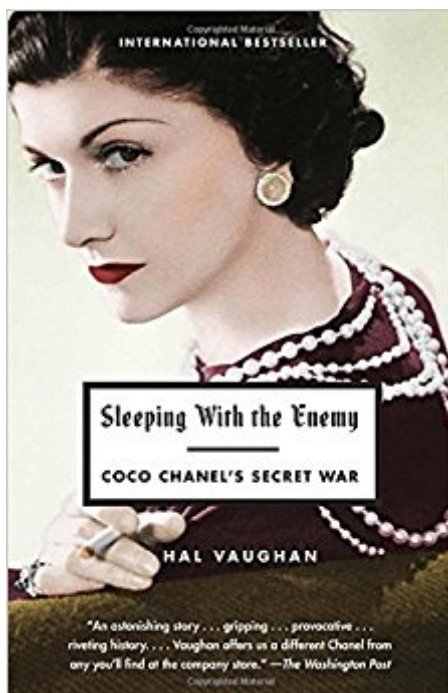


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Sleeping With The Enemy: Coco Chanel's Secret War



Synopsis

This explosive narrative reveals for the first time the shocking hidden years of Coco Chanel's life: her collaboration with the Nazis in Paris, her affair with a master spy, and her work for the German military intelligence service and Himmler's SS. Gabrielle Chanel was the high priestess of couture who created the look of the modern woman. By the 1920s she had amassed a fortune and went on to create an empire. But her life from 1941 to 1954 has long been shrouded in rumor and mystery, never clarified by Chanel or her many biographers. Hal Vaughan exposes the truth of her wartime collaboration and her long affair with the playboy Baron Hans Gfeller von Dincklage who ran a spy ring and reported directly to Goebbels. Vaughan pieces together how Chanel became a Nazi agent, how she escaped arrest after the war and joined her lover in exile in Switzerland, and how despite suspicions about her past she was able to return to Paris at age seventy and rebuild the iconic House of Chanel.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[Hal Vaughan] ably demonstrates that Chanel was far from an innocent victim of circumstance during the second world war but a fully fledged Abwehr (German secret service) agent with her own number and codename: Westminster (no doubt a nod to her one-time lover, the Duke of Westminster). . . Vaughan, who writes with welcome economy and flair, deserves a lot of credit for finally unraveling the strands of Chanel's deeply deceptive

personality. [Sleeping with the Enemy] distinguishes itself from the many other Chanel biographies by tackling the dicey subject of Gabrielle Chanel's activities during World War II . . . This is a frank and unsentimental portrait of a figure that fashion writers are nearly incapable of criticizing. While Vaughan's discussions of Chanel's contributions to fashion add nothing new to the extensive literature on her, he more than makes up for it with his impressive research and the never-before-seen information that he has unearthed about her wartime activities. . . . What Sleeping with the Enemy offers is a more rounded look at a figure who has been over-studied and under-examined. [A] compelling chronicle of Coco Chanel . . . a different Chanel from any you'll find at the company store . . . by no means the account of an emerging style but a tale of how a single-minded woman faced history, made hard choices, connived, lied, collaborated and used every imaginable wile to survive and see that the people she cared about survived with her . . . Vaughan has gleaned many of the details of Chanel's collaboration from documents that were scattered for years throughout European archives . . . It's an astonishing story . . . gripping . . . provocative . . . riveting history. Marie Arana, The Washington Post "Chanel's war years, as explored by Hal Vaughan, are as camera-ready and as neck-deep in melodrama as Quentin Tarantino's 'Inglourious Basterds' and just as hard to forget now that they're exposed. David D'Arcy, San Francisco Chronicle" Hal Vaughan has done a stupendous job of research . . . Vaughan draws a brilliant portrait . . . a terrific and fascinating story. . . wonderfully told, and full of great characters. . . Vaughan brings her to life so vividly that we understand why no less a judge than André Malraux said that "from this century in France only three names will remain: de Gaulle, Picasso, and Chanel." . . . It is that rarest of good reads, a biography about a famous person with a surprise on every page. Nancy Mitford, I think, would have loved it, and written a wonderful letter to Evelyn Waugh about it!" Michael Korda, The Daily Beast

Hal Vaughan has been a newsman, foreign correspondent, and documentary film producer working in Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia since 1957. He served in the U.S. military in World War II and Korea and has held various posts as a U.S. Foreign Service officer. Vaughan is the author of Doctor to the Resistance: The Heroic True Story of an American Surgeon and His Family in Occupied Paris and FDR's 12 Apostles: The Spies Who Paved the Way for the Invasion

of North Africa. He lives in Paris.

I'm a big fan of bios and Chanel and I did not go into this book thinking she was 'just' a fashion icon- I was aware of the rumors and her circle of friends and her bad business deal with her perfume rights. That said, this story was fascinating- I had no idea how wide her circle truly was or the scope of her influence and businesses. I never thought she was a likeable person before and I certainly do not now-she was very kind to her family but to few others. My main complaint about this book is that, although it was an interesting topic, it was very dry and not really engaging. At any point I could have put it down and not picked it back up and the saving grace was that the topic was so interesting.

One of the most revelatory books ever written about Chanel, based on extensive research done in several European countries. The author is sympathetic to the contribution she made to women's fashion, and also her difficult childhood. Still, Chanel made a choice to protect her standard of living and to try and recover her perfume business by signing up with German intelligence; The undeniable proof is in the documents that were found.

I found the book to contain interesting information and accounts about Parisian-centered life, fashion, the occupation of France and the business practices that occurred during time span of the book. However, I did not really enjoy reading the book; I thought it was poorly written. It reminded me of reading Dan Brown (as an example). I wanted to get to the end for two reasons: so I could find out what happened and so I could stop reading the author's words. It's not high praise, but I did appreciate learning parts of Chanel's life that few people seem to be aware of. Friends thought it was just about fashion and intrigue, yet when I elaborated upon the book description, everyone I addressed had never heard those details.

This was a used book but I could find no sign of wear in it at all. The book is about the fashion designer, Coco Chanel, and has a lot of pictures of her designs and also of her with high ranking German officials. A very interesting read and it gives you information about France during WW II that you won't find in most history book. If you like history, read it; if you like fashion, read it.

A fascinating expose of someone, who because of her sheer strength of will, managed to get away from even answering to the post-war French Courts on the charge of collaboration with the Nazi's all

thru the German occupation of France from 1941 to 1944. One of her many lovers was a high ranking spy for the Gestapo and the SS. She had admirers in high places such as Winston Churchill who helped her despite her crimes.

The book was quite informative. Aside than her creative talent as a designer, she was certainly not someone to be admired!

This work is well named. However, the name does not cover Chanel's treachery in serving the Nazis. Having grown up regarding Chanel as a splendid couturier, and Chanel Number 5 as an especially nice scent, I was disappointed in her virulent antisemitism, although she was far from alone in that. It seemed to be endemic in the upper classes of Western Europe and Britain in the 30s and 40s. Also I found her relationships with men like Winston Churchill and the Duke of Westminster quite surprising. That Churchill, knowing of her perfidious relationship with her German lover, Dinklage, protected her from trial and execution is quite appalling. There is little question that the Russian Revolution and the subsequent murder of the Royal Family horrified those in Europe that such a thing could have happened in any of the countries. Hitler saw Communism as greatly to be feared, as did the British and French. Also, historically German and England together have fought France, barring the First World War. There were remnants of that alliance referred to. It was interesting to learn how well the upper classes fared in Paris, and to see the ordinary people looking through the garbage for food. The pictures with which this book is studded are helpful, although very small on the Kindle. The research that went into this book is extensive. The writing is clear and informative. All in all, a good read.

Never knew anything about Coco Chanel besides her birthing the LBD and other iconic fashion contributions. Truly fascinating and disappointing to find out about her cozy relationship with Nazis. Ugh. Very much worth reading.

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