Working Women: Contemporary Cinematic Costumes in "Desk Set" and "Working Girl"

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WORKING WOMEN:
Contemporary Cinematic Costumes in *Desk Set* and *Working Girl*

BY

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Abstract

WORKING WOMEN: CONEMPORARY CINEMATIC COSTUMES IN *DESK SET* AND

WORKING GIRL

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The contemporary cinematic costume designer is a visual storyteller. Through the dressing, or undressing of the actor's body, the costume designer narrates the cinematic character's physical and psychological journey from the first frame to the final credits. The costume designer creates the character's image by selecting specific garments and accessories that will inform the audience about the character's relationship with his cinematic environment.

The focus of this thesis is to examine how the contemporary cinematic costume designer unifies contemporary clothing with the actor's body to narrate a cinematic character's story. In order to understand how the costume designer creates a visual narrative, I will examine two films, *Desk Set* (1957) with costumes designed by Charles le Maire and *Working Girl* (1988) with costumes designed by Ann Roth that offer an entrée into two different time periods; however, both films were released as contemporary films.

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Introduction

> Getting dressed, even casually, fixing our hair, putting on makeup, etc., is a language that always 'recounts' something. Even more so in cinema, where every sign on the body of a character has a precise meaning, linked to social characterization, historical identity, grotesque emphasis, transformation in terms of personality or feeling, and so on. Thus in the great sense-making machine of cinema, costume represents yet another signifying system, the signs of which become distinctive feature, functioning as linguistic units that are often more important than script or sound track.[1]

The contemporary cinematic costume designer is a visual storyteller.[2] Through the dressing, or undressing of the actor's body, the costume designer narrates the cinematic character's physical and psychological journey from the first frame to the final credits. The costume designer creates the character's image by selecting specific garments and accessories that will inform the audience about the character's relationship with his cinematic environment. Although the central characters are the focus of film's visual narrative, the costume designer uses the costumes of the supporting cast as a point or counterpoint to the image of the central characters.[3]

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[1] Patrizia Calefato, *The Clothed Body*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004) http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/9780857854049. (accessed November 1, 2013), 91.

[2] The term "contemporary" refers to the correlation between the style of fashion and the release date of the film. The term "cinematic costume" is used to distinguish the difference between theatrical and cinematic costumes. Although many of the skills and techniques employed by both theatrical and cinematic costume designers are similar, the costumes are realized as two separate and unique garments. The theatrical costume is designed so that the effect, narrative and comprehension of the garment can be understood by viewers who are seated adjacent to the playing area, as well as the viewer standing behind the furthest row in the theatre. The cinematic costume is designed to create an image that is always viewed and received through the technical demands of the filmic process.

[3] The author has been a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829 that is a professional association of Designers, Artists and Craftspeople since 1983.
Kinsley, Karen Hummel. "Karen Hummel Kinsley." Last modified March 03, 2013. Accessed January 01, 2014. www.KarenHummelKinsley.

The costume designer's narrative mission is consistent regardless of the film genre. The work of the costume designer is to illustrate the character's journey whether his story begins clothed in metal armor or a white t-shirt; however, there is a perception that there is a difference between the costume designer's process in designing costumes for historic or fantasy genre films, rather than contemporary films. Costume designers who work in the contemporary genre do not garner the artistic accolades that are bestowed on their fellow designers whose work is viewed as more creative and "better" than costume design that is evidenced in contemporary film. Despite the fact that since 1967, when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences combined the Black and White and Color Costume Design Categories into a single award, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) with costume design by Lizzy Gardiner[4] and Tim Chappel,[5] is the only film to receive the costume design Oscar that showcased a limited number of contemporary costumes.[6] In recent years, the Academy has awarded the Oscar to Mark Bridges' homage to the 1930's black and white era musical, *The Artist* (2011) and Jacqueline Durran's work in *Anna Karenina* (2012).[7] These costume designs are considered historical or period costume films, while, for example, Gary Jones' costumes for *Oz the Great and Powerful* (2013), are viewed as fantasy costumes.[8] Both historic and fantasy genre films

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[4] Lizzy Gardiner was born in 1966 in Australia. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0306773/.

[5] Tim Chappel was born in 1967 in New South Wales, Australia. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0152579/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1.

[6] The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences' website at hhtp://www.oscars.org/awards/index offers an indexed list of all nominees and award recipients from 1948 to the present.

[7] Ibid.

feature exotic and unique clothing elements that bring the narrative work of the costume designer to the forefront of both the theatrical experience and the Academy ballots. The elements of clothing in these types of films are viewed on the screen as unfamiliar and removed from the viewers' frame of clothing reference.

> A characters clothes, accessories or hairstyle in a costume drama may appear verisimilar to the viewer if the latter's encyclopaedia [*sic*] contains prior knowledge of the apparel in vogue during the historical period in which the film is set and, moreover, if the images manage to make the costume credible at a textual and intertextual level, if they manage to stimulate the viewers' imagination (as a semiotic activity productive of other worlds). [9]

The cinematic costume designer's work is created within the parameters of visual constraint that is set up by Production Designer, who coordinates and oversees the visual cinematic departments. The unification and consistency of design elements is used to reinforce the audience's perception that the cinematic environment on the screen is "real." In order to convince the audience of this paradigm, the viewer's gaze is drawn through a rigidly defined visual portal into a cinematic space that has been imagined, drawn, constructed and controlled by the Production Designer. The costume designer is asked to filter the negotiated historical or fantastical cinematic elements through an additional prism of costume elements that may be referenced through historical garments, or the imagination of the designer, or a combination of both. Because the costume design in historical or fantasy films falls under the umbrella of the tightly controlled production design, the costume can stand outside the audience's common frame of reference; therefore, there is a willingness, cooperation and participation of the

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[8] The Costume Designers Guild Local 892 is a professional organization for costume designers working in film that is affiliated with the International Alliance of Theatrical State Employees (IATSE). The Costume Designers Guild Awards have three categories for costumes created for film: Contemporary, Period and Fantasy.

[9] Patrizia Calefato, *The Clothed Body*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004) http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/9780857854049. (accessed November 1, 2013), 92.

audience, as well as the actor wearing the costume, in the "suspension of disbelief," or "poetic faith" that transcends realism.[10] The actor is often willing to relinquish control over his sartorial self-image on screen because his cinematic, costumed persona will be confined to an image that is separate and distinct from the red-carpet image, which is more directly linked to his off-screen persona and fashion acumen. The unfamiliarity with the clothing allows the actor to make a more straightforward visual transformation into a character that stands outside of a pre-conceived self-image.

This straightforward visual transformation from actor "into" a character is not the same for the actor in contemporary films because the actor too easily and readily sees his own person, rather than the character, standing in front of the mirror. The blurred lines between actor and character can be blurred for the cinematic costume designer, as well as the actor. This suggests that it is essential for the costume designer working in contemporary films to balance, incorporate or disavow the actor's personal and public persona with the visual narrative.

To the audience, it appears that the contemporary cinematic costume designer simply asks the actors to wear clothing from their personal closets. Because the shirt, the suit, the coat or the hoodie, as seen on the screen, is familiar and, in most cases, common to what is available for purchase in any mall or on any number of websites, the cinematic costume designer's work appears to be invisible. In *Fashion in Film*, Adrienne Munich has worked to underscore the "craft of costume design as an essential aspect of film."[11] She argues the obscurity of a costume designer is the result of their success. "Costumes fuse seamlessly with characters' identities;

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[10] Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Biographia Literaria. Vol 2, Chapter XIV.
Wiley and Putnum. NY, USA 1847
http://mattwarren.com.au.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/resources/SuspensionofDisbelief.pdf

[11] Adreinne Munich, "Introduction," *Fashion in Film*, ed. Adrienne Munich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 2.

what a character wears in a film often seems natural and transparent, though it is as carefully

crafted and as intensely constructed as any other aspect of film production.[12]

The focus of this thesis is to examine how the contemporary cinematic costume designer

unifies contemporary clothing with the actor's body to narrate a cinematic character's story.

Previous scholarship in the field of costume and cinema has looked to broaden the early

correlation between fashion as witnessed through the influence of *haute couture* designers on

Hollywood costume, into a wide spectrum of academic fields, including film studies, sociology,

and feminist studies. The work of Stella Bruzzi, Patrizia Calefato, Adrienne Munich among

others, has aimed to levitate the image of cinematic clothing off of the screen and contextualize

the perception of the fashioned garment within socio-economic systems that stand outside, rather

than inside, its cinematic origins. I am interested in examining the cinematic costume from

within its filmic roots. Drake Stutesman in "Costume Design, or, What is Fashion in Film"

guided me toward this avenue of exploration:

> Fashion as a focus has evolved prodigiously in the last ten years (with or without the true homage its creativity deserves) but film fashion, or what is actually *costume design*, has not. It is marginalized, if not ignored, in the way that fashion, as Bruzzi and Church Gibson defined its dismissal, was written off not long ago.[13]

I want to re-direct the gaze of the viewer toward the contextualized garments and

accessories that are worn in two contemporary films, in order to understand the visual narrative

that is created by the contemporary cinematic costume designer. I will argue that through the

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Drake Stutesman, "Costume Design, or, What Is Fashion in Film?" *Fashion in Film*, ed. Adrienne Munich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,), 18.

Stella Bruzzi, and Pamela Church Gibson, "Introduction," *Fashion Cultures Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, ed. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London, New York: Rutledge, 2000), 18.

close reading of several pivotal scenes, showcasing the work of two different the cinematic

costume designers, it is possible to understand how the cinematic costumes have subtly and

seamlessly enhanced the narrative and served to advance the character's storyline.

In order to understand how the contemporary cinematic costume designer creates a visual

narrative, I will examine two films, *Desk Set* (1957)[14] with costumes designed by Charles le

Maire[15] and *Working Girl* (1988)[16] with costumes designed by Ann Roth[17] that offer an entrée

into two different time periods; however, both films were released as contemporary films. At

first viewing of both films, the naturalness of the clothing on the actors does not draw our focus;

however, through a close reading of a number of pivotal scenes in each film, I want to draw

attention to the complex and precise choices that have been made by the costume designers and

incorporated into the "look" of each character that helps to both individualize each character's

story, as well as create a unified cinematic environment. I want to understand how a cinematic

costume designer incorporates, dismisses or ignores the influence of the actor's personal and

public persona on a costume. I also would like to look at two films that were released over thirty

years apart that center on women in the corporate workplace, in order to examine how the

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[14] *Desk Set*, directed by Walter Lang (1957: Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2004.), VHS.

[15] Charles le Maire was born in Chicago, Illinois on April 22, 1897 and died in Palm Springs, California on June 8, 1985. In his 34-year career, he has 219 Costume and Wardrobe credits and 66 Costume Design credits in his filmography. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0494406/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1.

[16] *Working Girl*, directed by Mike Nichols (1957: Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, Inc. 2001.), DVD.

[17] Ann Roth was born on October 30, 1931 in Hanover, Pennsylvania. She designs costumes for both theatre and film. She has 117 Costume Design credits and 10 Costume and Wardrobe credits in her filmography. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0744778/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1.

cinematic costume designer has used garments and accessories to show us an image of the personal and professional lives of working women.

The names of Charles le Maire and Ann Roth are not memorialized on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but as contemporary cinematic costume designers they have created the visual narrative in over 400 films, including *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957), *An Affair to Remember* (1957), *Bus Stop* (1956), and *Desk Set*; and *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *The Birdcage* (1996), *(Mamma Mia!* (2008)*, Julie and Julia* (2009), and *Working Girl*.[18] Many of their credited designs have been influenced by current fashion trends that could be seen on *haute couture* runways, or urban alleys, or sometimes both simultaneously. Throughout their careers, they have costumed both the Hollywood star and the day-player in clothing that was contemporary to the release date of the film and available to the public-at-large. The goal of their costume design work is create the illusion of naturalness and reality through a precise and controlled adoption of garments and accessories. "Every time we watch a film our mind's eye sees the fashions depicted in it as an essential, yet barely perceptible message that is transmitted as 'natural.'"[19] The work of the cinematic costume designer is based on the ability to filter the myriad of contemporary clothing styles and synthesize the various elements that, when contextualized within the scene and worn by a specific actor, will support the narrative of the film.

> [The] Filmic representation literally constructs a world in which social subjects are depicted in relation to one another. The cinema is a sense-making machine that produces feelings, sensations and desires. Often clothes are mediators in this 'sense-making', not a mere objects, but a sign charged with social significance that the camera gaze, associated with the viewer's gaze, reinvents and thus restores to everyday semantic practices. [20]

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[18] The film release dates are from the IMBd.com on-line database.

[19] Ibid., 94.

[20] Patrizia Calefato, *The Clothed Body*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004) http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/9780857854049. (accessed November 1, 2013), 93.

The costume designer narrates the physical and psychological story of the character by creating a three-dimensional image of the character through the careful selection of clothing items and accessories that, when viewed within the context of the scene, can "express something far beyond the outfit: the costume designer must use the clothes to create basic movie elements."[21] Through the skillful implementation of the craft tools of costume design, the costume designer works to serve the film without drawing attention to the art of costume design.[22] Drake Stutesman comments:

> Costume design plays on our deepest responses to clothes and all their aspects (shape, color, texture), aspects which augment, indeed almost stand in for, our perceptions of sex, authority, comfort/discomfort, and stature. Nakedness is eroticized by clothing. Power, class, and wealth are recognized by what is worn.[23]

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[21] Drake Stutesman, "Costume Design, or, What Is Fashion in Film?," *Fashion in Film*, ed. Adrienne Munich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,), 20.

[22] The "craft" of costume design refers to the technical aspects, such as the use of fabric, tailoring, and fit of the garment. The "art" of costume design refers to the aesthetic of the costume that is achieved through elements perceived as beauty, style, grace, etc.

[23]Ibid.

Desk Set (1957)[24]

> Thinking through images is equivalent to representing the real; the metaphors and narratives in cinema have become an integral part of our daily lives. Verisimilitude in film is the 'truth' that fuels our imaging. Cinema 'think': it invents stories, narrative techniques, human types and bodily forms; it explores territories at the limits of experience, feelings and passions from the most banal to the most eccentric.[25]

Charles le Maire was asked to create the cinematic costumes for the cast of characters who inhabit a sophisticated New York City corporate environment. The movie version of *Desk Set (1957),* was based on a 1955 play by William Marchant and was revised for the screen by Phoebe and Henry Ephron as a vehicle for the eighth pairing of Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy.[26] The plot of *Desk Set* centers on the mistaken notion that a machine will be brought into the modern female-centric Research and Reference Department to replace the fully functional, efficient and productive staff at the fictitious Federal Broadcasting Agency in New York City. Charles le Maire was asked to develop the cinematic costumes that would create the visual narrative incorporating very specific contemporary clothing styles to illustrate the individuality of each character and yet maintain a unified image of a corporate work environment.

In the opening scene, the image of a semi-nude, art deco Diana-figure draws our attention to the importance of the female figure within this cinematic corporate space. The camera tilts up

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[24] *Desk Set*, directed by Walter Lang (1957: Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2004.), VHS. All quotations and references are from this film source.

[25] Patrizia Calefato, *The Clothed Body*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004) http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/9780857854049. (accessed November 1, 2013), 91.

[26] Katharine Hepburn was born Katharine Houghton Hepburn on may 12, 1907 in Hartford, Connecticut and died on June 29, 2003 in Old Saybrook, Connecticut. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000031/?ref_=nv_sr_2.
Spencer Tracy was born Spencer Bonaventure Tracy on April 5, 1900 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and died on June 10, 1967 in Beverly Hills, California. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000075/?ref_=nv_sr_1.

to see a sleek, high-rise office building and cuts to an interior shot of a golden female figure holding a globe in her upraised hand. Her globe's radiating golden rays dominates the entrance to office of the President of the fictitious Federal Broadcasting Agency. In a departure from the real National Broadcasting Company's masculine, golden Prometheus in New York's Rockefeller Center, we see a dynamic bare-breasted young female who is simultaneously holding up the world behind her head and pointing toward the future with her outstretched arm. Her guiding gesture directs a faceless gentleman across the camera frame toward the office door.

Le Maire defines the cinematic image of an executive secretary by costuming her in a close-fitting, dove-colored suit that frames her curves and enhances her body. In contrast to her crispness, the faceless gentleman dressed in his un-pressed sack suit, fedora and fringed neck scarf, appears to be out of place in the pristine office environment. When he addresses the attractive but conservatively dressed secretary, he removes his hat and scarf and introduces himself as Mr. Sumner (Spencer Tracy). Mr. Sumner does not wear an overcoat or gloves. He has limited his outerwear to a hat and a neck scarf to create an image of a man who is not concerned with his dress, his image or the weather. He is someone who is not familiar with the physical structure of the building or the people who staff the Federal Broadcasting Agency.

The contrasting cinematic costumes reinforce the female-male dichotomy between the controlled image of the fitted suit that frames the female form and the casual appearance of the male. When the attractive executive secretary responds to him, we see that she is accustomed to dealing with a more classically attired executive dressed in a pressed, tailored suit with crisp pant creases. The gentleman who has invaded her space is suspect because his clothing is outside the norm in this executive office space. Her three-quarter jacket sleeve is set into a small arms-eye opening that indicates her physical movement does not require her to reach or stretch beyond the

limited range of the multi-line phone resting on her island desk. She sits sentry, positioned toward the outer door shielding the President's office. With the wall of windows to her left and her phone on her right, she is capable of holding a defensive position against foreign intruders. Her helmet-type, tightly wound hairstyle and armor-colored suit restate her protective position and reinforce the barrier she creates between intruders and the President's inner sanctum.

The way the suit skims the body of the secretary; the costume helps to underscore her armored attitude as the gatekeeper of the President's office. When Sumner announces his arrival and expects the President to be available to see him, she retorts that he has arrived a day early for his appointment. Her tone is cordial but she cannot conceal her impatience with his un-professional lack of calendar acumen. He accepts her correction about the meeting date and asks for directions to the Research and Reference Department. Convinced that he does not have a very sound memory, she offers to write down the office number for him with her left hand. When he does not accept her help, we see that she has judged him as a sloppy worker. She is dismissive towards him. However, he is compelled to dictate several unsolicited changes in her office furniture arrangement that would increase the productivity of her work.

The visual contrast between Mr. Sumner and the secretary allows the audience to see the female as a worthy opponent in this verbal match. She appears to be strong-willed enough to withstand his challenge to her coveted position in front of the President's door. The secretary's initial reaction indicates that she is not receptive to the stranger's admonishment of the inefficiency of her desk placement. He correctly assesses that she writes with her left hand and that the natural light is coming from the wrong direction. However, we see her shoulders relax and let her guard down long enough to acknowledge and appreciate the observation because she responds to his willingness to talk to her directly. His speaking tone is straightforward and clear.

He does not speak down to her or speak to her as a subordinate. His advice is delivered as one professional to another in order to elevate her value within the corporate structure. By directing his observation to her, he has de-sexualized her stereotyped role of an attractive doormat placed under the feet of anyone entering the President's office and indemnified her work as a corporate asset. Sumner has removed the objectification of the female secretary as an office accessory and integrated her work into the efficiency of the corporate machine.

Le Maire has created an image for Sumner that is outside of the stereotyped business executive. The un-pressed quality of his loose-fitting suit shows us that he is more interested in his work than his physical comfort. We learn through the conversation that his occupation centers on efficiency. In order to reinforce that trait in Sumner, he does not wear an overcoat because it would take time to put it on and take it off. His neck scarf will provide the necessary warmth that he needs. Sumner's focus is on removing any obstacle that would hinder or thwart efficient performance. It is important in this scene for the audience to see the transition of the secretary from a standoffish gatekeeper to a receptive employee.

By costuming the secretary in a dove-gray suit, her image is allowed to transition from stone gate to corporate cog. Through the reconstruction of her space, he asserts that her productivity can be tightened, greased, re-aligned and accessed as contributing element within the corporation. This short, but pointed exchange is the first indication of Sumner's pre-occupation with efficient production in the work place. It is not coincidental that he is the creator of a new computing machine labeled EMMARAC (Electro Magnetic Memory And Research Arithmetical Calculator.) Sumner's skill is connected to the physical, the tangible and the spatial aspects of creating an efficient workplace. He is ill prepared to handle the complicated rearranging and restructuring of personal relationships of the well-ordered relationships within

the Research and Reference Department. Charles Le Maire has costumed the secretary as a

cinematic standard of female office decorum. Through the image of her tailored and fitted suit,

we have been informed about the "look" of the office. Through her introduction, we can adjust

our gaze to create social strata within the corporate environment.

It is possible to understand the cinematic environment of the Research and Reference

Department by examining the details of costumes worn by the various characters that occupy this

female domain headed by Miss Bunny Watson and staffed by Peg Costello (Joan Blondell),

Sylvia Blair (Dina Merrill), and Ruthie Saylor (Sue Randall.)[27] Charles le Maire embraces the

on-screen personas and individual physiques to create individual characters within a singular

working environment.

As the lead female character in *Desk Set*, the casting of Katharine Hepburn challenged

Charles le Maire's ability to create a realistic character on the screen. It was important for him to

integrate the character of Miss Watson and the tremendous persona of Katharine Hepburn into

the cinematic costume that would support Miss Watson's story. It is Miss Bunny Watson

(Katharine Hepburn) who supervises the day-to-day work in the department. It is the dichotomy

between Bunny's self-assured personality as she coaches and directs her female associates and

an in-secure and submissive encounter with her boss and long-term paramour, Mike Carter (Gig

Young) that creates the tension between the reality of Bunny's life as an executive and the

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[27] Joan Blondell was born Rose Joan Blondell on August 30, 1906 and died on December 25, 1979 in Santa Monica, California. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000951/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1. Dina Merrill was born Nedenia Marjorie Hutton on December 9, 1925 in New York City. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0581277/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm. Sue Randall was born Marion Burnside Randall on October 8, 1935 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and died on October 26, 1984 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0003711/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1.

unfulfilled marital dream-life with Mike.[28] It is the disruption of the office matrix by Mr. Sumner (Spencer Tracy) that exacerbates the chink in the status-quo relationship between Bunny and Mike.

The central casting of Katharine Hepburn as Bunny Watson opposite Spencer Tracy was a crafted cinematic convergence of the actress' acumen, her movie-star persona, her physical dexterity, and the audience's familiarity with the long-term relationship with Spencer Tracy. Charles le Maire's work in transforming her Hollywood persona into the on-screen persona of Miss Bunny Watson through his costume choices, is a key to the integration of her star persona into the cinematic environment that shapes the audience's perception that she is no longer "Katharine Hepburn," but Miss Bunny Watson.

From Katharine Hepburn's initial appearances in small parts on Broadway to her meteoric trajectory through the firmament of Hollywood, that culminated in an Academy Award for Outstanding Actress for her role in *Morning Glory* (1933) for RKO Studios at the age of 26, Hepburn began to hone her craft as well as her on-stage persona. Following a succession of RKO box office flops, even the success of her comic performance as an often-annoying heiress opposite Cary Grant in *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) was not successful enough to re-ignite her movie career. After being labeled "box office poison" by a number of critics, she retreated from Hollywood and took charge of jumpstarting her career by starring on stage in *The Philadelphia Story.* Hepburn realized, after her association with RKO and subsequent studio assignments in unpopular vehicles, that it was essential for her to not relinquish the control of her career to others. She realized that her future success was tied to *her* control of *her* artistic life. In order to

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[28] Gig Young was born Byron Ellsworth Barr on November 4, 1913 in St. Cloud, Minnesota and died on October 19, 1978 in New York City. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0949574/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1.

do begin this process, she purchased the film rights to *The Philadelphia Story* in order to control the on-screen casting, production personnel, including the director and, more importantly her self-orchestrated return to Hollywood. The success of the film, released in 1940, reenergized her box office appeal and fostered a reputation of a woman who was capable of being in charge of her own public image and her on-screen persona.

Katharine Hepburn's cinematic image stemmed from her Connecticut roots. The individual elements of her physical appearance were chiseled out of New England granite not Southern charm. Her clipped upper-crust vocal delivery was an undeniable feature that signified an articulate and educated mind. Her facial features were sharp and uncompromising. Her prominent cheekbones, broad mouth and wide-set eyes along with her angular shoulders and sinewy frame did not conform to the mid-century Hollywood beauty standards of soft feminine curves framing a diminutive waist. However, Katharine Hepburn's cinematic persona created an unapologetic celebration of her rebellious silhouette. Her straight-lined physique reflected her tightly controlled and orchestrated return to Hollywood as a successful producer. To the movie-going public, she was a success because she was chiseled, sleek and controlled. It appeared that she had self-generated her success unfettered by a studio or a marriage. Hepburn offered an image of self-reliance. She was the personification of the American success story. She had gone from "box office poison" to box office success on her own terms and in control of both her artistic life and her personal image. She was a woman of action not a sedentary figure waiting to be invited back onto the silver screen. She saw the opportunity to take control of her career and she pushed her star back into to the Hollywood firmament with her own hand,

Katharine Hepburn's cinematic image was associated with movement, momentum and the ability to "make something happen." She was not known to make action movies, although the

audience had seen her ride the rapids with Humphrey Bogart in the *African Queen* (1951). However, her true athletic prowess was not in the physical strength of her body, but rather in the subtle ability to isolate and control her movements in such a manner that her body language created a vocabulary that could speak volumes about her character's emotions, both on the surface and sub-textually. The costumes framed this physicality by allowing her to articulate her movement. Her movements within her clothes appeared to be natural and instinctive. The symbiotic relationship between what she was wearing in the scene and what she was "doing" in the scene created a naturalness and ease that would convince the audience that the costume was not a calculated gesture but was a garment that had been found in her closet. For example, Bunny's physical connection to Mike Carter as she tries to draw out his invitation to the country club dance, is a subtly choreographed dance featuring her torso which is highlighted by a white blouse that skims over her chest and back and accentuates her flirtations seduction as she leans in toward Mike. When he responds to her by leaning toward her, the spontaneity of the movement is checked and she withdraws her overt invitation by leaning away from him and cancels the possibility of a physical encounter. The fitted blouse and the slim-waisted skirt are used to frame the actresses articulate body as she demonstrates her sexual ambivalence toward Mike.

The cinematic costuming of Katharine Hepburn often incorporated high necklines that created an image of restraint, or a reluctance to reveal herself fully to the audience. Katharine Hepburn's choice of movie roles blurred the lines between her confident, secure and satisfied public persona and her private life that centered on her temporal relationship with married Spencer Tracy. The audience's interest in observing the flux between the public and private personas that represented Katharine Hepburn's life, created a palatable surface tension that could be broken with an on-screen touch, kiss or an extended look. The thin veneer of stoic New

England control could be cracked to expose the soft feminine core of her dimensionalized characters. It is this aspect of vulnerability and femininity that Katharine Hepburn brought to the character of Bunny Watson.

The cinematic environment of the Research and Reference Department is generated through the detailed costuming of the three actresses who surround Miss Watson. Joan Blondell, Dina Merrill and Sue Randall were cast because they each would serve as a visual and verbal sounding board to Miss Watson's character. The manipulation of costume elements that le Maire incorporates into their looks helps to differentiate each character. By highlighting their perceived ages and body types, as well as their acting styles, he adds to the varietal realism of the office environment. The associates in the Reference and Research Department include Peg Costello played by Joan Blondell as Bunny's co-worker, confidant, and advisor in the department. By casting Joan Blondell in the role, it is possible to create a wise and experienced figure who can serve as a guide to Bunny as she navigates the emotional quagmire of the office. Although Miss Blondell was only one year older than Miss Hepburn, her voluptuous physique as well as her soft, round facial features offers a motherly, compassionate counterpoint to Hepburn's more straight-lined, youthful image.

It is impossible to disconnect the image of Dina Merrill's Sylvia Blair and the imagery of Grace Kelly who had recently married Prince Rainier of Monaco in 1956. Sylvia is styled as homage to the fantasy that any movie star/commoner could live happily ever after with the prince of her dreams. The honey colored curls framing her flawless skin along with her beautifully proportioned "35-24-35" statistics that she flaunts to Mr. Sumner, offer an opportunity to connect the dream marriage of the working girl and her prince. Dina Merrill plays Sylvia Blair who is much younger than either Bunny or Peg.

The visual narrative of the office quartet is completed with the casting of twenty-two year old Sue Randall as Ruthie Saylor. As the youngest and most inexperienced actor and character in the group, her youthful exuberance gives us an opportunity to imagine a young Miss Watson at the beginning of her career.

The costuming of the office quartet illustrates how costume can influence the visual narrative of a film. Costume designer, Charles le Maire, pushed far away from the stereotyped image of research librarians in creating images for this staff of fact-finders. In an article written for *The Library Quarterly* and published in 2000, Katherine C. Adams acknowledges the self-stereotyped image of the librarian as a "loveless frump hiding behind her spectacles and surrounded by her books."[29] Although the script is written for four unmarried fact-finding librarians, the costume designer Charles le Maire pushes against the stereotyped occupational image of the taught and sexless spinster librarian. His costume choices serve to create and individual look for each woman whose image is far from the "loveless frump." By choosing to create a unique style for each female in the department, the clothing reinforces the idea that the women in the script are not to be referenced as an emotionless pack of workers. Instead of being viewed a amorphous group, they are viewed as individuals who are encouraged to invest their unique strengths and talents in their work in order to become an efficient and effective cog in the corporate matrix of the Federal Broadcasting Agency. The costume choices incorporated into each character not only add to the cinematic realism of the office dynamic but also contribute to

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[29] Katherine C. Adams, "Loveless Frump as Hip and Sexy Party Girl: A Reevaluation of the Old-Maid Stereotype," *The Library Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Jul., 2000): 288, URL:http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/stable/4309439 (accessed January 5, 2014).

and reflect the variety of clothing styles that would be seen in any number of real-life corporate office spaces in 1957. The clothing silhouettes worn throughout the film, are chosen to enhance each actress' figure and body type and illuminate the women's personalities, the social connection and structure between and among them, as well as underscore their femininity within the corporate environment. He integrates very specific costume choices in order to create a cinematic structure and visual subtext of their inter-office relationships. Le Maire's classic approach to costume design framed the individual female body in a way that retained the natural female form.

Our first image of the Research and Reference Department is a framed picture of the Diana-goddess statue that was located in the lobby of the office building. We see three desks that are arranged facing to each other. The stacks of reference material are not the dominant feature of the space. It is the women who occupy the desks who are central to the spatial configuration of the room. Peg Costello (Joan Blondell) is seated behind her centrally located desk dressed in a dark blue, belted, sheath dress with a prominent white bow that rests on her ample bosom and appears to block the descent of the dresses' deep squared neckline. The small white bows on the cuffs of the three-quarter sleeves accentuate her animated speaking style and create a delicate and feminine counterpoint to the large bow at the neckline. The wide, open neckline of the dress creates an impression of the sexual confidence and openness. The form-fitted bodice accentuates her curves that career down a sensuous slope from bosom to waist to hip. The skirt is cut to show her shape and glide over her desirable mid-century body and emphasize the sexualized formula of breasts and hips framing a proportioned waist. In order for Bunny to turn to Peg and confide in her, it is important that we believe that Peg has had had more sexual experience than Miss Watson. Her offered advice is tempered with both love and loss. The solid color of her

dress and the crisp bow accent reflect the solid and well-measured advice that she offers Bunny. The openness of the neckline and the framing of her hips reinforce Peg's open relationship to the world. From her blond bobbed hair and undulating gold dangle earrings to her peep-toe pumps, we see that Peg exudes confidence and acceptance of the feminine body and her own sexuality.

In contrast to Peg's voluptuous curved body, Charles le Maire has costumed Sylvia Blair (Dina Merrill) in homage to recently married Grace Kelly. Le Maire uses the audience's familiarity with the publicity-fueled marriage to Prince Ranier of Monaco to create a narrative of the princess and her prince. The cinematic costuming that references the real-life triumphant journey of a Philadelphia debutante turned working actress to a Princess of Monaco was a fairytale that was no longer relegated to animated Disney cells. Ironically, Dina Merrill referenced her own real-life debutante scenario as the only child of the billionairess Marjorie Merriweather Post and the financier E.F. Hutton. The roll of Sylvia Blair was her film debut.

Sylvia's cinematic image plays on the Grace Kelly-blond hairstyle that uses the copper color to provide a golden glow to her cinematic costume. The copper sweater twin-set enhances the camel circle skirt and worn with an English tan leather belt compliments her golden hair. Her tortoise hair clip, gold button earrings, gold and pearl chocker, gold bangle bracelets and brown pumps complete the carefully constructed office image of a cultured, educated Upper East Side debutante. She looks composed, balanced and confident as she easily moves around her desk or across the office space. She looks ahead rather than looking down, as she demonstrates the excellent posture and gliding gait of a woman destined to live in a future built on hard work and good fortune. The warm colorization of her clothing and accessories create an inviting and approachable image.

Ruthie Saylor (Sue Randall) represents Miss Watson in her youth. Le Maire makes this cinematic connection by costuming her in a smart and fashionable chartreuse green, short-sleeved mock turtleneck sweater that is accessorized with a neck pin that reveals Ruthie's modern approach to dressing. Her style is more youthful because of the short-sleeved sweater. Her sweater color choice is the most daring of anyone in the office. Her bold choice reinforces her daring to step outside the conservative palette that has been used to colorize the other female workers. Her gold button earrings, leather strap watch and dark pumps compliment the stylish but more conventional front-pocket, brown strait skirt with a rear-wrap back closing that is finished with large decorative buttons.

When we overhear Ruthie's phone inquiry about a particular dress that she hopes is on sale, we are clued into Ruthie's future. The "black velvet strapless dress in the window" she is asking about, is not suitable for office wear. She is anticipating wearing the velvet dress somewhere beyond the office. When Ruthie asks if there has been a reduction because she has seen the identical dress for "$10.00 less downtown," we learn that Ruthie is fashion conscious, but shopper savvy.

We are introduced to Bunny Watson as she bounds through the door and enters her office environment and trills, "Morning, kids, wait till you see what I snagged at Bonwit's?" The Hepburn voice cuts through the air before we can focus on her treasure box from one of New York's premier full service department stores. Before she can hear a response, she is surrounded and protected by her staff from the invasion of Mr. Sumner's unanticipated intrusion into their space. In a choreographed move that would make any football coach proud, the staff whisk the Bonwit Teller box out of Miss Watson's hands and pass it out of sight, strip her of full-cut, swing coat, gloves, brown crocodile clutch and shield her from the intruder lurking behind the file

cabinets. The staff covers Bunny's Bonwit lunch hour foray in order to make sure that any

activity outside of the frame work of the corporation is not misconstrued as their Miss Watson's

not being a serious "company man."

The depiction of the office environment is female-centric. The women dominate the

space and work together to protect and defend each other as demonstrated in the action

surrounding Miss Watson's entrance. In a 1956 article for the New York Times, a female

executive, Bernice Fitz-Gibbon commented on the advantage of a woman working for a female

boss:

> She likes working for a woman boss because she is aware, consciously or
> Unconsciously, that this sociological revolution that has taken place in the office is the
> work of women who just naturally can't abide stuffiness or formality or
> pompousness…Today's girl wants to get ahead. She's on pleasure and profit bent—with
> the accent on pleasure. The office is better than the movies. At the movies, you can only
> *look* at another life. In the office you can live another life.[30]

Charles le Maire begins to narrate Miss Watson's story by costuming her in a fitted

dolman-sleeve brown tweed jacket with hidden closures that softens but does not obliterate the

minimal curves of Bunny's body. The tweed of the jacket serves as an oblique reference to Miss

Watson's occupation as a librarian. The ease of the dolman sleeve is a counter-point to the

restrictive high mandarin collar, the self-belt of the jacket and the virginal white blouse collar

that stands at attention. Her dark brown, straight skirt is not stiff and unyielding. The ample

inverted pleats open and close as she expands and contracts toward the interloper. The cinematic

costume incorporates the tweed fabric and the high-necked blouse as a reference to a librarian

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[30] Bernice Fitz-Gibbon. "Tips for Would-be Women Bosses." *New York Times (1923-Current File),* Sep 23, 1956.
http://ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/113611672?account id=7287.

stereotype, but the fashionable cut of the jacket in combination with a contrasting skirt creates an image of a woman who has the ability and interest to translate the stereotyped image of the librarian into a dynamic interpretation of femininity in the work environment.

In the privacy of her office, Charles le Maire creates a cinematic costume that illustrates Miss Watson's longing for romance. This costume prop becomes the focus of the scene when she tenderly opens the Bonwit Teller box. Inside is a beautiful kelly green cocktail dress. The strapless and boned foundation of the dress is visible beneath a sheer over-blouse fashioned with a modest neckline and a demur short sleeve. The volume of the circular layers of translucent chiffon and organza and swishy taffeta dramatically offsets the small waist. The dress seems to float out of the box as Bunny gently holds the dress up and examines herself in the mirror. The green dress becomes a representation of life beyond the office space. The dress is a stylistic departure from our initial image of Bunny. Her office attire has framed a woman in perpetual motion who is driven by a keen memory of what is tangible and a desire to do a superior job. The facts and figures that surround her in her office are her refuge from the uncertainty of her life. Her office space, her co-workers and the satisfaction of completing a task have comforted and nurtured her. The green dress is the intangible. It is the transparent, delicate and impractical side of her nature that she carefully holds in front of her. She handles her out-of-office persona as if it could dissolve if handled too roughly. The translucency of the bodice adds our understanding of Bunny's thin veneer of resiliency. We see through her beautiful façade.

The cinematic connection between Miss Watson and her "promise dress" is broken when Peg enters the office and Bunny's daydream is brought back into the scene. She wistfully comments that this is dress that she will wear to the company dance when her boss, Mike Carter asks her. Peg rolls her eyes and shakes her head as she admonishes Bunny for being been too lax

with Mike about the dance invitation. Bunny asks, "You mean I'm too available?" Peg presses on, "Available? You're like an old coat that's hanging in his closet. Every time he reaches in, there you are. Don't be there once." Bunny sighs, "He'd just go out and buy himself a new coat." Peg retorts, "He's been wearing this one for seven years. What makes you think he won't anyway?" Bunny hesitates and says, "IF he did it… it would be…awful." Peg takes the dress out of Bunny's hands and holds up in front of herself. Peg no longer has the small proportion that will fit in the dress, but the youthfulness of the spring color and the dreamlike quality of the sheer fabric underscore the regret of a missed opportunity. Peg takes a moment and says, "Even as it is…I know, you go along thinking tomorrow something WONDERFUL is going to happen and you're not going to be alone anymore. And then one day you realize it's all over. You're out of circulation. It all happened and you didn't even know when it happened." Bunny tries to shake off the sting of Peg's comment by saying, "Well when that day comes, we will move in together and keep cats." Peg turns to Bunny. With her voice tempered with wisdom she responds, "I don't like cats. I like men and so do you."

The green dress is featured in the following scene to show the viewer Miss Watson's relationship with Mike and to create an opportunity for Katharine Hepburn to establish a physical relationship with him. When we watch Miss Watson's flustered reaction at hearing that Mike is on his way to her office, we begin to understand how important their relationship is to her and how much she wants to please him. She hesitates and makes the decision to show Mike the green dress. As she turns to face the door, with the dress held in front of her, Mike says, "Hello, Bunny." She responds, "Hello, Mike. Just a little something I took out on approval." Mike grins and says, "I approve heartily. It makes your eyes look green and sexy." Bunny smiles and puts the dress down, "That's what the girl that waited on me said, but I thought she was just trying to

make a sale. Mike makes a move to embrace her as he remarks, "She was. She just happened to be speaking the truth." As Bunny spins out of his grasp, we imagine the flirtatious girl inside the green dress. The green dress may have been taken out of the store on "approval," but the holding up of the dress in order to seek "approval" from Mike is what allows us to see Bunny's vulnerability.

The green dress that le Maire has chosen to represent Miss Watson's dreams is important because the flared style of the dress is used to forecast the silhouette of the dress that Miss Watson will wear in the office Christmas party scene. The green dress is not duplicated, but the duplication of the silhouette will connect the two garments to represent the flirtatious, yet wistful aspect of the character's personality.

In a scene that maneuvers both Miss Watson and Mr. Sumner out of the corporate office environment, le Maire must use the cinematic departure to get them to step out of their working clothing and have them transition into costumes that will help re-configure the relationship between the two characters. Mr. Sumner and Miss Watson are caught outside in a drenching downpour. When Miss Watson invites a soaked Mr. Sumner up to her apartment to dry off and share dinner with her, the unexpected invitation creates an opportunity for Bunny to offer Sumner the use of a man's robe that is buried in a pile of Christmas presents.

The cinematic choice of the robe with the initials "MC" on the chest pocket creates an image that reinforces Miss Watson's dream of a domestic future with Mike. When Sumner emerges dressed in the robe bearing Mike Carter's initials, we understand that he is stepping into the role of suitor, paramour, and potential fiancée in Bunny's life. Le Maire has added a gleaming white towel wrapped around his neck and tucked into the front of the robe and re-

costumes Mr. Sumner as a prizefighter. The masculine Sumner is ready to enter the ring and is prepared to fight for the prize.

Miss Bunny Watson's cinematic costume image in this scene reflects a softer and less structured character. Le Maire has costumed Bunny in a white Chinese-style robe with standing collar complete with Chinese frog closures. As the robe falls open, we see that she is wearing peach colored Chinese silk pajamas complete with Mandarin collar and frog closures. The exoticism represented in her garments extends her world beyond the confines of her New York apartment and references Katharine Hepburn's personal style of wearing trousers. Charles le Maire challenges the stereotype of the negligee and chooses the pajamas in order to create an audience connection between Hepburn's personal taste and the character of Miss Watson. By choosing pajamas, le Maire has been able to seamlessly link the actor and the character. The unexpected color choice of the pajamas is relevant because the soft color palette is contrary to the more common trope of Chinese red, blue or black used to represent an intense sexual exoticism, Charles le Maire has chosen the peach color for Bunny's pajamas and by combining the exotic style of the Chinese garments with the soft feminine peach color, Miss Watson and Mr. Sumner are visualized in a domestic pairing. The union of both the on-screen characters as well as the off-screen paramours creates a hopeful image of what might develop both on screen and off.

The cinematic moment is interrupted when Peg and Mike show up on Bunny's doorstep. Sumner takes off the borrowed robe and redresses in his damp, misshapen suit, unblocked fedora and pulls his smoking shoes out of the oven and performs a comic hot-foot dance for Bunny and Peg as he makes his departure. His comic appearance breaks down the formality of his

relationship with the two women, and in particular, his connection with Bunny. The softening of the suit parallels the new shape of their relationship.

The Christmas party scene offers Charles le Maire an opportunity to re-dress each female character in heightened feminine fashion. The characterizations of the office staff are carefully retained and re-imagined in this context. Peg's dark curve-hugging dress is similar in style to her opening costume. The open neckline and above-the-elbow sleeves repeat and reinforce the openness of Peg's character that was established earlier in the film. Added interest in the neckline is created by the addition of pastel-colored appliquéd flowers accented with reflective dark sequins encircling the neckline and trailing down the side front of the dark skirt. The dark color choice serves to reinforce the maturity and age of Peg's position in the office hierarchy. The dimensionality of the appliqués creates a softness in the neckline that adds an appropriate yet flirtatious accent near Peg's décolletage. Peg's swinging dangle earrings add a dancing accent to her ensemble.

Le Maire retains Sylvia's cinematic costume silhouette but heightens the quality of the dress and the importance of the event by creating a periwinkle blue silk dress with a voluminous skirt gathered into a dolman-sleeved, bateau neckline top. Her golden hair and enhanced party makeup convince us that she is a princess at the ball. Although the dress references Sylvia's preferred fashion style of a flared or circle skirt shape, the cinematic vibrancy of the fabric elevates the office silhouette to a level worthy of a prince's attention.

Ruthie's dress is interesting because the top is styled very similarly to Ms. Watson's first ensemble jacket. The dolman sleeve with a white vertical accent descending down the center front from neck to waist, references Ruthie's emulation of Ms. Watson. Ruthie is adoption of a more mature style references her desire to step into Ms. Watson's image. The conservative gray

color is a departure from Ruthie's previous bold chartreuse sweater choice. The change in color palette for Ruthie draws her into a more mature role within the office structure. We are disappointed that the "sale" dress that Ruthie was referencing in the opening scene does not materialize.

Ms. Watson creates a dramatic cinematic entrance wrapped in a scarlet trapeze coat with matching scarlet gloves. The voluminous coat punches through the De Luxe Color screen.[31] She swoops in with champagne bottle in hand and connects her office party with the company party beyond her glass door. Bunny spends an extended amount of time in her coat. When she finally rolls the coat back on her shoulders, she teases the viewer with a glimpse of the luminescent silver silk dress beneath but she reveals no more. The soft drape of the coat allows the viewer to image a striptease as she draws out her stripping-off of the sexually charged scarlet coat. She does not intend on completing the full strip until Mike Carter's arrival.

The strip tease is abruptly abandoned when Mike arrives carrying a very large white stuffed rabbit. His paternal gesture of offering Bunny a decorated "bunny" complete with red bows tied around its neck and ears creates an awkward moment for Miss Watson. It does not go unnoticed that Bunny is also wearing a small, translucent red bow in her hair.

Bunny removes the coat to reveal a silver silk dress that allows the viewer to see her as a fun and flirtatious character. La Maire, like many Hollywood designers, embraced the "New Look" fashion.[32] This rebellious style flaunted an excessive use of fabric in order to create a full

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[31] Patrizia Calefato, *The Clothed Body*, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004) http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/9780857854049. (accessed November 1, 2013), 17-18. Calefato discusses the significance of the color red in conjunction with Christmas holiday dressing by connecting the red color traditional association with pagan rites of fertility, birth and re-birth and sun-worship, as well as connecting the color red in folk costume in order to ward off evil spirits.

[32] The "New Look" style was created and introduced by Christian Dior in 1947.

circular skirt in a post-war world dominated by rationed commodities. The New Look

emphasized the feminine proportions of bust and waist; however, Stella Bruzzi, who has written

extensively in the field of fashion in film, has argued, "on the whole by the mid-1950s the New

Look was used to reflect safe, not particularly sexual, and quite matronly forms of femininity.

Full-skirted, small waisted outfits were often worn by female characters who were unthreatening,

at time stodgy.[33] Charles le Maire incorporated Dior's New Look proportions into Miss

Watson's look to push the mid-century complacency of the "unthreatening" or "stodgy" style

back into a flirtatious style that allowed the billowing skirt to hint at the treasure that is beneath

the undulating layers of fabric.

The cinematic image of the silver silk dress accentuates Miss Watson's dominance in her

space. The yards of silver shantung silk re-imagine her as a moving ornament. The neckline is

cut to be a lapel front dress, but Ms. Watson closes the neckline by corralling the collar with a

gold medallion necklace. The collar is secure, but when she moves, the opening below the

medallion reveals a modest glimpse of her chest. The flirtatious opening and closing of the dress

front allows a glimpse beneath the ornamental façade. The waist is cinched in a large bow. She is

a package ready to be opened by Mike.

Le Maire chooses a shimmering party dress that radiates light in this scene. We never see

Miss Watson in her beautiful flared, green "promise" dress. The silver costume frames Miss

Watson as a desirable, sexual woman. The costumes in this scene effectively convey the intent of

the actresses as they maneuver through an imbibed office party. The details of their clothing

convey the atmosphere of a fun and flirtatious event and maintain a comfortable level of

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[33] Stella Bruzzi, "'It will be a magnificent obsession': Femininity, Desire, and the New Look in 1950s Hollywood Melodrama," *Fashion in Film*, ed. Adrienne Munich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 164.

decorum. The movement of the fabric and the reflective surfaces reinforce the festive atmosphere without having to overtly sexualize the female staff and breakdown the established image of the office staff as efficient, professional, and feminine.

Charles le Maire created contemporary cinematic costumes that create a visual narrative for each unique character. The Christmas party scene offers an occasion to highlight the fact that the women of the Research and Reference Department, have been costumed as diverse and multi-dimensional characters. The costume choices create a balance that allows the persona of Katharine Hepburn to meld into the character of Miss Bunny Watson and create a synergy between and among the staff to create the illusion of plausible office environment. Le Maire utilized the a variety of silhouettes worn by Miss Watson to create her transition from executive, to wistful fiancé, cordial host to holiday vixen while maintaining a consistency in the character that allows the audience to witness a character, not an actor at work.

Working Girl (**1988**)[34]

> Costume designers have to tell a story, and they tap into the same stratagems that the first ancient dyed "fashion" threads tapped. They manipulate through tools such as silhouettes, color nuances, design lines, or fabric textures (is silk right for the character or is burlap better?) but they also create an emotional *feel* in the costume through minute details such as moving a shoulder seam further from or closer to the neck or making a jacket a little too tight, too loose, too short, or too long. They must convey considerable information through imperceptible details. Wonderful use of these seemingly innocuous signals is a costume design staple.[35]

Ann Roth created the transformative cinematic costumes for *Working Girl* (1988) that serve to illustrate how clothing is perceived as a signifier of intelligence, social status and occupational superiority. Ann Roth utilized garments and accessories to narrate the Cinderella-plot of a secretary dressing up in her boss' clothes and becoming a corporate executive. Released thirty-one years after *Desk Set*, *Working Girl* stars Melanie Griffith, Sigourney Weaver and Harrison Ford[36] as young professionals working their way through the social strata of the corporate matrix.

In the opening sequence of *Working Girl*, the face of the Statue of Liberty is framed by her thorny crown and up-stretched arm. The camera maintains a steady image of Lady Liberty as we circle around the statue in search of her sentinel point-of- view over New York Harbor. The

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[34] *Working Girl*, directed by Mike Nichols (1957: Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, Inc. 2001.), DVD. All quotations and references are from this film source.

[35] Drake Stutesman, "Costume Design, or, What Is Fashion in Film?," *Fashion in Film*, ed. Adrienne Munich (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,), 22.

[36] Mike Nichols was born Michael Igor Peschkowsky on November 6, 1931 in Berlin, Germany. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001566/?ref_=nv_sr_1.
Melanie Griffith was born Melanie Richards Griffith on August 9, 1957 in New York City, New York. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000429/?ref_=nv_sr_4.
Sigourney Weaver was born Susan Alexander Weaver on October 8, 1949 in New York City, New York. . http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000244/?ref_=nv_sr_1.
Harrison Ford was born on July 13, 1942 in Chicago, Illinois. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000148/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1.

initial female image in the opening sequence is similar to the golden Diana-goddess figure in the

opening sequence of *Desk Set*. The images inform the viewer that the film is from a woman's

point of view.

When we focus on the Staten Island Ferry cutting its way across the open water, the

female vocals begins to sing "Let the River Run," and our view changes as we helicopter over

the water and hover at deck-level adjacent to the ferry as it pulses toward the Manhattan skyline.

The camera crosscuts to the early morning standing-room-only ferry interior and pans across the

gray-scale images of commuters. The camera surveys the crowded mass of Staten Island

commuters. The monochromatic tones of their clothing reference the images of immigrants

arriving on Ellis Island. Ann Roth has used a monochromatic color palette to link the figures to

black and white photos. When the camera moves forward to frame two young women with halos

of hair, we see them in sepia colored clothing that set them apart from the other commuters. By

changing the color palette of the clothing of the two girls and we focus on their conversation. A

small three-candle birthday cupcake celebration is underway as the blonde blows out the candle,

the brunette asks, "Did you made a wish yet?" The birthday girl says, "Yea," as she looks

beyond her friend toward the Manhattan skyline.

Ann Roth must find a balance between creating comedic stereotypes and delivering a

visual narrative that is plausible. Tess McGill (Melanie Griffith) is introduced as a girl on the

move in her combination of running shoes with cotton crew socks.[37] The incongruity of her

running shoes and athletic socks paired with her office-style working attire is used several more

times during the film to emphasize the importance of function over fashion; however, Tess'

desire to function effortlessly in and through her environment can be changed quickly when we

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[37] The costume designer incorporates this realistic image of women wearing running shoes and crew socks. The fashion was adopted following a 1980 New York City subway strike.

watch her switch out of her athletic shoes and into fashionable pumps once she arrives at the office.

Tess is indistinguishable from her commuting neighbors as they disembark from the ferry. She is a part of the commuter landscape as she walks ashore. In the aerial camera shot, it is impossible to distinguish Tess and Cyn from the crowd. She arrives in Manhattan wrapped in a cognac colored leather coat, dark sheer hose with black dot texture, a large brown carry-all satchel over one shoulder and a large gray hobo bag over the other. She carries her worldly goods on her shoulders. The sepia-toned garments and accessories have helped to make a connection between her arrival in Manhattan and the arrival of immigrants at Ellis Island.

Ann Roth creates a number of different cinematic costumes for Tess that reinforces her image as a provincial secretary. Each of Tess' costumes is composed of many different items that take Tess' character to the edge of fashionable; however, the costume designer keeps her grounded in her own provincial style until her sartorial transformation into a corporate executive. In *New York Fashion: The Evolution of American Fashion*, Caroline Rennolds Milbank writes, "Design in the 1980s can be summed up with a single word: exaggeration."[38] The proportion of provincial Tess is more exaggerated than her transformed self because the costume designer has pushed the shoulder pads out further to contrast with the very tight skirt surrounding the small-framed hips of the actress. Ann Roth utilizes on-trend clothing to create a visual narrative for Tess. The term "trend " is in reference to a clothing style that exaggerates a specific part of the body and pushes the silhouette of the garment away from the natural form of the body. By establishing the character's multi-layer approach to dressing, the costume designer opens the

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[38]Caroline Rennolds Milbank, *New York Fashion: The Evolution of American Style*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1989), 264.

possibility of re-using and combining clothing items to create the perception of a provincial secretary's personal wardrobe There are a number of items that are re-used as signifiers of Tess' provincial self. The cognac leather coat and a black textured wool coat are seen repeatedly. There is a consistent use of both black and tan in Tess' wardrobe that are used to offset her body against the often-used gray-green backgrounds. Tess wears a royal soldier blue sweater only one time when she takes-on her male co-workers in retribution for setting her up with another co-worker who sexually harasses her. The color pallet that Ann Roth uses to signify Tess' provincial self is based on the color black.

Tess' physique is hidden under her de-sexualized garment. We do not see the shape of her body under her tan boxy blazer. She is wearing a black turtleneck sweater and tight pencil skirt. The left lapel has the flourish of silver phoenix brooch. The fit of the garment disguises her in the masculine office space. As she moves through a crowded office filled with chest-high opaque cubicle walls, we see the topography of male dress shirts and suspenders bobbing out of individual fortresses. She is the only visible female in the office. Once she negotiates her way through the maze to her desk, she sits to pull off her commuter trappings of white running shoes and white crew socks and puts on her City shoes in the form of a feminized oxford lace pump.

Ann Roth has created costumes that purposely restrict Tess' movement and appear to hobble and bind her. The character tries to take long steps, but she cannot. The only visible motion is seen in her upswept bangs. In Tess' early scenes, her hair reflects the popular exaggerated hairstyle of the late 1980s. The upswept bangs are lacquered so that she looks like she is in perpetual motion. The massive hairstyle guards the unrestrained hair at the back of her head that is left to kink and frizz.

By adding multiple fashion accessories to Tess' look, the cinematic costume designer has reinforced an image of a girl with a night-school degree. The multitude of fashion accessories include a black wide belt binding her waist, an oversize gold charm bracelet, a watch with a leather strap, a pear-shaped "diamond" solitaire on a gold chain and large gold-tone and black multiple hoop earrings. Individually, the accessories are on trend; however, the accessories are used to underscore that she is from beyond the moat of New York Harbor.

The visual narrative of the film shifts from a corporate space dominated by men to female-centric corporate department when Tess is re-assigned to a new female boss. As Tess walks through her new office space carrying her cardboard box of personal items, we can see a different landscape than at her previous position. The office space is an open concept devoid of tall, opaque cubicle walls. The desks are arranged with low glass walls separating the desks. It is possible to speak with someone in an adjacent desk without standing up. The occupants of the office are all female. Tess' former office was a bear-baiting pit compared to the atmosphere created in this environment. The evidence of feminine desk mementos and details, such as cut flowers, miniature Mylar balloons, an occasional greeting card propped on the desk, and a variety of small personal props, informs us that this place of business includes a modicum of female sentiment and celebration. The openness of the office space and the continuity of the desks create an image that is similar to the female-centric office space in *Desk Set*.

Tess begins to make herself at home at her new desk by unpacking a gray stuffed bunny and placing it on top of her typewriter. When the camera frames the contents of Tess' moving box, we see personal photos layered with her business schoolbooks, including "A Pocket Guide to Good English." Tess has brought items that represent her past and forecast her future.

Katherine Parker (Sigourney Weaver) is a visual contrast to Tess. The initial look of Katherine is very important to the plot because this is the look that Tess' will adopt to signify corporate acumen. The gray-green suit is repeated one additional time when Katherine wears the suit when she breaks up the corporate merger. The triple-peat of the suit reflects a very precise choice by the costume designer because the suit must stand out enough to be understood as a signifier of corporate stature to the audience, but not so much as to overpower the character or action in the scene.

Ann Roth costumes Katherine in a very tight color palette of gray-green, white, cream, dark taupe. The gray-green color in particular is repeated in Katherine's wardrobe in a number of different garment pieces including her initial opening-scene suit and complimentary coat. The muted palette is a signifier of corporate structure. The gray-green color, in particular, is in the scenery in order to connect the character and the physical space. Also, the gray-green color is used to imbed the image of the Statue of Liberty throughout the film. .

Ann Roth punches the color red into Katherine's look. This color is repeated in her cocktail reception dress, in the ski boots, in the ski costume and in the final scene of the film. Red is used on Katherine as a warrior color. It is interesting that she adds red lipstick to create a bloodthirsty mouth when she is wearing the red jacket in the final scene.

Katherine's look reflects her expensive taste. Caroline Rennolds Milbank notes, "The baby boomers, who came of age rebelling against the establishment, finally discovered status symbols and, inspired by the strong mid-1980s dollar, went after European ones especially."[39] The addition of a full-length fur coat establishes her level of personal success, as well as the Chanel shoulder bags that Tess borrows from Katherine's wardrobe.

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[39]Caroline Rennolds Milbank, *New York Fashion: The Evolution of American Style*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1989), 266.

An elevator "ding" announces Katherine's entrance. The sound of the IBM Selectric typewriters underscores the rhythmic and percussive sound of Katherine's heels as she strides down the aisle toward Tess. She offers a friendly wave of the newspaper to an open office door as Tess turns to see a statuesque Katherine wearing a Statue of Liberty-gray hounds tooth overcoat draped over her shoulders. She carries a leather envelope briefcase in her gloved hand and has a flat envelope bag over her shoulder. Her long, thoroughbred legs end in a nude stiletto pump. Her sophisticated gray-green, one button suit jacket with a modest shoulder pad is completed with a high-waisted matching pencil skirt. The fit of the garment is impeccable. The fabric glides over the curves of the body. The width of the skirt accommodates her stride. The color references the patina of the Statue of Liberty. She has an off-white, jewel neck silk blouse topped by a single strand of 18" pearls. She wears pearl button earrings, a gold curb-chain bracelet and an onyx and gold ring. Her loosely curled and manicured mane keeps time with her rhythmic stride. Her lightly rouged cheeks bookend her perfectly glossed lips framing a Cheshire Cat smile. Ann Roth has devised a color pallet for Katherine's cinematic costume that creates a harmonious connection to her corporate space of steel and glass. Katherine's feminine suit reveals very little detail about her personal life.

The visual contrast between the two characters reinforces the difference between the corporate and provincial worlds. . The sleek patina of Katherine versus the over accessorized look of Tess. The multiple bangle bracelets on one wrist, a charm bracelet on the other, plus the dangle earrings, over-power Tess' layered black sweaters and black tweed pencil skirt. She has added a wide elastic belt with faux front lacing over the turtleneck. Her colorful and exaggerated eye shadow makes her look tawdry next to Katherine's demur makeup.

When Katherine speaks to Tess about what to wear in the office, it is possible to deduce that Katherine does not find Tess' image up to her standards. Katherine describes her "office uniform" as being "simple, elegant, impeccable." It is important to the scene that the audience "see" what "simple, elegant and impeccable" looks like within the context of this film. The cinematic image of Katherine's gray-green suit perfectly fits this description. In contrast, Tess' clothing cannot be described using those three words. Katherine lays down several rules for Tess to follow:

KATHERINE PARKER: A few ground rules…you are my link with the outside world. People's impression of me starts with you. You're tough when it's warranted; accommodating when you can be; you're accurate; you're punctual; and you never make a promise you can't keep. I'm never on another line. I'm in a meeting. I consider us a team, Tess, and, as such, we have a uniform-- simple, elegant, impeccable. 'Dress shabbily and they notice the clothes. Dress impeccably, they notice the woman.'-- Coco Chanel.

TESS MCGILL: And how do I look?

KATHERINE PARKER: You look terrific. You *might* want to rethink the jewelry.

Tess covers the jingle bracelet and goes to the rest room to remove the other bracelets and wipe off some of her eye shadow. For the first time, Tess is not comfortable in her look and begins to adjust her image to please Katherine. After this exchange, Tess begins to wear post-style pierced earrings, rather than dangle earrings. She uses combs to pull up the front sides of her hair and she does not lacquer her bangs. The change in Tess' image is subtle, but her look begins to look more refined and less provincial than before.

The costuming of Katherine and Tess at the corporate reception reinforces Katherine's dominance over Tess. When we see the cocktail party in progress, Katherine is framed by floor

to ceiling windows and is holding court dressed in a scarlet red waisted dress with a pleated skirt and plunging v-neck. The red color separates her from her female and male co-workers who are wearing conservative tailored dark and neutral two-piece suits. Statuesque Katherine stands eye-to-eye with her co-workers. We hear "Excuse me," come from behind a group of men and we see a steaming dim sum tray and realize that Tess is acting as the party server as she pushes the cart through the crowd. Dressed in a serviceable black and white tweed suit with an asymmetrical closing that appears to resemble a chef's coat, we see Tess' glistening face framed by a humidity-induced splay of hair.

The cinematic costume confirms Katherine's control over Tess' future. She dabs her forehead and asks Katherine if she should go around the room again offering food to the department brass. Katherine feigns her willingness to assist Tess in her serving duties but then withdraws the offer by reminding Tess "you can't busy the quarterback with passing out the Gatorade." Katherine's reference to a quarterback reinforces her centric approach to her office staff. She thinks of herself as a team player, but she wants Tess to understand that she is the featured player in the game.[40]

As the camera pulls back, we see that Tess is kneeling at Katherine's feet while she attempts to buckle Katherine into the boot. Katherine's physical dominance both in the office space and over Tess is visually tied to Katherine's athletic prowess on the ski slopes. Designer

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[40] Working Girl, directed by Mike Nichols (1957: Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, Inc. 2001.), DVD. In an additional scene that was cut from the movie but is available in the DVD version on one of the preview trailers, Katherine is getting ready for the cocktail party. She stands in front of Tess wearing the red polyester pleated dress and as she hands Tess a can of Static Guard, she says, "Spray me down." Tess asks, "What?" Katherine looks at her and says, "Well, I can't very well walk around my own party clinging!" With a Cheshire Cat smile, Katherine raises the skirt to shoulder height exposing her white silk tap pants to Tess.

Ann Roth has maximized the dichotomy between Katherine's feminine persona and her athletic and competitive persona by dressing her simultaneously in a soft, yielding white silk blouse and a racing-red, hard, unyielding plastic ski boot. As Katherine sits, she crosses her ski-booted leg and hikes her calf length heather brown skirt over her knees, we focus on her muscular leg as the transition linking the feminine and masculine through the specific framing of her calf.

In a 2004 article, Erica Reischer and Kathryn S. Koo argue that the desirability of the muscled female body represents the concept that women are:

> Seeking to embody social values associated with muscles and to demonstrate that muscles which is to say strength, discipline and other such socially valued qualities are equally characteristic of women, within a revised definition of femininity that seeks to renegotiate its position with respect to masculinity, by acting on the social constructions grounded in the body.[41]

The costuming of Katherine works to visualize this "revised" definition of femininity within Katherine's character. By pointing toward her athleticism when she is dressed in feminine attire, Ann Roth affirms that Katherine possesses "strength, discipline and other socially valued qualities" that equate her with male executives. In contrast, Tess' restricted clothing, consisting of a mini skirt, does not allow her to demonstrate the physical freedom afforded to Katherine.

There are several scenes that are used by Ann Roth to reinforce the image of Tess' provincial roots. When the scene moves to a crowded provincial Staten Island bar, we see costuming styles that reflect an assortment of different shaped women wearing a mixed variation of sweaters or blouses and skirts. One or two women appear to be dressed like professional women because they are wearing two-piece suits; however, the predominant hairstyle includes a halo of lacquered bangs The working class roots of the neighborhood are evidenced by the men

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[41] Erica Reischer, and Kathryn S. Koos, "The Body Beautiful: Symbolism and Agency in the Social World," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 33 (2004): 314. URL: http://www.,jstor.org.exproxy.gc.cuny.edu/stable/25064855 (accessed January 5, 2014).

who wear flannel shirts or the occasional leather jacket. The absence of two-piece suits creates an environment of working class men.

In another scene, the costumes, or lack there of, underscore the relationship between Tess and her live-in boyfriend, Mick. In an intimate scene between the two, the viewer sees Tess from Mick's point of view when she stands in front of a three-way mirror attaching black sheer hose to a black lace garter belt. She is wearing only a black bra with red satin cups, and bikini briefs with a red satin front and black back. Mick (Alec Baldwin)[42], her live-in boyfriend clad only in a sheet and gold necklace, is lying in bed opposite the mirror. "You look great!" he says as he puts down his *Motor Trend* magazine and tosses a stuffed toy wolf that has a sheepskin fastened onto its back off of the bed. He invites Tess to join him. "You know Mick, just once I could go for something like a sweater or some earrings. You know, a present that I could actually wear outside this apartment." Tess has shown us that Mick's gift of choice is primal and sexual. He objectifies her for his pleasure. The cinematic costume is not beautiful or tasteful feminized lingerie. The red satin cups on the bra and the red bikini bottoms look cheap, as if Mick purchased them at a local sex shop. The "gift" will be removed for his pleasure, not worn for hers.

The cinematic transformation of Tess is a pivotal scene in the movie and the costume choices play a key role in the audience's willingness to accept Tess' physical change. The transformation sequence is triggered when Katherine breaks her leg and cannot return from Europe. Katherine asks Tess to go to her apartment. Tess goes to the Upper East Side apartment dressed in her cognac leather coat, running shoes and white crew socks. As Tess stands on the stoop in front of two massive doors, it is possible to understand the metaphorical distance

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[42]Alec Baldwin was born Alexander Rae Baldwin on April 3, 1958 in Massapequa, New York. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000285/?ref_=nv_sr_1.

separating Staten Island and Manhattan. Tess enters a fairy tale space that is expansive, pristine and colorless except for a Warhol-inspired, silk-screened multiple images of Katherine hanging on the wall. Katherine has been elevated to a work of art that is exhibited for personal and not public pleasure.

When Tess begins to try on Katherine's clothes, we see the metamorphosis of Tess from provincial girl to an urban woman start to take place. Tess begins to go through the selection process of the choosing an appropriate cocktail dress for her rendezvous with Jack Trainer (Harrison Ford). Tess begins the process of stepping into Katherine's world by "borrowing" pieces of Katherine's wardrobe, such as a sparkly $6,000 off-the-shoulder black velvet dress complete with a flared skirt with organza overlay that is studded with rhinestones. When Tess chooses the dress, she remarks, "This is it! It's simple, elegant; yet makes a statement. It says to people, 'confident,' 'a risk taker,' 'not afraid to be noticed…then you hit them with your smarts." She repeats the phrase Katherine had used to describe the "office uniform." Tess also borrows Katherine's broad-shouldered, full-length mink coat in order to "take a meeting" with Jack Trainer of Trask Industries. Wrapped in Katherine's clothing, Tess is transformed and ready to claim the corporate position that she wants. With a newfound confidence and her new image, she attends the corporate reception.

The cinematic costume that Tess wears is a unique garment within the film. Ann Roth has created a modern Cinderella-dress that references the 1947 Dior "New Look" because the style of the dress accentuates the feminine proportion of the bust to waist to hip. The style reveals the vulnerability of the neck and draws the viewers' gaze toward the décolletage. The style of the full skirt creates a flirtatious movement of discovery that teases the imagination. By adding rhinestones to the surface of the velvet fabric, the dress appears to sparkle. This feminine look

has been used to signify a princess gown in both animated and live-action films. Ann Roth did not incorporate the buoyant flared shirt silhouette in any other scenes or on any other characters. It is creates a unique visual link to a Cinderella-dress that supports the putting-on of borrowed garments in order to step into a new life. Tess' transformation is completed with a hairstyle that is bobbed and natural.

The choice of the black velvet dress is important because it is used to propel the story forward. First, the design of the dress must allow the audience to believe that Tess looks like a corporate executive at a cocktail party. Second, the dress must frame and flatter the character of Tess so that Jack Trainer will be drawn instantly to her from across a crowded room. Also, the dress must allow Tess to be flung over Jack Trainer's shoulder and carried up a flight of stairs. And finally, we must believe Jack when he delivers the following line to Tess:

JACK TRAINER: You are the first woman I've seen at one of these damn things who dresses like a woman, not like a woman thinks a man would dress if he was a woman.

(Trainer and Tess drink shots of tequila)

I didn't know that they let bad girls into these things.

TESS MCGILL: Do I look like I don't belong here?

JACK TRAINER: No, no, no. I'm sure you're a real ace at whatever it is that you do *do*.

TESS MCGILL: Damn straight.

JACK TRAINER: But *how* you look…

TESS MCGILL: I have a head for business and a bod [sic] for sin. Is there anything wrong with that?

The cinematic transformation carries forward when Tess wears Katherine's gray-green patinated suit paired with the complimentary coat. The subtle re-fashioning of Katherine's

garments on Tess' frame confirms Tess' appropriation of Katherine's corporate persona. Tess has assumed an image of confidence and control. From her smooth French twist hairstyle to her gray-green Lady Liberty suit. Tess' metamorphosis is complete.

The gray-green suit is re-fashioned one additional time when Katherine puts it on and reclaims her corporate identity. The suit has become the signifier of feminine corporate control. Ann Roth selected a muted color associated with Lady Liberty's patina that represents steadfastness and consistency rather than a bold primary color that would reference competition and victory. The subtle transition of the suit from one actress to another is never acknowledged.

Working Girl is a story about dressing up and becoming someone new, Ann Roth has worked to create the cinematic costumes that show the transition of Tess McGill from a provincial girl to a corporate executive. The costumes are so well integrated into the visual narrative of each character that the audience's focus is not on the clothes but on the character. By creating a limited color palette for each character, Ann Roth is able to re-use and mix garments and accessories to create the illusion that the clothes are from the character's closet. The off-screen personas of the leading women, Melanie Griffith and Sigourney Weaver, were not at the pivotal center of Ann Roth's designs. The consistent sleek exterior of Katherine Parker's character creates a visual barrier for Tess to break through. The turn in Tess' nature when she steps into Katherine's garments confirms the dynamic influence of the garment on Tess' inner confidence and outward power.

Conclusion

The work of the contemporary cinematic costume designer is to create a visual story. Charles le Maire and Ann Roth each designed costumes that would create the image of a contemporary female-centric corporate office environment that referenced the release dates of their respective films. Although the work was separated by more than thirty years, they used contemporary garments and accessories to narrate both the physical and psychological journey of their characters. Although the "contemporary" clothing styles were over thirty years apart, it is possible to find a commonality in their use of clothing styles and accessories. Both designers utilized contemporary garments to frame the female body in order to feminize and sexualize a character. Because fashion cycles help us to realize that "everything old is new again" many of the garments that were visualized by Charles le Maire in *Desk Set* could be marketed today. The cinematic office costumes that were designed for the female staff created an individualized visual narrative for the characters; however, le Maire's classic approach to costume design framed the individual female body in a way that retained the natural female form. By selecting and utilizing contemporary clothing styles that did not alter the natural female form, the contextualized cinematic costumes have retained the sartorial meaning of the clothing.

The styles of the 1988 clothing in *Working Girl* covered a much wider spectrum of classic and on-trend fashions. The term "classic" is in reference to a clothing style that relates more closely to the natural form of the body. The term "trend " is in reference to a clothing style that exaggerates a specific part of the body and pushes the silhouette of the garment away from the natural form of the body. As evidenced in the film, Ann Roth incorporated both classic and contemporary trend clothing to create the images that make a distinction between a corporate and provincial world. Katherine Parker was visualized as a corporate executive by wearing classic

contemporary clothing. Often classic styles repeat more often because they are more closely related to the body. Trend styles can also be considered fad styles, which are not often, if ever, found within the fashion cycle. Ann Roth incorporated trend clothing to costume both provincial Tess and many women in the secretarial pool. The exaggeration of the trend styles was evidenced in broader shoulder pads, the use of multiple jewelry trends, and leather coats.

For both designers, the New Look dress, that frames the bust to waist female proportion, was used to create an image of flirtation and fun. Charles le Maire utilized the style to create the kelly green "promise" dress and Miss Watson's silver silk party dress for the Christmas party. Ann Roth utilized the style to create a Cinderella-dress for Tess' transformation from provincial girl to urban woman. The volume of the skirt and the framing of the bust and waist were used feminize the cinematic characters and reinforce the flirtatious and sexual aspects of their personalities.

The cinematic costume designer creates a visual narrative through a series of choices that influence how the audience understands the story. It may seem obvious that Katharine Hepburn would wear a silver silk dress in the Christmas party scene; however, would the scene be the same if she had worn a tight silver silk dress with a slit up the side? Or what if she had worn a red dress rather than a silver one? Once the costume is visualized on the screen, it is hard to re-imagine a different costume. None of the choices are arbitrary and none of them are easy.

The focus of the work of the cinematic costume designer is to offer the audience an immersion in reality through a carefully controlled selection and utilization of garments and accessories. The costume designer's goal is to select items that appear to be the characters' personal clothing retrieved from their closet. The costume designer's triumph is to utilize garments and accessories to tell a good story. Simply put, cinematic clothing is a nothing more

than a compilation of clothing articles. It is the distillation and utilization of sartorial meaning that is the domain of the cinematic costume designer. By focusing inward and looking closely at the contextualized contemporary cinematic costumes in both *Desk Set* and *Working Girl*, it is possible to understand the precision and care that both Charles le Maire and Ann Roth incorporated into their garment and accessory selections to bind the film narrative, the character and the actor.

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