

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART SHOWS POPULAR FILM OF TWO DECADES AGO

What makes a movie popular? The answer seems to be the same today as it was two decades ago when Male and Female, directed by Cecil B. de Mille and starring Gloria Swanson, was first shown on the screen. After many years, this picture will be restored to view when the Museum of Modern Art shows it Wednesday and Thursday, July 30 and 31, at 4 P.M. as part of the Cycle of 300 films tracing the history and development of the motion picture from 1895 to 1940.

The popularity of Male and Female (1919) like that of The Philadelphia Story (1940) seems rooted firmly in a persistent American movie dream: luxury and glitter, sex with a dash of humor and daring, lively adventure, and a firmly moral, socially correct ending.

Mr. de Mille began his glamourization of James Matthew Barrie's play, The Admirable Crichton, by re-naming it Male and Female. For his movie version he retained the basic story of the handsome butler of a titled English household who, by virtue of native strength and ability, becomes master of the lordly family when all are cast away on a desert island. The haughty Lady Mary becomes his humble and loving slave, a point which Mr. de Mille further emphasizes by a vision-sequence drawn from the refrain of Henley's poem: "When I was a King of Babylon and You Were My Christian Slave."

In their essentials, Male and Female and The Philadelphia Story follow the same fundamental pattern. The rich and haughty heroine of each film is humbled -- and made to like it -- by the natural gifts of the lowly but upstanding males of the two movies, the butler of 1919 being replaced by the reporter of 1940. The moral, however, is the same: "A man's a man for 'a that'" -- especially when he's a poor man snubbed by a rich girl. The ending is the same too; in 1940, as in 1919 the highbred but humbled heroine marries a man in her own financial class, leaving the stalwart hero to content

himself with a mate in his own income level, thus carrying out in action the words of the Male and Female subtitle: "Would you put a jackdaw in with a bird of paradise? It's kind to kind---that's the way it always has been."

Paramount produced Male and Female in 1919, the late Thomas Meighan co-starring with Miss Swanson. The featured players were Theodore Roberts, Lila Lee, and Raymond Hatton. The film, which established Miss Swanson's reputation as the best dressed woman on the screen, still moves at a lively pace, retaining its original entertainment value. It is listed in the Museum's Cycle of 300 Films as the work of an outstanding director of American motion pictures who has maintained his place and pace in motion pictures for more than two decades. Cecil B. de Mille not only knew what the public wanted in the way of movies in 1919 but he knows today. Two of the most popular movies of recent days were produced under his direction---Union Pacific (1939) and Northwest Mounted Police (1940).

After its showing at the Museum of Modern Art the Film Library will circulate the films in the Cycle to other museums, colleges, schools and study groups throughout the country. This first half of the Cycle will continue at the Museum until November 1. Other outstanding films in the Cycle of special interest today will be Way Down East, starring Lillian Gish, 1920; The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, with Rudolph Valentino, 1921; The Story of Gosta Berling, with Greta Garbo, 1923-24; The Big Parade, with John Gilbert and Renée Adorée, 1925.