

ANNA WINTOUR: THE TRUTH BEHIND THE BOB

By Tara Kloeppel

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Tara Kloeppel and Anna Wintour have been working together for a while. Wintour just didn't realize it.

CELEBRITY AS RHETORIC



Being a celebrity can mean many things. What does it mean to Anna Wintour and the public who adores her?

POLITICS en VOGUE



They say politics is for ugly people. Not true if you're going to be Anna Wintour's type of politician.

POPULAR PHILANTHROPY



Sometimes doing good work can be dirty.

WHY DOES CELEBRITY MATTER?

How has Wintour's political savvy changed the trajectory of her career?



THE LANGUAGE OF FASHION

Wintour knows the fashion industry and its people. How did *Vogue* set the tone for Anna Wintour's rhetorical strategies?



WORKS CITED

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

During Fall 2008, a visitor to the English Department's computer classroom at the University of Missouri–Kansas City (UMKC) would have heard students probing the organizational logic of Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth-Century* and asking questions about embedding video files on a Sophie book page in my (Jane Greer's) class; or debating the linguistic choices of Gloria Anzaldúa and struggling with issues of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use; investigating writing assignments completed by students at the Radcliffe Annex in the 1880s and considering how an audience might respond to words and images in a non-linear composing space. Such questions and conversations unfolded within the context of Women and Rhetoric, a junior-level, writing-intensive (WI) class.

The UMKC catalog designates the course as “A study of the position of women within the traditions of western rhetoric,” but the course description on the syllabus directly addresses students and offers more details:

This writing-intensive course offers you the opportunity to study the position of women within the traditions of western rhetoric and the rhetorical practices of women as they pursue both public and private goals. You will also be developing your own rhetorical skills as you complete a variety of assignments that reflect your engagement with questions about how women in a variety of historical contexts have acquired rhetorical training and shared their expertise with other women; about how women have asserted their right to speak in public forums; and about the ways in which women have authored new discursive forms.

Through their reading assignments, students encountered women rhetors like Fuller and Anzaldúa, as well as Ida B. Wells, Nancy Mairs, Elizabeth Bacon Custer, Nomy Lamm, Anna Julia Cooper, Dorothy Allison, and others, and they probed the gendered geographies of rhetorical settings ranging from the elite women's colleges in the late 19th century to suburban churches, from the Columbian Exposition of 1893 to contemporary clothing boutiques in SoHo.

Rather, though, than simply studying women's rhetorical practices and performances, the students were asked to contribute to the history of women's rhetoric by completing a rhetorical biography of a woman rhetor and by arguing for her inclusion in our histories of rhetoric. The students completed a series of stepping stone assignments—a project proposal, a preliminary analysis essay, an annotated bibliography—to help them complete their research and move through the processes of composing. The students also authored multiple drafts and received feedback both from the teacher and from their peers.

Early in the semester, though, students not only had to choose the woman rhetor whom they wanted to spend the semester studying—they also had to choose whether to compose a traditional research essay (12–15 pages) or to compose a Sophie Book, a multimedia composing platform that invites users to consider how the concept of the book might be reimagined to include visual images, audio tracks, and videos. As the students made this crucial decision, I asked them to think about their goals as learners; their comfort level with the processes of learning new software programs; their strengths as composers—both in terms of traditional writing and with new media; and the ways in which our class would be fitting into their academic lives for the semester and into their lives beyond the classroom.

Condoleezza Rice, Victoria Woodhull, Andrea Dworkin, Pat Summitt, Jane Fonda, Susan Sontag—the eclectic range of women rhetors whom the students opted to study made for interesting class discussions. Our common work was further enriched by the fact that about half the students opted to compose a Sophie book. As

the students shared not only their research findings but also their insights about writing and composing in a variety of modalities, we collectively wondered about how new media technologies complicate the writerly anxieties many students experience; about organizational strategies that students found surprisingly adaptable to both the page and the screen; about the power of sound and images to enrich the affective engagement of both authors and readers; about students' willingness to edit on screen with painstaking care and their lack of interest in editing on the page; and about how composing Sophie books affected students' desires to share their work with family, friends, and wider audiences.

Several students did choose to take their work—both traditional papers and Sophie books—beyond our classroom. At UMKC's English Undergraduate Symposium in April 2009, Oliver Baker presented his work on Isabelle Allende and her self-deprecating rhetorical stance in literary interviews, and he was recognized for presenting the best paper in rhetoric and writing studies. Jonathan Pearson published his study of Hillary Rodham Clinton's

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



early rhetoric in volume 7 (2010) of *Young Scholars in Writing* [which is also featured in this undergraduate special issue in a different form]; and Tara Kloeppel's work on Anna Wintour and the rhetoric of celebrity is featured here in *Kairos*.

Ms. Kloeppel's original Sophie book had an expansive focus, celebrating how Wintour moved with rhetorical ease from the world of fashion into political and philanthropic circles. Visually, the Sophie book attempted to marshal the rhetorical affordances of the design

choices made by many high profile fashion magazines. Black, white, and silver were the dominant colors; the fonts were clean and modern; and the layout was uncluttered and structured by straight, bold lines. The images and videos that were included functioned as illustrations of the key points in Ms. Kloeppel's argument.

Immediately after finishing the Sophie book, Ms. Kloeppel decided to remediate her project into a traditional research paper so that she could submit it to *Young Scholars in Writing*. For Tara and for the YSW editorial board, the written paper fell flat. The argument was over-reaching, and the energy generated by the original Sophie layout and the illustrative images and videos did not come through in the words on the pages. Just at the time, though, that Tara's article was rejected by YSW, the CFP for this special issue of *Kairos* was circulating. Taking the insights she gained from her submission experience with YSW, Tara decided to submit a revision of her original Sophie book to *Kairos* guest editors Shannon Carter and Bump Halbritter.

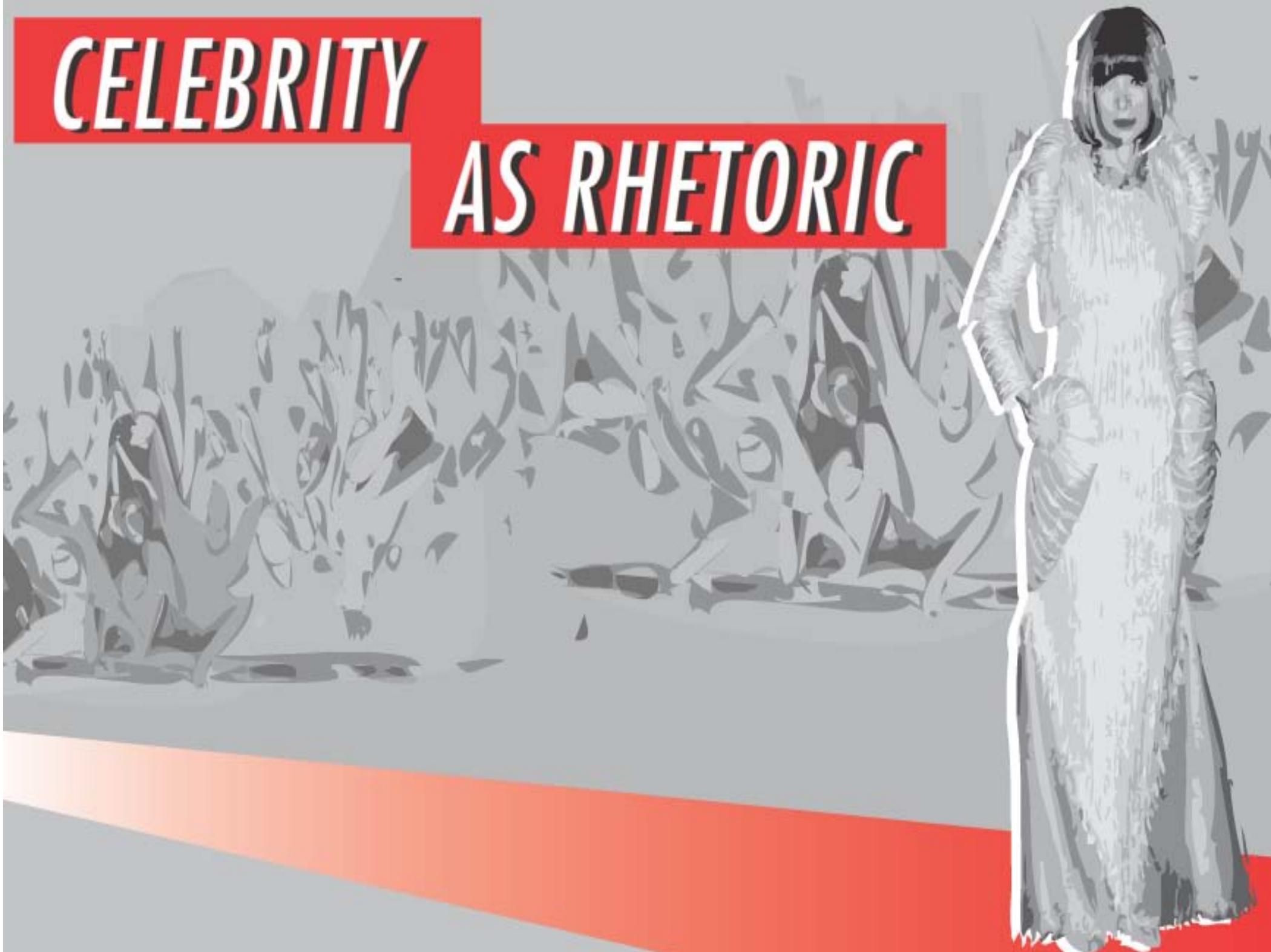
With the diplomatic and probing editorial feedback from Carter, Halbritter, and peer reviewers, Ms. Kloeppel has continued to develop and refine her project. She has narrowed her focus and crafted a more nuanced argument about celebrity as a rhetorical resource. She has also shifted from Sophie book to Adobe Illustrator and InDesign (exported as Flash), redesigning her project as a more complex remix of the design features of fashion magazines, rather than simply an imitation of them. The result is here for *Kairos*' readers to enjoy.

The opening editorial of the November 2010 issue of *Vogue* invited readers to listen in on the conversations among magazine staffers as they prepared for Fashion's Night Out (FNO)—a four hour, open-air runway show at New York's Lincoln Center that attracted an audience of some 1,500 people. The editorial declares FNO "The Greatest Show on Earth." For me, though, the greatest show on Earth happens everyday in composition classrooms across the country, where students like Tara share their journeys of intellectual inquiry with their classmates and their teachers. In asking and answering hard questions about their own processes of writing and about the expanding possibilities for communicating with a range of audiences, students in composition classrooms may not be as glamorous as the models who served vegan red-velvet cupcakes at Juicy Couture, a FNO event described in the *Vogue* editorial. But the fruits of their academic labor provide us all with real intellectual sustenance.

—Jane Greer

CELEBRITY

AS RHETORIC



CELEBRITY AS RHETORIC

According to *The New York Times*, *Vogue* is “the world’s most influential fashion magazine” (n.pag.); its circulation numbers have hovered around one million for the past decade. It is not surprising, then, that the editor-in-chief of said magazine, Anna Wintour, would be highly influential. While her occupation, and the stereotypes associated with running a fashion magazine, may not initially seem to be worthy of scholastic attention, careful study of Wintour’s influence reveals insight into the rhetorical tactics penetrating fashion culture in America, and perhaps more broadly, pop culture in America. As the woman in charge of one of the most widely read magazines in America and ranked #56 on Forbes’s list of the world’s most powerful women, Wintour’s influence is easy to estimate. Nancy Walker argues in *Shaping Our Mothers’ World: American Women’s Magazines*, “When [a] magazine[’s] contents are examined in the context of the historical processes in which they participated, they emerge as dynamic elements of American popular culture, responding to and interacting with events and ideologies that had wide cultural currency” (xi). Walker suggests that magazines are illuminating figures in the sky of cultural history. If the magazines themselves serve as prominent figures in understanding American cultural history, it is only necessary that our attention be expanded to the individuals behind these magazines, in this case, Wintour.

Holding such an esteemed position at *Vogue* entitles Wintour public admiration she would not possess as any other figure in fashion. Editors at magazines such as *Elle*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, and *InStyle* are far from being household names, even in the fashion community, and have yet to be the subject of feature-length films such as *The Devil Wears Prada* and *The September Issue*. It is exposure such as this that has simultaneously caused and resulted in Wintour’s use of celebrity as a rhetorical strategy. By definition, the celebrity “describes a type of value that can be articulated through an individual and celebrated publicly as important and significant,” according to David Marshall in *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (7). In Wintour’s case, *Vogue* serves as the value, and she represents

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the individual through which the magazine can be regarded. By virtue of this relationship, Wintour has maintained her fixture in pop culture by relying heavily on her credibility as derived from *Vogue*. It is the credibility derived from *Vogue* that serves as the foundation for her ethos-based rhetoric. Followers of fashion appreciate, respect, and regard Wintour’s voice as the quintessential one of the couture community. Cathy Horyn of *The New York Times* comments,

To many she is the dominant figure in the fashion world, her influence greater than any contemporary editor and running close to a press baron, because she has sought through her magazine and its spinoffs to set the agenda for an industry and through her civic causes, like the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to influence the cultural life of New York. (n. pag.)

Horyn’s definition of the fashion editor reiterates the notion of Wintour’s rhetorical strategies being based on her personal credibility as derived from *Vogue*. In *Demystifying Celebrity Business*, Guthey, Clark, and Jackson believe the ability to become more prominent than what you represent is essential to maintain celebrity when they state, “Celebrities depend for their status as such on... cultural dynamics, but in the process of celebrification and mediation these various activities are folded into or overshadowed by the personalities and actions of the celebrities themselves” (12). Using this logic, we can understand the cyclical nature of Wintour’s ethos.

Wintour depends on her association with *Vogue* to maintain her celebrity; many individuals and organizations have much to gain from *Vogue* exposure; thus, Wintour becomes the person through which individuals and organizations can reach *Vogue*, and therefore, they celebrate her, thereby undertaking Guthey, Clark and Jackson’s “process of celebrification” (12). This system works in the other direction, as well, meaning Wintour is keenly aware of this symbiotic relationship and takes full advantage of it. Horyn writes that Wintour “has used her influence more purposefully than anyone else: as a dealmaker” (n. pag.). After decades of doing so, she has constructed a level of credibility that presupposes her actual words and actions, this being the core of her current influence. A great deal of this essay will be less concerned with the details of *what* Wintour says, but will instead focus on *why* and *how* it’s deemed important. As a result, I will seek to examine the changing face of ethos-

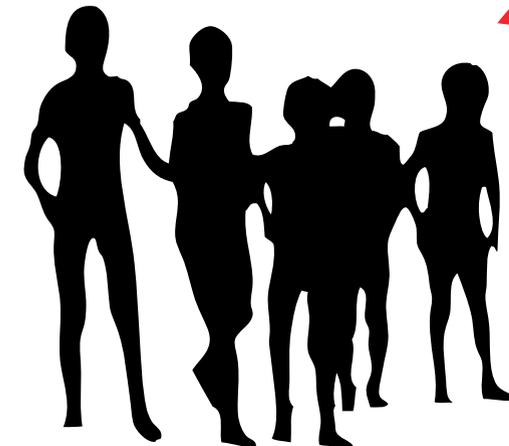
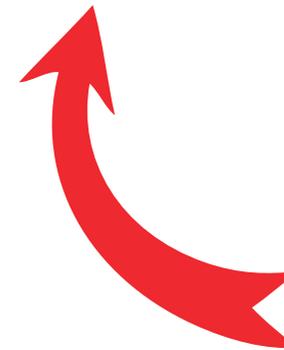
CELEBRITY AS RHETORIC

based rhetoric through Wintour's celebrity. At one point in time, the job of a select number of individuals was to decide whose opinion mattered. However, with the democratization of knowledge thanks to fashion websites, blogs, and other social media outlets, everyone's opinion is thrown into the rink. Therefore, it has become increasingly important to present oneself as knowledgeable, reliable, and most importantly, *worthy* of being listened to.

My essay will look specifically at 2008 as exemplary of Wintour's fashion, philanthropic, and political endeavors in addition to an interview and a piece written by Wintour, in 2006 and 2004, respectively. As the subject of the 2009 documentary *The September Issue*, Wintour has exponentially increased her public presence. However, this essay was written prior to the film's release and will not address either the film or Wintour's press regarding it.



VOGUE



THE LANGUAGE OF FASHION



THE LANGUAGE OF FASHION

Understandably, the scene most affected by Anna Wintour's influence is the fashion industry. In order to understand how Wintour managed to expand her own celebrity outside the pages of *Vogue*, we must first recognize how she did so within its pages. Wintour was employed at several publications including *Harper's Bazaar*, *Viva*, and *New York* before usurping Grace Mirabella and becoming the editor-in-chief of *Vogue*. Once promoted from her creative director position at the magazine, Wintour began establishing *Vogue* as the "it place" to have work published as a result of her recruitment of renowned models, writers, designers, and photographers. Alberta Olvia and Norberto Angeletti describe Wintour's approach in *In Vogue: The Illustrated History of the World's Most Famous Fashion*:

By hiring photographers of the caliber of Annie Leibovitz, Steven Meisel, Arthur Elgort, and Patrick Demarchelier, and by confirming the positions of Helmut Newton, Bruce Weber, Herb Ritts, and the legendary Irving Penn, the Wintour team transformed the pages of *Vogue* into a cavalcade of art, originality, and sophistication, and the magazine itself into not only an inspirational but also an educational entity. (258)

Having already cemented a certain amount of credibility in fashion with her appointment as the editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, Wintour continued to assert her prestige in the fashion realm by surrounding herself and *Vogue* with established and celebrated artists, writers, etc. According to Guthey, Clark, and Jackson, celebrities "function ... as prototypical figures of pure agency, as creative individuals who have power to bring products and possibilities into being through force of their personality, genius, and will" (13). Using this logic, Wintour (the celebrity) brings together fashion leaders (the products and possibilities) in an effort to bring into being the collective, glamorous vision that is *Vogue*.

Wintour's celebrity-centric ideas can be seen throughout her tenure at *Vogue* including her monthly "Letter from the Editor." In the letters, Wintour writes of photographers, *petit mains* (meaning the people who do the behind-the-scenes work in fashion), and designers that she has deemed appropriate to shape the face of fashion. In doing so, she exemplifies what Marshall says is a primary role of celebrity: to "embod[y] the empowerment of the people to shape the public sphere symbolically" (7). In other words, *because* the trusted Wintour features these individuals as the faces of fashion, the public accepts them as such. As if being featured in almost every issue of *Vogue* by way of advertisements, editorials, or fashion layouts were not enough, Wintour uses her "Letter" to position the reader within the high-society circle she and *Vogue* are at the center of. Wintour conveys not only the influence

fashion celebrities have had on her onto the magazine but more importantly the influence she and *Vogue* have had on those celebrities.

It may be useful to compare Wintour's editorial voice to that employed by nineteenth-century American editors, defined by Patricia Okker as the "sisterly editorial voice" in *Our Sister Editors*. According to Okker, the sisterly editorial voice "is characterized by a relative informality and an assumed equal and personal relationship between editor and reader" (23). Wintour, however, transforms the sisterly editorial voice (still commonly used by her fellow fashion editors in their respective letters) into a "celebrity editorial voice." Instead of referring to herself as a peer amongst readers, she positions herself as one of the celebrities cited within her letter; she gazes down upon her readers who look up to her seeking *en-vogue* guidance and assurance.

For example, the October 2008 "Letter from the Editor" celebrates Patrick Demarchelier, one of the most renowned fashion photographers in the world, and the opening of his retrospective show at the Petit Palais in Paris. Wintour writes, "Nobody is more delighted than myself and my colleagues at *Vogue*. Patrick has been shooting for this magazine, on and off, since the eighties. I first met him in the seventies" (114). By referring to the photographer on a first-name basis and pointing out the fact that their relationship blossomed prior to her position at *Vogue*, Wintour legitimizes herself as the celebrity by using Demarchelier's. Wintour also extends this sort of sentiment later in her letter when she addresses some of the most well-established global design houses: "It's a mutual privilege, likewise, for Renee Fleming to wear a series of couture gowns made for her by Christian Lacroix, Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, and John Galliano for Christian Dior, for her appearance at the Metropolitan Opera Gala on September 22" (122). Wintour's words seek to highlight the celebrity web she has woven around *Vogue*; she has orchestrated a celebrity pairing between one of the most famous opera singers and the most famous design houses. In doing so, Wintour overrides the professional aspect of these talents and turns them into mutually celebrity-serving entities. Such writings reveal Wintour's savvy ability to utilize her connections, colleagues, and friends in an effort to connect her personality with the celebrity that radiates around them.

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THE LANGUAGE OF FASHION

Because she has successfully surrounded herself and the magazine with fashion elite, she has personally garnered much power and influence outside the pages of *Vogue*. In keeping with her ethos-based persona, she expects her advice to be heeded with fashion dealings even when not pertaining directly to the magazine. Horyn further reports:



In recent years she has gone beyond the editorial domain and involved herself in the placement of designers at fashion houses. Her efforts fall across a spectrum of involvement, from outright pitching the name of a person she likes to a chief executive, to putting her weight behind a pending decision, to effectively make a marriage. She instigated the deal last year between the men's designer Thom Browne and Brooks Brothers, cultivating in a virtually unknown talent the idea of a larger audience and then urging the company's chief executive, Claudio Del Vecchio, to give him a chance. 'She put a lot of pressure on me,' Mr. Del Vecchio said. 'She'd say, 'I think there's something here. Please keep talking.' This fall, Mr. Browne's designs will be in 90 Brooks Brothers stores — and, presumably, of course, in *Vogue*. (n. pag.)

Horyn perfectly articulates the kind of working relationships Wintour forms with those featured in her magazine. By featuring designers or fashion houses *within* the pages of *Vogue*, Wintour invites herself into a position of power *outside* of the magazine—both personal and professional. Oppenheimer writes, "Anna's philosophy was always to combine pleasure with business" (298). Wintour mixes her personal and professional relationships with fashion insiders in order to extend her fame outside the confines of her position at the magazine.

This establishment as a celebrity figure in fashion is again seen in an interview with Barbara Walters as one of "The 10 Most Fascinating People of 2006." In the interview, Walters asks Wintour questions regarding her personal tastes in fashion and Wintour takes the opportunity to mention a fashion house that has intertwined its business with Wintour both personally and professionally.

Barbara Walters: Anna, you walk down the street and everyone is wearing t-shirts and jeans, so what is fashion?

Wintour: Well, t-shirts and jeans can be just as equally as fashionable as an Oscar de la Renta ball gown.

Walters: Do you think women are still interested in fashion?

Wintour: I think they love fashion.

Instead of simply replying "ball gown," Wintour makes sure to label the ball gown as an "Oscar de la Renta ball gown." Coincidentally, the Oscar de la Renta family is heavily involved in the Council of Fashion Designers of America, one of Wintour's philanthropic endeavors, and has even held the position of president of the council. It is doubtful that Wintour deeming the ball gown as an Oscar de la Renta was purposeful. The sheer mention of the famous designer conjures the idea of celebrity Wintour seeks to attach to her and the magazine. Guthey, Clark, and Jackson write that "Celebrity occurs only when fame becomes a commodity produced and consumed via the commercial media in a manner that generates a particular form of abstract consumer desire" (11). Every name Wintour drops serves a both a commercial and emotional purpose that lends itself to maintaining her celebrity.



POPULAR

PHILANTHROPY

POPULAR PHILANTHROPY

We have already established how Wintour was able to garner celebrity within Vogue and the close-knit fashion community. What separates Wintour from other elite fashion editors and personalities is her ability to extend her power outside of the glossy pages of a magazine and into positions where millions of dollars are on the line. By participating in such organizations as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute Gala (a fundraiser for the Institute) and the Council of Fashion Designers of America (an organization that provides monetary supplements to both established and up-and-coming designers), Wintour attunes herself to the affluent New York society. By doing so, she broadens the horizons of her own celebrity. Because she has already garnered such credibility in her own circle, she is able to rely on it when venturing into other arenas.

Furthermore, hobnobbing with the likes of George Clooney and Julia Roberts, Wintour's selected co-chairs for the 2008 Costume Institute Gala entitled "Superheroes: Fashion and Fantasy," allows her credibility to be unquestioned. Eric Wilson for *The New York Times* writes, "the guest list, reflecting the theme, was unusually diverse, as in Lynda Carter, Donatella Versace and Venus Williams. Mr. Clooney and Ms. Roberts were co-chairman and chairwoman of the event, which meant they were stationed next to Ms. Wintour to greet the 750 or so guests" (n. pag.). As the overseer to the event, Wintour personally created the guest list so her incorporation of such an extensive list of high profile celebrities is curious. Wintour elects not to invite art historians or costume designers who would have knowledge on the Gala's topic, but instead gathers a list of "Who's Who" in Hollywood to publicize the event. The event being more highly publicized means Wintour is more publicized, which in turn legitimizes her credibility in a circle that should not traditionally be in the comfort zone of a fashion editor.

At a press conference prior to the event, Wintour takes an informative session regarding the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute Gala and transforms the address into an opportunity to preview her lucrative, celebrity-clad guest list.

[We wanted the display to] be as diverse, provocative, and exciting as the guest list for the Costume Institutes dinner itself. So, Cat Woman is as welcome as Coco Chanel or the Prince of Wales as the artist formerly known as Prince. And while the fashion world may not be his world, Philip has taken delight in introducing

the treasures and pleasures of the museum to everyone from Johnny Rotten, David Bowie, Puff Daddy, to Vivienne Westwood, Marc Jacobs, and now of course, the great Giorgio Armani.

Wintour's not-so-subtle name-dropping speech lends itself more to a celebrity-clad event promotion as opposed an informative press conference for an event made up of the biggest philanthropists and contributors to the Metropolitan Museum. Wintour isn't shy of her ability to pull the biggest celebrity names to an event virtually unknown to the general public. By bringing Hollywood's biggest celebrities to her event, Wintour creates publicity not only for the Costume Institute Gala but for herself.

Wintour is again seen marketing herself through philanthropic efforts in *Tom Ford*, an illustrated biography of the work of the designer where Wintour's writing serves as the foreword. While Wintour does address the phenomenal career of Ford, she takes extreme liberties in highlighting her personal endeavors with Ford, particularly his participation in one of the matters closest to Wintour's heart.

Then, in 2003, he agreed to act as my co-chairman for the Metropolitan Museum of Arts Costume Institute Gala. Over the course of many months, I began to understand something of his methods and magic. I don't believe I have ever worked with anyone with a greater passion for detail or a clearer vision of his aesthetic goals.... As someone disposed to my own brand of perfectionism, it was an unfamiliar experience to be outdone by a man whose persistence and exactitude puts my own to shame (13).

In lieu of endlessly praising Ford's genius, she turns a majority of her praises around in ways to make herself appear more credible. In lauding Ford's "passion for detail and "vision of aesthetic goals," Wintour praises her own ability to achieve such "exactitude." Her self-deprecating, second-place words



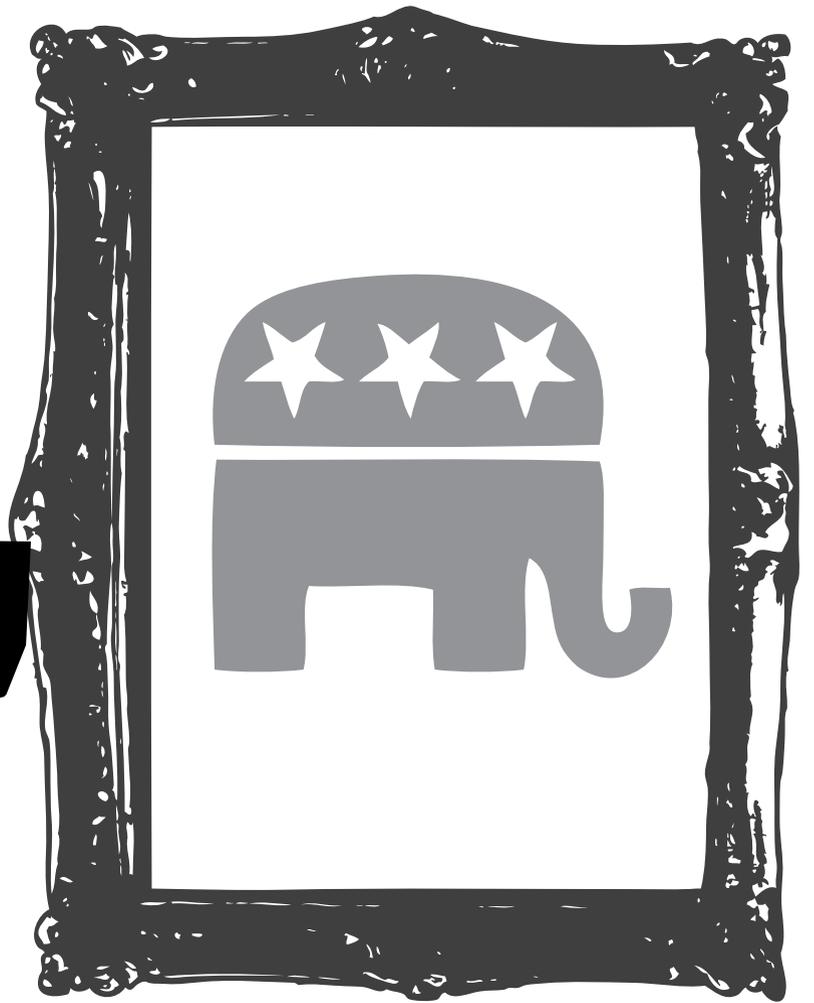
POPULAR PHILANTHROPY



serve the purpose of highlighting her strengths while attempting to not lose sight of the intended focus of the article.

However, it is doubtful that Ford was too deeply upset for Wintour's self-promoting foreword in his book. Only four years later, Ford would learn firsthand the benefits of sharing the celebrity limelight with Wintour. Wintour's other philanthropic interest, the Council of Fashion Designers of America, named Tom Ford the 2008 Menswear Designer of the Year. When deciding on a winner, the CFDA takes into account such considerations as runway shows, global sales, and advertising placements in magazines such as *Vogue*. While Wintour is not a voting member, she is known to highly influence those voting on the prestigious awards.

Wintour's celebrity-centric philanthropic involvement exemplifies the reciprocal relationships that develop as a result of her rhetorical efforts. Wintour's limited public rhetoric lends credibility to the notion that much of Wintour's celebrity is garnered through associating with other individuals and organizations. By limiting the amount of face time she allows the public, Wintour is able to capitalize on her celebrity persona, handling her own agenda. Wintour carefully selects such glamorous events as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute Gala and the Council of Fashion Designers of America because she realizes the potential they have for promoting the matters of utmost importance: maintaining the celebrity of *Vogue*, which she does through her position as celebrated/celebrity editor.



POLITICS

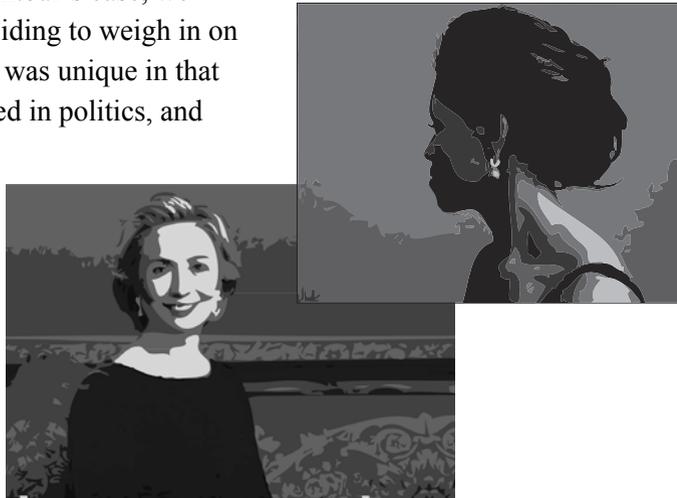
en VOGUE

Wintour positions herself as a credible source in fashion and philanthropic societies, but she also does so in an arena typically opposed to the ideals promoted by *Vogue*: politics. Employing her “Letter from the Editor,” she creates a sense of credibility on a subject not usually seen under the jurisdiction of a fashion editor. In this case, Wintour uses her fashion magazine as a platform for the United States presidential election. Wintour begins her November 2008 “Letter from the Editor” with an acknowledgment of Sarah Palin as John McCain’s influential running mate, and the surreal involvement *Vogue* played in the public becoming more informed about Palin.

It turned out that Rebecca Johnson’s profile of the Alaska governor in our February issue was one of the very few sources of meaningful information about this extraordinary newcomer to the political scene. Of course, when we published the story last winter, we had no inkling – why should we? – this gubernatorial novice would become such a national figure. (76)

Above is one of the few cases when Wintour actually backhands *Vogue*. By stating that *Vogue*, a fashion magazine, was one of the only sources for information regarding a presidential candidate, she instantly discredits Palin. She continues to discredit Palin by saying *Vogue* had no idea the monumental attention Palin would soon obtain: “Why should we?” (76). Wintour, clearly in support of the Democratic Party, then quickly transitions to the feature of her letter. Marshall writes, “The celebrity category also permits looking at the meaning of the politician, or identifying his or her ‘affective function’ in the organization of interests and issues” (204). In Wintour’s case, we have to examine her reasons for deciding to weigh in on the presidential race. The 2008 race was unique in that it became fashionable to be interested in politics, and specifically the Democratic Party.

In the November 2008 issue of *Vogue*, Wintour encouraged a full spread on the “remarkable” women of the Biden family (77). Even the first page of Wintour’s “Letter from the Editor” is overcome with a portrait of the Biden women that fills more than



half of the page. Palin, however, is given the lower right-hand corner. Wintour continues her accolades for the Democratic Party in the second half of her letter. The layout is dominated by photographs of Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton, and a “Vote for Hope” Obama t-shirt. Meanwhile, the Republican Party is given a quick shout-out courtesy of two small pictures of Roberta and Cindy McCain and a short mention in a paragraph that reads like an afterthought.

It turns out that [Senator Biden] is at the center of a remarkable circle of educated, independent, and civic-minded women. This has been a women-centric election year. In our pages we have featured Michelle Obama and Obama senior advisor Valerie Jarrett (Democrats) and Cindy and Roberta McCain (Republicans). But a transcendent figure has been Hillary Clinton. She has made an important intervention in the lives of all American women, not simply with her drive and catalyzing energy, but by keeping issues of special concern to us... at the forefront of political thinking. (80)

Wintour takes time to personally expound on the strengths of the Biden women and Clinton, but only briefly mentions to the two McCain women. Paralleling the discussion of Wintour’s favored female politicians are interjections of the creative writers and photographers that brought these women to *Vogue*. “When Arthur Elgort and Tonne Goodman’s photograph of four generations of Biden women came into the office we were frankly stunned” (80). In addition to marketing her political affiliations, she represents the finest work of *Vogue*’s staff. The addition of the mention of the photographers within the feature did little to contribute to the meaning of the article. Such bibliographic information could have easily been contained in the footnotes instead of brought to the forefront of the article. However, in keeping with Wintour’s celebrity-focused rhetoric, she insists on bringing as many well-known names to the article as possible.

Wintour is such the savvy rhetorician that she not only furthers the campaign goals of her favored political candidates but also positions herself as a credible source simply because those candidates have been featured in *Vogue*. Marshall asserts, “The celebrity system provides... a soapbox, for ideas and arguments about how it is possible for an individual to take action, to stand out from the crowd, and to make a difference...” (205). Wintour’s “Letter from the Editor” does not simply comment on the magazine as a whole, but serves as a testament to the magnetic powers of Wintour to attract the best and the brightest celebrities whether they be employees or the future Secretary of State.

WHY DOES CELEBRITY MATTER?



CONCLUSION

Because of Wintour's tendency to turn every public address into a statement that seeks to further her own celebrity, she has successfully infiltrated three of the most elite groups in the New York City social scene. Wintour understands the avenues supplied by using celebrity to establish credibility. By using her reputation as a celebrity, Wintour enters public spheres that wouldn't otherwise be open to her. Wintour successfully employs an ethos-based rhetoric because she has realized the power within not only her name and position, but the reputations of other reputable individuals. As a result of Wintour's ability to manipulate situations to her benefit, she has become a staple in New York's fashion, philanthropic, and political scenes. In return for her unwavering devotion to her elite circle, they return the favor by pledging an allegiance to Wintour as well as *Vogue*.

But what does all this influence mean? First, Wintour's influence outside the pages of *Vogue* means that she is virtually irreplaceable to the magazine. Without the power and networking abilities associated with Wintour's credibility, *Vogue* would no longer have the imperial quality it now sustains. If CondeNast ever attempted to remove an unwilling Wintour from *Vogue*, the consequences would be dire. With her departure from the magazine, Wintour would take the most established designers and creative photographers, lucrative philanthropists, and potentially the Democratic Party. The connections Wintour has established are a direct result of her ability to market any person (herself included), organization, or issue coolly and subliminally.

As a result of Wintour's rhetorical capabilities, she has outgrown the title of editor-in-chief of *Vogue*; she has become a celebrity in her own right. There is no need to define her as such just as there is no need to define Julia Roberts as actress. Wintour's success as a result of her rhetorical maneuvers reflects a shift in our culture. She has risen to such an esteemed position in pop culture due in large part to her ability to align herself with certain people and organizations. Anna Wintour has rewritten the rules of rhetoric herself. It's not what you say. It's not even how you say it. Perhaps it is who you say it with that matters most in our celebrity-obsessed culture.

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