

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

The *Letty Lynton* Dress:  
A Case Study of  
Film Costume and Women's Fashions of the 1930s

by

Monique Brandt

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Science

DEPARTMENT OF CLOTHING AND TEXTILES

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THE LETTY LYNTON DRESS:  
A CASE STUDY OF FILM COSTUME AND  
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BY

MONIQUE BRANDT

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba  
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## ABSTRACT

It is a common perception that movie costumes influence fashion. There are logical reasons why films and fashion can be linked together: both are part of the material culture and popular culture of a society, both are forms of communication. Theories from fashion, film studies and mass communications can be used to explain how films and fashion relate. None explains the relationship entirely.

A white dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton* was chosen for study. The costume was analyzed for design details. *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping* were examined for pictures of garments. The 2,016 garments, chosen equally from each magazine, distributed evenly over the seven year collection period (1930-1936) and equally distributed between fashion features, advertisements and illustrations, were checked for the presence of the design details.

Any impact the *Letty Lynton* dress had on women's fashion of the 1930s was found in the increase of the number of design details rather than in copies of the costume. No duplicates and only 21 pictures of similar garments were found. All of the design details used in the *Letty Lynton* dress were present in the magazines before the release of the movie. The design details of puff sleeves, hour-glass silhouette and ruffles, used by Adrian to enhance the function of the costume, became more common after the release of the movie and were important to the recognition of similar dresses. Similar results were found in *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping*.

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

Motion pictures are perceived to have an important influence on human behaviour. This perception was especially strong in the 1930s (Charter, 1933/1970). The way people walked, talked, loved and even dressed was believed to be influenced by the movies.

Movie costumes were, and are, considered an important influence on fashion. Yet, very little has been written on the specific relationship of film costume to fashion, and there is even less empirical research on the subject. What writings there are on the topic are either contradictory, inconclusive, or based upon studio publicity or designer's beliefs (Adrian, 1933; Adrian, 1934; Eckert, 1978; Gustafson, 1982; Herzog & Gaines, 1991; LaValley, 1987; Luick, 1933; Maeder, 1987). The purpose of this study is to analyse empirical data and clarify the relationship between a selected film costume and fashion as found in women's magazines of the period.

Fashion and Film

It is not unreasonable to link film costume and fashionable clothing. Both films and fashions are part of the material culture of a society (McCracken, 1988); both are indicative of the time, place, and people that produced them. Films are seen as a reflection of the "desires, needs, fears, and aspirations of a society at a given time" (Allen &

Gomery, 1985, p. 154), and to paraphrase Laver, the crinoline is as much a symbol of Victorian England as the Albert memorial (Brenninkmeyer, 1963). Allen and Gomery (1985) describe film as a "multifaceted phenomenon: art form, economic institution, cultural product, and technology" (p. v). The description is equally apt for clothing.

### Theoretical Links

There are theories concerning fashion, film, and mass communications that explain how films could have an impact on fashion and how fashion could have an impact on film. These theories relate to, complement, and parallel each other.

The fashion diffusion theory (Sproles, 1979) and the diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1962) identify opinion leaders as those who adopt an innovation early in the cycle of diffusion. Opinion leaders can be people in the media such as actors in a film. These people legitimize or give status to an innovation.

The multi-step theory of mass communication, related to the diffusion theories, also identifies an intervening person, who is present between the originator of a thought, idea, or innovation, and the recipient of the message, idea, or product (Jamieson & Campbell, 1988). The multi-step theory allows for feedback from the audience to influence the originator of the message.

Part of Mulvey's "to be looked at" theory (1975) relates to the diffusion and multi-step theories. Because the actors in a movie portray a desirable, possibly idealised self,

viewers may wish to emulate them. Stars serve as fashion opinion leaders, legitimizing a style.

Semiotics, the study of signs, is used in both fashion and film (Kaiser, 1990; Silverman, 1983). A certain style of garment could signify something desirable to the viewer. The viewer might wish to adopt this style. Common to all the theories is the concept of a person, such as a movie actor, who is looked up to, admired or emulated, and who legitimizes an innovation or fashion.

### Historic Links

In both research and popular literature the 1930s are the most commonly mentioned era with respect to film's influence on women's fashion. There are several factors which support this belief. The 1930s were an important decade for films. Sound became firmly established and methods for filming in colour were introduced. The studio and star systems, in which actors, directors, designers, or technical people were under long term contract to a studio, were ensconced (Hampton, 1970). The studio and star systems allowed teams, under the direction of a producer, to work together over a long period. This helped to establish an identifiable image or look for the star.

The 1930s were also crucial for female actors. More women were ranked as top box office stars in the 1930s than at any other time; in 1932, the top three box office draws were women (Medeiros, 1988). The number of female stars, their stature, and the importance of their roles have been

unequaled since the 1930s (Medeiros, 1988).

Movie going was a popular pastime throughout the 1930s for the Canadian and American public. During the 1930s, Canadians went to the movies 10 times a year on average (Urquart, 1965). Canadians now attend the movie theatre about three times a year (Canada Year Book, 1992). In the United States, 80 million people attended the movies every week in 1930 (Finler, 1988). In comparison, about 20 million Americans attended the movies each week in 1985 (Finler, 1988). Most films seen by Canadians, then as now, were produced by Hollywood (Horn, 1984).

Given the importance of movies in the 1930s, the stature of women within these movies, and the prevalence of this decade in the literature, this study focuses on the relationship between a selected film costume and women's fashion in the 1930s.

### Background

Though it appears logical that films and fashions are related and that film costumes could influence fashion, the literature is mixed. Belkaoui and Belkaoui (1976) found that media, such as print advertisements and films, reflect what already exists in a society. Maeder (1987) supported this view, but carried it further, making a convincing argument for fashion's influence on historical films.

Conversely, Dominick (1979) and others stated that media influence people's behaviour. Blumer (1933/1970) described the movies as "one of the main sources of information on



styles of clothing and makeup" (p. 30). LaValley (1987) discussed how historical films influenced fashion.

Eckert (1978) described extensively the commercial connections or tie-ins between films and merchandising. But, this work was not referenced and it is probable that it was based on press kits and studio publicity releases. Herzog and Gaines (1991) studied costumes designed by Adrian for Joan Crawford in *Letty Lynton*. Their research stemmed in part from the writings of Eckert (1978). Herzog and Gaines (1991) found no evidence to support Eckert's (1978) claims of extensive tie-ins and retail merchandising of the costumes in *Letty Lynton*.

Gustafson (1982) examined the influence of Edith Head's costume designs on fashion. He found that most of the costumes had no impact on women's fashion. One costume said to have started a trend was a black dress worn by Audrey Hepburn in *Sabrina*. Gustafson's (1982) findings contradicted this. Not only did the *Sabrina* dress not initiate a style, the look had existed several years before the movie's release. Gustafson (1982) found that the few costumes that did show up as street wear in women's magazines had certain elements in common. The costumes tended to be exotic creations worn by stars with whom the audience could identify.

#### Justification for Research

A lack of empirical research, conclusions based upon studio publicity or designer's beliefs, and conflicting and

inconclusive findings all point to the need for more research in the area of fashion and film costume.

Since the 1930s appear to be an important time with regards to film costume and fashion, an example from this decade was used to determine the nature of the relationship. A selected film costume was analyzed for design details and fashionable dress in magazines was examined for the same design details.

Magazines were used because they are a form of mass communication, as movies are. Like films and fashion, magazines are part of the material culture of a society. Women's magazines in the 1930s were aimed at the mass market consumer, and they offered women advice on many things, including how to dress.

#### The *Letty Lynton* Dress

A white ruffled dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton* was chosen for the study (see Figure 1). The combination of actor, designer, movie and costume was identified as the most recurrent unit described in print (see Appendix A). It is "continually cited . . . as the most dramatic evidence of motion picture 'influence' on fashion behavior" (Herzog & Gaines, 1991, p. 74). The costume has been described as the "famous *Letty Lynton* dress" (Leese, 1991, p.6).

Figure 1 - The *Letty Lynton* Dress



Note: From Costume Design in the Movies (p. 7) by E. Leese, 1991, New York: Dover. Copyright 1932, 1959 by MGM. Reprinted by permission of Turner Entertainment Co.

The *Letty Lynton* costume has a controversial history. Macy's was said to have sold 500,000 copies of the dress (Eckert, 1978; Leese, 1991). Eckert (1978) wrote that it was featured in 400 Cinema Fashion Shops across the country. But, Herzog and Gaines (1991) found no evidence of the half million copies sold by Macy's nor of the 400 Cinema Fashion Shops.

It is questionable whether this costume is the precursor of the broad-shouldered look that emerged in the mid 1930s and 1940s as credited by some writers (Chierichetti, 1976; Leese, 1991). Schiaparelli was also credited with starting the broad shoulder (Chierichetti, 1976; Collard, 1983). Others say Schiaparelli's broad-shouldered design was first shown in her 1933 collection (Collard, 1983), a year after the movie's release.

#### Questions to be Answered

Is there a relationship between films and fashion? What is the nature of the relationship? Do clothing fashions have an impact on film costumes? Do film costumes have an effect on fashion? Or, do neither films nor fashions have any impact on the other? Is the relationship between film costume and fashion only in one direction? Or, can it work in both directions simultaneously? Do clothing fashions and film costumes exist on a parallel plane, originating out of the common source of a society, but never intersecting?

Is credit given to the costume designer, actor, or movie if a fashion is popularised? Is there a time lag between the

release of a film and the appearance of similar fashionable clothing, or is the effect immediate? Do film costumes and fashions have the same relationship in Canada as they do in the United States?

Using the white dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton* as an example, the study attempts to answer these questions. The purpose of the study is to document the appearance of a particular design in women's magazines in relation to the design being shown in a movie. Based on the documentation, the visibility of this design in American and Canadian women's magazines, prior to, during, and after the release of the movie is described.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Fashion

##### Definition of Fashion

Since this study examines women's fashions of the 1930s and their relationship with film costume, a clear definition of fashion is necessary. For the purposes of the study fashion is defined as the prevailing style of any given time (Frings, 1991; Nystrom, 1928).

Other definitions of fashion, such as those by Sproles (1979) and Kefgen and Touchie-Specht (1986) are similar to Nystrom's and Frings's. These definitions have three elements in common. First is the idea of prevailing style: a certain style is adopted by many people. The second element is time: the style is adopted at a given point in time. The implication of the time element is that at another point in time, another style may be prevalent. This leads to the third element: the concept of change. If the prevailing style is worn at a given point in time and another style is worn at another point in time, then the prevailing style must change over time.

##### Fashion as Part of Material Culture

The material culture of a society is comprised of the physical goods and products of that society. It is the concrete and tangible expression of that society (Kaiser, 1990). Clothing is part of the material culture of a people.

It is produced and worn at a given point in time and place; it is part of the art and artifacts of a society.

Fashionable clothing is part of the material culture of a society and part of the popular culture. Popular culture is composed of those items and artifacts that are in general popular use by the masses (McCracken, 1988).

A complicated combination of historical, economic, political, geographic, climatic, technological, artistic, and social factors influences clothing. Like other cultural forms, clothing can come to represent and to transmit and transform shared values (Kaiser, 1990).

Anspach and Kwon (1976) found that the Western dress styles adopted by Korean women varied with their age-culture group and their values, as evidenced by their education. The younger women were more likely to have a higher level of adoption of Western clothes and Western values. The older women tended to have adopted fewer Western clothes and those they did adopt tended to resemble traditional Korean clothing.

#### Clothing as Communication

Clothing is a form of non-verbal communication. It can transmit messages of gender, age, group affiliation, political attitude, even personality. Buckley and Roach (1974) found that clothing was a communicator of established culture and counter-culture social and political attitudes. Subjects in Workman's (1988) study inferred personality traits such as active or inactive based on the perceived

ownership of brand-name or store brand jeans.

Semiotics, or the study of signs, is often used in the study of clothing communication. The sign is composed of the signifier and what it signifies. In personal appearance the signifier would be the tangible aspect of appearance such as clothing or hairstyle. That which is signified is interpreted by the viewer. The meaning of the sign is determined by the context and cultural framework and is not fixed (Kaiser, 1990).

A clothing style may be adopted because of what it signifies to the wearer and to the viewer. For example, a woman might adopt a skirted suit for career wear because to her, and to other people in her work environment, it signifies a business like image.

### Fashion Theories

Fashion theories explain how fashion change occurs. The theories can be categorized into two types: those that theorize how and why people wear clothes on an individual or group basis, and those that explain how new styles are transmitted.

Change is a fundamental component in the concept of fashion. Change is propelled by the twin desires for conformity and differentiation and the striving for balance between the two. This dichotomy is central for several fashion theories that explore how fashion change occurs on an individual or group basis.

Simmel (1904/1957) theorized that the lower classes,



wishing to emulate the upper classes, would conform to the upper classes prestigious style of dress. The upper classes, wishing to differentiate themselves from the lower classes, would change their style of dress. This new style of dress would then be imitated by the lower classes, perpetuating the cycle of change.

Nystrom (1928) also used the desires for conformity and deviance in his theory. Nystrom (1928) hypothesised that fatigue or boredom with the current style, curiosity for the new, and the desire for new sensations were motivations for wearing new or different clothing. Rebellion against convention or a desire to be different were also motivations for deviant clothing. Clothing that conformed to the norm could be prompted by a desire for companionship or a wish to dress like the members of a group that one belonged to or wished to belong to.

Blumer (1969) built on Simmel's notion of prestige in fashion and separated it from class differentiation. Blumer believed fashion was a function of collective selection. Blumer stated that individuals choose clothing based on rational decision. But as a group, people collectively select a style because they have similar life experiences and because the style has respectability or a stamp of approval. The endorsement comes from an elite group of people whose prestige stems not from some inherent social position, but from their ability to identify the direction of fashion and their adroitness at being at the forefront of the collective selection.

A person may wish to wear a particular style because it has been endorsed by the fashion elite, or because it is new and different. Because fashion is about change and newness and modernity, it is sensitive to whatever is current. Developments in art and technology help define what is currently new and potentially fashionable. What becomes fashionable is that which fits the zeitgeist or spirit of the time (Blumer, 1969).

Fashion moves in different ways across a society. Simmel (1904/1957) described how fashion trickled-down from the elite upper classes to the lower classes. Blumer (1969) felt that the fashion elite were not necessarily the upper classes and therefore fashion could trickle across different social classes simultaneously if the new style was deemed to fit the spirit of the times. Fashion could also float up from the lower classes (Field, 1981).

Common to the three directional theories of fashion movement is the notion of a fashion elite whom others wish to identify with or emulate. They may be considered elite because of social position or because of their potential to be fashionable.

The fashion diffusion theory explains how a style moves from the elite group to the general masses. Fashions have a cycle, from initial introduction, to adoption by a few people, to greater acceptance and adoption by most people, to gradual obsolescence. People are categorized according to when in the fashion cycle they adopt a new fashion: fashion innovator, fashion opinion leader, mass market consumer, late

fashion follower, and fashion isolate or laggard (Sproles, 1979). The process of adopting a new fashion is the same as the process for adopting any innovation: awareness, evaluation, and adoption or rejection (Rogers, 1962).

The elite group of people in Simmel's (1904/1957) and Blumer's (1969) theories are change agents. Change agents can be either fashion innovators or fashion opinion leaders, but they initiate or propel an innovation. The elite lend credence to or legitimize a fashion (Sproles, 1979).

The previous theories explain why change in clothing style occurs and how it occurs. They do not address what direction the change takes.

At first style changes in fashion might appear to be random; hemlines move up or down, sleeves and necklines alter. Researchers such as Richardson and Kroeber (1940), Young (1937/1966), and Belleau (1987) found fashion to be cyclical. Similar styles and silhouettes recur regularly throughout the history of Western dress.

Lowe and Lowe (1990) measured the velocity of change in women's formal evening dress. They found that fashion is driven by both endogenous (internal) and exogenous (external) forces. Each new style gradually evolves out of a previous style (endogenous), but there are outside factors (exogenous) that influence the direction that evolution takes or that add new elements to the style.

Robenstine and Kelley (1981) examined whether fashion change is related to social change (exogenous). They found moderate support suggesting that fashion change is unrelated

to social change (endogenous).

Behling (1985-1986) related fashion change to demographics. A style becomes popular when large numbers of people adopt it. The elite or fashion opinion leaders serve as role models. The role models are determined by the mean age of the population. Behling (1985-1986) cites two eras when the fashion elite, because of demographics, moved from the upper classes to the lower, and fashion percolated-up. In the 1920s and the 1960s the median age was very young, and the ideal woman in both decades was very young, almost boyish. During times when the median age was older, like the 1930s, the role models were also older.

A composite of the previous theories supports the concept of fashion change moving from a fashion elite. The elite are a prestigious group of people who are role models because they have the potential to be fashionable. Others, wishing to emulate, identify with, or belong to this group, conform to the elite style of dress because the style of dress signifies something desirable to them. The elite, wishing to differentiate themselves, adopt another style, which is in turn imitated. Endogenous forces prompt the style to be different, but not too different. Exogenous forces point to the direction which stylistic change takes. It is an ongoing process of gradual evolution.

#### Film

The study of film can be divided into four areas: social, aesthetic, economic, and technological (Allen &

Gomery, 1985). The following section will deal with the social aspects as well as discuss some aesthetic theories of film.

### Film as Part of Material Culture

Motion pictures are part of the material culture of a society. Movies can be an obvious reflection of the society that produced them, because in them we see evidence of the way people walk, talk, act and dress. Films are simultaneously a documentation of art, economics and technology (Allen & Gomery, 1985).

Like fashion and other cultural forms, movies are seen as both a reflection of and an influence on society (Kaiser, 1990). They represent, transmit, and transform cultural values. Because of their vast audience, the potential for influence is perceived as enormous. Since the inception of motion pictures there has been concern about their effect on viewers because of their status as cultural form.

### Film Theories

There are many theories in the area of Film Studies. This section deals with those that appear particularly germane to film costume and fashion.

Mulvey's 'to be looked at' theory (1975), based on Freudian psychoanalytical thought, expands on the concept of scopophilia (pleasure in looking) and applies it to the context of motion pictures, specifically women, as they are portrayed in movies. Part of this theory is useful in

examining the relationship of film costume and fashion.

Mulvey (1975) proposed that in some ways, viewing a movie is similar to the way in which a child first recognizes its own image in a mirror. The image the child sees is him- or herself, but an idealized, more complete, more perfect self. In this sense, the audience views the actor in the same way the child sees its reflection in the mirror. To the viewer in the audience, the actor is like him- or herself, only idealized, more complete, more perfect. The star portrays "a complex process of likeness and difference (the glamorous impersonates the ordinary)" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 18).

The female viewer identifies with the glamorous actor on screen (Mulvey, 1975). The actor, masquerading as ordinary, is like herself, only better, more glamorous. Wishing to become more like the image on the screen, the viewer attempts to emulate the actor, perhaps by dressing like her.

Semiotics are useful in studying the relationship of film costume and fashion. People may adopt costumes from a film as fashion because of what the costume signifies. The meaning of the signifier, or costume, would be dependent upon the context. The context includes: when and how the costume was seen in the movie, by whom it was worn, the importance of the costume to the story, the image of the actor wearing the costume, and the cultural framework of the viewer watching the movie.

In both semiotic and 'to be looked at' theory the film costume could be part of a desirable image that the viewer might wish to emulate.

## Mass Communications

### Definition and Function

In any communication process there is a sender, a receiver and a message. In mass communications the mass media are the transmitters of a message, the audience is the receiver, and the message is variable. The sender of the message would be the person or persons responsible for producing the message, such as the writers and directors of a television show or movie. The mass media include radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and movies (Schramm, 1972).

There are several defining aspects of mass communications. The senders operate within a social context; they are influenced by society and society influences them. The messages transmitted by the mass media are public and are accessible to a mass audience. Though the messages transmitted are essentially one way, in that they travel from sender to receiver, a two-way process is invoked when the receiver selects or chooses what he or she is to receive. Additionally, the sender of the mass communication message is usually a large and complex organization (DeVito, 1990).

Mass media have several functions. The first and possibly the most obvious is to entertain, but media can also be used to confer status, to impart information, and to enforce social norms (Lazerfeld & Merton, 1948/1972).

### Movies as Mass Communication

Movies are a medium for mass communication. The movie

studio is a large and complex organization, operating within a social context and sending its message to a mass audience. Movies are accessible to the public. The information is one-way, but audiences are sending a message back to the movie studio when they choose which movie to see.

Though movies are primarily thought of as entertainment, they do serve other functions. The documentary is a clear example of a movie that imparts information. Movies routinely enforce social norms by portraying people as successful when they follow these norms. Deviance is usually punished (Haskell, 1974). Movies also confer status when an actor is elevated to stardom.

#### Theories of Mass Communications

Of the theories on how mass media, including movies, communicate, the most basic is the simple one-step theory. In this theory the movie has a direct impact on its audience (Lazerfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944/1972). For example, viewers in the audience, hearing a new expression by the actor, use this phrase in their own speech. This theory ignores possible confounding factors such as the possible influences of other people, or the effect of interpersonal relationships. In the example used, the phrase might be adopted by someone because a peer used it.

A more complex theory, designed to accommodate possible intervening factors, is the two-step theory (Berelson, 1948/1972; Katz, 1957/1972). Because people are more influenced by interpersonal contact than by the media, media



influence the public by first influencing opinion leaders who in turn influence the public. The opinion leaders can be members of the public or people within the media such as movie stars. This theory does not allow for feedback from the audience.

The theory that grew out of limitations in the two-step theory is the multi-step theory. This theory proposes that media influence an audience, whose members in turn influence each other and then influence the media (Jamieson & Campbell, 1988). The multi-step theory allows for complex interactions between various people and various media.

According to the agenda setting theory (Shaw & McCombs, 1977), media select and call attention to certain people, ideas or events. The selection and attention can confer importance or status. From this theory arises the question: does the media cover only important events, people or ideas, or do events, people or ideas become important because the media cover them?

Part of the agenda setting theory of mass communications is the concept of gatekeeper (Lasswell, 1948/1972). The gatekeeper controls what information, ideas, and events are portrayed in the media. Examples of gatekeepers would be television programmers, magazine editors, movie producers and studio heads.

The diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1962) looks at how people are influenced to adopt something new. It is used in fashion as well as mass communications. The mass media provide ways by which information about the innovation

can be diffused. According to Rogers (1962) there are three general stages to the adoption of an innovation. The first stage is the information acquisition stage in which a person first becomes aware of and acquires information about an innovation. In the second stage, the person evaluates this information, and either rejects or adopts the innovation in the third stage. For example, a movie viewer might see a new dress design in a movie, the viewer evaluates whether this dress would be desirable to her, and decides whether to buy a similar dress.

The first people to adopt an innovation are the innovators. They do not necessarily originate an idea, but they introduce it. Movies can be innovators, introducing an innovation, such as a new style of garment, to the masses. Early adopters are the next group to adopt an innovation, they legitimize and make the innovation acceptable. The innovation is then adopted by the early majority, the late majority, and finally the laggards.

#### Theories Pertinent to Film Costume and Fashion

When examining the possible relationship between film costume and fashion several theories already discussed appear applicable. The following section is a compilation of these theories.

#### Diffusion of Innovations and Fashion Theories

To explain how film costume might influence clothing fashion, the diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1962)

and the fashion diffusion theory (Sproles, 1979) are useful. The innovator (Rogers, 1962) or fashion innovator (Sproles, 1979) is the first to wear or use an innovation. They introduce it. Films could be innovators by being the first to display a new fashion.

The opinion leader legitimizes an existing innovation. Opinion leaders are usually early adopters (Rogers, 1962) or fashion opinion leaders (Sproles, 1979). Actors in movies could serve as opinion leaders, popularizing or conferring status on a new but existing fashion. Innovative communicators (Rogers, 1962) are those people who are both innovators and opinion leaders. They introduce an innovation and legitimize it. Movie actors could act as innovative communicators by introducing a new style and conferring status to it. The innovators, opinion leaders, and innovative communicators are all change agents, people who initiate or drive an innovation.

Fashion opinion leaders can be in the media, such as actors, or they can be part of the public. Polegato and Wall (1980) show that people who are fashion opinion leaders derive their fashion information from several sources, including television performers and movie actors.

Movies and movie actors could be an exogenous force (Lowe & Lowe, 1990) that influences fashion. Because costume designers in a given society would be subject to similar life experiences (Blumer, 1969) as the movie audience, the costume could be similar to clothing already being worn. For those seeking differentiation (Simmel, 1904/1957; Nystrom, 1928),

the movie costume would be different, but not too different.

### Other Mass Communications Theories

The step theories of mass communication can also be used to explain the relationship between film costume and fashion. The one-step theory (Lazerfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944/1972) suggests that the film costume directly influences the audience to buy or wear a similar garment.

The two-step theory (Berelson, 1948/1972; Katz, 1957/1972) proposes the existence of an intervening person who is influenced by the movie costume, adopts it and then influences others. In the innovation theories this person would be called the opinion leader. The intervening person could be an actor, a fashion opinion leader in the audience or a magazine that showed the movie costume as a fashion.

The multi-step theory of mass communications (Jamieson & Campbell, 1988) allows for the influence of fashion on film costume and for the influence of film costume on fashion. Film costumes could influence what fashionable people wear. The fashionable people influence other people. The film costumes are also influenced by what people wear.

### Film Theories

There are film theories that are relevant to the relationship of film costume and fashionable clothing. Part of Mulvey's 'to be looked at' theory (1975) can be related to the diffusion theories. Because the actors portray a desirable, idealized self, viewers may want to emulate them.

Actors serve as fashion opinion leaders, legitimizing a style.

Semiotics is used for film and fashion. A movie costume could communicate or signify (Kaiser, 1990) something desirable to the viewer. The viewer may then want to adopt this signifier.

Common to all the theories is the premise of the film costume as something desirable. Either the movie confers status upon the costume, the actor is part of an elite that the viewer wishes to emulate, or the costume signifies something desirable to the viewer. The effect can be direct, from actor to audience. It can be indirect, from fashion opinion leader to others within a group, or via a magazine that showcases the new movie fashion.

### Film Costume

#### Function of Film Costume

The primary function of film costume is to help delineate the character's image and to define changes within the character. Edith Head (1983) believed that even if the sound should disappear from a movie, the costumes should still convey to the viewer a sense of the characters and their relationships. This relates to semiotics in clothing and film where the costume signifies something to the viewer. A costume helps the actor get into character and convincingly portray the part.

A secondary function of film costume is to enhance the image or glamorize the star. The costume designer Adrian

frequently used details above the waist to help focus attention on the actor's face (Chierichetti, 1976). A third function of film costume was characteristic of the 1930s. The costumes were used as a vehicle for publicising the movie. Clothes were often culled and used for advance publicity in movie and women's magazines.

Film costumes are designed by costume designers, but the image of the actor on the screen is the result of the combined efforts of the director, writer, actor, designer, camera person, and other technicians. Since film costumes are designed to meet the requirements of a film, if a trend is started it is "purely an accident" (Head, 1983, p. 163).

The costume designer, unlike the fashion designer, works from a script with a specific actor and character in mind and not to some idealized fit model and creation that is purely the designer's invention (Berg & Engelmeier, 1990). Head (1983) stated that costume designers have no control over what they do, whereas fashion designers are usually free to "do what they consider their own thing" (p. 166). While the sentiments expressed by Head (1983) and Berg and Engelmeier (1990) may disregard the realities of the fashion marketplace, they point out that film costumes are designed for films and not for the buying public.

Though Head (1983) believed that film designers experienced a lack of control over their product, certain designers had a recognizable look. Travis Banton was known for his slick, sophisticated styles worn by Marlene Dietrich (Chierichetti, 1976). Walter Plunkett was admired for his

accurate historical costumes (LaValley, 1987), and Adrian was known for his cosmopolitan and versatile designs for stars such as Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford (Leese, 1991). These designers were all prominent in the 1930s.

### Evolution of Film Costume

In the early days of movie making, film costumes were not designed specifically for a film. If the film was historical or exotic, or of a previously staged theatrical production, costumes and possibly sets were borrowed from theatre and opera companies. If the film being produced was modern dress, then actors were expected to supply their own costumes (Chierichetti, 1976). Gloria Swanson believed that part of the reason she was so employable in the early years of her career was because she had an extensive wardrobe (Swanson, 1980).

By the 1930s, film costumes for female leads were specifically designed for a film. Female extras wore costumes provided by the studio, but not always designed for the specific movie being filmed. Males, both leads and extras, were expected to supply their own costumes unless the film was historic. Then, costumes for the leads were specifically designed and extras were costumed out of the studio's wardrobe (Chierichetti, 1976). Males continued to supply their modern dress costumes into the forties (Head, 1983).

The emergence of the costume designer parallels the rise of the star system (Chierichetti, 1976). The rise of the

star system parallels the rise of the studio system (Mordden, 1983). Under the star and studio systems, the same actors, technicians and directors, were under long term contract to a given studio. This meant that the same designers, writers, directors, technicians and actors, overseen by the producer, could work together for many films and a recognizable image was established for the star actor. The costume designer played an especially important role in creating the star's glamorous image.

As the studio system waned in the 1950s, so did the star system. Actors, designers and directors were hired for individual films. When the realistic movies of the 1960s and 1970s were being made, costume designers were occasionally dispensed with and film costuming had come full circle, with the actors or even non-actors again supplying the costumes they were to wear in the film (McConathy & Vreeland, 1976).

Costume designer Sylbert (1983) made a provocative point about the difference between film and theatre. Theatre, no matter how realistic the play, always uses a designer to create a unified image. Films set in contemporary times sometimes do away with a designer. She stated that these films are the hardest to costume because "everybody is an expert because everybody wears clothes, and everybody has an opinion" (Sylbert, 1983, p. 160).



## Women's Fashion and Film Costume

### Film's Impact on Fashion

#### Anecdotal Evidence

Writers in publications as diverse as fan magazines and costume reference texts have written about films' influence on fashionable clothing. Kaiser (1985) identified *Flashdance* and *Urban Cowboy* as having influenced fashion trends with cut-up sweatshirts and cowboy boots and hats. Wilcox (1942) wrote that Mae West influenced lingerie in the 1930s. Laver (1988) stated that film actors, such as Greta Garbo, were "almost arbiters of fashion, their costumes created by designers such as Gilbert Adrian" (p. 241). Russell (1983) cited Hollywood as a major force in fashion during the 1930s because the movies were one source of entertainment that was affordable to most.

Tortora and Eubank (1989) also mentioned Greta Garbo, as well as Shirley Temple and Jean Harlow, as important fashion figures in the 1930s. Chierichetti (1976) stated that certain costumes and actors had an influence on fashions in the 1930s. In particular, he cited a white ruffled dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton*. The "famous *Letty Lynton* dress" was also singled out by Leese (1991, p. 6). In a survey of the literature, this costume was the most frequently mentioned as influential on fashion (see Appendix A).

Writers of movie star biographies and of social history also mention movie stars' influence on fashion. David Niven (1975) wrote that Marlene Dietrich legitimized the wearing of

pants when she wore them in public in the 1930s. In his history of the 1930s, Allen (1972) wrote of women imitating Greta Garbo or Joan Crawford.

### Research

There is little research on the specific relationship of fashion and film costume. Gustafson (1982) examined costumes designed by Edith Head between 1934 and 1954 and their influence on fashion. He found little evidence to support the notion that film costumes influenced fashion. Gustafson (1982) believed this was because costumes were created to glamorize the star and her persona. The costumes were too far removed from ordinary clothes to be suitable for wear and were frequently too impractical. Gustafson mentioned Mae West's skin tight and elaborately beaded gowns as an example. Yet *Chatelaine* did a pictorial fashion feature on Mae West's influence on fashionable clothes in June 1933, calling the costumes examples of the Gay Nineties influence (Templeton, 1933). Gustafson (1982) believed, that because costumes were designed at least a year before the movie's release, there was a good chance that the costumes would already be behind the times when the audience viewed the movie.

Gustafson's (1982) view that movie costumes rarely influenced fashion coincides with that of designer Edith Head (1983). Head believed her film costumes were generally not copied because they were designed to flatter a specific actor in a specific scene and were not usually translatable to real life. One costume she did believe to be influential was a

dress designed for Audrey Hepburn for *Sabrina* in 1954. Gustafson (1982) refuted this claim, stating not only was that particular style not influential, but it had appeared in popular magazines as early as 1946.

Gustafson (1982) concluded that movies that had contemporary settings were not influential on fashion. The costumes that did have a degree of influence on the retail market tended to be exotic creations. Examples given were the sarong worn by Dorothy Lamour in 1934 or the costumes designed for Hedy Lamarr for the film *Samson and Delilah* in 1949. The degree of influence declined over time. Gustafson (1982) found no correlation between the popularity of a film and its star and the degree of influence the costumes had on the retail market.

Adrian was a costume designer with MGM in the 1930s. In interviews and articles such as ones he wrote for the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1933 and *Harper's Bazaar* in 1934, he promoted the idea of identifying with a star's look and using that look as a guide to dress by. He wrote that his costumes influenced fashion (Adrian, 1933; Adrian, 1934).

Others, such as Dominick (1979), found that media influence people's behaviour. Blumer (1933/1970) described the movies as "one of the main sources of information on styles of clothing and makeup" (p. 30).

LaValley (1987) focused on historical movies and their influence on fashion. He wrote that movies were a major influence on how people dress because people wished to appear like their favourite star in the latest movie. Garment

manufacturers were influenced by the demand for these movie styles as well as by the designs in the movies. Historical costumes were especially important because they introduced new elements into garment design. This is similar to Gustafson's (1982) view that exotic, though not too different, fashions were more likely to be adopted.

Another writer who believed movie fashions were influenced by their cultural surroundings was Hollander (1975). She discussed how the body shape of nudes in paintings was influenced by the fashionable clothing of their time. She also discussed how movie costumes, whether historical or not, are influenced by the fashions of the time, just as nudes are.

#### Marketing Tie-ins

At the height of Hollywood's glamour years, 1939-1945, there were retail stores and departments within stores, in the United States and England, devoted to Hollywood fashion (Eckert, 1978; Wilson & Taylor, 1989). The promotion of Hollywood fashions was aided by the movie fan magazine (Chierichetti, 1976).

Eckert's (1978) work is an extensive discussion of the many commercial connections that existed between Hollywood movie producers, manufacturers and retail stores. Unfortunately this work is not referenced. He stated that by 1937 Bernard Waldman's Modern Merchandising Bureau had established Cinema Fashion Shops in 400 different towns and cities across America. Eckert (1978) also stated that Macy's

sold 500,000 copies of the white dress worn by Joan Crawford in *Letty Lynton*. These claims are unsubstantiated and are refuted by Herzog and Gaines (1991) who found no evidence of a half million copies of the dress nor of Cinema Fashion Shops across the country.

Herzog and Gaines (1991) did find Hollywood publicity material featuring this dress. Hollywood used fashion to draw women to the movies. The fashion publicity predicted the influence various costumes would have on women's fashions (Herzog & Gaines, 1991).

Herzog and Gaines (1991) examined consumer culture pertaining to movies and women. Though they describe the *Letty Lynton* dress as a myth, there is an underlying implication in their work that film costumes did influence what women wore.

#### Fashion's Impact on Film

Maeder (1987) examined the influence current clothing had on costumes in historical movies. He points out the discrepancies between what is historically accurate and what was worn on screen. The differences are frequently found in hair and makeup styles, and in body shape, as determined by foundation garments. Though costumes might appear to be historically accurate, the hairstyles, makeup, and body shape tend to be contemporary to when the movie was made.

The discrepancy between what was historically accurate and what was contemporary was due in part to the efforts to glamorize the stars. The studios often felt that the

audience would find completely accurate clothes unpalatable and contradictory to the star's image (Luick, 1933; McConathy & Vreeland, 1976). Movie costumes can also be larger than life; exaggerated details can be used to make a story point. The discrepancies have further implications. Movie viewers, unaware that the historically accurate has been compromised to match the current ideal or make a story point, see the movie costume as authentic.

Researchers in other forms of media have also found that media is influenced by current images of people. Some studies suggest that television and advertisements reflect the way in which women are viewed in society (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Lennon, 1990). The reflection reinforces a particular view or value (Dominick, 1979).

There is another area where fashion's influence on film is more implicit than explicit. Sylbert (1983) and Head (1983) both discuss the difficulty in designing for a contemporary picture so it does not look dated when it is released. A film's costumes can be designed a year or two before the movie's release. The costumes would look dated to an audience if they were influenced by the clothing worn when they were being designed.

### 1930s

#### Fashion History - Women's Clothes of the 1930s

By 1930, the drop waisted, short skirted dress of the 1920s had evolved into a longer dress with the waist approaching the natural position. Clothing accentuated

women's natural forms. The tubular silhouette of the 1920s gave way to gentle curves (Tortora & Eubanks, 1989).

Sportswear became more common for women. Evening dresses became long (Boucher, 1987), and frequently had emphasis on the back, which was sometimes bared to the waist (Laver, 1988).

Paris was still important in the design world. Madeleine Vionnet originated the bias cut that became a staple throughout the 1930s. Another prominent designer at the time was Elsa Schiaparelli. Her theatrical, sometimes whimsical or surrealistic designs were popular (Tortora & Eubanks, 1989). American influence was transmitted via Hollywood movies. Laver (1988) called Greta Garbo an arbiter of fashion. Allen (1972) described young women on the streets of New York, dressed like Greta Garbo or Joan Crawford.

The general look of the 1930s was slim and straight, with soft curves, the shoulder being slightly broader than previously. The skirt flared slightly at the bottom and reached almost to the ankle. The ideal figure was tall and slim (Laver, 1988). By the end of the decade, skirts were shorter, shoulders broader and more squared, waists more sharply defined. This silhouette was to remain throughout the war years.

### Film History

#### Hollywood in the 1930s

Motion pictures have been in existence since the early

1900s. They developed as a popular form of entertainment early in the century in several countries, including France, Britain, the United States and Canada. In North America, the growth of urbanization and industrialization paralleled the growth of the motion picture industry (Finler, 1988). This growth helped to create an audience with the time and income to seek a new form of entertainment.

Early films were little more than short clips of film without any plot. Soon, short films with a simple plot were made. Usually a collection of these shorts were played together to make up a few hours of entertainment for the paying customer. By the late 1910s and early 1920s, some movies were made with a social theme. These themes both reflected and influenced the social attitudes of the time (Finler, 1988).

The first film studios were in New York. By the early 1910s, motion pictures were made in and around Los Angeles (Finler, 1988). Hollywood became the centre for American film making in part because of geography and climate. Unlike New York, the area was sparsely inhabited so there was plenty of space to build large studios with huge back-lots (Baxter, 1973). The climate was more temperate and sunnier than New York, allowing for year-round outdoor shooting. Within a short distance, the filmmakers could find mountains, valleys, deserts, oceans, rural and urban landscapes. This helped secure Hollywood as the location to make films (Baxter, 1973).

At the start of the movie industry, there were many



small, competing film companies. The industry was shortly dominated by a few large corporations. The largest were MGM, Paramount, Fox, Warner Brothers and RKO, followed by Universal, Columbia and United Artists (Finler, 1988). Of these eight dominant studios, RKO ceased to exist, and the others endured in name only, surviving substantial changes, reorganizations, and buy-outs over the years.

The first movie studios were considered factories. Movies were products to be manufactured and sold. The actors, designers, directors and technicians were workers in these factories.

Many early movie moguls started in other businesses. Several of these people came from or had connections to the garment trade. Marcus Loew of Metro, which later amalgamated with Goldwyn and Mayer to become MGM, was in the fur and garment trade in Chicago. So was William Fox of Fox Studios. Carl Laemmle, the head of Universal, had previously been a garment manufacturer. Ernst Lubitsch, a director and producer for Paramount, worked in his parents' clothing store (Baxter, 1973). These men were known for their shrewdness. Perhaps they recognized the potential of tying movies in with the garment business.

#### Film Audience

As soon as there were movies for people to see, there was concern about the movie's influence on people's behaviour. The concern became more focussed and organized as the movies' popularity grew (Baxter, 1973). In the late

1920s and early 1930s, several groups were formed to monitor the movies and even control their content. One of these groups was the Hays Commission. Formed in 1930, its specific function was to control the moral content of Hollywood movies (Hampton, 1970).

Another group formed was the National Committee for the Study of Social Values in Motion Pictures. This group commissioned twelve studies on the "influence of motion pictures upon children and youths" (Blumer, 1933/1970, p. ii) by the Committee of Educational Research of the Payne Fund. These twelve studies were interested in the possible effects movies had on the ideas, conduct, and morality of children. The introduction of the preface of this series reads in part "Motion pictures are not understood by the present generation of adults. They are new; they make an enormous appeal to children; and they present ideas and situations which parents may not like . . . in short, just what effect do motion pictures have upon children of different ages?" (Charter in Blumer, 1933/1970, p. vi).

The burgeoning concern over the movies' influence becomes understandable when one looks at motion picture attendance figures during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1923, the average weekly attendance at the movies in the United States was 43 million. By 1930, it had reached 80 million people. Compare these figures with the approximately 20 million weekly viewers from 1965 to 1985, and the importance of movie going in the 1930s becomes clear (Finler, 1988).

During the 1920s and 1930s, the movies were also a

common, popular, and easily accessible form of entertainment in Canada. A movie cost less than a quarter. The movies most likely to be seen by Canadians were Hollywood musicals or comedies (Horn, 1984). In 1930 Canadians went to the movies an average of ten times a year (Urquart, 1965). Canadians in the 1990s attend the movies about three times a year (Canada Year Book, 1992).

In the 1930s, most studios assumed that the majority of their audience was women, and that women were key in deciding which movie to see and when (Handel, 1950). This helps explain the stature of female stars in the 1930s. More women were box office stars in the 1930s than at any other time. They commanded healthy salaries; Mae West was the highest paid movie performer in the 1930s. Women's roles in the movies were at least equal in stature to that of men's. This importance has declined since the 1930s (Medeiros, 1988).

## Social History

### Economics

The Great Depression officially started with the stock market crash Tuesday, October 29, 1929. It reached its depth in 1933 (Horn, 1984). Many firms collapsed or were forced to reduce their work force or to lower wages (Allen, 1972). Over a quarter of all wage earners in Canada were out of work by 1933 (Canada Year Book, 1939). By 1930 one quarter of American city factory workers had lost their jobs (Allen, 1972). The situation for farmers, already bad because of low beef and grain prices, was exacerbated by the drought and

grasshoppers that plagued much of the mid-western and western United States and Canada (Horn, 1984).

High unemployment and low wages led to severely reduced spending on consumer goods, which caused a drop in demand for these goods. Fewer goods were manufactured and more workers were laid off or had their wages reduced. It was a downward spiral (Allen, 1972). Especially hard hit by unemployment were young, unskilled, blue-collar workers (Horn, 1984).

### Demographics

Canada grew rapidly throughout the first part of the twentieth century. In 1931 the population had grown to over 10 million. The population was young, though older than it had been in the 1920s, with slightly more males than females. Over one fifth of Canadians lived in cities of over 100,000 people. More than half of the population lived in a town or city (Canada Year Book, 1933). The United States was more urbanized, with 29.5% of the people living in cities of 100,000 or more (Canada Year Book, 1933).

Though Canada was still largely a country of people who lived in small towns or on farms, they were not isolated. There were about 13 telephones for every 100 Canadians, and about one motor vehicle for every ten people by the late 1920s (Canada Year Book, 1933).

The 96% of the people who were considered literate were serviced by many local and regional newspapers (Canada Year Book, 1933). Radio became increasingly popular in the early 1930s; a radio could be bought for less than ten dollars

(Horn, 1984). To put this in perspective, in 1931, the average minimum weekly wage for women was about 12 dollars. For men it ranged from 14 dollars a week for unskilled factory labour to over 60 dollars a week for a skilled bricklayer (Canada Year Book, 1933).

Many people made their own entertainment during the 1930s. Local dances, house parties, and even amateur theatrics were popular. The traditional 'higher' art forms of painting, poetry and professional theatre suffered. Sports and movies became important forms of entertainment because of their cost and their accessibility (Horn, 1984).

#### Conclusion

Whether the audience wished to be entertained or transported to a more pleasant and glamorous world, Hollywood movies were an important form of entertainment in Canada and the United States in the 1930s. Movie stars had identifiable images and were important cultural figures that reflected, transmuted and transmitted cultural messages. Partly because of their newness, and partly because of their scope, there was concern about motion picture's potential influence. Women's fashion was an area of potential influence.

Theories concerning film studies, fashion, and mass communication offer explanations of how and why film and fashion might relate as aspects of society's material culture. No one theory explains the complicated nature of fashion and why and how it moves completely. But a compilation of feminist film theories, diffusion theories and

mass communication theories can be used to explain the relationship between film costume and fashion. Common to the theories is the concept of the movie actor as a member of an elite who is admired, emulated and who legitimizes the style worn, because he or she is an opinion leader or because the costume signifies something desirable to the viewer.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### Selection of Film Costume

To examine whether costume of the 1930s was related to women's fashions of the era, a specific costume from a specific film was chosen. The costume was analyzed for design details. Photographs and sketches of women's garments in magazines were examined for the presence of the design details to determine whether the design details were present in fashionable clothes before, during and after the release of the movie. The white ruffled dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton* was selected as the film costume to be analyzed. This combination of designer, actor, movie and costume was the most frequently cited influence on fashion in the literature (see Appendix A).

### Selection of Magazines

The magazines that were examined were the Canadian *Chatelaine* and the American *Good Housekeeping*. Both magazines targeted the middle class woman; both were popular women's magazines in Canada and the U.S. in the 1930s. Canadians were included in *Good Housekeeping's* market and *Chatelaine* was available to Americans. The magazines were considered similar in content and target audience.

Neither *Chatelaine* nor *Good Housekeeping* focused specifically on high fashion. Paris fashions were shown, but

the bulk of the fashions featured were clothes that the average woman could make, using *Chatelaine* patterns, or order from the *Good Housekeeping* service. *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping* catered to the mass market consumer rather than the innovative consumer. They displayed the accepted fashions, not the new, unusual, or more extreme versions of a style as high fashion magazines were more likely to do.

There is precedence for using these magazines when examining movies and fashion. Gustafson (1982) and Ohmer (1990) both used *Good Housekeeping* when examining the impact of movies. *Chatelaine* was selected as the Canadian counterpart because it is comparable in content and target audience to *Good Housekeeping*.

#### Questions

Using the white dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton* as an example, a series of questions were formulated to guide the research. These questions were:

1. Were design details of the *Letty Lynton* costume present in magazines before the release of the movie?
2. Were design details of the *Letty Lynton* costume found more frequently in the magazines after the release of *Letty Lynton*?
3. Was there any difference in the incidence of design details found in *Chatelaine* (Canadian) compared to *Good Housekeeping* (American)?



4. Was there a time lag between the release of the movie and the presence of design details in the magazines?
5. Was the designer, actor, or movie credited when design details were present in the magazines?

In addition to these basic questions, some auxiliary questions, based on information recorded on the data collection sheet, were raised. Specifically:

6. What were the design details of the "style similar" garments?
7. Were the similar garments found in fashion features, advertisements or illustrations?
8. Who was given credit for the similar garments?
9. Did the time of year have any impact on the number of similar garments or design details?

### Content Analysis

#### Definition and Justification

Content analysis was used as a methodological and analytical tool to answer the research questions. Content analysis can be defined as the "scientific, objective, systematic, quantitative, and generalizable description of communications content" (Kassarjian, 1977, p. 10). In content analysis the frequency with which a predetermined unit appears, is counted. Individual design details in the selected movie costume were the units that were tallied from the magazines. These units were determined by analysing the movie costume and recording its design details on a data

collection sheet (see Appendix B) before the magazines were studied.

#### Determination of Units

A still from the movie featuring the costume was the basis for the analysis. The movie costume was a floor length gown with an hour-glass silhouette. The gown was constructed of white, crisp and sheer fabric. It had a jewel neckline, Peter Pan collar, and short puff sleeves. The costume had a defined waist with a belt and a horizontally-oriented, heart-shaped buckle. The lower portion of the gown featured a peplum, gored overskirt, and three lines of either tucks or ribbons running horizontally around the skirt. These horizontal lines were in the bottom third of the skirt.

A striking feature of the costume was its profusion of ruffles. There were ruffles around the edge of the collar, peplum, and buckle. There were three rows of ruffles at the hem of the dress and the entire puff sleeve was covered in rows of ruffles.

There were 21 units, or salient design details, in the *Letty Lynton* costume. The design details are defined in Appendix C. The details were compared to selected garments in the magazines. For each garment, the design detail was recorded on the data collection sheet as present, not present, or not visible.

#### Sample Selection

All issues of *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping* from 1930

to 1936 were examined. The period began two years prior to the release of *Letty Lynton* to determine if the design details of the movie costume were present in fashionable garments before the movie was produced. The period extended four years after the movie's release to allow time for an innovation to complete the cycle from introduction to acceptance to obsolescence.

Each garment on an adult female figure in the magazines, whether sketched or photographed, was potentially usable and countable as one incident. The garment could be presented from a side, front, or back view. If more than one view of a garment was available, details from all views were used in assessing the garment, but it was counted as one occurrence. If a garment was spread over more than one page, the first page it appeared on was the page number recorded. When more than one garment was featured on a page, each was dealt with separately starting from left to right and then top to bottom. Each garment was then assigned a secondary number after the page number for selection purposes. A data collection sheet was filled out for each selected garment and an identification number was assigned to each data collection sheet.

Sketches and photographs of clothed adult female figures were found in three areas of the magazines: 1) illustrations for fiction/feature articles, 2) advertisements and 3) fashion features. The illustrations for fiction/feature articles tended to be at the front of both magazines. The advertisements were found throughout the magazines, but

primarily at the back. The fashion features were usually clustered together either in the middle or the back of the magazines.

If all sketches and photographs of women's garments in both magazines were analyzed they would total approximately 15,000. *Chatelaine* had between 30 to 70 clothed adult female figures per issue, while *Good Housekeeping* had up to 150 per issue. A sample of the garments was selected using the following method.

It was decided that four garments from each of the three areas, illustrations, advertisements and fashion features, for a total of 12 examples for each issue of each magazine, would be used. For the 84 issues of *Chatelaine* and the 84 issues of *Good Housekeeping* 2016 examples were selected.

Garments selected were women's one or two-piece contemporary day or evening dresses. Outerwear, active sportswear, lingerie, or pants were not usable. Additionally, at least 17 of the salient design details had to be visible on the garment. Reasons for undiscernible design details included: angle of picture, indistinct rendering, small size, and obstruction.

#### Illustrations and Advertisements

The first four garments from fiction/feature articles and the first four garments from advertisements that met the above criteria were selected.

### Fashion Features

Garments from the third category, fashion features, were selected differently. The table of contents was first checked for the number and placement of fashion features in the magazine. The fashion features were then checked to see if they contained usable figures. Garments from each fashion feature were used proportionally. If there was only one fashion feature with usable garments then all four garments were selected from that feature. If there were two fashion features with usable garments then two garments were selected from each. If there were three fashion features, one garment was selected from each, with the fourth garment selected randomly from one of the three fashion features. If there were four fashion features with usable garments then one garment was selected from each. If the number of fashion features with usable pictures was greater than four, then four fashion features were chosen randomly. Random choices were made by rolling a die.

Within each selected fashion feature the appropriate number of garments, as determined by the previous step, was chosen. All usable garments within the fashion feature were assigned numbers and randomly picked by rolling a die.

### Recording on the Data Sheet

On first viewing the picture of the selected garment, an initial impression of similarity to the movie costume was recorded. The garment was then examined for the presence of the design details listed on the data collection sheet and

recorded. Copy accompanying the picture of the garment was scanned to find, which, if any, designer or label was given credit for the garment.

#### Checking the Data

The data on the collection sheets and the computer data entry were checked for accuracy and reliability. All completed data collection sheets were assigned an identification number. These identification numbers were utilized in various ways to check the data.

#### Data Entry Accuracy

Errors in data entry were checked. Frequencies on all variables were calculated. Since a finite number of garments from each area of each magazine was analyzed, the frequency of the variables of 'magazine', 'year', 'month', and 'where found' could be checked. Discrepancies were located and corrected.

Using a table of random numbers, 25 identification numbers were selected. The data collection sheets corresponding to those numbers were checked against the computer printout of the entered data to ensure accuracy of data entry. No errors were found.

#### Data Collection Reliability

One hundred of the identification numbers were randomly selected and the garment corresponding to the identification number was reanalyzed to check reliability in the data

collection. In addition, all garments that were deemed to be similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume were reanalyzed. For the garments judged similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume, no errors were found in the collection of the data.

Of the random 100 identification numbers that were reanalyzed, some discrepancies were noted. No differences were found in the 10 independent variables. Out of the 100 sheets, five differences were found in the 25 dependent variables. The error rate for the dependent variables was 0.2%. All discrepancies were between the perceived presence of a design detail and the perceived visibility. In no instances was a design detail in a garment thought to be like that of the *Letty Lynton* costume in one analysis and perceived to be not like that of the *Letty Lynton* costume in the other analysis.

Five of the 25 dependent variables were found in the waist area. These were defined waist, belt, heart-shaped buckle, ruffled waist and ruffled buckle. This was the area most likely to be not visible, either because of indistinct rendering or because it was obscured, often by the figure's arm. The waist area was also the area most likely to render a figure unusable.

Data collection was conducted by three individuals. The errors were quite evenly distributed between collectors. The first collector had an error rate of 0.1%. The second collector had an error rate of 0.3%, and the third collector had an error rate of 0.2%.

### Data Analysis

The frequency of appearance of each design detail in the garments in the magazines was calculated. The frequencies were depicted in charts showing design detail x magazine x issue. These charts were used to answer questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9. Selected bar charts showing design detail x year are used in the chapter discussing results. In addition to examining individual design details, contingency tables were used to determine if combinations of design details were important.

The data for all the garments that were deemed 'style similar' were grouped and frequencies of the variables calculated. These frequencies were used to answer questions 6, 7 and 8. A classification tree was used to illustrate the answer to question 6, what is the relationship between the design details and the 'style similar' category.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During this study 2,016 pictures of garments from *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping* from 1930 to 1936 were systematically selected and examined using content analysis. Garments in the photographs and drawings were compared to the white dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton*.

In this chapter the results of the data collection and analysis are examined. This includes the identification variables, the design detail variables and the "credit given" variables, followed by the time factor. Following the description of the individual variables, the "style similar" category is examined in the same order: identification variables, design details, credit given and the time factor. A discussion follows each section. The next section of the chapter deals with the relationship between the relevant design details found in the style similar dresses and the design details found in all the garments used for the study. The last two sections of the chapter evaluate the fit of some fashion and mass communication theories and answer the research questions.

#### Description of the Sample

##### Identification Variables

The 2,016 pictures of garments were equally distributed, 1,008 in each magazine, and were divided evenly over the

seven year collection period (1930-1936), 12 pictures x 12 months x 7 years x 2 magazines. The garments were also equally distributed between those found in advertisements, fashion features and illustrations. The category of advertisements was divided into clothing advertisements and advertisements for other products. The majority (94.0%) of the advertisements were for products other than clothing. The clothing in these advertisements was what was perceived to be worn by the average consumer.

About one-fifth of the pictures were photographs, the rest were artist renderings. About 80% of the pictures were front views, and the entire garment was visible.

#### Design Details

As part of the sample selection, at least 17 of the 21 design details had to be visible for a garment to be used for this study. The hem and the waist were the areas where details were most likely to be not visible. The details at the hem were not visible for about 18% (range = 370 to 376) of the 2,016 garments (see Table 1). Five design details were located at the waist; many garments were not selected for the study because details in this area were not visible. The design details of colour, fabric and ruffled hip were visible in all garments. For every garment, each of the 21 design details was judged to be like that of the *Letty Lynton* dress, not like that of the *Letty Lynton* dress, or not visible.

Table 1

Similarity and Visibility of Design Details in Garments

Design Detail	Visible	Not Visible	Like (%)	Not Like
Length	1,640	376	566 (34.5%)	1,074
Hour-glass silhouette	2,012	4	94 ( 4.7%)	1,918
Puff sleeves	1,991	25	186 ( 9.3%)	1,805
Jewel neckline	1,988	28	269 (13.5%)	1,719
Peter Pan collar	1,988	28	58 ( 2.9%)	1,930
Defined waist	1,988	28	1,457 (73.3%)	531
Belt	1,983	33	1,199 (60.5%)	784
Heart-shaped buckle	1,832	184	4 ( 0.2%)	1,828
Peplum	2,015	1	64 ( 3.2%)	1,951
Over-skirt	2,012	4	85 ( 4.2%)	1,927
Gored skirt	1,999	17	314 (15.7%)	1,685
Horizontal hem	1,641	375	39 ( 2.4%)	1,602
Colour	2,016	0	447 (22.2%)	1,569
Fabric	2,016	0	77 ( 3.8%)	1,939
Ruffled neck	2,003	13	206 (10.3%)	1,797
Ruffled shoulder	2,006	10	93 ( 4.6%)	1,913
Ruffled sleeve	1,994	22	173 ( 8.7%)	1,821
Ruffled waist	2,004	12	20 ( 1.0%)	1,984
Ruffled buckle	1,873	143	5 ( 0.3%)	1,868
Ruffled hip	2,016	0	62 ( 3.1%)	1,954
Ruffled hem	1,646	370	81 ( 4.9%)	1,565

N = 2,016

Almost three-quarters (73.3%) of the garments had a defined waist and over 60% had a belt. Over a third (34.5%) of the garments were full length and almost a quarter (22.2%) were white. About 16% of the garments had a gored skirt. The jewel neckline was found in 13.5% of the garments while puff sleeves, ruffled neck and ruffled sleeves were each found in about 10% of the garments.

The hour-glass silhouette, ruffled shoulder and ruffled hem were all found in about 5% of the garments. The design details of Peter Pan collar, peplum, overskirt, crisp and sheer fabric, ruffled hip, ruffled waist, and horizontal detail at the hem were all found in less than 5% of the garments. The least common design details were the buckle and the ruffle at the buckle, found in only 0.2% and 0.3% of the garments.

The design details found most often had common attributes. The details appeared to either: contribute to the overall look of the garment, such as colour, silhouette, gored skirt (which contributed to the shape of the skirt), defined waist and length; or were details of the upper body, such as puff sleeves, jewel neckline and ruffled shoulder.

#### Credit Given

A sizable majority (93.5%) of the garments examined were not credited to any designer. There was no mention of Joan Crawford or Letty Lynton in either of the magazines. Adrian was mentioned three times in his capacity as a fashion designer, but not as a film costume designer. In all, 50

designers or labels were mentioned. The most commonly cited was Patou with 12 of the dresses credited to him. Other designers referred to include Worth with nine mentions, Molyneux with eight, and Lelong, Chanel and Maggie Rouff, each with seven.

### Time Factor

#### *Chatelaine and Good Housekeeping*

All of the design details found in the Letty Lynton costume were present in the magazines before the release of the movie. Some, such as the puff sleeves, jewel neckline, hour-glass silhouette and ruffled shoulder were found more frequently after the release of the movie. The number of puff sleeves and jewel necklines increased noticeably in 1933 (see Figures 2 and 3). The incidence pattern of puff sleeves is similar to the incidence pattern of sleeves with shoulder fullness exhibited in Young's work (1937/1966). The number of hour-glass silhouettes and ruffled shoulders also increased (see Figures 4 and 5).

There was a moderate increase each year of full-length garments and belted garments. Crisp and sheer fabric became slightly more common towards 1936. The number of gored skirts and white dresses increased in 1932 and then declined. After an initial increase between 1930 and 1931, the number of defined waists remained constant. Peter Pan collars became more common between 1930 and 1933, declined in 1934 and increased in 1935 and 1936.

Figure 2 - Puff Sleeves - Total by Year

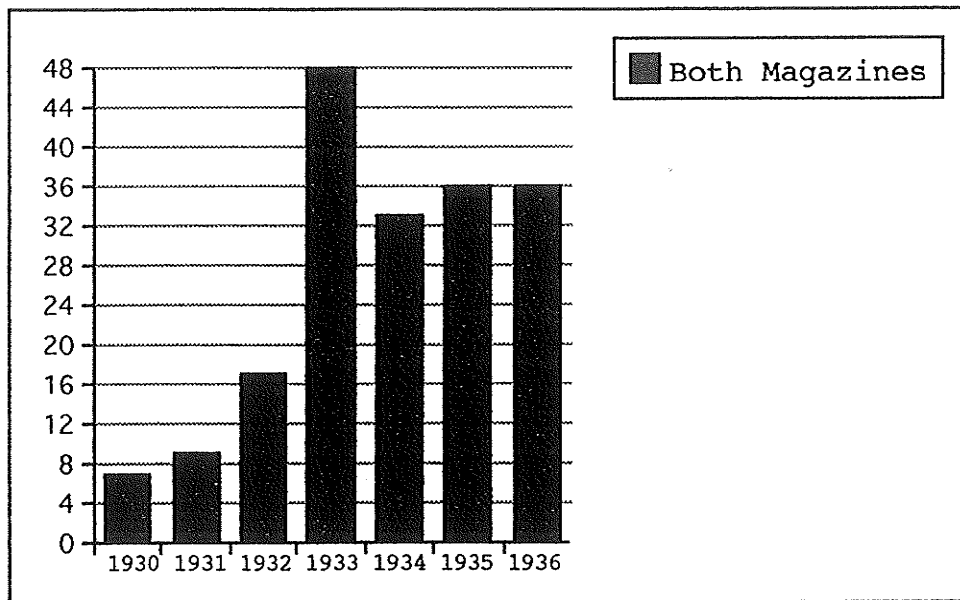


Figure 3 - Jewel Neckline - Total by Year

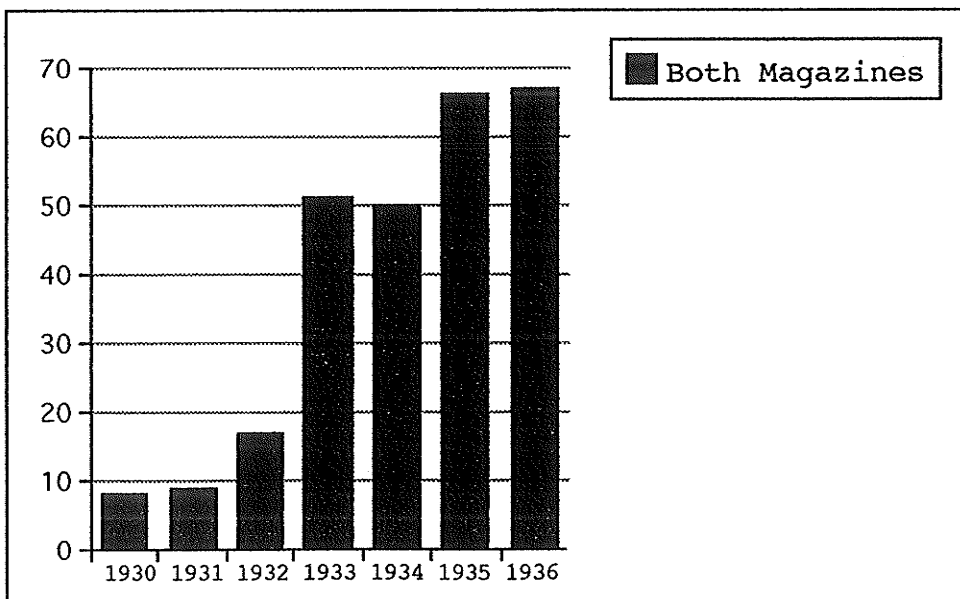


Figure 4 - Hour-Glass Silhouette - Total by Year

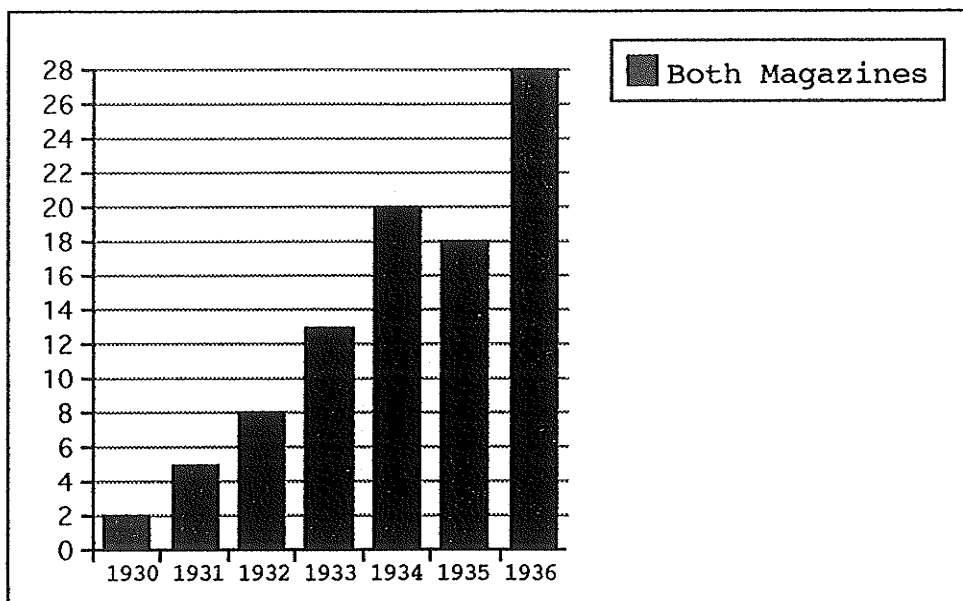
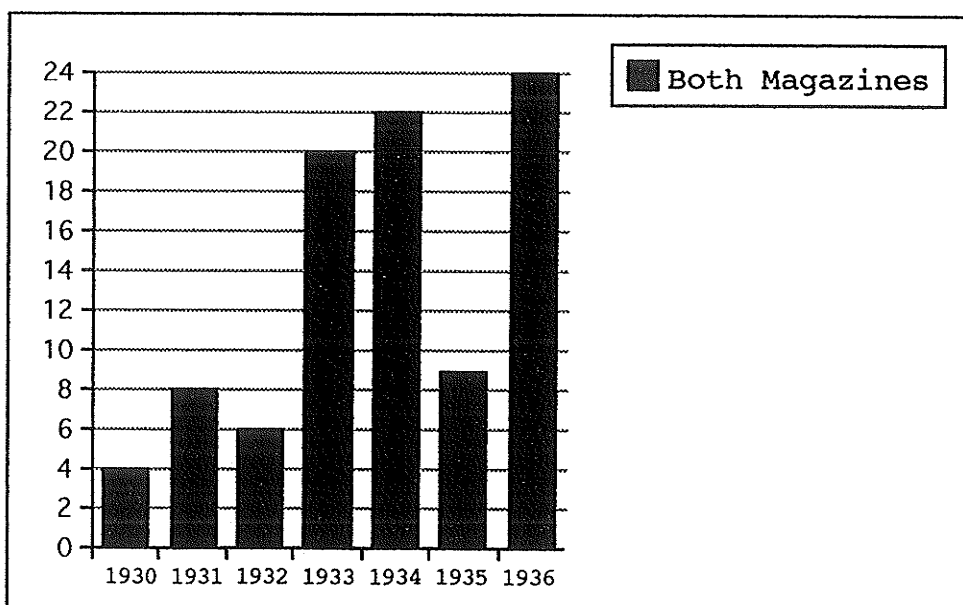


Figure 5 - Ruffled Shoulder - Total by Year



The frequency of other design details either did not increase or displayed no pattern. No pattern was discernible for the design details of heart-shaped buckle, peplum, overskirt, horizontal hem, ruffled neck, ruffled sleeve, ruffled waist, ruffled buckle, ruffled hip and ruffled hem.

The frequency of each of the 21 design details was also totalled monthly. No patterns emerged. There was no apparent seasonality in the incidence of design details.

#### *Chatelaine vs. Good Housekeeping*

Though the presence of design details in pictures of garments varied between the magazines, the general timing and quantity of occurrences were similar. The number of puff sleeves increased at the same rate between 1930 and 1933 and decreased in 1934 for *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping*. The rates differed between the two magazines for the last two years of the study. There was an increase in puff sleeves during 1935 with a slight decrease in 1936 in *Chatelaine*. *Good Housekeeping* exhibited the reverse pattern.

The trends were similar in both magazines for the categories of defined waist, colour and length. The number of defined waists increased between 1930 and 1932 in *Chatelaine* and between 1930 and 1931 in *Good Housekeeping*. The number of defined waists remained steady throughout the period examined for both magazines, showing a slight increase in 1935. There was no rate change after 1932.

The number of white garments in both magazines increased between 1930 and 1931 and remained relatively constant between



1931 and 1936. The greatest number were found in 1933 for *Chatelaine* and in 1932 for *Good Housekeeping*. The overall trend for white garments in both magazines was less after 1933.

The number of full-length garments gradually increased from 1930 to 1936 for both magazines. The rate of growth did not appear to be different after the 1932 release of *Letty Lynton*. Full-length dresses were more common in *Good Housekeeping* in 1930, 1932 and 1933.

The pattern for ruffled hem was similar for *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping*. There was a fluctuating incidence rate for both magazines, but the timing and quantity varied. Ruffled hems became more common in *Chatelaine* in 1933, less common in *Good Housekeeping*. Of the years examined, ruffled hems peaked in 1936 for both magazines.

The number of ruffled shoulders in both magazines grew between 1932 and 1933, subsided and then increased again in 1936. There were more ruffled shoulders found in *Chatelaine* than in *Good Housekeeping* in every year but 1934. The fluctuating pattern was similar.

An hour-glass silhouette appeared earlier and more often in *Chatelaine* than in *Good Housekeeping*. The number of hour-glass silhouettes doubled between 1932 and 1933 in *Chatelaine* and decreased in *Good Housekeeping*. The greatest number of hour-glass silhouettes, for both magazines, was found in 1936. The hour-glass silhouette was more common in *Chatelaine* than in *Good Housekeeping* throughout the period examined.

The heart-shaped buckle was extremely rare. Only 0.2% of the garments had a heart-shaped buckle, two in *Chatelaine*

and two in *Good Housekeeping*. None of the four were oriented horizontally as was the buckle on the *Letty Lynton* costume.

Though the overall pattern and frequency of design details was very similar in *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping*, there were some differences. Hour-glass silhouettes, puff sleeves and ruffled hips were more common in *Chatelaine*. Full-length garments, jewel necklines, belts, peplums, over-skirts, horizontal details at hem, and ruffled necks were more common in *Good Housekeeping*. While the greatest number of puff sleeves, for both magazines, was found in 1933, some of the design details, such as ruffled hems and hour-glass silhouettes, gradually increased throughout the period examined.

#### Style Similar

Once a picture was selected it was determined, based on first impression, whether the chosen garment in the magazine was similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume or not. Of the 2,016 possible occurrences, only 21 (1.04%) of the garments were deemed similar to the *Letty Lynton* dress.

#### Style Similar Identification Variables

Seven of the similar dresses were found in fashion features, nine in illustrations for fiction, four in general advertisements and only one in an advertisement for clothing. Two of the similar dresses were found in photographs, the remainder in sketches. Both photographs were found in *Good Housekeeping* in 1936. One was in an advertisement, the other

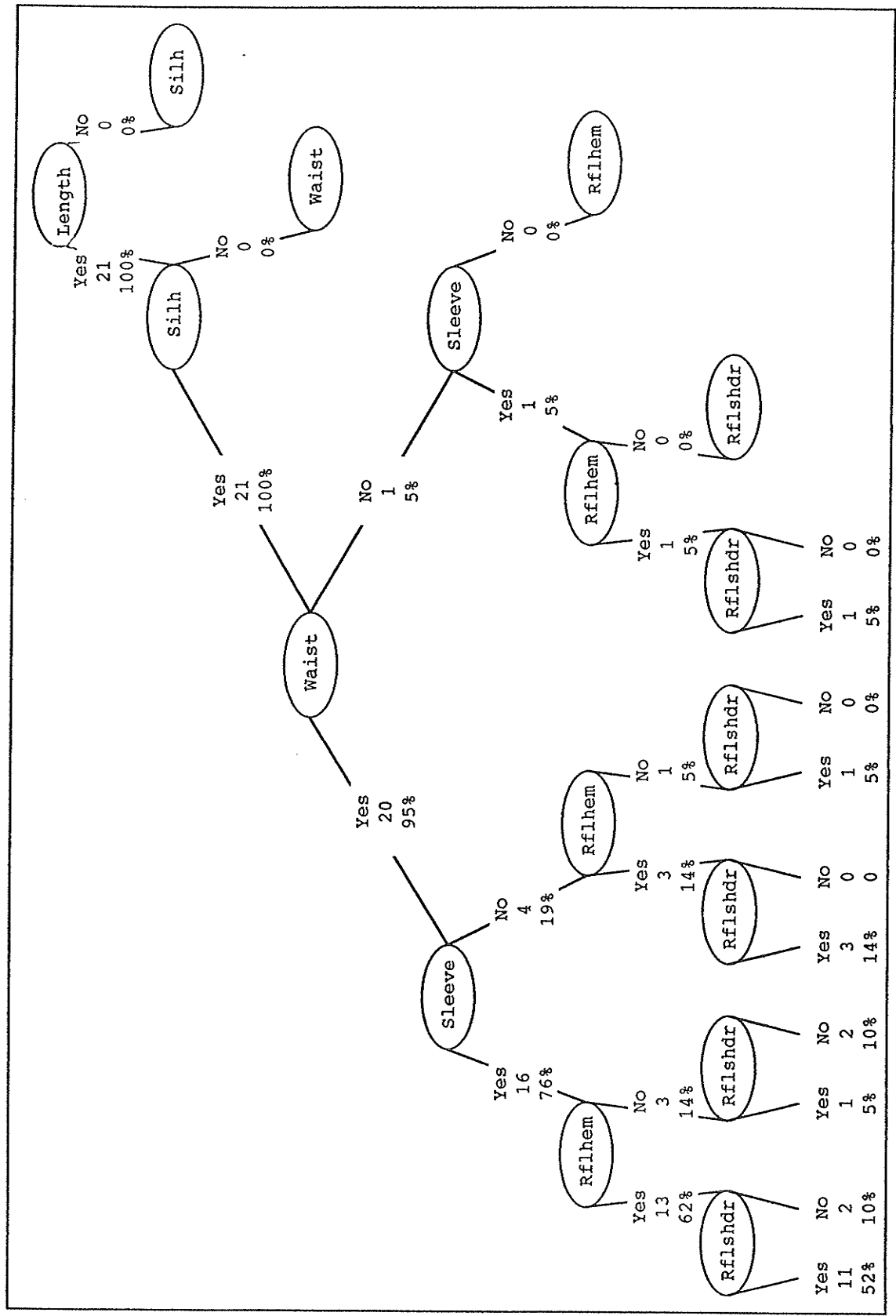
was in a fashion feature. The most common view of the similar dresses was the front view. Fifteen of the similar dresses were pictured from the front, four from the side, and two from the back.

Almost half of the similar dresses were found in illustrations for fiction. These illustrations for fiction served some of the same functions that movie costumes did. They were an idealized invention used to illustrate a point or a character trait. The lack of representation in real clothing suggests that garments similar to the *Letty Lynton* dress were even less common than this study found.

#### Style Similar Design Details

The garments that were judged similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume had several things in common. All 21 (100.0%) were full length and had an hour-glass silhouette. Twenty (95.2%) of the 21 similar garments had a defined waistline, 17 (81.0%) had puff sleeves and 17 (81.0%) had ruffled hems. Sixteen (76.2%) of the similar styles had ruffled shoulders. If the categories of ruffled neck, sleeve and shoulder are grouped, 20 (95.2%) garments had ruffles at the upper body. Fifteen (71%) of the similar styles were white. The design details of length, silhouette, defined waist, puff sleeves, ruffled hem and ruffled shoulder appear to be pertinent to the identification of a garment as being similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 - Classification Tree for Style Similar Garments



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Other design details, though part of the design of the *Letty Lynton* dress, do not appear to be important for the identification of similar garments. None of the 21 dresses had a Peter Pan collar, a heart-shaped buckle or a ruffle around the buckle. Only two of the garments had a peplum and two had a gored skirt. Three of the dresses had an overskirt and three had a ruffle at the waist. Four of the garments had a jewel neckline.

Over three-quarters (76.2%) of the similar garments shared a common sleeve, waist and silhouette. The ruffled neck, shoulder and hem, the other common elements, also contributed to the general shape of a garment. The details by which a garment was first recognized as similar to the movie costume were the large details and the colour. The minute details, such as collar and buckle were not important for initial recognition.

#### Credit Given When Style Similar

Neither Joan Crawford nor *Letty Lynton* was mentioned in connection with any of the 21 (1.04%) garments similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume and Adrian was not credited for any of the designs. Two of the garments from 1936 carried the Saks Fifth Avenue label. One of these is described as being "ruffled in the Chanel manner" (Good Housekeeping, 1936, p. 141). Maggie Rouff was also credited with one from 1936. One from 1935 had a Rosine label, and one from 1934 was by Lelong. One dress from 1931 was designed by Patou. No designers were credited for the other 15 similar garments.

The presence of an intervening factor, such as a fashion change agent, may account for the lack of mention of the movie, designer or actor. A magazine editor, acting as opinion leader or gatekeeper, selects which garments to feature in the magazine. These garments, which are probably mass manufactured, would be credited to the designer or the label, not the original source of inspiration. Any impact would be indirect, therefore the originators would not be credited.

#### Style Similar - Time Factor

##### Style Similar - *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping*

Though the movie was released in the spring of 1932, 3 of the 21 similar designs were present in the magazines before the movie's release. Ten of the garments, about half, were found in the magazines from 1936, four years after the movie's release.

There was no apparent seasonality in determining when the similar garments were found in the magazines. Though no similar garments were found in July or December, one to three similar garments were found in each of the remaining months. Two-thirds of the similar garments were found in the first half of the year.

Replicas of the movie costume were not visible in the magazines examined. Very few similar dresses (n=21) were found and half of these were found four years after the movie's release. The movie was not seen after 1932 and was taken out of circulation by a court case in 1936 (Herzog & Gaines, 1991). Any impact the movie costume had on women's

fashion was probably indirect because none of the key players of the movie costume were mentioned in the magazines. An intervening factor, such as a magazine, was involved in the transmission of the innovation. This is consistent with fashion diffusion and diffusion of innovation theories in that opinion leaders can introduce and legitimize an innovation (Berelson, 1948/1972; Katz, 1957/1972; Rogers, 1962; Sproles, 1979).

The similar dresses were not found in any particular season. This is interesting because the contemporary viewer might consider the dress to be summery. It is white, ruffled and airy looking. In the context of the movie it was worn in a hot, summery climate and the movie was released in the spring.

#### Style Similar - *Chatelaine* vs. *Good Housekeeping*

Dresses similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume were equally distributed between the two magazines. Ten similar dresses were found in *Chatelaine*, 11 in *Good Housekeeping*. The yearly distribution was also comparable.

Though some might believe that Canadian fashion would change at a slower rate and to a lesser degree than American fashion, this does not appear to be so. The occurrence of garments similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume was comparable in the Canadian and American magazines.

#### Lack of Frequency

One possible reason for the small number of garments

similar to the movie costume, could be the strict criteria by which designs were judged similar. The overall look of the garment had to be similar to the movie costume, not just one or two details. This differs from Herzog and Gaines (1991) who used the puff sleeves as the primary determinant of similarity.

Fashion's evolution is relevant; designs are rarely copied exactly, but elements are adopted and adapted for use in other designs. Fashions that are shown on the runways are exaggerated versions of what is for sale in the back room. In the same way, movie costumes can also be exaggerated versions of a style, with design details used to make a story point or glamorize the star. People who copy or produce their own version of a style, try to capture the essence of that style, not all the details, which may be expensive to mass produce. This is especially true of the 1930s, when economic restraints encouraged economy in production.

The design details of a style tend to be pared down to their minimum during the course of the fashion cycle. Jack and Schiffer (1948) found that women on the street wore clothes similar to those in the high fashion magazines. However, the magnitude of the changes in the styles was less extreme. Due to fabrication costs, garments at the end of the fashion cycle are a diluted version of the original garment.

Another possible reason for the lack of similar dresses might be the venue in which the search was conducted. Only women's magazines rather than high-fashion magazines were



chosen. A higher number of similar dresses might be found in a magazine that has a higher saturation of fashion or in a catalogue that sells women's clothing because these sources might have more garments to choose from. However, these sources were not chosen because it was felt that high fashion magazines catered more to the fashion innovator in the fashion cycle and that catalogues were more likely to showcase diluted fashions catering to the late majority and the fashion laggard.

There is also a simple reason why there were few garments in the magazines that were judged similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume. The movie costume in its entirety did not have a direct impact on fashion.

#### Comparing Style Similar to the Sample

##### Relevant Design Details

In order of frequency, the design details found to be relevant to the recognition of dresses similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume were: full-length, hour-glass silhouette, defined waist, puff sleeves, ruffled hem, ruffled shoulder and colour. Three of these design details, puff sleeves, hour-glass silhouette and ruffled shoulder, showed an increase after the 1932 release of the movie. The prevalence of these design details is forecasted by earlier literature. Herzog and Gaines (1991) focus on puff sleeves in their discussion of the influence of *Letty Lynton*. Other writers discuss the increase of the broad shouldered look (Chierichetti, 1976; Leese, 1991), a result of the puff

sleeves, ruffled shoulder and hour-glass silhouette.

Colour was important in the recognition of over 70% of the similar dresses, but there was no increase in white garments after the release of the movie. One factor in the high proportion of white garments might have been the magazines. *Good Housekeeping* was largely black and white with some tinted pictures. *Chatelaine* was viewed on microfiche, so it was entirely in black and white. There was no difference in the number of white garments between the magazines. About a quarter of the garments in each magazine were white. A garment was judged to be white if it was lighter than the background page.

Of the years surveyed, the design details of hour-glass silhouette, ruffled shoulder and ruffled hem, were most common in 1936, the last year the magazines were examined. Nearly half of the style similar garments were found in 1936. Combined with the movie's withdrawal from circulation, this also supports the idea that any impact the movie had was not direct. It is unlikely that consumers waited four years to acquire their version of the *Letty Lynton* dress.

The design detail of puff sleeves peaked, and the design details of jewel neckline, hour-glass silhouette and ruffled shoulders increased in 1933, suggesting that influence from *Letty Lynton* was possible.

Though the number of puff sleeves, jewel necklines, hour-glass silhouettes and ruffled shoulders increased after the release of the movie, the total incidence of these variables remained small. Less than 10% of the garments

examined had puff sleeves, about 13% had jewel necklines and less than 5% had hour-glass silhouettes or ruffled shoulders.

The design detail of defined waist was important to the recognition of similar garments and was present in almost three quarters of the garments examined, yet the pattern of appearance did not change after the movie's release. Colour was another important recognition factor for style similar garments that was not influenced by the movie costume. One quarter of the garments surveyed were white, but there was a moderate decrease in white garments after the movie's release.

In summation, all the design details were present before the movie's release. A few, such as puff sleeves, jewel necklines, hour-glass silhouettes and ruffled shoulders, increased after the movie's release. Most showed no change. Some, such as hour-glass silhouettes, ruffled shoulders and ruffled hems were found most frequently in 1936, the last year examined, four years after the movie's release. It is possible that the number of these design details continued to increase.

Contingency tables were used to determine if combinations of design details were important. Only four (0.2%) garments had puff sleeves, hour-glass silhouettes, ruffled shoulders and jewel necklines, design details found more frequently after the movie's release. Puff sleeves, ruffled shoulders and hour-glass silhouettes were also important to the recognition of style similar garments. Fifteen (0.7%) garments had this combination, all of them

were judged style similar.

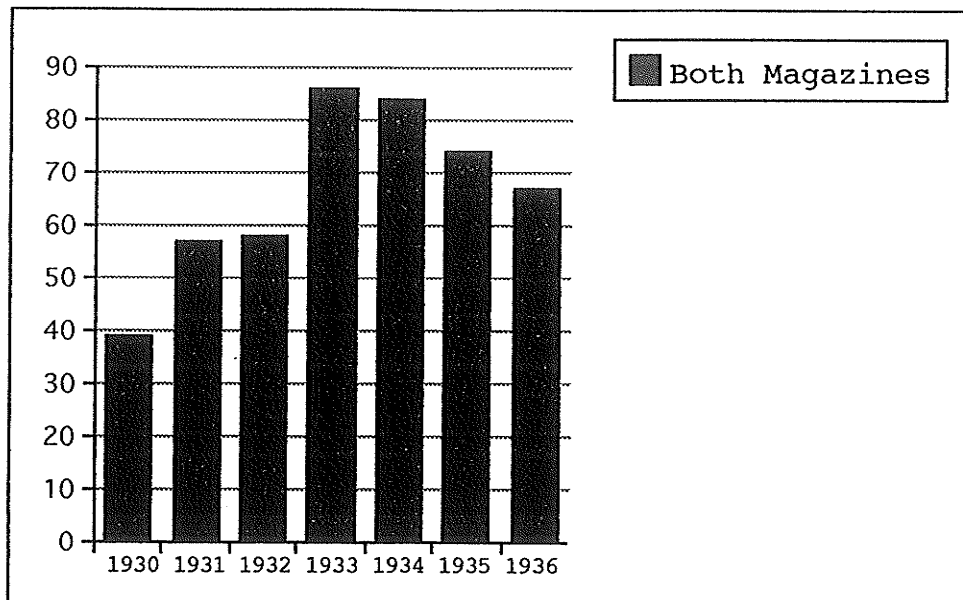
Full-length, white garments with puff sleeves were slightly more common. There were 38 (1.9%). The number of these garments increased through out the period examined, and was highest in 1936. There were 186 (9.2%) garments with puff sleeves and 93 (4.6%) with ruffled shoulders. Only 19 (0.9%) garments had puff sleeves and ruffled shoulders.

The categories of ruffled neck, ruffled shoulder and ruffled sleeve were combined. Ruffles in the upper body were found in 333 (16.5%) of the garments. They were distributed quite evenly throughout the period examined, with the fewest found in 1930 and the most in 1934.

Almost a quarter of the garments (23.1%) had either puff sleeves or ruffles in the upper body. The number increased almost 50% between 1932 and 1933. Most were found in 1933 (see Figure 7). The puff sleeve appears to be the pivotal design detail. There were 266 (13.2%) garments with puff sleeves and ruffles in the upper body. The garments were distributed evenly throughout the period.

The set of garments with the combined design details of puff sleeves, hour-glass silhouettes and ruffled shoulders is a subset of the style similar garments. Other combinations of design details do not seem to be important. Perhaps women preferred either puff sleeves or ruffles; 465 (23.1%) of the garments had puff sleeves or ruffles in the upper body.

Figure 7 - Puff Sleeves or Upper Body Ruffles - Total by Year



### Evolution of Fashion and the Function of Costume

Adrian used existing fashion details in designing the costume for *Letty Lynton*. The dress combined several design elements that were common before the movie's release. Design details such as the gored skirt, defined waist and belt were often found in both magazines in the early 1930s. Other details, such as the jewel neckline and Peter Pan collar, were not common in women's fashion but were typical in girls' wear judging by the illustrations in *Good Housekeeping* and *Chatelaine* from the period. Ruffles were also present in girls' wear.

By using these girlish elements in the movie costume, Adrian added a touch of innocence and demureness to Joan Crawford's character. This is important because within the

context of the movie she kills someone, possibly in self defence, possibly accidentally. The audience needs to believe the killing was justified, that she is in essence, innocent. The Peter Pan collar, ruffles, and colour all reinforce the innocent character.

Adrian was known for his "big dresses" (Crawford in Quirk, 1988, p. 16) and his use of detail above the waist to focus attention on the actor's face (Chierichetti, 1976). With its profusion of ruffles, full-length and hour-glass silhouette the *Letty Lynton* costume was definitely a big dress. The Peter Pan collar, puff sleeves and ruffles on the collar, shoulder and sleeve certainly framed Joan Crawford's face. Three of these details, the puff sleeves, hour-glass silhouette and ruffled shoulder, not only enhanced the function of the costume, but were also important in the recognition of dresses similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume, and were found more frequently after the movie's release (see Table 2).

Some design details used and exaggerated specifically for costume emphasis were adopted for fashionable clothing. This supports Gustafson (1982) who found that costumes had to be somewhat unusual to have an impact on the retail market. It is also similar to the way in which historical costumes introduced new elements into women's fashions (LaValley, 1987).

It is interesting that the design details found in girls' wear but not in women's wear did not become more popular after the movie's release, even though these details were used for story emphasis in the *Letty Lynton* costume. Perhaps the child-like details were not picked up because

they were not exaggerated. Perhaps it was because, as elements found in girls' wear, the design details had childish connotations, or perhaps the design details were too different from those found in women's wear to be adopted.

Table 2

Important Design Details

<u>Sample</u> (increased after release of movie)	<u>Style Similar</u> (important to recognition)	<u>Costume</u> (enhanced function of costume)
Puff sleeve	Puff sleeve	Puff sleeve
Silhouette	Silhouette	Silhouette
Ruffled shoulder	Ruffled shoulder	Ruffled shoulder
Upper body ruffles		Upper body ruffles
	Ruffled hem	Ruffled hem
Neckline		Neckline/Collar
	Colour	Colour
	Full-length	Full-length
	Defined Waist	

Like the other design details, ruffles were also present in fashion before the release of the movie, albeit in a slightly different form. Fashion did have ruffles, but the placement and character of the ruffles were different. At the end of the 1920s, ruffles tended to be droopy. The visual line of the garments pointed down. During the 1930s,

the ruffles gradually became crisper and the visual line started to point up and often out. This is consistent with Herzog and Gaines (1991) and with the emergence of a broader-shouldered and more hour-glass silhouette (Collard, 1983; Chierichetti, 1976; Leese, 1991). Perhaps the ruffles echoed the depression, which started in 1929, reached its depth in 1933 and generally ended by the close of the 1930s (Horn, 1984). Ruffles also appeared to be more common in the 1930s than in the 1920s.

Peplums were not common when the movie costume was designed but the peplum can be seen as an evolution of an existing fashion. It was very common for dresses of the late 1920s and early 1930s to have detail in the hip area, usually a decorative seam. Though the peplum was somewhat new, the horizontal emphasis on the hip was not.

Adrian adopted, adapted, and recombined existing fashion elements to make a new design. After the movie's release exact copies of the costume were not found in the magazines, but certain elements and the feel of the dress were repeated in other designs. Herzog and Gaines (1991) discussed how street fashion would refer to movie costume and examples were found in this study of garments that referred to the *Letty Lynton* costume.

#### Evaluation of Theories

In the literature review a number of theories pertinent to the area of fashion and film costume were presented. Several of the theories are relevant to the study, but none



appears to fully explain the relationship of fashion and film costume.

Though copies of the *Letty Lynton* dress were not found, the fashion diffusion theory (Sproles, 1979) and the diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1962) can be applied to the individual design details. Either the movie or the actor was the fashion opinion leader; neither introduced the design details, but both helped to popularize them.

Under the multi-step theory (Jamieson & Campbell, 1988), there is an on-going process in which the media influences an audience, the members of the audience influence each other and also influence the media. The process does not work with individual films, but if the movies produced by a single studio are seen as part of a continuum, then the theory can be applied. The *Letty Lynton* costume prompted some people to adopt design details found in the dress. The people who adopted the details influenced others in the audience but were also influenced by the others. The design details became part of contemporary fashion worn by the audience. The audience influenced the media and contemporary fashions influenced the film costume.

The movie could also be considered a gatekeeper (Shaw & McCombs, 1977). Design details in the costume were selected and importance was conferred on the details by their presence in the movie. Certain aspects of the film costume were adopted in contemporary fashion as a result of this importance. Perhaps the agenda setting theory (Shaw & McCombs, 1977), with its attendant notion of gatekeeper, is

better utilized as an explanation for the importance of the *Letty Lynton* costume in the literature. The costume was an important part of the movie's publicity campaign (Herzog & Gaines, 1991). Movie and fan magazines were gatekeepers, selecting the costume and giving it importance.

Lowe and Lowe (1990) found design elements that affect the silhouette of a garment change slowly. This finding is consistent with other proponents of the cyclical nature of fashion (Belleau, 1987; Richardson & Kroeber, 1940; Young 1937/1966). The superficial elements of a style change more rapidly (Lowe & Lowe, 1990). In this study the design details of defined waist and full-length changed slowly. The design details of puff sleeves and ruffled shoulder changed more rapidly.

Lowe and Lowe (1990) were also concerned with endogenous and exogenous forces on fashion. Perhaps fashion change in large details like length are endogenous, following their own logic, and fashion change in smaller details like puff sleeves, are more susceptible to exogenous forces such as film costumes.

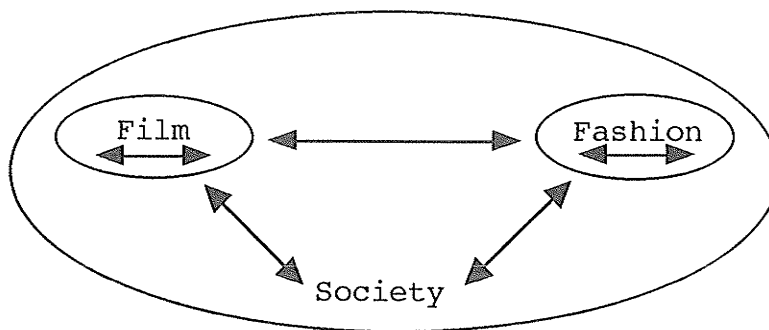
The diffusion theories (Rogers, 1962; Sproles, 1979) are useful if applied to individual design details rather than the entire costume, but they do not explain the reciprocal relationship between film and fashion. The multi-step theory (Jamieson & Campbell, 1988) is applicable if an individual film is considered part of a continuum of films produced by a studio. The agenda-setting theory (Shaw & McCombs, 1977) appears to be more useful in explaining the literature about

film costume and fashion than in shedding light on the relationship between them. Like Lowe and Lowe (1990) this study found that fashion is neither purely exogenous, influenced by outside forces such as film, nor purely endogenous, following its own logic.

#### Cultural Ecosystem

What is needed is a theory which allows film and fashion, or any other aspect of material culture, to be examined within the realm of their cultural ecosystem. Like fish in a lagoon, film and fashion exist within a culture. If there is a storm in the lagoon, or an oil spill, or if another species is introduced, then the behaviour of the fish already in the lagoon might be altered, though they will still behave as fish do. Similarly, film and fashion are both affected by the larger events in society. Film and fashion also follow their own internal code of behaviour. Because film and fashion exist within the same cultural ecosystem, they are not only affected by the same external forces, they also interact with each other and with the larger ecosystem. Figure 8 diagrams this.

Figure 8 - Model of the Cultural Ecosystem



### Research Questions Answered

Nine questions were originally raised with regards to the relationship between film costume and fashion. The questions focussed specifically on the white dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton*. The answers are summarized as follows.

All the design details found in the *Letty Lynton* costume were present in *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping* before the movie's release. Some, such as the jewel neckline and Peter Pan collar, were more likely to be found in children's wear than in women's wear.

The design details of hour-glass silhouette, puff sleeves, jewel neckline, ruffled shoulder and ruffled hem were found much more frequently in the magazines after the release of *Letty Lynton*. The Peter Pan collar was found slightly more often. The frequency of other design details did not appear to be affected by the movie.

There was no difference in the incidence of design details found in *Chatelaine* as opposed to *Good Housekeeping*. The number of design details like that of the *Letty Lynton* costume was very similar for both magazines. Some of the design details such as the hour-glass silhouette, puff sleeves and ruffled hip were more common in *Chatelaine*.

Not all the design details that increased did so at the same time. The design details of hour-glass silhouette, puff sleeves, jewel neckline and ruffled shoulder increased shortly after the movie's release. Other design details such as ruffled hem and hour-glass silhouette were found most

frequently four years after the movie's release, the last year the magazines were examined.

In no instances were the designer, movie or actor credited with a design. Most of the garments were not credited to any designer (93.5%). Fifty different designers and labels were mentioned, the most common was Patou with 12 credits.

The design details of garments judged similar to the movie costume, in order of frequency, were: full-length, hour-glass silhouette, defined waist, puff sleeves, ruffled hem, ruffled shoulder and colour. About half of the similar garments had all of these design details. Seven of the similar dresses were found in fashion features, nine in illustrations for fiction, four in general advertisements and only one in an advertisement for clothing.

In over 70% of the similar garments, no designer was credited. Other designers or labels cited were Saks Fifth Avenue, Maggie Rouff, Lelong and Patou. The season of the year made no difference in the presence of the design details. Despite the summery nature of the costume, similar garments were found throughout the year.

Based on the design details found in the style similar garments, important elements in the recognition of a garment appear to be those that contribute to the overall shape of the garment and those details found in the upper body of a garment. These details were also the most commonly found in the sample. The design details of hour-glass silhouette, puff sleeves, jewel neckline and ruffled shoulder all

increased after the release of the 1932 movie *Letty Lynton*. These details were also important to the recognition of style similar garments in the magazines.

Exact copies of the *Letty Lynton* dress were not found in *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping*. The number of style similar garments was only 1%, but design details important to the recognition of style similar garments were found more frequently after the movie's release. This is consistent with the evolution of fashion. Elements of a style are adopted and adapted to suit the manufacturers' needs or consumers' demands. Exact duplicates are rarely seen, it is the essence of a style that is important.

The capturing of the essence of a fashion is paralleled in the world of movies. Real life is never duplicated, but the film-maker hopes to capture the essence of it on film. Conversely, consumers wish to capture the essence of the reel world in the real world.

CHAPTER 5  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Background and Justification

It is a common perception that movie costumes influence fashion, but there has been very little empirical research to support the belief. What literature there is on the subject is either contradictory, inconclusive, or based upon studio publicity or designer's beliefs (Adrian, 1933; Adrian, 1934; Eckert, 1978; Gustafson, 1982; Herzog & Gaines, 1991; LaValley, 1987; Luick, 1933; Maeder, 1987).

The movie designers Adrian (1933; 1934) and Luick (1933) believed their costumes were influential on fashion. Edith Head (1983) thought her designs had no affect on fashion. Gustafson (1982) examined the impact of Head's designs on ready-to-wear and found some support for the influence of film on fashion, but his findings were inconclusive. Eckert (1978), whose unreferenced writings were probably based upon studio publicity, claimed movies had a strong influence on fashion. Some of Eckert's claims were refuted by Herzog and Gaines (1991), but implicit in their work is the concept of films influencing fashion. Maeder (1987) wrote of contemporary fashion's impact on historical films. In the same book, LaValley (1987) discussed the impact historical films had on contemporary fashion.

There are logical reasons why films and fashion can be linked together. Both are part of the material culture and

part of the popular culture of a society. Both are forms of communication; movies are part of mass communications, clothing is an aspect of non-verbal communication.

Theories from the fields of fashion, film studies and mass communications were evaluated in relation to films and fashion. These theories have common elements.

The diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1962) and the fashion innovations theory (Sproles, 1979) both describe how an innovation or fashion can move through society. An important factor in the process is the opinion leader who legitimizes an innovation. The multi-step theory (Jamieson & Campbell, 1988) of mass communications also uses an opinion leader. Part of Mulvey's "to be looked at" theory (1975) relates to the diffusion and multi-step theories. Actors portray an idealized self. In that capacity, stars serve as opinion leaders. Common to all the theories is the concept of a person who is looked up to, admired and possibly emulated.

The 1930s are the most commonly mentioned era with regards to film's influence on women's fashion in both research and popular literature. There are several factors which support this. The 1930s were important for technological advancements in sound and colour. Movie attendance was very high. The studio and star systems were firmly in place. The number of female stars, their stature, and the strength of their roles peaked during this decade (Medeiros, 1988).

To examine the relationship of film costume and fashion



a specific costume from a specific film was selected. The white dress designed by Adrian and worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM film *Letty Lynton* was chosen. This costume is the most frequently cited example of film's influence on fashion in the literature (see Appendix A). The history of the costume is controversial. Macy's is said to have sold 500,000 copies of the dress (Eckert, 1978) but Herzog and Gaines (1991) found no such evidence. The costume is credited with starting the broad-shoulder look (Chierichetti, 1976, Leese, 1991), but so is Schiaparelli (Collard, 1983).

#### How the Study was Conducted

To determine whether the "famous *Letty Lynton* dress" (Leese, 1991, p.6) had an impact on women's fashion of the 1930s, or if the film costume was influenced by contemporary fashion, a series of questions were formed. To answer these questions the costume was analyzed for design details. *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping* were examined for pictures of garments. A total of 2,016 garments were used. The garments were checked for the presence of the design details. In addition, garments were noted if they were similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume.

#### Results

The 2,016 pictures of garments were chosen equally from each magazine and were distributed evenly over the seven year collection period (1930-1936). The garments were also equally distributed between advertisements, fashion features

and illustrations. Almost all of the advertisements (94.0%) were for products other than clothing. About one-fifth of the pictured garments were in photographs, the rest were rendered by artists. Approximately four-fifths of the pictures were front views and the entire garment was visible.

All of the design details used in the *Letty Lynton* costume were present in the magazines before the release of the movie. The Peter Pan collar, jewel neckline and ruffles were often used in children's wear.

The most frequently found design details in the sample were the defined waist (73.3%) and the belt (60.5%). Also common were the full length (34.5%) and the colour white (22.2%). Of the frequently found design details, the defined waist, full length and colour were also important factors in recognizing garments similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume. None of the frequently found details became more common after the release of the movie.

The design details of puff sleeve, jewel neckline, hour-glass silhouette and ruffled shoulder became more common after the 1932 release of the movie *Letty Lynton*. Garments with either puff sleeves or ruffles in the upper body increased by half between 1932 and 1933. Almost a quarter (23.1%) of the garments had one or more of these design details. Most of them were found in 1933.

The details of puff sleeve, hour-glass silhouette and ruffled shoulder were also important in the recognition of garments similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume. The number of hour-glass silhouettes, full length garments and ruffled hems

was highest in 1936, the last year the magazines were examined.

The overall pattern and frequency of appearance of design details was similar in *Chatelaine* and *Good Housekeeping*. Neither magazine lead the other in the presence of design details.

Only 21 (1.04%) of the garments were deemed similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume. Design details frequently found in these garments were: full length (100.0%), hour-glass silhouette (100.0%), defined waistline (95.2%), puff sleeves (81.0%), ruffled hem (81.0%), ruffled shoulders (76.2%) and the colour white (71.4%). If the design details of ruffled neck, sleeve and shoulder are grouped, 95.2% of the similar garments had ruffles at the upper body.

Three of the 21 similar garments were found in the magazines before the release of the movie. Ten were found in 1936, four years after the movie's release. The similar dresses were not found at any particular time of year.

There was no reference to Joan Crawford or *Letty Lynton* in the magazines. Adrian was cited in his capacity as fashion designer, not as film costume designer. Most (93.5%) of the garments were not credited to any designer. The remainder were credited to one of 50 designers or labels. Six of the garments similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume had designer credits.

### Conclusions

#### Definition of Impact

The white dress worn by Joan Crawford in the 1932 MGM

film *Letty Lynton* was chosen as a basis for research because of the number of times it was cited in the literature as an example of the influence movie costumes have on fashion. The impact of the costume on 1930s fashion can not be determined without a definition of the word impact. If impact is taken to be an exact copy of the costume, then the impact was nil because no duplicates of the costume were found. If impact means the presence of substantially similar garments, then there was very little impact on women's fashion because there were very few similar garments in the women's magazines. However, if impact can be measured by the presence of design details in fashionable clothing, if fashions can refer to a style rather than quote it, then there was an impact.

#### Essence and Economics

The impact the *Letty Lynton* costume had on women's fashion of the 1930s was found in the increase of the number of certain design details rather than in copies of the costume. This raises two questions. Why were design details found, rather than the whole costume? Why were certain design details found, but not others?

There were 21 design details in the *Letty Lynton* costume, but a picture drawn with only three design details, the hour-glass silhouette, puff sleeves and ruffled shoulders, would still be recognizable as the *Letty Lynton* costume. These details capture the essence of the costume.

The design details of puff sleeves, hour-glass silhouettes and ruffled shoulders: increased after the

release of the movie, were important to the recognition of similar garments and were used to enhance the function of the costume (see Table 2, p. 75). If a consumer or manufacturer wished to have a garment similar to the costume, they did not duplicate the costume, but referred to it by repeating the essential elements: the puff sleeves, the hour-glass silhouette and the ruffles.

The fact that manufacturers did not need to copy the *Letty Lynton* costume was beneficial to the manufacturer and the consumer. The original costume would be expensive to reproduce. The full skirt, big sleeves and yards of ruffles required a lot of material. The ruffles and numerous other details were very labour intensive to produce. By using only the silhouette, the puff sleeves and some ruffles in the upper body, the manufacturer caught the feel of the *Letty Lynton* costume at a fraction of the original cost and was theoretically able to pass this saving on to the consumers, a very important point in the economically depressed 1930s.

Economics can also be used to explain why the number of white dresses did not increase after the release of the movie, though the colour was an important recognition factor. The labour required of the consumer to wash, starch and hand-iron a copy of the *Letty Lynton* costume would be immense. If the garment were white the process would have to be repeated more frequently. In the movies there were maids to starch and iron all those tiny pleated ruffles. Very few audience members had the time needed to look after a dress like the *Letty Lynton* costume, even fewer had maids.

The costume was fanciful, theatrical and part of the escapism of the movies. People in the 1930s went to the movies to escape reality. The lush and glamorous costumes by designers like Adrian, worn by stars like Crawford, were part of the escapism. The costumes were not meant to be duplicated, for the world of the movies was not meant to be duplicated. The movies, their worlds and costumes, were part of people's dream fantasies.

The fiction illustrations in the magazines were also dream fantasies. About half of the garments similar to the *Letty Lynton* costume were found in these illustrations. The *Letty Lynton* dress was not meant for real life, only echoes of it were found in the design details of women's fashionable clothing.

### Selling the Star

It was presumed that most of the movie audience was female and that women made most of the consumer decisions in the 1930s (Handel, 1950). Demographically, the median age of the population rose between the 1920s and the 1930s (Canada Year Book, 1933). It made sense for the movie studios to sell a new, more mature star to the newly mature audience.

Part of the new star image was glamour. The soft-focus lighting, the impeccable makeup and the luxurious costumes were part of the glamour. The glamour of the stars was part of the dream fantasies and escapism that movies represented to the depression era audience.

Joan Crawford was truly a star of the people. In the

earliest years of her career she went by her own name, Lucille LeSueur (Quirk, 1988). When stardom appeared possible, the studio, as part of its revamping of her image, had a public contest to change her name. The result, easy to spell and pronounce, with a certain class to it, was Joan Crawford.

Crawford reinvented herself, or was reinvented by others, several times throughout her lengthy career. In the first phase of her career she was the dancing girl. She started as a hooper and was the epitome of the bright young thing of the 1920s who loved to party. In the 1930s the party girl was transformed into the working-girl-who-made-good. In many of her movies filmed during the 1930s, Crawford played a woman who had pulled herself up by her own bra-straps by virtue of her hard work (if not always by her virtue), her social graces and her ability to dress.

The working girl who had risen above her station was part of Crawford's persona. Female audiences identified with her and saw her as a role model. Crawford started as poor working class, but because of hard work, drive, ambition and the ability to dress, rose to become one of the top stars at one of the top studios. If Crawford could escape poverty, then there was hope the audience could too.

When Crawford strayed from the virtuous path, as she did in *Letty Lynton*, the triumphant finale occurred when she had acknowledged the error of her ways and once again trod the straight and narrow. The *Letty Lynton* costume is indicative of her virtuous return; it reaffirms Crawford's basic

goodness and innocence. It was likely worn in the scene where Crawford accidentally, on purpose, in self-defence, poisons her former lover, who has been stalking her and trying to blackmail her into returning to him. But Crawford has already left him and his dissolute life and has returned to the good life of her mother, complete with new and acceptable fiancé in tow. The death of her ex-lover, however inadvertent, frees Crawford from her past. Her return to the fold is affirmed when her fiancé and formerly estranged mother lie to provide Crawford with an alibi when she is accused of murder. The movie ends with Crawford, her fiancé and her mother all leaving to join the fiancé's family at their country estate in the Adirondacks.

The *Letty Lynton* dress is an interesting example of Adrian's costume design and of the function of movie costume in the 1930s. The dramatic elements of little-girl collar and virginal colour were used to emphasize Crawford's innocence. The big puff sleeves, silhouette and the exuberance of ruffles were theatrical elements, typical of Adrian's "big dresses" (Quirk, 1988, p.16). The ruffles, neckline and collar frame the face, perfect for close-ups. The dramatic and theatrical elements of the costume, the delicate fabric and finely pleated ruffles and the way the picture was lit and shot all contribute to the glamorous image of the star.

As the word glamour suggests, the *Letty Lynton* dress was aimed at the viewing audience, not at other characters in the film. The costume is fanciful, childlike and over-the-top,



almost a caricature of femininity. In Mulvey's "to-be-looked-at" theory (1975), females are the passive recipient of the male gaze. In the costume, Crawford is meant to be looked at by the audience; she is decorative, demure and girlish. If the costume were intended for the male gaze rather than the female, it is not surprising that the dress was not copied. Females rejected the costume as a whole, with its little girl details and fussy femininity, but they adopted the theatrical details that were part of the glamour of the costume.

The *Letty Lynton* costume is an example of MGM's investment in Crawford. Supposedly, Adrian created the big puff sleeves and the broad shoulders of the costume to camouflage Crawford's faults. The puff sleeves and ruffles exaggerated Crawford's already broad shoulders and made her hips look slimmer and her legs look longer in comparison. Crawford was given the star treatment because she sold movies. MGM was not trying to sell the costume but the movie. Crawford's persona, her ability to wear the glamorous costumes and the clothes themselves were used to publicize the movies and enhance the image of the studio.

It was not just the costume but the woman who wore it that made the *Letty Lynton* dress famous. In 1934 Marion Davies wore a similarly styled dress by Adrian in the film *Going Hollywood*. Neither the movie, the costume, nor the actor caught on. Davies, as publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst's mistress, did not have Crawford's working-girl-made-good persona that female audiences could identify

with. Davies also lacked Crawford's ruthless ambition and talent for repackaging herself for changing markets.

Hollander (1975) describes theatrical costume as that which is similar to but larger than life. Unlike dramatic costume its purpose is not to illustrate a story point or character, but to render the wearer bigger, better and grander than other people. The roots of theatrical costumes can be found in everyday clothing. The ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary. Mulvey (1975) describes the star actor, in her theatrical costume, as the glamorous impersonating the ordinary.

Joan Crawford was transformed from an ordinary working girl to a star. Women identified with the star and the transformation. Adrian combined ordinary details from women's and girls' fashions into glamorous costume for dramatic and theatrical purposes. It was the theatrical, glamorous elements of the costume that were adopted and adapted for women's fashions. Perhaps women were trying for a little transformation of their own.

#### Canadian and American

There is a perception that Canada lags behind the United States, that Canadians are not as quick to adopt innovations nor are they as fashionable as Americans. Yet this study found no substantial differences between the American and Canadian magazines, no evidence of Canadians' unfashionability. In fact, hour-glass silhouettes were found earlier in *Chatelaine*, the Canadian magazine. And the

important design details of hour-glass silhouette, ruffled shoulders, puff sleeves and ruffled hips were all more common in *Chatelaine* than in *Good Housekeeping*, the American magazine.

Canada was considered part of Hollywood's North American market. Canadians and Americans went to the same movies for the same reasons. The same publicity stills were sent to Canadian and American media. American magazines were available in Canada and Canadian magazines were available in the United States and both countries experienced a depression during the 1930s. Because of the marketing, cultural and economic similarities it is understandable that design details were found in similar quantities and at similar times in the Canadian and American magazines.

### Theories

The relationship between the *Letty Lynton* costume and women's fashion of the 1930s appears to be reciprocal. While there is evidence of the movie costume in fashionable clothing, the costume was influenced by contemporary dress. Both films and fashions were part of a larger social and economic climate.

Several fashion and mass communication theories help explain the relationship between the *Letty Lynton* costume and women's fashion of the 1930s. None explain the relationship entirely.

The diffusion theories (Rogers, 1962; Sproles, 1979) explain how films can influence fashion. The endogenous and

exogenous forces on fashion (Lowe & Lowe 1990) can be used to explain why some of the design details showed little or no change while other details exhibited rapid change. Neither theory resolves the reciprocal relationship between the *Letty Lynton* costume and women's fashion of the 1930s.

The multi-step theory (Jamieson & Campbell, 1988) does allow for feedback between the media and the audience. It is useful if the movie *Letty Lynton* is considered part of a continuum of movies produced by MGM. None of the theories takes into account the existence of both film and fashion as part of society.

Film and fashion are both subjected to external forces and to internal trends; both are part of a larger cultural ecosystem. By using the proposed cultural ecosystem theory as a framework, it is possible to see how film and fashion act and interact with each other and with other aspects of society.

#### Implications for Further Research

During the course of this study, further questions were raised regarding the relationship of film and fashion. Do other film costumes have relationships with fashion similar to that of the *Letty Lynton* costume? Is there a similar relationship between male film costume and men's fashions? To answer the questions other costumes in other movies could be studied. Possibilities include: the 1930s styles worn by Faye Dunaway in Warner's 1967 *Bonnie and Clyde*, or the undershirt that Clark Gable did not wear in Columbia's 1934

*It Happened One Night.*

This study used women's magazines to assess the relationship between film costume and women's fashion. Would the impact be the same if it was measured in other ways? Extant garments or photographic records of people could be searched. Surveys of mail-order catalogues or pattern books might reveal a different pattern.

The number of similar dresses is extremely small, the number of like details is larger, but still small; how small is small? What would the normal proportion of any design detail be? At any given point in time there will a large variety of styles available to consumers and worn by people. What degree of saturation is a fad, what is a fashion, what numbers can be considered pure chance? A study documenting the details of the clothing women wore in the 1930s and compared to the results of this study could provide answers.

Another area to be explored is the importance of movie publicity to women's fashion. The white *Letty Lynton* dress "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 of the film" (Herzog & Gaines, 1991, p. 90). In advertisements for the opening of the picture in Winnipeg, Canada, Joan Crawford is wearing the white dress (Winnipeg Free Press, 1932). The fact that this costume is remembered and discussed so many years later is testimony to its importance and to the "skill of the professional publicist" (Herzog & Gaines, 1991).

Several of the movie moguls in the 1930s had previous experience in the garment trade. Was there any connection between these men and the movie designs available to the consumer? How did the commercial tie-ins between movies and manufacturers work in the 1930s? Were there 400 Cinema Fashion? What were they? Where were they? What happened to them?

The movie, and later fashion career, of Adrian is worth examining. It was noticed during the research for this study that Adrian appeared to recycle certain styles. An analysis of his movie costumes would prove interesting.

This study found existing film, fashion and mass communication theories did not examine film and fashion as cultural products. The cultural ecosystem framework, which places film and fashion within a societal setting, is in its earliest stages. Further development of the model would be useful.

Skjelver, quoting Gowan (1964) in the *Journal of Home Economics*, wrote that historical researchers must check "local legends and traditional assumptions against ascertainable fact" (1971, p. 107). Herzog and Gaines describe the *Letty Lynton* dress as a myth that has "passed safely into costume history" (1991, p.88). The myth is not so much misplaced as it is misunderstood. Because of the conditional support for the *Letty Lynton* legend a fundamental question is raised: how many other myths are being accepted as fact?

Appendices

Appendix A  
Film Costume and Fashion References in Print



The information in Appendix A is taken from various books and articles dealing with the influence film costumes had on fashion. Information given by various authors has been supplemented by Leese's *Costume design in the movies* (1991) and Halliwell's *film guide to over 10,000 films* (1979).

Table 3

Total References

Category	Number	Category	Number
<u>designer</u>		<u>movie</u>	
Adrian	33	Letty Lynton	10
Edith Head	13	Bonnie and Clyde	5
Walter Plunkett	11	Romance	3
Theadora van Runkle	5	Gone With the Wind	3
Other	55	Other	96
<u>actor</u>		<u>decade</u>	
Joan Crawford	18	1930s	67
Greta Garbo	16	1950s	17
Marlene Dietrich	5	1940s	15
Norma Shearer	5	1960s	13
Other	73	Other	5

N = 117

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Adrian	Greta Garbo	A Woman of Affairs 1928 MGM	slouch hat	O'Hara 1986
Adrian	Greta Garbo	A Woman of Affairs 1928 MGM	slouch hat, plaid lined, belted trench coat	Turim 1983
Adrian	Greta Garbo	Anna Karenina 1935 MGM	not specified	LaValley 1987
Adrian	Greta Garbo	As You Desire Me 1931 MGM	pill-box hat	O'Hara 1986
Adrian	Greta Garbo	Camille 1936 MGM	not specified	LaValley 1987
Adrian	Greta Garbo	Mata Hari 1931 MGM	double-breasted styles, sable coat, broad shoulder	LaValley 1987
Adrian	Greta Garbo	Queen Christina 1933 MGM	cartridge pleats, velvet doublets, leather jerkens, linen collars	LaValley 1987
Adrian	Greta Garbo	Romance 1930 MGM	Empress Eugenie Hat, hat tilt, ostrich feathers	LaValley 1987
Adrian	Greta Garbo	Romance 1930 MGM	Eugenie hat	Allen 1972

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Adrian	Greta Garbo	Romance 1930 MGM	Eugenie hat	O'Hara 1986
Adrian	Greta Garbo	various 1930s	body shape especially broad shoulders	Laver 1988
Adrian	Hedy Lamarr	I Take This Woman 1939 MGM	snood	O'Hara 1986
Adrian	Jean Harlow	various 1930s	not specified	Turim 1983
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	dress	Leese 1991
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	not specified	Allen & Gomery 1985
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	white dress	Chieri- chetti 1976
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	white dress	Eckert 1978
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	white dress	Frings 1991

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	white dress	Herzog & Gaines 1991
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	white dress	Keenan 1977
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	white dress	Stallings 1978
Adrian	Joan Crawford	Letty Lynton 1932 MGM	white ruffled dress	O'Hara 1986
Adrian	Joan Crawford	various 1930s	broad shoulder	Quirk 1988
Adrian	Joan Crawford	various 1930s	broad shoulders	Collard 1983
Adrian	Joan Crawford	various 1930s	not specified	Turim 1983
Adrian	Norma Shearer	Marie Antoinette 1938 MGM	modest hoops - Hattie Carnegie designed	LaValley 1987
Adrian	Norma Shearer	Marie Antoinette 1938 MGM	not specified	Turim 1983

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Adrian	Norma Shearer	Romeo and Juliette 1936 MGM	velvet evening gowns, skull caps	LaValley 1987
Adrian	Norma Shearer	The Barretts of Wimpole Street 1934 MGM	higher decolletage, fur-lined hoods, skirts	LaValley 1987
Adrian	Norma Shearer	various 1930s	not specified	Turim 1983
Adrian	various	various 1930s	padded shoulder, slim skirt, geometric details	Turim 1983
Adrian, Orry-Kelly, Banton	Hepburn, Lombard, Harlow, Dietrich	various 1930s	not specified	Wilson & Taylor 1989
Cecil Beaton	Viven Leigh	Anna Karenina 1948 London Films	velvet throat ribbons, dog collars, velvets	LaValley 1987
Donfeld	Jane Fonda, Susannah York	They Shoot Horses Don't They? 1969 Palomar	halter tops, nautical trousers, sleeveless striped sweaters	LaValley 1987
Dorothy Jeakins, Moss Mabry	Barbra Streisand, Robert Redford	The Way We Were 1973 Columbia	not specified	Leese 1991
Earle Luick, Edward Stevenson	James Cagney	Public Enemy 1931 Warner	not specified	Wilson & Taylor 1989

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Edith Head	Audrey Hepburn	Sabrina 1954 Paramount	neckline with bow	Head & Ardmore 1959
Edith Head	Carol Thurston	The Story of Dr. Wassell 1944 Paramount	glorified underwear	Gustafson 1982
Edith Head	Claudette Colbert	Zaza 1939 Unknown	1900 - 1904 style	LaValley 1987
Edith Head	Dorothy Lamour	Moon Over Burma 1940 Paramount	jacket with rosettes and pearls, skirt	Gustafson 1982
Edith Head	Dorothy Lamour	The Jungle Princess 1936 Paramount	sarong	Gustafson 1982
Edith Head	Dorothy Lamour	The Jungle Princess 1936 Paramount	sarong	O'Hara 1986
Edith Head	Elizabeth Taylor	A Place in the Sun 1951 Paramount	white strapless evening dress	O'Hara 1986
Edith Head	Esther Fernandez	Two Years Before the Mast 1946 Paramount	bustle	Gustafson 1982
Edith Head	Hedy Lamarr	Samson and Delilah 1949 Paramount	hat, top with braid and pearls, play-suit	Gustafson 1982

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Edith Head	Mae West	She Done Him Wrong 1933 Paramount	shape, silhouette	LaValley 1987
Edith Head	Paul Newman Robert Redford	The Sting 1973 Universal	not specified	Leese 1991
Edith Head	Paulette Goddard	Unconquered 1947 Paramount	bustle, off- the-shoulder neckline	Gustafson 1982
Edith Head (Travis Banton?)	Loretta Young	The Crusades 1935 Paramount	stylized nun's habit with pearls	Gustafson 1982
Elizabeth Haffenden	Maggie Smith	The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie 1968 TCF	1930s classic sportswear	LaValley 1987
Irene Sharaff	Judy Garland	Meet Me in St. Louis 1944 MGM	knit stocking cap	LaValley 1987
John Furness	Julie Christie	The Go- Between 1970 EMI	not specified	Leese 1991
John McCorry	Albert Finney, Susannah York	Tom Jones 1963 United Artists	shirt	LaValley 1987
Judy Moorcroft	Judy Davis	A Passage to India 1984 Unknown	linen	Wilson & Taylor 1989

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Moss Mabry	James Dean	Rebel Without a Cause 1955 Warner	jeans	Wilson & Taylor 1989
Natalie Visart	Joel McCrae	Union Pacific 1939 Paramount	frontiersman shirt and belt buckle	LaValley 1987
not specified	Carole Lombard	various 1930s	broad shoulders	Danielson 1989
not specified	Edward G. Robinson	Little Caesar 1930 Warner	not specified	Wilson & Taylor 1989
not specified	Fess Parker	Davy Crockett 1955 Disney	raccoon tail hat	LaValley 1987
not specified	George Raft	Scarface 1932 Howard Hughes	not specified	Wilson & Taylor, 1989
not specified	Greta Garbo	various 1930s	broad shoulders	Danielson 1989
not specified	Greta Garbo	various 1930s	broad shoulders, makeup	Allen 1972
not specified	Greta Garbo	various 1930s	broad shoulders, natural style	Tortora & Eubank 1989



<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
not specified	Greta Garbo	various 1930s	not specified	Behling 1985-86
not specified	Greta Garbo	various 1930s	not specified	Turim 1983
not specified	Jean Harlow	various 1930s	platinum hair	Allen 1972
not specified	Jean Harlow	various 1930s	platinum hair	Tortora & Eubank 1989
not specified	Jeanne Moreau, Brigitte Bardot	Viva Maria 1965 Panavision	Edwardian fashions	Wilson & Taylor 1989
not specified	Joan Crawford	various 1930s	broad shoulders	Allen 1972
not specified	Joan Crawford	various 1930s	broad shoulders	Danielson 1989
not specified	Joan Crawford	various 1930s	hair, makeup, clothes	Tortora & Eubank 1989
not specified	Joan Crawford	various 1930s	not specified	Behling 1985-86

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
not specified	Joan Crawford	various 1930s	not specified	Turim 1983
not specified	Julie Christie, Terence Stamp	Far from the Madding Crowd 1968 EMI	Edwardian fashions	Wilson & Taylor 1989
not specified	June Allyson	various 1940s	pageboy hairstyle	Tortora & Eubank 1989
not specified	Mae West	various 1930s	curves	Allen 1972
not specified	Mae West	various 1930s	not specified	Boucher 1987
not specified	Marilyn Monroe	various 1950s	hour-glass shape	Turim 1983
not specified	Marlene Dietrich	various 1930s	men's suits	Niven 1975
not specified	Marlene Dietrich	various 1930s	not specified	Boucher 1987
not specified	Marlene Dietrich	various 1930s	trousers	Wilson & Taylor 1989

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
not specified	Marlon Brando	The Wild One 1950 Columbia	leather jacket	Wilson & Taylor 1989
not specified	not specified	Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs 1938 Disney	Snow White afternoon dress, dopey hat	LaValley 1987
not specified	Rudolph Valentino	various 1920s	pomaded hairstyle	Tortora & Eubank 1989
not specified	Shirley Temple	various 1930s	hair in ringlets	Tortora & Eubank 1989
not specified	Theda Bara	various 1920s	Vamp makeup	Wilson & Taylor 1989
not specified	Veronica Lake	various 1940s	hairstyle over eye	Wilson & Taylor 1989
not specified	Veronica Lake	various 1940s	peek-a-boo hairstyle	Tortora & Eubank 1989
not specified	William Powell	Man of the World 1931 Unknown	sapphire cuff- links	LaValley 1987
Omar Kiam	Merle Oberon	Wuthering Heights 1939 Samuel Goldwyn	wedding gown	LaValley 1987

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Phyllis Dalton	Julie Christie, Omar Sharif	Doctor Zhivago 1965 MGM	coat	LaValley 1987
Phyllis Dalton	Julie Christie, Omar Sharif	Doctor Zhivago 1965 MGM	great coats, Russian look	Tortora & Eubank 1989
Pierre Cardin	Jeanne Moreau	Jules et Jim 1961 Film du Carosse	not specified	Wilson & Taylor 1989
Ralph Lauren	Diane Keaton	Annie Hall 1977 United Artists	oversize menswear	O'Hara 1986
Ray Aghayan, Bob Mackie	Barbra Streisand	Funny Lady 1975 Columbia	not specified	Leese 1991
Rene Hubert	Marlene Dietrich	Flame of New Orleans 1941 Universal	lace	LaValley 1987
Rene Hubert	Vivien Leigh Laurence Olivier	That Hamilton Woman 1941 London Films	fichu dresses, velvet picture hat	LaValley 1987
Robert Kalloch	Clark Gable	It Happened One Night 1934 Columbia	no undershirt	Tortora & Eubank 1989
Schiaparelli	Mae West	Every Day's a Holiday 1938 Paramount	bare shoulders, bosom emphasis, feathers	LaValley 1987

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Theadora van Runkle	Faye Dunaway Warren Beatty	Bonnie and Clyde 1967 Warner	1930s look	Leese 1991
Theadora van Runkle	Faye Dunaway Warren Beatty	Bonnie and Clyde 1967 Warner	1930s look	Turim 1983
Theadora van Runkle	Faye Dunaway Warren Beatty	Bonnie and Clyde 1967 Warner	1930s look, beret, sweater, midi	Wilson & Taylor 1989
Theadora van Runkle	Faye Dunaway Warren Beatty	Bonnie and Clyde 1967 Warner	beret	O'Hara 1986
Theadora van Runkle	Faye Dunaway Warren Beatty	Bonnie and Clyde 1967 Warner	beret, soft sweaters, midi	LaValley 1987
Theoni Aldredge	Mia Farrow	The Great Gatsby 1974 Paramount	not specified	Leese 1991
Travis Banton	Loretta Young	The Crusades 1935 Paramount	long flowing lines, capes fastened with clip	LaValley 1987
Walter Plunkett	Hayley Mills	Pollyanna 1960 Disney	sailor collars, boaters, pleated skirts	LaValley 1987
Walter Plunkett	Irene Dunn	Cimarron 1931 RKO	leg-of-mutton sleeves, broad- shouldered look	LaValley 1987

<u>designer</u>	<u>actor</u>	<u>movie</u>	<u>garment/style</u>	<u>author</u>
Walter Plunkett	Jean Simmons, Stewart Granger	Young Bess 1953 MGM	sleeveless full-skirted summer frocks	LaValley 1987
Walter Plunkett	June Allyson	Little Women 1933 RKO	hair style	Tortora & Eubank 1989
Walter Plunkett	Katherine Hepburn	Little Women 1933 RKO	fabric patterns, pinafores	LaValley 1987
Walter Plunkett	Katherine Hepburn	Little Women 1933 RKO	hair snood	Tortora & Eubank 1989
Walter Plunkett	Katherine Hepburn	Mary of Scotland 1936 MGM	velvet formal dresses and cloaks, tam with snood, sports jacket	LaValley 1987
Walter Plunkett	Vivien Leigh	Gone With the Wind 1939 MGM	barbecue dress, small waist, full skirts	LaValley 1987
Walter Plunkett	Vivien Leigh Clark Gable	Gone With the Wind 1939 MGM	hair snood	Tortora & Eubank 1989
Walter Plunkett	Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable	Gone With the Wind 1939 MGM	hats with veils	LaValley 1987
Walter Plunkett and Travis Banton	Merle Oberon	A Song to Remember 1945 Columbia	velvet contrast at collars and pockets	LaValley 1987

Appendix B  
Data Collection Sheet

## DATA COLLECTION SHEET

ID# (1-4) \_\_\_\_\_

STYLE SIMILAR (5) 1 - Yes 2 - No

## IDENTIFICATION VARIABLES

Magazine (6)	Year 193? (7)	Month (8-9)	Page
Chtln Gd Hskpng			(10-12)
1 2	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	_____

Where Found (13)					Type (14)
Fash Feature	Cloth Ad	Other Ad	Illus	Other	Sketch Photo
1	2	3	4	5	1 2

Garment View (15)				Portion Viewed (16)		
Front	Back	Side	Full	Waist	Hip	Knee
1	2	3	1	2	3	4

## GARMENT VARIABLES

Floor Length (17)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Hour-Glass Silhouette (18)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Short Puff Sleeves (19)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Jewel Neckline (20)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Peter Pan Collar (21)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Defined Waist (22)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Belt(23)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Heart-shaped Buckle (24)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Peplum (25)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Overskirt (26)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Gored Skirt (27)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Horizontal Detail at Hem (28)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
White/Light (29)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Crisp & Sheer Fabric (30)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible

## RUFFLES at

Neckline/Collar (31)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Shoulder (32)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Sleeve (33)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Waist (34)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Buckle (35)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Hip (36)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible
Hem (37)	1 - Yes	2 - No	3 - Not Visible

## CREDIT GIVEN

Adrian (38)	Crawford (39)	Letty Lynton (40)	Other Designer
Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	(41-42)
1 2	1 2	1 2	_____



Appendix C  
Definition of Design Details

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Design Detail	Is like that of the <i>Letty Lynton</i> costume if:
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Floor Length	Garment covers the ankles.
Hour-Glass Silhouette	Garment is wider at the hem and the shoulders than at the hip and waist with a distinct difference between the waist and hip area.
Short Puff Sleeves	Sleeve ends between shoulder and elbow and is gathered at the armscye and hem.
Jewel Neckline	Neck of garment sits at the base of the neck in front and back.
Peter Pan Collar	Collar is small, round, flat, with no stand and two rounded points in front.
Defined Waist	Waist of garment is fitted at the natural centre of the body and is defined by a seam or a belt.
Belt	A band with a closure is present at the waist.
Heart-shaped Buckle	Buckle on the belt is heart-shaped and oriented in any direction.
Peplum	Short skirt-like extension is sewn to the bodice of a garment.
Overskirt	A sheer/semi-sheer skirt has another layer visible underneath.
Gored Skirt	The overskirt has three vertical panels visible in the front or back section.
Horizontal Detail at Hem	There are multiple lines of trim, braids, stripes or tucks around circumference of the skirt in the bottom third of the garment.
White/Light	The garments are white or light in colour, lighter than the background page.

Crisp and Sheer Fabric      Garment is either visibly crisp and sheer, standing away from the body or is described as such in the accompanying text.

Ruffles

Neckline/Collar	There are ruffles in the area.
Shoulder	There are ruffles in the area.
Sleeve	There are ruffles in the area.
Waist	There are ruffles in the area.
Buckle	There are ruffles in the area.
Hip	There are ruffles in the area.
Hem	There are ruffles in the area.

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