

Stockholm University; Department of Journalism, Media & Communication
Thesis for the Degree of Master in Media and Communication Studies

**The Glamorous Life of Chanel No. 5
- a contribution to the theory of glamour**



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ABSTRACT

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Glamour is an ideal that permeates our highly visual culture, yet the concept still remains indefinite. Despite its highly ideological function, it has been included in the academic discussion only in the recent years. The aim of this study is to broaden the understanding of glamour as a modern phenomenon and elaborate it as an analytical concept. This is achieved by examining the advertising imagery of Chanel No. 5, the legendary French perfume from the influential haute-couturier and socialite Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel. The theoretical frame consists of the history of glamour as well as the semiology of advertising. Semiology is also used as a method for analysing the adverts. The journey with Chanel No. 5 starts from the year of its creation, 1921, and one advert from every decade is chosen to a closer interrogation. Based on eight semiological analyses of Chanel No. 5's adverts, I argue that glamour is a myth that becomes activated through a system of signs. The glamour of Chanel No. 5 depends on the use of celebrity personas, on skillfull and exclusive media treatment, and on the circulation of signs which connote luxury and feminine sexuality, yet always with a fresh, contemporary touch. In the end, glamour is a highly manufactured, unattainable ideal which entices and invites for consumption.

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1 INTRODUCTION

What do Coco Chanel, Marilyn Monroe, Jean Shrimpton, Catherine Deneuve, Carole Bouquet and Audrey Tautou have in common? They have beauty that is iconic. They have changed ideas on feminine and sexy. And they all represent the face of Chanel No. 5 – the world's bestselling scent which still today, 90 years after its creation, is bought approximately every 30 seconds, all around the globe. Besides having been worn by the glamorous socialites, it must have been a defining scent of many moments in the lives of millions - continuously since 1921.

In this dissertation I will examine the concept of glamour by following the life of the world-renowned scent - Chanel No. 5 - through almost a whole century; through *les années folles*, the Great Depression, the Second World War, the booming post-war years, to the last half a century which has witnessed an ever increasing passion for consumption. Glamour has kept up with the modern history, not consistently the same, yet somehow *it* has been there - accompanying film stars, debytants, cars, design, and perfumes. "The word glamour is ubiquitous in the mass media," writes Joseph Rosa, "where it always seems to allude to a potent combination of sex appeal, luxury, celebrity, and wealth - yet it is never entirely clear just what glamour is" (Rosa et al 2004: 38). The term is, indeed, widely used in connection with fashion, show business and entertainment, beauty and beauty marketing. According to Stephen Gundle, who has written comprehensively on glamour's history, glamour is "an image that attracts attention and arouses envy by mobilizing desirable qualities including beauty, wealth, movement, leisure, fame, and sex" (2008: 390). In effect, the idea of glamour as seductive and artificial has been implicit in the meaning of the word from the outset, as social historian Carol Dyhouse reminds (2010: 156).

Glamour, like any concept and phenomenon, is easier to understand when we see it in the light of history. Therefore, this study takes on a historical perspective: I will approach the concept of glamour by examining the adverts of Chanel No. 5, the first one dating back to 1921, the year of the scent's creation. The fascination with advertisements as source material is motivated primarily not what they reveal about advertising, but what they reveal about the society and the culture (see McFall 2004).

The theoretical framework for the study will be composed of the history of glamour and semiology of advertising. The history of glamour will be drawn mainly on the pioneering work of Stephen Gundle, Clino T. Castelli, Carol Dyhouse, and Joseph Rosa. Along with Roland Barthes, Judith Williamson, Robert Goldman and Stephen Papsen will provide the theoretical framework for the semiology of advertising, and semiology will also serve the tools for analyzing the adverts.

1. RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The aim of the study is to broaden the understanding of glamour as a quintessentially modern phenomenon and elaborate it as an analytical concept with the following research questions:

- *What kind of a sign system is created around Chanel No. 5; how do the adverts construct the myth of glamour?
- *What are the continuous respective irregular elements of glamour in the adverts?
- *How do the adverts reflect the changing female ideals?
- *How is glamour connected to the expanded fascination with media celebrities?

I hope the dissertation will encourage the reader to think of glamour from a critical and scholarly perspective, and thereby inspire for further research.

1.2 DISPOSITION

The dissertation is structured in the following way: After the introduction I will provide background knowledge of Chanel No. 5 in order to familiarize the reader with the perfume's extraordinary history. Subsequently, I will present the theoretical frame which consists of the history of glamour and semiology of advertising. The following chapter, then, is about semiology as a method, and I will have a few words of the selection of the materials. The core of the work is the analysis part, which consists of eight separate analyses of adverts, and each advert will be placed beside the analysis for the reader to see. To conclude, the findings of the analyses will be assembled, and their contribution to the still vague theory of glamour will be discussed.

2 BACKGROUND

The story of Chanel No. 5

For the better part of a century, the scent of Chanel No. 5 has been a sultry whisper that says we are in the presence of something rich and sensuous. It's the quiet rustle of elegant self-indulgence, the scent of a world that is splendidly and beautifully opulent. And, at nearly four hundred dollars an ounce, it's no wonder that Chanel No. 5 suggests nothing in our minds so much as the idea of luxury.

It is with these words, Tilar J. Mazzeo, a cultural historian, biographer and student of wine, luxury, and French culture, describes Chanel No. 5, the signature scent of Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel. Her recently published book, "The Secret of Chanel No. 5" (2010) deserves applause; despite attempts to complement on Mazzeo's research, it is hard to find anything more comprehensive written on Chanel No. 5 - she indeed did discover and bring to light the "secret" of this famous yet mysterious perfume.

Chanel No. 5 has a history – a life! – of its own, and this chapter is devoted to telling the story of it, in line with Mazzeo who carried out her research on numerous archives. Mazzeo has also contributed to this study by providing the primary source material, and I hope that the analyses that follow in chapter four will give further insights on Chanel No. 5's brand image construction.

The story of Chanel No. 5 starts quite sadly. Not many could imagine that Chanel, one of the richest and most influential women of the twentieth century, came from very humble and undesirable origins. She was an orphan girl, who made her way in the world through many obstacles. We know her as Coco, but probably few of us know that she earned that nickname when she was a showgirl actress, her signature number being a famous Offenbach tune "Qui qu'a vu Coco" and "Ko Ko Ri Ko". Being on public display for the entertainment of men, she belonged to the social outcast of *demi-monde*, which made her an unrespectable woman – something she wanted to fight against to. As a couturier, she was to be a major force in liberating women from old fashions.

Her signature scent, Chanel No. 5, is a revolutionary perfume, in many respects. Coco Chanel burst onto the scene of perfume with a brilliant timing, being among the first couturiers to launch her own perfume. Had she inkling of it or not, the 1920s and 1930s are still known as the golden age of modern perfumery. The perfume, which carried Chanel's lucky number, was an artistic creation of Ernest Beaux, the "Nose", who worked with aldehydes, powerful but unstable synthetic substances, which were brand new in the world of perfumery. Perhaps more significantly, the perfume would capture the essence of the Roaring Twenties and reject all the conventional stereotypes about the women of *demi-monde* and the respectable women, and the fragrances they could wear – "It would be a scent that could define what it meant to be modern and elegant and sexy." (p. 22) With the artificial composition of Chanel No. 5, she shifted the paradigm of fragrance – women should no longer resemble the smell of rose.

Coco introduced the perfume only “to some of her glamorous friends who set the trends in the world of high society”. It was an exclusive restaurant in Cannes where she first showcased it. Then, having introduced it to the glamorous socialites, the flasks of Chanel No. 5 would appear on the shelves of her boutiques, where it would soon take on a cult following. What is staggering, this would happen without any advertising. The flappers, as the trendsetting beautiful young things knew how to call themselves, knew that it was a must-have.

In 1924, despite the great success, Coco Chanel stood aside from the perfume business with the creation of Les Parfums Chanel, run by the Wertheimer brothers. The duo behind the perfume success story Boujouis “set out to make Chanel No. 5 a perfume with a global distribution and, by doing so, to gain worldwide fame for the product. [...] The transformation of Chanel No. 5 into the world's most famous perfume would happen with the opening of the vast American market.” (p. 99) There was a new kind of luxury market that included the middle-class consumer. “The goal at Les Parfums Chanel, where Ernest Beaux had now been hired as the head of fragrance, was to bring Chanel No. 5 to the cultural mainstream, where it could reach the women who read fashion magazines like *Vogue* and patterned their hemlines after news from Paris.” (p. 100) In 1929, it was officially the world's best-selling perfume.

The Great Depression in the 1930s, however, meant black clouds above the perfume industry as well. But Chanel No. 5 was still coveted. That decade set the connection between the perfume and Hollywood's world akin to a dream. But it would be only on the good half of the next decade when the success would reach an abstract size. During the Second World War, Chanel No. 5 would grow into a cultural icon and a true symbol of luxury.

Chanel's famous shop at Rue Cambon would remain open during the Second World War, and all that would be sold on the first floor was sparkling perfume bottles with the double Cs. Chanel No. 5 was a reminder of “a world of glamour and beauty that

somehow had survived. It became the ultimate symbol of France, part of what everyone was fighting for" (p. 149). The perfume became a precious souvenir: "[...] even the American President, Harry S. Truman, went looking for it. In a letter to his wife, Bess, written from Potsdam, Germany, in 1945, he wrote that he had purchased for her many pretty souvenirs - but he was sorry, he couldn't find her anywhere a bottle of Chanel No. 5." (p. 157)

Like only a handful of other brand names in history, Chanel No. 5 now represented more than just a product, and it came to be a curious example of a larger phenomenon - "pleasures of shared middle-class luxuries". In 1953, Chanel No. 5 would be the first fragrance to embrace the new medium of television. "It was a return to Chanel No. 5's long associations with cinematography and the glamour of Hollywood, which had started back as early as Coco Chanel's trip in 1931 to the MGM studios." (p. 190) In 1955, Marilyn Monroe, who earlier had told that she only wore Chanel No. 5 to bed, was photographed in the Ambassador Hotel in New York City with the famous bottle, and the scent's fame was only increasing.

In the early 1960s, however, the image of Chanel No. 5 got a crack. It was becoming too common as it was sold in discount drugstores and chain outlets. It was selling, but it had lost some of its allure while becoming too available and inexpensive: "It was a thin line between a coveted icon and a tired cliché. A product like Chanel No. 5 had always a problem. The balance between being an elite cultural icon and an object of mass-market appeal is delicate business. Luxury demands exclusivity." (p. 193) It was an alarm for the marketing department.

In the 1970s, Alain Wertheimer, who was the new head of Les Parfums Chanel, took on major changes. The bottles were taken out of the drugstores, and a new artistic director, young Jacques Helleu, gave new life to Chanel No. 5. Helleu's insight was to return to the glamour of the movies: "Marilyn Monroe, as the perfume critic Tania Sanchez puts it, wore Chanel No. 5 because it was sexy. She was always the kind of woman to whom the scent appealed. It was the same reason Chanel No. 5 was

adored by those risqué flappers in the 1920s. To transform the story of Chanel No. 5 again, Helleu hired Catherine Deneuve as fragrance's spokes-model." (p. 198) Subsequently, the advertising came to feature even surrealistic ad-length films that played with sensual fantasy and mystery. Behind those spectacular film fantasies there are big names, such as Ridley Scott, Luc Besson and Baz Luhrmann - and a vast sum of money. Times had changed. Now, the glamour of the brand was almost solely dependent on the advertising.

3 THEORETICAL FRAME

3.1 GLAMOUR

Glamour is an intriguing concept; alluring yet elusive. It is a floating signifier: what we refer to when we talk about glamour is not stable but changing, depending on our frame of reference. Ideas of what constitute glamour have changed through time, and yet there are marked continuities. It is impossible, then, to reduce it to a simple formula. In recent years there has been a growing interest in the concept among scholars from a variety of fields - glamour does not pop up only on glossy magazine covers. Before conducting the study of Chanel No. 5, I will take the reader through the twentieth century and provide an overlook of the trajectory of glamour and the different elements of it, as argued by Stephen Gundle - film and television scholar; Carol Dyhouse - social historian; Joseph Rosa - design historian; and Valerie Steele - fashion historian. The chapter is built up on different themes that I consider to be the building blocks of the theory of glamour.

3.1.1 The origins of glamour

Gundle suggests that glamour as it is understood today emerged at a quite specific point in history. According to him, Paris of the Belle Époque in the beginning of the

twentieth century "was the heart of a new type of civilization based on money and consumerism." (1999: 271) Aristocracy had been in decline in the late nineteenth century and the industrial and financial revolutions had brought to the fore a new elite that was eager and able to buy access to social prestige. In this new kind of a society surfaces and appearances were central as a mass culture of entertainment and consumerism was already in formation. The upper class became a visible elite but the allure of luxury and wealth could only be perpetuated to the extent that it was perceived to be theatrically accessible to all. The desire to be seen, noticed and talked about was greater than ever before.

Gundle (2000: 12) argues that glamour is bound up with the expansion of publicity and the press. The alluring image became increasingly important as the mass media developed and provided opportunities for staging, representing and inventing people, events and commodities. The invention of international picture agencies which presented images of the personalities of the visible elite for the consumption of readers, and the marketing of the imagery of an elite lifestyle to the aspirant wealthy or the newly wealthy through luxury magazines like *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, cultivated a curiosity about the lives of rich and famous (Gundle 1999: 274). Such publications diffused a certain idea of what was chic as their photographers and graphic artists furnished an ideal image of high life. Until then, the life of the courts had seemed inaccessible, but now, to lead a grand hotel lifestyle, one needed only "to earn enough money to be able to afford a beautiful car and elegantly dressed woman." (Gundle 1999: 275)

In order to grasp the meaning of glamour, it is important to enhance that it is a modern phenomenon; it could not exist before a high degree of urbanization, development in communications and a distinctive bourgeois mentality. Essentially, it involves "the masses, it is comprehensible and accessible to them and requires their active participation through the dreams and practices of the market place." (Gundle and Castelli 2006: 23) If Paris of the Belle Époque was a pioneer in glamorous

practices, it was the American film studios after the First World War who truly brought glamour to the masses.

Writing about Hollywood stars in 1939, Margaret Troph defined glamour, which was the buzz-word of the 1930s, as "sex appeal plus luxury plus elegance plus romance" (cited in Rosa et al 2004: 42). It is important to understand that glamour is not a style but rather "an effect, a quality that depends on the play of imagination" (Rosa et al 2004: 24), or as Gundle puts it, "an explosion of visual effects and publicity-seeking fireworks" (2008: 390). The term is not confined to any specific realm of commercial life but can be applied to a variety of phenomena from fashion and industrial design to architecture, as Rosa et al (2004) well illustrate. What is essential in glamour, is the make-believe: "It is an escape, an illusion, an ideal, a dream." (Rosa et al 2004: 26) As we shall see, this magical combination described by Troph is not a natural attribute but a cunning strategy, and often a persuasive construction of image-makers.

3.1.2 Glamour - dreams and desires of the consumer?

Glamour is a routine feature of contemporary commercial and entertainment culture. "As in fashion," David Bell (1976: 68) argues, "advertising has emphasized glamour. A car becomes the sign of 'good life' well lived, and the appeal of glamour becomes pervasive. A consumption economy, one might say, finds its reality in appearances. What one displays, what one shows, is a sign of achievement." Gundle (2000, 2006, 2008) argues persuasively that glamour is integral to capitalist modernity and consumer culture as consumer products fuelled with glamour promise instant transformation and entry to a realm of desire. Glamour's escapism is inseparable from its charm, and from its origins glamour has been associated with dreaming; yearning for a better, richer, and materially lavish life. As Dyhouse (2010: 29) argues, it was the powerful need for escapism during the Great Depression together with the explicit suggestion that glamour was the key to a woman's economic potential that set the scene for the golden age of glamour.

Glamour is not a product of individual taste or personality but rather a visual effect - created by fashion designers, hair-dressers, press agents and photographers (Gundle 2008: 4). Glamour, as identified by Gundle (2000: 45), is "an enticing image, a staged and constructed image of reality that invites consumption. That is to say, it is primarily visual, it consists of a retouched or perfected version of a real person or situation and it is predicated upon the gaze of a desiring audience." According to him, beauty, sexuality, theatricality, wealth, dynamism, notoriety, movement and leisure are all qualities which are closely associated with glamour, and which the manufacturers of glamour seek to captivate in order to engender the right effect (2008: 6).

Creating a mysterious appeal is, in the end, calculative image-making. "Commodities needed an aura," has been claimed, "because large-scale manufacturing had stripped goods of their intrinsic value that derived from them having been made of human skill and effort." (Gundle and Castelli 2006: 34) Thus, pompous efforts are being done to endow commodities with an aura that exceeds their use-value and incites temporary feelings of pleasure and luxury (ibid. 10). Catching the moment is vital, certainly, as novelties fuel the imagination of the consumers. What was glamorous in the 1920s, cannot therefore be directly translated "glamorous" in the 2010s, yet contemporary glamour often mixes ideas and themes drawn from the past: "It can be said, that glamour is heavily influenced by its own history and that back-ward looking elements are strong. If glamour sometimes acquires a dull and repetitive feel, it is because the weight of the past is heavy." (ibid. 188)

3.1.3 Glamour and "to-be-looked-at-ness"

Glamour seems to be strikingly feminine and to some extent always sexual. As both Gundle and Rosa et al write, it was in effect the courtesan of the nineteenth century that first used spectacular excess as a strategy, "since a glamorous appearance

attracted attention – and wealthy men” (Steele in Rosa et al 2004: 40). Glamour, then, has much to do with the commercialization of sex, and engendering sex appeal is quintessential to glamour. The “strategy of appearances” (term by Baudrillard, used in Rosa et al 2004: 41) was later applied especially to the Hollywood stars, and in the 1960s, following the popularity of pin-up girls, glamour began being associated also with erotic photography (Gundle 2008: 261). It is claimed that there is “a connotative linkage of the erotic femininity and with the commodity and its assimilation to the structure of commodity fetishism.” (Solomon-Godeau in Gundle and Castelli 2006: 9)

John Berger's famous assertion in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), “men act and women appear” and “men look at women; women watch themselves being looked at” were a starting point for subsequent work on the 'male gaze' (Dyhouse 2010: 156). The male gaze theorized by Laura Mulvey as “to-be-looked-at-ness”; “the constitution of the feminine self as desirable and desiring” (Gundle and Castelli 2006: 10), is seen as a prominent feature of glamorous representations. Contemporary fashion designers sometimes praise vulgarity and make sex very much of an overt matter: “Versace's fashions are more likely to be perceived as glamorous because of stylistic excesses such as intense color and lavish surface decoration, and especially their hypersexuality, which is expressed through revealing cuts and overt references to sexual fetishism [the notorious 1991-92 Bondage Collection, with its emphasis on straps and buckles]” (Steele in Rosa et al 2004: 38). As Dyhouse (2010: 162) observes, glamour has got louder as it has become more widely available and more democratized.

3.1.4 The trajectory and repertoires of glamour

The construction of glamour is highly dependent on the right context. Some places are, simply, more glamorous than others. Paris and New York have traditionally enjoyed the role of defining new trends, ever since luxury ocean liners connected both sides of the Atlantic (see Albrecht 2008). The medium matters too, certainly. Not

surprisingly, photography has been a vital medium in the construction of glamour due to "its easy reproducibility and capacity for making the false seem true" (Gundle 2008: 158). *Vogue*, which enjoyed and to some extent still enjoys the role of a "style guide, trend-former, and cultural weathervane" (Gundle 2008: 379), was a pioneer in the use of photography and lifted it into a matter of prestige. Soft-focus settings, lighting and retouching created "a distinctive elite look" and brought forth "an aura of elegance". Importantly, it was the social prominent enjoying that mode of representation, yet it was not exclusive to them: "It allowed for the secret weaving of myths and enticements that caught spectators unawares, enchanting them under the guise of a true representation. It was also a medium of mass society, profoundly linked to modernity and to the emphasis on visual wonders and effects that had marked commercial promotion since the early nineteenth century." (Gundle 2008: 158)

Rosa (2004: 16) suggests that glamour, as it is understood today, has its origins linked to Hollywood and early representation of women in film: "Glamour became identified with actresses such as Jean Harlow, Marlene Dietrich, and Joan Crawford, who specialized in playing a certain kind of femme fatale. Wrapped in opulent silk gowns and dripping in diamonds, she toyed with men and ignored the law; her habitat was inevitably a sprawling home or lavish penthouse furnished in the Moderne style." Indeed, the American film-industry in the 1930s and 1940s was widely known as "the Dream Factory" or the "Glamour Factory" (Gundle and Castelli 2006: 62). The movies had a great impact on everyday-life as they seemed to promote the idea that maintaining a good appearance was an important part of the performance of the daily life: "The movies helped people to dream and the apparatus of consumerism assisted them in partially turning those dreams into lived experiences." (Gundle 2008: 194-5) The volume of sales in perfumes and cosmetics for example increased dramatically. A complex language of desire evolved around the enviable ones, and magazines, photographs, and advertising all helped to generate the aura of stardom (ibid. 183).

It is important to highlight that glamour is not a static phenomenon. As Dyhouse (2010: 89) writes, in the wealthy postwar years glamour "was suddenly becoming both much more affordable and accessible. Not surprisingly, this fuelled fears about cheapness and vulgarity." The line between glamour and vulgarity had always been blurry, but the 1950s New Look demonstrates that fashion industry and media did their best to erase the "old" glamour entirely. The New Look, introduced by Christian Dior's debut couture collection in February 1947 (see Gundle 2008: 199-201), contradicted much that had been associated with Hollywood glamour: "Where glamour had allowed women to test the barriers of gender and class, the New Look reinvented traditional femininity with all its class-based, hierarchical associations. It was a style replete with limitations, its celebration of well-bred, ladylike containment making it much easier to stigmatise the vulgar and downmarket." (Dyhouse 2010: 90) Glamour as it had been before the Second World War was, all of a sudden, out of fashion. However, as Gundle (2008: 198) puts it, "it was far from true that glamour was coming to its end," just that "its production would never again be concentrated so powerfully in the hands of relatively few men."

The late 1950s and the 1960s, then, were marked by a new kind of fresh youthful sexuality. Film stars, like Marilyn Monroe, Brigitte Bardot and Audrey Hepburn - the icons of the time - were still emulated, but it was the time of counterculture. Youth became much more visible, and the haute-couture was in decline whereas the street style became prominent (Dyhouse 2010: 114). A new sense of freedom took over the youth: the contraceptive pill was introduced liberating ideas on sexuality and they had "the liberty to choose from a new and ever-widening range of codes about how to dress" (ibid. 124). Classic Hollywood glamour was still out of fashion; it was the youthful radiance that was much more important. It would not be until the 1980s the bold glamour would return to mainstream - but then it would be big like the economic growth. Status, showy ostentation, big jewels and gilt earrings, shoulder pads and bold lipstick, as well as a revival of haute couture and the birth of supermodels, were all signs of the 1980s glamour (ibid. 138). It was shiny, and over-the-top.

Gundle and Castelli (2006: 187) argue that "glamour evolved as a series of distinct visual effects which are still in wide use". They present eight categories which serve as a palette for creating glamour, the "aesthetic of persuasion" (ibid. 85). The visual language of glamour include making use of the exotic, using strong colors, sensationalizing with gold, embracing the non-colors black and white together and separately, glittering images, using thrilling graphics and alluring plastics. What is striking, according to the authors, is the continuity of these effects. This seems to suggest that "glamour became wholly detached from class-related situations and rituals and acquired an autonomous dignity as a dynamic of seduction and enchantment." (ibid. 187) The traditional displays of glamour, however, have seen a new element of postmodern irony. Steele (in Rosa et al 2004: 44) argue that the young people today are accustomed to a more casual style of self-presentation than the Hollywood divas of the past, but "there is an increasing tendency to adulterate images of old-fashioned glamour with a deliberate undercurrent of irony or ambiguity. Madonna, for example, has drawn on Marilyn Monroe's glamorous image while also putting it on quotation marks".

3.2 SEMIOLOGY OF ADVERTISING

The concept of glamour has a close relationship to consumer culture and advertising; it can be seen as an offshoot of a new era based on consuming and visual spectacle. Glamour is always, at least to some extent, purchasable. In the end, it is a constructed ideal that saturates our highly visual culture - and advertisers have their own role in it along with other image makers. Not coincidentally, advertising imagery will be used as the primary source material in this study, and therefore it is necessary to ask: how do adverts make sense to us?

3.2.1 Advertising and meaning-making

In contemporary society advertising is everywhere: it is estimated that an average American is exposed to over 3 000 advertisements every day! (Danesi 2004: 256) That must mean, then, that most of the time we do not consciously think about the messages adverts try to communicate to us (we simply have no time for that) but they do certainly permeate our sight; in magazines and newspapers, on television, on buses and subways, on billboards. Advertisements can, of course, be a visual pleasure, yet it is important to view them with a critical eye. Advertisements are, indubitably, an ideological site; they are discourses that construct the world socially and culturally whilst promoting a normative vision of the world and reflecting the logic of capital (Goldman & Papson 1996: 18). It is hardly surprising, then, that advertising industry has always been a subject to criticism. In his influential book *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, David Bell (1976: 293-294) boldly stated that "all modern advertising is geared to this task of selling illusions, the persuasions of the witches' craft. That is a contradiction of capitalism, one that remains true today." As advertisements are highly ideological, it is important to understand the strategies that advertising uses to add meaning to products and to speak to consumers in a manner that evokes desire and need.

Advertising is perhaps best understood as a system of sign values (Williamson 1978; Goldman & Papson 1996). A sign value is generally equal to the desirability of an image, and contemporary advertisements operate so that they build new signs of identity (Goldman & Papson 1996: 5). Sturken and Cartwright (2001) write about consumer culture and the manufacturing of desire. They argue that advertising is "an unattainable highly constructed world which is held out as an attainable ideal" (2001: 216). They pinpoint the non-natural relationship of the product and its meaning: "It can be said that advertising asks us to not to consume commodities but to consume signs. [. . .] This means that ads set up a particular relationship between signified (the product) and signifier (its meaning) to create signs in order to sell products as well as the cultural meanings and connotations we attach to those products. When we

consume commodities, we thus consume them as commodity signs. We aim to acquire, through purchasing a product, the meaning with which it is encoded." (ibid. 205-206) Similarly, Goldman & Papson (1996: 2) argue: "Stripped of its glamour, advertising is a kind of cultural mechanics for constructing commodity signs. Advertisements are structured to boost the value of commodity brand names by attaching them to images that possess cultural and social value: brand name + meaning of image = a commodity sign."

"French perfume" was long set a phrase, used to refer to the magical, mysterious scents that only the French could produce, fragrances so seductive that they were guaranteed to make any woman more alluring and to add a touch of glamour to any occasion (DeJean 2005: 249). How do we attach such qualities to a scent? Advertising, of course, strives for constructing brand images which appeal to the potential consumers of the product. In her classical semiological study *Decoding Advertisements* (1978), Judith Williamson analyses Chanel No. 5's advert which features French actress Catherine Deneuve's face. Williamson argues strongly that there is no link between Catherine Deneuve in herself and Chanel No 5. Instead, Chanel No. 5 tries to mean to us what Catherine Deneuve's face means to us: "The ad is using another already existing mythological language or sign system, and appropriating a relationship that exists in that system between signifier (Catherine Deneuve) and signified (glamour, beauty) to speak of its product in terms of the same relationship; so that the perfume can be substituted for Catherine Deneuve's face and can also be made to signify glamour and beauty." In Williamson's view, then, the key function of advertising is to differentiate between products in the same category of use-value. Perfumes, then, are advertised mainly through the creation of images.

Signs can of course be used in many ways to evoke interest in potential buyers, and as advertising has developed, there has been an ever greater need to find new ways to trying to differentiate the product from other products of great similarity. Goldman and Papson (1994: 24) argue that advertising has, in effect, "glamorized

itself into crisis by continuously painting an unreal world, and relentlessly trying to top one set of unattainable promises with yet another". According to critics, advertisements promote an unreal world, separating them from daily life by glamorizing them and manufacturing 'false needs'. The overemphasizing of social appearances - "superficial sign values" - and eclipsing the actual use and exchange value of goods led to criticism, which in turn led to a conversion into competing stylistic differences in the 1980s. Some advertisers did indeed distance "themselves from what spectator-buyers had come to regard as the unattainable perfection of *GQ* and *Glamour* models." (ibid. 26)

4 METHOD

Glamour is thus an up-to-date, seductive image that attracts attention and arouses envy, and in the end is only a highly manufactured attribute that requires mediators. As Gundle (2008), Rosa (2004) and Dyhouse (2010) map the history of glamour, it is apparent that even though glamour mobilizes desirable qualities such as beauty, wealth, movement, leisure, fame and sex, the face of glamour is not fixed but changing. The changes in glamorous representations are connected to other changes in society; people always seek to become better and more alluring versions of themselves but the idea of what that better and more alluring is change, going hand in hand with other changes in society. As the authors have underlined, the concept of glamour is strongly connected to consumer culture, and advertising: glamour is something we can achieve through purchasing the products that are attached with bearers of glamour. Therefore, conducting an analysis of advertising imagery of the century's perhaps most glamorous product may contribute to a better understanding of this modern, highly visual and mediated phenomenon.

4.1 Semiology: tools for decoding the visual

In this study, eight magazine adverts of Chanel No. 5 will be analyzed using semiology which offers tools for visual analysis. It is widely acknowledged that semiology is an important method of visual analysis and a great number of studies on advertising imagery have relied on it as their analytical tool (Williamson 1978, Goldman & Papsen 1996, Cook 1992, Sturken & Cartwright 2001, Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996). Simply put, semiology is a scientific approach to the analysis of meaning and it means the study of *signs* - of which human culture consists. A semiological analysis employs a refined set of concepts which produce detailed accounts of the ways the meanings of an image are produced (Rose 2004: 69-70).

4.1.1 Opening the toolbox

There are various approaches to semiology that all have their own conceptual precision. However, the basic unit of a semiological analysis is a *sign*. The study of Chanel No. 5 adverts, like many contemporary applications of semiology, follow from the work of French theorist Roland Barthes who provides important tools for understanding cultural products, like adverts, as signs that can be decoded. Barthes used, following Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure, a system of signifier (word/image/object) and signified (meaning) as the two elements of a sign (Sturken & Cartwright 2001: 29).

When analyzing images, denotation and connotation are useful terms that describe the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Barthes developed further Saussure's model of a sign and distinguished two orders of signification. Saussure worked on the level of the first order which Barthes calls denotation; the literal, descriptive meaning of the sign. The other order is called connotation, and it describes the cultural, social and historical meanings that are added to a sign's denotative meaning, producing an illusion of a denotation. For Barthes, this illusion

is a myth. (Sturken & Cartwright 2001: 19-20) Susan Hayward (1996: 322) gives a simple but illustrative example of the use of the terms when applied to a visual analysis: "At the denotative level this is a photograph of the movie star Marilyn Monroe. At a connotative level we associate this photograph with Marilyn Monroe's star qualities of glamour, sexuality or beauty - if this is an early photograph. [. . .] At a mythic level we understand this sign as activating the myth of Hollywood: the dream factory that produces glamour in the form of stars it constructs."

Adverts, like images often do, include not only an iconic message but a linguistic one too. The linguistic message has an important function, especially in advertising, for all images are polysemous with "a floating chain of signifieds", and thus possibly confusing. As Barthes (1977: 39) explains: "[...] in every society various techniques are developed intended *to fix* the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs; the linguistic message is one of these techniques. At the level of the literal message, the text replies - in a more or less direct, more or less partial manner - to the question: *what is it?* [...] The caption helps me to choose *the correct level of perception*, permits me to focus not simply my gaze but also my understanding." Further, Barthes argues that this *anchorage* may be ideological, as "the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle dispatching it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance" (ibid. 40).

Adverts may be viewed as cultural stories which are not only products of consciousness but also of unconsciousness. Roland Barthes describes this unconscious dimension of culture as "what-goes-without-saying". In *Mythologies* (1957), where Barthes used semiology to examine popular cultural artifacts of the 1950s and the language of mass culture, his aim was to make explicit what too often remains implicit: "I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of what-goes-without saying, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there." (Barthes 1957: 10) Adverts can

be seen as myths in disguise, and semiology provides tools for unveiling these myths by distinguishing the different layers of signification.

4.1.2 How to use the tools of semiology?

I have now explained some of semiology's central concepts and how they are related to each other. A semiotic analysis will enable to decode the adverts and to trace the system of signs through which the adverts foster and further circulate the myth of glamour. But, as Rose (2004: 73) points out, despite semiology's analytical richness, it does not offer a clear method for its application. Therefore, before jumping any further, let us go through in more detail how I will proceed with the analyses that follow.

First of all, the analyses will include an identification of the central units, the signs, of the advertising image. The face of the advert will be given a central role, as "Chanel [...] chooses its models more carefully as any harvest of May roses or jasmin from Grasse" (Benaïm in Mazzeo 2010: 198; the roses and jasmines for Chanel No. 5 come exclusively from Grasse's perfume capital) and the qualities of the spokes-model are to be transferred to the image of Chanel No. 5. In order to further decode the cultural and social meanings of the images, I will utilize a semiologist's checklists by Nick Lacey (2009) and Gillian Dyer (1982) and approach each image by tracing the following points: representation of bodies (age, gender, race, hair, look); representation of manner (expression, gaze, pose); representation of activity (touch, body movement, positional communication); and props and settings. I will also pay attention to the use of visual effects; color and lighting.

Then, as the different signs of the image are differentiated, their meanings are explored. The qualities that the signs symbolize, thus their connotative meanings, are to be shifted into Chanel No. 5 brand image. The interpretations will lean on cultural-specific knowledge but subjectivity cannot be fully avoided.

4.2 MATERIAL

As the material available for the study was very ample – ascribe to Tilar Mazzeo's research and Chanel No. 5's 90 year old history - it is necessary to inform the reader how I have selected the adverts for the analyses. First of all, I want to be clear that the study by no means aims to cover all phases of Chanel No. 5's advertising, nor do I claim that the adverts are statistically representative of a wider set of images. Instead, I have done a deliberate selection from a great amount of material based on three criteria: The adverts were expected to stand out visually, include enough of signs to analyze, and reflect the zeitgeist. By these criteria I want to ensure detailed case studies that will then together provide an interesting outlook on the ways glamour has been constructed around Chanel No. 5, throughout its history. In total, eight print adverts will be analyzed, each of them considered as a window to the decade. The adverts will be analyzed in a chronological order:

“Flapper” by Georges Goursat 1921

Coco Chanel by Francois Kollar 1937

Susan Parker by Richard Avedon 1957

Jean Shrimpton by Helmut Newton 1969

Catherine Deneuve by Richard Avedon 1978

Carole Bouquet by Michel Comte 1987

Estella Warren by Luc Besson 1998

Audrey Tautou by Jean Pierre Jeunet 2009

Principally, one advert from each decade was chosen, yet with one exception. In the end, the decade of the 1940s was left out due to poor advertising; the Second World War of course cut the volume of advertising remarkably and none of the adverts featured anything else but the product itself.

5 ANALYSIS

5.1 Chanel No. 5 and the flapper image



Sem's tribute to Chanel No. 5, 1921

Let us start the journey with Chanel No. 5 with this image that appeared as early as in 1921. It is the first tribute to Chanel No. 5, by the famous cartoonist Georges Goursat. Interestingly, it is generally known as the first advertisement of the perfume but, strictly speaking, it is not an advertisement because it was not paid promotion. However, to be applauded by Georges Goursat, known as "Sem", certainly put the name of the perfume on people's lips - in effect, the sketch has become one of the most lasting images of Chanel No. 5. (see Mazzeo 2010: 86-7)

Sem had a good sense on the pulse of the society; he put his fingers into something very topical. Chanel No. 5 was created at the early stage of *les années folles*, the Roaring Twenties, which came to witness the emergence of the mass media and social practices such as popular fashion and dance music, but also a new kind of woman. As one historian describes the new modes of the 1920s, "[...] now it was time to reject constraints of any kind and to encourage individual freedom. The new fashions reflected the changing female ideal: the arbiter of fashion was now young and liberated, modelled on La Garçonne, the tomboyish and scandalous heroine of the eponymous novel by Victor Margueritte (1922). The new tendency was to conceal a woman's natural attributes. With her cropped hair, bare legs and arms, skimmed hips and flat chest, slim almost to the point of skinniness, woman was almost an androgynous creature." (Bouvet & Durozoi 2010: 160)

In this sketch from 1921, we see a girl, perhaps Coco herself, dressed in a blue knee-high dress, and an ample flask of Chanel No. 5 on the left corner of the picture. The girl is tall and slender, her hair is short, face is tanned, and heart-shaped lips are painted in red. She is to signify the new, modern woman of the 1920s. In English they would call her a flapper. In Sem's caricature, the flapper is coveting the signature scent of Coco Chanel.

Chanel is, interestingly, credited with creating the new modern woman. It is claimed that the clothing, youthfulness, and slenderness of the flapper were originally her invention (Gundle 2008: 160). Furthermore, it was Chanel's public persona that

helped in creating the glamorous flapper: "Chanel did not just dress women. She emerged as a public personality who was the best testimonial for the products that her company produced." (ibid. 163) She benefited from the interest of the press and the development of international café society. She was friends with many Paris-based artists and she was a favorite with *Vogue* and other fashion magazines. "The flapper", or as in French *la garçonne*, "was the figure who first embodied in the public realm a desire for personal freedom and self-definition." (ibid: 159) Earlier, the term flapper had also been used to refer to young prostitutes, and sexuality indeed was central to the image of the modern girl of the 1920s: "They were slim, angular, energetic, and sexually charged." (ibid: 159) And this is exactly how the girl coveting Chanel No. 5 is depicted. What is more, she is not leaning on her "natural" beauty but on beauty that is rather unusual and artificial.

At the turn of the century, make-up and red lips had still been associated with women of a doubtful reputation. Now, however, it was no longer a sign of the *demi-monde*: "Being fully made up, especially in the evening, was no longer disreputable. [...] As compensation for the simple hairstyles, lips and eyes were accentuated. The famous heart-shaped, cherry-red mouthy came into fashion. Regardless of the natural shape of their mouth, many fashionable women simply created it with lipstick." (Lehnert 2000: 26) As seen in Sem's tribute to Chanel No. 5, make-up, and especially lipstick, was now introduced to the new modern woman's "glamour kit". Open red lips of the flapper also connote a sexually free woman and the bare legs are a sign of her sexual awareness, too: for the first time legs were seen erotic, and the knee-high dress came to fashion (Lehnert 2000: 25). Clearly, the glamorous woman reaching to Chanel No. 5 was quintessentially a modern woman; now sexually free and independent.

In Sem's caricature the flapper looks like she is dying to get the bottle of Chanel No. 5 - getting that bottle would be a ultimate dream-come-true. Her facial expression, as well as her hands fervently reaching out to touch, tell everything about her desire and excitement for the object in the heights of the sky. The girl, who might as well be

Coco Chanel herself, is now given an identity of a potential consumer, and the bottle of Chanel No. 5 is represented as a vastly desirable object, unreachable, yet there to be seen and coveted. It seems vital for her well-being much like the sun; Sem has even drawn in the shadows as if the golden fluid of the scent would be as dazzling as the sunshine. In this way, Chanel No. 5 comes to signify something mythical and larger than life.

In its day, a surprising feature of the perfume was its minimalistic bottle. As Danièle Bott writes: "All the most attractive fragrances of the period were sold in conspicuously feminine and sophisticated bottles but Coco Chanel chose to launch her perfume in an all-purpose bottle to highlight the one thing that mattered, the fragrance itself." (Bott 2007: 157) The very simple bottle with Art Deco lines heralded a new generation of design. After the Great War, it was comfort, hygiene and functionality that came to define the new design (Bouvet & Durozol 2010: 107). Geometric lines signified rationality and modernity as they rejected the elaborate aesthetics of the past (Gundle & Castelli 2006: 163). Soon Art Deco would come to dominate the whole design world. Not coincidentally, the Art Deco flask of Chanel No. 5 celebrated Paris, The City of Light, and linked the city name permanently to Chanel No. 5. Paris ever since the Belle Époque certainly had been the place to be, or like to most people, the place to dream of.

5.2 Mademoiselle at Hotel Ritz Paris



Madame Gabrielle Chanel in her new apartment in the Ritz, Paris

Photo by Kollar, courtesy Harper's Bazaar

Madame Gabrielle Chanel is above all an artist in living. Her dresses, her perfumes, are created with a faultless instinct for drama. Her Perfume No. 5 is like the soft music that underlies the playing of a love scene. It kindles the imagination; indelibly fixes the scene in the memories of the players.

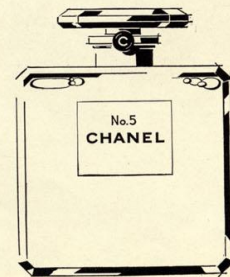
LES PARFUMS

CHANEL

GLAMOUR de CHANEL

GARDENIA de CHANEL

CUIR de RUSSIE (Russia Leather)



Coco Chanel by Francois Kollar 1937

This advert from 1937 features Coco Chanel herself, photographed by the famous fashion photographer Francois Kollar, at her home in Paris: Hotel Ritz. When we look at the image on its denotative level, we see a woman – Chanel – dressed in black, a fire-place, an armchair, and flowers. The woman, whose name the product carries, is at the center of attention. She leans on the fire-place, one arm put on her waist. Her gaze is directed to an object that is framed out of the picture, and her lips are tightly closed. She is wearing a hat with flowers, and her hair is groomed. The dress is detailed and reveals parts of her upper body, and even though it is long, we can see a glimpse of her left foot in a high-heeled shoe. She is wearing jewelry at her neck, ears, and wrist. The wall and the fire-place are decorated, and there is a small male statue portrait on the other side of Chanel.

As we have distinguished different signifiers in the image – which together with the brand name creates the commodity sign, we should ask what they signify and why these signifiers have been chosen for the picture. What are the cultural and social meanings added to the denotative meaning? On the connotative level we can say that we see a feminine place; the woman dominates the picture and the only masculine object is the statue portrait. The fire-place brings forth a warm, cozy ambiance and the flowers connote feminine beauty and sensuality. However, Chanel's gaze is sharp and severe. She does not look warm; her appearance is demanding and the black dress gives her a dramatic look. "Two long black despotic eyebrows, dark eyes, a pale and powdered complexion, an intensely red mouth never without lipstick: Coco Chanel's beauty expressed demanding perfectionism, which she cultivated to her dying day," writes Bott (2007: 124), and it is easy to see how well Kollar managed to capture the eye-catching beauty of Chanel. Interesting to the analysis in respect of glamour, though, is not her beauty and allure as such, but how carefully it is fabricated, immortalized, and advertised. Her display of jewelry, too, certainly played an important part in making her public image: "It would be impossible to talk about Coco Chanel without paying homage to pearls. They were such an integral part of her style and image as her little black dresses. They embodied her timeless elegance, her cultivation of beauty; they were an expression of her femininity. Only

pearls could highlight dark tanned skin, only pearls could bring out sparkling eyes and white teeth. Only pearls could capture the light, illuminate the face, embellish it like an invisible layer of make-up.”(ibid. 109) Even the black evening gown is transfigured into a jewel in itself with the skillful combining of fabrics in typical Chanel style. The black color, then, creates an aura of mystery with its captivating allure and its power to seduce.

In the 1930s, during the years of the Depression, Chanel dressed Hollywood stars such as Gloria Swanson, Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich, giving them a modern and truly Parisian look. Interestingly, the copy of the advert reads: “Madame Gabrielle is above all an artist in living. Her dresses, her perfumes, are created with a faultless instinct for drama. Her perfume No. 5 is like the soft music that underlies the playing of a love scene. It kindles the imagination; indelibly fixes the scenes in the memories of the players.” Madame Gabrielle is a star herself; there's a direct anchorage between the Hollywood dream world and Coco Chanel. The full elimination of spontaneity and the careful grooming of Chanel's appearance are signs of a constructed star personality. As Gundle and Castelli note: “In the black-and-white stills that constitute the most enduring and readily available examples of Hollywood glamour, [...] the balance of light and shade is crucial in dramatizing and conferring an atmosphere of sexual allure on the subjects. The actors may be very well known, but the visual descriptions that emerge on the photographs are of icons not individuals.” (2006: 71)

The media of advertising and cinema in the interwar years openly portrayed the wealthy as a separate, gilded elite. The rich acted as “a mirror of the social fantasies of the public”(ibid: 154). Chanel is clearly situated in a context which is polished and worldly. Hotel Ritz, along with expensive restaurants, theatres, and nightclubs, was founded to cater the wealthy elite (Gundle 2000: 117): “The hotel's standards of hygiene and comfort, the quality of its food and the range of facilities set a benchmark for luxury across Europe until the outbreak of the Second World War.” (Bouvet & Durozol 2010: 386) It is the luxurious manor of a self-confident and

seductive femme fatale. As Rosa (2004: 16) argues, glamour became identified with actresses who played the roles of femme fatale in silk gowns and played with men and whose "habitat was inevitably a sprawling home or lavish penthouse furnished in the Moderne style." The advert offers an image of Coco Chanel which certainly matches the idea of a high-class femme fatale, and it manifests the upper-class life that is more stylish than the reality. This work of fabrication heightens surface, and class becomes a question of style, pose and performance (see Gundle 2000: 168). This kind of publicity at least partly explains why we think of Coco Chanel as an icon, not an individual, and why her signature scent Chanel No. 5 is so strongly associated with Hollywood stars and Parisian high life. What is more, it is all a matter of artistic creation, or perhaps more like magic: when we wear a few drops of her signature scent, a bit of that same glamour will be added upon our lives which will then be transformed into something akin to a dramatic movie. It happened to Chanel who led extraordinarily luxurious life even in times of depression; this image is a testimony of it.

5.3 Suzy Parker - American ideal of the 1950s

6/6
Summer

Chanel N°5 Perfume 5.00 to 300.00
New Spray Perfume or Spray Cologne 5.00

every woman alive loves Chanel N° 5

CHANEL

©1961 CHANEL, INC., 1 W. 57TH STREET, NEW YORK. ALL PRICES PLUS TAX

Suzy Parker by Richard Avedon 1957

As said earlier, the 1940s was left out of the analyses due to poor advertising of the wartime, so now we leap from the 1930s straight to the booming post-war years. This advert is from 1957, and it is photographed by Richard Avedon, whose "passionate, adventurous, and imaginative" photographs for *Harper's Bazaar* "established him as the world's leading fashion photographer" (Gundle 2000: 221). The image is in black-and-white, and the contrast of the colors is effectively used to bring the young lady into the center of attention. In this advert, the woman is definitely not alone. There are two men in the picture; on both of her sides holding her hand. This group of three is at the entrance of a room that we cannot see; we only see the curtains. The woman is wearing a white dress in a fairytale fashion, and the men are dressed in convivial black suits. Both men look at the woman and they smile. Her eyes, however, look out directly at the spectator, and her face is turned into a grand smile; mouth open and lips painted seductively in shiny red. Despite same high degree of fabrication, this image has clearly different connotations in comparison to the image of Coco Chanel in the 1930s. The woman is obviously admired by the men who look at her with smile and excitement, and she is explicitly enjoying it. She looks flirty and daring, and she is having a good time, laughing. There is movement in the picture: they have a skip in their steps and her dress is fluttering, and the movement makes the image exciting. Even if we cannot see the room they are entering, we imagine a party and a crowded dance floor as their clothing follows a certain dress code. Already escorted by two handsome and well-dressed men, she will be getting attention from the party crowd as well. The image's connotations tell us a story of classical beauty, sexual allure, freedom, and fun, and the meanings are to be transferred to Chanel No. 5 which then becomes glamorous in that sense. But that is not all.

Like the 1937 advert, this advert is also black-and-white and plays skillfully with light and shadows. Most striking, visually, is the heavy use of white. Not only the dress is white, but also her complexion, in stark contrast to the darkness of the men. She even has a halo over her head, one takes notice. "The light skin of white actress,"

as Gundle writes about the conventions of early cinema, "was deployed to express purity, cleanliness, godliness, nobility, and the generality of humankind against supposed lower orders of humanity who were distinguished by darker complexions." (2008: 181) White has, indeed, a firm place in the language of luxury: "Because it is so easily soiled physically and symbolically, white has always been popular with those who wish to demonstrate wealth and status through the conspicuous consumption of laundry soap or conspicuous freedom from manual labor. It is traditionally worn by participants in the high-status sports of tennis and polo, especially in professional competition." (Gundle & Castelli 2006: 127) There is competition also in this picture, and it is certainly competition over the fine young lady in virginal and superior white.

For today's spectator this advert seems in many ways outdated, as do the adverts from the 1920s and 1930s, but what is it really that makes the advert so distant? It hardly is the fact that it is a black-and-white still, as often the contemporary stars, too, are photographed old style in black-and-white. (see Gundle & Castelli 2006: 188-9) One explanation is that not many of today's potential consumers would be able to identify the woman. To many, she would be "just another Marilyn Monroe" - a copy of the iconic sex symbol who expanded acceptable boundaries for feminine sexy in the same decade. However, to the spectator of the 1950s, she was one of the most recognizable faces. When we know that the woman in the advert is Suzy Parker, who on the same year made her Hollywood debut in the musical "Funny Face" starring Audrey Hepburn and "Kiss them for me" opposite Cary Grant, we add some more qualities onto the advert. There we have it again, an injection of Hollywood glamour. But what is more, Parker was not just a Hollywood actress - she was also a model and thus signified a new era of being-looked-at-ness and "a postwar world of stylish promise for all". As written on her obituary, her "elegant poses on scores of

magazines defined glamour in the 1950s and paved the way to the supermodels to follow.”¹

In many respects, this advert was a response to the moment. Suzy Parker was an American starlet, and she signified the new cultural and economic outlook. The 1950s are generally known as the golden age of America. The country was fuelled by optimism and prosperity - and by *democratization* of glamour. “For hard-pressed Britons and French people, many of whom were still living in wartime conditions of scarcity, America was nothing short of dreamland. However, unlike in the interwar years, when Hollywood's images of American life were experienced as pure fantasy, after 1945, these were connected to a realizable future. For the first time, the lifestyle of a whole country appeared to resonate with glamour.” (Gundle 2008: 231) The advert invites *every* woman to enter the party and the world of glamour: “Every woman alive loves Chanel No. 5”, and so glamour does not seem to be as exclusive as it was before the war. Nor is it Parisian; interestingly, there is no sign of the cultural capital of France - not even on the flask!

1 <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/06/arts/suzy-parker-willowy-model-and-actress-of-50-s-dies-at-69.html> (2011-23-04).

5.4 The Face of the Swinging London: Jean Shrimpton



Jean Shrimpton by Helmut Newton 1969

The 1960s was the decade of counterculture that embraced youth as the ideal: "The 1960s saw the first post-war generation in Europe reach adulthood. This meant that ideas that had been valid up until and throughout the 1950s changed considerably. Never before had the cult of youth so radically taken over all areas of life. In the Western world, youth now became an absolute model of fashion and the whole ambit of social life. Here was a powerful young class of consumers who did not relate to haute couture but wanted a fashion that would not only match the spirit of youth but would also be affordable. In this way fashion lost its elitist character and turned into a mass youth phenomenon." (Lehnert 2000: 56) This revolution in fashion meant also a shift in glamour. Glamour, as it had been understood before, was now out of fashion. It is clearly seen in this 1969 advert of Chanel No. 5 by Helmut Newton, which still mobilizes elements of glamour, yet the overly sprawling and glossy glamour is now wiped away. He, Newton, famously disdained the special effects, but his images nevertheless always had a strong fantasy element (Gundle 2008: 326). This advert for Chanel No. 5 is no different.

Interestingly, the image itself is not too loud. At first glimpse, not too much is happening. Newton is obviously using rather subtle coding of glamour as not too many signifiers are popping in sight first. What we see in the picture is simply a girl in a red dress and a flask of Chanel No. 5. A closer look at the image reveals a whole lot more. Let us consider the significations further. The girl is no less prominent than Jean Shrimpton, and the two colors used - red and gold - carry strong connotations. Furthermore, she inside the bottle recreates the fantasy myth of a genie in a bottle.

Suzy Parker was one the first models but Jean Shrimpton was perhaps the first supermodel, and a memorable icon of the Swinging London. Jean Shrimpton's distinctive, more down-to-earth look put her at the forefront of the fashion revolution of the 1960s. The cult of the fashion model was not a new phenomenon but one that had been taking shape for several years, and that enabled Shrimpton to step onto the stage of photographic world fame. She had perfectly proportioned and photogenic face, and she seemed natural with her "Shrimpton look, a look that required little hairdressing or make-up" (Gundle: 282). In many ways, she was "the consecration of

youth and beauty" (ibid: 291). Hardly a coincidence, her face came from Britain which was the leading trendsetter of the 1960s. Everyone looked at England, and London had become the target and "the city of youth" (ibid. 288). "Both within Britain and in international popular culture, London established an enviable primacy. It was seen as the heart of a loosening of social and cultural hierarchies and of cultural renaissance." (ibid. 297) When Shrimpton borrowed her face to Chanel No.5, she also gave it a fresh touch of glamour. But together with Newton's imagination and talent with photography, of course.

Swinging London was claimed to be a classless phenomenon, but Newton's visual language tells a slightly different story. The photograph makes use of two colors which together have a very strong visual appeal. Newton has given the bottle the glow of gold, which promotes the association of splendor and wealth. Gold brings forth "mystery and timeless prestige" (Gundle & Castelli 2006: 105), thus it makes the scent look precious, and highly-priced. "The language associated with red," on the contrary, "underlines a narrative of fire, heat, directness, passion," (ibid: 111) creating an interesting tension between the interplay of colors. The red dress of Shrimpton is lucid, too, which adds even more sexual magnetism to her - and to the scent. Strangely enough, the red dress, along with her open arms, almost turns her into a shrimp. Perhaps Newton, who is well-known for his uniqueness, was seeking for a deeper connection with the name of Shrimpton and the product.

Shrimpton's appearance and facial expressions convey an idea of an independent girl who is well aware of her sexual allure. She is firmly gazing at the spectator, giving him or her no chance to flee. Her auburn hair is floating in the air, making her seem very carefree, yet her intense gaze at the spectator indicates a deliberate approach. A strong fantasy element is added upon the image with the reference to the old exotic story of the genie in the bottle. The image of Shrimpton is alluring yet at the same time slightly dangerous as she represents the mystery of the ancient east. Now, are her intentions cruel or not? Let the spectator decide - because she can. Eventually, it is the spectator who is given the quorum to set the genie free or keep her captured. And the 1960s were all about freedom.

5.5 Catherine Deneuve and tailored androgyny



Catherine Deneuve by Richard Avedon 1978

This advert from 1978, by Avedon again, signals of a new era afresh. It is endowed with many elements that spellbound the spectator – and not least the effect is made by using the legendary face of Catherine Deneuve. In effect, she became the spokes-model for Chanel No. 5 already in 1968, thus she had already well established herself as a face of Chanel. This very advert, however, shows an interesting new take on glamour.

What we see if we take a quick glance on the denotative level of the image is Catherine Deneuve with her golden blonde hair, wearing a black suit with a white collar and a bow. Her clothing is black-and-white but there is a touch of gold in her voluminous light blonde hair, but also in the perfume and on the buttons. Her nails are painted in red, matching with the lips. There is a hint of a smile on her face, yet her mouth is closed. The shape of her eyes is outstanding, due to careful eye lining. Her eyes are wide open gazing directly at the spectator. The gaze is further intensified with layers and layers of mascara bringing forth long and thick eyelashes. Under her right arm she is holding a purse. Interestingly, the bottle of Chanel No. 5 is placed there, over the item that connotes money and power.

Why Deneuve? What does her face connote to us beyond her classical beauty? The French actress who featured art house films from Luis Buñuel like *Belle de Jour* (1967) and *Tristana* (1970) had aloof haute bourgeoisie look and she evoked romantic dreams: "Her delicate nose, her intense but slightly cold impression, her mouth with the finely drawn lips, so classically perfect that they concealed deep sexuality, were the very image of romantic beauty." (Gundle and Castelli 2006: 133) At the same time, she was "a cool blonde of great poise" with highly personal elegance. Soon she was widely regarded "as a symbol of the cultivated but unconventional bourgeois Frenchwoman". She was subjected to male-gaze as "men found her an irresistible mix of detachment, self-control, ambiguity, and transgression." (Gundle 2008: 327) She is described as a bourgeois icon, an embodiment of France, a model for elegance, a sex symbol, and a glamorous film star. These multiple identities gave her the opportunity "to highlight one or more over others, or even to play off against another to suggest an air of sinfulness and decadence," writes Gundle. "She was the

perfect vehicle for increasing the sexual element of glamour while maintaining class and high-end commercial appeal." (ibid. 327) In the end, her ultimate appeal was her mystery; one could read into her a bit of everything, thus all dreams were fulfilled with just one face.

In this advert, the mystery of her is very present. Not only because of her deep, intense interplay with the unknown spectator, but also because of her gender play. She borrows the posture from a successful and authoritative man. The dark and masculine clothing connotes seriousness and order, whilst she adds the necessary erotic sparkle with her luminous appearance and mysterious gaze. What is more, she is clearly blurring the gender boundaries by breaking the conventions of female fashion. The 1970s witnessed a turning point in new freedoms and aspirations that went hand in hand with the rise of second-wave feminism. Even if it was initially more concerned with rights and opportunities than the politics of dress, now women enjoyed the liberty to choose from a new and ever-widening range of codes about how to dress (Dyhouse 2010: 122-4). It was only in the 1970s pantsuits for women finally became socially acceptable (Lehnert 2000: 78).

Glamour in the 1970s, as Gundle (2008: 346) argues, became "a paradigm of distinction that was more widely available than ever before". Dressing up and constructing a mythical self with elements of media heritage, cosmetics and costumes were available to all. "In the 1970s, there was a thirst for prestige and originality that stretched well beyond the upper tier of the market to the middle and lower levels," writes Gundle. "Changes in women's education as well as expansion of the tertiary sector brought radical changes in the structure of the labor market. Many women were mobile professionals who needed wardrobes to match their new-found status." (ibid. 328) Now being glamorous was not only about being beautiful for the male-gaze, but to introduce new ways of being a woman which also borrowed from the paradigm of conventional masculinity, as women were entering new fields in the society. In this advert, "Catherine Deneuve for Chanel" promotes the idea of a strong and independent woman who is not afraid of being sexy and professional at the same time.

5.6 Carole Bouquet – power dressed à la 80s



Carole Bouquet by Michel Comte 1987

The 1970s advert featured clear signs of a transition into a wider paradigm of glamour construction; glamour was no longer strongly tied to the traditional feminine. This advert, then, from 1987, proves much the same. Carole Bouquet, photographed by Swiss Michel Comte, represents a new type of a successful woman, a "female warrior" or a "glamazon" as she was called in the 1980s (see Dyhouse 2010: 138).

Bouquet can be seen as a natural successor for the cool French blonde of the 1970s. Like Catherine Deneuve, Bouquet was a French fashion model and actress, who also featured in Luis Buñuel's movie; *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977). Thus, they both possessed the star qualities from the silver screen and kept the allure of Chanel No. 5 quintessentially Parisienne.

The advert itself is relatively simple. It certainly makes use of Bouquet's face as it dominates the picture – with the ample flask of Chanel No. 5 that she is holding firmly. Bouquet is a tough lady in red Chanel suit, with big jewelry on her wrist. The classic Chanel bag, the flask of Chanel No. 5, and a stiletto, are turned into gold and are now hanging on her right wrist, while a golden watch decorates her left wrist. Gold is also the material of the big rings hanging on her ears. What is striking is that all warmth seems to be wiped out of her bleak face; she is recognizably Bouquet but the face is so stony it almost freezes the spectator who she is steadily staring at. Her deep gaze is dramatized by smoky eye shadow, and her voluptuous lips are painted in red which matches with the suit. Overall, Bouquet's look is very neat and controlled – there is nothing to contradict with the image of a determined and successful woman. Much like Deneuve in the 1970s, she is crossing the conventional gender boundaries.

The depiction of Bouquet, as well as the oversize bottle of Chanel No. 5, tell something about the era which was marked by the cult of success and achievement

that was also manifest in all other aspects of society. "The ideal of female beauty of the 1980s was no longer a strayed little girl like Twiggy or the ladylike beauty of the 1950s, but a sporty, slim, muscular, and ambitious woman who was successful at work and in her private life and dressed accordingly, not denying her glamor and her eroticism but deliberately using them," argues Lehnert (2000: 86). Dyhouse observes a similar pattern in the representation of the 1980s fashion leaders who dressed for success: "Leafing through issues of British *Vogue* of 1985 reveals some astonishing examples of 'power dressing', or corporate drag: models wearing masculine suits and overcoats, collars and ties; flat-chested, with hand-kerchiefs peeping from breast-pockets [...] A note of startling incongruity is introduced by the fact that she is wearing diamanté drop earrings and a glittery bangle. If not aggressive, the expression on the faces of the model is sullen: they never smile." (2010: 136) "Big jewels and gilt earrings and buttons approaching the size of door knobs," she goes on, "set off the look, along with heavy gold chains. Hair was also big (this was a period when mousse, gel and heavy-duty hair spray were much in demand), shoulder pads were inserted into everything from jackets to fine wool sweaters, and lipstick was bold, uncompromising and carnivorously red". (ibid. 138)

The female image that also Bouquet's face represented indicated aggression, as well as self-assertion. The 1980s advert told a story that a woman who possesses Chanel No. 5 knew what she is about, "even if this signal was sometimes a bluff, masking a degree of uncertainty". (ibid. 138) The image persuades that Bouquet is a power woman, and besides her body language and facial expression, this is achieved through the showy jewelry and careful grooming. "'Dress for success' was the magic formula. By now women were present in the world of work as a matter of course and continued to climb the career ladder. They no longer fought for equality from women's enclaves; they seemed to have achieved equality and expressed it through clothes which marked their entrance into a man's world. Indeed, for a woman, having a career was made easier by the adoption of appropriate clothes." (Lehnert 2000: 87)

5.7 Selling the supermodel: Estella Warren



Estella Warren by Luc Besson 1998

The spokes-model for Chanel No.5 in the latter half of the 1990s was Estella Warren. She was chosen to represent the face of Chanel No. 5 in the modern and sexier adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood* by the French Hollywood director and producer Luc Besson (*Fifth Element* [1997] and *Nikita* [1992]). Warren was quite different, though, from the previous faces of Chanel No. 5. At that time, she was not yet an actress, nor was her nationality conventionally bound to glamour. Instead, she was originally a world class synchronized swimmer from Canada and who subsequently turned to modelling at very young age.

This advert from 1998 is an attention seeker with its strong visual effects; it is fuelled with color and sex appeal. Of all the previous adverts analyzed, this one most boldly rides on an explicit sexual suggestion. What we see is pale-skinned Warren in a revealing red dress, her eyes seductively squinting, voluptuous shiny red lips open, and wisps of blonde hair framing her face. Like in the advert of Jean Shrimpton in the 1960s, we see her through the golden fluid of Chanel No.5. The Art-Deco flask, now an iconic symbol of luxury, covers most part of the image. Only her face is left out for the spectator to fully see and flirt with.

The image is highly retouched; it is so sleek and glossy it almost dazzles. It is thus apparent that it does not even try to convince the spectator of any kind of naturalness but rather is a triumph for visual effects and superficial sign values. Like Marilyn Monroe's lips, as commented by Andy Warhol, Warren's lips are not kissable as such, but rather "very photographable" (see Gundle 2008: 309). In effect, her lips are popping out so much that she almost resembles a kissing gourami. When aware of Warren's past as a professional swimmer, one cannot dodge the interpretation of her floating in a pool of Chanel No. 5. In this way, the connection between Estella Warren's celebrity persona and the product is further reinforced. Furthermore, the many copies of the product set a connection with the reproductive work of Andy Warhol.

By the 1990s, glamour had become a social and cultural lubricant on an unprecedented scale, writes Gundle. "As a readily comprehensible visual repertoire

that aroused responses of desire, envy, and emulation, it found more applications than ever before in a world in which people increasingly defined themselves by what they consumed." (2008: 352) It was in the 1990s when the phenomenon of the supermodel, what Warren also represented, reached its peak; these women became the idol of the era, and a new hierarchy was created among them (see Ndalianis 2002: x). They took the role of a Hollywood star of the golden age: "Glamorous and beautiful, they attracted the publicity and were given the idol status that movie stars had enjoyed in the 1950s. It was not only fashion magazines such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* that wrote about them, quickly moving from reports on the clothes shown to features on the models themselves. The advertising industry also recognized that models were the fairy-tale princesses of modern times. Buoyed up by all this attention, models became astute businesswomen who courted the visual media, demanding fees appropriate to their market value." (Lehnert 2000: 83)

Interestingly, the new pets of the media culture came now from a variety of sources. Warren was different from her predecessors in the sense that she basically rose from a swimming pool, whereas the other Chanel No. 5 spokes-models had a conventionally more glamorous background. It seems like that was part of her appeal. It was a promise to the young girls who often aspired to become rich and famous for their good looks (see Lehnert 2000: 82), that almost anyone could get there. Gundle argues that supermodels were the product of a period obsessed by image and glamour. Their rise was the product of three distinct trends: "the globalization of the model industry, which occurred in the 1970s; the ready-to-wear revolution that took fashion to the masses; the absence of other figures capable of generating sufficient attention and interest to harness collective dreams." (Gundle 2008: 362) Models like Warren "epitomized contemporary ideas of beauty and inhabited a world of image as recruits of model agencies, who were packaged and shaped by photographers" (Gundle 2008: 363). They became "all-purpose celebrities" whose lives were the stuff of dreams. As with the courtesans of the nineteenth century, and the early Hollywood film stars, the models were bearers of the sexual fantasy of their age (ibid. 365).

5.8 Back to the start: Audrey Tautou as Coco



Audrey Tautou by Jean-Pierre Jeunet 2009

The paradigm of glamour has expanded largely since the early days of Chanel No. 5. Today, it is common for contemporary glamour to reenact the past - and that is just what the latest advert of Chanel No. 5 does. Interestingly, the current spokes-model for Chanel No. 5 is Audrey Tautou, the epitome of chic Parisienne who first came to international fame as the title character in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's story of *Amélié* (2001), and who then had the honor to take the role of Coco Chanel in Anne Fontaine's movie *Coco avant Chanel* (2009). Also the physical resemblance of Tautou and Chanel is evident, and therefore the face of Tautou is a double-signifier; it stands for herself, but also for Coco.

We see Tautou leaning against a mirror. She is looking away, but on the reflection of the mirror her gaze mystically meets the spectator. Her eyes are dark and her complexion pale and flawless, just like Chanel's. She is wearing a simple black top or dress, and a necklace with a five-pointed star. Her lips are closed but one can read a secret smile on her face; she looks content with herself. On the right corner we see the iconic bottle of Chanel No. 5, glowing of gold. Tautou's image radiates elegance and comfort, and a woman's independence from a man. However, she is not a femme fatale, like Chanel was in the 1930s. There is more softness in Tautou's appearance. Softness and sensuality is added upon with prudent use of colors and lighting: the portrait addresses the spectator's senses through shadows, lustre, sparkle and glow. The skillful play with the colors and lighting create an aura of mystery and godliness: "Light plays across skin, satin, the surface of fur and hair, and it is in large part this quality, along with careful posing and retouching that gives the well-known stills of screen goddesses their extraordinary seductiveness." (Dyhouse 2010: 30) The shining star on Tautou's necklace is to symbol Chanel's belief in the occult mysticism of numbers. The number five had always been her special talisman, as it is "the number of quintessence: the pure and perfect embodiment of a thing's essence. It was also, in a material universe of earth, water, wind, and fire, that other thing-ether, spirit-something mysteriously and untouchably beautiful". (Mazzeo 2010: 9)

The mirror creates a glamorous effect; they have conventionally been used for their "capacity to brighten up a room, to multiply the glitz of glittering surfaces, and to make everything seem larger than life". (DeJean 2005: 178) The mirror creates a visual effect that endows everything with magnetism and dream-like properties, but the message appears to be that she is revealing her true self, although she is unaware of the construction others will put on her (see Gundle & Castelli 2006: 91, 117)

The image cues that Chanel No. 5's contemporary glamour is constructed with signifiers that celebrate the discreet yet sensual and luminous beauty of Tautou - not to forget the double celebrity status of her. It is obvious that she is to represent Mademoiselle Chanel, too, and thereby remind us of Chanel No. 5's original allure. Certainly, it is a sign of the ever increasing obsession with the celebrity, and of course an homage to the legend. Chanel's ever-lasting success proves that it has become self-referential too: "the fetish of the mere name shows how it has begun to revolve around itself." (Vinken 2004: 84)

6 REFLECTIONS ON THE NOTION OF GLAMOUR

I have now traced cultural and social meanings in altogether eight advertising images, following the glorious life of Chanel No. 5 through almost a century, from the 1920s to the modern perfume's most contemporary look. It is fascinating how much cultural knowledge there is stored in our modern visual culture: the semiological decoding of the adverts revealed different trends and fashions from each decade, whilst reflecting changing ideas on femininity and telling their own story of the increasing passion for media celebrities.

Coco Chanel (1883-1971) was indisputably one of the most glamorous people, and brands, of the twentieth century. With a multiplicity of meanings attached to her name, she was able to create a robust brand that still today glows of glamour. Her

allure seems to be eternal as her triumph only continues to go on; in recent years there has been an ever increasing interest in her life in different media, which may be seen also as a sign of today's fixation with media celebrities. Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel, or just "Mademoiselle", is still today known for her revolutionizing haute couture, perfect eye for style, luxurious lifestyle, and mysterious love life that most of us can only marvel at. Chanel No. 5, her signature scent, speaks of the luxury and extraordinary beauty of her life - even though she signed away the rights for it already in 1924, three years after its creation. Since the 1950s, a good list of other internationally known celebrities have given their star allure to Chanel No. 5 through its advertising, including iconic film stars and models. The stars, which stem from the media, are considered to have the lifestyle that the consumers want to purchase along with the product. The adverts thus come to present social values and ideologies about "the good life". Signs with preferred sign values are circulated to add meaning to the product and speak to consumers in a language that evokes desire and need. The adverts interestingly mirror the cultural climate of their time in visualizing people's collective yearnings, yet leaving space to project individuals' dreams and aspirations onto them.

As Gundle argues, glamour is quintessentially a modern phenomenon; it could not exist without the great technological innovations, including the new media, of the twentieth century. Essential in the understanding of glamour is that it is, above all, a manufactured attribute that requires mediation. People we know intimately, in "real life", can thus never be glamorous in the sense I intend to use glamour; it is the ultimate perfection that can only be reflected on the media - and that is the very reason it entices and invites for consumption.

Being a modern phenomenon, glamour is very much linked to the cult of celebrity. The adverts promise a shortcut to happiness and fulfillment of needs and desires, and celebrities are employed as an appealing testimony for the product. The adverts function with the promise that by wearing the same brand of perfume as the famous model or celebrity, they will acquire their success, beauty and elegance - their

glamorous life. As the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the new media, it also witnessed the rise of new celebrities, whose fame was often achieved with a strategy of appearance. In the end, it is through the media the celebrity grew out of, and it is through the media glamorous attributes can be manufactured. Interestingly, Chanel No. 5 uses only the most celebrated people also behind the camera lenses. Employing the most talented and influential image-makers further ensures the exclusivity needed for glamorous appeal.

I argue that the glamour of Chanel No. 5 is a media myth, constructed with a system of signs which connote beauty, luxury, sexual appeal and elegance; which allow the modern people to climb onto the top of the social hierarchy. The glamour of Chanel No. 5 thus relies on visual spectacles, and it evokes strong associations with luxury, refinement, sexual allure and mystery. Its image follows keenly trends and fashions, yet it always rides at least to some extent on the iconic Art Deco bottle from the 1920s - which has universally come to signify luxury and is a reminder of glamour's origins in Paris, The City of Light, a city which was turned into a theatre and spectacle itself. Chanel No. 5 has always strived for being at the very pulse of the society, of its trends and fashions. This goes in great conformity with Chanel's own motto "I want to be part of what is going to happen." (Baudot 2003: 5) Glamour, then, is a concept which marvelously captures the cultural spirit of the modern times, and helps to understand the current strive for glossy images and digitalized perfection. It is a concept that is already being used in visual analyses, and therefore it would be only fair if we would have a more precise and consistent idea of it.

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