# *FEMINISM, FEMININITY AND ROMANIAN GLOSSY MAGAZINES*

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**Abstract***: The study analyses elements of the feminist movement, makes researches on the concept of femininity, along with their reflection into the Romanian glossy magazines. There are to be analysed the principles of feminism and its modalities of representation in the Romanian glossy magazines, published in both foreign and older Romanian magazines, as Revista Femeia. Moreover, there are to be investigated different issues, in different years of the magazines, specially accentuating their editorials.*

**Keywords***: woman, feminism – women emancipation, femininity, glossy magazines.*

Along the time, the role that the woman in our society has faced numerous changes. The 19th century is the one that brings various feminist movements. Women hardly enjoyed the right to study law or medicine, commerce, their presence being limited due to their limited right to inheritance and property. Women from the higher classes, the nobility and the bourgeoisie, began to organise meetings, in which they debated the women's rights, the right to voting for instance, or other important ones. In 1869, the women from Wyoming received the right to vote, equal to men, later on in the Western and Southern Australia, in 1890, the same situation repeating in three other American states. In 1880, Lady Harberton founded the Rational Dress Society. In 1893, the women from New Zeeland received the similar right to vote. In 1906, the women from Finland started to enjoy the same right (Lloyd, 1970,122). In 1919, the American Congress granted the women the right to vote. In the English speaking Canada, in 1922, the women were granted the right to vote too. Furthermore, in Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the women received the right to vote in 1923. In France, only in 1945, the law from the 2nd of November, instituted the feminine voting (*Ibidem*, 123).

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Fig. 1. Religious Leagues for women's suffrage



Fig. 2. Suffragettes on bikes, on march with flags and pancards in 1914



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Fig.3. Feminists on bikes at the beginning of XX Century



Fig.4. Feminists on bikes at the beginning of XX Century



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Fig. 5. Women on bikes at the beginning of XX Century

One hundred years ago, Alice Hawkins, a suffragette, cycled around Leicester promoting the women's rights movement, causing outrage by being one of the first ladies to wear pantaloons in the city. During the fight to win the vote the bicycle became not only a tool but also a symbol for the emancipation of women. The American civil rights leader, Susan B Anthony, wrote in 1896:

> *I think [the bicycle] has done more to emancipate women than any one thing in the world. I rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a bike. It gives her a feeling of self-reliance and independence the moment she takes her seat; and away she goes, the picture of untrammelled womanhood.*[1]

In the first half of the 20th century, there are formed two strong feminist associations: The International Council of Women (ICW) and The International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IAW). These associations condemns prostitution at the Congress from 1913 of ICW, the English suffragette Millicent Garret Fawcett calling it "women's slavery for the men's financial benefits" (Michel, 1979, 80).

After World War I, the right to vote was granted in 21 countries. The great feminine organisations, ICW and IAW, devoted to the prevention of war and the defending of women's rights to work: the wellbeing of workers, family allowances, equal working

[1] Quoting from the Internet address: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2011/nov/04/bicycle-symbol-womens-emancipation, last accessed was on 23 July 2017.



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conditions for the both genders, defending of illegitimate children, the right of the married woman to keep her name and nationality. The two organisation regrouped at Geneva, within the Women's Representative Organisations United Committee. It was constituted of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Women's Christian Union Temperance, the World Young Woman's Christian Association of the, the International Council of Nurses, the World Union of Women for International Concord. This Committee also put pressure on the United Nations Organisation to develop international relations, to promote peace, to abolish prostitution, to increase children's health and wellbeing, to educate the young married women and to provide proper working conditions and wages for the working women. Despite their dynamism, they obtained solely the recognition of the married women's right to keep their nationality (*Ibidem*, 81).

The book written by Simone de Beauvoir,*Le Deuxieme Sexe*, published in 1949, began to be translated in other countries around the world. It resorts to the dignity of the woman, to become her own master, to have a profession, in order to gain her economic independence. She was to inspire the fight of the American and French feminists, along with the women's movements of freedom.

There appears a period of feminism reconstruction, between 1965-1980, when, in the Occident, occurs the fight for the separation of sexuality from procreation. The progress of Chemistry and medical technique allows the emergence of efficient contraceptives, which give the women, for the first time, the possibility to make the difference between sexuality and procreation. Simone de Beauvoir says: "the liberation of women starts from the womb". From here, it begins the struggle of women to give all the other women the possibility to use these contraceptive means. The pioneering of these techniques starts from the Northern Europe countries and the United States. In the Netherlands, there is open a clinic of contraception starting with the 1883. Born at the end of the 19$^{th}$ century, in an Irish family from the Unites States, the American Margaret Sanger was the pioneer of *birth control*, fighting with the prejudice and the repressive laws from her country, contributing to the world development of *birth control*. The fight for the right to abortion continues. Towards the end of the 1960, in the USA, England and France, and other numerous western countries, a new feminist movement appears, a new generation of women born between 1935 and 1945, who are able to study in schools and universities. In culture, women oppose any form of sexism (act, discrimination, image) against women's dignity. They rewrite the school books and the children's books, in order to change the image of the gender roles. Numerous feminist magazines are published in equally numerous countries. An American architect, Fran Hosken, was publishing in 1975 an indispensable instrument, of worldwide information, for women *WIN News* (*Women International Network*). Beyond the masculine censorship, the magazines for women would publish feminist articles (in France, *Femmes Pratiques*, *Marie Claire etc.*). In theatre, cinema, in variety shows, women bring forward, wittily and humorously, the masculine and feminine traditional roles. From now on, the sexist patriarchal culture would coexist with a new anti-sexist culture. The involvement into the political lifeconveys the novelty of the women political parties. The access to work and the equality of the wages represents a new direction for the fight of the feminists. The collaboration with the syndicates seems to be auspicious. It is condemned pornography, as limitation imposed within the struggle for the liberation of women (*Ibidem*, 101-106).



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The feminist movements have contributed to the emancipation of the woman, to the breaking of her domestic invisibility, to the elaboration of a new lifestyle, significantly involved in the social and political life of the society. A new type of femininity is to be presented further on, more unrestricted, more focused on its own assets, on a behaviour liberated on addressing the masculine perspective. The feminine independence creates space for an image of a woman noticeably more self-aware. Femininity, as it is presented in art, in sculpture, in painting, in music, knows the change. It is met in the daily life, it can be encountered in ordinary places, it is depicted by poets, claimed by the common women, it is accessible. Femininity, defined in DEX as "all the features that constitute the specific of the feminine character", gains new connotations. Moreover, femininity reveals other contexts of manifestation, the office suit, which is supposed to hide the femininity and to equal the male suit, at work, does not lack femininity nonetheless, and gives the woman who wears it self-confidence.

The various magazines for women unravel a new type of femininity, being known the fact that fashion has contributed greatly to the emancipation of the woman. The women who would ride their bicycles and would play tennis, in the 19$^{th}$ century, had to have new clothes. The fashion revolution of Chanel House is renowned. Gabrielle Chanel becomes a recognised name in the 20$^{th}$ century, in the entire world. If we look carefully through a series of glossy magazines for women, we notice that, nowadays, life is richer, femininity is present and no longer hides under thousands of veils, that the woman's cultural life is fuller, that the small cosmetic and fashion whims can enrich the woman's life, and do not estrange her from herself, but get her closed to a self-aware femininity.

Reading the ELLE magazine editorial from November 2011, written by Roxana Voloșeniuc, chief editor of the magazine. In a relaxed manner, there are presented the most significant subjects of the magazines, there is advertised ELLE Man Magazine too, so there they are, tamed, men expected to be *Sexy, Stylish, Spirited !*, as the slogan of a commercial goes. I am attracted by the presentation given to an interview with Hanna Bota, a Romanian anthropologist, who spent a month in a cannibals' village. Reading the interview, one finds that it is a former village of cannibals, "The last anthropophagous act took place at some point in the 1970s, thus, we can undoubtedly declare that there are no longer cannibals on our planet" (Elle Magazine, November 2011, 90). The telling of the experience is a rather interesting one, yet, I tend to disagree with what Hanna affirms, as this village still being at the beginning period of its humanity, an opinion that the anthropologists long left behind, their culture is as mature as ours, the differences being the ones strikingly great.

An interview with Mircea Cărtărescu catches my eye once more, the writer creating, for a year, every month, "a story full of tenderness" for Elle Magazine. "An effect of sincerity" is the title of the interview, an inspired one, owing to the fact that one discovers a Mircea Cărturescu detached from the effects of life, overpassing more or less heroically the negative thoughts that he confronts, bathing himself in calmer waters.

The good news on addressing the first march against misogyny from Romania draws my attention. "The Slut Walk", as it was first called in Toronto, intends to be the voice against prejudices, especially those referring to rape, when it is considered that the victim is guilty. Organised by Asociația Front, Cercul de Lecturi Feministe and Grupul FIA, the march wished to be a signal on the prejudice regarding feminine freedom, the increased



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numbers of rapes, around a thousand a year, in Romania. Slogans as "I don't feel flattered if I am aggressed", "Down with the aggressors!", "Regardless my look, the no and the yes are firm" were being shouted by the participants. The reactions on blogs are nonetheless contradictory, many supporting the march, while many others ridiculing it, manifesting their misogyny. It should be regarded as an event that expects consequences: the change of the institutions' attitude, the understanding and not the accusing of the rape victims, a manifestation supported by the feminists from Romania.

Here are few themes that positions Elle Magazines beyond purses, cosmetic products and fashionable prints.

The Beau Monde Magazine cover from October 2013 displays Inna as the main character, announcing an article about her and showing photos of the star. Among the fashion articles, there is one that approaches a social theme: *Why don't we have children anymore?* "Compared to the census from 2002, we are two million less, and the natural growth rate remains negative. Why don't Romanians have children anymore? Is it the economic crisis, precarious social policies, or a change of mentality?" (Beau Monde Magazine, October 2013, 38). The article is written combining the solid academic information (researches, studies) with some examples, which can be also fictive, only for adding coherence to the approached theme, but let's read further and not gossip! Referring to the theme of our study, the feminism, and the glossy magazines for women, here is the opinion the article's author, Adriana Moscu: "Gradually, at the beginning of the last century, the women obtained the right to vote and to education, and their voice, within the society became more and more forceful. Similar to a game of domino, the consequences have shown their presence. From ten children in a family, after World war II, the situation changed, especially in the urban communities, to three or four, and, in the last two decades, the average reaching to one or two" (*Ibidem*, 39). To give birth to a child meant, at the beginning of the 20$^{th}$ century, to acknowledge responsibility and social recognition, whereas, nowadays, this social acknowledgement of maturity can be replaced by a successful career in a specific field, or an influent position in the community. There can be happy couples, with or without children, this freedom of the choice being considered essential. "After all, extremely important is the freedom of the choice. It is the only one that grants you the feeling of fulfilment, whether you like to hear the joyous voices of the children, or the music of Bach" (*Ibidem*, p. 40).

The Elle Magazine editorial from August 2010, also signed by Roxana Voloșeniuc, chief editor of the same magazine, brings under the spotlight a seriously debated theme, in the social media, the fashion for the plus-sized women. In order to constitute fair opposition to the presence of the anorexic top-models, the fashion for voluptuous women started to appear on the market. And nevertheless, seemingly, the number of the rounder women is increasing, rather than that of the skinnier ones. "Size zero is out! Voluptuous forms are again in, and we are loving it. That's why we have made a presentation of women with generous, beautiful, sexy forms and a style guide for them. Moreover, three editors from Elle, future moms-to-be, allowed the stylists to work with their new bodies, in order to proveyou that one can be gorgeous, regardless the *situation*" (Elle Magazine, August 2010, 51). Thus: "XXL girls have become an impossibly to ignore niche, and they are beginning to embrace this new status proudly" (*Ibidem*, 54).



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Further on, let's read Elle Magazine from June 2017. We meet Inna again on the cover, this time to find that pictures from the photo-shooting have been made with a Huawei mobile phone, Inna being the international Huawei image. There is the evolution of the latter-year techniques. Besides the articles about fashion and life-style, an article captures your attention, on addressing *What hurts the young people from today*. It is the overcoming of prejudices that refer to the younger generations. Additionally, we find that, in Romania, there was carried out a project, called *In a relationship*, which actually represented a research about the behaviour, the attitude and the values of the teenagers, organised by Friends for Friends Foundation, along with a big company, AVON, which made the commitment to decipher the mechanisms that generate domestic violence. The differences between boys and girls, regarding the emotiveness, the aggression, the violence etc. are widely debated in the article.

We notice how, at this moment of time, numerous feminist movements have present consequences, self-esteem, self-consciousness are increasing in case of women. Nowadays, femininity is complex, belongs to a relevant quotidian life, it is voiced strongly by the today woman. The glossy magazines, beyond the superficiality of some fashion magazines, or other superfluous subjects, also encompass some articles that are meant to support the contemporary feminist movements, or talk about art and culture, science and technique, special researches from the present time.

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