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8. Parisian fashion or functional style?

Ideal dress of the modern woman in Finnish women's magazines in the 1920s and 1930s

Abstract: The 'New Woman' of the 1920s with her modern dress was a controversial figure. In this article I analyse, how the new dress style was discussed in Finnish women's magazines in the 1920s and 1930s. The article reconstructs the genre of women's magazine by showing that in addition to commercial women's magazines there were also several bulletins published by different kind of women's organization. The analysis shows that many of the political magazines discussed also fashion, and political content was typical also for the commercial women's magazines, which makes them mixtures of political and fashion (consumer) magazines. Each magazine formulated its own version of an ideal dress style that represented its political goals. Additionally, each magazine reconstructed its own version of a 'women's magazine'. The concept of 'women's magazine' also changed during the time period under study, which underlines the need to carefully contextualise each magazine when they are used as research material.

Keywords: women's magazines, feminism, dress history, fashion, Finland

Isn't it humiliating that magazines that aim to boost women and raise them [their political awareness] are dying from lack of support, but those magazines that turn women into slaves of fashion and vanity overgrow like weeds? Those magazines are the source of all those disgusting, half-naked women with sleeveless dresses with bare backs and low-cut necklines.¹

Women's fashion underwent dramatic changes during the first decades of the twentieth century. The long and cumbersome dress and the mature feminine figure of the turn of the century were replaced by a short and loose-fitting dress and a boyish figure by the mid-1920s. In fashion magazines, the new style was celebrated as representing the emancipated "modern women" who—with increased employment opportunities—lived an active and independent life. In other forums of public discussion, the new style was mostly criticised. Short hemlines and low necklines were seen

¹ *Naisten Ääni* 17/1924, 256.

as indecent and unhealthy, and social observers such as the Finnish feminist magazine *Naisten Ääni* cited above were also worried that young women were more interested in the hedonistic lifestyle of a dancing “jazz girl” than the role of a mother or questions of women’s political rights. Women’s associations and other educators sought to control the social change by defining new standards for women’s behaviour, duties, and responsibilities.²

In this chapter, I analyse how Finnish women’s magazines discussed contemporary women’s fashion in the 1920s and 1930s.³ I ask what role fashion journalism played in each magazine, and what kind of dress style was seen as ideal for modern women. I understand the concept of “women’s magazine” as an umbrella category referring to periodicals that were addressed to women and discussed “women’s concerns.”⁴ This broad understanding of women’s magazines means that the study is not limited to the genre of commercial women’s magazines (women’s consumer magazines) that typically discuss fashion, beauty care and domestic matters but also includes other magazines that addressed “women” as their readers. It also allows the analysis of the similarities and differences between different sub-genres of women’s magazines.

Feminist and commercial magazines are usually seen to involve two very different and even opposite ideologies: women’s consumer magazines represent the fashion industry and consumerism and reinforce “unrealistic standards of beauty,” whereas feminist magazines are critical towards the aforementioned “traditional” women’s magazines and offer their readers an alternative, feminist perspective on society and women’s lives.⁵ A closer reading of *Naisten Ääni*, however, reveals that its readers were recommended to dress according to the latest Parisian style.⁶ This kind of combination of feminist or political and fashion content was also typical of other Finnish women’s

² See e.g. Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Kaisa Vehkalahti, “Jazz-tyttö ja naistenlehtien siveä katse,” in *Modernin lumo ja pelko. Kymmenen kirjoitusta 1800–1900-lukujen vaihteen sukupuolisuudesta*, eds. Kari Immonen, Ritva Hapuli, Maarit Leskelä, and Kaisa Vehkalahti (Helsinki: SKS, 2000); Birgitte Soland, *Becoming modern: Young Women and the Reconstruction of Womanhood in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Emma Severinsson, *Moderna kvinnor: modernitet, femininitet och svenskhet i svensk veckopress 1920–1933* (Lund: Historiska institutionen, Lunds universitet, 2018).

³ This chapter is based on my PhD thesis: Arja Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut! Vai mikä on tulevaisuutemme? Naisten päällyshousujen käyttöä koskevat pukeutumisohteet ja nissä rakentuvat naiseuden ihanteet suomalaisissa naistenlehdissä 1889–1945*. (Helsinki: Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistys, 2011).

⁴ Kathryn Shevelov, *Women and Print Culture. The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London: Routledge, 1989), 1–3.

⁵ See Kathleen R. Endres, “Women’s Magazines: Fashion”; in *Encyclopedia of Gender in Media*, ed. Mary Kosut (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2012); Andrea Bergstrom, “Women in Magazines: Feminist magazines,” in *Encyclopedia of Gender in Media*, ed. Mary Kosut (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2012).

⁶ See e.g. *Naisten Ääni* 19/1925, 301.

magazines in the early twentieth century.⁷ In my analysis, the critical views expressed in political women's magazines such as the *Naisten Ääni* also represent "fashion journalism" because they participated in interpreting fashion.

Internationally and historically, the boundaries between different types of women's magazines have not been clear. Since the establishment of the genre in the late seventeenth century, women's magazines have represented a wide variety of forms and ideologies. Besides fashion and feminism, the market of women's magazines has also consisted of periodicals associated with leisure, career, domestic matters, religion, literature, philosophy, various political aims, and moral conduct, for example.⁸ The history of women's magazines is therefore a history of a changing society, changing meanings of femininity, and changing meanings and forms of journalism and publishing. As a genre, women's magazines are not a simple and homogeneous concept; rather, they are an active, ideologically and historically changing modifier of texts, meanings, and social actions.⁹

The genre of women's consumer magazines was established in the US and the UK and also in Sweden during the late nineteenth century but in Finland, only during the 1920s and 1930s. In each country, the development of the genre took place in the context of the wider growth of the publishing industry and the development of consumer culture. It also coincided with the emergence of the bourgeois family model, which emphasised women's domestic role as an opposite to men's public role. At the same time, consumption patterns were redefined based on gender. Women were recognised as the target market of household items, fashion, and other women's products, including women's magazines. As a genre, commercial women's magazines represented this new ideology and femininity and were also instrumental in articulating and redefining them.¹⁰

⁷ Raili Malmberg, "Naisten ja kotien lehdet aikansa kuvastimina," in *Suomen lehdistön historia 8. Aikakauslehdistön historia*, ed. Päiviö Tommila (Kuopio: Kustannuskiila oy, 1991), 193–291; Töyry, *Varhaiset naistenlehdet*; Töyry, "Gender Contract"; Arja Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*; Erkka Railo "Women's Magazines, the Female Body, and Political Participation," *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 22, no. 1 (2014): 52–3.

⁸ Shevelov, *Women and Print Culture*; Ballaster et al., *Women's Worlds*; Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*; Margaret Beetham, and Kay Boardman, *Victorian Women's Magazines. An anthology* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2001); Töyry, *Varhaiset naistenlehdet*; Töyry, "Gender Contract," 13–26; Rachel Ritchie, Sue Hawkins, Nicola Phillips, and Jay S. Kleinberg, "Introduction," in *Women in Magazines: Research, Representation, Production and Consumption*, eds. Rachel Ritchie et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 1–22.

⁹ Töyry, "Gender Contract," 13–5.

¹⁰ Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*; Shevelov, *Women and Print Culture*; Ballaster et al., *Women's Worlds*.

Throughout their history, commercial women's magazines have been criticised for representing consumerism and promoting the interests of the fashion industry only.¹¹ The starting point for this article is however the notion that women's magazines are an institution that participates in defining the characteristics of femininity and producing gender relations in a given society at a given point of time. By paying attention to women and "women's concerns" such as dress and fashion, women's magazines also make claims about women's identities, capabilities, and social importance for both women themselves and society.¹²

As this chapter will show, women's magazines do not simply mediate fashion; they have a crucial role in representing and interpreting it to consumers through text and image.¹³ Women's magazines of the 1920s and 1930s adopted an active role in making the new style meaningful in a way that suited their ideology. The aim of this chapter is to discuss how women's magazines reconstructed the meaning of fashion and the ideas and norms of dress of class society in the inter-war period.

Methodology: Femininity in women's magazines

The ideologies of women's consumer magazines have been studied since the 1960s, particularly by feminist scholars, who have drawn different conclusions about their role in society. Especially in early studies, women's magazines were seen as repressive institutions maintaining patriarchal values and women's domestic role, but more recent studies have demonstrated their role as spaces for negotiation or even resistance for women.¹⁴ These contradictory conclusions can be partly explained by the fact that study results have depended on the material analysed. Women's magazines have developed as a mixed form containing various text types, genres, and voices that construct different and multiple meanings. The discussion and representation of femininity within a single issue therefore involves many ambivalent, fragmentary, competing, and even contradictory notions.¹⁵

¹¹ See e.g. Ellen McCracken, *Decoding Women's Magazines: From Mademoiselle to Miss* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); Maija Töyry, *Varhaiset naistenlehdet ja naisten elämän ristiriidat. Neuvotteluja lukijasopimuksesta* (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2005), 39–44.

¹² Shevelov, *Women in Print Culture*; Ballaster et al., *Women's Worlds*; Beetham, *A Magazine of her own?*

¹³ Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body. Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 235; Yunuya Kawamura, *Fashion-ology* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 4, 20, 80; Kathleen R. Endres, "Women's Magazines: Fashion," in *Encyclopedia of Gender in Media*, ed. Mary Kosut (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2012), 437.

¹⁴ Ballaster et al., *Women's Worlds*, 4–25; Beetham, *A Magazine of her Own?*, 1–3; Richie et al., "Introduction," 5.

¹⁵ Ballaster et al. 1991, *Women's Worlds*, 4–25; Beetham, *A Magazine of her Own?*, 1; Beetham, and Boardman, *Victorian Women's Magazines*, 4; Richie et al., "Introduction", 5.

This means that the chosen magazines and individual text samples need to be contextualised in terms of text types and genres as well as the historical context because each magazine and its content are also part of culture-specific political, economic, and other local discussions.¹⁶ As Maija Töyry has argued, women's magazines build their content around the contradictions in women's lives. She suggests that the success of women's magazines seems to lie in their ability to address readers in a way that resonates with the ongoing public discussions and negotiations, as well as with the private lives of readers.¹⁷

The material for this article consists of 14 Finnish women's magazines, which are presented in Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3. I have analyzed all articles and fashion columns published in these magazines in the period under study. In analysing the ideologies that they represent, I used method of discourse analysis¹⁸ to scrutinise how the magazines represent and give meaning to femininity as they discuss dress. I also determined the "implied reader" of each magazine, meaning the reader produced and subjected by the text.¹⁹ By defining their readers "as women," women's magazines construct their implied reader based on her gender; she is "not a man." Although women's magazines are often addressed to "all women," they seek to differentiate themselves from other magazines by defining their readers as certain kinds of women such as middle-class women or working-class women. The positioning of readers "as women" in women's magazines is ideological because it offers individuals social identities and, through them, ways of making sense of the world. They also give a particular meaning to gender difference and femininity. Additionally, different texts may construct different implied readers within one magazine.²⁰

In the magazines, femininity is usually represented simultaneously as a given and as something still to be achieved. Femininity is also often portrayed as a difficult process of "becoming a woman" that includes learning the skills of beauty care and dressing oneself stylishly and fashionable. For the process, they characteristically provide recipes, patterns, narratives, and models both in the journalistic content and advertisement. Therefore I read and analyse the women's magazines under

¹⁶ Töyry, "Gender Contract," 13–5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22–3.

¹⁸ Donald Matheson, *Media Discourses: Analysing Media Texts* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Ballaster et al., *Women's Worlds*, 2; Töyry, *Varhaiset naistenlehdet*, 61, 86; Porter. H. Abbot, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Second edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 84–6, 235.

²⁰ Ballaster et al., *Women's Worlds*, 25, 43–4, 82–3; Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*, 2, 5, 12–3; Beetham, and Boardman, *Victorian Women's Magazines*, 4–5; Töyry, *Varhaiset naistenlehdet*, 82, 253–54, 263.

study as agents of socialization, that tell women what to think and do about themselves, and keep them up to date on the arts and skills of femininity such as fashion.²¹

Finnish women's magazines of the 1920s and 1930s

The very first Finnish women's magazine was published in 1782, but only the establishment of the Finnish-language *Koti ja Yhteiskunta* and the Swedish-language *Hemmet och samhället* in 1889 started the boom of women's magazine publishing in Finland. They were bulletins of the bilingual (Finnish- and Swedish-language) women's rights association Finsk Kvinnoförbundet—Suomen Naisyhdistys (Finnish Women's Association), and they institutionalised the genre of women's magazines in Finland in the form of feminist magazines. The women's association had been established in 1884 by upper-class (bourgeois) women.²² The labour movement emerged in Finland at the turn of the twentieth century, and the first bulletin of labour women, the newspaper *Palvelijatar* (Domestic worker), was established in 1905. The following year, it was renamed *Työläisnainen* (Labor woman, 1906–1925).²³

In 1906, Finnish women got the vote and the right to stand as candidates in parliamentary elections. The following year, several leading figures of both the bourgeois and labour women's movements were elected as members of parliament. Thereafter, the bourgeois feminist associations were united with the women's associations of the conservative political parties, and the feminist women's magazines became their bulletins.²⁴ In the 1920s and 1930s, altogether eight women's political

²¹ Beetham, *A Magazine of her Own?*, 1.

²² Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 139–41; Arja Turunen, "Naistenlehdet Suomessa 1880-luvulta 1930-luvulle," *Media & Viestintä* 37, no. 2 (2014): 47–8; Töyry, "Gender Contract," 17–9. For the history of the Finnish women's rights movement, see Irma Sulkunen, "Suffrage, Nation and Citizenship – The Finnish Case in an International Context," in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship – International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms*, eds. Irma Sulkunen et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 83–105; Riitta Jallinoja, *Suomalaisen naisasialiikkeen taistelukaudet: Naisasialiike naisten elämäntilanteen muutoksen ja yhteiskunnallis-aatteellisen murroksen heijastajana* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1983); Irma Sulkunen, *Naisen kutsumus. Miina Sillanpää ja sukupuolten maailmojen erkaantuminen* (Helsinki: Hanki ja jää, 1989); Minna Hagner, and Teija Försti, *Suffragettien sisaret* (Helsinki: Unioni Naisasialiitto, 2006); Anne Ollila, *Suomen kotien päivä valkenee... Marttajärjestö suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa vuoteen 1939* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1993); Anne Ollila, "Women's voluntary associations in Finland during the 1920s and 1930s," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 20, no. 2 (1995): 97–107; Pasi Saarimäki, "Bourgeois Women and The Question of Divorce in Finland in The Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 43, no. 1 (2018): 64–90.

²³ Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 154; Turunen "Naistenlehdet Suomessa," 48. For the history of the women's associations of the labor movement, see Sulkunen, *Naisen kutsumus*; Maria Lähteenmäki, *Vuosisadan naisliike. Naiset ja sosialidemokratia 1900-luvun Suomessa* (Helsinki: Sosialidemokraattiset naiset, 2002).

²⁴ These women's associations were closely connected to party-political activism even before this. The Finnish Women's Association was established by bourgeois Fennoman (Finnish nationalist) women, and the Finnish Women's Association Unioni was established by Svecomans (Swedish nationalists in Finland) and liberal Fennomans. See Jallinoja, *Naisasialiikkeen taistelukaudet*; Hagner and Försti, *Suffragettien sisaret*; Tanja Ohtonen, *Oikeuden*,

magazines were published in Finland. Three of them represented the bourgeois political agenda: *Suomen Nainen* (Finland's woman, 1913–1990) and *Astra* (1919–1992) were bulletins of the women's associations of the Finnish-language and Swedish-language conservative parties (National Coalition Party and Swedish People's Party). *Naisten Ääni* (Women's voice, 1907–1949) represented the politically unaffiliated women's rights association Suomalainen Naisliitto (Finnish Women's Union), which had, however, close connections to party politics as it was established by women members of the Young Finnish Party (Constitutional-Fennoman Party) to support and promote the political participation of Finnish-speaking women.²⁵

Labour women had altogether four bulletins in the 1920s and 1930s. After the Finnish civil war in 1918, the Finnish Labour Party was divided into the Social Democratic Party and Communist Party. *Työläisnainen* (Labour woman) was published by communist women, and social democratic women established their own bulletin *Toveritar* (Female comrade) in 1922. In the 1920s, the publishing of the Communist Party's bulletins and newspapers faced difficulties due to the political situation.²⁶ *Työläisnainen* was first replaced by *Naistyöläinen* (Female worker) in 1925 and then by *Työläis- ja talonpoikaisnaisten lehti* (Worker and peasant women's magazine) in 1925–1930.

The eighth women's political journal *Lotta Svärd* was established in 1929 and represented the women's voluntary auxiliary paramilitary organization Lotta Svärd. The Lotta Svärd organization was founded to support the White Guard, a voluntary militia, by providing food supplies and medica, for example, and to promote patriotic values among women.²⁷

The genre of domestic women's magazines, which focused on discussing cooking, cleaning, gardening, needlework, child rearing, and other duties of housewives, was established in 1902 when the magazines *Emäntälehti* (Farm women's magazine, est. 1902) and *Husmodern* (Farmer's wife, est. 1902) were founded. They were bulletins of the popular educational Martha Organization,

laillisuuden ja ihmisyyden hengessä: Suomalainen naisliitto vuosina 1907–1939 (Helsinki: Suomalainen naisliitto, 2007), 14–20.

²⁵ Ohtonen, *Oikeuden, laillisuuden*, 14–20. The political participation and activism of Swedish-speaking women was supported and promoted by the women's association of the Swedish People's Party. See Ohtonen, *Oikeuden, laillisuuden*, 15.

²⁶ Sulkunen, *Naisen kutsumus*, 68–70; Lähtenmäki, *Vuosisadan naisliike*, 110–11; Tauno Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous 1923–1930* (Helsinki: Suomen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2008), 306.

²⁷ Pia Olsson, *Eteen vapahan valkean Suomen* (Helsinki: Suomen muinaismuistoyhdistys, 1999); Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, *Perhe maanpuolustajana: Sukupuoli ja sukupolvi Lotta Svärd- ja suojeluskuntajärjestöissä 1918–1944* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2012).

which had been established in 1899 to provide domestic economic advice to farmer and worker women.²⁸

Fashion as a harmful phenomenon in political women's magazines

Corresponding to the international feminist movement,²⁹ nineteenth-century feminist women's magazines were very critical towards fashion. They criticised corsets and suggested that women should wear so-called "reform dresses" as an alternative to fashionable dresses.³⁰ The women's rights movement was part of a larger bourgeois women's movement in Finland, which consisted of several prominent and powerful associations. The bourgeois women's movement demanded more political rights for women, but it also aimed at to emancipate women through the idealization of the domestic women. It emphasised the social importance of the housewife's role by arguing that by raising children, taking care of the household, and ensuring the emotional stability of the home, women advanced society as a whole.³¹ The fashionable "new woman" of the 1920s posed a threat to both of these objectives. In the 1920s and 1930s, the feminist bulletin *Naisten Ääni* continually criticised contemporary fashion as impractical and argued that the wearing of fashionable clothes made women look silly and illogical, which defeated the feminist argument that women were as intelligent as men. *Naisten Ääni* was especially worried about young women who were easily lured by the whims of fashion and were more interested in reading fashion magazines than educating themselves and joining the women's rights movement.³² To encourage young women to read *Naisten Ääni* instead of fashion magazines, the magazine established a new column addressed to them in the late 1920s.³³

On the other hand, members of the feminist movement were expected to follow fashion in their dress style. The bulletin advertised fashion houses and published reports of fashion shows. The Stockmann department store in Helsinki was praised for paying attention "to us who need to dress

²⁸ See Ollila, *Suomen kotien*; Ollila, "Women's voluntary."

²⁹ See e.g. Gayle V. Fischer, *Pantaloon and Power. A Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2001); Patrick Steorn, "Konstnärligt antimode. Svensk Reformdräkt kring sekelsskiftet 1900," in *Mode – en introduktion. En tvärvetenskaplig betraktelse*, ed. Dirk Gindt, and Louise Wallenberg (Stockholm: Raster Förlag, 2009), 225–49.

³⁰ Töyry, *Varhaiset naistenlehdet*, 225–7; Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 143–8.

³¹ Ollila, *Suomen kotien*, 338–9, 342; Ollila, "Women's voluntary"; Saarimäki, "Bourgeois Women", 73–4.

³² See e.g. *Naisten Ääni* 19/1923, 268; *Naisten Ääni* 17/1924, 256; *Naisten Ääni* 1/1926, 12; *Naisten Ääni* 18–19/1929, 367–8.

³³ Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 153.

well and follow both fashion and good taste.”³⁴ By reading *Naisten Ääni*, young women too would hopefully learn to dress in good taste.

In the early 1920s, other political women’s magazines representing either the labour movement or the conservative political parties equally criticised contemporary fashion with arguments similar to those voiced in *Naisten Ääni*: fashionable dresses were impractical, unhealthy, and ridiculous. Especially in the winter, light dresses caused serious colds and other problems.³⁵ In *Toveritar*, fashion was also discussed as a political question: the fashion industry exemplified the capitalist system that lured young girls astray.³⁶

Kotiliesi and the modern rational dress style

In Sweden, first women’s consumer magazines *Svensk Damtidning* and *Idun* were established in the late 1880s and the genre became more diversified as *Husmodern* and *Charme* were established in 1917 and 1921.³⁷ In Finland, the establishment of the first women’s consumer magazines *Naisten Lehti* and *Kotiliesi* took place only in the early 1920s. They did not, however, dramatically change the market of women’s magazines. Their mission was similar to the one pursued by the bulletins of the bourgeois women’s movement. They both called themselves “organs of Finnish women and homes” and aimed to bring women’s voice to the political discussion. In addition to political questions, the magazines covered art and literature and gave advice on housekeeping, health care, and dress. Their content was therefore a mixture of feminist, domestic, and fashion magazines.³⁸

Naisten Lehti was published by Edistysseurojen Kustannus (Progressive societies’ publishing), which represented Finnish educational civic organizations. It was suppressed within a year but *Kotiliesi* that was established at the end of 1922 by the publishing company Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö (WSOY) became the most long-lived commercial women’s magazine in Finland. *Kotiliesi* was a Finnish version of the American *Good Housekeeping* and the Swedish *Husmodern* that represented domestic women’s magazines, a consumer magazine genre, but the editorial team

³⁴ *Naisten Ääni* 22/1936, 318.

³⁵ *Suomen Nainen* 8–9/1920, 128; *Suomen Nainen* 22–23/1920, 340; *Toveritar* 11/1924, 130; *Työläis- ja talonpoikaisnaisten lehti* 5/1928, 4.

³⁶ *Toveritar* 11/1924, 130; *Työläis- ja talonpoikaisnaisten lehti* 5/1928, 4.

³⁷ Severinsson, *Moderna Kvinnor*, 44–52; Lisbeth Larsson, *En annan historia. Om kvinnors läsning och svensk veckopress* (Stockholm: Symposion, 1989), 105; Lisbeth Larsson, ”Trender i svensk veckopress,” in *Veckopressbranschens struktur och ekonomi*, ed. Karl Erik Gustafsson (Göteborg: Handelshögskolan vid Göteborgs universitet, 1991), 25–7.

³⁸ Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 160.

had close connections to the women's rights movement and represented its goals in educating Finnish women, emancipating them as experts of household matters, and professionalizing the status of housewives.³⁹ The motto of the magazine was "for better housekeeping, rational domestic economics, and cultivated homes."⁴⁰

Kotiliesi was targeted at middle-class women who made most of their clothing themselves. The magazine's educational role through which it aimed to modernise the Finnish way of life also dominated the way dress was discussed: the magazine did not merely present new fashion trends, but it strove to "translate" the ideals of Parisian fashion into a dress style suitable for the daily life of "ordinary" (middle-class) Finnish women. While fashion magazines used fashion photography to convey fashion ideals to their readers, *Kotiliesi* relied on written columns in which readers were taught how to dress: columnists provided detailed instructions on how to choose patterns and fabrics for dresses, how to sew clothes, and, most importantly, how to wear them.⁴¹ Dressing well did not only mean wearing fashionable and expensive clothing; rather, each person was supposed to know her personality, style and social class and dress accordingly. When choosing what kind of clothing to purchase or make and wear, women were advised to pay attention to the occasion on which the clothing would be worn and her own body type and personality.

A dress that suits Maija does not suit Kaija. A dress that looks very good on one occasion, is tasteless in another. A wonderful-looking dress can make a woman look terrible. A dress that is beautiful in a fashion magazine might look very different when worn by somebody with a different body type.⁴²

³⁹ The editor-in-chief of *Kotiliesi* was Alli Wihherheimo, who had previously worked as a copy editor at WSOY. The editorial team included four members: Laura Harmaja was a teacher (and later a professor) of home economics, Hedwig Gebhard was a founder of the cooperative movement Pellervo, which was established to modernise Finnish agriculture, Mandi Hannula was one of the leading figures of the Finnish Martha Organization, and Eva Somersalo and her successor Mary Ollonqvist were specialists of dress and handicrafts. They were both teachers at the Helsinki Handicraft School. Gebhard, Hannula, and Somersalo were also members of the parliament representing conservative parties. See Leena Löyttyniemi, "Harmaja, Laura (1881–1954)", in *Kansallisbiografia. Studia Biographica 4* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2000); Anna-Liisa Sysiharju, "Gebhard, Hedvig (1867–1961)", in *Kansallisbiografia. Studia Biographica 4* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2007); Ulpu Marjomaa, "Hannula, Mandi (1880–1952)", in *Kansallisbiografia. Studia Biographica 4* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2004); Päivi Aikasalo, *Alli Wihherheimo. Uranaisen sydän* (Helsinki: Otava, 2004).

⁴⁰ Malmberg, "Naisten ja kotien lehdet," 197–200; Töyry, *Varhaiset naistenlehdet*, 251–3; Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 161–3.

⁴¹ See e.g. *Kotiliesi* 23/1923, 699–702; *Kotiliesi* 5/1924, 120; *Kotiliesi* 6/1928, 175–176.

⁴² *Kotiliesi* 3/1923, 82.

Before buying new clothing, the implied reader was supposed to critically evaluate her existing clothing. For example, when the season changed, it was time to check the condition of one's existing clothes and remodel them if necessary:

Clean and iron them if they are still usable. In most cases, you can undo the seams and wash, iron, and sew the pieces together again to make a dress with a new style. If the colours have faded, dye the fabric with a dark colour, which will make it look almost like new.⁴³

The educational role adopted by *Kotiliesi* also meant that it taught its readers how to be economical consumer and dress in a civilised manner. Dressing oneself was represented as a skill involving various detailed aspects that all needed to be mastered to be a well-dressed modern citizen. Especially in the 1920s, *Kotiliesi* actively discussed why appearance mattered:

There are countless people who think that it's a sin to enhance one's appearance, that beautiful clothes mean superficiality and vanity, and that good manners are a sign of dishonesty and falseness. But why should a noble soul hide under a scary exterior? Aren't ugly clothes rather a sign of recklessness and a lack of a sense of beauty than of a prestigious character? Isn't it more pleasant to socialize with loveable and civilized people than with inconsiderate and clumsy people?⁴⁴

In *Kotiliesi*, the implied reader followed fashion although the magazine also warned against the whims of fashion. The most important aspects of dress were rationality, functionality, and hygiene. Firstly, readers were advised to buy clothing that had a classic style that would not soon go out of fashion. Secondly, clothing had to be functional: winter clothes, for example, had to be warm and protect the body from wind and cold weather. Thirdly, clothing had to be easy to wash because a clean and tidy appearance was an important characteristic of a modern woman. With these instructions, *Kotiliesi* taught its readers the idea of a modern woman as a rational woman who was an economical consumer, understood the principles of hygiene in preventing disease, and valued the ideas of modern functional design.

⁴³ *Kotiliesi* 17/1928, 581–582.

⁴⁴ *Kotiliesi* 20/1923, 592.

Establishment of fashion magazines in the 1930s

The publishing of *Kotiliesi* proved successful for WSOY. The circulation grew from 9,500 in 1923 to nearly 80,000 in the late 1920s.⁴⁵ The publishing of magazines was modernised during the 1920s: publishing houses started to publish new kind of periodicals that targeted new audiences and the genre of a periodical developed from a literary journal into a magazine consisting of various text types, a casual journalistic style and photojournalism.⁴⁶ These changes paved the way also for new Finnish women's magazines. Otava, WSOY's main rival, established its first women's magazine *Oma Koti* (Home of one's own) in 1932. *Oma Koti* was also a domestic magazine that aimed to elevate the status of housewives and make homes more pleasant, but its assumed reader was an urban middle-class housewife, and therefore gardening and farming of domestic animals were not discussed in it as in *Kotiliesi*.⁴⁷

A year later, the publisher Amos Anderson decided to modernise the market of women's magazines by establishing *Eeva*. It revolutionised the genre of women's magazines in Finland: instead of a domestic magazine, *Eeva* was a true fashion magazine. As the Swedish *Charme* that was established already in 1921, *Eeva* was targeted to the modern, independent women. It was also a Finnish version of foreign women's magazines targeted at upper-class ladies. *Eeva* addressed modern educated women, including career women, who were interested in art, literature, movies, sports, fashion, and beauty care. Domestic issues and handicrafts were not covered in *Eeva*. The editor Lempi Torppa was the former editor of *Kauneudenhoitolehti* (Beauty care magazine, 1931–1933), which focused on fashion, beauty care, and cosmetics. The readers of both these magazines represented urban upper- and upper-middle-class women.⁴⁸ While *Kotiliesi* was very critical towards the wearing of make-up, *Eeva* and *Kauneudenhoitolehti* advised women to look after their appearance:

The claim that beauty means power, applies especially to working women. Actresses, fashion models, saleswomen, women working in offices, house servants – they all must look as young and fresh as possible in order to keep their job and their position

⁴⁵ Malmberg, "Naisten ja kotien lehdet," 200.

⁴⁶ Uino 1991, 42–3, 81–93; Leino-Kaukiainen 1992, 220–1.

⁴⁷ Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 165–6; Malmberg, "Naisten ja kotien lehdet," 201–2.

⁴⁸ Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 191–6; Malmberg, "Naisten ja kotien lehdet", 203–4. For *Charme*, see Severinsson, *Moderna Kvinnor* and for ladies' magazines, see e.g. Ballaster et al., *Women's Worlds*, 93ff.

in life. No matter how talented and skilled they are at their profession, they might be replaced by younger and more beautiful women if they age too soon.⁴⁹

In 1934, WSOY and Otava united their magazine publishing into one publishing company called Yhtyneet Kuvalehdet (United Magazines), and *Oma Koti* was integrated into *Kotiliesi*. The editor of *Oma Koti*, Ida Pekari became a member of the editorial board of *Kotiliesi*. Her ideas of *Kotiliesi*'s profil dissented from the views of the editor-in-chief and the editorial board and disagreements hampered the editorial work. The difficult situation was solved by Jorma Reenpää, the managing director of the Yhtyneet Kuvalehti. He decided to establish a new women's magazine *Hopeapeili* (Silver mirror, 1936–1971) and asked Pekari to be its editor-in-chief. *Hopeapeili* was similar to the *Oma Koti* and it addressed the same audience as *Eeva*: the urban upper-middle-class women and career women who were interested in fashion, beauty care, and literary issues. *Hopeapeili* covered however also handicrafts, cooking, and interior design.⁵⁰

Kauneudenhoitolehti, *Eeva*, and *Hopeapeili* can be labelled as fashion and beauty magazines. Their readers were not given a list of domestic tasks, they were taught the routines of daily beauty care instead. For example, in the article "A career women's week", *Hopeapeili* instructed women to have a manicure on every Monday, pedicure on every Tuesday, facial care on Wednesdays, shaping of eyebrows on Thursdays and to wash their hair on Friday.⁵¹ *Kauneudenhoitolehti*, *Eeva*, and *Hopeapeili* reported on the latest trends of Parisian fashion and featured fashion also from Berlin, Stockholm, and America. Readers were informed about the materials, styles, and colours that were currently in fashion, and they were also acquainted with famous fashion houses and designers. For example, in the spring 1935, *Eeva* informed that in the next summer, dresses are much shorter than last year, "but not as narrow as we expected." The language of fashion was international: Dresses of the summer 1935 were made of "crépe de chine" fabric and they represented the style of a "georgette dress".

The fabrics of the Chanel are the most beautiful, they include dark colours with butterfly and star patterns. The most common colour combination consists of black and rose-red and it is typically used in the fabric called "mousse-line de soie" (in

⁴⁹ *Kauneudenhoitolehti* 1/1931, 6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 166, 196–7; Malmberg, "Naisten ja kotien lehdet," 204–6.

⁵¹ *Hopeapeili* 2/1938, 36.

Finnish it is often called chiffon). Dresses made of linen, lustex or piqué usually include a small coat or a cape.⁵²

The fashion industry and fashion as a phenomenon were never questioned. The magazines' implied readers kept themselves up to date with the latest fashion trends. Although the Stockmann department store was highly praised for providing high-quality fashion, the implied readers purchased their dresses first and foremost at fashion houses: "In the summer, we need a beautiful evening dress for the casino, and we will only find one at a fashion designer's salon."⁵³

Fashion journalism in political women's magazines in the 1930s

In parallel with the establishment of *Kotiliesi* in the early 1920s, *Astra*, the bulletin of the women's association of the conservative Swedish People's Party, started to publish fashion columns representing Swedish and Parisian fashion.⁵⁴ By doing so, it abandoned the critical tone against fashion characteristic of political women's magazines and started to develop into a fashion magazine. *Suomen Nainen* underwent a similar transformation during the 1930s. At first, readers of *Suomen Nainen* were given advice in a similar fashion to *Kotiliesi*—with an emphasis on choosing practical clothing⁵⁵—but since 1934, the fashion columnist focused on reporting on the latest trends of high fashion and the collections of Finnish fashion salons. Parisian fashion was represented as the norm of dress for readers of *Suomen Nainen*.⁵⁶ Next to the fashion column appeared ads of Finnish fashion houses. *Astra* also published a column entitled "Sy själv" (Sew by yourself), which provided advice on home sewing and advertised dress patterns published by the *Revue des Modes* store.⁵⁷ The relatively small amount of political journalism and the decision to develop the bulletin into a fashion magazine reflected women's political role in conservative parties: their role was to focus on traditional women's concerns and leave the ideological work to men.⁵⁸

The readers and editors of *Toveritar*—the labour women's bulletin—also noticed how the establishment of *Kotiliesi* changed the market of women's magazines. *Toveritar* had been very

⁵² *Eeva* 4/1935, 25.

⁵³ *Eeva* 4/1934, 13.

⁵⁴ *Astra* 14/1922, 8–9; see also *Astra* 1930, 17–8; *Astra* 1/1939, 36–7.

⁵⁵ E.g. *Suomen Nainen* 1/1932, 13; *Suomen Nainen* 10/1933, 143.

⁵⁶ E.g. *Suomen Nainen* 4/1935, 63.

⁵⁷ E.g. *Astra* 17/1927, 288.

⁵⁸ Vesa Vares, and Ari Uino. *Suomalaiskansallinen Kokoomus. Kansallisen Kokoomuspuolueen historia 1929–1944* (Helsinki: Edita, 2007), 298–306.

critical towards fashion, but in 1925, its readers expressed a wish that it would include sections on fashion and domestic matters as well. Readers explained that this might make the magazine interesting enough to subscribe also for those labour women who were not members of the women's association of the Social Democratic Party. Additionally, labour women needed an alternative to *Kotiliesi*, “whose recipes and fashion pages are unfeasible for us working women.”⁵⁹

To respond to its readers' wishes, the magazine started to publish a fashion column and sewing patterns in 1928. The fashion columnist gave advice on what kind of clothing suited different body types—that a short dress did not suit a bandy-legged woman, for example.⁶⁰ The publishing of sewing patterns was explained by noting that the modern style was so simple that every woman could now make her own dresses.⁶¹ The contemporary style was also praised for being healthy and practical:

Our [modern] dresses are loose-fitting and short. Young women might go too far with these. In our everyday dress, the pattern is not capricious but straight and as simple as possible, so that it would be very easy and economical to sew your dresses yourself!⁶²

The *Toveritar* fashion column ended with a hidden advertisement: “When you buy a *Revue des Modes* pattern, you can easily sew yourself a nice everyday dress and even an evening dress.”⁶³ During the 1930s, *Toveritar* transformed from a political bulletin into a domestic magazine similar to *Kotiliesi*. *Toveritar* started purposefully to compete for readers with *Kotiliesi*, but the change also resulted from an ideological change in the Social Democratic Party. In the early twentieth century, the labour movement had criticised the bourgeois ideal of domestic women, but in the 1930s, it started to support it.⁶⁴

A similar transformation also took place in *Emäntälehti*. While *Naisten Ääni* was worried that farm women would replace their traditional dress style and domestic materials with international fashion and imported fabrics,⁶⁵ *Emäntälehti* did not discuss dress and fashion until the late 1920s. At first, *Emäntälehti* discussed dress by giving advice on cleaning and repairing clothes. In 1924, it started

⁵⁹ *Toveritar* 5/1925, 62–4.

⁶⁰ *Toveritar* 3/1928, 47.

⁶¹ *Toveritar* 7/1928, 104–5.

⁶² *Toveritar* 7/1298, 104.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Sulkunen, *Naisen kutsumus*, 83–4.

⁶⁵ See e.g. *Naisten Ääni* 6/1930, 136.

to offer advice on how to darn underwear, aprons, and children's clothes.⁶⁶ In the late 1920s, *Emäntälehti* began to recommend that farm women should wear the national costumes that had been recently designed based on traditional Finnish peasant dresses.⁶⁷ Farm women were also educated about the importance of hygiene in everyday life. From the perspective of the upper-class educators, working-class and agrarian people's dress and homes were untidy. By emphasizing the importance of cleanliness and hygiene in appearance and at home, the Martha Organization and its periodicals taught their audience the modern middle-class standards of civilised manners.⁶⁸

A column advising on how to dress was established in *Emäntälehti* in 1931. Readers were taught that their most important dresses were their work and everyday dresses. The ideals of dress were similar to the ones expressed in *Kotiliesi*: the material and style for these dresses had been carefully selected to guarantee their functionality, easy care, and long-lasting use. The main difference between the two magazines was their attitude towards consumption. *Kotiliesi* represented consumer culture. The dresses of the implied *Kotiliesi* reader were made by herself or a seamstress, but the fabric was purchased in a fabric store. *Emäntälehti*, in turn, promoted the idea of self-sufficiency: farm women were supposed to make their family's clothing themselves by using wool and other materials that could be produced and processed at home. An evening dress was an unnecessary item of clothing for farm women; a simple black wool dress fulfilled the need for a Sunday dress, *Emäntälehti* reminded its readers.⁶⁹

In the late 1930s, a fashion column was established in *Emäntälehti*. It discussed the latest fashion trends, but it continued to emphasise the virtues of rationality and economical consumption: instead of making new dresses, women were supposed to mend their old dresses by patching them up with pieces of new fabric.⁷⁰ Lotta Svärd included a fashion column that gave its readers advice similarly to *Kotiliesi*. When performing official duties of the organization, members of the Lotta Svärd organization wore a Lotta dress, which was a simple grey uniform-like dress that symbolised patriotism, discipline, and moral purity.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 177.

⁶⁷ E.g. *Emäntälehti* 1/1927, 10–1; *Emäntälehti* 2/1928, 38–41.

⁶⁸ Ollila, *Suomen kotien päivä*; Arja Turunen, "Nykyaikaista naista luomassa. Kotilieden, Emäntälehdten ja Toverittaren pukeutumisohteet kansalaiskasvatuksena 1920–1930-luvuilla," *Kasvatus ja Aika* 13, no. 4 (2019): 14–5; Kati Mikkola, *Tulevaisuutta vastaan. Uutuuskien vastustus, kansatiedon keruu ja kansakunnan rakentaminen* (Helsinki: SKS, 2009), 239–52.

⁶⁹ *Emäntälehti* 6/1931, 303; *Emäntälehti* 7–8/1931, 346.

⁷⁰ *Emäntälehti* 4/1937, 118.

⁷¹ Turunen, *Hame, housut, hamehousut!*, 187.

Conclusion: Fashion journalism reconstructed the identities and consumption patterns of class society

In the UK, US and also in Sweden, the genre of women's magazines was established in the late 19th century as the genre of women's consumer magazines that discuss fashion, beauty care, and domestic matters. The establishment and development of this magazine genre has been closely linked to the development of consumer society and the bourgeois family model. The ideologies of women's magazines are therefore often interpreted as representing consumerism, capitalism, and conservative values, but in this article, I have demonstrated that in the Finnish context of the 1920s and 1930s, various sub-genres of women's magazines were published that represented differing and even conflicting ideologies.

In Finland, the genre of women's magazines was established in the form of political magazines. The first Finnish women's magazines were published by bourgeois women's rights associations. As their main goal, the vote for women, was reached, women's political activism was channelled through political parties, and the feminist bulletins were replaced by the bulletins of the women's associations of the conservative political parties. Their political agenda was twofold: upper-class women demanded more political rights, whereas lower- and middle-class women were supposed to focus on their duties as mothers and housewives. The latter agenda was disseminated to farm and working-class women through the domestic women's magazines *Emäntälehti* and *Husmodern*. The conservative political ideology and bourgeois family model were criticised and challenged by the women's associations of the labour party and the communist party. It was common for all these magazines to criticise fashion and warn readers about the dangers of becoming a fashion victim. In their journalism, they reproduced and reconstructed fashion as a frivolous phenomenon that was also harmful to women. In *Työläisnainen*, fashion was also closely associated with the problems of capitalist society.

Due to the late establishment of consumer society in Finland, the publishing of consumer magazines for women became a profitable business only in the 1920s and 1930s. The first one of them, *Naisten Lehti*, was published only for a year, but *Kotiliesi*, established in 1922 proved to be successful and it is published even today. They renewed the journalism and publishing of women's magazines, but they did not revolutionise the market of women's magazines. Firstly, the previous and existing political women's magazines had also included fashion pages and advertisements. Secondly, the

new consumer magazines, especially *Kotiliesi*, continued the tradition of political bulletins by discussing women's position in society and other political questions.

Most of Finnish women's magazines published in the 1920s and 1930s can be described as a mixture of political and fashion (consumer) magazines as they represented the ideology of consumer culture as well as the political ideology of bourgeois or labour feminism. The women's magazines *Kauneudenhoitolehti* and *Eeva*, which were established in the early 1930s, were the only one representing a women's consumer (fashion) magazine without political content or connections to the bourgeois women's rights movement. However, they were not the only representatives of the genre of women's fashion magazines: the political magazines *Astra* and *Suomen Nainen*, which were published by Swedish- and Finnish-language conservative political parties, kept the political content to a minimum and offered their readers a substantial amount of fashion journalism.

In all the women's magazines, fashion journalism reflected and reconstructed the ideas and norms of dress of class society. The feminist magazine *Naisten Ääni*, the political bulletins *Astra* and *Suomen Nainen*, and the consumer magazine *Eeva* were targeted at upper-class women who were supposed to dress according to their social standing: to follow fashion, purchase their clothing at fashion salons, and be familiar with the principles of good taste. In these magazines, modern dress meant the latest style designed by fashion designers.

In the magazines of the Martha Organization, which were targeted at farm women, the ideal dress was a simple self-made dress. On the one hand, it was an economical option for poor agrarian women who could not afford imported fabrics or ready-made clothes. On the other hand, this kind of advice served to keep farm women out of modern consumerism and maintain traditional needlework skills. In dress, modernity meant functionality and hygiene.

Kotiliesi, *Oma Koti*, *Hopeapeili*, and *Lotta Svärd* were targeted at middle-class women, and the ideal dress in these magazines represented the ideals of a middle-class lifestyle. Fashion was portrayed as something that women must follow in their dress, but the implied readers were also expected to be rational consumers. Instead of buying clothing at fashion salons, the readers of these magazines made their clothing by themselves or had it made by a seamstress. Consuming fashion meant first and foremost consuming fabrics and women's magazines, which reported on the new styles of dress. In these magazines, a modern dress was a dress that was functional in style and

chosen carefully to suit the wearer and the occasion on which it was to be worn. The modern dress was also a clean, tidy, and hygienic dress.

In the labour women's magazine *Toveritar*, the fashion journalism of the 1920s reconstructed a clear difference between working-class and middle-class women. The simplicity of the modern dress meant that it was easy to sew at home, which also made it a cheaper option for working-class women. In the 1930s, the magazine began to promote middle-class style as an ideal that also applied to working-class women.

My analysis shows that each magazine formulated its own version of a "women's magazine" and "modern dress." Both these concepts also changed during the time period under study, which underlines the need to carefully contextualise each magazine when they are used as research material.

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Table 5.1

Women's political magazines published in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s

Publisher	Title	Publishing period
Finnish Women's Union (Suomalainen Naisliitto)	<i>Naisten Ääni</i> (Women's Voice)	1907–1949
National Coalition Party	<i>Suomen Nainen</i> (Finland's woman)	1913–1990
Swedish People's Party	<i>Astra</i>	1919–1992
Women's Association of the Social Democratic Party	<i>Toveritar</i> (Female comrade)	1922–1943
Women's Association of the Communist Party	<i>Työläisnainen</i> (Labour woman)	1906–1923
Women's Association of the Communist Party's	<i>Naistyöläinen</i> (Female worker) / <i>Työläis- ja talonpoikaisnaisten lehti</i> (Worker and peasant women's magazine)	1925 / 1925–1930
Lotta Svärd Organization	<i>Lotta Svärd</i>	1928–1944

Table 5.2

Domestic women's magazines published in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s

Publisher	Title	Publishing period
Martha Organization	<i>Emäntälehti / Husmodern</i> (Farm women's magazine)	1902–

Table 5.3

Women's consumer magazines published in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s

Publisher	Title	Publishing period
Edistysseurojen Kustannus (Progressive societies' publishing)	<i>Naisten Lehti</i> (Women's Magazine)	1921
WSOY / Yhtyneet Kuvalehdet (United Magazines)	<i>Kotiliesi</i> (Hearth and home)	1922–
Otava	<i>Oma Koti</i> (Home of one's own)	1932–1934
(Publisher unknown)	<i>Kauneudenhoitolehti</i> (Beauty care magazine)	1931–1933
Kustannus oy Eeva (Publishing Ltd Eeva)	<i>Eeva</i>	1933–
United Magazines	<i>Hopeapeili</i> (Silver mirror)	1936–1971