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## Katharine Hepburn: Star as Feminist (Film and Culture Series)

Andrew Britton

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#3360284 in Books 2003-12-30 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.76 x .76 x 6.641, 1.46 #File Name: 0231132778256 pages | File size: 69.Mb

**Andrew Britton : Katharine Hepburn: Star as Feminist (Film and Culture Series)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Katharine Hepburn: Star as Feminist (Film and Culture Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. In-depth. Very deep. By Martha Malarky I'm still working on this book. Although the subject matter is popular culture, the analyses are complicated. GREAT photographs, though! 0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Katharine Hepburn: Star as Feminist By emm The book has interesting

information, but the writing style is so convoluted it is not enjoyable to read. The photographs in the book are good reproductions.<sup>9</sup> of 9 people found the following review helpful. A sharp and thought-provoking marvel! By Shantanu Rane This is a superb critical evaluation of all of Hepburn's film roles until 1984. It is the only book about Hepburn that did not disappoint me. Hepburn biographies and studies have often tended to "normalize" Hepburn (eg. Kate - Charles Higham) or rationalize some contradictory aspects of her personality (eg. A Remarkable Woman - Anne Edwards) based on \*conclusions drawn from\* material that is in media circulation. Andrew Britton, in refreshing contrast, meticulously examines the implied beliefs and thought processes \*behind\* such material. Hepburn, through Britton's book, emerges in an arena all her own, resisting all attempts at conventional compartmentalization. I absolutely agree with his views on many movies, say, "Woman of the Year", where Hepburn's presence in the title role suggests an independence and authority which the film's contrived, though expertly acted, ending, tries (unsuccessfully) to suppress. His views on the "violence of the performance" in "Summertime", which makes "the film's project untenable", are also very apt. Apart from a thorough examination of Hepburn's roles with Tracy, Grant and others, this book makes pointed comparisons between the spinster roles of Bette Davis and Hepburn. It also has a very original discussion on The Philadelphia Story (Hepburn), Ninotchka (Greta Garbo), and Destry Rides Again (Marlene Dietrich), which according to Britton, were attempts to humanize (and hence compromise) its three female stars, who had previously been labelled "box-office poison". For fans of Hepburn, for serious followers of films, and for all those who are concerned about the hidden ideas that films (sometimes inadvertently) propagate into the filmgoer's mind, this is an objective, insightful book which should not be missed.

Of all the major Hollywood stars, Katharine Hepburn was the least conventional, conforming to none of the stereotypes of female superstardom. She was not an exotic outsider in Hollywood like Greta Garbo or Marlene Dietrich; nor was she a victim of the studios like Judy Garland or Marilyn Monroe; and she was certainly not a creature of the system like Joan Crawford and Lana Turner. Instead, she always appeared intelligent, willful and independent, able to develop her own persona within the confines of the studio system. Andrew Britton proposes a feminist reading of Hepburn's films, arguing that her persona raises problems about class, female sexuality, and women's oppression that strain to the limits the conventions of a cinema ultimately committed to the reassertion of bourgeois gender roles. Hepburn's work is also used to explore more general issues, such as the functioning of the star system. This is one of the very few analyses of American cinema to focus on a film star rather than a director or a genre and as such is essential reading for anyone interested in the movies. First published in the United Kingdom twenty years ago, this lavishly illustrated new edition features a foreword by the noted film critic Robin Wood.

From Publishers Weekly Hepburn's film persona challenged expectations of class and gender, while her strong self-assurance defied the strictures of Hollywood studios during her career. According to Britton, a British film lecturer before his death in 1994, Hepburn's public image was replicated in part by her film roles. Yet that same brash confidence, coupled with the social conventions of the day, dooms her onscreen characters, who are validated only when they find contentment with men. Britton combs Hepburn's oeuvre for signs of subversive feminism and points out the studios' successes at undermining them. But his thesis doesn't live up to his title. Although a close examination of such films as Sylvia Scarlet, Stage Door and Woman of the Year impart some insight into the gender politics of the day, much of Britton's analysis is labored and his conclusions are strained (and, at times, overwrought, as when he claims that casting Hepburn as the controlling mother in 1959's Suddenly, Last Summer was a reaction to her role as a daughter rebelling against patriarchy in 1932's A Bill of Divorce). The book, published in England in 1984, displays Britton's encyclopedic knowledge of film. He assumes his readers are similarly familiar with everyone from D.W. Griffith to Hal Ashby. In addition, he expects them to know Jacques Lacan's writings, Marxist politics and sophisticated gender identity theories. Academics may not mind Britton's leaden prose, but researchers will be frustrated by his lack of attribution. Bw photos. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Andrew Britton lectured in film studies at the Universities of Warwick, Essex, and Reading. He also taught at Queens and Trent Universities in Ontario, Canada, and was a guest lecturer at other universities in Britain, Canada, and the United States. He died in 1994. Robin Wood is a founding editor of CineAction and author of Hitchcock's Films Revisited, Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... and Beyond, and Sexual Politics and Narrative Film. He is professor emeritus at York University and the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Cinema Studies.