The politics, promises and perils of addressing violence against women in Romania in the 2000s

Politica, promisiunile şi pericolele abordărilor în materie de violenţă împotriva femeilor în România anilor 2000

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Abstract

The matter of combating violence against women was included on the political and public agenda in Romania in the early 2000s. A law addressing domestic violence was passed in the Romanian Parliament in 2003, but the legislative and policy-making actions concerning this matter was mainly part of a paradigm of simulated change in the following years, as Romania became a member-state of the European Union. Moreover, public and political discourses on this topic have been filled with references to European identity (and, by default, non- European identity), rendering the fact that addressing violence against women was included on the publics and political agenda as a signifier of European membership.

Keywords: violence against women, Europeanization, discourse, Romania.

Rezumat

Problema combaterii violenţei împotriva femeilor a fost inclusă pe agenda politică şi publică din România la începutul anilor 2000. O lege privind violenţa domestică a fost adoptată în Parlamentul României în 2003, dar acţiunile legislative şi de dezvoltare de politici publice pe această temă au fost parte dintr-o paradigmă a schimbării simulate în anii următori, pe măsură ce România devenea stat membru al Uniunii Europene. Mai mult decât atât, discursurile publice şi politice pe acest subiect au fost inundate de referinţe la identitatea europeană (şi, implicit, noneuropeană), transformând faptul că violenţa împotriva femeilor era inclusă pe agenda publică şi politică drept simbol al apartenenţei europene.

Cuvinte-cheie: violenţă împotriva femeilor, europenizare, discurs, România.

People know what they (re)present; they frequently know why they (re)present what they (re)present; but what they do not know is what (re)presents what they (re)present[1]. Discourses that (re)present violence against women are potentially violent and construct the identities they (re)present. It is important how we present, re-present and represent this type of violence because we can simultaneously undermine or deepen the violence, deconstruct its causes or deposit it at social, cultural, economic and political (gendered) margins. And what people present, their rhetoric and their ideas, once posited, are institutionalized, become institutions, understood in the broader sense of the term as mechanisms and reference points which organize social, cultural, economic or political life; they become representative for the society that produced them in the first place and keep representing it as identity

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[1] This utterance, which belongs to the author, is a variant inspired by the following quote from Michel Foucault: *People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does"*. See M. Foucault, in H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982, p. 187.

characteristics. Thus, not only the violence against women, but also its prevention and combating, are politicized. The present project sets out to offer a new perspective on the issue of violence against women in Romania. It shall be focused on a discursive point of view within a historical and sociological framework regarding addressing the issue of violence against women on the political and public agenda in Romania. This way, the processes of institutional and identity construction brought about by these public and political problematizations shall be identifiable.

Addressing violence against women in Romania: between the Balkan floozie and the European Union

I continue with this line of thought and state that people know what they construct; they frequently know why they construct what they construct; but what they do not know is what is constructed by what they construct. By construction I understand a broader sense of the term, a historical process, not an event, of creating, defining, organizing, developing, stabilizing, depositing. By institution I refer again to a more general sense of the concept, defining it as any location of power which organizes social, political, economic and cultural life. Therefore, a posited social, political, economic and cultural practice ossified in time or, on the contrary, instituted at a certain point. I make a difference between institution and identity, although I believe that identity, understood as the whole given by the intersection of certain ways of being and doing, can also be an institution or can be institutionalized, as this project will show. Thus, violence against women, as well as combating it, can be institutions or can be institutionalized. Identity can also be defined through these institution(alization)s as being one way or another. For example, *non-EUropean or EUropean*[2].

By the discourse referring to a certain issue I understand the totality of 'locations' – and of the connections between them – in which it is addressed, it is approached repeatedly, recurrently, starting from the level of language to the level of institutionalization. Therefore, in the public and political discourse in Romania I have identified the recurrent usage (measuring the recurrence as repeating the same frame in more than 10% of the analyzed "texts") of the following frames of (re)presenting the violence against women:

- domestic violence is represented, both from a governmental and from a nongovernmental point of view, as an issue of aligning to European and international norms, used as standards for reporting Romania's evolution in this field and considered to be the adequate combating and prevention mechanisms.

- domestic violence is represented as a matter of protecting the family by the state.

- violence against women is represented as a specific issue of the private space (both regarding the causes, the location of the act of violence and regarding the solving of the problem).

- violence against women is represented as a grotesque spectacle of corporal victimization of women, this case being especially recurrent in the media, but also appearing in political statements

- violence against women is represented as the responsibility of women to protect themselves

- violence against women is represented as being potentially solved at the intersection between governmental and nongovernmental efforts

- combating violence against women is represented as a criterion of assessing governmental performance.

- violence against women is represented as the problem of economic and political, social and cultural margins/predicaments.

As EU accession was a central issue on the political agenda in Romania in the 2000s, any matter which was more or less connected to this, even though peripheral on the public and political agenda, could benefit from the general importance of the accession for the advancement on these agendas. Therefore, defining violence against women as an issue connected to the European Union implies solving the problem by acknowledging it as a point of European interest. And this implies the necessity of

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[2] I use the term "EUrope", "EUropean", "EUropeanization" in order to illustrate the often used, abused and/or misused conflation of the European Union- EU- with Europe as economical, political, social, cultural, even spatial, geographies.

addressing it at the level of public policies and institutions, governmental and nongovernmental, in Romania. Thus, for example, the law 217/2003 for preventing and combating violence within the family, was presented by Mona Muscă, Romanian MP, in the parliamentary debates regarding its adoption, as follows:

"I wish to bring to your attention the fact that there is a recommendation of the European Union, of the Council of the European Union regarding domestic violence. This is a very recent recommendation, from 2002, it is Recommendation no. 5, which clearly states that *each Member State of the European Union, therefore us as well, if we wish to become members of the European Union*, will have to have a special law regarding domestic violence. That recommendation states very clearly what this law should contain. Well, one law was made from the three laws proposed to your approval and the initiative of making just one law, of elaborating one bill from the three belongs to the Juridical Commission, who gave us the idea and whom I thank for the respective idea, we managed to submit only one bill, *this one fulfilling all the recommendations of the European Union. I could safely say that it is currently one the most European laws*, I am referring to our bill"[3].

Europeanness is, therefore, constructed in relation with violence against women through the development of policies, institutions and legislation dedicated to its prevention and combating. In this context, the references to the European Union legitimize discursively the adoption of a law regarding domestic violence in Romania, a new, but necessary domain of regulating and of developing public policies, this law being (re)presented as an alignment with EU norms and requirements, in the historical context of this state's accession to the Union. A contribution to the construction of the significance of the Europeanness of the European Union as a symbolic location of combating violence against women takes place. Laurel Weldon remarks that what appears to determine the reaction of governments to violence against women is the presence of a movement of powerful women connected to the state institutions meant to improve the status of women[4]. This reaction may refer to bureaucratic actions or to any actions of governments and parliament, of state institutions in general. Nonetheless, in the case of Romania, the reaction of the political class, the governments and the parliaments during the 2000s to the issue of violence against women, especially domestic violence, was also a result of the fact that the Romanian state had to align to European norms regarding gender inequalities – gender-based structural violence – and their materializations in direct violence, for example. However, this reaction can be an institutional, material one, of combating and prevention of violence against women or a rhetorical one. If the reaction at the rhetorical level is stronger than the institutional one, then we are more likely dealing with an avoidance of a real and authentic problematization of the issue. The (re)action to violence against women at a governmental level, and at a nongovernmental level as well, "does not automatically imply efficiency", as efficiency refers to the impact of the policies developed for prevention and combating. Also, rhetorical reactions, when exceeding material reactions, may signify responses from governments, or even of civil societies, which are meant to avoid a real critique of the issue. Forms of addressing violence against women are created – or actually, borrowed and adapted –, forms which are a discursive alignment to its prevention and combating, without sufficient, consistent efforts to address the structural foundation of social, cultural, economic and political gender inequalities that fuel the violence in the first place. This approach to domestic violence, whose (re)presentation is a reactive one (to the requirements of the EU), not a proactive one (referring to the needs of women in Romania), is problematic precisely because it renders invisible the necessity to prevent and combat domestic violence as a lived reality and it materializes and instruments it into an indicator of the Europeanness in Romania.

Additionally, violence against women is encrypted (un?)intentionally in the Romanian political discourse as a specific problem of marginalized social, cultural, economic and political groups. This frame is focused on diagnosing the causes of violence, but it does so from a patriarchal, discriminatory

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[3] Parlamentul României, „Dezbaterea Proiectului de Lege pentru prevenirea și combaterea violenței în familie; Propuneri legislative privind violența în familie și Propuneri legislative privind protecția victimelor violenței în familie", în *Dezbateri Parlamentare*, București, 2003, disponibil online la http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5394&idm=13&prn=1, accesat la 12 decembrie 2010 – s.n.

[4] L. Weldon, *Protest, Policy, and the Problem of Violence Against Women: A Cross-National Comparison*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002, p. 5.

perspective, which rehashes stereotypes and cultural and structural violence by means of public (re)presentations. In February 2010, in Iaşi, Romania, a man assaulted 12 women with a knife within a few days. Tudorel Butoi, expert criminalist, psychologist and professor, invited in a TV programme of a national news channel, offered his opinion on the matter. Thus, at the request of the reporter: "To wrap things up, tell us if women can protect themselves in any way from the point of view of an expert criminalist", Tudorel Butoi replied:

"Women can and must be cautious. Women must know how to choose when to go by elevator and not overwhelm us because they were raped in the elevator. When and with whom. They must know to walk on well-lit, populated routes. Not to wander in parks at night like explorers and then come to the police station saying they were raped. To know whom they start a conversation with and with whom they agree to have relations and so on and so forth. Unfortunately, this Balkan floozie behaviour, with the exception of these victims… uuuh, who did not display such behaviour, is characteristic for bimbos *(piţipoance)* and uuuh they become victims because they are provocative victims, most of them"[5].

In this context, violence against women is approached as being caused by women's behaviour, thus a perspective on this type of violence as a result of the lack of caution of women, not of men's responsibility, is adopted. Furthermore, the causes of violence do not reside only in the category of "woman", but they are discursively deposited between social, economic, political and cultural stereotype-borders of the identity position represented by the "Balkan floozie". The discursive positing of violence against women in social, cultural, economic (and even political-women) groups deepens the marginalization of already secondary and marginal socio-cultural and political-economic groups. Their exclusion is, thus, reiterated. This way, discursive deposits of violence are created, from which the causes of violence are eliminated each time it is necessary to explain the respective problem. One reason for this approach may be avoiding the problematization of the role of men in this phenomenon. Additionally, in a vicious circle, the discursive creation of these deposits of violence marginalizes the violence against women on the political and public agenda, limiting its approach. Such a limitation is addressing this type of violence in the stereotypical dates of the 8th of March or of the 25th of November, for example.

The intentional and unintentional recurrence of some (re)presentation frames in addressing violence against women in Romania has a creative, defining and redefining potential of this type of violence, of the structures that fuel it. But it has an inherently limited character, being just one (re)presentation frame from potentially many others and reducing the approach of the issue to only a certain perspective. Also, the ossification or the positing of a (re)presentation frame can alter its creative feature, turning it into a static, limited/ing frame. It is a discourse developed through the recurrence of using the European Union as a reference in addressing this type of violence, the discourse of the Europeanisation of combating violence against women in Romania. It is a new, innovative discourse until it ceases to be new or innovative in the Romanian context, becoming part of the (Europeanized?) Romanian way of being and doing.

In the analysis of violence against women, the qualitative approach is as important as the quantitative one and the other way around. Approaching the words of violence/violent acts against women is as important as approaching the numbers of violence/violent acts. Thus, its (re)presentations are an important aspect of its understanding, criticizing and, potentially, of its combating. Teresa de Lauretis concludes in the "considerations on the semiotic production of gender between the rhetoric of violence and the violence of rhetoric"[6] that "violence is engendered in representation"[7], it is inherent to it. Moreover, Sally Engle Merry states that: „from a performative perspective, doing violence is a way of doing gender"[8]. We may further argue that violence becomes the defining frame of identities, not only genderized, involved in what is presented, re-presented and represented as violence. Thus, identity

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[5] Taken from Realitatea TV news, February, 24 2010, 2 p.m., between 07:02-07:49, available online at: http://webtv.realitatea.net/jurnale/realitatea-de-la-14-00-24-02-2010?autoPlay=true#ve_video_player_a, accessed on March, 1st 2010, my underlining.

[6] T. Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 32.

[7] *Idem,* p. 33.

[8] S. Engle Merry, *Gender Violence: A Cultural Perspective*, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 11.

positions such as "aggressor"/violent and "victim"/violated or social group prone to violence – either as "aggressor" or as "victim", for example, must be understood as also being violent towards the ones they identify and position accordingly when illustrating violence. This is due to the fact that they are (de)limited and the positioning inside them can occur arbitrarily. However, since presenting, re-presenting and representing violence is important for its prevention and combating, it brings about disregarding these indirect consequences, violent themselves. Also, the arbitrarily unequal relations of power between the one who (re)present and the (re)presented are also disregarded, which, in my opinion, stands at the basis of producing and legitimizing any type of violence.

Given all of the above, it is important to address an archaeology (in Foucault's sense of the term) of the (re)presentation frames of violence against women in Romania and to address the invisible genealogies of violence, mediated by these frames. Foucault's archaeological method refers precisely to this *dispositif* of laws, architecture, administrative practices and words[9], positioning itself from a methodological point of view in the postmodern sociology[10]. This author is very well understood as a philosopher-historian whose theories are a source for sociological analyses. Thus, he approaches the production of knowledge and disciplines and discipline, the nature and effects of control practices, the creation of actors and identities. It moves away from the conventional sense of the central, coercive power, institutionally conceptualized towards the power we have over ourselves. The present project presents precisely perspectives on the ways in which candidate and member states internalize and normalize *European* norms, but also how in the institutional and rhetorical discourses surrounding these processes identity and status quo constructions and deconstructions take place.

The Europeanness of combating violence against women

Thus, the (re)presentation of domestic violence in public policies in Romania by means of a *European* frame – the legal and institutional alignment to EU norms and discourses with "European" references – may (in)form (on) perspectives regarding this phenomenon, it may define is as an issue may legitimize changes in its approach, from accepting and staying silent to combating and preventing. These perspectives however are beneficial, having the potential to generate change in the sense of institutionalizing the combating of violence against women because of the political framework of the Union, inside which Romania must function. But the same perspectives, the same (re)presentation frame are limited, as all the other (re)presentation frames. In this case, the limitation refers to the fact that it limits the addressing of the violence against women to its connection with its combating in the script or working scheme of the European Union. But this holds true for every (re)presentation frame. Nonetheless when a certain frame is used repeatedly, it posits in a discourse – of the Europeanisation of the combating of violence against women, for example. And this discourse has a creative potential and contributes to identity constructions and to significances related both to violence against women and to Europeanization, but also to the intersection between the two. For example, (non)European identities which do (not) combat violence against women or because they do (not) combat violence against women.

As gender equality, violence against women, especially domestic violence, is legitimized in politics "in terms of democracy development, social growth progress or the acceleration on the Europeanisation of societies – cases which occur predominantly in countries that have recently joined the EU"[11]. This (re)presentation frame is predominantly used (and abused?) on the Romanian political stage where, in a euro-pragmatic paradigm, the EU becomes the practical and symbolic mediator and legitimizer of breaching the imaginary delimitation between the public and private space – as a used and 'abused'

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[9] P. Veyne, *Foucault: His Thought, His Character*, Cambridge: Polity, 2010, pp. 30-31.

[10] B. Agger, „Critical theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism: their sociological relevance", in *Annu. Rev. Sociol.,* 1991, 17:105-31.

[11] Lombardo *et al*, 2005 *apud* Vlasta Jalušič, "Stretching and bending the meanings of gender in equality politics" in E. Lombardo, P. Meier și M. Verloo, eds., *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, bending and policymaking*, London and New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 58.

location, as explanation and complication of the violence against women in general in the Romanian society[12]- by the Romanian state and its representatives with the aim of addressing this issue through public policies in Romania. Moreover, the European Union is considered an anchor, both practical and symbolic, for debates on sensitive issues for Romanian society and for Romanian political elites and that have been only recently visible on the political and public agenda in Romania. Thus, approaching these processes from the discursive perspective of politics, EU may be considered the symbol of combating domestic violence. The connection between the European project, of the European Union and violence against women and combating it respectively shall be explored in this context. This shall be carried out by analyzing the policies of the Union and of Romanian regarding this matter, by analyzing the connections between the two and by analyzing the discourses surrounding these policies and their implication in (non)European identity construction processes. As R. Amy Elman argues in exploring sexual equality, 'virtual equality' in an integrated Europe:

"[i]n Europe, the rhetorical rejection of inequality may intensify and prevent concrete acts of promoting social justice. Also, committees on women's status and legislation against or investigating sexual and racial inequality may be used as trampolines for a remedy or substitutes for substantial action. Not all EU efforts to *address* inequality are necessarily created to *stop* it. Addressing inequality is not the same as delivering a remedy, although it can be considered a first step. Differentiating between initiatives and rhetoric, on the one hand and effective steps towards equality, on the other hand, is a challenge. Verbosity is not a verb"[13].

Krizsan and Popa state that: 'in the absence of clearly articulated EU norms of combating domestic violence, Europeanization takes place particularly through the evaluation of national processes of developing public policies by reference to an *abstract notion* of "Europeanism"'[14]. The European Union's Europe is a concept that is stretching and bending[15]), it is articulated at a supranational level, as well as at an international level, at a regional level, as well as at a national level, but, moreover, from the perspective of all matters that are problematized at these levels regarding the enlargement and deepening of European integration. It is a myth of unity and unification of differences and a myth of universality of principles and values. Also at a national level, of new member states, between the elites and the European institutions and the day to day life of European and Romanian citizens, for example. This level, approached in the current project, of de/re/construction of the connotations of the European Union's Europe, is the level of national elites and of a national media that have the power to, simultaneously, (in)form Romanian society; but who also represent this society. They put, at an official level and on a broader scale, the EU Europeanism in a Romanian context and either alter the context in order to align it with already existing European norms, or alter the European norms in order to keep the *status quo* in Romanian society. Or, in the third case, they act constantly in a hybrid, EU-Romania, European-Romanian paradigm of approaching certain problems in the political area or even generally in the public one. These processes take place according to certain intentions and, sometimes, even unintentionally or rather indirectly.

Klaus Eder suggests the idea of Europe as an empty signifier as a starting point for the analysis of identity construction processes that take place in Europe stating that there are certain 'ideas' that work as a proxy for Europe and that can be considered to be 'reference objects of a collective identity'[16]. The 'idea' of combating violence against women is, in my opinion, or at least wishes to be, such a reference object, a proxy for the European Union's Europe. However, this, although beneficial at first, suggests the

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[12] The section referring to "The Continuum of Violence against Women" contains a broader discussion on the matter.

[13] R. Amy Elman, *Sexual Equality in an Integrated Europe: Virtual Equality*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 2.

[14] A. Krizsan and R. Popa, "Meanings and Uses of Europe in Making Policies against Domestic Violence in Central and Eastern Europe", in E. Lombardo and M. Forest, eds., *The Europeanization of Gender Equality Policies. A Discursive-Sociological Approach*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, p. 51, my underlining.

[15] I am using this conceptualization by analogy with the way in which it is used by E. Lombardo, P. Meier and M. Verloo, eds., *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, bending and policymaking*, London and New York: Routledge, 2009 regarding gender equality, as an open concept which can take different meanings.

[16] K. Eder, "A Theory of Collective Identity: Making Sense of the Debate on a 'European identity'", in *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2009, 4(12):427, p. 435.

instrumenting of combating violence against women in re/defining Europeanism or a collective European identity within the EU. We speak here about a Europe of combating violence against women, joint to a series of '"Europes" (plural)': 'a cultural Europe, a geographical Europe, a Europe of Human Rights, and a political Europe[17], starting from the idea according to which 'we should see identities as evolutionary products of processes in which stories are combined and recombined' Europe being an ideal case for such a perspective[18]. Moreover, in this Europe, combating violence against women (through laws, institutions and public policies, political statements) is instrumented as a criterion of discrimination and incrimination (of the *soft* kind, specific to the issue at hand!, through recommendations, country reports, eurobarometers, political statements) of states that do not develop mechanisms to tackle this type of violence.

Delanty states that there are more 'Europes', and the one that 'became predominant today is very much one of exclusion and not of inclusion'[19], and that Europe is a contested idea with deep roots in history and should be treated as such, with reflexivity, so that it does not become dangerous[20]. The simultaneousness of exclusivism and inclusivism of the European project is an important aspect of the research on Europeanization and European identity. That's exactly why the presence of non-European identity construction processes in the critique engaging of violence against women denote exactly these simultaneous inclusions and exclusions. Delanty argues that 'macro-identities […] are more likely to be divisive, rather than unifying and are often the products of a violent and forced homogenization', this being a reason for reflection on the necessity of the respective identities[21] or, at least, of an increased reflection on building significations of these identities and their instrumenting in the political and public area.

Lastly, it is important to engage and scrutinize the way in which the problem of direct, interpersonal, brutal violence (beyond the cultural and structural one) against women in public discourse has become a criterion according to which belonging to the European Union's Europe could be disconfirmed or confirmed for different social, cultural and political entities on the European continent. These processes are produced in a context and create context, i.e. stereotypes, unequal power relationships and social, cultural, political and economic symbolisms. In the context of more and more clear political and politicized actions regarding the approach (and solution to?) the issue of violence against women, my research will bring this type of violence up for discussion as an aspect to which building a European identity, of a way of being European is reported. This picture will be complicated when it is realized from Romania's perspective, which, during the 2000s, it was both inside and outside of the EU and on its way to the EU, literally, generally, but from the point of view of approaching violence against women. And this uncertain positioning gave birth to problematic policies and identities, in the processes of approaching violence against women in the (non)European or (non)Europeanized Romanian political and public discourse. Lastly, but not less importantly, three contradictions regarding approaching violence against women in Romania, that emerged constantly and repetitively from its problematisations on the public and political agenda will be addressed. We are dealing with the (re)presentation of women as an arbitrary deposit of the creation of violence against women. Additionally, I refer to the fact that in the critical engagement of the creation of violence, the economic, political, social and cultural, and even gender and age status is significant. In its combating through institutions, policies, laws, these aspects are less emphasized. And it is about the similarities of constructing European post-nationalism of combating violence against women and those of building (non-European?) nationalism of violence against women, i.e. the nationalism of instrumenting women's experiences in the construction/imagination of European not so post-nationalist post-nationalism.

The intention of naming this policy of limitation/depositing of the causes of violence in the responsibility in social groups that area already discriminated on criteria of gender - women, ethnicity - the Roma, economy - poor people or mobsters, social status - the floozie, or culture - Balkan

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[17] Eder, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 442.

[19] G. Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1995, p. 156.

[20] Delanty, *idem,* p. 157.

[21] *Ibidem*, p. vii.

and so on, was not the reification of the 'Balkan floozie'. However, it reunites, in my opinion, a variety of social, cultural, political and economic (gendered) outskirts. This is the reason why for the focusing on this case in defining the respective policy of depositing the creation of violence. I assume, from an ethical point of view, any contribution to cultural violence that can be generated by the reiteration of this particular (re)presentation of violence against women. I'm trying to balance it through the deconstruction that I have offered regarding it, which I think addressed both the causes and the effects of handling, using and abusing such frame of (re)presentation centred on women's responsibility. More than that, from a feminist point of view I think that I have tried not only to scrutinize the in/equalities that must be taken into consideration in order to(in)validate such representations, but also potential resistance mechanisms that can deconstruct and undermine it not only on a discursive level, but also on a material, institutional one. Such deposits of violence creation, its exclusion outside the normal(ized) social, economic, political and cultural order are themselves institutions. These are deposited practices of (re)presentation of violence against women that recreate the patriarchal gendered order, taking responsibility away constantly from the direct agents of violence, namely men - not exclusively, but extensively the abusers in these cases.

The 'Balkan floozie' can be correlated to the 'Third World' in the political statements of Romanian members of parliament who seek to illustrate a Romania in which women are abused, physically and structurally, within the family and outside of it. Moreover, this Third World is the non-European which, according to criteria of (not)combating violence against women, is at the basis of establishing the political, social, cultural and economic order in which the European Union's Europe is the normative power. And Romania swings, both institutionally and rhetorically, between the European Union's Europe and the Third World according to the capacity to develop institutions, legislation and public policies, to internalize international norms, to prevent and tackle violence against women. Beyond this aspect, another dimension of combating violence against women, is the one that intermediates (non)European identity constructions. These institutions and identities are intermediated in and intermediate themselves positions in hierarchies based on the 'staging' of norms transmitted by supranational and international entities, between national and supranational entities and vice versa, between governmental and non-governmental and vice versa, even between the Parliament and the media - political and public. And this staging of combating violence against women, problematized earlier from a national, as well as from an international perspective has, ultimately, effects similar to those of making a bodily spectacle of violence against women, encountered all too often in the media. Thus, through rhetorical - parliamentary or media -, institutional and legislative problematizations of public policies which lack reflexivity and real understanding of all the complexities that the (re)presentation of violence against women includes, problematic discourses and materialities are intermediated. This is also valid for the way in which its combating is institutionalized and politicized. These critical engagements, as well as their consequences, be they institutional, legislative or public policy, governmental, as well as non-governmental, political, as well as of the civil society, constitutes discursive, epistemological, cultural and structural violent acts against women. Contributing (or rather not contributing) to the prevention and combating of violence, these (re)presentations and the discursive violent acts that they intermediate, are materialized and continue the vicious circle of violent acts against women. They can intermediate the perpetuation of the *status quo* that treats this type of violence superficially, that only prioritize twice a year because then it's 'time' for its debate and the formal recognition of its status as a problem. But this formality too is the result of exogenous pressures, and their resolution determines tensions between their exogenous forms and a political, social, cultural and domestic economic context, that frame certain gender regimens. It is the matter of the context that creates the 'problem', the context of inequalities that cause it and fuel it.

Therefore, by addressing historical processes of (in)formation of prevention and combating violence against women on the public and political agenda, in the Romania of the European Union, we can see that, eventually, regarding this perspective on the violence against women, the forms of prevention and combating matter primarily… because they have existed before the background, built, in this case, *a posteriori.* And this is illustrated by the fragmentation, discontinuity, superficiality and sluggishness with which a real, authentic policy of preventing and combating violence against women at a national and

supranational level… which can measure itself by its own context, not another one, in order to legitimize itself. And which, thus, could undermine these two nationalisms and open up the discussion towards post-nationalism of the combating and prevention of violence against women.

However, non-European Romania, (self)excluded from Europe along with the Third World, is antagonized by European Romania, that which has internalized, from the point of view of public policy, legislative or institutional discourse, but also from the point of view of public and political rhetoric, the international norms and those of the Union regarding the prevention and combating of violence against women. However, the arbitrariness with which violent, non-European identities, gendered, ethnic 'deposits' of violence creation are constructed is opposed 'only' by the superficiality with which the European identity is constructed as a symbol of combating violence against women. It is the matter of a policy of prevention and combating that stimulates a presupposed/imagined European character - democratic and egalitarian regarding the gender dimension of social, cultural, political and economic life - of the approach of gender inequalities. Those structural historical inequalities, i.e. structural violence on the basis of gender, which fuel and legitimize direct, interpersonal violence on the basis of gender, against women. In Romania, the European Union and its membership in the European Union's Europe was, particularly before 2007 (re)presented as a myth of modernization, civilization and inclusion in an exclusive club where members have extended benefits. Specifically, a club of equal opportunities and gender equality. Moreover, the European Union's Europe is (re)constructed symbolically, from the centre, as well as from the outskirts, as a symbol of prevention and combating of violence against women, on a rhetorical level, as well as on a practical level; despite the fact that rhetorically, as well as practically, the EU policy in this area is still fragmented and incoherent.

Nevertheless, integration in the European Union's Europe requires approaching these violent acts against women in Romania. As a matter of fact, the integration in the ranks of the international community that at the turn of the millennium became more and more focused on this problem and its material instances or the socio-cultural and economic-political institutional discourses that they fueled as well. In this context, violence against women enters the public agenda in Romania and, moreover, on the political one. These were meant to be the locations for the (in)formation of the public, of the public policies, of the governmental and non-governmental initiatives, of the institutions regarding the problem on gendered violence against women.

The problem *problematized* on these agendas, however, used to be not subtly made invisible until recently by an imaginary historical division between public and private life, whether it was in the house or in the street, in a couple or among strangers. Its publication required legitimizing references. And they were found in Western conceptualizations, international norms and norms of the European Union. In this context violence against women was addressed using various frames of (re)presentation. Two of the most frequent in the analysis of the political and public agenda from the perspective of approaching violence against women starting with the year 2003 were: alignment with the European norms, in particular and international, with the purpose of preventing and combating violence against women; depositing the causes/the creation of violence against women in imaginary geographies excluded from the political order of European Romania, *non-Europeanized.* Thus, combating violence against women in Romania, especially the structural and domestic one, were becoming, in the context of institutional discourse, as well as in the context of discourse understood as rhetoric, fields of the Europeanization of Romania. Europeanization is understood in this case as an intersection of the processes of institutional construction with processes of identity construction, from a methodological perspective that combines a longitudinal historical approach of these processes with a sociological-discursive one, centred on the identities involved in them and their setting in structures.

Conclusions

In this context, at the intersection between the two above mentioned (re)presentation frames, there is more than a development of public policies and institutions with European forms that lack the required Romanian background. The 9th year span between the first law regarding the prevention and combating of *family* violence (defined by the Parliament at the time of its debate – 2003 – as 'the most European

law') and the one that amended it *in* order to have efficient mechanisms to approach the problem, not only a legislative admittance of the problem, is illustrative for this type of politicization of violence against women in Romania. Also, at this intersection we have processes of creating a European identity that condemns violence against women, by measuring it against the non-Europeanism of accepting this type of violence. Thus, the Romanian patriarchate leaves its mark on the Europeanization of Romania from the point of view of preventing and combating violence against women and the status quo is extensively perpetuated or very slowly undermined and modified. Moreover, it recreates the Romanian paternalism, according to which this type of violence can be prevented by supervising secondary, marginal, social, cultural, economic, political and gender categories – in particular women, poor families, unsuitable 'Balkan floozie' behaviors – that put Romania in the third world. Paradoxically, in the singular situation in which misogyny is considered to be the cause of violent acts against women, this (re)presentation too re-colonizes the much too handy third world category with the creation of this type of violence on gendered criteria. These aspects shine another light on Romania's Europeanization regarding violence against women, rather simulated, that (ab)uses European references to legitimize itself, but which is not sustainable (intentionally?) This simulated Europeanization is intermediated by a superficially imported and implemented policy, somewhat similar to the European one, but more extendedly incorrectly and laconically (in)formed. It is a matter of, in the case of Romania, as well as in the case of the European Union, applying strategic and superficial institutional bandages to serious abuses against women.