

# **FROM “SOVIET WOMAN” TO “COSMOPOLITAN”: A CRITICAL READING OF WOMEN’S PESS IN GEORGIA**

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*Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of Gender Studies*

*In partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies*

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Budapest, Hungary  
2009

## **Abstract**

This MA thesis examines Georgian women's press during the recent history of the country in order to determine its role in constructing the gender stereotypes and female images. The main concern of the thesis is to analyze how women's magazines' versions of femininity change from historical moment to moment and how these changes are determined by the country's political, economical, and social condition. In order to achieve this goal the thesis analyzes two Georgian women's magazines: "Soviet Woman" (1957-1961), lately renamed as "Georgian Woman" (1961-1990; 1991-2007), and "Cosmopolitan" (2006-present day)

The main research questions of this study are the following: How were the various political changes reflected on the politics of the women's press in Georgia? How were the female images constructed through these magazines in the different periods? What are the dominant topics in the magazines? What is the role of the market in the politics of these magazines? What is the role of the women's magazines in creation and promotion of a certain model of femininity that corresponds with the actual political trends? How did the promoted concepts of femininity in the different versions of Georgian women's magazines challenge the traditional beliefs about Georgian women?

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## Introduction

This MA thesis examines Georgian women's press during the recent history of the country in order to determine its role in constructing the gender stereotypes and female images. The main concern of the thesis is to analyze how women's magazines' versions of femininity change from historical moment to moment and how these changes are determined by the country's political, economical, and social condition. In order to achieve this goal the thesis will analyze two Georgian women's magazines: "Soviet Woman" (1957-1961), lately renamed as "Georgian Woman" (1961-1990; 1991-2007), and "Cosmopolitan" (2006-present day)<sup>1</sup>.

The choice of these magazines was stipulated by the fact that there have been no other women's magazines published in Georgia for more than two years. Thus these two magazines are the only sources for analyzing how women's images were constructed in women's press in different periods and under the different political regimes in Georgia.

The main research questions of this study are the following: How were the various political changes reflected on the politics of the women's press in Georgia? How were the female images constructed through these magazines in the different periods? What are the dominant topics in the magazines? What is the role of the market in the politics of these magazines? What is the role of the women's magazines in creation and promotion of a certain model of femininity that corresponds with the actual political trends? How did the promoted concepts of femininity in the different versions of Georgian women's magazines challenge the traditional beliefs about Georgian women?

"Soviet Woman", lately renamed as "Georgian Woman" was published during three different political periods: during the leadership of two communist leaders: Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev; during "Perestroika": liberal political and economical

reform of the last years of the USSR, and during the first two decades of independence of Georgia. As for “Cosmo”, it appeared on the Georgian media-market only recently, in 2006. To be able to look through the changes Georgian women’s press has undergone during these years the thesis will analyze two issues of the magazines published in each period. That means two issues of the year 1957, when “Soviet Woman” began to be published; two issues of “Georgian Woman” of the year 1967 to see how the change of the name reflected on its politics, two issues of the year 1987 when “Perestroika” is in the midst of its existence; two issues of the year 1997 when Georgia is already an independent country, and last issues of “Georgian Woman” in 2007. As for “Cosmo” the thesis will examine first two issues of the year 2006 when it began publishing and two issues of the year 2008 to see how it developed and adapted the Georgian reality.

The thesis consists of five chapters, while the first chapter deals with the representation of the theoretical and historical background of the research each of the last four chapters examines the Georgian women’s press of one particular historical period.

The second chapter examines Georgian women’s press during the years of Khrushchev and Brezhnev. It starts with the brief historical account and, by giving the examples from the magazines, analyzes how the state’s position towards the role of a woman in a public/private spheres determined the ways “Soviet Woman” and “Georgian Woman” depicted the ideal image of a Georgian woman.

The third chapter deals with the issues of “Georgian Woman” published during “Perestroika”. The chapter argues that the main novelty brought in Georgian women’s press by “Glasnost”, which was an important part of the reform and meant the liberalization of the Soviet press, was that “Georgian Woman” began to analyze the difficulties women faced

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<sup>1</sup> All of the magazine articles examined in this work are translated by the author of the thesis

while trying to fit the triple role of a mother, a worker and a citizen. But the responsibility for failing was still ascribed on women.

The third chapter analyzes the political, economical, and social condition of the country during the transition from the socialist to capitalist systems. The replacement of the central planning by the market economy played the main role in the fate of “Georgian Woman” which seized its existence a year after “Cosmo” appeared on the media-market. The examination of the last issues of “Georgian Woman” showed its inability to fit the demands of the audience. The magazine did not change the format and the conservative content of the articles which still praised the traditional values of Georgian family and ignored the topics about sex and sexuality.

Entering of the foreign capital in Georgian media-market and its influence on its content will be most thoroughly examined in the last chapter where “Cosmopolitan” as the only representative of Georgian women’s press during last three years (2007-2009) will be analyzed. The examined issues of “Cosmopolitan” showed that while in the articles translated from American “Cosmo” the images of women became far more sexual, depicting women who are independent and in charge of their lives, the Georgian part of the magazine remained fairly conservative by ascribing the leading and decision-making role on men either in a public or in a private spheres and avoiding to depict sexual images of Georgian women.

The major findings of the research will be summarized in the conclusion. The last paragraphs of the thesis will discuss its limitations and will define the possible ways of its further development.

## **Chapter I: the Role of Women's Press in General and its Significance for the Georgian Reality**

As this MA thesis deals with a critical reading of Georgian women's magazines starting from the fifties of the twentieth century till the present day the main concern of it will be to determine the role of such magazines in constructing the "normative femininity"; how this role changes from one historical period to other; what influence state ideology on the one hand and the demands of the audience on the other hand have on the content of the magazines. While using works examining the role of Soviet women's press and studies analyzing women's magazines issued in capitalist countries, the aim of the thesis will not be to analyze how socialist women's press differs from its capitalist counterpart but to look through the historical development of Georgian women's press and reveal some important tendencies concerning the constructing gender stereotypes.

The thesis will use two approaches worked out by the feminist writers about the role of the readers of women's magazines. The main question of the debate around this issue is whether these readers must be seen as the cultural dupes who straightforwardly consume everything they read or as the ones who produce their own meaning from the texts given. Suzanna Danuta Walters ("Sex, Text, and Content", 1999) gives to this debate chronological framework naming it as a shift in feminist cultural studies from an "images of woman" perspective emerged in early feminist cultural criticism to "woman as image" – more sophisticated approach (225).

Both approaches provide a relevant theoretical framework for this work as they help to analyze the magazines published during the different historical periods. So I will review the main aspects of this debate on the example of two works done by two feminist authors –

Marjorie Ferguson (“Forever Feminine”, 1983) and Joke Hermes (“Reading Women’s Magazines”, 1995) and define the aspects from their theories that are relevant for my case study.

Walters calls the first approach *descriptive* which assumes that there is “a one-way flow between image and viewer with the image acting on the viewer by prescribing roles and behaviors to a largely unspecified and undifferentiated ‘receiver’ of the cultural message” (225). Thus the role of the audience is wholly neglected; she has nothing to do with the construction of the image which exists independently and the viewer simply acknowledges its meaning.

I will use a work of Marjorie Ferguson’s “Forever Feminine: Women’s Magazines and the Cult of Femininity” (1983) as an example of such approach. According to Ferguson the editors of women’s magazines are the “agenda-setters and gatekeepers of the female world” (188). They, independently from everything and everyone, dictate what, when and for how long will be placed before the audience. They have the power to determine what women are and what they want. Everything they print on the papers of their magazines is consumed by the readers without asking questions:

Staff quality and quantity, editorial production budgets, printing deadlines and technology, advertisers’ pressures or changing organizational structures – all of these impinge on the editorial process, but only rarely dictate it. Their influence is only partial or intermittent when compared with that of the power is invested in editors to decide the what, when and how of what is said (188).

It is interesting that in this list of the factors that influence the editors’ decisions, the demands of the audience are completely missing. Angela McRobbie (“*More!:* New Sexualities in Girls’ and Women’s magazines” 1996) defines such approach as the one which



sees feminist critics as “occupying high moral ground” who can look at those magazines from the distance, without being influenced by them and reveal their “true nature”, and thus create barrier that divides them from the ordinary readers which are blind consumers of everything they read (173-174).

McRobbie opposes such simplistic view of how meanings are produced within the magazines and stresses the importance of finding target groups in order to guarantee the place in the media-market. While paraphrasing Nixon, she suggests that economics of the magazine cannot “exist as some pure activity outside the everyday practices of producing magazines. It is neither the base, nor the ‘boss’, neither the bottom line of sales and circulation figures, nor the commands from the upstairs offices of the editor-in-chief” (179).

While Ferguson’s approach is seen simplistic within feminist cultural criticism it can help us with examining the women’s magazines issued during the Soviet Union as it has many similarities with the ways the Soviet government treated the media. The latter was seen as the tool for persuasion propagandizing the party’s ideas and providing the models of behavior for citizens (Hollander 1972, 22). Possibility of the resisting reading was rejected by the party. But as opposed to Ferguson’s point of view, the state and not the editors of women’s magazines were perceived as the “agenda-setters and gatekeepers of the female world.”

While analyzing the magazines published in Soviet Russia McAndrew states: “In looking at Soviet women’s magazines, we are interested in finding out the model of the world which they seek to plant in women’s consciousness” (1985, 79). But to find it out a brief historical background is necessary in order to understand the significance of the Soviet media in general and women’s press in particular. From the very first years of the Soviet Union private media seized to exist and party gained the control over the material base of

mass-communications. This made Soviet media to become wholly unprofitable and independent from the demands of the market.

The freedom of the Soviet press was guaranteed by the Constitution of the USSR (Article 125). But the meaning of the word freedom was itself very specific; it was the freedom to speak “the truth” that was established and defined by the party beforehand. So “the Soviet citizen was enjoying his freedom within the allegedly beneficent state which protects him in doing ‘what is good for him’” (Schramm 1956, 127). That is why two concepts that are seen crucial for the freedom of the capitalist press – objectivity and freedom *from* the state – were not permitted.

Schramm singles out three ways of how the party controlled the press: appointing politically reliable editorial staff; constantly giving them directives about the materials to be published; and reviewing and criticizing press whenever the party saw the need for it.

To narrow down our discussion to the topic of the thesis, we will now concentrate on the role of soviet magazines in particular. While analyzing soviet media as an ideological tool of the party Hollander sees its weakness in the lack of knowing its audience caused by the specificity of the country – it was the union of historically and culturally different nations with different traditions and social structures – and by the neglecting the need of the audience research: “The major shortcoming of the mass media as instrument of persuasion stems from the communicator-audience relationship. The audience of the media are by they very nature heterogeneous and disconnected, and their exact composition at any given time is unknown” (23).

The magazines on the other hand are always aimed at some particular target group determined by age, sex, occupation, hobby, etc. This feature of periodicals, which attracts advertisers at the free market, for the Communist party was a solution of the problem discussed in the previous paragraph. On the one hand it offered a specialized audience and on

the other hand an opportunity to spread the political ideology through the medium that was not assumed to be political at all. McAndrew stresses the advantage of the latter feature of the magazine by quoting Curran:

The common assumption that one section of a newspaper – that dealing in public affairs – is political, whereas the rest is apolitical seems to us to be profoundly misleading. It is precisely where the content offers itself as apolitical... that ideological significance is most successfully concealed (79).

If we take into consideration everything we have said about the functioning of the Soviet press in general, the question that may arise is why the state needed an additional form of ideological tool represented by the sex-specific publications aimed at women only? Why was there a need of women's magazines while there were no magazines issued specifically for soviet men? McAndrew asks the similar question: "What do Soviet women need to know that Soviet men do not need to know?" and gives the following answer to that question: "Clearly, in terms of magazine publications, there is the world, and there is the women's world" (87-88). What was that women's world and what were its peculiarities? To answer to this question we have to know some details about the politics of the Communist party.

The aim of the Central Committee in Moscow was to erase national identities among the populations of conquered countries to create the proletariat mass, the one that would be easy to govern under the communist dictatorship. In order to do so, the Central Committee controlled every stage, every aspect of people's life. Women also played the important role in the politics of the Soviet Union. They were "performing the triple role of 'mother', 'working class hero,' and 'socialist citizen'" (Kornelia Slavova, 2006). Women were perceived by the state as the important representatives of proletariat, the ones who had to play the decisive role in creating the "ideal society", "heaven on the earth" (Francine du Plessix Gray, 1990). More

precisely “women were held to be an important part of the nation-building process the ultimate goal of which was to form a national army of workers in industry, agriculture and defense of the country” (Onoprienko 2008, 62).

Thus Soviet women’s magazines can be seen as the locus where one can analyze the specific relationship between Soviet women and the state by using the approach named “images of woman” as it helps us to understand the position of the state towards these magazines. But it gives little support when it comes to define the role of the audience as an active part in communicator-receiver relationship either in socialist or in capitalist systems. Moreover, by the end of the eighties party itself, now headed by Mikhail Gorbachev, changed its attitude towards the functions of mass-communication which had its effect on the ways state treated women’s press too. This change, named as Glastnost, was part of the political and economical reform, Perestroika, which began in 1985 and lasted till the break of the Soviet Union.

According to Satter, Perestroika was caused by the economical crisis that became the matter of the concern for the party because it had the major influence on the military backwardness of the USSR in comparison to the capitalist world. This situation, on its part, presaged the victory of the capitalist world in the Cold War over the Soviets (2005, 41-43).

So making Soviet press more liberal and freer from the state influence was still part of the competition with the capitalist west, it was an attempt to establish capitalist values of free market without changing the system. That situation led to the numbers of paradoxes about the terms like “freedom of speech,” and “objectivity.” The new system demanded from the journalists to show the weaknesses of the state without questioning its ideology. This reform was not supposed to change the socialist system but to improve it within the boundaries of the communist ideology.

Masha Gessen characterizes Glasnost in this way: “The job was one of identifying and detailing the ills of Soviet society – things that were a part of everyday Soviet life...but had not been depicted in the media” (1995, 198). What Gessen misses to say is that press was putting the responsibility over these illnesses of Soviet society not on the state or the ideology it proclaimed but on the citizens themselves. In other words, if a factory failed to produce enough goods, media now had the right to speak about it in order to show how irresponsible behavior of some Soviet citizens could lead to the important economical problems. On the one hand such articles served as the seekers for scapegoats to explain why country was in an economical crisis without blaming the state and on the other hand they forced the citizens to work harder.

The same happened in women’s press. During Glasnost it did not seized to be the ideological tool for the party. Moreover, now that press was allowed to speak freely about the problems of Soviet society women faced even more pressure from the state: if previously women were depicted as ideal workers, mothers and citizens – the position that was impossible to achieve in a real life but was assumed by women’s press as the natural state of every Soviet woman – now the articles showed that some women could fail to fit this triple role and put the responsibility for that failure on women themselves.

The second aspect mentioned by Gessen as an important impact of Glasnost on women’s press is that sex became the theme of open discussion. However this change did not occur in Georgian women’s press. Moreover, sex remained tabooed even after the break of the USSR. This distinction can be explained by the traditions and the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in Georgian society which became very influential after the country gained its independence in 1991.

After the break of the Soviet Union just like in other post-communist countries in Georgia as well the question of re-defining the content of the national identity became a key

issue. With many other aspects media also became the locus of dramatic changes: “Local views, so often buried under central party rhetoric, suddenly appeared, loudly and angrily... the past and the present were being rewritten from day to day” (O’Neil 1997, 2).

The main change for the media was caused by the transition from the socialist to the capitalist system. The means of mass media had to adapt themselves to the new economical system where competition on the free market determined their fate – whether they would continue existing or not did not depend on the state’s goodwill anymore but on the numbers of the sold issues. “Often after the initial euphoria, many programs or publications found they lacked a large enough audience to survive in a new system of profit and loss, and quickly folded. Foreign capital in many countries came to dominate the most important media assets, raising questions about information monopolies and external control all over again” states O’Neil while examining the press of Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union (1997, 2). That is exactly what happened in Georgia as well. While “Georgian Woman” continued existing after the break of the USSR eventually it was replaced by the franchised version of “Cosmopolitan” owned by HEARST Communication, New York.

As transition to the market economy became the reason why more and more foreign capital was invested in Georgian media, the questions of audience-research, finding target groups and satisfying their needs became as acute as never before.

At that point the second approach of feminist cultural studies – “woman as image” – will help us with setting a more complete theoretical framework. This approach is seen by Walters as *productive* and it assumes that “meaning is not simply immanent in the text but produced at least in part by actual audiences in particular social contexts, bringing with them specific “cultural capital” (244). Joke Hermes’ work “Reading Women’s Magazines” (1995) can be analyzed as an example of such approach. She asserts that women’s magazines continue existing in media-market because the texts they contain are enjoyed, they bring

pleasure for all kind of readers, be it ordinary woman or feminist critic which leads to the “appreciation of the local and specific meanings we give to media texts and the different identities any one person may bring to bear on living our multi-faceted lives in societies saturated with media images and texts of which women’s magazines are a part” (5).

As the response to such approach McRobby argues that the opinion that enjoyment of magazines is equally shared by all women can lead to the new dangers of essentialism, as “universally experienced female pleasure is itself a feminist violation, an example of feminists invoking a normativity” (175). Such normativity is mostly heterosexual and is leading to the new forms of exclusion and marginalization.

Another problem this approach may contain is the danger of relativism as it can lead to the difficulties of examining “the multiplicity of interpretative locations and reading strategies that women make in various situations without falling into the traps of individualism and particularism” (Walters, 249).

To avoid this danger feminist cultural studies turned to anthropological and sociological methodologies. While there are no interviews included in this thesis and no participant observations have been carried out in order to support it, the thesis still uses this methodology by giving the historical contextualization to the examined magazines. The thesis will argue that particular political, economical, social and cultural condition of the country determines the meanings women put in the texts of the magazines. It does not mean, however, that in every country every woman conceives the cultural texts in the same way, but some general similarities can be found in every reading as no one is “wholly free to make resistant reading out of the whole cloth. Images are so often filled with dominant cultural messages that...the vast majority of us will feel the weight of the dominant” (Walters, 247).

The limitations accompanied to such approach are justified as the aim of the thesis is not to define the multiple interpretative possibilities of the texts but to examine how state

ideology influences the ways those magazines construct “normative femininities” and to what extent the interests of women are preserved within them.

While analyzing issues of “Soviet Woman,” “Georgian Woman,” and “Cosmopolitan” I will also use works done by Georgian feminist writers in order to set a comparative framework about the roles and images that are inscribed to Georgian women. This different perspective offered by Georgian feminists towards the ways of constructing “normative femininities” will help to determine the role of the media in this complex and multilateral process.

When we speak about Georgian feminism, we mean works done from the end of the twentieth century till now. Before that the word feminism itself rarely appeared in writings done by Georgian scholars. This situation has its reasons; from the very first years of the Soviet Union “women’s question” gained very different meaning in comparison to the western feminism. The USSR was the first country that proclaimed the equal rights of men and women in its constitution. This equality meant that “women’s question” was solved in the Soviet Union by putting on women a responsibility to be as devoted and useful workers and citizens as their male counterparts in a public sphere while remaining ideal housewives and mothers at home.

Having analyzed Russian women’s magazines issued during Stalin’s era, Onoprienko concludes that “women were viewed not as individuals needed to be liberated, but as a collective body who could contribute to economic growth of the country and participate in the common struggle against class enemies with their male comrades” (2008, 62). That meant that women’s emancipation was not a gender issue, it was meant to happen together with the emancipation of proletariat from the ruling class. That is the reason why Holmgren argues, that gender was “a self-erasing or non-category” in Soviet societies and feminism



was perceived as “an exclusionary bourgeois by-product, the self-indulgent agenda of privileged middle- or upper-class women” (1995, 20).

This explains why after the break of the USSR feminism as it was understood in western capitalist countries - that is giving women equal writes in public sphere - found no support in such post-communist countries as Georgia. Georgian women had already been active members of public sphere without any attempts from the state to facilitate their domestic duties. This led to the tendency of “return to the home” – “a site of psychological and moral refuge” (Holmgren 1995, 21).

Another factor that determined the backlash towards feminism in the early years of independent Georgia was the nostalgia for the historical past of the country. This nostalgia was caused by the desire to re-define a national identity that had nothing to do with the Soviet past. That led to the reinforcement of Christianity and the influence of Georgian Orthodox Church. The images of a Georgian woman as an ideal mother whose only mission is to give birth to the future generation of Georgian patriots who are of course male and who will return the previous glory and prosperity to the country became an important aspect of traditionalization. This tendency was apparent on the pages of “Georgian Woman” issued after the break of the USSR as well as we shall see it later.

Parallel to this, opening of borders and the process of globalization brought new values and tendencies. Foreign capital played the role of catalyst in this process. Eva Hauser describes this situation on the example of Poland which has many similarities with Georgia: “The post-communist period is marked by competing symbolic politics in which pro-Western liberal forces are opposed by nationalistic factions (divided into populist anti-Catholic and Catholic)” (1995, 78), in the case of Georgia – populist anti-Orthodox and Orthodox. This battle of values between old traditions and new value-systems created cacophony that reflected gender issues largely. Christian morals demanded from women bashfulness,

recognition of the superiority of men and preservation of virginity till marriage (interestingly enough the loss of virginity without marriage that has no gender specificity in Christianity was always perceived by Georgian church and society as the sin that can be committed only by a woman).

On the other hand globalization set new demands for women bringing western feminist values threatened by the backlash caused with the historical memory of Soviet “women’s question” and with the fact that because of the economical crisis most women still lived under the double burdens being simultaneously family’s bread-winners and housewives and mothers.

At that point Georgian feminists educated mostly in various foreign universities (including Russia) took their place in academic circles. The chaotic situation determined the theme of their works to have mostly an explanatory character – pointing out the meaning of feminism in general, telling the history of western feminism and trying to explain the reasons of Georgian women’s present conditions by analyzing how Georgian women’s femininity was constructed during the last century. It is the last aspect of their works that will be elaborated in this thesis to have an alternative point of view about the main question of this work: how does state ideology influence the ways women magazines construct gender stereotypes and images of women.

As I examine women’s magazines published in three different historical periods, Soviet era, Perestroika, and independent Georgia, I will use works dealing with the press of the particular period. Taking into consideration the fact that there are no studies about Georgian women’s press in particular, I will apply works dealing with the socialist and capitalist media in other countries while acknowledging the specificities Georgian women’s press might have with the help of the studies done by Georgian feminists.

As I already mentioned, I will use both – “images of woman” and “woman as image” – approaches to determine how women’s press worked in Georgia during the both systems. Consequently I will argue that while “woman as image” approach gives us a better opportunity to examine the complicated relationship between communicator and receiver, the first approach still offers interesting insights about the constructing gender stereotypes.

While socialism and capitalism have many differences, we cannot still compare them as two polar systems with distinctly distinguishable features. Moreover there is no one type of socialism/capitalism in any socialist/capitalist countries. Every economical system develops differently in different countries according to its traditions and social structure. That is why comparing socialism and capitalism may lead us to the simplistic understanding of those terms. To avoid this danger I will try not to oppose magazines issued during the Soviet Union to the ones published after its break. But instead I will keep an eye on the historical process of development with stressing some interesting similarities and differences that were appearing in different historical periods in relation to the role of women’s magazines and the images of women within them.

## **Chapter II: Georgian women's press during the years of Khrushchev and Brezhnev**

This chapter consist of two parts each examining Georgian women's press during one historical period. The first section analyzes first two issues of Georgian "Soviet Woman" (1957-1961) published in 1957, that is, during the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, and the second section analyzes two issues of "Georgian Woman" (1961-1990; 1991-2007) published in 1967, that is, during the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev. Each section will start with the brief historical review of the period examining its political, economical and social peculiarities. Analyzing these issues will help us to determine how versions of femininity constructed on the pages of Georgian women's press varied from historical moment to moment and what role the state played in this process

### **II.1. "Soviet Woman" during the Khrushchev's Era**

Georgian "Soviet Woman" was a franchised version of the Russian magazine that was a monthly publication of the "Soviet Women's Anti-Fascist Committee" and the "All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions." Georgian "Soviet Woman" was owned by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia and was defined as social-political and literary magazine. It consisted of twenty-two pages, black and white print, A5 format of the pages. The price of the magazine was thirty kopecks (cents) with the circulation of ten thousand copies. More than half of the pages were dedicated to the non-journalistic materials: short-stories, fairy-tales, lyrics, etc. The rest of the articles dealt with the representations of the lives of Georgian women.

The first issue of Georgian "Soviet Woman" was published a month after Nikita Khrushchev became the leader of the Soviet Union as he took a post of the General Secretary

of the Communist Party after the death of Joseph Stalin. This period – 1956-1964 – is known as the “Khrushchev Era” of de-Stalinization and liberation.

Reforms held in this period had an important influence on the lives of Soviet women what, for its part, largely defined the topics and themes covered in women’s press. There were two main reasons why “women’s question” was reviewed in this period: the demographical and the economical crisis both caused by the Second World War. This is why the emphasized interest in maternity became a key-issue for the government for solving the demographical crises.

The topics like the role of a mother in upbringing a child, personal hygiene and the health of women were subsequently raised in “Soviet Woman” as well. As we read in an introductory article of the first issue “The aim of the magazine is to provide a help for mothers with articles and consultations about the issues like how to take care of a child, prepare delicious food and make housework easier” (1957, issue 1; p. 2).

This promise is fulfilled with the articles written by professional doctors or psychologists. For example in the article under the name “Child’s Inner World” (1957, issue 2, p. 22) postgraduate student of the psychological department explains how to take care of the nervous system of a child. By providing various fictional situations the author gives advices for both a mother and a father how to handle their problematic children. What is interesting in this article is that responsibility in upbringing a child is meant to be equally distributed between both parents.

In another article where the author is reviewing the works of Ilia Chavchavade, a famous Georgian writer and social activist from the nineteenth century, we read: “As he depicts a woman as one of the moving forces of the social life, Ilia underlines her most important duty as a mother. A good family is a foundation for a good generation, and a good generation is a pillar for the wellbeing of the society” (1957 issue 2, p.2).

Few pages later there is another article dedicated to the same writer where we can read even more distinct rendition of motherhood as a woman's prime duty: "a woman is a person without shield-and-sword, while a mother is armed with all virtues and how can this two compete with each other" (1957, issue 2, p.6). On the cover of this issue we can see a picture of a female statue breastfeeding an infant.

As we have already mentioned, demographic crisis was not the only problem of the post-war Soviet Union. The decline in economics was largely caused by the deficit of the labor force. "If the economy was to expand as intended, a higher proportion of the working-age population needed to be drawn into 'social production.' These included persons engaged in housework and personal auxiliary farming" (Ilic 2004, 16). This meant that more women were encouraged to work in agriculture and industry what was in disagreement with the cult of maternity demanding from women to be at home and dedicate their life and skills to their role as mothers and wives. This contradiction was never addressed on the pages of the examined issues of "Soviet Woman." The female audience could read articles dedicated to the issues of child-rearing and house holding next to the publications portraying hero women-workers who, on their side, were mothers themselves without pointing out the problems of double burden.

The Communist Party emphasized a question of women's participation in political and social life. While women's equal sociopolitical rights were guaranteed by the 1936 constitution of the USSR, in reality women were largely absent from the decision-making positions. Khrushchev and his encirclement used this incompatibility between the law and the real life as one of the means for de-Stalinization, accusing the latter of marginalizing women from the public sphere. So underlining the importance of including women in politics was a way to gain the recognition from Soviet women which was an important task as Stalin's cult still remained strong among the Soviet population. In his speech at the 20<sup>th</sup> party

Congress in 1956 Khrushchev, while celebrating de-Stalinization, dedicated several minutes to this issue as well: “Very few women hold leading posts in the party... It should not be overlooked that many party and state organs put women forward for leadership posts with timidity” (Khrushchev 1956, 109).

Despite such attention to the “women’s question” in reality the only change that happened was that the party started talking about this issue. Press was not an exception, much publicity was given to the statements concerning women’s representation in politics, but what was missing were the concrete examples of how these statements were operating in practice.

In “Soviet Woman” too we read the editor’s promise that much attention will be paid to the women who have succeeded as politicians. This promise was not kept simply because it was really hard to find a Georgian woman occupying an important decision-making post. Mary Buckley summarizes this situation in few words: there was a tension “between ideological claims about the successful liberation of women under Soviet socialism and more realistic observations about women’s lives” (1989, 140).

One more peculiarity of the Khrushchev’s era was in changing the foreign policy by opening borders. While it still was very difficult to cross the borders of the USSR, some exceptions were allowed if it helped to improve the economical situation at home. “Khrushchev spearheaded a ‘thaw’ of the Cold War in international relations and a period of ‘peaceful coexistence’ with the Western powers” (Ilic 2004, 19).

This had its effect on women’s lives as well. Soviet women became the members of the “Women’s International Democratic Federation”. The representatives of WIDF, which was founded in 1945, aimed to fight against wars, world conflict and the use of atomic bombs. Khrushchev openly supported this organization. He even spoke on one of the meetings held by the organization in 1959 (Ilic 2004).

It is not surprise that in the introductory article of the first issue of “Soviet Woman” the editor promises the reader that the magazine will thoroughly cover the events held by WIDF and its achievements in protecting mothers and children and in strengthening the peace among nations (1957, issue 1, p. 2).

The editor keeps the promise and in a next page already we can read an extensive article dealing with the history of WIDF starting from 1945, its achievements and the role of Soviet women in the work of the organization.

Apart from the topics already discussed in this chapter the pages of the first issues of “Soviet Woman” are mainly dedicated to the cultural life of Georgian women or to the novels written either by women authors or with a female protagonist in them dealing mostly with women’s experiences and emotions. We can also read verses praising motherhood and fairy-tales. For example out of nineteen articles published in the second issue of “Soviet Woman” only six of them are journalistic works, the rest are poems, verses, literature reviews, short stories or essays.

This kind of detachment from the real world makes “Soviet Woman” of the fifties rather neutral periodical organ from the political point of view. This tendency can be explained with the fact that it was the first attempt of creating women’s press in Georgia and its editors need to mark the territory in order to gain the audience and its trust. The radically ideological articles might become the reason for low readership.

## **II.2 “Georgian Woman” of the 60’s**

The issues of “Georgian Woman” examined in this section were published ten years later, when Khrushchev’s era was replaced by the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982), and under the new title “Georgian Woman.” While changing the title in such way should have meant that the magazine would have less influence from Moscow and,



particularly, from Communist Party the following paragraphs will assure us that the shift into the politics of the paper did not appear.

As Buckley points out “the main contribution of the Brezhnev years to the woman question was the declaration that it was unsolved” (1989, 161). This declaration was caused by the fact that demographic and economical crisis was getting more and more serious and the reasons of this situation had to be found in society without questioning the main ideology. That is why party stated that communism in the USSR was not achieved yet and this was the reason why Socialist society was not leaving in prosperity.

Economical problems, low birth rates and labor shortages gave rise to more severe conditions for women already suffering from the double burden. Women were perceived to play the crucial role in improving the situation by increasing their reproductive and productive potentials simultaneously.

The interesting tendency of the issues of “Georgian Woman” published during this period is that maternity becomes less important theme in comparison to the women’s social life, career, or professional achievements. Only one article in each issue is dedicated to the domestic problems, while the rest of the magazine deals with the biographical stories of working women.

During Brezhnev years nuclear family gained an important signification for raising the birth-rates. While “the male role as child-rearer was a non-topic in 1960s and 1970s” (Buckley 1989, 175), his presence in a family as the head of the family was perceived inevitable as only in this case would family have the potential for further reproduction. This tendency is clearly seen in an article under the title “Child is Waiting for His Father.” This is a story of a young woman who was abandoned by her husband after the birth of a baby, as the husband suspected that the new-born was not his biological child. The author of the article is accusing the father as being intolerant and unreasonably jealous towards his

innocent wife and addresses him directly with a request to return to the family in order to make his child happier with little siblings (1967, issue 2, p. 20).

The main body of “Georgian Woman” published in 1967 is dedicated to the success stories of working women. McAndrew sees in such articles the educative nature of Soviet press: “The glorification of successful individuals is seen as educating through inspiration and is coupled with exhortation to greater efforts” (1985, 82). In each issue of “Georgian Woman” we read professional biographies of female farmers, industrial workers, teachers, sportsmen, and artists. All these articles say nothing about the personal lives of these women but at the end of each article the reader learns that these heroines of work have their families. This personal information is given by chance with such sentences as – “tomorrow she will visit her native region together with her children” (1967, issue 2, p. 7) – as though having a family is a quite natural thing for a successful working woman. So natural that it does not even have to be emphasized separately. In such articles we often read sentences like “if it is necessary she will unquestionably sacrifice herself for her beloved work” (1967, issue 1, p. 3), or “she would be glad to be able to do her job even if she did not receive any salary for it” (1967, issue 2, p. 3).

Women’s political roles became less important during the Brezhnev years in comparison to the Khrushchev’s era, but it did not mean that this issue was no longer discussed by the Communist Party which stated that “Equality of political participation was indeed ‘possible’ but reality or what ‘is’ lagged behind” (Main 1974, 3-4). But culprits in this situation were seen to be women themselves for showing less enthusiasm and skills and having insufficient education. Finding out and stressing the reasons of these factors were not an issue for the party.

As for “Georgian Woman” among the articles dedicated to the lives of professional women the reader can find a publication dealing with the biography of the female assistant

of the minister of trading of Georgia. The journalist singles out those features of this woman that helped her to gain this position: “hot tempered and kind, caring and gentle, sensitive and understanding” (1967, issue 2, p. 6-7).

This characterization leads us to the communist understanding of sex equality and difference. While praising equality of men and women in public sphere there was no debate about the “natural”, that is physiological and psychological, differences between the sexes. This difference meant that women were capable for only certain types of work and child-rearing was their ultimate duty. That meant a determined distribution of roles between women and men either in work place or at home:

Women were a separate group of workers from men and a specific category of social labor due to the “inalienable and irreplaceable” functions of motherhood...It was not suggested that casting woman as the main childrearer, cook, shopper, washer and cleaner might result in gender inequalities. Such a suggestion was regarded as typical of bourgeois feminism (Buckley 1989, 175).

This tendency is clearly seen even in the titles of the “Georgian Woman’s” articles: “Housewife of the Village,” “Teacher – Mother of Our Children at School,” “Romanticizing Politics?! – Why not!” etc.

The first article of the second issue of “Georgian Woman”, 1967, is written by the chairman of the supreme council of Georgia who addresses Georgian women with praising words. He states that women are occupying more and more positions in public spheres thus asserting that they can freely stand side by side with men. The article continues in this way: “Moreover, we, men, cannot say that we are equal with women. As a woman is a symbol of tenderness, virtue, kindness and devotion. We cannot say the same about a man. A woman is a wife and a mother, who gives the birth to a new life” (1967, issue 2, p. 2). This kind of

division of sexes prescribed for women certain essential assumptions of naturally being emotional, tender, caring.

The naturalness of female sex and heterosexuality is clearly seen on the page of “Georgian Women” where the article about the sex-changed operation is placed beside the article named “The Dead Man Came Back into the Life” unified under the rubric “Unbelievable News.”

Thus, examining several issues of Georgian women’s press of the fifties and sixties makes it clear that topics covered in magazines were highly determined by the politics of the state towards “woman’s question” which “was linked to the development of socialism [...] Thus, the relevance of the woman question could alter according to the economic and political priorities of any given period and itself moved through different stages” (Buckley 1989, 163-164).

As we saw in this chapter the influence of the state ideology and politics on the magazine was permanently increasing; if the first issues of “Soviet Woman” largely deal with the cultural representation of women, later issues are wholly political publications rendering women as an important force for creating socialism; the aim of the magazine becomes the economic and political propaganda.

The main topics covered in “Soviet Woman” and “Georgian Woman” were maternity, stories concentrated on the successful career woman, women’s international organizations and in the last place – beauty and fashion. We find no articles dealing with women’s sexual life.

Double burden caused by the demographical and economical crises of the post-war Soviet Union is not a topic of discussion in the magazine. Being a perfect mother and a worker is perceived to be a natural thing for every woman and failing this task was seen to be impossible. As McAndrew argues, “In the Soviet case, women’s magazines are part of a

complex ideological structure confronting Soviet women with the image of themselves as the Super-achiever, the New Soviet Woman, which is at some distance from the reality of most women's lives" (1985, 112).

While representing women as men's equal partners in a work force, the fact that women are physiologically and psychologically different from men is stressed thoroughly almost in every article. This difference is the only reason why magazine sees the necessity in dedicating several pages to such "feminine topics" as the fashion, exercises, diet, decorating the house, etc. These are the only pages where the function of magazine is not a mass-propagandist of socialism.

### **Chapter III: Georgian Women's Press during Perestroika**

In this chapter I will concentrate on the issues of "Georgian Woman" published in 1987, that is, during the liberal political and economical reform introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985-1991. As the main point concerning this reform and its significance to the Woman's Question were explained in the theoretical part of the thesis, this chapter will put an emphasis on the main characteristics of this period, and will concentrate specifically on the issues that were relevant for Georgian women's press at that time. After that I am going to define what have changed in the work of "Georgian Woman" by giving the concrete examples from the articles examined.

The term Perestroika means "reconstruction" or "restructuring" and was the answer of the Central Committee to the political, social and economical problems that have existed in the Soviet Union from long before. As the problems were getting more and more serious some important changes became unavoidable. According to Buckley, Perestroika "in theory, at least... demands initiative, efficiency, and a new psychology to overcome the inertia and sluggishness of Soviet production and administration" (1989,192).

An attempt of creating a new consciousness meant to recognize that shortcomings in society did exist but these were the citizens of the society that had to be blamed in it and not the system. This kind of opinion had to be spread with the help of media and this is where Glasnost, as an important aspect of Perestroika, had to play its role.

Glasnost in English means "publicity" or "openness" and meant giving the right to the people and media to speak freely about the problems of society and openly debate about them without questioning the communist ideology, or how the government itself named it: pluralism of opinions within the confines of socialism. Reino Paasilinna defines Glasnost "As a tool or instrument for breaking up and gradually transforming the structure... lifting

the bans on specific themes, giving journalists and researchers access to archives, opening up the prospect of critical evaluation of activities” (1995, 58).

For women it meant the widening of the boundaries of the themes concerning the problems in women’s lives including abortion, male alcoholism, infant mortality, difficulty of receiving adequately-sized flats, problems of double burden, etc. Those topics found the publicity on the pages of women’s press as well.

Nevertheless, although liberalization of the Communist system was meant to take place in all areas of the Soviet Union the speed of its spreading from the center to the peripheries was quite low. That is why Glasnost did not have a big influence on the politics of “Georgian Woman” published in 1987.

Before analyzing the concrete articles here is a brief description of the format and the content of the magazine: “Georgian Woman” of Perestroika’s years was still a monthly publication owned by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia and was defined as socio-political and literary magazine. It consisted of twenty-two pages, black and white print, A5 format of the pages. The price of the magazine was the same in comparison to the earlier years, that is thirty Kopecks (cents) but the circulation enlarged significantly: it became one hundred and forty thousand instead of a hundred thousand.

The front page as a rule was dedicated to the picture depicting either children or women never looking straight at the camera but always in process of some activity, as if the existence of a camera was not noticed. Such photographs of women were typical for the whole Soviet press. McAndrew defines them as pictures which “suggest activity [...] These women are more preoccupied with what they are doing than with the presence of a camera [...] These are emphatically *not* women who have been designed solely to attract male attention” (1985, 86-67).

As for the rubrics, the largest amount of articles was still dedicated to the successful women – workers, politicians, artists, sportswomen. On the second place according to the amount of articles, were publications dedicated to maternity, its importance and attractiveness is shown by the stories dealing with the experiences of mothers with more than six children. The last page was always dedicated to the advices for housewives and mothers concerning the issues like the health of a child, private hygiene, various recipes, etc. The new thing of this period was such articles that had nothing to do explicitly with the lives of women, or their problems but instead were telling about the decisions made during various conferences held by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In fact the first articles of both issues of “Georgian Woman” examined here are of that kind, which means that this kind of information was perceived to be the most important for a female reader. One more novelty were the articles written by male authors analyzing such gender questions as what is the role of a woman in a society and at home. It is in such articles were problems like double burden of women, difficult economical situation, problems with obtaining well-paid jobs, etc. were addressed. Those articles are the perfect examples to analyze the debate that existed in the society concerning the woman’s question. The debate reveals some paradoxes and inconsistencies regarding the position of the state when it comes to the questions concerning the role and the place of women in a socialist society. The amount of the literary texts was reduced to two short-stories and a page dedicated to poetry per issue.

While analyzing women’s position in the Soviet news during Perestroika Brian McNair singles out stereotypical images prescribed for woman during that period: the worker, the mother and the lover (1991, 189-195). As the first two images were typical renditions of womanhood during the whole Soviet era and in the previous chapter we already had an opportunity to speak about them, I will give few examples of how these images were strengthened on the pages of “Georgian Woman”, then I will concentrate on the third –



woman as a lover – image, and finally I will examine other specificities of the Georgian women's press during Perestroika.

While articles dedicated to the hero-workers who, at the same time, are perfect housewives and mothers were not the novelty for socialist Georgian women's press, what had changed during Perestroika was that women were not any more the protagonists of such publications. Instead of it the economical reform itself became the main concern of the journalists together with the opportunity given by Glasnost to speak about the problems in different spheres of economy. For example, the article "Honorable Leader" (1987, issue 1, p.5) which at first seems to deal with the life of a director of a cloth factory, mostly speaks about the work of the factory itself with the sentences typical for the Soviet press of this period: "some problems occurred with fulfilling the annual plan. Nevertheless the plan was fulfilled, the factory had the potential to do even more, but it had problems with receiving the material on time, which caused comparatively lower result". From the article it seems that the fact that the director of this factory is a woman serves just as a justification to write about this factory in a woman's magazine. But in some cases, as I already mentioned, even the need for such justification is neglected and the article is wholly dedicated to the reforms held by the state, statements pronounced by the heads of the party and the examples how this reforms work in practice.

As for the articles dedicated to maternity they are still in the center of attention. Even in those articles which deal with the professional side of women's lives, there is always a sentence or two from which the reader is informed that the heroine of work is a mother as well. In the articles dedicated precisely to mothers of big families, while praising the motherhood as the most pleasant and significant condition for a woman, we also learn how government helps and supports them. For example in an article "More Children – More Happiness" (1987, issue 2, p. 15-17) we read that after the birth of the tenth child the family

was awarded with a washing-machine by the administration of the village. The motherhood as the most valuable role for a woman is underlined with such sentences as: “when she failed to enter the university she realized that education was not for anyone, fell in love, got married and gave birth to ten children.” And these are the words of a hero-mother herself: “If you cannot hear a cry of a baby in your house, than what is there that is worth living for? Mother can handle the sleepless nights and extreme tiredness without difficulty. She is awake for twenty-four hours. So let us give birth to as many children as we can, dear mothers!” From these words it is clear that the role of a father as a helper in up-bringing a child is absolutely ignored. To raise a child is a duty of the mother only, even if it means to give up the education and any active role in the public sphere.

As for the third image of the woman as a lover, it can be seen as a new phenomena for the Soviet Union, typical only for to the years of Perestroika: “Perhaps the most obvious effect of Glasnost on Soviet media images of women has been the emergence of approaches to sexuality previously regarded as western and, thus, as decadent” (McNair 1991, 199). But it is important to note that depicting women as objects of sexual desire in Soviet media started even before Perestroika. McAndrew in her article written in 1985 singles out two types of images of women; first, as we already mentioned, is an image of a worker. The second is a “plaything-consumer [...] a relatively new role for Soviet women” (87).

This change had not influence “Georgian Woman”, and this is where the specificities of Georgian society and cultural traditions are most visible. While analyzing these differences Ketevan Rostiashvili, Georgian historian and feminist, sums up the reasons why Glasnost had lesser effect on the lives of Georgian women: “Georgia is an incredibly traditional society, which in many ways predetermines the social role of women [...] her basic function is seen in terms of reproducing and educating the next generation, and creating the comfort of home and hearth [...] the most important are moral/psychological customs[...] [like the believe

that] marriages are made in heaven” (1994, 38). So a woman was always associated with her family; Ethical standards required for unmarried women to live with their parents. The figure of an independent woman with sexual desires simply did not exist. This situation was encouraged with the fact that the poverty of the country determined a woman’s economical subordination to the male members of the family as women were rarely employed for the high-paid jobs. So the sexual images of women were perceived to be immoral and “Georgian Woman” clearly shared this point of view by ignoring the image of a woman as a lover during Perestroika as well.

In the end of this section I will concentrate on two articles dealing with the theoretical questions about the role and duties of women in the journal. Both of these articles are written by male authors and very clearly represent the debates that existed around woman’s question during Perestroika. The first article, “Woman is a Great Force” (1987, issue 1, p.8) starts with a quotation of Gorbachev where he speaks about women’s duties in work-place, science, culture, politics and household: “Nowadays our country needs from them to be active members of economy and culture...” – the way this sentence is phrased clearly indicates that what women need is not the concern of the government but instead the country’s needs determine women’s roles. The rest of the article is dedicated to the numbers showing how women’s participation in public spheres permanently increases. Then the author stresses women’s difficult position caused by the double burden and gives us information concerning the government’s plans for helping women with making the working-hours shorter, maternity leave longer, etc. But the final conclusion is that it is primarily women’s responsibility to arrange their time in such a way to be productive in both – public and private – spheres. The article quite unexpectedly ends with the praising of motherhood which seems at odds with the content of the rest of the article.

As I already mentioned in the first chapter, while the state during the years of Perestroika acknowledged that women need to be helped, the tendency of blaming women for failing to execute triple role of a mother, a worker and a citizen was typical phenomena in these years.

Another paradox of this period of so called liberalization and democratization of the system was that the conservative opinions like the one that women should return to their families were most actively expressed. The politics of Glasnost made it possible for such opinions, which contradicted Soviet ideology (woman's primarily duty according to Engels, Marx and Lenin was participation in a social production), to be freely pronounced and debated. Buckley sums up this debate in the following way: "traditional lines on the need to strengthen the family co-exist alongside fresh pressures for more frank discussion of problems faced by women [...] Traditional arguments about strengthening the family ignore issues of female self-determinism and equality of the sexes [...]" (1989, 195).

Such mixing of opinions is clearly seen in an article titled "For Georgian Women" (1987, issue 1, pp.14-15). This publication is a survey of Georgian women's current position, problems they are facing and the author's opinion towards the ideal image of a woman. The article starts with the statement that Georgia is an exceptional country where women were always treated as equals with men. The author apologizes that he has to single out women from men in his article and stresses that the fact that he refers only to women must not be seen as an attempt to marginalize them or to express any kind of disrespect: "as sometimes it gets unavoidable to make this separation because of their [women's] different nature, interests, role and position." Only this introductory part is full of paradoxes by expressing exaggerated awareness that writing only for women can be seen as rendering them as different from men and right away enumerating all the possible features to make a clear distinction between them (women) and us (men).

The article continues with stressing how more and more women start to become active citizens. The author states: “for me it is ideal combination when a woman is a useful worker and exemplary mother at the same time.” But he does not forget to mention that if recently women’s duties became three times more complex, as by becoming workers and active citizens they did not stop being responsible for the household, men’s duty has not changed at all. Man has not become the helper of a woman in a private sphere and the author gives us the reason for such a situation: “Because women can do it and men cannot. Woman has a psychological and social aspiration to broaden the areas of her preoccupation. But by doing this she loses something that is in the basics of her very nature.” And in the basics of her nature, according to the author, is to be a mother of more than two children. The rest of the article is dedicated to the importance of the motherhood for the country, the author states: “For the nation the death of a single woman equals to the death of ten men; man is a present and woman is a future.” So the only value of a woman is seen in giving birth to the new generation of healthy men, as they are the ones who make the country and society strong, and to the new generation of healthy women to have someone to carry on with the duties of reproduction. At that point the author realizes that he has neglected women’s social roles and finds necessary to apologize and make his statements less conservative:

As I re-read what I have written so far suddenly one idea stroke me – what if someone will think that the author of this letter preaches the retrogressive ideas about the limitation of women’s interests and chaining them back to their families. Not so abruptly but I am still standing for making women’s duties lighter. Women themselves must have enough consciousness to make those duties lighter.

The last paragraph is dedicated to the author’s opinion about how women must look and behave. He states that a woman must not try to be original in the ways she dresses talks,

behaves, smokes a cigarette or drinks cognac as such woman can attract only an unworthy man: “the most important is the attractiveness of an inner world of a woman; everything else is ephemeral: youth, physical beauty, etc.” From this quote we can draw several conclusions: woman’s ultimate aim is seen in finding a worthy man; caring for the beauty of your body is seen as immoral; being different from others is perceived to be punishable as it leads to the failure in the most important task – getting a good man.

While the first opinion is typical for all glossies the last two assumptions cannot be found in any women’s magazine issued in capitalist system. The aim of such glossies is to create good consumers from their readers by persuading them in their uniqueness. But at the same time they stress that this kind of uniqueness must be bought, that is, achieved with the help of their advices. As for “Georgian Woman” of the eighties woman is a producer, not consumer, whose existence is justified by her ability to be useful for the society.

We can sum up that while the substantial part of “Georgian Woman” is dedicated to explaining how the reform works, from the articles I have analyzed here it is quite clear that the liberalization promised by Perestroika did not reflect on the content of the articles dealing with women’s problems. The liberalization did not lead to showing more open, or even sexier images of Georgian women, one thing that made Georgian women’s press most significantly different from other socialist magazines. The fact that the circulation of the magazine became higher can only be explained with the tendency that now women could read about the problems they were facing in everyday lives. The main things that changed were the style of writing,- now the journalists had the right to speak about problems caused by double burden, economical problems causing unemployment, etc,- and putting the responsibility for failing to play the triple role of a mother, a worker and a citizen on women themselves. The journalists crowned women with super-powers that men did not have and demanded from them such heroic achievements that a normal person would not be able to execute.

## **Chapter IV: Georgian Women's press after the break of the Soviet Union**

This chapter deals with the Georgian women's press after the break of the Soviet Union till the present day. The chapter consists of two parts; while first part examines "Georgian Woman" published in 1997, issues like political and economical changes in Georgia after gaining the independence, process of nationalization and traditionalization, reinforcing the influence of the Church will be addressed in connection with determining the women's role in a new society in order to see how these changes were represented on the pages of "Georgian Woman." In the second part of the chapter will be analyzed the last issues of "Georgian Woman" published in 2007 to see how free market economy, privatization, democratization, globalization and entering of the foreign capital, which became the dominating force in Georgian media, determined the magazine's fate.

### **IV.1. "Georgian Woman" of the 90's**

To understand the cultural and social meaning of the articles published in "Georgian Woman" soon after the break of the USSR, we need to have an idea about the period of transition in Georgia which lasted quite long and, despite many similarities, still differed significantly from the other post-Soviet republics. First I will briefly review political history of Georgia of the 90's; after that I will focus on economical issues – transition from central planning to a market economy; then I will see what role women played in these processes and in the end I will examine how these processes reflected on the work of "Georgian Woman" of the 90's – what type of femininity was praised, what old roles remained and new ones appeared, how the sexuality was addressed and what advises were given to women.

Georgia gained independence in 1991 when through the elections Zviad Gamsakhurdia became the first president of the country. His presidency lasted several months till January

1992 when he was forced to leave the country after the civil war. Soon after this Eduard Shevardnadze became the second president of Georgia and during twelve years preserved this post. Despite very short period of presidency Gamsakhurdia's politics largely defined the fate of Georgia during the following decade. Gamsakhurdia's era is known as the period of populism. Populism appears in such countries where government supports people and sees the elite as its enemy. Such ideological themes as unity, patriotism, heroism, anti-elitism, radical nationalism and traditionalism are typical to it (Jones 1994). In Georgia that meant several things: the social class which was privileged during Soviet Union was labeled as "red intelligentsia" and enemy of the country, extreme traditionalization and nostalgia towards the historical past and greatness of Georgia raised the feelings of nationalism, treating national minorities and foreigners as country's enemies, rewriting history, making economical and educational system together with the media dependent on the government, giving Georgian Orthodox Church power to interfere in the process of re-building "Georgianism": "Gamsakhurdia's 'blood and soil' rhetoric emphasized re-birth, the antique purity of Georgian culture and the unbroken connection of Georgians with their ancestors [...] [His politics was] a zero sum game of good versus evil. God had given to Georgians a 'great mission' and protected their 'rightful activity' in the world" (Jones 1994, 133, 136).

The most important aspect of transition was economy, to be more concrete, passage from central planning to a market economy, which, according to Michel Mandelbaum, caused in post-Soviet countries change of "the beliefs, the habits, and the skills of an entire population[s]" (1993, 2). If we follow the line of his argumentation this kind of transition leads to the liberalization of economy by abolishing monopoly and state's control and instead of it establishing private economy. To succeed in those tasks Mandelbaum sees the "Western aid" as decisive factor. In "Western aid" he means looking at West as an exemplary model for building your own economy and access to Western markets.



Mandelbaum continues his discussion by pointing out that because this period of transition is long and very hard, government may lose the support and confidence from its citizens, “and without confidence, the policies of political authoritarianism and economic populism will have their day” (1993, 15).

This is exactly what happened in Georgia. Instead of creating and reinforcing private economy state increased its monopoly over economical system as privatization and entering of the foreign capital meant that the owners might become non-Georgians, that is, its enemies. That is why “government monopolies stayed intact, minerals, strategic industries and land remained ‘nationalized’ [...] first step in agriculture was to convert collective farms into state farms, not break them up into private holdings” (Jones, 1994, 134). Strategic industries included media as well. So the press remained highly censored and controlled by the government even after the break of the Soviet Union.

While Gamsakhurdia was very soon replaced by Shevardnadze, the considerable part of his politics remained the same for more than ten years. That is why foreign capital found its way in Georgian market only by the beginning of the twenty-first century.

As for the gender issues during this period of transition, in 1991 the first non-governmental organizations of the Caucasian women were created. Their function was to reinforce traditional duties of women – housework, maternity – and they worked for maintaining peace, and helping the victims of the war. So doings of these organizations did not lead to the raising of feminist concerns. Paradox was that if during the Soviet Union feminism was associated with capitalist bourgeoisie, after the break of the union it became associated with the Soviet epoch where emancipation of Soviet women meant the granting to them the triple role of a mother, a worker and a citizen. And thus feminism was once again condemned by Georgian society.

As for Georgian national movement, according to Lela Khomeriki, the question of gender equality was an off-topic for its ideology. That caused the decline of the interest towards the problems of women in press as well. While analyzing Georgian press of the 90's Khomeriki stresses several important points concerning the gender representations: the responsibility for creating a harmony within a family, doing housework and raising children are put solely on women; double standard is working while evaluating the sexual behavior of men and women: what is seen as a moral degeneration for women, for men it is just a joyful adventure; very often we read publications dealing with the occasions when after getting married women either abandon their work or limit it significantly; sexism is a part of Georgian press of this period; word feminism can be read very rarely and, as a rule, with a negative context (Khomeriki 2006, 23-25).

As for the women's press particularly, two issues of "Georgian Woman" published in 1997 will give us a clear idea about how they operated during the period of transition. "Georgian Woman" of the 90's with its format did not differ a lot from a magazine issued during the Soviet Union. The most significant difference was in its circulation; it became six hundred instead of one hundred and forty thousand and it of course was not owned by the Communist Party any more. It still consisted of twenty-two – twenty-four pages, black and white print, A5 format of the pages.

Rubrics became even less diverse: instead of articles dealing with the political issues now we read publications dedicated to the glorified past of Georgia. More than half of the articles still tell us stories of working women but if previously it was a farmer or teacher who was praised now we see portraits of women-soldiers, frontier-guards, military doctors and officers. The theme of motherhood is still noticeable in the various articles but we meet a lesser amount of publications dedicated directly to motherhood. The last articles are still dedicated to the advices about child-caring and household. The amount of the literal texts

remains the same as well. There is also a rubric “Woman and International relations” where we can read about the lives of women living abroad, Georgians or foreigners. Articles dealing with the theoretical issues of women’s role and position in the society do not exist any more. If we take into consideration the fact that in this period Georgian press was still under the state’s control we can argue that absence of such articles is a clear indicator of the indifferent position of the state towards gender issues. The topics dealing with sex are still not visible. If we look at the pictures depicting Georgian women one can not distinguish them from the ones from the Soviet era.

To make the discussion more vivid and expressive I will concentrate on two concrete articles which I find most relevant to understand the magazine’s politics. The second issue of “Georgian Woman” starts with the article “The borders of Georgia under the reigning of king Tamar” (1997, issue 2, p.2) As it is clear from the title, the article is dedicated to the historical past of the country, when it was in its peak of prosperity in the twelfth century and was governed by a woman. In the article we also read other names of famous historical female figures as the representatives of Georgian womanhood: “Georgian women must take an example from them in order to guarantee the nation’s future” – states the article. As I already mentioned such kind of nostalgic attitude towards glorified past was caused by the desire for re-gaining national identity through ignoring Soviet years and identifying with the ancestors who lived many centuries ago.

The opinion that getting married and having children is perceived to be a woman’s final and most desirable aim can be seen from the article “Beauty and Pride of Frontier-Guards” (1997, issue 2, p. 4-5). While it starts praising the bravery of female frontier-borders as the equal defenders of the county hand-in-hand with men, article slowly transfers to the eulogy of motherhood: “first of all you [women] must be a hero-mothers, as it is said that woman is the most useful when she is a mother.” The next paragraph deals with stating the priorities of

being a frontier-guardian: “Georgian woman in a uniform is a rarity still, so use this priority, young ladies! In the form you look much more attractive and you can easier find a man who will become your husband.” So finding a good man is still preserved to be the most important aim for a woman. While examining gender relations in post-Soviet Russia Sarah Ashvin states:

The institutional and ideological underpinnings of Soviet-approved gender relations and identities have been removed [...] the state no longer monopolies the patriarchal role. Meanwhile, no clear alternative model is being imposed from above [...] the new plurality has only intensified the sense of normative uncertainty which characterizes the post-communist era (2000, 18-19).

While this kind of normative uncertainty was present in the Georgian society as well, examining the issues of “Georgian Woman” made it clear that some kind of state monopoly over women’s role and patriarchal order still existed. The most significant determiner of this is the way journalists are addressing women, women’s role is still determined by the needs of the country and not by seeking what will be better for them. If during the Soviet Union they had to be the active part of proletariat working for its future prosperity by being a heroic mother and a worker, now when preserving the independence is the nation’s main concern, state demands from them to be the heroic fighters and mothers.

As the period of transition lasted too long in Georgia and was accompanied with populism, blocking foreign capital, opposing extreme nationalism to globalization and as “the absence of alternative societal structures led to dependency on the old Soviet administrative framework” (Jones, 1994, 134) the fact that the format and the style of the magazine did not experience significant change does not come as a surprise.

## IV.2. Last issues of “Georgian Woman”

In this section I will analyze the last issues of the magazine published in 2007. Before concentrating on the content I will briefly determine political, economical and social situation of the country to see in what environment the magazine was working.

As I already mentioned above Shevardnadze’s presidency lasted twelve years and ended by the “Rose Revolution” in 2003. After that pro-American force naming themselves United National Movement came into the power headed by Mikhail Saakashvili, the present president of Georgia. From that period globalization became truly apparent bringing in the country foreign capital together with foreign ideas about the structure of the society and ethical values that differed a lot from the local attitudes. Once again Georgia faced the problem of defining national identity.

In the first chapter I already pointed out the most important aspects of this period of competing value systems – traditionalism versus westernization; nationalism versus globalization, Christian morals versus more liberal attitudes. The existence of such conflicts caused the emergence of radical groups, one seeing the only salvation in religion and traditional value-systems, and the other, mostly consisting of young people educated in foreign universities, who condemned everything that was in connection with Georgian nationality, naming religious people retrogrades and Georgian traditions out of dates. This conflict had a huge impact on women’s lives as female sexuality became one of the most debated questions among those groups. Moreover, now answer on the question, what do you think about the institution of female virginity now determined one’s place in this debate; in conservatives’ point of view an unmarried woman who lives with an active sexual life is a prostitute, for liberals if a woman is a virgin she is uneducated and undeveloped.

“Georgian Woman” took the side of conservatives or, to be more precise, stayed devoted to the course it has selected long before. Not to look at the content of the articles only the fact that the format of the magazine stayed the same even in 2007 speaks for itself. Nothing changed during a decade: first page depicting women who are not trying to look attractive but are busy with their work, rubrics dealing with professional stories of working-women stressing at the same time the importance of motherhood, advises given to housewives and mothers, completely ignored topics of sexuality. What can be called as a novelty, which most clearly shows the magazine’s position towards the debate I described above, are articles dealing with religion; we can read statements of the patriarch of Georgian Orthodox Church about the role of Christianity in Georgian history and its role in preserving the peace and morality in a society, articles telling about the monasteries and churches that are in need of restoration, etc. More concrete examples will make the content of the magazine clearer.

The first issue of “Georgian Woman” published in 2007 starts with the statement of the patriarch where we read: “Orthodox Christianity is our historical decision, foundation of our consciousness and life. According to the nation’s interests the Church even today plays a role of so called ‘people’s diplomat’” (2007, issue 1, p. 2). Religious content is present in many articles and interviews which at the first sight are not dealing with such topics. For example in an interview with a Georgian female painter journalist asks whether the respondent is a dreamer or realist. The answer is following: “Sometimes I dream but according to my personal experience only prayer can make things become real. So I am realist” (2007, issue 2, p. 18). Sometimes articles start with quotations from the Bible.

As for depicting the role of a woman of being a successful professional and a mother at the same time article named “Child is a Woman’s True Happiness” (2007, issue 1, p. 9-10) will give us a good example. It is an interview with a famous Georgian actress who gives her

own recipe how to handle the double burden: “It is hard to explain by words. Women just know how to do it. The happiest moment of my life was when I became a mother. I guess this feeling helps me to do my work and still enjoy the life.” From those words it is clear that women are perceived to have some natural, essential ability which men do not have.

Such biological, essential distinction between men and women is more clearly seen in an article which tells us about the project “Anthology of Georgian Poetesses” (2007, issue 1, p. 10-11) that aimed to publish works, biographies and photos of Georgian poetesses starting from the eighteenth century. The journalist asks one of the organizers of this project whether male poets writing under the female names will enter the volume. The answer is negative and the explanation is following: “There are some solely female feelings: love between mother and child, grief for dead husband... which can be expressed only by women and any attempt from the side of men is always artificial.”

In the end I will examine an article which shows what role was ascribed to a woman in a family from the magazine’s point of view. It is an article telling us a love story of a Georgian actress and her husband. Here we read: “Zura was a typical Georgian man who wanted his wife to be at home, that is, to have a real Georgian family. And it happened so, indeed: Nino was busy with household” (2007, issue 2, p. 13-14). Then reader is informed that after some period Nino became a student of Theatrical Academy and the journalist asks the following rhetoric question: “I guess you are surprised how Nino managed to get her husband’s permission for becoming an actress?” As it gets clear from the article Nino made this decision when his husband was abroad in jail and she just used that opportunity to make her wish come true. The article continues: “So she tried and passed the exams. But the hardest part was ahead: she had to send her husband a letter telling what she had done... For Zura it was a catastrophe! He hardly adapted to this news and told her: alright then! Study! If you be a normal actress you may work and if not you will sit at home!”

The fact that such articles were published in 2007 tells us how out of date were the opinions and images of women spread by “Georgian Woman.” Its motto is vividly seen in the following address to women: “Do not ever lose your inner ‘I’. Keep being yourselves without wearing masks and pretending. In family preserve patience. Do not be shameful for being traditional and locked in frames as a woman is most beautiful within those frames” (2007, issue 2, p. 22).

Such conservative attitude makes it clear that the audience of the magazine hardly could be the Georgian youth, while older generation would not find anything new that they had not read during decades. So finding the target groups seemed to be a difficult task for the twenty-first century “Georgian Woman.” The fact that the circulation of the magazine became twenty times less than in the previous years points to the fact that the embryo of market economy, where the countries budget does not any more guarantee the economical stability for the journal and the only way of surviving is winning the competition by selling more than your opponents do, had its influence on “Georgian Woman” as well. Why it managed to exist sixteen years after the break of the USSR can be explained with the fact that for more than a decade it remained to be the only representative of Georgian women’s press. But then “Cosmo” appeared...



## **Chapter V: “Cosmopolitan” – new era in Georgian women’s press**

“Georgian Woman” seized existing a year after “Cosmopolitan,” first Georgian glossy magazine, appeared on media-market in April 2006. In this chapter I will examine four issues of “Cosmo,” two from the year 2006 and two from the year 2008 to see how it was developing and adapting to Georgian reality. The main concern of this chapter will be to determine how “Cosmo” changed images of women constructed on the pages of “Georgian Woman,” what role it plays within the debate among conservatives and liberals, how sexuality is addressed and to what extent it resonates with the dominated attitude towards sex in society. To be short, the aim will be to see how franchised “Cosmo” fitted in Georgian media-market. In the end of the chapter by examining the lifestyle praised on the pages of “Cosmo” I will define the escapist character of the magazine and its role in constructing normative femininity.

Georgian “Cosmo” is a franchised version of American “Cosmopolitan” owned by HEARST Communication. It is a monthly glossy magazine consisting of two hundred pages on average, out of which twenty - twenty-five pages are dedicated to the articles written by Georgian journalists dealing with the stories about Georgian women and men, sixty – sixty-five pages are dedicated to the commercials and the rest pages are covered with articles translated from American “Cosmo” and pictures depicting non-Georgian models. The price of the magazine is six Lari, that is, approximately three Euros. The circulation is ten thousand. Every issue starts with an editorial column from where the reader finds out the general theme of the issue. The themes of the four magazines that will be examined here are: pregnancy, movies, shopping, and affairs. Those themes determine the topics of the articles written by Georgian journalists, the content of the rest of the magazine stays similar during the years.

The most visible feature of Georgian “Cosmo” is the inconsistency between the translated articles and the ones written by Georgians. If the translated part of the magazine is overtly full of sexual images, stories, advises praising strong independent women with an active sexual life; its Georgian counterpart is incomparably modest, even defending traditional beliefs of a woman being more subtle, delicate and dependent on the decisions of her husband. Such tendency is most vividly seen in pictures; while non-Georgian models are depicted in the most defiant poses, Georgian women are still busy with their work not paying any attention to the camera, dressed in everyday clothes. Not only pictures but also the articles show the same situation. For example, in an October-November issue 2006 next to the article “Sex without borders”, which is translated from American “Cosmo” and explains in details some extraordinary ways of having sex, we read the article titled “Bold Experiment” about a Georgian married couple whose so courageous experiment was to watch a porn together.

Such paradoxical situation can be explained with the fact that while “Cosmo” is a franchised version and thus must fit into the format of its American version, in the society, where tradition moral-values are still strong, it is almost impossible to find such respondents who will freely talk about their sexual life. Patrick O’neil calls such inconsistencies within one media-organ the cacophony of the press in the period of transition “where old rules had lost their legitimacy and new ones had not yet been promulgated to take their place” (1997, 2).

While “Cosmo” is ideally meant to be a business-woman’s magazine, from the issue which is dedicated to the pregnancy it gets clear, that motherhood is still perceived to be the most important role of a Georgian woman. The problem of double burden is still as apparent in those articles as it was in “Georgian Woman”. From this point of view the article named “It is Quite Manageable” (2006, September, p. 110-113) is very illustrative. The article tells

us about the successful mothers who were able to return to their jobs two-three months after giving the birth. Article starts with the journalist's preaching: "If you still do not have the job, do not blame your pregnancy or child for it! The only reason why you are sitting at home is that you have not done enough to change the situation! And in reverse! If you are hesitating to have a child for you are afraid to lose your job that means that either you are lazy or incompatible to have children or who knows what else!" From the rest of the article we read that all three respondents have nannies who take care of their children while they work. The role of the father as a supporter is wholly ignored. So even today, just like in the years of Perestroika, women are seen responsible for failing their double role of a mother and a worker/businesswoman, while men are free from any duties regarding household and children. The fact that because of the hard economical crises in Georgia very few can afford to have a nanny makes the article even more cynical and abusive.

According to the articles published in "Cosmo" women are blamed not only if they fail to be a heroine mothers and businesswomen but also in that case if they fail to look after their appearance as well. In an article "After Getting Married" (2008, September, p. 36) male journalist talks about the tendency that after getting married a big percentage of women stop caring for their physical appearance and that gives a husband reason to satisfy his esthetical needs with other women: "the main creator of such transformation is a husband and now in the center of his attention is not the kitchen of his flat but noisy parties and meetings where he can rest his eye on other beautiful women[...] What can we do?! Girls change but men's taste does not! So, girls, try not to lose your attractiveness even after you find a man of your dreams." So even the author of the article sees a husband responsible for a wife's transformation, it is still a woman who is responsible and blamed for it.

The most remarkable thing that makes "Cosmopolitan" different from "Georgian Woman" is a lifestyle that is praised on its pages. It is far more glamorous and refined and

even unachievable for the most part of its audience. For example the March's issue of "Cosmopolitan" 2008 is dedicated to the description of the ways how to spend your leisure time. From the editor's column already we read that the best way to overcome the stress after the long and cold winter is to spend some money on the clothes designed by the world's famous couturiers or buy a ticket either to Paris or Barcelona and spend more money with the same purpose there. Article ends with the editor's optimistic remark: "Oh! You are already packing your bags?! It is marvelous! I wish you a nice flight and enjoyable shopping!" As we turn page, the whole article is waiting for us describing tempting places of Western Europe where we can freely spend our money. The fact that the vast majority of Georgia's population does not have any economical possibility to live the country for whatever reasons makes such articles utopian and escapist.

One more example of such incompatibility between the reality and the content of the articles can be found in the February's issue of the same year. Article under the name "How to Save Money" gives us several tips which start with such words: "If you have ten Thousand Lari..." (That is five thousand Euros); "Buy Share"; "Get Insurance", etc. The main suggestion of the article is the following: "You do not need to be a genius businesswoman or a super-manager in order to learn how to save the money and create the serious economy. Every woman can do it if she uses the money cleverly. The most important is to make your demands appropriate to your income and put your money in profitable business." As it is clear from these quotations, the author of the article is absolutely blind to the possibility that maybe there exist such women who have not got this ten thousand Lari.

If we assume that such magazines as "Cosmo" are escapist publications whose function is to help the reader to detach herself from reality for some period, then the question will be, do magazines like "Cosmopolitan" have anything to do with the construction of the "normative femininity" and with the reinforcement of the patriarchal order. I will argue that

despite its unrealistic renditions of womanhood “Cosmo” can still be seen as one of the constructors of feminine identities and its main weapon is in the constant repetition of the themes like beautification, child-rearing, housework, sex, etc. Ferguson calls them female rituals in order to preserve the “cult of femininity”: “much of what is repeated [on the pages of the magazines] suggest a form of sacred observance through their repetition: being ‘good’ at being a woman involves doing womanly things at regular and appointed times” (7).

This suggestion leads us to the Foucaultian understanding of power relations that is described in Sandra Lee Bartky’s article “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power” (1988). While describing several practices of how power works on women – diet, exercise, specific repertoire of gestures and movements, makeup, clothes – Bartky argues that they produce “a ‘practiced and subjected’ body, that is, a body on which an inferior status has been inscribed” (71). Furthermore Bartky states that one of the disciplinarians who impose those practices upon women is, of course, media by constantly assuring the audience about the need for such practices.

While also stressing the importance of repetition, as a normative structure of gender identity never can be stable and assured, McRobbie states, that “what remains normative across the board is the pleasure of consumption, the enjoyment of being a girl or woman and the assumption that this state of femininity is natural, the simple and unproblematic meeting of sex and gender” (182).

To illustrate how this state is achieved on the pages of Georgian “Cosmo” I will bring an example from the rubric “Cosmo-World” where the editorial staff of the magazine responds to the readers’ letters by giving them advises. In the June’s issue 2008 we read a letter from an eighteen-year-old girl who is worried about her mental health as she is not interested in boys and feels to be different from her friends. The letter ends with the question: “Am I really abnormal?” “Cosmo” answers: “It’s hard to say how serious is all this. You are

too young to conclude that you are not interested in boys! [...] But maybe it would not be bad too see a psychologist. That does not mean that you are abnormal or in need of some treatment. It is just that sometimes we all need to talk about our feelings and resolve our problems with the help of the professionals.”

The examination of four issues of “Cosmo” made it clear that while the translated part of the magazine offers us the images of women that are new for Georgian society its Georgian part still stays quite conservative. Such double character of the magazine can be seen as a winning marketing move: while the escapist part of the “Cosmo” helps the reader to detach from the reality for some period, articles written about and by Georgians does not make them feel marginalized as their modest way of living is shared by thousands of other Georgian women. So the pleasure the reader receives from “Cosmo” lies in two different concepts: escapism and identification.

## Conclusions

The aim of the thesis was to show how the specific political, economical, social, and cultural condition of the country influences the ways gender identities are constructed on the pages of women's press. In order to achieve this goal I was looking at the history of Georgia starting from the nineteen fifties concentrating on the aspects that were relevant for creating the dominant assumptions about the roles of women in a society, and then examining the issues of women's magazine published during the same period.

While both magazines examined here were the franchised versions of the journals published abroad (in case of "Soviet Woman" and "Georgian Woman" in Russia and in case of "Cosmopolitan" in the USA), the research showed that the specificities of Georgian culture, social relations, and ethical assumptions influenced the ways these magazines worked. This tendency is most vividly seen in connection with the topics about sex and sexuality. Even in "Cosmo" which is meant to be a journal for independent, sexually free businesswomen, images of Georgian women are still rather modest in terms of sexuality.

Looking through the issues of women's magazines published in different historical periods made it possible to stress some similarities and differences when it comes to the following topics: the roles prescribed to women in public/private sphere; the ideal image of an ideal woman; women's sexuality, etc. While motherhood is perceived by both magazines as the most important duty for a woman, the significance of other roles like a worker, a citizen, a lover, a businesswoman varied from time to time. Ballaster defines this kind of instability of the versions of femininity within a women's magazine in the following way: "The magazines' shared version of femininity varies, of course, from historical moment to moment [...] This instability holds both at the level of the components which make up the

complex definition of womanhood available in the magazine at any one point and the relation between this components” (1997, 88). In case of Georgian women’s press if during the fifties and the sixties the roles of a mother, a worker and a citizen were seen as equally important, during Perestroika the duty of a citizen became less significant for the magazine. Later in “Cosmo” a role of a worker and an active citizen was replaced by the role of a businesswoman and by the image of a lover.

The main significance of this research is that it provides an interesting case study for examining the process of creating gender identities in Georgian society. As “women’s magazines are part of an economic system as well as part of an ideological system by which gender difference is given meaning” (Ballaster 1997, 88), analysis of Georgian women’s press can help us to understand how gender stereotypes, like the inferior role of a woman in a family and a public sphere or seeing motherhood as a woman’s prime duty, were constructed and reinforced in Georgia.

The fact that the thesis covers the whole history of Georgian women’s press starting from the fifties of the twentieth century makes the whole research and the examination of the women’s press of each particular period rather general. But as it is the first attempt to systematize in one study the tendencies of development of Georgian women’s press, such generalization can be seen as unavoidable. The next step will be to concentrate more thoroughly on a particular historical periods.

By dividing the thesis according to the historical periods, the aim of the work was not to oppose one period to the other, as no period can be taken as a monolithic unit of clearly distinguished attitudes and believes in a society in general and in media particularly. But such division was the most convenient way to successively analyze the topics and the themes that were most largely covered on the pages of Georgian women’s press throughout its development.



The thesis can be further developed by the analysis of two other Georgian magazines “Amarta” and “Me”. “Amarta” is another Georgian women’s magazine, while “Me” is a journal for sexual minorities.

The thesis did not analyze “Amarta” because it started to be published only a year ago and after several months changed its format by concentrating on more general issues than typical women’s magazines do. But as it is the first attempt to publish a not franchised version of women’s periodical, the analysis of “Amarta’s” issues and its comparison to franchised “Cosmo” can be a very useful addition to this study.

One more novelty in Georgian media-market that is worth to mention here is the first “Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Magazine in Georgia” named “Me” first published six months ago. “Me” is a bilingual, Georgian-English magazine which has its own electronic version. It is financed by Dutch national LGBT association and is free of charge. As it is a highly theoretical periodical mainly discussing the gender stereotypes and defending the rights of sexual minorities, the analysis of this magazine can help us to set a comparative framework about the female and male images constructed in different types of Georgian press.

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