INTRODUCTION

Fashion Shows

ADRIENNE MUNICH

Fashion in Film explores the vital synergy between dress and the cinema, a force as old as film itself. To offer but one example of their connection, the annual Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science Awards (the "Oscars") draws from the very core of the fashion/film dynamic. The fashion parade that opens the Oscars not only adds to the ceremony's buzz but nearly trumps it in hype. This event might seem to be merely a publicity device designed to heat up excitement for the award extravaganza, a trivial byproduct of the truly essential ceremony. Yet in fact, there is a primal connection between the two spectacles, a connection that lies, discreet and often unremarked, in the perceived difference between actors and those film roles that have transported them to the red carpet.[1] Upon reflection, however, we realize that our fascination with the stars and their finery constitutes another layer of their film identity. On the carpet tread carefully crafted performers, whose names may have been inventions and whose ensembles have been donated. Both events, then, are shows, or one big show, part of a ritual; the opening fashion show serves as a processional preceding the bestowal of trophies. As with many relationships, however, the pair aren't always seen together; the Oscars fashion show spins off into other media—reverential or snippy commentary, reviews, and photographs—to assume a life of its own, a life that many follow more avidly than the Oscars themselves.

I use the Oscars to illustrate the connections between fashion and film because it makes a glitzy spectacle of their alliance. Their affiliation

extends beyond Hollywood and invades places where modernity has taken a foothold. After all, for some time now, cinema has been one of modernity's—and even postmodernity's—messengers. The relationship between fashion and film contains layers of meanings—aesthetic, commercial, patriotic, political. Sometimes films inspire fashions even where no one would have expected them to catch on. See, for example, Barbara Klinger's recent work on the rage in Afghanistan for "Leo's haircut," inspired by the film *Titanic*.[2] To investigate fashion and film in tandem reveals that the two cultural performances have been connected and mutually enrich each other both materially and aesthetically.[3]

All chapters in this volume investigate ways that the fashion and film alliance expresses itself. Taken together, the chapters bring the importance of costume designers out of the workroom into the light and make us view the elaborate craft of costume design as an essential aspect of film. Costume designers work at the very center of creating the Look. Despite being recognized with their own Oscar category, however, designers usually sit at the back of the credit bus. For instance, the popular and useful database IMDb.com requires that you click and scroll to find the costume designer. In contrast to the names of actors and directors, which are immediately conveyed to someone searching for a film title, you need to already *want* to know the name of a costume designer in order to find it. In a sense, costume designers work in obscurity because of their success. Costumes fuse seamlessly with characters' identities; what a character wears in a film often seems natural and transparent, though it is as carefully crafted and as intensely constructed as any other aspect of film production. Consequently, costume designers are too often ignored. Each essay and filmography in *Fashion in Film* seeks to reverse this long tradition of obscurity.

Fashion in Film offers a variety of perspectives on the Look of fashion in film in order to reveal fashion's influence on film and film's impact on fashion. The term Look as I've already used it in this introduction implicitly draws together the act of deliberate seeing in both fashion and film, but it is perhaps most recognizable as a fashion term describing a fashion ensemble. Look is a fashion statement. When the groundbreaking fashion scholar, Elizabeth Wilson, describes fashion as "the look," we could easily substitute watching films for reading fashion magazines: "Fashion

is a magical system, and what we see as we leaf through glossy magazines is 'the look.'"[4] Look in a film most obviously refers to an ensemble of visual signs in attire that orients the viewer by its simultaneous strangeness and familiarity and, at a glance, conveys meanings. In an intimate reciprocity, the Look looks back. Marlene Dietrich wearing a tuxedo and top hat in *Morocco* (1930) provides an obvious and extreme example. This famous look may have startled, even titillated, viewers, and dramatically marked the character, Amy Jolly, even though in other scenes she wears conventionally feminine hats, soignée gowns, and famously high heels.[5] The Look created by Diane Keaton's vintage menswear almost fifty years later in *Annie Hall* (1977) enabled fashion possibilities for viewers that expanded and blurred conventional gender definitions. When Look refers to clothing as personal costume, it references the fashion industry's presentation of fashion itself as a phenomenon depending on changing styles that at any moment declare what the knowledgeable person will look like. Fashion in film, in this usage, is costume suggesting a conscious assumption of a publicly sanctioned identity. Fashion dictates a Look.

Look needs to be differentiated from decades of film criticism that focuses on the dynamics of "the gaze." When the film scholar, Laura Mulvey put the term "gaze" into circulation in 1975, she was speaking explicitly of a spectator—marked exclusively as male—who derives pleasure from seeing women either fetishized or vilified in Hollywood films. Mainstream cinema, according to Mulvey, is in the business of delivering pleasure to men by relaying the gaze of the male character to the camera and then to the male spectator. By contrast, Look, as a fashion concept, is about character and fashion information. Spectators who consume the Look, either male or female, are at least temporarily oblivious to narrative and moral judgment as they process crucial aspects of the character's manner and appearance.

In my Dietrich example above, Look deftly constructs Dietrich's character, Amy Jolly. The costuming helps viewers understand Amy as a character, but also offers possibilities for personal expression. Just as an Amy Jolly style can import into the ordinary world a little Dietrich swank, so Diane Keaton herself acquires real panache with those trousers.[6] Such integration of film fashion into personal identity occurs de-

spite fashion's definition as inexorably linked to the present moment.[7] Paula Patton, nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Oscar for her role as a teacher in *Precious* (2009), reveals to a *New York Times* reporter what influences her Look: "I always love Grace Kelly. That white dress she wears in 'To Catch a Thief' is to die for. I was thinking I should have it remade for a red-carpet affair. . . . Marilyn Monroe in 'Gentlemen Prefer Blondes' in that purple outfit with the right belt and the right bag—it opened me up."[8] Patton shows that she designs her professional image in relation to earlier great stars; clearly ordinary viewers can do the same.

Patton's language reveals that for her film fashion blends with items in the stars' personal closets. She does not take into account that Kelly's white dress and Monroe's purple outfit were costume designs, not picked up on the swanky Beverley Hills shopping street, Rodeo Drive. That the white dress seems to belong to Grace Kelly and not to the film character who goes unnamed by Patton underlines the point that the costume design appears natural and uncontrived, perfectly worn by the actress who then is remembered through her character's dress. The great and prolific Edith Head designed the costumes for this and other Hitchcock films, including the white dress that now signifies "Grace Kelly." In the case of Monroe's purple dress, William Travilla designed it with the right belt and the right bag. What strikes a newspaper reader seeking fashion news in the *Times* style section in 2009 is that both films were produced in the early 1950s. Yet to Patton, the dresses continue to have an impact on her fashion sensibility, not as quaintly vintage but as right for her own moment and self-image. That is to say, film fashion, bound to star images, endures beyond the confines of the short time periods associated with a typical notion of fashion. According to received wisdom, fashion seems to define itself as a particular Look unique to a brief moment, yet that definition competes with fashion designers' penchant for quotation, for importing the past into their declarations of the *now*. This Janus-like quality in fashion—looking backwards to design forwards—finds its perfect vehicle in film. Moviegoers do not need the fashion industry to act as interpreter in order to understand movie costume of whatever period as a fashion show for their own moment. As Patton envisions herself in sartorial quotation, she exemplifies

what Ulrich Lehmann describes as "fashion's dialectical aesthetics," a term describing how fashion's inevitable ephemerality also contains its own opposite, "the eternal."[9]

Viewers quickly grasp the contemporary meanings and values conveyed by costume, even in films about earlier historical moments. Thus, fashion is an essential tool in the craft of conveying meaning through film. Reciprocally, films provide a dictionary, or better, an encyclopedia and an archive for fashionable quotation. Oscar-winning costume designers may not stand at the forefront of the fashion/film alliance. Yet though the Award is not given for the most influential costume design, film influence on fashion is powerful. In 2010, *Avatar,* whose costume designs, produced by collaboration between animators and conventional designers, would have required a reconception of the category, was not nominated; nonetheless it immediately inspired fashion designers.[10] For fashion, movies are a gift that keeps on giving.

Taken as a whole, *Fashion in Film* expands upon conventional understandings of the role of fashion in creating the Look of a film and influencing its meanings. There may be no entirely satisfactory definition of fashion. Joanne Entwistle offers a simple and seemingly unproblematic one: "Fashion is dress that embodies the latest aesthetic."[11] Bringing the notion of historical specificity into a consideration of fashion, Gilles Lipovetsky emphasizes fashion's ephemerality and its importance in defining modernity. Such a focus opens up a consideration of consumer culture and class. No definition is uncontested in fashion studies; the claim that fashion as a concept originates in Western modes of commerce and kinds of political organization is particularly contentious.[12] Lipovetsky, representing a highly politicized view, argues that fashion is a democratic phenomenon, dependent upon modern industry and independent of class because modern capitalistic democracy allows anyone access to fashionable Looks and the freedom to pursue fashion. While we may harbor reservations about his opinions, it is clear at least that film provides a democratic medium of access to Looks. Film opens fashion to huge audiences that exceed the boundaries of a fashion moment and enable viewers and fashion designers to adapt past fashions to their own time. Film offers fashion to the masses and is an avenue to its democratization.

FASHION, NATION, CAMERA

The impact of nation and nationality form a subtext throughout the chapters in *Fashion in Film,* although each chapter takes up the concept of nation from different perspectives. Most chapters recognize how film fashion navigates among national borders. Because of the contradictory yet powerful manner in which fashion operates, it can both assert a fashion identity for a particular country and gesture toward a Look for which national borders seem irrelevant. Indeed, some films include fashion as part of their portrayal of a national character. That such a weighty concept as "nation" could be dependent for its very definition on a cultural practice generally considered superficial, insubstantial, and particularly associated with women's (implicitly or explicitly trivial) preoccupations testifies to fashion's fundamental importance in the modern world.

To add to the complexity of defining nation through fashion, an international context may suggest a national identity by means of a filmic Look. To cite a little-known but pithy example, Doris, the narrator and main character in the 1932 German bestseller, *The Artificial Silk Girl* by Irmgard Keun, visualizes her life as if it were a screenplay:

> I think it will be a good thing if I write everything down because I'm an unusual person. I don't mean a diary—that's ridiculous for a trendy girl like me. But I want to write like a movie, because my life is like that and it's going to become even more so. And I look like Colleen Moore, if she had a perm and her nose were a little more fashionable, like pointing up. And when I read it later on, everything will be like at the movies—I'm looking at myself in pictures.[13]

The pictures that Doris conjures are international, largely from Hollywood, not Germany. Keun endows Doris with a modernity that characterizes her historical moment by showing how she weaves together her identity with fashion awareness and movie fandom. The character doesn't see herself as a film still or a head shot; she sees herself moving and clothed: "And now I'm sitting in my room in my nightgown, which has just slipped off my famous shoulder. . . ."[14] As a self-aggrandizing young woman desiring above all else to appear trendy, her account stitches together the cultural fabrics of film, fashion, identity, and, more complexly, nation. The character seems suspended above a vaguely

Western global map, lifting herself above her tawdry life through a fantasy about being glamorous. She seems to efface her German nationality by visualizing herself as an American film star. And yet, capturing a moment in her nation's history—the transition from the Weimar Republic to Nazi Germany—Doris in her synthetic clothes fits into the milieu of Weimar decadence. Keun's artificial silk girl could be cited as an exemplary figure with a recognizable attitude defining that particular time and place. At the same time, her self-image reflects foreign moving pictures.

Complicating the national mélange even more, Keun consciously adopts and then adapts a memorable device from the American novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925), by Anita Loos. Here, famously, is Loos's character Lorelei Lee: "So I told Mr. Lamson how I write down all of my thoughts and he said he knew I had something to me and when we become better acquainted I am going to let him read my diary."[15] Keun's character claims a fashionable distinction in rejecting Lorelei's obsolete diary in favor of a screenplay.[16] Adding an intertextual layer to these self-styling women-on-the-make, no person after the 1953 film adaptation of Loos's novel can separate Lorelei's self-portrait from the luscious screen presentation of Marilyn Monroe as an updated, 50s-fashioned Lorelei; now Paula Patton wants to bring Marilyn/Lorelei's purple dress into the twenty-first century. When a reader in our moment encounters Doris, she sees her multimedia reflections through Monroe back in time to the liberated flapper, Lorelei, to the silent film star, Colleen Moore. Not only does Doris envision herself as an American movie star, but current readers of the novel are likely to imagine the setting focused through the lens of American film projectors.

The Artificial Silk Girl tracks Keun forming her main character according to a national type, while appropriating fashions from international origins. It's precisely these cosmopolitan tints that color concepts of Weimar decadence. From the very intertextuality of Doris's construction emerges her defining voice. Colleen Moore (1900–1988), who is the model for the artificial silk girl's self-image, built her fame during the silent film era upon her fashionable image as much as her acting ability. Her bobbed haircut (sometimes called a "Dutch-boy," to further expand the internationalism of fashion inspiration) was radical for a moment of

stylishly flowing locks and made worldwide fashion history and elevated Moore into an international fashion icon. Hence, Keun builds her novel on a foundation of cinematic fashion knowledge. She could expect that her readers would appreciate Doris's limits when she imagines her nose improving on Moore's and her hair permed, entirely changing the Colleen Moore bob into something inauthentic or "artificial."

The silent star's influence reached not only beyond national borders but also to later eras. Another place we find national blurrings exemplified is in the history of the character of American Sally Bowles and her perspective on 1931 Weimar culture. The steamy mix first entered British consciousness through Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), then was made internationally famous by its adaptation first into an American play, *I Am a Camera,* then to a musical show, *Cabaret,* and finally to a 1972 Hollywood film. It is no coincidence that Isherwood's narrator in *Goodbye to Berlin* declares "I am a camera." Whatever kind of camera Isherwood meant, we envision, as we do with Doris, a movie camera. (And, if that camera is trained on Liza Minnelli as Sally, one might even glimpse the echt Hollywood/American icon Judy Garland in her daughter's song and dance act.) Nor is it an accident that Sally Bowles wears a Colleen Moore bob in *Cabaret* or that legendary costume designer Edith Head adopted a Colleen Moore bob as an icon of her own Look. By doing so, she both quoted an earlier film/fashion moment and gave herself a timeless quality as if she had been there, fashionably, forever. Living beyond the grave, Edith Head is made into a fashion monument in the guise of the superhero costume designer Edna Mode in the animated film *The Incredibles* (2004).

Doris testifies that ordinary, anonymous people see themselves as having starring roles, wearing fashions that reflect and construct their own lives. *Fashion in Film* explores the intensity of looking at fashion in the movies as if attending fashion shows. Some essays in the volume pay close attention to the primary function of costume, to establish character, while also suggesting that costume in film is also about sheer surface, the fabric itself, independent of character, independent of narrative. Costume steps out of the movies and onto the runway.

The mutual influence fashion and film exert on each other cannot be exaggerated. For instance, in *Unzipped* (1995), a documentary about

0.1. Edna Mode, with her Colleen Moore/Edith Head bob, in *The Incredibles. Courtesy of Disney/Pixar/Photofest.*

fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi teeming with fashion and movie stars, the genius-as-fashion-maker finds inspiration in earlier films such as the silent documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922) and the Jack London classic, *Call of the Wild* (1935). For many consumers, there is only a narrow margin of difference between the pleasures of shopping and the delight of watching a movie. Fashion ads often draw on film Looks, with the seductive allure of moviegoing powering inducements to shop, as demonstrated in a 2009 *New York Times* ad for the high-end department store Saks Fifth Avenue, that equates the two ways of looking: "See the 2nd Floor Instead of a Movie."[17] Fashion and film are gloriously intertwined.

This volume offers many exciting ways of exploring the twists and turns of the two strands.

Fashion in Film is divided into three main sections: Fashioning Film, Filming Fashion, and Fashioning National Identities, with each section preceded by a brief overview. The epilogue, After Fashion, with only one essay, serves as homage to and showcase for its author, E. Ann Kaplan.

NOTES

1. Recognizing the importance of the red carpet, the official website features a link to it. If you click on "Women's Fashion," you can see a fashion show consisting of no fewer than 144 fashion shots of celebrities proceeding alphabetically from Amy Adams to Ziyi Zhang. The show consists of dresses from Academy Awards past (over ten years), and it's interesting that one cannot accurately date the fashion changes. The accompanying caption gives the designer of the gown as well as the source of the accessories. If those 144 dresses are not enough, the site also features a retro fashion link to gowns worn by Academy Award winners, sorted by decade and going back to the 1930s. Not to overlook men's fashion, another link takes you to a gallery of Oscar finery as worn by actors from Ben Affleck to Billy Zane. http://www.oscar.com/redcarpet/.

2. Barbara Klinger, "Contraband Cinema" 114–15.

3. Before film, theater provided a venue for fashion shows, and burlesque anticipated the fashion parade. Earlier books and individual essays have discussed fashions in film. Though not a comprehensive list of titles on the topic, the following are some to consult for more on the topic: Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, *Fabrications;* Sarah Berry, *Screen Style;* Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema;* David Dresser and Garth Jowell, *Hollywood Goes Shopping;* Pam Cook, *Fashioning the Nation;* Edward Maeder, ed., *Hollywood and History;* and Marketa Uhlirova, ed., *If Looks Could Kill.*

4. Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams,* 157.

5. Amy flamboyantly takes them off to disappear with the other camp followers into the desert sands and "The End."

6. Annie Hall's wardrobe was inspired by Keaton's own wardrobe. Charlotte Herzog, in "'Powder Puff' Promotion," describes a similar interchange between the virtual audience of a fashion show in a film and the actual viewers (144).

7. It is also true that filmic representation of a historical period has changed over time according to fashion. For examples of how historical figures such as Cleopatra and Marie Antoinette have looked in films over a period of time, see Edward Maeder, ed., *Hollywood and History.* On fashion in films as selling glamour to viewers see Jeanine Basinger, *A Woman's View.*

8. Karen Nelson, "Pulse."

9. Ulrich Lehmann, *Tigersprung,* 9–10.

10. After the 2010 Academy Awards, Ruth La Ferla, commenting in the *New York Times* on the intense relationship between fashion and film, asserted "clearly a long and fabled love affair has lost its heat" (E7). Her remarks refer to the costume awards going to relatively safe costume designs rather than to highly colored and original costumes in such films as *Avatar,* costumes which were immediately translated to runways by such important couturiers as Jean Paul Gaultier and Valentino. La Ferla actually underscores the strong influence of film on fashion, if not the influence of Academy Awards for costume design; her evidence seems to affirm what she denies in illustrating fashion designers' polymorphous attraction to film fashion.

11. Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body,* 1.

12. For arguments that extend fashion to embrace world cultures and earlier historical moments, see, among many others, Jean Allman, ed., *Fashioning Africa;* Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashion-ology;* Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion.*

13. Irmgard Keun, *The Artificial Silk Girl,* 3.

14. Ibid.

15. Anita Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,* 9.

16. To appreciate more fully Keun's cosmopolitan influences, see Maria Tatar's excellent introduction to the novel: "Inspired by the example of Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925), Keun set out to write the German answer to the best-selling novel from the United States" (xvii).

17. "See The Second Floor" (A3).

WORKS CITED

Allman, Jane, ed. *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Basinger, Jeanine. *A Woman's View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women, 1930–1960.* Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1995.

Berry, Sarah. *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Bruzzi, Stella. *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Cook, Pam. *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema.* London: British Film Institute, 1996.

Craik, Jennifer. *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Dresser, David, and Garth Jowell, eds. *Hollywood Goes Shopping.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Entwistle, Joanne. *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory.* Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2000.

Gaines, Jane, and Charlotte Herzog, eds. *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body.* New York: Routledge, 1990.

Herzog, Charlotte. "'Powder Puff' Promotion: The Fashion Show-in-the-Film." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 134–59. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Isherwood, Christopher. *Goodbye to Berlin.* New York: Random House, 1939.

Kawamura, Yuniya. *Fashion-ology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies.* Oxford: Berg, 2005.

Keun, Irmgard. *The Artificial Silk Girl.* Trans. Kathie von Ankum. New York: Other Press, 2002 [1932].

Klinger, Barbara. "Contraband Cinema: Piracy, *Titanic,* and Central Asia." *Cinema Journal* 49 (Winter 2010): 106–124.

La Ferla, Ruth. "Film and Fashion: Just Friends." *The New York Times* (New York) March 4, 2010, (Styles): E1, E7.

Lehmann, Ulrich. *Tigersprung: Fashion in Modernity.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000.

Lipovetsky, Gilles. *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy.* Trans. Catherine Porter. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.* 1932. New York: Penguin, 1998.

Maeder Edward, ed. *Hollywood and History: Costume Design in Film.* New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16 (Autumn 1975): 6–18.

Nelson, Karen. "Pulse: What I'm Wearing Now." *The New York Times* (New York), November 1 2009, (Styles) 3.

"See the Second Floor." Advertisement. *New York Times* (New York), November 9 2009: A3.

Tatar, Maria. "Introduction." In *The Artificial Silk Girl,* xi–xxi. New York: Other Press, 2002.

Uhlirova, Marketa, ed. *If Looks Could Kill: Cinema's Images of Fashion, Crime and Violence.* London: Koenig Books, 2008.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985, rev. 2003.

FILMOGRAPHY

Annie Hall. Dir. Woody Allen. Costumes, Ralph Lauren. Rollins-Joffe Productions, 1977.

Avatar. Dir. James Cameron. Costumes, John Harding, Mayes C. Rubeo, Deborah Lynn Scott, and others. 20th Century Fox, Dune Entertainment, Giant Studios, Ingenious Film Partners, Lightstorm Entertainment, 2009.

Cabaret. Dir. Bob Fosse. Costumes, Charlotte Flemming. ABC Pictures, 1972.

The Call of the Wild. Dir. William Wellman. Costumes, Omar Kiam. Twentieth Century Pictures, 1935.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. Dir. Howard Hawks. Costumes, William Travilla. 20th Century Fox, 1953.

The Incredibles. Dir. Brad Bird. Walt Disney Pictures, Pixar Animation Studios, 2004.

Morocco. Dir. Josef von Sternberg. Costumes, Ruth Morley. Paramount Pictures, 1930.

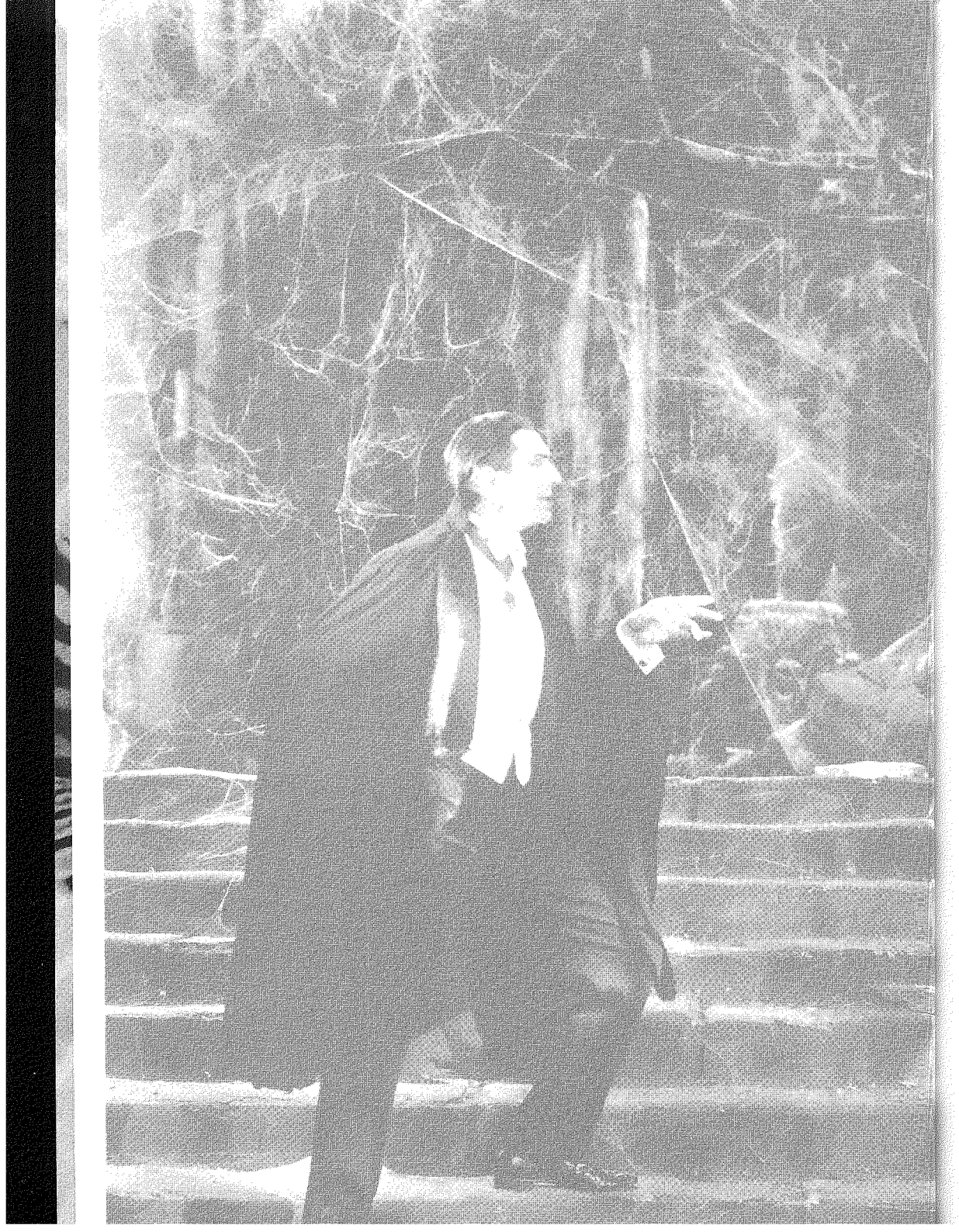
Nanook of the North. Dir. Robert J. Flaherty. (Documentary film.) 1922.

Precious. Dir. Lee Daniels. Costumes, Lisa Cortes, Tracey Fields, Anne Kenney. Lee Daniels Entertainment, Smokewood Entertainment Group, 2009.

Titanic. Dir. James Cameron. Costumes, Deborah L. Scott. 20th Century Fox Film Corporation, Paramount Pictures, Lightstorm Entertainment, 1997.

To Catch a Thief. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Costumes, Edith Head. Paramount Pictures, 1955.

Unzipped. Dir. Douglas Keeve. (Documentary Film.) Hachette Filipacchi, Miramax Films, 1995.



PART ONE

Fashioning Film

Fashion, in its original sense, indicates the process of making, and thus the title of this section signifies making films by means of fashion. In the introduction, I indicated that Look signifies a fashion statement, and that the overall Look of a whole film contributes to a film genre, and the cinematic method itself of tailoring as a way of making films. In the broadest sense, these four chapters concern fashion's role in making movies and creating their Look.

Drake Stutesman in "Costume Design, or, What Is Fashion in Film?" focuses on the meticulous craft of the costume designer as integral to a given film's meanings. Using examples of some important Hollywood costume designs for both men and women, she demonstrates the centrality of painstaking costume design in constructing the meaning of a film. Stutesman argues, moreover, that, though costumes are not equivalent to "clothes," they include clothing design and as such "helped design what becomes recognizable as an American style." Film costumes have promoted American success in an international economy. Fashioning film, in her sense, also fashions America as a Look. Her point about fashion and its relationship to national identity is taken up in different ways in other sections. To begin *Fashion in Film* with this chapter both emphasizes the crucial role of costume designers and introduces themes that are threaded through the entire collection.

Viewers recognize film genres by means of costumes. "Fashioning Film" touches on the implications of this understanding by focusing on

some familiar and enduring genres. Mary Ann Caws in "What to Wear in a Vampire Film" indicates in her very title that there are prescriptions for the vampire Look that we can identify and follow from the early silent vampire films to their recent incarnations in television series and films. Caws demonstrates that all vampire costumes are styled for a formal ritual. The vampire dresses in formal attire to honor the blood rite, which emphasizes the hallowed nature of the performance. Whether male or female, a vampire can be known by a Look. Written in high style, Caws's chapter describes how fashion contributes to the tone of vampire spectacularity that signifies the vampire film as a genre.

Ula Lukszo, in "Noir Fashion and Noir *as* Fashion," takes up the enduring mode of film noir to show that it only retrospectively becomes a genre when later films select fashions that then give the later film its "noir" Look. "The development of film noir as a genre is a post-noir phenomenon" she argues, demonstrating her point with films produced in what is generally considered the post-noir period, that is, after the 1930s and '40s. These later films pick and choose from the fashions of the early noir movement so that eventually the very Look contributes to "the recognition and *creation* of noir as a genre." In that vital sense, fashion shapes the genre.

Giuliana Bruno culminates the section with an elegant description of fashioning film. In "Surface, Fabric, Weave: The Fashioned World of Wong Kar-wai" she provides a paradigm for the visual language of film. Rather than "fashioning," Bruno uses the metaphor of "tailoring" powerfully to indicate the very texture and body-forming nature of both fashion and film. The chapter brings the reader into the exquisitely tailored cinematic world of Wong Kar-wai, refreshing Western eyes with its different aesthetic. At the same time, and while focusing on this one director and his carefully fabricated designs, Bruno's essay opens the eyes to the tailoring of film itself as a supremely aesthetic medium. Her chapter fluidly advances the volume to the next section which focuses on filming fashions.

ONE

Costume Design, or, What Is Fashion in Film?

DRAKE STUTESMAN

Why do we love fabric so much? Why do we love tailoring? A great couturier uses the best material to achieve a garment's ideal flow, stretch, cling, or billow or any other desired aspect of shape, block, and line. Madeleine Vionnet is famous for her bias cut because it caused the material to fall in a mesmerizing way. Paul Poiret is famous for his draping because it revolutionized women's clothing. Charles James is famous for his constructions (such as a hard corset that sustains a floating ball gown) because their anomalous balance uniquely eroticized the wearer.[1]

Great costume designers are equally ingenious. The most influential, on film and in fashion, is Gilbert Adrian (a.k.a. Adrian), MGM's Head of Costume (1928–1941) through its golden decade, who is famous for sculpting the padded shoulder and tapering, sleek silhouette that dominated much of twentieth-century dress.[2] Jean-Louis's corset-based, strapless gown for Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (1946) is considered to have anticipated Dior's 1947 New Look. Many others have also moved the course of fashion by introducing trends—from Edith Head's flowery bustier for Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun* (1951) to Kym Barrett's sinuous, utilitarian, cleric-inspired long black coats for *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003). This level of comparison raises questions. Are fashion and costume design the same? What do they have in common? Where do they depart?

Fashion is now a public sensibility—it is talked about at every level of society; bookstores have huge "fashion" sections; the red carpet is about

who is wearing what label; names like Armani, Versace, and Chanel are household words; stars like Puff Daddy have their own clothing houses; and, "experts" on fashion such as, of all people, Joan Rivers, have sprouted up everywhere. No one blinks an eye. Despite Baudelaire's apotheosis of fashion as modern society's litmus test,[3] this attitude toward fashion is relatively recent. In 2000, fashion scholars Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson summed up the discomforts of examining the subject: "Finally fashion's fundamental dilemma is that it has inevitably been predicated upon change, obsolescence, adornment and, in the so-called First World, it has been inextricably bound up with the commercial; this has led to the assumption that it is therefore superficial, narcissistic and wasteful."[4]

But a few years later, other fashion scholars could raise the status of their subject. In *Fashion Statements,* Francesca Alfano Miglietti extolled fashion's role, finding it "a reality that belongs essentially to modernity."[5] Christopher Breward shared that sentiment, declaring that "fashion now occupies the centre ground in popular understandings of modern culture. It enjoys unprecedented coverage in the western media and defines the tenor of urban life as no other medium."[6] "Modernity" legitimizes fashion, but Breward underestimates today's preoccupation with it. As early cinema took hold of the public imagination in the early 1910s, costume design and its trendsetting fashions became an implacable and alluring force.

Fashion as a focus has evolved prodigiously in the last ten years (with or without the true homage its creativity deserves) but film fashion, or what is actually *costume design,* has not. It is marginalized, if not ignored, in the way that fashion, as Bruzzi and Church Gibson defined its dismissal, was written off not long ago. Costume design is not only a phenomenal element of the filmic process, it is a phenomenon that has changed international economies. Lenin recognized film as "the most important" of the arts in part because it is the most persuasive.[7] Film spreads a Look or a message faster than any other medium except the internet. This power has allowed costume design, often unsung, to outdo couture's influence.

Film costume design started at the lowest end of the taste scale, Hollywood, and was pitted ultimately against the highest end, Parisian

couture, which had dominated the garment trade since the seventeenth century. By the 1930s, this inequality had leveled and the scales began to tip toward the U.S. film industry and its groundbreaking popular costumes. At that time, American film costume design had so great an impact on the world of fashion that the important surrealist couturière Elsa Schiaperelli announced, without irony: "What Hollywood designs today you will be wearing tomorrow."[8]

With this kind of primacy, it could be said that film costume design not only boosted U.S. success in an international economy but, I would argue, went further. It helped to define an American identity, which to this day is still linked with the same adjectives that describe American design generally—inventive, straightforward, streamlined, practical, dynamic, pioneering, and explosive. By the early to mid- twentieth century, costume design had developed a significant connection to the American fashion empires, which began in earnest in the 1930s and 1940s with houses like Hattie Carnegie (who fostered many great costume design and couture talents),[9] John-Frederics, Traina-Norell, Mainbocher, Claire McCardell, and more. As these began to infiltrate the global fashion market and establish a style that was associated with an American Look, the European garment trade realized it was in conflict with a strong rival. Once the U.S. controlled cinema distribution (from the late '10s and early '20s onwards) the extraordinary costume design of American films reached and astonished audiences by the millions. Initial costume designers, such as Clare West and Adrian, recognized costume design as a great force in twentieth-century *haute couture.* Their work, crucial to the establishment of American style as a world competitor, was the first to outstrip the French, who until then had ruled fashion both commercially and artistically. It's arguable that West and Adrian were key figures in laying the groundwork for what is internationally known as the "American Look." They also were extremely vocal in their defense of U.S. fashion over Parisian alternatives and influenced the public to rethink which continent to imitate. Adrian bitterly commented that his designs went to Paris on film and French couturiers stole his ideas and returned them to the States as their own invention.[10] This was so common, he stated, that "every Hollywood designer has had the experience of seeing one of his designs ignored when first flashed on the screen and

then a season or two later become the vogue because it had the stamp of approval from Paris."[11]

There have been some partnerships. In the Studio days, such couturiers as Schiaparelli, Chanel, Lucile, Givenchy, Dior, Hartnell, Balmain, Molyneux, Lanvin, Erté, Norell, and Reville designed for films, often in tandem with an in-house costume designer, and today it is not unheard of to see a film credit for Giorgio Armani or Jean-Paul Gaultier. But these were not, and still are not, strong relationships. The cinema costume design world and the couture world are linked but also very separate.

With these intense connections, it is obvious that the costume designer and couturier share a great deal. They each have an intimate knowledge, if not a deep love, of fabric, tailoring, line, and style, and they typically can claim an invaluable imagination and innovative, even wild, aesthetic. But there are many differences. The key one is that costume design is a working craft whose purpose is not to serve or even expand a style but to serve a film. It must express something far beyond the outfit: the costume designer must use clothes to create basic movie elements. They have to meet extreme demands such as coping with the cinematographer's lighting, the dimensions of an actor's body, the story's character, and that unique cinematic feature—the close up—all without being obtrusive. It is a complex task but it succeeds because the audience is well prepared. How so?

What does not seem to have changed in the course of some forty thousand–plus years of human society is the impact of clothing on the psyche. Costume design plays on our deepest responses to clothes and all their aspects (shape, color, texture), aspects which augment, indeed almost stand in for, our perceptions of sex, authority, comfort/discomfort, and stature. Nakedness is eroticized by clothing. Power, class, and wealth are recognized by what is worn. Fashion plays on the same responses and is as old as clothing itself. In 2009, twisted flax fibers, thirty thousand years old and dyed into pinks, blues, and grays, were found in the Republic of Georgia. Elizabeth Barber, an expert on prehistoric textiles, surmised that these threads were not for functional wear but rather for "fashion," as she put it, because, even then, status was beginning to be revealed through cloth.[12] What, then, are , clothes, fashion, and costume design? In a sense, clothes are what one sweats in (a life), fashion is the

sweep of a Look (a lifestyle), and costume design is an industrial illusion of both (a desire for a life).

Fashion historian Valerie Steele puts it succinctly, "Fashion is a particular kind of clothing that is 'in style.'"[13] The differentiations of fashion (i.e. high fashion/low fashion) are not elaborate. They are found in the cost, the use, and the tailoring expertise of the clothes. High fashion, or *haute couture* (which loosely means "quality stitching") is only a small part of what is termed the "fashion system." The rest is boutique, ready-to-wear, and—the most lucrative part of any fashion empire—branding.

Costume, on the other hand, is on another planet or, as it were, a parallel universe. Though often breathtaking, it is really a clever cinematic beast of burden, created for a solely cinematic purpose. The former head of the American Costume Designers Guild, costume designer Deborah Nadoolman Landis, sees costume and fashion as "antithetical." She maintains that the starstruck public can't believe that the costume the star wears is a cinematic device that is there only, as Landis sees it, to tell a story.[14] This sounds unilateral and certainly there are many overlaps between fashion and costume design, but she is right that the public doesn't grasp costume design as a piece of film architecture.

Costume is a high art. The costume designer uses the word "build" to describe an outfit's construction. The costume is an object, a literal building that the actor enters, "wears," or inhabits in order to perform. Many actors feel that they understand their character once they have worn the costume. It is a psychic world (it protects the actor's character fantasy) as well as a material one (it must be built to withstand great stresses such as wind, water, fighting, dancing, sweating, tearing, staining, and constant reuse). One even could compare the extremes of costume design, (such as a much toiled-over costume that appears for a few minutes and then is never seen again, like Norma Shearer's ball gown by Adrian in *Marie Antoinette*, 1938), with the extremes of *haute couture*, the original outfits seen on the catwalk. Alexander McQueen, Viktor and Rolf or Hussein Chalayan, to name a few, have often created bizarre clothes for their seasonal collections that are impossible to wear. They are only prototypes and they quickly disappear. In the documentary *The Secret World of Haute Couture* (2007), *haute couture* customers (often requesting anonymity), who have sole access to these original clothes, describe how

they refit the single catwalk article, even completely, at great cost. After these clients' retailoring, multiple versions of the clothes emerge until the innovations of the outfit filter into retail mass consumption. Some costumes are unwearable though fans crave their style. For example, Marilyn Monroe's pink gown in the 1953 film *Gentleman Prefer Blondes*, which she wears while singing "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," was made of upholstery satin and lined with felt by William Travilla.

Costume designers have to tell a story, and they tap into the same stratagems that the first ancient dyed "fashion" threads tapped. They manipulate through tools such as silhouettes, color nuances, design lines, or fabric textures (is silk right for the character or is burlap better?) but they also create an emotional *feel* in the costume through minute details such as moving a shoulder seam further from or closer to the neck or making a jacket a little too tight, too loose, too short, or too long. They must convey considerable information through imperceptible details. Wonderful use of these seemingly innocuous signals is a costume design staple. In the television sitcom, *Two and A Half Men* (2003–present), a silhouette subtly creates part of the comedy. The show is about two brothers—one an immature forty-something, handsome and a swinging bachelor who has a constant stream of beautiful bed partners, and the other an immature forty-something, homely and deeply repressed. The swinger is always dressed in large, square, knee-length shorts, a box cut, vertically lined rayon sport shirt with an open collar, and loafers with white socks. He looks stylish but also somewhat adolescent, as the clothes make him look boyish, reflecting his inner character. The repressed brother wears a polo shirt tucked into a neatly cinched belt, waist-high. His top shirt collar button is always closed but often the button pulls on the buttonhole, making two taut folds. This, a feature obviously sewn into the costume, makes him look pinched, almost childishly dressed in a different way, and underscores his immaturity and psychic discomfort. If the costume designer, Mary T. Quigley, dressed the brothers in fitting, hip, or debonair clothes, they would both look like well-built, handsome men, and the comedy wouldn't work.

Color too dictates what can work and not work in a film and the costume designer has to deal with a host of possible problems—from art direction to the actor's complexion to the lighting, to name a few.

This can range from knowing what not to dress an actor in (if a wall is green, then an actor in a green suit could be lost against it) to knowing the limitations of a color within the context of the film. In *Shaft* (2000), costume designer Ruth Carter was determined to dress the lead character, Shaft, in black, though the cinematographer was against it, concerned black would be lost in the film's many night scenes. Carter had to find a material that flattered actor Samuel L. Jackson's complexion but refracted enough light to offset it *and* would withstand the darkness of the shots. After many tests, she settled on a coal-colored suede whose upright fibers uniquely threw off light as the body moved.[15] Piero Tosi, one of the world's greatest costume designers, who costumed most of Luchino Visconti's films and is known for his perfectionism and historical faithfulness, nevertheless changed the blue of the military uniform in *Ludwig* (1972) because he felt it was not a "believable" color.[16] This nuanced judgment is crucial. The costume designer must know how to convince a modern audience and therefore must not only know the true attire, textiles, patterns, and colors that someone in a given period would have worn—from a cave dweller to a barfly in '60s Hong Kong to a Victorian nun—but be able to deviate from any of it.

Costume designers approach the character not just from the perspective of what suits the storyline (for example, is it a western, a noir, a romance, or a sci-fi?) but from the perspective of what suits the actor. They must, at times, make an actor's character emerge against body type. In the international hit HBO series *The Sopranos,* which ran for eight years (1999–2007), James Gandolfini portrayed domineering, sexual, violent mafia head Tony Soprano. Soprano's clothes had to reflect an unsophisticated New Jersey twenty-first-century mafia look (realism was part of the show's attraction). At the same time, Gandolfini was an overweight, round-faced, balding man and not an obvious seductive lead. Thus costume designer Juliet Polsca had a conflict. She couldn't rely on the ubiquitous Armani suit to glamorize him, as that would be out of character, so she artfully dressed Gandolfini in solid tones of greys, browns, blacks, and tans, and in diamond and striped patterns. The fabric was of good quality and the color tones were elegant, lending him urbanity while the simple, polished lines sexualized his bulk. Though it might be considered a trick Look, Polsca set new styles.[17]

1.1. Moss Mabry cleverly juxtaposed the delicate garments of the middle-aged women who signify vulnerable life against the brainwashed, deadened soldiers' dark, heavy combat uniforms in a recurring nightmare in *The Manchurian Candidate*. *Courtesy of Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store.*

The beautiful Grace Kelly, in her Academy Award–winning performance in *The Country Girl* (1954), had to play against type as a dowdy, downtrodden woman married to an older, alcoholic man. In charge of Paramount's Costume Department at the time, Edith Head dressed her in loose, high-collared white blouses, long A-line skirts with little emphasis on her waistline, and flat shoes. Her shapely body was disguised and her character made to seem stifled. In the 1939 romantic comedy, *Ninotchka,* about a Russian commissar, played by Greta Garbo, who comes to Paris and gradually succumbs to the joys of western decadence, the costume fabrics as well as the costume designs revealed her route from disciplinarian to lover. Adrian dressed her for the entrance scene in a stiff wool suit, cut close to her body and tightly buttoned, but, as the film progressed, each time her garment changed, he softened the fabric, until finally she was dancing in an off-the-shoulder chiffon gown.

Costume designer Moss Mabry also used fabric to subliminally underlie the 1962 Cold War thriller, *The Manchurian Candidate,* a film about brainwashed American POWs from the Korean War. A key motif appears in a recurring nightmare where soldiers sit among middle-aged, well-dressed women at a ladies' suburban garden party and the dream women slowly are revealed to be Communist officials watching the POWs commit murder as a test. The dream's atmosphere is both gentle and sardonic. The soldiers are polite, almost bored. When, on command, a soldier, in a detached state, strangles his friend, nothing changes, and the soldiers show no emotion.

Throughout, the camera pans across the women's heads and shoulders and, though they all wear hats, it is their décolletage that stands out. The dresses are made of flowered or patterned silk or cotton, with modest but revealing scoop or V-neck collars (some plain, some flounced). Most of the women wear sparkling, at times gaudy, but tasteful necklaces. Through such details, the audience is unconsciously drawn to their throats. The vulnerable throat (the place where the soldier is killed) stands in for the naturalness that the brainwashed soldiers have suppressed. When the dream portrays the men as apathetic and cold, the talkative, delicately dressed women evoke, in the viewer, what the dream does not reveal—the soldiers' humanity.

A single outfit can also speak volumes. One of cinema's most iconic and most shrewd is Lucinda Ballard's costume for Marlon Brando in the 1951 film based on the 1947 play, *A Streetcar Named Desire,* about two sisters in working-class New Orleans—one married to, and desperately in love with, a crude, stunning, virile man played by Brando, and the other, unmarried, who is trying to hide her sexual past. Sex, and its compulsions, is one of the narrative's driving forces. As such, it played a major role in the costumes.

Ballard dressed Brando in an undershirt and trousers. Figure 1.2 shows a studio shot of Brando, as Stanley, in the costume he wears through some of the film's opening scenes. Casting Brando as Stanley is an obvious choice. His effortless, irresistible, insouciant sexiness is obvious in his pose, but a close look shows that many devices also promote it.

Brando wears an ordinary undershirt and belted trousers, but the clothes are not haphazard. Ballard created this outfit to *seem* as if his clothes are filthy from work, wrinkled from the sweltering New Orleans' heat, and clinging to Brando's flesh. The clothes are so plausible, it's as if he lives in them. But they just have been lifted from a wardrobe rack and, to complicate the job further, since Brando wears these clothes in many scenes, more than one set, exactly alike, would have had to be made.

Though this type of Look had been seen in French and American 1930s films and in the 1940s wartime male, Brando's fame raised it to new heights and it is likely that Ballard took care to perfect the overall eroticism.[18] The undershirt is fairly tight. The sleeves hug the round shoulders and Ballard would have sewn them into caps to snugly fit Brando's muscles, placed the seams to flatter his neck and shoulders, and cut the sleeves to do the same, giving him the most compelling lines possible. The sweat is necessary to the narrative, but where it is placed and how it appears are costume design choices. This sweat enhances Brando's shape. The dark, seemingly wet (though it is oil), stain sits in the middle of his chest, revealing its muscular curves and so making his body accessible and real. The armpit creases are placed so that their V-lines visibly show how active Brando is and how strong. The undershirt's wrinkles cross his tapering body, outlining his contours as if hand drawn, taking our eyes with them, one long fold rolling straight into the front of his pants. His shirt and trousers would have been beaten, washed, or worn to make them appear used, and the edges of the pants' pockets pulled on to give the impression that he would hook his thumbs there often. The fabric is not denim but something softer, hanging off his hips to underscore his build.

As real as this looks, the purpose of the costume is not realism. It is, as Landis argues, to tell a story and, in this case, to make Brando look like a working class stud, his character and key to the plot's progress. Without his sexiness (for his attractiveness is the critical difference between the two sisters) the story fails. Ballard could have dressed Brando in heavier,

1.2. Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire* smolders in a carefully constructed costume of an undershirt and belted trousers.
Courtesy of Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store.

baggier pants and a squarer shirt that was dirty to the point of repulsion. But she revamps the semi-dressed 1930s and '40s male persona enough to anticipate a late '50s style. This is an amazing feat—balancing realism, eroticism, and period accuracy (the postwar '40s) with an appeal to the vanguard (1950s audience).

On top of displaying this level of dexterity, psychological awareness, and historical knowledge, and on top of dealing with all the cinematic constraints (lighting, plot, body, etc.), and on top of (sometimes) having to make ugly costumes, costume designers must, just as Juliet Polsca did, satisfy the public's "monstrous" need for "beauty and romance" as Nathaniel West described a fan's hunger in his novella about Hollywood, *The Day of the Locust.*[19] No matter what, costume designers have to fascinate their audience—and satisfy them.

This is a display of talent that leaves couture, for all its qualities, behind. But who *knows* these costume designers' names? Or the name of William Travilla, whose white, halter-top, pleated dress for Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) is perhaps cinema's most famed garment; or Theadora van Runkle, whose *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) costumes launched major trends in the '60s and '70s; or Patrizia Von Brandenstein, whose off-the-rack white three-piece suit for John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) is recognized (and copied) worldwide; or Eiko Ishioka, once a designer of fabrics for Issey Miyake, whose exquisite, extreme costumes for *Mishima* (1985), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1991), and *The Cell* (2000) are legendary?

These names represent some of the extraordinary trendsetters in the history of costume design. But Clare West[20] and Adrian are in a category of their own. It was their marvelous imaginations that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, helped to place a recognized American design ideal on the map. However, this took time. At its inception, the U.S. film world still looked to Europe for artistic leads and for a glamorous cinema Look from Europe's *haute couture* but, by the mid- to late teens, this dependence fizzled and a well-financed tradition of in-studio American costume design began.[21]

In 1911, the year of his famous Orientalist "A Thousand and Second Night" party, Paul Poiret ruled world couture with his hobble skirts, huge sleeves, and fluid, unrestricting, non-waisted gowns. He costumed Sarah

Bernhardt in the French 1912 film *Queen Elizabeth,* dressing her against Tudor type in draped, loose, beaded dresses that made her sixty-eight-year-old body appear chic. Adolf Zukor helped fund the film when its French production company, L' Histrionic Film, collapsed, and distributed it in the U.S., after he established his company Famous Players. The film's great success spurred more American producers to bring the clout of refined European "art" to their domestic pictures. They imported top couturiers such as Poiret and Erté and designers such as George Barbier, Paul Iribe, and Joseph Urban to Hollywood. But these artists lasted a short time, typically only months, as the rigors and demands of costume design (so different from those of couture) were too much to handle and not their provenance.[22]

It was in this transitional period that the great talent of Clare West arose and with it the origins of the Costume Design department as it is known today. The silent period did not credit costume design on screen, so facts are hard to substantiate. Making the task harder still, many studio records were disposed of in the 1950s. Very little is known now about West and her name is forgotten, but it's thought that she worked on D. W. Griffth's *Birth of a Nation* (1912) and it's certain that West costumed much of his *Intolerance* (1916).[23] She spent two years trying to coordinate historical details on this immense project, which spanned many centuries, and was also the first film to dress extras. Before *Intolerance,* the Costume Design department was known only as "wardrobe" and actors often wore their own clothes, or costumes were rented or thrown together.[24] With this film, West was awarded the credit of "Studio Designer" at Griffith's Triangle Studios,[25] an unprecedented official title. Her influence was already in play when *Photoplay* declared that *Intolerance*'s costumes swayed current fashion.[26] And this was just the beginning of her remarkable hard work. She worked on at least ten Cecil B. DeMille blockbusters, designing for settings from the Bible to prehistory to life among the modern, ultra-chic, 1920s smart set. She was lauded both for accuracy and for incredible contemporary styling. DeMille was canny enough to understand that what the producers were looking for in their European "art" experiments could be found in *extravagance.* "I want clothes that will make people gasp when they see them. Don't design anything that anyone could buy in a store," he told

her. He loved what he called "her lavish hand." DeMille hired West in 1918 to oversee costumes at Famous Players-Lasky, the foremost studio at that time, because he knew her genius could "make people gasp."[27] It did.

Christian Esquevin, in his Adrian biography, locates the era of Hollywood's greatest pressure on France in the late '20s when, he argues, a form-fitting gown showing a womanly shape began to glide across the silver screen, simply obliterating Poiret's boyish, cloaked, semi-asexual figure.[28] But this pressure began even earlier with West's talent, with her popularity and the publicity that her work garnered. Her reputation grew more public as her outré, sexy gowns, barely clinging to the bodies of the superstars of her era—Gloria Swanson, Bebe Daniels, and the Talmadge sisters—appeared on screen, in the fan magazines, and on the backs of screen goddesses at parties. Her fabulous outfits included the patent leather swimsuit in *Saturday Night* (1922) and the octopus dress and cape seen in *The Affairs of Anatol* (1921) (which may be considered a forerunner of Adrian's infamous Zeppelin Ball gown in *Madam Satan* [1930]). These and many other creations made West famous. She devised personal clothes for special star clients (as did many costume designers after her, including Adrian, Howard Greer, Irene, and, later, Patricia Field; they also opened retail salons). Her opinion counted and she was the first to champion American fashion over European. In 1923, *Screen News* quoted West's belief, after a trip to Europe, that U.S. motion picture costumes trumped Paris designs and led the couture world.[29] Less than a decade later, Adrian voiced this same conviction and ratified it in his line of fashion "firsts."

These forceful talents and forceful voices were persuasive, but economic failures and political struggle also slowed Europe's couture lead. By 1915, World War I prevented most French imports from reaching the U.S., and this meant that "American-made" clothing gained prominence and even cachet (campaigns urging buyers to "Buy American" were not uncommon).[30] In the 1910s, many European films enjoyed big U.S. audiences, but by the '20s, as studios, especially Famous Players-Lasky, had

1.3A. The bold Babylonian costumes Clare West designed for *Intolerance* influenced fashion trends. *Courtesy of Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store.*

taken corporate control of the industry and of distribution, European films lost favor and were denigrated as old-fashioned or perversely arty. The fashion trades still were under French hegemony, but American cinema costume design, crazy as it could be, began to beat Parisian fashion at its own game because it had the widest public: the wide-eyed moviegoer. In the '30s, seventy-five million Americans went to the movies weekly, but only a few read the couture magazines.[31]

By this time, the prolific Adrian (designing for over ten films a year) was on his way to becoming the true luminary of the American Look, responsible for more fashion firsts than any other U.S. designer in fashion or in film. He advocated simplicity but he also inventively took that quality to new extremes. He perfected a "V-line" silhouette, which enhanced a trim female figure with elegant, hard lines. He used collarless necklines, tie fasteners, slashes, straps that were only decorative, asymmetrical pockets, and asymmetrical balances between large features and small features. His inner work, such as stitching techniques, could be unique and problem-solving. He was daring in mixing textiles and daring in experimenting with complex tailoring, seeing how far he could take a clean line without making it complicated. These are only a few of his hallmarks.

Oleg Cassini, a costume designer and Jacqueline Kennedy's stylist, cited Adrian as "perhaps the only member of our profession powerful enough to impose his taste on a director."[32] Adrian was able to stride both worlds as no one else, and he was direct in his intentions, stating in 1931, "[w]hat I am trying to create for the screen are ultra modern clothes which will be adaptable for the street."[33] By the 1930s he became a household name and, like West, had an opinion that counted.

In 1932, Adrian changed the garment industry forever when he converted a cinema costume into a ready-to-wear retail dress. With this feat, he became a triumphant force in both the fabric and the clothing trades, major economies of the time. Adrian's ruffled white organdy gown for Joan Crawford in *Letty Lynton* (1932) was the first cinema costume to be mass-marketed and was described by Edith Head as the single most

1.3B. Clare West's famous stark, outré, and elegant Octopus cape for *The Affairs of Anatol*. *Courtesy of Photofest.*

important fashion influence in film history.[34] This is hardly an exaggeration. The dress became an overnight craze. One Macy's outlet bragged of selling five hundred thousand copies. Whether true or not, the boast indicates the dress's fame. When Adrian began to market his *Letty Lynton* dress, he entered into a swirling maelstrom of radical transformations in the fashion world.

In the 1930s, Paris and New York had been struggling for decades over ready-to-wear, which had eclipsed handmade clothes (previously worn by all parts of the population). Ready-to-wear had been a slowly growing segment of the French industry since the late 1800s, when small dressmaking workrooms, often run by women, and the rich salons for exclusive clients, grouped into larger conglomerates. Men took over the management of these new workrooms. Labor was forced into many strikes. In 1925, though the garment industry (especially *haute couture* patterns and the rights to them, as well as ready-to-wear clothing) was still France's second largest exporter, it was weakening. By the late '20s, ready-to-wear had stormed the U.S. fashion world and was considered a successful base for couturiers such as Hattie Carnegie and Omar Kiam, who were touted in American *Vogue* as creators of "a mode that is definitely American."[35] By the 1930s, France's export–import trade, the basic bread and butter of its garment world, and its ready-to-wear market had been drastically changed by the strikes and the war, and its global reach had diminished.

While an American Look and the ascendance of ready-to-wear clothing were already in the making, it was Adrian's move that definitively brought film and its costume design to a new kind of commercial marketing. By seizing this advantage, he changed the course of the American sense of Americanness forever, sealing a fantastically productive bond between basic artisan crafts like costume design and filmmaking with an economic boom that jettisoned the U.S. from Europe's hold. He was part of the early foundations of a rapidly developing American identity. He adamantly defended an American Look that still exists today with all the Adrian earmarks—clean tailoring, practical elegance with an original and extravagant use of fabric, and an urban sophistication that speaks of a woman on the move. He described this as "the natural kind of American grace for which I strive."[36] These traits were further developed

as identifiably American over the decades in the work of designers like Claire McCardell, Bonnie Cashin, James Galanos, Halston, Bill Blass, and Calvin Klein.

No designer is isolated. Some of these design motifs also appeared in Chanel, Schiaparelli, and in the *fashionista zeitgeist* of the early century, but Adrian more than anyone diversified and unified these ideas with an American style in mind. He and West, both film costume designers, saw the grace in the American Look long before Americanism and its culture became acceptable internationally. Remarkably, though still an underappreciated profession, the qualities of film costume design—strange mixtures of *declassé, classé,* wild style, artisanship, and economic and artistic constraints—are part of the roots of American individuation.

NOTES

1. Richard Martin, *Charles James,* 6–7. Martin argues that James's heavy, highly engineered dresses conveyed an eroticism and empowerment unlike any other in the '40s and '50s and that this anomaly was James's greatest achievement.

2. Christian Esquevin, *Adrian,* 36. Though the question of who invented the woman's shoulder pad silhouette, and when, has been much debated, Esquevin places the debut of Adrian's shoulder pad in 1928 and Schiaperelli's and others' in 1931.

3. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life,* 13. In the 1860 essay, *The Painter of Modern Life,* Baudelaire extols the "ephemeral" and "contingent" found in fashion as the real measure of modernity, in part because the vogues of what people wear embody living in modern time and so are the most representative of it.

4. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson, "Introduction," 2.

5. Francesca Miglietti, *Fashion Statements,* 15.

6. Christopher Breward, *Fashion,* 9.

7. Mira Leihm, *The Most Important Art,* 34. V. I. Lenin in conversation with A. V. Lunacharsky in 1922 said, ". . . film, of all the arts, is the most important. . . ."

8. Jane Mulvagh, *Vogue History of Twentieth Century Fashion,* 123.

9. Hattie Carnegie fostered the great couturiers James Galanos, Claire McCardell, Norman Norell, and Pauline Trigère as well as the great costume designers Travis Banton, Howard Greer, and Jean-Louis.

10. Paul Poiret, *King of Fashion,* 154. Conversely, French couturiers also had trans-Atlantic complaints. Poiret, years before, complained that couture clothes were bastardized by "intermediaries" between the continents who were only interested in what they could sell. He maintained that Americans "were condemned to see nothing of the true Parisian mode except what is without personality, without significance. . . ."

11. Esquevin, 19.

12. NPR Radio, *All Things Considered,* September 10, 2009. In response

to reporter Richard Harris's quoting Elizabeth Barber as saying that "woven clothing developed not so much for comfort as for fashion, especially important fashion," Barber answers, "It's not until you start to get haves and have-nots that people start differentiating themselves by, look what I'm wearing as opposed to what you're wearing or not wearing."

13. Valerie Steele, *Fifty Years of Fashion,* 3.

14. Deborah Landis, *Screencraft,* 7. Many other costume designers describe their profession in this way.

15. Mary Ellen Harrington, *Fifty Designers/ Fifty Costumes,* 26. Interview with Ruth Carter.

16. Landis, 84.

17. After another designer briefly worked on three episodes, the actors demanded that Polsca return, believing their roles were inextricably tied with the costumes and the Look that she created for them. She completed the entire series, seventy-three episodes. (Interview with Juliet Polsca by the author.)

18. In conversation with the author, costume designers Rita Ryack (Academy Award nominee) and Carol Oditz confirmed that Ballard would approach the costume in this manner.

19. Nathaniel West, *Miss Lonelyhearts and Day of the Locust,* 4.

20. Susan Prichard, *Film Costume,* 247. West's first name is variously spelled Clair, Claire or Clare. Pritchard claims that "Clare" is correct.

21. By the 1920s, the budgets for costume design could be enormous. In 1922, West spent $100,000 on furs for one actress in *Manslaughter* (Prichard, 304).

22. One exception is Paul Iribe, graphic artist and designer of theater sets, furniture and more, who had worked for Poiret and Jeanne Paquin. He designed for a number of American films, either solely or in collaboration with other costume designers. He and West worked on *The Affairs of Anatol, Adam's Rib, Manslaughter,* and *The Golden Bed.* But, it is difficult to separate out a single costume designer's silent era work in these kind of collaborations. Each costume designer could make outfits for specific actors or work on specific scenes (vignettes were popular in this era) or one could be responsible for the film overall while another costume designer created for a single actor. Costume designers did not necessarily work together. Many sources still conflict over accreditation. In histories written after the silent era, the names of the men in such collaborations, such as Iribe or Mitchell Leisen, have typically been favored over those of the women, such as West or Natacha Rambova. But it's not always the case. Also, many excellent talents came from France to make careers in Hollywood, and some stayed permanently, including Jean-Louis, known as the French Adrian, and René Hubert. (Madeleine Delpierre et al., *French Elegance in the Cinema,* 45–79.)

23. Prichard, 154. Griffith is known to have conceived some of the costume design.

24. David Chierichetti, *Hollywood Costume Design,* 8.

25. This was such an important achievement that nine years later, in 1925, *Motion Picture* still noted it (Prichard, 109).

26. Lillian Howard, "Back to Babylon for New Fashions," 39–40. West's Babylonian costumes were influential.

27. Cecil B. DeMille, *The Autobiography of Cecil B. DeMille,* 261.

28. Esquevin, 22.

29. Prichard summarizes two newspaper articles from the time. "Say Europe's Designers Using Our Film Ideals," *Screen News* 2, no. 10 (March 10, 1920): 14. "Once Paris . . . Now Los Angeles," *Grauman's Magazine* 5, no. 36 (September 24, 1922). (Both Prichard, 304.)

30. Mulvagh, 33.

31. Robert McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression,* 576.

32. Oleg Cassini, *In My Own Fashion,* 107.

33. Esquevin, 33.

34. Ibid., 17.

35. Mulvagh, 85–86.

36. Esquevin, 35.

WORKS CITED

Barber, E. J. W. *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in Neolithic and Bronze Ages.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays.* Trans. Jonathan Mayne. New York: Da Capo, 1964.

Baudot, François. *Poiret.* New York: Assouline Publishing, 2003.

Breward, Christopher. *Fashion.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Bruzzi, Stella, and Pamela Church Gibson. "Introduction." In *Fashion Cultures Theories, Explorations and Analysis,* ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson. London, New York: Routledge, 2000.

Calhoun, Dorothy. "Styles Are Dictated in Hollywood and Paris Designers Follow Them." *Motion Picture* 29 (March 1925): 116–117.

Cassini, Oleg. *In My Own Fashion.* New York: Pocket Books, 1987.

Chierichetti, David. *Hollywood Costume Design.* New York: Harmony Books, 1976.

Delpierre, Madeleine, Marainne de Fleury, and Dominique Lebrun. *French Elegance in the Cinema.* Paris: Musée de la Mode et du Costume Palais Galliera, 1988.

DeMille, Cecil B. *The Autobiography of Cecil B. DeMille.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959.

Esquevin, Christian. *Adrian: Silver Screen to Custom Label.* New York: Monacelli Press, 2008.

Green, Nancy L. *Ready-to-Wear, Ready-To-Work, A Century of Industry and Immigrants in Paris and New York.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997.

Gutner, Howard. *Gowns By Adrian: The MGM Years 1928–1941.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001.

Harrington, Mary Ellen, ed. *Fifty Designers/ Fifty Costumes: Concept to Character.* Los Angeles: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2004.

Howard, Lillian. "Back to Babylon for New Fashions." *Photoplay* 11, no. 5 (April 1917).

Kaplan, Joel, and Shelia Stowell. *Theatre and Fashion: Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Landis, Deborah Nandoolman. *Screencraft: Costume Design.* Burlington, Mass.: Focal Press, 2003.

Leach, William. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture.* New York: Pantheon, 2003

Leese, Elizabeth. *Costume Design in the Movies.* New York: Dover, 1991.

Liehm, Mira, and Antonin Liehm. *The Most Important Art: Soviet and East European Film After 1945.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Martin, Richard. *Charles James.* New York: Assouline, 2006 [reprint:

London: Thames and Hudson, 1977].
McElvaine, Robert S., ed. *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression*. Vol. 2. New York: Thompson-Gale, 2004.
Miglietti, Francesca Alfano. *Fashion Statements: Interviews with Fashion Designers*. Milan: Skira, 2006.
Mulvagh, Jane. *Vogue History of Twentieth Century Fashion*. London: Bloomsbury Books, 1988.
Poiret, Paul. *King of Fashion: The Autobiography of Paul Poiret*. London: V&A Publishing, 2009. Reprint 1931.
Prichard, Susan Perez. *Film Costume An Annotated Bibliography*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1981.
Scheier, Sandy. *Hollywood Dressed and Undressed: A Century of Cinema Style*. New York: Rizzoli, 1998.
Steele, Valerie. *Fifty Years of Fashion*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000.
———. *Paris Fashion A Cultural History*. Oxford, New York: Berg, 1988.
West, Nathaniel. *Miss Lonelyhearts and Day of the Locust*. New York: New Directions, 1962 [1933].

FILMOGRAPHY

Adam's Rib. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Costumes, Clare West, Paul Iribe. Famous Players-Lasky, 1923.
Affairs of Anatol. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Costumes, Clare West, Paul Iribe. Famous Players-Lasky, 1921.
Birth of a Nation. Dir. D. W. Griffith. Costumes, Clare West. David W. Griffith Corp, 1912.
Bonnie and Clyde. Dir. Arthur Penn. Costumes, Theadora Van Runkle. Tatira-Hiller Productions, 1967.
Bram Stoker's Dracula. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Costumes, Eiko Ishioka, American Zoetrope. 1992.
The Cell. Dir. Tarsem Singh. Costumes, Eiko Ishioka, Avery Pix. 2000.
The Country Girl. Dir. George Seaton. Costumes, Edith Head, Paramount. 1954.
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. Dir. Howard Hawkes. Costumes, William Travilla. 20th Century Fox, 1953.
Gilda. Dir. Charles Vidor. Costumes, Jean-Louis. Columbia, 1946.
The Golden Bed. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Costumes, Clare West, Paul Iribe. Famous Players-Lasky, 1925.
Intolerance. Dir. D. W. Griffith. Costumes, Clare West. Triangle Corp, 1916.
Letty Lynton. Dir. Clarence Brown. Costumes, Adrian. MGM, 1932.
Ludwig. Dir. Luchino Visconti. Costumes, Piero Tosi. Mega Film, 1973.
Madam Satan. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Costumes, Adrian. MGM, 1930.
The Manchurian Candidate. Dir. John Frankenheimer. Costumes, Moss Mabry. M.C. Productions, 1962.
Manslaughter. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Costumes, Clare West, Paul Iribe. Paramount, 1930.
Matrix Reloaded. Dir. Andy and Larry Wachowski. Costumes, Kym Barrett. Warner Brothers, 2003.
Mishima. Dir. Paul Schrader. Costumes, Eiko Ishioka. American Zoetrope, 1985.
Ninotchka. Dir. Ernest Lubitsch. Costumes, Adrian. MGM, 1939.
A Place in the Sun. Dir. George Stevens. Costumes, Edith Head. Paramount, 1951.
Queen Elizabeth. Dir. Henri Desfontaines, Louis Mercanton. Costumes, Paul Poiret. L' Histrionic Film, 1912.

Saturday Night. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Costumes, Clare West. Famous Players-Lasky, 1922.
Saturday Night Fever. Dir. John Badham. Costumes, Patrizia Von Brandenstein. Robert Stigwood Organization, 1977.
The Secret World of Haute Couture. Dir. Margery Kinmoth. BBC, 2007.
The Seven Year Itch. Dir. Billy Wilder. Costume Designs, William Travilla. 20th Century Fox, 1955.
Shaft. Dir. John Singleton. Costumes, Ruth Carter. MFP Shaft Productions, 2000.
A Streetcar Named Desire. Dir. Elia Kazan. Costumes, Lucinda Ballard. Warner Brothers, 1951.

TWO

What to Wear in a Vampire Film

MARY ANN CAWS

Nothing is more fashionable than the enduring and recurring rituals of fashion. The very fashioning of film itself brings the mind into a heightened ritualistic state. For each genre has a stock tradition out of which the ritual is enacted in film after film. The anticipation of the ceremony rests upon a certain degree of visual sameness that allows us to recognize how the specific example plays into and with or against the fashion that has been built up by tradition over the years.

Now, I am particularly interested by the fashion of the vampire film, about which Michael Wood's column in the *London Review of Books* of May 14, 2009, remarks (in this case, about the recent *Let the Right One In*): "Vampires seem to be making a comeback these days and not just at night and from the grave."[1] On July 1, 2009, we read lots about the vamped-up excitement in a *New York Times* article cleverly called "A Trend With Teeth," written by Ruth La Ferla (and what a great name for the topic!): "Rarely have monsters looked so sultry—or so camera-ready. No small part of this latest vampire mania seems to stem from the ethereal cool and youthful sexiness with which the demons are portrayed. Bela Lugosi they are not."[2] True, but sometimes I wish they were: shows my old-time nature. Sex is nice, and youth is lovely, but Bela Lugosi's costume, ah . . .

Now, that's something to sink your spectator's teeth into.

Some of the best minds in cinema and fashion are involved in these films, as has always been the case. The ritual of the vampire film has its

own rules, and the audience delights in it, as do, in appearance at least, the actors, and very certainly the designers. What the perpetrator of the blood-enjoying act wears and what his or her victim wears is a topic worth dwelling on, as it is an act they are always specially dressed up for. The act is a ritual, even, not to shy away from its quasi-religious overtones, a sacrament. How one dresses the celebrants of that sacrament, sacrificer and sacrificed, is key, for every aspect of appearance points toward the ritual of blood to be accomplished. The point is of the ritual all wrapped up in the custom and costume of the scene; every word brings its own weight with it, as does every item of clothing. The audience has to anticipate the action, and to recognize well beforehand who is the villain and who the victim. In the case of the victim, cinematic portrayal is of course a matter of setting innocence against criminality, naïveté against cunning. The spectacle of the feast has to start with the spilling of a bit of the victim's blood—usually with a scratch or a tiny slash—which lets the vampire reveal the excitement of the red color, the true background for the eroticism so closely entwined with vampirism. In these films, the villain is in fact the hero or heroine: such a criminal, generally dressed in at least semi-erotic garb, has to be (and to want to be) hated and, therefore, according to the code, beloved. And audience recognition of the roles to be played out has to be instant. Thus the central importance of the costume. Everything is high and on a high: spectacle is all.

This is true even when—or perhaps more when—the spectacle is wrapped up. Best of all the costumes of this type is the long black cloak that wraps up even as it reveals the character underneath, which is familiar to us from the iconic *Dracula,* Tod Browning's masterpiece of 1931. The great Count Dracula, Bela Lugosi, comes so majestically down the stairs, his pace matching the length of the intensely black cloak: slow and heavy, *something fearful impending.* Things have to move slowly for the proper solemnity of the ritual. And the very idea of the cloak suggests disguise, the cloaking of the fearful fact of our excitement at the blood-sucking, the drawing out of energy from victim to vampire. Ever after, the long black cloak has signified vampiredom, the evil empire of night. It is a glamorous version of the cape, which was common in the Europe of the Middle Ages and then returned to fashion in the nineteenth century,

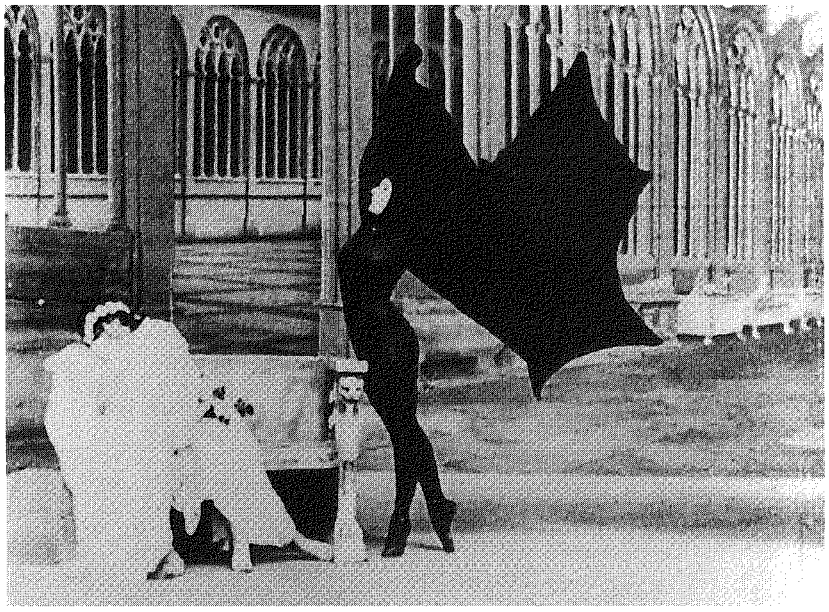
so the cape-turned-cloak reminds us of Count Dracula's fabled long life as well as his fashion appeal.

The human who can defeat a vampire is rare, and so also specially marked. Only daylight, or a stake in the heart, or a cross can undo that cloaked empire, as Buffy and every other vampire slayer will come to know. Buffy, the modern teenage version of the One Who Spells Death to the Vampire (1997–2003), most famously appears in early seasons dressed in a miniskirt and black boots with perhaps a white two-piece cotton top or a bright-blue jacket, signifying purity and, of course, the color of the sky in daytime, the contrary of the dark night-colored cloak. The brevity of her skirt creates a contrast with the dragging length of the traditional vampiric cloak, as white does with black. Bela Lugosi's garment has, of course, in its and his superb elegance, both colors: the black wing collar of his cloak rises up high on the back of his neck, while his very white vest with its perfect bowtie and V-shaped front, with the cutaway panels at the waist, match the small V-shape of his dark pocket handkerchief. Nothing is unplanned in this image, nor in the way the tails of the cloak rise to suggest bat wings when he shrinks away backwards from the cross Van Helsing shows him. Nor is Buffy's miniskirted, high-booted costume unplanned: each is perfect in its contemporary elegance. We could take these two figures as the ur-figures of the vampire film.

Even before Lugosi, in France, Louis Feuillade's serial *Les Vampires* (1915) was an instant and long-lasting hit. In it we can already see visual icons that become classic: the preening stance of the vampire with front protruding, and the visible bat wings, both alluring and frightening. Here the fabled Musidora as Irma Vep, wearing a tight black bodysuit and mask with holes for the eyes, vamped her way over the screen, making the film an instant cult favorite. Vampires are never timid. Audiences, past and present, long for the fear instilled by the black winged costume.

The hidden violence implied even in the first moment when we see only the costume is what makes vampire films such a raving success, even the recent *Twilight* (2008), which is only watered-down vampire-

2.1. Bela Lugosi as Dracula in Tod Browning's *Dracula*.
Courtesy of Jerry Ohlinger's Movie Material Store.



2.2. Musidora as Irma Vep in *Les Vampires.*
Courtesy of Gaumount/The Kobal Collection.

dom from the point of view of the cognoscenti. Yet, as seen in that film, vampire styles have evolved since *Les Vampires* to convey a diverse array of moods and characterizations. In the deeply creepy and high-fashion film *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (1994), Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise do a dandy act: we see Brad Pitt in a plain black suit with tie; Tom Cruise in blue-green suit spangled with frog closures; Brad Pitt in an orange-brown vest and full blouse. The child vampire they create, Claudia, dresses in opulent adult styles cut down to her diminutive figure, in blues and greens, jewels, laces, and feathered hats. Most engagingly, Lestat, the celebrated vampire played by Tom Cruise, wears a white blouse with puffy sleeves and an elaborate jabot at his neck, fetchingly set off by a black vest, embodying a typical vampiric mixture of effrontery and elegance. At an interview (included on the DVD release), noted vampire author Anne Rice, upon whose book the film was based, appears clothed very *comme il-faut* in her black jacket with contrasting white at the cuffs and neck, the off-white of two strands of pearls, and a

jabot-style blouse. She maintains that at its core the story's appeal is not really all about vampires, but really about us. Her own clothing seems to translate that message into a fashion statement: we could dress like that, right? (Indeed, as a full disclosure: I would LOVE to have a blouse like Lestat's!) Interestingly, here it is the narrator, the one who plans the rituals, in this case Anne Rice, who gets to wear the black and white, offset against the spectacle of the colorful dandy vampires. So she acts as stand-in for us, the spectators, while the guys are the spectacle. These lads are deeply glamorous, but in no way does this film or many others like it give off the scary vibrations of the truly great vampire films.

To capture that vibe, one must think of André Breton in the very early and very great silent film *Nosferatu,* F. W. Murnau's 1922 creation based on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Its celebrated statement, *"Quand ils eurent traversé le pont, les fantômes vinrent à leur rencontre . . ."* ("When they had crossed the bridge, the phantoms came to meet them . . ."), resonates to such an extent that Murnau reproduces it twice.[3] These seem to me, indeed, to be the most resonant words in the whole vocabulary of vampiredom. They echo, they vibrate. Now, that is what the vampire film is supposed to be about. How to dress the actors so that vibration will be conveyed to the audience?

In the original *Nosferatu,* the hunched-over, heavily made-up vampire with the scary eyes wears a high turbaned hat, its soft top curling over like the shape of his long curling fingernails. The shoulders of his long jacket are gathered into the sleeves, and he constantly crouches, as if to fit into the coffin out of which we see him coming and going, scrunching over toward the blood on the victim's finger, slightly cut by the knife as he slices into an innocent morsel of bread. "Blood! Your precious blood!" The astounding hat adds to the scare of the picture, even as it covers, playing the same role as the long black cloak covering Bela Lugosi in *Dracula.* What covers, frightens. Some trace of that feeling remains even when a scene seems humorous to us now: "Is this your wife here?" asks Nosferatu to the husband of the lovely lying-down lady. "What a lovely throat!"

In the opening of a much more recent *Dracula* (1992), directed by Francis Ford Coppola, with Keanu Reeves, Winona Ryder, and Anthony Hopkins, in which Gary Oldman plays the super-dandy vampire, we are

treated to an elegance befitting the tradition and the ritual. In place of the long black cloak, we are offered a delightful vision of vampire London mod style, with top hat, long curls, blue glasses, grey suit with narrow lapels, stickpin (an early sign of bloodletting to come, the aware observer may note) and, naturally, his perfectly fitting black gloves. His is an appearance with which any self-respecting victim would fall in love. Later, in London, he appears with white hair piled high and a long red cloak dripping behind him: "I am the last of my kind." It certainly makes you hope so. His white collar replies to the good guy Keanu Reeves's white collar in the film. Behind him, a shadow is always cast—suggestion turned into statement. Evil casts a long shadow.

In the famous bed scene, Winona as Mina lounges on her bed in her ravishing nightgown—white, of course—and announces how she wishes to get away from this realm of death. You don't know what you are saying, says Oldman, but he is as wrong as he is right. In another wonderful scene, the victim wears heavily eroticized black leather gloves as she caresses the white fur of an animal, the covering of the hands only intensifying the visceral stroking of the fur; the victim has now also adopted the erotic dynamic of covering up. Costuming here emphasizes that vampirism as a style is contagious: the ritual of blood calls for the heavy accent on dress and dressing up.

Mel Brooks's parody of vampiredom, *Dracula: Dead, And Loving It* (1995), one of the most screamingly funny vampire movies ever made, plays to the hilt the classic costume of Mr. Vampire: a black cape, of course, because that is necessary for the transformation into a bat (he hovers on the ceiling, smashes against the window, shrivels up into a bat costume like Clark Kent into Superman, or Batman himself, only backwards). Again we see high-piled white hair—a touch of Old World wisdom signifying an ancient vampire—along with a white jabot and red insert, and again a stickpin: always a very good touch, the stickpin. This parody has it all, with the slow-speaking naïve and innocent Jonathan, the always hungry Renfield snatching at every insect that comes along and ending with the tail of some forlorn beastie protruding from his mouth, the heavily accented vampire specialist brought in for good counsel, and the lovely Mina turned vulgar redmouth with the jagged teeth we long to recognize, her robe turned seductive, her mind to mayhem.

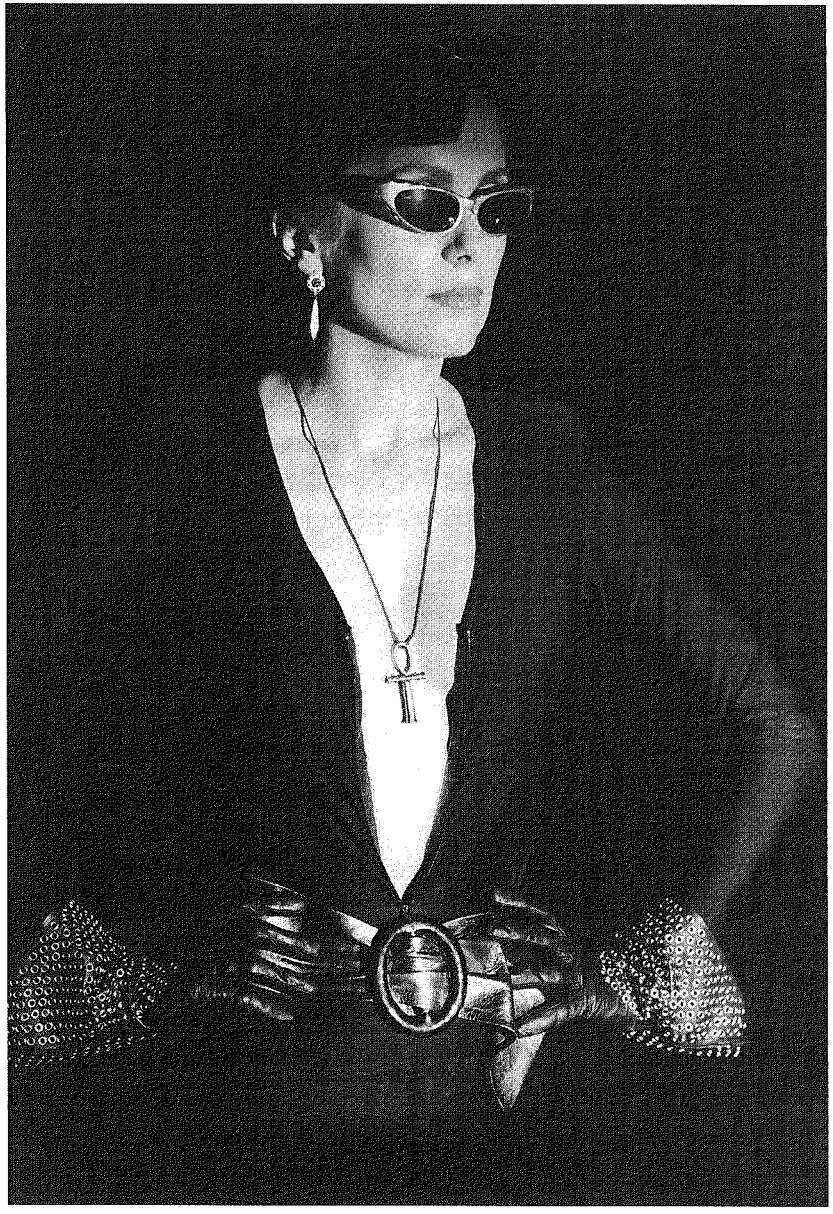
Then there is the entire tradition of the lesbian vampire, a very low form of which is exhibited in *Vampyrs* (1974). While not the most elegant vampire film, it illustrates the allure of vampiredom over and against sunlit humanity very clearly. The couple is perfectly matched: a blonde (who hides behind trees, with the red for DANGER showing on a part of her black outfit) and a darker, more obviously menacing woman. Her role is to stop the cars with male drivers, say to the driver, a true naïf, of course, that her car has broken down, get in with him and manage to get him to the castle, and thence her bedroom, where he is made to absorb endless quantities of red wine. This singularly unsubtle reference to blood also naturally reminds us of the blood of Jesus and the Christian ritual of which vampirism is a depraved variant. The sacrament is always in the mind of the spectator, who is, vicariously, a participant.

In any case, these lesbian vampires are very repetitive in their fashion: they wear various versions of low-cut black garments, most of which are very décolletée (which means, literally, de-necked). These beings in their low necklines are bloodsuckers down to their garments, completely given over to their ghastly and alluring act. After seducing and drinking the seduced man's blood, they hightail it in their long black cloaks—robes and cloaks flow like blood—across a field to the cemetery, where they will find a coffin to sleep in. Or they may be trapped in the castle and so forced to sleep huddled in the cellars, all curled up like two bats. These loving/slaying heroines so interestingly dressed, in and out of the castle, in their black and red garments, are clearly opposed to the drearily dressed couple who appear, normally outfitted, living in a trailer car, thus setting up the contrast of trailer against castle, dull against elegant, unremarkable against remarkable and unusual. Would one not rather be a chic black-caped vampire with lots of black décolleté dresses than a boring, staid, regular old trailer wife? The normal and therefore victimized woman wears boots (no self-respecting vampire would be caught in boots; rather they fit the vampire slayer like Buffy). But she *wants* to be seduced by the strange. So here, as always, it is the well-dressed killers who get to serve and maybe drink the good "Transylvanian wine" (about which vintage no one can guess) and wear the groovy black and red cloaks and hide behind the trees and pounce on the unsuspecting drivers. Who wouldn't opt for that?

But just as the viewer must secretly prefer a fashionable vampire to a drab victim, there is also an undeniable sexiness to the victim's role. John Carpenter's *Vampires* (1998) shows a vampire stretched out on the ceiling like a giant bat, descending in a most erotic fashion onto Cheryl Lee in a very low-cut blue dress. His kiss is planted below her neck, and planted with such vigor that she manifests a delight quite over the top; there's not much difference here between making love and vampire mischief. All vampires seduce, after all, but some do it more quickly than others. Here the act happens in a flash, just as the costumes are more flashy than elegant. Blood from a chalice is served by a cardinal in his robes, stressing the relation between the blood of Christ and the blood served and drunk by the vampire, testing the limits of the profane and the sacred.

For me, the ultimate, ultimate in costume for vampire and victim is to be found displayed in two very great films. First is *The Hunger* (1983), one of the best vampire films of all time, in which David Bowie singing behind a pane of glass sets the initial scene, an incipit in which his fame and his rich elegance of costume work together—seduction already at work behind the glass. But he won't have the last word. As he ages so rapidly, his lover, the chilly Catherine Deneuve in her eternal mature beauty remains her stolidly cool self, marked by the black sunglasses covering her all-seeing blue eyes, her perpetual cigarette showing off her red lips. In one wonderful scene, her extraordinary unnaturalness is highlighted in contrast to some plants that are dying naturally, their yellow against her black. This is elegance personified, drama all the more suggestive for being low-key.

The initial presentation of the vampire is all-powerful. We see her first in her black hat and watch her slow takeoff, before she approaches the piano to play out her seduction, her black earrings dangling from her earlobes, as an ankh dangles between her breasts in her very décolleté black dress. Woof. The ankh, focus of attention, will be the murder weapon.... The music always matches the costume: Lalo here, Schubert there, Vivaldi elsewhere. The supreme Catherine is always supremely tailored: a simple silk blue suit, matching hat, or a Jill Sander–type stark-lined blouse with black slit skirt, mesh stockings, and pearl earrings. For the final sacrifice scene, her short-sleeved black satin robe reveals an inset of ecru satin . . . and the ankh, which will unsheathe a small dagger



2.3. Catherine Deneuve as Miriam in *The Hunger*.
Courtesy of MGM/UA/The Kobal Collection.

to plunge into the neck of Susan Sarandon, the victim, who is immensely attracted to and continually haunted by the supreme elegance of the heroine/villain.

Most amazing in this extraordinary film is the play of veils. A white veil adorns the bride and honeymooner, when all seems to be working out with Catherine and the young David Bowie, who kisses her through those enveloping folds. When aged and dying, he tries to kiss her once more through a veil, a dark one with dots. It won't work, of course: that is what veils are for. Later, the white curtains wave their folds, enveloping the bloodthirsty vampire, and then, mortally, hovering above the victimized Bowie, collapsed in his ancient age, with white doves all about and a sevenfold amen echoing over the many coffins of Catherine's destroyed victims. These veils change to crimson during the bloodsucking scenes and to black in the funereal scene as our vampire plunges, in her black robe, through the iron railings to her end. Black everywhere, skeletons crumbling, high angles registering the doom.

Finally, we have to look at the magnificent Delphine Seyrig in *Les Levres Rouges* (released to English-speaking audiences as *Daughters of Darkness,* 1971), a great cult film. She plays Elizabeth de Bathory, a famous serial killer of young girls in the late sixteenth century, who endures as an immortal vampire into the present of the film. The allure is captured on one of the posters for the film, showing her change from the glamorous fur-ruffed villainess to the seductive murderous aggressor.

The costumes are unforgettable; Delphine Seyrig's always stand out against those of the others—whether her attendant vampire in ordinary black and white, or her victim, Valerie of the long blond hair in a fur coat with a high collar. Seyrig's costumes increase in glamour, from that crucial initial suggestion of violence to the high-powered climax. First, she appears from the rear seat of the black limousine. Just one shiny black boot emerges and then all we see of her face is glossy red lipstick—its effect heightened by the spotlight upon it, and by the golden waves of hair above her long black dress with fur-lined neck. The way her mouth moves, sensual and strange, instantly reminds us of the vampire suck and bite. It quivers all over. . .

Later, in the first encounter between victims and victor, she sits knitting in a knee-length high-collared black dress, with buttons marching

2.4. Delphine Seyrig, John Karlen, and Danielle Ouimet as Countess Bathory, Stefan, and Valerie in *Les Levres Rouges* [*Daughters of Darkness*]. *Courtesy of Photofest.*

from the collar down the left side: a buttoned-up heart all right. Here enter the victims, wet from the outside, Valerie in her gorgeous long fur coat, its collar rising in the back over her long blond hair, and her always suspicious husband, who is less excited about having a hot rum drink in the lounge with the countess and her knitting needles. If we had not already gotten the point, we cannot miss it in the scene where Elizabeth Bathory sits demanding love in a short red satin dress, with neckline plunging in a V-slit under her red collar, and nails a matching red. The contrast with her assistant and love, Ilona, in a short black dress and pristine white collar, says it all, or almost all. Elizabeth, clearly eternal, is danger, red as the blood that will be spilled.

In the last and climactic scene, she wears a sparkling sequined silver dress; she parts the curtains leading into the sacrificial chamber, where the victim's husband now too wears red: a bright bathrobe, preparing him for the final sacrifice. The candles flickering and the general solemnity of the room underscore the ritualistic nature of the end. Valerie, the new bride is wearing a long white dress, and Elizabeth puts a black scarf around her neck to hide the new bite. Everything moves slowly until the dramatic end, with the table overturned and the massive crys-

tal globe placed over the red-robed groom's face, preparing him for the feast. The final shot, as the two vampires hover over the man robed for sacrifice and splayed out flat on the floor between them, might remind us of post-crucifixion paintings (the Deposition of Medardo Rosso, for instance)—the red, white, and silver showing how baroque vampirism can be.

But finally, it is all about the costume, from the black bat's wing cloak to the white or red robes of the ritual: it is all about what the cloth veils, and what it reveals. And how seductive is all this aggression! Listening to a news program the night after I saw the triumphantly elegant *Les Levres Rouges,* I distinctly heard, instead of someone "violating the applicable laws," this totally convincing phrase: "a violation of applicable jaws." Vampirism gets to you. It is a sublime spectacle.

NOTES

1. Michael Wood, "At the Movies."
2. Ruth La Ferla, "A Trend With Teeth," E1(L).
3. André Breton, first in *Les Vases communicants,* discussing it on pp. 36–37, reproduction facing p. 32, and then in *L'Art magique,* discussion p. 281, reproduction p. 280.

WORKS CITED

Breton, André. *L'Art magique.* Pléiade edition, vol. IV. Paris: Gallimard, 2008.

———. *Les Vases communicants.* Paris: Gallimard, 1955.

La Ferla, Ruth. "A Trend With Teeth." *New York Times,* July 2, 2009: E1(L).

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula.* Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1897.

Wood, Michael. "At the Movies." *London Review of Books,* May 14, 2009.

FILMOGRAPHY

Bram Stoker's Dracula. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Costumes, Eiko Ishioka. Columbia Pictures, 1992.

Daughters of Darkness [*Les levres rouges*]. Dir. Harry Kuemel. Costumes, Bernard Perris. Maron Films, 1971.

Dracula. Dir. Tod Browning. Costumes, Ed Ware and Vera West. Universal, 1931.

Dracula: Dead, And Loving It. Dir. Mel Brooks. Costumes, Dodie Shepard. Castle Rock Entertainment, 1995.

The Hunger. Dir. Tony Scott. Costumes, Milena Canonero. MGM Studios, 1983.

Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles. Adapt. by Anne Rice. Dir. Neil Jordan. Costumes, Sandy Powell. Warner Brothers, 1994.

Nosferatu. Dir. F. W. Murnau. Costumes, Albin Grau. 1922. Film Arts Guild, 1929.

Twilight. Dir. Catherine Hardwicke. Costumes, Wendy Chuck. Summit Distribution, 2008.

Vampires. Dir. John Carpenter. Costumes, Michel Robin Bush. Columbia Pictures, 1998.

Vampyres. Dir. José Ramón Larraz. Wardrobe Supervisor, Dulcie Mid

TELEVISION

Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Prod. Joss Whedon. Costumes, Cynthia Bergstrom et al. 20th Century Fox, 1997–2003.

Les Vampires. Dir. Louis Feuillade. Societe des Etablissements L. Gaumont, France, 1915.

THREE

Noir Fashion and Noir *as* Fashion

ULA LUKSZO

The streets are dark and wet, and in the background we see a city skyline. Out from the shadows steps a man in a fedora and trench coat. The audience sits back, aware that it has been transported into the world of film noir. It would be difficult to dispute the fact that the clothes of the noir film—part of the noir Look—are essential to the nostalgia and fascination we associate with these films. Significantly, however, despite the depth and breadth of noir criticism, very little attention has been paid to the semiotics of dress in the noir film. As a concept, movement, or Look, noir has been highly influential in twentieth-century cinema, television, and advertising, yet its costuming has been largely ignored. Given the use of noir as a tool of "cinephilia," as described by James Naremore,[1] we must consider what exactly about the movement or Look of noir lends itself to visual cinephilia as well as to the proliferation of noir pastiche, parody, and imitation that continues well past the classic noir period of the 1940s and '50s. Although many film critics define the Look of noir as relating to techniques of filming (low- and high-angle shots, close-ups, chiaroscuro effect, etc.), few would argue that a fedora and trench coat are any less important or recognizable aspects of the creation of the film noir Look. It is precisely the fact that these elements of dress are overlooked despite their obviousness that makes them conspicuous. In this chapter, I will be examining elements of dress in classic film noir as well as their reinterpretations in retro- and neo-noir films such as *Chinatown* (1974), *Body Heat* (1981), *Miller's Crossing* (1990), and *L.A. Confidential*

(1997), among others. My interests lie in the use of clothing to tell the stories of the characters, how certain elements of dress become symbolic of noir as a whole, and, finally, how noir becomes a kind of "fad" or fashion in and of itself.

One of the reasons for suggesting that noir can be defined by fashion is that film noir was not thought of as a genre during the classic period but only belatedly in subsequent criticism. The term "film noir," coined by film critic Nino Frank in Paris after World War II, was adopted by the French critics *after* many classic noir films of varying plots had already been made, including John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), and Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* (1944). In this sense, the French invented American film noir, for the term was not used in the United States during the war at all.[2] And though we may now think that certain elements of noir are endemic to it, such as the femme fatale, the voice-over narration, flashbacks, a hard-boiled detective, a criminal investigation, or a chiaroscuro visual style, many films of the classic era lack these elements. *Key Largo* (1948) has no femme fatale; neither does *The Big Sleep* (1946); though the title character is initially set up as one in *Gilda* (1946) she is distinguished by being played by a known actress, sharing in the hero's victimization at the hands of the villain, and ultimately by her happy ending.[3] *The Blue Dahlia* (1946) has no voice-over narration and no detective, and *Double Indemnity* is told from the criminal's point of view. In other words, we are dealing with several kinds of film genres within the noir movement: the detective story, the police procedural, the thriller, the crime film, and so forth. Therefore, film noir cannot be considered a genre, as Elizabeth Cowie writes , for it is "at least not a genre in the sense that the term is applied to other cinematic forms such as the western, or the gangster film, which have a specific iconography of objects and milieux as well as a limited set of narrative themes or problematics. . . . [The film noir] has no unique elements, and whilst it has some obligatory elements, notably narrative elements of the suspense mystery or thriller form, it does not have any forbidden elements."[4] Steve Neale, in *Genre and Hollywood,* similarly notes that many elements of the films we might consider noir, such as the femme fatale, can also be found in other Hollywood films from the 1940s.[5] Conversely, though the classic period is considered to extend

until Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* in 1958, 1950s noirs already differentiate themselves from their 1940s forerunners in fashion, characterization, and representations of family. Janey Place suggests that rather than a genre, film noir is best interpreted as a film movement: "Film movements occur in specific historical periods—at times of national stress and focus of energy. They express a consistency of both thematic and formal elements which makes them particularly expressive of those times."[6] Indeed many film critics identify the mood of noir films as expressive of angst, apathy, war-time paranoia, and anxieties about the American man's masculinity during and after World War II. Steve Neale proposes, similarly, "as a concept film noir seeks to homogenize a set of distinct and heterogeneous phenomena; it thus inevitably generates contradictions, exceptions and anomalies and is doomed, in the end, to incoherence. Paradoxically, however, both film noir and neo-noir . . . have, as we shall see, both acquired a much more secure generic status over the past three decades as the term 'noir' itself has become more ubiquitous."[7] I will develop the second half of his argument further in the rest of this chapter.

As a result of the flexibility of this movement, style, or set of conventions, it may appear useless or next to impossible to find patterns in dress and costume in film noir. However, as I have already noted, these films *do* contain common patterns of dress and related signifiers, making noir fashion a significant means of constructing noir into a contemporary genre and a cultural fantasy. As Todd Erickson suggests, the emergence of noir as a distinct genre in the 1980s resulted in recognition among film scholars "that we could understand *film noir* on two distinct planes. First, as an overall cinematic movement which, to some extent, modified most of Hollywood's product during the forties and fifties, and secondly, as a (new) genre that emerged from the overall movement."[8] The early movement, however, was immediately linked to the fashions of the 1940s and '50s, and films of the period were then incorporated into the genre canon after the fact. What has made film noir into a genre since the 1950s is perhaps the simple fact that it is taught and spoken about as one; we now conceive of film noir as a genre regardless of the fact that no one in 1940s Hollywood used the term. The use of the term by scholars and the general public reinforces the perceived reality of noir as a genre, just as its recognizeability reaches a peak in its pastiche form. I argue that the fashions prevalent in the early "noir" movement and the meanings they carry become so overused that they eventually contribute to the recognition and *creation* of noir as a genre. It is therefore worthwhile to look back first on the fashions of the original noir films to see if we may detect any patterns in how this Look was initially crafted out of existing fashions of the time, lending noir its generic status retrospectively.

PART ONE: THE "CLASSIC" NOIR PERIOD, 1941–1958

Because the films we now consider film noir were made in Hollywood studios such as Warner Bros, RKO, and Paramount, they not only had to adhere to the Hayes Production Code of 1934, but they also in many ways reflect certain semiotic conventions of the classic Hollywood style that later became part of the nostalgic quality associated with noir. In particular, the representations of villains and femme fatales become particularly stylized in the film noir, even when there is some improvisation in individual films. Initially, it seems that the styles portrayed in classic noir films are merely reflections of styles popular at the time. Jane Gaines notes that "the motion picture industry in this period . . . represented its product as uplifting entertainment which stood outside time and was never 'dated.' The industry avoided tying in so closely with the woman's fashion trade that it would be required to refer to the seasonal shifts which stimulated the retail clothing business."[9] Though this may be true, a visible shift can be seen in the noir films of the 1940s as compared with those of the '50s, especially in women's hairstyles and men's suits, a reflection of actual changes in styles for men and women. The 1940s men's suit was high-waisted and wide-legged, with the jacket forming the "inverted triangular silhouette—broad shoulders and narrow waist—[that] defined both men's and women's styles" in the '40s.[10] In *Gilda* (1946), Glenn Ford's character Johnny Farrell sports high-waisted trousers and a wide-shouldered jacket; by the time Ford makes *The Big Heat* in 1953, his pants are much narrower and his shoulders much less boxy. It is, perhaps, a logic of small differences, as Gilles Lipovetsky terms it, yet the changes are especially noticeable to a contemporary viewer, for whom the 1940s men's suit appears rather unusual. These

small fashion changes, however, have minimal bearing on the plot of the film or the representation of its characters. In *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), Sam Spade appears to own several fedoras of varying colors and shades, yet these changes in shade (or presumably color, though it is difficult to tell in black and white) of headwear have little to no bearing on his characterization; neither does the fact that he wears variously a double-breasted pinstripe suit or a dark three-piecer. In this era, a three-piece suit sometimes seems to offer a picture of someone a little stuffier or older, but not always. A watch-chain glimmering on a character's bulging stomach might signify wealth—or it might not. The trench coat that we so closely associate with the hard-boiled detective and noir films is most often worn, quite logically, in scenes where it is raining. Thus, it might seem that most clothing choices reflect little more than everyday personal choices. As will become apparent, though, when we look at the costumes in the context of comparing protagonist to antagonists, we find that these films *do* in fact have a code that lets the audience know how to read the main characters via their clothing.

It is essential, of course, in many of these films—such as *The Maltese Falcon, The Glass Key* (1942), or *The Blue Dahlia* (1946)—that the hero be dressed sharply, though within the norms of men's fashion at the time. In most noir films a lack of tie simply means the protagonist is at home, relaxing; he wears his hat outdoors or in hotel lobbies (*The Maltese Falcon*) or grocery stores (*Double Indemnity*). He takes it off in the presence of ladies, but never forgets to take it with him. The fedora, as I will explore further a little later, becomes one of the key expressions of noir-ish-ness in later periods. In the classic period, though, the archetype of the hero in the fedora seems to draw on the 1930s precedent of the well-dressed gangster, while simultaneously cleaning him up for his role as the dispenser of "true justice." The hero of the classic Hollywood noir is for the most part well dressed and well put together, the studios of the day preferring a fantasy of sharp new suits rather than using wardrobe to faithfully reflect the rumpled, gin-soaked Dashiell Hammett or Raymond Chandler protagonists that formed the basis for many noir heroes. Erin A. Smith comments that the "everyman" character and his tough-talking are "allegories about workers' control and autonomy. . . . This places hard-boiled pulp fiction squarely in a time

characterized by intense struggles over who would control the pace and method of production." The literary noir hero is, consequently, "his own man," tough, not fashion-conscious, and utilitarian in his dress.[11] The fantasy of the Hollywood screen version is that these "everyday Joes" wear custom-fitted suits. However, the suit ensemble becomes, more than a fantasy, a signifier when compared to other forms of male dress. The villains' costumes inevitably signify something other than that of the hero, namely wealth, which by extension also signifies greed, vanity, and cruelty. Probably the most well-known example of these qualities in dress can be found in *The Maltese Falcon,* the 1941 film most often credited as being the first true film noir. In *The Maltese Falcon,* Humphrey Bogart wears the standard double-breasted suit with the handkerchief in the breast pocket, often a pinstriped suit that perhaps signifies professionalism. The male villains of the film, played by Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet, appear, respectively, in a black, short-jacketed tuxedo, plaid bowtie, white gloves, and walking stick; and in a velvety jacket and vest with a braid across the stomach, striped pants, and a boutonnière. They, of course, only care about the recovery of the falcon and the riches it will afford them, though it is evident in the film that Greenstreet's character, Mr. Gutman (a faintly Germanic name), is already wealthy.

The motif of the rich and *ethnicized* villain can be seen in many, if not all, noir films. Edward G. Robinson's gangster character in *Key Largo* (1946), Johnny Rocco, appears in a silk bathrobe and smokes a cigar before dressing smartly in a dark suit with a patterned tie and gold tie clip, a dandyism associated with Europe, not America. He is also marked as foreign by his last name. Similarly, the gangsters in *The Big Heat* and *The Blue Dahlia* (both from 1946) are cast as Italian or Italian-American. The Germans in *Gilda* (1946) are almost always dressed in tuxedos with white bowties, and when they go out in the evening, they wear black top hats and capes. *Out of the Past* (1947) portrays Kirk Douglas's villain character initially in a silk dressing gown / smoking jacket while giving orders to Robert Mitchum's Jeff Bailey, who constantly wears a trench coat and fedora. (Significantly, Bailey does not wear the trench coat during the pastoral initial scenes of the film, which take place in a small town in California where he has been hiding from his criminal past, so the coat stands for the past he cannot escape and links him to the world

3.1A,B. Kirk Douglas in *Out of the Past* and Edward G. Robinson in *Key Largo* appear in bathrobes that connote luxury, opulence, and illegally won wealth.

of crime, an element almost always present in noir.) Throughout these films, it becomes evident that characters who flaunt their wealth via tuxedos, walking sticks (Ballin in *Gilda* or Lorre's character Joel Cairo in *Falcon*), top hats, or silk pajamas and dressing gowns must be evil, and are often ethnicized or feminized. Joel Cairo is made out to be a homosexual, while Rocco is an Italian gangster, and Ballin and his associates are even called "Krauts" by Farrell (though no aspersions are cast on his Irishness). Richard Dyer argues that in *Gilda,* "Ballin is . . . fastidiously dressed and mockingly perverse (the standard signs of homosexuality in film noir), as well as elitist, powerful, and cruel."[12] Though Douglas's Whit in *Out of the Past* is not ethnicized, he is most certainly unmanned by a gunshot wound, especially once we find out that it was Kathie Moffat, his girlfriend, who shot him. All of these character traits, however,

appear to play out as a part of classic Hollywood conventions and an ideology that reinforces one's present social class, emphasizing that to aspire to be wealthy is to aspire to be cruel while wasting too much time caring about personal appearance. It is significant that when Johnny Farrell first goes to Ballin's casino in *Gilda,* though he dons the required tie to get in, he refuses cologne—he's a tough guy after all.

In these ways, the noir films accede to the traditional function of costume as explained by Gaines: "In the service of narrative ideas costume is assigned one main function: characterization. In this capacity, costume also works to blend straggling physiological signifiers so that they contribute to character."[13] Similarly, Gaines argues that "at the basic level, musical motif and costume motif alike borrow popular conceptions to locate types. For instance, the wide apron identifies the mammy, the feather boa the floozy, and the turban with bananas, the

Latin American rumba dancer—visual shorthand which depends, like musical typage, on ideological premises lodged in this iconography."[14] In this case, a silk dressing gown lets the audience know this is a wealthy, cruel man and in opposition to him is the tough good guy who wears the trench coat and fedora. Though perhaps these signifiers are not quite as simple or obvious as a turban with bananas, over time they come to fulfill the same function.

Women's clothing in the classic noir period does similar work in setting up the dichotomy between the femme fatale and what Janey Place calls the "nurturing woman." Place argues that "the iconography [of the film noir] is explicitly sexual, and often explicitly violent as well: long hair (blond or dark), make-up, and jewelry. Cigarettes with their wispy trails of smoke . . . and the iconography of violence (primarily guns) is a specific symbol . . . of her 'unnatural' phallic power."[15] I would add to this list any articles of clothing that are conspicuous for their excessive luxury, such as evening gowns, exotic hats, long gloves, high heels, and furs. This last object often signifies a woman of excess, one who is in some way or another dangerous to the male protagonist, such as Kathie Moffat in *Out of the Past,* Gloria Grahame in *The Big Heat,* or Brigid O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon.* Beautiful and luxurious gowns, often body-hugging and strapless, similarly define a woman as "trouble." *Gilda* provides the best example of this. Gilda spends much of the film either in fancy silk dressing gowns or pajamas, or dangerously tight strapless gowns, her extravagant clothing emphasizing how she has sold herself to Ballin for his fortune, flirting and dancing with various men to make Johnny jealous, and in general not being true to her feelings for Johnny. It is significant that at the end of the film, when Gilda is finally penitent (or perhaps she has just been punished too many times by Johnny), she is shown wearing a simple pinstripe skirt suit. In *Out of the Past,* Kathie wears long, flowing gowns or tight, body-hugging dresses while seducing Jeff Bailey. At the end of the film, though, directly before her demise, she shows up at Bailey's wearing a modest, high-collared skirt suit with a nun-like habit over her hair. Even more reserved is Ann Miller, in *Out of the Past.* Jeff Bailey's sweetheart in Bridgeport, California (where Jeff lives his double-life), Ann is coded as a "nurturing woman"; her hair is pulled back in a conservative style and she wears

3.2A. Rita Hayworth, in the titular role of Gilda, in her appearance as the fatal woman on stage, famously attired in a slinky gown with long black gloves.

country clothes: jeans, a button-up collared shirt, and sensible shoes. In *The Big Heat,* Jocelyn Brando, in the character of Ann Bannion, is set up as a homemaker and guardian of hearth and home, with friendly polka dots that contrast with the sensuous gowns and tight dresses Grahame wears as the femme fatale Debby, who is a gangster's girl. As Place explains, this nurturing female is the hero's link to an ideal that serves as an alternative to the dangerous women he is surrounded by, even if that alternative is only a dream, an impossibility. Similarly, the nurturing woman "is linked to the pastoral environment of open spaces, light, and safety."[16] The femme fatales, however, are phallic women whose sexuality is dangerous, even at its most alluring. Their extravagant gowns, like the villains' tuxedos, come to bear the weight of villainy, moral looseness, and emotional turmoil.[17]

In many ways, of course, these clothing and narrative conventions were imposed on the classic noir films by the Hayes Code, which speci-

3.2B. At the end of the film, having given up the life of a kept showgirl, Hayworth's Gilda appears as a "penitent" femme fatale in a demure suit.

fied that crime cannot pay and moral looseness must always be punished. At the same time, as Naremore points out, "[noir films] usually depict nightclubs, café society, and the homes of the extremely rich. By their very nature, they are deeply concerned with sleek clothing styles, and they repeatedly give us women who signify what Laura Mulvey describes as 'to-be-looked-at-ness.'"[18] This desire for luxury becomes part of the paradox of the film noir and the beginnings of a cultural fantasy situated in the noir. This is a fantasy that has to do with the rich getting punished and evil-doers receiving true justice, and the protagonist must dress well while avoiding the kind of concern over appearance that connotes homosexuality. Despite the Hayes Codes, though, the films still manage to give a sense of a degenerate society where nothing is as it seems and everyone is corrupt. As John Cawelti writes of the hard-boiled fiction that much film noir is based on, "the hard-boiled detective encounters a linked series of criminal acts and responsibilities; he discovers not a single guilty individual, but a corrupt society in which wealthy and respectable people are linked with gangsters and crooked politicians."[19] At a time when the thrill of winning the war has been superseded by anxieties regarding jobs, women in the workforce, immigrants, and disillusioned GIs back from the front,[20] the noir takes ascendancy for a while. It allows the audience to enjoy the thriller plots of films like *Double Indemnity* or *Gilda,* while at the same time appreciating the clothing the characters wear and the wealth or security they portray, even if ultimately that wealth is coded negatively. One example of popular interest in the noir characters' wardrobes can be seen in the example of "when RKO's *Murder, My Sweet* was released in 1945, [and] it prompted the *Hollywood Citizen News* to run a long article entitled 'It's Murder, but Gowns Are Sweet,' by fashion correspondent Florabel Muir, who spends two full columns lovingly describing the costumes worn by Claire Trevor."[21] Thus, the film noir relies on both the visual pleasure that resides in the costuming and the lighting of the film, and the emotional pleasure of seeing criminals punished and tough protagonists either dispensing "true justice," as Bogart's Sam Spade does in *The Maltese Falcon,* or succumbing to their transgressions, like Fred McMurray's Walter Neff does in *Double Indemnity.*

In fact, I would argue that these films, as varied as they are in plot and portrayals of male protagonists and their female antagonists, converge on the point of fashion. The visual pleasure of the films lies precisely in the gowns and costumes of designers such as Orry-Kelly (*Maltese Falcon*), Edith Head (*Glass Key, Blue Dahlia, Double Indemnity*), and Jean Louis (*Gilda, The Big Heat*). Though many film noirs may have originally been thought of (and some are still considered) as B movies, it is evident that studios recognized their appeal to their audiences and had no scruples about using some of their best designers to create costumes for them. In this way, the fashions of noir and noir's association with the classic Hollywood era; the glamour of stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Alan Ladd, Veronica Lake, Rita Hayworth, and Lauren Bacall; the unique lighting; and the gritty plot lines of its films, together created a powerful cultural memory. Though forgotten for nearly two decades, noir makes its comeback in the seventies—and beyond. It is in the retro- and neo-noir films that the fantasy of the to-be-looked-at-ness of the

noir hero and heroine (or anti-heroine, as the case may be) resurface, imbued now with nostalgia for pseudo-toughness and all its various accoutrements, and simultaneously "creating" a now recognizable genre known as film noir.

PART II: RETRO-NOIR, NEO-NOIR, AND NOIR FOR NOIR'S SAKE

At the present moment, I would argue that the elements of noir are easily recognizable, to the point that noir elements have been appropriated in nearly all media types. Noir elements are used in commercials, cartoons, episodes of television shows, fashion advertising, and, naturally, in contemporary films. In order to differentiate between contemporary noir films that are set in the classic period of noir—the 1930s, '40s, or '50s—and those set in the time period when they were filmed, I have chosen to use the terms most often used by other critics: retro-noir and neo-noir, respectively. I agree with Jans Wager that, "retro-noirs tell primarily reactionary, nostalgic tales about gender and race, stories that confirm white male supremacy while marginalizing women and nonwhites."[22] For these films, more often than not, setting a film in the past gives free rein to use sexist and racist motifs that are explained in the film as inherent to the time period in which it is set. In fact, Wager goes on to argue that "retro-*noir*s have far more in common with non-*noir* films from the classic period than with classic *film noir,*"[23] and he cites *L.A. Confidential* (1997) as an ideal example of this phenomenon. *Chinatown* (1974) is something of an exception among retro-noirs in that, though it is set in the 1930s, Faye Dunaway's character struggles against her powerlessness, trying to protect her daughter/sister, and ultimately her demise becomes part of the film's critique of noir motifs of women as cunning deceivers who deserve death. It is the neo-noirs, however, that span the widest spectrum of gender portrayals, with some, like *Brick* (2005), portraying women as sexually loose and/or powerless deceivers, while others, such as *Bound* (1996) or *Body Heat* (1981), portray women who empower themselves at the cost of men. From the perspective of costume, the neo-noirs are naturally much more varied, while retro-noirs do their best to adhere to the standards of dress in the classic Hollywood era. In fact, retro-noirs are much more likely to suffer from a "noir for noir's sake" syndrome, in which the plot and character development are subsumed by the film's visual obsession with the "look" of noir fashions; that is, the fashions of the 1930s, '40s, and early '50s. Even if originally the fashions of the first noirs were chosen for their contemporaneity, their meaning takes on a false fullness for the films that worshipfully recreate them without considering what the clothes can do for the characterization of the protagonist(s) and antagonist(s), or what kind of work they can do for the film beyond reinforcing setting and mood.

Chinatown deserves its own analysis, since it is one of the first noir revival films of the 1970s. Cawelti argues that "a film like Chinatown deliberately invokes the basic characteristics of a traditional genre in order to bring its audience to see that genre as the embodiment of an inadequate and destructive myth."[24] Though the traditional elements of the film noir are present and the characters strut around in 1930s-inspired clothing (Dunaway even sports pencil-thin eyebrows and Marcel waves), the wise-cracking hard-boiled detective is clumsy in his investigation, the femme fatale turns out to be a victim, and the "bad guys" get away with their horrific crime. Jake Gittes (Jack Nicholson), the protagonist, is unable to navigate the corrupt universe he lives in, and he ends up perpetrating the same mistakes he did in the past when he worked on the police force. As Cawelti points out, "[Gittes's] attempt to be the tough, cynical, and humorous private eye is undercut on all sides; he is terribly inept as a wit, as his attempt to tell his assistants the Chinese joke makes clear."[25] His dandyish appearance in perfectly tailored white suits is undercut quite soon in the film by a large bandage he must wear over his face, disfiguring him in a way inconceivable for either noir heroes of the past, such as the uber-masculine Bogart or boyishly handsome Ladd, or retro-noir film heroes from the end of the millennium, whose suits and fedoras do the work of conveying sex appeal. Gittes is not a ladies' man to begin with, and with the bandage he takes on a monstrous appearance, not unlike Debby in *The Big Heat* after gangster Vince has poured hot coffee over half her face. The bandage makes Gittes a victim as much as supposed femme fatale Evelyn Mulwray (Dunaway), though he doesn't know it at that point in the film. Similarly, Dunaway lacks the glamour

and beauty of traditional film noir women, and, as Naremore notes, "her face is powered, her eyes are red, and her teeth are stained from lipstick. Her hair, which she compulsively brushes back from her forehead, is stiffened with permanent waves."[26] This attention to detail is singular among retro-noirs in that the details are not one-to-one signifiers as tuxedos or long satin gloves are in the classic noir, yet they manage to convey characterization even as they subvert the conventions of noir. There is, significantly, very little nostalgia for the time period portrayed in the film. Instead of creating yearning for a bygone time, the film works to expose inequalities present in the 1970s. The corruption of politicians in southern California in the 1930s is code for contemporary corruption. The nostalgic golden light of the film and Jake Gittes's white suits are subverted by his bandaged nose, Dunaway's tired, lined face, and the overall sense of dread that permeates the film. At the same time, the characters' clothes may be the most positive element of the past that the film acknowledges; evocative and well-tailored, the costumes reinforce the notion that while telling a story of social evils, *Chinatown* still revels in the sartorial glory of the past.

In contrast to the importance *Chinatown* gives its plot of political corruption, many other retro-noirs focus on clothes as if the clothing was an end in and of itself. Fredric Jameson, in regards to *Chinatown,* calls it a "nostalgia film," part of a postmodern sensibility of pastiche, which, according to Jameson, "is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask. . . . : but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter."[27] I would argue, however, that if *Chinatown* or Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (1970) (another film Jameson cites) are "nostalgia films," they at least attempt to comment on both the time period portrayed in the film and the time period of the film's production, while later retro-noirs do neither. Both of those films, in fact, work to expose false notions of nostalgia for bygone eras by portraying the ugly truth underneath the attractive façade of the past. In contrast, the Coen Brothers' *Miller's Crossing* (1990) appears to exist solely to worship Dashiell Hammett–style banter, Prohibition Era violence, and fedoras. The film is particularly concerned, nearly obsessed, with hats. As Naremore writes of the film: "*Miller's Crossing* is 'about' little more

than wide-angle lenses, low-level compositions, tracking shots . . . smoking a cigarette in the dark while sitting next to a black telephone, with oriental rugs spread over hardwood floors and gauzy curtains wafting in the night breeze. Perhaps most of all, it is 'about' the glamour of men's hats."[28] The film begins with a surrealistic scene of a fedora flying through the forest at Miller's Crossing, and Tom (Gabriel Byrne) is led back to Verna's (Marcia Gay Harden) apartment to get back his hat. The hat becomes a self-conscious symbol in the film, even figuring in Tom's dream of his hat being blown off his head. When Verna guesses that the dream was about Tom chasing his hat, he responds with the line, "Nothing more foolish than a man chasing his hat," which becomes the catch-phrase of the film. Elizabeth Wilson writes that "the obsession with pastiche, this 'nostalgia mode' is related to the way in which the dictatorship of *haute couture* broke down in the 1960s and 1970s. A single style can no longer dominate in the post-modern period. Instead there is a constant attempt to recreate atmosphere."[29] If we take this to be true, then *Miller's Crossing,* like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* or *L.A. Confidential,* are full of atmosphere, perhaps at the cost of other filmic elements.

Blade Runner (1982), though set in the future, consciously channels noir fashions by giving Harrison Ford's Deckard a trench coat and the femme fatale/female victim Sean Young a 1940s-inspired skirt suit, as well as various large and luxurious furs. Deckard's fellow blade runners and his boss sport fedoras as well. As Elois Jenssen explains, "Scott's vision of *Blade Runner* was a 1940s film noir detective story, like Humphrey Bogart's portrayal of Philip Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*. . . . The most obvious touches in the wardrobe are Harrison Ford's Bogart-esque trench coat and Sean Young's broad-shouldered business suit."[30] In this case, a film about the future is able to draw on film noir clothing styles (as well as low lighting and Venetian blind shadows) to create an atmosphere unusual in science fiction, but one still familiar to the audience, especially just a year after the release of *Body Heat,* which, though a neo-noir, also draws heavily on film noir atmosphere and fashion. Although William Hurt may sport a mustache and shaggy tresses, he still wears a suit and tie, and Kathleen Turner's clothing is rarely specifically rooted in early 1980s fashions. In fact, her wardrobe is almost entirely white, as though

3.3A. Sean Young as *Blade Runner*'s fatal woman wearing one of many luxurious fur coats.

alluding to white-garbed Phyllis (Barbara Stanwyk) in *Double Indemnity,* one of the films *Body Heat* consciously remakes. Kathie Moffat of *Out of the Past,* one of the most paradigmatic femme fatales of the classic period, wears white when Jeff Bailey first sees her. The notion of having the femme fatale wear white does a kind of inverted semiotic work, the icon of danger wearing the color of innocence. It is significant that all three characters manage to successfully seduce the male protagonists in their films, while a femme fatale like Brigid in *The Maltese Falcon* never wears white and never succeeds in fully duping Sam Spade. Thus, having Turner wear white in *Body Heat* further conflates the time period of the film, pushing it into the "eternal '30s" suggested by Jameson. The noir atmosphere is only increased by the fact that Turner's character gives Hurt's character a fedora as a gift in the film, explicitly linking *Body*

3.3B. In *Blade Runner,* Deckard's boss Bryant (M. Emmett Walsh) explicitly channels noir fashion in a fedora.

Heat to the perceived genre of the noir. The fedora in *Body Heat,* as in *Miller's Crossing* and *Blade Runner,* becomes the central object through a sense of noir-ishness that is portrayed. It becomes an object imbued with meaning through patterns of nostalgia and, via nostalgia, cultural fetishism and fantasy regarding the noir. Modern culture romanticizes the fedora because it is perceived as saturated with various positive meanings: dashing hero, "golden-era" days, high fashion, etc. Films, naturally predisposed toward conspicuous clothing display, focus on the fedora as an object that comes to signify, in film shorthand, all the fantasies inscribed into film noir by the culture of pastiche.

Though perhaps lacking in fedoras, *L.A. Confidential* (1997) returns to the pattern of obsessively accurate retro-noirs in the style of *Miller's Crossing.* In fact, *L.A. Confidential* goes one step further in playing out

3.4A,B. Jane Greer in *Out of the Past* initially appears in white, a color that Kathleen Turner wears throughout *Body Heat.*

its pastiche of film noir by centering the story on high-class call-girls whose agency promises its patrons that they will be entertained by a prostitute "cut" to look like a famous actress: Rita Hayworth, Jean Harlow, Veronica Lake, etc. The fact that Kim Basinger's character looks nothing like Veronica Lake and is much too tall and too old to reprise the 1940s actress, whose screen career foundered shortly after the end of the decade, rendering her eternally young, is of no consequence to the film. In fact, the film seems to rely on the *unknowing* of the audience: it can use 1940s fashions and refer to 1940s actresses, sure of itself that the fashions will be recognized even if, *especially* if, the actresses referred to are not. Instead, the names of those actresses work in similar ways to the fedora: merely invoking these people or objects becomes symbolic of an entire history of filmmaking and cultural production that is collapsed by the new film and compacted in a small, easy-to-parse package. Expressive of this idea is Jans Wager's notion that Basinger's character

is a "pastiche femme fatale" because "just as she represents Veronica Lake, Lynn also represents the femme fatale of *film noir.* She walks the walk, talks the talk, and certainly dresses the part."[31] This last point is of key importance. Though Basinger may not physically resemble Lake, she sports Lake's signature hairdo, the platinum blonde color, and retro gowns that, even if nothing similar was ever worn by Lake, code Lynn as of her time period. However, accuracy in *L.A. Confidential* in terms of *resemblance* is not nearly as important as accuracy of dress and gender and race relations. As Naremore points out, "unlike *Chinatown,* which it vaguely resembles, *L.A. Confidential* uses the past superficially and hypocritically. On the one hand, it attacks Hollywood of the 1950s, making easy jokes about the 'reality' behind old-style show business; on the other hand, it exploits every convention of the dream factory, turning history into a fashion show. . . . The film's primary appeal seems to be its stylish 'look.'"[32] The very visualness of the film medium, combined with the parody and pastiche that Jameson argues characterizes the postmodern era, turn the film noir into a visual *style,* a certain look or fashion that always resembles something else that came before it. As Lipovetsky writes of the consummate fashion epoch: "fashion is in

charge, because the love of novelty has become general, regular, limitless."[33] In films such as *L.A. Confidential* or *Miller's Crossing,* fashion is most certainly in charge, and the plot and characters become secondary to their self-conscious channeling of noir fashions. In many respects, these films betray a sensibility that I term "noir for noir's sake," which is also evident in more recent films that tanked at the box office, such as *Hollywoodland* (2006) and *The Black Dahlia* (2006). There is no questioning of the conventions of noir in these films, as in *Chinatown,* no extra meaning secured by the clothes the characters wear. The fashions of noir are imitated for the purely nostalgic pleasure of visuality, to the point that *Hollywoodland* and *The Black Dahlia* seem to be aping not classic Hollywood noirs, but rather, in a strangely postmodern twist of fate, *L.A. Confidential* or *Chinatown.*

Though many neo-noirs have no such respect for the fashions of the 1930s and '40s, they still play with the conventions of noir, usually in order to seem marketably chic. *Bound* conflates the gangster film genre with the conventions of film noir and twists them both by making the protagonists female and, specifically, lesbians.[34] *Brick* appears to be an experiment in cleverness to see whether a noir story can be successfully transposed onto a contemporary Southern California suburban high school setting. Both films, despite giving their protagonists nominally contemporary clothing, still manage to evoke noir fashions, as *Body Heat* does. The gangsters of *Bound* dress in fedoras and pinstripe suits, while Violet (Jennifer Tilly) is a pastiche femme fatale, imitative of Debby in *The Big Heat* (who is also a gangster's moll, like Violet), with her tight black dresses and short, curling hair cut. Even Corky (Gina Gershon) manages to evoke the 1950s greaser girls portrayed in *Touch of Evil* (1958), the film that many critics argue was the last true film noir of the classic period. Similarly, though the hard-boiled teenage protagonist of *Brick,* Brendan, wears a windbreaker rather than a trench coat, the femme fatale, Laura, wears black throughout the film, a coat with a faux fur collar, and a black beret, echoing Lauren Bacall in *The Big Sleep* or, in another postmodern twist, Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde.*[35] The villain of the film, "the Pin," wears all black, with a black cape and walking stick reminiscent of Ballin and his German associates in *Gilda.*

The commercial world that uses retro-noir for advertising has further hammered out the codes of noir. A recent Tekserv commercial plays on a scene from *Chinatown,* specifically, one of the most emotionally affecting scenes, when Gittes slaps Evelyn to try to get a straight answer out of her, only to realize that she has been the victim of incestuous rape. The commercial uses chiaroscuro lighting, black and white film, and a detective slapping a thug to get information from him about . . . a computer. Guess Jeans ran a commercial in the 1990s with Juliette Lewis as an undercover spy for a detective (Harry Dean Stanton) who investigates unfaithful spouses. Here the link between noir fashion and commercial fashion is made explicit, for the Guess label attempts to become associated with the sensuality, mystery, and cultural cachet of noir. However, noir has been used to advertise products as banal as ketchup, Colombian coffee, or Hellman's mayonnaise as well as fashionable clothing lines,[36] creating something of a quandary: the codes of noir are now so well-defined, so easy to invoke, that beyond recoding films from the past as "noirs," noir-ishness is now on the one hand fashionable, and, on the other, prosaic and commonplace. The very fashionableness of noir is taken up and transmuted, thus becoming a parody of itself, and perhaps, even a parody of a parody, erasing its historicity and, while creating a genre, simultaneously disengaging it from any particular purpose aside from the pleasures of the atmosphere being evoked as well as of the recognition of the thing being parodied.

CONCLUSION

Hence, though "classic film noir avoids generic status . . . neo-noir achieves it."[37] An episode of the 1980s show *Moonlighting* titled "The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice" illustrates the new generic requirements perfectly: black and white film, a city apartment, a man (Bruce Willis) playing the trumpet in an undershirt and suspenders, voiceover narration, cigarettes being chain-smoked, and a bombshell femme fatale (Cybil Shepherd). Retro-noir especially, and neo-noir to an extent, rely on these easily recognizable and consumable characteristics of noir to give themselves a history they don't have while accessing a set of conventions that in and of themselves are already perceived as plea-

surable. As Gilles Lipovetsky explains, the customs of the past "have the charm of days gone by, a past restored less through respect for ancestors than through a spirit of play and a desire for individualist affiliation with a given group."[38] In the case of modern film directors, producers, studios, and actors, the affiliation of the given group is the film noir "genre" that serves as a charming paradigm, ahistorical in its historicalness, and fashionable precisely because those fashions no longer exist. They have become fragmented, as in the neo-noirs, where a beret or fur collar or fedora stand in synechdocally for the gown or fur coat or three-piece suit that are no longer in vogue. In retro-noir, the viewing pleasure lies in recreating those fashions of the past on actors who are fashionable now. In the words of Lipovetsky, "the axis of the present has become the socially prevalent temporality,"[39] and the preoccupation with the paradigm of noir is an essentially narcissistic one, in which the characters wish to see themselves as part of the noir fantasy, a paradigm that remains static, accessible, and novel with each reiteration. With this static set of conventions, noir has become a genre precisely because contemporary noir films are made self-consciously, evoking what has collectively come to be considered "noir-like." In doing so, they make history "a fashion show," as Naremore has suggested, which colludes with contemporary sensibilities about the fashionableness of vintage and retro clothing. Unfortunately, by doing so, modern noir films do not elaborate on the genre, do nothing new, and in fact, make noir simply like a Halloween costume, to be worn, enjoyed, and discarded once its novelty (the novelty of the past, perhaps) has worn off. It is precisely the fascination of costume that noir fashion holds for contemporary audiences, who yearn for an older definition of glamour that bespeaks both romance and toughness, high emotions and gritty exteriors. The fantasy of noir is an escape from the complications of modern gender roles, an exciting and effortless receding into a story that does not question women's body-hugging dresses and awkwardly large hats. These elements, along with the bygone glamour that is perceived in men who wear suits all the time, elide issues of female subordination, male-on-female violence, and punishment of sexually provocative women into a careless fetish for stylish, if dated, clothing.

Certainly, many neo-noirs, such as *Bound* or *Body Heat,* are able to revise gender roles, expose inequalities, and play with traditional noir conventions.[40] However, other such films, and certainly most retro-noirs, don't. Films like *L.A. Confidential* or *The Black Dahlia* are sometimes even more strident than classic-era noirs in demonizing and punishing powerful, independent women while either beating up or protecting the innocent, nurturing women. *L.A. Confidential* manages to do both to Kim Basinger's Lynn: she works for the villain, so she must deceive her true love, Bud, and seduce his rival, Ed. For this Bud punishes her with a beating; then, as a part of "protecting" her, he goes and beats up Ed. Lynn herself has no power except that of first wooing the audience with her glamour and then eliciting their sympathy for her imposed passivity and inability to act. At every move, Lynn's ability to act for herself and become a phallic woman is circumscribed, and she becomes the prototype for the pastiche femme fatale. Similarly, issues of race are even less acknowledged in retro-noirs, where racist epithets and lack of actors of color are explained away by the idea that "this is how it was in the past." For these reasons and others, Fredric Jameson argues that retro- and neo-noir films are "an alarming and pathological symptom of a society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history."[41] I would also add, incapable of dealing with contemporary gender roles, though this claim might be made for most Hollywood films. The particularly alluring notion inherent in noir, however, is, what Marc Vernet writes, that "on the whole, *film noir* is like a Harley-Davidson: you know right away what it is, the object being only the synecdoche of a continent, a history, and a civilization."[42] Though noir, as I have discussed it here, is evidently neither cohesive nor, in fact, so easily categorizeable upon close consideration as it at first seems, the fantasy of noir evades all these problematic details. And it is this *fantasy* of the film noir that has been adopted: certain single images and stereotypes that become a synecdoche for a fake history and an archetypal civilization that never really existed. The very *fashionableness* of noir attests to the way its elements have been picked up *à la carte by* contemporary filmmakers and advertisers who seek to bring back the glamour and fashions that appear to be the only true constants of film noir.

NOTES

1. James Naremore, *More Than Night,* 39.

2. Todd Erickson writes, "*Film noir* was just a term, which French cineaste Nino Frank reputedly invented it in 1946, when the move houses of post–World War II Paris were deluged with a wave of hard-edged American crime pictures. . . . Remarkably . . . thirteen years passed before an English-language book—*Hollywood in the Forties* by Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg—used the term and formally recognized film noir as a distinct body of films." (Erickson, "Kill Me Again," 309.)

3. This interpretation of Gilda comes from Richard Dyer, "Resistance Through Charisma," 117–119.

4. Elizabeth Cowie, "*Film Noir* and Women," 127. In the Introduction to the 1978 edition of *Women in Film Noir,* E. Ann Kaplan also recognizes the nebulous generic status of film noir: "film noir can perhaps better be seen as a *sub-genre* or a *generic development* emerging from the earlier gangster genre than as a genre by itself" (Kaplan, "Introduction," 16).

5. Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood,* 163. See Neale for a more detailed discussion of the crossover between supposedly noir-specific elements and elements of other Hollywood films from the classic noir period.

6. Jane Place, "Women in Film Noir," 49.

7. Neale, 154.

8. Erickson, 308.

9. Jane Gaines, "Costume and Narrative," 198.

10. Tiffany Webber-Hanchett, "The Modern Era: 1910–1960," 54.

11. Erin A. Smith, *Hard-Boiled,* 80.

12. Richard Dyer, "Postscript: Queers and Women in Film Noir," 123.

13. Gaines, 193.

14. Ibid., 204.

15. Place, 54.

16. Ibid., 60.

17. Of course, in the case of *Gilda,* the fact that Gilda has been unreasonably "punished" for her flirting with other men by Johnny, both physically and emotionally, seems to be of no consequence to the film's trajectory, which ends on a happy note with Ballin being killed by the men's room attendant (Argentinean, of course) and Gilda and Johnny going back to America together having happily resolved their turbulent relationship.

18. Naremore, 197.

19. John G. Cawelti, "Chinatown and Generic Transformation," 245.

20. For more information regarding postwar disillusionment in regard to the Hollywood noir, see Sylvia Harvey, "The Absent Family of Film Noir," 35–46; Frank Krutnik, *In A Lonely Street;* and Paul Schrader, "Notes on Film Noir," 153–170.

21. Naremore, 197.

22. Jans B. Wager, *Dames in the Driver's Seat,* 75.

23. Ibid., 76.

24. Cawelti, 254.

25. Ibid., 274.

26. Naremore, 208.

27. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," 114.

28. Naremore, 215.

29. Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams,* 172.

30. Elois Jenssen, "Vision of the Future," 109.

31. Wager, 84.

32. Naremore, 275.

33. Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion,* 229.

34. It is possible to read *Bound* as doing positive work to the noir genre, as it rewrites the roles women can play in the genre and challenges portrayals of femme fatales through the character of Violet, who proves herself to Corky as a real lesbian and a trustworthy partner in crime. Chris Straayer expands this argument in "*Femme Fatale* or Lesbian Femme," where he writes that "*Bound* revisits and revises film noir" by inscribing the film with "a lesbian feminist discourse" (151–60).

35. As Wilson notes in *Adorned in Dreams,* "In 1967 *Bonnie and Clyde* set going the thirties look of berets and long, lanky skirts with 'old-fashioned' jumpers—although Faye Dunaway's hair remained relentlessly straight and sixties" (172).

36. Naremore, 197.

37. Wager, 14.

38. Lipovetsky, 230.

39. Ibid., 229.

40. For a more detailed look at '90s neo-noirs that focus on sexually fatal women in films such as *Basic Instinct, The Grifters, Mother's Boys, Body of Evidence, Single White Female,* and *The Last Seduction,* see Kate Stables, "The Postmodern Always Rings Twice," 164–82.

41. Jameson, 117.

42. Marc Vernet, "*Film Noir* on the Edge of Doom," 1.

WORKS CITED

Abbott, Megan E. "'Nothing You Can't Fix': Screening Marlowe's Masculinity." *Studies in the Novel* 35 (2003): 305–24.

Cawelti, John G. "Chinatown and Generic Transformation." In *Film Genre Reader III,* ed. Barry Keith Grant, 243–61. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.

Cowie, Elizabeth. "*Film Noir* and Women." In *Shades of Noir: A Reader,* ed. Joan Copjec, 121–66. London: Verso, 1993.

Dyer, Richard. "Postscript: Queers and Women in Film Noir." In Women in Film Noir, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 35–46. London: British Film Institute, 2000 [1978].

———. "Resistance through Charisma: Rita Hayworth and Gilda." In Women in Film Noir, ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 35–46. London: British Film Institute, 2000 [1978].

Erickson, Todd. "Kill Me Again: Movement becomes Genre." In *Film Noir Reader,* ed. Alain Silver and James Ursini, 307–30. New York: Limelight Editions, 1996.

Gaines, Jane. "Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman's Story." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 180–211. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Harvey, Sylvia. "The Absent Family of Film Noir." In *Women in Film Noir,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 35–46. London: British Film Institute, 2000 [1978].

Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture,* ed. Hal Foster, 111–25. Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983.

Jenssen, Elois. "Vision of the Future: Costume in Science-Fiction Films." In *Hollywood and History: Costume Design in Film,* ed. Edward Maeder et al., 97–112. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987.

Kaplan, E. Ann. "Introduction" to 1978 edition of *Women in Film Noir,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 15–19. London: British Film Institute, 2000 [1978].

Krutnik, Frank. *In A Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity.* London: Routledge, 1991.
Lipovetsky, Gilles. *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy.* Trans. Catherine Porter. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994 [1987].
Naremore, James. *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
Neale, Steve. *Genre and Hollywood.* London: Routledge, 2000.
Place, Janey. "Women in Film Noir." In *Women in Film Noir,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 47–68. London: British Film Institute, 2000 [1978].
Schrader, Paul. "Notes on Film Noir." In *Movies and Mass Culture,* ed. John Belton, 153–70. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996 [1971].
Smith, Erin A. *Hard-Boiled: Working-Class Readers and Pulp Magazines.* Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 2000.
Stables, Kate. "The Postmodern Always Rings Twice: Constructing the *Femme Fatale* in 90s Cinema." In *Women in Film Noir,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 164–82. London: British Film Institute, 2000 [1978].
Straayer, Chris. "*Femme Fatale* or Lesbian Femme: *Bound* in Sexual *Différence.*" In *Women in Film Noir,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 151–63. London: British Film Institute, 2000 [1978].
Vernet, Marc. "*Film Noir* on the Edge of Doom." In *Shades of Noir: A Reader,* ed. Joan Copjec, 1–32. London: Verso, 1993.
Wager, Jans B. *Dames in the Driver's Seat.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005.
Webber-Hanchett, Tiffany. "The Modern Era: 1910–1960." In *The Fashion Reader,* ed. Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun, 46–58. New York: Berg, 2007.
Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Big Heat. Dir. Fritz Lang. Costumes (gowns), Jean Louis. Columbia, 1953.
The Big Sleep. Dir. Howard Hawks. Perf. Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, and Martha Vickers. Costumes, Leah Rhodes. Warner Bros., 1946.
The Black Dahlia. Dir. Brian DePalma. Costumes, Jenny Beavan. Universal, 2006.
Blade Runner. Dir. Ridley Scott. Costumes, Michael Kaplan and Charles Knode. Warner Bros., 1982.
The Blue Dahlia. Dir. George Marshall. Costumes, Edith Head. Paramount, 1946.
Body Heat. Dir. Lawrence Kasdan. Costumes, Renié. Warner Bros., 1981.
Bonnie and Clyde. Dir. Arthur Penn. Costumes, Theadora van Runkle. Warner Bros., 1967.
Bound. Dir. Andy and Larry Wachowski. Costumes, Lizzy Gardiner. Gramercy, 1996.
Brick. Dir. Rian Johnson. Costumes, Michele Posch. Focus Features, 2005.
Chinatown. Dir. Roman Polanski. Costumes, Anthea Sylbert. Paramount, 1974.
The Conformist [*Il Conformista*]. Dir. Bernardo Bertolucci. Costumes, Gitt Magrini. Paramount, 1970.
Double Indemnity. Dir. Billy Wilder. Costumes, Edith Head. Paramount, 1944.
Gilda. Dir. Charles Vidor. Costumes (gowns), Jean Louis. Columbia, 1946.

The Glass Key. Dir. Stuart Heisler. Costumes, Edith Head. Paramount, 1942.
Hollywoodland. Dir. Allen Coulter. Costumes, Julie Weiss. Focus Features, 2006.
Key Largo. Dir. John Huston. Costumes, Leah Rhodes. Warner Bros., 1948
L.A. Confidential. Dir. Curtin Hanson. Costumes, Ruth Myers. Warner Bros., 1997.
Laura. Dir. Otto Preminger. Costumes, Bonnie Cashin. 20th Century Fox, 1944.
The Maltese Falcon. Dir. John Huston. Costumes (gowns), Orry-Kelly. Warner Bros., 1941.
Miller's Crossing. Dir. Joel Coen. Costumes, Richard Hornung. 20th Century Fox, 1990.
Out of the Past. Dir. Jacques Tourneur. Costumes (gowns), Edward Stevenson. RKO, 1947.
Touch of Evil. Dir. Orson Welles. Costumes (gowns), Bill Thomas. Universal, 1958.

TELEVISION

"The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice." *Moonlighting.* Dir. Peter Werner. Costumes, Susan Cohoon-Swain. ABC, Los Angeles, Calif. 15 Oct. 1985.

PART TWO

Filming Fashion

From the earliest film era, Fashion appreciated its affinity with Film as a means to enhance its visibility. This affinity extended beyond aesthetics to encompass a connection between mutually advantageous industries. Cinema seemed to offer even more possibilities for promoting fashion than fashion's earlier ally, drama, had. This section explores ways that filming fashion stimulated fashion desire, reflected and enforced cultural values, and yet also undermined those values.

Caroline Evans in "The Walkies: Early French Fashion Shows as a Cinema of Attractions" makes a point that applies to all moving pictures and fashion shows: both concern "images of women in motion." Early silent films of fashion shows join other silent films as part of a "cinema of attractions" rather than the "cinema of narrative integration." Fashion show films can be understood as participating in a modern language of visuality. Evans regards fashion language as a new way of seeing: "the visual language of film," she points out, "began to percolate into fashion journalism, suggesting that the viewing competences of fashion writers were structured at least partly by cinema." She traces the parallel development of fashion shows and films to their convergence and then considers implications of their partnership in such modes as the fashion newsreel, originating in France and promulgating an image of Paris as a world fashion center.

Jane Gaines in "Wanting to Wear Seeing: Gilbert Adrian at MGM" focuses on a Hollywood film costume designer and fashion couturier to

explore questions of wearability, consumer desire, and seeing cinema. Adrian's costumes, often unwearable, present a conundrum of unwearability that creates visual desire. Ordinary women who see his film fashion want to wear seeing itself, and they want to wear the film. In order to explore what Gaines calls "the wearability–unwearability problematic," she proposes "five theses on unwearability." In doing so, she parses differences between filming unwearable costumes and wearable fashion. The geometry of Adrian's designs worked in contradictory ways, for and against the film, for and against the actress, for and against the viewer who desires to wear the film.

Stella Bruzzi, in "'It will be a magnificent obsession': Femininity, Desire, and the New Look in 1950s Hollywood Melodrama" describes a seismic shift in postwar film fashion. She argues that the great Hollywood costume designers appropriated Christian Dior's New Look only to tone down its sexual allure. Whereas Hollywood films of the '30s and '40s consolidated an identity as the ultimate in glamour, '50s Hollywood adapted the New Look to express an ostensibly traditional femininity. While the fashions of the period suggest a conformity to male demands for subservient women, they also betray a simmering rebellion with gendered constraints. Bruzzi uncovers repression: "The erotic energy of many of these films," she notices, "is siphoned off... onto the costumes." The New Look of these films also filmed gender ideology, a way of filming fashion as a code for emerging feminist consciousness.

Film fashion glories in the history movie, which offers the fashion-conscious an encyclopedia of styles, but also a measure of difference between past and present. Historical costuming also offers up a re-envisioned past that supports contemporary gender politics. Maura Spiegel in "Adornment in the Afterlife of Victorian Fashion" examines neo-Victorian fashion in films to argue that they present a moral valence that favors anti-fashion over fashion. The plain woman represents the morally preferable whereas the ornate woman wears her frivolity, vanity, and moral vacuity in her costume. In discussing films adapted from neo-Victorian novels, Spiegel shows how Hollywood values change in filming fashion. Whereas in the 1930s, the fashionable woman could also be intelligent, in later film adaptations, she looks more fussy than alluring, her character questionable rather than admirable. Surprisingly,

American films of current decades echo a Victorian value system that favors the plain over the ornate.

Continuing the topic of filming historical fashion for contemporary purposes, Diana Diamond's chapter, "Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette:* Costumes, Girl Power, and Feminism" shows how the Oscar-winning costumes use the eighteenth-century's fashion-crazed and doomed French queen to reinterpret that period's use of fashion, in order to convey our own era's cultural urgencies. Drawing in part on exclusive conversations with Milena Canonero, the costume designer, Diamond shows how "shifts in style, color, cut, coiffure, accessories, jewelry, headgear, and even necklines" signify the adolescent queen's maturing fashion and political savvy. As Marie Antoinette used fashion to assert her own style and identity as a kind of independence, so youthful third-wave feminists also defied earlier feminisms in claiming their right to the pleasures of adornment.

FIVE

The Walkies: Early French Fashion Shows as a Cinema of Attractions

CAROLINE EVANS

Fashion shows and films came into being almost simultaneously. In France, the first film shown to a paying audience was in 1895; in London and Paris the first fashion shows were staged in the late 1890s. This chapter looks at the sometimes uneven chronological development of fashion shows in French film, particularly newsreel, in the silent period. Starting, paradoxically, with the relative absence of fashion modeling from early film, it identifies some structural similarities between the two, in terms of a common concern with images of women in motion. It discusses why fashion modeling went unrepresented in the first films by distinguishing the audiences for the first fashion shows from those for film shows in the period up to 1910. After that date, the audiences for fashion shows and film began to converge, as both fashion journalism and newsreel began to show scenes of Paris mannequins—as fashion models were called—at work. The chapter goes on to argue that the French fashion show as it developed in the early twentieth century had many affinities with the "cinema of attractions," in particular with the féeries and trick films of Georges Méliès from around 1903. While, however, cinema developed at a rapid pace in the early 1900s, the fashion show in the same period soon settled into a relatively static format. It continued to exhibit the characteristics of an "attraction" long after cinema itself had moved away from an attractions-based format toward a "cinema of narrative integration." The chapter looks at the early marketing devices of the couturier Paul Poiret as a form of attraction, in particular at his use of film from

1910–1913 to show his mannequins modeling. It then surveys the continuing, if varied, types of coverage of fashion shows in newsreel, also a relatively static genre, from the 1910s into the 1920s as a continuation of the attractions tradition. It concludes by suggesting that film footage of fashion shows and fashion modeling in the 1910s and 1920s mixes fact and fiction in such a way as to challenge—as many film theorists have—any simple distinction between attraction and narrative in film.

FASHION IN MOTION IN THE 1900S

Although fashion modeling was not widely filmed until the 1910s and 1920s, fashion shows and film nevertheless shared some characteristics from the outset. The sense that cinema was introducing new ways of seeing and thinking about the world was articulated in 1900 by Henri Bergson in a lecture at the Collège de France on the "Cinematographic Mechanism of Thought."[1] He further developed the theme in *Creative Evolution* (1907), using the example of soldiers walking to explain his ideas about visual perception and consciousness: "we take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, we have only to string them on a becoming . . . we hardly do anything else than set going a kind of cinematograph inside us."[2] The French word for a military parade, *défilé,* also meant mannequin parade, or fashion show, and Bergson's cinematic description of watching soldiers marching preceded fashion journalists' descriptions of fashion models at work by only a few years. Soon, the visual language of film began to percolate into fashion journalism, suggesting that the viewing competences of fashion writers were structured at least partly by cinema. In 1910, *Femina* magazine called the forthcoming autumn fashions "un véritable cinématographe de la mode de demain" ("a veritable cinematograph of tomorrow's fashion"),[3] and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* described French fashion as a "rapid film rush," epitomized by the photographs in American department stores of Parisian mannequins "striding along a wind blown walk" on the boulevards or at the races.[4]

In the early 1900s, both fashion and film evidenced a fascination with, among other things, human movement and female display. In 1902, a Parisian couturier commented "une robe est une chose qui marche" ("a dress is a thing that walks") and "nous faisons de la sculpture qui bouge"

("we make moving sculpture").[5] Fashion illustration began to imitate the immediacy of the camera. Anne Hollander describes "the blur of chic—the dash, the vivid abstract shapes, a face, body and clothes all perceived as a mysterious, not quite personally identifiable mobile unit" in the fashion photograph in which "the quick impression, the captured instant, was the new test of elegance."[6] This desire to frame fashion in motion was part of a wider imperative to materialize movement.[7] The program of the first films shown to a paying public in the Grand Café on the boulevard des Capucines in Paris on December 28, 1895, included Louis Lumière's film *Sortie des usines,* shot in Lyons in June 1894. The film was essentially a walking scene: the factory gates open, and out flow a tide of men, women, and children, the crowd of women in their large picture hats looking, to modern eyes, remarkably smartly dressed for factory workers. In 1904 a journalist described another type of worker, a member of a new female profession, the fashion mannequin, walking to work across Paris:

> Cette jolie femme à la taille fine et cambrée, dont le costume sort, on le devine, de chez le bon faiseur . . . se hâte vers la rue de la Paix ou la place Vendôme. Il est neuf heures à peine, mais malgré l'heure matinale et le froid vif qui cingle le visage, plus d'un passant se retourne et glisse en la croisant un rapide compliment.
>
> (This lovely woman with her slender, curvaceous figure, whose costume, one discerns, has come from a good dressmaker . . . hastens towards the rue de la Paix or the place Vendôme. It is barely nine o'clock, but despite the morning hour and the sharp cold that stings the face, more than one passer-by turns round and slips while paying her a quick compliment.)[8]

The four-minute Gaumont film starring Renée Carl, *Une Dame Vraiment Bien* (1908), made a comedy of just such a scene. A pretty woman exits from a clothing shop, promenades in the Paris streets, and piques masculine curiosity. All the men turn around as she passes, setting in motion a comical chain reaction: falls, collisions, and other blunders. The film is an instance in French film of the way that, as Constance Balides has argued in relation to American comedy films of the 1900s, everyday scenes of women walking through public places are turned into sexual spectacle.[9]

Several early American films had fashion themes and scenarios, and one, *A Busy Day for the Corset Model* (1904)—unusually—even showed fashion modeling scenes.[10] In France, however, where fashion modeling was becoming established in the early 1900s, surprisingly few films showed it. The new technology of moving images would have been an arresting way to show the new profession of living mannequins, either in fiction or as "actualities," the early cinema genre that included such real-time events as ceremonies and military parades, as well as more mundane ones like babies eating their dinner and views of the 1900 Paris Universal Exhibition. However, with a few exceptions, fashion mannequins went cinematically unremarked. The Gaumont-Pathé archives in Paris contain four pieces of actualities from 1900 of fashion modeling but after that there is nothing until 1909. The 1900 footage includes mannequins modeling hairstyles and clothes, as well as a fashion show and dance at a charity ball in Cannes in 1900, the *Bal des Petits Lits Blancs.*[11]

Perhaps the paucity of films of fashion modeling was due to the fact that, in the early 1900s, the mannequins, young women paid to walk to and fro in the elite fashion houses of the rue de la Paix and the place Vendôme, were largely invisible to the general public. Perhaps they were invisible to filmmakers too, who may have been ignorant of their existence or unable to gain access to their places of employment. In France, the fashion show developed behind closed doors as a private spectacle for a privileged few. Its function was to show dresses for sale, both to individual clients and to the trade buyers who came to Paris on buying trips twice a year from North and South America and the rest of Europe. In this period, fashion shows were written about but not widely photographed or illustrated, for the French couturiers did not want to publicize their trade links with foreign department store buyers for whose convenience the fashion show evolved. It was only later that the French public first saw the glamorous figure of the mannequin in person. After 1908, mannequins were sent to the Paris races with increasing regularity to walk up and down in the couturiers' latest creations. Their appearance was at first considered scandalous and they were much photographed and written about, but by about 1910–11, when they began to be frequently shown in newsreel footage, their presence at the races was accepted. In this period also, French film companies extended their appeal to the middle classes and to women.[12] From this combination of causes, the audiences for fashion and film began to converge stereoscopically from

the 1910s, and it is from then onwards that one finds many more instances of fashion modeling on film.

Before then, the audiences for fashion shows and film remained distinct. In the first decade of the century, the visual language of pose, gesture, and attitude developed separately in the different spheres of fashion modeling and film acting, even though, in their creation of a language of bodily expression appropriate to these new forms of display, both film actresses and fashion mannequins drew on many of the same historical antecedents (stage actresses' gestures, tableaux vivants, and *poses plastiques*).[13] The fashion mannequin, like the silent film actress, was mute, except when the client asked her a question. Descriptions of mannequins at work contrasted the lively chatter of their *cabine* backstage with their silent presentation when modeling to clients in the salon.[14] There, the mannequin had to work with her body to develop a repertoire of movements, gestures, and poses. The cinema, too, required a new acting style akin to mime that used the whole body expressively, a style exemplified by the Danish film actress Asta Neilsen. In 1911, the French actress Mistinguett described the physicality of film acting, and wrote, "Par tempérament, j'ai le gout de la gesticulation . . . ces qualités devaient me mener tout droit au cinéma" ("By temperament, I've a taste for gesticulation . . . these qualities must have led me directly to the cinema.")[15] She described two, apparently contradictory, styles of acting that the cinema required: vivid movement for long shots, and relative immobility for close-ups. Both these elements featured in the fashion show, where the mannequins' fluid and expressive walk would periodically freeze, momentarily, into static poses, before flowing back into life as they moved on through the salons and disappeared backstage into the dressing rooms. Their static poses, like the cinema actresses' bodily gestures, invoke Bergson's description of the perception of movement through a series of poses or "privileged moments" akin to a series of film stills, and Gilles Deleuze's observation that "cinema appeared at the very time philosophy was trying to think of motion" applies no less to the fashion show than it does to cinema.[16]

The parallel development of film acting and fashion modeling in different spheres in the 1900s provides evidence of how comparable elements of visual culture can become visible at different moments to

diverse audiences. Film was shown to a wide public of differing social groups, initially in a variety format in café concerts, music halls and travelling fairground theatres across France, and later in custom-built cinemas.[17] The earliest fashion shows, by contrast, were limited to invited audiences in upmarket Parisian couture houses. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that, in that first period of filmmaking, when the French film production companies, in particular Pathé-Frères (formed in 1902), were developing a range of genres,[18] and despite the fact that many of these genres foregrounded women as spectacle, fashion modeling was not among them. Instead the film genre that disseminated images of women in motion and of swirling fabric and seductive costume was that of dance; between 1900–1902, over half of Gaumont's production consisted of dance films, many of which used dancers from Paris theatres.[19]

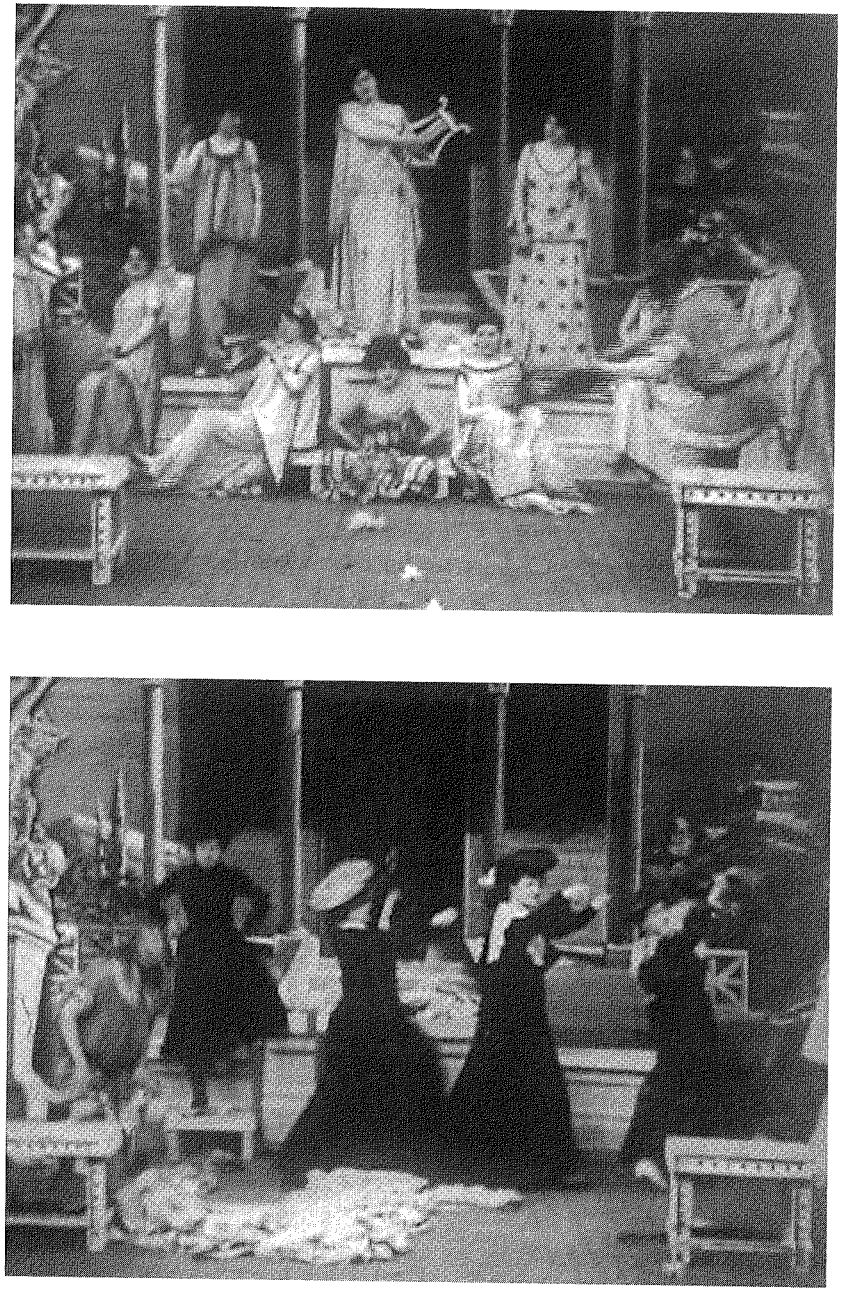
THE FASHION SHOW AS ATTRACTION

It is, however, not in only dance films but also in another French genre, féeries and trick films, known at the time as "transformation scenes," that further affinities with the fashion show can be traced. A fantasy genre derived from the "fairy plays" of nineteenth-century French revue theatre, féeries combined a strong element of burlesque with visual trickery. The tradition was given a spectacular contemporary update by its principal exponent, the filmmaker Georges Méliès, a stage magician who adapted the visual motifs of his trade to the cinema.[20] In his féeries and trick films, as in the earliest fashion shows, costume and scenography took precedence over narrative and plot. Méliès's studio, built in 1897, housed a vast store of costumes which, he claimed, eventually numbered 20,000.[21] In planning his films, Méliès began with the decor and costumes before working out the details of the scenario, "using the thread of the story to assemble what was really significant, the trick effects and tableaux of spectacle."[22] Similarly, in his fashion shows around 1908, the couturier Paul Poiret chose to have his mannequins appear, not through the main doorway to his principal salon, but, as if by magic, from a small invisible doorway to one side. In this way the couturier used stagecraft and showmanship to present his fashions, just as the filmmaker used

stop-frame photography and other tricks to create the effect of women suddenly appearing out of nowhere.

By carefully choreographing and lining up his shots, then stopping the film to change the actors or props before starting it again, Méliès achieved startling transformations within the camera's field of vision. As well as this stop-motion technique, Méliès used reverse motion and multiple exposures. By means of such "*trucs,*" or tricks, Méliès made women appear, multiply, transform, and disappear at breakneck pace.[23] In *La Parapluie fantastique* (1903), he conjures up a group of ten neo-classically clad women who subsequently transform into modern fashionable dress and exit off screen like a row of fashion mannequins. Like the genre to which it belongs, the film points to the inherently unstable and transformative potential of fashion, with its capacity for disguise, masquerade, and deception. And in his *La Lanterne magique* (1903), ten identical ballerinas dance out of an enlarged magic lantern. Linda Williams argues that their identical bodies spewing out of the machine call attention to their status as "totally mastered, infinitely reproducible *images,*"[24] not unlike the way that Arsène Alexandre, the art critic of *Le Figaro,* worried in 1902 that the fashion mannequin was reduced by her job to the status of "un objet matériel, un meuble commun et banal" ("a material object, a common and banal piece of furniture").[25]

In purely formal terms then, early film, in particular the magical transformations of the féeries, has several features in common with the early fashion show and its lines of young women appearing, disappearing, and reappearing in different costumes, sometimes replicated confusingly in the mirrored interiors of the salons. The first period of cinema, from 1895 to approximately 1906 or 1908, is commonly referred to as the "cinema of attractions." First coined in 1986 by André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, the term refers to a type of film that shocks, astonishes, and directly addresses the spectator instead of using narrative to draw the spectator into a "diegetic universe."[26] Rather than understanding the way people watched these very short pieces of early film in terms of narrative, Gunning tried to relate film to other forces, such as the changing experience of time and modernity, and thereby to explain how the effect of motion, rather than storytelling, might be the defining feature of the experience of watching very early film. In particular, he analyzed



5.1A,B. Scenes of ladies multiplied, from *La Parapluie fantastique,* directed by Georges Méliès.

these early films as a form of spectacle, drawing on the ideas of the film director Sergei Eisenstein from the 1920s about cinema as a "montage of attractions." Although many historians and theorists have challenged, modified or extended Gunning's original periodization and formulation,[27] the term "attractions" has become established, replacing its predecessor "primitive cinema." It has, furthermore, provided a useful model to think about different forms of cinematic address within mainstream Hollywood cinema, such as special effects or stage numbers in musicals. Wanda Strauven argues that "despite the fact that the cinema of attractions was clearly thought of as a time-specific category of film practice (and more specifically of spectatorship), its real attraction consists of its applicability to other periods of film history, to other similar practices beyond early cinema (and even beyond cinema)."[28] It is in this sense that the concept might provide a framework to think about the experience of watching early fashion shows from approximately 1900.

The four characteristics of the cinema of attractions that Richard Abel identifies, following Gunning, can be applied equally to the fashion show.[29] First, both film and fashion show were presentational rather than narrative; their female protagonists, be they fashion mannequins or revue actresses, appeared as "attractions," rather than as personalities with character and individuality. In films like *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902) Méliès used showgirls and female acrobats from the Châtelet Theatre; their synchronized movements and uniform appearance was also a characteristic of couture house mannequins, with their robotic, repetitive performance—often modeling the same dress ten times a day to ten different clients—and their standardized, house styles of modeling. Even the word mannequin, derived from the word for an inanimate dummy, suggested their uniformity. Further, the cinema of attractions often addressed the spectator directly, as the actors looked directly to camera, much as the mute mannequins might make a visual appeal to the clients by gazing at them as they modeled. Second, cinema of attractions presented its action in a series of homogenous spaces, or tableaux, that did not alter for the duration of the scene, very like the range of couture salons through which the fashion mannequin would walk, modeling to clients who remained seated within that room. The mannequins were thus, as Gunning describes early films, "enframed rather than emplotted."[30] Third, the fixed viewpoint of the spectator in the couture salon mirrors the single, unified viewpoint of the camera in the cinema of attractions. The use of the long shot in cinema "was to make human figures primarily performers of physical action rather than 'characters' with psychological motivations,"[31] and this also describes the impersonal role of the fashion mannequin. Fourth, early films were "semi-finished products" which the purchaser "finished" by choosing how to present them, with music or sound effects, perhaps a *bonimenteur* or commentator to explain the action,[32] and the choice of varying the projection speed by hand-cranking the film.[33] Similar effects were manifest in the couture houses, where clients could specify that mannequins come closer to give a better view of the dress, and where the couturier decreed how fast or slowly the mute mannequins walked, and performed the role of *bonimenteur* by talking the client through the dresses as they were being modeled. The role of the couturier as scenographer in the show, directing the appearance of the models in groups or singly, was akin to that of the director in the film.

PAUL POIRET AS SHOWMAN

No early-twentieth-century French couturier more resembled an impresario of attractions in the way he directed and managed his own business than Paul Poiret, who opened his first house on the rue Auber in 1903, and who was one of the principal exponents of the fashion show. Poiret's promotion, marketing, and publicity stratagems—of which the fashion show was an important element—mixed media, performances, and audiences. Charles Musser has argued that in the cinema of attractions it was film exhibitors rather than filmmakers who determined how films were seen, because they controlled and directed the multifarious forms of film presentation by adding music or lectures, and by editing or recoloring the film prints they bought.[34] Like them, but a few years later, Poiret marshaled a series of interconnecting attractions intended to create an aura of excitement and expectation, adapting the strategies of popular visual culture to high-end consumer culture. In the years leading up to World War I, besides running his couture house and staging fashion shows, he produced a perfume, he designed for the stage, he opened an interior de-

sign studio and school, he cultivated the press, and he threw spectacular themed parties.[35] He took his mannequins to London to model for the Prime Minister's wife in 1909 and on a whistlestop tour of eight European countries in 1911. He commissioned illustrators to make luxury albums of his fashion designs, and in 1911, he was the first to use both photography and film to promote them, modeled by his house mannequins.[36]

In July 1910, the illustrated paper *L'Illustration* published a long article on Poiret with several photographs of his mannequins parading in the formal gardens of his fashion house. It described Poiret's command of the *défilé* (the mannequin parade) in filmic terms, highlighting how he stopped, started, and even reversed it on command, exactly like the stop-action effects, dissolves, and superimpositions of Méliès, whose trick effects made women appear, multiply, and disappear on screen as if by magic.

> D'un mot, d'un geste . . . il dirige le cortège . . . Un signe de lui, une syllabe les lance en avant, les arrête, puis les fait repartir, aller, revenir sur leurs pas, se croiser, mêler, au gré de sa fantasie, ainsi qu'en un ballet aux mouvements paresseux, . . . et se retourner, subitement, toutes, pour faire admirer un moment le galbe de leurs hanches.
>
> (With a word, a gesture . . . he directs the cortege . . . a sign from him, a syllable, throws them forward, halts them, then makes them start again, go, come back on themselves, cross over, mix, according to his fantasy, as if it were a ballet with lazy movements, . . . and return, suddenly, all of them, to show off for a moment the curve of their hips.)[37]

Méliès had made fifteen short publicity films in 1900, including one for Mystère corsets and another for Delion hats, which were projected at night in the street outside his magic theatre, the Théâtre Robert-Houdin.[38] Poiret, who was an enthusiastic amateur photographer, was the first haute couturier (as opposed to corsetier or milliner) to recognize the promotional possibilities of film. In July 1911 he filmed his mannequins parading in his garden on the occasion of his "The Thousand and Second Night" party, with the mannequins and saleswomen brilliantly lit by the light of "un projecteur puisant destiné a remplacer la lune" ("a powerful projector destined to replace the moon").[39] The footage became part of a completed film, now lost, covering the full history of his designs. He showed it in August 1911 to an audience of overseas buyers and customers for his new fall collection as part of "an elaborate reception" which

included "oriental dances," a live fashion show, and "*rechérché* refreshments and much merriment."[40]

Shortly afterwards, Poiret set off on his European mannequin tour. Two years later, in September 1913, he embarked on a second marketing tour, this time of America. The Paris correspondent of the *New York Times* reported that, instead of living mannequins, he planned to take

> a specially colored cinematographic film representing the dress display in his showrooms here. The film will show all his creations, even those dating a few years back. They will in fact be a review of the fashions of the last twenty years. The films represent a departure from M. Poiret's original intention to take with him a corps of mannequins to show the dresses at his lectures. Consultation with American authorities disclosed the fact that such gowns were dutiable, so the couturier decided not to take them. Instead he had his showrooms specially fitted up for the purposes of taking colored film of the different costumes.[41]

In this way, fashion film had a commercial role to play, as well as a cultural one, in demonstrating Poiret's modernity to his customers. On his lecture tour, Poiret intended to show the film, with himself in the role of lecturer who explained the film, similar to the lecturers of the cinema of attractions in the early 1900s (although by 1913 lecturers were no longer used in the cinema).[42] Prior to his departure, he held a "cinematograph dinner" for thirty guests in the walled garden of his house, where he showed the new film. One of the guests was the Paris correspondent of the *New York Times,* who described his filmed mannequins as "Goddesses from the Machine" and wrote:

> The guests sat on the marble steps that run across half the front of the house, and suddenly, into their vision, came a dramatic parade of pictured mannequins who moved in and out of the garden trees, and sauntered on the graveled garden paths, wearing the very newest clothes that had been invented by Poiret that week. Here was Andrée, famous as the queen of mannequins in Paris, and who indulges in a touch that "gets over the footlights" and never ceases to have its effect, when she saunters across the room wrapped in a costly coat which, with a superb gesture, she unfastens, lifts from her shoulders, and throws to the floor without even a backward look, then saunters on, disclosing an equally costly robe. There is no putting into words the effect she produces by throwing one coat after another onto the floor as she parades up and down the salon. Poiret taught her this touch. She does it in the cinematograph as she does it in the salon, and Americans will see it in the moving pictures with which Poiret will illustrate his lecture here. But back to the supper: it was difficult to believe that these visions of lovely women and costly robes moving among the trees were produced by a machine.[43]

Another journalist corroborated this account in his description of how Poiret taught his mannequin Andrée most of her modeling gestures, one being "to enter a room in a gorgeous wrap. This she unfastens at the throat and lifts from the shoulders, letting it slip carelessly to the floor as she walks on without a backward look. The one principle which Poiret instills is disdain and contempt of the clothes which are being exhibited."[44] Andrée's actions exemplified the exhibitionist side of fashion modeling that constituted it as pure "attraction," on- or off-screen. The mannequin's motion is, is in this sense, inherently "filmic"; it is also "staged" in the acting out of disdain, by 1913 one of the tools of the mannequin's trade.

Poiret's film, which does not survive, was, according to Leese, impounded on arrival by the New York customs on grounds of obscenity.[45] American press reports, however, suggest otherwise. The *New York Times* reported that Poiret arrived with "a set of motion picture films showing models dressed in various gowns designed by him, promenading in the courtyards of [Poiret's] establishments at 26 avenue d'Antin and 107 Faubourg St Honoré, in Paris. He will use the films to illustrate lectures he will give at the Plaza, where he has a suite, and at hotels in Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston."[46] Four days later, it reported that on September 25 Poiret lectured on fashion to an audience of "buyers and men and women interested in women's dress in a business way" who filled the ballroom of the Plaza Hotel. The talk was followed by a four-reel film of his mannequins modeling in his Paris gardens and shop. The *New York Times* reported "many gowns of original and startling color and cut were shown. As each model stepped on to the screen, the lecturer [Poiret] described the colors of the gown she wore and often told where he obtained the idea for it."[47]

A fortnight later, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* described a Poiret screening to an audience of 700 women at the Blackstone Hotel on October 6, 1913.The film showed a mannequin in Poiret's "lampshade [or minaret] gown, whose 'hoop' swayed with the motion of her body," while "another model preened herself before a mirror and showed the basic principle of the trouser skirt."[48] In addition, a few colored slides were projected to illustrate Poiret's orientalist color combinations of blue and green, scarlet and black, purple and white. Unlike fashion newsreels, which were very

short, Poiret's film consisted of four reels, and some gowns were shown more than once.

It is unclear if this was Poiret's original 1913 film made in Paris, or a new one shot in the United States. Two weeks later he was supervising the making of a new one, according to the film journal *Motography* which reported that "Kinemacolor is taking natural pictures of the latest creations of Paul Poiret, the Parisian designer, including a number of radiant and diaphanous garments.... M. Poiret is in this country at present, lecturing on women's styles, and is personally watching the production."[49] In his discussion of color fashion newsreels, Eirik Frisvold Hanssen has pointed out how Kinemacolor films differed from contemporary film practices, having "more in common with earlier film conventions, specifically the cinema of attractions' mode of presentation which was based on 'showing' rather than 'telling' in order to demonstrate the powers of the photographic process."[50] Kinemacolor technology might therefore be argued to have a natural affinity with the fashion show, itself a form of "attraction," an affinity found in both Kinemacolor's film productions (such as *Paris Fashions*,1913) and its 1913 "cinemagazine" the *Kinemacolor Fashion Gazette*, a newsreel format showing fashion alone rather than next to "hard" news subjects.[51]

FASHION NEWSREELS FROM THE 1910S TO THE 1920S

At the same time that Poiret began to exploit film for publicity purposes in his fashion business, a significant quantity of newsreel footage showing fashion modeling began to be shown in cinema programs. It was internationally disseminated in a weekly newsreel format by Pathé-Frères from 1909 (*Pathé Revue*) and by Gaumont from 1910 (*Gaumont Journal*).[52] Early newsreels were short, with only two or three items on each reel, and the footage of Paris fashion was especially short. In 1911, however, Pathé expanded its fashion coverage by producing a series of short films entirely devoted to coming fashions for *Pathé Animated Gazette*.[53] That year, an American journalist commented "A growing feature of the imported films is the display in colors of the newest styles in gowns and hats in Paris. 'Mannequins' of the smartest Paris shops glide up and down for the camera operators, and in a brief time the latest fashion hints are

presented to the women of America."[54] The increase in newsreel footage of Paris fashion was matched in this period by the increasing publicity given to mannequins in novels, in the fashion press, at the races, and on stage. From 1912, Gaumont began to use named actresses as well as professional mannequins to model clothes in couture houses.[55]

In the theatre, the genre of fashion plays had existed since the 1890s, to which were added two touring plays about mannequins in the 1910s. In January 1912, *La rue de la Paix* by Abel Hermant and Marc de Toledo opened at the Vaudeville Theatre in Paris. With approximately fifty costumes designed by the fashion illustrator Paul Iribe and executed by the couture house of Paquin, the play, which satirized both Lucile and Poiret, was a glorified fashion show masquerading as a melodrama. Two years later, Paul Gavault's four-act comedy *Le Mannequin* opened at the Comédie-Marigny on February 5, 1914. Set in "Maison Augusta" in the rue de la Paix, the curtain rises on a scene of mannequins modeling for clients. Mme. Augusta instructs the mannequin on how to walk in this season's gowns: "Please walk, mademoiselle Julia. Look: with the bust held back, you understand, as for all our models this season."[56]

Just as Charles Musser has argued that American cinema audiences' viewing competences were structured by the vaudeville tableaux vivants and "living pictures" of the 1890s,[57] so these popular French touring stage plays brought the fashion mannequin's repertoire to a wider audience. Following them, a considerable number of fashion-related silent feature films began to be made in France between 1915 and 1929, set in fashion houses or department stores, some concerned with models and modeling, some featuring actual fashion shows. Most of these do not survive, and the task of comprehensively researching and cataloguing them from contextual sources remains to be done.[58]

In parallel with the development of fiction films with fashion-related themes, fashion newsreel continued to be produced, but remained, as Hanssen argues, "a remarkably static genre" that changed less than any other film genre from the 1910s–1930s.[59] Hanssen makes the case for fashion newsreel as a form of attractions-based film. Just as Poiret's marketing stratagems, which included both film and fashion shows, constituted an arrière-garde attraction at a time when cinema had moved into a period of "narrative integration," so too did newsreel retain some of the

features of attractions-based cinema. Paradoxically, it is no accident that three of the designers with Paris studios who were most innovative in developing the fashion show, Poiret, Lucile, and Patou, were also among the most open to the new medium of film in promoting their designs.[60] Distributed worldwide, French fashion newsreels promulgated the idea of exclusive Paris fashion, the earliest ones being set in intimate couture salons with scenes of two or three mannequins modeling to equally small groups of clients. Many of the surviving *Gaumont Journaux* have English language intertitles and feature the Paris couturiers who were particularly successful with American buyers.[61]

Fashion newsreel was addressed specifically to a female audience, as Hanssen has shown. He has also argued that the use of color in fashion newsreels in the 1910s and 1920s was derived and adapted from earlier attractions-based film practices and then integrated with more recent narrative cinema conventions. Newsreels reveal how much modeling styles varied between the houses, from the well-known gliding walk of the Paris mannequins to a more theatrical and flamboyant prance. Although the genre was relatively static, as Hanssen argues, there were variations within it in both modeling and directing styles. Photographs of Poiret's mannequins modeling in 1910 suggest that his first film of 1911 featured a line of mannequins walking across the screen. By contrast, Gaumont footage from the house of Boué in 1913 shows a single mannequin who revolves on the spot so smoothly that she might be on a turntable.[62] She does not walk anywhere, and the camera too remains static, a feature of the earlier cinema of attractions which by 1910 had largely been replaced by more complex ways of filming and editing. The short piece of Boué footage is most interesting for its close-up of the mannequin's right arm and hand (showing her wedding ring), during which she revolves alternately clockwise and counter-clockwise, so that the detailing on the sleeve is very well displayed.

In the newsreel footage from the 1910s, some mannequins simply model as they would have done professionally to clients in the salon, but others play the role of society women, chatting and taking tea together in narrative scenarios that thinly veil the point of displaying the latest fashionable costumes, introducing a note of fiction into real-life modeling. They suggest that the editing techniques, modeling styles, and sce-

nography of fashion newsreel have the potential to add a further layer of complexity to debates about the origins, chronology, and development of both the cinema of attractions and narrative cinema, particularly since attractions-based techniques continued to inform some types of fashion newsreel well into the 1920s.[63]

In the 1920s the Manuel Frères studio still used static cameras to film mannequins who revolved on the spot like the Boué mannequin, their upper bodies motionless, smiling glassily at the camera,[64] whereas in other newsreel footage from the 1920s both camera and mannequins are animated and mobile.[65] They walk in a lively and springy way through parks and gardens, constantly turning, gesticulating, chatting, and shooting the occasional sly glance at the spectator as if to check that they are still watching, while the camera, too, is in constant movement, circling them, first coming in close, then drawing back, so that its actions too seem flirtatious and dynamic. Whereas the former exemplifies Gunning's arguments about the direct frontal appeal of attractions-based film that shows rather than tells, the latter tends to support Musser's argument that even actualities footage creates a "diegetic universe."[66]

One apparently documentary fashion film from c.1926 or later shows a couture house fashion show, juxtaposing scenes of a real couturier (who may be Jean-Charles Worth)[67] talking a journalist or buyer through the collection with scenes of a glamorous fictional client whose older male companion exhibits a roving eye for the mannequins to add comedy to the scene. The film exemplifies Judith Mayne's argument that the mode of address of the cinema of attractions was inevitably gendered in that it employed "human figures to embody both the visual fascination and the rudimentary narrative structures of early film."[68] All eyes are on the mannequins. The look of the female client's male companion forms a counterpoint to the touch of the male couturier who, in talking the female buyer or journalist through the collection, seems unable to take his hands off the mannequin, whom he manipulates and revolves like a living doll on a turntable. This short film shows the visual seduction of modeling luxury clothing in an elite setting; but it also reveals, as the camera follows the mannequins through the salons in alternating close-ups and long shots, a complex set of gender, economic, and class relations

5.2A. Fashion Show in French couture house, possibly Worth, late 1920s. *Courtesy of Lobster Films, Paris.*

5.2B. Couture client at fashion show, possibly Worth, late 1920s. *Courtesy of Lobster Films, Paris.*

between the couturier, his mannequins, his saleswoman, and his two types of female customer, the private client and the professional buyer or journalist. These scenes, be they actualities or fictional reconstruction, highlight the class and gender masquerade that is a structural part of fashion as both industry and image.

The juxtaposition of the client's roving eye with the professional's roving hands in this admixture of fiction and factual film undercuts any simple distinction between attraction and narrative. It seems, in fashion, to be a case of "both/and" rather than "either/or," much as Charles Musser suggests when he argues that, for example, close-ups in narrative cinema do not just forward a film's story but also give the audience an opportunity to look at the stars. Musser concludes that attractions and narrative integration stand in a dialectical relationship to each other, and Elsaesser suggests that it is impossible—as well as conceptually and methodologically problematic—to separate them.[69] Nowhere is this more so than in the French fashion show and the fashion newsreel, for as both Williams and Balides have argued, "women become a certain kind of attraction in the cinema of attractions,"[70] and are "already fictionalised," their bodies invested with "a diegetic surplus of meaning."[71] Lucy Fischer makes the same point about Busby Berkeley's films from the early 1930s when she argues that, in cinema history, "certain myths concerning women are inscribed in the seemingly value-free level of plastic composition," so that female stereotypes amassed on screen constitute "an ongoing fashion show of popular female 'styles.'"[72] From the earliest actualities films portraying fashion in the 1900s to the visually more sophisticated footage of the 1920s where both camera and mannequins have begun to move together in a seductive duet, the fashion newsreel's direct address, like that of the mannequins who model in it, is to the spectator. Both fashion shows and fashion newsreel remained relatively static genres in the period of rapid style and technological change in which they came of age; and, as Mila Ganeva has argued in relation to German fiction films in the Weimar period, fashion modeling scenes disrupt the narrative flow of cinema and provide fragmented glimpses of earlier cinematic forms that reflect the fragmented experience of modernity in the early twentieth century.

NOTES

1. Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command,* 28.
2. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* 323.
3. Marie-Anne L'Heureux, "Nouveautés d'Automne," 514.
4. Gene Morgan, "Revue de la Ville." Cinematic metaphors, both pictorial and verbal, continued to be used in fashion writing and magazine layouts throughout the 1910s and 1920s.
5. Arsène Alexandre, *Les Reines de l'aiguille,* 61 and 72. The couturier cited is anonymous.
6. Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes,* 331 and 332.
7. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918.*
8. Ghenya, "La Journée d'un Mannequin," 15.
9. Constance Balides, "Scenarios of Exposure in the Practice of Everyday Life," 63–80. See too Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town,* 219–20.
10. See Balides, 68 and 74.
11. Stills can be can be viewed free of charge online at www.gaumontpathearchives.com. *Modes, Coiffures, défilés de mannequins présentant leurs coiffeurs* (1900, Gaumont), Gaumont-Pathé Archive reference number (hereafter GP ref) 0000GB 00097. *Métiers à tisser, mode, costumes en laine sofil. Plan sur des mannequins de mode* (1900, Gaumont), GP ref 0000GB 00348. *La mode. Aviation. Course cycliste Paris Roubais* (1900, Gaumont Actualité), GP ref 0000GB 00138 BOB1. *Ballet Serge Lifar. Festival de Cannes. Danseur et chorégraphe* (1900, Gaumont), GP ref 0000GB 007744 BOB 3.
12. Susan Hayward argues that from 1908 Gaumont, closely followed by Pathé, sought to widen its appeal to more middle-class audiences, and Abel argues that by approximately 1912 the high proportion of female characters in contemporary melodrama and spectacle "seems to assume a high percentage of women in certain French cinema audiences" (*French National Cinema,* 354).
13. On cinema acting, see Roberta E. Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures;* and Jean-Philippe Tesse, "Les Gestes qui sauvent," 82. On the influence of stage mannerisms on fashion modeling in early-twentieth-century German fashion photographs, see Susanne Holschbach, *Vom Ausdruck zur Pose.* On the historical precedents for the pose in fashion modeling, see Gabriele Brandstetter, "Pose—Posa—Posing—Between Image and Movement," 248–64.
14. L. Roger-Milès, *Les Créateurs de la Mode,* 68.
15. "Mistinguett fait du ciné," 356–58.
16. Bergson, *Creative Evolution;* Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990,* 57.
17. Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town,* 7 and 59.
18. According to Abel, from 1902 to 1904 the Pathé catalogues contain up to a dozen genres or *scènes:* "pleine air films, comic films, trick films, sports films, historical films and actualities, erotic films, dance films, dramatic and realist films, féeries, religious or biblical films, and synchronised-phonograph films" (60).
19. Ibid., 78.
20. On Méliès's féeries, and the genre in general, see Abel, 61–87.
21. David Robinson, *Georges Méliès,* 24.
22. Abel, 62.
23. Lucy Fischer, "The Lady Vanishes," 30–40.
24. Linda Williams, "Film Body," 19–35, quoted in Abel, 67.
25. Alexandre, 105.
26. Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault, "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History," 384.

27. Gunning argued that the cinema of attractions was followed by a period of transition to "narrative integration," from c. 1907 to c. 1913, thus setting up a binary opposition between attraction and narrative (although he argued the two could, and did, coexist in the same films). Charles Musser has both challenged and modified his periodization (see Wanda Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* 389–416). Musser, like Thomas Elsaesser (see Strauven, 205–23) has also queried Gunning's binarism, and Gunning himself has participated in the ensuing debates and redefinitions. For an encapsulation of the principal definitions, arguments and revisions to the debate twenty years after its inception, see Strauven's volume, which also reprints four important early papers, by Donald Crafton [1987, revised 1994], André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning [Japanese version 1986, French version 1989], Tom Gunning [1986, revised 1990], and Charles Musser [1994].

28. Strauven, 20.

29. Abel, 60–61.

30. Ibid., 60, quoting from Tom Gunning, "'Primitive' Cinema," 10.

31. Abel, 61, quoting Noel Burch, "Primitivism and the Avant-Gardes," 487.

32. See Germain Lacasse, "The Lecturer and the Attraction," 181–91.

33. Abel, 61, quoting Thomas Elsaesser, "Comparative Style Analysis for European Films, 1910–1918."

34. Abel, 61, citing Charles Musser, "The Eden Musée," 73–83; Musser, "The Nickelodeon Era Begins," 4–11.

35. On Poiret's life and work, see *Paul Poiret et Nicole Groult;* Palmer White, *Poiret;* and Nancy J. Troy, *Couture Culture.*

36. In the 1920s Poiret went on to act with Colette in a touring play, *la Vagabonde,* to design costumes for several French films and, while on a promotional tour with his mannequins in 1923, to star with them in a Czech comedy film, *The Kidnapping of Fux the Banker,* in which Poiret played himself, credited as "Leon" Poiret, presenting his collection to a young debutante. See Marketa Uhlirova, "Scandal, Satire and Vampirism."

37. Gustave Babin, "Une Leçon d'élégance dans un parc."

38. Robinson, 45.

39. Montoison, "La fête chez Paul Poiret," 829.

40. "Poiret's Elaborate Reception," 42.

41. "'To Bring 100 Gowns."

42. Lacasse, 181–91.

43. "Poiret, Creator of Fashion Here."

44. E. M. Newman, "Nothing to Do but Wear Fine Clothes!"

45. Elizabeth Leese, *Costume Design in the Movies,* 10. From the late 1900s, many French films, in particular those of Pathé-Frères, came under attack in the American trade press as "morbid, gruesome, indecent or simply 'in bad taste'" compared to "'good, clean, wholesome, national, patriotic, educational' American films," according to Abel, 45, who cites *Variety* and *Moving Picture World* from 1908. Abel describes how, from 1909, when the American National Board of Film Censorship came into being, Pathé's films were either rejected or forced to be cut or retitled in disproportionate numbers.

46. *New York Times,* "Paul Poiret Here to Tell of His Art."

47. *New York Times,* "Wants Women to be Audacious in Dress."

48. *New York Times,* "Poiret Startles Chicago Women."

49. *Motography,* "Poiret Creations Pictured," 296.

50. Eirik Hanssen, "Symptoms of desire," 107–108. "Poiret Creations Pictured," 296.

51. "Kino Starts New Series" (*Variety,* October 17, 1913), cited in Hanssen "Symptoms of Desire," 114.

52. Many examples can be found on the French Gaumont-Pathé website, some under "*défilé*" and many more simply under "*mode.*" See www.gaumontpathearchives.com. The earliest is *Mode à Paris et au Bois* (1909, Pathé), GP ref 1909 1. From 1910 there is *Belle époque. Mode 1910. La mode dans un salon* (1910, Gaumont), GP ref 0000GB 02046. From 1911, the volume increases significantly, with thirty-eight fashion items from that year, and thereafter the volume remains steady throughout the 1910s and 1920s. Coverage is divided between modeling in couture salons and in the fashionable parading grounds of the Bois de Boulogne and at the Paris races. The earliest salon shows, from 1911, are: *Paris, la mode, robes et manteaux Elise Porot* (1911, Gaumont), GP ref 1150GJ 0000; *La Mode à Paris, défilé dans le salon d'un couturier* (1911, Gaumont), GP ref 1113GT 00010; *Mode: les créations de mode Carlier, robe à transformation, robe kimono* (1911, Gaumont), GP ref 1112GJ 00007; *Paris: la mode des fourrures présentée dans un salon* (1911 Gaumont), GP ref 1143GJ 00011; *Paris: la mode feminine du couturier Henrie et Cie présentée dans un salon* (1911 Gaumont), GP ref 1134GJ 00010; *Présentation de mode dans un salon Parisien* (1911 Gaumont), GP ref 1111GJ 00008. An unusual variation showing modeling on a curtained stage is *France, deux mannequins présentent la mode Parisienne pour la camera Gaumont* (1911, Gaumont), GP ref 1121GJ 00017. Fashion in the Bois de Boulogne in 1911 can be seen in *Paris: la mode présenté au lac du Bois de Boulogne* (1911, Gaumont), GP ref 1129GJ 00015; *Paris, présentation de la mode au pavillon d'Armenoville* (1911, Gaumont), GP ref 1149GJ 00015; *France, mode féminine au lac du Bois de Boulogne: accéssoires, sacs et ombrelles* (1911, Gaumont), GP ref 1128GJ 00014. Fashion at the Auteuil racetrack in 1910 is featured in *Grand Steeple Chase en 1910* (1910 Gaumont) GP ref 1000GD 00149, and at Longchamp in 1912 in *Paris, Grand Prix à Longchamp* (1912, Gaumont), GP ref 1227GJ 00020.

53. Leese, 9.

54. Reel Observer, "In the Moving Picture World," 26.

55. The earliest in the Gaumont Pathé archives is *Paris. L'actrice Lucie Hamard présente la mode Laferrière dans un salon* (1912, Journal Gaumont), GP ref 1214GJ 00009, followed by *Arlette Dorgère, chez Drecoll* (1913, Gaumont), GP ref 1309GJ 00003.

56. Paul Gavault, *Le Mannequin,* 3.

57. Musser in Strauven (ed.), 164.

58. They would include *La poupée brisée* (1922), *Métamorphose* (1923), *On demande un mannequin* (1923) and *Faubourg Montmartre* (1924). Mila Ganeva has comprehensively covered fiction films with fashion shows and modeling from the 1910s in German cinema. See Ganeva, *Women in Weimar Fashion.* For America, see Barbara Naomi Cohen-Stratyner, "Fashion Fillers." Fashion in film in Britain in the 1910s–1920s has been covered by Leese, and also by Jenny Hammerton in *For Ladies Only?* For discussions of the ways in which, from the 1930s, narrative cinema incorporated the fashion show in American film, see Charlotte Herzog, "Powder Puff Promotion"; and, Sarah Berry, *Screen Style,* 47–93. On the silent period, see Sumiko Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture,* 87–100.

59. Hanssen, 107.

60. In 1915, Lucile, whose mannequins had featured in two Gaumont newsreels in 1913 and 1914, allowed her New York salon and her mannequins to be used Walter Edwin's *The Spendthrift* (U.S., 1915), a fiction film that integrated scenes of live modeling. On Patou, see the Gaumont-Pathé Archive which contains one newsreel feature, *Paris à la Mode: robes et manteaux, création Parry* (1912, Gaumont), GP ref 1210GJ 00011, that shows the very

first salon of Jean Patou, who opened it as "Parry" in early 1912. To launch Parry, Patou organized an afternoon event at the Théâtre Femina which included a debate on fashion ("une charmante causerie") and a fashion show, "presented on ravishing mannequins" who were illustrated in a lineup in the fashion magazine *Femina*. The printed program identified two schools of fashion, an eighteenth-century one and a more streamlined, neo-classical one—Parry's choice—that prefigured Patou's streamlined modernism of the 1920s. (See *Femina*, 157.) From the 1920s, many newsreels feature Patou fashions, and can be seen on the Gaumont-Pathé website.

61. They include: Parry (1912), later to become Jean Patou; Martial et Armand (1913); Boué (1913 and 1914), later to have a New York branch; Lucile (1913 and 1914), who had American branches in New York and Chicago by 1914; Paquin (1914), who also had a New York fur branch; Drecoll (1913 and 1914); Beer, and Buzenet (both 1916). Pathé's *Aspects de la vie en 1914* (1914 Pathé) has some footage of a Paquin mannequin modeling.

62. "Mannequin à Boué Sœurs en 1913," *Gaumont: Actualités diverses sur Paris 1900 à 1915*, 1915, Archives Françaises du Film (hereafter AFF) ref 50825. This standard modeling technique remained in use for decades. It features in Tony Lekain's *On demande un mannequin* (France 1923, restored Cinémathèque Française 2006) and is demonstrated in Julien Duvivier's *Au bonheur des dames* (France, 1931, restored Cinémathèque Française and Lobster Films, 2008) in a scene where the heroine Denise is taught to model, including close-ups of mannequins' feet turning on the spot.

63. See Hanssen.

64. Lobster Films, Paris, ref. no. NUM 92, France, documentary, 1929. The shots illustrated in this chapter are at: 01-55-24-24 and 02-54-39-01.

65. Philippe et Gaston, *Créations de Jeanne Lanvin: Vers la mode d'hiver*, 1920, AFF, ref 157153. Quatre mannequins dans un jardin, *Actualités*, 1927, AFF ref 3752.

66. Musser, in Strauven (ed.), 404.

67. I am indebted to Molly Sorkin at FIT, New York, who suggested this possible identification.

68. Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole*, 166.

69. Musser in Strauven (ed.), 411–12; and, Elsaesser in Strauven (ed.), 215–16.

70. Balides, 65.

71. Linda Williams, "Film body," 26, 24.

72. Lucy Fischer, "The Image of Woman as Image," 4.

WORKS CITED

Abel, Richard. *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896–1914*. Updated and expanded edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Alexandre, Arsène. *Les Reines de l'aiguille*. Paris: Théophile Belin, 1902.

Babin, Gustave. "Une Leçon d'élégance dans un parc." *L'Illustration*, July 9, 1910.

Balides, Constance, "Scenarios of Exposure in the Practice of Everyday Life: Women in the Cinema of Attractions" [1993]. In *Screen Histories: An Introduction*, ed. Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey, 63–80. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution* [*L'Evolution Créatrice*, 1907] Trans. Arthur Mitchell. London: Macmillan, 1911.

Berry, Sarah. *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Brandstetter, Gabriele. "Pose—Posa—Posing—Between Image and Movement." In *Fashion Body Cult*, ed. Elke Bippus and Dorothea Mink, 248–64. Stuttgart, Germany: Arnoldsche Publishers with the University of the Arts Bremen, 2007.

Burch, Noel. "Primitivism and the Avant-Gardes." In *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen, 483–506. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Chicago Daily Tribune. "Poiret Startles Chicago Women." October 7, 1913.

Cohen-Stratyner, Barbara Naomi. "Fashion Fillers in Silent Film Periodicals." In *Performing Arts Resources*, vol. 14, *Performances in Periodicals*, ed. Barbara Naomi Cohen-Stratyner, 127–42. New York: Theatre Library Assoc., 1989.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Negotiations 1972–1990*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

Dry Goods Economist. "Poiret's Elaborate Reception." September 23, 1911.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Comparative Style Analysis for European Films, 1910–1918." *Deuxième Colloque International de Domitor*, Lausanne, France, July 1, 1999.

Femina. 268, March 15, 1912.

Fischer, Lucy. "The Image of Woman as Image: The Optical Politics of *Dames*." *Film Quarterly* 30 (Fall 1976): 2–11.

———. "The Lady Vanishes: Women, Magic and the Movies." *Film Quarterly* 22 (Fall 1979): 30–40.

Gaines, Jane, and Charlotte Herzog, eds. *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Ganeva, Mila. *Women in Weimar Fashion: Discourses and Displays in German Culture, 1918–1933*. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2008.

Gaumont-Pathé Archive. http://www.gaumontpathearchives.com/.

Gavault, Paul. *Le Mannequin. Comédie en quatre actes*. Paris: Editions la Petite Illustration, 1914.

Ghenya. "La Journée d'un Mannequin." *Le Figaro-Modes*, no. 14, February 1904.

Giedion, Siegfried. *Mechanization Takes Command*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969 [1948].

Gunning, Tom. "'Primitive' Cinema—A Frame Up? Or the Trick's on Us." *Cinema Journal* 28 (Winter 1989): 10.

Gunning, Tom, and André Gaudreault. "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History." [1986]. Reprinted in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006.

Hammerton, Jenny. *For Ladies Only? Eve's Film Review, Pathé Cinemagazine 1921–33*. Hastings, U.K.: The Projection Box, 2001.

Hanssen, Eirik Frisvold. "Symptoms of Desire: Colour, Costume, and Commodities in Fashion Newsreels of the 1910s and 1920s." *Film History: An International Journal* 21, no. 2 (July 2009): 107–21.

Hayward, Susan. *French National Cinema*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Herzog, Charlotte. "Powder Puff Promotion: The Fashion Show-in-the-Film." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 134–59. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Higashi, Sumiko. *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: the Silent Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Hollander, Anne. *Seeing Through Clothes*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993 [1978].

Holschbach, Susanne. *Vom Ausdruck zur Pose: Theatralität und Weiblichkeit in der Fotografie des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: Reimer, 2006.

Kern, Stephen. *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983.
Lacasse, Germain. "The Lecturer and the Attraction." In *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* ed. Wanda Strauven, 181–91. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006.
Leese, Elizabeth. *Costume Design in the Movies*. Bembridge, Isle of Wight, U.K.: BCW Publishing, 1976.
L'Heureux, Marie-Anne. "Nouveautés d'Automne." *Femina*, no. 233 (October 1, 1910).
Mayne, Judith. *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
"Mistinguett fait du ciné." *Fantasio* 130 (December 15, 1911).
Montoison. "La fête chez Paul Poiret." *Fantasio* 120 (July 15, 1911).
Morgan, Gene. "Revue de la Ville. Picture of Models Good Drawing Card." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 25, 1910.
Motography. "Poiret Creations Pictured." X, no. 8 (October 18, 1913): 296.
Musser, Charles. "The Eden Musée: Exhibitor as Creator." *Film and History* 11 (December 1981): 73–83.
———. "The Nickelodeon Era Begins: Establishing the Framework for Hollywood's Mode of Representation." *Framework* 22/23 (Autumn 1983): 4–11.
New York Times. "Poiret, Creator of Fashion Here." September 21, 1913.
———. "To Bring 100 Gowns." September 7, 1913.
———. "Wants Women to Be Audacious in Dress." September 26, 1913.
Newman, E. M. "Nothing to Do but Wear Fine Clothes!" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 16, 1913.
Paul Poiret et Nicole Groult: Maîtres de la mode Art Deco: Musée de la Mode et du Costume, Palais Galliera. Paris: Editions Paris Musées, 1986.
"Paul Poiret Here to Tell of His Art." *New York Times*, September 21, 1913.
Pearson, Roberta E. *Eloquent Gestures. The transformation of performance style in the Griffiths Biograph films*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
Reel Observer. "In the Moving Picture World." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 26, 1911.
Robinson, David. *Georges Méliès: Father of Film Fantasy*. London: British Film Institute, 1993.
Roger-Milès, L. *Les Créateurs de la Mode*. Paris: Editions du Figaro, 1910.
Strauven, Wanda, ed. *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006.
Tesse, Jean-Philippe. "Les gestes qui sauvent." *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 587 (February 2004).
Troy, Nancy J. *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003.
Uhlirova, Marketa. "Scandal, Satire and Vampirism: *The Kidnapping of Fux the Banker*." In *If Looks Could Kill: Cinema's Image of Fashion, Crime and Violence*, ed. Marketa Uhlirova, 108–17. London: Koenig Books, 2008.
White, Palmer. *Poiret*. New York: C. N. Potter, 1973.
Williams, Linda. "Film Body: An Implantation of Perversions." *Ciné-Tracts* 12 (1981): 19–35.

SIX

Wanting to Wear Seeing: Gilbert Adrian at MGM

JANE M. GAINES

In this chapter I argue that to see the film is to want to wear the film, and more, to want to wear seeing itself. My point of departure is a particularly outrageous and scandalous gown that Gilbert Adrian designed for the eponymous protagonist of Cecile B. DeMille's film *Madam Satan* (1930).[1] Even in pre-Code Hollywood, this dress met with objections from the censors. Hence my attraction to the impossible costume-ball dress: it is Adrian's attempt not only to imagine a gown in which a woman seduces her own husband, but a gown which literalizes the wearer's body as an erupting volcano. Indeed, much of the fashion history fascination with this dress lies in the challenge of its rendering, the difficulty of translating Adrian's designs into material reality (a task which, in the *Madam Satan* case, was facilitated by the generous use of nude *soufflé* in the back as well as in the front). This most magnificent and sumptuous example of Adrian's work is an avenue into a continually intriguing problematic, a problematic shared by both motion picture costume history and the history of consumer culture. Let us call this the "wearability" conundrum. In popular vernacular this might be phrased as: "Should the modern woman wear a Look that is this extreme"? Or, should she "wear a Look that is too much like"?

For certainly, the Madam Satan dress is one of those Adrian inventions that epitomizes the defiance of adaptation that was said to characterize his motion picture work. And it is on the subject of adaptation,

most practically understood as the question of costume translatability into both commercial ready-to-wear "knock-offs" and women's dress practice, that I want to concentrate. But as you will see, translatability is not a simple question of stylistic modification. What I want to argue is that Adrian had a productive and creative relationship with what I am calling "unwearability."

To begin with the problem of translation calls attention to a discourse that is fascinatingly yet at times irritatingly inconsistent. This is the discourse or discussion of what modern women should do with the costume Looks articulated in the pages of *Screenland, Photoplay,* and *Vogue,* as well as in local newspaper fashion sections. Interestingly, these publications efficiently achieve three goals with the concept of untranslatability or irreplicability: untranslatability first adores and enshrines the artist designer; second, it discourages knock-offs, and, third, it dispenses style advice to the fashion novice. But the inconsistent wisdom thus imparted to the young woman contains the old double-standard message that springs from the sexual and social mores that applied to working girls in the earlier decades of the twentieth century. This contradictory advice is always what we could call "do–don't advice," such as "Do copy this dress but don't be caught wearing it." Such advice has historically been premised on the assumption that young girls yearned to become other than what they were. Motion picture scholars have found this cultural attitude throughout the first decades of the twentieth century. Shelley Stamp's "movie-struck" girls, filmgoers in the 1910s, for instance, were characterized at the time she says, as "hopelessly caught between their fascination with stories on the screen and a narcissistic desire to appear there themselves."[2] So significant and successful has been the work on the historical female spectator that it is now difficult to recall a time when no such work existed.

However, some years before feminists took up the historical study of consumer culture, Charles Eckert opened the door to this work in his study of 1930s Hollywood, central to which is the classic essay "The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window." In it, he fictionalizes an ideal nineteen-year-old single girl, the same one effectively "fictionalized" by the culture industries. An exquisite advertising model (constructed by each of her consumption choices), she sees in Macy's window a copy of Travis

Banton's design for Carole Lombard in *Rumba* (1935). The girl rushes into Macy's Cinema Fashions Shop to find the dress on the rack for $40 and from there rushes to the matinee screening of the film. Eckert imagines what she sees:

> Three dresses and a fur coat later, the gown entered. Back-lit, descending a stair, vivified by motion and music, it whispered and sighed its way into George Raft's roguish arms. Through the alchemy of his caresses it became libidinous, haunted. It slipped from Carole Lombard's shoulder and had to be lifted back again. It snaked its way across one knee, cascaded from the stairs to the floor like liquid light.[3]

In pursuing my own questions I take my inspiration from Eckert's satire in its assumption that no empirical study can deliver such a girl, nineteen years old in 1935, to the contemporary researcher. We cannot know her and she may never have known herself anyway, as Eckert's fiction of the culture industry's fiction suggests. Thus I propose to locate her here hypothetically—as part of a triangle—between the designer and the consumer culture, both of which we have studied with more success. It has been well established that the motion picture studios, reaching a new height of consumer targeting, in the 1930s launched cooperative advertising arrangements with local merchants as well as national companies, triumphantly taking up women's daily wear as a marketing strategy. But the motion picture studio designer may at times have been the weak link in this imaginary chain.

To begin thinking about the relationship between extravagant screen costume and ordinary women, I want to stress the distance between them, as visualized in Figure 6.1. It is the same as the distance between these women working in a secretarial typing pool and the dream costumes seen in a backstage melodrama such as *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941), the film advertised in a poster on their office wall. One of the last films designed by Gilbert Adrian before he left the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio (MGM), *Ziegfeld Girl* features both wildly fanciful and outrageous stage costumes as well as everyday wear. To ask about the distance between the Ziegfeld success story and these working women today, however, is neither to revive the critique of the culture industries nor to complain about women's unrealizable fantasies. The office in this 1941 photograph must have been a modern one and these women, so intent

6.1. Office typing pool with poster of Ziegfeld Girl.
Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

on their typing they are oblivious of the poster, may have been pleased to have found a paying job and may have wished for only somewhat more or for much more. We do not know. We are struck, however, by the incongruity between the ordinariness of these working girls and Lana Turner, the paradoxical "ordinary girl" who becomes a Ziegfeld Girl in the film. We wonder how the studio could be so confident that they could bridge this distance.[4] How, then, do we get around the problematic third aspect of translatability, the style advice corollary—in this case, specifically, the attitude that thinks of women spectators as copycat consumers and the screen as a shop window? As I will argue, there is a way in which Adrian's untranslatable designs throw up a barrier against this very reductiveness. But meanwhile in the background, the forces of commerce, working together with (and formulating) the aspirations of young women, produced the ongoing women's magazine debate: "to wear or not to wear the film."

The question of fashion and film in the 1930s and 1940s requires its own theory of female spectatorship, the fulcrum of which may be the motion picture star designer as much as the star herself. And here the best example may be Adrian, about whose designs the studio publicity was so unabashedly contradictory. During the height of his career at MGM, the publicist discourse effectively encouraged adoring emulation of Adrian designs—but emulation without exact copying. Here the contradictoriness of the message to young women overlaps with the studio discourse around the designer who was, after all, expected to design not just to design, but to design to inspire emulation. Relevant to these competing dicta is a larger world of possibility tucked inside the historical concept of emulation, a concept in need of significant rehabilitation, especially in this case. What we need in order to think fruitfully about emulation is an explanation of the diffusion function of mass culture. Michel Foucault, quite usefully, has discussed the historical term *aemulatio* as a similitude that goes beyond mirroring or the "means whereby things scattered throughout the universe can answer one another."[5] As Foucault theorizes this scale of mirroring, it is as though "Like envelops like, which in turn surrounds the other, perhaps to be enveloped once more in a duplication which can continue *ad infinitum*."[6] So the utility here is in enveloping as a way around communication theory's old one-way sender–receiver model, the model perhaps implied in a typical notion of emulation that is too easily translated into marketing's terms. What is needed in a new theory of emulation is an explanation of the all-consuming divorced from the judgment against consumption.[7] There could be in emulation both the "everywhere-you-go-you-see aspect" and the comfort of a commodity culture which anticipates our every sense need. Like this question of emulation, the wearability–unwearability problematic needs further complicating, so I want to divide it into what I call "five theses on unwearability." These theses I will then discuss in terms of Gilbert Adrian's work with Joan Crawford at MGM, 1932–1938.

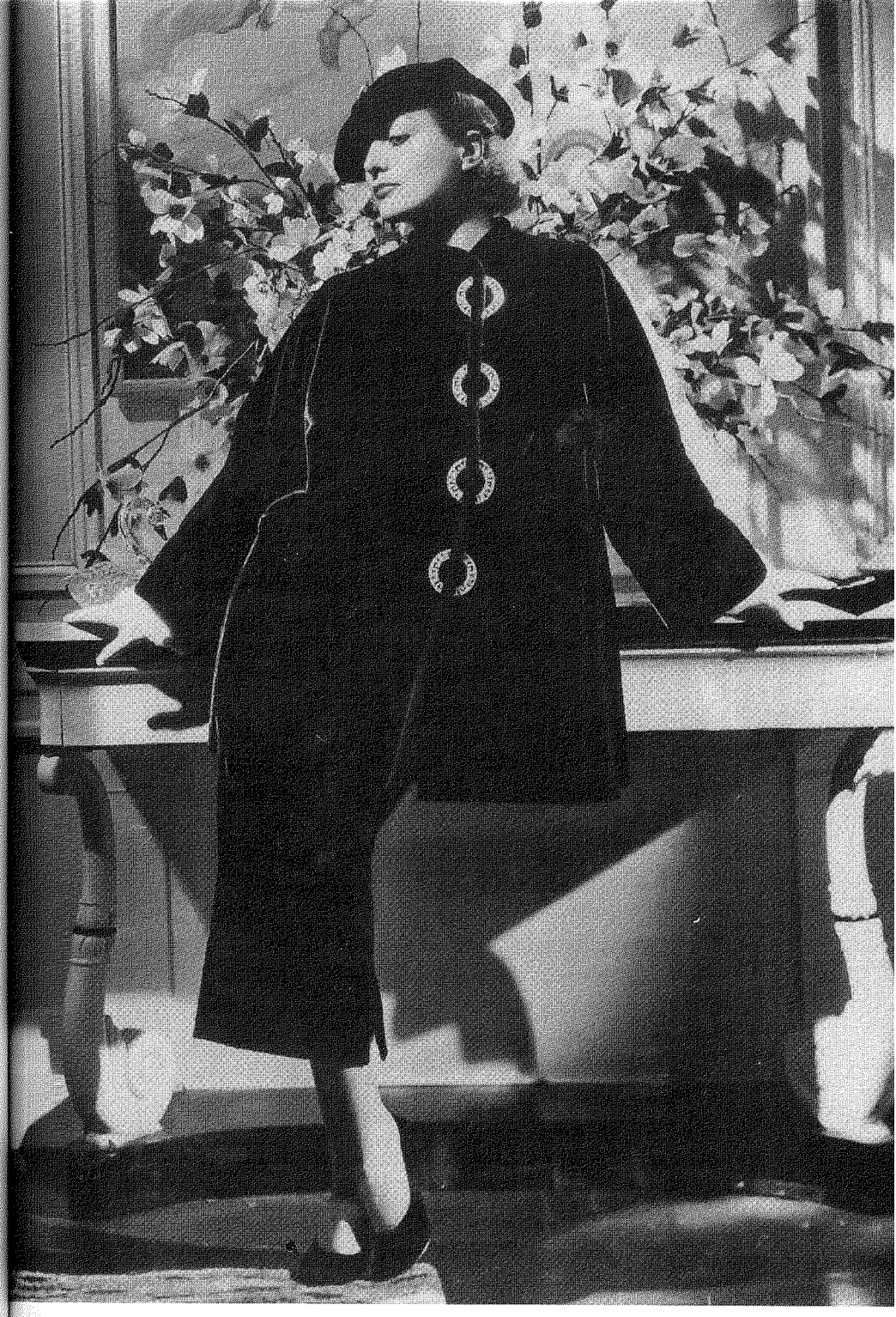
THESIS 1) *DECLASSIFICATION OF UPPER-CLASS STYLE*

Sarah Berry relies on this principle in her argument that in the 1930s luxury as a Look was extracted from the upper class and disconnected from

economic means as well as from the "breeding" that the class system has historically required. "Glamour," by definition, was developed in popular motion pictures as within reach of all, regardless of social standing.[8] In *Sadie McKee* (1934), for instance, the narrative brings Joan Crawford up from her status as the maid to the wife of the head of the household. Since social class is now only a matter of appearances, Adrian's exquisite detailing can make style-as-class highly visible, appropriating upper-class sumptuousness for the former maid who steps so effortlessly into elegance. Consider, for instance, the asymmetrical placement of the large half-moon rhinestone buttons on her three-quarter length black velvet coat. We cannot help but feel that the rhinestones on velvet, though they may be perfectly set design-wise, are ever so slightly askew. Here, also exemplifying the play with conventional design expectations, Adrian cuts Loretta Young's wonderful neckline out over the shoulder in a detail that is both necklace and collar, and renders her mutton sleeves in velvet. In two designs, old money fabrics and accessories have been de-monied (that is, the stuffy sense of old money has been removed) and repurposed in a youthful, defiant, and ever-so-slightly iconoclastic mode. In this new American mode, Adrian develops a highly reversible principle that if class is style, style is class.

THESIS 2) *UNWEARABILITY AS THE STARTING POINT FOR FASHION FANTASY*

During the 1930s craze for ready-wear, stimulated by cooperative advertising or "tie-ups" and fanned by the popular print media, Gilbert Adrian stood alone. Instead of hopping on the bandwagon, Adrian produced what might be called "never-wear." Fashion detractors thought Adrian's work was too *outré,* certainly for ordinary women who were cautioned never to attempt to wear the Looks he designed; some even thought that Adrian was too *outré* for screen actresses whose scenes did not necessarily require either his modernist experiments or his historical baroque.[9] What we might call the wearability problematic was concentrated, certainly between 1932 and 1938, on the modern dress aesthetic that Adrian



6.2A. *Sadie McKee. Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

6.2B. Loretta Young. *Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

worked out in a particular run of MGM films, a run of run-of-the mill films, really. These are films in which Adrian's designs, in particular for Joan Crawford, are scene stealers, offering visual attraction that exceeds narrative necessity. Recent scholars such as Robert Gutman, Sarah Berry, and Stella Bruzzi confirm as well the importance of the "smashing" dress, which, in Bruzzi's terms can work as an "interjection" with the capacity to undermine the "normative reality" of the film, and this is our opening for considering how the spectacular costume makes imaginative appeals to women.[10]

Here we see the contradictory message in all of its confusion. While the discourse of fan and women's magazines on motion picture screen fashion held that for the ordinary woman, these clothes were virtually unwearable, such costumes seen on screen could encourage imagined wearings. In this regard, Sarah Berry has argued that women *did not* take "unwearability" as a dictate as to what they could and couldn't wear.

Rather, she says, the motion picture extreme inspired new expression and even reinvention of the self through what one chose to wear.[11] The best 1930s test of the wearability/unwearability problematic is still the famous case of the *Letty Lynton* dress. It is well known that first Macy's and then other department stores across the country sold an extraordinary number of copies of the white *mousseline de soi* puffed-sleeve evening dress that Adrian created for Crawford in the 1932 film. The story was circulated that the studio designer was surprised at the extremes to which women took the mutton sleeve, making the voluminous dress sleeves of the screen original, in contrast, seem relatively modest. Intriguingly, Howard Gutner reports that Adrian was surprised by the rage that the dress produced, commenting that "In the studio we thought it a trifle extreme."[12] Adrian, of course, never had any idea which of his designs would be picked up by whom in the relay between studio publicist and fans. Fans, however, were ready to take these improbable clothes to new heights, to expand upon them and to incorporate them into their fantasy lives. So what we can take from the Letty Lynton dress example is that in the 1930s unwearability may be less a prohibition than a starting point for fashion practice, and even an invitation to fashion fantasy. As further support for this I would cite Andy Warhol, who once said that "Fantasy and clothes go together a lot." Now we wouldn't want his flat-footed definition to stand in place of all of the theories of fantasy advanced by feminist theorists in recent decades.[13] But there is a way in which Warhol's reduction of a complicated relation also appears as a penetrating insight insofar as it allows fantasy and clothes to exist together in fantasy space. In other words, we often have "fantasy clothes" whether we wear them or not.

To further test the wearability/unwearability hypothesis, we need to ask about the possibility of a disconnect between the viewer/consumer, the studio publicist, and the retailer, the consequence of the designer's unbridled screen work. Let us not forget those designs that the market rejected, either censored by retailers or the studio or snubbed by female consumers (I have considered in this regard the queerness of the *Queen Christina* (1933) fashions and other merchandising tie-ups[14]). The best example is *Marie Antoinette* (1938), the film Adrian designed

for Norma Shearer on what began as the most gargantuan budget of his entire MGM career. By 1938, MGM had given up on the idea of marketing tie-ups for the Adrian designs, and no publicity campaign was mounted for *Marie Antoinette* fashions. One of the problems, in addition to the shear extravagant enormity of the designs, may have been the connotation of "ridiculousness" the period costume inherited from the excesses of the eighteenth-century French court.[15] In particular, note the three foot high coiffure from the late 1780s, and the oblong hoop that defines the complex pannier skirt—two feet on each side of the waist and a third behind. Although costume historian Satch LaValley reports that Hattie Carnegie thought her clients might be interested in "modest little hoops," my contention is that since they apparently weren't, the unadaptable hoop exemplifies literal unwearability for us. Let us say that *Marie Antoinette* stands as Adrian's supreme achievement of the unwearable—clothes as furniture and animal shelter, among other things.[16]

THESIS 3) *SPECTACULARIZATION OF THE FAMILIAR*

Costume historians remind us that relative to Paris design, Hollywood costume in the Golden Era of the 1930s and '40s was seldom avant-garde. Hollywood designers explain that they were constrained to work with recognizable silhouettes because of motion picture release dates, a constraint that implicitly admits a market mindset. Working within these limits, designers knew that they could neither innovate nor anticipate because the appearance of their work was dependent upon the studio's release date timetable, a date set sometimes more than a year after production was complete. To get around this problem, the more adventuresome designers began with a familiar shape and produced the extravagantly spectacular out of it. In other words, the design challenge was to be both familiar and outrageous, a combination exemplified, perhaps, by Adrian's design for what I call the Letty Lynton poisoning suit. Here he begins with a belted afternoon suit, recognizable by its cut as a 1930s classic, but renders it not in wool but in *silver lamé*.[17] Another Letty Lynton

6.3. *Letty Lynton. Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

costume that provides a rendition of ordinariness spectacularized is an evening gown marked by the interestingly incongruous use of sequined faux bandanas. Often, Adrian's designing included unconventional or irreverent uses of fabric. So we have in this evening dress a signature moment of iconoclasm—the mixture of elegance and tawdriness, formal and casual wear—bandana-knots done in black half-sequins on white crepe at the neck and hips. Here, the bandana-knots also work out the film's scandal motif, carrying the idea that this well-bred young girl is having a sleazy affair with a callous playboy (Nils Asther), the man whom she will inadvertently poison. Again, we also see Adrian's characteristic asymmetry deployed between the hip and bodice treatment as well as between the sides of the body itself produced by the duality of the hip sash—half crepe fabric, half sequined.

THESIS 4) *ENVELOPMENT OR WEARING THE FILM*

Recall again Foucault's theorization of emulation: "Like envelops like, which in turn surrounds the other, perhaps to be enveloped once more in a duplication which can continue *ad infinitum*."[18] Let us say that the goal of the studios was to envelop the female consumer, but this envelopment is only part of what I mean by "wearing the film." There are ways of wearing the film and ways of *wearing* the film. I mean not only the sensorial engulfment of the spectator, a kind of commodity immersion, but also a more comprehensive engulfment. I also see in some cases an engulfment of the film by the dress, and perhaps even a rivalry between the dress and the film culminating in the victory of the dress that is the film.

This theory of the emulative with its tendency toward engulfment would rely upon the concept of synesthetic aesthetics, an adaptation of Vivian Sobchack's phenomenological approach to cinema. Synesthesia, the confusion of one sense with another, is of course a clinical disorder as well as a more general human tendency, and only following Sobchack an approach to cinema aesthetics. As an aesthetic, synesthesia begins with the principle of confusion between the senses and, as I see it, can

6.4. *Marie Antoinette. Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

6.5. *Dinner at Eight. Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

crescendo to a profusion of senses. Sobchack's synesthetic body, as I have discussed elsewhere, is a body that knows one sense in terms of another, a body "wrapped up in seeing and viewed in touching."[19] Theoretically, this confusion/profusion could extends to the experience of taste as well, and is suggested by the image of Jean Harlow's gold digger in *Dinner at Eight* (1933) where Adrian's visual literalization of a "concoction" was capitalized on by the MGM publicity department in a widely used production still (Figure 6.5). The synesthetic aesthetic exemplifies what I like to call the "much too much" aesthetic, a concept that figures the social into the sensorial. One principle of the "much too much" synesethetic aesthetic is this: when you run out of extreme signs in one semiotic system you draw from another. Conversely, something "over the top" involves a spilling from one sign system into another. Engulfed in so many ruffles, Jean Harlow here taxes the eye; at the exhaustion of the

eye we are referred to another sense, taking a cue from her character's penchant for eating chocolates in bed.

Again, the philosophy of Andy Warhol explains something both obvious and impenetrable, filling out the dimensions of this crucial "felt" component. "It's the movies," he says, "that have really been running things in America. . . . They show you what to do, how to do it, how to feel about it, and how to *look* how you feel about it." The synesthetic principle, then, is in the invitation to "*look* how you feel about things" as well as to "feel how you look about things," and is easily extended to the suggestion that you might also "taste how you feel about things." Yet sensorial engulfment and its concomitant sensorial confusion accrue to theories of the female spectator, the weakest side of the triangle, the other sides of which are the designer and the culture industry. She is the most unknowable.

Here the relative knowability of the designer's screen work picks up where the female spectator question leaves off and takes theoretical flight. Adrian's designs epitomized the film itself, going beyond the mere wearing of the costume within the film. His designs aspire to the condition of the film itself; they are designs that, even today in retrospective viewing, produce the effect of *wanting to wear the film.*

Adrian was interested in the architecture of the dress that glitters as much as the dress that billows, but he also knew that light-catchers and sparklers were scene-stealers. At least two of his most dazzling designs never appear on screen, their relegation to publicity an admission of their threat to the film. I refer to the famous bugle-beaded dress from *The Bride Wore Red* (1937) and a less familiar cape from *Sadie McKee* (1934). Sadie's full-length cape replicates aspects of the technological process, being itself a pro-filmic light source generating patterns on the wall without the aid of the projection apparatus. The motion picture star is here illuminated by her own costume. Daring to put light shows within the light show, Adrian organized his own sartorial discourse within and sometimes against the mise-en-scène, and sometimes against the characters, as we will see. Who other than Adrian would have decided to render a dress and matching cape in red bugle beads? Let us not forget, however, that bugle beads, sequins, and rhinestones have a long history of signifying the side-show and burlesque side of sexualized entertain-

ment, relying on a stabilized caricature of money and finery. Undeniably, Adrian's bugle-beaded matching cape and gown for *The Bride Wore Red* is cast in the narrative with this aesthetic history in mind. For when she chooses to wear this gown (against the protests of her maid), the Crawford character fatally reveals her gold-digger's motives to her fiancee's artistocratic parents. But more important, we need to consider what Adrian was attempting to do in the context of the latter half of the thirties. In both the *Bride Wore Red* dress and the *Sadie McKee* cape he created a sheet of light that can be seen to be worn—not worn, but *seen to be worn,* that is, not exactly seen as *wearable* in the practical, translatable sense, but only worn insofar as it is seen. And yes, I do mean, with reference to cinematic illusionism, that the phenomenal mountain of bugle beads may only "seem to be worn."

THESIS 5) *ARTISTIC AVERSION TO ADAPTATION EXPRESSED AS SOCIAL BARB*

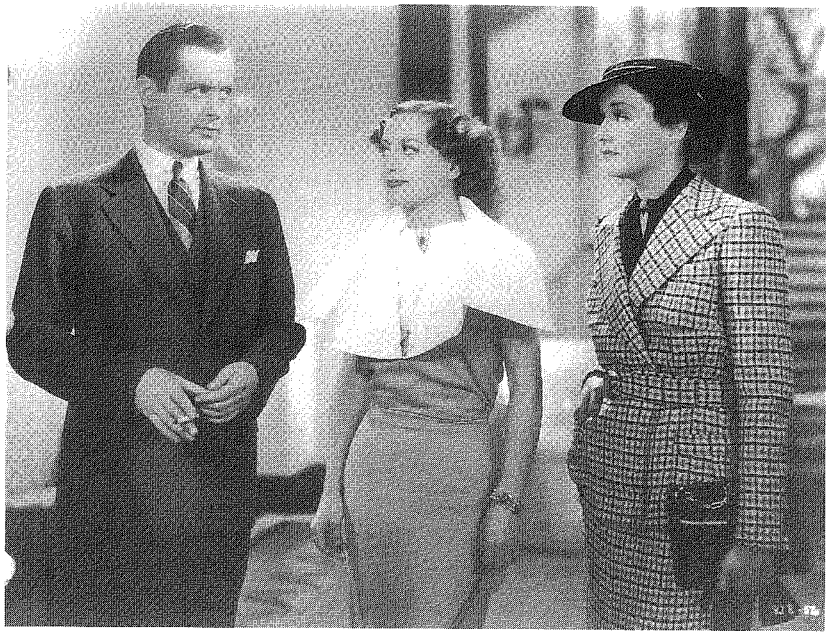
I have already suggested that Gilbert Adrian had an aversion to adaptation. A hallmark of his MGM work could be seen as the development of clever barriers to copying, defiant designs that ready-wear manufacturers could not easily follow. It has also been noted that his detail and use of shapes, in their extremity, undercut a crucial premise of women's fashion—flattery. The most evident example of this unflattering fashionability would be the gowns and hats for *The Women* (1939), which appear in some scenes to mock the characters who wear them by playing on comic incongruity. Here, a large woman wears a small perky hat (see Figure 6.7a). Or, consider the famous kite lapel which he used on Crawford in several films, and which, when featured in *No More Ladies* (1935), was called an upside down nun's cap in one fan magazine article (see Figure 6.7b).[20] Rather than attributing this troublesome design to either misogyny or wit, I want to suggest that the dissonant detail is a double knot: a social barb as well as a defiant resistance to adaptation. Let's concentrate on the social barb for a moment. What I mean by the social barb capacity of the design features is the way they are tucked into the social situation as comment on the absurdity of current protocols of dress and demeanor. The barb is "hidden in plain sight," as we might say,

6.6. *Sadie McKee. Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

unseen by the straight (male) view of the world. Who else would miss the fact that in 1935 Adrian was beginning to satirize Joan Crawford's Joan Crawford? Certainly the unwearability features of his clothes take on a certain attractive danger whose confusing message to the ordinary woman was: "Wear at your own peril," but do as Joan Crawford does.

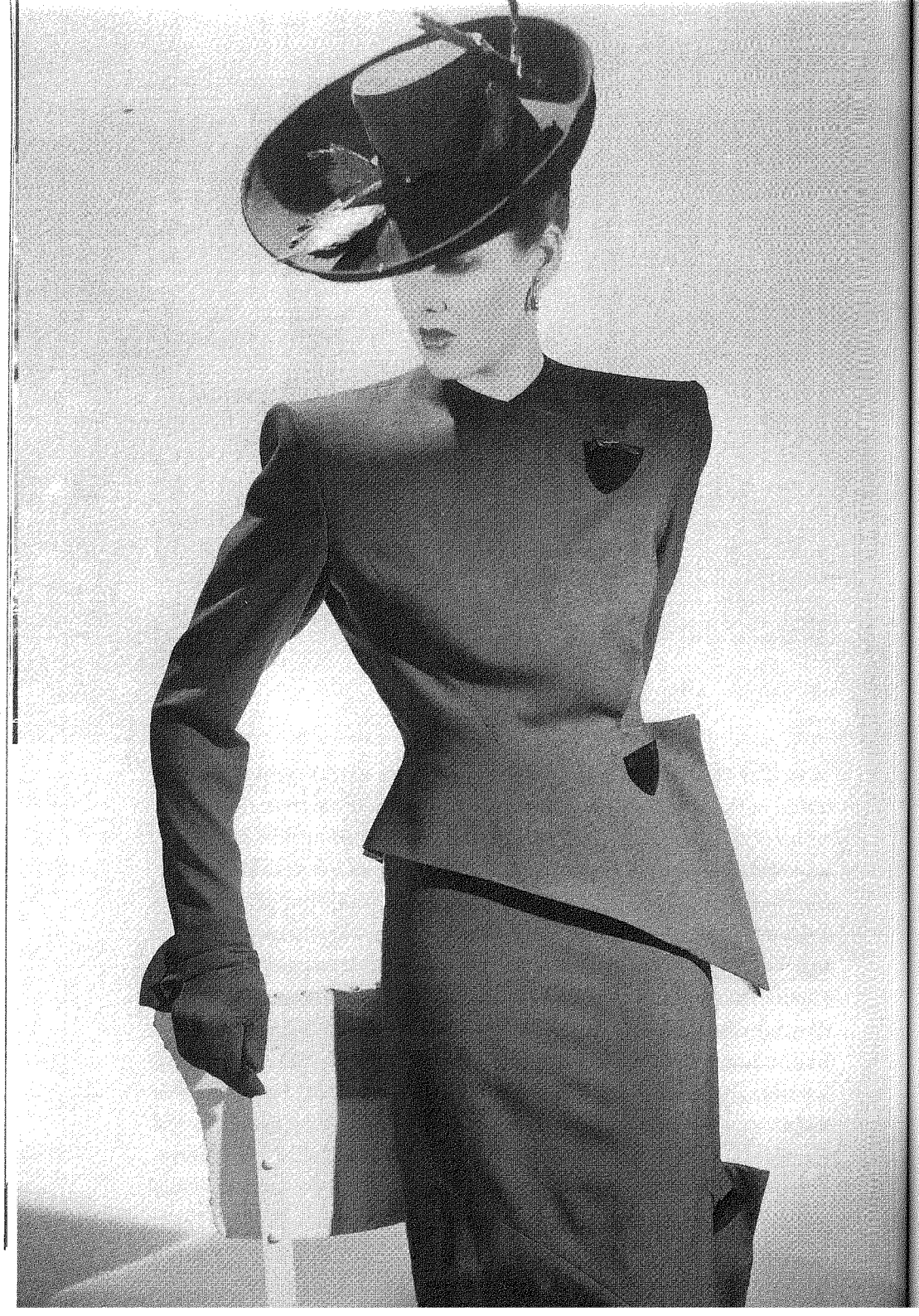
6.7A. *The Women. Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

With these theses in mind, I would like to argue for yet deeper insight, stepping back momentarily from particular designs. The problem with the term "fashion," of course, is that it has come to stand for both the particular stylistic features of dress and the recurrent change of these features. And this changeableness is thought to be as fickle as an unfaithful lover. There is something of the cruelty of the fashion system in Walter Benjamin's profound analysis of fashion culture in which he says that "Every fashion is to some extent a bitter satire on love; in every fashion, perversities are suggested by the most ruthless means."[21] In relation to the "bitter satire on love" I want to consider an example of Adrian's work in the ready-wear business that he started in 1941 after leaving MGM. Here I find the signature anti-copying device



6.7B. *No More Ladies. Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art Stills Archive.*

as well as the barb. His mode has an edge, its extravagance concentrated in the jacket that juts out into an asymmetrical triangle, the severity of the Crawford-Look wide shoulders turned upside-down and sideways. Was he now more free to send up the Crawford silhouette after having left MGM? The wonderfully unwearable but nevertheless to-be-worn jacket tells us that its details are perversely unfunctional and that dress in this mode is both absurd and phenomenally fantastic. Finally, this tailored suit epitomizes the flow of glamour into daily life. We have always known that glamorous fashions are in some way about love, especially if love is the reverse side of money. Perhaps Adrian's fashions are unwearable because we don't always want to know their underside, let alone wear such a sly commentary on yearning. As for the bitter satire, seen in the extremity and severity, really the ferocity, the angularity of his designing: to wear the film is to wear the unwearable, anyway.



6.9. *Dream of Love. Courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

6.8. (*facing page*) Adrian, Ready-Wear Suit. *Private Collection.*

CODA: *DREAM OF LOVE* (1928)

But wanting to wear seeing? Isn't that the ultimate in unrequited yearning? Consider the last of our examples of costumes that strive to rival or exceed the film in which they appear. Consider Joan Crawford in a lost film titled *Dream of Love* (1928), framed in white fox fur and wearing an Adrian design hemmed in glittering icicles. Consider how our appetite for wearing seeing is like our appetite for love. Ask, will our appetite for wearing seeing ever be satiated?

NOTES

1. See Jane Gaines, "On Wearing the Film," for illustrations of the Madam Satan dress.

2. Shelley Stamp, "Movie-Struck Girls," 198–199. She further explains that experts in those years characterized these girls as so distracted by themselves, others, and their own daydreams, that they were never exactly "absorbed" by the image on screen. See also Gaylyn Studlar, "The Perils of Pleasure?" 6–33, on how fan magazines in the 1920s worked to direct readers toward approved and "appropriate" interests.

3. Charles Eckert, "The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window," 110. First published in *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 3(1) (1978), this was one of the earliest articles to open up the serious study of cinema and consumer culture.

4. Dyer's main idea of in "Four Films of Lana Turner" is that Turner is quite remarkably constructed as both sexy and ordinary. Despite Dyer, I remain unconvinced that this actress ever stood for "ordinariness" very successfully.

5. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 19, is describing the way the now discredited notion of resemblance as a way of knowing had in the sixteenth century a nuance and richness that allowed for the kinds of distinctions we may have forgotten.

6. Ibid., 21.

7. See Jane Gaines, "On Wearing the Film," 167, where I suggest that following Merleau-Ponty (*The Visible and the Invisible*, 146) we get around a mechanistic understanding of emulative dress with the reciprocity of the bodily that "sees itself, touches itself seeing and touching."

8. Sarah Berry, *Screen Style*, xix, answers the question of class envy and fashion emulation quite complexly. She urges an understanding of dress in the 1930s that goes beyond the question of economics, especially as it "acquired social protocols." Further, the "implication that upper-class glamour [was] a matter of appearances rather than 'breeding' (and therefore could be emulated) does not imply that viewers were interested in adopting the *values* of the upper class." The opposite would be the case, as both Hollywood films and popular fashion discourses "demystified" upper-class glamour in ways that emphasized economics, not upper-class moral superiority. Joan Crawford, for instance, who always moved up from working class to middle class, was "most likely admired and imitated for her characters' determination not to be trapped in predetermined social rules," suggesting that she represented more than mere "escape" from working class situations.

9. See Howard Gutner, *Gowns by Adrian*, 160, on this charge against Adrian.

10. Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema*, 17. But to suggest how this dress breaks the code, consider director George Cuckor's comment that if the costume "knocked your eye out" it was not good for either the scene or the film (as quoted in Gaines, "Costume and Narrative," 195, which see also for how Hollywood creative personnel gave lip service to the idea that costume posed a threat to the narrative).

11. Berry, 87, argues against seeing a contradiction between fashion marketing's insistence on wearability and the apparent unwearability of screen fashions: "Far from contradicting consumer fashion marketing and its emphasis on 'wearable' costumes and star emulation, these stylistically excessive modes of costuming can be seen to represent the apotheosis of both costume and fashion as agents of self-invention and the malleability of social identity."

12. Gutner, 119. Berry, 88, references the *Fortune Magazine* article that reports the Modern Merchandising bureau's claim that Macy's sold 500,000 copies of the Letty Lynton dress, also states that fans created even more exaggerated sleeves, and concludes that the American woman is much more "dramatic" as well as more "courageous" than Adrian ever imagined that her to be. These claims could be true, but we should also consider that the news story may have originated as a press release written by MGM publicists or an interview with Modern Merchandising Bureau's founder Bernard Waldman. For more on the Letty Lynton dress, see Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, *Fabrications*, 1985.

13. For a feminist theory of fantasy that is perennially productive see chapter 4 ("Fantasia") of Elizabeth Cowie's *Representing the Woman*, 123–165.

14. See Gaines, "The Queen Christina Tie-Ups," especially 53, on the subversion of gender assumptions. On Adrian as gay male designer see Gaines, "Dorothy Azner's Trousers." Satch LaValley, "Hollywood and Seventh Avenue," 81–82, says that the *Queen Christina* collars were successfully adapted and sold at Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Gimbel's. I am still looking for evidence of women wearing this collar that comes close to the evidence of women wearing the Letty Lynton puffed sleeve.

15. Gaines and Herzog, *Fabrications*, 21.

16. The reference here is to the vermin that reportedly infested eighteenth-century wigs, attracted to the four-paste used in their construction. See Gaines and Herzog, *Fabrications*, 21–22.

17. For further discussion of the scene and illustration see Gaines, "Costume and Narrative," 207.

18. Foucault, 21.

19. Gaines, "On Wearing the Film," 167. This would begin with Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, 76, where she refers to the "cooperation" of the senses. Sobchack's earlier notion of cinematic synesthesia is based on her use of Merleau-Ponty. Less indebted to him is the more recent concept of "cinesthetic" in Sobchack, "What My Fingers Knew," 53–84, which doesn't develop the feature of reciprocity that I am relying on here.

20. Gaines, "Costume and Narrative," 192.

21. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 79.

WORKS CITED

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project.* Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Berry, Sarah. *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Bruzzi, Stella. *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Cowie, Elizabeth. *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Dyer, Richard. "Four Films of Lana Turner." In *Only Entertainment,* ed. Richard Dyer, 65–98. London: Routledge, 2002.

Eckert, Charles. "The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 100–121. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Gaines, Jane. "Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman's Story." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 180–211. New York: Routledge, 1990.

———. "Dorothy Arzner's Trousers." *Jump Cut,* no. 37 (1992): 88–98. http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC37folder/ArznersTrousers.html.

———. "On Wearing the Film: *Madam Satan.*" In *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations, and Analysis,* ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson, 159–177. London: Routledge, 2000.

———. "The Queen Christina Tie-Ups: Convergence of Show Window and Screen." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video,* no. 11 (1989): 35–60.

Gaines, Jane, and Charlotte Herzog, eds. *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body.* London: Routledge, 1990.

———. "Norma Shearer as Marie Antoinette: Which Body Too Much?" In *Fashioning Film Stars: Dress, Culture, Identity,* ed. Rachel Moseley, 11–26. London: British Film Institute, 2005.

———. "'Puffed Sleeves Before Tea-Time': Joan Crawford, Adrian, and Women Audiences." *Wide Angle 6,* no. 4 (Spring 1985). Repr. in *Stardom: Industries of Desire,* ed. Christine Gledhill, 74–91. London: Routledge/British Film Institute, 1991.

Gutner, Howard. *Gowns by Adrian: the MGM Years 1928–1941.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001.

LaValley, Satch. "Hollywood and Seventh Avenue: The Impact of Period Films on Fashion." In *History and Hollywood: Costume Design in Film,* ed. Edward Maeder, 78–96. New York: Thames and Hudson/Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1987.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible.* Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Sobchack, Vivian. *The Address of the Eye.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.

———. "What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh." In *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture,* ed. Vivian Sobcack, 53–84. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Stamp, Shelley. *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Studlar, Gaylyn. "The Perils of Pleasure? Fan Magazine Discourse as Women's Commodified Culture in the 1920s." *Wide Angle* 13, no. 1 (1991): 6–33.

Warhol, Andy. *Style, Style, Style.* New York: Bulfinch, 1997.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Bride Wore Red. Dir. Dorothy Arzner. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1938.

Dinner at Eight. Dir. George Cukor. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1933.

Dream of Love. Dir. Fred Niblo. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1928.

Letty Lynton. Dir. Clarence Brown. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1932.

Madam Satan. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1930.

Marie Antoinette. Dir. W. S. Van Dyke. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1938.

No More Ladies. Dir. Edward H. Griffith. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1935.

Queen Christina. Dir. Rouben Mamoulian. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1933.

Rumba. Dir. Marion Gering. Costumes, Travis Banton. Paramount Pictures, 1935.

Sadie McKee. Dir. Clarence Brown. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1934.

The Women. Dir. George Cukor. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939.

Ziegfeld Girl. Dir. Robert Z. Leonard. Costumes, Gilbert Adrian. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1941.

Stazione Termini. Dir. Vittorio de Sica. Costumes (Jennifer Jones), Christian Dior, Columbia Pictures, 1954.

Tea and Sympathy. Dir. Vincente Minnelli. Costumes (Deborah Kerr), Helen Rose. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1956.

TELEVISION

Mad Men. Prod. Matthew Weiner. Costumes, Katherine Jane Bryant. American Movie Classics, 2007–present.

EIGHT

Adornment in the Afterlife of Victorian Fashion

MAURA SPIEGEL

Among the variety of dress-reform movements that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, the female "aesthetic dress" movement, which originated with the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts Movement near mid-century, is distinctive for having a significant fashion influence. It caught on in the 1870s and had an impact on fashion design until the end of the century. Walter Crane, an artist and illustrator associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, tells us that the aesthetic dress Look drew inspiration "from the purer and simpler lines, forms, and colours of early medieval art."[1] The archetypal "aesthetic dress," according to fashion historian Patricia Cunningham, had a "loose bodice, sleeves set in high on the shoulder so they would not restrict movement, and a full skirt worn without extending petticoats or crinolines."[2] Beyond design influence, these clothes seemed to open up a new or at least distinctive notion of feminine self-fashioning, a look for the artistic nineteenth-century woman, defining a kind of feminine subculture of intellectual, artistic, and cultivated women (Sarah Bernhardt and Isadora Duncan both developed their style out of this look). These loose-fitting and uncorseted, wide-wasted and distinctively simple, unornamented dresses offered the intelligent woman an anti-fashion fashion engagement.

Anti-fashion fashion, like the aesthetic dress movement, is, arguably, a creation of the nineteenth century. It isn't after all very surprising that while fashion was gaining momentum as a consumable middle-class

marker of taste, a backlash was building, or a variety of backlashes.[3] One influential source of fairly consistent anti-fashion opinion was the high-minded Victorian novel, where fashion and fashionableness are almost consistently coded negatively. The conventional opposition between the fashionable or "ornate" woman and the "anti-fashionable" woman is often configured, especially in this period, as one between ornateness and plainness—and indeed the aesthetic dress movement favored simplicity and plainness over the more elaborate adornment and detailing of fashionable styling. In novels of the period we repeatedly encounter this opposition as a contest between the "ornate woman" and the "plain woman," and it almost always resolves in the triumph of the plain woman—who gets her man. The original of the plain heroine, whose antithesis, the ornate woman of fashion, is traditionally reviled, is a creation of the nineteenth century.[4] Female fashion, associated in novels of this period with ornament, with "frills and furbelows," conveyed the image, for many serious novelists, of a woman whose self-presentation was either imperfectly or too perfectly managed. (A host of characters from Dickens comes to mind, from the bedecked and bedraggled Miss La Creevy, "a mincing young lady of fifty"—doubtless a bit out of fashion—to the "over-dressed" Miss Knag, both found in *Nicholas Nickleby.*) The woman of fashion serves primarily, in these novels, to make the plain woman look good, to provide a contrast to her virtues, to morally enhance her final victory. To list some of the most obvious examples: Jane Eyre, our ur-"plain Jane" who even declines Mr. Rochester's gift of a wedding trousseau, has both Adèle and Blanche as anti-types; *David Copperfield*'s Agnes has Dora; *Middlemarch*'s Dorothea Brooke and Mary Garth, two variants on the plain woman, are contrasted with Rosamond as an ornate type; and *Wuthering Heights*' Cathy Earnshaw famously embodies both types in herself—to her peril. Plainness in the Victorian novel is associated with the good middle-class English virtues of earnestness, modesty, integrity, autonomy, and character; and, in some instances it is also linked to the perhaps compensatory traits of female intelligence, verbal agility—wit. Ornament is linked to any number of faults, including vanity, silliness, falseness, sentimentality, and Catholicism. In these novels, intelligence falls on the side of plainness, while sophistication (or too much worldliness) falls on the side of fashionableness or the ornate.

The man who chooses the ornate over the plain woman has, in many instances, exposed an unredeemable flaw of character, and he usually finds himself ruing his choice.

In the afterlife of Victorian narrative, in movie adaptations, historical fictions, and films, the moral and sexual contest between the plain and ornate woman lives on. A staple of the nineteenth-century female *Bildungsroman,* this opposition continues to occupy a place in coming-of-age stories of our own era. *Legally Blonde* (2001), for example, a popular, high-grossing film, gains comic traction by inverting the familiar Victorian paradigm, shuffling the terms so that the seemingly superficial, fashion-conscious, ultra-"fem" heroine, Elle Woods, turns out to be more clever than her New England–styled "plain" rival, and also to have more integrity, heart, and grit than her anti-type. Ms. Woods, who majored in fashion in college, can make it at Harvard Law School *and* maintain a perfect manicure. When we of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries return to tell stories set in the "Victorian era," these two types almost invariably make an appearance. Their opposition provides a scaffolding to explore ideas about sexuality and gender, ideas that have a special place in nineteenth-century ideology and scientific speculations. Theories of "Victorian sexuality" (itself a fetish, and of course something that could not be named in its own time but that remains a reference point for sexuality to this day) come into play in the costuming of post-nineteenth-century renderings of Victorian society. Adornment—and the very idea of fashion—is tied in a number of ways to issues of sexual expression, sexual selection, and gender. In the two films I will explore in this chapter, both adaptations of revisionist Victorian novels—that is, novels written about but not during the Victorian period—John Fowles's 1969 *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and A. S. Byatt's 1992 *Angels and Insects* (or *Morpho Eugenia*), ornament carries ideological freight in its relation to sexuality, gender, and to *nature,* a word Raymond Williams described as "perhaps the most complex in the language," and in relation to fashion, too.[5] In both of these films, the "plain" women win out against their ornate rivals, and the plain characters are the ones with whom the viewer identifies.[6] In the texts from which these films were adapted, however, the two terms, the *ornate* and the *plain,* take on new meanings, meanings that reflect their authors' revisionist agenda vis-à-vis Victorian

sexuality, and also, unsurprisingly, meanings regarding the period of their own production.

Additionally, the nineteenth-century themes of sincerity, modesty, and female autonomy that played a significant role in narratives treating the types of the plain and the ornate woman in Victorian novels also play a role in these two films. Those positively valenced Victorian values of sincerity and modesty that were conventionally associated with plainness in the nineteenth century, are exposed in the films as mere ideology; plainness is rendered as no less a performance than fashionableness.

THE DECLINE OF ADORNMENT

In some quarters, the ornate and the plain are to this day quite reductively gendered. Ornateness is associated (at least in the human species) with the female, and so, by a familiar equation, its value is discounted; and plainness, correlated with the male, comes to signify dignity and power. Once women begin to aspire to some parity with men, at the end of the eighteenth century, the great era of ornateness (wigs, powder, brocade, cod-pieces, beauty spots) begins its decline, followed by what fashion historians call "the great male renunciation," that is, the rise of men in black.[7] Ornateness, however, receives its most enduring assault from the female side, in Mary Wollstonecraft's founding feminist document, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), where she rails against the role of fashion in women's lives, observing that women of fashion "take pride in their weakness."[8] "Soft," "cunning," and far too attentive to their clothes, women confuse style with knowledge. Women are betrayed, Wollstonecraft remonstrates, by such "trivial employments" as fashion, which reduces the mind and trains the female to be vain and artificial.

Indeed, Wollstonecraft urges women to renounce their frills, to dampen their display, contending that to gain social power, women must forfeit sexual power; they must forfeit their frivolous attachment to fashion and accede to rationality, to behave more "like men." This argument remained persuasive for a very long time; one sees its influence, for example, in the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. In an earlier iteration,

with a eugenics-inspired twist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman applies this premise to her female utopian novel *Herland,* published in 1915. The novel is attentive to female attire and self-fashioning throughout, including an enthusiastic description of the revolutionary introduction of pockets into the unadorned tunic-like dresses these highly evolved women have devised. Convinced that the display and enhancement of female secondary sexual characteristics both degraded the female *and* was responsible for the devolution of the entire species, Gilman contended that women must phase out these corruptions through determined acts of will. Comparing female adornment to the male peacock's celebrated fan—in her view significant only as a physical handicap to the animal—she makes the case that "exaggerated differences" between male and female secondary sexual characteristics are correctable mutations. Gilman's objective, a decrease in observable gender differences, relies upon a diminution or tamping down of both artificial and physiological ornamentation. As the women of Herland demonstrate, in plainness lies power.

In an altogether different theory for the fall of ornament from grace, Anne Hollander proposes that fashionable dress loses prestige in the nineteenth century because of the fashion plate, new mass-produced images found in *Godey's* and other early women's magazines. Fashion-plate artists developed an illustrative style that showed no impulse to keep pace with serious art, Hollander explains—which for centuries had represented the dynamic between the "beauty of the natural world and the beauty of rich clothes." The result was that fashion lost moral ground along with aesthetic prestige. The images in the fashion plates became more and more elaborate; the fashions appear increasingly insipid and, in Hollander's account, "spiritually burdensome" and "at odds with earnest pursuits."[9] Hollander goes on to observe that while photography was developing at great pace, it was long remiss in dealing with the image of female elegance, up until the 1920s when it first found a fashion language.

Plainness and ornateness in dress have taken on many meanings in film representations through the decades. Hollywood wardrobe designers of the 1930s understood themselves as the arbiters of the fashion language of feminine sophistication. In this era, the intelligent woman is *pro*-fashion.[10] Being fashionable suggests confidence, independence—

sexual and financial—and knowingness. Hollander observes that in the 1920s and '30s "the female clothed body was given its own dignified visual unity for the first time since antiquity."[11] Indeed, as Hollywood virtually invents the language of glamour, elegance of line, casualness and motion are stressed; ornament is eschewed. Sophistication has switched sides; now on the side of plainness, streamlined fashion asserts itself as empowering to women. In 1930s films representing *contemporary* life, the ornate woman is the matron, the insignificant or naïve ingénue, the social aspirer, the woman without taste; she is garish, she is Stella Dallas. Her antithesis does not suggest *restraint;* she is Jean Harlow, Carole Lombard, Greta Garbo. Ornament belongs, among other places, to the past, and in the 1930s Victorian costume movies, women are decorated more than attired. For the 1930s, the Victorian woman *is* the ornate woman; her self-adornment is without sexual or social force. Frilly clothing becomes associated with little girls.

THE PLAIN AND ORNATE IN THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

The 1981 film adaptation by Harold Pinter of *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* which was nominated for six Academy Awards, including best costume design for Tom Rand (won that year by Milena Canonero for *Chariots of Fire*), presents a self-conscious gloss on the Victorian novel, and offers a revised, very 1960s representation of our two types. Ernestina (Lynsey Baxter) is the ornate figure here; she is the pretty, well brought-up daughter of a self-made industrialist; she is affianced to the upper-crusty Charles (Jeremy Irons). Here's how Fowles introduces this ornate woman in his novel:

> The Young lady was dressed in the height of fashion, for another wind was blowing in 1867: the beginning of a revolt against the crinoline and the bonnet. The eye in the telescope might have glimpsed a magenta skirt of an almost daring narrowness—and shortness, since two white ankles could be seen beneath the rich green coat and above the black boots . . . ; and perched over the netted chignon, one of the impertinent little flat "pork pie" hats with a delicate tuft of egret plumes at the side.[12]

8.1. Three-tiered skirts, beribboned bonnets, a double-breasted jacket, and a mantle place these 1855 fashion-plate figures in an inelegant confusion of the plain and the ornate. *Courtesy of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, UW28769z.*

In the film, Ernestina's fashion sense is not so flatteringly portrayed. Her first appearance shows her to some advantage; she is wearing lavender and dark purple, a fetching contrast to the grays of the windswept seaside scenery, but the rather fussy fringes on her dress and her little "pork pie" hat suggest primness rather than elegance. In subsequent scenes, her dresses combine pinks and blues, often in large plaids; frumpy little bows are distributed meaninglessly about her costume without reference to her figure; and short, puckered ruffles and little buttons run down her front. Her ornate dresses seem to carry the air more of museum displays than fashion plates, and as such they appear somehow musty and a bit depressing to modern tastes. Tightly trussed, her hair fussily and unbecomingly arranged, Ernestina looks prissy and over-dressed—in 1960s argot, "uptight." Without glamour or elegance, her clothes seem an indictment of both femininity (*qua* femininity) and of fashion itself—if such designs could ever have been fashionable.

In one scene, Charles finds Ernestina in her garden where she appears to be expressing her justifiable if unexamined boredom and fury through the acceptable, ladylike "exercise" of archery. Amid trees and flowers her plaid matching dress, gloves, and hat clash with her setting. Her ensemble appears especially silly and contrived as she moves stiffly about this natural scene. Given that she is surprised by Charles's visit, we wonder at the reason for such an elaborate display of attire in the middle of the afternoon. Her get-up seems intended to suggest that she has not the faintest idea of how *not* to obey the laws of fashion—which in the world of this film are implicitly linked to conventionality and the repressive rules of propriety.

In contrast to the ornate Ernestina appears Sarah (played by Meryl Streep), our plain woman who is also a "mad" woman, a marked woman, a seduced seductress—a social outcast. Sarah, dressed often in black or in what used to be called "earth tones," displays for the late-twentieth-century viewer a more compelling response to the circumstances of her Victorian lot. Her clothes are unornamented, loosely fitted (there is no evidence of a corset) allowing her the mobility to recline picturesquely under a tree and to move freely across fields and underbrush on her transgressive walks in the undercliff. Her crisp white un-frilly petticoats are revealed when she swings her legs on her route through the woods. Her

8.2A. Reaching a lavender-colored gloved hand to her fiancé, Ernestina is dressed in a slightly ill-fitting purple gown with lace and feathery-fringe trim. Her looped braids, glittery earrings and brooch, and her lace and beribboned hat establish a bourgeois version of our ornate woman in *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

hair is arranged in a simple chignon, which loosens into thick unruliness in almost every scene. Her plain clothes are associated with an idea of Romanticism, as in David Caspar Friedrich's painting, "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog" (1818), but also with the Pre-Raphaelite image of tragic feminine beauty and sensuality—linked with the aesthetic dress movement discussed earlier.

In contrast to the film, Fowles in the novel emphasizes Sarah's "obliviousness" to fashion, rather than an anti-fashion statement implied in her costuming on screen.[13] Here's our first glimpse of her in Fowles's text:

> She had taken off her bonnet and held it in her hand; her hair was pulled tight back inside the collar of the black coat—which was bizarre, more like a man's riding coat than any woman's coat that had been in fashion those past forty years. She too was a stranger to the crinoline; but it was equally plain that that was out of oblivion, not knowledge of the latest London taste.[14]

Unlike her rival Ernestina's self-presentation, the drama of Sarah's clothes is activated in nature—when she stands in weather, windswept, when she crosses terrain—not when she makes an entrance in the drawing room. Sarah's dresses, in their simplicity of fabric and design, in the

8.2B. Looking distinctly Pre-Raphaelite in this publicity photograph for *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* Meryl Streep's plain outfit of stark wool is arranged dramatically in folds that suggest depths, secrets, and an erotic charge of equal parts shame and defiance. *Courtesy of United Artists/Photofest.*

absence of corseting, and the tailoring that allows her freedom of movement, reference the Look of aesthetic dress, as her attitudes and the poses she strikes echo various Pre-Raphaelite paintings. What's more, her fashioning would seem to confirm Anne Hollander's thesis in *Sex and Suits* that women's clothes have gained elegance by aspiring to the single-lined look of the man's suit; notably, in the period of the film's production, circa 1980, tailored suits for women, "power suits," had their apotheosis.[15]

Ornateness in this story is associated with Ernestina, whose Victorian earnestness is limited, proper, conventional, and obediently restrained. And now the plain woman, far from her Victorian prototype, has become wild and sexually alive, flirting with madness, defying convention. Her defiance appears to serve her more successfully than Ernestina's conformity, as she comes out a well-adjusted artist at the end. Unlike in later costume movies (*The Piano,* directed by Jane Campion in 1993 with costume design by Janet Patterson, for example), Victorian clothes do not here create erotic tension as a product of their restraining features. Restraint is not eroticized in the 1960s or '70s; *transgression* is. This repressed version of the ornate woman represents the anti-type of the liberated woman of the 1960s or '70s, and a type that still resonated, evidently, until the release of the film in 1981. Sarah's virtues, unlike her Victorian forebears', are spontaneity and, implicitly, diffused erogenous zones—another fashion of the mid- to late twentieth century. Indeed, the film's original audience would have been contemptuous of Ernestina for mislocating her sexual power in the details, willingly participating in her own oppression.

What this Victorian plain woman of the 1960s and a fictive plain woman of the 1860s have in common is that their plain dress functions as a protest against their gender constraints, against fashion itself, in a period when sophisticated fashion became anti-fashion. The Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic dress movement of the 1860s and '70s is comparable to the anti-fashion mood of feminists in the 1960s and '70s—when a version of androgyny was emerging as a feminist ideal.

The novel ends with Sarah working for and residing in the home of the artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti. (Although Rossetti remains unnamed in the novel, several identifying clues are provided, including the recent

death of the painter's young wife Elizabeth Siddal, the presence in the house of an artistic brother, William Michael Rossetti, and of a "scandalous poet," Rossetti's friend, A. C. Swinburne). Charles is beguiled by her appearance; no longer dressed in black, Sarah strikes him as an "electric and bohemian apparition." She has "flagrantly reject[ed] all formal contemporary notions of female fashion."[16] The "simplicity and attractiveness" of this "uniform of the New Woman" is contrasted to the more conventional "wretched bustles, stays and crinolines."[17] Notably, Fowles's fashion statement is again revised by the film's costume designer Tom Rand. In the novel, Fowles describes Sarah's colorful outfit:

> Her skirt was of a rich dark blue and held at the waist by a crimson belt with a gilt star clasp; which also enclosed the pink-and-white striped silk blouse, long-sleeved, flowing, with a delicate small collar of white lace, to which a small cameo acted as tie. The hair was bound loosely back by a red ribbon.[18]

In the film, in contrast, Sarah's outfit is far less elaborate; she wears a handsomely tailored white blouse with faint beige stripes, a light beige skirt that falls simply to the ankle, a gray belt, and a pale pink ribbon hanging loosely, almost like a man's tie, at her collar. Absent the bright colors, stripes, lace collar and jewelry accents, her Look in the film conveys continuity with her anti-fashion, aesthetic dress statement of earlier on (although the skirt and blouse are conceivably a nod to the "New Woman" Look Fowles anachronistically invokes). More pertinently, in keeping with the plain versus ornate theme of the film's female costuming, Sarah's apparel remains solidly on the plain side of the divide.[19]

ORNAMENT AND THE POST-NATURAL

Angels and Insects, the 1994 adaptation (directed by Phillip Haas) of A. S. Byatt's 1992 novella, *Morpho Eugenia,* presents a fabulously ornate "ornate woman" played by Patsy Kensit. The contest between the two figures, the ornate and the plain woman, is played out rather conventionally in a contest for a man—but there are a number of clever twists to this story. The man in question is William Adamson (Mark Rylance), a naturalist specializing in insects and butterflies. Of modest origins—he is the son a butcher—Adamson has returned from ten years in the Amazons,

penniless, having survived a shipwreck which cost him all but a few of his precious specimens. Adamson is introduced into the aristocratic family Alabaster by the patriarch, Reverend Alabaster, who shares his fascination with insects. Irresistibly attracted to the older daughter of the family, Eugenia, our ornate woman, Adamson is astonished when he is encouraged by her father, and then by Eugenia herself, to marry her. In due time Adamson discovers that Eugenia and her brother Edgar are lovers and that the children he thought were his are the offspring of incest. He eventually finds his way clear of them with the aid of, or more accurately, through the well-wrought design of the story's plain woman, the governess Matty Crompton (Kristin Scott Thomas).

The costumes of the wealthy, overbred, anemic Eugenia Alabaster are somewhat whimsically fashioned from a glittering palette of silvers, lavenders, bright reds, and deep velvet blues. They are wildly elaborate, but not fussy or bourgeois (like Ernestina's), and not without elegance. They are the best money can buy, and unlike in *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* money *can* buy taste in this 1990s version of Victorian society. In contrast, Matty, our plain woman, is dressed mostly in blacks and dark blues, her simplicity of dress matching her position in the household. Unlike in *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* the plain woman is not introduced to us with a romantic long shot or lingering close-up; in fact, our ornate Eugenia is much more the favorite of the camera in this film, as if her brilliant ornamentation irresistibly draws our eyes to her.

And unlike in *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* in the world of this film, nature and ornament are not opposed or clashing. Standing out of doors, Eugenia Alabaster's costume puts us in mind—through exaggerated visual analogy—of the fabulous ornamentation of a bumblebee. The fashioning of Eugenia's clothing so emphatically echoes the film's treatment of the exquisite ornamentation of certain insects, especially butterflies, that we are urged to ponder the significance of the comparison. If sometimes nature itself (in the universe of this film) is excessively ornate, even "over the top," what are we to make our ornate Eugenia? Is the reliable Victorian novelistic alignment of *plainness* with nature being overturned? More fundamentally, is the film endorsing the very nineteenth-century mental habit of drawing analogies between animal and human behavior as a way to test the human behavior's "natural-

8.3. Angel or insect? Bee or beekeeper? Patsy Kensit manages to sport this drolly stylized version of a Victorian day dress and hat in *Angels and Insects.*

ness?" Through the ornate woman and her opposition to the plain one we find—as in the earlier film—adornment or fashionableness under scrutiny, and again the terms of the dispute are reconstituted. As we have seen before, gender and sexuality (the very "nature" of the female) are implicated in the representation of ornament and plainness; in this instance, these terms are informed by gender preoccupations that belong to the 1990s. Exploring questions of gender and sex through the lens of the 1860s has particular piquancy, as we will see.

In this film, the mysteries of this great English house unfold slowly, but from beginning to end, this world is saturated in the discourse of Darwin and the disputes surrounding his theories. In a dinner scene early in the film where Eugenia appears in an exquisite pale pink gown, her dress and hair arrayed with leaves and berries, the very meaning of

adornment is taken up in conversation. Reverend Alabaster discusses the beauty of certain butterflies, then invokes the Duke of Argyle to observe that our responsiveness to beauty of form, our sensitivity to delicate variation and brilliant color is itself evidence of the work of a creator. (This line of thinking helps us to understand the lack of austerity of this nineteenth-century Reverend and his tolerance for the fabulously ornate costuming of the many females in his family.) In response, Adamson, the naturalist, a younger man of the new generation, suggests that the "purpose" of all this brilliance and loveliness may be, as Darwin proposes, designed to serve sexual selection, that is, there simply may be some "advantage" in flaunting one's "scarlets and golds" toward attracting a mate. Raising the questions of whether beauty and our attraction to it are evidence of God's hand, or whether they function merely in the service of sexual selection, directs us to wonder if we mortals are closer to angels or to insects? This dispute, however, is cut short when, in reaction to our plain Matty's contributions to the discussion (Matty inquires with some urgency whether the drabness of the female butterfly or bird might be "protective," presumably in the sense of protecting from sexual address by the aggressive male), Eugenia knocks over a glass of red wine, spilling its contents onto her own magnificent attire, a mishap that draws gasps of horror from all assembled. Effectively putting an end to the conversation, and to Matty's moment of self-display—as her articulate comments attract the attention of the male in question *despite* her lack of adornment—Eugenia makes an elaborate and showy departure from the dining room.

As Adamson stares entranced at Eugenia taking her leave of the table, we are given time to wonder what to think of the film's treatment of ornamentation. The tone in the first half of this film is sometimes difficult to gauge; what conclusions are we to draw from the gorgeousness of Eugenia's attire? We aren't supplied the usual narrative indicators for judging our adorned woman; is her ornamental beauty a divine gift or does she flaunt her "scarlets and golds" to attract a mate? Is she to be trusted and admired for her "advantages," God-given or "natural," or to be distrusted, as would be more typical, for being showy, insincere, superficial, and unnatural? Or, does Eugenia's adornment, like her demeanor, signal vapidity? Is she performing the rote and seemingly imper-

sonal biological function of luring a mate? In this dinner sequence there are so many delicious ironies at work, as Adamson, while engaged in this discussion, sneaks peeks at Eugenia around the centerpiece, through which she appears framed in leaves and flowers.

The idea of ornamentation as sexual signal is set up at the very start of the film when, under the opening credits, painted and feathered "savages" dance orgiastically by firelight, and subtle emphasis is placed on their crude ornamentation. This scene dissolves into another scene of ornamented dancers, the formally attired attendees of an English ball, the men in black, the women arrayed in brilliant hues. Does the film want to suggest, we wonder, a relativism regarding the uses of adornment, whether in "savages" or English ladies? And if so, is this relativism pro- or anti-adornment? Does it validate the sexual power of adornment, or does it view it as a biological lure or snare that puts the male at a disadvantage—as Adamson appears to be in his helpless and irresistible attraction to Eugenia? At this point in the narrative, we are not sure what to make of the pile-up of sorties into questions of gender, sexuality, and nature. One further turn of the screw is given in the observation Adamson offers that in butterflies and birds, it is the *male* that is brilliantly colored, not, as Eugenia assumed in a prior scene, the female.

Ornamentation, sexual selection, and gender are complexly interwoven in this film, urging us to engage the question, what *is* nature? And even to question further, does "nature" have any explanatory power—as the Victorians seemed to have believed it did—with regard to human society? What's more, if we take the natural world (or our *reading* of the natural world) as a map of what is or of what is possible, if we anthropomorphize or draw analogies of our own choosing, do we misread the world as it is? Adamson, for example, cannot recognize or even *see* the incest that is taking place in his immediate proximity because it is not part of his idea of what is natural, of what can occur. And likewise, he cannot see Matty Crompton, our plain heroine, because she too is an apparent anomaly having no place in nature—a woman of intellect who is also a sexual being.

But the danger is not only in misreading the world, it is also in drawing moral precepts from a Victorian idea wherein what is deemed to belong to "nature" can be loosely equated with how things are meant

to be. Perhaps this story is drawing us toward an even more dramatic post-Victorian and postmodern conclusion, that there are dangers in reifying "nature," in trying to draw lessons from nature, in trying to read our "oughts" analogically from what we observe in the natural world? *Angels and Insects* presents us with the spectacle of an army of red ants as they organize themselves and attack a black ant farm for the purposes of enslaving them; we learn that before long the black ants take on the behaviors of the red ants. Certainly the analogies between the insect world and that of nineteenth-century imperial England are plain enough, and the viewer is invited to imagine how in the nineteenth century this scenario could have represented a natural allegory for imperial dominance, Social Darwinism enacted in miniature and affirmed by the fact that nature "will have it so." But the film, I believe, urges us to consider that there is nothing in this ant story for us to emulate; indeed, the film deconstructs the logic of the "natural order." The natural world does not give us clues to how things are, or how they are supposed to be. Thus, ornamentation in the "natural world" offers no meaningful cues regarding the "nature of gender in human beings."[20]

Through the opposition of the plain and ornate women, the very premises of "nature" are upended in this film. Additionally, in perhaps a less consequential reorientation, plainness and its conventional association with sincerity and modesty are similarly undone. Dressed in blacks, dark blues, and grays, Matty's restraint is a uniform she wears; it is not internalized, except perhaps to sharpen her ambition. Her plainness is in fact not so very plain in this film, where her costume includes stylish detailing and accessories; in the novel, in contrast, she is described wearing musty black gowns and brown stuff dresses, "severe and unornamental."[21] In the film adaptation, her plainness is a costume, too; it is not the opposite of ornament (or of wealth), nor the authentic expression of a demure nature. It is a social accommodation rendered in a narrative gesture that serves, I think, to undermine the very logic of sincerity and authenticity, to demystify plainness as the pose of the "virtuous" girl.

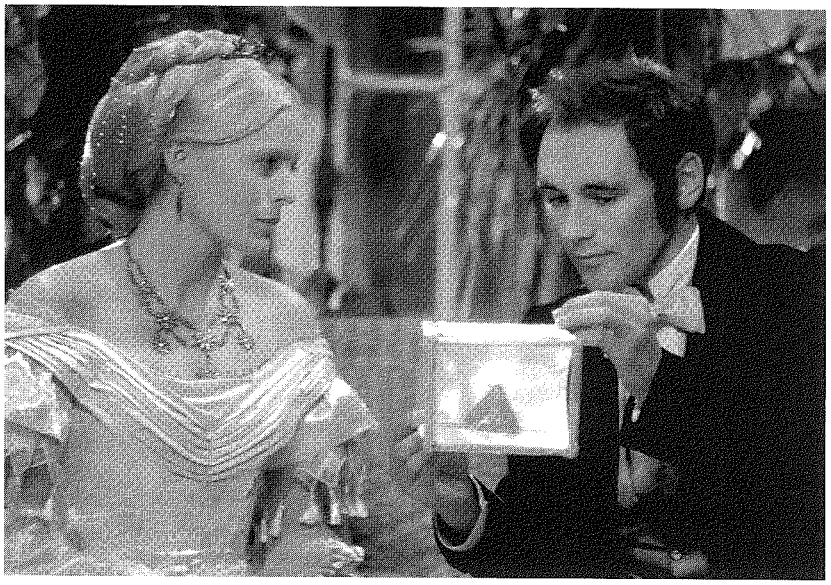
While Adamson believes in a static paradigm of the natural, Matty knows better, because by these terms and the logic of her day, she herself is unnatural—a scientifically minded woman who writes books. Matty is

8.4A. The plain heroine of *Angels and Insects* is given some interesting detailing by costume designer Paul Brown. A woman of intellect, her dress is a study in symmetry, with the designs on her sleeves pointing to her fecund head.

an observer of mutations and transformations, like black ants adopting the behavior of red ants. Nature is not orderly, consistent, logical—nor is it romantic or associated with passion. In this film, we are post-natural, and thereby post-gender.

Or in perhaps a darker reading, the film could be offering a new take on the Darwinian narrative of sexual selection. To return to the dinner scene discussed above, Eugenia's decision to spill her wine can be interpreted as a wry intervention into the male-centered dispute about whether female beauty in all its radiant adornment is evidence of God's existence or support for Darwin's theory of natural selection; that is, her gesture might suggest that her self-adornment is neither God nor instinct at work, but her own deliberate move in a complicated social schematic where the only reliable premise seems to be the egotism and gullibility of the male.

Like Sarah Woodruff in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and many of her "plain" Victorian predecessors, Matty is the author of a scheme



8.4B. The ornate woman of *Angels and Insects* appears in satin, lace, and jewels, awaiting Adamson's proposal of marriage. *Courtesy of Samuel Goldwyn Company/Photofest.*

to reposition herself in society, to find a way to have a life of her own. Unlike Sarah's, Matty's plan extricates the male, her chosen mate, Adamson, from the snare he's fallen into as a functionary, a worker ant in this great anthill of a house, an analogy the film plays with quite wittily. At the end we see the two lighting out together in the dark of night—presumably to make their way to the Amazons, to the Victorian salvation of meaningful work. Surely Matty will do without fashions where she is going, but this need not be interpreted as an anti-fashion statement *per se*.

Sarah of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* turns out in the end to have been deploying her madness and her tragic airs, expressed in part through her unconventional attire, in order to ensnare the clueless Charles, because she needs to escape her gender-locked circumstances and he is a likely mark. When we see Sarah at the end, when she has allowed the desperate, lovesick Charles to finally track her down, she is living comfortably, working as an assistant to a famous Pre-Raphaelite artist—and her wardrobe has changed along with her mental status. She is still not

wearing conventional Victorian clothing, but is dressed smartly in a rational skirt and blouse, an anti-fashion costume soon to be associated with Suffragettes—a new step in an old dance.

In both of these revisionist Victorian narratives, plainness is still the costume of defiance, but in these stories (unlike in the Victorian novel) plainness is a performance no more nor less than ornamentation is. And in both these films, it appears that the straight male of the species has replaced "plain Jane" as the earnest one, now a pawn (and patsy) in the hands of designing women.

NOTES

1. Radu Stern, *Against Fashion,* 106.

2. Patricia Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion,* 112.

3. C. Willet Connington, in his 1936 *Fashion and Women's Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century,* describes the Aesthetic Dress Movement as just another fashion, insofar as it was "the fashion to have artistic tastes." He does indicate, however, that this movement rejected a certain order of fashion when he notes acerbically, "The intellectual group was as yet small in numbers, and its increasing contempt for the merely fashionable type of woman led it into strange vagaries which afforded endless opportunity for public ridicule" (171). Walter Crane, in an 1894 issue of *Aglaia* (Journal of the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union), notes that by the 1870s and '80s, "we saw the fashionable world and the stage aping, with more or less grotesque vulgarity, what it was fain to think were the fashions of the inner and most refined artistic cult." He goes on to say that the market was "flooded" with "art colours" and "aesthetic" fabric of all kinds (quoted in Stern, *Against Fashion,* 106.)

4. In eighteenth-century novels such as *Humphry Clinker, Evelina,* and *Pamela,* ladies of fashion serve an educational function for the heroine: with all their attractions, they are *not* to be emulated. Their antithesis, however, is not the "plain woman," but rather the innocent country lass.

5. Raymond Williams, *Keywords,* 184.

6. Ibid.

7. John C. Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes,* 111.

8. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women,* 44.

9. Anne Hollander, *Feeding the Eye,* 144.

10. The aesthetic dress movement, which began as an anti-fashion statement, evolved into expensive high fashion, culminating with designs by Chapman for Liberty of London and Fortuny. See Geoffrey Squire, "E.W. Godwin and the House of Liberty," 81–89.

11. Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits,* 147.

12. John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* 5.

13. James Laver (in *Taste and Fashion from the French Revolution Until Today,* 81–3) notes that "aesthetic dress" rejected the new colors that had only recently arrived on the market as a result of the development of aniline dies as garish; these colors included magenta, worn in the novel by Ernestina (as well as the lavender she wears in the film). Sarah, in keeping with this principle of anti-fashion (rather than "obliviousness") avoids the fashionable new colors.

14. Fowles, 7.

15. See Hollander, *Sex and Suits,* especially chapter 5, "Nowadays."

16. Fowles, 443.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. It is curious that Fowles doesn't dress Sarah in the style so famously worn by the Pre-Raphaelite muses and models, some of whom, like Sarah, were artists themselves. Instead he gives her the "New Woman" Look (and the shirtwaist), which are commonly associated with a later period. The term "New Woman" was coined in 1894 by novelist Sarah Grand.

20. The influence of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), with its groundbreaking assault on distinctions between *sex* as biological and prediscursive and *gender* as culturally constructed, contends that both sex and gender are culturally constructed. For compelling discussions of science and nature in Byatt's novella, see Heidi Hansson, "Double Voice of Metaphor"; and, June Sturrock, "Angels, Insects, and Analogy," 93–104.

21. A. S. Byatt, "Morpho Eugenia," 43.

WORKS CITED

Byatt, A. S. "Morpho Eugenia." In *Angels and Insects.* New York: Random House, 1992.

Connington, C. Willet. *Fashion and Women's Attitudes in the Nineteenth Century.* New York: Dover edition, 2003 [1935].

Cunningham, Patricia A. *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850–1920: Politics, Health, and Art.* Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2003.

Flügel, John C. *The Psychology of Clothes.* London: Hogarth, 1945.

Fowles, John. *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1969.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1979.

Hansson, Heidi. "The Double Voice of Metaphor: A. S. Byatt's 'Morpho Eugenia.'" *Twentieth Century Literature* 45 (Winter 1999): 4.

Hollander, Anne. *Feeding the Eye.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

———. *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

Laver, James. *Taste and Fashion: from the French Revolution Until Today.* New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1938.

Squire, Geoffrey. "E. W. Godwin and the House of Liberty." *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* 34 (2000): 81–99.

Stern, Radu. *Against Fashion: Clothing as Art, 1850–1930.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004.

Sturrock, June. "Angels, Insects, and Analogy: A. S. Byatt's Morpho Eugenia." *Connotations* 12, no. 1 (2002/2003): 93–104.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women.* 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1987.

ELEVEN

The Stars and Stripes in Fashion Films

ADRIENNE MUNICH

A moment arrives in a "fashion film" when the story pauses to feature a fashion show. Expecting it, the audience switches optical gears to a kind of spectatorship that transforms them momentarily into fashionistas. Viewers of whatever gender join the fashion cognoscenti to view the show, with ritual parade and twirling models robed in outfits that dreams and stories are made of.[1] For the female spectator, the fashion show coddles her, transports her into a fantasy land where she might don an alluring style. For his part, the male spectator takes his role as evaluator of fashionable femininity, escorting a woman to fashion. Once American fashion films captivate viewers into fashionability, they often deliver another message that has apparently little to do with fashion: Hollywood fashion films often arrive on the silver screen draped in an American flag.

It is true that even the Stars and Stripes bow to historical fashion adjustments, looking the same but coming in different sizes and bearing altered meanings. This chapter focuses on three Hollywood fashion films about twenty years apart—*Roberta* (1935), *Funny Face* (1956), and *Mahogany* (1975)—which, in three different ways and each reflecting its time's political and economic issues, use fashion to shape affiliations with America. As in other cases of political coalition, the alliance of fashion with nation involves a good measure of wariness on the part of each side toward its ally. In most fashion films, satire or irony figures in

portrayals of fashion, its aesthetics, and its industry. A cosmopolitan perspective—wherein most concepts of fashion thrive—incorporates admiration mixed with condescension for traditional American traits, particularly those associated with authenticity, openness, and distrust of cosmopolitan urbanity. Fashion films with a nationalistic subtext cannot wholeheartedly champion a cultural institution that is associated with surface, with cosmetic appearance, with super-refinement. While providing a perfect medium for showcasing fashion, fashion films often lightly deride it. Yet without seeming to, some fashion films demonstrate that fashion can be imported and rebranded: Made in the U.S.A.

Hollywood fashion films make a preemptive move to enter America into competition as a global fashion center, while trading on European allure.[2] Tons of films reveal that the U.S., particularly New York and Hollywood, sought to appropriate or claim a dominant fashion position over Europe. To repudiate the sheer gorgeous magnetism of Paris or Rome as fashion capitals poses a formidable challenge; thus films take the viewer to Europe, but with eyes of an outsider, sometimes of a tourist. The three exemplary films I examine all take the viewer to Europe on a business trip and reflect a conflict about fashion, at once conceived as a fierce economic engine and a frivolous pastime for binding up female energies. That portrayal reveals a discomfort at recognizing fashion's central cultural position within a generally puritanical ethos, as the films affirm an American work ethic, but then question its expenditure on producing nothing more substantial than a quickly passing fashionable ensemble.

To focus on fashion in order to raise questions of nation and national definition reveals the centrality of fashion in identity formation. This applies not only, as is obvious, to personal and ethnic identities but also to an American identity that conceives itself as superior to Europe in knowing how to get things done. The fashion shows featured in the three films examined here appear at a culmination of the action, at a point where national identity is either affirmed positively or negatively in relation to fashion. America is at once too mighty to take fashion seriously yet too respectful of profitability to reject it. The films offer differing perspectives on fashion—and differing judgments of fashionability—to encourage loyalty to an American identity.

In the Depression-era film *Roberta,* fashion transports viewers to swanky settings, with luxurious, generally unaffordable clothing that provides rich furnishing for imaginary closets. Set in a never-never land called "Paris," the film deploys its plots, subplots, and characters in service of a romance with middle-American, small-town, plain forthrightness that might appear discordant with its *soi-disant* French setting. The American characters, all from Indiana, find themselves in a Paris dress shop. They include Roberta (Helen Westley), who is actually the Aunt Minnie of John Kent (Randolph Scott), a former football player and friend of bandleader Huck Haines (Fred Astaire), along with his high school girl friend, Lizzie Gatz (Ginger Rogers), who is passing herself off as the temperamental Comtesse Scharwenka with a quasi-Polish accent. Bearing names from American pop culture (Minnie Mouse, Huck Finn, and Lizzie Borden) the Indiana natives flaunt a midwestern openness and naïveté that extends even to Aunt Minnie, who unaccountably has made a huge fashion success in Paris, despite her matronly appearance, recalling the types of roles associated with Margaret Dumont. As if to confirm her unfashionability, the plot eventually reveals that sweet, rich old Minnie doesn't actually design clothes. That responsibility goes to her able Russian émigré assistant, Stephanie (Irene Dunne). Fashion, portrayed as almost decadent, is done by Europeans, but America exports its good business head in the person of Aunt Minnie.

The Americans also export popular music. Nothing could be more American than the Jerome Kern score and Huck's midwestern band, "The Wabash Indianians." The plot launches on an American pun. Huck's band sails to Paris for a nightclub gig under a Russian-born impresario's misapprehension that he was getting a band of Native Americans. It is a joke that so unselfconsciously alludes to non-European residents of America that it seems to suggest a fundamental difference in the way that Americans and Europeans perceive their national authenticity, the Europeans bogged down in class-consciousness, and the Americans blithely entitled one and all. (Unfortunately for the plot, the French Revolution necessitates a substitution of Russian for French aristocracy. The character of Stephanie, the Paris fashion designer, might make more sense were she French.)

Huck calls his band members "fellas," and Kent's repeated genial exclamation, "Gee that's swell," epitomizes wholesome American enthusiasm. To moderate their hick image, Huck and Kent French-polish their homey style, learning the language of speech and fashion without sacrificing their prairie openness, which shows itself as insouciance about details of fashion design, fabric, and fabrication.[3] Of course, they appreciate pretty dresses (plus the money made from them and the girls who wear them), but they are shown knowing what they like without knowing about fashion. Clearly, a real man's left hand doesn't know what his right hand is doing, and that's good for Indiana.

The word "Paris" serves more as a synonym for "fashion" than as a location. Stripped of its signature shots of famous landmarks, devoid of Parisians, made up of rooms with no views, Paris is a brand. The sets create an interiority that might just as well read as Indianapolis, where the shop name seems more at home. Thus, American business appropriates "Paris" and welcomes consumers. In the film these consumers are largely Eastern European titled émigrés, for whom fashionability and nightlife require their adornment in remnants of their authority—furs, tiaras, uniforms bedecked with flashy medals. The Russian/American contrast extends to musical performances. Irene Dunne, as Russian Stephanie, trills "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" in an operatic register that comes across as cultured European highbrow. Middle-American business acumen absorbs European fashion sense in order to market it, a filmic mirror of the actual selling of *Roberta* fashions. Bernard Waldman's Modern Merchandising Bureau copied fifteen of the elegant *American* designer Bernard Newman's costumes for sale in the United States.[4]

The film's two romances, the Astaire and Rogers musical and the fairy tale of the fullback who loves a secret princess thinking she is a shopgirl, unite under the sign of fashion. Imperious aristocrat Comtesse Scharwenka behaves rudely and snottily as she demands obsequious service from the shop staff. Once unmasked as Indiana Lizzie, she freshens up, loses her caricatured accent, and turns into a dancing sweetie pie. John Kent's fiancée (Claire Dodd) sails over to meet him and orders Stephanie to sell her a dress that John has judged vulgar and unworthy of Roberta's style. Her bad taste, visualized as a black dress with a bathing

suit back, betrays her bad character, a measure of fashion's moral valence. Stephanie's good taste, though Russian, qualifies her for John.

The denouement features the long-awaited fashion show. A fanfare prepares the viewer for a full-screen, engraved invitation to enjoy Roberta's "entertainment" (on one line) and "gowns" (on another). The invitation constructs viewers of both genders as part of the fashion show audience within and outside the film. The long fashion sequence follows the clock, featuring afternoon attire, then cocktail dresses, and finally evening gowns. Models circulate among the male and female viewers near round tables, stopping while ever-agile Huck stands next to them to deliver rhymed descriptions of the outfits. The first outfits exaggerate costumes specific to women's upper-class daytime activities, such as polo, skiing, sun bathing, meeting for tea, shooting, and flying planes. The ensembles burlesque real activities whilst Huck's verses embroider on the notion of activity as an outfit accessory: the polo outfit can be accessorized with a horse, the hunting outfit with a gun and two dead ducks, the aviatrix getup with a plane. Following daytime wear, cocktail fashion underscores the cocktail hour, an American custom. For the fashion show finale, the camera pans upwards toward a door atop a circular staircase. Mannequins in evening gowns appear in the doorway and then move slowly down to the viewer's level. Architectural space rotates the models in their finery as they descend.

Stephanie materializes, wearing a white gown with white fox trim and a relatively plain diamond necklace (though with huge stones) as her only jewelry. Her dress could have inspired Disney princess attire, with its fur collar framing the Russian princess's face and neck(lace) as she sings an operatic version of "Lovely to Look At."

After Stephanie introduces the opulent theme, other models follow, many with evening hats and full fur coats, muffs, or fur-trimmed dresses.[5] Emphasizing fur's opulence and its associations with sex, one spectacular example features two liveried footmen standing at attention at floor level. They move forward slightly as the stone-faced model reaches the bottom of the staircase and stands impassively facing the film viewer (as distinct from the guests seated at round tables) allowing the footmen slowly and deliberately to remove her floor-length sable wrap to reveal a metallic silver gown. Subsequent models repeat the ritual.

11.1. *Roberta*. Stephanie in fashion show white gown, white fox trim, and diamond necklace.

Roberta's solemn parade receives a comic gloss in the musical comedy, *Guys and Dolls* (musical 1950, film 1955), which includes a spirited striptease featuring extravagantly expensive clothes to the lyrics "Take back your mink" (Frank Loesser). Furs thus deliberately taken off suggest both opulence and the high-class burlesque sensibility represented by showgirls at such Parisian night spots as the Folies Bergère.[6]

Whatever its multiple purposes in the plot, *Roberta*'s fashion show offers sartorial information. The fashions initiate film viewers into an imaginary upper-crust life that takes place in well-dressed vignettes from noon to midnight. Selling fashion to ordinary Americans constitutes part of the movie industry's commercial history; here, fashion assumes a Parisian façade and claims cosmopolitan taste in order to sell its wares to American natives on the Great Plains. The fashion show patter inscribes

11.2A. *Roberta.* Lizzie as Comtesse Scharwenka in black satin ensemble; Huck slips off her fur-trimmed coat before the final dance number.

the actual American commercial connection to Waldman's dresses into the script. Huck announces a "gown ran up for Marie, Queen of Romania; we also ran up three for Mrs. Smudge in Pennsylvania." The choice of "Smudge" rather than a more tony Pennsylvanian name definitely suggests middle class. Mrs. Smudge brings high-falutin' fashion down to the level of the common woman, democratizing it while also allowing for gentle denigration of the fashion world. Is American Smudge trumping the Queen of Romania by ordering three to her one? Or do the multiples suggest a parvenu and hence a snobbish attitude toward democratization in mass-market fashion? The film has it both ways.

Roberta's fashion show also links the fashion Look to love with the song "Lovely to Look At," and symbolically appropriates fashion for American purposes when Fred and Ginger take over. The fashion show

11.2B. *Roberta.* Lizzie dancing with Huck in tuxedo to "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes."

segues into the legendary couple ballroom dancing, first to a reprise (but with changed tempo) of "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," thus appropriating the song from the Russian princess to associate it with the famous American dancing couple, and finally ending with them doing a fabulous, quintessentially American tap dance to the Kern tune, "I Won't Dance." The irony of the "won't dance" dance mirrors the film's double attitude toward fashion. Don't we do it even while we say we won't? Indeed, wouldn't women in the present moment still feel great in Ginger's slinky black satin gown, with a diamond brooch gently defining the bosom? Gee, *that's* swell.

Twenty years later, Fred changes partners from Ginger Rogers to the younger Audrey Hepburn in *Funny Face,* altering the romantic chemistry. American jingoism persists but has taken a different tonality, one that portrays the American fashion industry as depending upon French *savoir faire* while rejecting an intellectual life associated with French pretension. In the years of postwar recovery, America is jockeying for a top billing in the Western world's fashion show. The film's generally satiric tone undermines the claims of fashion but can't really efface the latter's glamour. The initial setting at *Quality,* a New York fashion magazine, portrays fashion not only influencing but dominating "the American woman;" fashion editor Maggie Prescott (Kay Thompson) characterizes her as a slave to the dictates of fashion.[7] *Quality* magazine represents the American woman's fashion bible, its religion founded on its evident dependence on Europe, confirmed by the magazine's requisite trip to Paris to shoot the *Quality* (American) woman.

Fashion films often feature a male enabler who transforms the fashion-challenged girl to a fashion insider. For a recent rendition of the type, think of Stanley Tucci's Nigel in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006), who is shown pawing through racks of clothes to ramp up the un-chic college-girl taste of Anne Hathaway's Andy Sachs. Since many fashion movies promise transformation through the Look, this male figure plays the transformer. The Astaire character, Dick Avery (modeled on Richard Avedon, who served as an advisor to the film), plays the transformer role to the point of happily ever after.[8]

A signal moment opens the darkroom to viewers, revealing fashion photographers' secret technique. We watch Avery as he resorts to a precursor of photoshopping to transform the image of dowdy Jo Stockton (Audrey Hepburn), a fervent Greenwich Village intellectual and acolyte of a French philosophical movement satirically labeled "empathicalism" (a play on French intellectual "isms," notably existentialism). "Dick" desires to have a model who also thinks and sees the potential in Jo. To turn her from a brown study in jumper and sensible shoes into a fashion icon, he whites out the details of her features. We watch the transformative process as he draws out of the developing solution a deliberately overexposed image with the dove eyes, classical nose, and perfect lips of the girl who will become the *Quality* Woman, the

11.3. *Funny Face.* Photomontage of Americans in American-style clothes in Paris. Jo wears signature black pencil pants.

model for a new appearance of inner depth that will exemplify the Look for American fashion readers.[9] Again, as in *Roberta,* the film portrays both sides of an ambivalent attitude about fashion in Dick's quest for a beauty who's also smart. His developing technique visually indicates the autocracy of his desire, which is articulated toward the end of the film when he comments of the empathicalist Professor Flostra, "He's about as interested in your mind as I am." Talking out of both sides of his mouth, Avery speaks an ambivalence about women that the film connects to their seduction by fashion. Whiting out cancels individualism, rendering a "funny face" into a classical ideal, under control of the male photographer.

Duality of attitude also characterizes this fashion film in other ways. The film imports American envy of Parisian cultural authority and fashion status into its diegesis by portraying the three main characters, Prescott, Avery, and Stockton, loudly scorning those naïve American tourists besotted with Paris sights but then tracking them as they independently visit them all, singing their American hearts out.[10] Their chance encounter at the Eiffel Tower confirms Paris's irresistible attraction. The rest of the movie exploits that attraction for American competitive, consumer purposes.[11]

11.4. *Funny Face.* Jo floats down the Louvre staircase in red Givenchy gown and nike pose, with the Nike of Samothrace in the background.

As in *Roberta,* the score includes luminaries of the great American Songbook, this time Ira and George Gershwin, and calls attention to the film's allegiance to Stars and Stripes under the direction of an American photographer. We see Avery setting the mise-en-scène for Jo Stockton by telling her a story to induce an attitude; the model acts a part, and fashion here shows how an intellectual acolyte could imagine herself into a new identity by the clothes she wears, thus converting her to a fashion acolyte. David Campany describes the method whereby the photo shoot reveals fashion's constructed nature:

> the centerpiece of *Funny Face* is the long sequence of location shoots featuring Hepburn. Each has a different theme . . . and each culminates in an ecstatic freeze-frame that mimics the snap of Astaire's shutter as it catches Hepburn's movements. . . . Each freeze is held for several seconds and put through heavy color filtrations of cyan, magenta, yellow, red, green, and blue, emphasizing the image as a malleable entity to be perfected for the screen or magazine page.[12]

A dialogue between moving pictures and stills in relation to fashion, along with the Gershwin music, produces entrancing filmic elements.[13] These moments beguilingly present aesthetic faces of fashion. Not simply as evanescent but as timeless, fashion receives a striking embodiment when the gauzy chiffon layers of a red evening dress appear around the

corner of the Louvre staircase presided over by the Nike of Samothrace, which soaringly personifies the glory that was Greece. Jo, in an identification with the statue, calls out to Dick: "take the picture" as she floats down the staircase in the Victory (the meaning of "nike") pose.

As is true with most Hollywood fashion films, the conflicting messages about fashion indicate deep ambivalence about its allure. An apparent conflict between mind and body depends upon resolving the nationalist agenda in favor of what Maggie calls "pizzazz." In a way, however, the film ends up trashing intellectual behavior (mind), as it did at the beginning of the film when Maggie leads a fashion brigade in trashing the Greenwich Village bookshop where mousy Jo Stockton works and reads in order to rearrange it for a fashion shoot.

Such contradictions and ironies are also reflected in the French/American costume designers, with Hubert de Givenchy designing Audrey Hepburn's Paris fashions and Edith Head named in the film credits as designer, winning and accepting an Academy Award despite Givenchy's gorgeous contributions.[14] In a further irony, Head's American casual garb in the film has had the greater impact on fashion.[15] Hepburn's skinny black pants, black turtleneck, flats, and pony tail endure as wearable fashion into the twenty-first century, with the casual clothes chain Gap featuring Hepburn on ads for its skinny pants Look. (See Hepburn's original costume in Figure 11.3.) To complicate matters more, the bohemian Look could be seen as an appropriation of Left Bank Paris by smoky Village cafés and similar hangouts throughout the States in the 1950s and early '60s.

Funny Face ends with a Gershwin tune, "S'Wonderful" that wittily rhymes fashion with love: "you make my life so glamorous, can't blame me for feeling amorous." Despite other ironies, such as Audrey Hepburn's less-than-American accent and a skepticism about fashion's dictates as a ploy for susceptible magazine readers—Maggie Prescott remarks of a major magazine campaign to "think pink" that she wouldn't be caught dead in the color—fashion emerges victorious.[16] And the real American gets the girl—as in fact he does in all three films.

Twenty years later, in the midst of racial upheavals in the United States and movements to involve African Americans in political races, the use of fashion and its national inflections take a more negative turn;

it is used not only to smooth or white out funny faces, but for the whitening of African American racial identity. *Mahogany* (1975), starring a non-singing Diana Ross, portrays the fashion capital in Rome, mainly in order to condemn that European setting as decadent and materialistic and to elevate American values that reject fashion. Race, so imperative for 1970s social consciousness, radically constructs the film's portrayal of fashion, showing a fashion industry controlled by white men and by white women who serve as acolytes (or worse) to male dominance.[17] Fashion, European and decadent, fundamentally corrupts through its worship of false gods, Mammon, and sexual perversity. The film's message resembles those of the preachers in the revivalist tent meetings of the time, except with a Black Power slant rather than a biblical one. Whilst *Funny Face* takes the form of a Cinderella tale, *Mahogany* tells a conversion narrative in which Cinderella finds a false prince and is unconverted from fashion worship to discover the true meaning of devotion in her man.

For the film's initial setting in Chicago during political agitation for black power, the white world of the department store where Tracy (Diana Ross) serves as an assistant to the haughty, prim, and probably racist buyer, Miss Evans (Nina Foch), contrasts starkly with the South Side black neighborhood where Tracy lives. Further illustrating the racial divide, Tracy visits her aunt (Beah Richards) sitting in a row of women behind sewing machines in the garment factory where she works. Most satirically, the viewer is asked to contemplate a block of ghetto walk-ups where the seriously disturbed celebrity fashion photographer Sean (Anthony Perkins) stages his fashion shoot. In this setting, ghetto blacks slouch off his camera but range themselves in the foreground of the film camera, looking miserable. They form a color-coded contrast to the stately elegance of the white models, who strike poses on the crumbling porches of the blacks' tenements. This graphic juxtaposition visually stages the binary terms of the film. Stunning fashion aesthetics disdain gritty reality to figure fashion as offensively frivolous, callous, and materialistic. Fashion here does not practice a Protestant ethic.

Sean, an American expatriate living in Rome, fulfills the male transformer role. Like Dick Avery, he recognizes Tracy's potential as a fashion model, chooses her to assist in his ghetto shoot, and then transports her from Chicago to Rome. Believing that the eternal city will provide a

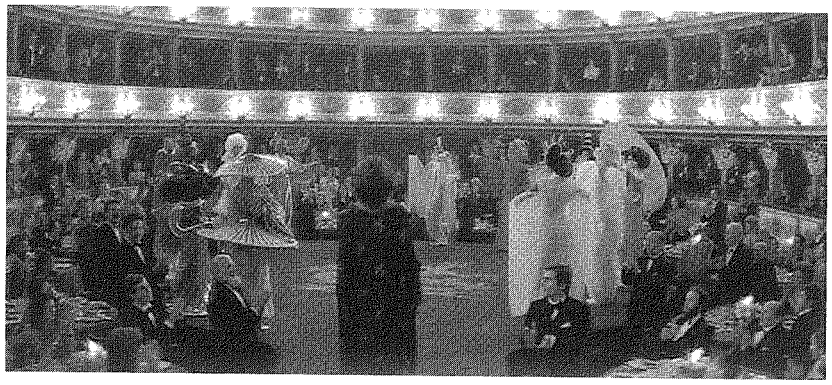
more welcoming opportunity for her couturier ambitions, Tracy undergoes a transformation similar to that of Jo Stockton in Paris. She, too, turns into a supermodel whose face seems to rival Roman attractions, much as the flaming red gown of Jo in the Louvre seems to overshadow the magnificence of the Nike of Samothrace. A fashion shoot in the Coliseum makes a similar point, this one showing Tracy in one of her own outlandish fashions and a hairdo resembling a double helix.

To escape the exploitative conditions of American racism and to fulfill her ambition, Tracy transforms into someone who sells her image to the highest bidder, in one scene appearing on a billboard with a Revlon ad (American cosmetics in Rome?) in front of a Roman ruin. Yet Tracy carries to Italy the baggage of her race, which Sean relabels. By calling her "Mahogany," he performs a similar erasure as Dick Avery, simultaneously exoticizing her (mahogany does not grow in Illinois), reclassifying her into the vegetable kingdom, and rendering her skin merely a vibrant, even fashionable, color on a visual spectrum. Her hue, apparently an asset, contrasts beautifully with the stone grey ruins Sean features in his photo shoots. Thus, fashion negates race without producing true liberation.

The 1970s also experienced a feminist movement that built its vocabulary on the foundation of civil rights language; the two social movements come together in Tracy's character. She longs for a career of her own as a fashion designer, takes courses, designs a shimmering rainbow top that her aunt runs up. Yet when she meets and enters into a romance with Brian (Billy Dee Williams) a political activist running for office on a platform of lifting his constituents' race consciousness and racial pride, the idealism of his goals seems to stack the deck against her feminist ambition, as embodied in a flashy blouse. It is clear that fashion serves as an ideal vehicle to diagnose feminist desire for an independent career as female narcissism. In the turmoil of the '70s social movements, fashion served as an ideal target for feminists (it is more than interesting in this regard that Sean collects guns to counterbalance his sexual impotence). Feminists were discrediting fashion because it deflected female energies from self-liberation and it cemented women's role as sex objects.[18] Consider the difference had Tracy wanted to go to Harvard Law School as college fashion major Elle Woods does in the third-wave feminist film *Legally Blonde* (2001).

11.5A,B. *Mahogany.* Tracy models her kimono for a charity fashion show, then, back to camera, receives applause for her Asian-inflected couturier collection.

Mahogany's Roman setting both allows the film to differentiate itself from fashion films set in Paris and to draw upon associations with a particular kind of Roman decadence that viewers might recall from films of Fellini, Antonioni, and Pasolini. Visiting Rome, Brian dismisses the glory of its antique ruins by remarking: "In Chicago, we call them slums." Tracy achieves her goals, both reigning as the Look and enjoying a smashing success as a fashion designer. Both successes, however, depend on white men. To satisfy the politics of the film, Sean, the fashion transformer, must be utterly discredited. Beyond his impotence (evidently not only with Tracy), his hostility to women (which he expresses by using a blown-up image of a former protégé for dart practice), and his self-destructiveness, which culminates in his suicide, he is a control freak. The other, older and married white man, Christian Rosetti,



underwrites her couture house only as a prelude to setting her up as his mistress. Once she is established as a couturier, Tracy emulates the overbearing tempestuous behavior associated with (clichéd) representations of temperamental fashion designers. It is "under whitey," as it were, that Tracy morphs from oppressed to oppressor. To overload the valences even more, both white men are feminized, or at least emasculated: neither manages to have sex with Tracy. Christian's name also echoes the Victorian woman poet, Christina Rossetti. When Brian appears in Rome, the other white men appear pallid in many senses compared to his '70s American masculinity—reflected in his casually suave American sportswear. At a fashion party in Rome that reeks of *la dolce vita,* Brian remarks on the gender-indeterminacy of fashionistas after a flagrantly swishy man tries to chat with him.

Diana Ross, given prominent billing in the opening credits as the costume designer, actually designed the costumes for the requisite fashion show, though there was possibly an uncredited wardrobe manager who created the non-Tracy-designed garb. Ross, with what must have been unconscious irony, designed blatantly orientalist fashions. She exuberantly displays herself in what resembles a barely modified kimono for her contribution to a charity auction. Then, in her own fashion show at the denouement, mannequins parade in exaggerated Asian-inflected garb, many with stylized, intensely madeup features resembling masks from Noh drama. Some carry parasols copied from fancy cocktail drinks. The faces erase identifying marks of human individual-

11.6. *Mahogany.* Tracy, in white fur, facing death in a car crash.

ity, conveying a message closely related to Hepburn's whited-out photo in *Funny Face.* In this way, despite her fashion triumph, Tracy's talent and career aspirations come across as completely lacking any allegiance to the Stars and Stripes, so that when she renounces her fashion ambitions, she seems to have undergone a patriotic awakening rather than a vocational sacrifice.

Sited among those Roman ruins, Tracy's fashion shows are associated with death. (And retrospectively, we might consider Dick Avery's overexposed funny face image to signify the timelessness linked to death.) To reinforce the connection of fashion with death, Sean takes over Tracy's sleek red custom convertible and embarks on a death drive. Sitting in the driver's seat, foot on the accelerator, he snaps shots of a terrified Tracy. After the car crash that kills Sean, the film shows a bandaged Tracy in bed in Christian's villa, being shown the blown-up black and white photos of her terrified face; she is a person facing herself facing Death. Walter Benjamin's words provide an apt gloss for this juxtaposition of fashion with death:

> Here fashion has opened the business of dialectical exchange between woman and ware—between carnal pleasure and the corpse. . . . For fashion was never anything other than the parody of the motley cadaver, provocation of death through the woman, and bitter colloquy with decay whispered between shrill bursts of mechanical laughter. That is fashion. And that is why she changes so quickly; she titillates death and is already something different, something new, as he casts about to crush her.[19]

The film joins death with fashion after Tracy's fashion show when she appears drained of emotion and energy, her body resembling a soft doll emptied of its stuffing. At the moment when Christian expects his sexual payback, she becomes corpselike, and he sends the body home. Fashion has attempted to sacrifice her, but Chicago, with all it represents in American lore, plus subservience to her Man and his Cause, resurrects her.

The theme song of *Mahogany,* "Do You Know Where You're Going To?" (Michael Masser and Gerald Goffin), signals the identity crisis that the film explores. Tracy, the "you" of the song, must turn westward, to Chicago, to spurn fame for love, to embrace a firm racial and gender identity. Political rallies replace fashion shows. Nevertheless, Tracy's final scene at a political rally showcases her in a fluffy white fun fur, fashionably setting off her rich dark skin and contrasting with the dark street clothes of her boyfriend's South Side constituents. The film—and its star costume designer—cannot quite relinquish fashion's allure.

Whereas Tracy's own designs reinforce prejudice against fashion, the beautiful dresses she wears, including the sequined gown she wears at her own fashion show, work against that negative message. The gown shows no orientalist proclivities, and, as with Rogers's black satin and Hepburn's red chiffon, ordinary women might imagine slipping into it. Exquisite fashions such as those associated with "Made in Italy" thrive in the lived world of the film. While inevitably favoring Brian's political goal of "making the world a better place" over filling the eye and clothing the body, the film flaunts a visually arresting counter-message. Elizabeth Wilson eloquently expressed this conflict between doing good and looking good: "Fashion in our culture is elaborate, fetishized, neurotic, because it goes against these [spiritual] values, against the grain of the cultural norm, representing the return of the repressed and the profound importance of the superficial."[20] *Mahogany* hints of the 1980s return of that repressed in third-wave feminism, a feminism that recognizes fashion's pleasures and the right to celebrate appearances.

Fashion shows from Hollywood set in motion a kind of double vision for viewers. They invite us to step into a looking-glass universe where fashion *matters* and you can have it all—love for great clothes and for the stars and stripes forever.

NOTES

I thank Herbert Sussman, Anya Taylor, Miriam Brody, and Richard Munich.

1. Maureen Turim's "Designing Women" discusses American silent film and its redefining femininity as glamour, "the pursuit of quiet splendor," 148. For a lively discussion of fashion and glamour in later "women's films," see section two in Jeanine Basinger, *A Woman's View.*

2. Joan DeJean, in *The Essence of Style,* portrays Louis XIV as the consummate fashion king, not only fashion-conscious in his person but also consciously supporting fashion industries in France to form its identity as the place where taste and fashion was defined. Caroline Weber, in *Queen of Fashion,* shows how Marie Antoinette adroitly built on the French fashion image. While the results were cataclysmic for her, Paris lived on as a fashion capital.

3. Rumors about Scott's sexual orientation do not figure ironically in his characterization as quintessentially manly, for the character of a football player here draws on Scott's cowboy roles as that kind of guy's guy.

4. Charlotte Herzog, "'Powder Puff' Promotion," 135; Sarah Berry, *Screen Style,* 67.

5. Jeanine Basinger wittily discusses uses of fur in 1930s films as making up for what ordinary women in the depression could not possibly afford, but could dream of when they went to the movies. Opulence and glamour are epitomized by fur: "displaying the star not only in a variety of fur coats, but also in fur hats, fur gloves, fur muffs, fur skirts, and fur-trimmed pajamas," 115. Basinger also points out how films presented dozens of outfits designed for only one activity, 116, which matches the organizing device of *Roberta*'s fashion show.

6. See, especially, Herzog's "Powder Puff Promotion" for a description of the fashion show shots, 139ff., and Berry also for discussion of fashion and musicals.

7. Susan Sellers explores interchanges between *Harper's Bazaar* and American ambition in the film as it

> serves as a departure for rethinking the incorporation of modern European design in the context of postwar American consumer culture.
>
> *Funny Face* sheds an alternate light on a familiar story; the incorporation of Eurocentric modern design in *Harper's Bazaar* and the meaning of that incorporation in the context of a publication produced for women. (Sellers, "'How Long Has This Been Going On?,'" 13–14)

8. Peter Krämer, in "'A Cutie With More Than Beauty,'" points out that Astaire had taken a similar role of what he calls an "initiator" of younger women in other films and calls the character a "Svengali," 62. As we shall see, the fashion film uses this sort of transforming male for relationships with little or no age disparity. Krämer explores the biographical elements that create a narrative hodge-podge without acknowledging that fashion films generally show little respect for logic in plots.

9. Douglas Smith, "Funny Face Humanism in Post-War French Photography and Philosophy," extends discussion of the influence of philosophy on the film by situating photographers and Avery's photographic method in a humanist tradition. Such a promising direction exceeds my purposes here, though it is important to note.

10. For an exploration of what she calls the "European hinterland" imported into Hollywood musicals, see Fiona Handyside, "Beyond Hollywood, Into Europe."

11. Gaylyn Studlar, "'Chi-Chi Cinderella,'" explores the intersection between Parisian chic, Hepburn's roles, and French dependence upon American consumers: "American manufacturers and retailers longed to exploit once again the status of superiority enjoyed by Parisian designers. . . . French fashion houses were keenly aware of their postwar dependence upon U.S. business practice and American consumers who could afford French luxury goods. By the mid-1950s it was estimated that 70 percent of haute couture clients were Americans" (160). See also Elizabeth Wilson, "Gamine Against the Grain."

12. David Campany, "From Ecstasy to Agony," 42.

13. The Gershwin tunes are from their 1927 musical by the same name.

14. Rachel Moseley, *Growing Up With Audrey Hepburn,* provides documentation for Hepburn's influence in interviews with women who sew their clothes and who identify with her as an "image/text."

15. Hilary Radner makes a similar point ("Embodying the Single Girl in the 1960s," 185). See also Elizabeth Wilson, "Gamine Against the Grain," 30–32.

16. See Handyside, 87, for contextualization of Hepburn's European origins.

17. The film was not a critical success, and there is much to find fault with, particularly its heavy-handed use of racial stereotypes and its gratuitous hostility to fashion—which goes beyond satire, especially in terms of the homophobic stereotypes used to characterize Sean as what later decades would see as a homosexual dwelling in a fashion closet filled with gays.

18. For theoretical positions brought to bear on this film, see Jane Gaines, "White Privilege and Looking Relations."

19. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* 63.

20. Elizabeth Wilson, "All the Rage," 38.

WORKS CITED

Basinger, Jeanine. *A Woman's View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women, 1930–1960.* Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1995.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project.* 1972. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Berry, Sarah. *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Campany, David. "From Ecstasy to Agony: The Fashion Shoot in Cinema." *Aperture,* no. 190 (Spring 2008): 40–47.

Cook, Pam. *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema.* London: British Film Institute, 1996.

DeJean, Joan. *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafes, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour.* New York: Free Press, 2005.

Gaines, Jane. "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory." *Cultural Critique* 4 (Autumn 1986): 59–79.

Handyside, Fiona. "Beyond Hollywood, Into Europe: The Tourist Gaze in *Gentlemen Prefer Blonds* (Hawks, 1953) and *Funny Face* (Donon, 1957)." *Studies in European Cinema* 1, no. 2, (2004): 77–89.

Herzog, Charlotte. "'Powder Puff' Promotion: The Fashion Show-in-the-Film." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 134–59. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Krämer, Peter. "'A Cutie With More Than Beauty: Audrey Hepburn, the Hollywood Musical and *Funny Face.*" In *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond,* ed. Robynn Jeananne Stilwell and Bill Marshall, 62–69. Exeter, U.K.: Intellect Books, 2000.

Moseley, Rachel. *Growing Up With Audrey Hepburn.* Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Radner, Hilary. "Embodying the Single Girl in the 1960s." In *Body Dressing,* ed. Elizabeth Wilson and Joanne Entwistle, 183–198. Oxford: Berg, 2001.

Sellers, Susan. "'How Long Has This Been Going On'? Harper's Bazaar, *Funny Face,* and the Construction of the Modernist Woman." *Visible Language* 29 (Winter 1995): 13–34.

Smith, Douglas. "Funny Face Humanism in Post-War French Photography and Philosophy." *French Cultural Studies* 16, no. 1 (2005): 41–53.

Studlar, Gaylyn. "'Chi-Chi Cinderella': Audrey Hepburn as Couture Countermodel." In *Hollywood Goes Shopping,* ed. Garth Jowell David Dresser, 159–178. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2000.

Turim, Maureen. "Designing Women: The Emergence of the New Sweetheart Line." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Fashioned Body,* ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 212–228. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Weber, Caroline. *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution.* New York: Henry Holt, 2006.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity.* New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1985, rev. 2003.

———. "All the Rage." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 28–38. New York: Routledge, 1990,.

———. "Gamine Against the Grain." *Sight and Sound* (March 1993): 30–32.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Devil Wears Prada. Dir. David Frankel. Costumes, Patricia Field. Fox 2000 Pictures, 2006.

Funny Face. Dir. Stanley Donen. Costumes, Edith Head, Hubert de Givenchy, 1957.

Guys and Dolls. Dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Costumes, Irene Sharaff. The Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1955.

Legally Blonde. Dir. Robert Luketic. Costumes, Sophie de Rakoff Carbonell. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2001.

Mahogany. Dir. Berry Gordy. Costumes, Diana Ross. Motown Productions, Paramount Pictures, 1975.

Roberta. Dir. William A. Seiter. Costumes (gowns), Bernard Newman. RKO Radio Pictures, 1935.

TWELVE

Does Dress Tell the Nation's Story? Fashion, History, and Nation in the Films of Fassbinder

KRISTIN HOLE

The September 2007 issue of American *Vogue* devoted an article to the "überglamorous leading ladies" of the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. The story examined how the director's forty-three film and television productions have influenced the world of high fashion, citing as examples recent collections that were inspired by films such as *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972), *Chinese Roulette* (1976), and *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1979). Fassbinder belonged to a generation of West German filmmakers born during the period of World War II. His cohort inherited the legacy of fascism and struggled to create a new and viable German culture. The historical and cultural moment that was Germany from the late 1960s to early 1980s, the time when Fassbinder was active, is not necessarily the first that comes to mind when one thinks of fashionable films. Yet Fassbinder's oeuvre appropriates the thematic and visual language of Hollywood genres from film noir and gangster to melodrama, while evincing a decidedly self-reflexive and avant-garde character. The women in his films are nothing if not glamorous. From their garter-belts to their fringe-trimmed suits to their furs, the stars of Fassbinder films exude nostalgia for old Hollywood glamour. In an attempt to look closely at the meanings of fashion in Fassbinder's work, I will focus specifically on two films, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *The Marriage of Maria Braun,* taking these films off of the runway and returning them to their specific historical and national context. Inherently paradoxical, fashion maintains the tensions between truth and artifice; in Fassbinder's work,

fashion struggles with the threat of the past returning *and* expresses the hope of a new generation creating a new Germany.

Although made within the same decade, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *The Marriage of Maria Braun* are representative of early and late Fassbinder, due to the brevity of his thirteen-year career. *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972) is set explicitly in the world of fashion—it centers on a love affair between fashion designer Petra (Margit Carstensen) and aspiring model Karin (Hanna Schygulla). *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1979) is the first installment in Fassbinder's Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) "trilogy,"[1] completed by *Lola* (1978) and *Veronika Voss* (1982). These "historical" films, while still firmly in the tradition of melodrama, seek to retell post-WWII German history through the lives of three remarkable and ambitious women. Of his historical films Fassbinder explained:

> *Lola* and *Maria Braun* are films about the country as it is today. In order to understand the present, what has and will become of the country, one has to understand its whole history or at least have worked on it [. . .]. *Maria Braun* and *Lola* are stories that could only have happened at the moment in time in which they are situated. And they are, I hope, part of a total picture of the Federal Republic, which helps us understand its peculiar democratic contours better—and also the dangers and temptations of this democracy. To that extent, they are both very political films.[2]

Although *Petra* is not one of Fassbinder's explicitly historical films, Lynne Kirby argues that it *is* in fact about the recent German past: "In the cases of both Petra and the German nation, the irony stems from the desire of each to distinguish herself/itself from the past, to create an identity unbesmirched by a former enslavement to misguided ideals."[3] If we read Petra as an allegory for the German nation and if *Maria,* also an allegorical character, is about "the country as it is today," then both *Petra* and *Maria* are reflections on contemporary sexual and political relations and their relationship to recent German history. The ability of fashion to project desired identities, identities that signify a break with or reworking of the past, is key to understanding one of the central meanings of fashion in Fassbinder's films. While at first glance Fassbinder may seem to use fashion only as a means of highlighting the superficiality and alienation of his characters, he also deploys fashion to gesture toward

the potential to self-define and create new worlds in the new world of postwar Germany.

The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant centers on Petra's struggle for a new kind of relationship, one that breaks with previous cycles of control and domination. However, in her affair with Karin, Petra ends up reproducing the power relations and dysfunctional dynamics of her past. Her failed efforts to control her new partner through the promise of love and success result first in her total breakdown and ultimately in her acceptance of a life without Karin. Fassbinder leaves the question of Petra's future characteristically ambiguous. Formally, the film is highly self-reflexive. Mannequins, dolls, a large Poussin painting, mirrors, and the ever-present gaze of Petra's secretary Marlene dominate the mise-en-scène. Tropes of mirroring and doubling throughout the film reinforce the themes of truth and artifice, often, along with the costumes, highlighting the alienation of the characters from one another. The women rarely look at each other when they converse, and their movements are rigid and artificial. The absence of interpersonal connection is further reinforced by the film's use of long takes, which allow the characters to carefully reposition themselves, stiffly and deliberately posing themselves for the viewer. Heavily influenced by both Bertolt Brecht and his recent discovery of the films of Douglas Sirk, Fassbinder uses strategies of alienation inspired by the former, while like Hollywood master Sirk taking up the genre of melodrama or the "weepy," using its emotional and visual excess to critique the social context in which his characters act. The stiff, overly posed quality of the mise-en-scène throughout the film works to distance the viewer from the action, a technique that Fassbinder frequently used. In contrast to his other films and because of the fashion world setting of Petra's studio, these formal devices work in *Petra* to give the impression of a meta-reference to the fashion industry. The long takes and frozen poses of the characters create the effect of fashion photography stills. On one level, the fashion world context and the clothing of the characters contribute to the film's reflexivity, functioning to highlight the artificiality of the character's relations and to discourage the viewer from overly identifying with the narrative. Yet Fassbinder's work thrives on paradox. While fashion works along with

the formal language of the film to distance the viewer from the action, at the same time, the artifice of fashion contains a seductive power that the film celebrates visually.

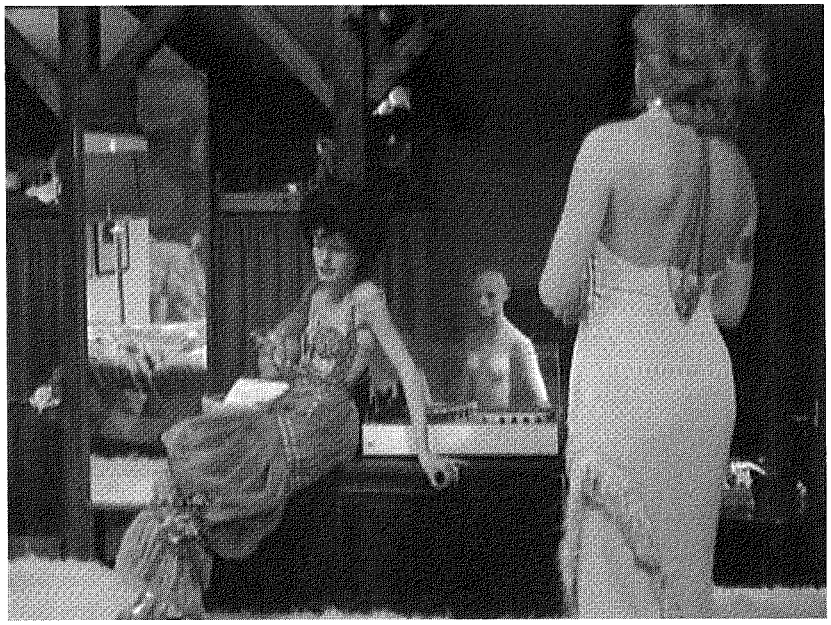
Fassbinder troubles any attempt to equate the artificial with the bad or to allow a simplistic conflation between dress and body. The opening scene of the film establishes a distinction between fashion and the body, as Petra's deceitfulness is rendered separate from her actual appearance. When we first witness Petra lying to her mother over the phone, she has not yet dressed or put on her wig and makeup. Fassbinder makes it clear that Petra does not need to be in costume to play a role. Petra proceeds to dress slowly and deliberately for the camera. She carefully spins around and buttons up her peignoir (a white floor-length number with fringe trim, a rhinestone belt, and a fur collar), and stands posed as if for a photo.[4] Petra turns to put on a wig in front of the mirror, and then slowly applies her makeup, from foundation to false eyelashes to lipstick. At key points in the dialogue that follows, her face is visible only as a reflection in her handheld mirror. The film's very self-conscious concern with Petra's first moment of getting dressed and "putting on her face" establishes its interest in fashion and beauty as role-playing, although as evinced in this scene, neither are necessary preconditions for the ability to play a deceptive role.

As Jane Gaines has argued in relation to classic Hollywood melodrama, costume can work both to index character psychology, supporting the film's narrative development, *and* to absorb the emotional surplus of the plot, even to the point of competing with the narrative trajectory itself.[5] Always shuffling between classical Hollywood and the avant-garde, Fassbinder utilizes costume as a visual element that is necessarily and politically in tension with the narrative, but he also draws on its ability to add to characterization. He uses the costumes as psychological cues while at the same time undermining their reliability.[6]

An example of his use of an outfit as index of the character's psyche can be found in a scene in which Petra appears stranded in a sea of white shag carpet next to a white telephone. It is her birthday and she desperately desires for Karin to call. She wears a long green off-the-shoulder dress with ruffled top, a blonde curly wig that reminds one slightly of Karin (perhaps a melancholic choice on Petra's part?) and

12.1. Petra takes a drink.

a choker sprouting a bouquet of red flowers, which seems to visualize Petra's emotional distress very viscerally as a bleeding from the throat. These same flowers will be held at Petra's genitals during one of the final scenes, a melancholic tribute to the lost sexual possibilities of her relationship. When Karin is first introduced, her suit of purple and paisley hints that she is there to do business, but the furry trim (technically marabou) suggests a sexuality infused with the dynamics of domination and submission. Notably, the other women in the scene are similarly fur-trimmed and have just been discussing the power games inherent in any romantic relationship. In the scene in which Petra and Karin have their first "date," while Petra's outfit seems true to character, Karin's is not such a straightforward indication of her interiority. When we see Petra framed in a doorway she looks like something out of a Klimt painting. Her skirt makes it almost impossible for her to move, suggesting her entrapment by the excessiveness of her desire. But the top of her outfit is a mix between armor and beaded lingerie, between protection and



12.2. Petra and Karin meet for the first time.

exposure ("I had to fight," says Petra to Karin regarding her past). The outfit's oscillation between defense and desire is echoed by Karin's, on whom a sequined metallic bra-top dress hints at self-protection, opening to expose a triangle around her bellybutton, giving her a sense of extreme vulnerability, as well as echoing a vaginal shape, here offered to Petra. Her thick gold choker and armband connote bondage. Although her outfit indicates a servility and vulnerability, this is revealed to be the opposite of stubborn, independent Karin's true character.

In regard to the use of costume in *Petra,* Olga Solovieva argues that "dress replaces the body. Mask-like makeup and ever-changing wardrobes take on a life of their own, representing the dynamics of the characters' personalities."[7] This is not quite so; dress can never "replace" the body for Fassbinder's characters. Fashion provides the means by which his characters attempt to create new personas for themselves, personas that will help them to break from their dysfunctional pasts. Yet the body and its interconnected psyche remain, threatening to undermine the

fantasies expressed by their fashion choices. As indicated in the opening scene, in which Petra's forced enthusiasm toward her mother and her dishonesty over the phone are accomplished without outfit, wig, or makeup, the relationship between who you are and what you wear is not straightforward. Fashion is not to blame for the artificiality and oppressiveness of sexual and interpersonal relations in the film. Karin's peek-a-boo gown belies her invulnerability and stubborn independence. Like many of her words on this first night of passion, Karin's dress, with its slave band accessories and exposed core, does not reflect who she is. If anything, her garb is a representation, along with her speech, of the person she wants Petra to see her as. Although Karin maintains that she has always been honest with Petra, she seems all too aware of how to get what she wants from the lonely designer. There are bodies beneath clothing that contradict their outward presentation. The characters are not what they wear, but often what they wear expresses who they wish they could be. It is this side of fashion, as a space of self-creation, that must be read alongside the stigma that fashion carries as inherently superficial. Fashion is, for Fassbinder, an ambiguous site of multiple meanings that harbors within it radical potential. The problem, in *Petra,* is not fashion but the people on whose bodies it is displayed. For Petra, like Germany, *despite* the promises of fashion—the potential to re-create the self, individuality, and the possibility of other ways of being—she remains trapped in her past, repeating dangerous older patterns.

Nor is artifice an inherently bad thing. As Fassbinder said when asked about the inspiration for his television productions, "The true *is* the artificial."[8] Fassbinder's celebration of artifice is evident in the parallel he draws between the world of fashion and the medium of film itself. In her attempt to connect with Karin on their first night together, Petra asks Karin whether she likes art, concerts, or films, to which Karin replies, "I love movies. Films about love and suffering." Here the dialogue explicitly draws attention to the film *as* a film. Just as they love fashion, the women love film. Just as fashion is a fetishized illusion, so film provides a space for individual and collective fantasies to be given a visual language. Thomas Kellner also notes this connection when he writes, "The *mise-en-scène* is marked by cinematic excess that itself calls attention to the artificiality of the cinematic apparatus and in several scenes

explicit parallels are drawn between the dreams that fashion and cinema produce and the fantasies of the characters."[9] Fassbinder's relation to Hollywood melodrama is both a celebration and critique of the genre; his relationship to fashion is equally complex. No authentic or better world provides an outside against which this "artificial" world of fashion is ranged. If anything, it is Petra's aspirations to authenticity—mirrored in the fact that her costumes *do* tend to provide some indication of her desire—that are her romantic downfall. She tells her friend Sidonie, "I wasn't interested in any feminine conjuring tricks. It only makes you unfree." If we associate fashion with rapidity of change and an unceasing quest for novelty, then Germany, beneath the surface of the "economic miracle," is still struggling to be fashionable. When Karin says upon her return to Germany that things are basically the same, Petra echoes, "Nothing much can change in Germany." Petra's struggle with artifice and depth contrasts greatly with the women in the FRG trilogy who will celebrate artifice and exploit their own femininity to get ahead in the new Germany.

More so than *Petra, The Marriage of Maria Braun* is clearly linked to a particular socio-historical moment in Germany. The film is most often read as an allegory for postwar Germany itself, with Maria standing in for the nation as a whole. Maria, married amidst the explosions of the end of World War II, works her way up in the world financially during the period of Germany's "economic miracle." Although the film is not explicitly situated in the world of fashion, Maria uses fashion and its always-anticipatory temporality to establish herself in the new Germany. Anton Kaes refers to the clothing in the film when he discusses its strong sense of historical realism:

> The faithful reconstructions, from the postwar train station to the living room décor of the fifties, from the Allied uniforms to the women's hairstyles, evoke historical time between 1944 and 1954 through visual motifs well known from old photographs and newsreels. Images . . . of women in head-scarves clearing away rubble . . . carry a high recognition value.[10]

In Kaes's need to establish the realism of the film, he overlooks the role of fantasy in Fassbinder's reconstruction of German history. Barbara Baum, the costume designer for *Maria Braun* and many other Fassbinder productions up until his death in 1982, says in relation to the

aesthetic of his films that, "[Fassbinder] did not want pure naturalism or realism. That would have been wrong for his films. He often said, 'We are making a certain film about a certain period—but from our point of view.'"[11] Perhaps the military uniforms and headscarves point to a meticulous eye for historical accuracy, but some images—women walking through the rubble of war-torn Germany in high heels, Maria donning a fur jacket and fur-trimmed hat—were likely not meant to be faithful reconstructions. Writing in *Vogue,* Lynn Yaeger comments on this scene: "Forget if you will that in Germany's devastated economy such clothes would be impossible to purchase for at least another decade, and that even if they were available, they would be highly unsuitable for a stroll through the rubble."[12] If the clothes are not about naturalism but about a "point of view," then rather than faithfully reconstructing Germany as it was, fashion acts as a space from which other ways of envisioning postwar Germany can emerge. In both *Petra* and *Maria Braun,* we see the costumes function in the register of fantasy as opposed to proofs of historical accuracy. If Maria represents the nation, then her body and its adornments are in part a fantasy of nation. Schygulla, Fassbinder's favorite leading actress, notes this when she says, "[The glamorous costuming] was his way of putting into one image the idea that Germany was rising out of ruin instead of putting ashes on itself, instead of going into grief—which perhaps it should have done."[13] The positivity of Schygulla's reading is in stark contrast to Kaes's, who claims that Fassbinder depicts Germany/Maria as, "A creature dressed in obviously expensive clothes that has lost its soul."[14] Yet there is room in the context of the film and Fassbinder's *oeuvre* for both of these readings. The elaborate clothing both says something about the fantasy of the nation *and* can be seen as a critical symptom of some of the problems of the times. In fact, such contradictory readings are inherent in Fassbinder's relationship to Hollywood cinema, capitalism, and West German democracy.

Maria not only exhibits fashion sense, but also adopts fashion's concern with the future to make her way to the top in postwar Germany. Cultural critic Gilles Lipovetsky argues that the capitalist democratic West is living in the era of consummate fashion, a time in which fashion's logic of ephemerality, seduction, constant novelty, and the promise of

12.3. Maria and her sister take a walk.

individuality are being extended to broader and broader spheres of collective life.[15] Fashion's rule extends even into our experience of temporality. Lipovetsky writes, "What is fashion, indeed, if not a modern social logic instituting a new legitimate temporality—the social present—that breaks with the traditional order venerating continuity and fidelity to the past?"[16] *Maria Braun* begins with an explosion: a picture of Hitler comes flying off the wall as a bomb hits the building where Maria is performing her nuptials. This explosion and the fascist image that it relegates to the ashes tell us that we are entering a new time. Maria realizes early in the film that she must use her mastery of appearances to get ahead. She trades in her mother's brooch for a bottle of bourbon and a dress ordered exactly to her specifications. The dealer (significantly played by Fassbinder) handing her the dress states, "Black, size 38, short sleeves, low cut. Wasn't easy to get." He offers her a valuable edition of the works of Kleist, but Maria passes saying, "Books burn too fast and don't give

enough heat." Maria rejects the past, represented here by the work of celebrated author Heinrich von Kleist, in one of many moments in the film where she aligns herself with the future-present of fashion, rather than the past.[17] In the scene immediately following, Maria will have her mother shorten the dress to expose her calves. This dress will be Maria's ticket into a relationship with a financially supportive American soldier, and later with Karl Oswald, whose textile manufacturing company will securely establish Maria financially. Initially working as a translator for Oswald (she has learned English "in bed" with her American soldier) she asks for a moment alone with the head of the American firm, reasoning, "I don't know a thing about business. But I do know something about the German woman and the difference between nylon and cotton. I understand quite a lot about the future. You might say I'm a specialist in it." Maria's knowledge of women and clothing are here implied to be to her advantage in the new German order, an advantage she has over the older men for whom she works. Her ability to anticipate what will serve her well in her quest for upward mobility constitutes her key to getting ahead in the world. Maria explains her involvement with Oswald to her husband, who is in jail for a murder that she committed, explaining that she asked Oswald to sleep with her *before* he could have the chance to make a proposition, so that she would have the upper hand. In another scene Maria tells her brother-in-law that "Reality lags behind my consciousness."

Maria's investment in the future seems to feed into the social present of fashion, in that it enables her to prepare for the change and novelty inevitable in the new era of democratic capitalism. Fassbinder and Maria (as Germany) want to break with the past, but in the process they reveal that the past is not so easy to leave behind. Just as an explosion begins the film, the explosion that ends it is followed by a series of negative shots of the post-WWII Chancellors up to the film's production year (1979), with Willy Brandt, with whom Fassbinder had political sympathies, noticeably absent. The visual logic implies that the fascist past (represented by the image of Hitler at the film's beginning) is somehow continuous with the present. This impression is compounded by Fassbinder's use of actual historical radio broadcasts layered in the soundtrack of the narrative. An earlier broadcast of Chancellor Adenauer stating that

Germany is against rearmament is later contradicted when Adenauer announces that Germany must begin the process of rearmament. The radio broadcast of Germany beating Hungary in the 1954 World Cup is the last thing heard in the film. The radio announcer shouts, "Germany is World Champion [*Weltmeister*]," eerily hinting at the forgetting of history that Fassbinder both critiques and participates in through his own filmic reconstructions.

HISTORY LESSONS

As is evident from the visual and auditory links made in *Maria,* Fassbinder was critical of what he saw as the continuities between West Germany in the 1970s and the Nazi era. He argued that because West Germany had been handed democracy and freedom, rather than having fought for it, traces of fascism were still evident in everyday German life. Of his FRG trilogy he said,

> We didn't learn much about German history in Germany, so we have to catch up with some basic information, and as a filmmaker I simply used this information to tell a story. That means nothing more than making reality tangible. I see many things today that arouse fear in me. The call for law and order. I want to use this film to give today's society something like a supplement to their history.[18]

While Fassbinder himself identified the trilogy as a history lesson, Lynne Kirby sees in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* a critical awareness of the continuities of the present with the fascist past. She argues that many of the costumes worn in the film hearken back to the interwar period when fascism was on the rise; thus the costumes "put fashion on a continuum with fascism."[19] Thomas Elsaesser argues that in Fassbinder's films *"esse est percipi,"* "to be is to be perceived."[20] In Fassbinder's films, the exhibitionism of the characters is a more dominant motif than any spectatorial voyeurism. According to Kirby's reading, this exhibitionism in *Petra* reeks of fascism. She argues that the conformity of fascism is the conformity of the fashion world: "The fashion industry *is* the industry of conformity, of social-sexual uniforms."[21] Kirby tempers her interpretation somewhat, arguing that other costumes in *Petra* would challenge a straightforward reading of the film as strictly about fascism. Rather, the film must be considered as touching on, "the ambiguous survival of

outmoded social relations, their coexistence with and survival as incorporation at the heart of contemporary socio-economic structures."[22]

While Kirby's ultimate conclusion falls in line with my analysis, I would challenge her alignment of fashion with fascism and conformity. Undeniably, fascism had an aesthetic and exhibitionist dimension.[23] Walter Benjamin famously wrote that fascism was the aestheticization of politics,[24] and Susan Sontag argued that under National Socialism "politics appropriated the rhetoric of art."[25] I argue, however, that fashion needs to be separated from an easy conflation with beauty or aesthetics. Fashion's meanings are much more complex and contradictory. While fashion can create regimes of conformity, it *also* promises constant novelty and change, the ability to be an individual and to self-fashion.[26] This ambiguity is evident in Elizabeth Wilson's claim that "To dress fashionably is both to stand out and to merge with the crowd, to lay claim to the exclusive and to follow the herd."[27] Wilson points to the paradox that although most people's fashion choices in a given time and place have more similarities than differences, people tend to see their appearance as an expression of their individuality, at least in the capitalist West. Individuality and novelty are somewhat outside of fascism's logic of conformity and the static immortality of the leader, even if the latter ideals are highly beautified and even eroticized. Citing a long lineage of scholars who saw fashion as intrinsic to the logic of capitalist democracy, equality, and social mobility, Yuniya Kawamura argues that "fashion both requires a certain degree of mobility and fluidity within a society and promotes a more egalitarian society and erases class boundaries."[28] Lipovetsky echoes this when he argues, "Fashion must be conceptualized as an instrument for the equality of conditions,"[29] which "marks a . . . limit to the process of social and political domination in modern societies."[30] Also opposing Kirby's emphasis on the conformism of fashion, Eugenia Paulicelli in her study on fashion under Italian fascism argues that something in the way fashion itself works served to undermine the fascist system: "a culture shuttered in by its nationalistic, totalitarian and autarchic modes was anathema to the creativity and change inherent in fashion."[31]

The paradoxical nature of fashion needs to be reined in and channeled if we are to maintain notions of collective social responsibility and

ethical principles in modern capitalist democracies. This ambivalence, rather than any straightforward alignment of fashion with fascism or a less authentic way of being, is what is key to understanding the role of fashion in Fassbinder's films. If anything, Fassbinder was concerned to show that while the promises of capitalist democracy's fashion logic were available and operable for Germany, the social and sexual relations of a previous order still lingered in a nation that had had its democracy handed to it in 1945, rather than having struggled for that freedom. Maria, trying to sell her wedding dress for goods early on in the film, tells her mother, "Nobody wants wedding dresses now," of course alluding to the paucity of German men "on the market," but also hinting at a break with tradition. Wedding dresses, while subject on a minor scale to the whims of fashion, are somewhat outside of the fashion logic, and in discarding hers, Maria, like her nation, is eager to show her fashionability, her ability to adapt to the demands of capitalism and democracy.

PERFORMING THE NATION

Thomas Elsaesser suggests that we read the FRG trilogy's focus on women in terms of their ability to embody the spectacle of show business and capitalism.[32] The protagonists are strong women, consciously using their appearance to control the gaze of men in order to get what they want. Maria, Veronika, and Lola are all talented performers. Elsaesser writes of the historical films that, "they are centered on a female heroine, each of whom, perhaps even more crucially, lives her life through the realities and values of show business, which constitutes them, makes them into what they are, and gives them a field of action, *a terrain for being that exceeds the scope their lives might otherwise have had.*"[33] Lola, a sex worker and singer in the local brothel, deftly negotiates the political and economic situation in her town to ensure the financial security of herself and her child. Veronika Voss, whose character is based loosely on the life of interwar film star Sybille Schmitz, who died of a drug overdose in 1955, demonstrates a keen awareness throughout the film of how to best showcase her aging assets. When she first has a drink with the reporter who later becomes obsessed with her, she orders the waiter to dim the lights and uses candlelight to create a more flattering image of herself for

her companion. Later, in a flashback, Veronika argues with her husband as she tries to create a mood in their villa with lighting and music. He complains, "It's always the same crap. You always have to be doing something, always setting something up. Can't we just be the way we are?" To which Voss replies, "Why can't you understand me? When an actress plays a woman who wants to please a man, she tries to be all the women in the world rolled into one." The three protagonists all understand the power of appearances in the logic of postwar German capitalism and survive or perish acceptingly within this system.

When Veronika explains that sometimes, "an actress plays a woman who wants to please a man," she reveals a certain meta-awareness of femininity as performance. This level of performativity on the part of Fassbinder's characters is what Johannes von Moltke argues is their availability for certain campy spectatorial pleasures. Where Elsaesser reads the FRG heroines as *performers,* Moltke argues for a reading of their *performativity.*[34] Here we have "the nation and its history as a drag performance, put on by a particular body."[35] Moltke will go on to argue that, "Where the female female-impersonator erases the substantiality of the feminine, the impersonator of national history radically shifts the status of the historical subject, suggesting that *it is only by 'doing' the historical moment that we can access its meanings.*"[36] Perhaps this point provides a better window into the highly self-reflexive *Petra* as well as the more explicitly historical *Maria Braun.* Both Petra and Karin are very much characters who are playing characters, a fact evinced by their usage of fashion to project the selves they want to be or be seen as. If history is in Moltke's analysis rewritten through the body (of the woman/Schygulla) then we must ask (to rephrase Jane Gaines) if dress tells the nation's story.[37] Caryl Flinn echoes Moltke's claims, arguing that the silence around recent German history for the postwar generation necessitated a performative relationship to history.[38] Flinn suggests that music and other elements of style in the films of the New German Cinema be read as artifacts that produce alternative possibilities for understanding identity and history. Although these artifacts may not correspond with objective historical referents, the often emotionally charged associations they evoke in the viewer enable various forms of identification and the exploration of lost possibilities. Although she does not explicitly discuss

12.4. Maria visits her old schoolhouse.

fashion, as a major element of film style costume must necessarily be considered as just such an "artifact" that signals other ways of seeing Germany. Maria walks through the ruins of her childhood school in a long black dress and a pillbox hat, a strand of pearls around her neck. Of the jacket with animal-print fur trim worn in this scene, Schygulla says, "The trim on the coat was almost like saying the tiger is rising again."[39] In her reference to the lush costumes signifying a glamorous Germany rising from the ashes, Schygulla seems to imply that in the case of *The Marriage of Maria Braun,* dress *was* meant to tell a story, though that story is perhaps a fairy tale, about the nation.

Thinking of fashion in terms of performative reiterations of history and identity points to the ambivalence of Fassbinder's relationship to Germany *and* fashion. Iterability both cites from a catalogue of already available meanings and at the same time reworks them to enable other ways of seeing and doing history and identity to emerge. As was evident in *Petra,* the body will always place limits on the ability to enact

a meaningful (and lasting) reiteration. It would be a mistake to embrace wholeheartedly a reading of fashion as a realm of purely utopian democratic potential and unlimited individuality. Fashion, too, has its dangers. However, one of the meanings it makes available is precisely this realm of fantasy, of imagining other ways of being and of breaking one's ties to the past. Though Fassbinder, always cynical, may have been critical of aspects of the fashion world, he was keenly aware of its fantasy-producing nature and the way it fabricated new selves and possibilities for action.

Even a cursory viewing of Fassbinder's films reveals their richness as sources of high fashion inspiration. The world of fashion, like camp spectatorship, works on the basis of deterritorialized readings of its sources. While a Marc Jacobs collection or certain camp appropriations may take away from some of Fassbinder's political critique, they pick up on a celebration of the superficial that is already present in Fassbinder's relationship to fashion and style. While the argument for camp enables the reading of history as a drag performance to emerge, I would argue for a reading that reterritorializes these performances, placing them squarely in the context of Fassbinder's relationship to Germany past and present. Fassbinder was critical of contemporary Germany, of the constant danger of the nation slipping into past ways of being. Yet as he argued, "God knows the FRG is not comparable to Hitler's Reich. And although I can imagine a different government, this is where I do my business."[40] Although critical of capitalism, Fassbinder was aware that, "some aspect of venality forms part of every opportunity to be happy."[41] This ambivalence must be read into the role of fashion in his films: fashion, like the cinema itself, tells *a* truth despite, or perhaps because of, its artifice. The fantasy realms that fashion gives us access to, the promise of change and individuality inherent in the way fashion operates enables the creation of new identities and of a different nation. Dress tells the nation's story: Germany is writ large in the figure of Maria Braun; it is also written in the stories of the individuals whose smaller histories, in a film like *Petra,* combine to offer other possible ways of understanding German identity. The glamour of Fassbinder's vision must be read as both a celebration of the possibilities of postwar democracy and as a weary eye turned on the tendencies of the present to eschew fashion's penchant for change in

its reproduction of the fascist past. Like the faces obscured by the many veils that adorn the hats of Fassbinder's leading ladies, an older Germany lurks behind the promise of the glamorous and the new.

NOTES

1. I put trilogy in quotation marks, because Fassbinder intended to continue making this series of "historical" films before he died of a drug overdose in 1982, having completed only three.

2. Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany,* 20–21.

3. Lynne Kirby, "Fassbinder's Debt to Poussin," 16.

4. The costumes for *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* are by Maja Lemcke. This is the only film that Lemcke worked on with Fassbinder.

5. Jane Gaines, "Costume and Narrative," 205–206.

6. See Jaspers and Reichmann, "Kostüm als Charakterdarstellung." According to Barbara Baum, who was Fassbinder's costume designer from 1972–1982 and worked on films such as *The Marriage of Maria Braun,* once their relationship was established, Fassbinder gave her a great deal of freedom, generally offering her a few guiding concepts or figures and then often not viewing her creations until the actors were dressed and the shooting had begun. For *Petra,* however, Fassbinder may have had more direct input into the costuming, because it seems to have been his first time working with Lemcke, and especially because costume plays such an important visual role in the film.

7. Olga Solovieva, "You Are What You Wear," 53.

8. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *The Anarchy of the Imagination,* 198; italics mine. A character in Fassbinder's 1979 film *The Third Generation* also sums up his attitude well when he says, "Film is a lie, twenty-five times a second. Truth is a lie, every film tells us that. In films lies are dressed up as ideas and shown as truths. That's my idea of utopia—the only one there is."

9. Thomas Kellner, "Fassbinder, Women, and Melodrama," 34.

10. Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to* Heimat, 87–88.

11. Juliane Lorenz, ed., *Chaos as Usual,* 156.

12. Lynn Yaeger, "Screen Idol," 512.

13. Ibid., 514.

14. Kaes, 98.

15. Gilles Lipovetsky, *Empire of Fashion,* 131.

16. Ibid., 243.

17. Although it must be noted that the Kleist reference has multiple valences, as the author was an important reference point for many of the directors associated with the New German Cinema.

18. Kaes, 88. The present-day situation in Germany was of course the rise of "terrorism" in West Germany and what was viewed as the crackdown on free speech and freedom of the press. These issues were the subject of a collaborative film in which Fassbinder participated, *Germany in Autumn* (1978).

19. Kirby, 17.

20. Elsaesser, 68.

21. Kirby, 18.

22. Ibid.

23. Apropos the aestheticization of politics under fascism, Visconti's *The Damned,* a highly stylized film about a wealthy German family's corruption under the Third Reich, ranked first on Fassbinder's list of top ten movies. See Fassbinder, "The List of my Favorites" in *Anarchy,* 106.

24. See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

25. See Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism."

26. This argument is made by Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams,* 6; Lipovetsky; and Eugenia Paulicelli, *Fashion under Fascism,* 149.

27. Wilson, 6.

28. Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashion-ology,* 24. This is also central to Wilson and Lipovetsky's definition of fashion as a social phenomenon.

29. Lipovetsky, 31.

30. Ibid., 37.

31. Paulicelli, 143.

32. Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany.*

33. Elsaesser, 116; italics mine.

34. He is particularly interested in adding Schygulla as a campy performer of femininity to the already established canon that includes figures such as Judy Garland.

35. Johannes von Moltke, "Camping in the Art Closet," 98.

36. Ibid., 99; italics mine.

37. See Gaines.

38. Caryl Flinn, *New German Cinema.*

39. Yaeger, 514.

40. Kaes, 97.

41. Fassbinder, *Anarchy,* 68 ("'I'm a Romantic Anarchist'").

WORKS CITED

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations,* 217–52. New York: Schocken Book, 1968.

Elsaesser, Thomas. *Fassbinder's Germany: History Identity Subject.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996.

Fassbinder, Rainer Werner. *The Anarchy of the Imagination.* Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins Press, 1992.

Flinn, Caryl. *New German Cinema: Music, History, and the Question of Style.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Gaines, Jane. "Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman's Story." In *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body,* ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, 180–211. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Jaspers, Kristina, and Hans-Peter Reichmann. "Kostüm als Charakterdarstellung: Interview mit der Köstumbildnerin Barbara Baum." *Film-Dienst* 59 (2006): 53–55.

Kaes, Anton. *From Hitler to* Heimat: *The Return of History as Film.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Kawamura, Yuniya. *Fashion-ology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies.* Oxford: Berg, 2005.

Kellner, Thomas. "Fassbinder, Women, and Melodrama: Critical Interrogations." In *Triangulated Visions: Women in Recent German Cinema,* ed. Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey and Ingeborg von Zadow, 29–42. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Kirby, Lynne. "Fassbinder's Debt to Poussin." *Camera Obscura* 3 (1985): 4–27.

Lipovetsky, Gilles. *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Lorenz, Juliane, ed. *Chaos as Usual: Conversations about Rainer Werner Fassbinder.* Berlin: Henschel Verlag GmbH, 1995.

Moltke, Johannes von. "Camping in the Art Closet: The Politics of Camp and Nation in German Film." *New German Critique* 63 (Autumn 1994): 76–106.

Paulicelli, Eugenia. *Fashion Under Fascism*. Oxford: Berg, 2004.

Solovieva, Olga. "You are What you Wear in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*." *Film Comment* (November/December 2002): 53–56.

Sontag, Susan. "Fascinating Fascism." *New York Review of Books*, February 6, 1975.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Yaeger, Lynn. "Screen Idol." *Vogue*, September 2007.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Costumes, Maja Lemcke. Filmverlag der Autoren, 1972.

Chinese Roulette. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Albatros/Les Films du Losanges, 1976.

Lola. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Costumes, Barbara Baum. Trio Film, 1981.

The Marriage of Maria Braun. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Costumes, Barbara Baum. Trio Film, 1979.

Veronika Voss. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Costumes, Barbara Baum. Trio Film, 1982.

THIRTEEN

Subversive Habits: Minority Women in Mani Ratnam's *Roja* and *Dil Se*

SARAH BERRY

This essay will look at how two Indian films from the 1990s use costume to articulate social tensions around gender, nation, and minority Indian cultures. Made by Tamil director Mani Ratnam, the films use dress to depict women as representatives of marginalized social groups with a conflicted relationship to modern Indian nationalism. While the male protagonists in these films seek to transcend cultural difference, the heroines symbolize marginalized groups and embody resistance to the "homogenizing majoritarian discourses" of Indian nationalism.[1] In the films *Roja* (*Rose* 1992, costumes uncredited), and *Dil Se* (*From the Heart*, 1998, costumes by Manish Malhotra), Ratnam focuses on gender, ethnic, and center–periphery divides, using feminine identity as a space of instability from which to explore the conflicted nature of India's contentiously multicultural national identity.

Numerous analyses of Indian film have explored the way that women's roles symbolize issues of national identity. Sumita Chakravarti has described the geisha-like courtesan as a character whose fusion of Hindu and Muslim arts and social graces makes her a "national projection of a literal embodiment of Hindu-Muslim unity."[2] Jyotika Virdi has looked at how the resurgence of romance-centered films in the late 1980s coincided with market liberalization and the rise of Indian consumer culture. Instead of exploring social hierarchies, she notes, heterosexual romance now deals with "redefinitions of the self and subjectivity in relation to the family and community."[3] Ranjani Mazumdar notes that