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National College of Art and Design
Department of Fashion and Textiles

Fashion and film in the 1930's

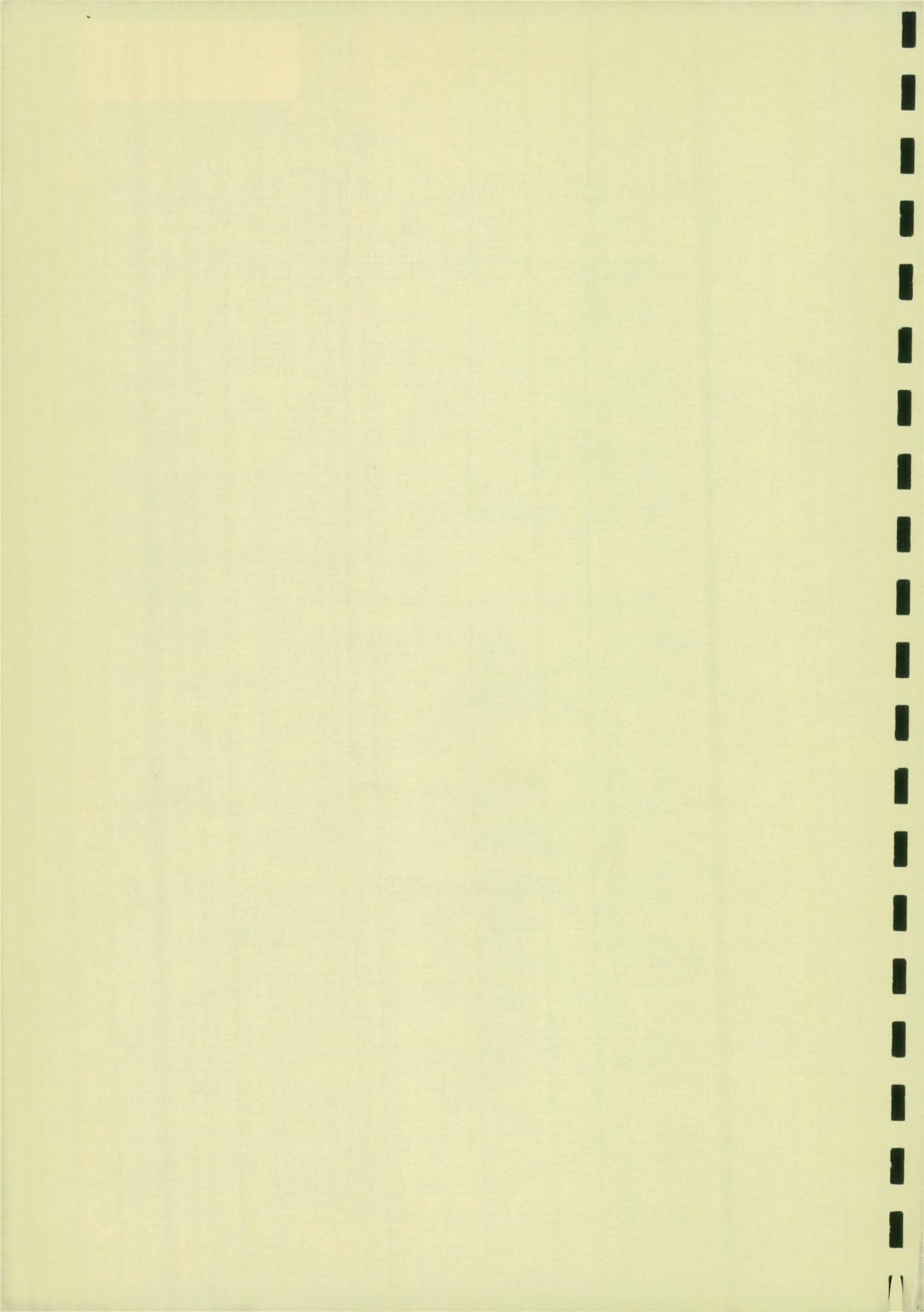
By

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Submitted to the faculty of History of art and design and complimentary
studies in candidacy for the degree of

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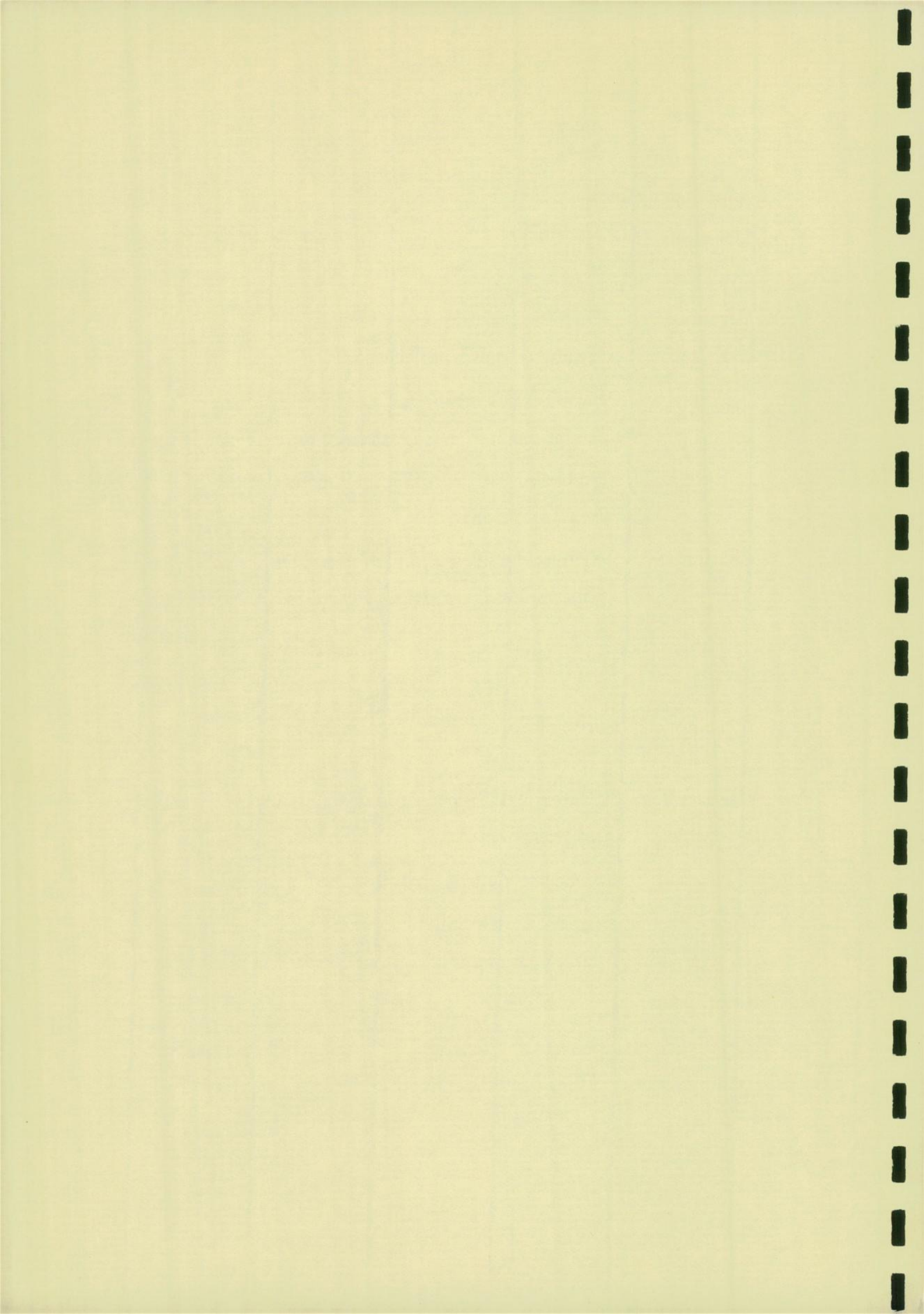
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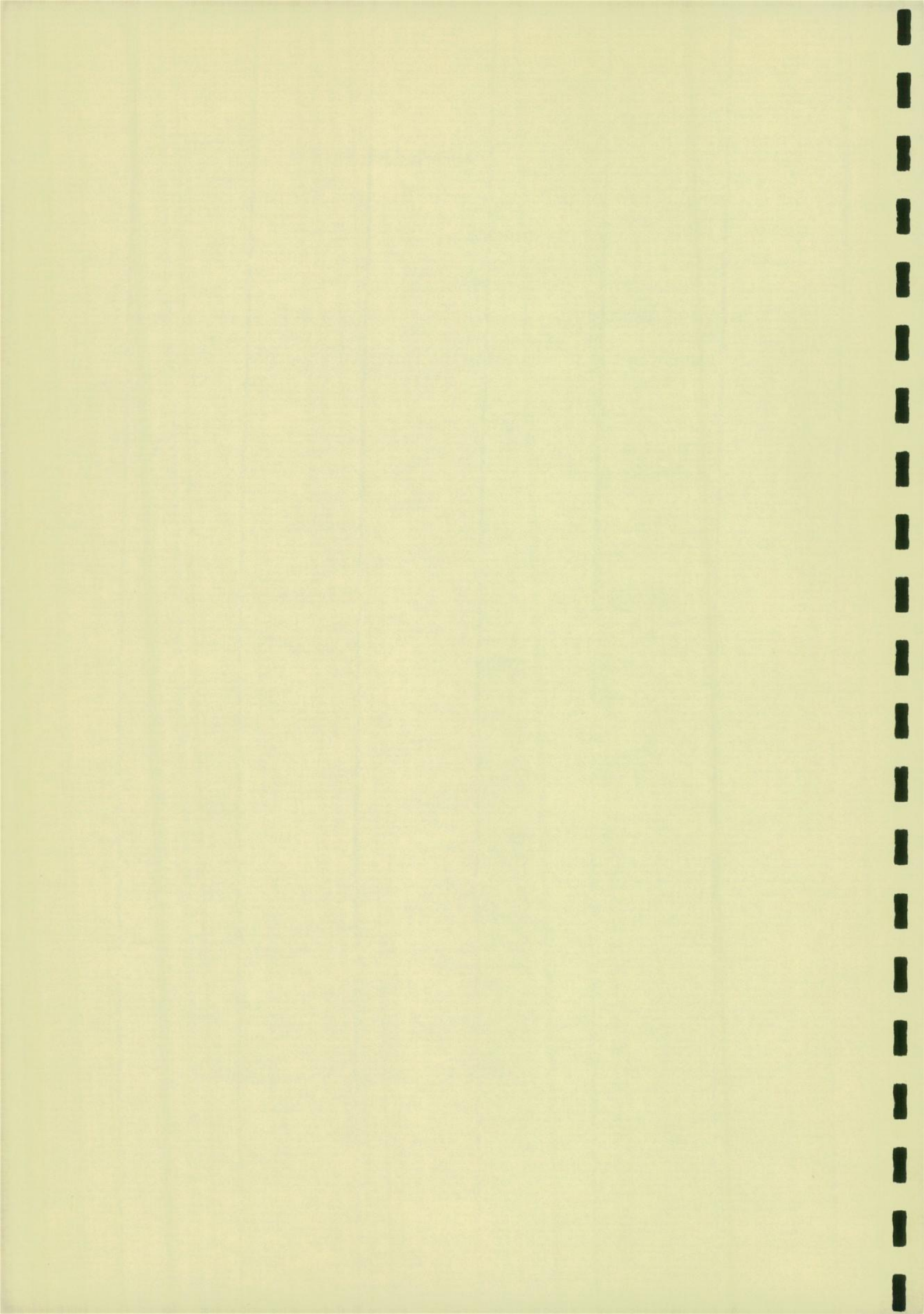
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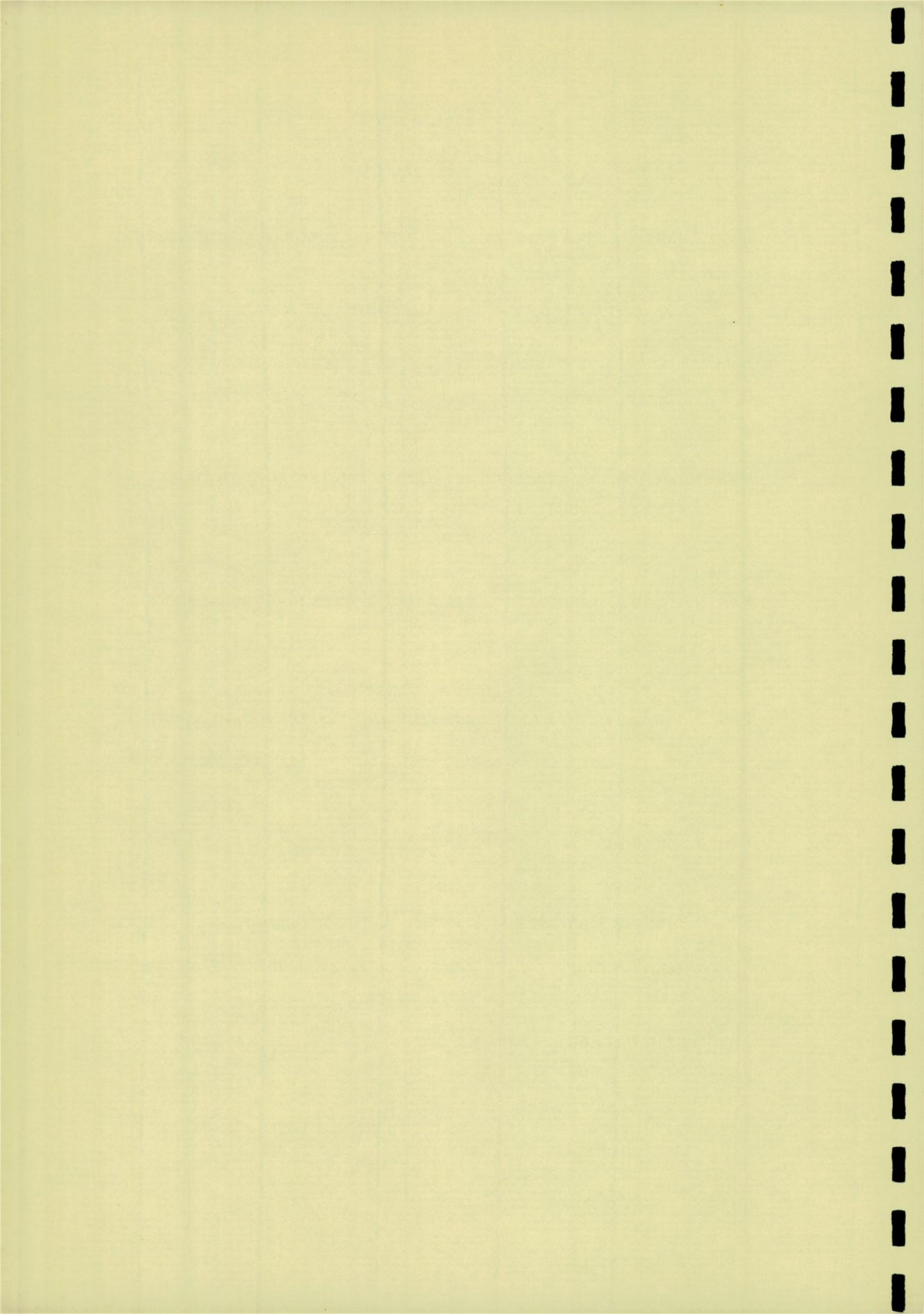


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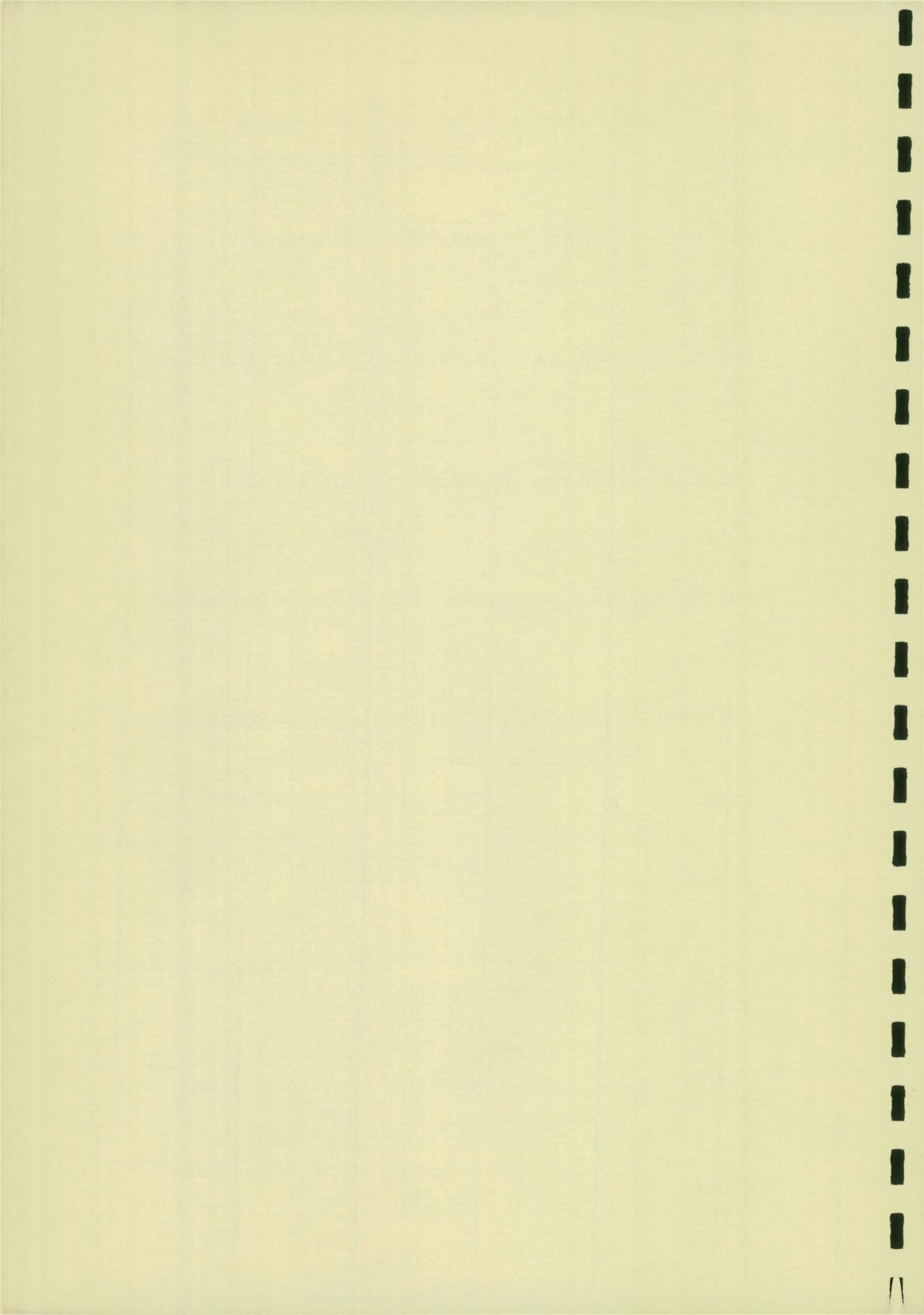


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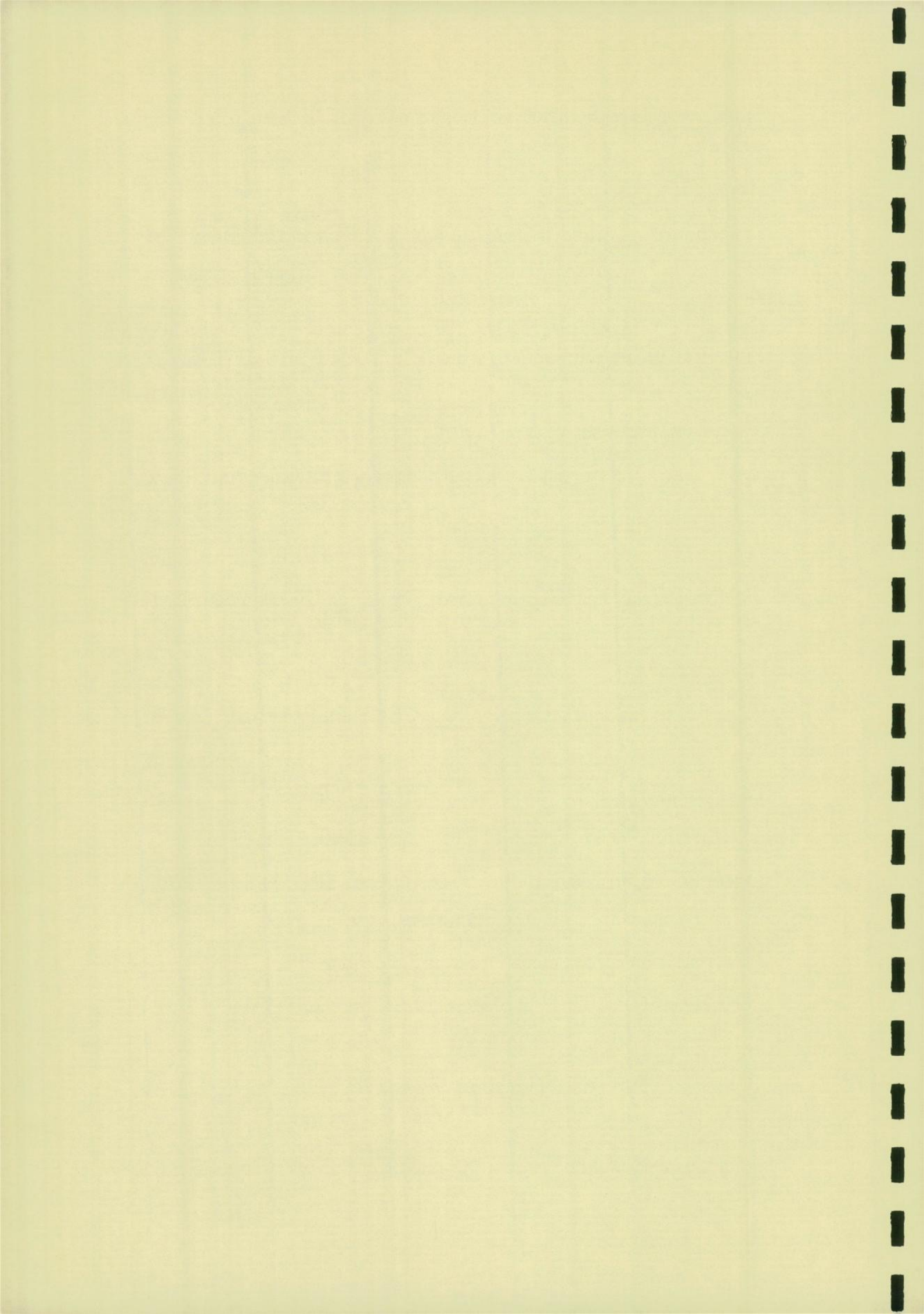
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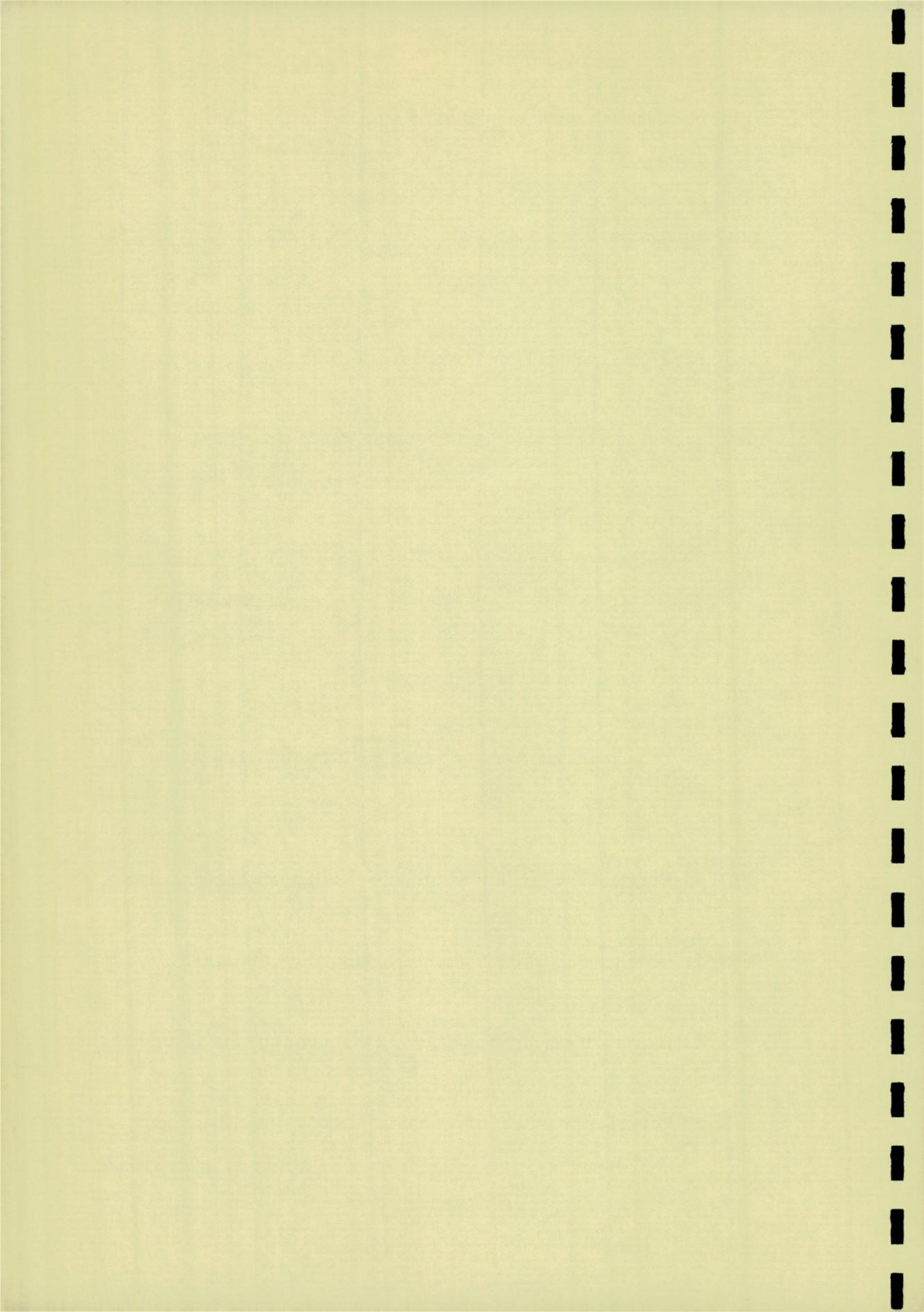


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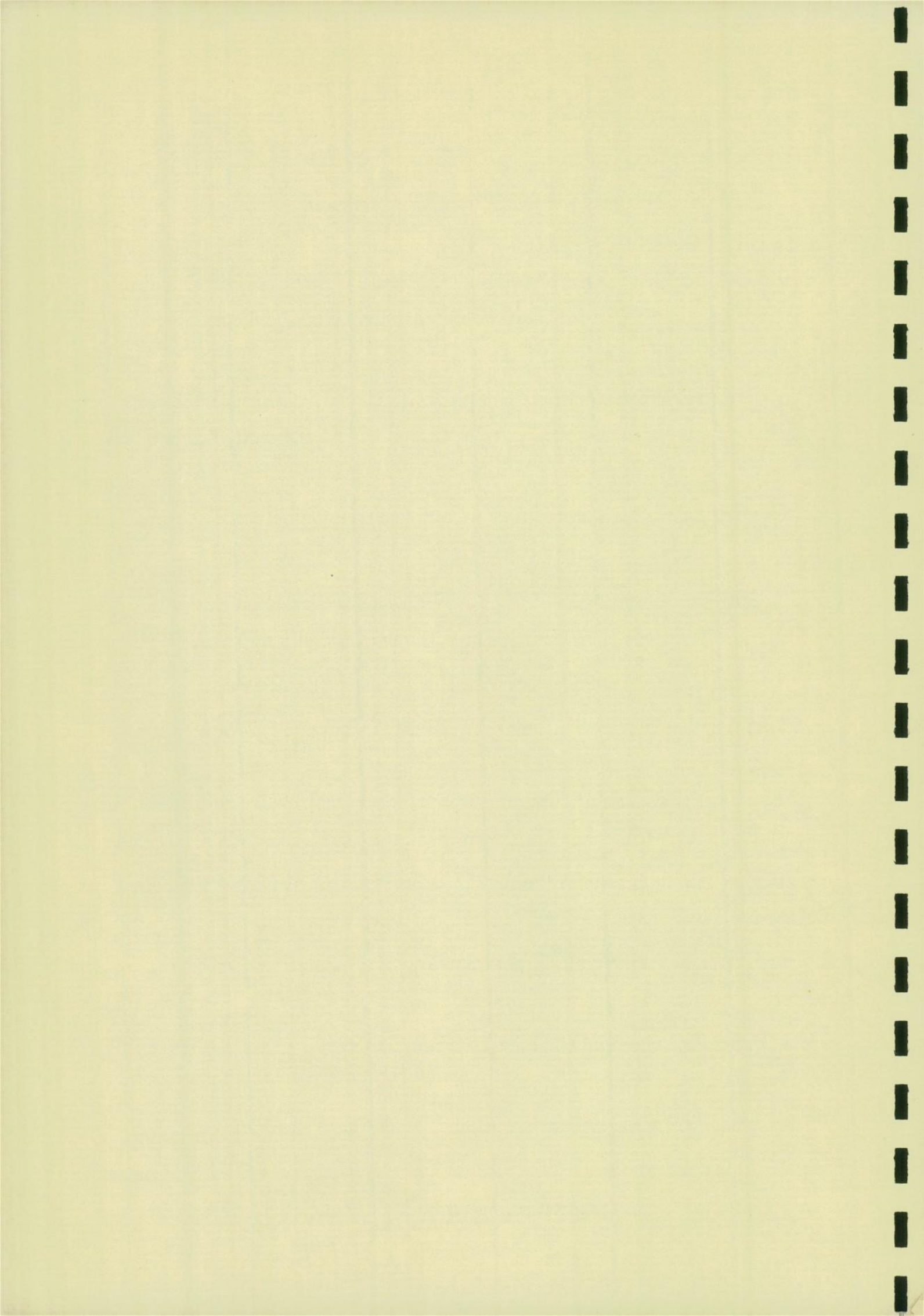
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Introduction

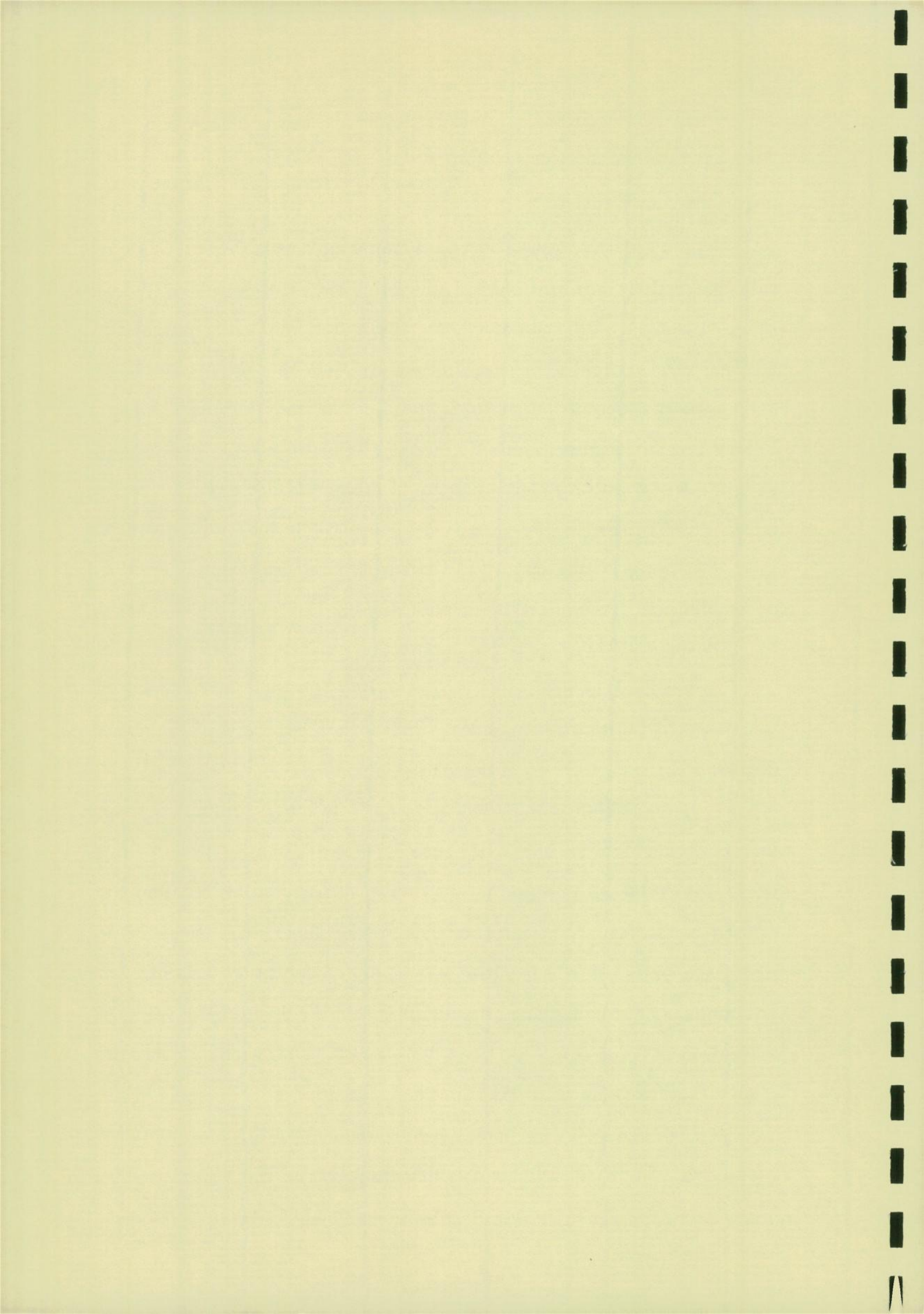
'Film is the most perfect medium for the exploitation of fashion and beauty that ever existed'¹

The 1930's in Hollywood was synonymous with these qualities I will begin this dissertation by analysing the Thirties in terms of America's social and economic state, as a nation coming out of the Depression, its rapid recovery and emergence as one of the most glamorous decades of the century. The film costume designers Adrian, Travis Banton, Edith Head etc. were all fortunate to work in an environment of uncontrolled creativity, unlimited budgets and beautiful stars. The Thirties in Hollywood epitomised style and ultimate good taste. Yet none of this could have been achieved were it not for the enormous task force of crafts-people available to realise the dreams of these designers.

I will develop this point by discussing the technical aspects of creating lavish outfits while working under the restrictions of the public desires and the early years of the censorship rules.

While designing for period films gave designers unlimited scope for creativity, it often led to the use of artistic licence; period films were often released containing costumes with a definite contemporary influence. Consciously or unconsciously the designers felt they had to make elements of the costumes socially acceptable. Despite the enormous amount of money spent on costume sometimes \$3,000 or \$4,000 on a single dress for a specific actress or a specific movie, the results however were often less than convincing.

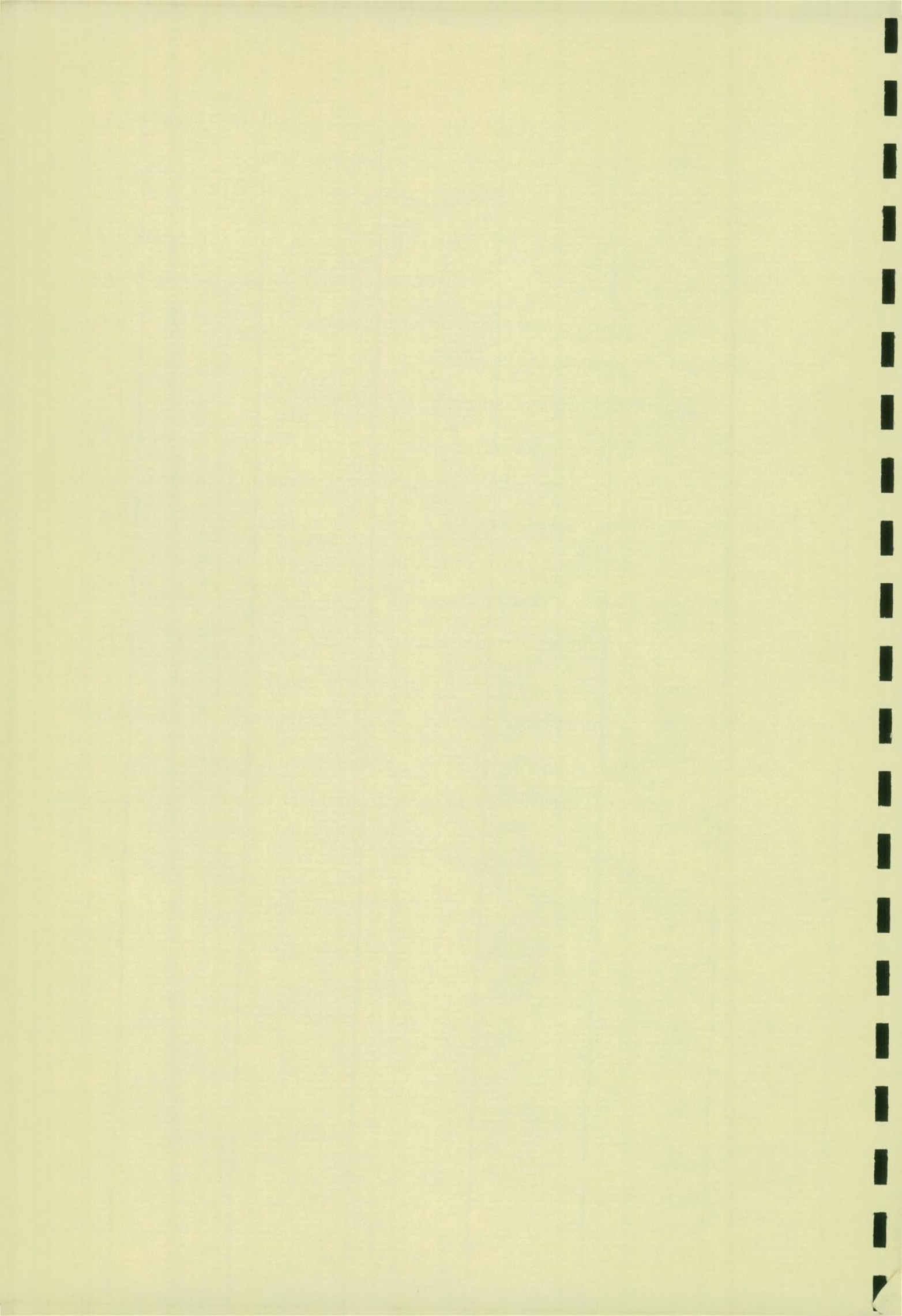
I will discuss this point with reference to three versions of Cleopatra from 1917, 1934 and 1963, 'Gone With The Wind', (1939), and 'Marie Antoinette', (1938). Each of these films has been applauded



for the accuracy of period costumes. With evidence I will show that the general silhouette was retained but the styling had changed considerably to suit contemporary aesthetics.

It is ironic that designers while incorporating elements of contemporary design into period costumes were often responsible for creating new fashions, for example in 'Mata Hari', (1931), Adrian introduced the now famous skull cap.

Here in my final section I will emphasise the enormous influence films had on retail fashion during the Thirties. The influence of film on fashion cannot be overemphasised, everything from hats to garters, to shoes, even to jewelled rosary beads, eg 'Mary of Scotland', (1936), were developed as commercially viable accessories. Costume designers held such a powerful position in the progression of American fashion it is surprising that costume designers the world over did not try to establish their success in Hollywood. As a final point I will discuss, taking one notable designer, as an example how this could not work. The requirements of costume designing and couture designing are quite different. Yet they could both be summed up with one word ... Glamour.



SECTION 1.

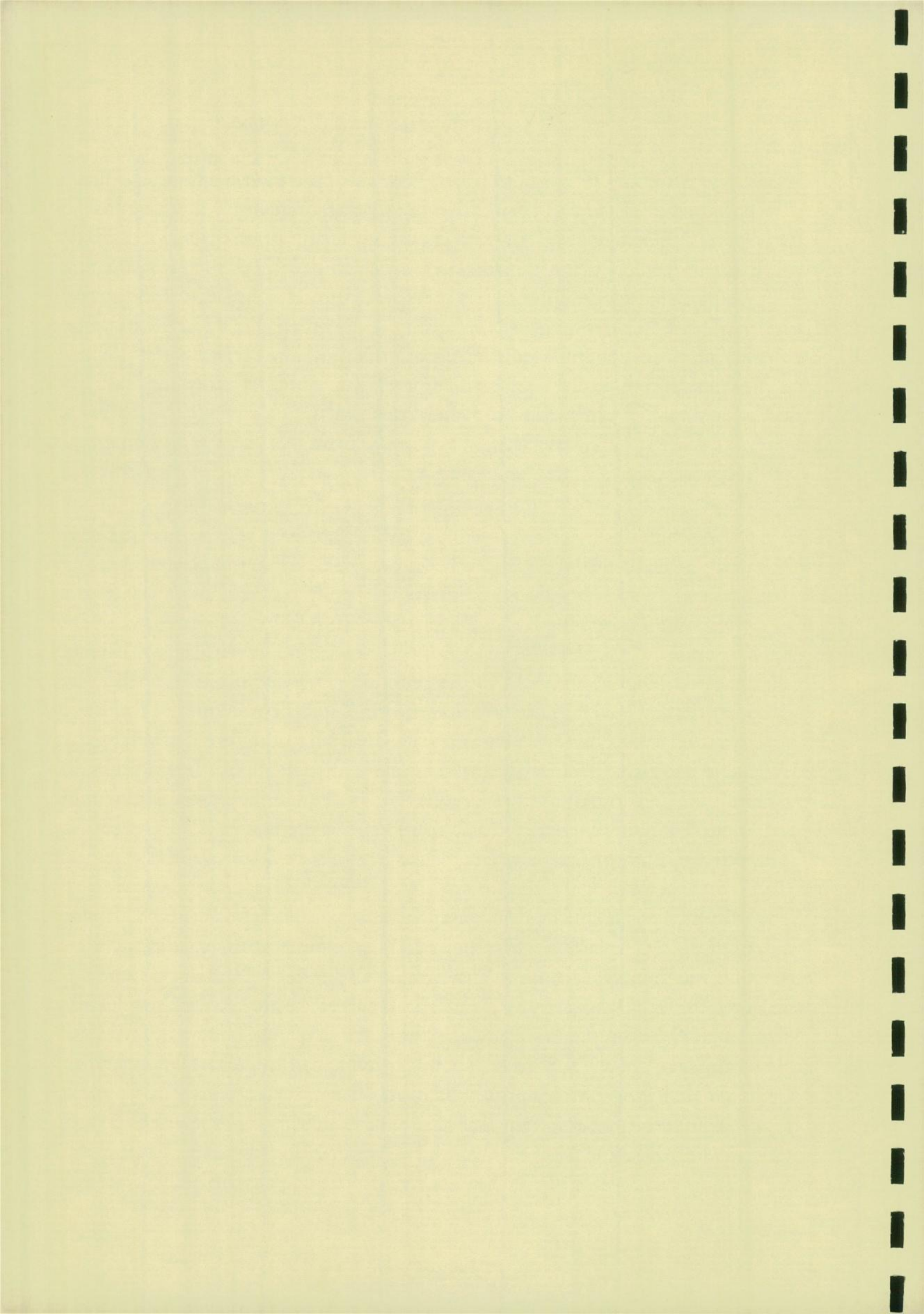
The Depression and Hollywood.

The 1930's was a curious decade. For the first time in modern culture the United States had been struck by a crisis of identity. It was suffering an all time low from the effects of the Wall Street Crash, followed automatically by the Depression and a serious blow to the optimistic outlook of the people. All this was in direct contrast to the late Twenties, a period of gaiety, romance and elegance, of white ties, platinum blondes, beaded dresses and the shimmering of light. But the dream didn't last; from dancing in the halls to standing in the breadlines; it all ended suddenly. The rich had to suffer a decline in status: they were still grand but they were the 'new' poor. All these misfortunes were psychologically disastrous for a society which had never questioned its optimism. They believed every problem would be surmounted. Now for the first time they were faced with a real threat to their security. Just as in any catastrophe, the after effects are the hardest; people need back ups and guidance to recover. in a strange way films were responsible for doing just this in the Thirties.

As I have said above the thirties were a peculiar decade, starting off on a very depressing note with social and economic decline. Yet, by the late 1930's, in the space of a few years, it had become one of the most exciting and glamorous decades in the film industry. Curiously the Depression in the early Thirties was responsible for the success of Hollywood throughout the decade. A society overcome by social and economic hardship was rediscovering its own identity

Why was film so successful?

During the mid thirties in America, Film was all that mattered, it was exciting and alive - a whole new world, a source of inspiration . A new film was heralded with anticipation and suspense. It inspired young men to saunter like James Cagney, dress like Cary Grant and woo like Clarke Gable. Women aspired towards the likeness of Hedy Lamarr, the remoteness of Greta Garbo and the sexuality of Claudette Colbert. They each had their own identity and mannerisms which gave them unique star quality Hollywood has not seen since. Just like any popular art the cinema needed a large following to sustain it. In 1937 61% of the U.S. population went to the movies week (see FIG 1) nowadays the figure is



CINEMAS AND ATTENDANCE

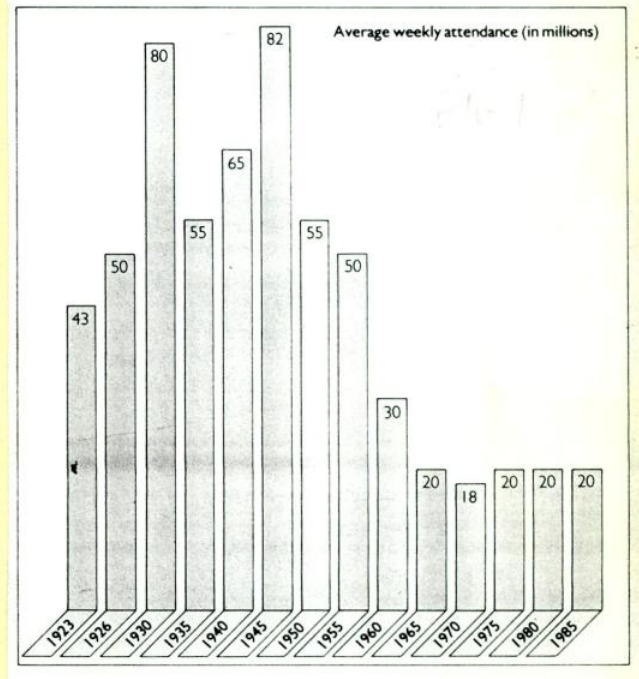
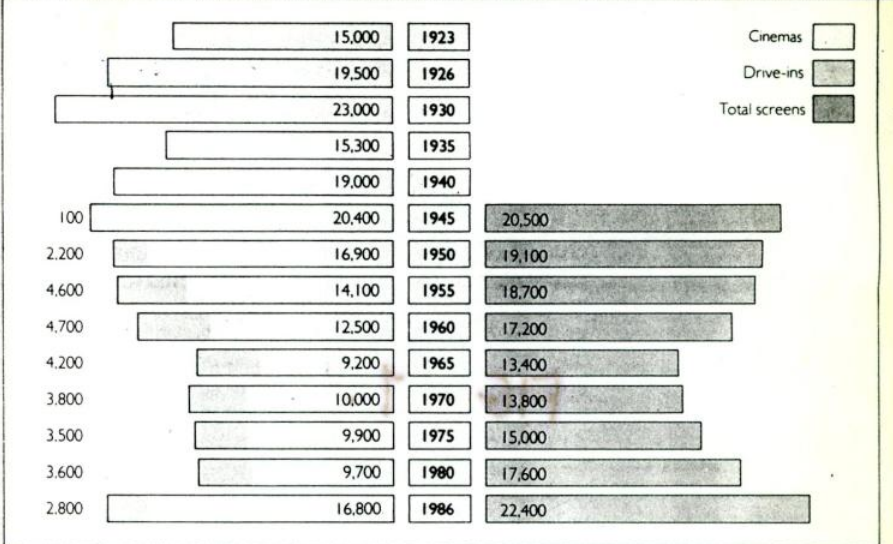


FIG 1 : This chart shows in graphic detail the growth and demise in popularity of movies for the last 60 years.

1953

1953



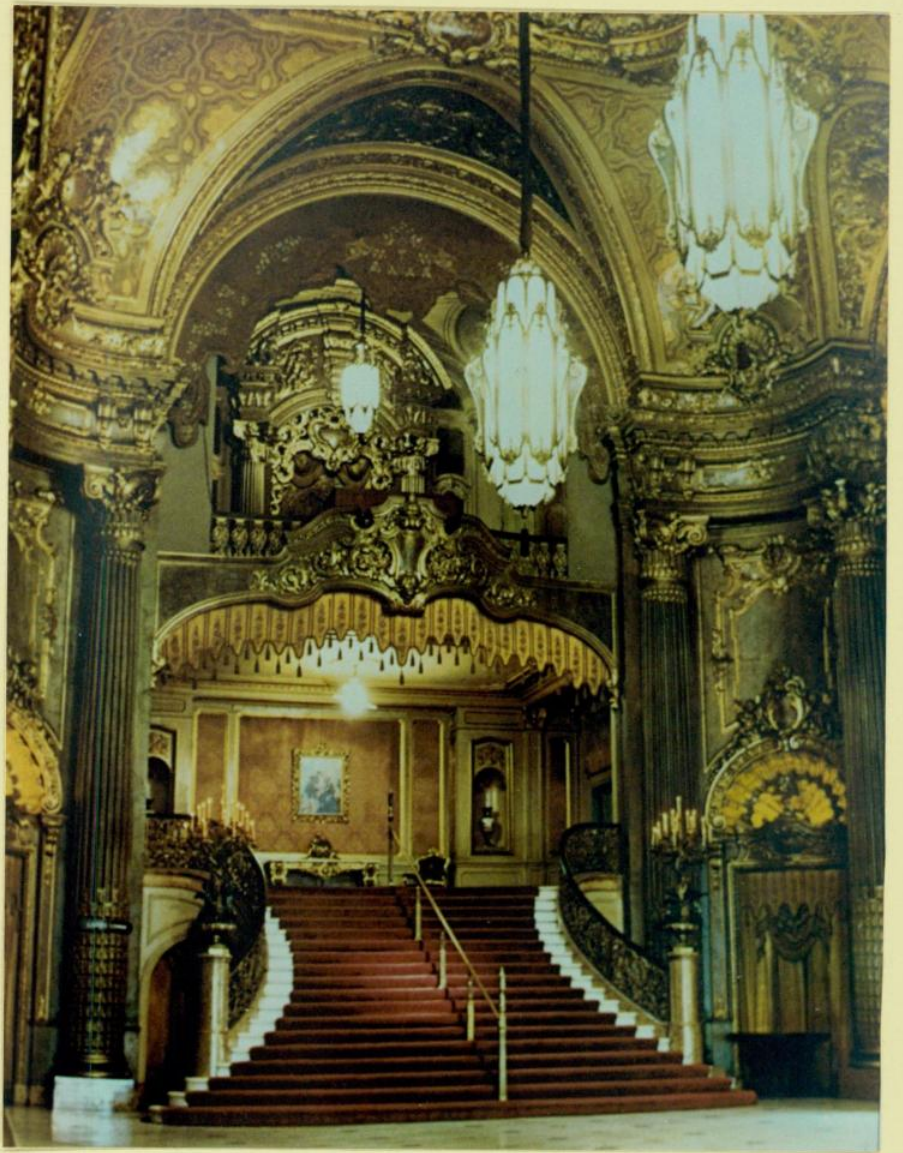
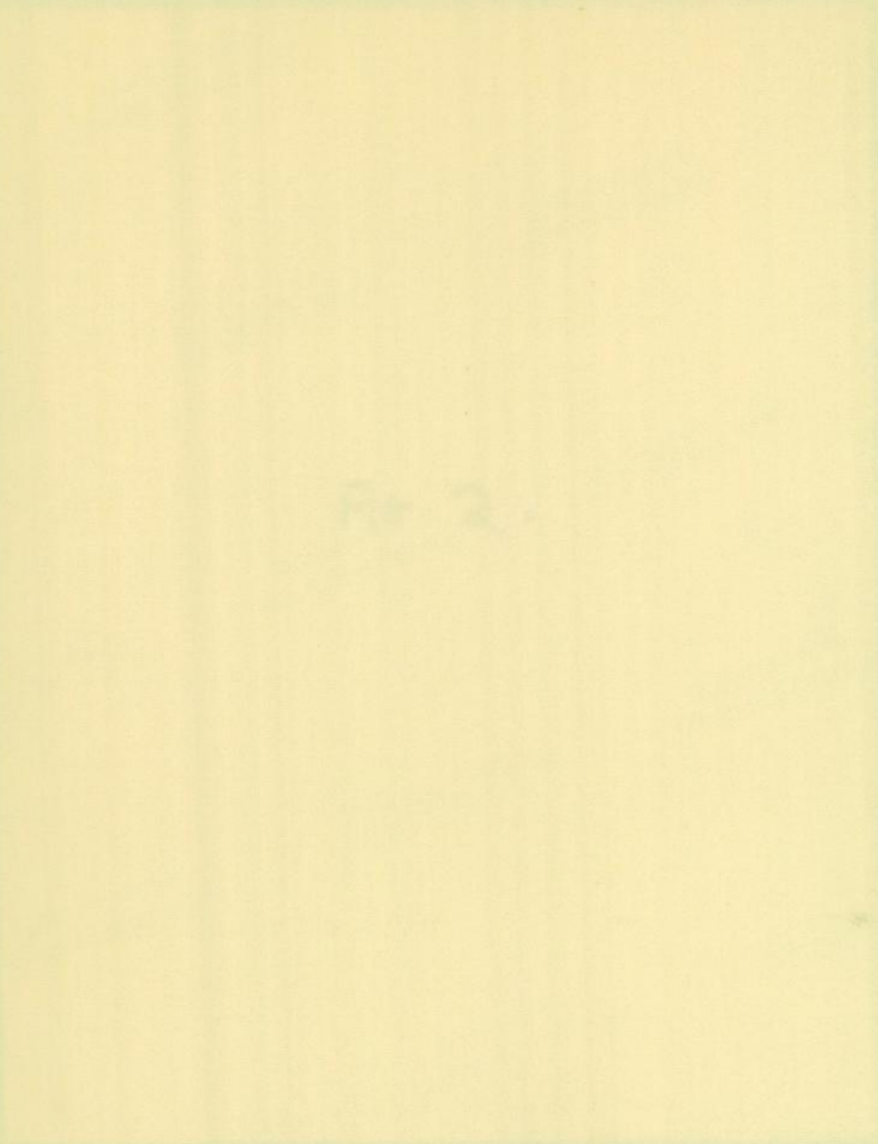


FIG 2 : Cinemas of the 1930's were more akin to palaces with trappings of plush carpets, gilt ornaments & crystal chandeliers. e.g. The San Francisco FOX.



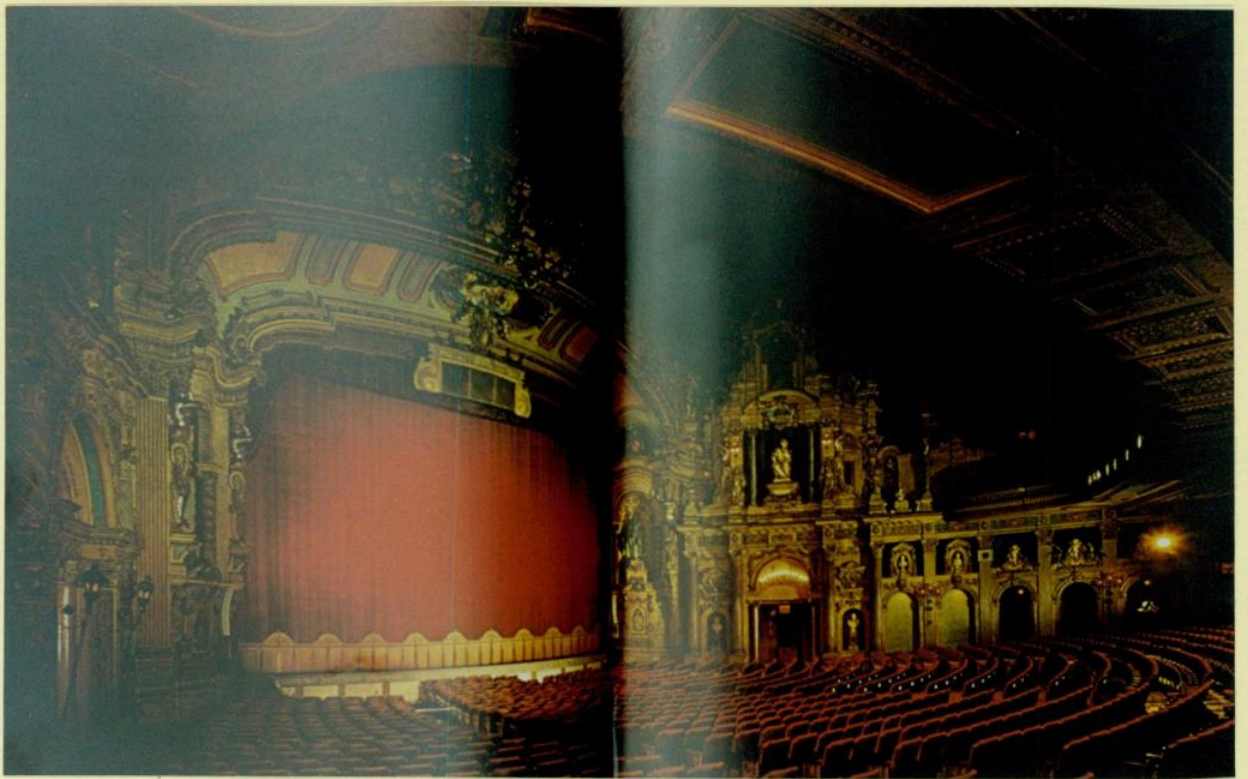


FIG 3 : 'Lowes Paradise' could seat up to 3,936 customers comfortably!

Fig 3

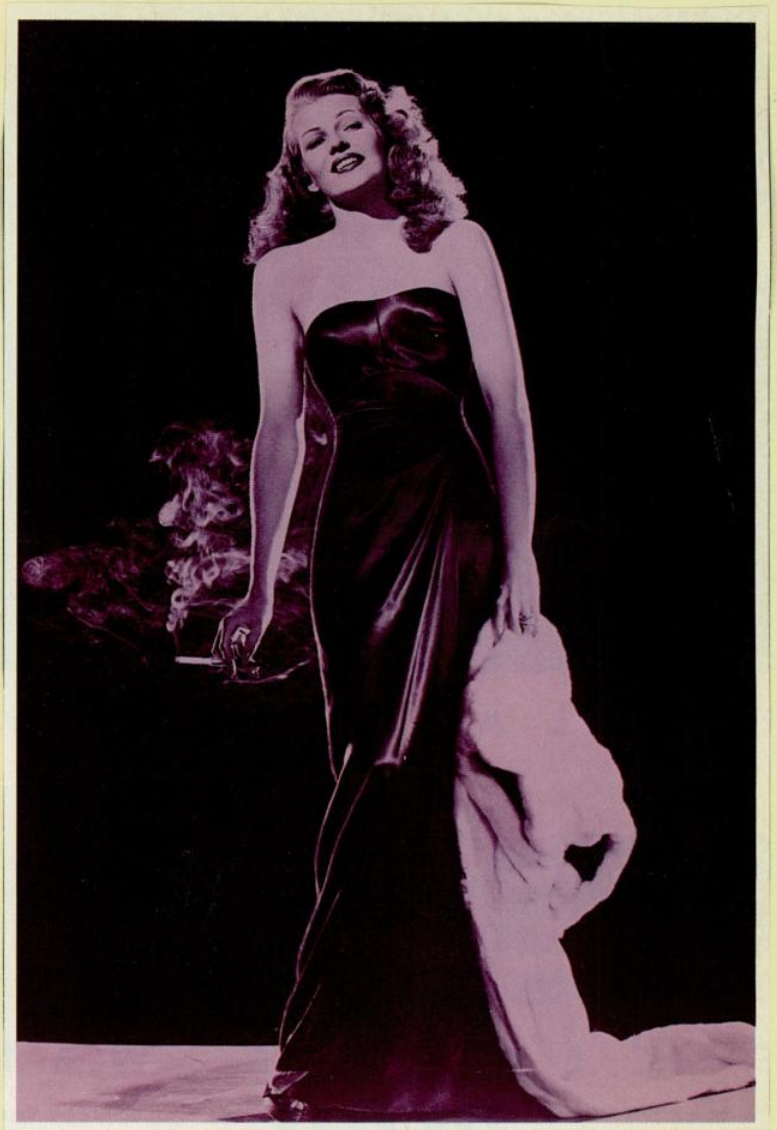


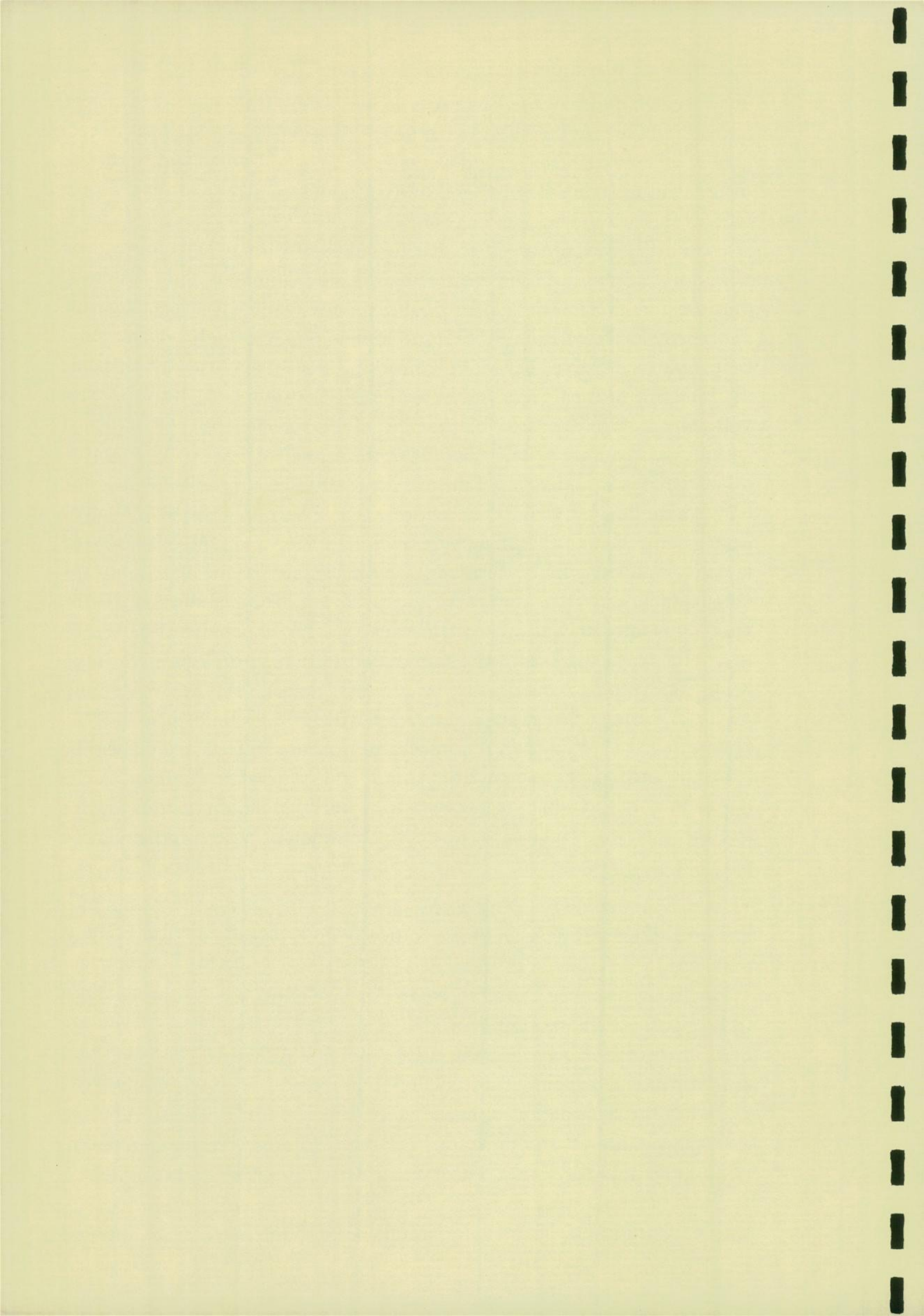
FIG 4 : Rita Hayworth -'before and after'...

about 23% ². It is an extraordinary percentage. It suggests that films had an incredible hold on the unconscious of society. It provided excitement and stimulation and almost gave people a purpose for living. It may seem almost obsessive to today's public who are getting harder and harder to please, but in terms of stimulating the imagination, it was all that people had in America during the late Thirties.

Cinema going during the decade had more to offer than it does nowadays. It was an outing of spectacle, illusion, grandeur and lavishness. The theatres were more akin to palaces with lush red carpets, marble statues, gold plated ornaments, grand staircases, painted ceilings and huge entrance halls; They were a shrine to the dreams they offered. (see FIG 2) Some of them were truly enormous, for example the Roxy in New York and Fox in Detroit which seated 5,000 people, (see FIG3). So it wasn't just a matter of just popping down to the local at the last minute to see what was new - far from it. People dressed up, as if for a grand ball. Whole families went, children were left in care in a special chamber with an attendant while their parents enjoyed for a couple of hours the lavish comforts which were for the most part a far cry from the subsistence existence they were mostly living. That is the key to the success of the cinema during the Thirties - the experience was totally new, it was escapism and the foundation on which dreams were built. Attendance numbers increased steadily right through the war years until the early Fifties when numbers dropped - the novelty had worn off. This is why those who went to the movies during the thirties remember the era more so than that which went before and came after. As Roger Angel put it in a paragraph in New Yorker: 'Those who went to the movies during the Thirties became forever and uniquely part of the movies generation.'³

Even nowadays many people aspire to the Thirties in terms of a favourite film as opposed to any other period, despite all the modern advances.

In the Thirties everyone dreamed of becoming a star; the chances were greater then than they are now. In the Thirties, stars were not born, they were mass produced, with many just picked off the street and groomed for stardom. Total dedication was necessary; many girls underwent a reformation of class, voice and deportment with intensive classes in hair care and make-up. The results were very often successful, for example Rita Hayworth, (FIG4), Lana Turner and Greta Garbo, all of whom were initially ignored by studio bosses. Intensive grooming can



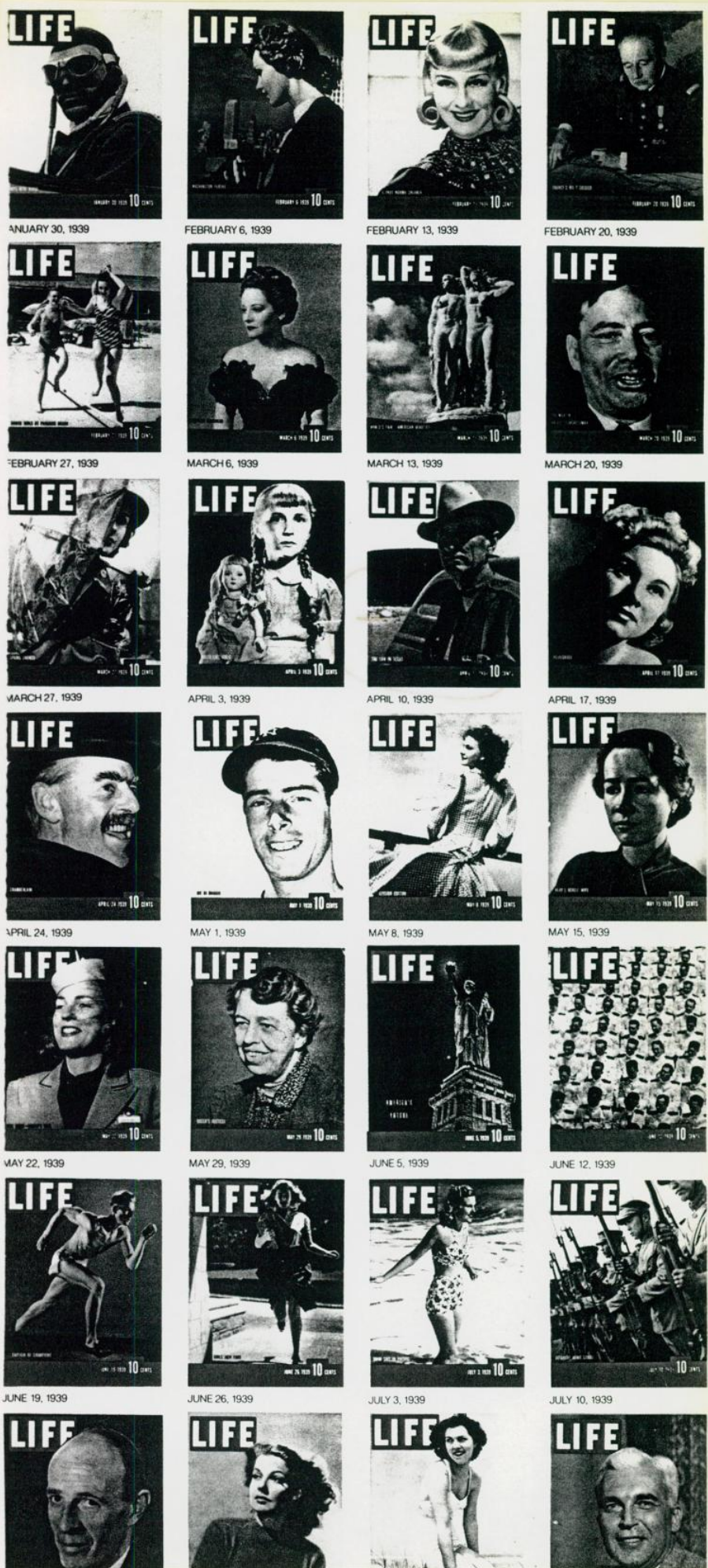


FIG 5 : Life magazine of the Thirties often featured movie actresses on its covers to boost sales.

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obviously turn ugly ducklings into swans. To further their careers and to intensify public interest it was necessary to appear in all the right places with all the right people. In New York El Moroues was the place to be seen in. Its clientele were the loveliest, toughest, smartest and most celebrated women. Club 21 was an important place to catch up with what was happening. The spanish style El Palzo or the Persian Rooms were all frequented by those wanting to be noticed⁴. Needless to say these two did great business. Dining out became fashionable during the thirties and dispensed with stuffy old rules of dressing, whom you would and would not receive at home, orders of precedence and endless courses of all too familiar meals in an all too familiar environment.

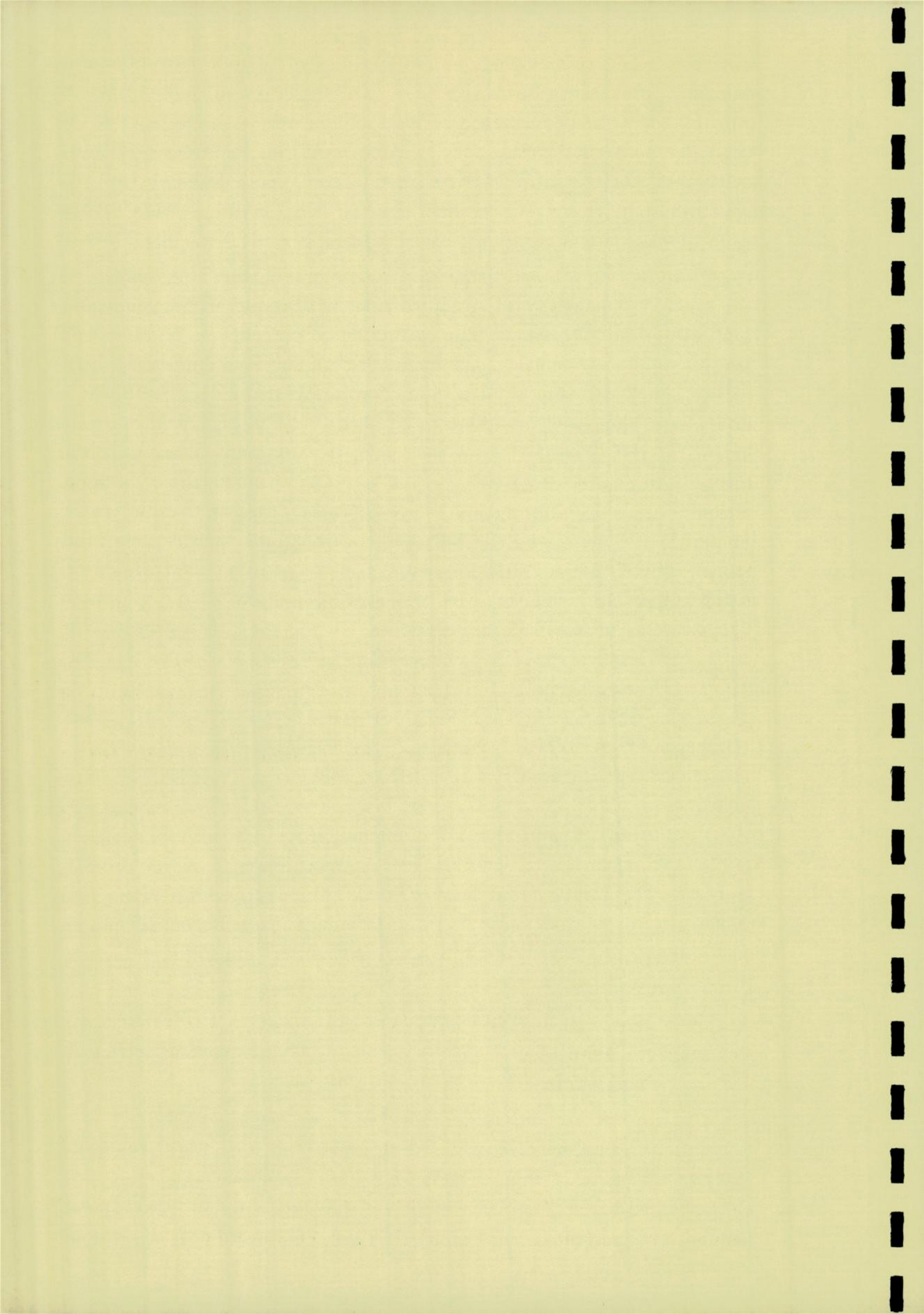
Of course everyone wanted to know who was doing what, with whom and where, so a need was there to be filled. In 1936 Life magazine was set up as the essential social reference. It contained columns by the influential Hedda Hopper, Lovella Parsons and Sidney Shalsley, accompanied by photographs by Margaret Bourke White, Peter Stackpole, Thomas McEvoy and Alfred Eisenstradt. It was then, and still is, influential in educating people and broadening their minds on social issues. The magazine was by no means a show-biz rag. Although film related features were quite popular during the thirties and movie stars were regularly featured on the front cover to boost sales (see FIG 5). It carried stories on

'CELEBRITIES AND FAMOUS SIGHTS, MEN AND WOMEN AT THEIR DAILY ACTIVITIES, PASSING FANCIES AND OLD DIVERSIONS, THE GOODNESS OF THE EARTH AND THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE PLANETS'.⁵

By the end of the first year of publishing it was evident just what the public wanted to see in each issue. Hollywood newcomers were always featured. The public loved Merle Oberon who cropped up again and again, after being discovered in 1936. In a sentence it was important to 'keep up with the latest fads, to capture fast action and to pay tribute to lasting loves'⁶

By doing this it fulfilled what Henry Burke said in 1936, describing the new born publication... '... to see and to take pleasure in seeing, to see and be amazed, to see and be instructed'⁷

The combined talents of Hollywood and Life magazine were influential in the growth of new attitudes and morals during the decade. Hollywood produced films which helped to dispense with prevailing old-fashioned ideas. The public emulated the stars through mannerisms, fashion, hair and make-up. People like Greta Garbo, Rita Hayworth and



Carroll Lombard exerted an incredible influence on the public and continued to do so throughout the decade. It was an era which could be summed up in one word.....GLAMOUR.

Lavishness in film

'The Thirties shimmered with Hollywood at its grandest, a dream reinforced by costumes and gowns, that even today epitomise sophisticated beauty and timeless elegance'⁸

Hollywood and glamour, the two are synonymous. In my research for this thesis I have heard people say that the women looked as women should; maybe nowadays a statement like that would be considered sexist and very narrow-minded. Nonetheless women's dress of the period stood for sophistication and elegance. The Thirties saw costume designers treated like Gods, governing groups of skilled workers, (usually low paid), slaving to create the dreams and visions of their superiors. In many cases the costumes were only seen for minutes, These were often the most expensive and took the longest to make but that wasn't an issue. They all worked in a 'never never land where the fine line between illusion and reality was joyously blurred.'⁹ Everyone believed in the dream and the the fantasy the movies evoked - the costume designers in their ivory towers, the screen goddesses whose every move was reported and the public who allowed themselves to be enraptured.

A lot of the film's contents centered around high society where lavishness and exotica could be exploited to the last as the screen gratified the stars and their clothes. With so much emphasis being placed on costumes, many wonder why Hollywood never became a centre of fashion. The reason is that the costume designers job is to create a fashionable screen image, not necessarily fashion. A fashion centre only becomes such when it manufactures the clothes to be bought by the public. Hollywood never did this; it provided what are corectly termed cinema costumes, for specific actresses, specific roles and specific movies. Occasionaly cinema costumes influenced fashion. I will discuss this phenomenon in a later chapter. Director George Cullen, who worked on many Thirties films, has said that Hollywood wardrobes were

created to serve the picture not to make fashion, they must fulfil two requirements a) 'They must serve the script and make the character believable and not distract from the scene; b), they must seve as a dramatic element in the film'¹⁰. That is the difference between costume

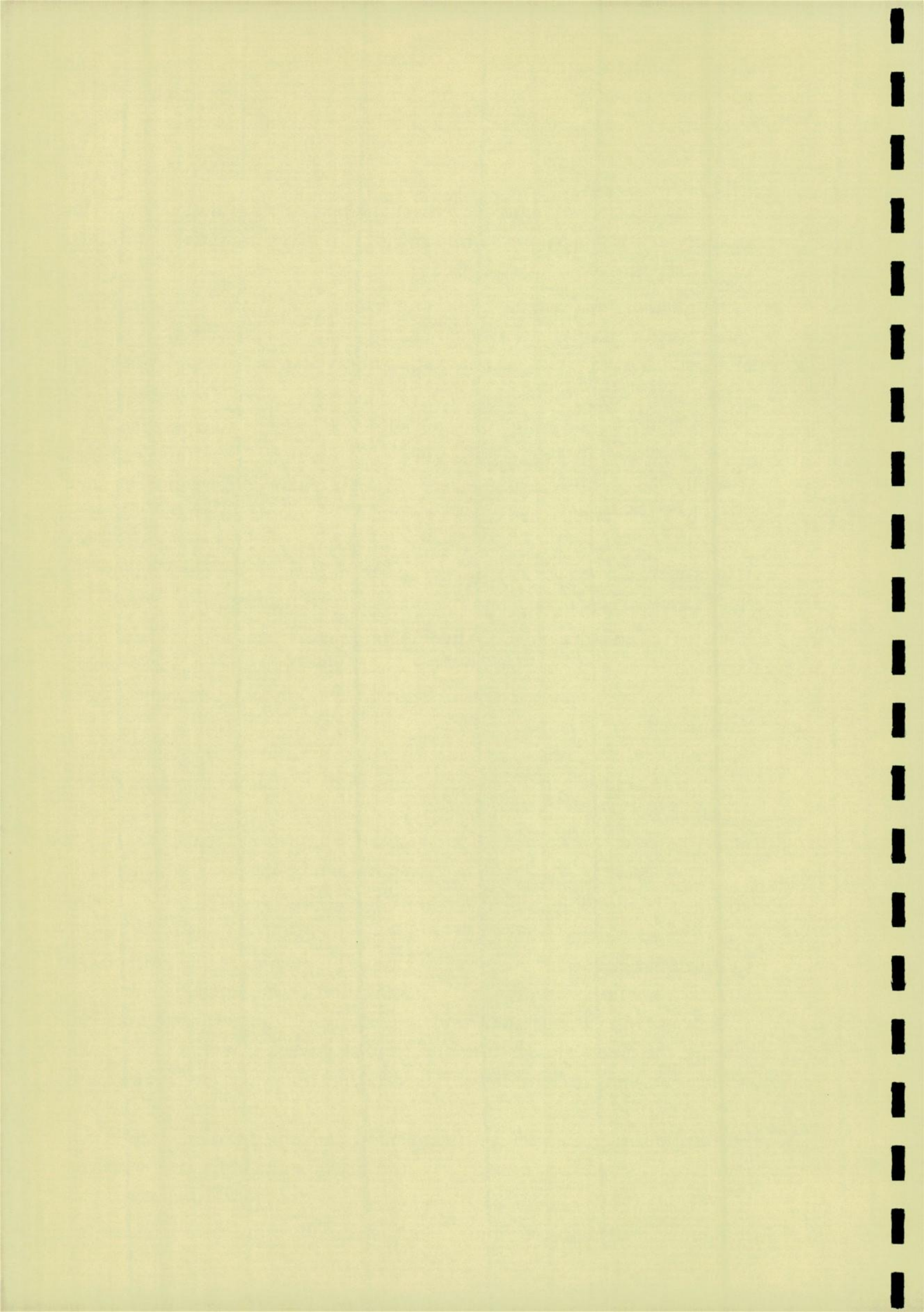




FIG 6 : Hedy Lamarr in a publicity still for' Algiers' (1938)

Fig 6

and fashion. Most Hollywood costume designers would not consider themselves fashion designers in the mainstream sense as they are expected to do more than just design - they must be historians, researchers designers and craftsmen. It is only when a film is set in a contemporary era that the designer has unlimited scope for design related to the period.

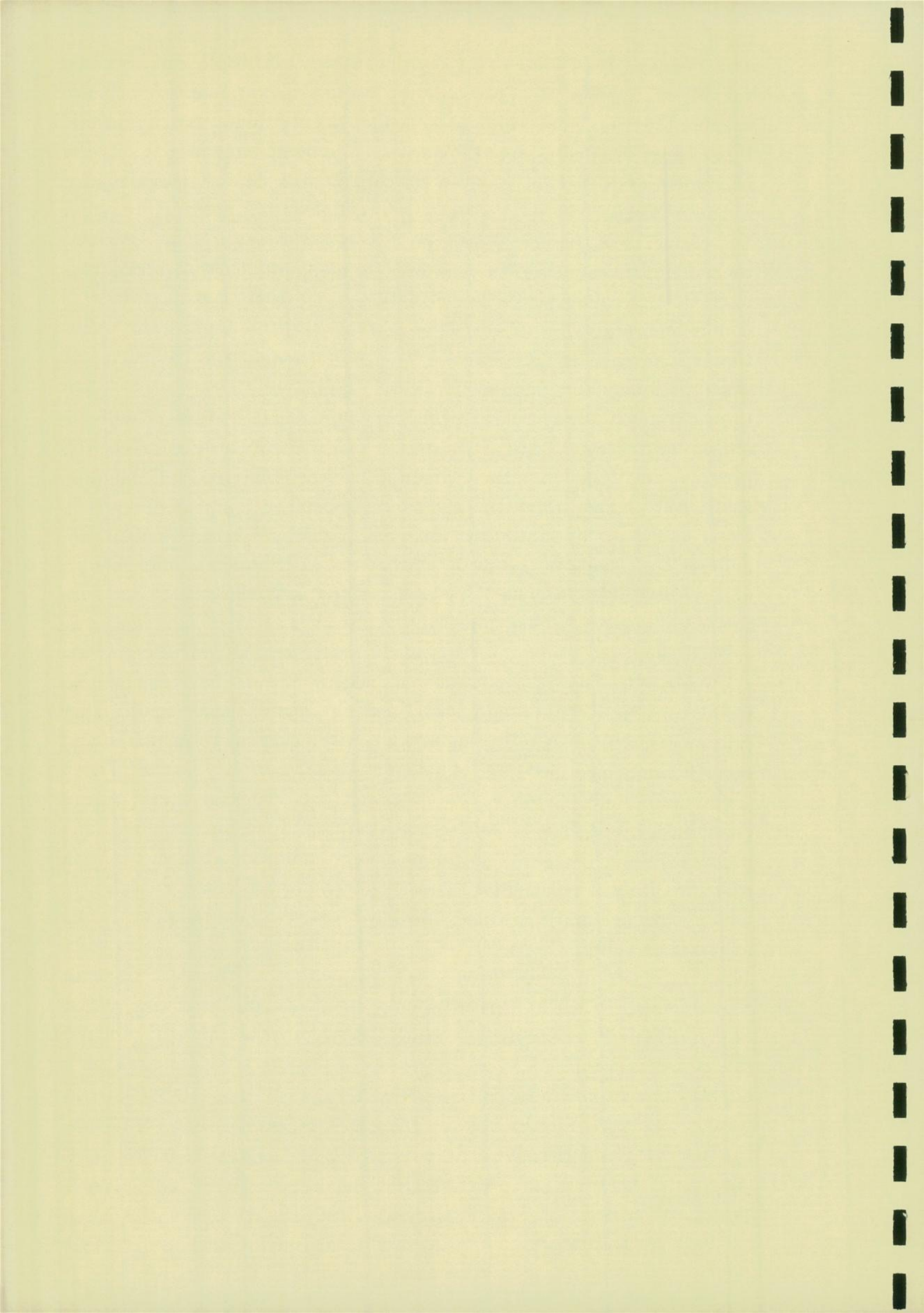
Elements of the design seen on the screen were slavishly copied by the public; these design details were a major influence in dress. It is interesting to compare to today where Vogue magazine lays down what is fashionable and what is not. Film has very little influence any more. However in the Thirties millions women flocked to the cinema every week to follow the fashions of Norma Shearer, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford and Marlene Deitrich. Only a few thousand ladies saw the Paris shows and read Vogue. These were no major influence on the progression of fashion, they 'dictated' rather than led. All the time Hollywood avoided intentionally creating fashion, it followed the general trend laid down by fans. However what Hollywood style lacked in new sillhouetes it made up for in design details, ie: trimmings, hats, fabrics and jewelery,(see FIG4) combined with the natural charisma of the stars this led to many a fashion spin-off.

The cultured women of Paris were not impressed with the growing show-biz vulgarity of Hpllywood impinging on its coveted role as trendsetter in elegance and good taste. Yet when costume designer Adrian opened his couture salon in Los Angeles in 1945, Paris and London loudly aplauded him for his wise move.

Costume designing is a joy for its experimental and creative capacities yet it had to fall in line with many complex limitations imposed by movie making as the designers could not work in isolation from the other departments. Edith Head, one of the greatest designers for the cinema and eight times an Oscar winner, made the point in the following paragraph...

THE COSTUME DESIGNER IS INVOLVED RIGHT FROM THE START ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE FILM, EVEN IF ONLY ONE TREATMENT IS POSSIBLE . THE BUDGET HAS TO BE VERY

CAREFULLY FIXED. I START ON THE DESIGNS WHEN THE SCRIPT IS READY. ONLY THEN CAN I DRAW UP A DRESS, PLOT A SCORE WHICH SHOWS WHAT FIGURE WILL APPEAR IN EACH SCENE, AT WHAT TIME OF YEAR, HOW OFTEN AND WITH WHOM. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING AT THIS STAGE IS TO MASTER A SCRIPT. IT CONTAINS DATA ON WEATHER CONDITIONS, THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL STATUS OF

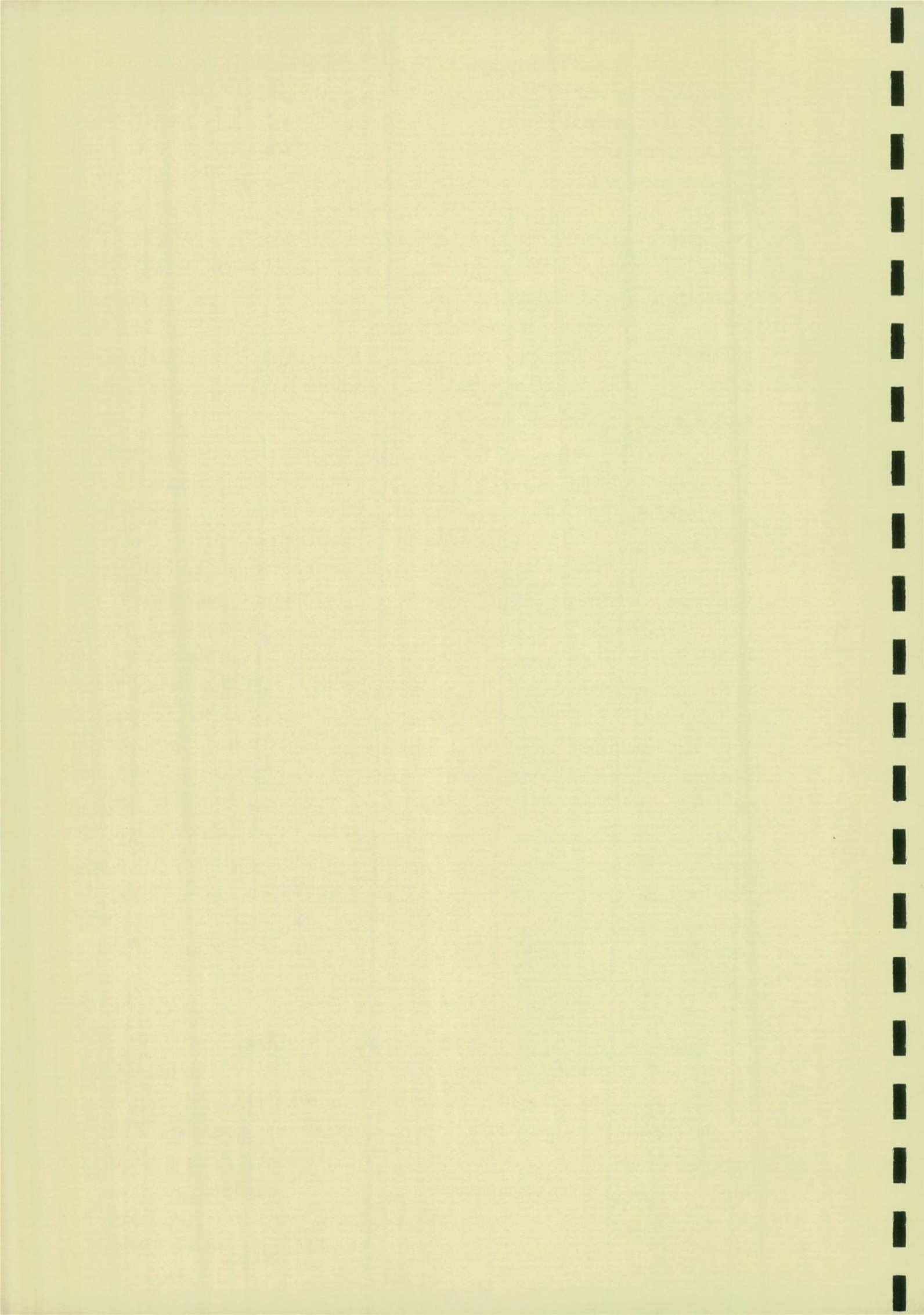


THE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERS, THEIR PERSONALITIES AND SO ON. THESE STUDIES ARE THE BASIS FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DIRECTOR THE PRODUCER AND THE CAST. I ALWAYS TALK TO THE CAST FIRST, ASK THEM HOW THEY SEE THEIR PART AND HOW THE CHARACTER SHOULD IN THEIR VIEW BE DRESSED. THEN I SPEAK TO THE ART DIRECTOR TO MAKE SURE I DON'T DESIGN A LILAC DRESSING GOWN FOR A LILAC BEDROOM. SIMILARLY I TALK TO BOTH SET AND LIGHTING DESIGNERS, THE EFFECT OF A COSTUME LARGELY DEPENDS ON THEIR WORK.

SO I DO NOT DESIGN THE COSTUMES BY MYSELF, I WORK IN CLOSE CO-OPERATION WITH ALL CONCERNED. I DO NOT DESIGN FOR PEOPLE BUT WITH PEOPLE I BELIVE THAT IS WHY I HAVE LASTED ALL THESE YEARS .11

Interaction with other departments is wonderful when it works for all concerned but it is not always a success. Some directors were more approachable than others where costumes are concerned. Many of them did not appreciate the dramatic quality of a dress and often ignored what was an integral design feature of an outfit. Cullen, Minelli and Seznich all appreciated clothes and worked with the costume designer as best they could. Designers also had to consider a stars image and the physical limitations of each actress. Costumes were an enormous expense for production companies as every thing had to be made photogenically and had to be a perfect fit for the actress. Lead actresses hardly ever wore off the peg clothing. No matter how well made, they were seldom photogenic; even couturier gowns could look terrible on the screen. This is a contrast between a gown made in Los Angeles and one made in Paris, they may look similar but photogenically the Hollywood gown will be more suitable for the screen. Orry Kelly, the head designer at Warner Brothers during the Thirties, was a genius for knowing what was photogenic and what was necessary for each camera angle. That was the problem with Parisien couture, it was either over-dramatic or under-dramatic.

Some of the Thirties actresses were credited with good taste. Constance Bennet, Greta Garbo, Maura Shearer and Caroli Lombard all dressed themselves without question under the guiding hand of the studio costume designer. A few actresses, notably Katherine Hepburn and Bette Davis discussed their costume in terms of their characters and what they would wear in the situation. However few kept the garments afterwards as they were often adjusted and readjusted to fit actresses in



minor roles. A major responsibility of the designer was continuity as he had to ensure that the costumes and their treatment followed a logical sequence in the completed film. Often films are shot in reverse order, the final sequence being shot first so obvious wear signs have to be considered if the film is to have logical continuity. Some studios weighed their stars every day. An increase or loss could cause major problems for the designer trying to maintain continuity on screen.

In addition to complying with the script, the actresses' whims, the actresses' limitations and the technical problems, the designer had to work within an allocated budget, satisfy the desires of the public and, most importantly, comply with the censorship ruling: costume designers had to make it their business to be aware of what was acceptable to ensure the film ever saw the light of day.

Censorship

From as early as 1930 movie producers were obliged to follow the designated production code of 1930. Its contents were devised by an Irish Catholic ex-Philadelphia newsman, Joseph I. Breen and a Jesuit priest, David A. Lord. Both had the support of the Catholic bishops and an influential Catholic motion picture publisher, Martin I. Quigley. These three were important figure-heads in the creation of the Legion of Decency in 1934. The 1930 code was by and large ignored with its stated aim '... to unite religious morality and box office necessity. It coincided with the Depression when studios were making huge losses with attendance numbers dropping rapidly. In a bid for profits, studios resorted to sex and violence to retain audiences. It didn't last long as in 1934 the legion distributed forms, urging the public to boycott indecent movies. In three weeks over eleven million people had signed the forms. The studios had no other choice but to fall in to line with the Legion of Decency. A formula was devised which would allow sex and crime within moral bounds. These were acceptable as long as there was an equal amount of 'good' in the story to balance out evil - as defined by the code.

The code prohibited such things as homosexuality, interracial sex, abortion, incest, drugs, most forms of profanity and a vast array of words considered vulgar including s-e-x. It is not surprising then that the movies of the Thirties appear to belong to a mythical world of glamour and intrigue, all far removed from reality. The industry couldn't dare approach moral or social themes, it was cut off from the contemporary world.

Costume designers encountered major problems with the legion. For example in Gone with the wind Walter Plunkett had great problems as

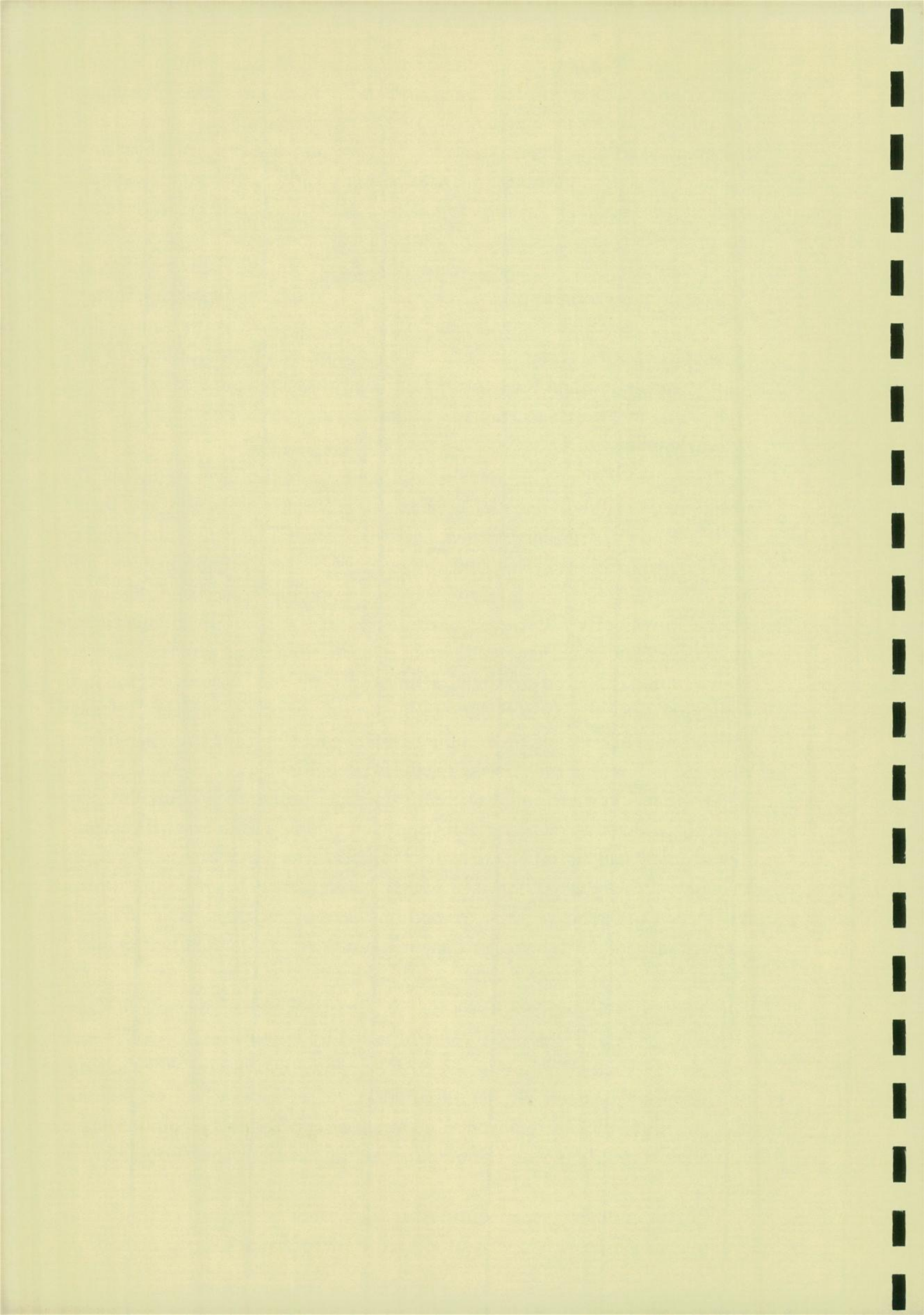




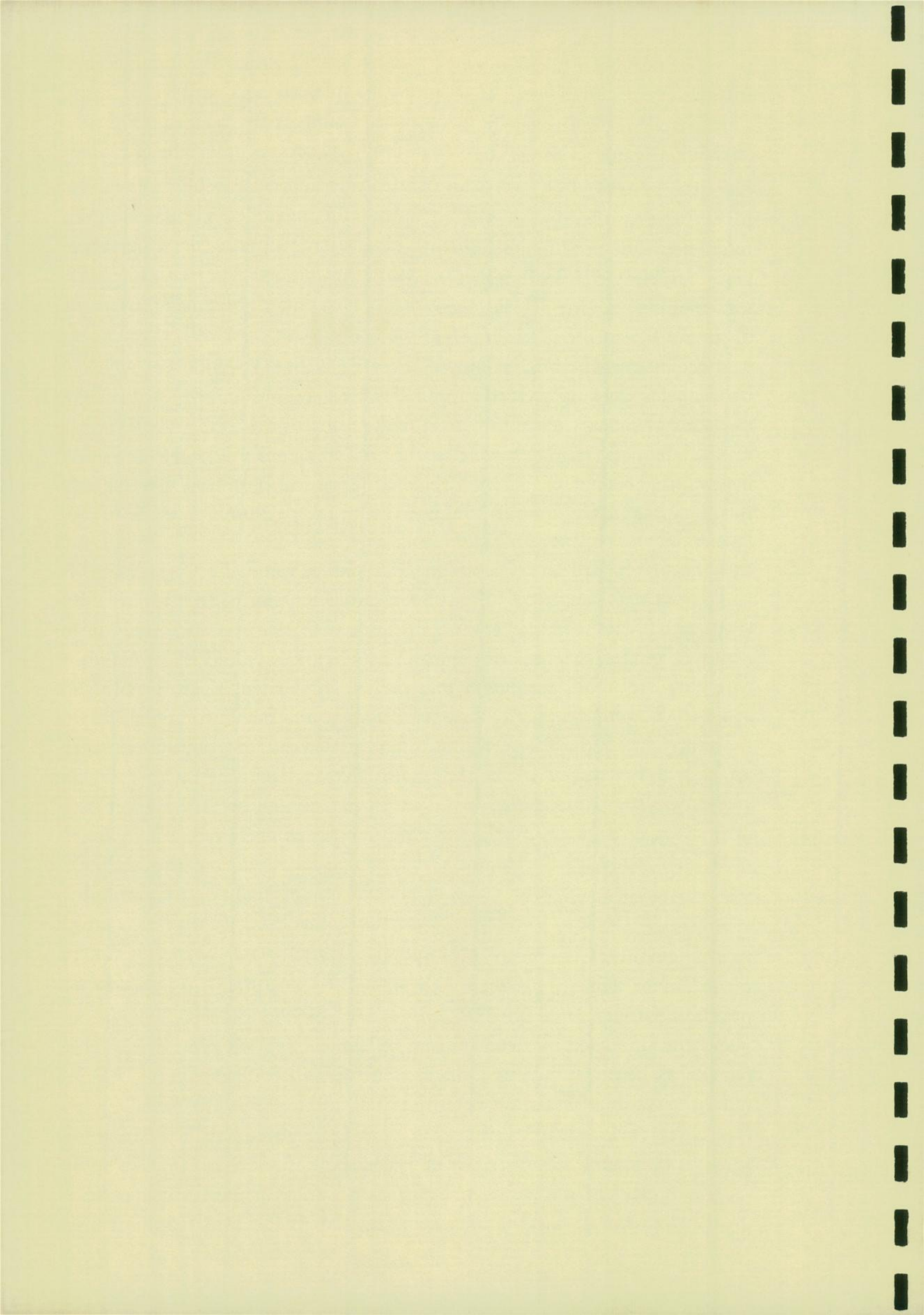
FIG 7 : The controversial dress for 'Jungle Princess' (1936)

FIG 7

he could not use a pregnancy pad for Melanie, Olivia De Havilland, (scenes involving childbirth were also prohibited), who was almost at term, unless a viewer had read the book, it was difficult to know that she was actually pregnant. As Plunket said 'It suggests people actually slept together',¹² instead he had to use big shawls and rugs to hide her figure. No garters were allowed and absolutely no cleavage, in fact it often happened that production had to be suspended to rework an offending gown. In many cases there was very little logic in the authorities actions, for example, in The Three Musketeers (1943), Lana Turner wears a dress cut low at the sides to reveal the contours of her breasts, the dress was deemed acceptable but only if she wore a large jewel on her chest to conceal her cleavage. Another unbelievable example is a dress designed for Dorothy Lamour by Edith Head for the film Jungle Princess (1936) it was slashed low on her chest and very revealing yet it was deemed quite acceptable because of a strip of beaded fabric running from her neck to her stomach, (see Fig 7), there were a lot of double standards in operation.

Not all the studios were financially stable, when the Depression hit Hollywood between 1932 and 1934 it caused many of them to go into bankruptcy, receivership or reorganisation. M.G.M. was the only one to continue to show a profit through the lean years, (see FIG 8), although it was only a fraction of what it had previously earned. Even the M.G.M. executives, including Louis B. Mayer, took severe pay cuts from \$10,000 to \$750, until the Depression lifted. All areas of production were affected and costs lowered. Wages for extras fell from \$3 per day to £1.25. Admission prices were cut to attract audiences. The darker side of the industry revealed desperate studios resorting to sex and violence to attract audiences, ie. "B-Movies"

The credit for M.G.M.'s success goes to Irving Thalberg, the studio's vice-president in charge of production, who believed to spend was to make money. During his time with M.G.M. he acquired a reputation for producing films of technical and artistic excellence. He did this by acquiring the world's best in the business by offering the largest paychecks and the biggest budgets. The average budget for an M.G.M. film in 1932 was \$500,000, about \$180,000 more than any other studio. But costs varied: Camille in 1937 cost \$1.5 million to make, mainly because of its star attraction, Greta Garbo. Not only did M.G.M. have the biggest budget in Hollywood it also had the most sought after costume designer, Adrian, working to create the most elegantly sophisticated



Profit and Loss Figures

The profits of Loew's/Metro averaged just over \$2 million per year during 1921-23, but grew substantially after the merger with Goldwyn and Mayer. By 1925, the first full year of Loew's/MGM, profits and revenues had grown to twice their previous levels, and this pattern continued up to the 30s, benefitting from such hits as *The Broadway Melody* (1929) and

from its highly profitable cinemas. The Depression caused only a brief setback, and MGM continued to earn substantial profits up to the late 40s when the company first began to struggle. Profits were weak throughout the 50s, not helped by the anti-monopoly laws that forbade studios to own their own cinemas, and by the 60s MGM had ceased to be a major power within the industry

Separate profit figures for MGM (available only from 1925 to 1934)

1925	2.0
1926	3.1
1927	2.9
1928	5.3
1929	6.8
1930	9.9
1931	6.3
1932	3.0
1933	1.3
1934	4.1

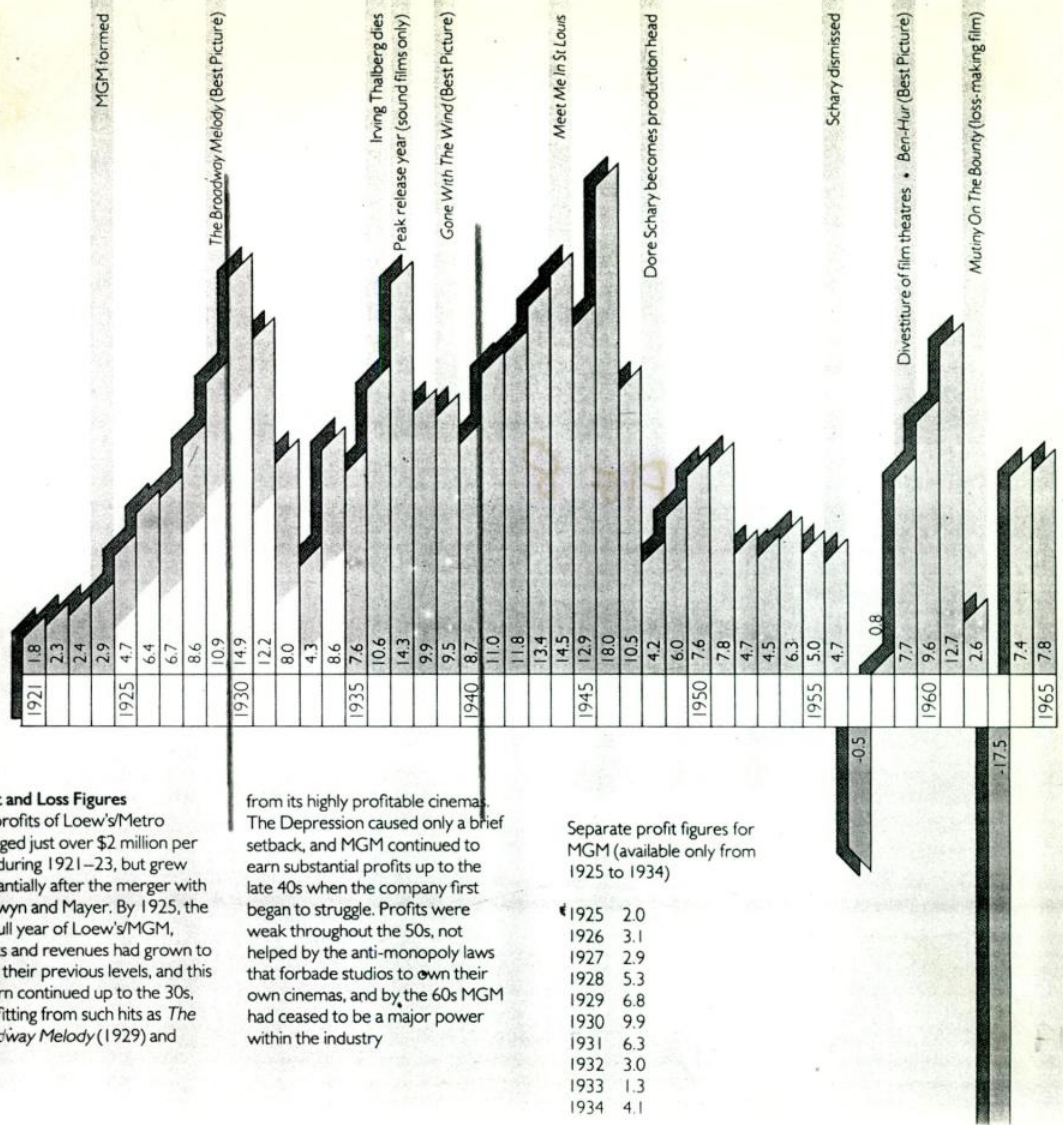


FIG 8 : This chart documents the profit and loss figures for the movie industry during the Thirties .

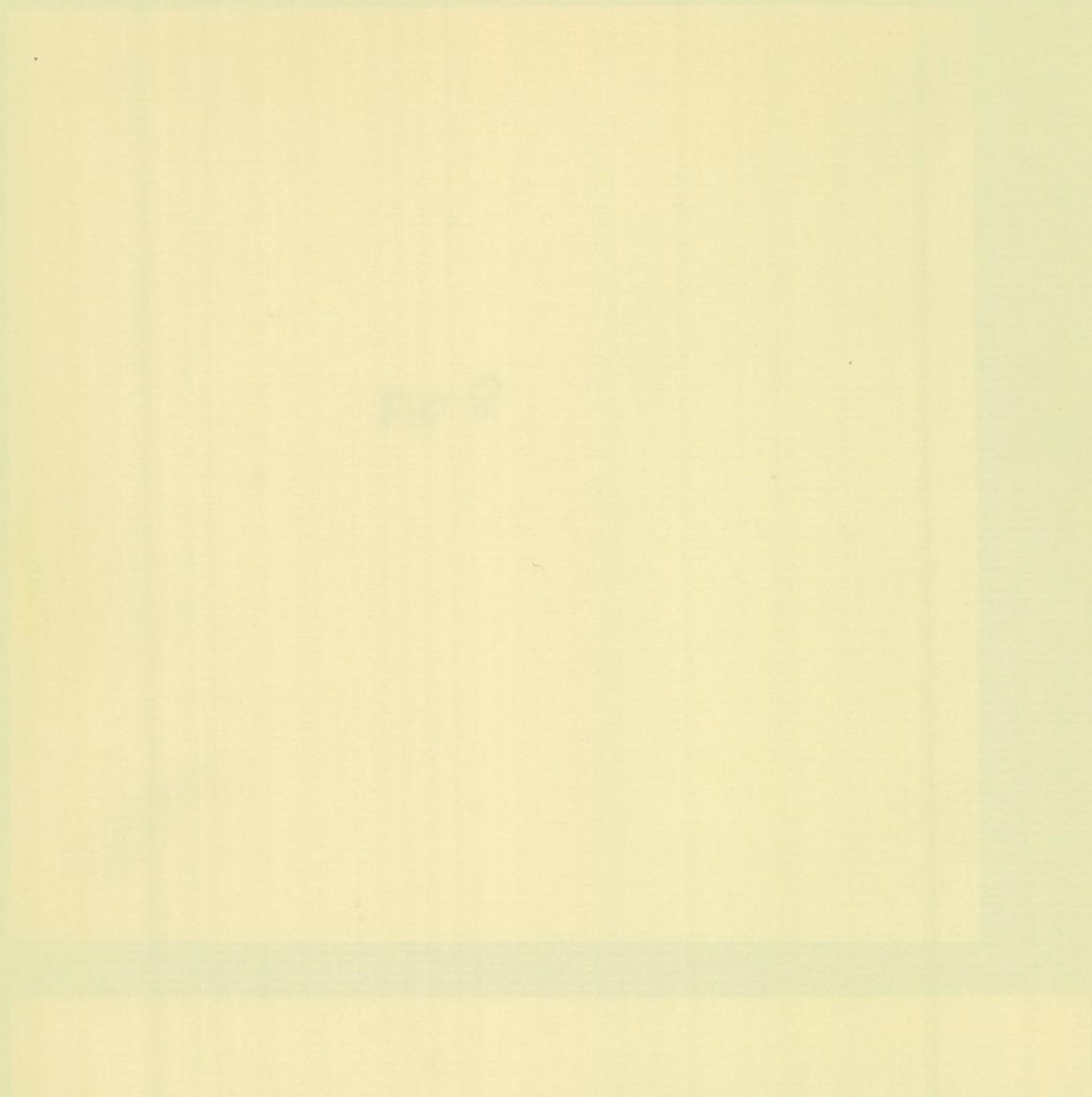




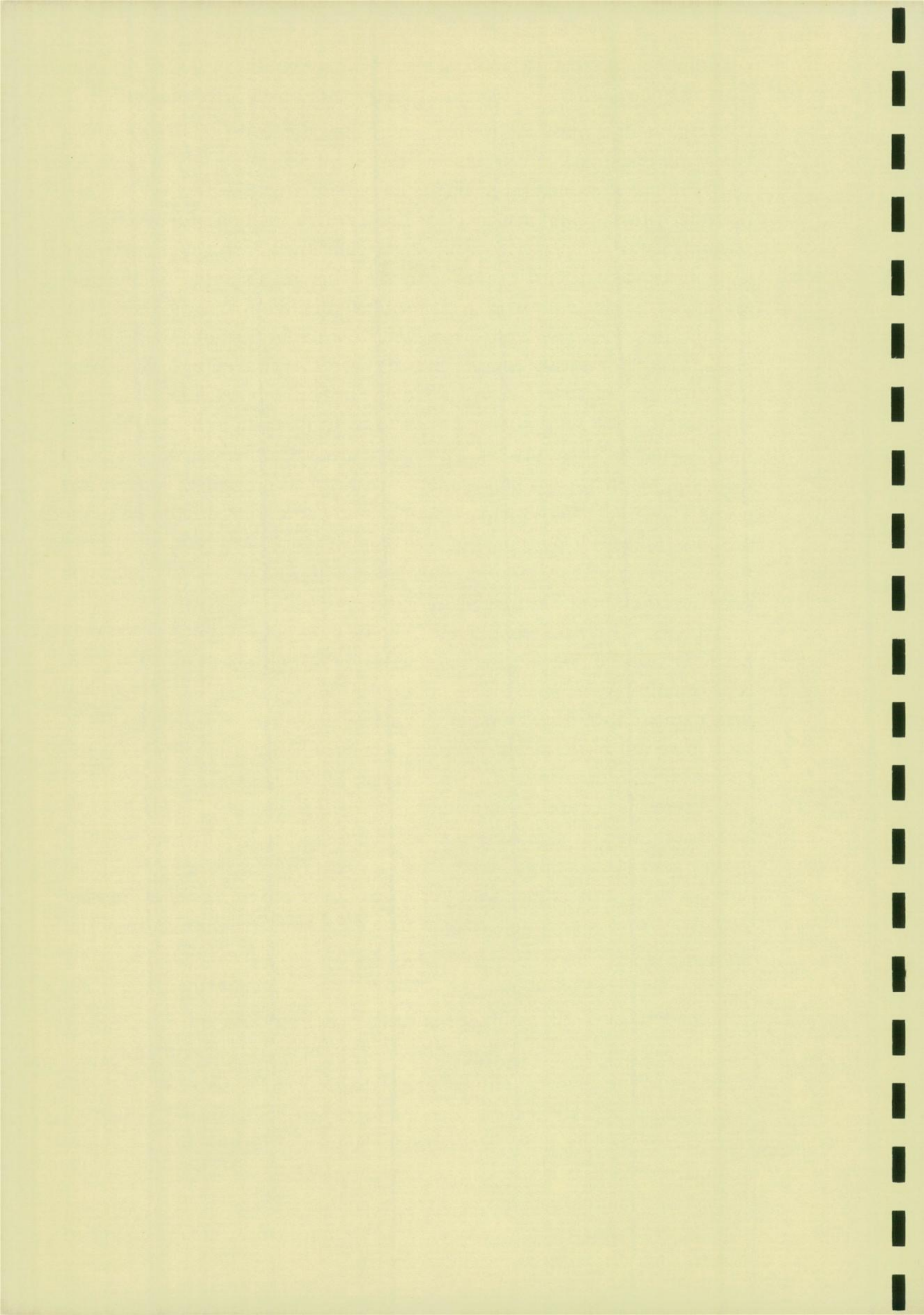
FIG 9 :Marlene Deitrich had a unique sense of style -created by Travis Banton, it was hugely popular and sparked many spinoffs.

Fig 9

costumes on screen. In 1935 alone, M.G.M. produced 2,600 dresses, using 23,000 yards of fabric¹³. In Camille, Adrian took full advantage of the large budget allocated to him, using only the finest fabrics with real gems and diamonds. His argument was that it was necessary in order for Garbo to feel the role and mood of the period - the film was set in Paris in 1897. Other studio designers received only a fraction of what M.G.M. allocated, yet it is a tribute to them that they managed to achieve sophisticated, elegant outfits with so little. An example of this was Marlene Dietrich who was dressed so distinctly by Travis Banton of Paramount, her style of dress will live longer than many other showpieces, (see FIG9). Banton also dressed Carole Lombard, Mae West and Claudette Colbert with similar sophistication and individuality.

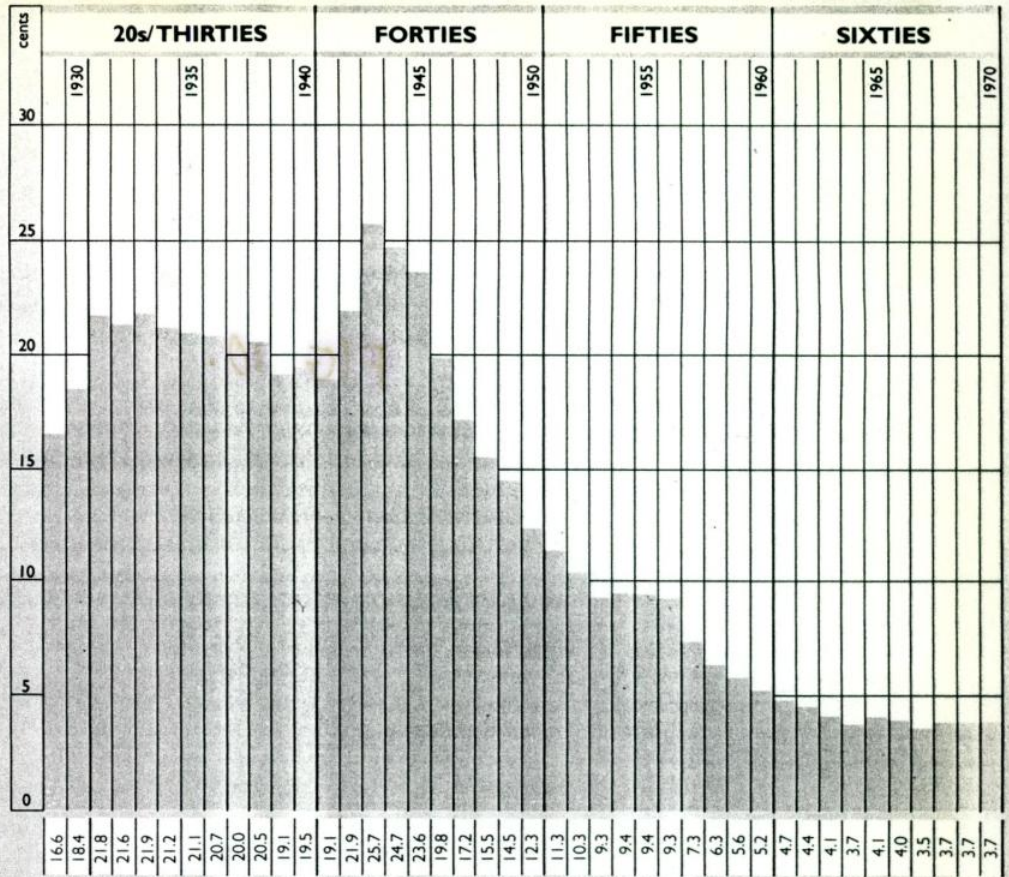
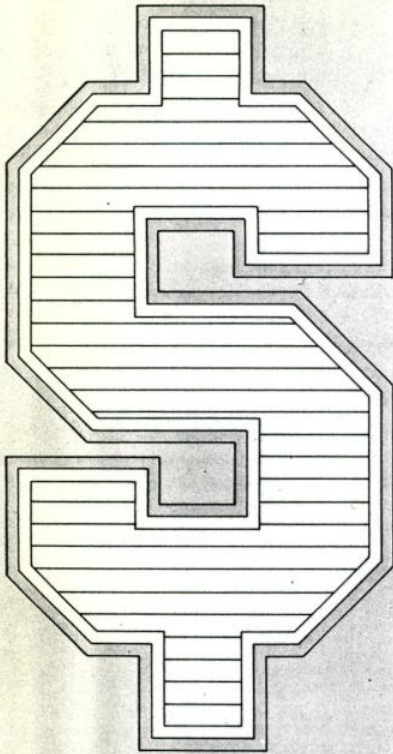
By 1934 the studios had begun to pick up again and by late 1935 had started to show profits. This led Warner Brothers to invest more money in its production and costumes than it had previously done. It was a well known fact that this particular studio had a tight grip on its purse strings. However it obviously took example from M.G.M. and progressed to make many visually exciting films, namely In Caliente (1935), Anything Adverse (1936) and Captain Blood (1935).

It wasn't easy for production companies to show profits; there were many factors influencing the success or failure of any production unit. New studios were being set up or merging with others, technical development within the industry was fast and furious and the change over to sound in the late Twenties saw a huge increase in attendance with a rapid drop during the Depression of the early Thirties, (see FIG 10). These years were a growth period with major companies battling with each other to sign up top stars, improve their production facilities and expand ownership of movie theatres. This latter proved to be a great success when attendance rates were up but when numbers dropped it caused many companies to go into debt; for example Paramount Production had the highest profits of 1929 - 30, (it owned over 1,000 cinemas across the States), yet it had only a few major hits. By 1932 it was in debt over \$21 million - attendance numbers had dropped¹⁴. Ticket prices usually ran from 10 cents to 75 cents depending on the theatre and the show, when you consider that some of these theatres sat over 4,000 people the scale of this business can be appreciated. In 1922 the average weekly theatre admissions totaled \$40 million, the figure doubled in the next seven years. Outside private investment was largely responsible for the success of many companies particularly in the late 20's and early 30's. The findings of the Motion Picture Almanac showed



MOVIES' SHARE OF THE ENTERTAINMENT DOLLAR

US box-office receipts as percentage of total US recreation expenditure

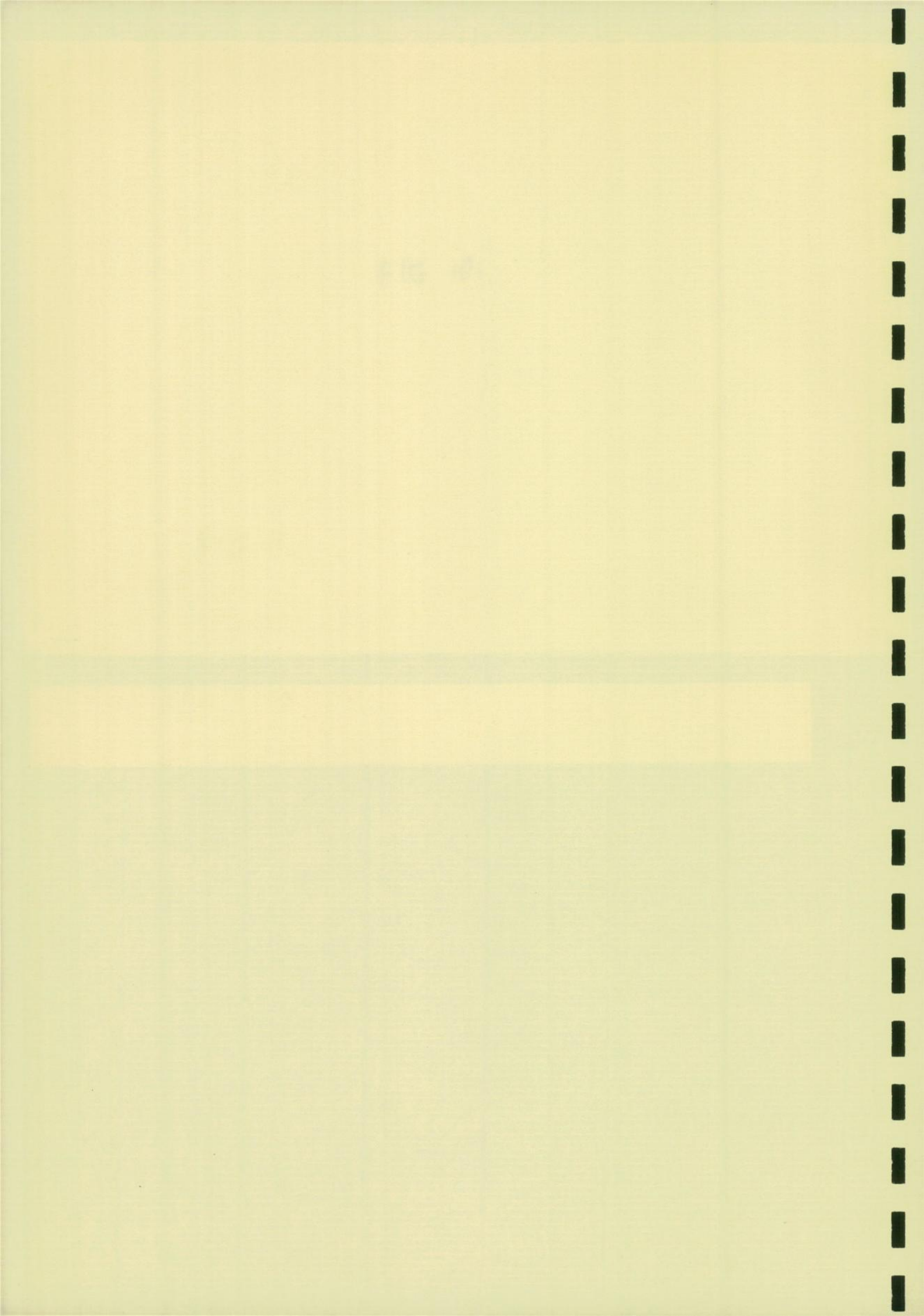


This chart helps to explain the kind of difficulties experienced by the film industry over the years, when the public has turned away from the cinema to other past-times. The movies maintained their share of recreation expenditure in the 30s and this share rose in the 40s. But the decline which began in 1944,

accelerated in 1946-50 and continued more gradually for most of the next 20 years - finally came to an end in the early 70s. Since then the movies' share has remained relatively stable. Other important items included in recreation expenditures (and their relative importance) since 1950 are as follows: spectator

sports and amusements such as theatre, opera, bowling (about 10%); books, magazines and newspapers (20% in the 50s falling to 15% by the early 70s); toys and sports equipment including pleasure boats and aircraft (20% rising to 30%); radio and TV sets, records and musical instruments (20%)

FIG 10 : This chart shows the U.S. box office receipts as percentage of total U.S. recreation expenditure.



BUDGET ANTHONY ADVERSE (Warner Bros. 1936)		\$	\$
Date of budget: November 15, 1935			
1	Story cost		40,000
1a	Continuity and treatment		
	S. Gibney	24,667	
	Added dialogue	2,060	
	Other	1,507	
			28,234
2	Director Mervyn LeRoy*		45,933
2a	Supervisor Henry Blanke*		3,000
3	Assistant directors* Bill Cannon		10,651
4	Camera		
	Tony Gaudio 13 weeks @ \$425*	5,525	
	Other	6,962	
			12,487
5a	Cast salaries		
5b	Contract talent		
	Olivia de Havilland* Angela Guisseppi	2,375	
	Anita Louise* Maria	4,000	
	Henry O'Neill* Fr. Xavier	2,570	
	Donald Woods* Vincent Nolte	3,500	
	Joseph Crehan* Capt. Elisha Jonham	315	
	Luis Alberni* Tony Guiseppi	5,000	
		<u>17,760</u>	
5c	Outside talent		
	Fredric March Anthony Adverse	12,480	
	Louis Hayward Denis Moore	2,000	
	Grace Stafford Lucia	1,500	
	Claude Rains Don Luis	16,000	
	Gale Sondergaard Faith	6,825	
	Edmund Gwenn John Bonnyfeather	10,625	
	Other	39,767	
	Talent on day check	13,480	
		<u>102,760</u>	
			120,437
6	Extras		42,473
	includes:		
	Interior Paris ballroom	5,500	
	Interior Opera House promenade	7,000	
	Exterior Anthony's home Gallegos	3,870	
7	Musicians/Song releases: Score Eric Korngold		39,000
8	Property labor		10,102
9	Construction of sets		145,300
	includes:		
	Interior Maria's bedroom	11,079	
	Interior lower floor Casa Bonnyfeather	16,461	
	Interior Opera House Leghorn	9,269	
	Interior Paris ballroom	12,504	
	Interior Opera House promenade	6,070	
	Exterior Anthony's home Gallegos	7,651	
	Exterior jungle	10,564	
	Exterior road Alps	6,642	
	Exterior French chateau	6,780	
	Exterior old mill and forest clearing	5,323	
	Exterior convent courtyard	3,084	
	Exterior Casa Bonnyfeather and street	44,032	
	Exterior Bonnyfeather courtyard	6,375	
10	Stand-by labor		20,000
11	Electricians		18,890
12	Striking		15,000
12a	Make-up Perc Westmore		13,715
13	Art department salaries* Anton Grot		25,000
14	Cutter's salaries* Ralph Dawson		6,000
15	Property rental and expense		24,485
16	Electrical rental and expense		10,000
17	Location expense		10,107
	includes:		
	Exterior road Alps	2,177	
	Exterior French chateau	1,469	
	Exterior convent courtyard	3,545	
18	Tricks, miniatures etc. Fred Jackman		16,535
	includes:		
	Carriages crashing in the Alps	5,350	
19	Wardrobe expense Milo Anderson		47,000
20	Negative film		16,000
22	Developing and printing		20,000
25-34a	Other		30,380
TOTAL DIRECT COST			770,729
35	General studio overhead @ 31% (actually 32.3%)		248,942
40	Depreciation @4%		30,829
GRAND TOTAL COST			1,050,500

* indicates portions of studio contract salaries carried in the ANTHONY ADVERSE budget
 NOTE: in job categories, only most senior name is given here
 Source: Nick Roddick. *A New Deal in Entertainment: Warner Bros. in the Thirties* (BFI Publishing, 1983)

FIG 11 : This is a budget breakdown for an average movie of the mid Thirties.

FIG. 3.



FIG 12 : An achievement in costume history! This beaded red dress by Adrian weighed 25 lbs. It is completely covered in glass bugle beads.

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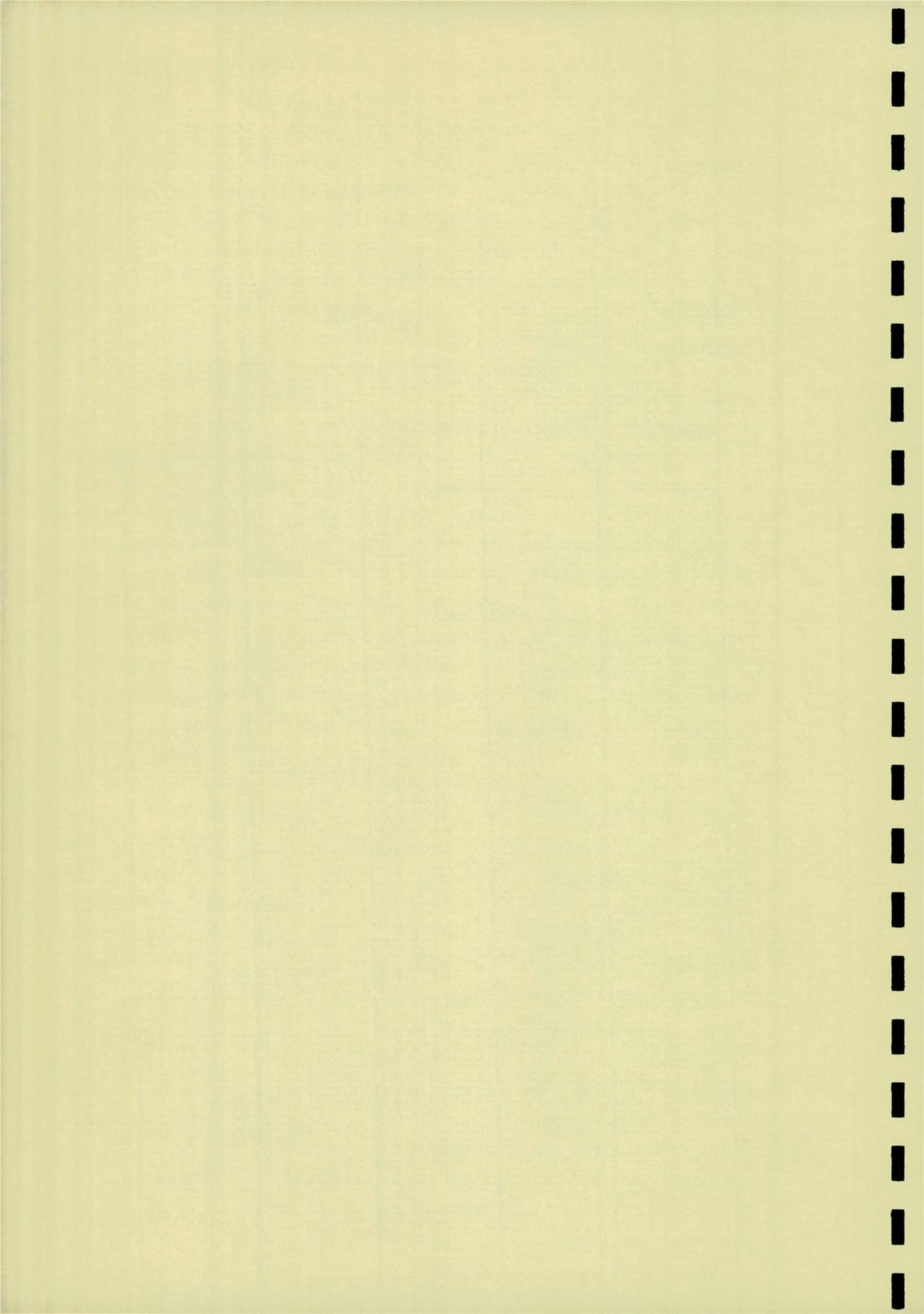
[Faint horizontal text or markings]

that from April 1928 to April 1931, the number of stock shareholders in Fox, Paramount and Warner Brothers increased from 20,000 to 63,000¹⁵. Although most of the companies recovered from the Depression only M.G.M. remained 'above water' throughout the period. The profits of many of the studios remained low or non-existent despite the fact that they were making use of supposedly advantageous practices such as block booking, price fixing and discrimination against small independent exhibitors. The high cost of production, (see FIG 11), was responsible for this. Most of the profits remained on a par with investment. Peak production and distribution was not profitable, it just encouraged over production. Not every film was a success, only the most visually exciting.

Technical Aspects of Designing for the Screen

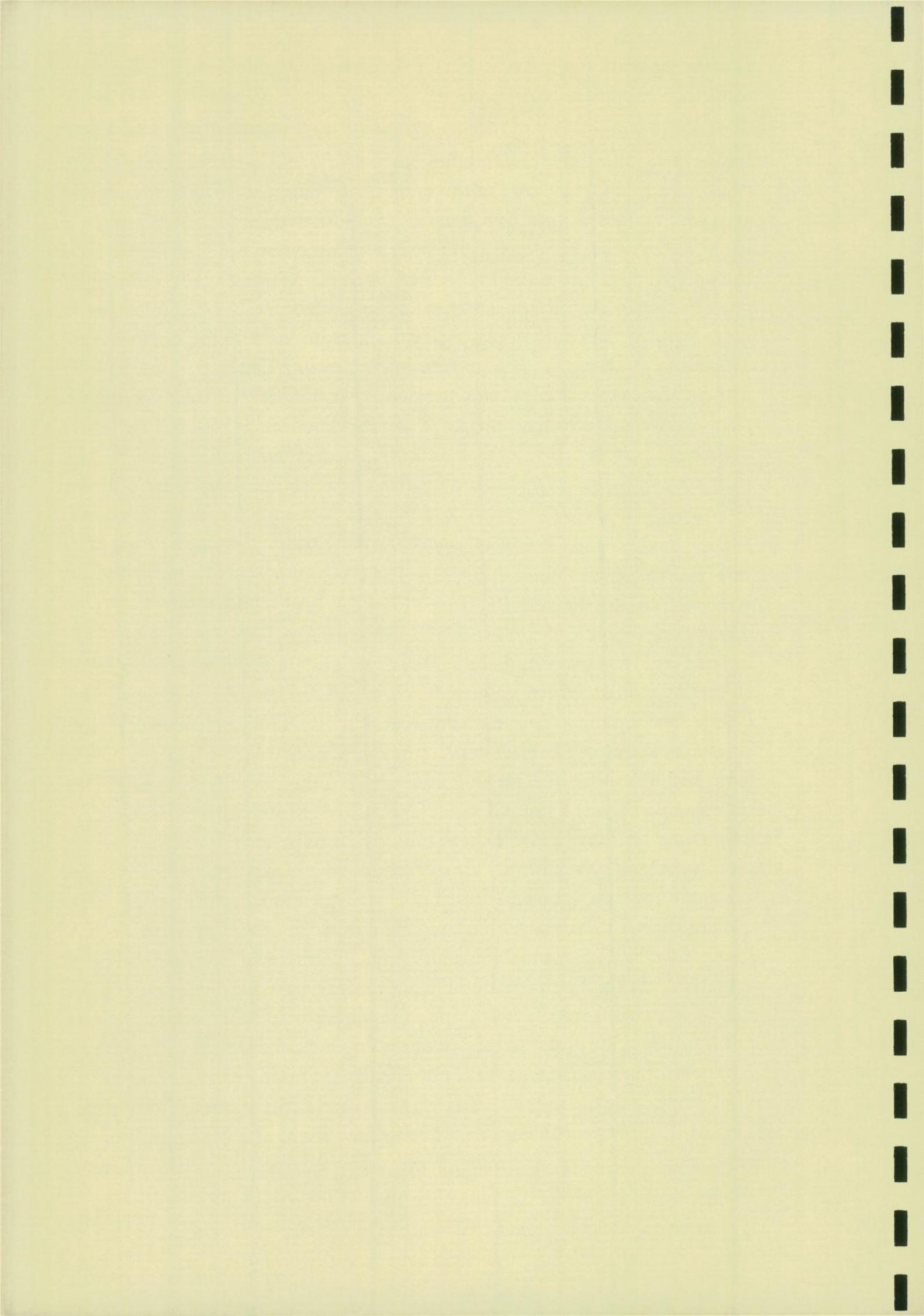
It is commonly perceived that designers led glamorous lives but none were excessively rich. Despite their high profile jobs and large responsibilities they were not well paid. Even at the height of his success at M.G.M. Adrian earned approximately \$1,000 per week, although Hedda Hopper, a notable gossip columnist of the time, has suggested amounts of \$75,000, this has never been confirmed¹⁶. Either way it was a fairly moderate amount for someone with such a high responsibility. Between 1931 and 1934 Adrian designed for almost all the stars and extras in practically every M.G.M. - quite a large work load. He left M.G.M. in 1942 and was replaced by Kallach and Howard Sharp.

The costume designers did not work in isolation, none of the designs would have been realised without a large workforce of cutters, seamstresses, sketch artists and bead makers working away behind the scenes, often around the clock. These people were just as important as the designers, yet were more often than not exploited. A seamstress' starting salary at Paramount \$16.50 per week, an experienced seamstress earned 121.60 for a 44 hour week but would earn 'Golden Time' for special projects, time and a half for work over 40 hours¹⁷. During particularly busy periods studios often 'promoted' seamstresses to the rate of cutter and fitter these positions earned a flat \$40.75 for a 54 hour week and were not entitled to claim over-time. Nowhere was glamour found so lavishly as in the evening wear of the period. It is here that excellence of craftsmanship is found at its supreme. Of all the materials used for evening wear perhaps beads and sequins reflect the glamour of Hollywood more than anything, (see FIG12). Mass production was never a problem as every dress was unique, designed for a specific



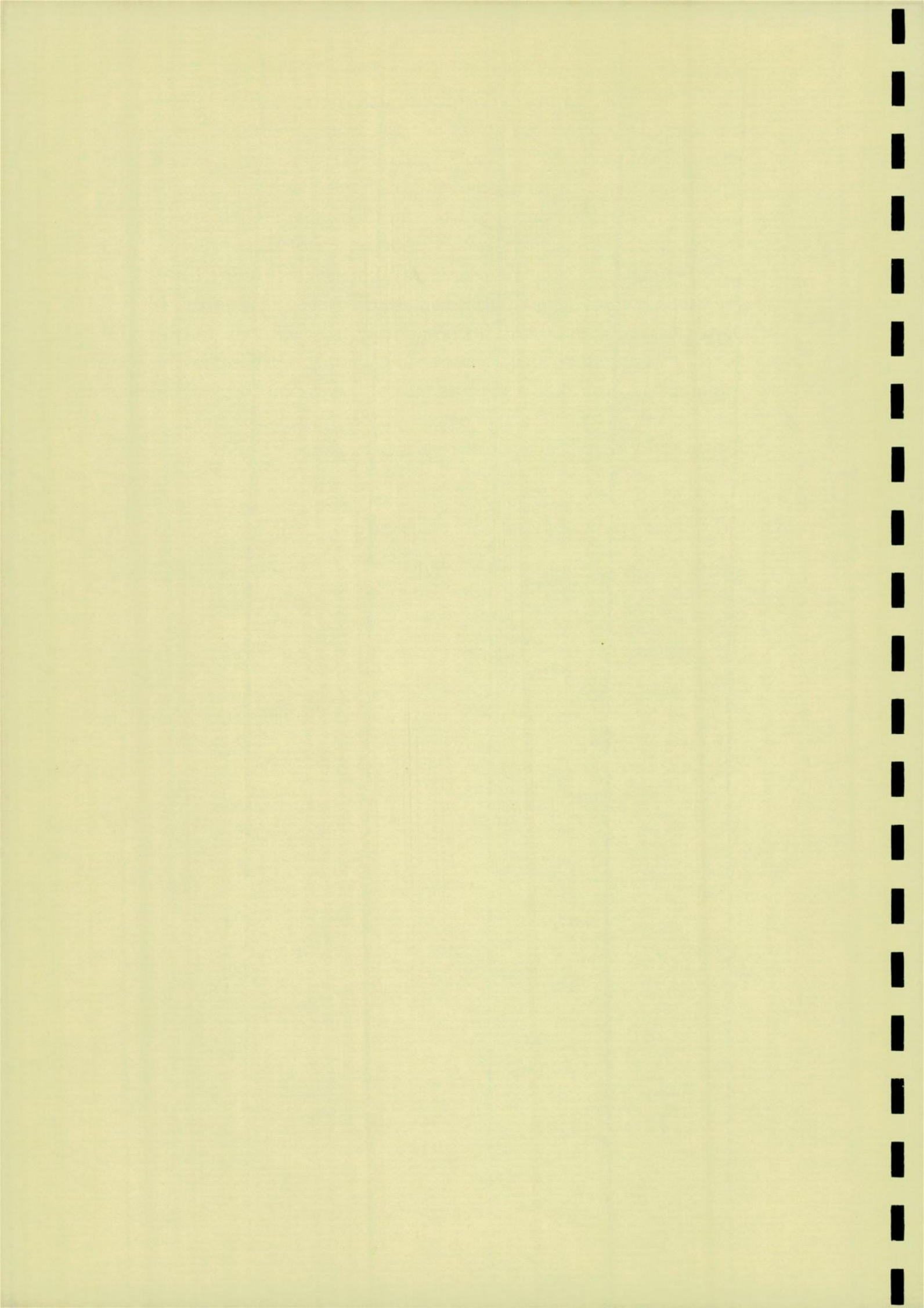
actress for a specific movie. Having cheap skilled labour on hand was an advantage. Beaders earned 65 cents an hour in the mid-Thirties and it took six to eight weeks to make one solid bugle beaded dress₁₈. These ladies were directly responsible for adding glamour to the screen. Designers usually used a base material of chiffon on which to sew the sequins or beads; this was ideal as it allowed the finished garment to cling and flow with the body. The overall effect was that of a dress clung to every inch of the body like a second skin. Nothing could rival it for impact and dramatic appeal. Sequins were gelatine-based and so were quite light to move in. Bugle beads in contrast were made of glass so a whole dress covered in these beads could be quite heavy.

In fact most were unintentionally destroyed due to their being hung up for long periods of time - the force of gravity would tear a beaded dress to shreds. In 1937 Joan Crawford wore a red bugle beaded dress in The Bride Wore Red (1937), the dress caused a sensation, it was the ultimate in beaded glamor, (see FIG12). It weighed 25 pounds and was covered in scarlet bugle beads. Publicity said Crawford lost 3 pounds wearing it. It was so heavy it had to have straps across the back,(unseen by the audience), supporting it. In many cases the beads and sequins were so dense they became the fabric itself. The dresses were sometimes made up in the fabric first and then had the sequins sewn on, so avoiding seams showing and creating a nicer lieⁿ on the body. These sequined dresses were almost a form of therapy. The designers got great personal satisfaction out of creating original beaded masterpieces, the audiences were thrilled with the glitz and the glamor and the actresses loved the novelty of wearing a one off creation. Scripts soon emerged with scenes deliberately written which included an elaborately beaded dress. Reasons for a spectacular creation were usually musicals or exotic locations, for example Top hat starring Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire (1935). The cost of these dresses was enormous. The most expensive ones, that is those which took eight weeks to make could cost in the region of \$3,000 to \$4,000 , an astronomical amount, even nowadays. As I have said not all the studios could afford to spend \$4,000 on a single dress. Many worked on a shoestring budget. When Walter Plunket worked for R.K.O. during the Thirties, his staff consisted of one cutter and five table ladies. These ladies were in charge of groups of seamstresses who took patterns from the cutter-fitter and developed them into the final product. The seamstresses were hired by the week or the day as there wasn't always work available. Therefore the table ladies could also be discharged if there was a slack in work. Cutters and fitters were usually the last to



go₁₉. In direct contrast when work was available it usually came in droves and so working hours were often gruesome with twenty four hour working days not being unusual. Everyone including designers and seamstresses worked long hours when necessary. It may sound primitive and disorganised to us today but this took place after the Depression when anyone was prepared to work for anything.

Many of the designers notably Adrian, Plunket, head and Orry-Kelly stayed long periods with one studio often under hard working conditions. Why ? The environment they worked in was the ultimate in every designer's ambitions, to be actively involved in a world populated by the most beautiful, glamorous, talented people in showbiz. Undoubtedly they almost became part of the dream they were creating.



SECTION 2

'EVERY AGE REMAKES THE VISIBLE WORLD TO SUIT ITSELF AND SO HAS ITS OWN PARTICULAR WAY OF LOOKING AT CLOTHES WHICH FORM ITS DAILY WEAR. THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDERS ARE SO AFFECTED BY THEIR BRAINS THAT THEY SEE NOT PRECISLY WHAT IS BEFORE THEM, BUT WHAT THEY WISH TO BE THERE'²⁰

This quote is very significant when referring to the reproduction of period costumes for film. Despite the designers best intentions to recreate accurate reproductions, evidence of contemporary styles generally creeps in. Consciously or unconsciously it is hard to say, suffice it to mention that the designer will always feel he has to recreate a style which will have some elements the public can relate to. It has to be aesthetically pleasing and morally acceptable regardless of its historical accuracy. Some of the most popular films of the thirties were period films, eg Gone With the Wind (1939), Queen Christina (1933), She Done Him Wrong (1933). To name but a few. At the time the costume recreation of the period was proclaimed to be a true reflection of the era they were set in and indeed everyone believed that to be the case. Contemporary viewers are not aware that the costumes they see reflect their own standard of beauty and style, for example to suggest that Cleopatra floated around in bias cut slips in 98 b.c. in ancient Egypt is historically incorrect. Yet it was seen as an accurate interpretation of the style in 1934. It is only with the passage of time we can see just how accurate the designers were in their visual interpretation. I will now take three different versions of Cleopatra 1917, 1939 and 1964 respectively and suggest with pictorial proof that the costumes in all three were affected by the fashions of the period they were made in.

Cleopatra 1917

The 1917 version of Cleopatra is probably the most amateur of the three. The costumes, hairstyle and make up are all more in tune with Theda Barr's screen image and that of 1900 than that of a queen of ancient Egypt.

It is not surprising that Theda Barr was asked to play the queen of the Nile. In the 1910's one of the most important influences was the style of the femme fatale or vamp and no one played the part better than she. Barr wore paste bangles, slave bracelets and beads long before Coco Chanel ever introduced the concept of costume jewellery. Her

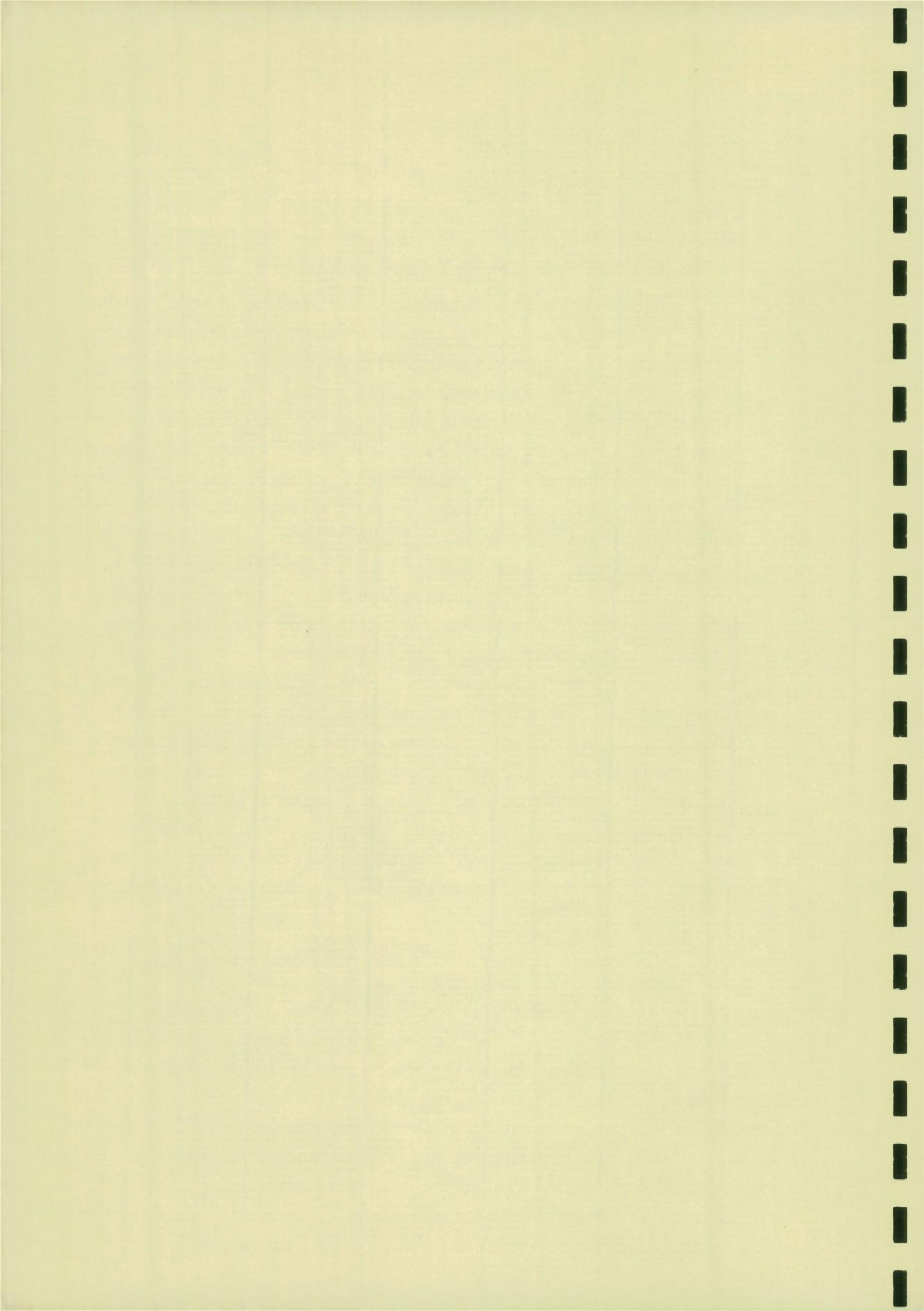




FIG 13 : Pearls were a popular feature in the 1917 version of Cleopatra, but they would not have featured in ancient Egypt.

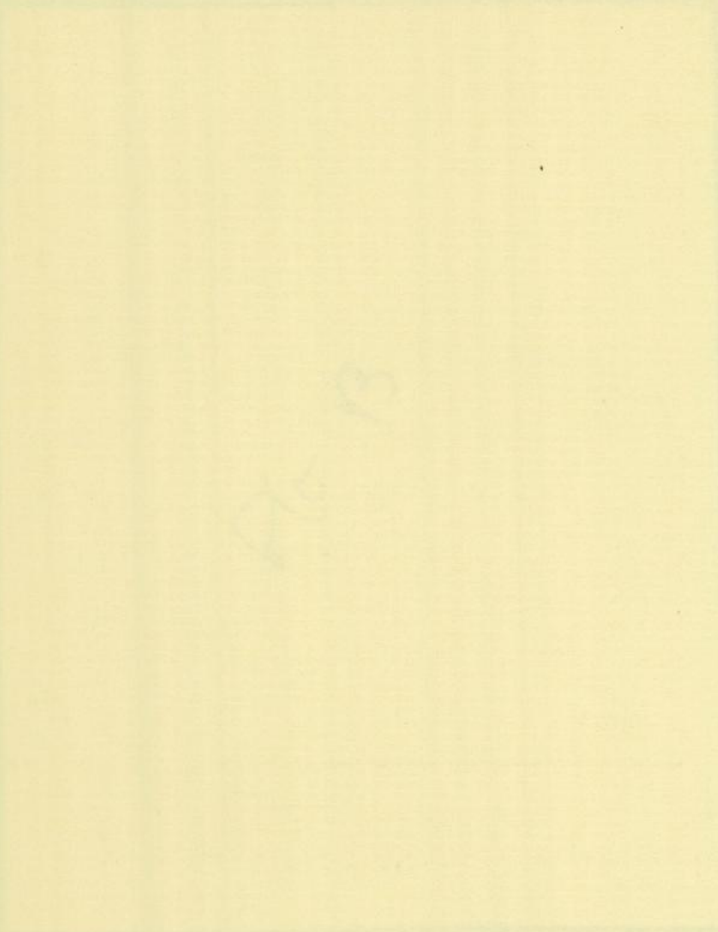




FIG 14 : Stylised prints were a regular feature in the 1917 version of Cleopatra.

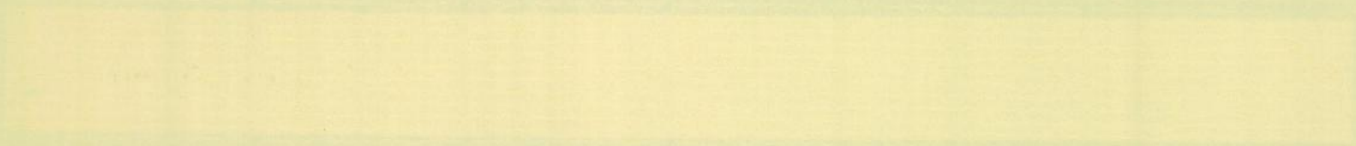
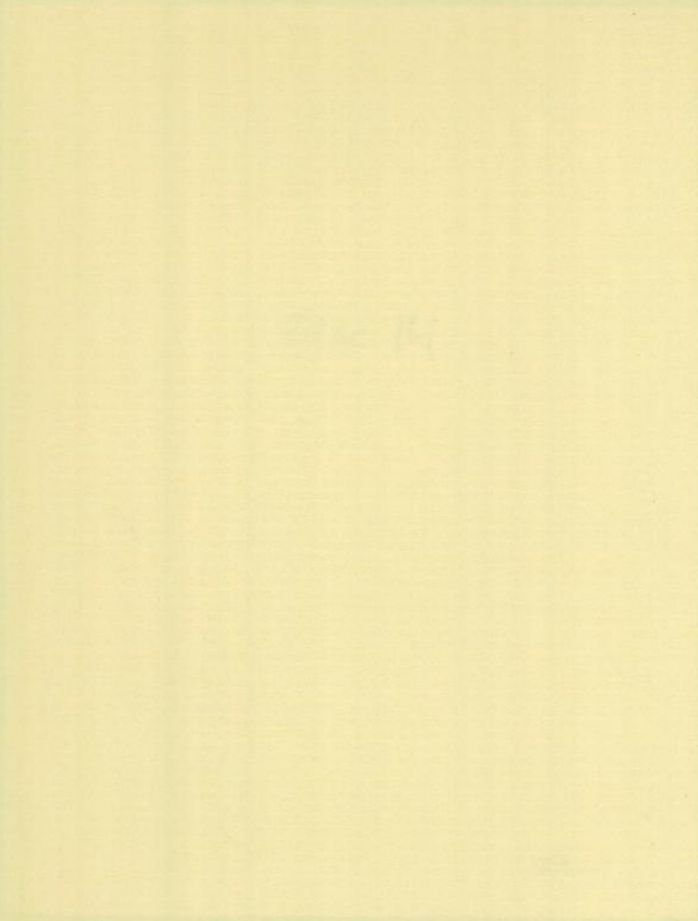




FIG 15 : Vamp!

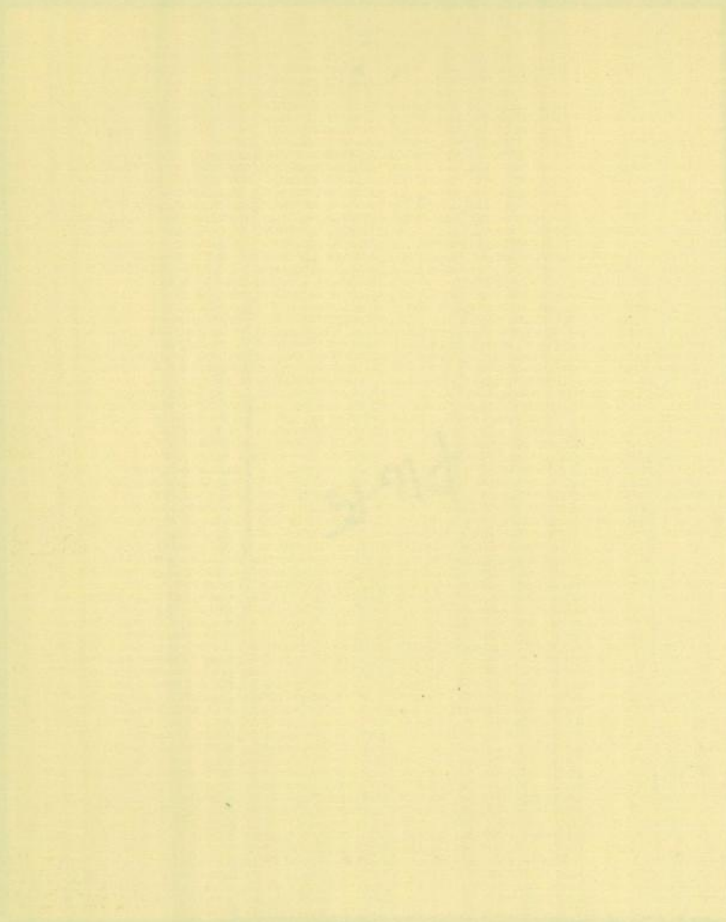




FIG 16 : The doe -eyed look of the 1910's was incorporated into the film.

Field

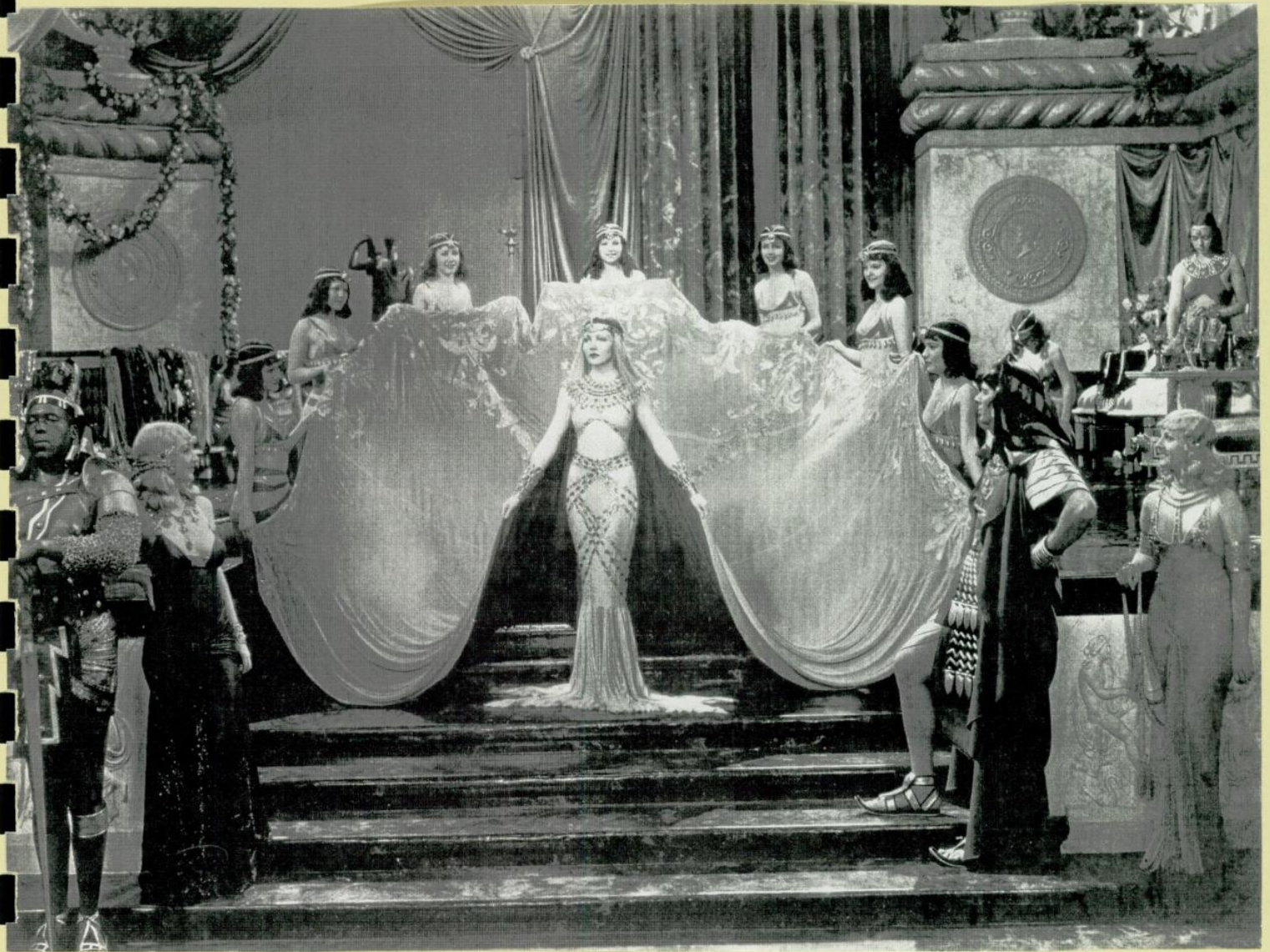
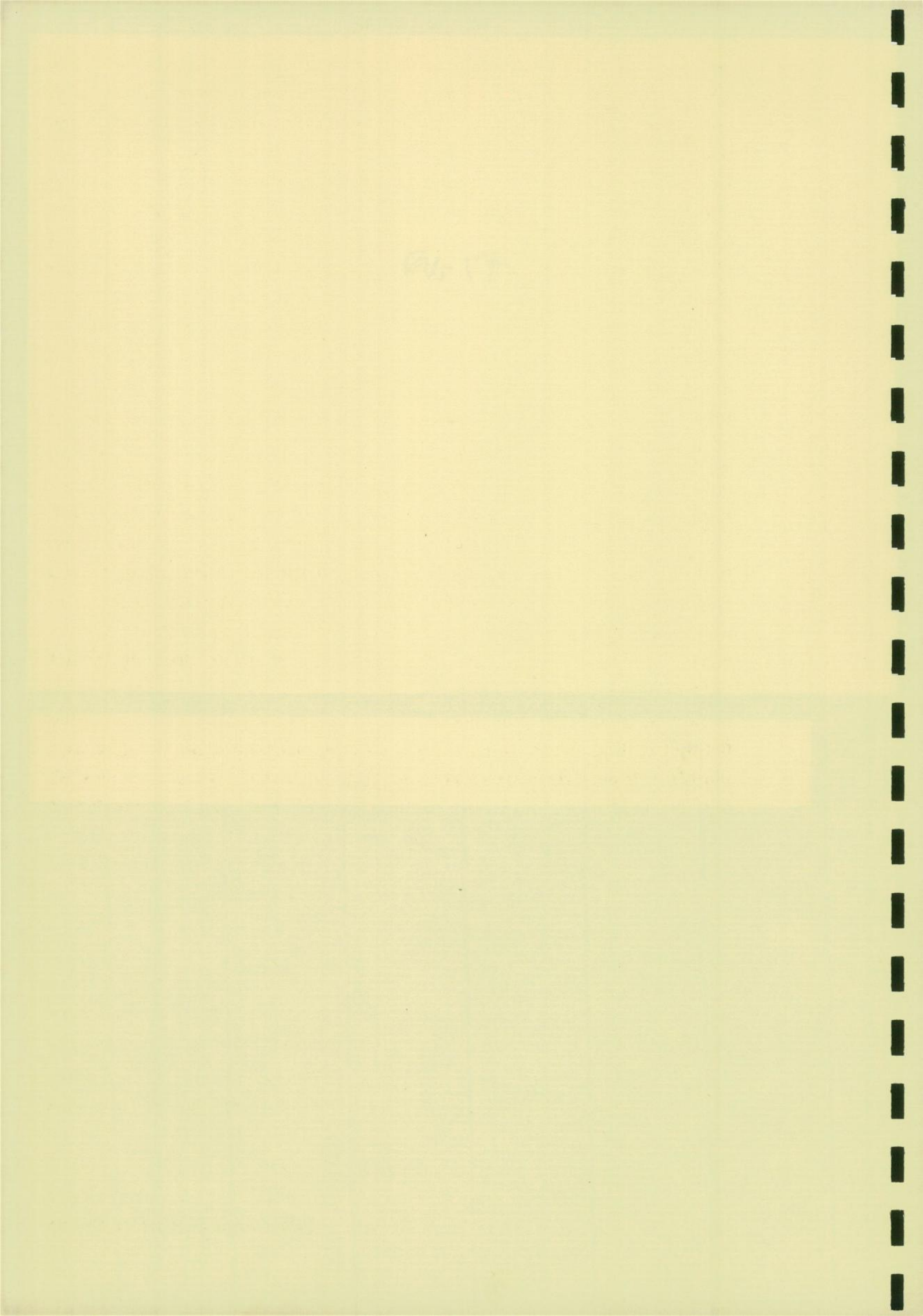


FIG 17 : In contrast to the 1917 version ,Cecil B. De Mille 's production in 1934 is very Thirties Art Deco in style .



sequined over-skirts, jeweled somachers and beaded shawls helped to set the stereotype for a host of extra ladies to come. There is no known costume designer for the 1917 *Cleopatra*. In fact the costume production can only be admired as much was done by the stars themselves. Barr wore metallic fringes, pearl embroidered brocades, rhinestone encrusted chiffons, (see Fig 13,14 & 15) . Her outfits were inspired by a variety of sources -Leen Balist's design for the Ballet Russes, Paul Povrat's on cultalism and Georges Bamber's drawings for the periodical *La Gazette Bon Ton*, all initially introduced in Paris.

Visually these costumes at a glance all seem very suitable for the role of Cleopatra. They certainly do not resemble every day wear and definately dont represent a serious attempts to recreate period dress. Who ever was responsible for overseeing the costume production was obviously more intrested in recreating an overall image of opulence and glamour; Theda Bara with her vamp like qualities fitted the picture perfectly. Large quantities of pearls were used in the film, (see FIG 14), both as jewelery and embroidered onto dresses. This would have been technically incorrect as pearls were a rarity in ancient Egypt. The Egyptians had developed sophisticated jewelery techniques using gold and precious stones as well as enamels and ceramics. Of course pearls were used because they were the fashion of 1917, in fact in the forthcoming years pearls were commonly used as a means of decoration in films depicting ancient times. Bara's make-up was applied in a similar fashion to that of the time. With the emphasis placed on the eyes and mouth. Her eyes throughout are smudgeline to give a shadowed soulfull look outlined with thick mascara. It gave a very sad-eyed look which was emphasised by the eyebrows - they were dark, long and curled downwards at the outer edges. Lipstick was usually applied in a rosebud fashion, very narrow, bright red with arched peaks, (see Fig 16)

Cleopatra 1934

Of the three versions of *Cleopatra* the 1934 one, directed by Cecil B. De Mille and starring Claudette Colbert is undoubtedly the one that was most influenced by what was happening in society. The costumes were designed by Travis Banton and from the begining it bears the hallmarks of a 1930's film, it is a visual shrine to Art Deco, with the fanciful story of a love triangle thrown in for good measure, (see Fig 17). It was a lavish spectacle of fathers, gold, glittering jewels and blond young maidens all true to the De Mille sense of spectacular.

From the very outset the female costumes have a very Thirties influence; bias cut is the order of the day, which is not surprising as the

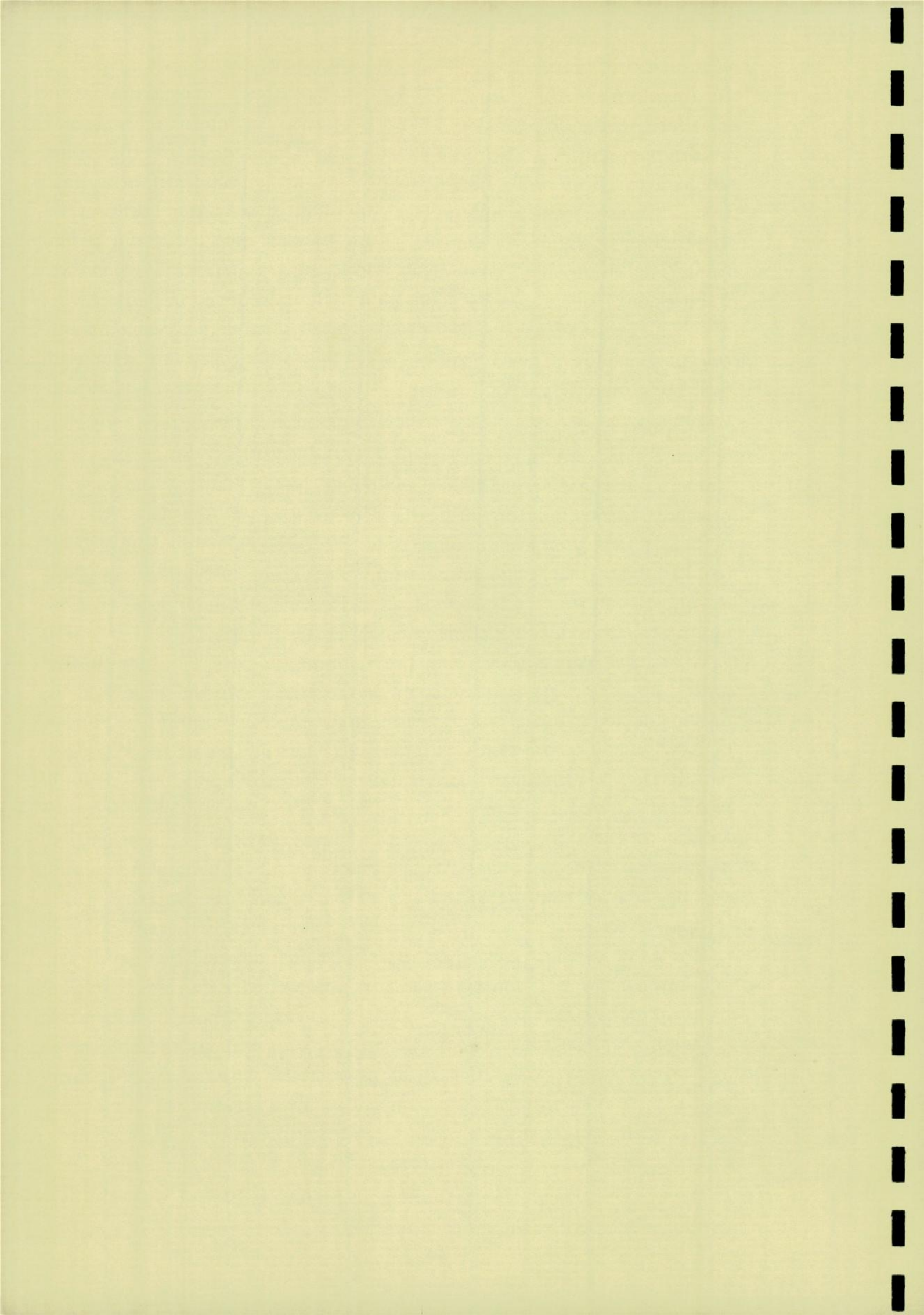




FIG 18 : Claudette Colbert strikes a seductive pose in a still from the 1934 version of Cleopatra -clearly a Thirties influence in body conscious dressing .

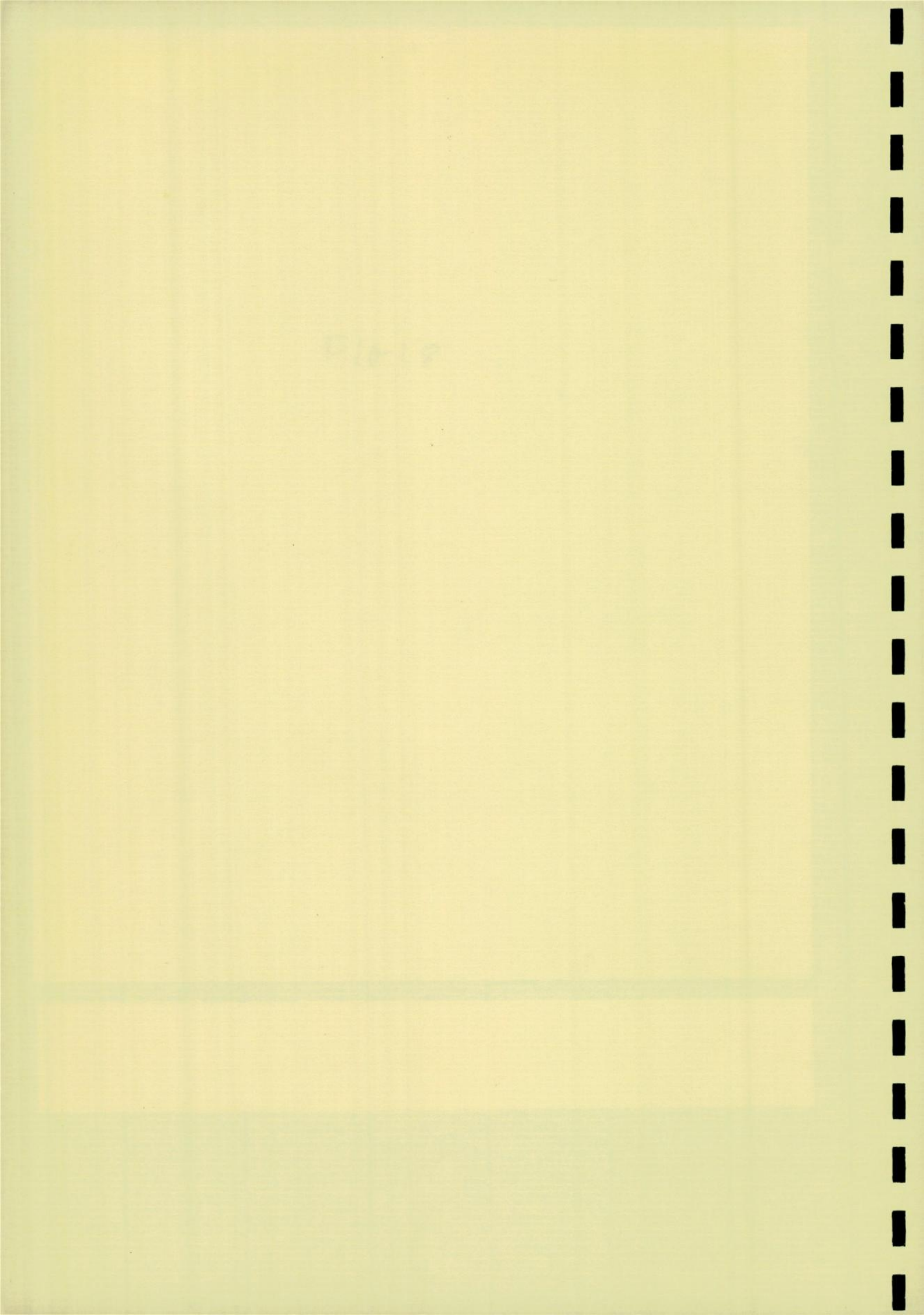




FIG 19 : No longer doe-eyed ! see FIG 16.

215 (4)



FIG 20 : The 1964 version featured long flowing toga like dresses - very 60's in influence.

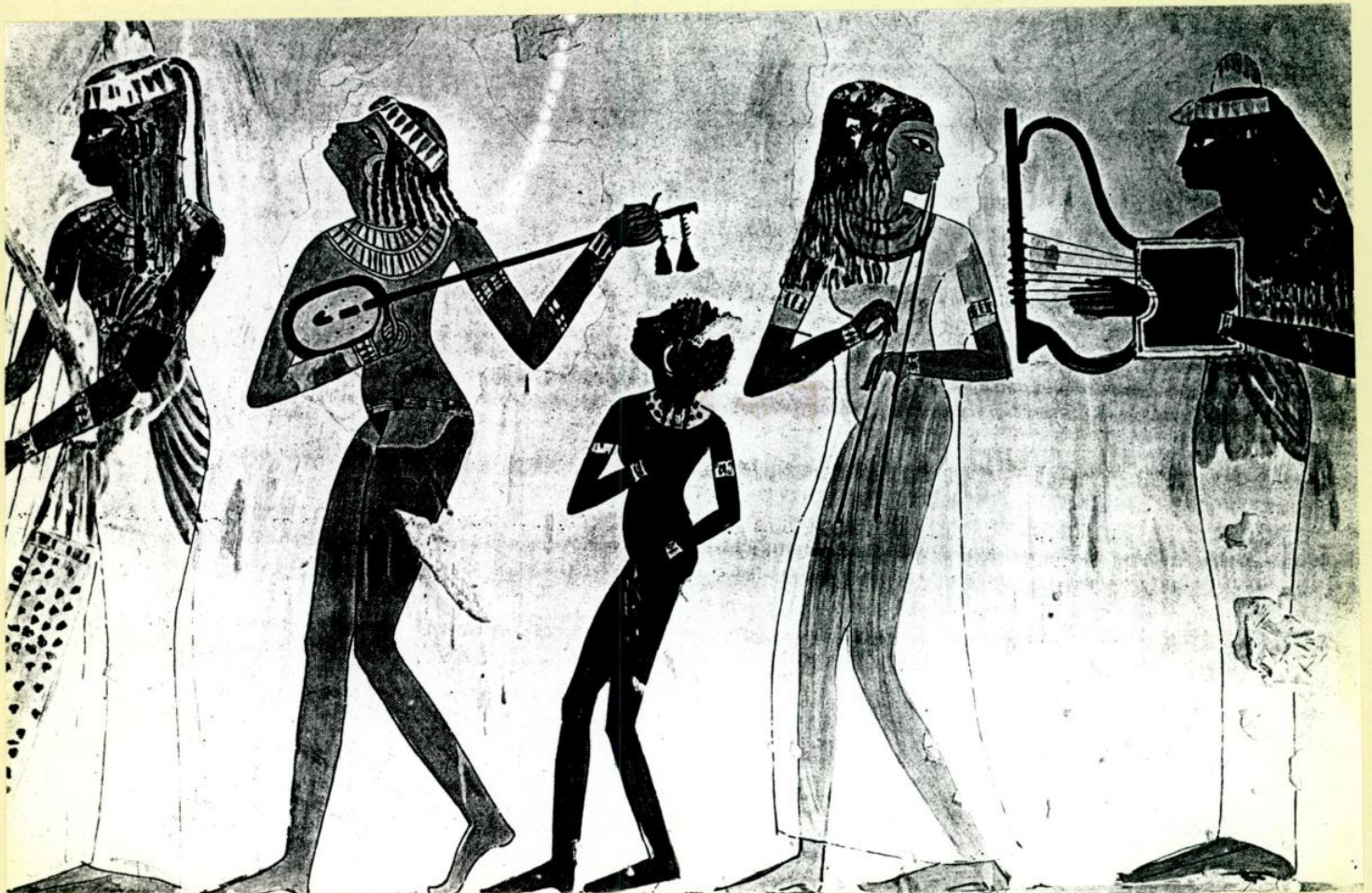
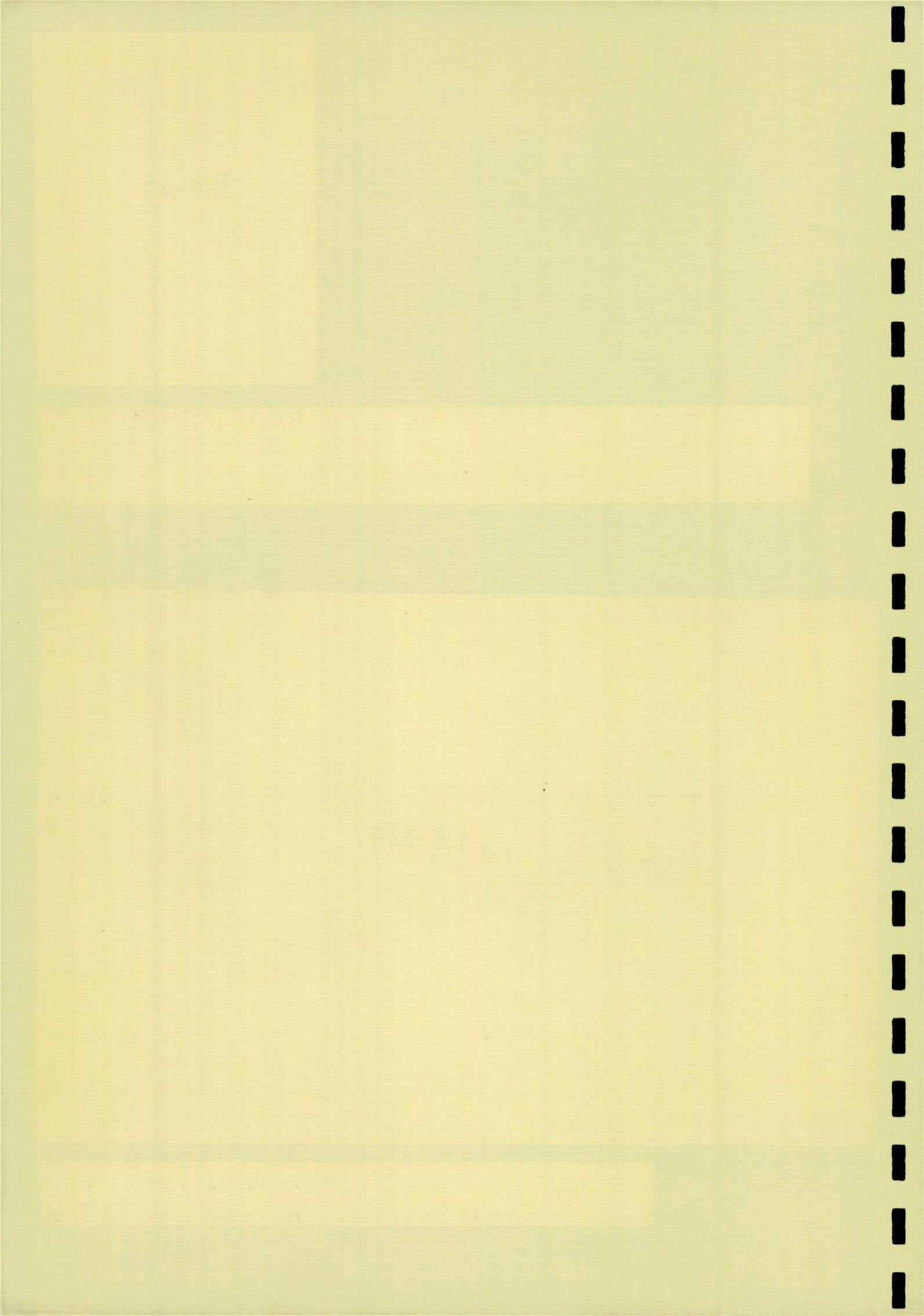


FIG 21 : Ancient Egyptian drawing of prevailing fashion.



1930's were synonymous with evening dresses cut in this manner. Strappy halternecked backless dresses are all styles found in the film with the essential jewels and diamante added. where Theda Bara is adorned with fringing jeweled brocades and chiffons, Banton has chosen decorate his Cleopatra in gold and silver lame with trimmings in jewels and beads. he relies more on silhouette and bodily form to represent Cleopatra as a seductress than vampish mannerisms common to the 1910's, (see FIG 18).

Apart from the obvious dress factor the style of make-up is very obviously a 1930's influence. As in the earlier film the emphasis continues to be on the eyes and mouth but in a different style. The eyes are more subtle with only a soft lining of the upper lid and a coat of dark brown mascara brows are however important and a tell tale feature, they are long and thin with a high round curve which gives a wide eyed look as opposed to the sad doe-eyed look of the 1910's. The lips are given full treatment with full heart shaped peaks in bright red, (see FIG 19.1). It is interesting to note the quantity of blonde and fair haired maidens in the film, all with contemporary hair styles and make-up, considering the film is set in North Africa, it's highly unlikely they would have existed in that part of the world. The hairstyles featured in the film are all very 1930's in style, a long shoulder length style with the ends curled and bangs across the forehead, (see FIG 18). Colbert wore 3 wigs in the film - all in this style . In fact she soon made bangs her trademark in an era when this style was not altogether fashionable.

Cleopatra 1963

Extensive research was done for the 1963 version of Cleopatra. It was in its day and still is considered a mammoth production. It was directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz with costumes designed by Irene Sharp, Vittorio Novarese and Rene Conley. Despite all the research and a very convincing portrayal by Elizabeth Taylor in the title role, there is evidence of the 1960's in body consciousness dressing. Many of the maidens and cast wear Toga like easy flowing ~~leagtaus~~^{KAFTANS} which was basically a long rectangular hand woven piece of cotton or semi-transparent fabric; wrapped around the body. This is reflected in the sixties style of evening wear, beach wear and leisure wear, (see Fig 20). The era is also reflected in the physical make-up of the actresses, their average measurements being 37 - 24 - 30 which bear little or no resemblance to the stylised figures of 48 B.C., (see FIG 21).

Taylor's costumes proved to be a deep source of interest to the press and indeed the public. Most of the costumes had some aspect of the sixties, with the cleavage being the focal point of attention. A lot of

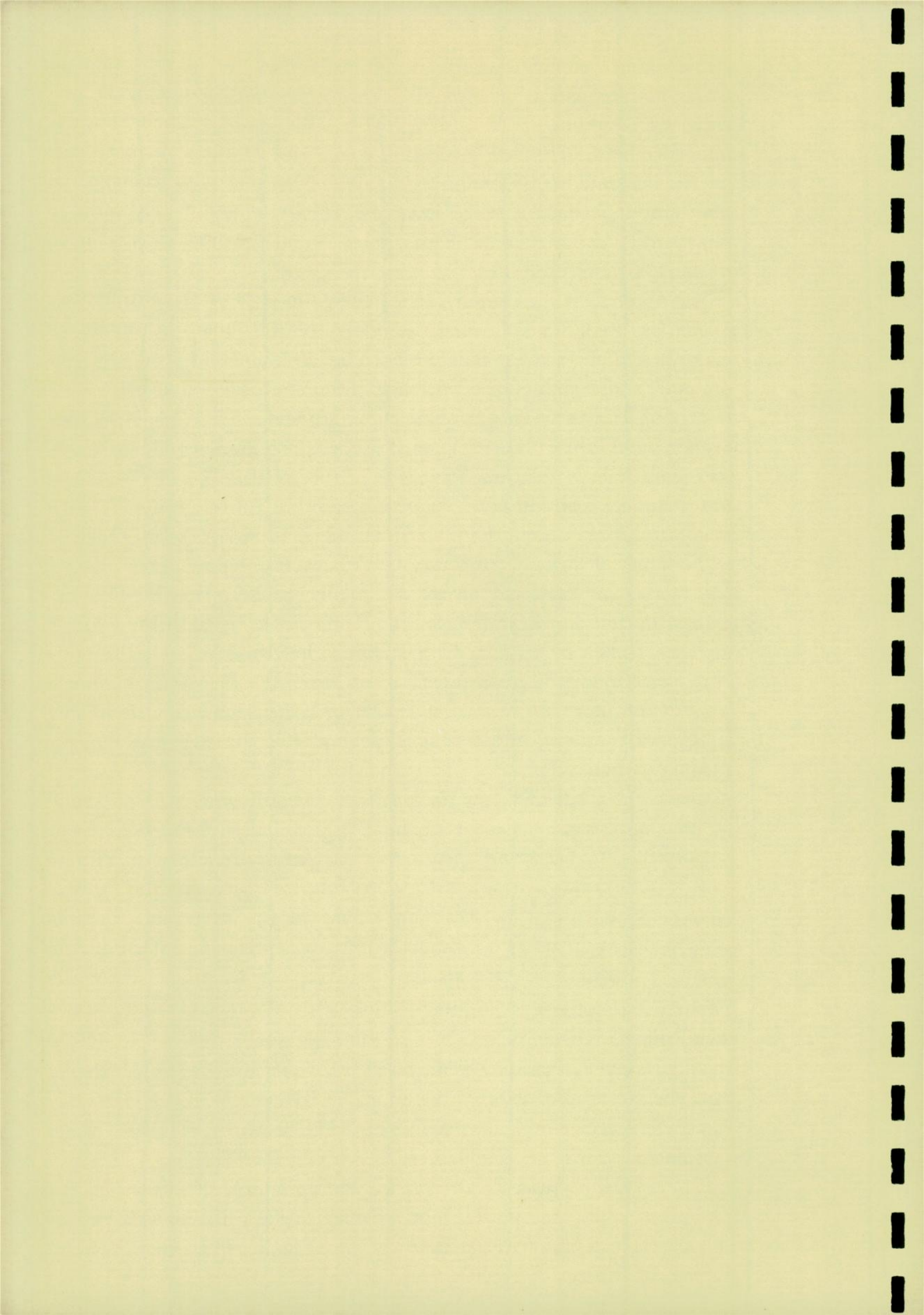




FIG 22 : Elizabeth Taylor's bust was deemed essential viewing in the 1964 version, in keeping with the movement of fashion.

FIG 23a : The make up in the 1964 vresion is the most accurate of the three ,note comparison to FIG 23b.



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23a.





FIG 24 : The beehive in ancient Egypt ???



FIG 25 : Another beehive !...a definite 1960's influence.

1912

1913

1914

1915



the outfits were cut to expose the bust yet still keeping within the realms of decency, (see FIG 22). Such cutting was not in keeping with the style of dressing found in costumes of ancient Egypt, (see FIG 21). Other aspects such as the waistlines of the dresses were an obvious sixties influence. Unlike the other versions the make-up in the 1963 version is probably the most accurate. The emphasis is placed on brows, dark, heavy and high, the eyes are outlined in black extending to the outer corners with black mascara and long lashes. This importance given to the eyes is in keeping with ancient Egypt,(see FIG 23). Unfortunately the lips are painted in the subdued hues of the sixties, a far cry from the raw henna of ancient Egypt. What dates the film more than anything else is undoubtedly the hairstyles. Some of these styles are historically accurate, however the beehive style crops up frequently, (see FIGs 24 & 25), as does the Vidal Sasson look. Unconsciously the designers have in every scene retained elements of the sixties be it hairstyle make-up or dress. Ironically Elizabeth Taylors heavy dark eye make-up was responsible for setting a trend which accelerated during the late sixties.

None of the three versions of the film reflect a serious attempt at historical reproduction although designers at the time probably thought they had created something of the kind.

I will now take two period films made during the thirties Gone With the Wind (1939) and Marie Antoinette (1938) which should be acclaimed if only for the astronomical amount of research invested in them. Yet with a basic knowledge of twentieth century fashion it's easy to pinpoint what years the films are rooted in.

Gone With the Wind 1939

Gone with the wind has long been proclaimed one of the greatest movies ever made. It was directed by Victor Flemming and released in 1939. Unlike a lot of films from the period it has stood the test of time. Before I discuss it in terms of historical accuracy I think it is necessary to see why the film has proved so popular with such a vast audience for so long. Like many of the thirties films it was a mammoth production to tackle. The total cost came to \$£,957,000 of which \$55,664 was spent on mens costumes and \$98,159 on womens costumes. The film required 5,500 outfits altogether, with a laundry bill alone coming to \$10,000 ²¹. It is well to keep this in mind when thinking what a glamorous job a costume designer has! Walter Plunket was considered

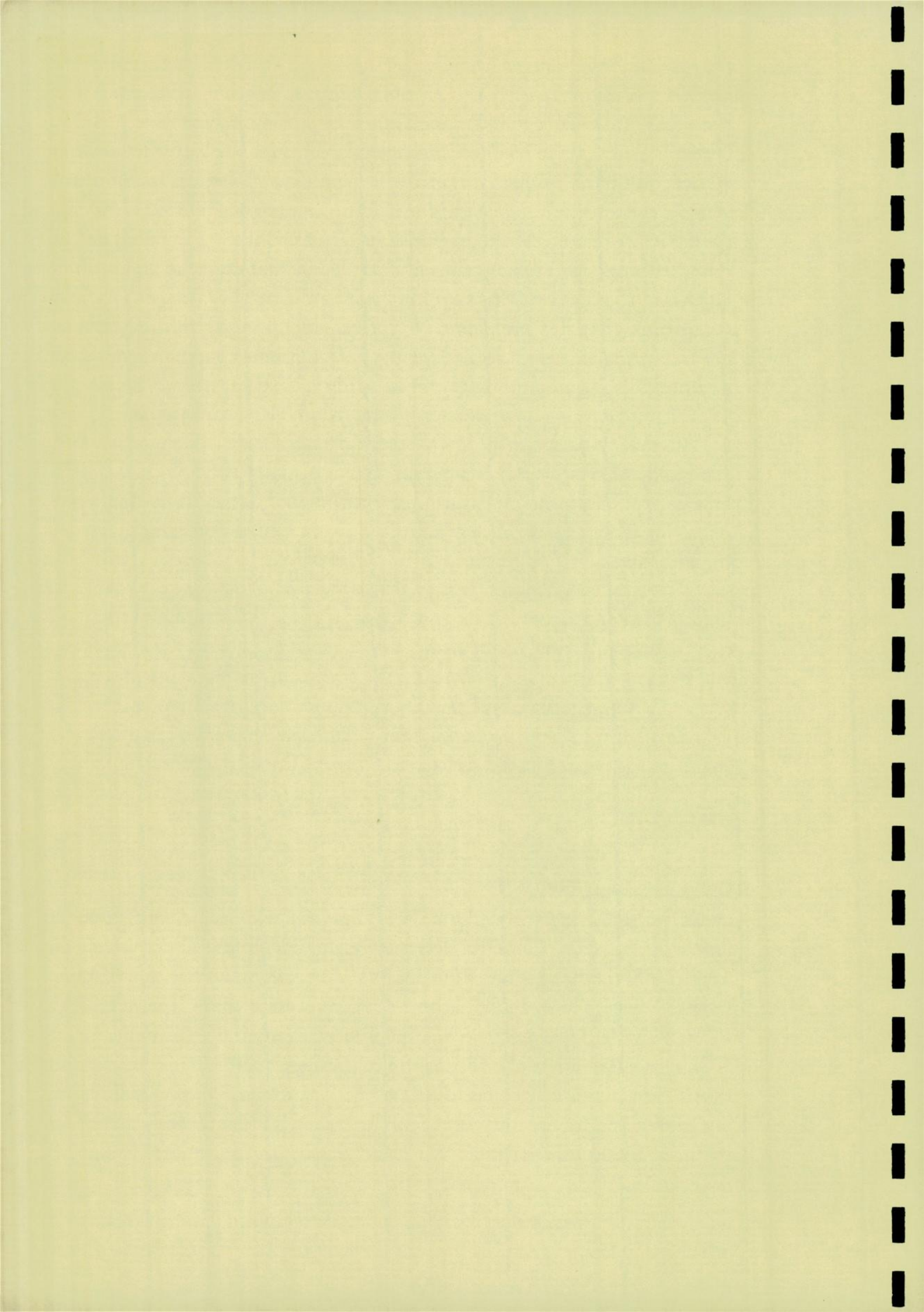
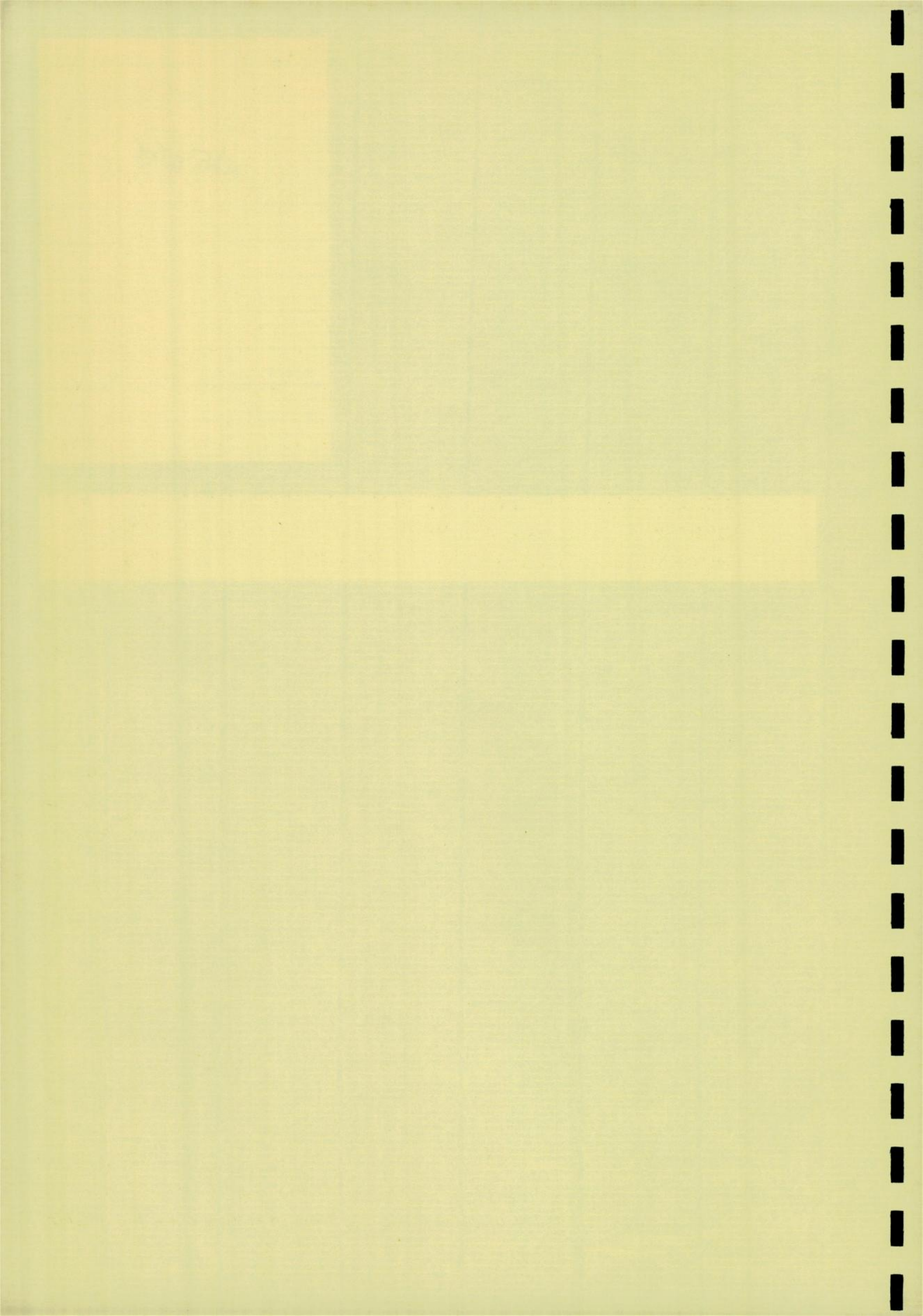




FIG 26 : Vivian Leigh in Gone With the Wind.the silhouette of this dress is more in keeping with the 1930's than 1800's , broad shoulders ,tight waist and 'page boy' haircut.



the only person suitable to take on the task of costume designer. He had worked on a number of period dramas prior to this including Mary of Scotland, (1936), Little Women, (1933), and Quality Street,(1937). David D. Selznik, the head of production had ordered Plunket to follow as closely as possible Margaret Mitchell's description of costumes in the book. From the very beginning everything had to be perfect, Plunket strove for authenticity in recreating the dresses worn during the American Civil War. He spent months travelling, talking and examining remnants of dresses from the period. Nothing would be made until an actress was found to play Scarlett O' Hara. After much searching Vivien Leigh secured the part. To Plunket's delight she had a perfect figure with a twenty-three inch waist but even then problems arose where one least expects them. Plunket explains;

'A FIGURE PROBLEM, AS FAR AS SELZNIK WAS CONCERNED, HE WAS LOOKING FOR CLEAVAGE WHICH THE CENSORS WOULDN'T LET US USE ANYWAY. BUT SHE HAD NO CLEAVAGE AND THAT WAS BECAUSE SHE HAD A CHEST IN WHICH THE BONES WENT OUTWARDS CALLED PIGEON BREASTED. THE BREASTS WERE NORMAL BUT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO GET CLEAVAGE FOR HER₂₂.

As breasts were very important in the thirties something had to be done. For scenes which required cleavage, (mostly evening dresses), her breasts were taped into position with a little padding at the sides to look natural and the whole upper torso wrapped in 'adhesive'. It was very uncomfortable yet at no stage is it evident Leigh was under such discomfort. Despite all the research and overcoming the technical difficulties, Plunket designed many outfits with a definite thirties feel to them. There is no doubt the public thought they were seeing accurate reproductions of Civil War dress. The general style suggests the mid-nineteenth century but the silhouette betrays the film's origins. In all the dresses for the film bodices were cut to conform to the body underneath. However in the 1860's the corset formed the shape which was considered fashionable for the times.

In the opening scene Vivien Leigh with her broad, puffed shoulders and page-boy hair style is more in time with the fashion of 1939 than 1861,(see FIG 26).

Plunket was evidently intent on creating a dramatic impact at all costs. The crinolines in the film are exaggerated, designed in a dome shape which is larger and wider than any surviving from the period, (see FIGs 27, 28, 29). It is the accessories which date the film more so than the costumes. Plunket enlisted the help of milliner John Fredriks

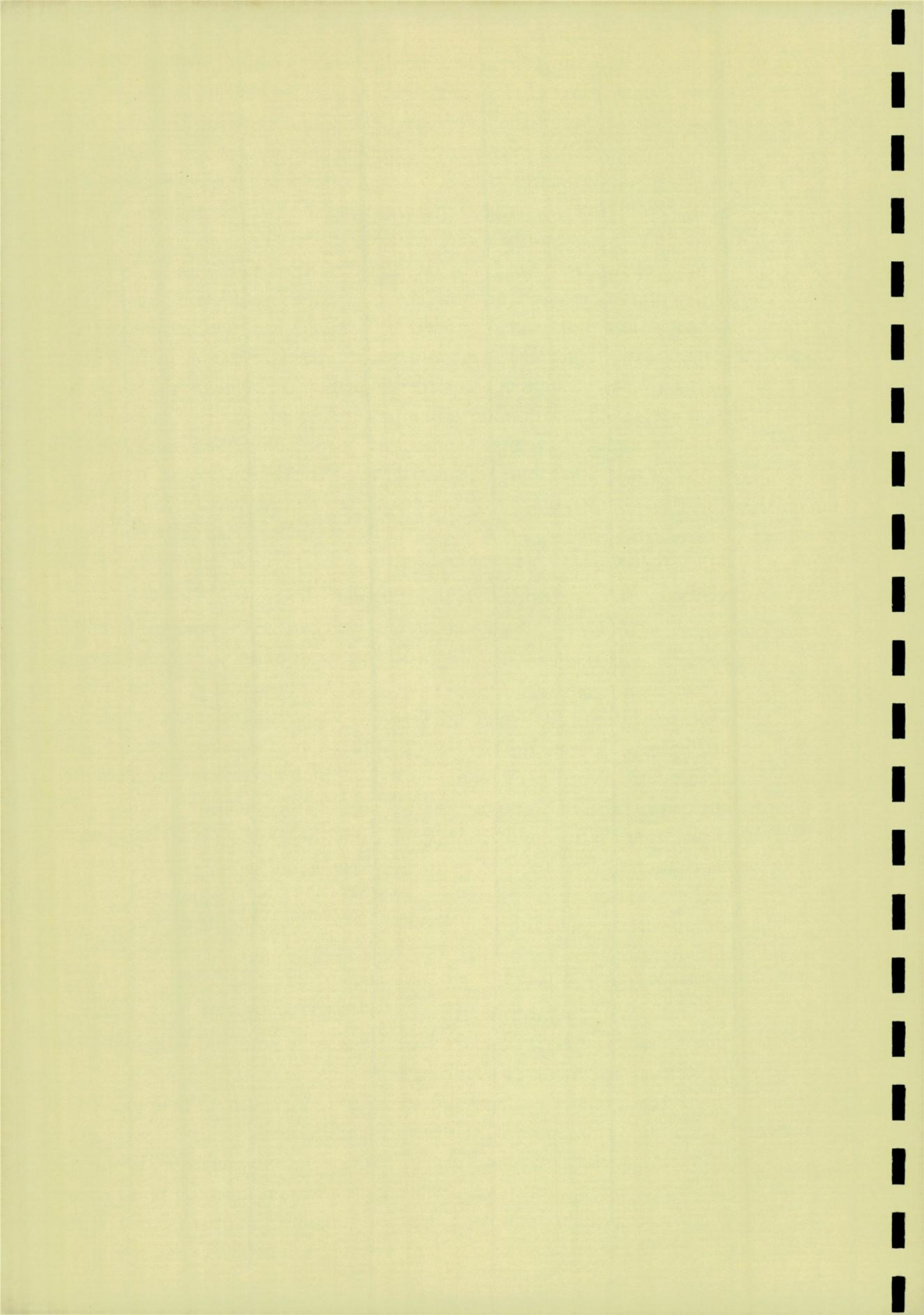




FIG 27 : Silhouettes of the 1860's.

File 27

Government of the United States



FIG 28 : Fashion from 1861.

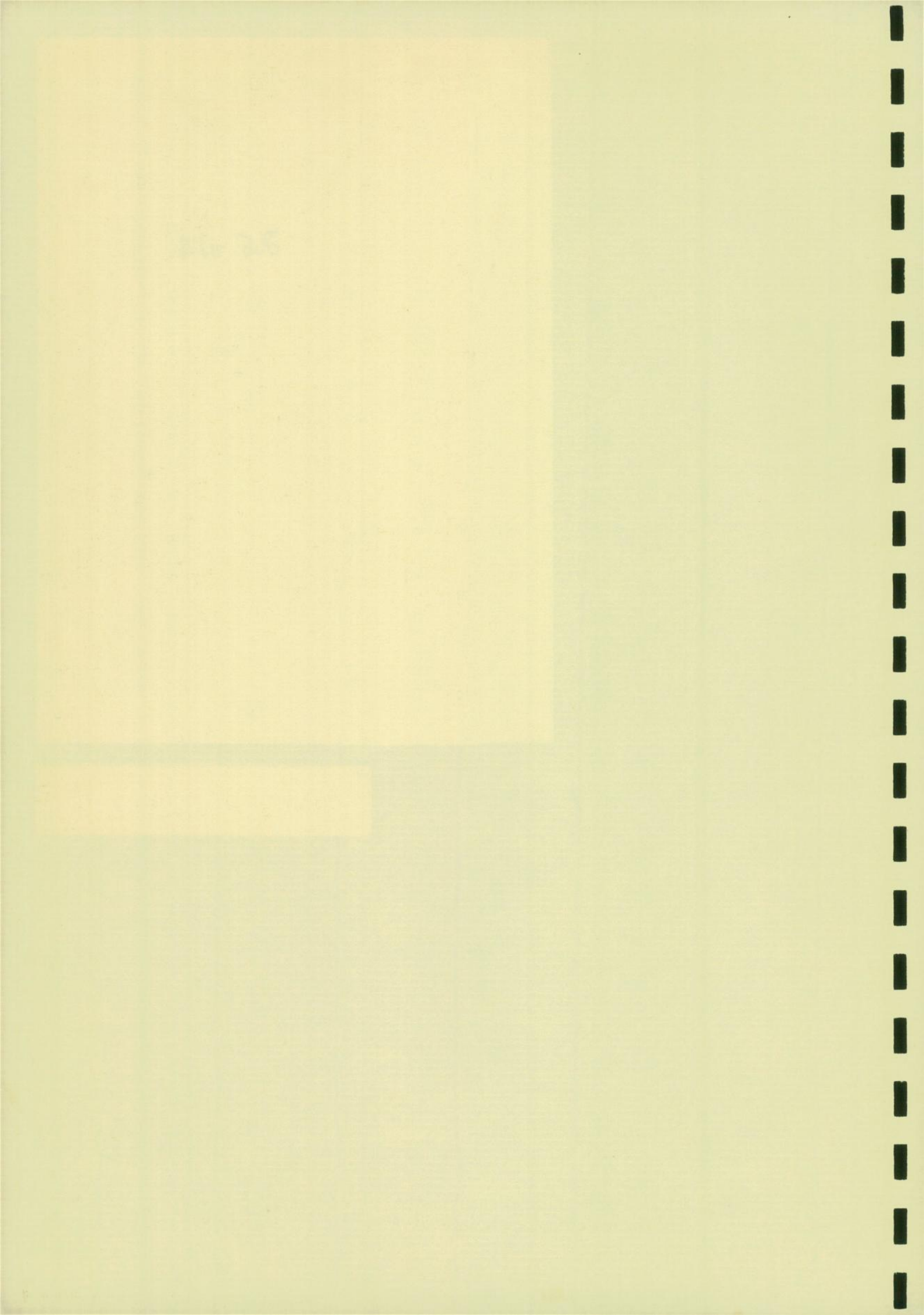




FIG 29 : The famous barbeque dress from Gone With the Wind . It was copied in numerous fabrics ,styles and price ranges .

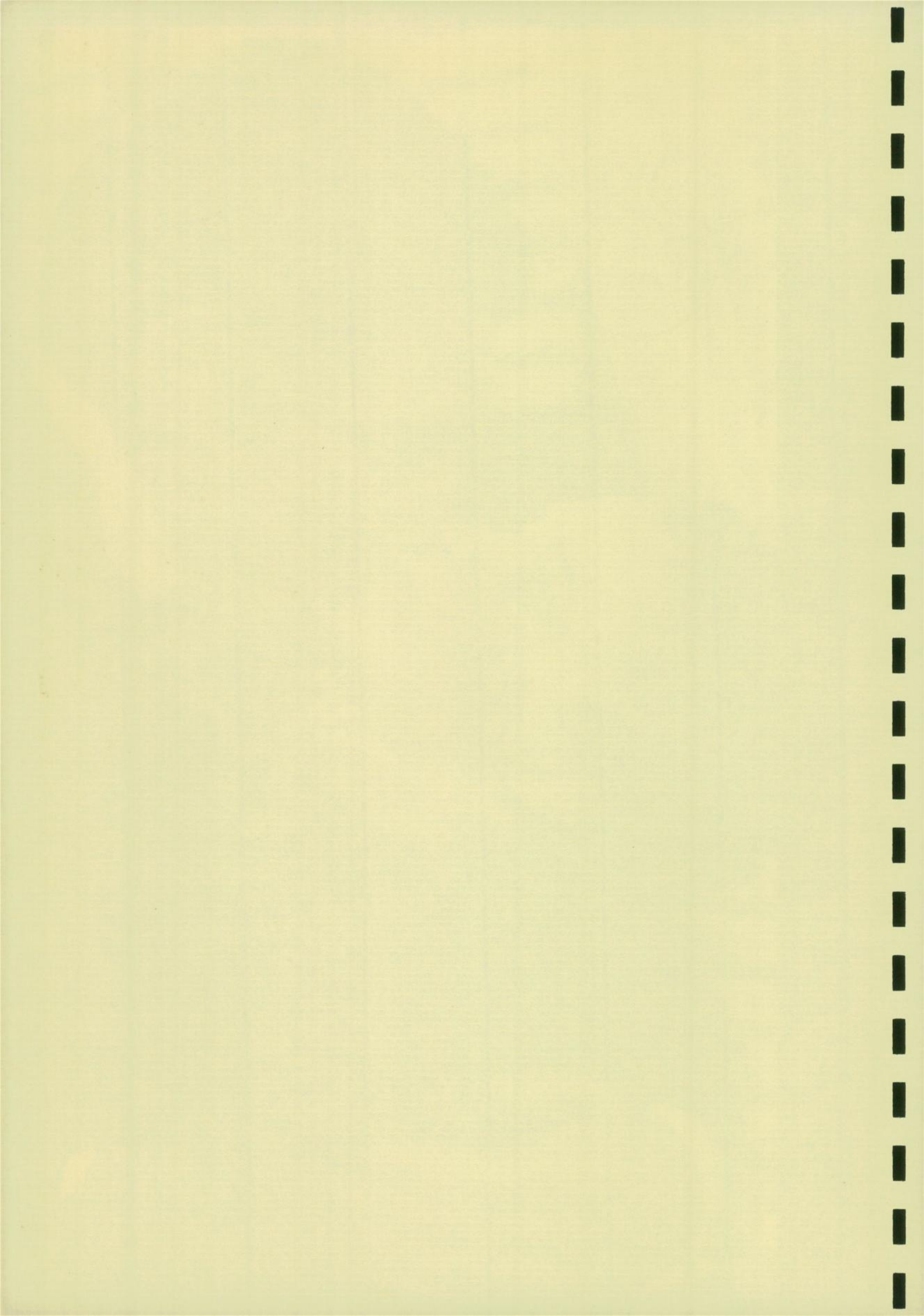




FIG 30 : Hat styles from the movie bear a strong resemblance to the 1930 style in hats.

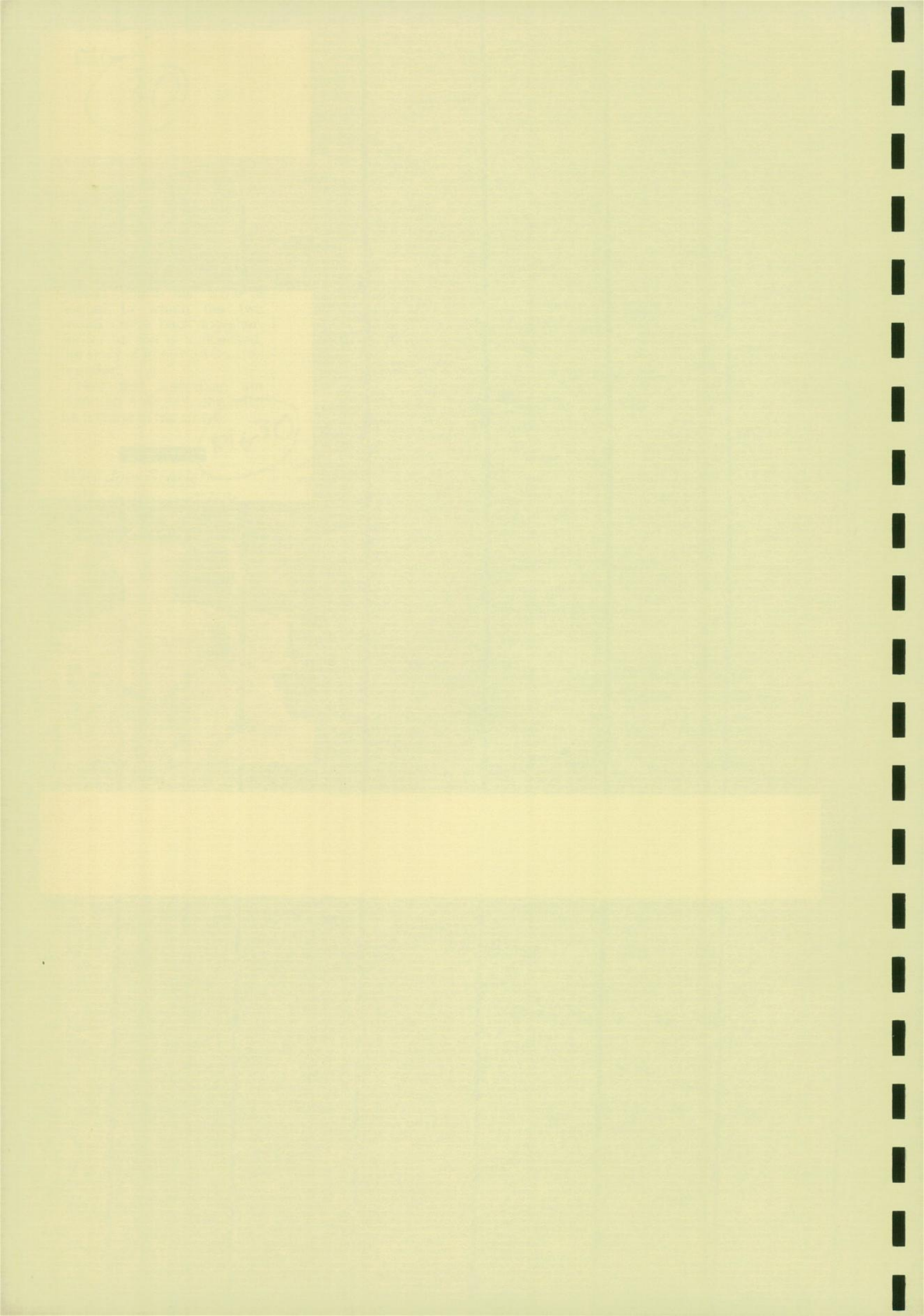




FIG 31 : A Fashion hat from the late 1930's.

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Chapter 8



FIG 32 : The wedding dress which sparked numerous imitations. It changed the fashion in bridal wear from 1939.

0-72



FIG 33 : The ballroom scene from Marie Antoinette. Norma Shearer's dress weighed over 50 lbs.

F1635

to design a range of co-ordinating hats for the outfits. What is extraordinary here is that all the extras wore historically accurate recreations...

'BONNETS BRIMS ROSE HIGH IN FRONT AND ARE TRIMMED WITH JUTTING QUILLS, THE CURTAIN IS BLACK EDGED WITH BALL FRINGE OR JET PENDANTS₂₃, (see FIG 27).

But most of the hats Vivien Leigh wears are worn at an asymmetrical angle low over her right eye. With large bows tied under her right ear, (see FIG 30). This presents a style that only became acceptable in the late Thirties, (see Fig 31). It is very unusual that Plunket, who was renowned for his accurate reproductions, could design two completely different styles for one period. He was obviously aware of what he was doing, which draws a contradiction between his work ethics and practices. As I have said Plunket was directed to pay strict attention to the book and its description of costumes. He excelled himself in the wedding scene: Scarlett O' Hara got married in her mother's wedding dress, and it is obvious as it is much too long for her and is of a style twenty five years earlier with puffed sleeves and a small nipped in waist, (see Fig 32). It was also a very costly looking dress as her mother was from a wealthy background. Plunket has reproduced that to perfection although it is necessary to read the book to appreciate this. It is one scene where he could have applied artistic licence and got away with it.

Marie Antoinette 1938

Marie Antoinette was made in 1938 and starred Norma Shearer in the title role. To this day it is probably the most comprehensive attempt Hollywood has made to show life in the eighteenth century French court. It got major press coverage as it was one of the most extravagant projects that M.G.M. had tackled to date. The movie was budgeted for one million dollars, (which was double what the average budget was in 1932)₂₄, it took five years to plan and research with \$500,000 being spent even before all the players were cast. Every aspect of the production was extravagant. Adrian designed for all the major stars plus 1,250 extras and two poodles, with a total of altogether 4,000 costumes and 3,000 wigs₂₅. No expense was spared in trying to be as authentic as possible. Adrian travelled to France and scoured the continent researching the costumes. He returned with authentic velvet and lace using only the finest fabric with enormous ~~consequent~~ expense. Fifty yards of white satin was used for Marie Antoinette's wedding dress. Her white plumed ballgown, (see FIG 33), weighed approximately fifty

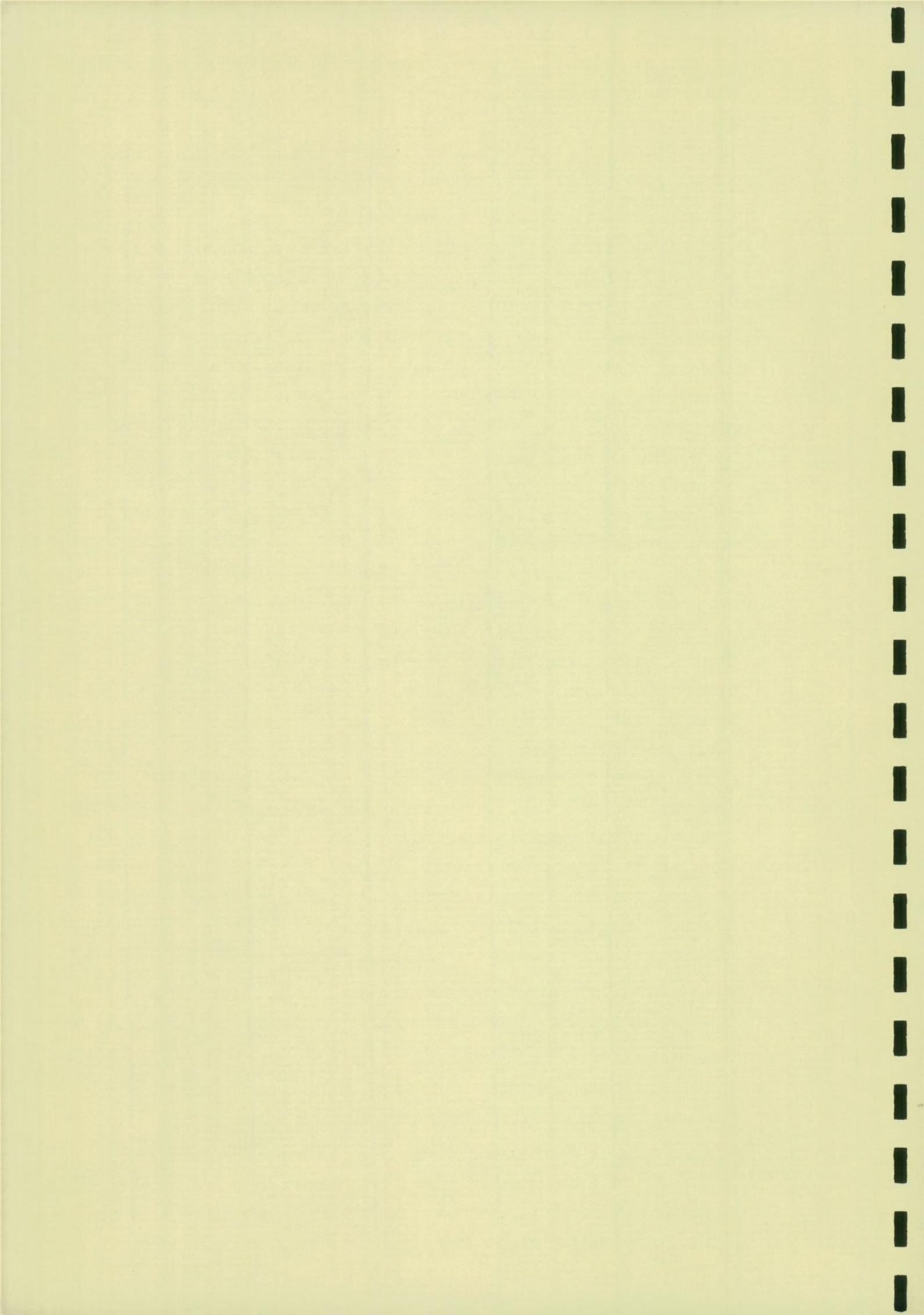




FIG 34 : Elaborate ornamentation was Adrian's signature.

39

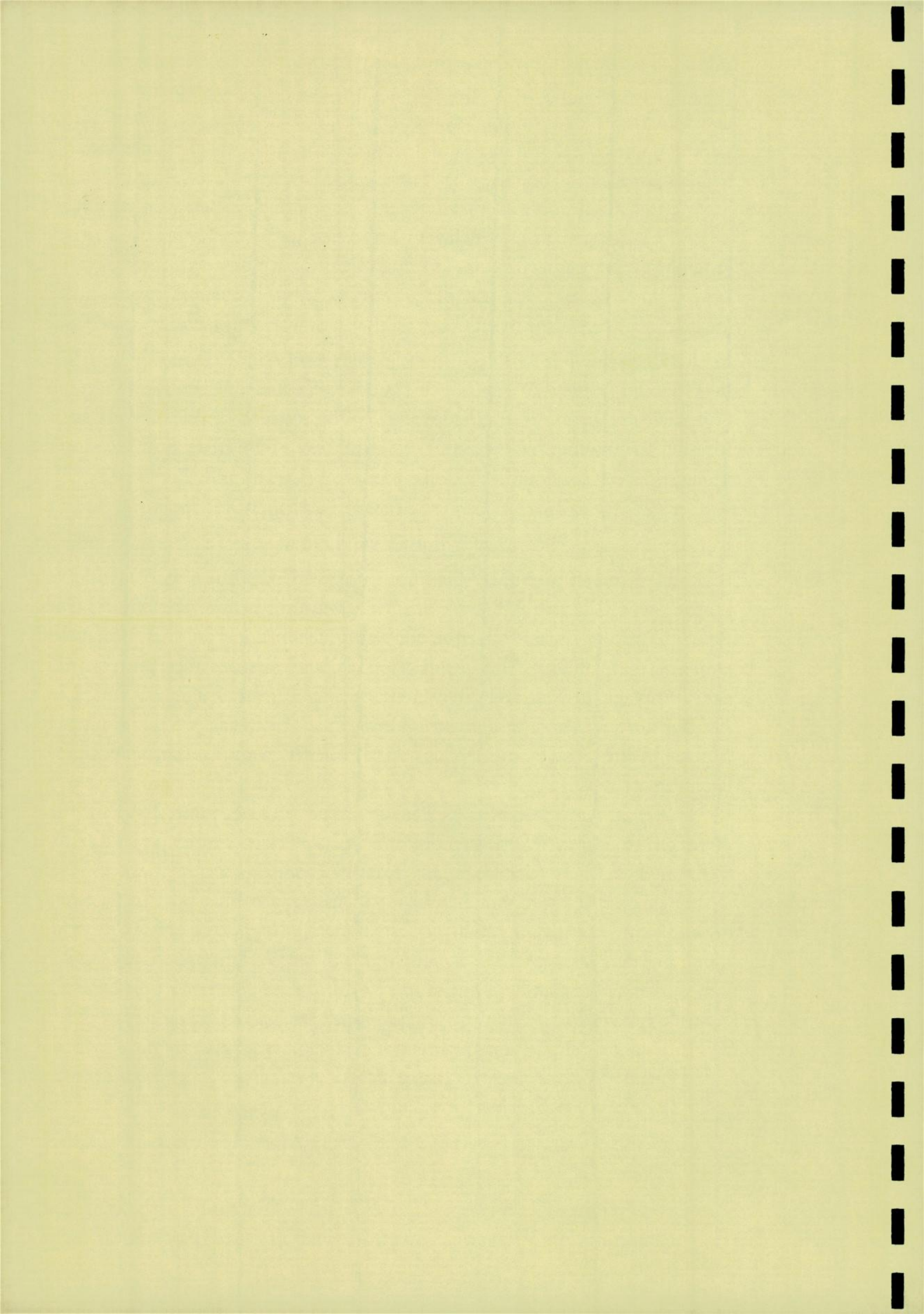
pounds, which was probably half Norma Shearers own weight. Many of the wigs weighed up to twenty-five pounds hence a great deal of stamina was essential during filming. Many of the fabrics were specially woven in Lyon if what was required was not to be found in wholesale stock. Buying from retail outlets was usually a last option. In the early days of cinema each studio had a store of fabric ready for use whenever it was needed. Most of the fabric came from Europe. Companies such as Bianchini, Dushan, and all the great Swiss, French and Italian fabric companies would come to Hollywood with their fabric samples. The designers were always aware of what movie was in the pipeline so they made provision for it. The system was much more closely knit than today. Each studio had its own prime stars so the designers knew automatically what would suit each actress. Unlike today as Edith Head says 'We go out to a [regular commercial] store and try and buy something and we don't know until the last minute who is going to be in the film'¹⁴.

To embroider the fabrics fifty women were brought from Guadalagarain Mexico to sew on thousands of sequins²⁸. The embroidery took the form of applique, beading and even painting, every available surface was covered with gold or silver sequins, pearls or ribbons, (see FIG 34). In fact Adrian based some of the decorations on surviving 18th century embroidery. The production team were so determined that everything be perfect that they sent the fox fur that Shearer wears in the film to New York to be dyed blue to match her eyes. Considering the film was in black and white I think it was an unnecessary extravagance.

Never were dresses larger or more cumbersome, than in the eighteenth century, some of them almost six feet in width, (see FIG 35). The gowns had to be constructed in the studio machine room due to their size and weight, similarly special dressing rooms had to be built on the sound stage to facilitate the movement of the actresses. The following extract is from a poem of 1753 and would serve as a good reference to the absurdity of the gowns.

'LET YOUR GOWNS BE SAQUE, BLUE YELLOW OR GREEN,
AND FRECKLE YOUR ELBOWS WITH RUFFLES SIXTEEN,
FULL OF YOUR LAWN APRON WITH FLOUNCES AND ROWS,
PUFF AND PUCKER UP LACE ON YOUR ARMS AND TOES,
MAKE YOUR PETTICOATS SHOUT THAT A HOOP EIGHT YARDS
WIDE,
MAY DAINTILY SHOW HOW YOUR GARTERS ARE TIED'²⁹.

The final product was certainly visually exciting and it was



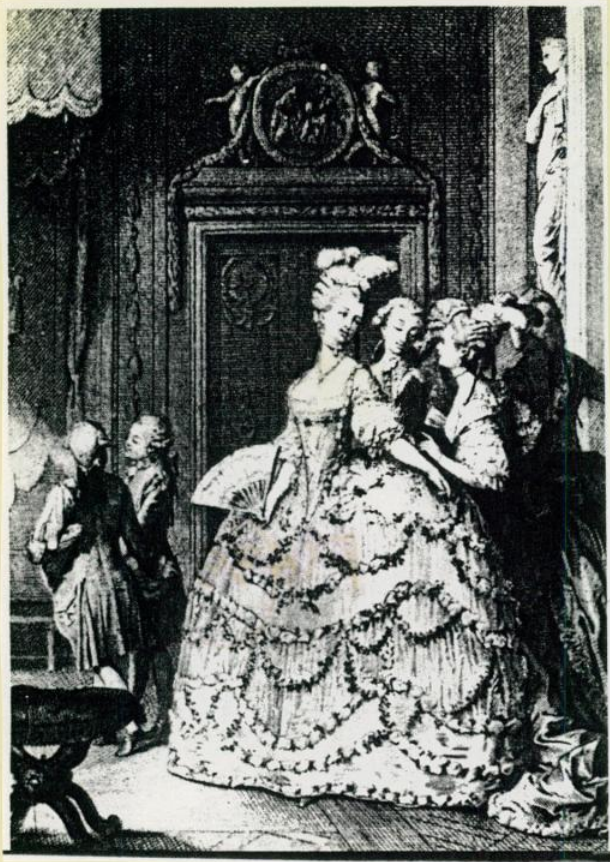


FIG 35 : The 'box like ' styles common of 1780's fashion .

1714 75

1714 75

1714 75





FIG 36 : Adrian's interpretation of 1780's dress is more dome shaped and wider than is documented.



FIG 37 : Off the shoulder styles never featured in 1780's fashion.....but were highly fashionable in 1938??

1952

1953

1954

1955

1956

1957

1958

1959

1960

1961

1962

1963

1964

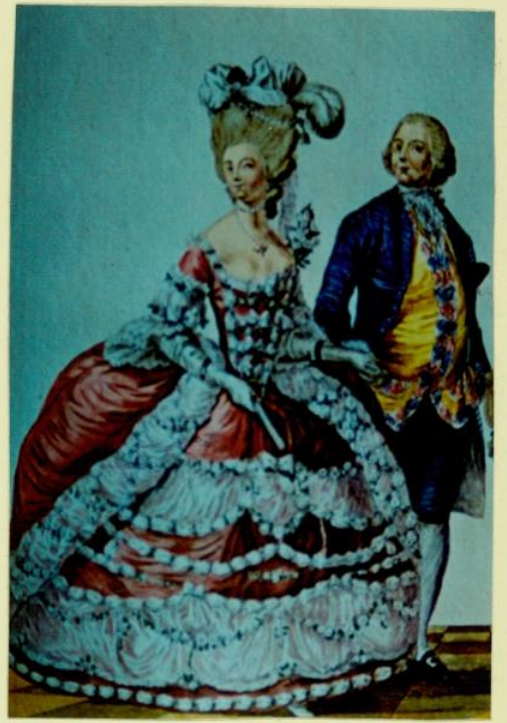


FIG 38 : 1780's style in dress was shorter than Adrian's interpretations.

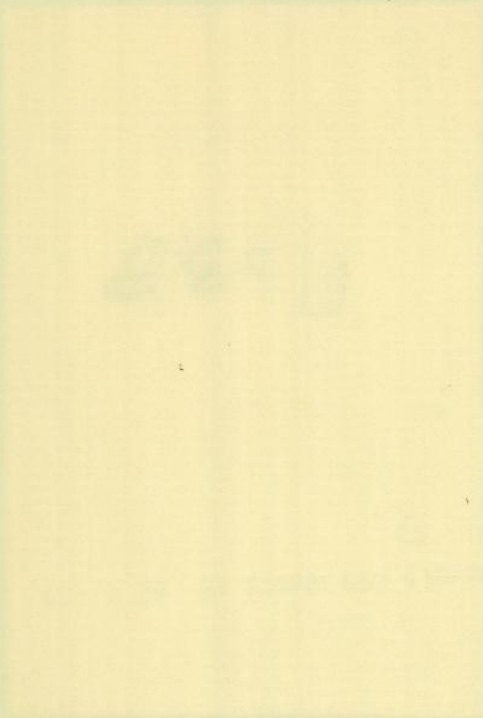
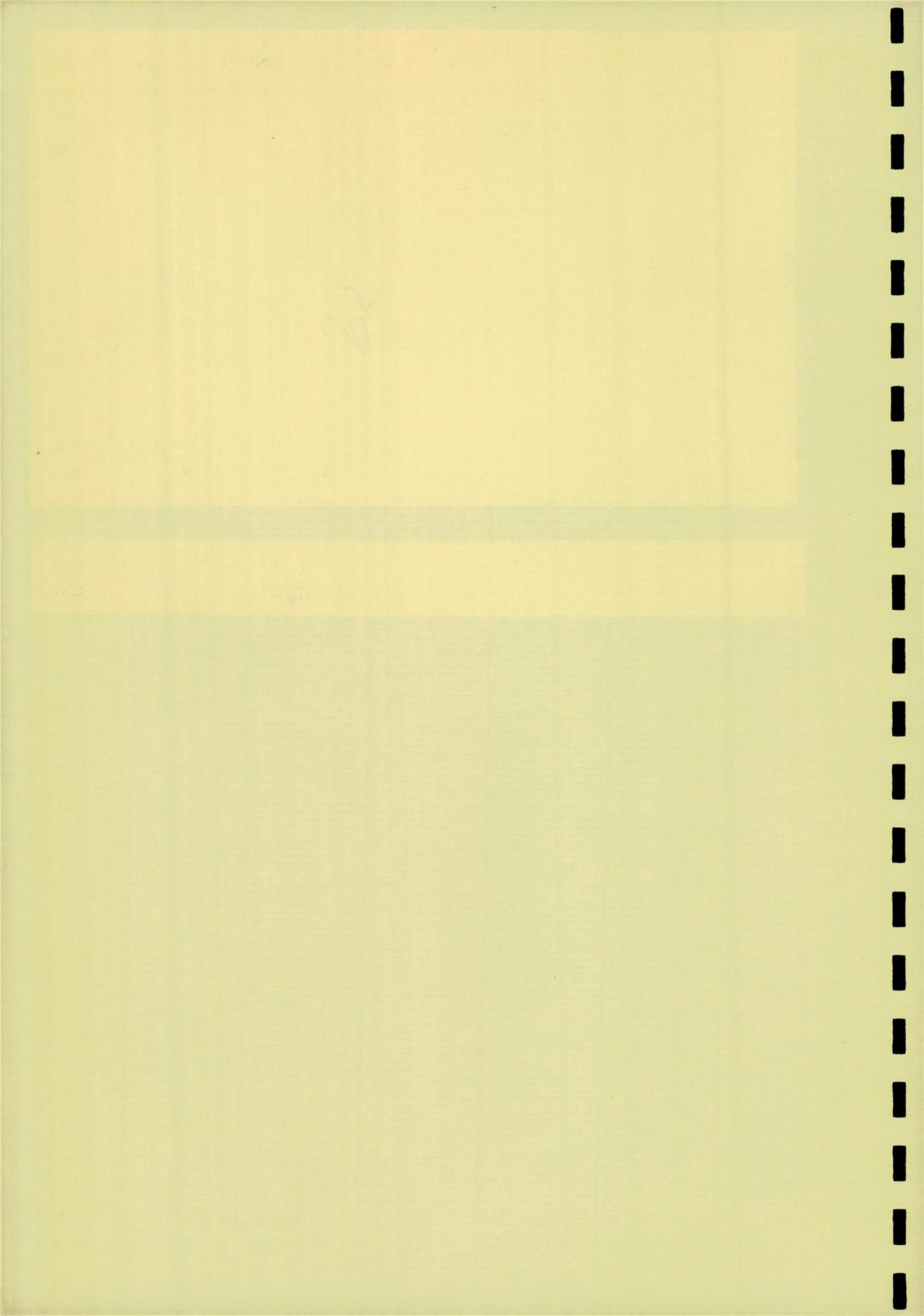




FIG 39 : 1780's dresses never had trains -there should be an ankle visible as it was considered daring and fashionable during the court .



obvious that the intense research had been worthwhile and although the costumes captured the physical shape of the period's dress the cut was altered to suit audience expectations. In the 1930's bare shoulders were quite fashionable so Adrian cut nearly all Norma Shearer's dresses to conform to this standard, (see FIGs 36 & 37), apparently hers were beautiful. He obviously ignored the fact that this style would never have appeared in public in the eighteenth century.

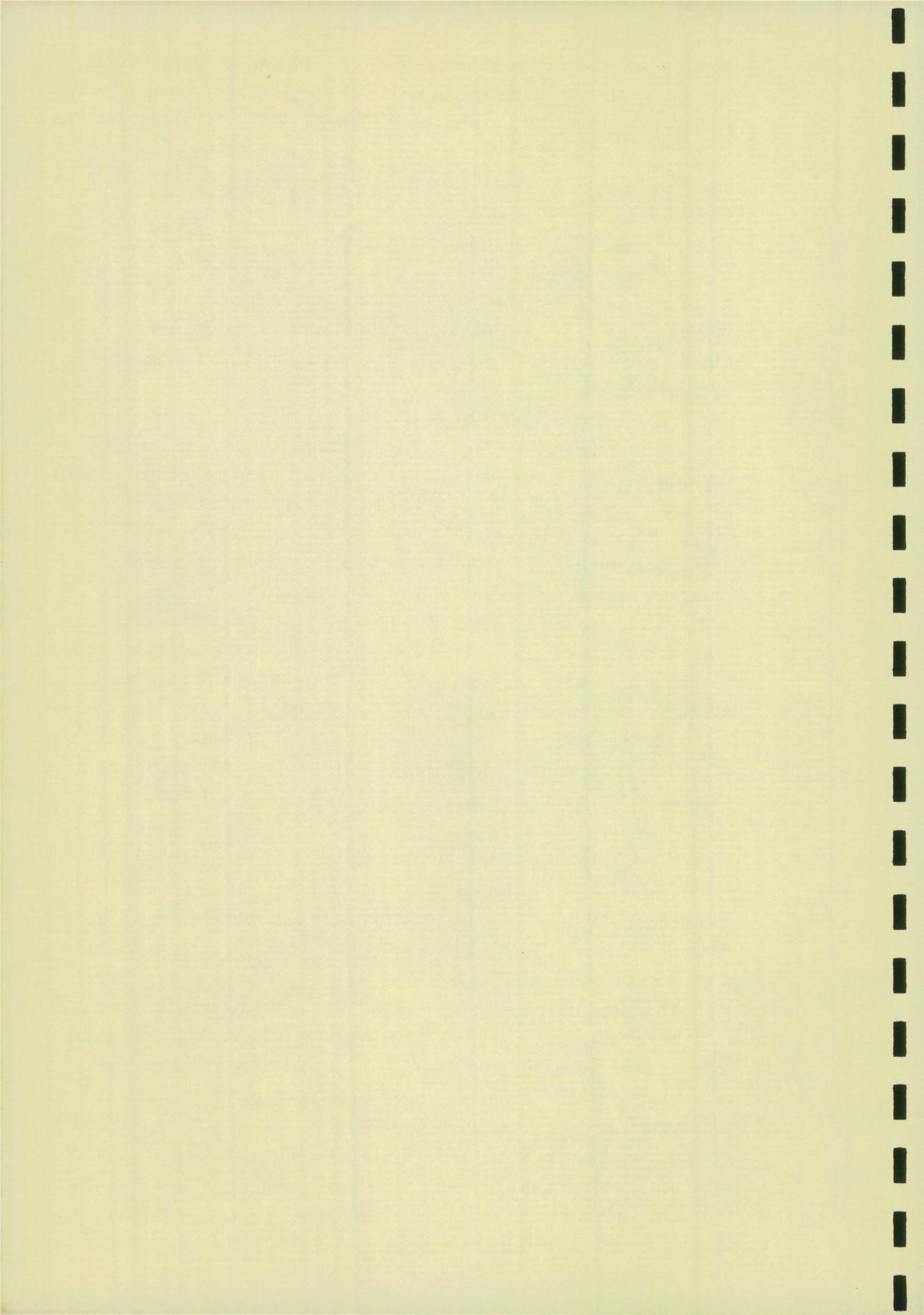
How Adrian would alter the cut of the dresses so drastically after all his research and still suggest it was an accurate reproduction of prevailing styles is hard to understand. On one hand he seems to very diligent and committed yet on the other hand given to fanciful displays of artistic licence.

There were reports that Shearer expressed concerns that she was rather high waisted; in response Adrian extended the bodice to an unnatural length and expanded the extreme. Dresses of the early 1770's were much more box like in silhouette, (see FIG 38), as opposed to the broad dome shapes Adrian designed, (see FIG 36).

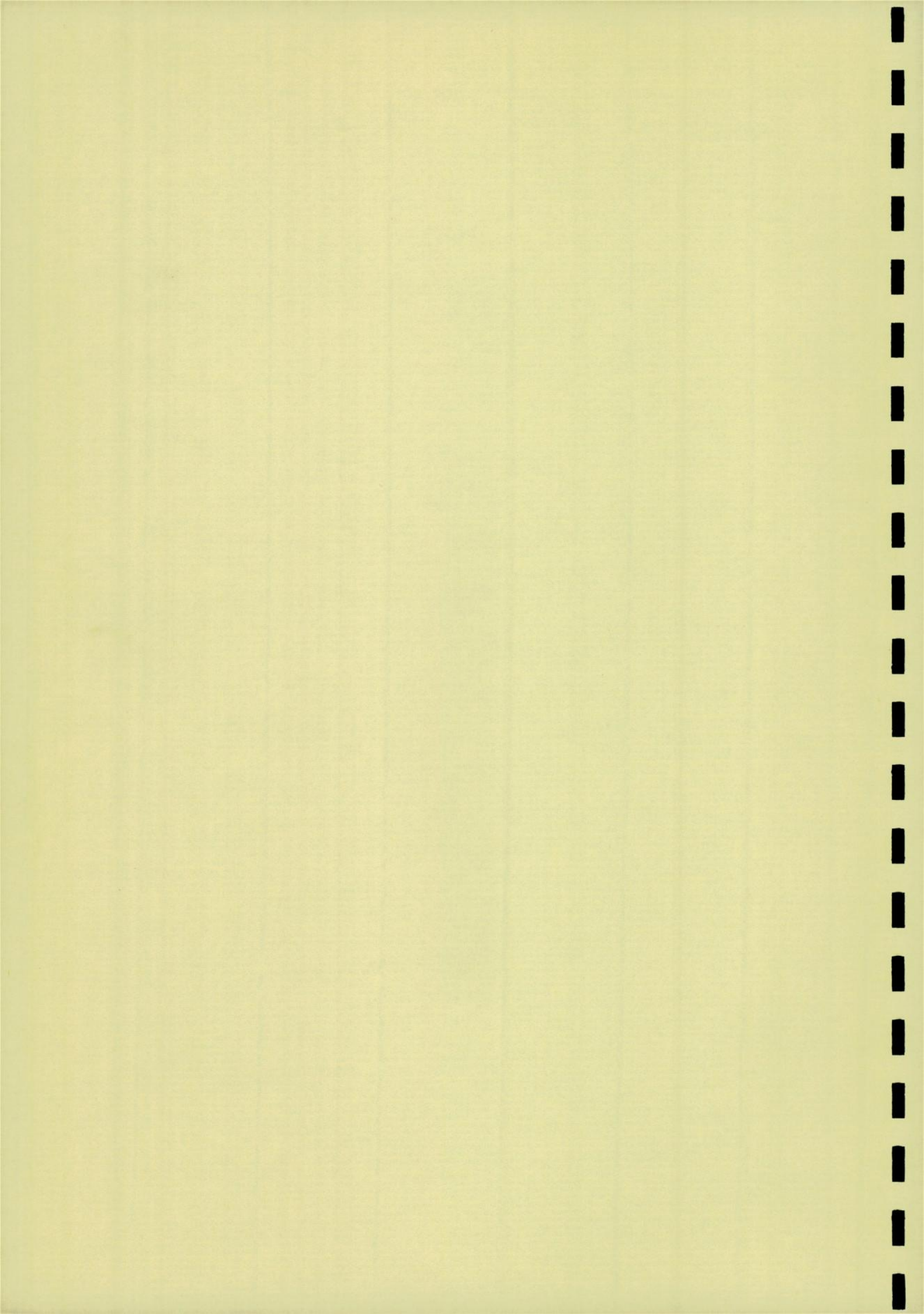
Lengthening the bodice and expanding the hoops served only to make the figure more contrived and uncomfortable looking. He also added straps to the backs of the dresses, (see FIG 38). In fact Adrian created problems for himself in lengthening the dresses, they were now so heavy and long that the actresses found it difficult to walk. He overcame this by attaching ribbons to the hoops through the skirt so they could be lifted to avail movement. I imagine he added trains to the garments to create a sense of drama with the sweeping and rustling of rich fabric. Of course trains were very much in vogue for evening dress for the thirties.

These are the most obvious examples of historically incorrect interpretations in the film, however there is one more example which would go unnoticed to the untrained eye yet reflects a very strong thirties influence. In the grand ballroom scene Shearer wears a ball gown adorned with an arrangement of bias cut strips of silver tissue, (see FIG 36). Fabric has never been documented as being cut on the bias in the 18th century so it certainly wouldn't have been used as a decorative feature. Bias cut was the hallmark of the thirties in women's dress.

Despite the irregularities running through the dress Adrian remained true to the over all styling of the period. At a first glance most costume enthusiasts would recognise it as being a pre-French revolution film. Despite the intense research and large capital invested, it failed to make an impact at the box office. Many feel that this was due to Irving Thalberg's untimely death. He was the studio vice-president in charge of



production, highly respected for his knowledge and technical experience and responsible for getting the film off the ground but he never saw it completed.



SECTION 3.

Influence of Film Costume on Fashion.

The worlds of cinema ,costume design and commercial fashion have never worked in isolation.Film has always had a major influence on the way people dress; This was never more evident than in the 1930's,at the start of the decade Schiaparelli commented ;'The film fashions of today are your fashions of tomorrow.'³⁰ the decade saw intense pressure being put on designers and manufacturers to produce collections which reflected prevailing fashion trends in the movies.Costumes in period films have been responsible for creating design trends more than elements of contemporary fashion. The design details used in period films are more inspiring in the sense that they suggest ideas which may not have been in current circulation. The fashion reporter of THE NEW YORK TIMES ,Lillian Churchill noticed this.

IT CANNOT BE DENIED THAT CLOTHES IN PERIOD PICTURES DO AFFECT THE MODES OF THE MOVEMENT, THE DRESS IN MODERN FILMS MAY BE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE ,BUT COSTUME PICTURES ADD NOTES, BARS AND PASSAGES TO THE SYMPHONY OF DRESS.³¹

Many of the film costume designers had a higher profile than the current mainstream designers , they were treated like Gods ,in fact film reviews of the time were often more concerned with the fashion content as opposed to the artistic and technical brilliance of the movies .In 1940 one thousand buyers voted on their favourite designers. Three of the top nine names were costume designers; Adrian, Travis Bantan and Howard Greer . The designers were well aware of the influence they exerted ,yet it was never their intention to create costume which could be translated into commercial fashion for department stores . The requirements of each are vastly different - as I discussed in my first chapter . A sucessful film costume has to fit the technical needs of the film and compliment the actresses.But it was necessary that costume were aware of what was happening in the field of fashion as their design concepts had to have an appeal for the public when the film was released ,which was often twelve or fifteen months after the garments were designed .Most costume designers got their training in the clothing industry ,usually at mass production level although sometimes in the theatre .It was an advantage to those that did as it gave them a heightened sense of contemporary fashion so their ideas were easily

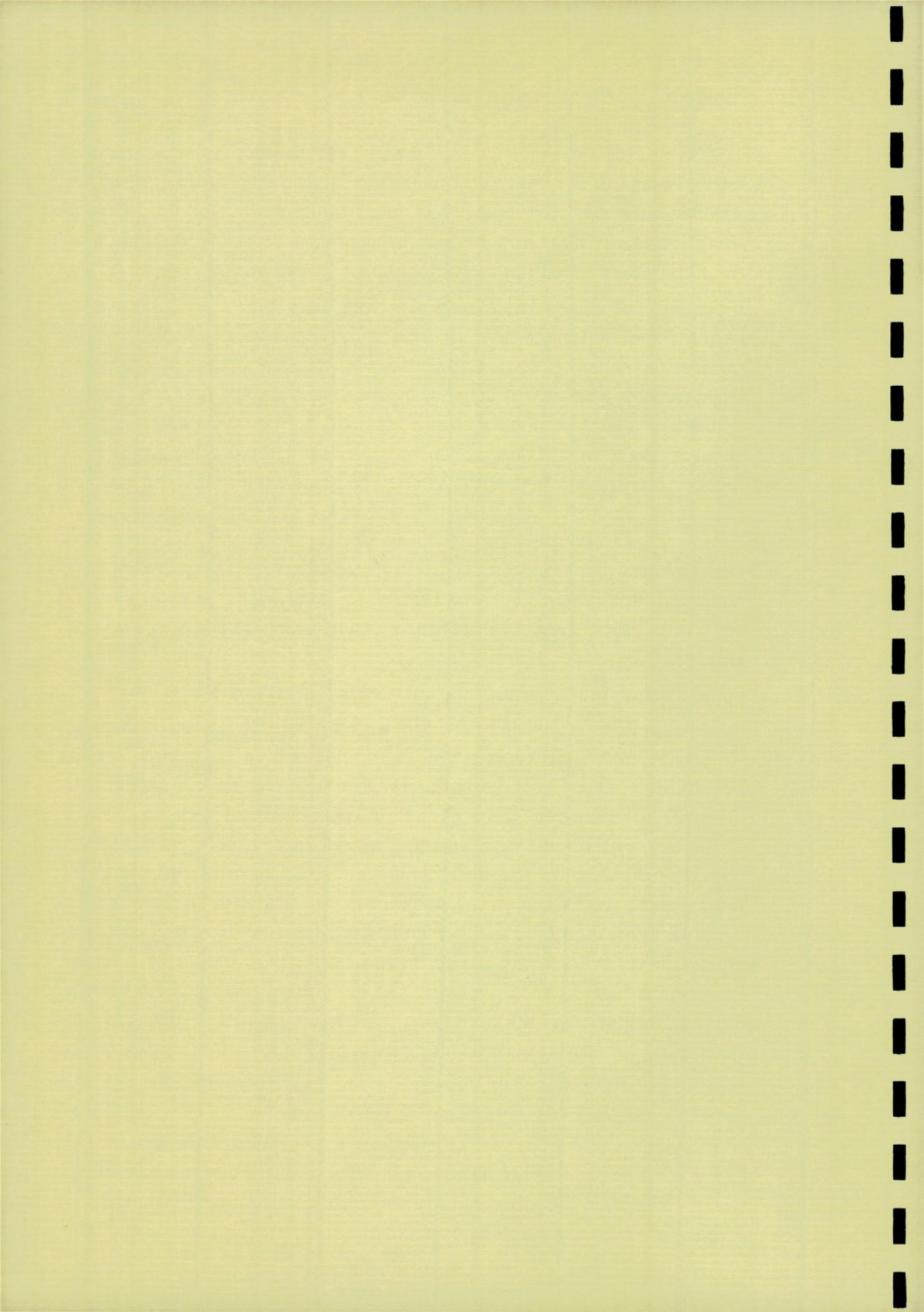




FIG 40 : Adrian redesigned the cloche and called it the 'Empress Eugenie Hat'.

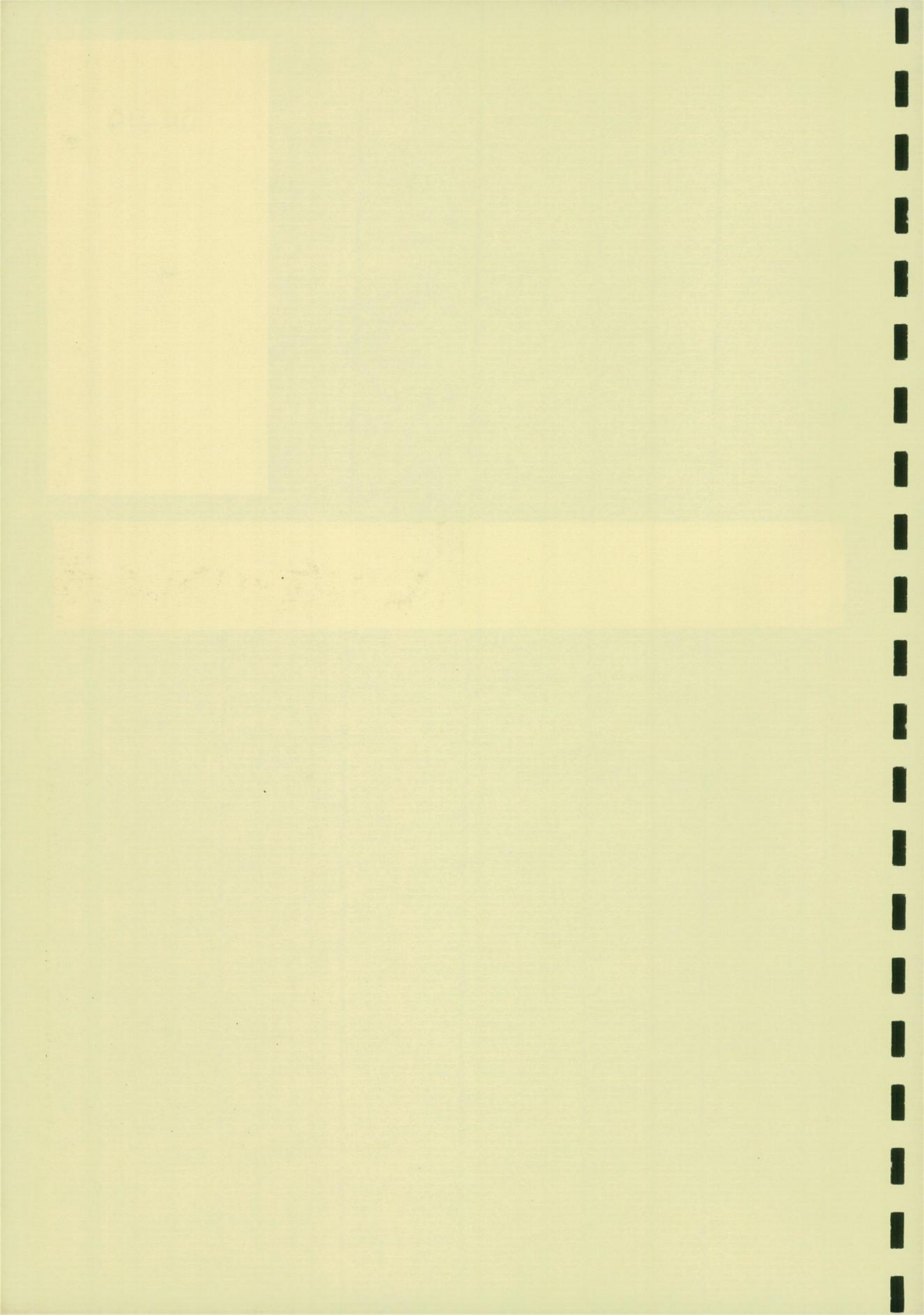




FIG 41 : The jewelled skull cap from Mata Hari (1931) designed by Adrian.



FIG 42 : Adrian's panama hat for Garbo.

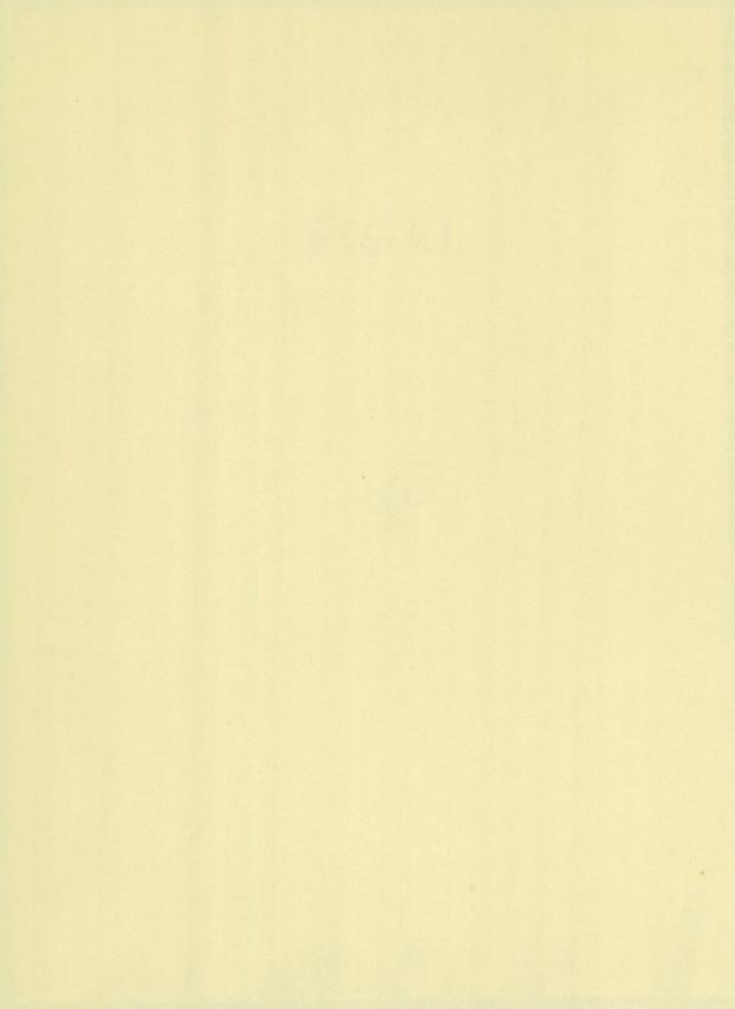
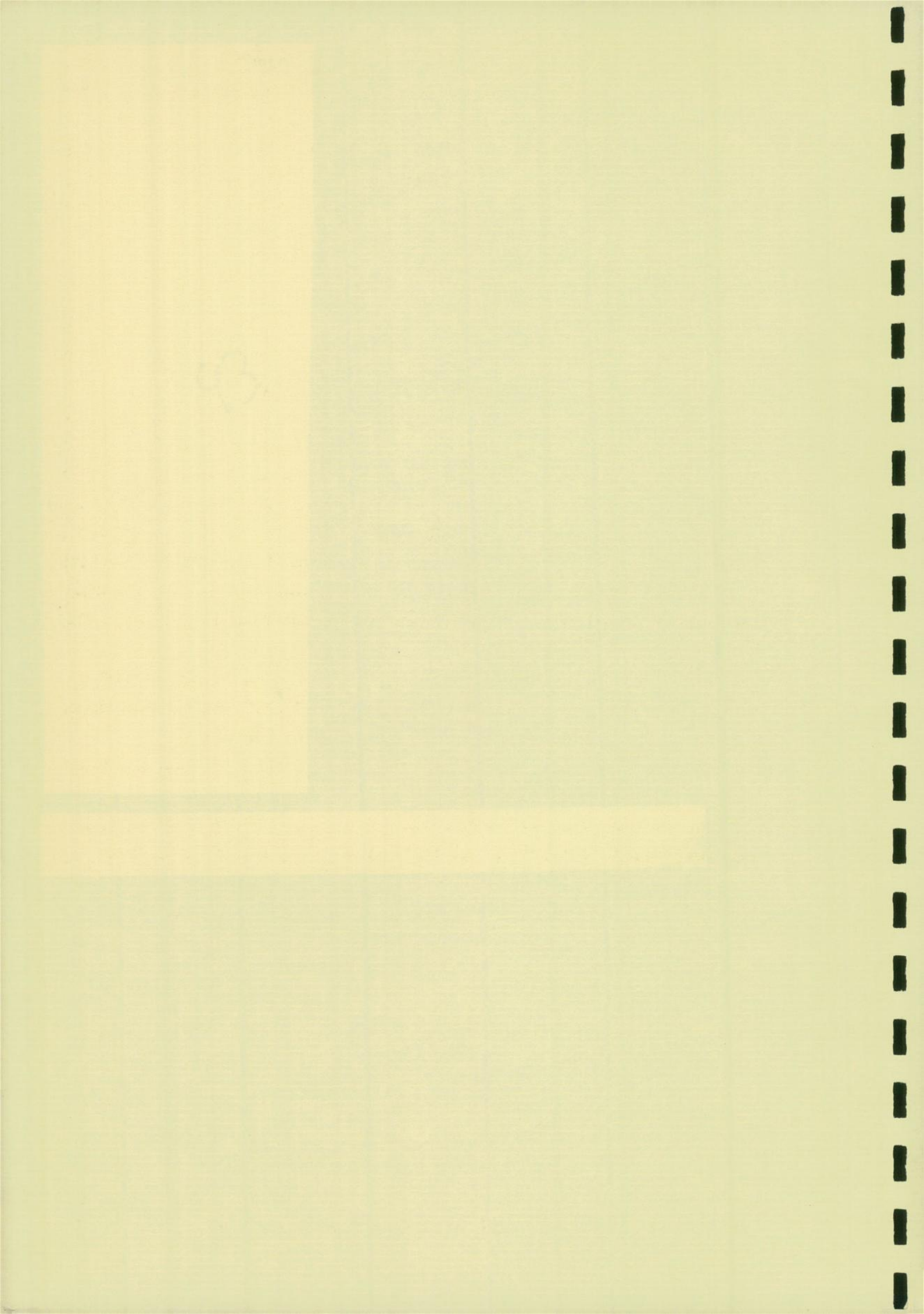




FIG 43 : Garbo designed this hat herself for Ninotchka (1938)



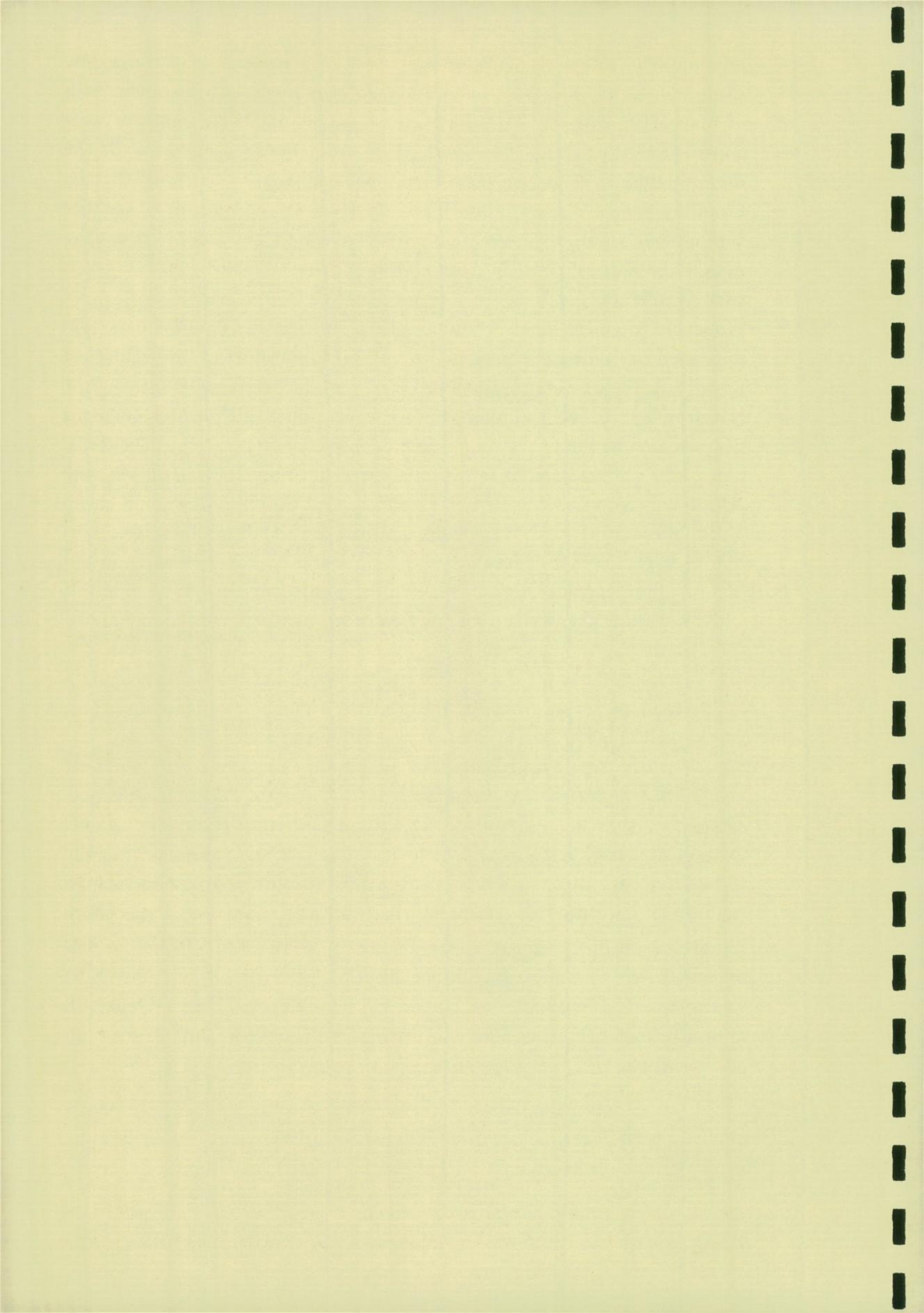
adapted from the screen to the street. Adrian's designs were constantly used as a source of design inspiration. He was lucky to have spent most of his career with M.G.M which meant no limits where budgets were concerned .During his time with the studio he dressed some of the most glamorous actresses of the period ;Joan Crawford, Norma Shearer, Greta Garbo and Jean Harlow. Of course none of the sophisticated outfits he created would have had any import if it were not for the natural charisma and charm of these women.

GRETA GARBO.

Probably the most idolised woman of the thirties was Greta Garbo. She appeared in a number of historical pictures during the Thirties: Romance(1930) , Mata Hari(1931) ,Queen Christina(1933) , Anna Karenna(1935) and Camille (1936).The costumes Adrian designed for her were responsible for many commercial spinoffs . If we take these films and study them in terms of their retail appeal we can see why Adrian was so successful. He never ever dressed Garbo in any thing cheap . The fabrics were always exclusive and the jewels were more often than not real.The period costumes Adrian designed for her were often historically incorrect neither were his contemporary outfits compatible with prevailing trends , yet they were always very 'becoming'on the screen.

Adrian took a lot of chances ;for example ,when designing for Romance he decided to revive interest in the 1920's cloche by designing it in velvet and ostrich feathers,worn over the right eye (see fig40). He named it the Empress Eugenie hat. Anything Garbo wore on her head was copied and was usually known as a Garbo.She is probably best remembered for her role as the World War spy Mata Hari. The jeweled skull cap (see fig 41) introduced in the film and the Empress Eugenie hat were both copied in a wide price range and influenced how women wore their hats for the rest of the decade .Also copied was the white panama hat from Camille (see fig 42) and the hat Garbo herself designed for Ninotolia (1939)(See fig 43). For years after Mata Hari was released , the double-breasted broad shouldered sable coat was still a royalty free bestseller.Macy's, Gimbels and Saks on fifth Avenue all carried copies and accessories inspired by Adrian's designs.³²

In Queen Christina, Garbo wore a stiff white linen collar, almost Puritanical in style, framing her face . This style of collar became a major fashion accessory during the mid thirties , adaptations were sold in various price ranges from \$15 to \$35 in Macy's Cinema shop.Patterns also appeared in Modern Screen Magazine Pattern Book.



From the same film design details such as cantridge pleating velvet doublets and leather Gerkins were all adapted for retail purposes and enjoyed enormous popularity. Garbo possessed a great sense of style. If she liked an outfit she could wear it with such an air of authenticity and unselfconsciousness that the film was bound to be a success. This suggests that the success of a film was based on the ability of the actresses to carry off an outfit, indeed if this was the case every film Garbo starred in would have been a box office sellout, and most of them were.

Both Garbo and Adrian left Hollywood in the early Forties after he was asked to design a more phlebian wardrobe for the actress in Two Faced Woman. Adrian stated 'When the glamour ends for Hollywood it ends for me,'³³ Garbo's reasons were more complex 'I actually went on filming longer than I intended, I really wanted to live another life.'³⁴

GONE WITH THE WIND(1939)

So far my argument is that period films made during the Thirties had a major impact on the world of commercial fashion. To reinforce this point I will discuss two historical films which were very successful in this context,

When Gone with the Wind was released in 1939, it's costumes were the source of great excitement in the world of fashion. Lillian Churchill, writing in the New YorkTimes commented;

GONE WITH THE WIND IS CREATING A MAGNIFICENT SPLASH IN THE CINEMA SEA AND AS AN INFLUENCE ON WOMEN'S FASHION IT HAS CREATED A GREAT STIR IN THE POOL OF FASHION .³⁵

Walter Plunkett, the film costume designer had worked on many period dramas and was aware of the workings of the system. He foresaw the the welcome return to the lace ruffles, applique, ribbons and braid which he had used liberally in the film. His predictions were correct ;the success of the film saw a blitz of commercial spinoffs unequalled in the history of period film publicity tie-ins. Everything and anything was promoted as being inspired by the film, brassieres, corsets, hats, veils, scarves, girdles and jewelery were all marketed as having the 'Scarlett O'Hara look. Which was basically crinolines and lace worn with child like innocence. The extraordinary thing was that most of the merchandise bore little or no resemblance to the originals in the film. Any dress that had a green satin ribbon or a ruffle of lace was promoted as being the Scarlett O'Hara barbeque dress (see fig 29). This particular dress with it's tight waist and flocked organza skirts is credited as being one of the most copied dresses of the decade along with Wallis

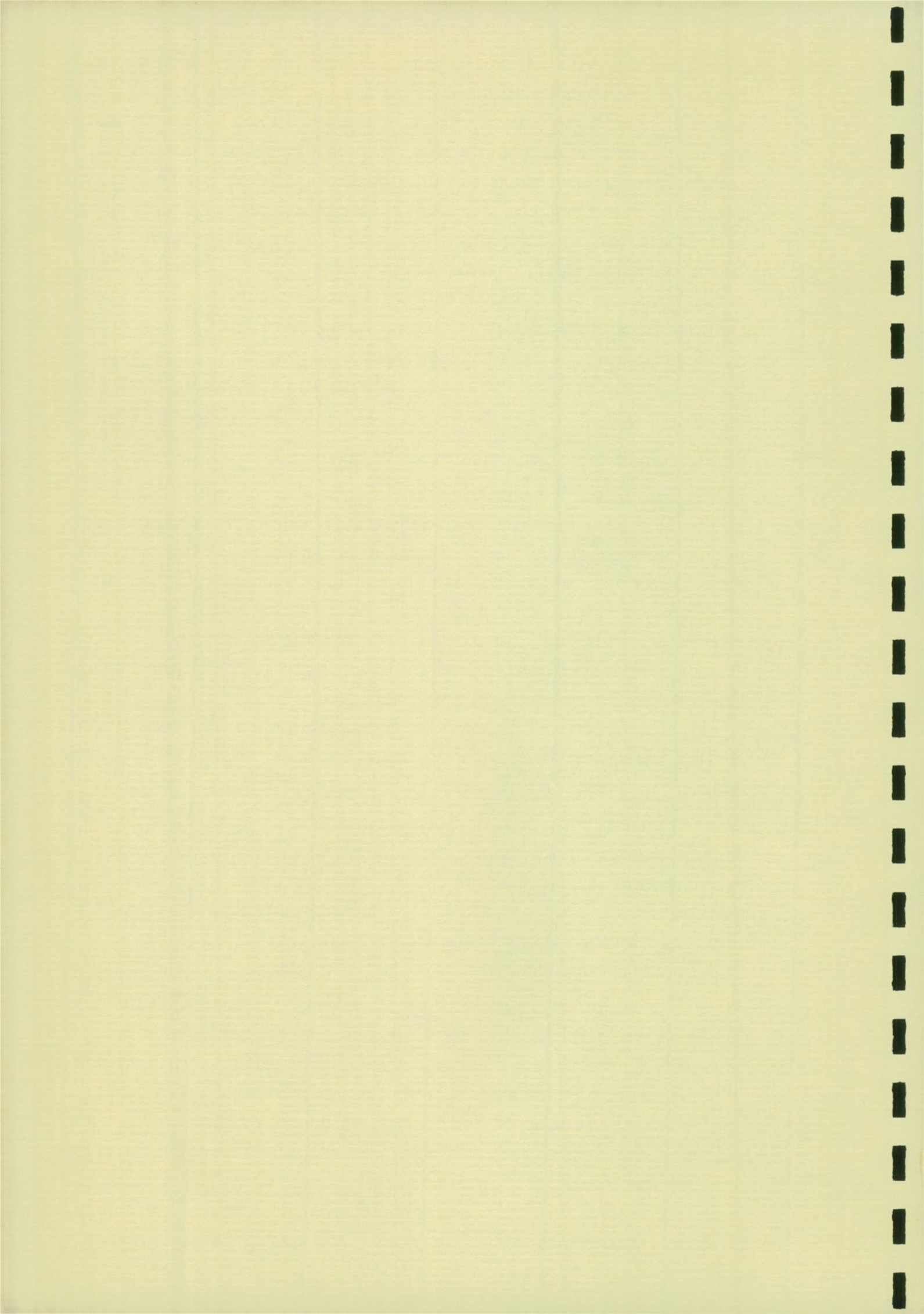




FIG 44 : This style became popular after Vivian Leigh's wedding dress featured in Gone With the Wind.

Chapter 3

FIGURE



FIG 45 : Charles Worth adapted the silhouette in 1942.

F18-45



FIG 46 : Balenciaga brought the silhouette to it's extreme.

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FIG 47 :Walter Plunket's hugely successful costumes for 'Mary Of Scotland'

710-47-



FIG 48 :Gold thistles. . . Each one was hand crafted especially for the outfit.

98

[Faint horizontal text or markings]



Simpsons' Mainbocher wedding dress. It was manufactured in a wide variety of fabrics and styles, in rayon, seersucker and cotton. Many of the copies used only a tenth of the fabric used in the original.

The wedding gown Scarlett wears in an early scene from the film (see fig 32) was very influential in changing the style of wedding dresses for approx the next ten years. Most 1930's wedding dresses were bias cut, crepe back satin which clung to every inch of the figure. The dress in the film was quite a contrast with a nipped in waist, puffed sleeves and the essential petticoats under yards of fabric. The influence of the dress during the next ten years was totally unexpected, waists were nipped in still further, petticoats were worn over crinolines and some designs even had additional panniers and bustiers. 36

The dress was on the screen for only a couple of minutes yet it had an enormous impact on bridal fashions in the following years. The style can be seen in an edition of Vogue's October Pattern Book for 1940 (see fig 44). The Silhouette is directly influenced by Scarlett O'Hara's dress, but has been restyled for commercial practicality i.e. economising on fabric quantity. The Parisien couturiers were also influenced; Charles Worth designed a wedding dress around the same silhouette in 1942 (see fig 46). + 45.

MARY OF SCOTLAND.(1936)

In 1936 a few years prior to the sensation Gone with the Wind caused, Mary of Scotland starring Katherine Hepburn caused fashion headlines with an elaborate array of Elizabethan costumes by Walter Plunkett. His ability to design sophisticated period costumes is reflected here just as it did three years later in Gone with the Wind. The costumes were very elegant and stylish, as the ill fated Queen, Hepburn wore heavy velvet gowns with tartan cloaks, expertly proportioned ruffs and berets with feathers and jewels. (see fig 47) No expense was spared. One of Hepburn's outfits consisted of a lipstick red Lyons velvet gown with authentic gold plated thistles. Each piece was made to order by 'Joseph' a well established American jeweller of the time. (see fig 48). There were very little design alterations made to the styles of the period. It is a perfect example of a b/w costume being executed to the highest degree. To this day his costumes are considered some of the most elegant and finest made in Hollywood.

The success of the film sparked off trends in every area of women's retail clothing, the consistent use of velvet in the film sparked a trend for fuchsia, midnight blue and plum coloured evening gowns with





FIG 49 :The Elizabethan sleeve sparked many spin-offs

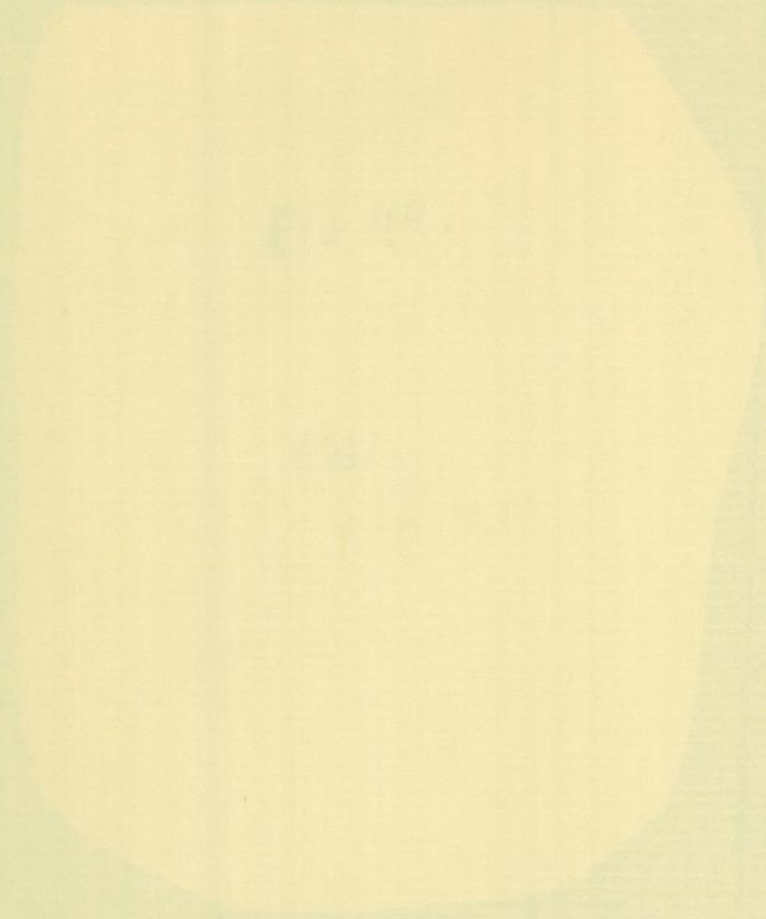




FIG 50 :Walter Plunket introduced the notion of a 'feather in one's hat' in 'Mary Of Scotland', (1936)

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Small rectangular area of discoloration or ghosting in the lower middle section.

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FIG 51 :Feathers appeared everywhere after 'Mary Of Scotland', (1936)

1851

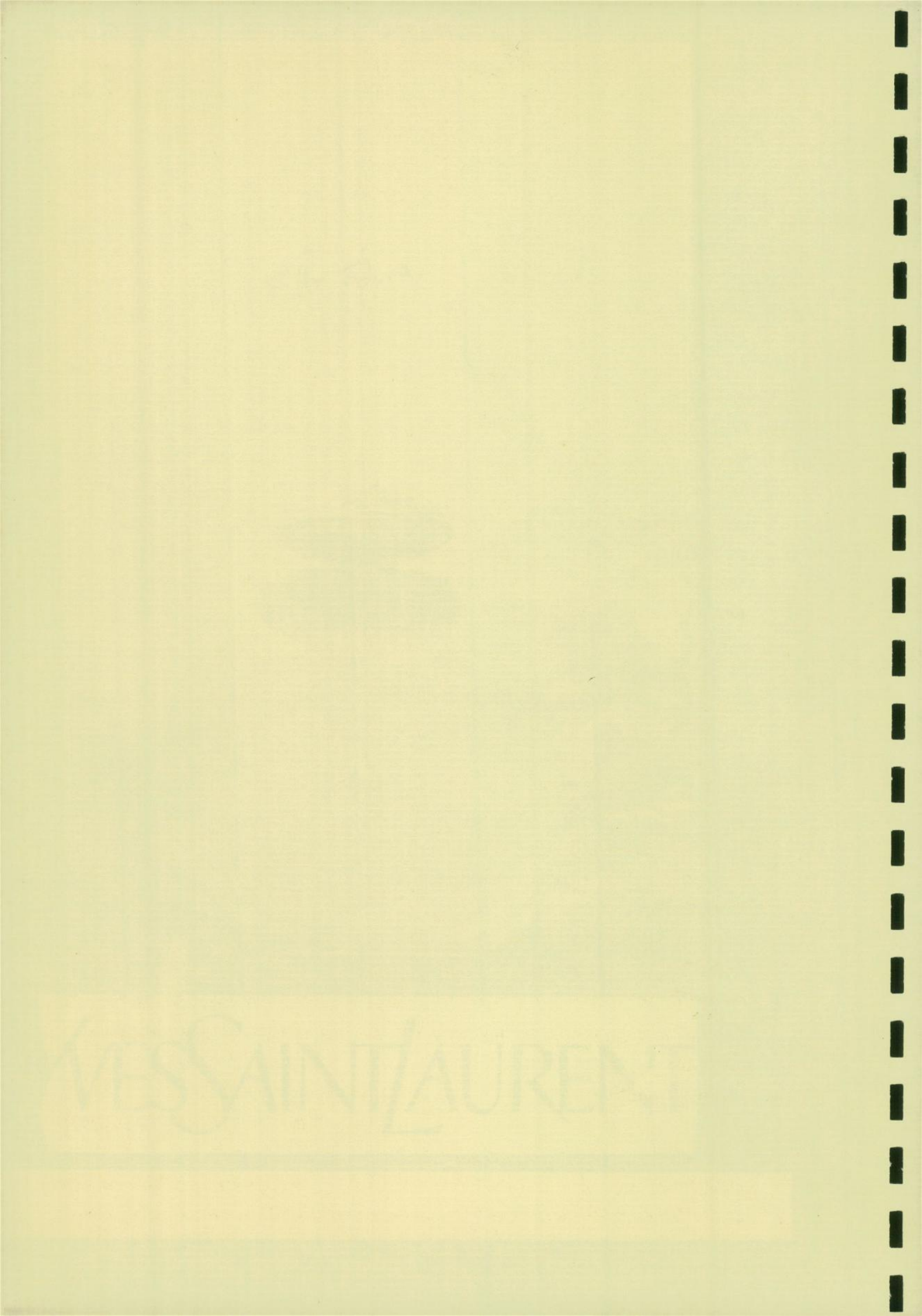
1851

1851



YVES SAINT LAURENT

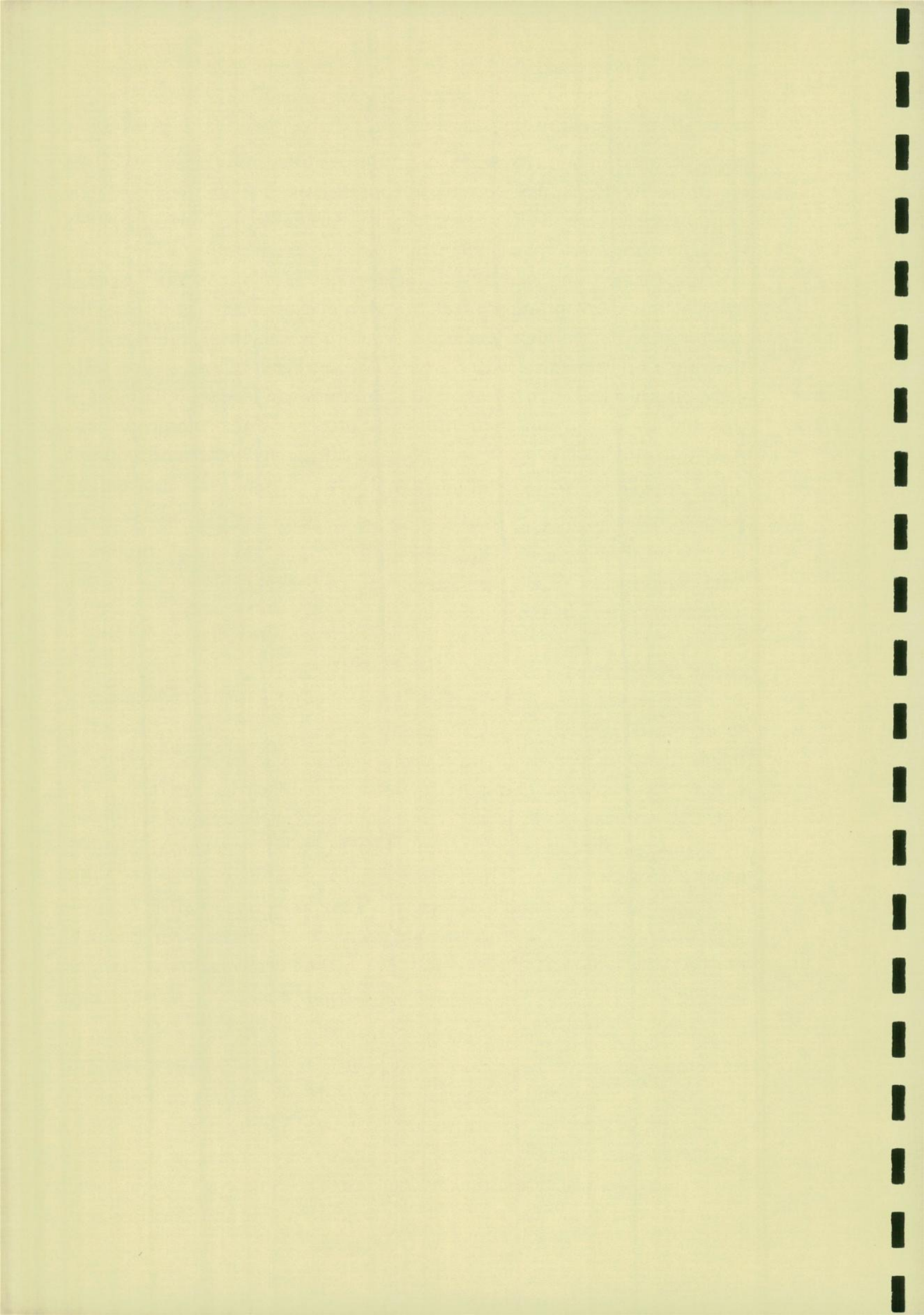
FIG 52 a & b :Yves Saint Laurent featured the highland look in his autumn/winter collection



matching cloaks. Photoplay (the worlds leading movie picture magazine) forecasted a trend for the coming season in 'scarlet suede gloves, gold buckled scarlet satin slippers and gold filigree rosaries .'37 complete with instructions on how to incorporate them into one's existing wardrobe. White ruffles became an important item on the necks and cuffs of sleeves as did tiny seed pearls. This influence was applied to black day dresses in particular .The Elizabethan style puffed sleeve also sparked a new trend (see fig 49). Incidentally ,Plunkett wisely agreed to oversee the retail production of the spinoff garments . Probably the most widely copied elements of the costumes was the headwear .In a hunting scene Hepburn wears a beret low on her forehead with a large eagles feather protruding from it at a jaunty angle (see fig 50).Copies of this hat were sold in their hundreds at every angle of the market, turkey feathers were stuck in trilbys , cloches, pillboxes and panama hats and sold as cheap imitations(see fig 51).38. Schoolchildren bought them in Woolworths and they became uniform dressing for everyone for a while.As a fashion influence Mary of Scotland has stood the test of time .Even in the 1990's designers continue to use it for it's distinction and elegance.(see figs 52a & 52b).

PARIS V HOLLYWOOD.

Creating strong fashion influences is never easy .It requires a designer to be in the right place at the right time, plus a certain amount of talent.Costume designers have been responsible for unintentionally setting trends .Hence one may wonder why the Parisien couturier were not drawn to the glamour and relative security of Hollywood to further their successes if not establish it. As I said in my first chapter,designing for the catwalk and designing for the screen are very different so the transition is rarely smooth. A perfect example of this is Coco Chanel, who in 1930,after a chance meeting with Samuel Goldwyn (head of M.G.M.) was lured to Hollywood to act as a chief designer to the stars on and off the screen for the sum of one million dollars39. At this stage Chanel was already a major success story both on the continent and in the States so she did not necessarily need the extra business. She is credited as being the first designer to create clothes which don't inhibit the wearers movement, classic casual dressing which has stood the test of time.She accepted the the job offer as a challenge and a new experience - on which she thrived .According to Goldwyn . 'Women will go to the cinema for two reasons ,one to see the film and the stars ,two



to see what is the latest thing in fashion.'⁴⁰ He was a shrewd man and saw in Chanel a means of enlarging his audience. After all it was the Depression and he was prepared to go to any lengths to keep his studio from losing money. Chanel went on to dress Mary Pickford, Gloria Swanson and Greta Garbo all in the same Chanel style. It couldn't and didn't work, the scheme was a failure. Chanel only designed for three films Tonight or Never (1931), Palmy Days (1931), and The Greeks Have a Name for It (1932). The costumes she designed would have been a great success for her retail stock, but on the stars they were dowdy and plain especially in comparison to Adrian's glamorous, larger than life, indeed sometimes gaudy designs. Chanel made the mistake seeing the stars as bodies to be dressed, whereas Adrian saw them as individuals with their own star characteristics. In any case, simplicity and understatement do not thrive in Hollywood. Chanel, the eternal optimist was undeterred, during her stay in Hollywood she studied the American fashion scene and social mores with a view to broadening her own business ventures. She may not have succeeded in dressing the stars for the screen but made loyal friends of Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo.

In my first chapter I discussed the enormous impact cinema had on a society during the Thirties, both psychologically and in terms of its relevance to fashion. Film no longer influences fashion to the extent it did sixty years ago. Very few period films become major box office sellouts nowadays, and if they do it is rarely the costumes which are the attractions. For example Dangerous Liaisons (1987) starring John Malkovich and Glenn Close became famous more for its steamy seduction scenes than its very ornate costumes. Its impact on fashion is an area for discussion; many would claim it inspired designer Vivienne Westwood's collections for the following years, which featured corsets and Boucher inspired prints and petticoats. However her interpretations did not filter through to high street fashion so its influence was minimal. It could be argued that Universal Studios most successful film of the eighties Out of Africa (1985) starring Meryl Streep and Robert Redford, was responsible for introducing the Safari look and to a certain extent it did increase the popularity of white baggy shirts, khaki shorts and straw hats. But its commercial success was far less than an equally successful film of the thirties. Society of the Eighties has much more self assertiveness than that of the Thirties and there were a lot more influences on fashion than previously, such as Surrealism, after a Schiaparelli exhibition in the Musee de la Moda et



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FIG 53 :Laura Dern wears a 1990's inspired dress in the film 'Rambling Rose', (1991), set in the 1930's

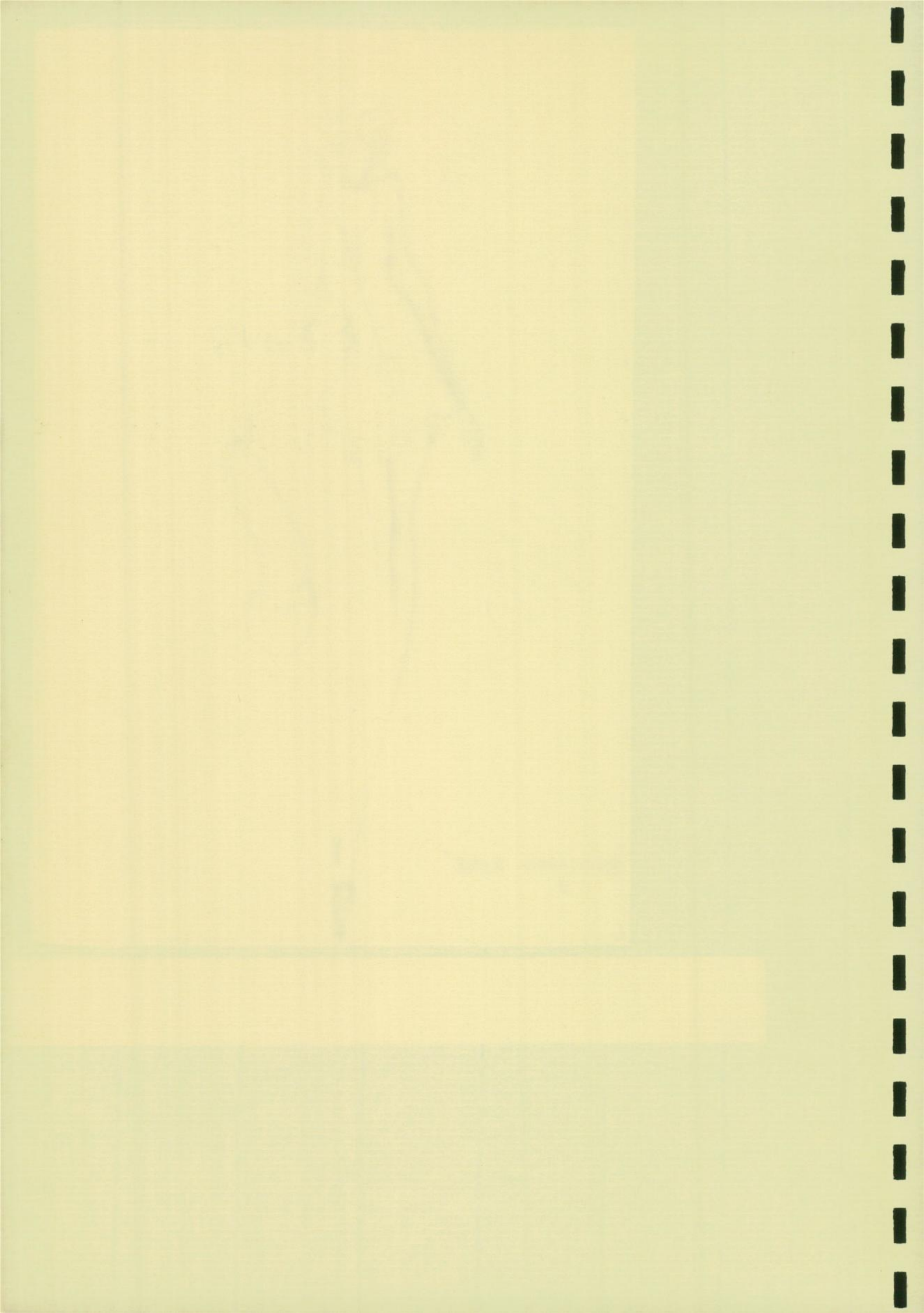




FIG 54 :The Decorative work on the bust of the dress bears a strong resemblance to the 1990 style of dress, (see FIG 57)

File 54

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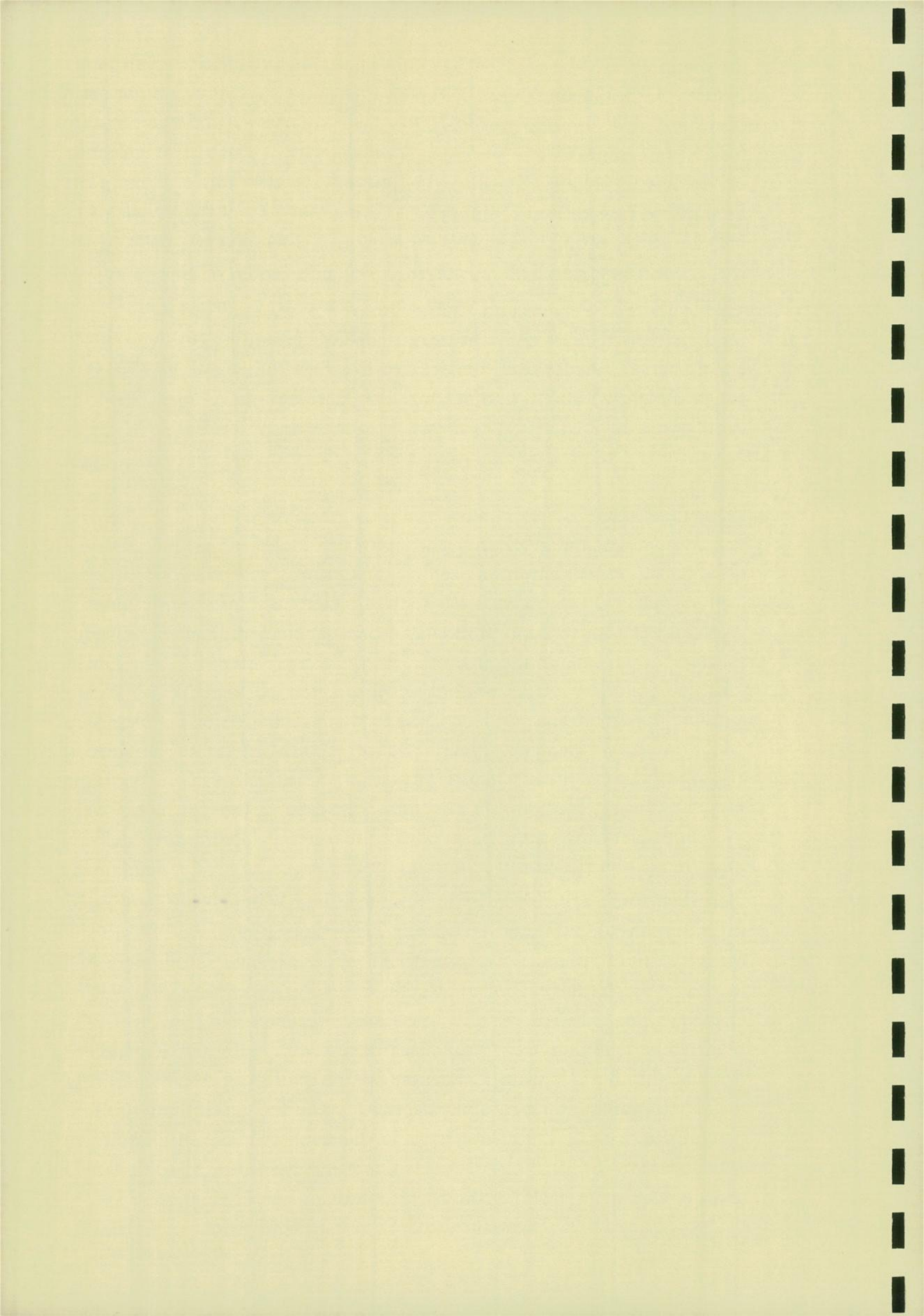


FIG 55, 56 & 57 :Is it a coincidence this style of short, body conscious style dressing has crept into the film?

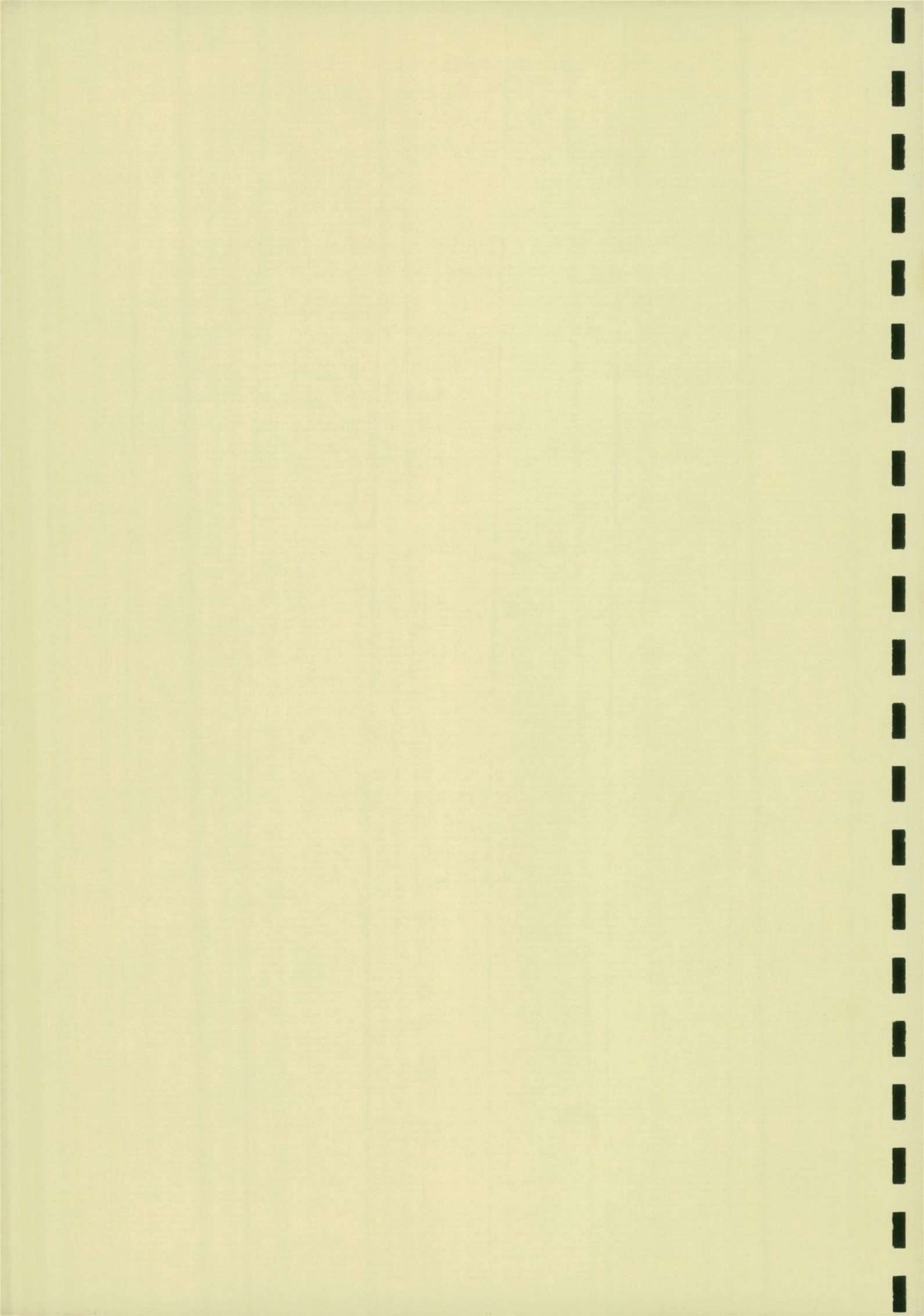
du Costume in Paris in 1984. The 'high powered business woman look' inspired by the soap operas of the Eighties was also very popular and sparked a revival of interest in 1940's style shoulder pads. The bondage look has been around for years and will not go away, is this a reflection on society? Perhaps. Despite the success of the above films, the attendance numbers in comparison to a popular film of the Thirties was low. In 1939, 65 million people went to the cinema every week in the U.S.A. In 1985, 20 million.⁴¹ Hence the film would not have had the same impact. In my second chapter I have discussed two period films made in the Thirties and the historical interpretation of each. In my conclusion I would like to make reference to a film made in 1991 but set in the early 1930's and see just how designers have interpreted the era.

CONCLUSION.

It is important to keep in mind that the work of a film costume designer is very much influenced by the era in which he is born into. As we have seen, this is particularly true of historical films. The designer is so blinded by surrounding influences that he sees only what he wants to see, not historically proven fact. So skirts often become longer, shorter, wider, tighter etc. The final design bearing a strong resemblance to existing social mores. This is also true in the 1990's, when costume designers today feel they have a certain amount of artistic licence at their disposal; an example of this is the film Rambling Rose (1991) starring Laura Dern and Dian Ladd, and set in the deep south in the 1930's. Both Dern and Ladd have very confronting styles of dress. Laura Dern plays the title role of Rosebud, a very shy, emotionally disturbed but attractive girl who is adopted by a well-to-do family. The intention is to help her come out of herself, reject her inferiority complex and develop as a young woman. This may all sound like a film review but it is essential to know when studying Rosebud's costumes. She plays a very promiscuous character and her costumes reflect this, the only element of Thirties dressing is the bias-cut, flimsy dresses she wears. However they are far too short and are very skimpy to be acceptable interpretations (see fig 53). The focus of attention on her breasts (see fig 54) also give away the film's origins. Although Dern plays a very sexy character, I feel it was unnecessary to costume her in what is very definitely a 1990's inspired dress (see figs 5⁵ & 5⁶).⁵⁷ On the other hand, Rosebud's foster mother (Dian Ladd) wears outfits



that very much echo the 1930's feel for dress-midriff length dresses, cowl necklines ,softly tailored jackets and scarves .This seems to be a trend in historical pictures ;The leading stars are quite often wearing incorrect reproductions while the rest of the cast are historically correct in their attire . It brings us back to the point that the designer feels he has to recreate outfits which will be acceptable to a contemporary audience .What is elegant in dress varies dramatically from one period to another and we in the 1990's have our standards too....'Short dresses and coats are chiming well with milky lengths of leg and naked limbs as smooth as honey'.⁴² The costume designer for Rambling Rose obviously had this in mind when designing for Rosebud. While doing this thesis I have discovered just how dependant film has been on fashion ,and fashion on film , maybe not so much now but certainly during the thirties - The Golden Era of Film.



FOOTNOTES

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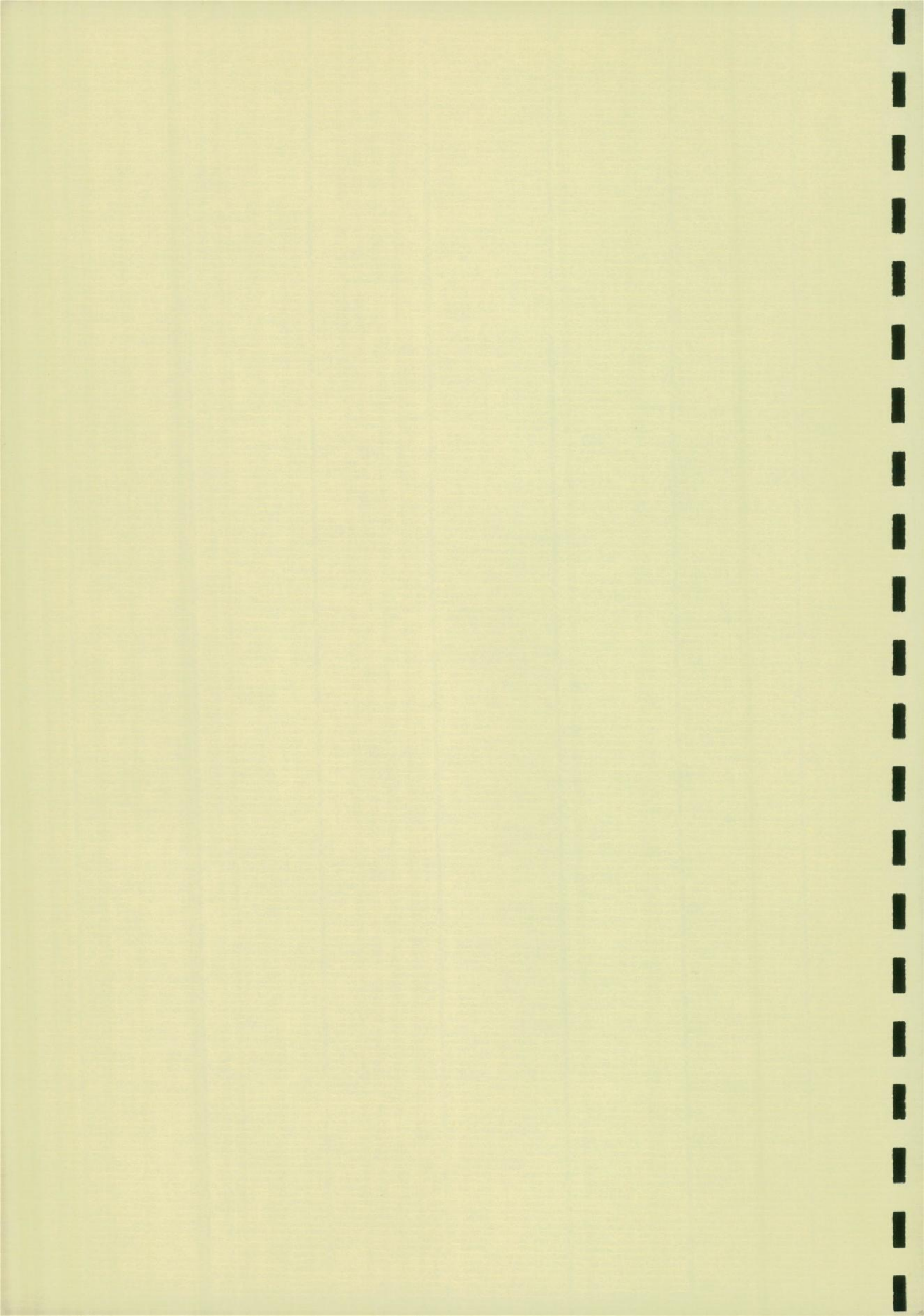
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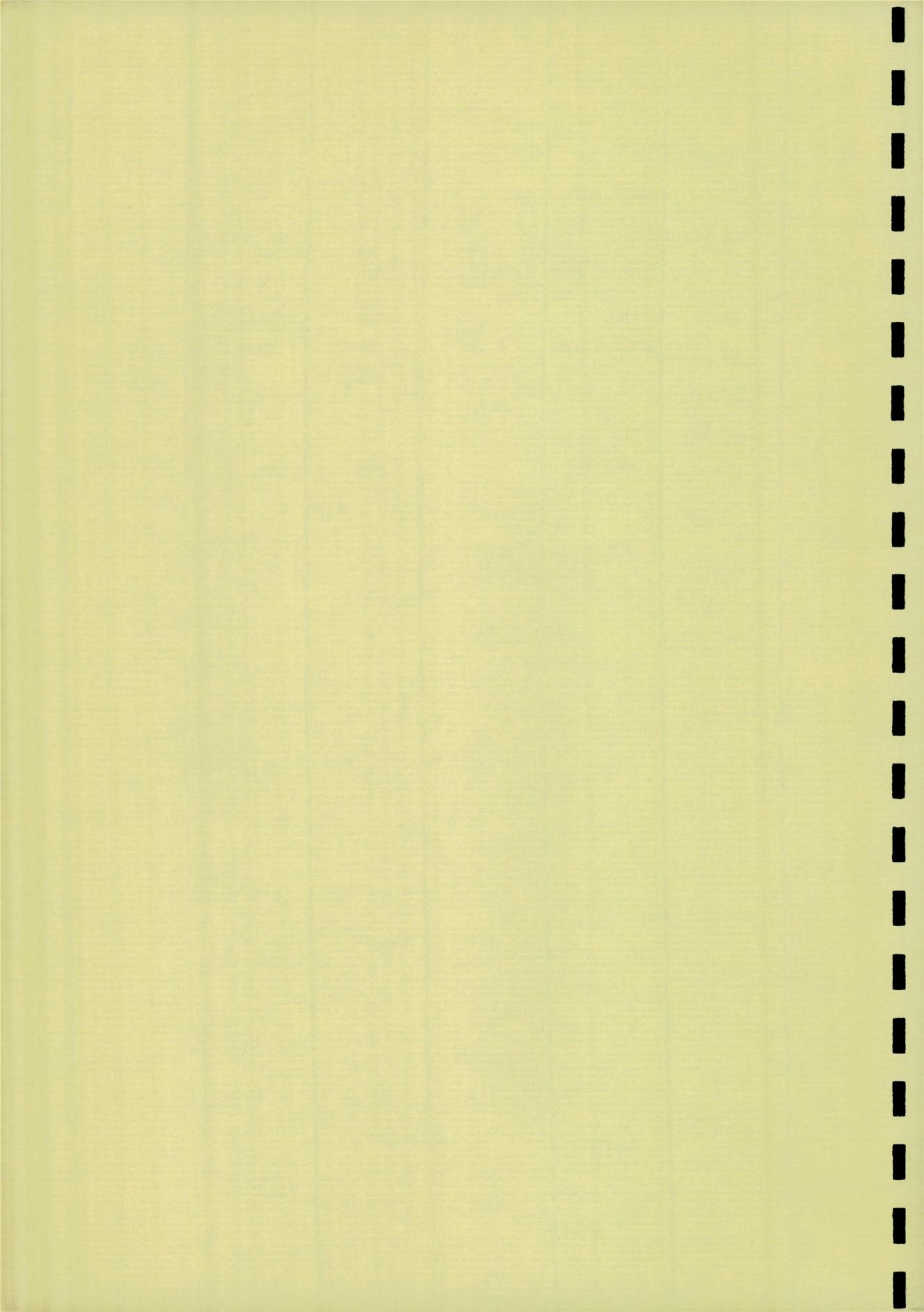
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SECTION 3.

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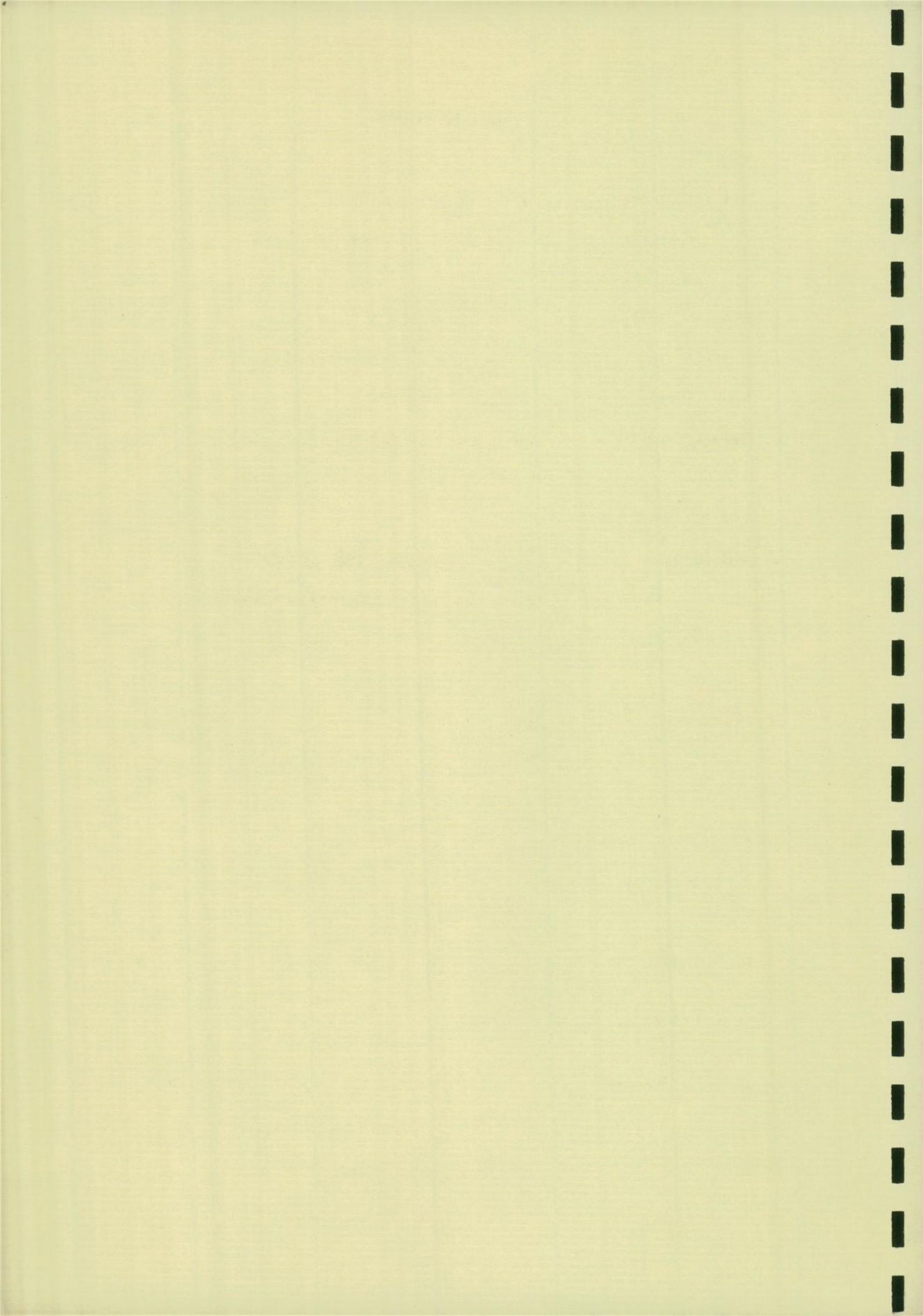
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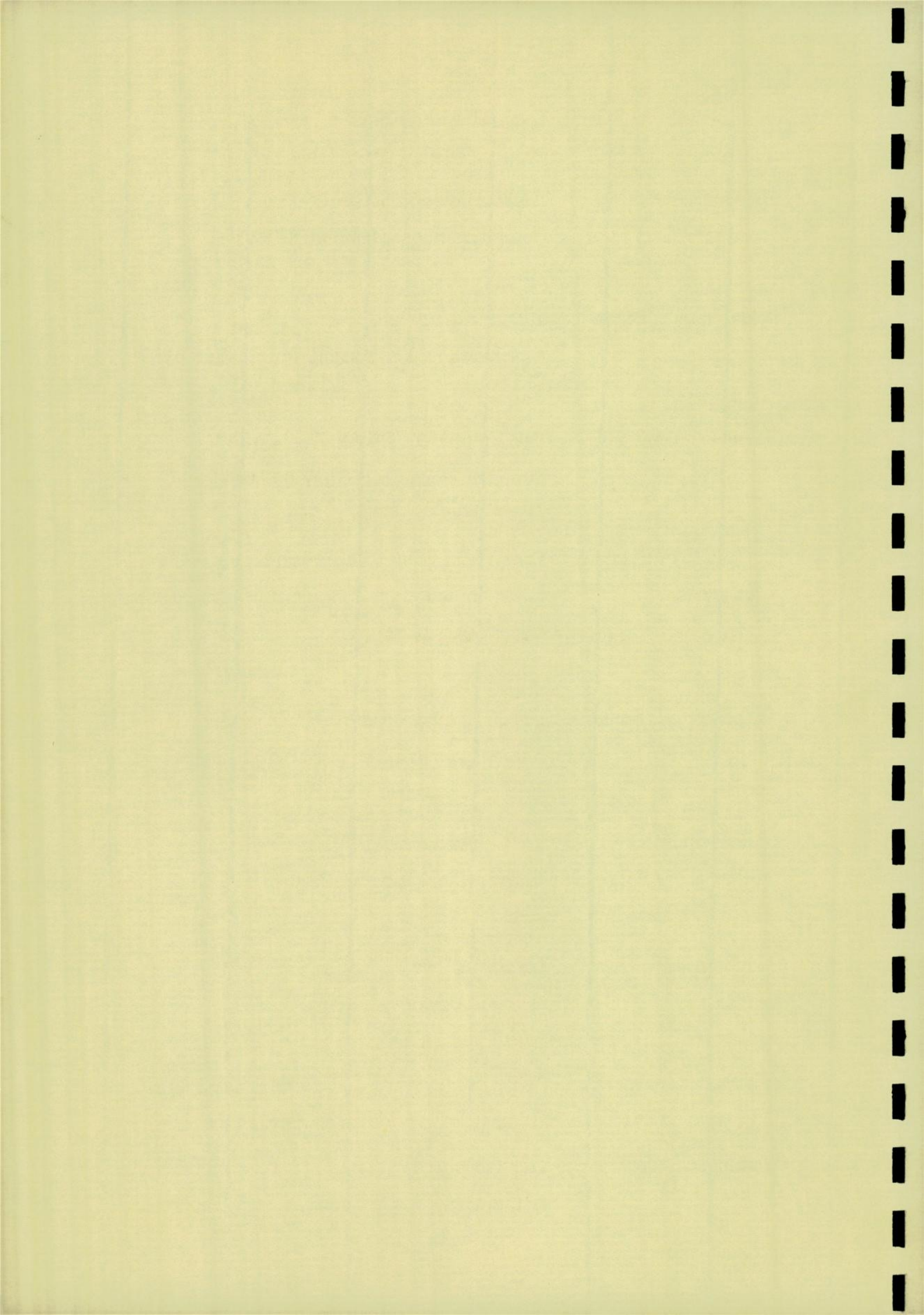
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