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**Costume and “the copy”: defining authenticity in the analogue original,
the reproduction, and the digital garment within
the museum and archive**

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by

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Thesis

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Abstract

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

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A comparative examination of the original and reproduction *Gone With the Wind* costumes at the Harry Ransom Center is at the heart of this study, which proposes to trace the relationship between the analogue original costume, the replica garment, and the digital image reproduction. A discussion of definitions of authenticity and “the original” within such areas as conservation, film studies, and audience perception explores the questions: what is the role of the reproduction, and can it challenge the authority and “aura” of the original? This inquiry illustrates that authenticity is negotiated; it is not always fixed in a clear line ranging from “the real thing” on one side to “the copy” on the other. The study concludes with examining digital image reproductions of costume. The online digital database record can potentially reveal more than a face-to-face encounter with the object in a gallery space, illuminating the biography and history of the garment,

changes in curatorial decisions and exhibition practice, and the experience of tactility and embodiment.

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Introduction

In museum and archive collections of clothing, costume, and fashion, the reproduction plays an important, and, until recently, an under-examined role. Museums and archives pride their existence and base their missions on collection, preservation, and display of authentic items—“the real thing”—not copies of them. A face-to-face encounter with an original object, a witness to “being there” with all of its attendant history, marks of use, and proximity to the individual or event can be a powerful and moving experience—although this experience is usually mediated by physical distance, barriers, and low lighting to protect the object. Reproductions, which are often not subject to such environmental restrictions, have been a part of the museum experience for over a century, from replicas of classical sculpture to paper squeezes of ancient inscriptions (Gurian, 1999). One of the purposes and primary value of the reproduction for curators and conservators has been to enable the original to remain safely in storage, protecting and maintaining its current state (Boersma, 2007: 109-110).

This study was initially inspired by discussions of the original and the copy within the film studies and archives communities, and will begin with framing questions about the original and reproduction garment in light of these conversations, as well as scholarly and popular attitudes towards the place and meaning of the original and reproduction in

archives and museums. The subsequent inquiries were largely motivated by a simple question: do reproductions matter? And can they be considered as important or as valued as the original? Can they communicate anything to us beyond mimicry of the original object; is there a rival power present in their materiality, or in the perception of the reproduction? Where does meaning reside, if “a place”, tangible or intangible, can be determined? These questions will be explored through examination of definitions of authenticity and the original object in the areas of conservation, archives and museums, film studies, and public perception.

When considering and performing conservation treatments on costume, the received wisdom over the past 40 years or so has been to “return” the garment to its “first form”, before alterations or interventions that have occurred during the costume’s lifetime (Landi, 1998: 5-6; Lawrence and Cavello, 1971). Conservators and curators have grappled over the last several decades with the ethics or desirability of reproducing portions of or entire garments. For example, does the conservator “fill in” missing areas with new material in a textile or leave the gaps in the current “original” object, or does a complete or partial reproduction of a garment represent an object completely lacking in authenticity and primary source “information”? While adding new material or creating complete or partial replicas has been a part of conservation practice for decades, there is the lurking feeling of dishonesty behind the presentation of the restored garment to the audience:

One of the leading principles for the conservator is to be honest, i.e. never to disguise the restoration so that it cannot be traced. Of course, there is no need to emphasise the restoration, but there should not be an imitation of the original material (Ekstrand, 1972: 185).

The decision to create and exhibit “imitation replicas” can still be regarded as controversial (Flecker, 2005: 186). When considered less as a passive replica, a “fake”, or a binary opposite to the original and more as a dynamic object in its own right, reproductions can be very useful and instructive. They can reveal a designer’s original intent when the initial state at creation is damaged or severely compromised (Bulgarella, 2010; Sá, Ramos, Macedo, Ferreira, & Coutinho, 2012), can illuminate details about function and use through tactile interaction with the audience, as museum objects generally cannot be handled (Holmes, 2012; Frost, 2009), can complete a garment with missing elements (Breeze, 2002; Flecker, 2006: 186-199; Pritchard, 2010: 68-69), or put the finishing touches on styling an object that will provide a more complete context of the garment for the viewer (Palmer, 2008:47) In some cases, if the original is lost or severely damaged, the reproduction is the only manifestation of the original object (Eastop and Dew, 2006).

A question considered over the past decade or so is the marginalization of the object—or even worse—the disappearance of the physical artifact from public consciousness through digital reproduction and “virtual” experiences (Wallace, 1996: 101-114). Will the online image or digital experience supplant the public’s desire to see an object in person, or replace the museum’s mandate to display and care for objects?¹

¹ At a conference held at the University of Glasgow, December 6-7, 2012 entitled, *‘The Real Thing?’: The Value of Authenticity and Replication for Investigation and Conservation*, Centre for Textile Conservation

The Fashion Institute of Technology recently announced a concerted push to add at least 50 new images a month to their online collections database, and corporate endeavors such as designer Valentino Garavani's archive, a permanent online, downloadable exhibition that resembles a seemingly infinite digital gallery space, was launched in fall 2011 (Campbell, 2012; Wilson 2011). The Europeana Fashion Conference, held in Florence in April 2013, coincided with the opening of the online Europeana Portal (a consortium of 22 museums, archives, libraries, and private collections that have joined to make available their fashion-related digital images and records of objects in their collections through an online archive, estimated to hold 700,000 digital records by May 2015). Speakers and organizers extolled the digital archive as a way to open up collections to audiences, stay relevant, and create opportunities for creative interpretations and presentations of their collections (Mida, 2013, April 25). Even surveys of paper-based resources of fashion and clothing cannot avoid discussion and illustration of online image-based resources (King and Clement, 2012: 98-102). As more collections are placed online in different contexts, what does this mean for the physical, analogue object? What is the relationship between the original and the digital reproduction---or does a relationship cease to exist? Is it a one-way street from the material, "authentic" object towards the virtual and experiential? The role of museums, and the objects within them, has been acknowledged as changing in the late 20th and 21st century, particularly

and Technical Art History, the question, "does digitization replace museum visiting" was posed to conference attendees and was also asked on the website (see <http://www.textileconservationcentre.co.uk/news/call-papers-centre-textile-conservation-and-technical-art-history>). Attendees (including the author) who volunteered responses agreed that, no, digitization does not replace museum visiting—if anything it increases interest of and attendance to the physical institution.

in regards to the centrality of objects to the museum experience. With recent studies that ask, “do museums need objects?” is anxiety over the “death” of the object warranted (Conn, 2010)?²

If the digital reproduction may be seen as posing a threat to the object, can analogue reproduction costumes challenge the “original” garment? What is the role of the reproduction in the museum or archive? This study proposes to map the relationship between the original garment, the reproduction, and the digital reproduction in an online context, with an emphasis on questions of authenticity. A case study of a comparative exploration of the original and reproduction costumes from the film *Gone With the Wind* (1939) at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin will begin this discussion, along with an examination of the definitions of “the original” and “the copy” in film archives, the study of film costume, conservation practice, and fan reproduction. The current conservation work and the previous reproduction project demonstrate a shifting perception over time of what constitutes “the original.” This study will examine the tension between the potential power of the reproduction and the “authentic” costume. Can “the original” reside onscreen, in the viewer’s memory and imagination, or in the act of creation? Or is the fabric and construction of the original garment, institutional authority, and the largely intangible “aura” of the object sole guarantors of authenticity? This case study will illustrate that authenticity is not always fixed in a clear line ranging from “the real thing” on one side to the “copy” on the other.

² Conn (2010) notes that object-saturated galleries have been steadily declining in the 20th century: “...on the whole visitors see far fewer objects than they did a century ago. For some museums, collections are only secondary to their institutional mission. At others, objects are almost irrelevant to what the museum wants to do and how it does it” (p. 56).

This study will conclude with an examination of the limits and possibilities of authenticity in the digital reproduction of costume and clothing. Is the digital reproduction a faithful replication of the original, destined to be a poor imitation, or something else entirely? What exactly are viewers accessing—a replication of the physical object, an experience, a directed narrative constructed by the museum or one of his or her own making? A brief discussion of the online “life” of the digital *Gone With the Wind* curtain dress costume will be followed by an exploration of the digital garment as expressed through images and accompanying text found within collection databases in national and international museums. This chapter will illustrate that the digital reproduction of a garment can be as instructive and illuminating in providing context, history, and interaction as a face-to-face encounter with the garment in a museum gallery setting.

Chapter 1: The conceptual costume within and beyond the film frame

1.1 COSTUME AND THE FILM IMAGE

The costumes from the 1939 film *Gone With the Wind* (henceforth referred to as “GWTW”) are arguably some of the most widely recognized garments in film or the history of popular culture. In the summer of 2010, the Harry Ransom Center put forth a public plea to raise funds to conserve the dresses. The five original gowns, in the David O. Selznick Collection at the Center, had not been seen publicly for nearly 30 years, due to fragility and the inability to withstand prolonged display; the conservation project is discussed further in section 2.1. Public reaction on the comments section of online articles and publicity about the conservation endeavor and the fundraising effort produced some interesting reactions regarding the value or meaning of “the original” gown, including the following:

Gail: If you want to see the dresses watch the movie.

Bad Pam: Let's put things in perspective here, folks. The dresses were lovely but they served their purpose. They are expendible [sic]. By the same token, the set of my favorite movie, King Kong, was destroyed for the Burning of Atlanta scene. The movie is what counts!

Cindy: I think the stars of the movie would be ashamed to see so much money wasted when there are hungry to feed. They [sic] movie has been restored, that is good enough.³

³These are three comments from readers appearing on a 2010 Associated Press article; see Vertuno, (2010, August 10). There were 168 public comments on the story by August 13. Comments on web articles are fugitive information, and are subsequently deleted (along with the article, as in this case—the link for this

Scholarly discussion of film costumes in the field of film studies primarily focuses on the costume in the dominant medium—the film—and not the material artifact itself (Brown, 2008; Sobchack, 1990).⁴ As noted above in the audience comments on the preservation of the GWTW gowns, the general public can also be apt to identify the costumes as legitimately existing only within the film medium. This view is to a certain extent validated by practitioners of costume design, such as Deborah Nadoolman Landis, who define costume within the boundaries of the film frame and the narrative vision of the director, with the image of the costume onscreen being the ultimate expression and experience of the designed garment—the costume was created for the dominant medium, and is a unique storytelling device that is bound by and exists for the narrative. The goal of the costume designer is to create a three-dimensional item that reaches its final form as a two-dimensional image on screen, deliberately “flattened and distorted” by the camera lens. Landis’ comprehensive tome of 20th and 21st century film costume, *Dressed: A Century of Hollywood Costume Design*, is largely illustrated with photographic images of

article is no longer active, and a later link [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100810/ap_en_ot/us_gone_with_the_wind] does not have the viewer comments). The author either preserved the articles with comments as a PDF, if possible, or copied and pasted comments into a Word document in order to save them for future reference.

⁴ For example, Tom Brown includes Scarlett O’Hara’s sumptuous costumes as a crucial component of visuals that create the notion of gendered spectacle within the film. He defines the costumes, sets, and furniture as part of a constructed feminine sphere, as the interiorized “the décor of history,” and charts Scarlett’s gaze shifting from these interior trappings to the typically masculine viewpoint of the exterior, expansive vista as she takes control of Tara at various points in the film.

Sobchack discuss film costume in terms of creating both spectacle and authenticity. There has been a resurgent interest in costume as spectacle, or costume for its own sake. The third “Fashion in Film” film festival (2010-2011), *Birds of Paradise*, exhibited films that “foreground costume, adornment, and styling as vehicles of sensuous pleasure and enchantment.” See <http://www.fashioninfilm.com/festival/birds-of-paradise/>.

costumes as sketches or film stills, not the three-dimensional costumes themselves. This presentation was likely due to either the difficulty of obtaining an image of the costume mounted on a mannequin or the fact that the original costume may no longer exist. Landis does emphasize her intentional exclusion of any Hollywood “glamour” shots of stars in costumes from the 1920s-1940s: “The costumes [George] Hurrell shot in his studio were taken out of the cinematic context—set, lighting, story”... “clothes come to life when the director calls, ‘Action!’” (Landis, 2007: xxiv).⁵

Landis views costumes that transcend the limits of the narrative or the parameters of the film as saboteurs: “Costume is one of the director’s most effective tools for telling a story—so powerful, in fact, that a distracting garment can ruin a scene. Hollywood glamour and spectacle has been known to sabotage a dramatic screenplay...” (Landis, 2007: xvii). For Landis, the costume on film is, to paraphrase FIAF’s Code of Ethics, “the closest approximation to the original experience” of the costume (Walsh, 2006: 6). Landis is obviously concerned with elevating the significance of costume design within the study of film, and has culled original costumes for her latest endeavor, the exhibition and accompanying catalog, *Hollywood Costume*, an exploration of the creative process of film costume design and the accompanying physical artifact of the costume. And yet the filmic image of celluloid and memory can trump the appearance of the physical costume itself within the exhibition, as will be discussed in chapter 2. *Hollywood Costume* co-contributor and curator Christopher Frayling references the common view held by

⁵Walter Plunkett’s most oft-quoted thought about the GWTW costumes is that he didn’t consider it to be his best work, but acknowledged the importance and legendary status of the film and “the green dress, because it makes a story point” (George, 1986: 55-56).

various practitioners of filmmaking, film studies, or film preservation that it is the aura of the film that is transferred into the costume---it is a vehicle, an arrested moment, an incomplete “substitute for the experience of watching a film” (Frayling, 2012:195-196).

In the three-dimensional costume, all of the possible flaws, hasty repairs, offscreen color of the fabric, unenhanced by lighting or film processing, and subsequent history of the costume (if there are many years separating the costume from the film’s production) are here to see. In a sense, the three-dimensional costume is evidentiary of the all of the work enacted by the designer, wardrobe, and makeup crew, as opposed to the illusion presented onscreen. Some viewers have observed that they are “reduced to flimsy cloth and a memory of something marvelous” (Crompton, 2012). The screen magic dissipates, and the audience is left with what is undoubtedly an intriguing look behind the scenes, but is the costume artifact indeed “the original”?

There are scholars of fashion and film studies who question costume’s dependence on narrative and character development, and strive to “liberate” the film costume from the confines of the screen. Film and television scholar Stella Bruzzi writes: “The mandatory bridesmaid status afforded to costume failed to coalesce with my response to cinema, where, much of the time, clothes seemed able to impose rather than absorb meaning” (Bruzzi, 1997: xiv). Several studies explore aspects of “extra-textual discourse” such as female spectatorship, consumerism, and the experience or memory of the film costume that attempt to situate the costume beyond the film and the theater. Bruzzi and Jane Gaines are interested in “the interrogatory costume” that has the capacity

to “disrupt the narrative” (Gaines, 2000).⁶ Such costumes are generally “showstoppers”, or iconic costumes that are well-known in both the scholarly and popular imagination; due to their spectacular appearance, such costumes can even contradict character development, contrary to the practitioner’s view that a costume should only enhance a linear character progression. Studies of the “interrogatory costume” also intend to disrupt the received wisdom of a singular vision of the costume designer or director in the visualization and creation of the costume (akin to auteur theory in which a single creator takes the credit for the work of many) to include other persons involved in creating the film’s aesthetic (art director, set designer) as well as the participation, expectations, and experiences of the film spectator. Within the same essay from *Hollywood Costume* quoted above, Frayling does acknowledge the multiple meanings of one of the most well-known costume items of cinema—Dorothy’s ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)—as transcendent of their meaning onscreen:

What is the ‘original’ pair? Does it matter?...Why have the ruby slippers been canonized since as *the* artefacts? Is it because of *The Wizard of Oz*, because of Judy Garland, because of their iconic status in the gay community, or because more generally they stand for lost innocence?...What exactly do the slippers represent? (Frayling, 2012: 201)

⁶ In her study of Gilbert Adrian’s provocative and dramatic costume for Kay Johnson in *Madam Satan*, Gaines calls for a debunking of the privileged sense of seeing when analyzing film costume to include the embodied sensations of “seeing wearing” and “wearing seeing,” experienced by both the actor and the spectator: “The radical implications of this [Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological body that ‘sees itself, touches itself seeing and touching’] for film theory should be apparent. If the senses are not exclusive of one another, seeing is no longer the dominant mode of access to the world but will always be qualified by the other senses which may assert their own dominance.” Based on this theory, she makes the provocative conclusion that “to see the film is to wear the film” (p. 173).

To continue the inquiry of the power of the film costume to transcend the “original” film image, this study will now turn to the notion of “the original” or “true” material artifact in textile conservation practice, as well as the recent history of known uses of the original GWTW costumes in an institutional museum setting.

1.2 THE PARAMETERS OF THE “ORIGINAL” IN TEXTILE CONSERVATION, ARCHIVAL FILM PRACTICE, AND THE MUSEUM

The notion of the “original” object in textile conservation has evolved over the last 30 years. It was common practice in the 1970s and 1980s to perform treatments that would return the object to its “true state,” i.e., the assumed, “inherent” original state of the object at the time of its creation. This often involved a thorough cleaning of the object to remove accumulated dirt and grime over time, as well as the removal of anything understood to have been added since the time of the object’s creation (such as repairs or embellishments). A 1971 conservation report describes treatments at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art that demonstrates a language of redemption for gowns altered by subsequent generations. These dresses remain in between a pure expression of a given style from a particular era, “the poor foundling that no fashion plate will claim” (Lawrence and Cavallo, 1971: 22). The conservators speak of the necessity “to move [a] gown back to 1785” by removing all changes made by intervening owners to get back to the “true” object: “The benefits of studying garments for evidence of conversion are clear, the most important being the greater ability of

keepers of costume collections to offer the public *truth* and enjoyment” [italics mine] (Lawrence and Cavallo, 1971: 28)

The purpose and intent of conservation has since changed from “uncovering” the “true state” of an item to an accounting for the history and changes of the object over its lifetime, the user(s) of the object over its lifetime, the intended use of the object by the institution, and any necessary community involvement in determining the treatment to be carried out. Instead of washing clean a garment or textile to reveal its initial, pristine state, dirt may be retained in order to demonstrate its use or wear, or may even reveal where the garment had been worn or traveled. Digital enhancements and photography can also be used to emphasize details that may be too faint to see with the naked eye. Regaining an item’s “authenticity” is no longer considered a matter of necessity or duty, but a choice that is fraught with decisions of what to retain or give up for a questionable “truth.” Thus, there has been a shift in the field from an assumption of a singular, defined, original state to the possibility of several layers of realities, existing across time, within “the original” object (Lennard and Ewer, 2010; Landi, 1998: 5-6).

The original is extremely important to the institutions that own and display material artifacts. Visitors to a museum or archive expect to see “the real thing.” Who wants to come to a museum or archive, institutions with the assumed authority to care for original artifacts, to see a reproduction? During his interrogation of the generally unquestioned authenticity of nitrate prints and the supposed “inauthenticity” of digital film in an archival setting, David Walsh discusses:

A visitor to a gallery to see a famous artwork is understandably irritated to discover that they have been examining a replica, even if that replica is

indistinguishable from the real thing. Current conservation practices mean that it is increasingly common for museums to display facsimilies in place of their valuable possessions—for example, if you visit the Imperial War Museum’s permanent displays you will see a number of accurately fashioned (and carefully labeled) replicas where the originals are too delicate to survive long-term display. This kind of practice can lead to a perception that we are moving towards a Disneyland-isation of culture, where everything has been replaced by moulded replicas of the original (Walsh, 2006: 5-6).

In the film archives community, it is strongly felt that the film must be experienced as it was “at the time of its creation,” on celluloid, in a theater (Fossati, 2009: 143).⁷ The recognition that nearly all “original” film prints are basically copies of copies (thus calling into question the notion of “the original”) is somewhat analogous to the practice of multiple copies of “original” costumes for films.

Complicating the notion of the “original” costume is the suggestion that the curtain dress at the Ransom Center is a “duplicate”, and that the “real” curtain dress was given to Western Costume Company in Los Angeles in 1941 (George, 1986: 54).⁸ This

⁷Cherchi Usai, quoted in Fossati.

⁸ It is unlikely that Selznick would have given this most important dress to Western Costume, especially since he gave away many of Scarlett’s costumes as gifts to individuals or to charity. One letter, dated January 9, 1940, from Katherine Brown to Ms. Belmont Dennis, and another from Katherine Brown to David O. Selznick dated December 26, 1939 does mention that Selznick planned to gift the curtain dress to the city of Atlanta, but a letter or memo that definitively states this has not been found in the archive; see Jock Whitney Papers, 29.13, Harry Ransom Center. The “Selznick International Productions” tag on the interior of the dress does note the change number (“#16”) as well as “#2”, which would seem to imply that there were two copies of the dress in existence. I have not been able to locate an inventory in the Selznick archive that lists two curtain dresses; only a duplicate hat for the dress is noted in various inventories; see Selznick collection, 193.9 for an inventory linked to a memo to “Ann” from “fli” dated 7/14/41; another undated inventory in 193.9 lists the curtain dress and duplicate hat as “Property of Selznick” (this list also appears in the Jock Whitney Papers, 29.13) It is likely that the “#2” written on the tag on the dress refers to the “2nd” piece of the costume; inside the separate bodice, a tag sewn on the center seam appears to read “1” or “1st”; it is faintly written, but appears to be a numeral “1”.

raises the question of whether a “#1” costume, possibly the costume worn onscreen, is more “authentic” than a “#2”, “duplicate” costume. The onscreen version is generally referred to in the industry as the “hero” costume—the name giving preference and authority to the representation of the costume in the dominant medium, the film, and not necessarily to the comprehensive work of the designer and his/her staff. This reference to “duplicates” also begs the question of whether or not a costume is determined “original” only if it appears on screen, not if it was simply produced for the production for a particular actor. Would a “duplicate” not worn by the actor be also considered “the original”?

“Duplicates” or not, a description of the last time the five original GWTW costumes were exhibited at the University of Texas at Austin in 1983-84 demonstrates the power of the notion of the original. Curator George Wead describes the organization and display of the items related to the production phase in his “Personal Notes on An Exhibition”:

Viewers then move through make-up and costume photographs to the display of five original costumes. Arranged against a large circle of panels, the costumes represent the center of the exhibition’s dramatic structure. It is classic construction: the moment of peripety on which the design turns. Visually the costumes are very powerful items: three-dimensional icons of a legend (Wead, 1983: 115).

Wead is very much aware of the strength of the artifact itself, of the power of the three-dimensional item in the shape of the human form that is the larger-than-life opposite of the two-dimensional sketch, film still, or even the moment onscreen.

Perhaps the last time all five original costumes were displayed outside of the University of Texas at Austin before the Ransom Center's acquisition in 1981 was for the exhibition, *Romantic and Glamorous Hollywood Film Costume*, at the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1974.⁹ The subsequent catalog of the highly successful exhibition was published in 1976, with the wonderfully over-the-top title, *Hollywood Costume: Glamour! Glitter! Romance!*. The exuberant *Vogue* editor and exhibition consultant Diana Vreeland speaks of the curtain dress in the introduction to the catalog ("Make it Big!"):

Or when Scarlett creates from sheer will that dress out of the dining room curtains—the dress in which she says, 'Never, never again will I be hungry.' The dress in which she walks away and survives, survives, survives. That is the real spirit of the American Woman. That's drama. That's triumph. That's *Gone with the Wind* (McConathy and Vreeland, 1976: 22).

Of course, Vreeland doesn't quite remember the *mise-en-scène* of the curtain dress correctly, but she would be the first to admit her mistake—and does her mistake really matter? The costume has, in a sense, transcended the official narrative. Vreeland goes on to rapturously describe the textures and embellishments of various film costumes in the exhibition, the creation of a "dizzying, heady atmosphere that meant both danger and desire, and sometimes total charm." Her enthusiastic tactile descriptions of physical materials certainly underscore the joy and immediacy of the three-dimensional artifact, and one can imagine that, as curator, she felt a sort of "drama" and "triumph" in the survival of the original curtain dress nearly 35 years after the production at that time.

⁹ A brief showing of the costumes also occurred at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1979 (email correspondence from E. Maeder, [former costume and textile curator at LACMA] personal communication, August 17, 2012).

The preceding essay in the catalog by Dale McConathy notes that the reason for the survival of many costumes in the exhibition was an MGM auction in 1969, when private collectors bought the costumes of “their favorite stars,” but may have lacked the correct facilities and environments to preserve them properly: “Much of Hollywood’s most tangible presence had been started on the road to ruin.” It should be noted that costume curators and conservators also share with the film archivist and curator this anxiety of losing the original object, or the nostalgia for the original object. As with celluloid prints, the “inevitable decay” or loss of the textile-based garment is perennially and almost romantically expressed, along with a firm duty to protect and significantly slow down the degradation of the object. It could be argued that the devotion to the original costume garment, as well as celluloid film in the early 20th century, represents a fight for the legitimacy of the medium as something that is worthy of study, collection, and preservation. Despite significant published studies of fashion and costume from as early as the sixteenth through the twentieth century, the scholarly study of fashion, costume, and clothing has only begun to be accepted as a legitimate discipline or academic field worthy of serious study within the last 15-20 years (Taylor, 2004: 4-65).

The connection of a costume to its star, its celebrated designer, and its use in the film— its “indexicality,” or material specificity—surely plays a role in representing the significance of original artifact, and was a major motivation for early collectors and costume fans (and continues to be). McConathy describes the scene in the Metropolitan galleries as visitors looked at the costumes with “awe and excitement—almost a religious fervor.” “One visitor exclaimed as she neared the portion of the gallery devoted

mainly to Greta Garbo: ‘I never thought I’d get so close to a star!’” (McConathy & Vreeland, 1976: 25). Certainly the proximity of the dress to its star, Vivien Leigh, has caused members of the public to define the curtain dress as “Vivien’s dress” or “her dress”; there is also the connection to its celebrated designer, Walter Plunkett, and the physical traces of use on the set of the beloved film. It is the materiality of the dress, its fabric that has touched the actress and “touched” the film, which can be most compelling to some audience members.¹⁰ Mary Ann Doane discusses the dual nature of the “indexical” object, as something that both suggests “an imprint or trace” that points to something else, or that which can be strongly felt by its material presence:

Its [indexicality’s] promise is that of touching the real. On the other hand, such an argument has the flavor of a theology, and it is not surprising that the discourse of indexicality seems indissociable from that of the relic” (Doane, 2007: 142).

1.3 THE ORIGINAL COSTUME IN FILM AND TEXT: AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHORITY

Concern with authenticity and representing “the real” is a thread that runs throughout the history of the making of GWTW. The authority of Plunkett as a master of recreating historical costume lent credibility to Selznick’s production as an authentic recreation of Mitchell’s South.¹¹ In adapting GWTW for the screen, David O. Selznick,

¹⁰ See comments on the “Cultural Compass” blog, post (2010, November 30), retrieved from <http://www.utexas.edu/opa/blogs/culturalcompass/2010/11/30/conservation-work-begins-on-gone-with-the-wind-dresses-with-study-of-stitching-and-construction/>

¹¹ GWTW as a film represents a master epic of nostalgia, a fond and uncritical yearning for the “old South”, which was embraced by not only devotees of the “Lost Cause” but a wider national and international audience enchanted with what they perceived as an accurate representation of this “lost” world; the film continues to provoke both fascination and anger. While a discussion of the narrative of GWTW as nostalgic fantasy is beyond the reach of this paper, it should be noted that, despite Selznick’s intentions to create an accurate depiction of the Civil War South, not all contemporary viewers agreed that the depiction was “authentic”; see J.Cronin, (2007). Selznick was willing to compromise on authenticity

the film's producer, was very concerned about the faithfulness of the film to Mitchell's novel; it was a bestseller of the day, read by a large segment of his potential viewing population. Descriptions of each of Scarlett's gowns were compiled and scrutinized by SIP staff as early as 1936; designer Walter Plunkett traveled through the South meeting with Southern women, researching prints and fabrics.¹² Mitchell's good friend Susan Myrick was hired as a sort of authenticity authority, to advise on how a scarf would have been tied to the correct cadence and phrases to be used by different characters. Authenticity, therefore, was of the utmost importance to the costuming and presentation of characters, especially that of its star heroine, Scarlett O'Hara.

The layers of adaptation from text to the creation of the costume to the onscreen version to the reproduction dress (the latter discussed in the next chapter) demonstrate that creativity and problem-solving are important factors in making a new version of the costume that references and pays homage to the "authentic original" of Mitchell's imagining. Plunkett deviates from the original text in presenting a much more glamorous vision of the curtain dress; costumes from *GWTW*, as well as those from other Hollywood period films, balanced authenticity with audience expectations of current ideals of beauty and style (Maeder, 2012). Glamorizing was certainly promoted by Selznick, who was often at odds with Plunkett and other production staff on the subject of

when it came to depicting the experience of slaves and slavery by ultimately turning down the suggestion of NAACP secretary Walter White to hire a "Negro Technical Advisor" for the film. For a discussion of SIP interoffice memos on the subject of "the Negro Problem" and the well-intentioned but patronizing attempts to include Black voices in advisement on the film, see J. M. Miller, (1986).

¹²See Selznick Collection, 420.8, Harry Ransom Center, for textual descriptions of Scarlett O'Hara's costumes and character ("Gone With the Wind Data on Characterization / Costumes / Settings" by Franclien Macconnel, November 4, 1936).

period authenticity versus awe-inspiring beauty in the costumes.¹³ Scarlett's curtain dress no longer has a "somewhat worn Irish lace collar" donated by her sister Suellen, nor does Scarlett wear Aunt Pitty's "black broadcloth cloak" when she goes to visit Rhett Butler in prison. Neither does she carry Aunt Pitty's seal muff, as Scarlett's cold, unprotected hands will create a memorable scene shortly thereafter. Plunkett's costumes transcended the written descriptions to become instant cinematic and popular culture icons. If, as certain film scholars concerned with costume argue, the costume can transcend the film narrative and exist in its own right, can reproductions of a costume challenge the sole authority of "the original"?

¹³ See memo dated February 1939 from David O. Selznick to "Messrs. Cukor, Menzies, Wheeler, Plunkett, cc. Mr. Klune", Selznick Collection, 185.10; also memo dated February 6, 1939 from R.A. Klune to David O. Selznick, 193.9, Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center.

Chapter 2: The original and reproduction GWTW costumes at the Harry Ransom Center

2.1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In August 2010, the Harry Ransom Center launched a campaign to raise funds to preserve five original gowns worn by Vivien Leigh in GWTW. The campaign attracted tremendous media attention, and three weeks after the announcement, thanks to enthusiastic supporters and fans from around the world, the fundraising was complete. The impetus for the campaign was to ready the costumes for safe display at the Ransom Center in anticipation of an exhibition coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the film in 2014.

The original costumes arrived at the Ransom Center with the acquisition of the archive of the film's producer, David O. Selznick, in 1981, which includes correspondence, storyboards, costume sketches, set models, and administrative documents on all aspects of film production and the business activities of Selznick's company, Selznick International Productions (SIP). The five Scarlett O'Hara costumes in the Selznick collection are the green curtain dress (Figure 1), the green velvet dressing gown, the burgundy ball gown, the wedding gown and veil, and the blue velvet peignoir.

Film costumes were generally not made to last beyond use in a production, nor did studios necessarily cherish them. Decades of general indifference about the long-term value of costumes from within the studio system resulted in many costumes from

Hollywood's early-to-mid 20th century output to be lost, discarded, or sold.¹⁴ Costumes were reused in subsequent productions (and continue to be recycled today), often revamped beyond recognition. The majority of costumes from GWTW were given to Western Costume Company for reuse, while Selznick gave other costumes to organizations, individuals, or charities (George 1986: 51-54). At the time of the film's release in 1939, the value of the physical costume was not, as expressed by one of Selznick's production managers, "the gown itself nearly as much as it is the functional value in connection with the campaign," meaning the amount of publicity it could generate for the film and the studio.¹⁵ This was achieved mainly through "exploitation tours," a common industry practice of loaning out costumes and props for display at venues and special events to promote the film. The shipping, excessive handling, and cleaning for these tours took their physical toll on the costumes. And yet Selznick was prescient in saving five of Scarlett O'Hara's most show-stopping costumes from pivotal or emotionally charged moments in the film, retaining them with the rest of SIP holdings. The interest in Hollywood costume and the perception and visibility of their cultural and historical value has steadily increased since the 1970s.

Following a single public viewing of all five costumes at the University of Texas at Austin in 1983 (discussed in Chapter 1), it was determined that the originals were far too fragile for display or travel. Replicas would be made to fulfill the public demand to

¹⁴For more information on the various fates befalling 20th-century film costume (and particularly for information on the 1970 MGM auction), see McConathy & Vreeland, 1976: 25-32; also see a series of essays on "Collectors and Collecting" in *Hollywood Costume*, (Landis, 2012), p. 176-261.

¹⁵ Memo from R.A. Klune to Miss Katherine Brown, November 21, 1939. Jock Whitney Papers 29.13, Harry Ransom Center.

see the costumes. In 1986, Sister Mary Elizabeth Joyce, director of the Fashion Design department at Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Texas, was contacted to direct the project, which would be executed by two students, Jan Hevenor and Carrie Harrell. The reproductions would become the public representatives of the original costumes for nearly three decades.

Following the successful completion of the conservation campaign, questions immediately arose from within the Ransom Center and from the public about the fate of the reproductions, or indeed their meaning or place in the collection. During this 27-year period, the reproductions had almost come to represent the image of the originals themselves. Images of the reproduction gowns were circulated and posted on fan websites, and were displayed on the Ransom Center website in the form of an online exhibition. The replica garments were exhibited nationally and internationally as compelling stand-ins for the original costumes. This was a symbiotic relationship; the reproductions ensured the safety of the originals and provided the public with a physical garment to view and enjoy. What is the relationship now that the originals are front and center once more? Beyond the obvious function of relieving the originals of the rigors of handling and display, how can the relationship between the original and replica costumes be defined? Is there indeed a clear notion of the “authentic” or “original” film costume?

This section will look at the different definitions of what may be considered “the authentic” in relation to a film costume: the costume’s physical materiality, the aura of the garment and its history, the onscreen garment as it is viewed in the film or imagined in the viewer’s memory, audience response to the reproductions, and replication and

embodiment as an authentic expression of the costume's original function. This study will focus solely on the green curtain dress for two main reasons. Firstly, it is one of the most iconic, beloved and reproduced costumes from the film, and arguably one of the most recognized costumes in Hollywood film history. Its image was the one chosen for the conservation campaign –“save the curtain dress” was the rallying plea for donations. Secondly, and most important for this discussion, the gulf in appearance is significant between the original curtain dress (Figure 1) and the reproduction (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Original curtain dress, *Gone With the Wind* (1939), Walter Plunkett, designer. David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin



Figure 2: Reproduction curtain dress, 1986, Carrie Harrell and Jan Hevenor, designers, after Walter Plunkett. David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Conservation issues surrounding the curtain dress are most compelling and relevant for a discussion of authenticity, not only in regards to the conservation treatment, but also in the attempt to capture the elusive nature of the authentic in the reproduction project. Three different elements of contention will be examined: a confounding set of stitches on the waistband of the dress connecting the under-bodice and the voluminous skirt, the presence of a wire and twill tape support in the hem of the underskirt - and most intriguing - the fading and discoloration on the green velvet fabric. Between shifting notions of authenticity and the authority of the “original” object, the tug of nostalgia, the power of memory and the enduring screen image, the definition of ‘the real thing’ is difficult to fix.

2.2: DEFINING “THE ORIGINAL”

For the reproduction and conservation projects, the directives and criteria for maintaining or achieving the authentic original were clearly defined. The reproduction project was concerned with authenticity in the form of exact replication of the gowns as they existed in 1986 and 1987.¹⁶ The directive was not to perform extensive research into the history and use of costumes, but create a stitch-by-stitch, “exact duplicate” of the original costumes in their current state. The public would view exact copies of the gowns

¹⁶Information on the process of the reproduction project was largely taken from a videorecording of a lecture, ‘Reconstructing Scarlett: *The Gone With the Wind* Costume Project,’ given by Carrie Harrell at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum at the University of Texas at Austin on April 27, 2002, for the occasion of the exhibition, *From Gutenberg to Gone With The Wind: Treasures from the Ransom Center*. Information about the reproduction process was also gleaned from the author’s examination of the reproduction gowns, and personal communication with Jan Hevenor (November 13, 2012) and Carrie Harrell (October 15, 2012).

they were deprived of seeing, in the absence of the originals. The original dresses were viewed as the authoritative object and were largely unquestioned. The costumes had impeccable provenance, coming directly from the Selznick estate. And yet layers of adaptation and use had occurred from its initial creation and use on the film set. National and international tours of the costumes for special events immediately following the film's post-production in 1939, known within the film industry as "exploitation" tours, as well as subsequent exhibition years later, complicate the notion of the "original" costume.¹⁷ Puzzling fading and perplexing repairs and additions, most likely occurring post-production, are evident on the curtain dress. Was the gown an accurate representative of its use on the film set, or merely a tangible specter of its original self?

Before the conservation work began on the gowns in 2010, the conservator, Cara Varnell, and participating members of the project had to decide what constituted the "original" gown. It was ultimately determined that the "original" costume was the gown envisioned and created by Plunkett and his staff as seen in the 1939 film. As part of the Selznick collection, the gown is contextualized within the company's business activities and the production of the film. However, with this intrusion of nearly 45 years of alternate contexts between the wrap of the film and the acquisition of the Selznick archive in 1981, must we accept that the "original" film costume no longer exists? Can the "original" be revealed, and can we, or should we, "get" to it?

¹⁷For more information on the 'exploitation' tours of the costumes and their ultimate disposition, see correspondence and publicity in the David O. Selznick Collection, 193.9 and 194.6-7; and the Jock Whitney papers, 29.13, Harry Ransom Center, the University of Texas at Austin.

For the original film costume, authenticity often involves decay and damage - the marks of extensive travel and display, the passage of time, and its wear by the film's star Vivien Leigh and an unknown number of dressmaker's dummies. The gown was not meant to last beyond its moment onscreen and post-production obligations. And yet to prolong the life of the original, this decay must be mitigated. It is nearly impossible not to reference here the oft-quoted and influential essay by Walter Benjamin, which describes the "aura" of an object as encompassing the entire life of the object, flaws and all, which cannot be successfully reproduced (Benjamin, 1969). Any reproduction in this sense will be inferior to the original. And yet the reproduction costume must simultaneously walk the line between reproducing authenticity and creating a strong, sustainable garment. Similarly, the conservation project must accept inevitable interventions, however tentative or minimal, that will forever alter the garment as it exists today.

2.3 DEFINING AUTHENTICITY I: THE WAISTBAND

During the reproduction project, Harrell and Hevenor noted their surprise at discovering the asymmetry and alterations to the skirt of the curtain dress. Several lines of machine stitching and a heavy black grosgrain ribbon awkwardly connected the lightweight bodice to the heavy velvet skirt. Two folds of the skirt pleats hung precariously outside of the waistline seam, completely unsupported. The waistband of the curtain dress becomes a direct confrontation with the discontinuity of the perceived past with the present reality –a rupture in authenticity (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Interior waistband of the original curtain dress. Photo by Nicole Villarreal

Although it is possible that hasty repairs and alterations could have taken place on the set, it is difficult to believe that Plunkett and skilled studio seamstresses would have approved and executed this work. Instead of replicating the “authentic” costume as it exists now, Harrell and Hevenor had to make a choice in reproducing this area. The waistband and bodice were joined with a clean, single stitch and with the folds of the pleats stitched securely to the waistband, without the grosgrain ribbon. This choice had the double benefit of reflecting well on the skills of Harrell and Hevenor, and of ensuring the stability of the gown through time (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Interior of the reproduction waistline. Photo by the author

Initially, the plan for the conservation of the curtain dress waistline was to separate the sleeveless bodice from the skirt. There were several times that Varnell sat, scissors poised, to perform surgery and separate and reattach the bodice with a set of coherent, supportive stitches. But the original intent could not be determined. Were these repairs made later by less skilled hands after months of touring the nation? Or were they intentional, reflecting the desperate state of Scarlett's financial affairs and dwindling resources in the screen narrative? The biggest fear was that there would not be enough allowance on either side of the bodice to reattach the skirt securely and successfully. Finally it was decided to leave the skirt and bodice connected, and support and stabilize weak areas only. An additional, temporary waistband was sewn to the waist to lessen the weight on this area and protect the loose pleats during display. Interestingly, the reproduction gown displays the aspirations of the conservation project—to remove the

rows of damaging stitching and secure the pleats to the waistband. It is intriguing to contemplate that the reproduction may approximate the appearance of the waistline in the original gown, as it existed in 1939.

2.4 DEFINING AUTHENTICITY II: THE HEM SUPPORT

A wire and twill tape support in the front hem of the lighter green underskirt provides an interesting example of the original gown as authentic object verses the authority of the onscreen costume (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Above: The original curtain dress at the Ransom Center, circa 1984. David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Below: Wire and twill tape hem support in the original costume. Photo by Nicole Villarreal

When viewing the costume in motion on film, as well as in film stills, it is readily apparent that the support is not present in the dress (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Film still of Vivien Leigh on the set of *Gone With the Wind* (1939). David O. Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

The hem falls flat in front, without the constructed undulation of a wire and tape support. Decades later, in 1974, the curtain dress was displayed at the Metropolitan

Museum of Art as part of the exhibition, *Romantic and Glamorous Hollywood Design*; a photograph of the costume in the exhibition catalog clearly shows the support present in the front hem (McConathy & Vreeland, 1976:163 [plate 59]). It is likely that the wire in the hem was added for display purposes, perhaps to add drama and to convey a sense of movement. For the reproduction gown, this element was replicated and placed in the hem, along with a long-held marker of authenticity and authority since the time of couturiers Charles Worth and Paul Poiret—

a label bearing the handwritten names of the makers, Harrell and Hevenor (Figure 7).



Figure 7: The reproduced wire twill tape in the hem of the reproduction curtain dress. Photo by the author.

On the one hand, the support can represent Benjamin’s concept of “aura” and the authentic object through time. It is a tangible piece of the costume’s history and a physical marker of how it has changed and transformed from its creation to the present

day. On the other hand, it represents a deviation from Plunkett's original vision, incompatible to the dress that Vivien Leigh wore and enlivened onscreen. In the context of the conservation project, the costume as it appeared onscreen was considered the authentic costume, and the wire and twill tape support was removed. It is retained along with the original gown as part of its history and use, but it could be argued that the costume's aura has been ruptured, and the "object through time" has been tampered with. But it is at such intersections that decisions must be made regarding the preferred state of the garment, and this example demonstrates that authenticity is a choice, not a fixed absolute. There is no prescribed, set recipe for "the original". As briefly described in Chapter 1, there has been a gradual shift since the 1970s in the field of textile and costume conservation from an assumption of a singular, defined, original state (Lawrence and Cavallo, 1971) to the acknowledgement of several layers of realities, existing across time, within "the original" object. That the choice of the state to preserve is preferred, not inherent, in the object is widely accepted in the conservation profession today and is seen as an inevitable factor in the course of treatment (Lennard and Ewer, 2010: 59). It could be argued that the presence of the wire support in the reproduction costume can now stand as a record of the original costume's history of use and adaptation through time.

2.5 DEFINING AUTHENTICITY III: DISCOLORATION AND "ORIGINAL" COLOR

The most interesting problem is the unmistakable fading and discoloration on the dress (Figure 8). Close examination reveals that the fading largely follows the folds and drape of the gown as it would have been exposed to light and air when worn on a human

body or a dress form for display.¹⁸ There are places where the deep emerald green can still be found in the inner folds of the exterior of the gown, the shoulder capelet, and voluminous skirt.



Figure 8: Bodice of the original curtain dress. Photo by the author

The designer, Walter Plunkett, claimed that he hung the velveteen fabric in the window to achieve a faded appearance.¹⁹ The choice of fabric was the important first step in the design process for Plunkett, and this decision always preceded the sketch (Bailey,

¹⁸For more information on possible causes for the fading and discoloration and measured degrees of color change, see N. Villarreal, 2012:16-18; 44-68.

¹⁹While assisting in mounting a display of the *Gone With the Wind* costumes at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1979 (still owned by the Selznick estate at that time), Plunkett insisted to Edward Maeder, former curator of Costumes and Textiles at LACMA, that he faded the fabric for several months before creating the dress (E. Maeder, personal communication, August 17 2012). An article that includes information on the first conservation treatments of the GWTW costumes in the 1980s (at the Texas Memorial Museum) refers to an undated interview (not cited) with Plunkett in which he “mentioned that he laid the fabric for portieres and gown out in the sun to fade” (Johnston, 1986: 19).

1982: 20). As a designer concerned greatly with period authenticity as well as its place within the narrative, it makes sense that Plunkett would have faded the fabric; the dress in both Margaret Mitchell's novel and in Selznick's film was fashioned out of curtains. It is also possible that Plunkett wished to create nostalgia for something lost, ingrained into the fabric itself—the descent of the once grand Tara into decay and disrepair following the war. And yet the extreme fading and discoloration as it exists today is likely not the fading that Plunkett achieved in 1939; conservators who examined the dress as early as 1985 agree with this assessment (Johnston, 1986:19). Repeated stories of Plunkett's deliberate fading, whether by additives or sunlight, (McConathy & Vreeland, 1976:164; Cameron and Christman, 1989:173), and that the dress was made from the actual curtains from the film set (George, 1986: 55-56; Myrick, 1982:190) are ingrained in the myth of the creation of the dress. The reproduction project director, Sister Joyce, saw the fading as essential to creating an exact replica of the gown (Wellinghoff, 1986: 62). If it is accepted that an object's only authentic state is its present known state, not an assumed previous state (Muñoz Viñas, 2002: 26), it could be argued that an attempt at achieving the precise fading would have been an authentic expression of the original gown. A label sewn into the interior of the dress mysteriously reads, 'sprayed with Sudol', a substance assumed at the time as the method for fading the dress. Instead of risking the ruination of the completed reproduction gown, the plan to fade the fabric was abandoned. Once finished, the reproduction gown approximated how the gown appeared onscreen, without fading, not the physical, original gown as it existed at the time.

2.6 DEFINING AUTHENTICITY IV: THE ORIGINAL, THE ONSCREEN, AND THE “REMEMBERED” COSTUME

In her theory of adaptation from the written word to the moving film image, Linda Hutcheon describes the audience experience of adaptation as a “conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing” (Leitch, 2008: 108). This is an experience that undoubtedly must occur for viewers when contemplating not only the reproduction gown, but the original gown itself. The original gown, with its faded appearance, does not equate with the vibrantly colored Technicolor gown onscreen, whose color has also fluctuated over time through different versions of the film (Cherichetti, 1976:167). Additionally, Selznick’s desire for heightening the vibrant color of the costumes with the Technicolor process to produce awe-inducing effects, or to complement an actor’s eye color (Myrick, 1982: 190), reinforces the impossibility for definitive knowledge of the costume’s original color in 1939.²⁰ For the conservation project, the fading and discoloration was retained and accepted as part of the history of the dress, and no conservation intervention was attempted to achieve an elusive ‘original’ color.

For the viewing public, there is possibly a sense of loss, of distance from the original gown to the viewer’s memory and experience of seeing the costume on film. This is especially the case where the image or memory of the dress of a personage is stronger than the familiarity with the physical garment itself (Eastop and Morris, 2010: 80). In fact, it is the reproduction gown and the onscreen gown that have steadfastly

²⁰For memos regarding the use of color, see Selznick Collection, 193.9, Harry Ransom Center, 15 February 1939; 13 March 1939; and 13 May 1939.

remained in the public consciousness for the last 30 years. Instances have occurred where images requested from the Ransom Center for the original costume have been replaced with requests for the reproduction gown, as it more closely resembles the “green” curtain dress of the film or collective memory. Indeed, the curtain dress was viewed by visitors at the Victoria & Albert Museum exhibition, *Hollywood Costume* under a green-colored filter, a curatorial decision that approximates both the viewer’s memory of the gown and how the costume appears onscreen. With the addition of the green light, the costume has been described as being “[brought] back to life” (Gage, 2012), as if its current state, though original, is unacceptable or ineffective. Presented in this context, the onscreen gown trumps the state of the costume as it exists today, and the physical garment is nearly subsumed by the screen image, the desire to reclaim the “original”, and the presumption of audience expectations. If it is said that costumes of popular culture “hold us fast to a particular moment in time” (Orlofsky and Trupin, 1993), it should be reiterated that a deliberately biased choice of that “authentic” moment is being chosen when an object undergoes conservation treatment, reproduction, or is represented in the museum setting, whether that moment is onscreen, in the physical present, or in the beholder’s own imagination.

This brings us to the question of memory and nostalgia in the discussion of authenticity. Theorist and scholar Svetlana Boym’s definitions of nostalgia provide an interesting lens through which to consider the current conservation work, the representation of the curtain dress in the *Hollywood Costume* exhibition, and the reproduction project. Boym defines the concepts of “restorative nostalgia” and “reflective

nostalgia”; the former yearns for the state of environments or objects exactly as they once were, the latter is cognizant of the distance and the changes between the present moment and the past, and that the two can never be reconciled. These two concepts resemble recent debates in conservation concerning the best course of treatment: the restoration of an object to an assumed original state, or a general acceptance of the object as it exists in the present. In considering the 1980s restoration of Michelangelo’s friezes in the Sistine Chapel, Boym asks, (to paraphrase her question): what is more authentic, [the original object] untouched by age, or the historical [object] that ages through time? (Boym, 2001:46) She further states, “Nostalgic reconstructions are based on mimicry; the past is remade in the image of the present or a desired future...” (Boym, 2001:354). One could argue that the curtain dress can also be fashioned after a desired past, the need to return to the nostalgic experience of the dress in the memory or the imagination. Authenticity is thus not only unfixed or non-inherent to the object, dependent on the goals and intentions of those who have the object in their care (curators and conservators) or those who will view and enjoy it (the museum audience), it can also be perceived in a very emotional and highly subjective fashion.

Is the recreation of the experience of watching the curtain dress onscreen what people desire? Is this closer to “the original” than the original costume itself? This may depend upon if the audience member’s viewpoint approximates what Fossati terms the “mind/film approach,” which:

will be less concerned about the medium and more about the visual result...[as opposed to] ‘realism’, the mind/film approach does not trace the nature of film

back to its power of representing reality but rather to its effect (what it does) on the spectator (Fossati 2009:114).

There is no doubt that each individual will view the costumes differently, depending upon one's memory of and relationship to them. Although the fading of the fabric is still discernable through the green filter placed on the dress for *Hollywood Costume*, the longing and desire for the onscreen costume will obscure the distance between the "original" gown of the 1939 film and its present day state. For the curators, the green filter may aid in representing what is thought to be the designer's and director's original intent of how the gown was meant to be seen; for the spectator, it may represent a nostalgic return to the "original" gown and the perceived memory of the 1939 film. For the reproduction project, there was a desire and respect for faithfulness to the original costume in its present state in 1986, and yet the combination of swift project deadlines and the motivation to create a garment free of flaws, decay, and age resulted in a garment that strongly resembles the onscreen costume.

2.7 AUTHENTICITY, AFFECT, AND CREATION

Abby Smith notes the existence of "experiential" or "affective" authenticity of the original object, and that "a physical object often has more meaning or significance than its creator intended it to" (Smith, 2003: 173). If the audience experience and emotional response to an object is what is valued in the perception of authenticity, then authorship, uniqueness, and the materiality of the original takes a less privileged position (Tseëlon, 2012: 113). The reproductions have been displayed in several national and international

venues since their creation, and their presence, despite the fact that they are not originals, delights and in some cases profoundly moves the viewer (Figure 9).



Figure 9: The Ransom Center reproduction costumes at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art exhibition, *Sketch to Screen: The Art of Hollywood Costume Design*, 2010. Image courtesy of Oklahoma City Museum of Art

These are not duplicitous objects that attempt to deceive, but clearly state their status as reproductions of the original garments. The aesthetic enjoyment and experience of the gowns' design and construction is not diminished by the fact that they are not originals.

Is there room beyond the original object for valuing the activity of creation in determining what makes an object authentic? If the authentic garment's aura resides in the actual fabric and fabrication of the garment, then the reproduction can be an accurate expression of the authentic, created through the same means of choosing fabric, draping, and the acts of cutting and sewing. It can be argued that the reproductions created at Incarnate Word College are truly privileged garments, due to their close proximity to the original measurements, fabrics, and embellishments through examination of the original garments. On the Ransom Center website, an online exhibition dedicated to the making of GWTW follows the Hollywood convention of describing the extraordinary amount of labor, fabric, and time that are invested in the making of period costume. The description of each reproduction costume includes the precise number of hours, types and amounts of materials used, and the exact duration of time spent to make each gown.²¹ This emphasis on fine materials and technical skill immediately demands the respect of the audience, giving a measurable sense of the extraordinary effort of the task. In their discussions of costume and style as spectacle in Hollywood historical "epic" films, Vivian Sobchak and Sarah Berry argue that the publicity of details such as the yardage of fabric or hours of embroidering had the intention of validating the authenticity of the historical film (Sobchak, 1990: 31; Berry, 2000: 77-79). The excess and opulence of the costumes would accurately mirror, for example, the lavishness of Scarlett O'Hara's antebellum and Reconstruction-era lifestyle or the extravagances of Marie Antoinette through Norma Shearer's wardrobe in the 1938 film. Articles contemporary to GWTW also use these

²¹ See <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/web/gwtw/wardrobe/>.

types of statistics to overwhelm, awe, and confirm the “historical truths” being presented to the spectator.²²

These statistics (along with the fact that the patterns were made directly from measurements of the originals) gives the Ransom Center replicas an aura of authenticity that exceeds reproductions produced by fans. It could be argued that there is a range in authenticity in reproductions, depending upon the amount of time spent, the quality of the materials used, the skill brought to the project, and the proximity of the reproduction to the original.²³ In addition, the institutional authority of the archive lends considerable credence to the Ransom Center reproductions. But it is worthwhile to look beyond institutionally sanctioned reproductions to the reproduction as an experiential, embodied item that can challenge the sole authenticity of the original.

2.8 AUTHENTICITY, EMBODIMENT, AND THE EVOLVING FILM COSTUME

Although impossible from a conservation standpoint for the original or institutional reproduction costume, embodiment and wear are activities that can accurately recreate the original function, if not necessarily the context, of the costume. Scholar Joan Entwistle has long argued for an emphasis on studies that place the costume

²² Lillian Churchill, “Modes à la Movies: Costume films bring back fashions of long ago.” *The New York Times Magazine*, January 7, 1940, 8-9, 18.; “Gone With the Wind Details Accurate,” November 26, 1939, *The Sunday American*, Atlanta, (clipping from Selznick Collection, 194.6); Norman Siegel, “Gone—Cost Huge Fortune,” January 23, 1940, Cleveland, Ohio (no associated paper name—photocopy from Selznick Collection), 194.7.

²³ One particular designer who creates GWTW reproductions calls attention to the time, effort, and quality of her creations, stating up front on her home page that she does not produce GWTW Halloween costumes; these are costumes for the serious collector. See <http://www.gwtw4ever.com/lifesizeindex.htm>.

within the context of the human body, as an essential component to the more abstract societal, political, and gender and image theories of costume and clothing (Entwistle, 2007). The embodiment, or physical wearing, of the costume is a functional, and one can argue, authentic expression of the costume.

Too much emphasis on embodiment, however, leaves the museum curator, conservator, and other museum professionals in the unfair position of hawkers of “dead frocks” on mannequins. What some may view as a “second life” for the garment in the museum is seen as a final death by others. The museum and archive is constantly charged with presenting “dead” or “lifeless” objects that inevitably lose meaning and context when taken off the human body and placed in a gallery. Designer Marc Jacobs has famously remarked, “I think clothes in a museum are a complete death”, and designer Karl Lagerfeld has referred to the Metropolitan Museum of Art as the “Necropolitan”, and refused to participate in the selection of clothes for a recent Chanel retrospective at the museum (Tomkins, 2013: 64).²⁴ Costume designer James Acheson told Deborah Landis that her exhibition idea for *Hollywood Costume* would be doomed to failure: “this exhibition will be nothing more than dead frocks on dummies” (Gage, 2012). It is also striking the number of recent articles that consistently use metaphors for clothing in museums or archives as dead or dying patients, or the archival space as a graveyard or mausoleum; on the flipside, other articles invoke the archive as a sterile, precious environment or shrine (Martin, 2013; Wilson, 2011; Yaeger 2012). Nevertheless, this is not a new observation. Elizabeth Wilson, in her study of fashion and modernity, *Adorned*

²⁴ “Marc Jacobs says ‘Fashion is Not Art’, (2007 November 12), *Los Angeles Times*, retrieved from <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/alltherage/2007/11/marc-jacobs-say.html>.

in Dreams, acknowledged this unease in the opening pages—the melancholy paradox of the unmoving garment and the absent body (Wilson, 1987:1-3); Anne Hollander also states that clothing has “no social but also no significant aesthetic existence unless it is actually being worn” (Hollander, 1978: 451). Fashion scholar Caroline Evans notes Charles Baudelaire’s nineteenth century observation of the morbidity and absurdity of the disembodied garment (Evans, 2009:154); 20th century designer Elsa Schiaparelli, known for her Surrealist garments, describes the short-lived life of the garment: “...as soon as a dress is born it has already become a thing of the past...A dress cannot just hang like a painting on the wall, or like a book remain intact and live a long and sheltered life.” (Schiaparelli, 1954: 59). One could argue in response to these claims that the garment does not spend the entirety of its life on the body (they do, in fact, hang in closets or on walls, lay in heaps on the floor, lie in boxes waiting to be unwrapped, etc.); compelling sociological studies exist that explore the complex relationships that women have with their unworn clothes (Banim, Maura, & Guy, 2001; Bye & McKinney, 2007). One could further the argument that the museum environment is not an artificial fictive environment, but a valid, alternative reality to the garment on or in proximity to the wearer.

As advocates for the preservation of clothing to be viewed and studied by designers, students, scholars, and other interested parties, the curator or conservator cannot consider live embodiment of a costume. The challenges of dynamically and safely presenting a garment are considerable, and are perhaps not fully realized by members of the public, who must agree or disagree to accept and benefit from the disembodied

garment before them. It is no wonder that the display of original or reproduced garments in live hands or on a live body creates so much excitement, such as Tilda Swinton's recent performance at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris entitled, "The Impossible Wardrobe." The actress held and interacted with significant garments from the Galliera museum of fashion, the extent depending upon her reaction to them. Swinton did not fully wear the garments, but handled them in variable modes of reverence and care with the white cotton gloves of the archivist (Holt, 2012). This performance can represent a creative compromise in public presentation between preservation and the garment's original function, though it is certainly not a common, possible, or affordable one for all collections or venues.

The curtain dress was recently reproduced and enthusiastically worn by a live model in 2012 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for the 100th anniversary celebration of Western Costume, the oldest costume shop in Hollywood, which also aided in creating costumes for principal, supporting, and extra actors for *GWTW* in 1939, and also received dispersed costumes from Selznick International Productions after the film was completed. For this gala celebration at LACMA, Western Costume, which still actively functions as a costume shop, reproduced several well-known or landmark costumes in the history of Hollywood film. The curtain dress, as reproduced in 2012 by Western Costume, is a hybrid form of an accurate reproduction of the physical original garment as it exists today, in the tassel belt and bodice, while the skirt most closely resembles the drape in Plunkett's sketches of the dress and stills of Vivien Leigh on the set, as she hitches up her skirts to create several folds on either side (Tschorn: June 21,

2012). Bobbi Garland, archivist at Western Costume, describes the clothing at Western Costume as clothes that “work for a living,” including the famous “buckboard dress” from that resides in the collection and has since been altered, worn, rented and displayed for nearly the last 75 years (Tschorn, June 17, 2012). For the active costume shop, embodiment is an essential function of the film costume.

Embodiment of the costume by personages other than the film character, or original actor, can lend itself to an evolving narrative of the costume. Memorably, American comedienne Carol Burnett imagined the iconic curtain dress outside of the “original” film narrative and mise-en-scène in her infamous 1976 televised parody, “Went With the Wind”, wearing an absurd, reimagined curtain dress designed by Bob Mackie. Photographer/artist Yasumasa Morimura has similarly taken the curtain dress outside of the narrative and the film frame to blur the lines between the male and female actor (Morimura is a man dressing as iconic female stars), the national boundaries of icons, and audience expectations of the “framing” of such icons. In his photograph, *Self Portrait (Actress)/After Vivien Leigh 3*, Morimura, wearing a reproduction of the curtain dress, replaces the muddy streets of Atlanta for a generic “glamour shot”-type background, suggesting nowhere or anywhere. Yasumasa Morimura’s performative photographs and Carol Burnett’s sketch comedy foreground GWTW’s iconic costumes outside of the “official” or “original” film narrative and film frame. In a similar vein, reproductions worn by film fans and costume enthusiasts continue to extend the film narrative and aura of the original costume in ways that challenge the sole authority of the screen or the physical, analogue costume.

2.9 THE SPECTATOR/FAN AND THE CULTURE OF REPRODUCTION

Gone With the Wind is neither the first film for which reproduction costumes or promotional items were created, nor the last film to have a devoted and active fan culture. Costume designer Andrea Galer still produces and sells a high-quality reproduction coat worn by Richard E. Grant's malcontent character Withnail from the 1986 cult film *Withnail and I*. Fans in London recently competed for a chance to win the coat through the most impressive performance of a scene re-enacted from the film. The successful embodiment and recreation of the character of Withnail in costume would lead to possession of the coveted reproduction costume, to be worn and enlivened in real life by a flesh-and-blood fan (Smith, 2005). The original costume is thus reimagined and reworn in a real-world context that references, but lives outside of, the film narrative.

Reproduction costumes related to a film franchise with another strong fan base, *Star Wars* (1977), demonstrates the sometime unstable relationship between original and reproduction. A case recently heard in the UK Supreme Court concerned a dispute between director George Lucas and Andrew Ainsworth, an industrial and prop designer who created the stormtrooper helmets and costumes for *Star Wars*; the line between the power of the original and the assumed diminished power of the reproduction becomes blurred in such cases of intellectual property and copyright, especially when financial gain is involved. Ainsworth had been selling replicas of the helmets and the costumes to customers for about \$2,500 per costume. Ainsworth lost his case in the U.S., and can no longer sell replicas in the U.S. market. Lawyers for Lucas argue that Ainsworth does not own the copyright to the design, the helmets and costumes are works of art in their own right, and that they qualify as "sculpture" and are therefore protected under U.K.

copyright laws. Lucas lawyers also attempted to draw a direct parallel between the masterful replication of the costumes and the copyrighted two-dimensional sketches and paintings of the stormtroopers. In this sense, Lucasfilm is nearly simultaneously arguing that the replicas are copies, or rip-offs, of the “legitimate” copyrighted material, and that the copies are the originals. However, during the first case in the lower courts in 2008, the Lucasfilm vice president was quick not to alienate the practice of fan reproductions:

[the ruling] makes it clear that Lucasfilm and George Lucas are the rightful owners of the copyrights related to Star Wars. We do not intend to use this ruling to discourage our fans from expressing their imagination, creativity, and passion for Star Wars through the costumes and props they make for their personal use. Rather, we see the court’s decision as reaffirming that those who seek to illegally profit from Star Wars will be brought to task (Williams, 2008).²⁵

Again, the crux of the matter of reproductions seems to lie with the proximity to the original or to specialized information that continues to be the property of the studio. Fans generally are not former staff who worked on the set, nor have they been able to take measurements and notes directly from the original stormtrooper helmet and body armour. A fan reproduction that is nearly indistinguishable from an original appears to

²⁵ See also on www.guardian.co.uk, Ben Child, (2011, March 8) “George Lucas strikes back over stormtrooper copyright, 8 March 2011, retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/mar/08/george-lucas-stormtrooper-star-wars-copyright>; and Sam Jones, (2008, April 9) “Director sues over sale of replica film costumes,” retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/apr/09/news.culture>; Stuart Baran (2011, 8 March), “UK supreme court to rule on stormtrooper copyright”, retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2011/mar/08/supreme-court-star-wars-copyright>.

be illegal only if that fan makes a considerable financial profit and is privy to the specifications of the originals.

Pam Cook discusses the importance of the fan's desire (and her own) to replicate items from a favorite historical fiction film in terms of not only connecting with the character but also being an active participant, not mere passive viewer, of the film:

Confronted with an image of the past, a spectator may appreciate its beauty, contest its accuracy, or want to acquire a copy of it. The first requires an aesthetic judgment, the second historical knowledge, while the third may involve considerable persistence in obtaining a satisfactory facsimile. A case in point are my own attempts to track down a copy of the earrings worn by Phyllis Calvert in *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (1944), which have been continually frustrated.

If I were lucky enough to find and wear those facsimile earrings, I would have collected a highly prized memento that would connect me with someone else in another time and place, thus closing the gap between myself and the past, and I would have retrieved a little piece of exotica that might magically transform my own environment, endowing me with the rebellious spirit of its original wearer (Cook, 2005: 222).

Cook goes on to concede that such desires are motivated by “consumerist impulses, but those impulses do not seem so very far removed from those motivating historical research, which must also involve an imaginative leap across time and place.” Quoting Cook's observation and introspection at length is instructive for beginning an examination of fan reproductions produced and consumed by fans of the character of Scarlett O'Hara.

2.10 THE FAN REPRODUCTION AND THE GWTW COSTUMES

The reproduction holds a unique place in the history of the GWTW costumes. Enthusiastic communities of GWTW fans, or "Windies" as they have named themselves, produce and consume exacting and detailed reproduction costumes from the film, often with details tweaked for individual taste (Severson, 2011).²⁶ Replication of Scarlett's costumes both through commercial and home production has always been a huge part of the "costume culture" of the film, beginning with the blockbuster premiere in Atlanta, Georgia.²⁷ Research into the publicity surrounding the release of the film in 1939 reveals that the public relationship with the costumes has always been strong and has been encouraged since the film's inception.

Atlanta, the city that figured so dramatically in the film (in the "burning of Atlanta" sequence and as the backdrop for the appearance of the iconic "curtain dress") and was the home city of author Margaret Mitchell, planned a three-day extravaganza of events for the city and the Hollywood stars that lead up to the film's premiere on December 15, 1939 (from which the film's African-American actors, Hattie McDaniel and Butterfly McQueen, were prominently excluded). Included in these festivities (and duplicated in other cities such as Philadelphia) was a "Cinderella" contest in which debutantes and Junior League members vied for the chance to be "Atlanta's own Scarlett O'Hara," and snare the opportunity to wear the cherished original "barbeque" dress to the

²⁶See www.scarlettonline.com for links to *Gone With the Wind* reproduction costume sites, Scarlett 'look-a-likes', and images of reproduction costumes worn by fans.

²⁷Fifty years later, Ted Turner, on the anniversary of the film's release, held a gala "reunion" and event in Atlanta, and commissioned collector and designer Gene London to recreate costumes from the film, including the curtain dress. These reproductions did not appear to be exact replicas of the costumes, but varying interpretations of the gowns. See http://www.readingpublicmuseum.org/museum/exhibits/exhibitions/magic_of_hollywood.php

gala ball where Atlanta's elite and the GWTW stars would attend. The girl whose measurements most closely resembled those of Vivien Leigh would be declared the winner. Young women were encouraged to imagine themselves not only in the role of Scarlett O'Hara, but in the clothes of Scarlett O'Hara. In addition to the appearance of an original GWTW costume at the ball, additional Scarlett costumes, including the curtain dress, were on display adjacent to the gala ballroom with accompanying "period" jewelry, under armed guard supervision. The costumes would continue to be dispatched on "exploitation" tours throughout the nation for another year. David O. Selznick, realizing the visual power of the costumes themselves (and the detrimental effect their display could have on "robbing the picture of its costume value and whatever thrill there is for women audiences as each costume appears") was sparing with the number of costumes on display at any one venue. The "barbeque" dress would continue to be worn by lucky "Scarletts" for high profile events in major American cities (and even traveling as far as Buenos Aires), as well as be widely copied and sold in department stores.²⁸ Through the sale of GWTW-inspired garments and patterns (Emery, 2001; LeValley,

²⁸"Six Belles Seek to be 'Scarlett' in Gown Contest (Junior Leaguers, Debutantes Beseige Chairman in Attempt to Wear Film Costume)", (1939 November 25) *The Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Saturday, page 2 (photocopy from Selznick Collection, Harry Ransom Center, 194.6); "Elaborate Gowns to be Exhibited," (1939, November 26), *The Sunday American*, (no page number available, photocopy from Selznick Collection, 194.6); "Philly's 'Scarlett' Writes of Her Most Glorious Day," (1940, January 19) (no newspaper information available, photocopy from Selznick Archive, 194.7; Rhea Seeger, "Gone With the Wind Gowns Revive Elegance," (1940, January 21) *Chicago Sunday Times*, (photocopy from Selznick Collection, 194.7); cable to "KS" from "DOS" (David O. Selznick), November 21, 1939.

1987: 84-85), women were encouraged not only to envision themselves in the clothes of Scarlett O'Hara, but to actively make and wear the garments.²⁹

Helen Taylor, in her 1980s ethnographic study of GWTW female fans, includes a brief chapter on “bringing GWTW home” in the form of replicas and memorabilia (Taylor 1989: 27-31). Taylor has noted that the “openness” of the ending appealed to female readers and allowed them to imagine different possibilities for the narrative. In creating their own replicas of beloved costumes from the film, fans wish to “wear” Scarlett and in a sense transcend the film narrative to include their own experiences with those of their admired heroine. From time to time fans send photos of their gowns to the Ransom Center, or inquire as to what materials may be used on the gowns so they can feel they are faithfully creating their own reproduction. Fans proudly display in their homes the reproduction gowns (usually of the curtain dress or the “barbeque” dress) they have either made themselves or purchased. A good replica is not necessarily a “Disneyland-ification” of the original, but something that is personal, cherished, admired, and, in many cases, created by the fan. In discussing the importance of replicas and memorabilia for the GWTW fan, Taylor indirectly acknowledges that the text of the novel and the image of the film should not be the only experiences and sensations privileged by fans (or, it could be argued, the authority of the “the original” gowns). Reproductions by fans demonstrate the ability of the reproduction to transcend the dominant medium of the film narrative and the original costume’s context.

²⁹Walter Plunkett himself advised David O. Selznick on possible promotional tie-ins for *Gone With the Wind*-related garments and accessories. See David O. Selznick Collection, memo dated November 14, 1939, 193.9, Harry Ransom Center.

Scarlett's story becomes part of a personal history, connecting the individual to a strong and resilient, if flawed, female character (Taylor, 1989: 94-108), the “Golden Age” of Hollywood, an expression of nostalgic “Southern hospitality” or simply a nostalgia for childhood memories of watching the film with friends and family. A discussion of these desires is beyond the limits of this paper, but the point can be made that the reproduction can represent an authentic experience for the maker, the wearer or the viewer who contemplates the reproduction costume either in the home or in the gallery setting. It can be argued that the reproduction is part of the narrative –and history –of the *Gone With the Wind* costumes.

2.11 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There can be an active exchange that can take place between the original and reproduction costume—the rediscovery of the design and construction, a direct experience of ruptures or discontinuity with the past, and the interrogation of the original costume. Authenticity is constantly in flux as objects change, and views towards the desired state of the object change. Reproducing an original garment can reveal the limits of authenticity—revealing what is and is not there, and what can never be recovered—the “true”, original garment.

Beyond aura, indexicality, or institutional authority, the originals are evidentiary of a life of a costume both beyond and within the film frame, and through viewing and studying its details one can see the work of Plunkett and his staff as well as evidence of its subsequent social and institutional life. Conversely, reproductions also represent the

evolving life of the costume within and beyond the film frame. And although they are nearly 25 years old and have fragility issues, the reproduction GWTW costumes will continue to play an important role in both delighting audiences and in ensuring the stability of the originals post-conservation.

The “barbeque” dress, a costume much beloved by fans and worn by Scarlett O’Hara during the first half of the film, represents a succinct expression of the complementary nature of the original and reproduction costume. The costume, currently held at the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History, exists in true hybrid form, as both an original (the bodice) and reproduction (the skirt, remade by Plunkett at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the previous owner of the dress, before his death in 1982).³⁰ It must have been poignant for Plunkett to revisit his work 40 years later and contribute work that has allowed the costume to continue to be enjoyed by viewers. Reproductions can challenge the notion of the original in terms of “aura,” audience enjoyment, and questioning the dominant narrative of the film or the authority of the museum/archival object. The original and reproduction both have value and can be complementary to each other, and can also exist as legitimate objects in their own right.

³⁰Plunkett also “refurbished” the five costumes in the Selznick Collection; see Wead, 1983, p. 62.

Chapter 3: Authenticity and the Digital Garment

3.1 AUTHENTICITY AND THE DIGITAL GWTW COSTUME

If the analogue reproduction can challenge the sole authenticity of the original garment, can the seemingly immaterial digital reproduction do the same? The GWTW costumes have lived a varied online existence beyond the websites, blogs, and social media sites of the museum or archive. Images of the costumes online have often taken the form of reposted images of the Ransom Center reproductions, or those costumes produced by fans. By contrast, images of the original garments have not circulated much beyond screen grabs or stills from the film. This is largely because institutional images of the original costumes were unavailable, or nonexistent. Keith Trumbo photographed the curtain dress for the exhibition catalog *Hollywood Costume: Glamour Glitter Romance!* in 1976, referenced in Chapter 2, but this image (McConathy & Vreeland, 1976:163) appears to have circulated little online, likely because of copyright restrictions or unfamiliarity with the exhibition. Only one image of the original gown, photographed by the Ransom Center circa 1983, has been used sparingly for public viewing. Recently it was used to publicize the 2010 conservation campaign for the costumes through the Center's website, blog, and Facebook platforms. The image was chosen because it was the only institutional photograph of the curtain dress in existence at the time. This same image was reproduced and distributed widely in analogue, postcard form for the *Hollywood Costume* exhibition.

Online, this image of the original curtain dress has appeared sporadically, and the discrepancy between it and the onscreen image is notable, as noted in Chapter 2 (in addition to the discoloration, the gown in the Ransom Center image has no underpinnings to create the correct, exaggerated “bell” shape of the skirt). It has also appeared on non-institutional web pages with “added” green color, manipulated with Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator, much akin to its green-filtered, analogue state in the *Hollywood Costume* exhibition.³¹ As previously discussed, the “authentic” or desired state of the costume is negotiated—not fixed—with the addition or subtraction of analogue or digital color.

The image that has circulated the most in recent years is the reproduction curtain dress, photographed for the 2001 exhibition catalog, *From Gutenberg to Gone With the Wind: Treasures From the Ransom Center*. This image often is mistaken for the original costume. One fan proudly juxtaposes an image of her self-produced curtain dress (“my dress”) alongside the reproduction dress (“real dress”) on her reproduction costume blog.³² This page links to another site that displays screen grabs or still photographs from the film alongside an image of the “original” Ransom Center reproduction dress. The frequency and ubiquity of the reproduction dress across the Web, along with its similarity to the color of the onscreen gown, can render it synonymous with “the real thing” for some viewers.

³¹ See <http://realastrologers.com/when-the-going-gets-tough-the-tough-get-resourceful>

³² See http://www.jedigal.com/Costume_Blog/Entries/2008/4/20_Curtain_Dress_from_Gone_With_The_Wind.html.

New image sharing sites such as Pinterest and Polyvore encourage the proliferation and new juxtapositions of images of the curtain dress in the online sphere.³³ Interestingly, the argument has been made that the reproduced image reinforces, rather than diminishes, the aura of the original object through its ubiquity and familiarity (Walsh, 2007:29). An encounter with the “real thing” can be considered even more powerful, or more meaningful, after repeated virtual exposures to the given object.

Thus far this study has explored possible definitions of authenticity surrounding the original and reproduction film costume: aura, the material object, the act of creation, the act of wearing/embodiment, and audience emotional response. This chapter will explore the limitations and possibilities of the digital reproduction in online digital image collections of fashion and dress. It should be noted here that the images to be discussed are fashion garments, not costume in a film/performance context, as has been discussed up to this point.³⁴ The primary reason for focusing on fashion items is simply that there are more images and data available for study; many museums with online digital collections do not collect, or minimally collect, film costume. For example, the focus of the Fashion Institute of Technology’s collection is high fashion and couture; their online database retrieves only seven garments of “film costume”, six created by Gilbert Adrian (who was also a couturier) and one created by John Galanos (whose ready-to-wear work was likened to couture). There is only one film costume retrieved from the Metropolitan

³³ For example, see <http://pinterest.com/kach5503/fashion-costumes/>; another page with the Ransom Center reproduction dress has many examples of how members “style” this item, creating digital collages with the dress, film stills, and accessories such as boots and purses. Retrieved from http://www.polyvore.com/gone_with_wind-scarletts_green_curtain/thing?id=19840009.

³⁴ Additionally, “fashion”, “dress” and “costume” can be used interchangeably; in this context, “costume” can also refer to a historical garment from a particular decade or time period.

Museum of Art's collection database, a costume designed by Travis Banton and worn by Anna May Wong in the 1934 film *Limehouse Blues* (accession number 2009.300.1507); another garment in the Metropolitan's collection worn by Anna May Wong will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Despite the differences in context and interpretation between fashion and film costume, the two types of garments are nonetheless textile-based, three-dimensional garments that provide the same challenges in terms of display, or digital and analogue reproduction and representation.

Although it is accepted in this paper that the physical garment can never be fully replicated by a digital representation, this chapter will argue that the digital image can create meaningful perspectives on and connections between the "original" analogue costume and the digital "reproduction." The database record can illuminate more about the biography, interpretation, and lifespan of an object beyond a single, face-to-face encounter with a garment in a museum gallery.

3.2 THE GARMENT AND THE IMAGE

The image of the fashion garment (or indeed the film costume) has always been of paramount importance to the interpretation, commodification, popularization, and mythology of fashion and its attendant luminaries—be they designers, celebrities, actors, or artists. Much of fashion criticism and scholarship revolves around the fashion image, and not necessarily the clothes themselves. One of the mid-twentieth century milestones in studies of fashion, Roland Barthes's *The Fashion System*, typifies this disconnect from the physical object through its focus on "the written garment" as it is described or imaged

in fashion magazines.³⁵ While Barthes's focus on fashion concerned semiotic theory, Anne Hollander's *Seeing Through Clothes* analyzed clothing through its image depiction in painting and sculpture (with a brief foray into costume and the filmic image). Caroline Evans, in her study of late twentieth century fashion's fascination with morbidity, mortality, and spectacle, notes that our current increasing reliance on the virtual demands greater emphasis on the image (Evans, 2009: 303).

As the number of images proliferates exponentially online, the need to validate the experience of the garment firsthand appears more urgent. Curators and conservators must justify the ongoing existence of collections in their care, especially those items that are fragile and demand considerable resources and attention (Palmer, 2006); professional fashion critics cite not only the importance of in-person experience of garments but the socialization and human interaction that springs up around the spectacle and imagery of the fashion show, to distinguish themselves from the efforts of armchair, amateur fashion bloggers (Ruttenberg, 2013).³⁶ The film image is perhaps more studied, revered, or accessible than the film costume itself, as has been discussed in Chapter 1 ("If you want

³⁵ In a later reflection on *The Fashion System*, Barthes acknowledges that he had to make a "choice" between focusing on real clothing or written clothing and recognizes the limitations of his choice, but concludes that, "...the system of actual clothing is always the natural horizon which fashion assumes in order to constitute its significations: without discourse there is no total Fashion, no essential Fashion. It thus seemed unreasonable to place the reality of clothing *before* the discourse of Fashion: true reason would in fact have us proceed from the instituting discourse to the reality which it constitutes." See Barthes, 1990: x-xi.

³⁶ At the same time, the Metropolitan Museum of Art recognized the prevalence and importance of blogs and online images to the dialogue on fashion with their exclusively online exhibition, "Blog.mode: addressing Fashion," in 2007. Viewers were invited to leave comments on each of the garments or accessories chosen for the exhibit. See Rubin, 2007.

to see the dresses watch the movie”). Regardless of where one stands, the importance of the image to analogue fashion and film costume cannot be underestimated.

It is significant to remember that the physical three-dimensional garment does not have a fixed state—depending upon how it is stored, displayed, or handled, the garment will always “look” different. How a costume is lit, placed on a mannequin of a particular style, how it is shaped and supported beneath with underpinnings will consistently lead to changing interpretations and contemplation of a “new” garment—it is never in stasis, whether flat, on a body, or on a dress form. In a similar vein, the digital image of a physical, malleable object is yet another interpretation and manifestation of that object. In her discussion of the virtual image, Anne Friedberg notes that “...the virtuality of an image does not apply direct mimesis—but a transfer—more like metaphor—from one plane of meaning and appearance to another.” The fashion garment in a museum online digital image collection can be viewed as Friedberg’s “transfer” or “metaphor”, or a “simulacrum”—an image that has “no referent in the real world” (Friedberg, 2006: 1-11). If the image is interactive (zoom functions, 360-degree views, detailed “hotspots”, variants in lighting from one area to another), then the digital garment is remade and experienced differently each time it is accessed and viewed. In other words, the demand that the digital image of a garment be a direct translation of all the physical attributes of that garment is an unrealistic one, or murky and unresolved, at best.³⁷

³⁷This point also echoes 20th century discussions surrounding 19th century beliefs concerning the “truth” of the photographic image, and that the photograph imparts a complete, wholly objective, or accurate representation of the person/thing the photograph displays. It is widely accepted today that photographic images (as well as archives and representations of archival materials) are mediated objects (Schwartz, 2000; MacNeil, 2005).

3.3 THE MATERIALITY OF THE DIGITAL IMAGE

Despite the obvious material differences between the digital garment and the analogue garment, recent scholarship has emphasized the materiality of the digital image, and has made this distinction to avoid a material/immateriality binary opposition between the “real” and “online” object (Cameron, 2007; Smith, 2003). The digital image is a file with physical, unique properties—a distinct entity from the analogue garment it represents.

In rare cases, the online digital image is the only accessible physical representation of the analogue garment, or the only existing image of the object itself. This is an example where the physical garment and the digital image merge into a single entity. The digital image, and the online means of access to it, becomes “the original.” The website for the Deliberately Concealed Garments Project (see Appendix for more information) hosts a database of images of garments that were intentionally and ritualistically interred in walls, doorways, fireplaces, and other transitional spaces in homes throughout the UK. These garments were usually uncovered during the course of renovation to a property where walls were improved or removed. Depending upon the owner’s wishes, the garment could either be re-interred, discarded, or given to an institution for care and study. In the first two cases, the image and its inclusion on the digital image database becomes the only accessible (or existing) image, record, and representation of that object. (Buelow and Eastop, 2012).

One of the obvious benefits most often cited by those who discuss fashion and dress digital image collections is the opportunity to display detailed images of a garment without the garment itself being handled and subjected to possible damage and

manipulation (Martin, 2003; Zeng, 1999). The digital image can ensure that the physical garment is protected. Yet the digital garment does not have to be defined as a mere shadow of the “real thing”—it can provide much more than the role as second-hand surrogate. The existence of precise, high-resolution photography can extend a viewer’s experience of the garment beyond the gallery setting, or even an intimate, in-person viewing. Conservation guidelines for lighting objects with the lowest lumen output possible in the gallery setting complicate the matter of seeing detail in person (Michalski, 2011). Digital images of interiors and details can provide a surprisingly more intimate experience with the object, and can recreate or approximate the experience of embodiment through innovative digital photographic techniques. For example, RTI, or Reflectance Transformation Imaging, a technique that captures images using simultaneous light sources at once, can “reveal surface information that is not disclosed under direct empirical examination of the physical object.”³⁸ Digital images have the potential to directly amplify and enhance our ability to see and understand an object.

Walter Benjamin would likely argue that the transference of the “life” of the object from the physical to the digital is impossible, just as he did not think this possible from the original to the reproduction, be it a three-dimensional or photographic one. Likewise, the “Florence Declaration”, a statement by The Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz /Max-Planck-Institut on the future of preservation of analogue photography, declares that the digital reproduction cannot produce the “entire biography”, nor the “tactile aspect”, of the photograph.³⁹ While this is unarguably true, it is possible for the

³⁸ Retrieved from <http://culturalheritageimaging.org/Technologies/RTI/>

³⁹ Retrieved from http://www.khi.fi.it/pdf/florence_declaration_en.pdf

digital record to come very close to reproducing biography and the tactile nature of the physical object. I will demonstrate this through the exploration and analysis of international and national online collection databases of fashion in the English language, particularly the records of two extensive collections that hold large amounts of data and are influential in setting standards for the museum community—The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA) and Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). These institutions are often cited first in a list as the two museums with exemplary digital image collections, largely due to the volume of images available and accompanying quality of metadata (Sauro, 2009; Mida, March 2013). In exploring these image collection databases, I became particularly intrigued with records that display multiple images taken across time. For a complete list of databases consulted (which was largely taken from a resource list of online digital image databases on the Fashion Institute of Technology website, “Costume and Textile Collections Online”), see the Appendix.⁴⁰

3.4 THE DIGITAL COLLECTION

Published studies of digital image collections of fashion and dress have focused mainly on the challenges of applying existing metadata standards to digital records, as well as the organization of content, search parameters and retrieval, and the quality of the digital image (Martin, 2003; Zeng, 1999). The desires of users have also been briefly discussed, the most prevalent concern being access to high-resolution images with high-quality detail (Martin, 2003). These studies concur that the importance of digital image

⁴⁰ The list on the Fashion Institute of Technology website can be retrieved from <http://fitnyc.edu/3425.asp>.

databases for research, protection of the original object, and new possibilities for presentation of objects must be acknowledged and harnessed for future relevance and use of collections (Sauro, 2009, Mida, March 2013). Yet no known published study has looked at the content of text and images within the database record for a fashion collection and how the viewer may begin to extrapolate information beyond the discovery of the object or the given specifications and information about the object itself; this has been done with studies of photography and film databases and particular items found within such online archives (Conway, 2010; Ricci, 2008). Some of the cases to be argued for the strength of the digital image in an online digital fashion collection are the illumination, rather than the obscurity, of the biography and history of the object through the digital image and database record, as well as the creation of an archival biography of the object (Palmer, 2006) that can include the history of changing museum practice and curatorial decision-making.

Online databases of fashion and clothing collections with variable numbers of records, ranging from a few hundred to tens of thousands, and differing search parameters have proliferated over the last 10 years. The time and effort involved in photographing, researching, and applying metadata to objects makes creating an online database with a substantial number of records a formidable task. Depending upon financial and staff resources, costumes may be thoughtfully mounted on forms or mannequins and shot in a carefully lit studio, or shot on a flat surface or on hangers. Introductory pages for the databases for the University of North Texas's fashion collection as well as the University of Alberta note the ongoing digitization and research

of objects in the collection—the database and the accompanying records are works in progress as more objects are added and future research can augment or change the existing record; for specific examples of how incomplete records are handled by the Powerhouse Museum, see these records for flight attendant’s uniforms (items 94/70/1-21).⁴¹ The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum takes a playful approach to their public alpha collection database as a work-in-progress (the tagline for their database is, “This is our stuff, we have lots of it”); a link to the image and record list for the exhibition *Fashioning Felt*, is followed by, “there were 75 objects in this exhibition but right now we can only show you 10 of them.”⁴² Cooper-Hewitt, the Powerhouse Museum, and the Brooklyn Museum collection databases encourage audience input in assisting with this task, with opportunities to tag, add photos, comment, and provide contextual information about the objects. Even for museums with much smaller collections than the tens of thousands of fashion items at the MMA or the V&A, for example, the creation and maintenance of records and images requires considerable time and resources.

Several sites implicitly acknowledge the importance of an image—any image, in any state of presentation—to the viewer; the Indianapolis Museum of Art database displays a variety of images in various states of presentation: on a mannequin (shot in a studio), in the gallery, in an office or lab, or in the process of being photographed for item documentation.⁴³ Search options on various databases are given for records “with images

⁴¹ <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database>

⁴² <http://collection.cooperhewitt.org/exhibitions/>

⁴³ For examples, see records for items 2004.53; 1984.83A-B; 74.352; and 80.285A, respectively. Retrieved from the collection database, <http://www.imamuseum.org/collections/browse-collection/textile-fashion-arts>

only” (University of Alberta; Kent State University, for example), the option to include records “without images” (as it is assumed that the default preference is records with images), and even the option to show only items that are currently on view at the museum (Los Angeles County Museum of Art; MMA). The V&A also has an option for “best quality records including image and detailed description.” The Drexel University online fashion collection is made up exclusively of high-resolution, detailed, 360-degree viewable images. As a result of this commitment, less than a few hundred records, including gallery views of two exhibitions, are available for view on the database.

But can the digital database approximate the experience of seeing “the original”? Is it merely a pale referent to “the real thing”? A curatorial project created in 2010 at the V&A by dress curator Judith Clarke and psychologist Adam Philips provides a useful framework for thinking about the storage of costume. Philips provided definitions for particular words (“plain”; “measured”; “comfortable”), and Clarke interpreted these definitions with objects (some from the V&A collections, some commissioned specifically for the exhibition) within spaces in Blythe House, the collections storage building of the V&A, a place rarely if ever seen by the public. In this space, Clarke says she was free to wonder, “what are we storing when we are storing dress?” Online digital collection databases can be thought of as a form of “storage” for the objects in an institution’s collections—the records contain the images, materials, provenance, measurements, and other associated metadata about the object. The database is essentially a storage space that can be accessed and viewed by the public in manner that would be impossible in the physical, three-dimensional world. Even an authorized staff member at

the MMA, for example, could not physically look at and responsibly handle hundreds of garments in one day and manipulate them to see interior details, the back view of garments, etc. Although Clarke's and Philips's project deals directly with three-dimensional physical objects and real space, some of the scenarios and ideas with which they grapple can be applied to the study of digital image collections; these will be discussed in turn in this section. Clarke speaks of "a double loss of life" of the garment in archival storage—it is both removed from the human body, as well as removed from public view. Online digital collections can help to demystify the archive and provide a connective pathway between the viewer on the outside and the garment inside the institution.

Clarke notes that in storage, visitors do not expect the garment to be "brought to life"; they expect it to be classified and cared for.⁴⁴ In the digital database record, the different iterations of the animated garment through photography for exhibition or publication, as well as more practical, less studied images capturing the physical attributes of the garment for the purposes of care and documentation, can be retained and discovered. The documentation of an object before and after treatment, or upon accession or in advance of a loan agreement are standard practices in conservation and museum work, but these images are not always available to the public.

For example, a search for an unusual object that yields narrow results, "chopine"—an elevated shoe worn by Venetian prostitutes, and later noblewomen, in the

⁴⁴Artists at MOMA's P.S.1 also considered the museum object in storage for the 1998 project and exhibition, *Deep Storage*—the storage crate is both "the carapace" and "the coffin". See Schaffner and Winzen, 1998, p. 12.

16th and 17th century—displays a range of photographs illuminating the changes in the object over time. The MMA search results in three records; one pair of chopines from the MMA collection, another two from the recent acquisition of the Brooklyn Museum of Art Costume Collection. Accession number 2009.300.1494a,b displays four photographs. The first two show the chopines in color, the last two are black and white, obviously older photographs than the color photos. The color photograph presents a pair of remarkably well-preserved shoes, embellished with silk flowers, a tassel, lace-like appliqué and edging in what appears to be metallic thread. The black and white photographs show a much different-looking shoe—the silk flowers on the vamp are creased and crushed, the fabric on the wedge appears puckered in places, the tassel threads hanging in front are coarse and twisted. One can zoom into both black and white and color images to a surprising amount of detail. It is revealed through comparison that the silk flowers and tassels have been steamed or manipulated in some way into a relaxed and natural shape, and the fabric on the upper and the wedge has either been completely replaced, or reoriented on the shoe to relieve puckers and looseness; in the black and white photograph, the grain of the fabric on the wedge is oriented in a different direction. While it is likely that these photos were not taken by a conservator for treatment documentation (perhaps for other documentation or publication), these photos achieve the same goal of tracing the changing object, and reveals that museum objects are never in a state of sterile, “lifeless” stasis, or of an arrested “original.”

A search for “chopines” on the V&A site retrieves three pairs. The accession number T.48&A-1914 tells the viewer that this particular pair was likely acquired in

1914. Like the MMA record, there are several images, in this case, six images. The first three images show the chopines with their impressive height against a grayish-black background, at slightly different angles to show the different designs in the punched leather, their orientation producing slight shadows on the flat surface. The last image, similar to the MMA image progression, is a black and white image, presumably from the time of accession, and shows the chopine in profile with a slightly misshapen upper and stains on the elevated sole (these conditions have been rectified, as shown in the later photographs). The two photographs between the current color photos and the oldest black and white photo are in color, with a much different feel and look than the others. A single chopine shoe is placed in profile on a highly reflective surface against a deep black background; the reverse image of the shoe is reflected beneath. In addition to the shoe, two small white feathers are included in the composition; these feathers rest on the mirrored surface near the shoe, their images also reflected. The image is very dramatic and somewhat theatrical; do the feathers refer to the now absent owner/wearer? Have these feathers dropped from the lady's fan, or headpiece? Are these feathers from a bird that have settled in the street, with which this lady's feet will never have contact? The second color photograph is a nearly identical composition, without the feathers. The difference between the first three color photographs and the following two color photographs reveal a change in curatorial presentation and display of an object. In the more recent photographs, the dramatic reflection is gone, along with the theatrical gesture of the feathers, for a seemingly more objective image with a standard gray matte background and surface; the latter image establishes a consistency that alludes to the

aesthetics and choices of the home institution as well as to a generalized expression of the image as a museum collection object. In addition to this rich visual institutional and object history, the V&A record lists the names of the exhibitions in which this pair of chopines have been displayed, plus extensive metadata and brief descriptive histories of chopines in general and for this particular pair.⁴⁵

To further this example, the scrutiny of images from another database record concerns a coat worn by Chinese-American twentieth century film star Anna May Wong, which, again, was acquired by MMA through the accessioning the Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection. This coat was discovered through a search for “coat”, yielding 2,397 results, or 40 pages of results with 60 images present on each page. A few records depicting “coats of arms” or painted Renaissance portraits of men and women wearing coats appears in the results (and extends the possible associations and connections between clothing and other media in the MMA collections), but the overwhelming majority of records retrieved were clothing and costume from the Costume Institute collection.

There are three photographs present on the record of this coat (accession number 2009.300.3564). It is not clear if all the photographs were taken at the Brooklyn

⁴⁵ It should be noted that depending upon the service used, the exhibition history and multiple images may not be available to the viewer. For example, looking up the chopines in the MMA collection via the digital image library ARTstor (<http://library.artstor.org/library/rlogin.html>) reveals only the initial color image of the object. A search for “chopine” on ArtStor retrieves eight records--two records for the MMA pair (2009.300.1494a,b), four other pairs in the MMA collection, and two records for a pair at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. What the record lacks in images it partially replaces in text, with a detailed material description of the chopines and a date for the color image (2007). Despite the inclusion of this valuable information on the record, without all of the images present one cannot see the significant alterations that have been done to this object during its lifetime. The representation of the object is frozen in time, in 2007 in particular, on the ArtStor database.

Museum, although it is relatively safe to assume that the black and white photograph is the oldest photograph and originated at the Brooklyn Museum. The first photograph to display represents a kind of simultaneous acknowledgement of the creator of the coat (couturier Madeleine Vionnet) and its owner (Anna May Wong); the presence of Ms. Wong is literally stitched into the lining of the coat with Chinese characters that spell out her name, and this significant detail is shown in the initial photograph. The second photograph shows the coat closed, and the finished line and silhouette as envisioned by Ms. Vionnet. The third and last photograph shows the coat on a mannequin from behind, along with the suggestion that Ms. Wong is wearing the coat, evidenced by the black bobbed wig on the mannequin's head. We are to assume that Ms. Wong is literally wearing the coat and has been caught in the action of taking a step forward with her right foot. This trio of photographs can represent the trend in curatorial representation in the twentieth century to suggest the abstracted presence of a real personage, rather than a literal representation that is perhaps too close to the conjuring of someone who is no longer alive. As late as the 1970s and 1980s, realistic mannequins with full features, wigs, and makeup were common in the museum exhibition, which then shifted to mannequins with minimal or no features (or headless) in the 1990s; the museum garment on the "authentic"-looking person became an uncomfortable, distracting presence (Taylor 2002: 42-47). Mannequins or dress forms from the 1990s to the present can include the complete erasure of the body; invisible supports hidden within and perfectly formed to the garment strongly evoke the shape of the body and how the garment defines it (Kite, 2010: 32, 36), while at the same time limbs, head, and any discernable human features

disappear from view.⁴⁶ This record of multiple forms of curatorial representation is but one example of many of this kind in the MMA database.

One of Judith Clarke's presentations, for the word, "plain" (for the V&A exhibition referenced earlier), included shapes covered in Tyvek cloth that evoked the silhouettes of famous Balenciaga gowns in the V&A collections. These dresses, as she imagined them to be displayed in a gallery space, were "stored" along with the surface space between them, also covered in Tyvek. She mused that she could save the curatorial intent of this particular configuration—a kind of lament that the curator's space of imagination and realization is always broken down at the close of an exhibition. Of course, an exhibition space and its objects can never be "saved" in storage—all the pieces come off the mannequins and go back to their boxes or hangers. It could be argued that the digital database record, with its multiple images of differing presentations and states of condition, as well as the accompanying text of exhibition history, can approximate the physical, three-dimensional impossibility of storing curatorial intervention and intent. These database images further assert that "the authentic" object and its presentation are constantly being considered, rethought, and negotiated, in both the analogue and digital environment.

⁴⁶ The "invisible body" presentation is especially prevalent at museums where the view of fashion as art fits with their institutional mission, such as LACMA (for example, see an image of a dress designed by Rei Kawakubo (accession no. M.2005.112) and a gown designed by Charles James (accession no. 55.75), at collections.lacma.org; this display method is also common in the display of haute couture as art form (for example, see gallery view of Betsey Bloomingdale's couture garments for the 2009 exhibition, *High Style: Betsy Bloomingdale and the Haute Couture* at the museum at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, <http://fidmmuseum.org/exhibitions/past/fashion/high-style-betsy-bloomingdale-and-the-haute-couture/>). It should be noted, however, that the use of headless, featureless, or "invisible" mannequins can also be seen at varied museums with differing missions—their use depends upon many factors, including budget and interpretive intent.

In contrast to the last two examples, digital database images can also represent the disembodied garment, displaced from a human form (or mannequin) and displayed on a hanger or on a flat surface. This type of presentation can be chosen for quick documentation purposes, or when the interior or construction of a garment is of interest. MMA accession record 2011.166a-c shows a three-piece Alexander McQueen ensemble consisting of a sleeveless, embroidered mesh blouse, and a jacket and skirt in a mesmerizing digital print representing the markings on the wings of a moth.

There are 16 images associated with this garment. The first seven photographs show the ensemble on a translucent mannequin from the front, side, and back views; additional details are also photographed with the garments on the mannequin. Images nine and ten are especially interesting for their emphasis on the interior of the garment. Placed off the form and flattened on a two-dimensional surface, these photographs do not necessarily exude lifelessness, but instead can bring the viewer back to the methods of creation of the garment—making the garment from two-dimensional pattern pieces on a flat surface. The disembodied garment can also aid in approximating for the viewer the imagined experience of how the garment may feel if it is placed on the body. Photographs of interiors and various details can evoke the sensation of chiffon, silk, lace, seams, labels, metal tags, zippers or necklines against the body. These online images may be the only chance that a viewer outside of museum staff can experience the visual or imagined tactile interior of a McQueen garment. These types of images recall Jane Gaines’s concept of being able to “see wearing” and “wear seeing” (Gaines, 2000: 173).

Additionally, images of interior labels can also act as an affirmation of the authenticity of a garment from a particular designer.

MMA is also experimenting with RTI techniques (mentioned earlier) to capture more detailed and nuanced surfaces of interiors (Scaturro, 2013). Equally intriguing are three 360-degree, rotating video images of CT scans of the structurally complex garments of designer Charles James on the Chicago History Museum digital database (see the Swan dress, 1960.319; the Pagoda jacket, 1978.145.1a-b; and the Tree dress, CC.1973.59). These image scans were taken at the Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago. The strange beauty of the simultaneous interior and exterior of two gowns and a jacket by James gives an entirely new perspective on the garment, and almost elevates the connection of the disembodied garment to the human body, due to its display that utilizes a method engineered to reveal the inner workings of human bones and organs. In this sense, the images of interiors of garments can not only illuminate construction methods and details hidden by conventional display on a mannequin, but they can also approximate the experience of touch (Palmer 2008: 52-53), something forbidden in the museum environment, and embodiment—the original function of the garment—as discussed in Chapter 2.

Ironically, the particular McQueen ensemble at MMA was likely never worn—the manufacturer or price tag remains attached—an ephemeral remnant that can also give clues to the life of the garment in the former owner's wardrobe. Either the garment was bought as a collector's piece, purchased by the owner and admired as a design but not as enjoyed when worn, or given as a gift and not worn. One MMA record displays images

of what is presumed to be the former owner in her coat designed by Claude Montana, standing in her kitchen (see accession record 2011.446a, b). Although the donor is named, and a photo (albeit without her facial features) of her wearing the coat is attached to the record, any specific details of how, when, and where the garment was worn throughout her ownership are not included; this is largely because at the Costume Institute at the MMA the emphasis for significance is placed on the garment and the designer (unless the personage is well-known or an exceptional collector, such as socialite Nan Kempner or collector and textile designer Iris Apfel—two exhibitions were organized around their personal collections at MMA in 2005 and 2006, respectively).⁴⁷ Even database records for garments worn by some of the most well-known personages of our time, such as an Alexander McQueen ensemble worn and donated by pop star Madonna, does not include any images or information concerning when and where Madonna wore the ensemble—the focus is squarely on McQueen and his design, which is worn by a featureless mannequin in the record images, standing in for Madonna (see accession number 2010.208.2a, b).

Conversely, a record in the Powerhouse Museum's database of a men's vest designed by Vivienne Westwood describes how, when, and where the former owner wore the vest (see "Vest by Vivienne Westwood", 1988, accession number 2003/196/1).⁴⁸ Much contextual information is given about Westwood's design and its significance

⁴⁷These exhibitions were *Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Apfel Collection* (2005-2006) and *Nan Kempner: American Chic* (2006-2008). For a discussion of the Apfel exhibition and the subversion of individual biography in the exhibition presentation, see Palmer, 2008: 55-57.

⁴⁸ Part of the "statement of purpose" for the Powerhouse Museum includes: "We base our exhibitions and programs on the ideas and technologies that have changed our world, and the stories of the people who create and inspire them." Retrieved from <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/about/>.

within fashion history and the Powerhouse collection, but also how the former owner interacted with the garment. Jac Vidgen, an organizer of “RAT” events, gay-friendly dance parties in Sydney in the 1980s and early 1990s, describes how he wore the vest with detachable sleeves, where he wore it, and what other accessories and garments he wore with it.⁴⁹ Tags attached to the record that can help contextualize the garment beyond its significance within the fashion timeline or design history include, “Dance”, “Gay and Lesbian culture”, “Youth Culture”, and “Dance Club Culture.”

For a discrete collection of 62 garments at the Museum, The Gene Sherman collection, the name of the donor trumps the name of the designers. Dr. Gene Sherman, a gallery owner and director, collected clothing and accessories for Japanese designers for over 20 years. Instead of the names of such Japanese designers as Issey Miyake or Yoji Yamamoto being the main organizing element of the collection or focus of the items, the fact they were collected, owned, and worn by an Australian woman takes precedence. Several records include lengthy quotes from Sherman about how she wore (or didn’t wear) the garment, and how she emotionally and intuitively responds to the appearance, touch, or wear of the garments.⁵⁰ Database record images display not only the object cataloged and collected by the museum, but supplemental garments that undoubtedly demonstrate how Sherman might have worn that particular garment (i.e., A Yoji

⁴⁹Likely assuming familiarity with an Australian audience, “RAT” parties were not defined in the database record, and warranted a quick online search: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rat_Parties

⁵⁰ For example, see “Skirt by Issey Miyake, 2000” (accession no. 2009/16/20) or “Skirt by Issey Miyake, 1993” (accession no. 2009/16/19) on the Powerhouse Museum collection database, <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/>.

Yamamoto skirt is shown on a mannequin with a non-collection garment such as a plain, unembellished black long-sleeved bodysuit or shirt).

All the preceding examples illustrate that there is much more to be gleaned from digital database images and accompanying records than an acknowledgement of the loss of physical contact with the original object. The digital garment can provide an entirely different experience of an object and much detail about its biography and historical context of creation and use (both before and after institutional ownership), interior construction details and the approximation of tactile sensation when the garment is worn, curatorial decisions—not only in object presentation but when items pass from one institution to another—the organizing principles and institutional view of the object’s primary meaning and value, and trends in exhibition and museum practice.

3.5 THE DIGITAL GARMENT—FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Interestingly, experiments in the last 15-20 years have attempted to merge through digital means the physicality of textiles with the largely immaterial notions of memory, emotion, and feelings of comfort and well-being. While “smart clothing” attempts to seamlessly combine the tangible electronic devices that are used by many people on an everyday basis (phone, computer, PDAs, etc.) into the clothing we wear, more recent experiments of human “intangible” emotion and clothing raise interesting questions surrounding privacy and perceived boundaries of socialization. Wearable garments have been created that will respond to emotional changes, be it anxiety or amorous feelings,

and produce subsequent scents that will calm down the wearer or attract a potential partner (Tillotson 2006). In an attempt to record human interaction on garments, engineered textiles fashioned into dresses retain on the surface the aftereffects and areas where a person has been touched, through sensors and lighting (Berzowska 2005). Experiments with fabric by forward-thinking designers like the duo Viktor and Rolf have played with the idea of the physical garment becoming totally subsumed by the digital. The use of blue screening, or chroma-keying, on blue fabric (a process used in filmmaking and television) allows a digital image to be projected onto the garment, obscuring the color and print of the fabric. When a blue screen environment surrounds this garment, it will completely dissolve into the projected digital images, further obscuring the shape of the garment as well as the silhouette of the human body. If and when such garments become mainstream in our society, catching up with the increased normalcy of interaction with “virtual” garments online for entertainment, curiosity, and scholarly research, it is interesting to contemplate what the future may hold for the online garment, the museum community, and its audiences.

The tools to create a 3-D museum garment through traditional means are already here—the Los Angeles County Museum of Art has downloadable patterns of garments in their collection available on their website that can be sized up and created by hand and machine. Are downloadable garments a future possibility, where one can download a garment to the surface material of one’s choice with a 3-D printer? Will the digital be able to approximate the tactile? What will be the “real” curtain dress if it can be downloaded to one’s printer at home?

The desire to add interaction and movement (QuickTime videos, 3-D environments) to the online digital database image may eventually translate into a requirement in order for museums to stay relevant to their perceived audiences (or to acquire new audiences). Nathalie Khan notes the perceived shift from the static fashion image to the “moving fashion image” or film—the longstanding fashion image is no longer still (Khan, 2013), or no longer in a fixed single point but in immersive, multi-dimensional environments (Karaminas, 2012). In the recent traveling retrospective of fashion designer Jean-Paul Gaultier’s work, “talking” mannequins with animated faces, created through projection onto the 3-D surface of the mannequin’s face, by turns greeted, appraised, and stared down visitors throughout the exhibition (Jasmin, 2012). However, such technology and theatrical design is in reach for museums with adequate funding and support for such endeavors, and that exhibit borrowed garments (i.e., non-collection material) from couture houses or private collections, with which liberties can be taken with movement and presentation that may not be practical or ethically sound for museum collection material (Palmer, 2008: 32-35).

Three-dimensional online body-imaging has led to experiments in “trying on” dresses in the fashion digital image database on a 3-D body (generic or your own) in a virtual “environment” contemporary with the garment (Martin, 2013). While this may demonstrate a subversion of a singular text-based (and image-based) narrative about the object authored by the museum and curator (Cameron and Robinson, 2007: 183-186), it may also create a suppression of the biography of the object, especially if a known person wore that particular garment (de la Haye, 2006:134-140). And with these presentations

the balance between scholarship, entertainment and engagement must be carefully considered. Is there an added benefit for the viewer or researcher when the garment is placed into an “authentic” historical virtual space? Do we learn more about the costume? An enthusiastically received exhibition at the Costume Institute in 2004, *Dangerous Liaisons*, of 18th century costume in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s French decorative art galleries certainly proved this was a successful approach. Various “tableaux vivants” of mannequins in compromising situations recalling de Laclos’s novel amongst furniture and decorative objects from the period were very effective in bringing these garments and their “wearers” close to an animated state of being. And yet in the digital realm, how does one decide on the correct “authentic” spatial context for the clothes? Does the digital background environment connect to the decade or century of the clothing, the history of the former wearer or owner, or the contemporary space of the viewer, as arguably the present is the only “authentic” time the present viewer can truly know and experience?

The institutional “gray space” of the museum background in a digital image acknowledges the “in-between” space that the garment represents in the museum collection---it is neither “here” (a 19th century garment fully at home in the 21st century) nor “there” (a 19th century dress that can be transported back to that time). The gray space can be an expression of Svetlana Boym’s “reflective nostalgia”, which accepts the distance between ourselves and the time period in which the object was created, as well as gestures to the displacement of the garment from its original context. This is, in a way, an honest assessment of the place of the garment in the museum and archive. For

example, the difference between the photograph of Alexander McQueen's "oyster dress" in the Metropolitan's collection and the oyster dress from the McQueen archive photographed for the exhibition catalog *Savage Beauty* provides an instructive juxtaposition. The MMA photograph on the digital database record (accession record 2003.462) presents the gown in the institutional grayish space on a mannequin gesticulating with one arm in the direction of the rows of organza shell-like shapes of the voluminous skirt, swept to the front to convey a sense of movement. A second, assumedly older photograph in the record shows the gown from the back, on an armless mannequin, in a relative state of stillness and repose. By contrast, the gown owned by the McQueen archive is not subject to the restrictions of museum objects, the most significant exception being that the gown can be worn and enlivened by a real person. The catalog photo (Bolton, 2011:166) shows the gown in dynamic form, blown by an invisible wind and responding to the movements of real limbs and breath (although the final photo is manipulated to seem as if the live model is a curiously lifeless mannequin made of painted wood or fiberglass, photographed against a gray background). This emotive and dramatic image does not appear in the digital database record, as it does not represent the same garment in the museum collection. The task for museum staff to make these garments "come alive" through photography or exhibition can be appreciated further when this in-between space—the "gray space" that negotiates between original function (wear) and preservation (non-wear)—is frankly acknowledged and represented.

While there will likely be recurring anxieties that digital or digital hybrid garments will replace or undermine the "real" garment in the museum, it is safe to

assume that the originals will endure alongside their digital transformations. No matter how compelling the virtual presentation, an encounter with the physical garment will always be desirable and compelling. As future fashion chroniclers assert, digital transference of textile designs, virtual clothing, and 3-D printed or spray-on dresses may result in “a cult for cloth, a nostalgia for the stitch and a desire for exquisitely handcrafted embellishments.” (Lee, 2005: 140). Viewers will undoubtedly crave physical access to these “real things” or such expressions in more mainstream fashion garments, akin to designer Raf Simons current line for the Dior fall/winter 2013-2014 collection. Simons has coined a portion of the collection “memory wear”, which consists of hand-embroidered reproductions of Andy Warhol’s early fashion illustrations from the 1950s. Although this is likely not a personal memory for many Dior customers (unless one happened to be friends with Warhol while he produced these drawings), Simons feels that he will imbue the wearer with a shared, collective fashion memory that is hand-crafted, historical, sincere, and thus, authentic.

Another area for future research in the study of meaning and authenticity of the digital garment is exploration of literature on the authenticity of digital records (both text and image) and recordkeeping. This body of research examines the different ways that authenticity can be contested, assured, or maintained in both the physical and intellectual properties of digital records (Council on Library and Information Resources, 2000; Hackett, 2003). These examinations can in turn aid in informing the discussion of what is the “real thing” or the “authentic” garment in online institutional representations of costume and clothing.

3.6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Virtuality is not something new in our late twentieth/twenty-first century existence. Because of the pervasiveness of computers and the internet today, it may be difficult for us to realize that through examinations of objects through mirrors, the immateriality of memory, the advent of photography (Schwartz, 2000: 11-22), and the window displays of 19th century department stores and the screen of the cinema, audiences for centuries have learned to sophisticatedly navigate across time and space through “virtual” spaces (Sandberg, 2003: 7, 145-146; Friedberg, 2009: 1-11). The digital image of a garment “stands in” for the real garment, but also becomes a new expression and experience of that garment, just as the analogue reproduction garment is a new, carefully considered garment of the analogue original. Digital images and their display online become more significant as vital documents to researchers, curators, conservators, and the interested public as the history of these garments becomes longer and longer, or, if the garments themselves and the continuation of their physical life ceases to exist.

Caroline Evans speaks of the physical body as “a ghostly fragment or tracing” that persists in digitally manipulated fashion photography (Evans, 2009: 211) The database can also prove to be a site of “digital ghosts” that persist long after they have departed from the museum. The Brooklyn Museum’s online database still displays images of gowns that have since left the institution and been transferred to MMA, such as various costumes from an 1972 exhibition entitled, “Costume Theater”, or an 1962

exhibition entitled, “The House of Worth.” The new digital life of these gowns can be traced to their new home at MMA through the digital database (for example, a 1920s gown, accession number 2009.300.1329, and a Worth coat, accession number, 2009.300.94). With the inclusion of past exhibition images from the Brooklyn Museum in the MMA database, these images also include “the ghosts...of past curators” (Clarke, 2010: 113). At the same time, garments photographed flat can evoke the ghost of future curators, who have yet to choose and interpret the objects for research and display. All of these images through time on a single database record can encapsulate the desired state of the costume to be preserved at a given time, representing the desired image of the original to be created and displayed through a carefully crafted reproduction image (or through an analogue costume, for that matter).

In a visually rich film, *The City of Lost Children* (1995), with wonderful costumes designed by Jean-Paul Gaultier, actor Dominique Pinon plays a scientist/deep sea diver who has created multiple clones of himself. Although the clones are exact copies of his physical visage and body, each clone possesses his own personality, motivations, and quirks. When the clones finally meet their creator, they are awestruck, and repeat to each other in reverent, surprised (and for the viewer, hilarious) tones: “L’originale! C’est l’originale!” One clone muses at one point that it must be “lonely” being the original—the burden of specialness and of being “the first.” This amusing encounter is an apt metaphor for the relationship between the original and subsequent reproductions. Despite the clones and their maker resembling each other and being all “the same”, they are all

equally independent of and dependent on one another; they are intertwined in similar or exact appearances, but can differ in action or intention.

The question posed at the beginning of this study, “do reproductions matter?,” can be answered with an undeniable, “yes.” Analogue reproductions are not static mimeses of the original, but differing, dynamic expressions of the original as envisioned by conservators and curators, designers, and film fans. Digital reproductions can be readily accessible to viewers outside the museum or archive walls, and can provide an alternative experience of the garment that details the history of use and interpretation, as well as physical details that can generally be seen only through a virtual image. The relationship between the original object and the reproduction, be it analogue or original, can be considered as less of a hierarchical one, and more as a dialogue between the two, constantly rethinking and negotiating interpretation, process, and the ever-evolving, desired state of “the original”, or “the real thing.”

Appendix: List of Fashion, Clothing, and Costume Collection Databases Consulted

Museum: University of Alberta (Clothing and Textiles Collection)

Collection Database URL: <http://collections.museums.ualberta.ca/cltx/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 23,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 18,102

Search Parameters: keyword or subject search; search "with images only"; or specific categories (i.e., gender, cultural region, etc.)

Special Features: interactive pie chart for browsing by category (i.e., "outerwear", "footwear"); randomly generated "Collection Facts", such as "4,518 items with images", or "140 items are named Coat"; multiple image views of object

Museum: The Brooklyn Museum

Collection Database URL: <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/collections/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): The Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection was transferred to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2009 (there are currently 8607 records in the MMA database for search results for The Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection within the Costume Institute).

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): There are still records/images available in the Brooklyn Museum database of items since transferred (see "Exhibitions" results for "costume" keyword search); also some costume items from the Arts of Africa, Americas, Contemporary, and Asian collections (for example, see item 22.1500a-b)

Search Parameters: keyword and tag searches; advanced search with differing parameters ("object", "artist", "exhibition", and "library and archive search")

Special Features: public tagging and commenting available; "record completeness" percentage scale (0-100%); multiple contemporary and historical object images on one record

Museum: Chicago History Museum (Costume and Textile Collection)

Collection Database URL: <http://digitalcollection.chicagohistory.org/cdm/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): over 50,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): Not listed, but 943 records available to browse on home page

Search Parameters: keyword search; advanced search with selected categories (i.e., “artists/makers”, “place of origin”, etc.); browse suggested topics ("Menswear"; "Christian Dior")

Special Features: Object history information and exhibition history included in display of records; CT scan videos of selected garments by designer Charles James; multiple image views of object

Museum: Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum

Collection Database URL: <http://collection.cooperhewitt.org/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): over 250,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 120,000 (13,761 results for costume and textiles)

Search Parameters: keyword search; "fancy" search with many parameters, including "colors"; "exhibitions"; "countries"; "random", etc.

Special Features: public tagging of items, can also link to viewer's own outside images of art or artist; records link to other related objects in the collection

Museum: Deliberately Concealed Garments Project

Collection Database URL: <http://www.concealedgarments.org/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): Not listed

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): Not listed, approximately 50-100 records

Search Parameters: garment type, material, or location; tags; or “recently added objects”

Special Features: oral histories and case studies of specific items or caches also available; "report a find" form

Museum: Drexel University Historic Costume Collection (Drexel Digital Museum Project)

Collection Database URL: <http://digimuse.cis.drexel.edu/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): approximately 7,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 129

Search Parameters: search by decade, designer, category ("Chinese robe"; "day wear"; "evening wear"), fabric, or donor

Special Features: QuickTime video 360-degree views of each garment; detail "hotspots" with zoom function; interactive panoramic gallery views of two exhibitions, “Geoffrey

Beene: From the Collection of Iris Barrel Apfel”; and “Objects from the Qing Dynasty: Chinese Treasures from the Drexel Historic Costume Collection”

Museum: Fashion Museum, Bath (UK)

Collection Database URL:

http://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk/collections/collection_search.aspx

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 80,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): Not listed, but about 250 records with images available to browse on home page

Search Parameters: keyword search; or search by material, date, name, or category (decade or type of clothing); suggested topics (including, "World War II"; "Ceremonial")

Special Features: search results appear on scrolling track at bottom of page; record lists if the item is available to view by appointment

Museum: Fashion Institute of Technology

Collection Database URL: <http://fashionmuseum.fitnyc.edu/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 50,000 garments, 30,000 textiles

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 875

Search Parameters: Keyword and search by decade; suggested collections such as "accessories"; "menswear"; "new additions"; or by “people” (designers and brands)

Special Features: multiple views of object; ability to save favorites to your own personal “board” or gallery

Museum: Indianapolis Museum of Art (Textile and Fashion Arts Collection)

Collection Database URL:

<http://www.imamuseum.org/collections/browse-collection/textile-fashion-arts>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): approximately 7,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): not listed, but 8,343 records result for "Textile and Fashion Arts" (all records are likely not from this department)

Search Parameters: keyword search, materials or object type

Special Features: "Creation date" and "Accession date" sliders provide a range of dates for search; can include multiple images for objects, including images from past exhibitions or display

Museum: Kent State University Museum

Collection Database URL: <http://www.kent.edu/museum/collection/online-catalogue.cfm>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): more than 40,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): Not listed, but 1229 search results for "coat", for example

Search Parameters: keyword search; advanced search with established fields (i.e., "creator", "medium"); "random search"; search records "with images only"; will warn a user for a search with "too many hits"

Special Features: multiple views and images of object; "Gallery of Costume" for selected 18th, 19th, and 20th century garments with self-moving images across page, showing different angles

Museum: Kyoto Costume Institute, Japan

Collection Database URL: http://www.kci.or.jp/archives/digital_archives/index_e.html

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): approximately 12,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 200 (can view more onsite at the KCI Study Room for a fee)

Search Parameters: search by decade, from 1750s-1990s

Special Features: search by visual "silhouette" timeline, organized by decade; interactive zoom images

Museum: Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Collection Database URL: <http://collections.lacma.org/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): more than 20,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 2,407 results for Costumes and Textiles

Search Parameters: keyword search; artist, classification, curatorial area, century or decade (chronology), or location (one of two buildings at LACMA); can search only records with images or unrestricted images

Special Features: can create an account for "my gallery", tagging, or ordering reproduction images online; downloadable patterns of 18th century menswear

Museum: McCord Museum, Canada

Collection Database URL: http://www.musee-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/explore.php?Lang=1&tableid=4&tablename=department&elementid=00013__true

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 18,845

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 945

Search Parameters: keyword search; search by title, creator, date, accession number

Special Features: zoom function on images; public tagging function; can order image reproductions online; can create “image pairs” with other items in collection

Museum: Manchester City Galleries (UK), Gallery of Costume

Collection Database URL: <http://www.manchestergalleries.org/our-other-venues/platt-hall-gallery-of-costume/the-collection/collection-themes/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 7,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 800

Search Parameters: keyword search; search by collection themes (including, "Designers"; "Clothes for Work"; "Sexuality"; "Recycled Fashion")

Special Features: detail images of object; record links to "related themes" or tags

Museum: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute

Collection Database URL: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): over 35,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 35,547 records for the Costume Institute; 8,495 for the Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection

Search Parameters: keyword search; search by "Who" (designer), "What" (wool, silk, hats, shoes, etc.), "Where" (country or continent), "When" (decade or century span), "In the Museum" (by curatorial department)

Special Features: multiple images/views of object, including current and past images; zoom function; ability to save images to "MyMet" account

Museum: University of North Texas, Texas Fashion Collection

Collection Database URL: <http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/TXFC/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 15,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 508

Search Parameters: keyword search; search by "fulltext", "metadata", "subject", "title", or "creator"; or "latest additions"

Special Features: images and record are dated; "usage" data on how often record is viewed

Museum: Philadelphia Museum, Costumes and Textiles Collection

Collection Database URL: <http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/216-430-183.html>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 30,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): 8,150 records for Costume and Textiles

Search Parameters: keyword search; other search options (“artist/maker”, “classification”, etc.)

Special Features: multiple views of object; zoom function; public tagging function

Museum: The Powerhouse Museum, Australia

Collection Database URL:

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/menu.php>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): Not listed; as of June 2010, there are 150,338 objects across ALL Powerhouse Museum collections

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): Not listed; 8,093 results for "clothing and dress"; 4,843 results for "textile"

Search Parameters: keyword search; browse tags, themes, special collections, and selected categories of clothing and dress; can search records with images only or only those objects on display

Special Features: zoom function; public tagging function; extensive object history information, when available; the website also includes records and images of The Australian Dress Register, "a collaborative, online project about dress with Australian provenance pre-1975" (the database includes garments outside of the Powerhouse collection)

Museum: Textile Museum of Canada

Collection Database URL: <http://www.textilemuseum.ca/collection/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 6,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): Not listed, but 1,058 results for "textile"

Search Parameters: keyword search or advanced search ("artifact type"; "culture/people", etc.)

Special Features: zoom function; collection images included on "Social Fabric", an online forum where visitors can view, comment, and respond to particular questions about an object or its "physical quality" (i.e., "silky shiny", "coarse wooly")

Museum: Victoria & Albert Museum (UK)

Collection Database URL: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

Number of items in collection (as of July 2013): 75,000

Number of records in collection database (as of July 2013): Not listed; a "textile and fashion" keyword search for records with images only resulted in 1,377 records. Currently there are 354,952 records with images online for ALL V&A collections (1,116,697 in the database)

Search Parameters: keyword search, advanced search (object name/title, artist/maker, museum object number, etc.); can search for "only records with images" or "best quality records including image and detailed description"

Special Features: multiple images and views of object, including historical images; can download PDF of database record

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