A new kind of star is born: Audrey Hepburn and the global governmentalisation of female stardom

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In 1988 Audrey Hepburn returned to the limelight as a United Nations (UN) Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Traversing the globe from Africa to Latin America to Eastern Europe to Asia and back to Africa, Hepburn re-entered public life in order to command attention to the plight of children, making much-hyped appearances on popular talk shows, testifying before congressional committees on behalf of the UN, launching UNICEF’s annual State of World’s Children Reports, and ultimately earning a Presidential Medal of Freedom and an Honorary Oscar for her international efforts. This essay traces how Hepburn realised a new modality of star power: as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Hepburn re-invented the cultural powers of stardom, pushing them into the field of global governmentality. Crucially, it was Hepburn’s ‘authentic’, pedagogical femininity that facilitated this re-direction and re-articulation of star power: the article argues that Hepburn’s stardom allowed her cultural power to become synonymous with a distinctly cosmopolitan yet highly feminised form of pastoral power.

Keywords: Audrey Hepburn; charitable female stardom; cosmopolitan citizenship; global governmentality; UNICEF

The spirit of Audrey

In 1988 Audrey Hepburn returned to the limelight as an United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Traversing the globe from Africa to Latin America to Eastern Europe to Asia and back to Africa, Hepburn re-entered public life in order to command attention to the plight of children, making much-hyped appearances on popular talk shows, testifying before congressional committees on behalf of the UN, launching UNICEF’s annual State of World’s Children Reports, and ultimately earning a Presidential Medal of Freedom and an Honorary Oscar for her international efforts. At the unveiling of the ‘Spirit of Audrey’ statue at UNICEF headquarters in New York in 2002, Mia Farrow (UNICEF 2003) recounted:

As a teenager, I worshipped her. My friends and I simply worshipped her. As an actor, her radiance, I think she touched all her audience in the same way. And then the fact that she went that step further in the consciousness that there were people needing help. That was where she truly, truly inspired me. I never tried to be like her as an actress because she was up there with the gods. Just to be adored and worshipped. But as a human being, that she said ‘That’s not enough, I have a responsibility to my brothers and sisters all over the world.’ And she brought her particular kind of light to the darkest corners of the earth and brought focus there.
Fellow Goodwill Ambassador and long-standing activist Harry Belafonte (UNICEF 2003) reflected on Hepburn’s legacy, calling her ‘one of the great women of the 20th century’: ‘I think what she did with her celebrity, what she did with her art, the way she conducted herself as a human being, is a remarkable example of how the rest of us should really use our lives’. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (2003) proclaimed Hepburn the epitome of a ‘new kind of star: the kind that shines its light on the hardship and injustices suffered by the children of this world. The kind that confronts us and melts away our indifference. The kind that forces us to admit that we can and must do something to help’.

This essay traces how Hepburn not only epitomised ‘a new kind of star’ but also realised a new modality of star power. As UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Hepburn re-invented the cultural powers of stardom, pushing them into the field of global governmentality. With Hepburn, the cultural powers of stardom were governmentalised, that is, re-directed and re-articulated to the international aims, programmes and governing rationalities of the UN. She was not the first Goodwill Ambassador – as Mark Wheeler points out elsewhere in this volume, that was Danny Kaye – but she was one of the earliest and most influential. Crucially, it was Hepburn’s ‘authentic’, pedagogical femininity that facilitated this re-direction and re-articulation of star power, as Hepburn’s stardom allowed her cultural power to become synonymous with a distinctly cosmopolitan yet highly feminised form of pastoral power. Today the charitable, do-gooding ‘spirit of Audrey’ haunts the UN, as the organisation continues to rely on that ‘particular kind of light’ she was able to bring to global governmentality.

**Cosmopolitan stardom and global governmentality**

From the vantage point of our present, where it seems that nearly every Hollywood luminary is a social crusader of sorts, Hepburn’s turn as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador may seem commonplace, even common-sense. After all, relationships between Hollywood stars and charitable causes go back to the era of ‘Pickfair’. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford supported the Red Cross publically, and Pickford’s work with orphanages was an important facet of her star image (May 1980). Nowadays, links between Hollywood stars and social causes are stronger than ever and figure as a central linchpin of contemporary star discourse. Associating with worthy causes is no less than a job requirement in the ‘post-studio’ star system, where stars are responsible for producing their star image and managing their brand value (McDonald 2008); in this context, do-gooding emerges as an efficient – both cheap and effective – means of crafting personae and heightening public regard (Littler 2008). In today’s celebrity–cause matrix, however, the biggest stars (e.g. Angelina Jolie and George Clooney) appear to take on the biggest causes (e.g. global poverty and genocide), becoming ‘Messengers of Peace’ and ‘celebrity advocates’ for the UN and its affiliated organisations (Traub 2008).

Hepburn’s role as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador set the stage for our contemporary conjuncture where Hollywood’s brightest leading lights are increasingly embroiled in matters of global social welfare. As Andrew Cooper (2008) explains in his book *Celebrity Diplomacy*, ‘Audrey Hepburn created a model of star power expressed via the UN organisational structure that other celebrities could – and did in quite large numbers – try to follow. It was a model that allowed celebrities to go global with their enthusiasms. It linked them to UN specialised agencies. . . In this model, glamour worked to enhance the sense of commitment’ (p. 20). Put differently, Hepburn ushered in a distinctly cosmopolitan mode
of stardom in which stars step outside the representational worlds fabricated by Hollywood and into the fields of humanitarian relief and global governing.

While Hollywood stardom has long been infused with cosmopolitan flair, it is important to distinguish this new mode of stardom from other forms of global/international stardom. Martha Nussbaum (1996) traces the cosmopolitan world-view back to the Cynics and Stoics and their conceptualisation of world citizenship: for each ‘dwells, in effect, in two communities – the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration that “is truly great and truly common”. . . It is this community that is, fundamentally, the source of our moral obligations’ (p. 7). Here cosmopolitan citizenship is animated by moral obligations that supersede domestic politics and is premised on one’s membership in the global human community. In this way, cosmopolitanism implies a permanent tension between one’s status as citizen of a bounded community/nation and one’s status as a citizen of global humanity. As an international governing body committed to universal human rights and purporting to represent the general/global welfare, yet comprised of national representatives and member states, the UN embodies this tension in its very structure, perpetually walking a delicate path between its own international mission and the domestic interests, will and sovereignty of its members. Ultimately, however, the UN’s authority and legitimacy on the world stage hinges on the moral obligations associated with cosmopolitan citizenship.

Crafted primarily within the institutions, exigencies and discourses of the UN and global governing, cosmopolitan stardom aims to mobilise media audiences as cosmopolitan citizens; that is, citizens who feel (and act on) a moral obligation to global humanity, in particular the ‘general welfare’ represented by the UN. Within the parameters of cosmopolitan stardom, a star’s status as a ‘citizen of the world’ takes centre stage: cosmopolitan stars figure as icons of the international community and performers of global commitment and caring. Specifically, cosmopolitan stardom is marked by a star’s deep, long-term commitment to a global cause, as well as its institutional champion (in Hepburn’s case, child welfare and UNICEF); documented field trips ‘to the darkest corners of the earth’ which show the star learning about and experiencing firsthand the issues facing the international community; and the star’s participation in public education and fundraising efforts, targeted primarily at western citizens and designed to engage media audiences on these issues. As Sean Hepburn Ferrer (2003) recalls of his mother’s UNICEF work:

The schedules were grueling. . . my mother. . . would have to make numerous stops on the way to a destination in a developing country. . . Subsequently they would travel to developed countries, where she would give interviews, talking about everything she had seen and learned, make appearances, and join in UNICEF’s fund-raising efforts. They did this all several times a year, with a few weeks’ break to recover from jet lag, and then back on the road (p. 146).

Cosmopolitan stars are thus cultural phenomena that operate materially and practically in the field of global governmentality. Michel Foucault (2004) coined the term governmentality to refer to a dispersed mode of power that seeks to act ‘at a distance’ on the conduct of citizens by shaping their dispositions towards the social world and the institutions that govern it. While Foucault offered his theory of governmentality as a way to conceptualise the specific powers of liberal-democratic states, scholars have extended Foucault’s work in order to consider the ways in which international regimes seek to govern populations and constitute citizens responsive to these regimes (see Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995; Larner and Walters 2004). Cosmopolitan stars are simultaneously agents and cultural technologies of global governmentality to the extent that they work to bring media audiences, primarily
those in the western world, into alignment with the international aims and programmes of
global governing.

Since Hepburn’s death in 1993 from colon cancer, cosmopolitan stardom has been
subject to a dramatic rise; for while the UN’s deployment of stars as goodwill ambassadors
dates back to 1954, over the past two decades the UN has greatly expanded its deployment
of stars. Today stars appear to be eager to help and to clamour for appointments; meanwhile,
the UN sees pop culture icons as expedient resources for realising their international aims
in the context of a highly mediated global civil society. For example, the UN’s refugee
agency, explains that its Goodwill Ambassadors (which include, most famously, Angelina
Jolie) ‘use their influence and popularity to help spread awareness about United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)’s work, raise funds for its operations and lobby
governments’ (UNHCR staff 2010). In conjunction with the signing of the Millennium
Declaration, Kofi Annan instituted the ‘Celebrity advocacy for the New Millennium’ project
in hopes of drumming up widespread citizen support in the West for the UN’s new and
sprawling global agenda centred around global development (Cooper 2008).

Despite the ever-growing prominence of cosmopolitan stars in contemporary media
and geopolitical landscapes, it is important to see that the articulation of stars to global
governmentality is a vexed venture, with the wealth, glamour and mobility of stars stand-
ing in stark and problematic contrast to the mundane, technical and often horrific problems
facing those they seek to help. The cultural knowledges and connotations that surround
stars and celebrity culture (i.e. excessive consumption, superficiality, artificiality, narcis-
sism) do not collide readily with the serious, high stakes business of humanitarian relief
and global policy. Cultural critics and historians have indeed long been troubled by the
phenomenon of Hollywood stardom, the rise of celebrity culture it is imagined to have pre-
cipitated and the moral decay it is alleged to represent. To quote one of the most famous
examples, Daniel Boorstin (2006) declared the celebrity (who is, interestingly, here male
by default) to be:

*a person who is known for his well-knownness.*

His qualities – or rather his lack of qualities – illustrate our peculiar problems. He is neither
good nor bad, great nor petty. He is the human pseudo-event. He has been fabricated on the
purpose to satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness. He is morally neutral. . .
His relation to morality and even to reality is highly ambiguous (p. 79, emphasis in original).

Leo Lowenthal (2006) lamented the shift in popular biographies away from ‘idols of
production’ (political and business elites) towards ‘idols of consumption’ [sports and enter-
tainment figures from the realm of leisure who do ‘not belong to vocations which serve
society’s basic needs’ (p. 130)]. Lowenthal worried: ‘They seem to lead to a dream world
of the masses who no longer are capable of willing to conceive of biographies primarily as
a means of orientation and education. They receive information not about the agents and
methods of social production but about the agents and methods of social and individual
consumption’ (p. 131). For these critics, the rise of a mass culture dominated by media
celebrities represents cultural decline: the replacement of self-made heroes with fabricated
stars, of business, politics, civic leadership and education with the gossipy, hedonistic,
morally bankrupt, feminised world of consumer culture. Echoes of Boorstin and Lowenthal
live on in the ever-present moral panics surrounding celebrity culture and the tabloidization
of news, politics and everyday life it is imagined to fuel.

It is precisely these echoes that make the emergence of cosmopolitan stardom (and
stars as material and practical agents of global governmentality) a curious historical
development. In fact, today's cosmopolitan stars – most notably female stars such as Ashley Judd, Madonna and Jolie – regularly come under fire for their forays into matters of global social welfare, scolded for their allegedly self-serving, misguided and/or narcissistic attempts to save the world (see, for example, Weisberg 2005; Elkus 2007). However, in contrast to those who have followed in her footsteps, Hepburn's performance on the world stage as a glamorous advocate for needy children was rarely called into question. As UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Hepburn used her star image, the fact of her 'well-knownness' and personal biography to both educate and orientate audiences towards the issues facing the international community. Crucially, Hepburn's 'authentic' pedagogical femininity eased the contradictions associated with transforming glamorous stars into icons of global commitment and caring, and effectively translated the cultural powers of female stardom into a powerful cultural technology of global governmentality.

Audrey Hepburn and the cultural powers of female stardom

Many scholars have sought to understand the appeal of Audrey Hepburn, and the general consensus is that Hepburn's immense cultural sway had much to do with the her non-threatening, 'authentic', Cinderella-esque femininity. As *Cosmopolitan* staff (1993) put it in their tribute to Hepburn: 'Her boyish beauty supplanted the standard images of high artifice and hourglass figures long associated with high style. She was the real thing – a refined, naturally elegant brunette who exuded a warmth and vulnerability' (p. 270). Standing in contradistinction to pin-ups such as Marilyn Monroe, Hepburn was regarded widely as a 'woman's star' and a new icon of gamine femininity – an exciting alternative to what Marjorie Rosen called the 'mammary woman' so prominent in the 1950s popular media landscape (Moseley 2002). Susan Douglas (1994) recalls: 'Wide-eyed and small breasted... Hepburn seemed, well, not quite presexual or asexual but like a fairy or storybook princess, above it all. She made sexual maturity for girls less scary, as if on the other side of puberty you could be child-like and androgynous and still be attractive to men... women like Hepburn and Jackie Kennedy, were critical icons... for they made being boyish “classy” and very “in” ’ (p. 105). Rachel Moseley (2002) also documents a 'Cinderella motif' at work in Hepburn's image: 'This motif can be understood as a historically specific articulation of a discourse about the acquisition of certain kinds of femininity and the potential for upward mobility through work, education and/or marriage' (p. 132). Key to this construction were Hepburn's roles in such films as *Sabrina*, *My Fair Lady* and *Funny Face*, in which Hepburn played a young woman finding social mobility through dress, education and romance. Crucially, the Cinderella fantasies afforded by Hepburn's stardom were grounded in authenticity and transparency, as Hepburn's life on-screen seemed at one with her 'real' life (i.e. her family ties to European aristocracy, her plucked-from-obsccurity rise to fame and fortune, her relationships with older, established men). In other words, Hepburn appeared to be 'the real thing' and, as a result, her audiences felt a deep familiarity with and investment in her stardom (Moseley 2002).

What is more, Hepburn's approach to femininity was readily achievable. Hepburn is credited widely with creating a specific 'look' that, despite her impossibly thin frame, was do-able. As she told Barbara Walters, 'My look is attainable. Women can look like Audrey Hepburn by flipping out their hair, buying the large glasses and the little sleeveless dresses' (*Barbara Walters Special* 1989). Put differently, Hepburn's star image, rooted in the promises of self-transformation and social mobility, presented women with what Foucault (2003a) called technologies of the self, 'which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies
and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves’ (p. 146). As Jackie Stacey’s (1994) work shows, female stars in particular foster a wide array of partial identifications with audiences which function akin to technologies of the self. While cinematic identifications with female stars – identifications that take place in the context of cinematic viewing – tend towards fantasy-based relationships constituted by devotion, adoration, transcendence and aspiration, Stacey uses the term ‘extra-cinematic identificationary practices’ to describe a related though disparate set of audience–star relations that take place outside the cinematic context: ‘These processes also involve the spectators engaging in some kind of practice of transformation of the self to become more like the star they admire, or to involve others in the recognition of similarity to the star. This transformation does not only take place at the level of fantasy, but also involves activities in which the star becomes part of discourses of the spectator’s identity outside the cinema’ (p. 159).

What Stacey’s audience studies reveal are the ways in which audiences make use of star images, incorporating and adjusting star discourses to accommodate their own individualised regimens of living. In Hepburn’s case, it is safe to say that the pedagogical and interactive dimensions of female stardom elaborated by Stacey became more explicit and pronounced, as Hepburn’s Cinderella star image was built on the very notion of self-transformation through self-fashioning.

Hepburn’s return to pop cultural prominence as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in 1988 re-invigorated her star image, allowing the cultural powers of her female stardom to be re-articulated and re-directed in new ways. Rosemary Coombe (2006) suggests that, despite claims that cultural artefacts have lost their aura in what Walter Benjamin described as ‘the age of mechanical reproduction’, stars are unique in that they maintain an aura by virtue of their status as living, historical beings:

If the work of art’s aura derives from its unique, embodied, or tangible presence in time and space, an individual history, and a situation in a cultural tradition, then it is difficult to deny the aura of the celebrity. However often a celebrity’s likeness is reproduced, there remains a social knowledge of the celebrity as an individual human being with an unapproachable or distant existence elsewhere, a life history, and a mortal susceptibility to the processes of heartache, injury, illness, aging, and, ultimately, death. ... Arguably, celebrities evoke the fascination they do because however endlessly their images are reproduced, their substantive duration – that is, their life – never becomes wholly irrelevant. They never lose their autonomy from the objects that circulate in their likeness (p. 732).

In other words, with stars there exists a permanent reserve of social and cultural resources lodged in off-screen existence that can be tapped into. This reserve makes stars potentially limitless objects of speculation and fascination, giving them a virtual life that extends beyond the mechanisms of the culture industry. In fact, the discourse of stardom is itself organised around the star’s aura. As Richard deCordova (1990) argues: ‘With the emergence of the star, the question of the player’s existence outside his or her work in film became the primary focus of discourse. The private lives of the players were constituted as a site of knowledge and truth’ (p. 98).

What is distinct, then, about the representational landscapes surrounding stars is the way in which star discourse hinges on a ‘hermeneutic mode of reception’ (pp. 112–113), whereby audiences are positioned to investigate, speculate about and interpret the ‘real’ identities of their big screen idols. This discursive organization – grounded in the star’s aura and fuelled by audiences’ interpretative efforts as regards the private, personal lives of stars and the ‘truth’ of their identities – makes stardom a highly mobile and flexible discourse, capable of intersecting with disparate discourses at work in a particular context. In Hepburn’s case, as the star assumed the role of UNICEF
Goodwill Ambassador, she re-activated the social knowledges and cultural resources associated with female stardom and, at the same time, subtly re-directed the hermeneutic mode of reception away from her fashion sense and Cinderella personae towards the international aims of the UN and the discourses of global governing.

**Back into the limelight: UNICEF and the Hepburn aura**

Hepburn’s return to public life in 1988 was itself an event, for her quiet, gradual retirement from film-making set the stage for a dramatic re-entrance. Hepburn’s aversion to the press throughout her career meant that there was much still to be learned about the iconic yet reclusive star, so after years away from the bright lights of Hollywood Hepburn garnered enormous media attention in her new role as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador. Well aware of these dynamics at play and of the power of her aura, Hepburn explained: ‘If this career has given me, has left me with something very special, it’s the fact that it’s left me with this, whatever it is, this voice, this curiosity people have still to see me, to talk to me, which I can use for the good of children’ (Barbara Walters Special 1989). ‘I knew my role was “the lure”. Starvation in third-world countries was not hot copy. I think the powers that be rightly thought that I might be able to attract a little attention. All those reclusive years helped too! If I had been seen all over the place – except in my backyard in Switzerland, weeding – I wouldn’t be quite the snare. But lying low all those years made me a curiosity’ (quoted in Cosmopolitan staff 1993, p. 282).

The ‘lure’ of Hepburn’s female stardom worked at many different levels in popular media. On one hand, her work with UNICEF made her ‘newsworthy’, and Hepburn appeared regularly on nightly news shows across the western world to report her findings after UNICEF field trips. On the other hand, her UNICEF work became a pretext for talk show hosts and tabloid journalists to delve back into the star’s elusive personal life. Thus Hepburn’s Goodwill Ambassadorship played out primarily in the context of much-hyped television interviews with journalists of various stripes, all of whom were eager to get some long-awaited ‘scoop’ from the recently resurrected female star.

However, Hepburn’s status as ‘hot copy’ for journalists – broadsheet and tabloid alike – was not all she brought to the table for UNICEF; she also had a personal connection to the organisation and its work on behalf of children. At the end of World War II, Hepburn’s family received emergency assistance from the then little-known UN agency in Holland. In addition, Hepburn had experienced her own personal struggles with health and motherhood. As Kul Chandra Gautam (2008), recipient of the 2008 Audrey Hepburn Humanitarian Award explained,

Deep beneath the glamour and glitter, and beauty and pageantry of a Hollywood star, studded with Oscar and Tony, Emmy and Grammy awards; hidden inside the Givenchy clothes and the Ferragamo shoes, Audrey was really a UNICEF poster child. Unlike any other Goodwill Ambassador, Audrey had experienced first-hand exactly the kind of childhood problems that UNICEF has been dealing with everyday for the past 60 years. As a child, she had suffered from hunger and malnutrition. She had been traumatised by war, and abandoned by her father. She had suffered from anemia and whooping cough, and had a near-death experience when she was six weeks old. As an adult, she had three painful miscarriages, just like so many mothers today in developing countries.

Fortunately for UNICEF, Hepburn proved incredibly adept at articulating her personal biography to the UN’s international aims, at making her star discourse – organised around the private lives and ‘real’ identities of stars – accommodate her latest role as UNICEF
Goodwill Ambassador. Hepburn had a knack for keeping UNICEF in the conversation: when journalists or audience members wanted to talk about her film career or fashion sense, Hepburn found a way to steer the discussion back to her work on behalf of children. The apparently easy synergies between Hepburn’s personal biography and the broader institutional aims she was enlisted to promote helped to ease the contradictions involved with turning a fashion icon into a serious advocate for impoverished children. In response to CBS’s Harry Smith’s suggestion that she has lived two distinct lives, one as a glamorous film star and another as global humanitarian, Hepburn replied:

No, Harry, because it really is all one life. And I never led what people think is this glamorous life. I have always been me. I’ve always been aware of what goes on in the world. And I certainly grew up in a war-ravaged country and I’ve always known, you know, that I was privileged and many were not. I’ve always seen suffering, known about it, and that hasn’t changed. I’m still the same old girl (CBS This Morning 1991).

Thanks to her status as an iconic yet reclusive female star who bore a personal connection to her chosen cause, Hepburn’s cosmopolitan stardom took the form of a series of confessional interviews. Hepburn used her new platform to reflect upon her personal experiences, framing revelations of her deepest trials and tribulations as an occupation survivor and mother in relationship to UNICEF’s on-going work on behalf of children. For example, Hepburn recalled her childhood struggles to adjust to post-liberation life, recounting where her commitment to and passion for children was formed:

I did emerge from the last war, along with hundreds of thousands of other children in Holland, with a very poor health because of years of malnutrition. And UNICEF did come in right after the liberation with food and clothing, and, surely, that’s made me a little more aware that some people might not have, what it means to be hungry, deprivation, and so forth. Never do I think of this when I see a child in Africa who’s at death’s door, but what I’ve always had, and maybe that I was born with, was an enormous love of people. Children (Audrey Hepburn Remembered 1993).

Of course, confessions have long been an important staple of star discourse. As deCordova argues, confessions intensify the hermeneutic star–audience relation, as they offer glimpses into the depths of the star’s identity and promise to reveal the secrets of her soul. However, Hepburn’s confessions as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador not only worked to reveal an inner depth or secret truth. Through her highly personalised confessions of caring for the world’s children, Hepburn translated the cultural powers of her stardom into the field of global governmentality, becoming a moral entrepreneur for the UN and offering up her own stardom as a cultural site for audiences to work on their identities as cosmopolitan citizens. In other words, as Hepburn stepped back into the limelight for UNICEF, not only was her aura re-activated; crucially, her star power was re-directed and re-articulated to the governing agenda of the UN.

**Signs of global melodrama: cosmopolitan citizenship as technology of the self**

Christine Gledhill (1991) has argued that stars are signs of melodrama: that the discourse of stardom works to bring the moral function of melodrama once performed by novels and plays into contemporary visual culture and mass society. The construction of stars exhibits many features found in the dramatis personae of melodrama. Melodramatic characterization is performed through a process of personification whereby actors – and fictional
characters conceived as actors in their diegetic world – embody ethical forces’ (p. 210, emphasis in original). Like melodrama, stars make legible what Peter Brooks called a ‘moral occult’: ‘the continuing operation of a Manichean battle between good and evil which infuses human actions with ethical consequences and therefore with significance’ (p. 209). Off-screen stars also function as signs of melodrama; audience studies conducted by scholars such as Joke Hermes (2006) and Elizabeth Bird (1992) show how contemporary star discourses – specifically, gossip and tabloid representations centred on the private, personal lives of stars – offer different groups of readers sites for moral consensus and community building. As UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, however, Hepburn emerged a very different sort of sign of melodrama. Through her confessions of caring for the world’s children, Hepburn became a highly instrumental ‘sign of global melodrama’ by putting the melodramatic/moral functions of stardom to work for UNICEF.

First, it is important to see that Hepburn’s cosmopolitan stardom required her to perform peculiar sorts of emotional work. Footage of Hepburn undertaking traditional types of care/women’s work on her field trips – from nursing and education to nurturing and comforting sick children – regularly provided context and backdrop for her interviews. However, Hepburn was not only asked to perform for UNICEF cameras but also – and crucially – to offer up her reflections upon these images and experiences to journalists, all the while connecting them to her personal life. For example, in one of Hepburn’s final UNICEF interviews with *McNeil/Lehrer NewsHour’s* Charlayne Hunter-Gault, after her trip to Somalia, a tearful Hepburn recounted her experience of watching a child die at a UNICEF feeding centre:

Hepburn: And this boy was sitting with just a bit of cloth around him, rail thin, I mean, really just bones and eyes and absolutely struggling for breath. He obviously had a respiratory infection, and I was suffering so for him because I did have asthma as a child and anemia and edema and all the things that come with first degrees of malnourishment that I remember, remember so this crisis of not being able to breathe and struggling to – and I just felt I wish I could breathe for him but he literally sort of just lay down while I was there and was gone.

Hunter-Gault: Died?
Hepburn: Mm hmm.
Hunter-Gault: In front of you?

This doubling of emotional work rendered Hepburn’s confessions of caring extremely potent, at once heightening Hepburn’s ‘authentic’ femininity and intensifying the hermeneutic star–audience relationship.

Moreover, Hepburn’s confessions of caring also doubled as moral authority building for UNICEF and the UN while holding at bay accusations of propaganda. [Since its inception, the UN has struggled to avoid charges of propaganda from national governments, insisting that its communication strategies are no more than non-political, public education campaigns (Alleyne 2003).] For example, later on in her interview with Hunter-Gault, Hepburn argued that:

[... ] though the UN has been very criticised, they’re not to be sneezed at because what other organisation has the planes, the people? You know, it has to be done. These are wonderful, the CARE, Red Cross. I don’t know if during the first great famines in Bangladesh, during the great famine in the thirties in Russia, during the Irish famine, how much did we do about that? Now we’re at least trying, and doing it rather well. But we’re impatient, because now we see
the children dying right in front of us, for most of us on television. I’ve seen it happen, and I’m filled with a rage at ourselves. I don’t believe in, in collective guilt, but I do believe in collective responsibility. Somalia is our responsibility. It’s certainly the British responsibility, the Italians’ responsibility, because they colonised that country. And they should be doing more, I think. They have an obligation to those people from whom they benefited for so many years. But it is the international community, and that is the beauty of humanitarian, of relief workers, of humanitarian aid, that regardless of what’s going on, of the danger, of the diseases they’re getting themselves, they do it, and they don’t give up (MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour 1992).

What is evident in Hepburn’s statement is the extent to which the context and format of the confessional, television interview worked to authorise Hepburn as a powerful advocate for UNICEF, the UN and the growing nexus of transnational humanitarian organisations. On one hand, Hepburn was able to articulate in no uncertain terms the need for the UN on the global stage. The relatively open format, designed to illicit Hepburn’s deepest feelings, provided ample wiggle-room, allowing the star to contextualise contemporary humanitarian efforts (strikingly, she often noted the legacy of colonialism on the developing world, as well as longer histories of humanitarian disasters) and, at the same time, to elevate/idealise the work of relief workers, the agencies that employ them and the broader missions that they purport to carry out. However, what could arguably be considered as blatant UN propaganda became refracted into a highly personalised and individualised sentiment. Hepburn’s emotive yet reasoned pleas for collective responsibility and a stronger humanitarian infrastructure figured not only as the personal opinions of a popular female star but also, and crucially, as an embodied ethical force. Through reflecting on her role and work with UNICEF, Hepburn became a highly specified, instrumental sign of global melodrama, articulating the melodramatic function of stardom to the global governing agenda of the UN. In other words, Hepburn made the moral universe of cosmopolitanism and UN-led global governmentality legible by way of her confessions of caring.

Most significantly, perhaps, Hepburn’s cosmopolitan stardom carried great potential for cultivating citizens responsive to the international aims and programmes of the UN. For what was ultimately achieved in Hepburn’s UNICEF interviews, although the doubling of affective labour, was the translation of cosmopolitan citizenship into a technology of the self. As a sign of global melodrama, Hepburn not only made the case for the UN and UNICEF, but also implied courses of ‘right’ action and conduct to her audience. For example, Hepburn often discussed giving and helping as a commonly felt cultural value and practice. As she explained to the Christian Science Monitor’s Robert Press (1992):

I don’t have to tell them what to do because the world is full, I’ve discovered, of kind people. And I’ve also discovered once they know, they give, they help. It’s not knowing that holds them up. Each country has huge problems of its own, which quite rightly they must take care of – the homeless in America, the poor in every country. But I think there’s always enough to give to the countries that are the most needy.

When asked by CBS’s Harry Smith, ‘Is there a point at which our well of compassion might run dry do you think?’, Hepburn replied, ‘Never. I – I don’t think that’s – it’s not in human nature. Giving – giving is like living. I mean if you stop wanting to give, I think you – there’s nothing more to live for’ (CBS This Morning 1991). To her Donahue audience, Hepburn explained: ‘Although I knew about this side of life, I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes. Africa, Bangladesh, Latin America. So much suffering and so much poverty. But you deal with it by doing something about it’ (Phil Donahue Show 1990). There was a therapeutic tenour enlivening Hepburn’s cosmopolitan star discourse, as becoming involved with the
good works of the UN is presented as a way to cope with the knowledge, which as she often pointed out had been with her since her childhood, of the horrible suffering endured by those less fortunate. Assuming her audience will share her personal commitments once they ‘know’, Hepburn’s confessions of caring emerged as an invitation for audiences to join her.

Female stars have long offered techniques for self-fashioning and resources for living to their audiences, and Hepburn’s Cinderella persona and achievable ‘look’ was perhaps the fullest expression of this dimension of female stardom. As Goodwill Ambassador, Hepburn’s highly pedagogical mode of stardom was extended to encompass her maternal goodness, generosity and caring which became positioned as being potentially as achievable and obtainable as her look. Through awareness, compassion and giving, media audiences could also partake in the project of helping children and supporting UN efforts to ensure global social welfare. In other words, Hepburn’s cosmopolitan stardom worked as an opportunity to fashion oneself as a specific sort of cosmopolitan citizen: Hepburn became not only a lesson in how to be glamorous, but also in how to be charitable and good. There is no better evidence of this dynamic than Melissa Hellstern’s (2004) *How to be lovely: the Audrey Hepburn way of life*, a self-help manual for women based on the teachings of Hepburn’s stardom. Hellstern writes in her introduction: ‘To the world, she represented all that a woman could be, and we wanted in. We still do. By looking at her words from interviews over the years, we may just find a new revelation or two, and certainly some we knew all along’ (p. ix). Nearly the entire text of the nearly 200-page book consists of Hepburn quotes organised into themes such as ‘How to find your bliss’, ‘How to make your mark’, ‘How to be beautiful’, ‘How to nuture your family’ and ‘How to change the world’. With regard to the latter, Hellstern explains, ‘[c]hanging the world seems an impossible task. And not one among us can do it. Only when we each commit to small steps forward will we turn it all around’ (p. 175). In this section, several lessons are culled from Hepburn’s work with UNICEF including: ‘Think deeply’, ‘Be hands-on’ and ‘Inspire’. The book ends with Hellstern’s plea to her readers to continue Hepburn’s legacy by contacting The Audrey Hepburn Memorial Fund of the US Committee for UNICEF: ‘Changing the world is truly up to us – one country, one volunteer, and one child at a time’ (p. 189).

**Pastoral power, charitable femininity and global governmentality**

In the context of Hepburn’s UNICEF goodwill ambassadorship, star power became synonymous with a highly feminised form and distinctly cosmopolitan articulation of what Foucault (2003b) called ‘pastoral power’. Foucault argued that one of the preeminent modalities of power at work in contemporary societies is pastoral power. Developed initially within the institutions of Christianity, pastoral power (i.e. the spiritual guidance of the pastor) found form in the confession and was premised on ‘a knowlege of the conscience and an ability to direct’ (p. 132); pastoral power sought to ensure mass salvation by tending at once to the community at large and the souls of individuals. Foucault showed how modern liberal regimes have adapted the techniques of pastoral power, dislocating them from the church as well as the moral authority of the pastor, and dispersing them throughout the social realm in the name of promoting the welfare of the population. Contemporary forms of pastoral power reconstitute the end game of salvation in the next world with salvation in this one, where salvation encompasses a variety of ‘worldly aims’ (e.g. health, security, rights, wealth). Like earlier forms, modern pastoral power moves outwards targeting the population at large, and inwards, targeting the dispositions, conducts and souls of individuals (Greene 2005).
Hepburn was the first star to function as an agent of pastoral power in the broader field of global governmentality. Thanks to her pedagogical and ‘authentic’ femininity, Hepburn emerged as a cultural site where both functions – the generalizing (outwards) and individualizing (inwards) – of pastoral power meet. On one hand, as a sign of global melodrama and an icon of global caring and commitment, Hepburn tended to the general welfare, particularly populations in developing worlds, bringing moral authority to the UN and the institutions of global governance. On the other hand, through her own confessions of caring – that is, by revealing the ‘depths of her own soul’ to media audiences – Hepburn worked on dispositions of conducts of individuals, particularly those in the West, converting cosmopolitan citizenship into a technology of the self.

Ultimately, the UN and regimes of global governmentality need the potent sorts of pastoral, cultural power realised by Hepburn’s female stardom. Unlike domestic regimes of governmentality, the UN does not have other forms of power (aka sovereign and disciplinary) at its disposal, especially in its dealings with more powerful western states; instead, the organisation must rely heavily, if not totally, on global forms of ‘governing at a distance’, winning legitimacy from citizens who feel a moral obligation to and are willing to prioritise and work for the welfare and rights of global humanity represented by the UN. Thus, cosmopolitan stars such as Hepburn become expedient resources for their abilities to act on the dispositions and conducts of media audiences: cosmopolitan stars are charged with making cosmopolitan citizens, bringing western audiences into alignment with the international aims and governing rationalities of the UN.

However, Hepburn’s pastoral star power was of a distinctive ilk, taking the form of charitable femininity that was specific to Hepburn and realised in the context of her re-activated aura and her pedagogical, ‘authentic’ star image. Therefore, at the same time that Hepburn crystallised the idea that cosmopolitan stars could play significant roles in global governmentality, she also set a near-impossible standard. Indeed, the ‘spirit of Audrey’ haunts the UN, as the organisation continues to rely on that ‘particular kind of light’ and specific sort of star power she was able to bring to global governmentality.

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