



HANDBOOKS IN COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA

The Handbook of Magazine Studies

Edited by Miglena Sternadori | Tim Holmes

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The Handbook of Magazine Studies

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Miglena Sternadori
and
Tim Holmes

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Part I

Conceptual and Historical
Underpinnings

Magazines, Megazines, and Metazines

What Is a Magazine in the Twenty-First Century?

Tim Holmes

Introduction

The question about what a magazine is, or isn't, has by now surely been won, been lost, been declared a draw, been abandoned in a fit of pique ... hasn't it? No, it would appear that despite the long drawn-out debate (see Holmes and Nice 2012, chapter 1), it hasn't. It hasn't because the premise of the question keeps changing as the ways that people use media, and particularly digital and social media, evolve. It hasn't because magazine-like media entities continue to be invented and used in ways that make them candidates for inclusion in the taxonomy.

Here's an interesting metaphor, drawn from a magazine about wildlife, for how perspectives on what is or isn't a magazine can legitimately differ. The Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) is a seabird that many of us would, in our ignorance, classify rather generally as a small seagull. Like many birds, kittiwakes have moved into urban areas and adapted man-made landscapes for their own purposes. In the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, in the northeast of England, there is a colony of kittiwakes that nests on the Tyne Bridge. The magazine story itself is about how not everyone welcomes the presence of these birds but the author makes the point that, "As far as kittiwakes are concerned, the bridge is a cliff, but in a different setting. It looks quite different to us, but it provides most of the same features" (Mason 2018, p. 34).

I will argue in this chapter that it is the features that are important, not the setting, when it comes to debating what is or is not a magazine. Dr. Samir Husni (n.d.), whose impressive credentials include being the founder and director of the Magazine Innovation Center, as well as professor and Hederman lecturer at the Meek School of Journalism and New Media, University of Mississippi, is also known as Mr. Magazine. On his website of the same name, there is a strapline that reads, "If it is not ink on paper, it is not a magazine". (Mr. Magazine n.d.). He is right, of course, but right in the sense that the opponents of Newcastle upon Tyne's kittiwakes are right: it's a bridge, not a cliff – but in the absence of a real cliff, it will perform the functions of a cliff very well indeed for the birds that use it. Are media consumers who use non-traditional structures for magazine-like purposes to be denied the opportunity to think of them how they like? Are we who study those uses to be strictly limited by a historical straitjacket that forces us to consider only old issues of *Vogue* or new issues of *Cereal*? Or, as Andrew O'Neill notes in his history of the highly contested musical genre heavy metal, is it the case that, "Ultimately, genre labels are unimportant. The map is not the territory. They exist as a descriptive guide, but the boundaries between genres are all porous" (O'Neill 2018, p. xxi)?

The metaphor above might help to illustrate a point but it does not explain what “magazine-like purposes” are, nor does it provide a solid framework for analysis. For the former I draw on the General Theory of Magazines expounded in *Magazine Journalism* (Holmes and Nice 2012); for the latter a useful model is provided by Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, who proposes that the industrialized world has been through three industrial revolutions and is entering the fourth (Schwab 2017).

The theory of magazines states:

1. magazines always target a precisely defined group of readers;
2. magazines base their content on the expressed and perceived needs, desires, hopes, and fears of that defined group;
3. magazines develop a bond of trust with their readerships;
4. magazines foster community-like interactions between themselves and their readers, and among readers;
5. magazines can respond quickly and flexibly to changes in the readership and changes in the wider society (loc. cit.).

Although the primary focus in this definition is on what *magazines* do, it is equally important to note the functions of *members of the readership group* in the relationship – they are a cohesive community of interest; they express, explicitly or implicitly, a set of information needs; they trust (and are trusted); they interact with one another; and they change, either because group membership rotates or because their information needs change in response to external stimuli or personal development. All these factors count toward determining the “magazine-like purposes” of both the media entity and the community of interest.

In his book *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, Klaus Schwab briefly delineates three phases of industrial development that precede the current situation in which machines are smart and technologies are fusing “across the physical, digital and biological domains [making] the fourth industrial revolution fundamentally different from previous revolutions” (op. cit., p. 8). Although sketched rather than analyzed deeply, with a little customization the precursory phases provide a useful framework on which to map out an evolutionary history of magazines. In Schwab’s timeline, the first industrial revolution occurred with the shift from reliance on animals, human effort, and biomass as primary sources of energy, to the mechanical power enabled by using fossil fuels. In fact there is a strong argument that the roots of the first revolution can be more accurately dated to Gutenberg’s perfection of the printing press and movable type circa 1439 (Eisenstein 2012, p. 13; Steinberg 2017, p. 17). Not only did this permit and encourage the spread of knowledge essential to the flowering of the first phase of industrial development, it also allowed the invention of the magazine form. Whether the very first was *Gynasceum, sive Theatrum Mulierum* (1586, fashion plates) or *Erbauliche Monats-Unterredungen* (1663, edifying philosophical discussions) or *Journal des Scavans* (1665, book reviews), the form is accurately defined by David Abrahamson as bringing “high-value interpretative information to specifically defined ... audiences” (Abrahamson 1996, p. 1).

Landmark inventions from the post-printing press phase include James Hargreaves’s spinning jenny (1764), Arkwright’s water frame (1769), Trevithick’s steam locomotive (1803) and, of course, Koenig and Bauer’s steam-driven printing press, the first two of which were installed by *The Times* of London in 1814. The key magazine from this period was undoubtedly *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, founded by Edward Cave in 1731. Not only was it the first periodical to feature the word “magazine” in its title, it concerned itself with improving the social, cultural, and economic capital of the landed gentry who were its intended consumers, including ways of incorporating inventions of the industrial-agrarian revolution into their farms and estates. Cave’s publication was also taken as a model by other publishers, including Benjamin Franklin who, in

1740, planned to launch America's first monthly magazine. However, his *General Magazine* ended up second to bitter rival John Webbe's *American Magazine* by a few days (Lemay 2006). Neither magazine lasted very long.¹

Many would agree the canonical book to be *An Inquiry Into Nature And Causes Of The Wealth Of Nations* by Adam Smith (1776). Smith's book famously contains the description of a pin-making factory where the various stages of production are separated into discreet operations, thus delineating the principles of the division of labor that permits higher productivity, greater output, lower prices – and mass production.

Schwab puts mass production at the heart of the second industrial revolution, but allies it with a change of power to electricity. A plausible date for the start of this second phase would be 1882, when public power stations employing electric generators began operation in London and New York. Both used direct current (DC) which had significant drawbacks for long-distance power transmission in comparison with alternating current (AC) systems. The decisive engagement in the ensuing Battle of The Currents was fought at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair between Thomas Edison (DC pioneer) and George Westinghouse (who had licensed Nikola Tesla's polyphase AC induction motor). Westinghouse (and AC) emerged the victor, but the practical advantage had already been demonstrated in Lauffen, Germany, where an AC generator went into service in 1890. One of the earliest pioneers of the electrically powered printing press was Thomas Davenport of Vermont, USA, who in 1840 used his self-built electric rotary press to publish his own magazine, *The Electro-Magnet and Mechanics Intelligencer*, in which he described such impossible devices as electrically powered trains, pianos, and cars (Wicks 1999, p. 69). Electricity took a surprisingly long time to supplant steam as an industrial power source, but by 1906 British newspaper proprietor Edward Lloyd was printing *Lloyd's Weekly* and the *Daily Chronicle* on electrically powered Hoe² perfecting presses (Vick n.d.).

One name permanently associated with mass production is Henry Ford, but it was Ransom E. Olds who created the first automobile assembly line for the Oldsmobile Curved Dash in 1901 (Berger 2001). The Model T did not get going until 1908, but before either car hit the road, English publisher Illife had launched the world's first weekly motoring magazine, *The Autocar*, in 1895. This was as much a statement of faith in the future of the motor car as it was a commercial venture, but the fact that it is still appearing every week is a strong argument for the correctness of the decision.

Mass production encouraged the development and professionalization of a raft of new marketing techniques, including branding and advertising, and it was during this phase that a sustainable business model for magazine publishing was developed. Credit for realizing the potential of advertising revenue to subsidize production costs and allow more affordable cover prices is divided between Cyrus Curtis (*Ladies Home Journal*, 1883), Frank A. Munsey (*Munsey's Magazine*, 1889), and Samuel McLure (*McLure's Magazine*, 1893); whoever it was, the new model allowed magazine publishing to expand and flourish at a time when manufacturers were increasingly aware of the need to reach potential customers and persuade them to buy – it's all very well having the means with which to create a cornucopia of artifacts, but their value is only realized when a sale has occurred. For this to happen, potential consumers must be made aware of availability, they usually need an idea of cost or level of expenditure, of the specific benefits of a particular product, and where the item can be located. As a grossly oversimplified generalization, branding concerns itself with explaining the benefits that will accrue to the customer (Clifton and Simmons 2003; Holt 2004), and advertising takes care of the rest. When combined with the forms of popular mass communication readily available at the time – newspapers and magazines – the right conditions were formed for the enduring business model characterized so well by Abrahamson: “delivering ... readers to a group of manufacturers or distributors with the means and willingness to advertise their products and services to them” (Abrahamson 1996, p 28).

Curtis or Munsey or McLure saw this model could be used to the benefit of both partners in the arrangement – the manufacturer and the medium. Although none of their magazines

was concerned with two wheelers, bicycles make a good example. The bicycle went through a long period of design evolution, from the *Laufmaschine* invented by Baron Karl von Drais in 1817 (also known as the Draisine), through a succession of *velocipedes* pedaled through the front of two equal-sized wheels, to the *ordinary, or penny-farthing*, perfected in the 1870s with its gigantic front wheel and tiny rear. The *ordinary* may have had many great characteristics but its tendency to pitch riders off head first when the front wheel hit a bump or pothole somewhat counted against it becoming a popular means of transport, and the difficulty of adjusting the ratio between pedals and wheel made it relatively inefficient. There was still a large gap in the market for a bicycle that was much easier and safer to ride for ordinary mortals, preferably one that was also straightforward to manufacture. The gap was filled in 1885 when John Kemp Starley designed and made what came to be known as the *safety* bicycle for the Rover brand. The safety was a bicycle as we have known it – a diamond frame with equally sized wheels at either end, pedals in the middle of the diamond connected to the rear wheel with a chain running over gears. Starley, who came from a family of renowned engineers, did not patent his design and it was soon adopted and adapted by most other cycle manufacturers. It was simple to make and could be standardized, which helped to lower costs and increase sales; by 1889 Rover had created a version for women that did away with the top tube of the diamond frame, widening the market further and, incidentally, giving rise to conditions that fomented a moral panic around female cyclists and their rational attire.³

With a standardized design across the industry (the global industry as it happened) manufacturers began to compete in the market on price and brand promises; some makes became the reliable way of getting to work, others sought glory on the racetrack for their sporting mounts. All needed ways to alert consumers to their wares and persuade them to purchase. The magazine related point of this? A study of Muddiman's *Tercentenary Handlist of English and Welsh Newspapers, Magazines and Reviews* (Muddiman and Roland 1920) shows that between 1875 and 1900 there were 31 cycling magazines launched in the UK. Enthusiasts on the one side could meet manufacturers and distributors on the other, through the medium of the magazine. Publishers were clearly happy to facilitate the encounter. This was not restricted to the British Isles – in the USA, according to Norcliffe (2001), cycle manufacturers accounted for up to 10% of all advertising in US periodicals by 1898.

The third industrial revolution, *pace* Schwab, began in the 1960s with the development of digital systems and rapid advances in computing power, that was “catalysed by the development of semiconductors, mainframe computing (1960s), personal computing (1970s and 1980s) and the internet (1990s)” (Schwab 2017, p. 7) Marshall McLuhan, perhaps the foremost cultural critic of the electric age, certainly thought that this phase marked a revolutionary change from the era dominated by Gutenberg's mechanical invention: “Obsession with the older patterns of mechanical, one-way expansion from centers to margins is no longer relevant to our electric world. Electricity does not centralize, but decentralizes” (McLuhan 1994, p. 36).

The idea of decentralization certainly seems to accord with the postwar boom in magazine publishing (Abrahamson 1996; Johnson and Prijatel 1999) that resulted, at least in part, from the alignment of three key elements – the growth of viable specialist subject areas, increased emphasis on individual identity (often expressed through conspicuous consumption) and the capitalist commodification of leisure. Hobbies, interests, and leisure activities pursued outside work became important markers of identity, and the adoption of specific magazines reinforced those personal choices, the more so when alternative titles became available. Choosing *NME* over *Melody Maker* (both British music weeklies at their peak in the 1960s) became a subcultural marker of authenticity as much as a musical preference. Erving Goffman's (1972) canonical, but in many respects extremely dated, work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was published at the start of the electric era. It incorporates the concept of “front” as “that part of an individual's

performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to determine the situation for those who observe the performance” (p. 32); important elements of front are the “assemblages of sign-equipment” (p. 33) providing the accessorizing details that reinforce the part the individual is playing. Goffman focused on physical settings such as “furniture, décor, physical layout, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props ...” (p. 32) and a specialist magazine proclaiming the actor’s adherence to high fashion or powerful automobiles would certainly work as a prop. (Of course, the individual can also be genuinely interested in the subject matter.)

Despite McLuhan’s dictum about decentralization, the electric age in and of itself gave rise to new interests and tribal identities that could be colonized by enthusiasts and commodified by magazine publishers. For example, *computers and automation* is widely credited with being the first computer magazine. It was launched and self-published by Edmund C. Berkeley as *Roster of Organizations in the Field of Automatic Computing Machinery* (1951–1952), before changing its name to the slightly snappier *The Computing Machinery Field* (1952–1953), then *Computers and Automation*.⁴ The name changed in 1973 to *Computers and Automation and People*, as Berkeley’s focus changed from the machines to the ways in which humans interacted with them, and then finally to *Computers and People* in 1975. The magazine ceased publishing in 1988.

Berkeley’s magazine was aimed at the scholarly and serious-minded end of the community of interest but it did not take long for hobbyists to be catered for. *Popular Electronics* was launched by the Ziff-Davis publishing company, which was soon claiming it to be the world’s largest-selling electronics magazine (Holley n.d.). The January 1975 edition of this title can claim to have had a significant effect on developments in the personal computing industry. According to a story published on *Fast Company*’s website in January 2015, this issue was bought by Paul Allen because it had a cover story about the Altair 8800 minicomputer (McCracken 2015). Allen shared it with his fellow Harvard undergraduate Bill Gates, they wrote a program in Beginner’s All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code (BASIC) for the Altair and formed a company called Micro-Soft to market it. Thus began the personal computer (PC) industry, but also the computer/electronics publishing sector, which has grown into a multi-branched field that covers everything from professional practice to gaming.

The electric age also gave rise to several significant effects for material conditions of production in the magazine industry. One of the first fruits was phototypesetting, which began the process of taking typesetting out of the realm of mediaeval metalworking, with its hot lead sloshing around machines like the Linotype, and into relative modernity with the Linofilm (no technology based on photography, which had been around for 100 years by this point, could be called truly modern). The machines necessary for the physical creation of magazine pages became more compact, more digital, more flexible, and more based on personal computer technology (Hicks and Holmes 2002, pp. 126–132). By the 1990s it was possible to fit most of the necessary components (a PC with desktop publishing and photo-processing programs, a scanner and a large number of storage disks) onto an office desk. Although the costs of paper, printing, and distribution remained high, other barriers to entering the market with a new magazine came tumbling down, which was good news for anyone with an idea they wanted to see in print and, perhaps even better for established publishers, who could both cut costs and risk launching more marginal projects.

As we can see, the first three phases of Schwab’s timeline fit well with observable developments in the magazine industry. Before considering how the fourth and current phase might work it will be useful to provide a triadic taxonomy that allows a more granular discussion of how magazines fit into the broader media ecology suggested by the theory of successive industrial revolutions. In keeping with the main characteristics of the different eras, three categories that suggest themselves are: magazines, megazines, and metazines.

Magazines

This is the base category, as it were. It covers everything that Mr. Magazine (see above) believes is necessary for a magazine: print on paper. The history is well charted and it does not take a long or deep investigation to discover that traditional print-on-paper magazines continue to be launched. A glance at the trade press (*InPublishing, Folio*) or magazine organization websites (FIPP.com, Magazine.org) shows that print launches in categories as varied as children’s education (*Little Baby Bum Songs and Stories*, D. C. Thomson, February 2019), music festivals (*FestWorld*, Festworld Entertainment, March 2019), and true crime (*Crime Monthly*, Bauer, April 2019 – one of two print magazines Bauer launched that month, the other being the crafting title *Take A Break Makes*) make the news with some regularity.

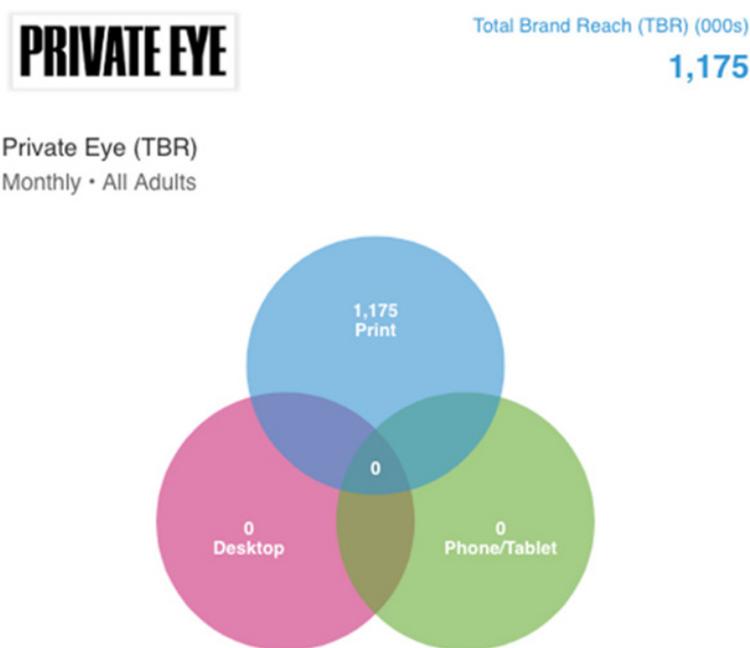
Magazine aficionados who are tired of being told print is dead will find such news encouraging, but a new print magazine from a commercial publisher will rarely stand alone. At the very least there are likely to be satellite media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram pages to reinforce the brand, but at the other end of the scale, the printed magazine may be a relatively small part of a much larger entity. Take *Little Baby Bum Songs and Stories* as an example. It is just one ingredient in the media mix of El Bebe Productions, a brand that produces content and products for pre-school children. A cynic might be forgiven for thinking the company has found new ways to sell old, and uncopyrighted, nursery rhymes after looking at the website (<http://elbebeproductions.com>), which features toys, books, DVDs of animated songs and merchandise such as dribble bibs; the magazine itself is listed in the Products tab of the main web page and it is revealing that the cover of the launch issue proclaims in the bottom right hand corner, “As seen on YouTube.” It is not hard to understand why a paper-based magazine might be a useful part of the overall offering, with the main reason being its physical materiality: “Colouring in!” is one of the cover tasters, and while it is technically possible to “colour in” outlines on a tablet, the act of rubbing crayons or pencils against paper provides a different sensory experience (also on the cover, “DIY Sensory Play Ideas!”) that seems likely to appeal to parents who would like to afford their child a range of haptic sensations and keep time spent in front of a screen under control.

The most important factor in the definition of a magazine (for this taxonomy) is that the print element is the primary focus and digital satellites are secondary. For reasons Megan Le Masurier explains in Chapter 7, this makes such magazines likely to come from the indie sector, but one of the most successful indie mags is *Private Eye*, perhaps the antithesis of “indie” in everything except its independence. For those unfamiliar with the title, it is a satirical fortnightly, printed on A4 size⁵ newsprint quality paper. It has its roots in a juvenile magazine founded by four public schoolboys (“public school” in the UK meaning one of the top-echelon private schools), was developed during their years at Oxford University and launched properly in 1961. It is full of jokes both good and bad, and it attacks with equal savagery politicians, cultural icons, and anyone else who is seen to be lying, cheating, or acting hypocritically. It has a lot of cartoons and, the key to its success, a lot of investigative journalism, often into areas that mainstream media cannot or will not examine (see Kevin Lerner in Chapter 26). This willingness to poke its nose into everybody’s business, to kick over the stones and see what wriggles away, seems to have had a correlative effect on its circulation figures in recent years – coincidentally, or not, the years in which information disorder⁶ has dominated news discourse.

Official figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC; www.abc.org.uk) show *Private Eye*’s growth over the past three years; it hit a record figure for a single issue with the Christmas 2016 edition, at the end of the year in which the USA elected Donald Trump as its president and the UK voted to leave the European Union. Subsequent audit periods showed an upward trend that has, in the most recent figures (July to December 2018) begun

to level off. However, at 233 869 it is still the leading title in the news and current affairs sector, comfortably ahead of *The Economist* (162 100 – although *The Economist*'s global figures are significantly larger).

ABC provides forensic metrics for circulation but the publishing industry also likes to measure audiences. In the UK this task was handled until 2018 by the National Readership Survey (NRS), but because NRS methodology was based almost entirely on print it was considered unfit for purpose in the digital age and the organization was superseded by the Publishers Audience Measurement Company (PAMCo). PAMCo's survey methodology includes print but also captures phone, tablet, and desktop data to provide a metric for total brand reach across all platforms (see Tan 2018). The results are freely available on the organization's website and they provide a useful guide to the taxonomy being proposed here. Looking at the data available for *Private Eye* at the time of writing, PAMCo's results show clearly that it is a *magazine*: the Venn diagram illustrating the degree of overlap between platforms shows Desktop 0, Phone/Tablet 0, Print 1 175 000.



The Venn diagram shows overlap of readership between platforms

Source: image courtesy of PAMCo.

Megazines

If *Private Eye* is a good example of a *Magazine*, *The Economist* will stand as the initial example of a *Megazine*. Ironically, it is not signed up to PAMCo, but it is a committed member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation and has worked with that organization to clarify its total brand

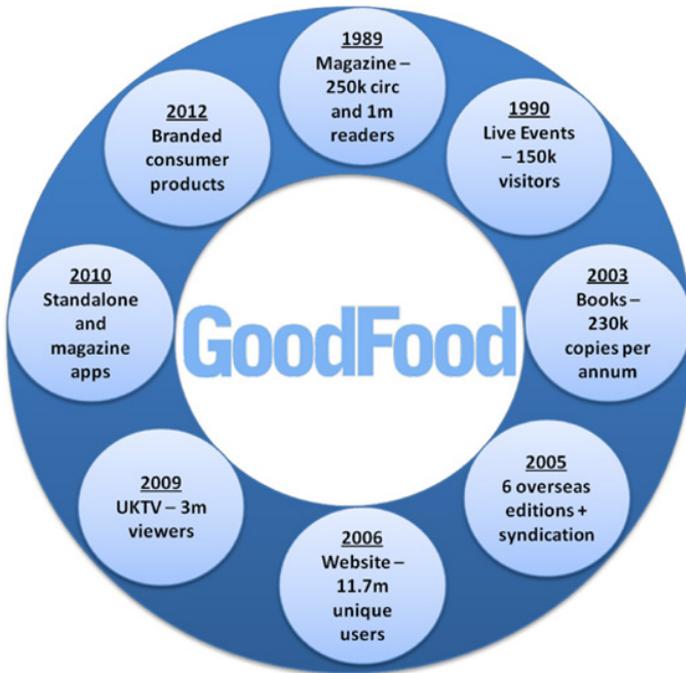
reach (ABC 2019). Data results from ABC show 10 categories in which The Economist's circulation and reach are measured:

Data results for 'ECONOMIST'		
Name	Company	Type
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	WeChat
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	Weibo
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	Google+
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	Consumer Magazines
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	LinkedIn
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	Brand Reports
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	YouTube
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	Instagram
The Economist	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	Line
Economist App (Classic)	The Economist Newspaper Ltd	Online

Source: image courtesy of ABC.org.uk.

However, that is not a full account as it does not include the title's Twitter, Facebook, or Tumblr results, nor the radio/podcast that can claim six million streams and downloads a month (Walker 2018). Deputy editor Tom Standage made it clear how important the various digital platforms were in both spreading awareness of the title and driving readers toward the main offerings of print or digital editions in an interview he gave to journalism business-to business (B2B) title *Press Gazette* in 2016 (Ponsford 2016). One of the reasons for revising the methodology for ABC data was to emphasize the importance of the digital edition; as Marina Haydn, *The Economist's* managing director of global circulation, explains in that 2019 ABC case study, "The new reporting has enabled *The Economist* to articulate greater engagement with its products, particularly for digital editions which had previously been understated" (ABC 2019, n.p.). In this proposed taxonomy, then, *The Economist* is not a *Magazine*, it is, thanks to the surrounding panoply of digital offshoots and different platforms, a *Megazine*. We can see it is strong in its print-on-paper form but to focus on print to the exclusion of everything else that comprises *The Economist* as a media brand is to ignore reality. Yes, it is still a magazine in the traditional sense, but the print element is just one ingredient in a much larger, more complex recipe.

And recipes literally lie at the heart of what might be considered an archetypal *Megazine* – *BBC Good Food*. When Nick Brett and Peter Phippen⁷ were charged with developing BBC television content into other forms of content that could be monetized through the corporation's commercial arm, BBC Worldwide, some of the decisions made themselves – *Top Gear* could be directly translated from screen to print, for example – but others were more oblique. There was no program actually called *Good Food*, but there was *Food and Drink*, a popular show that ran from 1982 to 2002, and other food-related programming that could be drawn on to create a portmanteau magazine concept.



Source: image courtesy BBC Worldwide.

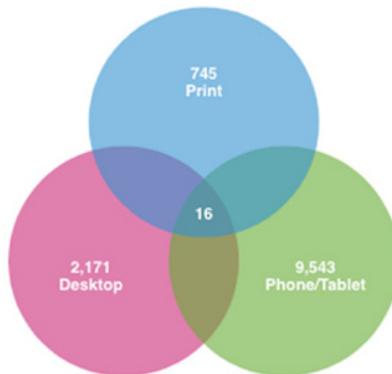
The magazine launched in 1989 and was almost immediately followed by the launch of the Good Food Show, and then a series of brand-related developments, the most important of which have been the website and the apps, especially the fully responsive version that made the content easily accessible on mobile devices. The PAMco data clearly shows the relative importance of print, desktop, and mobile versions within the overall brand.



Total Brand Reach (TBR) (000s)

11,626

BBC Good Food (TBR) (U)
Monthly • All Adults



The Venn diagram shows overlap of readership between platforms

Source: image courtesy PAMCo.

What the brand dial diagram above does not show is a development that has not yet reached fruition, the BBC Good Food live experience. The print magazine's reputation rests on its guarantee to test recipes multiple times before they are published, in a scientific attempt to ensure results can be replicated. This task is undertaken in the BBC's test kitchens which are currently not accessible to the public. But what, Nick Brett thought, if you could make those kitchens visible and turn them into a brand experience – watch the food being tested, eat it in a restaurant, buy the utensils with which it is being prepared or the crockery on which it is served? As it happens, in the UK *BBC Good Food* was beaten to the actualization of this concept by *Good Housekeeping* (a *Magazine* that has definitely evolved into a *Megazine*), which opened a shiny new iteration of its Good Housekeeping Institute to visitors in 2014. (The Good Housekeeping Institute was originally established in 1900, and in the USA its live-experience version opened to visitors in 2009.)

There is another aspect of print magazines that is credited with increasing importance for the *Megazine* concept: the front cover. Simon Kanter, editorial director at Haymarket Media in the UK, is a passionate advocate of the front cover acting as a poster for the brand as a whole. He is responsible for a lot of B2B and customer titles, many of the latter being controlled-circulation publications that are mailed to members of professional organizations such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (which has two titles: *People Management* and *Work*). The magazine brand is expected to play an important role in adding value to the membership fee, so Simon Kanter's titles are expected to excel in all aspects of magazine craft – design, contents, compelling storytelling, haptically satisfying paper choices, and so on. But above all else, he emphasizes the importance of the cover as a page able to stand in its own right and generate engagement. Clearly, this is an encouragement for people to look at the rest of the print magazine – and getting people to look at something they are sent for free, whether they want it or not, is a big task – but even more importantly the provocativeness, pleasure, and creativity of the print front cover should raise awareness of the brand (and organization), and encourage engagement on social media. The ensuing network effect can then help bring new casual readers into the top end of the digital funnel and begin the process of converting them, via carefully constructed steps, into engaged readers and then paying subscribers.

This general policy is echoed in many current publishing strategies. In March 2019, *Folio*, the North American news and information site for publishing professionals, analyzed how *Wired* leverages all the platforms under its umbrella: an app, a paywall for digital subscriptions, a series of themed newsletters, an OTT⁸ video channel, and live experiences that fall into three categories: B2B, B2C (business to customer), and custom events for brands. There is also the feted print magazine, of course, but the changing attitude to, and relative importance of, print can be judged by this statement about a “refresh” to the design, made by editor-in-chief Nick Thompson and quoted in the *Folio* story:

Thompson clarifies that the refresh doesn't equal a redesign, and that while a complete overhaul of print might have been the right approach a decade ago, “it's probably not the right approach right now. The days of big redesigns with art directors staying up all night and things pinned to the wall and late night decisions on fonts, those days are done.” Going forward, he says that any change made on one platform should be reflected across all of them, since they're all integrated. (Barber 2019, para. 14–15).

Within the taxonomic category of the *Megazine*, print is just one part of a bigger mix and, given the idea of the poster effect, having a print avatar of the brand in your hand is perhaps the equivalent of the “brand experiences” that *Campaign* (the bible of the British advertising industry and another of Simon Kanter's charges) reports on increasingly frequently. *Time Out* was the original and best “what's on” magazine for London, but now it is published in cities around the world and the brand has branched out into food markets. As *Campaign* reported in

March 2019, *Time Out* has reinvented its revenue model to incorporate food markets that will be worth up to 35% of total revenue (McAteer 2019). But rather than just being a bolt on brand extension, the experience was rooted in and has grown out of the magazine's history. As McAteer explains, it started in Lisbon in 2014:

Editors saw the opportunity to turn an historic city market into the Time Out Market. It's hailed as the world's first food and cultural market experience rooted wholly in editorial curation. The best chefs, drinks and experiences are handpicked by the publication's writing team which test, taste and review what the city has to offer. (McAteer 2019, para. 6)

Time Out Market now claims to be one of Portugal's biggest tourist attractions,⁹ and the value generated by this conflux of curation and gastronomy was not lost on Time Out Group's CEO Julio Bruno, who launched the drive to expand the concept into cities around the world. The goal is to have Time Out Market function not just as a food destination but as a curated "experience" that is integrally linked with the editorial brand, working "hand-in-hand with the publication's online and print presence to drive traffic and readership across the 315 cities it's physically in," so that the benefits flow "in both directions as millions of visitors to Time Out Market results in growing interactions with the *Time Out* brand which in return drives eyeballs and awareness, increasing our relevance for advertisers" (McAteer 2019, para. 14). As Bruno concludes:

We are synonymous with the best of the city and that is why Time Out Market is the perfect extension of our brand – we curate the best of the city, and now we bring the best of the city to our audience. This is something we can own, more than other media companies. (McAteer 2019, para. 21)

Metazines: Affordance as an Analytical Tool

Before moving on to the third and final element of the taxonomy, it will be useful to introduce a theoretical concept that may help us to both understand the repercussions of the Time Out Market and unravel the meaning of the *Metazine*. That concept is the affordance. My first encounter with affordance was in a video about doors that did not operate in a readily predictable way, published by the online magazine *Vox*.¹⁰ Doors that appeared to invite a user to pull them turned out to need pushing ... or sliding one way or the other. Trying to work out what lay at the root of this inconvenience led *Vox* to a spry old geezer named Donald Norman, whose classic book *The Design of Everyday Things* dealt with exactly this problem (among others). Norman defines affordance as "the relationship between a physical object and a person ... a relationship between the properties of an object and the capabilities of the agent that determine how the object could possibly be used" (Norman 2013, p. 11).

The reason the doors confused users was because they did not offer a straightforward relationship between what they could do and what the user thought he or she could or should do with them. The affordance was not immediately obvious. Norman did not invent the concept, which was first coined by James J. Gibson, a psychologist, who used it to describe what an animal's environment provides or furnishes it with: "I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment" (Gibson 1979, p. 127).

In fact, the concept of affordance is capable of interpretation in different ways, across different disciplines. We have already seen two above and, as an introduction to their chapter "The affordances of social media," Bucher and Helmond (2017) provide a very useful primer on the subject.

As they note, the term is “multivalent” (p. 261), and, in addition to Gibson’s relational affordance and Norman’s perceived affordance, they outline descriptions of technological, social, and communicative affordances that have been used by scholars in different fields. In the spirit of Derrida’s bricolage (Derrida 2001), it is possible to contrive an elucidation of affordance that draws on several useful aspects of interpretation and that will provide us with an effective lens through which to consider the *Metazine*.

In the context of this chapter, the two most useful varieties of affordance are *perceived* and *communicative*. The *perceived* variety reflects an emphasis on the relationship between object and agent. The *communicative* type of affordance is relevant for two reasons: first, the concept of communicative affordances is widely used in studies of communications facilitated by mobile devices, which is an important consideration for the *Metazine*; second, because of Bucher and Helmond’s observation that “the range of social contexts in which mobile communication takes place afford new forms of social identity, as well as the modification of tacit codes of social interactions” (p. 264).

Donald Norman tells us: “An affordance is a relationship” (2013, p. 11). It is a well-documented characteristic of magazines that readers form strong bonds with them (Hermes 1995; Beetham 1996; Korinek 2000; Consterdine 2002) – and what is a strong bond if not a relationship? Norman and others also emphasize that an affordance is not a fixed property of the object or the agent; that is to say, the notion of a *relationship* explains how the same aspect of the environment or object can provide different affordances to different people, and even to the same individual at another point in time. In this sense, a magazine (to use the word in its generic sense) can be considered an affordance, or rather a series of potential affordances because the relationships readers form with magazines, the uses to which readers put them – i.e., the “relationship between the properties of an object and the capabilities of the agent that determine how the object could possibly be used” (Norman 2013, p. 11) – multiply and compound with time. Magazines provide different affordances to different people but also to the same people at different times. *Time Out* in its original form afforded readers the means to learn about events or restaurants they might enjoy, but that enjoyment was at one remove from the publication. *Time Out Market* affords direct enjoyment of consuming food, but some of those who enjoy it might well be people who have previously enjoyed the indirect affordance.

Another example: the British magazine *Motorcycle Mechanics* (1959–1983) was originally aimed at motorcyclists whose machine was their primary form of transport. They needed information to keep their bikes running, to get to work, or to go on holiday. The affordance provided by the magazine would generally have been one of utility, complementing the need to know with the means of knowing. The same magazine bought *now* as a vintage issue might afford new knowledge of a kind unrelated to the initial intention, as well as enjoyment. Its depictions of relationships between genders and classes, perhaps, might be of value to a sociologist or a cultural historian; a classic motorcycle hobbyist might find nostalgic entertainment in the descriptions of repair techniques. It is possible that a newcomer to the old motorcycle scene who lacked the skill and understanding of an old hand might enjoy the original affordance of utility.

Consider now the Facebook group British Motorcycle Mechanics.¹¹ Set up by Greg Scoffield in February 2015, it is a closed group, and every new member has to be approved by the administrator to ensure that the applicant has a genuine interest in the subject matter and is not just a false agent or a bot intent on luring members to a malicious external site. Such careful scrutiny might argue for a small group but membership is still growing and currently stands at 14 000+, which would be a respectable circulation figure for a specialized magazine. Greg is very clear about the group’s purposes: “To provide a teaching forum for learning mechanics, give experienced mechanics a place to associate and, above all, provide a forum for all members to interact with fellowship” (Scoffield n.d., n.p.). In other words, it is based on relationships and knowledge exchange. The kinds of information sought and offered concern everything from very basic fixes to very advanced engineering, and because there are different opinions about the best way to

tackle any mechanical problem, there are very often lively discussion threads under original posts. The group page has links to a growing number of documents and files from factory and other sources, so part of its function is to act as a library or a permanent set of back issues. There are also collections of video and still images, some of which are of excellent quality.

In other words, British Motorcycle Mechanics is like a living, *permanently-on* magazine that is staffed by 14 000+ content creators, many of whom are globally acknowledged experts in their field. This is way beyond the situation Dan Gillmor (2006) predicted in *We The Media*, when he foresaw “Big Media” having to level with citizen journalists. Big Media have been shoved completely out of the picture. British Motorcycle Mechanics clearly is not a magazine, yet a comparison of its attributes with the General Theory of Magazines shows distinct parallels:

1. it targets a precisely defined group of users (indeed, a hand-picked group);
2. its content is entirely based on the expressed and perceived needs, desires, hopes, and fears of that defined group; it is the group that determines what the content is;
3. the page and its founder has developed a bond of trust with the users;
4. the posts and their threads foster community-like interactions between themselves and their readers, and among readers; without the community, there would be no interaction and, as noted, no content.

This, and the concept of the communicative affordance, is what leads me to characterize British Motorcycle Mechanics as a *Metazine*, which is both a metaphor for a magazine and a meta-representation of the form. Conventional media organizations would love to have the levels of engagement shown within this group, as well as the depth of knowledge in the content,¹² but there is one significant element missing, and that is an appropriate way to monetize it. A subscription model could work but would destroy the founding principles of free access to freely shared knowledge and expertise. The *Metazine* may be, by its very nature, resistant to commercial exploitation. This is not to say that advertising or promotion are prohibited; they are not. Most straightforwardly, the group home page has a “recommendations” tab, under which can be found links to many different individuals or organizations that have something useful to offer, be it parts, a service, or even a good place to ride. More subtly, and woven into the very fabric of the posts, members will recommend businesses they have dealt with; indeed, some of the members leaving comments run their own specialized businesses, and users who have been in the scene for a while are likely to recognize their names from the advertisements they once placed in conventional magazines. In effect, everything that happens in a commercially published magazine is happening in this group, but the organizing principle is a sort of pro-bono idealism rather than a profit motive.

Another Facebook page that shows similar *Metazine* characteristics is the Epiphone Les Paul Owners (ELPO) group; with 32 969 members, it represents a more than respectable circulation. The Epiphone Les Paul is a specific make and model of guitar, but once a person has been admitted (it’s another closed group), the joke is that members are free to discuss *any* make and model of guitar, guitar accessories, playing techniques, or music made on any guitar, although there is an understandable preponderance of the eponymous instrument. ELPO users often contrast this total freedom to post with other specific-make-and-model guitar groups that police their content very tightly and are referred to as “cork sniffers,” the analogy being with wine snobs. Again, the group is like a *permanently-on* version of *Total Guitar* or *Guitar World* but instead of having to wait a month to find out whether a particular brand or model of guitar, amplifier, pickup, or effect pedal is going to be reviewed, users can just create their own content immediately and have it commented on or augmented by others in the community. Furthermore, there is very little chance of commercial considerations tainting the opinion or information because it is so heterodox – for example, when Jock Mirow of Denver, Colorado, posted on 27 March 2019 about his Epiphone Les Paul’s pickups sounding muddy, by the next morning he

had 82 pieces of advice that recommended 23 separate makes or models and the reasons for preferring them. There is no way that an influencer is going to break through that much noise and no way that a single manufacturer or brand can dominate the discourse. The *Metazine* affords an egalitarian marketplace of ideas and opinions.

The final example of a *Metazine* comes from an individual rather than a group, from Twitter rather than Facebook, and represents one strand of magazine-like material rather than a complete magazine. The author goes by the handle @gawanmac, and a good example of the kind of post I am referring to can be found at <https://twitter.com/gawanmac/status/1008254934498926592>. This is a thread of posts that document a walk @gawanmac took, from a busy main road out into the English countryside to a ruined building, a historic site that is the only known example in Britain of a Roman temple that was later used as a Christian church. The thread is an artfully fashioned mixture of images and beautifully crafted captions that takes in details of the route, plants seen along the way and, close up, on site, points of architectural interest, maps, and other information. It is exactly the kind of content one would be delighted to find regularly in *Country Walking* (UK) or *Backpacker* (USA). There is even a monetizable element, as he has an Etsy shop that sells prints of his atmospheric photographs, but this is clearly not a commercial or commercializable site. Check it out and you are more likely to come across posts about LGBTQ+ or Palestinian politics than a country walk, which makes the nature rambles¹³ more integrated into a real life that encompasses diverse interests.

What these three examples, and countless other instances, have in common is that they have progressed so far beyond the idea of participatory journalism propounded by Singer et al. (2011). It is no longer the case that the audience is *permitted* to participate in media discourse under certain constraints in certain conditions; as Bucher and Helmond suggest, new forms of social identity are afforded by modern communications technology and platforms, with new codes of social interactions creating relationships among and between group members. The *Metazine* affords a non-commodified mode of information exchange and entertainment, often based around a commodified field (motorcycles, guitars) but operating beyond the usual mediated boundaries.¹⁴

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show that, as a matter of historical and cultural necessity, the study of magazines needs to move on from its legacy roots to recognize and encompass the evolved categories of *Megazine* and *Metazine*. This applies whether the student is from an academic or an industrial background. The necessity is not comfortable news for journalists, publishers, journalism schools, or academics operating in fields of heritage media.

However, as is evident from news pages of the journalism trade press or a visit to a store that specializes in indie titles, the *Magazine* is far from moribund. An arm of Gutenberg's galaxy (McLuhan 1962) continues to expand, as print on paper exerts its gravitational pull on the imagination of "typographic humans" (to adapt McLuhan's phrase). There will never be nothing to study in this field, but there can be no question that its mass market phase has passed.

The *Megazine* is likely to continue its trajectory of growth as media organizations seek to create 360° brands. From the large titles, such as *Good Housekeeping*, to small ones such as *Delayed Gratification*,¹⁵ the concept of surrounding a magazine with offshoots and events in pursuit of revenue, sometimes to the point where the magazine becomes a subsidiary player in the scheme, is now a well-established business model. This field will remain open to study of commercial development and cultural affect for the foreseeable future.

The *Metazine* is a phenomenon rich with possibilities for further study by media scholars, especially those that bring with them knowledge and understanding of the magazine as a socio-cultural form. It overlaps with the field of social media studies, and can draw on the analytical

tools from that field, but it has distinct characteristics that should encourage new developments in magazine studies. Such studies may also provide valuable insights for the publishing industry.

In conclusion, it does not matter whether the structure of the magazine is a bridge or a cliff – if it provides the features that its users want, it can be either, or both, or something else entirely. The trick is to be able to see the magazine-like features.

Notes

- 1 For an entertaining version of this story, see <http://mentalfloss.com/article/92095/bitter-race-publish-americas-first-magazine>.
- 2 The Hoe web perfecting press was named after an American inventor, Richard Hoe. It sped up printing because it used a continuous roll of paper and could print on both sides of a page.
- 3 There are two interesting observations to make here: (i) The Society for Rational Dress, founded in London in 1881, published a quarterly magazine, the *Gazette*, which ran for six issues; copies are available in the British Library, Shelfmark: 1866.b.9.(10.); (ii) medical studies of female cyclists discovered the interestingly named phenomenon of “bicycle face” in young women who took up the sport. See Marland (2013). For a view on the moral panic around cycling see <https://thevictoriancyclist.wordpress.com/2015/06/21/cycling-accidents-and-1890s-moral-panics>, accessed 19 March 2019.
- 4 A digitized collection of issues can be found at https://archive.org/details/bitsavers_computers And Automation.
- 5 One of the standard paper sizes in Europe and in other parts of the world, 8.27 × 11.69 in. The standard paper size in the USA that is the closest to the A4 is 8.5 by 11 in.
- 6 Giving a keynote at the 2016 Future of Journalism conference in Cardiff, Wales, Dr. Claire Wardle, executive director of First Draft News, made a very strong case for not using the term “fake news.”
- 7 Respectively editorial director and managing director of BBC Worldwide at the time.
- 8 OTT = Over The Top, a standalone video channel that delivers content over the internet. In the case of *Wired* and other Condé Nast media brands, this is not channeled through YouTube – although *Wired* does have a successful YouTube channel, too.
- 9 See also: <https://www.timeout.com/about/market>.
- 10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yY96hTb8WgI>.
- 11 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/britishmotorcyclemechanics>.
- 12 Indeed, when I was publishing a magazine in this sector, I did pay some of the group members to write for me.
- 13 Here’s another: <https://twitter.com/gawanmac/status/984865835566141440>.
- 14 The British crafting magazine *Mollie Makes* represents a rare disruption of the new order. A social media coordinator was the first editorial appointment, and it was her task to delve into crafting *Metazines*, identify key contributors, and persuade them to help Future Publishing to develop a Big Media equivalent. Of course, Future Publishing does not tell the tale exactly that way: www.journalism.co.uk/news/how-future-builds-an-audience-before-launching-a-new-title/s2/a553224.
- 15 In a related development, Delayed Gratification has offered masterclasses in how to launch and develop an independent magazine: <https://www.slow-journalism.com/filter/events-and-classes>.

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Reading Magazines

Taking Death Cab for Cutie from Shed to Dalston

John Hartley

Magazine research is like Montreal — diverse on many levels
Miglana Sternadori 2014

Introduction

It could be said that that “there’s no such thing as a magazine” – it is too chaotic, contingent, and confused a term to stand as a category.¹ The word’s Arabic origins lie in the storage of goods, especially military ordnance. Thus, the Parthenon was used as a magazine for Turkish explosives during the Ottoman occupation of Greece, with fatal effects on the former temple building when a hostile Venetian shell blew it up in 1687.²

Around the same time, the term transferred metaphorically from analogue storehouse to printed miscellany, as a generic title for collections of heterogeneous items of interest and use to particular reader-sets. That innovation introduced a distinction between “book” as a volume concerned with one topic, and “magazine” as a volume concerned with many. The further distinction between one-off books and periodical magazines followed.

Out of the Shed

The original usage of the word “magazine,” denoting any large shed, may seem a long way from *Wired*, *Dazed & Confused*, or *Charlie Hebdo*. But thinking of a magazine as a storehouse may still prove helpful for placing “periodical publications” as we know them now. For any center of mixed population (a city, or country), imagine a distributed network of warehouses, some with specialist contents (gunpowder), others with general goods (department stores), standing ready for users to visit when they need a particular item. Such storehouses are an efficient coordination mechanism for the distribution of specialist and novelty items for differentiated demographics among heterogeneous populations. This, in turn, defines the magazine format.

Sheds must be located close to where they will be needed, but not so close as to intrude on residential space. They may be organized as part of a state apparatus (ordnance shed) or a market economy (Amazon); they may be wholesale (an agricultural barn) or retail (IKEA). It is worth recalling that in many European languages the word “magazine” refers directly to shops and

stores, while periodical publications are called something else (*revista, périodique*, etc.) So, a магазин in Russia is something you can walk into. If you want to buy a magazine while you are in there, you will have to ask for a журнал (journal).

Keeping in mind their built form, it can be seen that magazines are still performing a cultural function of the same type. The contents of each title may differ but, at a higher level of integration, they are a type of “novelty bundling” service (Potts 2011), making available to the public various semiotic and knowledge resources that are too specialized or uneconomic for households to keep at home – or sometimes too risky. The thing about warehouses is that notwithstanding who owns them or what they contain, their cultural function is the same.

Different stores keep different things for different users. They keep stuff dry for when you need it. The main issue that needs further thought is about who exactly “you” might be. Magazines as metaphorical sheds full of words and pictures continue their time-honored function of storing miscellaneous stuff against its use but, because this is now the realm of semiotic representation, language, and sense-making, this “stuff” (Miller 2009) is best conceived not as “goods” but as “knowledge,” which involves people and institutions as well as texts and forms. People notoriously do not know what they do not know,³ so “needing” any item of semiosis rarely precedes supply: you do not know you want *Vogue* or *Grazia* or the *New Statesman* until it is under your nose; and you do not know you want to know what is inside any issue until you open it, the surprise being part of the pleasure of keeping up, which is as much a social-network need as an individual want.

Magazines are located at the semiotic equivalent of the “edge of town” – the edge of attention (Citton 2017) – so readers must make an effort to visit, and magazines must use the store and its storefront to attract and hold readers for their particular category of difference. Their cultural function focuses on forming random individual readers into readership groups, more or less ordered, and frequently connected among themselves through other institutions or cultural practices. These range from special interests (craft, hobbies, music, sport, business, etc.) to giant abstractions – or “fictions” (Harari 2015) – based on religion, nation, gender, age, class, etc. Over time, readerships in turn use their shared consciousness of the group, sustained in part by identity-signaling in magazines, to exercise agency *as* groups.

User-Created Readerships

When investigating magazines and other media, scholarship has routinely adopted the point of view of the proprietor, editor, journalist, writer, artist, photographer, etc. These occupations make the object for which demand is thereby created. However, *producers’* intentions – commercial or imperial advancement, the salvation of souls, or the improvement of selves (Oakeshott 1975, p. 263) – tell us little about what *readers* use magazines for, once acquired, and how that works within a larger cultural context.

Focusing exclusively on the producer, as media research routinely does, results in a very skewed “model” of magazines. Agency, causation, and power cluster at one pole of a polarized system: it is all about ownership and control, subsidized by advertising (Curran and Seaton 2018, p. 37). There is not much left at the other pole. Readers are reduced to little more than a behavioral effect of causal agency located somewhere much further up the value chain. All that is needed is to set the marketing department loose on them.

Media scholarship inherited this skewed way of thinking from both behavioral science (USA) and political economy (Europe). Both traditions saw centralized, top-down, command-and-control, power-hungry media organizations seeking to *amass* readers as tokens in another game entirely: that of gaining commercial or political power (Carey 2000). It seemed acceptable to carry on using this model of communication throughout the industrial era because of the radical asymmetry between those who made money (owners) and those who made meanings (readers).

Looked at through the lens of behavioral political economy and following a linear sender–receiver model of communication, readers (in the mass) were there for the economic gain of proprietors or the political gain of partisans. Inevitably, readers were reduced to a mere number: *circulation*, that being the currency of power and influence for producers. What more was there to worry about?

It has transpired that there was quite a lot to worry about. Technological changes that are now at the center of everyone’s attention destroyed the asymmetry between producer and consumer (not at a stroke, but in principle), by lowering the cost of publication effectively to zero, at least for those with access to computers or mobile devices, now numbering in the billions, more than half of all humans.⁴ In principle, everyone who posts a comment or sends an email is a publisher; everyone who uploads a photo or text is a journalist; anyone who wants to find something out can turn to an app or browser; anyone looking for reading matter across heterogeneous subjects can do so, at almost infinite scale, without turning a single magazine cover.

Suddenly, “readers” became “users.” They used online and social media for their own purposes. Individually and as groups they made culture – sense (meanings and new language), identity (personal and group), consciousness (of self, other, and cosmos), and knowledge (informal know-how and formal sciences). The term “user” was not available in the days of industrial mass communication. It comes from computer culture. Its value lies in the presumption, built into the concept itself, that the “end user” retains agency. Users do something, from utilizing a ready-made feature (copying) to making something new (creating). They are linked through technology into a system or network in which they are “nodes” of agency (Barabási 2002), not endpoints of a value chain (Hartley 2008, pp. 19–35). Further, their digital activity could be tracked, unlike the act of reading itself. Suddenly, *circulation* includes not just consumers but also producers and makers: it signifies a network; in an older idiom, a class.

What were readers “using” through the long decades of industrial mass media? They were making meaning and growing knowledge, both their own and that of the systems they used. Unfortunately for scholars, these are fleeting, fugitive objects for analysis, extremely hard to recover. To reach them, you need a model of communication that owes more to language and literary studies than to political economy and linear cause-and-effect.

One way of achieving that result is not to use the usual disciplinary methods but personal biography, stories from life, or what is sometimes now called auto-ethnography, where it is possible to smuggle life and story into science and method (and vice versa). This was the route taken by Richard Hoggart (1957), the first critic to “read” magazines as a meaningful part of culture. Hoggart did not consider magazines as a category (the shed); only in relation to his own particular interest in who used them (a class). Those following in his footsteps built on his example, to investigate the meaningfulness of magazines for particular readerships – girls, teens, and women in particular, from Angela McRobbie’s early work on *Jackie* (1978), via Anne Krisman’s “radiator girls” (1987), to Megan Le Masurier’s more recent studies of *Cleo* (2009, 2011). These certainly offer startling insights into how magazines forge readerships into self-knowing “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991); and they offer nuanced readings of how reading, culture, knowledge, and identity intersect.

It is hard to project this approach back in time without being accused of sentimental nostalgia (Curran and Seaton 2018, pp. 270–273). It is not easy to provide evidence for the cultural role magazines may have played in turning large populations into a coherent readership in the first place. The individual uses to which they were put are manifold. The line of causation from text to knowledge and action is indirect. It hardly seems possible to trace each grain of influence from an original trickle of textual causation to the wide, amorphous alluvial plain of everyday associated life, especially when everyone involved is dead. Unsurprisingly, the general field of “reading studies” is sparse, scattered (Cavallo and Chartier 1999), and often personal – even when offered as a general history (Manguel 1997). Compared with the history of the book, it is an appendage (e.g. Finkelstein and McCleery 2002).

It was not until about 150 years after popular periodicals began to make political and social waves in industrializing Europe, first as the precursor to the newspaper and then in their own right, that any scholar thought to study how their internal imaginative world meshed with the culture of their readers, for good and ill. Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* was published in 1957.⁵ When Penguin republished this landmark book in its Modern Classics series 50 years later, the editors lopped off the part of the original subtitle that made "special reference to publications and entertainments" (McGrath 2010). The shortened subtitle, "aspects of working-class life," may leave the impression that here is a work on the sociology of a class. But, in fact, it is written in the tradition of literary criticism (Owen 2007), where evidence is not gathered from anthropological observation but from the literary organization, expression, and imaginative truth of the text.

Here, Hoggart was on to something new. He asked what popular publications are *for*, not as economic or industrial products but in relation to the inner lives of class-based readerships. The major innovation was not the application of Hoggart's left-Leavisite Lit Crit to popular culture – startling though that was. It was the way he explained the "uses of literacy" in cultural (group) rather than individualistic (behavioral) terms. Hoggart saw reading as a *class practice*, undertaken in the cultural environment of the urban industrial home, street, and neighborhood. This is what shaped working-class families and their likes, loves, and loyalties – at once produced by and producing the sense of solidarity and difference that marked "people like us." Hoggart's insight was that mass literacy was important at the group level, the "effects" of mass media being felt on class culture, not on individual behavior. He took a first step toward a "reading" of modern, urban everyday life, with a view to understanding what it meant, how it was changing, and what industrial-scale publication had to do with that.⁶

To his contemporaries, Hoggart was an "angry young man." He was placed alongside a new generation of literary intellectuals from working- or middle-class backgrounds. The Angry Young Men were named after John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956). They included novelists like John Braine (*Room at the Top*, 1957) and Alan Sillitoe (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1958); and playwrights like Arnold Wesker (*Chicken Soup with Barley*, 1958). These writers were scornful of upper-class privilege, working-class restriction, and welfare meritocracy alike. They were disdainful of "the Establishment," even while preoccupied with their own upward social mobility.⁷ The successful movie of *Look Back in Anger* (1959) starred Richard Burton, a rising Shakespearean actor and son of a Welsh miner, the living embodiment of the explosive and often toxic tension between "class" and "culture."⁸

What made Hoggart's analysis of "publications and entertainments" especially compelling, connecting it to these literary figures, was that its literary criticism was *fiction*. Chatto's legal advice was that proprietors would undoubtedly sue if Hoggart named the real culprits or quoted publications directly. At a very late stage, about the time he was persuaded to change the book's title from the intended "*Abuses of Literacy*" to the inspired "*Uses*," Hoggart went through the manuscript and fictionalized the textual examples of "mass art" he wanted to critique. Here, he departed from the strict empiricism of modernist Leavisite criticism, which sought objectivity by narrowing the critical enterprise to the literary "object" itself – the text. With no empirical object to analyze for fear of litigation, Hoggart entered the imaginative space of the novelist,⁹ where the tension between the values of hard-won class culture and the attractions of the new could be given full voice. As a recent observer has put it:

The punch-up-prone and sex-strewn "Yank mags" that have such a de-vitalising effect on British teendom may be morally disgusting, but Hoggart the literary critic, working his way through *Sweetie*, *Take It Hot* and *The Lady Takes a Dive*, is forced to concede that their high-octane, sub-Hemingway, jump-on-his-testicles prose style isn't altogether to be despised. (Taylor 2017 n.p.)

One of Hoggart's fictional coinages was a pulp-fiction crime magazine called *Death Cab for Cutie*. No such magazine existed, but the title's apt compression of sex (cutie), violence (death), modern urban mobility (cab), and cool but cruel insouciance (American idiom) has led to its own peculiar immortalization. It lives on in the name of an American "moody emo-rock outfit" specializing in teenage-angst music. The band is fronted by Ben Gibbard, better known in the celebrity press for having briefly been married to Zooey Deschanel. Commenting on the unlikely name, Gibbard told Chicago's *Time Out* magazine:

Thank God for Wikipedia. At least now, people don't have to ask me where the fucking name came from every interview (August 23, 2011).¹⁰

Wikipedia explains:

Gibbard took the band name from the song "Death Cab for Cutie" written by Neil Innes and Vivian Stanshall and performed by their group the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. The song was performed by the Bonzos in the Beatles film *Magical Mystery Tour*. The song's name was in turn taken from an invented pulp fiction crime magazine, devised by the English academic Richard Hoggart in his 1957 study of working class culture, *The Uses of Literacy*.¹¹

Death Cab for Cutie proved too good a name to confine to literary criticism. A jokey take-down of American schlock, it suited the very English Bonzo Dog band and the Beatles, bringing it to the attention of a much wider crowd. Eventually, it turned into its own opposite. Instead of warning "us" *against* the Americanization of teen culture, it was still circulating 50 years later – *as* American teen culture.

That things routinely mean their opposite is a sign of our times, part of the inner lives of class-based readerships, in Britain at least. John le Carré, master of the fiction of deception and distrust (especially on "our" side), turned that insight into an art form. In his autobiography, he explains why: "in Britain our secret services are still, for better or worse, the spiritual home of our political, social and industrial elite" (2017, p. 22). As Le Carré's fictional writings make clear, these services are also Britain's last bastion of class supremacy. In the 1950s and 1960s, the traditional elite were the only group deemed (by their own peers) to be trustworthy enough to deal in the stock-in-trade of espionage: deceit, lies, and treachery. But a succession of scandals in the 1960s revealed an upper class riddled with traitors. Le Carré's spy fiction is at once a critical class analysis and an attempt to "explore a nation's psyche" (2017, p. 22). Hidden behind his own well-heeled disguise, Le Carré was, like Hoggart and the rest, an Angry Young Man. He concedes that life-stories too are duplicitous. Narrated events become "sufficient to themselves," part of a culture and its language, beyond the control of authority. The boundaries between fact, fiction, falsification, and fabrication, between history and imagination, are hard to maintain. Instead, they remain a resource for anyone and everyone to use, in ways that may subvert and betray the very values the original subject sought to proclaim. That is the history of reading: life and narration alike, marked by a strong sense of class consciousness that cannot identify or police its own boundaries, where "we" are also "they," truth also duplicity, have inexorably "widened into incoherence" (Le Carré 2017, p. 12).

Proprietorial Readerships

We should leave the world of the reader for a moment, to consider another character in this story: the proprietor. As they barge into our everyday life, media moguls' heavy tread sounds menacingly to contemporary ears. But the "demon barons of Fleet Street" (as it were) have been marching noisily across popular consciousness for well over a century. What kind of mark did

they leave on readers? Perhaps it is not so deep as we fear. Quite possibly, you have never heard of Walthamstow, or nearby Waltham Cross, now dormitory suburbs of the suburban sprawl stretching across north London. But both of them have a significant place in media history, having felt the footfall of the world's first and its most recent media giant.

In Walthamstow (Figure 2.1) lies the home (previously occupied by William Morris) of Edward Lloyd (1815–1890).¹² Lloyd was the pioneer of the “penny press.” Starting out as a populist radical, turning out cheap periodicals brimming with plagiarized serial stories (notoriously including those of Charles Dickens), Lloyd became the archetypal media industrialist. He founded (among others) Lloyd's Weekly News, which boasted “the largest circulation in the world” and was the first British newspaper to sell over a million copies.

Lloyd was a technical innovator, introducing high-speed rotary presses to England and opening a factory for making newsprint out of Algerian esparto grass. As well as promoting progressive ideas and democratic politics, Lloyd sought popularity, scale, and speed in the dissemination of useful knowledge, factual and fictional:

On 27 November 1892, *Lloyd's Weekly's* 50th jubilee issue reported that “eight monster web machines, each printing two copies at a time, run off *Lloyd's* at the rate of over 200,000 copies an hour.”¹³

Fast forward to today's north London, where, in direct line of filiation from Lloyd, just up the road in Waltham Cross, lies the 40-acre Newsprinters printing works. Owned by Rupert Murdoch and opened in 2008–2009, it houses 12 manroland Colorman XXL presses. These can print “one million copies of a 120-page newspaper every hour.”¹⁴ Impressive though that is, Waltham Cross is only one of three such plants in the UK: another near Liverpool houses five further presses, capable of printing 430 000 newspapers an hour, with a third in Scotland

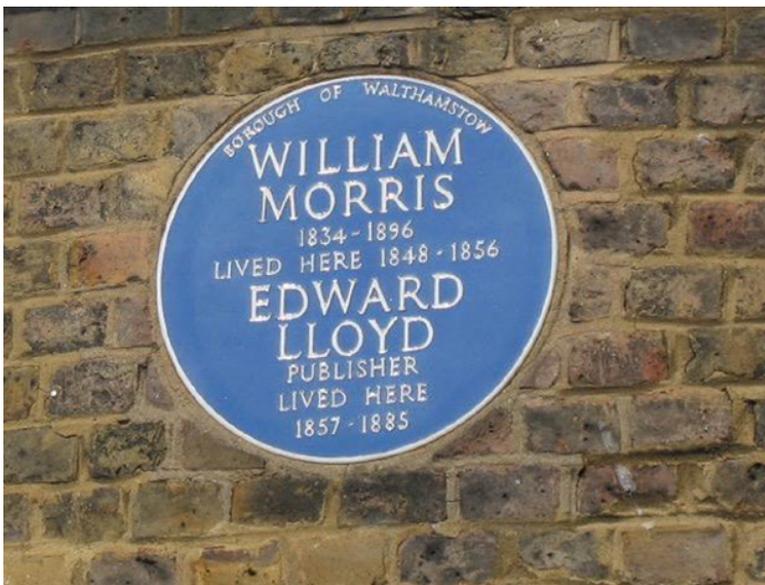


Figure 2.1 Blue Plaque to William Morris and Edward Lloyd on the Water House, Walthamstow. Edward Lloyd's heirs gave it to Council in 1898. It was opened as Lloyd Park in 1900. The house is now the William Morris Gallery. Source: Stephen Craven for [geograph.org.uk](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plaque_to_William:Morris_and_Edward_Lloyd_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1214659.jpg). CC license: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plaque_to_William:Morris_and_Edward_Lloyd_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1214659.jpg. And see: <http://www.edwardlloyd.org/houses.htm>. Picture: Stephen Craven.

operating two more, which can print a “144-page tabloid straight in a single pass on the presses at speeds up to 86 000 copies an hour.” Such is their capacity that Newsprinters do not print only News Ltd. papers:

We are proud to print *The Sun*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* for News UK, plus *The Daily & Sunday Telegraph*, *Wall Street Journal*, Northern editions of the *Financial Times*, *The London Metro*, *The London Evening Standard* and a great many regional titles.¹⁵

From such statistics, it seems incontrovertible that the “mass” media and industrial-era scale of the printed press are still reverberating under the heel of the all-powerful proprietor. We should take note, even as we turn our attention to new digital realities. The speed of the presses has increased fivefold in the century between Lloyd and Murdoch (from 200 000 to 1 million copies an hour in London), and their capacity expanded to print color (and rival titles). The business model remains the same: central production and fast distribution of cheap, popular journalism, seen as mass consumption of entertainment (political and sporting spectacle; human interest and conflict; promise of comfort), maintaining an “us” versus “them” version of class consciousness as a “lived experience,” and occasionally delivering (or at least promising) vast numbers of popular votes to the proprietor’s favored party. Party politics, the greatest spectator sport of the nineteenth century, is still brought to you by an *industry*, with all the familiar nineteenth-century attributes – unscrupulous capitalists, industrial scale, centralized control, factory-production, mass consumption, political manipulation, modernity rendered as spectacle and story. Everything old is new again.

But under the showy industrial bang and clatter, something very different is emergent, still not fully formed. One of the main achievements of the early popular press was the creation of the *class reader*. This is taking the radical energy of the early “pauper press” in a completely new direction, not toward standardization and scale, but turning inward, toward the relationships and identities of small-scale or even self-scale users. In a sense, the industrialists made this new agent, but they no longer control it. This new player is more like a “language community” than a market; readers use and create new meanings within an *autopoietic* (self-creating and self-renewing) sense-making system (Luhmann 2012). It is a very different “mode of production” from the proprietorial one.

Readership Systems and Classes

Readership systems that are internally connected are structured like Paul Baran’s (1964) model of a *distributed* as opposed to a *command-and-control* communications network. While proprietors, advertisers, and governments may imagine – and wish – that a publication communicates as a centralized network (Figure 2.2, left), a literate readership means that it is organized and interconnected internally, working as a distributed system (Figure 2.2, right), of which the highest-level empirical form is a language.

Such a “social technology” takes time to establish. Reading was not a popular pastime among the poor before the Industrial Revolution. Of course, rising literacy rates were the result of more than one cause. Protestantism, in particular, promoted Bible study. Education followed the demand for numerate workers to operate utilitarian industrial processes. It was seen as a political necessity, too, as the franchise was cautiously extended to the laboring classes (1867). But the radical progressive “pauper press” and “penny press,” invented by Edward Lloyd and others, was the world leader in forging a secular, popular readership around the desire for population-wide knowledge, supplied at a scale that dwarfed other media.

The “knowledge is power” movement was linked not only to power politics, but also to Enlightenment values (science, discovery, social progress), the cultivation of “the self” (*bildungsroman*;

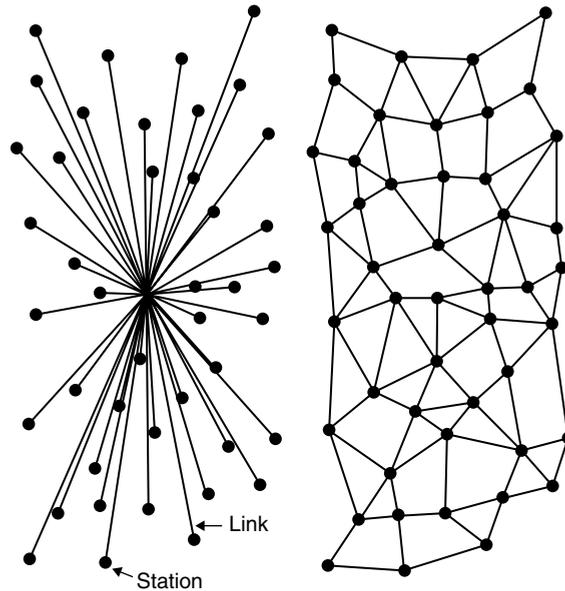


Figure 2.2 Readership as a distributed communication network. These famous diagrams by Paul Baran (1964, p. 2) mark the fabled origin of the internet. Unlike the “command-and-control” system (L), which can be knocked out if the center is destroyed, the distributed system (R) is resilient enough to withstand nuclear attack: communications can just go around missing nodes. The concepts the diagrams visualize were revolutionary in military terms, but distributed communications already existed: they are the very fabric of language and culture; the means by which knowledge is circulated and preserved. Source: Baran’s original diagrams can be seen at <https://www.rand.org/about/history/baran.html>. Rand Corporation.

self-help), and practical know-how (household management, make-do-and-mend, DIY, smallholdings, “hobbies”). Naturally, in among all that *useful* knowledge (Rauch 2001) was a good deal of scandal, murder, sensation, and play. In among the news items and “improving” content were fictional stories by celebrity authors and (purportedly) factual ones from the police courts, although the distinction was not respected in practice. Edward Lloyd’s first periodical title was:

The Penny Sunday Times and Weekly Police Gazette, a miscellany comprised of fiction and faked police reports. Advertisements for *The Penny Sunday Times* proclaimed the writing was “Sketched with the Humour of a ‘Boz’” [Dickens].¹⁶

Before committing exclusively to newspapers, Lloyd specialized in these “penny bloods,” novels issued in weekly parts (Kirkpatrick 2016), prefiguring “death cab for cutie” crime fiction by more than a century. He published over 200 of them between 1839 and 1853:

Amongst his most famous were *Varney the Vampyre, or The Feast of Blood* (1845–47), and *The String of Pearls, or The Sailor’s Gift* (1846–47), both written by James Malcolm Rymer, the latter introducing the character of Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street.¹⁷

This was the beginning of a new kind of mass literacy, whose chief characteristic was that it was *purposeless*, not tied to priest, politician, or profession, available to be used for any or no purpose at the will or whim of the *user*, not the producer. Literacy, appetite whetted by the Demon Barber of Fleet Street and *Varney the Vampire*, became a “means of production” of knowledge, but, unlike most machinery, it was in the hands of the population at large. It was learned (not innate),

so it had to be taught. That necessitated the presence of institutions and behind them the purposes of paymasters – church, state, capital, and successive barons of Fleet Street. Even so, literacy’s peculiar attribute, a “social technology” that could nevertheless only be used by individuals, put it at least at one remove from direct or causal force from “interested” agencies. Reading is not the same as taking instructions. Instead of remaining a top-down tool for governmental or capitalist control, literacy was increasingly available as an alternative bottom-up source of organization and action among a growing population who could use it to think for themselves.

The “multitudes” exceeded what was wanted of them by their masters. At micro-scale, readers might resist, refuse, or play with the resources of literacy, using it to pursue the very opposite of proprietorial wishes, or simply tune out and read the “Sunday funnies” (Mann 1992),¹⁸ looking not for ideologies but recipes, stories, tips, and scandals. At macro-scale, collective organization could be constructed “from below.” Literacy’s spread was accompanied by the development of Tocquevillian and class-based associations. These consolidated throughout the nineteenth century, becoming the giant class-based unions and political parties that transformed the political landscape of modernity, not least through their cultural and educational apparatus, such as the Workers Education Association and Workers’ Libraries (Francis 1976). All the major political movements of the twentieth century were founded on literacy established in the nineteenth. Both knowledge (positive content) and uncertainty (doubt, skepticism, opposition, critique) were circulated as social facts, part of everyday life, mundane, and unremarked, but available and scalable.

Later leftist historians, notably Raymond Williams (1961) and E.P. Thompson (1963), argued that the “English working class” was self-created through its organizations, principally the trade union and cooperative movement and the Labour Party. Both Williams and Thompson pursued the history of class consciousness through the means by which it was constructed at the time: periodical publications. Like Hoggart, they felt political and cultural qualms to see how these once purposeful organs of popular enlightenment were faltering in the face of post-World War II international commercial popular culture. No sooner had they achieved the intellectual emancipation that went with full literacy than the popular classes were squandering it – on “Death Cab for Cuties.”

Readers as Representations

What did early popular readers look like to their contemporaries? They entered the realm of representation as self-motivating figures inspired by knowledge but, strangely and simultaneously, as an object of desire – the very archetype of Hoggart’s “cutie.” We can meet a couple of them, both of striking beauty (Figure 2.3) ... but duplicitous meaning.

Both the sculpture and the painting are titled *The Reading Girl*. Both are duplicitous because they subvert the classical nude form, using it to depict the modern “common reader” (in Dr. Johnson’s sense). The sculpture is by Italian Pietro Magni (1817–1877). It was modeled in 1856, carved in 1861. Capturing a young woman who is so absorbed in her book that she has let her shift slip, the sculpture made Magni’s name and fame. For his contemporaries, it expressed the new artistic movement of *verismo*, or realism,¹⁹ challenging neoclassicism, quoting the classical nude in order to renew it. The girl is understood as working-class (vernacular chair; floor rushes), and what she is doing – reading while disrobing – turns out not to be noble or aesthetic but patriotic and democratic:

The Reading Girl may very well represent Italy itself, soon to come into maturity as a nation. In this regard, *The Reading Girl* fuses *verismo* concepts of truth to nature and close observation with emotional insight, all in service to a rising Italian patriotic sentiment.... In its livelier, more immediate, true-to-life aspects, it successfully appealed to a wide public and linked itself to the growing democratic vision of a united Italy.²⁰

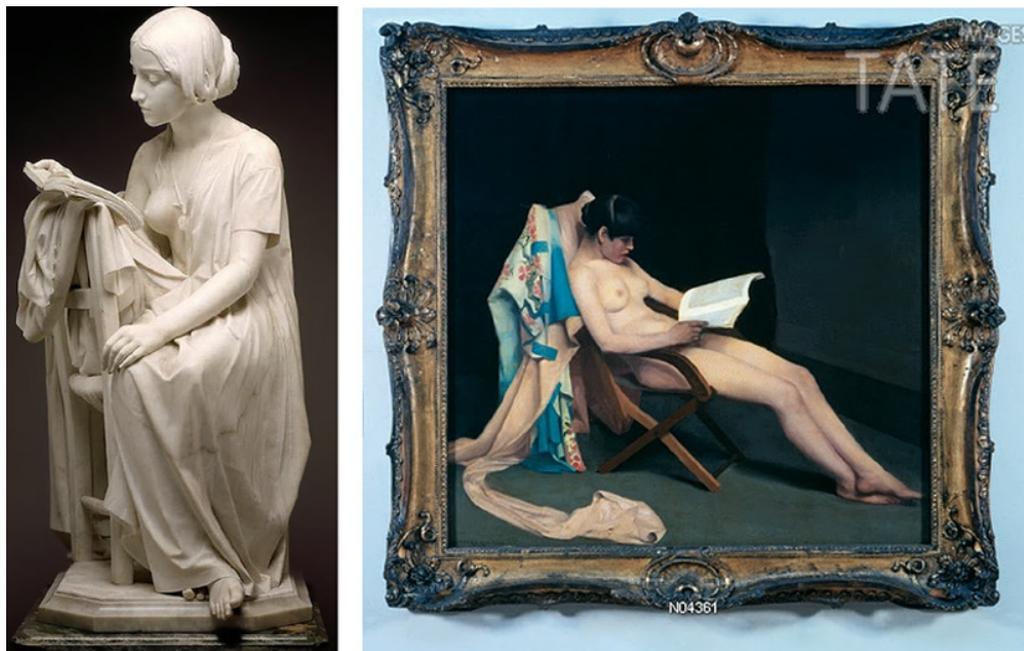


Figure 2.3 *Reading Girls*: Magni’s sculpture (1861) and Roussel’s painting (1887) dramatize the democratization of reading: one portends political emancipation, the other is a harbinger of the modern consumer; both depict ordinary people as realistic truth rendered desirable.

This is the *democratic* reader. Let us meet her later cousin: the *fashionable* reader. The painting is by Théodore Roussel (1847–1926). It was modeled by Hetty Pettigrew and exhibited in London in 1887. It caused an immediate stir. The critic for *The Spectator* (16 April 1887) wrote:

Our imagination fails to conceive any adequate reason for a picture of this sort. It is realism of the worst kind, the artist’s eye seeing only the vulgar outside of his model, and reproducing that callously and brutally. No human being, we should imagine, could take any pleasure in such a picture as this; it is a degradation of Art.²¹

The degrading, brutal, callous and “vulgar outside” of the model seemed offensive to some at the time because here was a depiction not of classical aesthetics or divine nudity in the service of noble sentiments, but “a robust and healthy young woman, with a taste for current fashion,” as the Tate’s summary puts it. Here is an early portrait of *the consumer* – female, *déclassé*, modern, self-absorbed, but nevertheless interested in something beyond her own sexuality, which is portrayed but not proffered. She represents a flattened, naturalistic novelty; a democratization of the ‘classic’ subject of art for the mass-media age. Among the fashions on show is what she is reading – of course, it is a magazine.

Readers as Makers

This was the “common reader” whose literacy was such that by the mid-twentieth century it had achieved “surplus value” or *purposelessness*, no longer confined to the needs of industrial capitalism, consumerism, or even democratic politics. From the mid-twentieth century literacy was very widespread in the industrial trading democracies and in socialist countries alike. If you

did not have it, that could henceforth be understood to be a disorder, bringing social disadvantage. Sculpted “reading girls” might continue to delight the eye of the benevolent beholder (Figure 2.4), but now the purpose was to invoke empathy for the “inner struggle” of the dyslexic child, to reduce the shame associated with inability to read, and to display works by dyslexic artists. One of these is multiple Oscar-winner Sir Richard Taylor. With Sir Peter Jackson, he was responsible for the props, costumes, prosthetics, and animatronics used in *The Lord of the Rings*.²²

The *uses of literacy* were no longer instrumental but manifold, nonlinear, and semiotically affluent. Readers were voters, citizens, the public, consumers, audiences; in addition, some were activists, advocates, educators, artists, scientists, radicals, revolutionaries, dreamers, mischief-makers, comedians, preachers, commentators, critics ... and migrants. Public communication could no longer be modeled as a top-down, center-to-periphery, command-and-control, one-to-many process. The “multitude” began to find ways to “talk to itself,” to achieve some level of self-organizing auto-communicative group identity (Lotman 1990), and to give each other a helping hand. The uses to which the “receiver” might put public communication could not be restricted to or predicted by the intentions of the “sender.”

Bundling Readers

Here, reading went in exactly the opposite direction of industrial efficiency. The division of labor and consequent proletarianization of artisanship in the factory system grew apace during the nineteenth century and it still continues with automation, expanding from manufacturing to the service sector, and from national to global scale. But reading has gone the other way: proliferating out of all proportion to utility. Ordinary people, for whom reading was hard-won but barely functional – for religion, work processes, or regulatory compliance – could now read anything the Republic of Letters might throw at them, limited only



Figure 2.4 *Inner Struggle*, by Sir Richard Taylor and Weta Workshop. Dyslexia Foundation, Christchurch, New Zealand www.ctct.org.nz/dde/exhibit.html. Source: photo: J. Hartley.

by local accessibility and price (Flint 1993). While the economy was busy dividing productive processes (as in Adam Smith's pin factory), mass literacy was growing by *bundling* all kinds of novelties together, such that any one reader was confronted by a superfluity of semiotic abundance without obvious limits. The problem now was how to limit choice (categorize and filter), and where to look for preferred reading (search and sample). The answer was the magazine.

The magazine was also a solution to a tricky problem for producers. It helped them to sell uncertainty! It traded in novelty; stories, news, and ideas whose attraction for readers lay in not being known in advance. The magazine offered readers a heterogeneous repertoire, not a "good," under the unifying sign (masthead) of newness for a given we-group. Choice was downstreamed from provider to user. Pre-industrial forms of "novelty bundling" (Potts 2011), such as fairs and festivals, required people to attend in person. Literacy allowed novelties into the home, and at industrial scale. Periodical publications quickly adopted bundling at various levels: within the text, by genre (romance, action, etc.); by author (who do you like, trust, or admire?); or by publisher (specialized imprints). Magazines played a vital role in stimulating attention to the supply of novelties and providing status signals that affected their value. They helped publishers to reduce uncertainties: they lacked knowledge of the market (demand follows supply when novelty is the product); they wanted people to pay attention to things that did not interest them or that they actively disliked (this is the founding skill of journalism); and they supplied incommensurably different things – fact and fiction; story and image; news and pinups; politics and sport; freedom and comfort; economic information and children's entertainment – often within the same covers, for the lowest price, in order to capture as many different segments of the potential market demographic as possible.

Periodical magazines used their succession of pages to organize different sections and genres of content, sometimes purposed for the attention of different "family members," or simply used to put regular features in predictable order. As periodicals, they could also sort material by season. It takes time to standardize such forms (just as it took time to sort out which pedal went where in motor cars), but over time an efficient set of "rules" was established for the convenience of both producers and consumers, who tend to school each other in what works, such that new players would adopt existing layouts. Competing titles would become ever more similar. The general market was extended by a "division of labor" (specialization) among magazine themselves. Each household might purchase different magazines for different members and different purposes. Eventually, some newcomer's experiment in breaking the rules with something new catches on, and a new paradigm begins.

In short, the magazine was an early adopter of the branding and targeting techniques of the creative economy or "economy of attention" (Lanham 2006). It worked as a "social network market" (Potts et al. 2008) et al. 2008), where status (attained by copying style-leaders) determined price and where consumer choices were dictated by the choices of others in the system, called "entrepreneurial consumers" by Hartley and Montgomery (2009), a "function" that is now professionalized by "influencers" (Abidin 2016).

Imperceptibly, a community (or numerous overlapping reading communities) of avid, entertained, well-led readers becomes literate in the fuller sense; it learns the codes and it becomes easier for readers (consumers) to act also as writers (producers). Some people take the chance to raise their own voice, share their ideas, win an argument, or improve their skills in print. Because of the capital costs required, such participation typically takes an amateur or consumerist form – letters to the editor, sharing crafts and hobbies, household management (recipes), fan fiction, and jokes. It is by these means that group identities, a sense of who "we" are, can be maintained, a feature that was first textualized around social class (the "pauper press"), but soon expanded to encompass large-scale communities of gender and nation, and specialized segments, as magazines proliferated for ever more tightly defined groups.

From Shed to Dalston

In the digital age, the cultural function of magazines – the storehouse on the edge of town – far exceeds the form perfected in print (although the brands and mastheads familiar from that era continue online, with mixed success). Readers are now writers, in their millions, on social media, DIY websites, and through magazine-maker apps, such as Issuu, Blurb, (USA), Jilster (Netherlands), Madmagz (France), etc. Good advice is on hand.²³

What is the political effect of user-led novelty-bundling and networked two-way communication, to promote a sense of co-subjectivity among people “like us”? It may be too soon to tell, but a straw in the wind has been captured by one of the online successors to print periodicals, a “hyperlocal” news site (Hargreaves and Hartley 2016, pp. 142–152). This one is called *Loving Dalston* (in east London). It is run by David Altheer, a journalist made redundant by Rupert Murdoch’s prestige title *The Times*.²⁴ In June 2017, someone tipped it off that a feature film called *Forgotten Man*, shot in East London and featuring a cameo role by actor-model Jerry Hall, was screening at the East End Film Festival in the nearby Hackney Picture House. The reason why that became news was not just that that Jerry Hall (60) is married to Rupert Murdoch (86), the Australian-American media tycoon with a big printing works in Waltham Cross, nor that the couple came over from “his Mayfair pad” in their “tycoon-comfy” Range Rover to watch the film. The newsworthy bit came at the end of the film. It starred not the power couple themselves, but an anonymous member of the audience. *Loving Dalston* takes up the story:

Alas, things did not go altogether well. Leaving as the lights went up ... they were spotted by a young Corbynista [Figure 2.5] in the near-full house. Murdoch paused in his shuffle towards the exit as a loud voice rent the air: “We are the majority now, you [James Blunt]!” Except he used a single word.²⁵



Figure 2.5 “We are the majority now.” Media mogul encounters the audience. Source: Hetty Einzig @HettyEinzig (Twitter). Photo courtesy of Hetty Einzig.

Was the trip to Dalston a metaphorical re-run of “Death Cab for Cutie”? Will Rupert Murdoch soon be a “Forgotten Man” in another anonymous London suburb? Let the last word (not the rude one)²⁶ go to the anonymous young representative of a new reading public: “*We are the majority now.*” That is what comes of reading magazines for 150 years. The tables are turned.

Notes

- 1 A good way to gauge just how little common ground there is in terms of content is to contrast different “top 10” lists of magazines, such as those based on circulation (e.g. <http://gazetterevue.com/2016/08/top-10-best-selling-magazines-world>; or <http://www.trendingtopmost.com/worlds-popular-list-top-10/2017-2018-2019-2020-2021/entertainment/most-read-magazines-world-best-selling-famous-newspapers-cheapest-expensive>) compared with those selected by editorial taste (<http://www.theworldsbestever.com/category/magazines-2>; or <http://www.themontrealreview.com/world-best-magazines.php>).
- 2 See: <http://www.ancient.eu/parthenon>.
- 3 In psychology, it is called the Dunning–Kruger effect: <http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2016/07/the-internet-isnt-making-us-dumber-its-making-us-more-meta-ignorant.html>.
- 4 “More than half of the world’s population now (2017) uses the internet. More than half the world now uses a smartphone. Almost two-thirds of the world’s population now has a mobile phone. More than half of the world’s web traffic now comes from mobile phones. More than half of all mobile connections around the world are now ‘broadband’.” Source: <https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview>. At the same time, more than half of the world’s population live in cities. Source: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/urbanization/the_worlds_cities_in_2016_data_booklet.pdf.
- 5 Original publication by the literary publisher Chatto and Windus; the paperback edition was published by Penguin in 1959. The 2009 Penguin Classics edition was issued as *Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life*.
- 6 Such an enterprise could not be accomplished in one book. It required an entire field – cultural studies – to acquit the project. As ever in the way of these things, by the time cultural studies reached maturity it had forgotten what it set out to find.
- 7 See: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Angry-Young-Men>. See also: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/feb/24/society>, on Hoggart as “angry young man.” The film of *Look Back in Anger* contains the line: “You’re hurt because everything’s changed,” referring to the protagonist’s middle-class father-in-law, “and Jimmy’s hurt because everything’s stayed the same,” referring to the working-class (but college-educated) protagonist. The line sums up the sense of being caught between two equally unappealing worlds that marks the “angry young men” and the “kitchen-sink” domestic drama of the time.
- 8 Burton’s obituary in *The New York Times* set the tone for the working-class boy-made-good by describing Burton as “A plump, roughshod primitive who spoke no English up to the age of 10.” Burton’s native tongue was Welsh (<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/1110.html>). He “made good,” reigning for a time as the most famous man in the world (with fellow Welshman Tom Jones), but the effect of his energy and talent on himself was toxic (a “career” already rehearsed by fellow Welshman Dylan Thomas).
- 9 “Like E P Thompson, another icon of the cultural studies brigade, he is supposed to have regretted that he never became a novelist” (Taylor 2017).
- 10 Quoted in: <https://www.timeout.com/chicago/music/death-cab-for-cuties-ben-gibbard-interview>.
- 11 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_Cab_for_Cutie.
- 12 What follows is indebted to the website of [edwardlloyd.org](http://www.edwardlloyd.org/): see <http://www.edwardlloyd.org/index.htm>.

- 13 Source: <http://www.edwardlloyd.org/innovation.htm>; and <http://www.edwardlloyd.org/LWN-18921127-jub.pdf>.
- 14 Sources: <http://newsprinters.co.uk/Who-are-we/Broxbourne-site-statistics>; <http://newsprinters.co.uk/Who-are-we/Knowsley>; <http://newsprinters.co.uk/Who-are-we/Eurocentral>.
- 15 Steve Whitehead, managing director, Newsprinters. quoted at: <http://newsprinters.co.uk/About-us>.
- 16 Source: John Adcock at <http://john-adcock.blogspot.com.au/2015/02/edward-lloyds-200th-anniversary-1815.html>.
- 17 Source: Robert Kirkpatrick at <http://www.edwardlloyd.org/biog-kirkpatrick.pdf>.
- 18 See: <http://shop.russcochran.com/Sunday-Funnies-1-2-Sun-Fun-1-2.htm>.
- 19 Verismo is now best known as a term in opera; see: www.roh.org.uk/news/a-blanket-term-misused-what-is-and-isnt-verismo.
- 20 Source: National Gallery of Art (USA): <https://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.127589.html>. Another copy of this work is held in Milan, juxtaposed with a sculpture that depicts a *writing* girl: <http://www.italianways.com/la-donna-che-scrive-e-quella-che-legge-tutte-e-due-compiono-opera>.
- 21 Source: www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/roussel-the-reading-girl-n04361: Tate Gallery, London, where the painting hangs: <https://www.tate-images.com/results.asp?image=N04361>. The model was Hetty Pettigrew, one of three professional model sisters, who was about 20 at the time. She became Roussel's mistress, and they had a daughter together. She died in 1953 (Wikipedia). Roussel, who was French but domiciled in England, died in 1926.
- 22 See: www.dyslexiafoundation.org.nz/richard_taylor.html.
- 23 E.g. Danny Miller in *Creative Review*, 2016: www.creativereview.co.uk/how-to-launch-a-magazine.
- 24 See: <http://lovingdalston.co.uk/2012/07/openness-policy>.
- 25 Story at: <http://lovingdalston.co.uk/2017/06/ruPERT-is-wheeled-in-to-hackney-to-see-wife-jerrys-movie-when-an-angry-punter-calls-him-out>.
- 26 It was the "C word" that made this story newsworthy. *The Guardian*, unlike others, chose to spell out the unprintable expletive: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/lostinchowbiz/2017/jun/22/ruPERT-murdoch-jerry-hall--cinema-night-hackney-east-end-welcome>. See also: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/23/ruPERT-murdoch-verbally-abused-night-hackney. Appropriately, *The Big Issue* carried the story, noting that the film *Forgotten Man* is about homelessness: <https://www.bigissue.com/news/ruPERT-murdoch-attends-premiere-film-homelessness>. On the etiquette of using the c-word, see Emma Jane: www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-09/feminist-parenting-and-the-c-word/10871098.

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