**Woody Allen: ‘Style Guru’? Costuming the Middle classes, Anti-fashion as Aspirational Fashion in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* and *Midnight in Paris*.**

**Sarah Lloyd and Sarah Stacey: University for the Creative Arts Rochester**

**ABSTRACT**

*This article examines costume and class in the films of Woody Allen, with a focus on anti-fashion as aspirational middle class costume, using two recent and notable examples from Allen’s European tour oeuvre. We consider the tension between the bland, yet curiously compelling costuming of the middle classes in Vicky Cristina Barcelona (2008) and Midnight in Paris (2011) and explore how the mundane costumes of the bourgeoisie in these films are upheld in the press and by audiences as fashionable and desirable. We place our analysis in relation to the work of Gaines, (1990) Bruzzi (1997) and Warner (2012) to highlight the audience appeal of the costumes which, whilst unspectacular, represents an aspirational dress code that is unrelated to specific trends or designers. Our argument is twofold: firstly that anti-fashion in film is a trope of the middle class, which is limited in range and personality and is positioned in the narrow margin between bourgeois aspirational dress codes and expressive bohemianism. Secondly we contend that the costume is anti-fashion and, paradoxically, fashionable and desirable through association with Allen’s rarefied world of urban intellectualism. This article addresses a need to explore the lack of analysis in costume studies on middle class costume in cinema.*

**KEYWORDS:**

Audience

costume

fashion

middle class

bohemian

cinema

**INTRODUCTION**

This article addresses the costuming of the middle classes in two Woody Allen films *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (VCB) and *Midnight in Paris* (MP). Both VCB and MP focus on middle class Americans at their leisure, in romanticized European settings with the lead characters temporarily immersing themselves in an alluring bohemian world. We argue that the middle class characters in these two films have a limited choice of costume due to tensions around overtly aspirational dress and status slippage. Therefore this article addresses anti-fashion as a trope of the middle classes in film costume. As a contrast, our argument uses the spectacular figure of the bohemian to show the restricted range of clothing options for the bourgeoisie. We acknowledge that Woody Allen is a director who, arguably, would not be considered a style guru in terms of his personal style. However, ironically, through association with his filmic world of the urban intellectual we contend that the anti-fashion, ‘everyday’ costumes in two of his films have paradoxically been transmediated through the blogosphere by audiences as aspirational and desirable. Moreover, we argue the costume is valued partly due to the shift of audience interest in what actors wear off-screen (see Church Gibson 2012). We assert that Allen’s characters’ clothing becomes additionally aspirational to the audience due to the characters’ rarified social positions, despite the blandness and mundanity of their costumes. Consequently, Woody Allen has indirectly become a ‘style guru’ despite this being the opposite of his intention, as both VCB and MP make a clear critique of American materialistic culture. Through an investigation of audience responses we will demonstrate the appeal of ‘everyday’ fashion that Helen Warner (2012: 124) argues is neglected in costume studies as a source of audience pleasure. Warner argues for the extension of costume theory beyond textual analysis and claims that previous studies have made assumptions about how the audience reads costume. Although the examination of fashion blogs and style articles is still within the realms of textual analysis, these sources do reveal what audiences think about on-screen costume.

Allen’s fashion appeal was cemented in 2012 when French fashion brand Être Cécile released a T-shirt emblazoned with the caption ‘Written and Directed by Woody Allen’, in Allen’s trademark font of choice (Windsor Typeface) priced at $130, clearly highlighting the allure of the association with Allen’s compellingly neurotic Manhattan-ites. Furthermore, Allen’s own ‘geek chic’ image of casual button down shirt, khaki trousers and thick framed spectacles are so synonymous with the director we can immediately pronounce who the Allen stand-in is in his films. In fact, his biographer Lux (2000) claims this informal style enabled Allen to segue between his role as director and actor. That is not to say that costume and appearance are insignificant in Allen’s films. The most often cited costume is Diane Keaton’s androgynous suit in *Annie Hall* (Allen, 1977). However, it was Keaton who was responsible for the costume choice rather than Allen or a costume designer (Keaton 2012). It is evident that the director has a strong visual aesthetic in terms of style but is not overtly interested in clothing as directly communicative of character: in a *Vogue* interview Cate Blanchett claimed ‘Woody Allen just doesn’t get clothes’ (Alexander 2013). Blanchett, who helped to select her own wardrobe for her role as a fallen socialite in *Blue Jasmine* (Allen, 2013), asserted that the director ‘has no interest or understanding’ of his characters’ style because his aesthetic has remained the same for twenty years and he ‘doesn't understand why anyone would change their wardrobe according to their mood, or how they want to present themselves’ (Alexander 2013).

Costume designer Sonia Grande, who designed costumes for *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* and *Midnight in Paris* further explains Allen’s aesthetic choices, suggesting that for both her and the director costume should remain as simple as possible. Grande explains that she actively avoids complexity and unnecessary detail, when working with Allen as ‘the viewer needs to be paying attention to the message the actors are expressing’ (Grande 2012). Here we reminded of Jane Gaines’ (1990) argument that in classical Hollywood cinema the primary function of costume was to serve character and narrative; fashionable costume dated a film and was therefore avoided by costume designers and directors. However, Gaines argues that spectacular costume was permissible in melodrama and only then did it have the potential of creating its own visual language. Stella Bruzzi (1997) positions her seminal analysis of unspectacular costume in cinema in relation to haute couture in films such as *Belle de Jour/Beauty of the Day* ([Buñuel](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000320/?ref_=tt_ov_dr), 1967) as opposed to normative ‘everyday’ clothing on screen. In addition Bruzzi refers to ‘the ability of film fashion to inspire particularly bland contemporary trends’ (1997: 7) in relation to Ralph Lauren costumes in *The Great Gatsby* (Clayton, 1974)and *Annie Hall.* In addition the 1960s saw the emergence of costumer designers ‘shopping’ for film costumes, but again Bruzzi refers to selected ready-to-wear, fashionable designer items (1997:7). Unspectacular, non-designer costume has been used in cinema to connote realism but there is a notable lacuna in the literature of cinema costume as unspectacular, ‘everyday’ and desirable. In this article we define the unspectacular costumes in VCB and MP as explicitly ‘anti-fashion’: contemporary clothing which is not trend lead. Wilson defines it as ‘“true chic” which used to be defined as the elegance that never draws attention to itself, the simplicity that is “under-stated”, but which for that very reason stands out so startlingly’ (2003a: 183). The appeal of the anti-fashion costumes is demonstrated through the claim by Guardian blogger Anna-Marie Crowhurst (2011) that Woody Allen’s films offer ‘style lessons’ to the fashion conscious audience and states that:

Allen continues his obsession with mud colours, getting Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams and even Carla Bruni to slope around the Left Bank in a tonal palette of chocolate, biscuit and taupe, accented with denim and a little bit of snobbiness. It's surely a mark of the cast's skill that they are able to pretend it's normal for Americans abroad to act as though no other colours exist beyond camel, khaki and oatmeal.

Given that Crowhurst has also noticed the limited costuming, questions arose from this about the constraints of costuming the middle class on-screen and what the perceived pleasures were for the audience where there is a clear lack of interesting style. In this sea of crumpled beige and khaki linen, it is challenging for middle class characters to express a sense of individuality through dress.

Although there is a range of literature on Woody Allen and his films (see for example Girgus 2002; Silet 2006) within this there is little analysis of costume. A discussion of the acceptability of modern attire during the time travel scenes in MP can be found in Eubanks (2014) but his article is not an examination of costume per se. Analysis is challenging due to the lack of discussion of contemporary middle class costume in cinema. Bruzzi (1997) has, however, focused on heritage cinema and costume drama as depicting an uncritically idealized bourgeois past. In fact, Allen’s depiction of the past in MP can certainly be said to be, by his own admission, an idealized, romantic and nostalgic vision of the 1920s, including in our opinion the costumes (Fusco 2013; see also Eubanks 2014).

**WOODY ALLEN AS TASTEMAKER**

Throughout his career Allen has rejected the Hollywood studio system and has taken inspiration from European art cinema (see Sayad 2013; Knight 2013; Menegaldo 2013). Allen’s love for the work of filmmakers such Jean Renoir and Jean-Luc Godard with the latter’s ‘taste for fragmented, self-reflexive narration and the unveiling of the cinematic process’ are evident in Allen’s films such as *Annie Hall* (Menegaldo 2013: 64). Similarly, according to Menegaldo, VCB echoes the bohemian *nouvelle vague* film *Jules et Jim/Jules and Jim* by François Truffaut (1962). Other cinematic influences are European *auteurs* Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini (Lax 2000). The ‘art’ tendencies evident in the work of Allen’s heroes are visible in his own oeuvre, with Sayad (2013) confirming his status as an *auteur* and draws on Baxter (1983) who positioned him as ‘foreign’ (2013: 20). Additionally, Girgus argues that Allen has achieved success through creating the ‘Woody Allen’ identity, thereby producing a ‘unique aura’ that made him popular with movie audiences (2002:1).

Bourdieu’s concept of the ‘cultural intermediary’ is useful here in positioning Allen as a tastemaker. The ‘cultural intermediary’ is defined by Bourdieu as those who ‘“perform the task of gentle manipulation”’ of tastes (1984: in Smith Maguire 2014: 16). Smith Maguire describes Bourdieu’s cultural intermediaries as ‘both shaping tastes for particular goods and practices, and defining and defending (new class) group positions within society’ (2014: 16). In relation to taste and group positions both films could be appealing to a left-wing middle class audience, particularly as according to Sayad Allen has an ‘aversion to Republicans’ (2013:15). Moreover, Menegaldo (2013) and Fusco (2013) argue that Allen pits materialistic Americans against genuine artistic appreciators in MP, a theme also evident in VCB; consequently Allen’s political and cultural position is established on screen. The director’s left leaning, ‘geek chic’ intellectual image, European filmmaker *auteur* traditions promote him as an ‘arty’ and independent filmmaker and arguably mediate the unspectacular costume of the middle class in VCB and MP as attractive and desirable through association. Thus, through Allen’s *mise-en-scène* the products and lifestyles on show help to define and support middle class taste.

**THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOIS COSTUME IN *VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA* AND *MIDNIGHT IN PARIS***

The predominant types of garments in VCB for the American women are relaxed, mix and match, casual separates such as jeans, loose drawstring trousers, Henley t-shirts, vests, unstructured shirts and jackets, soft blouses and loose belted shirt dresses (See Figure 1). The American men, when not in suits, are often seen in clothing, such as polo shirts and deck shoes connoting their chosen leisure pursuits of golfing and yachting. Fabrics appear to be good quality cottons, jersey, silk and linen. The naturalness of the fabrics is notable as they highlight the expense of the garments: cheap, synthetic fabrics associated with fast fashion are not evident. Colours are limited to khaki neutrals highlighted with occasional warm berry tones and mustardy yellows. Outfits are minimally accessorized with discrete jewellery, cross body bags and practical flats such as Birkenstock style sandals and plimsolls. The contemporary bourgeois, laid-back, but unimaginative taste of VCB is replicated, albeit with greater polish in MP with slightly cooler shades and tones dominating (See Figure 2).

Defining social class through taste, including social practices such as dress, has been a subject of much sociological enquiry, and any discussion of class, status and taste cannot ignore the much cited theoretical canon of Veblen ([1899] 1994) and Bourdieu (1984). Historically, class distinction has been defined by the most privileged groups in society outwardly displayed their status through the accumulation of material goods, and/or social practices which express their refined taste (Bourdieu 1984). Allen’s characters in VCB and MP exist within the realms of the middle classes, openly displaying economic and cultural capital to varying degrees. They are highly educated, and for the most part, wealthy either accumulatively or through heritage. They have the privileged position of being able to explore intellectual and creative pursuits, seemingly, without financial burden. Fred Davis (1992) contests a purely sociological reading of status as directly expressed through conspicuous sartorial choices and updates the discussion of class identity and taste by stating that a more complex reading of status and dress must be acknowledged, due to the continuous flux and social change, which destabilizes social identity in postmodernity. Davis suggests that contemporary taste is determined by ‘ambivalence’ and ‘tensions between contradictory behaviours of either claiming or deflecting claims of status’ (1992: 64). Davis uses the example of the wealthiest individuals in American culture ‘feinting’ rather than ‘flaunting’ status, as modesty and understatement became the preferable exhibition of economic means (1992:55). Summarising Davis (1992) Lynch and Strauss assert that ‘the deflection of status was rooted in an acetic sensibility stretching back to the protestant reformation, where aversion to an outward display of wealth was considered a higher form of moral character’(2007: 74). Davis’ example of highly regarded simplicity in the twentieth century is Coco Chanel’s ‘little black dress’, which he argues suggested ‘social superiority […] in the raiments of penury’ (1992: 64). Allen’s characters in both films can be defined as middle class through their deflection of the obvious symbols of wealth and their adoption of simple styles and protestant modesty. Whilst they perhaps do not display ‘penury’ the colours, cuts and fabrics of the clothing are plain and inconspicuous. The costumes seem to support the notion that restraint in dress is, presently, a key marker of taste and status, as Appleford states;

Fashion may be more democratised, but it seems that class distinctions in terms of fabric, colors and cut strongly persist, with middle-class women preferring more neutral colors and natural fabrics, as opposed to their working-class counterparts, who look for trend-led and conspicuous items. (2013: 113)

Allen is distinctly critical of the characters that ‘flaunt’ their economic status, and engage in ‘conspicuous consumption’ (Veblen [1899] 1994) without the necessary cultural capital or true appreciation of the arts that Allen finds so repugnant in the bourgeois American characters. For example in MP, according to Fusco (2013), the lead character Gil’s materialistic fiancée Inez and her mother Helen consume antiques only to affirm status as opposed to genuinely appreciating historical design or patina (see Figure 2). Wilson also notes this contrasting attitude to art between the bohemian and the bourgeois philistine who was seen as a ‘crass and undiscriminating individual, for whom art was a status symbol, an opportunity for display of wealth rather than taste’ (2003b: 17). However, in terms of these characters’ costumes they are distinctly inconspicuous, which as Davis suggests ‘in the never-ending dialectic of status claims and demurrals, modesty and understatement in attire often come to be viewed as truer signs of superior social status than lavish displays of finery’ (Davis 1992: 62-63). He continues to assert overdressing could be seen as ‘*nouveau riche’* citing Ralph Lauren’s success as a designer as predicated on ‘making new wealth look like old’ (Davis 1992: 63). This dialectic between ostentatious display and tasteful sartorial restraint is played out in MP when the casually dressed Inez (faded denim and muted blue Henley t-shirt) is window-shopping for a heavily encrusted diamond wedding band. Inez states to her mother ‘it’s the way you have to go and then everyone will see it in the back row when he puts it on my finger’. Additionally we noted very few appearances of branded items, one being a Lacoste polo shirt worn by Vicky’s husband Doug in VCB and the other a Dior shopping bag carried by Inez’s friend Carol in MP. Inez and her mother also have a penchant for designer bags from brands such as Hermès and Chanel, but these are subtly worn with no overt indication of the designer logo. However, only the materialistic, bourgeois characters are ever shown to be wearing a brand in both films: these are the characters Allen clearly disdains, due to their philistinism and lack of immersion into European culture.

Woody Allen has presented a range of middle class characters such as preppy Republicans, entitled materialists and pretentious intellectuals most of whom are only very subtly differentiated in dress from characters such as Gil, in MP and Vicky and Cristina in VCB, thus representing the idea of non-expressive homogenized dress codes of the middle classes. In one scene in VCB Cristina wears loose, beige linen trousers and a khaki green tank top, with no remarkable detail and Vicky is seen in dark denim jeans, trainers, white Henley T-shirt and khaki green cargo jacket: in almost every scene Vicky’s clothes are indistinguishable, connoting neither personality or individual taste (See Figure 1). These costumes signify the intransigent social position of the middle class characters, who are not allowed to express themselves freely through dress unlike the bohemian characters.

**COSTUMING THE BOHEMIAN OTHER**

Thecostume and dress of the bohemian characters serve as a direct contrast to bourgeois respectability. Elizabeth Wilson (2003b) maps the complex myth and trajectory of the figure of the bohemian to assert the uses and meaning of bohemia in postmodern culture. Whilst the historic origins of bohemia are multi-faceted the figure of the bohemian can be defined as a flamboyant, deviant, sexually liberated, radical intellectual who is associated with high art and avant-gardism; typically they rejected wealth and the normative conventions of society including consumerism and materialism. As Wilson stresses the identity of the bohemian is ‘always dependent on its opposite’: the bourgeoisie (2003b: 1-2). She explains that in bohemian stories ‘sometimes the bohemian (good) is contrasted with the bourgeois (bad)’ (2003b: 1-2), which is clearly evident in these two films. Wilson argues that bohemia is the ultimate glamorous lifestyle, which originally situated itself outside consumer culture, conveying the artist lifestyle. However, both these films offer a distinctive, nostalgic and romanticized vision of a non-politicized bohemian. The bohemian characters in both films portray ‘exaggerated individualism’ (Wilson 2003b: 2), resulting in costumes that are more expressive of character. In MP the spectacular, bohemian costume remains strictly relegated to artists and writers of the modernist past. Adrianna the love interest of Gil in the 1920s represents the glamorous bohemian with clothing consisting of heavily beaded flapper dresses complete with feathered head bands. As a fashion designer she is positioned as a creator of fashion and therefore an artist, her interest in fashion is not denigrated in comparison to the contemporary bourgeoisie characters. Allen legitimizes the use of fashionable costume only for the bohemian characters (whether in the past or the present) as they are cultural producers rather than mindless consumers.

The ultimate spectacular bohemian is the emotionally unstable artist Maria Elena in VCB whose clothing consists mainly of vintage finds and antique underwear worn as outerwear. Maria Elena’s costume indicates her creativity and seeming poverty through second hand or vintage styles. A key outfit that announces her bohemian status is a white antique linen and lace chemise with a hint of transparency. She is also seen wearing peach palazzo pants with tie front shirt and also owns a large leather bag emblazoned with a tiger’s face. Through selecting and re-appropriating rare antique garments Maria Elena shows her ability to creatively reinterpret the past, situating her as unconventional, original and authentic (see Delong, Heinemann and Reiley 2005). Wilson (2003b) asserts this as a characteristic of the bohemians’ ability to express the authentic inner-self through dress. She is also sexier than the other female characters and displays the only obvious cleavage in the film. Both the artists/bohemians convey their status as the ‘other’ and their erotic, dangerous allure through their costumes. Another notable outfit is a vintage pink satin slip accessorized with a fringed cross body bag and a cigarette (See Figure 3). The use of underwear as outerwear is twofold; it is the antithesis of middle class respectability and through stripping away the protective layers of outerwear signifies her emotional vulnerability. This reminds us of Gaines’ theory that that dress tells the woman’s story and costume acts as an emotional barometer for female characters, ‘a woman’s dress and demeanor, much more than a man’s, indexes psychology; if costume represents interiority, it is she who is turned inside out on-screen’ (1990: 181).

Interestingly, it is only the bohemian characters in VCB and MP whose costume is afforded the power to indicate emotional interiority. By outmanoeuvring bourgeois culture the bohemian figure is less susceptible to what Foucault (1980) refers to as the constraints of the disciplined body and practices of the self. If we apply this to femininity the disciplined body can be seen as the controlled body, conforming to ideas of bourgeois respectability in dress and behaviour. Maria Elena is expressive of her emotional state, which is made manifest through her dress, body and appearance. Maria Elena’s bare-feet, smudged eyeliner, big tousled hair and sumptuous dishevelment clearly signal her fractured mental state and bohemianism. For instance, in his article on female hair control Thom Hecht (2008: 208) refers to ‘the overly sexual nature of cascading hair, and thus the unruly body’.

**TRAPPED IN THE MIDDLE**

Gil, Vicky and Cristina are presented as likable and part of the bourgeois in terms of status. They are not materialistic, are open-minded and are attracted to the ideals of bohemianism but ultimately choose to stay with the security of the bourgeois world. It appears that this is the difficulty of costuming them as they occupy a space between the rules of aspirational bourgeois dress and expressive bohemianism; this denies them any expressive individualising features. An important scene in VCB is the pre-emptive finale in which the married Vicky finally decides to act on her feelings for bohemian artist Juan Antonio and agrees to a surreptitious meeting. Before this meeting Vicky experiences the age-old conundrum of what to wear on a romantic assignation, but after trying on one unremarkable ensemble after another, decides on a typically unspectacular and unsurprising combination of oatmeal, linen pants and light cotton shirt: it is clear that any of the outfits would have been suitable for the date, given their homogeneity, which reflect Vicky’s non-descript style. Jeffers McDonald (2010) has written on the pleasures afforded the female spectator on witnessing the on-screen transformation and describes the tropes of these transformative sequences. What is notable about this scene is that Vicky is denied any such transformation. The Cinderella transformation trope is often witnessed when working class or lower status characters engage in social mobility; rarely does this trope include middle class characters unless moving from unfashionable to fashionable such as in *The Devil Wears Prada* (Frankel, 2006). The denial here acts on several levels, firstly there is a denial of fashion; frivolous and unserious, and therefore not befitting of her character. Secondly a denial of overt sexiness, witnessed in the bohemian characters; Vicky does not wish to seem so easily sexually available to Juan Antonio despite her conflicted emotions. She cannot embody the bohemian ideal and is therefore confined to a homogenous outward appearance that she perhaps feels does not express her true self. Vicky displays distinct discomfort with her outfit fussing with her clothing, until she meets Juan Antonio.

In the classic transformation film *Pretty Woman* (Marshall, 1990) the prostitute, Vivien, transitions from tacky glamour into standardized, acceptable femininity, and while her new costumes highlight her beauty (see Bruzzi 1997) her sexiness is muted in favour of middle class respectability. If we read Vicky’s non-transformative scene in accordance with class we see the limited aesthetic choices available to a woman of her social status. Her clothing represents a sort of safety and guideline, defining the parameters of acceptable middle class dress codes. As Appleford reminds us the middle class ‘have an immense desire to be ‘“seen in a good light”’ (2013: 113). Vicky’s indecision is connotative of her emotional state, it supports the narrative and is subservient to character, however in contrast to Maria Elena, the bohemian who represents freedom both sartorially and emotionally, Vicky’s choices are limited by her bourgeois inability to embody the dangerous notion of what Wilson (2003b) defines as the glamorous outcast.

**AUDIENCE RESPONSE**

Film costume as style inspiration has long been established through the analogy of the cinema screen as shop window, with the glamorously costumed stars and lavish sets of the classic era of Hollywood stimulating desire for what was seen on-screen (see Gaines and Herzog 1990; Eckert 1991; Stacey 1993; Bruzzi 1997: Berry 2000; Jeffers McDonald 2010). However, more recently Church Gibson notes a change in audience desire for celebrity fashion, asserting that ‘when fans admire a star’s style, they will usually be talking of the clothes that he or she wears off screen; in the past, they would be referring to what the star wore on-screen, within the diegesis, the fictional world’ (2012: 66). As Church Gibson stresses, fans now have an increased interest in normal or off-duty chic of actresses, such as the attractive, but relatively ‘ordinary’ Jennifer Aniston who is often pictured both on and off screen in ‘simple, casual clothes’ (Church Gibson 2012: 71). Consequently, Aniston can be seen as a more democratic ideal for women to aspire to. Following on from this it is understandable that the attractive but ordinarily costumed and styled actresses Scarlett Johansson, Rebecca Hall (Cristina and Vicky in VCB) and Rachel McAdams (Inez in MP) could inspire desire for such casual clothes as their costumes would not necessarily be dissimilar to their off-screen clothes.

Church Gibson also refers to the changing media landscape and the ability for ‘images to “bleed” across the media’ (2012: 125). This is evident in imagery of the non-professional/non-affiliated fashion/style blogs we looked at, which celebrate the settings, costumes and actresses in VCB and MP and importantly the clothing and brands that could replicate these on-screen looks. The exact source of desire and inspiration for audiences is perhaps heterogeneous given that ‘traditional boundaries between the different media institutions […] have themselves broken down partly through the new power of the internet’ (2012: 125). A clear line between screen costume and audience replications of looks is now more difficult to establish, particularly when costumes are bland and normal and inspirations are multifarious and blend into one another. The concept of non-hierarchical information is discussed by Rocamora (2012) who examines hypertextuality in the fashion blogosphere with its never-ending movement and shift of text and image, placing the viewers’ interpretation of the text outside of the text. In this transmediation, the substance and surface, meaning and contexts of texts blur and their meanings cannot necessarily be controlled.

The blogs celebrated surprisingly what we had considered the bland costume of Vicky, Cristina and particularly the unlikable character Inez. There was a desire for Maria Elena’s more spectacular bohemian dress but not above the middle class characters. The glamorous beaded flapper dresses of 1920s bohemian Adrianna in MP were admired by some bloggers, but comparatively less than contemporary costumes, most likely due to their limited wearability (see Rennie 2012; Feather Factor 2014). Bloggers often praised the costumes over the film itself and offered followers advice on how to replicate the looks, even providing links to websites where similar garments were available to purchase (Wermick 2010; Dimeo-Ediger 2011; Jose Abad 2011). Many responses to the blog posts about the film showed a desire to watch the film based on the costume alone (Wermick 2010; La Couturier 2009). The vocabulary the bloggers used to describe the film styles included: chic; elegant; classy; breezy; comfortable and drapey. On the blog *Feather Factor* (2014)followers were engaged in attempting to discover where the clothes could be purchased and which brand the decidedly non-visibly branded clothing originated from. It is evident that some fashion savvy bloggers have recognized the brand of clothing being worn through their own knowledge or research (Feather Factor 2014; see also Rennie 2012;). Despite no clear branding being evident the audience understand restraint and simplicity as a marker of aspirational, designer fashion.

Moreover, bohemianism is still seen as an attractive element within the films with bloggers and followers emphasising their love of the bohemian themes. Wilson (2003b) argues that audiences have always had a voracious appetite for bohemian stories, which represent freedom and danger. Whilst as Wilson (2003b) has clearly demonstrated, bohemianism is no longer outside consumer culture, the bland costumes of the middle classes are bathed in the glow of the bohemian stories told in these films. For example, La Couturier (2009) writes ‘there is something about the **bags** in Vicky Cristina Barcelona that is so perfectly styled to make it all the more unconventional and bohemian’. However, only two bags in the film, belonging to Maria Elena could be described in such a way, whereas the other bags are unremarkable. Thus, it might be argued that the bland becomes more desirable through its association with the bohemian in these films.

Allen’s critique of American consumer culture is disregarded or perhaps missed by the audience and some of the finer points of narrative/characterisation are not always recognized as shown by bloggers emulating and aspiring to the styles of characters whose class identity is being openly derided by Allen. Inez, for example, the least likeable figure in MP displays many traits associated with entitled materialist bourgeois culture and yet in many of the blogs it was her style that garnered the most praise. *The Frisky* focuses on Inez saying ‘she’s spoiled, entitled, condescending, and has no sense of magic. One thing she does have, however, is a pretty amazing sense of style. Her belted shirtdresses, platform sandals, and aviator sunglasses were a nice distraction from her awful personality’ (Dimeo-Ediger 2011). Additionally blogger *Feather Factor* (2014) writes ‘I think Rachel’s Mom dresses very elegantly as well’ and includes a specific image of Helen to show her ‘Etoupe belt with matching Birkin’. Yet Philip French (2011) film critic for the *Observer* writes that Helen and John represent ‘repugnant…Tea Party’ politics, the first time according to French that the right wing political party is mentioned in a feature film are openly described by character Gil as ‘crypto fascist air-head zombies’ expressing clear vilification from Allen.

La Couturier’s blog reads like a love letter to VCB and whilst it does not offer advice on sourcing the style it does discuss accessories in-depth including Cristina’s vintage camera, which is described as ideal for an ‘avant-garde look. I see it as an accessory’(2009). Cristina uses this camera as means to explore her creative and intellectual side, but in this instance it is reduced to an accessory signifying bohemia, which is contradicted by her non-bohemian outfit of jeans and marl grey t-shirt. Allen’s critique of bourgeois consumption habits is overlooked by the blogger who by fetishising objects of the past in terms of surface reinforces the middle class consumption habits condemned by Allen. In this way the blogger has picked up on Allen as a ‘cultural intermediary’ who is seen to be shaping tastes for specific goods and practices. The latter combined with the *mise-en-scène* in which they are presented are helping to define new class group positions which are read as aspirational.

**CONCLUSION**

Wilson (2002b) asserts that in late capitalism, bohemia, or the idea of bohemia, is commercialized and disseminated through the mass media to encourage consumption. Indirectly Allen, as a cultural intermediary, has created a rarefied world that is deemed desirable by audiences and inspires consumption, despite his original intention of critiquing late capitalist consumer society. By placing even unremarkable clothing in a bohemian setting Allen unwittingly makes the costume desirable.Our textual analysis highlighted strong sartorial differences between the bourgeois and bohemians, but it seemed that when film costume is transmediated through the blogosphere these differences become flattened. Helen Warner cautions against ‘marginalizing everyday fashion and refusing to acknowledge its importance as a source of audience pleasure’ (2012: 121) hence our discussion of blog responses to the film costume. Our research has shown that the normalcy of the costume in both films is the primary inspiration for not only pleasure but that ironically costumes are appropriated by audiences as idealized fashion and so are re-appropriated into consumer culture. It is unsurprising that audience want to imitate Inez, Vicky and Cristina due to their status as leisured, financially secure women at home enough to dress down even in the relatively luxurious culture they inhabit. Arguably the costumes function as markers of ‘appropriate’ dress compliant with middle class respectability and yet at the same time are casual, elegant and accessible. It would seem that even if filmmakers try to situate their work outside of fashion, in many ways the invocation of contemporary clothing through costume within an idealized *mise-en-scène* proves highly appealing to audiences. Substance is replaced with surface and meanings blur when screen fashions are transmediated through blogs. What was a critique of materialism and American puritanical culture is homogenized into a style, seen by many as aspirational.

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**Images**

Figure 1: Vicky, Cristina and Juan Antonio in Oviedo *Vicky Cristina Barcelona (Allen 2008)*.

Figure 2: A day trip to Versaille in *Midnight in Paris (Allen 2011)*.

Figure 3: Bohemian Spanish artist Maria Elena in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona (Allen 2008)*.

Figure 1: Vicky, Cristina and Juan Antonio in Oviedo *Vicky Cristina Barcelona (Allen 2008)*.