



Fashion's role in visualizing physical and psychological transformations in movies



Hyeonyoung Choi ^{a,*}, Eunju Ko ^{b,1}, Carol M. Megehee ^{c,2}

^a Yonsei University, Department of Clothing and Textiles, College of Human Ecology, 262 Seongsanno, Seodaemun-gu, Samsung Hall 313, Seoul 120-749, Republic of Korea

^b Yonsei University, Department of Clothing and Textiles, College of Human Ecology, 262 Seongsanno, Seodaemun-gu, Samsung Hall 318, Seoul 120-749, Republic of Korea

^c Coastal Carolina University, E. Craig Wall Sr. College of Business Administration, P. O. Box 261954, Conway, SC 29528-6054, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 April 2012

Received in revised form 1 May 2012

Accepted 1 June 2012

Available online 12 July 2012

Keywords:

Archetype

Costume

Fashion

Movie

Pretty Woman

Protagonist

Transformation

Visual narrative art

ABSTRACT

Using visual narrative art, this study looks into the images of cinema costumes and investigates how the fashion and styles in the movie reflect both the main characters' psychological changes and their identity-forming processes. This study analyzes the transformative effect of fashion (movie costume), the development of individual characters, and social and other situational influences on the heroine in the movie *Pretty Woman* (1990). *Pretty Woman's* underlying theme is derivative from three classic fairy tales: *Cinderella*, *Pygmalion*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. Such fairy tales in movie dramas are archetypal enactments representative of deep emotional and physical transformations audiences wish to experience. Watching protagonists' wardrobe changes and emotional transformations enables viewers to identify/self-recognize the storylines and catharses in the movies and often to achieve virtually the same experiences and emotional highs—outcomes which are the modern equivalent to Aristotle's "proper pleasure."

© 2012 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Movie-going is part of everyday life in the 21st century and is not just the prerogative of the privileged classes. In addition to serving as a medium of self-expression, movies perform the roles of historic recorder and experimenter predicting future life. As the world economy changes and industrialization and information exchange and transformation flourish, individuals' cultural needs will continue to evolve. As a result of all of this growth and change, people are expected to demand that movies be more varied, individualized, and creative. As the movie market grows and changes, the role of movie costumes assumes greater importance in the audience's experience and interpretation of the story.

Movie costumes are part of a symbolic language within the medium that delivers meanings of clothing in history and culture and expresses each actor/actress' role in a movie (Hayward, 1997). That is, the audience evaluates a movie's historic background, each actor's social class, and his/her economic condition and values through the clothes worn in a movie. Therefore, clothes or costumes worn in a

movie provide a visual language delivering the movie's symbolism to the audience that not only helps the story's flow by intensifying the movie's psychological and symbolic effects, but also influences customer behavior (perceptions, interpretations, attitudes, and/or behavioral intentions, for example).

As movie audience members identify with the protagonist in the movie (i.e., hero or heroine), they produce positive meanings about the protagonist. The audience vicariously gains a sense of satisfaction by accepting and internalizing the costumes seen in the movie and may create or participate in a new fashion trend by adopting the costumes or forms of dress similar to clothes seen in the movie. In this way, the movie audience influences the fashion industry. People now consider movie costumes to be a valuable form of art, the creation of which provides a glimpse of a nation's society and cultural background, its spiritual culture, living standard, and racial traits.

The purpose of this study is to examine the emotional and physical transformations and the archetypal meanings that movies can provide. The study proposes that audience members frequently experience implicit (non conscious) interpretations and virtual catharses by identifying with the experiences and outcomes in movie storylines. The research approach is an interpretive case study of the movie *Pretty Woman*. Released in 1990, *Pretty Woman* tells the story of a street girl who falls in love with a rich business executive. This study creates visual narrative art (VNA) to investigate how fashion and styles in the movie reflect the two main characters' psychological changes and their identity-forming processes.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +82 10 3421 0773.

E-mail addresses: allfor4you@hotmail.com (H. Choi), ejko@yonsei.ac.kr (E. Ko), cmegehee@coastal.edu (C.M. Megehee).

¹ Tel.: +82 2 2123 3109; fax: +82 2 312 8554.

² Tel.: +1 843 349 2706; fax: +1 843 349 2455.

2. Visual narrative art (VNA)

Visual narrative art (VNA) is useful for mapping scenes or episodes in a story through multiple media forms – photographs, drawings, clip art, dance, video, and symbols – to convey imagery and meaning of events in the story (Megehee & Woodside, 2010; Woodside & Megehee, 2010a, 2010b). Woodside and Megehee (2010a) also describe the use of cognitive sculpturing (CS) that results in visual narrative art by creating an arrangement of symbols to represent people, processes, time periods, and outcomes of a story. Since the objects in CS are moveable, they often become dramas with symbols invested with intention. CS represents a gestalt visual interpretation of the entire story; Woodside and Megehee (2009) describe a phase dynamics model using cognitive artwork.

Megehee and Woodside (2010) summarize twelve archetypal forces that may appear in a story in the roles of protagonist, antagonist, or help. These archetypes include Ultimate Strength, the Siren, the Hero, the Anti-Hero, the Creator, the Change Master, the Powerbroker, the Wise Old Man, the Loyalist, the Mother-of-Goodness, the Little Trickster, and the Enigma. Jung (1916/1968) provides and analyzes additional archetypes. Woodside (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010) propose that stories express the unconscious seeking and fulfillment of one or more archetypal forces.

3. Movie costumes

Movie costumes include all the clothes and accessories that actors wear to express their roles in a movie. Another definition of movie costume includes all the kinds of clothes used to promote a movie's dramatic effects. Costumes form a movie's unified image by maintaining congruity between the clothes actors wear and their hair styles, hair accessories, gloves, footwear, and make up. Costumes play a key role in conveying all of the meanings associated with the actions and outcomes in movies.

Costumes help actors perform their roles more easily in movies and the costumes sometimes even determine whether a specific role should be performed (Ryan, 1966). Also, the colors of costumes or accessories can become the foundation for the movie's communication with its audience by symbolically representing social rules or features in the movie.

Similar to clothing in general, costumes play the role of expressing social status. That is, costumes convey the interaction between a movie character's personality and his or her situational status. A role is the range of prescribed or expected behavior associated with a person's position or status in a group or organization. The role, or the part the actor plays, is influenced by others' expectations of behavior. As a cultural factor in a movie, costumes help convey social status, personalities, and the relationships among characters in the movie. Costumes visually express the actors' roles against their surrounding environment in the movie. That is, costumes promote a movie's artistic values by expressing a movie's artistic features. Furthermore, costumes help communicate social relationships, cultural factors, and characters' psychological functions.

4. *Pretty Woman* (1990)

Written by J.F. Lawton and directed by Garry Marshall, *Pretty Woman*, a romantic comedy released in 1990, stars Richard Gere, Julia Roberts, Hector Elizondo, Jason Alexander, and Laura San Giacomo. In *Pretty Woman*, Edward Lewis (Gere) travels to Los Angeles for a business trip and decides to hire a Hollywood prostitute Vivian Ward (Roberts). They like each other, and since Edward needs to work the social scene over the next week in order close an important business deal, he offers Vivian money to stay with him for an entire week. The plot of the remainder of the movie is what transpires over that week.

To deepen the understanding of the meanings within *Pretty Woman*, contents of this movie are analyzed in two distinctive ways. First, visual narrative art (VNA) presents the script in images that help surface unconscious, as well as conscious, meanings in the story. Next, the movie's costumes are analyzed for their contribution to understanding the personalities, social situations, status, and transformations of the central characters in the movie.

5. Content analysis using visual narrative art

Edward Lewis, a successful businessman and corporate raider, meets by chance a beautiful prostitute, Vivian Ward. Edward receives a little help from Vivian in reaching his destination since she knows where she is going and knows how to drive the Lotus Esprit he has borrowed from his attorney to get back to his hotel. Edward appreciates Vivian's freshness and surprising naivety, so he invites her into the hotel and ultimately pays for her to spend the night with him. See Fig. 1 for this initial and subsequent action.

The Siren archetype represents Vivian because she is attractive regardless of what she is doing. Ultimately, however, Vivian does not lure Edward to his peril but to his salvation; they save each other. While Edward is in Los Angeles on business for a week, he hires Vivian to be his date for a series of functions, including a business dinner at a fancy French restaurant and a polo match sponsored by Edward's company. Vivian and Edward negotiate her price for acting as his date for the entire week, and they agree on a \$3000 retainer plus access to his credit spending money for clothing for the week-long appointment. Vivian then goes shopping on Rodeo Drive for appropriate clothing for her job as Edward's date, and saleswomen scorn and ignore her because of the way she is dressed.

When Vivian returns to the hotel after her unsuccessful shopping trip, she encounters hotel manager Bernard Thompson (Elizondo) who is at first chagrined at her presence in his hotel. Barney, as Vivian calls him, soon becomes Vivian's ally and helps to transform her from an ugly duckling into a swan. Barney's girlfriend helps Vivian find an appropriate dress after which he coaches Vivian on table etiquette for her important dinner date at the Voltaire, a very fancy and expensive French restaurant. When Edward returns to the hotel that evening to meet Vivian for their dinner date, he is very surprised by how much she has changed. (He almost did not recognize her sitting at the bar waiting for him.)

At dinner, Vivian meets the president of the company that Edward is trying to take over – James Morse, a good-humored elderly gentleman who treats Vivian warmly in spite of his understandable animosity towards Edward – and the grandson, David Morse, whom they will run into again later in the week. The business-related discussions at dinner do not end well, and Edward has concerns about completing the negotiations successfully. During the conversation between Vivian and Edward on the hotel balcony after the dinner, the audience and Vivian learn of Edward's fear of heights.

The Little Trickster archetype represents the saleswomen on Rodeo Drive because they cause trouble for Vivian. The Wise Old Man represents Bernard, the hotel manager, because he helps Vivian triumph over a bad situation by becoming her mentor—at first by making sure she acquired an appropriate dress for the business dinner and then by teaching her table manners for this first date. Finally, the Change Master represents Vivian because she gets an extreme makeover, transforming both on the inside as well as the outside.

The next morning, Vivian tells Edward that she only got one dress because the saleswomen on Rodeo Drive refused to help her. Edward tells her that salespeople are not nice to people, they are nice to credit cards, and so he accompanies her on a shopping spree. Vivian returns to the posh Rodeo Drive shop where she had been previously rebuked and tells the saleswomen that they made a big mistake by not waiting on her yesterday. Vivian implies that the saleswomen lost the commission they could have earned had they waited on her the day before.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1017608>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1017608>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)