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Best Reviews Latest Top Reviews â€¦ The book is also richly illustrated with images of iconic outfits and intimate photographs from Chanel's private albums.â€™ The Mail on Sundayâ€¦ and Fascinating. Chanel was a tragic figure of the almost Shakespearean aspect â€¦ a very successful, wildly strong-willed, yet fatally flawed and ultimately filled with regret.â€™ Sunday Timesâ€¦ The French fashion icon finds a clever and likeable interpreter in Justine Picardieâ€¦, the mystery that has become brand.â€™ The Independentâ€™ is vividly told account of Coco Chanelâ€™ live life has all the elements of a novel: mystery, feeling lost, finding fame and fortune, distinguished loversâ€™ | , come out of hiding.â€™ The Telegraphâ€¦ detailed and captivating readâ€™ Red Magazineâ€¦, Brilliant biographyâ€™ Graziaâ€¦ Picardie sheds new light on an intensely private designerâ€¦, Impressiveâ€™ Stylist Magazineâ€¦ The darker aspects of [Chanel] are subtly and carefully revealed by Justine Picardie.â€™ The Wall Street Journalâ€¦, Justine Picardie sheds new light on the darker truth behind the glossy mythâ€¦; Guaranteed to be the most well-read accessory at London Fashion Week.â€™ Daily Expressâ€™ It is thoughtful and beautifully illustrated illuminating iconoclast, who could rightly be said to have invented a twentieth century woman.â€™ Times literary supplement Justine Picardie is the author of five books, including her critically acclaimed memoir, â€¦ If the Spirit Moves Youâ€™™, and has also contributed short stories and essays to several anthologies and books on fashion and photography. Formerly a journalist for the Sunday Times, a Vogue director, editor of Observer magazine, and a columnist for the Telegraph, she is now editor-in-chief of Harper's â€™ Bazaar and Town & Country. Continue reading major fairy tale books Style Reunited: Sleeping With the Enemy: Coco Chanel's Secret War by Hal Vaughan, 279 pages; Alfred A. Knopf, \$27.95; Coco Chanel: Intimate Life, Lisa Chaney, 448 pages, Viking, \$27.95; Coco Chanel: The Legend and Life of Justine Picardie, 343 pages, HarperCollins, \$40.Credit... Patricia Wall/The New York Times (center)Let Coco's catfight begin. I have to be careful not to trash another writer, said Lisa Chaney, author of Coco Chanel: An Intimate Life, a new biography fashion icon. Then she continued to throw down the gauntlet. (One imagines tweed-decorated lamb gloves from Chanel's autumn/winter collection.) Over the phone from her home in York, England - and in a press release from her publisher - she ticked off a litany of beef with another recent Chanel book, Hal Vaughan's Sleeping With the Enemy: Miss Chanel's Secret War. Mr. Vaughan's biography, which appears to show that Chanel was a Nazi agent during World War II, is written in a highly outrageous style, Ms. Chaney said. From the first few pages, it's an allusion and jumping to conclusions. It's pretty unmanageable, which I think he did. Mr Vaughan said he thought it was waiting for Amazon to deliver it. But he had questions about a third new biography, Coco Chanel: Legend and Life, justine Picardie, who reads to him, told how it would be written to please the late designer's namesake company. I don't know if it was subsidized, but it's clearly a Chanel book, he said. Ms. Picardie, a British writer, had her own potshots for other biographers. I suppose it was Lisa Chaney who told you that my book is allowed by Chanel, she said. As for Mr. Vaughan's book? The name is an instant sound bite. At least seven Chanel books have been published in the past 18 months. It was almost inevitable that the books would end up pitted against each other in reviews, but now some of the authors are going after each other in real life. It's not just selling or bragging rights at stake. The real battle is over what Mr Vaughan claimed is an almost institutionalised refusal to dive into the dark side of Chanel. The thing that really bothers me is that no one is going to address the facts, he said. What writers have no doubt is that Gabrielle Chanel (1883-1971), known as Coco, was a fascinating, prickly character, equal parts diva, social climber, femme fatale and genius. She was born into poverty and abandoned in an orphanage. Thanks to her hard work, talent and a series of affairs with rich, well-placed men, she has become arguably the most important fashion designer of the 20th century. All three writers also agree on something uglier: in Nazi-occupied France during The Second World War, Chanel was an associate — a charged war term for a citizen who worked with the enemy. It's the degree of Chanel collaboration that's at issue. Mr. Vaughan's book details Chanel's long love affair with Baron. Günther von Dinklage, a Nazi spy, and her dealings with nazi higher-ups. Chanel, Mr. Vaughan writes, was a willing agent for the enemy, introducing germans to her well-placed friends. In 1944, Chanel embarked on a mission to deliver a message to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who said some high-ranking German officers wanted to end hostilities with Britain. In return, she writes, she expected - and received - favors. These included the release of her nephew from a German war camp and apartment at the luxurious Ritz Hotel in Paris during the German occupation of France. She also appealed to the Nazis to help her match control of her perfume business from the brothers, whom she had sold a majority stake to years earlier. Chanel was an accomplished opportunist who was going to get what she wanted, said Mr. Vaughan, who also paints his subject as a lifelong anti-Semitic. She knew exactly what she was doing. She didn't see anything wrong with it. ImageCoco Chanel.Credit... Evening Standard/Hulton Archive via Getty ImagesMs. Chaney and Ms. Picardie write about the affair with Dinclage as well, but interpret Chanel's behavior differently. There is no doubt that she was an associate of sorts, in that she had a lover who was German, and he had connections to the Nazis, Ms. Chaney said. The question for her is how much Chanel knew or decided to know about dinclage pods. Ms. Chaney suggested that her subject may have been blinded by love. At the beginning of their relationship, in 1940, Dinclage was 44 and Chanel was 57. She was very aware that it was a late matter, the author said. For her part, Ms. Picardie said Chanel was involved in a German conspiracy - but the German conspiracy was to try to bring about the early conclusion of World War II. Which account is accurate? Valerie Steele, director of the museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, said she had read Vaughan and Chaney's books (and looked at Ms. Picardie's) and supported Mr. Vaughan's theory. Chaney implies that Chanel was just guilty of horizontal cooperation; I think it was definitely more, she said. Ms. Steele and all three sparring authors agreed that it was unwise to judge Chanel's wartime behavior without putting it in context.Ms. Chaney said Chanel's position in general was quite reprehensible. But think about what it was like to actually live in an occupied country. There are levels of cooperation. You could say that everyone who stayed in France was an associate. Chanel is surprisingly vague about its founder's wartime activities. A spokesman for Ian dos Reis Nunes, referred to Dinclage not as a Nazi but as a German aristocrat. The timing of this romance with the German was unfortunate, even though Baron von Dinklage's mother was English and with him before the war, said Ms. dos Reis Nunes via email. Conflicting accounts, she added, go to show difficulty in distinguishing fact from fiction. Both Ms. Picardie and Ms. dos Reis Nunes said that Chanel Inc. had neither authorized nor subsidized Ms. Picardie's books. But Karl Lagerfeld, a contemporary designer for Chanel, contributed to the book's original drawing. In the end, determining whose version is the final one may not matter, said Rhonda Garelick, a professor of English at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and a Chanel scholar. She said she believes Americans' interest in this chapter of Chanel's history has more to do with the current climate of political, social and economic upheaval. We occupy Wall Street - 99 percent versus 1 percent of super-elite multimillionaires - and we're finally evaluating what it means to have such a wealth gap, Ms. Garelick said. We watch an episode of Chanel's life when people collected garbage looking for food while she lived at the Ritz hotel as one of the richest women in the world. If, during this period, it has also betrayed its country, it arouses our interest. It's a good thing readers are so interested. Make room on the shelf for another biography of Chanel: Antigone in Vogue, by Ms. Garelick. Now he's working on his handwriting. Nwo.

