



# RESEARCHING WOMEN IN SILENT CINEMA

NEW FINDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY MONICA DALL'ASTA, VICTORIA DUCKETT, LUCIA TRALLI

**RESEARCHING WOMEN**  
**IN SILENT CINEMA**  
NEW FINDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

Edited by:

Monica Dall'Asta

Victoria Duckett

Lucia Tralli



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

## **Women and Screen Cultures**

**Series editors: Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett**

ISSN 2283-6462

Women and Screen Cultures is a series of experimental digital books aimed to promote research and knowledge on the contribution of women to the cultural history of screen media. Published by the Department of the Arts at the University of Bologna, it is issued under the conditions of both open publishing and blind peer review. It will host collections, monographs, translations of open source archive materials, illustrated volumes, transcripts of conferences, and more. Proposals are welcomed for both disciplinary and multi-disciplinary contributions in the fields of film history and theory, television and media studies, visual studies, photography and new media.



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/>

# 1

### **Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives**

**Edited by: Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett, Lucia Tralli**

ISBN 9788898010103

2013.

Published by the Department of Arts, University of Bologna  
in association with the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne  
and Women and Film History International

Graphic design: Lucia Tralli



FACULTY OF  
VCA &  
MCM

women & film  
history  
INTERNATIONAL

# Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives

## Peer Review Statement

This publication has been edited through a blind peer review process. Papers from the Sixth Women and the Silent Screen Conference (University of Bologna, 2010), a biennial event sponsored by Women and Film History International, were read by the editors and then submitted to at least one anonymous reviewer. When the opinion of the first reader was entirely negative or asked for substantial revision, the essay was submitted to a second anonymous reviewer. In case of a second negative opinion the essay was rejected. When further changes were deemed necessary for publication, the editors worked extensively with the authors to meet the requests advanced by the reviewers.

## Board of Referees

Richard Abel (University of Michigan)  
Kay Armatage (University of Toronto)  
Janet Bergstrom (University of California, Los Angeles)  
Giorgio Bertellini (University of Michigan)  
Elaine Burrows (Women's Film and Television History Network UK/Ireland)  
Vicki Callahan (University of Southern California)  
Sumiko Higashi (Professor Emerita, SUNY Brockport)  
Sabine Lenk (DOMITOR International Society for the Study of Early Cinema)

Jill Matthews (Australian National University, Canberra)  
David Mayer (University of Manchester)  
Giuliana Muscio (University of Padua)  
Jacqueline Reich (Fordham University, New York)  
Masha Salazkina (Concordia University, Montréal)  
Matthew Solomon (University of Michigan)  
Shelley Stamp (University of California, Santa Cruz)  
Virginia Wexman (University of Illinois, Chicago)

## The Editors

Monica Dall'Asta is Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Bologna, Italy. She is the author of the award winning book *Trame spezzate. Archeologia del film seriale* (2008) She edited a new Italian translation of Alice Guy's Memoires (*Memorie di una pioniera del cinema*, 2008) and the first collection on women filmmaking in Italian silent cinema (*Non solo dive. Pioniere del cinema italiano*, 2008).

Victoria Duckett teaches film history in the Centre for Ideas, Victorian College of the Arts. She has held posts in the University of Manchester (Department of Drama) and the Università Cattolica, Milan (Department of Communication and Performing Arts). She has published broadly in early cinema, has programmed films for Cinema Ritrovato, Bologna, and been involved in Women and the Silent Screen since its founding in Utrecht, 1999. She is currently completing a book that explores Sarah Bernhardt and early film (*History Fed By Fiction: Sarah Bernhardt and Silent Film*, University of Illinois Press, forthcoming).

Lucia Tralli is a Ph.D. Candidate in Film and Media Studies at the University of Bologna. Her main research focus is the re-use of media images in audiovisual productions. She received her MA in 2009 with a thesis about the practice of found footage and the work of two contemporary women filmmakers, Alina Marazzi and Cécile Fontaine. She is now writing her thesis on contemporary forms of audiovisual remixes, focusing especially on fan vidding and gender related issues in remix practices.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett <i>Kaleidoscope: Women and Cinematic Change from the Silent Era to Now</i>	2
PROLOGUE TO PART I	12
Heide Schlüpmann <i>An Alliance Between History and Theory</i>	13
I. HISTORICAL IMAGES	27
Martin F. Norden <i>Alice Guy Blaché, Rose Pastor Stokes, and the Birth Control Film That Never Was</i>	28
Veronica Pravadelli <i>Lois Weber's Uneasy Progressive Politics: The Articulation of Class and Gender in Where Are My Children?</i>	42
Donna R. Casella <i>Women and Nationalism in Indigenous Irish Filmmaking of the Silent Period</i>	53
Dunja Dogo <i>The Image of a Revolutionist: Vera Figner in The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty</i>	81
Margaret Hennefeld <i>The Politics of Hyper-Visibility in Leni Riefenstahl's The Blue Light</i>	96
Federico Pierotti <i>Coloring the Figures. Women's Labor in the Early Italian Film Industry</i>	106
Mark Garrett Cooper <i>Archive, Theater, Ship: The Phelps Sisters Film the World</i>	120
PROLOGUE TO PART II	130
Christine Gledhill <i>An Ephemeral History: Women and British Cinema Culture in the Silent Era</i>	131
II. WOMEN AND THE CULTURAL DISCOURSE	149
Mary Desjardins <i>Fading Stars and the Ruined Commodity Form: Star Discourses of Loss in American Fan Magazines, 1914-1929</i>	150
Anne Morey <i>School of Scandal: Alice Duer Miller, Scandal, and the New Woman</i>	163
Mark Lynn Anderson <i>The Impossible Films of Vera, Countess of Cathcart</i>	176

Anke Brouwers	
<i>If it Worked for Mary. . . Mary Pickford's Daily Talks with the Fans</i>	197
Claus Tieber	
<i>Mary Pickford—as Written by Frances Marion</i>	220
Kristen Anderson Wagner	
<i>Silent Comediennes and “The Tragedy of Being Funny”</i>	231
Qin Xiqing	
<i>Pearl White and the New Female Image in Chinese Early Silent Cinema</i>	246
Ansje van Beusekom	
<i>Getting Forgotten. Film Critic Elisabeth de Roos and Dutch Culture Before World War II</i>	263
Luca Mazzei	
<i>The Passionate Eye of Angelina Buracci, Pedagogue</i>	273
PROLOGUE TO PART III	288
Jane M. Gaines	
<i>Wordlessness (to be Continued)</i>	289
III. GENDER ON STAGE	302
Annette Förster	
<i>A Pendulum of Performances: Asta Nielsen on Stage and Screen</i>	303
Victoria Duckett	
<i>The “Voix d’Or” on Silent Film: The Case of Sarah Bernhardt</i>	318
Elena Mosconi	
<i>Silent Singers. The Legacy of Opera and Female Stars in Early Italian Cinema</i>	334
Stella Dagna	
<i>A Tribute to Her Creativity: Maria Gasparini in The Stage</i>	353
Michele Leigh	
<i>Alexander Khanzhonkov and His Queens of the Screen</i>	362
Amy Sargeant	
<i>However Odd—Elsa Lanchester!</i>	374
Laraine Porter	
<i>A Lass and a Lack? Women in British Silent Comedy</i>	384
Johanna Schmertz	
<i>The Leatrice Joy Bob: The Clinging Vine and Gender’s Cutting Edge</i>	402
Viktoria Paranyuk	
<i>Riding Horses, Writing Stories: Josephine Rector’s Career at Western Essanay</i>	414
Luciana Corrêa de Araújo	
<i>Movie Prologues: Cinema, Theater and Female Types on Stage at Cinelândia, Rio de Janeiro</i>	424

## The Leatrice Joy Bob: *The Clinging Vine* and Gender's Cutting Edge

ABSTRACT: Zelda Sears' 1924 Broadway play *The Clinging Vine* mocked male stereotypes of women. In the play, businesswoman heroine Antoinette (A.B.) is both chagrined and amused to find she has become a man magnet after she adopts an ultra-feminine "clinging vine" persona in order to test its effects. But when the play was adapted for film in 1926, with actress Leatrice Joy playing the lead role in a very short haircut, "Antoinette" disappears into her initials (A.B.), and her pre-transformation character appears masculine in both dress and demeanor. The character's masculinity is accentuated by the silent film medium, as there is no female voice emerging from A.B. to counter her masculine impression. The result that in the film version, A.B.'s feminine transformation reads more like drag queen than clinging vine—a performative, hyper-feminine camouflage of a naturalized masculinity. Archival research into Joy's career, coupled with interview transcripts and notes from Kevin Brownlow's Hollywood series and discussions with Joy's daughter, Leatrice Joy Gilbert Fountain, sheds light on the movie's transformations and their consequences, both for Joy and for gender. The film version of *The Clinging Vine* movie reflects a historical moment that was surprisingly open to playful interpretations of gender. Such explorations were cut short with the coming of sound, as the attachment of actors' voices to their bodies enabled a firmer anchoring of sex to gender.

In playwright Zelda Sears' *The Clinging Vine*, a successful businesswoman, Antoinette—known primarily as "A.B."—learns that she can only be successful in love if she adopts a stereotypically feminine persona around men: the "clinging vine" persona of the title. On this point, Sears wrote that there was no limit to how "imbecilic" a pretty woman could be and still attract a man ("A Woman Playwright's Secret" 58). Both audiences and critics responded enthusiastically to the play, which had successful runs on Broadway in 1924 and later on the road. Critics welcomed the 1924 play's satire on masculine expectations of women, expectations which were starting to become as outmoded as the "clinging vine" gender definition evoked by the title (Addison 341). That audiences were comfortable with Sears' attack on the sexism of the day is indicated by the fact that one girls' school performed the play at a fundraiser, with schoolgirls cast in the male roles ("Girls to Give Play" 21).

According to critic Kim Marra, Jewish immigrant Sears "passed" for what she was not by constructing an idealized white, middle-class femininity for her characters. This depiction of Sears is fair, to some degree. However, if Sears has constructed idealized female characters at odds with her own identity and experience, she has at the same time exposed the ideal as dependent on performance: the satire in *The Clinging Vine* comes from how well the lead character's very hastily adopted feminine charade works on the men around her. Throughout the play, A.B.'s charade exposes the male dominance of the workplace as illegitimate, and her character chooses as a mate someone who is ill-equipped to join the patriarchal order without her help. As a woman and as a cultural outsider, Zelda Sears had to play similar

games herself (Marra). Sears' other plays suggest that machination lies beneath the behaviors of successful outsiders, machination that is entirely necessary to American definitions of success. For example, a year before *The Clinging Vine* was produced, Sears' musical *Lady Billy* featured an Eastern European female protagonist who passes herself off as a boy soprano in the United States, and marries an American at the end ("Mitzi Back in 'Lady Billy'"). Sears' work upholds class mobility as a fundamental part of the American social order, but with a caveat: audiences who accept that order must, like the characters in her plays, be willing to be hoodwinked by those outsiders who are capable of exposing the naturalized surfaces that uphold it.

In *The Clinging Vine*, A.B. runs her own paint company and has been too busy and happy doing so to think that her overall competence might hurt her in the marriage market. She visits her grandmother, with whom she has always had a strong connection, and admits that if she were ever to get married, it would be to the childhood friend (Jimmy) who understood her best. (Sears, *The Clinging Vine*). A.B. first appears in the play wearing a paint-covered smock with paint in her hair, more interested in testing a new product for her paint company than in whether men find her attractive. A few years later, in 1926, a movie version of *The Clinging Vine* was made and this is the version of *The Clinging Vine* we are familiar with today. In the movie version, directed by Paul Sloane, the paint company belongs to A.B.'s boss, who takes credit for her ideas, and—in a marked difference from Sears' play—A.B.'s initial appearance is decidedly masculine. The grandmother becomes her boss's wife, and the love interest, Jimmy, is the boss's nephew. Both Jimmy and A.B. need to be married off to each other in order for the company to continue successfully, and "Grandma" (played by veteran vaudeville comedienne Toby Claude) masterminds a feminine transformation for A.B.—a transformation that A.B. embraces for the sheer joy of its performance.

A.B., played by silent film star Leatrice Joy, is presented as a male executive in the first few shots of the movie. She is shot at a desk from behind in medium range, so that what is visible of her in the frame is only the back of her closely cropped head, a man's collared shirt, and a pinstripe vest. She holds a phone in one hand and signs papers shoved before her with the other. A close-up shot shows her hand decisively marking a budget with her initials: "A.B." Only an intertitle several shots into the movie, introducing the character and Joy's name, suggests the character is in fact female. After the intertitle, Joy is shown from the front, her small breasts completely flattened inside the male vest. Ensuing shots show her in close-up, her eyebrows thick and her skin porous and shiny [fig. 1], or from the waist up, her gestures sweeping and preemptory. Joy was no stranger to male impersonation. She frequently teased Cecil B. DeMille and entertained actors on his sets by imitating DeMille's long, mannish stride (Fountain), and DeMille called her "young fellow" (Brownlow, "Rough notes from Leatrice Joy Interview"). In addition, she had previously played a tomboy raised by her ship captain father in *Eve's Leaves*. Publicity for *The Clinging Vine* drew attention to the role's masculinity by announcing that Joy was forced to appear in several scenes with an un-powdered nose,





1. With her “unpowdered nose,” Leatrice Joy portrays the masculine “A.B.” in the opening scene of *The Clinging Vine*. The woman in the frame’s top left corner provides feminine contrast.

and that she was much relieved to move on to subsequent scenes where she could powder it (“Clinging Vine, The.” Press Kit). It is unlikely that Joy was actually distressed either way; this announcement was probably intended to titillate a curious audience. Since the film was silent, viewers would not have heard Joy’s female voice counter her male image. With only her appearance and her behavior to go by, an audience member unfamiliar with Joy from her previous roles would assume she was male.

Why was A.B. presented as decidedly masculine at the beginning of the film version of *The Clinging Vine*, when Sears’ play indicated that her character’s “problem” was merely her lack of understanding that her marriageability depended on meeting male expectations of women? The answer lies in part in actress Leatrice Joy’s decision to get a man’s haircut, and to keep it that way over the course of several movies, of which *The Clinging Vine* was one—a haircut so short that it became known as the “Leatrice Joy bob” (“Vanity.” Press Kit). Leatrice Joy’s long career in movies began in 1915 and included starring roles in *Her Fractured Voice* (1917) and Maurice Tourneur’s *A Girl’s Folly* in 1917. It took off in the early twenties when she starred in *Manslaughter* (1922), *Saturday Night* (1922), and *The Ten Commandments*

(1923) for Cecil B. DeMille. Like her predecessor Gloria Swanson, Joy was generally cast as the frivolous but independent “modern woman” who would showcase DeMille’s lavish costumes (Addison). She was so successful as DeMille’s *protégé* that her career presented a constant threat to her husband, romantic screen idol John Gilbert, whose career was less secure than her own at that time. By September of 1925 they were divorced, in part because of his insecurity, but during a later reconciliation attempt, Joy had followed Gilbert into a barbershop and asked the barber to cut her hair just like Gilbert’s (Drew 74–75). The new man’s haircut made her unfit to play traditionally feminine leads, and because she was by this time contracted as the star of Cecil B. DeMille’s new production company, Producers Distributing Corporation (PDC), roles were developed to exploit her haircut, as wigs did not photograph convincingly (Brownlow, “Leatrice Joy Interview”).

Joy’s decision to get this haircut was based on impulse. According to her daughter, Leatrice Gilbert Fountain, Joy was in the middle of a picture when she cut her hair. Publicly, she referred to her cut as chic; privately she confessed she found it empowering (Fountain). The haircut became a big story, perhaps giving a shot of temporary publicity to her career. (Joy later stated that her career began its downhill slide when she was forced to move to PDC, which suffered from poor promotion, lack of Los Angeles releases, and shoddy production values.) (Drew 81–82). She would have known there would be some repercussions from the haircut, regardless of the reasons behind her decision, as it was widely publicized at the time that Jobyna Ralston and Mary Pickford’s contracts stipulated that they could not bob their hair. DeMille was furious that Joy had deprived herself of her femininity (“This Is the Bob”; “In Spite of Her Ultra Boyish Bob...” Photo; Brownlow, “Leatrice Joy Interview”), and this reaction on his part may have helped publicize both Joy and her haircut. In its 1926 review of *The Clinging Vine*, *Film Daily* says that Leatrice Joy “makes good use of her mannish bob” (“Clinging Vine.” Review). Whether for publicity or self-empowerment, Joy kept her hair short through a total of five movies: *Made for Love* (Paul Sloane, 1926), *Eve’s Leaves* (Paul Sloane, 1926), *The Clinging Vine* (Paul Sloane, 1926), *For Alimony Only* (William C. de Mille, 1926) and *Vanity* (Donald Crisp, 1927). She kept it short until early 1927, when fashion trends decreed that Hollywood women were growing their hair again.

In Sears’ version of *The Clinging Vine*, the message A.B. and her audience are to glean from her successful feminine masquerade is ruefully stated by A.B.: “It is very difficult to be business-like and lady-like at the same time.” A.B. has adopted a childish brand of femininity that is meant to stand in negative contrast to the self-possessed adult the audience knows her to be. Commenting on the fact that the men around her “eat it up,” she says, “I’m so simple I’m silly, and so childish I need a teething ring.” To emphasize this point, Sears’ stage directions dictate that the dress A.B. wears to debut her new femininity should be “so youthful it is almost childish.” The childlike version of femininity Sears criticizes is carried into the movie. A.B. wears mostly white, including stockings and shoes, and two long hooped skirts, one with flowerpot *appliqués* (the latter specified in Sears’ original play).



2. “A.B.” affects the style and manner of a Victorian “clinging vine” femininity.

Particularly incongruous is a large shepherdess bonnet that hides Joy’s short—but now curled—hair [fig. 2].

However, with Joy’s haircut firmly established as a signifier of masculinity in the opening scene, A.B.’s transformation in the film version of *The Clinging Vine* takes a decidedly queer turn away from her transformation in the play. Rather than changing A.B. from a woman to a childlike girl, as in the original stage play, the movie reveals gender—both femininity and masculinity—as drag: a performance constructed from costumes and behaviors. A.B. is transformed into a lady by Grandma, who reveals the secrets of femininity to her—secrets that consist of plucking her eyebrows and learning how to bat her eyelashes [fig. 3]. The childlike costumes Grandma picks for her to wear in her new embrace of femininity serve only to further emphasize A.B.’s flat chest and short hair. These costumes read as a hyper-feminine camouflage of a supposedly more “natural” masculine identity. Joy’s shifting gender performances bear out this impression. When she is dressed in male garb, A.B. plants her feet apart and faces the camera and her fellow cast members in a direct and frontal posture. Her movements are forceful and direct. When she is angry, she juts her jaw forward and jabs her fingers at people, or she constrains her violent impulses by clenching her fists and snapping pencils. When she is distressed or puzzled, she grimaces or scratches the back of her head.



3. With one eyebrow plucked and her short hair in curling papers, A.B, practices batting her eyelashes at a horrified butler.

After her feminine transformation, however, these gestures are replaced by fluttering or wringing hands, batted eyelashes, and coyly twisted postures. It is only when she is alone and unobserved that she returns to the assertive gestures and postures of before, leaving the impression that these are more “natural” for her [fig.4].

Men performing as women in cross-dressing farces have traditionally pointed up the element of construction in their impersonations by reverting to unladylike behaviors when they are alone (see, for example, Jack Lemmon in *Some Like It Hot* [Billy Wilder, 1959]). Contrasts like these suggest that femininity is masquerade and masculinity is the natural state. When a cross-dressing man conveys the message that masculinity is a natural form of behavior by adopting it when he is alone, femininity is revealed as an artifice, albeit one necessary to maintain gender difference. But if a woman conveys the impression that a masculine self-presentation comes more readily to her than a feminine one does, the notion that certain gender performances are more “natural” than others loses credibility. Intertitles in *The Clinging Vine* suggest the film’s performative understanding of gender as well. For example, femininity is described as a commodity that can be bought, sold and worn. After A.B.’s transformation at Grandma’s hands has the desired effect of attracting all the men around her, an intertitle appears that states, “Oh, what a magician was Grandma! She



4. Alone, A.B. scratches her head and grimaces, in gestures that recall her masculine behavior in the scenes prior to her transformation.

crossed a lemon with a dressmaker's bill and produced a peach!" Metaphors of botany and alchemy are mixed in this intertitle, suggesting that money is a medium which produces transformations that are genetic, as opposed to merely cosmetic. (The term "peach" was commonly used in this time period to refer to attractive women, and "lemon" refers to anything defective.) Simply by paying for new dresses, Grandma has become a trader in a commodified femininity.

A.B.'s boss is dubious about her feminine transformation, seeming to prefer her as she was. "Who dressed A.B. like a girl?" he asks irately, refusing to believe she would have put her new costume on voluntarily. Reviewers of her day did not buy Joy's transition either, and it left some with an uneasy impression that they were watching a man impersonate a woman, even after A.B. had adopted female clothes and mannerisms. A 1926 reviewer from *Variety* magazine stated there was "too much stress laid in the masculine side of the heroine early in the picture. An impression lingers . . . that a female impersonator is playing the girl . . . it persists in the mind as the picture unreels" (Schrader). The reviewer continues that he "cannot, while looking at the picture, disassociate the idea that [Joy] is doing an 'Eltinge'"—a reference to Julian Eltinge, a popular female impersonator of the day (Horak 160). Eltinge had, in fact, done a female impersonator turn the previous year for the same DeMille company

(Producers Distributing Corporation), in a cross-dressing farce movie called *Madame Behave*. Reviewers of today experience a similar dissonance when they compare A.B.'s character pre- and post-transformation, but they are likely to explain the problem in a different way. For example, one reviewer from Internet Movie Database finds her transition to femininity unconvincing, and sees this lack of believability as a fundamental flaw in the movie:

“Ms. Joy is simply too unattractive and looks like a guy...they should have made her a lesbian after all” (Planktonrules). Kevin Wentink of Digital Silents remarks that Joy's haircut works in her male guise, but actually works too well: “When we first see ‘her,’ I had to pause the DVD to make sure ‘she’ was really a ‘she’. . . and after her transformation [she looks] like she's in drag, making the love scenes with Jimmy particularly interesting.”

Heather Addison has written that *The Clinging Vine* “constructs [A.B.'s] masculinity as something freakish” (335). It is certainly true that other characters in the movie react negatively to A.B.'s mannish appearance and behavior, including, initially, her future love interest Jimmy. However, the movie itself appears to have a different aim than Addison suggests: it is gender itself, rather than A.B., that is revealed as freakish. This is revealed most explicitly at the end. Jimmy has fallen in love with the feminine A.B., unaware that she is the same person who fired him by telegram from his uncle's paint firm. After she saves him from a bad business venture, he learns that she works for his uncle and was responsible for firing him. A.B. has been taught by Grandma to recite two stock phrases to men in order to bolster their sense of masculine superiority—“Aren't you wonderful” and “Do go on!”—and she repeats them frequently in the company of men. When she sees that Jimmy has discovered who she is, she braces for Jimmy's rejection of her. Instead, he turns the tables on her and says “I think you're wonderful!” thereby playing the female part in the performance that gender has constructed. A.B. happily responds, in the movie's last line, “Do go on!”—implying that, like a man, she would be happy to hear herself talked about all day. Jimmy has embraced the possibilities of fluid gender boundaries and has become worth the trouble A.B. has taken to get him. In the end, the movie shows, we are all the dupes of gender, but the wise ones are those who can perform it with a difference.

The press had already begun to spell doom for Joy's career by the time *Eve's Leaves* was released in June 1926. The July *Photoplay* review of *Eve's Leaves* said “Poor Leatrice Joy! A couple more vehicles like this and she'll have to go into vaudeville” (“Poor Leatrice Joy...” Photo). A month after this review (in August 1926), *Photoplay* featured a photo spread of an array of female stars with bobbed hair and warned “side whiskers are the newest peril from Paris...watch out for the bald-headed rage!” (“Going, Going...GONE” 66-67). As a dire warning to the Hollywood set, lest they go too far, the last shot of this spread shows a photo of Leatrice Joy with mutton-chop sideburns painted in below her short male hair [fig. 5]. The release of *The Clinging Vine* served only to cement Joy's doom. Joy made films sporadically after *The Clinging Vine*, well into the sound era, but her popularity declined, and she did indeed go into vaudeville for several years (Drew 61; Fountain and Maxim).

# ..... GONE!

Side whiskers are the newest peril from Paris. Watch for the bald-head rage!



Came Aileen and her Pringle Shingle. Came ears. Came "beau-catchers." Came fame to Aileen



Followed the Beverly Bob presented by Marion Davies. Hairer shorter than short. More daring than Dad's



The crowning glory goes the way of other crowns. How could you, Billie Dove?



Virginia Valli's bob is one of the newest revenges on the Seven Sutherland Sisters

Paris orders hair on the cheeks. Look what side-whiskers would do to Leatrice Joy!



5. *Photoplay* depicts Leatrice Joy as the tipping point in an American femininity threatened by Paris fashion.

Joy's ex-husband John Gilbert made a weak transition into the sound era, perhaps, like Joy, for reasons having to do with gender performance. A long-standing rumor held that Gilbert's career failed because, with the coming of sound, his voice was revealed to be high-pitched and decidedly un-masculine. Leatrice Fountain, the daughter of Joy and Gilbert, later noted in her biography of her father that there was in fact nothing unusual about Gilbert's voice (Fountain and Maxim). However, Joy herself noted that his screen voice did not come across well. She hinted that the problem had less to do with his actual voice and more to do with an emotional range and latitude that had been afforded to male silent film stars—in particular the matinee idol—but that had stopped being seen as acceptable after the coming of sound. In an interview with Kevin Brownlow for his *Hollywood* series, Joy stated of Gilbert's performance that

I never heard that voice because it wasn't his voice, it was the medium of sound in those days. . . and you know another thing, you see Jack was an emotional lover, [he] could breathe those heavy passionate words with meaning in them . . . it's himself coming out with those words and [the female lead] listens to them but the screen was a sensitive instrument at that time and the people in the audience weren't ready to hear those expressions with such meaning coming from a shadow . . . a man's soul being bared to the woman he loves. (Brownlow, "Leatrice Joy Interview")

Prior to the sound era, performing for film meant engaging in highly stylized forms of acting that developed from live theater, in particular vaudeville. With the arrival of sound and dialog, the voice was expected to anchor the photographic image in a pre-existing reality, securing the authenticity of both the image and the reality from which it was supposed to have emerged. Joy, like Gilbert, enjoyed a certain flexibility of gender roles during the silent era, a flexibility that became constrained once voices were added to images and expected to conform to the gender ideals of the day. A movie era had passed with the advent of sound. Films involving cross-dressed characters continued through and beyond the arrival of sound—in fact, John Gilbert played opposite a cross-dressed Greta Garbo in *Queen Christina* (Rouben Mamoulian) in 1933. But voices were now attached to the bodies of those characters. And those voices were identified with the actors who possessed them—and thereby with the gendered bodies of those actors. In 1926, *The Clinging Vine* was able to play at the boundaries of gender and performance. After the arrival of sound, there was less room for such play.

THE AUTHOR: Johanna Schmertz is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Houston-Downtown, where she teaches courses in film and gender studies. She has applied feminist and queer theory to a range of popular culture texts, publishing in *Pedagogy*, *Rhetoric Review*, and *Postscript*. This is her first foray into archival research.



*Works Cited*

- Addison, Heather. "Do Go On!": Performing Gender in *The Clinging Vine* (1926)." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 25.4 (2008): 334–345. Print.
- Brownlow, Kevin, dir. "Leatrice Joy Interview." *Hollywood: A Celebration of the American Silent Film. 01 "The Pioneers."* 1985. Television.
- . "Rough Notes from Leatrice Joy Interview." 1964.
- "Clinging Vine." Review. *Film Daily* 8 Aug. 1926: n. pag. Print.
- "Clinging Vine, The." Press Kit. 1926. Everson Collection, Tisch School of the Arts, New York. Print.
- The Clinging Vine*. Dir. Paul Sloane. Perf. Leatrice Joy. 1926. Image Entertainment, 2006. DVD.
- Drew, William M. *Speaking of Silents: First Ladies of the Screen*. Vestal, NY: Vestal Press, 1989. Print.
- Fountain, Leatrice Joy Gilbert. Personal Interview. 23 July 2011.
- Fountain, Leatrice Joy Gilbert, and John Maxim. *Dark Star: The Untold Story of the Meteoric Rise and Fall of Legendary Silent Screen Star John Gilbert*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. Print.
- "Girls to Give Play for Cathedral Fund." *The New York Times* 21 Apr. 1925: 21. Print.
- "Going, Going...GONE." *Photoplay* Aug. 1926: 66–67. Print.
- Horak, Laura Evelyn. "Girls Will Be Boys: Cross-Dressed Women and the Legitimation of American Silent Cinema." Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 2011. United States - California: ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT). Print.
- "In Spite of Her Ultra Boyish Bob..." Photo. *Photoplay* Mar. 1927: 59. Print.
- Leatrice Joy, perf. *Her Fractured Voice*. 1917. Film.
- . *A Girl's Folly*. Dir. Maurice Tourneur. 1917. Film.
- . *Manslaughter*. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. 1922. Film.
- . *Saturday Night*. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. 1922. Film.
- . *The Ten Commandments*. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. 1923. Film.
- . *Made for Love*. Dir. Paul Sloane. 1926. Film.
- . *Eve's Leaves*. Dir. Paul Sloane. 1926. Film.
- . *The Clinging Vine*. Dir. Paul Sloane. 1926. Film.
- . *For Alimony Only*. Dir. William C. de Mille. 1926. Film.
- . *Vanity*. Dir. Donald Crisp. 1927. Film.

- Madame Behave*. Dir. Scott Sidney, perf. Julian Eltinge. Producers Distributing Corporation, 1925. Film.
- Marra, Kim. "Marginal Experience/Mainstream Vision in the Theatrical Career of Zelda [Paldi] Sears." *Staging Difference: Cultural Pluralism in American Theatre and Drama*. Ed. Marc Maufort. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995. 76–84. Print.
- "Mitzi Back in 'Lady Billy': Comedienne at Her Best in New Musical Comedy at Liberty." *New York Times* 15 Dec. 1920: 15. Print.
- planktonrules. "Watchable but Not Particularly Inspired or Convincing." *Reviews & Ratings for The Clinging Vine*. *IMDb.com*. 8 Aug. 2009. Web. 7 July 2013. <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0016730/reviews>>.
- "Poor Leatrice Joy..." Photo. *Photoplay* July 1926: 57. Print.
- Queen Christina*. Dir. Rouben Mamoulian, perf. Greta Garbo, John Gilbert. 1933. Film.
- Schrader, Fred. "The Clinging Vine." *Variety* 21 July 1926: n. pag. Print.
- Sears, Zelda. "A Woman Playwright's Secret." *Theater Magazine* Sept. 1924: 58. Print.
- . "The Clinging Vine." 1924. TS. *Zelda Sears Papers*. Hargett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens.
- Some Like It Hot*. Dir. Billy Wilder, perf. Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis, Marilyn Monroe. 1959. Film.
- "This Is the Bob..." Photo. *Photoplay* Aug. 1926: 80. Print.
- "Vanity." Press Kit. Museum of Modern Art. Department of Film and Media. 1927.
- Wentink, Kevin B. "The Clinging Vine (1926)." DVD Review. *Digital Silents: Essays Available on DVD and Laserdiscs*. Digitalsilents.com.