

71 | trousers and tiaras: Audrey Hepburn, a woman's star

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abstract

Audrey Hepburn is one of cinema's most stylish and enduring icons, and has embodied an ideal of femininity for generations of women. Using textual analysis, archival research and audience accounts of 'Doing the Hepburn Look', I argue that Audrey Hepburn, as a star clearly addressing a female audience, offered a flexible image which was enabling to young women through dress in relation to exigencies of gender, class and national identity. The paper draws on research conducted as part of a larger project investigating Hepburn's ongoing appeal for young British women from the 1950s to the 1990s.

keywords

audience; Audrey Hepburn; class; differences; dress; femininity

On how to be lovely, you gotta be happy ...
Can't do it with make up, you've just gotta wake up,
You don't need dough, you don't need a college degree
You'll be as happy as can be ...

From McRobbie's (1978) cultural studies work on the oppositional use of make up and fashion by working-class girls, to the recent emphasis in film studies on the relationship between cinema, consumption and the female spectator (see for instance Doane, 1987 and Stacey, 1994), critical work emerging in the later stages of second-wave feminism has shown a marked attention to the consideration and re-evaluation of fashion and femininity. This work has frequently been a site in which the exclusions of second-wave feminism in relation to race, ethnicity, sexuality, class and culture have been significantly challenged (See Gaines and Herzog, 1990; Ash and Wilson, 1992; Bruzzi, 1998; Bruzzi and Church-Gibson, 2000; Guy and Banim, 2000). Published in 1990, *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* (Gaines and Herzog) signalled the importance of a critical approach to clothes and the body as part of a wider concern to deconstruct the female image, and in *Chic Thrills* (Ash and Wilson, 1992), Angela Partington's 'Popular fashion and working-class affluence' argued for the importance of class in understanding the ways in which fashion is used by women in the everyday practices through which they present themselves to the world. As Wilson (1985: 13) has convincingly argued in relation to the significance of dress, 'The political subordination of women is an inappropriate point of departure if, as I believe, the most important thing about fashion is *not* that it oppresses women'.

As the lyrics of 'On How to be Lovely' from *Funny Face* (Stanley Donen, 1956) suggest, at the heart of the star text 'Audrey Hepburn', lie a set of democratic discourses of fashion and beauty and a clear address to a female audience, producing a highly flexible star image which consequently has been available to women across boundaries of generation, class and national identity. Penny Summerfield has suggested that

[p]ersonal narratives draw on the generalised subject available in discourse to construct the particular personal subject. It is thus necessary to encompass within oral history analysis and interpretation, not only the voice that speaks for itself, but also the voices that speak to it, the discursive formulations from which understandings are selected and with which accounts are made

(Summerfield, 1998: 15).

In this paper, I offer a discussion of the discursive construction of the feminine address of Hepburn's image, and an exploration of some memories of the taking up of that address in the everyday practices of women who admired 'The Audrey Hepburn Look' in the 1950s and 1960s, and their mobilization of it in

negotiating their way in the world. For many of the white, working-class women who took part in the study – as for Hepburn's key screen characters – appropriating 'The Hepburn Look' enabled them, through dress, to negotiate difficult or unfamiliar social situations, or to experiment with less conventional feminine identities, while remaining within the bounds of social acceptability in 1950s and 1960s Britain. Precisely the same set of discourses which structure Hepburn's star image also underpin the accounts of her given by the women who took part in the study: the close relationship between dress and subjectivity, for instance – it is through talk about clothes that the women tell both stories about Hepburn, and their own histories and identities. Similarly, many of the women, in telling those stories, told their own Cinderella narratives, their own stories of dress and social mobility. The interviews produced a number of different appropriations and mobilizations of 'The Hepburn Look', which emerged as a rich site for the articulation of ideas around femininity, modernity, class, generation and national identity.¹

1 This paper draws on two research projects designed to investigate the enduring appeal of Audrey Hepburn with young British women in the 1950s and 1960s at the height of her stardom, and again in the 1990s through a combination of textual analysis, archival research and interviews with two generationally distinct groups of British women who have admired and recreated 'The Hepburn Look' for themselves. In the present paper, I deal only with accounts given by the first group of women. The main research project consisted of the analysis of the key film texts of Hepburn's career, material in film fan and women's magazines of the period, and long semi-structured conversational interviews with women who offered to take part in the research projects and presented themselves as admirers of Hepburn. I already knew some women, who

a woman's star

Central to Audrey Hepburn's appeal and address to a female audience, has been the constitution and circulation of her image (understood as constructed from the sum of the information available on the star including film roles, stills, gossip, press and publicity, but also those aspects of a star's personal life available for public consumption; Dyer, 1979: 2–3) within discourses and sites conventionally understood as belonging to feminine culture: fashion, beauty, and the fairytale narrative of transformation. The discursive formulation 'Audrey Hepburn' is marked by the 'Cinderella' motif – a trope which structures not only her on-screen roles but also the extra-filmic discourse surrounding the star: Givenchy remembers that as Hepburn tried on his designs for the first time, 'the change from the little girl who arrived that morning was unbelievable' (Collins, 1995: 173). The Cinderella motif is a staple of feminine culture, from the childhood fairytale, to the before and after, rags to riches fashion and beauty makeover of girls' and women's magazines, women's films (e.g. *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), *Pretty in Pink* (Howard Deutch, 1986), *Pretty Woman* (Garry Marshall, 1990)), and a great deal of recent British television programming, offering the magical spectacle of transformation and the promise of a better self and a better life. It is this fairytale narrative of growing up and transformation in which discourses of beauty, dress and class are brought together as social mobility (while always already deserved) and a sense of self is achieved through a stylish makeover, which is at the heart of the key romantic comedies of Hepburn's career: *Roman Holiday* (William Wyler, 1953) (although in reverse – the princess becomes 'ordinary' for a day), *Sabrina* (Billy Wilder, 1954), *Funny Face* (Stanley Donen, 1956), *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Blake Edwards, 1961) and *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964), ensuring that the values

'ordinary' and 'special', central to stardom (Dyer, 1979: 49) are held in play. Paris, powerfully associated with *haute couture* and signifying European sophistication, plays a central role in these and other Hepburn narratives, and the dance or ball is the significant site at the heart of these Cinderella stories, a moment of increased visibility which provides a space for both the visual pleasure offered by the showcasing of the transformation, but also for the articulation of the anxiety and emotional resonance of 'coming out' in relation to class, as well as gender.

The apparent transparency and authenticity of Hepburn's star image – the extreme degree of fit between what is known of the fairytale femininities she embodied in her 'real' life, and her film roles which later played quite self-consciously on this – are central to her appeal:² Hepburn had an early career modelling for fashion magazines and is perpetually associated with *couturier* Hubert de Givenchy who dressed her on-screen and off throughout her career, and whose clothes she claimed, gave her confidence: 'They make me feel so sure of myself', she is reported as having said in the 1960s British magazine for young women, *Honey* (April, 1967). Similarly, knowledge of Hepburn's aristocratic European ancestry and training with the *Ballet Rambert* cements both the graceful, poised, refined princess and the dancer aspects of her image suggested by the flat pumps, simple dancer's black, tiny waists, slim trousers and 'ballerina' skirts which signalled 'Hepburn style' in the 1950s. The story of the little girl who survived for weeks in a cellar during the German occupation of Holland, and who carried *Resistance* messages in her dance shoes, later to become one of Hollywood's greatest stars, is perhaps the most powerful Cinderella narrative of all. This key trope, which embodies aspirations of beauty, romance and social mobility and which has been central to feminine popular culture and socialization, is surely at the centre of Hepburn's appeal and address to a female audience, structuring both the star's image and career, and also the personal accounts given by women who admired her.

a gendered attractionist aesthetic

At the heart, then, of Hepburn's Cinderella narratives and star image, is a discourse of fashion and beauty which produces a gendered attractionist aesthetic around her on screen, and opens up a significant space for a competent gendered gaze in which the details of dress are privileged. Furthermore, the inscription of this gaze offers a significant challenge the kind of 'to-be-looked-at-ness' which has frequently been argued in relation to the presentation of the female star in classical Hollywood cinema (Mulvey, 1989).³ Hepburn was rarely constructed for the 'male gaze' but rather textual analysis suggests that the subject position constructed by the text is one interested and competent in reading the details of fashion and style.

In the key films of Hepburn's career, while dress, as I discuss later, is tied intimately to character and indeed to subjectivity, nevertheless it does not function silently in the *mise-en-scène* but rather is an attraction in its own right,

introduced me to others, and the sample (14 in the main project) snowballed from there in a conventional manner. The aim was not to measure audience response against my analysis of the 'text' Audrey Hepburn, but rather in writing the research to produce an account in which suggestive resonances might emerge. See Moseley 1996, 2000 and forthcoming, 2002.

2 On this point, see Richard Dyer's discussion of Lana Turner (1991).

3 Molly Haskell suggests that in retrospect 'the qualities which made her more desirable to us were precisely those that made her less desirable to masses of

red-blooded American men. A friend tells the hilarious story of seeing *Sabrina* on the army post where his fellow servicemen much preferred the more curvaceous Martha Hyer' (1991: 10).



Figure 1

pausing the flow of narrative to solicit an attentive gaze even outside the spectacular possibilities of the musical or melodrama.⁴ In *Breakfast at Tiffany's* for example, the camera repeatedly captures Hepburn on the verge of going out or coming in – on the stair or in the hall – where her silhouette and the details of her dress can be viewed to the best advantage (See Figure 1). Publicity for the film stated that 'all told, Miss Hepburn is a fashion show herself as she scurries through *Breakfast at Tiffany's*'. Similarly in the murder mystery *Charade* (Stanley Donen, 1963) Hepburn's procession through the film takes the form of a feature on

⁴ See Gunning (1990), as well as Gaines and Herzog (1990) and Bruzzi (1998) for significant arguments about the role of dress in relation to narrative.

occasion wear: skiing, lunch in Paris, an afternoon in the park. *Funny Face* is explicitly concerned with fashion, having Hepburn's character Jo Stockton transform from Greenwich Village bookstore assistant to *couture* model, and plays self-consciously on Hepburn's early career as a model and her professional association with photographer Richard Avedon, who acted as art consultant on the film – the photographer played by Fred Astaire is named Dick Avery. Through this play on its star's associations with fashion and beauty culture, the film develops an innovative aesthetic which draws explicitly on the graphic conventions of fashion publishing. The credit sequence begins with a light box illuminating fashion and beauty plates for a fashion magazine, and foregrounds details of accessories and make-up under a magnifying glass. The first number, 'Think Pink!' is formally and thematically based upon an archetypal fashion spread from a women's glossy magazine, and features two-dimensional images of pink fashion accessories and beauty products montaged and abstracted with details shown in isolation: a bag, a shoe, an earring, a bow. This spectacular sequence offers a powerful address and pleasure to a spectator familiar with the layout of fashion magazines; furthermore, this film is knowing about the address it offers, playing both to the woman with conventionally feminine interests, whilst also incorporating a (rather circumscribed) proto-feminist (because anti-fashion) discourse through Hepburn's character. The co-existence of feminine and feminist discourses around Hepburn is, I will suggest, a central aspect of her appeal.

In *Sabrina* too, the film's audio-visual organization encourages the engagement of gendered competencies around dress: the address to a female spectator, and the space allowed for a gendered gaze invested and competent in reading the details of dress is quite clear. Sabrina Fairchild's (Hepburn) return to Long Island after two years in Paris is the moment at which the character's stylish transformation is revealed. As Sabrina writes to her father of her impending arrival – 'I shall be the most sophisticated woman at Glen Cove Station', there is a dissolve to a shot of a toy poodle in a diamanté collar, sitting upon a stack of co-ordinated luggage. The camera then pans slowly up Sabrina's elegant Paris suit, taking in the detail of the cut and the pleated turban-style skull-cap and hoop earrings. She strikes a sophisticated pose, head on hand, looking to one side, and the camera pulls back to give a full 'fashion-plate' shot of the moment. Hepburn's performance here, however, prevents this shot from becoming purely iconic, as she manages to portray the self-consciousness and anxiety of the moment through the movement of her eyes. Sabrina walks away from the camera, turns and retraces her steps as if on a catwalk, offering the spectator a view of the back of the suit and allowing an attention to the cut and silhouette, and the detail of the tiny slit in the rear hem, and the kitten heel shoes. This display is constructed as quite clearly for the attention of a spectator invested in dress, and is absolutely not about Hepburn's body. The sequence offers a space for a pleasurable, non-voyeuristic female gaze before David Larrabee does a double take at Sabrina and pulls up in his sports car.



Figure 2

There are a number of similar moments in the film where dress is displayed for a gaze which is not constructed textually as male, but which rather is motivated by an interest in the details of clothing – for instance when Sabrina dances alone in the indoor tennis court, or when she arrives at Linus' office for dinner in the bateau-neck cocktail dress and sequinned skull cap which spawned copies in department stores across the world. Again, Sabrina's walk towards the camera, pirouette, pause and further walk are motivated simply by the need to display the details of the 'V' back for the spectator (See Figure 2). This aesthetic in *Sabrina*

and other Hepburn films allows a space for a close, familiar, invested and knowledgeable gaze, and draws the female spectator in.⁵

Perhaps most significant, though, and central too to the accounts of Hepburn given by the women I interviewed, is the close association of this fashion aesthetic around the star with the articulation of her characters' subjectivities – throughout Hepburn's films, subjectivity is articulated formally around dress. When, in *Sabrina*, the transformation is revealed at Glen Cove Station, the moment also signals the blossoming of Sabrina's subjectivity and sense of self. Where previously in the film her subjectivity has been signalled through voice-over and point-of-view, on her return from Paris, where, she writes to her father, she has learned how to 'be in and of the world, and not just to stand aside and watch', the revelation of her new look is accompanied by a full orchestration of the melody 'La vie en rose' which we have heard in the previous Paris scene played simply on an accordion, this musical shift across the dissolve suggesting the coming to fruition of her sense of self. From this point on in the film, Sabrina's subjectivity and new found sense of self are clearly expressed through the relationship of her body to her clothes; it is not at all that the character is from this point on limited to her appearance, but rather that the question is, as Jane Gaines has suggested, 'What if self-decoration gives women a sense of potency to act in the world?' (Gaines and Herzog, 1990: 6). As I suggest here, this was clearly the case for the women who spoke to me about doing 'The Audrey Hepburn Look', and for whom the best way to talk about their favourite star was through their own relationship to fashion and beauty.

⁵ Gaylyn Studlar (2000: 164–165) has also recently noted the 'fashion show' presentation of Hepburn, and the time allowed in *Sabrina* for the female audience to look with a 'shopper's eye'. See also Partington (1992) for a discussion of the skilled gaze of the female consumer.

an unconventional beauty: difference, democracy and achievability

One of the central ways in which consent has been secured around Hepburn's image is through the particular discourses of beauty within which that image has been constructed. While Hepburn embodied the *couture* ideal in the late 1940s and early 1950s, her looks, and indeed her extreme slenderness – often described as 'androgynous' – were consistently constructed throughout her screen career as unconventional or 'different' by Hollywood standards: 'Surely the vogue for asexuality can go no further than this weird hybrid with butchered hair? (*Films and Filming* 1954; 1, 1: 20). Hepburn has thus been understood as representing a democratic standard of beauty which, in combination with her perceived 'independence' and 'naturalness' produced her as a star whose looks and style were potentially available to and achievable by any young woman.

A number of women who spoke to me referred to Hepburn's difference from other popular stars of the period (often Marilyn Monroe) as central to her appeal and increased availability for them:

I mean I can remember really – I suppose in my early teens – erm, thinking that she was the kind of woman I'd like to be [laughs], it was sort of, you know, she wasn't, she wasn't very ... *glamorous* in a – in that conventional sort of Fifties way, which was what the other film stars were, and she was much less *curvaceous* – all the others were rather sort of – *large*, and [both laugh] which I didn't particularly like ... erm ... and I always liked her hair (Liz).

For this interviewee as for others, Hepburn's difference was not simply located in her style and body shape, but also in her mobility and activity – she seemed freer and more independent – and in relation to this her slenderness, her simple, unfussy style of dress, the fact that she wore her hair very short and flat shoes rather than the stiletto heels fashionable in the period, were repeatedly mentioned in the accounts. Hepburn is described as 'boyish' in a number of accounts, and the way in which this star offered 'boyish-ness' in conjunction with femininity was particularly significant for a number of women. Rosie, for instance, who felt quite distanced from conventional modes of feminine self-presentation when growing up felt "'Oh, I could almost sort of manage that' because she was sort of slightly boyish, but terribly feminine", and similarly, Bernie remembered:

But when she wore casual things it ... it was *feminine*, but *tomboyish*. [...] Yes, you could – you had the *freedom* of – *putting* a pair of trousers on and jeans, and so you could go riding your bike and *not* have to keep holding your frock down and all this crap [...] You know – 'cos I mean you could be as free as the lads, and have a laugh, and run and do whatever we want – you know what I mean – but still be ... *a girl*. And it – and it looked *nice*. It looked nice. I can remember us all – what we did was – with rolling these jeans up sometimes, we would sew gingham ... so they'd be blue jeans, but the turn-ups would be, like pink and white gingham!

Hepburn's wearing of trousers was much commented upon in the fashion pages of film fan magazines; a back page feature in *Picture Show and Film Pictorial* for instance, 'Women wear the pants!' legitimates this liberating style of dress both through reference to Hepburn's career as a dancer, at the same time carefully containing it: 'More women than ever will "wear the pants" this summer-time, there is no doubt about that! Fortunately, it is only in the fashion sense' (21 May 1955). Hepburn then, represented for these women a way of being which, while quite different from what they frequently refer to in the accounts as an 'excessive' mode of glamorous femininity, nevertheless managed boyishness with an acceptable feminine chic: through 'The Hepburn Look' you could be boyish, but still a girl. In a number of accounts of doing the Hepburn look in the 1950s and 1960s, the star's difference in this respect precisely signals her modernity.

Rosie gave a very interesting account of the way in which she had used a version of 'the Hepburn look' which she found both achievable and socially appropriate to manage a situation which she had on previous occasions found difficult to negotiate:

So I always remember when I was about fifteen, and I was incredibly skinny when I was fifteen, erm, and my family always despaired of me in France ... and it was my father's cousin's golden wedding and there was this great dilemma about what we were going to do with me at this occasion, 'cos I never dressed appropriately! I could never – no matter what I tried, I just never was comfortable in what they considered being, sort of, a suitable thing to wear. [RM: What would they have liked you to have worn on that occasion, do you think?] Some sort of co-ordinated, you know, outfit that was – preferably either a dress or a skirt, but I actually wore a black, very very thin cotton polo neck sweater in black, and some sort of black equivalent of ski pants, and, which I think very much came from the whole sort of, Left Bank *Funny Face* type, sort of Audrey Hepburn ... and it worked! I mean, you know, they actually thought I'd found some style at that point! [laughs] So I think, that was the sort of image I locked into, but I think it was just much more than the way she looked, I think it was, I thought, 'well that's the *sort* of acceptable – ' because it's on the big screen, and everybody thought she was wonderful – femininity that I could just about cope with. [RM: One that you could do?] One I could do, and one that didn't confine me too much.

In Rosie's account then, the French-ness, femininity and classiness of the Hepburn look which she appropriates for this event allows her to carry off a pared down, simple look which was both acceptable to her and to her family on a 'dress up' occasion. She later commented that this look is still her failsafe on smart professional occasions.

In *Funny Face*, Kay Thompson, playing the editor of *Quality* magazine, instructs Jo (Hepburn) in being an authority 'on how to be lovely'; Hepburn fulfilled this role extra-textually too, and publicity for both *Funny Face* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* included look-a-like competitions. Girls with a 'funny face' like Hepburn's were invited to enter and win a glamour makeover like that received by Jo in the film: 'Any girl who thinks she looks like Audrey Hepburn – and you'll be surprised at how many there are around – is eligible to enter'. Publicity around the film thus centred on a key aspect of Hepburn's image – the perceived difference, or unconventionality of her beauty – constructing this through a discourse of naturalness ('Can't do it with make up, you've just gotta wake up') which suggested it as democratic and achievable – with an emphasis on inner beauty, and not on cosmetics. Hepburn is widely reported to have said that her face was 'more personality than glamour' (*Photoplay* 27, 6: 60; June 1960), and it is this emphasis on democratic and natural beauty which, despite Richard Dyer's suggestion that 'it may only induce a sense of misfortune or even failure in some in the audience' (1993: 59), seems to have secured her appeal for many women, as I discuss below. 'Know-how' on how to achieve Hepburn's 'natural' look with cosmetics was widely available, however, in women's magazines and the fashion and beauty pages of film fan magazines of the period, and accounts demonstrate that young women could competently deconstruct Hepburn's 'natural' face in order to recreate it. A particularly interesting piece in *Modern Screen* of 1954, a magazine which clearly, from the quantity of advertising space

devoted to beauty and fashion, was addressed to the female filmgoer, made much of the unconventionality and unevenness of Hepburn's looks by Hollywood standards, pointing out that 'her teeth are not perfectly aligned, her nostrils flare and her dark hair seems carelessly cut' (92). This piece draws out another central aspect of her image which was central to her appeal for the women who spoke to me: the simultaneous difference and acceptability of her beauty and style.

Audrey

can sit as primly as a princess, wearing a suit by de Givenchy [sic] and kicking off her patent leather pumps to reveal pink toenails peeping through her nylons. It seems so correct that you wonder if you shouldn't kick off your own shoes. She can slop her coffee over the cup and it looks as though that's the only proper way to handle a teacup. Audrey's undeniable attraction, in one word, is presence. Most Hollywood stars affect it but never quite attain it. That's why Audrey Hepburn has bowled them all over. With her it comes naturally, as it does with some other girls known as princesses The girl who arrived on the spot left in the spotlight — simply by doing and being nothing but her enchanting self

(*Modern Screen*, April 1954: 92–94).

Hepburn is presented here as able to make unconventional behaviour seem acceptable — the combination of poise and casualness is central to her image, and as I argue elsewhere can be traced to her early career in modelling and is linked to the snapshot aesthetic of early 1950s fashion photography described by Wilson (1985: 158).⁶ Similarly, in her roles in *Sabrina*, *Funny Face* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Hepburn offered a negotiated version of contemporary 'alternative' Beatnik looks, through, for example, the Bohemian black narrow trousers and turtle neck sweater worn in *Funny Face* and associated with figures such as Juliette Gréco and the Parisian Left Bank scene. Hepburn's neatly groomed, chic *couture* version of this style was often described as 'kookie' — a 'different' look which contemporary British young women's magazines nevertheless emphasised must always still be simple, clean, tidy and pretty (*Mirabelle and Glamour*, 17 June 1961: 6). Richard Dyer has argued that the ability to appear to reconcile social contradictions is key to stardom (1991), and Hepburn's 'acceptable difference' was central to her popularity with the women I interviewed, for instance in the account given by Rosie, above, which draws clearly on the 'Bohemian' Hepburn of these films.

The combination of ordinariness and special-ness secured around Hepburn's image through her Cinderella roles made her both an available ideal and an object of aspiration. Her 'in-between-ness' in terms of age, class and national identity was central in producing her as a flexible image — as simultaneously unconventional and acceptable — and thus available both to those young women interested in 'resisting' certain hegemonic modes of femininity, and for whom she was perceived as offering an alternative, intelligent and proto-feminist identity (see Fell, 1985;

⁶ See Moseley (forthcoming 2002)

Haskell, 1991; Francke and Wilson, 1993; Wilson, 1993), but also to those for whom an investment in social propriety may have been more of an imperative, whether in relation to generation, class or national identity, or indeed the conjunction of all three with gender. As I have argued elsewhere, the class related imperative to 'look respectable' in determining the choice of a star style to recreate should not be underestimated.⁷ A number of the interviewees described Hepburn as 'classy, not sexy', often constructing this understanding of the star through contrast to another, such as Monroe or Brigitte Bardot. Hepburn's perceived European-ness was central here, as evidenced by one woman's remark that Hepburn's was an available style to her as a young woman because she seemed 'nice': 'typically English! ... American girls were always brash, and far more mature than English girls, and I think Audrey Hepburn was – you could relate to the sort of person that she was, because she didn't give that impression'. Hepburn's body shape was also key to her embodiment of a restrained, European classiness which the women who spoke to me about liking her found appropriate and possible, and which, importantly, located her as 'not about sex'. Bernie compared Hepburn to fuller figured stars including Bardot, Monroe, Ava Gardner and Jane Russell, pointing out that when she was a teenager 'there's no way we could walk around the streets like that! ... Everything you've been told 'You can't, you mustn't, it's not – and if you do, they won't love you anyway'. Similarly, one interviewee described Hepburn as 'a lady' (a frequent comment) and remembered having been especially taken with her in *My Fair Lady*, expressing a love of the Edwardian styles, gloves, bags and shoes displayed in the film. This woman also went on to remember being guided away by her mother from an admiration of 'daring' stars like Marlene Dietrich and Eartha Kitt, and towards Deborah Kerr. Hepburn represented a mode of femininity which was possible in many ways: economically (you could do the look cheaply and it required less labour than other femininities circulating at the time in relation to hair, make up and dressmaking), physically (she had an 'adolescent' body), and perhaps most significantly, her look was new and modern, but also socially appropriate for these young women growing up in 1950s and 1960s Britain. As Bernie put it, with Hepburn: 'it was all within reach, if you like'.

⁷ See Moseley (2001)

trousers and tiaras

Central to both the discursive formulation 'Audrey Hepburn', and to accounts of the star given by women who admired her, has been the intractability of the relationship between style and identity. While the research drawn on here is local and qualitative, it is nevertheless suggestive in relation to existing work within film studies on gendered spectatorship (for example Stacey, 1994), and particularly in relation to the absence therein of class, so significant in cultural studies work, and its conjunction with gender as a significant term for thinking about the relationship between stars and audiences. What emerged, then, was the flexibility

of Hepburn's image in remaining possible and appropriate in relation to subtle lines of class and generation. While in this study women who had remained working class and/or associated their period of growing up with the late 1950s were clearly more invested in the ladylike, 'Givenchy Hepburn', other women who had shifted class and/or associated their youthful femininity with the late 1950s and early 1960s, thus crossing over into a period which saw the rise of a particular kind of 'liberated' youth culture and fashion (which meant partly that there was less labour involved in looking respectable), a loosening of class distinctions (and indeed a shift from the term 'young lady' to 'girl'), were able to make use of the acceptably different modern, pared down Bohemian look associated with her in the 1950s which has often been discussed in relation to burgeoning feminist identities in the period. It is significant, however, that the accounts of Hepburn's appeal and doing 'the look' given by young women who admired her in the 1990s are as invested in the elegant, tiara-clad Hepburn as they are in the simple, chic modern look of *Sabrina* and *Funny Face*. It is clear in these accounts that nostalgia is the key mode, and 'post-feminism' the significant cultural context for the understandings of Hepburn made by young British women in the 1990s, in particular the revaluation of the pleasures offered by conventional modes of feminine self-presentation, and the sense that these might not necessarily be in conflict with feminist identities (see Brunsdon, 1997: 86).

Cultural studies work has privileged the concepts of resistance and negotiation in relation to audiences and readers, and has often figured the resistant as the active. Walkerine (1997: 22) has argued, however, that cultural studies has thereby demonstrated a lack of concern with ordinary, non-politicized people and their engagement with culture. She makes a powerful argument for the importance of attending to concepts such as 'coping' and 'surviving', for thinking about how subjectivities are formed through everyday practices, defending young working-class girls whose femininities and pleasures might be seen as 'not radical enough' for feminism. Audrey Hepburn was a star whose image offered a clear address to women, not simply through an emphasis on conventional feminine concerns such as fashion and beauty, but through the use of those discourses to express subjectivity and individuality. Hepburn offered the young British women whose accounts are discussed above both the conventional pleasures of feminine adornment, along with the possibility of experimentation with 'different' identities and the negotiation of conventional modes of femininity within the boundaries of respectability and acceptability which her look managed. Around Hepburn, fashion and beauty are not simply the means by which the female viewer is caught in the trap formed by the conjunction of cinema screen, mirror and shop window. It is clear that everyday practices relating to fashion, dress and beauty may be both active and *not* resistant, but rather significantly invested in the production of hegemonic identities as a way of being able to be 'in and of the world'.

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