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AUDREY HEPBURN: THE PERFORMER AND THE STAR

by

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To begin with, a little theorising; then some analysis of the Audrey Hepburn star and of how this filmgoer responded to it.

Film stars are not what at first glance they may seem. It is tempting to think of film stars as simple concrete physical objects, and to identify them with especially prominent film actors. They are, we might think, the sort of actors who appear in memorable films, get highly paid for their efforts, get their names above the title, live in almost legendary places such as Beverly Hills or Malibu or Switzerland, give interviews to print and broadcast journalists, and so on. Against this, I argue that actors are not film stars because actors are concrete people, whereas stars are social institutions, hence abstract objects. To identify film stars with especially prominent actors is a naive synecdoche: it identifies the film star - of which Audrey Hepburn is a classical example - with the flesh-and-blood performer whose work contributed some of the ingredients that made up the star. Although obvious enough now, it has too infrequently been acknowledged in the past that a performer's work is only one of several ingredients which go into the process of making a star of that performer, albeit an ingredient that is at some stage necessary. Necessary but never sufficient. In addition to the input of a performer, sufficiency in the star-making process requires the social institutions and technology of film making as well as the collaboration of the receiving audience.

The result of mixing the ingredients of performances, film-making and audience reception in a particular way is the star. The star, unlike the prominent actor, cannot act in a film, be paid, live in a particular place, or be interviewed. Humphrey Bogart and Marilyn Monroe are stars, though the performers who bore those names have been dead these many years, and hence no longer act, get paid, live anywhere or give interviews. By contrast, at the time of writing, Audrey Hepburn the performer was alive and still able to perform, be paid, live in certain places and give interviews. Yet, I would maintain, the star we associate with her name is fully formed, no longer dependent upon her, or changeable by her, but subsists in whatever realm we choose to allocate social institutions.¹ This early closure of her star is, I shall argue, a special feature of her career. Other stars went on being formed over almost all of their performer's lifetime, viz. John Wayne, Joan Crawford, Cary Grant, or Marilyn Monroe. Still others achieved the fully formed star persona only late in the performer's career - Fred Astaire and Humphrey Bogart are examples. Hepburn's work as a young newcomer helped build a distinct star persona very quickly. Once it was formed she attempted with little success to broaden and to change it, and she gradually lost touch with it, indeed, became in a way irrelevant to it. This was not unrelated to the fact that the rationale she gave for attempting change - to broaden her acting range - overlooked the fact that she was famous and well-paid as a star, not as an actress.

The degree to which this strange trajectory of her star had to do with objective conditions in the film industry is hard to ascertain. Although most of her star-building films were made under contract to Paramount, it was at a time (1953-1957) when the studio system

1. In order not to be distracted by social ontology I have not specified the nature of social institutions in the text. My general views on the topic were set out in Jarvie 1972.

in general, and its star-making machinery in particular, was disintegrating. Most of Hepburn's efforts to broaden her star were undertaken once she was free of studio entanglement, and they consisted entirely in an insistence on tackling roles that went beyond her strengths as a romantic comedienne. Her somewhat tormented off-screen life better matched her later roles than it did her early comedies, yet, one way and another, neither real life nor later roles contributed to her already extant star.

The temptation to fuse performer and star seduced even that shrewd observer of stars Richard Dyer. His view that stars are images muddled performer and star as when he wrote that, 'of course stars are real people who exist in the world' (1979, p. 13). Stars are real and exist in the world, but not quite in the way 'real people' do. Like Dyer, I too have been guilty of this synecdochal confusion of the performer with the star - so I now emphasise that a star is not to be identified with the performer who exists in the world. A star is a particular type of social institution in the formation of which some film performances are contributory ingredients, but the dimensions of whose existence are more extensive off-screen than on and hence should not be identified with the performer or the aggregate of the performances. A principal dimension of existence in which performer differs from star is life and death. Humphrey Bogart is dead, but as a star he lives. Audiences still have para-social interactions (see below) with him. Tyrone Power and Robert Taylor are also dead, but so are their stars. It will be my contention that although Audrey Hepburn lives on, and so does her star, this need not have been the case.

In mitigation of the mistake Dyer, I and others made it might be argued that some of the glamorous aura surrounding stars derives from the confusion of star and performer. Perhaps.

But those of us who study stars closely and are aware of the difference do not thereby spoil our pleasure in stars.

One way to add flesh to the stark sociology of this account of stars as social institutions is by contrast with Richard Dyer's plausible and enlightening view that a star is an image.

Using layout to emphasise the elements of his view, we get:

a star is

an image (not a real person)

that is constructed (as any other aspect of fiction is)

out of a range of materials (e.g. advertising, magazines etc. as well as

films) (Dyer 1972, p. 12).

Dyer's definition of the star as an image - even though he qualifies it as not solely visual - nevertheless overemphasises the visual aspects of the star and makes the social relations into which the star enters difficult to grasp (his phrase is 'hard, if not impossible, to establish', 1979, p. 13). For one thing, it is not usual to treat images as the sort of thing that can enter into social relations. A star does indeed have an image, but its social relations point to dimensions to its existence beyond what is conveyed by the notion of an image.

Another of the ways in which the existence of stars goes beyond mere imagery would be Horton and Wohl's (1956) idea that stars are para-social entities with which the audience has para-social interactions. Were we to concentrate on their paradigm example, the TV talk-show host who speaks to, looks at, and orientates his behaviour towards the camera as though it were a live person responding to his cues (Horton and Wohl were writing of Jack Paar), we might be misled into thinking of para-social interaction as no more than theatrical illusion.

Illusion it is, but, I would argue, one that is sustained by concrete actions on the part of both the audience and the performer. The audience tunes in, pays attention, laughs. Studio audience reactions and host actions to cue the home audience are complements. Each presupposes and is orientated towards the other.

Turning from television to movies, the same points apply: neither audience nor performer is unaware of the illusion of interaction and, indeed, both connive at the process of sustaining it. The silence of the audience in the movie theatre is produced because the audience consciously refrains from offering interactive response to on-screen cues, presumably under the knowledge that the performer on the screen cannot react.² On the part of the performers, acting skills are deployed partly to draw attention away from the artificial devices being used to sustain the para-social interaction, especially the technique of performing for the camera while not acknowledging it. An inexperienced performer is said to be 'camera-conscious'.

We have a very restricted vocabulary for writing about the performers' effects. Often we resort to simple description or absurd metaphor, as when we write about the camera being 'in love' with a performer. Because of the dominant naturalistic conventions of the cinema, wherein the camera is an unseen and unacknowledged observer, what a performer such as Hepburn accomplishes is to seem to play at other actors on the screen, while calculating all

2. In some societies (including sub-cultures of our own) the culture of movie-going does not impose the sepulchral silence that is the ideal in ours (or perhaps was the ideal). This means that some audiences viewing movies from our culture do not engage in the same para-social interactions that are being cued from the screen. Nothing follows from this for the view I am developing.

the effects for the impassive lens a few feet away, itself a stand-in for flesh-and-blood audiences in cinemas.³

Consider one of the characteristic ways of staging a dialogue scene between two characters. Instead of facing and looking at one another as is common in life, the following will sometimes be the pattern. One actor will approach the camera, affording the audience a full-face view, but speaking and looking past the camera to some point in space. The other actor, visible over the shoulder or beside the first one, will address the back of that person's head during their colloquy, even responding to the (concealed) facial changes. This type of staging derives from the demands of the lens, i.e. the audience, yet must remain implicit because the dominant narrative convention of movies is that the overlooking lens and the demands it makes on the spatial arrangement of performers is not to be acknowledged. The contrivances of direction and performance and the complicity of the audience in overlooking these contrivances are both indirect forms of social interaction, social interaction that goes well beyond what we would naturally ascribe to an image.⁴

Since performers engage in such indirect forms of social interaction with the audience, we would do well not to reduce the further entity in part produced from such ingredients, the star, to an image. We might better understand stars as entities in our social universe that we can call 'pseudo-persons', persons we like to think we know (a social relation), even without

3. In the documentary *Foto: Sven Nykvist* we can observe an interesting facet of Ingmar Bergman's technique. In intimate scenes he sits next to but just off-camera, very close indeed to his performers. Thus as they project their performance for him it is also captured by the camera, so it and we the audience share some of the intimate rapport Bergman has with his players.

bring able to meet them face-to-face (a social relation). The piquant point is that stars are entities such that no-one can ever meet them face-to-face. If I meet Audrey Hepburn I do not meet the star, the social institution; I meet a flesh-and-blood performer who may in fact have difficulty coping with such social relations as: (a) the demands and expectations of being (b) mis-identified with the star her (c) performances contributed to (d) making.

In this respect these star pseudo-persons resemble real persons we have heard a lot about (a social relation) but have not met (a social relation). The main difference is that behind what we have heard about real persons there does stand a real person, who can be met, and whose reality can confirm or correct what we have heard (or, their reality may remain elusive).⁵

Behind what we have heard of the film star Audrey Hepburn there stands no such real person (pace Dyer) because her star was a constructed pseudo-person, one constructed, moreover, from mostly fictional shards and fragments dispersed through many media. Our confusion on the matter comes from the fact that the actress Audrey Hepburn was necessary to the construction of the film star Audrey Hepburn, but she was not sufficient. Sufficiency was only achieved when her efforts were complemented by those of others in the industry, the other media, and still others in the position of audiences. Audrey Hepburn the performer on screen contributed elements to the pseudo-person of her star and may or may not have assisted in the off-screen production process too. It was Alexander Walker, I think, who shrewdly noted that if the performer comes to think that the major task they must perform is

4. The staging just described is derived, of course, from the stage. My point is that in this matter of implicit social interaction between performers and audiences there is only a difference of subtlety between movies and live theatre.

to contribute to and sustain the star, they too may end up confusing their real selves (and no naive view of this need be assumed in the era of Erving Goffman) with the star self.⁶

Audrey Hepburn the star cannot be identified with the real, rather thin, highly-strung, Dutch woman who was been twice married, has two children, and was at the time of writing sixty years old. (She subsequently died at age 63.) Oddly for her and for us, while her work on screen at least was a necessary ingredient in the fabrication process of the star Audrey Hepburn, her star continued to be present as one of the institutions of our society even though the actress had long ceased to collaborate, either on-screen or off. What she had helped to create was no longer under her control, no longer needed her. My sense is that the construction of her particular star took a relatively short time, was rapidly completed, and that subsequently when Audrey Hepburn appeared in films, or received media coverage, she no longer contributed any input to the star she helped create. Indeed the thin, highly-strung etc. sixty-year old who did good work for UNICEF may now be seen as benefitting from her prior association with her star. And, even more eerily, the star she helped to create could outlive her. Unlike real persons, social institutions such as stars need not die. This is not to deny that her star could pre-decease her. In Hepburn's case this did not happen. For those of us present at the creation her star still burns, as it does for nostalgia buffs and some film specialists. For

5. Perhaps the *locus classicus* is the case of Peter Sellers, which is argued in Evans 1968 and certainly not contradicted in Ekland 1980. It is much embroidered by Lewis 1997.

6. Walker 1966 makes this the main point of his chapter on Elizabeth Taylor.

the film public at large, my sense was that her star had dimmed in her final years and then after her death it shone again.⁷

The social relations mentioned several paragraphs above by no means exhaust those into which a star enters. A star permits real persons to have para-social interactions with them, that is, one-way communication (them with us) that simulates two-way. Another way in which stars are very different from images is that the nature and variety of the social functions stars can perform are different from those performed by images. I take my view of institutions from Agassi, who has suggested that their primary function is as inter-personal means of coordination.⁸ What do stars function to coordinate. Some of these are: ideals, fantasy figures, symbols, role-models, salespersons, preachers, object-lessons, dire warnings, aspirations, dreams, targets, scapegoats, emotional outlets, elements in erotic scripts, projective identifications, and so on. They permeate our society because it operates by means of symbolic interactions, which create a space where abstract social entities can dwell.

So much for preliminary theorising about stars, performers, images and social institutions. How directly to address stars in one's writing, what to put in of oneself as audience member? The theoretical ideas just outlined have two main sources: ethnographic exposure of the author to, and manipulation of the para-social relations involving, stars; and sociological reflection. The separations they involve between the star, the para-social relations of star and audience members, dramatic role, off-screen accoutrements, and the real performer, have been very difficult to distinguish. Some of our folk sociology is quite good (e.g. our ability to read markers of social class), some of it not so good (our ability to

7 . Her son, writing in 2003, notes the eeriness of her having died ten years before and still she is everywhere (Ferrer 2003). It also has to be said that her star never dimmed in Japan, a country that continues to have an ardent relationship to it.

demystify the mass media). The problems of both the social function of stars and of their phenomenology to the audience have taken me beyond folk sociology into their scientific successors.

All too little of the writing about stars draws on sociology and social psychology, or is in the literary genre of the academic paper at. Most of what one can read when researching Audrey Hepburn falls into four quite different literary genres, illustrating the very limited number of literary formats utilised in writing about stars. Here is the list with the Hepburn examples named in brackets. There is the illustrated picture book (*Cinema Star Album 184*; *Audrey Hepburn*; Ferrer); the show-biz biography (Parish, Higham, Woodward); the feminist tract (de Beauvoir); the love letter (Reed).⁹ All of these take the star persona as unproblematic and either illustrate it with pictures, feed it with factoids,¹⁰ deconstruct it with ideology, or become deluded by it (the love letter is directed at a performer, mistaken for a social institution).

All four genres suffer from lack of theory about stars and from systematic confusion between performer and star. None of these formats suits the explorations I am attempting in this essay. Perhaps I could characterise it, rather untidily, as an attempt to use a combination of sociology and autobiography (or of autobiography sociologised) to get at the social function of stars in general, and the functions of Audrey Hepburn and other stars for the audience, including me. It thus has to take partial account of my social relations to her star persona. Inevitably this could provide certain opportunities for self-revelation, opportunities I

8. See his surpassingly brilliant paper (1960) and its complement (1975).

9. Since this was written I have come across another literary format: the catalogue. Hepburn has been the object of a number of shows connected to style.

10. See Mailer's 1973, p. 18.

intend to pass up except where they are a revelation to me. In so far as I can illuminate the functioning of the star in the individual psychic process, it is only in the hope of illuminating it in the social process.¹¹

My para-social relations to Audrey Hepburn's star perhaps need to be spelled out. I had been an adolescent filmgoer for several years when I saw *Roman Holiday* in 1953 at the age of 16. Female movie stars played a strong role in the fantasy emotional life of all the boys I knew in the small British town where I grew up. A small sub-class of our reactions, very vivid at the time, and gone almost beyond recall now, were the star personae we found purely erotic. The eroticism was usually crystalised in single moments in a film, or an isolated still, moments that allured one into constructing a promising erotic script.¹² Performers in 'continental' films such as Danielle Darrieux, Martine Carol and Silvano Mangano rather outdid Hollywood's entries in these stakes. Quite different from the purely erotic were the sub-class of star images with which one fell in love. In early adolescence my heart yearned when I saw the face of Elizabeth Taylor reproduced on page or screen. Such silent perfection. When Audrey Hepburn came along I had a rather longer infatuation with her, one that seems to have faded out as she endeavoured to broaden her range as an actress and move away from the romantic comedy films wherein the affair began. My sense is that this was also the progress of her career, vaulting to highly paid superstardom, then stabilising, then gradually fading.

11. Agassi writes: "I propose that psychology studies the adjustment of the individual to society, and the problems involved in this, and including problems of the maladjustment of the individual such as schizophrenia. Sociology, symmetrically with this, studies the adjustment of social to the individual, and the problems involved, and including problems of maladjustment of society such as caste system and other rigidities." (Agassi 1977, p. 306.)

As an avid filmgoer I know from my diaries that I saw Hepburn in her bit parts in *Laughter in Paradise*, *Young Wives Tale* and *The Lavender Hill Mob*. (A full list of her films is given below.) Yet neither at the time, nor when prompted by video re-runs of them now, can I affirm that she was noticeable and that her promise stood out, as is claimed in both her show-biz biographies (Higham and Woodward). As an intellectual movie fan (who sometimes self-deceptively denied the power of stars in the attractions of the cinema) I must confess that I saw her first and second American films not because of her but because of their directors: Wyler (*Roman Holiday*, 1953) and Wilder (*Sabrina*, 1954). (I caught up with *The Secret People* only in 1989.) She radiated infectious charm in *Roman Holiday* and was positively entrancing in *Sabrina*. She played, in the latter, an adolescent yearning for the attention of the object of her romantic affections: a reflexive role for the adolescent filmgoer.

Having seen her in those films, however, and recollecting the impression they made, it is no surprise that when, as the film reviewer for the LSE student newspaper *Beaver*, I came to review *War and Peace*, I wrote what I could now at best describe rather charitably as a love-letter. This state of enthrallment, marked by eager attendance at each of her new films stopped abruptly with *Green Mansions*.

For four years, 1953-1957, I could script her into a romantic fantasy in which she was the dream girl, a love object but not really an erotic one. (The exception was a brief scene in *Sabrina* when she appeared in shorts. Neither the character in the film, nor the performer, seemed to regard the outfit as provocative. To read it that way was therefore, of course, violative. So little emphasis in the star persona was placed on Hepburn's body - or 'figure' as the expression was then - that I confess to a certain incredulity when production stories for

Two for the Road touted her 'courage' in doing a nude scene. Why then was it disappointing that it was left on the cutting room floor? Because the offered thrill from all such scenes is not the aesthetics of contemplating a hitherto hidden body but the fantasy violation of what is usually withheld. Hence magazines such as *Celebrity Skin*.)

All her films of those years, all that one read about her off-screen life, seemed of a piece, with the exception of her marriage to Mel Ferrer, which took place between *Sabrina* and *War and Peace*. Unless stars marry stars, and the right ones at that, there is almost always something jarring about the real-life marriages of the performers, making that action difficult to assimilate into whatever scripts the audience is writing around the stars. This is, of course, because of the persistent confusion between performer and star already outlined. The gaunt, unmemorable and unfamous Mr. Ferrer seemed a very odd life partner for the bubbling and mischievous Hepburn star persona. One somehow expected the performer to marry someone at least as interesting as she was as a star. Those casting her pictures consistently placed her opposite leading men who were older and rather sophisticated - Peck, Holden/Bogart, Fonda, Astaire, Cooper. In contrast to the Ferrer nuptials, the young Elizabeth Taylor had around this time married the debonair Michael Wilding. Had Hepburn married a man of this calibre or, more sophisticatedly, a writer or director, it would have rested easier with her star persona. And yet all of this line of thought was absurd. For all we fans knew Hepburn the performer was far less interesting than the star she played, Ferrer far more interesting that we took him to be simply because he was not a star of the first rank.

Her attraction as a star survived that marriage for this member of the audience by it simply being erased from consciousness - helped by Ferrer's not appearing in her major films, and directing certainly her most boring one. The persona and characteristics of her star

seemed to continue to settle into place until 1957, the year in which both *Funny Face* and *Love in the Afternoon* were released, the two twin peaks of movie pleasure that I associated with her. 11 features before her 'retirement' in 1967, then, for me the closure of her star persona was complete. Her subsequent films never matched the perfection achieved in 1957, and, indeed, had the star not been both well defined and closed, might have spoiled it. The beginning of the end was *Green Mansions*, a film with which almost everything was wrong. Anthony Perkins did his febrile impersonation of James Dean when the part called for a John Wayne or Gary Cooper. Henry Silva was an implausible Amazonian Indian. A Disneyland jungle set for the Amazon rain forest. An impossibly whimsical story and part for Hepburn, a nature girl with a dancer's turnout, wearing a form-fitting sackcloth slip apparently by Givenchy, immaculately pancaked, with glossy brushed hair and not a single bang out of place. No wonder the local natives took her for a witch and burned her alive in a tree. The *Monthly Film Bulletin* wrote of her being 'tense and camera-conscious'. This was not just a bad film, but a bad film she and her husband had hand-picked as a vehicle for her. Instead of the sophisticated European clothes-horse, the essentially playful and urban image her star persona embodied, she tried to perform like a faun. There was no place for this material in the developed star persona. Instead of the film being an enhancement of the star it was an embarrassment.

There were to be several other duds (*The Nun's Story*) when she tried to be actressy; comedy flops (*Paris When it Sizzles: My Fair Lady; How to Steal a Million*), and others in which there was a tendency to overplay the cute aspects of her star persona - the wide-eyes and vocal mannerisms (*Breakfast at Tiffany's; Charade* - the films that other, less severe, observers might take as the last appearance of the star persona). And while it was

understandable that a performer should try a variety of things, *The Children's Hour*, *The Unforgiven*, and *Wait Until Dark*, while interesting, were very far from vehicles suitable to showcase the star whom her fans loved. To be truthful, this fan lost interest. Hepburn was working on her absurd declared ambition to be a 'great actress' without much success and with scant regard for something far more important, the social institution of the star Audrey Hepburn she had helped create and towards which she had some responsibility.

If my ruthless disregard of films that did not seem to embody or enhance the star persona is accepted, it comes down then to a very small canon. So far from her being a star who could do no wrong, the image that captivated was present in very few films and ceased to be reproduced once she had entered her thirties.

Writing about all this is very difficult, not only because one's former self does not always bear scrutiny, but also because there is a cruelty involved that makes one glad the UNICEF ambassadress and retired performer never read it. The rueful realisation dawns that it might be very uncomfortable to meet Audrey Hepburn the performer, because it was the star not the performer who was interesting, attractive, etc., and the performer is not and cannot 'be' the star in face-to-face encounter. Expecting to meet the star is what philosophers call a category mistake, like expecting to meet the insurance company after meeting all its personnel. How unpleasant it must be for a flesh-and-blood performer to realise that they are expected in face-to-face encounters to be something that, after all, has been constructed by the public out of their performances, and only some of those performances at that, and out of lots of other, more extraneous things, including audience fantasies and projections. This unpleasantness explains, I believe, several of the phenomena of stardom such as the

detestation of type-casting, the confusion of self and star persona, and the often strong ambivalence about publicity.

If this is correct, why do journalists pursue star interviews? Is it to expose the ordinariness behind the glamour? But why? In order to de-glamourise, or to show that the ordinary and the glamour can go together? Since such interviews are part of the machinery of star-making and maintenance they invariably contribute to the glamour, whatever the intention. Similarly the interview may frustrate the star, since their intention may be to use it to point at the flesh-and-blood performer, and succeed merely in enhancing the star.

In writing about the theory of stars, the problems of literary form, the peculiarities of Hepburn's star career, and one audience member's para-social relations to her star, I have postponed long enough the undergirding of facts gleaned by revisiting the films, ploughing through the biographies and the clippings files, indulging in longing and nostalgia. Who was the performer necessary to this star-fabrication, what did she contribute, what was *she* really like? My account will be lean because I wish to avoid all factoids, namely stories which became facts only because they were printed in newspapers and magazines.

Born in 1929 in Belgium to a Dutch mother and a British father, Audrey Hepburn arrived in London in 1948 and worked her way in three years from ballet school to photographic model to cabaret in the West End to small parts in films. Her bit parts were forgettable, but were followed by a second lead in *The Secret People*, when she was 22, the lead in the Broadway stage version of *Gigi*, when she was 23, and the lead in the major Hollywood film **Roman Holiday** when she was 24.

I lay stress on her age at each point because she was older than the parts she was playing (teenagers), which suggests two things: she did at that time look younger than her

age, and thus there was a good deal of contrivance - performance - in her presentation of self. She was not just some frisky teenager being naturally winsome on screen, she was an accomplished performer perfecting her performance as a frisky teenager.¹³ Indeed she reached such a perfection that when, near the end of her major film career, she made *My Fair Lady*, she could no longer shed the performance in order to make the scruffy flower girl of the opening scenes remotely believable in looks, age or accent. It is true that neither Wendy Hiller (in the 1938 film *Pygmalion*) nor Julie Andrews (in the stage production of the musical) did much better. It is obviously a very difficult part to cast. When Eliza's transformation took place Hepburn seemed utterly in her element in swanky clothes and high toned company, despite the plotted opportunities supposed to display the cracks in the façade.

Her entire film career comprises 26 roles in films,¹⁴ six of them canonical because they fed into her star, the other twenty of questionable relevance:

BIT PARTS

13. Thus one might be sceptical of the following story. During the screen testing for *Roman Holiday* it was arranged to keep the camera rolling after the test-scene was over, whereupon 'Audrey smiled and gave an infectious laugh that made the hardened crew laugh in response. The results were irresistible.' (Higham, p. 45). Supposedly it was her natural high spirits caught by the screen test camera after the call of 'cut' that persuaded William Wyler she was right for *Roman Holiday*. This typical factoid is always told (by Madsen and, presumably taking it from him, Higham and Woodward) as a trick contrived by Wyler to expose her natural self. All these supposedly sophisticated journalists expect us to believe that a professional performer on a movie set, surrounded by lights and crew, is only performing when the cameras are rolling. They even report that she eventually figured out that the camera was still rolling and so reacted to that, too. It does not allay scepticism to find that, according to these writers, the test was directed by Paul Stein (Higham) or Thorold Dickinson (Woodward) and then was shipped to Rome (Madsen, Higham) or Hollywood (Woodward).

14. A complete filmography as well as a list of her stage and television work is appended to Woodward, facts in a sea of factoids.

1. 1951: *Laughter in Paradise*, d. Mario Zampi, filmed in London. Audrey in a walk-on as a night-club cigarette-girl.
2. 1951: *One Wild Oat*, d. Charles Saunders, filmed in London. Audrey as an hotel clerk.
3. 1951: *Young Wives Tale*, d. Henry Cass, filmed in London. Audrey as the lodger, Eve.
4. 1951: *The Lavender Hill Mob*, d. Charles Crichton, filmed in London. Audrey as a hat-check girl.
5. 1951: *Monte Carlo Baby*, d. Jean Boyer, Lester Fuller, filmed France. Audrey as Linda Farrell, mother of the missing baby at the centre of this farce. Filmed after *The Secret People*.

CANONICAL

6. 1952: *The Secret People*, d. Thorold Dickinson, filmed in London. Audrey as the ballerina sister of a refugee played by Valentina Cortese. They get mixed up with a terrorist from their home land (Serge Reggiani).
7. 1953: *Roman Holiday*, d. William Wyler, filmed in Rome. Audrey as Princess Ann, who slips her handlers and has a 24-hour romance with an American newspaper man (Gregory Peck).
8. 1954: *Sabrina*, d. Billy Wilder, filmed in Hollywood. Audrey as the daughter of the chauffeur to the Larabee family (Humphrey Bogart and William Holden).

9. 1956: *War and Peace*, d. King Vidor, filmed in Italy. As Natasha.
10. 1957: *Funny Face*, d. Stanley Donen, filmed in Paris. Audrey as the bookstore clerk, Jo, transformed into a high-fashion model by a fashion photographer (Fred Astaire).
11. 1957: *Love in the Afternoon*, d. Billy Wilder, filmed in Paris. Ariane, the daughter of a private detective (Maurice Chevalier) wins one of his Lothario subjects (Gary Cooper).

QUESTIONABLE

12. 1959: *The Nun's Story*, d. Fred Zinnemann, filmed in Africa, Belgium and Rome. A Belgian girl joins a strict order, endures the Congo and eventually returns to ordinary life.
13. 1959: *Green Mansions*, d. Mel Ferrer, filmed in Hollywood. Rima, a child of nature in the Amazonian forest, entrances an adventurer (Anthony Perkins) and is killed by superstitious Indians.
14. 1960: *The Unforgiven*, d. John Huston, filmed in Mexico. Hepburn as a rancher's daughter suspected of being a half-breed, resulting in a fight with the Indians.
15. 1961: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, d. Blake Edwards, filmed in New York. Holly Golightly, a beautiful and bizarre good-time girl intrigues her neighbour, a writer (George Peppard).
16. 1961: *The Children's Hour*, d. William Wyler, filmed in Hollywood. Two school teachers are accused of lesbianism (co-starring Shirley Maclaine).

17. 1963: *Charade*, d. Stanley Donen, filmed in Paris. A widow (Hepburn) in search of her husband's fortune is abetted and pursued by several sinister men (Walter Matthau and Cary Grant).
18. 1964: *Paris When it Sizzles*, d. Richard Quine, filmed in Paris. Screenwriter (William Holden) and his secretary (Hepburn) act out film ideas.
19. 1964: *My Fair Lady*, d. George Cukor, filmed in Hollywood. Musical version of Shaw's *Pygmalion* with Hepburn as Eliza Doolittle, Stanley Holloway as her father and Rex Harrison as Professor Henry Higgins.
20. 1966: *How to Steal a Million*, d. William Wyler, filmed in Paris. An elaborate art-theft caper film co-starring Peter O'Toole.
21. 1967: *Two for the Road*, d. Stanley Donen, filmed in France. A bickering couple (Albert Finney and Hepburn) try to save their twelve-year old marriage on a journey across France.
22. 1967: *Wait Until Dark*, d. Terence Young, filmed in Hollywood. Blind woman menaced by psychotically violent criminal (Alan Arkin).
23. 1976: *Robin and Marion*, d. Richard Lester, filmed in Spain. Robin Hood (Sean Connery) and Maid Marion in middle age.
24. 1979: *Bloodline*, d. Terence Young, filmed in several European cities and New York. Family intrigue surrounds Hepburn's inheritance of a Zurich-based pharmaceutical company. James Mason, Ben Gazzara and other stars.
25. 1981: *They All Laughed*, d. Peter Bogdanovich, filmed in New York. Comedy involving four private eyes, one is Ben Gazzara.
26. 1989: *Always*, d. Steven Spielberg, filmed in Hollywood. A small

part as an angel.

Into the star persona go not only the materials from each relevant film, but also, as both Ellis (1982) and Dyer (1979) stress, the material generated by the publicity machine, some of which purports to give the public access to the private side of the star, but all of which is manifestly as constructed as the films themselves. But Hepburn was a case of a star persona fully formed over the course of a few films, a persona with no clear outline of an offscreen life and indeed one whose marriage to the wooden and pretentious Mel Ferrer was a source of deep dismay to some fans. She was not a star who generated off-screen excitement, or whose off-screen persona presented an interesting magnification of, or complement to, her on-screen work. On the contrary, where on-screen there was cool, humour and imperturbability, off-screen there peeped through suggestions of imperiousness, nerves, hysteria, catastrophic taste in men.

One depressing result of reading the biographies and clippings files for this essay has been the worsening sense of the reality of this conflict. Sceptical as one must be of all such factoidal materials, the bewildering contradictions startle. Hepburn is reported as not considering any of her physical features in isolation to be beautiful. Yet she is also reported as poring over fashion magazines, insisting on Givenchy clothes, retiring when the signs of age precluded youthful parts. There are hints of her having Gone Hollywood with a vengeance: staying in luxurious hotels, trailing an entourage, pets, and vast quantities of luggage, some of it furniture. Yet there are claims to being a simple soul devoted to the simple life: housewife, mother, gardener, lover of animals. There is the fatal attraction to playboy charmer men, apparently oblivious to the unsatisfactory complexity of motives such

men would have for pursuing her. This star of two films by the wisecracking Billy Wilder even married in all seriousness a plump Italian psychiatrist called 'Dotti'!

What I should like to turn to now is closer scrutiny of that brief period of star appeal, lasting at most about ten years (the very last film in which her star can be claimed to be shining is, I think, *Charade*), the audience fantasy scripts that Hepburn fitted, her rival stars, and so on. The early nineteen-fifties also saw the almost simultaneous rise of Marilyn Monroe and Grace Kelly, the voluptuous blonde and the ice blonde. Yet of the four women stars mentioned in the essay so far three were relatively ladylike and not overtly sexually provocative (Taylor, Kelly, Hepburn). Unlike Marilyn Monroe their success was not cultivated through a voluptuary apparatus of tight skirts, plunging necklines, puckered lips or provocative behaviour. Speaking for myself I found it quite impossible ever to construct an erotic script around the Marilyn Monroe star persona, although others, I know, took her to be the pinnacle of erotic promise. The style of provocation offered by Brigitte Bardot was much more to my erotic taste. Whether I was out of the mainstream or not, the Hepburn persona elicited my adoration not because of eroticism but because of a kittenish playfulness, intelligence, and insouciance, qualities that were displayed in only a handful of her films.

In trying to characterise the nature of her appeal I must part company with the French writers. Morin describes Hepburn as part of a group of nineteen-fifties gamine women stars embodying a 'perverse innocence' - whatever that means. It may tell us more about the fantasy scripts which Morin writes for himself than about the star persona of Hepburn. He groups her, grotesquely (p. 29), with Bardot, Françoise Arnoul, Marina Vlady and, more plausibly, Leslie Caron. Simone de Beauvoir groups her with the same names and characterises the type as the erotic hoyden. Perhaps I am in a minority of one here, but I

would want to insist that Hepburn was not really ever tomboyish. Her playfulness was girlish, her image always feminine. No doubt attraction to women with subdued secondary sexual characteristics may have androgynous, even bisexual overtones. Yet it also deserves to be noticed that Hepburn represented a female type admired in the west since the nineteen-twenties: tall, slim, and very pretty. It makes more sense to relate this to its connotations of youthfulness than to boyishness.

What then was the heart of the Hepburn star performance, the persona this young woman from both sides of the North Sea contrived as her contribution to the pantheon of stardom? I think it has to be the importation of a continental high fashion style into the movies. More so than her rival screen princesses (Grace Kelly especially), Hepburn exploited looks and style that derived from the still-camera world of Paris Fashion (Dior, Balmain, Balenciaga, Courrèges, Givenchy), utilising heavy eye make-up and clean-lined clothes draped on a figure so slim as to be out of reach of most real world women. She animated the mannequin, made her what every admiring male hoped such silent clothes horses might be in the flesh: witty, charming, and winsome, rather than cold, aloof and mysterious. The majority of her films were made in Europe, where the extreme high style and sophistication of her clothing, hair and make-up was repeatedly displayed against the background to which such things were then 'naturally' attached. Time and again she played opposite debonair and sophisticated men considerably her senior, but only with difficulty her match.

To argue this further it might be best to go back to the handful of films which enshrine for me the star persona of Audrey Hepburn the comedienne - demure, playful, intelligent, unafraid: *Roman Holiday*, *Sabrina*, *Funny Face*, **Love in the Afternoon**. By the time of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and *Charade*, she had become winsomely and self-consciously cute in

the deployment of her mannerisms, the freshness had worn off, the calculation was starting to show through.

Roman Holiday and *Sabrina* were both films about the construction of images. In the first glamour and sophistication were deconstructed, then restored. The dignified and aloof Princess Ann in *Roman Holiday* escapes her handlers and for twenty-four hours enjoys being an ordinary tourist without the trappings of royalty. In a reverse Cinderella ending, she abandons love of a commoner, Joe Bradley (Gregory Peck), to return to her royal duty. Behind the royal façade, Ann is shown to be just a regular, fun-loving girl. But the façade is serious business, so she goes back behind it. The part gave Hepburn the chance to play the regal scenes, to go through a change of appearance and hair style, to have hysterics, get tipsy, play frisky scenes, chases, and a scene of falling in love. Most of the repertoire from dignity to indignity was tried out in this film.

After the reverse Cinderella story of *Roman Holiday* came the true Cinderella story of *Sabrina*, in which she played the chauffeur's daughter, infatuated with the rich playboy boss David Larrabee (William Holden) who does not notice her until she returns from cookery school in Paris chiquely dressed and sophisticated. Cinderella has gone from rags to the glass slipper. However, this continental education has also been enough to enable her to see through the wolf and take up with the truer and steadier but much older brother Linus (Humphrey Bogart). Whereas Princess Ann's transition was from regal to chiquely informal and back again, Sabrina's was from schoolgirl to mannequin. Her parts in both these films suggested that Hepburn's star had two sides, a glitteringly perfect fashion image and a naïve and playful personality underneath.

Funny Face is once more about the building of glamorous images, the Cinderella transformation. Beginning in a Greenwich Village bookshop, where the blue stocking bohemian Jo Stockton is discovered, she is transformed into a stunning fashion model, who then falls in love with the much older and experienced photographer Dick Avery (Fred Astaire). For me this is the ultimate film showcase for her star because it postulates the blue-stockings concealing a beauty, a beautiful personality, romantic and fun, a beautiful looker by the standards of the fashion world, and all this in a film with production design by the fashion photographer Richard Avedon.

That a new star's first three films should all be about the transformation of the ordinary and the unglamorous into the extraordinary glamour of the star, that all should play on the Goffmanian theme of the line between the private and the public presentation of self, is gift enough to the theorist of stardom. That they were also successful films and the launch of a successful star career shows how well the serendipitous Hollywood system worked.

Sex rears its head for the first time in *Love in the Afternoon*, where the cello-playing youngster Ariane sleeps with and yet snares the philandering older playboy Frank Flanagan (Gary Cooper). The characters Hepburn played in this period had a love-life but no sex-life, so in this film she became a man's mistress without removing a stitch of clothing, getting into a bed or ever having a single hair out of place. The cynical writer-director Billy Wilder clearly relished the contrast between Hepburn in her severe A-line clothes and figure to match, and the curves of her prop cello.

Of all these film texts the richest for me in star resonances and in intrinsic worth as film is *Funny Face*. In my recollection it perfected the star persona that Hepburn was in process of helping build out from herself, and it had the added piquancy for the university student

viewer that she was in the film a bookworm, an intellectual, a philosopher, indeed, who could yet enjoy dance and fashion. The film's gentle satire on the left-bank philosophy of 'empathicalism' and its sexually predatory Paris guru Emile Flostre, bore comparison with Paul Jennings classic satire on Resistentialism and *its* guru Paul-Marie Ventre.¹⁵

Perhaps the highest compliment one can pay a musical is to say of it that although it was made at Paramount, it was worthy of the Freed Unit at MGM.¹⁶ Donen, a graduate of that unit, took the most urbane and sophisticated of musical stars, Astaire, and teamed him with the emerging sophisticated image of Hepburn. She was given several opportunities to showcase herself. She appeared first as a bluestocking assistant in a Greenwich Village bookstore, contemptuous of the world of fashion when it invaded her store to use it as background for a shoot. She was transformed during the film into a high fashion mannequin, the toast of *tout Paris*, photographed by Richard Avedon. She got to dance with Astaire and to do a satirical ballet 'expressing herself'. She got to sing (undubbed, unlike *My Fair Lady*) and, like Astaire, her voice proved to have a charming way with a song, however 'imperfect'. And she got to play high comedy yet again. Although for story purposes an American, the film was made in Paris and her overall look before and after the transformation was not very American. (One wonders what today's fashionable young bohemians make of the all-black outfits she wore in the bookshop and the Left Bank café - in a film of 1957.)

There is a very special 'lift' to this film, which completely overcomes its slightly dubious anti-intellectualism. The practical photographer, Avery (Astaire), found himself sympathetic with and attracted to the bluestocking bookstore clerk, Jo, who confessed her

15. 'Report on Resistentialism', (Jennings 1951).

yearning to go to Paris and study empathicalism. He impulsively kissed her, and when she asked why he did it, he replied that everyone wants to be kissed - even a philosopher. After his exit she then performed a very slow rendering of 'How Long Has This Been Going On', alone in the messy bookstore, her only prop a hat with long streamers. It ended on a sad and wistful note as she puzzled over whether something was missing from her life.

Avedon's famous photograph of her face in extreme high key, emphasising the eyes, nose and lips, used in the poster and on the soundtrack album cover, is used on-screen in Avery-Astaire's serenade to her, 'Funny Face'. Donen staged this song in a red-lit darkroom, Hepburn entirely in black, and ended it with an electric moment when Avery-Astaire pushed her into the beam of the enlarger and the camera dwelt on her beauty, suddenly revealed in full colour.

Disembarked in Paris, Avery-Astaire, Maggie Prescott (Kay Thompson) and Jo pretended to be busy and parted ways, when what they secretly wanted to do was rush round all the tourist spots. Each had gone to a different place so, to follow them, the sequence eventually used triple-split screen. Its opening is one of the most gorgeous illustrations of what John Russell Taylor has called the moment in musicals when 'action taughtens into dance'. Astaire exits from a cab near L'Arc de Triomphe, saunters across the sidewalk, turns, and then, orchestra, legs, voice and tracking camera synchronise as he steps rhythmically into the first line of 'Bonjour Patee': 'I wanna step out, on the Champs Elysees'. All three sets of parallel scenes were shot outdoors and the climax of the song found the three characters meeting in the elevator of the Eiffel Tower, the final chorus taken high up on an observation

16. Where in fact, if we can believe Higham pp. 99-100, it was originally conceived.

deck. Not only was this a *tour de force* of musical and location film-making, it had the light and romantic touch to perfection.

Hepburn's Jo gets to do a delightful parody on modern dance and on *apache* in a smoky *rive gauche* hangout, and learns that Dick Avery was correct when he told her that her philosopher guru was 'about as interested in your intellect as I am'. Their big romantic dance number was staged on the grass and river beside a country church, which is also where the film ended after the usual misunderstandings have been cleared up.

To a budding young student of philosophy in the mid-fifties, attracted as Woody Allen has sheepishly admitted, to the intellectual kind of girls Hepburn portrayed in the film, *Funny Face* not only polished to perfection the Hepburn star persona, it also reassured one that there was pulchritude in girls who did not resemble Marilyn Monroe in any way whatsoever. Thin girls could be interesting, intense girls could be interesting, girls with some spirit and matching wits were yet delighted to be pursued, so it seemed. We dreamed the dream. In this film not only was Fred Astaire a much older man, he too had a funny face. Comfort for all those males who knew their looks were not in the class of Gregory Peck or William Holden or Gary Cooper.

It is very hard to know whether the closure of Hepburn's star persona which I have described was something other members of the audience also sensed. Perhaps not, given the extraordinary success of her film of four years later, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, which to me felt highly calculated. It could be that one's dreams of women were, at about the age of twenty, with graduation approaching, switching from the unapproachable ideals of the screen, to the concrete options available in life, where real social interaction rather than para-social interaction offered itself. It could also be that the sexless perfection she represented was hard

to continue to script into one's dreams as one's experience of the fleshy reality of desire in this world for this or that person became urgent. At all events, Hepburn the star is for me a fixed social institution of my late adolescence, one whose charm and delivery of pleasure declined abruptly after 1957 and whose films, although usually seen, were regularly disappointments. Since during those years I also pursued intensive inquiries into, and thought about, films in society it is possible that I demystified my own experience of the star. It is possible, but I do not think it is so. I am inclined to the view that stars do certain sorts of social work for us at given stages of life and not at others. In a movie-saturated culture it is possible that, as people move through the life cycle, they move through a succession of star pleasures.¹⁷

To end with I want to shift out of the autobiographical register and suggest a generalisation: historians and sociologists of film need to read stars not off the films, but as far as possible from the ways in which the audiences used and enjoyed them. Stars are social institutions and they function not only as narrative devices or product differentiators of films. They also function in the psychic counterparts of the social lives of the audience. But to get it right we need a lot more exploration of the detail of the para-social interaction which surrounded them.¹⁸

17. Here I must point to my colleague Fred Elkin's pioneering and neglected work.

18. Christopher Bray's book on Michael Caine is a good negative case. His thesis is that in the 1960s Michael Caine in some way both embodied and stimulated the shaking up of the British social class structure and life opportunities of those from the bottom of the heap. Yet his entire test of this thesis is his own reactions, or "readings", of Caine's performances and reference to box-office success. He claims that if the "lad culture" of the time of writing has any star hero it is Caine. He does not tell us how he knows this. (Bray 2005).

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