"Before She Was a Virgin . . .": Doris Day and the Decline of Female Film Comedy in the 1950s and 1960s

by Dennis Bingham

Abstract: Doris Day's complicated "dialogue" with her audiences varied over the decades, and endures, in a distorted way, in popular memory. This article studies the decline of her film stardom and her retirement from films as concurrent with the definitive end of the female comic as the unequivocal subject, rather than object, of comedy.

> The words "Doris Day" get a reaction, often adverse. They are an incantation, and people who have no reason to disdain her fine performer's gifts shy from her as from a religious force.
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> John Updike, reviewing Day's memoir, *Doris Day: Her Own Story*, in 1976.

Sexless Sex Object, Non-comic Comedy Star: The Doris Day Rorschach Test. Although few think of her now as a comedian, or as being in any way funny, Doris Day was a big comedy movie star. Day (née Kappelhoff) came out of a musical comedy tradition, and also flirted with melodrama in the course of her twenty-year reign (1948–68) as one of the leading American film stars. But it was in the romantic, or as they're often called, "sex comedies," of the late fifties to mid-sixties that she reached her greatest popularity. Day was voted the number one box office star in the annual Quigley Poll of U.S. exhibitors for four of the five years from 1960 through 1964, yielding only to Elizabeth Taylor in 1961. She was the last woman to hold that position for any significant time and, to date, the next-to-last actress to occupy it at all.[1]

Thus, Day might be considered the last major female comedy film star. Her last feature film was released in the epochal year of 1968. That changing-of-the-guard period in American film, when a New Hollywood finally materialized to displace the remains of the studio system, was marked by two events that would help confirm Day in film culture as hopelessly unhip and perpetually virginal. One was her refusal of Mike Nichols's offer to play Mrs. Robinson in *The Graduate*, the kind of role that could have altered her image as drastically as Nichols's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* the previous year had changed Taylor's. "I could not see myself

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rolling around in the sheets with a young man half my age whom I had seduced," Day wrote in her memoir. "I realized it was an effective part . . . but it offended my sense of values."[2] The other was the debut of *The Doris Day Show* in the fall of 1968, a situation comedy which aired on CBS until 1973. Day changed the format of the show after its first season from a sentimental comedy about a widow and two children on a farm to an urban story about a career woman in San Francisco, a format that bore more relation to the roles Day had played in her most successful film cycle. The show seems to have lodged in the space between Day's image as a Warner Brothers contract star (1948–54), as a peaches-and-cream girl-next-door, and her persona in her later comedies as a single woman making her way in the cosmopolitan "man's world" of the big city. Day's rejection of the New Hollywood represented by *The Graduate*, the overnight datedness of her body of film work, and her seeming retreat to a bland, innocuous TV sitcom marked her by the end of the sixties as, if not a symbol of everything against which both the sexual revolution and the feminist movement were in revolt, then simply irrelevant.

Starting in the late seventies, however, Day's films and persona began to elicit a fair amount of against-the-grain analysis from feminist film critics seeking to reconcile contradictions in the popular memory by returning to the films themselves. These critics ask how Day's "virginal" repute squares with her image as a hard-working, independent career woman. And usually they find that it doesn't. Such approaches were abetted by Day's own 1976 memoir, which attacked her virginal image and were initiated because, as Day told her writer, A. E. Hotchner, "I'm tired of being thought of as Miss Goody Two-shoes . . . the girl next door, Miss Happy-Go-Lucky."[3]

Indeed Day's star vehicles following her career-changing role in *Pillow Talk* (1959) undermine her, often playing to the "Miss Goody Two-shoes" image while turning it into a withering mockery of femininity. Feminist film historian Lucy Fischer argues that the "shrinking" of woman is intrinsic to comedy as a genre, at least to an ahistorical concept of comedy as a genre with fixed, changeless properties.[4] Kathleen Rowe, on the other hand, contends in *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter* that the "unruliness" of woman's laughter and of female figures, which had been contained and kept a distant second to male comics in the silent era, and enjoyed a heyday in screwball comedies written for such actresses as Barbara Stanwyck, Jean Arthur, Claudette Colbert, and Katharine Hepburn, among others, was progressively stifled in Hollywood films of the fifties and sixties.[5]

American culture's darkening mood toward women following World War II is best seen in those well-known two sides of the cinematic mirror—the femme fatale of film noir and the long-suffering heroine of the woman's film. However, the comic icons of the screwball era who survived as stars into the fifties often did so, like Hepburn and Rosalind Russell, by allowing their free-spirited personae to be evolve into "tragic spinsters" in such films as *Summertime* (David Lean,1955) and *Picnic* (Joshua Logan, 1955), respectively. The case of Katharine Hepburn is instructive. She continued as a comedy star well into the 1950s in films costarring Spencer Tracy (*Pat and Mike* [George Cukor, 1952], *Desk Set* [Walter Lang, 1957]). But these movies are carryovers from the forties. Her greatest successes came as "old maids" in *Summertime* and *The Rainmaker* (Joseph Anthony, 1956) and as the

horrid mother in *Suddenly Last Summer* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1959), all of which earned her Oscar nominations. The "spinster" archetype that she was able to convert into comedy at the start of the decade in *The African Queen* (John Huston, 1951) needed to go tragic. The unruly woman was channeled into television, so to speak, notably into the TV career of Lucille Ball (who had failed as an RKO and MGM contract player of the forties and who became on television arguably the greatest female comedy star ever).

Later in the fifties, after having been subordinated in the popular culture to the male comedian comedy of Martin and Lewis, Bob Hope, and Danny Kaye, romantic comedy returned as a dominant Hollywood genre in a form that recast the screwball comedy of sociocultural opposites into a coarser battle-of-the-sexes narrative informed by the unique (and as it turned out, socially untenable) combination of male dominance, conformity, consciousness of sexuality, and repression that was the 1950s. This new cycle needed equilibrium, a stable center. It found this, however briefly (until it too proved untenable), in the poised, dignified persona of the established movie star, Doris Day.

Day was surely no unruly woman. Nor was she simply a diminished woman, reduced to an object of jokes told by men. She can be found in some ambivalent space between the two: independent, optimistic, even tough, in some ways; undermined, trivialized, and objectified in others. She is not seen, in her day or now, as the source of the comedy in her films, even though there have been plenty of male stars of romantic comedy whom the public associated with the genre for long stretches of their careers.[6] Why then is Day not considered a "funny lady"?

I see two broad reasons. One is her "image," which looms so large as to block out the talents of the woman herself and the films that she made. "She appears sheer symbol," wrote Updike, "of a kind of beauty, of a kind of fresh and energetic innocence, of a kind of banality. Her very name seems to signify less a person than a product, wrapped in an alliterating aura."[7] Dwight MacDonald, ostensibly reviewing *That Touch of Mink* in 1962, diagnoses a disease: "The Doris Day Syndrome." The chief symptom is a bland conformity, of which the "disease," conversely, is also a symptom in the culture at large. MacDonald's Day is

> as wholesome as a bowl of cornflakes and at least as sexy. [Her face is] unmarked by experience, thus titillating the American male's Lolita complex, while at the same time . . . , it is full of Character, or maybe just Niceishness, so that it also appeals to the ladies. No wonder Doris Day is Hollywood's No. 1 box-office property. I suspect most American mothers would be pleased, and relieved, if their daughters grew up to resemble Doris Day. She has the healthy, antiseptic Good Looks and the Good Sport personality that the American middle class—that is, practically everybody—admires as a matter of duty.[8]

Decades later, Day is remembered, oddly as a star whose image was that of "natural" and "unadorned" femininity, for the kind of vanity, long identified with actresses, which refuses to change and which calls for camera filters to obscure the aging process. These become obvious as early as *Lover, Come Back* (1962). She also is identified with a reluctance to veer from a carefully contrived and steadfastly maintained persona.[9]

Dwight MacDonald's condescension toward contemporary popular taste segued decades later into a distorted popular memory of Day that is reflected in the work of a number of film scholars. Ed Sikov writes in 1994, "In the national myth of the past, Doris Day's virginity is an all-defining metonymy for the era's sexual values."[10] Rowe in 1995 remarked that "by the end of the [fifties], Doris Day, sunny and sexless, typified the new heroine of romantic comedy."[11] In 1994 Susan Douglas lamented "the unfortunate plethora of Doris Day films . . . in which a thirty-five year-old maidenhead was as sacred and well-guarded as the Pietà"[12]

Day revisionists include Jane Clarke, Diana Simmonds, and Mandy Merck in their 1980 monograph, *Move Over Misconceptions: Doris Day Reappraised*, written to accompany a Day retrospective at the British Film Institute (BFI); T. E. Perkins, in a 1981 article in *Screen* published in response to the same retrospective; Janice Welsch in a 1977 essay on Day, Marilyn Monroe, and Audrey Hepburn; Steven Cohan, in his lengthy chapter on *Pillow Talk* in *Masked Men*, his study of masculinity in fifties films; myself, in a chapter on *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in *Acting Male*; and Robin Wood, in his analysis of the same film in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*. Of all of these, none offer sustained analyses focusing on the meaning of Day's persona and films (except perhaps for the Clarke-Simmonds-Merck monograph, which has never been published or distributed outside the U.K.). All of them are probably influenced by the work of Molly Haskell, whose auteurist-humanist approach in *From Reverence to Rape* (1974) may now be considered dated by most feminists, but it is important to note that Haskell was the first feminist critic to attempt to unpack Day's image and read it, however impressionistically, in light of the female spectatorship of Day's era.[13]

Doris Day: Her Own Story. The most effective deconstruction, if not destruction, of the Doris Day signifier was performed with exquisite deliberation by Day herself in her memoir, *Doris Day: Her Own Story,* on which she and writer A. E. Hotchner began to collaborate shortly after the end of her TV series. (The book was first published in 1976). No tabloid exposé could have ripped the lid from a star image with as much relish as Day took in dismantling her own persona. Her narrative begins,

> After twenty-seven years . . . , my public image is unshakably that of America's wholesome virgin, the girl next door, carefree and brimming with happiness. An image I can assure you, more make-believe than any film part I ever played. But I am Miss Chastity Belt and that's all there is to it.
>
> And what are the sweet, virginal roles I have played on the Silver Screen? I was slugged and raped by Jimmy Cagney, battled the Ku Klux Klan with Ginger Rogers and Ronald Reagan . . ., was the long-suffering wife of alcoholic baseball pitcher Ronald Reagan, and became so hysterical with fear of Louis Jourdan that the movie had to be shut down while I recovered.
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> Well, then, it's my carefree personal life that has given me this image. Sure. At ten years of age I discovered that my father was having an affair with the mother of my best friend. Divorce followed. At thirteen, I was in an auto that was hit by a train, and that abruptly ended my promising career as a dancer—and threatened to make me a cripple for life. I

> was married at seventeen to a psychopathic sadist. When my third husband died, a man I had been married to for seventeen years, I discovered that not only had he contrived to wipe out the millions I had earned, but he left me with a debt of a half-million dollars. My reward for a lifetime of hard work. Yes, sir, America's la-di-da happy virgin![14]

In the strong literary voice and narrative drive constructed for her by Hotchner, previously best known for a best-selling account of Hemingway that Day had read before contacting him, Day recounted her marriage to Martin Melcher, a perhaps well-meaning but domineering former agent who "managed" Day's career to the extent of often signing her up for films without consulting her, becoming in effect worse than the most heavy-handed studio head about type-casting her and giving her no choice over her roles. Worse yet, Melcher turned her income over to an attorney, Jerome Rosenthal, who sank her money into his own misbegotten schemes—oil wells and hotels—the extent of whose financial calamities he kept from his celebrity clients (some of whom also included Gordon MacRae and Kirk Douglas).

After Melcher's sudden death of heart failure in April 1968, Day discovered that Melcher and Rosenthal had mismanaged away all of her money, and that her husband had signed her to a CBS TV series despite her having refused TV offers for years. She despised the show's format, taking over the series after its first year and revamping it not once but twice, after its first and third seasons. In the book Day even revealed a personal connection to, of all things, the Sharon Tate murders; Terry Melcher (1942–2004), Day's son by her first husband, and whom Martin Melcher later adopted, had lived in the house where Tate and her friends were murdered by the Manson family. As an executive at Columbia Records in the 1960s, Terry Melcher had turned down Charles Manson, who had aspirations as a rock musician, for a record contract, and Manson's murderous crew was reportedly now looking for him. Clearly, by setting this all down in a book, Day meant to fry the eyes of those who would tie her to the railroad track of her virginal reputation.

The memoir was written after Day had long since left filmmaking, had ended her TV series (at her initiative, not the network's), and seemed ready to retire from public life, which she for the most part did. When she engaged Hotchner, Day was in the process of a lawsuit against Rosenthal, which she won in September 1974. The book includes the complete text of the oral opinion of Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Lester Olson, who ordered Rosenthal to repay a total of over 22 million dollars. The ruling takes six pages and works like the climactic courtroom scene in a Hollywood movie. Just in time, a happy ending materializes. Nonetheless the memoir is suffused with a nothing-to-lose candor that brought it favorable reviews and greatly improved Day's reputation. During the seventies, when children of classic-era stars were writing vengeful exposés such as *Mommie Dearest*, *Haywire,* and *Going My Own Way*, here was a star setting her own record straight in a disarming, forthright manner. The book even ends with an appendix in which the star gives detailed advice on makeup, diet, clothes, and exercise.

The memoir preceded and helped to inform just about all of the feminist revisionism that was applied to Day's work (except Haskell's, which predated it). Discussions of the films in the 1980 BFI monograph, for example, are accompanied by extracts

from the autobiography. In a sense, anyone wanting an explanation for Day's abrupt withdrawal from professional life need only consult her memoir. The 1998 episode of the A&E Network's *Biography* series on Day draws most of its material from *Doris Day: Her Own Story*. The book can hardly be said to have been written guilefully; in fact, Day's outing of the tawdry origins of her TV series and of her loathing for much of it, probably hurt her chances of growing richer off its residuals, since the program never went to syndication and has rarely been reaired, except on the same Christian Broadcasting Network that cablecast Day's talk show, *Doris Day's Friends*, in the mid-1980s. (However, the first three seasons of *The Doris Day Show* have been offered for sale on DVD in 2005 and 2006.) Ironically, it was after the first episode in 1985, which featured a reunion with Rock Hudson, that publicity photos from the show's taping called attention to Hudson's sickly appearance, forcing the actor to announce for the first time that he was suffering from AIDS, and adjoining Day to yet another dark milestone in American cultural history.

Doris Day: Her Own Story topped *The New York Times* nonfiction best-seller list for three weeks in March and April 1976. It was also well received critically, although few reviews rose to the level of Updike's, which ran in the *New York Review of Books*. It was reviewed in *The New York Times*—not in its top-priority Sunday Book Review section, but on a Saturday, and not by a reviewer especially assigned (Molly Haskell would have been a logical choice), but by one of its regular staffers, Mel Gussow. Gussow writes, "One finishes the book with a regret that Miss Day has not stretched herself, that she has not made better movies and that she has not made better life choices . . . She *is* a survivor, and a primary reason is that she is a movie star who never had an overwhelming need to be a movie star."[15]

Thus Gussow accepts what Carolyn G. Heilbrun, in her groundbreaking book on women's autobiography, identified as one of the genre's salient structural characteristics. Heilbrun, in exploring the contradiction between worldly achievement and accepted female roles in patriarchal society, finds the autobiographies of successful women to be full of disclaimers about their ambition or their aspirations to be any greater than ordinary women. Such women "accept full blame for any failures in their lives, but shrink from claiming that they either sought the responsibilities they ultimately bore or were in any way ambitious."[16]

Furthermore, Heilbrun finds that "one must be called by God or Christ to service in spiritual causes higher than one's own poor self might envision, and authorized by that spiritual call to an achievement and accomplishment in no other way excusable in a female self."[17] Moreover, Heilbrun wrote that an autobiographical subject's papers will often reveal a confident, hard-driving, ambitious woman of the type that is totally denied in the same woman's memoirs. Thus Day writes at the beginning of her book, "My roots in Cincinnati go very deep. I didn't leave there wanting to escape to someplace better . . . I could have happily lived my entire life in Cincinnati, married to a proper Cincinnatian, raising a brood of offspring, but preordination, which I sincerely believe in, had other plans for me."[18] Therefore, even while presenting a "debunking" account of herself, Day plays the accepted and sanctioned role of the successful woman who disavows her success, attributing it to "preordination," if not to openly ambitious men.

Moreover, not only does Day belittle the "virgin" image by contrasting it to her actuality, but, sounding like an academic critic, she demonstrates that her films don't even bear it out: "And to complete those virgin credentials: I've had one child of my own and a couple dozen movie and television children—in fact, on one occasion Rock Hudson married me on my way to the delivery room!"[19]

"Sexlessness" vs. "Pillow Talk." For Day's detractors, "sexlessness" is a recurring theme, and Day herself concedes the point.[20] Her failure to project sexuality, at least up until the late fifties, made her less threatening, both to a male spectator's sense of his own sexual initiative, and to females ("No competition," wrote MacDonald). Molly Haskell, the first feminist critic to claim Day was misunderstood and undervalued, met the actress for an interview in 1975 and was surprised by her "enormous bust—the biggest shock, because who knew she had it? She usually wore the kind of gear—lumberjack shirts, suits, and shirtwaist dresses—designed to conceal it."[21]

However, if it is true that Day's films render her sexless, then those comedies, such as *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back*, in which male characters hatch elaborate plots to have sex with Day, lose their point. So do various remarks made about her by men, in the films and outside them. Consider a comment by Ross Hunter, who produced three of Day's films, including *Pillow Talk*. Before the making of that film, according to Hunter, "Doris hadn't a clue as to her potential as a sex image and no one realized that under all those dirndls lurked one of the wildest asses in Hollywood."[22] Hunter's line resembles one spoken in the film by the wolfish antihero. Brad Allen (Rock Hudson), spying Jan Morrow (Day) for the first time in a restaurant and realizing she's the woman who detests the womanizer that ties up the party line they share, takes in a point of view shot of her rear and gulps in voiceover double entendre: "So that's the other end of your party line."

It goes without saying, therefore, that Day's body is the focus of interest for Day-traders as different as Molly Haskell and Ross Hunter. Equally important as the attention to her body, however, is Day's own obliviousness to it. Haskell reports that "when I mention . . . to her [that the films obscured the size of her bust], she plays dumb." In one of the sidebar interviews that Hotchner inserts into *Doris Day: Her Own Story*, James Garner, who co-starred in *The Thrill of It All* and *Move Over, Darling* (both 1963), talks about Day as "a very sexy lady who doesn't know how sexy she is."[23] Day, in her "divine composure," to use Hélene Cixous's phrase, behaves with self-contained discretion becoming to a woman in polite society. In so doing, she allows others (specifically men) to define her, and to project onto her sexual definitions of the sort that put them in control.

Female Sexuality and Male-centered Humor. What such definitions have in common with assumptions about Day's cinematic virginity is that both place Day as object-noun in a sentence spoken by and between men. Hunter prides himself on being the man who told Day that she had a (cinematic) sexuality. Moreover, Oscar Levant's quip, "I knew Doris Day before she was a virgin," has in the past four decades become a cultural axiom. It connotes cynicism toward Hollywood's

presumed packaging of values and mores. It also emphasizes the lacerating, debunking truth-telling of the male speaker along with some sexual fantasizing: If Levant "knew" Day—in the Biblical sense—before she was a "virgin," he may fancy himself the wolf who fleeced the lamb. In short, many of Day's comedies end up illustrating, in the often sophisticated narrative structures of romantic comedy, Freud's much cited point that the position of woman in humor is as the butt of a joke shared by two men.[24]

A reason why Day may not be considered a comedy star—and why indeed she may be thought of as a chief cause of the demise of women in film comedy (at least until Julia Roberts, Sandra Bullock, and Reese Witherspoon revived it)—is that the narratives she appeared in often made her the object of male-centered humor.[25] No fewer than five of Day's films released between 1958 and 1964 offer a man pretending to be somebody else in order to trick her.[26] The comedy stems from the audience's knowledge of the ruse and the suspense of waiting to see what Day will do when she finds out, as she inevitably and dramatically does each time. In all cases, a devious predator, sometimes a competitor Day's own age, sometimes a disapproving older man who wants to show up an upstart young woman, masquerades as a naif, a sweet, sensitive "virgin"—whether sexually or not—who allows Day to think she's taken him under her wing. In an example of the first variant, *Lover Come Back*, Day and Hudson play advertising account executives at competing agencies. In an instance of the second, *Teacher's Pet* (1958), Clark Gable's self-made newspaper editor believes in experience as the only teacher, and sets out to humiliate Day's instructor of college journalism by pretending to be an insecure student. He of course soon finds himself falling for her.

Day falls in love with, *and is willing to give herself sexually* to, the "sensitive man," the disguise. The joke on women—or is it on men?—is that the kind of man a "nice girl" goes for doesn't exist. Given the sexual Machiavellianism of the men she runs up against, Day might be forgiven for preferring "singleness," as the ads for *Pillow Talk* proclaimed. However, after the sham is exposed—always just before Day is actually seduced—the man, implicitly or explicitly, discovers that the encounter has drawn out a genuine tenderness in him. He then sets out to meet the woman halfway, in what is understood as a marriage of equals. Of course, star signification plays a leading role here; audiences of the fifties expected a Hudson, a Gable, or a Cary Grant to be sincere at heart and knew that, once smitten by good-natured Doris Day, the hero would do the right thing.

Under the recently liberalized production code in effect in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Hollywood films could discuss sex, suggestively and euphemistically, but still could not treat it as a part of ordinary life.[27] In these comedies, marriage negotiates with sex, sexuality negotiates with security, and for women in a pre-Pill era where unwed pregnancy was still a taboo, pleasure negotiates with commitment. But there's something else, too.

In their 1980 reassessment, Jane Clarke, Diana Simmonds, and Mandy Merck assert that what Day's characters are out to protect is not their hymen; it's what could be called their autonomy, a point not taken later on by audiences of both genders who remembered Day as being "associated with a repressive, or at least, normative

sexuality." Simmonds writes that, in light of the hollow promise for women of the sexual revolution that made Day's "sex comedies" and her persona passé, "the widespread use of and public respectability for 'the Pill' by the late 60s put a new pressure on women. Far from 'sexual freedom,' the Pill was a gun placed at any woman's head: as if the threat of pregnancy was the only reason a woman might have wished to say no to sex."[28]

In *That Touch of Mink*, the heroine's sidekick (Audrey Meadows) asks her "What do you expect from a man who wants to take you to Bermuda and doesn't ask you to marry him?" Day replies, in her most matter-of-fact, deep-voiced delivery, "Respect," a line so intriguingly incongruous, yet logical, that it was included in the movie's trailer. The films are products of a cultural assumption that men are driven to initiate sex, while women are compelled to receive it, or reject it—to deal with it somehow. Thus sex is seen as more important to the man. At the same time, these movies claim that man is empty and unfulfilled without the commitment, companionship, and emotional continuity of marriage, values associated with women, though not necessarily the successful, fulfilled career women Day usually played.

However, the impression that the sex comedies are always about free-wheeling bachelors "trapped" into marriage to a "nice girl" who will have sex only after vows are read doesn't hold up on close examination either. The wild denouement of *Lover Come Back*, for example, finds Day getting an instant annulment after learning that she and Rock Hudson have gotten married while both were in a drunken stupor caused by spiked candies neither knew were alcoholic. The masquerades of *Teacher's Pet* and its much more broadly comic progeny, *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back*, give the heroine the illusion that she is the experienced one, and that the shy, callow man needs her to show him "the ropes." This problematizes still further the idea that these movies are about "a forty-year-old virgin defending her maidenhead into a ripe old age"[29] Moreover, the films often end in forced reconciliations of contradictory elements. "The battle of the sexes" on which the sex comedy subgenre is based becomes exposed as a battle within American culture, and within the films, the characters, and even each of the sexes themselves.

Pillow Talk, in particular, establishes in the Day character an active, desiring sexuality assuming the right man comes along. Cohan writes, "Regardless of what the fifties audience may have thought about her being a virgin or not, *Pillow Talk* does not imagine Jan lacking sexuality. . . . Jan's significance for the battle of the sexes is that she appropriates for femininity what the [late fifties] culture had accepted . . . as a proper sexual identity for the bachelor."[30]

Day herself saw *Pillow Talk* as the turning point toward a more grown-up, contemporary persona. The script, she recalled, offered "very sophisticated comedy, high chic, the leading lady an interior decorator, an 'in' lady very much tuned into the current New York scene. The plot, for 1959, was quite sexy. . . . clearly not the kind of part I had ever played before."[31] Evidently Hollywood saw *Pillow Talk* as a new departure for the now 35-year-old "girl-next-door." The film won her an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress, the only one of her career.

Day, who reports receiving mail from dismayed fans when she departed too violently from her accepted image (as she evidently had with the 1955 musical

melodrama, *Love Me or Leave Me*), might know better than anyone what that image was.[32] However, she appears to have begun a necessary transition toward a more complex, adult persona after leaving Warner Bros. in 1954. Warners had made Day a star in nostalgic family musicals, often as the "tomboy" who made the obligatory changeover into femininity by the last reel. This theme reached its apotheosis in a musical comedy extravaganza of gender confusion, *Calamity Jane* (1953), in which each of the movie's four leads, male and female, appears in some sort of gender-based masquerade, if not drag, during the course of the film.

The period following the end of the studio contract produced, for Day, as for many former studio stars who went freelance in the fifties, some of the star's most interesting work. Not only did melodramas like *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955) and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) stretch her range and require her to perform up to the strength of costars James Cagney and James Stewart, respectively, but the comedies and musicals also showed a more mature Day. Films such as *The Pajama Game* (1957) and *Teacher's Pet* (1958) took her image from girl-next-door to career woman. Audiences for her films knew her as *The Pajama Game*'s union representative who wouldn't back down in a strike crisis. And when she falls in love with the plant manager, she forces him to fire her. They saw her as the ambitious and talented Ruth Etting in *Love Me or Leave Me*, who enters a Faustian bargain with a Chicago gangster in the twenties and pays a horrible price; and as the poised journalism instructor of *Teacher's Pet*, "a phallic woman," as Clarke, Simmonds, and Merck call her, who helps the narrow-minded male newspaper editor see that he's been hiding his lack of education behind a cranky, macho exterior.

Female Stardom and the Subject-Object Dialectic. Hence, from 1955 on, Day's persona began evolving toward a fantasy of cosmopolitan and hard-earned independence that would seem to clash head on with the image of an available but nonthreateningly hard-to-get girl-next-door. Thus many of the films, and Day's persona at large, involve the familiar dialectic of subjectivity and objectification. The films, through *Pillow Talk,* show female control, autonomy, and personal concerns as, at the very least, valid. At the same time, they undermine a perspective that can be said to belong to women (or at least to middle- and working-class white American and European women). An articulating male viewpoint intrudes through the camera and, in the later comedies, through humor. This objectification views the female star from a distinctly masculinist set of attitudes, desires, fears, and definitions.

Somewhere in between subjectivity and objectification is, beginning with *Pillow Talk*, turning Day into a high fashion model. This positions the female spectator as one who goes to a Day film for the clothes. Universal, where Day made six films between 1959 and 1964, including the Rock Hudson cycle, the melodrama *Midnight Lace* (1960) and the comedies *That Touch of Mink* and *The Thrill of It All*, seems in particular to have marketed Day's films toward an audience envisioned along the lines of broad gender stereotypes. They combine increasingly male-oriented plots and humor with opulent fashion displays. These are made part of the diegesis, with famous jewelers and clothiers often given screen credit. *That Touch of Mink*, which

works in a runway fashion show, thanks the New York department store, Bergdorf Goodman, "for being Bergdorf Goodman."

There is little question that the clothes adorning Day played an important part in the reception of these films and in the diegetic world created in them. Day cites the clothes she got to wear in *Pillow Talk* and other films as one of the most pleasurable aspects of their production.[33] A special trailer for *Midnight Lace*, narrated by Irene, the film's costume designer, is a literal fashion show, with Day modeling for the camera most of the designs she wears in the film.[34] In *Star Gazing*, Jackie Stacey's study of female reception in films in Great Britain in the forties and fifties, based on the memories of female audience members who responded to surveys, Day is one of the stars most often mentioned. Some women told Stacey that they went to Day's films "mainly for the clothes."[35] One can argue that in the films in which Day plays a successful career woman, the clothes are part of a fantasy of independence and self-reliance that a female spectator can share. However, the clothes often appear to be there for their own sake—independent of Day and the character she's playing. In *Midnight Lace*, a melodrama about a wealthy housewife being stalked by a threatening phone caller, the disjunction between the fashion display and a horror narrative that can't begin to contain it becomes severe.

Overall, the subject-object dialectic has been central to feminist debates over female spectatorship within male-dominated film systems ever since Laura Mulvey argued that the male gaze excludes any positive feminine energy from the experience of films on both the narrative and visual levels. Day is a peculiar figure in this debate. The assumption that she, in her version of blonde perfection, is a packaged Hollywood product, her position as the butt (no smutty jokes intended) of male derisive humor, and the impression that the films use her as a representation of ideas to which women should conform, from how they should look and dress to what kinds of wives they should be and how many children they should have, all place her decidedly on the side of "object."[36]

On the other hand, a number of commentators of the seventies and eighties claimed Day as a misunderstood, "positive image" for women. Janice Welsch reports that Day's characters have careers outside the home in "seventy-five percent of her movies." Welsch identifies Day with the "sister" archetype, nearly equating gender equality with American upward class mobility. "There is a democratic aura apparent in all her relationships," writes Welsch, "not only with men. Her movement into the upper or upper middle class, socially or economically, is usually earned by hard work and perseverance combined with talent and a touch of luck."[37] Molly Haskell concurs: "Where Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly have only to lift a finger or an eyebrow, Doris Day must work hard, and for a happiness that seems more often than not to hang by a thread." Implicit in Haskell's observation is the idea that Day is devoid of manipulation, that rather than inspiring or maneuvering men to get her what she wants, she goes after it herself. "She creates herself," concludes Haskell.[38]

Long-lasting star personas generally manage to contain their share of contradictions, or to put it differently: they allow both conservative and progressive meanings. Female stars, unlike males, usually signify the conservative meaning in their extra-cinematic discourse, and both at once in their films. Day's career can be

seen historically as embodying the conservative in the Warner Bros. period, with its nostalgic family musicals and tomboy and girl-next-door characters, and the progressive in the transitional period, which established her in roles of independent career women and wives who held their own with established male stars.

In the sex comedies, however, the two collide, making the resulting persona often hard to read. Progressive analyses of the comedies, such as those by Clarke, Simmonds, and Merck, do not convince, since too many of the films' contradictions must be overlooked in order for their arguments to work. On the other hand, criticism that dismisses Day as sexless or as marriage bait does not hold up on the most casual viewing of the films. These are ultimately comedies of masculine hubris, in which a trickster male at last meets the mark who shows him how shallow his life has been. Male subjectivity is privileged in these films; the woman is the mirror in which the man finally looks at himself. In sinking to the bottom of his character—tricking a woman by seeming to be someone he's not—the wolf discovers a better man, the one he's been pretending to be. Through him, he finds he likes being loved, and by a woman who is at least his equal. The rootless playboy is ready for marriage in the fade-out. The question begged by these films is whether the heroine, who has been no more in search of a spouse than the man has, wants to give up her independent life at the altar, and indeed how much of it she will give up.

Performance and Voice. In asking how the films work as comedies, the first place to look is on the performance level. According to Henry Jenkins and Kristine Karnick in their book on classical era Hollywood comedy, performance in romantic comedy is "narrativized," and "marked by the comic exaggeration of realist traits."[39] Day's portrayals in *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back* take seriously the professional competence and ambition of their characters, Jan Morrow and Carol Templeton, while exaggerating emotions such as indignation at the Hudson characters' tactics and hurt anger when Day's characters discover they've been had.

Day, as a singer, establishes her characters vocally. Authority in our culture proceeds from the word, which is communicated definitively first in writing, and next by means of the voice. The voice, as the film theorist Kaja Silverman points out, is a more compelling sign of subjectivity than the more easily objectified body. For example, the musical melodrama *Love Me or Leave Me* wants to show how Ruth Etting has sold herself to the gangster Martin Snyder. The film does this by rendering Day's body the possession of male looks. However, it must work hard in the visual register to negate the power of both of Day's voices, the singing and the speaking. T. E. Perkins writes that she was first convinced that there was more to Day than the popular image when she saw *Love Me or Leave Me* on television in the seventies: "I was struck by the strength of Day's performance and particularly by the bitterness of her portrayal of Ruth Etting after her marriage to Snyder."[40] This bitterness is expressed by a dropping of the voice to a low monotone that the spectator must often strain to hear. The immobility of the face and the listlessness with which the body is held, follow the voice's lead.

Day knows that the way to undermine a character played by the frenetic James Cagney is to underplay Cagney. In a climactic sequence Synder takes

Etting to Hollywood, and insists on meeting the studio head. Snyder/Cagney, in a high-energy harangue, declares that he told the producer "his last three pictures were stinkeroos. That's how it is with these Hollywood phonies. You gotta let 'em know who you are." Day in a low, level voice asks, "Who are you, Marty? Can you produce a picture?" People on the set probably thought Cagney dominated the scene. But the changes in tone, key, and tempo that Day's held note render the scene chilling. Cagney's character is thus made to seem shrill and. By withholding emotion, even a victimized female character exerts control.

Such moments occur often in the films of Day's maturity. They give the impression not only of a woman who sees through men's bluster, but reveal Day as endowed with traits usually thought of as masculine. (Pauline Kael's idea of a compliment to a Day performance [in *Love Me or Leave Me*] is to say that she seems "less butch than usual."[41]) In the "wolf in sheep's clothing" comedies Day often appears to play the male role. Her characters are calm, controlled, honest, confident, competent, and absolutely who they claim to be. The men, on the other hand, playact; they are mendacious, sneaky, manipulative, and shallow, all traits often attributed to women. The casting of the "phallic, tree-like" Rock Hudson does temper these characters, but the traits are still there, albeit in gaudily masculine packaging.

The powerful vocal foundation of Day's performances may be what causes Day to seem less of a pushover than most of her female contemporaries. The strength and pliability of her voice, controlled by her alone, often contrasts with Day's blonde softness and with whatever chiffon-and-pastel concoction a film's costume designer has provided for her. At the end of *Calamity Jane*, the heroine in her wedding dress has been prompted by the narrative toward conventional female behavior. If the change fails to convince, however, it might be because Jane's West-of-the-Pecos voice hasn't stopped sounding as if the actress found the inspiration for it elsewhere on the Warner Bros. lot: Yosemite Sam.

The control and poise of the singer infuse Day's body and affect with confidence and calm. What the early Warners musicals played as "tomboyishness" and what Cohan calls, in *Calamity Jane*, "impersonating the bachelor as a transvestite" becomes in the transitional films the assurance of a woman of the world.[42] In *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, Day's Jo Conway, a famous singer who retired to marry a doctor and live in Indianapolis, is portrayed as far more at home and relaxed in foreign countries and cultures than her I-wear-the-pants-in-the-family husband.[43] These films convey poise through performance.

I take issue with the informal "commutation test" Jenkins and Karnick apply to certain famous performances in order to point out that it matters less who plays which role in romantic comedy and the classical traditions from which it derives than in comedian comedy.[44] Substitute June Allyson as Stewart's wife in *The Man Who Knew Too Much,* or Shirley Jones in *The Pajama Game,* or Lauren Bacall in *Teacher's Pet,* or Kim Novak in *Pillow Talk*—all plausible choices—and you'd have characters whose conflict with the authoritative male would be less clear-cut and whose eventual capitulation to the male position would feel more inevitable before it happens and less unsettled after it does.

Object Lesson: *Teacher's Pet.* *Teacher's Pet* is in many ways the film that kicks off Day's sex comedy cycle. This black-and-white social comedy would seem to have little in common with the Eastman Color comedies Day made for Universal, whose production values are glossier and whose comedy is broader. The precedents for the cycle of sex comedies are founded in several ways: Unlike *The Pajama Game* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the film is ultimately about the male hero. In a film whose conflict involves professional experience versus educational training, it's never even clarified whether Day's instructor has had newspaper experience. This leaves her a less than authoritative character, since the main strike against her in Gable's book is his assumption that "she's never been inside a newspaper office."

Second, Day's character recedes in importance as the narrative goes on. At first, she is solid and substantial, a person much more to be reckoned with than the hero supposes. The scene in which Gannon first goes to Stone's class illustrates this. Stopping a severe-looking woman in glasses he assumes to be the teacher, he then leers at Day as she walks in, taking her for a very pretty student. Gable registers shock as Day/Stone begins the class and he realizes she's the "frustrated old biddy." A round of leering and a point-of-view shot of her full body with focus on her legs is punished with embarrassment and humiliation.

As the film progresses, it becomes clear that Day's character functions as little more than a device for Gable's disillusionment and growth. The plot turns to humorous conflict between Gannon and the second lead, a whizbang psychology professor. The second male lead, played by Gig Young in two films, *Teacher's Pet* and *That Touch of Mink*, and by Tony Randall in all three with Hudson, is important in that he functions sometimes as a go-between for the romantic leads. Young and Randall, both of whom at this time seemed to have the looks and charm to become stars themselves, but never quite made it, play second bananas who just miss out on whatever it is—getting the girl, holding their liquor as well as their friend does, or generally being in the catbird seat, which is invariably occupied by the hero, no matter how much trouble he may be in.[45]

The Day character soon becomes a term of exchange and comparison between the two men with yet a third male taking shape just offscreen. In the Hudson films, this male is a spectator who shares jokes (like the one about "the other end of my party line") at the woman's expense. In *Teacher's Pet* the third male has an Oedipal dimension, as Erica Stone is revealed two-thirds through the film to be the daughter of a famous father, a legendary newspaperman revered by journalists like Gannon.

The chief difference between *Teacher's Pet* and the comedies that follow lies in the fact that Seaton's film takes itself seriously as a morality narrative about a man's maturation, complete with an Oedipal symbolic father to be revered, then rejected, and finally reconciled with. The intricate denouement, so compromised it plays like a treaty hammered out in lengthy negotiations, runs the hero through a gauntlet of clarifying moments. He is made to feel, as he tells the Gig Young character, "like a man whose house has just burned down. I've got no place to go." The Day character performs the function of woman-as-liberalizer, common to mid-fifties dramas such as *Giant* and *A Face in the Crowd*. This figure softens the hero's hard edges, gently disproves his preconceived notions, and brings him to a more enlightened

understanding of himself and the world. Indeed T. E. Perkins asserts that all of Day's major films are "gender definition" narratives. Those about females

> are about "progressive" women in conflict with a traditional male, and tradition tends to win out. Gender definition films about men . . . are about a reactionary or progressive male, in conflict with a reactionary or progressive male or female (or institution or organization) . . . And the progressive element tends to win out. Femininity is worked out in relation to men. Masculinity is worked out in relation to other men and the demands of the (male) world.[46]

Teacher's Pet is reminiscent of two romantic comedy subgenres of the thirties. One is the screwball comedy in which a complacent male or female meets a more footloose member of the opposite sex, usually of a different social class, who shows the uptight partner how to live by his/her wits and get more fun out of life. The other is the Capraesque social comedy in which a naive, idealistic male meets a worldly wise, jaded woman. The romance that results is not nearly as important as the partnership. The hero shows the heroine a purpose in life besides just making a living and getting by. The heroine shares her street smarts and shows the dreamy male how to make his way in the world while keeping his principles intact. Gable appears to reprise his character, Peter Warne, from *It Happened One Night*. Much of the comedy stems from the old newspaperman's grudging efforts to adjust to a world in which journalism can be taught in school—and by confident young women.

On the other hand, Day's existence compels Gable to change his attitudes to a changing world. Erica leaves the newspaper office on Jim's arm, after showing her sublime admiration of his new, enlightened attitude. Jim's assistant editors, who know nothing of the romance, look on in wonder. One asks, "What do they have in common?" "If I know Jim," says another in the film's last line, "he'll find something." In masculinist postwar Hollywood movies it is the man's prerogative to find "something" to sustain a sexual liaison with an attractive woman. It is the film's and the audience's secret—and a final joke—that this couple is founded on a mutual respect based on elaborately worked out principles, not just sexual attraction.

Roots and the Rootless: *Pillow Talk*. *Pillow Talk* takes as its starting point a collision of wills and desires between a stable career woman who is very connected to society, and a rampant male trickster whose relation to responsible society is more fluid.[47] Thus he can float into a disguise at a moment's notice. Day is an interior decorator. The tasteful apartment that she presumably has decorated herself, the shop out of which she works, and her gorgeous wardrobe are tangible evidence of her work and its rewards. By contrast, Brad Allen (Rock Hudson) is a Broadway composer and although his lavish Manhattan bachelor pad signifies success, the only fruit of his labor the audience hears is the bogus love song, "You're my inspiration, [fill in woman's name]" that he pretends to write for each one of his many female conquests. In *Lover Come Back*, the Day-Hudson follow-up which adheres so closely to the *Pillow Talk* plotline that it feels like a sequel, the Hudson character is even more clearly a scoundrel, however likable, securing clients for his ad agency by plying them with liquor and women, while Day is a serious and ethical professional.

Figure 1: Jan Morrow (Doris Day) and Brad Allen (Rock Hudson) negotiate the sexual wilderness in split screen in Michael Gordon's *Pillow Talk* (Universal Pictures, 1959).

The comic premise of *Pillow Talk* can be stated simply: Doris Day, in her full evolution as independent career woman with girl-next-door lineage, meets Rock Hudson-*All-That-Heaven-Allows*-nature-boy-as-metropolitan-lecher. *Pillow Talk* takes off, as several critics have noted, on Rock Hudson's "natural man" persona which had become mythologized in his melodramas for Douglas Sirk.[48] Few have noted, however, that the film indirectly trashes the fifties convention of the "liberalizing female." The strong woman, whose emancipated state is defined almost entirely in terms of material accumulation, runs up against an incorrigible male whose intractability stems from his libido rather than any adherence to tradition.

Unlike in *Teacher's Pet*, where the dramatic action brings about a change in the hero, the comic devices here are more pleasures in themselves than they are the means to a narrative end. So it is the end in these films that is problematic; Hudson may play the wolf, but Day is no Red Riding Hood. The way the films are devised, it is the Don Juan who poses a menace to society and must be marched off in the last reel to the hoosegow of marriage (at least as the films see it). Because the single woman is strong, upright, capable Doris Day, the films can come up with few compelling reasons why she must get married, except of course to follow the conventions of the era. In an early scene of *Pillow Talk* in which Jan Morrow (Day) talks on the phone with Brad Allen (Hudson), with each of them shown by means of split screen, Brad needles the heroine:

> BRAD: You're a woman who lives alone. Doesn't like it.
> JAN: I happen to like living alone.
> BRAD: Look, I don't know what's bothering you, but don't take your bedroom problems out on me.
> JAN: I have no bedroom problems. There's nothing in my bedroom that bothers me.
> BRAD: Oh, that's too bad.

Although the film certainly gets laughs at Jan's expense in such exchanges, it's too much to say that *Pillow Talk* completely sides with the male. After all, Gannon

in *Teacher's Pet* assumed that the teacher would be "a frustrated old biddy," and the joke was on him. *Pillow Talk* brings out into the open the cultural pressure that is brought to bear on a woman who lives alone and likes it; she clearly is not supposed to like it and so her statements of satisfaction are heard as defensive protests. But that doesn't mean she's not contented. The point is pressed harder yet in the dialogue that follows when Jan finds that Alma, her drunken maid, has been listening in:

> ALMA: If there's anything worse than a woman living alone, it's a woman saying she likes it.
> JAN: Well, I do like it. I have a good job, a lovely apartment. I go out with very nice men to the best places. The theatre. The finest restaurants. What am I missing?"
> ALMA: If you have to ask, believe me, you're missin' it.

This fifties film might assume that a single woman's unhappiness is such a given that it needs no proof or explanation. However, in embellishing the evolved Doris Day image with the finishing touches of a chic apartment, an exciting job, and a smashing wardrobe, the film boxes itself into the rich fantasy of female independence, mobility, and comfort that it has so lushly created. As Steven Cohan writes, "there is no reason . . . not to take Jan at her word when she tells Alma she is satisfied with her life, any more than there would be if she were Brad speaking to Jonathan—or a male reader writing in to *Playboy*."[49]

Thus the need to rein in what could be called the unruly man is more urgent than the compulsion to marry off Doris Day. This is partly because more comic invention and interest has been devoted to Hudson's character than to Day's. For example, although the female protagonist's name, Jan Morrow, can be seen as a play on Day's sunny persona, it is more likely a sly reference to "Rex Stetson's" sweet talk line that she makes him feel "like a pot-bellied stove on a frosty morning"; hence "Jan" for "January" and "morrow," an archaic word for "morning."[50] However, the film can't stop breaking down Allen into incoherence, making it difficult to say that *Pillow Talk* decisively privileges male subjectivity. In the climax and resolution, Jan redecorates Brad's seducer's apartment. Jan gathers the furnishings from unfashionable shops, but they might have come from the Universal property department, as they bring together props for a sultan's harem from the studio's early forties Arabian Nights series, from Dracula's castle in the early thirties Universal horror cycle, and from Ma and Pa Kettle's sitting room, a pot-bellied stove, a player piano, and a "Home Sweet Home" sampler. Jan's retaliation is followed by a sequence in which Brad carries Jan through the streets, caveman-style, to propose to her in his apartment. But this he-man display is capped by the film's final joke, the payoff to a running gag, whereby Brad is carried off to the examination table by a obstetrician who is convinced that he has found a man who "has crossed a new frontier"—the first pregnant male.

The film's battle of the sexes refuses to be resolved, and its *can-you-top-this?* series of alternating victories for the hero and the heroine is in keeping with the parity between them that has been maintained throughout the film. This has been done by means of the split screen. Additionally, the consistent use of subjective echo-chamber voiceovers, evenly divided between them, keeps Jan's point of view in the forefront even though Brad's deception prevents her from knowing what he and the audience know.

On their second date, Rex tells Jan he'll take her home "back home-style" and heads for a horse and buggy for hire. Cut to the couple in the carriage, Rex driving:

> REX: Whenever I want to feel close to home, the only thang that helps is gettin' behind a horse.
> JAN (v.o.): There's something so wholesome about a man who loves animals.
> BRAD (v.o.): I hope this stupid horse knows where he's supposed to go.

The camera then cranes slightly over and between the couple, to the driver crouched in back.

> DRIVER (v.o.): Hangs onto the reins like a subway strap. I don't know what he's up ta, but I'm sure glad she ain't my daughter.

This use of voiceover to illustrate the role-playing and anxieties of dating rituals is not unique. However, it does stop the source of jokes from centering amongst the male characters by keeping Jan's point of view in the forefront, and in a way that emphasizes the good faith of the Doris Day persona versus the likable roguery of Allen/Hudson. The voiceovers also help objectify the male character by constantly reminding the spectator of his masquerade and by showing how flimsy it appears to outsiders. The reason this is necessary is that Day and Hudson establish such a rapport in these scenes that we may start believing Allen's ruse. After all, making us forget that we're seeing an illusion is what Hollywood film is supposed to do. *Pillow Talk* must continually snap us back to its version of reality.

Another way that an equilibrium between the two characters is maintained is through the second male lead, Jonathan Forbes, who is Brad's best friend but also his competitor for Jan's affections. Cohan notes that "Jonathan's double duty as Jan's suitor and as Brad's best friend, in contrast to Randall's simpler role in the later two Hudson-Day comedies, prevents him from occupying a single, stable position in *Pillow Talk*'s homosocial plotting of heterosexual desire."[51]

Jan's refusal of Jonathan's offers of marriage, which the audience is never meant to take seriously, marks her once again as a self-respecting woman in control of her own needs and wants. She won't marry a rich man for his money, as his first three wives apparently did, even when he makes it easy for her by throwing himself at her feet. Cohan points out, however, that Jonathan's love for Brad far outweighs either man's regard for Jan: "Imagine: even though his buddy has stolen his girl and indirectly caused him to suffer a broken jaw, Jonathan *still* remains best friends with Brad, choosing the man over the woman."[52] By the end of *Pillow Talk*, the balance has shifted to the two men. Once Jonathan discovers the deception and breaks up the romance of Jan and "Rex," there is no longer an obstacle between the two male friends. In fact, the relationship of Brad and Jonathan heralds a new emphasis in American film on male friendship that supersedes male-female relationships. This has implications for the way Doris Day's characters are handled in the films that follow.

Guy Talk: Day-Hudson, or Hudson-Randall? The second male lead becomes more emasculated as the cycle goes on; increasingly, he is dependent upon the strong male lead. In *That Touch of Mink* Gig Young is a former Princeton economics professor who has sold out for big money as tycoon Philip Shane's financial manager.

Figure 2: Brad (Rock Hudson), Jonathan (Tony Randall), and Jan (Doris Day) form a comic triangle in *Pillow Talk* (Universal Pictures, 1959).

He bemoans his boss's economic grip on him in between trips to his analyst, who plies him for insider stock information. Randall's specialty is millionaires made impotent by their inherited wealth and what the films suppose to be a consequent lack of motivation and confidence. Both types operate as foils to the can-do men of the world played by Gable and Grant in Young's films and to Hudson in Randall's. In *Lover Come Back* Hudson puts a scientist to work developing a product to go with the nonexistent brand name he has run TV ads for, but the formula repeatedly explodes in Randall's face, in a different color each time. In *That Touch of Mink*, Young's character happily submits to blows, kicks, and dog attacks.[53] What this comedy of masochism accomplishes ultimately is to isolate Day's characters and confront them with a united front of male buddy solidarity. *Send Me No Flowers* even contrives to get Hudson and Randall in bed together, where they complain about each other's long toenails and stealing of the covers, like a burlesque of a long-married couple.

Most of the comedy of *Lover* and *Send Me* is centered in the male buddy couple, as Hudson and Randall relate as people who know one another better than anyone else does, while Hudson and Day wear masks, play roles, and try to out-maneuver each other. Most of the loyalty is between the men as well. On a performance level, Randall's comic energy and timing helps bring some life to Rock Hudson's stolid performance style. The male heroic lead, who is expected to be the least demonstrative cast member, draws energy from the second male lead, in the way that the male stars of romantic comedies a generation earlier played off lively female co-stars like Stanwyck, Katharine Hepburn, and Carole Lombard.

With the female star hidden behind veils of lens filters and limited to slow burns and other expressions of indignation, the affection-masking male banter of Hudson and Randall generates the bulk of the comic situations and payoffs. The men's dealings with each other are the most convincing in these films, while the desperate denouements that get the heterosexual couple together by the final fade-out appear unmotivated and forced. Perhaps one cannot blame a woman for wanting to be where the action is, which in the later films, is among the men. While *Pillow Talk*

is in the tradition of romantic comedies in which battling men and women come to know each other and themselves better by the end, *Lover Come Back*, *That Touch of Mink*, *The Thrill of It All*, and *Send Me No Flowers* all depict men and women as strangers to one another, getting together or staying together under pressure of convention and with the woman pushed deeper into the shadow of the man; significantly, the last three films of the cycle show Day as unemployed and incompetent (*That Touch*) or cast her as slightly ditsy housewives (*Thrill*, *Send Me*).

Smut and the Single Girl: Day and the Decline of Women in Comedy. *Lover Come Back*, the follow-up to *Pillow Talk*, completes the marginalization of the female lead and the exclusion of a female point of view. The film opens with an establishing shot of Madison Avenue and what a generic male announcer calls in voiceover "glass and steel beehives." As in all beehives, he intones, "there are workers and there are drones," with Day introduced as "a worker" and Hudson, being driven to the office by his date from the night before, shown as "a drone." With Day performing more and more, as the sixties went on in response to male casts and male-centered comedy, it's no wonder she became thought of as the eternal virgin. If the only definition of her is a sexualized one, then perhaps it follows that she would be seen as protecting her flower in the midst of so many drones.

The competition between Day's Carol Templeton and Hudson's Jerry Webster is of a professional nature, but is constantly displaced to the sexual. In a cross-cut sequence Templeton's crisp professionalism and air of command—she orders merchandising copy and art to her office for work on landing a campaign—are contrasted by the hungover savoir-faire of Webster, a ne'er-do-well who has done quite well; he orders orange juice, coffee, and a masseur.[54] The design of Templeton's office—Danish Modern, ecru pine in clean, efficient lines—also contrasts with the heavy, slightly yellowed masculine decadence of Webster's sanctum. Everything about Templeton suggests the Puritan work ethic; her black and white outfits in the early scenes manage to be simultaneously chic and staid. Her character—and Day's performance—have a severity that was missing from her Jan Morrow. The result is that Day/Templeton's objections to Hudson/Webster's unethical behavior come off as simply puritanical. This film gets its laughs when the boys are left alone to have their fun.

Not only is there an aura of effeminacy to Day's ad agency—the visual artist is a gay man who sketches the kitchen for a floor wax commercial with lavender linoleum—but her opposition to Webster's practice of winning male clients by getting them drunk and providing them with women from "the Bunny Club" is undermined by double entendres, the set-ups for which she has to deliver straight-faced. When marshalling her forces to work up a new campaign for floor wax, including a redesign of the container, Day/Templeton looks to the right of the camera, in close-up, and earnestly proclaims, "The agency that lands this account is the one that shows Mr. Miller the most attractive can." Cut to a shot of the rabbit-tailed "cans" of six bunny club dancers, as Miller (Jack Oakie) tells Webster/Hudson, "Most attractive. This one's most attractive."

Much of the film is in this vein. Randall, who plays the pathetic son of the founder of the agency for which Hudson works, does not have so much as one scene with Day. Thus Peter Ramsey, the Randall character, functions purely as foil to Hudson's

masculinity; his blunders are made out of insecurity, requiring Hudson's guile and resourcefulness. There are other differences from *Pillow Talk*. After Webster masquerades as the scientist Linus Tyler (Jack Kruschen), whose antisocial kookiness is confirmed by the fact that he lives in Greenwich Village, Day is totally shut out of the range of information; the audience knows that the product Templeton is seeking to represent, Vip, is a sham. They know that Linus Tyler, whom Webster incarnates as a naive, inexperienced genius, is actually an insufferable, egotistical misanthrope—and "a confirmed woman-hater," as one character calls him. There are no voiceovers this time to convey Day's point of view or to distance us from Hudson. What's more, the notion of Hudson as spectator-representative is reinforced by the film's answer to a Greek chorus, a couple of middle-aged conventioneers from the heartland who vicariously eye Hudson's carryings-on, comparing his carefree bachelor life to their presumably boring married lives and generally reacting to his progress, usually showing up just as he is with a new woman.

1ST MAN: My, what a way to go to work.
2ND MAN: That's a woman!
1ST MAN: Make you homesick, Fred?
2ND MAN: Yeah. Makes me sick we're going home next week.

The presence of these guys completes the concept of the overestimated bachelor playboy, a figure who represents the heterosexual male imaginary, a realm of limitless libidinal satisfaction. In *Lover* even Webster's pace of sexual activity, as this duo imagines it, eventually forces an awareness of physical limitation and aging.

2ND MAN: There goes Superman.
1ST MAN: Makes you realize how old we're getting.
2ND MAN: If he doesn't slow down, he's gonna catch up with us.

In addition, where Day in *Pillow Talk* is a confirmed Manhattanite with a good job and a secure relationship with her employer, Carol Templeton is newly arrived from Omaha, and is constantly in danger of losing her job. Even her boss is the standard WASP authority figure, a significant change from the funny, tolerant Frenchman (Marcel Dalio) she works for in *Pillow Talk*. This change means that she has little professional authority, in a profession, advertising, which has always been about the safest target for Hollywood lampooning. Thus, while Jan Morrow had the run of New York—even her apartment was more spacious—Carol Templeton appears crowded and harassed. Day's performance reflects the character's insecurity. Her acting is uncharacteristically tense and strident, perhaps because the comedy is so reactive and the character so vulnerable. She forfeits the advantage she'd taken in her films since *Love Me or Leave Me* of appearing calmer and more composed than her male co-star.

Even the conceit whereby she falls for the man Hudson pretends to be lacks the previous film's romance. The film's range of knowledge is so much on the side of Hudson that Day simply looks like a dolt for falling for Tyler the inventor, whom she follows in an attempt to get the Vip account (for which Webster's commercials are already airing). The film appears to invite the audience to laugh at Day's gullibility,

Figure 3: An unequal split screen reveals the balance of power in Delbert Mann's *Lover Come Back* (Universal Pictures, 1962).

something *Pillow Talk* stopped well short of. Webster-as-Tyler tells Templeton, "As my father, the philosopher, used to say, 'knock at my door and I shall take you in.'" "Doctor," she says, "I'm knocking." "And I'm taking you in."

The male point of view here has a nastiness and an open misogyny. Women are leeringly regarded as sex objects in a way consistent with the "sex sells" Madison Avenue milieu. After the wild party Webster throws for Miller, a musician takes home a "Bunny Club" girl in a bass fiddle case. Where Brad Allen seemed at least to like the women he seduced, here the tone toward women is undisguised contempt. When Ramsey asks Webster, "What's this obsession with girls," he answers, "I was a poor kid, remember? I didn't have toys to play with." The film reverts to *Pillow Talk* split screen for one early exchange between Day/Templeton and Hudson/Webster, even though this film's use of the 1.85:1 ratio, as opposed to the 2.35:1 CinemaScope ratio of *Pillow Talk*, means that the two characters don't get equal space; Hudson is given two-thirds of the screen. The exchange is worth quoting in its entirety:

> WEBSTER: Will you kindly keep your big, fat nose out of my business? If the competition's too tough, get out of the advertising profession.
> TEMPLETON: You aren't even in the advertising profession. And if I weren't a lady, I'd tell you what profession you are in.
> WEBSTER: Tell me anyway.
> TEMPLETON: Well, let me put it this way. I don't use sex to land an account.
> WEBSTER: When do you use it?
> TEMPLETON: I don't!
> WEBSTER: My condolences to your husband.
> TEMPLETON: I don't have a husband.
> WEBSTER: That figures.
> TEMPLETON: What do you mean, that figures?
> WEBSTER: Well, a husband would be competition. There's only room for one man in a family.

TEMPLETON (fuming): Let me tell you something, Mr. Webster. I wish I were a man right now.
WEBSTER: Keep trying. I think you'll make it.

Somewhere between *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back* the persona of the independent Doris Day gets permanently lost. A line is crossed and in *Lover Come Back* the Hudson character's careless treatment of women becomes the film's own. While the earlier films never equated the Day character's ambition with "penis envy," this film embraces the notion, illustrating the impossible position of women in comedy as the 1960s began. Women here are either brainless sex objects to be "played with" and deceived (the Vip hoax begins when Webster contrives to shoot some commercials he plans to shelve with the "Bunny Club" dancer Rebel Davis, played by Edie Adams, to keep her from testifying against him before the Ad Council), or helpful secretaries; either castrating would-be executives like Templeton, or invisible wives, waiting back home.

Day therefore looks lost in her own movie, an impression made definite by the decision to use filters and lens gel for her close-ups and even her medium shots. This has the effect of italicizing her aging (at the not-so-advanced age of 37), emphasizing her difference from other faces that do not need to be filtered. It is the ultimate objectification. In a film in which virtually every human figure is a careful construction, none more so than the male lead, the female star is the one whose construction is made obvious.

The treatment of Day as a special effect, as it were, and an unconvincing one at that, in a film in which her character is accused of trying to be male, reminds a spectator in 1962 that here is all too obviously a woman, one whose defects and inadequacies need covering up. Thus, in a film about male playacting and deception it is the actress who is caught, extra-diegetically, in a lie. This image and the film that presents it sets the tone for the Day films that followed and makes clear why Day is not seen as the source of the comedy in her films. Encased in protection against the perceived response to her own photographic image, she can do little but react to the men who make the world go round, even when that world is one in which she is the star.

Kathleen Rowe locates the presentation of Marilyn Monroe in *Some Like It Hot* (1959) as the point where the unruly comic woman was definitively "tamed." Similarly, the Day sex comedies, made at about the same time, provide examples of how filmmakers and film audiences came to believe, especially in the years following World War II, that women do not originate comedy. The male comedy team that springs up in the midst of films billed as romantic comedies offers evidence that these films are specimens of Freudian smut. With Day, the respectable woman, "resistant," as Freud puts it, the sex comedies provide no shortage of "third persons" to appreciate dirty jokes, be they the Tony Randall characters, the two middle-aged men who comment on Webster's sexual progress, or, of course, the male spectator himself.

There is a moment in *Lover Come Back* that sets out a clue as to how Hollywood comedy of this period perceives its audience—and its heroine. Templeton takes "Linus Tyler" to a strip show, to keep Jerry Webster from doing so. The stripper, who, in a perfectly "smutty" joke, is billed as "Sigrid Freud, the 'Id Girl'" (although

Figure 4: Jan (Doris Day) plans her revenge in *Pillow Talk* (Universal Pictures, 1959).

a truly allusive writer might have chosen the name "Erma Vip"), is never seen but is in the camera position so that we see the strip club audience from the point of view of the stage. As "Tyler"/Hudson catches the daisies that were covering the stripper's breasts, Day reacts with disinterest, discomfort, and disgust; she is unable to look. Just behind her, however, in the midst of the predictably male crowd, is seen a dark-haired young woman wearing a yellow blouse. Her response is like the men's. She looks with interest at the strip show, laughs uproariously when the daisies fly toward the crowd, nods approvingly to her male companion, and sips her drink.

Who is this woman and why is her reaction so different from Day's? Is she a lesbian who enjoys looking at naked women? Or is this, rather, the film's concept of its ideal female spectator, one who is no different from men, and who participates in male attitudes toward women and laughs at male-centered jokes? This anonymous woman would seem to be the cooperative standard against whom Day's aghast response is to be judged.

By a standard in which sexual difference is wiped out and women react as men do, Day indeed is virginal, or frigid, or both; her disdain toward sexual exploitation can be equated with Puritanism. The films' problem with her is not that she is too masculine, but that she is not masculine enough; that is, her career women characters want the mobility and prerogatives allowed only to men, but still retain a viewpoint seen as "female."

In discussing this contemptuous tone in the sex comedies, T. E. Perkins notes that even when Day wreaks her revenge, the man

> is never treated with the contempt that is meted out to her. While we could argue that this reflects positively on women's fundamentally nicer nature and negatively on male arrogance, such a view goes against the whole tone of the films. . . . We can now see that Day's attitude pre-figured contemporary feminist attitudes to women's "independent sexuality," but it is important to acknowledge that it was only pre-figurative; at the time it was hard to express an alternative to the view of Day's sexuality which her male co-stars were expressing.[55]

This analysis gets at the deadlocked quality of Day's persona and her comedies. Day's stardom evolved out of a studio system that was aware of the economic need to cater to a large female audience. That audience dispersed into television viewing and the industry reverted to a focus on young men, the group that the new social science of demographics showed to be Hollywood's prime audience. Day's sunny, independent persona found the ground shifting out from under her, even at the moments of her greatest popularity. As soon as the persona found its box-office niche, it gave way to redefinition. Feminism, as Perkins suggests, may provide interpretations that were not possible when the films were new. However, the misinterpretations that continue to visit the very mention of "Doris Day" shows that there has not been a time even in the feminist (and postfeminist) eras when a strong independent woman could laugh back from the big screen at the system that holds her and expect anyone to be there laughing with her. "Doris Day" remains a contradictory promise that can never be fulfilled.

Notes

1. The last woman to date to be voted the top box office draw of a given year was Julie Andrews, on the strength of *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*, in 1966 and 1967. Julia Roberts came close to the top spot in 1999 and 2000, as did Nicole Kidman in 2003.
2. Doris Day and A. E. Hotchner, *Doris Day: Her Own Story* (New York: Morrow, 1976), 187.
3. Ibid., 3.
4. Lucy Fischer, "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child: Comedy and Matricide," in *Comedy/Cinema/Theory*, ed. Andrew Horton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 60–64.
5. Kathleen Rowe, *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).
6. The list of such actors is long, ranging from Cary Grant, Gary Cooper, and James Stewart from the studio era, to Tom Hanks, Kevin Kline, and George Clooney more recently.
7. John Updike, "Suzie Creamcheese Speaks" (1976), *Hugging the Shore: Essays and Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 794.
8. Dwight MacDonald, "The Doris Day Syndrome" (1962), *Dwight MacDonald on Movies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 110.
9. See Molly Haskell, "Icon of the Fifties," *Holding My Own in No Man's Land: Women and Men and Film and Feminists* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27.
10. Ed Sikov, *Laughing Hysterically: American Screen Comedy of the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 3.
11. Rowe, 172.
12. Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media.* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 71.
13. Jane Clarke, Diana Simmonds, and Mandy Merck, *Move Over Misconceptions: Doris Day Reappraised* (London: British Film Institute, 1980); T.E. Perkins, "Remembering Doris Day," *Screen Education* 39 (Summer 1981); Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Janice Welsch, "Actress Archetypes of the 1950s: Doris Day, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn," in *Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary (New York: Dutton, 1977), 99–111; Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities*

in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Robin Wood, *From Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: the Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1974), 265.

14. *Doris Day: Her Own Story*, 9.
15. Mel Gussow, "It Wasn't Always Sunshine," *The New York Times,* February 14, 1976, 23.
16. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: Ballantine Press, 1988), 23.
17. Ibid.
18. *Doris Day: Her Own Story*, 9.
19. Ibid., 8.
20. Day took up the "sexlessness" refrain to describe her public image before *Pillow Talk*. She said that by 1959,

    > I had been making films for a dozen years . . . primarily films of nostalgia, costume musicals, films depicting wholesome families. There had been a few notable exceptions, of course, but there is no gainsaying the fact that a "Doris Day movie" had come to mean a very specific kind of sunny, nostalgic, sexless, wholesome film. It had not happened by design . . . but the Doris Day movie was nevertheless entrenched in the public's mind. America had undergone great change in the Fifties, the Korean War being one of the main influences, but the Doris Day movie remained a stable commodity. Ibid., 181–182.

21. Haskell, "Icon of the Fifties," 32.
22. *Doris Day: Her Own Story,* 188.
23. Ibid., 183–184.
24. According to Freud, this type of joke "calls for three people: in addition to the one who makes the joke, there must be a second who is taken as the object of the hostile or sexual aggressiveness, and a third in whom the joke's aim of producing pleasure is fulfilled . . . When the first person finds his libidinal impulse inhibited by the woman, he develops a hostile trend against . . . [her] and calls on the originally interfering third person [the listener] as his ally. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), ed. and trans., James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), 118–119.

    For Rowe, "Freud's account . . . explains why so much laughter is directed *at* women and why so much comedy is misogynistic. It also explains why women so often feel alienated from many traditions of comedy, whether the slapstick of early silent film or the routines of standup comedians from Andrew Dice Clay to Eddie Murphy" (68–69), a point on which Fischer expounds in showing women's exclusion from much film comedy. The late fifties-early sixties sex comedy, in finding woman to be the cause of the frustration of man's sexual freedom and his indentured servitude in marriage, grows out of a misogyny that infused much of Western popular and high culture from the end of World War II until the start of "second-wave" feminism in the late sixties. Thus, Frank Krutnik in his article, "The Faint Aroma of Performing Seals: The 'Nervous' Romance and the Comedy of the Sexes" (*Velvet Light Trap* 26 [Fall 1990]) finds "a marked increase in the prominence and aggressiveness [also Freud's word] of innuendo" in the comedies of this period. "This innuendo tends to be especially directed at women who tend to define themselves in 'nonsexual' terms, like Doris Day's career women" (61). This misogyny peaks in films such as the 1965 Jack Lemmon vehicle, *How to Murder Your Wife*.
25. Of course, comedies starring women do not disappear after the sixties. Female comedy stars, however, flickered as sporadically on cinema screens in the seventies and eighties as did female stars in general. Some seventies comedy stars like Jill Clayburgh (*An Unmarried*

Woman [1978], *Starting Over* [1979]) came and went with blink-and-you'll-miss-her rapidity. Other comediennes, most notably Diane Keaton, were careful to keep their day jobs as dramatic actresses. Indeed Keaton emerged as Woody Allen's "Gracie Allen" in *Play It Again, Sam* in 1972, the year *The Godfather* proved her chops in drama. Keaton's 1977 Academy Award for playing the madcap Annie Hall was probably cemented by her performance that year in the dour sexual revolution tragedy, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar.* After a six-year hiatus, Jane Fonda, once a star of such comic films as *Cat Ballou* (1965) and *Barefoot in the Park* (1967), reentered mainstream cinema in 1977 in a comedy, *Fun with Dick and Jane,* only to submerge herself immediately into earnest dramas (*Julia* [1977], *Coming Home* [1978], *The China Syndrome* [1979]), making only one more comedy, the massive hit *Nine to Five* (1980). Barbra Streisand, who, like Day, gained stardom as a singer and in musical comedy, headlined straight comedies, such as *The Owl and the Pussycat* (1970) and *What's Up Doc* (1972), but such films and their box-office appeal became more uneven and infrequent as the decade wore on. On the other hand, Goldie Hawn probably carried more comedies than any actress since the heyday of Doris Day, Marilyn Monroe, and Audrey Hepburn. Hawn is a comic descendent of Judy Holliday, the Jewish dumb blonde (?!); her professional name even sounds like "Billie Dawn," the role in *Born Yesterday* that propelled Holliday to stardom. Like Holliday, Hawn won a rare and surprising Oscar for a comedic role at the start of her film career (*Cactus Flower*, 1969). She went on to star in comedies for more than two decades, often in the Holliday-like role of the "dumb blonde" whose "native intelligence" outsmarts the sharpies, a formula revived for new generations, alas, in *Legally Blonde* (2001).

26. One of these films, *Jumbo* (1962), is a throwback to the musicals with which Day began her star career at Warner Bros., and is typical of the genre-mixing of late musicals in that it relies on melodrama for its plot, comedy for some of the characters and bits of business, and upon the expected musical conventions whereby characters express emotional states and turning points in song and dance. In *Send Me No Flowers* (1964), the third and final Day-Hudson-Tony Randall vehicle, and the only one in which Day and Hudson play a married couple, a hypochondriac husband imagines that he overhears his doctor referring to him as terminally ill. The audience knows that the husband and the wife are suffering under a misconception; however, when she learns the truth from the doctor, she assumes that the man has intended to deceive her, as in *Pillow Talk* and *Lover Come Back.*
27. For an informative account of the 1956 liberalization of the Production Code, see Gregory D. Black, *The Catholic Crusade against the Movies, 1940–1975* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 154–155.
28. Jane Clarke, Diana Simmonds, and Mandy Merck, *Move Over, Misconceptions: Doris Day Reappraised* (London: British Film Institute, 1980).
29. Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 265.
30. Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 279, 281.
31. *Doris Day: Her Own Story*, 182.
32. Ibid., 144–145.
33. Ibid., 182–183.
34. *Midnight Lace.* Special Trailer. Universal-International, 1960. Used as promotion for American Movie Classics Cablecast of *Midnight Lace*.
35. Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 195.
36. Haskell summarizes these in her description of "a feminist luncheon at the Waldorf-Astoria sometime in the eighties [during which] the woman sitting next to me launched

into a near-tirade about how her life had been blighted by 'those films of the fifties in which Doris Day ended up in the kitchen, glued to the frying pan and her apron.' While sympathetic to the woman's tale of woe and the social pressures behind it, I felt Day was more convenient than appropriate as a symbol of oppression of women. The suburban nesting phenomenon was far more a staple of television shows than movies." "Icon of the Fifties," 23.

37. Welsch, "Actress Archetypes of the 1950s," 109.
38. Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 267.
39. Henry Jenkins and Kristine Brunovska Karnick, "Acting Funny," in *Classical Hollywood Comedy* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 163.
40. T. E. Perkins, "Remembering Doris Day," *Screen Education* 39 (Summer 1981), 25.
41. Pauline Kael, Review of *Love Me or Leave Me*. *Cinemania* '97 CD-ROM. Seattle: Microsoft, 1997.
42. Cohan, 281.
43. For more on the Day character's quiet mastery of the male in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, see Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood*, 74–78.
44. Jenkins and Karnick make the point that "the romantic comedy has created rounded characters who have an integrity and complexity that holds our attention, apart from the particularity of their realization in a given film. Casting Gary Cooper in *The Lady Eve*, James Stewart in *Ball of Fire* and Henry Fonda in *Philadelphia Story* would make a difference, but not as great as casting Groucho Marx in *Modern Times*, Charles Chaplin in *The Road to Utopia* or Bob Hope in *Duck Soup*," 164.
45. Tony Randall of course later became a top star on series television, continuing a pattern played out by many actresses such as Lucille Ball, Cybill Shepherd, and Candice Bergen. Gig Young, in another familiar pattern, later won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for a serious dramatic role, as the burned-out Depression-era dance-hall emcee of *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (1969).
46. Perkins, 26.
47. In all that has been written on *Pillow Talk*, no note is taken of the director, Michael Gordon. One study even calls him "Michael Douglas" as if collapsing the names of Michael Gordon and Gordon Douglas, another colorless *metteur-en-scene* of these years, into that of a familiar actor. Gordon was a Johns Hopkins and Yale Drama School-educated director, who was blacklisted amid the 1951–52 HUAC Hearings on Hollywood. Before his blacklisting, Gordon's most notable films were an adaptation of Lillian Hellman's *Another Part of the Forest* (1948) and the movie of *Cyrano de Bergerac* that won José Ferrer a Best Actor Academy Award in 1950. *Pillow Talk* was his first film in Hollywood after eight years on the blacklist and it seems an extreme example of sociopolitical innocuousness in response to the era's political witch hunts.
48. This is made explicit, since among the Hudson roles to which the film refers is his character Bick Benedict in *Giant* (1956), a Texas rancher whose attitudes toward changing times and racial minorities are broadened by his humanistically feminine Northern wife.
49. Cohan, 281.
50. The name "Jan Morrow" has inspired creative readings from critics. Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans suggest that the name is a play on "Jeanne Moreau," who was just becoming known as an icon of the French *nouvelle vague*, which itself was just developing in France as the film went into production in the spring of 1959. The allusion might have been a little too esoteric and "inside" for American audiences of the time.

See Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans, *Affairs to Remember: Hollywood Comedy of the Sexes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989)

51. Cohen, 291.
52. Ibid. Indeed what Cohan describes applies with precision to the relationship in *Sideways* (2004) between Miles (Paul Giamatti), a depressed and divorced alcoholic, and Jack (Thomas Haden Church), his rampant and libidinous underemployed actor friend. Like Jonathan, Miles allows his pal to burden him with an escalating series of humiliations, endangering his budding romance with a woman by betraying her best friend, being sent into the home of a man Jack cuckolded to retrieve the wallet Jack left behind, and finally letting his friend fake an accident by crashing Miles's car into a tree. The difference is that the "sad sack" figure, by the story's end, appears to have realized that his buddy is among the things holding him back, and rejects him, literally leaving him at the altar of a wedding Miles and the audience knows is something of a fraud. The comic mileage—and character possibilities—to be drawn from this pairing, in short, are unexpectedly enduring.
53. Schlemiels, sad sacks, and comic male victims are mainstays of Hollywood romantic comedy of this period. It's hard to watch Young and Randall in these films without thinking of the *lead* characters of numerous comedies by Billy Wilder and his many imitators, notably those played by Tom Ewell in *The Seven-Year Itch* (1955), Ray Walston in *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964), and especially Jack Lemmon in *Some Like It Hot* (1959), *The Apartment* (1960), and *The Fortune Cookie* (1966) and a string of similar vehicles, and seen, as I mention above even in recent comedies such as *Sideways*. While Lemmon in *The Apartment*, who seems the prototype, finds redemption from his endless symbolic castration by a vicious male system in *his* rescuing of a woman victimized by the same system, the more conservative Universal-Ross Hunter-Stanley Shapiro cycle gives the schnook refuge in friendship with a stronger male, who despite his flaws, is able to make his way in the world. I don't think it's a stretch to see the Hudson-Randall and Grant-Young relationships as precursors of such later New Hollywood male buddy pairings as Robert Redford-Michael J. Pollard in *Little Fauss and Big Halsy* (1970), Jon Voight-Dustin Hoffman in *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), Gene Hackman-Al Pacino in *Scarecrow* (1973), Clint Eastwood-Jeff Bridges in *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* (1974), and many others. All of these pair a comic-tragic little guy with a badly tarnished rendition of the traditional heroic male lead, in a dependent homosocial relationship parallel to the traditional male-female pairings that these films render superfluous and obsolete. These films also tend to have strong elements of comedy in an uneasy generic mixture.
54. This use of the term "ne'er-do-well" comes from an interview with Rock Hudson, who is quoted as saying, "The advertising man in *Lover Come Back*, like the composer in *Pillow Talk*, was a ne'er-do-well. And playing a ne'er-do-well is terrific. You automatically like a ne'er-do-well, don't you? I guess it's because it's what we all wish we were, but don't have the guts to be." Liner notes, "*Lover Come Back/Send Me No Flowers* Double Feature." Laser Disc. MCA/Universal Home Video, 1996.
55. Perkins, 29.