



## Vamp: The Rise and Fall of Theda Bara

By Eve Golden

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Theda Bara's remarkable life as told by Eve Golden's heartfelt account is short of discovering a means of traveling through time and as close as we are ever likely to get to meeting the screen's great Vamp!

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## **Vamp: The Rise and Fall of Theda Bara By Eve Golden Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### From Library Journal

Veteran biographer Golden (Platinum Girl: The Life and Legends of Jean Harlow, LJ 10/1/91) here chronicles the career of silent siren Theda Bara, the quintessential "vamp," who played Carmen, Salome, and Cleopatra, among other notorious female roles. Like many film biographies, it succumbs to familiar pitfalls: obligatory but cursory nods to film history and an uneven narrative, where the subject's "rise" inevitably is more compelling than her "fall." Laden with familiar apocrypha on Bara, Vamp isn't groundbreaking, but it is a much-needed full-length work that shows how Bara's precedent-setting career has contemporary resonance in mass-mediated images. With a critical eye for her primary sources, the fanzines, the author deconstructs Hollywood stardom without over-intellectualizing the star. Although Bara's films are dated, Golden gives due consideration to the icon Bara created-and to the life behind it. Recommended for general collections.

*Jayne Kate Plymale-Jackson, Univ. of Georgia Libs., Athens*

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#### From Booklist

This is the first book-length study of the early silent film actress perhaps now most memorable for the coiled-snake bra she wore as Cleopatra. Despite her status as the first media superstar, there is a dearth of good contemporary material on her. Theda Bara was the first product of the star system, and her real biography was intentionally obfuscated during her lifetime. Although she had a comfortable, middle-class upbringing in Cincinnati, Bara (whose real name was Theodosia Goodman) was promoted as the daughter of a French actress and an Italian sculptor, born under the stony gaze of the Sphinx. Her personal appearances were choreographed to enhance an exotic image, and her film roles played on the public perception of her as a temptress, a "vamp." Golden argues that her career was the prototype for those of Harlow, Monroe, and Madonna. As with those later sex symbols, controversy over Bara revolves around whether she was a creation of studio publicity or "a decent actress, trapped in scores of bad films." Although Bara's best movies survive only in fragments, Golden believes she was the latter. *Mike Tribby*

#### Review

This is the first biography of silent movie sex symbol Theda Bara to appear: it uses Bara's personal scrapbooks and other original materials to present a well-researched study of Bara's life and film achievements. Enjoy a readable and involving survey of her career which reveals details of her personal life.

-- *Midwest Book Review*

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##### Melanie Ratcliff:

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### **Chi Reyes:**

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### **Monica Bonner:**

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