Between Edge and Elite:
Niche Fashion Magazines, Producers and Readers

Ane Lynge-Jorlén
London College of Fashion
University of the Arts London
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ABSTRACT

Between Edge and Elite: Niche Fashion Magazines, Producers and Readers

This thesis examines contemporary niche fashion magazines and uses as a case study an ethnographic investigation of a niche fashion magazine and its producers and readers. Fashion magazines are instrumental not only in helping readers make sense of, understand and consume fashion; they are themselves fashionable media that set trends in how fashion is mediated. Niche fashion magazines are a subgenre of fashion magazines that is produced and consumed by cultural intermediaries. They are part of a complex cultural circuit which involves their marketing, production, circulation, textual representations and readers' consumption. Within this circuit values, meanings, codes, notions and practices of fashion are exchanged, and these are the focus of this thesis.

This thesis examines the niche fashion magazine genre, addressing its hybridised quality of art, popular culture, high fashion, elite and edge. Through active participant observation, the case study explores the production practices and the different economies and values that inform the encoding of fashion into the magazine. Drawing on in-depth interviews with niche fashion magazine readers, the thesis also explores how readers make sense of niche fashion magazines by engaging with their symbolic value.

Within the fashion press niche fashion magazines are the focal media for the tastemakers of fashion. Yet niche fashion magazines as an object of inquiry has been neglected by academia, which has paid more attention to women's and men's magazines and their textual representations. A central aim of this thesis is to contribute to an understanding of the meanings of fashion mediation with a specific focus on the methodological integration of textual, consumption and production analysis. By generating new insight as to how fashion is exchanged and mediated between producers and readers of niche fashion magazines it contributes to the study of fashion within sociology and media research.

DANSK IMAGES

All images shown in the thesis are featured with kind permission of Style Counsel.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

> Below the radar of the mainstream, but required reading for the movers and doyennes of the art and fashion world, magazines like 032c are successfully finding a niche while serving as a glimpse of the future of a publishing industry in flux. Titles like 'Purple,' from France, 'Fantastic Man' from the Netherlands, and 'Self-Service' from Paris exploit the overlapping fields of art, architecture and music that fashion has become. They are printed on expensive stock, look like art catalogues, sell at specialized shops across the world for prices beginning at €10, or $13.50, and have a devout following.
> (Tzortzis 2007)

Fashion magazines play a central role in circulating fashion. They are instrumental not only in helping readers make sense of, understand and consume fashion; they are themselves fashionable media that set trends in how fashion is mediated. The focus of this thesis is specific subgenre of fashion magazines, which I call 'niche fashion magazines', described by Tzortzis above as 'below the radar of the mainstream', with a hybridised quality of art, popular culture, high fashion, elite and edge.

Niche fashion magazines are the focal media for the tastemakers of fashion. They are also part of a highly unstable and oversaturated fashion magazine landscape. This landscape is characterised by staff and editor mobility (Jackson *et al.* 2001), an ebb and flow of titles (Braithwaite and Barrel 1988) and a constant and highly competitive hunt for advertising revenue. Surprisingly, academia has neglected the genre and how fashion is mediated within the alternative fashion press, paying more attention to women's and men's magazines and their textual representations of gender. This thesis is concerned with contemporary niche fashion magazines and their cultures of production and consumption. By exploring these I aim to contribute new knowledge to the study of fashion and media and generate new insight as to how fashion is exchanged and mediated between producers and readers of niche fashion magazines.

Angela McRobbie (1994: 59) observes that there is, throughout cultural studies, a distinction, a binary opposition between 'text and lived experience'. As an attempt to overcome this, both are explored in the thesis through integration of textual analysis, production ethnography and reader interviews. By merging these modes of analysis, meanings of niche fashion magazines within the whole 'circuit of culture' (du Gay *et al.* 2003) of niche fashion magazines are explored, qualified and interrelated. A central aim of this thesis is therefore to contribute to an understanding of the meanings of fashion

mediation with a specific focus on the methodological integration of textual, consumption and production analysis.

Context

A visit to R.D. Franks, a specialist fashion book and magazine shop in central London, overwhelms by the abundance of fashion magazines that mix fashion, art and graphic design. There are the ones that have survived more than a decade such as *Visionaire* (1991), *Purple Fashion* (1996) and *Self Service* (1995), and the newer ones that have already reached cult status such as *A Magazine* (2004), *Another Magazine* (2001), *POP* (2000), *Fantastic Man* (2005) and *Love* (2009). While all of them have carved different niches of fashion mediation and pride themselves on being different, independent, creative and conceptual, they all belong to the same niche fashion magazine culture.

Since the emergence of the women's magazine genre in the late 17th century (see, for instance, Adburgham 1972; Braithwaite 1995; White 1970), magazines have been powerful channels announcing what is in fashion and shaping readers' tastes in fashion. Subsequent to fashion dolls, fashion magazines have historically almost single-handedly been responsible for spreading fashion and showing new collections across different types of readerships. However, more recently the emergence of the online fashion press with abundant style and fashion blogs and websites such as Showstudio.com (established in 2000) and style.com (launched in 2001) has challenged fashion magazines' 'monopoly' as fashion mediators. The online fashion press has two major advantages over fashion magazines: they are constantly updated with news and they are much cheaper to produce. The abundance of online fashion publishing has led to speculations on the death of the printed fashion press. According to the *Economist* (27 September 2007), magazine circulation is declining as a result of the Internet, as well as the overall recession. Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) also argue that newspaper supplements and free magazines add competition to the magazine industry. Indeed, fashion magazines across genres are struggling to survive; for instance in May 2009, *i-D* changed its monthly frequency to bi-monthly in order to survive the 'current economic climate' (Brook 2009a) and British *Arena* had to close in April 2009 (Brook 2009b). In spite of this, new titles keep appearing that are either self-funded or funded by sponsorships or advertisements. More to the point, the printed fashion magazine has one advantage over the online fashion press: its tactile quality. The physicality of the magazine, as will be demonstrated, is highly valuable to readers.

Positioned at the forefront of fashion, the innovators of fashion use niche fashion magazines as playgrounds to try out new styles of photography, styling, art direction and models. These producers of fashion are linked via the networks and (sub)cultures of the various niche fashion magazines they work for. It is a prestigious and growing medium, highly influential in how fashion is consumed and produced. The supply of niche fashion magazines has grown since the turn of the millennium, yet little knowledge is available as to what they are and how they function in the field of fashion. Although the magazines under study are niche media, they are tightly linked to the wider fashion industry and do not work in isolation from the wider fields of fashion journalism, photography, publishing and clothing trends. Thus, understanding niche fashion magazines also casts light on the way fashion works. The producers of the most successful niche fashion magazines are important tastemakers in that they often also work as consultants and art directors for fashion brands, shaping what is deemed fashionable. For instance, editor-in-chief of *Love* Magazine, Katie Grand, besides working for many other niche fashion magazines, also works as a creative consultant for Louis Vuitton, Miu Miu and Loewe. Camille Bidault-Waddington is a contributing fashion editor of *Self Service* and works as a stylist for *Purple Fashion* as well as working as a consultant for Marc by Marc Jacobs, Sonia Rykiel and Pucci. Mathias Augustyniak and Michael Amzalag, who run the art direction and graphic agency M&M, work as creative consultants for *Vogue Paris*, the designers Yohji Yamamoto and Martine Sitbon and the photographers Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin, who in turn are responsible for ad campaigns of, for instance, Balenciaga. These producers are thus responsible for the making of high fashion trends, which later in the fashion cycle are emulated into the high street. The culture around niche fashion magazines can be said to function as a 'fashion incubator' that turns out fashion trends, which affect the wider trends in fashion clothing, styling, photography, beauty ideals, art direction and graphic design. The reach and significance of niche fashion magazines therefore go beyond the magazines and affect the wider field of fashion. By understanding the production, consumption and textual qualities of these magazines, this thesis creates knowledge of the value system that underpins them, which is relevant to understanding the wider impetus and stimulus of fashion trends and the field of fashion.

DANSK Magazine, the case study of this thesis (See Chapter Five), was, at the time of fieldwork, a well-established Scandinavian niche fashion magazine but it has since gained a better position internationally. *DANSK* is significant for its reproduction of the field's shared values and, like most other niche fashion magazines, its producers

also work as creative consultants and important tastemakers in Denmark, and *DANSK* is thus representative of the production and consumption practices central to the niche fashion magazine culture.

Niche fashion magazine exposure is valuable branding and functions as 'look books' of producers and contributors' work, providing a reference point as well as working tool for the movers and shakers of the field of fashion. In an increasingly fast-paced fashion industry the high street label Zara has 20-odd annual packs (mini collections), while the high-fashion label Chanel does more than six annual collections (pre-fall, fall, haute couture, pre-spring, spring/summer and cruise collections). Alongside this speeded up production, Internet sites and blogs offering up-to-the-minute news, niche fashion magazines represent a potential slower consumption of fashion. While the Internet, fashion blogs in particular, is gaining grounds in the field of fashion, this thesis shows that magazines are highly important to the readers who treasure them as material and symbolic objects. Exploring the materiality of niche fashion magazines is important at a time where digital mediation seems to replace much 'material' fashion mediation. With their limited print run, rarer frequency and expensive production, these exclusive magazines represent the haute couture of the fashion press. Their position outside the Internet is also part of the magazines' own justification. For instance, editor-in-chief Olivier Zahm writes in his editorial note of *Purple Fashion*:

> As an independant [sic] magazine, it has maintained a commitment to artistic individuality, integrity and intelligence. So we also resist the drift towards the Internet, the future home of magazines and practical consumption, in preference for art's unpredictability and a sense of true fashion design.
> (*Purple Fashion*, issue 4, fall-winter 2005/06: 18)

Besides offering an alternative to the Internet, *Purple Fashion*'s rationale is to not cater to practical consumption. Instead niche fashion magazine consumption, as this thesis will show, is highly symbolical and it is precisely their symbolic value that sets niche fashion magazines apart from most other genres of fashion magazines.

Aims and Objectives

Niche fashion magazines make up a whole magazine culture of production, representation and consumption. The aim of this thesis is to explore the values, codes and meanings that are exchanged and shared within the niche fashion magazine circuit. What is it that these magazines offer? What kind of fashion culture do they belong to?

How do they become meaningful to their readers? What practices and values underpin their production? What cultural meanings circulate within and across the magazines, from the producers to the text and to the readers? How do readers understand the producers of niche fashion magazines as well as other readers? And how do producers relate to their readers as well as other producers? This thesis seeks to answer these questions. This introductory chapter, besides introducing the aims and context of the thesis, also defines the concepts that are used throughout: 'mediation' 'magazine culture', 'field of fashion' and 'value'.

Thesis Structure

The thesis falls into nine chapters, which all explore the various 'cultures' (a concept I define below) involved in niche fashion magazines. Chapter Two reviews the literature on magazines, focusing on women's magazines, men's magazines and fashion magazines as well as the literature on fashion writing. It pays attention to the methodological shifts within the field and points out the gaps which this thesis hopes to bridge. Chapter Three provides the methodological framework of the thesis and outlines the methods used, as well as providing critical reflections on my position in the field. Chapter Four attempts to define the subgenre of niche fashion magazines. With a starting point in the style magazines of the 1980s, it discusses the emergence of the genre and, by drawing on theories on postmodernism and the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1993a), among others, it seeks to understand how niche fashion magazines straddle the various genres, styles and logics of art and commerce, among other sectors. Lastly, it provides two case studies of key examples of the niche fashion magazines genre: glossy niche magazines and art fashion magazines, which represent different styles, such as irony and art, and underlying beliefs connected to various cultures and geographies of the magazines. Chapter Five focuses on *DANSK* Magazine, the specific case study of this thesis. It examines its visual identity, fashion spreads and fashion writing and sets the framework for the following chapters, which offer close readings of the production and consumption of *DANSK*. Drawing on ethnographic participation in the making of *DANSK* magazine and Bourdieu's field theory, Chapter Six explores the production of *DANSK* outlining both the organisation of work and the various values, codes and practices that inform how the editors put the magazine together. The findings of in-depth interviews with *DANSK* readers is the focus of Chapter Seven, which pays attention to the symbolic consumption of *DANSK* and other niche fashion magazines, and it also examines how readers understand the boundary of their 'reader culture' and

how certain vehicles such as models, clothes and ads are key parts of their meaning-making. Chapter Eight follows suit with an analysis of readers' consumption of *DANSK* in relation to the physicality of the magazine and makes a case for the interrelation between the material culture of the magazines and readers' symbolic appropriation of them. Chapter Nine is an extended conclusion that attempts to join the various moments of production and consumption, in a discussion of the meanings and significance of niche fashion magazine cultures as well as suggest avenues for future research.

Definition of Concepts

Four notions are repeated throughout the thesis: 'mediation', 'magazine culture', 'field of fashion' and 'value'. This section seeks to define what these notions refer to.

Mediation

Defining mediation is not an easy task, as it is a highly complex word to which a range of conflicted meanings have been attributed (Williams 1988). In cultural theory, mediation refers firstly to 'the way human relations are "mediated" by social conventions, ideology, class, gender etc.', and secondly it refers to 'the way mass media "mediate" and thus filter and shape the transmission of information' (Milner and Browitt 2002: 234). It is useful here to consider mediation as 'a means of transmission, or agency as a medium' (Williams 1988: 204). In this sense, mediation covers 'intermediate agency, from material things ... to mental acts' (Williams 1988: 205). Mediation is also a substantial interaction in itself, which is not a 'neutral process of separate forms, but an active process in which the form of mediation alters the things mediated or by its nature indicates their nature' (Williams 1988: 205). In relation to mediation, understood as the interaction between two opposites, 'mediation is in the object itself, not something between the object and that to which it is brought. What is contained in communications, however, is solely the relationship between producer and consumer' (Theodor Adorno, cited in Williams 1988: 206). Referring to objects of art, Adorno sees objects as 'mediated' by social relationships but they should not be reduced to this relationship between, for instance, producers and consumers, as objects constitute a form in themselves.

Keeping this set of definitions in mind, I use 'mediation' to refer to a process in which meaningful objects, such as magazines, images and texts, and values, beliefs,

ideas and meanings are transmitted between agents and institutions. What is mediated, the magazine and the encoded values, is not neutral, but both informs the mediation and is informed by the socio-cultural relationships between transmitters and receivers. Specifically, mediation occurs between producers and readers, with the magazine being the object that connects them. Writing on advertising, Anne Cronin (2004) argues that mediation is not a single action but takes place at the same time between multiple spaces and agents involved in the same production, such as different practitioners involved in an ad campaign or the production of a fashion magazine where art directors, writers, photographers, retouchers and proofreaders all perform what she refers to as 'multiple regimes of mediation'. In view of this, mediation within and across niche fashion magazines is not a single act but occurs from different interrelated sites. I will pursue this in Chapter Six on the production of niche fashion magazines.

Magazine Culture

'Culture' has been widely studied. In defining how culture is used in the present thesis, I draw on a range of approaches which are united by their focus on 'shared meanings' (Hall 1997: 1) and practices. Before doing this I would like to introduce briefly two contrasting definitions of culture, as they are central to the discussion of the nature of what I call the niche fashion magazine culture. In the tradition of 'Kulturkritik' (Milner and Bronwitt 2002: 8) of the German Frankfurt School, culture is viewed as elitist and refers to the arts and artistic and intellectual activities; in other words 'culture' is taken to refer to refined and high culture. The other approach comes from a British cultural studies tradition and Raymond Williams, who saw culture as a 'way of life'. Turning away from cultural elitism, he announced that 'culture is ordinary' (Williams 1997: 5). In this sense, 'culture' is attached to shared meanings and the specificity of a group of people, a lifestyle or a period in time and is often synonymous with 'popular culture'. These two approaches and the debates on high culture versus popular culture were for many years at the centre of the definitions of culture, especially within theories on postmodernism. While contemporary culture is certainly a mix of both popular and high culture, a tension between them still applies. As explained in Chapter Four, contemporary niche fashion magazines indeed mix the cultural codes of the elite and the popular but a distinction between the two approaches is also played out within the niche fashion magazine genre. Its members engage in cultural gatekeeping, restricting access to the culture by using elitist codes. This topic is discussed further in Chapter Nine.

Culture is a socio-cultural construction, created by its members. Williams (1997: 6) argues that culture has two aspects: 'the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested'. This implies practices, meanings, traditions and values that are shared by groups of people as well as how this culture changes as new observations are made meaningful. The idea of learned meanings through the acquisition of shared knowledge is central to how culture is applied in the thesis. Drawing on the work of Williams and Hall, Patricia Curtin and Kenn Gaither (2007: 35) define culture as follows: 'Culture is the process by which meaning is produced, circulated, consumed, commodified, and endlessly reproduced and renegotiated in society'.

Bearing in mind the idea of culture as a process of production, consumption and circulation of meanings, I now turn to the work of Michel Maffesoli (1996) and Arjan Appadurai (1996). Although they are not directly referring to culture in their work on disindividualisation in contemporary society and globalisation respectively, they provide a helpful framework for understanding how magazine circuits constitute cultures. The work of Maffesoli relates to subcultures and style cultures (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979; Muggleton 2000; Thornton 1995) inasmuch as he addresses social groupings that, among other things, are tied together by a shared aesthetic. But where his work departs from the early work on subcultures is that he does not focus so much on style as resistance to hegemony or as relating to class, but on the feeling of togetherness. In addressing how people relate to each other in metropolitan areas, Maffesoli (1996) refers to the notion of neo-tribalism, where people belong to various tribes. Neo-tribes are small micro-groups in which members share a common space either real or virtual (through the Internet). Unlike classical tribalism, Maffesoli (1996: 76) argues that neo-tribes are characterised by 'fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal' in which people can belong to plural tribes at the same time. Central to the concept of the tribe is the everyday, which links to Williams' concept of culture as ordinary; a way of life. Tribes are temporary in the sense that they are played out by people creatively, as the different shared lifestyles are created by their members. Maffesoli criticises the concept of the individual, referring instead to the 'persona', which is the mask an individual takes on in order to blend in and adapt to situations that are acted as a group. The notion of culture, if seen with the eyes of Maffesoli, relates to everyday creation, rather than the elite and refined. Aesthetics play a significant role to neo-tribes. Maffesoli argues that 'aesthetic is a way of feeling in common' (1996: 77). So the way we dress, our appearance, our lifestyles and the fashion magazines that we read link us and 'act as the glue' (Maffessoli 1996: 77) to the feeling

of tribal togetherness. Within tribes certain rituals are performed as confirmation of membership, with the sole purpose of asserting the small group against the large group. Maffesoli's work on tribes is useful to this thesis as it pays attention to the sense of togetherness and the shared aesthetic practices members, producers and readers feel within the niche fashion magazine culture.

Arjun Appadurai's (1996) term 'mediascape' is also useful as it reminds us that global distribution of media connects people in sites across spaces and communities. The suffix 'scape' refers to 'imagined worlds' (1996: 33) within the global economy where electronic and print media become 'a text-in-motion' (1996: 9). Appadurai uses the term mediascapes to refer 'both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media' (Appadurai 1996: 35). Central to the concept is that the media in global landscapes is fluid and it crosses global and local boundaries. Following Appadurai, international niche fashion magazines reach and connect people globally and are instrumental in the creation of imagined communities of readers and producers. I discuss the concept of mediascapes in Chapter Seven in relation to the local/global context of *DANSK* magazine and how its readers relate to this.

An influence on the methodological design of this thesis, and on the way I use the term 'culture', is the concept of 'circuit of culture' (Johnson 1986; du Gay *et al.* 2003). It refers to the fact that magazine culture, and the way meaning is constituted within this culture, cannot be understood without looking at the whole circuit through which the magazine passes. The circuit of culture includes five moments: regulation, production, consumption, representation and identity. These together provide 'a shared cultural space in which meaning is created, shaped, modified, and recreated' (Curtin and Gaither 2007: 37-38). While there is no beginning or end, the various moments are distinct and important to the production of cultural meaning. Within the circuit of culture model the emphasis is thus on culture as a process. This thesis looks at the three key moments of such a culture: representation, production and consumption.

The above notions and definitions all make up the concept of 'magazine cultures', which is referred to throughout the thesis. This refers to co-existing imagined and real communities, in which everyday magazine consumption and production practices are made meaningful through shared values and practices that are both elitist and popular. On the formation of nationalism, Benedict Anderson (1991: 6) argues that one of the features of a nation as a community is that it is imagined, because 'members

even of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. Drawing on Anderson's concept, what unites readers and producers of magazine cultures is not their face-to-face interactions, but, connected in mediascapes and through mediated communication, their capacity to create and imagine a community, club or togetherness with likeminded people. However, the magazine culture also involves actual communities. Readers do sometimes come face-to-face, physically joining together in reading magazines or discussing them with friends and colleagues, as Chapter Seven shows. Moreover, the production of a magazine involves close collaboration between editors and contributors in real communities.

Following Maffesoli's (1996: 77) idea that 'aesthetic is a way of feeling in common', magazine cultures provide a temporal, real or imagined space and networks, which are interrelated articulations of cultures, where readers and producers share meanings and values. I also use the terms 'reader culture', 'cultures of consumption', 'production culture' and 'cultures of production', which refer to the shared meanings and values within the community of readers and producers respectively; the various moments of the circuit.

Lastly, although writing about 'the death of the author' and the reader's autonomy of meaning-making, Roland Barthes (1979b) reminds us of the importance of the text: 'the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture' (1979a: 146). What we can gain from Barthes is that in order for any sense-making to occur, the textual 'tissue' must exist. Culture, if it is defined as real and imagined communities in which people share meanings and values through practices, thus also rests on things, in this case magazines, to bind it together. Chapter Six discovers how producers orient themselves towards other producers by means of the magazines, as well as the shared practices employed across magazine production. Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight show how readers construct and create memberships, in-groups and communities through the reading and display of niche fashion magazines. And lastly, as I will argue in Chapter Nine, readers and producers through their professions and set of shared values join in the same niche fashion culture.

Field of Fashion

Another notion I refer to throughout the thesis is 'the field of fashion'. The notion of field draws directly on Bourdieu's sociological concept (see, for instance, Bourdieu 1993b). There are other key terms central to Bourdieu's field theory, such as habitus,

taste, distinction and capital, which will be accounted for in Chapter Six. With his field theory, Bourdieu attempts to overcome the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism. By 'fields' he means 'structured spaces of positions' (Bourdieu 1993b: 72), which is a social arena where struggles or competition for resources and access take place (Jenkins 1992). There are different fields, such as the field of religion, the field of philosophy and the field of fashion. Key to understanding any field is that within these social spaces there are different rules and laws that organise them: 'In order for a field to function, there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with a habitus that implies knowledge and recognition of the imminent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on' (Bourdieu, 1992b: 72). So a field is a social arena in which the 'players' accept and understand the game.

In drawing on Bourdieuian theory, Agnès Rocamora (2009: 28) offers a useful definition of a field, as 'a semi-autonomous structured space of positions defined by specific rules of functioning, values and principles, and the existence of consecrated institutions involved in the promulgating and legitimating of such rules and values'. Players in the field, field members and aspiring field members need to reproduce the stakes, logic and values specific to the field to uphold the field. Members of the field of fashion need to accept, and thereby reproduce, the idea that fashion is driven by change and distinction, which informs the different strategies and practices used. Central to the field of fashion, as to any field, is the hierarchical relation between players such as magazine editors, photographers, models, stylists, designers and shops – where some are more established and powerful and others are aspiring players, who Bourdieu calls 'newcomers'. The established players want to maintain their position by 'conservation strategies' and the newcomers and pretenders try to gain a footing by 'subversion strategies' (1993b: 133). Bourdieu (1993b) and Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975) also chart the different strategies and positions between the designers of the field of French haute couture in the 1970s.

The term 'field of fashion' could be replaced with the more general 'fashion industry', but this does not encapsulate the hierarchies and struggles among the agents and institutions that Bourdieu's notion entails. When I refer to the field of fashion I thus mean the particular social space in which agents (such as photographers, models, fashion designers and fashion journalists) and institutions (for example the advertising economy, and freelance culture) accept the beliefs that underpin the field, such as aesthetic change and distinction.

There are some limitations to Bourdieu's structuralist approach. By focusing on the homology between high culture and high fashion his field theory, as Rocamora

(2002) argues, ignores mass fashion. More generally, he reduces processes of production and consumption to class differentiation and manifestations of distinction and does not pay attention to the materiality of consumption (Rocamora 2002). Reducing the production and consumption of culture to overly deterministic social structures, governed by calculative strategies, leaves little room for the disinterested and spontaneous creativity that may be involved in it. This will also be discussed in Chapter Six. Yet in spite of these reservations Bourdieu's work offers a useful framework for understanding the social processes involved in consumption and production of niche fashion magazine culture.

Value

A key notion that is used is 'value'. This is closely linked to 'mediation', 'magazine culture' and 'field of fashion'. How does one define value? Grant McCracken (2005: 175) argues that an exhaustive definition of value does not exist. Simply, value denotes 'worth', 'quality', 'price', 'significance' and 'attraction'. Intrinsic to both magazine culture and field of fashion is the shared meanings and values and the belief in them. Appadurai (1986: 3) argues that 'value is embodied in commodities that are exchanged'. The exchange can be of material or symbolic value. Regardless of which, the value of something is not inherent, and in order for something to become valuable, it must be created and recognised collectively as valuable. Value is socially constructed and can change over time. Furthermore it is culture-specific, as different groups of people hold different types of values.

In his work on fashion writing, Roland Barthes (1985: 24) argues that fashion is 'pure value, it cannot produce clothing or constitute one of its uses'. To Barthes the value of fashion lies in its detachment from its use value; fashion is a value in itself, which is bestowed on the object. This type of value is produced symbolically. In a similar vein to Barthes, Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975) describe value in relation to fashion designers and their labels. They argue that the value of a designer's label is symbolic and that the label bestows value to the designer's name via symbolic production, which they call 'transsubstantiation' (Rocamora 2002). Bourdieu and Delsaut use the Christian concept of communion, in which there is a change of substance of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, to explain the symbolic production of a cultural product. Symbolic production is the 'production of beliefs in the values' (Rocamora 2002: 349) of the work. Thus, the production of value is dependent on a shared belief in it.

In terms of the Bourdieuian framework, value is a symbolic attribution but one must not ignore the material culture, the actual status or economic worth of the object in the creation of value. Central to my usage of the term 'value' is that it is a symbolic resource shared by players, such as editors, photographers and fashion writers, in the field of fashion. Within the niche fashion magazine culture certain valued objects and practices are specific to that culture. As Chapters Six and Seven will show, the underlying values of the niche fashion magazine culture are exclusivity, rarity and timing, which are shared across producers and readers.

Conclusion

In developing my theoretical framework I draw from a range of different approaches. All the concepts – mediation, culture, field of fashion and value – support the analysis of the practices and meanings of niche fashion magazines and their production and consumption. Producers and readers are tied together by the shared, real and imagined space of the niche fashion magazine 'culture' in which shared values are circulated and reproduced. While popular culture is central to niche fashion magazines, the nature of the niche fashion magazine culture is as elitist as it is difficult to access, as I will show in Chapter Four and Chapter Seven. 'Mediation' is the process in which magazines' meanings, values and beliefs are transmitted and circulated within the magazine culture. The process of mediation is informed by the different socio-cultural relationships involved in the transmission: producers in relation to other producers, the relationship between producers and readers and vice versa, and the relationship between readers are the focus of this thesis. The niche fashion culture where the mediation takes place is also informed by the logic of the 'field of fashion' in which certain logics and practices are taken for granted and internalised. Members of the field of fashion know the stakes and compete for the same positions, reproducing the laws and acting on 'conservation strategies' or 'subversion strategies' depending on their position. Underlying mediation, culture and the field of fashion are a set of symbolic values, such as exclusivity and newness, specific to niche fashion magazine cultures.

With the aim of expanding our understanding of fashion magazines, this thesis focuses on the magazine cultures of niche fashion mediation. It specifically explores the representation, creation, production, reception and consumption of meanings, values and beliefs involved in the culture of niche fashion magazines. This project is concerned with fashion as a shared, mediated and aesthetic meaning and thus aims at contributing to the study of fashion within sociology and media research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEWING THE MAGAZINE LITERATURE

Text, Readers and Production

Introduction

> Magazines (...) are vectors of pleasure, they encourage the acquisition of knowledge, they may play an important role in the formation of identity, they are open to resistant readings, they easily encompass and incorporate flexible and varying conditions of consumption and production, and they form a readily accessible community focus. All this rolled into a highly successful cultural form – yet it is a form which scholars have, with a few exceptions, tended to underestimate and overlook. (Holmes 2008: introduction)

Although fashion, both as a dress practice and as a system of meanings, is increasingly studied within an interdisciplinary field of academia, the fashion press, as well as magazines more generally, remains relatively under-researched, as Holmes (2008) argues above. As a media product, fashion magazines are part of a complex cultural circuit which involves their marketing, production, circulation, textual representations and readers' consumption. Within this circuit values, meanings, codes, notions and practices of fashion are exchanged, and these are the focus of this thesis. Understanding this circuit, but most importantly the codes through which values and notions of fashion are mediated, consumed and produced, will shed light on the wider niche fashion magazine culture.

The small body of existing research on fashion magazines is dominated by content and discourse analysis and semiotic work on women's magazines, with a focus on the written words and images of fashion (Barthes 1985 [1967]; Jobling 1999; König 2006; Rabine 1994; Rocamora 2006). There is some research into the production of fashion magazines (see, for instance, Braithwaite and Barrell 1988; Moeran 2006a; Gough-Yates 2003) and the consumption and reading of women and teenage magazines (see, for instance, Crane 1999; Frazer 1987; Hermes 1997; Lewis 1997). Work on women's magazines and men's magazines employs different foci and approaches fashion very differently. While research in the form of textual analysis of women's magazines is prominent (Ballaster *et al.* 1991; Ferguson 1983; Gough-Yates 2003; McCracken 1993, 1982; McRobbie 1978, 1996, 2000; Winship 1987), scholars of men's magazines (Edwards 1997; Crewe 2003; Jackson *et al.* 2001; Mort 1996; Nixon 1993, 1997a, 2003) combine textual analysis with a focus on the producers of magazines.

Through reviewing the literature on women's, men's and women's fashion magazines, it becomes clear that what is missing is a methodological integration of textual, consumption and production analysis with specific focus on fashion and its meanings. With the exception of Jackson *et al.* (2001), scholars fail to integrate the

complexities and interrelationship between the production of the meanings of fashion into the magazine, the magazine codes and the ways these meanings are consumed, appropriated and activated by the readers.

Moreover, scholars tend to explore the same titles, high-end glossies, teenage and men's magazines. Thus, analyses of *Vogue, Cosmopolitan* and *Jackie* or *GQ, loaded* and *FHM,* which are produced by large publishing houses and often published in various national versions internationally, are prevalent. With a few exceptions such as Eugénie Shinkle's (2008) anthology on the reading of contemporary fashion photography, contemporary niche fashion magazines have not, on the whole, been explored by researchers.

Judging by the continuous emergence of new titles, niche fashion magazines are growing in numbers, but research has not yet examined the genre and the people who produce and read them. For this reason, this chapter examines the existing research into men's and women's fashion magazines as well as research on fashion writing. When analysing the academic research on magazines a picture of methodological trends emerges. The research traditions fall roughly into three major strands: textual, consumption and production analysis. For the purpose of clarifying these methodological approaches, the following review is divided into three sections: textual analysis; reader ethnography; and production analysis. The idea is not to force scholars into a fixed methodological matrix, but to present their key arguments in relation to their main methodologies. Key texts, including Barthes' *The Fashion System* (1985[1967]) and Joke Hermes' *Reading Women's Magazines* ([1988] 1997) will be analysed in detail. Key audience (Radway 1991; Ang 1996) and reception studies (Hall [1979] 1996) will also be examined to contextualise shifts in the research on magazines. The final section of this chapter addresses research on the circulation of meanings and the 'circuit of culture', which integrates text and lived experiences of consumers and producers. The focus is on key contributions that examine circulation of meanings (du Gay *et al.* 2003; Hobson 1982; Jackson *et al.* 2001; Morley 1992).

Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is by far the most widely used approach to study magazines. This approach investigates the representations of editorial and advertising images and written texts, focusing on the meanings encoded within these sites of discourse. Within the textual approach, three 'traditions' prevail: the first is concerned with feminist readings of oppressing images of commercial and normative femininities, which are deemed harmful to women. The second is a semiotic reading of fashion

magazine journalism, as part of the mediation of fashion. Lastly, male scholars, examining new forms of masculinity within men's magazines, are noticeably celebratory of the genre and are more interested in the ways in which the magazines construct new forms of masculinities.

Much second-wave feminist criticism of women's and fashion magazines rests on Marxist-informed arguments: magazines promote commodified desire, increase consumption (McCracken 1993: 299), encourage commodity fetishism (Rabine 1994: 73) and obscure the fact that they are themselves commodities which reproduce the ideology of capitalist society (McRobbie 2000 ([1978]: 73). Advertising in women's magazines is particularly criticised in Ellen McCracken's semiotic analysis of women's magazines (1993). The purpose of her research is to reveal the advertising nature of women's magazines. She critically highlights the fact that magazines' structures are dependent on advertisements and that the editorial content is adjusted according to advertisements. The existence of magazines is based on advertising revenues, and the exchange of revenue for editorial features is a common practice across magazines cultures. This 'advertising culture' is problematic to McCracken, as its 'primary message – that women should buy certain products – is encoded in numerous subtexts or secondary meaning systems that frequently induce insecurities while simultaneously creating pleasure' (1993: 4). She outlines the various categories of advertising, such as covert, overt, tie-ins and advertorials. In a footnote of her work (p. 306), McCracken refers to the responses of 34 undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts with whom she has discussed *Cosmopolitan*. They find it pleasurable; one reader likes 'the smell of the printed page' (p. 6) and another gains what McCracken labels 'utilitarian pleasure' (p. 6) from magazine ads as they help her compare products. While McCracken in passing discusses the students' reading of *Cosmopolitan*, she emphasises a '"text-centric" analysis' (p. 301) of women's magazines, as her aim is to go beyond readers' pleasures to understand the commercial culture that underpins most magazines and she wants to carry out oppositional reading of magazine texts. Though McCracken, like most of the second-wave feminists, acknowledges the pleasures of magazines, a methodological issue arises from her work. Meanings are not locked inside the text waiting for the academic analyst to unlock them through semiotic readings. Not only does semiotic reading privilege the insightful analyst's reading over readers'; what is more, the methodological assumptions imply that readers fall victim to false consciousness.

It is in Marjorie Ferguson's *Forever Feminine. Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity* (1983) that women's magazines receive most criticism. In drawing on Durkheim, Ferguson argues that women's magazines construct and reproduce

dominant representations of femininity, which she refers to as the 'cult of femininity', (1983: 5) which are shared and maintained through the readers' rituals of consumption. She contends that women's magazines are oracles that carry sacred messages about femininity. The editors are the high priestesses who select and shape the cult, and the readers are ordered to perform the 'rites', 'rituals' and 'sacrifices' (Ferguson 1983: 7). Women's magazine mediate 'sacred knowledge' (Ferguson 1983: 7) of femininity directed specifically at female readers. Ferguson does not approach magazines through textual analysis only, but she also interviews editors and other contributors to women's magazines as well as observing various stages of the production, which she was able to do through her previous job as a journalist editing and contributing to women's magazines. She outlines the changes in the messages offered in British women's magazines and the various editorial practices and structures involved in the production of magazines. Through, for instance, offering recipes and self-help, the role of women's magazines is to provide a 'social institution which serves to foster and maintain a cult of femininity' (Ferguson 1983: 184). What is problematic with Ferguson's analogy of a cult is that it dismissively positions women as naïve, uncritical and objectified consumers, reducing them to passive consumers. In view of this, Ferguson leaves little room for considering any potential pleasure, meaning-making agency or oppositional reading in readers' consumption.

Peter Corrigan (1997) examines, via the magazines' titles and content, the sort of woman that women's magazines construct. He argues that women's magazines construct a sense of community and sameness. While aiming to explore the consumption of women's magazines, Corrigan, due to lack of time and funding, instead looks at the textual construction of women as consumers. Semiotics thus becomes the 'easy' option, distanced from the mess of the social world. The methodological disadvantage of Corrigan's work is that advertising discourses and the themes of the features are used as representations of women's actual consumption of both the magazine and the products they hypothetically buy. However, his argument on magazines' construction of sameness and community is interesting, and I will explore the idea of magazine membership in Chapter Seven.

Angela McRobbie's (2000 [1978]) semiotic analysis of the teenage magazine *Jackie* is also focused on the underlying ideology of teenage femininity. By addressing its teenage readers as a unified group interested in recipes on how to get boys, lose weight and look good, and eager to move on to the next stage of womanhood, McRobbie argues that the discourses of *Jackie* leave little room for other kinds of adolescence and femininity. McRobbie is also highly critical of *Jackie*'s ability to look natural and cover the fact that it is itself a commodity, advertising for

itself and other products. She argues that *Jackie* reproduces the ideology of capitalist society and the sense of freedom it provides is an illusion. It is a leisure title that is commercially grounded and controlled by private capital interests, which are consumption-driven. *Jackie* acts as an intermediary, bridging the gap from adolescence to womanhood by spending, and in an argument that echoes McCracken criticism of magazine's consumption imperative, McRobbie claims that the readers (2000: 109) 'are here being introduced to and educated into, the sphere of feminine consumption'. In her analysis she introduces a 'she' (McRobbie 2000: 82), referring to a female reader. This 'she' is, in fact, a theoretical construction. No reader ethnography or interviews are carried out and her interpretations are assumed to be synonymous with *Jackie*'s readers without further substantiation of how actual readers make sense of *Jackie* and appropriate it. McRobbie later revisits this work and criticises her assumptions about *Jackie* readers (1996), which I will discuss later. What is problematic with McRobbie's early work on *Jackie* is first of all her underlying assumption that the text and its capitalist and patriarchal ideology overpower its readers. Secondly, the methodological issue is the belief that meaning is fixed in the text. Unlike McRobbie, Elizabeth Frazer (1987) examines how teenage girls actually read *Jackie*, and finds that the readers read against the grain of the encoded ideology. Frazer argues against the ideological assumption that readers have false consciousness and her work shows that readers are far from passive receivers.

The studies of Ferguson (1983), McCracken (1993, 1982) and McRobbie (1978, 1996, 2000) are important works of their time, laying the foundation from which new questions and avenues of enquiry have arisen. However, some unresolved questions also arise from many of these early feminist readings of magazines. What Frazer (1987) calls 'ideology' and Evans and Thornton call 'ideology of femininity' (1989: 3) are central – not the voices of the readers and their attitudes towards the magazines or the producers' practices and the values that they encode in the magazines. Part of the theoretical choice is the methodological assumption that meaning is fixed in the text, which in the case of feminism is patriarchal oppression, and the researchers know how to unlock this and inform the readers. Although actual reader consumption and appropriation is not their focus, qualifying their findings with actual reading might support, challenge and give nuances to their analysis. McRobbie is one of the most active scholars on magazines and she also acknowledges some of the limitations of her earlier work. One of the key findings of McRobbie's later work (1996), as well as that of Crane (1999) and Lewis (1997), is that younger readers may not find contemporary magazine discourses as

problematic as older feminists, or read them both with and against the grain regardless of their feminist or post-feminist stance.

Moreover, fashion is not the primary focus of most research into women's magazines. Instead, the spotlight is on the construction and representation of gender. While femininity is explored in relation to the images of fashion, other discourses of fashion such as what fashion is about, what are its practices, how notions and beliefs of fashion shape the consumption and production of the magazines, and how insiders and outsiders read magazines differently have not been examined. One reason for this is that the groundbreaking work of second-wave feminism condemned the whole package of fashion in the 1960s and 1970s (Evans and Thornton 1989). Feminists at the time regarded fashion as patriarchy's partner in crime, arguing that fashion involves imperative and manipulative femininity, which construct a false and objectifying female identity. Fashion, in much structuralist, textual work on women's magazines, is seen as part of a wider ideology, which is oppressive to women since it demands certain consumption patterns, femininity and body types, streamlined and dressed according to fashion. Fashion was, thus, part of the 'ideology of femininity' (Evans and Thornton 1989: 3). Furthermore, feminist research coming out of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s and early 1980s, which was also shaped by the Frankfurt School's critical approach to the culture industries, has informed much initial research on women's magazines (see, for instance, Winship 1980, 1981; McRobbie 1978). Women's and girls' magazines in Winship's and McRobbie's work are essentially understood as demeaning to women, hurtful and consumerist; the magazines' meanings are understood as 'negative' and the scholar 'knows better' than the readers. But as Holmes argues (2008: x) 'gender is not the only lens through which to study magazines'. Frazer (1987) similarly argues that magazine scholars are too preoccupied with identifying '"the" ideological effect' (1987: 411) of the magazine on the reader, and her work on readers of the teenage magazine *Jackie* shows that readers are freer than theories imply. While most feminists (Crane 1999; Gough-Yates 2003; Hermes 1997; Lewis 1997; Lewis and Rolley 1996) do acknowledge that magazines give women pleasure, as McRobbie notes (1996), they have overlooked other important issues: that cultural artefacts are not 'born' with a fixed meaning and that readers can both actively experience pleasure and be critical of magazines, as Lewis (1997) and Crane (1999) show.

While this thesis does not disregard these previous groundbreaking magazine studies, which laid the foundation for magazine research, it aims to further the study of fashion and its mediation by analysing contemporary niche fashion magazines, shaped by complex and lived, everyday cultures of production

and consumption. Semiotic analysis of fashion writing, as the following sections examine, can enable analysis of the internal structures of tone, style and references within the fashion magazine. However, it is important to link this to the whole 'circuit of culture', to the experiences and lived cultures of consumption and production.

Fashion Writing

With the exception of Rocamora (2001, 2006), research into fashion writing and journalism draws on Barthes' structuralist account of written fashion, which is informed by Saussurean linguistics. This strand provides microanalysis of fashion writing and fashion journalism (Borelli 1997; König 2006; Machin and van Leeuwen 2005; McRobbie 1998), mostly from *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, focusing on cultural encodings, lexicon, messages and references within textual representations. Thus, meanings are extracted from within textual structures. Like feminist readings of representations of femininity, their focus is not on the 'lived cultures' of reader appropriation and production of fashion writing, but on the text as a thing in itself and how it can be interpreted within theoretical frameworks.

Roland Barthes' *The Fashion System* (1985 [1967]) has become a touchstone in fashion studies, analysing fashion's communicative potential. He was not, however, the first scholar to investigate fashion magazines. The pioneer was the Lithuanian-born French linguist A. J. Greimas. His 1949 doctoral thesis was a historic lexicography on fashion words from the fashion magazines of the 1830s (Greimas 2000). That Greimas's linguistic contribution to fashion magazine research was not published before 2000, and then in French only, explains why his work has been overlooked by fashion scholars.

Barthes, informed by Saussurean linguistics, develops a highly complex and critical discussion of fashion into a system of linguistic meanings. Drawing on semiotic discourse analysis of a sample of French women's fashion magazines, he breaks utterances into various codes, sets and units. Barthes is not interested in dress practices or images of fashion, but in fashion writing, as he believes fashion does not exist unless it is described. His data sample includes the bylines, captions and headings as well as the texts that accompanied the fashion spreads from a year's publication (June 1958-June 1959) of *Elle* and *Jardin des Modes*.

Barthes argues that fashion writing is based on interrelated codes. Within these codes he distinguishes the real, physical garment, the photographed garment, which he calls *image clothing* (*vêtement-image*), and the garment written about in magazines, which he refers to as *written clothing* (*vêtement écrit*) (Barthes 1985: 3). Barthes' interest is in the latter, since he wants to decode the language of fashion.

While a photograph involves multiple readings, the written word, he argues, is more powerful and lends itself to a 'purer' analysis (Barthes 1985: 8), as it acts like an authority that dictates the reading and pronouncement of fashion. Written fashion 'arrests' the reading by emphasising, for example, 'the blue silk' or 'the fur trim'. It gives information by isolating certain elements and in that sense it provides knowledge. Written clothing, consisting of vestimentary, evaluative or circumstantial codes, transmits the sign of Fashion (Barthes writes it with a capital F), whose authoritative language lures readers into buying it.

Barthes criticises written fashion's lack of transparency – it is institutionalised and a naturalised world of fashion that operates by and refers to its own conventions. The fashion sign, the union of the signifier and the signified, is arbitrary. It is made each year, now even more often than in 1967 as there are now more seasons and co-existing trends, by 'an exclusive authority' (Barthes 1985: 215). Gatekeepers – such as PR agents, fashion designers, trendsetters, opinion leaders and, most importantly, fashion magazine editors and writers – make up this authority. Barthes explains fashion's drive for newness linguistically, as he argues that fashion is always the same system, only its lexicon changes.

Barthes' work is central to most subsequent analysis of fashion writing, and his influence goes far beyond the analysis of written fashion. His argument that fashion is a simulacrum, detached from anything original (Barthes 1985: foreword; *xii*), is later revisited by Jean Baudrillard (1995, 1998), and Barthes' idea of fashion as a sign of play (1985: 257) and the futility of fashion (1985: 267) are also central to Baudrillard's criticism of post-modern fashion (1995). Barthes claims that written fashion is powerful, since it transcends the actual garment. What is essential is the desire and meaning that it sells (1985: foreword; *xii*). Furthermore, some of the ideas presented in *The Fashion System* were already introduced in Barthes' earlier work on myth in society (1972 [1957]), where he debates how dominant, capitalist and bourgeois ideologies are veiled and significations are naturalised, as myth acts to disarm complexities and to make dominant values and beliefs natural and common-sense.

In an argument reminiscent of subsequent criticism of women's and fashion magazines, Barthes alleges that fashion overpowers its consumers. Barthes' linguistic analogies are theoretical constructions that situate fashion remotely away from any 'lived cultures' of production and consumption. Through them he 'places fashion in a vacuum' (Wilson 2003: 57), outside actual appropriation or meaning-making. Paul Jobling (1999) also criticises Barthes on two accounts: first, for ignoring the photographic representation of fashion and second, for objectifying women as the only gender of fashion.

A host of scholars specifically explore written discourses in fashion magazines (Borelli 1997; König 2006; Machin and van Leeuwen 2005; McRobbie 1998) and in newspapers (Rocamora 2001). In her extensive examination of the image industries of British fashion, McRobbie (1998) claims that the style of fashion journalism has not progressed since 1967 when Barthes first analysed the language of fashion magazines (McRobbie 1998: 153). Fashion journalism, to McRobbie, confirms legitimate patterns of shock and newness, which are limited to what can be fed into a fashion spread. She argues that style magazines such as *i-D* and *The Face* may have pioneered styles of photography, but is just a 'style', as fashion writing has not changed. This resonates with Dick Hebdige's earlier criticism of *The Face* as a stylistic and post-modern image surface (Hebdige 1985). McRobbie also contends that style magazines exclude any 'serious discussion of the social processes or economic relations which underpin fashion as a cultural activity' (McRobbie 1998: 154). The work of fashion photographers, stylists and journalists is left uncriticised and their values are similarly unchallenged (McRobbie 1998: 165). While it is true that fashion is rarely dealt with critically in the fashion press, as it is not traditional to review fashion collections as on a par with film, theatre and music journalism, I would argue that a serious discussion of fashion's social processes is hardly the fashion press's role. Although fashion writing, and its inclusion of self-critique, varies according to magazine genre, one can find critical treatment of fashion in the broadsheets, such as Suzy Menkes' work for the *International Herald Tribune* and in the trade press. These points are taken up in Chapter Four when I discuss different styles of writing and critical fashion writing in relation to defining what makes up the genre of niche fashion magazines and their degree of independence.

Drawing on a sample of British *Vogue*, Anna König (2006) disagrees with McRobbie, arguing that fashion writing is not a fixed form. While the use of imperative language and exaggerations is still dominant, König shows that the references and vocabulary have changed. She identifies a change in style towards a larger number of shorter articles, more focus on celebrities and the increasing use of irony (König 2006: 215). This shift, however, includes a less critical tone and more homogeneous style of fashion writing (König 2006: 219), and König argues that fashion writing is often deprived of variety (2006: 220). Laird Borelli's (1997) analysis of fashion writing in *Vogue* forms part of König's frame of reference. Herself a fashion writer and contributor to *Vogue* and style.com, Borelli, like many others, draws on the Barthesian focus on 'written garment' and analyses the individual styles of three of American *Vogue*'s editors-in-chief. In a similar manner as Rocamora's (2006) inquiry on readers' letters, Borelli is interested in the voice of the magazines expressed in 'Point of View' sections, which guide the reader

through the do's and dont's of the season's fashion (Borelli 1997: 249). To Borelli, 'Vogue speak' (1997: 254) is exaggerated and hyphenated, and she argues, rather predictably, that the different styles of the editor reflect how fashion is mediated and each generates a new fashion rhetoric (1997: 258). Similarly, Machin and van Leeuwen's (2005) Barthes-informed paper on various global versions of *Cosmopolitan* analyses a range of styles linguistically and, like Barthes ([1967] 1985), König (2006) and Borelli (1997), they identify fashion's imperative tone, always having to be up-to-date, as well as other styles of writing which I shall return to in Chapter Four.

Agnès Rocamora's work breaks free from the Barthesian legacy. Her analysis of fashion writing in the *Le Monde* and *The Guardian* (2001) and the readers' letters in *Vogue Paris* (2006) is instead framed by Bourdieuian theory. Rocamora sees the journalistic representations of fashion as part of the symbolic production of fashion. While the French newspaper positions fashion within high culture (i.e. high fashion), the British discourses position fashion as part of popular culture, pop fashion. Rocamora's interest in cultural production is furthered in her work on readers' letters in *Vogue Paris* (2006), which reflects a French understanding of fashion as high fashion, belonging to high culture, which is equally reflected in the high cultural capital of the reader letters. Rocamora is significant for paying attention to the underlying cultural values and beliefs of fashion conveyed in fashion writing, not codes of femininity or capitalism. Her work is, thus, useful for enabling analysis of the values and beliefs that inform the cultures of niche fashion magazines.

Textual approaches to fashion writing on their own isolate the text from the lived cultures of the writers, editors and institutions that produce them and the readers that read and make sense of them. Textual analysis alone runs the risk of what Entwistle refers to as the 'bracketing off' (2003: 70) of the social and actual practices of reading, the reader's processes of meaning-making, the larger framework of production, and the institutions of magazine publishing. However, used as a part of the investigation into the interrelated processes of the circuit of fashion mediation, existing research on fashion writing is beneficial for a close reading of fashion writing's style and tone.

Men's Magazines

Unlike the second-wave feminist magazine scholars, scholars investigating the textual qualities of men's magazines (Benwell 2003; Edwards 1997; Mort 1996; Nixon 1997a; Crewe 2003; Jackson *et al.* 2001) are more celebratory in their approach

to fashion and the press targeted at men. Their work unpacks the codes of the 'new man' and 'new lad' as he is represented in magazines and how new genres of men's magazines that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s presented and legitimised new territories of male consumption and identity construction. Furthermore, with the exception of Bethan Benwell (2003), women tend to explore women's magazines, and scholars of men's magazines are predominantly male. Research positions inevitably mirror one's own interests, experiences, sexuality, political stance and sense of identity, and, thus, male researchers might be more inclined to read and respond to men's magazines. Moreover, as men historically have not been oppressed, (male) scholars investigating representations of masculinity are less concerned with the idea of magazines as sites of oppression. Instead scholars are claiming men's magazines as sites of representations of different fashionable masculine identities.

New magazines emerged in the 1990s, and the 1980s discourses on the 'new man' were replaced by the 'new lad' or 'laddishness' and scholars began to analyse the shifting masculinities represented in *GQ, Arena, loaded, FHM* and *Maxim*. Where the 'new man' was represented in the media as 'sensitive', 'self-conscious' and 'stylish' (Jackson *et al.* 2001: 34), the 'new lad' was more (hetero)sexually assertive and was often presented and stereotyped as an unscrupulous and shameless alcohol, football and women-consuming figure that listened to Britpop. The various discursive constructions of masculinity found in men's magazines as well as in the wider press participate in the construction of new legitimate forms of masculinities. For example, the new type of man towards the end of the 1990s was labelled 'metrosexual'. The journalist Mark Simpson (1994) was one of the first to use the coinage and it has since been used in the media to refer to straight men whose grooming, appearance, self maintenance and fashion and lifestyle consumption approximate those associated with gay men.

The first three important works on masculinity and men's magazines (Edwards 1997; Mort 1996; Nixon 1997a) provide a historical account of the new men's and style magazines that is anchored to the socio-cultural changes that took place in the yuppie and Thatcherist decade of the 1980s. They draw on cultural references from the time, such as the *Levi's 501* advertisements, the emergence of new men's and style magazines and changing patterns of male fashion retailing and male fashion consumption. In charting the representation of the 'new man' figures, these authors employ textual analysis of magazines and draw on interviews with magazine producers published in newspapers, press and advertising journals. According to Edwards (1997: 76), these new magazines mediate and legitimise consumption 'as a socially acceptable leisure activity for men and as a symbolic part

of a successful lifestyle'. Apart from legitimising male consumption, the magazines educate and rhetorically create a cultural elite with matching spending patterns (Edwards 1997), by highlighting certain products and spending cultures.

As part of the wider consumer transformations taking place at the time, changes in men's magazines, menswear, retail and advertising spaces, Nixon (1997a) and Mort (1996) explore the new male readership, men's magazine journalism and the new visual codes of masculinities in the fashion pages of the new magazines targeted at men in the 1980s. The entrepreneur Nick Logan, the publisher and editor of *The Face* and *Arena*, together with graphic designer Neville Brody and stylist Ray Petri, were key figures in the 1980s who were responsible for producing new types of imagery for the new magazines. Mort (1996) notes that Ray Petri's work not only introduced non-white ethnic men and 'homosexual culture' (Mort 1996: 71) into the fashion pages of *The Face* and *Arena*, but it helped to legitimise styling as a profession in its own right. Nixon (1997a) examines *The Face* and *Arena* as well as *GQ* and argues that *The Face* provided a springboard for emerging talents and the magazine's overall entrepreneurialism allowed for a 'different vision of work' (Nixon 1997a: 149). This also corresponds to McRobbie's (1998) concept of 'freelance culture', which I will return to later. In examining the fashion imagery of *The Face, Arena* and *GQ*, Nixon identifies three prevailing male looks: Ray Petri's 'buffalo boys', 'Italianicity' and 'Edwardian Englishness'. He argues that 'the magazines' fashion pages were the site where the new visual languages of masculinity associated with the "new man" first emerged and where they were consolidated and elaborated' (Nixon 1997a: 168).

These approaches to men's magazines articulate three aspects: firstly, the new genre of magazines that emerged targeting a male consumer with imagery and discourses that liberated the man from the 'fashion closet'. Previously, magazines aimed at men were really men's general interest magazines – what was new was that the magazines focused directly on men's fashionable consumption. Secondly, the legitimisation of male consumption was part of the socio-political sentiment of the 1980s, which was expressed in fashion in two distinct ways. On the one hand, there was the yuppie's 'label-fussy' über-consumption of fashionable clothing as symbols of success, power and achievement. On the other hand, it was informed by the post-punk counter- and club culture of New Romantics and other style cultures where men were dressed up and wore just as much makeup as women. Thirdly, as the scholars on men's magazines point out (see, for instance, Edwards 1997), feminism and the gay movement had made men aware of gender issues and the subsequent post-feminist theories helped them enjoy and find pleasure in new appropriations of gender through fashion. Furthermore, the work of Mort (1996),

Nixon (1997a) and Edwards (1997) is significant for paying attention to style magazines, and noting how their editors and cultural entrepreneurs changed the ways in which fashion was mediated in the 1980s. Niche fashion magazines, as Chapter Four shows, evolved from style magazines and their address to both men and women.

Reader Analysis

The above reviews of women's magazines, fashion writing and men's magazines show that textual analysis is the predominant method, useful for isolating meaning in the next. This section examines how readers have been analysed. The shifts that took place in cultural and media studies of the late 1970s and early 1980s are significant to the methodological changes in research on magazines. The pessimistic view of the Frankfurt School that the Culture Industry 'has automatic ideological effects on its consumers' (Morley 1995: 298) has informed much of the subsequent 'effects studies' coming out of The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, with its focus on ideology. One of the approaches is known as the 'hypodermic needle' theory, where audiences are passively 'injected' with a message (Morley 1995). The preoccupation with media power relates back to the much early feminist readings of magazines as having an automatic ideological effect on the readers. Theories of consumption in media studies, however, gradually granted audiences more active roles.

One of the first groundbreaking reception theories that combined semiotics with a social context was Stuart Hall's 'encoding/decoding' model (Hall [1979] 1996). Hall merged a structured and semiotic reading of communication with the idea that the viewer has some agency in making meaning of the text. To Hall the processes of communication, production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction are interlinked, distinctive 'moments' (1996: 128). Each stage is important, and the communicative exchange should be seen as a whole circuit (Hall 1996: 129). As such Hall's work is a predecessor of Richard Johnson's (1986) later work. Hall formulates the concept of 'encoding/decoding', in which the former is the point at which the producer 'puts' the message into the text and the latter is the point at which the viewer responds to the message. The messages may or may not be decoded by the viewers according to the intention formulated at the moment of production. He points out that the moment of encoding organises and limits decoding, through what he calls 'preferred reading' (Hall 1996: 134), which is performed according to the 'dominant', ideological and institutionalised discourses that are embedded in social orders. Hall does however go on to say that there is no

necessary correspondence between encoding and decoding, which he calls 'dominant reading', and he acknowledges 'negotiated' readings where viewers largely accept and understand the codes but adapt them to their interest, and 'oppositional' readings which resist or oppose the dominant codes (Hall 1996: 137-138). Encoding cannot impose decoding, but the former constitutes some of the restrictions within which the latter will operate.

Although Hall's model was groundbreaking at the time because it granted the viewer more agency, it is often criticised as a 'linear model of communication' (Gripsrud 2006: 10; Jackson *et al.* 2001) and, like much research on women's magazines, it is anchored to ideology. While Hall acknowledges oppositional readings, he too believes that the media message is rooted in ideology and its institutions are far more powerful than viewer agency. This approach positions the media as 'intermediaries' of ideology. The specific notion of cultural intermediaries is discussed further in Chapter Six.

From the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a gradual turn towards audiences as a reaction to the more textual-based media work coming out of the CCCS in Birmingham. This signified a gradual shift towards the audience's own voice and everyday consumption patterns. This strand of media studies has been labelled the 'ethnographic turn' (Drotner 1993; Moores 1993). The ethnographic approach made little impact on the research on magazines, but research in media consumption was widely employed within television studies (see, for instance, Ang 1996; Hobson 1982; Morley 1980). Instead of exploring certain structures of meaning, media ethnography focuses on processes of meaning making. It usually develops a micro-analysis of delimited social groups and their perspectives, rather than macro-analyses of whole societies. What was 'new' in much audience research was that it gradually broke away from 'effects studies' and the idea that media texts overpower passive audiences. Instead, scholars were increasingly concerned with how audiences actively engaged in making sense and meaning of the media texts. McRobbie (1996) shows that from the 1980s onwards, new feminist methodological approaches divided the field, with audience scholars reacting against the lack of interest in magazine readers and instead allowing the female readers more agency. McRobbie herself argues that the ideological approach to magazines may not have been particularly successful as it made (1996: 174) 'many millions of women victims of ideology' and 'was both simplistic and demeaning to those ordinary women'.

A few feminist scholars writing on magazines have appropriated ethnography or readers' own sense-making into their work, primarily through reader interviews (see, for instance, Crane 1999; Frazer 1987; Hermes 1997; Lewis 1997; Winship 1987). By exploring the lived cultures of readers they support their

findings and challenge and rejuvenate the discourses on women's magazines. Janice Winship's *Inside Women's Magazines* (1987) integrates her own reading experiences with an analysis of the magazine industry and content of different genres of women's magazines. Her ethnographic contribution is minimal, as she only draws on her own reader perspective. However, what sets her work apart from other contributions concerned with the supposed 'harm' of women's magazines is her focus on the pleasures of reading. She recognises that feminist reading of women's magazines is double edged and involves both attraction and rejection.

Much like Winship's own reading of magazines, Reina Lewis and Katrina Rolley (1996) explore the lesbian visual pleasures offered by high-fashion magazines *Vogue, Vogue Italia, Elle* and *Marie Claire,* based primarily on their own readings. They challenge the belief that the visual pleasures rendered by a fashion image are those of a man. Via fashion magazines' experimental and provocative lesbian imagery, a lesbian gaze, as well as visual pleasure, is to be found within the mainstream fashion press. Within this viewing position, lesbian responses to the fashion image occur through two readings: objectification understood as a pleasure-giving process and narcissistic desires as a double movement of both being and having the object. Furthermore, whilst most fashion photographers are male and their work can be read as a representation of sexual attraction between a male photographer and the female (and male) model, Lewis and Rolley argue that female high-fashion photographers such as Louise Dahl Woolf, Sarah Moon, Deborah Turbeville and Ellen von Unwerth (Lewis and Rolley 1996: 180-181) have made images available to women readers, both heterosexual and lesbian, since the 1930s.

Reina Lewis (1997) furthers this work by exploring how lesbian readers, including her own reading, make sense of the fashion pages in lesbian magazines. She finds that while it is much easier for lesbians to engage in the pleasure of ambivalent and post-modern fashion pages in *Vogue,* readers employ a realist, critical reading of fashion in lesbian magazine *Diva.* While gay men's consumption of the fashion in gay magazine *Attitude* is appropriated pleasurably, Lewis wants to find out why the pleasure of fashion is absent in lesbian consumption of lesbian magazines. In doing so, Lewis identifies two overlapping modes of reception: firstly, readers expect the magazine to reflect the authentic lesbian culture outside the magazine and they therefore refuse the magazine and read against the grain, as it represents what they see as dominant femininity. Secondly, readers form identity through preferred readings of mainstream women's fashion, which is then put into practice in social spaces (Lewis 1997: 101). The second reading is often conducted by a group of younger women who readily adopt style and fashion changes. Lewis concludes that reading is informed by the context of the text, whether it is a

mainstream or subcultural magazine, the readers' expectations of the magazines, and lastly their fashion literacy and sense of self as a consumer.

Diana Crane (1999) also contributes to the feminist interpretation of fashion magazines' imagery by showing that there is no single hegemonic reading of gender in fashion femininity, but different polysemic readings. Based on Lewis's work (1997), among others, Crane argues that older women in particular are more critical towards magazine imagery and fashion. While younger women are more likely to employ representations of fashion as part of forming contradictory identities, Crane's findings showed that women did not employ a post-modern 'role-playing' approach to fashion. Instead, they perceived positions of gender in fashion, from a modernist point of view, as something stable. Crane's informants thus remained critical about fashionable identities and gender representations. Women's readings of fashion imagery in magazines are expressed as 'conflicted hegemony', since Crane concludes that readers do not consider fashion magazines and their editors to be authoritative. Similarly, as Chapter Seven will show, readers do not so much consider the editors and producers of a niche fashion magazine to be authoritative, especially if the magazine is not delivering to their expectations, but they are rather concerned with the magazine's symbolic status.

Reading Women's Magazines by Dutch feminist and media researcher Joke Hermes (1997 [1988]) was one of the first works to focus exclusively on the voices of the readers. In investigating the cultures of consumption and appropriation of women's magazines Hermes insists that readers need to 'speak for themselves' actively and not through researchers' readings. Hermes' work also challenges the arguments behind most textual readings which argue that women's magazines are hurtful to women. Central to her methodological argument is the assertion that the previous focus on specific texts restricts an analysis of 'everyday sense-making' (Hermes 1997: 5) and ignores how texts become meaningful to their readers. Hermes is instead interested in 'the contextual nature' of media use (1997: 5), which is similar to Radway's findings on the contextual cultures of romance reading (Radway 1991). Hermes argues that textual analysis on its own is not sufficient to reconstruct meaning and considers textual analysis to be the academic's reading of women's magazines. She places meaning at the moment of consumption and thus relates to the literary theory of Barthes (1979), Eco (1981) and the German 'Aesthetics of Reception', which similarly places meaning of the text at the moment where the reader appropriates it.

Hermes' methodological design integrates her readings with an analysis of 80 ethnographic interviews of men and women. To code her interviews, she employs cultural 'repertoires' (Hermes 1997: 7) as analytical constructions, referring

to recurring themes and issues, and these help her to go beyond the participant utterances. The reading of magazines is attached to everyday routines and the magazines are 'easily put down' (Hermes 1997: 31). They are used as 'in-between' activities (1997: 32) and are often of little cultural value and thus not very meaningful outside the context of readers' everyday life. While Hermes originally wanted to explore how women's magazines become meaningful, she argues that her data show that magazines hardly have any meaning at all. She concludes, rather radically and unlike most research on magazines, that because of its routine quality, reading magazines might be a meaningless activity. Referring to what she calls 'fallacy of meaningfulness' (Hermes 1997: 16), she is critical of the tendency of much media studies research to assume that all use of popular culture is significant, which is substantiated by researchers only using the informants' most expressive utterances.

While Hermes' work advances the focus on the consumption of magazines, her finding of the meaninglessness of reading is problematic. What does 'meaning' mean? What can be deemed 'meaningful'? Meanings of cultural artefacts, such as fashion magazines, are not always easily explained or rationalised. Meaning, to du Gay *et al.* is not a 'thing in itself' (2003: 4) derived from the cultural artefact, but a process and a representation of discourses that are part of the whole circuit of culture. Reading, from this perspective, is just one process and its meaning should be derived from the interrelation of cultural processes. Reading involves engagement with, and decoding of, messages and codes. It processes the magazine by contextualising the consumption of previous reading experiences. The reader, according to Jauss's Gadamerian-informed reader theory, brings into play 'the memories of the familiar' texts (Rice and Waugh 1997: 83) and reading becomes an intertextual 'horizon' of texts. This process of reading may be experienced as meaningful or without meaning to the readers, but it necessarily involves their engagement with, and appropriation of, the text – and that involves meaning-making. Readers may decode magazines according to, or against, the intention of the producers' encoding (Hall [1979] 1996; Morley 1992), but it is still a meaningful act of consumption. Jackson *et al.* (2001: 17) state in relation to men's magazines that the 'act of consumption always entails the production of meaning'.

Hermes is clearly inspired by the key audience research of her time – that of Janice Radway (1991[1987]) on romance reading and Ien Ang (1996[1985]) on watching soap operas. Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1991) explores women reading romance books and her interest is in what reading means to an audience. Radway carried out ethnographic research among the women of a small community in the American Midwest where she also lived, and took part in their routines

during the research. Like Hermes, Radway found that romance reading is a central part of women's daily routines. It fulfils psychological needs, as it provides an escape from everyday pressures, represents time for themselves and, most importantly, gives them pleasure. Readers are active, but their meaning-making processes are directed by the fiction's narrative and language. Feminist media scholar Ien Ang's work on the television series *Dallas* (1996) also explores the viewers' experiences of pleasure and displeasure, as revealed in 42 letters written by viewers of *Dallas*. Ang sees the viewer as semi-autonomous since they engage actively with *Dallas*, which directs and supports certain readings and meanings. This harks back to Hall ([1979] 1996) and Morley's (1992) work, which will be reviewed later.

Consumption, as well as production, is the most under-researched element of magazine cultures. This might partly be because reader ethnography is time-consuming, costly and 'messy'. Investigating how readers read and make sense of magazines is not easy and relies on interviews. Hence, like other interview-based research projects, it can be challenging for the researcher to go beyond the utterances of the interviewees. Audience ethnography is sometimes criticised for including extensive reader quotations, a tendency Drotner calls 'holding the microphone ethnographically' (Drotner 1993: 19, my translation). Here, lengthy quotations are used to make a case, instead of the researcher actively discovering and interpreting patterns arising from the data. Indeed, more work is needed to explore and understand how readers appropriate fashion as it is mediated in fashion magazines. In the process it is pertinent to explore how consumption is an act of differentiation. Bearing these points in mind and building on earlier work relating to fashion magazines, this thesis explores how readers use and appropriate certain magazines as 'identity value' (du Gay 1997: 96) and how their consumption articulates socio-cultural differentiation (Bourdieu 1993, 1995).

However, doing only reader ethnography runs the risk of placing the reader in a reflexive, post-modern position where meaning can be anywhere and nowhere – detached from production and the textual source. Completely disregarding the text isolates consumption from the material that structures readers' meaning-making processes. The case for connecting the consumption context to the textual source is articulated in Bethan Benwell's (2005) linguistic work on interviews with male readers of men's magazines. She stresses a need for a better linkage between the text and its context, and a need to understand these moments as parts of a circuit of culture. Benwell argues that while most audience studies have employed empirical, ethnographic analysis, focusing on the 'contexts and ethnographies of reception' (2005: 150), they have ignored the text. They prioritise the context at the

expense of the text itself and, she argues, they fail to connect the reception with the textual content. This thesis similarly argues that it is necessary to anchor meaning both to the text and to the interrelated moments of consumption and production, which are part of the whole magazine culture, to understand how fashion, as values and meanings, is produced and consumed.

Production Analysis

Analysing magazine production is as important as textual analysis of magazines and ethnography of readers' engagement with and appropriation of the magazines. Understanding the modes of production and the institutions and people that produce magazines is necessary in order to explore the economies and markets in which the magazine circulate and the way notions of fashion are produced. Primarily after the turn of the millennium, scholars (see, for instance, Braithwaite and Barrel 1988; Crewe 2003; Gough-Yates 2003; Jost 2004; McRobbie 1996; Moeran 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006a) started to focus on magazine production, marketing, advertising, producers and institutions. These scholars argue that the production of magazines and the institutions they are part of are largely overlooked in research and their investigations aim at 'filling out' that gap. Their argument is that the culture of magazines cannot be separated from their economic and market context, and that the work cultures surrounding the productions promote certain magazine discourses. Many of the studies include interviews with producers, but fail to access the field ethnographically.

In a series of papers and articles Brian Moeran (2001, 2002, 2004, 2006a, 2006b) examines the production of Asian and Western women's magazines and women's fashion magazines. He focuses on the production processes and the magazines' interdependence on advertising. Throughout his papers Moeran reiterates that women's magazines are cultural products *and* commodities that are part of cultural economies and the production of culture. As a part of this argument he emphasises that fashion magazines are a '"multiple audience" property' (Moeran 2006a: 727), addressing both advertisers and readers' – something that Ballaster *et al.* (1991) also noted in their work on women's magazines. While Moeran advocates the methodological integration of textual, production and consumption analysis as part of the circuit of culture, he fails to integrate readers and their consumption and meaning-making processes into his work. Instead, Moeran relies on the statistical information on reader profiles provided by the magazines (2002, 2008). This is useful for a demographic segmentation of the readers and gives a picture of target readers. However, this method does not involve looking at the lived cultures of

consumption or how readers make sense of magazines and appropriate them in their lives. His production analysis is based on content analysis of magazine advertisements and fashion pages and interviews with magazine producers – production ethnography is absent, as access was denied (Moeran 2006a). Moeran later acknowledges that 'nobody has yet successfully bridged the methodological divide by examining the total social processes surrounding the production, representation, circulation (distribution), reception and contents of women's magazines '(2008: 267-268).

Methodological approaches change and McRobbie (1996) also revisits her previous work, as well as expanding it with magazine editor interviews. Her work forms part of her later study of the British fashion industry published in 1998, in which she carries out a series of interviews with various producers of fashion, including stylists and journalists. Her data show that the working cultures surrounding magazine production are based on badly paid and unstable freelance work. This is also the case with niche fashion magazine contributors, as Chapter Six will show. In dialogue with her previous work on magazines, McRobbie shows that female producers are familiar with feminist discourses on women's magazines through their college degrees and this knowledge does not 'disagree' with their work. Women working in fashion do not necessarily feel uneasy, or that they are contributing to the production of harmful imagery of women. A similar post-feminist approach is reflected in Gough-Yates's (2003) work on women's magazines. She aims at setting herself apart from many previous scholars, such as McCracken (1993) and Ferguson (1983), by criticising the assumption that magazine producers are manipulative and the magazine texts are problems for female readers. Gough-Yates links the transformations and discourses of the 'New Woman' of 1980s and 1990s magazines to the shifts in the wider economic production and technologies from Fordist mass and regulation production to a Post-Fordist mode of production with flexible specialisation and quick responses. While Gough-Yates' initial aim was ethnographical fieldwork on the production of magazines and interviews with magazine producers, she was not granted access to do this (2003: 22-23). Because of this, instead of empirical ethnography Gough-Yates had to rely on textual data from magazines, magazine advertising and the marketing trade press. Such information provides a textual construction of producers, not an insight to the actual choices, encodings and practices of production. Getting access to participant observation is a common methodological issue in recent magazine research. In contrast to Gough-Yates (2003), Crewe (2003) gained access to interview 38 key figures in the industry: publishers, editors, and managing and executive directors of the chief men's magazines. Crewe is aware of the limitations of doing interviews only, as they do

not reveal details of the daily production and practices. He argues that getting ethnographic access can be extremely difficult, as the media guards its image protectively (Crewe 2003: 211). I will discuss how I secured access to the field in Chapter Three.

This summary has shown how textual, audience and production methodologies, used alone or combined with one another, are prevalent. As Moeran (2008) points out, magazine research has not yet successfully bridged the methodological divide by examining the total culture of fashion magazines. This analysis of the literature has examined the gradual shift from understanding magazines as oppressive and their readers as passive recipients of ideology to a growing acknowledgement that readers actively enjoy as well as criticise magazines. It has also showed how methods of analysis have expanded from textual readings of codes to include interviews with readers and producers. The interrelation of the text, its readers and producers and the question of whether meanings are fixed, created or produced, runs throughout as the underlying methodological arguments. Much can be gained from examining work with integrated methodological frameworks that rise above the un-nuanced reader discourses of passive/pessimistic/critical versus active/optimistic/celebratory. Drawing on different media and cultural studies on the circulation of meanings, the concluding section will thus examine more fruitful methodologies.

Circulation of Meanings

There is only one key example of work into men's magazines that integrates textual, reception and production analysis. Jackson *et al.*'s *Making Sense of Men's Magazines* (2001) is based on Richard Johnson's 'circuit of culture' (1986), and understands magazine production, readers' interpretation and textual content as interrelated processes. Analysis of the editorial work of the production is combined with qualitative content analysis, and readers are interviewed in focus groups. The focus is on exploring the commercial success of men's magazines and how they help to create changing masculinities. Like other research into men's magazines (Benwell 2003; Edwards 1997; Mort 1996; Nixon 1997a; Crewe 2003), they argue that the magazines legitimised new ways of debating and showing 'laddish' masculinities in the 1990s, as well as influencing the cultural repertoires available to men and magazines. They conclude that men's magazines both change men's gender identities and reinforce traditional forms of masculinity. Rather than focusing on the one-sided arguments of ideology and resistance, their analysis provides a more

nuanced and complex argument on contemporary masculinities as they are mediated across magazine circuit of culture.

Central to their findings is that meaning is not found in the magazine, waiting to be realised by the reader, but that readers are actively engaged in the production of meaning. Reading gives readers pleasure and they are able to engage critically with the magazines. Jackson *et al.* criticise Hall's model ([1979] 1996) on a number of accounts – they believe that circulation of meaning is not a 'linear logic' (2001: 4) and they claim that his model sees meaning circulated as a 'conveyor belt' (2001: 16). Consequently, they understand mediation as complex circuits of culture rather than one-way flows of information.

If most magazine work, with the exception of Jackson *et al.* (2001), has failed to integrate textual analysis with consumption and consumption analysis, then what are the alternatives? Media and cultural studies on circulation of meanings and messages provide a more useful framework for analysing magazines. Within different traditions and approaches, predominantly television studies, textual representations are integrated with consumption and production analysis, which lend methodological inspiration to this thesis.

Hall's (1996 [1979]) work, as reviewed earlier, has been very influential in David Morley's (1992) work on television. While Morley also acknowledges the limitations of appropriating Hall's reception model, as it was originally developed for the analyses of news and current affairs journalism, he still believes it is the best alternative to the (post-modern) conception of 'open' media texts. Morley argues that meaning cannot be analysed properly without reference to its institutional, economic or social conditions. He breaks away from the American tradition of 'uses and gratifications' and its psychoanalytical analysis of individual interpretations, as he believes it ignores audience interpretations as part of socio-economic structures.

In his research on the BBC television programme *Nationwide*, Morley used two modes of analysis: semiotics provided him with an approach to internal structures of the text and its messages, and sociology was used to analyse the cultural context of the audience. According to Morley, media messages are constructions, which 'promote certain meanings' (1992: 21). These meanings are limited and embedded in the message. Corresponding to Hall's 'preferred reading', Morley's 'directive closures' (1992: 22), such as headlines, captions, film commentary, status of speakers, direct the audience's interpretation. Based on Hall's 'encoding/decoding' model, Morley formulates the concept of 'structured polysemy' (1992: 86). He explains that although the same media event can be encoded in more than one way and contains more than one potential reading – according to the 'dominant', 'negotiated' or 'oppositional' code (1992: 89), it

proposes and prefers certain readings. Thus, he acknowledges the 'polysemic principle' that messages can produce more than one meaning. However, media producers do not leave messages open to any interpretation, as they are concerned with effective communication. Instead, through what Morley calls 'direction' or 'closures' such as headings, 'preferred or dominant readings' (Morley 1992: 84) are promoted.

According to Morley, individual reading of a programme is marginal. Readings, instead, reflect the membership of a group or subculture, as they share 'cultural codes' (Morley 1992: 54) and the reading relates to their socio-economic positions and the socio-economic structure of society. Morley rejects the assumption that media messages automatically have an effect on the audiences and he instead focuses on how the audience 'make sense of the world that the media offer' to them (Morley 1992: 76).

Dorothy Hobson (1982) in her work on the soap opera *Crossroads*, which was broadcast in Britain at the same time as Morley's *Nationwide*, combines audience ethnography with producer ethnography. She gained the trust of the producers and carried out interviews with them and the actors as well as observing their rehearsals and subsequent recordings in the studio. Her ethnography of 'lived cultures' of production is attached to the *Crossroads* text and the viewers' experiences watching it. She watches episodes with the viewers and then uses the episodes to stimulate discussion with the viewers. Her methodological design is an inspiration to this thesis, in that Hobson's work combines analyses of the media text and lived cultures of viewers and producers of *Crossroads*. I will return briefly to Hobson in Chapter Three.

Du Gay *et al.*'s (2003) approach to circulation of meanings also underpins the methodological argument of this thesis, which will be outlined in Chapter Three. With the case study of the Sony Walkman, du Gay *et al.* extend the structure-agency debate to the 'circuit of culture' where meanings are exchanged and circulate in a non-linear way. Drawing on the theory developed by Richard Johnson (1986), they identify five processes that are helpful to understand cultural structures: representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. They examine the Japanese context of the production of the Sony Walkman, its design and the global consumption of it. In order to understand cultural artefacts they must be analysed through these processes of the circuit of culture. Central to this model, and unlike Hall's, is that there is no beginning; what is essential is that all the aspects are considered in the examination of cultural artefacts. Where this project departs from du Gay *et al.* (2003) is that it is not so much the cultural artefact, the magazine, but the circulation of notions and appropriation of values of fashion within the

magazine cultures that is the focus. Furthermore, unlike du Gay *et al.*, I conduct ethnography in order to embrace the lived cultures of consumption and production.

By using an integrated approach, the danger of making assumptions on behalf of readers can be avoided, theories can be qualified by examining the actual and 'lived cultures' of producers and readers and anchored, as part of a circuit, to the magazine text. While du Gay *et al.* (2003), Jackson *et al.* (2001) and Hobson's (1982) methodologies have inspired the overall methodological argument of this thesis, findings of other scholars provide helpful notions, theories and understandings that support the analysis of the text, consumption and production: Crane's (1999) and Lewis's (1997) work on actual readers is useful for the analysis of the meaning-making of niche fashion readers. With his concept of textual 'closures' and sharing of 'cultural codes' Morley (1992) provides the bridge from readers to the text. Barthes (1985([1967]), König (2006) and Rocamora's (2001) work will be used on fashion writing. To understand the production side of magazines McRobbie's (1998) concept 'freelance culture' is beneficial, and it will be used together with Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and work on cultural production to understand the symbolic production and values of fashion.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the values, practices and codes of niche fashion magazine cultures, focusing specifically on *DANSK* magazine. *DANSK* is used as a case study but the intention is to extend the understanding of fashion mediation in the case of niche magazines in particular. By combining sociology, media studies and ethnography, this thesis offers an interdisciplinary approach to understanding how meanings and values of fashion are mediated and as such contributes to sociological research on fashion and media research.

This chapter outlines the integrated methodological framework of the project and includes reflections on my position in the field, the nature of ethnographic practice and my own experience of this. The methods used include active participant observation of the production of *DANSK* magazine and semi-structured in-depth interviews with producers and readers, as well as qualitative textual analysis. In this chapter I discuss the ways in which I am approaching and integrating these different methods.

Production Participant Observation

> Participation in the field is a necessary step in the process of understanding. (Kondo 1986: 82)

My degree of participant observation is a combination of active participant observation and insider research. Traditionally, ethnography involves qualitative research techniques through long-term participant observation in the lives of those studied (Davies 1999; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995), where the observer becomes a 'member of the observed group' (Robson 1993: 194). Participant observation typically took the form of long-term engagement in non-Western communities, in which the researcher was a stranger. The emphasis was on observation, as language and ethnic and cultural differences made participation difficult (Johnson *et al.* 2006). However, research into contemporary groups and cultures in a wider range of settings can involve study of one's own culture, from which the researcher can more easily gain access to conduct active participation. Much can be gained from what Nelson (cited in Johnson *et al.* 2006: 113) calls 'full' participation, as 'activities participated in can be more easily internalized' and thus understood. One of the advantages of full participation or active participation is thus that it brings the researcher close to the data and usually involves good rapport

and openness.

The participant observer can also observe and participate in a group he or she is already a member of. One strand within this type of participant observation is when a practitioner conducts research in his or her own organisation, which is also called insider 'action research' or 'practitioner-research', and it is often conducted with the purpose of improving practice (Coghian 2001). While this is not the purpose of this research, similar methodological reflections apply.

Gaining Access

Getting ethnographic access to the production practices involved in fashion magazines is extremely difficult for outsiders, as editors often guard their media image (Crewe 2003). Other magazine researchers and fieldworkers (see, for instance, Crewe 2003; Gough-Yates 2003; Moeran 2006) have attempted but were denied access, which impacted greatly on their methodological framework and therefore their findings. Indeed, producers and publishers are usually extremely protective of their public image as well as of the confidential economic and symbolic exchanges that go into making a magazine. Getting access is a smooth process when you are an insider in the fashion industry. Like Ferguson (1983) in her magazine research, I was no stranger to the producers of *DANSK*, as I had worked with Style Counsel, the company that produces *DANSK*, on several occasions in the past. Having been a member of the Danish fashion industry since 1999, occupying different positions such as an international model, freelance fashion writer and co-initiator of the Danish Fashion Institute, helped me secure entry into the magazine. My participation in the Copenhagen fashion scene provided me with membership status and a ticket to the 'behind the scenes' of a niche fashion magazine. The producers already knew me, and at the time of fieldwork I was already 'inside' the field working as a freelance contributor to the magazine as a writer. Via this position, active participant observation in the production of three issues covering various stages of the production was obtained and in-depth semi-structured interviews with producers were carried out.

Prior to the fieldwork, the executive editor of *DANSK*, Rachael Morgan, had contacted me in June 2006 inviting me to join the editorial team. When we met to discuss their proposal, I took the opportunity to inform her about my project. I mentioned casually that I might be interested in using *DANSK* as my main case study later, though at that point I had not decided which magazine to examine. We did not discuss it in detail at the time, but she supported the suggestion. I did not join the editorial team, as living in London made participation in the editorial

meetings in Copenhagen unworkable at the time. Instead, I began contributing to the magazine as a freelance writer. Six months later, in December 2006, I contacted Rachael Morgan to negotiate access to the production of *DANSK*, which proved to be rather easy. At our meeting she raised no objections, but took the project seriously and seemed happy that I was interested in the magazine from a research perspective. She then acted as a gatekeeper and the final approval of the two editors-in-chief was granted via her. The fieldwork was initiated less than two weeks later at the beginning of January 2007.

Fieldwork at *DANSK* began in January 2007 and ended in August 2007, during which time I followed the production of three issues, focusing on how producers put the magazines together from the initial idea to the date of publication. I participated in and observed different slots of the production: in the layout and DTP (desktop publishing) phase of issue 13, numerous editorial meetings of issue 14 and issue 15 where content, themes and contributors were negotiated, two photo shoots in studios and workdays in the office as well as the release party of issue 14. Throughout the participant observation I took extensive notes. These are descriptive accounts of the set-up and what took place at the magazine, and direct quotes as well as more personal reflections on my position in the field. My degree of participant observation was active, which means that I participated in 'existing social practices' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 106), sharing my personal views, and I also participated in the production of the magazines both as a writer (issue 14) and as a participant at editorial meetings (issue 14 and issue 15), which involved discussions on content, themes and other contributors.

Before the fieldwork commenced my contribution to *DANSK* had been writing fashion features and doing interviews with the CEO of Hermès, Patrick Thomas, as well as the avant-garde designers Caspard Yurkevich and Henrik Vibskov, and during fieldwork I contributed to, and edited, the guide to Copenhagen included in issue 14, *CPH Love*. Like Crewe (2003), who enjoyed a good rapport with producers of men's magazines and was offered a job at one interview, I was offered two jobs during fieldwork, which were the result of contacts established during fieldwork: one as fashion features editor of *DANSK* and editor-in-chief on a sister publication, *DANSK Daily*, published twice a year by Style Counsel and the Danish Fashion Institute in conjunction with Copenhagen Fashion Week, which reviews and covers the shows as well as features and interviews with Danish fashion professionals. I accepted the latter, in which I was engaged to work for May-August 2007. This furthered my knowledge of the production cultures of fashion magazines as well as my position in the field of fashion in Denmark.

Reflections of Active Participant Observation

Doing participant observation throws up a range of ethical questions as to, for instance, the anonymity or disclosure of identities and the researcher's responsibility and place within the research. The ethical dimensions of the thesis have been approved by the University of Arts' Research Ethics Sub-Committee and thus comply with the University's Code of Practice on Research Ethics. One carefully considered ethical consideration was the decision to disclose the identity of the producers but to keep the interviewed readers anonymous. The disclosure of *DANSK* Magazine was essential to give weight to the findings of the fieldwork and as a result keeping the editors' identities anonymous was not an option, as they feature on *DANSK*'s colophon. This was made clear to the editors through consent forms and oral information recorded on tape at the beginning of each interview. Disclosing research identities requires careful, responsible and sensible handling of the data, as not to harm the editors' identities and interests. For that reason, the interview transcripts were sent to the editors who were given the opportunity to identify any sensitive material that they did not want to disclose in the thesis. The interviewed readers, on the other hand, were granted anonymity to protect their identities. The readers, as well as the editors, were informed that they had the right to discontinue participation at any time.

There are advantages and disadvantages of being so close to the data. One of the aspects that makes this position different from an outsider research position is, as David Coghian (2001: 51) argues, the advantageous insider 'pre-understandings' and access. Scholars with pre-understanding of the field of study have the obvious advantage of a high degree of experience and knowledge:

> They know the everyday jargon. They know the legitimate and taboo phenomena of what can be talked about and what cannot. They know what occupies colleagues' minds. They know how the informal organization works and whom to turn to for information and gossip. They know the critical events and what they mean within the organization...They can participate freely, without drawing attention to themselves and creating suspicion.
> (Coghian 2001: 51)

This was indeed the case. I knew and understood the fashion jargon, the habitus and social skills involved in fashion, which were used actively to develop rapport and a position from where I could immerse myself even more in the field. The disadvantage, as Coghian (2001) argues, of pre-understanding and knowledge is the assumptions that could result in not questioning as much as outsiders would. The challenge is thus for the insider to make strange the familiar. Coghian also

emphasises that role duality, the involvement in two roles as both researcher and organisational member, can lead to a confusing relationship with fellow workers.

To avoid insider bias and individual interpretations, the ethnographer should employ a 'reflexive' approach (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Davies 1999) throughout the process. I use Davies' definition of reflexivity as 'a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference' (Davies 1999: 4). My subject position is part of the analysis of the data and an ongoing evaluation of the various 'field relations' is therefore necessary (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 80-123).

During fieldwork there were times when I 'went native', where it was my lived experience and a big part of my working life. During these 'gone native' periods I had difficulty in reflecting critically upon my fieldwork, as it seemed so natural to me. Pierre Bourdieu (1993b), writing on the valuing of haute couture, argues:

> For a 'native', whether producer or consumer, the system acts as a screen. Between Chanel and her label, there is a whole system, which Chanel understands better than anyone, and at the same time less well than anyone.
> (Bourdieu 1993b: 138)

While Bourdieu wrote this in relation to the transubstantiation of the label, the symbolic value of haute couture, his reflections are useful in understanding how an insider participant observer cannot explain the act of valuing cultural objects in the field, as she or he is part of the system of valuing. In order to understand and explain this, distance is required. In her fieldwork in Japan, Dorinne Kondo (1986) held a complex insider/outsider position in her field as a Japanese-American who looked and felt Japanese, but did not speak fluent Japanese. In order to overcome the cultural awkwardness this caused in the Japanese community she was studying, she and her informants tried to make her as Japanese as possible by reducing 'the distance between Self and Other' (Kondo 1986: 77). In this process Kondo abandoned her position of observer, which resulted in a 'collapse of identity' (1986: 75). She realised that her role as the 'daughter' of a Japanese household suffocated her on a psychological level from her other perspective as an American researcher, and she had to move out of the house to reconstitute her identity. As with Kondo, one of the problems I experienced with active participation was the lack of distance, which is needed to process the experiences and create knowledge. As an insider I did not experience a psychological split of identity but I did experience issues of lack of distance. During fieldwork there were times where I found it difficult to reflect critically on what was said or done, as I had internalised the practices. After the fieldwork, when analysing the data, I experienced difficulties in recovering

meaning, let alone processing the information, since I had incorporated the values through my insider active participation. Another implication that both Kondo (1986) and Coghian (2001) recognise is that certain questions cannot be asked by an insider who knows the social and cultural codes, whereas outsiders can ask the questions without jeopardising their position. In hindsight there are questions, particularly relating to economy, that I would have wanted to pursue but did not as that would have felt intrusive.

Very good rapport was established early on, as a result of the existing relationship, the editors' generosity, mutual social interaction and me proving my worth through participation. From the outset my gatekeeper, the executive editor Rachael Morgan, had encouraged participation: 'I don't want you to sit in a corner. I want you to be part of it', she said. I found that my participation influenced what and how things were talked about. Besides asking clarifying questions and joking, I introduced topics into the conversation and commented on what was said, which informed and shaped the data. Often I was asked my opinion. On one occasion during the layout phase, the art director asked my opinion about the layout and the exact words I used were used in the following day's presentation to describe the graphic identity to the editors-in-chief. I gradually became aware that the more I participated and the more 'social capital' and 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1984) I exchanged, the more I was included into the field and thereby further increased my 'fashion capital'. If I was chatting and voiced my opinion, they were more interested and willing to share information. Fieldwork at *DANSK* magazine required social capital and contribution in exchange for 'being around'. Possibly as a result of my exchange of social capital and previous collaboration they trusted me and throughout the fieldwork I was invited to have lunch with them. These lunch sessions were highly valuable, since they revealed social structures and the cultures surrounding the production, which was based on cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984).

Drawing on Erving Goffman, Moeran (2007) recognises how fieldworkers who succeed in moving from 'front stage' to 'back stage', to more sensitive themes, do so because of their personality and the intimacy they are willing to establish. Once a fieldworker has access to the 'back stage', the fieldworker can engage in social games. Moeran argues:

> (...) your informants realise that you have learned the rules and know the difference between front and back stage games and, as a result, they stop pretending when in your presence, and allow themselves to be seen as they are. (Moeran 2007: 14)

This transition between front stage and back stage is not always clear, and it was, in my case, more organic, since the producers and I already knew one another. The

longer I stayed, however, the better the rapport. As Johnson (Johnson *et al.* 2006) experienced in his active participant observation of an Alaskan fish camp, I found that the producers saw my role as ethnographic researcher overshadowed by my role as a contributor, or perhaps wanted to capitalise on my presence as a form of exchange. There was one incident, on the second day of fieldwork, where I was denied access when observing the layout. The editors were meeting afterwards to discuss the budget and how they could bring in the remaining advertisers to break even. The information and figures were, however, disclosed to me the following day.

Constant reflections on my position were necessary, as I was concerned with how much I was informing the data by participating in the social structures surrounding the production – which involved talking and sharing my views, jokes and tastes. Consequently, I tried some silent periods where I observed more than I participated to check whether and how that changed my position and the field. During these periods the executive editor often asked me if I was getting enough information, and encouraged me to ask questions. The more silent observation mode proved not to be constructive with people who already knew me and how I present myself in the field of fashion, which is different from the way I conduct myself as a researcher. I generally found the less I shared the more awkward the observation became and the producers seemed more aware that they were being observed.

The distinctions between the actual work activities and the breaks were not always clear. There were ongoing social and informal chats about other magazines, designers, collections, Danish fashion companies, film and gossip about celebrities and the Danish royal family, and phones were answered as well. Many topics directly related to, as well as surrounding the production, were based on fashion news, being the first to know and exclusive knowledge.

> You learn to separate fact from fiction, gossip from information, while strategically using both to gain further (more reliable) data. (Moeran 2007: 14)

Separation of gossip from information, as Moeran argues above, was simply not feasible, and this therefore proved to be an inflexible division. What constitutes both is very much dependant on the field one is studying, and the field of fashion, and arguably many other fields of cultural production, is shaped by work cultures in which flexibility and gossip is a key part of the discourse. Furthermore, as I had internalised the practices I had further difficulty in separating the two. Moeran, however, has a point insofar as engaging in gossip and the social space and

discourses that inform the production endowed me with more cultural and social capital and as a result I was more trusted, which then gave me access to further participation and observation.

One of the functions of gossip, according to Gail de Vos (1996), is the preservation of status. Drawing on the work of Rosnow and Fine, De Vos notes that professional and social groups wanting to preserve their status combine gossip and jargon so as to make conversation impenetrable for outsiders and thereby draw a distinction between inside members and excluded outsiders. The more I engaged in the gossip, the more I demonstrated my membership. Often sentences began with 'Have you seen the new...?' The pace of conversations was swift and intimacy was encouraged. My knowledge of fashion, its discourses and social practices was confirmed: socially skilled, opinionated, entertaining and flamboyant personalities exchanging personal stories, sarcasm and business-to-business jargon on the latest fashion news. The production required flexible working attitudes, and the whole working culture could potentially feed into the magazine as content. I actively took part in the working culture of *DANSK* and the social talk involved in it.

Although the majority of my participant observation was active, there were two instances, in particular, where this was not the case: observation of two photo shoots. Both begged for a more passive mode of observation. Observing the production of a Chanel haute couture photo shoot with top model Freja Beha, I openly took notes in my diary, as I had done throughout the fieldwork. During the shoot, the editor-in-chief asked me if I had seen the film *Notes on a Scandal*, saying he would recommend not taking notes after having seen that. In short, the diary notes revealed in the film reveal the true nature of the character of the spinster teacher who has been emotionally blackmailing the young teacher who is having an affair with a student. This was obviously meant as a joke, but as power play and truth are central themes in the film I also interpreted it as an indication of his unease with my note taking on that particular occasion. The day was marked by tension, as there was creative disagreement between the photographer and the editor-in-chief, and the editor-in-chief presumably did not want me to disclose this in my thesis. Yet my focus is on the processes of cultural intermediaries' work of production, rather than the identities of production, and thus not on power play or creative egos at work. I return to a discussion of cultural intermediaries in Chapter Six. What the above points on the photo shoot suggest is that, unlike editorial meetings, in which attendants, including myself, were there to share their views, the nature of fieldwork at a fashion shoot in a studio is primarily that of observation. Unless asked, sharing one's opinions on styling, photography, makeup and composition could be highly offensive as that would be seen as showing disrespect for people's

creative skills and the egos at work. At breaks and at lunch I was back in 'participation mode' via social interaction. Different modes of participant observation are thus required within the same fieldwork and the fieldworker needs to understand and employ a high degree of social and cultural skills and flexibility in order to obtain as much information as possible and at the same time not be in the way when tension arises. It was thus necessary for me to reflexively switch from backstage to front stage mode, from participant to observer mode, in order to meet the terms of the various field and power relations.

Interviews

During participant observation informal conversations provided me with useful information on production values, aesthetics and work cultures. This information was expanded in face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interviews with the editors-in-chief, Uffe Buchard and Kim Grenaa, executive editor Rachael Morgan and art buyer Camilla Bigler, as well as three interviews, conducted via email and phone, with production manager Mette Andersen, CEO of Style Counsel the publisher of *DANSK* Jacob Pedersen, and the Scandinavian advertising representative, Camilla Bjarnholt from Forlaget Benjamin.

Oakley (1981), Kvale (1996) and Holstien and Gubrium's (1995) theories inform the design of these interviews, which followed prepared questions in order to cover research questions and themes, but also included a more conversational form. Inspired by Oakley's (1981) work, I saw the interviews as a communication between two people. In order to establish a dialogue where the interviewee is prepared to trust the interviewer with personal or sensitive information, I should be willing to do the same. Meaning is not something to be accessed, but instead the meaning of the interview is a collaborative construction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). I use Kvale's (1996) work on 'InterView', which is 'an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest' (1996: 2). This is a special kind of dialogue supervised by the interviewer that allows the interviewee to feel safe to express feelings, experiences and opinions. This way, knowledge is established through the interaction of the interviewee and myself, where I have informed him/her about the context and purpose of the interview before starting it. During the interviews I asked questions that were triggered by the interviewee and altered or abandoned prepared questions as interesting information was revealed (Davies 1999) and shared my own views and attitudes as well.

The tape-recorded interviews were carried out in the interviewee's native tongue: Danish, English or Swedish. They were then transcribed and translated. Davies (1999) argues that a translator's perceptions and theoretical standing inevitably influence the translations and some nuances and connotations could be lost in the translation. In my translations, I have stayed as true to the tone of the quotes as possible, but acknowledge that nuances may be lost in translation.

Reader Interviews

This stage is informed by ethnographic audience work by media scholars, including Janice Radway's (1991) work on romance reading and Joke Hermes' (1997) readers of women's magazines. Like them I focus on the uses of reading and I am not concerned with readers' false consciousness. Instead I want to find out how readers decode fashion and the magazines.

Drawing on 20 semi-structured in-depth anonymised interviews with eleven female and nine male readers of *DANSK* Magazine, I examine how readers make sense of the magazine, their discourses and how they understand their membership of the readership. For the sake of analysis informants are given pseudonyms. Unlike Jackson *et al.*'s (2001) respondents, who were recruited for their social diversity to prompt a broad reading, where some respondents were not familiar with the magazines under study, the selected respondents were recruited because of their familiarity with *DANSK*. Their knowledge varied: some were loyal readers, some had only flicked through it once, one subscribed, some were ad hoc readers, one was an ex-reader and one disliked it intensely but still reads it. The sample consists of Danish, English, Swedish, Norwegian and Czech readers based in London, Copenhagen and Stockholm. They are all young; between 20 and 33. These are referred to as '*DANSK* readers' or 'the readers', which only applies to the interviewed respondents, not *DANSK* readers in general. Moreover, the concept 'reader cultures' (see Chapter One) is used to refer to the various socio-cultural, communities, real and imagined, that readers engage in across national cultures and magazine genres. It refers to small groups of people who share the same views, tastes, practices and fashion preferences. It encapsulates cultural groups that share similar lifestyles and occupy similar jobs, in which fashion and its press are central and which shape the members' values and practices. Readers are members of various reader cultures at the same time and magazines are used to assert their membership of the various cultures. As a keen niche fashion magazine reader myself, I shared my preferences and views with the informants, which often took the form of a conversation led by me. Via my reader position I participate in many

reader cultures, which I use for different purposes; this disposition shaped my interview questions and understanding of the reading and usage of niche fashion magazines.

As Kondo (1986) argues, ethnographic knowledge is relative and contextual and understandings are anchored to a vantage point. This is particularly the case with my chosen methodology. Had my informants been unfamiliar with both *DANSK* and other niche fashion magazines, they would have made sense of them very differently, and as a result my findings would in all probability be very different.

Readers were primarily recruited from already established channels, such as friends, colleagues and acquaintances contacted via email, phone or face-to-face. The sample thus represents a slice of *DANSK*'s readership within my extended network. Further readers were reached via snowballing. As an attempt to reach readers working outside the image industry, three unsuccessful attempts were made to recruit students from within the University of the Arts London and Stockholm University, but they were all unfamiliar with the magazine. As a niche fashion magazine, *DANSK* is a cool and hip magazine, but compared to other niche fashion magazines available through the same channels, *DANSK* is a smaller and less opinion-leading publication, which may be the reason why some potential *DANSK* readers, such as fashion students, are unfamiliar with it. And as a result a pattern emerged: readers familiar with *DANSK* outside the image industry were very hard to come by. The respondents work as cultural intermediaries, in fashion as designers, journalists, photographers, stylists, fashion academics, brand managers, PRs, one even producing another niche fashion magazine, or in the related image industries as curators, interior designers, graphic designers, film directors and industrial designers. The sample readers, thus, are also producers in either fashion or other culture industries and, given their profession, many of them have contributed to various aspects of magazine production. Via this position, and unlike most research on magazines where informants are laypersons, the informants could be said to belong to a group of 'specialist readers'.

The conduct of the interviews and transcriptions is structured according to the same reflexive principles as described in the above section on producer interviews. Inspired by Hobson's watching of *Crossroads* with her viewers, I brought the three issues (issue 13, *Pet Power*; issue 14, *CPH Love*; issue 15, *Evilism*) I had observed and participated in the making of, to the interviews to stimulate conversation on both *DANSK* and other niche fashion magazines. This allowed me to investigate how they handled magazines, flicked through them, and what they noticed and where they paused. Most interviews were conducted in the

interviewees' homes, where I had a chance to see for myself where they kept their magazines. Other interviews were conducted in my office or in cafes, but I always asked if and where readers kept their magazines.

Data were analysed looking for recurrent themes and attitudes. The interviews conveyed a high degree of gossip. Not only did this mirror the rhetoric with which the production of the magazine was conducted, there was also a match between how readers made sense by gossiping about the producers and how the producers were gossiping about other producers. According to Gail De Vos (1996: 23-24), in addition to preservation of status, another function of gossip is that of social control. As social control, gossip functions as a social catalyst and acts as mode of socialisation where people through comparison gain self-knowledge and social power is distributed. Thus, by gossiping both readers (and producers) create a social arena from which they gauge their position and membership of the culture.

Furthermore, some interviewees saw the interview as a therapeutic opportunity to talk about themselves, and disclosed personal information to me outside the framework of research. Moreover, many informants were flattered by the attention and wanted to portray their desired identity, which was constructed and performed during the interview. Readers occupy different reader positions, both within a single reader and between the reader cultures. In my analysis I do not make claim on general readers, as my informants are 'specialist readers' because they work as cultural intermediaries themselves and are highly literate niche fashion magazine readers. Specialist readers, as Chapter Seven shows, are inclined to accept or partly accept the values underpinning the magazines. General readers may share these values, but in all probability carry out more critical interpretations of the magazines.

Qualitative Textual Analysis

Bethan Benwell argues (2005) that the content of text has been ignored since the 1980s because media scholars have been more preoccupied with culture as a process, not as a thing, and she advocates 'the contextualisation of the cultural text' (2005: 149). The text represents the message in transition mode. Roland Barthes says 'The text is a passage to meaning' (cited in Rice and Waugh 1996: 194), which implies that the text in itself is not meaningful, but directs potential plural meanings appropriated by the readers. The processes of production and consumption are interrelated to the 'textual cultures' of niche fashion magazines. As one of the processes in the circuit of culture, niche fashion magazines should also be analysed.

Qualitative textual analysis helps to identify, organise and interpret recurring themes and discourses within niche fashion magazines. The aim is to identify the visual and written codes that are interrelated to the processes of reader appropriation and decoding and producer encoding. This involves qualitative textual analysis of 'image clothing' and 'written clothing' (Barthes 1985: 3), which focuses primarily on fashion spreads and fashion writing within fashion features, but also pays attention to the overall graphic identity and layout.

The sample used for close reading is *DANSK* magazine, issues 1-15, 2002-2007. These are used to outline *DANSK*'s aesthetic identity, written and pictorial fashion and its particular Danishness. I explore the tone and style of writing in features, designer interviews and collection reports as well as the style of photography in fashion spreads, the overall graphic layout and the style and *mise-en-scene* of the fashion photography, which includes retouching, styling, props, lighting and models. This, as well as the background information provided by the producers, helps to give a close reading of *DANSK* and its characteristics.

Apart from *DANSK*, contemporary key niche fashion publications have been studied and collected throughout the project from across the subgenres of niche fashion magazines. These are used to define and map the genre and subgenres of niche fashion magazines and include primarily *Purple Fashion, Self Service, Acne Paper, 10* and *POP*, as well as *Tank, Another Magazine, Exit, Nylon, i-D* and *Visionaire*. Where possible the complete succession of magazines has been examined, but attention is given to the latest issue at the time of analysis. These magazines help to contextualise the position of *DANSK* in the field as well as to identity common features and key contributors operating in the field. Vis-à-vis other international niche fashion magazines, *DANSK*, as a case study, bears a mark of its Danish nationality with regard to ads, contributors and the styles featured but also its aesthetics of graphic design and art direction. As will be explored throughout this work, both producers and readers consciously compare *DANSK* to other niche fashion magazines. Examination of, and comparison with, other titles provides an understanding of *DANSK*'s status in the field and its relation to both other titles and producers. By qualitative textual analysis of *DANSK* and other key international niche fashion magazines I aim to identify and interpret what constitutes the textual representations of the culture of niche fashion magazines, their genre and shared features.

Position and Positioning

My position of both being inside and outside *DANSK* poses ethical questions and

demands careful management of these two roles. The handling of the ethical dimensions of such a double role was not simple. While the editors had been informed that I was present to participate and observe for the purpose of research, the longer I stayed in the field my position increasingly became a grey zone of researcher and member of the editorial staff. I overcame this grey zone through constant reflexive engagement with my role as both a researcher and a contributor to the magazine. Throughout the fieldwork I took extensive notes on what was going on, what was being said and the editors' reaction towards me. Taking notes not only helped me maintain my researcher position amid my active participation, it allowed me to move between these two positions. However, my position as a researcher as well as producer of magazines is not just that of a double position, as contributor to/producer of magazines and magazine researcher. Since I am also a niche fashion magazine reader, I occupy a researcher-producer-reader position. The challenge of such a position is to evaluate my own subjectivity and to make the familiar strange by stepping back from what, to me, seems commonplace and banal. For example, the use of models and key collection press samples seems common sense to me, both as a former model and as a member of the field of fashion. If I had been an outsider I may have objected to the values underpinning the production, such as exclusivity and timing, but how can I be critical of my own field where I, like the producers and readers, have internalised values, beliefs and practices of fashion? I have striven to maintain a reflexive approach, which includes questioning my own position, knowledge, co-production and consumption and this, aided by Bourdieuian theorisation, proved to be the means with which to do that. I kept questioning what I brought to the fieldwork, my degree of participation and the difference between sharing personal and private experiences with the observed informants. During fieldwork at *DANSK*, my roles as researcher and contributor merged, and these different positions might not always have been transparent, either to the observer or to myself.

Maintaining distance, or what Simmel (1973b) calls 'objectivity', was thus challenging. Uniting remoteness and nearness, Simmel's objectivity refers to the special quality a stranger participating in a group holds. Being a stranger allows him or her to confront the group and its laws by an '"objective" attitude' (Simmel 1973b: 145). However, as I was no stranger, I could not maintain this attitude, even as a construction, and I had difficulties in maintaining a position of 'both inside and outside of the setting' (Gray 2004: 242). Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 253), in his reflexive sociology, similarly strives to straddle objectivism and subjectivism by maintaining an objectifying relation to knowledge, through a practice he calls 'participant objectivation'. This implies the researcher critically objectifying his/her

own relation to the object, 'the objectivation of the subject of objectivation, of the analysing subject' (Bourdieu 2003: 282). The task of the sociological researcher is to carry out a double form of objectification – both to the object and to oneself. What needs to be 'objectivized', besides the social world of both, is also the researcher's social origins, position and trajectory as well as their 'position within the microcosm of anthropologists' (Bourdieu 2003: 283).

Despite my reflexive position and attempt at 'objectivising' my own position and relation to the observed objects, my active insider participation may be criticised on the grounds of bias and subjectivity. While all fieldworkers inevitably inform the data and need to adapt to roles and take on positions, a process that relies greatly on one's social skills, I believe that if it had not been for my insider position and active participation, access would have been denied and this project almost certainly would not have come to be.

CHAPTER 4: BETWEEN EDGE AND ELITE
Niche Fashion Magazines, Genre and Subfields

What is a niche fashion magazine? That question cannot be answered by examining the magazine as a textual object only, but also calls for examination of its production and readership. While the latter two will be examined in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, this chapter explores the characteristics of the genre and how it is positioned in the field of the fashion press. The aim of the chapter is three-fold: the first is to provide a historical context of the genre; the second is to outline what makes up the genre; and the third is to provide a map of the field of contemporary niche fashion magazines, focusing on fashion photography and fashion writing in two main subgenres: glossy niche magazines and art fashion magazines.

Context

> Genres can be defined as patterns/forms/styles/structures which transcend individual art products, and which supervise both their construction by artist and their audience. (Ryall, cited in Lacey 2000: 132)

Genres are not set in stone, but refer to loose classifications of texts that are based on shared discourses, conventions, codes and the object of discourse. They are used to establish text recognition and expectation keyed by form and content. Following Ryall's above definition, a genre is a form of paradigmatic contract between the maker and the receiver of the text, which helps construct meaning. Lacey (2000) adds to the receiver-maker nexus the institution in which the text is produced, such as book publishers and galleries. While the idea of a genre might be helpful when analysing and categorising texts, Turner argues that genres 'continually change, modulate, and redefine themselves' (cited in Lacey 2000: 134) and in this process subgenres emerge, which both share conventions with the main genre and have conventions specific to them.

Within magazine research little attention has been given to what makes up the various genres. For instance, Brian Moeran (2001) in a working paper on the cross-cultural comparison of *Elle* and *Marie Claire*, refers to the publications as women's magazines. In a later paper analysing *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Marie Claire* he refers to them as fashion magazines (Moeran 2006a). While these titles are, indeed, examples of overlapping genres, the mixing of terminologies is confusing and calls for further treatment of genre characteristics. Agnès Rocamora (2009) argues that magazine research has rarely made a distinction between fashion magazines and women's magazines, the reason being that fashion is a big part of

women's magazines. However, niche fashion magazines focus specifically on fashion, art and popular culture, which are mediated with experimental graphic design, and the label 'women's magazines' would not only overshadow such specific subjects and type of fashion mediation, it would also ignore the fact that they address both men and women. While fashion is generally made synonymous with a woman's interest, men's magazines, as Rocamora (2009) recognises, are rarely referred to as fashion magazines. In his treatment of fashion writing and magazines, Barthes also sees fashion as female; 'the woman of Fashion' (1985: 256). Niche fashion magazines, which will be examined below, bypass a gender-specific address by focusing especially on fashion, for both men and women.

Most magazines contain different and heterogeneous discourses on fashion (Ballaster *et al.* 1991). Rarely does a magazine consist of similar voices from cover to cover. Rather, it provides a reading experience of different tones, emphases and styles of imagery and writing. This heterogeneous quality of contemporary magazines, as well as the constant modulation, as Turner argues above, challenges a classification of magazine genres. While genres do indeed overlap, we need to examine what makes up the ignored genre of niche fashion magazine, as that will shed new light on fashion and its media culture. This thesis does not explore the genre of women's magazines or fashion glossies, which are shaped by different production and consumption modes. They will henceforward be referred to as women's fashion magazines, including specialist high-end fashion glossies such as *Vogue* and mid-range women's magazines with a fashion and celebrity focus such as *New Women*, which are published by media conglomerates such as Condé Nast, Hachette, Bauer or IPC Media. The focus here is on the subgenre of niche fashion magazine, but in order to understand this, and its position in the field, a historical context must be established.

The history of women's magazines goes back to the late seventeenth century (Ballaster *et al.* 1991), but it was not until the 1870s (see, for instance, Braithwaite 1995; White 1970) that the women's press as we know it today was born. Since then women have largely been addressed by recipes and writings in the imperative tone on how to obtain and maintain the required bourgeois femininity (Ballaster *et al.* 1991). But magazine genres also change, at the same time as they shape and define societal changes. The British *Nova* magazine (1965-1975), for instance, focused attention on the changing status of women in society and addressed fashion- and style-conscious women within discourses of emancipation and sexual liberty (see, for instance, Beard 2002). *Nova* was also one of the first British style bibles, which included new types of fashion styling that combined high fashion with army-surplus and thrift store clothes. It also published thought-provoking features on the female orgasm, feminism,

homosexuality and racism. Elliott Smedley (2000), however, has recognised that the various subcultures of the 1970s were ignored by fashion magazines up until 1978, when Terry Jones, who was art director at British *Vogue* at the time, published *Not Another Punk Book*. In the 1980s this changed, and so did the overall magazine market in the UK.

Away from the mainstream, a new genre of magazine surfaced: the style magazine. The style magazines such as *The Face* and *i-D* dealt differently with fashion, and also constructed new forms of masculinities and femininities, which I explore below. These titles should be seen against a magazine market facing increased competition and shifts in the work force: since the 1970s overall magazine circulation had dropped, and as a result of competition from foreign publishers entering the English market in the 1980s, primarily German publishing houses such as Gruhner & Jahr and Bauer (Braithwaite and Barrell 1988), budgets were cut, and large numbers of in-house staff were made redundant and replaced with freelancers. In addition, by the mid-1980s women's magazines had transformed and lost what McRobbie calls their 'predictability' (1996: 176). New technologies and digitalisation such as desktop publishing software, which allows for the production and design of magazines on a personal computer, became widely available in the 1980s (Hesmondhalgh 2002), which also impacted greatly on the overall market, as magazines became easier and cheaper to produce.

Born out of the early-1980s style cultures, the 'first wave' of the British style press provided the breeding ground for niche fashion magazines. Tired of the glossy perfection of women's fashion magazines, Nick Logan launched *The Face* in May 1980 (discontinued in 2004) and in August of the same year Terry Jones launched *i-D*. *The Face* and *i-D*, along with Carey Labovitch's *Blitz*, were responsible for establishing the basis of the style magazine genre by providing a playground for aspiring fashion talents. The magazines were self-produced in lo-tech fanzine-like circumstances: *i-D*, for instance, was initially self-funded and stapled together on A4 paper in Terry Jones's house (Jones, T. 2000), while Nick Logan paid for *The Face* by remortgaging his house. There was also a ubiquitous sense of self-promotion in the style magazines, which showed the styles of friends of the producers or the producers themselves, as well as how they partied. In this way, producers and readers of the magazines were interrelated, as both were producers and consumers of the style cultures that fed into the magazine content. I will return to this idea later. In many ways early style magazines resembled fanzines, or simply zines. 'Zines are non-commercial, small-circulation publications which are produced and distributed by their creators' (Spencer 2005: 13). They are the personal voice of their creators, made outside commercial interest for communities of fans who share interests in the same music,

cultural phenomena or superheroes. Historically zines go back to the 1930s where fans of science fiction magazines organised themselves into networks through the readers' letters page, and began to write their own magazines that communicated through 'fanspeak' (Spencer 2005: 95). Zine media later became part of the feminist revolution and the punk scene, among other areas, and have now evolved into blogs.

The early style magazines are known for mediating 'real' styles as they were seen on the street. *i-D* pioneered 'straight-up', a style of photography of people on the street accompanied with vox pop questions about their style. Straight-up, which has become the visual emblem of the first-wave style press, was also 'a style of dress worn by ordinary people as opposed to professional models, combined in apparent disregard of dominant fashion codes and celebrated in the streets' (Rocamora and O'Neill 2008: 186). Opposed to expensive fashion shots in studios executed by a professional crew, straight-up is the epitome of lo-tech and inexpensive fashion photography capturing 'real' people on the streets, in clubs or hanging out publicly. It has since become a widespread form of documenting styles both in fashion magazines and on online style blogs. Reflecting the anti-commercial and anti-establishment discourses of the time, the first-wave style press was as much a barometer of the social change taking place in Thatcherist Britain as a mouthpiece for the styles of post-Punk and New Romanticism. While, indeed, the visual style and innovation of both straight-up and the overall visual identities were, and are, paramount to style magazines, their reach and reflection of their readers as producers and consumers of subcultures not only informed how people dressed and lived their lives at the time, it also innovated what constitutes fashion mediation. *i-D*, for instance, produced new formats of fashion mediation with 'bricolaged' layout of collages of visual imagery: 'typewriter-face print, ticker tape headlines and wild, often perverse graphics' (Jones, D. 2000: 9). In 1983 *The Face*, led by the art director Neville Brody, was voted Magazine of the Year at the annual Magazine Publishing Awards and its typeface and design received acclaim from professional design journals (Hebdige 1985). Similarly, like the fashion spreads in *Nova*, the clothes featured were either people's own or a mix of inexpensive thrift shop garments and designs from emerging talents.

Customised and vintage clothes thus became part of fashion styling in the 1980s and 1990s. Captions such as 'stylist's own' or 'model's own' also began to feature in the bylines. This shift in fashion photography is what Charlotte Cotton (2000) calls personalisation of fashion. She argues that this is a result of a group of freelance stylists, such as Simon Foxton, Edward Enninful, Anna Cockburn, Melanie Ward, Venetia Scott and Katy England, who, being unaffiliated to a particular

magazine, were not restricted to showing specific clothes or products in a 'commercial light' (Cotton 2000: 6).

The style magazines were significant for providing a platform which mediated a new generation of photographers in the making. The 'School of London', as Muir coined it (cited in Smedley 2000), consisted of a group of photographers, such as Corrine Day, Juergen Teller, David Sims and Nigel Shafran, who began working for style magazines in the 1990s. While they had individual styles, Smedley (2000) argues that what united them was their shared realist aesthetic. This was a style of often overexposed, sexualised and humorous imagery of raw, documentarist scenery with little or no retouching of the models, which was a result of their simple technical equipment, using snapshot, point-and-shoot cameras with inbuilt flash. Often their own lives, homes and friends, their hedonistic lifestyles, parties and sex lives, were staged unfiltered and sometimes the photographers themselves participated in front of the lens. Through personalised *mise-en-scene*, fashion imagery sought to construct a sense of authenticity of the lives of those involved, outside of commercial restraints.

The style press had a second coming in the 1990s, as Penny Martin (2008) has recognised: 'the 1990s were all about the second wave of the style press, an entrepreneurial, brattish, swaggering bunch of kids taking over the publishing community. This was very much characterised by *SleazeNation, Dazed & Confused* and *Raygun*' (Martin, cited in Shinkle 2008b: 122). At the same time as this British second wave of the style press, the genre of men's magazines evolved with new titles such as *loaded, Maxim* and *FHM*, mediating a 'laddish' culture of sex, football and binge drinking. The lad magazines and the second wave of the style press were, according to photographer Rankin (cited in Shinkle 2008a: 91), a reflection of the 1990s' ecstasy 'drug culture' and hedonism. *i-D*, which along with *The Face* had been responsible for establishing the genre, also changed in the 1990s. Henceforward it included more advertising and became altogether glossier (T. Jones 2000). Moreover, assimilation of what was once a subversive and subcultural form of fashion mediation also became a style vocabulary of the high-end fashion press and the style of photography, such as straight-up and 'trash realism' (Andersen 2006), soon began to appear in British *Vogue*. Below I examine in more detail the different styles of photography.

Two strands of fashion photography that emerged in the 1990s still comprise the key styles of photography in niche fashion magazines: trash realism and hyperrealism. By the mid-1990s, a 'grunge' style of fashion that informed both fashion clothes and fashion photography was circulating in style magazines, and to a lesser degree in high-end women's fashion magazines. Originating in the Seattle-based independent music scene with bands such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam and Soundgarden, the grunge aesthetic became known as an undone unisex look with

Doc Marten boots, plaid shirts, stonewashed jeans and knitted beanies. Grunge was also reflected in fashion photography, but, as Cotton (2000) argues, the label attempted to group photographers and stylists together disregarding their stylistic differences. These differences will not be accounted for here, since the purpose is to explore the style, as it still informs fashion photography in niche fashion magazines. Grunge photography was also labelled 'heroin chic' (Spindler 1997) or 'trash realism' (Andersen 2006). Some of the photographers who led trash realism, such as Juergen Teller, Corinne Day, Wolfgang Tillmans and Nan Goldin, utilised snapshot aesthetic and borrowed the codes of documentary photography. Crossing into the realm of the private life of the photographer, the model was often shot in interaction with the photographer using low-tech styles, point and shoot cameras with direct flash, against a wall or hanging out at the photographer's home. Apathetic, skinny and 'seemingly' unstyled models shot in slouching or distorted 'anti-posing' poses were key to the style, as expressed in Corinne Day's work with Kate Moss.

Jobling (1999) notes that after Alexandra Shulman was appointed editor-in-chief in 1992 British *Vogue* began incorporating trash realist grunge styles. An example of this, which was deemed controversial at the time (Cotton 2000; Jobling 1999) for its heroin chic style, was the fashion spread *Under Exposure* that featured in the June issue of *Vogue* 1993. It was a lingerie spread by Corinne Day featuring Kate Moss, shot in Moss's apartment at the time. With Moss's adolescent, empty-eyed and anti-posing look and little or no digital manipulation of the image, Day, like Terry Jones with *i-D*, wanted to reflect reality and move away from 1980s excessive makeup, big hair and glamour (Corinne Day Diary 2003). Adding to the blurring of genres was the fact that models, stylists and photographers who had made a name in the style press, began working across different genres of magazines.

A shoot that epitomised the style and the era was Juergen Teller's now famous nude shot of supermodel Kristen McMenamy with a Versace-heart in lipstick painted on her chest, published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in 1996. Staging the underbelly, the intimate and 'authentic' scenes of the fashion world, trash realism framed images of drug and party cultures. The idea of representing reality as 'real', as unfiltered as possible, was a significant feature, which also often involved unpolished and literal sexually suggestive motifs, i.e. 'porn chic'. Trash realism has been criticised as a pseudo-documentary aesthetic that does not go beyond the pretence of fashion (Shinkle 2008) and for borrowing the codes of artistic photography in an attempt to avoid the commercial stigma that hunts fashion photography (Smedley 2000).

Another strand of fashion photography at the time, which stands in contrast to trash realism and still persists today in both high-end women's fashion magazines and niche fashion magazines, was that of hyperrealism. Correction, retouching and

perfecting of the model body and the image through computer manipulation has, since the 1980s, been a common procedure in contemporary fashion imagery. The computer became a central creative tool and digital manipulation of fashion photography gained a foothold in style and niche fashion magazines in the mid-1990s, which re-established glamorous fashion photography (Cotton 2000). Some photographers used it excessively in a style that went beyond glamour and perfection. This was a far cry from trash realism with its framing of 'the real' in fashion photography. Drawing on Baudrillard, Andersen has labelled this style 'digital hyperrealism' (Andersen 2006: 233), which she refers to as 'ultra sharp hyperrealism whose glossy display of objects often employ digital processing. Frozen in their movements and with completely even skin colours the models, and the shiny worlds they inhabit, seem not alive or natural, but excessively artificial' (Andersen 2006: 233[i]). Excessive retouching, model 'cloning' or inserting models who have been shot in a studio exposed to studio lighting into another *mise-en-scene* with a different type of lighting, are characteristics of the style which bring attention to the constructiveness of the image. Baudrillard's (1995: 2) term 'hyperreality' refers to the state of society where 'every reality is absorbed by the hyperreality of the code and simulation'. By this, Baudrillard means that the contemporary world has become fictional and imaginary, without interaction with the 'real' reality but with 'reduplication of the real' (1995: 71). Following this, the hyperreal applies to a style of photography where, for instance, the real body of the model has been retouched and manipulated to a degree where it is only a simulation of the actual body. Cotton (2000: 07) argues that some photographers reinterpreted 1970s styles as a 'conscious sense of pastiche'. The exaggerated work of the fashion and celebrity photographer David LaChapelle bears the mark of digital hyperrealism and the French photo-artists Pierre et Gilles are more than anyone known for this style. Rankin, Mert and Marcus and Inez Van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin from the early stages of their career employed digital manipulation in their photography. Nick Knight in his work for Showstudio is similarly known for his experimental use of new technical advancements. The style of digital hyperrealism, unlike trash realism, does not employ 'accidental aesthetic' (Andersen 2006: 237) or attempt to represent naturalistically what was before the camera when the photograph was taken. Instead it goes beyond the referent, glamorising and perfecting reality. While hyperrealism labels a distinct style that brings attention to the image and the medium itself, which sometimes makes use of Computer Generated Imagery (CGI), the use of digital manipulation, retouching and manipulation of images is now a staple practice in the production of most fashion imagery.

From the first and the second coming of the independent style press and the new styles of photography, niche fashion magazines emerged as a genre. Where models, new stylists, new photographers and art directors have found a subcultural and perhaps more subversive platform in the style magazines, niche fashion magazines merge experimental art direction and fashion photography with the high-fashion 'establishment' through the use of high-fashion clothing and established contributors. In view of this, the niche fashion magazine genre is a glossier extension of the style press and is considered a gathering point of innovative fashion photography and art direction. Merging the codes of the style press with high-fashion clothing and targeting both men and women, titles such as *Visionaire* (1991), *Purple Fashion* (1996, relaunched in 2004), and *TANK* (1998), were among the first niche fashion magazines.

Towards a Definition

> 'Niche publishing' will be the watchword. (Braithwaite and Barrell 1988: 151)

Bearing the historical context in mind I shall now attempt to define what makes up a niche fashion magazine. Intrinsic to contemporary niche fashion magazines is, as it will become clear, the overlap of art and fashion. Susan Kismaric and Eva Respini (2008) argue that in the 1990s certain magazines, which they refer to as 'independent magazines', such as *Self Service, Dutch, Big, Surface* and *Sleek* 'bridged the worlds of art and fashion, showcasing young and unknown photographers and designers' (Kismaric and Respini 2008: 33). Similarly, from the early 1980s art journals such as *Artforum* began to include fashion in their content (Kismaric and Respini 2008). I will pursue the idea of niche fashion magazines merging art and fashion in the next subsection. Furthermore, some of the features of niche fashion magazines introduced in this section, such as the use and functions of irony, will be discussed in detail in the final section of this chapter.

The term 'niche fashion magazine' is inspired by the work of David Muggleton (2000). Gough-Yates (2003) and Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) also discuss 'niche magazine publishing' in relation to new marketing strategies in which publishers produced specialist magazines to attract readers with increasingly specialised lifestyles. Muggleton refers to the media of style cultures – the independent music press and style magazines – as 'niche media' (2000; 135). Such publications are often staffed by people with 'subcultural capital' (Thornton 1995) who participate in, and produce, style cultures themselves. This interrelation between

the culture of the producers and the culture of readers is key to understanding the culture of niche fashion magazines because readers, as argued in Chapter Two, also work as cultural intermediaries in the field of fashion and other image industries. Like early style magazines, niche fashion magazines often exclusively target a group of insiders, which makes them business-to-business publications – produced and consumed by professionals working in the image industry.

The term 'niche fashion magazine' refers to small-scale independent fashion magazines that merge high fashion with art and style cultures, often targeting both men and women. Contemporary titles include *A Magazine, Another Magazine, Citizen K, Crash, S Magazine, 10 Magazine, Plastique, POP, Visionaire* and *125*, which all belong to different subgroups of the genre (for a comprehensive list see Appendices A and B). Rhodes (2008) groups magazines such as *Tank, Purple, i-D, Dazed & Confused, W* and *The Face* under the coinage '"alternative" fashion press' (Rhodes 2008: 2000). Art, experimental aesthetic and innovative graphic design are integral to these titles, which often set new trends in photography, styling and art direction, and, while they are often first to feature new designers, attention is primarily given to already established designers and artists. They are produced by freelance tastemakers, innovators and artists who collaborate and work for very little payment, an idea I return to later, in teams across disciplines. Traditionally, their visual and journalistic styles spring out of style magazines, but the two genres differ. Style magazines are preoccupied with a younger scene of music and clubbing, announcing the new and the young talents of the time and often mediating style as part of anti-establishment discourses. For instance, the now discontinued *Sleaze*, which was a relaunch of *Sleazenation*, featured on its March 2004 cover a burning photograph of Victoria Beckham, accompanied with the caption 'Celebrity burnout. Reclaiming culture from the people who are destroying it'. A critical take on celebrity culture like that of *Sleaze* is largely absent in niche fashion magazines. Instead, they mix mainstream popular culture with art and high fashion – and the clothes featured are innovative and avant-garde items from the new collections of ready-to-wear and haute couture designer labels such as Givenchy, Lanvin, Jil Sander, Balenciaga, Maison Martin Margiela, Chanel and Louis Vuitton. As such niche fashion magazines merge edge and elite, bridging the avant-garde and the establishment.

Compared to women's fashion magazines, taken as a whole, which are mostly published monthly and in larger print runs (British *Cosmopolitan* has a monthly circulation of 460,276[ii] and British *Vogue* a circulation of 220,325,[iii] while American *Vogue* has a paid circulation of 1,224,131[iv]), niche fashion magazines are usually published quarterly, biannually or infrequently, and in smaller numbers, but, unlike zines, they are distributed through established distribution channels. The

Belgian niche fashion magazine *A Magazine* has a biannual circulation of 15,000,[v] the French *Self Service* has a biannual circulation of 30,000[vi] and the French *Purple Fashion* a biannual circulation of 70,000.[vii] Circulation numbers should be seen as indicative only, as some producers are known to inflate the actual figure to attract advertisers. The smaller group of niche fashion magazines rarely run readership analysis (ABC), which means their readership is often not calculated or analysed. Sometimes, though, media kits provide estimated readership numbers. Generally, 15-30 percent[viii] of the total content of niche fashion magazines consists of ads, whereas ads sometimes represent up to 50-60 percent of women's fashion magazines such as *Vogue Paris*. This does not mean that niche fashion magazines are less dependent on ads; instead it indicates, first of all, that their budgets are smaller, which means that their contributors are paid less, if at all, and their overall production costs are lower than high-end women's fashion magazines. Secondly, advertisers are not so attracted to niche fashion magazines as their readership is smaller and highly segmented and niche fashion magazines are also choosier about dealing with advertisers whose brand image does not match that of the magazine brand.

Their points of purchase are limited, as they are sold in art bookshops, select newsstands and multi-store boutiques as well as cultural institutions such as the Institute of Contemporary Art and the Hayward Gallery shop, but some British chains of bookstores in central London, such as Borders, also carry a selection of niche fashion magazines. Compared to women's fashion magazines they are expensive and cost between £5 and £170 an issue. With a few exceptions such as *POP* Magazine (published by Bauer, which also publishes a group of women's and teen magazines) and *LOVE* Magazine (published by Condé Nast), they are mostly independently run and are therefore not tied to conglomerate publishing houses. They are usually published by creative directors who run advertising agencies or work for other companies. This is a topic I return to in Chapter Five.

Whereas women's fashion magazines tend to advertise key content on the cover, most niche fashion magazines keep cover text to a minimum. *Exit* magazine, for instance, has omitted a cover image entirely in favour of a colour-block cover only featuring its title. Referring to women's magazines, Ellen McCracken (1993: 4) argues that the cover is the 'most important advertising', which convinces readers to buy them. Reducing cover texts or entirely omitting them, and in the case of *Exit* replacing the image with a block of colour, bypasses the conventions of advertising content on the cover to invite readers into the magazine, or to read it or buy it. This suggests that niche fashion magazine covers do not have to advertise their content because they are addressing a specialist readership already familiar with the genre codes.

Women's fashion magazines employ what could be called 'directive fashion writing' through direct address and 'how-to-recipes' (Moeran 2006: 727) such as 'navy blue is the new black' or 'how to look great in photos', which often by the use of the imperative dictate and advertise certain trends and products. König calls this imperative tone of voice the 'informed voice of authority imparting wisdom' (2006: 212). Central to the critique of the writing in women's fashion magazines is that it directs consumption: McCracken (1993) argues that it creates commodified desires. A similar argument can be found in the work of Barthes (1985), to whom the intention of *written clothing* is to persuade the readers to consume it. To him, the power of written clothing is to give meaning and value to the actual clothes: 'the "speech" (of the magazine) seizes upon insignificant objects, and, *without modifying their substance,* strikes them with meaning, gives them the life of a sign' (Barthes 1985: 65). However, Barthes is writing about fashion writing in the 1960s, which, as König argues, has changed considerably, and furthermore, he is referring to another magazine genre.

On British *Vogue*, König argues that there is an increased expectation of its 'readers to have a comprehensive knowledge of contemporary and historical figures within the fashion world. Models are often referred to on a first name basis, as if there could only possibly be one "Gisele" or "Erin"' (König 2006: 215). This tendency is pushed even further in the fashion writing of some niche fashion magazines. In the case of Karl Lagerfeld, for instance, mid-range women's fashion magazines would typically inform the reader that he is the German-born creative director of Chanel and Fendi, as well as of his eponymous label. Instead, niche fashion magazine *DANSK* says 'Herr Lagerfeld' is a 'well-read German Action Fashion Man' (*DANSK, Evilism*, issue 15, 2007, p. 66). This highly ironic style not only assumes readers' familiarity with Karl Lagerfeld, it essentially provides little introduction and explanation to readers unfamiliar with Lagerfeld. I will elaborate further on irony below and in the following chapter.

Lastly, fashion spreads across genres are usually accompanied by bylines informing the readers about the brands featured. What sets niche fashion magazines apart from, for instance, women's fashion magazines is that the latter often provide price information about the clothes shown in the fashion spreads, which essentially acts as consumer help. Such information is often absent in niche fashion magazines.

As argued at the beginning of this chapter, distinguishing the various genres is difficult because they utilise similar styles of photography and writing. However, two principal styles of fashion writing are found in niche fashion magazines: the first is that of irony and the second is an intellectualising style, which I return to below. These styles of writing are also present in other magazine genres such as high-end women's fashion magazines, where they are often combined with pieces of directive

fashion writing, as defined above. In spite of these reservations, the ironic and intellectual styles of fashion writing are more pronounced in niche fashion magazines. In mediating fashion, both styles draw on texts outside fashion. Ironic fashion writing principally draws on knowledge and figures from the wider popular culture, and the intellectual style of writing uses historical and academic references to explain its subject. I will give examples in the last section of this chapter.

Niche fashion magazines are positioned between high-end women's fashion magazines, style magazines and art magazines. In view of this, they merge the cultural codes of elite and edge. Some magazines are more 'hip' than others and are used as a shared reference point within the field. New or relaunched publications in particular, such as Andy Warhol's *Interview*, which in September 2008 was revamped by the new editors Fabian Baron and Glenn O'Brien, receive attention in the fashion press. Stylist and editor-in-chief Katie Grand's *Love*, launched in February 2009, was similarly much talked about within the fashion industry. The status of certain niche fashion magazines is a result of collaboration by top photographers, models, stylists and high-fashion advertisers, which lends kudos to the magazines. Niche fashion magazines have a particularly high level of 'coolness', as they are produced by a group of fashion leaders: esteemed freelancers whose work acts as a seal of approval, setting fashion rather than following it. Thus, getting coverage in niche fashion magazines, as well as gaining prestigious exposure in style magazines (McRobbie 1998), can also propel one's career. But unlike style magazines, which provide a training ground for aspiring talents (Cotton 2000; McRobbie 1998), niche fashion magazines prefer to employ either overlooked or more established members of the culture and fashion industry, which endow niche fashion magazines with a more exclusive and prestigious profile.

Within niche fashion magazines, hierarchies exist where high-status contributors and advertisers act as seals of approval and endow magazines with the desirable combination of avant-garde and popular culture; high and low culture. As a result, niche fashion magazines, and indeed *DANSK*, as will become clear in Chapter Five, hold at their centre two distinct but co-existing beliefs: fashion as a legitimate art as well as fashion as frivolous. These beliefs are not in opposition, but are merged both within one magazine and within the genre of niche fashion magazines. I shall return in detail to how these are played out in the style of writing and photography as well as various subgenres in the last section of this chapter. Before I do so a discussion on the cultural position of the niche fashion magazine is appropriate. Raphaël Niemojewski (2004: 180) has recognised that new types of magazines which merge avant-garde positions with fashion and celebrity culture have a 'hybrid nature'. The idea of magazines' hybridised quality is essential for

understanding niche fashion magazines, and their exchange of fashion and art – as well as their bridging of women's fashion magazines and style magazines. Based on their position between the field of art magazines, style magazines with their independence, creative and experimental styles and women's fashion's magazines with their glossy paper and focus on new collections, the majority of niche fashion magazines are hybrids par excellence.

Art, Subculture and High Fashion Hybridised

> The one area where the cultures of art and fashion appear to be most inextricably interfused, where common territory is most coherently shared, is that of the style magazine, aimed at a young market, where both the graphic presentation and the visual content and ideological position suggest a comfortable acceptance of shared values, linking dress, music, media and art. (Radford 1998: 153)

How are we to understand the overlaps between fashion and art? Niemojewski's idea of the post-modern hybrid, outlined above, attempts to bypass the distinction between art and commerce. Radford recognises that the style press integrates art and fashion. However, it seems the distinction between fashion and art is still employed rhetorically when making sense of both style magazines and niche fashion magazines. For instance, embedded in Kismaric and Respini's (2008) idea of a magazine 'bridging the worlds of art and fashion' is that art and fashion are, at least traditionally, understood as dichotomous entities. Underlying the opposition of art and fashion is the classic opposition of pure–impure, high–low and art–commerce. What makes fashion's interrelationship with art so complex, as Bourdieu and Delsaut (1975: 22) argue, is that the field of fashion is 'situated at an intermediary position between the artistic field and the economic field' (cited in Entwistle and Rocamora 2006: 739). At this intermediary position, while fashion is valued for its artistic values, its commercial value preys on its status as art.

The idea of art as pure, and untouched by commercial value, stems back to the Renaissance when art was regarded as the highest and purest form of creativity. This stance was also reflected in Romanticism's idea of the genius artist (Hesmondhalgh 2002). Embedded in Theodor Adorno and Marx Horkheimer's critique of 'The Culture Industry' is the concept that culture is ideally art, which is true and pure and 'act[s] as a form of critique to the rest of life, and could provide a utopian vision of how a better life might be possible' (Hesmondhalgh 2002: 15). Culture in the culture industry, which Adorno and Horkheimer used in the singular, had become commodified and thus lost its purity and ability to render critique. Hesmondhalgh (2002) argues that since the Romantic Movement there has been a widespread

assumption that art can only thrive away from commerce, which has led to the polarisation of creativity versus commerce. Artists rejecting commercial interests are viewed as better artists.

However, throughout the history of modern fashion avant-garde artists and fashion designers have collaborated and taken great inspiration from each other, for instance Elsa Schiaparelli with Dalí and Jean Cocteau in the 1930s and Yves Saint Laurent's 'Mondrian' dress from 1965 (Kim 1998). In the 1980s this became more widespread when artists such as Richard Prince, Jean Michel Basquiat and Cindy Sherman began to collaborate with fashion designers such as Jean-Paul Gaultier, Jean-Charles de Castelbajac and Comme des Garçons (Kim 1998). This was at the same time as style magazines emerged. From the 1990s style and niche fashion magazines began to include art photographers (Cotton 2000; Kismaric and Respini 2008), which further blurred the distinctions between the commercial sphere and art. This collapse of former divisions should be seen in relation to postmodernism. Indeed, the 'erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called popular culture' (Jameson 1985: 112) is one of the key features ascribed to post-modern theory on contemporary culture. On the relationship between fashion and postmodernism, Elizabeth Wilson (1998: 392) argues that 'today, there is blurring between mainstream and countercultural fashions', and notes that it is not a new phenomenon but has existed throughout the history of modern fashion.

While postmodernism is not a cultural theory as such, but an umbrella concept that refers both to 'a whole set of artistic movements' and to the 'effort[s] from within cultural theory to define the specific nature of these movements' (Milner and Browitt 2002), it has come to represent a set of ideas on contemporary popular culture. Talking of postmodernism in the 1960s, John Storey (2001: 147) identifies these efforts as a 'revolt against the canonization of modernism's avant-garde revolution; it attacks modernism's official status, its canonization in the museum and the academy, as the high culture of the modern capitalist world'. He continues to say that 'modernist culture' including the work of bohemian and modernist artists such as Picasso, Joyce, Eliot and Brecht 'has become bourgeois culture' and argues that the avant-garde's 'subversive power has been drained by the academy and the museum' (Storey 2001: 147). Embedded in theorisations of postmodernism as well as in postmodernist works of art is the belief that cultural elitism no longer holds sway. Similarly, on the contemporary avant-garde Angela McRobbie has argued 'of course this is no longer an avant-garde proper, since the privileging of the forms has been abandoned in favour of a cross-referencing between forms, and notably between pop music and "art", between aesthetics and commerce, between commitment and the need to make a living' (McRobbie 1996: 21). Included in this is the breakdown of

distinctions between high and low culture. The mixed genre of niche fashion magazines, bridging style magazines, women's high fashion magazines and art magazines, should be seen against this post-modern debate, but I argue in Chapter Nine that the tension between high elitist culture and popular culture remains somewhat unresolved in the beliefs that underpin the niche fashion magazine culture.

Stéphane Wargnier (2004) distinguishes two distinct types of magazines representing each side of the field of the fashion press: magazines concerned with attracting as many readers as possible, which refers to mass-scale women's fashion magazines, and in the process of doing so address their readers through the 'lowest common denominator' (Wargnier 2004: 165). At the other end of the field, Wargnier finds small-circulation magazines (i.e. niche fashion magazines) used by staff as 'playground' as mouthpieces or 'self-promotion', where the pages lack a shared vision of a 'common project'. Since niche fashion magazine production is not financially profitable, the motivation for making magazines is based mostly on creative self-fulfilment and self-promotion. (This will be explored further in Chapter Six.) Common for all magazines, both large-scale women's magazines and small-scale niche fashion magazines, Wargnier argues, is that ' by abandoning their role as temporal and social "mediators", fashion magazines have given up their place to the crudity of economic motives' (2004: 165). Wargnier's criticism of both types of magazines assumes that magazines, regardless of genre, have a responsibility to mediate fashion regardless of economic imperatives. Most producers of niche fashion magazines consider themselves to be creative, independent or even artistic, and, thus like Wargnier they usually see advertising as a necessary evil – an attitude that will be explored in Chapter Six. Although they too conform to the exchange of advertising revenue, niche fashion magazines enjoy relative creative freedom of form and content compared to women's fashion magazines, which usually have bigger budgets, staff holding contracted positions and often promote and liaise with the fashion industry via sponsored subscription and competition gifts and favourable product reviews. This critique is based upon a polarised division of the field and, in his comment on the pestering 'economic motives', Wargnier mobilises the classic opposition between art and commerce and the different values that underpin them.

Wargnier's idea of the field made up by two different poles brings to mind Pierre Bourdieu's (1993a) work on cultural production. Bourdieu divides the field into two subfields of production: the 'subfield of large-scale production', which includes popular culture, mass cultural artefacts and practices that cater for a wide audience, as well as the 'subfield of restricted production' that addresses a limited audience and involves the production and consumption of rarefied and symbolic

goods, including art and high culture as well as high fashion. The two types of cultural production are structured on different sets of values. While the first is based on acquiring economic capital, the second is preoccupied with 'art for art's sake' (Bourdieu 1993a: 36), gaining recognition by peers, and symbolic value. With a small print run, small readership and a high symbolic exchange value, niche fashion magazines fall into Bourdieu's category of restricted production. There is but one element that interferes with the symmetry of this grouping: advertising and the exchange of revenue. Bourdieu himself does not see symbolic capital as exclusive of economic capital; in fact he argues that symbolic capital can be, and often is, 'cultural services' exchanged into economic capital (1984: 291). The symbolic status of the magazine makes up its identity and brand, which is what attracts advertisers, i.e. revenue. The question is, does the inclusion of commercial brands and advertisements make niche fashion magazines less cutting-edge and innovative? How readers engage with this question will be explored in Chapter Seven.

Niche fashion magazines are not alone in mixing avant-garde codes and discourses of art within a commercial framework. *Vogue*, belonging to the high end of women's fashion magazines, has historically provided a platform for art photography and innovative art direction, and this still applies to its French and Italian editions, *Vogue Paris* and *Vogue Italia*. As a result of visionary editors such as Carine Roitfeld for *Vogue Paris*, teamed up with former art director Fabian Baron and photographer Mario Testino, the fashion spreads of *Vogue Paris* are sexually daring and graphically distinctive – and similar to the visual presentation of niche fashion magazines. Similarly *Vogue Italia*, edited by Franca Sozzani, is responsible for making trends, often shot by photographer Steven Meisel. Sozzani ran a much-discussed and widely publicised 'all black' July 2008 issue, using only black models, as a response to the under-representation of black models in fashion (Horyn 2008), which sold out quickly so that more copies had to be printed (Mower 2008). *Vogue* cannot be lumped together as a single publication, because the various national editions of *Vogue* differ greatly. But while elements of *Vogue Paris* and *Vogue Italia*'s aesthetic codes overlap with the independent, avant-garde press, as they are produced by the Condé Nast conglomerate and on a much larger scale, they are not niche magazines. They are a borderline example, of which one of the informants interviewed about the reading of niche fashion magazines, said '*Vogue* is where the mainstream begins'. I will return to how readers make sense of niche fashion magazines later, but the quote illustrates how readers themselves deploy distinctions of mainstream (commerce) and avant-garde (art) in making sense of fashion media. If *Vogue* (at least the French and Italian editions) represents the threshold to the mainstream, it marks the crossroad where high fashion, niche fashion and mass fashion overlap.

The producers themselves also acknowledge the exchange between the genres of high-fashion women's magazines and niche fashion magazines. Editor-in-chief of *Self Service*, Ezra Petronio, in an interview with Katie Grand, editor-in-chief of *Love* argues:

> For years, our independent magazines have played a role in challenging and influencing the aesthetics and content of the established magazines. Yet, ironically, these past years have seen the boundaries blurred to the extent that very often today, the established is now influencing the independent! Although we contributed to bringing a certain aesthetic into an establishment, today, sometimes the opposite is true. Magazines like *Vogue* are at times way more trendy and react quicker to certain things than independent magazines. (Petronio, *Self Service*, issue 30, S/S 2009, p. 308)

As a culture industry, the contemporary field of fashion and its press is more 'complex, ambivalent and contested' (Hesmondhalgh 2002: 17), than merely boiling down to an art–commerce opposition and the different values that underpin it. The independent magazines that Petronio talks about are affiliated with subcultures. Research on subcultures (see, for instance, Hebdige 1979; Muggleton 2000) have traditionally positioned subcultures outside dominant, mainstream culture as a representation of working-class oppositional subcultures. However, in relation to the writings on subculture, Caroline Evans has recognised (1997a) that cultures, hegemonic or subcultural, are mobile and fluid. Furthermore, and most significantly, she argues that dominant culture has co-opted the codes of subculture. In view of this, maintaining the distinction between subculture, out of which independent magazines grew, and mainstream culture, is out of touch with contemporary culture. The distinctions, however, are often employed by members of various cultures when making sense of their membership. For instance, on club cultures, Sarah Thornton (1995: 96) says that the opposition between mainstream and subculture is 'a means by which many youth cultures imagine their social world, measure their cultural worth and claim their subcultural capital'. These ideas of mobile and fluid cultures, as well as members maintaining the rhetorical distinction between mainstream and their own culture, are useful in gaining an understanding of niche fashion magazines. They are commercially structured and thus not outside the mainstream, but the values of editors and readers of niche fashion magazines, and the way that they understand their world, *is* outside the mainstream. By employing the codes of art – avant-garde and innovative art direction and photography, and structured on the 'art for art's sake' logic – niche fashion magazines are a post-modern medium that hybridises art, style cultures, high fashion and commerce value.

Contemporary Niche Fashion Magazines

The genre of niche fashion magazines encompasses a range of subgenres that share conventions and have their own specific styles. Out of these two principal subgenres, glossy niche and art fashion magazines prevail. These will be explored in this section, with attention given to fashion photography and fashion writing. It is clear that the styles of photography examined above, hyperrealism and trash realism, still constitute the main styles of photography in glossy niche magazines and in art fashion magazines respectively. The above discussions of fashion as art are relevant to understanding these subgenres, since the two subgenres mediate different sets of beliefs in fashion. Encapsulated in the glossy niche magazine, as will be explored below, is a belief in fashion as a frivolous part of post-modern popular culture, fun and ironic. In art fashion magazines on the other hand, fashion is dealt with as a legitimate art – a meaningful and intellectual topic.

Mapping the field of contemporary niche fashion magazines provides a glimpse in time, as it is a very unstable market where new titles appear frequently just as other titles fold or come out very irregularly. For instance, Katie Grand, editor of *POP Magazine* and her team left *POP* in the autumn of 2008, and launched the first issue of *Love*, a biannual Condé Nast publication, in February 2009. As argued in Chapter One, as a result of desktop publishing software such as Quark Xpress and InDesign, it is fairly easy to make a magazine. It is staying in business, as Braithwaite and Barrell (1988) argue, attracting advertising revenue, which is hard – especially in times of economic hardship when advertising budgets are tightened. Since genres change and modulate, as argued at the beginning of this chapter, and as the same group of freelance photographers, stylists models and writers work across them, subgenres cannot always be clearly demarcated.

Anna König (2006) notes that scholars analysing fashion writing refer to the subject as a fixed form, when it is in fact fluid. Contemporary fashion photography and fashion writing involve many styles, which change over time. The aim of this section, however, is not to account for the changes but to explore the different styles that make up the subgenres and establish a framework for further discussion. The different styles of photography and writing are employed across the subgenres; the following grouping is thus an attempt to make clear the characteristics of the niche fashion magazine and its key subgenres, but acknowledges the limitations of such an endeavour as there are overlaps in the styles used in the subgenres.

Magazine contributors tend to form alliances and collaborations with magazine editors across magazines; thus top writers, photographers, stylists, hair and makeup artists contribute in networks across the subgenres and some collaborations are more established and lasting, such as photographers Terry

Richardson for *Purple Fashion*. As a result, certain styles of photography, and of writing as well, often come to represent the identity of the magazine.

Glossy Niche Magazines

Another Magazine, Tank, Issue One, Plastique, POP, 125, DANSK, Lula, Numéro, Surface, Squint, Oyster, Vs, 10 Magazine, 125...

Drawing on the tradition of style magazines and their mediation of fashion as fun, lightweight and ironic, this subgenre is especially found in Britain. Like style magazines, their focus is on news of wider culture as well as new collections. Reflecting the general increasing interest in celebrity culture across style magazines and women's fashion magazines, young cool actresses and other style icon celebrities such as Lou Doillon, Kirsten Dunst, Milla Jovovich, Juliette Lewis and Chloë Sevigny are featured in glossy niche magazines.

Image Fashion

Central to the style of photography in glossy niche magazines is what could be called 'stylist driven' spreads, referring to the tendency for stylists to shape and fit the clothes to the concept and the vision of the spread, so that the documentation of the clothes is secondary. In her analysis of style magazines, McRobbie (1998: 164) argues 'for the editors and the creative teams the art work of the page takes precedence over the clothes that are being featured. Sometimes they can barely be seen or fade into the background'. She continues, 'they are much less concerned about showing the work of designers'. While she is commenting on the practices in style magazines, this also applies to niche fashion magazines. An example of the precedence of the image and the styling of the image is found in *POP*'s fashion spread 'POP Pets' (Winter issue, Nov 2008). On the pages the stylists are photographed with pets, dressed in outfits matching the pet's appearance or colouring. Some of the clothes become mere props supporting the premise of the story – that owners and their pets look alike. In one of the shots of the spread, 'Anders with Boy the sheep' (pp. 40-41), the representation of the clothes does not in any way support the design of the clothes, as Anders is wearing a goat and sheepskin coat from Dolce and Gabbana inside out. Underlying this story is an ironic approach to fashion, and the concept and idea of the story takes precedence over the representation of the clothes. Throughout *POP*'s 20th animal-themed issue, an ironic approach to fashion is perpetuated. In 'The Bear Necessities' in the same issue a life-size teddy bear is dressed in fashion clothes and

styled with accessories. In an accessory spread later in the same issue, models are replaced by real monkeys wearing jewellery from Cartier, Dior and Van Cleef and Arpels (pp. 148-157). *POP*'s representation of clothes in its fashion spreads exemplifies how the fashion is fitted into a conceptual idea, be it pets or art, that supports the belief in fashion as fun.

Whereas most contemporary fashion imagery, as argued earlier, is digitally manipulated in its postproduction, often photography in the glossy niche subgenre is enhanced in a way that brings attention to its constructed artificiality. This falls under Andersen's concept of hyperrealism (2006) in which the depicted image is perfected beyond reality, creating a fantasy world of perfection. The image looks airbrushed, skin tones are too even, limbs elongated and, as a result, the bodily status of the model displayed becomes a 'synthetic ideal' (de Perthuis 2008: 171), which goes beyond the corporal realities of the model. This applies particularly to beauty shots which focus on hair, skin and makeup. The spread 'Femme Fatale' in *Oyster*, issue 79, 08/09, is an illustration of how retouching is employed to smooth out skin and the unwanted contours such as 'eye-bags', creases, spots and wrinkles. On the four-page spread, which is an advertorial for hair products, female models expose their naked torsos, arms and breasts. Light falls flatteringly on their bodies and facial pores are invisible so that their faces become perfectly even surfaces.

Digital manipulation is deployed throughout *125*'s 12th issue (A/W 2008), which is structured on the theme 'future'. In the spread 'Plug-in Baby' (pp. 126-143) models are inserted, 'plugged', into different virtual worlds – a technique created by shooting the models in a studio and then transferring that image onto another background. In the same issue 'The Future's Light' (pp. 88-99) naked models are dressed in 'hologram dresses' of different brushstrokes of light textures, patterns and designs which cover their bodies.

Written Fashion

When it comes to fashion writing in glossy niche fashion magazines, its editorial focus is news driven, capturing new design talents, new collections, music releases and films. It employs slang and a conversational tone in mediating fashion as a fun and frivolous subject not to be taken too seriously. Key writers contributing to this subgenre also work for the British broadsheets, such as Hadley Freeman, who also writes for *The Guardian* as well as British *Vogue* and *10 Magazine*, Claudia Croft and Colin McDowell, who write for the *Sunday Times Style Magazine*.

Fashion is part of the wider field of popular culture, and in some collection reports references to the wider popular culture occasionally substitute for addressing

the fashion itself. Rocamora's (2001) comparative research into the journalistic discourses of the British newspaper *The Guardian* and the French *Le Monde* provides a useful structure for understanding the distinctions of the subgenres. In recognising the distinctions between the British and the French discourses, Rocamora argues that *The Guardian* mediates a belief in fashion as popular culture and *Le Monde* a belief in fashion as high culture. Utilising spoken language, slang, puns and mockery, fashion writing in art niche fashion magazines is akin to the British tradition that mediates fashion as popular culture, which by nature is self-referential and fun. McRobbie (1998: 8) also argues that in the UK fashion 'is a "popular thing" rather than an "elite" thing'.

For instance, in *POP*'s animal issue (issue 20, 2008), Stuart Vevers, the creative director of Loewe, is interviewed about his new collection by Murray Healy, accompanied with images of Vevers dressed in a beaver costume and Murray in a pig costume. The punning title, playing on the animalistic theme of the issue, reads 'Stuart Beavers has a rabbit with Murray Squealy' (Winter issue 2008: 86-89). The idea of fashion as fun is pushed further in the collection reports. In *10 Magazine* the personal accounts dominate the format of the collection reports. Through tongue-in-cheek accounts written in the first person, the reporters cover their own personal experiences and lives outside the show more than the collections. The focus is typically on their experience of travelling to New York, London, Milan and Paris twice a year, informing us of their flights, hotels, morning rituals and parties – they are 'knackered', 'famished' and 'feeling rubbish'. They inform readers of 'smelly photographers' and shopping sprees in colloquial language: 'Okay, enough of this bullcrap, I can wait no more. Head over to the Marc Jacobs store and have a proper scout.' (Hadley Freeman in *10*, issue 26, 2008: 120). The self-indulgent style of writing, focused on outside activities, leaves little room for actual reports or reviews. In their analysis of *Cosmopolitan*, David Machin and Theo van Leeuwen (2005) identify different styles of writing in the fashion content. Two of the styles that apply to Freeman's style are 'street style – the slang of the trendy, and the young; and conversational style' (Machin and van Leeuwen 2005: 588). The first refers to the latest slang expressions produced by the young and the trendy, which in this case also are co-produced by Hadley Freeman herself. In the second form of address, informal conversational styles blur the boundary between private and public talk. Through slang and informal styles, irony is at the core of Freeman's tone and her whereabouts, not the show, take centre stage.

Magazine fashion journalism is criticised for not being critical (McRobbie 1998), and when space is used on the actual collections, fashion reporting in *10* mimics criticism via irony, spitefulness and sarcasm: 'Tim Blanks unfortunately told the

Purple gals that I had described Charles Anastase as "very paedo-tastic", which I must confess I did. Well, you look at a collection of clothes for allegedly grown women that is little more than Bonpoint writ large and tell me that child abductions don't come to mind' (Freeman in *10*, issue 26, 2008: 129). Through hyperbole (comparing a women's collection to a range of children's clothes), this passage is first of all in the self-referential style, as it lacks an introduction and assumes that readers know Tim Blanks, senior fashion writer for Style.com, the women working at *Purple Fashion* and the French childrenswear label Bonpoint. The tone of irony and mockery is at the forefront, something König (2006) has also recognised in relation to the fashion writing in British *Vogue*. On postmodern mass media, McRobbie (1994: 17) claims 'self-referentiality is all-embracing', and argues that media texts draw on other images and narratives instead of mediating the real world. Umberto Eco has traced this shift in focus within television. He contends that the media 'talks less and less about the external world' and 'talks more about itself and the contacts it established with its own public' (Eco, cited in McRobbie 1994: 17). Gonzo journalism, associated with Hunter S. Thompson, is a highly subjective style of journalism, which uses hyperbole and sarcasm, and focuses on personal experiences. Within Freeman's gonzo style of writing, she indulges in her own writing and spite rather than analysing and reporting from Charles Anastase's collection. Furthermore, by referring to Tim Blanks and the girls from *Purple*, she shows that she knows and talks with key powerful members of the fashion industry and in doing so displays her own position and status as part in the exclusive fashion network. This clearly illustrates a shift in focus from the clothes to its mediators (Freeman herself as well as Blanks) as well as other texts (Bonpoint). On the construction of values in the press, Roger Fowler (1991: 15) notes that in 'the popular Press' the trend towards personalisation is significant because it enables the inclusion of personal utterances from significant individuals, such as celebrities, or common people who have experienced something extraordinary. He argues that the functions of personalisation are to 'promote straightforward feelings of identification, empathy or disapproval' and to simplify complex historical and institutional processes (Fowler 1991: 15). While Fowler talks about personalisation in the social construction of value in the news, of which he is critical, there is a central point to be taken from him in relation to Hadley Freeman's style of writing: the use of people as symbols 'avoids serious discussion and explanation' (Fowler 1991: 16). Thus, while the premise of fashion reports more generally is to describe, analyse and at best review the collections, Hadley's personalised style pays attention to her own and other people's feelings and simplifies the job at hand. Had it not been for the accompanying images of the collections, the reader would know more about the writer and industry gossip

than the collections. Within the omnipresent irony and egocentrism, fashion is treated as a lightweight and fun subject, and in the process wider contemporary culture is referenced. Central to this style of writing is not only the assertion of the writer's own position and the belief in fashion as fun, but also the way in which it criticises fashion indirectly. Criticism is pretended via irony and spitefulness – as a form of mock criticism – with which writers can engage without jeopardising their jobs or the magazine's revenue. König argues:

> By incorporating ironic statements about fashion into their text, writers avoid the pitfalls of looking sycophantic whilst neatly sidestepping the job-threatening issue of being openly critical of the fashion system. The growing dependence on irony may also be a reflection of writers' awareness that they are presenting a simulacrum of the fashion world: they don't believe in it, so why should the readers? (König 2006: 216-217)

While it could be argued that fashion writing in, for instance, British *Vogue* produces similar ironic discourses on fashion, the difference lies in the degree in which this style is carried out. The subjectivity of the writers, the personalisation of writing, their spitefulness, use of slang and conversational tone are accentuated and exaggerated in glossy niche fashion magazines. Fashion is increasingly covered in the press and, as part of this growth, McRobbie (1994: 146) argues that it 'learns to talk about itself with a new fluency, it can even mock itself'.

Underlying the ironic style of writing, as well as photography, is the belief that fashion is not a consecrated art form as other canonical arts such as painting, architecture and theatre are. Instead, its status is understood as frivolous and by mocking it the writer can show a distance between herself/himself and fashion. Furthermore, irony marks a distinction between readers who share an understanding of what constitutes the denotative and connotative layers of the text and uninformed readers who do not share the knowledge of the implied, unsaid and humoristic distance. In both modernist and postmodernist literature, irony is a common trope used to express distance (Connor 1997). Linda Hutcheon (1995) recognises how issues of power are central to a negative understanding of irony, between the superiority of the ironist and the inferiority of the interpreter.

> In a negative sense, irony is said to play to in-groups that can be elitist and exclusionary. Irony clearly differentiates and thus potentially excludes: as most theories put it, there are those who 'get' it and those who do not. (Hutcheon 1995: 54)

Readers who do not 'get' Hadley's text fall victim to the irony, and, as they do not

share the context of the existing 'discursive communities', risk exclusion and embarrassment (Hutcheon 1995: 18). Ironic fashion writing, thus, creates a distance in two senses, both from the readers who do not 'get' it and from the subject, which is not taken seriously.

In both the visual and written codes of glossy niche magazines fashion is presented as artificial and veiled by the use of digital manipulation and irony. The values of and beliefs in fashion underpinning and reiterated in the codes bear the mark of distance to the actual topic, and as a result fashion appears ironic, frivolous and 'young at heart'. In a manner suggested by the debates on postmodernism, fashion in glossy niche fashion magazines does not so much play against art as it constructs its own elitist self-referencing discourse, addressing already initiated readers and bracketing off laymen.

Art Fashion Magazines

A Magazine, Acne Paper, (Another Magazine), Crash, Encens, Exit, Fantastic Man, Fanzine 137, 032C, FAT Magazine, Purple Fashion, Quest, Self Service, Visonaire...

While glossy niche fashion magazines are predominantly British, the second subgenre, art fashion magazines, is based geographically in continental Europe, with Paris as the hub (*Self Service, Purple, Crash, Acne Paper*). The historical location of this genre in Paris is significant. Since Louis XIV's establishment of Paris-based fashion and textile industries and the birth of the haute couture system in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Paris has occupied a hegemonic position as centre of fashion (Rocamora 2009). Through this history as well as the French literary celebration of fashion, Rocamora argues that in France fashion is legitimised as high art (2009: 39-40). Pursuing Rocamora's earlier work (2001) on the distinction between French and English fashion writing, art fashion magazines draw on the belief in fashion as art and high culture.

The majority of art fashion magazines comprise juxtapositions of trash realism, portraiture and porn chic photography capturing key collections of high fashion; art works and collages; and analytic conversations with producers of culture. Mixing glossy and matte paper, the pages of art fashion magazines are similar to art journals or exhibition catalogues with their in-depth interviews. Often, art fashion magazines are collector's items, and due to their limited circulation, early issues or special editions often sell out.

This subgenre is characterised by its play with conventional magazine layout and form. For instance, each issue of the tri-annual *Visionaire* takes on a new format,

as a hardbound book, a collection of T-shirts (issue 54), a series of fashion designer characters as toys (issues 44 and 45) or music CDs (issue 53). Furthermore, to eschew traditional ad pages, sponsor collaborations are conducted for each issue, with, for example, Louis Vuitton (issue 18), Comme des Garçons (issue 20) and Hermès (issue 32). Although maintaining the magazine format, the biannual *A Magazine* plays with the conventions as well. Shaping its editorial structure, for each issue a fashion designer noted to be 'intellectual' is invited to be the guest curatorial editor. For instance Maison Martin Margiela curated the first issue (2004), the second was by Yohji Yamamoto (2005) and the issue eight (2008) was curated by Riccardo Tisci, the creative director of Givenchy. The aesthetic profile of *A* magazine, as well as *Visonaire*, is image-led; more so than other niche fashion magazines, as it includes very little written text. Instead the specific curator's collages, mood boards, art, poems, private snapshots of fashion people who usually are their insider friends, fashion spreads featuring the designer's clothes are given space. The format of *Self Service* is a hard cover book, and in issue 28 (spring/summer 2008), it plays with the format of the fashion spread. By breaking the conventional structure, which usually follows an order conveying a story, mood or narrative, the fashion spreads are mixed, and styling, styles of photography and models originally belonging to separate spreads are juxtaposed into a continuous spread. This reads as fragments, broken down by 'jump cuts' of different styles, which render the visual reading experience heterogeneous. Furthermore, replacing the customary short news-related stories, which most types of fashion magazines run, *Self Service* gives space to up to ten long in-depth interviews shaped as analytical conversations. The art direction in the cases of *Visionaire*'s changing wrapping, *A Magazine*'s curatorial approach and *Self Service*'s book-like appearance gives art fashion magazines a status as artistic objects and innovates what constitutes fashion magazine mediation.

Image Fashion

While art fashion magazines also include colourful and hyperrealist fashion photography, which is certainly the case with *Visionaire*, there are two styles of photography that are more particularly given an outlet in this subgenre: the first draws on the portraiture from art and comprises calm, no-movement posing with melancholic and sultry mood, soft focus or deliberately unfocused images shot in black and white or in subdued colours. The second is the sexual extension of trash realism, 'porn chic'. Photographer Daniel Jackson and stylist Mattias Karlsson's 'Odi et Amo' in *Acne Paper* (issue 7 2008/09: 12-29) is an example of the first. With a subdued grey toned background and rustic wooden floorboards, table and chair, the

spread resemble a Dutch renaissance painting. With sombre facial expressions, the two models, male and female, are alternatively nude, displaying their milky white skin, and then dressed in tailored tweeds. The contrast of the styling, between the white, naked skin and the coarse grey tweed, is repeated in the canvas-like faces with their lack of (visible) makeup framed by their dark hair. The style of photography and pictorial styling support the image's overall visual references of Renaissance art, as well as the nude in art, and as such the visual iconography of the spread is gesturing towards a mediation of fashion as high culture.

The background of the 'Odi et Amo' spread includes a visual detail much used in niche fashion magazines, 'the line between the wall and the floor' (Shinkle 2008). This line, which is literally the line where the wall and the floor meet, has come to represent:

> the apotheosis of fashion photography's fascination with abject, and an emblem of its penchant for 'realism'. It is an index of the street and of the gritty, transient world – complete with dirty flats, dirty clothes, blemished skin and lank hair – that lies beyond the fantasy realm of the designer's studio or the couture boutique. (Shinkle 2008: 214-215)

In other words, as a visual emblem, the line between the wall and the floor represents the whole school of trash realism and its attempt to frame or stage reality unpolished. While 'Odi et Amo' does not convey trash realism, the models' skin is not blemished and their posing is not awkward but follows a repertoire of unsmiling and sombre variations, its dystopic mood constructing a world that lies beyond picture-perfect fantasy.

The line between the wall and the floor, both as a specific visual *mise-en-scene* and as an emblem of realism in fashion photography, is much more pronounced in the other principal style of photography. As an extension of trash realism, 'porn chic' has since the 1990s been part of fashion's visual vocabulary. Since sex is a staple in contemporary fashion photography, drawing on a tradition that stretches back to Richard Avedon's sexually emancipated photography of the 1960s (Hall-Duncan 1979) and the sexual fantasies produced in Guy Bourdin and Helmut Newton's work of the 1970s, the style is hardly shocking or controversial – at any rate not to readers familiar with these aesthetic codes. Sexualised photography shot in snapshot styles with a point and shoot camera by photographers such as Terry Richardson, Juergen Teller and Katja Rawles trespasses into the realm of the seemingly private within the framework of fashion. The bare body signifies fashion as well and the naked bodies of the models become garments themselves, inviting the reader to scrutinise their fashionably thin bodies performing or posing sexually.

Purple Fashion, led by editor Olivier Zahm, is the driving force of the porn chic style. For instance, the images of *Purple Fashion* (winter 2008/09) from the cover to the spreads to the images accompanying interviews are permeated with nudity and sexualised posing. Bare breasts, genitals and kissing and caressing are part of *Purple Fashion*'s show-it-all fashion vocabulary. For instance an interview with the actress Lou Doillon is accompanied by a spread of her posing naked, and an interview with photographer Mario Sorrenti is similarly accompanied by self-portraits and images of his family posing naked. In the same issue of *Purple Fashion*, Terry Richardson, who usually shoots *Purple Fashion*'s covers, has photographed the artist Dash Snow in the key pieces of the latest womenswear collections. The spread shows the tattooed Snow, with his family, drinking beer and smoking cigarettes, dressed in latest Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent, Christopher Kane and Hermès, as well as naked. It shows him sucking on his girlfriend's breast, her holding his penis, him holding his naked baby daughter, him kissing his grandmother. It is shot against a white wall with wooden skirting boards and floor, literally showing the line between the wall and the floor. Within this decadent and excessive narrative of a 'free-loving' family, prestigious key collection clothes become deconsecrated and secondary pieces of the *mise-en-scene*; the sexual and subversive 'reality' of the story is at the core. Replacing a female professional model with a male non-professional man adds to the subversive character of the spread. The spread, like most of its kind, stimulates a kind of naughty prying, similar to the voyeurism that is fuelled by looking at paparazzi images of celebrities in compromising situations. It stages an authentic 'reality', the aesthetic codes of which make sense to its readers because they are familiar with them:

> Though realist fashion photography may challenge conventional codes, they [sic] are simply coded differently, designed to appeal to a market that eschews the conventions of traditional imagery. Rather than being a radically different kind of image, they simply require a different kind of interpretive labour, and the identity of their market is based, in part, on its ability to perform this labour. (Shinkle 2008: 218)

While porn chic permeates the imagery of popular culture (McNair 1996, 2002), the style is at its most hardcore pornographic in Terry Richardson's work. Although these photographic styles are emulated in wider culture, and sexual imagery in particular is found across advertising, they are exaggerated and pushed further in niche fashion magazines. I return to a discussion on the significance of porn chic in niche fashion magazines in Chapter Five.

Written Fashion

Turning to the fashion writing of art fashion magazines, its focus, unlike style magazines and glossy niche, is not the young, the new and the trendy, but rather personalities, experts and connoisseurs with more established careers who have not been overexposed in other magazines. For instance, *Acne Paper* (Issue 7, winter 08/09), featured an interview with the linguist Noam Chomsky on the rules and fashions of language (pp. 56-57). *Purple Fashion*, (Vol. III, issue 10, 2008) had an interview with the graphic designers Michael Amzalag and Mathias Augustyniak, the founders and art directors of M/M, who are responsible for high-fashion ads and catalogues and an exhibition at Palais de Tokyo (pp. 136-143). *Self Service* (issue 29, 2008) featured a double interview with Suzy Menkes, fashion editor of the *International Herald Tribune*, and Stefano Tonchi, style editor of *The New York Times*, on fashion journalism (pp. 412-417). The principal format of interviews, which is also a growing trend, is what is called Q&A, a transcription of the recorded conversation with the journalist's question and the subject's answer. Q&A not only gives an insight into the actual interview and how it progressed, it also allows readers to read the interviewee's own answers rather than the writer's paraphrase highlighted only by the most significant quotes. While the fashion reports in *10* Magazine provide a mouthpiece for Hadley Freeman's unfiltered and ironic gonzo style of writing, which focuses on her own experiences, the Q&A format brings attention to the writer in a different way. Via the questions the writer's ability to ask stimulating questions reflects back on his/her own expertise. Unlike fashion writing in glossy niche magazines with its use of slang, hyperbole, spiteful tone and omnipresent irony, fashion writing in art fashion magazines takes its subject seriously. In interviews and features the interviewee is introduced with his/her title, work and background, usually in an elaborate introduction with long sentences comprising intellectual reflections on the interviewee or the subject discussed. An intellectual undercurrent characterises the interviews on fashion, art and other cultural phenomena, which are mediated through analytical questions and information with a high LIX formula.[ix] In *Acne Paper* the fashion historian Peter McNeil's interview with the vintage dealer Martin Kamer opens with 'Walter Benjamin once said, "Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories." Ever since the first organised collections of curiosa were put together in the 16th century, people have felt compelled to systematically gather objects' (Issue 7, winter 08/09: 30). The quote from Benjamin frames the interview as clearly academic, and it is followed up by an account of the historical context of collecting. In *Self Service* (issue 29, F/W 2008) an interview with Andre Leon Talley, editor at large of American *Vogue*, begins: 'On the importance of mentors and liberation from the shackles of American

Puritanism. On the visual interpretation of fashion narrative and reading to Diana Vreeland after dinner' (p. 409). This style is essayistic and metaphorical, revealing just enough to get the reader interested, assuming that she or he can decode the type of writing and the references on which it draws. Within this serious strand of fashion writing, the exchange of knowledge and analysis of subject and the poetry of the language requires a different literacy on the part of the reader than for ironic fashion writing.

König (2006) argues that British *Vogue*'s serious, longer expert pieces since the 1980s have been replaced with shorter features in line with the magazine's increasing focus on celebrity culture. While the serious pieces have disappeared from women's fashion magazines, they have found their way into art fashion magazines whose mediation of fashion gestures towards art and academic journals.

With their fashion writing and photography, art fashion magazines mediate the belief that fashion is a serious high cultural art form, worth reflecting about intellectually, and attempt to analyse and go beyond fashion's fantasy world.

Both subgenres, glossy niche magazines and art fashion magazines, articulate styles of photography and writing that are used in the glossy high-end section of women's fashion magazines. Where niche fashion magazines clearly depart from the mainstream is that they are the breeding ground for developing styles in art direction, photography, styling and writing – and as such advance what constitutes fashion mediation. This section has mapped out the prominent features of the two subgenres and in doing so I have argued that glossy niche magazines and art fashion magazines not only mediate different values of fashion, they are also culturally anchored to primarily the UK and France and their different cultural histories of fashion inform the set of values underpinning them. What unites them is that the world of fashion these magazines construct is based on a set of exclusive and elitist codes with which their readership is familiar – and as such bracket off outsiders. How readers understand themselves and make sense of the codes provided in niche fashion magazines will be pursued in Chapter Seven.

Conclusion

This chapter has moved from macro- to microanalysis. I began by tracing the genre historically, identifying the genre's roots in style magazines of the 1980s and the new styles of photography that gained footing in the 1990s. I have defined the genre of niche fashion magazines as independent small-scale publications that merge style cultures with high fashion, popular cultures with high cultures and art, and as such they are positioned between style magazines, high-end women's fashion magazines

and art magazines. The genre comprises two principal subgenres: glossy niche magazines and art fashion magazines. While these subgenres overlap and consist of heterogeneous styles and discourses of photography and fashion journalism, they are most clearly distinguished by the different beliefs in fashion that they mediate. Glossy niche magazines mediate fashion as a lightweight, fun subject that is part of popular culture, which in its writing is conveyed with irony. Its fashion photography escapes reality by constructing a picture-perfect fantasy world of desires. Art fashion magazines borrow the codes of art in their mediation of fashion, taking fashion seriously and exploring it intellectually, mediating a belief in fashion as high culture. The genre's photography gestures towards art and documentary photography. Challenging the format of what constitutes fashion magazines, niche fashion magazines sit on the edge of the fashion press mediating high fashion within different codes of art, popular culture, realism, fantasy and desires. For want of better words, niche fashion magazines, including both subgenres, are elitist inasmuch as they restrict access to outsiders, edgy as they innovate fashion mediation, and exclusive as they are expensive to make and buy. As such niche fashion magazines are the haute couture of the fashion press, because they are produced in limited numbers and address a limited readership within codes that require high cultural capital on the part of their readers.

The following chapter explores what constitutes the visual and written identity of *DANSK* magazine, as a case study of a glossy niche magazine.

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[i] My translations henceforward when citing Andersen 2006.
[ii] *Cosmopolitan*, media kit, September 2008
[iii] *Vogue*, media kit, September 2008
[iv] http://www.condenastmediakit.com/vog/circulation.cfm, accessed May 2009
[v] *A Magazine* media kit, September 2008
[vi] *Self Service* media kit, September 2008
[vii] *Purple Fashion* media kit, September 2008
[viii] cf. the latest two-three copies of *Self Service, Purple Fashion, Another Magazine*
[ix] The Lix formula is a system developed by the Swedish pedagogue C.H. Björnsson. It indicates the level of a text's readability based on sentence length and use of long words. The greater the Lix formula the more difficult the text is.

CHAPTER 5: *DANSK* MAGAZINE

A Case Study of a Glossy Niche Magazine

Bearing in mind the definition of the genre given in the previous chapter, I will now turn to the specific object of analysis of this thesis, *DANSK* Magazine, a Danish English-language niche fashion magazine addressing both men and women. It is published from its Copenhagen office but draws on contributions from a network of international freelancers – photographers, stylists, writers and models. *DANSK* is used as a qualitative case study of niche fashion magazines and sheds light on the wider culture of niche fashion magazines.

This chapter focuses on *DANSK* magazine, its organisation of labour and its visual identity. Via qualitative textual analysis it pays attention to *DANSK*'s visual identity, its journalistic and photographic styles and its distinct Danishness. The data used in the analysis are issues 1-15 of *DANSK* 2002-2007 as well as participant observation of the making of three issues (issues 13-15) that took place from January 2007 to August 2007.

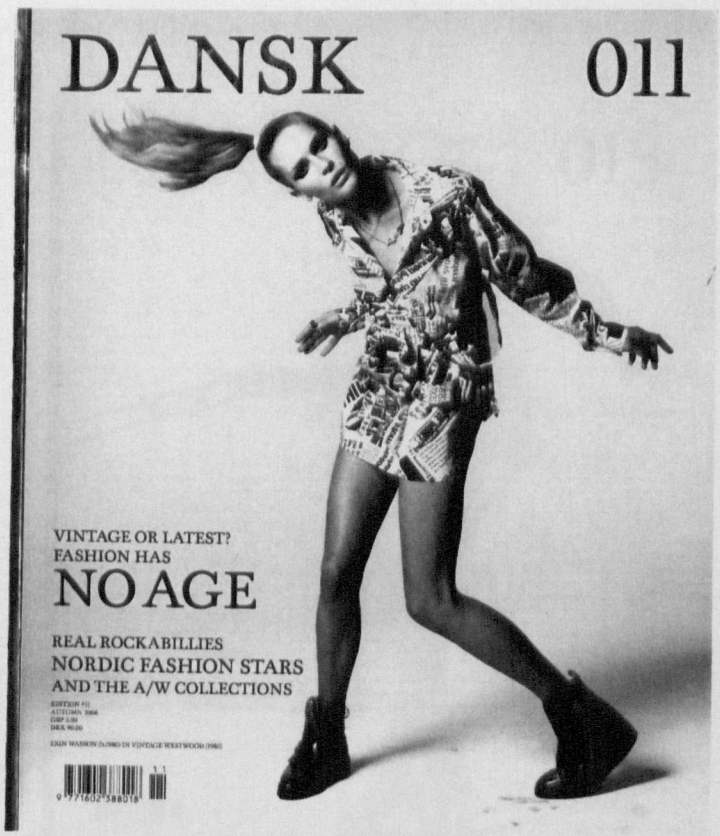

Image 1. Cover, Issue 11, *No Age*, Autumn 2006

Organisation

DANSK was launched in August 2002 and its title means 'Danish' in Danish. The name was inspired by the now-discontinued *Dutch* magazine, which was an influential niche fashion magazine in the late 1990s. In the first couple of years, *DANSK* was published biannually, matching fashion's two main seasons fall/winter (August) and spring/summer (February), but since issue 7 it has become a quarterly publication (February, May, August and November). From February 2009 it became biannual again due to time and wider economic constraints affecting the whole magazine industry. Its first print run was 5,000 copies, which was increased to 10,000 copies by the second issue and by the third issue it was apparently raised to 20,000 copies. *DANSK* has an estimated readership of 120,000.[i] Purchasing single copies of *DANSK* in the UK costs £5, and the annual subscription is £28. Every issue is based on a theme, which is usually inspired by a fashion or lifestyle trend, with titles such as *No Age* (issue 11), *Contradiction* (issue10) and *Me Me Me* (issue 7). For example, the *Pet Power* issue (issue 13) was inspired by the animalistic prints the editors-in-chief and founders Uffe Buchard and Kim Grenaa had seen at Alessandro Dell'Acqua's Spring/Summer 2007 collection while attending Milan fashion week, and they wanted to push the trend further by pursuing the relation between pets, fashion and contemporary culture.

Image 2. Cover, Issue 13, *Pet Power*, Spring 2007

Its international distribution channel is Comag, which also distributes other high-fashion and niche fashion magazines such as *Another Magazine* and *Vogue*. Comag is co-owned by Condé Nast publications and The National Magazine Company. *DANSK* is distributed in 21 countries[ii] worldwide, but the producers only know the sales figures for whole countries, not for individual shops. Comag, presumably in wanting to protect its market, does not disclose such information, which makes its market opaque for the magazine producers, but it is a way for the distributors to keep control of the power of the market.

DANSK is positioned within the glossy section of niche fashion magazines, as explored in the previous chapter. It merges the glossy codes of women's fashion magazines with Spartan graphic design, hyperreal fashion photography and authoritative features on lifestyle trends. *DANSK*, however, as the following section will show and like most fashion magazines, does not make up a fixed genre but consists of a mix of heterogeneous photographic and written styles.

DANSK's organisation and division of labour fall under what has been termed 'post-Fordism', a system that involves flexible specialisation, a specialised freelance workforce, small-scale production of specialised products and increased use of computer technology (see, for instance, Hesmondhalgh 2002). There are only two full-time members of staff in contracted posts: the executive editor and assistant editor, Rachael Morgan and Fernanda Palmeiro respectively, who cover a multitude of responsibilities which are mainly carried out by computer and phone. Due to the freelance structure, the production of *DANSK* requires a high degree of flexibility and often involves 'uncertainty' (Hesmondhalgh 2002: 22). The commissioned material submitted by contributors is not always satisfactory to the producers and sufficient advertising revenue is not always raised. There is thus uncertainty regarding the outcome as well as the budget, and possible dissatisfaction with the result. This requires immense flexibility on the part of the editors and the contributors, who need to be willing to work unpaid overtime in struggling to balance creative freedom and egos with deadlines and demands from advertisers and publishers. I shall return to this later.

DANSK's organisation and co-ownership reflect Hesmondhalgh's (2002) description of cultural industries working across complex connected and joining alliances to other competing companies. Following Castells' breakdown of the organisational shifts taking place in the 1980s, Hesmondhalgh refers to this strategy as 'interfirm networking' (2002: 95). Companies are rarely self-sufficient, and as a result, small firms in particular form alliances with other companies. The interfirm structure is

beneficial in that both parties bring their special competences to the table. *DANSK* was, at the time of fieldwork (Jan-Aug 2007), co-published by two fashion and design production agencies: Style Counsel and Dyhr.Hagen, as an interfirm network. Both companies are small in size, but prominent within the Danish fashion and lifestyle industry. Style Counsel is an image production agency, responsible for the production of many fashion shows during Copenhagen Fashion Week, the production of fashion campaigns and consultancy to a range of fashion and lifestyle brands. Uffe Buchard, Kim Greenaa and Majbrit Lauritzen (who later left to open her own fashion and production agency) founded Style Counsel in 1997 as an agency representing stylists, makeup artists and photographers. In 2004 they decided to focus only on the production of fashion shows, advertising campaigns, concept development and image consulting. Style Counsel has shaped Danish fashion over the past twelve years, as it was the first company to professionalise the production of images and catwalk shows. Peter Hagen and Lars Dyhr established Dyhr.Hagen in 2002 as a design agency that specialises in fashion and lifestyle image campaigns and corporate identity. It works with both Danish and international brands and has a group of in-house graphic designers and art directors. While Dyhr.Hagen and Style Counsel join forces in producing *DANSK*, as well as other publications, they compete for other clients in producing campaigns, imagery and design identity for fashion and lifestyle brands. The structure of a design agency publishing a magazine is not unique to *DANSK*. *Self Service* is published by the advertising studio Petronio Associates, formerly Work in Progress, founded by Suzanne Kroller and Ezra Petronio in 1994. *Tank* magazine similarly works closely with Tank Form, a creative agency established in 1998 that operates across different fashion media and with different luxury brands. Niche fashion magazines are thus also part of branding strategies of fashion labels or creative agencies as brand extensions (Dyson 2008). For instance, Swarowski publishes its own (promotional) magazine, *Krystalised*, the clothing brand COS also produces its own fashion magazine, and *Acne Paper* is co-published by Acne Jeans / Acne Creative. The interfirm structure has obvious socio-economic advantages in that it can take advantage of an existing network of advertisers and other producers, but it can also operate with little or no revenue, because as long as cash flows into the design agency as the mother company, producers can afford to work without pay on the magazines.

Style Counsel and Dyhr.Hagen's clients are some of the most established Danish fashion brands and they are responsible for producing fashion shows, campaigns and visual corporate identities. Using this network is highly advantageous as makeup artists, designers and photographers are already familiar with the *DANSK* producers,

which makes booking and collaboration run more smoothly. From this network some of their Danish advertisers are also sourced.

The idea of starting *DANSK* came from Buchard and Grenaa, who originally trained as a hairdresser, and a designer and stylist, respectively. After having worked as fashion directors on *Eurowoman* (a Danish women's fashion magazine), they wanted to produce their own magazine as a creative outlet, outside the commercial constraints of a women's magazine and its focus on readership statistics. *DANSK* is owned by Style Counsel and Dyhr.Hagen in a 65/35-percentage split with Style Counsel having the majority share. This means that Buchard and Grenaa, who also act as the editors-in-chief, have the final say on content and aesthetic selection. Lars Dyhr and Peter Hagen are trained as graphic designers and act as art and design directors of *DANSK*. Since the time the fieldwork was carried out, Dyhr.Hagen and Style Counsel have parted ways, as of autumn 2007. The last collaborative issue was issue 16, the *Reinvention* issue, and *DANSK* is now owned and published solely by Style Counsel. Other changes of staff have taken place since, which reflects the instability and flexibility of the workforce in the magazine market. Except for the executive editor, Rachael Morgan, and the assistant editor, Fernanda Palmeiro, both parties work unpaid after office hours and on the weekends. Since the time of fieldwork, Morgan has left and been replaced with Kathrine Houe, who previously worked for *Eurowoman* and *Cover* (Danish fashion magazines), and Palmeiro left for a job as head of press for a Danish fashion fair and was not replaced due to financial cutbacks. This shows that not just *DANSK* but fashion magazines in general are characterised by frequent movement of editors and contributors, as they progress and advance in the field. The following section explores the structure, aesthetic and identity of *DANSK* while it was a joint venture at the time of the fieldwork[iii].

Until March 2007 *DANSK* shared Style Counsel's office at its prominent central Copenhagen address, but then moved into its own office space on the top floor of the same building, interconnected by a back staircase. *DANSK* Magazine is not only physically connected to Style Counsel, but the network used in the production of both is overlapping. For instance, some of the Danish advertisers are also clients of Style Counsel as well as of Dyhr.Hagen. The editors see the magazine as a separate entity, with *DANSK* representing their unconstrained, creative outlet and Style Counsel and Dyhr.Hagen the commercial enterprises servicing external clients and other brands. When asked, they say that no capital is transferred from the 'mother agencies' to *DANSK*.

The production of *DANSK* from the initial meeting discussing the theme for the magazine to the final printed magazine takes approximately three months. Most of the daily work is carried out by the executive editor, Morgan, and the assistant editor, Palmeiro. Braithwaite and Barrel (1988) chart the development of the production of magazines and show that the in-house workforce has been reduced significantly since the 1980s as a way for publishers to cut down on budgets in an increasingly competitive market. Peter Jackson *et al.* (2001: 56) similarly found that most magazines have a very limited group of contracted staff and thus rely heavily on freelancers. This type of shrunken workforce is typical of niche fashion magazines, as they are not published by magazine conglomerates with a plethora of magazines produced on a large scale where advertising deals are easier to negotiate – thus enabling bigger budgets and more contracted posts. Like *DANSK, Purple Fashion, Self Service, 10* and *Fantastic Man* similarly have few editorial staff occupying contracted posts.

Morgan and Palmeiro organise and manage the editorial meetings and plan of the production of the content, with instructions given from the editors-in-chief, Buchard and Grenaa. This includes booking models, photographers, stylists, makeup artists, flights, locations and studios, calling press agencies to arrange for collection samples to be sent for the fashion stories and contacting and briefing freelance writers as well as writing some of the texts or conducting interviews. Morgan is English but speaks fluent Danish, so she also translates those texts submitted in Danish and acts as the overall sub-editor. Although at the time of fieldwork *DANSK* had two external advertising representatives, one responsible for the Scandinavian market and another responsible for the international market, Morgan, Buchard and Grenaa, as well as Dyhr and Hagen, also participate in selling advertising space to clients in their network. Since the time of fieldwork, all advertising activities have moved in-house as a result of dissatisfaction with the results, and *DANSK* now looks after its own ad sales.

At the editorial meetings a group of freelancers are called upon to share ideas and brainstorm. As mentioned above, *DANSK* relies heavily on contributions from freelancers, sometimes for a very little pay. Their reward is understood to be the acquisition of symbolic and cultural capital with which to develop their portfolio or CV. Participation in the editorial meetings reflects the unaccredited and unpaid freelance culture, but the meetings are seen as a chance for freelancers, usually writers and creative people tuned into cultural trends, to inform the editorial process and suggest interviews, features or other contributions they would like to make. The symbolic exchange is highly beneficial to *DANSK* but also accepted by the contributors who

build their CVs and strengthen their network via their work for *DANSK*. I will explore this further later.

Once a theme has been decided upon and work is divided, it requires determination and endurance to carry it out. Designers may not want to be interviewed, models may not be available or may be on hold for other jobs and key collection pieces may not be available. Hence, the *DANSK* editors every so often need to come up with new ideas and decide on other models. This is a process that requires flexibility, a great deal of emailing and phoning, drawing on an expanding network, and overall perseverance. It is a process in which 'no' is rarely taken as an answer, and the editors push hard to get past the gatekeepers such as press agents, designers and model bookers.

Once texts have been submitted and images shot, they are proofread and images are digitally retouched by digital agencies specialising in image production. Then the magazine is ready for what is called the production stage. This involves layout, graphic design and upload to printers, which takes place within the premises of Dyhr.Hagen, also based in central Copenhagen. The art directors, Peter Dyhr and Lars Hagen, the production coordinator, Mette Andersen and a freelancer carrying out desktop publishing (DTP) are all engaged in the last stage of the production together with Morgan. The editors-in-chief, Buchard and Grenaa, come in to see, discuss and approve the layout.

From the initial ideas to the final printed product, *DANSK* undertakes a journey that involves specific and complex choices. While most ideas are directed top-down from the editors-in-chief, the execution of ideas is collective throughout and depends on a network of specific expertise of the art directors, writers, photographers, advertising representatives, digital retouchers, makeup artists and many more.

Aesthetic Identity and Editorial Profile

As Ballaster *et al.* note (1991) magazines are a melting pot of different voices and thus include heterogeneous styles and, at times, contradictory messages, which are explored below. In *DANSK* these different styles are held together by a Spartan overall aesthetic and tidy layout. It feels and looks very stylised, flawless and expensive. The styles of photography, the degree of digital manipulation of the images, the thick paper quality, the small font types and style as well as the tight layout are all factors adding to *DANSK*'s aesthetic of lushness, exclusivity and luxury, which place it in the subgenre of the glossy niche magazine.

DANSK is printed on thick, high-quality coated paper. Its weight and paper quality are especially noticeable in the handling of the magazine. The measurements (23x27cm) of its page fall outside standard A4 or A3 paper formats, which means that *DANSK*'s printing is customised. In fact, the special paper used for *DANSK* is the most costly element of the production. The number of pages per issue is usually just below 200. The magazine is heavy to handle as it weighs about 950 grams. The quality and thickness of each sheet is 135 grams per square metre, in comparison with a normal white A4, which is 80 grams per square metre. The quality of the paper is enhanced by a coat of special matte varnish. The paper for the cover is thicker, weighing 350 grams per square metre, and this is coated with another varnish. Compared to weekly gossip magazines and many women's fashion magazines, which are stapled, the pages are glued to a stiff back and the thick, colour-saturated pages provides a feel of good quality.

For each issue the art directors, Peter Dyhr and Lars Hagen, create new graphic motifs, for instance airbrush effects or hexagon-shaped boxes, and mix font types, which gives each issue a distinct identity. In relation to women's fashion magazines that come out in great numbers, *DANSK*'s changing layout gives each issue an aura of exclusivity and uniqueness. Yet its overall layout is recognisable, which is important for brand recognition. It is uncluttered, tidied and modern, with spacious pages that are not overloaded with juxtapositions of images or text, which makes for a minimalist identity often associated with Scandinavian design. The frequent use of full-bleed images, which means that the image runs right to the edge of the page without a framing border, creates a visual aesthetic where each image is given a great deal of space. This is further accentuated by the frequent use of double-page images, where one image is given two pages. Similarly, there are no sudden ruptures in the layout. The type is in a small font, which makes for a demanding reading experience. This is taken further by the frequent use of a white text on a black background, which is known to challenge readability. The visual layout of the text, thus, is given priority over its readability. Overall this makes for a visually driven identity.

Its cover is largely free from text, except for its title, the name of theme, information on price and edition. From the *No Age* issue (issue 11), two or three subheadings, 'Real Rockerbillies. Nordic Fashion Stars. And the A/W collections' (issue 11), advertising key content has been included. Out of 15 issues, two covers have displayed male models (issues 9 and 12) and there has been one male back cover (issue 15). Unlike most other magazines, the back cover was free of advertising until issue 20, since when the back cover has been used for advertising. The back cover is the most

expensive advertising space in most magazines. It was of paramount importance to the editors to keep the 'packaging' of the magazine their brand, undisturbed by other brands. However, as a result of the economic climate the space was freed in a special agreement with Chanel. Before the freeing of the back cover, the front cover often continued on to the back cover, as with the *Pet Power* issue (issue 13) or the back cover made up a second cover, as with the *Evilism* issue (issue 15).

Image 3 and 4. Front and back cover, issue 15, *Evilism*, Autumn 2007

The Front-of-Book (FOB), which is magazine terminology used to describe the first third or half of most magazines, comprises mostly ads and short news stories. Ads are similarly clustered at the FOB and at the end of the magazine. Compared to high-end women's fashion magazines in which ads take up 60 percent of the content, ads only take up 17 percent of the content of *Pet Power* (issue 13), 15 percent of *CPH Love* (issue 14) and 20 percent of *Evilism* (issue 15). I will return to advertising revenue later.

Written Fashion

Editorial texts are placed in the first half of the magazine and comprise different formats: for instance, notes on fashion news highlight the positive, special or new attributes of the products, trends or people featured. *DANSK* contains three prominent

styles of writing, which I return to shortly, but regardless of the style of writing and format, such as lifestyle features, trend reports and designer interviews, editorial on skincare, fragrance and beauty, products and people is always written in a favourable light. The style of writing is a mix of voices that merges traditions from different journalistic styles. Most writers at the time of fieldwork were Danish; some were Danes living abroad in Berlin or London. Only a couple of writers submit their copy in English, which means texts are translated. Of the various styles, directive, intellectualising and ironic writing are prominent. The first, 'directive fashion writing', which uses 'how-to-recipes' and imperatives, as described in Chapter Four, is primarily used in the pieces on skincare and lifestyle trends, known from women's magazines. In the *What a Boy Wants* issue (issue 9), in 'Bush is Back', Pernille Melsted writes about the return of pubic hair. On the topic of Brazilian bikini waxing, Melsted muses:

> That particular autumn I was looking forward as much as the tortuous event as I was to the launch of the first Marc by Marc Jacob collection. Had I only known back then that pubic hair fashion would (inevitably – just like the natural ebb and flow of hem lines) change, I could have saved my $70 and cancelled the appointment. (p. 77).

Writing in the first person, Melsted relates her personal and humorous experiences of waxing, which are substantiated with examples from contemporary culture. This inclusive closeness, sharing an intimate experience of hair removal, is a style well known from women's magazines and the trend towards personalisation is general in the wider popular press (see, for instance, Fowler 1991). This is continued by Mina Ingerslev, who in the *Evilism* issue (issue 15), writes about the painful treatments women undergo in the quest for beauty: 'A few seconds of pain can be exchanged for silky skin. Genetics are responsible for our hirsuteness, but by using hot or cold wax, tweezers or depilatories hair can be eliminated' (p. 75). She continues by accounting for treatments available for the reduction of cellulite, teeth whitening and skin rejuvenation injections. With the direct 'how-to' advice provided, this style of writing is similar to that of women's magazine and implies that the readers will use the features as consumer help. Furthermore, the favourable mentions of products found throughout *DANSK* highlight how directive fashion writing, as described in the previous chapter, in all probability is used to either attract advertisers or provide existing advertisers with editorial coverage.

The second strand of *DANSK*'s writing is in a more intellectualising and analytical style, typically in features on lifestyle trends or cultural phenomena. In issue 9, Rune Gade, a Danish art historian, analyses how a group of contemporary artists

explore the role of masculinity in their art. In doing so, he provides analyses of specific pieces of art: 'the destructive ritual of violence is replaced by the symbolic ritual of song and dance and an aggression-laden situation is suddenly enveloped in a dream-like tenderness, a suggested form of love between men' (issue 9, p. 52). The use of 'ritual' and 'symbolic' is embedded in intellectual discourse. An example of a more poetic style of writing that draws on Classical knowledge is found in the *Me Me Me* issue, issue 7. An adaptation from the Greek myths on Echo and Narcissus reads 'He stood gazing with admiration at those bright eyes, those locks curled like the locks of Bacchus or Apollo, the rounded cheeks, the ivory neck, the parted lips, and the glow of health and exercise all over' (issue 7, pp. 50-51). This piece can of course be enjoyed without knowing its references, but knowledge of Greek mythology, Bacchus and Apollo and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* provides a full understanding of the embedded codes. In the *Blonde* Issue a biologist interviews a lecturer in genetics about the biological blonde: 'it requires that they get together with another heterozygote (Aa) who also carries a 1 in 2 possibility of passing on a, or a homozygote (aa) for a who will definitely pass on a' (p. 34). Agnès Rocamora (2006: 158-159), writing about the readers' pages of *Vogue Paris*, argues that the magazine's texts are produced and constructed to be read as intellectual, by juxtaposing fashion alongside canonical arts, in an attempt to not only portray the magazine's high cultural and 'serious' profile but that of the ideal readers as well. Bourdieu (1975: 16-17, cited in Rocamora 2006: 159) notes that fashion is a 'minor art', which occupies 'an inferior rank in the hierarchy of artistic legitimacy'. By its analogies with art, literary classics and science, fashion in *DANSK* is legitimated as high culture instead of being a frivolous and 'minor' topic. Furthermore, the scientific discourse, as well as the intellectual and prose writings, comprises specialist information. Instead of acting as consumer help, like 'directive fashion writing', as analysed above, this intellectualising high cultural style of writing conjures up an image of the ideal and implied reader of *DANSK* as analytical and interested in art and science. In addition, most of the *DANSK* writers have postgraduate academic degrees in art and humanities, but only a few are trained as journalists. This means that a high level of general knowledge and intellectual reflections often mark *DANSK*'s written profile, with the exception of beauty and skincare features and short news items that advertise products or trends favourably.

The third style of writing increasingly used is the ironic distance to the interview subject and a slight spiteful tone of voice known from the British glossy niche fashion press. As also accounted for in the previous chapter, this style is represented by fashion writers Hadley Freeman, who is the deputy fashion editor of *The Guardian*, and

Richard Gray, the fashion features director of *10* magazine. Writer Susanne Madsen, who since the fieldwork has become *DANSK*'s fashion features editor, draws on this tradition – she was also trained in Britain. For the *Evilism* issue, Madsen's interview-feature with Karl Lagerfeld is titled 'Karl does K'. To 'do K', slang for taking drugs, is used as a pun on the name of Lagerfeld's new label, K:

> Since this is the evil issue, we could have kicked off this interview with Karl Lagerfeld by waxing lyrical about his sharp tongue and exquisite wickedness. We could have mentioned how he once famously commented on Coco Chanel as 'a bitch who invented a style and made everyone believe she invented modern fashion. And that's kind of genius.' How he never used to visit Communist countries because they were 'too depressing.' Sure we could have talked about how he doesn't like fat people (here, we could have said something about stones and glass houses, but we would have let that one slide since he's been in skinny jeans for some time now) and we could have included his scary and terribly theatrical statement: 'I have no human feelings'. (Madsen, issue 15, p. 66)

Madsen continues: 'But shoulda-woulda-coulda – we won't do that, because there is more to Herr Lagerfeld than his superbly articulated bitchiness and slightly frightening persona.' Madsen's use of 'waxing lyrical', 'something about stones and glasshouses', 'shoulda-woulda-coulda' and 'Karl does K' is a mix of youthful spoken language, slang and idioms. Furthermore, she does not introduce Lagerfeld, but assumes that the readers already know him. She uses Lagerfeld's own words to stage him, under the ironic pretence of not wanting to cover him that way. By doing so, Madsen not only creates a distance between the subject, Lagerfeld, and the piece, but she creates a journalistic meta-awareness – as a double distance. She inserts herself, as 'we', as part of the text, not as an inclusive imaginary community of women as Melsted does in the text discussed above, but as a know-it–all presence of the author. She thus both plays with her own writer position and with Lagerfeld's position as subject of the feature. Furthermore, the focus of the feature is on Karl as constructed by the media, not his work. Madsen puts Lagerfeld on a 'throne', calling him 'the Emperor of fashion'. Echoing *The Guardian*'s discourse on designers as fashion celebrities (Rocamora 2001), Lagerfeld is constructed as the celebrity star, whose own star-studded quotations are used as the structure of the piece. Through mockery and play with the positions of the writer and the subject, this style mediates fashion as fun, playful, not to be taken too serious, but also as an exclusive self-referential popular postmodern culture. By means of irony, writers convey a belief in 'it's only fashion', positioned at a distance from a 'real' or serious world. König argues that fashion writers including ironic statements about fashion in their text are 'sidestepping the job-threatening issue of being openly

critical of the fashion system' (König 2006: 216). Irony is used to strike a balance between editorial independence and satisfying advertisers. Through irony, criticism is mocked, and the magazine keeps its identity as independent as well as keeping the advertisers happy. As argued in Chapter Four, the function of irony is the creation of distance between in-groups and out-groups; readers who get it and readers who don't. Distance is created not only to outside readers, but to the topic of fashion as well.

A reading of *DANSK* offers the readers mixed messages of fashion that move from directive recipe formats to intellectual reflections to irony and implicit fashion references. Ballaster *et al.* (1991) also note that a mixture of different kinds of writing is central to women's magazines. In *DANSK* these different kinds of writing invite readers into the magazine by what I have called 'directive fashion writing' and exclude them if they do not share the irony or understand the specialist, intellectualising discourse used, which leaves them having to manoeuvre in mixed codes of inclusivity and exclusivity. As much as this brings to light the heterogeneity of fashion writing in *DANSK*, it also implies a slight elusiveness of the editorial profile and the complexities involved in striking the balance of selling ad space without 'selling out' of its niche position.

Fashion Spreads

While the FOB (front of book) consists of ads, newsy stories and features, the remaining content, apart from ad pages, is an uninterrupted flow of fashion spreads. Each issue has approximately eight fashion spreads, of which two are devoted to menswear, one to accessories, one to beauty and the rest womenswear. *DANSK*'s fashion pages show high-fashion clothing and models, often top models, shot in various highly stylised narratives, reflecting the theme of the issue. Clothes (styling, labels) are just one aspect of a fashion spread, which also include the model (look, pose), the style of photography (lighting, crop). The image is given priority and thus the clothes, primarily high fashion of the season, are represented in a mix of heterogeneous styles of photography. Rosetta Brookes argues that, as a result of economic and consumption changes, the representation of fashion has shifted 'from the product to the product-image' (Brookes 1989: 188). Similarly, Beard (2002: 32), in her analysis of *Nova* magazine, argues that the clothes themselves or the designers' idea of them are overruled by 'the styling of the photograph'. She continues 'For the cause of reinvention, it was the image of fashion and of being fashionable that was being promoted, and not specifically clothes themselves'. Paul Jobling also notes:

> The fashion spread... does not simply exist to replicate the intentions of the designer, but to form a symbolic link with the desires and expectations of the spectator as well. Indeed, more often than not fashion itself seems to become subordinate to the context in which it appears in magazines.
> (Jobling 1999: 107)

Although key collection pieces and their symbolic status matter greatly to both the producers and the readers (which will be discussed later), the overall visual narrative and aesthetic of the image is given priority. The fashion spread does not function to represent the designer, but it is a space where prestigious key collection pieces are photographed creatively. Even the high fashion designers themselves are aware of this. Stefano Pilati of Yves Saint Laurent says:

> Even if you put all the magazines together, you wouldn't see the complete collection. They all pick only the most photogenic clothes. And not all of the fashion magazines are really accessible. Most of them feed the industry, but they don't go further than that. (Pilati interviewed by Wilson 2008)

For example, on the spread *Two in the Bush* from the *Pet Power* issue, drawings of exotic animals illustrate the animalistic theme. On the black and white double spread (pp. 110-111) the bylines inform us that the dress is by Giles, but as it is a head shoot, the dress is cropped and what we see is a voluminous hood of ostrich feathers. A similar example is found in the spread *Futuristic* in the *Blonde* issue (issue 3, Autumn 2003, p. 66) where a headshot of a blonde model is framed by her fur-clad arm resting on her head. The byline informs the reader that she is wearing a 'blouse in Saga Mink® by Saga Furs'. Because of the cropped image this blouse is not visible to the reader. These examples are not indications of a nonchalant approach to the actual clothes, as indeed the label of the clothes and whether they are key collection pieces play a significant role in both the production and reading of the status of the magazines. This will be explored further later. It illustrates, however, that the visual narrative and the overall *mise-en-scene* takes precedence over the presentation of clothes. This is typical of both niche fashion magazines and high-end women's and men's fashion magazines. Another point relating to the *Futuristic* spread is the aspect of covert advertising. Saga Furs appears in the bylines of each style, which is an indication of 'editorial help' in exchange for coverage of the brand. I will return to the subject of advertising in Chapter Six.

Image 5. 'Two in the Bush', Issue 13, *Pet Power*, Spring 2007

Another feature found throughout *DANSK* is that the lack of clothes, or revealing clothes, is used as a style in its own. 'Porn chic' (see, for instance McNair 1996, 2002; Sørensen 2003) is a coinage used for the inclusion and legitimisation of sexualised imagery in popular culture. The sexualisation of fashion is a common practice across the fashion press, but in niche fashion magazines in particular. The work of Pierre Bourdieu is helpful in explaining what the stakes are when featuring porn chic styles in niche fashion magazines. Bourdieu (1993b) argues that the tendency to provoke is structured on the power struggles in the field of fashion. To Bourdieu the field of high fashion functions like the field of high culture, where the establishment and those with the most specific capital use 'conservation strategies' (1993b: 133) to protect the rarity of their label. In order to enter the game of fashion, the new participants, who Bourdieu calls 'newcomers', those without specific capital, adopt 'subversion strategies' (1993b: 133) in an attempt to shift positions. Newcomers, thus, devaluate the establishment and

generate new legitimate values (Rocamora 2002: 344), in magazines such as *DANSK*, and *Purple Fashion* as examined in the previous chapter, through sexual provocation and mockery. Seen in the light of Bourdieu's argument, porn chic is used as the 'ammunition' of subversion in the struggle of gaining a position in the field of fashion. Porn chic in niche fashion magazines represents a tool with which magazines can position themselves as radical, daring and cutting-edge.

Yet, as sex has become increasingly integrated into the discourse of mainstream fashion photography since the 1960s, its aura of subversive potential is perhaps limited. Instead porn chic has come to represent a *style* associated with subversion. As the examples below show, the porn chic style is instrumental in making *DANSK* appear daring and products desirable. Porn chic breaks down carnal barriers and taboos, and included in the magazine discourse it provides a way of achieving an unconventional and distinctive magazine profile. Brian McNair argues that 'porno-chic aims to transfer the taboo, transgressive qualities of pornography to mainstream cultural production' (2002: 70). However, sex as a branding tool has become increasingly mainstreamed and is reflected in the wider cultural democratisation of sex and its representation in the media, something McNair (2002) calls 'pornographication' of culture. The difference in the employment of sexual codes in mainstream culture and niche fashion magazine lies in the degree to which bodily sexualisation is presented. The further away from the mainstream press, defined as large-scale women's fashion magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, the more literal the inclusion of sex in fashion photography becomes, in, for example, Terry Richardson's work for *Purple Fashion* and *Purple Sexe* or the overall editorial profile of *S* Magazine. These publications are also driven by the editors' own explicit sexual orientation and desires. For instance, the editors-in-chief of *DANSK* are openly gay, which also informs their visual preferences. *DANSK*'s use of bare breasts, skin-tight swimming trunks and shiny, oiled bodies is a style, an aesthetic tool, that sets into motion three readings: firstly, it shifts the focus from the clothes to the body of the model who is exposed to scrutiny. The retouching or lack of manipulation places the body in *mise-en-scenes* of hyperreal perfection or trash realism respectively, as accounted for in Chapter Four. Secondly, it taps into a subversive potency which adds an 'edge' to the magazine. And lastly, any interpretation of porn chic should be seen in relation to the context where it is featured. Porn chic is an expected visual code of the genre of niche fashion magazines, in the same way that ironic and intellectualising styles of writing are part of their textual codes. By using porn chic, *DANSK*, and any other niche fashion magazine, simply 'speaks' the same visual language as its peers and

fulfils the genre 'requirements' and thereby demonstrates and earns its position in the field.

While both the male and female body are sexualised in *DANSK*, the representation of the male body is often through homoerotic, soft-core narratives of close-ups of groomed body parts. The spread named after the model Tyson (*Contradiction* issue, issue 10, 2006, pp. 102-110) is an example of how the undressed body signifies fashion on its own, as a fashioned body. Through various black and white as well as subdued colour photos, we see close-ups of Tyson's buffed torso and nipple, his face in profile next to the profile of an ancient (Roman or Greek) head of a male statue, him flexing his stomach and arm muscles as he is carrying a (Roman or Greek) pillar, his hands and hair. Throughout the bylines inform us of the products used: for instance Quick Bronze Tinted Self-Tanner Mousse by Clinique or Eight Hour Cream Intensive Hand Treatment by Elizabeth Arden. The story unloads two obvious readings. The first reading is a reading of desire. The homoerotic representation, in which the props evoke the idea of classic Greek male (homo)sexuality, in all probability addresses a gay reader enjoying the spread for its sexual qualities. It might also stimulate what could be called double-desire, similar to that discussed by Lewis (1997) in her work on lesbian reading of women's magazines, with the reader both desiring to be (look like) him and desiring him. The second reading of the spread is what could be called a professional reading, and is concerned with the bylines; understanding them as obvious covert advertising or a way to woo potential advertisers by showing them what kind of additional editorial exposure they can expect. A similar homoerotic spread of swimming trunks (*CPH Love* issue, issue 14) was, as Chapter Six will pursue, understood by the Danish readers in relation to their knowledge of the producers' own desires and homosexuality. Chapter Seven will explore how readers actually understand *DANSK*, and the values they draw on in doing so.

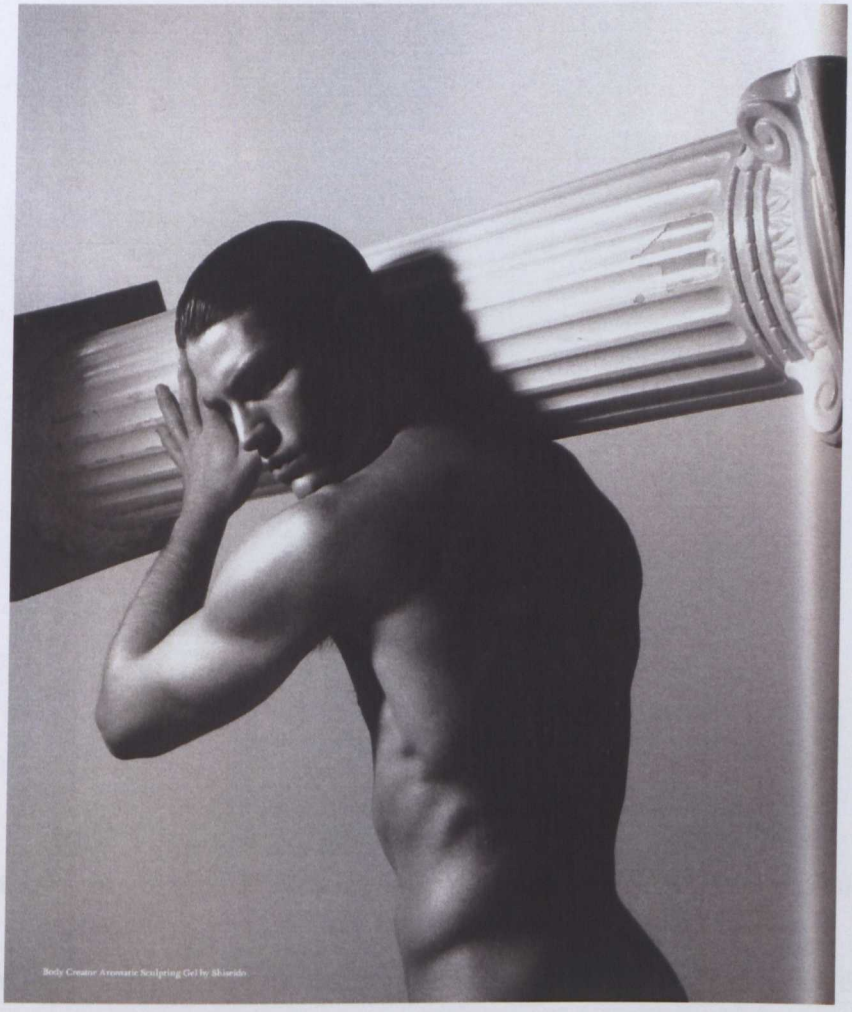

Image 6. '*Tyson*', Issue 10, *Contradiction issue*, 2006

Another example of *DANSK*'s use of sexualised photography is found, for instance, in *The Luxurious issue* (issue five, 2004). In an accessory spread, 'Accessories in Nature' (pp. 108-119), the accessories and the naked, adorned female body in them are cropped into fragments of close-ups, much like the framing of the body in pornography. A Birkin bag covers her pubic hair and she holds a Fendi bag next to her naked breast. The spread is not part of a narrative or a mood; instead the association between sex and desirable objects is spelled out brazenly, and sex and accessories are objects of double-desire in which expensive high-fashion accessories and sex are mutually reinforcing.

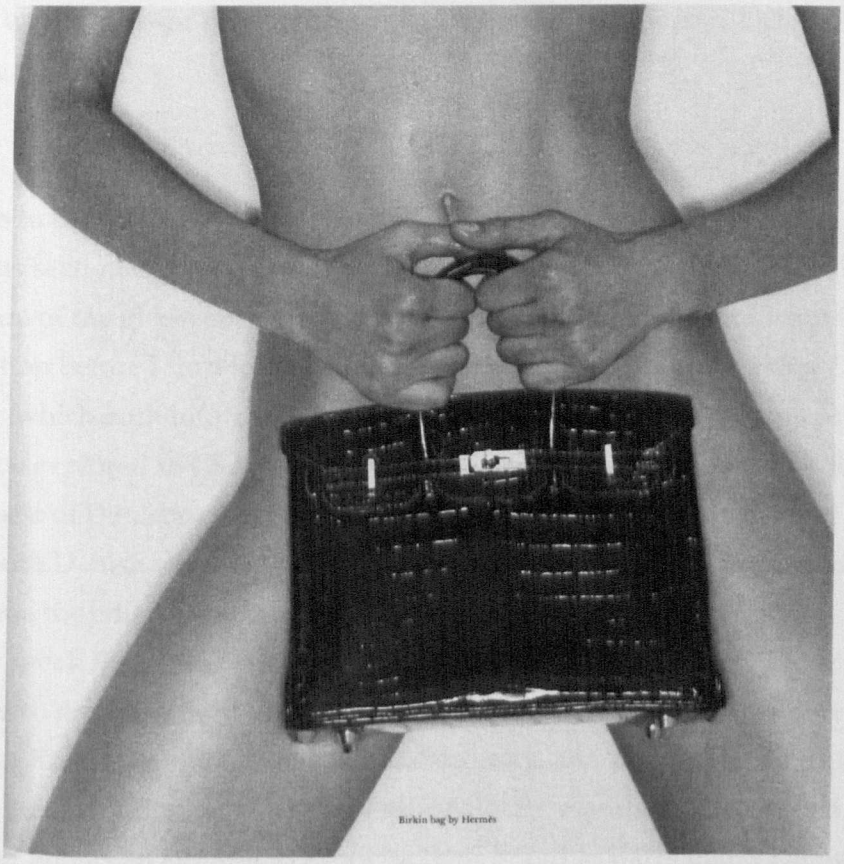

Image 7. 'Accessories in Nature', Issue 5, *The Luxurious issue*, Autumn 2004

What is the significance of the cropping of images so that clothes become unidentifiable; showing only key items as well as the porn chic style? Niche fashion magazines do not circulate representations of designer clothes in order to serve the designers or do the clothes justice. As Brookes (1989), Beard (2002) and Jobling (1999) argue, they use clothes to create and style images that reinvent and push fashion photography forward.

Overall, the aesthetic identity of *DANSK* is lush, exclusive and luxurious. This is most strongly reflected in the thickness of the paper, the saturation of the printing, the top models and high fashion featured and the digital perfection of the imagery. The exposed bodies of the models and their skin are not just a matter of genetic attributes, but are enhanced by a high degree of image manipulation and retouching, leaving the skin flawless and wrinkle-free, and the bodies unrealistically perfect. The images look streamlined, creating a controlled aesthetic filter that informs the overall style of *DANSK*, which is devoid of random, fun or direct flash as associated with the work of Juergen Teller or Terry Richardson. Instead *DANSK* mediates fashion as a dream of

perfection, which is never present or real, but hyperreal (Andersen 2006: 233) and 'excessively artificial'.

Danishness to the World

The previous section explored *DANSK*'s visual and journalistic profile as belonging to the sub-genre of the glossy niche magazine. There is yet another significant feature that needs attention before I turn to examine what drives the editors in making *DANSK*: its Danishness, which both informs the production practices and the reading of *DANSK*, which will be explored in Chapter Seven. In addition to its name, since the first issue a strong element of Danishness has been mediated. In the early issues the text was printed in both Danish and English. The reason for printing the text in Danish was firstly because the editors wanted Danes to read it in Danish – a rather futile reason as most Danes speak fluent English as it is the first second language obligatory in schools from the fourth grade, and the target readers of *DANSK* are in all probability used to reading other English-language magazines. Secondly, and perhaps more fittingly, the Danish text, with its different letters and especially its vowels, was also used as a graphic effect and as an attempt to exoticise their brand as particularly Danish. Thus, when it first launched, its Danishness was its point of distinction, something used to set it apart, in the masses of international fashion magazines. Its clear attachment to Scandinavia was also initially reflected in first editorial note of the first issue, 'The unique Scandinavian style plays an integral role in creating trends in the rest of the world, yet despite our name we do not assume an automatic right to exclusively represent Denmark. *DANSK* is an international magazine, which views the world through Danish tinted spectacles' (Buchard and Grenaa, p. 21, *The Comfortable Issue*). Although they wanted to portray the international world, they did so from a Danish and Scandinavian perspective.

The idea of Danishness also came through strongly with the first issue (2002), a spread with 'real' Danes accompanied with the question 'Why do you live in Denmark?' (pp. 22-25), a spread with 'some of Denmark's most exciting models au naturel' where each photograph of a nude model was accompanied by their name and place of birth (pp. 54-61), a feature on Danish schnapps and aquavit in relation to Danish traditional food culture (pp. 158-165), followed by drinks recipes made with Rød Aalborg aquavit and a interior spread with Danish stoneware and ceramic art. The last spread featured redesigned packaging for Matas, Denmark's largest chain of

chemists, equivalent to Britain's Boots. It set the mood for branding and exoticising Denmark and its aesthetic, people and design history to the world.

The magazine's Danishness was also examined thematically in two issues: the *Very Danish* issue (issue 6, 2005) was dedicated to the best of the Danish fashion and personalities with HRH Crown Princess Mary as cover model. *CPH Love* issue (issue 14, 2007) focused on Copenhagen culture and fashion and included a guide to Copenhagen's fashion, design and hotels. Throughout, expert statements from Danish professionals provide support for written features. Each issue also includes Danish fashion in the spreads as well as interviews with Danish designers such as Camilla Stærk, Noir, Baum und Pferdgarten and Bitte Kai Rand. Interviews with Danish designers have become a regular feature, formalised through the subheading 'DK Wear', informing the readers that what they are about to read involves Danish fashion.

The contributors, writers, photographers, stylists and makeup artists were initially sourced in Denmark and Scandinavia, but increasingly an international network of contributors is used. Throughout, *DANSK* has worked with high-profile top models, such as Esther Canadas, Guinevere, Erin Wasson, Kristina Kruse and Frankie Rayder, but they are flanked by Danish models and top models with international careers such Louise P, May Anderson, Matthias Laursen, Eddie Klint, Freja Beha and Helena Christensen.

While *DANSK* is an international magazine, and increasingly so with a consolidated international network of contributors, its Danishness remains a strong feature. Not just its specific Danish/Scandinavian aesthetic identity but also the producers' position in the field of Danish fashion is picked up upon by its readers, who understand its Danishness as both a marker of distinction and as exclusion from gaining international status. As Chapter Seven will explore, readers understand its Danishness as either something excitingly exotic or as something 'provincial' and imbued with less status than international magazines.

Bearing in mind the above analysis of *DANSK* as a glossy niche magazine, its mixed styles of fashion writing, its Spartan graphic design, its glossy and hyperreal fashion photography employing porn chic codes and its particular Danishness, I will now explore the codes and values that shape the producers in making *DANSK*.

[i] *DANSK* media kit, 2008

[ii] As of 24 June 2008, confirmed by the executive editor Kathrine Houe

[iii] For the sake of readability, the account is largely written in the present tense, although it is acknowledged that the setup at the magazine has changed considerably since the time of the fieldwork.

CHAPTER 6: 'IT'S NEVER GOOD ENOUGH'

Cultures of Niche Fashion Magazine Production and Fashion Capital

Following on from Chapter Five, this chapter examines what drives the producers of *DANSK* and the different economies and values that inform their production of the magazine. The findings are based on participant observation of the making of three issues (issues 13-15), which took place from January 2007 to August 2007, as well as in-depth semi-structured interviews with the two editors-in-chief, executive editor, art buyer, the production manager and the advertising representative.

Cultural Intermediaries

Before analysing the specific values that shape the production of the magazine and how they are reproduced by the magazine producers, it is essential to comment on the role the producers of niche fashion magazines play in the field of fashion. As defined in Chapter One, I use the term 'mediation' to refer to a process in which values, beliefs and messages are transmitted between magazines, readers and producers, shaped by the socio-cultural relationships between these parties. In this context, magazine producers are mediators of fashion and taste-makers, and more specifically they are mediators of niche fashion. As such they belong to the occupational and social grouping 'cultural intermediaries'. This term originates in Bourdieu's coinage 'new cultural intermediaries' (1984), which refers to middlebrow, new *petit bourgeois* workers in the culture industries – 'all the occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services' (Bourdieu, 1984: 359). The category also includes 'radio and TV producers and presenters, magazine journalists'. Bourdieu traces how this group has grown in size and influence since the middle of the twentieth century. Recent studies have criticised the concept on a number of accounts. Nixon and du Gay (2002) argue that there is a need to clarify what makes up the grouping 'new cultural intermediaries'. They point out that the concept is too inclusive, as people occupied in the field of cultural production have different educational backgrounds and work ethos. Bourdieu's coinage is rooted in the occupational shifts that took place in France in the 1960s, and, as Nixon (2003: 26) argues, that 'throws up the question of periodisation in relation to the emergence of these intermediary occupations'. He argues that practitioners such as broadcasters, advertising agents and journalists are not new, and neither are the occupations

expanding. It is thus more appropriate to talk about 'cultural intermediaries' rather than 'new cultural intermediaries'. Keith Negus (2002) is also critical of the term 'new cultural intermediaries' on various accounts but argues that 'the central strength of the notion of cultural intermediaries is that it places an emphasis on those workers who come *in-between* creative artists and consumers (or, more generally, production and consumption)' (Negus 2002: 503).

In what way can the editors of *DANSK* be said to be cultural intermediaries? First, the editors and contributors come in between and mediate fashion clothing to the readers. Second, and perhaps more noteworthy, is that their work mediates fashion through various styles of writing, styling, photography, graphic identity and art direction. Third, the intermediary quality of niche fashion magazines is, as Negus argues above, and specifically in the case of *DANSK*, that it bridges the production and the consumption of fashion; it also blurs the boundary between these two moments and fashion mediation. Since many readers of niche fashion magazines also work as cultural intermediaries, the boundaries between producer and consumer overlap. In making *DANSK*, the editors and contributors cite other magazines, producers of fashion imagery and journalists. Anne Cronin (2004: 354) also notes that advertisers refer to, and take inspiration from, the work of other advertisers and furthermore 'practitioners strategically raid new cultural trends they see appearing across a range of sites (fashion, art, popular music, design, television) and put selected elements of them to work in their campaigns'. The *DANSK* editors' consumption of tastes and practices cannot be separated from production decisions about the magazine. Thus, it is in this capacity that the editors are cultural intermediaries, and both the *DANSK* producers (editors, photographers, writers, stylists, art directors etc.) as well as the readers work as shapers of cultural taste.

On the cultural intermediary work of advertising, Cronin (2004: 353) argues that research needs to pay attention to the process of production as well as the 'influence of practitioners' social position and beliefs on this process'. This chapter pays attention to the process and the role and beliefs of the practitioners' positions in shaping this process and its underlying values rather than the identities of the intermediaries. Cronin (2004) further notes that in the work on advertising agents as cultural intermediary, there is an over-emphasis on the Creatives, which are the ones who produce the ideas, images and text for the advertising campaign. This emphasis ignores other people in the advertising agencies involved in the advertising process, and she advocates paying attention to 'multiple regimes of mediation', which includes the range of roles specific to advertising such as the media buyers' mediating role with

media sites and the complex mediation of conflicting approaches that occurs in any one campaign between individual advertising practitioners with different roles (Cronin 2004: 357). The 'multiple regimes of mediation' involved in the production of a niche fashion magazine are different from those of advertising. These, to name some, involve the mediating and, at times conflicting, role between advertisers and the magazine; the commissioning mediation between the editors and freelance contributors (photographers, stylists, writers); the self-reflections of the editors and their mediating position amongst both other agents and readers in the field of fashion. This chapter primarily pays attention to how the encoding of fashion into the magazine is shaped by the reproduced practices of fashion mediation shared by other agents in the field of fashion.

Reproduction of Aesthetics

One of the significant processes of production is driven by distinction, as the editors formulate their own taste and aesthetic by both distinguishing themselves from others and maintaining that what they do is in good taste: 'This picture is below our standard', 'This is not *DANSK*' and 'You have to be very fashion to understand the fashion in that'. 'Would X and X do this? If not, then we'll do it'. In the interviews and during the observations it becomes clear that the editors want *DANSK* to be of a 'high calibre'. Buchard himself describes *DANSK*'s signature style as centred on what he calls 'eye candy':

> Is it eye candy? Or is it ugly because it has to be new? If it's just ugly it's not going into our magazine. If it's new as well as tasteful, then it's something for us. We follow a system of eye candy that we've gradually built up.
> *Uffe Buchard, editor-in-chief and founder*

Kim Grenaa concurs, and emphasises 'glamorous' and 'beautiful':

> We like the glamorous fashion, the fashion that is a bit established, the clothes you can buy more than one place in the world (...). The glamorous for us ... well, fashion for us should be entertaining, tasteful, it should be a dream universe where you go to see something beautiful.
> *Kim Grenaa, editor-in-chief and founder*

Buchard and Grenaa's taste, according to them, is 'glamorous', 'lush',[i] 'popular', 'superficial'; the 'rough edges are smoothed off ' and there is 'graphic simplicity'. Rhetorically these features are used to distinguish *DANSK* from other niche fashion

publications. Buchard talks about 'eye candy' as some kind of aesthetic filter through which the magazine content is passed. Their shared understanding of eye candy ensures that fashion is mediated as a beautiful dream universe, tasteful and pleasing to the eye. How this is judged is essentially a matter of shared informed taste and aesthetic judgement. According to Immanuel Kant's philosophical theory (Edgar and Sedgwick 1999; see also Bourdieu 1984; Miller 1987), judgements of beauty are based on feelings and are universally valid. What is beautiful is subjective since it rests on pleasure or displeasure, but it also applies universally as it is shared publicly. Beauty is a transcendental *a priori*, which means it exists before empirical reason, and in order for something to be beautiful one must perceive it with disinterested interest. Kantian aesthetic believes that works of art or objects should be experienced as immediate pleasure and ultimate beauty is, thus, sublime and pure. What is problematic with Kant's theory of aesthetic judgements is that it overlooks the cultural as well as socio-economic factors that shape taste and one's aesthetic judgements. Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) fights strongly against Kant's aesthetic judgement on several accounts. Taste to Bourdieu is arbitrary and is acquired through background, education and cultural values; it is not pure or innocent but reveals socio-economic positions, class and social differences. Through our habitus, our acquired incorporated, embodied and internalised dispositions that inform how we act, talk and think, we learn to like some things and dislike others, and thus judge beauty and ugliness upon these dispositions. To Bourdieu aesthetic dispositions are not individual, but socially shaped by our habitus. Through socialisation we consciously and unconsciously acquire practices, values and tastes (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The habitus is the structured structure that structures practice. It shapes and reproduces cultural norms acquired over time and through socialisation and experience, and structures how specific social groups make sense of and act on the world similarly, by sharing the same internationalised and embodied practices and behaviours. It provides the members of a field, the players, with a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu 1993a: 5), and refers to how practices, actions and tastes are culturally and socially mobilised. If we accept that we have certain pre-reflexive dispositions that organise our taste and distaste, how then does Buchard and Grenaa's sense of eye candy come to be and how does it inform the selection of what goes into the magazine? While Bourdieu is useful for understanding taste as shaped by internalised dispositions, Herbert Blumer (1969), unlike Bourdieu, does not focus on class differentiation to explain the tastes and changes in fashion. He argues that the wish to 'be in fashion' is comprised by an 'incipient taste' (Blumer 1969: 280), which Entwistle (2009: 9) explains as 'the emerging aesthetic dispositions of the

particular time'. This taste, defined as a wish to be in fashion as well as the burgeoning trends and dispositions of new aesthetics of the time, is to Blumer a much stronger impetus in a contemporary, changing world than the social differentiation model of, for instance, Simmel (1973a) and Bourdieu (1984). To Blumer what is in fashion is a result of a process of 'collective selection' (1969: 282) by designers, buyers and innovators who choose from among competing styles. The social interaction in the shared network in the field of fashion makes this a 'collective taste' (Blumer 1969: 284). While Blumer addresses fashion clothing, his theory also sheds light on the choices made by fashion magazine editors. In terms of Blumer's hypothesis it is much more likely that Buchard and Grenaa's construction of 'eye candy' is a result of their wanting to be in fashion and a rhetoric formulation of their distinct profile which is shared by members of the field of fashion. While Blumer addresses taste in the singular, I would argue that there are plural 'incipient tastes' in contemporary fashion cultures.

The way the issues of *DANSK* come into being gives an example of the producers' reproduction of shared taste. An example is issue 13, *Pet Power*, of which the overall theme was inspired by the trend of animalistic prints of that season, seen at Milan fashion week. Buchard highlights that during fashion weeks they also network, party and talk with other members of the fashion industry and gain a great deal of inspiration for the magazine. Another more general reproduction of shared tastes is the use of *key* fashion clothing in the fashion spreads, which is a shared practice across magazines. Yet another is the use of top models, also featured across magazines. Shared taste is also embodied and Buchard and Grenaa's style of dress encapsulates this. At a business meeting in Stockholm, Buchard had deliberately worn 'a lot of Dior', as he believed through this 'his views would be accepted more smoothly'. While the latter is an example of taste shared by Buchard and the people at the meeting, and their being able to decode it as Dior and, thus, significant, it also touches upon the issue of manifestation of fashion capital, which I explore below. How are we then to understand Buchard and Grenaa's rhetorical construction of 'eye candy'? The editors desire to be in fashion and their aesthetic profile of 'eye candy' marks a distinction and positions them in a field where all agents act to be in fashion. In this context, eye candy constitutes one taste culture out of many, which is shared by readers and other producers who also have a penchant for 'beautiful', 'glamorous' and 'lush' fashion.

If we accept the above hypothesis, the tastes of fashion in a moving world then continually adapt *to be in fashion*. Buchard and Grenaa's taste in fashion focuses on that which beautifies and is 'popular', but their judgements of taste and aesthetic are adapted to fashion's new tastes and aesthetics. Buchard demonstrates above that he is

aware that ugly things can become imbued with reversed value and become attractive, simply because they are new. However, encapsulated in his sense of taste and aesthetic judgement is the belief that unattractive ruptures, which lie at the core of the fashion system, are not automatically tasteful or pleasing to the eye. He also declares that 'distasteful' fashions are not automatically included in the magazine, but when I pursue this he acknowledges that while he would not necessarily exclude 'ugly' fashions from the magazine, he would make sure they were presented in a beautifying way, i.e. within a photographic style that gave them a *DANSK* 'eye candy' signature. Thus, their taste in fashion is acquired through two interrelated processes: that which is shared with other members and is cultured through field membership and habitus, and another which strives to distinguish *DANSK* from the flock by using shared codes of taste. Encapsulated in the processes of production is the way in which what is deemed aesthetic is negotiated through contradictory practices of taste, as the editors formulate and modify their taste according to the culture they belong to. Hesmondhalgh (2002: 72) notes that contradictions lie at the core of production of culture, centred on negotiations of 'creativity versus commerce', which should not be viewed as a simplified polarity but as a fundamental contradiction within the work and between sites of production. I will return to this later.

Related to the shared taste and distinction is the way Grenaa, one of the editors-in-chief, sees *DANSK*:

> It's focused on international fashion and international brands – that's the fashion we like to pass on and that's our focal point. We can do a bit underground, but it's not ... it's not our focus market. It's easier to say it's not *i-D*, because that's not *DANSK*'s energy (...). We like the glamorous fashion, the fashion that is a bit established, the clothes you can buy at more than one place in the world (...). The glamorous for us ... well, fashion for us should be entertaining, tasteful, it should be a dream universe where you go to see something beautiful. I've great respect for the other part of fashion, Juergen Teller and all that, it's just not ... for one I don't know how to do it; if I did it, it would look forced. You can assert about *DANSK*'s fashion profile that it's a bit affected, that it's a bit forced and staged but that's deliberate. We didn't pretend she just got out of bed, right. And all this Terry Richardson and the others, well they do it bloody well, there's truthfulness in it, and we couldn't give it that truthfulness.
> *Kim Grenaa, editor-in-chief and founder*

In order to cultivate its signature eye candy style, *DANSK* is positioned against other publications and fashion styles. The production of *DANSK* involves specific knowledge of other publications (*i-D*), players (Juergen Teller and Terry Richardson) and styles in the field of fashion against which *DANSK* is positioned. *i-D*, Teller and Richardson,

representing 'truthfulness' or trash realism as examined in Chapter Four, make up the counterpart of *DANSK*'s mediation of fashion as glamorous, eye candy, beautiful and lush.

Prompted by my observation and participation, and by the interviews, the producers reveal that they are driven by an impetus to secure status, distinction and recognition via what could be called codes of newness and exclusivity, which also lie at the centre of the fashion system. In order to discover what constitutes news and to achieve exclusivity the editors rely on their knowledge of the field of fashion and other players, as well as their network of culturally tuned in people, which they use to position themselves and their magazine. The knowledge, competences and values employed in the production can be summed up as a specific resource shared by members of the field of fashion. Drawing on Rocamora's (2002) and Entwistle and Rocamora's (2006) Bourdieuian work, the concept of 'fashion capital' is useful to understanding the producers' impetus and what is put into the magazine. It refers to the specific acquired competence (knowledge, practice, habitus) players can use as a resource in order to position themselves, compete for positions and take positions, in the field of fashion. While fashion capital entails economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital, it also addresses the embodiment of fashionable aesthetics in the form of a fashionable look and appearance and a highly maintained and preferably thin body. The concept of aesthetic labour, as put forth by the work of Entwistle and Wissinger (2006), addresses how the embodiment of specific aesthetic is the core economic and cultural resource within modelling. I include this idea of specific aesthetic body in the concept of fashion capital, as the display of fashionable appearance, and high self-maintenance is significant to the editors and their fashionable self-identity. For instance, when asked about their appearance and whether they find it important to look fashionable, the editors tend to talk about how their style has become less fashionable, how they used to try out all the trends and how their style has changed as they have grown up. They are highly conscious about their own appearance and wear designer clothes such as Lanvin, Prada, Raf Simons, Balenciaga and Dior: they work out and talk about what food to eat and skincare and beauty treatments. As expected, they talk a lot about fashion and they also notice and compliment other people's clothes or appearance. These are all bodily regimes of the fashion capital. A significant aspect of fashion capital is acquired through consumption. In addition to their bodily consumption of clothes and products they travel a great deal both for business and pleasure and go out to restaurants, opening parties and clubs, which all generate knowledge that feeds their fashion capital.

Fashion capital, thus, involves knowledge of the field of fashion, of other key players, its discourse, acceptance of its system of constant change and an incorporated embodiment of fashion. The concept of fashion capital casts light on the specific resource that drives the editors to select and include certain things in the magazine. Indeed, players in all fields are endowed with different degrees of capital, as different capitals are effective '*in relation to* a particular field' (Bourdieu, 1993b: 73). Academics, for instance, are endowed with 'academic capital' in which knowledge of the field of academia, acceptance and reproduction of academic traditions, discourse and practices, other field players and critical analysis of their subject are key.

Sarah Thornton, as mentioned in the previous chapter, uses the term 'subcultural capital' (1995; 11) to describe how values, 'hipness' and hierarchies within club cultures take on meaning. Within the club space, subcultural distinctions become meaningful through the objects and embodiment of the members who know the codes. She argues that 'Subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder' (Thornton 1995: 11). Similarly, the magazine is a signification of the editors' acquired fashion capital and degree of kudos, and works as a marker of distinction within the field that positions the editors in relation to other players and publications. Fashion capital is the principle that governs the editors' actions and the cultural values that shape the production as well as bind them together with other agents in the field.

Production Values

The production of a niche fashion magazine is a complex procedure that involves a range of aesthetic judgements and values which are expressed via the codes of exclusivity and timing. The following section explores these codes, which are shared and used to mark distinctions and positions between other publications and producers. Before I turn to these, I will briefly discuss the highly competitive nature of the field. Bourdieu (1993a), in his work on cultural production, illustrates how the fields of literature and art involve social positioning and manifestations of the players competing for the same positions. Bourdieu calls this competing struggle 'position-taking' (1993a: 30). Central to position-taking is the act of making one's name:

> To make one's name' [*faire date*] means making one's *mark*, achieving recognition (in both senses) of one's *difference* from other producers, especially the most consecrated of them; at the same time, it means *creating*

> *a new position* beyond the positions presently occupied, *ahead* of them, in the *avant-garde*. (Bourdieu 1993a: 106, italics in original)

It is fruitful to transfer this idea of position-taking and making one's name to the production of a niche fashion magazine, as the magazine is a symbolic and material object producers use to strengthen and defend their position and status in the field. However, there is a general weakness in Bourdieu's argument. What is problematic is the implication that advancing through competition is the sole motivation for players of cultural production. Although this may be the 'rules of the game', it is not necessarily the general motivation for making fashion, music or films or any other cultural media. His rather calculative field theory neglects any artistic streak, or creative impulse, that cannot be explained or motivated by 'position-taking'. However, the overall critique of Bourdieu's concept of position-taking aside, the editors of *DANSK* are, in fact, driven to gain status and secure fashion capital, which is displayed by interlinked codes of exclusivity and timing that act as markers of their degree of fashion capital. The following sections explore this.

Exclusivity

The rare, the luxurious, the limited and the difficult to achieve make up the special brand of exclusivity that characterises *DANSK*. Three vehicles in the production especially mark this shared exclusivity: models, key outfits from designer collections and photographers. The models *DANSK* uses are key to climbing the ladder of fashion and showing off their fashion capital, as Buchard explains: 'Well, we often do this when we're offered number 8 and number 20 of the models' top ranking: Number 20 might be right for the editorial, but we choose number 8. And that's naturally because it gives us more status.' The rank Buchard refers to is www.models.com, an international model site that ranks models based on their exposure in campaigns, catwalk shows and magazine editorials. It is used by some members of the industry as a reference point for models' 'cool' factor, fashion capital and economic capital.[ii] The logic of exclusivity is not based on who is necessarily aesthetically right for the story, but the degree of fashion capital that can be acquired by using the one imbued with most status, as declared by models.com, since this renders a display of high degree of fashion capital. By working with the most fashionable models *DANSK* is co-producing and announcing the look of fashion as well as opting to advance its own position.

A top model lends value to the producers' networking with prestigious agencies such as IMG Models, which represents most top models. Female models including Audrey Mornay (Issue 1), Guinevere (issue 10), Erin Wasson (issue 11), Esther Canadas (issue 3), Malgosia (issue 13), Freja Beha (issue 14) Luca (issue 7), Lisa Cant (issue 15), Vlada (issue 13), Amanda Moore (issue 12), Anouck Lepère (issue 12), Kristina Kruse (issue 2) and many more have adorned the pages and covers of *DANSK*. These models, of course, are not easy to get, and getting them relies heavily on *DANSK*'s brand recognition as well as its good relationship with model agencies and bookers. Most top models are secured via the art buyer, Bigler, who has ten years' experience as a photographer's agent in London, Los Angeles and New York, as well as a model agent for agencies Models 1 and IMG Models in London. Her network not only gives access to models, but to a wide range of members of the fashion industry, photographers, stylists, casters, makeup artists, PRs and designers who are useful to the production of a fashion magazine. A good phone book, thus, is essential in getting the right models to promote the magazine's status.

The right models, as well as photographers, which I will return to later, work in tandem in getting the right outfits for the shoot which are protected by gatekeeping PR agencies. Bigler, the art buyer, explains how models give access to the designers' press offices: 'Well, it's obvious if I call up McQueen [British designer Alexander McQueen] and tell them we're shooting a story with Sasha P and Tanya D [two high-ranking models], then it's more likely that they'll give me the clothes than if I call up and tell them we're shooting a new face.'[iii] It is not just the model that matters in acquiring fashion capital – the right clothes similarly reinforce status and position, as Buchard explains:

> Within clothing, it's super, super important what it is. There's status in whether you just got some outfits from the collection or the three top important styles. It's a bit like if you sit second row then you'd bloody want to sit front row. It's the same all over. It's never good enough.
> *Uffe Buchard*

Buchard demonstrates that maintaining one's fashion capital is an ever-increasing and accumulating source. As Entwistle and Rocamora recognise in their work on London Fashion Week (2006: 748): 'Physical presence, that is, being seen in the field, gives witness to their field membership.' Key outfits, just as where one sits at the shows, mediate one's position and status within fashion. The employment of fashion capital as a resource depends on other players within the same field recognising it as such and sharing a belief in it. Thornton (1995) also recognises this in relation to subcultural

capital. She addresses the hierarchies within club cultures and how subcultural capital in them is measured against degrees of credibility; that you can be high or low in subcultural capital. Similarly, where Buchard sits at the shows marks his degree of fashion capital. The editors' fashionable bodies can thus be used as a resource to position themselves and show their status, as in the above example of Buchard attending a meeting deliberately wearing a lot of Dior. But one's seat at the fashion show as well as wearing certain valued clothes are dependent on others acknowledging these as valuable. The more capital one has accumulated, the more freely one can move in the field and take on the front row position. Embedded in this is that fashion capital is not a constant and one can never rest on one's laurels, but must stay in the game by either defending one's second row seat or advancing to the front row, or being first to show key collection pieces. This practice is essentially about position-taking.

For its fashion spreads *DANSK* borrows outfits directly from the designers' press offices, and, as this is the procedure for all magazines, there is a competition for outfits. As magazine editors are keen to show key items from the collections early on in the season, key clothes are in constant circulation from magazine to magazine and they are flown in specifically for magazine shoots. How long a magazine has to wait to borrow the clothes indicates how important the press offices deem it, and consequently the producer's degree of fashion capital.

> The reason why we fight to ... broaden our spectrum, also in relation to photographers, is that it would make everything a lot easier. With regards to the shoot with Eddie [Klint], if I can call up the houses and tell them we're shooting with Casper Sejersen [Danish photographer who photographed the mentioned shoot] then they probably wouldn't know who he is, but we get the clothes because it's with Eddie. If I could have said 'we're shooting with little Peter and some top photographer like Mert and Marcus' I would have gotten the clothes as well. So one of those elements have to be top class for it to be easy to get the clothes.
> *Uffe Buchard*

Models, photographers and clothes work in tandem, they are inter-dependent and both give status to the magazine. Issue 14 'CPH Love' is an example of this exchange. The Chanel haute couture story 'Kaizerlich' (pp. 148-159) features the Danish model Freja Beha, who at the time held fourth ranking on models.com. Since she was the campaign girl for Chanel that season her status alone gave access to shoot Chanel couture in Copenhagen. Freja, as well as good contact with the press office, secured the shoot. The same logic applied to the menswear AW07-08 collection preview in the same issue, 'E. Klint' (pp. 160-175). The Danish top model Eddie Klint secured key outfits by Galliano,

Alexander McQueen, Givenchy and Kriss van Acshe. At the time he was the campaign model for Prada and this got *DANSK* the Prada King Kong monkey outfit (p. 166), which otherwise would have been very hard to get:

> It is more difficult than ever before to get clothing for your shoots. It's impossible, because the houses still only make one press collection and at the same time there's now 10 times more magazines now than 10 years ago. Or even more. So the battle for the good outfits and the battle for the good models have just gotten a whole lot more difficult. I think it's exciting to fight for it. I am even happier when I get that ridiculous Prada King Kong outfit … because I succeeded.
> *Uffe Buchard*

Image 8. 'E. Klint', Issue 14, *CPH Love*, 2007

Central to the field of cultural production and the valuing of cultural products by agents in the field is, according to Bourdieu (1993a), the struggle between agents competing for positions. In terms of Bourdieu's theories, the value of *DANSK* and the belief that supports it is generated through struggle, and, thus, winning the struggle for the Prada King Kong outfit Buchard is valuing the particular fashion spreads in which it features, which lends value to the overall magazine and to Buchard's position in the field. Key outfits are a marker of fashion kudos in the industry and more specifically of your standing with the press offices. The rules of the 'fashion game' are based on

competing for the same stakes, but winning just once is not enough. To uphold the value of exclusivity one must persevere, and fashion capital and the valuing of cultural products are never-ending struggles to accumulate resources which can be turned into better positions such as front row seats or editor positions. Indeed, the objects and fashions that render exclusivity, such as the Prada King Kong outfit, change over time and new objects that mark exclusivity materialise.

Image 9. Cover, Issue 14, *CPH Love*, 2007

Image 10. 'Kaizerlich', Issue 14, *CPHLove*, 2007

The production of exclusivity is furthered in the fashion writing. A range of freelance writers, most of whom hold postgraduate degrees in art and humanities, contribute to *DANSK*. Susanne Madsen, at the time a staple contributor and now fashion features editor explains:

> We don't write 'the fashion designer Tom Ford', right. We'll just write ... we'll just sometimes write his first name and expect our readers to know who that is, and if they don't, well then they probably read the wrong magazine. It's an esoteric tone. But of course it varies from writer to writer.
> *Susanne Madsen*

As König writes with reference to the habit of writing about top models 'as if there could only possibly be one "Gisele" or "Erin"' (König 2006: 215)', the belief in exclusivity permeates the text, so that if readers do not recognise 'Tom' they do not belong to the ideal readership. While this is Madsen's point of view, the journalistic style does, however, vary a great deal, as she also acknowledges. This point was explored in the previous textual analysis of *DANSK*.

Timing

The second key code used to signify the editor's degree of fashion capital is timing. As a quarterly magazine, *DANSK* cannot compete with the news provided in monthly magazines or fashion sites and blogs that are updated several times a day. Despite this, the editors are keen on upholding a sense of timing. Timing in combination with exclusivity mark the magazine's status as being one of the first to show key outfits and signifies a magazine's ranking within the hierarchy of magazines. A discussion that took place at one of the editorial meetings illustrates this: it was suggested that the next theme should cover the growing awareness of green, eco fashion and corporate social responsibility. This was judged to be 'right now' but because of the production time of three months it would be 'old news' when released. It was also noted that *Vanity Fair* had previously published a 'Green Issue' and furthermore the *Vanity Fair* available at the time of the meeting was the 'Africa Issue', which dealt with similar issues. Although the debate on global warming is very much still 'happening', the principle of selection is that it would not be reflecting a new trend or be 'fashion forward' enough to devote an entire issue to it.

At another meeting I suggested doing an interview with Olivier Theyskens, who at the time had just been appointed creative director for Nina Ricci, in conjunction with his inaugural collection. This was also deemed 'old news', as other media had already interviewed him. This illustrates that although these were interesting news items at the time, they were not new enough for the desired editorial profile of *DANSK*. In spite of their quarterly frequency, absolute fashion newness and preferably being the first to tell their readers what is new is important: 'We boast that we know what is happening, and we'd like to bring the news before it becomes news', said the executive editor.

The *DANSK* editors seem particularly focused on gaining recognition achieved by following already approved trends, models and photographers. For example, rather than collaborating with early career photographers who have not yet been published in

high-status publications or worked with producers endowed with high fashion capital, they work primarily with more established photographers who can 'up their game'. As Bigler, the art buyer, puts it 'We need to show that we are at that level' and a high-ranking model helps show exactly that. While they make their mark with their glamorous, colour-saturated printing and immaculate images with retouched flawless skin, it seems their Danish position informs not only their aesthetic identity but also sets them back in terms of international network and advertisers. To compensate for their Danish position, which hinders their advancement, their strategy is to rely on approved international models, clothes and photographers in the hope of getting an international position within the 'agreed' rules. While the *DANSK* editors undoubtedly are taste shapers within the Danish field of fashion, their strategy of reproduction of international practices suggests their impact and positioning in the international field of fashion is perhaps rather that of taste followers.

Economic Values

DANSK is our CV to the international scene.
Camilla Bigler, art buyer, DANSK Magazine

As discussed in Chapter Four the field of fashion is 'situated at an intermediary position between the artistic field and the economic field' (Bourdieu and Delsaut, cited in Entwistle and Rocamora 2006: 739). This precise position is useful to bear in mind when exploring the economic structure of *DANSK*. As I discuss below, bringing out a niche fashion magazine is a balancing act of creative and editorial freedom, tight budgets and commercial constraints. The editors' understanding of the field of fashion as well as of the niche fashion magazine genre informs the making of *DANSK*. (See also Chapter Four for a discussion on this.) Far from profiting from the magazine, the editors and contributors' reward is fashion kudos. How is *DANSK* then financially feasible? This section briefly discusses aesthetic markets and aesthetic values, and then looks at the advertising and freelance cultures involved in the economic calculations of *DANSK*.

The economic calculations involved in the production of *DANSK* are not detached from the editors' cultural calculations or quest for status differentiation. In order to understand this, *DANSK* should be seen as aesthetic product in an aesthetic market. Neoclassical theories, Keynesian theory and institutional theory, Aspers argues

(2006), are not applicable to aesthetic markets such as that of fashion photography, in which freelance work, self-employment, direct contact between producers and contributors and focus on status are key. Entwistle (2009: 10) defines an aesthetic market as a market in which 'an aesthetic quality – be it a look or style – is commodified, that is, defined and calculated within a market and sold for profit (...) Markets where an aesthetic quality is the *core commodity*, rather than when the aesthetic is important in the process of selling something else.' Central to aesthetic markets is that their economies are calculated differently, and 'cultural' and 'economic' categories are merged. Entwistle (2009: 12) argues that 'aesthetic values do not come out of nowhere; they certainly do not reside in the disembodied signs of contemporary capitalism, but are generated *internally* to the market itself, by the routine actions and practices of individuals and institutions'. In the field of fashion, what is valuable, i.e. what is *in fashion*, is subject to continual changes. Thus, values in aesthetic markets are unstable, but objects are stabilised in certain moments (Entwistle 2009) where certain looks, styles of writing, photography, models and styling are in fashion and become valuable. Aesthetic values, which are central to the production of a niche fashion magazine, are not free of economic calculations but constitute an aesthetic economy.

Status is central in understanding aesthetic market, as Aspers (2006) argues. Like Bourdieu's (1993a) division of the field of cultural production into large-scale and restricted production, Entwistle (2002, 2006) and Aspers (2006) identify co-existing aesthetic markets within fashion modelling, buying and fashion photography respectively. Aspers (2006) makes a distinction between high-fashion photography and low-fashion photography where the first represents art and the second money. Geared towards commercial value, commercial modelling involves shooting and modelling for a Pepsi world-wide campaign, catalogue work or working for large-scale magazines with little fashion status (Entwistle 2002). This economy is deemed low-status and contributing to it does not improve one's status as it is not respected in the industry and thus fails to promote and propel one's career. The other subsection of the aesthetic market is oriented to status and prestige through editorial work for high-fashion magazines and doing campaigns for high-fashion labels, and this economy is deemed high-status. Entwistle (2006), in her work on fashion buying in Selfridges, shows that buyers balance carefully between commercial brands and 'cutting edge', barely profitable high-fashion labels to ensure the right profile. Central to the internal logic of niche fashion magazines is the high status accorded to those with high fashion capital. This status may convert into fame (and possibly money, although this must be

disavowed, as discussed below) for those agents in the field who can secure high status. This division of the aesthetic market is attached to an 'art for art's sake' logic (Bourdieu 1993a: 36), which supports the belief in its uncommercial and therefore purer status.

Although he is writing about the subfield of restricted production of culture, Bourdieu's work can be utilised as it provides nuances to an understanding of high-status fashion work. According to Bourdieu (1993a), denial of economic capital is a common practice of the subfield of restricted production of culture, which is driven by peer and connoisseur recognition. Bourdieu terms this 'production-for-producers' (1993a: 46). The editors rate their success in terms of their display of fashion capital and acknowledgement by other members of the field. In fact, rather than mentioning the receiver as an actual reader, the reader is somewhat depersonalised and the editors seem more concerned with addressing and impressing 'the industry' as a whole. In other words, they produce it for themselves, for their peers and for recognition in the business. Aspers in his work on the aesthetic values in the market of fashion photography (2001: 15) also recognises that 'fashion editors of magazines orient themselves primarily to other fashion editors'.

Money Matters

Considering niche fashion magazines as a high-status good in which the aesthetic *is* the good, not something added on, is useful when analysing the economy of *DANSK*.

> No one makes magazines today because they think they are going to be rich, because then ... I'll say that straight away: forget that, that's not happening. It's a way of getting a creative outlet.
> *Camilla Bigler*

DANSK does not make a profit, a point that was made frequently during observation and interviews: 'No one bloody expects to make a living on a magazine' and 'You shouldn't make a magazine if you want to be rich'. As explained, this complex circuit of symbolic exchanges is maintained through the members of the field of fashion being willing to work free of charge. Hesmondhalgh, drawing on Miège, argues that work by freelance cultural intermediaries in 'the cultural industries is underpaid because of a permanent oversupply of artistic labour' (2002: 57). He goes on to show that many only work occasionally or take other jobs to back up their artistic labour. This is also true for the contributors of *DANSK*, as it does not provide a full-time job. As explored above, Aspers (2006) and Entwistle's (2002) findings on editorial high-fashion photography

and fashion modelling, the value exchange for conducting what is considered to be artistic work is status not money. Unpaid work for *DANSK* similarly supports the making of one's name, through which one can leave a mark, make a difference and potentially create a new position. *DANSK* thus acts as the emblem of its editors and other contributors who share the aspiration for status, recognition and distinction.

While Bigler argues above that magazines are not a moneymaking venture, but a way to express yourself creatively, their motivations are, as explored above, not disinterested or free of calculations on advancing in the field. But what economic calculations and structures inform the production? What seems a never-ending, spiralling process of acquiring fashion capital is also subject to different types of economic calculations.

Besides being a creative outlet, the editors make it clear that *DANSK* was also born to develop their international network, achieve creative respect with, get tickets to the international fashion shows and generate extra business for Style Counsel. As such, *DANSK* is used as a 'brand extension' (Dyson 2008) of Style Counsel. A physical way of displaying status and the acquisition of fashion capital is where one sits at the international fashion shows. Uffe Buchard says: 'It has something to do with honour, right. The problem is only when you sit third row you want to sit second row, and when you have the second row then you want front row. It never ends.' Seating illustrates clearly the hierarchy of fashion and how one's physical position displays status, credibility and seniority within the fashion crowd. Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) in their work on London fashion week examine how the spatial outline renders the power and status of the members of fashion. The embodied display of fashion capital, thus, marks where one 'sits' within the hierarchy of fashion.

Although *DANSK* is independent, which the editors insist on, it is attached to Style Counsel, the fashion advertising and production company, which is a viable business. The significance of this structure is that it allows the *DANSK* editors to move between their motivations for accumulating economic capital (Style Counsel) and symbolic capital (*DANSK*), and the two economies rub off on one another. *DANSK* lends symbolic capital to Style Counsel's brand, whose portfolio consists of fashion campaigns for less prestigious Danish fashion brands. Style Counsel in turn provides an established network from which advertisers are sourced. This dual organisation allows the producers to embrace the commercial establishment, via Style Counsel, and more daring 'fashion-forward' mediation via *DANSK*. The editors thus work within two different but interrelated economies. Similar physical separation of economy and cultural economy is found in fashion modelling, where commercial work is separated

from the model's more prestigious editorial work and images of commercial work are not included in the model's portfolio (Entwistle 2002). With *DANSK*, the different economies are not in opposition, but mutually reinforcing and relate to what Bourdieu calls 'consecrated avant-garde' (1993a: 104). He used this term to describe the state when producers of avant-garde, small-scale goods become endowed with high symbolic capital and grow old without losing their cool. While Bourdieu argues that the small avant-garde firm cannot become the big firm and vice versa, in the case of *DANSK* and many other niche fashion magazines, high symbolic capital alone is not sufficient but they need advertisers to run the magazine. Following Bourdieu the avant-garde's strategy is to renounce economic motivations, as shown by the above quotes, in the name of being different and making a name. Consecrated avant-garde is when cultural producers have become an establishment within the avant-garde. While *DANSK* functions on strategies of consecrated avant-garde, the editors still struggle to balance the quest for symbolic capital with making ends meet, a subject I return to later.

The total costs of making *DANSK* cannot be disclosed here. The paper quality, printing and binding are the most expensive parts of the production. For example the gilded paper edges that were hand painted on *The Perfect Issue* (issue 2, 2003) alone cost approximately DKR 180,000 (~ £ 21,510 as of 6 March 2009). The costs per issue are approximately DKR 48 (~£ 5.74 as of 6 March 2009). To make a profit the cover price must be approximately DKR 90, which is its Danish cover price. However, in the UK *DANSK*'s cover price is just £5. As of June 2008 the aim was to strengthen *DANSK*'s position in the American market (Los Angeles and New York), but in order to do so, and break into the international market more generally, the cover price had to be reduced in these markets as a way of selling more copies.

Just as models and designer outfits mark a magazine's status, photographers are key markers of fashion capital. While *DANSK* features a few acclaimed photographers with international careers such as Daniel Jackson, Andreas Sjödin, Mark Høm and Blaise Reutersward, its level of photographers does not lend as much kudos to its status as that of the top models featured. The reason is lack of funds:

> Believe you me, I've spoken to Lachlan [Bailey], and I know Laurie Bartley, you know ... he wants to [shoot for us]. They don't want pay, they just want their expenses covered. But a shoot in New York is just an entirely different economy than a shoot in Copenhagen. And besides, they are incredibly zealous about retouching. Having people they never met before retouching their pictures would never occur to them. And that costs. And that money, and I'm not saying you should make a magazine to get rich, becomes a question of priority each time.

> Sometimes we can afford to make the stories with Daniel Jackson but unfortunately we can't afford that each time.
> *Camilla Bigler*

While the new generation of top photographers, which Aspers calls 'high-status fashion photographers' (2006: 86), such as Lachlan Bailey and Laurie Bartley, might be interested in shooting for *DANSK*, the shoot and their especially requested retouchers cost a great deal more than *DANSK* can afford. This, according to the editors, prevents them from advancing their status and potential position-takings.

> It would be fantastic if one of the ten best photographers in the world would shoot for us, because that would elevate us.
> *Kim Grenaa*

Except for the pricier production skills (paper, coating, printing and binding), which are sourced externally, most contributors provide their expertise without charge or for a nominal sum. The model works for free, and is also sometimes booked and flown in in conjunction with a paid job for a Style Counsel client, which then pays the expenses. The clothes borrowed from the press office are sent to fashion shoots for free, but *DANSK* has to return them at its own expense and this can be very costly. Writers work for a symbolic payment and photographers rarely get more than their expenses covered. Models get high-status editorial work that enhances their portfolios. There are compensations for little or no pay; writers are sometimes treated to goodie bags of free cosmetic and beauty products, which are sent in abundance to the magazine for its beauty shoots. Contributors also sometimes draw on *DANSK*'s name to acquire fashion show tickets. Moreover, the *DANSK* editors also often offer contributors paid jobs with Style Counsel clients.

Part of *DANSK*'s aesthetic economy is the symbolic value and further work it generates for its contributors. The magazine is structured as a circuit of symbolic capital where services are exchanged for status. This, consequently, makes up one's fashion capital which can potentially be exchanged for economic capital, dependent on the acquired position, status and skills. The immediate reward lies in making one's name, acquiring a high degree of fashion capital and potentially landing a new position; it is an economy structured on position-taking. Most contributors use niche fashion magazine work as a flagship for their own ideas and as a place to build their portfolios, develop contacts and network, which eventually could lead to well-paid campaigns for

a prestigious fashion house for editorial models or editor positions for the writers. Fashion writer Susanne Madsen says:

> I'm paid DKR 1500 for a 2000 words feature that takes me 3 weeks to write and a phone call to ... when I interviewed Karen Elson and her band ... a two hour phone call to the US. (...) I can deduct that from tax, but that's just one of the things. And then I get paid DKR 1500. The money's not worth it, but that's not why ... I don't write for the money. It's my, how should I put it, it's my portfolio, it's my showcase, you see.
> *Susanne Madsen, at the time freelance writer now fashion features editor of DANSK*

As Madsen explains, money is not the motivation for writing as she is paid the equivalent of £179.32 (as of 6 March 2009) with which she has to cover a phone call to the US and three weeks of research. Instead she writes to build her CV and further her career:

> I would never have gotten *Flaunt* [American niche fashion magazine] if it weren't for *DANSK*. I sent them my features and as soon as I said I write for *DANSK* they were like 'wow, great, we'd like to see your things'. I use it as my showcase, that's for sure.

Madsen's quote demonstrates how the reward is the promise of career improvement. Susanne Madsen was later appointed fashion features editor, which led to her appointment as fashion features director. My work for *DANSK* led to a position as editor-in-chief of *DANSK Daily*, a fashion newspaper covering and reviewing Copenhagen Fashion Week. While editing *Dansk Daily* did not pay much, it offered me an improved position in the field from which new networks and potential new job ventures emerged. For instance, Dyhr.Hagen, which co-published *DANSK* and *DANSK Daily* with Style Counsel and with which I had worked closely both during fieldwork at *DANSK* and while working for *DANSK Daily*, offered me the position of fashion features editor of *FAT* Magazine, an art fashion magazine published in English with an international distribution. A detailed discussion on my position is included in the methodology in Chapter Three.

Advertising

While the above sections explored the aesthetic value and symbolic exchange involved in the making of *DANSK*, the following section briefly examines the economic profile and figures of *DANSK*'s advertising. Ads are the financial backbone of magazines, and

as with any other magazine, advertising shapes the contents of *DANSK*. Many scholars (see, for instance, Ferguson 1983; McCracken 1993) have criticised the commodified and promotional culture of women's magazines, but advertising remains the lifeblood of every commercial magazine – from car to motherhood magazines, and now even some newspapers. The question remains: how does it shape the content and how does it affect the reading experience? The latter question will be explored in the following chapter.

A relatively small portion of the content of niche fashion magazines is made up of ads. Advertisements, for instance comprised approximately 24 percent of *Vs*'s total content of its S/S 2009 issue and approximately 14 percent of the content of *Purple Fashion*'s S/S issue is ad pages. Compared to high-end women's fashion magazines, in which ads can take up to 60 percent of the content, ads only take up a small percentage of *DANSK*: 17 percent of the content of *Pet Power* (issue 13), 15 percent of *CPH Love* (issue 14) and 20 percent of *Evilism* (issue 15). *DANSK*'s low percentage of ads is an indicator of two things: first, the editors are not willing to compromise creative ideas because of commercial pressure from advertisers. Second, and more generally, unlike women's fashion titles, some niche fashion magazines have a harder time securing advertisers as they are less willing to enter advertising deals with less prestigious brands, i.e. brands endowed with a low degree of fashion capital, and furthermore they have a much smaller readership than women's fashion magazines, which means ads get less exposure. These circumstances reduce the amount of available advertisers. But as much as magazine editors prefer to exercise control of ads or covert ads, they need to survive and, thus, the production of many a niche fashion magazine relies on the balance of running a business without selling out.

DANSK's low percentage of ads also suggests an unstable ad flow and difficulty in attracting sufficient advertisers. At the time of the fieldwork *DANSK* had just entered an agreement with an external publishing house, Benjamin, to sell advertising. Benjamin has a portfolio of more commercial and mainstream magazine titles, and the collaboration was an attempt to try new methods of stabilising advertising sales. The reality was that the editors were still an active part of the sales, and, thus, the collaboration was not successful and was discontinued eight months later. For instance, during the layout stages of issue 13, *Pet Power*, the executive editor Rachael Morgan told me there was a shortage of ads and they had just a week to secure the budget. This was the responsibility of Benjamin, but as Benjamin had failed to get enough ads the editors called up one designer whose clothes were featured in the magazine and asked the designer to place an ad in exchange for exposure. This is an example of the various

types of economic negotiations between advertisers and magazine producers, and in this particular case the editors were in a position of control of the negotiation, as it is an accepted practice to ask fashion labels to pay for favourable editorial exposure. Usually, the reverse circumstances apply where advertisers request additional editorial coverage in addition to their allocated advertising space. The general tendency is that advertising exposure of the brand is not always deemed sufficient, and the marketing staff often negotiate further editorial exposure in return, which is usually in the form covert ads and favourable product reviews.

As a reflection of their futile collaboration with Benjamin, which failed to secure more international advertisers, the ads placed in *DANSK* during this period (January-August 2007), of which many are for Danish brands, lend less fashion kudos to *DANSK* than ads for international high-fashion brands. How this affects the reading of *DANSK* will be explored in Chapter Seven. In an over-saturated fashion magazine market, the competition for advertisers is fierce. To survive, which means to attract advertisers, magazines need to have a strong and distinct profile in order to stand out and secure ad revenue. The shortage of advertisers for *DANSK* may thus be understood not only in relation to the unproductive collaboration with Benjamin, but also as a reflection of *DANSK*'s editorial profile in relation to other niche fashion magazines that belong to the consecrated avant-garde, such as *Self Service*, *Purple* and *Another Magazine*. Despite its international format, *DANSK* has cheaper ad rates than its international equals. *Purple Fashion* for instance sells its back cover for 20,000 euros,[iv] in *Self Service* it is sold for 21,200 euros[v] and in *Another Magazine* it goes for 43,574 euros.[vi] These prices are indicative, as discounts are often offered when advertisers commit to several issues. The status and position of these magazines in the field are reflected in their exclusive and expensive ad prices, which endow them with economic capital that in all probability, unlike *DANSK*, allows them to refuse advertisers unfit for their profile. *DANSK*, at the time of research, did not advertise on its back cover, so there is no available figure to compare with. *DANSK*'s most lucrative space is the first double-page spread, which is page two and three of the magazine (counting the cover as page one). This costs 14,500 euros,[vii] but various types of discounts are also offered. This is low even compared to other niche fashion magazines: *Self Service*'s opening double page is priced at 25,350 euros and the same in *Another* costs 32,756 euros. An explanation of *DANSK*'s lower rates is that although it is published internationally and in English, it is subject to specific advertising structures: international brands allocate budget pools to specific markets. This means that *DANSK* competes with Danish/Scandinavian magazines for international advertisers and not with Paris, London or New York-based

publications, which compete for bigger allocated pools. This means that the Hermès or Dior advertisements come from Danish/Scandinavian budgets, which are not as large as Italian or English pools. A strategy of attracting advertisers is the cheaper ad rate. A way to move beyond this limitation is to open a *DANSK* office in another market, such as London. Since the time of fieldwork three changes have taken place in attempts to improve *DANSK*'s economy. As of issue 20, *The Honesty* issue, *DANSK* released its back cover for advertising, which is the most lucrative placement as it is the one that gives the most brand exposure. It has entered an agreement with Chanel committing for cover ads for three issues. In addition to its Copenhagen office, Style Counsel has opened an office in central London to which *DANSK* also is affiliated. And lastly, as of issue 21, *Relax, DANSK* became a biannual publication as opposed to a quarterly one. These are all strategies for improving their economy as well as, in the case of opening a London-based office, gaining a better footing in the international market.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to answer the questions: what values drives the editors? What kind of economies and values inform the selection of content and the production of a niche fashion magazine?

DANSK is an aesthetic good within the subfield of restricted cultural production. As such its producers are driven by status differentiation, recognition from other producers and an 'art for art's sake' logic. Its production relies on freelance culture where contributors, editors and producers share the belief in the reward of status and position-takings. Payment and economies do not rest directly on monetary exchange, but on the accumulation of fashion capital, which provides status and, potentially, new positions.

The *DANSK* editors use a set of shared codes to display both their own degree of fashion capital and the magazine's: exclusivity and timing. High-status models and photographers and key collection items act as vehicles to secure the former, and news which has not been circulated too much in other publications constitutes the latter. These vehicles, which are markers of fashion capital, are dependant on peers recognising them as valuable for the editors to acquire new positions, such as a better seat at the fashion shows, early access to key collection items or work with more high-status photographers. Underlying the selection of models, clothes, photographers and news is a 'collective taste' (Blumer 1969), which is produced by the wish to be in fashion. The tastes in fashion change continually and so does the aesthetic value of

models, clothes and photographers. The editors' specific aesthetic filter of 'eye candy' may be rhetorically and aesthetically different to members of the field, but it needs to be recognised as valuable by other members of the field of fashion to constitute fashion capital. Furthermore, the editors need to adjust their 'eye candy' to the ever-changing tastes in fashion to retain their fashion capital.

While *DANSK* is not a moneymaking business, the motivation for producing it, and I would argue for producing niche fashion magazines more generally, is that it constitutes both a 'disinterested' creative outlet and an 'interested' means of acquiring fashion capital and potentially become part of the consecrated avant-garde. Achieving the latter goal would allow the editors to move more freely and attract more high-status advertisers and high-status photographers. Additionally, their interested motivation for making *DANSK* is that it renders a creative display, which can be used to attract more clients for Style Counsel.

These finding are not separated from either the textual qualities or the reading and consumption of *DANSK*. What is valuable to its editors, or in Stuart Hall's terminology the encodings of aesthetic value, is also shared by its readers. While this chapter has sought to explore the production side of the circuit of niche fashion magazine culture, the next chapter explores how readers read, consume, interpret the codes and make sense of niche fashion magazines.

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[i] Danish 'lækker'

[ii] While producers of other magazines follow the same logic of model exclusivity, they may be more active in 'making' a model rather than following the chart on models.com.

[iii] A 'new face' refers to brand-new models who are usually rather young and do not have much modelling experience – some only have a couple of Polaroid images or test pictures in their portfolio.

[iv] *Purple Fashion* media kit 2008

[v] *Self Service* media kit 2008

[vi] *Another Magazine* media kit 2008

[vii] *DANSK* media kit 2008

CHAPTER 7: 'SPEAKING TO THE ALREADY CONVERTED'

Readers, Consumption of Exclusivity and Reproduction of the Codes

As a continuation of the existing work on magazine readers (Lewis 1997; Crane 1999; Hermes 1997; Jackson *et al.* 2001), this chapter focuses on the readers' own meaning-makings and the cultural dispositions that inform and shape them. Drawing on 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with eleven female and nine male readers of *DANSK* Magazine, it explores how readers make sense of niche fashion magazines by engaging with their symbolic value, which involves models, clothes, ads and how readers understand *DANSK* through specific codes of 'Danishness'. Consumption involves symbolic, material and cultural consumption, which are interrelated parts of consumption. The symbolic work of consumption, however, should not be seen as isolated from the physical features of the material objects, which is the focus of the next chapter. What unites them is that both the material culture of the object and the symbolic appropriation of it are work of consumption that functions as social communication between readers. Furthermore, following du Gay's *et al.*'s (2003) circuit of culture approach, consumption is just one aspect of how an object becomes meaningful, and consumption is, thus, not separated from the production and representation phases; as shown below, these phases are in fact overlapping and interrelated. Before I examine the symbolic consumption of readers, I briefly discuss approaches to reading and attempt to define magazine reading.

What is reading?

> A key dilemma for the fashion industry is that while millions enjoy looking at these images on the page or on the screen, there is no direct relation between looking and actually consuming.
> McRobbie (1998: 155)

As Angela McRobbie points out, the relationship between looking, and I would add reading, and actual consumption of the products advertised is not necessarily direct. Reading and looking at magazines are part of consumption in the sense that they are meaning-making practices. While both reading and looking are primarily conducted individually, consumption of the magazine and meaning-makings are shaped by social reproduction of shared values. Corrigan (1997: 32) argues that 'consumption communicates social meaning, and is the site of struggles over social distinction'. This approach is useful when interpreting how readers make meaning of niche fashion magazines. As will become clear, readers use magazines to

accumulate knowledge that in turn is used as a marker of social status and definition of self-identity in relation to others.

Readers employ what could be called different registers of readings, which are based both on context and on levels of attentiveness given to the magazine. These registers involve reading in one's home, reading publicly, standing up, sitting down, reading from the back, reading from cover to cover, browsing, flicking through randomly, reading with a specific focus, looking at images and reading the text. These different registers are informed by the different conditions, such as private or public reading, which affect what is looked at and how the magazine is read and consequently how meaning is produced. Talking to readers is invaluable as their interpretation of reading can tell us about discursive communities involved the reader cultures.

As argued in Chapter Four, how one makes sense of and reads a text is dependent on the genre in question, which functions as a form of paradigmatic contract between the maker and the receiver of the text that helps construct meaning. Through one of the above registers of reading readers consume magazines, which fulfil different purposes. Moeran (2006a: 725) argues that the purpose of high-fashion magazines like *Elle, Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* is 'to inform readers of the latest fashions, of who is wearing what in the entertainment world and where they may find the clothes shown in its pages every month'. While there is also a functional purpose in reading niche fashion magazines, they form part of readers' complex social practices, centring on social differentiation, which seem much more significant to readers' niche fashion magazine usage.

Before I turn to the analysis, it is useful to outline briefly how reading and readers have been approached theoretically. Literary theories of reading focus on the relationship between the text and the reading, and meaning is sought within this axis. Within the German strand of literary reception, the work of Hans-Robert Jauss is known as Aesthetics of Reception (Jauss in Rice and Waugh 1997). Jauss offers a post- Gadamerian hermeneutical theory of reading as a process that brings into play various horizons, perspectives and understandings used at different stages by the reader. Understanding a text is rooted in history and previous reading experiences, and shaped according to the text's genre. The text evokes 'the horizons of expectations and rules familiar from other texts, which are then varied, corrected, changed or just reproduced' (Jauss in Rice and Waugh 1997: 83). The artistic nature of literary work is determined by the reader's response to it, and Jauss believes the reader's experiences run *a priori* to the birth of the work. New reader horizons occur when there is a distance between the horizon of expectations of the text and the literary work, which can result in a 'horizon change', as the experience overrides the

familiar experience or articulates a whole new one, creating an 'aesthetic distance' (Jauss in Rice and Waugh 1997: 84). New experiences acquired through aesthetic distance which result in a horizon change then become a familiar horizon in a future aesthetic experience. Thus, reading can potentially generate new perceptions and new horizons, but when the distance between the horizon of expectations and the work is insignificant, the reception passes without change; instead it fulfils and confirms the expectations of the conventions of the genre.

Another approach is found within Roland Barthes' (1979) semiotic work. Barthes rejects the idea that the text contains meaning in itself. In *The Death of the Author* (1979a) Barthes argues that the meaning of the text is not prearranged by the author, but released by readers in the process of reading. Extending his dissolution of the authoritative author, Barthes (1995) later distinguishes between different kinds of texts: the 'writerly text', in which the reader participates actively in the process of making meaning, and a 'readerly text', which restricts the reader to passive reading. With Barthes, the realisation of the open text requires a competent reader who can engage freely with demanding, modernist texts. Underlying his work is the idea that the reader is not the receiver of the text, but its producer. Barthes' (post-structuralist) conceptions of reading completely disregard the idea that textual constituents promote certain readings. A more apt approach is that of Morley (1992), as reviewed in Chapter Two, who argues, like Hall (1996), that while media texts contain more than one reading, they are not open to any interpretation. While Morley's work is about television, and specifically the current affairs series *Nationwide*, his ideas can be utilised to make sense of the reading of niche fashion magazines. Morley argues that headlines, speaker commentary and captions, which he calls 'direction' or 'closures' promotes 'preferred or dominant readings' (1992: 84). Unlike Barthes, who focuses on individual reading, Morley argues that readings reflect the membership of a group or subculture, as they share 'cultural codes' (1992: 54).

Drawing on this brief overview of definitions and approaches to reading and reader positions, I approach reading as textual interpretation and readers as semi-autonomous meaning-makers who, through textual direction such as genre and styles of photography and writing, construct meanings, which also reflect their social-cultural dispositions. Informed by their shared understanding of magazine codes, prompted by 'directive closures' (Morley 1992: 22) and their 'horizons of expectations' (Jauss in Rice and Waugh 1997: 83) of the niche fashion magazine genre, meaning is socially formed by the *DANSK* readers' shared cultural dispositions. Furthermore, readers do not assume one position but many, and, thus, at times contradicting or negotiated readings are made.

Readership Boundaries

Bearing in mind the above definition on reading and reader positions, I will now examine how readers regard and define themselves and how they consume niche fashion magazines. As outlined in Chapter Three, the informants are readers already acquainted with *DANSK*. Furthermore, through their professions they are involved in cultural production – many specifically in fashion – and thus many of them have contributed to various aspects of fashion magazine production. Existing work (Ballaster *et al.* 1991; Moeran 2006a) has pointed out how magazines address two readerships: readers and advertisers, and in this particular case these two groups of readers coincide. This corresponds with Muggleton's (2000) definition of the niche press as a medium in which producers and consumers of subculture are interchangeable. Readers, as such, are also cultural intermediaries.

Like its producers, the readers of *DANSK* read a great many magazines and participate in many magazine cultures across genres from gossip magazines such as *Grazia* and *Heat* to women's fashion magazines such as *Marie Claire* and *Vogue* and fanzines and niche magazines such as *Butt* and *A Magazine*. Their overall fashion media consumption is vast and includes magazines, fashion sites, style blogs and international newspaper coverage of fashion. Readers read different magazines for various reasons, clearly distinguishing what the different genres bring them. One reader said she reads about 50 different magazines a week, which sounds like an overstatement, but it might not be, as she, like most readers, does not always distinguish between reading and looking. Instead, reading is often a visual practice, and only a few readers actually address the written texts or the magazine journalism. The same reader said reading magazines 'is like visual food', something she must do to get stimuli for her job as a fashion designer for a high-fashion brand[i]. The readership sample thus represents fashion literates who are knowledgeable about fashion and magazine genre distinctions and also consume fashion and lifestyle media rapidly and in abundance. Their reading is largely related to their work, and magazines are used to get inspiration and to find out what people working in fashion are doing. On women's magazines, Joke Hermes (1997: 14) argues that they do not create audiences with strong narrative interest or cult followings. The very opposite is true of niche fashion magazines because certain titles, depending on the readers' aesthetic preferences, are viewed as required reading.

> It's almost like a magazine of magazines, or a magazine for those who are already converted. And that's what's problematic about it, people have already converted and they already know all the stuff or a lot of this stuff.
> *Amber*

The boundary of *DANSK*'s readership is restricted and somewhat elitist. Reflecting upon *DANSK*'s readership, one reader said 'it's preaching to the already converted'. Drawing on a religious reference, this quote recalls Ferguson's (1983) comparison of women's magazines to a religious cult. While Ferguson's reader is hypothetical and reduced to a passive receiver of required femininity mediated via dominant capitalist and patriarchal codes, this reader uses the religious analogy to show that *DANSK*'s codes are exclusive and can only be understood by those already in-the-know. Her interpretation suggests that readers essentially believe the magazine to be a marker of fashion leaders and followers. Following the religious analogy she implies *DANSK* is not missionary in a pursuit to recruit or convert more fashionistas, but is only interested in those who are already leaders and who already believe in the magazine and its exclusive discourse. Her interpretation also reminds us of the insider/outsider distinction as accounted for in research on subcultures and their boundaries in relation to mainstream culture (Hebdige 1979; Muggleton 2000; Thornton 1995). Via their position as cultural intermediaries, the *DANSK* readership is made up of insiders who already understand the internal self-referential codes of fashion, as they are professionals who have internalised the visual and journalistic codes of niche fashion. When asked, most readers assume that *DANSK* is only read by people in the fashion industry, as it does not give 'an easy access to outsiders', as one reader put it. This shows that readers make clear distinctions between themselves as insiders and outsiders who cannot find their way in. They also argue that outsiders engage with magazines as consumer help:

> Niels: I think my mom who reads *Alt for Damerne* (Danish women's magazine) and *Sirene* (Danish girl's magazine) and stuff like that, would feel completely alienated by this.
> Ane: Why is that?
> Niels: Because there's no 'How to look like a million' pages. Well, there isn't 'this month it's this it-bag'. There's nothing for her to relate to, because how do you handle this other than just enjoying the pictures. It needs to bring her something. When she has seen a magazine, it needs to bring her something or has taught her something. That can be 'next month it's pink and purple' and nothing more than that. And also the feature on 'Susanne, her four kids and her dog', right. This doesn't do that.

> Ann: I don't think my sister who's fairly interested in fashion would be attracted to this magazine.
> Ane: Why not?
> Ann: Because she couldn't see the immediate use of it. Well, I think she would want magazines like *Woman* and *Costume* (Danish women's magazines), which she would feel she could go out and put together an outfit from more directly. In her job she doesn't need a coat like that (purple quilted coat by Alexander McQueen, p. 183 in issue 15, 'Evilism'). I think she would say 'but I would never wear that!' Even though she's 34 years, she's young and works as a curator in a museum, she's also just a mom-of-3 and needs a manual she can shop by. It targets people who already know about fashion or are

interested in it. Even *Vogue* is too advanced for her sometimes, right. That says a lot.

Image 11. 'La Cocotte', Issue 15, Evilism, Autumn 2007

Many readers describe how relatives, friends or colleagues would not understand the magazine in the way they think *DANSK* is intended to be understood. Their interpretations suggest that outside readers miss its encoded meaning, which implies the way to understand the magazine, and to read it 'accurately', is to unload the intentional meaning of the magazine. This refers back to Hall (1996: 134) and Morley's (1992: 84) concept of 'preferred reading'. This involves readers' full acceptance and reproduction of the text's codes as produced by the editors. Certainly, there are multiple positions of reading, as reading is a complex process and meaning occurs on many levels, whether or not the reader understands, or accepts, the encoded meaning. However, readers imply that the intention of the magazine is not to offer shopping guidance or consumer help; instead it became obvious that they use it as a provider of fashion references and mediator of fashion aesthetic. Essentially, the magazine acts as a vehicle that the readers can use to match their knowledge with that of the producers. Thus, by claiming to 'get' *DANSK*, readers confirm their membership of the magazine culture and match their

sense-making to that of the producers. While it is true that niche fashion magazines are both produced and read by people engaged in fashion or cultural production, what most clearly materialises out of the readers' sense-making is how the magazine is used as an intermediary between themselves as insiders and other initiated insiders. As an intermediary, *DANSK* acts as a conduit of shared values, information and knowledge between the producers and consumers. Or as Callon puts it: 'something passing between actors which defines the relationship between them' (Callon, cited in Dant 1999: 124). The magazine is the textual glue that ties the producers and consumers together. Furthermore, the intermediary relationship between producers and consumers is defined by their shared valuing of, for instance, exclusivity and *out-of-reachness*, which I will explore below. Pursuing this, Bourdieu's (1993a) division of the field of cultural production into two subfields is relevant here. Not only the production, but also the consumption of *DANSK*, sits within the field of restricted production, where the logic of what Bourdieu calls 'production-for-producers' (1993a: 46) applies, which implies production for a restricted audience of connoisseurs. The satisfaction of production does not lie in a critical mass of readers, as in the case of widely circulated mainstream women's magazines, but in the acknowledgement and consumption by other members of the field. If this is the criterion for success, *DANSK*, judging by the sample readers, has succeeded in attracting connoisseur readers who use it to assert and strengthen their field membership.

Use of Magazines

While readers use *DANSK* as 'visual food', with which to get professional inspiration, the magazine is also used to acquire competence, which is revealed as readers set into motion their whole knowledge of fashion when making sense of it. Readers employ language and jargon specific to the field of fashion (see, for instance, Barthes 1985, on the language of the magazines' written text), which involves namedropping photographers, models, fashion brands, gossip about the movers and shakers, what they deem cool and what they don't. Bringing into play their pre-understandings readers also compare *DANSK* with other magazine experiences and their 'horizons of expectations' (Jauss in Rice and Waugh 1997: 83) based on fashion experiences and references: it was deemed 'very Meisel', (referring to the style of the American top photographer Steven Meisel); a 'discount version of *Numéro*' (a French fashion magazine); *DANSK*'s retouched and polished style reminds some of the French niche fashion magazine *Citizen K*, and its Scandinavian aesthetic is also compared to the now-folded Norwegian niche fashion magazine

Fjords. Via the interviews a whole map of niche fashion magazines and the various groupings and hierarchies materialises. Readers engage with their magazine references and in doing so they are indirectly placing *DANSK* in the glossier subsection of niche fashion magazines where the magazines mentioned also belong. (Please see Chapter Four as well as Appendix A for a mapping of the field.) Readers' valuations of the magazine are shaped by their fashion references and by their own position in the field, which involves practice, experience in and knowledge of key producers, styles and attitudes as well as the fashion aesthetic and its logic of change.

Readers strengthen their references by their vast fashion magazine and media use. The magazines as well as their references bestow fashion capital on them (Entwistle and Rocamora 2006). As also outlined in Chapter Six, this refers to the specific acquired competence (knowledge, practice, habitus) that members in the field of fashion can use as a resource in order to position themselves, and compete, in the field. Fashion capital involves knowledge of fashion and acceptance of its system of constant change, of other key players and the display of fashionable appearance and high self-maintenance. *DANSK* is used to build readers' fashion capital, and in assessing *DANSK* they bring into play their knowledge of the styles of fashion, other magazines and producers. *DANSK* is thus a tool to gain fashion capital, and at the same time the readers employ their fashion capital in making sense of it. Often readers talk about how their work relates to *DANSK* and whether or not there is an aesthetic match between their style of work and *DANSK*'s style. They use it and other similar magazines to position themselves and acquaint themselves with the various styles and the movers and shakers of the field. For instance, a photographer, a stylist and a writer talk about how having their work in *DANSK* would be an important stepping stone for furthering their career, which implies that reading niche fashion magazines is also used by readers to assess how their work sits within the field and how they can market themselves to gain a better position. McRobbie (1998) similarly accounts for this in her work on the British fashion industry, illustrating how style magazines such as *The Face* and *i-D* were used as a creative showcase for new talent which helped launch stylists, photographers and models' international careers. Ellis notes:

> It's not just *DANSK*, it's any magazine that I read, I suppose I just look at them more on a professional level and I think about how it would suit my work, how it's gonna project me in the industry, how it might raise my editorial profile as a stylist, how they are gonna lay out or make a story I'm going to do look in the magazine.
> *Ellis*

The above quote suggests that the consumption of niche fashion magazines is based on professional assessment and aesthetic identification, which are shaped by readers' fashion capital. Magazines are used as a point of orientation for their relation and position and how they can advance in the field. Thompson and Haytko's work on the discourse of fashion consumers shows that through 'self-identity construction' (1997: 21) consumers use fashion as social markers in relation to their social group. Some of their respondents also talked about how they used magazines to create an individual look. The discourses that *DANSK* readers employ reveal a similar aspect, only their self-identity construction is related to their profession, not their personal dress, and how they use magazines to stand out professionally and improve their career prospects.

Logic of the Field

What knowledge and values make up readers' fashion capital? It is shaped by the logic of the field of fashion and more particularly the subfield of niche fashion where high fashion meets style cultures. Fashion capital consists precisely of knowing and understanding the mix of exclusivity and connoisseurship of high fashion and style cultures. The following paragraphs discuss and define what makes up the logic of the field of fashion and in turn readers' fashion capital.

Niche fashion magazines embrace both expensive, high fashion with its luxury and heritage as well as style cultures that challenge traditional aesthetics and magazine conventions with bricolage in art direction and styling. They are interrelated, as they both belong to the field of fashion, but draw on different strategies of exclusivity: the first is that of elitist privilege and the second is that of rebellion manifested in youth and style cultures. This brings to mind Bourdieu's (1993b) analogy of haute couture with high culture, as outlined in Chapter One. According to Bourdieu, the dynamics of the field of fashion are powered by a constant struggle between the establishment, such as, in the 1970s, Dior and Balmain, and the newcomers, such as Scherrer and Paco Rabanne, where the establishment acts on 'conservation strategies' wanting to preserve and continue and the newcomers act on 'subversion strategies' wanting to revolutionise and radicalise (Bourdieu [1974] 1993b: 133). The establishment holds the most power and the newcomers need to overrule the values of the establishment in order to legitimise their values and gain recognition, and this constant struggle is one of the dynamics of the field of fashion. While useful in explaining the dynamics of the field of fashion, Bourdieu's dialectics of the old and the new, the establishment and the newcomers, right and left, seem dated when seen in a contemporary context.

Caroline Evans' (1997a) writing on the complexities of subcultures is useful, as she challenges the dialectics of subculture and dominant culture. She argues that subculture cannot simply be defined as resistance to hegemony since that implies that culture, including subculture and dominant culture, is fixed when it is in fact mobile and fluid. According to Evans, dominant culture has co-opted the codes of subculture and as a result subcultures are more about 'finding a sense of community than about rebellion' (Evans 1997a: 171). In terms of Evans's argument, a clear example of the conflation of the dialectics of dominant culture and counterculture is the young directional designers who are responsible for revamping long-established fashion houses with edgier profiles, such as Nicolas Ghesquière for Balenciaga, Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton and John Galliano for Dior. Similarly, porn chic (pornography dressed up in fashion) has been co-opted by the mainstream, and bare breasts, open mouths and sexually suggestive posing are not just found in *Vogue* but have become common advertising tools in the wider culture. Contemporary fashion seems less about either/or opposition than about mixing styles, histories and references – regardless of their seemingly high or low status. This is the result of larger societal changes that involve legitimisation of popular culture as well as faster-moving trends, which is clearly visible in fashion. Niche fashion magazines combine the heritage of high fashion with challenging, innovative aesthetic and anti-establishment discourse. Niche fashion magazines are thus based on a principle of exclusivity informed equally by tradition and innovation, just as the wider field of fashion. Readers have internalised this logic via their field membership and their habitus – and their fashion capital is based on this knowledge.

Evans's (1997a) idea of subcultures functioning as a means to 'finding a sense of community' is useful in revealing how niche fashion magazines help construct a community of insiders, a reader culture. Corrigan (1997) similarly argues that the characteristics of women's magazines, via the 'recipe' format, are the sense of imaginary community. While niche fashion magazines are different from women's magazines in that they mediate fashion through exclusive codes and they address both women and men, they both offer communities, yet very different ones. One of the approaches used to define culture in Chapter One, Benedict Anderson's concept 'imagined community' (1991: 6), is useful here. Readers may never meet but feel connected through 'the image of their communion' with other likeminded readers who also 'get' the exclusive style of fashion writing and fashion photography featured in *DANSK* and other niche fashion magazines. This way niche fashion magazines function as a reassurance of membership to already initiated members who understand the exclusive and elitist codes. I return in the

next chapter to the idea of readers constructing a sense of community and belonging through appropriation of the material culture of the magazine.

Inside the Box - Collective Fashion Consensus

While readers' acquired fashion capital shapes how they assess magazines according to the principles of the field of fashion, readers have different assessments and plural readings of *DANSK*. The various fashion spreads and ads that to some are beautiful and interesting are to others in bad taste and dull. 'Strong', 'avant-garde', 'out-of-reach', 'fun', 'elitist', 'beautiful', 'messy', 'edgy', 'personal approach', 'surprising' and 'realistic' are some of the words readers use in addressing what they considered important in niche fashion magazines. Judging by the words readers use, they demand heterogeneity and expect magazines to show different styles and images that reinvent fashion. One reader says that she wants the magazines to 'push the limits for what fashion is'. It is considered positive for niche magazines to be individual, and not like other magazines (something most magazines across the board would brand themselves on), show the work of new designers or photographers and take chances showing taste-challenging styles. Readers approach *DANSK* and similar niche titles expecting a high degree of 'fashion forwardness', newness, exclusivity and change, which essentially ropes in a very limited culture of fashion literate readers. While this applies to fashion in general, the distinction between women's fashion magazines and the specific case of *DANSK*, and other niche fashion magazines, is based on fashion literacy:

> Johan: I don't think that if you compare the text in *DANSK* with *i-D*'s it demands the same kind of previous knowledge. *i-D* writes incredibly esoterically where you need the craziest references to decode what they say. You can quite easily understand the text but its many dimensions are lost upon you if you don't know the fashion world, right. But I don't think *DANSK* demands the same [high] Lix formula[ii].
> Ane: Why not?
> Johan: Maybe because *i-D* demands that from their readers, right. I think it can be flattering to the reader that, you know 'if I can manage to decode this then I must be part of the good crowd'. It's a bit like what kind of people read Dostoyevsky and what kind of people read the Kitty books, right. You read the difficult fashion magazines because you want to belong to that crowd.
>
> You feel like you are part of kind of a club because you think 'very few people could read this magazine and understand any of it with all these names that are being dropped'.
> *Richard* on *10 Magazine*

Readers are readers in two interrelated senses: they are respondents in my fieldwork as *DANSK* readers and they are, qua their jobs, reading it as experts working in the field of fashion and image cultures. Brian Moeran (2006a), referring to fashion magazines as 'multiple audience property' (Moeran 2006a: 727), maintains a distinction between readers as readers and readers as advertisers. While such a distinction may be useful in understanding mass-scale fashion magazines, it does not apply to readers of *DANSK* or the wider field of niche fashion magazines. Via their jobs, they are working professionally with fashion, and one reader had moreover previously advertised in *DANSK*. Drawing on the wider field of niche fashion magazines, such as *i-D* and *10*, in making sense of *DANSK*, they are mostly engaging with a professional reading foregrounding their field membership. The first particularly knowledgeable reader, Johan, believes that to fully understand the magazine is a difficult process that demands previous knowledge, because its meaning is not explicitly stated and not easily accessed. Central to this interpretation is the readers' degree of activity in participating in the text and production of meaning. In his structuralist work on literature, Roland Barthes (1995; see also Milner and Browitt 2002) is the advocate of 'writerly texts', a label that refers to difficult modern texts that are co-authored by the readers, in contrast with passively consumed 'readerly texts'. With writerly texts the readers are forced to become writers themselves, or to 'enter into an active collaboration with the author, who obliges them to construe meanings and develop the text's significances for themselves' (Stevenson 1992: 216). Writerly texts give *jouissance*, bliss, to the readers. The jouissance gained by an active reading of 'difficult' niche fashion magazines is the feeling of having earned and asserted one's membership of the magazine culture as a demonstration of one's fashion capital and demarcation from uninformed outsiders. Furthermore, central to Johan and Richard's interpretations is that they imply that the right way to read the magazine is to unload its 'preferred reading' through understanding as many codes and references as possible and reproducing the text's discourses.

Bearing in mind the readers' specialist consumption, through their cultural intermediary work and by 'getting' the codes and discourses of the magazine, another significant aspect of magazine consumption is that of self-identity and how the magazine becomes an extension of the readers' selves. Processes of self-extension occur in different ways. Drawing on Sartre, Russell Belk (1988) shows that a way for objects to become part of oneself is to know them. In relation to Johan and Richard's assertion of field membership through their knowing the magazine codes and references, the magazine becomes instrumental to their self-identity. Through knowledge of the objects, niche fashion magazines and their aesthetic, cultural and

historic references become an extension of the readers. I return in detail to the idea of self-identity in Chapter Eight.

Belk (1988) recognises that it is through shared consumption symbols that one expresses and defines group membership. Symbols such as niche fashion magazines are instrumental in identifying group membership and define the group self. Magazines thus function as totemic objects that support the feeling of membership and shared values. Merging this approach with the Bourdieuian concept of fashion capital, magazines are understood collectively as part of the logic of the field in which fashion capital is a key resource in defining one's membership. Understanding the codes of difficult niche magazines such as *i-D* or *10* demonstrates social distinction, one's degree of fashion capital and one's place in the fashion hierarchy.

Rules of the Doxa

While criticism towards *DANSK*, other titles and fashion in general, is recurrent in the interviews, it is directed from inside the field of fashion, not outside it. Bourdieu (1993b), in his structural approach to the field of haute couture fashion, explains how field membership involves accepting the values of the field, its beliefs, not overthrowing them, and as a result the values are naturalised. The internal struggle, such as readers criticising *DANSK* and positioning it against other niche titles, can, following Bourdieu, only 'destroy the hierarchy but not the game itself' (1993b: 134). Their practices and sense making is shaped by the doxa, which is the practical knowledge of the field's understood rules of the game, the implicit rules that are constantly reproduced and left unchallenged. Bourdieu (1977) uses the notion of doxa to describe what is socially taken for granted, what appears to be natural that 'goes without saying because it comes without saying' (Bourdieu 1977: 5). As a result of their internalised doxa, readers do not question the values of fashion, but reproduce them by participating in the game as 'players' (Bourdieu 1993b: 133) familiar with the stakes of the field of fashion.

Readers may disagree about aesthetic preferences, but they do so from an internal position. This illustrates clearly the boundaries between the insiders to the fashion world and the outsider position from which the fashion codes, as displayed in *DANSK*, make little sense or are subject to criticism. Readers are engaged in this specific fashion culture without challenging or questioning its aesthetics and non-explanatory mediation of fashion, and readers do not attempt to distance themselves from the magazines or the field. While some criticise *DANSK*'s style, they do not object to its fundamental logic of exclusivity, change and

connoisseurship. Particularly, out of the readers' discourse three vehicles emerged as important markers of exclusivity: clothes, models and ads. Unlike Crane's (1999) respondents, *DANSK* readers do not talk about it being problematic that the depicted clothes might be too expensive or the models represent unreachable or unhealthy body ideals. They want them to be out of reach. As they are members of the field of fashion, their habitus is shaped by its values of expensive clothes worn by young, tall and thin women and men and these are therefore naturalised and left unchallenged. In fact, most readers have fashionable bodies – they are dressed fashionably and the majority are slim and body conscious. They are concerned with whether or not the clothes featured represent the best from the new collections, the key pieces, which they have already seen either by attending the show or online. They talk about clothes in relation to the styling, the style of photography and retouching. If a key outfit has already been shown in other magazines before it reaches the pages of *DANSK*, readers are aware that this is because the press offices responsible for lending clothes to magazines considered other magazines more important than *DANSK*. This has a negative effect on its status.

The represented body image is addressed in relation to the 'coolness' of the model, if s/he is right for that story or if a model has been overexposed. *DANSK* has always consolidated its status by featuring many international top models. However, in reaction to a fashion spread, a reader exclaimed: 'Vlada, she is out now!' Referring to the Russian top model Vlada Roslyakova in one of the editorials ('The Shining' in *Pet Power*, issue 13, pp. 162-175). One needs only to check the latest ready-to-wear shows online to see that Vlada is indeed still very sought-after. This quote, however, demonstrates three aspects of how readers engage with the models[iii]: newness and change of models are deemed important, they are familiar with model names and models form part of the magazine's fashion capital. If the model is deemed passé it then affects the magazine status.

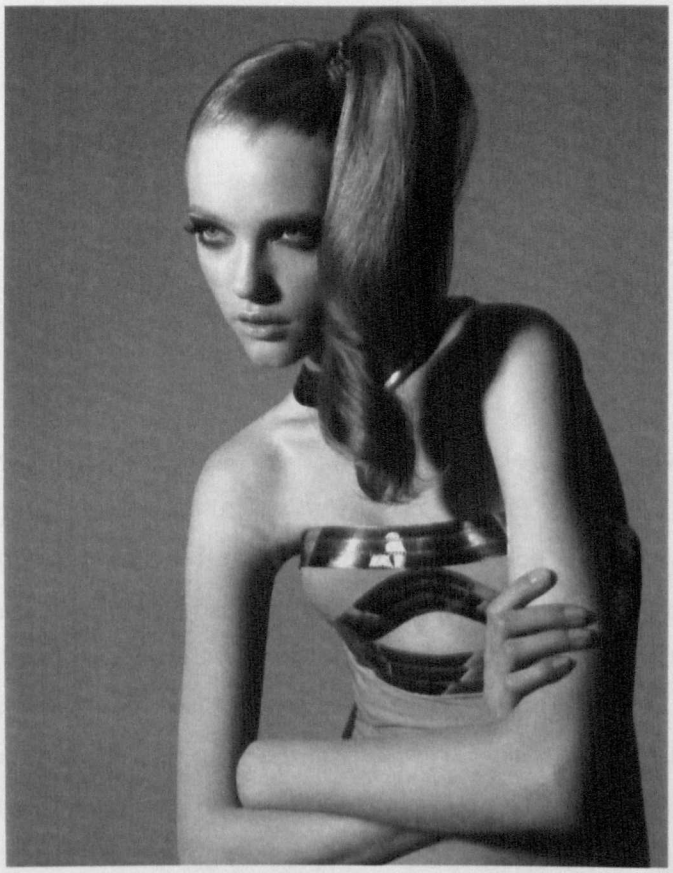


Image 12. 'The Shining', Issue 13, *Pet Power*, 2007

Ad(ding) Value

> I take them more seriously, because they have Burberry and Gucci. It shows that they approve of *DANSK*.
> *Hanne*

Advertising is integral to the visual flow of the magazine and ads are read and decoded by the readers as an important part of the content. Interpretation of the data shows they use ads in two interrelated ways: firstly, magazines expose readers to the brands' advertising campaigns, which keeps them informed about the industry and new trends, which they use to build their fashion capital. Secondly, ads are understood as bearers of status, which lend kudos to the magazine brand. Thus, the ad pages in *DANSK*, and in the other fashion magazines that are mentioned in the interviews, are not flicked through unreflectively as unnecessary 'filling'. Readers take in who is advertising and talk about the style of photography and the models featured, and that informs and shapes their meaning-making of the magazine. They use this information to assess the coolness of the magazine as a brand.

> I use them to be up to date: 'So that's how the new Gucci campaign looks.'
> *Helle*

> They [ads] are inspiring. I mean when you see this Designers Remix ad [Danish label] you don't see the shirt, right. But it is a mood, a trend, something that swallows you. I like that, and often, especially with *Vogue* or another of the big magazines with many ads, the ads are just so different. Marc Jacobs does that snapshot style, and Dior or Louis Vuitton are super retouched. All of them have different visual expressions. I really like that.
> *Susan*

Magazines are the primary channel of exposure to fashion and lifestyle brands' advertising campaigns. Readers talk about Juergen Teller's snapshot-style campaigns for Marc Jacobs or Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott's retouched and lavish campaigns for Louis Vuitton. Thus, exposure to ads provides information about the frontrunners that produce them. New ad campaigns from the big fashion brands are launched twice a year and appear in the magazines in March and in September, which are also the months that glossies, such as British and American *Vogue*, dedicate their issues to special 'international collections'. Ads, just like editorials, are creatively pushing trends, setting new styles in photography, styling, make-up and model looks. Looking at these campaigns as well as the fashion spreads in the magazine not only brings readers up to date with the latest looks, it trains the eye in identifying different fashions and trends as well as the signature styles of the players in the field. Niche fashion magazines are used as what could be called a 'professional directory' in which readers learn about the latest styles and makers of fashion mediation. As such, ads provide aesthetic information and function as points of reference that can be used to nourish one's fashion capital and secure one's position in the field.

McCracken (1993: 299) claims that magazines, through their advertising structure, promote 'commodified desire' and increase consumption, yet the informants very rarely address ads in relation to the actual displayed products. In fact, in contrast to previous studies of women's magazine (McCracken 1993; Winship 1980), readers are not concerned with the capitalist system to which they belong. Susan, quoted above, who is a graphic designer, says that she uses ads as inspiration, not so much to see the actual clothes but to see the trends and moods of the art direction. They also accept that advertising revenue keeps the magazines going financially. Haley and Cunningham's (2007) study of female readers of women's magazines similarly shows that readers accept that magazines give editorial mentions to advertisers' products as well as the advertisers providing the

overall economic basis for the magazines. Moreover, Haley and Cunningham's work also shows that readers enjoy 'the ads just as much as the articles' (2007: 173).

> I don't remember [buying] anything from *DANSK*, perhaps I have, but I always choose what I want from catwalking[.com] on the day of the show.
> *Richard*

None of the readers say that they buy clothes featured in ads, although they do admit that they draw vestimentary, as well as professional, inspiration from the fashion spreads. However, they insist they have already seen the clothes online or at the show and thus use different media as shopping inspiration. So rather than informing readers' spending, what seems to matter to the readers is the status and brand image of the ads. Being concerned with how the advertising brand image affects the magazine brand and using ads as markers of the magazine's status, their consumption of ads is primarily professional.

High-fashion brands are understood as raising the status of the magazine. As Hanne argues above, she takes *DANSK* more seriously because it has high-fashion ads. Ads can certainly act as a seal of approval of the magazines – but only the right ads. What kind of approval do Burberry and Gucci add to the magazine, and do other ads take away from the magazine brand?

> Liv: Ad wise it's usually all right but then you have something like this [Schweppes]... But then they also have Bottega Veneta, which is super great and Gucci, well really great, great and then there are some less great.
> Ane: What do you mean by great?
> Liv: Great in the sense that they are high-end fashion.
> Ane: What do you think about that?
> Liv: It elevates the status of the magazine. And it makes it more international that they have hold of those advertisers because ads today are so integrated into a magazine that you can't separate them. You can't say 'well, there are twenty pages of crap ads, but the rest of the magazine is super good.' They are also fashion images. Part of seeing what kind of ads it has, is also part of reading a fashion magazine.
> *Liv on the advertising pages in issue 15, Evilism.*

> I think it's quite funny that you kind of judge a fashion magazine by its advertisements, of course. And for a fashion magazine it has incredibly few clothing ads. It starts with fragrance and then a Hermès and then the Danish stuff, right. Really a lot of Danish fashion stuff and cars and glasses, and I think [as you leaf through it] it gets worse and worse advertisement wise, and I think it's a bad sign to see so much crap advertisement in a magazine.
> *Johan*

Schweppes is a soft drink brand more commonly found in youth magazines and fashion magazines with less focus on luxury. This ad, which was criticised by four readers, shows a cartoon displaying a juxtaposition of urban scenes accented by

bright yellow colours: skyscrapers of New York, a woman hailing a yellow cab, jazz musicians and a dancing man with a drawn yellow motif swirling around him emphasises his movements. Not only Schweppes's cultural connotations, but also its obvious lack of use of fashion aesthetic (photography, models, fashion styling), rub off negatively on *DANSK*'s status. High-end fashion brands with a history, like Bottega Veneta (which was recently revamped by designer Thomas Maier), Gucci and Burberry on the other hand lend credentials to the status of the magazine. With his 'of course', Johan, above, shows that he finds it natural to assess a magazine's status by its ads. He has internalised the logic of the field where ads enter into a circuit in which models, key collection items and photographers are status- and value-adding components of the magazine. While readers disagree as to the status of some brands, they all adhere to the same logic, the doxa, the naturalised taken-for-granted. This shows that while the values that structure the field remain the same, brands are valued differently. For instance, while some readers understand a Hugo Boss ad as lending credibility to *DANSK*, others think it is affecting *DANSK*'s status negatively, as it is deemed to be not exclusive enough.

> Mathilde: It means a great deal what kind of ads a magazine has. I think, for example, it loses some marks that Bruuns Bazaar [Danish mid-range brand] is in it.
> Ane: How?
> Mathilde: That kinda belongs in *Eurowoman* or *Costume* [Danish women's fashion magazines]. It has to be brands that are out of reach in this magazine to get the right prologue when you enter the magazine. It's like a film with a bad beginning. If the beginning tells something else, then you start to encode that into it. It mustn't 'deduct', because its [*DANSK*'s] aesthetic is unattainable. If you then have a bad ad, like here an ad for glasses with Oliver Bjerrehus [former Danish top model] for Lindberg, then it doesn't work. This is just stupid. I don't understand why they do this. I also think it's a bit stupid of those advertisers to altogether expose their products in this magazine because they [the readers] don't buy this CCDK [Danish mass-market fashion label]. Then it's just to get revenue for the magazine's survival, and you understand that they would have to do that, but I think it's a shame that they aren't more consistent. Or at any rate have certain requirements for advertisers who want to place an ad that it has to address its segment. Well, all of this is commercial, this CCDK and it is the same with Bruuns Bazaar, which tries to be edgy and all but is a bit like ... provincial.

In her work on *Dallas* viewers, Ang argues that reading a media text is not an easy process, as readers have to be familiar with the genre and 'know specific codes and conventions in order to be able to have any grasp of what a text is about' (1996: 27). In reading niche fashion magazines and their ads readers reproduce the genre's codes and conventions, expecting to see ads imbued with a certain symbolic and fashion capital. Mathilde, quoted above, clearly has a high level of detailed and analytical knowledge of magazines and she expects to find that the ads mirror the exclusivity of the magazine's status, and when they fail to do so, the status of the

magazine is at stake. Ads have to be 'out of reach', which Danish brands are deemed not to be. Unlike the flavour of exclusivity the international high-fashion ads endow the magazine with, CCDK and many of the other Danish brands that advertise in *DANSK* are consumer-driven labels with midrange pricing and quality and are both financially and culturally more available. This violates what in literary analysis is called the author/reader contract (Smith 1994), which is the expectations readers have that are based on the genre conventions and premise the author provides. If the genre is a niche fashion magazine then that promises high fashion, avant-garde fashion and style cultures, which are all exclusive and out of reach and readers expect the ads to match this profile. If the ads signal mainstream fashion, then it violates the author/reader contract and as a result the readers, like Mathilde, will almost certainly dislike the text.

Furthermore, by labelling them 'commercial' Mathilde, the above reader, is not only distinguishing Danish ads from *DANSK* and its international ads, she is also hinting at the distinction found in most culture industries – that between commerce and art. In terms of the art–commerce discussion in Chapter Four and Chapter Six, 'commercial' is used disapprovingly, referring to the underlying logic of the field of large-scale production (Bourdieu 1993a). 'Commercial' is also the key value of economic capital. The high end of the fashion industry, the 'art for art's sake' (Bourdieu 1993a: 36) logic applies, renouncing that which is made with the motivation only to sell. 'Commercial' is understood as selling out and represents constraints over creativity. While the distinction between art and commerce alludes to the artistic creation that is put into the campaigns of international brands, which have far more fashion capital and economic capital than Danish brands such as CCDK or Bruuns Bazaar, Dior, Louis Vuitton and Burberry are just as much part of a commercial fashion industry. But as these belong to the 'consecrated avant-garde' (Bourdieu 1993a: 104) they thus straddle the economic impetus without losing their cool. Implicated in Mathilde's meaning-making is the knowledge of the different values and markets of fashion and, accordingly, different advertising aesthetics. Similar distinctions persist in the field of modelling, as Entwistle (2002) shows, as discussed in Chapter Six. Catalogue work or ad campaigns for the high street would be considered commercial, by producers in the subfields of high fashion and avant-garde fashion, and thus imbued with less status and provide less fashion capital to the model, than editorial magazine work for *Vogue* or *Self Service* or a Prada campaign would. McRobbie (1998) also accounts for the co-existing economies in the field of British fashion design where favour is given to fashion as art, not as an industry. *DANSK* and CCDK are simply not an expected coupling, as CCDK is driven by an impetus to gain economic capital. *DANSK*, on the other hand, by its

position in the field of small-scale production, is driven by the logic of gaining symbolic capital and credit from insiders, an 'art for art's sake' (1993a: 36). Thus *DANSK*, by showing a CCDK ad, is mixing strategies of symbolic and economic capital that, according to Bourdieu, belong to two subfields. As discussed in Chapter Four, mixing the codes of art and commercial fashion is a distinctive feature throughout the field of fashion, not least in its high-status markets, but the mixed message it produces in *DANSK* confuses the Danish readers who are familiar with the cultural production of CCDK. I will return shortly to the aspect of 'Danishness' of *DANSK*.

Bearing in mind that the informants are specialist readers (see introduction of this chapter and Chapter Three on various positions of readers), they make sense of ads according to the values of the field of restricted cultural production (Bourdieu 1993a). These values are structured on achieving recognition by peer producers. Being cultural producers themselves, readers consume the ads symbolically rather than consuming the clothes featured in the ads, and are concerned with how the advertising brand image affects the magazine brand. Thus, by setting into motion the internalised values of 'production-for-producers' (Bourdieu 1993a; 46), ads are read as markers of status. While, as outlined in Chapter Two, the emphasis in early textual work on women's magazines was feminist readings of women's magazines, focusing on how women's magazines were essentially demeaning to women, there is a similar aspect to be found in Angela McRobbie's (1996) argument below:

> Readers do not look at the endless shots of Claudia Schiffer or Naomi Campell only from the viewpoint of envy. (...) It is more that the magazines reference and signal to the readers that they know what they are doing. (McRobbie 1996: 189)

While McRobbie talks from the viewpoint of the magazine producers, the relevance here is that readers assess the magazine from a similar viewpoint of the producers and are concerned with whether or not magazines signal status and 'know what they are doing'.

Specialist Reading

Ultimately, *DANSK* readers primarily assess the fashion pages, including ads, according to the overall *mise-en-scene*, everything used before the camera that makes up the style of photography such as models, clothes and makeup, but also the paper quality, retouching and the style of the photographer and stylist. This suggests that readers for the most part are more concerned with a specialist reading of what

models, clothes, ads, lighting, makeup, etc. bring to the style of the magazine. Pushing this further, readers employ what could be called a reproductive mode of reading as they, through the doxa, take models and collection press samples for granted. They are not distancing themselves from the field to which *DANSK*, and the other similar magazines that came up in the interviews, belong. Reproducing the meanings of the field of fashion, the specialist and insider readers have naturalised fashion's codes and understand them as an internal system of meaning-making that refers to itself. In their reading of niche fashion they reproduce the values of exclusivity and connoisseurship expressed by the use of key collection pieces, models and ads with which they assess both the magazine's status and their own position in the field. They find it natural that models are thin, clothes are expensive and ads are the magazine's financial underpinning – the field is shaped on this logic and 'out-of-reachness'.

An example of readers' acceptance of *DANSK*'s style is their reactions to a male swimwear spread, *Thongs Up* (CPH Love, issue 14, pp. 110-121), which shows a series of close-up images of an oiled body and swimming trunks. Some readers thought it was 'tacky' or 'very gay', but some readers liked it precisely for its homoerotic qualities, its 'vulgarity', and thought it gave the magazine its much-needed edge. Lewis (1997) and Crane's (1999) work on readers of women's fashion magazines show that academics and older women, often outsiders to the field of fashion, are more dismissive of fashion and its media than younger readers who are more fashion literate. Thompson and Haytko's (1997) respondents were very critical of magazines and their representations of fashioned bodies, and although they were young college students they were all outside the field of fashion. *DANSK* readers are young, highly fashion literate and inside the field and, thus, in their reading of the *Thongs Up* spread they do not criticise the sexualised imagery or the model's unattainably fit body, being more concerned with its style and whether or not he had a good physique. These readers make sense of the spread in terms of the values of the field and acting upon the doxa.

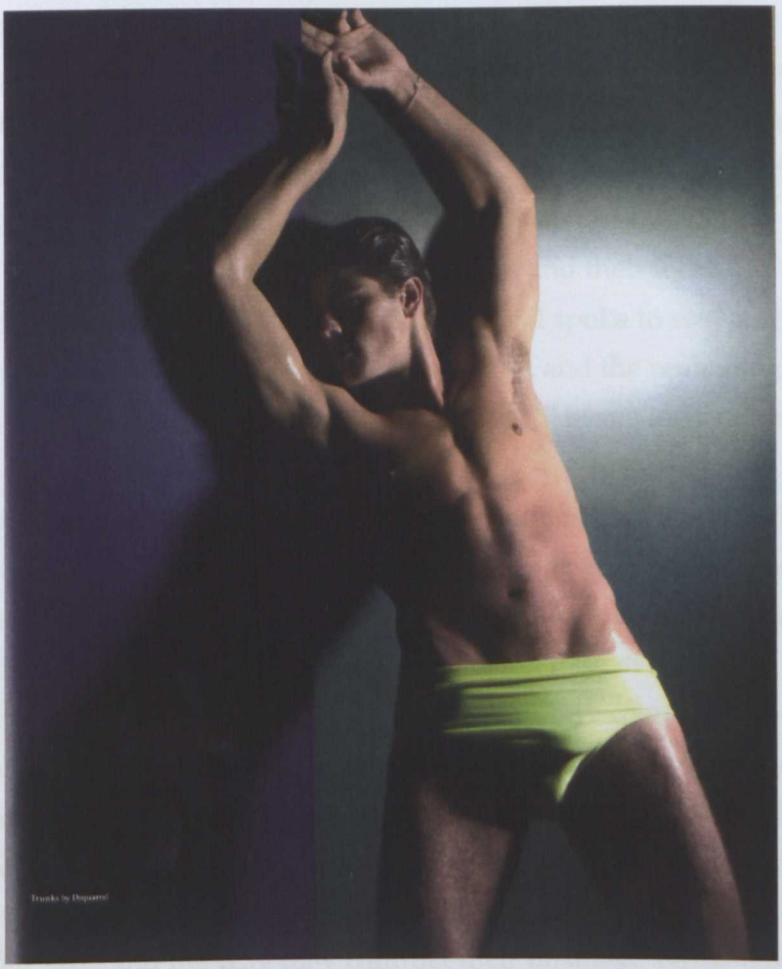


Image 13. 'Thongs Up', Issue 14, *CPH Love*, Summer 2007

As shown in Chapter Two, Morley (1992) argues that individual reading is marginal. Readings, instead, reflect the membership of a group or subculture, as they share 'cultural codes' (Morley 1992: 54), and the reading relates to their socio-economic positions and the socio-economic structure of society. As informants are producers of culture, working as cultural intermediaries, they are members of a similar group as that of the editors. Thus, their readings did not diverge much from a 'preferred reading' of the magazines. Had the informants represented a broader and more diverse social group, their readings would in all probability have been against the grain or 'oppositional' to that of the editors.

Consumption of Danishness

Bearing in mind how Danish readers read Danish ads, I now turn to the idea of Danishess, which was a recurrent theme of the readers' meaning-making of *DANSK*. As explored in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, *DANSK* features Danish lifestyles, Danish models and Danish designers and its distinct

Scandinavian aesthetic, evident in its graphic identity, gives *DANSK* an apparent Danish profile. With a global distribution to 21 countries,[iv] it has a readership that shares an interest both in *DANSK* and other niche fashion magazines. The focus of this section is how non-Danish and Danish readers construct different kinds of 'Danishness' in making sense of *DANSK* by drawing on, respectively, stereotypes of Danishness and their local knowledge of the producers. Of a total of 20 readers, I spoke to six Danes based in London and eight Danes living in Denmark, and the remaining six readers were English, Swedish, Norwegian and Czech, living in London and Stockholm.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the way in which informants make sense of *DANSK* includes their personal views and gossip on the editors and other key people in the fashion industry. The editors-in-chief, Buchard and Grenaa, are public media figures in Denmark. Danish national television has covered their work in a series of documentaries and they are considered 'fashion experts'. Furthermore, since most of the interviewed readers work in fashion and since Copenhagen is a small fashion scene, they already know the producers professionally either from work experience or via colleagues. The nature of the Danish readers' sense-making focuses on aspects beyond the magazine, such as the producers' public image, their sexuality, their taste and the way they conduct their business. While many Danish readers, both London-based and Copenhagen-based, speak rather disapprovingly about *DANSK*, non-Danish readers are generally more impressed with it. As a result of their local, insider knowledge, Danish readers often refer to *DANSK* as synonymous with its producers:

> My impression of *DANSK* is that it's Kim and Uffe's look book.
> *Mads*

> I think the two of them ... have now become a mouthpiece for what the Danes think fashion is and what good taste and what good style is.
> *Catherine*

> Well, this glamour luxury, I don't think it's valid any more because it was so strong in the IT era by the turn of the millennium, right. It's crazy they are still doing it. And that's where I think Kim and Uffe are a bit stuck in that whole bling bling, gangsta luxury, nice models and champagne thing, right. I think that's a bit vulgar. We already know that. To me it has moved the same way as *Wallpaper** because *Wallpaper** also held on to that lushness. I think identity, look and lush-wise *DANSK* looks a bit like that.
> *Johan*

Oblivious to its editors, the power structure of the Danish fashion industry and its rumours, non-Danish readers reflect on the magazine itself or talk about its visual style as a representation of a certain Scandinavian and

Danish aesthetic and looks. Within the group of non-Danish readers, there is a clear distinction between Scandinavian (Swedish and Norwegian) readers and the other non-Danish readers. Scandinavian readers highlighted *DANSK*'s Danish/Scandinavian design character, as the following quotes illustrate:

> The strong design, the cleanness about it. [It's] very Arne Jacobsen. You can see this is what the Danes are best at.
> *Hanne*

> The editorials are very sand coloured. I think the colours are very Scandinavian. I also think the graphics are Danish. It's really tight, cut down, it's very purified when you look at it. There's a white box and a black box.
> *Johan*

> The reason why I'm particularly interested in *DANSK* is because I feel it represents Scandinavia and I'm very enthusiastic about Scandinavia.
> *Hanne*

The Danish designer Arne Jacobsen, who Hanne mentions above, is iconographic of the Danish design and furniture tradition. Based on 'strong design', 'sand colours' and 'tight' style, readers make sense of *DANSK*'s Danishness and 'Scandinavianness' by drawing on their cultural insights into the style known as 'Danish Modern'. Simply put, this is a Danish style that had its heyday in the 1940s and 1950s and designers such as Arne Jacobsen, Finn Juhl, Hans Wegner and Poul Hennigsen have made 'Danish Modern' design world famous. It is known for its modernist and reductionist styles and use of organic and zoological forms and natural materials such as wood, wool and leather. As shown in Chapter Four, *DANSK*'s minimalist visuals and graphic design draw on this 'Danish Modern' mode of expression. The editorial on Swedish fashion, 'Class of 2008' (issue 15, pp. 92-105) in particular employs a faded look with a Nordic light and stripped bare, reductionist style with little props and 'freeze frame posing'. Furthermore, 'Danish Modern' is not only a strong tradition in Denmark, but Swedish and Finnish designers also made significant contributions to the style, so that 'Danish' and 'Scandinavian' are often used interchangeably. Thus, Scandinavian readers are more likely to draw on this Danish/Scandinavian design legacy in making sense of *DANSK* than other non-Danish readers, by the simple fact that they are Scandinavian and the cultural capital they draw on in making sense of *DANSK* is anchored in insider knowledge of Scandinavian design, which is manifest all over Scandinavia in typography and architecture in public spaces and in many middle-to-upper-class homes.

Image 14 and 15. 'Class of 2008', issue 15, *Evilism*, 2007

To other non-Scandinavian and non-Danish readers *DANSK's* Scandinavian/Danish character was found in the models:

> Amber: If I didn't know that it's Scandinavian I'd think Belgian, but Scandinavian is really a strong kind of connotation.
> Ane: Why is that?
> Amber: Most of the models are blonde…

> Because the focus and content on Denmark, the Scandinavian models which are quite dominant throughout, does give it quite a unique identity. You can tell it's a Danish magazine.
> *Simon*

Interestingly, each of the three magazines that were used to prompt the interviews contained eight fashion editorials but the *CPH Love* issue only featured one blonde model and *Evilism* and *Pet Power* each featured three blondes. While blonde models may be dominant in Western fashion magazines, they are certainly not overrepresented in *DANSK*, and out of the total eight blonde models just one is Danish (Mads L. from Unique Models in 'Copenhagen's Claim to Fame', pp. 92-109, CPH Love issue). This suggests that readers project the myth of the 'Scandinavian

blonde' or a Scandinavian look onto the models, when in fact most of the models featured were dark haired and not Danish. *DANSK* also prompted one Scandinavian reader to talk about a certain Danish look and even ranked the best-looking people of the Nordic countries, saying that she believed the Danes came first and the Finns last. Readers thus read *DANSK* in the light of their conceptions and the cultural dispositions that shape how they make sense of things. To understand this, Hans-Robert Jauss' post-Gadamerian reception theory on reading (Jauss in Rice and Waugh 1997) is a useful tool for understanding how readers engage with previous experiences in making sense of a text. Jauss sees reading as a process that brings into play various horizons, perspectives and understandings used at different stages by the reader. He argues that a text is rooted in history and previous reading experiences, and like Ang (1996), reading is shaped according to the text's genre. The text evokes 'the horizons of expectations and rules familiar from other texts, which are then varied, corrected, changed or just reproduced' (Jauss in Rice and Waugh 1997: 83). Similarly, readers expect to find blonde or Scandinavian-looking models in *DANSK* and their sense-making is shaped on their expectations and fabulations of the text rather than the reality of *DANSK* and the models featured. Jauss argues that reading can potentially generate new perceptions and new horizons, but when the distance between the horizon of expectations and the work is insignificant, the reception passes without change; instead it fulfils and confirms the expectations of the conventions of the genre. While there is distance in the work, the non-blonde models, it is not significant enough to override the readers' expectation of finding blonde or Scandinavian-looking models. *DANSK* is too close to their expectation to release itself from it by creating a new horizon, or seeing its reality.

What sense can be made of these differences? Within the boundary of the *DANSK* readership yet another sub-distinction of an inside/outside relation exists with regards to the cultural codes of Danishness embedded in *DANSK*. Danish readers, insiders to Danish culture, think the familiar is 'uncool', and non-Danish outsiders to Danish culture exoticise *DANSK* as a representation of Scandinavia. A geographical way of understanding inside/outside relations can be found in Roland Robertson's (1995) work on globalisation. He argues how global homogenisation and heterogenisation co-exist and should not be considered an either/or, polarised scenario. He calls this co-existing local micro conditions and global macro markets 'glocalization' (1995: 28), which to him is not an opposition. A globally distributed fashion magazine like *DANSK* expresses this 'glocal' relation succinctly. The co-existence of local and global is also encapsulated in the

idea of the mediascape (Appadurai 1996), as outlined in Chapter One. Central to mediascapes is that they circulate media in global landscapes and cross global and local boundaries. So while the same medium is appropriated differently in the different sites, by readers in Copenhagen, London or Stockholm, niche fashion magazines reach and connect people globally and are instrumental in the creation of different imagined communities.

DANSK is understood both by a shared homogeneous fashion culture, where readers work within the same logic of the field, and by various local heterogeneous positions of Danes, Scandinavians, Europeans and so forth that all bring to it different insights into the local culture it represents. While non-Danish readers exoticise *DANSK*'s Danishness or 'Scandinavianness', Danish readers see it as an extension of its producers. Key fashion producers and trends may be picked up globally but local trends and producers may not. *DANSK* is thus a case study for how a readership makes sense of fashion magazines drawing on their socio-geographical position to understand a magazine and its producers.

Copenhagen is not a fashion capital on a par with Paris, London, Milan or New York with their history, infrastructure and the cultural constructions attached to their status as fashion capitals. However, in an increasingly global world, new emerging centres of fashion claim their spot on the global fashion map. Fashion (and textiles) in Denmark, with Copenhagen as its focal point, is considered to be Denmark's fourth largest export good (Riegels Melchior 2008: 70-71). Since the 1990s fashion has increasingly become part of the Danes' self image. Furthermore, through initiatives like the Danish Fashion Institute[v] and Copenhagen Fashion Week, as well as a growing number of designers and fashion magazines with global distributions, Copenhagen's increasing fashion kudos is being increasingly covered by international fashion magazines and trade journals. Danish readers, however, make sense of *DANSK* as a representation of Denmark's inferior position in relation to more established centres of fashion:

> I don't think it's sure enough of itself. Maybe it's because it has that provincial advertising tone. Maybe that's more piercing to a Dane. A bit like when people really have a hard core Danish accent when they speak English or French, and you just think 'uhhhhh'. Perhaps an Italian doesn't think about it, but I don't see English or French magazines promoting their cultures in the same way. If a magazine wants to be established as a fashion magazine in that genre, then that's international and it really doesn't matter where you're from.
> *Julie*

> To me it's a reflection of how narrow-minded the Danish fashion scene and fashion magazine culture are. I'm probably very negative in my view on Denmark; I think it's too intimate. It's Uffe Buchard's magazine. To me it's a very, very Danish magazine and that way I actually think it's a bit provincial.
> *Catherine*

> It's a provincial magazine. It's never upfront, you never see clothes you haven't seen before, right. There has to be something for Birger Christensen (Copenhagen fur and fashion multi store) to be in the magazine. We've already seen the big collections on style.com the minute they are published.
> *Jacob*

These Danish readers with their local insider knowledge and their tough critique make distinctions between themselves as informed readers, acquainted with the styles and conduct of international magazines, and *DANSK* – which to them is a provincial magazine lacking a 'global' way of doing. In her cross-cultural analysis of the fashion discourses in *Le Monde* and *The Guardian*, Rocamora (2001) puts emphasis on how Paris is constructed by journalists as superior to the provinces. She argues that the belief underpinning the status of Paris is that:

> The high, the pure and the true art can only be found in Paris, superior to *la province*, which is synonymous with the low, the impure, the standardized, that same 'bigger number' ... and feared as a sign of the degradation of high fashion.
> Rocamora (2001: 138-139)

Quoting Bourdieu, Rocamora argues that Paris is constructed as a social space that is '"physically realized or objectified"' (2001: 139), against which 'provincial' equals 'vulgar'. The binary opposition between capital and province is a symbolic construction of, in this case, *DANSK* as an 'uncool' provincial magazine against 'cool' international fashion magazines and doings.

Underpinning the above understandings of *DANSK*'s Danishness, whether it is it seen as exotically fascinating, a stereotyped myth of Scandinavia as a region populated by blonde people, or it is seen as inferior in relation to international ways of doings, is a sense of 'otherness' and 'difference'. What Stuart Hall (1997: 225) calls 'the spectacle of the "Other"' refers to how representations of difference are stereotyped in the media. Hall (1997) charts how 'difference' and 'otherness' are approached through, among others, anthropological and psychoanalytical theories. He argues that the anthropological approach to understanding things is through giving them different positions of social classification. Classifying things, or organising them into binary oppositions, are significant acts of attributing meaning to them. This also provides symbolic boundaries between things, which help one to understand their differences. Psychoanalysis has

approached the concept of the other through the argument that 'the "Other" is fundamental to the constitution of the self' (Hall 1997: 237). The idea is that one gains a concept of self, self-definition, through difference from others.

Drawing on the anthropological understanding, readers make sense of *DANSK* by classifying it as specifically Danish, reproducing a myth of the blonde Scandinavian or giving it an inferior position opposed to superior international fashions. Via the psychoanalysis approach, the interpretation of readers' meaning-making is their construction of self through different degrees of knowledge of Danishness and their position as knowledgeable readers as opposed to uninformed outsiders. This reading sets up an imagined community or what Hall (1997: 258) calls a 'symbolic frontier between (...) "insiders" and "outsiders", Us and Them'.

A last significant aspect of how readers construct their own position in relation to *DANSK* and its Danishness is that critical Danish readers still read and still keep it in their homes:

> For me it's natural to keep on top of things. *DANSK* is important because I live in Denmark, and therefore I have to watch it. If I lived in Paris I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you as a reader of *DANSK*. The only reason why I still read it is because I live in Denmark.
> *Jacob*

> I read all the Danish magazines to see what people are doing at home, I like to keep up.
> *Camilla*

> I look at *DANSK* because it's Danish and I'm Danish. The same way I look in *Cover* and *Alt for Damerne* because I'm Danish. And I like Copenhagen, but I'd prefer to go to Riesen [Copenhagen bar] than Nasa [Copenhagen members only night club], right. That's probably where I don't agree with their aesthetic, their taste and choice.
> *Catherine*

Informants, as discussed earlier, often want to give the impression that they are critical and sometimes assume an oppositional position in relation to the magazine. Again, as also established in the previous section, despite their judgment they still read it because as members of the field they need to know it, because it is part of their world and they need to be familiar with it to participate in that world, regardless of their taste preference or disagreement. Their urge to cultivate their fashion capital is thus stronger than their aesthetic disagreements. Gaining fashion capital, thus, is a conflicted process involving various degrees of aesthetic valuing, concept of self in relation to social ordering and a fundamental drive for social differentiation.

Tim Edwards (2000: 6) argues that 'consumption, and indeed consumer society, is centred on an inherent series of contradictions on several levels'. The unresolvable contradictions in modern society affect consumption and any attempt to understand both, according to Edwards, needs to accept that these contradictions are not easily resolved. In their work on men's magazines, Jackson *et al.* (2001: 4) also note that while there may be dominant or intended readings, the way readers read and talk about their readings are often ambivalent. The contradictory nature of consumption, and in this specific case the consumption of *DANSK*'s Danishness, involves 'negotiated readings' (Hall 1996; Morley 1992), with readers largely sharing and accepting the 'cultural codes' but also modifying them and adapting them to their own position and experiences. What seems to matter, regardless of the contradiction of consuming *DANSK* when openly disliking it, is that *DANSK* acts as a construction and assurance of membership and aids the feeling of togetherness as well as preservation of fashion capital.

Conclusion

This chapter is based on a qualitative case study that seeks to understand how fashion insiders make sense of one particular niche fashion magazine, *DANSK*. While there may well be discrepancies with other magazine cultures, *DANSK* is understood by its readers as part of the genre of niche fashion magazines, and thus in making sense of *DANSK* readers talk about it in relation to other magazines. Consequently, their meaning-making is not just based on *DANSK* but on the wider field of niche fashion magazines. Niche fashion magazines are part of specific fashion cultures where the producers and consumers are interrelated, and readers thus make sense of *DANSK* by engaging in this culture of 'production-for-producers' and reproducing its meaning. Engaging with what I have called a reproductive mode of reading, readers are critical of *DANSK*, and of fashion in general, and conduct negotiated reading when it is not delivering to their expectations of exclusivity and connoisseurship, but they do not overthrow its values and accept the use of models, expensive clothing and ads. In fact, these are used as markers to assess the magazine and its position in the field of fashion. Niche fashion magazines are read professionally to gain fashion capital in order to participate in the field of fashion and potentially gain a better position. Data show that readers do not use them as a consumer might, to help to buy clothes. Instead, readers use other media for that purpose, online media or glossies. In any event,

clothes are often featured creatively, interpreted by photographers and stylists who change the look of the garments via image cropping, making them smaller (pinned in the back) or hiding them in layers of clothes or in dark shadows. Thus, niche fashion magazines do not create 'commodified desire' in their readers, as McCracken (1993) argues about women's magazines. While reading is largely used as a visual stimulus, magazines are not simply used as a leisure pursuit or as shopping inspiration. They are used professionally to improve one's standing via obtaining fashion capital. Niche fashion magazines are used by the industry as a mediator of cool, as a tool to assess other producers and the hierarchies of the field and they thus act as intermediaries between magazine production and consumption. Moreover, as niche fashion magazines are business-to-business publications producers and consumers share a valuing of exclusivity and *out-of-reachness*.

Within the reader culture of fashion-savvy inside readers different degrees of 'insideness' apply. Danish readers, for instance, employ cultural dispositions and local knowledge of the editors when engaging with *DANSK*'s specific 'Danishness'. They utilise local gossip and see *DANSK* as an extension of the lives and tastes of the editors. Non-Danish readers speak approvingly about its distinct Scandinavian/Danish design identity and exoticise the models featured as looking particularly Scandinavian/Danish.

The readers' work of consumption is not isolated from either the production or the textual qualities of *DANSK*. In fact the informants, being specialist readers, draw on their cultural dispositions and insight into production of cultural work, especially fashion and design, when reading *DANSK*. Moreover, by regularly referencing textual examples, clothes and models featured in fashion spreads and mood in ads, readers' consumption is directed by textual constituents, or 'closures' as Morley (1992: 84) calls them. As extension of this chapter, the following chapter analyses readers' consumption of *DANSK* as a physical object, and argues that this, in fact, is inextricably bound to their symbolic consumption.

[i] This is not an isolated case. In fact, 19 out of 20 readers talk about the visual inspiration that they draw from niche fashion magazines and use in their jobs.

[ii] The Lix formula is a system developed by the Swedish pedagogue C.H. Björnsson. It indicates the level of a text's readability based on sentence length and use of long words. The greater the Lix formula the more difficult the text is.

[iii] Many readers comment on the models featured, their look and coolness and know their names.

[iv] As of 24 June 2008, confirmed by executive editor Kathrine Houe.

[v] Eva Kruse, director of the Danish Fashion Institute, has the ambitious task of making Copenhagen the fifth-largest fashion capital after Paris, New York, Milan and London.

CHAPTER 8: 'AN EXTENSION OF YOURSELF'

Magazine Possessions, Social Distinction and Consumption as Production

The material culture of magazines cannot be separated from readers' symbolic appropriation of them. Drawing on the work on material culture and consumer culture, this chapter is an extension of the previous chapter and explores how readers engage productively and actively with the physical quality of niche fashion magazines, focusing on how magazines as physically situated objects are appropriated into the lives of the readers; their economic consumption of magazines; and how they use magazines' physical 'presence' as part of their lifestyles and sense of self.

Spaces of Free Consumption

As the previous chapter showed, the magazine, its style of mediation and the clothes, ads and models featured are, through reading and looking, made meaningful. The act of purchasing is also part of the consumption process, but as this section will show readers do not always purchase the magazines they consume, or, as it was argued in the previous chapter, the clothes or products featured.

Compared to weekly and monthly glossies and even to books, niche fashion magazines are costly: *DANSK* costs £5, *Self Service* costs £16 and *Visionaire* costs between £150 and £430 depending on its sponsorship and packaging – for instance, issue 18 was packaged as a monogrammed portfolio by Louis Vuitton and issue 50 was a series of ten toys made by ten different artists. While readers read a great many magazines, they do not necessarily purchase them. There are two main reasons for this: firstly, many readers are provided with free magazines at work. Secondly, they make use of the available public channels that provide them with free magazine reading.

> Because I effectively have a work account I can literally buy the magazines I want so I'm in quite a fortunate situation.
> *Simon*

Readers attending *DANSK*'s or other magazines' launch parties are usually provided with a free copy, and contributors to the magazine get it for free. Occasionally producers also send magazines to people they would like to attract either as opinion leaders or potential contributors. Furthermore, readers in paid positions can read magazines at work, as many companies or agencies engaged in cultural intermediary work buy or subscribe to key fashion and lifestyle

publications, which are used as work-related inspiration and references. If readers employed in cultural production, like Simon, decide to purchase magazines themselves they can reclaim the cost from their employers, as it is seen as work-related expenditure.

> I don't necessarily buy them, but I often go to Magasin [Copenhagen department store with an international newsstand] and gawp at them, right.
> *Gabriella*

> I would read them in [Central] Saint Martins' library. And I often read these things in shops like what used to be Zwemmers in Charing Cross Road. They do have good runs of fashion magazines so I inevitably go and check them there and browse through them.
> *Amber*

Given the nature of the fashion industry, as McRobbie has shown (1998), the majority of the informants are self-employed freelancers and the remaining readers are studying for a profession in fashion. Some do not buy as many magazines as they would like, largely because they consider them too expensive, and largely because free reading is available at select newsstands, museum bookshops or design college libraries. It is not only freelancers or aspiring fashion professionals who source their magazine reading this way, even readers who are provided with magazines via work often read, look or flick through them free of charge in the shops. In specialist magazine/book shops such as R.D. Franks in central London one can browse through magazines free of charge, and in larger bookshops like Borders on Oxford Street in London one can take magazines to the in-store Starbucks and read them for free while having a coffee.

> Ane: Have you ever purchased *DANSK*?
> Ellis: I have in the past over the last 2-3 years picked it up occasionally, but I'd say it's very rarely that I ever buy a magazine. I spend time looking through things in shops first and take it up to Starbucks and read it, but very rarely do I actually purchase them.

While an increasing number of Copenhagen and Stockholm newsstands now tolerate magazine browsing, such as Magasin in Copenhagen or Press Stop on Götgatan in Stockholm, it is customary in Scandinavia to purchase magazines before reading them. These new emerging spaces provide for reader cultures of highly fashion literate readers. Free of charge or, if they decide to bring it up to the in-store Starbucks of Borders, readers may not have spent more than a couple of pounds on coffee and in return they are updated on the new issues, styles of fashion, collaborations of players and ad campaigns.

If readers do decide to buy magazines, they choose carefully which magazine, which also tends to be the magazine they collect or, as Ellis says, the ones that can be used directly for inspiration for work:

> You know if I'm gonna buy something... I look at them more for a professional reason, you know. Who is it gonna benefit in my job, so very rarely I actually buy something. Unless I see a story that's exceptionally beautiful and I wanna keep to enjoy it and look at and reference it again. Or if I see something I can reference in my own work in the future, you know.
> *Ellis*

Airport newsstands in the bigger airports in capitals often carry extensive selections of various genres of magazines, including niche fashion magazines. Most informants travel a great deal and refer to airport newsstands as another key place, which not only provides them with free reading, but a place where they would actually purchase magazines to read on their journeys. Readers also make sure to bring niche fashion magazines back from their travels. For instance, a Scandinavian reader living in London who was about to return to Scandinavia had to her regret stopped buying magazines as she considered them too heavy to bring home, and she wanted to keep them rather than throw them away. I return to the aspect of keeping magazines below.

Sometimes reading forms part of readers' research 'field trips', which are even, as the quote below shows, used as a place for professional meetings to discuss magazines and ways of approaching magazines for jobs:

> Ellis: We'll all look at magazines together in Borders or R.D. Franks.
> Ane: Do you go there together?
> Ellis: Yeah, sometimes we do or we'll meet up in Borders and we have a pile of magazines and we'll look through them and talk about what people are doing. I think it's essential to do that, you gotta be aware of what other people, your other contemporaries are doing in the industry. With friends and colleagues we look at magazines, maybe that would be a good place for us to approach, you go through the masthead, you approach the magazine and see if you get commissioned, which works sometimes but some of them are not so good at replying.

This passage shows how magazines are used 'investigatively', as part of the process of getting a position, position-taking, in the fashion industry. Unlike women's magazines, which are primarily read as a leisure pursuit (Ballaster *et al.* 1991) and as what Joke Hermes (1997: 32) has referred to as 'in-between' activity as magazines are easily picked up and put down, the above suggests a different usage of niche fashion magazines. The aesthetic information contained in niche fashion magazines add to readers' professional knowledge, and the names on the mastheads are crucial information not just for readers wanting to

access the fashion industry, but form part of most readers' fashion capital. This information can be accessed for free and, thus, the channels that provide free reading of magazines make up a new and symbolic economy of magazines: readers can, free of charge, acquire resources that make up part of their fashion capital which will enable them to move within the field. Similar exchange occurs when looking at fashion collections on the Internet or window-shopping. It is free but provides valuable symbolic, and potential economic, resources for the readers.

Furthermore, what the above quotes suggest is that readers employ different registers of reading, as outlined in the previous chapter. Sometimes they browse while standing up, sit down with a stack of magazines when they have a bit more time to read, or they are actually purchase it to bring home to read and look at the texts with more concentration. If readers browse through magazines in the shop, they also have the opportunity to compare and relate the different visual stimuli obtained through the magazine and thus gain a comparative overview of the different styles of mediation, and the producers involved, on offer. Regardless of the registers and the different foci employed when browsing, looking or reading, magazines are crucial for the acquisition of fashion capital. As also argued in Chapter Seven, specialist readers primarily read niche fashion magazines as vehicles for accessing professional references. Whether readers are freelancers, self-employed or work at a corporate level (design studios, brand agencies, model agencies), niche fashion magazines form part of their work tools and fashion capital, as agents need to know the various styles and players to better direct their work and professional distinction. As discussed above, this does not necessarily involve the actual purchase of the magazines, because retail spaces make for a free reading economy.

For Keeps

I now want to explore the status of magazines in the homes of the readers. Daniel Miller (2001: 1) argues that the material culture within our home is both an appropriation and representation of the larger world. It will become clear that readers' appropriation of niche fashion magazines within their homes functions as a vehicle for building social relations, conservation of aesthetic references and creation and representation of identity.

Readers tend to have favourite magazines, which are the ones they actually buy. Once these magazines make it into the homes of the readers, they become part

of magazine collections and archives, used as reference and are reread, stored in piles on the floor or in bookcases next to books, and are very rarely disposed of:

> I don't use them very often, but I just can't throw them away. It's fun to have some *Dazed and Confused* from '94. It's just fun to have those different formats because they were among the first to do that.
> *Helle*

> I feel they are an ongoing series. Since I'm particularly interested in fashion photography I collect them and in ten years ... it's like history in a way and you have references there as well.
> *Hanne*

> Ane: Do you bin it?
> Amber: No, ohh no, you can't bin it. That's the thing. It's an investment, I think. You're buying something with really lovely images, you wouldn't want to get rid of that. I would use it for references; I would come back to it probably.
> *Amber*

Encapsulated in Amber's idea of investment is how magazines are attributed with cultural, symbolic and material values. They become valuable in various ways: culturally they provide readers with knowledge of fashion and they are used as aesthetic references as well as historical documentation, as Helle and Hanne say. Materially they form part of a collection/library/archive, and are treasured as collectors' items:

> If I bought something like this I would probably buy it almost thinking 'this would be great to have an archive of because one day these would be valuable', because they are not coming out in huge editions and they will be sought after one day.
> *Amber*

There are two interrelated insights to be gained from the readers' keeping of magazines as an archive. Firstly, it implies an interrelation of consumption and production as the production of an archive is a result of the 'creative work of consumption' (Mackay 1997: 11). Active appropriation of magazines thus renders the work of consumption a productive interaction with objects. Adam Arvidsson argues that consumption 'is a form of labour, that is, an activity that produces value' (2005: 239). Readers, not just in relation to the creation of an archive but through their consumption taken as a whole, are actively engaged in the social construction of value. In drawing on Maurizio Lazzarato, Arvidsson (2005: 241) uses the concept of 'immaterial labour' to explain the work of consumption as production of social relations within which objects become meaningful.

Consumption as a form of productivity of immaterial labour relates to how collections function as social distinction (Belk 1988). As parts of collections, magazines are symbolically valued as status displays, which is similar to the way that book collections signal the collector's identity. Readers also make clear

distinctions between which magazines they keep as collector's items and which they would bin. Compared to monthlies, which are only kept temporarily, niche fashion magazines are kept permanently or until they take up too much space and the archive is sorted out to create more space. The space magazines that take up in the home is addressed by most readers, and they frequently sort them and clear them out, but would much prefer to give them away as presents than discard them.

> Johan: It's mostly that you look at them when you're moving house or clearing space and throwing them away. But there is a difference in what is fashion magazines and ... well which you keep and which you don't. It's only the expensive and high-quality ones you don't dispose of.
> Ane: Where is the boundary?
> Johan: Well, I remember I had shit loads of *Wallpaper** for instance. I threw most of them away, it was a bit tough, but it didn't have as much cred anymore. Whereas *Bibel*, which was relatively cheap, I would never chuck that out. But that's because it ceased and it's therefore a cult magazine because it was so niche and Swedish and it only came out for a few years. Although the content, when you look at it, isn't maybe wildly spectacular but it was very special for that country and it was written in Swedish.

Johan's words demonstrate that the distinction between which magazines readers save and bin is not just a matter of price or quality; it is also a sense of rarity, as with Johan's discontinued *Bibel* or Amber's idea of keeping them for an archive. Discontinued magazines sometimes become cult magazines, such as early *Blitz* and *The Face* or copies of *Interview* from when Andy Warhol was editing it. Johan also says that magazines that lose their 'cred' such as *Wallpaper**, are not worth hanging on to. This suggests two aspects: firstly that magazines move in and out of fashion, like trends, and secondly that the magazines pass on credibility and status differentiation to their owner. Central to both moving and refurbishment, according to Jean-Sébastian Marcoux (2001: 83), is that it brings back memories attached to objects and by making the memories explicit, we decide which things to hold on to and which things to abandon. Conservation in this way becomes meaningful through the classifying process of sorting out. Following this approach things are not just kept because they are valued, they also 'acquire value through the sorting process' (Marcoux 2001: 84); as with the decision to keep the *Bibel*, but not *Wallpaper**, their value becomes explicit through the process of conservation.

Collection of magazines functions as conservation of memories, but perhaps more significant is their status as fashionable objects used as reservoirs of historic, cultural and aesthetic references:

> It's always fun [to reread them], especially if you have a magazine that is ten years old and you think 'Jesus, did we really think this was cool', right.
> *Susan*

Encapsulated in Susan's conservation of magazines is not just that they serve as historic documentation, but they become valuable as objects imbued with nostalgia and retro.

Another significant aspect of readers' handling of the magazines is that they prefer to keep them whole. Only very few people tear out pages and they are primarily designers who use them in mood boards or readers who have worked for the magazine and therefore need the tear sheets in their portfolios.

> I would feel bad about doing it [tearing] with *DANSK*. It's something to do with the way it's attached, it's something like, well it's almost like a book. I can't cut out stuff because if I do that it's not complete anymore. Then it's not as clean. It's pretty OCD like [laughs] but once you've cut it, it's kind of broken. So it's best not to cut it and that's why I put in posted notes.
> *Mathilde*

Some readers scan and photocopy the pages to keep the magazine intact, and keep the pages in a folder as an archive of sorts. Similarly, should they loan magazines to friends, they would make sure to get them back. In reflecting upon why keeping them intact was important, many readers compared them to books:

> Ane: Do you sometimes tear out pages?
> Johan: No, I never have. That's to do with the fact that fashion magazines feel like books to me. You just don't do that with these high-quality fashion mags, the expensive ones. And I would never fold a dog-ear in my books either. I would never do that.
> Ane: Is that to do with the price?
> Johan: No, that's just how I feel. It's the way I was raised. I regard them as literary works or books.

> Ane: If there were pages that are of particular interest to you, would you tear them out?
> Jacob: No, not of *DANSK*. Because it's a magazine I collect. Then there would be no reason to keep it.

> Well, it's a whole which is made ... they have made this as a final product. That's the way it should be so if you tear something out then something is missing of that whole. It sounds more philosophical than it is. I just never thought I would do that. I would photocopy it ....
> *Niels*

Their material status is treasured immensely and keeping them intact as part of magazine collections and archives matters a great deal. Simply possessing the magazines makes the readers feel good in different ways, which I explore below.

> They are part of your library. They are part of my reference books.
> *Johan*

> I have kept a whole box of magazines at my parents', but they are pretty dated now but I don't have the heart to chuck them out because they are books, right.
> *Camilla*

> It [*DANSK*] really stood out on the shelf in Selfridges or in Magasin and in the airport. It was like a book, glossy and all and so thick. Several square kilometres of rainforest must have been slaughtered to make a magazine like this, which is not good, but it looks real nice.
> *Richard*

While *DANSK* is not hardbound like *Self Service*, its glued back binding, rather than stapled, as well as its thick paper give it a book-like quality. The physical book-like 'presence' of the magazine is significant on two levels: firstly, in the same way as books, magazines contain substantial aesthetic information that the readers want to keep like a library. They treasure magazines for their cultural and material value. Secondly, they look 'real nice', as Richard says. By being placed on the same plane as books, niche fashion magazines become valuable as high status objects rather than as frivolous, fun and disposable. Their visual identity is given symbolic value by the readers, and most readers, thus, keep their magazines out on display or even place the newest issue or their favourite magazine on top of the pile.

Consumption is part of everyday life and the goods we consume communicate who we are or who we would like to be. Featherstone (2007) argues that the items we consume can be understood as bearers of aesthetic value and indicators of lifestyle and identity. The physical presence of niche fashion magazines in readers' homes or places of work are used to mediate both their professional and personal identity (which many readers were unable to separate), by lending a part of their visual identity and symbolic capital to the owner. They form part of the visual lifestyle that readers want to display.

> Susan: When it's good quality and when it's something you want to read, you have it lying around. Of course it says a lot about you, what magazines you have lying around. And I'm the type myself, if I have an issue of *DANSK*, although I can't be bothered to read it, I keep it lying around because it says something about me that I have a magazine like this.
> Ane: What does it say about you?
> Susan: It says that I'm interested in fashion and that I can manage things that aren't right in your face, but that you kind of have to imagine stuff yourself. With very commercial magazines you get ... whereas with *DANSK* and *Cover* [Danish monthly] you kind of have to think for yourself.

Possessing magazines makes readers feel good about themselves, as they help to assert their identity as someone who, in Susan's words, 'can manage things that aren't right in your face'. This compares to the way that having certain literature on one's bookshelf communicates the owner's degree of cultural capitals. S/he might not have read *Ulysses*, but having it on display helps to construct the desired identity as a James Joyce reader.

The physical quality of magazines and their inseparable symbolic significance are used to communicate social distinction. Magazines are endowed with meaning by the readers and become extensions of their desired identity and self-concept.

Self-Extension

> All objects are social agents in the limited sense that they extend human action and mediate meanings between humans.
> (Tim Dant 1999: 13)

Following Dant, magazines become meaningful in that they mediate meaning and become extensions of the readers. This is the focus of this section. While readers refer to niche fashion magazines as a point of reference, many say they do not reread or use them as often as they would like to. Thus, the reason for keeping them is not based entirely on their cultural value (aesthetic and historic references) or material value (collection/archive/library). On account of the magazine's physical status and visual identity they become symbolically valuable in that they provide readers with a sense of self-identity.

In places of work engaged in cultural production magazines are often displayed, like coffee table books, for clients to see, as Anne says:

> Ane: Where would you keep *DANSK*?
> Anne: I would keep them in my studio. I think it looks good when you have clients visiting.
> Ane: In what way?
> Anne: It is a lush magazine to have. I think it's cool to have this lying on the table for clients to look at.

DANSK is used to send a signal about her company's profile and ultimately about her professional identity. At work and in the home, magazines become part of the interior, in piles and on bookshelves. One reader even has custom-made boxes made to protect his magazines from wear and tear and dust. Most readers carefully style their homes around magazines and make sure that the magazines are arranged for visitors to see:

> Ane: Where do you keep them?
> Johan: Normally in the living room or when I lived alone on the coffee table or lying around where people would sit and read it. Because a lot of having it out is to do with that it's a statement. When I got too many they were piled up or on the window ledge. They were just littered everywhere. But it wasn't random, they were almost placed.
> Ane: Did you place them?

> Johan: Yes, you did that sometimes, that's for sure. Yes. Depending on what kind of visitors you had, right. You could change them and put other ones out.

Johan attributes meaning to the magazine through what McCracken (1990) calls 'meaning transfer', which is a two-way movement. Meaning is a culturally constituted movement between agents (readers) and the goods (magazines), which is informed by the values encoded at the moment of production. Readers' meaning-making is informed by the culture of fashion (the field, its logic and agents) and knowledge and expectations of the magazine genre, as established earlier with Jauss (Jauss in Rice and Waugh 1997) and Ang (1996) (Cf. Chapter Seven). Meaning, following McCracken (1990), is transferred to the magazine by the readers bringing their culturally constituted knowledge into play. McCracken pursues the concept, arguing that meaning can also be transferred from the object, the material status of magazines, to the consumer through various personal rituals. Through what he coins 'possession rituals' (McCracken 1990: 85), consumers attend to the object, for instance via reflection and showing it off. Through this ritual, consumers create value of the magazine by displaying it and they use it as a marker of status and lifestyle, for instance, as well as of field membership. The idea of possession rituals is useful to understanding how magazines become meaningful as part of readers' self-identity and sense of self.

> I think I've this idea that if I own a magazine, even if I don't know all of the knowledge that's in it, it becomes part of my library.
> *Simon*

By simply possessing them and keeping them on display in their homes, readers attribute magazines with meaning and they become part of their identity. Belk (1995: 65) argues that paramount to understanding consumer culture and consumer behaviour is the hypothesis that 'you are what you possess'. He argues that 'a key to understanding what possessions mean is recognizing that, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves' (Belk 1988: 139). This condition is exactly what Marx criticised about the exchange value of capitalist society where 'commodity fetishism' is key and the value of labour has been displaced by things. Whether we agree with Marx or not, magazines, through rituals of possession, become a treasured part of readers' extended selves and thus, as Miller (2001: 116) argues, 'objects and persons have values which are interchangeable'. As Susan says above, she keeps *DANSK* on display because it communicates her identity to other people as someone creative who can think for herself, just as Johan styles his home with magazines with the intention of impressing his visitors. Belk (1988: 147) argues that relationships with

objects 'are never two-way (person-thing), but always three-way (person-thing-person).' Susan uses magazine just in this way, not so much in a relationship between herself and the magazines, but as an intermediary between herself and another person.

Encapsulated in Susan, Johan and Simon's quotes is that niche fashion magazines are used as part of readers' social distinction and knowledge of them is instrumental to process of self-extension. Much work on fashion and lifestyle consumption (Simmel 1973a; Bourdieu 1984; Veblen 1994) argues that objects of consumption are markers of social distinction and class:

> Consumption is the articulation of a sense of identity. Our identity is made up by our consumption of goods – and their consumption and display constitutes our expression of taste. So display to ourselves and to others – is largely for symbolic significance, indicating our membership of a particular culture. (Mackay 1997: 4)

In this context, the magazines we read demonstrate our taste and membership of the magazine culture. The magazine objects thus matter greatly to the creation of identity, as they signal who we are or who we aspire to be. In his early work on consumption, Baudrillard (2003 [1969]) sees objects of consumption as signs released from their functional use and their exchange and symbolic values. They are autonomous and divorced from their material referent. While the consumption of niche fashion magazines involves functional use, exchange values and material status, there is an interesting point to be taken from Baudrillard's idea of the consumption based on the 'logic of sign value' (2003: 257), as this also refers to the logic of status and differentiation. The magazine as a material object, on the shelf next to books or in the pile with the newest or most treasured issue on top, is used as a lifestyle prop that signals status and social differentiation. Magazines mediate exclusivity, prestige as part of a collection as well as the aesthetic knowledge of the owner. The magazine is a sign, or an extension in Simon's words, of the desired identity as reader in the know, and this way it becomes a part of him.

The idea of social distinction is central to understanding how magazines are part of the aestheticisation (Featherstone 2007) of lifestyle. They form part of the construction of readers' self-identity and materialise their symbolic and cultural capital. Although Simon says he does not 'know all of the knowledge that's in it', it gives him a feeling of possessing the knowledge. Having them on the shelf sends a signal that readers 'can think for themselves' and that they do not need to be spoon-fed what is cool. Simon, a particularly pensive reader, reflects further on how magazines are an extension of his identity:

> Simon: I don't believe that you ever finish with a magazine. I think it has like its own life journey. It's forever relevant, it just becomes a case of – you know – to what extent you're willing to hold onto it, to wait for that moment where it's really useful. I just think there's an element of it being part of the furniture, making me feel good about myself. I consider myself someone who likes to be ... a little bit different, a little bit individual and I think niche fashion magazines help me to feel that way.
> Ane: Would you say that magazines are some sort of a self-fulfilment?
> Simon: Yeah, I think so. I think it makes you feel more connected, more fashionable and I suppose your cultural capital is improved. I suppose it's an extension of yourself, to push it to the ultimate conclusion, I think it becomes an extension of your identity and I think when people come into your room and they see it, then it becomes something they associate with you, makes you ... I think it enhances your personal brand.

As part of the furniture and as decoration of the home, magazines become part of readers' identity. Instead of referring to identity, this reader's concept of 'personal brand' is interesting as it implies that the self-concept or the desired identity is something to be advertised to a third party. As such magazines are used as branding of desired selves and that sends a signal to others of who they would like to be. In her work on home decoration, Alison Clarke (2001: 42) also argues that 'the house objectifies the vision the occupants have of themselves in the eyes of others and as such it becomes an entity and process to live up to, give time to, show off to'.

Niche fashion magazines are indeed such a significant means for mediating identity that even titles that readers dislike are kept to boost their 'personal brand'. For instance, Danish readers who are critical of *DANSK* (see previous section), still keep it on display in their homes. Jacob, for instance, who criticised *DANSK* heavily, uses both his favourite niche fashion magazines and *DANSK* as interior styling.

> Well, I have a long shelving unit where I put things, which are nice to look at. And a *DANSK* issue is there from time to time. I did put an old *DANSK* there again because I thought it suited the other stuff I had out. It was *The Blonde Issue* [issue 3, 2003] that has been out a couple of times.
> *Jacob*

Gabriella does the same, despite her mixed feelings.

> Ane: Do you keep *DANSK*?
> Gabriella: Yes, and that is really very interesting because I never look at it. I don't use it for anything. I think it's the format and the ... well, it is like a book sitting on the shelf. There is something that makes you want to keep it. But I'd like to know what that is?
> Ane: Is it because it is heavy?
> Gabriella: Yes ... or it is because it looks nice with a *DANSK* magazine on the shelf. I'm not proud to admit this.

So while some readers may criticise *DANSK* for lacking fashion capital, specifically

in relation to its ads and visual identity, they still use it as style prop to strengthen their own profile. How are we to understand these oppositions? In his analysis of the ideology underpinning the teenage magazine *Seventeen* and readers' potential resistance to it, John Fiske (1990: 185) claims that in order to successfully appeal to its audience, a magazine 'must contain some signs of their oppositional social position'. Consumption is a complex and contradictory process, as Edwards (2000) argues. Magazine consumption involves oppositional and mixed feelings from its reader, who, as examined in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, is exposed to heterogeneous messages within a single medium. One way of dealing with these mixed messages is to oppose them, without overthrowing them. This relates back to the previous arguments on the doxa. Readers may obtain a critical position, but they do not destroy 'the game itself' (Bourdieu 1993b: 134), i.e. the game of using magazines as status display. This means that while readers may have mixed feelings about the aesthetics of the magazine, and employ 'negotiated reading' (Hall 1996; Morley 1992), the status-giving qualities of the magazine takes precedence. In addition, in an interview situation, informants often want to present themselves as knowledgeable and critical readers. One way of doing that is by positioning themselves against the magazine. Similar to Bourdieu (1993a) on the denial of economic capital and 'art for art's sake', Frederik Stjernfelt and Søren Ulrik Thomsen (2005) have identified, and not just within the avant-garde, a general tendency within contemporary culture towards a preferred critical and oppositional viewpoint. They argue that if one wants recognition, it is imperative to be oppositional without really admitting to what one prefers. Stjernfelt and Thomsen call this 'the negative constructiveness',[i] which implies a focus on the thing one dissociates oneself from, in the position of 'anti'. While this reading by no means disregards readers' critical analysis, the fact that even oppositional readers keep it for its status-giving qualities shows the complexities and contradictions involved in magazines consumption.

Conclusion

What does this tell us about the economic consumption of magazines? And how do readers appropriate the physical status of the magazines in their home? There are three aspects involved in the consumption of material culture of *DANSK* and other niche fashion magazines. Firstly, the actual economic consumption is limited, as magazines are available to the readers through free channels. Furthermore, as shown in the previous chapter, readers claim that they rarely purchase anything they have seen in the pages of niche fashion magazines, but use other channels such as Internet

sites on the latest collections, blogs and women's fashion magazines. Secondly, magazines are kept as collections of historical documentation and aesthetic information. Thirdly, as physical objects they are given meaning through a process of aestheticisation of readers' lifestyles, which gives them a sense of social distinction and self-identity. Magazines become totemic emblems of identity, acting as intermediaries transmitting meaning from the (desired) lifestyle and aesthetic position of the owner to others who operate in the field of fashion and reproduce the logic of high status and exclusivity. There are two dynamic forces at work in the consumption of material objects: differentiation and similarity (Lunt 1995). Thus, the consumption of niche fashion magazines essentially expresses the dynamics of how readers negotiate between making individual and social identities. Maffesoli's (1996) definition of neo-tribes, on which the definition of magazine culture draws, can illuminate readers' actions in possessing the magazines and displaying them in their homes. Maffesoli argues (1996: 93) that members of the neo-tribe employ certain rituals, which are 'specific signs of recognition which have no other goal than to strengthen the small group against the large'. Following this, readers of niche fashion magazines assert their membership of the exclusive niche fashion magazine culture by appropriating the magazines as styling props indicative of their inside position, which in turn gives them a sense of belonging.

I have also argued that underlying niche fashion magazine consumption is a certain kind of productivity through which readers actively appropriate magazines into their lives and homes as both objects of styling and part of a library. Furthermore, via this productivity readers engage in immaterial labour (Arvidsson 2005) through which magazines become meaningful social constructions of value. In the next chapter, I will discuss further the way that readers can be said to engage in production.

[i] 'Den negative opbyggelighed'

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

The Significance of Niche Fashion Magazine Cultures

Summary

In this thesis I have explored the cultural circuit of a niche fashion magazine and the values, meanings and practices that are mediated within this circuit. Both the niche fashion magazine genre and the research methodology applied have previously been overlooked by fashion academics. In order to understand niche fashion magazines and their cultures, I have used the circuit of culture (Johnson 1986; du Gay *et al.* 1997) approach for an integrated methodology, and Bourdieu's (1993a) work on cultural production and his notions of field and capital to understand the values and beliefs underlying the production and consumption of magazines. In this chapter, besides summing up my findings, I will discuss the wider issues arising from this thesis, and the significance of niche fashion magazines in the field of fashion. I also explore how they constitute a culture and suggest avenues for future research.

In Chapter Four, I argue that since the late nineteenth century, when fashion magazines were established as a genre in their own right, the genre has continually changed, modulated, and redefined itself, increasingly blurring the visual distinctions between the alternative and the mainstream fashion press. Niche fashion magazines grew out of the style magazines of the 1980s and emerged as a genre in the early 1990s. With their small-scale and restricted production, independence, limited print run, expensive paper and exclusive fashion focus they mix the codes of style magazines, high-fashion magazines and art catalogues. On a visual and journalistic level they are comparable with style magazines and high-end women's fashion magazines but niche fashion magazines are more focused on high fashion than style magazines, and their ironic and intellectualising writing brackets off more readers than the 'directive fashion writing' found in most women's fashion magazines.

What I refer to as glossy niche magazines and art fashion magazines are the two principal subgenres of niche fashion magazines, and while their journalistic and photographic styles overlap, they are distinguished by the different belief in fashion they mediate: in glossy niche magazines, which are predominantly British, fashion is a frivolous topic and part of popular culture. In these magazines, fashion writing is characterised by a high degree of irony. Through digital manipulation, the fashion photography escapes reality, constructing a picture-perfect fantasy world of desires. Based primarily in Paris and continental Europe, art fashion magazines take fashion seriously, exploring it intellectually, mediating a belief in fashion as high

culture. In these magazines, fashion photography gestures towards art, documentary and nude photography. What is significant about the niche fashion magazine genre is that while it straddles both popular culture and high culture, a distinction between the two persists within the subgenres. By experimenting with the layout and format of fashion magazines, niche fashion magazines present new ways of representing fashion. As a whole they sit on the edge of the fashion press, representing the haute couture of fashion mediation. Intrinsic to the niche fashion magazine culture is that it is produced and consumed by cultural intermediaries who share similar values.

In Chapter Five, I offer a micro-analysis of the specific case study of this thesis, *DANSK*, and its fashion photography and fashion writing. *DANSK*'s specific lush aesthetic profile, what the editors refer to as 'eye candy', positions it in the subfield of glossy niche magazines where the fashion photography is characterised by 'digital hyperrealism'. The fashion writing in *DANSK* is a heterogeneous mix of three styles: directive fashion writing with 'direct recipe' format and consumer help rhetoric; intellectualising writing used primarily in features and articles on art and cultural trends; and, lastly, ironic fashion writing which creates a double distance between both the subject matter and the writer's position.

Like other niche fashion magazines, *DANSK* is a creative outlet attached to a more viable mother business, Style Counsel, that can ensure both capital and a network from which advertisers are sourced, which I explore in Chapter Six. As an interfirm business at the time of research, *DANSK*'s production relies on the alliance between two companies, Style Counsel and Dyhr.Hagen, and their different competences. The producers are driven by status differentiation, recognition from other producers and an 'art-for-art's-sake' and a 'production-for-producers' logic (Bourdieu 1993a). The magazine relies greatly on freelance culture, with the economic calculations informing the production resting primarily on contributors and editors sharing the belief in position-takings and potential accumulation of fashion capital, as payment is symbolic. Their motivation for producing *DANSK* is, however, not disinterested, as they do it to acquire fashion capital, attract more clients for Style Counsel and potentially become part of the consecrated avant-garde.

While the editors distinguish *DANSK* from other niche fashion magazines by its special 'eye candy' profile, their taste in fashion, and thus their production of *DANSK*, are informed by a 'collective taste' (Blumer 1969) in fashion and, most importantly, their wish to be in fashion. Essentially, in order for *DANSK* and its producers to stand out, their practices need to resonate with, and be recognised as valuable by, other members of the field of fashion. The editors of *DANSK* orient

themselves towards other producers and the magazine is thus informed by the shared practices and aesthetics of other producers. Ensured by the use of high-status models, photographers and key collection items and news which has not been circulated too extensively by other publications, exclusivity and timing are the underlying values through which the producers can gain fashion capital and the magazine status. These values are also shared and reproduced by the readers.

Inextricably bound to the editors and the whole niche fashion magazine culture are the readers and their sense of belonging to the group, which are the focus of Chapter Seven. By and large readers make sense of *DANSK* according to the intention of the editors: the preferred reading. Criticism and negotiated readings occur when it is not delivering to their expectations of exclusivity, 'out-of-reachness' and newness, but as readers have internalised the values of the field of fashion they expect the use of ads, key collection items and models. These elements are judged by their level of status so that the more exclusive, rarer and newer they are, and the more high-fashion capital they are endowed with, the more prestigious they are for the magazine. Through reading niche fashion magazines, specialist readers are reassured about their values and their membership of the niche magazine culture.

In Chapter Eight I argue that readers' economic consumption of magazines suggests that they make great use of retail spaces where free magazine reading is available. They claim that they do not use niche fashion magazines as consumer help or purchase products they have seen in the magazines, because they use other types of media for that. While readers read them free of charge at select newsstands, they do also buy the niche fashion magazines that they feel especially passionate about. The physical status of magazines matters greatly: they constitute collections and libraries, which are used as historical documentation and aesthetic information as well as markers of identity. They become meaningful through a process of aestheticisation, in which they are used as style props in readers' homes, giving them a sense of social distinction and self-identity. As such magazines demonstrate readers' inside position in the magazine culture as well as providing them with a sense of belonging to it. Niche fashion magazines are used as means of self-extension, mediating meaning from the (desired) lifestyle and aesthetic position of the owner to other members of the magazine culture. Through the creative work of consumption, readers of niche fashion magazines assert their membership of niche fashion magazine culture by investing the material culture of the magazines with symbolic and social values. In a manner reminiscent of Corrigan (1997), Ferguson (1983) and Ballaster *et al.*'s (1991) findings that women's magazines provide readers with a sense of community and sameness, *DANSK* readers, who are also readers of the wider niche fashion press, belong to a shared community where different

registers of reading (flicking through, looking, reading) as well as possessing and displaying niche magazines bestow them with knowledge and help construct their self-identity as knowledgeable fashion literates.

Business-to-business Culture

I have argued throughout this thesis for a methodological integration of the moments of production, consumption and representation involved in the niche fashion magazine culture. I will now explore more closely how these moments constitute a self-referential culture and what the nature of this culture is. As outlined in Chapter One, one of the key features of culture is the ways in which meaning and aesthetic practices are shared within imagined and real communities across global and local subcultures. What is significant about the niche fashion magazine culture is that production and consumption are interrelated practices.

Edwards (2000) notes that recent research on consumer society (see, for instance, Fine and Leopold 2002; Hesmondhalgh 2002; Mackay 1997; Miller 1987; Slater 1997) has reincorporated and reinterpreted a Marxist approach to consumption, which views consumption and production not as separate entities but as interrelated moments of the process of culture. However, with the exception of Jackson *et al.* (2001) research has not viewed fashion magazine consumption through this approach.

In their capacity as producers of culture, the informant readers are specialist readers. They gauge niche fashion magazines' status as an extension of their producers and the level of fashion capital they are endowed with. This reassures them of the culture and the shared values of exclusivity, timing and being in fashion, which they reproduce. Furthermore, the work of consumption, as Chapter Eight showed, involves active appropriation and use of magazines as an archive or collection. Through the process of appropriation and possession identities are constructed. Consumption functions as 'immaterial labour' (Arvidsson 2005) and as such readers engage in productivity when making sense of, and valuing, magazines.

In their capacity as consumers of culture, the editors and contributors' own consumption is a prerequisite for their production of niche fashion magazines, as this depends on knowing the field of fashion and reproducing standard practices such as using collection samples, models, writing about lifestyle trends, and digital manipulation of photography. Through travelling, consumption of fashion, magazines, entertainment, art, dining and partying they build their fashion capital – a process that relies on knowing other media and players of fashion. So while the

producers are essentially the sellers of the magazine, they are also consumers of the same market of fashion.

Readers and producers are connected through, for want of a better expression, a culture of professionalism. Thus, the consumption and production of niche fashion magazines are processes of cultural gatekeeping, demarcating 'us' from 'them'.

Elite?

I now want to dwell for a moment on the nature of the culture of niche fashion media. I have already established that the magazine under study acts as an intermediary, linking the readers and producers, who, in the magazine, together find a channel for displaying and gaining fashion capital. I have tried to explain the genre by arguing that it straddles a belief in both popular culture and high culture, in the subgenres of glossy niche magazines and art fashion magazines respectively. Available theories on postmodernism (see, for instance, Baudrillard 1995, 1999; Huyssen 1988; Lyotard 1984; Jameson 1991), whether celebratory or condemnatory, agree that postmodernism is characterised by a dissolution of barriers between high and low culture and an inherent challenge against the avant-garde high cultural canon of modernism (Milner and Browitt 2002). While the social, artistic and geographical conditions of modernism no longer apply to contemporary culture, a modernist belief in art as high elitist culture exists within the subgenre of art fashion magazines. I have argued that the genre is a hybrid that mixes cultural codes but I have also attempted to make sense of the logic of the production and consumption of niche fashion magazines with an 'art-for-art's-sake' (Bourdieu 1993a: 36) approach, arguing that the motivation for producing *DANSK* is not economic but to gain symbolic status and recognition by other producers, and that the readers reproduce this logic. This may seem contradictory because, while the genre can be understood as a post-modern hybrid of magazine genres, there is a strong belief in elitism underpinning its culture, especially the elitism of art fashion magazines. With the use of irony both in photography and writing, intellectual treatment of topics, restricted points of purchase and limited editions, produced and consumed by elite groups, niche fashion magazines are not just exclusive, they sit on the edge of elitism. I would argue that the distinction, which remains unresolved, between high and popular culture persists within the magazines. Mirroring the contradictory nature of contemporary culture, the genre is 'complex, ambivalent and contested' (Hesmondhalgh 2002: 3).

Cultural Mix

What is niche fashion magazines' position in the field of fashion? And how can the niche fashion magazine be said to be significant? In his work on cultural consumption, Grant McCracken (1990: 80-81) suggests that the movement of meaning in the fashion system is produced and transferred through three sites of 'meaning transfer': media, opinion leaders and groups 'that exist at the margin of society: hippies, punks, or gays', which could be called subcultures. Niche fashion magazines straddle all three positions. With their linkage to subcultures and their high-end position in the field of fashion, they constitute a media that merges edge and elite, which according to McCracken is significant in producing fashion meaning. Essentially, niche fashion magazines are a medium significant for making fashion change and move forward, and they provide a focal point for the movers and shakers of fashion. Referring to the power of gatekeepers in making a style a fashion, Yuniya Kawamura (2006: 79) argues that the print media have 'important functions for fashion diffusion', as designers 'need to be legitimised by those who have the power and authority to influence, such as editors from major fashion magazines'. Niche fashion magazines hold a special position in the field of fashion in that they are both produced and consumed by cultural intermediaries who in their work create fashions within culture, and as such they constitute business-to-business media. The producers and consumers (who are also producers) do not work to represent the fashion designers and serve the industry but are driven by their own aesthetic and economic calculations and 'position-takings'. Being at the forefront of fashion, the magazines and their producers and consumers contribute to the remaking of fashion's cultural definitions. Niche fashion magazines are vehicles of aesthetic mediation of fashion. Their high-status aesthetic mediation is esteemed as innovative and acts by linking people and media together in an exclusive culture. Niche fashion magazines are the textual tissue, which Arjan Appadurai (1996: 9) calls a 'text-in-motion', that connects people from across local subcultures in a global mediascape.

How does the future look for niche fashion magazines? In these times of global recession, advertising budgets are plummeting and, like most other businesses, the fashion press is suffering. However, with their highly segmented profile, expensive production and rare frequency niche fashion magazines are a luxury commodity, the haute couture of the fashion press, which was never really a moneymaking venture. The increasing coverage of fashion in the media, free online sites and free newspapers may have bigger repercussions for mid-range women's fashion magazines than for niche fashion magazines. As an innovative creative medium they work as brand extensions of the contributors, products, brands and

advertisers featured, treasured for their rarity and high cultural value. Yet a way for niche fashion magazines to stay alive economically is for the genre to change and adapt to the times. This is already beginning to happen as publishers reduce the frequency of magazines, but the biggest change is that the makers of niche fashion magazines have started to venture into cyberspace: *Interview* magazine's website provides fashion spreads, full interviews and videos. *Contributing Editor* is an online niche fashion magazine, *Wanchor* magazine, a new Internet-only niche fashion magazine, launched during London Fashion Week in September 2009, and even *Purple Magazine*, whose justification, as outlined in Chapter One, is formulated as outside the Internet and practical consumption, now offers an addition to the magazine through the personal blog www.purple-diary.com. Ponystep, once a subcultural club in London's Shoreditch led by Richard Mortimer, is now also an Internet-based style magazine. While niche fashion magazines are available to read free of charge at certain points of purchase, as shown in Chapter Eight, Internet-based niche fashion magazines transform the values of the genre and its material culture. David Hesmondhalgh (2002) shows how falling revenues in the late-1970s magazine publishing industry resulted in a number of innovations, including desktop publishing software, as well as the formation of niche markets. Similarly, the current downturn may force innovations in terms of genre modification, increasing employment of online niche fashion mediation and other methods of publication. As Turner argues, genres 'continually change, modulate, and redefine themselves' (cited in Lacey 2000: 134), and in so doing subgenres may emerge which both share conventions with the niche fashion magazine genre and have new conventions specific to them.

Future Research

In this research on fashion mediation in contemporary niche fashion magazine cultures I have provided a thorough case study of a specific niche fashion magazine. By doing so I have addressed a gap in academic methodology and knowledge on niche fashion magazines, their producers and consumers and the processes of niche fashion mediation. In arguing that niche fashion magazines make up a specific type of fashion mediation, I have primarily explored the work of the editors and readers and looked at some of the disciplines that go into the production, such as fashion writing, styling, art direction and fashion photography, as well as briefly mentioned blogs as new sites of fashion mediation. These are sites which comprise what Anne Cronin (2004) calls different 'multiple regimes of mediation', a term that refers to the way different practices are involved in making of, for instance, the same ad

campaign or Internet magazine. Future research could investigate the cultural practices of these other regimes of fashion mediation.

I have argued that genres change constantly. A future project could explore the modification of the genre when published online and investigate if that results in democratisation, and eventually alternation, of the value of exclusivity that is significant to the paper-based genre.

I have also discussed the Danish cultural geography of *DANSK* and the Englishness and Frenchness of the niche fashion magazine subgenres, glossy niche magazines and art fashion magazines respectively. How do the cultural, social, historical and economic conditions of, for instance, London inform the production and consumption of fashion magazines? And what is the relationship between the local sites and the global circulation?

Intrinsic to the niche fashion magazine genre is the dialectics between edge and elite, avant-garde and mainstream, subculture and popular culture, which are not easily resolved. If my arguments read divergently at times, it is because niche fashion magazines are a complex medium and stand in the middle of these oppositions, post-modern or not. Other research projects could set out a methodological and theoretical framework for understanding the complexities of contemporary fashion mediation.

Despite wanting to demonstrate the integrated culture of niche fashion magazines, one of the limitations of this thesis might be that it is structured in the distinctive moments, representation, production and consumption, involved in the circuit of culture. Instead future research on cultures of fashion mediation could be structured thematically, with a focus on where the moments join, and in that way overcome what Angela McRobbie (1994: 59) has called a binary opposition between 'text and lived experience'.

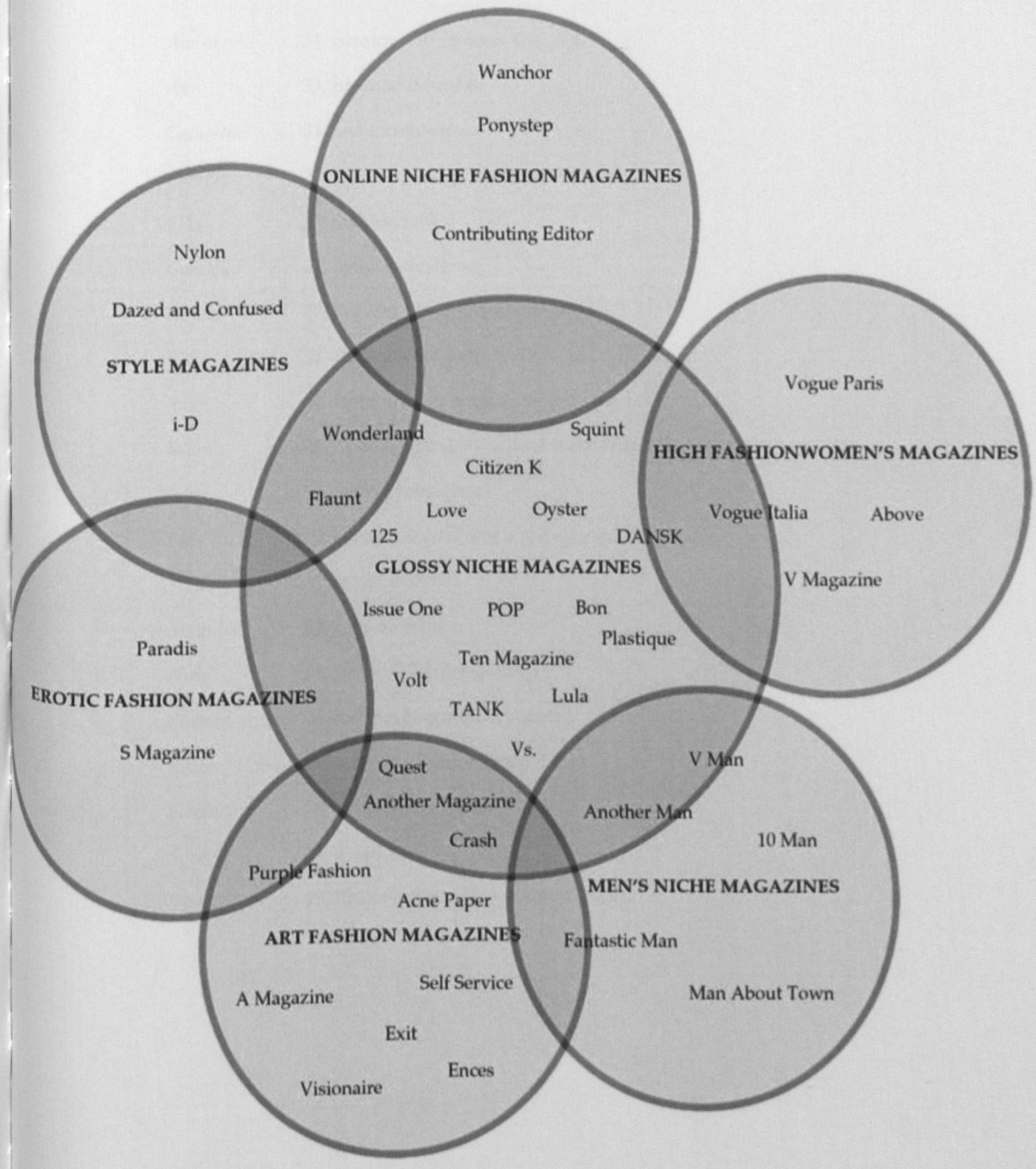
The primary contribution of this thesis is the integration of the key moments of niche fashion magazine production, consumption and representation, focusing on a specific case study. In addition, gaining ethnographic access to the guarded 'behind the scenes' of the making of a niche fashion magazine has never before been achieved by researchers. It is thus my hope that this thesis can be a springboard for researchers to pursue fieldwork in the fashion industry and that the fashion industry will be more open to researchers so that new knowledge on fashion media practices can be generated.

APPENDIX A

List of the wider field of niche fashion magazines

A Magazine
Above
Acne Paper
Amelias
Androgyny
Another Magazine
Another Man
B Magazine
Big
Blackbook
Bon
Borne
Citizen K
Commons & Sense
Crash
Dansk
Dazed and Confused
Dealer du Luxe
Distill
Drama
Exit
Fantastic Man
Fanzine 137
Fashion Rag
FAT
Flaunt
Flux
French
Fused
Haddi & More
He Magazine
i-D
Issue One
Journal
Let them Eat Cake
Lula
Man About Town
Neo 2
Nico
Nylon
Nylon for Guys
Oyster
Papermag
Paradis
Perfect
Pig
Plastique
Plastic Rhino
Pop
Preen
Quest
Purple Fashion
Rubbish
Russh
S Magazine
Sam
Self Service
Slash
Spoon
Squint
Super Super
Surface
Tank
The Last Magazine
The Journal
Tush
V
Vague Paper
Visionaire
Volt
Vs.
WAD
Wonderland
032C
10
10 Man
125
...

APPENDIX B: THE FIELD OF NICHE FASHION MAGAZINES



APPENDIX C: LIST OF INFORMANTS

All names have been changed.

Amber	31, curator and fashion lecturer
Ann	33, product designer
Catherine	31, fashion designer
Camilla	28, fashion photography student
Ellis	27, fashion stylist
Gabriella	31, fashion designer
Hanne	27, fashion photography student
Helle	33, fashion designer
Jacob	32, fashion designer and brand manager
Johan	28, upper secondary school teacher and former fashion model
Julie	31, fashion designer
Liv	30, executive editor of a niche fashion magazine
Mads	31, interior stylist
Mathilde	30, film director
Niels	26, fashion design student
Richard	20, fashion journalism student
Robin	31, fashion photographer
Simon	28, brand consultant
Susan	31, graphic designer
Victor	29, PhD student and freelance writer

APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY

Advertorial: A combination of 'advertisement' and 'editorial'. An advertorial is usually an article or a series of images produced for the magazine to look like an independent story, but they are paid for by advertisers or produced editorially to give favourable exposure to the advertising brand. Some advertorials clearly show this by the header 'promotion' or 'advertisement', and the Advertising Standards Authority in the UK requires advertorials to be clearly marked as such.

Editorials: A term used more broadly in the magazine industry that refers to fashion spreads (see below) in fashion magazines, more specifically niche fashion and high fashion women's magazines. In contrast to 'commercial' work, editorial work is highly valued by models, photographers and stylists as it endows them with the high fashion capital necessary to get work on well-paid high fashion campaigns.

DTP: An abbreviation of 'Desktop publishing'. It refers to the use of the computer and software to create visual displays and page layouts. Desktop publishing software, such as InDesign and QuarkXPress, is used to create publications.

Fashion spread: Refers both to two facing pages as well as successive pages of fashion images produced for the magazine. 'Fashion spread' is often used interchangeably with 'fashion story' or 'editorial'.

F-O-B: Magazine industry terminology for 'Front of book'. A women's fashion magazine such as *Vogue*, published by a media house, is called a book by its editors and producers. The front of the book, roughly one-third, is where the shorter articles and news items as well as ads are placed.

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