

“Costly Thy Habit as Thy Purse Can Buy”: Gary Cooper and the Making of the Masculine Citizen-Consumer

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In a scene from *The Cowboy and the Lady* (1938), Gary Cooper saunters into a fully-automated, modern kitchen. Cooper, playing the rodeo cowboy Stretch Willoughby, has been invited into the home of the “lady” he will court throughout the film. He and two of his cowboy friends clomp from one modern convenience to the other, while the film plays the scene for its comic effect. As the long-limbed, gawky Cooper and his buddies vainly attempt to operate the appliances and jump in fright at the sounds of automatic dishwashers, both the audience and the female characters on the screen are invited to laugh at their masculine domestic ineptitude. Yet by the end of the film Cooper the Cowboy has mastered both the Lady and the domestic sphere of consumption that so confounded him early in the film. He gains that mastery in a strange but telling scene played out on his Montana ranch, where he has returned alone to prepare a suitable domestic setting for his new bride. In that scene, Stretch enters the frame of the partially built home he and his lady bride will share. He ambles through the house, opening imaginary windows, arranging imaginary furniture by erasing and re-drawing chalk outlines, and advising his imaginary bride where to sit. He quickly and unwittingly draws a bemused audience of fellow ranch hands. But just as quickly, Stretch draws his audience into his game. He invites them inside, making certain that the cowboys pass appropriately through the imaginary door rather than the windows and walls. He guides them over to the

outline of the future couch. Under Stretch's spell, the men sit quietly and engage the illusionary Mrs. Willoughby in polite conversation. Stretch's relationship with domesticity and consumption is no longer laughable. By imagining and commanding consumer commodities and domestic space, he has mastered both the wife that will soon live there and his fellow men.

Why would Gary Cooper, the rugged cowboy star of *The Virginian* (1929) cum populist "everyman" from *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), play a character defined by his ability to control domestic commodities? The seemingly baffling mixture of cowboys and commodities, ruggedness and domesticity in the scenes described above can best be understood in the context of the development of Cooper's star image, which in turn sheds light on a larger debate over masculinity in the 1930s. According to Richard Dyer, because our conception of stars is at once intimately personal and infinitely public, star discourses root general ideas about society within the individual performer. Constructions and interpretations of stars both reveal and are part of the process of shaping such fundamental social categories as class and gender.¹

In this essay, I will examine Gary Cooper's image as it was constructed on the screen, in publicity, in fan magazines, and by popular reviewers from the late-1920s through the 1930s. I argue that changes in Cooper's star persona between the late-1920s and the end of the 1930s demonstrate a much wider, fundamental transformation in the way Americans conceived of gender and citizenship. During the Great Depression, a new masculinity emerged, synthesizing nineteenth-century self-made manhood with early-twentieth-century ideas about masculine virility into a new, dominant conception of manhood based on the responsible purchase of consumer commodities in service to the nation.

In the nineteenth century, self-made manhood reigned supreme as the dominant form of American masculinity. As Michael Kimmel has argued, "The central characteristic of being self-made was that the proving ground was the public sphere, specifically the workplace. And the workplace was a man's world (and a native-born white man's world at that). If manhood could be proved it had to be proved in the eyes of other men."² In a production-oriented society characterized by finite resources, men internalized the need for conservation by denying themselves sexual pleasure and by avoiding physical and emotional exertion. Self-denial preserved scarce physical and mental strength for use in the workplace. Restrained behavior, in turn, stemmed from what dominant conceptions of nineteenth-century manhood saw as the essence of any man—his inherent and unchanging "character." A man's place in society, his relation to the market, and his good conduct were simply outward signs of his internal character.³ In addition, the self-made man of the nineteenth century could make exclusive claim on the rights and privileges of American citizenship, because he alone, not women or lower-class men, generated the capital upon which American society was built, and he alone possessed the character to use his authority and wealth for the public good.

In the early-twentieth century, a new corporate economy and mass culture emerged to destabilize Victorian self-made manhood and weaken the exclusive claim self-made men could make on American citizenship. A man's outward appearance, a strength and virility evidenced by a muscular physique and a vigorous personality, came to signal his manhood rather than his inner character and standing in society. In addition, as the process of consumption gained importance at the expense of the value placed on production, the ideological constructs of the feminine consumer and the masculine producer gained and lost prestige accordingly.⁴ Male citizen-producers found their exclusive claim on the public sphere challenged by largely female citizen-consumers and by a new conception of rugged masculinity that divorced manhood from the traditionally masculine responsibilities of production and citizenship. During the Depression, men reasserted their claim on citizenship, not by reaffirming the centrality of production to American manhood and public life, but by casting themselves as superior and responsible consumers. Hollywood and mass culture, as evidenced by the shifts in Gary Cooper's star image, played a primary role in the emergence of the masculine citizen-consumer.

Historians of gender have failed adequately to trace shifting gender ideologies through the Great Depression. They correctly describe the deterioration of the widely accepted nineteenth-century ideal of self-made manhood and the ascendance of a new, ruggedly sexual masculinity at the turn of the twentieth century. While they argue that self-made manhood was destabilized, they also correctly note the persistence of some of its remnants in the male middle-class breadwinner. Yet many historians who discuss manhood during the Great Depression focus exclusively on the fate of the breadwinner, analyzing Depression-era manhood exclusively in terms of attempts to retain or reinforce the breadwinner ideal amid the crisis born of widespread unemployment and poverty, while abandoning discussions of rugged sexuality.⁵ Yet if rugged sexuality presented an ascendant alternative to the self-made man and the breadwinner in the early twentieth century, what happened to the rugged man during the Depression? Shifts in Gary Cooper's star image demonstrate that, contrary to much of the historical scholarship, rugged masculinity persisted into the 1930s and the Great Depression brought more than a reactionary attempt to revivify self-made manhood. In fact, the Depression witnessed a synthesis of the authority, responsibility, and gender and racial dominance claimed by the self-made man and breadwinner with the virility and sexual allure of early-twentieth-century rugged masculinity into the new ideal of the male citizen-consumer.

The confusion surrounding masculinity in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries resulted from a shift in what Robert W. Connell calls a “hegemonic masculinity.” Connell argues that those with social power construct a dominant ideal of manhood, a “hegemonic masculinity,” that draws its power from the subordination of femininity and alternative masculinities. Borrowing from Antonio Gramsci, Connell sees hegemony as an ascendancy arising from the “organization of private life and cultural processes,” not brute force.⁶ The

restructuring of the American economy at the turn of the century and the shift in social power from the hands of entrepreneurial businessmen to managerial classes destabilized hegemonic masculinity. The ruggedly sexual man emerged as a significant but not necessarily dominant ideal by the 1920s. By basing manhood in virility and brute strength, rugged masculinity reoriented old stereotypes about the licentiousness and barbarity of immigrant and African American men, suggesting that they could be more masculine than their white middle-class counterparts. In addition, the new masculinity ascribed to the male body the traditionally feminine role of acting as an aesthetic object. Furthermore, women gained more control over masculinity because manhood became increasingly dependent on women's willingness to confer sexual desire on the aestheticized male body. Thus, while undercutting self-made manhood, rugged sexuality failed to fulfill the primary function of hegemonic masculinity by neither subordinating femininity nor drawing the boundary between itself and subordinate masculinities.

Mass culture, particularly Hollywood, first helped to destabilize hegemonic masculinity in the early-twentieth century and then worked to re-stabilize it in the 1930s by synthesizing rugged sexuality with the producer ethos through the construction of a subjective male consumer. In particular, shifts in Gary Cooper's star image paralleled changes in the dominant ideals of American manhood. Cooper's Depression-era image embodied discourses of self-control, independence, character, and glamor, thereby reconciling many elements of the self-made man with the rugged masculinity. The male consumer of the 1930s actively consumed and manipulated the props that signaled his sexuality. Since his glamor now depended on his own power to manipulate commodities, the masculine consumer liberated his sexuality from the caprice of women. In addition, because the new hegemonic masculinity linked sexuality to consumption, it excluded those who could not afford the price of admission—African American and lower-class men. Furthermore by helping to revitalize the economy, the male consumer of the Depression, like the nineteenth-century self-made man, met his citizen's duty to serve the nation and the public good. Thus, the ideal of the responsible male consumer reinstated the subordination of femininity and marginalized alternative masculinities, while simultaneously drawing a connection between masculine consumption and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

In this essay, I will focus on Gary Cooper's star image in and around *The Virginian* (1929) and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936). In the seven years that separated these two seminal points in his career, Cooper's image underwent a profound transformation. In *The Virginian* Cooper played the title role in his first appearance in an all-talking picture. The movie met with tremendous success among critics and at the box office. Indeed, the film was so popular that Paramount re-released it in 1935. It established Gary Cooper as a major Hollywood star whose popularity would clearly grow along with the new sound technology. *The Virginian* also had a profound impact on his star persona. Through-

out the early years of his career he was frequently associated with the role as the film established him as a ruggedly sexual Cowboy star. *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* seemed to mark a significant departure for Cooper and a change in his star image. Critics noted his skilled acting, and he received his first Oscar nomination for his portrayal of Longfellow Deeds. Over the next several years, Cooper would earn more acclaim for playing a series of “common man” characters similar to Deeds in *Meet John Doe* (1940), *Sergeant York* (1941), and *The Pride of the Yankees* (1942). Fan magazines began to present him as an “everyman,” defined in terms of character, responsibility, and his status as a breadwinning family man rather than his rugged sexuality; however, his glamor status persisted through the changes in his persona. Cooper’s films continued to capitalize on his physical appearance as critics, gossip writers, and fan magazines continued to read his image in terms of glamor.

Gary Cooper emerged as a star in the late-1920s amid a fundamental transformation of American manhood. Managerial capitalism and the growth of a leisure culture at the turn of the twentieth century had destabilized the ideal of the self-made man. As Warren Susman has argued, the early-twentieth century witnessed the ascendance of a “culture of abundance,” which focused on indulgence and consumption rather than on self-denial and production. This culture was closely linked to the appearance of a new middle class of salaried white-collar workers who engineered, managed, clerked, and marketed the nation’s growing corporate sector.⁷ With this new corporate capitalism and the resulting decline in opportunities for entrepreneurship, middle-class men exercised less control over work, both at the point of production and in terms of their own career trajectories. In addition, corporate capitalism brought more women into the workplace, thereby blurring the boundaries between men’s and women’s roles in society. Thus, the loss of autonomy and homosociality in the workplace undermined self-made manhood.

Cinema played an important role in the reshaping of masculinity in the early-twentieth century. Early short films and nickelodeons capitalized on spectacle and titillation. D.W. Griffith reacted against that moral experimentation and between 1908 and 1915 served as the most prominent artistic spokesperson for a group of reformers intent on constructing a cinema of Victorian morality. Griffith’s traditional understanding of society and gender pervaded his films. For example, his films repeatedly affirmed the value of the work ethic and held up the self-made man as an ideal. One such film, *Avenging Conscience* (1914), depicted a young man’s downward spiral caused by his attraction to the uninhibited leisure and sexuality of Italian immigrants and his disdain for his father’s advice that he prepare himself for a career. Lary May has dubbed this movie a “warning film” because it demonstrated the danger of deviating from the work ethic.⁸ Likewise, black sexuality constituted the greatest threat to traditional society in Griffith’s best-known film, *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Thus, Griffith’s films exemplified and contributed to a larger campaign to resist changes in middle-class manhood in the early-twentieth century. The restrained self-made

man of character was the hero of the Griffith film while the sexualized masculinity of lower-class ethnic groups threatened to subvert a society predicated on middle-class gender norms.

The group of stars and directors that emerged from 1915 through the early-1920s abandoned Griffith's Victorian vision and signaled the triumph of the culture of abundance and rugged masculinity on the silver screen. Artists such as Douglas Fairbanks and Cecil B. DeMille helped to usher in American consumer culture and provided the first whole-hearted cinematic endorsement of the new virile masculinity of the twentieth century. As Sumiko Higashi has demonstrated, Cecil B. DeMille's Jazz Age films helped to familiarize audiences with a mode of artistic expression based on spectacle and fantasy that would prove instrumental in acculturating the middle class to the burgeoning consumer culture.⁹ Fairbanks similarly offered a model of manhood for the new culture of abundance. He frequently played men who worked as clerks and low-level management in large corporations. Although these characters often felt constrained in their work, just as frequently they found redemption in the realm of leisure and consumption. Rather than a fundamental component of manhood, work became a means to an end, a way of earning money in order to participate fully in the culture of abundance. Fairbanks signaled this shift in masculinity in his well-publicized "private" life as well. His star persona was that of the quintessential athlete. Magazines and newspapers routinely depicted him engaged in sports and feats of strength. The print media repeatedly pictured him lifting various people—from his wife, Mary Pickford, to the heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey—on his shoulders. Notably, Fairbanks acquired his manly physique through rigorous leisure-time exercise, not on the job. Fairbanks personified the new masculine ideal that had become ascendant by 1920.¹⁰

While an inner "character" constituted the center of nineteenth-century manhood, the new masculinity personified in Douglas Fairbanks relied on performance and bodily display. As Kimmel argues, the language of gender changed at the turn the century.

Manhood had been understood to define an inner quality, the capacity for autonomy and responsibility, and had historically been seen as the opposite of *childhood*. . . . At the turn of the century, *manhood* was replaced gradually by the term *masculinity*, which referred to a set of behavioral traits and attitudes that were contrasted now with a new opposite, *femininity*.¹¹

Masculinity now depended on the more malleable concept of "personality," as opposed to an unchanging and essential character. The new middle class believed that people could alter their behavior and physical traits in order to achieve success. Cultivation of a personality that the nineteenth-century middle class would have damned as "insincere" now became the measure of a man's worth and his key to success.¹² A muscular body built through and for vigorous ath-

letic exercise proved an increasingly important way to display one’s strength and masculinity. The early-twentieth century saw the popularization of numerous participatory and spectator sports such as boxing, baseball, body-building, and hunting. In addition, male sexuality—or more specifically, heterosexuality—became a definitive measure of manhood in the early-twentieth century. Thus, between the late-nineteenth century and 1920 the dominant masculine ideal had increasingly shifted away from self-made manhood rooted in character toward a rugged masculinity based on personality, appearance, and sexuality; however the shift in masculinity was neither wholly complete by 1920 nor was it without tensions and contradictions.¹³

Gary Cooper’s star image in the late-1920s reflected some of the tensions and contradictions pervading the emergent cultural construction of rugged masculinity. For example, although cast primarily as a cowboy or soldier, his persona contained elements of sexual glamor commonly perceived as feminine. In fact he actively exploited his appearance in order to launch his film career. In 1925, while trying to break into the film business, Cooper posed for and circulated several glamor photographs. These photos continued to surface in fan magazines as late as 1929. In the pictures, he gazes upward into the camera and masks a shy grin behind his hand while his curly hair tumbles down his forehead.¹⁴ Cooper also engaged in a series of well-publicized off-camera romances. Often coupled with well-established actresses, he was accused of relying on personal relationships with women to establish his acting career. For example, Clara Bow, a rising star at Paramount Studios at the time, reportedly took one look at Cooper and demanded that the studio cast him in her upcoming film *It* (1927). Cooper and Bow began a well-publicized romantic relationship, and she then convinced the studio to cast him as the leading man in her next film, *Children of Divorce* (1927). Later that year Cooper would land a small but noteworthy role in *Wings*, another Bow film. Because he relied on women and his own sexuality to jump-start his career, fan magazines questioned his masculinity. Writers mockingly dubbed him the “It Boy” in reference to his professional and romantic (or perhaps “professionally romantic”) involvement with the “It Girl,” Clara Bow.¹⁵

Initially, Cooper seemed to fall victim to many of the same contradictions in Hollywood masculinity that plagued the silent era’s most prominent male glamor star, Rudolf Valentino. From his rapid ascent in 1918 until his death in 1926, Valentino was both revered and reviled for his sexuality. One of the most troubling aspects of Valentino’s sex appeal was its close link to his Italian ethnicity. The female desire he inspired implied that the unbridled sexuality of immigrants actually held more appeal for white middle-class women than the manhood of those from their own class and ethnic backgrounds. Valentino was often associated with the predatory sexuality of “tango pirates,” young Jewish and Italian men who frequented Manhattan’s dance halls and provided dance lessons and entertainment for middle-class women. Screen roles, such as his portrayal of the title character in *The Sheik* (1919) repeatedly mobilized the

predatory sexuality associated with the ethnic “other.” The Arab character he played in that film, revealed to be European only at the film’s conclusion, appealed to white women both on and off the screen because of Valentino’s good looks and because of the brute sexuality associated with the actor’s and his character’s ethnic backgrounds.¹⁶

While many critics denounced Valentino’s brute sexuality, others criticized him for being too passive, feminine, and even homosexual because he made himself the object of female (and male) sexual desire. Although Valentino often played the role of sexual predator, he also spent an unusual amount of time as sexual prey. For example, in *The Son of the Sheik* (1926), Valentino is kidnaped, bound, and whipped across his bare chest, all for the pleasure of the desiring spectator. Valentino thereby defied what Laura Mulvey defines as one of the fundamental tenets of Hollywood cinema—the invariable subjectivity of the male gaze. Point of view cinematography and editing, she argues, objectify female characters while privileging the subjectivity of the gaze of its male characters. On the screen, men look and desire. Women are looked at and desired. By implication, the spectator looks through the camera’s gendered lens, identifies with the male character’s subjectivity, and objectifies the female character.¹⁷ Valentino often performed a passive masculinity and by implication privileged feminine subjectivity. That passive feminine sexuality also comprised a large part of his off-screen persona. Writers portrayed him as a servant to his mannish wife, and they made much of the slave bracelet she gave him as a present. In addition, they saw him as a “woman-made man,” because he used his physique and his sexuality, both in his personal life and in his acting, to advance his career.¹⁸ He placed himself in the feminine role of passive sexual object and depended on the active female desire to sustain himself. Thus, rugged sexuality, as personified by Valentino, contained two inherent contradictions. First, it threatened white middle-class men by privileging features that had traditionally been ascribed to ethnic men. In addition, it threatened to overturn masculine dominance itself, by turning the male body into an aesthetic object and making manhood dependent on women’s sexual desire.

Unlike Valentino, whose major defense against charges of effeminacy was the projection of an equally damning hypermasculine ethnicity, Gary Cooper generated more palatable alternative discourses that successfully contained the threats posed by his sexuality. Notably, his sexual magnetism often stemmed from youthful rather than feminine beauty. Female fan magazine writers cooed that he possessed “the bashful charm of a juvenile” and a “boyish quality” that made him “beloved.”¹⁹ That boyishness invested him with a vulnerability that also countered the characterization of him as a woman-made man. Rather than portray him as a sexual predator, magazine writers frequently rendered him the naive victim of ill-fated affairs with more experienced older women. Both in and out of character “The Big Boy,” as one *Photoplay* writer dubbed the lanky, youthful actor, expressed a desire to be nurtured and mothered. He attracted attention

in his early films when suffering and dying.²⁰ For example, Cooper appeared in only one brief scene in *Wings*. In this film about World War I flying cadets, Cooper plays Cadet White, the more experienced pilot who shares a tent with the film’s two stars. Cooper exchanges banter with the two new recruits, then leaves the tent to execute some flying maneuvers. On the way out he turns to face the camera for a close-up. He stands in the tent door, and the light coming from outside frames him in an angelic glow as he offers his tragically prophetic last words, “When your time comes, you’re going to get it.” This small role became a breakthrough moment for Cooper, as fan mail reportedly poured into the studio about the actor who had played the tragic young ace.²¹ From *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (1926) through *A Farewell to Arms* (1932), Cooper’s screen roles repeatedly found him combining sexual attraction with a wounded vulnerability (see figure 1). Thus, while at times Cooper’s image was that of the gigolo, at other moments he became a naive young man vainly searching for maternal love.

In addition, in contrast to the discussions of the ethnic “other” that swirled around Valentino, Cooper’s image drew upon that most classically American of male archetypes—the cowboy hero. In a 1929 *Photoplay* article Cooper related a “life story” that developed according to generic Western literary conventions and actively cultivated a cowboy image. Cooper painted an idyllic portrait of the Montana ranch where he spent his youth.

Nights, lying very quietly in your bunk, you attune your ears to every sound that the darkness gives. The faint mournful note of the loon, in the far distance. The round gurgle of Andy’s creek as it parts to pass the huge boulder in its center. The soft patter of the chipmunks as they stealthily come to nuzzle at the door, in search of food.²²

The ranch’s pastoral beauty was occasionally “disturbed by a skulking coyote. . . . You wriggle out of bed, climb into pants and sweater, grab a rifle and speed out to the corral.”²³ For Cooper, the West represented freedom and beauty tempered by danger. Like a true cowboy hero, he lived on the border between nature and civilization, between “the deep howl of the wolf” and the family home. As with all cowboys, Cooper’s gun placed him in the liminal space between civilizing protector and natural predator.²⁴ The article also used generic Western conventions to discuss Cooper’s move to Hollywood and his entrance into acting. Los Angeles was a half-wild “Western city, sprawled over deserts and mountains” where he encountered loneliness and poverty. Alone and poor, he had reservations about remaining in Los Angeles. The turning point came when he obtained his first acting job as an extra in a Tom Mix western. “In the distance I saw Mix’s leading woman, Billie Dove,” Cooper told the reader, “I thought she was beautiful. I decided Hollywood was interesting.” In true Western fashion, femininity and romance tamed young Cooper’s wanderlust.²⁵



Figure 1: A publicity photograph from *The Last Outlaw* (1927) juxtaposes Gary Cooper's passivity and ruggedness. *Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.*

The Virginian marked Gary Cooper's emergence as a Hollywood star. The film, based on Owen Wister's 1902 classic novel of the same name, at first glance seems to offer an unproblematic portrayal of rugged masculinity. The Virginian is an archetypal western hero, and film critics have pointed to his stoicism, leadership, and willingness to kill as typically rugged masculine traits.²⁶ *The Virginian* certainly drew from the publicity surrounding Cooper's rugged

Montana roots, but the film also deftly manipulated the discourses of boyishness and glamor that underpinned his star image.

The film highlighted Cooper’s boyishness in his interactions with women. Cooper appears especially playful in the scene in which he first meets the film’s heroine. Early in the film the Virginian notices the attractive new school teacher, Molly Wood (Mary Brian), getting off the train (see figure 2). He finds his opportunity to meet her when she runs in panic from what she believes is a runaway bull. The Virginian rides in, scoops her up, and rescues her from the charging “bull,” which he knows is truly a cow and poses no danger; however, he continues to play along with Molly’s fear. Thus, superior physical strength and knowledge of the rugged West allow Cooper/the Virginian to seize initial control of the relationship. The tide turns quickly, however, when Molly becomes aware of the ruse. Now, she possesses superior knowledge of the situation, because she *knows* she has been fooled, while the Virginian still assumes her ignorance. He learns the truth in a shot/reverse-shot sequence that begins with an establishing medium shot of Molly standing in front of Cooper looking at the cow. In the next shot Molly glares at Cooper. A reverse shot captures a dismayed perplexity on his face. After another medium shot in which Molly chastises him, the sequence ends with a final close-up of Cooper from Molly’s point



Figure 2: Gary Cooper and Molly Brian in *The Virginian*. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

of view. Cooper makes a noticeable gulp, a boyish trait that would stamp his career, then looks shyly downward, unable to meet Molly's gaze. Just before the camera cuts away from the closeup, Cooper glances upward through the tops of his eyes without lifting his head, like a chastised boy seeking approval. In fact, that boyishness becomes a running joke throughout the film as he frequently uses his impish charm to goad her into acting the scolding schoolmarm.

The Virginian also capitalized upon and reaffirmed Gary Cooper's sexual glamor. He wears noticeably heavy stage make-up throughout the film, which creates a sharp contrast between the smoothness of his appearance and the ruggedness of both the terrain and the faces of many of the film's other male characters. His light-colored clothing places him in contradistinction to the black-clad villain. In order to establish the Virginian's honor and morality, the camera shoots Cooper's close-ups in soft focus with back lighting. Ultimately, the combination of make-up, costume, and lighting tends to frame Cooper in a soft glow that filmmakers at the time usually reserved for female love interests. In addition, Cooper relies on facial expression to develop the Virginian as a "man-of-few-words." As a result, the camera lingers on him in moments of silence, his eyes darting about to express sorrow or suffering. While attempting to demonstrate the Virginian's soft-spoken honor and nobility, the cinematic apparatus turns the film's star into an object of aesthetic beauty upon which the camera and the audience gaze.²⁷

In addition, Cooper's femininity injects homoerotic overtones into the Virginian's relationship with his best friend, Steve (Richard Arlen). Despite the Virginian's romantic pursuit of Molly, the film reserves its most deeply felt emotional sequences for the exploration of the relationship between the two male characters. In one particularly poignant scene, the Virginian warns Steve not to become involved in cattle rustling. Through the latter portion of the scene, Cooper rests his hand on Arlen's thigh. Both characters' apparent lack of awareness of the contact between them makes the gesture all the more intimate. Despite the visible pathos shared by the two men, Steve fails to heed the Virginian's advice, and he is caught and hanged for rustling. The hanging sequence is also imbued with homoerotic overtones. Unable to talk to the Virginian without "acting the baby," Steve tries to ignore his presence, but the camera captures a series of brief, longing looks between the two men. Cooper's face in particular expresses anguish throughout the sequence. Just as he did when meeting the female love interest, the Virginian casts his eyes downward. The scene ends with a close-up of Cooper as Steve is hanged just beyond the scope of the camera. This time, rather than looking up in boyish flirtation, Cooper continues to hang his head in heartbreak.

The discussions of Gary Cooper's glamor, ruggedness, and boyishness left no room for the Victorian ideal of the self-made man in his early star image; however, as historians of gender have demonstrated, remnants of the nineteenth-century self-made man did persist into the twentieth century. Despite losing its centrality, work continued to inform discussions of manhood, but now became

associated with modest breadwinning rather than public success. The new family man was expected to be “buddy,” male role model, and provider for his wife and children. Although men were defined less in terms of public power and financial success, the new father’s authority remained rooted in his ability to responsibly provide for his family.²⁸ Much of the popular art of the time, such as that produced by the New Deal public art and theater programs, reaffirmed the correlation between work, family, and manhood.²⁹ Such New Deal programs as the Works Progress Administration and the Civil Works Administration also undergirded the breadwinner ideal by targeting men and discriminating against married female workers in particular.³⁰ An examination of shifts in Gary Cooper’s star image in the 1930s, however, suggests that rugged sexuality did not entirely disappear during the Depression. Although by the 1936 release of *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, new discussions of Gary Cooper as an honest and responsible worker became incorporated into his persona, his image reconciled Depression-era paternal masculinity with the discourses of ruggedness, boyhood, and sexual glamor that had informed his earlier star status. His image united sexuality and responsibility, work and consumption, ultimately forging a new masculine type: the male citizen-consumer who, like Stretch Willoughby in *The Cowboy and The Lady*, retained autonomy over his own identity and command over the domestic sphere through the manipulation of consumer commodities.

Austerist film critics have traditionally found a populist sensibility in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and other films directed by Frank Capra. They argue that Capra’s films, which often centered around the battle between a small-town hero and urban political, economic, and intellectual elites, invented a mythical pre-industrial American past.³¹ Raymond Carney offers an astute critique of those who would approach Capra’s films by placing his characters within social categories. He argues that treating Capra’s work as cinematic sociology ignores the central theme in Capra’s work—the constant striving of the individual to exercise his or her imagination despite social pressures. Capra’s ideal hero “honors the uniqueness of personal consciousness and affirms the power of the individual to escape repressive systems of understanding.”³² Yet both the individualism that Carney sees in Capra’s work and the populism ferreted out by earlier critics derive from the nineteenth-century concept of the self-made man. Indeed the populist strain in American history has been interpreted as a political movement that sought a viable place for individual autonomy amid the increasingly complex social world of the late-nineteenth century.³³ Both individualism and populism are predicated on and assume the existence of the independent, self-made producer. Carney and the “populist” critics he tackles simply describe opposite sides of the same gendered coin. While the concept of “populism” focuses on masculine economic independence, Carney’s individualism highlights the spiritual side of that same masculine quest for autonomy.

The leading male characters in what scholars have termed Capra’s “populist” films, *Deeds*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *Meet John Doe* (1941), and *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946), either personify or attain a cluster of ideal

masculine characteristics that echo nineteenth-century self-made manhood. The Capra hero is practical, sincere, and rejects the affectations of glamor. Financial solvency and sound character guarantee his manhood, not physical display. Although Long John Willoughby in *Meet John Doe* and George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) may lack financial independence and control over their own destiny, their lack of autonomy represents the central dilemma for each of the respective films. Therefore, as Carney argues, Capra's films do not amount to an uncritical celebration of the "little guy," as many critics assume, because Capra problematizes the process of self-making.³⁴ Ultimately self-realization and autonomy, both material and imaginative, provide an ideal toward which Capra's characters strive within the limits impressed upon them by their obligations to family and society. Furthermore, from Longfellow Deeds through George Bailey, despite all the social stress and individual doubt they encounter, Capra's male heroes retain their inner character. Thus, Capra's films developed a model of masculinity that mirrored the responsible paternalism ascendant in American culture during the Great Depression and infused it with strong doses of an older self-made manhood.

In many ways, Longfellow Deeds embodies the masculine traits of the classic Capra hero. Deeds, played by Cooper, possesses an impeccable character. Although others in the film misinterpret his openness as naivete, Deeds' sincerity actually enables him to detect the greedy motivations of those who conspire to steal his fortune. As a reviewer noted in the *New Republic*, "Gary Cooper is not the I-swan stooge of tradition, but a solid character, shrewd and not to be trifled with."³⁵ In addition, he manifests power and integrity rooted in the responsible use of money. Deeds inherits his fortune from his wealthy uncle Semple, whose recklessness has led to a fatal car accident. Unlike his irresponsible uncle, he handles his money practically and capably. For example, he refuses to continue his uncle's donations to the opera because it never turns a profit. The film's turning point arrives when an unemployed man enters the Deeds' mansion to admonish him for hoarding his fortune in the face of widespread poverty. Apparently not even Deeds has fulfilled his manly responsibilities. He reasserts his manhood when he decides to use his fortune to purchase land and farming equipment for the unemployed masses. Thus, Deeds' masculinity is rooted in his good character, financial solvency, and ability to assist national economic recovery through the responsible redistribution of his wealth.

Publicity and reviews surrounding Gary Cooper during the mid- to late-1930s mobilized notions of financial responsibility by stressing his status as a hardworking actor. For example, reviews for *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* stressed Cooper's workingman status by contrasting his comedic performance with his earlier glamor roles. Most reviewers expressed "surprise" at what they viewed as his capable acting. One remarked that he had shown that "he [could] achieve something beyond the manly muteness on which his reputation as an actor [had] hitherto reposed."³⁶ Early in his career, discussion had rarely centered around Cooper's acting ability. In fact, he was often portrayed as a "natural"; his pleas-

ing appearance and youth spent on the ranch readied him to play glamor and cowboy roles despite lack of talent and dedication to his craft. Indeed, Cooper's image openly rejected the value of hard work. In an early biographical article, Gary Cooper was repeatedly contrasted with his brother Arthur. The young Gary scrambled up trees and rode the open range, while Arthur stayed on the ground and in the home. Arthur's youthful stability evolved into an adulthood as an accountant.³⁷ During the 1920s, Gary's untamed nature made him unsuitable for any type of work, so he simply used his “natural” rugged qualities to play cowboy on the big screen. By the mid-1930s, star discourses around Cooper began to take note of the hard work he performed to forward his career. In one instance, the author of a 1932 article described a “battle” between Cooper and Cary Grant over number-one star status at Paramount studios and determined that, unlike Grant, Cooper lacked both talent and skill as an actor. Yet the writer ultimately laid odds in favor of Cooper to win the battle. Cooper's main asset in his contest with Grant was his dedication to acting, not as a performative art, but as a job. The author believed that Cooper skillfully manipulated the media to acquire favorable publicity. In this respect, “natural” glamor and ruggedness became a status achieved through old-fashioned, American hard work. On the other hand, Grant came across as a slick, polished artist with a touch of the Continental about him. Thus, the writer distinguished the hardworking Gary Cooper of the Depression-era from both Cary Grant, the artist, and Cooper's own Jazz Age image characterized by “natural” glamor and personality.³⁸

Longfellow Deeds and Gary Cooper's mid-Depression star image also suggested that true wisdom grew from good character rather than intellect. Cooper's anti-intellectualism evoked a simplicity and practicality that ultimately lent him insight more profound than that of most intellectuals. In a 1939 article that purportedly revealed the real “Coop,” Joel McCrea offered an anecdote that he believed epitomized Cooper's personality. Cooper had been out of town and had not seen McCrea in a long time. Cooper came to McCrea's ranch and asked McCrea to take a walk with him. “We walked for an hour or more, with never a word from him. That was like him.” The two men paused at a beautiful vista:

We stood there for five or ten minutes, perhaps, both of us silent. Finally, Coop drew a long deep breath and turned to me. . . . “You know, McFee, that European situation is a hell of a mess,” he remarked. He launched into as intelligent a discussion of international affairs as I have ever heard. . . . When he had finished, he shut up again.³⁹

According to this passage, Cooper's laconic nature and simplicity concealed profound intellectual understanding, not ignorance. He offered common sense insight that ran deeper than any intellectual pontification. In addition, writers also interpreted his reserved nature as a “goodness” lacking in other Hollywood personalities. According to an unnamed actor quoted in a 1936 article, “I never

heard him get off a wise crack, but I never heard him get off a mean crack either. Most actors pop off at random. . . . He's always polite and considerate."⁴⁰ Thus, this incarnation of Gary Cooper possessed that traditional manly virtue "character," which allowed him insight into the world around him, but prevented him from demonstrating that wisdom in flashy or spiteful ways.

Longfellow Deeds also possessed a superior wisdom that derived from his good character. His sincerity contrasted directly with the hypocrisy and greed of the more cosmopolitan people he encountered. Deeds's old-fashioned character explains the seemingly paradoxical violence in the early parts of the film. In two cases Deeds shoves and punches other men. Each of those whom he assaults—a lawyer seeking a portion of his inheritance and the literati who mock his greeting-card poetry—use words in a deceptive manner. That manipulation of appearances and deception through words is antithetical to Deeds's worldview. Unaccustomed to manipulating words and appearances himself, he lashes out violently. His initial frustration with those he encounters in the city and his early resort to violence springs from innocence, not ignorance. Deeds possesses an intellect that is superior precisely because it is rooted in his own inherent honesty, integrity, and wisdom, not professional training or artistry. In the film's climactic courtroom scene, in which Deeds defends himself against charges of insanity and saves his fortune, Deeds discovers how to utilize his intellect. As Carney argues,

when he rises to speak during the final minutes of the insanity hearing, Deeds . . . shows himself the master of all attitudes and manners, to the point of, in strict literary-critical parlance, wittily and playfully flaunting his ability to "deconstruct" their utterances at will. He systematically takes up each of the major pieces of testimony that have been used against him by the witnesses and lawyers in the hearing and...reveals the essential textuality of the discourse.⁴¹

Thus, Deeds deconstructs the words and institutions that threaten to imprison him. After he lays those structures bare, the courtroom is left with the film's only tangible reality, Deeds's good character, and the judge acquits him on that basis.

As discourses of work and character began to inform Cooper's star image, he developed a seeming nonchalance about his appearance. A 1935 article in *Woman's Home Companion* asked the reader to ignore Cooper's former glamor persona. The article's author expressed amazement at hearing women name Gary Cooper as part of a best-dressed list. The author then interviewed Cooper to ask his opinion on clothing. Cooper appeared stunned and embarrassed that someone had called him a well-dressed man and attested to knowing very little about men's fashion. "I don't know a darn thing about dressing. I just trust in the Lord and keep my shoes shined."⁴² Another article written in 1936 acknowledged his

former glamor status, but argued that he had given up glamor to concentrate on family and work. “Gary’s black tie and white tie are still freshly pressed and ready for duty, but banished now to his studio dressing room closet.”⁴³ For the simple man of the 1930s, fashion consciousness reflected a self-indulgence inappropriate to the context of the Great Depression. Thus, by displacing surface qualities such as “personality” and “appearance” with discussions of work and family, Cooper’s Depression-era star image seemed to shift away from rugged sexuality toward paternal responsibility.

Yet despite its incorporation of work, character, and the family, Gary Cooper’s image never ceased to embody male sexual glamor. Cooper’s Jazz Age persona carried over into the Depression, and competed with discourses of work and character. A full-page advertisement for *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935) illustrated the resiliency of Cooper’s glamor image. Although the ad argued the most “important” part of his performance was his “tensely dramatic role,” it also relied heavily on Cooper’s glamor persona. The first 75 percent of the ad copy detailed his appearance in various military uniforms. The ad indicated that in his current film, “Gary alternates between the English Army service uniforms and the picturesque Indian dress uniforms worn in honor of the native allies of the British.”⁴⁴ Various publicity stills depicting Cooper in stylish uniforms from a number of his films framed the ad copy. The actual film also plays on Cooper’s glamor, lingering over the bare-chested star at times and concocting several scenarios that place him in the exotic, flashy uniforms of “the native allies of the British” (see figures 3 and 4). Indeed, the publicity stills from *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* mobilized Cooper’s glamor persona as well. In one photo that ran alongside an article titled ironically, “Why Gary’s Gone Rural Again,” he created a striking image in formal dinner jacket, top hat, and silk scarf.⁴⁵ In fact, although Longfellow Deeds initially chafes when fitted for a new tuxedo, Deeds and Gary Cooper become well accustomed to the new clothing over the course of the film, often cutting a striking figure in top hat and tails. In regard to his performance in *Souls at Sea* (1937), a reviewer mused that “against the elemental forthrightness of background that the sea can sometimes provide,” Cooper proved “that few others perform so admirably out doors.”⁴⁶ This particular reviewer read Cooper’s performance aesthetically, in terms of bodily display, not acting. Thus, glamor remained part of his star image while he simultaneously signified responsible manhood.

Audiences also continued to read Cooper as a glamor star. In 1936, a *Harper’s Magazine* writer lamented the passing of the matinee cowboy. She criticized Cooper as a “modernized and movie-ized version of Leather Stocking who has acquired sex appeal.”⁴⁷ In 1935, another reporter watched Cooper walk past as “the stenographers of the Goldwyn office, who are fairly accustomed to seeing screen personalities, joined in a cooing, oh-ing chorus.”⁴⁸ Male audience members also interpreted his image in terms of glamor, although in less favorable terms. The “common man” whom Mr. Deeds purportedly personified sometimes failed to notice that Cooper had become one of them. A *Pictorial Review*



Figure 3: Cooper in an Indian dress uniform in *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*.
Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

writer reported overhearing a man leaving the theater after a screening of *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* remark, “No fellow has a right to be that good-looking and, on top of it, to make all that money.” His friend “chipped in with the thought that he wouldn’t mind Gary’s good looks so much if he were just plain Frank Cooper, and worked in a factory.”⁴⁹ In the mid-1930s, audiences and writers appeared to notice Cooper’s appearance and sex-appeal as much, if not more than, the character and work-ethic that signified responsible manhood.

Cooper’s glamor image in the 1930s rested on his ability to responsibly and tastefully consume American-made goods. In the article in which Cooper feigned ignorance of “dressing,” he continued to define tasteful clothing as crucial to his manhood. Cooper quoted *Hamlet’s* Polonius:

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express’d in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man.

Polonius’s statement merged simplicity with masculine physical display. Cooper’s analysis of the quote framed it within his typical discourse of sim-

simplicity. “‘That,’ said Gary, ‘is true talk.’” Cooper’s star image reconciled simplicity with appearance to construct a new manhood centered on the responsible purchase and use of consumer goods. Moreover, the author then linked Cooper’s taste in clothing directly to American industry. Although he had bought suits from around the world, “the cut of the suits turned out in New York [pleased] him the most.” Though he once purchased hand-made English shoes, he stated, “Good American-made shoes hold their shape better and last longer.” Cooper’s responsible glamor clearly worked for the welfare of the American economy.⁵⁰



Figure 4: Cooper sporting another costume in *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*.
Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Writers presented Cooper as not only consuming articles of clothing, but also, much like Stretch Willoughby from *The Cowboy and the Lady*, as taking responsibility for shaping spending patterns within his home. Two articles centering around the Cooper household in Brentwood, California, revealed Gary's control of tasteful domestic consumption. A November 1935, article in *Arts and Decoration* described the interior of the new Cooper estate in Brentwood. The home embodied taste, refinement, and practicality. On the editorial page the editor offered a mission statement for the magazine,

[W]e intend to stand primarily for the luxurious, convenient, and comfortable ideal of American living. . . . It is the complete home that we wish to stand for, and this naturally includes the kind of life that is lived in such a home—the cultivated, amusing, happy life that is the purpose of all the money-making in the country, and to achieve which is a pretty bit of exercise for the mind and spirit and body.⁵¹

Thus, by displaying Cooper's house, *Arts and Decoration* also displayed his "cultivated, amusing, happy life," and linked it to a distinctly American standard of living. As detailed in the aforementioned article exploring Cooper's return to "rural" life, he not only earned the money necessary to build a luxurious home, but also imposed his tastes on its construction and use. Gary Cooper, not his wife, dictated the patterns of domestic consumption. He modeled his "ranch" after the home of his Montana youth. His wife, a former New York City debutante, simply followed Gary's rustic lead. They cultivated the garden and hiked. When he worked on a film, his wife remained home, but rather than altering the familial patterns of consumption, she took "over the weed and bug battle single handed, with some direction and assistance from the master of the house when he [returned] from work at night."⁵² In this combination of luxury and paternal authority Gary Cooper's image reconciled the two strains of masculinity based on sexuality and outward display on the one hand and character, responsibility, and independence on the other. His image offered a new masculine synthesis based on responsible spending and generous consumption of American goods.

The discourses of glamor and consumerism incorporated into Gary Cooper's image provide a structured interpretation of his portrayal of Longfellow Deeds.⁵³ Two scenes in particular draw out the consumerist aspects of Cooper's persona. The first occurs early in the film, just after Deeds has moved into his late uncle's mansion in New York City. Through a series of medium shots, the scene shows Deeds in his bedroom as he is being fitted for a new suit. Two tailors dress him and undress him in ill-fitting vests and jackets. At one point one of the tailors even pulls his pants down. All the while Deeds speaks with lawyers, advisors, and servants about his schedule and his estate. Throughout the scene, Cooper's face registers confusion, both at his inability to control the conversation over his



Figure 5: Gary Cooper, as Mr. Deeds, being fitted for formal evening wear. *Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.*

estate and at the control the tailors exercise over him in manipulating his appearance (see figure 5).⁵⁴ Indeed Deeds's lack of control over his appearance becomes a running joke throughout the first half of the film, as his servants continue to attempt to dress him despite his efforts to complete the task himself.

Yet just as Gary Cooper did, and Stretch Willoughby would do, Deeds learns to control and manipulate commodities, thereby gaining mastery over his home and assisting in the larger process of economic recovery. He acquires that mastery in a scene midway through the film. The scene starts with a medium shot of Deeds playfully sliding down the banister in his mansion. A medium shot then shows Deeds striding confidently into his dining room, approaching a small dining table surrounded by his servants. The camera offers a close scan of the table, dwelling on the fine china and gold that make up the table services. A medium shot shows Deeds grabbing one of the gold salt shakers. He slides around the table with his eyes fixed on the commodities decorating it in order to determine if the setting suits his taste. A large flower arrangement at the center of the table partially obscures his movement. The arrangement catches his eye, and he orders it removed. Two hands quickly appear from outside the shot, remove it, then just as quickly drop a smaller arrangement in place of the original. Deeds

then plops down in his chair and orders his butler to sit across from him. He has determined that the table is now perfect. Through a commanding gaze, good taste, and a few well-placed requests of his servants, Deeds has taken control of his home. Notably, he never employs the table for its original purpose, an intended marriage proposal to Babe. Instead, the table reappears after what most critics concur is the film's turning point, the scene in which a gun-wielding, impoverished farmer confronts Deeds in his home, prompting the heir to hatch a plan to share his inheritance with the millions of Americans rendered destitute by the Depression. Yet, before embarking on that plan, he first shares the bounty so elegantly displayed on his dining room table with the unfortunate farmer, a symbol of Depression-era America.

Gary Cooper's star image embodied a new Depression-era masculinity. It ultimately reconciled the discourses of glamor and Western ruggedness with the responsible independent manhood overtly informing his 1930s' image. In so doing, Cooper's image suggested that the "common man" could spur positive change and economic recovery. Cooper's masculinity rooted itself in commodity consumption, idealizing the responsible male consumer rather than the producer. The ruggedly domestic man, by controlling consumption in the home, could ultimately fuel economic recovery.

The male consumer represented a new hegemonic ideal that helped to shape the political culture of the 1930s and the face of New Deal liberalism. As Lizabeth Cohen has argued, the incursion of a consumer economy into ethnic neighborhoods in the 1930s helped forge a mass culture that united formerly distinct ethnic groups into an industrial working class. Class consciousness, born out of mass culture and consumerism, led to a class-based politics that allowed workers to influence New Deal social policy.⁵⁵ Workers who had become integrated into the consumer economy united to demand that government ensure their continued participation despite the economic downturn. Thus, during the New Deal defending the consumer became synonymous with working for the public good, while the right and the ability to achieve an "American standard of living" became synonymous with citizenship.⁵⁶ Labor leaders, business, and government solidified the importance of the consumer in American politics as they came together to ensure the growth of a mass-production, mass-consumption economy through the application of Keynesian economics.⁵⁷ The idea of the masculine consumer ensured that gender was woven into the fabric of New Deal social policy and the Keynesian liberalism that emerged from it. By correlating consumerism with manliness the emergent male consumer ideal retained the traditional link between manhood and citizenship. Unlike simple rugged sexuality, this masculinity excluded African American men from true manhood, because they lacked the purchasing power to master the props of masculine consumerism. At the same time, as consumption became equated with citizenship, the male consumer asserted the rights of men to seize control of the process of consumption, which had traditionally been associated with femininity. Thus,

manhood continued to be correlated with citizenship, and the New Deal placed money in the hands of its citizen-consumers—white men. The “American” standard of living that New Deal liberalism subsidized excluded women and African Americans.⁵⁸ The Depression saw a tremendous surge in unionization and workers helped to radicalize New Deal programs, but the New Deal also excluded a large number of Americans based on race and gender. The hegemony of the masculine citizen-consumer reflected in Gary Cooper’s star image offers an explanation for that contradiction. Changes in his star image during the 1930s demonstrate how the Cowboy, by first encountering and then controlling domestic consumption, could carve out personal autonomy while claiming political power and authority over the Lady and his fellow man.

Notes

1. Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979) and *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1986). According to Dyer, the cinematic apparatus can be instrumental in foregrounding particular facets of a star’s persona. For example, Dyer argues that backlighting in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* mobilized Robert Redford’s sexual allure, while the harsh lighting of *All the President’s Men* helped to foreground a political persona. In addition to the film text, three media create the star image: promotion, publicity, and commentary. Promotion encompasses official advertisements and press releases. Publicity includes incidental press coverage of a star’s personal life and privileged access to a star, such as interviews. Commentary consists of popular performance reviews and word-of-mouth discussion.
2. Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 26.
3. Karen Haltunnen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 1-55; Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 1-80; E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformation in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).
4. Roland Marchand demonstrates that early-twentieth-century advertisers saw women as the primary consumers of commodities and directed their advertisements at them accordingly in *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity: 1920-1940* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985), especially 66-69.
5. For example see Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 191-221; Rotundo, *American Manhood*; Robert Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 143-160; Ralph LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
6. R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987), 183-8.
7. Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).
8. Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 43-95.
9. Sumiko Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: The Silent Era* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1994).
10. May, *Screening Out the Past*, 96-146.
11. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 119-20. Italics in original.
12. See Haltunnen, *Confidence Men*, for the importance of sincerity for the nineteenth-century middle class. See Susman, *Culture as History*, for the emergence of the idea of “personality.”
13. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 81-191; J. A. Mangan and James Malvin, “Introduction,” in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 1-6. For studies of physical culture see David L. Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent: Eugene Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 187-93. For the development of heterosexuality see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 111-127.
14. For descriptions of Cooper’s head shots see Homer Dickens, *The Films of Gary Cooper* (New York: Citadel Press, 1970), 6; Stuart M. Kaminsky, *Coop: The Life and Legend of Gary*

Cooper (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 23; one of the photos appears in Dorothy Spensley, "The Big Boy Tells His Story," *Photoplay* 35 (April 1929): 64.

15. Kaminsky, *Coop*, 31-34; Dickens, *Films of Gary Cooper*, 6; Dorothy Spensley, "Suffering to Stardom," *Photoplay* 32 (April 1927): 75.

16. Gaylyn Studlar, "Valentino, 'Optic Intoxication' and Dance Madness," in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 23-45; Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), 245-94.

17. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.

18. Studlar, "Valentino"; Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 245-94.

19. Spensley, "Suffering to Stardom," 75.

20. Spensley, "The Big Boy," 64; Spensley, "Suffering to Stardom," 75; Marion Leslie, "I'm Through Being Bossed," *Photoplay* 43 (October 1932): 34; Michael Malone, *Heroes of Eros: Male Sexuality in the Movies* (New York: Dutton, 1979), 118-120

21. See Dickens, *Films of Gary Cooper*, 38.

22. Spensley, "The Big Boy," 64.

23. *Ibid.*

24. For the West as liminal space see Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5, 70.

25. Spensley, "The Big Boy," 64.

26. Kaminsky, *Coop*, 47; Joan Mellen, *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 74-6; Mitchell, *Westerns*, 167.

27. For the laconic Western hero as the object of the cinematic gaze see Mitchell, *Westerns*, 151-65. For Cooper as the object of the gaze in *The Virginian* see Jeffrey A. Brown, "'Putting on the Ritz': Masculinity and the Young Gary Cooper," *Screen* 36 (Autumn 1995): 197-202.

28. For example, see Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, and Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*.

29. Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Verso, 1997).

30. For the relationship between the breadwinner ideal and the New Deal see Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, 143-160.

31. See for example, Charles J. Maland, *American Visions: The Films of Chaplin, Ford, Capra, and Welles, 1936-1941*, Dissertations on Film Series (New York: Arno Press, 1977); Charles J. Maland, *Frank Capra in Twayne's Theatrical Arts Series*, ed. Warren French (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980); Jeffrey Richards, "Frank Capra and the Cinema of Populism," in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1976), 65-77; Glen Alan Phelps, "The 'Populist' Films of Frank Capra," *Journal of American Studies* 13 (December 1979): 377-92.

32. Raymond Carney, *American Vision: The Films of Frank Capra* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), xvii.

33. Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

34. *Ibid.*, 38.

35. Review of *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* in *New Republic*, 22 April 1936, 315.

36. Review of *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* in *Time*, 27 April 1936, 36.

37. Spensley, "The Big Boy," 64.

38. Jack Jamison, "Cary vs. Gary," *Photoplay* 44 (January 1933): 33.

39. Joel McCrea, "My Friend Coop!" *Photoplay* 55 (20 October 1939): 10. McCrea states without explanation that Cooper called him "McFee."

40. Connell, "Mr. Cooper Goes to Town," 50-1.

41. Carney, *American Vision*, 289.

42. Jerome Beatty, "Keep Your Shoes Shined," *Woman's Home Companion* 62 (October 1935): 85.

43. Julie Lang Hunt, "Why Gary's Gone Rural Again," *Photoplay* 49 (30 August 1936): 112.

44. James A. Daniels, "Gary Cooper, Fighting Man of All Nations," (advertisement) *Photoplay* 47 (February 1935): 25.

45. Hunt, "Why Gary's Gone Rural Again," 30.

46. Review of *Souls at Sea* in *Time*, 23 August 1937, 50.

47. Ruth Suckow, "Hollywood Gods and Goddesses," *Harper's Magazine* 173 (July 1936): 194.

48. "Gary Cooper Gets the Third Degree," *New York Times*, 3 March 1935, section 8, p. 4.

49. Connell, "Mr. Cooper Goes to Town," 12.

50. Beatty, "Keep Your Shoes Shined," 85.

51. Francine Douglass, "Movie Star's New Home," *Arts and Decoration* 43 (November 1935): 15; editorial statement, *Arts and Decoration* 43 (November 1935): 7.

52. Hunt, "Why Gary's Gone Rural Again," 112.

53. See Dyer, *Stars*, for the ability of star image to structure film text.

54. Carney, *American Vision*, 269, similarly reads this scene as suggesting Deeds's lack of control over his own identity.

55. Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). See also, Jean Christophe Agnew, "Coming up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective," in John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 19-39.

56. Lizabeth Cohen, "The New Deal State and the Making of Citizen Consumers," in Susan Strasser, et al, eds. *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 111-25, and Charles McGovern, "Consumption and Citizenship in the United States, 1900-1940," in *ibid.*, 37-58.

57. Steve Fraser, "The Labor Question," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 55-84; Alan Brinkley, "The New Deal and the Idea of the State," in *ibid.*, 85-121; Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991); Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

58. For racial inequality in New Deal programs see Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17-32; for the exclusion of women from certain New Deal benefits based on the idea of citizenship see Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: Free Press, 1994).