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## [chapter head] Afterword

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British *Vogue*'s cover for October 2022 featured the actor Timothée Chalamet. Alone.

According to editor Edward Enninful, Chalamet was chosen as the first solo male cover star in the magazine's 106-year history because he 'is modern man incarnate, as an actor and as a person'.<sup>1</sup> His modernity, it seems, has to do with refusals of conventional masculinity and of fixed national identity. In the cover portrait he wears a pearl choker, as many *Vogue* models have done before him, and the photo shoot incorporates womenswear. Enninful observes that Chalamet 'dismantles old-fashioned notions of masculinity as a matter of course'.<sup>2</sup> The feature article focuses on Chalamet as a global citizen: American with a French father, bilingual and much-travelled.<sup>3</sup> I started to think about the meanings of *Vogue*'s presentation of Chalamet after reading Richard Junger's essay in this book about changing depictions of 'the young man of today' on American magazine covers in past eras. Whilst I was still reflecting on it, the next issue of *Vogue* appeared.

British *Vogue*'s cover for November 2022 featured nobody. It was a blank, a block of purple. This time, though, the visual stunt was not a new move but an evocation of tradition. *Vogue*'s cover for February 5, 1936 was a purple blank in tribute to the late George V; in March 1952 the death of George VI was marked in the same way. Yet the three covers are not identical. The overlaid white text is a form of editorial art (text as image) which can be used to trace *Vogue*'s changing self-presentation. In 1936, the word 'Vogue' slants upwards, in a script font with an enormous curving 'V'. This was one of several attention-grabbing logotypes which the designers experimented with in the thirties. In 1952, the magazine's name is written in a stark, blocky sans-serif font anchored to the top edge. A couple of years later, in a drastic shift, *Vogue* customised an elegant French serif typeface ('Didot') for a new

logotype which has been used ever since across the international family of editions. The 2022 cover is the only one of the three to give the name and dates of the monarch who has died. Evidently, it could no longer be assumed that audiences would instantly recognise the significance of royal purple.

The *Vogue* brand launched in the US in 1892. At that period – as the subtitle of this book indicates – the rise of the mass-circulation illustrated magazine coincided with the inauguration of modernism. By the 1920s modernism was becoming mainstream and British *Vogue* celebrated a set of writers and artists – among them, Virginia Woolf, Clive and Vanessa Bell, and the Sitwells - whom it saw as ‘upholders of English cultural endowment’.<sup>4</sup> Their heartlands were in Bloomsbury. One *Vogue* columnist, admiring yet puzzled, described ‘that scintillating trinity, Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell, whose poems are sharp as icicles, jagged as tinfoil, unexpected as flamingos in Bond Street or pearls in a dinner oyster’.<sup>5</sup> The Sitwells represent the extreme limit of *Vogue*’s tolerance for modern experiment; at the same time, they are emblematic of its privileged and patriotic social milieu. Indeed, whom do we find commenting on the crowning of George V in *Vogue*’s coronation issue in April 1937? None other than Sacheverell Sitwell.

In *Vogue* – then as now – nationalist discourse alternates with globalised or international modernity. We see this same alternation when reading across the titles explored in *Magazines and Modern Identity*. *Vogue*’s multiple instantiations – with editions produced from Poland to the Philippines – perfectly demonstrate that dynamic between national cultures and the normative influence of an Americanised global culture which is the primary focus of this book. Yet *Vogue* plays it safe: its internal tensions are contained within a highly commercialised print product, while a relentlessly banal prose style counteracts the occasionally subversive visual images. By contrast, many of the magazines analysed in this volume were located in financially or politically precarious areas of the print marketplace.

Some took ideological risks: the Rizzoli periodicals, for instance, clashed with the regime of fascist Italy as Maria Antonella Pelizzari outlines. Others exhibited fractures resulting from contrary cultural and economic pressures. For example, the French-Canadian *La Revue moderne*, as Adrien Rannaud explains, was simultaneously an intellectual monthly committed to the maintenance of francophone culture in North America and a consumer-oriented women's magazine which often reproduced content from popular US titles.

When I teach my course on 'Modern Periodicals', I take to the first meeting a pile of print magazines in languages other than English. I ask the students what they can deduce about the genre, target audience and market positioning of each periodical simply from visual cues and material aspects. I am surprised every time by the extent to which we can 'read' the magazine as print product even without being able to read its textual content. In future, I will draw on *Magazines and Modern Identity* as I talk with the students and as I pursue my own research on the embedding of mainstream monthlies into national or international print ecologies. The methodological innovation that characterises the book will be especially valuable. It is fascinating to see these deeper explorations of the methods we learned about at the stimulating 'Future States' Nearly Carbon Neutral Conference in 2020, where early versions of some of the chapters were presented. For instance, Guilia Pra Floriani demonstrates how a situated and an integrated reading of a periodical can be worked out in tandem: she places *The True Record*, from revolutionary China, into relationship firstly with other periodicals of a similar type and secondly with 'artefacts and visual materials located outside *The True Record*'. Patrick Roessler's approach is inspiring in its combination of breadth and theoretical power. Most of us limit ourselves to one type of magazine whereas he looks across the range of genres which made up interwar Germany's illustrated press. The concept of the 'small archive', developed by German literary and digital humanities scholars is surely going to be crucial for our future explorations of the forms of knowledge production

that happen in magazines. And the ‘iconic turn’ which Roessler identifies in the culture of the Weimar Republic is also happening in modern periodical studies: all the essays in *Magazines and Modern Identity* are highly attentive to visual idioms and to their political power. So I’m still thinking about the meanings of that purple blank.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Enniful, ‘Timothée Chalamet is British *Vogue*'s First Solo Male Cover Star’. *Vogue* (London), October 2022, 45.

<sup>2</sup> Enniful, ‘Timothée Chalamet’, 48.

<sup>3</sup> Giles Hattersley, ‘The Chalamet Effect: Timothée Talks Fate, Fashion and Being an Old Soul’, *Vogue* (London), September 2022, 182-97.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Garrity, ‘Selling Culture to the “Civilized”’: Bloomsbury, British *Vogue*, and the Marketing of National Identity’, *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 2 (1999): 33.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Seen on the Stage’, *Vogue* (London), early October 1923, 31.