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## **All I want is you. Between brand refreshment and paradigm shift – Chanel No 5 in the 21st century<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The subject of the article is to show the cultural change that has occurred in terms of the created pattern of femininity in the Chanel No 5 perfume advertisements realized by Baz Luhrmann. The purpose of the research was to trace the mechanisms of evolution of the images represented by Nicole Kidman and Gisele Bündchen, who are the faces of Chanel No 5, taking into account the aspect of the iconic identity of the brand. Conclusions were formulated in the context of cultural studies.

**Keywords:** Chanel, branding, advertising, 21st century popular culture, Baz Luhrmann.

### **Introduction**

Legend has it that the launch of the iconic Chanel N° 5 fragrance took place in 1921, when the first one hundred flacons were given by Madame Gabrielle ‘Coco’ Chanel as a Christmas gift to her best customers<sup>2</sup>. Composed by Ernest Beaux, the perfume was characterised by its originator as “A feminine perfume, with a feminine scent”<sup>3</sup>, which defined its character and defined it as a symbol of femininity, combining the characteristics of the Chanel brand: modernity, sensuality, independence, exclusivity, elegance and luxury. Originally, this premise found expression in: the fragrance composition, the shape of the flacon, and then in the selection of celebrities invited to the advertising

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<sup>1</sup> With thanks to J. B. for the inspiring insights that contributed to this article.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in order to arouse the interest of the French socialite, Gabrielle Chanel, together with Ernest Beaux, surreptitiously sprayed her perfume on a summer evening in one of the exclusive restaurants in Cannes. It was not until later, in December 1921, that she gifted the first flacons to her selected female customers; see T. J. Mazzeo, *The Secret Life of Chanel No 5. The first biography of the world's most famous perfume*, transl. M. Biernacka, Znak, Krakow 2016, pp. 105–106 and 112–114.

<sup>3</sup> *Inside Chanel. Chapter 1. No 5*, <https://www.chanel.com/us/about-chanel/the-stories/> (accessed 8.11.2023).

campaigns, considered icons of femininity, whose images reflected the moral transformations taking place in the 20th and 21st centuries. Over the course of a century, Chanel N° 5 has become an iconic perfume, the most famous, used by women all over the world and the best-selling product of the Chanel brand, continuously maintaining its original character and gaining global recognition, available both in the exclusive boutique at 31 Rue Cambon and in egalitarian chain perfumeries.

The centenary story of Chanel N° 5, is the story of the product and the evolution of the means used to create the brand and its myth presented in the spot *No 5, 100 Years of Celebrity*<sup>4</sup>, which, re-updated in subsequent campaigns, generates its sales potential. It is also a story about: the changing perceptions of femininity over the 20th and 21st centuries, the images that reflect them and the female sexuality inscribed in the hetero-normative matrix; the crossing of the boundary between being an object and a disposer of desire and not having to choose between being a star, a mother and a lover.

In order to demonstrate this, a semiological analysis of two Chanel N° 5 advertising films by Baz Luhrmann *Chanel No 5. The Film* from 2004<sup>5</sup> and *The One That I Want from 2014*<sup>6</sup>, will be carried out, revealing a shift in the functioning paradigm regarding the creation of the female image. It reflects the cultural shift that has occurred in the twenty-first century to reject the unidimensionality of the role being performed – as shown in the continuation of the existing message in the advertising campaign with Nicole Kidman (2004) – in favour of the possibility of reconciling multiple roles, in the context of the ideology of *work and life balance*, in the campaign a decade later with Gisele Bündchen (2014). The argumentation will be carried out in the context of Baz Luhrmann's films *Moulin Rouge!*<sup>7</sup> and *The Great Gatsby*<sup>8</sup>, which are the hypotheses of the selected advertisements, as well as the myth of Chanel N° 5 and the images of the brand ambassadors creating it: Gabrielle Chanel, Marilyn Monroe, Catherine Deneuve and Carol Bouquet.

To this end, a cultural studies methodology will be used to enable the study of narrative messages as carriers of ideology and to aggregate research tools from: semiology, feminist criticism, film studies. I take as key statements for my reflections: Roland Barthes' in his essay *Myth Today*<sup>9</sup>, Naomi Wolff's presented in *The Myth of Beauty*<sup>10</sup>,

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<sup>4</sup> *Inside Chanel. Chapter 32. No 5. 100 Years of Celebrity*, <https://www.chanel.com/us/about-chanel/the-stories/> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>5</sup> *Chanel No 5. The Film*, directed by B. Luhrmann, 2004, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hcaaKhGL00> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>6</sup> *Chanel No 5. The One That I Want*, dir. by B. Luhrmann, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8asRWe5XNw8> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>7</sup> *Moulin Rouge (The Moulin Rouge)*, dir. B. Luhrmann, prod. Australia, USA 2001.

<sup>8</sup> *The Great Gatsby (The Great Gatsby)*, dir. by B. Luhrmann, prod. USA 2013.

<sup>9</sup> R. Barthes, *Myth today* [in:] *idem, Mythologies*, transl. K. Dziadek, KR, Warsaw 2000, pp. 237–296.

<sup>10</sup> N. Wolff, *The myth of beauty*, transl. M. Rogowska-Stangret, Black Sheep, Warsaw 2014.

Laura Mulvey's published in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*<sup>11</sup> and in relation to the way the category of the film star is defined in culture and the mechanisms of their functioning: Daniel J. Boorstin<sup>12</sup>, Richard Dyer<sup>13</sup> and Wiesław Godzic's recapitulating their findings in *Known That They Are Known*<sup>14</sup>.

Previous research on the Chanel and Chanel N° 5 brands focuses, among other things, on their functioning in the luxury goods segment and the analysis of marketing campaigns<sup>15</sup>, the use of story-telling in the brand narrative<sup>16</sup>, and has been interpreted in the context of glamour theory<sup>17</sup>.

## Chanel N° 5 and their myth

The idea of the perfume becoming the essence of the brand encapsulated in a glass flacon was realised at all stages of its development: starting with the creation of the composition, the creation of the name and visual representation, and the subsequent marketing communication. For the creation of the Chanel N° 5 formula, based on more than 80 ingredients, Madame Chanel hired Ernest Beaux, the author of the legendary Bouquet de Catherine, composed for the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty, which was renamed Rallet N° 1 due to the outbreak of World War I. As Tillar J. Mezzeo writes in *The Secret Life of Chanel No 5. The first biography of the world's most famous perfume*:

Contractually, Ernest, building on the rose and jasmine heart of Rallet N° 1, was to give them greater purity and boldness, and in the new formulations he experimented even more boldly with ways of balancing powerful natural extracts with modern synthetics [...]. The result was a fragrance that was heavy with rose and jasmine, but not as obscenely expensive as Ernest Beaux's Russian creation. [Thanks to this] Chanel N° 5 still had the chance to become the world's most expensive fragrance of 1920<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> L. Mulvey, *Visual pleasure and narrative cinema*, transl. J. Moch [in:] *Panorama of Contemporary Film Thought*, ed. by A. Helman, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, Krakow 1992, pp. 95–107.

<sup>12</sup> D.J. Boorstin, *The Image. The Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, Vintage, New York 1964.

<sup>13</sup> R. Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies, Film Stars and Society*, London-New York 2004.

<sup>14</sup> W. Godzic, *Znani z tego że są znani*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warsaw 2007, pp. 33–44.

<sup>15</sup> N. Yang, *The brand analysis of Chanel*, 'The Frontiers of Society, Science and Technology', Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 78–82.

<sup>16</sup> B.-M. Amălăncei, *Storytelling and Image in Brand Communication*, 'Argumentum. Journal of the Seminar of Discursive Logic, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric' 2021, No. 19(1), pp. 85–101.

<sup>17</sup> H. Hautala, *The Glamorous Life of Chanel No 5 – a contribution to the theory of glamour*, Master's thesis, Stockholm University, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> T.J. Mezzeo, *The Secret Life of Chanel No 5....*, pp. 101–102.

What made them unusual was:

- 1) basing it not on the aroma of a single flower, but of a whole bouquet;
- 2) a combination of floral notes and animal musk, which are considered mutually exclusive due to their cultural connotations;
- 3) the use of extracts of natural origin with modern, synthetically derived substances – aldehydes – which gave them their distinctiveness;

resulting in an iconic floral-aldehyde fragrance that, despite its predecessors, according to the narrative created from the beginning, will be the first, unique and only<sup>19</sup>.

With a product, it still had to be packaged. According to the convention of the time using repetition as a function of redundancy, the costliness and exclusivity of women's perfumes were emphasised by the elaborate forms of crystal flacons reflecting *in extenso* the aesthetic ideals of Art Nouveau, as demonstrated by Guerlain's Shalimar, as iconic as Chanel N° 5. In contrast, Gabrielle Chanel chose to encapsulate the aromatic essence of her brand in a flacon whose asceticism would direct attention to the perfume enclosed within, while its shape emphasised its exclusivity, modernity and luxurious nature. The cuboidal bottle, made of the thinnest possible clear glass, closed with an octagonal stopper reflecting the baguette cut of a diamond and bearing a clear label clearly indicating the contents, the brand name and its characteristic combination of black and white, was as avant-garde as its creator and the fashion she created.

Looking at the formulation of Chanel N° 5, which contains synthetic Rose E.B. and Jasmophore jasmine notes, and the flacon, in which the equivalent of heavy crystal is the thin, delicate glass that is its antithesis, one can see that they are as much imitations of traditionally conceived wealth and luxury as the artificial pearls emblematic of the brand they represent, whose pearliness can be unlimitedly spectacular thanks to modern technology.

How effective the result was best demonstrated by Sem's satirical drawings published in 1921 and 1923 showing the coherence of the three representations of the Chanel brand: the style of its creator, her tailoring and her fragrance.

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<sup>19</sup> *Inside Chanel. Chapter 1. No 5*, <https://www.chanel.com/us/about-chanel/the-stories/> (accessed 8.11.2023).



Fig. 1. Original Chanel No 5 flacon from 1921; <https://www.firstversions.com/2015/02/chanel-n5.html> (accessed 8.11.2023).



Fig. 2. Chanel No 5 bottle in 2023; [https://www.dolce.pl/chanel/no5/6499.php5?gclid=CjwKCAjws9ipBhB1EiwAccEi1OhX-78RLYBORm1A\\_asDb9tUpawSAdepkmYf-fOkP1jOkALqTszRsfBoCwgwQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.dolce.pl/chanel/no5/6499.php5?gclid=CjwKCAjws9ipBhB1EiwAccEi1OhX-78RLYBORm1A_asDb9tUpawSAdepkmYf-fOkP1jOkALqTszRsfBoCwgwQAvD_BwE) (accessed 8.11.2023).



Fig. 3. The evolution of the shape of the Chanel No 5 flacon between 1921 and 1985, which shows the accentuation of their luxury character by imitating the diamond cut in the shapes of its edges; <https://www.dolce.pl/blog/historia-najslynniejszych-perfum-swiata-chanel-n-5.html> (accessed 8.11.2023).



Fig. 4. Sem's drawing believed to be Chanel's first advertisement No 5, 1921; <https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/399905641883089047/> (accessed 8.11.2023).

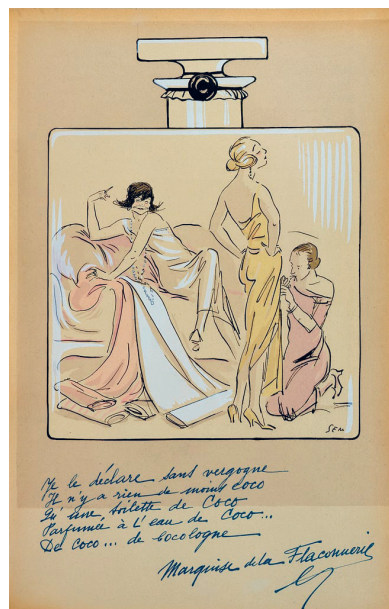


Fig. 5. Caricature of Coco Chanel published by Sem in the volume *Le Nouvel Monde*, 1923; <https://www.meisterdrucke.ie/fine-art-prints/Sem/301238/Caricature-of-Coco-Chanel-%281883-1971%29-in-a-bottle-of-Chanel-No.5%2C-from-Le-Nouvel-Monde%2C-1923.html> (accessed 8.11.2023).

And just as the fragrance enclosed in a slightly modified flacon has proved unchanged, so the faces of Chanel have changed, representing different images of femininity while maintaining the sensuality, erotic appeal and independence inherent in them.

## Marilyn Monroe, Catherine Deneuve and Carol Bouquet - the constitution of the image

As Naomi Wolff noted in *The Myth of Beauty*

Every generation more or less since 1830 has had to fight its own beauty myth. [...] It claims to refer to intimacy, sex, life, the celebration of femininity. Meanwhile, it de facto consists of emotional distance, politics, finance and sexual oppression. [...] The qualities that are considered beautiful in women at a certain time are merely symbols of feminine behaviour that is desirable at that time. The myth of beauty in fact always determines behaviour, not appearance<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> N. Wolf, *The myth of beauty...*, pp. 17–18.

Here, it would be appropriate to specify that they are correlated in such a way that appearance is an iconic representation of attitude.

Just as the twentieth century was a time of women's emancipation and the subsequent transformation of the canon of feminine attractiveness and beauty, as reflected in the images of the Chanel N° 5 ambassadors, the narrative reconstructed on this basis is a story of the emancipation of desires and the right to choose modes of self-realisation. In the fashion space of the first decades of the twentieth century, this was expressed in the shortening of hair lengths and dresses and the simplification of their cut in order to emphasise the figure, while abandoning the display of the culturally recognised attributes of femininity of full hips and breasts, as reflected in the image of the peasant girl created by Gabrielle Chanel.

In the 1950s, the wave of rebalancing the world after the trauma of the Second World War and the return of men from the frontline and women to their role as goddesses of the home<sup>21</sup> saw a renaissance of the fuller-figured female figure, represented by Marilyn Monroe, regarded as a sex symbol. She also said in 1952, answering the question of what she preferred to sleep in, "Chanel N° 5"<sup>22</sup>, which she confirmed in 1955 in an advertising session at the Ambassador Hotel in New York, commissioned by the brand<sup>23</sup>. Her overtly erotic image was an expression of the bifurcation inherent in puritanical American culture between the desexualised image of the wife and the sexualised, fetishized image of the mistress who was the object of desire, embodied at the time by a platinum blonde woman with clearly defined bust, waist and hip lines. An illustration of this phenomenon in the public sphere was President John F. Kennedy's relationship with his wife Jacqueline and Marilyn Monroe singing *Happy Birthday* to him.

This juxtaposition reveals yet another aspect of the cultural functioning of the Chanel brand, just as its tailoring became an icon of classic, distance-creating elegance, so its perfumes were meant to emphasise sexual appeal. However, in both situations, for the female wearer this meant being trapped in an image created for public use. Distinctive for the images of wife and lover was the string of pearls surrounding the neck, which, iconic for Chanel, never appeared in the Chanel N° 5<sup>24</sup> advertisements. A specific attempt to overcome this ambivalence was a 1965 advertisement addressed to the American public, in the finale of which a man, with the words "Tempt her with Chanel N° 5" spoken from off-screen in a male voice, places a veil on his chosen one's head<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> More extensively on: B. Fridan, *The mystique of femininity*, transl. A. Grzybek, Czarna Owca, Warsaw 2012.

<sup>22</sup> *Inside Chanel. Chapter 2. Marilyn and the 5*, <https://www.chanel.com/us/about-chanel/the-stories/> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>23</sup> *Marilyn Monroe in 10 points*, Nez De Luxe, <https://nezdeluxe.pl/2015/04/marilyn-monroe-w-10-punktach.html> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>24</sup> In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Chanel No 5 commercials made by Ridley Scott, which were also advertisements for the brand, featured only pearl clips with the Chanel logo emblazoned on them.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=naU7U1-Vpqq> (accessed 8.11.2023).



**Fig. 6.** Jacqueline Kennedy in 1961 wearing a Chanel costume, pearl necklace and toque [after:] Jennifer Algoo And Kerry Pieri, *A Look Back At Jackie Kennedy Onassis's Iconic Style Classic only begins to define it*, <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/trends/g1370/jackie-kennedy-onassis-style-0111/?slide=9> (accessed 8.11.2023).



**Fig. 7.** Marilyn Monroe during a session at the Ambassador Hotel, 1955 [for:] *Marilyn Monroe in 10 points*, Nez De Luxe, <https://nezdexluxe.pl/2015/04/marilyn-monroe-w-10-punktach.html> (accessed 8.11.2023)

In 1968, the ambassador of Chanel N° 5 for the next decade was hailed as the most beautiful woman in the world after her role in Louis Bunuel's perverse *Beauty of the Day*<sup>26</sup>, the thoroughly French Catherine Deneuve, and on the other side of the lens involved Richard Avedon photographing his characters in their naturalness and Helmut Newton fetishizing female bodies. Consequently, one of the elements of the campaign realised with her were surrealistic film shorts evoking the motif of sensual fantasy known from *Beauty of the Day*<sup>27</sup>. The campaign based on her celebrity image, with its inherent inaccessibility, used it as a medium and introduced a narrative developed over a decade, whose message was unambiguous. According to it, it is the woman who makes the choice of a partner who offers her what she desires, as reflected in the phrase uttered by Catherine Deneuve at the end of the spots, "He knows that what you want is Chanel"<sup>28</sup>. And just like the iconic image of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Marilyn Monroe was inscribed with being subject to a man's choice, so Catherine Deneuve's image as an icon of the following decade was inscribed with independence and the power to make choices. Here, too, it can be seen that just as Marilyn Monroe's figure carried the promise of satisfying the fantasies of the beholder, so Catherine

<sup>26</sup> *Beauty of the Day*, dir. by L. Bunuel, prod. France, Italy 1967.

<sup>27</sup> T. J. Mazzeo, *The Secret Life of Chanel No 5...*, p. 254.

<sup>28</sup> See *Chanel No 5*, 1971, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyQS\\_A3zO6U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyQS_A3zO6U); *Whispered*, dir. by H. Newton, 1973, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGVNGoMXE2c> (accessed 8.11.2023).



Deneuve's evocation of the heroine of *Beauty of the Day* represented the ambivalence of fulfilling one's fantasies and being their object.



Fig. 8 Catherine Deneuve, photograph by Richard Avedon 1971; <https://cafleurebon.com/new-fragrance-review-chanel-no-5-leau-olivier-polge-2016-scent-diaryfive-days-and-five-faces-of-chanel-no-5/catherine-deneuve-by-richard-avedon-1981/> (accessed 8.11.2023).

Independence, freedom of choice and the realisation of one's desires were unequivocally presented in the following decade, in advertising spots made by Ridley Scott and starring Carole Bouquet, who had previously created the character of Conchita in Luis Bunuel's *The Dark Object of Desire*<sup>29</sup>. As Alain Wertheimer stated in 1987, Chanel N° 5 as a brand in the 1980s needed as its ambassador "a person and not a personality"<sup>30</sup>, which was the cool and aloof Catherine Deneuve.

Ridley Scott's realised storylines were wrapped around the slogan "Share your fantasy", as presented in the subsequent *La Piscine*<sup>31</sup>, *La'invitation*<sup>32</sup>, *Monuments*<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *The Dark Object of Desire*, dir. by L. Bunuel, prod. Spain and France 1977.

<sup>30</sup> P.H. Dougherty, *Advertising: A New Woman For Chanel*, 'New York Times' 25.11.1987, section D, p. 17 <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/25/business/advertising-a-new-woman-for-chanel.html> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>31</sup> *Chanel No 5. La Piscine*, dir. by R. Scott, 1979, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b82iyeti9jg> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>32</sup> *Chanel No 5. L'invitation au reve/Le Jardin*, dir. R. Scott, 1982, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ3vwlhHodo> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>33</sup> *Chanel No 5. Monuments*, dir. by R. Scott, 1986, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-EDl8xF7Ruc> (accessed 8.11.2023).

and *La Star*<sup>34</sup>. The independence and dominant character of Chanel's new campaign heroine was consistently underlined by the red of her lipstick and costume, which in the 1980s functioned as a *power dress*, an iconic element of the image of the successful woman, and by showing her against a background and attributing to her the masculine attributes of prestige and freedom: a penthouse, vertiginous skyscrapers, a soaring aeroplane, a traversing wilderness black Corvette with an elongated bonnet and a luxury yacht.



Fig. 9 Carole Bouquet, 1986, [https://morfreeov.xyz/product\\_details/44484050.html](https://morfreeov.xyz/product_details/44484050.html) (accessed 8.11.2023).

Marilyn Monroe, Catherine Deneuve and Carole Bouquet, three icons of femininity who, in the second half of the 20th century, were used to modernise, revitalise and enhance the image of Chanel No 5, presenting a story of emancipation in line with the Chanel spirit, and in the 21st century, by making Nicole Kidman and Gisele Bündchen brand ambassadors, two more chapters were added to it.

## Chanel No 5 with Nicole Kidman's face – a brand refresh

In 2001, he premiered *Moulin Rouge!* Baz Luhrman. Its success was the first in a series that led to Nicole Kidman's starring role in 2001–2003, following her unexpected divorce from Tom Cruise: *The Others* (2001), *The Hours* (2002), *Hill of Hope* (2003) and *Dogvill* (2003)<sup>35</sup> she did not disappear from the screens, the media, the lists

<sup>34</sup> *Chanel No 5. La Star*, dir. by R. Scott, 1990, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-v9WMs3zwCo> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>35</sup> *The Others*, dir. A. Amenábar, prod. by France, Spain, USA, Italy 2001; *The Hours*, dir. S. Daldry, prod. by USA, UK, France, Canada, Germany 2002; *The Hill of Hope*, dir. A. Minghella,

of nominees and winners of the Oscars and Golden Globes, often competing with herself and constantly attracting attention with her presence. At the same time, as a result of the post-World War II cultural expansion of the United States in a globalised world, American *glamour* dethroned French chic, and the oracle of style and bible of fashion became *Vogue*, edited by Anna Wintour in New York since 1988. Therefore, in 2004, Hollywood film star Nicole Kidman, recognisable in the space of globalised pop culture, became the face of Chanel N° 5, giving them the aura of American *glamour*. Directed by Baz Luhrmann, the *Chanel No 5* commercial used the familiar *Moulin Rouge!*

1. the characters of the protagonists: the man in love who tells the story of his love; the mistress who has to choose between love and career, and is created by Nicole Kidman; the impresario who is the guardian of the laws of reality;
2. plot solutions: a chance meeting results in the heroine falling in love and wanting to leave her previous life, which is opposed by her impresario;
3. iconographic elements: the dress in which Nicole Kidman's characters meet their lovers; the lover's flat in the mansard;
4. a way of creating space through the use of places and objects iconic to the city, while moving the action from Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's Montmartre in Paris with its *Moulin Rouge* cabaret to New York's Times Square. In the short feature film, as in the original, the narrator is a man in love who tells the story of his love. It is an exemplification of the closing statement of the original film: "Once upon a time there was an extraordinary, magical someone..."<sup>36</sup>, except that the person is not a courtesan dying of consumption, but a film star fleeing from the flashing lights, who gets into a taxi occupied by an unknown man. Divided into three acts separated by twin shots of the lovers' meeting and parting, the story of an ordinary man's encounter with a glamorous woman, framed by a casket composition, is a tale of dreams and her having to choose between love and career.

The narrative frame of Baz Luhrmann's ad is the story of a young man, representing the *every-man character*, who, sitting on one of New York's rooftops on a Chanel neon sign and looking out at the city spreading out below, with the illuminated Empire State Building dominating it, with the Chanel logo on the facade, to the sounds of Clod Debussy's *Clair de lune* and saying, "When I woke up in this dream..."<sup>37</sup>, begins to spin his tale, indicating its fairy tale character.

In the first act, a woman in a ball gown, fleeing from the flashbulbs, boards a young man's occupied taxi in crowded Times Square; looking into his eyes, she establishes a romantic relationship with him and simultaneously orders the driver to drive. In parallel, between the shot of crowded photojournalists and her opening the car door, the story of her disappearance and search is presented. Media headlines, juxtaposed with shots of her terrified face against a cacophony of flashbulbs and horns,

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prod. by USA, UK, Romania, Italy 2003; *Dogville*, dir. L. von Trier, prod. by Denmark, Germany, Italy, France, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Finland, UK 2003.

<sup>36</sup> *Moulin Rouge!*...

<sup>37</sup> *Chanel No 5*. Film....

create her as the hunted victim of a media hunt. And a taxi, like Cinderella's carriage, takes her to the man who is in love with her, except that it does not take her to the ball, but allows her to disappear from it.

In the second act, set in the shadow of a Chanel neon sign, captured by the tranquillity of her lover's space, she hangs up her gown and, stepping out from behind it as if from behind a curtain, presents herself as a fun-loving dancer. Her unbuttoned shirt and dinner jacket, reminiscent of Catherine Deneuve's French chic, symbolise a sense of freedom, naturalness and self-expression, repressed as a result of assuming the identity of a star represented by an image whose function is to live up to the public's expectations. The expression of the affection that brought the pair of lovers together is their kiss, portrayed in the style of a Broadway musical against the backdrop of a Chanel neon sign and a sky lit up by fireworks. But instead of a fairy tale finale, analogous to *Moulin Rouge!*, there is an impresario representing the laws of reality, who tells his protégée that she must return, and her reply "I don't care about tomorrow"<sup>38</sup>, clearly indicating that only the 'now' is important.



Figs. 10 and 11. Catherine Deneuve, photo by Richard Avedon 1974; <https://www.elle.pl/arttykul/reklamy-retro-perfumy-chanel#retro-reklamy-chanel-catherine-deneuve-2> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>38</sup> *Moulin Rouge!*.



Fig. 12. *Moulin Rouge!* photo by Baz Lurhmann, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4399550/mediaviewer/rm2879416576/?ref\\_=tt\\_md\\_4](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4399550/mediaviewer/rm2879416576/?ref_=tt_md_4) (accessed 8.11.2023).

The last act begins with the sentence “It was the right decision”<sup>39</sup>, which justifies the necessity to say goodbye and parting, which, like their first meeting, takes place in a taxi. The repetition of the shots depicting them, emphasised by the sameness of the place, the time of day, the aura and the protagonists’ clothes, as well as Nicole Kidman’s mouth uttering the words “No one can steal our dream”<sup>40</sup>, implies that their romance could only be a projection of a man. The commercial’s concluding sequence of shots and counter-shots shows the narrator sitting on a rooftop, on the Chanel logo, and Nicole Kidman ascending a red-carpet-lined staircase in a black evening gown, which recalls the well-known frames showing the entrances of invited celebrities to the annual gala organised by ‘Vogue’ at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

At the words he uttered:

“ - Yes. You will forget.

- I know.

- I don’t...

- Our kiss...

- Smile...

- Her perfume...”<sup>41</sup>

close-ups of her figure and face follow, with a final shot of the Chanel N° 5 diamond emblem necklace visible in the back neckline, whose diamond brilliance, an iconic representation of American *glamour*, outshines the classic elegance of the gown.

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<sup>39</sup> *Moulin Rouge*...

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

The two created images representing the Chanel N° 5 brand idea are united: femininity, sensuality and independence. And just as in the first one the pink ostrich-decorated dress, the hairstyle, the dynamics of the shots and the plot motifs connote an emotional, spontaneous, romantic, natural and submissive lover to her partner, in the second one the black ascetic dress, the pinned-up hair, the static nature of the shots and the depiction of her as she climbs the red carpet to the stairs of the neoclassical building connote an elegant, aloof, discreet and controlling starlet, whose public image is a manifestation of her professionalism, and the recognition she has achieved a testimony to her success.

The ambivalence of the two images is apparent from the first shots, in which the fleeing heroine is shown against the backdrop of an advert displayed in Times Square with her participation. It is used not only to create a dramatic tension between the protagonist's desires and societal expectations of her, but above all to broaden the identification spectrum of the campaign's addressees. What is interesting is that, in the press campaign, the ambivalence indicated is mitigated by the introduction, by means of a change of hairstyle, of an indirect image, as the following comparison shows:



Fig. 13. Nicole Kidman, photo by Patrick Demarchelier 2004, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4399550/> (accessed 8.11.2023).



Fig. 14. Nicole Kidman, photo by Patrick Demarchelier 2004, [https://live.static.flickr.com/2052/1700187160\\_3e205a7fbf\\_b.jpg](https://live.static.flickr.com/2052/1700187160_3e205a7fbf_b.jpg) (accessed 8.11.2023).



Fig. 15. Nicole Kidman, photo by Patrick Demarchelier 2004, <https://www.fashiongonerogue.com/chanel-no-5-ad-campaign-brad-pitt-nicole-kidman/> (accessed 8.11.2023).

The narrative created in 2004 for the global advertising of Chanel N° 5 is a contamination of clichés and phantasms operating in the space of popular culture. Primary among these is the perception of women as possessing a charm that captivates men, of which Chanel N° 5 is the olifanic manifestation. And the irresistible power they possess is told not only by the man sitting on the roof at night, but also eight years

later by Brad Pitt in the spots *There You Are*<sup>42</sup> and *Wherever I Go*<sup>43</sup>, who became the first man to be offered the chance to be an ambassador for Chanel N° 5.

## Chanel No 5 and Gisele Bündchen – a paradigm shift

And although in 1999 *Noting Hill*<sup>44</sup> created by Julia Roberts the glamorous star Anna Scott chooses the ordinary William Thacker, combining a career as a Hollywood star with a happy personal life, such a solution in Chanel's narrative does not appear until 2014. Then their ambassador becomes a model for the first time, Brazilian Gisele Bündchen, and the director of the advertising spot is again Baz Luhrmann, who in 2012 presented *The Great Gatsby*, which is a story about: a man in love and his love for the one and only, a time of women paying homage to the *look* proposed by Gabrielle Chanel and the dynamic development of New York.

*The ad for The One That I Want*, whose soundtrack is a dramatized *cover* performed by Lo-Fang of *You're the One That I Want*, the song made famous as the love duet of the characters in *Grease*<sup>45</sup>, shows a day in the life of a woman who is a representation of the Chanel brand idea. Like her predecessors, she is: mature, beautiful, desirable, modern and independent through her career. New to the Chanel narrative is the storyline created by Gisele Bündchen, which has hitherto been absent from the brand's communication: playing sports, living with an attractive partner in a neighbourhood-free modernist villa on the ocean's shore, being mum to a daughter who is a few years old, and experiencing a relationship crisis as a result of the classic work-life conflict. Also new is the depiction of the resolution of this situation, when, after the photo shoot, the heroine, holding a letter in which her partner wrote that 'You are the only one I want', declines to attend the *after-party* and runs away, only to cross New York's Queensboro Bridge, run into a club where a man waiting for her, overcome with uncertainty, approach him and passionately kiss him, showing the audience a diamond necklace with the emblem of the 5.

On the visual level, the second of Baz Luhrmann's advertisements uses the familiar motifs already depicted in the form of the neon logos of Chanel and 5 and the way of creating a representation of New York by means of its iconic objects, which in this production is the Queensboro Bridge. There is also an analogous way of playing the intertextual game that the referenced *The Great Gatsby* became the subject of in 2014:

1. by the plot-primary motif of a man's desire for the woman he loves to choose him;
2. In the sequence of the convertible crossing of the Queensboro Bridge;

<sup>42</sup> *Chanel No. 5: There You Are*, by J. Wright, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGs4C-jeJiJQ> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>43</sup> *Chanel No. 5: Wherever I Go*, dir. by J. Wright, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Uv-VmMamNgE> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>44</sup> *Noting Hill*, dir. by R. Michell, prod. UK, USA 1999.

<sup>45</sup> *Grease*, dir. by R. Kleiser, prod. USA 1978.

3. in the final creation by Gisele Bündchen reinterpreting the Jordan Baker dress designed by Mucci Prada – a character that is a representation of the tomboy created by Gabrielle Chanel, which places the created heroine in the context of the source image for the idea of the advertised brand.



Fig. 16. Elizabeth Debicki as Jordan Baker in *The Great Gatsby*, 2013, <https://s.yimg.com/ny/api/res/1.2/62wdWHsujUKIosC-b8qWPSw-/-/YXBuaWQ9aGlnaGxhbm-RlcjtoPTY2Ng-/https://s.yimg.com/os/creatr-uploaded-images/2022-10/962dd090-5546-11ed-bfb7-fb1451b2ad5f> (accessed 8.11.2023).

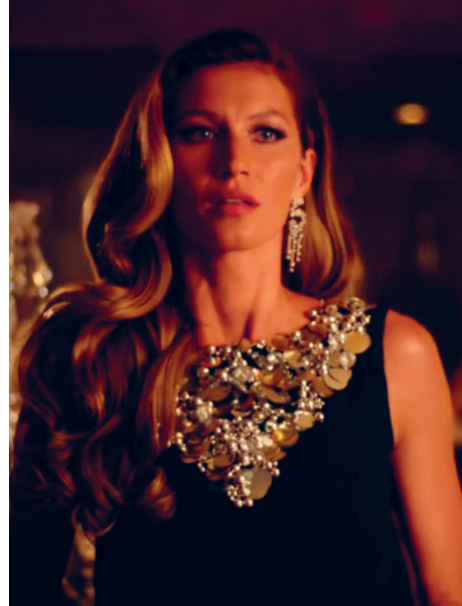


Fig. 17. Gisele Bündchen in *Chanel No 5: The One That I Want*, 2014, <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/a2/28/7d/a2287d1e4d-37d330e2f054596a11483a.png> (accessed 8.11.2023).

In ideological terms, however, despite still possessing the same qualities that Madame Chanel attributed to the wearers of her perfume, the woman who represents the idea of Chanel N° 5 in the second decade of the 21st century is someone completely different from her predecessors. Her choice of self signifies self-realisation in every aspect that is important to her and, instead of resignation, the possibility of reconciling the different roles she plays in life. At the same time, the power relationship and direction of control that condition the public image and its bearer are reversed. Nearly a century after the premiere of the world's most famous perfume, it is possible that it is not the image that is an instrument of control in relation to the subject adopting it, who, by subordinating their functioning to it, becomes its prisoner, but it is the image that



is subject to the control of the subject adopting it, becoming a functionalised, rather than an incapacitating tool used to achieve a desired goal. In the decade between the campaigns in which the Chanel N° 5 ambassadors were Nicole Kidman and Gisele Bündchen, a twofold revolution in thinking took place. The first was the belief that it was possible to harmoniously reconcile all aspects of life; the second was the recognition as an idea worth pursuing of balancing life and work, which, a decade later, results, with regard to Generation Z, in the recognition of the primacy of life over work. In addition, the ideological message created in the campaign with Gisele Bündchen was reinforced by interviews with her, in which she spoke about how the aim of the campaign was to create a representation for all the roles women have<sup>46</sup> and about her connection to nature and her practice of meditation and yoga<sup>47</sup>.

## Completion

Tracing the century-long history of advertising communication concerning Chanel N° 5 shows how, through the selection of female brand ambassadors, the brand's narrative was shaped in order to sustain its identity, a constitutive element of which was 'modernity' as one of the basic ideas appearing in advertising<sup>48</sup>. This resulted in an evolution of the created female images, while at the same time the representation of the celebrity figure was being re-vamped. For this reason, the images presented not only reflect the moral transformations and cultural changes that have taken place over the century, but also show the strategy of expanding the group of potential female recipients of the product, making it possible to maintain sales dynamics and the position of market leader emphasised by the brand owner. They also become a record of a metatextual discourse on the cultural conditions of celebrity functioning, and in terms of persuasion they indicate the purposefulness of the use of repetition in advertising, which is not without reason called the art of repetition<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> *Chanel No 5. Interview with Gisele Bündchen*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tt1p-d73i6ys> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>47</sup> *Gisele Bündchen for Chanel. Conversation with Nature*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ofTtxS5GqA> (accessed 8.11.2023).

<sup>48</sup> K. Cymanow-Sosin, *Locating ideas in advertising*, Adam Marszałek Publishing House, Toruń 2020, p. 245.

<sup>49</sup> A. Rylko-Kurpiewska, *Advertising as the art of repetition*, Novae Res, Gdynia 2016, p. 13.

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