Fast-Talking Dames
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in Fast-Talking Dames
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This chapter explores and introduces one of the most impressive and influential creations of the talkies—the momentous yet underappreciated sexual and social revolution that occurred when movies acquired the power of speech—the fast-talking dame. One example of such a dame is Claudette Colbert, played by Edwina Corday, in It's a Wonderful World. The film relates Guy Johnson's—played by James Stewart—experience of reevaluating dames from the neck up. After such an experience with Claudette, Guy sees a dame as a brainy marvel. Damehood, then, is a distinction reserved for the quick-witted as well as the attractive. A pretty faces therefore has no claims on damehood, and brains have an equal part in the allure of the fast-talking speech. This chapter thus explores the persona of the fast-talking dame and how the persona emerged in American and movie culture.

From Servants of the Empire to Everyday Heroes
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In the twentieth century the British Crown appointed around a hundred thousand people, military and civilian, in Britain and the British Empire to honours and titles. For outsiders, and sometimes recipients too, these jumbles of letters are tantalizingly confusing: OM, MBE, GCVO, CH, KB, or CBE. Throughout the century this system expanded to include more different kinds of people, while also shrinking in its imperial scope with the declining empire. Through these dual processes this profoundly hierarchical system underwent a seemingly counter-intuitive change:
it democratized. Why and how did the British government change this system? And how did its various publics respond to it? This book addresses these questions directly by looking at the history of the honours system as a whole in the wider context of some of the major historical changes in Britain and the British Empire in the twentieth century. In particular, it looks at the evolution of this hierarchical, deferential system amidst democratization and decolonization. It focuses on the system’s largest—and most important—components: the Order of the British Empire, the Knight Bachelor, and the lower ranks of other Orders. By creatively analyzing the politics and administration of the system alongside popular responses to it using diaries, letters, newspapers, and memoirs, it shows the many different meanings that honours took on for the establishment, dissidents, and recipients. It also shows the ways in which the system succeeded and failed to order and bring together divided societies.