



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

Sacred Heart University
DigitalCommons@SHU

Communication, Media & The Arts Faculty
Publications

School of Communication, Media & the Arts

10-2001

'Good Little Bad Girls': Controversy and the Flapper Comedienne

Sara Ross
Sacred Heart University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/media_fac



Part of the [American Film Studies Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), and the [Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ross, Sara. "'Good Little Bad Girls': Controversy and the Flapper Comedienne." *Film History* 13.4 (2001): 409-423.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Communication, Media & the Arts at DigitalCommons@SHU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Communication, Media & The Arts Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@SHU. For more information, please contact santoro-dillond@sacredheart.edu.

'Good Little Bad Girls': Controversy and the flapper comédienne

Sara Ross

In the late 1910s and early 1920s, the American film industry experimented with a variety of new and timely female types which in some way challenged the sexual status quo, including the bohemian feminist, the madcap, the baby vamp and the flapper. Whether drawn from the headlines, adapted from best-selling novels or hot Broadway plays, or created for the screen, these characters had the potential to generate both strong box office, and controversy and censorship. Films in this period typically used two basic strategies for representing these self-consciously 'modern' feminine types. The first was to treat the behavior of the protagonist as a social problem. Drawing on the nineteenth-century typology of the fallen woman, films that used this strategy provided a moral lesson by showing the tragic fate or redemption of girls who wrong-headedly succumbed to the rhetoric of free love or feminism or the lure of the jazz age.¹ Another strategy was to make the young woman's real or imagined transgressions the subject of comedy, as was often done with the 1920s' most prominent young female type, the flapper. This strategy could retain the moral redemption angle in comedic form, through the flapper's ultimate rejection of modern ways and recuperation into the family. In addition, comedies concerning modern girls eased the threat of the representation of them as sexual beings by making light of and/or satirising their behavior. The flapper comedies of the 1920s drew on and developed earlier traditions for the comic representation of sexual young women, and in turn provided a precedent for the romantic comedies of the 1930s and beyond.

The comic performance of flapper stars was central to creating the balance of sexiness and fun that made the flapper an acceptable and successful

screen type. This essay will demonstrate the importance of comic masquerade to the performance styles of consummate flapper comédiennes Colleen Moore and Clara Bow. Their performances contributed to a successful blending of sexual and social rebellion with girl-next-door innocence in their films, a blend which served to deflect controversy and, in the process, helped to create a new screen type.

Controversy in the flapper film

The pressbook for *Dancing Mothers* (1926), which featured Clara Bow in an important supporting role as a rebellious flapper daughter, sums up a number of the appealing elements of films featuring the modern girl: 'You're going to get a kaleidoscope panorama of the fast side and fast set of New York life which movie fans like.' The pressbook promises: 'bright lights ... theatres ... night clubs ... dancing ... recklessness ... madness ... Greenwich Village ... wild escapades at night ... dash ... spice!'² The box office draw of the flapper character can be attributed in large part to the daring nature of these characters' behavior and milieux. The sexually aggressive modern girl would smoke, drink and neck her way through films, wearing revealing clothing and making suggestive remarks while attending wild parties and dancing to the 'jungle rhythms' of jazz bands or driving roadsters at dangerous speeds, thus offering the 'spice' that pleased the 'picture

Sara Ross, a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Hartford, is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Her essays have appeared in *Aura* and *Hollywood Goes Shopping: American Cinema and Consumer Culture*. Correspondence to 148 Church Street 2F, Middletown, CT 06457, USA.

house reflex'.³ *Variety* frequently noted the box office potential of the flapper film's combination of youth and sex. For example, it commented favorably on the 'sexy stuff' and the 'Greenwich village scene' in its review of *His Children's Children* (1923): 'The coming out ball of the youngest daughter of the family is full of real punch stuff for the hinterland ... What with society flappers smoking and drinking, rolling their own and leaving their almost corsets in the retiring room, it may be termed "hot stuff"'.⁴ *Variety* called the collegiate flapper story *The Plastic Age* (1925) 'sure fire', exclaiming, 'for the flappers and their sundae buyers *The Plastic Age* is perfect ... and the home run hitter will be Clara Bow as Cynthia Day, a tough little baby to hang around a college campus, but her excuse can be that she had no mother to guide her'.⁵ Exhibitors echoed *Variety's* assertions that sexy flapper vehicles drew audiences. For example, the Dixie Theatre of Durant, Mississippi reported to the *Motion Picture Almanac* that in *The Fleet's In* (1928): 'Clara Bow sure does her broadcasting of thrills in every nook and corner of your house. In this one, she pleases them all and gives them a lesson in all kinds of up-to-date loving and the new and latest dances. Everybody moves swiftly in this picture, just what they all want'.⁶ Producers responded by serving up more 'flip flaps'. As a First National advertisement said of the Colleen Moore flapper film *We Moderns* (1925), each film in the cycle attempted to be 'even more dizzy and unbridled than its predecessors ... !'⁷

The same features that were deemed saleable by the industry made flapper films the subject of censorial concern and critical derision throughout the decade, and presented a challenge to producers and exhibitors wishing to cash in on the character's popularity. As portrayed on film, the flapper's behavior, attire, slang, and taste in books and music all pushed the boundaries of acceptability. For example, *Flaming Youth* (1923), one of the first successful flapper films and one that set both the formula and the tone for the cycle, generated controversy and protest in some communities, and censorship in others.⁸ An Associated Press article picked up by the New Brunswick, New Jersey, *Home News* states that: 'Showing of the motion picture, *Flaming Youth*, starring Colleen Moore, at a local theatre has provoked a storm of protest. Members of the Women's Club here were given a private showing of the film last night prior to its public exhibition today and declared that "it is not a fit picture for young people

to see"'. The article further reports that 'Mayor Spencer Baldwin also attended the private showing last night at the request of the women but said he could see nothing wrong. "It is just what goes on in every day life", he said. He refused to heed the women's request that permission to show the picture be refused.' Officials in some other communities did not show the same restraint. The *New York Telegraph* reported that, on a warrant signed by George Bouckaert, Chairman of the Seattle Board of Theatre Censors, Seattle theater manager Leroy V. Johnson was arrested on a charge of 'exhibiting a motion picture of objectionable nature', for showing the film.⁹

Producers were aware of both the box office potential and the hazards of portraying the flapper character. Correspondence near the end of the decade between producers and the MPPDA, the film industry trade association responsible for self-regulation, demonstrates that stories of the modern girl were considered particularly problematic and in need of careful handling.¹⁰ For example, memos in the MPPDA file for the comedy *The Wild Party* (1929) indicate that Clara Bow's flapper films were watched particularly closely by both that organisation and by local censors. In November of 1928, Jason Joy of the MPPDA wrote a memo indicating he was concerned about this film before production even began: 'We have under registration for Paramount the title *The Wild Party*. We understand this is by the author of *Flaming Youth*. It is being written for Clara Bow, and perhaps ought to have some special attention.' In January of 1929, Joy indicated in a further memo that 'censors will be predisposed to watch it a bit more carefully'. Before releasing *The Wild Party*, Paramount reportedly agreed to a number of cuts suggested by Joy, eliminating 'ten "shots" of feminine pulchritude', a 'bootlegger episode', and 'all drinking by the girls'. Notwithstanding reductions in its quotient of pulchritude and booze, after its release *The Wild Party* was further singled out as a problem film in an MPPDA internal memo on censorship concerns in Texas. The memo reported that citizens' groups in that state were demanding more censorship on the grounds that 'practically all pictures now have to have a wild party in them and that all dialogues are getting out of bounds'.¹¹

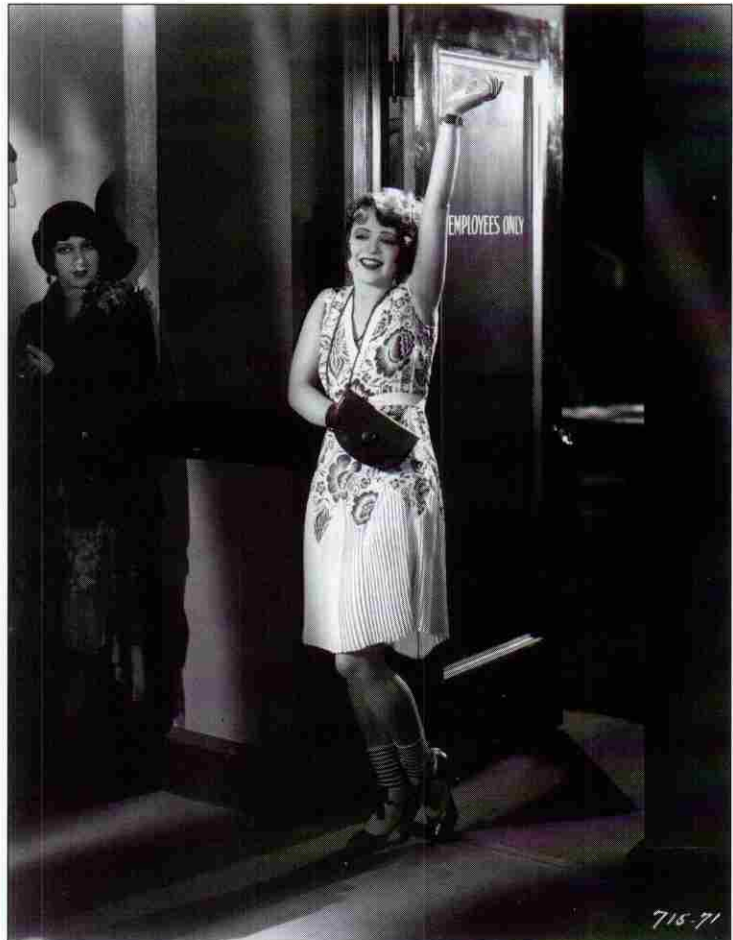
Racy slang, as presented in dialogue intertitles, was seen as another problem point in flapper films. After reading the script for the Clara Bow film *The Fleet's In*, Joy wrote a letter to David Selznick,

pointing out twelve 'colorful titles' in the film, a number of which were attributed to Bow's character, Peaches, and which he 'felt certain the censors will eliminate'. They included the following: 'the words "goal 'em" in the title which reads, "we gotta greet 'em, grab 'em, goal 'em and go!" ... [the] words "look hot and keep cool" ... [the] words "operatin' without a license" in "Most of em are osteopaths – operatin' without a license" ...' and '[the words] "stretches my girdle", in the title "Don't make me laugh ...".' However, in this case Paramount declined making the recommended cuts. In a letter to Joy, Paramount's Julian Johnson explained that 'the romantic nature of the comedy demands a consistent and colorful title background', and that furthermore, 'all the titles seem peculiarly apropos, natural and inoffensive from these characters ... In places where the censors aren't so squeamish, they will have their full laughing effect.'¹²

The controversy attached to flapper films led producers to seek a balance between 'spice' and acceptability when handling this material. Strategies for reining in the unbridled flapper included some that were common across genres: not only reducing problematic images and language but also introducing narrative correctives to a character's 'bad' behavior, what came to be called 'compensating moral values' after the industry's adoption of the Production Code in 1930. Others strategies, to be detailed below, were specific to comedy.

The moral ending was the most common strategy for shielding films from controversy. The vast majority of flapper films conclude with the flapper explicitly renouncing her experiments with the modern lifestyle and/or settling down in a relationship with a conventional man. While selling the films' sexy elements, promotional materials and publicity articles also often made it clear that the protagonist mended her ways by the end, and that the films offered up a lesson. For example, the *Motion Picture News* reported of *Flaming Youth* that '... the story drives home a lesson to this jazz-mad age'.¹³ The promotional synopsis of *The Perfect Flapper* (1924) also serves to typify the formula when it says of the film: 'So after lots of adventures and misunderstandings, explanations are made and "The Perfect Flapper" becomes a perfect wife'.¹⁴

Like reductions in racy content, however, the moral ending was not a guarantee against controversy. For example, the *Variety* review of *The Perfect Flapper* described the moral 'in the latter stages of



the film's footage', as 'so much reading matter'. The review continued: 'While it may square the character on the screen ... [it] will hardly cause concentration from the parents and is sure to sponsor an outburst of bright and witty sayings from the youths with their girl friends in the audience.' It concluded that the film would have been better off without a moral at the end, 'for there's little use attempting to make an audience think while viewing a vehicle of this type'.¹⁵ The apparent hypocrisy of the moral ending might even exacerbate negative reactions to flapper films. Writing in the *Los Angeles Express*, Mabel Brundige Horton expressed disgust with the flapper characters in *We Moderns*, particularly Colleen Moore's character, Mary, as well as skepticism about the film's moral ending:

Poor little flappers! The harder they flap the more they are maligned. Yet at heart the excitement chasers are sweet young things who

Fig. 1. Several problematic titles containing racy slang were attributed to Clare Bow's 'Peaches' in *The Fleet's In* (Paramount, 1928). [Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.]

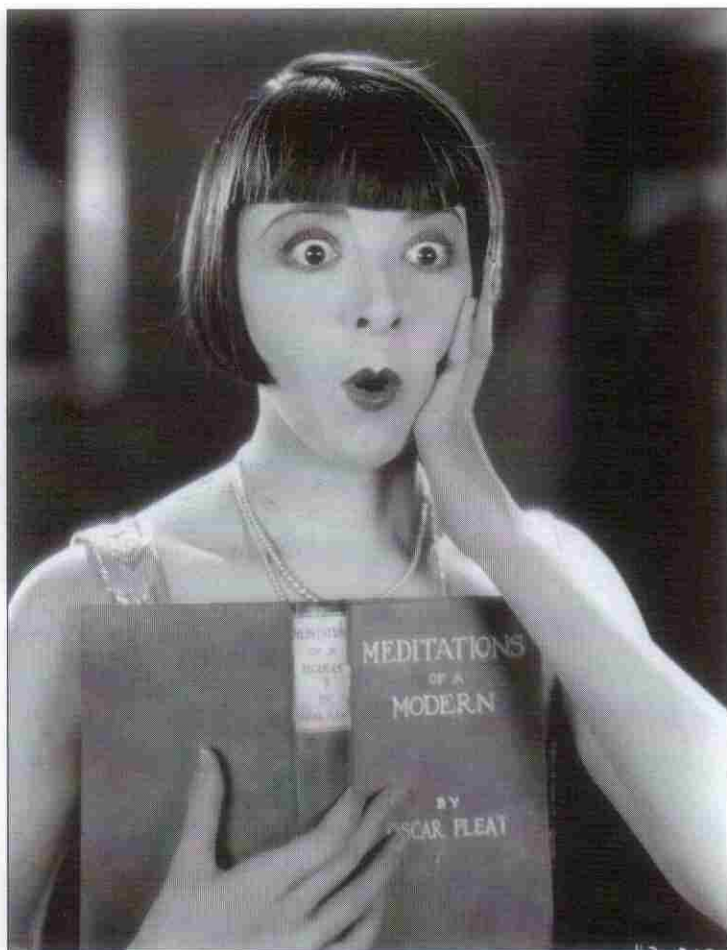


Fig. 2. Colleen Moore as Mary Sundale in *We Moderns* (FN, 1925): Mary's search for excitement leads her to forbidden reading material. [Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive.]

run home to mamma when their wings are singed. In the end, of course, they fall into the arms of the adoring hero ... No girl who pursued such an erratic course would be, at heart, a demure little saint. Girls of Mary's type are more sophisticated; indeed, their bloom vanishes quickly and, in the parlance of slang, they are 'hard boiled eggs'.¹⁶

A moral lesson tacked on after scenes of jazz-driven revelry might thus have only limited success in improving a film's reception.

One further variable that neither the MPPDA nor producers could entirely predict or control was exhibitor handling of flapper films. Local advertising and exploitation might further emphasise a film's controversial elements.¹⁷ For example, the memo on the reception of *The Wild Party* in Texas mentioned above reported: 'at the small town of Cisco, west of here, an R and R theater manager in advertising the

Wild Party as a midnight show advertised it for those over eighteen years of age. He indicated that it was very risqué. I do not know how it is in the rest of your territory but if this thing keeps up we are in for censorship trouble in this section.'¹⁸ A story about *The Perfect Flapper* in the *Cleveland Press* demonstrates how the stage show in a given theater could undercut the moral ending:

There is good comedy in this movie ... but its moralizing is awful. The heroine assures her aunt that when she is married she will give up jazz music as well as her lip-stick. This is recorded in the picture to show that even if she does dance to new dance music she is a nice girl, because she really does not like it. One might imagine that this illustrates the depths to which the movies can slip in their efforts to meet the requirements of political censorship ... The theater in which this movie, which so earnestly warns young women against the new dance music, is exhibited in New York also features the Paul Whiteman Jazz band ... One reviewer writes 'If this was intended to assist its argument against jazz, the joke's on the producers'. The joke does not lose savor in Cleveland, where Philip Spitalny's Jazz Band plays at the State, the theater which exhibits *The Perfect Flapper*.¹⁹

Thus, in the face of the controversial nature of the flapper character, and the handling by some exhibitors that the films were likely to receive, efforts at self-regulation, particularly narrative strategies such as ending with a moral lesson, were not wholly successful in making the cycle broadly acceptable.

Comedy as a defense against controversy

Comic handling of the flapper character could ease its controversial impact by adopting a mildly critical or satirical tone for the depiction of the modern girl, and/or by lending a general lightheartedness to the material. The majority of flapper-centered films were comedies, and when flappers appeared in dramas, they were often subsidiary characters whose jazzy behavior was the butt of humor in moments of comic relief. For example, early in her career, Clara Bow played similar supporting roles in the dramas *Black Oxen* (1924) and *Dancing Mothers* (1926), films which lampooned the modern girl and set her up as a foil for the more traditional leads, played by Corrine

Griffith and Alice Joyce, respectively.²⁰ In *Black Oxen*, Bow's rather obnoxious Janet vies with Griffith's older woman, Mary, for the affection of the protagonist, Clavering. One sequence intercuts between a jazz party, featuring Janet and a throng of young revelers in a crowded apartment, and a romantic tête-à-tête between Clavering and Mary in her home. At the party, Janet mixes cocktails and dances suggestively with a drunken young man. When she literally dances him off his feet and he collapses on a couch, she jokingly puts a lily between his hands as though laying him to rest, and continues to dance wildly around him. The intercutting draws a contrast between Mary's gracious behavior and Janet's antics. In its review of the film, the *Moving Picture World* stated that 'Excellent comedy relief to the dignified role of the heroine is provided in the role of an ultra-jazzy heroine.'²¹ *Variety* made the similar comment that 'Clara Bow contributed a flapper type that relieved the tensify of the dramatic moments and served as refreshing comedy relief'.²²

Bow provided some similar moments of comic relief in the role of Kittens Westcourt in *Dancing Mothers*. The film was described in Paramount's pressbook as the 'newest, fastest, de luxiest comedy-drama of modern family life'.²³ Amid the drama of a neglected mother whose husband and daughter are caught up in the 'revels of jazzmania', comic moments are provided by Bow's flapper dialogue and jazz-aded behavior, and by glimpses of Greenwich Village high life, including a pirate-themed nightclub. Bow's flappers in both *Black Oxen* and *Dancing Mothers*, though scene-stealers, were largely caricatures that served to demonstrate the moral superiority of the heroine's dignified behavior. The films provided a blend of drama and comedy which presented the flapper as both a social problem and a subject of satire.²⁴

When the flapper character was a protagonist rather than a subsidiary character, as, for example, when Clara Bow moved on to starring roles, comedy typically also moved to the fore, helping to create a rounded and sympathetic version of the flapper. In particular, a comic treatment of the character's actions made it possible for the flapper protagonist to indulge in 'bad' behavior while remaining a good girl.²⁵ When Colleen Moore's clothes come flying off as she spins out of control on a dressmaker's turntable in *Irene* (1926), or when Clara Bow quips about her rich boss 'Sweet Santa Claus, give me him!' in *It* (1927), the implications of illicit sexuality are sof-



tened by the comic tone of the proceedings. Julian Johnson's defense of the questionable intertitles in *The Fleet's In*, quoted above, also relies on this kind of estimation of a film's tone. He implies that the titles were used in a lighthearted manner that was appropriate when considered in view of the comic nature of the film and its characters.

The comic tone in flapper films is especially insistent when potentially shocking settings or incidents are portrayed. For example, the inevitable drunken party sequence tends to be played for laughs in both comedies and dramas. Jazz parties in *Flaming Youth*, a comedy, and *Wine of Youth* (1924), *The Plastic Age* (1926) and *Our Dancing Daughters* (1928), all dramas with comic elements, feature slapstick drunks, visual jokes and humorous subtitles. At a college dance in *The Plastic Age*, a running gag features party goers disappearing into a back room and coming back out decidedly tipsy. The sexual interactions of the students are also handled comically. A title quips, 'there are two kinds of girls at every dance – those who prefer to dance – and those who prefer not to'. The title is followed by a suggestive medium shot of the intertwined legs of a boy and girl sticking out from behind a wall. In the party scene in *Wine of Youth*, during what a title calls 'a little evening class in home-jazzing', a boy offers a girl a bottle marked 'ginger ale'. She turns up her nose at it, but he insists. While she takes a sip, he lays a pillow behind her, and she pantomimes passing out from the strength of the alcohol. Dramatic encounters between the leads are inter-

Fig. 3. Precocious teenager Clara Bow and her 'older man' (Conway Tearle) at the pirate-themed nightclub in *Dancing Mothers* (FP-L, 1926). [Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive.]



Fig. 4. The inevitable drunken party scene in *We Moderns*. [Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.]

perspersed with gags featuring the same increasingly drunken girl, culminating in her leaving the party wearing a man's sweater, only to have another girl unravel it down to nothing as she walks to her car.

Thus, both flapper comedies and dramas with a subsidiary flapper character often adopted the strategy of poking fun at the foibles of the younger set while at the same time exploiting them for box office punch. By this means, the younger set was presented as laughable rather than threatening. There were apparently precedents for the satirical treatment of the modern girl in screen representations of other potentially threatening female types that appeared just prior to the period of the flapper's screen popularity, particularly the bohemian feminist. Unfortunately, prints of these feminist comedies do not appear to have survived. However, based on descriptions in contemporary reviews and promotional materials, films such as *Experimental Marriage* (1919), *Oh, You Women* (1919), and *Miss Hobbs* (1920), treated the stereotype of the man-hat-

ing feminist as comically excessive. According to an advertisement in *Moving Picture World*, for example, *Oh, You Women* made fun of the 'he-women' who wanted to take on traditionally male jobs.²⁶ The John Emerson-Anita Loos Production for Paramount reportedly portrayed a small town thrown into turmoil when a feminist mother and daughter arrive from out of town, and convince the women of the town to get 'all rigged up as men' by assuming male clothes and wartime jobs.²⁷ An advertisement for the film described it as 'A roaring comedy, making fun of the feminine foibles of today – fighting with ridicule the employers who won't give back the jobs to the soldiers'.²⁸

The flapper cycle inherited this strategy of 'fighting with ridicule' most directly from early experiments with flappers and flapper-like characters. Promotional materials suggest these films were intended to be viewed as comedies and proposed a satirical handling of their subject matter. For example, in the comedy *Indiscreet Corinne* (1917), Olive Thomas played a rebellious madcap society girl who pretends to have a 'past' in order to land a job in which she must seduce a South American millionaire. The text of an advertisement for the film reads: 'She shocked her aristocratic family by craving to be a regular vampire with a past. Her wild escapades will keep your patrons in suspense and laughter.'²⁹ The pressbook for *Bobbed Hair* (1922), in which Wanda Hawley played an early incarnation of the screen flapper, described it as an 'amusing satire of the Greenwich Village set', interwoven with 'certain human problems, of the girl dissatisfied with home surroundings'.³⁰ Colleen Moore's first film at First National, *The Huntress* (1923), which was released just prior to *Flaming Youth*, was advertised on posters as 'The rollicking tale of a feminine go-getter and her relentless man-hunt'. The poster text states: 'You'll delight in her militancy – when efforts are made to bend her will ... Wanting a husband, she kidnapped a man! You'll laugh till you cry.'³¹ The advertising for these films thus set an immediate precedent for viewing the excesses of feminine youth as comic and provided a means of undercutting rather than applauding modern feminine types.

The presentation of the modern girl's behavior in a silly and/or satirical light was strongly dependent on performance. The *Variety* review of the feminist comedy *Miss Hobbs* described the title character as a young woman who 'indulges in all the cults and isms available and professes a strong aversion for

the male sex'.³² The *Moving Picture World* elaborates on the word 'professes', praising Wanda Hawley for conveying the fact that Miss Hobbs' attitudes are only superficial: 'She [Hawley] has realised that the air of arch sang-froid which goes with the characterisation is only a pose and that underneath lies womanly appeal and charm.'³³ Louella Parsons made a similar comment about Colleen Moore's performance in *The Perfect Flapper*:

Miss Moore, one of our best known screen exponents of this newest form of unrestrained femininity, gives a new angle on flapperism. I have always taken violent exception to these pictures that paint a moral on the sins of the girls of today. I always find it inordinately stupid to have to sit through reel after reel and watch some bobbed-hair ingenue smoke cigarettes, drink cocktails, go on jazzy parties and act like a high-class moron. But these objections in 'The Perfect Flapper' are somewhat softened by the thought that we are seeing a burlesque. I felt all the time that Colleen Moore was kidding every other flapper picture and every motion picture founded on this species of the feminine sex.³⁴

By identifying the artificial or 'posed' nature of the performances, these two descriptions isolate a key feature of many comic portrayals of the modern girl in the 1920s. While running the spectrum from sympathetic and winsome to broadly ridiculous, many of these performances suggest that the transgressive behavior of the characters is removed from their 'true' nature. Narratively, the behavior is usually motivated as a whim produced by the influence of the media or a charismatic figure, or a pose assumed to shock or impress other characters. This strategy relies not only on cues in the narrative as to the character's inherent innocence, but also on a performance style that underscores any potentially shocking behavior as a comic masquerade. This strategy reached an artistic peak in the work of Colleen Moore, whose performance style and star persona were designed at one and the same time to present the quintessential flapper, and to undercut and satirise her identity as a flapper.

Colleen Moore's comic performance

Following the success of *Flaming Youth*, its new young star, Colleen Moore, earned the nickname 'the flaming youth girl', and she was thereafter

closely identified with the flapper type. A variety of strategies were employed to shield the star from the potential for controversy inherent in this type. Most prominently, the scenarios of Moore's flapper films built upon and extended the strategy of presenting a comically exaggerated mimicry of sexual maturity and sophistication as one aspect of girlish behavior. Though embroiled in daring, 'modern' scenarios, Moore's characters are distanced from the implications of these scenarios through her performance style. Their flapper behavior is presented as an attempt to masquerade as something that they are not, and when they are successful in reaching their goals, romantic or otherwise, it is through humor and winsomeness rather than through the calculated sexuality that they try to project. Moore's flappers often reveal what they try to hide, betray emotion when they try to act cool, show their innocence when they aim for sexiness, and, ultimately, win through charm those whom they try to vamp.

For example, Moore's performance as Pat in *Flaming Youth* served to express not only her character's youthfulness and liveliness, but also the innocence and playfulness behind her wild flapper behavior. Milton Sills's character, Cary Scott, is won over by Pat's enthusiasm, despite his initial disdain for the modern girl. Moreover, it is the vivacity of Pat's behavior, and the comedy of her failure to assume the flapper's modern sexuality, which proves appealing to the spectator as well. Take, for example, a scene in *Flaming Youth* in which Pat gets made up in her sisters' finery to sneak in to the older girls' party. Patricia sits before a mirror at her sister's dressing table and applies the many accessories associated with flaming flapperhood, with comic excess. To a low cut, strappy gown, an armband, and exaggerated spit curls, Pat adds a large Spanish comb and beauty spots for her face and arm. To her neck, ears, hair, and even lips, she applies large dollops of ten different potions and perfumes that are lined up on the vanity and then caps them off by powdering herself all over with such gusto that a cloud of powder fills the air. She then adds one more beauty spot for good measure, primps herself once more, and, assuming a silly imitation of a suave walk, with her arm stretched out and her hand held flat, she strides from the room to join the party downstairs. Throughout her preparations, Pat's physical actions oscillate between attempts to assume a pose of sophistication equal to her accessories, and irrepressible outbursts of youthful enthusiasm. For

Fig. 5.

Would-be model Irene O'Dare (Colleen Moore) causes havoc in the dress shop of 'Madame Lucy' (George K. Arthur). *Irene* (FN, 1926). [Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.]



example, after applying the perfumes, she pauses to pose grandly and kiss at herself in the mirror, and then indulges in an excited shimmy of her arms and shoulders while she decides what to apply next. Near the end of the sequence, she gets up to check her gown, swirling around excitedly. Then her eyes widen, as she seems to notice the low-cut bodice for the first time. She becomes alarmed and pulls the dress up a bit. Her fascination with her flapperish accessories thus coexists with an occasional glimpse of their potential implications which causes her to draw back from them.

Similar instances of this performance style can be found in a Moore comedy vehicle less explicitly centered on the flapper, *Irene*. Less controversial films such as this helped to establish Moore's persona and the convention of undercutting supposedly sophisticated behavior by physical comedy, which became a hallmark of her films. Irene (Moore), a daughter of poor Irish immigrants, meets the wealthy Donald Marshall (Lloyd Hughes) when she delivers a package to his estate. Having been asked to wait

in a library, Irene begins to play with the elegant drapes, and before long she has constructed a simulation of a fancy gown using the drapes and a lampshade with a tassel. She pretends to be a society woman, striking a pose, offering cigarettes to an imaginary companion, and improvising the dialogue: 'My dear, I never smoke anything but Turkish Atrocities.' As she continues her masquerade, Donald happens into the room and takes her for a friend of his mother's. When he turns his back to speak to a servant, the alarmed Irene removes her borrowed 'outfit' and hides behind a curtain, but she gives her hiding place away when she knocks over a ladder. The two end up laughing together, and Donald is smitten. When his snooty fiancée arrives shortly thereafter, Irene envies her fancy clothes, but mockingly imitates her haughty poses from behind a curtain, mouthing 'Applesauce!' before making her retreat. Her attempt to masquerade as a society woman in this scene is echoed later in the film when Donald and his couturier friend, Madame Lucy, try to pass Irene and her friends off as society girls in a

fashion show. Although this later attempt is ultimately unsuccessful, Irene nevertheless wins Donald away from his sophisticated fiancée with her charm and her comic antics.

A key ingredient in this scene is Moore's comic inventiveness as she uses everyday props to pose as a society woman. Moore's films typically introduced many opportunities for this type of mimicry, which might then contribute to her characters' propensity to reach their material or romantic goals in unexpected ways. Another example can be found in *Orchids and Ermine* (1927), in which Moore played would-be gold digger Pink Watson. In response to a classified ad, Pink arrives at a posh hotel to apply for a job. She finds a long line of women waiting already, and, noting that she does not fit in with the group, she adopts a comic exaggeration of the 'hard boiled' slouch of the woman in front of her, with her hands on her hips and her nose in the air. When the woman turns to look at her, she holds the pose defiantly for a few seconds, and then, unable to keep it up in the face of the other woman's scrutiny, drops it in alarm. When the woman looks away again, she tries to adopt another pose, moving her arms self-consciously from one position to another. In an office at the head of the line, the boss gives his assistant the directive to pick out a 'sensible girl' from among the 'chiffon dolls'. The assistant walks down the line of applicants, who all smile and flirt. When he reaches Pink, she is just turning to go, having given up on her efforts to appear sophisticated. He selects her and takes her back to the office, where she is unable to hide her nervousness. The boss looks her up and down, and tells her to start the next day. The scene ends as Pink exits the office, and her shadow reveals that she is jumping up and down with excitement on the other side of the office door. She thus wins the job because her attempt to appear to be as worldly as the other women is completely unsuccessful.

Ella Cinders (1926) provides another example of a character who succeeds despite, and perhaps because of, the misfiring of her imitative behavior. In an attempt to win a contest that promises a screen test, Ella sneaks an advice book for aspiring actors from her stepmother.³⁵ The book contains photos of 'eye exercises' in which the eyes are used to express states of mind such as 'sorrow', 'hate', 'love', 'cross-eyed', 'fear' and 'flirtatious'. After trying out 'love', and 'flirtatious', Ella finds that she has a remarkable facility for 'cross-eyed'. A split screen effect gives her the ability to perform an impressive array of ocular



gymnastics. Later, Ella goes to a photographer to have her picture taken for the contest, wearing a comical interpretation of a sophisticated outfit, at which, the title states, 'six moths laughed until they died'. Her attempts to assume the sophisticated poses that she has seen in her book are thwarted when a fly lands on her nose just as the photo is taken. The resulting silly facial expression wins the contest. As a judge later explains: 'Beauty means nothin'. The movies need newer and funnier faces.'

Moore's consistently funny face gave the assurance that, no matter how unbridled her flapper roles became, she was always only playacting. By portraying flapperhood as the act of playing at being a flapper, Moore's performances supplied the ideal comic formula for reconciling the expression of sexual sophistication with a more fundamental innocence. Performance style, and particularly physical comedy, thus provided a means of offsetting some of the more controversial aspects of the flapper or the modern girl.

Fig. 6. Colleen Moore as Ella, 'acting' in *Ella Cinders* (FN, 1926). [Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive.]

Clara Bow's comic performance

It remained for Clara Bow, who supplanted Moore as the top female box office performer in 1928, to collapse the distinction between pretended sophistication and a more fundamental innocence.³⁶ Scholarly commentary on Clara Bow has often remarked on the star's lively performance style, which expressed both innocence and sexuality. For example, Richard Koszarski has said that 'surviving Bow films ... show a natural comedienne, blending sexiness and humor in a tradition later developed by Carole Lombard'.³⁷ It is important to note both the continuity of Bow's style with that of other performers, and the innovations that allowed her characters to unite sex appeal, innocence and comedy in a new way. Established aspects of the flapper type, such as the character's irreverence, energetic movements, and enjoyment of masquerade and posing, were all part of Bow's performance style. She combined them with rapid-fire changes in facial expression and mood, an assured though playful sexiness, and a display of pleasure in sensual activities. These elements gave her characters their edge while retaining the comic touch that had allowed earlier flapper characters to broach the combination of youth and sex on the screen.

One notable feature of Bow's style was the rapidity with which she changed her moods, expressions and movements, exaggerated even beyond the flapper's typical animation. For example, in *Black Oxen* there is a scene in a taxi in which she unsuccessfully attempts to seduce the protagonist, Clavering. Her expression quickly changes from an angry glare to a dreamy lovesick look to a look of sullen resignation as he repulses her advances. Such fleeting expressions were a key feature in enabling Bow to blur the distinction between the pose and the character's 'real' intentions and thus to give the effect of characters that were simultaneously knowing and innocent.

True to this rapid-fire performance style, when Bow's films present her character pretending to be something that she is not, the comic masquerade is usually reduced to a fleeting pose rather than an extended and distinctly silly comedy sequence, as is the case in Moore's films. The impression that the flapper character is being undercut through burlesque is thus softened in Bow's work, though it has not disappeared. For example, in the sequence from *Irene* discussed above, considerable screen time is devoted to Irene's process of adorning herself with

a lampshade and curtains and playing at being a wealthy society lady. In a sequence in *It*, Bow's Betty Lou also pretends to be an elegant and reserved woman of society as she prepares for a date at the Ritz. However, unlike Moore's explicit and elaborately staged masquerade, Bow's transformation is confined to two brief poses that she takes up and drops in a matter of seconds. Betty Lou has arrived home at the low-rent flat that she shares with a friend, Molly. She realises that she does not have a dress to wear for her date. Thinking quickly, she takes up some scissors and cuts into the day dress that she is still wearing, in order to convert it into an evening gown. After a cutaway to a parallel scene set in the boudoir of her wealthy rival, she is shown wearing her successfully completed evening costume. She tops it off with a scarf, assumes an arch expression, and raises her hand as she turns around slowly in mock haughtiness. A moment later she breaks into a laugh, flinging her hands down and patting Molly affectionately on the shoulder. Shortly thereafter, Molly motivates a repetition of the pose by curtsying and announcing 'Mademoiselle's car has arrived'. Bow assumes the same pseudo-regal attitude, and, hand raised, stalks majestically out of the apartment.

Though Betty Lou is clearly pretending to be something that she is not in these momentary poses, in the context of the entire sequence there is no great distinction between the poses she adopts and the character's 'real' personality, in contrast with the example from *Irene*. Betty Lou's haughty poses are two among many others in the scene. For example, as Molly shows reluctance to help her to cut up her dress, Betty Lou pouts for a moment and then smiles immediately afterward in contradiction of her pouting look. The same playful quality is evident when she behaves in a sexy manner. For example, when she first tells Molly that she is going to the Ritz, and again later, as she is dressing, she strikes a half-comical sultry pose, fluffing her hair with one hand. Her sexual self-display is thus presented in jest, but nonetheless, due to the rapid succession, the distinction between the poses and her 'real' or innocent self is not marked.

An interesting contrast can also be made between the dressing up scene in *It* and the scene in *Flaming Youth* in which Moore's Patricia puts on her sisters' clothes and cosmetics. Both characters engage in similar preening and posing behavior. However, Patricia also reveals her self-consciousness about the sexual implications of putting on the low-



Fig. 7. Blatant sexual self-display in a publicity still for *It* (FP-L, 1927). Clara Bow and William Austin. [Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.]

cut gown which is a bit too large, and which reveals more of her chest than she would like. In *It*, Bow shows none of this self-consciousness as she takes up scissors and starts cutting out the front of her dress while it is still on her body, revealing her slip and brassiere beneath. She looks up in surprise when Molly expresses shock at this behavior, and then laughingly enlists the other woman's aid. This scene thus creates the impression that, while Betty Lou is always only playing at being sexy, just as she plays with other passing attitudes, her sexiness is nevertheless a 'natural' part of her personality.

A similar confusion over which actions are a pose and which reveal the 'real' character may be found in a scene at the beginning of *Black Oxen*, which, as noted above, is a dramatic film in which Bow has a comedic supporting role. Bow's Janet enters the sitting room where Clavering is talking with her father and grandmother. Earlier in the scene, she has returned after a night out, gone upstairs to

undress, and shocked the butler by coming into the hallway in her underclothes to find out who has come in downstairs. Discovering that it is Clavering, she puts on a new dress and races down. She stops in the lower hallway before she enters the room and takes a surreptitious puff of her cigarette. She then strikes an attitude, with her hand on her hip and the cigarette held out to the side, and saunters into the room, swinging her hips. Her entrance thus starts out as a clear pose. In the subsequent exchange with Clavering and her family, however, her expressions rapidly change from arch sophistication to annoyance to sauciness and sarcasm, so that it is difficult to mark a distinction between her poses and her 'natural' reactions. When she responds to Clavering's threat to spank her if she does not behave with the quip 'Can I depend on that?' her bravado sustains a hint of genuine desire. If Moore's performance in *Flaming Youth* helped to define flapperhood as the act of pretending to be a flapper, Bow's style

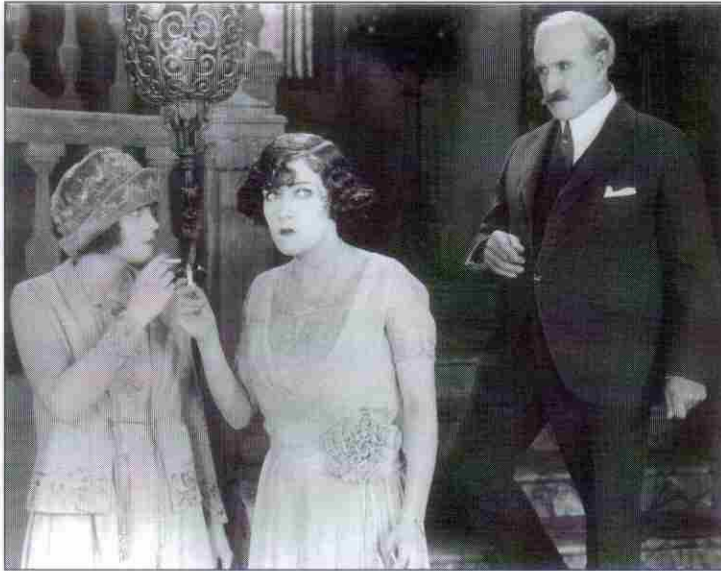


Fig. 8. Eleanor 'Swiftie' Forbes (Gloria Swanson) and her sister (Vera Reynolds) hesitantly light up, only to be caught by their father (Theodore Roberts) in *Prodigal Daughters* (FP-L, 1923). [Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.]

of rapidly shifting poses blurred the line between pretending and 'being'. The result was that she could appear to be knowing and sexual, and at the same time, appear to be merely playing at being sexual.

If this is contradictory, it is a contradiction that is used within the plots of her films, by means of the confusion it generates in the male characters that come into contact with her. Her characters' sexy and uninhibited behavior often leads male characters to assume that she is in fact sexually knowing, and mistake her for a 'bad girl', introducing conflict between the characters. For example, in *It*, Betty Lou and her love interest, the wealthy Cyrus Waltham, spend an evening together at Coney Island. In the course of the evening, as they visit various rides, she rolls around on the floor with him on the 'social mixer' ride, pulls his arms around her on the giant slide, and flashes her garters and stockings as they are spun in a barrel. When Cyrus kisses her at the end of the evening, she seems to contradict the implications of this earlier forward behavior by slapping him in indignation. Then, as she climbs the stairs to her apartment, leaving him bewildered in his car, her indignation itself seems to have been merely playful, as she smiles with pleasure, and reenacts both the kiss and her retribution on a stuffed dog that they have won on their night out. Through Bow's performance of these actions, the question of which aspects of her character's behavior are playful and which are 'real' becomes unanswerable, and one must simply accept that she is a 'good girl' despite her sexy behavior.

Another key distinction between the Bow flappers and the Moore flappers is that Bow's characters used their emotive abilities in a more obviously self-conscious way. Moore's characters often inadvertently reveal emotions or aspects of their personality that they had intended to conceal, as is evident in the example discussed above of Pink's failed pretence of hard-boiled sophistication in the line of would-be telephone operators in *Orchids and Ermine*. In contrast, the use of performance in Bow's films, in tandem with the hierarchy of knowledge typically set up through the narration, tends to construct characters that have control over the revelation and concealment of their inner emotional states, making them more successfully manipulative. They used this self-control to their own advantage, and to comic effect, in romantic situations.

An example is found in *Get Your Man* (1927), in which Bow's American society girl, Nancy Worthington, pursues Robert, the son of a Duke, in spite of his betrothal to the daughter of a Marquis. The two fall in love in Paris, where Robert is picking up wedding gifts for his impending marriage. Soon after he returns to his fiancée's home, Nancy follows, and tricks her way into the Marquis' home by faking a car accident outside the gate. She then flirts with the Marquis until he proposes to her, and agrees to accept him on the condition that he will break his daughter's betrothal to Robert. With Robert free, she arranges to get into a compromising situation with him, thus breaking off her engagement to the Marquis and winning Robert for herself. The complicated manipulations of this farce are made possible by the ability of Bow's character to counterfeit some emotions, such as her passion for the Duke, and hide others, such as her yearning for Robert and her amusement at his evident jealousy. Scenes which concern her manipulation of the situation are staged so as to show off the rapid transformations of Bow's facial expressions, while hiding them from the other characters. For example, when Robert is first alone with her at the home of the Marquis, he falls on his knees in front of her, with his back to the camera, and kisses her hand. Bow, facing front, reacts with evident emotion, but hides it behind a blasé expression as soon as Robert looks up at her.

In a sequence near the end of the film, she tricks an angry and jealous Robert into coming into her room in the evening, when she is in her dressing gown, to help her close a window. Once he is in the room, she closes the door and begins dancing about

madly and jumping on the bed, attracting the other members of the household with the noise. She pauses at one point to listen at the door to see if the others are coming, and then continues her mad dance. Finally, with her gown in revealing disarray, she throws herself into the arms of the bewildered Robert. As she embraces him, and her head moves over his shoulder and out of his range of vision, her deranged expression changes instantly to a triumphant smile. When the others enter, she pretends to be deeply ashamed, and assumes a downcast expression while a tracking shot precedes her across the room toward the foreground. When she clears the others' range of vision in the foreground, she once again breaks into a sly smile. The film's narration thus reveals how Bow's character controls her expression of emotion in such a way as to manipulate her lover and the others. In addition, unlike the hapless scrapes that Moore's characters get into in films such as *The Perfect Flapper* and *Naughty But Nice* (1927), Bow's character in *Get Your Man* orchestrates her own 'compromising' situation in such a way as to achieve her romantic goal. In her earliest flapper roles, such manipulations were associated with the unsympathetic, 'baby-vampish' side of characters like Janet in *Black Oxen*, but by the time of her starring flapper comedies, they were performed by her appealing protagonists.

Another important aspect of Bow's particular rendition of the flapper is that her characters combined the flapper's signature naughty behaviors, such as drinking, smoking and wearing revealing clothing, with an unusually unadulterated degree of sensual pleasure in these activities. It is not so much that other flapper characters did not take pleasure in their Charlestons and cocktails, as that, before Bow's versions of the flapper gained prominence, they would typically demonstrate some degree of hesitation about their actions. While publicity photos for the flapper film *Prodigal Daughters* (1923) show Gloria Swanson holding a cigarette at the end of her fingertips and puffing experimentally, Bow's Janet in *Black Oxen* takes a casual puff when no one is looking, to prepare herself to meet her family, and Kittens in *Dancing Mothers* draws deeply on her cigarette as she waits for Gerald, the man she loves, in his apartment. The difference between Moore's reaction to her low-cut dress in the scene from *Flaming Youth* and Bow's uninhibited pleasure in her improvised evening gown in *It* provides another example of this distinction. Similarly, in *Wings* (1927),

when Bow's Mary trades her ambulance driver's uniform for a show girl's sequined dress, she eagerly throws off her uniform and dons the dress, shimmying to make the sequins sparkle, and showing no self-consciousness about the low neckline and form fitting contours. One of Bow's most famous gestures, from *Dancing Mothers*, provides a final illustration of this aspect of her performance style. In the scene in which Bow's Kittens breaks in to Gerald's apartment, she grabs a cocktail shaker, making a 'yummy' expression. Taking a drink, she ecstatically traces the course of the liquor down her throat to her belly. Bow's characters thus show none of the hesitation over flapperish vices that were common in other flapper films. The way Bow plays them, her flappers smoke, drink and dress daringly not only to rebel or to get a reaction from their elders, but because they thoroughly enjoy these activities. Whereas a performer like Colleen Moore would draw comedy from her character's lack of experience with cigarettes or low-cut gowns, the humor in sequences such as that in *Dancing Mothers* comes from the incongruity of a young girl's exuberant pleasure in drinking a cocktail.

The precedents of earlier flapper characters certainly provided the model for the kind of playful posing by which the sexually forward behavior of Bow's flapper characters could be taken as comical. However, her characters' knowing behavior was not an obvious pretence, distinct from her essential 'innocence'. Instead, her films made posing itself an integral part of the characters' emotional and sexual expression. They furthermore increased the sexual stakes by having the flapper character take control of romantic situations, and express an uninhibited enjoyment of the sensual pleasures that went with her activities.

The performance styles of both Moore and Bow thus provided a means of reconciling youthful innocence and sexy behavior in their sympathetic flapper characters, though Bow's integration of these qualities was more thorough. In the case of both actresses, the impact of the performances within their films was also buttressed by their broader reputation as comediennes. This comic performance style did not completely address the potential for controversy inherent in a sexually rebellious female character, a fact that is made evident not only by censorious reactions to flapper films in the 1920s, but also by problems that arose with later sexy comediennes such as Mae West.³⁸ However, it did

set an important precedent for the use of comedy to ease the threat presented by female protagonists who were good girls and also sexual beings.

Acknowledgements: My thanks to Lea Jacobs and Scott Higgins for editorial comments. Thanks, also, to

the staffs of the Motion Picture Division, George Eastman House; the Library of Congress; the Film and Television Archive of the University of California, Los Angeles; and the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the tradition of the fallen woman in film and literature, see Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Madison University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). For a discussion of antecedent characters to the flapper, see Sara Ross, 'Early Experiments with the Cinematic Flapper', *Aura Film Studies Journal* 6, no. 2 (February 2000): 20–44.
2. Press Sheet, *Dancing Mothers* (Paramount Pictures, 1926), Copyright File, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
3. 'Hula', *Variety* (31 August 1927): 22.
4. 'His Children's Children', *Variety* (8 November 1923): 26.
5. 'The Plastic Age', *Variety* (21 July 1926): 14.
6. 'Box Office Record', *Motion Picture Almanac 1929* (Chicago: Quigley Publishing Co., 1930), 123.
7. *We Moderns* advertisement, in *Colleen Moore We Moderns Scrapbook*, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, CA (hereafter, Academy Library).
8. *Flaming Youth* reportedly did record business at many theaters, and it appeared on several lists of top box office performers for 1923 and 1924. For example, it was named number two of ten 'Outstanding Box Office Attractions' for 1923 by *Film Daily* and appeared among distributors' lists of the '10 Best Box Office Titles' for two years running. It was on three out of six distributor's lists of the '10 Best Box Office Titles of 1923', and on two out of four of the 1924 lists, as reported in the *Film Daily Yearbook*. 'The Ten Best Pictures of 1923', *Film Yearbook 1924* (New York: Wid's Films and Film Folks, 1924), 123; '10 Best Box Office Titles of 1923', *Film Yearbook 1924*, 499; 'Ten Best Box Office Titles, 1924', *Film Yearbook 1925* (New York: Wid's Films and Film Folks, 1925), 347. Though it was far from the first film to feature a flapper character, it brought the character new prominence and remained a reference point for later flapper films, and thus can rightly be said to have launched the flapper cycle. For a further discussion of *Flaming Youth*, and of flappers appearing between 1918 and 1923, see my dissertation, Sara Ross, 'Banking the Flames of Youth: The Hollywood Flapper, 1920–1930' (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2000), and Sara Ross, 'The Hollywood Flapper and the Culture of Media Consumption', in *Hollywood Goes Shopping: American Cinema and Consumer Culture*, ed. David Desser and Garth Jowett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 57–81.
9. 'Hackensack Women Oppose Film, But Mayor Permits It', New Brunswick, New Jersey, *Home News* (17 January 1924) and 'Seattle Censors File in *Flaming Youth* Act', *New York Telegraph* (2 March 1924) both in *Colleen Moore Scrapbook #3*, Academy Library.
10. Voluntary and highly variable self-regulation by producers was supplemented by the increasingly institutionalised practices of the MPPDA over the course of the 1920s. The MPPDA's initial regulatory efforts, conducted under 'The Formula' from 1924, applied only to notorious literary works acquired for adaptation by the studios. This aspect of self-regulation was conducted from the New York office, and usually undertaken by Maurice McKenzie or Lamar Trotti. The head of the MPPDA, Will Hays, dispatched Jason Joy to the West coast and, in 1928, he reported the establishment of an office in Hollywood to review original screenplays, see Jacobs, 28. Thus, the earliest flapper films would not have been subject to industry self-regulation unless they derived from a book or play which was itself deemed problematic by the New York office. Nonetheless, the MPPDA's treatment of later examples of the cycle gives a good indication of its controversial status and the textual strategies deemed appropriate for dealing with it.
11. J.K. to Jason Joy, Memo, 30 November 1928; Joy, 9 January 1929; and J.J. Strickland to Joy, Memo, n.d., *The Wild Party*, Production Code Administration Files, Academy Library. While there is no date noted on the memo from Strickland to Joy, other films mentioned in the memo, including *Gentlemen of the Press* (1929), *The Party Girl* (1930), *Montana Moon* (1930), and *The Divorcee* (1930), all released between the winter of 1929 and the spring of 1930, suggest that it was written in early 1930.
12. Joy to David Selznick, 16 August 1928, and Julian Johnson to Joy, 21 August 1928, *The Fleet's In*, Production Code Administration Files, Academy Library.
13. *Motion Picture News* (24 November 1923) in *Colleen Moore Scrapbook #3*, Academy Library.
14. 'National Tie-Up Section', *Exhibitor's Trade Review* (Associated First National Pictures, 1924) Academy Library. The 'Tie-Up Section' is a supplemental press book that focuses on the tie-ups established for *The Perfect Flapper*.
15. 'The Perfect Flapper', *Variety* (25 June 1924): 26.
16. Mabel Brundige Horton, 'Flappers are Entrapped in Fiery Balloon', *Los Angeles Express* (9 November 1925) in *Colleen Moore We Moderns Scrapbook*, Academy Library.

17. For a further discussion of exhibitor practices and their impact on the reception of the flapper film, see Ross, 'The Hollywood Flapper and the Culture of Media Consumption', in *Hollywood Goes Shopping*.
18. J.J. Strickland to Joy, Memo, n.d., *The Wild Party*, Production Code Administration Files, Academy Library.
19. *Cleveland Press* (25 June 1924) in *Colleen Moore Scrapbook #3*, Academy Library.
20. In this period, films about the effects of the jazz age on the family often interwove adult conflict, typically through a father or mother trying to relive their youth, and flapper elements. Such films could then be advertised as having appealing elements for both generations. In addition to *Dancing Mothers* and *Black Oxen*, examples include *The Married Flapper* (1922), *His Children's Children* (1923), *Three Women* (1924), and *Wine of Youth* (1924).
21. 'Newest Reviews and Comments: *Black Oxen*', *Moving Picture World* (19 January 1924): 216.
22. '*Black Oxen*', *Variety* (3 January 1924): 23.
23. *Press Sheet, Dancing Mothers*, Copyright File, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.. Alternatively, the press sheet called the film a 'big, flashy, Rolls-Royce comedy-drama of New York society'.
24. Much the same can be said of Bow's role in the college comedy-drama *The Plastic Age*. Bow's Cynthia is the source of both trouble for the distracted hero, and comedy in scenes such as a freshman hazing in which the boys are forced to wear funny outfits and climb into her dormitory, where she flirts and makes fun of them. Even in the epic drama *Wings*, Bow's girl-next-door flapper is featured in those sequences that provide comic relief, such as the French cabaret scene.
25. Realart's promotion of sometime flapper Bebe Daniels as 'the good little bad girl' made this paradox explicit. See, for example, Realart Pictures advertisement, *Moving Picture World* (5 June 1920); Realart Pictures advertisement, *Moving Picture World* (12 June 1920); and 'Realart's New Star is Bebe Daniels, Now Named "The Good Little Bad Girl"', *Moving Picture World* (5 June 1920): 1316.
26. *Oh, You Women* advertisement, *Moving Picture World* (12 April 1919).
27. '*Oh, You Women* May Be Booked by All Exhibitors', *Moving Picture World* (19 April 1919): 413.
28. *Oh, You Women* advertisement, *Moving Picture World* (19 April 1919).
29. For an example of this ad, see *Moving Picture World* (17 November 1917).
30. Exhibitor's Pressbook, *Bobbed Hair* (Famous Players Lasky Corporation, 1922), Title File, George Eastman House Film Archive, Rochester, NY.
31. 'Intrusive Halftone Not at All Helpful', *Moving Picture World* (3 November 1923): 149.
32. 'Miss Hobbs', *Variety* (18 June 1920): 33.
33. 'Miss Hobbs', *Moving Picture World* (19 June 1920): 1490.
34. Louella Parsons, 'Miss Parsons Has a Hunch that Colleen Moore is Kidding Other Films', *Syracuse Telegram* (24 June 1924) in *Colleen Moore Scrapbook #3*, Academy Library.
35. The sequence provides an inside joke for those familiar with Moore's participation in just such a volume. See Inez Klumpp and Helen Klumpp, *Screen Acting: Its Requirements and Rewards* (New York: Falk Publishing Co., 1922), 37, 221.
36. Moore led the *Exhibitors Herald* poll of female box office performers for 1926 and 1927. The *Motion Picture Almanac* reported that in its 1928 survey Bow had surpassed Moore, who had been its top star for 1927, with 255 points to Moore's 132. 'Money Making Stars', *Exhibitors Herald-World Almanac 1927* (Chicago: Quigley Publishing Co., 1928), 13; *Exhibitors Herald-World Almanac 1928* (Chicago: Quigley Publishing Co., 1929), 22; *The Motion Picture Almanac 1929*, 145.
37. Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (New York: Scribner, 1990; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 309.
38. For a discussion of censorship concerns centering on Mae West, see Ramona Curry, 'Goin' to Town and Beyond: Mae West, Film Censorship and the Comedy of *Unmarriage*', in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, ed. Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (Routledge, 1994), 211-237.

