

CONSTRUCTION OF THE WOMAN'S IMAGE IN THE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE "LILIT" (2019–2021)¹

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Abstract

The aim of the research "Construction of the woman's image in the lifestyle magazine "Lilit" (2019–2021)" is to reveal the methods used to construct the image of a modern Latvian woman in the interviews of the lifestyle magazine "Lilit" in the period from 2019 to 2021. The magazine is published in Latvia, intended for a female audience and written in Latvian. The article examines the influence of feminism in the portrayal of women in the media, the history of the development of the Latvian woman's image and women's image in terms of beauty. The narrative of the interviews, the ideas of feminism and photos of the interviews are analysed, as well as the visual image of a woman is compared in the narratives and photos of the interviews. The research methods used in the article are narrative analysis and the analysis of photography proposed by Roland Barthes.

Keywords: Latvia, female intellectual, gender, beauty, narrative, portrait photography, cultural feminism.

Introduction

The magazine, in which the researched interviews were issued, has been published in Latvian since 2005 and releases monthly interviews with well-known, successful and inspiring Latvian women. Ten interviews published between 2019 and 2021 were analysed in detail, focusing on the construction of an image that characterizes an intellectually and artistically creative woman engaged in writing (eight out of ten women are book authors, the other two have published smaller articles, reviews, interviews, etc. in print media). The considered time period was chosen with the purpose of revealing current trends in the creation of a woman's image, not yet knowing that this main trend could be slowed down or changed by lifestyle adjustments dictated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Based on the typology in a diachronic aspect used by Victoria Smeyukha (*Викторня Вячеславовна Смеюха*) in the work "Domestic women's magazines: historical and typological aspect", in the typology of Latvian women's magazines "Lilit" ranks among the literary social magazines. "Lilit" magazine positions itself as a lifestyle magazine for women, emphasizing in its self-promotion that Lilita was the first woman created by God. She was too independent and self-confident, so she left paradise.³

The understanding of media theory is mainly based on the work "Gender and the media" by Rosalinda Gill. Umberto Eco's studies are mainly used to actualize the concept of beauty. The analysis of photography mainly uses the approach of Roland Barthes, which he demonstrates in the book "*Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*", to look at the photographs in correlation with the visual image of the woman constructed in the text of the interview.

Feminism and the image of women in women's magazines

Lifestyle magazines for women are a means of mass information that has become an integral part of modern women's life. Here, "lifestyle" is understood as a set of habits of an individual, manifested in the use of goods and services, spending free time and forming social relationships. As Rosalinda Gill emphasizes, women's magazines chooses a form of communication that allows readers to be treated as equals, simulating the conversations of girlfriends. Magazines are oriented towards what women have in common as female representatives (Gill, 2007, 182–183). The self description of "Lilit" magazine highlights the characteristic of women's magazines mentioned by R. Gill: "A magazine that, like a good friend, shares its experience about relationships, fashion and beauty care, but does not insist that there is only one right way" (Lilita).

Women's magazines are a powerful tool for searching, creating, reflecting, and maintaining a woman's identity. Considering the fact that the content of the magazine is created as a search and reflection of women's values, it can also be seen as a representative of the ideology of femininity. "Femininity" is a complex of physical, mental, and behavioural characteristics that include stereotypical views of women's personal characteristics, appearance, comportment, clothing, hobbies, interests, and professional endeavours. It is a historical construct that summarizes normative attitudes and ideas about what a woman should be in a particular society and era (Cimdiņa, Šroma 2017, 68–69).

³ [Lilita]. (n. d.). Our magazines. *Lilita.lv*. Available: <http://www.lilita.lv/lv/musu-zurnali/> [accessed 24.04.2021].

Based on the approaches of describing feminine and feminist text proposed by Elizabeth Grosz in the work "Space, Time, and Perversion", the researched magazine "Lilit" can be classified as both – feminine and feminist. This is indicated by the gender of the authors of the articles and interviews, who are women. The content of the magazine is based on women's interests, useful advices and life stories of different women. Accordingly, the magazine's audience is mostly women. The magazine itself defines its target audience as follows: "Lilit is a magazine for a woman who is not afraid to live: experiment, venture, win and make mistakes" (Lilita).

Since the 1990s of the 20th century, interest in celebrities has been growing, as a result, women's magazines began to publish celebrity life stories more often, as well as stories about their marriages and sexual relationships. As the beauty industry evolves, it emphasizes the importance of feeling satisfied and beautiful in one's body, as well as women's own ability to develop self-confidence and control over their lives. There is also an emphasis on the abilities of women as activists and good organizers both at work and at home. The prevailing opinion is that a woman is capable of being a full-fledged employee, taking care of children, hosting parties at home, tending the garden and planning the interior of the house, etc. at the same time (Gill 2007, 184). Consequently, the side effects of female overload come into view, as well as the related "double burden" concept that appeared in feminist theory in the 70s of the 20th century (Cimdiņa, Šroma 2017, 54). Despite the "double burden", most women are proud of their new role in society, taking on new responsibilities and not giving up the ones they already have.

In magazines aimed at a female audience, femininity is represented as fickle, its maintenance requires constant vigilance, starting with the body and external image, ending with the construction of oneself and one's identity (Gill 2007, 211). "Lilit" appeals to a woman whose world is not limited to the wishes and needs of others, who loves herself, does not spare time and means to please herself (Lilita). It can be considered that the image of a woman described in "Lilit" is feminist, in the sense that it emphasizes a woman's own ability to develop self-confidence and love for herself.

Woman and beauty

Western thinking has been characterized by the attachment to gender, as well as separation of mind and body. Man is attributed with mind, culture as well as theoretical and rational thinking ability, and woman – with body, nature, emotions, matter and experience (Cimdiņa, Šroma 2017, 39). Despite the efforts of feminism to position the female body as the space of a woman's own identity, society still tends to perceive it as an object of desire.

Umberto Eco's book "History of Beauty" describes Saint Isidore's (*Isidorus Hispalensis*) opinion that different parts of the human body have practical uses, while others are intended only for ornament, beauty and attractiveness. Distinguishing between the useful and the beautiful, Saint Isidore proposed to see the female body as the facade of a building. Just as facade decorations enhance the beauty of a building, the body also appears beautiful because it has its natural (navel, gums, eyebrows, breasts) and artificial (clothing, jewellery) decorations (Eko 2009, 111). Clothes, hairstyles and accessories not only indicate gender identity, they also construct it. Traditional folk culture represents gender, age and social class wearing traditions of clothing and accessories. For example, in Latvia, young girls wore flower crowns, married women wore headscarves, *aubes*, *mices*, *galvautus* (different types of traditional head coverings). Men wore trousers, and women wore *brunčus* or *lindrakus* (traditional skirt names) (Cimdiņa, Šroma 2017, 90).

U. Eko sees an inseparable connection between the perception of beauty and good in human consciousness. He believes that we use the adjective *beautiful* to refer to what we like (Eko 2009, 8). Despite the fact that a person can subjectively determine the beautiful on an intuitive level, philosophers have long tried to explain the phenomenon of beauty. Socrates (*Σωκράτης*) and Plato (*Πλάτων*) addressed the theoretical explanation of beauty in Ancient Greece. Two of the most important concepts of beauty that were developed over the centuries arose from Plato's views. The first is beauty as the harmony and proportion of parts. The second is beauty as brilliance. Plato separated beauty from its physical carrier, so it is not attracted to an object perceived by the senses, but spreads its brilliance everywhere (Eko 2009, 48). In this aspect, human "beauty" is contrasted with the brilliance of "divine" beauty. According to Ella Buceniece, one of the authors of modernism who pointed out the connection between beauty and the essence of a woman is Georg Simmel. He believed that a woman should be beautiful and by the term "beautiful" he understood a harmonious unit of internal and external relations (Buceniece 2015, 258–259).

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche saw a contradiction in beauty. According to him, the beautiful is the ideal, which we would not know without its opposite – the ugly. He also found contradictions in the definitions of "beauty" by various philosophers. F. Nietzsche discovered that Immanuel Kant defined the beautiful as that which pleases disinterestedly, contrary to Stendhal's statement that the beautiful "promises" happiness and excites the will and interest (Nīče 2005, 158–160). This contradiction could be explained by the fact that Kant and Stendhal are talking about different beauties and their own subjective reaction to, for example, a beautiful woman.

U. Eko also claims that beauty has never been and never will be absolute and unchanging. He emphasizes that an important role in a person's image is played not only by his body, but also by character and qualities of the soul, which are perceived not with the physical eye, but with the eyes of the mind (Eko 2009, 41). Both R. Gilla and U. Eko claim that beauty means not only the attractiveness of the external image, but also the inner beauty. Nowadays, it is the mass media that most widely play different standards of beauty.

The women interviewed

When creating a woman's image in the mass media, it is determined whether her visual image meets the standards of beauty, whether her personal life is fulfilled, whether she has achieved something in her career, whether she can be called a "successful woman" (Damean, 2006, 89–94), that is, whether she is worthy of attention as raw material for creating the imaginary structure. However, the lifestyle magazine "Lilit" offers interviews with Latvian women who are ready to be honest with themselves and their readers, to share their life experiences in order to educate and inspire other women.

Looking at the interviews of "Lilit" magazine, it can be seen that they are based on the interpretation of the interviewee's life story. A life story is a specific narrative that contains personal life experiences, and it is believed that by telling stories about one's life, a person creates their narrative identity (Pipare [n. d.]).

The intellectual and artistic self-expression of the women writers interviewed in Lilit magazine is quite versatile. Ieva Melgalve (1981) – writer and translator, author of several books, who says the following about herself: "Writing is one of the ways I think and communicate with the world from an early age." (Literatura.lv [n. d.]) Alise Zariņa (1987) is a movie director who publishes articles in the cultural and independent thought internet magazine "satori.lv", she is also the author of the collection of poems "Papjemaše" (2009). Art scholar and curator Inga Šteimane (1965) is the author of the monograph "Jānis Viņķelis" (2003) and co-author of several other monographs on art and artists. Writer and translator Baiba Zīle (1974) – author of several books, writes both in Latvian and English; also published under the pseudonyms Anna Kravicka and Barbara Sea. Journalist and theatre critic Henrieta Verhoustinska (1973) – author of several articles, interviews and reviews. Ten of them are interviews and articles published in "Lilit" magazine in the period from 2011 to 2017. Zane Zusta (1982) – journalist, author of children's books, head of the publishing house "Ucipuci". The children's story "Ucipuci domā ārpus kastēs" (Ucipuci thinks

outside the box, 2017) was nominated for the "Latvian Literary Award 2017" in the "Best Original Literary Work for Children" category. Writer Maija Pohodneva (1973) – author of several books, as well as film director and screenwriter. M. Pohodneva works in such genres as thrillers, crime novels and detective novels. Ramona Indriksone (1958) – writer, also published under the pseudonym Luīze Briede. In the book "Pāris metru zem ūdens" (A couple of meters under the water, 2019) she introduces herself "as a brave author who does not shy away from talking about the dark side of life openly, without exaggeration and with a deep understanding of complex situations and characters" (Literatura.lv [n. d.]), Zane Enīņa (1977) – traveller and blogger, her adventures on the trip across South America, Easter Island and Antarctica, collected in the first book "Nekaunīgais pingvīns" (Cheeky Penguin, 2020), followed by her second book "Uz Aļasku un atpakaļ" (To Alaska and back, 2022). Playwright Justīne Kļava (1990) – her original plays and dramatizations have been staged in major Latvian theatres, for has repeatedly received the "Spēlmaņu nakts" (Gambler's Night – the annual nomination of Latvia's best productions, established in 1993) awards for her plays.

In order to understand the image construction principles of the women interviewed by "Lilit", attention was paid to what themes and life episodes appear in their narratives. In four interviews, the narrator uses the third person to introduce the reader to the main character, and in six – wants to be present and uses the first person. The introduction has an important place in the composition of the interviews. It is like a portrait sketch of the woman being interviewed, a description of her profession and her achievements so far, often highlighting other aspects of her life as well. For example, I. Melgalve is announced as a mother of three children who writes books for children.

The use of the first person in the introduction of H. Verhoustinska's interview is confirmed by the pronoun *mani* (me), but in the introduction of I. Melgalve, the first person is expressed in the description of the circumstances of the interview. "Meeting on a rainy day. Drinking wine, eating zucchini pancakes." (Vīgante 2019, 7) Also it reveals the environment and time. I. Melgalve's interview takes place on a rainy day, in the station cafe. A different mood develops in the conversation with B. Zīle, which takes place on a sunny day. The reader is already informed that in a few hours B. Zīle will board a plane to Frankfurt, where she works and lives. In the introduction of B. Zīle's interview, it is revealed that her book about weight loss "Rausītis un Karma" (2019) will be of great importance in the conversation, while in A. Zariņa's interview, the accent will be placed on feminism that permeates her life and profession.

The introduction is followed by a question-and-answer conversation between two women. The narrative takes place in three tenses – past,

present and future. The past is connected to the narrative of the life story, the present – to beliefs and the future to goals, hopes and dreams. The narrative composition and thematic orientation of the interviews are similar. Each interview contains questions about the interviewee's life: childhood, parents, school and study years, creative impulses, choice of profession, work and achievements, relationships with men, love, marriage, children, beauty and other visual image issues.

The interviews of H. Verhoustinska, Z. Eniņa and I. Melgalve begin with the question of their character traits, documenting also the peculiarities of the everyday conversational language of modern Latvians, a sample of especially uncensored lexicon, where traces of Russian and English appear. I. Melgalve admits her lack of sophistication, she explains that the use of slang is a conscious decision. Examples include the Russian slang words *hуйня* (*хуйня* – bullshit), *davai* (*давай* – let's), *грапонка* (*граненка* – faceted glass) and English words used in Latvian language conversation – *šainī* (shiny), *hepī* (happy) etc. I. Melgalve uses even the English-Russian compound *superkruta* (super, *крута* – cool) (Vīgante 2019, 14). On the other hand, Z. Eniņa reveals that he suffers from character traits that are considered Latvian – a high sense of responsibility, eternal running, busyness and overload, which forced Zane to radically change her life: “That crazy run stopped one day eight years ago, when on a straight path from a work meeting, I was taken to the hospital by ambulance. It turned out to be a ruptured lung. [...] It is said that shortly before death, people regret that they lived the life that others expected of them, and not the one that they would have wanted. I had the same feeling.” (Rudzinska, 2021, 4)

The interviews of I. Melgalve, J. Kļava and Z. Zusta are based on questions of career development. On the other hand, the interview with Z. Eniņa does not have the plot guidelines characteristic of “Lilit” interviews, the entire interview is about the journey of Z. Eniņa's soul and body to “find herself anew”. “Every person's life path is different, and that's great. If someone feels happy living in the countryside and, for example, taking care of cattle – all respect, really! [...] But another wants to sit in a fancy office in Riga and work only by the computer. [...] One wants a family, one doesn't – please! That's why we're interesting – because we're different,” Z. Eniņa shares her thoughts. (Rudzinska 2021, 9)

The questions at the end of the interview are not chosen randomly, each of them tells some generalization about the woman being interviewed. I. Šteimane's narrative forms a ring-shaped composition. As a child, she wanted to be a musician, but life turned in a different direction. At the end of the interview, the interviewer asks if I. Šteimane still plays the piano. To which Inga replies: “Recently I surprised my sister's son. We played together. But I can live without it. From this I conclude that the choice was

made correctly." (Vīgante 2020, 11) This realization forces the reader to reflect on her life choices. The interviews with B. Zīle and A. Zariņa ends with a question about relationships with men. In B. Zīle's case question is about love, but A. Zariņa's – respect. A. Zariņa claims that men need to be more involved in the feminist discourse, so that they treat women more respectfully and, accordingly, earn a more respectful attitude towards themselves (Burve-Rozīte, 2019, 27).

In the interviews with the writers, there are also advertising elements of their texts. At the end of M. Pohodneva's interview a 2-page fragment is offered from her book "Kaķu vārdotāja" (Cat's charmer, 2020). The interview with Z. Zusta also ends with a 1-page fragment from her book "Aiz durvīm" (Behind the door, 2019). In the end of the interview the journalist asks a question, whether the author sees the book's heroine Emma in herself, to which the writer replies: "Emma and I have a lot in common, but we are also different, because I will always fight until the end for what is important to me." (Rudzinska 2019b, 23) A similar construction is also formed in R. Indriksone's interview. The writer is familiar with the interviewer Dace Vīgante, they both met at the Literārā akadēmija (Literary Academy is a program, which implements projects related to the development of professional skills of writers). The women start the conversation about Ramona's pseudonym use and ends it with the writer's revelation: "Now when I write, it feels as if I have met myself from deep inside." (Vīgante 2021b, 21)

The interviews document significant facts about the world of thoughts and mental life of contemporary Latvian women writers, the personalities mentioned in the interviews have directly or indirectly influenced the formation of their personalities. The following Latvian cultural figures appear in the life stories of the interviewed women: Silvija Radzobe (1950–2020), Nora Ikstena (1969), Valentīna Freimane (1922–2018), Lilija Dzene (1929–2010), Normunds Naumanis (1962–2014), Dita Rietuma (1967), Ieva Melgalve (1981), Aivars Eipurs (1956), Dace Rukšāne (1969), Zigmunds Skujiņš (1926–2022), Mirdza Ķempe (1907–1974) Regīna Ezera (1930–2002). The names of foreign authors are also mentioned – Fyodor Dostoevsky (*Фёдор Михайлович Достоевский*, 1921–1881), William Shakespeare (1564–1616), Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), Arkady and Boris Strugacki (*Аркадий Натанович Стругацкий*, 1925–1991; *Борис Натанович Стругацкий*, 1933–2012), Herbert George Wells (1866–1946), Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899–1961), Knut Hamsun (1859–1952), Henrik Johan Ibsen (1828–1906), Anton Chekhov (*Антон Павлович Чехов*, 1860–1904), Erich Maria Remarque (1898–1970). Some literary works are also mentioned – "Zaļā zeme" (1945) by Andrejs Upītis (1877–1970), "Don Quixote" (*El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote*

de la Mancha; 1605, 1615) by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616) and “A Streetcar Named Desire” (1947) by Tennessee Williams (1911–1938).

Feminist ideas revealed in the narratives

Magazine interviews, similar to post-feminism, respect each woman's individual choices in career and family life. If the introduction of I. Melgalve's interview mentions that she is a mother of three children, then A. Zariņa, who does not have children, reveals in her interview: “I sometimes think with admiration for women – she also has three children, when can she handle everything!?” (Burve-Rozīte, 2019, 27) She explains that a woman can combine a successful career with raising children, but it is a “double burden” that a modern woman can choose to carry or not.

Not all women whose lives and beliefs have been influenced by feminism call themselves feminists. The reason for this could be the internal contradictions of feminism, as well as the public's perception of the concept such as feminism itself. Society often sees feminists as representatives of radical feminism, although the ideas of liberal feminism may be the most widely represented in Latvia. Liberal feminism advocates women's personal and political autonomy and freedom of choice. Similar to the issue of children – despite the fact that a part of society still puts pressure on a woman in matters of reproduction, a woman has the right to make this decision herself.

Feminist values play an important role in the narrative of A. Zariņa's interview, informing and educating on issues of gender equality. She thinks that countries where equality is a value led to mental well-being and fight against the cultivation of gender stereotypes. She asks the cameramen to film the female and male bodies with the same attitude, without leaning towards the eroticism of the female body. In the division of labour, who will light the fire and who will cut the vegetables, she stands for freedom of choice, not division of labour by gender (Burve-Rozīte, 2019, 27). Feminism, which A. Zariņa talks about in the interview, is based on mutual respect between the genders and freedom of choice.

The interviewer asks H. Verhoustinska in which of the book worlds she would like to live in if she had the choice. She answers that she finds the second half of the 19th century the most interesting, with the development of science, the beginning of psychoanalysis and the ideas of women's equality. She also fondly mentions the women's dresses of the time (Rudzinska 2020, 6).

In the life of J. Kļava, her grandmother plays a significant role, the prototype of which appears in the play “Dāmas” (Ladies, 2016). Justine reveals: “Grandma didn't see the play. But it was on purpose, I didn't want

her to feel bad in any way. [...] I knew my Grandma very well and I know that it was difficult for her to see the reflection of her personality. The way she imagined herself, was not how the family members experienced her in life. [...] She knew, of course, about the play, and very often repeated how proud she was. Her mother was illiterate, so the fact that her granddaughter became a writer – meant a lot.” (Vīgante 2021a, 7) Laura Robinson through Charles Cooley’s concept of “mirroring the self” explains the influence of people on the construction of the self. She argues that people’s self-esteem lies in the perception that is formed from how we think society judges us. In this process, an individual enters the mind of another individual with the help of imagination and sees himself from the outside. It is an opportunity to see how a given individual’s appearance, mannerisms, deeds, character and goals are perceived (Robinson 2007, 9). Often this mirroring is just an illusion we choose to live in. J. Kļava does not reveal what the grandmother’s illusion about herself was, but notes that the play itself has feminist orientations: “Considering that this women’s topic – third-wave feminism – is generally relevant in the world now, I hope you will be interested in a play.” (Vīgante 2021a, 7)

In the interview, M. Pohodņeva philosophizes about women’s roles, which are assigned from childhood. Fearing condemnation, a woman accepts them without understanding either about herself or the roles. “A woman can live her whole life in an unsuccessful marriage and fit in – be a good mother, housewife, wife – but at the same time never be fully accepted. It is such a tragic moment when you realize that you have never really been loved, nor accepted, only fit in,” says Maija. (Rudzinska 2020b, 13)

On the term “femininity” Z. Eniņa writes as follows: “Now I am on the way to femininity. Never before have I been particularly attracted to all these external things – dresses, colours and beads. [...] Of course, femininity is not so much an appearance, but a set of inner feelings that I am still learning.” (Rudzinska 2021, 11) The path to femininity is different for every woman, the end point is also not clear, because modern women tend to perceive the term “femininity” in different ways. There is no unified view of this term in modern feminist literary and cultural theory either.

Visual image of a woman in interview photos

As previously noted, the body and external appearance still play an important role in the construction of the female gender identity (Gilla 2007, 199). In the interview, both types of perception are satisfied – sight with an image and mind with a text. Focusing on the relationship between the both – R. Barts pays special attention to the press photograph to which the text is attached. The text, connoting with the image, accelerates

the perception of the message. He argues that press photographs are part of some larger arrangement in which these elements work together (Barts 2006, 168–169). This article explores this collaboration by drawing parallels between the interviewee's appearance in the photographs and their view of their visual image, as well as their understanding of beauty in general. It is important to realize that a photograph includes not only the person being photographed, but also the photographer's vision. The third point of view also appears in the magazine photography – the magazine's intention regarding the visual material of the interview. In the last work of R. Barta's life "Camera lucida" (1980) there is a rejection of the semiotic analysis of photography. R. Barta is driven by the desire to find something in photography that everyone can see. Therefore, in the work "Camera lucida", R. Barts does not define photography, but describes it, because he does not want to create a theory of the image. The structure of a photograph, being in a group of multi-layered objects, will always bring with its referent – what it represents (Barts 2006, 14–16). In this article, only those interview photos, that were taken in specially organized photo sessions for interview purposes, are considered. There are ten photoshoots and the photos from each photoshoot will be analysed according to the following criteria: gender of the photographer, number of photos, location, colour, overall mood, pose and mimicry of the referent.

Looking at all ten interview photo sessions, it can be concluded that in nine out of ten photo sessions, the photographer was a woman. The reason for this could be the way in which the photographer constructs the image of a woman, emphasizing those visual gender characteristics of the representative that correspond to the policy of the magazine. The average number of photos in an interview is four. Photo sessions take place in both photo studios and outdoors, however, most photos are taken in photo studios. The poses tend to vary, but one thing is the same for almost all women – a frontal portrait, most often supplemented with a wide smile. The overall mood of the photo session harmoniously forms a relationship with the text of the interview. The style, tonality and mood of the photos of each interview are determined not only by the concept of the magazine, the personality of the interviewee, the style of the particular photographer, but also the time in which the photos were taken. The interviews that took place before the pandemic, in 2019, are bright and colourful – on the covers of magazines and in the cover pictures of interviews, women smile with wide smiles. With the beginning of the restrictions caused by the pandemic in Latvia, the photos of the 2020 interviews remain less bright and in the cover photos the women smile with a light smile in which you can't see their teeth, or they don't smile at all. Same smile trend can be observed in the photos of the 2021 interviews.

Visual image appearance in interview texts

In the interview, the statement is made that many women want to lose weight, whether or not they need it. B. Zīle is announced as a woman who not only focused on reducing her body weight, but also wrote the book "Rausītis un Karma" about it, which is an open diary about the author's slimming experience and practice of "body positive" philosophy. "Body positive" is a social movement whose goals are to create an equal attitude towards bodies of different sizes, genders and races. "No matter how we preach the *I'm fat, therefore beautiful* philosophy, I see many people with serious health problems caused by being overweight," [emphasis in original] (Rudzinska 2019a, 10) B. Zīle tells the interviewer. She started her slimming journey because she didn't feel good about her body and wanted to wear the clothes that no longer fit her. B. Zīle claims that men are not one of the reasons for losing weight. She believes, "If a woman feels good in her body, if there's a sparkle in her eyes, she'll be *wanted*." [emphasis in original] (Ibid.). Body shape doesn't matter as long as a woman feels good in that body.

I. Melgalve, when asked about how important appearance is to her, chooses to talk directly about her body. She talks about the thoughts that often hit her: "I look terrible, I'm fat and so on." (Vīgante 2019, 12) She attributes weight loss to healthy eating and exercise. As reasons for losing weight, she cites: dissatisfaction with her appearance, the desire to wear again the clothes she likes. The writer admits that she is now so strong in her body that she can lift and carry considerably heavy things to the fifth floor. She quips, "I look at all those slim girls who are what I want to look like, those beautiful, slim arms, and I think, oh man, what are they going to do when they have to lift a water bottle?" (Ibid.) Despite being dissatisfied with her body contours, I. Melgalve also sees positive power in her body. She finds that using cosmetics does not change her attitude towards herself as a more or less beautiful woman. While planning the photo session, I. Melgalve had the idea to take pictures with and without makeup. The caption to the photos in which she is seen without makeup makes think about how we perceive the relationship between the use of makeup and a woman's beauty: "How important is it for Ieva to have makeup? Is it important for Ieva or for those around her? Existential questions of our time. So important and actually so unimportant." [emphasis in original] (Ibid., 10)

H. Verhoustinska, unlike B. Zīle and I. Melgalve, does not talk about her body in terms of slimming, but in terms of aging. H. Verhoustinska hosts the program "Kultūrdeva" (Cultural dose) on Latvian television, therefore makeup artists, hairdressers and stylists make sure that she matches the image of a woman-presenter established by television. She says that

the stylist department is responsible for her beauty on the television and they manage to make her sleepless face and imperfect contours acceptable. Also, the high-heeled shoes in which H. Verhoustinska is seen hosting the program are not her choice, but the stylist's. She puts on these shoes only when she sits down in the presenter's chair. Although H. Verhoustinska is concerned about the aging process of her skin, she does not consider interfering with it with skin tightening or filler injections. She doesn't consider women who have made this decision, but she finds it scary what women are willing to do to prevent the effects of aging. H. Verhoustinska reveals that the attention of men is a secondary importance in her life, although she has never lacked this attention. She is more worried about how she hosted the show than how she looked on the show.

A. Zarina's interview introduction describes her visual image as colourful – pink tights, a pink backpack and a short dress. The relationship between her visual image and feminist views is explained as follows: "Feminism does not stand against the lifestyle and style traditionally considered feminine, but for the right of every woman to choose what to be, how to live and how to realize herself." (Burve-Rozīte, 2019, 17) She herself does not consider her dressing style to be feminist because she does not have pants in her wardrobe. Despite this statement, in the photographs of the interview, A. Zariņa is represented in pantsuits and leggings (as known, masculine-style costumes are the characteristic that comes from feminists of the 1930s). She says that hair colouring is an internal battle with herself. Being colourful is a challenge, because it often creates resistance, not only attracts attention.

In the introduction to I. Šteimane's interview, it is written that the conversation took place before the stagnation caused by Covid-19, but the photo session was in compliance with the contact restrictions established in the country. The journalist explains that this interview is like a peculiar turning point at a time when we have become a little different. Šteimane is described as follows: "Behind the painterly exterior, which could have been created by the brush of a Flemish old master, lies the missionary's faith in the living artistic process and the beauty of relationships." (Vīgante 2020, 4) Interview photos taken in a photo studio are monochrome. The background and clothes are matched to the colour of I. Šteimane's hair. In the opening photo, she stands straight with a direct gaze, this pose generally considered archaic (Barts, 2006, 127). Unlike the previous interviews where could see a lot of smiling pictures, in this interview there are none. Can assume that this is the result of the pandemic conditions. Hair is the only element of I. Šteimane's visual image that she has chosen to talk about in an interview, however, she prefers to talk about philosophical topics. I. Šteimane reveals that she is moved by beauty: "I am

emotionally very responsive when I feel the beauty of the relationships – it can be in an art exhibition, literature or people.” (Vīgante 2020, 11)

Z. Eniņa talks about her body in terms of health and the level at which it functions so that she can live. At the beginning of the interview, Z. Eniņa was called true, fragile and strong at the same time, feminine and cherishable, as well as an absolutely real woman. This feeling permeates the interview photos as well. Dressed in earth tones, with light makeup, without unnecessary accessories, natural movements and a light smile – this the way how she talks about finding her mental and physical path to herself.

“Then I meet Maija – a gorgeous, rich Venus – and I thought, what would Rubens or Michelangelo give for the opportunity to paint or mould her into a sculpture,” (Rudzinska 2020b, 13) writes interviewer Kristīne Rudzinska at the beginning of the interview with M. Pohodņeva. M. Pohodņeva’s the comparison with Venus is a reference to what U. Eco writes about in his works, saying that the standards of beauty have differed from each other in different periods of time (Eko 2009, 418). The beauty that Maija possesses would be highly appreciated in the circles of baroque painters and sculptors, but in the modern world, Maija feels differently. The interviewer asks why the heroine of the book calls herself a “fat girl”, to which she receives the answer: “Well, she doesn’t think very highly of herself.” (Rudzinska 2020b, 13) The prototype of the heroine of the book is the author herself, so this conversation, which is apparently about the book, is also about the attitude of the writer herself.

M. Pohodņeva talks about the norms and stereotypes accepted by the family and society, which young women have to face on a daily basis. She also mentions women’s desire to please a man, which is caused by the fear of being alone and unloved. “There are people for whom external appearance is very important – to look good,” (Ibid., 15) says M. Pohodņeva and adds that these people are often unhappy, but still maintain their image, because the visual image seems more important than inner well-being. Her recipe for beauty and femininity is self-acceptance and acceptance of others. The interview is not embellished with photos of the writer. The two interview portraits are laconic and energetically positive. In the photos, you can see Maija’s naturally wavy hair, which does not hide grey hair.

Self-acceptance is an important issue that the interviewer D. Vīgante talks about with R. Indriksone. R. Indrikson’s fear of being unaccepted by appearance comes from childhood. R. Indriksone also touches on the issue of beauty. In her opinion, the beautiful is what cannot be expressed in words: “The wind is blowing, the sun is warm, the waves, the sand is swirling. The tiny units of language are too small to express something so beautiful. Even Einstein couldn’t. Just feel.” (Vīgante 2021, 21)

At the beginning of the interview, J. Kļava is described as an open, energetic, healthy ironic woman who stands out for her sharp mind and direct language. Despite the fact that Justine is a young, beautiful woman, there are no questions in the interview that affect J. Kļava's visual image, femininity or attitude to beauty. In the interview photos, J. Kļava looks self-accepting and enjoying life. Dressed in an oversized knitted sweater with a high collar and a woollen skirt, she speaks of comfort and warmth with her visual image.

The most important insight related to the visual image, which can be found in all the analysed interviews, is related to the acceptance of oneself and one's external appearance at different age stages. It is important for women to feel good about their bodies and find inner peace. Most of the interviewed women have admitted that inner harmony is more important to them than external appearance.

Conclusion

Thanks to the feminist movement, a woman has the opportunity to read magazines in which women interview representatives of their own gender about what it means to be a woman today. The narratives of the interviewed women's life stories reveal what would have been missing without the presence of feminist ideas – a woman's opinion, freedom of choice, education, choice of profession, achievements, etc.

The magazine "Lilit" has a cultural feminism orientation – with the help of interviews, it informs the society and historically documents about existence of the strong and successful Latvian women, creating, although not unambiguous, an image of the 21st centuries creative Latvian woman.

The image of a woman in magazine interviews is constructed in the interaction of a life story and a photo portrait. The plot of the narrative is created by the interviewer, while the fable is created by the interviewee. In addition to the woman's self-image, various characters appear in the interviews – family members and other people who played a significant role in their lives. The interviewed women often referred to the personalities of the literature and theatre industry – writers, poets, literary scholars and theatre critics who have left an impression on the lives of the interviewed women.

Interviews reveal that a woman's self-esteem is related to her body (figure, aging process) and individual style (clothes, shoes, makeup, hairstyle). Although half of the women interviewed by magazine express an unsatisfactory attitude towards their body, the unifying thought in all interviews is that inner self-satisfaction is still more important than outer appearance.

Depending on the situation, the photos attached to the interview can be kept both in a united style, and also revealing the feelings and aspects of the personality of the interviewed woman over a longer period of her life. The style, tonality and mood of the photos of each interview are determined not only by the concept of the magazine, the personality of the woman being interviewed, the style of the particular photographer, but also the time in which the photos were taken. For example, the interviews that took place before the pandemic are brighter, more colourful and happier than after the Covid-19 pandemic started.

Studying the correlation between the photographs and the content of the interviews, it was discovered that the visual image of a woman in the "Lilit" lifestyle magazine is created according to the expressions of the interviewed woman's essence, without claiming to be a reflection of reality. In photo sessions, a makeup artist, hairdresser and stylist work with women, who create their visual image according to the plan, but makeup is used that does not mask the signs of aging – wrinkles. It can be concluded that in the "Lilit" lifestyle magazine, the visual image of a woman is constructed by deliberately beautifying, but not contradicting a woman's true nature and showing respect for her femininity.

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