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Propaganda, Patriotism, and Rivalry: How the Interests of the Trade Press Shaped British Fashion Following the Second World War

As the Second World War drew to a close in 1945, other conflicts emerged across Britain concerning the type of society and economy that should be built out of the rubble. Some of the more heated of these debates concerned the future of the fashion industry, as total war had impacted everything from procurement to retail, and it was apparent that the scale of change since 1939 meant there could be no return to pre-war business as usual.¹ This chapter explores the role that the fashion trade press – defined as publications produced for a readership of fashion industry professionals – played in disseminating ideas about how the British fashion industry should respond to this new post-war order. It demonstrates the importance of the trade press as a two-pronged propaganda tool for the industry; on the one hand boosting moral and communicating ideas about fashionable trends, new technologies, and business strategies internally within the industry, while on the other, lobbying for industry interests to external bodies, including the government. Analysis of the trade press through this lens therefore reveals much about how ideas for the direction of the future of British fashion were disseminated, exchanged, and debated within different sectors of the fashion industry and more broadly in public life.

The period between 1945 and 1950 was a time of shifting priorities and circumstances for British fashion as the country transitioned out of war. Following five years during which its role revolved around communicating government regulations – and during which its content was censored – the trade press had to adapt its practices in peacetime to lobby for the interests of an industry keen to exploit new opportunities created by the wartime disruption of the global economy. This necessitated communicating both within the industry and to a newly-elected Labour government which had bold ambitions for (but limited understanding of) the fashion industry. This chapter looks across the content of a range of trade publications in order to understand both the types of changes editors and contributors wanted to effect within the industry, and how they used their editorial privilege to construct arguments towards this purpose. In particular, this chapter reveals how publications used rhetoric and visual imagery to convince their readers of their authority as sources of information about trends in both fashion business and design. It focuses on two key areas of contestation that featured regularly in editorial articles: the relationship between government regulation and private fashion businesses, and debates about what type of fashion industry Britain should build in order to ensure success in a very different post-war world. By unpicking the agendas and discursive methods of trade publications it reveals new understandings of the debates and power dynamics that shaped mid-twentieth century British fashion.

In spite of the increased prevalence of fashion media studies as part of the larger growth of dress history and fashion studies in recent years, the trade press is still widely overlooked as a distinct genre of fashion media and it is notably absent from otherwise broad edited collections on the subject.² It is most commonly employed by fashion historians as a resource from which to extract factual evidence to support arguments around the history of the fashion industry.³ But the trade press has never had a purely documentary function, nor can it be grouped together as a homogenous whole. The evident contradictions and biases within different trade publications show that they served a range of readerships from different sectors of the industry, and the variety of their editorial lines trouble the use of these sources as an ‘authentic’ record of the fashion industry. This makes a re-evaluation of the use of trade publications, and the mechanisms through which they disseminate ideas about what the fashion industry is and should be, long overdue in order to keep pace with a wider criticality of media discourse as an agent of change within fashion studies.⁴

This chapter draws upon developments in the way that magazines and periodical materials are used in fashion scholarship, where there has been a distinct move away from an ‘unquestioning’ use of these published sources as evidence for what people wore, and a growing recognition that they offer far richer source material for unpicking questions of subjectivity, desire, consumer identity, and cultural norms.⁵ As Cynthia White demonstrated in her seminal sociological study of women’s magazines, in order to understand the processes by which periodicals influenced and impacted the fashion industry it is necessary to look at both what information was communicated through them and the factors – ranging from social and technological changes to the personalities of individual editors and contributors – that shaped the nature of their content and its reach.⁶ Consequently, this chapter approaches the trade press with an understanding that the media does not merely represent or report on events, but rather plays an active role in shaping them through the presentation and dissemination of selected information. In doing so, it highlights how the trade press used words and images to upset established power dynamics and reshape the material world of post-war British fashion.

The Development of the British Fashion Trade Press to the 1940s

British fashion trade publications are a media genre born from the expansion of periodical publishing during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, a period during which the production and circulation of knowledge was carefully managed under the guiding principal that ‘knowledge is power’.⁷ This expansion was the result of advances in technology;⁸ the development of increasingly efficient communication and distribution networks;⁹ and increased literacy rates.¹⁰

A number of specialist trade publications emerged between 1860 and 1890, including the *Draper and Clothier*, probably the first example of a British trade publication for the dress and textile industries.¹¹

This publication only ran from 1859 to 1862, likely due to a shortage of readers and a lack of willing advertisers. Printed advertisements effectively subsidized the cost of producing periodicals (as is the case with contemporary magazine publishing), and the willingness of specialist businesses to buy print advertisements was particularly important for trade publications due to their small circulations.¹² It was not until the first decades of the twentieth century and the development of mass production garment manufacturing that the fashion trade press really became established in Britain.¹³ The growing economic importance of clothing manufacturing during this era provided a larger readership for trade publications, and the communication of manufacturing techniques and industry news became increasingly important as fashion manufacture and retail became less localized industries due to the growth of multiple retailers, national wholesalers, and mail order. Furthermore, fashion trends were changing faster than ever, and industry professionals could not afford to let their fashionable knowledge fall behind that of their consumers, who were now able to access new weekly magazines to inform them of the latest looks.¹⁴

Circulation numbers drove subscription and advertising revenue, and publishers of professional and trade publications of all genres learned early on that simply reporting new discoveries and industry developments was not enough to keep readership high. It was publishing 'professional disagreements and demands for reform' that really kept people reading.¹⁵ Much like mainstream fashion and lifestyle magazines, the trade press needed to provide both information and entertainment. One of the best ways to achieve this was by developing strong editorial lines that provoked both agreement and argument from their readers.

By the 1940s the British Fashion Trade press comprised a wide range of publications representing a span of the industry's different sectors. The most prominent of these was *Drapers' Record*, founded in 1887 and edited during this period by B. A. Cooper. *Drapers' Record* featured a large number of single author editorials, often densely written in highly technical language, which discussed industry trends and the fortunes of major fashion businesses. While not the most progressive or user-friendly publication, it used its didactic and somewhat old-fashioned editorial tone as a tool by which to convey an almost paternalistic authority in its pronouncements on the impact of governmental policies on industry and taxation.

Other established trade publications chose to reinforce their continued relevance during an era of tumultuous change not with editorial continuity but reinvention. In March 1945 the *Drapers' Organiser*, founded in 1915, modernized its name to *Fashions and Fabrics* in recognition of the changed post-war industry and its merger with *Drapery & Fashion Weekly*. *Fashions and Fabrics* employed simpler vocabulary in order to communicate to a broader readership. The publication was more concerned with communicating new fashion design trends than *Drapers' Record*, and

consequentially included a larger number of fashion illustrations and photographs from the Paris and London couture and wholesale couture collections than its rival. It was also more actively involved in a range of events and initiatives to promote and influence the fashion industry outside of publishing, including running the first coordinated London fashion shows after the war, known as the ‘May Fair Parades’.¹⁶ Notably, *Fashions and Fabrics* maintained strong and close connections with groups representing higher-end ready-to-wear and wholesale couture, such as the Guild of Creative Designers and the London Model House Group.

The third significant publication discussed in this chapter is *The Maker Up* – a much newer entrant to the market that launched in July 1939. *The Maker Up* described itself in broad terms as ‘The accredited organ of the garment making, wholesale clothing, made up furnishings, smallwares and fabric cutting industries’, but its primary focus was on mass-market womenswear production. It catered to a lower-end of the market than *Fashions and Fabrics* and maintained strong connections to the Council of Light Clothing and Allied Trades Association Ltd.¹⁷ Although *The Maker Up* was based in London’s Fleet Street, its editor Arnold Hard was extremely well-connected to manufacturers in both Leeds and Manchester through service on a variety of industry boards. Amongst these was the Clothing Institute, an initiative he instigated and where he worked alongside influential fashion figures including Montague Burton, Norman Hartnell, and Herbert Kay (secretary of the Wholesale Clothing Manufacturer’s Federation).¹⁸ This is reflected in the publication of lengthy and detailed reports from numerous industry meetings, which lend *The Maker Up* a greater diversity of opinions than many of its competitors. *The Maker Up* also distinguished itself through the inclusion of detailed flat patterns that interpreted new high-end fashion trends into garments suitable for mass-manufacture (figure 1). These demonstrate that the publication was produced for the benefit of a readership with hands-on involvement in the cutting and manufacturing of mass-market fashions and saw its role as an intermediary through which information could be shared between prestigious industry groups and small-scale ready-to-wear manufacturers and garment workers. This target market is also reflected in the businesses that chose to advertise through the publication, with the majority of advertisements for items such as interfacing and zips that were required by light clothing factories and workrooms.

[Figure 1 here]

This chapter also draws on material from the *Tailor & Cutter*, a well-established publication that started life in 1866, and two publications dedicated to the fashion export trade – *The Ambassador* and *Fashions and Fabrics Overseas*. Taken together, these various trade publications offer significant insight into fierce debates about the future of the British fashion industry as it emerged from the Second World War, reminding us how the character, identity, and materiality of British fashion has been contested and reconstructed at times of crisis for the fashion industry.

Rationing, Regulations, and the Renegotiation of the Relationship between the Government and the Fashion Industry in Post-war Britain

Like other fashion-related industries, the British fashion trade press faced significant disruption between 1939 and 1945. Conscription and paper rationing changed both the make-up of editorial teams and their physical product. More significantly, the function of trade publications was altered by the high level of government intervention in the wartime fashion industry. The government regulated both the production and retail of clothing through three complex and evolving sets of legislation in the years during and immediately following the war: Rationing (regulating the amount of clothing individuals could purchase between 1941 and 1949); Utility Apparel orders (regulating the supply of cloth to manufacturers and profit margins between 1941 and 1952); and the Making of Civilian Clothing (Restrictions) orders (limiting the design and embellishment of clothing between 1942 and 1946).¹⁹ These were extremely complicated sets of regulations that were frequently updated, causing considerable confusion both within the industry and amongst the general public.

Consequently, trade publications re-focused their editorial content away from the types of debate that had fueled their circulations since the nineteenth century, and instead devoted considerable column inches to updating their readership with the latest information concerning government regulations and how these might impact their businesses. Publications such as *Drapers' Record* compiled special booklets on the control orders, entitled 'Questions on Control', alongside publishing regular factual updates on changes to the orders. This lent considerable weight to these publications as trusted sources of official information for fashion businesses. But their role as intermediaries in the relationship between industry and government was more complex and multifaceted than simply one of dissemination. The trade press was a powerful lobbying voice on behalf of industry interests, and studying the various ways publications used their platforms to resist and influence government policy reveals how the fashion industry disentangled itself from close government involvement and renegotiated its post-war relationship with official bodies.

Aside from some mild criticism about poor communication between the government and the fashion industry, the majority of trade publications pursued a broadly uncritical line with regards to government policy and regulation during the war years. This was at least partly the result of a mindset that collective wartime sacrifice was required as a form of patriotic duty. Rare expressions of gentle criticism were usually tempered by phrasing that offered the government the benefit of the doubt by 'hoping' they would rectify the problematic situation once it was highlighted to them.²⁰ However, with the arrival of peace in 1945 and the gradual removal of government regulations from 1946 onwards, the trade press once again reverted to a more critical role. This is evident in an escalation of

anti-government rhetoric and the increasingly agitated and hostile linguistic tone used to highlight the government's perceived failings.

For example, many publications conveyed palpable frustration at the Board of Trade's failure to listen to industry voices and the unnecessary problems that resulted from this, such as the Board of Trade's last minute U-turn to reduce the number of coupons required to purchase coats and suits in the spring of 1946 after it transpired that official estimates about productivity had been incorrect.²¹ The government was also regularly accused of missing opportunities to promote and support British fashion due to its failure to listen to the expertise of representatives from the fashion industry. When the government decreed that Princess Elizabeth would forgo a *trousseau* for her wedding in 1947 in order to show solidarity with a nation experiencing shortages and austerity, *Fashions and Fabrics* ran a scathing editorial pointing out that this was an extremely short-sighted decision. Although it might help the government spread their message that the British economy could be saved through the self-denial of consumers, the publication pointed out it was an enormous missed opportunity to gain global publicity and boost exports of British fashion goods.²² Towards the end of the 1940s, attacks became both more personal and more damning of the systematic failings of those in power. In June 1948, *Fashions and Fabrics* described the failure of communication between the industry and Harold Wilson, then president of the Board of Trade, as a deliberate act of sabotage on behalf of Wilson, insinuating that the government was actively working against the fashion industry, and that these problems 'will never be solved while the government remains opposed to the principle that the best interests of trade are in fact the best interests of the nation'.²³

Although a number of publications shared a sense of grievance that the government failed to understand or prioritize the fashion industry, they did not all share the same specific concerns, and between 1945 and 1949 individual publications pursued specific lines of criticism regarding government regulations. *Drapers' Record* took a vocal stance against government regulations, arguing that there were 'Too many types of coupon', and that regulations changed too frequently for consumers or small businesses to keep up.²⁴ It also argued that confusion arising from this complexity was compounded by a lack of clear information provided by the Board of Trade.²⁵ But a number of publications argued against *Drapers' Record* in favour of the retention of government regulations. Many large-scale producers of inexpensive ready-to-wear benefitted enormously from rationing and Utility regulations, which rewarded the efficiency of long production runs and guaranteed a seller's market.²⁶ The *Drapers Organiser* argued that government regulations had improved the quality and design of British wholesale tailored clothes and lobbied for Utility regulations to be maintained after the end of the war.²⁷

As different sectors of the industry faced different challenges between 1945 and 1948 – ranging from regulatory restrictions on profit margins to competition from inexpensive foreign imports – some trade publications actively lobbied for the expansion of government involvement in the fashion industry. *The Maker Up* responded to an influx of new mass-manufacture businesses producing low-cost and low-quality garments from 1947 onwards by lobbying for the government to provide more quality control through the introduction of a British Standard Trademark.²⁸ At the higher end of the market, *Fashions and Fabrics* campaigned for more detailed and nuanced regulations to protect the interests of wholesale couture; and in 1946, they provided a platform for trade groups such as the Guild of Creative Designers to argue that the imposition of flat-rate ceiling prices would stifle the industry's creativity and export potential.²⁹ This campaign provides an example of the importance of the trade press as a line of communication between industry and government, as it contributed to the Board of Trade's decision to create a new category for high-quality non-Utility outerwear, identified by distinctive 11011 'dinner plate' labels, which could be sold above the lower set of manufacturers price ceilings.³⁰

But the relationship between the trade press and government was not always so productive. Although trade publications presented their criticism as a necessary and apolitical function of their service to both the fashion industry and fashion consumers, at some publications it was also evidently politically motivated. The conservative leanings of the editor of *Drapers' Record*, B. A. Cooper, are apparent in the monthly 'Editor's Comments' section, where the editor drew on political rhetoric in order to position fashion as a marker of post-war progress rather than an unnecessary luxury at a time of austerity. Cooper's persistently damning commentary of the government echoes the language of Conservative MPs who used clothing as a metaphor to contrast the plenty and prosperity of Conservative policies with the austerity of Labour's socialist agenda. There are obvious parallels, for example, between Cooper's arguments in favour of revoking rationing and clothing regulations in order to create a more prosperous future with 'more to eat, brighter homes, less queuing'³¹ and the language employed by Conservative MPs such as Thomas Moore, who stated: 'We Tories believe [...] in more goods in the shops for the housewife. We believe in prettier clothes for the women with fewer coupons'.³² The 'Editor's Comments' section also featured satirical cartoons that lampooned the absurdity of government figures and the regulations that came from their offices in order to further reinforce this anti-Labour message. The authority of the Board of Trade was repeatedly undermined through its personification as a snooping and interfering nosy neighbour (figure 2). Stafford Cripps, who served as the President of the Board of Trade and then Chancellor of the Exchequer, was singled out for attack in illustrations that portrayed him as humourless, mean, and disinterested by emphasizing his tight lipped, angular form and beady, dark eyes.³³

[Figure 2 here]

Understanding the inherently political nature of *Drapers' Record's* editorial line during this period provides important context for the historical evidence it presents. For example, *Drapers' Record* was strongly critical of wage inflation in the years between 1945 and 1948. It presented wage inflation as a problem for both manufacturers, whose profits it erodes, and for consumers, attributing rising clothes prices to increased wages.³⁴ The blame for this crisis was placed firmly in the hands of the government, for the introduction of new costs such as National Insurance and trade unions, whose greed threatened to bankrupt manufacturers.³⁵ The persistence of this editorial line suggests it was a popular opinion amongst the publication's readership. However, *The Garment Worker* – the periodical of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers – instead blamed the increase in clothing prices on the rising cost of raw materials and the 'high profits made by manufacturers'.³⁶ These contrasting perspectives serve as a reminder that trade publications should not be considered neutral sources, and that the fashion trade press often represented the interests of business owners rather than employees in the opinions they disseminated through their editorial content.

Developing New Ways to Support a Changing British Fashion Industry

The government lobbying and campaigning by trade publications is indicative of their broader aims to influence the future shape of the fashion industry through printed discourse. Both the editorial boards and readership of trade publications were well aware that the war had changed the economics of making clothes. The type of quality tailored outerwear that British firms had built their reputation on in the interwar period was increasingly uneconomical to produce due to the high costs of both material and labour. Between 1935 and 1948, there was a dramatic redistribution of labour in the fashion industry from more skilled work producing tailored and bespoke garments to less skilled mass-manufacture jobs.³⁷ The growth of brightly printed and inexpensive synthetic fabrics combined with new technologies and systems of mass manufacture meant certain types of clothes – such as dresses and blouses – could be produced more cheaply than ever, and by 1948 Britain's wholesale manufacturers were increasingly reliant on these products for their profits.³⁸

Some publications were initially hesitant about the shifting direction of the British fashion industry and used rhetorical language to encourage their readers to resist change. The *Drapers Organiser* went so far as to employ military language to warn smaller businesses that they risked being pushed out of the market by larger mass manufacturers, calling for 'No Surrender To Invading Multiples'.³⁹ However, by 1946 even publications that had sounded notes of caution about the pace of the move to mass-production in 1945 were convinced that these new processes were the future and redirected their editorial space to persuading their readers of this by employing optimistic language about innovation

and progress. The increased quality, consistency, and efficiency offered by new technologies were discussed as a way to stimulate growth in a market that had been constrained by the war.⁴⁰ At *Fashions and Fabrics* (the renamed *Drapers Organiser*) the pace of technological development was no longer described as a threat, but as a colossal achievement linked to Britain's wartime victory: 'Garment factories under the stress and urgency of war have evolved systems of production which would normally have taken 25 years of normal progress to achieve'.⁴¹ Even publications catering to more traditional segments of the industry encouraged their readers to embrace modern methods, including the *Tailor & Cutter*, which reminded individual bespoke tailors that they would need to make suits that could compete in price with those sold through multiple retailers if they wanted to survive in the new post-war reality.⁴²

Editorial boards understood that encouraging efficiency and technological understanding was not enough to sustain a thriving British fashion industry alone. In an era of mass-manufactured ready-to-wear, where clothes were not made to last and novelty was more important to consumers than quality, British fashion and its reputation for country tweeds and quality staples needed to accomplish something of a rebranding exercise. There was a palpable urgency to this from 1946 onwards due to the increased competition that followed the erosion of the wartime seller's market once goods became more plentiful and restrictions began to ease. This situation was further exacerbated as British manufacturers were faced with a resurgence in international competition in the form of American ready-to-wear imports and the reconnection of Parisian design to the global market after the liberation of France.⁴³

Trade publications rose to this challenge by promoting a message of optimism about the future of British fashion design. Many drew on the prevailing patriotic spirit of the era in the unquestioningly celebratory tone they adopted towards British products in relation to their international counterparts. British quality was still celebrated, but ran alongside a new focus on the superior (if understated) design of British garments: 'the average Englishwoman's suit' proclaimed *Fashions and Fabrics*, 'is better style, cut, fit and material than the average American'.⁴⁴ *The Maker Up* took a particular lead in this process by expanding their editorial content to include more detailed and prominent information about new fashion trends. This trend information was vital at a time when the mass-market segment of the industry still employed relatively few designers and relied heavily on skilled cutters to copy and adapt styles from the worlds of couture and wholesale couture, with rewards for those businesses who were able to do so fastest.⁴⁵ It is, therefore, particularly notable that *The Maker Up* only minimally featured the work of Parisian designers in its trend features, and chose instead to devote the majority of this editorial space to the work of British designers. In doing so, the publication boosted industry confidence in the nation's home-grown talent. Furthermore, *The Maker Up* borrowed styles of language and fashion illustration from fashion magazines such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* in

order to create a sense of excitement about new British seasonal styles. The presentation of these evolved from a written 'Fashion Forecast' section in 1945, to an illustrated feature entitled 'Highlights from the Collections' in 1947, to two multi-page spreads in 1948 grandly entitled 'London Leads the World' (featuring styles from the London Couture collections) and 'Light on the Collections' (featuring styles from the wholesale couture collections) (Figure 3).

[Figure 3 here]

However, *The Maker Up*'s efforts to promote the supremacy of British designs were not always entirely convincing. Headlines such as 'British Fashions Take America By Storm' were undermined by text that failed to justify the hyperbole and instead revealed a more lukewarm reception.⁴⁶ It must also have been apparent to readers that their unquestioning support for the superiority of British fashion design was at odds with accounts of the relative prestige of British, French, and American fashions in the fashion press and newspapers, which covered Parisian designers with particular enthusiasm from 1947 onwards and often derided the efforts of their London counterparts with headlines such as 'Paris Laughs at London "Fashion"'.⁴⁷ These comparisons demonstrate that trade publications had a tendency to present the fashion industry as the ideal they wanted it to be, not as it necessarily was in reality.

Other trade publications also drew on lessons from the fashion press in order to increase their credibility as a source of cutting-edge information about fashion design at a time when this was increasingly important to the post-war industry. Comparing cover designs before and after the relaunch of the *Drapers Organiser* as *Fashions and Fabrics* (figures 4 and 5) shows that following the redesign there was an increased use of stylized fashion illustrations and an almost exclusive representation of women's wear fashions, rather than other profitable sectors of the industry such as children's wear. *The Ambassador* went further and borrowed the internal layouts and design of fashion magazines in order to produce a product that looked more like a glossy fashion magazine than a trade publication. Although the publication was strongly rooted in the 'sense of intensified patriotism' of the post-war period, it drew upon international trends in fashion photography in order to visually present a case for British design, without having to use clichéd patriotic language.⁴⁸ This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the chic and modern fashion photography of the 'Ballet' features *The Ambassador* ran in 1949 and 1950, in which British ballet dancers posed in British designer clothes.⁴⁹ By blurring the boundaries between fashion magazine and trade publication, *The Ambassador* boosted the cultural capital of British fashion on the export market. To a lesser extent, similar editorial changes at *Fashions and Fabrics* and *The Maker Up* disseminated an optimistic message about the rising creative status of British fashion on a global stage. The attractive and

modern design of these publications communicated the power of visual culture to their readers, and in doing so made them look again at how they presented and marketed their own products.

Looking comparatively across these sources reveals how these editorial and design choices were employed with the aim of shaping the fashion industry according to the desires and needs of different industry groups. For example, *The Ambassador* used the visual imagery of high fashion to present an overinflated sense of the economic significance of wholesale couture to the wider British fashion industry. In turn, *The Maker Up* used hyperbolic headlines to present an overconfident view of the popularity of British couture and wholesale couture design amongst the general public.⁵⁰ However, taken together, these different publications present a compelling picture of how the trade press communicated new promotional and manufacturing techniques to the British fashion industry as it urgently tried to reinvent itself according to the changed post-war needs of both domestic and international markets.

[Figures 4 and 5 here]

Conclusion

This chapter exposes how trade publications exploited the status they had gained as trusted sources of information during the Second World War to effect change within the fashion industry and further cement their position as significant channels of communication between 1945 and 1950. It details how publications used patriotic language and bold, bright imagery inspired by fashion magazines to both boost confidence in British fashion design and reinforce their own status at the forefront of fashion. Visual and verbal rhetoric were employed as tools to lobby government and industry groups, while simultaneously positioning publications as arbitrators between the two. Publications aimed to exploit this powerful position to steer British fashion towards business plans and policies that benefitted the various sectors of the industry from which their readerships were drawn. As this chapter reveals, they did not always achieve their aims. However, while *Drapers' Record* failed to remove Stafford Cripps from the cabinet and *The Maker Up* never quite managed to persuade a wider public that London in the late 1940s really did 'lead the world' in fashion design, the efforts of these publications did contribute to broader awareness within industry and government that there was a need to modernize the industry and redefine British fashion in a new post-war era.

More broadly, this chapter highlights the importance of recognizing the trade press as a network of editorial voices lobbying on behalf of the multiplicity of different businesses that make up the fashion industry, not as a homogenous whole. While the trade press made a vocal contribution to arguments about how the British fashion industry should be rebuilt after the Second World War, there was little

consensus across different trade publications as to the best way forward for an industry unevenly impacted by a conflict that acted as a catalyst for the growth of mass-manufacture and resulted in deskilling and decline in the market for traditional tailoring and higher-end goods. While one publication argued fiercely for the importance of prioritizing textile availability for the fashion export market, another complained at the injustice of the Board of Trade's policy of prioritizing fabric for the export market over the needs of domestic manufacturers.⁵¹ Where one hailed the efficiency of modern mass-manufacturing techniques as the future of British fashion, another cautioned that the move towards mass manufacture would harm Britain's fashionable reputation by leading to a lack of individuality in design.⁵² These contradictory positions demonstrate that the information disseminated by trade publications was influenced by various industry and personal agendas and publications were often extremely biased towards the interests of the sector of the industry they served. However, far from undermining their use as historical sources, it is this bias that makes the trade press such a vital resource for understanding the power structures that shaped the historic fashion industry.

Analysis of the trade press not only reveals the content and form of contemporary debates about British fashion, it also sheds light on the narrow group of individuals who had the power to employ the tools of editorial privilege to shape these debates. Although fashion is often associated with a predominantly female and immigrant workforce, the editorial boards of each of the trade publications discussed in this chapter were almost exclusively comprised of white men. Furthermore, photographs of the various industry committee meetings reported in trade publications also show overwhelmingly male membership. By reporting on these meetings and the statements issued by industry groups, the trade press provided a platform for these significant male voices. Some publications extended this platform to powerful men beyond the fashion industry by acting as proxy spokespeople for the government.⁵³ *The Ambassador* offered an outlet for Harold Wilson, then president of the Board of Trade, to speak 'directly' to overseas buyers in a full page letter praising the creativity and quality of British fashions and textiles.⁵⁴ If, as Felice McDowell argues, the cultural capital and social status of a publication's contributors can itself be understood as a form of 'authorship' that reveals unspoken class and gender dynamics, then the trade press lays bare the lack of class or gender diversity amongst the decision makers of the post-war fashion industry.⁵⁵

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Figure 1. 'Coat with Drop Shoulder and Upper Sleeve Fullness'. *The Maker Up*, October 1951, 300-301.

Figure 2. 'He Snoops to Conquer' cartoon. *Draper's Record*, November 17 1945, 45. Courtesy of the Yorkshire Fashion Archive.

Figure 3. 'Light on the Collections' feature. *The Maker Up*, January 1948, 25-26.

Figure 4. Cover page. *Drapers Organiser*, January 1940.

Figure 5. Cover page. *Fashions and Fabrics*, January 1946.

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- ¹ Bethan Bide, 'London Leads the World: The reinvention of London fashion in the aftermath of the Second World War', *Fashion Theory* 24, no. 3 (2020).
- ² Djurdja Bartlett, Shaun Cole and Agnès Rocamora. *Fashion Media Past and Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). Additionally, while there has been a small amount of excellent and focused work exploring the editorial aims and the relationships between industry, policy, and media discourse at one British trade publication – *The Ambassador* – there are currently no comprehensive academic studies of the editorial processes and the people behind these at some of the most significant, influential, and long-running publications, including *Drapers' Record* in the U.K. and *Women's Wear Daily* in the U.S.A.
- ³ Regina Lee Blaszczyk. *Fashionability: Abraham Moon and the Creation of British Cloth for the Global Market* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017). Rebecca Arnold. *The American Look: Fashion, Sportswear and the image of women in 1930s and 1940s New York* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 80-81.
- ⁴ Agnès Rocamora. *Fashioning the City: Paris, Fashion and the Media* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).
- ⁵ Elizabeth Wilson. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1985), 157, and Christopher Breward. *The Culture of Fashion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 197.
- ⁶ Cynthia White. *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970), 18. See also Catherine Clay, Maria DiCenzo, Barbara Green and Fiona Hackney. *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1918-1939: The Interwar Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).
- ⁷ David McKitterick, 'Organising Knowledge in Print', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume 6*, ed. David McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 536.
- ⁸ Aileen Fyfe, 'The Information Revolution', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume 6*, ed. David McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 568.
- ⁹ Tricia Meech. *The Development of Women's Magazines 1799-1945* (Manchester: Manchester Polytechnic Library, 1986).
- ¹⁰ White. *Women's Magazines*, 59-60.
- ¹¹ David McKitterick, 'Publishing for Trades and Professions', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume 6*, ed. David McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 504.
- ¹² McKitterick, 'Publishing for Trades and Professions', 504.
- ¹³ Andrew Godley, 'The Development of the Clothing Industry: Technology and Fashion', *Textile History* 28, no. 1 (1997), 3-10.
- ¹⁴ White. *Women's Magazines*, 80.
- ¹⁵ McKitterick, 'Publishing for Trades and Professions', 505.
- ¹⁶ *Fashions and Fabrics*, September 1946, 19.
- ¹⁷ *The Maker Up*, September 1947, 138.
- ¹⁸ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, Monday 26 January 1948.
- ¹⁹ Geraldine Howell. *Wartime Fashion: From Haute Couture to Homemade, 1939-1945* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). Mike Brown. *CC41 Utility Clothing: The Label that Transformed British Fashion* (Sevenoaks: Sabrestorm, 2014).
- ²⁰ *The Maker Up*, February 1945, 73.
- ²¹ *Fashions and Fabrics*, April 1946, 22.
- ²² *Fashions and Fabrics*, November 1947, 19.
- ²³ *Fashions and Fabrics*, June 1948, 17.
- ²⁴ *Drapers' Record*, July 7 1945, 39 and February 9 1946, 18.
- ²⁵ *Drapers' Record*, June 28 1947, 15.
- ²⁶ Christine Boydell. *Horrockses Fashions: Off The Peg Style in the 40s and 50s* (London: V&A Publishing, 2012), 28.
- ²⁷ *Drapers Organiser*, March 1945, 4 and November 17 1945, 45.
- ²⁸ *The Maker Up*, May 1948, 291.
- ²⁹ *Fashions and Fabrics*, January 1946, 16.
- ³⁰ *Drapers' Record*, April 13 1946, 11.

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- ³¹ Drapers' Record, March 9 1946, 24.
- ³² Hansard. HC Debate, 29 October 1947, vol. 443, cc877-997, 961.
- ³³ 'Weight and See'. Drapers' Record, January 1 1949, 19.
- ³⁴ Drapers' Record, July 28 1945, 11.
- ³⁵ Drapers' Record, January 10 1948, 24.
- ³⁶ The Garment Worker, August 1949, 158.
- ³⁷ Board of Trade, Final Report on the Census of Production for 1948 (London: HMSO, 1952), Table 8.
- ³⁸ Board of Trade, Final Report, Table 7.
- ³⁹ Drapers Organiser, February 1945, 24.
- ⁴⁰ The Ambassador, 1946 No. 3, 123.
- ⁴¹ Fashions and Fabrics, May 1946, 18.
- ⁴² Tailor & Cutter, August 19 1949, 750.
- ⁴³ Arnold. The American Look, 172. Dominique Veillon. Fashion Under the Occupation (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 144.
- ⁴⁴ Fashions and Fabrics, June 1946, 35.
- ⁴⁵ Drapers' Record, March 5 1949, 23.
- ⁴⁶ The Maker Up, February 1947, 86-87.
- ⁴⁷ Daily Graphic, November 8 1946, 2.
- ⁴⁸ Christopher Breward, 'Introduction', in The Ambassador Magazine: Promoting Post-war British Textiles and Fashion, ed. Christopher Breward and Claire Wilcox (London: V&A Publishing, 2012), 8.
- ⁴⁹ The Ambassador, 1949 No.10 and 1950 No. 9.
- ⁵⁰ For example, while the couture and wholesale couture designs presented at the 1946 'Britain Can Make It' exhibition were praised in the trade press, women's dresses were the most disliked items in the entire exhibition according to visitor interviews. Mass Observation FR 2441[1].
- ⁵¹ Drapers Organiser, February 1945, 50; Draper's Record, April 7 1945, 12.
- ⁵² Drapers Organiser, January 1945, 20-21; Draper's Record, April 28 1945, 14.
- ⁵³ The Maker Up, September 1948, 159.
- ⁵⁴ The Ambassador, 1948 No. 3.
- ⁵⁵ Felice McDowell, 'The Influence of Anthony Denney: Authorship in the Production and Consumption of British Fashion Media in the Late 1950s', Photography and Culture 8, no. 3 (2016).