

## “Miss Europe” and “Miss Romania” 1929: Beauty Pageants Between Aesthetic Aspirations and National Propaganda

Vlad Mihăilă\*

**Abstract:** *This article aims to expose the connections between feminine beauty, nationalism, and political propaganda that have characterized modern beauty pageants since their creation in the 1920s. By surveying the ways in which gender and national identity were socially and culturally constructed through the “Miss Europe” and “Miss Romania” competitions, it will be argued that beauty pageants played an important role in affirming national unity, cohesion, and solidarity as well as in bringing diplomatic tensions to the fore of Romanian public debates. These debates were triggered in February 1929 when the first title of the most beautiful woman in Europe was awarded to “Miss Hungary”. The Romanian weekly magazine “Realitatea Ilustrată” [“Illustrated Reality”], one of the most read publications in the 1920s and 1930s, covered this news extensively, investing the European competition with a patriotic meaning and seeing it as the battleground for a symbolic encounter between the Romanian and Hungarian nations. Thus, the European pageant translated political, ethnical, and propagandistic discourses in terms of feminine beauty and identity.*

**Keywords:** beauty pageants, feminine beauty, gender, identity, nationalism

---

\* Vlad Mihăilă has a Ph. D. in History, at the Doctoral School of History, University of Bucharest (November 2017). Thesis title: “Miss Romania (1929-1933). The Beauty Pageants Organized by “Universul”, “Ilustrațiunea Română” și “Realitatea Ilustrată”. Main areas of interest: cultural and social history, gender and cultural identity, history of mass-media and advertising, microhistory, history of the body, corporal representations, and sexuality. Contact: mihaila.vlad@gmail.com.

## Introduction

Modern beauty pageants are complex cultural institutions which have a long and rich history. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, they have been a means of creating and spreading an idealized gender identity, as well as an arena for political debates in which this identity is presented, performed and used to produce legitimate representatives of local, regional or national communities. For more than a century, they have created a symbolic space for debates and a cultural framework in which distinct and usually divergent definitions of femininity were discussed and displayed. For most present-day viewers, beauty pageants are either culturally irrelevant or anachronistic in their continuous task of promoting a stereotypical female imagery.<sup>1</sup> Despite this critique, they continue to be organized in almost all corners of the globe and to create a unique context in which the female body is utilized to discuss the “proper” way in which gender, national, ethnic, racial and sexual identity must be publicly displayed and represented.<sup>2</sup> Thus, beauty pageants offer historians a useful glimpse into the complex, diffuse, and mobile nature of the discourses pertaining to the nation, determining the criteria by which membership to this community is judged and articulating the attributes

---

<sup>1</sup> Elwood Watson, Darcy Martin (eds.), *“There She Is, Miss America”*. *The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, Beverly Stoeltje (eds.), *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*, New York, Routledge, 1996, p. 2.

needed for a woman to be designated as a legitimate representative of its qualities, virtues and aspirations.<sup>3</sup>

The link between modern beauty pageants, nations, and nationalism is an important aspect of the academic interests that these cultural institutions have fueled. The concepts of “nation” and “nationalism” are used in this paper not as “natural”, ahistorical realities, but as culturally-defined products of historical creation. They follow historian Ernest Gellner’s definitions – the former a human collectivity whose members “recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it”, the latter “a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent”.<sup>4</sup> The title granted to national beauty pageant winners itself – the juxtaposition of the term “Miss” and the country’s name – “România” –, encapsulates the connection between nationalism and femininity.<sup>5</sup> The modern nation, this “imagined community” created on the basis of relationships between people that do not know each other but who believe in the existence of a deep solidarity that transcends cultural, economic, and social differences,<sup>6</sup> is in constant ideological need of symbols and visible artifacts of its unity and cohesion.<sup>7</sup> Beauty pageants also create a particular type of “imagined community”. They generate a set of signs and

---

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World. Beauty Pageants and National Identity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1999, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983, pp. 1, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Banet-Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 2006, pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History. Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p. 96.

practices that define womanhood in terms of national identity, fulfilling the symbolic role of bringing national tensions to the center of public debates and vying to “appease” them by the way of incorporation into a set of common practices that ultimately affirm national cohesion.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the organizers of beauty pageants do not aim to offer viable solutions to ethnic, racial or cultural tensions latent in a society, but to “level” disparities, undermine potential crises, and incorporate differences into a homogenous symbolic configuration.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, beauty pageants publicly affirm social unity, solidarity and cohesion, epitomized by the visible symbol of the national beauty queen.

The abstract, impalpable character of “the nation” does not guarantee the adhesion and engagement of the members of a community in the absence of concrete and visible expressions of national solidarity. For it to remain a “legitimate institutionalized system of beliefs and practices”,<sup>10</sup> the nation needs symbols of its unity and identity. To attain this goal, an idealized image of womanhood is created as a national symbol. Historian George L. Mosse links the birth of nationalism at the beginning of the 19th century to the assimilation of new feminine ideals: “Nationalism – and the society that identified with it – used the example of the chaste and modest woman to demonstrate its own virtuous aims”.<sup>11</sup> The winner of the national beauty

---

<sup>8</sup> Sarah Banet-Weiser, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality. Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, p. 90.

pageant became such a social and moral ideal, fulfilling a symbolic role similar to other feminine ideals created during the height of 19th century nationalism such as “Marianne”, “Germania”, and “Britannia”.<sup>12</sup> These ideals of womanhood were representative of the nations’ self-image, signifying the eternal and perennial existence of national values and promising a world of order, harmony, and stability.<sup>13</sup> Thus, femininity was inextricability linked with national propaganda, with the modern nation-state’s ideal of creating, using, and promoting a political agenda through strictly codified feminine identities, in a process that Penny Edwards aptly called “propagender”, a term that encapsulates the idea that “by the late nineteenth century, the adoption of the female form as a national sign was a mainstay of nationalist movements and state governments in Europe and America”.<sup>14</sup>

### **Beauty pageants on the world’s stage**

Modern beauty pageants arrived on the historical scene in the immediate aftermath of the “Great War”, however they were built upon

---

<sup>12</sup> Idem, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 8-9.

<sup>13</sup> Idem, *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Boulder & London, Westview Press, 1988, p. 66.

<sup>14</sup> Penny Edwards, “‘Propagender’: Marianne, Joan of Arc and the Export of French Gender Ideology to Colonial Cambodia (1863–1954)”, in: Tony Chafer, Amanda Sackur (eds.), *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2002, p. 116.

centuries-old traditions, legends, stories, and festivals.<sup>15</sup> The organizers of the first beauty pageants used these earlier exhibitions to create the illusion of a historical continuity, thus legitimizing the new cultural institutions through a process of “inventing traditions”. The concept of “invented traditions” was theorized by historian Erich J. Hobsbawm as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past”.<sup>16</sup> The mythological prototype of modern beauty pageants was in the minds of their creators the episode of the judgment of Paris. According to the ancient myth, the Trojan mortal, son of King Priam and Hecuba, was designated by Zeus to pick the most beautiful goddess from the trio of Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. By offering the golden apple to the goddess of love and lust in exchange for the affection of the most beautiful woman, the Lacedaemonian queen Helen, Paris became the first judge of a beauty pageant.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the most important international beauty competitions were “Miss Universe” (officially called “The International Pageant of Pulchritude”), held in the coastal resort city of

---

<sup>15</sup> Kimberly A. Hamlin, “Bathing Suits and Backlash. The First Miss America Pageants, 1921–1927”, in: Elwood Watson, Darcy Martin (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>16</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”, in: E. J. Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Candace Savage, *Beauty Queens: A Playful History*, New York, Abbeville Press, 1998, p. 11.

Galveston, Texas from 1926, “Miss America”, held in Atlantic City, New Jersey from 1920, and “Miss Europe”, held for the first time in Paris in 1928. A product of one man’s hopes and ambitions, “Miss Europe” was created by Maurice de Waleffe (1874 - 1946), a Belgian-born journalist and editor for two important Parisian newspapers – “Le Journal” and “L’Intransigeant”. Maurice de Waleffe was described by contemporaries as an eccentric, a flamboyant and passionate bohemian with a genuine passion for art and aesthetics, as well as an unscrupulous businessman that foresaw the huge commercial potential of the public display of feminine beauty. It is interesting to point out the way in which M. de Waleffe was described by “Miss France” 1928, Raymonde Allain, as embodying “the crassest, ‘most American’ methods of contemporary business”; he was “nothing but a huckster”, aiming to make use of her beauty “‘like a lighted sign’ to promote his own commercial *cum* patriotic interests”.<sup>18</sup> He is credited with the creation of France’s first national beauty pageant in 1920, initially called “La plus belle femme de France” and renamed in 1927 “Miss France”.<sup>19</sup> From December 1927, M. de Waleffe, in his capacity as the official European representative of the “Pageant of Pulchritude”, organized the first edition of “Miss Europe”. Initially, the European pageant held at Paris was formally affiliated to “Miss Universe”. However, irreconcilable differences between the European and American committees will cause a permanent rift between the two international events after 1929. “Miss Universe” will be held until 1931 in

---

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe al ziarului «Universul». Interview cu d. Maurice de Waleffe”, *Universul*, No. 10, 13 January 1929, p. 3.

Galveston and in 1932 and 1935 in Belgium, whereas “Miss Europe” will survive until 1938.

### **Maurice de Waleffe and the politics of beauty**

Maurice de Waleffe can be seen as the “ideologue” of national beauty pageants held in the majority of European countries in the 1920s and 1930s. In articles and editorials published in French and Romanian newspapers, he articulated a unique ethnic and nationalist discourse according to which feminine beauty represented a hallmark of national identity and a visible exemplification of the purity, uniqueness and particularity of each European nation. Significantly, the first article about the need to establish a national beauty pageant in Romania was published not by Romanian journalists but by the Parisian editor. The article, covering a large portion of the front page, was printed by the daily newspaper “Universul” [*“The Universe”*] on December 5, 1928, one of the most important political journals of the day. “Universul’s” plan to send a Romanian representative to take part in M. de Waleffe’s European pageant was first revealed in the summer of 1928, when the French journalist, a friend of the newspaper’s director, Stelian Popescu, came to Romania for the annual Congress of the “Latin Press Association.”<sup>20</sup> In a text filled with political and racial connotations, M. de Waleffe aims to familiarize the Romanian public with the grand parades and demonstrations

---

<sup>20</sup> \*\*\*, “Frumusețele europene la Presa Latină”, *Universul*, No. 50, 14 February 1929, p. 7.

held in honor of feminine beauty in Europe and the US. He argues that, in the last couple of years, the most important European nations, “except two or three new and miniscule states” were reunited in a competition that aimed to bestow upon a single representative the title of “Miss Europe” – the fairest woman in the “Old Continent”.<sup>21</sup> The title’s symbolic value, prestige and importance were based, in M. de Waleffe’s opinion, on the strong bond between ethnicity, nationality and femininity, the most beautiful European woman being “authorized to go to New York this spring to ‘raise the glove’ that the New Continent has thrown to the Old one for the last couple of years, claiming that the American is the most beautiful woman in the world”.<sup>22</sup> By scheduling a competition to determine the most beautiful European woman, M. de Waleffe aimed to prove the superiority of “the European race” as opposed to the American one, arguing that the European woman was the embodiment of ethnic purity, while the American was “a daughter of mixed blood”, the result of multiple waves of immigration that generated the diversity of American society. The concepts of “race” and “nationality” were used interchangeably in this era: “What brought ‘race’ and ‘nation’ even closer was the practice of using both as virtual synonyms, generalizing equally wildly about ‘racial/national’ character, as was then the fashion”.<sup>23</sup> Nationality was perfectly congruent with ethnicity in M. de Waleffe’s view – each national beauty “type” was seen as “pure”. But the affirmation of

---

<sup>21</sup> Maurice de Waleffe, “De ce ziarul «Universul» va alege pe «cea mai frumoasă femeie din România?»”, *Universul*, No. 283, 5 December 1928, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 108.

European racial and esthetic superiority wasn't the only argument invoked by the journalist to highlight the importance of the "Miss Europe" pageant. His discourse also touches on problems of national stability and survivability in an era when these topics were highly debated in European societies. These debates were especially relevant in France, where declining birth rates and the threat of depopulation were seen as direct results of the "Great War".<sup>24</sup> By linking beauty pageants with society's capacity to reproduce itself – with national demographic policies –, de Waleffe brings natality and eugenics into the discussion of beauty:

*"If 'Miss America' will be victorious, if this daughter of mixed blood will defeat the European delegate, the mixture of races will have proven its superiority! And, in these times of frantic tourism, when we all travel in other countries other than our own, we will encourage our girls to marry foreigners. If, on the contrary, 'Miss Europe' will be found more beautiful than the most beautiful girl of mixed blood, we can continue to believe that our old European matrimonial system is preferable".<sup>25</sup>*

De Waleffe's statement should be contextualized, taking into account the fact that in the years that followed the First World War, 15 European nations introduced laws that cancelled the citizenship of women who married aliens, following the example of the US Congress-approved Expatriation Act of 1907.<sup>26</sup> These normative acts prove the scope of the debates concerning

---

<sup>24</sup> Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890-1970*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 165-166.

<sup>25</sup> Maurice de Waleffe, "De ce ziarul «Universul»...", *Universul*, 5 December 1928, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Erika Kuhlman, *Reconstructing Patriarchy After the Great War: Women, Gender, and Postwar Reconciliation between Nations*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 108-109.

the legal status of women and the attitudes of governments towards what they believed were the obligations of women to their nations. His article illustrates the pervasive nature of racial and eugenic theories in the 1920s and 1930s. Developed as an autonomous scientific field in the last quarter of the 19th century, eugenics was founded on the idea that the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the human race can and should be controlled by the state through medicine and education. In Romania, eugenics was promoted by a series of well-known doctors such as Gheorghe Marinescu, Iuliu Moldovan, Gheorghe Banu, and Iuliu Hațiegan, but also by intellectuals such as Simion Mehedinți and Dimitrie Gusti.<sup>27</sup>

Following one researcher's observation, the economic and cultural competition between the US and France in postwar Europe gained a new expression through international beauty pageants, translating cultural tensions in terms of female bodily features, shapes, and proportions: "Combatants were not solemn men outfitted in uniforms and equipped with modern weapons but exuberant young women adorned in colorful bathing suits and armed only with the chief weapon in the coquette's arsenal – a dazzling smile".<sup>28</sup> In the complex equation of artistic, ethnic, and nationalist meanings produced and reproduced by beauty pageants, M. de Waleffe adds a demographic dimension, arguing that "marble Venuses do not reproduce, while flesh and blood Venuses, put to good use, could avoid the necessity of

---

<sup>27</sup> Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*, Pittsburg, University of Pittsburg Press, 2002, pp. 1-4.

<sup>28</sup> Holly Grout, "Between Venus and Mercury. The 1920s Beauty Contest in France and America", in: *French Politics, Culture & Society*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2013, p. 47.

an obscure venal marriage and choose a husband that is worthy of them”.<sup>29</sup> M. de Waleffe’s vision according to which the final “battle” had to be waged between “Miss Europe” and “Miss America” was rejected by the organizers of the “International Pageant of Pulchritude”. His plan was to organize a final contest between the two in New York (not in Galveston), where they had to be judged by “a mixt tribunal, half European and half American” composed only of artists and aesthetes”.<sup>30</sup> In his view, a beauty queen, once her annual “reign” was finished, was naturally obliged to further serve the country’s interests by assuming the traditional roles of mother, wife, and housekeeper. By reclaiming the century-old “steel-engraving lady” ideal, the “fragile and submissive maiden of the Victorian stereotype”,<sup>31</sup> she contributed not just to the social reproduction of the nation, but also to its genetic betterment: “The result: the nation’s children will be prettier and healthier. The species will be perfect by the way of attentive selection”. For M. de Waleffe, thus, beauty pageants were an efficient way to purify and beautify the nation: “they are a means to save some of these few ‘human statues’ so rare and precious, that can adorn our species and that we need so badly”.<sup>32</sup>

## Two “Miss Romania”

---

<sup>29</sup> Maurice de Waleffe, “De ce ziarul «Universul»...”, *Universul*, 5 December 1928, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Lois Banner, *American Beauty*, New York, Knopf, 1983, p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> Maurice de Waleffe, “De ce ziarul «Universul»...”, *Universul*, 5 December 1928, p. 1.

Once the necessity, importance and morality of these competitions were affirmed, M. de Waleffe turned to the organizational aspects of the European and Romanian pageants. The “match” to determine the most beautiful woman in Europe was going to be held on February 7, 1929 in Paris; the board of judges was headed by de Waleffe himself and was composed of “great artists, one for each participant country”.<sup>33</sup> He then highlights the rules of the Romanian competition, showing that participants had to be between 16 and 25 years of age, unmarried, and “to have an honorable profession, meaning to live with their parents or by the fruit of their own labor”.<sup>34</sup>

The contest to determine the first-ever “Miss Romania” or “Domnișoara România” as she was alternatively known in the era was held on a Sunday morning on January 13, 1929. The board of judges assembled by “Universul” and presided over by M. de Waleffe elected a young 24-year-old woman from Constanța, Maria (Marioara) Gănescu, to represent Romania in the European pageant.<sup>35</sup> Three weeks later, “Miss Romania” would leave for Paris accompanied by an aunt (the international pageant regulations specified that all contestants had to be chaperoned at all times during the contest), arriving in the French capital on February 5, 1929.<sup>36</sup> The “Miss Europe” pageant took place on February 7 in the central salon of “Le

---

<sup>33</sup> Idem, “Concursul de frumusețe”, *Universul*, No. 288, 8 December 1928, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, “De ce ziarul «Universul»...”, *Universul*, 5 December 1928, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Domnița*, No. 1, 8 February 1929, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> \*\*\*, “Concursul internațional de frumusețe dela Paris”, *Universul*, No. 43, 7 February 1929, p. 1.

Journal” and was won by Hungary’s representative.<sup>37</sup> Receiving 12 out of 17 votes, “Miss Hungary”, Elisabeta (Erzsi) Simon Böske, conformed to the criteria imposed by the organizers: she was 20 years old and lived with her parents in the picturesque region of Lake Balaton.<sup>38</sup> From a physical standpoint, “Miss Hungary” again followed the aesthetic ideal proposed by the organizers, seeing as she “was of an aristocratic whiteness and delicacy” borrowed, M. de Waleffe tells us, from the natural environment of her country’s great lake, “where you can fish for the famous ‘fogash’ with its white and delicate meat”.<sup>39</sup>

During 1929, the weekly magazine “Realitatea Ilustrată”, the most read illustrated magazine of the era (with a circulation of 65-85.000 prints in the 1920s-1930s)<sup>40</sup> and “Universul’s” rival, directly affiliated to the “Miss Universe” pageant in Galveston, constantly covered and repeatedly analyzed the European contest. Its reactions and rhetoric prove the importance of the pageant’s result in discussing sensitive topics such as diplomatic tensions, national identity and racism. The particularity of the Romanian “case” stems from the fact that not one, but two separate and competing “Miss Romania” beauty pageants were created and promoted in 1929, each claiming that its winner is the only true, legitimate representative of the Romanian nation. The

---

<sup>37</sup> \*\*\*, “La candidate de la Hongrie a été proclamée la plus belle femme d’Europe”, *Le Journal*, No. 13263, 8 February 1929, p. 1; P. C., “Miss Europe visite L’Intransigeant”, *L’Intransigeant*, No. 18009, 9 February 1929, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Maurice de Waleffe, “Cea mai frumoasă din Europa”, *Universul*, No. 33, 28 January 1929, pp. 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> A. B. C., “Succesul unei reviste ilustrate”, *Dimineața*, No. 8943, 16 November 1931, p. 20; *RI*, No. 412, 12 December 1934, p. 24.

first “Miss Romania” pageant was organized by “Universul” on January 13, 1929, while the second one was created by “Realitatea Ilustrată”, a magazine founded in 1927 in Cluj and purchased by two major left-wing dailies, “Adevărul” and “Dimineața”, in 1928, both ideologically opposed to “Universul”. The second “Miss Romania” pageant took place on March 17, 1929 and its winner was to be sent directly to “The International Pageant of Pulchritude” in Galveston. The (real or imagined) tensions that arose in the wake of “Miss Hungary’s” victory are a testimony to the ideologically-charged debates fueled by the Romanian press. In the journalists’ view, “Miss Romania” was a key subject on the national political agenda. Furthermore, the act of discrediting the European contest and its winner was an indirect way to attack the other “Miss Romania” pageant, all the more so since “Realitatea Ilustrată’s” winner, Magda Demetrescu, was the runner-up of “Universul’s” rival competition.<sup>41</sup>

### **Racial, ethnic and diplomatic tensions**

The transformation of “Miss Europe” into a topic of national interest began in February 1929 with the news that the European beauty crown had been won by “Miss Hungary”. Initially, “Realitatea Ilustrată” welcomed the result. An article printed on February 16 shows that “without question, the

---

<sup>41</sup> \*\*\*, “Duminică s-a ales regina frumuseții din România”, *Universul*, No. 12, 16 January 1929, p. 3.

victor of Paris is a very beautiful young woman”.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the dailies “Adevărul” and “Dimineața” report impartially that the European competition was won by “a blonde beauty, with very delicate features”.<sup>43</sup> However, the results were criticized not from an aesthetic standpoint, but from an organizational and ideological perspective. Even though she was a legitimate beauty, “Miss Europe” was “not a true representative of the ‘pure’ Hungarian race”.<sup>44</sup> “Realitatea Ilustrată” will thus argue that, owing to its racial and genetic composition, the Hungarian population was intrinsically devoid of any aesthetic qualities: “they have high cheekbones, small eyes, flat noses, a short stature etc.”.<sup>45</sup> Hungary, it was believed, could not “naturally” be credited with winning an international beauty contest. The magazine is quick to offer an explanation for Erzsébet Simon’s victory: “she isn’t a product of the Hungarian race. In her appearance there is an evident German influence”. Signaling Hungary’s imposture, the magazine ensures its readers that its own “Miss Romania” will follow with great care and responsibility the racial and ethnic criteria stated by M. de Waleffe: “We will do our best to choose a representative type of Romanian beauty, be it the beauty of Banat with its striking Roman features, the beauty of Bessarabia in which you can sense a Slavic influence, or the beauty of Oltenia with its

---

<sup>42</sup> \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe al «Realității Ilustrate»”, *Realitatea Ilustrată* (hereafter *RI*), No. 8, 16 February 1929, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe din Paris”, *Adevărul*, No. 13845, 9 February 1929, p. 2; \*\*\*, *Dimineața*, No. 7960, 9 February 1929, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe...”, 16 February 1929, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

Dacian appearance”.<sup>46</sup> By invoking the three central pillars of national identity, “Realitatea Ilustrată” placed the national beauty pageant in the political, cultural, and historiographical debates that sought to establish and affirm the historical primacy of the Romanian people (as opposed to the “alien” origin of Hungarians). These earlier 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectual and political debates were revived and rekindled with much pathos in the new geopolitical context created by the Versailles system of peace treaties.<sup>47</sup>

“Hungarian revisionism” and the aggressive diplomatic claims of Budapest – two central themes of public debates in interwar Romania – will also feature as important topics concerning the election of “Miss Romania”, “Realitatea Ilustrată” seeing the pageant as an arena for a symbolic confrontation between the two nations and consequently issuing patriotic calls for enrollment: “every Romanian woman, knowing herself to be beautiful, will understand that it is her duty to participate in the beauty pageant organized by ‘Realitatea Ilustrată’”.<sup>48</sup> In the symbolic struggle between Budapest and Bucharest, the magazine will make use of M. de Waleffe’s vision and rhetoric to prove the illegitimate character of “Miss Hungary’s” victory and to argue in favor of the “natural” superiority of Romanian women’s beauty.

---

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed analysis regarding the process of creating a Romanian national identity in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2011, pp. 59-298. For the process of “nation building” in the interwar era, see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare, 1918-1930*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1998.

<sup>48</sup> \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe...”, 16 February 1929, p. 9.

In its next issues, “Realitatea Ilustrată” will diversify its critiques against “Miss Hungary”. No longer a legitimate winner of the European title, Erzsí Simon will be portrayed as a devious and immoral candidate that used her seductive charms to sway the European vote in her favor. The false and artificial nature of her election was exposed in an article titled “How ‘Miss Hungary’ became ‘Miss Europe’”. In this text, the magazine’s critique starts from the “Miss Hungary” national pageant, during which Erzsí Simon succeeded in seducing M. de Waleffe who had stopped in Budapest on his way to preside over the election of “Miss Romania”: “I took advantage of this trip to Bucharest to stop on my way in Budapest, where I presided over the election of the most beautiful Hungarian woman”.<sup>49</sup> During the contest, she “transformed him into the most devoted apostle of her candidacy”.<sup>50</sup> In addition to gaining the admiration of the chief architect of “Miss Europe”, Hungary’s representative benefitted from “a second lucky and even decisive occurrence” by enlisting the help of one of the era’s most famous female performers, Jenny Dolly, “one of the renowned Dolly Sisters, her compatriot”. This news first appeared in the Viennese newspaper “Neue Freie Presse” which, cited by the American press, stated that “Miss Simon's most decisive luck was her meeting in Budapest with Jenny Dolly, one of the Dolly sisters. The dancer revealed to the future queen all secrets concerning beauty out of the wealth of her experience as a music hall star. Patou, the

---

<sup>49</sup> \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe al ziarului «Universul»...”, *Universul*, 13 January 1929, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> \*\*\*, “Cum a devenit «Miss Ungaria», «Miss Europa»”, *RI*, No. 10, 2 March 1929, p. 7.

great tailor, had to create for her a special dress that suited most her style of youthful beauty and for this toilet, too, Jenny Dolly contributed her most precious advice”.<sup>51</sup> Eluding the official pageant rules that prohibited the involvement of theater actresses, dancers, and movie stars from competing and being involved in the event, “Miss Hungary”, in the words of “Realitatea Ilustrată”, “took advantage of absolutely all the secrets in matters of feminine beauty, of the experience of a music hall star”.<sup>52</sup> The magazine is invoking here the 14 official „Pageant of Pulchritude” rules created by the Galveston organizational committee and published in Romanian in January 1929, one of which stated that participants “had to prove that they did not have an artistic or cinematographic career or do not work in a similar profession”.<sup>53</sup> This unfair advantage was made clearer by employing the renowned designer Jean Patou, who “was constrained to create a special gown that perfectly fitted the stature and juvenile complexion of Miss Hungary, a gown that was also designed with the precious advices of Jenny Dolly in mind”.<sup>54</sup> Again, the contrast between the official rules of the pageant stressing that the contestants’ dresses should be modest – they had to parade in “simple town or night dresses, chosen by the candidates”,<sup>55</sup> and “Miss Hungary” was evident. Erszi Simon was thus dressed in “a very low-cut sleeveless dress, made from very fine lace”. The candidate’s disparagement was also affirmed

---

<sup>51</sup> \*\*\*, “«Miss Europe», Pupil of Jenny Dolly, Stirs Anti-Semite Riot”, *The Galveston Daily News*, No. 353, 28 March 1929, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> \*\*\*, “Cum a devenit...”, *RI*, 2 March 1929, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> \*\*\*, “«Realitatea Ilustrată» alege pe «Miss România»”, *RI*, No. 2, 5 January 1929, p. 5; *Adevărul*, No. 13829, 19 January 1929, p. 2; *Dimineața*, Nr. 7940, 19 January 1929, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> \*\*\*, “Cum a devenit...”, *RI*, 2 March 1929, p. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Maurice de Waleffe, “De ce ziarul «Universul»...”, *Universul*, 5 December 1928, p. 1.

by her choice of a provocative haircut. Again, Jenny Dolly was the one who “dictated to the hairdresser a look that covered her ears with gracious curls”. The music hall star’s choice of makeup was equally enticing: “she used a little powder and a special blend invented by her sister, Iancsi Dolly, made from white, pink, and dark powder”. Finally, Jenny Dolly gave her compatriot “lessons on how to walk, how to smile – and finally, how to be liked”. “Realitatea Ilustrată” concludes that “Miss Hungary’s” European triumph was attained by making use of a lascivious and decadent feminine identity that contrasted with the juvenile, modest, and ingénue ideal of womanhood proposed by the organizers: “Behold the way in which Miss Hungary has defeated her European rivals”. The magazine asks the question whether “the skillful attire and studied manners” will be enough to win the title of “Miss Universe” at Galveston, stating once again the superiority of Romania’s representative, who “must participate in our national elections without the use of artificial aides” and who, restating the importance of racial arguments, will be “the embodiment of pure beauty”.<sup>56</sup>

The symbolic struggle between “Miss Romania” and “Miss Hungary” at Galveston did not eventually take place. “Realitatea Ilustrată” will report on the eve of the European candidate’s transatlantic voyage to the US that “Miss Erzsi Simon, Miss Hungary, has declared that she will not participate in the Galveston pageant”.<sup>57</sup> Employing a rhetorical strategy similar to the

---

<sup>56</sup> \*\*\*, “Cum a devenit...”, *RI*, 2 March 1929, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> \*\*\*, “Plecarea candidatelor europene la concursul din Galveston”, *RI*, No. 17, 20 April 1929, p. 19.

one used in previous articles, the magazine will highlight the fact that “Miss Hungary’s” decision was made by acknowledging the fact that, without the subjective advantages gained during the European contest, she “did not want to risk a defeat at Galveston, because there in front of other referees (...) she might not win any of the nine prizes handed to contestants or in the best-case scenario just a secondary one.”<sup>58</sup> Her decision to not participate in the “Miss Universe” pageant is linked by the magazine to a failed nationalist initiative, perceived as having a strong anti-Romanian character, Erzsi Simon planning on “dressing up in a black outfit as a sign of mourning for the lands dismembered from Hungary – doing this even if it meant a defeat on esthetic grounds”. This symbolically-charged political gesture will also be featured in “Viitorul” [*“The Future”*], the official newspaper of the National Liberal Party of Romania (PNL). Here, the plan to decry the unjustness of the Versailles system was seen as the creation of the Hungarian journalists, who saw and speculated the great propagandistic potential of the “Miss Universe” pageant: “She will have a ‘kolossal’ effect in America, appearing clothed in her mourning dress, with the mutilated map of Hungary pinned to her chest”.<sup>59</sup> The article in “Viitorul” stresses that the inherent political nature of the competition was tainted by Hungary’s petty revisionist attitude. The plan, however, was destined to fail, seeing that “common sense and the continental public spirit will protest against this news and this monumental Turanian ludicrousness”.<sup>60</sup> Taking up this challenge, “Realitatea Ilustrată” will ask the

---

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> \*\*\*, “Miss Izrael”, *Viitorul*, No. 6324, 15 March 1929, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

Hungarian press to “reverse its decision not to send Miss Hungary to Galveston”, at the same time stating that “we would like the chance for (...) Romanian’s representative to compete against Hungary’s choice, the victor of Paris”.<sup>61</sup>

“Miss Hungary’s” absence from Galveston’s pageant was further explained by the magazine “because Iancsy Dolly could not get vacation from the ‘Moulin-Rouge’ to join her compatriot and offer assistance with her precious advices”.<sup>62</sup> The fact that “the artificial ‘Miss Europe’ stays home” was evidently opposed to “the admirable representative of Romanian beauty” who “has embarked towards the great battle which she will fight on the other side of the Ocean to prove to the world that Romania, in addition to her well-known virtues, has beautiful women”.<sup>63</sup> This paragraph highlights the symbolic mobilization of feminine beauty in the interests of the nation through a masculinized rhetoric, “Miss Romania” bearing the responsibility of fighting for her country’s honor and glory, while “Miss Hungary” is portrayed as being stripped both of the “superficial” physical advantages that had seduced M. de Waleffe and the Parisian jury, as well as of the virtues and qualities of her Romanian counterpart. In the symbolic competition between the two national beauty winners, “Miss Romania” is invested with masculine traits such as honor, courage, combativeness, willingness to do one’s duty, “manliness” being an essential virtue coopted by the nation state in its

---

<sup>61</sup> \*\*\*, “Plecarea candidatelor...”, *RI*, 20 April 1929, p. 19.

<sup>62</sup> \*\*\*, “Frumusețile Europei”, *RI*, No. 22, 25 May 1929, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

symbolic struggles against internal or international enemies.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the magazine restates that “Miss Hungary” won the European beauty pageant through mischief and unfair advantages and was a coward for refusing to compete against “Miss Romania” at Galveston: “Miss Erzsi Simon, ‘Miss Hungary’, elected ‘Miss Europe’ at a problematic contest in Paris, did not go to Galveston not because of reasons of nationality, but because she was first and most firmly convinced that her selection was a parody”.<sup>65</sup> In the end, the magazine’s critique reaches its zenith, “Miss Hungary” herself admitting that her European victory was a travesty.

According to “Realitatea Ilustrată”, the importance of crowning “Miss Hungary” as the new “Miss Europe” had not only diplomatic consequences, but also potential destabilizing effects for Romanian’s internal affairs. The magazine proves this statement by publishing a letter sent in April 1929 by “a group of good Romanians, readers of our magazine” from the town of Jibou (today in Sălaj county) in which the Romanian public is warned about the aggressive cultural policies of Hungary grounded on the victory of its representative at Paris.<sup>66</sup> The group of patriotic Romanians pointed out that “in our region quite a stir was caused by songs with verses

---

<sup>64</sup> Masculinity as an essential trait in the service of the nation and nationalism is analyzed in classic studies such as Joane Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations”, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, No. 21 (2), 1998, pp. 242-269; George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1996; Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993; Angus McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries, 1870-1930*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1997.

<sup>65</sup> L. M., “Concursul de frumusețe din Galveston”, *RI*, No. 24, 8 June 1929, p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> \*\*\*, “Un concurs al «Realității Ilustrate»”, *RI*, No. 16, 13 April 1929, p. 10.

dedicated to ‘Miss Europe’”, these songs being made in Budapest and “having the seal and character of propaganda, all the more as ‘Miss Europe’ is one of Hungary’s daughters”.<sup>67</sup> The political issue of revisionism is further complicated in the minds of these concerned readers by the imminent danger of radicalization among the Hungarian minority in Transylvania and, even more serious, of the “Magyarization” of the Romanian population through songs composed in honor of “Miss Europe”: “And painfully, these songs touch the hearts of our Hungarian compatriots and are sung in all cafés – even by Romanians”. The adequate response envisioned by the group of readers is to “fight propaganda through propaganda” by creating a patriotic song contest. These patriotic hymns “will express the beauty, the harmony, the musicality, the true characteristics of *Romanian beauty*”. The winning song composed for “Miss Romania” would be published in “*Realitatea Ilustrată*” and distributed “in all corners of the country”, thus “contributing to the spiritual lifting of the population and at the same time it will be a counter-manifestation”.<sup>68</sup> Significantly, the magazine will enthusiastically accept the propositions, launching a national literary and musical contest and stating that “the texts must have a patriotic content and the notes will capture the beautiful and inspired tones, nuances and accents of our national music”. Moreover, the winning song “will receive a prize of 5000 lei”.<sup>69</sup> Although the magazine won’t publish the results of the contest, it is historically

---

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

important to record its existence as a cultural initiative tied to national beauty pageants that meant to halt the perceived cultural advances and encroachment of Hungary in interwar Romania. As in the previous articles, the international beauty pageant becomes a problem of national security and cultural policy.

After electing its own “Miss Romania” in a grandiose pageant held on March 17, 1929 in the sumptuous “Palace of the Arts” (“Palatul Artelor”) and conducted by Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, the Minister of Internal Affairs,<sup>70</sup> “Realitatea Ilustrată’s” focus will shift from insisting on the political meaning of Hungary’s European victory to affirming the exceptional qualities and virtues of Romania’s (new) national representative. In the magazine’s view, its own beauty queen was set to become not just an embodiment of the racial, moral and aesthetic superiority of Romania not just towards Hungary, but also towards all other European nations: “Our magazine wishes its and the country’s elected representative the utmost success, for her own fulfillment and for the glory of her motherland which she honors with her beauty”.<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusions

In the spring of 1929, the political and ideological meanings of beauty pageants were translated in terms of diplomatic tensions by Romanian magazines and newspapers. Unwilling to accept the fact that “Miss Europe”

---

<sup>70</sup> L. M., “D-ra Magda Demetrescu a fost aleasă «Miss România»”, *RI*, No. 13, 23 March 1929, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, “Concursul de frumusețe din Galveston”, 8 June 1929, p. 6.

was a “daughter” of Hungary, “Realitatea Ilustrată” created texts that aimed to contest the Parisian result both on pragmatic and racial terms. By deeming the Hungarian nation “objectively” non-aesthetic, the magazine sought to delegitimize Erzsi Simon’s victory on the theoretical grounds proposed by the European pageants creator, Maurice de Waleffe. Moreover, the magazine speculated the European result in its own pragmatic interests by aiming to prove the superiority of its own “Miss Romania”, as opposed to the one elected by rival “Universul”. By delegitimizing “Miss Hungary’s” election, it suggested that the entire European pageant was superficial and immoral (as opposed to “Miss Universe”). The history of beauty pageants in Romania will unfold on the premise of this bitter rivalry between the two gazettes.

More than just cultural ephemerae, the “Miss Romania” beauty pageants were from their beginnings in 1929 intimately linked to political and nationalist discourses, generating what Cezar Petrescu, one of Romania’s most successful interwar writers, ironically called “missromânism”<sup>72</sup> – a form of patriotic rhetoric centered on affirming the glory, fame, and pride of Romanian identity distilled in the features, behavior, and virtues of national pageant winners. The symbol of “Miss Romania” – the unique and legitimate representative of the nation – had in this era a precise mobilizing effect, contributing both to solidifying internal cohesion and unity and promoting the country’s image abroad. To this end, the organizers of Romania’s first national beauty competitions set to make “Miss Romania” a household name,

---

<sup>72</sup> Crt., “Miss România. Mare roman satiric de Cezar Petrescu. De vorbă cu autorul”, *Curentul*, No. 755, 26 February 1930, p. 3.

to make sure that this new national symbol would penetrate all social and cultural strata. In this regard, the pageants performed a symbolic function similar to the international sporting events that engrossed many Europeans in this era – the creation of the football World Cup in 1930 and the Olympics, to give just two examples –, namely they created a social and cultural space apt to instill national sentiments through identification with a public symbol – “The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of the nation himself”.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the “imagined community” of millions of Romanians gained a concrete, visible form through the tens of thousands of men and women cheering their beauty queen and all the more through “Miss Romania” – a national feminine symbol that was more than a name, a pretty face, and a harmonious body parading in national and international contests.

## Bibliography

### 1. Primary sources (newspaper and magazine articles)

- \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe al «Realității Ilustrate»”, in: *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 8, 16 February 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe al ziarului «Universul». Interview cu d. Maurice de Waleffe”, in: *Universul*, No. 10, 13 January 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe din Paris”, in: *Adevărul*, No. 13845, 9 February 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Concursul de frumusețe din Paris”, in: *Dimineața*, No. 7960, 9 February 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Concursul internațional de frumusețe dela Paris”, in: *Universul*, No. 43, 7 February 1929.

---

<sup>73</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

- \*\*\*, “Concursul internațional de frumusețe din Galveston”, *Adevărul*, No. 13829, 19 January 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Concursul internațional de frumusețe din Galveston”, *Dimineața*, Nr. 7940, 19 January 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Cum a devenit «Miss Ungaria», «Miss Europa»”, in: *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 10, 2 March 1929.
- \*\*\*, *Domnița*, No. 1, 8 February 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Duminică s-a ales regina frumuseții din România”, in: *Universul*, No. 12, 16 January 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Frumusețile Europei”, in: *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 22, 25 May 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Frumusețele europene la Presa Latină”, in: *Universul*, No. 50, 14 February 1929.
- \*\*\*, “La candidate de la Hongrie a été proclamée la plus belle femme d'Europe”, in: *Le Journal*, No. 13263, 8 February 1929.
- \*\*\*, “«Miss Europe», Pupil of Jenny Dolly, Stirs Anti-Semite Riot”, in: *The Galveston Daily News*, No. 353, 28 March 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Miss Izrael”, in: *Viitorul*, No. 6324, 15 March 1929.
- \*\*\*, “Plecarea candidatelor europene la concursul din Galveston”, in: *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 17, 20 April 1929.
- \*\*\*, *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 412, 12 December 1934.
- \*\*\*, “«Realitatea Ilustrată» alege pe «Miss România»”, in: *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 2, 5 January 1929.
- A. B. C., “Succesul unei reviste ilustrate”, in: *Dimineața*, No. 8943, 16 November 1931.
- Crt., “Miss România. Mare roman satiric de Cezar Petrescu. De vorbă cu autorul”, in: *Curentul*, No. 755, 26 February 1930.
- L. M., “Concursul de frumusețe din Galveston”, in: *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 24, 8 June 1929.
- L. M., “D-ra Magda Demetrescu a fost aleasă «Miss România»”, in: *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 13, 23 March 1929.
- L. M., “Un concurs al «Realității Ilustrate»”, in: *Realitatea Ilustrată*, No. 16, 13 April 1929.
- Maurice de Waleffe, “Cea mai frumoasă din Europa”, in: *Universul*, No. 33, 28 January 1929.
- Maurice de Waleffe, “Concursul de frumusețe”, in: *Universul*, No. 288, 8 December 1928.

Maurice de Waleffe, “De ce ziarul «Universul» va alege pe «cea mai frumoasă femeie din România?»”, in: *Universul*, No. 283, 5 December 1928.

P. C., “Miss Europe visite L’Intransigeant”, in: *L’Intransigeant*, No. 18009, 9 February 1929.

## 2. Secondary sources

Allen, Ann Taylor, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890-1970*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Ballerino Cohen, Colleen; Wilk, Richard; Stoeltje, Beverly (eds.), *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*, New York, Routledge, 1996.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World. Beauty Pageants and National Identity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1999.

Banner, Lois, *American Beauty*, New York, Knopf, 1983.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 2006.

Boia, Lucian, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2011.

Bucur, Maria, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*, Pittsburg, University of Pittsburg Press, 2002.

Chafer, Tony, Sackur, Amanda (eds.), *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2002.

Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983.

Grout, Holly, “Between Venus and Mercury. The 1920s Beauty Contest in France and America”, in: *French Politics, Culture & Society*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2013.

Hobsbawm, E. J., *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Hobsbawm, E. J., Ranger, Terence (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

- Kuhlman, Erika, *Reconstructing Patriarchy After the Great War: Women, Gender, and Postwar Reconciliation between Nations*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Livezeanu, Irina, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare, 1918-1930*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1998.
- McLaren, Angus, *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries, 1870-1930*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1997.
- Mosse, George L., *Nationalism and Sexuality. Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Mosse, George L., *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Mosse, George L., *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth And Twentieth Centuries*, Boulder & London, Westview Press, 1988.
- Nagel, Joane, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations", in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, no. 21 (2), 1998.
- Nye, Robert A., *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Savage, Candace, *Beauty Queens: A Playful History*, New York, Abbeville Press, 1998.
- Smith, Anthony D., *The Nation in History. Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000.
- Watson, Elwood, Martin, Darcy (eds.), *"There She Is, Miss America". The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.