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## ***Breakfast at Tiffany's*. From Page to Screen. The Making of a Classic. Transformation of Gender Relations**

### **Summary**

The aim of this article is to explore how the film adaptation of Truman Capote's novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's* translated the literary original into cinematic language. My claim is that the essential transfigurations ensued in terms of gender relations. The question of what motivated them, and how they impacted the cult status which the movie work acquired, is approached by focusing on the transformations from the perspective of the dramatic structure. Through the use of script development tools: type of narration, thematic premise, central question, controlling idea, mediation, protagonists, setting, and the ways in which casting, style of cinematography and music interact with them, I will attempt to pinpoint and analyse the key differences.

**Keywords:** screen adaptation; dramatic structure; gender roles; integration into society

### **Закуска в „Тифани“. От страницата към екрана. Създаването на една класика. Преобразуване на междуполовите отношения**

#### **Резюме**

Целта на статията е да изследва как в процеса на екранизация киното превежда новелата *Закуска в „Тифани“* от Труман Капоти на своя език, какви преобразения се явяват в полето на социалните изследвания на пола в следствие, защо са били необходими и как са допринесли за днешния култов статут на филма. Подходът ми се основава на анализ на трансформациите от драматургична гледна точка – наративна инстанция, тема, централен въпрос, водеща идея, време и място на действието, протагонисти, както и на взаимодействието им с избора на актьори, стилови характеристики на операторската работа и музиката.

**Ключови думи:** екранизация; драматургична структура; социален пол; интеграция в обществото

### **Introduction**

Since the cinema first approached literary works as plot sources in the Silent era, an ardent debate has been going on among academics, critics and film professionals. The practice quickly acquired staunch opponents like Virginia Woolf who, in her essay *The Cinema*, argued against the abuse of literature, to conclude bitterly, “The alliance [of cinema and literature] is unnatural,”<sup>2</sup> and even expressed fears that the film medium might bring out the savage in the spectators. Those

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<sup>2</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *The Cinema*. In: *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays*. London, Hogarth Press, 1950, p. 168.

passionate for the ‘motion pictures’ were apprehensive that borrowing from older forms might cause the cinema to compromise the yielding of its own identity. The moderate ones, like André Bazin, saw adaptation not as a threat to the cinema but as one of the many possibilities before the new medium<sup>3</sup>. The present text privileges the idea that any given film is an independent oeuvre in itself, unbound with fidelity to the literary source, and aims to explore what changes occurred during the translation into cinematic means of expression, for they allow a glimpse into the dynamics of the social structure.

The novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote saw the light of day in 1958 under the auspices of Random House, after Harper's Bazaar rejected it on grounds of immorality. Despite the scandalous reputation which foreran the publishing of the book, Paramount Pictures were determined to see the work through to the big screen and launched a development stage with two scriptwriters, one replacing the other, before even acquiring the rights. Merely three years later, in 1961, an eponymous movie premiered, starring Audrey Hepburn and directed by Blake Edwards. A film inevitably introduces changes to the literary original in the process of adaptation. In this particular case, the divide between the two artistic mediums seems less formidable than when classic oeuvres are concerned, as neither time distance, nor cultural status separates them. *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, which was not one of Capote's most popular or critically acclaimed works, became a timeless classic in its screen adaptation, a household name for generations to come, was nominated for the Academy awards in five categories and won in two.

What motivated the executives at Paramount to go after the troublesome novella? Most probably it was the kernel of a heroine worth to be put on screen, not to be analysed but admired for her vitality. It was the new kind of woman whom Holly personified that Hollywood fell in love with, for her ‘warmth, the zest, the humour, the beauty and, more importantly, the basic heart and honesty that is Holly Golightly’<sup>4</sup>.

### **Dramatic structure**

At the beginning, I propose a brief summary of the book and annotation of the movie, to outline the key plot variations. Capote's work is a first-person reminiscence about an irresistibly charming young woman in search of happiness and freedom, who, after a series of unfortunate accidents, leaves the town to pursue her dream around the world. In Blake Edwards' creation, a young writer settles in a New York, where he falls in love with his neighbour Holly, an irresistibly charming young woman

<sup>3</sup> Bazin, André. *What is Cinema?*. University of California Press, 2005, pp. 53-76.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Richard Sheperd to Y. Frank Freeman, 16 April 1959, Memo from Bernard Feins to Sidney Justin, 8 December 1958, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* file, folder 1, Paramount Production and Budget Records, AMPAS. Cited in: Krämer, Peter. The Many Faces of Holly Golightly: Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and Hollywood. – In: *Film Studies*, Issue 5, Winter 2004, p. 62.

pursuing her dream of happiness and freedom. The two fall in love but she is unwilling to compromise her dream. After a series of unfortunate accidents, she decides to leave town and continue her quest. The male protagonist convinces her to stay for the sake of their love.

### **Narrative voice**

The novella renders the story through first-person narration. The cinematic version, on the other hand, relies on omniscient narration. Nevertheless, the information delivered doubles the viewpoint of the hero – from the moment when the two protagonists meet, early on in the plot, we only know what he knows. This is, in fact, a form of restricted narration, and a key tool for generating empathy, as viewers unavoidably react to events at the same time as the character. The film lets us share the view of a man in love, which is partly how the infatuation of the film audience with the character of Holly is constructed. In the literary source, the point of view is not only personified, but in addition – voyeuristic. The integrated narrator is watching Holly without being seen, learns about her “from observing the trash-basket outside her door”<sup>5</sup> (20), even picking up shreds from the love letters she receives, studying them carefully enough to inform readers which the most frequently used words are, and using the pieces as bookmarks, in this way appropriating pieces of her relationship with her lovers. He approaches his narration in a similar, evasive manner, beginning with a description of the neighbourhood where he met Holly Golightly – the real object of his writing. In the film, the young man makes her acquaintance face to face. Subsequently, he gets involved with the heroine romantically.

Despite his initial claim to have forgotten all about the story, the novella’s narrator is obsessively specific about dates, and gives many clues to the audience as to when the events took place<sup>6</sup>. In this manner, Capote introduces an unreliable narrator, while the film maintains the integrity of the omniscient narrator.

The attitude of the novella’s storyteller towards the heroine perceivably oscillates between fascination and deprecation. At the outset, he demonstrates dismissiveness: “It never occurred to me in those days to write about Holly Golightly, and probably it would not now...” (9). By contrast, in the cinematic version, he is so intrigued by her that when they meet for the first time, he forgets his immediate engagements. What is more, she inspires him creatively. The very first sentence in his new piece of writing, in a long time, is about her.

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<sup>5</sup> All quotations from the novella are taken from the edition by Penguin Modern Classics (2000) with the numbers in brackets indicating the respective pages.

<sup>6</sup> We know that the action begins in October, and in the following summer she sings songs from the musical *Oklahoma!* (20), which opened in March 1943. Therefore, the action starts in 1942 and continues through 1943.

The narrator-protagonist of the novella admits to his obsession with Holly: “[S]he no longer rang my bell. I missed that... I began to feel toward her certain far-fetched resentments, as if I were being neglected by my closest friend... I couldn’t work.” (30-31) Then, he begins to look for flaws in her. On more than one occasion he points out her short-sightedness, as in: “It was obvious now that they were prescription lenses, for without them her eyes had an assessing squint, like a jeweller’s.” (22) Further, the narrator revenges on her by depriving her of her glasses: “I stepped on Holly’s dark glasses; they were lying on the floor, the lenses already shattered, the frames cracked in half. Perhaps that is why Holly, a rigid figure on the bed, stared at Jose so blindly, seemed not to see the doctor...” (72) The narrator takes delight in describing how the first signs of age crawl onto her face: “a tough tiny smile that advanced her age immeasurably” (90). At times, he is conscious of his malice: “The notion of introducing Mrs Golightly to her husband had its satisfying aspects...” (66), “I wanted to be unkind.” (79) First, he is jealous of her upcoming wedding, then his mood changes: “I loved her enough to forget myself, my self-pitying despairs, and be content that something she thought happy was going to happen.” (80) When she is arrested, the narrator finds pleasure in giving a detailed account of her being smeared in newspapers, which amounts to two entire pages of the book (82-84). By contrast, the movie shows a few headlines.

When Holly mentions having “the mean reds”, not quite sure that he understands, Capote’s young writer asks if this is like “angst” (40). Thus, he demonstrates his intellectual superiority. In the film, Paul, trying to grasp the meaning of the phrase, asks simply, “You mean like the blues?” – he positions himself as her equal, and an equal to the audience.

At the beginning of the literary story, the protagonist provides his guess as to where she might currently be – “Dead. Or in a crazy house. Or married.” (14) – in fact, projecting his own desire for her destiny. His attitude is generally marked by bitterness. In the cinematic version, the benevolence of the invisible narrator is felt continually.

### **Functions of the protagonists**

In the film, the protagonists are defined by their goals: his is domesticating her through love, hers – staying free by not falling in love. Their goals are opposite; in this way, curiously, they come to be antagonists. Viewers sympathise strongly with Holly’s drive for freedom, but at the same time identify with Paul’s love for her and wish it to succeed. It is his desire which dominates the narrative, therefore the narrative is consistent with the patriarchal discourse. Female desire, as is typical in the classical Hollywood cinema, is forgone for being either non-existent, or criminal. Here, it is less valid,

because it is too abstract – an undefined quest for independence, and too egotistical – not contributing to the social good via reaffirmation of marriage, a fundamental patriarchal institution.

The central conflict of the film, thus born by the motivations of the protagonists, is between personal integrity and integration into society. Therefore, the central theme emerges as personal freedom. From it, sub-themes branch off: gender issues – equality of the sexes, female emancipation, and domestication; and growing up.

The central question, following from the conflict, is ‘Will love win over?’ As the answer is ultimately positive, the central idea emerges as “Love is more important than personal freedom.” This clear-cut framework is hardly applicable to the literary piece.

### **Setting**

In the novella and in the movie, the action is set in New York – the ultimate place to be. In both, she is looking for ‘more’. Suitcases are piled up next to the entrance door of her apartment, as if she were to leave the following day. Instead of an address, her card announces ‘Travelling’. Throughout the movie, Bossa Nova music fills the aural dimension. While this fashionable Brazilian genre functions on a narrative level to connect her with her lover José, its exoticism denotes the sense of yearning experienced by the heroine. At the same time, the sounds of the Bossa are challenged by another tune, no less haunting – the song sung by Hepburn, which became known as ‘Moon River.’ The Southern melody represents the yearning for a life beyond, an ideal. It is a wanderlust more intimate and paradoxically imbued with homesickness, a longing of the soul for its true home, an answer to an existential quest.

The novella employs a frame narrative set fifteen years after the main story. We are informed that the core of the action is set in “the early years of the war” (9). As it unravels, we are constantly reminded that it happened in the past: “Of course this was a long time ago...” (10), “...we giggled, ran, sang along the paths towards the old wooden boathouse, now gone.” (52) In this way, the narrator attempts to distance himself from the events.

The movie, on the contrary, instils a sense of ‘happening now’. We learn that the young writer’s book was published in 1956. Holly reacts with questioning criticism at his not writing since – the period seems too long to her. The film premiered in 1961, therefore we might suppose that this is the latest date at which the action could have been set. In addition, there are numerous references to personalities of current popular culture: Nehru, Albert Schweitzer, Leonard Bernstein. The film makes the characters and the viewers of the film contemporaries and creates a strong sense of identification.

In the original story, the characters have lived through the Depression and carry its trauma. The rough childhood of the heroine described in the novella – an orphan child who has escaped abuse and starvation – was not a rare occurrence, and this contributes to the realistic quality of the literary source. In addition, WWII is raging, imposing restrictions like food rations. Holly's brother Fred, who is serving in the army, is killed in combat. The alleged pro-Nazi sympathies of would-be-Holly's-husband, Rusty Trawler, are mentioned. At the finale, as the two main characters are having a ride in Central Park, out of nowhere they are attacked by a band of Negro boys, who throw stones at them and scare the horses (81). The environment is chaotic and hostile.

The movie chooses to set the action many years after the war. What does the transposition of the action more than a decade later bring to the plot? To begin with, the characters do not remember the Depression. Consumption is at a new unprecedented peak since the twenties. Holly's harsh childhood is an exception – this makes the heroine herself exceptional. No war is perceptibly raging. While the international climate of the Cold War sustains tension and engages the United States in warfare around the world, no war is named – the film chooses to forgo political issues. Fred is killed, but not in combat, this happens upon his return to the US, in a car accident – his death is not heroic but pointless.

1950s affluence and style flood the screen. Telephones, which were so hard to get by in the novella, are conspicuously everywhere, of all styles and types, including executive ones (at the producer's home, along with an electric bed). Even Holly's carelessly arranged apartment is air-conditioned and furnished with a large fridge. Everything is enhanced by technology, including the writing of the male protagonist, who uses a typewriter. All is bright and new, there is lightness and easygoingness about everything.

### **Imagery**

The cinematography works to highlight this concept. As Laura Mulvey explains, "The magic of the Hollywood style at its best... arose, not exclusively, but in one important aspect, from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure."<sup>7</sup> The Technicolor process is utilised to this end. It is vivid, lush, unrestrained – spectacular. The set design and costumes take full advantage of it, introducing bold colour schemes. The abundant lighting renders the experience of watching the film comfortable. The wide-screen format invites the eye of the viewer to wander, explore and get absorbed

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<sup>7</sup> Mulvey, Laura. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In: *Film Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Mast, Cohen and Braudy. Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 748.

in this world. Consequently, the visual aspect of the film is highly pleasurable, in contrast with the gritty realism of the novella, where colours themselves fade.

### **Portrayal of the hero**

The sexual orientation of the narrator-protagonist in the novella has generated significant debate. While many readings claim that he is homosexual, the book is rather oblique about the issue. In his study, Tomas Fahy finds proof of his homosexuality near the end of the book, when Holly calls the young writer ‘Maude’ (93) – a coded nickname for a male homosexual at the time<sup>8</sup>; in the philosophy on marriage, which Holly develops in conversation with the protagonist<sup>9</sup>, “A person ought to be able to marry men or women or listen, if you came to me and said you wanted to hitch up with Man o’War, I’d respect your feeling” (77). These phrases, however, are drowned in Holly’s abundant chatter, and not singled out as statements in the text. Rather, reasons for construing the storyteller as homosexual in some interpretations are informed by previous work by Capote like *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948); also by the first-person narration combined with Capote’s own very public homosexuality. However, in the book there is a moment when the protagonist is massaging her back, while she is provokingly (half) naked, a feeling of aggression wells up in him. It is first prompted by her criticism of his writing, but then the description of her body by the narrator leads us to read in his violent impulse acrimony at her not being his: “Her muscles hardened, the touch of her was like stone warmed by the sun.” (59) In this case he might be defined as heterosexual. The narrator uses the ambiguity to tease the readers about his feelings for her. “Or, and my question is apparent, was my outrage a little the result of being in love with Holly myself? A little. For I was in love with her. Just as I’d once been in love with my mother’s elderly coloured cook and a postman who let me follow him on his rounds and a whole family named McKendrick.” (71)

In a third interpretation, Peter Krämer proposes, “His strong emotional attachment to the dazzling heroine is intensely romantic yet completely asexual.”<sup>10</sup> The first-person narrator does not define his sexuality, but discusses a minor character, Joe the barman, whom he suggests to be homosexual judging by his preference for non-typically male activities. In this way the narrator takes a stereotypical, outsider’s point of view to homosexuality.

How was the issue treated in the cinematic version? Presentation of homosexuality in Hollywood film, at the time, was limited to caricature, and never extended to main characters. In one

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<sup>8</sup> Fahy, Thomas. *Understanding Truman Capote*. University of South Carolina Press, 2014, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> Krämer, Peter. The Many Faces of Holly Golightly: Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* and Hollywood. – In: *Film Studies*, Issue 5, Winter 2004, p. 58.

memo a studio executive complains about the first draft of the script by Locke Elliot: “The young man he has written is petty and unattractive in character, borders on the effeminate, which we all detest.”<sup>11</sup> However, the main problem in adapting the novella was seen as “this is more of a character sketch than a story”<sup>12</sup>. The movie reshapes the character into a ‘red-blooded heterosexual’ who falls in love with Holly, which, according to the second scriptwriter George Axelrod’s recollection<sup>13</sup>, saved the plot from a dead-end. Whatever the concerns of the studio were, this change steered the movie into heteronormative standards.

The male protagonist is also transfigured as strikingly handsome, with a GI physique and the healthy looks of a country child, yet he is very urbane, sleek, visibly certain of himself, not anxious about his career or future. He has already published one book, but chosen the easy life. He faces all dangers that the plot provides ‘like a man’. He is generous and forgiving. The worst trait of character that could be ascribed to him is laziness, but in that, he aligns with the ‘slobs’ in Holly’s life, a word which she uses as a term of endearment. He is purified from serious defects of character and body. His problematic fall into the occupation of a kept man is necessary for dramatic reasons – in order for the male protagonist to exonerate Holly from her compromising profession (no matter whether it is clear what she does for a living) and consider her a worthy romantic interest, he must be put on the same ‘shelf’. This created strong opposition from the official censorship body, The Production Code Administration. “The Hollywood censors were more worried about Paul’s sexual activity than about Holly’s... [They] demanded that the fact that she paid him for sex had to be obscured”<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, the film producers chose to ignore the last of the recommendations, and the film is rather explicit on the matter, even contains a shot displaying dollar bills being left to Paul. What the studio put significant effort into was preserving the romantic aura of the heroine.

The film is also the story of the male protagonist’s emancipation, but it is too immediately and unproblematically achieved, so it remains in the background. Unlike his literary counterpart, the movie protagonist has a name – Paul, but he is barely developed as a character. What the film is really concerned with is the taming of an untameable woman.

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from Richard Sheperd to Y. Frank Freeman, 16 April 1959. *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* file, folder 1, Paramount Production and Budget Records, AMPAS. Cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> William Pinckard, Reader’s Report, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* file, Paramount Script Collection, (AMPAS), Beverly Hills. Cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> *Show*, October, 1961, unpaginated clipping. *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* clippings folder, (AMPAS). Cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>14</sup> Letter by Geoffrey M. Shurlock to Luigi Luraschi. 17 August 1960, Memo by E.G.D., 20 September. 1960. *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* file, Production Code Administration Records, AMPAS. Cited in: *Ibid.*, p. 63.



### Portrayal of the heroine

She is the ultimate ‘it girl,’ both in the film and in the literary source – a person in possession of irresistible magnetism, an heir to Clara Bow’s classic heroine from *It*, the 1927 movie which gave currency to the popular expression. Not surprisingly, Holly returns to the men who worship her as the photographic image of a head of an idol, carved by a man on another continent. The last time she is seen, in one character’s words, “she went like she come, rode away on a horse” (13) – ever elusive.

The novella seeks to dint her perfect image by questioning her intelligence, sanity, strength of character, finding physical flaws, too. Nevertheless, it induces complexity in her by revealing dignity and courage.

The ultimate criterion by which the female protagonist is judged, in the two works, is her morality, dependent upon the interpretation of the phrase “50 dollars for the powder room”. The novella reveals its meaning early on, in a scene which unfolds before the eyes of the hero. She leaves a man outside her apartment, because he wasn’t smart enough to give her 50 dollars when she asked for a little powder-room change – the evening was wasted for her in terms of revenue. In the movie, she leaves a man outside, even though he had paid the 50-dollar fare “for the powder room”. This detail provides considerable doubt as to whether she sleeps with the men. We only see her escaping them, as in the scene above, taking their money and tricking them – maybe this is the principle of her business. The meaning of the phrase “50 dollars for the powder room” in the film remains obscure. As director Blake Edwards recalls, “The majority of the audience didn’t know... what *50 dollars for the powder room* was.”<sup>15</sup> The filmmakers used this to protect the heroine from being judged right away, they first had the audience fall in love with her. When she proclaims that she wants to marry a millionaire, she is not presented as a gold-digger, but as a dreamer. Peter Krämer develops the following idea:

Holly Golightly... represents two different types of liberated women in 1940’s America: those who come from a foreign, provincial or lower-class background and therefore have to reinvent themselves to gain entry into the social and economic elite; and the daughters of that elite, who are ‘naturally’ sophisticated and privileged to do pretty much whatever they like.<sup>16</sup>

The novella provides further clues as to her profession – she receives men in her apartment, mentioned by the narrator as “her callers” (61). When she learns that the protagonist is a writer, she

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Blake Edwards. Documentary *Breakfast at Tiffany’s: The Making of a Classic*, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Krämer, Peter. The Many Faces of Holly Golightly: Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* and Hollywood. – In: *Film Studies*, Issue 5, Winter 2004, p. 58.

remarks, “I’ve never been to bed with a writer.” (23), from which it might be deduced that she’s been to bed with many different kinds of men. She complains about “men who bite”, and actually shows the marks on her body (21). The film replaces the line above with ‘rats,’ thus making the physicality and suffering of selling her body less tangible and more abstract. Her livelihood does not come as condemnable until the scene at the library where Paul is rejected by her, which happens right after the fulfilment of their romance, and he throws a 50-dollar cheque at her. But, at this point, the audience is already under her spell.

In the book, she sleeps with Doc (68), her ex-husband, who has come to take her – she uses sex as a currency in all types of circumstances.

The narrator-protagonist in the novella notices the bed in her room, “double one at that, and quite flashy: blond wood, tufted satin” (51). In the film, she sleeps in a single iron bed – black, deprived of any hint of girlishness or sweet pleasure, covered with a red college blanket – not the expected setting for a queen of the night. In fact, Paul’s bed, which is double, corresponds better to the literary description of Holly’s bed, and leaves no doubt as to its purpose. The supposed sexual act between the two protagonists takes place off-screen and while the mask she wore the night before hangs by his bedside, he wakes up alone. The sexual act is simultaneously revealed and refuted, so that Holly’s romantic aura be preserved. It is important to defend her purity in order to make her a viable subject for marriage.

### **Casting**

The concrete aspect of the film medium determines that any actor leaves their imprint on the character that they play, both via their screen and star persona, due to what Stanley Cavell in his seminal book, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*, calls ‘a natural ascendancy of actor over character’<sup>17</sup>.

Truman Capote insisted that Marilyn Monroe played Holly, and in numerous interviews voiced his discontent at Audrey Hepburn being chosen instead: “Holly had to have something touching about her, unfinished. Marilyn had that.”<sup>18</sup> Audrey, or her Holly, has nothing unfinished, nothing vulnerable about her. On the contrary, her appeal lies in the untouched integrity that she emanates. To the image of the languid blonde, born to please, Blake Edwards’ reading opposes an energetic, resourceful and headstrong female character. Paradoxically, Hepburn’s boyish physique corresponds by the word with

<sup>17</sup> Cavell, Stanley. *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*. Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> Inge, M. Thomas, ed. *Truman Capote: Conversations*. Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1987, p. 317. Cited in: Fahi, Thomas, *Understanding Truman Capote*. University of South Carolina Press, 2014 p. 99.

Capote's own description of Holly: "For all her chick thinness, she had an almost breakfast cereal, a soap and lemon cleanness... It was a face beyond childhood, yet this side of belonging to a woman." (17) In every other aspect, Hepburn was cast against character – her screen persona, her exquisite speech and manners were left unaltered for the film. This produced the necessary inner contradiction to make a cinematic character viable. And it caused the audience to remain in denial of her profession.

One key quality of the film actress/character in the classical Hollywood film is discussed in Laura Mulvey's ground-breaking essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema':

In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Women displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease... she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire.<sup>19</sup>

Audrey Hepburn does hold the look, but her 'to-be-looked-at-ness' is not sexualised. The scene at the strip-tease bar, where the protagonists watch a show, serves the purpose to illustrate the distinction between Audrey and the woman on the stage, a Marilyn type, who is nothing but a sexual object, while Holly is appealing despite not being subjected to standardised sex-appeal. Importantly, the attractiveness of Audrey Hepburn is difficult to define, just like Holly's.

While the casting desexualises Holly, it does the opposite to the male protagonist. Not only does he become sexually attractive, but in a new way. The role, intended initially for Steve McQueen, is deprived of the rough masculinity he would have brought to it. George Peppard's presence transfigured the character into 'a sight for sore ladies' eyes.' The pleasurable quality of his body and his baby blue eyes are highlighted by the film cinematography, transforming actor and character into a source of pleasure. Our gaze is invited to linger on the protagonist's bare athletic and shaven chest – the male body in this film is made into something to be desired. The film presents a new kind of masculinity, thus defying patriarchal ideology. As Laura Mulvey explains,

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female... According to the principles of the ruling ideology, and psychical structure that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Mulvey, Laura. Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In: *Film Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Mast, Cohen and Braudy. Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 750.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 750-751.

This postulate is successfully challenged by the film. Ultimately, it is the female leading character who, to this day, emerges as the memorable figure of the film. Because of the paradox she contains – her ability to preserve her integrity despite the circumstances debasing her.

### Conclusion

What determines the audience's affectionate relationship with the film is its quality of a 'good object', in Kleinian terms, 'helpful and gratifying', as opposed to 'bad' – 'persecutory objects'<sup>21</sup>, on which the subject can project their frustration. The film deflects the frustration, which might be experienced by the viewers. It spares any detail deemed too crude, like the loss of Holly's unborn child, which is also at odds with the plotline. On the contrary, the book creates such details, especially when it comes to acting with revengefulness on the heroine. The book encourages projection of aggressive impulses by the depiction of the frustrated, revengeful, betraying, and dishonest protagonist-narrator, whose discredit leads the reader to project their disappointment over the act of narration, and subsequently over the entire work. While the novella provides an ending in accordance with the heroine's desire, it confronts the viewers with frustration over being summoned to question their ability to make similarly unconventional and daring choices as the heroine. The film, on the other hand, provides a resolution, which confirms the rightness of the life choices made by the majority of the audience. In addition, since the viewer has been guided to identify with the male protagonist, the fulfilment of his desire is perceived as fulfilling to the audience. Moreover, the unambiguous resolution provides a feeling of completion. The novella leaves the heroine in a dangerous place, and deprives the plot of a clear-cut ending, in this way depriving the audience of a comforting experience.

In terms of gender relations, the film proposes options ahead of its time – where gender equality lacks, it is added. Most radically this is demonstrated where carnal exploitation is concerned. While female prostitution had been present on film screens since the arrival of the medium, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* offered its male alternative, whereby a woman is the client. The male body becomes an object of desire, but also of consumption. This is not unrelated to the new type of post-war consumerism, with women at the top of the charts. However, traditional gender relations are re-installed at the finale, with the romantic union of the heterosexual couple, which is only possible after the heroine has abandoned her dream of independence. This is a requirement of the classical Hollywood discourse, under which a film is allowed a great degree of liberty, but in the end all dangerous tendencies need to be tempered and compensated for. What the film provides to the audience is a two-hour respite from

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<sup>21</sup> Klein, M. Some Theoretical Conclusions regarding the Emotional Life of the Infant (1952) in *Developments*, 200. In: *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. Laplanche and Pontalis. Karnac Books, 1996, p. 189.

abundance by social norm. Alternatively, in the novella Capote gives his Holly ultimate freedom, but maintains an overall feeling of resentment towards the rebellious female protagonist, thus upholding the patriarchal discourse. By contrast, the film achieves the ‘perfect’ balance of female emancipation and patriarchy.

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