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Fashion Writing Challenges the College Journalist

Fashion knowledge plus good word usage means interesting work ahead, explains Margaret Anne Clark

The college woman who, on coming home from a formal, relates easily and vividly "who wore what and why" might make an excellent fashion journalist. Maybe she worships the goddess Fashion and delights in talking about her. Her memory of detail is, no doubt, excellent.

The imaginative college woman interested in textiles and clothing, who finds it easy to crystallize her pictorial memory into readable sentences, finds a direct challenge to her abilities in the field of fashion writing.

The position of fashion editor today has become several jobs in one. It offers a business occupation and also demands creative work. A student need not be a writing genius to gain a mentionable post in the field of home economics journalism, but she must be a person trained in the use of words.

If one is thoroughly familiar with clothes and their latent possibilities, she will have little difficulty in finding writing material. Anyone who is familiar with the chatter of fashion magazines and women's sections in metropolitan newspapers is conscious of its casual, fluent, condensed character.

A knowledge of journalistic style such as may be secured through practical experience on a college paper forms a good foundation on which to build a career. Most successful fashion journalists modify their style and weave a definite personality into it.

An understanding of the social world and its usages is important. It would be quite difficult for a writer to describe in flowing detail "what they are wearing on their southern cruise this winter" when she has little or no idea of the atmosphere of a southern cruise.

The flexibility of the fashion world offers a great variety of positions. Many enterprising journalists create their own jobs. In general, the business of fashion writing consists mainly of promoting some designer's creation. Many interesting angles develop from this base when the industry is considered as a whole.

First, the designer herself must be publicized. Everyone knows how dearly the exclusively dressed woman pays for the French labels in her gown. Some designers do all of their own publicity work or at least dictate what their press shall consist of. Thus, an interesting combination of artistic and journalistic talent is achieved.

Also, the manufacturer or retailer must be promoted. There are fabrics and color combinations to be brought before the consumer's eye. It is the task of a home economics journalist to create a demand for the designer's product in the mind of the consumer. Millinery, shoes, bags and gloves also require extensive publicizing.

Why are we all wearing chunky gold jewelry on our sweaters this year instead of the single strand pearls that we wore last year? Because we have been told that "metal jewelry is what is being worn this year."

Many women create their own positions. They may forecast to department stores information predicting what coeds will want to wear to football games next fall. Perhaps they will go around the country conducting fashion polls.

The smart fashion magazines offer desirable editorial and advertising positions. A number of them conduct career contests that may serve as wedges for ambitious college students to pry their way into their chosen field. Most daily newspapers carry a home economics page with at least one or two columns of running comments on clothes available in local stores.

Pattern companies employ many skilled fashion writers to provide descriptive copy for their pattern books. Sewing machine manufacturers need journalists to publish their leaflets of sewing helps and hints.

Fashion writing gives a wide scope for the journalists' art. The constant change and the variety of it offer opportunities for description and critical work, which can result in distinguished articles.