

Power in Media Discourse and Media Structures: Power Relations in the Standardizing of Gender Representations in Romanian Mass Publishing

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The article proposes an analysis of contemporary Romanian mass publishing to pursue the power relationship established by discourse and image from the perspective of consumer culture theories, power theories, post-colonialist and feminist theories. The case study focuses on the observation of the roles of force played by language and image, on the observation of the relationship of forces in the representation of gender relations and on the analysis of the process of cultural heterogeneity. Our position is that nonspecific visions of gender representations are hybridized to local culture through a synthetic autochthonizing process that produces standardized models.

Keywords: power, gender representations, resistance, mass culture.



This article's main purpose is to observe the discourse generated by the power of some cultural mass networks, especially the contemporary mass publishing area, appeared in the Romanian space between 2005-2010, from the perspective of the intersections between consumer culture theories, power theories, (post)colonialist theories (studying the rapport between the centers and the peripheries) and feminist theories. These theoretical directions will support the case study, which focuses on three articles published in the indicated period. In our opinion, these publications constitute themselves in a position of force supported by a globalizing mass network, which has redefined the local consumer culture through the blending of new directions. The primary meaning of

the notion of power, irrespective of context, translates into a relationship of control and constraint between the owners of the force and the object involved. In the cultural space we debate the influence of force conventionally exerted on a segment of the society, via a commercial and ideological legitimate justification.

In order to operate with the concept of *mass culture*, we were compelled to make a distinction between **consumer culture** (*media culture, pop culture*, according to Spiridon¹; *cultural industry, mosaic culture, media culture, major culture* according to Eco²) and **specialized culture**. As Monica Spiridon pinpoints, in order to avoid value labels, such as *elitist culture, high culture*, we are faced to the difficulty of distinguishing between the terms. As a result, we decide to use the terms



cultural press and *specialized culture* vs. publications and mass culture.

Our analytical interests focus, on the one hand, on the so-called *glossy magazines*, mass publications targeting especially women, of whom I selected *Cosmopolitan* and, on the other hand, to the national daily newspaper *The Event of the Day* (*Evenimentul zilei*)³, considering it representative for the period under discussion. Within the last twenty years, the Romanian market of *glossy* publications consists of local publications with Romanian capital (some of them even inherited from the Communist system, such as the magazine *Femeia*⁴) and of imports of famous Western brands. The Anglo-American *glossy magazine* is a very well sold magazine, printed on good quality paper, mostly addressed to a public divided by gender, containing a series of information related to famous people, fashion, beauty, behavioral recipes of any kind, lifestyle, health, job, enclosed by professional photos, cultural recommendations and advertising. This category includes famous publications, such as: *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* (United States of America), *Elle* (France), *The London Magazine*, destined to women and *Esquire*, *Muscle & Fitness* (United States of America), *Men's Health*, *Money Men's Journal*, all launched in The United States, *QNM Magazine per l'uomo* (Italy), *Lui* (France).

The hypotheses of the analysis are twofold. The first one starts from the idea that the cultural discourse approached by the Romanian mass publications is a form of emergence of power, both as a dispatch of forces (as Michel Foucault states) and as a system of forces manifesting in a social field (according to Bourdieu). Within the discourses concerned, we are interested in what the functioning scheme is, with its image-supported language. Afterwards, we investigate whether the receptor of this journalistic discourse is determined to position itself against the built-in power dispatch. The other hypothesis assumes that the representations of the woman and the man showcased in the imported publications are in contradiction with the local products and have promoted a cultural and ideological redefining since the 2000s. Is this cultural context a colonial manifestation or not? In this case, can we talk of a relationship of domination in the exercise of the power of a *source culture*, called by Franco Moretti *target culture*, towards a (semi) peripheral culture? And if so, are there any forms of resistance to the ideological interactions of the local publications?

With regard to the evolution of the Western mass culture, famous and early theorists of cultural mutations have noticed how the entry in the area of *multicommunication*, *technoculture*, generalized *transculturation* (the terms belong to René Berger⁵) has favored semantic changes materialized in social resets. Back in 1964, Eco was prophesizing an apocalyptic

cultural revolution and was describing a post-war mass culture that was borrowing and adapting avant-garde processes to produce an intelligible message designed to satisfy everyone. Eco was then saying that the stake of this production is to convince the consumer (*the built-in*) that he had succeeded in meeting with culture by buying it as an art.

According to Monica Spiridon, *pop culture* productions are successful adaptations of the culture specialized in the codes of mass culture that reach the consumers through desemanticization⁶. This becomes a new cultural reality, supported by an innovative technological infrastructure, by an ample mass audience, by image, an intermediary with an important force of forwarding the message, of an extraordinary dissemination capacity, prevalences of an unprecedented force insertion. The unidirectional relationship and power asymmetry are obvious and have the effect of creating a new cultural reality, different from the traditional one.

The theory of global stratification of the societies in *centers*, *semi-peripheries* and *peripheries* proposed by Moretti illustrates the relationship between *source cultures* and *target cultures*. We consider that taking over the narrative pattern, the ideas, the pattern of the presentation and the marketing process of *The Unique One* (*Unica*), a Romanian glossy magazine, for example, or *The Woman*, is a compromise that frames into the paradigm proposed by Moretti. Regarding the international imported brands such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Advantages*, *Elle*, *Vogue*⁷, the model is taken over directly and is justified by the fact that they respect the central structure. We consider that in the case of local productions we are dealing with a hybridization that is produced in the context of a total ignorance from the part of the Anglo-American journalism, the source culture. This *target media culture* has never intended such a thing. The status of superiority of the source culture validates the copying on behalf of the Romanian publications. Moretti states that, in this case, there is no forced colonization of small cultures, as it did not concern the initiation of multiple expansion processes, but, more precisely, the small cultures voluntarily incorporate the model, becoming a uniform part of a global system⁸. The Romanian glossy productions, as we know them today, just as local TV productions, have not emerged as a result of autonomous development, the model of construction being a *compromise* between the Western influence and the local material. This compromise was sought after by the Romanian mass culture. The desire to align with the western model is also linked to the complex of East European post-communist cultures.

The cultural mobility that led to observable ideological interactions in the mass media discourse is enframed in the coordinates discussed by Homi

Bhabha. When theorizing the process of cultural hybridization, he argues that it dictates the creation of new transcultural forms in the contact areas produced by colonization, via assimilating cultural signs and practices from the colonizing cultures. Bhabha discusses the change in the limits of the authenticity of cultures, and he talks about the existence of a space of symbolic interaction, which determines a process of closeness to another identity. Passing “beyond does not imply a denial of the original subjectivities, but a transitive process of articulating cultural differences.”⁹ This fluctuating relationship between the colonist and the colonizer at the level of a transcultural space builds a space of negotiation. Liminality encompasses the condition of being “between two fixed identities – open to the possibilities of cultural hybridization – that accept cultural differences without imposing hierarchies.”¹⁰ The world of the consumer press of the 2000s presents a change in the discourses of belonging and identity formation. The increased interconnection, the mobility and the transnational traffic all contribute to a gradual disintegration of target-based dynamics.

On the other hand, we are interested in an analysis of woman's representations in relation to the man, as they appear at the level of the discourse and the image, within the body of the articles discussed from a feminist perspective. We have in mind the feminist theories of the 3rd wave, appeared in the 90's, but also the new and surprising developments of new materialism. In 1995, two books were published and they reformulate the feminist agenda in a manner updated to the new social stratification: *Listen Up: Voice from the Next Feminist Generation*¹¹ and *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*¹². The authors talk about a feminism of multiple identities, promote gender partnership, and distinguish between the struggle of the middle-class white woman and the lower class African-American woman. The new materialism of 2000s, launched by thinkers such as Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, Jane Bennett, Vicki Kirby and Manuel DeLanda, brings an epistemological turn, which represents a rupture from traditional feminism. Important for our context is how its representatives discuss the denaturalization of power relations, by redefining the notions of materiality, thus relieving the fragility of contemporary society and rethinking the condition of the woman within the 21st century.

Case study. The Much Appreciated Women. Representations of Power relations in Romanian Contemporary mass publications (2005-2010)

For content analysis, I selected three articles belonging to Romanian mass publications from the first decade of the 21st century: *Cosmopolitan* magazine, the daily *Business Magazine* and the newspaper *The Event of*

the Day, with their issues from 2005 to 2010. I opted for a selection of articles in which I aim to demonstrate the previously announced assumptions.

As I stated earlier, the current Romanian mass publications market (whether financial, sport or glossy) is divided between the international imported brands and the products made in Romania. The themes proposed by these publications targeting women with medium to high income, those in the upper social category of women who *know what they want* are: fashion, career, body modeling, medical advice and psychological therapy, shopping suggestions, celebrity presentations, pseudo-literature masquerading as short prose, reading recommendations from the translated or domestic chick-lit. We have tracked the terms in which the power is configured through the message of ideas and visually, with regard to gender relations.

The article entitled “Leadership, A Top Challenge”¹³, from *Cosmopolitan*¹⁴, signed by Radu Coman, proposes the readers a recipe for obtaining and maintaining a leading position which involves a list of aspects related to body, attitude and motivation modeling. Thus, according to the author of the article, it is enough to know what you want, to expose your external qualities, in order to obtain: “a salary that ends with many zeros, consistent bonuses, a private office (with a view), extended lunches (cash-settled by the company), laptop and a car destined for work”. The list of facilities bestowed to the chosen women attracts everybody and convinces us that, in order to obtain a leadership position, the rigorous professional training, superior to the other candidates, is almost irrelevant, just as special communication skills or management skills are not essential. No value such as engagement, major responsibility, overtime schedule, sacrifices and reinventions, adaptability and the management of multiple tasks in different fields, deadlines, and maturity does not appear among the list of *must have it* of the future boss. The article also appeals to a formal strategy to persuade us, through a short message extracted from the text and particularly promoted by formatting with visual effects (color, enlarged and bold font, high-priority position) that this form is the one targeted by *Cosmo readers*. There are various strategies of direct addressing. The author of the article builds a familiar identity by positioning against the reader. Bypassing the formal address by switching to the informal second person singular form, the speech builds a position of power, minimizing the status of the reader and gaining autonomy. The reader's integration into the context leads to a direct mobilization through confessional addressing, following patterns as: “How many times did you not wish a car or your lunch cash-settled by the company?”, a question with a powerful effect of speech authentication. The playful choice of words in the issue of obtaining a desirable job, the redefinition in blunt



terms, the relativizing of the employment conditions are also strategies that legitimize the messenger.

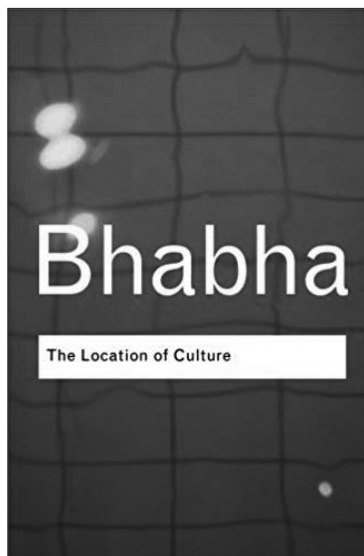
The ideological context of the article urges us to take into account Michel Foucault's interpretation of the relationship between body, sexuality, discourse¹⁵ where the theoretician reveals the political, social and economic investment of the manipulated and metamorphosed body in the power signifier. The verbal discourse is supported by the visual one, through the image which is overlapping the text. Strategies for stating a verbal message are reinforced by visual strategies and their main purpose is to build a relationship of power between the image and the viewer, from the perspective of the unconscious, updated by the visual field. The image of a young business woman who is wearing an impeccable black suit, her hair perfectly styled, crossing an intensely circulated avenue of the capital city, and under whose steps the city becomes tiny, is a domineering image. This representation relies on the identification of a viewer (the lacanian state of the mirror) with the body presented through an erotic tension given by the unauthorized position of the female model, who seeks the viewer's eyes in order to take him into possession. The editor relies on the supposed look (*the gaze*, as this concept is mentioned by Gillian Rose and Laura Mulvey¹⁶) as a response that must be fascinating. The model focuses her attention on the implied viewer located, after the woman's inquisitive look, in the lower part of the image frame, and which can only be in a minor posture compared to the dominant image of the female model. Also noticeable is the secondary stake of the image for the viewer's instinctual incitement. When it comes to identifying with the other, it is inevitable not to appear some tensions born from the fact that the image stirs both the attraction and the desire to own her. Therefore, the supreme power of the future boss is beauty, be it artificial, the model with the figure of an intellectual woman. This only pushes to the extreme the feminine condition, that of being looked at.

Both the discourse and the accompanying image designate a paradigm of materiality that risks to promote an essentialist discourse. The disguised use of sexuality as a promise transforms gender features into consumer goods, traded on the *market* of other consumer items. Not accidentally all glossy magazines contain, among their pages, promotions of different means of body adjustment (modifying therapies, silicone interventions, surgical intervention, chemical injections etc.), new religions of the fitness industry and healthy living, eco philosophies. All the above gathered into a pseudo-scientific discourse turned into a factor of power that standardizes a new mainstream. According to Foucault, this manifestation of power is just a strategy that remains an object of negotiation. Upon designating *power analysis*, the theorist deals

with how the different institutions exercise their power in relation to groups and individuals, and how the latter ones assert their resilience. Depriving himself from the interpretation of power as a suppressor, he finds here a productive aspect, because power leads to the emergence of new forms of behavior. He states that the subjects regulated by structures, such as media culture, have the right to negotiate, not only to respond as required. Foucault's proposal is conceiving power as strategy, not as possession. From this point of view, the article under analysis, "Leadership, A Top Challenge", urges us to look for the consumer's negotiating space. Does it only become an object of an oppressive power, or, according to Foucault, do we find that it is not powerless in this strength report.

We are also interested in Bourdieu's view regarding power relations¹⁷. He examines the social world as a multitude of *fields of social practice* in which participants compete for a status of honor, trying to gain access to a symbolic capital in order to exercise their symbolic power. They are victims of symbolic violence, according to the author, because the owners of the power are legitimated by the context of established practices, as is journalism. Adjudicating the prerogatives to represent the experiences and interests of women (or men) belonging to a particular social category, for instance, the discourse of some magazines like: *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, *Elle* or *Unica* and even *The Woman* is falling into the symbolic violence, mentioned by Bourdieu, which is "gentle, invisible, unknown as such, resulted from experience"¹⁸. The journalistic field is dominant, despite its inferior position within the cultural field¹⁹. Through symbolic violence the meanings are extracted from information, which leads to a partial perception.

In his classification, alongside the economic capital, there is the cultural and the social one. Social capital is very important for the exercise of power and resistance to power. The consumers of these publications are a non-homogeneous audience that shares, at one point, the same viewpoint (consuming the same culture) and forms a social capital that is used to accumulate an economic capital. Decisive in this competitive game is the status of the one who transmits the discourse, more precisely communicator's competences. What Bourdieu states further is that speeches can generate practices. Even here, though from other positions, Bourdieu approaches Foucault. The more the position of the social actor within the field is more autonomous (which means that the actor has symbolic and formal legitimacy), gaining relations of authority, the more he has a relationship of power. The theorist discusses the permanent game of competition within a social field that depends on the volume and the structure of the capital (economic, social, professional). The effects of the speech depend on the position occupied in the power field. Returning to the article discussed above,



“Leadership, a Top Challenge”, our thesis is that the article also counts on the erotic aggression, operated by the identification with the other, an elementary psychic mechanism. The hypothesis holds us in the logic of thinking that the woman, even in the act of seduction, remains in the position of an object that receives value only from the point of view of the subject. From the perspective of Bourdieu, but also of Foucault, one no longer deals with subject and object: power games move to another level. In the order of our discourse, both the exposed woman and the viewer, who must be persuaded to buy the magazine, as it contains a recipe on how you can be at the top of a hierarchy, become objects of an economic system and they uphold the desire to buy. After Foucault, the buyer is obliged to dispute his position. According to Bourdieu, both of them are in a state search competition that would lead them to escalate to the social, economic, and cultural field. Always the promoted models correspond to the ideal of attractiveness in that cultural code, which establishes another privilege to the communicator of the discourse. The reader is unconsciously delivered the idea that, by paying for this product, she may become bossi(er). This interpretation strengthens the hypothesis of a receiver (whether in the position of a woman who aspires to adapt to the model presented, or of the man who wants to take possession of such a model) who unconsciously identifies itself with the feminine characters in the picture. In the relationship of production, the woman no longer remains in the position of object, and the viewer, be it woman or man, in the subject, but they both become objects of an economic system. Regarding the image, the power factor is fascination with manipulative effects, a basic principle of marketing strategies.

It is known that especially in the secluded space of the former communist bloc, though not only, the relationship between the gender category and politics

is controversial, because politics has been defined as a predominantly masculine field in the post-socialist space, producing an inadequate attitude for the few women who stood out in this field. The construction of gender is and was a social capital, in Bourdieu's terms, and its effects have also put their mark on the roles assigned to men and women in the public space and, implicitly, on politics in the broadest sense. Strictly referring to political participation, socialism is considered to be a breakthrough in the discourse concerning women's inclusion in formal institutions, though, statistically discussing, this system has only strengthened the supremacy of men. In the pages of an important national daily newspaper, especially in the first decade of 2000, *The Event of the Day*, we are informed that Bucharest has the first prefect woman in the history of the capital city, Mrs. Mioara Mantale, who had been invested one day earlier. The article, entitled “Mioara, when you swear, do not bend too much!”²⁰, describes the conjuncture of the official investment event. The elements designed to outline the event are confined to insignificant details: the aspects of the clothing of the new female prefect (“dressed in an elegant black suit with fur, which reveals a generous décolletage”), the observations regarding the attitude of the prefect woman: “she was not intimidated by the masculine presence” (as she should, we add) and its assertion that “people from Bucharest do not risk anything if they trust a woman”. The journalist Teo Popescu observes emphatically the attitude of the men from the public, whose attention was distracted from the political program sustained by the new invested woman, due to her female presence. Moreover, the article cites the ironic advice given by the mayor of Sector 1, Andrei Chiliman, who addresses the prefect as follows: “Mioara, when swearing, do not bend too much!” followed by an anonymous reply: “It's okay, she has a beautiful décolletage!” The journalist also concludes: “Finally, there is a smell of fine perfume on the prefecture's hallways!”

Despite the promise that the presented event aligns the Romanian political space to the principles that were setting it apart from the European states, regarding the representativeness of women, the article focuses on the good image of the new prefect, in the least desirable and necessary sense, from a specialized point of view. Presented exclusively as a representative gender image, it remains a new interface that could raise diverse interests in a space reserved exclusively to men.

*Intelligent women have no luck when
it comes to marriage²¹*

Another article in the same newspaper, published in 2007, informs both women and the representatives



of the other gender, about a statistic which, in fact, does not contain elements that would validate it as authentic. According to it, women involved professionally do not have the chance to establish a stable home, the ideal standard of the Romanian traditional society, because they are not as well appreciated as their peers, who did not make the professional and cultural training a goal.

Subliminally, the message of the text creates a false consciousness through which power relations are concealed in society by a distorted perception of the reality. There is a set of ideas that legitimize, potentiate and direct a certain social attitude, claiming that a woman's place is at home, raising babies, cooking, watching in silence their almighty husband, a predestined vocation. The companion of these desirable women *can be lucky* even if he is trained and he has built a professional career. Here is an ideological representation of a woman who can only perform in the domestic space, a theory that is well-known many years ago in the Romanian society, expressed and promoted by an offensive discourse with unfair competitive representations. The message is advocated by the data of a sociological statistics, as the author of the article claims, and has the tone of the one who warns about what we consider to be good, bad, normal, abnormal. The establishment of a clearly defined kingdom, that belongs to the woman in opposition to another kingdom, belonging to the man, is a practice I did not think could operate in the pages of a 21st century publication. **The gender stereotypes**, presented in women's magazines during the Communist era and immediately after belong to some patriarchal paradigms, far different from **hybridized stereotypes**, coming from a native, rural humanity, suddenly urbanized, industrialized and brought straight into the Communist system by force, being tributary to certain traditionalist resonances, despite a ghostly gender equality, ideologically promoted by the communist and post-communist regime. These representations reflect a part of the vision promoted by indigenous mass culture.

Rebrand yourself!

Another article found in *Cosmopolitan* addresses a redundant theme for all women's publications, the one concerning permanent body adjustments, a woman must consent to, for being able to design a desirable standard representation, an optimal pre-set pattern. The article entitled "Rebrand yourself!"²² contains a series of ten actions that a woman (especially a young woman) is compelled to follow exactly to respond to the projections of male representatives. About the rebranding term, born as a result of some bonded reproductions from English, we consider it would have easily found a Romanian correspondent, but the

stake of the terminological choice is also manipulative. The obligation to form a body, but also an attitude, becomes even more convincing when it seems a complex process. The model is a hybrid one. The direct address (implying the second person singular form) observed in the previous article is part of the enunciation strategy that gives the writer a superior position, despite his seeming familiarity. Moreover, the authentication level of the message increases and gives rise to a convincing intimacy between the transmitter and the receiver. The article promotes an image of the decorative woman, desirable only as a universal model, lacking in individuality, who has lost her aspirations in other vocations. The feminine representation sketched is of a woman who gains value through her outer appearance. It should be kept in mind that the text taking the form of a narrative writing has, as its primary purpose, the masked promotion of various body care products, makeup, clothing and services of the same range, hence ensuring the success of the process. The text is advocated by the image of "rebranded" women. The article proceeds with a text of pseudo-literature, of the type present in all mass culture publications, more specifically, articles that play with narrative strategies in fictional simulations, mostly pursuing a single theme: the couple relationship of the type exhibited in the chick-lit novels which, furthermore, promote them steadily. The redundancy in discourse and image, the unjustified obscenity, the narcissism, the schematic narrative template and the easy tricks with expressive purpose, coupled with a good-evil dichotomy in the absence of nuances, poor ideological content, cheap stylistic components, lack of any ambiguity are some of the issues we have identified.

From a feminist perspective, promoting a standard of universal body and attitude leads to an objectified representation of women. In 1991, in *The Beauty Myth*²³, American feminist writer Naomi Wolf, a powerful voice of the third wave of feminism, examines the flourishing beauty industry as a form of power imposing aesthetic standards hard to reach for women. Wolf's main thesis is that adherence to physical beauty standards has become a mandatory and demanding duty for women as they have gained ground in social and political terms. The *Cosmopolitan* articles discussed above promotes standardized representations of power positions. The main goal, though the most masked, remains the economic one. This ideological standardization is the engine of a profitable cosmetic, medical, food, sports and fashion industry that builds unrealistic expectations. Thus, the woman who wishes to become the boss in the first article analyzed here or the one who has to rebrand herself is actually the expression of standard ideological models, which primarily serve purely commercial purposes. On the other hand, the new materialism opens perspectives

from other areas. Recognizing women's vulnerability, diversity and inequality compared to men should determine us to redefine gender relations. Taking into account these ideological situations, the three representations of the women discussed here remain in a profound anti-feminist scheme.

In an interpretation from the perspective of transnationalism, this discourse is a model of social and cultural transaction, through which an exchange of ideas and new senses between cultures occurs. The interconnectivity of the ideas about the image of the woman is obvious at all mass media levels. This last article is an eloquent model of cultural hybridity, favored at all levels by the process of globalization, which has fluidized frames taken over and overlapping the native ones. The speech, the image, the designed contexts, the male-female representations create a Western space; the Romanian substrate is minimized and the text abounds in clichés sampled in the Western world. Presenting the native atmosphere is not a goal. The attempt to invent local authenticity is limited to the spatial-geographic landmarks: Bucharest is only situational, as we could easily place the contexts and the actresses of the publications in Los Angeles or London.

Therefore, the two initially established **hypotheses** were tightened by the analysis. Undoubtedly, in the selected articles, spanning 2005-2010, as well as in those that were not analyzed in this case study, but which complemented the research interest, the speech and the image establish power relations in representations that build unbalanced images of the gender categories involved. Thus, in both types of publications, those belonging to the international *Cosmopolitan* brand and those appearing in the daily national *The Event of the Day*, representations of competent, proficient men counterbalance with representations of women in tempting postures, passionate about shopping and their body image. Whereas male stars are politicians, businessmen, athletes, cultured people, female stars are top-models, working in the television industry, football players or politicians' mistresses, singers. The representation of the trained woman, situated at the same level as the man, appears more rarely and, when this happens, ironic interpretations abound in the native press, or are limited to the same external formatting as in Anglo-American press. "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power".²⁴

In Bourdieu's logic, in the competition for *the honor status*, the final winner is *the economic field*. Both publications have a high circulation at national level and record remarkable commercial results. *The cultural field*, from the categorization of the fields designed by Bourdieu, suffers mutations in two directions. One is

born from a colonial hybridization process and is easily detected both in local glossy publications (*Unica, Woman, Formula As, Can-can* etc.) and in articles published by western culture brands (*Cosmopolitan, Elle, Vogue, Advantages*), which self-proclaim of feminist-avant-garde orientation. The other direction of the cultural field is a form of compromise resulting from the resistance opposed to the Anglo-American source culture, called by Franco Moretti *target culture*, which preserves an intermediate vision. If the articles in *Cosmopolitan* configure a Western space, where the Romanian substrate is minimized, and the (con)texts abound in clichés embraced in the Western world, local publications remain patriarchal, promoting essential gender-based identities. Therefore, despite the feminist standard, promoted with great conviction by glossy publications, unlike national newspapers, the ideas promoted within their pages prove to be profoundly anti-feminist, irrespective the ideological perspectives adopted. All four articles discussed are far from being singular cases, the approach is a generalized pattern throughout the period considered, both in the glossy press and in other national reference newspapers (worthy to be seen in this direction are: "Moldavian women are smart, ambitious and beautiful", "Swiss men prefer Eastern women", "Ole, ole, here come the women!"²⁵, which appeared in *The Event of the Day* or the virulent article written by Dan Ciachir, *Frigidity and Atheism*²⁶, which appeared in *The Day*).

On the other hand, it has to be mentioned that both directions are in different paradigms from those promoted by the specialized culture, specialized literature, be it literary, economical or cultural. The power discourse present in the mass media is part of a network of transnational mass culture and functions similarly in all the Romanian mass culture areas: television shows, soap operas, chick-lit, blog, social networking, advertising, mainstream music and so on. The effects of power in blending cultural directions aimed at validating some gender identities through discourse and image represent hybridizations with great manipulating force.

Note:

1. Spiridon, Monica, *Popular culture. Modele. repere si practici contemporane*, [*Popular culture. Models, landmarks and contemporary practices*, Scrisul Românesc, Fundatia-Editura, Craiova, 2013, p. 9.

2. Eco, Umberto, *Apocalittici e integrati*, Bompiani, Milano, 1964, translated in Romanian by Polirom, Iasi, 2008, p. 46.

Apocalittici si integrati. Comunicatii de masa si teorii ale culturii de masa, Bompiani, 1964, tradusa in romaneste in 3. Evenimentul zilei is a Romanian national daily



newspaper with local capital founded in 1992, with the largest circulation in the 90s.

4. *The Woman*, the Romanian magazine *Femeia* first appeared in 1869, taken over in 2006 by the multinational trust *Sanoma Hearst*.

5. René Berger, *La mutation de signes*, Éditions Denoël, Paris, 1972.

6. Spiridon, pp. 63-74.

7. International glossy magazines with a monthly circulation of more than 30 000 copies on the Romanian market.

8. Moretti, Franco, *Distant Reading*, Verso, London-New York, 2013, p. 50

9.. Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 113.

10. Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 4.

11. Walker, Rebecca, ed., *Listen Up: Voice from the Next Feminist Generation*, Anchor Books, New York, 1995.

12. Barbara Findlen, ed. *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, Seal Press, Seattle, 1995.

13. The original title in Rom. "Sefia, provocare la nivel înalt"/ "Leadership, A Top Challenge" (my translation).

14. *Cosmopolitan*, no. 10, Burda Romania, 2010.

15. Cf. Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I, *The Will of Knowledge*, translated by Robert Hurley, New York: Pantheon, 1978, p. 95;

16. Cf. Gillian, Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, Sage Publication, London, 2001. The author describes the social relationships between women and men, instituted on the power of the vision mechanism, establishing the concept *the gaze*. She analyzes the way a man looks at the woman, but also how the woman looks at herself or how she looks at another woman. She appeals to Laura Mulvey's findings in the essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* to define the term *phallogentrism*, which is a response to the male asymmetrical, unequal look. The author said that the man takes a look at the woman who is reduced to the object hypostasis.

17. Bourdieu, Pierre, *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*, Paris, Fayard, 1991.

18. *Ibidem*, p. 13

19. Bourdieu, Pierre, *Sur la télévision et le champ journalistique*, Liber-Raisons d'agir, 1996, translated in Rom. by Bogdan Ghiu, Editura Art, Bucuresti, 2007, p. 88

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21. The original title in Rom., "Femeie inteligente n-au noroc la măritat", published in *Evenimentul zilei*, nr. 4715/2007

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