

FASHION JOURNALISM

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Abstract

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A historical examination of the symbiotic relationship between the industry and the fashion media shows that the ultimate function of fashion journalism is commercial in that it is a discourse structured to engender consumption. It has also contributed to gender ideology and the feminization of fashion consumerism. However, it also produces the value of fashion and creates the fulcrum of what is fashionable and what is not. Since the nineteenth century, tensions have existed between the democratizing and demystifying elements of commercial fashion journalism on the one hand and the need to uphold the discriminatory symbolic value of fashion on the other. This is particularly the case in West Europe, where fashion journalism has traditionally posited the industry as art.

The Fashion Industry and Fashion Media

The fortunes of the fashion industry and the fashion press have been indissolubly linked since the late eighteenth century. The advent of the specialist fashion media in West Europe was tied to the development of the modern fashion industry. In both cases, the epicenter for women's fashion was Paris, and fashion journalism developed to disseminate and promote what was fashionable in the French capital. France and its court had assumed fashion leadership among the European aristocracy in the late seventeenth century, and the first vehicles of the fashion media were, arguably, the dolls sent by the shops in the rue Saint-Honoré to the courts of Europe in the seventeenth century to support the burgeoning guild of tailors and seamstresses.

The mythical status of Paris in the nineteenth century as the apotheosis of fashionable culture created a pan-European desire for Parisian fashion—actual clothing, patterns, and trends. The active promotion of the industry at the Great Exhibitions in Paris and the importance of the industry to the French economy—by 1860, France was Europe's foremost industrial power due to fashion and its ancillary industries—meant that while other countries, particularly Britain and Germany, had fashion magazines such as *The Ladies Magazine* and *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* at the turn of the century, by the middle of the century, the format and content of all European fashion magazines were largely derivative of the innovative French model. Furthermore, in matters of fashion, the French journals were the most influential—and international; by 1869, *Le Moniteur de la Mode* had eight foreign editions, including St. Petersburg, New York, and London.

The dominance of the French media continued until the early twentieth century, when U.S. publishers started to make inroads into Europe. After World War II, other fashion centers developed in Europe, particularly in Italy and Britain, where new fashion journals emerged to promote and support their indigenous industries. The growth of Berlin as a center for fashion culture has led to the launch of magazines such as *O32c*. Following in the French tradition of the nineteenth century, European fashion magazines, even international brands such as *Vogue*,

tend to be more visually innovative and creatively avant-garde than their more commercially powerful peers in the United States.

The Birth of a Symbiotic Relationship, Pre-1850

The latter part of the 1700s saw the launch of a number of specialist fashion journals, most notably *Le Journal des Dames et des Modes* (1797–1837). Although the fashion and textile trades were well established in France, the French Revolution saw the repeal of the sumptuary laws of the ancien régime, laws that had proscribed the wearing of certain types of clothing for all but the aristocracy; thus, the Revolution created in theory an opportunity for a democratic fashion industry and fashion press.

The very beginning of the nineteenth century saw little change in the fashion industry in terms of technological innovation or institutions. Although some magazines promoted “revolutionary” dress that distanced them from the old order, the focus of magazines such as *Le Journal des Dames et des Modes* was still very much on the society elite or *femmes riches*. This latter publication lasted forty years, and its engraved color fashion plates, text describing the sartorial modes and lifestyles of the society elite, and regular weekly publication prefigured the press of the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond. The fact that the fashion editorial consisted of unidentified protagonists and half-explained anecdotes suggests that fashion was still a closed and inaccessible world. Although court fashions were relatively short-lived, the widespread cycles of industrialized fashion had yet to be instituted. The discourse was, therefore, primarily informative rather than normative; it did not yet seek to regularize fashionable consumption along idealized lines, nor to create its own logic of seasonal change. As a consequence, the notion of “out-of-date” did not exist: The term *à la mode* was much in evidence in editorial matter, but not its antithetical counterpart, *démodé*.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, printing costs grew cheaper, and an urban fashion market, together with the beginnings of an industrialized fashion, emerged. Inspired by the success of *Le Journal des Dames et des Modes*, a plethora of new fashion titles was launched, although many did not survive because there was not yet enough of a middle-class consumer market to support them. *La Mode* (1829–1862) was one of the more successful. Owned by Emile de Girardin, it sought not only to showcase the latest fashions but also to elevate the quality of fashion writing and included such literary figures as Honoré de Balzac among its contributors. From 1830 onward, the wider artistic community adopted fashion as a symbol of modernity and initiated the symbolic value of fashion as art.

The originality of many of these new fashion magazines lay in their visual content. *Le Petit Courrier des Dames*, for example, introduced plates showing the back as well as the front of garments, thereby allowing dressmakers to copy fashions more precisely. Indeed, *Le Follet* (1829–1882) gained international success thanks to its illustrations by the Colin sisters. In this respect, it might be noted that, although women were increasingly the readers of these journals—and *Le Petit Courrier des Dames* (1821–1869) had been founded by a woman, Donatine Thierry—fashion journalism at this point was principally the prerogative of men.

The function of fashion magazines at this time was, in general, more commercial than their antecedents and was linked to their relationship as an advertising vehicle for the fashion industry. A nineteenth-century commentator notes that French fashion magazines were at the forefront of the development of advertising. Fashion plates during this period included details of every supplier—even the provenance of a handkerchief was a matter of commercial exploitation. In addition, glowing and direct recommendations in the editorial matter were paid for by clients and are thus akin to what is in the early twenty-first century termed advertorial (advertising in the form of editorial). This practice was instigated by Henri de Villemessant, founder of *La Sylphide* (1839–1885), when he perfumed the covers of the magazine with free sachets of scent from Guerlain that were given in return for several lines of publicity in the editorial. Others magazines, such as *Psyché* (1834–1854), appear to have worked on a commission basis for manufacturers such as Blech-Steinbach and Mantz, whose dresses they advertised under their masthead. In this manner, a symbiotic relationship between the fashion industry and the fashion discourse was born.

While the magazines continued to disseminate and chronicle fashion trends among the elite, their discourse started what [Pierre Bourdieu](#) would later term the “symbolic production” of the value of fashion itself. Fashion was posited as a supernatural force, a genius or modern goddess, that could transform the wearer into a person of social and sartorial distinction. Fashion also became a regulatory discourse: À la mode was linked to the notion of démodé and to the threat of social ridicule as a result of bad taste or inappropriate fashion choices. The discourse thus created a value for itself as a means of avoiding the threat of social sanctions—a threat still present in the twenty-first century, witness the British television program *What Not to Wear*.

Consumption and Symbolic Production, 1850–1910

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the rapid growth of the textile industry, the development of ready-made clothing, and the advent of the department store, together with a growth in personal wealth and the expansion of the railways, meant that fashion entered middle-class culture. It was during this time that the specialist fashion press consolidated its influence on the culture and discourse of fashion. In France, it grew from around twenty titles in the 1840s to as many as sixty by 1870, and despite often being published weekly rather than bimonthly, their circulation also increased dramatically: In 1846, the most successful title, *Le Petit Courrier des Dames*, had seven thousand subscribers; by the mid-1860s *La Mode Illustrée* (1860–1937) had more than fifty thousand subscribers in France alone.

A page from the French magazine *Le Journal des Dames et des Modes*, 1801. Originally published in 1797, this magazine was for the society elite, reporting on wealthy lifestyles and describing the most up-to-date fashions on a weekly basis. Picture Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

The period also witnessed the arrival of monopolies in the fashion press. The most powerful new press magnates were Louis Mariton, Charles Compaign, and Adolphe Goubaud, who, by 1879, owned twenty titles under the auspices of the Société des Journaux de Mode Réunis. These empires were founded on a rationalization of resources, particularly in relation to the expensive fashion plate. The 1854 laws on ownership of artistic property allowed magazine proprietors control of their illustrators’ work at home and abroad. As a result, as early as 1856, one of the illustrator Jules David’s plates had a circulation of thirty-five thousand, thanks to the fact that Goubaud had created a whole series of subbrands of *Le Moniteur de la Mode*. These economies of scale, together with the mechanization of the printing process, led to cheaper or modulated (tiered) subscription rates: for example, *La Mode Illustrée* had subscriptions that ranged from four francs per year for illustrated patterns only to twenty-four francs per year for the deluxe album with colored plates. These prices, in turn, played an influential part in making these magazines available to a less-affluent public.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there were even more fashion magazines; as many as 180 new titles were launched in France between 1871 and 1908, including *L’Art de la Mode* (1880–1975) and *Le Petit Écho de la Mode* (1879–1977), while 1886 saw the launch of *Brigitte* in Germany, and 1892 that of *Vogue* in the United States. Circulations continued to increase: *Le Moniteur de la Mode* had 200,000 subscribers by 1890.

The symbiotic relationship between industry and the press intensified—undoubtedly thanks to the support of the department stores, in particular, and their extensive advertising budgets, of which the specialist fashion press was the main beneficiary. Classified advertisements, catalogs, and store brochures were all inserted into magazines. Indeed, *Le Moniteur de la Mode* originally started life as a catalog for the clothing store Popelin du Carre, and even after it became independent in 1843, it still regularly included a short brochure of its latest fashions. By the 1860s, most magazines had formed relationships with a limited number of retailers. Even *La Mode Illustrée*, which prided itself on its editorial integrity and indeed publicized the fact that it did not accept classified advertisements, was not immune from the recommendation of certain couturiers and biannually included catalogs for the store Magasins du Louvre.

Meanwhile, the discourse of fashion itself also served the department stores. Editorial endorsements continued to be given in exchange for fashion plates. In other words, the desire to lower costs and increase circulations increased the dependency of magazine publishers on the industry. Fashion journalism had to satisfy advertisers on the one hand and readers on the other.

Although in the first half of the nineteenth century there were still magazines aimed at both sexes, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the specialist fashion press became exclusively aimed at women. As early as 1855, the fashion magazine was posited in a leading etiquette manual as a key component of the bourgeois woman's lifestyle. It also offered one of the few careers open to women.

Fashion editorials became increasingly inflected with ideology as well as commercialism. Fashion and a preoccupation with one's appearance became essentialized as feminine, and definitions of upper-middle-class femininity were promoted and circulated in the fashion press as inextricably linked to clothing. In order to uphold the sales of the fashion product among a wider and less fashion-literate public, it became necessary to articulate and delineate more rigorously a feminine ideal with appearance at its core, so that editorial matter increasingly centered on fashionable clothing as a means of accessing a specific and desirable lifestyle. It also inaugurated a culture of consumerism in which the act of consumption itself became fetishized and feminized. It was on the new glamorous and aspirational shopping experience of the department stores—along with trips to the Tuileries or the Bois de Boulogne, for example—that the magazines focused in promoting clothes shopping as part of the idealized feminine lifestyle.

As it became more widely circulated, the fashion press also became more segmented, and differing rules of consumption were promoted as desirable depending on whether, for example, the reader was a young girl or a middle-class mother. Magazines aimed at more affluent readers focused on the latest styles and celebrity fashions worn by the society elite (and later actresses, as well as by women in literature and the arts). For publications such as *L'Art de la Mode*, fashion was treated as art. In France, fashion was still embraced by the wider artistic community as a symbol of modernity; even the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé launched a fashion magazine (*La Dernière Mode*), and literary figures such as novelist Gustave Flaubert contributed articles on fashion.

Publications aimed at a less-affluent middle-class readership, on the other hand, adopted a more practical editorial approach that sought to educate and advise readers on fashion rather than merely chronicle elite fashionable attire. This shift undoubtedly contributed to the circulation of such magazines and to the growth of the fashion industry, because it created a less intimidating editorial environment and also provided readers with the means to access fashion at a lower cost.

As [Roland Barthes](#) has noted, it is the fashion discourse itself that creates the value of the fashion object. If part of the value relates to its inaccessibility and its mystique, then democratized fashion threatened the cultural status and value of the artifact itself. Fashion journalism thus started to perform the dual function of both demystifying and explaining fashion, by providing readers with strategies to gain access to fashionable clothing on the one hand and to the mystification, as well as the elaboration of the inaccessibility and desirability, of the fashion artifact on the other.

As the individual symbolism of being fashionable became less socially discriminating, a new discourse emerged around the etiquette of fashion: The manner of dressing became as important as the dressing itself. The desire to protect the aspirational symbolism of fashion led to the inauguration of taste as a signifying value, largely defined as tautologous rules of propriety, and the notion of "distinction" permeated the rhetoric of the upmarket fashion press. This segment also created fashion leaders, such as the Empress Eugénie and members of the European aristocracy, as the custodians of sartorial knowledge. The discourse grew more regulatory, and boundaries of normative display emerged. An excessive or overly individualistic performance ran the risk of being designated as *excentrique* or socially embarrassing.

The commercialization of fashion, particularly by the department stores, meant that fashion became big business for France both domestically and in terms of exports. As a result, fashion journalism also found itself, along with fashion in general, embroiled in questions of national

identity and the promotion of French industrial and creative superiority. The phrase *notre génie industriel* (our industrial genius) became ubiquitous to all forms of fashion discourse. Furthermore, fashion was at the forefront of the industrial and materialist culture revolutionizing Europe. The culture of feminine consumption purveyed by the fashion press meant that fashion magazines, along with the fashion industry, became the target of criticism by those opposed to this ideology, including feminists and the religious right.

Fashion plate from Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine, 1864. This hand-colored lithograph, showing the fashions of the day, was published in Paris by Adolphe Goubaud. By 1879 Goubaud was a powerful press magnate and, with Louis Mariton and Charles Compaign, owned twenty titles under the auspices of the Société des Journaux de Mode Réunis. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. www.vam.ac.uk

The Golden Age, 1920–1960

Despite witnessing two world wars and major social upheaval, the format of the fashion press changed little from the nineteenth century. However, along with the fashion industry, it became more professional, more influential, and more international. While Paris continued to dominate fashionable trends, its industry and media faced increasing competition from emerging new fashion centers, particularly the United States, Britain, and Italy—all of which developed more casual sportswear design and manufacture.

West European—and indeed world—fashion was, with the exception of the occupation years, dominated by trends from the Parisian couture houses, which moved from being suppliers to being creators. The symbiotic relationship between the industry and the press continued in the marketing of haute couture. In 1912, seven of the most important Parisian designers—Cheruit, Doeuillet, Doucet, Paquin, Poiret, Redfern, and Worth—sponsored a new magazine—*La Gazette du Bon Ton*—that was designed to unite couturiers and the leading artists of the day. The symbolic value of couture, rather than fashion, as art was born.

During World War II, both the couture industry and the discourse of fashion again became embroiled in national politics and propaganda. The French government viewed the export of couture garments as an important part of the war effort, and support for the French fashion industry was represented in the press as patriotic resistance. *Fémina* introduced a column on “Fashion During the War” in 1917, which sought at infrequent intervals to chronicle fashionable silhouettes. New fashion magazines such as *Les Éléances Parisiennes* (1916–1925) emerged to promote couture at home and abroad. A special issue of *La Gazette du Bon Ton* was published in 1915 in both the United States and France to honor an exhibition of couturiers' work in San Francisco, its discourse inflected with the rhetoric of battle and Paris's new “warlike elegance.” The Germans, meanwhile, were producing their own chronicles of French fashion trends such as *Les Modèles Parisiens*. Elsewhere, patriotism was also linked to fashionable consumption. Attending to one's appearance at one of the “elegant and fashionable Cylax salons” was a matter of national duty in the pages of British *Vogue*, which also promoted the appeal of the utility clothing range created by prominent British designers in 1942.

During World War II, couture and the French fashion press were effectively silenced. The Germans censored and limited the number of fashion journals—*Fémina* and *Vogue* ceased publication—and attempted to create Germany as *the* fashion center. After the war, however, couture formed a central platform in rebuilding France and the nation's identity. During the interwar years, the specialist press had focused on the celebrity of the wearers—*les dames de vogue*—as much as on the creators in defining fashion trends. From 1947 onward, it was the press as much as the couturiers who created the rigorous look and seasonal cycle of fashion. Couture houses started to produce up to four collections a year, and the press became the unique custodians and interpreters of this news. It was the media discourse that created the mythical prestige of haute couture by labeling coherent trends and elaborating on the fashionable fetishism of the articles. As Carmel Snow, editor of American *Harper's Bazaar*, remarked to *Time* magazine in August 1947, “The editors must recognize fashions while they are still a thing of the future. The dressmakers create them, but without these magazines, the fashions would never be established or accepted” (cited in Wilcox). However, it was increasingly

the foreign, particularly the U.S., press that was influential in supporting the couture industry, because European markets were weak after the war.

The period also witnessed the growing influence of the United States in the world of fashion and its media in Europe. Condé Nast's *Vogue* was the first magazine to have a foreign edition edited that was produced locally: British *Vogue* was launched in 1916, followed by a French version in 1920. Nast also formed an agreement with the *Gazette du Bon Ton* in 1915 to publish in the United States, and, by 1925, the French magazine had been merged with Nast's *Vogue*. Nast had also renamed and launched *Jardin des Modes* (1922–1996). Meanwhile, the publicity machine of Hollywood ushered in a focus on celebrity fashion in the press and influenced the latter's treatment of couturiers. The designer profile, complete with a personal interview, emerged as an important facet of fashion journalism, particularly in Italy, where designers have always been treated by the indigenous fashion press as national celebrities.

Lassitude: Robe de dîner, de Paul Poiret, illustration by Georges Lepape from *La Gazette du Bon Ton*, published in Paris, 1912. This magazine was sponsored by seven of the most important Parisian designers, Cheruit, Doeuillet, Doucet, Paquin, Poiret, Redfern, and Worth, with an aim to unite couturiers and the leading artists of the day. Picture Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

The journalists' validation of the couturier enhanced not only the appeal of the couturier's products but also that of the increasingly international array of fabric manufacturers and the ready-to-wear companies on whose expanding advertising budgets the press depended. These companies capitalized on their publicity vis-à-vis their relationships with the mythical prestige of the couturiers. The French fashion press nationalistically promoted the links between couturiers and domestic fabric houses in their editorials but accepted lucrative advertisements from the increasingly powerful foreign textile suppliers in Britain and Switzerland, for example. Elsewhere, the balance of power was also shifting. In 1956, British *Woman* magazine agreed to eschew the promotion of natural fibers in its editorial policy, in exchange for a double-paged advertisement from the British Nylon Spinners.

The expansion and segmentation of the fashion press continued apace, supported by the growing fashion industry but also by other products aimed at women. While the professional oracle of couture fashion was the *Officiel de la Couture et de la Mode de Paris* (1921), other specialist consumer magazines started to be printed on glossy paper and to appear monthly. To uphold the symbolic value of fashion in the face of continued democratization, elite titles such as *Vogue* continued the nineteenth-century construction of fashion as art. Couture was linked with surrealism, while literary figures such as Colette and Virginia Woolf were employed as commentators. Iconography, such as Erté's illustrations or Man Ray's photographs, further reinforced this creative paradigm. The class signifiers of taste, distinction, and elegance still dominated the rhetoric of these magazines. In Britain, editorial matter focused on the luxurious lifestyles of couture clients and their debutante daughters. Despite the freedoms afforded women in the wars, the normative femininity produced within these magazines in the 1950s was still a ritualistic and regulated art to be practiced with the aid of an ever-increasing multitude of products. Beauty as well as clothing became subject to the dictates of fashion.

French *Elle* was an exception to this ideological paradigm. Created by Hélène Gordon-Lazareff in 1945 and targeted at the modern working woman, the magazine dealt with a breadth of subjects beyond fashion, including politics and sexuality, and its editorial style was more informal and interactive. At the vanguard of ready-to-wear in France, *Elle* featured reports on the couturiers' new collections and formed relationships, in an echo of the nineteenth century, with retailers, including the mass market outlet Prisunic, whose window displays and clothing were dictated by editorials about the store.

However, much of the growth in the fashion media came from the mass-market women's-interest journals that continued to posit fashion in a broader editorial context of domesticity and household management. This was particularly so in Britain, where *Good Housekeeping* and *Woman* were launched in the 1920s, for example. These magazines created an aura of glamour in production values that was borrowed from the elite press (*Marie Claire*, launched in 1937 in France, was labeled "the poor woman's *Vogue*") but their editorial matter, as with their nineteenth-century forebears, promoted fashion within a reassuringly pragmatic

framework. The discourse of this segment continued to focus on how to access fashion, with hints on such other things as circumventing clothes rationing, for example. The German magazine *Brigitte* also instituted the rubric “make the most of your body type,” which is in the early twenty-first century the staple of fashion television.

The Rise of Individualism, 1960 Onward

On the surface, much has changed since 1960. The fashion industry is global, and the French fashion press is no longer dominant (in specialist fashion magazines, France is behind the United States and Italy, whose presses have developed in line with their fashion industries, although *Elle* and *Marie Claire* are, along with *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, the only globally recognizable brands of the fashion press). The fashion media and related disciplines have expanded exponentially with the advent of the stylist and fashion public relations, for example, and information is instantly disseminated on the Internet and television (Fashion TV was created in 1997). The end of the 1990s saw 2,000 journalists from more than 40 countries, 100 television stations, and 400 radio stations in Paris covering the hundreds of ready-to-wear shows. Despite this globalization, however, the fashion press in West Europe still retains a distinctively regional flavor: Italian and German fashion coverage is dominated by weeklies, and, although newspaper supplements in Britain have focused on fashion since the 1980s, these were only launched in Italy a decade later.

The shifting population profile in the 1960s brought a new audience for fashion and the media, so that the hierarchical paradigm shifted from social class to youth. British *Nova* (1965–1975) started to focus on how clothes were worn rather than on the clothes themselves. Fashion was recreated in its discourse as an empowering expression of individualism. Arguably, however, the discourse of individual style that has developed since is still regulatory and normative, since it continues to promote the potential for fashion faux pas (“What’s Hot, What’s Not,” for example) and still functions as the consumer’s guide to such perils.

In the 1980s, a decade that saw fashion “in fashion,” coverage exploded in both the specialist and general media. The advent of fashion public relations brought a new, more manipulative, and arguably cynical dynamic to the symbiotic relationship between the industry and the media, as discussed by British cultural studies scholar [Angela McRobbie](#). In the 1990s, designers, particularly Italian designers, started to provide magazines with ready-made photographic spreads in an echo of the earlier provision of visual material by department stores. More recently, retailers in Britain have been sponsoring inserts on runway trends and accessories, for example.

In an increasingly crowded industry and media landscape, designers and magazines have sought to differentiate themselves through branding. The image of the label has become the focus of both, and text has increasingly played second fiddle to iconography. As a corollary of this, celebrity has increasingly become the sole arbiter of global fashion. First the designers, then the supermodels, and then stars of the screen have been created as individual signifiers of distinction and taste (“fashionistas”) and annexed as icons of the brand image. However, in some ways, the celebrity paradigm merely contemporizes the industry’s manipulation of Empress Eugénie as a sartorial figurehead in the nineteenth century. Magazines have increasingly sold themselves to lucrative advertisers on the basis of their unique appeal to a homogeneous readership and of their individual editorial point of view. Men’s magazines were launched to cater to the new commercial opportunities offered by the cultural dissemination of designer labels and conspicuous consumption.

Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of American *Vogue*, at the Richard Chai Fall fashion show at the Salon in Bryant Park during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, New York City, 2009. British-born Wintour has also edited the U.K. edition of the magazine. WireImage.

The 1980s saw the rise of the British fashion industry that for two decades had defined itself through popular street culture. This period also saw a new breed of British hybrid and unisex magazines, *ID* and *The Face*, which contributed to this rise. These magazines produced a counterdiscourse to the commercial demystification of the designer label and reasserted the

symbolic value of fashion as art, but in this case it was pop rather than high art. Together with fashion editors-cum-stylists like Melanie Ward, these magazines created, rather than reported, fashion. Contributors worked without remuneration as a means to promote their individual image, and, as with the mainstream press, iconography predominated over text. Their legacy can be seen in the experimental and sometimes controversial styling of Italian and French *Vogue*, as well as in a plethora of titles launched since the 1990s, such as *Purple* (France), *Dutch*, *Stockholm*, and *Dazed and Confused* (Britain), all of which provide a showcase for emerging talent in the fashion world.

Criticisms of Fashion Journalism

Since the 1990s, there has been increasing criticism of the influence of commercial interests on fashion journalism and of a lack of critical integrity in the discourse. [Angela McRobbie](#), for example, has argued that fashion journalism lacks the critical objectivity of other forms of culture, while [Colin McDowell](#) has pointed out that many fashion journalists lack professional knowledge of the industry. Furthermore, these contentions are at odds with the continued and recently heightened media promotion of fashion as a serious creative culture industry. It is true that negative reviews of catwalk collections have resulted in journalists being banned by designers; it is also true that as much as 80 percent of magazine revenues comes from advertising, that publishers have increasing control over editorial content, and that the dividing line between editorial matter and promotion is less discernable than ever. However, these negative shifts arguably have as much to do with the culture of global consumerism and consolidated marketing power as with the fashion discourse per se.

Fashion journalism is part of a broader cultural discourse, yet it continues to be isolated from cultural criticism—perhaps because it has been at the forefront of cultural change; perhaps because it continues to be perceived as feminine and trivial and therefore provides an easy target for negative commentary; or perhaps because, since the nineteenth century, it has been embroiled in questions of cultural identity.

With the diffusion of universally affordable, disposable fashion, the demystification of fashion has continued apace. The how-to feature is in the early twenty-first century a staple of even elite fashion journalism. The growth of international style networks and blogs has democratized and demystified the discourse of fashion. In order to uphold the discriminatory value of fashion, this discourse has recreated the closed world of “fashion insiders.” This modern incarnation of the esoteric universe of *Le Journal des Dames et des Modes*, which began in the often self-reverential text of the hybrid press, has permeated the discourse of more conventional magazines such as *Vogue*.

There is a danger, of course, that this discourse may be so inaccessible that it leaves little room for the consumer. In the increasing plurality of fashion, the media’s role in editing and creating direction for its consumers becomes all the more essential. Genuine levels of expertise and vision will continue to provide symbolic endorsement to the industry and to create the value of fashion. Furthermore, fashion journalism has always and will continue to play a significant role in the nurturing of young designers’ talent. As [Roland Barthes](#) once argued, it can be said that, without journalism, there would be no symbolic value in commercial fashion and therefore no fashion industry at all.

Snapshot: Fashion Journalists

In the nineteenth century, fashion journalism was one of the few career options open to women, particularly in France. Although they had no formal fashion training, many of the innovative editors of the fashion press were women, including Emmeline Raymond of *La Mode Illustrée*, for example. These women were primarily fashion writers who informed readers on current fashions as well as on matters of social etiquette and good taste, although they also took charge of the overall look and content of the magazines. Raymond used her renown as a fashion editor to write books on embroidery and etiquette that were translated and sold in Britain and Germany.

It was not until after World War II that fashion journalism became an internationally recognized profession and that newspapers as well as magazines employed staff journalists to cover

fashion. These journalists wrote copy and were also responsible for visual material. In the 1950s and 1960s, many of the doyennes of the fashion press were found in the United States, but British journalists such as Ernestine Carter and Alison Adburgham, as well as French journalist H  l  ne Gordon-Lazareff, also developed international reputations. Formal training colleges for designers and fashion journalists were still in their infancy.

Carter, American by birth, had a varied fashion career. Starting as curator for a design exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1946, she then became fashion editor at *Harper's Bazaar* for three years. Following a brief stint as a cookery writer, she went on to edit the women's page at the *Sunday Times*. Carter interpreted developments in Paris fashion to British readers and also played a crucial role in nurturing British design talent.

Since the 1980s, there has been an increasing division between stylists, who are responsible for the visual material, and writers. Fashion editors on newspapers tend to be writers who commission freelance stylists for photographic material. Fashion editors on magazines, as well as editors-in-chief, are more likely to be stylists—Alexandra Schulman, editor-in-chief of British *Vogue*, is a notable exception to this, being a journalist with a nonfashion background. Since the 1990s, there has been an overall trend toward outsourcing fashion journalism to freelance writers and stylists.

There are many specific courses for fashion journalists in the twenty-first century, although many stylists come from a design or art school background. There is a great deal of fluidity in the industry between public relations, journalism, and design. German designer Jil Sander started her fashion career as a journalist, as did British designer Luella Bartley, while Glenda Bailey, editor of American *Harper's Bazaar*, followed a degree in fashion design with a collection for Guisi Slavino in Italy before moving into fashion journalism. Journalists play a key role in championing young designers. British fashion historian and writer [Colin McDowell](#) formed Fashion Fringe in 2004 to nurture emerging young British designers, and the late journalist and stylist Isabella Blow was responsible for championing the likes of the late designer Alexander McQueen and milliner Philip Treacy in her career as style director at British *Tatler*.

Some of the most influential fashion editors of the twenty-first century are from West Europe, including Anna Wintour of American *Vogue* and Glenda Bailey, who are both British; Franca Sozzani, editor-in-chief of Italian *Vogue* and *L'Uomo Vogue* and author of a number of fashion-related books; and Carine Roitfeld of French *Vogue*. Roitfeld has no formal fashion training and started as a teenage stylist at French *Elle* in the late 1970s. Her career as a stylist gained universal recognition in the 1990s, when she worked extensively with photographer Mario Testino and designer Tom Ford during his career at Gucci. After a brief period as a stylist at Missoni, she was appointed editor-in-chief of French *Vogue* in 2001.

References and Further Reading

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