

chief agent of change. Instead it stresses its time-based, natural and inevitable maturation theme; this is not Cinderella but, as Vincent Canby further notes in the *Motion Picture Herald* review, ‘a variation on the ugly-duckling-into-beautiful-swan theme’ (2045).

The film further reinforces the ease by which Calam transitions from a tomboy to a woman by allowing her to remain in masculine (albeit immaculate) attire. But this decision also leaves open the loophole of androgyny that the narrative’s drive towards appropriate female behaviour and goals might have hoped to secure.

Here we can again see in action Jane Gaines’ argument from *Fabrications*, that the dominant and costume narratives in films can be in conflict. The dominant narrative trajectory takes the grubby female yahoo and attempts to tame her, educating her to approved 1950s standards of female conduct, which necessitates her leaving behind the unfitting masculine occupation and the clothes that go with it. The costume narrative, by contrast, and however ambivalently, permits her to maintain a level of androgyny that seems out of step with contemporaneous assumptions about polite female manners and looks. By situating the emotional climax of the film, not in the hastily mounted wedding scene (occupying just two minutes of the film’s duration), but in the ‘Secret Love’ number, both longer and more emotionally rich than the wedding, the costume narrative showcases Calam’s apogee while she is still in trousers.

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

Synopsis

Andrea ‘Andy’ Sachs (Anne Hathaway), a recent college graduate hoping to become a journalist, is interviewed for a job on *Runway* magazine, even though she knows and cares nothing about fashion. The Editor In Chief, Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep), of whom everyone in the office is terrified, ignores the reservations her First Assistant Emily (Emily Blunt) has about Andy and hires her as Second Assistant. Although she is scornful of the whole concept of fashion, when Andy is told by Emily that just one

year working for Miranda guarantees any job in journalism, she determines to hold out.

Despite Miranda's impossible personality, Andy commits herself to the job, but does not seem to gain any ground. Her boyfriend, friends and family all tell her to quit since she is so unhappy, but she refuses. Nigel (Stanley Tucci), *Runway's* art director tells her that although she works hard, her superior attitude to fashion and those who love it holds her back. Andy realises this is true and begs Nigel to help her show she is committed by making her look like a *Runway* girl. Newly groomed, fashionably outfitted and accessorised, Andy begins to make a success of the job, but her relationship with her boyfriend suffers, and they split up.

The highlight of the First Assistant's year is to be taken to Paris for Fashion Week. Emily gets terrible flu but insists on going, until Andy is offered the trip by Miranda – if *she* tells Emily the bad news. Andy complies when, running errands for Miranda, Emily is hit by a car and hospitalised. Emily, on crutches, is left behind as Miranda, Andy and Nigel fly off to France.

Returning to her suite one evening Andy finds Miranda tearful, and the woman reveals a rare vulnerability as she admits her husband is divorcing her. Andy offers her sympathy but Miranda's *froideur* takes over again. Still feeling bad for her boss, Andy is getting ready for a date with Christian Thompson (Simon Baker), a young writer, when Nigel comes to tell her *his* big news: he will soon be leaving, becoming President of a new company for a global brand, with Miranda's blessing.

After dinner, Andy and Christian end up in bed together. The next morning Andy discovers a mocked-up *Runway* cover – the woman for whom Christian is working, Jacqueline Follet, is planning to oust Miranda and take over the magazine. Andy rushes to warn her but Miranda has already dealt with the plot – by giving Jacqueline Nigel's new job. Andy expresses her surprise at Miranda's ruthlessness, sacrificing Nigel's dreams, but her boss calmly says Andy is capable of equally selfish behaviour: didn't she replace Emily on the Paris trip? Andy is horrified and realises how far she has come from her original goals and standards. She leaves Miranda and returns home to America.

Andy attends another job interview, this time for a writing job on a New York paper. The Editor asks why she was at *Runway*, and Andy

truthfully replies the experience taught her a lot. In any case, the Editor says, she must have impressed Miranda, who has provided a glowing reference. Happily hired, Andy is walking back through Manhattan when she sees Miranda getting into her limousine. Though she offers a hesitant wave, Miranda seems to ignore her; alone inside the car, however, the demon boss reveals a small smile.

Contexts

If *The Bride Wore Red* and *Calamity Jane* were easy to see as products, of and tapping into, their specific contemporary contexts, it is more difficult to place *The Devil Wears Prada* in a similar historical and societal milieu, since the film is only four years old at the time of writing. What we lose by not having the detachment of distance, however, we gain in being able to pinpoint specific influences which might, with time, otherwise become lost. In other words, *The Devil Wears Prada* can still be advanced as a piece of mid-noughties zeitgeist before the passage of time reveals the particular socio-cultural resonances this specific time has.

Examination of the film's references leads in several different directions: while the Crawford vehicle clearly spoke to and of her persona and the Depression, and Day's film can be read in terms of her star image and specific 1950s notions of appropriate female behaviour and appearance, it is not so easy to isolate the most dominant influence on *The Devil Wears Prada*. As with the two earlier texts, a large amount of the context for the film centres around the actor playing the central character, but the collaboration of the film's stylist and director on a previous celebrated project, the film's status as adaptation of a best-seller and the contemporaneous glut of television makeover shows also fed into the film and its reception. These various facets of pressure on the text will be considered in turn.

Casting Anne Hathaway as Andy Sachs sent a very clear message to potential audience members: the film would contain a major sartorial metamorphosis. Given the book's focus on fashion and the reversal of fortunes enjoyed by the heroine once she has succumbed to the high-glamour world of *Runway*, this casting can be seen as an example of what Richard Dyer (1979) calls 'perfect fit': the actor fits the role so closely that

there is no tension between her star persona and the character she is playing (145). Putting Hathaway, already associated with costume-based transformations, into a ‘makeover movie’ reinforced the film’s narrative trajectory even before filming started. Hathaway’s association with transformation began with her first film role, *The Princess Diaries* (2001) – Mia Thermopolis, finding herself the heir to a European crown, metamorphoses to befit this status. Hathaway has built on this so that her star persona now reflects the concept of ‘the makeover’, with this term relating not only to what will happen *in* her films, but *across* her films too. While undergoing makeovers in her roles has become a dominant part of her star persona, her presence in a film can also be seen as itself initiating change, as with the biopic of Jane Austen (‘Plain Jane’s life gets a sexy makeover for the screen’ – Stone, 2007: C8). Lately also, negotiating the transition from teen to adult star, she can be seen making over her career from one type of role to another.

Another of the main factors feeding into contemporary reception of *The Devil Wears Prada* was the combination of the film’s director, David Frankel, and costume designer Patricia Field. Both had worked together previously on *Sex And The City*, and viewers aware of this could hope to find similar elements in the film: an accent on eye-catching, designer-brand fashions, a concern to follow the female characters’ stories in a similarly luxe version of Manhattan, and an irreverent approach to sex. While *The Devil Wears Prada* may at first seem to disappoint over these particulars, the film actually does deliver them, albeit in a scaled-down version. Within its tighter time-span, *The Devil Wears Prada* weaves together the stories of Andy, Miranda and Emily, with ensemble scenes driving much of the film. Although the accent on sex is much reduced in the film, Andy’s devotion to her job does not deprive her of a sex life, as she gets to sleep with Christian.

Above all, however, what Field’s name especially connotes is *fashion*: she acts as a guarantee that the film will feature lots of outré outfits. Interestingly, in noting Field’s involvement in the film, some reviewers felt that she had ‘got it wrong’ when it came to portraying what fashion journalists actually wore; the reviewer of the *Los Angeles Times*, observing Andy wearing a toe ring, protested: ‘no fashion magazine assistant or editor would don a toe ring. Ever’ (Moore, 2006: E1). To some, these costume

decisions seemed intended rather than misguided, with the film actually satirising the world of fashion (Freeman, 61; *Premiere*⁹). Field herself in the DVD commentary does not allude to any such parodic intention, however; similarly, newspaper interviews detail her wardrobe decisions without any suggestion of intent to undermine. As the caption beneath one photograph of the stylist confirms, Field's line seems to be: 'I love fashion, and I would never do something bad to the industry' (Avins, 2006: ix). While Booth Moore, who despaired of Field putting Andy in a toe ring, concluded that *The Devil Wears Prada* 'is a film about insiders that has been costumed for outsiders' (E1), perhaps, as we will see in the detailed costume analysis, the film sets up a complex costume narrative which not all viewers, fashion insiders or otherwise, may have understood.

A further influence on the film was its status as an adaptation of the 2003 Lauren Weisberger *roman à clef*. An insightful article in *The Hollywood Reporter* indicates the book's part in the film's potential success:

'Prada' offers all sorts of riches for a movie: an established, catchy chick-lit title with a huge female following; a coming-of-age tale about a smart Cinderella named Andy who undergoes a total makeover; a glamorous Manhattan fashion magazine setting; and, last but not least, a magnificent Faustian villain... (Thompson, 2006)

Thompson perceptively points to the fairy-tale aspect ('Cinderella') of the plot as an element of its popularity, as well as understanding that the movie can be 'pre-sold' to the audience who enjoyed the book. Most of the contemporaneous reviews of the film mentioned the source novel (Didcock; Portman; Ringel Gillespie; Groen, all 2006), although, again, as with the costumes by Field, there was debate over whether the film had honoured or betrayed its source. Rick Groen felt the former: 'The source is Lauren Weisberger's *roman à clef* about her stint at Vogue magazine, a rather yappy novel whose shrill tone has been somewhat muted in Aline Brosh McKenna's adaptation' (Groen, 2006: 7).

By contrast, *The Hollywood Reporter's* view was that the film remained ambivalent about the high-fashion world it depicted, eventually failing to condemn it as the book did (Honeycutt, 2006). It seems to me that the film employs its costume transformation as a way of metamorphosing the source text. In this way the sartorial transformation becomes a way of adapting the book and indeed of transforming its message, subverting it

from an all-out attack on high-fashion consumerism and becoming, as Honeycutt notes, something much more ambivalent about the potential of clothing to alter one's personality and fortune.

The final cultural influence on the film version of *The Devil Wears Prada* is the makeover show. Such shows, where 'ordinary' members of the public are aided in their transformations by professionals, attaining by the end of the episode, a new sense of self-worth, as well as a new face, haircut or wardrobe, became popular programming from 2002, with the launch of ABC's *Extreme Makeover*. With everything – one's self, home, car, job, diet, partner – seemingly appropriate for transformation, the tropes which have sustained Hollywood metamorphoses for decades might seem to be given a new currency. It is interesting, then, that some cinematic tropes carried into the television programmes are given a new twist, and several of the most definitive are ignored.

The television makeover show plays up what the filmic transformation often ignores: the work necessary to achieve the transformation itself. By contrast, the show suppresses what the film often highlights instead: the shopping and invisible transformations achieved during pans and fades and covered by music. While so many of the films looked at in this volume choose to attest the supreme success of the female transformation by a moment of misrecognition by the important man in the transformee's life, this is watered down in the television versions to the 'No!' uttered in disbelief and joy at the heroine's 'big reveal'. The most significant omissions from the television shows are the false transformations and the idea of ameliorating the glamour. While the films frequently work to show the specific wardrobe transformation foisted on the central female is not entirely right for her, and she must find her own comfortable level of attractiveness, the investment of shows such as *Extreme Makeover* in high-level glamour and expensive, painful and long-term physical changes renders impossible the ideas of opting out, changing one's mind, or modulating alterations to suit personal circumstances; and there must be no hint that these new selves are actually disguises. While the visual tropes of the film-based transformation – the use of the staircase as a place to stage the reveal, the 'catwalk' moment as the newly made woman pauses and poses for attention, the pan up her body and the occasional use of slow-motion – may be incorporated into the television series' menu of

devices, there are then notable differences in the themes used by films and television, even though metamorphosis seems to be at the heart of both of them.

An article by Brenda Weber (2005) subjects *Extreme Makeover* to the same unsympathetic scrutiny it imposes on participants.¹⁰ Weber examines the show's ideological foundations, and traces its language and imagery to their roots. Significantly, what she attests as the fundamental principles of the show are often different from those of film transformations; these differences point to very different engagements with the concepts of identity, desire and agency at play within television and cinema. Three points she raises are particularly interesting to our study.

Weber's first point is that *Extreme Makeover* also raises the idea of a 'true self'. However, she sees this concept problematised by the show, unlike the films which I suggest use it as a type of rescue. Weber quotes one made-over participant's assertion – 'I'm me now!' (1) – commenting that the woman's self-perceived external unattractiveness had caused a split between her outer and inner selves, her exterior form and interior identity. Surgery is seen as having healed this split, bringing about unity. Weber concludes however that because this 'coherent subjectivity' (1) is perceived in terms of 'outside/in changes' rather than the reverse, unity is based only on the surfaces with which the show is obsessed (8), and is therefore illusory. As I have suggested, the notion that a change of haircut, makeup or wardrobe could fundamentally change one's personality causes the films which portray and valorise such changes considerable anxiety, an anxiety assuaged, partially, by the idea of the 'true self'. In this way, a film transformation is not a making over but a bringing out of what was always there: not a change so much as a revelation. *Extreme Makeover* does not try to work this rhetoric into its shows, Weber suggests, because its concern with surfaces prohibits the type of interiority the films rely on evoking.

The two other ideas that Weber raises are that there are national, and topical, aspects to *Extreme Makeover*. Since I am specifically studying Hollywood films, it is interesting that Weber claims there are inherently American resonances to the show. Weber reads the commitment to self-change embodied in the willingness to participate in the show as signalling a determination to strive at attractiveness; this involves not

only the celebrated American value of hard work, but also a surrender to capitalist consumerism:

...personal transformation is the first and most necessary step in self-improvement and, thus, to a sort of sublime American entitlement... The commitment to continual makeovers propels a necessary consumerism. (4)

Reflecting on the use of the Cinderella story in the iconography of the show, Weber calls the makeover 'one-part fairy tale and one-part American dream' (15). She adds that through the power of the metamorphosis, 'ostracized ugliness [is] brought into meritocracy through glamour' (15). It is interesting that Weber sees the obligation to self-transform as the duty of a loyal American citizen; the 'sublime American entitlement' is perhaps similar to the idea that anyone can grow up to be President of the United States; equally, anyone can grow up to be beautiful. Lowly birth, religion, poverty, unattractiveness: none of these need stand in the way of either ambition, as long as one is prepared to work hard to achieve one's goals. While Weber speaks about the 'democratisation' of glamour in this way, it should be noted that this democracy is only open to those who can afford expensive plastic surgery or are prepared to live with the debts.

If the reward of democratic beauty is that anyone can have it, reversing the valence of the connection implies that *everyone should*. Weber offers the idea of 'the makeover ultimatum': 'if you can change, you should; if you don't, accept the consequences' (5). This can clearly be seen as a message which carries over to the film world of *The Devil Wears Prada*, where it is perceived as part of Andy's duty to *Runway* to take fashion seriously enough to align her image with the corporate one.

This is where the film seems to me to ask a question which Weber does not touch on, however: if it is an American's duty to buy into consumerism, is it equally one's duty to purchase expensive goods? *The Devil Wears Prada* might initially be seen suggesting that designer items are the desirable ones and it is thus Andy's responsibility to gain and wear these. Is this message meant to carry across the cinema screen and be addressed to audiences also? Perhaps not: as the examination of the costume narrative will indicate, there are hints that buying haute couture is not necessarily the patriotic obligation that making the most of oneself is. It should also be noted that Patricia Field is well known not only for her

styling of Carrie Bradshaw et al in *Sex And The City* but also for designing ranges for budget-price outlets like Payless Shoes.¹¹ Her work with Marks and Spencer, for a Winter 2008 collection, was dubbed by Field a further step in ‘my philosophy of “the democratisation of luxury”’ (Barnett, 2008).

The other aspect of *Extreme Makeover* I think pertinent to *The Devil Wears Prada* is Weber’s claim that the show (2002–2008) is particularly ‘now’. She starts by vaguely gesturing to the circumstances of the programme, what she calls ‘the zeitgeist of anxieties about the body out of control’ (15); then hones in on a specific event she first indicates, and then rejects, as the genesis of the show:

Cultural anthropologists have argued that anxieties about policing bodily excesses are most prevalent in cultures where external boundaries are under attack... We can see this, quite specifically, in recent US anxieties over terrorism, punctuated by the attacks on September 11, 2001. *Extreme Makeover* debuted in December 2002, and in many ways our collective emotional investment in the show could be read as a larger hope of enforcing boundaries... Ultimately however I would argue that the contentious state of the world is less at issue for *Extreme Makeover* than is a deeper investment in our collective desire and anxiety. In many ways, this form of boundary policing is not about a culture under siege but about a culture believing itself under siege. (16)

Weber posits that the terrorist attacks on America in September 2001 had a particular impact on the country’s psyche, directly linking the establishment of the makeover show to the anxieties felt after the country’s body politic had been damaged. Attempts to control individual bodies on the show can be read as attempts to exercise power over individuals, making them whole and united, in order to atone for lacking the power to heal the country as a whole.

Although Weber steps away from directly attributing the founding of *Extreme Makeover* to the events of September 11, I have two thoughts about this. Firstly, we have seen in this book that metamorphosis through costume and cosmetic change has been a current theme throughout Hollywood cinema; there is thus perhaps more permanence to the anxieties in the American psyche than Weber appreciates.

Secondly, it seems to me that the programme’s insistence on the importance of consumerism could be read in patriotic terms in the light

of the events Weber references. It might then be significant that *The Devil Wears Prada* spends the majority of its running time in Manhattan, not only because this is where Andy-original Lauren Weisberger spent her year indentured to *Vogue*, but also because New York City needed healing as the city principally attacked in 2001. Showing a variety of montages, then, where city street and Central Park become the locale for both official fashion shoots and Andy's own impromptu fashion shows, the film demonstrates patriotic citizens doing their duty by continuing their commitment to consumerism. That this is an American duty at a time not only of potential terrorist threat but also economic downturn (Harris, 2009) does not counteract Weber's suggestion, but ties it more closely to quotidian worries than extreme threats.

Influences

The Devil Wears Prada fits easily into the ranks of film transformations which largely follow the Cinderella story. Clueless Andy labours hard at her job but cannot be successful – or go to the ball – until Fairy Godfather Nigel magically transforms her into a chic fashionista. While the film enjoys its little joke about gay-coded Nigel being a *Fairy Godfather*, it also contains other fairy-tale elements, including the heroine forced to toil (Andy), the haughty evil queen (Miranda) and cruel stepsister (Emily). Interestingly, however, the film abandons the handsome prince/loyal commoner conflict (Christian/Nate), leaving the princess to get the right job rather than the right man at the film's end.

The film's employment of fairy-tale elements was not overlooked by reviewers, with many recognising the Cinderella elements,¹² while Barry Didcock of *The Sunday Herald* noted also the maturation-element built into the story which fits also with Hans Christian Andersen's tale of inevitable and natural improvement: 'Anne Hathaway plays "ugly" duckling to Meryl Streep's boss from hell' (2006: 19).

There are divergences, however, from the standard Cinderella tale in the film, and it is interesting that in this the movie also diverts from the book. More attention will be paid later to the specific changes the film wrought on its source material; here it is enough to note that Andy's fashion hopelessness in the book is not so simply cured by the access to

Nigel's magic Closet and its transformatory clothes. The book also has no equivalent of the Nigel character, and the film can thus be seen inventing and shaping his story to create the person of the Fairy Godfather. Further, Book Andy does not receive one swift lesson in style which she internalises, as her film equivalent does. In the section of the novel where Miranda and her entourage go to Paris for the fashion shows, Andy is so convinced that she will commit endless fashion crimes that her wardrobe, hair and beauty colleagues put together a bible for her, detailing what to wear for different occasions during her fortnight away, advice offered even at the micro-level of eye shadow (Weisberger 2003:317). Film Andy, by great contrast, undergoes her initiation into the fashion world and thence experiences no backsliding. The film's decision to grant Andy agency and expertise in choosing outfits and applying makeup has two effects: it makes her transformation the more total and thus the more magical, as befits the Cinderella story, and it also underlines the ease with which any woman could take hold of her life and present herself more fashionably – a significant part of its intentions.

It seems to me important that the film, while it is happy to recast and re-inflect various plot points and events from the book, does not see fit to add a Pygmalion figure to its mix. Nigel inaugurates Andy's self-renovation, guiding her through the wondrous Closet, picking garments and accessories for her, then handing her over to makeup and coiffure professionals, but he does not do so from a personal or romantic interest, as the Pygmalion lover-artist does. Nor for that matter can he really be seen, like Cinderella's Fairy Godmother, elevating a wrongly cast-down heroine to her rightful place. Andy is not a fashionable or wealthy young woman forced into a more lowly (costume) position, as Cinderella is; instead, she has shown herself unwilling to accept the supremacy of surfaces which *Runway* insists upon and is thus more lucky than worthy that Nigel takes pity on her.

The two young men who compete for Andy's affections in the film's (rather superficial) romantic sub-plot have no effect on her wardrobe at all: neither is qualified for the role of Pygmalion. What is also missing from this film's costume narrative, especially in comparison to those of Anni and Calam, is Andy's input to her transformation. While Anni dresses like a lady to secure a better future, and Calam chooses her own version of a

modulated androgyny once she realises her 'secret love', Andy does little to embrace the transformation beyond asking Nigel to help her fit in, and then wearing all the fabulous outfits the Closet provides. Her passivity in this is perhaps an important part of the narrative and is used at the end of the film when Andy seems, like Calam, to have found a level of glamour she is comfortable to make her own.

Costume reading

What happens when the costume narrative is employed on a text which not only openly highlights the importance of the right clothes for a woman, but is specifically about the importance of *fashion*? Both *The Bride Wore Red* and *Calamity Jane* include the idea of fashion, in that Anni obviously buys clothes she believes will make her look like a fashionable lady, and similarly, the gowns Katie inherits from Adelaid and passes on to Calam are designed to signal they are fashionable to the audience. But *The Devil Wears Prada* is *specifically* about an institutionalised obsession with not only the latest clothes, but the priciest, most exclusive, couture clothes, packaged and sold as images to the readers of *Runway*. Whether these readers – and the women in the film's audience – are being exhorted to go out and buy these garments, or high-street copycat versions, however, remains to be seen.

I hinted above that I believe the film uses the costume narrative to remake the book: the wardrobe story is the method of adaptation. But when the source novel is both so well known and so replete with names of labels and designers, does this cause a problem for the film-makers? Anne Thompson for *The Hollywood Reporter* (2006) indicated that many different screenwriters tried to shape an arc for the story that would take it from a series of rather whiny anecdotes to a fully formed narrative, but the shape of the plot was not the only problem facing the film-makers. As items to be paraded, bought, sold, borrowed, coveted and endlessly discussed, clothes themselves were fore-grounded in the book; could Patricia Field then hope to use costume to underline the characters envisaged by director Frankel, and herself, when the book had already provided so many sartorial fiats? Could the schematisation of character-delineating costume work amidst the noise produced by so many other clothes, especially those produced by big-name couturiers?

The creative team behind the film found a solution to combat Weisberger's label-mania. In the book, clothes, bags, shoes, jewellery, hats, belts and other accessories are incessantly mentioned.¹³ The film however, not only refuses to use items of clothing mentioned at specific moments in the novel, but reworks the book's narrative to place an entirely different emphasis on Andy's journey through the film. Looking at the costume narrative of the film, I want to explore not only the usual aspects of the wardrobe choices, but also consider how the costume decisions alter both its heroine's trajectory and character.

On the DVD commentary for the film Field notes that there were 'upwards of 60 changes' for Hathaway's character in the film: this profusion of outfits prevents attention being paid to each individual ensemble. I will thus dwell on pre-transformation outfits, the metamorphosis scene itself, and key ensembles after it. Overall the trajectory of Andy's costumes is from chaos to coherence, from multicolour to monochrome, and, reversing these less-is-more lessons, from tiny accessories to statement pieces.

The film starts with a montage cross-cutting the morning rituals of various women against Andy's dressing for her interview at *Runway*. The reverential donning of their clothes and makeup by these model-like females is contrasted with Andy's uncaring attitude to clothes: where they choose with deliberation, she grabs with haste. Her nonchalant adoption of a dingy pair of panties contrasts with their assiduous selection of petal-like, leopard print or frothy lingerie, their measured breakfasts (exactly eight almonds placed in a bowl) cut against her carefree purchase of an onion bagel, munched absentmindedly as she walks to the subway. The thrust of the sequence is to establish the different places that clothes and personal appearance have in the lives of these different women; Andy, about to be interviewed at a publishers, is concerned with her written output, whereas the others, whose job is to appear glamorous, are *themselves* their own output.

Going for her interview at *Runway*, Andy wears an outfit which might have passed muster at college but is heavily overwritten as unsuitable for an interview anywhere, let alone a fashion magazine. Patricia Field, the film's costume designer, calls Andy's pre-transformation look 'American Simple' and Hathaway suggests the character is an Everygirl: 'kind of the girl next door: ... She looks like a girl you know ... that you saw on the subway

... like your babysitter'.¹⁴ In contrast to the chic women of the introduction, Andy is coded as sartorially incoherent, in black trousers, white shirt under lilac jumper, brown-beige jacket, big brown belted coat, knitted wool scarf and gloves. The total effect makes Andy out of place in the sleek world of publishing she is entering.

The following day Andy's work begins in earnest and she learns her job is to rush around town collecting hot coffee and anything else for which Miranda feels a vague need ('I want 10 or 15 skirts from Calvin Klein'). It is interesting that although Andy is still in her 'before' incarnation here, Patricia Field dresses her in a designer coat: the wintry Manhattan weather demands she wears an overcoat, and Andy varies her wardrobe by wearing a white one. Underneath, her outfit is again uniformly incoherent and this is commented on overtly by Nigel and, with a glance of distaste, by Miranda, but the use of the coat is puzzling unless seen as a fashion forecast of Andy's future. A bone white coat by Calvin Klein, it is worn by Andy with a brown and white spotted woolly scarf and, again, woolly gloves; bundled up into it, with her hair cascading down and around her coat collar and scarf, Andy still looks a mess. But significantly, she looks like she has the potential for glamour, and this is possibly why the Calvin Klein coat is used here. The film's project throughout is to indicate that Andy can, with very little commitment and assistance, become inordinately glamorous. That she has a Calvin Klein coat in her wardrobe is not enough to confer this glamour on her *alone*, yet, it indicates the path she will follow to find what Miranda instantly notices she lacks: 'You have no style...'

The clothes under the coat also attain significance: they form the basis for a stern lecture Miranda gives Andy – and the audience – lest anyone doubt either the seriousness of what Miranda does for a living or the impact of her decisions on the rest of the dressed world. Andy wears a thick blue jumper, a blue plaid skirt, thick black tights and black clumpy slip-ons. Nigel attempts to help her with this particular faux pas, bringing her a pair of high-heeled sling-backs, but Andy rejects them, assuming Miranda realises her worth goes beyond the superficial. Miranda instantly disabuses her of this illusion, however, by casting her gaze at the offending footwear with a moue of disgust. Interestingly, the camera, in reproducing Miranda's dissatisfied look down the length of Andy's body to her shoes, inverts the usual *upward* glance of approval noted as a transformation

trope. The DVD commentary reveals that this is a signature look of the cameraman, Florian Balhaus, common enough within his oeuvre to be dubbed by colleagues ‘a Florian tilt’. This tilt was devised when Balhaus was working, with Field and Frankel, on *Sex and The City*, and was purposefully meant to showcase the programme’s footwear. Having used this shoe moment to underline Andy’s fashion ignorance, the scene moves on to crystallise this even further, as Miranda takes Andy to task for her sneering attitude to fashion.

The speech, not present in the novel, bolsters Miranda’s character, showing her power is not illusory and thus not totally dictatorial. Miranda examines two blue belts to use on an outfit she is attempting to construct. An assistant notes that choosing between them is ‘a tough call ... they’re both so different’, at which Andy sniggers: to her they seem almost identical. Miranda challenges her, and Andy, trying to get out of the difficult situation, attempts an escape which summons Miranda’s measured but devastating tirade:

Andy: ... I’m still learning about this stuff ...

Miranda: This *stuff*? Oh, okay, I see ... you think this has nothing to do with you. *You go to your closet and you select, I don’t know, that lumpy blue sweater, frinstance, because you’re trying to tell the world that you take yourself too seriously to care about what you put on your back. But what you don’t know is that that sweater is not just blue ... it’s not turquoise, it’s*



The Devil Wears Prada 1: Andy at her interview

not lapis, it's *cerulean*, and you're also blithely unaware of the fact that in 2002 Oscar de la Renta did a collection of cerulean gowns and then I think it was Yves Saint Laurent wasn't it, who showed cerulean military jackets – I think we need a jacket here – and then cerulean showed up in the collections of eight different designers. And then it filtered down through the department stores and then trickled down into some tragic casual corner where you no doubt fished it out of some clearance bin. However, that 'blue' represents millions of dollars and countless jobs and it's sort of comical how you think you've made a choice that exempts you from the fashion industry when in fact you're wearing a sweater that was selected for you by the people in this room – from a pile of *stuff*.

In the next scene, in Andy's apartment, she complains about Miranda's rant while her boyfriend fries her a cheese sandwich. The business both characters carry out is significant; he is cooking a highly calorific dinner, and she, bemoaning the dressing down Miranda gave her, is putting on a casual outfit for home wear. That this consists of two vests, with sweatpants, a Northwestern University sweatshirt and a couple of hair-bands proves that Andy has not got Miranda's message. She still believes herself impervious to the dictates of fashion, yet the chaotic outfit reveals her character, exposing her inability to make the right kind of fashion choices (this top or this) while also suggesting that she is happy dressing in the type of messy casuals students wear for comfort. However, there is a sign at the scene's end that Andy is starting to pay attention: she won't eat the sandwich. While she says she's not hungry, her follow-up remark shows the *Runway* ethos is beginning to permeate: 'that is why those girls are so skinny...'

The next significant costume Andy wears is the 'before' outfit on the day of her transformation. In *The Devil Wears Prada* the failure of an outfit is usually associated with some other failure by Andy at one of her office tasks, illustrating she has not yet grasped that dressing to fit in is one of her principal duties and that everything will improve with fashion compliance. After another Andy disaster, Miranda coldly notes she had tried to circumvent just such failures by hiring, not the usual 'stylish, slender, of course' *Runway* fashionistas but, 'the smart, fat girl'. Andy leaves the room stung to tears. For this scene the stylists padded Hathaway to make her appear large and put her in a pale peachy coloured top to emphasise this.

Andy wanders off, finds Nigel and complains to him, but he challenges her superior attitude to fashion; she may believe she is working her hardest, but behaving as if fashion is beneath her will endear her to no one, least of all Miranda. In their DVD commentary the creative team assert it was important that Nigel didn't just take pity on Andy, but bothered to stop and upbraid her for her attitude to clothes. Interestingly they describe this in language which directly evokes and contradicts the role from Cinderella Nigel seems to play: 'He's not a fairy godmother in any way'. Given that the conversation between Andy and Nigel ends with her absorption of his criticism, and the realisation that she can prove her devotion to *Runway* by conforming to its aesthetic standards, this remark seems disingenuous. The scene ends with Andy beseechingly saying 'Nigel? Nigel!' and his firm 'No'. In keeping with the traditional comic trope, however, where a definite negative is instantly overthrown, the following scene opens with Nigel leading the way into the magic Closet where all the sample clothes sent to the magazine are stored. Though he protests they are bound to find nothing big enough for her (an American 6 and thus the equivalent of a UK 10) Nigel does amass an armful of goodies for Andy, significantly picking items he names by their designer: 'We're doing this Dolce for you, and shoes – Jimmy Choo's, Manolo Blahnik's... Nancy Gonzalez, mmm love that, and this is a Rodriguez, this we love... okay now Chanel, you're in desperate need of Chanel...'

Nigel then ushers her off to the beauty department. Andy returns to her office after her transformation and is now given her big moment; importantly the major change besides the removal of the padding and her new groomed hair, cut with a fringe instead of just lying bushily on her shoulders, is that she wears Chanel top to toe: a blazer, thigh-high leather boots, a skimpy top with sequins, and gold chains. Although the various fabrics used in the outfit – the shiny fetishistic leather balanced by the nubby material of micro mini skirt and blazer – are significantly eye-catching, it is the designer rather than the design that is really important at this point. Just to make sure the audience get that she is now dressed in designer couture, Emily falteringly asks 'How did...are you wearing the Ch...?' Andy smoothly anticipates her question and finishes it for her: 'The Chanel boots? Yes, I am'. In fact, this wardrobe transformation seems to have had an immediate effect on Andy's efficiency as, entering the office

in her new outfit she steps smartly to the ringing telephone and, for the first time in the film, answers it in the approved *Runway* fashion without seeming ill at ease. Andy, dressed thus, is for the first time unflappable.

If Andy astonishes Emily here with her sartorial metamorphosis, the next scene shows her boyfriend is no less amazed. He sees her waiting for him outside the restaurant where he works; as he looks in astonishment, a music track begins which then acts as a bridge into the next scene, a montage showing Andy going to work in successive fabulous outfits. The song is 'Vogue' by Madonna. While it has been noted previously that montages such as this, designed to show off the transformation outfits, generally use a catchy tune, here the lyrics of the song seem strangely at odds with the sentiment of the scene. Madonna's song contains the line 'Beauty's where you find it', and a mantra more oppositional to the *Runway* credo could hardly be imagined. I think the reason this song is used here, other than because it is bouncy and acts to move along the scene of Andy turning up at work in increasingly outré outfits, is as a sly reference to the film's source novel. If, as was widely hinted at the time, Lauren Weisberger's time at *Vogue* magazine inspired her to write the novel as a form of revenge against her own Miranda Priestly-type boss, Anna Wintour, then the film can be seen using this track as an oblique homage to that vengeance notion, confirming *Runway*, Andy's destination throughout the montage, as the film version of *Vogue*.

During the track, Andy's progress to work is filmed as if it were a single journey, repeating recognisable points of the trip she made during the opening credits; here the fact that these are actually iterative journeys is made plain by the different outfits she wears, changing whenever a vehicle passes or Andy goes down into or emerges from the subway: it is an economical device which shows that she is reaping the sartorial benefit of the *Runway* closet, even as the outfits she dons become more extreme fashionably: shorter, tighter and of richer fabrics.

The film continues to showcase Andy wearing a variety of couture; this is sometimes made evident by naming the designer and sometimes by the presence of the fashion house's well-known logo visible in the ensemble (such as the interlocking c's which indicate Chanel). The next 'big' wardrobe moment, however, is, by contrast, label-less. Miranda decides she needs not just Emily but also Andy with her at a lavish fashion benefit.

The scene is significant in several ways. It marks a further stage of Andy's enslavement to her job – she complies with Miranda's wishes and goes to the soiree despite it being Nate's birthday. As an evening formal event it puts Andy into full evening dress and thus speaks to the movie's Cinderella motif, especially when she encounters Christian on the stairs as she is departing – she doesn't lose her shoe, but the film does have her flee from him to meet a time-deadline. It also marks a point when her own regime of not eating, alluded to occasionally, begins to pay off: Andy, looking for Nigel and an evening gown in the closet finds he has something gorgeous for her:

Andy: I *love* that! Will it fit me?

Nigel: Oh yeah... a little Crisco and some fishing wire and we're in business.

This exchange reveals that the pair have become close enough for teasing; when Andy turns up at the benefit, however, Nigel halts his conversation to give her a definite look of approval at the fit. It seems significant that although Andy is wearing a designer (Galliano) at this point, the name of the couturier is not the focus of the scene – her princess moment is enshrined in the flattering shape of the dress, the soft delicate lacy over-sleeves that seem to caress her upper arms, and without the interruption of commerce and consumerism. Christian remarks, 'You're a vision', and the aim of the scene is to enforce this, not to pay its respects to a particular designer at this point. Of course Andy is wearing couture; the point is that she looks appropriately fabulous – and thin – in it.

When Miranda takes Andy and not Emily to Paris, she negotiates the hurdles of the job, pleasing Miranda, while also putting together her own outfits and finding time to romance Christian. As usual, when her wardrobe achievements are mentioned, it is Nigel to whom Andy plays. When he tells Andy about his new venture outside *Runway*, Andy toasts him with champagne and another one of their bantering exchanges follows:

Andy: Congratulations, Nigel: you deserve it.

Nigel: You bet your size six ass I –



The Devil Wears Prada 2: Are those the Chanel boots?

Andy: – Four!

Nigel: Really? ... Let me see that!

Andy's weight loss has been a subtle, background, story; she has not been seen carrying out a dieting regime, but the combination of her constant frenzied activity, plus the absorbed lesson that *Runway* women must be thin, has obviously impacted on her and is the more insidious for being tacit.

Two final costumes of significance remain in the film. The contrast between the two could not, at first, seem greater: Andy goes from couture gown to leather jacket and jeans. But this seeming repudiation of the fashion world is more complex than it first appears.

Andy rushes to warn Miranda of the plot against her but is snubbed by her boss. Off screen she then changes for the next round of activities, dressing in a Louis Vuitton semi-formal outfit – back-accented dark green dress, short-sleeved black jacket, heels, diamonds, tiny gold bag – for the *Runway* lunch where Nigel's new job is to be announced. This is probably the most dressed up, the most couture, we have seen Andy, appropriately

enough because this is when her temptation is at its height. After giving Jacqueline Follet the job Nigel had wanted in order to safeguard her own, Miranda travels with her assistant to the next event. If Miranda is the Devil of the book and film's title, this is the occasion for her tempting the innocent Andy; as they ride through the glittering City of Light, Miranda seems to offer her protégée the world. And this is the moment that Andy, beautifully coiffed, made-up and dressed up as she is, wakes up. She realises that dictating others' outfits *and* lives is not why she got into publishing: she wanted to write. Walking away from the temptation offered here echoes her earlier rejection, at the *Runway* benefit, of Christian, who arrives as she departs. Although he dangles as bait before her the possibility of meeting his editor Andy resists that enticement; here too, practically offered a share of her world by Miranda Priestly, she simply walks away.

The final scene of the film shows Andy back in New York City and in what, compared to the costumes since her transformation, seem to be 'normal' clothes. She is being interviewed again, as in the film's opening scene, but now for the type of job she always wanted, on a reputable New York newspaper. As she walks through the Manhattan streets we are given a chance to see her outfit in detail: she wears a leather jacket, calf-length high-heeled boots over jeans, a black polo neck jumper and a pendant. Her hair is glossy and sleek, and she looks slender, chic and put together. Rejecting *Runway* has evidently not meant rejecting the lessons she has learnt about being judged at face value. Given that her tasks as Miranda's assistant mostly involved pouring Pellegrino, buying coffee and sourcing unsourceable objects, what Andy has told the editor about her time at *Runway* – 'learnt a lot' – seems at odds with her actual day-to-day experience. What she has actually learnt is that exteriors count and an intelligent woman is foolish to ignore them.

Considering the ways in which the traditional tropes of the transformation scene play out in this particular film, I will start here by looking not at the thematic, but at the visual tropes. All four of the common aesthetic elements used to mark the metamorphosis scene are present in *The Devil Wears Prada*, but it makes often innovative use of these. For example, it employs the staircase motif, but not at the precise moment of transformation. Both of the major important temptations of Andy are staged on or at the foot of staircases. In the first instance, Andy

is running away from the *Runway* party when she meets Christian going in; stopping on the stairs, both turn so they are facing away from where they are going, as they flirt around the topic of their mutual attraction. Christian offers what he hopes will be the clincher: if Andy won't stay and have a drink with *him*, will she talk to his boss, who is interested in her writing? Christian tries to sidestep the personal frisson between himself and Andy, luring her through her ambitions, but she resists. It is important to recognise that it is not Christian himself who is the temptation to Andy – if he were, we would judge her a failure when she later sleeps with him. The temptation the film portrays is that of fast-tracking her way to being a writer by cultivating contacts, and it is important for Andy's integrity that she refuses this.

The second moment of important staircase placement has Andy refuse to step onto the stairs at all. In Paris, after Miranda has seemingly offered her the world, Andy alights from the limousine and stares up at her boss engulfed by photographers and journalists. She again chooses not to take



The Devil Wears Prada 3: Height of temptation

the bait, and here, as Miranda visibly rises in front of her, going up the stairs, Andy rejects the notion of succeeding, getting on and getting up, the entire premise of Miranda's offer.

While some transformation moments choose to stage their 'big reveals' on a staircase, having the newly transfigured woman emerge in her new form, then slowly descend like a goddess coming down to earth to her adoring worshippers, *The Devil Wears Prada* chooses astutely to split these moments and to use the stairs in a divergent symbolic register. Perhaps because there are literally so many 'catwalk' moments staged on runways, the film wanted to avoid employing that metaphor here: Andy rejects the runway at the moment she rejects *Runway*.

Instead, Andy's personal apotheosis, when she appears in her new incarnation to the amazement of her on-screen audience, occurs in a far more fitting place: the office. Her failure at simple office tasks – answering the telephone, writing memos – has already been shown; now when she glides into the space, in slow-motion, in thigh highs, and in control, her first act is to take the *perfect* phone call. Andy's transformation may only consist of a few designer items and a sleeker haircut, but the difference in terms of her self-confidence is palpable, and aptly rendered by her languid strut, showcased in slow-mo as she tosses her new chic hair over one shoulder to a shimmering, magical-sounding riff on the soundtrack.

The film also uses the visual trope of the camera pan up the body and interestingly modulates its usual employment so that it happens not only when Andy's boyfriend appraises her but also when *Miranda* does. Nate's reaction is explored below in considering the film's use of the misrecognition moment; Miranda's comes during the montage of costume changes which accompanies 'Vogue' on the soundtrack. With the last outfit change, when Andy is wearing a velvet coat, mini dress and high boots, she readies Miranda's desk and then exits as Miranda enters the room. The camera pans up her body in the approved manner for noting a costume improvement: that this is Miranda's point of view, rather than a man's, underlines the fact that it is a job Andy is changing for, rather than the usual aim of gaining a partner. This pan up her body – which is underlined by Miranda turning her head to watch Andy leave the room – echoes and answers the disapproving pan down her figure, the 'Florian tilt', which Miranda gave earlier. There it was used not just to showcase the shoes, as



The Devil Wears Prada 4: Ameliorated glamour

the commentary suggests, but to signal Miranda's awareness of Andy failing to fit in. The look up her body now confirms Andy has got it right. Andy's reactions to the two appreciative pans reveal her real interest and ambitions: while she is pleased at Nate's response to her change, her face seems to be glowing with pride and excitement when she walks from Miranda's room knowing her boss has given her the 'once-over' of appreciation.

Besides these visual tropes, *The Devil Wears Prada* also employs many of the thematic elements of the film-based transformation, and its omissions are easy to fathom. For example, the main trope it excludes from its schema is the visible transformation. This is calculatedly not shown, as the point of the film is to erase the work needed to turn Andy 'from geek to chic'.¹⁵ In order to underline its message, the wardrobe alteration has to occur off screen, and thus the film makes use of the invisible transformation. When Andy reappears after her transformation, to the chagrin of Emily and the

frank admiration of Serena, the work necessary to render her a couture version of herself has been accomplished off screen, in the edit between leaving the Closet and arriving in the office. In using this trope the film *almost* employs the shopping motif also, although there is one significant difference between the scene in which Andy gathers her armfuls of designer goodies and that in, say, *Gold Diggers of 1937*: there is no money involved. This is shopping at its most magical and fantasy-fulfilling, since the accumulation of consumables costs nothing.

There is also obvious employment of the misrecognition moment. After Andy's transformation, the scene cuts to the exterior of the restaurant where Nate works. He is coming out; Andy is leaning against a car waiting for him. As he walks by, he checks her out as he would any attractive female, and carries on walking. Then he comes to a halt, slowly looks back at her, and the camera gives us the slow pan-up of approval as he takes in her changed appearance. When Andy asks, 'So, what do you think?', his answer perfectly enshrines the totality of the metamorphosis: 'I think we better get out of here before my girlfriend sees me with you!' Andy is so different, she is not just improved, but seems a totally different person. However, the film attempts to prove that Nate is wrong in this assumption; and this may be the reason that the couple does not end the film together. It is crucial to the way the film shapes Andy's trajectory and alters its source novel that the young woman has not become a different person but – again employing the 'true self' motif so frequently found – is at last letting her exterior reflect her authentic interior.

This emphasis on the 'true self' trope is the way the film attempts to put across its message, not just to Andy, but to the audience also. In order for this message to be effective, the film needs to couple the invisible transformation with the idea of one's authentic identity being released – rather than changed – by the proper outfitting. To this end, it sets out to make Andy's metamorphosis seem as natural as possible. This is not done in the same way as Calam's alteration, through an inevitable maturation and gradual relinquishing of immature tomboy ways. Instead, this is achieved by altering the heroine of the book through her wardrobe, the film's method of adapting its source text. It is through her attitude to her appearance that *The Devil Wears Prada* subjects the character of Andrea Sachs to a comprehensive shift. Book Andy begins her slavery at *Runway* indifferent

about fashion, and leaves the same way – clueless and unskilled. Film Andy starts unkempt and uncaring, but not without the potential for sartorial salvation. Unlike her novel counterpart, she learns how to dress, put together a chic ensemble, apply mascara; and this latter moment is dwelt on as a telling close-up cues a flashback: in her hotel room in Paris, Andy contemplates the distance she has travelled between her interview day and the present moment amidst the glamour of Paris Fashion Week.

Unlike both *The Bride Wore Red* and *Calamity Jane*, where the costume narratives acted at times to undermine and subvert the dominant narrative trajectories, *The Devil Wears Prada* operates its dominant and costume narratives in tandem. This film uses its costume plot not as an oppositional discourse to the dominant narrative of the film, but as an oppositional discourse to the source novel. The schematised wardrobe changes are not merely indicative of the central character's trajectory – they are its *materialisation*. The costume discourse establishes itself as such an integral part of the narrative that it becomes the primary method of adapting the novel and its heroine to the screen, achieving a volte-face on the book's final refutation of fashion. While Print Andy ultimately rejects fashion, *Runway*, and Miranda Priestly, Screen Andy introjects the lessons she has learnt during her tenure at the magazine. After Miranda, Book Andy reverts comfortably to weight gain and wearing the same pair of (non-designer) jeans every day for a week; Film Andy, while in jeans, looks as slim, chic, groomed and accessorised as at the height of her *Runway* time.

By thus reversing the conclusion of the novel, the film version of *The Devil Wears Prada* valorises not fashion per se – as Andy's more extreme outfits have indicated, this is not really suitable for 'real life' – but the duty of attractive self-presentation. In doing so the film renders its central character a more mature young woman than the whiney self-justifier who inhabits the book, slyly changing the tenor of the text from *roman à clef* as a mode of revenge, to a *bildungsroman* as an act of advertising. And what is being advertised is the same version of the American dream Brenda Weber found infusing *Extreme Makeover*: the idea that every woman should make the best of herself; that this best involves a glamorised appearance; and that this appearance supports *national* consumerism.

If Andy, a smart but averagely (un)stylish recent graduate can learn enough about clothes to pass muster in the cut-throat world of high

fashion then, the film suggests, with a little help and a little luck – and a little diet – so could we all. Andy’s easy absorption of the *Runway* ethos, which takes place in a single edit and suffers no backsliding, promises the audience that any woman who takes hold of her life, pays attention and swears off fried cheese sandwiches can become more glamorous. The work of Nigel and the *Runway* beauty professionals who cut Andy’s hair and give her a sophisticated makeup, *must* then be invisible to play to the twin and paradoxically linked fantasies such films foster: that such changes are magical (hence Andy’s show-stopping entrance, the shimmering music on the soundtrack, the slow-motion strutting and hair tossing) and, because they involve no evident work, *easy*.

Furthermore, while Andy has been toiled over in the makeup and hair departments, the overall effect is not of *difference* (the makeover) but *improvement* (the make-better). This is an essential factor in the film’s project. For the Andy of the final scene to have learnt a permanent lesson, the glamour and attractiveness have to be inherent within clueless Andy. The transformation of the heroine that Nigel assists, then, does not represent change so much as evolution. I think this is the ultimate reason the film neglects to show the transformation process itself – because by not revealing the workings of the transformation it will seem more organic. The film’s project is to reveal that Andy was *always* a high-fashion princess inside; not showing the process required to render her thus outwardly makes this seem all the more plausible.

It is interesting to ponder whether *The Devil Wears Prada* presents Andy’s transformation as a false one, and thus employs this common motif of the metamorphosis film also. While it does show her adapting to, and indeed relishing, the haute couture she is allowed to borrow from the Closet, the film eventually hints that this is not the *real* Andy, again utilising the ‘true self’ trope as a touchstone to guide viewer understanding of the choices she makes. Andy’s transformation is then a false one inasmuch as she does not maintain her allegiance to designers such as Dolce and Gabbana, Azrouel and Galliano once she has left *Runway*, rejecting these labels’ extreme couture which she wears during her Paris trip. Instead, the film posits there are levels of transformation for Andy, beginning with her catwalk moment when she strides in slow-motion and grace into her office in Chanel.

This scene, as has been noted above, is carefully crafted to make her alteration seem natural and easy, a glamorising rather than a total revolution. As noted, Emily name-checks the designer so that the audience is in no doubt that Andy, who Nigel proclaimed was ‘in desperate need of Chanel’ has found some, and is wearing it to great effect. After this scene the outfits she wears become more and more haute and heavily accented as designer, either by literally revealing the label or by their extremity as office wear – the Calvin Klein dress, the mini skirt with velvet coat. This commitment to extreme fashion reaches its zenith, appropriately, as Andy reaches the height of trying to be the perfect assistant, in Paris with Miranda. Wearing the highest heels, the tightest skirts and the most plunging necklines, Andy here almost succumbs to the seduction of *Runway*, and Miranda.

Andy has to learn, in that other favourite transformation trope, to ameliorate the extremity of her outfits, to dial down the haute of her couture to something approaching a more everyday level. In a review of *The Devil Wears Prada* in *Cineaste*, Martha Nochimson concludes that instead of opting, as the heroines of 1980s career women movies do, for the ‘mommy track’ at the end of the movie, Andy chooses ‘the dowdy track’ (Nochimson 2006: 50). I do not think the film shows Andy as dowdy, however; at the film’s conclusion she seems not rejecting glamour, so much as excess, toning her look down to a level more appropriate to her current circumstances. She does not revert to the big-haired, multi-coloured slouch of the earliest scenes; as she strides confidently off through Manhattan in her cigarette jeans and stiletto-heeled boots, her outfit may be casual but is also stylish. And I think that the labels she promotes in this final outfit are chosen intentionally as part of the film’s ultimate message to the viewer.

Kirk Honeycutt’s review of the film in *The Hollywood Reporter* criticises the movie for an unresolved ambivalence towards the world of high fashion:

It eventually becomes clear that there is method to Miranda’s madness: Her incessant demands are tests to purge staff members who are not up to her own ruthless quest for perfection. Indeed the virtuous moral at the movie’s end – that this is no way to live a good life – feels hallow [sic] because the film displays an unmistakable ambivalence toward *Runway*. With its grudging admiration for fashion-fabulous costumes and for

this glamorous lifestyle, the film idolises that which it would skewer.
(Honeycutt: 2006)

While I take Honeycutt's point, I think the film is intending to make a distinction between the 'fashion-fabulous' costumes it endorses, and those it considers too outré to be useful. If Andy is our 'Everygirl', then the outfit in which she ends the film is the important one. She has not, like her book counterpart, reverted to wearing the same pair of jeans every day for weeks,¹⁶ nor has she seemingly gained back any of the weight the *Runway* regime skimmed off her. Albeit in more casual mode, she is still wearing designer labels: her brown leather jacket is by Vince,¹⁷ her black turtleneck sweater is a DKNY design and her chocolate suede stiletto boots are Calvin Klein. Significantly, all these designers are American. If, as Weber suggests, it is an American woman's patriotic duty to look her best, and to commit financial resources to doing so, then it is surely also her duty to support American designers when she is out shopping?

The over-the-top designs and outfits that Andy models in the office and then in Paris are fabulous but they are also free: she could not hope to afford them on a salary either from *Runway* or from her new writing job. American designers' couture may be too pricey also but their diffusion and high-street lines are affordable and patriotic buys, however. *The Devil Wears Prada* thus takes Andy from her college-era wardrobe of thrift store 'American simple' up to the dizzy and rarefied heights of European haute couture and then slightly down again to more sensible levels of attainable chic from American labels. Three films have been looked at in detail in these case studies. *The Bride Wore Red*, *Calamity Jane* and *The Devil Wears Prada* were chosen because each seems to exemplify how Hollywood films have consistently been interested in exploring and exploiting the connections between costume and transformation. They each also offer opportunities to see both the frequency – almost, it seems, the *inevitability* – of presenting the internal metamorphosis within the narrow range of traditional externalised tropes, and the specific ways in which the transformation theme resonated with the particular social and historical contexts of the films' producing times.

For all three films, the intricate involvement of the star persona and the transformation trope proved to be an unexpected but inescapable finding. While Day has associations of maturation and chronologically

expected changes within her resonances, both Crawford and Hathaway, although ostensibly such different types and from such different historical periods, both proved to have ‘the makeover’ as a major recurrent element in their films and screen personae, a point underlined by the frequency with which press compared both of them to Cinderella.

The idea of a separate ‘costume narrative’ existing in a mainstream film and serving sometimes to underline, and sometimes undermine, characterisation or narrative points advanced by the dominant story trajectory was borne out by all the studied films, with all three proving to be fascinatingly ambivalent texts. *The Bride Wore Red* attempted to condemn its heroine Anni for using her sexuality to get ahead, to get a man and to get wealth, but firstly in casting energetic Crawford and then in dressing her in Adrian’s ravishing red beaded gown, the film sent very mixed messages about the behaviour for women it would deem more appropriate. The film also notably failed to punish Anni for her transgressions: while it removed her shot at riches, it gave her the love of her life, whom she would never have met if not masquerading as a fine lady – which the film attempts to censure. Above all, the use of the red gown as an index of undesirable femininity was a bizarre and doomed concept given its modern shape, richness and suitability for Crawford’s form.

In *Calamity Jane* the costume narrative is again at odds with the dominant trajectory since this wants to see her androgyny and agency safely confined in a bustled frock, but this goal is circumvented by the fact that the emotional highlight comes not when the heroine has been trussed up in her wedding dress, but in the scene before, while Calam, still dressed in trousers, proclaims her ‘Secret Love’.

The two films thus work to destabilise the dominant narrative trajectory, and use their costume schema as a way of letting ambivalent messages and unresolved issues into the text. By contrast, *The Devil Wears Prada* runs its costume and dominant narratives in concert, using costume’s potential for fostering an oppositional discourse to counteract the thrust not of the film’s story, but that of the original source novel. Thus working in tandem, the costume plot and the main story seek to subvert the book’s total rejection of fashion, turning it instead into a dismissal of European haute couture excess and a valorisation of American designers.

In addition, all three costume narratives suggest that Gaines' tenet, that the costume plot 'cannot anticipate narrative developments' is often invalid. These three films consistently allow costume to forecast the narrative ahead, and, in particular, the sartorial transformation which their heroine will undertake. The opening scene of *The Devil Wears Prada*, cutting 'American simple' Andy against the 'fashion-fabulous' women neatly highlights the distance between the *Runway* women and the aspiring writer as well as indicating that this is a journey she will make during the course of the film. Calam's recourse to clean white clothing, whenever hurt by Bill's personal remarks about her androgyny, becomes a decisive element in her own choice of clothing after rejecting the false transformation urged on her by Katie; the small amounts of white shirt shown under her dirty deerskins increase in stages to culminate in her wedding dress; thus again her selection of that pristine garment, worn next to her skin, almost as protection against Bill's slights, acts as a forecast of outfits and attitudes to come. Finally, Anni's whole story is, in effect, predicted to the audience at the very start of the film, when her modelled figure appears, dominant and vital, in peasant gear, towering over the mountains and little towns on the music box. Although this is not the first outfit we see the human Anni wearing, the impact of the model on the box is sufficient to suggest to the audience this is an outfit we will be seeing again and which will have great narrative significance. Not only is this, then, the dress Anni is wearing when she secures a marriage proposal from Rudi, it is also what she wears, disgraced and ostracised at the end of the film, when Giulio claims her.

In the theory section of this work, we saw how Jane Gaines' ideas that design and fabric could carry their own symbolism was borne out; in the three case studies too, the particular qualities of a choice of cloth or silhouette have proved to be significant. In Anni's case, the Bride who attempts to Wear Red on the evening of her marriage dons a far more demure, bridal-type gown on her first evening at the hotel; this outfit acts as a type of displacement of the innocent attire she should put on as a bride, and it attracts both Rudi and Giulio's attention. The softness, sheerness and yielding fragility of the gown imply similar qualities belong to Anni herself – quite erroneously. A similar use of a white gown can be seen in *Calamity Jane*, but there the design symbolism is used to mark Calam off

from the other fashionable Deadwood ladies, as her dress is much more columnar, and less festooned with the apron-like swag at the front than the others, as well as, perhaps, to reinforce the idea that her phallic and active body has not been totally tamed by the act of putting on a dress. Both fabric and design can be seen, finally, in *The Devil Wears Prada*, to be offering hints about the wearer; in Andy's final outfit, for instance, her leather jacket, albeit a designer one, has a few of the overtones of 'street' and 'rebel' which traditionally accompany such a garment (there would be more if the jacket had been black – that would have more clearly spelled 'rock n roll'). Alongside the armour-like leather, which Andy has perhaps donned as a mechanism to defend herself in her interview, she also wears a black polo neck very much in keeping with the idea of an intellectual; this outfit spells 'writer' as much as other costumes worn by Andy after her transformation signified 'fashion lackey'.

What I hope the case studies have shown is how films telling the story of inner and outer transformation in Hollywood have come to rely on a series of motifs and elements which they use and re-use, sometimes with knowing glee. These visual and thematic tropes have both maintained a consistency across the wide historical period examined, and found new ways to engage with the specific times and societal impulses prompting the films themselves. Close attention paid to these scenes of metamorphosis can illuminate ambivalences and uncertainties about how successfully clothes can – and should – render our inner 'true selves' outwardly. Without concentration on the costume narratives in our case studies, for example, we might share the dissatisfaction with which successive generations of critics have viewed *The Bride Wore Red* and felt that the conclusion of *Calamity Jane* definitively closes down the heroine's active identity. *The Devil Wears Prada* similarly shows that costume can be the method by which an adaptation of a well-known source novel can become not so much a rendering in another medium as a total subversion of its intentions.