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Doctoral Thesis

VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE MONTHLY
MAGAZINE "DOLGOZÓ NŐ" (1945–1989)

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This doctoral thesis examines the visual language and photographic material of the monthly women's magazine "Dolgozó Nő," published between 1945 and 1989. The issues of the magazine, ranging from 26 to 38 pages, contain thousands of graphic works and photographs. The aim of my analysis was to interpret and track changes in the image of women and feminine ideals by analyzing the magazine's rich content. My research focuses on the representations of women, also considering the influences of propaganda.

"Dolgozó Nő" was launched in 1948 as a propaganda publication of the Democratic Union of Women in Romania, a Hungarian-language forum that supported women's emancipation. Although it was the mouthpiece of a national organization, the presence of Hungarian editors and themes suggests that the "Hungarian voice" was present in its pages. By 1949, the magazine had a circulation of 22,000 copies, a significant number given the demographic conditions of the time, and by 1970, it had a circulation of 120,000 copies.

My research uses as examples the 1993 study by Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins on "National Geographic." My basic hypothesis is that the photographic material of the magazine is relevant for examining changes in the image of women and that the peculiarities of the political system influenced the content.

I had three main objectives:

1. Detailed processing and analysis of the visual material from the magazine "Dolgozó Nő."
2. Tracking changes in the image of women based on quantifiable data, taking into account political events and social changes.
3. Formulating additional findings regarding the magazine's visual language.

My research contributes to a deeper understanding of the representation of women during that period and to revealing the role of the magazine "Dolgozó Nő" in the political and social context of Romania. My hypothesis is that political and social changes influenced the image of women conveyed by the magazine, a hypothesis I attempt to support with data. The thesis begins with a detailed presentation of the subject, emphasizing its importance and explaining concepts

related to the theme, often referring to contemporary history, historical science, and sometimes anthropology, sociology, or press history. At the beginning of the work, I also present the historical and political context, extremely relevant to my research, as the socialist and communist state forms, which significantly deviated from the ideal model, influenced the press in a specific way, shaping the era's ideals in an arbitrary and almost unnatural manner.

I emphasize that detailed knowledge of the historical context is very important, and this includes the essential fact that historians studying the period between 1945 and 1989 differentiate between different eras based on their political, social, economic, and ideological particularities. The most generally accepted periodization divides the period 1945-1989 into three distinct units: the first era is the Stalinist ideology era (1944-1953), the second is the period of ideological crisis (1953-1965), and the third is the Ceaușescu era (1965-1989). This division is, in fact, linked to changes in the country's and the Soviet Union's leadership, not necessarily to observing and interpreting internal social or economic changes. Similarly, the period associated with Nicolae Ceaușescu can be divided into two stages, marked by his election as president on March 28, 1974. However, for the period 1965-1989, Novák Csaba Zoltán proposes a division based on a more complex system of thought. Thus, the first period (1965-1974) is the era of de-Stalinization and liberalization tendencies, the years of promises; the second period (1975-1984) is the era of intensified nationalist tendencies, influenced by the small cultural revolution; and the third period (1985-1989) is the era of the denouement, characterized by deepening political and economic crisis (from the minorities' point of view, this is characterized by the disappearance of the Hungarian problem and the emergence of Hungarian-speaking Romanians in party documents). I also used this periodization as a starting point in my work.

I dedicated a subchapter to the visual language of the period, not just as an introductory unit but also to highlight the significant gaps in the Romanian specialized literature in this field.

The detailed presentation of the magazine is, in fact, a contribution to the history of the press, in which I presented the columns, editors, authors, and contributors of the magazine. "Dolgozó Nő" was published from 1945 until November 1989, and its early issues resembled more propaganda brochures than illustrated women's magazines. They lacked illustrated covers and rich illustrated supplements, with the focus on text and its message. In 1948, the magazine came under the jurisdiction and leadership of the Union of Democratic Women in Romania (UFDR), which

meant the development of a more conscious image – as we would say today – with stricter guidelines and clear objectives. By being edited in Hungarian, the magazine was unique. Its survival alongside its Romanian counterparts, "Femeia" and "Săteanca," until the end of the regime is undoubtedly due to its propagandistic character, which allowed it to address all Hungarian women in Transylvania, an important asset even in critical periods of minority politics.

I separately addressed the issues of "Dolgozó Nő" and propaganda, as well as "Dolgozó Nő" and women's emancipation. A fascinating aspect of my research is the issue of women's emancipation and propaganda specifically targeted at women. As already mentioned above, the image of women promoted through the articles and images in the "Dolgozó Nő" magazine changed significantly over time (even the feminine ideal). "Dolgozó Nő" was most of all an "advocate" of the struggle for gender equality in its early period, especially in the '40s. Towards the late '40s and early '50s, "Dolgozó Nő" practically became the propaganda organ of the Union of Democratic Women in Romania, being a Hungarian-language mouthpiece of the struggle for women's emancipation. However, it is important to emphasize that if we look at the entire history of the magazine, this period is not characterized by laudatory verses and editorials imposed on the editors, as the editors of the time believed in what they wrote. In fact, only this period has an activist-feminist spirit if we look at the texts. By the late '50s, the focus began to gradually shift: although the main articles still featured a certain highlighted worker in a factory, an agricultural cooperative, etc., the achievements increasingly praised the system and the party. The late '70s and '80s represent the peak of the fading feminist character. In the '80s, we almost see Ceaușescu on the covers more often than female portraits or workers. The main articles were about factories, constructions, sometimes without any reference to women. Of course, eternal women's themes such as household, cooking, and fashion were always present in the magazine, but it is a fact that the initial traits related to public, political life, and emancipation gradually disappeared completely.

The chapter dedicated to research history highlights the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, including the research of the visual language of the period, the research of press products and propaganda, the relationship between the era and women, the social conditions of the period, as well as the issue of Hungarian minorities in Transylvania and Romania. Of course, I also address a few studies that previously dealt with the "Dolgozó Nő" magazine. The research history section

shows that previous studies on this topic are fragmented, relying more on case studies than on synthesis works.

The next chapter is a methodological presentation – presenting the method of content analysis and its applicability in the case of the research subject, as well as the author's preliminary examinations of the material, which include the analysis of the magazine's covers, the use of compositional analysis, and the possibilities of applying iconography and iconology. The listed methods are complemented by interviews and the oral history method – these interviews being included as transcripts in the appendices of the work. The chapter reveals that my methodological approach was primarily content analysis, supplemented by qualitative methods.

The most important part of the work is the application of the content analysis method. In the methodology chapter, I detail the history, evolution, and possible areas of application of the method, emphasizing that it is a frequently used method in press analysis due to the large volume of source material. I created the version of the method I consider most effective for my research, combining the methodologies of Klaus Krippendorff and Gillian Rose. The research stages preceding content analysis, as highlighted by Krippendorff and Rose, provided preliminary information and knowledge about the subject, which helped in sampling, defining categories, and decoding. For the application of the content analysis method, I chose the method described by Gillian Rose, which is based on the use of cards: the thesis includes the digital version of the cards as an appendix.

The first step of the analysis was defining the studied sample. According to the logic explained earlier, I analyzed the images from the editions of 1948, 1952, 1957, 1964, 1967, 1971, 1977, 1981, 1987, and 1989 (unlike previous examinations, for the second period, I worked with only two annual series, as in the others, because the results so far do not justify a larger sample). As already mentioned, despite this systematic sampling, in the earlier phase of the research, I found that the volume of material to be analyzed is too large, so I also applied a second layer. From each edition, I randomly selected 5 images in which a female figure appears, so we are talking about approximately 60 images per year (except for some years when the magazine did not appear every month), meaning about 600 images in total, which is a sufficiently large

number to illustrate some trends.

A second stage was defining the categories. I decided on categories based on my preliminary research and the list of questions created during that research. Finally, the following categories were chosen:

- The general theme of the article
- Text-image relationship
- The main character of the image
- Secondary characters of the image
- The profession/occupation of the characters
- The environment/location of the image
- The degree of activity of the character(s)
- The direction of the look
- The perceived attitude
- The tone of the presentation

I used these categories to decode the images. The images used for testing the categories are included in the appendices of the thesis.

After detailed content analysis, the work presents the results of the analysis, initially categorically and then through case studies. For example, the images of the 1960s and 1970s show interesting results. These decades mark the true heyday of the "Dolgozó Nő" magazine, not only because of its editorial team (with very competent editors) but also because of its content, which is rich in visual elements (the period is also characterized by visual language in general). The research highlights the peak of the column's women's image representation in the 1960s. We find mostly professionals (doctors, engineers) on the covers, the visual material is abundant, and we notice that even the selection of models has reached an era of gradual refinement, highlighting the role of the media in shaping female beauty ideals.

In the late 1980s, although the magazine still retains its propagandistic character, a visible decrease in the quality of visual material can be observed. The absence of photojournalists is noticeable, as well as the gradual disappearance of true professionals from the editorial team. The focus shifts from the individual to the collective, resulting in fewer portraits and more group shots, which significantly changes the magazine's visual dynamics.

Finally, the last chapter summarizes the findings of my research, pointing out that although "Dolgozó Nő" always reflected the political and social changes of the time, the image of women conveyed through the magazine varied significantly over the decades. This variation is closely related to the prevailing political and ideological influences of each period. The thesis concludes that the visual representation of women in "Dolgozó Nő" offers valuable insights into the broader context of women's emancipation and propaganda during the socialist and communist eras in Romania. Literature is naturally included.