

THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR: MULTIMODALITY AND VISUAL RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN ROMANIAN MEDIA

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AIM AND METHODOLOGY

- To highlight **the visual rhetorical strategies used in the constitution of the female imaginary** within the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, based on 76 news reports published between 24 February 2022 and 31 December 2022, on the following mainstream Romanian channels: *hotnews.ro*, *stirileprotv.ro*, *libertatea.ro*, *stiripesurse.ro*, *romaniatv.net* and *digi24.ro*;
- How are images used for persuasive purposes in the news about military conflicts?

VISUAL RHETORIC: OVERVIEW

- "any form of message that is addressed predominantly to the eye" (Grancea 40)
- "the totality of the figures of speech that appear in a visual discourse" (Grancea 40)
- a third acceptation given to the phrase *visual rhetoric* is related to the selection that any image imposes on the empirical datum it represents, a selection guided by the author's intentions, by the way in which he or she wishes to present that reality. (Grancea 41)
- (1) Visual rhetoric is a *meaningful* set of visible signs and therefore a mode of communication. (2) Visual rhetoric is rooted in looking, seeing, and visualizing. (...) (3) While the forms of visual rhetoric vary widely, from paintings and photographs to sculptures and buildings to films and television, they are human constructions and indulgences. (Ott, Dickinson 392)



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The visual rhetoric in the POLITICAL NEWS about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

- Female representatives of Romanian and international politics, such as Simona Cojocaru, Diana Șoșoaca, Maria Zaharova, Maia Sandu and Giorgia Meloni.
- **rhetoric of protest vs. "invitational" rhetoric;**
- The social actors in these images are analysed through the grid proposed by David Machin in the chapter *Multimodal analysis of photography of the Iraq occupation* in the volume *Discourse, War and Terrorism*, as follows: representations of social actors (individual or group representations; roles fulfilled; biological and cultural traits), and techniques of image making (frame, colour, arrangement of elements).

Women politicians in Romania & Women politicians from abroad



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The visual rhetoric in the SOCIAL NEWS

The predominant theme in the category of social news is the sexual abuse of Ukrainian women by Russian soldiers, but it should be noted that journalists use metaphorical images in their discourse, where the women who suffered these horrific experiences cannot be individualized.



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The visual rhetoric in the MILITARY NEWS

collectivization – anonymization – none representation



Collectivization is intended to create the idea of unity in the struggle for common goals, to emphasize belonging to a particular culture and to convey the need for solidarity at crossroads.



The images in which the depicted figures are **anonymized** are also interesting. This technique occurs when "people are represented but their identity is somehow unclear or uncertain" (Ledin, Machin 52), as in the case of this woman representing the Freedom of Russia Legion, who hides her true identity behind a mask.



Per Ledin and David Machin point out that "it is crucial if someone is not represented in an image" (Ledin, Machin 53). In a culture of war, everything is dehumanized, silenced, including visual representations, which tend to associate human figures with symbols.

The visual rhetoric in the MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

- The general news category includes, in particular, images in which female beauty is emphasized through physical features, as well as appearances of famous people expressing their views on the military conflict. The focus is shifted from the role that women play in the war to their physical appearance, which is seen as a benchmark of femininity.



CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the visual rhetoric in the analysed news reports highlighted the following aspects:

- The women are actively present in the war, both in politics and directly on the front, despite the stereotypes that associate women with passivity;
- The visual rhetoric of media reinforces traditional stereotypes about women's role in the public life and perpetuates gender inequality within society;
- The visual rhetoric helps to shape the image of women in military conflicts, as they are depicted in the images analysed, in particular as representatives of the collectivity, emotionally involved in the war;
- The female identity becomes an exponent of the Ukrainian and Russian collectivity, a symbol of the struggle for freedom.

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LINKS OF THE IMAGES

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LINKS OF THE IMAGES

- <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-externe/europa/peste-40000-de-femei-sunt-inolate-in-armata-2318010.html>
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