Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

_____ _____

Kristen Welch Date

Coco Chanel in Hollywood: What Her One Year in Hollywood Reveals About Fashion, Film Costume and the Female Spectator

By

Kristen Welch
Master of Arts

Film Studies

_____
Michele Schreiber
Advisor

_____
Matthew Bernstein
Committee Member

_____
Karla Oeler
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____
Date

Coco Chanel in Hollywood: What Her One Year in Hollywood Reveals About Fashion, Film Costume and the Female Spectator

By

Kristen Welch
B.A., University of Central Florida, 2008

Advisor: Michele Schreiber, PhD.

An abstract of
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in Film Studies
2011

Abstract

Coco Chanel in Hollywood: What Her One Year in Hollywood Reveals About Fashion, Film Costume and the Female Spectator
By Kristen Welch

This thesis explores Coco Chanel's collaboration with Samuel Goldwyn on the films *Palmy Days*, *Tonight or Never* and *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*. While the business partnership was deemed a failure by both the press and later scholars, it remains an important piece within film costuming history and reveals early efforts to appeal to female spectators using high fashion. Thus, this thesis argues that a thorough study of why Chanel's Hollywood work failed is necessary to understand later, successful collaborations between couturiers and Hollywood.

Coco Chanel in Hollywood: What Her One Year in Hollywood Reveals About Fashion, Film Costume and the Female Spectator

By

Kristen Welch
B.A., University of Central Florida, 2008

Advisor: Michele Schreiber, PhD.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in Film Studies
2011

Table of Contents

Tables and Figures

Introduction

"In fashion, one day you're in, the next day you're out." As the catchphrase from Lifetimes's *Project Runway* shows, the fashion industry is notoriously fickle: couturiers strive to create designs that speak to, and even shock, the prevailing society while simultaneously establishing a house style. Though the industry has seen as many one-hit wonders as it has lasting icons, perhaps no icon fascinates or inspires quite like Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel. Her influence on 20th century fashion is great--without her the little black dress wouldn't be quite so chic and pearls would only be worn on special occasions, to name two of her many innovations. There have been other designers who have defined their time, from Christian Dior's New Look in the 1950s to Mary Quant's Mod designs in the 1960s, but none have remained as timeless as Chanel's "less is more" aesthetic. Her style continues to be copied and, thanks to the success of the house's current head designer, Karl Lagerfeld, Hollywood starlets continue to shine in the house's elegant and fashionable gowns. With the rise of label culture, house names have become an important part of the cultural zeitgeist, and Chanel's name has found new life as a signifier for classic elegance.[1]

Not only has Chanel's design aesthetic continued to influence both costume designers and personal stylists in Hollywood, but her life has become the center of several films and even a musical starring Katharine Hepburn. Chanel has also become a staple within fashion texts, maintaining her status as style maker and icon with books like Karen Karbo's *The Gospel According to Coco Chanel: Life Lessons from the World's Most*

---

[1] A good example of the prominence of label culture comes with the featuring of Jimmy Choo and Manolo Blahnik on HBO's *Sex and the City*. Neither designer was well-known until they were featured on the show but now their names signify two highly coveted shoe brands.

Elegant Woman. Chanel's place in popular culture reveals the important role fashion plays in modern society and in Hollywood. Over the past hundred years, the relationship between the two industries has grown, so that clothing plays an important part within films and their extra-textual discourse, as evidenced by the rise in red-carpet coverage. The popularity of "shopping" films such as *Sex and the City* (New Line, 2008), *The Devil Wears Prada* (20th-Century Fox 2006) and *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (Walt Disney Studios 2009) bring the allure of the fashion industry into double-relief with heroines simultaneously experiencing the perils and pleasures of high-end shopping. With these texts, consumerism is applauded at the same time it is criticized and the audience watches the heroines shop in extended sequences that allow the spectator time to contemplate the clothes.

Shopping films of both the Classical Hollywood period and today's modern landscape introduce the important theoretical consideration of the female spectator; the films mentioned above, for example, foreground the consumer impulses of their female heroines, which takes the form of both visual pleasure for the spectator and conflict for the heroine and her love interest. Drawing upon the nineteenth-century conceptions of self and the body, these heroines must navigate the world in which identity and body are bound together with fashion working as an additional aesthetic to signify individuality. The emphasis placed on shopping montages and fashion shows further places clothing center stage and temporarily turns the actor into a haute couture model. Yet, the rise of the shopping film owes much of its aesthetic to early collaborations between Hollywood and couturiers, which utilized fashion to appeal to the female spectator. Writings on

fashion and film costume continue to appear but most focus either on the fashion house montages of the 1940s women's film, star images and costume, or the shopping film today.[2] The purpose of such studies has, for the most part, centered on the role of the female gaze in establishing a spectatorial relation to clothing, with more current films being understood under the umbrella of post-feminism and a return to femininity as power. Within this thesis, however, I seek to establish a clearer understanding of the role fashion can play within a filmic text. Specifically, I focus on Coco Chanel's work within modernist culture; for, her creation of the "New Woman" look in the 1920s brought femininity into the modern era, appealing to the suffrage movement and utilizing new mass technologies. Thus, it is important to consider how her position as an arbiter of fashion was well established when Samuel Goldwyn offered her a position as chief costume designer on his films for United Artists.

Her visit to Hollywood, however, lasted less than a month and the collaboration only produced three films--*Palmy Days*, *Tonight or Never* and *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*. The brevity of her visit has led many researchers to spend little time looking at the business partnership, mainly calling it a failure before moving on to more high-profile and successful examples. In fact, there has been no single article written on Chanel and Goldwyn's collaboration, making it a rarely discussed moment in the history of fashion on film. This thesis argues that by looking at Chanel's time in Hollywood, we can better understand the tenuous relationship between Hollywood, fashion and the female

---

[2] See: Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: IN UP,1987); Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies,* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Tamar Jeffers McDonald, *Hollywood Catwalk: Costume and Transformation in American Film*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

spectator. It also reveals how the 1930s saw the rise of the "costume designer" as arbiter of taste before the post-war period re-established Paris as the center of the fashion world. Clearly, Chanel and Goldwyn's partnership did not "work" but by understanding the reasons behind the disintegration of the relationship, we can better understand the role fashion plays in film while also opening up questions for further study. For example, why such relationships work in today's cultural moment when in 1931 Chanel and Goldwyn's could not.

One of the more difficult things when studying fashion comes from a theoretical vantage point: what exactly is it? This question is at the center of chapter one, which looks at the rise of fashion and consumer culture during the mass industrialization of the 19th and early 20th centuries. While such an approach favors historicization over a more theoretical approach, tracing the relationship between the fashion industry and consumer culture does reveal changing conceptions of individuality and the body as well as the recognition of the female gaze as a powerful consumer force. In many ways, the rise of fashion culture coincides with that of film, giving us a cohesive vision for an understanding both. Of course, fashion theorists have argued for its economic importance, its role as a cultural signifier and even how it functions as a separate language. The key work that shaped much of the early writings on fashion was Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* and his Darwinian exploration of the economy and middle class society. He not only coined the phrase "conspicuous consumption" but also argued that the act of leisure (which economically led to the accumulation of goods) was an act of waste (activity that did not contribute to productivity). For him, clothing

represented an important and prime example of conspicuous consumption because it was a luxury that could be displayed and shown off. Therefore, if clothing signifies the economic status of the wearer then, the more costly the item, the more significance it is given in the consumer market.[3] Such a viewpoint of clothing remains in effect today and does give some credence to the popularity of label culture and its relation to overspending and consumer debt in today's economic landscape.

Veblen not only developed theories related to the temporal and costly functions of high fashion but he also related clothing directly to women. For Veblen, clothes were not a marker of individuality but a signifier of monetary importance with the female's style directly tied to the economic situation of her husband. He writes that "the women being not their own masters, obvious expenditure and leisure on their part would rebound to the credit of their master rather than to their own credit."[4] The problem with such a theory is that his economic stance and historical position (1912) make him place women, servants and even slaves on the same level, negating the individual in his analysis. Such an argument also forgets female economic power, which was limited at the time but, as chapter one will show, was an important consumer force to which advertisers and shop owners directly appealed.

The emphasis on the female consumer soon became an important factor when studying fashion and other leisure activities such as the fiction novel. As Nan Enstad

---

[3] As he notes, "the changing styles are the expression of a restless search for something which shall commend itself to our aesthetic sense; but as each innovation is subject to the selective action of the norm of conspicuous waste, the range within which innovation can take place is somewhat restricted." Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 174.

[4] He goes on to state that "our social system makes it the woman's function in an especial degree to put in evidence her household's ability to pay." Veblen, 180.

writes in *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure* fiction and fashion should be examined together because they relate not only to feminine desire but grew out of the same economic climate to appeal to a female consumer. For Enstad, film operates in a similar way because, like novels and fashion, it appeals to women's imaginative landscape. Specifically, the film acts as more than an object or narrative for the female consumer and instead becomes a "collective dreamworld" through which she imagines "enacted identities."[5] In other words, the people presented onscreen become ideal subjects6 which the female spectator wishes to emulate in terms of style and personality. Therefore, this thesis will take into consideration not only the historical significance of fashion for the female spectator but the importance it plays within the filmic text in establishing an ideal figure.

Fashion does not just exist as a historical or perfected image but also functions as a cultural signifier, as Roland Barthes argued. He wrote that "language and dress are, at any moment in history, complete structures, constituted organically by a functional network of norms and forms."[6] The semiotic approach to fashion indicates its importance as socially defined "norm" much like word definitions change depending on the cultural moment. Therefore, fashion operates on a constantly evolving scale which is socially derived; for, that which the majority adopts becomes the popular trend of any given era. Interestingly, Barthes locates Chanel outside of this paradigm because of her appeal to reason, simplicity and unchanging elegance. In fact, "the creations by Chanel challenge

---

[5] Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia UP, 1999), 186.

[6] Barthes, *The Language of Fashion* (New York: Berg, 2005), 8.

the very idea of fashion. Fashion (as we conceive it today) rests on a violent sensation of time. Every year fashion destroys that which it has just been admiring...Chanel always works on the same model which she merely 'varies' [each year]." However, Chanel's initial designs which favored feminized versions of masculine clothes were shocking enough to draw the public's attention. Her insistence on simplicity also gave her clothes a timeless appeal: in other words, from the 1920s through today, women have always equated her designs with elegance and sophistication. Thus, I disagree with Barthes, who places Chanel outside fashion, and argue that we must understand what she signifies for the female consumer. Thus, I utilize his theory of fashion as a sign in order to show how Goldwyn's reasons for hiring Chanel were directly tied to her cultural standing and ability to appeal to women.

However, Chanel's time in Hollywood cannot be looked at solely from a fashion theory perspective, for film not only visually showcases clothing but also integrates it into its mise-en-scene. As Jane Gaines notes in "Costume and Narrative," "primarily costumes are fitted to characters as a second skin, working in this capacity for the cause of narrative by relaying information to the viewer about a 'person'."[7] In other words, much like nineteenth-century fashion theory, film costume relates individuality to clothing so that a character's dress informs the audience about his or her personality. The relation of costume to character and plot is the centerpiece for all writings on film costume and must be taken into account when looking at clothing within the filmic text. Therefore, in order to fully understand Chanel's function as both couturier and costumer

---

[7] Jane Gaines "Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman's Story," *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, Ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York: Routledge, 1990), 180-211, 181.

during this time, a melding of fashion theory and Gaines' writing is necessary. Her designs must be understood, first, for the way they exemplify overarching trends of the period and secondly, for their function in the text (both in terms of narrative and promotion).

Here, my thesis differs from prior work dealing with couture in Hollywood which primarily looks at the phenomena through the lens of costume. For example, Tamar Jeffers McDonald's recent book, H*ollywood Catwalk: Costume and Transformation in American Film*, contends that fashion plays into the "cinderella" narrative of films like *Date Movie* (20th-Century Fox 2006) and *The Devil Wears Prada* in which the characters are transformed into elegant and sophisticated women. As she argues, the change is precipitated more by new clothing than anything else which turns the woman into a model for the audience's gaze. The problem with her analysis is that she does not take into account the extra-textual discourses which surround the high fashion utilized in films like *The Devil Wears Prada*. In fact, costume designer Patricia Field uses high fashion labels in her design aesthetic, meaning that the clothes her characters wear are often recognizable and available for purchase by the audience. The extra-textual signifier of a label's name (with all its cultural connotations) therefore works within the film text and must be accounted for when analyzing the relationship between film and fashion. Thus, if producers like Goldwyn utilize designers to appeal to audiences, then some of these same spectators would watch the film already aware of the importance of the designs. In fact, spectators have a foreknowledge of the designer's aesthetic and cultural meaning which would inform the reading of the costumes.

Thus, my thesis takes into account both the historical and theoretical implications of fashion and costume theories when looking at Goldwyn and Chanel's partnership. Chapter one specifically deals with the rise of fashion culture, female consumerism and cinema in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here, the influence of fashion theory is felt most; for, the chapter seeks to explain the reasons why Goldwyn hired Chanel in the first place. Therefore, the chapter looks both at Chanel's importance within modern culture and fashion's growing place in 1920s Hollywood. After defining Chanel's meaning for the female consumer/spectator, I look at the partnership itself. Chapter two, "Coco Comes to Hollywood," utilizes correspondence between Goldwyn and Chanel as well newspaper reports in order to discover why the partnership failed. Though the correspondence may be incomplete, the telegrams and letters from the Samuel Goldwyn papers reveal that no apparent rift occurred between producer and designer; in fact, the only indication of trouble exists within newspaper articles. Prior writings on Chanel and Goldwyn's partnership are therefore incorrect in placing the blame on either designer or producer; rather, the perceived failure of the collaboration appears to be a creation of the press.

The chapter also takes into account the female spectator and her importance at the box office. In fact, by 1931--the year Chanel came to Hollywood--studio heads were looking for new ways to appeal to women with fashion becoming the number one promotional tool. Therefore, Goldwyn's hiring of Chanel can be seen within this larger discussion and his desire to utilize the designer's cultural standing. However, not everyone was happy with Goldwyn's decision, as the chapter shows by contrasting East

and West Coast newspaper reports. In doing so, chapter two reveals that the press was heavily divided in their responses to Chanel's visit. The reason for this lay within the larger context of Hollywood's influence on female consumers and the belief that Los Angeles had become the new center for fashion. For example, *The Los Angeles Times*' articles on her visit would become increasingly misogynistic and nationalistic in their tone because their purpose was to rally around local costume designers.

Such criticism against Chanel would, however, cease once *Palmy Days*, *Tonight or Never* and *The Greeks Had a Word for Them* were released. I examine the positive reviews of her designs in Chapter Three, "Fashion, 24x a second," which looks at Chanel's place within the filmic texts. The chapter looks at each film in detail, showing how fashion works within the narratives as well as in individual promotion and reception. In doing so, the chapter takes into account Gaines' theory of costume design to see if Chanel truly worked within the costume paradigm. The results show that the gowns functioned well within the narrative and were a hit with reviewers. In fact, Chanel's simple design aesthetic worked well on-screen and did not overpower the actresses. Therefore, the collaboration's failure does not lie with the designer. I argue, instead, that the problems are with the films themselves. As the chapter shows, only *Palmy Days* was greeted with enthusiasm both by the press and public but it was, unfortunately, the film which showcased Chanel least. *Tonight or Never* and *The Greeks Had a Word for Them* were criticized for both their plots and acting, and this was echoed in the mediocre box office which greeted both. Thus, as much as Chanel was promoted in trade journals and

praised within critical reviews, her name alone could not compensate for these problems (in fact, it is doubtful any designer's reputation could).

By looking at Chanel and Goldwyn's collaboration, I argue that we can better understand the function of fashion in terms of the filmic text and the female spectator. Though the partnership was short-lived and unsuccessful, it is helpful to understand if we want to comprehend the rise of figures like MGM's Adrian in the 1930s or the success of later collaborations (such as Givenchy with Audrey Hepburn). Thus, my goal with this thesis is to fill in a missing piece of film costume history, to examine the reasons why the partnership failed and to discover how Chanel's gowns functioned within the larger discussion of how to appeal to female spectators.

Chapter One: Modernity, Mass Production and the Rise of Consumer Culture

> "I set the fashion for a quarter of a century...Why? Because I knew how to express my own time." -Gabrielle Chanel[8]

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were times of unprecedented change for technology and industry, which, in turn, had a profound effect on society. They witnessed the rise of mass culture and consumerism, which modernists like Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer would write and comment upon, and the rise of manufactured fashion and haute couture. It was into this world that Gabrielle Chanel was born in 1883.[9] The child of Albert and Jeanne Chanel (who were unmarried at the time of her birth), Chanel would spend her childhood in Aubazine, an orphanage run by the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary, after the death of her mother. At eighteen, she left the orphanage and found her way to Moulins, where she became a shop assistant and poseuse (cabaret singer). Her popularity increased among the garrison stationed there, and her song *Ko Ko Ri Ko* gave rise to the name she is best known by: Coco.

This young woman, who was to become the arbiter of 20th-century fashion, grew up in an age that was quickly adapting to changing notions of public and private spheres. Fashion itself was undergoing a change from being personally-created and practical to a manufactured good that resulted in an increased aestheticization of the body and the rise of the female consumer. Fashion, therefore, became a commodity that could be both mass-produced and consumed, and, in terms of haute couture, an art form. This mirrored

---

[8] Edmonde Charles-Roux, *Chanel and Her World: Friends, Fashion and Fame* (New York: Vendome, 2005), 146.

[9] *Chanel and Her World*, 19.

the rise of modernity, in which art could be reproduced and brought to the masses, chiefly through photography and film. For example, film could be reproduced ten-fold from an original print and experienced at different times and places by groups of people. Each print was practically identical which, as modernist theorists like Walter Benjamin have noted, changed society's conceptions of authenticity and originality.[10] As I will illustrate, the idea of "the original" has particular significance for fashion and commodity culture, with haute couture becoming a response to clothing's mass production. Chanel herself would simultaneously embrace new technologies, such as using jersey fabric, while imbuing her creations with an authentic aura--not everyone, after all, could purchase her clothes.

Her importance in the fashion industry reached its peak in the late 1920s, making Goldwyn's decision to collaborate with her easy to understand; for, the growing film industry was looking for new avenues to increase audience size and appeal to the female spectator. The producer was particularly interested in the relationship between fashion and women, and eager to exploit it when promoting his films. His theory, that women went to movies to see the costumes, was actually part of a larger dialogue between the film industry and its growing use of product placement and corporate tie-ins. Therefore, to fully comprehend the reasons both Chanel and Goldwyn entered into the partnership, it is necessary to understand how fashion and consumerism relate to cinema's early history. This chapter, therefore, will look at the history of fashion's industrialization and its relation to both female spectatorship and consumer culture.

---

[10] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Film Theory and Criticism*, Ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford UP, 2004) 793.

Fashion and Modernity

Fashion, as we know it today, hardly existed before the rise of mercantile capitalism during Europe's Medieval era and only truly became a cultural force with the establishment of bourgeois culture.[11] This was due to the rise in trade and population increases in major cities, though fashion wouldn't become a cultural phenomenon until the Industrial Revolution. As Elizabeth Wilson explains in "All the Rage," ancient and medieval clothing was used to define a particular level of profession or trade, not as the marker of individuality or, more specifically gender, that it would come to signify in the twentieth century.[12] In fact, from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, laws would be passed to "restrict by legal means what individuals might wear" in order to maintain class ranking, but all this would change with the Enlightenment's call for democracy and individualism.[13] During the same period, roughly between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, new technologies such as the power loom and the sewing machine allowed clothing to be made for and sent out to the masses. Therefore, this increase in reproduction meant that anyone could follow trends regardless of status, and because style was easily copied, could mimic the clothing of the upper class (a particularly democratic view of dress).

With the rise of photography and the newspaper, clothing became "fashion" because images could be circulated which represented the overarching trends of a given period.

---

[11] Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 16.

[12] Wilson, "All the Rage," *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, Ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York: Routledge, 1990), 28-38, 33.

[13] *Adorned*, 24.

By becoming part of mass communications, the adoption of fashion became more widespread and the epochs of style became shorter since changes could be made, and shown, on a quicker and grander scale. For example, newspapers began to follow fashion by the season (i.e., Spring or Fall) and would share information gathered with readers. One *The New York Times* article from 1912 declares: "although profound secrecy surrounds the activities, now in full swing in the studios of fashion designers for Autumn and Winter models, some startling news has transpired this week."[14] The article goes on to reveal the new dress trend but it does show how fashion was not only eagerly anticipated but understood as continually changing. The article does not have any accompanying pictures, but most fashion articles would also include illustrations so that the reader could see the trends.

Yet, the dissemination of these images also led to an emphasis on gender difference, with fashion soon viewed as a particularly feminine concern. This change can be seen as a reflection of the increasing inclusion of women in public spaces, a practice practically unheard of for respectable women prior to the Industrial Revolution and an important factor in the creation of the female consumer.[15] As Anne Friedberg explains in W*indow Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, during the nineteenth century "the mass production of goods and high volumes of consumers demanded new sales outlets, and

---

[14] "Expect A Dress Revolution," *The New York Times*, 14 July 1912, C4.

[15] As Miriam Hansen explains, "the shift from a production-centered economy to one of mass consumption crucially depended upon the female shopper whose numbers had increased ever since the Civil War." Hansen, "Adventures of Goldilocks: Spectatorship, Consumerism and Public Life," *Camera Obscura* 22 (1990), 51-72, 52.

patterns of consumption changed in response to new retailing techniques."[16] The rise of the female consumer was, in fact, a by-product of this mass urbanization and production; for, as their presence in the urbanized public spaces increased, manufacturers sought them out as a new revenue stream. The nineteenth-century would therefore see an increase in typically "feminine" leisure activities (for instance, reading novels, painting china, embroidering, etc.), while also expanding this definition to include department store shopping, packaged tourism and cinema spectatorship.[17] Most important, these activities introduce the idea of the power of looking, particularly locating this power within the female gaze. In fact, as fashion began to exert greater influence on ideas of style and feminine beauty, greater emphasis was placed not only on vision but on the visual choices an individual could make while shopping, watching films and traveling.

Sitting in a cinema, for example, **t**he spectator not only can look at the images but also chose what to focus on, thereby granting the viewer a small amount of control. This idea has an even greater role in the relationship between consumers and fashion, as, unlike in the cinema, there is a double image created: that of the piece itself as well as the overall effect created when the individual puts on the clothes. In the first instance, the female consumer was granted power over clothing items because she could look but did not necessarily have to buy, a practice known today as "window shopping." This form of visual consumption was also a product of modernity; for, shop windows would not have widespread use until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Coinciding with

---

[16] Anne Friedberg, Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern (Berkeley: U of CA P, 1993), 58.

[17] Friedberg, 4.

the growing number of women in the public sphere, this act allowed them to engage in the visual pleasure of looking. As Friedberg notes, "the 'paradise' of the department store relied on the relation between *looking* and *buying*, and the indirect desire to possess and incorporate through the eye." Of course, this power also derived from a sense of choice since a shopper is welcome to look at a product without buying it. Here, the gaze becomes important because the act of contemplation relates to the act of desire: the more desirable the object, the more likely a person is to buy it. More important, as more methods were introduced to allow the shopper time to look, including product displays and aisles, the more power was granted to the female consumer. Thus, the power of choice (in terms of commodities) was seen as a distinctly feminine way to signify empowerment.

Of course, shopping not only increased the role women played as consumers, it also had a profound effect on society's relationship to objects. In 1926, Kracauer pointed to this change in his "Analysis of a City Map," when he wrote that "people of every class are free to lose themselves for entire afternoons, contemplating the jewelry, furs, and evening attire whose unambiguous magnificence beckons promisingly..."[18] This "magnificence" is the object which is granted special significance in the marketplace: the commodity. By creating an allure around a particular item, stores and manufacturers try to ensure that a consumer not only looks but buys, hence the marketing of commodities as must-have items. As Friedberg explains, "the commodity is a social construction, not found in nature, but an object invested with a special value derived, not from its 'use' but

---

[18] Siegfried Kracauer, "Analysis of a City Map," *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995), 43.

from its relation to other objects in the marketplace."[19] With this definition, the desirability of the object can be seen as outweighing its practical application and also as being a product of society; for, items are only granted special value when society deems it.[20] Therefore, the idea of the commodity points to the important relationship between fashion, consumerism and culture in which all three are constantly influencing and being influenced by the others.

Mass industrialization not only introduced the commodity to the public but also resulted in a homogenization of style. For instance, the turn-of-the-century saw an increase in ready-to-wear garments--mass produced clothing made in a factory setting. Just before the start of World War I, in fact, this industry had expanded to included skirts, dresses, blouses and petticoats, while also employing women in increasing numbers.[21] Yet, this increasing standardization (in which factories, not individuals, created clothing) was not fully embraced by consumers, who reacted by arguing that fashion was an art form. In fact, though ready-to-wear clothing provided a cheaper alternative to millinery work, most female consumers still wanted handmade and one-of-a-kind items. For example, in 1916, Lorinda Perry studied Boston and Philadelphia milliners and concluded that though department stores had "large variety, convenience, and

---

[19] Friedberg, 53

[20] Curiously, this also relates to semiotics and Charles Peirce's definition of "symbol." These "words" are culturally maintained and their general meanings are agreed upon through mass use; thus, their significance can change over time. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover, 1955).

[21] *Adorned*, 78.

dispatch...these advantages are more than offset by lack of individuality."[22] While Perry is directly alluding to the popularity of the millinery trade, her comments can also be seen as reflecting the rise of the couturier.

In fact, designers, seamstresses and artists, couturiers did not exist until fashion became industrialized. In the 1850s, Charles Frederick Worth began making exclusive designs and is credited as being the first modern dress designer.[23] Here, the idea of the aestheticization of the body can be seen; for, a commodity is imbued with a specific aura which the consumer wishes to attain for him/herself. If reproduction, in Benjamin-ian terms, leads to the destruction of originality and aura, than haute couture can be seen as a reaction, and possible solution, to this movement. By creating one-of-a-kind items, early dressmakers like Worth imbued their creations with the aura of commodity and gave the wearers the sense that they were wearing an original art object. These handmade creations were strikingly different than those of early aristocratic designs; for, the women who bought from Worth, at first, were street-walkers and shop girls--two professions in which the female had most power as a money-earner but least social status. This meant that Worth's dresses became desired for the essence of luxury they exuded, thereby the aestheticization of the body can be seen as creating an outward appearance of elegance despite the working class nature of his patrons. Therefore, women could not only exercise power through shopping but could show off this power by wearing their purchase,

---

[22] Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Chicago: U of IL, 1997), 101.

[23] *Adorned*, 32

inviting the gaze of others.[24] The power women could exercise over their own image not only has ties to consumerism but to female independence. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that as modernity gave women increased consumer power, they would also be arguing for more power in the political and public realms. Fashion, in fact, is so tied to culture that it began to reflect the changes to society occurring with women's rights: bloomers became a symbol of suffrage and, by 1908, Paul Poiret, the French designer, had abandoned the corset.

By liberating female movement, fashion reacted to the growing suffrage movement; yet, even this act was debated, showing that designers were already exerting influence over the public. In 1910, for example, Dr. R. W. Lovett of the Harvard Medical School was extolling the health benefits of the corset and directly alluding to fashion's insistence on stays.[25] A more specific link between fashion and feminism can be found in the 1915 *The New York Times* article "Sees Woman Voter As An Insult To God." In it, the Reverend Cyrus Townsend Brady gave his reasons why women shouldn't vote: fashion was one of them. He declared that the "supineness with which you accept the dictum of fashion and clothe yourselves in the ephemeral sartorial idiocies current is indicative...break these shackles if you can, before you ask to be trusted with the vote."[26] Both articles illustrate that the connection between women and fashion had become an important, and well-understood fact in modern society by World War I. This relationship

---

[24] Ibid, 12

[25] "Corsets A Real Blessing," *The New York Times*, 8 Feb 1910, 2.

[26] "Sees Woman Voter As An Insult To God," *The New York Times*, 18 Oct 1915, 4.

increased with the influence of Chanel, who would further liberate female movement and style in her designs.

The Rise of Coco Chanel

Perhaps no one illustrates the dual function of fashion as both manufactured good and art form as well as Coco Chanel. Her designs reflected her time period but also, in their simplicity, could be easily copied and re-manufactured for the masses. She would also exemplify the "new woman" of the 20th-century, merging typically masculine items with feminine touches and showcasing a distinct mobility both in her designs and her life. Her connection to modernism, both in terms of industrialized society and as an aesthetic, is necessary to any understanding of her style and her eventual connections in Hollywood; thus, any consideration of Chanel's power in creating a 20th century ideal must be looked at in terms of both cultural and industrial practices of her time.

In the first decades of the twentieth-century, Chanel abandoned her aspirations of becoming an actress or singer and turned to using her connections (she was, by then, the lover of Etienne Balsan, a textile heir) to set herself up as a modiste (hat maker). Her first major client was Gabrielle Dorziat, a famed actress, who wore Chanel's creations on-stage. So popular were these hats that in 1915 Chanel was able to open a dressmaking studio in Biarritz and thrived there because the city was little affected by the war. [27] Her earliest creations would harken back to the stark costumes of the convent she had been raised in, while also taking on a sporty, and decidedly low-class style. For example, in 1911 she began wearing loose sailor jackets which were "reminiscent in form of the

---

[27] Edmonde Charles-Roux, *Chanel: Her Life, Her World--And the Woman Behind the Legend She Herself Created* (New York: Knopf, 1975), 125;150-1.

sailor blouse and in fabric of the jockey's pullover. The line was loose, requiring no corset...the body was merely suggested."[28] She had begun the process of creating her signature style (feminizing masculine fashion) and the response was almost immediate: Chanel's designs were a hit. Her influence expanded quickly so that by 1916, *The New York Times* attributed the American popularity of sport clothes to Chanel.[29] Her popularity, therefore, can be seen in her design aesthetic, which showed off simplicity during an age of spectacle, offered mobility in the face of the hobble skirts and remained true to her own vision.

As the teens wore on, and Chanel's fame grew, women began to adopt the "Chanel" style which reflected their growing liberation while already looking ahead to the modernist aesthetic of the 1920s. As Edmond Charles-Roux explains, Chanel's importance for early 20th-century fashion lay in how

> embellishment gave way to line, yielding a costume born of the single-minded logic of its creator. Chanel wanted to achieve what no one else had dared to do with such candor: women going forth liberated by shortened skirts and loosely fitting garments that de-emphasized the bust and lower curves.[30]

Her work can thus be seen as both influencing and influenced by the women's movement of the teens: clothing was no longer restrictive but allowed the wear to move and, when wearing pants, achieve a decidedly masculine mobility. In many ways, her individualized

---

[28] Ibid, figure 18.

[29] "America Tempted By The Paris Sport Styles," *The New York Times*, 23 Apr 1916, X2.

[30] *Chanel and Her World*, 138

style was the epitome of commodity culture--a sought-after vision of new womanhood while also, in its adoption by mass society, a reflection of the growing standardization of style itself. I will examine this dichotomy in a moment, for now it is important to see how Chanel's aesthetic operated within the female-as-consumer vision: allowing women not only the power to purchase but the ability to showcase this power through an adoption of masculine pieces. Nowhere is this more apparent than Chanel's most famous innovation: the pairing of boyish fabrics (i.e., tweed) with rows of pearls.

Chanel's designs not only influenced the way women dressed but also found their inspiration from the aesthetic movements of the time, most notably the German Expressionist and Art Deco movements of mid-decade as well as the growing urban culture. These artistic movements focused on stark use of lines, blocks of color and a distinction between shadows and light. Fashion itself adapted to the aesthetics, most notably in the popularity of black and white in designs. With the harsh use of lines, the body became the holder of the clothes and even Chanel created garments that increasingly hid the feminine shape. In many ways, by de-emphasizing femininity, the fashion industry entered into the cultural moment by merging the fascination surrounding commodities with the increased desire for anonymity. Yet, Chanel's designs were never as extreme as her contemporaries and this simple rendering of popular trends granted her a loyal and large following In 1928, *The New York Times* noted her success: "it is neither an injustice nor an exaggeration to say that Chanel now stands in a class by herself."[31] She had, in just over ten years, become the leader of the fashion world. In fact, her

---

[31] May Birkhead, "Couturier Rivalry Is Intense in Paris," *The New York Times*, 12 Feb 1928, 40.

attention to detail, the female form and movement also made her a popular designer for theater, seen in her work as costume designer on productions like *Le train bleu* (1924) and *Apollon musagete* (1928).[32] With this, she was able to work with the famed Ballets Russes, which would allow her to work with other famed artists of the time: Igor Stravinsky and Pablo Picasso. Her designs matched perfectly with their aesthetic: at once simple but also elegant, reflecting the aesthetic of the time while also remaining quite timeless and, of course, allowing for a wide range of movement. In fact, when fitting her models, she "had them swing their arms and legs for hours until she was sure how a fabric worked in motion."[33]

Her design was not only influenced by aesthetic movements or the growing need for feminine mobility but also by mass production. For her part, Chanel did not try to fight it but instead, embraced any new technology offered (as shown with her early adoption of jersey). The simplicity of her designs, then, not only finds a kinship with the women's suffrage movement but also with modern technology and ready-to-wear. Unlike her contemporaries, Chanel didn't take legal action against the growing trend of copying high fashion. Instead she "would follow the imperatives of commerce more often than its own caprices; one would be making only minor changes from season to season, the way automobile designers alter the lines of their cars."[34] The relation of fashion to car manufacturing (itself an exemplary industry of Taylor economics) would also be taken up

---

[32] For more on Chanel's theatrical designs, see: Roux, *Chanel: Her life*.

[33] Howard Gutner, *Gowns by Adrian: The MGM Years 1928-41* (New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc, 2001), 47.

[34] *Chanel: Her Life*, 246.

by the press: in 1926, *Vogue* would refer to Chanel's "little black dress" as "here is a Ford signed Chanel."[35] Thus, despite being a couturier, Chanel embraced the factory aesthetic that was overtaking other industries.

Perhaps the best example of this is her famous perfume, Chanel No. 5. So named because it was the fifth formula brought to her, this scent is typically connoted by images of elegance, simplicity and luxury (that small bottle is, of course, not cheap). However, by not giving it a name, as many designers did and continue to do, Chanel can be seen as embracing the industrial aesthetic of her time; for, No. 5 also conjures up the image of a factory, in which parts are utilized to create a whole. In this case the formula itself is just one of many variables that Chanel might have chosen. She not only refused to name her perfume but her gowns as well, telling the *The New York Times* in 1931 that "names are vulgar and silly."[36] More than just a personal reaction against names, however, this nevertheless places her in relation to the factory system in which objects are just one of many copies. Therefore, naming any one item is unnecessary. Aesthetically, then, her designs spoke to the culture in which they were born: minor alterations would establish those slight changes to society which occur each year, but the overall aesthetic ("Chanel") would remain the same. Thus, in many ways, Chanel reflected her time as much as she may have influenced it, and her adherence to a modernist aesthetic as well as practice (mass reproduction) gives some indication of her willingness to try her hand at film costuming.

---

[35] *Chanel and Her World*, 227.

[36] "Chanel Visits America," *The New York Times*, 8 Mar 1931, 121.

Early Cinema, Female Spectatorship and the Change to Classical Style

Fashion was not the only industry going through major changes in the early part of the 20th-century: cinema itself, born in the late nineteenth century**,** would begin establishing itself as *the* leisure activity of the middle-class during the century's first two decades. Its early history, as Tom Gunning has explained, was as a "cinema of attraction" based primarily on utilizing pure spectacle to attract an audience. Female spectators comprised a large portion of early cinema's audience. By 1910, in fact, Kathy Peiss estimates that women made up 40 percent of the working-class audience.[37] Most important, as Miriam Hansen explains in "Adventures of Goldilocks: Spectatorship, Consumerism and Public Life," early cinema, much like shopping, granted women power as arbiters of the gaze. This can be seen in her study of the 1897 versicope release of *The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight* in Chicago, in which 60 percent of the audience was female.[38] The popularity of the fight for female spectators can be seen as tied to their increased presence in the public sphere while also affording them "the forbidden sight of male bodies in semi-nudity, engaged in intimate and intense physical action."[39] Cinema, therefore, allowed women the chance to look unhindered at a male body. Cinema's earliest voyeuristic-like films can therefore be seen as continuing the trend that window shopping had begun in the nineteenth century: women as powerful consumers of images.

This cinema style would not remain for long, as the industry itself underwent increasing standardization between 1907 and 1917 to become the classical Hollywood

---

[37] Hansen, 53.

[38] Hansen, 51.

[39] Ibid, 51-2.

system. This change, as Hansen explains, let cinema go from a "primarily working-class entertainment to an ostensibly classless institution of popular culture, as the focus of industrial attention shifted from the neighborhood nickelodeon to the downtown picture palace."[40] Once again, a connection can be made from early cinema and the earliest vestiges of "fashion culture": in response to mass culture, these industries adopted styles which would appeal to a range of classes while still maintaining popular (i.e., middle class) tastes. The picture palace itself is a good example for this because its architecture not only resembled the more respectable theater houses but the styles of historical affluence, including Egyptian temples and Chinese pagodas. Like the rise of haute-couture, cinema had its own means for reacting to its "reproducible" nature: give the audience a one-of-a-kind experience (the picture palace), even if the film itself was the same whether it was shown in New York or Boise**.** Film's relation to theater is also an important aspect of the change towards a classic style because film, during this time, wished to be viewed as an art form on par with more "bourgeois" activities such as theater-going and novel-reading. This change from lower-class to middle-class entertainment would also lead to the adoption of narrative techniques that reflected the aforementioned art forms which film strove to imitate.[41]

Much like the standardization of the fashion industry and the adoption of new markets (department stores), cinema's transformation into the classical system, or "a mode of narration that made films self-explanatory and self-contained," led to a new

---

[40] Hansen, 55.

[41] Ibid, 55.

relation with the spectator, particularly the feminine one.[42] By increasing films that contained the more traditional 3-Act structure, production companies attempted to appeal to the greatest number of people, thereby creating an "ideal" spectator. Reception, therefore, became an important marker not only for a given film's popularity but to test the appeal of a given story line. The effect was that the relationship between films as commodity and spectators as consumer became greater and, by adopting more middle-class story lines (the popularity of the domestic melodrama, for example), women's own domestic roles became foregrounded. Unlike the case in early cinema, then, the feminine gaze was hindered by an increasingly omnipotent and masculine gaze of the camera, an important idea in feminist film theory.[43]

Of course, this hypothesis forgets that women still made up a significant portion of audiences and were increasingly sought-after by the industry in the 1920s. Like the fashion industry, in which women are both powerful consumers and subjects of the male gaze, film created a similar paradox for the female spectator. As Hansen states, the film industry after 1917 relied on and catered to female audiences while increasingly making the spectator's position a masculine one. The reason for this, as she argues, is because "the implementation of the classical system was not instantaneously effective and perhaps never as total as film theorists have made it seem."[44] It might also be the difference between the way men and women relate to the screen space. As feminist theorists like

---

[42] Ibid, 55.

[43] For more on the masculinized gaze of the camera see: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Ed. Amelia Jones, (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[44] Hansen, 65.

Mary Anne Doane have explained, female spectators tend to watch films in a way that allows them to relate to both the feminine and masculine point of view.[45] Regardless of the reasons for this paradox, it nevertheless shows the precarious position the female as spectator and consumer occupied in modern society. In this light, the spectator/consumer is granted the ability to "look" which asserts itself in the power of choice; however, much like the spectator who takes on the point-of-view of the masculinized camera, the female consumer finds herself in a space highly masculinized by idealization. The female as consumer must navigate through these ideals in order to understand or grasp their meaning. Even Kracauer would point to this particular relationship in which the female spectator responds emotionally to the images before her in "Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies," which also shows the distinct relationship between cinema and shopping.[46]

Cinema and Fashion: A Mutually Beneficial Relationship

As early as the teens, cinema would begin utilizing fashion as a promotional technique aimed at female spectators. These included plot lines with increasing focus on women's issues (the aptly titled "woman's film") and increasing promotional use of actors, costumes, make-up, etc. Of course, the exploitation of the relationship between cinema and fashion was not only done by film producers: manufacturers also utilized movies as a way of disseminating product images. Therefore, fashion and Hollywood can be understood as appealing to women's roles as both spectator and consumer of images. At the beginning of the century, in fact, reports began to circulate that films were a new

---

[45] Doane, 8.

[46] Siegfried Kracauer, "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies," *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995)

and better means of advertising product because they could reach a large audience not just in the United States but around the world. This can be seen in a Will Hays radio speech from 1930 in which he states that film is a particularly helpful service to American businessmen because, "the motion picture carries to every American at home and to millions of potential purchasers abroad, the visual, vivid perception of American manufactured products."[47] Much like the creation of department stores in order to promote the growing fashion industry, manufacturers turned to cinema as a new medium by which commodity culture could be exploited. Seemingly less intrusive, the growth of "product placement" mirrors the increasing notion that film audiences are easily led by the images on-screen, because they have no choice but to watch the flickering images presented to them.

Film's ability to reach a large audience and to disseminate not only American goods but American values was of particular interest to advertisers who quickly began experimenting with so called "advertising films," a forerunner to television commercials. These "films" typically included a brief story that revolved around a given product but whose subtlety in selling them made the films appear to be the short-subject films that typically preceded the main picture. One example is the 1931 Carole Lombard film *It Pays to Advertise* (Paramount) which is set in an advertising firm and spotlights, explicitly, numerous American products. Not all campaigns were as blatant in their marketing as that one, and the majority of audiences were rarely able to tell the difference

---

[47] Charles Eckert, "The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window," *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, Ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York: Routledge, 1990), 104.

between fiction films and advertising movies.[48] This appealed immensely to advertisers so that, by 1931, *Variety* estimated that 50 percent of theaters were showing these types of films, interestingly right around the time that Chanel arrived in Hollywood.[49] As Janet Staiger notes in "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising," "during the early period of film advertising, faith in film as a potential indirect advertising medium spread across the country."[50] Film itself would not fully standardize its advertising strategies until the 1930s but it is important to consider how film's advertising history mirrors, in many ways, the advertising of fashion in the nineteenth century, when newspapers were the main means of showcasing product. In both, the image becomes an important marketing tool that appeals to the power of the gaze; however, film could go one step further by integrating these products into the plot.

The largest demographic which advertisers hoped to appeal to were female spectators, because the growth of the female consumer, as previously discussed had a significant influence on the way products, especially fashion, were shown onscreen. Their consumer power, in fact, continued to grow in the first two decades of the 20th-century, as women began entering the workforce, though admittedly making much less than their male counterparts. The rise of the female consumer soon influenced films aesthetics which, as has also been shown, were a product of their cultural milieu. In fact, the

---

[48] Ibid, 110-1.

[49] Eckert, 111.

[50] Janet Staiger, "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising, *Cinema Journa*l 29.3 (Spring 1990), 3-31, 12.

popularity of this mode for both the fashion and cinema industries can be seen in a *Variety* report from 1928, which notes that "short fashion talkies with feminine stars strutting the gowns and then talking about them is Universal's latest launch into sound."[51] Here, a direct link between the advertising film and the fashion show can be found while also situating the popularity and importance of this style for the industry: profitable enough that Universal would utilize the newest technology to showcase it. It may also show the ease with which these films were accepted by the public; for, Universal would not have taken the risk of utilizing sound without some guarantee that it would be shown.

Fashion also began to play an important role within films themselves, particularly in reflecting and appealing to the desires of the female consumer. This can be seen in Jeanne Thomas Allen's analysis of *Fig Leaves* (Fox 1926) in which she notes that, by the close of the 1920s, women made up "82 percent of department store purchases...90 percent of jewelry...[in fact] Women spent more on clothes than any other member of the family."[52] This was the result of the increased consumerism begun in the nineteenth century, with clothing being the number one industry in which the female consumer exerted her power. Here, Allen turns to *Fig Leaves* to show how female consumerism became a known cultural fact in the 1920s.[53] The film itself presents a world where the

---

[51] Variety, 10 Oct 1928, 4.

[52] Jeanne Thomas Allen, "*Fig Leaves* in Hollywood: Female Representation and Consumer Culture," *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, Ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York: Routledge, 1990), 122-33, 129.

[53] In *Screening Out the Past*, Lary May notes that the 1920s saw a rise in women's sexual freedom with consumerism often viewed as an antidote to their growing eroticism. He writes that Cecil B. DeMille's films often revolved around the idea that "working or middle-class women were supposed to think that the way to attract successful men was to surround themselves with an aura of luxury" so that consumption became tied to modern notions of marital happiness. See: Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York: Oxford UP, 1980), 213.

female is drawn into, and sometimes lost within, the fashion industry. It is not within the scope of this chapter to delve deeper into the film's utilization of, and commentary on, 1920s gender roles; however it is important to consider the film's use of the fashion show because it relates directly to female consumerism. In fact, the fashion show itself was an important tool in appealing to women for both the clothing and film industries. According to motion picture costume historian Elizabeth Leese, "early fashion show films from about 1909 through 1918 were newsreel shorts or simply displays of gowns which eventually progressed to a story line built around the display," a form which would continue to be used until the late 1930s.[54] While the fashion show sequence would have enormous popularity in the women's films of the 30s and 40s (most notably, MGM's 1939 release, *The Women*), these early shorts show how fashion promotion was often disguised as a form of entertainment for the female spectator.[55]

Within *Fig Leaves*, for example, Eve (Olive Borden) becomes a model for a famous designer, unbeknownst to her husband, Adam (George O'Brien). At the climax of the film, Adam goes to the shop to buy a gown for his wife only to discover that she is, in effect, on display in the store.[56] This, of course, brings up the notion of modeling as the spectacularization of the body and the woman's acceptance of offering herself to the male

---

[54] Charlotte Herzog,"'Powder Puff' Promotion: The Fashion Show-in-the-Film" *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, Ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York: Routledge, 1990), 134-59, 134.

[55] For Herzog, this would be seen most fully with "the commercial tie-ins and articles about stars and studio designers in fashion magazines and local newspapers, along with the narrative and dialogue of these feature films provided mutually supporting channels of exploitation." See: Herzog, 135.

[56] Allen, 130-1.

gaze. For the purposes of this chapter, however, the scene functions as a way to see how the fashion show had already entered the public's vision of the fashion industry by the 1920s. This style of showcasing clothing on an actual body (where the public could view the fit and movement of the item) was a relatively new phenomenon, with Chanel, Poiret and Worth all claiming to have invented it.[57] While allowing the public to view clothing on a human form was an important innovation in the fashion industry, it also had ties to cinema in which the spectator has a similar relation to clothes. In film, the audience can view a gown from different angles as well as up close and from afar; more importantly, it also captures clothing's movement which fashion photography could not portray.

Thus, film became a popular vehicle for showing off clothes because the spectator was granted access to a fashion show without needing to travel to Paris. The popularity of these subjects would lead to an increase in fashion's use, and showcase in, feature films. The increase in its use also coincided with the standardization of film costuming in the 1920s. During this decade, in fact, well-known designers like Edith Head, Adrian and Orry-Kelly would all begin to work in studio costume departments. As will be seen in the next chapter, this had an enormous impact on views toward the fashion industry, with many coming to declare that Hollywood was the new style capital of the world. This belief, of course, was helped along by the "Screen Modes" fashion shows given by Los Angeles Times columnist Peggy Hamilton in the late 1920s, which showcased Hollywood fashions in New York City and Paris.[58] But, perhaps the best example of

---

[57] As Herzog notes, however, "as early as the turn of the century, designers were sending models to horse shows and to other public functions to sow off their creations in order to set fashion trends and promote sales." Herzog, 134-59, 134.

[58] Christian Esquevin, *Adrian: Silver Screen to Custom Label* (New York: Monacelli, 2008), 22.

Hollywood's growing relationship to fashion is the "Cinema Fashions" line developed by Bernard Waldman's Modern Merchandising Bureau. Developed in 1930, the store was the epitome of tie-in marketing, allowing consumers to purchase off-the-rack versions of their favorite cinema clothes and accessories.[59] The line would even be carried by major department sores, including R. H. Macy's, and represented a distinct shift in thinking about film costumes. Now, designers could cater to an awaiting public who were eager to get their hands on items worn by their favorite stars; in other words, the film costume, by the late 1920s, had become the epitome of commodity culture. So popular was the line, in fact, that by 1932, it reported "with much exaggeration of selling 500,000 copies" of Joan Crawford's *Letty Lynton* (MGM 1932) dress, originally designed by Adrian.[60]

By most estimates, the popularity of tie-in marketing and the in-film fashion show meant that the relationship between the fashion industry and cinema was and continued to be a success. Exploiting consumer culture and, in particular, the female spectator/consumer, the fashion industry found a new outlet by which to sell its designs and Hollywood studios discovered a new promotional tool. By 1931, however, studio heads were looking at new ways to market to the female audience and, in Sam Goldwyn's mind, no one represented a more lucrative promotional partnership than Coco Chanel.

---

[59] Eckert, 107.

[60] Esquevin, 17.

Chapter Two: Coco Comes to Hollywood

Fig. 1 Alma Whitaker, "Sugar and Spice," *The Los Angeles Times*, 29 Mar 1931, 21.

Chanel arrived in Hollywood in March of 1931 and left at the beginning of April. As short as her visit was, it nevertheless raised questions about the relationship between fashion, film and female spectators. The resulting dialogue within newspaper reports concluded that film costuming had overtaken high fashion in appealing to female spectator-consumers. In their view, Chanel's visit was viewed as an unnecessary promotional stunt. Her quick departure from Hollywood also piqued the interest of gossip columnists and speculation filled *The Los Angeles Times* as to why the designer left. Coverage of Chanel's visit began in January of 1931 and *The Los Angeles Times* represented the partnership in an increasingly unfavorable light: Chanel was painted as a snobby interloper and Goldwyn as the unhappy producer who had to deal with her. In fact, the paper's articles read like a misogynist and nationalist tract against the Parisian designer in favor of local costumers, such as MGM's Adrian. By contrast, East Coast papers like *The New York Times* greeted Chanel with open arms and hoped she could bring class to Hollywood. By contrasting the two positions taken by the East and West

Coast press, this chapter reveals not only Los Angeles' perception of Chanel but also the growing belief that Hollywood was the world's new fashion center.

The idea that Hollywood costumes had taken the place of European fashion in the minds of female spectators was the result of a larger movement to discover why women went to the movies. Promotional tie-ins and the foregrounding of fashion became, in the 1930s, the mode by which producers and studio heads attempted to appeal to women. They believed that women watched movies not as spectators but as shoppers, leading them to place more emphasis on costume in promotional materials.[61] Their notion was aided by the popularity of Adrian's designs in the press as well as in department stores; thus, not only did studio heads find a way to appeal to women but a way to make money by selling clothing. Thus, clothing functioned as an attraction for female spectators, and producers like Goldwyn wanted to find new ways to cash in on the idea.

Costume departments, meanwhile, were becoming increasingly standardized; in fact, during this period, costume designers worked exclusively for a single studio and became an important part of creating a star's image.[62] However, while Adrian enjoyed immense popularity at the start of the decade, this practice was by no means industry wide and in 1931 this promotional technique was at its earliest stages. As Berg notes, Goldwyn contracted with Chanel because he had "made it his contention that women went to movies to see how other women dressed. Many studio wardrobe departments

---

[61] Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood* (Minneapolis: U of MN P, 2000), xvi; 17.

[62] Janet Staiger notes that by 1922 companies such as Famous Players-Lasky already employed a wardrobe director who was responsible for overseeing the two main costuming departments: character and women's fashions. See: David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Styles and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), 149.

were still headed by theater costumers, who were little more than seamstresses."[63] By turning to one of fashion's most prominent members, Goldwyn hoped that women would flock to see the latest Parisian designs which offered a level of European sophistication not found in typical Hollywood costumes.

Yet, it is important to note that not everyone was satisfied with the new marketing technique. On September 15, 1931, for example, *Variety* ran "Faking the Dame Angle: Man-Made Pics Irk the Ladies." The article notes that female spectators comprised 65% of the box-office by 1931, with an additional 15% of men brought to theaters by women.[64] Thus, female spectators represented a large part of the box office making the question of what women wanted particularly important during the period. However, the article argues that all the male producers claim "that in making pictures it's always a case of women first. To which the women engaged in picture making retort that the angle is actually a man's idea of what a woman's point of view should be."[65] Such a stance indicated that fashion promotion did not actually appeal to women; rather, the article offers a solution wherein female filmmakers should have been given a chance to appeal to their sex. However, such criticism did not stop the ongoing trend towards using fashion but coming just as Chanel's films were entering release, the article does demonstrate that her contract was the beginning of a larger movement that would see Hollywood declare itself the "new" capital of fashion.

---

[63] Berg, 213-4.

[64] "Faking the Dame Angle: Man-Made Pics Irk the Ladies" *Variety*, 15 Sept 1931, 3.

[65] Ibid, 3.

However, changes in how the larger public viewed film costuming were not easy or quick and Chanel's visit became a central focus of this debate. Thus, this chapter will look at the historical implications of Chanel's trip to Hollywood, particularly the controversy which became an integral part of newspaper coverage. As opposed to previous research that has focused on specific costumes and stars, I argue that we can better understand Chanel's function as an important historical text (with her own set of cultural signifiers) whose time in Hollywood reveals the growing distrust between Hollywood and Paris that centers around appealing to women. As Adrian himself stated in the 1930s, "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."[66] His words would be echoed within much of the Los Angeles coverage of Chanel's trip. In fact, the idea that Chanel, Goldwyn and/or Gloria Swanson had a major falling out, a common theme in writings on the collaboration, seems to be the creation of newspapers, as primary research shows that telegrams between the designer and producer remained cordial.

Therefore, newspaper coverage and behind-the-scenes correspondence reveals a business savvy designer who was a star in her own right, and who increasingly became an object of derision for the press throughout 1931. Thus, Chanel's time in Hollywood can be seen as part of a larger dialogue in which Hollywood wished to assert its growing dominance in the fashion industry. Therefore, the reports which followed Chanel's visit expose the city's feelings towards the designer, and offer the first indication of where the

---

[66] Esquevin, 19

partnership's failure lay: in public perception rather than with either Goldwyn or Chanel.

Samuel Goldwyn, Coco Chanel and the American Press

As noted in chapter one, Goldwyn viewed Chanel as the next great promotional campaign: a designer with a recognizable name who connoted class and expensive taste. Her contract showed how highly he viewed the designer, offering her one million dollars on the understanding that she would come to Hollywood twice a year where a personal salon would be created just for her.[67] More important, the agreement not only included designing for his films but also a clause in which Chanel would dress actors in their everyday lives: according to newspaper reports, Chanel was contracted to work with Goldwyn's most important stars including Gloria Swanson, Norma Talmadge, Lily Damita and Ina Claire.[68] This was, in Goldwyn's mind, a way to create an overall impression of elegance for his contracted stars melding their private personas with their star images, at least in terms of clothing.[69]

The move would also distinguish him from other producers and studios, who employed in-house costume designers, not couturiers. Therefore, other producers could only offer theatrical costumes, while Goldwyn's films showcased the latest trends courtesy of the world's most-popular designer.

---

[67] Roux, *Chanel and Her World*, 278.

[68] Tom Pettey, "Chanel Will Tell Hollywood How to Dress: And Hollywood Will Tell the World," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 15 Mar 1931, G10.

[69] Roux explains that Goldwyn's intentions were to "reform the fashion habits of the great ladies of the screen," but, as scholarship of star images shows, it is more likely that Goldwyn wanted to create an overarching design aesthetic for his contract stars. *Chanel: Her Life*, 268-9.

The collaboration was announced in January 1931 in a nationwide press release, though only *The New York Times* gave it extensive coverage. On both January 20th and 25th, the paper ran two stories featuring Goldwyn's announcement, stressing that Chanel's mission was to keep films current by anticipating fashion at least six months in advance.[70] The claim would, in fact, play a major part in subsequent articles on Chanel, shaping the publicity surrounding the designer's visit, at least until she raised concerns about his use of the phrase "contracted with Chanel," which I will discuss later. The newspaper would also feature Goldwyn's claim that Chanel's visit would provide "a definite service rendered American women in being able to see in our pictures the newest Paris fashions--sometimes even before Paris sees them."[71]

Yet, while Goldwyn attempted to show his reasons for hiring Chanel--utilizing the Parisian elegance to appeal to the female consumer/spectator--the articles mainly focus on the designer not on the audience. In fact, the articles brush over the idea that American women could see the latest fashions and focus more on what Chanel could do for Hollywood. The headlines, for example, state that she was going to "aid" films by bringing them "fashion." This focus shows the perception of costuming at the time: namely, that it lacked elegance and mimicked fashion without being so itself.

The seeming divide between Hollywood and fashion is important when considering the dialogue surrounding Chanel's visit, particularly in The Los Angeles Times' response to her visit. Their coverage seems to argue against the perception that

---

[70] "Mme. Chanel to Aid Films," *New York Times*, 20 Jan 1931, 7; "Projection Jottings: Mme. Chanel to Design Fashions for Films--Bound for Hollywood," *New York Times*, 25 Jan 1931, X5.

[71] "Projection Jottings," X5.

Hollywood needed help from the Parisian couturier; instead, they focused more on the female spectator and the popularity of Hollywood costumes. In fact, while *The New York Times* would find a distinction between "fashion" and "costume," *The Los Angeles Times* would use the words interchangeably in order to show that Hollywood also played an important role in creating fashion trends. However, the division between the East and West Coast papers was not as apparent in early articles. In fact, though *The Los Angeles Times* would eventually view Chanel with disdain, she was originally referred to as a noted "superexpert" who could help bring films into the modern age. On February 1, reporter Jane Dixon noted that Hollywood had already made "so many errors in judgement" with regards to costume that Goldwyn had turned to Chanel who would "survey the battlefield and decide what the film stars of this company may wear now to be a step ahead of the styles a year from now."[72] While Dixon's idea that Chanel was rescuing film fashion might seem like a ploy on Goldwyn's part--utilizing the Hollywood publicity machine to present Chanel's fashions as a new and exciting part of his films--it may not have been the case. Instead, Berg notes that Chanel "took [Goldwyn] aback by grabbing all the headlines for herself. The newsworthiness of her work on *Tonight or Never*, she said, had nothing to do with motion pictures; it was that Chanel had at last come to America" [73] If anything, Goldwyn was dealing for the first time with a star whose image he could not mold; rather Chanel was strong force with her own set of publicity guidelines and about whom people already had preconceived notions.

---

[72] Jane Dixon, "Women Behind the News," *The Los Angeles Times*, 1 Feb 1931, A4.

[73] Berg, 214.

As previously noted, Chanel had immense control over her public image: often changing or concealing her past and having her nickname "Coco," rather than her first name, be most associated with her. Her visit to America was no different and this time, she asserted her power by making it clear that she was coming to survey Hollywood, not because she had made a deal with Goldwyn. On March 3, 1931, Chanel arrived in New York City and a steady stream of telegrams between Sam Goldwyn and his public relations man, Lynn Farnol, began. They chronicle not just Chanel's brief illness upon her arrival but also a studio preparing for an important guest, attempting to manage her large retinue and demands. The most important telegrams reveal Chanel's desire to control her own publicity and make it clear that she is not Goldwyn's employee. As Farnol's March 4 telegram to Goldwyn states, "she is amiable and friendly but she...seems extremely apprehensive of such phrases as "Samuel Goldwyn has engaged" suggest that we be very careful about this."[74] Thus, Chanel believed her time in America was to visit Hollywood rather than as part of a contractual obligation. A contract was certainly in place at the time, though neither of Roux's biographies give an exact date, but Chanel had made it clear that she didn't want the public to view her as a Hollywood contractee with Goldwyn having power over her. Her stance also reveals her feelings about Hollywood costume designers; for, though Chanel would contract with the Ballets Russes, throughout her time in America she would make it plain that she was not under any obligation to

[74] Lynn Farnol to Sam Goldwyn, 4 Mar. 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

Goldwyn.[75] In other words, she looked down upon costume design and wanted to draw a distinction between her gowns and those made specifically for the screen.

Following Farnol's telegram, Chanel would make her autonomy known to the press. On March 4, 1931, she arrived in New York City and gave her first American press conference. During the interview, she would indicate that she was not becoming a costume designer and that she hadn't signed a contract.[76] *The New York Times* would quote her as stating that "I will make not one dress. I have not brought my scissors with me. Later, perhaps, when I get back to Paris, I will create and design gowns."[77] Chanel, therefore, already knew that her visit would be short and that she wouldn't be working in Hollywood; thus, research that attributes Chanel's quick visit to a rift between herself and either Goldwyn or Swanson is incorrect. Instead, as I will show, later newspaper articles disregard Chanel's initial interview with *The New York Times* and render her departure as a snub against Hollywood. After Chanel's first press conference , Farnol reported to Goldwyn that the event had been a success, covered not only in the society columns but also in the main news and motion picture columns.[78] The producer, however, reported back with much ire that: "Delighted everything went over so well with Chanel reception however for your information none of newspapers here carried a line."[79] Thus, whatever fame Chanel was accruing on the East Coast was not occurring in Los Angeles, the very

---

[75] "Mlle. Chanel Here, Hollywood Bound," *New York Times*, 5 Mar 1931, 26.

[76] Ibid, 26.

[77] Ibid, 26.

[78] Lynn Farnol to Sam Goldwyn, 5 Mar 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

[79] Sam Goldwyn to Lynn Farnol, 5 Mar 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

city that Goldwyn hoped to impress. Such a discrepancy was alarming, for, without full publicity, the partnership would mean little to him.

The reasons for the West Coast silence are not entirely clear, though Farnol attempted to appease Goldwyn by placing the blame on the Associated Press, in particular Hazel Reavis, the head of women's service.[80] As he explained, the reporter "hates [Chanel] like poison" which "explains animosity of your Paris Associated Press Correspondent at time."[81] While Farnol's explanation does explain why wire stories were less favorable toward Chanel, it doesn't make clear the ongoing differences in coverage between *The Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times*. Nevertheless, the telegram indicates that garnering favorable press for Mlle. Chanel was becoming increasingly complicated for Goldwyn. He may have brought Chanel to Hollywood to appeal to women but her visit drew more criticism from the local newspaper than publicity for his films.

1930s Hollywood: The New Fashion Capital of the World?

As Chanel prepared for her transcontinental trip, newspapers began editorializing coverage, printing personal opinions as to why her visit was significant. For example, on March 8, both *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* featured AP wire stories on Chanel but to different effect. *The New York Times* maintained that Hollywood had never

---

[80] The exact reasons for this dislike are not given by Farnol and further research did not reveal any conclusive evidence. However, an April 19, 1931 *The Washington Post* may provide a clue: in it, Hubbard Keavy describes the difficulty of interviewing Chanel as she did not speak English. Rather, the reporters were hindered by an ineffectual interpreter. The fact that Chanel did not speak English would certainly have hampered any interview, and may have annoyed Reavis. Of course, this interpretation does not fully account for her strong dislike. Hubbard Keavy, "Screen Life in Hollywood," *The Washington Post*, 19 Apr 1931, A5.

[81] Lynn Farnol to Sam Goldwyn, second telegram, 5 Mar 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

been the place to discover "chic," therefore they mused about Chanel's effect on American clothing habits: would she, in fact, be able to change what women consider elegant by changing the way Gloria Swanson dressed?[82] *The Los Angeles Times* only devoted a paragraph to the announcement and hid it within a larger report on Hollywood.[83] Mostly factual, it does not betray the feelings of animosity which would come to exemplify the paper's coverage of her visit. Placing the articles in dialogue reveals that New York believes Chanel's importance lay in her ability to bring class to Hollywood, whereas Los Angeles appears to be printing Goldwyn's original press release. Therefore, the focus remains on the industry and Goldwyn's claim that his films would feature the latest trends. In fact, the article reads as a concession on the part of the Associated Press following Farnol's telegram about Reavis. In other words, they printed a minimal amount to appease the producer and gave no account of Chanel's interview in New York City. The limited coverage was expanded the next day when the paper declared:

---

[82] "Chanel Visits America: Famous Designer, Here for First Time, Says Fashion Is Not for Any One Group," *The New York Times*, 8 Mar 1931, 121.

[83] Norbert Lusk, "'Last Parade' Scores Heavily," *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 Mar 1931, B11.


World's Style Center for Women Shifts From Europe to Los Angeles

Black Lace Applique gives the contrast which makes this gown of white crepe chiffon, one of the most charming designed in Los Angeles.

Distinctly Feminine Appeal is given by the hip-to-toe ruffles which feature this Sunday supper dress, the creation of a local modiste.

Los Angeles Has Stepped Ahead of Paris as The World's Fashion Center, the result of the mobilization here of designers of women's modes from every quarter, attracted by the lure of the movies. Los Angeles stores are exhibiting later and more finished models than those on display in Paris shops. Above are three original designs.

Longer Bobs, Curled at the Ends, will be the spring mode in hair-dress, American fashion dictators aver. This one, a winner at a recent New York beauty show, is the ideal compromise between long hair and the bob, designed to permit wearing of tight-fitting hats. (A. P. photo.)

Fig. 2 "World's Style Center Shifts from Europe to Los Angeles," ***Los Angeles Times*****, 9 Mar 1931, 8.**

Together the images and captions support the claim that Los Angeles had overtaken Paris within the fashion world and in the minds of female consumers. Films apparently now influenced everything from evening wear to day gowns and even hairstyles.

The article also exemplifies how Chanel was viewed by the paper; for her portrait rests on the lower right hand corner amid visions of Hollywood elegance. The caption (not pictured) proclaims that she is "one of the dictators" of fashion who is en route to Hollywood. Thus, the paper uses Chanel to signify that the arbiters of fashion are relocating to Los Angeles, not, as *The New York Times* stated, because Hollywood needed help. By taking such a stance, the paper sides with its local designers and shows that the idea of the screen window was reaching maturity. In other words, Hollywood costumers were beginning to dictate the latest trends for the female consumer-spectator. Thus, the

article declares *The Los Angles Times*' stance toward fashion and filmmaking, wherein Paris no longer held power over the female consumer. Chanel's visit, therefore, reveals not only the producer's desires for appealing to a female audience, but also the growing movement to declare costumers the new couturiers.

With Chanel's arrival in Los Angeles, the East Coast coverage of her visit began to wane while *The Los Angeles Times* and industry sources began to focus on Chanel within society columns. During her stay Goldwyn introduced her to Hollywood's creme de la creme including Greta Garbo, Claudette Colbert and Fredric March as well as designers Mitchell Leisen (future director) and Adrian.[84] Yet, his publicity campaign for her visit not only focused on private meetings between Chanel and Hollywood stars but also included an industry tea in her new salon. This served as an introduction between the couturier and the Hollywood press, a meeting that would eventually become the central focus in deriding Chanel. In fact, the most critical articles written about her from 1931 focus on the salon, which United Artists equipped and decorated specifically for her, though she would never actually use it.[85] The salon is also important in terms of Goldwyn and Chanel's business arrangement, for it reveals that he believed she was a long term investment, not just a publicity stunt.

For the press, the salon became a point of criticism though articles written directly after the tea mask their disapproval with passive-aggressive writing styles as evidenced in *The Los Angeles Times*' column "Society of Cinemaland" by Myra Nye. In her report on the luncheon, she opens with the line: "Chanel has proven that even an ordinary

---

[84] Roux, *Chanel: Her Life*, 270.

[85] Roux, *Chanel: Her Life*, 270.

profession can be made into something alluring." [86] While such an opening sentence can be viewed as complimentary, it also calls couture an "ordinary profession," which relegates Chanel to the role of seamstress, a traditionally feminine and low-class employment. Here, the article takes on a slightly misogynist tone, which later reports would showcase in more explicit terms. The column would go on to report on Chanel's dislike of the newly-painted room before stating that "the well-dressed guests added the only beauty to the room."[87] Here, the working studio, filled with mannequins and sewing machines, fails to impress Nye which may be a further indication of contempt for Chanel's profession or even her success as a female designer. More important, the indication that Chanel was unhappy with the room, and the luncheon itself, may also be one reason for the press' antagonism which manifested itself in criticism aimed to present Chanel as interloper on the Hollywood scene.

The cartoon featured in the "Sugar and Spice" column (see Fig 1.) showcases this idea further, for it takes a humorous stance toward the tea. The column itself was a weekly satirical look at the comings and goings of Hollywood's important players, which turned small moments into animated fun. The joke featured in the cartoon was an actual event that occurred during the luncheon: a curious reporter decided to overturn one of the knick-knacks purchased for Chanel and, discovering the exorbitant price, declared that "maybe the tag was a movie prop." This rib against the studio's adulation of the designer reveals a difference between Goldwyn's aims and the views held by the Los Angeles Press: namely, that Chanel could bring "class" to Hollywood. This cartoon, and articles

---

[86] Myra Nye, "Society of Cinemaland," *The Los Angles Times*, 22 Mar 1931, 24.

[87] Nye, 24.

which followed, would paint the designer as a pretentious snob who turned her nose up at Hollywood while Goldwyn and the East Coast press would equate her with European sophistication. This dichotomy would continue throughout her design process and end only with Goldwyn's promotional campaigns for the films.

True to her word, Chanel's visit was short and she left Hollywood on March 26th. That day, Farnol reported that her arrival in New York was again greeted with positive press.[88] However, her Hollywood visit also led to a change in her business agreement: now, Chanel would design exclusively from Paris and send associates to Hollywood to execute the designs. Goldwyn's starlets could travel to Europe, as Gloria Swanson did, but the studio was also ready to contract several models (referred to in the telegrams as "mannequins") for the designer to utilize. Certainly, Chanel's dislike for the industry contributed to her decision to return to the safety of her Paris studios, but the negative press might have also played a part. Nevertheless, since Chanel did leave as scheduled and finish her contract agreement for the year, there is no reason to attribute the split to either Goldwyn or Swanson, as the press would later claim. Rather, it could be a case of two different agendas and cultures clashing.

Back in New York, Chanel would again take over her own publicity when she announced to the press the details of her return to Paris. Farnol telegramed Goldwyn that day with the news, letting him know that Chanel had alerted the AP wire that she was contracting models for her Hollywood designs and had indicated that Goldwyn was welcome to make his own announcement should it not appear in the Los Angeles papers

---

[88] Lynn Farnol to Samuel Goldwyn, 26 Mar 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

that evening.[89] This act would typify the business relationship throughout the next few months--with Chanel viewing her relationship with Goldwyn as businessperson to businessperson, not employee to employer. The costumes were to be designed on her own terms and in her own time, which explains the instances when Chanel proved difficult to get in touch with. Such a situation may explain why *The Los Angeles Times* portrayed her as a pretentious snob, but in many ways signifies the problems with contracting with an already famous person. In this instance, Chanel's fame equaled and in many ways eclipsed the producer's, making her role less as costumer than as star attraction.

On April 8, for example, Goldwyn would telegram Chanel letting her know that her employee, Madame Decile, was making "excessive demands" and asking Chanel for her advice in dealing with the woman. The telegram also had a note attached which indicated that this particular wire had yet to be answered by Chanel.**[90]** The matter would be cleared up, with Chanel sending Mme. Courtois, a trusted associate, who would receive credit as "costume supervisor" on *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*. She also maintained that she was "anxious" to continue their relationship, further indicating that their partnership continued on pleasant terms.[91] This exchange also details the type of business relationship the two maintained. In particular, the use of "advice" when bargaining with Decile over money exemplifies this, further proving Chanel's belief that

---

[89] Lynn Farnol to Samuel Goldwyn, second telegram, 26 Mar 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

[90] Samuel Goldwyn to Gabrielle Chanel, 8 April 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

[91] Ibid, 8 April 1931.

she wasn't a contractee, much as that may have irked the producer when his own demands weren't met.

Throughout the Spring of 1931, few telegrams were sent between producer and designer, though there was a brief exchange between Chanel and Frances Goldwyn, his wife, for whom Chanel was also designing. In fact, it is important to note that Frances would come up in several correspondences between Goldywn and Chanel, adding a layer of personal relations to their conversation. As for any indication that a disagreement occurred after Chanel had left Hollywood, the only incident that reveals some strain between the two occurred in May of 1931, with the revelation that the eleven girls chosen as Chanel's models had signed a blank contract without any indication of when they would be sent to Paris. As Lynn Farnol explains, "since [Chanel] left, I received one cable asking for photos of the girls, and another saying that we would hear from her finally before the end of the week. That was three weeks ago. Since then, we have heard nothing." He also writes that the models considered the entire thing to be a "publicity gag."[92] While it is certain that Chanel had used the girls to increase her American publicity--and hiring American models would certainly prove this--having them sign a contract reveals her interest in completing the project. As there are no further reports on this incident in Goldwyn's files, I attribute the misunderstanding to the difficulty of arranging two separate work visas (French and American) for the models. In fact, unlike previous accounts of the partnership, I find that within these telegrams no great split

---

[92] Interoffice Communication from Lynn Farnol to Abraham Lehr, 22 May 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

between Goldwyn and Chanel reveals itself. Thus, the failure of the collaboration does not rest with either but must be located elsewhere.

Behind the scenes, their relationship continued amicably throughout the summer, with no more misunderstandings. In June, Chanel sent her associate, Madame Courtois, to Hollywood with her designs for *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*. That day, Goldwyn wrote to express his excitement and indicate that he would help Courtois execute the costumes properly.[93] In Paris, Gloria Swanson arrived at Chanel's studio where she was not only fitted for costumes but also introduced to Parisian society. As Chanel herself wrote to Goldwyn during Swanson's stay, "I am happy to tell you that we are very good friends with her/hope to see you soon /love to Francis and you."[94] Whatever their relationship (which the press frequently conjured up as the reason for Chanel's brief visit), the two women appeared to be on friendly terms throughout Swanson's stay in Paris. This is further evidenced by *The New York Times* report that "Chanel Entertains at Brilliant Fete," with a guest list that included Swanson.[95] The only indications of trouble between Swanson and Chanel comes with a 1931 Swanson interview and her later memoir. The first was a *Photoplay* article which focused on Swanson's reaction to Chanel since "there is no woman in Hollywood more competent to talk on 'Clothes for the Screen as Compared to Clothes for the Drawing Room" than Gloria Swanson."[96] In fact,

---

[93] Samuel Goldwyn to Gabrielle Chanel, 25 June 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

[94] Chanel frequently referred to herself using the royal "we," and the fact that she had to mention the relations indicates a possible prior tension between the two women; Gabrielle Chanel to Sam Goldwyn, 27 June 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

[95] May Birkhead, "Chanel Entertains at Brilliant Fete," *The New York Times*, 5 July 1931, 24.

[96] Lois Shirley, "How to Adapt Screen Modes," *Photoplay*, July 1931, 32-3.

Lois Shirley, the article's author, posits that tensions arose between the two women because Swanson did not need Paris to tell her how to dress.[97] As Swanson herself stated "actresses are not manikins displaying gowns. The gowns are to display the actresses."[98] Yet, Swanson appeared in later photo spreads as Chanel's model and didn't protest against wearing the designs in *Tonight or Never*. Rather, the comments in *Photoplay* seem to reassert her own style (an important part of her star image) and raise interest in her film because of possible behind-the-scenes gossip. Her memoir supports my analysis because the only incident between Swanson and Chanel occurred during the fittings. Swanson wrote that the designer was unhappy with the star's weight gain between fittings, due to her then secret pregnancy.[99] Chanel worried that the line of the dress would be spoiled by the corsets or rubberized underwear that the starlet suggested but eventually gave in, and Swanson was able to hide the pregnancy throughout the production.

Following Swanson's visit, Chanel contacted Farnol asking for help in publicizing an upcoming visit to America. In particular, she wanted Goldwyn to place notices in American newspapers in order to promote her August collection.[100] Once again, their correspondence shows a mutually beneficial business relationship in which each could

---

[97] In fact, Swanson was a well-known clotheshorse by this time and fashion/consumption played an important part in her public persona. According to May, it was "her ability to transform herself through clothes and cosmetics that made her so famous. Learning, as she confessed, 'all my expensive tastes from Demille,' she was known as the 'best dressed woman in the world'." See: May, 234.

[98] Shirley, 33.

[99] *Swanson on Swanson*, (New York: Random House, 1980) 413-5.

[100] There is, however, no evidence that the studio responded to Chanel's query. Lynn Farnol to Samuel Goldwyn, 13 July 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

utilize the popularity and fame of the other to increase demand for their products. Thus, research shows that neither Goldwyn nor Swanson had a falling out with Chanel; rather, any reports of a divisive split seem to be a creation of the newspapers.

Echoes of Chanel's Visit and Publicity

Tracing Chanel's publicity within the papers reveals how the story grew from minor problems into a major rift, particularly in articles by *The Los Angeles Times*. During the summer of 1931, in fact, Hollywood reports began to sensationalize Chanel's visit and find fault with the designer for returning to Paris. For movie fans, *Motion Picture Magazine* painted a gossipy portrait of Chanel's Hollywood reception, indicating that her negative views of the industry were enough to fill a book. More important, the ongoing column, "The Talk of a Town," reports that visitors to Chanel's tea "regarded the simple Chanel's gray tweed tailor-made suit and four rows of pearls with frank American disappointment."[101] Of course, as a fan magazine, *Motion Picture Magazine* would tend to rely on gossip rather than hard-hitting facts to increase audience circulation but the article is the first to suggest that Hollywood truly disliked Chanel. Therefore, the piece is important because it suggests a turning point in articles on Chanel, which began to focus on the problems of the collaboration in more obvious language.

Two articles from *The Los Angeles Times* exemplify this most because they focus on Chanel's disdain for the industry and the reporters' personal opinions about this snub. The first was another edition of Alma Whitaker's "Sugar and Spice" column which reported on Chanel's decision to remain in Paris. The article opens by stating that

---

[101] "The Talk of a Town," *Motion Picture Magazine*, June 1931, 28.

"Chanel hopes she will never, never come back to Hollywood. The Parisian sartorial expert found it lacking, and after all the grand ballyhoo United Artists gave her."[102] Here, Whitaker focuses again on the salon and the effort the studio gave to please the designer. In other words, despite the attention and wealth lavished upon her, Hollywood did not live up to Chanel's "Parisian standards," as Whitaker phrases it. Once again, the divide between Paris and Hollywood arises and shows that *The Los Angeles Times* was still siding with local (i.e., American) costume designers.

Whitaker's personal opinions about Chanel are even more evident in the second paragraph, in which she states that "Chanel, you know, is the lady who declined the honor of becoming the Duchess of Westminster, since 'there can be many duchesses, but there is only one Chanel'."[103] She is citing the earlier romance between the Duke and the designer, which had filled the headlines, and, in the next sentence, relates Chanel's rebuke of Hollywood to that of a scorned marriage proposal. Yet, it shows a more personal attack against Chanel for believing herself above others, to the point of remaining single or, in this case, an autonomous businesswoman. This style of language by Whitaker echoes that of Nye's earlier article which wrote that Chanel's attainment of such fame was "quite enough for any one woman," though neither places her in relation to other successful women.[104] In both, the overarching theme revolves around Chanel's unconventional life: placing fame and business success over marriage (especially to a Duke). In the case of Hollywood, it seems to come as some surprise that a woman would

---

[102] Alma Whitaker, "Sugar and Spice," *The Los Angeles Times*, 26 July 1931, B20.

[103] Ibid, B20.

[104]Nye, 24.

give up a seemingly well-paid and influential position in film, particularly one offered by a famous producer. Neither article, however, is explicitly misogynist, but they criticize the personal life of Chanel rather than focus on her work.

The second article, "Chanel Visit Echoes Heard," by Muriel Babcock, continues in a similar vein though focusing less on Chanel's personal life and more on her abhorrence of Hollywood. The beginning of the article reads like the start of a horror film or perhaps the return of a serialized villain: "maybe you thought you heard the last in Hollywood of Mlle. Gabrielle Chanel," before recounting her brief interlude in the city.[105] Such language indicates that Chanel's dislike for the city was not only well-known but had also come as a personal snub to the denizens of Los Angeles. And, recalling Whitaker's criticism of Chanel's autonomy, Babcock takes issue because, despite being located in Paris, Chanel still had power in Hollywood; for, the echoes which Babcock alludes to are the arrival of Chanel's models.[106] Though the appearance of the gowns generated excitement, the article makes it clear that Chanel remained distrustful of Hollywood to the point that she declared that no photographs could be taken of the actresses in the gowns.[107] What the article does not indicate is that Chanel's alleged declaration actually made the gowns more noteworthy, as only a select view would be able to see them before release. Therefore, Goldwyn could publicize his films as the first glimpse of Chanel's fall line, which he would do in the Exhibitor's Campaign Books as

---

[105] Muriel Babcock, "Chanel Visit Echoes Heard," *The Los Angeles Times*, 24 Aug 1931, A7.

[106] It must also be noted that Babcock refers to them as "loud, expensive [sic] echoes," furthering the claim that the paper wrote of Chanel with disdain.

[107] Ibid, A7.

well as in his own promotional campaigns.[108] The article, however, makes it seem that Chanel has hindered Hollywood and continued to battle Goldwyn. For example, it ends with the conjecture that: "I suspect strongly when the grand premiere of [*Greeks*] takes place Hollywood will be less represented than the dressmaking world with its Rosies and Sadies and artist fellows rapidly sketching off models."[109] Here, Babcock clearly shows her disdain for the fashion industry, which turned the the film into a veritable runway show rather than a motion picture.

This view of Chanel would continue after her Goldwyn films were released so that by 1933, there was a planned adaptation of her life story entitled "Mlle. Revenge" by Elsa Maxwell. The press clipping announcing the project writes of Chanel as a major disappointment to Hollywood and also notes her rather plain appearance, despite her legend.[110] It was enough to arose the interests of Chanel's assistants and friends, with a letter to Goldwyn accompanying the article in the file. The note, from Winifred Boulter, indicates that Chanel was not aware of the project and her associates wanted to keep it that way. Instead, they would like to sue for defamation of character and hope that Goldwyn would take up the "matter in a friendly manner with prospective producers."[111] There is no further evidence that Goldywn took up the suit, but the film itself was never made. What the letter does signify, however, is the ongoing relations between the two

---

[108] In fact, this would actually become a main part of the film's promotion, as will be seen in chapter three.

[109] Babcock, A7.

[110] Mollie Merrick, " Hollywood's Best Dressed Girl in Two Fashion Plays," *Chicago Daily News*, Henry Romeike New York: Original Press Clipping Bureau, 13 Dec 1932.

[111] Winifred Boulter to Sam Goldwyn, 6 Jan 1933, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

parties, which would continue after their collaboration, though with less frequency. A letter kept in Goldwyn's Chanel file from 1937 notes: "I have not forgotten my voyage to Hollywood and how nice and helpful you have been."[112] While not the language of great friends, each shows a closer relationship that was not hindered or hurt with the end of the collaboration.

Why the collaboration failed remains a source of mystery, though many offered their conjectures. *The New Yorker* placed the blame on Hollywood's extravagant costume aesthetics, because Chanel "made a lady look like a lady. Hollywood wants a lady to look like two ladies."[113] Chanel rarely talked about her Hollywood visit, but when she did she was willing to admit that she did not hold the city in high esteem. To biographer, Edmonde Charles-Roux, she described it as "the Mont St. Michel of tit and tail."[114] Whatever Chanel's personal views of the industry as a whole, she never gave her opinions about either Goldwyn or Swanson; thus, any sensationalized account of her time in Hollywood must be looked at through the guise of newspaper gossip. Such reports would, however, be silenced by Goldwyn's promotional campaigns for *Palmy Days*, *Tonight or Never* and *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*. Each film would represent a test of Chanel's impact at the box office and, more importantly, give Goldwyn a chance to prove the collaboration's worth. Therefore, if the business partnership did not fail during

---

[112] Gabrielle Chanel to Samuel Goldwyn, 30 Nov 1937, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

[113] Roux, *Chanel: Her Life*, 271.

[114] Ibid, 269.

production perhaps the question of what happened can be answered by looking at the promotion and reception for each film.

Chapter Three: Fashion 24 Frames a Second

Chanel left Hollywood within a month of her arrival, leaving behind an ongoing discussion and debate about high fashion's place in film. Yet, even though her visit prompted criticism, the public and press eagerly awaited her designs. Throughout the summer of 1931, Goldwyn excited interest through "exclusive" photo spreads in Photoplay, actor interviews commenting on the designer, and promotional campaigns that included tie-ins with major merchandisers. Such publicity stunts were Goldwyn's contribution to the collaboration because Chanel's authority waned during the promotional period. Thus, though she generated and controlled publicity during her visit, as the films entered distribution it was Goldwyn's turn.

Curiously, despite his earlier claims that Chanel's fashions were an important part of promotion, their influence actually varied for each film. In fact, the first two releases, *Palmy Days* and *Tonight or Never*, focused campaigns on the stars (Eddie Cantor and Gloria Swanson, respectively), making Chanel's involvement minor. *Greeks*, meanwhile, placed her at the forefront of ads and newspaper campaigns because the stars (Ina Claire, Madge Evens and Joan Blondell) were less well-known. By comparing and contrasting all three films, in fact, the differences in star power and genre meant that Chanel was used only as a last resort; in other words, she became part of promotion only when the actors and plotlines could not sell the film. Thus, Goldwyn utilized Chanel like a studio costume designer rather than as a star attraction.

Nevertheless, when he wanted to appeal to women, posters for the films made it known that the gowns were made by "Chanel of Paris." In some cases, promotional

material directly addressed female spectators with slogans about how the gowns were well received by other women. Therefore, though Chanel wasn't the star attraction for either *Palmy Days* or *Tonight or Never*, she remained an important aspect in conceptions of what women wanted. Coming months after press scrutiny around fashion and the female spectator, these three films represented the final piece in Goldwyn's plan to use high fashion as a marketing technique. The results of his campaigns were mixed: reviews pointed out each film's costumes, often arguing that the ladies would love them, but only *Palmy Days* was a box-office success. Both *Tonight or Never* and *Greeks* quickly went through their first runs, in most cases lasting only for one week, and critically received poor reviews. Thus, Chanel generated publicity and even piqued the interest of female spectators, but her influence couldn't help either film achieve box-office success.

However, even with low box-office numbers, I wouldn't categorize her visit as a failure--at least not on the part of the designer. Her clothes were expertly crafted, well-received and functioned within each film's mise-en-scene. Where then does the blame lay? By looking at the promotion and reception of each film, I argue that Goldwyn didn't utilize Chanel well in his promotional campaigns and, by providing product that was mediocre at best, the studio guaranteed each film's failure at the box office. Marketing and reviews prove that Chanel's designs were a hit with audiences but the box-office receipts reveals an important fact: that some women will go see films for the fashion but true box-office success depends on the film itself. Thus, though the legacy of Chanel's visit is one of failure, the positive reception of her gowns prove she was actually

successful; instead, *Tonight or Never* and *Greeks* were the true disappointment and could not compete against the "A" pictures from studios like MGM.

Palmy Days

Eddie Cantor's follow-up to the wildly successful *Whoopee* (United Artists, 1930) was a light musical-comedy involving a phony psychic, mistaken identities and a bakery. Cantor stars as Eddie Simpson, an assistant to Yolando (Charles B. Middleton), a fortune teller who uses trickery to increase his following. During a visit to Yolando, Mr. Clark (Spencer Charters), owner of the A.B. Clark Bakery, sees Eddie and believes him to be the efficiency expert Yolando predicted would arrive. Hijinks ensue as Eddie takes charge of the bakery and falls in love with the bakery's aerobics instructor, Helen Martin (Charlotte Greenwood). The bakery employs an aerobics instructor because all of its workers are attractive and scantily clad women (played by the Goldwyn Girls, who perform in Busby Berkeley choreographed numbers). Directed by Edward Sutherland, the film was written by Eddie Cantor, Morrie Ryskind and David Freedman, and photographed by Gregg Toland. As none of these men were well-known in 1931, the film effectively became Cantor's star vehicle.[115] His name alone proved to be a box-office draw, despite the plot's basic comedic precepts. Yet, it was not the kind of film in which fashion plays a central part (though the opening song focuses on how to stay beautiful), making Chanel's first foray into Hollywood costuming a curious one. In fact, more

---

[115] Coming just after the mild success of *Whoopee*, the film actually functioned as a way to solidify Cantor's star image as the American everyman rather than as a Jewish stage actor and comic. Henry Jenkins notes that "*Palmy Days* and subsequent Cantor vehicles walked a thin line between the musical and the comic, allowing them to be packaged differently to respond to regional differences in genre preferences." See: Henry Jenkins, "Shall We Make It for New York or for Distribution?: Eddie Cantor, *Whoopee*, and Regional Resistance to the Talkies," *What Made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York: Columbia UP, 1992), 153-84.

emphasis is placed on what the Goldwyn Girls aren't wearing and Chanel's designs are never foregrounded in the film.

According to Justine Picardie, a Chanel biographer, the designer was brought into the film with little time to do more than design for the film's young actress Barbara Weeks, but that didn't mean the results were limited. Instead, Chanel utilized what would soon be a staple of costume design: creating multiple versions of the same dress so that it was pleasing from various angles and poses.[116] The innovation showcased Chanel's talents in flattering not only the figure, but the very movement of the wearer, creating a portrait of perfection, at least in the spectator's eyes. In fact, the illusion was decidedly cinematic in execution; for costume relied on editing so that the audience believed they were viewing a single gown and not the multiple variations designed to give the effect of perfection. The rest of Chanel's designs were equally stylish, if more traditional, but their real aim was to signify Weeks' beauty rather than stand out on their own. By becoming an important piece of mise-en-scene, the gowns show Chanel was not anti-Hollywood in design but actually introducing an important concept into costuming: designers could show-off the beauty of the star through fashionable trends that could also work in-tandem with the film's plot. Thus, as Eddie appreciatively glances at Weeks, the audience can take in both the actress' beauty as well as the clothing which adds to it.

Here, Chanel's designs work simultaneously within the filmic text as "costume" and within promotional material as "fashion." In this way, she can be seen as looking ahead to the future of costume design: able to exist simultaneously as consumer product and as

---

[116] Justine Picardie, *Coco Chanel: The Legend and the Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 210.

a piece of characterization/mise-en-scene. The extra-textual factor, in which costumes become "fashion" within promotional campaigns, can be seen in an early *Photoplay* article focused on Chanel's work on *Palmy Days*. Interestingly, the photo spread which accompanies the article refutes *The Los Angeles Times*' early claim that Chanel didn't want photographs taken of her designs. The images of Weeks wearing Chanel's gowns were featured within the recurring "Seymour" column which, each month, focused on the newest Hollywood clothing trends as well as specific film costumes. The article on *Palmy Days* was actually the first time Chanel's designs were seen by the public, allowing *Photoplay* to declare it was a "scoop" story in order to pique reader interest. As for Goldwyn, the magazine gave him an early way to promote a Cantor film to female audiences:

Fig. 3 "Here's what Paris Designs for the Stars," *Photoplay*, Sept 1931, 44.

Both photo captions reiterate that Chanel created the gowns at the request of Goldwyn and make it known that they will soon appear in *Palmy Days*. The third paragraph, interestingly, states that "the questions of whether a Paris designer can hit the right fashion tempo for the screen should soon be settled."[117] Thus, the article directly alludes to the ongoing debate about the possible differences in high fashion and film costume, which both *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* pointed out the previous Spring. The fact that the debate will be settled shows that the article sides with Chanel and Goldwyn, viewing the collaboration as a guaranteed success. In featuring Weeks, the article gives the ingenue an avenue to reach the public but because of the captions, she becomes little more than a Chanel model. In placing fashion above actress, Seymour's photo spread indicates that Chanel's designs were viewed as more than just costume; in fact, they were upcoming fashion trends.

While the article is the most prominent instance of Chanel's name in *Palmy Days* promotional material, the Exhibitor's Campaign book reveals that Goldwyn wanted more theaters to use fashion to sell the film. Under the "Sure-Fire Advance Newspaper Material," United Artists placed a single article focused exclusively on Chanel entitled "First Chanel Gowns Seen in 'Palmy Days.'"[118] Most of the copy centers around the models being the first of Chanel's to be brought to the screen, and allow Weeks to get plenty of mention as well.[119] It also rather democratically makes mention of the salon,

---

[117] Ibid, 44.

[118] *Palmy Days,* United Artists Exhibitors Campaign Book, 1931, 15

[119] This would have been important to Goldwyn for, as the copy points out, she had recently been put under contract. Therefore, selling the new starlet would have also figured into this "Chanel Campaign."

which was the center of such ire for the press. The potential copy reiterates that Chanel made the gowns in Paris "although she established a workshop at the United Artists studios on her recent trip to Hollywood."[120] In doing so, Goldwyn briefly acknowledges the controversy surrounding Chanel's departure but within the promotional campaign. Thus, theaters who ran the material would not only place focus on the gowns (in order to attract female audiences) but also help clear up any remaining doubts about the collaboration.

Despite studio copy, however, Chanel's gowns played a small part in promoting the film and most attention was turned toward Cantor. When asked about Chanel's involvement in the film, the actor stated: "someone asked me if Sam Goldwyn's new style expert, Mme. Gabrielle Chanel, designed anything for 'Palmy Days.' Emphatically not. Chanel has no designs on me, I have no designs on Chanel."[121] Hysterical in its wordplay, the answer reveals his ability to turn attention from the designer back to himself. Though she did have involvement in the film, there could be no doubt that Cantor was the only star to whom the press should pay attention. Following this logic, trade journals and newspapers utilized a campaign prominently featuring Cantor:

---

[120] Ibid, 15.

[121] "Cantor Discourses on Location of Prosperity," *The Los Angeles Times*, 4 Oct 1931, B18.

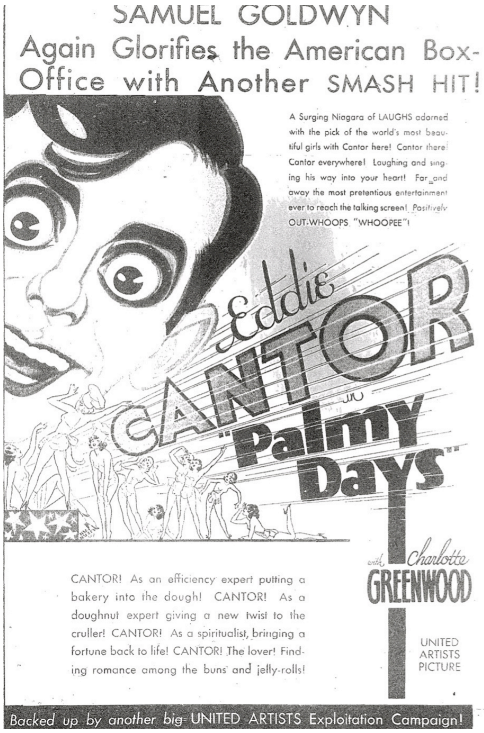

Fig. 4 *Palmy Days* Ad, *Variety*, 22 Sept 1931, 19.

Working as a follow-up film, the campaign therefore focuses on Cantor and the fact that *Palmy Days* "out-whoopees *Whoopee*."[122] Yet, Goldwyn also played an important role in the campaign, specifically acting as a voucher for the film's expensive look. Emphasizing the film's budget was part of Goldwyn's appeal to Depression-weary crowds, offering them not only Eddie Cantor but the chance to escape into a world untouched by economic trouble. It was, as the campaign book states, the "prosperity angle" which theaters could exploit: "Looks Like a Million...And Costs What It Looks Like!"[123]

Not everyone was happy with this campaign, however, and on September 19, 1931 *Motion Picture Herald* published "Bang Goes Another Million!," criticizing United

---

[122] *Motion Picture Magazine*, Nov 1931, 11.

[123] *Palmy Days*, United Artists Exhibitors Campaign Book, 2, 12. The other angles were: the bakery, the spiritualistic and the laugh. As this reveals, none were focused on Chanel's designs.

Artists for such a ploy. As they note, "far too often we have to observe that cost is not an index of value...that dollar structuring annoys the customers and that the exhibitor does not care what it costs, but is more eager to know what it is worth."[124] *Motion Picture Herald* offered the studio a sobering notion: that the look of any film was not an indicator of its exhibition value. This criticism seems directly tied to Goldwyn, as he would use similar tactics for *Tonight or Never* and *Greeks*, but interestingly no such criticism can be found when the expense is on fashion. However, the studio paid no attention to the article, and continued to utilize the copy within subsequent ads.

The final campaign that played a major role was the studio's encouragement of tie-ins with major manufacturers. These companies ranged from Hostess and Wonder Bread to local bakeries that could offer doughnut machines to the theaters.[125] *The Atlanta Constitution*, for example, featured ads for Idle-Knife Bread ("It's Sliced--and the favorite of Eddie Cantor") while the Dominion Theater in London installed a bakery in the lobby which sold thousands of doughnuts each day.[126] The London campaign offers perhaps the best example of the multiple ways products could be incorporated in promotion; for, United Artists partnered with such industries as Waffle makers, Toffee candies, typewriters, music publishers and razors. *Motion Picture Herald* also indicated that the studio had reached out to Woolworth stores, which shows that Chanel's designs

---

[124] "Bang Goes Another Million!" *Motion Picture Herald*, 19 Sept 1931, 7.

[125] *Palmy Days*, United Artists Exhibitors Campaign Book, 3, 5.

[126] *Atlanta Constitution*, 2 Oct 1931, 3; "Many Sales Angles Used in London to Sell Palmy Days," *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 Jan 1932, 60.

did play a role in tie-in campaigns as well, though no specific mention of her comes in the article.[127]

These campaign techniques worked, for the most part, and the film was greeted with enthusiasm and strong box-office. Reviewers paid close attention to Cantor's performance, with most noting that it was "not a *Whoopee* but it's a laugh, and that's what Cantor in a theater guarantees."[128] *The New York Times* review echoes many of the statements made by others and demonstrates that Goldwyn's reliance on Cantor's star image was correct: no one mentions Chanel in the reviews and instead places focus on the ongoing appeal of the comedian himself. Even *Variety*'s "The Woman's Angle" review fails to note the designer and instead writes of "Eddie Cantor wistfully tearing through a mad, exaggeratedly lavish production."[129] The production values are no doubt referring to the Berkeley musical numbers and so, in this instance, a division can be found between Goldwyn's initial remarks about female spectators and *Variety*'s review: the designer may be part of the production but Cantor would be the central focus by which the film's appeal would be charted.

Palmy Days opened at the Rialto in New York City on October 3, 1931, making $31,100 in just four days.[130] The film would prove to be popular in East Coast cities, playing for a total of six weeks at the Rialto and three in Chicago and Philadelphia. It went into wide release throughout October and November, soon becoming a hit in

---

127 "Many Sales Angles," 60.

128 "The Screen: A Frolic, With Mr. Cantor," *The New York Times*, 24 Sept 1931, 29.

129 "The Woman's Angle," *Variety*, 29 Sept 1931, 14.

130 *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 Oct 1931, 44.

Montreal, Los Angeles and San Francisco. In each city, including places where it wasn't held over, the film would post strong opening week numbers and, in some cases, prove to be a top-grosser. For example, in its third week in Seattle, *Palmy Days* made $6500 despite playing at the city's smallest theater, The Blue Mouse, which had only 750 seats.[131] In Houston, the film proved to be the highest grosser for the week of October 31, 1931, making 14,000 in its opening week; in comparison, the next week's showing, *The Unholy Garden* (United Artists 1931), made only $7500.[132]

Eddie Cantor's film proved to be a reliable hit for Goldwyn, posting strong box-office results and, in some cases, proving to be one of the most popular: *Chicago Daily Tribune*, in fact, would declare it one of October's best films.[133] Yet, the one area of the film never discussed was costumes--besides the Cantor interview and the *Photoplay* spread, no mention of Chanel entered into the film's marketing. Within the film itself, Weeks barely appears and her costumes are given little attention, though they are chic in design. The silence on costuming, both in the film and its promotion, would actually result in many papers incorrectly dubbing Goldwyn's next release, *Tonight or Never*, as Chanel's first film.[134]

Tonight or Never

Chanel's second Goldwyn feature was a Gloria Swanson vehicle, meant to take the actress from silent to sound star. The film had all the trappings of a first class

---

[131] *Motion Picture Herald*, 24 Oct 1931, 43.

[132] *Motion Picture Herald*, 31 Oct 1931, 28; *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 Nov 1931, 42.

[133] Mae Tinee, "Helen Hayes' Picture Heads List of Month's Best Movies," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 Nov 1931, F1.

[134] "Tonight or Never," *The New York Times*, 13 Dec 1931, X4.

production: it was directed by Mervyn LeRoy, photographed by Gregg Toland and adapted for the screen by Fanny and Frederic Hatton. The original property was a Hungarian play written by Lily Hatvany, which Goldwyn had seen in 1930 and bought specifically for Swanson.[135] The story revolves around the up-and-coming soprano, Nella Vago (Swanson), whose cold performances are attributed to the lack of romance in her life. One night, she falls for the handsome Jim Fletcher (Melvyn Douglas) but mistakes him for a gigolo; in truth, Fletcher is an American opera impresario and, in the end, offers Nella both the romance and career for which she longs. Filming began in September of 1931, with Chanel's costumes shipped over from Paris. The final estimated cost of the production came in at $663,039.81, with Chanel's gowns (worn only by Swanson) costing around $4,000.[136]

Compared to *Palmy Days*, fashion played an important role both in terms of production and within the film itself; in fact, the script often called for specific items--an emerald bracelet, a stunning white gown--which Chanel provided.[137] Most importantly, this film allowed Chanel to dress one of the studio's leading stars, giving her gowns greater screen time and prominence. Thus, the script's emphasis on clothing was expanded within the film text so that the audience is constantly asked to gaze at Swanson. In one sequence, Nella, sick of wearing black, declares that tonight she will wear her

---

[135] "Tonight or Never," *The New York Times*, 13 Dec 1931, X4.

[136] Interoffice Communication from Mr. Codd to Abe Lehr, 11 Nov 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles; *Tonight or Never* Estimated Budget, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

[137] Wardrobe Plot submitted by G. Hollingshead on 2 Sept 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.; "List of Costumes Sent From Chanel for Miss Swanson," *Tonight or Never* Estimated Budget.

white gown. Symbolically, the moment refers to her willingness to find love but it also allows costume to play a central role within the film text. LeRoy, for his part, makes sure that Chanel's designs are foregrounded:

Fig. 5 Displaying Chanel's Jewelry: Gloria Swanson in *Tonight or Never*.

Here, an over-the-shoulder shot shows Nella in a romantic reverie, due to the beautiful music, but her emotional epiphany is overshadowed by her jewelry. Her crossed hands create a pattern at the center of the frame which both draw the eye and emphasize the rows of diamond bracelets provided by Chanel. In the next sequence, when Nella visits Fletcher, the spectator witnesses the gown from multiple angles: Swanson turns, struts, and even, at one point, faces away from the camera. In doing so, Swanson showcases the gown's back, sides and front, allowing the gaze to travel along the dress. Chanel's creations, therefore, receive the full appreciation of the camera which mimics the desire to look so integral to the female consumer.

The gowns themselves are more emblematic of Chanel's design aesthetic than those worn by Weeks for they are simple and accentuate Swanson's curves without

restricting movement. Swanson also wears several versions of Chanel's most important fashion innovation: pairing strands of costume pearls with a day suit. By 1931 this look was synonymous with the designer so audiences were given another marker to recognize Chanel's work in the film. Also, curiously, when wearing such an outfit, Swanson bears a striking resemblance to Chanel herself:

Fig. 6 Swanson as Chanel in *Tonight or Never*.

The fur beret, pearl necklaces and simple wrap dress combine into a traditionally Chanel image of woman, one which Chanel frequently wore in life. The result turns Swanson into a mannequin or, rather, the embodiment of the Chanel ideal. By placing her in the foreground, LeRoy invites the spectator's gaze while the close-up allows details of the outfit to emerge (such as the fur, the individual bracelets, etc.).

Since clothing played a more important role within the film, it was only fitting that it should have more influence on the promotion. Yet, though Chanel's name was more prominently featured in relation to *Tonight or Never*, it would come to play a

secondary role to Swanson. In January of 1932, *Photoplay* ran another Seymour column focused exclusively on Chanel's designs, this time in a two-page spread which offered photos showing four of the gowns. Interestingly, the photographs are not related to scenes from the film; instead, Swanson poses for the camera becoming, once again, Chanel's model. The copy itself places fashion above film star, declaring that "once again we are able to give you an exclusive preview of the Chanel-designed clothes that you will see Gloria Swanson wear...And, according to our reviewers, Samuel Goldwyn has made a picture worthy of the clothes."[138] In the quote, the film must live up to both Chanel's standards and fan interest in her designs, so that the article seems to once again be siding with the designer rather than Hollywood. Thus, though the article's title is "See These Latest Styles in Gloria's Picture," the actress functions as little more than a mannequin. Therefore, the piece seems to work into Goldwyn's earliest conceptions of the collaboration: utilizing a popular figure (Chanel) to bring glamour and sophistication to his films. The photospread, then,works within his theory about female spectators but in this instance, does what no other advertising for the film would do: focus on Gabrielle Chanel and the gowns rather than Swanson and Goldwyn.

In fact, trade journals and newspapers would emphasize Swanson to sell the film and, while they do feature the actress in Chanel designs, all focus remains on the actress:

---

[138] "See These Latest Chanel Styles in Gloria's Picture," *Photoplay*, Jan 1932, 52-3.

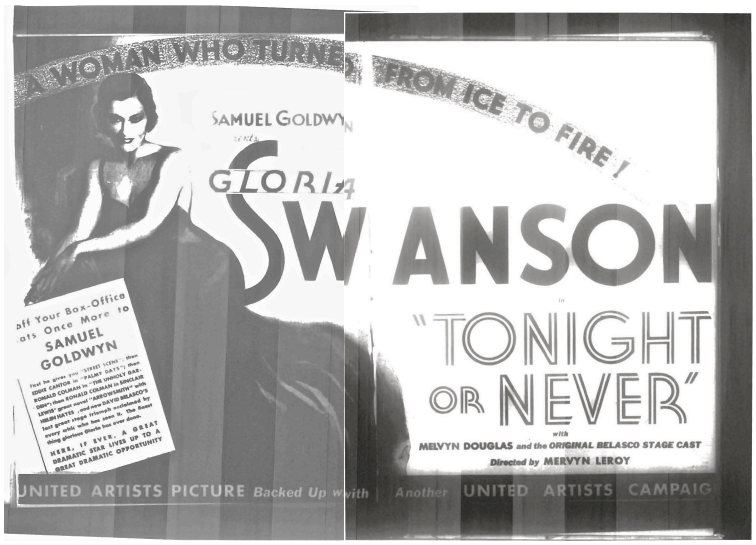

Fig. 7 *Tonight or Never* Ad, *Motion Picture Herald*, 19 Dec 1931. 30-1.

The two-page ad featured in *Motion Picture Herald* shows that for United Artists the star of the film, in fact the *only* thing to focus on, was Swanson. She poses in the black Chanel dress, but looks directly at the reader, drawing attention to her face. In bold letters, the ad features her name above the credits and the tagline: " A woman who turned from ice to fire!"[139] Photographs of Swanson would play a key role in newspaper advertising for the film while Chanel's name went unmentioned (though Goldwyn plays an important role in most ad's copy).

This did not mean, however, that fashion was neglected in promotional material as it was for *Palmy Days*; in fact, exhibitors utilized tie-ins in multiple cities that directly related to fashion. Thus, Chanel became an important factor in selling the film to local audiences. *The Washington Post*, for example, featured advertising for "The French Parfum"-- "Tonight or Never" which was "favored by those chic French women who

---

[139] *Motion Picture Herald*, 19 Dec 1931, 30-1.

exemplify great artistry in their personal charm."[140] The copy also mentions that the scent is as unforgettable as Gloria Swanson, but there can be no doubt that the "chic French women" with "great artistry" directly relates to Chanel, though her name goes unmentioned. In Los Angeles, there would be a more direct tie with her designs when Richard "Dick" Moss, the manager of the United Artist theater, presented a style show in connection with the film's West Coast opening. The fashion show "resulted in heavy matinee trade and much favorable comment from feminine patrons," thereby proving Goldwyn, at least in this instance, was correct in his earlier conjectures.[141] Moss would also inundate the city with multiple tie-ins and business collaborations including "a gown outfitting company, a chain store firm, Lux soap" and an unspecified newspaper.[142] The results proved, however, to be futile with lackluster reviews, and mediocre box-office numbers greeting the film.

In his files, Goldwyn kept a number of clippings from the New York dailies, which show a unanimous response to the film: the production was brilliant but faltering under the weight of an unwieldy script. As *The Sun* notes, "it has several items to recommend it, namely, settings by Willy Pogany, gowns by the famed Chanel of Paris, and new "it" boy from the stage, Melvyn Douglas, but it remains a mild and rather cumbersomely told little love story."[143] Chanel would receive favorable press throughout

---

[140] The Washington Post, 16 Jan 1932, 7.

[141] "Moss and Proctor Putting Heavy Campaigns On Coast," *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 Apr 1932, 54.

[142] "Moss and Proctor," 54.

[143] "*The Sun*," *The Hollywood Reporter Presents You with The Critical Reviews on Tonight or Never as Appeared in the New York Dailies*, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

Tonight or Never's run, becoming one of the main attractions that reporters could recommend to audiences. Yet, even when reviews pointed out the gowns, the focus still remained on Swanson. Much like *Palmy Days* was a "Cantor" film, in fact, *Tonight or Never* remained throughout its distribution a "Swanson" film. Thus, Chanel cannot be considered a "star attraction," for either *Palmy Days* or *Tonight or Never* despite the amount of time and money spent on her visit; rather, she was a charming coda which reviewers and exhibitors could utilize should star power not be enough to sell the films. For example, *Motion Picture Herald* noted that "Gloria never performed to better advantage, never looked better, or wore more gorgeous clothes."[144] *Variety*'s "The Woman's Angle," would strike a similar note, which places the actress above fashion and does not relegate her to the position of model. Thus, reviews pointed to Swanson's beauty, which the gowns added to, and invited the spectator to gaze at her not at Chanel's designs.

The emphasis on Swanson's ability to "wear" the clothes goes against early promotion of the film, which focused on the gowns themselves. In *Variety*'s "The Woman's Angle," review, for instance, they note that "when Gloria Swanson puts on a show made up of clothes...it provides the ladies a pleasant place to spend their afternoons."[145] Here, it is not Chanel who puts on the "show" but Swanson, thereby negating the designer in favor of the star's ability to attract the gaze. In other words, the clothes play a part in the film but it is Swanson who truly captures the imagination. Of course, as the *Variety* review later notes, the actress did not guarantee box office returns,

---

[144] *Motion Picture Herald*, 14 Nov 1931, 40

[145] "The Woman's Angle," *Variety*, 22 Dec 1931, 15.

therefore "the picture will need selling, especially when it is considered that this production ran into super money."[146] Their solution for exhibitors is to utilize Chanel's gowns in promotional material. Thus, though Swanson remained the star of the film (inter and extra-textually), nevertheless trade journals pointed directly to Chanel's place in reassuring box-office numbers should Swanson not be enough to make returns on an expensive production.

The film's box office in major cities was comparable to *Palmy Days,* though it was rarely held-over for more than two weeks (if at all). *Tonight or Never* opened on January 2, 1932 at the Rialto in New York, pulling in $30,900 in its first week.[147] The film would continue to do well for the next three weeks in New York, whose numbers would be echoed by theaters in Chicago and San Francisco. Elsewhere, the film had a standard run and was rarely held over: in Philadelphia and Albany, the film only played for six days before closing, a trend which wasn't limited to just those cities.[148] Most important, despite some strong receipts, the film was never the champion in comparison with other films being distributed at the time. For example, in Kansas City the film played in the city's largest theater, the Midland (4,000 seats), making only $14,000; the previous week's entertainment, *Hell Divers* (MGM 1932) made $30,400.[149] Unable to fill the largest theaters, which Goldwyn booked for the film, *Tonight or Never* found itself

---

[146] Ibid, 15.

[147] *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 Jan 1932, 42.

[148] *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 Feb 1932, 48; *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 Feb 1932, 39.

[149] *Motion Picture Herald*, 6 Feb 1932, 66.

quickly taken off the market at the end of February, 1932 when it was replaced by Chanel's final project: *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*.

The Greeks Had a Word for Them

"It's the three of us, against the men," states one of the characters toward the end of *Greeks*, a notion which not only encapsulates the plotline of the movie but its marketing campaign. This film, in fact, heavily featured its female actresses, and was made specifically for a female audience as the tag-line shows: "Here's to Our Men! Long May They Give!"[150] Originally a Zoe Akins play, the film follows gold-diggers, Polaire (Madge Evans), Schatzi (Joan Blondell) and Jean (Ina Claire), as they try to find rich men to support them. In the end, they decide to head to Paris, giving up marriage in order to have fun together. The rather thin plot was held together by innuendo, catty dialogue and plenty of shots featuring Chanel's designs. In fact, fashion is a key component of the film: the women bond over gowns and jewelry, and Goldwyn heavily used the clothing within its marketing campaign. This emphasis on the women's glamorous lifestyles cannot solely be attributed to Chanel's work in the film. As Lea Jacobs explains in *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942*, golddiggers and other fallen women were often metaphorically tied to modernity, its aesthetic movements and consumption culture. In fact, she notes that the press kit for *Greeks* "advised exhibitors to decorate their lobbies in a "modernistic" black and silver color scheme," in keeping with the film's production design.[151] Clothes also played an important role in these types of

---

[150] Variety, 2 Feb 1932, 20.

[151] Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942* (Berkeley: U of CA P, 1995), 55.

films because they signified the glamour and class heroines hoped to attain. Thus, Chanel's use in *Greeks* can also be understood in terms of genre conventions. However, the extra-textual discourse surrounding Chanel during promotion for the film goes beyond just genre convention and must be understood in terms of the designer's public persona. Therefore, though the film was not a runaway success, it remains an important piece in understanding Chanel's time in Hollywood; for, *Greeks* most fully articulates the notion that female spectators responded to film fashion in terms of promotion**.**

Unlike *Palmy Days* and *Tonight or Never*, Chanel was finally clothing more than one actress and, as the women are the central focus of the film, her designs were featured in every scene. It didn't hurt that she was no longer contending with star images and could, for the first and only time, be considered the person with the largest drawing power. This fact did not escape Goldwyn's notice and her name eventually played an important role in ad campaigns.

The film's production ended in November of 1932 with a cost estimated at $542, 163.02, close to the budget given for *Tonight or Never*.[152] Individually, however, each actress' wardrobe budget was not as much as Swanson's, though Claire's come close: her clothing totaled $3,050 compared to Blondell's $1,510 and Evans' $1,535.[153] The male actors, on the other hand, provided their own clothes, furthering the idea that the film wasn't just about women, it was also about showing them off in Chanel's expensive

---

[152] Codd to Mr. Lehr, 11 Nov 1931.

[153] "Wardrobe Budget: *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*," 22 Aug 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

designs.[154] As stated before, Claire, Blondell and Evans's characters often speak directly of the clothes they wear, making fashion a central part of the women's friendship. For example, a running gag throughout the film involves what articles of clothing the women have borrowed from one another. Director Lowell Sherman further emphasized the gowns by frequently shooting the women so that every angle of the gowns was featured. Often, the women walk directly toward the camera as though in a fashion show, thereby giving the audience plenty of time to gaze upon the clothes:

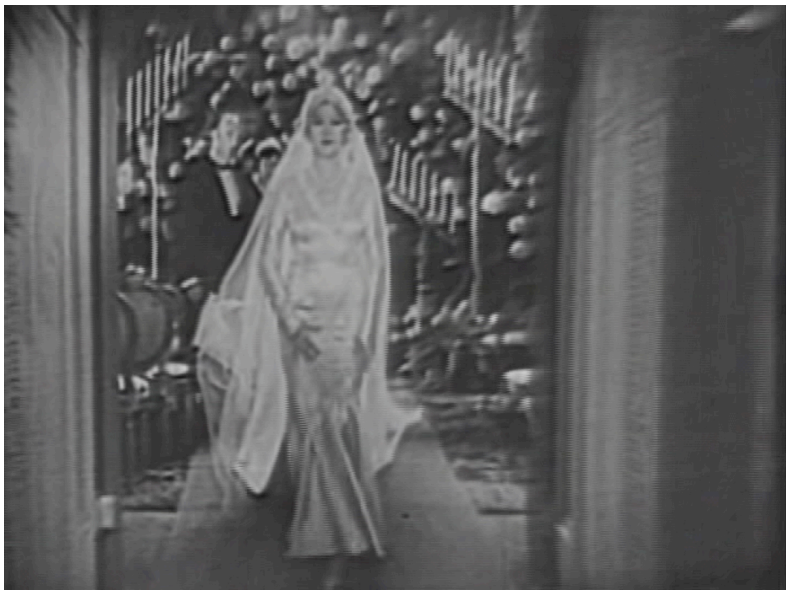

Fig. 8 Ina Claire shows off Chanel's Wedding gown in *Greeks*.

The above screencap is taken from the scene in which Blondell and Evans arrive to stop Claire's wedding. During the scene, they open a door and find Claire dressed in her wedding gown, framed by the doorway so that she becomes the frame's central focus. As they watch, she walks directly toward them and the camera, eventually meeting their gaze. In this instance, Blondell and Evans' gazes mimic the spectator's, offering Claire's

---

[154] Ibid, 22 Aug 1931.

bridal splendor for their consumption. Interestingly, Claire's walk not only mimics the style of a fashion show but alludes to how wedding dresses traditionally end couture shows. Thus, Claire's bridal gown signifies that the entire film (itself a fashion show of sorts) is at an end. Just after this sequence, she decides not to get married and runs off with her girlfriends to Paris.

Shots like figure eight frequently come up within the film but they would also figure heavily in the film's promotion. In fact, the film's marketing turned the women into models of Chanel's designs; thus, any focus on Claire, Evans or Blondell was often framed by what they were wearing. Thus, with *Greeks*' promotion, Chanel became a star attraction because this time her gowns were not overshadowed by the actresses star images, as was the case with Swanson. The Exhibitors Campaign book for *Greeks,* in fact, would highlight how fashion could be used: fashion shows were encouraged, as were window displays (which theater owners could purchase from United Artists), and four of the gowns were available for department stores to sell.[155] As the campaign book promised, "the exhibitor working together with the merchandise manager of the store, can derive a mutually advantageous publicity campaign with an entire window devoted to reproductions of gowns by Chanel."[156] Thus, United Artists was utilizing a campaign that would eventually become successful for other studios; for, the availability of Chanel reproductions mimics the Modern Merchandising Bureau's off-the-rack versions of Adrian costumes detailed in chapter one. However, no reports surfaced to indicated whether Chanel's copies were successful or not. This tie-in was eventually featured in a

---

[155] *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*, United Artists Exhibitors Campaign Book, 2, 5, 9.

[156] ibid, 5.

Motion Picture Herald article, which focused on the campaign's success in Lexington, Kentucky but it is not clear whether this type of promotion was widespread.[157]

The fashion angle was not only featured within tie-ins but would also be an important piece in trade journal and newspaper reports on the film. Once again, Goldwyn allowed *Photoplay* to feature the designs but, interestingly, the *Greeks* photographs appeared in November of 1931 before the magazine's *Tonight or Never* spread (which was published in January of 1932). The article was a four page spread devoted to Chanel and declares: "Here, Girls, Are Screen Clothes That Will Start Something!" and "First You See These Goldwyn-Chanel Styles Here--*then* See Them *on the* Screen."[158] By appearing before Swanson's spread, these photographs represent how important fashion would be in *Greeks*. The copy also indicates that Chanel's gowns will cause a stir but, importantly, the female reader should not just stop with *Photoplay*, they should also see the gowns "*on the* Screen." Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the focus remains almost entirely on Goldwyn and Chanel's collaboration, not on any of the actresses. Another spread would run in January of 1932, this time in *Motion Picture Magazine* but the article was only one-page and seems to be a reiteration of Seymour's earlier piece. Therefore, it can be seen as Goldwyn's attempt to rekindle interest in the gowns as the film entered distribution.[159]

By February of 1932, the *Greeks* promotional campaign was in full swing and Chanel's name would continue to be featured in advertising throughout the Spring:

---

[157] "Showman Ward Promoted Attractive Window," *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 May 1932, 52.

[158] *Photoplay*, Nov 1931, 38-41.

[159] "Here's How Chanel of Paris Dresses Ina and Joan," *Motion Picture Magazine*, Jan 1932, 56.

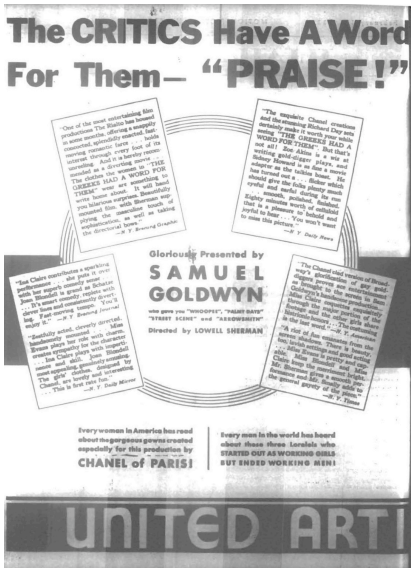

Fig. 9 *Greeks* Ad, *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 Feb 1932, 40-1.

Figure nine represents one page of a two-page ad from *Motion Picture Herald* which features newspaper reviews around Goldwyn's name. Interestingly, two of the reviews begin by praising Chanel, and recommending the film based on the glorious creations she designed.[160] Below Goldwyn's name, the ad also states: "every woman in America has read about the gorgeous gowns created especially for this production by Chanel of Paris!"[161] Thus, exhibitors should show the film because it had a built in audience: the women who've followed Chanel's visit in the press. Newspaper ads would echo the claim, emphasizing Chanel's importance within the film as well as reiterating the original story of her Los Angeles visit. *The Atlanta Constitution* would put a particular spin on the copy declaring "Women rave over the Chanel Gowns!"[162] In this instance, Goldwyn and

---

[160] *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 Feb 1932, 40-1.

[161] *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 Feb 1932, 40-1.

[162] *The Atlanta Constitution*, 20 Mar 1932, 8K; Chanel would actually play a large part in Atlanta's advertising campaign, even appearing in quarter-page ads.

Chanel's collaboration seems to gain success with *Greeks*, as fashion was directly linked to female spectators and their appreciation for the designs.

Reviewers, as shown in figure nine, praised Chanel's work on the film, though some would focus on the gowns as part of Goldwyn's "high quality" productions.[163] Even *The Los Angeles Times* found things to praise (and mildly criticize) in Chanel's designs calling the film a "glamourous production, not the least item of which are the widely publicized costumes of Gabrielle Chanel, all of them extreme and some of them becoming to their wearers."[164] Thus, while some critics could find no fault with Chanel, Los Angeles reports still showed a grudge due to her quick departure. In this review, they allow "some" of her designs to be becoming but they were unwilling to concede any more positive press for Chanel. Other papers did not take a similar stance and instead recommended the movie based on her gowns. However, this emphasis was not actually a mark in the film's favor as mise-en-scene was the only thing critics found praise-worthy. As Mae Tinee, the critic for the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, wrote: "the picture is well staged, acted, and directed, which is all that can be said in its favor...personally I wouldn't go around the corner to see [it]."[165] The negative reviews focus mainly on the script and unfortunately the unfavorable press outweighed the positive. Thus, though Chanel was reviewed favorably, her designs were lost within a film that could not please critics.

---

[163] Florabel Muir, *The Motion Picture Herald*, 28 Nov 1931, 43-4.

[164] Norbert Lusk, "Previous Week's Outstanding Pictures Held Over in New York Playhouses," *The Los Angeles Times*,14 Feb 1932, B10.

[165] Mae Tinee, "Vulgar Lines Mark Film of Gold Diggers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 Mar. 1932, 14.

The film opened at the Rialto on February 20, 1932 and closed after its second week, grossing just $37,200 during that time, or, roughly the first week intake for *Palmy Days*.[166] New York, Baltimore and Los Angles would actually be the only major cities who would hold over the film. In most instances, it would play for six days before closing and, in some instances, it wouldn't even last that long. For example, in Charlotte it played at the Carolina Theater for only three days, making $7,000 in that time.[167] By mid-April, *Greeks* finished its first-run, having failed to find an audience in both rural and urban markets. *Greeks*'s disappointing box-office run reveals that the film could not overcome negative reviews or its flawed script. As the last film made during Goldwyn and Chanel's collaboration, it represented an ultimate failure; for, neither Goldwyn's heavy campaigning nor Chanel's name guaranteed successful box-office.

However, taken as a whole, the promotion and reception for *Palmy Days*, *Tonight or Never* and *Greeks* show that Chanel's designs cannot be considered a failure. Instead, her designs proved to be popular in reviews, leaving the films themselves to blame for poor box-office. Goldwyn's own promotional strategies reveal the curious fact that his star designer, brought over to specifically appeal to women, was only truly utilized in the *Greeks* campaigns. With the first two releases, her name was barely mentioned and he relied heavily on the star power of both Cantor and Swanson to sell the films. Therefore, the collaboration seems to oscillate between success and failure: on the one hand, it only lasted for three films, none of which was a runaway box-office success, but on the other, Chanel's designs were and are a triumph of her design aesthetic. In fact, the function of

---

[166] *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 feb 1932, 46; *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 Feb 1932, 48.

[167] *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 Feb 1932, 44.

fashion within these films revealed not only her talents as a couturier but as a costumer; for, she was able to create fashionable, of-the-moment gowns without overtaking either star or script. Here, Chanel's method anticipates the design aesthetics which would mark successful collaborations between other couturiers and Hollywood. Thus, Chanel's time in Hollywood cannot be considered a failure for the designer; rather, it represents a moment in costuming history in which a couturier's name was not enough to ensure a film's success.

Conclusion

As *Greeks*'s first run ended, MGM released *Letty Lynton*, the film which would signify the perfect melding of designer-costume-star. As Sarah Berry notes, the film "solidified the transformation of Joan Crawford's image from that of a youthful party girl to an elegant 'clotheshorse.'"[168] Therefore, Adrian's designs did for Crawford what Chanel's failed to do with Swanson: take her from silent screen actress to sound film star. *Letty Lynton* also exemplified the power Hollywood now held over female consumers, for one dress caught the public's attention and became a fashion sensation. The dress, a ruffled white gown, became known simply as "The Letty Lynton Dress" and introduced the broad-shouldered look which would become synonymous with Crawford. The public clamored for copies of the gown and *Fortune* estimated that 500,000 copies were sold in 1932.[169] Yet, the gown had far-reaching effects not just in terms of Crawford's star image but for film costuming itself, for the film "was named by Edith Head...as the single most important fashion influence in film history."[170] Head herself would find enormous success as Hollywood's most celebrated and honored costume designer and the distinction of *Letty Lynton* shows the importance of the film in terms of costuming history. In fact, the success of the "Letty Lynton Dress" compared to the failure of Chanel and Goldwyn's collaboration shows that *The Los Angeles Times* had been correct: by 1932, American female consumers viewed Hollywood as the fashion center of the world.

---

[168] Berry, 88.

[169] Ibid, 88.

[170] Esquevin, 17.

Thus, by the end of 1932, Chanel's time in Hollywood had become a distant memory, as studio heads turned to in-house designers to meet the demands of female spectators. *Letty Lynton*, therefore, paved the way for designers like Head and for the ongoing relation between star-images and clothing. The film's success may also explain why so much film costume research often comes to revolve around the star; for, as the literal embodiment of the design, the star's image melds with clothing to create the overall star text. Thus, the designer is often forgotten because it is the star who benefits from the clothes. However, such a theory does not take into account the prominence of the designers in the public eye. Hollywood costume designers gained so much fame in the 30s that in 1938, Head, Orry-Kelly, Walter Plunkett, Travis Banton and Howard Greer "joined 'Carolyn Modes'...in order to design retail fashions."[171] Adrian would also enter into the retail business, opening his own couture and ready-to-wear business, the House of Adrian, in 1941.[172] By the end of the 1940s, costume designers had become the new couturiers--not only setting trends but selling them to the public. Studio heads applauded these efforts as "good publicity because it linked Hollywood style to the growing support for American ready-to-wear and wholesale designers."[173] The tie-in campaigns and Cinema Shop thus came full circle, with costumers appealing directly to the "screen shopper," this time from actual shop windows.

Meanwhile, European fashion houses were reeling under German occupation which effectively took Paris off high-fashion's pedestal, at least until Dior's "New Look"

---

[171] Berry, 21.

[172] Ibid, 109.

[173] Ibid, 21.

after the war. In 1938, following Germany's take over of Czechoslovakia, Chanel shut down her couture house, fired all employees and only kept her boutique running.[174] She reopened on February 5, 1954, to resounding disappointment: the simple designs that had gained her fame were now considered passe. Yet, despite such a response to her comeback, within a year she had gained the attention of the newest generation of consumers and once again became fashion's queen--a title she held for the next seventeen years. Her comeback year also signified another shift, for it was in 1954 that Givenchy first designed for Audrey Hepburn and effectively brought high fashion back to film. Whatever power the Hollywood costume designer held over female consumers in the 30s and 40s was beginning to wane in the 1950s. Thus, Paris regained the title of fashion center of the world and, once more, Hollywood came calling.[175]

However, it must be noted that Chanel continued designing for films after completing her work on *Greeks*. In fact, she went on to design for two 1930s French classics: Jean Renoir's *La Regle du Jeu* (DPF 1939) and Marcel Carne's *Le Quai des Brumes* (Les Films Osso, 1938). Her work on both films is a subject for another study but does show that Chanel was still willing to design for film even after her Hollywood visit was labeled a failure. Her success on both films also exemplifies how Chanel's designs were a perfect marriage of couture and costume; for, she was simultaneously able to utilize her elegant design aesthetic while never overshadowing the actress. Therefore, despite her unsuccessful Hollywood year, Chanel's costumes prove that she was well

---

[174] *Chanel: Her Life*, 304-5.

[175] An example of this would be *Funny Face* (Paramount 1957) in which Givenchy not only functioned as Audrey Hepburn's costumer but also as the inspiration for the character, Paul Duval (a Parisian couturier as played by Robert Flemyng).

aware of the costume design paradigm and utilized it when designing for film. Thus, the critical praise she received on *Tonight or Never* and *The Greeks Had a Word for Them* should be the marker by which we judge Chanel's time in Hollywood (which can also be seen as a precursor to her later work in French Cinema). She was, in many ways, a couturier who understood how clothing functioned on-screen and whose work looked ahead to future couturiers success.

Chanel's collaboration with Goldwyn is another indicator that the visit wasn't the complete catastrophe the newspaper's chronicled. In fact, their mutually beneficial business relationship, and courteous correspondence, paint a much different picture than has heretofore been written and proves that no great split occurred between the two. Though she never worked with Goldwyn again, their relationship continued in a cordial, if rather distant, way. In fact, a telegram from Chanel to Goldwyn in 1967 proves they continued writing long after their collaboration ended. It reads: "Many thanks to Frances and yourself for charming cable hope to see you soon in America."[176] No record of Goldwyn's original telegram was in his files but Chanel's response shows that the two remained on friendly terms.

Therefore, Goldwyn and Chanel's business partnership can no longer be seen as ending on an unpleasant note. Chanel may have disliked the Hollywood industry but Goldwyn existed outside her criticism. While she never again worked with the American film industry, we cannot label her visit as unsuccessful. The amount of promotion given to her work proves that Goldwyn and United Artists believed Chanel could appeal to the

---

[176] Chanel to Goldwyn, 30 Aug 1967, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

female spectator, and special promotions by theater owners confirm this. Reception of the films reveals that Chanel's designs were often considered among the best in Hollywood, and in the case of *Greeks* the only reason to see the film. Unfortunately, Chanel's name may have been enough to pique audience interest but wasn't enough to generate large box-office returns. Instead, the films failed either on the level of promotion (for *Palmy Days* was a success but underutilized Chanel's name) or on the level of script, as was the case with both *Tonight or Never* and *Greeks*.

1932 also represents a shift from Paris to Hollywood in terms of capturing the female spectator's gaze. Thus, Adrian's designs became popular while Chanel's fell by the wayside. Thus, Hollywood overtook the fashion industry so that costume designers and not couturiers became the new arbiters of fashion. In this way, blame cannot be placed on either Chanel or Goldwyn; rather, the collaboration failed because of timing. Thus, Chanel's poor reception by the American public in 1932 proved that Hollywood costume designers now exerted greater influence over the female consumer than European couturiers. Yet, the popularity of couture in Hollywood owes a debt to Chanel's designs, which proved that the marriage of high fashion and film could produce elegant and trendy results, without overpowering narrative. Thus, though considered a minor point within the history of film costume, Chanel's time in Hollywood must be remembered in order to understand the tenuous relationship between fashion, film and the female spectator which has influenced costume designers and couturiers to this day.

Bibliography

Allen, Jeanne Thomas. "*Fig Leaves* in Hollywood: Female Representation and Consumer Culture." *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*. Ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog. New York: Routledge, 1990. 122-33.

Atlanta Constitution 2 Oct. 1931: 3.

---. 20 Mar. 1932: 8K.

"America Tempted By the Paris Sport Styles." *The New York Times* 23 Apr. 1916: X2.

Babcock, Muriel. "Chanel Visit Echoes Heard." *The Los Angeles Times* 24 Aug. 1931, A7.

"Bang Goes Another Million!" *Motion Picture Herald* 19 Sept 1931: 7.

Barthes, Roland. *The Language of Fashion*. New York: Berg, 2005.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Film Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 2004.

Berry, Sarah. *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood*. Minneapolis: U of MN P, 2000.

Birkhead, May. "Chanel Entertains at Brilliant Fete." *The New New York Times* 5 July 1931: 24.

---, "Couturier Rivalry is Intense in Paris." *The New York Times*. 12 Feb 1928: 40.

Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Styles and Mode of Production to 1960*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.

Boulter, Winifred. Telegram to Sam Goldwyn. 6 Jan. 1933. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

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

"Cantor Discourses on Location of Prosperity." *The Los Angeles Times* 4 Oct. 1931: B18.

Chanel, Gabrielle. Telegram to Sam Goldwyn. 27 June 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, 30 Nov 1937. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, 30 Aug. 1967. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, Letter to Sam Goldwyn. 30 Nov 1937. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

"Chanel Visits America: Famous Designer, Here for First Time, Says Fashion Is Not for Any One Group." *The New York Times* 8 May 1931: 121.

Charles-Roux, Edmonde. *Chanel and Her World: Friends, Fashion and Fame*. New York: Vendome, 2005.

---, *Chanel: Her Life, Her World--And the Woman Behind the Legend She Herself Created*. New York: Knopf, 1975.

Codd. Interoffice Communication to Abe Lehr. 11 Nov. 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

"Corsets A Real Blessing." *The New York Times* 8 Feb. 1910: 2.

Dixon, Jane. "Women Behind the News." *The Los Angeles Times* 1 Feb. 1931: A4.

Doane, Mary Ann. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*. Bloomington: IN UP, 1987.

Eckert, Charles. "The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window," *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*. Ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog. New York: Routledge, 1990. 100-21.

Enstad, Nan. *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.

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

"Expect A Dress Revolution." *The New York Times* 14 July 1912: C4.

"Faking the Dame Angle: Man-Made Pics Irk the Ladies." *Variety* 15 Sept. 1931: 3.

Friedberg, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: U of CA P, 1993.

Farnol, Lynn. Telegram to Samuel Goldwyn. 4 Mar. 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, 5 Mar. 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, second telegram, 5 Mar. 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, 26 Mar. 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, second telegram, 26 Mar. 1931, Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, 13 July 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, Interoffice Communication to Abraham Lehr. 22 May 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

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

Gamber, Wendy. *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*. Chicago: U of IL, 1997.

Goldwyn, Samuel. Telegram to Lynn Farnol. 5 Mar 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, Telegram to Gabrielle Chanel. 8 Apr. 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

---, 25 June 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

The Greeks Had a Word for Them. United Artists Exhibitors Campaign Book. 1932.

Gutner, Howard. *Gowns by Adrian: The MGM Years 1928-41*. New York: Harry N Abrams, Inc. 2001.

Hansen, Miriam. "Adventures of Goldilocks: Spectatorship, Consumerism and Public Life." *Camera Obscura* 22 (1990): 51-72.

"Here, Girls, Are Screen Clothes That Will Start Something!" *Photoplay* Nov. 1931: 38-41.

"Here's How Chanel of Paris Dresses Ina and Joan." *Motion Picture Magazine* Jan. 1932: 56.

Hollingshead, G. *Tonight or Never* Wardrobe Plot. 2 Sept. 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

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

"How to Adapt Screen Modes." *Photoplay* July 1931: 32-3.

Jacobs, Lea. *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942*. Berkeley: U of CA P, 1995.

Jenkins, Henry. "Shall We Make It for New York or for Distribution?: Eddie Cantor, *Whoopee*, and Regional Resistance to the Talkies." *What Made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992. 153-84.

Karbo, Karen. *The Gospel According to Coco Chanel: Life Lessons from the World's Most Elegant Woman*. Charleston, SC: Skirt!, 2009.

Keavy, Hubbard. "Screen Life in Hollywood." *The Washington Post* 19 Apr 1931: A5.

Kracauer, Siegfried. "Analysis of a City Map." *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*. Ed. Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

---, "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies." *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*. Ed. Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

Lusk, Norbert. "'Last Parade' Scores Heavily." *The Los Angeles Times* 8 Mar. 1931: B11.

---, "Previous Week's Outstanding Pictures Held Over in New York Playhouses." *The Los Angeles Times* 14 Feb. 1932: B10.

"Many Sales Angles Used in London to Sell Palmy Days." *Motion Picture Herald* 30 Jan. 1932: 60.

May, Lary. *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry*. New York: Oxford UP, 1980.

McDonald, Tamar Jeffers. *Hollywood Catwalk: Costume and Transformation in American Film*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Merrick, Mollie. "Hollywood's Best Dressed Girl in Two Fashion Plays." *Chicago Daily News*. Henry Romeike New York: Original Press Clipping Bureau. 13 Dec 1932.

"Mlle. Chanel Here, Hollywood Bound." *The New York Times* 5 Mar. 1931: 26.

"Mme. Chanel to Aid Films." *The New York Times* 20 Jan 1931: 7.

"Moss and Proctor Putting Heavy Campaigns on Coast." *Motion Picture Herald* 2 Apr 1932: 54.

Motion Picture Herald. A Consolidation of Exhibitors Herald World and Motion Picture News. New York: Quigley Pub. Co. 1931-72.

Motion Picture Magazine Nov. 1931: 11.

Muir, Florabel. *The Motion Picture Herald* 28 Nov. 1931: 43-4.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*. Ed. Amelia Jones. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Nye, Myra. "Society of Cinemaland." *The Los Angeles Times* 22 Mar. 1931: 24.

Palmy Days. United Artists Exhibitors Campaign Book, 1931.

Peirce, Charles. *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. New York: Dover, 1955.

Pettey, Tom. “Chanel Will Tell Hollywood How to Dress: And Hollywood Will Tell the World.” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 15 Mar 1931: G10.

Picardie, Justine. *Coco Chanel: The Legend and the Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010.

“Projection Jottings: Mme. Chanel to Design Fashions for Films--Bound for Hollywood.” *The New York Times* 25 Jan 1931: X5.

“The Screen: A Frolic, With Mr. Cantor.” *The New York Times* 24 Sept. 1931: 29.

“Sees Woman Voter As An Insult to God.” *The New York Times* 18 Oct. 1915: 4.

Staiger, Janet. “ Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising, *Cinema Journal* 29.3 (Spring 1990). 3-31.

The Sun. *The Hollywood Reporter Presents You with The Critical Reviews on Tonight or Never as Appeared in the New York Dailies.* Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

Swanson, Gloria. *Swanson on Swanson*. New York: Random House, 1980.

“The Talk of a Town,” *Motion Picture Magazine* June 1931: 28.

Tinee, Mae. “Helen Hayes’ Picture Heads List of Month’s Best Movies.” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 8 Nov. 1931: F1.

---, “Vulgar Lines Mark Film of Gold Diggers.” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 8 Mar. 1932: 14.

“Tonight or Never.” *The New York Times* 13 Dec 1931: X4.

Tonight or Never Estimated Budget. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

Variety. New York: Variety Pub. Co., 1905-present.

Veblen, Thorstein. *Theory of the Leisure Class*. London: Macmillan, 1912.

"Wardrobe Budget: *The Greeks Had a Word for Them*. 22 Aug 1931. Samuel Goldwyn Papers. Margaret Herrick Lib., Los Angeles.

The Washington Post 16 Jan. 1932: 7.

Whitaker, Alma. "Sugar and Spice." *The Los Angeles Times* 29 Mar. 1931: 21.

---, *The Los Angles Times* 26 July 1931: B20.

"The Woman's Angle." *Variety* 29 Sept 1931: 14.

---, 22 Dec. 1931, 15.

"World's Style Center Shifts from Europe to Los Angeles." *The Los Angeles Times* 9 Mar. 1931: 8.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003.

---,"All the Rage." *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*. Ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog. New York: Routledge, 1990. 28-38.

Other Works Cited

Apollon musagete. By Andre Bauschant. Comp. Igor Stravinsky. Chor. George Balanchine. Paris, 1928.

Confessions of a Shopaholic. Dir. P.J. Hogan. Perf. Isla Fisher and Hugh Dancy. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2009.

The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight. Dir. Enoch J. Rector. Pef. James J. Corbett and Bob Fitzsimmons. Veriscope, 1897.

Date Movie. Dir. Aaron Seltzer. Perf. Alyson Hannigan, Adam Campbell and Eddie Griffin. 20th-Century Fox, 2006.

Devil Wears Prada. Dir. David Frankel. Perf. Anne Hathaway and Meryl Streep. 20th-Century Fox, 2006.

Fig Leaves. Dir. Howard Hawks. Perf. George O'Brien and Olive Borden.Fox, 1926.

Flers, Robert de. "Ko Ko Ri Ko." 1897.

Funny Face. Dir. Stanley Donen. Perf. Audrey Hepburn, Fred Astaire and Kay Thompson. Paramount, 1957.

The Greeks Had a Word for Them. Dir. Lowell Sherman. Perf. Joan Blondell, Madge Evans and Ina Claire. United Artists, 1932.

Hell Divers. Writ. Frank Wead and Harvey Gates. Perf. Clark Gable, Wallace Beery and Conrad Nagel. MGM, 1931

It Pays to Advertise. Dir. Frank Tuttle. Perf. Normon Foster and Carole Lombard. Paramount, 1931.

Letty Lynton. Dir. Clarence Brown. Perf. Joan Crawford and Robert Montgomery. MGM, 1932

Palmy Days. Dir. A. Edward Sutherland. Perf. Eddie Cantor, Charlotte Greenwood and Barbara Weeks. United Artists, 1931.

Project Runway. Creator Eli Holzman. Perf. Heidi Klum and Tim Gunn. Lifetime, 2006. DVD.

Le Quai Des Brumes. Dir. Marcel Carne. Perf. Jean Gabin, Michel Simon and Michele Morgan. Les Films Osso, 1938.

La Regele du Jeu. Dir. Jean Renoir. Perf. Marcel Dalio, Nora Gregor and Paulette Dubost. DPF, 1939.

Sex and the City. Creator Darren Star. Perf. Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Kristin Davis and Cynthia Nixon. HBO, 1998. DVD.

---, Dir. Michael Patrick King. Perf. Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Kristin Davis and Cynthia Nixon. New Line Cinema, 2008.

Le Train Bleu. By Henri Laurens. Dir. Jean Cocteau. Chor. Darius Milhaud. Paris, 1924.

Tonight or Never. Dir. Mervyn LeRoy. Perf. Gloria Swanson and Melvyn Douglas. United Artists, 1932.

The Unholy Garden. Dir. George Fitzmaurice. Perf. Ronald Colman, Fay Wray and Estelle Taylor. United Artists, 1931

Whoopee. Dir. Thornton Freeland. Perf. Eddie Cantor, Ethel Shutta and Paul Gregory. United Artists, 1930.

The Women. Dir. George Cukor. Perf. Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford and Rosalind Russell. MGM, 1939.