

THE CAROLE LOMBARD IN MACY'S WINDOW

Charles Eckert

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century American business was pre-occupied with production. Most of its energy went into expanding its physical plant, increasing efficiency and grinding the face of labour so that greater profits could be extracted and invested in production. In the last five years of the nineteenth century when, coincidentally, motion pictures were invented, American business discovered that it was up to its neck in manufactured goods for which there were no buyers. So it became sales minded. Through the first two decades of the twentieth century, sales techniques were developed so intensely that they produced gross excesses, alienating the public and giving impetus to antibusiness and antimaterialist attitudes among intellectuals. About 1915, fixation upon sales gave way to an obsession with management, to internal re-structuring and systemisation. Profits were decisively improved, but the contradiction between production and consumption, between the efficient manufacture and marketing of goods and the capacity of wage-poor workers to buy them, was no closer to solution. Therefore, throughout the 1920s business became consumer-minded.

While all of this was going forward, Hollywood had evolved from a nickel and dime business to an entertainment industry funded by the likes of A.T. & T., Hayden Stone, Dillon Reid, RCA, The House of Morgan, A. P. Giannini's Bank of America, The Rockefellers' Chase National Bank, Goldman Sachs, Lohoran Brothers, Halsey Stuart – in short, all the major banks and investment houses and several of the largest corporations in America. With the representatives of those several economic powers sitting on the directorates of the studio, and with the world of business pervaded by the new *zeitgeist* of consumerism, the conditions were right for Hollywood to assume a role in the phase of capitalism's life history that the emerging philosophy of consumerism was about to give birth to.

All of which brings me to a story, a sort of romance, which I shall begin, as all good storytellers do, in *Medias Res*.

Awakened by the brakes of the train, Bette Davis pulled aside a window curtain. Beneath a winter moon the Kansas plains lay grey with late winter snow. The mail clerk glimpsed Bette's face, but was too astounded by the pullman car itself to recognise his favourite star. The pullman was totally covered with gold leaf. The rest of the train was brilliantly silvered. From one car a tall radio aerial emerged mysteriously. Lost in his wonder, the clerk barely noticed that the train was underway again. He would later tell his children about the train with the golden pullman, perhaps fashioned for some Western gold baron, or for a Croesus from a foreign land. But he would never know that the interior of the train held greater wonders still.

As the cars gathered speed, other passengers shifted in their sleep, among them Laura La Plante, Preston Foster and numerous blond women with muscular legs (was one of them the supernal Toby Wing?). In an adjacent lounge car Claire Dodd, Lyle Talbot and Tom Mix were still awake, attending to a reminiscing Leo Carillo. In still another car a scene as surrealistic as a Dali floated through the Kansas night. Glenda Farrell lay in her Jantzen swimsuit upon a miniature Malibu Beach beneath a manufactured California sky made up of banks of GE ultraviolet lamps. The sand on the beach was genuine sand. Everything else was unreal.

The next to last car held no human occupants. The hum, barely discernible above the clack of the rails, emerged from the GE Monitor-top refrigerator positioned next to the GE all-electric range. When one grew accustomed to the dark, one saw that this was merely a demonstration kitchen lifted bodily, it seemed, from Macy's or Gimbels, and compressed into the oblong confines of a railway diner. In the last car was a magnificent white horse. An embroidered saddle blanket draped over a rail beside him bore the name 'King'. The horse was asleep.

The occasion that had gathered this congeries of actresses and appliances, cowboys and miniaturised Malibus, into one passenger train and positioned them in mid-Kansas on a night in February 1933, was the inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. If the logic of this escapes you, you simply must make the acquaintance of Charles Einfeld, sales manager for Warner Brothers.

Charles Einfeld was a dreamer. But, unlike yours and mine, his dreams always came true. Charles Einfeld dreamed (and it came true) that Warner's new musical, *42nd Street*, would open in New York on the eve of Roosevelt's inauguration, that the stars of the picture (with other contract stars, if possible) would journey to New York on a train to be called the *Better Times Special*, and that they would then go to Washington for the inauguration itself. The film, after all, was a boost for the New Deal philosophy of pulling together to whip the depression, and its star, Warner

Baxter, played a role that was a patent allegory of F.D.R. Einfeld then sought a tie-up with a large concern that would share the expenses of the train in exchange for a quantity of egregious advertising. General Electric, already linked with Warner as a supplier of appliances for movie props, rose to the bait.

The gold and silver train was given a definitive name: The Warner-GE Better Times Special. As it crossed North America from Los Angeles to New York its radio broadcasted Dick Powell's jazz contralto, GE ad-copy, and optimism (GE, as the parent organisation of RCA and NBC, was in a position to facilitate hook-ups with local stations). When the train arrived at a major city, the stars and chorus girls motored to the largest available GE showroom and demonstrated whatever appliances they found themselves thrust up against. In the evenings they appeared at a key theatre for a mini-première. Their *ultima Thule* was, of course, 42nd Street.

On 9 March bawdy, gaudy 42nd Street looked as spiffy as a drunkard in church: American flags and red, white and blue bunting draped the buildings; the ordinary incandescent bulbs were replaced with scintillant 'golden' GE lamps; a fleet of Chrysler automobiles (a separate tie-up) and GE automotive equipment was readied for a late afternoon parade which would catch those leaving work. In the North River a cruiser stood at anchor to fire a salute – a great organ-boom to cap off a roulade of aerial bombs. As the train approached New York from New Rochelle, a pride of small airplanes accompanied it. Once it arrived, the schedule was as exacting as a coronation: a reception at Grand Central by the Forty-Second Street Property Owners and Merchants Association, the parade, a GE sales meeting at the Sam Harris Theatre, and the grand première at the Strand.

This stunning synthesis of film, electrical, real-estate and transportation exploitation, partisan patrio-politics, and flecked-at-the-mouth starmania did not lurch fully armed from the head of Charles Einfeld, splendid dreamer though he was. It can only be explained in terms of the almost incestuous hegemony that characterised Hollywood's relations with vast reaches of the American economy by the mid-1930s.

The story of Hollywood's plunge into the American marketplace involves two separate histories: that of the showcasing of fashions, furnishings, accessories, cosmetics and other manufactured items, and that of the establishment of 'tie-ups' with brand-name manufacturers, corporations and industries. The two histories are interpenetrating, but they were distinctive enough to give rise to specialists who worked independently within and without the studio.

The scope of the first history can be set forth in a sentence: at the turn of the century Hollywood possessed one clothing manufacturer (of shirts) and none of furniture; by 1937 the Associated Apparel Manufacturers of

Los Angeles listed 130 members, and the Los Angeles Furniture Manufacturers Association listed 150, with an additional 330 exhibitors. Furthermore, 250 of the largest American department stores kept buyers permanently in Los Angeles.

When those intimately associated with this development reminisced about its origins, they spoke first of Cecil B. DeMille. In his autobiography DeMille maintained that the form of cinema he pioneered in the late teens and twenties was a response to pressures he received from the publicity and sales people in New York. They wanted few (preferably no) historical 'costume' dramas, but much 'modern stuff with plenty of clothes, rich sets, and action'. DeMille brought to Paramount's studios talented architects, designers, artists, costumiers and hairdressers who both drew upon the latest styles in fashions and furnishings and created hallmarks of their own. DeMille's 'modern photoplays' – films like *For Better, For Worse* and *Why Change Your Wife?* – guaranteed audiences a display of all that was chic and avant-garde.

While DeMille perfected a film display aimed at the fashion conscious, fan magazines and studio publicity photos helped spread an indigenous Hollywood 'outdoors' style made up of backless bathing suits, pedal-pushers, slacks, toppers and skirts. By the early 1930s these styles had penetrated the smallest of American small towns and had revolutionised recreational and sport dress.

The years 1927 through 1929 saw an explosive expansion of fashion manufacture and wholesaling in Los Angeles. Some of DeMille's designers opened shops which catered to a well-heeled public. The Country Club Manufacturing Company inaugurated copyrighted styles modelled by individual stars and employing their names. It was followed by 'Miss Hollywood Junior' which attached to each garment a label bearing the star's name and picture. This line was sold exclusively to one store in each major city, with the proviso that a special floor space be set aside for display. Soon, twelve cloak and suit manufacturers banded together to form Hollywood Fashion Associates. In addition, the Associated Apparel Manufacturers began to co-ordinate and give national promotion to dozens of style lines. The latter association took the lead in a form of publicity that became commonplace through the 1930s: it shot thousands of photographs of stars serving as mannequins in such news-editor pleasing locales as the Santa Anita race track, the Rose Bowl, Hollywood swimming pools and formal film receptions. The photos were distributed free, with appropriate text, to thousands of newspapers and magazines. In a more absurd vein, the Association organised bus and airplane style shows, which ferried stars, designers and buyers to resorts and famous restaurants amid flashbulbs and a contrived sense of occasion.

If one walked into New York's largest department stores toward the end of 1929 one could find abundant evidence of the penetration of

Hollywood fashions, as well as a virulent form of moviemania. One store employed uniformed Roxy ushers as its floor managers. Another advertised for sales girls that looked like Janet Gaynor and information clerks that looked like Buddy Rogers. At Saks, Mrs Pemberton would inform you that she was receiving five orders a day for pyjamas identical to the pair that Miriam Hopkins wore in *Camel Thru a Needle's Eye*. She also had received orders for gowns and suits worn by Pauline Lord, Lynne Fontaine, Frieda Innescourt, Sylvia Fields and Murial Kirkland.

The New York scene became organised, however, only with the advent in 1930 of Bernard Waldman and his Modern Merchandising Bureau. Waldman's concern soon played the role of fashion middle-man for all the major studios except Warner Brothers (Warners, always a loner, established its own Studio Styles in 1934). By the mid-1930s Waldman's system generally operated as follows: sketches and/or photographs of styles to be worn by specific actresses in specific films were sent from the studios to the Bureau (often a year in advance of the film's release). The staff first evaluated these styles and calculated new trends. They then contracted with manufacturers to have the styles produced in time for the film's release. They next secured advertising photos and other materials which would be sent to retail shops. This advertising material mentioned the film, stars and studio as well as the theatres where the film would appear. Waldman's cut of the profits was 5 per cent. The studios at first asked for 1 per cent, but before 1937 provided their designs free in exchange for abundant advertising.

Waldman's concern also established the best-known chain of fashion shops, Cinema Fashions. Macy's contracted for the first of these shops in 1930 and remained a leader in the Hollywood fashion field. By 1934 there were 298 official Cinema Fashions shops (only one permitted in each city). By 1937 there were 400, with about 1,400 other shops willing to handle some of the dozens of the Bureau's star-endorsed style lines. Cinema Fashions catered only to women capable of spending 30 dollars and more for a gown. It agreed with the studios that cheaper fashions, even though they would be eagerly received, would destroy the aura of exclusivity that surrounded a Norma Shearer or Loretta Young style. Cheaper lines might also cheapen the stars themselves, imperilling both box-office receipts and the Hollywood fashion industry.

Inevitably, competitors and cheaper lines did appear. Copyrighted styles that had had their run in the Waldman-affiliated shops were passed on to mass production (though seldom if the style was associated with a currently major star). By the later 1930s Waldman had added a line of Cinema shops that sold informal styles at popular prices. The sale of these fashions was tremendously aided by the release of photos to newspapers (they saturated Sunday supplements), major magazines and the dozens of fan magazines – *Hollywood*, *Picture Play*, *Photoplay*, *Shadowplay*, *Silver*

Screen, *Screenbook*, *Movieland*, *Movie Story*, *Movie Stories*, *Modern Movies*, *Modern Screen*, *Motion Pictures* and the rest. In monthly issues of each of these magazines, millions of readers saw Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Claudette Colbert and Norma Shearer in a series of roles unique to this period: as mannequins modelling clothes, furs, hats and accessories that they would wear in forthcoming films. The intent behind these thousands of style photos is epitomised in a 1934 *Shadowplay* caption for a dress modelled by Anita Louise: 'You will see the dress in action in Warner's *First Lady*'. Occasionally one was informed that the fashions were 'on display in leading department and ready-to-wear stores this month'. The names of the leading studio designers, Adrian of MGM, Orry-Kelly of Warners, Royer of 20th Century-Fox, Edward Stevenson of RKO, Edith Head of Paramount, Walter Plunkett of Selznick, became as familiar to readers as the stars themselves.

To all this we must add Hollywood's influence upon the cosmetics industry. In a field dominated by Eastern houses like Helena Rubinstein, Elizabeth Arden and Richard Hudnut, Hollywood's Max Factor and Perc Westmore were merely two large concerns. But Hollywood seemed to dominate the cosmetics industry because its stars appeared in the hundreds of thousands of ads that saturated the media. In the mid-1930s cosmetics ranked only second to food products in amount spent on advertising. The cycle of influence made up of films, fashion articles, 'beauty hints', columns featuring stars, ads which dutifully mentioned the star's current film and tie-in advertising in stores, made cosmetics synonymous with Hollywood. The same was true for many brands of soap, deodorants, toothpastes, hair preparations and other toiletries. No more potent endorsements were possible than those of the women who manifestly possessed the most 'radiant' and 'scintillant' eyes, teeth, complexions and hair.

Almost as significant for films as the scope of this merchandising revolution was the conception of the consumer that underpinned it. As one reads the captions beneath the style photos, the columns of beauty advice and the articles on the co-ordination of wardrobes and furnishings, one senses that those who bought these things were not varied as to age, marital status, ethnicity or any other characteristics. Out there, working as a clerk in a store and living in an apartment with a friend, was *one girl* – single, nineteen years old, Anglo-Saxon, somewhat favouring Janet Gaynor. The thousands of Hollywood-associated designers, publicity men, sales heads, beauty consultants and merchandisers had internalised her so long ago that her psychic life had become their psychic life. They empathised with her shyness, her social awkwardness, her fear of offending. They understood her slight weight problem and her chagrin at being a trifle too tall. They could tell you what sort of man she hoped to marry and how she spent her leisure time.

II

Now for our second history, that of the tie-up. In the 1930s, the two most powerful studios, Warners and MGM, evolved a form of tie-up that revolutionised sales and publicity – and permanently affected the character of films. The keystone of the method was a contractual agreement with a large established manufacturer. If the product would seem blatantly displayed if shown in a film – a bottle of Coca-Cola, for instance – the contract provided merely for a magazine and newspaper campaign that would employ pictures and endorsements of stars, and notice of recent studio releases. MGM signed a \$500,000 contract with Coca-Cola in March 1933, providing that company with the vaunted ‘star-power’ of the most star-laden studio.

There were other products, however, that could be prominently displayed in films without arousing criticism, except from the most knowledgeable. Warner’s tie-up with General Electric and General Motors provided both for the use of Warner’s stars in magazine ads and for the display of appliances and autos in films. Anyone familiar with the GE Monitor-top refrigerator will recognise it in a number of Warner films of this period. A tie-up with Buick (GM) provided for the display of autos in films and for a national advertising campaign that tied Buick to ten Warner films, among them *Gold Diggers of 1935*, *Go Into Your Dance*, *The Goose and the Gander*, *A Night at the Ritz* and *In Caliente*.

At the end of the campaign, in May 1935, *Variety* reported, ‘Automobile manufacturers have gone daffy over picture names following the campaign just completed by Buick and Warners: Latter company has tied up to stars on the last 10 pictures with Buick buggies.’

While Warners probably secured more major tie-ups than any other studio, MGM ran it a close race. We can illustrate its exploitative technique by examining the pressbook for *Dinner at Eight*, the studio’s most ambitiously promoted film of 1934. A page of photos of department store displays arranged in many cities was captioned, ‘The merchandising value of Jean Harlow’s name was never better demonstrated than by the dozens of *Dinner at Eight* fashion and shoe windows.’ The next page was headed, ‘Tie Ups A Million Dollars Worth of Promotion’ and included this text: ‘250,000 Coca-Cola dealers will exploit *Dinner at Eight*.’

Through the rest of the thirties, all of the major studios adopted and helped to perfect this system. In its classic – or perhaps Hellenistic – form, the head of exploitation supervised an effort that co-ordinated the creation of the script (tie-ups were often formative influences), the breakdown of the script into categories of products and services and the search for sponsors. Wilma Freeman of Warners told *Nation’s Business* in 1940 that she asked firms to design ‘a product that conforms with the picture’. In return Ms Freeman offered the sponsor 12,000 theatres and audiences

of 80,000,000 each week. When the product came through, a star was posed with it and the pressbook was made up. The formula, as a mathematician would say, had achieved elegance.

Before moving on to some conclusions about how all this affected films, there remains another complicity, that of the studio tie-ins with radio, to be discussed. Prior to 1932 the two major networks, CBS and NBC, did not have studio facilities in Hollywood. Warner Brothers, however, had acquired their own local station in emulation of Paramount which owned a half interest in CBS and used its nation-wide facilities to advertise films and to build up stars. Over 700 hours of Hollywood programming issued from both networks in 1937. The studios had done all in their power to woo the major networks to Hollywood, offering them their rosters of stars, their copyrighted music and advertisers eager to connect their products with star names. The following list suggests the range of programmes and sponsors that came to be associated with Hollywood between 1932 and 1937: Rinso Talkie Time, Hollywood Nights (Kissproof), Hollywood Show (Sterling Drugs), Madame Sylvia (Ralston), Hollywood Hotel (Campbell Soups), Lux Radio Theatre, Mary Pickford Dramas (Royal Gelatin), Gigantic Pictures (Tastyeast), Irene Rich Dramas (Welch Juice), Sally of the Talkies (Luxor), Jimmie Fidler (Tangee), Helen Hayes Theatre (Sanka Coffee), Leslie Howard Theatre (Hinds Cream), the Fred Astaire Programme (Packard Motors) and Ethel Barrymore Theatre (Bayer Aspirin).

The largest advertisers were, however, associated with the largest names. By 1937 CBS paired Al Jolson and Rinso, Eddie Cantor and Texaco, Jeanette McDonald and Vicks, Jack Oakie and Camels and Edward G. Robinson and Kraft. NBC followed suit with Rudy Vallee and Royal Gelatin, Bing Crosby and Kraft, Amos and Andy and Pepsodent and Jack Benny and Jello. This very potent fusion of products and performing stars aroused jealousy in the fields of recording, music publishing and journalism. Newspapers, in particular, felt that the coalition of Hollywood and radio was drying up their advertising revenue. But the most vocal critics were theatre owners. In their trade journals they protested the use of the stars they relied upon for their profits by a medium that gave its product away free. They connected declines in box-office revenue with the increased use of stars by radio, and they saw the studio sales and publicity men as madmen who had created a devouring monster in the foolish belief that they were helping the film industry. The shrewdest critics realised, however, that the tie-ups with radio advertisers gave the studios more than free advertising. Obviously lucrative contracts were involved, similar to those entered into for product tie-ups with films. By 1937 it was, in fact, common knowledge that MGM had a major contract with Maxwell House and that all requests for radio appearances and endorsements of its stars were reviewed in consultation with this company. From about 1934

on, more and more films employed radio personalities, used radio studios as locales and imitated the variety-show format. Hollywood was not so much aiding the growth of a rival medium as it was attempting to co-opt it.

The result, at least through the mid-1930s, was a kind of symbiosis which blurred the outlines of both media. Fred Astaire became as much a radio personality who performed songs from his pictures and acted out abbreviated versions of film plots over your table model Zenith as he was a dancer and performer upon the screen. The products associated with stars in films and radio became subliminally attached to their names and their radio voices. By the late 1930s the power of film and radio as advertising mediums seemed unlimited. The Hollywood studios, with their rosters of contracted stars, had come to occupy a privileged position in the advertising industry.

We can gain considerable insight into Hollywood's role in the evolution of consumerism, and into many of the characteristics of films of the 1930s and later, by combining this history with all the elements we have so far discussed in isolation. First we have an economy suddenly aware of the importance of the consumer and of the dominant role of women in the purchasing of most consumer items. (Consumer statistics widely disseminated in the late 1920s and early 1930s show that women made 80 to 90 per cent of all purchases for family use. They bought 48 per cent of drugs, 96 per cent of dry goods, 87 per cent of raw products, 98 per cent of automobiles.) Second we have a film industry committed to schemes for product display and tie-ins, schemes that brought some direct revenue to the studios but more importantly reduced prop and art department and advertising overheads. Add to all this a star system dominated by women – at MGM Shearer, Loy, Harlow, Garbo, Russell, Crawford, Goddard, Lombard, Turner, Lamarr; at Warners Davis, Francis, Stanwyck, Young, Chatterton and so on – hundreds of women stars and starlets available to the studio publicity, sales tie-in departments as – to use the favoured phrase – merchandising assets.

On one, more local, level, the combination of all these factors had some obvious and immediate effects on the kinds of films that were made. There appeared a steady output of films dominated by starlets – those hundreds of 'women's films', which are of such interest to feminist critics like Haskell and Rosen. In addition, Hollywood developed a preference for 'modern films', because of the opportunities they offered for product display and tie-ins. In many instances storylines were reshaped, to provide more shooting in locales suitable for tie-ins. Movies were made in fashion salons, department stores, beauty parlours, middle and upper-class homes with modern kitchens and bathrooms, large living rooms and so forth.

On another level, the studio tie-ins became important far beyond the influence they exerted on the kinds of films made. It is to this more

comprehensive level that I would move as I draw back from the cluttered summary I have led you through, to make some larger suggestions, not just about merchandising's contribution to Hollywood but about Hollywood's contributions to the form and character of consumerism itself. By the early 1930s market analyses were talking about the sovereignty of the consumer, the importance of women as purchasers and the necessity of learning more about their tastes and predilections. By the early 1940s market research had been invented, with its studies of the hidden needs and desires of consumers and its discovery that many products were bought for their images, their associations or the psychological gratifications they provided. Between these two movements Hollywood had co-operated in a massive effort to sell products employing a sales method that was essentially covert, associational and linked to the deeply gratifying and habituating experiences that films provided. Furthermore, the many fine sensibilities of Hollywood's designers, artists, cameramen, lighting men, directors and composers had lent themselves, even if coincidentally, to the establishment of powerful bonds between the emotional fantasy-generating substance of films and the material objects those films contained.

One can argue only from inference that Hollywood gave consumerism a distinctive bent, but what a massive base this inference can claim. Tens of millions of Americans provided the captive audience for the unique experiments in consumer manipulation that the showcasing of products in films and through star endorsements constituted. And this audience reacted so predictably that every large manufacturer in America would have bought its own small MGM had this been possible. Instead they were forced to await the advent of television with its socially acceptable juxtaposition of commercials and entertainment. The form television commercials have taken, their fusion of images augmented by editing and camera techniques, with music, lyrics and charismatic personalities, is obviously an extension of the techniques pioneered by Hollywood.

But is it equally obvious, as market researchers have claimed, that consumerism is grounded in psychological universals? What should we ascribe to the potent acculturation provided by Hollywood for several decades? Were we, as consumers, such skilled and habituated perceivers of libidinal cues, such receptive audiences for associational complexes, such romanticisers of homes, stores and highways before Hollywood gave us *Dinner at Eight*, *The Big Store* and *The Speed that Kills*? I would suggest that we were not, that Hollywood, drawing upon the resources of literature, art and music, did as much or more than any other force in capitalist culture to smooth the operation of the production-consumption cycle by fetishising products and putting the libido in libidinally invested advertising.

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'PUFFED SLEEVES BEFORE TEA-TIME'

Joan Crawford, Adrian and women audiences

Charlotte Cornelia Herzog and Jane Marie Gaines

Every little girl, all over the country, within two weeks of the release of Joan Crawford's picture, felt she would die if she couldn't have a dress like that. With the results that the country was flooded with little Joan Crawfords.¹

For *Letty Lynton* (1932), Gilbert Adrian designed Joan Crawford a gown which was to have far more significance than the film in which it was showcased. The white starched chiffon, featuring gigantic puffed and ruffled sleeves, introduced a fashion that lingered until the end of the thirties. Hollywood designers and fashion historians, recalling the period, have continually cited the 'Letty Lynton' dress as the most dramatic evidence of motion picture 'influence' on fashion behaviour.²

In the following, we begin to divide this idea of mass culture 'influence' into the theoretically more productive concepts of cultural production and women's subcultural response, which is in keeping with developments in feminist film criticism. Some of the issues raised by this criticism translate into consideration of women's fashion. For instance, ready-to-wear dresses, like motion pictures, are industrial products which carry cultural meanings. These meanings comprise the 'image' a woman assumes in her own dress and demeanour. We will deal here with how star image was articulated by means of costume, and how female fans in the thirties managed to put together similar 'looks'. This raises several questions: Did women actually 'choose' new fashions? Were women free to adorn their bodies in any imaginable way or was their appearance shaped by fashion ideas circulated by the motion picture and ready-to-wear industries? Was star imitation an indication that young women believed that clothes could change their circumstances?

STAR STYLES

Some fossils may still look to Paris for their fashions . . . but you and I know Paris isn't even a stand-in to Hollywood . . . that Paris may decree this and Paris may decree that, but when that Crawford girl pops up in puffed sleeves, then it's puffed sleeves for us before tea-time.³

In one sense, the Letty Lynton style was a commercial barometer. Its popularity corresponded with Hollywood's eclipse of Paris as 'oracle' of American style, and marked the new co-operation between the motion picture and women's clothing industries. Macy's sales of a half million 'copies' of the now legendary Letty Lynton dress is a reference to the immediate success of star styles more than anything else.⁴ When *Letty Lynton* was released in May 1932, Macy's had a Cinema Shop which specialised in gowns and accessories 'worn by the stars'.

Ready-to-wear copies or reproductions of motion picture gowns were modifications made with less fabric, so a woman was never purchasing the exact dress she had seen on the screen. Some Hollywood designers' work was closely followed in these reproductions. Adrian's designs, however, were not copied the way Orry-Kelly's designs for Warner Brothers had been.⁵ Adrian, in fact, had a particular fear that he might be imitated. Part of the distinctiveness of his style can be explained as an effort to thwart copying by creating lines which would be difficult or impossible to duplicate.⁶ Although the original Letty Lynton dress would never have been exactly duplicated, references to it abounded.

The puffy sleeve was immediately reinterpreted in a variety of ensembles and fabrics. Star fashion leaders were seen wearing the style both in and out of films. For the opening of *Strange Interlude* in 1932, Norma Shearer wore an Adrian-designed version of the voluminous-sleeved dress in organ-die and velvet, and Glenda Farrell appeared in *Lady for a Day* wearing a similar effect in pink tulle.⁷ Katherine Hepburn, as Cynthia Darrington in *Christopher Strong* (1933) wore still another rendition. In July of that year, Butterick Pattern Company made similar dresses available to ordinary women (Figure 8.1).⁸ The style was resilient and persistent and could be seen on Marlene Dietrich in black tulle with rouche effect in 1935, and on Princess Elizabeth, 10 years old, in 1936.⁹ The puffy-sleeved dress was a special occasion 'frock' which a young woman might wear for the country club dance, high school graduation or a wedding. In November 1939, Roberta Koppelman wore purple taffeta with mutton sleeves as her sister's bridesmaid in a Chicago wedding (Figure 8.2).¹⁰

**Dance Frocks
Are Bursting
Into Print**



5147 Evening frock. Plain or ruffle-edged scarf. Size 36, frock and plain scarf, 6 yards 39-in. novelty sheer silk. Sizes 12 to 30; 30 to 42 inches bust. Price, 50 Cents.

5183

5183 Chiffon frock with double-tiered cape sleeves. Size 36, 5 3/4 yds. 39. Sizes 12 to 20; 30 to 40 bust. 50 Cents.

Boa 5084

5186 Organdy frock with detachable capelet. Width 3 3/4 yds. Size 36, 5 yards 39. Sizes 12 to 20; 30 to 44 bust. 45 Cents.

5186

5147

5184 Satin evening gown. Attached sectional flared skirt with back fullness. Size 36, 4 3/8 yds. satin 39. Sizes 12 to 20; 30 to 40 bust. Price, 50 Cents. Organdy Boa 25 Cts.

5184

Figure 8.1 Butterick Pattern Company, 1933

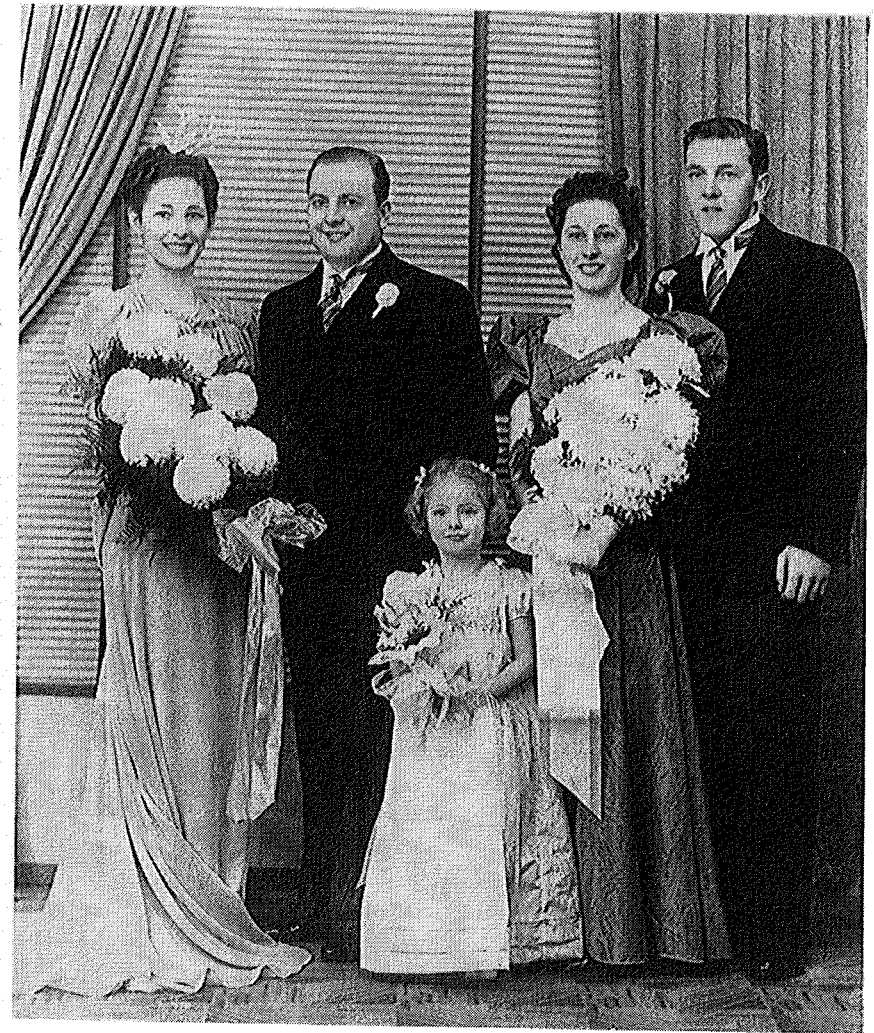


Figure 8.2

WOMEN AUDIENCES AND FASHION ON THE SCREEN

As the first thrilling bars of music herald the latest Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford or Norma Shearer production, you will notice, as the presentation unreels, the simple credit - 'Gowns by Adrian.' That is your cue to sit taut in your seat and strain all your faculties for what you and you and you will next be wearing is about to be revealed!!

Designer Helen Rose, in her book, *Just Make Them Beautiful*, says that

women went to Adrian-designed films just to see what the stars wore. It seemed to her that it hardly mattered at that time if the clothes were even appropriate for the scene.¹² Rose's recollection is perhaps a better description of the Crawford than the Garbo and Shearer vehicles designed by Adrian between 1929 and 1941. During the Adrian years at MGM, the display of clothes became conventionalised in Crawford's films. We have identified, for instance, the use of the 'social whirl' montage and the fashion-show-within-the-film as devices for showcasing shoes, purses, hats, furs and lingerie.¹³

Both the sheer number of costumes and the look of expense were important to Crawford's promotion during the 'clothes horse' phase of her career. The extensiveness of her personal wardrobe and the variety of costume changes in each new release were standard publicity topics, as was Adrian's financial extravagance. Crawford would recall that for these fashion plate films more was often spent on wardrobe than on the rights for the script.¹⁴ Critics at the time said that when there was little to remark about in the films, they could always write about the clothes.¹⁵

Joan Crawford's popularity rise dating from 1929 was coincident with an industry-wide emphasis on star costume which was immediately translated to women audiences in terms of their own clothing needs.¹⁶ In the late twenties and early thirties, studio publicity departments had begun a large-scale effort to use fashion as a means to draw women into movie theatres. Publicists wrote beauty advice and fashion commentary which was sent to studio exchanges along with sets of fashion stills (Figure 8.3).¹⁷ This material filtered out through exchanges to exhibitors who sent photographs and copy to local newspapers for Sunday supplement or women's feature page fashion specials. To the publicist, fashion was an advertising 'handle' or vehicle. It was a way to get a star featured and, hopefully, a motion picture title printed in the news media.¹⁸ In every major studio, one publicist, always a woman, was the fan magazine contact whose job was to ensure that star publicity material was converted to make-up, hair style, wardrobe or figure care articles.¹⁹ The elite fashion magazines, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, which had insisted on looking to Paris and ignoring Hollywood during the twenties, began at this time to acknowledge studio designers and to feature the more aristocratic stars as dress models.²⁰

Hollywood publicity at this time was taking on the tone and assuming the preoccupations of the high fashion magazine. Part of our concern here is to examine fashion publicity written in this vein as an index of what mattered to women fans and as a key to how they were involved through shopping and sewing in the cultural production of fashionable clothing. The following MGM publicity description of the Letty Lynton dress addresses women's interests and encourages a kind of absorption in the endless detail of dress and decoration:

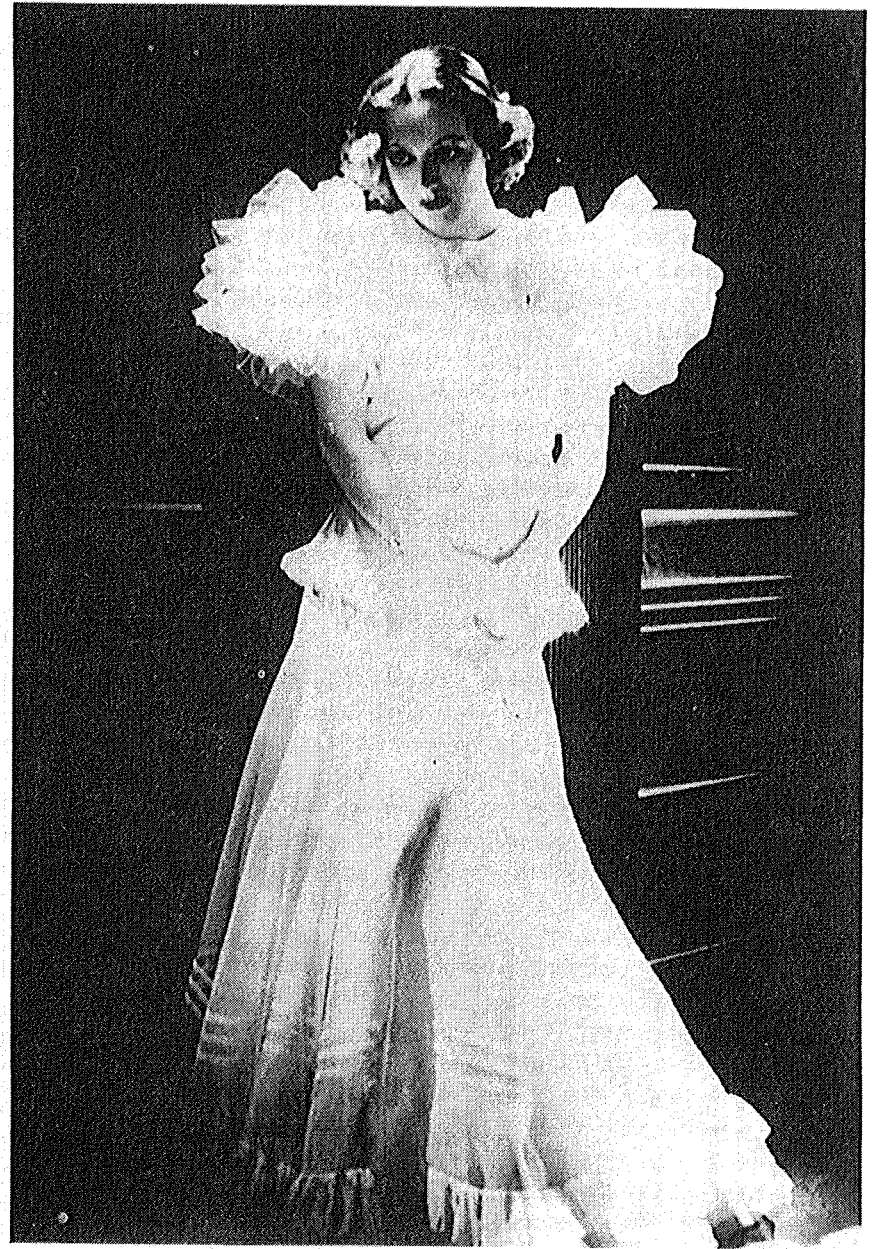


Figure 8.3 Joan Crawford in *Letty Lynton* (1932)

The predicted mutton sleeves have arrived . . . Combined with ruffles and tucks and flares they have returned to dress the modern girls. One of the prettiest and most becoming of these styles from the past – with modern trimmings – has been created by Adrian for Joan Crawford to wear in her latest Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture, *Letty Lynton*. The frock is of white *mouseline de soi* – a starched chiffon, and shows a rounded-neck and peplum-edged sleeves. The skirt beneath is of flaring and circular fullness with a series of three tucks appearing above the three-ruffled border . . . The ruffles of collar, sleeves, peplum, belt buckle and shirt are all accordian pleated.²¹

First of all, this copy, which would have been used for photo captions or as the basis for articles on Crawford's latest Adrian gown, is directed at those women who *follow* fashion developments. Although not all women would watch these occurrences quite as closely as retailers or designers, the American woman who wished to be stylish would know that the designs she saw on the screen constituted the fashion ideals to which her own dress should refer. It is assumed here that this woman would be particularly attuned to fashion cycles and current trends, designer trademarks and the fabric, cut and line of the clothes she saw the stars wear in the movies.

The woman who wanted never to be 'out of style' but always first to wear the new, would want to know that mutton sleeves were 'predicted'. The idea that the Letty Lynton dress is 'one of the prettiest and most becoming of these styles from the past – with modern trimmings' situates the design within the fashion cycle which, a woman would know, explained why she could expect styles to come back again years later. The 'fashion-conscious' woman would also want to see how a sudden style divergence such as the Letty Lynton dress might fit into the general trend of thirties fashion. She would know that at the time the film was released, the contemporary trend was towards an interest in revival styles. The mutton sleeve, puffed at the shoulder and tight from the elbow down, was a throwback to the 1890s. A fashion follower would further note that the lines of this dress moved upwards instead of down, a reversal of the drooping lines seen between 1930 and 1932. Fitted bodices were popular then as was emphasis on the hips achieved through either draped material or tunic tops. The Letty Lynton dress with its fitted bodice and hip emphasis created by a peplum, an apron-like extension of the top, continued this trend. The distinction between day and evening wear, marked by dress length, was also important in the thirties since both day and evening dresses had been short in the previous decade. Finally, the Adrian gown was the sort of evening or 'party' dress worn during summer months or in warm climates, and ideally, or rather, hopefully, as Joan Crawford had worn the dress in the film – on a shipboard cruise.

The contemporary trend was especially important to motion picture designers because they had an additional factor to contend with in their design calculations: a time lag between conception and unveiling added by production schedules. Due to this lag, a designer would have to create costumes six to eight months in advance of a film's release. In order for these designs to be neither out of date nor too *avant-garde*, the designer would compromise with styles that looked contemporary but added a novel twist. For a designer such as Adrian who aimed to affect American dress significantly, there was another frustration: a new touch might appear either too early or too late to affect the 'prevailing silhouette'.²² The mutton sleeve announced in the fashion copy arrived and stayed, but of the hundreds of costumes motion pictures premiered in this period, few diverted the course of fashion. Fashion publicity tied to the release of motion pictures, however, encouraged expectations of change with continual 'predictions'.

Designer appeal also suggested a way in which women might follow each new release, and MGM clearly used Adrians' personal as well as his artistic flamboyance to direct attention to his design style. Women would know, for instance, that one of Adrian's trademarks was 'emphasis above the table' – detail which was made especially interesting around the neck with tucks, flaps, inserts, beading or unusually shaped collars. Adrian's work was also characterised by lavish use of expensive materials such as lamé, chiffon, crepe, taffeta, satin, voile, fur, sequins and bugle beads.²³ He might, for an unconventional effect, use expensive fabric in a rather functional item, as seen in Crawford's memorable lamé polo coat.²⁴ In addition, the viewer might expect to see surprises in Adrian's asymmetrical use of contrasting black and white, in sculptural effects such as accordian pleating and in his exaggeration of a single motif, exemplified by the Letty Lynton sleeve.

Letty Lynton fashion copy acknowledges this interest with references to flares, tucks and accordian pleats in addition to the mutton sleeve, rounded neck and peplum. Women would be as interested in the fabric, *mouseline de soi*, or starched chiffon, and would want to know what it could be made to do or how easy it would be to work with. The film then showed another aspect, the dress 'in action'. Seeing the dress on Crawford would help women audiences imagine how it might 'respond' or move.

Studio publicity which revealed intricacies of costume construction assumed the existence of knowledgeable and resourceful female fans who could sew their own clothes. MGM production stills appeared in *Photoplay*, June 1932, illustrating the steps the costume department had taken to create the silver lamé cocktail dress Crawford wore in the poisoning scene from *Letty Lynton*. The description of the process, from sketch to cutting to final fitting, would be valuable information to a woman who



Figure 8.4

knew there were tricks to laying out a pattern in order to save fabric (Figure 8.4).²⁵ Not only did Butterick add 'Starred Patterns' in response to this interest in sewing glamour outfits, but *Silver Screen* and *Movie Mirror* magazines marketed patterns women could order through the

mail.²⁶ If women were making their own star styles, were they, in fact, recreating Crawford's silver lamé to wear for a 'dinner date'?

During these years, fan magazines interpreted the stars' love affairs and offered dress and grooming as well as romantic advice to those who ostensibly wished they were more like their screen idols. If Joan Crawford's sunburst evening gown seen in *No More Ladies* (1935) used 30 yards of silver tissue at \$18 per yard, the reader might modify the dress by using less yardage, *Photoplay* advised.²⁷ Or, if the reader could not afford silver fox for an evening wrap, she could make the same style in either fabric or less expensive fur.²⁸ Readers also received advice on how to adapt *one* dress for several different 'looks' or occasions. Seymour, fashion columnist for *Photoplay*, relayed advice from Joan Crawford to her fans on what to take on a trip. He reported that although Joan was taking the boat to Europe in the months after the release of *Letty Lynton* she would not be taking the 'frou frou' organdie dress with her. Instead, she planned to wear several puffed-sleeve blouses in plain organdie, eyelet batiste and dotted Swiss over a deep blue crepe evening gown. 'You could do the same thing for a fall evening costume only not have such summery materials for the blouses', Seymour suggested.²⁹

We would make a distinction here, however, between studio glamour information and the modifications of this material which appeared in fan and women's magazines in the thirties. The fan magazines continually recommended that women *adapt* star outfits to fit their own needs, and fashion writers as well as designers suggested that readers carefully select only those styles which suited them. In a 1929 issue of *Photoplay* Adrian advised: 'There are some stars you will do well to copy. Find your prototype on the screen and remember the lines she wears to help you in selecting your wardrobe.'³⁰ The practicality as much as the frivolity of dress was stressed.

In addition to Adrian, the French designer Elsa Schiaparelli was attributed with statements about appropriate and functional dress and economy in wardrobe planning.³¹ Such sources lent validity to the practical approach to fashion.

There are several ways in which this emphasis on practicality can be interpreted. First, women's publications may have recommended caution and practicality as a way of defusing potential criticism of Hollywood values and morals. The motherly tone of advice 'in the best interests of young women' can be seen this way. Second, culture industry manufacturers would know how much money women could afford to spend on clothes, movies and beauty products in the thirties. References to fabric cost per yard and the amount a woman had to 'put aside' each month if, for instance, she wanted a 'good' winter coat or serviceable shoes, all point to this. Would all women, however, have to economise in this manner? This second interpretation requires further breakdown and elaboration. In

order to do this, we need to return, briefly, to the history of ready-wear and the question of social class and consumption in the context of the depression.

FASHION AND SOCIAL CLASS

What impulse drove women to exclusive couturiers and bargain basements in their quest for puffed sleeves? Was it the desire to look like Crawford, or the subconscious urge for high romance as usually purveyed by this Grade A Glamour Girl? Did the imitators think that, dressed as Joan Crawford, they, too, might enjoy life as she does – on the screen?³²

Who were the women who were 'driven' to exclusive couturiers or bargain basements in their search for puffed sleeves? To begin with, the very rich and the wage earners have historically been first to take up new fashions. According to Ingrid Brenninkmeyer in *The Sociology of Fashion*, these two groups have less invested in convention than the middle class.³³ Fashion has had a wedge into the working class through young girls who were free to quickly drop one fashion and pick up another.³⁴ Can young working-class women account entirely for the success of retail wear star styles, particularly during the depression? Two factors are important here. First, in general, economic depression has historically encouraged mass-produced fashion sales. In both the twenties and thirties, ready-to-wear added customers from the group of more well-to-do women who were no longer able to afford dressmakers.³⁵ Second, in American society, clothes are relatively affordable commodities and have therefore served to disguise lack. Even during the depression of the thirties, it was possible for Americans to dress as though their circumstances had not changed.³⁶ Dress was not the indicator of class difference it had been during earlier historical periods. Rather, mass-produced fashion blurred class distinctions and performed an ideological function: it kept up the appearance of equality. The idea that the fashions of the stars were copied by patrons of exclusive couturiers and bargain basements alike went somewhat further. It had the most potency for the latter group, of course. To the woman with less means, the dress and the star held out something more. In order to think how a woman might measure herself against the star, and to fill out our consideration of motion picture 'influence' on fashion behaviour, we need finally to turn to the Crawford star image.

STAR IMAGE

Joan Crawford's life story was one of those star success legends which was often repeated in a way calculated to appeal to fans with similar



Figure 8.5 Joan Crawford in *Letty Lynton* (1932)

economic struggles. Like Lana Turner, Betty Hutton and Dorothy Lamour, Crawford had lived a hard life before she could relax into the ease and opulence which sympathetic stories said she had 'earned'. Fans would know how her father deserted the family and Joan left home in her teens to sing in clubs and dance in road shows. The Crawford 'hard luck' stories which were circulated in fan magazines often focused on clothes as indicators of her changing conditions. In a *Silver Screen* story

about the parallels between her own struggle and the plot of *Dancing Lady* (1933), Joan is quoted as saying that like the aspiring dancer in the film, she too had her first 'chance' when a friend gave her money to buy 'something decent to wear'. With \$14 she bought a handbag, gloves, shoes, hat, hose and dress. Recalling that dress, she said, 'I defy Hattie Carnegie to sell me a gown that will make me feel more *chic* than the little four-ninety-eight model I bought that day.'³⁷ Joan's story repeats the tenets of fashion advice to young women: 'You can be glamorous on "nothing"'. It is a matter of your own ingenuity and your ability to *wear* budget outfits as though they were Paris couture.'

Crawford's films from the Adrian period further bore this out. In thirteen of the films between 1929 and 1941, she played a character in an elevated social position by birth, such as an heiress or a socialite. In eleven of the Adrian films, she moved from a lower to a higher-class position through marriage. Some of her more memorable lower-class parts were as stenographer (*Grand Hotel*, 1932), factory worker (*Possessed*, 1931; *Mannequin*, 1938), maid (*Sadie McGee*, 1934), sales clerk (*Our Blushing Brides*, 1930; *The Women*, 1939) and cabaret singer (*The Bride Wore Red*, 1937). These films taught finishing school dress and decorum for high-class social occasions and dramatised the penalties of social *faux pas*. The Crawford character was continually lifted out of her social station because she exhibited cultivated tastes and aristocratic manners. She had a fierce aspiration to 'be better', and was often held up to other characters (sometimes other girls and sometimes her own suitors) who were either cynical about success or those who, feeling opportunity had 'evaded them', had 'settled for less'.³⁸ Joan Crawford, the star who had 'fought' her way to success, held out an idea of social advancement through dedicated work and self-improvement. A woman who read star beauty and fashion advice would know that this rise could be achieved through good grooming, diet, exercise and proper dress.

Although fashion histories report that women avidly copied the dress and imitated the lovemaking of their heroines during the thirties, we have found that there was some disagreement at the time as to whether Hollywood should offer fans glamour which was beyond their means. This conflict centred at times on the image of the dime store clerk who was thought to idolise Joan Crawford. Reviewers were critical of what they thought were 'unrealistic' representations of shop girls in Adrian gowns.³⁹ And certainly, even when Crawford played the hoofer, factory worker or maid, she wore silk or silk crepe, cut on the bias with a deep hem. Generally, the answer to this criticism was that fans *wanted* to see stars in silver fox boas and satin negligees no matter what roles they played. Joseph Mankiewicz was said to have explained to Crawford that the shop girl in the audience did not want to see her in a 'housedress with armpit

stains'. The shop girl, he said, would prefer to see the star dressed in the Adrian gowns she wished that she could wear.⁴⁰

Designer Edith Head countered this with a concern for the perspective of 'real women' in her interviews during the early years of her career. When a star she was costuming wanted to wear a gold-threaded evening gown to portray a working girl, Head argued that working girls could not be expected to 'wedge silver fox capes and lamé gowns into their clothes budgets'. When the star was not convinced, Head suggested that she listen outside theatres to the 'cynical comments of business girls and housewives concerning the elaborate wardrobes displayed by their screen counterparts'.⁴¹ A third interpretation of the fan and fashion magazine concern for practicality may be that this very emphasis softened the resentment Head described. The debate over copying the stars which arose so frequently should be seen as part of the larger picture in a society which holds out opportunity for all, but withdraws the offer for some.

CONCLUSION

Both the conflict over whether women should copy the stars and the great difference between screen costume and everyday dress have dropped out in the various historical accounts of the 'influence' of motion pictures on fashion behaviour. Also missing is reference to the massive production and promotion effort which poured out fashion fantasies through mass media channels. In 1932, the culture industries were poised to produce both fashionable goods and images of fashionable behaviour which, in effect, created the overnight 'flood' of 'little Joan Crawfords'. Fashion worked to elicit women's participation in star and screen myth-making. Women bought star products and tested star beauty recipes, circulating ideas about star image in their own improvised 'looks'. At some point, then, it seems as though the mania for star fashions 'sprang' directly from women fans.

Following a straight mass culture manipulation theory, one would argue that the function of all motion picture fashion information, whether it appeared in advice columns or advertisements, was to persuade women to buy clothes and cosmetics instead of devising homemade beauty ornaments and treatments. We have found in the material surveyed here, however, a respect for the fashion practices and preferences of ordinary women. What explains this? Women's fan and fashion publications in the thirties could hint at the richness of women's participation in their 'own' cultural activity which involved collecting and making pretty things. At this time, more research is needed on women's sewing and fashioning in the home during the thirties in order to understand how that subcultural production became attached to the culture of the mass-produced fashion.

The publications we have studied make references to colour-coordinat-

ing, mixing and matching separates, shopping for fabric remnants, stretching a paycheque and selecting accessories that would last for years. We would argue from this that women were not exactly the 'copy cat' imitators so often described. They did not step into star fashions without altering or changing something. There would be key differences between those fashions produced and pictured in magazines and on the screen and the ones women actually wore. The distance between marks unexplored cultural space.

AFTERWORD

In the five years since the publication of this article, we have continued to search for evidence of the existence of the 500,000 'copies' of the Letty Lynton dress sold in Macy's Cinema Shop coincident with the release of *Letty Lynton* (1932). One of these dresses did reappear in the 1986 Smithsonian Institute 'Hollywood: Legend and Reality' travelling exhibition. This gave us hope.

But our interviews with publicists and merchandisers, our search through pressbooks and newspapers and our examination of studio archives finally revealed something else. The thousands of Letty Lynton 'copies' as well as the hundreds of official Cinema Fashions Shops are wishful accounts of the tie-up phenomenon. Yes, star styles were a rage in the 1930s, and loose copies of the flouncy white dress were manufactured. But it is unlikely that the ready-wear industry ever produced a run of 500,000 on a dress of this type. Neither is there evidence that Bernard Waldman established Cinema Fashions Shops in 400 different US towns and cities by 1937. One short article on Waldman's Modern Merchandising Bureau (*Fortune*, 15, 1 (January 1937) appears to be the original source for the information about the agency. From there, Charles Eckert's posthumously published unfootnoted classic 'The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window' (reprinted here in part, ch. 3) ensured the Modern Merchandising Bureau's place in motion picture history.

The myth of the half million copies of the Letty Lynton dress was spread through fan and fashion magazine articles in the 1930s and has now passed safely into costume history. The discovery that the Letty Lynton copies are myth and not fact, however, should not cause us concern about the state of consumer culture and entertainment history. Rather, it should lead us to reconsider something else: Why is the publicist's promotional copy *not* valid historical discourse? Should we discount the skill of the professional publicists whose art lies in passing off promotion as news? The 500,000 dresses should not be treated as incorrect historical fact. The importance of the Letty Lynton dress is as much related to the success of a promotional ploy as it is to what women really wore in 1932.

Finally, the place of the Letty Lynton dress in motion picture and fashion history is even more curious when we consider that the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film (in which the dress appeared) has not been publicly exhibited since the year of the film's release. *Letty Lynton* was pulled from distribution because of an important plagiarism case (*Sheldon v. Metro-Goldwyn Pictures Corp.*, 1936). Consequently, the film has become canonised in copyright law rather than film studies texts. The film is an extremely interesting melodrama based on the Marie Belloc-Lowndes 1930 novel (in turn based on the notorious 1857 trial of Scottish heiress Madeline Smith, accused of murdering her lover). The one existing 35mm print is in the MGM vault in Culver City and is now the property of Lorimar Television. The memory of a film never seen is kept alive by the circulation of the George Hurrell photographs of Joan Crawford looking demure and submissive in the frothy fantasy dress.

NOTES

This is a slightly shortened version of an article which first appeared in *Wide Angle*, 6, 4 (1985) and is published here with a new 'Afterword'.

- 1 'Does Hollywood create?', *Vogue*, 813 (1 February 1913), 61.
- 2 'Does Hollywood create?'; David Chierichetti, *Hollywood Costume Design* (New York: Harmony Books, 1976), 17; W. Robert LaVine, *In a Glamorous Fashion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 44; Joseph Simms, 'Adrian: American artist and designer', *Costume*, 8 (1974), n.p.; Josephs Simms' biography of Adrian published through the Adrian Archive of Cheltenham Township Senior High School, Wyncote, Pennsylvania for a special Adrian exhibit; Ernestine Carter, *The Changing World of Fashion* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), 70, 159, with a photograph of Marlene Dietrich wearing a ruched sleeved dress which Carter describes as 'still echoing in 1935 Adrian's Letty Lynton sleeves invented for Joan Crawford in 1932'; Bob Thomas, *Joan Crawford* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 82, who wrote that 'Edith Head, who has won ten Academy Awards for costume design, has called Letty Lynton the single most important influence on fashion in film history'; and Eleanor Lambert in her article, 'Adrian exhibition to benefit education', *The Oklahoma Journal* (14 March 1971), 5D, who stated that Adrian 'turned Joan Crawford's extrabroad shoulders, large head and large mouth into a fashion identity not only for her, but for the whole late 30s generation'.
- 3 Wes Colman, 'Fads: Hollywood ideas that spread over the world', *Silver Screen*, 2, 12 (October 1932), 44.
- 4 Carter, 70; LaVine, 44.
- 5 Warner Brothers negotiated a separate contract with its designer Orry-Kelly to use his designs in a line of ready-wear clothes called 'Famous Movie Star Creations'. Several letters and interoffice memos dated 9 January 1933, 27 December 1932, 9 March 1941, etc. Orry-Kelly file, Warner Brothers Collection, University of Southern California. Warner Brothers proposed forming a corporation called Famous Star Promotional Corporation, to be in charge of selling franchises to individual manufacturers for the rights to sell designs using stars' names.
- 6 Lois Winebaum, 'Adrian', *Women's Wear Daily* (14 May 1971), 14.

- 7 Colman, 44; Marilyn, *Motion Picture*, 46, 2 (September 1933), 85.
- 8 'Dance frocks are bursting into print', *Butterick Fashion News* (July 1933), 4-5.
- 9 Carter, 159; *The Tatler*, 1805 (29 January 1936), 208.
- 10 The photographs referred to in the text are from the collection of Charlotte Koppelman Kopac.
- 11 Helen Harrison, 'Adrian's fashion secrets', *Hollywood*, 23, 9 (September 1932), 42.
- 12 Helen Rose, *Just Make Them Beautiful* (Santa Monica, California: Dennis-Landman Publishers, 1976), 147.
- 13 *Our Blushing Brides* (1930), *Mannequin* (1938) and *The Women* (1939), all include fashion shows within the film; *Chained* (1934), for instance, contains what we would call the 'social whirl' montage in which Crawford as the new wife of the owner of a steamship line is shown at a series of social events: the opera, the ballet, the races.
- 14 Roy Newquist, *Conversations with Joan Crawford* (New York: Citadel Press, 1980), 57.
- 15 Newquist, 95, 123.
- 16 Before this time, fan magazines separated fantasy gowns worn by the stars from practical clothes recommended for readers. The starlet or 'extra girl' modelled these scaled-down glamour outfits. See, for instance, 'Mary Philbin shows the wardrobe of an extra girl', *Screenland*, 17, 5 (September 1928), 38-9.
- 17 Fashion stills were different from production stills in that they featured both star and costume but did not include 'dramatic ideas'. The difference is made clear for publicists in Victor M. Shapiro's 'Duties of a unit publicity man: "musts" on each production', 1 July 1931, University of California at Los Angeles Special Collections. Also, Whitney Stine, *The Hurrell Style* (New York: John Day, 1976), 12-13, notes that Hurrell, who was employed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer at the time *Letty Lynton* was made, took glamour photographs in special sessions in his still gallery that were often reproduced in fan magazines to highlight fashions from a particular film. Other costumes featured in the *Letty Lynton* photo session with Hurrell were a sailor dress and an evening gown in white crepe and black bugle beads with white and black sections tied bandana-style at the neck and around the hips creating an asymmetrical effect. The white organdie, however, received the most photographic attention which suggests that it had been identified by the publicity department as an eye-catcher and was the centrepiece of the promotional campaign for the film.
- 18 In conversation with John Campbell, publicist, Twentieth Century-Fox, 1938 to 1943, 17 September 1980.
- 19 'Recollections of C. E. "Teet" Carle', publicist, Paramount Studios, 1927 to 1936, 1940 to 1960, transcript of oral history by Rae Lundquist, 1969, University of California at Los Angeles, 19-21.
- 20 Adrian, in 'Setting styles through the stars', *Ladies Home Journal*, 50, 2 (February 1933), 10 described how Hollywood was 'becoming the Paris of America', a direct challenge to fashion writers for these magazines who held the opinion that the Hollywood costume was vulgar.
- 21 Photo caption, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer publicity still from *Letty Lynton*, MGM Collection, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library.
- 22 Kathleen Howard, *Photoplay*, 50, 5 (November 1936), 90. Adrian, in an interview with *Photoplay*, speculated about the potential impact of *Camille*, which was not due to be released until Christmas of that year. If the 'crinoline influence' could be seen in the 'prevailing silhouette', then he expected that the

- Camille* designs could add more new touches, he said. However, it was also possible that they would appear either too early or too late to have any effect at all.
- 23 The notorious red evening gown (and cape) seen in *The Bride Wore Red* was made entirely of bugle beads.
 - 24 Margaret J. Bailey, *Those Glorious Glamour Years* (Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel, 1982), 104, identifies this coat as from *I Live My Life* (1935).
 - 25 'How they save Crawford's time', *Photoplay*, 42, 1 (June 1932), 76.
 - 26 'Movie mirror pattern department', *Movie Mirror*, September 1934, 59, and 'Kay Francis selected this dress for Silver Screen's pattern', *Silver Screen*, 4, 12 (October 1934), 54.
 - 27 Marvin Courtenay, 'Mid-summer fashion forecast', *Photoplay*, 48, 2 (July 1935), 101.
 - 28 Ibid.
 - 29 Seymour, 'Little tricks make Hollywood fashions individual', *Photoplay*, 42, 4 (September 1932), 104.
 - 30 Lois Shirley, 'Your clothes come from Hollywood', *Photoplay*, 35, 3 (February 1929), 131.
 - 31 Elsa Schiaparelli, 'How to be chic on a small income', *Photoplay*, August 1936, 60.
 - 32 Dorothy Spensley, 'The most copied girl in the world', *Motion Picture*, 53, 4 (May 1937), 69.
 - 33 Ingrid Brenninkmeyer, *The Sociology of Fashion* (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1963), 72-4.
 - 34 Rene Konig, *The Restless Image* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973), 213.
 - 35 Brenninkmeyer, 91.
 - 36 Michael Harrington, *The Other America* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 17.
 - 37 Patricia Keats, 'Our "Dancing Lady"', *Silver Screen*, 3, 12 (October 1933), 49.
 - 38 The Crawford films illustrated the advantages of social betterment but criticised the ultrawealthy, characterised in the films as decadent, faithless and not serious or hard-working enough to deserve her love. The man who promises to give her everything is sometimes an aimless playboy (*Dancing Lady*, *Our Blushing Brides*), too old or too debauched (*Chained*, *Sadie McGee*). Crawford and her shipping magnate husband (Spencer Tracy) are happiest in *Mannequin* when he goes bankrupt and they have to return to a more modest life.
 - 39 Bob Thomas, *Joan Crawford* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 107 and Lawrence J. Quirk, *The Films of Joan Crawford* (Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel, 1968), 20, wrote that one critic of *Reunion in France* (1942) commented that, 'Despite reports of limited yardgoods and costume budgets in Hollywood (it was mid-World War II) Miss Crawford manages to appear in a new gown in virtually every scene.'
 - 40 Thomas, *Joan Crawford*, 107.
 - 41 Beryl Williams, *Fashion Is Our Business* (New York: Lippincott, 1945), 149.