

Chapter 4

From *Marie-Claire* Magazine's Authoritative Pedagogy to the *Hellocoton* Blog Platform's Knowledge Sharing: Between Gender Construction and Gender Appropriation

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Abstract When *Marie-Claire* magazine was first published in 1937 in France, it broke new journalistic ground as the first written format directed at women. Despite its favourable reception, this type of publication, now commonly referred to as a *women's magazine*, is regularly decried as a vehicle for transmitting stereotyped models of a femininity that is confined to domestic life and superficial appearances. From a diachronic perspective, the participative web – ‘women’s’ blogs in particular – offers key areas of observation of what women do when they self-express directly to other women. Do they fall along the continuum of women’s magazines’ editorial style, or rather, do they break with those magazines’ gender codes and conceptions?

When *Marie-Claire* magazine was first published in March 1937 in France, it broke new journalistic ground as the first written format directed at women. Building on the progress in women’s literacy,¹ the editorial team created a magazine to unite a readership not around social affiliation but sexual identity: ‘You are all *Marie-Claire*, and this magazine has been designed for you’.² The magazine’s success was so immediate that it became a model for subsequent publications for women.

Despite the favourable reception, this type of publication, now commonly referred to as a *women's magazine*, is regularly decried as a vehicle for transmitting stereotyped models of a femininity that is confined to domestic life and superficial appearances.³ This paradox complicates our observation of the relationship between women and the cultural objects that are made for them and the gender preconceptions

¹ Mayeur, Françoise. 2008. *L'éducation des filles en France au XIXe siècle*. Paris: Perrin (1st edn: Hachette 1979).

² Marie-Claire. 1937a. *Editorial*.

³ Dardigna, Anne-Marie. 1978. *La presse féminine, fonction idéologique*. Paris: Maspero; Chollet, Mona. 2012. *Beauté fatale, les nouveaux visages de l'aliénation féminine*. Paris: Zones.

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associated with those cultural objects. From a diachronic perspective, the participative web – ‘women’s’ blogs in particular – offers key areas of observation of what women do when they self-express directly to other women. Do they fall along the continuum of women’s magazines’ editorial style, or rather, do they break with those magazines’ gender codes and conceptions?

The online platform *Hellocoton.fr* offers centralised access to a ‘selection of the best women’s blogs’, according to its home page. The site was chosen as a field of observation because it offers bloggers visibility subject to membership. This means that in choosing to register with *Hellocoton*, bloggers subscribe to the concept of ‘women’s blogs’ and acknowledge that their own production of writing may be characterised as ‘feminine’, recognising themselves within the site’s provided categories. By choosing to observe this platform, we are not claiming to faithfully reflect women’s online production in general – a goal made difficult by the inability to ascertain sexual identity and a complex delimitation of the corpus – but it allows us to access a sample of production qualified by its authors as ‘feminine’. The array of subjects, styles and profiles gives us the possibility to observe how these bloggers appropriate or contest the media messaging that is created for them.

4.1 Conceptions of Femininity

Marie-Claire was founded in 1937 by journalist Marcelle Auclair and newspaper publisher Jean Prouvost, who had owned the popular daily *Paris-Soir* since 1930. The concept of providing a magazine for women was validated by its immediate success upon publication.⁴ At the time, upper-class women consumed fashion magazines, but others had no regular publication at their disposal aside from the ‘magazine pages’ inserted into the daily paper.⁵ Since its origins, written media had been principally aimed at men, who were more literate and were culturally viewed as the primary consumers of information. *Marie-Claire*’s editorial mission was stated in its title:

To give the French woman, in a single newspaper, every week, all she may find to be of interest or of use.⁶

The magazine’s topics ranged well beyond fashion and style tips, the likes of which had been previously published. A study of *Marie-Claire* issues from 1937 to the present allows a typology of subjects. They can be grouped broadly into three categories that define the feminine along three facets: mother, guardian of the home and seductress.

These themes are not addressed equally over time. From its first publication in 1937 until it stopped publishing in 1944, personal care dominates, showcasing a

⁴Sullerot, Evelyne. 1963. *La presse féminine*. Paris: Armand Colin.

⁵Chermette, Myriam. 2009. “Donner à voir”, *La photographie dans Le Journal: discours, pratiques, usages (1892–1944)*. Ph.D. Université de Saint Quentin en Yvelines.

⁶Marie-Claire 1937a.

femininity based on seduction and expressed in beauty treatments and fashion. Beginning in 1954, when publication resumed, and until around 1970, the predominant themes are interior decoration, home management, cooking and childcare, emphasising a femininity centred on the home. From 1970 to 1995, sexual satisfaction becomes central, equating femininity with sexual liberation. From 1995 until the early 2000s, sexuality remains a major topic but moves beyond affirming feminine sexuality and into managing couple relationships.

While the approach changes over time, no theme ever truly disappears and these three pillars persist. This continuity reinforces an essentialist conception of the feminine around concerns described as shared. This formula, based on sexual commonality, has been repeated in other women's publications like *Elle* and *Marie-France* and until recently in magazines like *Femme Actuelle*, *Biba* and *Cosmopolitan*.

The *Hellocoton* platform, for its part, provides a 'selection of the best women's blogs' and showcases an assortment of articles categorised by theme on its home page. The site was created in 2008 by Hubert Michaux and Victor Cerutti, alums of the customisable French web portal *Netvibes*. From the outset, showcased blogs were not selected by the editorial team alone, but also by readers' votes. By January 2010, the platform was receiving two million unique visits each month.⁷ In July 2012, it was purchased by the Prisma Media publishing group, which also owns *Voici*, *Gala*, *Télé Loisirs*, *Prima* and *Femme Actuelle*, the best-selling women's magazine in France, with approximately 752,000 copies sold annually.

According to its *Publicité* page, *Hellocoton* now receives nearly three million unique visitors each month and hosts 30,000 blogs, not all of them active. Although a publishing group owns the site, it neither organises nor controls the bloggers' writing. Bloggers are independent and free to choose whether to register on the platform. Blog posts are selected via an algorithm that calculates the frequency of shares, number of votes and reader comments, which are seen as positive signs of interaction.

In 2008, the home page was organised into the following categories: *people*, *fashion*, *gardening*, *cooking*, *culture*, *beauty*, *family*, *creation*, *decoration*, *technology* and *chatterbox*, each one allowing access to selected posts on member blogs. Six years later in 2014, *gardening*, *people*, *technology* and *chatterbox* disappeared; *creation* and *decoration* merged into the single category called *créa déco*; three new categories called *moods*, *lifestyle* and *buzz* (for viral videos) emerged, while *fashion*, *beauty*, *cooking*, *culture* and *family* all remained unaltered. The editorial team modified its classifications to better match its member blog content and blogger interests. In *beauty*, for example, the subcategory *nail art* was created. *Nail art*, a practice connecting nail cosmetics to design creativity,⁸ now widely adopted by manufacturers of nail polish, wildly varied rhinestones and other nail equipment, was in part catalysed by bloggers who wrote about this theme, which pushed *Hellocoton* to create a dedicated subcategory for it.

⁷ Menneveux, Richard. 2010. Be.com le nouveau féminin en ligne de Lagardère, *FrenchWeb.fr*. <http://frenchweb.fr/be-com-le-nouveau-feminin-de-lagardere>. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

⁸ L'amOureuse. 2014. #La Reine des Neiges version 2. <http://amOureuse.wordpress.com/2014/05/13/la-reine-des-neiges-version-2/>.

Several days of observation show that the categories still in place since 2008 – *fashion, beauty, cooking* and *family* – are those that have been the most amended by bloggers. They are also the same themes taken up by *Marie-Claire* throughout its existence, but here, bloggers have appropriated them to the point of devoting entire blogs to them and sharing their own specialised topics.

Since *Hellocoton*'s classification is theme based, readers can navigate directly to topics of interest. The editorial team creates 'thematic folders' that each include several articles from different blogs that treat transversal topics, for example, 'Parfumée pour le printemps-été', '50 manucures de fête', '20 fonds de teint pour un maquillage parfait', 'Réussir son smockey eye', etc. (Perfumed From Spring to Summer, 50 Festive Manicures, 20 Foundations for the Perfect Makeup, Successful Smokey Eyes⁹).

Hellocoton's style of reading is also generated from the way that authors conceptualise writing on their blogs, in ways that are often specialised. Unlike *Marie-Claire*'s 'generalist' conception, which asserts a homogenised femininity, most bloggers write on only one or two topics. A blog's title indicates its content, as with cooking blogs like *Gastronoome*, *Cuisinez comme Céline*, *Papilles et Pupilles*, *La cuisine à quatre mains* and *La ligne gourmande* ('The Gourmet Within', 'Cook like Celine', 'Taste Buds and Eye Pupils', 'Cooking for Four Hands', 'Foodie's Figure'); fashion blogs like *Les tribulations d'Anaïs*: blog mode Montpellier, *La souris coquette* and *Modeuse timbrée* (Anais's Tribulations: a Montpellier Fashion Blog, The Coquette Mouse, The Crazy Fashionista); or beauty blogs like *Blackbeauty bag*, *Chicissime beauté* (Majestic Beauty) and *Destination beauté: mon petit monde girly* (Destination Beauty: My Little Girly World).

Bloggers also discuss topics that interest them without speaking generally of *femininity*. Readers meanwhile don't come from a single essentialised source but from centres of interest. This specialisation does not represent a fundamental transgression against the elements composing the female gender as magazines like *Marie-Claire* propose it, but more of a shift produced by the fact of women managing their own material and freeing themselves from women's magazines' homogeneity.

4.2 Towards More Symmetrical Communication and Exchanges

4.2.1 *Marie-Claire: Vertical Transmission*

In order to transmit to readers the information the magazine considered necessary to fulfil their social role, successive *Marie-Claire* columnists mainly used the journalistic form, writing articles and reports. The themes of motherhood, appearance and

⁹All translations by L. Kraftowitz.

the home were discussed like any current event or political topic, meaning they were explained in an objective narrative tone.

For example, in the article entitled 'La mode sculpturale' (Sculptural fashion), published on 3 September 1937,¹⁰ the columnist informs readers that:

Fashion has become a sculptor this coming season. Years ago, learning to dress required a painter's palette and a draftsman's drawer. Now what counts is a sense of volume, a taste for contours, and a pure and perfect knowledge of anatomy.

The information is written in the present tense, with a declarative and objective mood, leaving no room for doubt or the conditional tone. Columnists also use this approach for dispensing advice:

A truly womanly woman, neither thin nor fat: this is how you should look in these new dresses.

The prescription draws merit from its presentation: journalistic flourish naturalises the assertion into truth. It is followed by a procedure to achieve this desired result:

The most important is to have a shapely waist.

This description is illustrated by a photograph of an antique sculpture accompanied by a legend indicating the parts of the body – neck, shoulders, chest, etc. – to which the directions relate. This metaphorical use of imagery gives the text a visual translation.

The visual formula can also be more explicit, taking the form of a manual. In the article 'Mettez votre visage en valeur' ('Enhance your face'), dated 14 January 1938,¹¹ four photographs show two before-and-after examples of faces. Arrows positioned around the images indicate the areas of the face requiring work and lead to paragraphs explaining what actions to take.

The directive nature of this writing recalls the nineteenth-century instruction manuals. The guides, made available to teachers as they were facing the progressive and unprecedented growth of the number of girls in their classrooms¹²; to mothers responsible for their children's, especially their daughters', upbringing¹³; and to young girls themselves,¹⁴ provided a set of knowledge and information deemed useful to women's daily lives at the time. Activities or behaviours attributed to women were described in great detail in the formulas of a user's manual. Laundry, cooking, personal care, etc., were explained step by step, indicating that they required specific technical knowledge. The transmission of this knowledge occurred through a

¹⁰ Marie-Claire. 1937b. *La mode sculpturale*.

¹¹ Marie-Claire 1938a. *Mettez votre visage en valeur*, 8–9.

¹² Mayeur 2008.

¹³ Fonssagrives, Jean-Baptiste. 1869. *L'éducation physique des jeunes filles ou avis aux mères sur l'art de diriger leur santé et leur développement*. Paris: Hachette. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k104230x.r=manuel+instruction+fille.langFR>. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

¹⁴ Dufrenoy, Adélaïde. 1816. *La petite ménagère ou l'éducation maternelle (4 tomes)*. Paris: A. Eymery. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54455967.r=.langFR>. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

specific rhetoric consisting of several expressions, like the injunction to ‘Be within the family the ring that binds, the voice that consoles, the arm which supports, and through your actions and virtues make them love the name of God’.¹⁵ This example places the girl’s role within the mode of obligation and allows behavioural expectations to be made explicit alongside etched drawings depicting the girl amidst scenes of daily life, like other visual models of activities and behaviour.

To convince women to apply these strict rules and to make the models acceptable, the manuals’ authors used different justifications that were first and foremost essentialist. Activities assigned to women were defined based on a belief in a feminine nature as specific and different from the masculine nature. The domestic economy was described as ‘women’s science *par excellence*’,¹⁶ and the art of ‘performing housework and managing homes and families’ was ‘the woman’s domain’.¹⁷ Women’s activities were valued and the authors emphasised the specialised expertise they required and the dedication they represented: ‘The household duties, while menial in appearance, are sublime in reality, because they are summed up in these words: thinking of others’.¹⁸

Apart from Rousseau’s *Emile* (1762), men had no written material for ‘learning their gender’, whereas women, via instruction manuals and magazines, received a good number of lessons to ensure their social role. This transmission occurred through a specific, prescriptive rhetoric, partly related to the practical nature of the knowledge they needed to learn to implement.

Readers accepted the imperative tone because the columnist was seen as an expert possessing and transmitting a superior set of knowledge. They were often well known to readers, and some, like Marcelle Auclair and later Ménie Grégoire, became central personalities of the magazine. They presented their advice as ‘tips’, ‘tricks’ and ‘secrets’ that they were sharing with their readership. The transmission of this valuable knowledge established trust and allowed for the use of a directive tone. The tone was mitigated by the columnist, who was presented as a friend:

Readers of *Marie-Claire*, we are, above all, your friend, please ask our advice for all aspects of life, and we will work hard to be your happiness consultant.¹⁹

This climate of trust and friendship was built by a specific epistolary style that mimicked friendly correspondence. Beginning with the first issues, in a column entitled ‘Parlons en amies’ (‘Girl talk’), a columnist addressed readers directly, signing the text with the initials M.-C. or the magazine’s name, *Marie-Claire*, as you would the bottom of a letter. This signature, a convention of private correspondence, invoked proximity between the columnist and the readers. These codes were revisited in the ‘Le courrier de Marie-Claire’ (‘Letters to Marie-Claire’) section, in

¹⁵Juranville, Clarisse. 1879. *Le savoir-faire et le savoir vivre: guide pratique de la vie usuelle à l’usage des jeunes filles*. Paris: Librairie Larousse. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6149610s.r=manuel+instruction+fille.langFR>. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

¹⁶Juranville 1879: preface.

¹⁷Juranville 1879: 8.

¹⁸Juranville 1879: 20.

¹⁹Marie-Claire. 1938a. *Mettez votre visage en valeur*, 8–9.

which readers were identified by their first name. The response was written in the style of a discussion where one person asks the advice of someone more experienced and knowledgeable. The responses were signed by the first name of the columnist. This personal touch introduced feelings of connection. *Marie-Claire* was able to simultaneously embody the character of the columnist addressing readers and the readers themselves.

Many columnists made their mark on the magazine through the relationship they developed with their readers. Marcelle Auclair was on staff from its establishment in 1937 until publication halted in 1944 and returned in 1955 after its 1954 reappearance. Specialising at first in beauty, and later on in the post-war years in matters of morality and spiritual life, she responded to readers' letters and wrote prolifically. She dispensed advice and recommendations in the style of a friend, or at times a mother:

I ask you to please be natural. [...] In terms of eyeshadow, I agree with your mother and urge you to use it only in extreme moderation; you have everything to gain.²⁰

Marcelle Auclair had the kindness of a friend that readers could reencounter each week (or each month after the magazine's reappearance) and the knowledge of an older sister. This trust relationship was cultivated even beyond the magazine pages on 25 April 1938, when the Cercle des Amies de Marie-Claire (Marie-Claire Friends Circle) opened its doors, a house where readers could go for advice, classes or lectures, including some by Marcelle Auclair. Enhancing this climate of trust created a safe space for discussion, which in turn reinforced community cohesion.

Ménie Grégoire²¹ had a similar role in the early 1970s. *Marie-Claire* was becoming 'the couple's magazine' with the emergence of the theme of sexuality, which Ménie Grégoire helped develop. To do this, she changed the format of addressing readers, privileging direct exchange in the *Questions Sur l'Amour* (Questions About Love) column, where columnists published readers' questions and their own answers. While readers' letters had been featured since the magazine's beginnings, never had they been more central or taken up as much space. This form of direct exchange, which she used in parallel to her radio show on RTL, in which listeners phoned in with questions that she answered on air, fostered closeness between the columnist and her readership. Ménie Grégoire's work went beyond this format to include her prolific writing on sexuality for *Marie-Claire*. Her articles' defining characteristic was that she would gather a wide range of women's testimonials. This shared intimacy gave significance to the exchange and strengthened readers' sense of community.

This process of transmission, led by a woman expert, was also found in the magazine's advertising content since the advertising material mimed the articles: a transmitter of feminine traits, usually a celebrity, was shown on the page speaking about the product and her experience with it. This transmitter could also be an omni-

²⁰ Marie-Claire. 1938b. *Jeunes filles, la beauté c'est la santé*, 17.

²¹ Cardon, Dominique. 2003. Droit au plaisir et devoir d'orgasme dans l'émission de Ménie Grégoire. *Le Temps des médias* 1: 77–94. www.cairn.info/revue-le-temps-des-medias-2003-1-page-77.htm. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

scient narrator with a hidden identity but whose knowledge was understood to be superior to that of the recipient.

The context of friendship and trust helped create a strong bond between the magazine and its readers, which likely explains its reader loyalty. However, the bond was limited since readers could only have a limited, rhetorical exchange. In a mode of vertical transmission, the columnist remained the expert imparting knowledge to her students.²²

4.2.2 *Transmitting by Sharing*

Women bloggers, for their part, showcase topics that affect them and that either don't exist or rarely appear in women's magazines, through a high specialisation of subjects. For example, in the case of medically assisted procreation (MAP), bloggers discuss their experience as a couple and their often long and painful quest to procreate. These women share many intimate details with their readers, who consist predominantly of other so-called MAPettes and who in turn confide their challenges and successes. The vocabulary deployed is highly technical and the many abbreviations – DPO (day post-ovulation), gygy (for gynaecologist) and PDS (for blood test) – affirm the existence of a community dialogue that is indecipherable to unfamiliar or unaffected readers, recalling medical forums.

This sense of community based on experience sharing also appears in the comment sections, where encouragement, good luck wishes or advice for the blogger can be found. When she announced her pregnancy on her blog in an article on 15 May 2014, entitled 'Le dire tout bas, pour ne pas réveiller le mauvais œil...' ('A Whisper, So As Not to Wake the Evil Eye...'), Lucette received 66 positive reader comments.²³ Miss Infertility, the first to comment, wrote:

Whispers from me: (Yeeeeeeeeeeeeees!!!!!! Lucette, we both did it!!!!!! This is amazing!!!!!!!). Got my fingers crossed for you! i took my second dose this morning, this is stressful!! Lots of love.

Bloggers forge relationships and know the history and experiences of one another. They regularly wish each other well in writing their posts. On Lucette's post of 13 October 2014, entitled 'Trouillothon',²⁴ she reminded her reader friends that even during her pregnancy she wouldn't forget the anxiety they might be going through at the moment of embryo implantation:

Because today it is your turn, but together we are always stronger.

²² Pasquier, Dominique. 2014. Les jugements profanes en ligne sous le regard des sciences sociales. *Réseaux* 183: 9–25. <http://www.cairn.info/revue-reseaux-2014-1-page-9.htm>. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

²³ Chez Lucette. 2014a. *Le dire tout bas, pour ne pas réveiller le mauvais œil...* . <https://chezlucette.wordpress.com/2014/05/15/le-dire-tout-bas-pour-ne-pas-reveiller-le-mauvais-oeil/>.

²⁴ Chez Lucette. 2014b. *Trouillothon*. <https://chezlucette.wordpress.com/2014/10/13/trouillothon/>.

Motherhood is a theme in *Marie-Claire*, notably in topics related to childcare (1937–1944) and childhood education (1954–1970), but pregnancy itself as a subject is generally unexplored. However, it is widely addressed by bloggers who share the stories of their pregnancies month by month in the form of ‘pregnancy updates’, repurposing an older practice of ‘pregnancy journals’.²⁵ These posts are illustrated with a photograph of the author’s belly, which can be seen growing over the months.²⁶ This type of account, accompanied by self-produced images,²⁷ reinforces the uniqueness of each experience.

Bloggers also tell the story of their labour hour by hour, as seen in a number of blogs and posts.²⁸ Generally, they explain their desire to write not only to remember but also to share with other ‘nullis’ – a term they use to refer to nulliparous women. The stages and feelings attached to the experience are divulged down to the smallest details.

In these examples, knowledge related to motherhood is transmitted through individual stories rather than advice directives. Readers learn by way of many individual experiences, reinforced by the use of self-produced images.

Among beauty blogs, many posts narrate beauty routines. In ‘Routine du soir bonsoir’ (‘Good evening, evening routine’) on the blog *Woodybeauté*, dated 10 November 2014, a blogger narrates her nightly routine:

In the evening, especially in winter, I hate putting water on my face, it’s too chilly. So I need some practical and easy-to-use leave-on products. I’m a big fan of micellar water (see my many tests [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) but with the return of the cold I wanted a more soothing product.

She then states her opinion on each product and describes the sensations experienced during use. The article is accompanied by a photograph of the products used arranged next to each other,²⁹ a recurrent visual device in the blogosphere. The distribution of this visual form from one blog to another³⁰ shows that bloggers both appreciate and appropriate this personalised experience sharing.

²⁵ Fine, Agnès. 2000. Écritures féminines et rites de passage. *Communications* 70: 121–142. http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/comm_0588-8018_2000_num_70_1_2066. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

²⁶ Desperatecouchpotatoe. 2014a. *Journal de Grossesse – Saison 2, Episode 6 – Le paradoxe de la dernière ligne droite....* <https://desperatecouchpotatoe.wordpress.com/2014/09/18/journal-de-grossesse-saison-2-episode-6-le-paradoxe-de-la-derniere-ligne-droite/>.

²⁷ Gunthert, André. 2014. L’image conversationnelle. *Études photographiques* 31: 54–71. <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/3387>. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

²⁸ Desperatecouchpotatoe. 2014b. #*Journal de grossesse, saison 2, épisode 8 et fin, dans la douleur tu enfanteras*. <https://desperatecouchpotatoe.wordpress.com/2014/10/16/journal-de-grossesse-saison-2-episode-8-et-fin-dans-la-douleur-tu-enfanteras/>; Maman au naturelle. 2014a. *Mon accouchement Naturel Partie 1: Le travail*. <http://mamanaunaturelle.blogspot.fr/2014/11/mon-accouchement-naturel-partie-1-le.html>; Maman au naturelle. 2014b. *Mon accouchement Naturel Partie 2: la naissance*. <http://mamanaunaturelle.blogspot.fr/2014/11/mon-accouchement-naturel-partie-2-la.html>; Mon joli Cœur. 2014. *Mon accouchement (part 1), Une matinée pas comme les autres....* <http://mon-jolicoeur.blogspot.fr/2014/11/mon-accouchement-part-1.html>.

²⁹ Woodybeauté. 2014. *Routine du soir bonsoir !*. <http://www.woodybeauty.com/2014/11/routine-du-soir-bonsoir.html>.

³⁰ Olly Nolera. 2014. *Produits terminés #2 : mars/avril 2014*. <http://ollynolera.blogspot.com/2014/05/produits-termines-mars-avril-2014.html>.

Similarly to women's magazine columnists, the authors of posts like these share about their uses of beauty products. However, their experience is lent authenticity by the photographic evidence of the used product bottles. We know that columnists work for brands by creating positive editorial content, while here the photography serves as proof that the bloggers have truly purchased and used the products and have no hidden advertising agenda. Indeed, bloggers' demand for independence is a regularly recurring topic. In recent years, brands have taken note that bloggers, particularly 'influential' ones,³¹ might become mediators of production and have sought to forge relationships and contracts with them to promote their goods.³² In this context, bloggers have committed to specifying when their writing is connected to a partnership and when they are writing about a product that a company has provided them for free,³³ so as not to threaten the trust they have built up with their readers.

In a number of other cases, bloggers do not invent visual formulas but reclaim and repurpose media forms. Using tutorials, photographs or videos, they precisely describe step-by-step methods. On the blog *Lorylyn*, Laurianne explains on a self-produced video how to apply concealer.³⁴ Videos like this one can be quite intricately edited and even include music. Beauty bloggers also frequently use the before-and-after format to show a procedure's steps.³⁵ With these 'user manual' images, and by further individualising the exchange, bloggers reclaim the social function of gender-related practical knowledge transmission that women's magazine had taken charge of since the late 1930s.

In fashion blogs, bloggers often photograph themselves to show what they are wearing in their post. Mimicking magazines, they deploy a visual formula that comes from the fashion world. In women's magazines in the 1990s, editors published photographs of women out in the streets to show the authentic 'look'. *Street style* was characterised by full-length photographs of women posing in the street. This style was taken up by fashion photographers presenting their collections. Fashion bloggers have now seized upon these media visual codes while composing their own conduct and style of dressing.³⁶

³¹ Pasquier 2014.

³² Rocamora, Agnès, and Djurdja Bartlett. 2009. Blogs de mode: les nouveaux espaces du discours de mode. *Sociétés* 104: 105–114. <http://www.cairn.info/revue-societes-2009-2-page-105.htm>. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

³³ Pensée By Caro. 2014. *Les marques, la pub, le blog et moi*. <http://www.penseesbycaro.fr/2014/10/les-marques-la-pub-le-blog-et-moi-et-moi-moi/>.

³⁴ Lory lyn79. 2013. *Moi mon anti-cernes je l'applique suivant la méthode du Triangle !* <http://www.lorylynmakeup.com/2013/06/moi-mon-anti-cernes-je-lapplique.html>.

³⁵ NuellaSource. 2014. *Le Flawless concealer de Black Opal*. <http://nuellasource.blogspot.fr/2014/04/le-flawless-concealer-de-black-opal.html>.

³⁶ A moody girl's closet. 2014. *Fluo*. <http://www.amoodygirlscloset.com/fluo>.

As with fashion, culinary bloggers³⁷ share images of dishes they have prepared. For most, producing these images requires care³⁸ and is part of the photographic tradition of women's magazines that Barthes called 'ornamental cuisine'.³⁹ The search for polished images leads to posts providing technical guidance on how to achieve this type of photography.⁴⁰ However, unlike the bourgeois cooking that Barthes referred to, bloggers share easy recipes. Although in these examples, bloggers' visual production is imbued with a media-based model, the fact that they themselves have created the images and are the models also shows an inclination to appropriate that model.

4.3 Conclusion

When women speak in a way they qualify as feminine, they do so on themes that are quite similar to those of women's magazines, showing a consistency in these offerings. However, they break away from a global concept of femininity that suggests each of them has the same expectations or interests. By taking up blogging, they are appropriating functions that until now and for nearly a century have been controlled by the cultural industries, including the transmission of gender-specific knowledge. The magazines' authoritative style is disappearing to make room for individualised stories and experience sharing in which readers can find the information they need without receiving advice. The trust that magazines cultivated through rhetoric is now manifest in blogs, where communities are built and links are forged.

The appropriation of discourse occurs through the production and distribution of self-produced images that individualise exchanges while affirming a willingness to recognise oneself in the published visual models. Like instruction manuals and women's magazines, blogs fulfil a social function of gender transmission. While the male gender seems to be acquired less by 'learning' than by habit formation, in these blogs the feminine gender still seems to find expression through knowledge acquisition.

³⁷Naulin, Sidonie. 2014. La blogosphère culinaire. *Réseaux* 183: 31–62. www.cairn.info/revue-reseaux-2014-1-page-31.htm. Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

³⁸Chef Nini. 2014. *Mendiants de Noël*. <http://www.chefnini.com/mendiants-noel/> Accessed 17 Feb 2015.

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