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PARIS, HOLLYWOOD AND KAY KENDALL

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The Constant Husband (GB, Gilliat, 1955) was in many ways a watershed film for the British star, Kay Kendall. Filming took place in the spring and early summer of 1954, when Genevieve (GB, Cornelius, 1953) and Doctor in the House (GB, Thomas, 1954), hugely popular British comedies, had already brought her to the attention of the public and the critics. Although there had been problems before over suitable parts for her, it was the last film she made before the very public falling out with Rank Organisation in December 1954 when she was suspended from her contract for turning down a number of proffered parts, including the second Doctor film (Daily Herald, 22 December 1954). It was also the film on which she met and fell in love with her future husband, Rex Harrison, who was already a major star. But The Constant Husband is also significant from the point of view of image and fashion, the aspects of Kay Kendall's later career which are the subject of this essay. It was in this film that elements of Kendall's individual style most clearly seem to be shaping her costumes; it is perhaps not an accident that the costume designer Anna Duse was someone who knew Kendall in her childhood and had taught her dancing (Golden, p.15). The turned-up collar, the pushed-up sleeves, the heavy jewelry, the vivid colours, all seemed to be the culmination of touches which had marked earlier, smaller parts in black and white films such as Lady Godiva Rides Again (GB, Launder, 1951), on which Anna Duse had also worked, as well as the two colourful comedies. Kendall's next role as a theatre star who moves into television in Simon and Laura (GB,

Box, 1955) gave the opportunity for glamorous dresses (the responsibility of Rank's leading costume designer, Julie Harris). After that, Kendall's clothes, on and off the screen, would mainly be in the hands of the Hollywood studio, MGM, and Paris fashion houses such as Balmain and Givenchy.

I do not want to argue that Kendall's style took the wrong turn when she moved out of the British star system nor that the big battalions suppressed her own individuality. As we shall see, the change suited her in more ways than one and it is of course hard to see how things would have turned out for her had it not been for her early death in September 1959. But in this essay I want to look at the way in which fashion and style helped to create her image in this later part of her career. I have argued elsewhere that, in the male-dominated British cinema of the mid-fifties, Kendall was significant for presenting the possibility of an independent, stylish heroine of the 'new look'. In these comedies of the companionate marriage, she used clothes and fashion to personify not the fifties housewife and mother but the modern woman who made her own money and knew her own mind (Geraghty, 2000). With the move to Hollywood and the entry into the heights of celebrity which the liaison with Harrison brought, a different approach developed. This essay examines this shift in two different areas - in the biographical material in the press and elsewhere which commented on her use of fashion (1) and in an examination of two of the films she made with MGM, Les Girls (US, Cukor, 1957) and The Reluctant Debutante (US, Minnelli, 1958).

It is important to note that Kendall's body was not that of the ideal fifties film star, if we take Bardot and Monroe as typical pin-ups of the period. Kendall

turned down parts in Value for Money (GB, 1955) and As Long as They're Happy (GB, 1955) and felt justified when they were played by a completely different type, Diana Dors. Her height and slimness made her look more like a catwalk model than a film star. Indeed, after the disastrous London Town (GB, Ruggles, 1946), Kendall, according to her biographer, 'applied for and got many modeling jobs in the late 1940s. Photos show her to be the height of New Look elegance in off-the-shoulder gowns, full, sweeping skirts, peasant blouses and dirndls' (Golden, p.39) and it was at this stage also that she had her hair cut into a distinctive short style that worked with the clothes. The discrepancy between her own appearance and that of the classic film star was drawn attention to by Kendall herself who publicly expressed dissatisfaction with her looks and her body. In a number of interviews in the late 50s, she told a tale of the late 40s when, she claimed, a Rank executive told her ' "You are too tall and you photograph horribly" ' (American Weekly, 5 January 1958; Lewin, 1957?). Height was consistently an issue for her. "I have legs like a kangaroo" she told another US reporter during the making of Les Girls, adding that ' "I'm the same height as Gene Kelly without heels so I guess he'll have to stand on a box" ' (Hollywood Citizen-News, 2 February 1957). For a fifties film star in Hollywood, less than substantial breasts were also a problem; the New York Times Magazine reported her measuring herself up against contemporary icons and complaining ' "I feel so vitriolic about ladies with enormous bosoms . . . They give anyone who is my height and slightly flat-chested a bad name" ' (15 September 1957). As late as the summer of 1959, she was quoted in Life magazine as complaining that ' "my

feet are too big, my bosom is too small. I have huge hips and an enormous bottom. . . . I look like a female impersonator - or rather an angular horse" ' (quoted in Golden, p.147).

There were a number of ways of dealing with this body and turning into an element that worked with rather than against her star image. One was to use its contradictory elements productively. Thus, Picturegoer headlined a major feature on her as 'Two Takes on Kay Kendall'. Ostensibly, the two takes were by her father and grandmother who both contributed articles but the contradictory elements were immediately foregrounded in her father's piece, headlined 'Oh What a Spitfire', which began

Tall and elegant - a big star in films. That's how picturegoers know her. But I've known another Kay Kendall - a thin, little, live-wire, always getting into scrapes. An angel one minute and a minx the next. A tomboy you wanted to smack one moment and love a few seconds later. (10, December 1955)

This re-working of Kendall's physical awkwardness (the article is full of stories of her physical scrapes and accidents) into the characterisation of her as a tomboy supported stories of her as a rebel against the establishment, inside and outside the film industry. As her status grew, however, the emphasis on height and physical risk-taking transmutes into an appreciation of her as a comedienne capable of using her body to comic effect. Thus, a review of Les Girls drew

attention to her unconventional presence by calling her 'a lanky beauty of thoroughbred features' but linked this to her skills as 'a comedienne who can be funny in the mere tilting of an eyebrow' (quoted in Golden, p.117). The clowning element, first given scope in the trumpet episode in Genevieve, was acknowledged in the response to her comic skills in Les Girls; the British trade paper Today's Cinema welcomed 'our own Kay Kendall, whose drunken haywire comedy may not please everyone but is richly hilarious' (5 November 1957).

But the other way of dealing with this problematic film star body was to recognise it as indeed the perfect body for a model. Press interviews and pictures thus dwell on Kendall's love of clothes, emphasising both her own personal style and the expensive designer clothes appropriate to an internationally known celebrity. On the one hand, Kendall apparently rejects the glamour of Hollywood starlet's 'extremely low cut dresses' in favour of simple 'tweeds or sweaters or skirts' (Los Angeles Times, 12 January 1958). But simplicity too could be glamorous when it was Humphrey Bogart giving the advice to stick to 'a simple sweater, skirt and flat shoes' (Golden, p.144). Anne Sharpley sought out the 'real Kay Kendall' and concluded that she had changed from being 'the one-time "one of the boys"'. Kendall was now a fully fledged star, going to lunch and the theatre with Vivian Leigh and 'Betty' Bacall and asking, disingenuously, "It's not wrong to wear a mink coat, is it?" (Evening Standard, 25 February 1959)

In many ways, designer clothes from Paris fashion houses solved the problem of her tomboy body and allowed her to combine simplicity with glamour.

On her return to London from the US, an interviewer reported that she was 'gay and vivid, in a Paris model coat with a silk lining' and praised her for managing to be glamorous in the controversial fashion item, the sack dress (Lewin, 1957?). A link was made between the clothes she wore in her MGM films and her off-screen appearance. At the gala performance in London for My Fair Lady in 1958, she wore a Balmain gown created for The Reluctant Debutante but gave it her own signature by dyeing the boa pink (Golden, p133). For her final film, Once More with Feeling (US, Donen, 1960), the Givenchy gowns were designed solely in black and white and Kendall drew a fashion lesson from them for her own style. In an interview with Hollywood Citizen-News, she commented on how her own style was affected by these film wardrobes: 'I was a little frightened of black and white at first, because I love colors. I rotate orange, yellow and navy blue through the seasons but this is such fun for a change' (16 June 1959).

One feature of the later years, however, is the way in which fashion seems to be used as a prop to deflect attention from how ill she was. Being as thin as a model could then be understood as the result of a diet, as Muriel Pavlow later recalled (Golden, p.144). Photos and reports of the clothes she wore in the last stages of her illness movingly suggest a defiant use of style to create an image that was the essence of simple chic. When she came out of the London clinic in June 1959 to finish shooting Once More with Feeling, she was 'in her black Givenchy dress and Cartier brooch' (Golden, p.146). So strong is this connection between Paris fashion and the cover-up of her illness that her friend, Dirk Bogarde recalled in a 1995 interview what she had worn on the last night that he

saw her in the spring of 1959: 'a white chiffon dress, a Balmain, with autumn leaves and orange and beige on it. Very, very simple with beautiful shoes and that great mane of hair' (Golden, p. 142). The accuracy of this description, which does not feature in Bogarde's autobiography, is less important than the image it conjures up of the wearing of a Balmain dress as an act of bravery as her body gave way (2).

Les Girls is a musical comedy, directed by George Cukor who had a reputation for working sympathetically with screen actresses. It centres on a trial for libel brought by Angele (Taina Elg) against Kendall's Lady Sybil Wren. It tells the stories of a trio of dancers - the third is Joy (Mitzi Gaynor) - who are working for and fall in love with Barry (Gene Kelly). Although the trial takes place in London, the three different versions of the story given at the trial are set in Europe, mainly in Paris which features in the elaborate set of the quarter in which Barry and the girls live. The film focuses on the lives of the three dancers but the narrative is resolved through the man; Barry's evidence to the court reveals elements of the story which the two women had not known and, by discreetly avoiding the question of his relationship with them, he restores the marriages they had made when the act broke up. The film was better received in the trade press than elsewhere. Hollywood Reporter called it the 'gayest, maddest, merriest, musical spin' (2 October 1957) while the British Today's Cinema, reporting on the film as the choice for the annual Royal Film Performance, suggested that it had 'unlimited scope for all the glitter, personality, dancing and prodigal production that Hollywood can provide' (5 November 1957). The film

was seen as a US breakthrough for Kendall with her drunk scene gaining particular praise in the Hollywood Reporter. The Motion Picture Herald described her as 'a British actress whose billing on this side of the water will have important meaning hereafter' (5 October 1957) while the British Kinomatograph Weekly exulted that Kendall had 'proved that she can not only hold her own with, but outstrip, leading American and Continental actresses' (7 November 1957). Kendall did indeed win a Golden Globe for this performance.

The British press book for the film emphasised the 'lavish wardrobe for Kay's debut' and 'Fashions for "Les Girls"'. The critical comment emphasised art direction and costumes as an integral part of its appeal as a musical. The Motion Picture Herald included these in its list of what had made the film 'a souffle of gaiety, wit, color, movement, song, dance, fashion, romance'. Hollywood Reporter felt that 'the gowns by Orry-Kelly seem to be both attractive and chic, a neat trick when you can manage it' while Kinematograph Weekly found the 'wardrobe breathtaking and [the] décor dazzling'.

The Hollywood costume designer, Australian Orry-Kelly, had shared an Academy Award for his work on An American in Paris and would win another for Les Girls. In the overall organisation of the women's wardrobe, there is a contrast between the clothes worn for public show (at the trial, in the performance numbers) and those worn when the trio is off stage. Over the three days of the trial, Angele and Sybil wear glamorous clothes which fit the older, richer selves they have become through marriage. They appear in dark colours (black, brown, dark red) with contrasting jewelry, often pearl necklaces and ear rings; they wear

distinctive hats with sweeping brims or high crowns and are swathed in furs. The dance costumes are also co-ordinated and are rich and dramatic. Despite Kendall's concerns about her inadequate body and the publicity photos in which she looks ill at ease in a skimpy costume, there is relatively little flesh on display in the film. In the first sequence, 'Les Girls', black, white and red predominate; initially, the trio appears in enveloping white coats with red lining, then in black, shoulderless, cocktail dresses split up the front to show off the legs which are also emphasised by red shoes. Only at the end are the three revealed in sparkling showgirl costumes though even then their figures are obscured by diaphanous, fur-trimmed stoles. In their second song, the comic 'Ladies in waiting', the three wear a parody of 17th century French dress with powdered wigs, white lace and hooped skirts which split at the back to reveal legs and bottom, topped with a blue bow. Complementing the stars throughout the theatre scenes are the chorus girls who provide a vivid background in black and white African-inspired outfits or the more traditional red, showgirl costumes.

For the off-stage scenes, the trio's clothes are similarly co-ordinated though in a less rigorous way. The clothes are less formal, often separates with fitted tops or jackets worn over casual skirts or trousers. Patterns worn by one actress re-appear on another; thus, Joy's black and white striped jacket is reprised in the dress which Angele wears for her romantic date on the punt with Barry. The palette generally tends to be lighter with softer colours predominating. Colours complement each other with one character, normally Joy, providing a splash of darker colour against the lighter tones of the other two. This situation is

reversed though in the final party in Paris when Angele and Sybil wear coordinated evening dresses in turquoise, blue and green while Joy, who has taken on the role of Barry's main (and final) love interest, wears a white gown, with a light blue underskirt and matching ribbon trim. Thus, the off-stage wardrobe of the three women indicates that they continue to work as a trio but in a looser way.

The costumes though also allow for individual touches which relate to who is telling the story at any one point. Thus, in Sybil's account, Angele is presented as a sexy, Continental type with saucy hats, tight-fitting dresses in black lace and tops which tend to slip off the shoulder. By contrast, when Angele tells the story her clothes become demure and provincial while the drunken Sybil parades around in her see-through nightdress, clutching bright red carnations. The same clothes can take on different meanings depending on narration. In Sybil's tale, Angele dons her dull gray and white dress and schoolgirl hat when she despairs of Barry's love and decides on suicide; in Angele's own version, the same outfit merely reflects her faithfulness to her fiance and the good nature which leads her to try and help Sybil.

A more consistent marker of difference though is nationality which is related to character. Angele's more flirtatious style indicates her French nationality. Sybil's clothes are generally in tones of beige, white and cream and she wears full, pleated skirts, leather belts and soft tops. Each of the women gets a separate number with Barry but it is significant that, while the other two perform either stage numbers or romantic duets, Kendall's turn is a comedy number,

'You're Just Too Too', in which she is dressed in a smart olive trouser suit with a green scarf at the high neck. In general, then, her style is a casual version of the tailored, respectable clothing suitable for the character's eventual marriage into the British aristocracy. Joy's clothes on the other hand reflect her US nationality. She wears more easygoing separates, a check shirt and red slacks or a camel hair coat for going to the market, and is often in trousers. In her smarter outfits, Gaynor displays a sleeker silhouette than Kendall with pencil skirts or a simple black dress which hugs her figure. An all-American fifties girl, Joy holds out for marriage and in the end gets the man. Although Les Girls is reasonably evenhanded in its treatment of the three women, Joy's wardrobe does indicate the practical commonsense and unproblematic sexiness which will lead to the final revelation of her as Barry's wife and the instigator of his courtroom intervention.

The film's wardrobe is thus constructed around two approaches which offer a model of how Kendall herself was served by Les Girls. On the one hand the costumes work to blend the three women into a single entity so that the girls fit into their surroundings and their musical numbers with ease and grace; on the other hand, the clothes have individual touches which serve to emphasise character and particularly nationality. The clothes were thus an important part of the way in which Kendall herself in Les Girls became part of the industry's design process, the 'prodigal production' which Today's Cinema associated with Hollywood, but also retained her individuality as a British female star.

The Reluctant Debutante was a less prestigious production than Les Girls although it was directed by one of Hollywood's most experienced and established directors, Victor Minnelli. Set in London, the film was shot in Paris from a script adapted from his own play by William Douglas Hume, a playwright who had been rather left behind by the upheavals taking place in the British theatre in the late fifties. The story is set firmly in the British class system. Once again, Kendall plays an upper-class society belle, Lady Shelia Broadbent, who in a fit of one-upmanship, decides to launch her American step-daughter, Jane (Sandra Dee), into London society. The film featured a husband and wife partnership between Kendall and Harrison as Jimmie Broadbent but also sets Kendall's character at odds with the commitment to love, regardless of class or money, represented by Dee's innocent yet down-to-earth teenager. Their quarrel is resolved when the 'unsuitable' suitor, David Parton, inherits an Italian title and is therefore rendered desirable on all counts.

The film's reviews emphasised both fashion and the star couple as strong elements of the film's appeal. Kinematograph Weekly felt that the film had 'a compelling feminine interest' and an 'irresistible women's angle' (11 December 1958). The film continued Kendall's success in establishing herself as a major star in the US. Variety pronounced that 'It's really Miss Kendall's picture and she grabs it with a single wink', maintaining that she had created 'one of the best female comedy turns in years' (6 August 1958) while The New York Times praised her as a 'super-slick comedienne' who makes 'small talk into a minor art as she voices it' (15 August 1958). As with Les Girls, fashion was part of the

appeal to the female audience with Variety suggesting that, 'topping everything, as far as the female patrons will be concerned, will be Pierre Balmain's wardrobe creations for Miss Kendall and the feathery frocks are sure to cause a stir.'

The credits indeed proclaimed that the wardrobe was by Pierre Balmain of Paris and the story give plenty of scope for the display of beautiful gowns, worn at the balls and dinners which are the relentless staple of the coming out process, as well as for a parade of more casual wear, suitable for gossiping over elegant breakfasts. The costumes, although they are often themselves elaborate, are placed in a more simple wardrobe design than that of Les Girls. The major contrast is between Lady Shelia's wardrobe and that of Jane whose costumes are credited to a different designer, MGM's Helen Rose. Jane's clothes are generally girlish and neat. She arrives at the airport in a gray suit, velvet collar and matching hat; her gowns are in the palest of pastels, with embroidered bodices and full, floating skirts. Such clothes emphasise Jane's youthfulness and virginity (which Lady Shelia is trying to defend) though they do little to suggest the modern teenager which the script also hints at.

Kendall's wardrobe, on the other hand, is successful in establishing the style and character of Lady Shelia. The clothes work as simple but glamorous statements of fashion and as comic props and thus pull together Kendall's star image of fashion plate and comedienne. The first two outfits, both a dramatic pinky-red, establish Kendall as the main focus of attention. In the early scenes, she wears a simple suit with one large button at the top of the jacket, a collarless boat-shaped neckline and a slim skirt worn with white gloves and a matching hat

with a wide brim. The colour is also picked up in the set design, since it coordinates with the cyclamen on the office desk and a lampshade in the Broadbents' apartment. The effect is elegant and dramatic, a look maintained in Kendall's first chiffon ball gown which is in a similar red. The slim, shoulderless dress looks simple but, as Shelia moves through the ball, details of the draped front and the fall of material from a bow at the back are revealed. There is also a hint here of what is to come in the satin stole with a fur trim which dramatically complements the dress.

The use of a strong colour for these early costumes establishes Shelia/Kendall as the main focus in the image, the character who creates the action and works with the mise-en-scene. A montage of ball scenes then features two more gowns and as the film progresses the colours associated with Shelia becomes more muted - beige, gray, white - as the contrast between the elegance of the clothes and the exuberance of Kendall's clowning becomes more apparent. The high spot in the middle section of the film is the use of costume in an extended sequence in which Shelia and Jimmie host a dinner, try to keep Jane under surveillance at a ball and, on their return home, to deal with the consequences of her attraction to David. Shelia's dress for this sequence, which frequently breaks into farce, is a plain, high-necked, pinky-gray beige chiffon, buttoned up the back, with long sleeves and a full skirt. This rather strait-laced effect is however off set by dramatic accessories - elaborate jewelry and a huge matching boa. The latter, although at first sight an elegant accessory, in fact becomes a comic device, which reflects the mental state of the wearer; the

feathers provide a shimmering, undulating commentary which is always, though, slightly behind the movements of the agitated owner. At dinner, when the wrong guest arrives, Shelia's startled head peers up as if from a nest of feathers; when she chases fruitlessly round the ballroom, the swaying of the boa emphasises her zig-zagging movements; at home, in debate, with Jimmy, it falls in a long curve down her back or drops away from one shoulder as she waves her arms; it falls in two long columns down her sides when she tries to address David in a dignified fashion. The boa is useful as a feminine weapon when Shelia taps Jimmie with one of its wavering ends and as protection when she hides her face with it, on overhearing what she thinks is a fierce fight between the two men. Finally, it provides a cover for her when she falls, fully dressed, into exhausted sleep. No wonder Minnelli is reported to have 'changed its [the boa's] position in the script to a sequence requiring the maximum action' and remarked that "The boa proved the most effective prop I have ever worked with . . . It did everything but talk out loud" (Picture Show, 14 February 1959). The film ends, though, with Sheila restored to elegance, receiving guests at her own ball in a slim, gray, halterneck dress with white gloves, a diamond in the V of the neckline and more scattered in her perfectly groomed hair.

The Reluctant Debutante offers a good example of the way in which Paris fashion fed back into discourses about dress via film stars such as Kendall. One example of this practice, discussed more generally by Moseley (2002) in relation to Kendall's contemporary, Audrey Hepburn, is the long running fashion column by 'Gillian' in the British film magazine Picture Show which translated the 'looks'

associated with particular stars and designers into patterns and accessories more accessible to the readership. This involved encouragement from upcoming and established stars such as Heather Sears and Leslie Caron who, readers are assured, make their own clothes at home (31 October 1959); practical tips such as making a peasant-style blouse from handkerchiefs (29 May 1954) and descriptions of what stars wear, on and off the set. The column emphasises the virtues of restraint and being sensible which is couched in the language of femininity – clothes can be glamorous as long as they are not too revealing, are comfortable to wear and fit the concept of the modern housewife. Some films are difficult to work into this discourse; a discussion of Imitation of Life (US, Sirk, 19?) is accompanied by advice from Lana Turner – ‘Don’t overdo the glamour’ - which rather contradicts the example set by her costumes in the film. The Reluctant Debutante, on the other hand, provided good material for Gillian’s column.

The magazine reviewed the film as a ‘pleasant, romantic comedy . . . charmingly acted’ (7 February 1959). In the same issue, Gillian features Sandra Dee in an article entitled ‘Be Your Age’ which warns teenagers against the ‘scruffy look’ and commends Dee for looking ‘pretty and feminine’ in the film. The following week (14 February) the column devotes its whole page to the film, using Balmain’s designs for Kendall to argue against the vogue for ‘the sack’. The column quotes Balmain on the ‘pleasure’ of designing for Kendall’s ‘tall, willowy type of figure’. Balmain compliments Hollywood designers, including Orry-Kelly and Helen Rose, for helping to ‘set fashion style for women all over the world’ and, crucially, for keeping ‘fashion styles within bounds that have

made them copyable'. This is picked up in a detailed description of the 'red woolen two-piece' Kendall wears at the beginning of the film, emphasising the fashion details of the 'uncollared neckline' and the 'loose belt . . . around the normal waistline, tying in a bow at the front' (original emphasis). This outfit is deemed appropriate for copying by readers, being both up-to-date and wearable. It avoids the fashion excesses of the waistless 'sack' but has the imprimatur of Balmain and Hollywood. The evening dresses though are a different matter. Balmain emphasises that a floor length dress 'makes a woman more alluringly feminine' and the column agrees that they are 'just lovely to look at'. But Gillian warns that 'one is not likely to gain inspiration from one's own wardrobe from them'; clearly, too much sophistication and glamour makes the translation into appropriate wear for the feminine reader too dangerous.

Hollywood and Paris were thus crucial to the way in which fashion was constructed as part of cinema's appeal. I have discussed Kendall as an individual star but her success in these two late films tells us something more generally about how costume was used by Hollywood and Paris in the star-making process. Les Girls represents the process by which Kendall is slipped into and supported by the Hollywood machine. Her costumes help to create her character by complementing and contrasting with those of the other girls. Her star image is reinforced by the differences but it is more important that she fits the total mise-en-scene. She works as part of the system (les girls and Les Girls), not outside it. Having achieved this, The Reluctant Debutante offers a rather different approach. Kendall again fits the mise-en-scene but this time Minnelli builds the

film around her so that her costumes define the entire look of the film (3). She becomes not just a character but the key element of the décor, a splash of scarlet or a floating feather. In her British films, Kendall's costumes carried the stamp of her rebellious personality; in The Reluctant Debutante, that individuality remains but is underpinned by Hollywood and Paris. It has been smoothed into place as carefully as the chiffon and satin she wears with such style.

Notes

1. In using quotations from Kendall's interviews, I am not suggesting that these give us unproblematic access to her own thoughts although part of her image was an apparent openness and willingness to confide. Indeed, the repetition of 'spontaneous' comments in a number of interviews confirms the possibility of using such material to look at the image it creates. See Golden, pp. 91 and 146, for examples of interviews separated by two years in which Kendall makes a similar reference to looking like Danny Kaye.
2. This would seem to be another dress from The Reluctant Debutante. One of the difficulties about looking at and writing about Kendall in this period is indeed that her early death inevitably and poignantly over-determines what one sees, an experience which was clearly much more difficult for those who knew her.
3. Characteristically, Jean Wagner's 1959 review of the film for Cahier du Cinema said nothing about the clothes but praised Kendall as a puppet in Minnelli's brilliant control of the mise-en-scene.

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