

Bogie and Friends

Remarks during Dinner at Lowell House, Harvard University, January 26, 2011
Alexandra Torres

Thank you Lizzy. Good evening. My name is Alexandra Torres and I am a senior in Lowell House.

Welcome Back to Lowell House everyone. I imagine most of you sitting here tonight have just returned from our Winter Vacation. Hopefully you had the opportunity during this time to relax a little bit.

I myself had a lot of time to relax and I spent the majority of that time doing what I love to do most, watch classic films. Now I like a good film regardless of what era it is from but I am particularly fond of the Classics, especially films that were made in the 1940s during the war or the post-war years. Films from this era move me in so many different ways and fill me with happiness. These films display a whole world full of class, sophistication, and wonder that I cannot find in any other genre of film.

For instance, the great Katharine Hepburn epitomizes this class and sophistication in so many of her films such as in the 1940 romantic comedy *The Philadelphia Story* where she uses her quick, witty dialogue coupled with her special, pseudo-British, mid-Atlantic accent to stand up to the men in her life in this comedy of love and intrigue. I love a great number of Kate Hepburn films including the 1938 screwball comedy *Bringing Up Baby* where she and Cary Grant played a woman and a scientist trying to care for a giant leopard only to discover their attraction to each other.

Cary Grant himself plays memorable roles in many other films that are special to me. He stars in the 1955 romantic thriller *To Catch a Thief* with Grace Kelly where he plays a jewel thief who becomes smitten with a new woman in his life, and the 1957

An Affair to Remember where he and Deborah Kerr play star-crossed lovers who attach personal significance to New York City's Empire State Building, and the 1946 film *Notorious* where he becomes intimately involved with Ingrid Bergman in a harrowing tale of espionage.

I love the charming James Stewart when he plays an up and coming senator trying to establish himself in the 1939 drama *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, and when he plays a transformed George Bailey in the 1946 Christmas drama *It's a Wonderful Life* with Donna Reed playing his lovely wife Mary who always stays by his side.

Deborah Kerr and Donna Reed both star together in 1953 with the great Burt Lancaster, Frank Sinatra and Montgomery Cliff to make the drama *From Here To Eternity* with the iconic scene of Lancaster and Kerr rolling in each other's arms and kissing on a beach in Hawaii.

Before working with Grant, Bergman herself had starred with Humphrey Bogart in what I consider to be my favorite movie of all time, the 1942 drama *Casablanca*. Bergman and Bogie play Ilsa and Rick, two lovers who sacrifice their relationship and deep affection for one another for the good of the resistance. With the addition of Paul Henreid as Victor Laszlo, Claude Rains as Captain Louis, Sydney Greenstreet as Signor Ferrari, Peter Lorre as Signor Ugarte, and Dooley Wilson as Sam singing the film's iconic number "As Time Goes By", *Casablanca* proves to be a film that provides a world that I can escape to even if just for a little while.

Greenstreet and Lorre had worked with Bogie previously in the 1941 film noir *The Maltese Falcon*. Bogie plays Sam Spade, a private investigator, with such rigor and

style not unlike the way he plays private detective Philip Marlowe in the 1946 film noir *The Big Sleep* with Lauren Bacall. From seeing Bogie in these films portray a steadfast pessimistic and rough, edgy realist who ultimately remains loyal and faithful to who and what he believes in, it is clear to me that I am watching the greatest actor of that generation.

If you gave me another three hours to tell you about all the films that I have become attached to I would still not have enough time. I would tell you that for a while I was in love with James Garner when he played a faithful lover first to Greta Garbo in the 1936 romance *Camille* and then to Vivien Leigh in the 1940 romance *Waterloo Bridge*. I would tell you that I wished I was as beautiful as Audrey Hepburn and I

would have been able to explain to you why Spencer Tracy is my favorite actor of all time.

I will still be around for the next few months so if you see me in the dining hall and want some classic film inspiration I will be more than happy to become engaged in such a conversation. Otherwise, I will leave you with saying that whether it is Audrey Hepburn in her little black dress with pearls or whether it is Bogie looking into your eyes saying "Here's looking at you kid", I hope you can be so inspired as I have been by such films that encompassed a certain sophistication from another era, sophistication that once has been and that will never be again. Have a nice evening, Thank you, and good night.