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Elle and the Development of *Stylisme* in 1960s Paris

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This essay stems from a paper presented at the Costume Society's Annual Symposium in Leeds in July 2010 on the theme of The Price of Fashion. *In this expanded version, the author identifies the construction of* stylisme*, a new ready-to-wear model in 1960s France, in the pages of* Elle *magazine. Contextualized in a changing industrial and social landscape, the essay questions how these new depictions of* stylisme *served to improve consumers' ideas on ready-to-wear clothing in an industry previously fuelled by haute couture.*

KEYWORDS: *fashion press, ready-to-wear, prêt-à-porter, haute couture, Hélène Gordon Lazareff, modernity, youth subculture*

INTRODUCTION

For much of the twentieth century, haute couture dictated the functioning of the French fashion industry. Accepted by industrial insiders and consumers as the sole creative authorities, haute couturiers' designs determined the silhouette of garments produced by seamstresses and manufacturers of ready-made clothing. In the 1960s, new ideas concerning creativity and constant changes to the structure of the industry set the stage for an independent and successful French ready-to-wear. Focusing on changing creative philosophies, this essay specifically examines *Elle*, the French feminine lifestyle and fashion magazine, and its portrayal of ready-to-wear designers and the fashionable woman over the course of the 1960s. These depictions fabricated a textual ready-to-wear model, what I define as *stylisme*, which accompanied what was taking place at the production level. Rebecca Arnold writes that clothing is transformed by different industries 'literally through the manufacturing process, and metaphorically through magazines and photographs'.[1] Dominique Veillon contends that *Elle* helped shape the image of the new fashionable woman of the 1960s through its imagery, advertising, and dialogue on fashion, labelling it a 'beauty manual' for its readers.[2] Considering the magazine as both metaphor and tastemaker, I argue that these new depictions of *stylisme* played a role in improving consumers' ideas on ready-to-wear garments, necessary for the transition from a couture-based industry to one where both commercial models could function.

Stylisme as a 1960s phenomenon has not been defined collectively in scholarly works.[3] In the 1950s the trade and feminine press typically used the term *confection* and later prêt-à-porter to identify ready-made garments. From the early 1960s,

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French publications often used '*style*' to describe a specific ready-to-wear output and designer group. These designers, who came to be known as *stylistes* or *créateurs de mode*, appeared over the course of the 1960s and fulfilled manufacturers' and retailers' needs at that time for ready-to-wear designs for small-scale industrial production. Paralleling this, consulting agencies supported these designers in their goal to disseminate 'good industrial design' to new larger markets of women consumers who were increasingly younger and worked outside the home.

Elle promoted ready-to-wear as the perfect solution to new social dynamics by depicting active models and stressing this type of clothing's accessibility, youthfulness and practicality for fast-paced lifestyles. Still, journalists referenced past beauty ideals based on quality, originality, elegance and elitism, mediating between the magazine's younger readers and those who held onto the older values. This essay studies the imagery and dialogue fostered in *Elle*, questioning how its many-sided portrayal of *stylisme* distinguished this model from haute couture and *confection* but borrowed their favourable elements, allowing for its creative and commercial sanction. I will first briefly examine ideas on creation in the Paris fashion industry in the 1950s amid social changes. The second and main section explores the shaping of *stylisme* in the 1960s fashion press, by questioning journalists' treatment of 'old' and 'new' as they correspond to couture and ready-to-wear in terms of materials, production and attitudes. Here, I also consider *Elle*'s portrayal of the fashionable woman as active and young through dynamic imagery and depictions of elastic and practical garments. Lastly, *Elle*'s construction of *stylisme* is clearly illustrated in a 1969 article in the magazine *Réalités* discussing *stylistes* Emmanuelle Khanh (b. 1937), Christiane Bailly (1932–2000), and Michèle Rosier (b. 1930) who were first promoted in the pages of *Elle*.

CHANGING CREATIVE AND INDUSTRIAL PHILOSOPHIES

Industry insiders propagated the long-held and widespread belief that true creation was only possible at the haute couture level. Notably, in 1956 Raymond Barbas of the House of Jean Patou and president of the Paris Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture, the legendary trade organization for couturiers, defined couture as 'creative design' and deemed creativity incompatible with industrial production.[4] In other words, he argued that creating trends based on colour and silhouette only functioned within the bi-annual seasonal couture system. In turn, consumers relied wholeheartedly on the creative opinion of the couturier. The majority of women, who could not afford haute couture, made their own clothing, went to a seamstress, or bought *confection*. The manufacturers, caught in this cycle, thrived on making and selling simplified copies of couture models.

Many commentators note the unpopularity at the time of the term *confection*; it connoted poor-quality, machine-made, and mass-produced garments.[5] In her review of the 1960s fashion industry, fashion journalist Hebe Dorsey (1925–1987), referring to France specifically, wrote: 'Nobody would be caught dead in a *confection* dress — just too cheap for words'.[6] Although *confection* sales increased at the end of the 1950s, sixty per cent of French women still wore custom-made clothes, made mainly by local seamstresses, opting for quality and individualism over

machine-made *confection*.[7] The 18 February 1952 issue of *Elle* notably included a six-page survey entitled 'Would you like to find your dresses ready made?'.[8] Here, readers expressed their fears of the poor fit and sameness of ready-made clothing, but appreciated the time saved and economy of this option. The article aimed to promote this production, and prefigured *Elle*'s standpoint in the 1960s in stressing its modernity and also its adaptability to several body types, an idea that had normally been associated with made-to-measure clothing production.

To many, industrialization meant the loss of traditional hand skills and well-established ideas regarding quality, honour and nationalism. The creation of the trade journal *Prêt à Porter* in 1955 (renamed *Officiel du Prêt à Porter* in 1958) is proof of the growing movement towards ready-made production, but its pages illustrate the conflict between these established ideas and those looking to a more modern age. A 1957 article, for example, promoted ready-to-wear as a modern product but used traditional, artisanal and national descriptors. The article discussed the upcoming Salon National du Prêt à Porter, which was to take place in the distinguished Grand Palais, a space 'elevated by the glory of French artists'.[9] The author's use of words like 'continue' and 'tradition' contradicted the current and industrial connotations of ready-to-wear. Likewise, his description of 'a style linked, by line and colour choice, to the refinements of the artist' and 'within the traditions of French chic' associated ready-to-wear with high art and high fashion, designations normally reserved for haute couture.[10]

To replace the unpopular *confection*, manufacturers implemented new industrial terminologies, such as *semi mésure*, or semi-custom, and *couture en gros*, or wholesale couture.[11] A 1955 Wébé advertisement in *Prêt à Porter* similarly used the traditional status references 'couture' and 'elite' to formulate a new, luxurious *confection*.[12] This borrowing from couture terminology continued into the first half of the 1960s, as seen in an advertisement for the textile Jersey de Valançay in a February 1965 issue of *Elle* that proclaimed 'Finally! Custom-made ready-to-wear'.[13] The advertisement explained the company's '*service couture*': if the garment did not fit, clients could order another. Similarly ambiguous for the reader was a September 1966 spread describing '"Haute" Prêt à Porter', presenting a 'high' fashion product as 'terrific' and 'accessible'.[14] French manufacturer Jean-Claude Weill is credited as the first to use the term 'prêt-à-porter', a literal translation of the English phrase, in 1949 trade publicity.[15] From the late 1950s, prêt-à-porter and *confection* existed simultaneously but conjured up different meanings, the first connoting a more luxurious output, and the latter a less expensive, industrial product. Around 1962, *stylisme* appeared, viewed as the opposite of couture, although modelled on its desirable traits, as seen in ready-to-wear's evolving etymology.

Industrialists did not only use the concept of couture in their language. In the 1950s, manufacturers began labelling their garments thus linking their names, previously marred by unfavourable reputation, with quality and style.[16] In 1955 Albert Lempereur, *confectionneur* and promoter of prêt-à-porter, assumed presidency of the Association des Maisons Françaises de Couture en Gros (1943–1961), which assembled manufacturers under the label *Trois Hirondelles*.[17] This group strove to promote a luxury product through salons and fashion showings advertised in their journal, *Collections, documents officiels de la couture en gros*.[18]

Beginning in the late 1950s, the establishment of *bureaux de style*, or fashion-consulting agencies, also contributed to the changing image and improved the functioning of ready-to-wear production. These agencies notably sought to organize and foster communication within the industrial network. In 1957, Claude de Coux created Relations Textiles, the first such agency venture in Europe.[19] Involved in this project was dressmaker and consultant Françoise Vincent-Ricard who saw it as the vehicle to input a new production-marketing strategy for producing and distributing profitable, aesthetically pleasing, and high-quality products for all levels of the industry to follow.[20] These ideas became well established in the years that followed and, in 1967, Maïmé Arnodin (1916–2003), consultant and one-time editor of *Jardin des Modes*, and Denise Fayolle (1923–1995), then in charge of the *bureau de styl*e of the department store Prisunic, opened MAFIA (Maïmé Arnodin Fayolle International Associées) where they counselled and endorsed young designers, all with the goal of fostering 'beau pas cher', or beautiful and inexpensive design.[21]

Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, consultants worked to make good design available to more people, reflecting a wider democratic rhetoric opposed to the idea that only those who could afford haute couture could access good design. Questioning the dictatorial couturier — significantly during the time of France's decolonization process in Africa and later the 1968 Paris student revolts — would be at the core of the industry's promotion of prêt-à-porter during the 1960s.[22] In his 1966 article for the newspaper *Le Monde*, Michel Legris, describing the recent fashion shows for the winter season, implied the couturiers' authority: 'Tomorrow, specialized journals, magazines, and dailies will tell millions and millions of women in all the continents the colours and lines that they must adopt to be admired, to please, to be fashionable'.[23] While consultants propagated the notion of consumer choice and accessible design, the press promoted designers as talented creators instead of anonymous couture copiers.[24] A 1966 article in the trade publication *International Textiles* discussed Emmanuelle Khanh, Christiane Bailly and Michèle Rosier, ready-to-wear designers who created collections for manufacturers. The article described their clothing — distinct from elitist haute couture and ill-viewed *confection* — as consisting of 'original styles, without a trace of conformism, specially adapted to the tastes and needs of modern women'.[25]

PORTRAYAL OF *STYLISME* AND PRÊT-À-PORTER IN THE FEMININE PRESS

Over the course of the 1960s, the feminine press, pioneered by *Elle*, gradually steered its discussion towards ready-to-wear.[26] Hélène Gordon Lazareff (1909–1988) became editor-in-chief of *Elle* after creating the magazine with her husband Pierre Lazareff (1907–1972) in 1945.[27] At its inception, Lazareff claimed that her new publication would present its women readers with less 'fluff' and more relevant information on current affairs for their modern lifestyles.[28] In the 1960s, weekly issues ranged between 100 and 224 pages and their contents comprised fashion spreads (18 per cent), reports on cultural activities, women's issues, health and society (11 per cent), literature (9 per cent), home decoration and cooking (6 per cent), and advertising (30 to 50 per cent).[29] Of its estimated three million readers

in this period, mainly from middle and higher classes, 70 per cent lived in Paris and its suburbs or other French cities.[30]

In 1953, *Elle* launched its section, 'Prêt-à-Porter', under the direction of Claude Brouet who became head fashion editor in 1965. She also devoted one issue per season to ready-to-wear, which set the tone for similar developments in other French magazines including *Jardin des Modes* and *Vogue* in 1955 and 1956 respectively.[31] As Dominique Veillon has indicated, however, *Elle* distinguished itself from these publications in its clear focus on this production and not haute couture: increasingly into the 1960s, the magazine featured prêt-à-porter designers, manufacturers and retailers throughout the publication in every issue.[32] It is noteworthy that Lazareff created the magazine after spending the war period in the United States working for *Harper's Bazaar* and the women's section of the *New York Times* during which time she would have observed the considerable advances in the American ready-to-wear industry in relation to France. Moreover, we should consider *Elle*'s promotion of ready-to-wear as part of Lazareff's ambitions of innovation, alongside, for example, her penchant for avant-garde fashion and art. These radical leanings would have been more readily accepted by *Elle*'s predominantly metropolitan audience.

Elle served as a visual enforcer of the new *stylisme*. The 9 September 1965 issue, for example, pictured garments created by designer Emmanuelle Khanh for the manufacturers' lines of Pierre d'Alby and I.D., as well as for the boutique Dorothée Bis, which were then distributed and sold at four boutiques in total, all clearly marked in the magazine.[33] This format educated readers and consumers about the various components and workings of *stylisme*, based on designers freelancing for different manufacturers and the wide dissemination of those products to retailers. As such, this model differed intrinsically from haute couture, with one performative space or atelier, as well as from *confection*, whose manufacturers hid all traces of an individual creator. Although manufacturers' or retailers' labels did not usually include *stylistes*' names, these designers enjoyed a more elevated position in *Elle*; they were the subjects of articles and, for the first time, received credit for their garments with their names displayed next to the manufacturers and retailers of the respective models. The above-mentioned 1965 issue of *Elle* clearly labelled Emmanuelle Khanh's pink lambswool jersey dress as her design for the manufacturer I.D. and sold at the boutique Vog. The July and September 1965 issues of *Vogue* and *Officiel du Prêt à Porter*, respectively, also pictured this dress without crediting Khanh. *Elle* promoted these designers and retailers, which included boutiques and department stores, creating a tripartite '*style Elle*' system.[34]

COUTURE AND READY-TO-WEAR: OLD VERSUS NEW

A 1966 cover of *Elle* proclaiming 'prêt-à-porter challenges haute couture' clearly highlights the rivalry between the two models that unfolded in the feminine press.[35] As that title implied, the magazine positioned ready-to-wear as a new contender vying for power in the fashion arena. *Elle*'s dialogue was rooted in a contrast between older styles and mentalities, which described the reigning haute couture, and a more modern concept of design. Articles in *Elle* emphasized the newness of

ready-to-wear with reference to design, materials, and manufacture. The September 1965 issue thus described prêt-à-porter as 'a new production [...] forged by youthful patterns, conceived by new designers, realised through new means'. The article compared designers to inventors who sought an 'industrial aesthetic' in their 'prototypes'.[36]

The 1960s witnessed a great interest in the aesthetic of the future, most obviously manifested in the idea of the Space Age and reflecting the space exploration that started with the Soviet Union's 1957 Sputnik satellite launch. Parallel advances in industrialized production served to fuel artists and designers' creative explorations during this period.[37] Considering the industrial materials plastic and metal as potent symbols of the future, the *stylistes* experimented with synthetic fibres such as vinyl. Journalists described these textiles as fun, fashionable and futuristic, leaving behind old fears regarding industrialization. The 18 February 1965 issue of *Elle* identified Michèle Rosier's vinyl creations for V de V as 'Raincoats for the year 2000!'.[38] The model's white vinyl raincoat and trousers, with matching boots and helmet, suited her aerodynamic pose, with arms outstretched as though soaring through the air or even piloting a spacecraft. Rosier, the daughter of editor Hélène Lazareff, benefited from coverage in *Elle* that marked her out as a designer of 'modern' sportswear. The 8 September 1966 issue similarly underscored the Space Age aspect of the metallic fabrics Rodex, Lurex, and lamé given their 'silvery' façade, picturing garments by Michèle Rosier and Daniel Hechter.[39] Here, the reader was presented with an all-over glistening optical effect at the sight of Rosier's dress in jersey lamé, paired with metallic hosiery and silver-coloured leather shoes, alongside Hechter's silver-coloured vinyl suit and matching boots. The 22 April 1968 issue made the connection between shiny materials and a futuristic aesthetic in an article on the synthetic fabric Rexor, described as 'a modern, supple, lively, luminous material', ideal for 'this fashion of the future'.[40] In the article, Emmanuelle Khanh expressed her affinity for new materials as they facilitated 'shocking' and 'never before seen' clothes.[41]

In addition to these futuristic associations, authors presented the prêt-à-porter client as audacious, fun and rebellious, as seen in the 8 September 1966 issue of *Elle*: here, a spread entitled 'Revolution in New York' discussed the city's annual April in Paris Ball. This event was noteworthy in that it presented the work of ready-to-wear designers for the first time, specifically, Khanh, Bailly, and Rosier, as well as the then newcomer Paco Rabanne (b. 1934). The article contrasted the 'traditional fashion show of French haute couture' with its 'insolent' French prêt-à-porter counterparts.[42] In general, descriptions of haute couture relied on flowery rhetoric: the 28 February 1964 'Collections' issue of *Elle*, for instance, included a Christian Dior ensemble under the heading: 'Romantic transparencies and sex-appeal'.[43] For the author, the 'chiffon [and] flower' of a straw hat by Nina Ricci similarly suggested 'a softness, a tenderness that we crave'.[44]

Some depictions of ready-to-wear still evoked earlier, more conservative ideals of fashion based on allure and luxury. The 18 September 1964 issue of *Elle* described a 'classic' and 'charming' prêt-à-porter, akin to 'getting dressed at the grands couturiers'.[45] In the accompanying image, a model wore a 1920s-style cloche hat and Chloé suit, trimmed at the collar and cuffs with sumptuous fur. Similarly, the

8 September 1966 issue was one of many that continued to compare ready-to-wear production to that of couture. It illustrated coats for that season, asking readers to spot the difference from those presented in the earlier couture issue, as both were long with wide silhouettes.[46]

Did Brouet and other fashion journalists evoke older values so that ready-to-wear would gain legitimacy in the eyes of their readers? Or is this the natural rhythm of things where fashion, as Ulrich Lehmann has proposed, 'need[s] the past as a (re)source and point of reference, only to plunder and transform it with an insatiable appetite for advance?'.[47] As such, ready-to-wear fashion is a continual revision of older styles and ideas associated with couture. In many instances, journalists presented a mix of old and new values in describing ready-to-wear. An article in the 25 September 1964 issue pictured ready-made clothing from the department store Printemps, declaring: 'We are finally daring. Put on "funny" shoes. Wear lace stockings. Adjust a lunar helmet. Wink at all humanity'.[48] The article stressed the link between the youthful wearer's clothing and personality described as at once shocking, comical and intellectual, as well as romantic, patient, and with the goal to 'please the man she loves'. The article proposed four different ensembles to accommodate a wider group of readers. Each ensemble corresponded to a type: the 'intellectuelle' wore a quilted corduroy waistcoat, silk rayon blouse, pleated crepe skirt with a tie and glasses while her 'comical' counterpart, the 'cocasse', wore a leather jacket and wool culotte skirt with leather gloves, boots and a knitted beret. While not extreme in their clothing, these two types embodied younger women, such as students and those engaged in outdoor leisure activities. The writer then offered a clearer contrast in setting the 'logique' model, looking to haute couture in her patent leather pumps and a wool coat trimmed with fur, against her foil who was 'ready for the moon' in a cosmic zippered jacket and skirt in oilskin with matching boots and helmet (Figures 1 and 2). These two pages were also products of different hands: frequent *Elle* photographer Fouli Elia authored the 'logique' image and Peter Knapp the other. Knapp (b. 1931), *Elle*'s artistic director from 1959 to 1966, put in place a new graphic layout that accompanied Lazareff's modern vision of ready-to-wear and included bright colours, geometric backdrops and models in motion.

THE YOUTHFUL AND ACTIVE WEARER OF READY-TO-WEAR

Dominique Veillon has remarked on the changing voice and format of *Elle* in the 1960s to accommodate a varied group of readers who included adolescents, working women and homemakers.[49] She argues that *Elle* depicted an image of 'a woman in movement and in step with her time'.[50] Similarly, Hilary Radner notes that the fashion photograph of the 1960s illustrated the new feminine ideal: 'young, single, economically self-sufficient' incarnating 'the movement of a culture in transition'.[51] This translated visually into models posing outdoors in active roles, which reflected consumers' more energetic lifestyles and roles outside the home, and equated them to the burgeoning ready-to-wear.[52]

The 21 April 1961 issue included a spread with photographs by William Connors entitled 'Paris Promenade' presenting models out in the city streets. One model,

redingote du soir

Logiques ? Fourrure en hiver. Perpétuellement nouvelles ? Dernière longueur longue. L'esprit ouvert sur le monde ? Vive le folklore et les réminiscences de roman, avec une redingote du matin en agneau marron glacé ourlée de mouton - castor (559 F). Avec la toque pareille (45 F). Bottes de cuir (99 F). Ou bien la redingote du soir en gros ottoman de laine. Col et ourlets de fourrure noire (450 F). Pochette de velours noir (45 F). Chaussures vernies (49,90 F). Bas de Nylon noir (4,25 F). Gants de veau velours (48 F). Coiffure J. Dessange.

FOULI ELIA

CES MODELES SONT EN VENTE AU PRINTEMPS (HAUSSMANN ET NATION) ET DANS LES MAGASINS ENUMERES PAGE 175

FIGURE 1. Printemps (retailer), wool coat with fur trim, velvet gloves and clutch. Photographed by Fouli Elia on page 175 of *Elle*, 980, 25 September 1964

© *ELLE/SCOOP*

FIGURE 2. Printemps (retailer), oilskin jacket and skirt with matching boots and helmet. Photographed by Peter Knapp on page 177 of *Elle*, 980, 25 September 1964

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wearing garments from the boutique Réal, epitomized this urban movement as she is captured in mid-step, crossing the road. The 27 September 1963 issue also showed models roaming Parisian streets and the caption implied the many possibilities of life away from the home, remarking, 'you can wear these things in a London pub, lunching in Paris, waiting for your fiancé in Toulouse [or] dining in Calais'.[53] *Elle*'s metropolitan reader group could identify with these images of models inhabiting the city; for the magazine's less urban readers, the images would have lent another element of fantasy to the viewing experience.

Photographs in French fashion periodicals of the 1940s and 1950s depicting models wearing couture usually showed them walking or seated, though often outdoors. By the 1960s, however, models in ready-to-wear increasingly posed as if they were taking part in sporting activities to convince readers of the flexibility and comfort of their clothing. Bicycles were typical fashion accessories in *Elle* photo shoots during this decade. The 31 May 1963 issue of *Elle* pictured a model on a bicycle wearing a cotton polo shirt and gabardine culotte skirt designed by Emmanuelle Khanh for the fashionable Paris boutique Dorothée (Figure 3).[54] Her short boyish haircut and cap corresponded to her sporty stance, looking away from the camera and perhaps calling out to the two models and fellow cyclists on the adjoining page. The culottes, in their likeness to flared skirts, became the ideal compromise between masculine and feminine for designers. This key article of 1960s ready-to-wear fashion epitomized the idea of 'feminized active wear.'

The *Elle* issue from 7 August 1964 presented a spread in which models posed outdoors with well-known racing drivers. Attested by their apparel, it implied that the models actually took part in the sport, one known for its speed and edgy, modern lifestyle. In one image, a model wearing a corduroy suit and helmet by Michèle Rosier poses next to American driver Richie Ginther. Like the bicycle-riding model mentioned above she looks away from the camera and slouches against a car. Photographer John Cowan depicted the women models as the racers' equals, participating in a typically male activity while wearing trousers and other masculine accoutrements.[55] However, a model in this same spread wears Sonia Rykiel's short jersey jacket, silk blouse, and wool kilt, presenting a different construction of femininity. In a pose more typical of a mannequin on display, she stands upright with her hand behind her head and her foot forward. Posed thus, the model solicits the admiration of the racer behind her; the pair proposed a more typical relationship between the sexes as opposed to the previous example where they could be perceived as equals. Catering to more conservative readers, the author described the Rykiel outfit as taking 'another direction' from the otherwise radical clothing presented there. This ensemble, according to the author, encapsulated 'evening', 'charm' and 'the new romanticism'.[56]

In *Elle*, driving served as a paradigm to illustrate the action and freedom that this new ready-to-wear permitted as forecasted in 1960: 'A car trip, it's a coat trip [. . .] you will feel light and ready to go to the end of the earth. On the road! Choose the wrinkle-free coat in which you will travel the most comfortably'.[57] The 15 September 1969 issue showed a model driving and looking ahead, clad in a leather cap, gloves and wool-jersey coatdress by Emmanuelle Khanh, embodying the liberated woman in control of her fast-paced life.

FIGURE 3. Right page: Emmanuelle Khanh for Dorothée (retailer), cotton polo shirt and gabardine culotte skirt with 'S' belt. Photographed by Duffy on page 110 of *Elle*, 910, 31 May 1963

© *ELLE/SCOOP*

Much of the clothing during this period was made from supple fabrics such as jersey or knits, allowing for heightened movement. In addition, lack of inner and under structure distinguished these garments from the more formal and constricted ones of the 1950s and early 1960s. Designers' increased use of trousers, unstructured tunics, knitwear, sportswear and ready-made separates were in stark contrast to past dressier and structured silhouettes, and shaped a new active, youthful feminine body. In magazines, this flexibility translated into their practicality for modern, sportive lifestyles, well illustrated by the cover of *Elle* on 29 September 1966 subtitled, 'sweater-dresses: modern and practical'.[58]

Countless issues of *Elle* pictured models, arms outstretched, leaping in the air wearing knitted dresses and trousers to demonstrate the ease of movement possible through these garments. While perhaps not intended by journalists, one cannot help but relate this movement to the freedom some women began to acquire in the 1960s whether through new legal rights or through working outside the domestic sphere. In 1962, over forty-one per cent of women in France aged twenty-five to forty-nine worked, a figure that grew over the course of the decade.[59] Still, this group accounted for approximately only twenty-one per cent of *Elle* readers according to

a survey conducted by the French Institute of Public Opinion and presented in its 31 March 1966 issue.[60]

In a 1967 article on the *stylistes*, *Elle* journalist Claude Berthod used imagery that evoked movement to describe a visual race between older more constrictive styles and 'the young ready-to-wear':

> Today, 25 September 1967, you seem about ten years younger. Why? Because you dress younger and gayer, because you have learned to use colour, to do your eyes, to soften your lips, to walk faster on flatter heels [. . .] because, like all women regardless of age, you have benefited from the powerful current of youth that has swept fashion these past few years, leaving far behind corseted suits, veiled hats, and high heels.[61]

As seen here, depictions of *stylisme* in the press painted the picture of a clever, active, and young consumer.

A 1963 survey by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies indicated that fifteen- to twenty-year olds in France spent more on clothing than other consumer groups. The impact of this was evident in a fashion press that increasingly targeted younger readers. A 1965 issue of the *Officiel du Prêt à Porter* drew attention to this new age group of girls — numbering six million in France, according to the magazine — who wanted to choose their own clothes with their new spending power.[62] Throughout the 1960s, *Elle* abounded with articles on junior, young and student ready-to-wear, such as the 1963 spread on fashions for 'sixteen to twenty-year-olds' where photographer Dennis Stock depicted models dancing in a record shop wearing shorts and inverted-pleat skirts with Oxford shirts, along with caps and scarves.[63] These youthful styles, contextualized in the notion of ready-to-wear as clothing for an active lifestyle, came to be associated with *stylisme*.

READY-TO-WEAR ACCESSIBILITY AND CONSUMER CHOICE

Elle's portrayal of ready-made clothing implied freedom of movement as well as freedom of consumer choice. This was often couched in dynamic language, positioning women as active participants in fashion as opposed to passive couture models. A description of 1964 prêt-à-porter styles in the 13 September 1963 issue, for instance, encouraged readers to: 'Go on, jump from one extreme to the next! You can mix fabrics, colours, accumulate buttons or erase them completely!'.[64] However, while the 21 September 1962 issue ostensibly gave readers the choice between four ensembles, asking, 'Which of these four energetic outfits do you need to tackle the new season?', the author still prescribed what women were to wear, specifying that 'Black and white stimulates blonds, English checks go well with redheads, brunettes prefer beige. Choose according to your type and your heart'.[65]

Elle highlighted less expensive clothes from local stores as a contrast to the inaccessible haute couture as early as 1958 when the magazine defined prêt-à-porter as 'fashion for every woman' in an article entitled 'Caravane de la Mode'.[66] Dominique Veillon identified this as the first time a ready-to-wear collection was presented to all of France through a magazine and made available in two hundred provincial cities at the popular department store Dames de France.[67] Described as an 'ultra-practical collection' of twenty-five outfits made from synthetic fabrics,

Elle promoted this option for readers as ideal for everyday life (the fabrics being wrinkle-free, washable, and light) and adaptable (to large and small cities, to various seasons, to working women and others, and to 'the young and less young').[68] Most important, however, was the idea of the accessibility of fashion — affordable prices and wide dissemination — as noted: 'We are putting fashion within your reach. Today, we are bringing it to your door'.[69] The 15 September 1961 issue was one of many that continued to portray this type of clothing as easy to acquire and non-elitist as it was distributed to stores all over France. 'This ready-to-wear is two steps from your house, whether you live in Pas-de-Calais, the Loire-Atlantique, Var, Moselle, or Gironde [. . .]. You see, fashion is no longer a Parisian privilege, it is a French one.'[70] A 1967 *Elle* cover explaining 'Terrific! Ready-to-Wear '67 in 67 cities in France' attests that this accessibility was a concern of the magazine throughout the decade. Of course, with the market expanding, publishers could see more potential magazine buyers in the provincial cities. Hidden behind a dialogue interweaving product accessibility and consumer choice that catered to several feminine types, *Elle*'s own commercial motives fuelled its goal of improving and uniting the industry.

CREATIVE SANCTION

The portrayal of the *stylistes* as original creators in the press helped earn them legitimacy as tastemakers, separating this category of prêt-à-porter from *confection*: in various articles from the 1960s, *Elle* dubbed them 'fashion forerunners' and 'pioneers' who 'revolutionized' how women dress 'by their talent, originality, and inventive spirit'.[71] In 1966, *Vogue* labelled them 'pilots' and the trade publication *International Textiles* as 'original [. . .] without a trace of conformism'.[72] Magazines also stressed the independence of the *stylistes* from haute couture, contending that these innovative designers did not copy as their *confection* predecessors had done. In February 1964, for example, *Vogue* wrote that Emmanuelle Khanh and Christiane Bailly sought to make original prêt-à-porter, not 'far-off copies of haute couture'.[73] In a 1969 *Réalités* article, Gerald Dryansky, Paris head of Fairchild Publications, similarly noted in regards to Khanh, Rosier, and Bailly: 'In the past French ready-to-wear was asleep. There was a great deal of copying of couture elegance; this was replaced by a new kind of spirit, based on talent and imagination'.[74] Magazines even distinguished between innovative *stylistes* and couture unoriginality. The 16 August 1963 issue of *Elle*, for example, discussed the designers, noting the stuffiness of haute couture in that it was 'running out of steam, confirmed by the Winter collections. Out of 40 couturiers, how many are authentic creators? Besides Chanel, 4, 5, 6?'.[75]

The overt publicizing of the gender of female ready-to-wear designers acted as a clear foil to the predominantly male couturier, adding another level of separation between haute couture and ready-to-wear. Claude Berthod noted in *Elle* in 1968: 'Now ready-to-wear has conquered due to the talent, technique, and self-sufficiency of its tenors — who are by the way divas'.[76] The following year, *Elle* observed that, 'ready-to-wear is in the hands of women, or Emmanuelle Khanh, Christiane Bailly, Michèle Rosier, the three amazons of Prêt-à-Porter'.[77]

Sociologist Yuniya Kawamura questions the concept of creativity in the fashion industry, proposing that it is a 'legitimation and a labelling process' rather than an innate characteristic. She explains: 'One is not born creative but one becomes, that is, one is identified as, creative'.[78] I argue that *Elle* played a significant role in this legitimizing process for the *stylistes*. The single act of naming the designers next to their designs — as was previously done only for couturiers — did much to indicate their importance. Furthermore, the new characteristics that would collectively define *stylisme*, built on both older and new stylistic values, made it attractive in the eyes of the magazine's readers.

Régine Gabbey's 1969 article in lifestyle magazine *Réalités*, entitled 'The Ready-to-Dare Designers', focusing on Khanh, Bailly and Rosier, reinforced *Elle*'s construction of *stylisme*. The article, composed of a discussion between the three *stylistes*, portrayed them as epitomizing the new (prêt-à-porter) as opposed to the old (haute couture). Gabbey defined new and old through her choice of language, using verbs suggestive of change and innovation when referring to the new mode, such as 'renovating', 'launched', 'replaced', 'rewritten', and 'modernized'.[79] While couture was 'asleep' and 'rigid', the new style was 'alive'.[80] Central to Gabbey's narrative was the contrast between an older, richer couture client and a younger, working ready-to-wear consumer. This older woman was married to the concept of 'good taste', whereas her younger counterpart was characterized by 'a sense of inventiveness'.[81] Similar to depictions in *Elle*, she portrayed modern women as on the move, 'strolling, running for a bus or driving a car'.[82] In contrast to 'heavy' couture garments, Gabbey described ready-made clothing as pared down and light, ideal for an active lifestyle.[83]

Gabbey contrasted a one-dimensional 'couture elegance' with prêt-à-porter, whose designers she depicted as at once eclectic, romantic, and sport-conscious.[84] Descriptors for the new garments include 'sharply pointed' and 'long oddly shaped' and the abstract 'crazy but exciting' and 'saucy', visually implying youthful and garish styles.[85] In the article, Khanh, Bailly, and Rosier advocated 'schoolgirl dresses' and short skirts that caused 'women [to] look and feel ten years younger'.[86] Paralleling Gabbey's youthful depictions of the new clothing, however, she still evoked the older concept of luxury in her descriptions, asserting, for example, that traditional materials such as the 'shiniest satins, the softest velvets' are at the 'height of luxury, the most elegant'.[87] This article exemplifies journalists' opposing albeit blurred characterizations of the two models in their goal to sanction ready-to-wear. They exploited the otherness of the *stylistes* so that these designers could exist alongside haute couturiers whilst evoking older references to stay within the guidelines of the fashion system. Moreover, Gabbey's depiction of *stylisme* confirmed that *Elle*'s discourse became embedded in wider press and fashion mentalities.

CONCLUSION

Stylisme of the 1960s was key in shaping French ready-to-wear in an industry fuelled by haute couture's creative authority. In the 1950s, industrialists tried to strike a balance between new ideas on modernity and characteristics traditionally associated with couture in their goal to enhance the image of ready-to-wear. This exchange

between couture and prêt-à-porter continued to underlie fashion discourse throughout the 1960s as is seen clearly in readings of *Elle* whose narrative mediated between new feminine ideals of youth, practicality, daring and democracy, and those traditionally associated with couture, describing an elegant and elitist fashion, and prescribing trends albeit masquerading as reader choice. Certainly, fashion constantly references past styles and values in its natural progression, propelled by magazines' 'old versus new' discourse. In this case, *Elle*'s dialogue manipulated wider cultural values and its depiction of *stylisme* reflected new larger markets, the drive to the future, democratic rhetoric and consumers' more active lifestyles and roles outside the home. Just as Grant McCracken considers fashion journalists as 'agents who gather up cultural meaning and effect its transfer to consumer goods', Lazareff and her team input meaning into this ready-to-wear model.[88] I likewise argued in this essay that the magazine's format, which identified designers next to their work and listed manufacturers and retailers, reinforced the industrial structure of *stylisme*. *Elle* also sought to develop the industry by portraying these designers — mentioned by name — as original creators, a necessary step in the legitimising process of *stylisme*, challenging the notion of haute couture as the only creative engine. Many of them would go on to establish their own labels in the 1970s, owing much to the status and new opportunities gained under 1960s *stylisme*. Our understanding of this ready-to-wear model would benefit from further inquiries into the fashion press, notably to uncover 'hidden' *stylistes*, the manufacturers for whom they designed and the retailers who disseminated their creations.

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[3] In today's French lexicon, *stylisme* refers simply to fashion design. While dress historians and other commentators have isolated it as a 1960s phenomenon, linking it to a particular group of designers and consultants [Hebe Dorsey, 'Conclusion: Prêt à Porter v Couture', in *Couture, An Illustrated History of the Great Paris Designers and Their Creations*, ed. by Ruth Lynam (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1972), p. 243; Bruno du Roselle, *La Mode* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1980), p. 262; Didier Grumbach, *Histoires de la Mode* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), p. 204], the youth subculture [Bruno du Roselle, *Crise de la Mode; la révolution des jeunes et la mode* (Paris: Fayard, 1973), p. 4], and specific commercial production (Olivier Bardolle, *Mode in France: les dessous du prêt-à-porter* (Paris: Alain Moreau, 1979), pp. 10, 61; Françoise Vincent-Ricard, *Raison et passion. Langages de société: la mode, 1940–1990* (Paris: Textile/Art/Langage, 1983), pp. 67, 84, 87], there remains much to explore and define regarding *stylisme* in the field of dress studies. See also Madeleine Delpierre, 'La Haute Couture de 1960 à nos jours', in *Le costume: la haute couture de 1940 à nos jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), p. 33; 'La mode des années soixante', *Bulletin de l'IHTP*, 76 (November 2000).

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