

The Influences of Gabrielle Chanel as a Designer and Icon within Modern & Contemporary
Stylistic & Feminism Ideologies

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Section One: Critical Essay

Section Two: Creative Response (Poetry Collection & Prose Collection)

Critical Reflection 10%

(Please note that titles, bibliography & footnotes do not count towards wordcount)

Section One: Critical Essay

Style visionaries and a spectrum of entrepreneurs fed the creative flow of artists throughout the duration of the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The design concepts stemming from these designers all founded upon a drive, and belief in the significance of their style as a viable source of beauty, a worthwhile economic product and an impacting means of art, potentially contributing to a lifestyle, whether it be architecture, clothing, literature or visual art.

Ease and Style

In Chanel's case, her design had the ability to draw allure as well as ensure historical and physical durability. This was essential for the House of Chanel to flourish as a business through the years. Chanel invented a collection of clothing fitted as couture, but also designed to be re-produced for all women to wear, re-styling the constrained corsets as old news. The idea of loose clothing was not socially popular until Chanel personally embodied her style and stated that every woman should hold the right to wear the garments that appear elegant alongside being comfortable. The idea of being at ease with one-self particularly within female social circles was a topic of continuous discussion.

Coco brought about a new wave of feminist positive style and fashioned it to be the style of the century. Originality and genuity was often at the core of many of her designs, giving her models an effortless image, which of course appealed to her clientele. Function and elegance became a transpiring industry for Gabrielle Chanel. The social relations she forged along the way of her career and fascinating life certainly crystallised her status as iconoclastic figure within the fashion industry. She was a female designer who surpassed many current and aspiring male designers, this generates major public and elite engagement during Chanel's time in Paris and England. A universal statement had been made, and in order to maintain her business, she had to maintain her social persona, mythic personality and her skills as a dressmaker, and designer. The stimuli for every fashion house and designer in each field- is that a successful design has the potential to survive the test of time, and in time improve the space that it inhabits.

Young Coco & Importance of Early Stage Design

¹Many creative entrepreneurs began their lives in homes of either one, little or a complete lack of financial support, and also emotional care. Chanel's father left her Mother when Chanel was young to escape parenthood and live a separate life. ²The early stages of life have been different for many creatively driven individuals, however their stylistic visions paired with a stable setting of industrial effort such as Poiret did. After researching into this topic, I believe that a belief and support of creatively driven individuals can make the difference between a person with a drive for success and influence who perseveres through difficult times to eventually create iconography.

¹ (Discourse and Metalanguage, The Fashion System, Roland Barthes, p.14-16)

² (Existing Histories of Design, p.17)

Namesake's connected to brands are recognised for a reason: a legacy for the artist and their societal impact.

The Poiret Revolution

Post 1890s, Paul Poiret made a name in haute couture. He altered the shape of the corset, to which Chanel contributed later on, achieving an empire line which worked to abolish tight waistlines. It brought relief to the abused female figure by removing constriction around the middle. Post 1890s, Poiret was the second courtier to stress that fashion was part of the applied arts and not an industry to be thought of frivolously. Upholding design as a legitimate art form has enabled culture to develop and benefit society during the war and has also helped to improve environment factors by using more naturally sourced materials for material companies along the way. Poiret's workers were one of the first companies to produce couture and gain a respectable reputation from their work as well as contribute to the war effort in material wear for females and families at home and those working to keep the nation going behind the front line.

Fear, Respect and Asset Mobilisation

³As a social figure Chanel was seen as a business partner to be feared by competition from Dior and Yves Saint Laurent for starters. Friends saw her as a woman to be approached with a strategy due to her reputation of forging connections and attracting social engagement. The effect this had on female circles were monumental. A bobbed hairstyle was fashioned by Chanel on the – when she attended the Theatre with Boy Capel. Her indifference and experimentation began to build her a repertoire of breaking and re-making the rules regarding women's etiquette. When Chanel arrived in black a black dress which had been accidentally streaked in soot- instead of the traditional white dress code for the theatre and sporting short 'boyish' hair- as a result she gained social engagement and a stage to set up a standard, that she was taking a risk balancing her business on. This ultimately paid off. Chanel introduced a new style and a fresh idealised image for women clientele and also working and middle classes.

Timeless Design

Chanel's demand for simple, women's apparel as a re-fashioned mindset: women did not have to choose between 'feeling free and feeling beautiful', this coveted style filtered through the Parisian and English couture houses and production industries. 'Chanel's designs became recognised as a means of liberation and durability. She changed the face of style by challenging gender restrictions in women's clothing.' ⁴Through altering the construction of women's clothing to be tailored to women's bodies as opposed to wearing clothes to attract the male gaze gained Chanel immediate clientele not just from friends, but female clientele around the world. Gradually her reputation for breaking down barriers of what women could and could not wear constructed a style founded business that benefited sales, boosted economy, and physically contributed to the rise of feminism during the twentieth century.

Interviewing Chanel by Psychologist: Claude Delay

³, () <<https://bellatory.com/fashion-industry/Chanel-Feminism-Through-Fashion>> [accessed].

⁴ (design history, p18)

⁵Chanel, for a high example interweaved decoys within her personal life, bringing a major element of mystery to her reputation. Only a select few people knew of her original life narrative. The mindset, personal dealings, and a knack for legendary status kept Gabrielle Chanel's private affairs just that; private, until close acquaintance's such as Claude Delay attempted biographical interviews. Still she constructed different versions of her history. Her style remained an allure mixed with a societal interest in how she spent her time, much like the glamourized figures of modern culture. French female designer, founder and brand namesake. Credited during the 1st World War era with liberating women from constraints of the 'corseted silhouette' and popularizing sporty chic as the feminine standard of style. A prolific creator, Chanel extended her influence beyond couture clothing, realising her design in jewellery, bags and perfume. Signature scent Chanel No.5 by Coco and Ernest Beaux became an iconic signifier; appealing to instinctual olfactory. TIME magazine listed C.C as the C21st most influential icon. The interlocked double C monogram is a pendulum of directed feministic statements. Hence print and garment translated into iconography.

The history that researchers and interviews have gleaned and collected have become a secondary legacy which Gabrielle Chanel left behind her. Her first legacy was her house and revolution in business. To understand the mindset behind the French visionary we have to span back to where she spent much of her childhood. Unveiling her early years in a convent orphanage, and her flight into unconventional adulthood, Justine Picardie delves into the glossy surface of the mythic style icon. Throwing light on her passionate and turbulent relationships, this beautifully constructed portrait gives an insight into how Chanel made herself into her own driving creation.

The image that she built to create her business- and influence societies perspective and attraction to her newfound sense of style, and the methods in which she incorporated this into the lifestyles of countless women universally, hence her iconic status. An authoritative account, based on personal observations and interviews with Chanel's last surviving friends, employees and relatives, it proceeds to unravel her coded language and symbols, tracing the influence of her formative years on her legendary style. Feared and revered by the rest of the fashion industry, Coco Chanel died in 1971, at the age of 87, but her legacy lives on. Drawing upon her unprecedented access to the Chanel archive, Justine Picardie brings Gabrielle Chanel out of hiding and uncovers the consequences of what she covered up, unpicking the seams between truth and myth, in a story that reveals the true heart of fashion.

Style in Foundation Image

The concept of comfortably chic, effortlessly sleek, was the epitome of what society then, and society now thinks of when the brand is mentioned. The impact and influence of these ideas made deep changes to the ideologies of the 90s, socially, economically and psychologically. As did the style ideas of Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, Louis Vuitton and Ralph Lauren. As a majority, their original places of birth, or homes to be- were Paris. Christian Dior born 21 January 1905- 14 October 1957, Italy. French fashion designer- namesake for universal brand. Currently owned by Groupe Arnault. Yves was educated under Dior's tutelage, introduced by French vogue editor at the time Michael De Brunhoff. Yves's skill grew with an audience engagement.

There is a reason why Rue Cambon still stands as a shrine to its dead creator. Regarding a simple basis, ‘

⁵ (Picardie, Legend and Life, p25-39)

'I imposed black; it's still going strong today, for black wipes out everything else around.'
(C. Chanel)

⁶Many fashion foundations have relied on black to solidify collections. YSL and Dior enhanced collections with black, often pairing of black and silver embellishments created a delicate or bold contrast, depending on shade strength and application. The fact that Gabrielle Chanel was a woman who successfully built her empire within a prominently masculine business environment, was and remains a hugely empowering concept for feminism in post-modern culture today. The lasting impact and influence of Chanel's work, leading to the alteration of female perspective within society, from generalised corseted constrictions, to chic loose fitted garments and marketing strategies is clear.

⁷Resilient human longing for escapism is always welcome when times are tough—and here it was, counterintuitively displayed on a platform wildly visible enough to sustain the home war effort. Yves Saint Laurent symbolized something more about Paris than simply being a brand: It stood for chic, for eroticism, for a liberal code—a book of dressing written by one young designer and his business partner, Pierre Bergé, both French national heroes. For Vaccarello, and for everyone watching, the emotional weight of this show was accentuated by Berge's death, for a worldwide audience, too young to be aware of the history, this was a rare glimpse of fashion. It was an extreme statement of leadership, sexuality, provocation, and a future promise. Similarly, I believe the emotional weight Chanel carried around with her over her Mother's death, her Father's absence, the tragic passing of Boy Capel on his way to spend his life with Chanel- mounted upon her- yet she still found the drive to design and further the House of Chanel, her fellow members and models.

⁸Every style brand in business is anxious to appeal to the millennial generation to increase sales and improve marketing strategies, and as Papanek states in the Fashion Complex, product relies on an intrinsic process: use, need, Telesis, method, aesthetics and association. Chanel turned to scent as a business route, branching into the key notes of an opportunity to sell an image of simplicity once again. Chanel No.5 was concocted, selected by the scientific innovation of – and sold impeccably quickly by Chanel and her company. Her turnover's yet again, blossomed. The concept of Chanel sold the perfume first, then a mix of simple aesthetic design of thin lined and clear glassed bottle design hooked public desire. The liquid was transparent, design minimal- title too. Chanel's name marketed first, the effective scent followed suit.

Her idea of a feminine scent was not overwhelming or pushed upon to be bought. Her product was there to be sampled in stores and recommended by clientele that she had recently been in contact with at the time. Nevertheless, it sold. Chanel proved her ability to sell couture, clothes, accessories and scent, alongside set a luxurious and comfortable style for women to select at their leisure. She envisioned the future of ⁹style as it might be.

¹⁰Fashion is a method of executing a movement. Movement can mean an era, or a simple action in motion. Both concepts apply to the statement. Subtle changes of style can be seen in various cultures, but why is there such a force for marked style changes in western culture? Dior also had female creatives pursuing feminine ideals. Maria Grazia Chiuri had her mind set on merging her ideas into the house of Dior's work, art historian Linda Nochlin peels back systemic reasons why

⁶ (History of design, p13)

⁷ (Design History p18)

⁸ (History of Design, style techniques, p32, Papanek)

⁹ (p32)

¹⁰ (What is a Designer, Potter, p13-14)

women throughout history were dismissed from art establishment. Chanel was a major social influencer, yet she wasn't the only figure trying to push feminine ideals forward.

Pursuing the Modern-Woman

Behind Dior was an industrial superstructure that knew how to capitalise on a talented designer, hence setting ongoing competition with Chanel, who was flourishing by 1930 with a yearly turnover of 120 million francs. Social relations definitely played a part in finance for Chanel, but this was to be expected as a rising designer in 90s Parisian society. She had gained wealthy admirers and engaged in both friendly and sexual affairs with Captain Capel, the Grand Duke of Westminster, Duke Dmitri and Etienne Balsan. Setting a reputation as a woman of artistic industry and engaging in relations with whomever she wanted was a power that she displayed with a controlled hand. The modern-businesswoman standard had been set, paving the way for future female entrepreneurs.

World War One caused setback in sales, however in 1920s couture trade flourished. Value of couture trade was 5,750,000 francs. Value in Paris plummeted during the Wall Street Crash in 1929. Slow recovery by late 1930s. World War Two couture export increases arrived in 1947. Advertisement aided the design trade at this time. Worth advertised despite rampant privacy accusations during his time. He believed his designs were worth fighting for, as did Chanel later on.

Socially recognised poet of the C19th; Oscar Wilde- edited *The Woman's World*, a journal of literary female works, building a gradual canon of art created by female artists, increasing feminist ideals. The concept of women succeeding within industry, specifically creative at this point was hugely inspiring for the current and future generation. *Harper's Bazaar* featured illustrators; Sandoz, Medaille and Jonnard, hired by designers like Chanel to display work to fashion presses and the public. A high quality of creative craft resulted in social constraints being broken, producing styled clothes for each class, inspired by a stylistic idea.

New Age Expression

The war machine in 1914-1939 swallowed immense manpower, therefore woman supplied the demand. Trade stabilised due to industrial female effort, hence lessening the belief that gender mattered as much within distribution of work. It became smart for high ladies of reputable backgrounds to buy and wear Chanel to every social environment to project status and advertise the brand. Chanel's style filtered through 90s media sources and reached the working class. The Jersey was built to withstand practical work was popular. Enabling flexibility in clothes styled simply and purposely effective.

A chain of economic growth, began to flow, partially born in the growing fashion houses of Chanel, Dior, Yves Saint Laurent and Louis Vuitton. Chanel in particular took the dire situation of the War into consideration for her business and her belief in comfortable clothes for women. Introducing Jersey quickly became a historic breakthrough for her increasing brand, the war effort and as a social standing: a liberation of women and their everyday lives. Hence, a transformation of the individual's work, mind and body, partially stemming from the garment's society wore to work, and took care of their country in. It was expression in clothing.

Chanel was named as a revolutionary. At a time when one world was dying, and the 21st century was coming into existence, she saw the opportunity of style as a lifestyle as an opportunity.

¹¹Exploitation depends on the ethics and sociological extremities of the individual obtaining power- Chanel used her materials with social and economic respect and consideration. She was the same age as the new century, so it turned her to create an expression in clothing. This act is like a country's poet Laureate- they are turned to when society has been impacted or is due to be impacted by some momentous change, they are requested to produce written art in honour of it. Chanel used her clothing to create a wearable expression for a new age, and the women of that new age.

Natural Design in Greek Mythology

(Image of the Body, Gill, p1-5)Beauty is an ideal, realised early on in Greek mythology, praised for its evidence in the human form. Designers over the centuries have adapted garments to fit the form, objectively using contours of the body to guide them in their vision of adornment. Models display their bodies as a form of natural beauty. Designers use them as a model of artistic experimentation. Historically- a turn of a century can be seen as form of change, a need for new art, language, image and beauty as a means of creative sustenance. Psychologically, Chanel's liberating designs allowed women to work in industry as well as take care of themselves and their families at home. Time and the human form being two constant states interlinked throughout the war. In essence, Chanel took the need for a lifestyle revolution, gave society something to be revered, spoken about and worn.

The suffering body was given new meaning in Christian iconography. The Church grew despite the persecution of a grossly material and dissolute society. The Imperial Rome; this fiery baptism affected and Western attitude to the human image for a thousand years. The Renaissance brought a triumphant return of physical beauty to painting and sculpture, and an increased recognition of creative skills which gave the artist an accentuation of stature and influence. This would relate heavily to designers, artists and writers living before the Great War, bringing fresh designs into the turn of the new century.

In the 15th century the Florentine slang for being educated was 'sta al buco' meaning he is at the absus. It was a tool to harness mathematics for the benefit of man, in the way that perspective based on geometry was giving a new authority to art. And business was creating, serious, independent minded and yet with the Italian love of display. Botticelli's contribution to the portrayal of the body was neither forceful nor so psychologically complex. Full of simplicity with sweetness rather than strength.

What is a designer?

¹²A designer's work helps provide form and order to the amnesties of life. Either in the context of manufacture, place or event. The uncertainty within the definition highlights the issue of using a sole word to explain a large spectrum of very distanced experiences. The social argument has been; is design socially realistic? Does it justify its claim to social usefulness, or is it a privileged form of self-expression?

The necessary illusions used are called into question when paired with the deep expense that comes with the making and purchase of haute couture. Chanel's pairing of social liberation

¹¹ (Politics of the Artificial, p1-18)

¹² (What is a Designer, Potter, p13-14)

interlinked with her business efforts made her a designer to be reckoned with, as she realised the opportunity that the century had arrived upon, and how to bring about a certain economic boom for herself and her workers. In effect, she became an agent of change. Fashion was considered in mindset and physical material as a social fine art, it brought about and projected status. The significance of beauty was in high demand especially during the war, with people in a constant cycle of anxiety, loss and uncertainty.

Despite the concept that fashion dies, in many ways the importance of Chanel's house and industry was not about the fashion, it was centred around the personality that sold it, and more importantly believed in it. Chanel herself coined the phrase 'fashion dies but style remains.' As a materialistic and psychological influencer, she used her profession as a designer to inject beauty into society through her own terms. The components to her social allure inevitably transferring to her creations and products. Truth in an artistic sense being that any object crafted or simply 'being' 'invokes and involves the inescapably totality of a culture and hidden assumptions which condition cultural priorities.' In a basic sense, watering, feeding and warming the body is physically essential, yet the rest is a choice- hence the thirst and appreciation of art, subjective to beauty is also considered a need. This relates to style being fashioned/created and re-fashioned in a constant cycle. Chanel was the catalyst, and deliverer of a stylistic lifestyle.

Style Structures

¹³Industry, retailing and mass media play parts in a marketing process. Design has become regarded as crucial via economic terms. It represents a method of harmony and social control. The role of a designer is inevitable and holds great importance, in regard to art, clothing, and architecture. Hence the logical conclusion that design in terms of a building or bridge structure means the difference between life and death.

A constant sequence of contrasts and juxtaposed ideas are at play: art and industry, creativity and commerce, often opposite spheres of thinking, made to work together to produce an end product. All sources of craft, industry and creative thinking concern themselves with style and utility, material and a human desire in areas of the ideological. Economics and politics involve the public sector, and then bring into play the private sector. As a designer- to achieve and maintain social and economic, and psychological success- Chanel understood and implemented innate and acquired skills as an authentic designer. Her 'revolutionaire' status evidenced through documentation of twentieth and twenty-first century history.

Design History Problematics

A major element of Chanel's design could be said to be linked into the idea of symptomatic reading; which means paying attention to the unspoken. Her inclusion of function as a key aspect of design in her clothing style gave her work both a practical use and a visually pleasing appeal. Addressing the issue of female constraint both socially and materialistically brought her haute couture designs to twentieth century society's attention. Contextually, trauma and continuous stress, loss and uncertainty injected a need and appreciation for beauty into society. Hence 'ladies of high society', middle and upper-class women purchasing garments styled and produced by the House of Chanel and worn to embody and project status, a form of female empowerment, and

¹³ (Design History and the History of Design, Walker, p13)

also a clear flaunting of wealth. This propelled the economic cycle of commerce, and mass media, glamourizing Chanel's image and stature.

'Few clothes from distant past stand the ravages of time' (Design History p.13)

Yet Chanel's style-based designs have not only endured but remained and influenced modern culture in various forms. Glossy photographs printed onto pages of modern lifestyle and fashion magazines 'do not simply publicise products, they communicate a lifestyle and specific set of values.'

The Fashion System

¹⁴Roland Barthes theory *The Fashion System* 1985 supplies us with an example of second level meta-discourse analysis. A sophisticated, sociological study of fashion is based not upon the language of clothes as directly perceived but upon written fashion, that is, the text and captions alongside fashion illustrations in an issue of French magazines. A third example relevant to design history is (Necdet Teymur's *Environmental Discourse* 1982), a complex and critical examination of the concept environment as-

'it occurs in discourses of architecture planning, design, ecology and mass media.'

Coco Chanel's history is unclear in terms of recorded documentation, however interviews by Claude Delay and biographies sources as closely as literally possible have provided insight into her early stages of childhood at the convent, her frequent lack of solidified guardianship and emotional discontent concerning her lovers and relationships throughout the years.

Design history and the mindset of a designer seem to be closely linked, as design is both a young discipline, and an acutely innate one. Visual details of architecture designs at the convent where Chanel grew up, such as the interlinked C's, jewellery and embellishment designs display visual links to stages of her childhood.

If this is the case, she used life experience as inspiration for design in her collections. An artistic outlet for her personal expression perhaps? It shows an acute understanding of resourcefulness in artistic creation: stimulus, to design, to haute couture. My point throughout this essay has been that her influence as a social and feminist figure has been substantially rooted, giving her recognition through the ¹⁵social strata of her style. Success in Parisian and British economy paired with the Parisian culture boosted her reputation as a definite means to an end.

Relations-wise, personality earned her powerful connections, such as the Grand Duke of Westminster at the time when they engaged in a famously noted affair. Personal relations provided opportunities for business routes. This can be seen as a method of social manipulation by some critics, however I don't believe her personal decisions should be faulted or taken as proof of character. Her navigation of an industry previously run owned by male-founded power-houses was only the stem of her career. A significant character side-note is that each connection she made spoke of her with admiration, and respect.

¹⁴ (Discourse and Meta Language p.14, 15, 16)

¹⁵ (Politics of the Artificial, Margolin, p147-153)

The House of Chanel continues to flourish and empower female liberation through early-born simplicity, bringing a timeless approach to design. Hence why women wear whatever they choose.

Modern Style & Feminist Influence

¹⁶Stylistic strands of any influential designer can be tracked through design history. One book I studied in particular 'Unseen Vogue', 'The Secret History of Fashion Photography' edited by Robin Derrick and Robin Muir.

Derrick and Muir's visual records depict a testimony to a rich collection of original out-takes. The back cover states the photographs in final editions of Vogue simply due to lack of magazine space and due to the natural editing process of Vogue and a lack of magazine space, these images failed to make the final cut, however I think the unseen styles reflect an elegance and a drive for authenticity that models such as Angela Lindval 1997 by Tom Munro and Jean Shrimpton, 1964 by Cecil Beaton portray vividly. I-d Magazine quotes the book to be:

'a fascinating visual record.'

The significance of a feature is not my point however, my argument is that often the unseen, understated image is powerful in itself and ever beautiful in form. Photographers such as Cecil Beaton, Irving Penn, Herb Ritts, David Bailey, Guy Bourdin, Patrick Demarchelier, Juergen Teller, Nick Knight and Mario Testino and their work is shown and cleverly captioned. The photography interested me as a visual art as it's very simple.

When a designer begins the process of sketching out a design, it's a pencil or biro sketch, in other words: the bare essentials. Beaton's shots of Shrimpton reflect a Japanese themed style which implies (Refining Style, Margolin, p154) a simple refinery to the shoot. I think that Chanel's designs linked closely to the backbone of design theory which is why her style has been such a success.

A modern reference could be Kate Moss's clean-cut 'heroin chic' and iconic status as a model and muse. It could be argued her androgynous image was thirsted for dating back to the 90s Chanel influence. All style houses draw stimulus and influence from various muses; people, events, architectural visuals- however Chanel's vision has extended into modern stylistic thinking. As a result, women have dropped a façade of materialistic care along the way. In other words, confidence has gained popular appeal. A lack of corseted restriction has mentally and physically liberated women and boosted feminist ideals. Chanel introduced a natural state of languidness as a liveable lifestyle.

¹⁷Vera von Lehndorff, daughter of Count Heinrich von Lehndorff-Steinort was a portrait in motion, quite literally. She was considered too exotic to be a model at first, however found her niche in 1960s American Vogue. There Diana Vreeland's pursuit of the odd, eye-catching and the offbeat allowed the Countess an opportunity in 1965 to shine. ¹⁸I found this portrait Vera to be authentic in a simple image and natural beauty. Chanel's style taught clients that elegance originally stemmed from within, which can be thought of whimsically, but it is true none the less.

Photographed by David Bailey 1965, Jean Shrimpton in a black jump suit, and to her left the singer, Anita Harris in a lace minidress- both these styles adopt a naturally defiant statement of

¹⁶ (Unseen Vogue, Robin Derrick 2010)

¹⁷ (Unseen Vogue, Derrick, p.126-127)

¹⁸ (Unseen Vogue, p 126-127)

raw beauty and elegance. ¹⁹The black suit next to a minidress connotes immediate female liberation, first seen in Chanel's designs for the little black dress and minidress in . Karl Lagerfeld's 'The Ford' design continued Chanel's stylistics of the black dress.

Post-Modern culture has displayed exhibitions and Vogue has printed countless editions featuring Kate Moss by Nick Knight 2000 and 1999; the simplistic style is again continued. Nicknamed 'the herald of reality', Moss unexpectedly gained and coined her own iconography by fronting 'high fashion artifice and countless other brands.' ²⁰

Despite the backlash Moss was hit with for her 'fronting' the anorexia awareness campaigns alongside Johnny Depp as a 'high-cheekboned transatlantic couple', she remains an unrivalled icon of her generation. Moss's persona in style is a juxtaposition of her personality and original image, which is the style that Chanel stated would survive:

'fashion fades, it's meant to die, but style remains.' (C. Chanel)

A need for a 'less is more' style is clear, whether fitted on any model. The right to be authentic and accentuate a natural image was instigated by Chanel and has continued throughout designer history. To be, and remain substantial, has always been the aim of fashion. It can also be applied to a lifestyle: seeking out sustainability and originality through family, career, art and the finance that inevitably drives all of those elements together.

Pseudo Individuality and Reality

Lipstick is lipstick, whether belonging to either brand. A certain lighting may make a product appear more defined or refined compared to another, yet it remains a sellable product. Whereas Marlborough is known for being rough and rugged, Camel is seen as urban, and minted. A product is something bought with an element of care, or at least originally intended with a promise of highlighting individuality.

Chanel used a base image of elegant form to sell her couture. Her persona inside her Ritz apartment and outside the walls of her private space was hers to fashion and bring clientele in. This personality resembles her craft in a versatile manner. She could shift her attention to engage in what her audience wanted in order to further business, and also be herself at the same time.

Philosophical Pairing

Tom Stoppard explained theoretically *Why Beauty Matters* in a world full of chaos and discord. Relating this to design and Chanel's vision of style and her idea of beauty was easily applied. Both core ideals relate in the timeless elegance of good style that endures, albeit differing forms of expression and are used for different means, however the concepts behind them are the same.

Satire and comedy remain a hallmark element of Stoppard's work, he actively explored various narrative methods. Eclecticism is one of the many 'hallmarks' of Tom Stoppard's literary canon. Through this, his work has been delivered 'fresh, vital and enduring.' By travelling through a range of subjects, a constant theme in Stoppard's work has been rooted in an interest with aesthetics.

¹⁹ (Reception Theory, p179-186)

²⁰ (Unseen Vogue, p 328-329)

'The formal properties of play construction, and above all with style. For Stoppard, a writer's only obligation is 'to write well'²¹ and plays are 'good' or 'important' if the writing is 'of a very high order' and not because of its social content'²² Stoppard champions style, it is not an end in itself, as Thomas Whitaker asserted in his 1983 book 'Tom Stoppard'. Stoppard's stylistic bravura and theatricality are always yoked to, and in service of, some more substantial ideas, ideas often antithetical to Whitaker's interpretations.

I think by applying the concepts of style to design is intrinsic, every artist, writer or designer works off a foundation of some style, whether its influenced by previous artists or not. Chanel's style is centred in simple aesthetics and a philosophy to be 'dressed well.' If philosophy is a mindset, and writing is a method of observing and recording life in stylistic techniques- then Chanel's aesthetic style influenced the lifestyles of women throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century for the better.

Idealised Beauty in Modern Culture

Tom Stoppard quoted that 'journalism is the quickest way to revolutionise a society', which I can't help but agree with to a large extent. Chanel sketched out her designs or begin with on paper at her desk where she lived and worked across from Rue Cambon. Her Ritz apartment gave her a space to live as herself without having to entertain socially or work as a persona with her clients who travelled miles to see her and purchase her couture. The sketches she produced were the foundation on which she relied to keep her business going.

In concept and continuing essence, Chanel set a coding: a modern mindset via modernised industry, pushing feminism ideology into cultural psychology within her time.

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²¹ (Freedman C13),

²² (Hudson 68)

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Section Two: Creative Response

Collection of Poetry

Inspired by Episodic Chapters of Picardie's Autobiography, Coco Chanel, The Legend and the Life

A Stream of Consciousness

'Fashion like landscape, is a state of mind, by which I mean my own.' (C. Chanel)

Fashion like landscape, is a state of mind, by which I mean my own. Looking at a scene is an opportunity to see beauty. Detail is built into every object by an intentional plan when thinking through the process. It could be that I see what I want to see. As vague as that sounds, sometimes the content of a thought can only be expressed adequately through poetry. I think poetry can be visual. A visual art. A form of a beautiful thing. A garment, a girl's iris simply glinting in the light through a window as she drinks. The poise of her hand. Elegance. It's simple and you do not need very much. Less definitely is more, but not for everyone. Ordering a suit, ordering a jacket. A type of statement. I wonder what scent she will spray on the coat. Something that captures her. Key notes are important. There can only be a select few notes in one bottle, so which few do you pick?

Number One

'I Don't Like the Family' (Picardie, Legend and Life, Claude Delay)²³

The story begins as all others do with a flight, as misdirected as it may have appeared born on a mother's journey.

The marketplace in Saumur, Maine-et-Loire France.
August 19th, 1883.

I began breathing sometime around nine: July 6th, 1998.
Routine for a short while has woken me at ten
-and the hour keeps me in bed for a second

I pick up a shirt pulling it comfortably over my head, and shoulder-bones.
My upper stomach gleams in mid-morning sun.
Dappled skin, I'm still thinking.
What did she think of when light hit her?

Coco did not live in our type of luxury, modern materials, a loss of care.
but does it not strike a pause, at least on your way to work
after reading into her- that she had a hand in the belt hung over my wardrobe door,

²³ (Picardie, Legend and Life, Claude Delay)

looking closely at the strong black colour imposed in a time when white reigned as the beauty epitome, and now I can wear a buckled belt,
as easily as lifting my finger.

Number Two: Preserved in Amber

Marked in oil, pure baptismal

Gravel of Aubazine, clean linen and flowers

Paths leading up the pews, red carpets define a state of mind

Wooden seats that feel rigid below your legs, hardened or character-building?

Recognising an art to standing, a form of sitting, a way of listening to up-tempo and being simply-being,

Disciplining in progress I suppose, anyone could have felt and written

these lines as they apply to an idea of living.

Number Three: The Double C

A sign of something she saw as a child
small hands picking at cherries, small and wholesome as pecan crumbs on a dish.
thinking of clean soap and fresh linen behind a tall shadow
A close interest for stained glass, two curved lines semi in shape interlocking further on.

Number Four: Synapse

Imagine the notes, faint lemon, a berry lilt.

Rose stem, sea buckthorn: flowing complexion implied

No expense for sweat, it's a musk, honed against daily discord.

Coco grew rich as she vitalised vapour.

Linen is simpler the allure- more.

Precise or careless spray, pop.

Transparent potency

It lives on nostalgia and lingers on the subconscious. Leave a jacket and they know it's yours.

A blend of scent that, in brands, become revolutionary- while in a quiet town not far from

here, a certain bottle has a distilling effect: the liquid contained nods toward a past life, and an older generation.

Baths, saunas, its just steaming water and jell.

A burn you meld into, so its needed and you're sold.

No. 5

A thin line accentuates a clear
definition

abstract in form but concrete, fixed.

Font brings a clarity.

A labelled meaning, not yet a thing but a start

Print black font on a bottle, clear cut and pristine.

Walk past any double doors, enter any perfume shop and ask- with no air of expectancy
'Do you sell No.5?'

There is not much to it, just a question and a recognition.

The bottle contains scent sold by name and number, a synapse of coco.

I'm sold, both yourself and anyone who catches the scent from you as they walk by,
brush your hair, stand close to you.

Transmission of a legacy.

Number Six: A Voice

I wonder what forced her to voice it. I mean- an accumulation of stems
and complications and end but washed down to a plain sheet, what instilled
desperation?

Panic distils into fight or flight, fight flows racing reds into fixation and then
calm, design.

Less marked, more the marking by hand, tape

Number Seven: To Be

Less marked, more the marking by hand, tape
tapered taut from her models shoulders, hanging loose.

A fluid motion to stand and exhale, flicking a strand away fallen astray.

Silence cracked by a click of flame, held away from her garments and therefore poised
holding a white stick between her fingers.

Distraction,

Habit,

Decoy.

Number Eight: what is a designer?

An image, a meaning, a message

Staircase
Slivered mirrors.

'but mostly the pictures show Chanel standing alone: poised by the fireplace.'

Stance.

Number Nine: The Second Wave

From the steps

Imagine a brass band setting out the beat to her step

Low tempo flooding the air, the floor.

Brass connotes majesty, an entrance to a built stated wealth-

Dynasty, industry, family: rich in connection, business, relations.

Set features confused with arrogant tones- no, they are models.

Be realistic, of course they feel good in couture.

The garments have socially defined them.

But you do not know who they are.

They are girls.

Powerful girls.

Chanel thought of, built for, designed for, empowered a collective-

Watching them walk.

Number Ten: Chanel and her Models

Moved by their poise, by semi learned, semi loose stride,

By their stamina.

Holding themselves as beautifully as the styles that don their shoulder,

Slim hips, silk flowing radiant,

Glowing skin, reflecting Coco in design

Did they realise what they wore was monumental?

Prose: Two People in a Day

'Two love birds made of pearl in a tiny jewelled cage; two porcelain horses, one either side of the smoky mirror: two golden fire-dogs in the empty hearth. Once you start looking, the doublings are everywhere: a second Grecian mask, staring at its twin from

across the room; two Egyptian Sphinx, two ceramic bowls on top of a bookshelf, one containing a broken shard of crystal; two clocks.') ²⁴

'Preserved in amber- 'run your fingers over the marks of her pen still visible on the ink stained leather desktop.' ²⁵

Sitting alone or standing with people, I find that I am so many different people. I dropped my freshly bought liquid ink pen yesterday at half six, I only noticed the exact timing as I clocked the hands hitting south as my gaze flew to find where my pen landed. I used my scholarship money to buy most of my things. A swipe of the black lined card and- transaction complete. I could write freely again. '

Dry pens with the rigid edges did nothing for me. Truth be told I felt like a kid when I used them, they got the job done, but I knew what I liked. They retained a certain point, not just in physical form of the nib tip, but the way the nib glided alongside my thinking whenever I felt so calm that I needed to write, or with such a hyped racing bloodstream that I played club music or classical depending on my state of mind and stretched in front of my mirror.

It was a simple, beautiful mirror. Nothing to it except for two elements; a silver stretch of glass to reflect, lined by light pale wood. There was a twirled smear stained near the middle of the glass where I had been in a rush to run to lectures and scrubbed it with a makeup wipe on my way out of the door. For some reason I hadn't rubbed the stain off yet. I would look at it and think- I should scrub it a bit, but I always had a better way of spending twenty seconds, you know? It was a conversation, like pouring apple juice into a glass to be healthy, buying vegan pesto to mix pasta with because I genuinely loved to cook and eat clean.

People always told me I was too thin. They never usually sat on the gym floor, or my room floor to watch me and take notes of the effort and care I put into taking care of myself. But they didn't have to, no-one owed me anything. I knew- that was enough. Body types. What an absolute ache to bring into conversation. Majorly important, essential to keep people from crying, arguing and in some heart-breaking cases, dying. I hated it.

I would take photographs of my neck tilt, my hips leading up to my waist, anything aspect about my body that I relaxed into observing, learning about, the way I moved and worked. I danced incredibly when I was in the right state of mind. I could do anything. Confidence and my own human foundation had apparently found itself and begun to accentuate over the period of six months and it both exhilarated and terrified me.

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²⁴ Legend & Life p.11

²⁵ p.11

Money was a constant concern, I wanted to be drunk and stimulated all of the time. I was also guilt ridden if I was not productive and successful in everything that I set out to do. I genuinely thought I was losing my mind, I still do. But, as it turns out, through brief research, and asking various people 'what the fuck is happening to me and why can't I think like a rational human being. Emotions, what are they and why are they so disastrous?' I realised that I was in fact- just twenty.

-

I met my family in town yesterday. I was nursing a numbing red wine slash vodka hangover. Other substances had past my lips and nostrils, but I couldn't afford to recall that whilst walking through St Peter's Square to meet them.

The sun was gleaming, dressing loose was liberating. The next thing I knew the three of us were perched on sinking armchairs in Café Nero. Mother sat adjacent, kindly interrogating me on my future: ever the practical Mother. I ordered a latte. No cream or I would be sick. The cashier thought I was dieting. She clocked my sunglasses hanging off my shirt and dark eyes. The first time I had sat inside this café, I was sitting across from a girl I realised I was in love with, at the strange age of seventeen. Two tall glasses of steaming coffee and coconut juice on the table between us.

Three years past and now I was here with my Mother, dating someone else. I was using omission to avoid my Mother knowing about it, she wouldn't approve. She was still asking me very intensely what I wanted to do when I graduated in July. I'm certain my thin shirt, skinny jeans, and docs threw an image of me being a put-together person. It was an appearance of ease that I slid very easily into. The appearance of ease when you feel nothing of it but drive towards it. As the door opened across the shop, a faint wind and I picked up a scent. What was that? Something simple but sweet, it worked in distracting me anyway.

'You can't stay in the city, you'd need a job.'

'I know. I'm trying, trust me.'

My sister had looked at me amused, then looked away pensive. She acted older than her sixteen years. It a grace and a panic to witness.

Walking home was difficult. My legs had grown slightly numb due to detox shakes and a day of rigid questioning. Secondly, people always seemed to stare. Glancing past them was a motion I was very good at now. My jeans felt like a second sheen of skin, the awareness of baring my legs was home-born. The city lit by golden hour sun dispelled old memories though. The details of a scene, of a day, especially as night drew in, that's what evoked a drive inside me. I matched the feeling to a caffeine buzz.

Feeling tall in high boots. That was the thing- I knew exactly what I wore, and I knew exactly how I felt encased in leather, and what reaction it elicited out of people noticing. Some didn't care, some looked twice, others asked. I did the same. It wasn't artificial, it was a style I honed in my own time.

At 5pm I left Piccadilly gardens to walk along Market Street. The windows would be gleaming gently. The glass advertised nothing. You could see straight through the surface.

That was the beauty of it.

Prose: Notes and Silk

'Flanked by a pair of fortune teller's glass globes: one is in white quartz, cool to the touch; the other of gold-flecked resin, unexpectedly warm beneath the hands. Gaze into the glass and nothing is clear.' ²⁶

The Perfume Shop

Glass bottles lined the shelves. Clean cut wooden shelves. Stella thought nothing of the rain hitting the window pane it calmed her down. She got nervous during the early hours of the morning. She passed it off to the rush of customers asking her questions in a stream from nine until- just after six. The sixty minutes until seven was time alone to stretch her arms and un-tense herself.

Faces rather than names were how she recognised people. Red nails tapping on top of the counter meant the woman who spoke with a southern lilt and wore light coloured suits on week-days. Men in general looked her up and down before asking her if she sold aftershave above a certain price. Some didn't which she liked, but also didn't give a fuck about. Her second job was something she liked to think brought out her doubling. It was funny watching customers expressions recognise her as a bartender from Deansgate Locks. It didn't happen all the time, but she clocked it when it did.

Home

Ballet had lengthened Stella's body as a child. At 12 her parents had noticed it and told her to stop practising. She took the lessons anyway and told them she stayed behind longer after school. It worked. Strange to think her arms grew longer but her eyes stayed mostly the same. Pale distinct blue. Working nights meant light glinting against black backdrops on the way home. Princess street flats. The main reason she put down a deposit in two years ago was when she found out her grandmother who had passed away had left her two thousand in a savings account meant for an emergency. So, she secured herself a space and payed for it upfront. A blessing really. Though she knew the main reason she secured in the flat financially was the way she lived, taught to save from a young age. Finding a job at home just never happened. She had tried, honest to God.

²⁶ p. 11

Deansgate Locks/ El Diablo's

The bar could have been washed in shots. Stella washed a glass behind the bar, observing a girl dancing lonesome, watched by her friend. The headache after pouring shot after shot was manageable. The music was a steady beat, signalling drunken or at least very tipsy clubbers to eye the first pair of eyes to catch sight of them. They wore dark clothes mainly. The occasional splash of a red dress.

Market Street

Chain-market styles most likely bought at the Arndale for a satisfying offer. At least that's what Stella did. For her, the price didn't make a difference to her, it was the style that struck her. Slipping a thin vest on made her feel loose in all the liberating senses. Signature slip-on or an old faithful. You could easily throw on an over-sized jacket, worn leather jeans, some sort of slicked boots with a glint to them and no-one actually knew who you were or where you came from. There was a definite allure in the unknown. The places she practically lived and inhaled made her think past the basic image.

Critical Reflection

Critical Essay

Before setting out, I also needed to understand the concepts and philosophies of a designer to try and grasp how Chanel brought her style into society, created it, marketed her work, and as a result- left an enduring design in the hands and minds of people when she died.

I explored the concepts and execution of Chanel in business, social, psychological, feministic, and stylistic influences during her time as a designer and the modern style industry. This stemmed into relations between women and image, woman and body, and economical advantages of ethical fashion production. The philosophy behind early-stage design in artistic form cemented the foundation research of the essay and creative response.

Chanel's childhood and later life according to Picardie in particular provided in-depth insight. I explored the style of Chanel's brand- and persona Chanel used to drive her business. The resulting effects of her work, vision and beliefs had historical impact on women's lifestyles during and post War. Contemporary culture I found relevant as Chanel's style filtered into social, industrial and stylistic ideologies. Vogue published Chanel worldwide. Unseen Vogue displays unseen photographs that didn't make magazine cuts, due to lack of space, however Chanel's style can be seen to have travelled down to twenty-first century fashion-worn by women and men, benefiting both forms.

I considered the emotional toll maintaining her personality for universal gain must have taken. Her versatility to adapt persona and business manoeuvres to meet the industries ever in-motion cycles was iconic, remaining a feminist icon and original designer. Dedication was solidified in every geared decision she made throughout her life and career. I wrote a semi-critical dissertation in order to foreground a hugely historical figures' significance which is hopefully displayed in my creative response.

I had no doubt after my research that her stylistic vision contributed to feminism during the modern and post-modern era. Making use of critical and creative writing styles to present my findings felt like a personal academic and artistic attribution to an impressive and enriching legacy that impacted countless lives, mine included.

The critical section delves into social relations with the Duke of Westminster, Claude Delay, Boy Capel and Etienne Balsan. Her collaboration with – and the creation of Chanel No.5. I think her experience as a member of French and English society, after spending her youth as an orphan in the Aubazine convent all amounted and semi-influenced to her career, drive and social influence.

I linked Stoppard's *Arcadia* theory: linking style in writing, artistic expression and design theory together. A core hallmark of stylistic choice and harmony is shared, and within the discord of an unpredictable environment, such as society at the time of the First War- and Post War period. I wanted to display the effects of female empowerment, improved physically via a change of lifestyle that Chanel idealised, and brought into being. Chanel's 'less is more' concept could be applied to poetry: interpreted and reflected as truth written in concise style with durable beauty, applied in language. In essence: the discourse of design in form had an iconic influence through Gabrielle Chanel.

Poetry Collection

Following Picardie's autobiography chapters synced with Coco's life, I used a numbered title sequence for each poem, linking No.5, as a stylistically running device, using visuals to translate into concise yet expressive lines of poetry, using continuous themes of style, design, female empowerment importance- in particular relating to Chanel and her Models.

No.5's chemical-formula, compounded by Ernest Beaux and Couturier Chanel, an investment and marketing technique genius earned instant recognition. Poetry to me implies a burst or note of expression- hence Chanel's perfume being the stimulus. I linked the natural pleasure of cuisine (undeniably French-born), colour palettes and also selling image.

In *Synapse* I depict an image of a red cocktail, infusing colour, intoxication and thirst as instinctual, natural selling points. The base notes, and base need *to consume with a reason*. Re-iterating the idea that selling product to an audience is not artificial if applied using natural conceptualisation and ethical production.

Researching design lent my creative response specific depth. I pushed myself to write viscerally about layers of construction; design process' behind designer's careers, the end result. It felt grounding that simple design is present in ideology cycles.

Writing this project was an extended experience not entirely expected; enriching my creative and critical perspective, alongside an understanding of how Chanel set an enduring standard for a re-coded feminist mindset, and future encompassing legacy.

Notes and Silk

The creative section of my project is based on Chanel's pairing of business and private life personas. Her business-gearred mind-set and how career influenced her life in social and personal aspects. Justine Picardie's autobiography chapters recording Chanel's life,

especially No.5 and her childhood at Aubazine inspired my poetry and prose collection. Placing Stella first in a perfume shop, el diablos, then market street depicts her repeated routine of adapting personality. Attending to customers professionally in scent choice, then serving drinks to anyone walking through the club doors. Market Street signifies Stella's rooted interest in style design and the general effect garment choice, and the poise of the person modelling it has on an onlooker- I wanted to display a natural style advertisement through a fictional form.

Picardie's introduction became stimulus- depicting Stella's social and private mental encounters and observations within short scene segments. Via my protagonists I track through life sequences of young women navigating the ways of the world, in career and their personal lives. In Notes and Silk, Stella uses selling perfume and her bartender jobs as method of observing people to learn further about image, social relations and motivations. I thought the concept of using work to gain social experience related to Chanel's early stages of becoming a dancer to make a living, proceeding to work her way into social standing to build reputation, a social platform and potential clients for future business.

I wanted to write a piece based on a character whose snippets of daily life are depicted to have a double image, for example: my character Stella works in a perfume shop by day and by night she works as a bartender in a Manchester Deansgate Locks. I set the scene at Don Amigos, as I have been to the club often and I knew the visual stylistics of the club and observed the way people danced and reacted to each other. I liked the difference between Stella's work performance, shifting from her recommending perfume choices to people who wanted a product to complement their tastes and sometimes personality, or who they maybe wanted to be. Inside Don Amigos- the work requirement is much more frantic, alcohol is passed second after second and in a state of intoxication, a shot can easily be made a double shot to increase profit. I found this to be natural in business, and also interesting how the bartender can easily persuade a customer to spend more. I related this to Chanel's social relations that she built when meeting clientele and persuading them to make a habit of purchasing her couture designs. She had to appear genuine, and then pair that with a business orientated mind-set that kept the House of Chanel blossoming in reputation and a steady influx of finances.

Two People in a Day

Meg displays a natural, chaotic and amusing confusion in reaction to family and financial pressure. Her goal is simply to be, live well and earn. I wrote both protagonists personas to project a drive for success and a layered appreciation of beauty and design, amidst the routines of their different lives, which I thought linked to Chanel's experience as a woman breaking her way into the style industry, making social connections and pursuing a stylistic career and feminist ideal alongside.

Justine Picardie's journalistic style and Virginia Woolf's stream of consciousness form influenced my short-story form decision. I took visual inspiration from Chanel's Ritz apartment to reach imaginatively into her personal versus social persona. *Pages 8-9 of Legend and the Life* gave me visual material to work with. It helped me create a fitting setting for my character Stella to work and think in. I think that the way Chanel lived contributed hugely to her business, therefore experience is a key element to her story.

Creatively, I set Stella and Meg as aspiring young women to experience social situations and learn from them as a reflection of this.

Picardie's autobiography enriched my contextual knowledge of who Chanel was figuratively, and where she stood socially. Library design textbooks educated me in the foundation concepts that any designer uses to build work or career. The logic, aesthetics and philosophy used by aspiring and professional designers made sense to me. Understanding what choice or process an artist passes through to produce expression or product was important.