

# FEMINIZATION IN THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF FRENCH JOURNALISM: FROM *LA FRONDE* TO *F MAGAZINE*, OR HOW JOURNALISM BECAME A “WOMAN’S JOB”

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The model of French-style journalism has historically been built around two figures: that of the writer and that of the politician. This model has also historically been built on male values. I will try to show in this article the effects of feminization on the very definition of journalism. To do so, I have chosen to observe three different moments in the history of journalism that are important steps in the process of journalistic professionalization. I have chosen to “reread” three key moments in journalistic history—the turn of the twentieth century, the liberation from German occupation in 1944, and the end of the 1970s—in the light of editorial projects carried out by women and seeking to reconcile feminist or women’s interests and professional excellence. These three projects—*La Fronde* in 1897, *Elle* in 1945, *F Magazine* and *Histoires d’Elles* in the late 1970s—show how new entrants into a professional group succeed in imposing values in line with their trajectories and dispositions.

**Keywords:** Journalistic Professionalism; Feminization; Female Press; Feminist Press

The French model of journalism historically emerged as different from American journalism, built around commercial—or capitalist—logics of competition, because it was constructed around two figures: the writer and the politician (Ferenczi 1993). This model of a “journalism of ideas” (Delporte 1999), inherited in part from the French Revolution (Lemieux 1992), serving democracy and the public interest and protected from economic interests, has, however, been regularly challenged over the years as journalism became a profession. This was due to the effect of changes in the makeup and working conditions of the job. What journalism should be, what principles underlie the professional authority of those whose job it is, have been hot topics of discussion for more than a century, during which the boundaries of the profession

have never been fully established. Although the profession is based on certain major principles, it is their vagueness that still enables people of highly diverse characteristics and working practices to exist as a professional group (Ruellan 1993).

Major events in the history of the French press, such as the passing of the 1881 act on freedom of the press, the 1935 act on journalists' professional status, the liberation from German occupation in 1944, and May 1968, were all accompanied by vigorous debate about what journalism should be. These critical periods revealed the tensions between a model concerned with the public interest—a democratic tendency—and one more affected by market considerations—a commercial tendency. The controversies about the profession's values drew their intensity from the fact that these moments of crisis were also times of radical structural change within the profession itself. As the number and educational level of journalists increased, they gradually became more independent. They weakened their organic links with the world of politics but did not break the social function of commitment to the public interest that to some extent founded their professional legitimacy (Lévêque and Ruellan 2010). As economic constraints grew and new technologies arrived, they still remained collectively determined to defend the civic principles that made up their professional identity. Consequently they introduced new practices and formats to demonstrate their independence.

Most journalists were men, usually bourgeois and comfortably well-off, and for over a century the profession constructed itself along "alpha male" principles that excluded women and all they represented. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whether in literature and fictional accounts of the trade or in its symbolic personalities, the identity of journalists was associated with male characters, who were often rather reckless and shady (Pierre Giffard's *Le Sieur de Va-Partout*,<sup>1</sup> Gaston Leroux's hero Rouletabille), ready to risk their lives for a story (Albert Londres died in the Indian Ocean on his way back from a mission in 1932), ambitious, sexually attractive, and moving in high society (Guy de Maupassant's *Bel Ami*). At the end of the Second World War, it was the journalist in the Resistance who had risked his life in the Maquis, who emerged as politically committed and moving in the world of the powerful and who in the 1970s still influenced the professional ideal.

These values did indeed correspond to those of the men who occupied the influential leading positions in a world of journalism that had not yet been overtaken by the profession's slow feminization. Sociologist Rémi Rieffel estimates that in "1960, the first date for which figures are available, women were 14.3% of all journalists. For fifteen years this proportion slowly grew from just under 15% to just under 20%, and then accelerated: women passed 20% in 1975, 30% in 1987 and 39% in 2000. This means that the percentage nearly doubled in the 25 years from 1985 to 2000, with a sharp upturn in 1981–1990 (+51%) and slower progress in 1990–1999 (+27.3%)"

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Giffard is seen as one of the forerunners of "modern" journalism. His book *Le Sieur de Va-Partout: Memories of a reporter* (1880) marked as it were the social recognition of a genre of journalism based on "ubiquity, audacity and curiosity, investigation and courageous revelations, initiative and a grasp of sociology" (Durand 2011:1012), all qualities assumed to be necessarily lacking in the women of that period.

(2003:56). This rise did not, however, bring about any great change in the social division of labor. In editorial offices, as elsewhere, glass ceilings and glass compartments restricted women to certain types of press, certain functions, and certain pages. Their increase in numbers, therefore, did not mean that the job was “feminized” in the sense of a radical change in its dominant values.

Although journalism remained a man’s job, some women, ignored in or excluded from its legitimate areas, did attempt to “break into” the profession. They summoned up their resources, which they drew from their working experience and biography, both considered to be “illegitimate” or indeed stigmatizing and bound up with their “femininity” and feminism. In this way they helped to shift the profession’s own values. An analysis of the process by which journalism became more professional from the angle of its feminization is thus an excellent way of addressing some extreme cases and investigating the reshaping of the French press and the tensions within the profession at various points in its history.

The feminization of a job usually begins in the least legitimate parts of a profession (Perrot 1987) and involves those activities that comply with an alleged female nature (Boigeol 1996). Journalism is no exception (Damian and Saitta 2011). Historically women entered either via women’s magazines (Blandin and Eck 2010) or “women’s” pages in the mainstream press dealing with childcare and welfare topics or in “niche” journalism taking up female stereotypes only to turn them around. And then there are the editorial projects launched by women at times in the history of a press that largely excluded them from the profession, projects that while complying with the trade’s standards were intended to alter its principles of excellence.

I analyze the effects of the feminization of journalism as a profession as indicators of contemporary battles around the definition of that profession in order to see more clearly what women did to journalism. My hypothesis is that women’s arrival in journalism occurred at the same time as a redefinition of the boundaries of the profession and a subversion of its values via the prominent use of the resources these women used to enter it. To that end I selected three points in the history of French journalism that, for all their differences, mark stages in that history, times when the profession’s boundaries were being questioned and debated. I reexamine these three points—the turn of the twentieth century, the Liberation, and the late 1970s—by focusing on editorial projects put forward by women who sought to reconcile female or feminist interests with professional excellence. The first period was chosen because it marks a major economic turning point in the organization of the French press, making possible the beginnings of professionalization; it comprises Marguerite Durand and Séverine’s creation of *La Fronde* newspaper in 1897, showing how women used the supposed stigmas of their femininity as arguments to enable them to enter a professional area from which they were otherwise excluded. The second includes the launch of *Elle* magazine, an event revealing the tensions that had started with the Liberation between a triumphant “journalism of ideas” (inherited from the Resistance movement during the German occupation) and the rapid commercialization of the French press occurring at that time. The third period, the late 1970s, is analyzed via the creation and commercial failure of the feminist *F Magazine* and *His-*

*toires d'Elles*, a moment when commercial and industrial considerations pulled ahead of the civic considerations and “political” project embodied by the two publications. Their literary, committed journalists’ careers helped defend a journalistic model as only gender-outsiders could in the face of the economic standardization operating in the media.

On the basis of these three examples I show how the subversive acts of women’s creation of these publications combined with structural changes in journalism. I reveal via the stories of these women how a French style of journalistic excellence, both literary and politically committed, gradually became dominant (and institutionalized).

For each publication under study, I adopted two approaches. One focuses on published and unpublished contemporary documents to identify the editorial purpose behind these publications. For *La Fronde* and *Histoires d'Elles* these are to be found in the archives preserved at the Marguerite Durand Library in Paris (Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand, BMD). For *Elle* and *F Magazine* I had to work solely with their published content, which I analyzed (all the issues of *F Magazine* [1978–1982] and issues of *Elle* for 1945–1970). The other approach was to collate biographical data (from biographies, autobiographies, encyclopedias, press articles) on the female journalists who launched these publications, in order to understand how these “innovative” projects to explicitly subvert the ground rules of journalism fitted into specific lives and careers.

### **LA FRONDE: EXPLOITING STIGMAS AND USING FEMININITY TO SERVE JOURNALISTIC INDEPENDENCE**

“A journalist’s first merit is to be curious; their duty is to be talkative. Yet were not the very men who doubted *La Fronde*’s success those who told anyone prepared to listen that women’s two worst faults are curiosity and talkativeness? Faults in private life? Perhaps. At all events, they are qualities if one’s profession is to inform one’s contemporaries,” wrote André Tesser, adviser to the Minister of Finance in *L’Actualité française* (BMD archive, n.d.) when the launch of *La Fronde*, Durand’s daily newspaper “produced and edited by women,” was announced in 1897. His joke reveals the constraints affecting women who at the turn of the century intended to pursue journalism within a professional community that largely excluded them. They would have to prove that they conformed to professional practices while at the same time demonstrating how they were different. In this way they helped to change the journalistic ground rules to make them conform to what these women were and to enable them to use their resources, namely their political commitment and femininity—the only weapons they had to establish themselves in that community.

Within a rapidly changing profession, in which it was now possible to live off journalism and for journalism, new arrivals were attempting to introduce practices (such as reporting) and concepts of the profession (based on greater independence from politics and from capitalist motivations seen as increasingly invasive) that marked a sharp difference from earlier ones. Journalists began to organize and dis-

cuss their status in “general interest” structures like the *Syndicat général des journalistes professionnels* (Lévêque 2000; Ruellan 2014). The profession was organizing and in this period saw major advances: in 1918 journalists adopted a code of professional ethics, and in 1935 the French parliament passed an act defining their professional status (Ruellan 2011). Independence became the rallying cry of a profession that was far from cutting its ties with politics and remained heavily dependent on the capitalist economy (Chupin, Hubé, and Kaciaf 2012).

It was against this background that *La Fronde* was founded in 1897. The paper defined itself as being both committed to all types of feminism and a commercial product. Its launch made great use of the advertising methods of the age: a poster by a well-known illustrator, Hélène Dufau, was designed and distributed for the launch and presents were offered to future subscribers (sewing machines, charcoal portraits, etc.) (Lenoble 2004). Women, and especially primary school teachers, were the target audience of the newspaper marketing and advertising campaigns. However, the paper was above all a politically committed publication taking part in the feminist struggles of the period, particularly women’s access to citizenship rights, the professions (Rennes 2007), and the trade union membership of women typesetters (who set up the newspaper) (Chaignaud 2009).

*La Fronde’s* aim was thus a dual one: professional, by offering the public a newspaper “just like the others,”<sup>2</sup> and feminist, by working for all types of feminism (Kleiman and Rochefort 1989; Riot-Sarcey 2002), backed by women who would devote their professionalism and femininity to serving the paper. At a time when the journalistic profession was still largely closed to women (their proportion was estimated at less than 2 percent), the dominant model was male journalism in the interests of the powerful, and excellence was measured by the writers’ social capital, Marguerite Durand and Séverine led *La Fronde’s* journalists to become recognized writers on the side of the marginal opposition: first Boulangism and Dreyfusism<sup>3</sup> and then feminism. Durand was the wife of Georges Laguerre, “a left-wing Boulangist MP,” and moved at first in Boulangist circles. Before founding *La Fronde* she worked at *La Presse* and *Le Figaro*, where by her own mythical account she converted to feminism (Lévêque 2010). At *La Presse* she met Séverine, who had a long experience in journalism and politics, since between 1883 and 1885 she had worked and coedited *Le Cri du Peuple* with Jules Vallès, a noted Communard, and was herself also an opponent of the dominant political order. In addition to their political and professional careers, both women were bourgeois and praised for their beauty and talent. Séverine was painted

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<sup>2</sup> Evidence of recognition, *La Fronde* was called by its opponents “*Le Temps* in petticoats” (Rabaud 1996); *Le Temps* was one of the best-known newspapers of the period, serious, well informed, and set apart in format from the *petits journaux* that thrived on scandal and anecdote (Kalifa 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Boulangism and Dreyfusism were late nineteenth-century political movements. The first, taking its name from the French general Georges Ernest Boulanger (1837–1991), threatened the institutions of the Third Republic. The second movement, taking its name from the wrongly convicted French-Jewish military officer Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), aimed to consolidate French republican institutions.

by Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Durand acted at the Comédie Française before meeting Laguerre. She was noted for her beauty (especially in the obituaries written by her colleagues),<sup>4</sup> and her “entirely feminine” charm was considered to be a factor in the newspaper’s success. These were not “blue stockings”—the contemptuous term for intellectual women (Bard 1999)—who were delivering the feminist message, but pretty women invited to receptions, able to turn on the charm to gain their ends, whether to get news or advance the cause of women.

In founding *La Fronde*, Durand’s intention was to argue the cause of women and also that of journalism. Although it was her journalistic experience that allowed her to become one of the first female members of the Paris journalists’ association (Martin 1986), she was going, as she wrote herself, to put her “blonde locks” at the service of feminism and journalism. “When I founded *La Fronde*, it was almost impossible for women to find a place in the daily press.... Some women wrote magazine articles, novels, book reviews, but no newspaper would give a woman a byline for the politics, criticism, and reporting pages. I wanted to prove, and I succeeded, that the female brain is not incapable of work that requires intellectual liveliness, a vivid style and often some depth of knowledge.”<sup>5</sup>

Marguerite Durand was born in 1864, the illegitimate daughter of Anne Caroline Durand, an enlightened bourgeois woman who brought her up on her own. She attended a Catholic college and entered the Conservatoire at the age of 15. In 1881 she was admitted to the Comédie Française. In 1888 she married Laguerre and supported Boulangism. She began at that time to work for newspapers, including *Le Figaro*, where in 1896 she covered a feminist conference that determined her commitment to that cause. *Le Figaro* was a best-selling newspaper then firmly on the Dreyfus side. In 1897 she founded *La Fronde*, which appeared daily until 1903. She then took part in a number of journalistic ventures,<sup>6</sup> in particular *L’Action*, an anticlerical socialist daily. She also agitated and worked for the cause of women’s right to vote and equality at work, stood for election in 1913, and joined the Republican-Socialist Party after the First World War. She then continued her journalistic and political activities. In 1931 she bequeathed her archives on the history of feminism to, and became director of, what would later be called the Marguerite Durand Library. She died in 1936 (Coquart 2010; Dizier-Metz 1992; Rabaud 1996).

Séverine (Caroline Rémy de Guebhard) was born in 1855 to a modest family. Married against her will, she bore one son and then a second one with another partner. She became the colleague of Jules Vallès at *Le Cri du Peuple* in 1879. After he died she worked on various newspapers and when *La Fronde* was founded became one of its

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<sup>4</sup> In the *La Française* obituary from January 1936, Marguerite Durand is described as follows: “Blonde, with a radiant white complexion, most tastefully dressed, with manners based on origins in the *haute bourgeoisie*, an aristocratic boarding-school education and experience in high society, affable with enough discretion to have an easy air of authority, she displayed an entirely feminine charm without foolish coyness” (BMD archive).

<sup>5</sup> Conversation with Marguerite Durand, recorded in an unsigned unreferenced article (BMD archive, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> For the history of *Le Figaro*’s various political about-turns, see Blandin (2007).

main feature writers. She then took up political militancy (on the Dreyfus side) and feminism (particularly for women's right to vote). She was a pacifist during the First World War, joined the SFIO (a socialist political party affiliated to the Second International) and then the Communist Party. She died in 1929. She is believed to have been one of the very few women to have earned her living entirely from writing (Le Garrec 2009).

As Mary Louise Roberts (1997) points out, the mere fact that women like Séverine and Marguerite Durand claimed to be doing journalism was a subversive act, because this "forced" them to occupy public space and yet not practice the only profession that entitled women to do so at the time—prostitution. Marguerite Durand and Séverine both fought for the recognition of female journalists' practical interests (for example, access to official places from which women were excluded, such as the Chamber of Deputies, Paris City Council meetings, and the Stock Exchange) and also argued for a concept of journalism that broke with the generally accepted view of desk-bound feature-writer journalism, commenting on events rather than collecting information. It was precisely because they were feminists and emancipated bourgeois women that they sought to break down the journalistic routines of the period and turn away from the dominant model of journalism—that of men well integrated into society, close to the powers that be, who dominated the world of journalists at that time. In one of her articles Séverine argued for this "journalism on two feet, up-to-date, alert, responding to events as they happen." It was thus their real or constructed female qualities that enabled them to press for an alternative to the dominant model, an inspired and compassionate journalism that found expression in the coverage *La Fronde's* women reporters gave Alfred Dreyfus's trial in Rennes (Cosnier 1997). In this way, female identity, at least as it was constructed at that point in history, became an effective way of subverting professional values and an argument for shifting journalistic practice towards greater independence and political commitment (Muhlmann 2004). At a time when it was still the "feature-writing gentlemen," close to and cronies with the powerful, who dominated journalism, *La Fronde's* journalists were necessarily independent since they were officially excluded from the corridors of power, and it was this exclusion that enabled them to adopt and advance new formats like investigative reporting and a new ethics such as the defense of the weakest, the dominated groups, workers, women whose lot and struggles they to some extent shared and for whom they intended to be the spokeswomen. Marguerite Durand, Séverine, and the other writers at *La Fronde* would exploit the stigma of femininity to storm into the world of new journalism and adapt its shape to their own qualities. "Sensitivity," "common sense," "the fact that women know nothing of war" were brought into one article after another as a justification for doing journalism differently (Lévêque 2009). The forceful, or brilliant, achievement of *La Fronde's* writers was that they succeeded in innovating, inventing new ways of doing journalism while keeping this purpose within the journalistic thinking of the period, when other novices (such as working-class journalists) were also seeking to subvert established principles (Lévêque 2000). This transgression of the rules occurred, however, in compliance with respect for the social order—not least the gendered social or-

der—because it was by exploiting their identity as women, indeed, as the first female members of the professions, their feminine nature (Rennes 2007), that they were able to impose new professional ground rules and take it upon themselves to enter areas that were “forbidden” to them, at the risk that their gambit would cause their opponents to use arguments about their nature in order to exclude them from the game.

Years later, during another time, the Liberation, when the ground rules of journalism were being redefined, this ambivalent strategy of transgression within conformity would also be adopted by the journalists who founded *Elle*.

### **ELLE: BETWEEN TRIVIALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM, OR HOW TO PUT FEMININITY AT THE SERVICE OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST AND ... JOURNALISM**

As a symbol of the commercial success of the female press, *Elle* magazine has long attracted criticism. It has been accused of concentrating all the worst aspects of the genre, as a symbol of male domination, patriarchy, and triumphant capitalism (Dardigna 1978). When it was founded in 1945, the debate about reforming journalism was at its height: the aim was to break away from the old model of journalism corrupted by moneyed interests, a journalism of collaborators, and to set up “a journalism of ideas” (Delporte 1999) that would draw its legitimacy from its competence, moral mission, courage (displayed during the physical hardships of war and membership in Resistance networks), as embodied most especially in the male journalists on the staff of *France-Soir* who shared with *Elle* journalists the same premises in Rue Réaumur. This was the background to the appearance on November 21, 1945, of the first issue of *Elle*, which, while apparently distant from the new model of excellence, in fact came close to it in many ways. From the start the magazine was in color (contrasting with the conventionally male austerity of the French press of the day) but ran no advertisements (Grandpierre 2012), the sign of a desire to escape the capitalist reasoning considered to have led to the collaborating excesses of the press during the war (as with *Marie Claire*, founded in 1937, suspended in 1942, only reappearing in 1954). The magazine was intended to be discerning and attractive in form (with American characteristics its founder thought implied quality) and sought at the same time to take part in France’s postwar revival by giving women the advice that would enable them to play a major role, recommending thrift and encouraging them to involve themselves more in the life of society. So it combined practical and feminine topics (fashion, beauty, horoscopes, cooking) and more feminist ones—such as sex education and abortion—with a view to informing women of their rights and leading them towards greater liberty and equality. Here female emancipation should serve the public interest and maintain the gendered differences that justified sales to the magazine’s specific audience, young women entering work and higher education, with increasing disposable income (Battagliola 2008). In late 1960s–early 1970s, faced with severe competition from *Marie Claire* in this field, the magazine more directly supported the main feminist causes to do with work, politics, and sexuality. Even if *Elle* was widely criticized by the feminist organizations of the period



(Picq 1983) as a vehicle of male domination and capitalism, it has retained throughout a certain feminist “cement” that links its foundation to its current identity.<sup>7</sup>

The editorial purpose of *Elle*, as of women’s magazines in general, is thus ambivalent in that it seeks both to advance the cause of a readership whose living conditions (studies, employment, etc.) make them more sensitive to the question of equality and, at the same time, to maintain a traditional gendered order that underpins the economic model to which it owes its survival (based, bluntly, on selling advertising for products—cosmetics, fashion, cooking, etc.—exclusively designed to maintain women in the “unchanging” social roles of mother, wife, homemaker, and lover). Similarly, this ambivalence can be seen both in the editorial purpose stated by its journalists and in the content, layout, and format of the articles they conceive and present to their readers.

Within a profession that remained largely closed to them<sup>8</sup> (Gimbert 2010), the journalists at *Elle* invented a specific style reconciling the need to follow the dominant civic model (helping the nation recover from war and promoting the equality recently enshrined in the French constitution, for example) and the need to stand out in an increasingly competitive press market by presenting an attractive and financially solvent product. This was a journalistic style that brought together previously contradictory requirements, embodying both the male values of competence and rigor the political papers of that time required and the “wholly feminine” triviality and superficiality adopted by the magazine’s leading writers. Françoise Giroud (editor in 1946–1953) was representative of the *Elle* tone, addressing both male and female readers and ironically describing her own position as a woman and professional journalist (Mündschau 2010). Using the privilege of the dominated (Neveu 2000), *Elle*’s journalists occupied a typically female segment of the market, wielding stereotypes and exploiting the stigma so as to stand out in a journalist community that was male, serious, and still mostly inaccessible to them. By adopting and flaunting a more subjective stance in a field where objectivity, competence, seriousness, and rigor were required, the magazine became the standard-bearer for a behavior that complied with these women’s vision of the world. Hélène Gordon-Lazareff, co-founder nicknamed the Czarina (Dubois-Jallais 1984) because of the control she exercised over the staff, was emblematic of this stance. She possessed considerable social capital from her bourgeois origins (and her marriage to Pierre Lazareff, then director of *France-Soir*, one of the leading French newspapers) and a journalistic capital that bestowed legitimacy. Within the Lazareff couple, the journalistic qualities ascribed to each spouse are enough to reveal the gendered expectations in journalism. In their biographies/hagiographies, it is always Pierre’s rigor, seriousness, authority, hard work, and loyalty that are mentioned, whereas Hélène is always

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<sup>7</sup> The 70th anniversary issue on December 15, 2015, for example, devoted a feature to sexual liberation—“My body, my rights. Women and their bodies, seventy years of conquest that have marked the pages of our magazine”—and called on readers to continue the feminist struggle: an article “Feminism, our battle continues!” describes the nine goals yet to be achieved.

<sup>8</sup> There is no data on the proportion of female journalists in the immediate postwar period. Christophe Gimbert (2010) estimates on the basis of the directory published by the professional card commission in 1954 that women at that time represented 14 percent of all journalists.

presented as casual, flighty, absent-minded, “rather giddy” (*fofolle*), and imaginative—stereotypes that justified their talents and defined the gender-compliant “models” of journalistic excellence, male and female, embodied by the two of them.

Yet Hélène Lazareff was not short of the resources needed to succeed in journalism, such as her experience on the ground during her study trips as an ethnologist. Born into the Russian *haute bourgeoisie*, in 1919 Hélène Gordon fled to Paris after the Bolshevik Revolution. She married at the age of 18, bore a daughter Michèle in 1930, studied literature and ethnology, and joined a research mission led by Marcel Griaule to study the Dogon people of Mali. On her return, she went to see Pierre Lazareff, then director of *Paris-Soir*, to offer him a written account of her journey. In 1936 she moved in with him and began to work on *Marie Claire* and *Paris-Soir*. In 1939 they married and were forced by the war to leave France. They settled in the United States, where Hélène Gordon-Lazareff continued her journalistic work for *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, magazines that would later inspire her for *Elle*. On their return to France, Pierre Lazareff, who had headed the French section of the Office of War Information, became director of *France-Soir*. Hélène housed her new magazine in the Rue Réaumur premises of her husband's daily (Dubois-Jallais 1984).

However, she practiced a “salon” journalism close to the world of politics which she frequented, using her supposedly “natural” bourgeois qualities by inviting to their Louveciennes home personalities of politics and the arts (Delassein 2009). Her social capital, beauty, flirtatiousness, and “irresistible charm” (again as a bourgeois woman) were generally recognized, enabling her to advance in the world of journalism, marking out a female journalism—in particular a female political journalism—later praised for its excellence (Kaciaf 2013).<sup>9</sup>

The professional, political, and personal trajectory of Françoise Giroud, the other great personality of the magazine, also reveals this tension between professionalism and political commitment in which extravagance, charm, and private life became resources she and others could use to explain her success (Adler 2011; Giroud 2001; Ockrent 2003). As a personality in journalism recognized both for her experience at *Elle* and for her role in founding *L'Express*, her clear political leanings took her into government. Although she had recommended voting for François Mitterrand, the candidate of the Left, in the 1974 presidential election, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the winner, appointed her first Secretary of State for Women's Affairs (July 1974–August 1976) and then Secretary of State for Culture until March 1977. In the accounts that remain of her (which she helped to construct) she often comes across as a courageous daughter, abandoned by her father, who had to gain her independence by working while still young, a loving woman often unhappy in love (with Marc Allégret, a famous filmmaker, or Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, a politician and an influent press director), and a mother heartbroken by her son's death (in 1972), all images she was not reluctant to use (indirectly) in the articles in which she fiercely argued for women's financial independence through work.

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<sup>9</sup> Nicolas Kaciaf (2013) analyzes how at *L'Express* a female political journalism was forged by women (such as Catherine Nay, Michèle Cotta, and Irène Allier) who were perfectly prepared to use their attractiveness to get a scoop.

Françoise Giroud was born into a distressed bourgeois family and had to leave school at the age of 14. Through family connections she began a career before the Second World War as film continuity supervisor. She took a modest part (so she wrote) in the Resistance and was arrested and released by the Gestapo. After the Liberation she was hired by *Elle* and also worked for many other publications. In 1953, with Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, she founded *L'Express* and was its director until 1974. She then began a ministerial career, as secretary of state for women's rights (1974) and then for culture (1977). She left politics in 1979 and returned to journalism. She wrote a number of mainly autobiographical novels in which she described her unhappy romances.

Both Hélène Lazareff and Françoise Giroud are figures whose careers (and what posterity remembers of those careers) reveal the ambivalence of the process of feminization of a profession such as journalism. They succeeded in the profession by using resources that were doubly illegitimate for journalists: their commitment to the cause of women (even if that commitment was debatable and indeed debated) and their femininity, with the mainly "natural" qualities defined by it. Any subversion of the established order would appear to be limited, since it was by asserting and reproducing a traditional "gendered" order (as wife or mistress to "legendary" press bosses, Pierre Lazareff and Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber) that they advanced in the profession.

When the *Elle* model appeared to be losing its market (Charon 2008), two publications *F Magazine* and *Histoires d'Elles* attempted to refresh the model of the female press by "proposing a female point of view" on current affairs. As was the case for the earlier magazines, these two were launched at a time of radical change in the profession of journalism: the fierce competition unleashed by the opening up of the broadcast media to advertising, the decline of the editorializing press, the rise of the specialist press (Chupin, Hubé, and Kaciaf 2012). The number of journalists was rising sharply. In 1975 the number of press card-carrying journalists was 13,635 and in 1980, 16,619. At the same time their average age was falling and the proportion of women was rising, from 15.5 percent of press cards in 1965 to 20 percent in 1975 and 24 percent in 1981 (Damian-Gaillard, Frisque, and Saitta 2010).

### **F MAGAZINE AND HISTOIRES D'ELLES: FEMINISM SERVING THE CAUSE OF JOURNALISM**

When *F Magazine* and *Histoire d'Elles* were founded in the late 1970s, the differentialist argument was still being used, whereby "femininity" was an asset in professional journalism. Whatever their differences, the two magazines, via their founders, presented their feminine qualities as guarantees of their professionalism, in particular their literary talent and feminist commitment at a time when the journalist community was converting to forms of economic realism that affected the professional practices and values they defended. In a profession that remained dominated by men (only a fifth or a quarter of press cards were held by women) and was becoming more reliant on graduates of journalism schools and in which journalists' work was gradu-

ally beginning to be “rationalized,” the young women of *F Magazine* and *Histoires d’Elles* would for a while defend a model of journalism that was “inspired” and civic, literary and political, in line with the position they occupied in society and the profession. Their editorial aims, whatever their differences, were to set themselves apart from a political press considered too male and from a commercial women’s press considered too remote from the cause of women they supported. With different voices, the journalists of *F Magazine* and *Histoires d’Elles* were seeking to do “journalism another way,” against a background of upheaval in journalistic values in which the militant model of May 1968 was under threat from the gradual encroachment of economics in the media system, perfectly symbolized by the conversion of a newspaper like *Libération* in the early 1980s (Hubé 2010).

The journalistic aims I describe here and the figures of journalism who supported them give a clearer idea what was happening with gender as the model of the politically committed journalist was ebbing at this point in press history. Although “femininity” was still used (and available for use) to argue for a certain type of subjectivity (particularly literary) and commitment (feminist) in journalism, the values attached to it appeared towards the end of the period to have been finally replaced by the economic pressure operating on the activity (Bourdieu 1994), as evidenced by the failure of the two experiments.

Launched at nearly the same time—*Histoires d’Elles* on March 8, 1977, and *F Magazine* on January 1, 1978—their stated aims differed widely in form and content. Both intended to be general-interest magazines covering all topics (Iranian Revolution, general elections, etc.), adopting a point of view on current events that they defined as “female.” Their assets were not the same: *Histoires d’Elles* was intended to be economically viable but had few resources. It was funded by a nonprofit and called itself a “girlfriends’ paper,” disseminated through the state-subsidized distributor Nouvelles Messageries de la Presse parisienne but with a modest circulation of some 20,000 copies.<sup>10</sup> *F Magazine*, in contrast, was a concept invented within a major press group, L’Expansion, and enjoyed considerable logistical and marketing support. Their common feature, however, was their desire to present their aims as above all journalistic and not militant, setting them apart from most of the “feminist” publications appearing at the time, run by militant organizations for which they were the official mouthpieces.

While both magazines sought to stand apart from the feminist publications of the period, they also sought to differ from general-interest (male) “political” publications and, above all, from women’s magazines.

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<sup>10</sup> In its pilot issue (no. 0) there was a call for subscriptions. The aim was to collect “one hundred million old francs,” which represented, as noted in another manifesto in *Rouge* magazine of May 26, 1997, “the basic start-up investment (lease on premises, equipment, etc.) and a three-month operating budget: rent, telephone, employer’s contributions, salaries for about ten staff, reporting expenses, and miscellaneous outsourcing. But most of it is the advance financing of twelve issues. Because it is only after three months that the NMPP distribution system will remit the paper’s income from sales. We have to last three months before paying for ourselves. To find the 100 million, it only needs 5,000 women to take out a year’s subscription” (*Histoires d’Elles*, March 1977).

What we have in common is that we do not recognize ourselves in the image that women's magazines display. Which is not most women's image. These days women are asking questions. They have diversified their roles; they are playing a part in unions, politics, and cultural life. Why should they always be shown as creatures born to seduce, cook, or consume? Can a woman be reduced to that? Of course not. (from Claude Servan-Schreiber's editorial, *F Magazine*, January 1, 1978)

In various fields we have gained some independence of speech, even if this is far from ideal.... In the press, however, we are still, after years of women's movements, reduced to begging for space in existing papers both left- and right-wing. Of course, there have been, and still are, feminist papers but they have "tiny readerships." As for women's magazines, their "interest" in feminism is mainly related to commercial concerns or matters of fashion. (*Histoires d'Elles* manifesto, BMD archive, n.d.)

Their political aim was largely based on a form of essentialism, since they were promoting a "female" way of doing journalism, in other words, choosing and covering topics with a large dose of personal narrative and blurring the boundary between journalists and readers, without falling into the patterns of traditional femininity.

Those of us who are journalists felt uneasy and unsatisfied addressing women's issues in papers that were admittedly progressive and politically committed but were run by men according to their politics and ideology. It was because our experience in the women's movement prevented us from settling for a status of last resort—the token woman. (*Histoires d'Elles* appeal published in *APRE Hebdo*, April 22, 1977)

To respect this commitment, a mixed staff was rejected by both editorial committees; they only employed women, the only people likely to advance a female vision and sensitivity on current affairs. These concepts were sponsored by two women—Martine Storti at *Histoires d'Elles* and Claude Servan-Schreiber at *F Magazine*—the core of whose commitment as journalists was a political, and in particular markedly feminist, commitment.

Their professional careers largely explain their relationship with journalism and their conception of their job. Martine Storti and Claude Servan-Schreiber were first and foremost recognized as experienced journalists when they, respectively, launched *Histoires d'Elles* and *F Magazine*. Although neither went through journalism school—Storti was a philosophy graduate and Servan-Schreiber graduated from Sciences Po in 1957—their higher education courses were "suitable" for journalism at that time. Journalism was Servan-Schreiber's first job. She was born in 1937 and had 18 years of press experience when she started the *F Magazine* venture. She had already worked at many publications, including *Elle*, and was well acquainted with the world of the press, since she had married Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber (brother of Jean-Jacques), member of a family that headed a number of leading French periodicals.

Martine Storti began her career as a philosophy teacher (1969–1974) and then joined *Libération* in 1974 to edit the section on feminist movements. She stayed until 1979, even while *Histoires d'Elles* was being launched, for financial reasons. She continued to work in the press until 1984, when she was appointed to the Prime Minister Laurent Fabius's office, further evidence, after Françoise Giroud, that the corridors from journalism to politics reveal the close ties between these two worlds in France.

In addition to the two founders, the beginnings of the two magazines also involved women journalists who, while supporting the ambitious projects, still kept the "modesty" that was thought appropriate for female entrepreneurs. The official description of the initial project team presents a sort of female distancing, as if it was important not to "overdo it" or show off:

One evening with some women friends, someone said, "Supposing we started a paper!" That was in June 1976, heat wave June. It was dinner in Marie-Odile Delacour's flat, windows open, overlooking the Jardin des Plantes, with Evelyne Le Garrec and Hélène Bellour. The usual moaning: Marie-Odile and I were talking about our dreadful time at *Libération* and Evelyne about hers at *Politique Hebdo*. The same stories: articles they didn't really want, orders to "keep a distance from the Movement," not least to fit into a certain mold, a certain style, a certain way of covering the news.... And with some help from the Moroccan wine, the idea of the paper emerged. (Storti 1996:152ff)

And yet all these women had a sound experience in journalism before *Histoires d'Elles*. Evelyne Le Garrec (born in 1934) was a feature writer on *L'Aurore* and then a journalist on *Politique Hebdo*. In 1982 she wrote a biography of Séverine, the model of female journalism (Le Garrec 2009).

In *F Magazine* the initial editorial committee comprised five women: Nicole Chailot, Benoîte Groult, Paula Jacques, Ginou Richard, Françoise Rondeau-Salmon, and, of course, Claude Servan-Schreiber. Some of them had previous experience in journalism. Aged 58, Groult particularly, from *Elle* to *L'Express*. As we shall see, she already had a certain militant and literary notoriety when she joined the *F Magazine* venture. Jacques began her career in *L'Oreille en Coin* on Radio France Inter in 1975. Richard graduated from the Paris-based Journalism School and Training Center CFJ (Centre de Formation des journalistes) in 1961. A similar analysis could be made of other women who later worked on the two papers and it would show that their involvement was part of a real journalist career. *F Magazine* was a step in the careers of female journalists, including some who are now recognized or even famous, such as Anne Sinclair, Michèle Cotta, Christine Ockrent, Catherine Nay, Claude Sarraute, Arlette Chabot, Eva Bettan, and Brigitte Rossignaux. For many women *F Magazine* was the cradle of their careers as journalists.

The trajectories of the women involved in launching both magazines contain the double link to the original model of French journalism with its mixture of political commitment (feminist or other) and a literary career that in some cases ultimately superseded their journalistic career. Taking the two founders, Storti and Ser-

van-Schreiber, we find, both before the foundation of the magazines and later in their lives, the signs of their political, and in particular feminist, commitment. Servan-Schreiber describes, for example, that her vocation for journalism came while she was a student at Sciences Po from observing the journalists who were publicly condemning torture during the war in Algeria (interview to *Radioscopie*, Radio France Inter, January 18, 1978). After her experience with *F Magazine*, Servan-Schreiber continued her political campaigns, particularly in the struggle for women's parity in the 1990s. Other *F Magazine* writers were more radical still. Paula Jacques, for example, during her relationship with Claude Halfen, a presumed member of the extreme left-wing organization Action Directe who in 1980s stood trial on terrorism charges but was ultimately acquitted, received a suspended jail sentence for her supposed aiding and abetting Halfen's crimes (*Le Monde* 1984).

At *Histoires d'Elles* the feminism of the leaders of the movement was linked to their professional commitment. Even before launching the paper Martine Storti and Evelyne Le Garrec belonged to political movements explicitly on the left or extreme left of the political spectrum. Storti describes her actions in May 1968 while still a secondary school pupil: "It was when I was at the Lycée Fénélon that politics entered my life" (Storti 1996:52); later she mentions her work for "a Trotskyite group, OCI, a newspaper *Libération* and the Politics and Psychoanalysis group" (58). She confirmed her political commitment by leaving journalism after the Left won the 1981 elections and even joined the office of Prime Minister Laurent Fabius. Similarly, Le Garrec was involved in launching the *Libération* press agency in June 1971.

The political commitment of the two magazines' founding teams was indissolubly linked to their journalistic commitment, and some of their political activity occurred via journalism, working with publications that supported a cause at that time: *L'Express* during the Algerian War for Claude Servan-Schreiber, *Elle*, to which she supplied "feminist" reports, Agence de Presse *Libération* for Evelyne Le Garrec, and *Libération* for Martine Storti. Their commitment to the Left, or extreme Left, went with a feminist commitment confirmed by their later trajectories, as with two other journalists, Nancy Huston and Benoîte Groult.

These last two names illustrate the fact that the journalism practiced in these two magazines was a literary journalism that followed, accompanied, or preceded their writing careers. Literary figures spent some time working on the two publications, whether or not they had already published a novel, whether or not they were recognized at the time. Both magazines had well-known sponsors: Groult (born in 1920), after working on *Elle*, regularly wrote for *F Magazine*. At that time she had already published a number of novels coauthored with her sister Flora (*Journal à quatre mains*, 1958; *Féminin pluriel*, 1965; and *Il était deux fois*, 1967), a novel of her own (*La Part des choses*, 1942), and two nonfiction works on feminism (*Ainsi soit-elle*, 1977; *Le féminisme au masculin*, 1977).

Huston, who wrote regularly for *Histoires d'Elles* (Sebbar 2013), was younger at the time she entered journalism (she was born in 1953) but had already published a number of short stories in magazines, particularly feminist magazines. Her first novel, *Les variations Goldberg*, was published in 1981 and was followed by a dozen others.

Leïla Sebbar (born in 1941), another major figure at *Histoires d'Elles*, was already a well-known nonfiction writer and published part of her dissertation in *Les Temps Modernes*, for which she guest-edited an issue in 1976 on girls' education.

What do these women's careers tell us about the journalism of their time? In a world of journalism caught up in economics, where the task was to be increasingly efficient and "realistic" (eminently masculine values), the writers on *F Magazine* and *Histoires d'Elles* resisted by embodying a journalistic model based on more subjectivity and political commitment. In this way, given their later careers, they made it possible to feminize the profession in two ways, with more women in it and a marginal transformation of the dominant values and practices of the job. Like the journalists of *La Fronde* and *Elle* before them, they opened up the breach through which many other women journalists entered, namely a literary journalism, a journalism of psychological revelation exemplified at various times by Catherine Nay<sup>11</sup> and Christine Clerc,<sup>12</sup> and currently by Raphaëlle Bacqué and Ariane Chemin. By inventing a new "journalistic style," becoming "one of the girls" (Van Zoonen 1998) in a world of men—political journalism—they helped "refresh" political journalism and temporarily introduce female values that their male colleagues had to accept.

*Translated from French by Roger Depledge*

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<sup>11</sup> Catherine Nay belonged to the generation of women journalists who started at *L'Express* under the editorship of Françoise Giroud and who admitted using their feminine attractions to extract information from politicians. Like many of her colleagues (Christine Ockrent, Anne Sinclair), she shared her life with a leading politician (Minister Albin Chalandon). She is recognized for her biographies (of Jacques Chirac in particular) that emphasize the private lives and personalities of public figures.

<sup>12</sup> Also trained at *L'Express*, Christine Clerc is seen as having renewed political journalism by her ability to gain the confidence of the men and women in politics and use it to write "intimate" profiles or biographies.



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## РОЛЬ ЖЕНЩИН В ПРОФЕССИОНАЛИЗАЦИИ ФРАНЦУЗСКОЙ ЖУРНАЛИСТИКИ: ОТ «ЛА ФРОНД» К «Ф МАГАЗИН», ИЛИ КАК ЖУРНАЛИСТИКА СТАЛА «ЖЕНСКИМ ДЕЛОМ»

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Французская модель журналистики исторически сложилась вокруг двух основных фигур – писателя и политика. В основу этой модели были положены мужские ценности. В данной статье мы постараемся показать влияние феминизации журналистики на само определение этой сферы деятельности. С этой целью мы рассмотрели три разных периода в истории журналистики: начало XX века, освобождение от немецкой оккупации в 1944 году и конец 1970-х годов. Мы предлагаем новое прочтение этих ключевых этапов профессионализации журналистики в свете издательских проектов, осуществлявшихся женщинами и стремившихся совместить профессионализм с феминистскими или просто женскими интересами: «La Fronde» (1897 г.), «Elle» (1945 г.), «F Magazine» и «Histoires d’Elles» (конец 1970-х). На этих примерах мы покажем, как, входя в профессиональную группу, новички успешно навязывают ей свои ценности, соответствующие их траекториям и предпочтениям.

**Ключевые слова:** профессиональная журналистика; феминизация; женская пресса; феминистская пресса