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ILLUSTRATIONS IN TRANSYLVANIAN  
ROMANIANS' MAGAZINES IN THE FIRST  
DECADES OF THE XX<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

ABSTRACT

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*Illustrations in Transylvanian Romanians' Magazines*  
*in the First Decades of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century – Abstract*

The title, *Illustrations in Transylvanian Romanians' Magazines in the First Decades of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century*, was chosen as such due to the fact that the periodicals researched for this thesis aren't exclusively (although, in majority) published in Transylvania. Some of them appeared in Banat, some in Budapest, some in Bucharest. The initial intention of this research was to exclusively analyse illustrations from transylvanian periodicals, but such an endeavour wouldn't have been sufficiently enlightening and would have offered vague and incomplete conclusions. Thus, it was necessary to include some periodicals from Budapest, Bucharest or Timișoara that belonged to Romanians, that were destined for Romanian readers and especially Romanian readers from Transylvania. The thesis focuses on a cultural area and not a rigorously defined geographical area.

Chronologically speaking, two major historical phases of Transylvanian history were taken in consideration: the first two decades of the XX<sup>th</sup> century – a time in which the region belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire – and the first two decades after Romania's formation. Transylvania's change in status represents the backbone of the research, since the two phases of all types of studied magazines (cultural magazines, women's magazines, calendars and humor magazines) have been compared (with a special attention to the visual part) with the purpose of identifying recurring discursive models for each phase.

The thesis is an analysis of the visual elements of magazines, as a complementary type of discourse to the written part and it is an attempt of cultural investigation of the predisposition of a group – respectively the Romanian transylvanians from the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century – to choose certain types of images meant to express ideas or aesthetical attitudes as a way to address the readers and as a way of self-representation. The visual part has been compared and confronted with the written part, which, in certain cases, reflected the values and ideas encompassed by the images and in some cases contradicted them completely. Implicitly, the written part was analyzed from a historical perspective. The main questions that arose in front of the dual structure of the magazines were: is the visual language of the magazines primitive, in comparison to the

textual one? Does the visual part of the magazines compensate for the shortcomings and limitations of the textual part?

The methodology used is one specific to art history. The images in the magazines, respectively the original creations and the reproduced illustrations, were analyzed from a stylistic, formal and iconographical point of view. This analysis was done in correlation to visual culture background in which Romanian Transylvanian art is born. The first part of the thesis is an analysis of European art from the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, with a special focus on academism, art nouveau and neo-Romanian art from the Austro-Hungarian and Romanian region. The analysis focuses on so called “national” motifs discovered, chiseled or invented by many nations in this time, among them the Hungarians and the Romanians. Despite the attempt of delimiting and individualizing national cultures, such motifs were often transferred from one nation to another. The thesis is mainly focused on the transference of such “Hungarian” and “German” motifs in Romanian illustrations, the former also being partially borrowed from other cultures. The “aristocratic-supranational” motifs or images, often influenced by academism and neo-rococo, were also taken into consideration.

The thesis has four chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to cultural magazines, respectively the type of press that had the most meaningful impact on Romanian society in the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. Among these are the highest quality magazines in Transylvania and Romania. *Luceafărul* (Budapest, Sibiu, Bucharest, Sibiu; 1902-1945), was studied as a representative example for the prewar period, while *Luceafărul. Revistă culturală, literară și artistică* (Timișoara, 1935-1944), was studied as a representative example for the interwar period. After analyzing the written part of the two magazines it was found that both had the main goal of consolidating national identity through culture: in a more politicized, but less aggressive manner in the prewar period and, in the interwar period, in a more stylistically refined manner, literarily and journalistically speaking. The visual part of the magazines is also, in part, a result of a similar intention: to offer the readers a body of work with national traits.

After analyzing the covers of the two magazines it was found that the interwar visual language was much more coherent and refined than the prewar one. Regarding *Luceafărul* from Budapest and Sibiu one can see that the visual part of the magazine is inspired by various types of Austro-Hungarian art. One can see a mixture of academism and art nouveau. The images were adapted to in such a way as to offer a possible version of a “national style”, but the result is

eclectic and vague. In the magazine's attempt to offer the readers pictures with a national Romanian character, vernacular visual elements will be mixed in with "Hungarian" national elements.

In the interwar magazine one can see more matured "national" images, in illustrations such as the ones done by the artist Catul Bogdan, the main illustrator for *Luceafărul. Revistă culturală, literară și artistică*. These illustrations are consistent and expressive synthesis of vernacular art and byzantine elements, shaped into an original modernist form.

The second chapter is dedicated to women's magazines. In this case the methodological model that was used for the previous chapter and the next ones could not be followed, because there are no prewar illustrated women's magazines (as in, magazines written and read primarily by women). The analysis of interwar women's magazines was structured around a comparison between Transylvanian publication and the ones that appeared in Bucharest, with a special regard towards the type of feminism that was portrayed in such magazines. Unlike the feminism in Bucharest (in itself a very feeble phenomenon) that resembled the occidental one from the same period, feminism in Transylvania was significantly toned down by political conservatism and Christian morals. The different value systems are well reflected in the studied magazines: *Tribuna femeii* (Bucharest, 1930) and *Lumina femeii* (Cluj, 1920-1922). The later one's visual program is a complex combination between art nouveau, academism and neo-rococo, as a result of the magazine's intention to seem "modern" while also being attached to traditional values. For a better understanding of the subject, women's magazines situated on opposites ends of feminist values have been studied, such as *Femeia modernă* from Bucharest and *Femeia satelor* from Deva.

The third chapter is dedicated to calendars. Yet again, in this case, the prewar examples are compared to the interwar examples. *Calendarul ilustrat al poporului* (Budapest, 1908-1919) is the sole publication analyzed in the thesis which is targeted for Romanians, but adopts a pro Austro-Hungarian position. The illustrations, mostly influenced by academism, but also by realism reflect the political position of the publication. *Calendarul foii ilustrate* (Budapest, 1904-1916), *Calendarul ilustrat pentru toți și toate* (Lugoj, 1920-1929), *Calendarul Aurorei* (Gherla, 1891-1931) are examples of calendars with a Romanian nationalist orientation. The illustrations, technically inferior to the ones in *Calendarul ilustrat al poporului*, were also influence by academism, but were ichnographically modeled to reflect an idyllic peasant life. The images in

these calendars thus have a more pronounced decorative-aesthetic role, and not a militant one. They indicate the attachment of the Romanian population to traditional, familiar images. An eccentric example that is discussed is *Calendarul Tribunei socialiste* (Cluj, 1924-1929). The leftist orientation of the publication is reflected in its illustrations as well. In somewhat of a realist manner, with a caricature-like aspect and of a very poor technical quality, the illustrations are remarkable because of the iconographic elements meant to point out the oppression of the working class.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to humor magazines. These are, according to specialized studies, among the very few types of magazines that have declined in quality and impact during the interwar period. The examples analyzed in the thesis show that it wasn't necessarily a decline, but simply a change in program and purpose. The magazine *Calicul – humor și satiră* (Sibiu, 1881-1906) was studied for the prewar period. This publication – consider to be one of the best humor magazines in Transylvania – is built around political militantism masked in humor. The illustrations in the magazine though, do not follow this program. There are no caricatures of the criticised politicians, just caricatures of typical generic Romanians. Although the magazine has a nationalist note to it, the popularity of the auto-ironic illustrations will be great. The images, reused over and over again during the magazine's entire existence will become a sort of trademark for the publication.

*Cucu – revistă umoristică* (Cluj, 1933-1934) was chosen as a representative example of an interwar humour magazine. The magazine is a perfect illustration of the switch from a nationalist program, to the new, politicized one, in accordance to the new plusipartidist formula of the political landscape. The magazine belongs to the liberal party and the caricatures, made by Diodor Dure, are mostly aimed at the members of the ruralist party and the dissensions between its members. One can also see caricatures of liberal politicians, of local politicians and even of the king. Stylistically speaking, these illustrations are of a superior quality in comparison to those in *Calicul*, indicating, once again, a maturing of visual language during the interwar period.

The analysis of all these types of magazines proves that what can be called “Romanian” visual culture was invented at the end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century and during the first decades of the XX<sup>th</sup> century it was still in its experimental phase, in the search for a “Romanian national image”. In its attempt to be modern, the “Romanian” image will portray many art nouveau elements, while in its attempt to be authentic it will also portray elements of vernacular and

byzantine art. All attempts to create a national visual culture confirms that Transylvania's Romanian civilization from the first decades of the XXth century was particularly resistant to modernism and although it was, politically speaking, "nationalistic", it was also quite attached to the Austro-Hungarian culture it was exposed to for centuries.

Key words:

illustrations, graphics, press, caricature, visual culture, art nouveau, calendar