HYPERTEXTUALITY AND REMEDIATION IN THE FASHION MEDIA
The case of fashion blogs

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Since their appearance in the early noughties, fashion blogs have established themselves as a central platform for the circulation of fashion-related news and information. Often the creation of fashion outsiders, they have entered the mainstream fashion media, bringing to light the shifting nature of fashion journalism. The paper discusses the rise of the fashion blogosphere and the impact of new technologies on the mediation of fashion. Drawing on the notions of hypertextuality and remediation, it contributes to a recurring question in academic studies of digital culture: how new are new media? The paper looks at the ways fashion blogs define themselves in relation to traditional fashion journalism and the traditional fashion press. Their relation of co-dependence and mutual influence is unpacked to shed light on the contemporary field of the fashion media, and the role of new technologies in the production, circulation and consumption of fashion-related news.

KEYWORDS fashion blogs; hypertextuality; Internet; remediation; rhizome

Introduction

The 1990s saw the birth of blogs—a contraction of the terms web and log shortened into its present form by blogger Peter Merholz in 1999 (Rettberg, 2008, p. 26)—with their number soaring from 50 in 1999 (Kaye, 2007, p. 128) to 184 million in 2008 (Technorati, 2008). When in 2003 the genre—a regular, often daily, online posting of one’s musings on a variety of topics—was appropriated by a young American woman to document her style, the first blog devoted to fashion—nogoodforme—was created. The fashion blogosphere, now constituted by both independent and corporate sites, has since rapidly expanded with Blogger.com evaluating in July 2010 at 2 million the number of blogs “with an industry of fashion” (Blogger, 2010).

Blogs are generally included in the category “new media”, a term which, although in use since the 1960s, acquired high currency in the mid-1990s (Hui Kyong Chun, 2006, p. 1). This categorisation according to novelty has been debated by some, a question being: how new are new media? (see, for instance, Lister et al., 2009). As Fuery notes:

the new is a complex intersection of issues requiring recognition at a moment in time. It is not always—perhaps very rarely—something that appears for the first time. The new is not always new at all. One of the ways in which the new gains its status is the transformation of vision that allows us to see the new, and the social consequences that allow us to evaluate this status of the new. (2009, p. 20)

In this paper, I revisit this issue of the newness of new media in the light of fashion blogs, to ask, then, how new are fashion blogs? Asking the question forces us to reflect on the particularities of blogs as opposed to the printed press, which also means gaining a
better understanding of fashion discourse as articulated in the media. I first look at a key dimension of fashion blogs that constitutes a novel way of conveying fashion news, and a departure from the printed press: hypertextuality. I discuss “the transformation of vision” of fashion it has supported insisting on some of the changes fashion blogs have brought to the production, circulation and consumption of fashion discourse. Drawing on the work of Bolter and Grusin (2000 [1999]), I then discuss some of the ways blogs have refashioned old media, incorporating some of their defining traits in their own digital pages, to then look at how the print media have in turn refashioned themselves by capitalising on the success of blogs.

Before I do so, however, I present a brief overview of existing studies of the fashion media—all studies of print media, for no work has been produced yet on their digital counterparts (see, however, Rocamora and Bartlett, 2009)—as a way of situating the present study in the slowly growing body of work on the field of the fashion media.

**Studying the Fashion Media**

Studies of the fashion media constitute a corpus of work different from studies of women’s and men’s magazines (see, for instance, Crewe, 2003; Edwards, 1997; Hermes, 1997; Gough-Yates, 2003) in that it takes as its main subject of enquiry fashion images and/or fashion writing, in contrast with studies of women’s and men’s magazines, where fashion tends to be addressed only briefly.

Studies of the fashion media have privileged textual analysis. Amongst them is Barthes’s (1990 [1967]) *The Fashion System*, where he appropriates Saussurian linguistics to analyse what he terms “written fashion”, that is, fashion as put into words. Borrelli (1997) also looks at fashion writing. Deploiring the little attention that has been given to written fashion, she focuses on an analysis of American Vogue’s “Point of View” section from 1968 to 1993. Moeran (2004, p. 35) also is concerned with written fashion, observing that “it is, indeed, the use of language that transforms clothing into fashion”. Parting with Barthes and his endeavour to systematize the relation between the signifiers of written fashion, he sets out to look at the signifieds of fashion writing as occurring in the pages of Japanese fashion magazines. Where Barthes, Borrelli, and Moeran focus on fashion as written in magazines, Rocamora (2002) looks at newspapers in a comparative analysis of the British *The Guardian* and the French *Le Monde* to discuss the values attached to fashion in both.

Not only has written fashion been interrogated, but so have fashion images. Thus, Rabine (1994, p. 66) addresses the female body as represented in contemporary fashion magazines to argue that it is caught between “two bodies”: a “confident, free, sexually powerful” body, and a subordinate and objectified one. Jobling (1999, p. 66) also concentrates on the discursive construction of the body of fashion photography, here *Vogue*, *The Face* and *Arena*, also insisting on the “complementarity” between words and images in the creation of meaning, a complementarity Rocamora (2009) considers to analyse the discursive construction of “Paris” and the reproduction of the Paris myth in the contemporary French fashion media.

Other authors have privileged neither words nor images, preferring instead to explore fashion journalism as a genre, often focusing on a particular title. Thus, Benhamou (1997) looks at the first publication to have reported on fashion, *Le Mercure* (1672–1791), discussing the changes in discourses on fashion and women triggered by a change of
editors, whilst in her analysis of La Presse’s “Courrier de Paris” column (1836–39), Hahn (2005) discusses the rise, in the nineteenth century, of the fashion press as a commercial press. She argues that by the mid-1840s commerce and advertising had become a dominant feature of fashion magazines, with fashion constructed as a pleasurable experience addressed to “an emerging female consumer’s subjectivity” (Hahn, 2005, p. 224). A specific title—Vogue—is also the object of study of a special issue of the journal Fashion Theory (Conekin and de la Haye, 2006), in which authors attend to different aspects of a range of national editions of the magazine, also privileging textual analysis over studies of production and consumption. Indeed, such studies are rare. Amongst them, however, is Moeran’s analysis of four fashion magazines, where he addresses the issues of production and reception. He reminds the reader that fashion magazines “are both cultural products and commodities” (2006, p. 727) and that understanding them means interrogating not only their content but also their production and consumption. Attention to the latter also informs Lewis’s study of “the lesbian gaze”, where she discusses the “different forms of pleasure and identification activated” (1997, p. 92) in the reading of the fashion pages of a range of lifestyle magazines, including gay title Diva.

Finally, although McRobbie’s (1998) British Fashion Design does not focus on the fashion media, her study is worth mentioning in that it includes a rare investigation of fashion journalists. Drawing on a Bourdieuan framework, she discusses the “fluid field of fashion journalism” (1998, p. 151) to insist on its lack of “serious discussion” of fashion. Bourdieuan theory also informs Entwistle and Rocamora’s (2006) study of fashion journalism and fashion buying during London Fashion Week, an event, they argue, that materialises the field of fashion, its logic, structure and rules.

The fashion media, then, have proven to be a rich platform for the investigation of a broad range of issues. With the rise of fashion blogs this platform has widened, offering new opportunities for enquiry. In the remainder of this paper, I present some avenues for reflection on their role and specificity in the production and circulation of fashion discourse, starting—as a way also of engaging with the idea of the newness of new media mentioned earlier—with the idea of hypertextuality.

Hypertextual Fashion

The blogosphere is a hypertextual space. Hypertextuality has come to commonly refer to the electronic linking of a wide range of written texts and images, brought together in a constantly shifting configuration of networks—the sense used in this paper. A link—also called hyperlink—is one which allows Internet users to move through this configuration, jumping from one site to the other by clicking on the related signifier, usually a word displayed in a different colour, font, or style. As Lister et al. (2009, p. 26) remind us: “The prefix ‘hyper’ is derived from the Greek ‘above, beyond, or outside’. Hence, hypertext has come to describe a text which provides a network of links to other texts that are ‘outside, above and beyond’ itself”.

The term and essential principles of hypertextuality are not in themselves new. The concept, coined in 1965 by Theodor Nelson to refer to “a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper” (Nelson, cited in Rettberg, 2008, p. 45), was actually pioneered in the 1940s by Vannevar Bush and his idea for a machine, the memex, that
would store and link texts together in a manner akin to the way, Bush argued, the human mind works: through associations and connections (Bush, 1945, cited in Landow, 1997). This idea at the core of hypertextuality, that texts are inscribed in a complex formation of texts, a network, that they connect to other texts and exceed their limits, is also present, Landow (1997) reminds us, in the work of Foucault, Derrida, Barthes and Bakhtin. Indeed, the latter’s thinking behind the notion of intertextuality (see Bakhtin, 1981)—a term coined later by Kristeva (1969)—finds a materialisation in the hypertext. Academic writing itself, with its annotations, footnotes, and endnotes is premised on the practice of a degree of hypertextuality (Landow, 1997, p. 4).

With the World Wide Web, however, and the blogosphere in particular, hypertextuality has proliferated. It is the very structure blogs rest on. When the reader clicks on a link, images (both still and moving), words and sounds can come at once on the screen, quickly succeeding and completing each other, making of fashion blogs, in contrast with magazines, texts in perpetual movement, always new, never-ending. Indeed, although a magazine is always caught in a wider discursive formation, this formation is kept outside of the material boundaries of the magazine. The reader’s experience of the text, here the magazine, is contained by its materiality, the limits of its pages. The network of texts the magazine is inscribed in can be invoked but it can never be made fully present. With fashion blogs, however, a broad range of texts a post relates to can be made accessible by the “here and now” of the Web.

When accessing Tavi’s thestylebooker’s 12 November 2010 post, for instance, I may decide to read the text from beginning to end without any interruption, or I may decide to click on the first link included in the post—the word “how”—which immediately takes me to an earlier post Tavi refers to in her entry. A further link at the bottom of the page can take me to the comments section where I will encounter other readers’ reactions to the post, and possibly enter their own blogs to then move towards yet more diverse possibilities, across various historical times, textual genres and authorial voices, for blogs also always link to other websites.

Thus, the many sites, images and posts a blogger is referring to can appear on the screen at any time, taking over the text I had begun with, or rather turning it into a multi-layered text whose many threads lead me towards a potentially unending flow of images, words, and sounds. As Landow notes, hypertext “creates an open, open-bordered text, a text that cannot shut out other texts” (1997, p. 80); it “blurs the distinction between what is ‘inside’ and what is ‘outside’ a text”, making “all the texts connected to a block of text collaborate with that text” (1997, p. 83).

The reading experience described above in the case of Tavi’s blog parts with traditional, linear, modes of engagement with the printed text, for a hypertext is nonlinear, that is, “an object of verbal communication that is not simply one fixed sequence of letters, words, and sentences but one in which the words or sequence of words may differ from reading to reading because of the shape, conventions, or mechanisms of the text” (Aarseth, 1994, p. 51). Multiple entries and trajectories are possible, dependent on the reader’s whims, making of the blogosphere a nonlinear space of interrelated textual nodes that can be read in any order, a feature that Manovich (2001, p. 77) also argues is characteristic of new media.

Although a magazine can be opened at any page it is still premised on the idea of a linear organisation of its content from page one to page x with a sequence of sections generally shared by all magazines: contents, editorial, features and other articles, fashion
stories, beauty pages. With blogs, there is no beginning and no end, only a moment in one’s encounter with a text. As Bolter observes: “Where printed genres are linear or hierarchical, hypertext is multiple and associative. Where a printed text is static, a hypertext responds to the reader’s touch” (2001, p. 42). The centre can always be decentred; “it never tyrannizes other aspects of the network in the way a printed text does” (Landow, 1997, p. 85).

Thus, linking is one of the key traits distinguishing hypertexts from print technology (Landow, 1994, p. 6). Where fashion magazines never refer to any other magazines—clearly implying their independence from the rest of print publications and a status as the one authoritative fashion source—linking “produces a network organization” (Landow, 1994, p. 24) whereby fashion blogs constantly relate to other blogs, be it through directly linking to them in a post or by including them in their blogroll, the list of blogs and the related links bloggers favour.

**Rhizomatic Fashion**

Hypertextuality brings to mind the Deleuzian notion of rhizome, a concept helpful for reflecting on the structure of the Web (see also Landow, 1997, pp. 38–42), and of the fashion blogosphere in particular. A rhizome, following Deleuze and Guattari (1980)—whose own *A Thousand Plateaus* constitutes a “print proto-hypertext” (Landow, 1997, p. 38)—is an a-centred system that is always changing and made up of units—so-called “plateaus”—that are linked together in a non-linear way, in a network formation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, p. 32). “Plateaus can be read in any order and linked to any other plateaus”, to which they are joined by what Deleuze and Guattari call “lines” (1980, p. 33). In the blogosphere they are the links that allow Internet users the constant movement from one page to the next, from one site to the next. Indeed, the blogosphere, like the rhizomes Deleuze and Guattari discuss, is a space in a permanent state of becoming, never fixed. Its plateaus are the many pages blogs and the blogosphere are made up of, and which, in a perpetual movement of displacement and replacement, open on to a limitless number of sites and signs that allow the reader to be always on the move within a continuously changing textual space.

A rhizome by virtue of being never fixed is “a short memory, or an anti-memory” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, p. 32), a state that aptly defines fashion with its constant quest for, and production of, the new. In that respect the rhizomatic structure of the blogosphere aptly lends itself to fashion. The latter’s logic of renewal of clothes and styles is mirrored in the rapid renewal of posts and the endless replacing of one site by another that links enable. This is a logic of replacement that, as Bolter and Grusin (2000 [1999], pp. 43–4) observe, is also that of the Web: each new page takes over another *ad infinitum*.

The short memory of blogs draws attention to the idea of temporality and the role of time in the definition of the blogosphere, and the fashion blogosphere in particular. Time, Bauman argues,

is no longer cyclical (time), but not linear either because events and actions succeed each other randomly rather than in a straight line, and seem to change direction on their way... Nowadays we are held together by short-term projects, moving constantly from one project to another—what model of time can be derived from such experience? I suggest a “pointillist” time. Much like canvasses of Sisley, Seurat or Signac, which consist
of points only, no broad brushstrokes and no continuities. That is, though, as far as the
analogy goes, because in pointillist paintings you have pre-designed and in-built
meaningful configurations. However, in liquid modern life configurations are not given
beforehand. They are just randomly scattered points: episodes, fragments—but of what
whole? Living through the moment, one point in time, you cannot be sure to what
configuration you will eventually belong when scrutinized retrospectively. (Bauman,
cited in Deuze, 2007a, p. 673)

Blogs clearly articulate and feed into this conception of time, a time made of
fragments, of a succession of brief moments: the moments made of one’s encounter with
a succession of interlinked Web pages and sites; of written texts, still images, sounds and
videos; and of the snapshots of life bloggers narrate in their posts.

Time as articulated in the blogosphere, a new time of interconnected points, time as
“a fluid, networked entity” (Fuery, 2009, p. 31), echoes time as articulated in the field of
fashion. Indeed, where once fashion time was neatly paced by the twice-yearly collections
and the monthly publications of glossies, now fashion time has accelerated, fragmented
into a series of moments that have shattered its orderly pace. Pre-collection, pre-fall,
cruise, resort, high summer, and Christmas collections are all new moments in this
restructured fashion time, a time now ruled by the imperative of immediacy, which
Tomlinson (2007) has identified as constitutive of today’s “culture of speed”. Indeed,
where in the field of fashion newness was once restricted to a twice-yearly event, it is now
a permanent present, a situation the Internet has fed off and sustained. As Lovink puts it:
“Technology such as the Internet lives on the principle of permanent change...The
‘tyranny of the new’ rule” (2008, p. xi). Thus “the goal of ‘immediacy’”, he argues, has
become “a professional media value” (p. 90). Witness the live streaming of fashion shows,
events once the preserve of an elite given the privilege to see the collections months
ahead of their appearance in print media and in shops. Witness also the “what’s new”,
“just in”, and “new arrivals” sections of online fashion shops, in which collections are
constantly updated. Bolter and Grusin (2000 [1999], p. 43) argue that “replacement is the
essence of hypertext” and the Web “an exercise in replacement”, a comment also true of
the very content of websites in online fashion.

In their constant, often daily, updating of sites with new posts, fashion blogs feed
into this tyranny of the new, constructing, more than any other media, fashion as transient,
passing, already gone. The flow of posts replicates the flow of goods, with the posts and
goods of today promised to rapid take-over, out-fashioned by newer arrivals that freeze
time, and fashion, online into a perpetual present. As Virilio (1991, p. 14) notes,
“Chronological and historical time, time that passes is replaced by a time that exposes
itself instantaneously”. “It is a pure computer time”, which “helps construct a permanent
present, an unbounded, timeless intensity” (1991, p. 15).

The transience of blogs contrasts with the lasting quality of glossies with many often
kept by their readers like books on bookshelves (see Lynge-Jorlen, 2010). Thus, where
Bolter talks about “the qualities of the computer” as being “flexibility, interactivity, speed
of distribution”, he defines that of print as “stability and authority” (2001, p. 3), a stability
then, which contrasts with the un-fixity of hypertexts such as blogs.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980) encapsulate rhizomes’ state of short memory and
constant change in the notion of nomadism, which translates into the digital wandering
and flânerie often constitutive of one’s virtual movement through the Web. Within the
fashion blogosphere, this flânerie brings to mind another type of flânerie at the heart of
fashion: shopping. Where In Real Life (or IRL as off-line life is also called on the Web) consumers move from one shop to the next, wander around and browse—a term that aptly captures the link between shopping and digital deambulation—in the fashion blogosphere they move from one site to the next.

Instead of Parisian streets, shopping windows, and the faces of the passers-by, the virtual flâneur travels through virtual streets, highways, and planes of data; the eroticism of a split-second virtual affair with a passer-by of the opposite sex is replaced with the excitement of locating and opening a particular file or zooming into the virtual object. Like Baudelaire’s flâneur, the virtual flâneur is happiest on the move, clicking from one object to another, traversing room after room, level after level, data volume after data volume. (Manovich, 2001, pp. 274–5)

Flicking through a magazine is akin to flânerie too. However, shopping remains imaginary, a distant project. With blogs it becomes real, thanks to the many links that take readers straight to a digital point-of-sale, triggering and responding to the desires of “the society of immediate satisfaction” (Laïdi, 2000, p. 115). Laïdi notes “the logic of never-ending choices to be made on the spot” with which contemporary individuals are confronted (2000, p. 115). They are “submerged with possibilities. But these possibilities are in open access. They are here. They are no longer a horizon” (2000, p. 115). The Web has intensified this collapsing of the there/later into the here/now. Thus, in the fashion blogosphere, fashion news can immediately be conducive to the act of buying, a process which also draws attention to the role of discourse in the circulation of fashionable goods and, more particularly to that of bloggers as intermediaries between readers as consumers and fashion companies.

Digital hypermedia, Bolter and Grusin (2000 [1999], p. 53) write, “seek the real by multiplying mediation so as to create a feeling of fullness, a satiety of experience, which can be taken as reality”. In the fashion blogosphere the profusion of pages, words and images also evokes that of the goods encountered whilst shopping In Real Life. The profusion of digital signs echoes the abundance pertaining to fashion, once again fittingly matching its logic and serving its interest.

Decentred Fashion

A hypertext is a space where margins can be brought to the fore. It “reveals differences that turn out to be, no longer, inevitabilities and invisibilities” (Landow, 1997, p. 87). So does the fashion blogosphere. Objects, subjects which, in a print magazine have been left outside its pages, excluded from its discourse, can in the fashion blogosphere become visible. Indeed, far from simply recycling or appropriating stories already covered by the traditional media, bloggers often generate new, alternative content, as Bruns (2005) notes of news blogs. Bloggers are not mere users of the Internet, they are producers too (“produsers” as Bruns, 2005 puts it), active participants in the creation of news, or citizen-journalists, an idea I return to later.

In print media the showcasing of designers is ruled by advertising: editorial pages have to feature the brands that have earned titles some income by advertising in their pages. Although numerous independent blogs have started monetizing their sites by way of banner ads, such ads are few, leaving bloggers more control over the content of their sites. A platform can be given to designers whose lack of economic capital has excluded
them from the media, a space crucial to success in the field of fashion. The popular Susie Lau, for instance, whose blog, at the time of writing, does not feature any ads—except for the mention of two independent fashion titles called Dazed Digital and Another—has made reporting on the margins of the field of fashion a crucial element of her popularity. In a 6 November 2010 post for instance, she discusses the work of the little-known Anna Jazewitsch, whose “first graduate collection . . . entitled ‘Oftimica’ was a geometric and structured affair”. By clicking on the words “Anna Jazewitsch” and “Oftimica” the reader is given direct access to the designer’s blog and to some images of her collection, some of which are also featured on Lau’s blog. She says: “I do get designers who contact me about their work, to get features on the blog, and I’m happy that they’re approaching bloggers as well, because they recognise that it’s a different platform and that their clothes aren’t always going to be called in for magazines” (Lau, cited in Hanssen and Nitzsche, 2010, p. 15).

On her punkyb, the French Géraldine Grisey, another highly popular fashion blogger, often features little-known names such as Heimstone, a company launched in 2007 and embraced by independent bloggers. When in 2008 Grisey “introduced” it to her readers by way of a video, many enthused about the label:

- “Superb discovery show of Heimstone.” (steph, 3 July 2008)
- “I didn’t know Heimstone and the clothes look really cool.” (littlejujube, 3 July 2008)
- “I knew Heimstone a little . . . but seeing the look of the two designers makes me feel like trying the whole look.” (clémentine, 3 July 2008)
- “HEIMSTONE, a label that will quickly grow.” (Sophia 3 July 2010).

Decentring also informs the fashion blogosphere in its construction of a network of fashion cities. Where the field of fashion is dominated by Paris, London, New York and Milan, the cities the printed press almost exclusively focuses on, in the fashion blogosphere, these cities are only a few in a wider topography of fashion locales. This is particularly evident in the case of street fashion blogs, blogs that report on fashion as seen on the streets of various cities across the world (see, for instance, thesartorialist; dublinstyle; sofiastreetstyle). When accessing such blogs, readers enter a network of cities that covers a wide territory, and where no particular cities dominate others, but each is just a node, a moment, in a larger formation. Centres in hypertexts, we saw earlier, are always transient; “As readers move through a web of network of texts, they continually shift the center—and hence the focus or organizing principle—of their investigation and experience” (Landow, 1997, p. 36). As a new fashion blog replaces another to which it is linked, becoming the new centre of attention of the user, so, too, do the cities linked to change, endlessly reconfiguring the fashion map.

When the reader logs on stylefromtokyo, for instance, Tokyo becomes the city at the heart of the fashion blogosphere. The “world friend” section then allows her to move to Amsterdam by clicking on DamStyle, which can then take her to Lisbon with fashionstreetlisboa and from there to Moscow or Warsaw, and so on towards more destinations. In contrast with print fashion magazines, the fashion blogosphere allows a wide range of places to become visible, extending the boundaries of the geography of fashion. As Manovich (2001, p. 333) observes, with new media “cultural possibilities that were previously in the background, on the periphery, come into the center”.

In the fashion blogosphere, the geography of fashion has been decentred but so has the geography of fashion taste makers. Indeed, where until recently the sole influential
fashion media intermediaries were those fashion journalists, stylists and photographers linked to established titles such as *Vogue*, *Harpers* or *Elle* and avant-garde niche magazines such as *Purple* or *Pop*, the rise of the fashion blogosphere has resulted in the coming to prominence and the growing influence of individuals who had no institutional affiliation to the field of fashion when they started their blog. The French Géraldine Dormoy, of *cafe-mode*, writes that her blog “aims at making you share my personal point-of-view on fashion. Not really a fashionista, I consider myself more passionately eager for info” (*blogs.lexpress.fr/cafe-mode*, “L’Auteur”). Lau was working in digital media when she started *stylebubble* and now defines herself as “a freelance writer, full-time blogger and dabbling in all sorts of projects. I’m still a fashion-outsider” (Lau, 2010), whilst one of the most famous fashion bloggers, the aforementioned Tavi, is a 14-year-old girl who still attends school in America.

The popularity of such bloggers has been greeted with intense criticism by fashion insiders. *ES Magazine* cites a fashion director:

I complimented Tavi on her skirt and she told me it was vintage Prada. I said, “It’s not vintage, it’s from the collection five seasons ago”. She was astonished that I remembered it—but of course I remembered it. This is my world. I remember everything. These bloggers, they don’t understand about the history. (27 August 2010, p. 14)

Similarly, according to Robert Johnson (cited in Mesure, 2010), associate editor of men’s magazine *GQ*, bloggers “don’t have the critical faculties to know what’s good and what’s not”. As Bridget Foley (2010), of print magazine *WWD*, also puts it, implicitly contrasting traditional journalists’ informed knowledge (such as those working for her title) with bloggers’ lack of it:

Are we in competition with bloggers? Absolutely. I’d like to think that knowledge of what you are writing is still considered important. I’d like to think that some bed of knowledge about a designer and the history of the house remain important. I think we are starting to feel a little backlash toward the whole immediacy of things.

Such statements must be seen in the light of what some have argued is a crisis of the “expert paradigm” (Walsh, cited in Jenkins, 2006, p. 52). Jenkins puts it thus: “Walsh argues that our traditional assumptions about expertise are breaking down or at least being transformed by the more open-ended processes of communication in cyberspace” (2006, p. 52). Deuze (2007b, p. 112) talks about a “liquefaction of the boundaries between different fields, disciplines, practices, and categories that used to define what media work was”. In the field of journalism, including fashion journalism, this is compounded by the absence of official credentials, the lack of an established educational trajectory and that of “professional boundaries” (Carlson, 2007, p. 265). As a result, “the line between journalist and non-journalist is perpetually blurry and dynamic” (Carlson, 2007, p. 265), a blurriness that has paved the way for the concept of citizen-journalism, mentioned earlier, and that has allowed independent fashion bloggers to enter the field of fashion and claim legitimacy.

Hypertext “does not permit a tyrannical, univocal voice” (Landow, 1997, p. 36). In the fashion blogosphere this means a decentraling of the voice of traditional fashion experts, print fashion journalists, whose authority has been displaced by the shifting into focus of other voices such as that of bloggers. Thus, “The newness of new media”, Fuery (2009, p. 21) writes, “is not necessarily its technical inventions, it is the transformation of vision
that affects how we make sense of, and even actually make, the world and its social orders. The newness of fashion blogs partly resides in the shifting approach to fashion they have conveyed, a fashion that is not centred on established designers and key cities only, on the voice of the traditional expert, but that echoes the openness and the decentredness pertaining to blogs’ hypertextuality.

**Fashion Remediation**

However, Bolter and Grusin (2000 [1999]), drawing on the work of McLuhan (1967 [1964]), remind us that new media may well transform established visions, but they never totally supersede old media, for a new medium always appropriates some of the characteristics of an older medium. Where McLuhan (1967 [1964], pp. 15–16) argued that what characterises all media is that “the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium”, Bolter and Grusin (2000 [1999], p. 15) note that “What is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media”. They call this process “remediation”, a process whereby both new and old media represent and refashion each other.

Thus, the Web “is the remediation of print” (Bolter, 2001, p. 42), a process clearly at play between fashion blogs and print magazines. Bloggers, for instance, regularly borrow visuals taken from the printed press to illustrate a post, when they’re not directly writing about and celebrating the visual in question. As Bolter (2001, p. 23) reminds us, remediation involves “homage”. On 13 November 2010, for instance, Marie of kingdomofstyle congratulates Harper’s Bazaar “on such a captivating golden Christmas cover!”. She adds, having reproduced the cover: “At Christmas ... I want to feel the magic and the fantasy that only a big glossy cover can convey. When I first saw this cover I actually gasped.” Marie’s enthusiasm for Harper’s Bazaar lends support to Rettberg’s argument that “While use of the Internet is clearly increasing, this does not seem to be at the cost of other media usage, which remains stable. It seems likely that some media are used simultaneously” (2008, p. 45). Jaja Hargreaves, of july-stars, for instance, states that she reads

a disconcertingly enormous amount of fashion blogs and magazines. Anything from French VOGUE, JALOUSE, PURPLE, SELF SERVICES, LULA, RUSSH, ENCENS, FANTASTIC MAN, MONOCLE, POP and NYLON to the more conventional fashion publications like ELLE, UK VOGUE, GRAZIA, and the style supplement of the FINANCIAL TIMES. (Hargreaves, cited in Hanssen and Nitzsche, 2010, p. 44)

Similarly, in her blogroll, Anabelle (fashionpirate) links to the magazines she reads, including Pop, Vogue Nippon, and Another Magazine.

Fashion blogs also remediate print magazines by way of some of the poses personal fashion bloggers adopt when putting themselves into the frame of the computer screen, poses that evoke those of models in glossies. A recurring trope of fashion photography, for instance, are images of a model photographed from behind whilst walking away from the camera. Evans and Thornton (1989, p. 104) call it “the disappearing woman” (see also Rocamora, 2009, Chap. 6). The popular Rumi of Fashiontoast and Karla of Karlascloset regularly utilise this type of shot. On 9 June 2010, for instance, Karla is shown crossing a zebra crossing in a New York street, a visual evocative of Williams Klein’s famous 1960
photograph of two models in Rome, the black and white lines of the zebra they are crossing a striking echo, as in the case of Karla’s picture, of a pattern on their dresses. On 8 September 2010, Rumi is shown standing in the middle of a busy city road, her post reading: “I decided that I like the backs of things more than the fronts of things”. In images set in city streets more generally the bloggers are often shown taking long strides, another trope of fashion photography, and one that—like much contemporary fashion imagery—constructs the street as a space of fashionable display (see Rocamora, 2009; Rocamora and O’Neill, 2008).

In many posts bloggers are shown in movement, albeit frozen in time by the camera, but they are also featured at rest, on the street, often standing against a city wall, in a seemingly unelaborated pose reminiscent of the straight-up, a genre of fashion photography that came to prominence in the early 1980s in the British style press (see Rocamora and O’Neill, 2008), and which bloggers—street fashion bloggers in particular—have capitalised on. Indeed, British style magazine i-D’s first issue in August 1980 featured a spread entitled “straight-up” showing full-length portraits of ordinary people seen on the street, a city wall as prop. In the 1990s this take on style became the raison d’être of print magazines such as FRUiTS, STREET and TUNE, exclusively devoted to fashion as “found” on city streets, whilst also being regularly mobilised in the fashion pages of various other glossies and newspapers. Thus, when fashion blogs such as thesartorialist and facehunter took up the genre it had already been a regular feature of the printed press.

The blogs, however, have given it a new visibility, to the point that it has become tightly associated with the fashion blogosphere as if no other media before it had represented it. Indeed, independent fashion blogs are often seen as the one space where real fashion, fashion as worn by real people, can be seen. In April 2006, a reader tells Susie Lau: “i’m so sick of fashion magazines which are almost always overpriced boring commercials (except purple. i love purple). i’m so much more engaged by what real people think and wear. so thank you and keep up the good work” (Sarah). French blogger Betty (2008) puts it thus: “people love to be inspired by real people and also they see that there is fashion in real life and not only in the magazines”, whilst—according to Eirik Slyngstad and Andreas Schjonhaug of thestreethearts—“blogs are often started by ordinary people like you and me, and that makes them more real and effective for a large number of readers than magazines do” (cited in Hanssen and Nitzsche, 2010, p. 73). The inside cover of Scott Schuman’s 2009 book The Sartorialist, the print version of his eponymous blog, a phenomenon I return to later, reads: “His now-famous and much-loved blog, thesartorialist.com, is his showcase for the wonderful and varied sartorial tastes of real people across the globe”.

Such claims to the real are re-enforced by visions and representations of the Web as an unmediated space, which has consolidated the association of street fashion/fashion blogosphere, thereby somewhat occulting the significance of print media in popularising the genre. Indeed, the Web, as Bolter and Grusin (2000 [1999], p. 200) argue, “rivals” all media “by promising greater immediacy”. This is “immediacy” in terms of rapidity, as discussed earlier, but also immediacy in terms of authenticity and truth, “in the name of the real”, for immediacy also refers to a seemingly non-mediated relation to an image or representation (2000, p. 65). As Tomlinson (2007, p. 99) observes, the goal of immediacy is premised on the idea “that mediated material should be delivered both rapidly and with the rather illusive quality of ‘liveness’”. Bolter puts it thus:
claims of immediacy are what govern the circulation and consumption of new media products. What producers of new media artefacts are selling are experiences of immediacy. They engage in an ongoing struggle to define or redefine immediacy or authenticity of experience in a way that particularly enhances their own products. Often the immediacy of the product is expressed as transparency: you can see through the product to the ostensible reality behind it. (2001, pp. 70–1)

The idea that street fashion blogs present fashion as it is, unmediated, is reinforced by the absences of words and writing, which distinguishes such blogs from other fashion blogs. Indeed, the “value of immediacy”, Tomlinson argues, translates into “the removal of symbolic barriers and conventions (the newsreader’s desk) which signal the media as mediators, rather than as, say, everyday acquaintances and interlocutors” (2007, p. 100). In most independent fashion blogs this is articulated in writing through the adoption of a casual, often confessional tone, for as Tomlinson also notes, the value of immediacy informs a style of media presentation “which favours informality, direct conversational modes of address, and a certain assumption of intimacy (sometimes even of ironic complicity) with the audience” (2007, p. 100). In street fashion blogs this is expressed through the privileging of images over words, as if the former spoke for themselves, with no need for the mediating work of the blogger’s words. In his book, Schuman puts it thus: “I like people to draw their own conclusions, to find their own inspiration, without the influence of a guiding hand. That’s why you won’t find a lot of text in this book”. This is an explanation, one can assume, that is equally applicable to the minimally captioned blog.

This claim to immediacy as unmediated reality is supported by the claim to immediacy as rapidity discussed earlier, for images of street fashion in fashion blogs are images of the t/here and now, they are the present “reality” of city life, even more real, even more alive, than they are “now”.

The street fashion images many blogs have championed have in turn become an influence on the printed press. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, remediation is a two-way process: new media borrow from and refashion old media, which in turn refashion new media to absorb some of their characteristics in their pages. Thus, “Newer media do not necessarily supersede older media because the process of reform and refashioning is mutual” (Bolter and Grusin, 2000 [1999], p. 259). The British Grazia, for instance, has a section entitled “Style Hunter”, which clearly brings to mind the street-style blog facehunter. Like many other glossies its website also hosts a range of blogs, now a common tool of corporate fashion.

Print magazines have also remediated fashion blogs by incorporating the latter’s visuals and take on fashion in their own pages. This is the case, for instance, of the British Elle’s “Show Me Your Wardrobe” section. The section is the print version of Jackie Dixon’s eponymous blog, started in 2008. Some of the pictures she takes for it appear in Elle, and vice versa, with the British magazine also inviting readers to explore the blog by way of a “for more, see showmeyourwardrobe.com”, and with the blog announcing in its digital pages the release of the newest Elle issue that features it. This collaboration between blog and print medium draws attention to a defining trait of today’s media culture, that of convergence, or “the flow of content across multiple platforms and networks” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 274). As Bolter also notes:

in the late age of print, we see the move to heterogeneity and hybrid forms, including on-demand printing from digital databases, printed books and magazines that refer to
Web sites, Web sites that preview and sell books, and so-called “information appliances” that combine the characteristics of books, notebooks, and calendars… All such hybrids work against closure, because both in form and function they refer their users to other texts, devices, or media forms. (2001, p. 79)

Amongst the hybrid forms Bolter evokes features the putting into print of a blog such as Dixon’s, and so do the book by-products of popular blogs. Indeed, 2009 saw the publication of Schuman’s The Sartorialist, followed in 2010 by Rodic’s Face Hunter, both made of images previously published in the blogs. This remediation of fashion blogs into books is part of a wider trend that has seen the release of books based on blogs, with the “blooker prize” aptly capturing the proliferation of this new hybrid form.

**Conclusion**

The blogosphere is changing rapidly. It is only by paying careful attention to its many texts, producers and consumers that current shifts in practices of media production, representation and consumption will be identified and understood, shedding light on the shifting nature of the contemporary field of fashion media. In this paper, I have started addressing some of these shifts, shifts in the representation of fashion, for instance, shifts in the coming to dominance of new taste makers. Thus, I have paid attention to some of the defining traits of fashion blogs, to their novelty in contrast with print media—also arguing, however, with Bolter and Grusin (2000 [1999]) that new and old media, rather than excluding each other, feed into each other. This process forces us to see their relation as one of co-dependence rather than pure rivalry, as one that can lead towards constructive redefinition of each genre rather than the annihilation of the one by the other, contrary to the many apocalyptic statements on new media.

In the present article I have focused on blogs as texts, privileging a textual analysis of fashion blogs. However, as mentioned in the first section, studies of the fashion media should not limit themselves to such an approach, as understanding media products means understanding not only their textuality but their modes of production and consumption, too. Such a project falls outside the remits of this article but it is hoped that it will be undertaken in future times, through, for instance, ethnographies of fashion blogging and blog audiences. Only then will the full extent of the changes currently taking place in the fashion media be captured, shedding light on the shifting nature of the contemporary field of journalism and the redefinition of practices of production and consumption within.

**NOTE**

1. In quoting from blogs, grammar, spelling and stylistic choices such as abbreviations and capitalisation are reproduced unchanged.

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