

UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS AND DESIGN CLUJ
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DOCTORAL THESIS
MARRIAGE – FROM RITUAL TO SPECTACLE

(ABSTRACT)

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INTRODUCTION

Somewhere, between the two biological terminals – Birth and Death (in other words, entering and leaving the world), the Wedding – the cultural correspondent of marriage – is a moment over which man has complete power. It is an event to which one participates consciously, causing the restructuring, reconfiguration of groups of people in the traditional society, by changing the social status of both women and men, and causing a continuous forming process which shapes the spirit.

The marriage ceremony is the most important event in man's journey of evolution, it changes his social status and places him in another system of roles and relations, in the context of daily communication, as well as in the context of „ceremonial communication”¹¹. Between the rapture of the sacred and the plenitude of entertainment, man has access to the ludical component, the expression of the self as a form of mediation of the ceremonial context, creating particular forms of contact that cause the wedding to slip into the spectacular, commercial, social – thus the sequential reshaping occurs differentially.

Solemnity. Ostentation. Glitter. Fascination. Spectacular. „*Rabelaisian myth and feast*”. Dramatic discourse... This is the first argument that requires an interdisciplinary research of the marriage ceremony. Because the „*fascination of the theatrical*” means, in fact, history of the mentalities, of religion, of ethnology and anthropology, of behaviour, of textile art, of the costume. It means sociology, psychology, philosophy, esthetics, marketing, in other words it requires a multidisciplinary approach.

Another argument regards the research works in the field, which does not consider that illustrations are useful for an in depth research, and most of them approach the poetics and style of wedding texts or are limited to one ethno-folkloric area or subarea.

With the caution of a deal of subjective assessments and of personal examination, I undertook a scientific research, which covers ethnographic areas and historical events of a wide geographical area sequentially, with reference to the multicultural context and to the field of visual arts.

^{1 1} Ion Căliman, *Ceremonialul riturilor de trecere*, Editura Excelsior Art, Timișoara, 2010, pag 43

The purpose of the four chapters that make up the thesis is to highlight the dominant features in a great diversity of local aspects, selecting just the elements that emphasize the relation between behavior patterns with a common symbolic universe that guarantees the coherence and the depth of the communication.

The first chapter and most of the second chapter look into the traditional Romanian wedding and in all that the ritual of the wedding ceremony involves, which has evolved to a spectacle, especially through pointing out the existing symbolic elements, which are a midpoint between sacred and profane.

In chapter III I have given great attention to contemporary weddings, in the ethno-folkloric areas and in the urban environment, also analysing the notable influence of royal weddings and the Hollywood mirage. Today's wedding ceremonies do not have the richness of meaning, rather they are proof of ostentatious display of rank and wealth.

In chapter IV of the thesis I describe some aspects of the work in pictures, as well as a few coordinated themes.

In conclusion, my thesis wishes to emphasize that a work on the need of understanding of the value of the wedding ritual and ceremony is not only important, but also necessary.

CHAPTER I. THE WEDDING AS A TRANSGRESSION RITE

1. THE TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN WEDDING

Romanian weddings follows an extremely diverse scenario, because the change of rhythms during the wedding ceremony forms a sinuous path, similar to the walk that the wedding party had to take in the old times.

In the sequence of rites of the wedding ceremony - in the process of „trans–formation” - there are four important stages of the ritual, each with a specific meaning.

1. **the bargaining** - includes ceremonies that focus on the trade, the marriage proposal, the placement of the bride in the groom's care. In this stage the most important moment is the „pledge”, without which the event cannot continue.
2. **untying the bonds with old groups and integrating in a new form**, in a new group that will welcome them. It is a sequence in which separation rites are abundant.
3. **the moment of transformation** - is marked by the covering ritual, when the state of liminality ceases and the bride becomes a woman. In this sequence the language of gestures is dominant, the message is sent by the sign of the garment, thus marking the „carrying over the threshold” and the passage from one status to another happens once the ritual of covering of the body is complete.
4. **the communion** – is the sequence in which the true meaning of marriage is fulfilled, the bride and groom becoming one unity under the various aspects of their life. This moment occurs after midnight, when the groom asks the bride to dance.

The recomposition of social relationships through the celebration of marriage – as described by van Genep in the 60^s, goes from a series of separation rites to integration rites and the whole community makes sure that the rituals take place in the traditional manner and that the new family respects the rules that so many generations have strictly respected. The filtering, the „assessment” even puts the relationships of the members of the community to the test. The structure of the group, the quantity and quality of the gifts, the way in which the village takes part in the event, will reflect the way the community values marriage.

The marriage rituals go through three stages: **the engagement**, preceded by the **courting**, the **wedding**, the **rituals that take place after the wedding**.

The main sequences that initiate the marriage ceremony are: courtship, the wedding, the banns, the „fedeleş” dance.

The courtship is the moment when the young man officially asks for the girl's hand in marriage, after their relationship has been accepted by their parents, as a quiet consent to the marriage.

The engagement, a prelude to marriage, is perhaps the most important sequence of the ceremony in the period before the wedding. It contains rituals of separation, carrying over threshold and of preliminary integration in the new context.

The following sequences are the „banns” and the „fedeleş”. The rite of the banns or the announcements has the role of discovering the obstacles that might cause the marriage to fail.

The „fedeleş” takes place in the groom's and bride's home on Saturday evenings and it symbolizes the separation of the young couple from the group of unmarried girls and boys. For the couple, there is a „farewell” to the stage of boyhood and maidenhood; keeping the same proportions, the event is similar to the bachelor's party nowadays.

A magnificent spectacle, the wedding surpasses by grandeur all the other family ceremonies, as the pomp and ostentation is due to the large wedding party (sometimes the whole village attends) and, not the least, by the extremely spectacular outfits, most of them created especially for this unique event in the future family's life.

Having an important ritual component in the past and with a complex scenario, the wedding ceremony is a „unitary system in which: traditions, customs, moments, stages, gestures, signs, the lyrical side, music, costumes, colour – all serve a specific purpose”.²

Starting a family means to pass from a social circuit to another one which is extremely important in terms of status, imposing a specific scenario with roles which are established beforehand and which are strictly respected, so that nothing is omitted, neglected, minimalised.

² Ibidem, pag. 94

³ Marian, Florea – op. cit. pag. 228

The relations of role of the bride validates, with every sequence, the characteristics of all transgression rituals. The moment when the bride prepares to meet the groom is a sort of theater in theater situation, because the girl makes a version of the wedding in her own house. The time of the „dress – up” moment, when each participant wears the accessories fit to his role is marked by the „song of the bride”, which is performed vocally – a song that speaks about the destiny of the bride and which has a pragmatic as well as symbolic side.

Between the ceremonial sequences of the „shaving” and that of the „dressing – up” of the bride there are numerous similarities. Both the groom and the bride are „dressed – up” for the wedding by other persons. For the groom a specific song is performed for the operation of „shaving” and for the bride the („goghia”) bridal song. Both songs are sad, and mark the ceremonial sequence of separation. The two sequences are symmetrical and similar.

The dressing-up, the shaving, the combing and all the other symbols allow, facilitate the gradual transgression to a new social status.

The parents’ forgiving and blessing is common among all indo-european peoples and it is „one of the most solemn events that occur during the wedding”³. It is an homage, an expression of the deep respect for the parents who raised them and who prepared them for life, but also a moment of great grief caused by the separation from the parents. The forgiving represents, in the model of the transgression ritual, the end of the first sequence, that of separation.

The next step of the transgression – **the wedding**, is the fundamental strategic moment in the ceremonial structure.

According to the Romanian tradition, the religious wedding is based on the love and faith that the husband and wife will share for all of their lives. The placement of the wreaths on the heads and of the wedding rings on the fingers represent a sacred union, based on love for eternity. „The christian wedding ritual is austere, solemn and it makes a marriage sacred. From the point of view of the ceremony, when the religious wedding starts the second moment of the wedding begins: the passage from boyhood and maidenhood to that of people who are officialy and religiously wed, people who have settled down and took their rightful place in the community”⁴.

The assumption of the excesses, which have a precise role in the sacred dimension, later, in Mircea Eliade’s vision, „helps the strenght, life, seeds to circulate from one level to the other”, becoming necessary as a way to express the forces of life⁵.

⁴ Suci, Alexandru, op.cit., pag 92

⁵ Căliman, Ion, citându-l pe Mircea Eliade, op. cit. pag 132

2. THE CONVENTION OF MARRIAGE AND THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

The institution of marriage has inspired numerous works in the field of anthropology, its study being connected to the *"occurrence of the family as a nucleus of any society"*. The family created through the union of two persons of opposite sexes comprises the parents and the unmarried children, the marriage being imposed to the *„ethnic communities in order to adjust the bio-social mechanisms and to subordinate it to them"*⁶.

Regardless of the time and geographic area where it was established, the institution of marriage exists in all traditions, as a convention between a woman and a man, validated by an official, legal, even religious document, which has the mutual respect and affection as the base, with the clear purpose of starting a family that lives together, has children and perpetuate the stem.

The sacrament of marriage is found among *„the seven sacraments of the christian Church through which, when the priest utters the blessings, the holy grace that they need to start a christian family descends over the bride and groom"*⁷. In the Romanian tradition, the religious wedding consists of a multitude of customs, which differ from one area to another – beliefs that have been verified in time through its apotropaic and appeasing role.

A spectacle of unique beauty, a traditional wedding is, of course, orchestrated by the *„directors"* and *„actors"* in a tone that goes back and forth from ostentation to picturesque, between tragical and comical, between archaic and contemporary. They carry, in the context of traditional customs, various names, such as the ones who fulfill a ritual, actors, performers, ritual agents, role bearers, players, artists etc.

An important economical indicator, **the dowery** stands at the basis of a family, being an essential element of the agreement, of the *„contract"* that will be signed by the two families, but is also the term used to assign the part of the father's fortune he will give his daughter once she marries. Because without a dowery no woman can wed! She must receive land from her parents, things that are used around the house, clothing, animals, money and and so on.

The value of the dowery was not established by law or by a particular custom, it depended on the social and financial status of each family. Regardless of the rank and fortune, a girl's marriage was a difficult task for any family and writing a dowery record was a moral obligation of great importance for every father, because he gives the daughter a bit of everything, as the dowery acts states: *„from all that I have, from everything I have given her something"*⁸.

„The essential cell of society" as it was called by modern sociologists – a family has two main absolutely necessary components: a husband and a wife. But without children, the family could not fulfill its fundamental functional role. In other words, the functional cell that is the family is structured on three fundamental units: husband – wife – children.

Aside from the basic family nucleus, the **relations of kinship** are similar to a network of many tracks, and which includes blood relatives as well as the in-laws.

⁶ Suci, Alexandru – op. cit. pag 87

⁷ Suci, Alexandru, citându-l pe Ion N. Stoian, op. cit., pag 91

A family with potential, along with children, nephews, cousins, aunts, uncles, brothers-in-law, parents of the son-in law, to which the in-law relatives are added (the midwife who is related to the husband, godfathers), could reach an important number of persons (sometimes even hundreds). The spirit of caste could be easily observed, especially in the case of very wealthy families, which organised marriages within the same clan or where involved in forbidden relationships with members of their family, for fear that their fortune may be scattered. In the case of middle class families, the relations were much more natural, with no restrictions, there being rare cases of marriage between first or second degree relatives.

The traditional Romanian society, aside from consanguinity and affinity, which are common human forms, has a form of spiritual kinship which is extremely specific, whose ritual has multiple meanings: godparenthood.

This institution of godparenthood is a stable relationship, which spreads over succeeding generations, between two families – that of the godparents and that of the godsons. Godparenthood is inherited, especially by the male line. The godparents occupy a central position because they are present in all the liminal events of one's life.

Chapter II. THE SPECTACLE OF THE WEDDING

1. GROOM, BRIDE BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE

The wedding belongs to the whole family system, which includes close and distant relatives, then friends, the whole society. The role relationships of the bride sanctify the three specific phases of the transgression rituals. Regardless of the type of culture, „*the transgressions*” mediate nature (birth, puberty, death) and culture (awareness, ritualisation).

The wedding highlights a normative behaviour, being organized with the utmost care for the bride's feelings. More precisely, it concerns the collective identity of women, who are given the chance to reflect publicly on their condition as women. The „*domestic – private*” world represents the woman's territory. She is „sold” by her mother and „bought” or „bargained for” by the groom. Marriage, (like death) causes radical changes on a biological, as well as on a social level, the most elaborate cultural model referring to honour and shame, to the perspective of estrangement, separation, death. Symbolically, the bride represents the fusion of all these aspects. Moreover, the passage from maiden to woman implies a physical transformation marked by the loss of the virginity and, at the same time, holds a cultural mark, through the ceremony.

The honour of the group relies on the honour of the bride, because it represents the potential to begin a sacred life, guaranteeing the continuity of the family in time. Approved by cultural standards, the entrance to the world of sexuality means to enter the world of adults because with marriage comes a life full of responsibilities. Because it is a transgression ritual, „*the two*” hold the central position and interact with the other role bearers.

⁸ Ghițulescu, Constanța – În șalvari și cu ișlic: Biserică, sexualitate, căsătorie și divorț, în Țara Românească a secolului al XVIII-lea, Editura Humanitas, București, 2004, pag. 135

„The transformation of the wedding into a great spectacle led to the abandonment of some events which, probably, had an initiatic function in the past. An example is the tests that the groom must pass to prove that he is able to start a family”⁹.

During the wedding ritual, the „dressing – up” of bride is similar to a transgression ritual, which is an extremely emotional moment, marking the passage from one stage of her life to another, in a mix of joy and sadness – a price which is paid for the changes that have occurred in her life.

In all geographical areas, common characteristic elements are range from the white costume (the dress), symbol of freshness, purity – the bride’s wreath, the belt ornated with flowers, the white cloth, which can be found in all the areas of the country, called „hobot” beyond the Carpathian Mountains, „balț” in the Someș and Arieș valleys, „șlaier” in Banat and Bihor, „potilat” in the Apuseni Mountains. The custom of covering the bride’s head with white cloth has been kept until today, its signification „having roots in the biblical beliefs, and even farther, in the customs related to birth, wedding and death of the peoples of Asia Minor, Egypt, or of those living in the mediterranean and carpathian regions”, Maria Bocșe states.

In the traditional wedding ritual, the white cloth represents „the white bridge” of passage towards another land (similar to the „white cloth” used to measure the deceased during funeral rituals). In the case of the wedding, the white cloth stands for the change of identity of the maiden and for receiving a new identity, for a new family life.

Simion Florea explains the origin and use of this tool used in marriage rituals in most of the regions inhabited by Romanians, finding similarities customs of clothing with a white cloth in Greece, Albania and believing that the origin of this piece is the „Roman veil”, which represents innocence and copulation.

As a matter of fact, the wedding costume abounds in floral patterns, the bride’s clothes and wreath being dominated by flowers (as a motif, but also in reality) – which is not unusual, because the meaning of the flowers relates to the comparison between the bride and the flowers.

In the traditional village, the bride wears a belt ornated with flowers around her waist, the wreath is made up of thyme, pelargonium and margeran, with a small mirror and tinsel. Another interpretation focuses on the perishable, ephemeral moment, because as after the blooming is over, the fading begins, the girls must marry at the time when they have bloomed entirely.

There is no ritual or traditional – or even modern – ceremony in which clothing is not important for communication in the context of the entire language.

The holiday, ritual or wedding clothes were „bridges” to the eternal life because of the belief that clothes – and primarily the shirt – is „the home of the man, of the body”, said Maria Bocșe, a reputed ethnographer. The way clothes builds, shapes the body and even the spirit of each individual, becoming a „second skin”, a cultural case, which protects the individual from harmful contacts, in the ritual – magical dimension, is symptomatic.

⁹ Ibidem, pag. 89

The Romanian peasant's clothes perpetuate just two archetypal forms that correspond to the historical provinces of Transylvania and the Old Kingdom, perceived even in the way the costume is made, as a cultural „case”. Built on a cylindrical volume, the clothes follow the lines of the body, drawing the ideal „the spindle woman” – influences of the bizantine culture, in the vicinity of the royal courts. Thus, the head is covered with light cloths of floss silk, leaving the neck bare, a wide waist belt over the shirt that goes all the way to the ankles – decorated with embroidery are symbolic signs, on the lower side, from the waist down the body is wrapped with an apron with a folded corner, with peasant's sandals over the cloths that are wrapped around the feet, making them look statuesque. The walk, posture, even the traditional dances of the Old Kingdom depend on the narrowness of the skirt, of how comfortably the head can be moved. In Transylvania, influenced by western medieval cultures, the beauty ideal imposed by the shape of the costume is that of the fertile, opulent woman. The figure is drawn up from three overlaid spheres: of the head, of the core and one of the belly and hips.

Considered as a component of communication, the costume pieces become the witnesses of civilisation stages, evolution, structure mutation, the significance being extremely visible nowadays, the last century being the scene of the most rapid developments.

Regardless of the ethnographical area, the costume is conceived as a great sculptural form, meant to highlight the fundamental strenght lines of the human body. As it is the case of the peasants' architecture, through a refined sculptural mind, the costume offers the persons who wears it a statuesque look, not by being oversized, but by the proportion of the volumes.

For the greatest moment of their life, the young couple are dressed in their best clothes. Even the most modest family does its best for the big day. The wedding costumes, and all the ornaments that adorn them, give solemnity, dignity, refinement, harmony with the whole ceremonial context. The way in which the costume cohabits with the body and even with the spirit is symptomatic for the wedding ceremony as well. Marking the uniqueness of a day in a person's life, the weding costume sets the limit for the transgression from one status to another. To the austere lines of the costume a drop of glitter was added through the „*head garment*”, an important accesory that marks an important sequence of the ritual, namely the covering of the bride.

The costume of the groom always depends on the local customs and on the season, and it is made up of a richly decorated shirt, which the bride sends him as a gift the night before, the holyday coat specific to every ethnographic area and also the specific head garments. Depending on the local traditions, he wears a vest, a close-fitting jacket or a jacket ornated with embroidery or with insertion of lether, small mirrors, metal, buttons, beads, etc.

As it is the case of the bride, the groom wants to mark the wedding ceremony through a few accesories , which have a great esthetic value.

Through the efferecence with which almost every sequence of the ritual goes off, the dramatic character, the theatricality, leave a mark on the whole ceremony, generating important status changes of the main characters in permanent interaction with the two protagonists – the bride and groom.

2. CHARACTERS THAT HOLD A CEREMONIAL AND RITUAL ROLE

Because it is a spectacle of impressive grandeur, the wedding is orchestrated by directors and actors, main or secondary characters who support the whole scaffolding of the ceremony.

The main actors of the wedding ceremony on its entire duration, in the order of their importance are: the bride and groom, the parents of the groom, the parents of the bride, the godparents, the registrar, the priest, the churchwarden, the best men, the flag carrier, the bridesmaids, the announcers, the cook, the musicians and others.

The bride and groom are active factors in all the sequences of the three moments of the rituals of transgression. They make the supreme decision of passing from one status to another, from the state of depending on their family to that of independence through starting their own family. They go through the whole ritual track of the ceremony together, establishing role relation with the community.

The wedding procession, a collective heterogeneous form, vast and diverse, is an important component of socio-cultural communication. What is specific for the wedding procession is its complex character, because between the individuals a creative solidarity is established, a spiritual connection, an interaction of the central figures – the bride and groom with all the other age, sex and premarital state categories.

3. THE SCENERY OF THE CEREMONY – POMP AND OSTENTATION

Once the wedding feast is prepared the wedding goes follows a straight line. Preparations are made symmetrically, at the bride's house and at the groom's house.

In the groom's house, the most complex sequence of the preparation is the farewell dance – the „fedeleş”- a ceremonial stage that marks the end of boyhood and maidenhood, the separation from the group of girls and boys, from which the two could were inseparable before.

The party is focused around a small feast, to which the main actors participate and who dance until the late hours. The costumes are common, none of the elements of the ceremony costume is used – the only spectacular „element” being the cheer and dancing, which generate a dynamic moment. While they dance the „fedeleş” in the groom's house, the same type of event takes place in the bride's house, where the dowery is also being prepared.

4. THE SYMBOLICS OF THE OBJECTS

The feast is a form in which social relations manifest themselves, a particular form of consuming food, whose symbolic value places the sharing of the meal in a spiritual dimension. An important feature of celebration feasts is their dimension in time. Thus, the act of consuming food is started in a profane time – preceding the celebration – and ends in a sacred time – following the „ritual purification”, achieved by sacrificing animals.

Through the quality of the environment, of the scenery, through the the abundance of food and drink, through atmosphere, behaviour, social status, through the number of participants and how consistent the gifts are.

Although the scenery plays an important part in the wedding – the ceremonial background has a great influence on the success of the event.

The wedding gift, offered around a large table – where persons who represent the numerous families in the community of the Romanian village are gathered, represent „*an expression of social interaction and a means to regain a part of the resources wasted by the enormous spents*”¹⁰. In the traditional Romanian village nobody comes at a wedding empty handed. The gifts are compulsory and the obligation is mutual, in a system of cyclical reciprocity. The help that is offered to the young family should help build their own household and to consolidate the status of married people.

CHAPTER III. EVOLUTION AND METAMORPHOSIS

1. GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATIONS – THE DIVERSITY OF THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Among the studied wedding ceremonies, prevailing on a wide geographical area, the importance of the stages of the wedding is different from one area to another. In some cases the emphasis fell on finding a potential partner, on the period of courtship and seduction, then on the negotiation of the dowry – a stage followed by a wedding ceremony with a low degree of complexity, as it is the case of the Peul Bororo people of Niger.

The costumes of the actors (the wedding party or the bride and groom) are the focus point of the Lappish weddings. Each detail is a proof of the multicultural influences that the costumes have undergone.

In other cases, especially in that of arranged marriages, (even if nowadays, in some cases the bride and groom agree to marry), the costumes worn by the bride and groom (especially by the bride) are richly decorated. An example is the *miao negrii*, in China, where from the point of view of the ritual, the wedding is just a pretext to have a large meal, or in Tibet, where the ceremony is reduced to a farewell rite from the parents' home and of reintegration in the new family. Here the bride becomes the center of attention, and dressing-up the bride takes a long time, thus the costume she wears is a deposit of traditions, superstitions and history of these peoples.

For many traditional and traditionalist cultures, the contact with the modern world meant losing some of their customs, or that the time and importance given to these rituals has been reduced, but others keep them forcefully, resulting in ceremonies with an extremely complex repertoire, which most of the times last several days, enforced by an attention given to the scenery and to the costumes of the participants, especially that of the bride and groom, the latter being the one who usually changes several costumes, each with a different meaning.

In this order, in the following chapter I bring forward geographical variations of the marriage rituals, going from cultures that reach the highest point of complexity of the ritual and costume in the courtship stage, to those that keep the ostentation for the sequence of the wedding ceremony itself.

¹⁰ Kligman, Gail, op. cit., pag 76

2. HISTORICAL VARIATIONS – FROM ANCIENT CEREMONIES TO CONTEMPORARY WEDDINGS

The institution of marriage has suffered numerous modifications along the centuries, undergoing the influence of foreign cultures and religions. One of the aspects that draw the attention of the sociologists and anthropologists was the woman's marital and premarital condition, the information found being focused on her. From the earliest age, when she was considered ready for marriage she is being observed passing through all possible stages, including that of fiancée, bride, mother, widow.

Across time, the institution of marriage has been more or less popular. In recent times, the test marriages are accepted more and more freely by parents who were first doubtful. The percentage of persons who marry is decreasing constantly since the beginning of the 20th century. After the year 2000, marriage started to regain the popularity that once seemed lost. Meanwhile, weddings have become a profitable business, encouraged by the many exhibitions, wedding planners, stylists, jewelers, distributors of flowers, travel agencies, catering companies, all this to satisfy the need to turn a wedding into a grand celebration. Celebrity weddings are present in the media, creating a model that the rest of the population tries to follow.

The weddings of royal families are also in the eye of the media and they start certain styles of dressing and organising weddings that last for years. Having a strong political message (and recently an opportunity to sell promotional material with the picture of the royal couple), they were always a magnificent event and a pretext for an entire image campaign that is meant (for a shorter or longer period of time) to increase the popularity of the royal family.

During almost 80 years of history of the royal family in Romania, the kings, princes, princesses, have organised engagement parties and weddings in their noble manner. Because of certain historical conjuncture, political or even religious reasons, the weddings of the kings of Romania were celebrated abroad – with only one exception, that of princess Ileana. Even if there was a time when Romanians had their share of royal ceremonies, few people had the privilege to witness them .

4. THE IDEALISATION OF HOLLYWOOD MARRIAGES

Behind the impact of cinema on the style of the wedding dress lies mainly in the the modern myths that celebrities or the stories create. The costumes that are an inspiration for most models are almost never wedding dresses. These are especially like the dress and umbrella that Scarlett O'Hara wears during the garden parties in the film, which were, after the 70^s transformed in bride gowns. The dress sold in stores under the name „Sissi” is never the same dress which Romy Schneider wore, and even less so, the dress of the empress. It is an idealised reminder that combines the heroine from the novel, the star and the historical character.

The influence of cinema varies in time. The power that the cinema on the imagination of the bride and groom comes from the array of characters or from the motifs found in fairytales that have been brought to the cinema screen. Film stars and the heroines of literature make up a body of images that circulate in society through publicity and television. Stars, especially Hollywood stars, is, as a matter of fact, becomes a model that holds a precise role, and also a canon because „she lives on love, for love”.

Chapter IV. ASPECTS OF PERSONAL CREATION

1. PERSONAL ARTISTIC PROJECTS

In most of the personal projects that I have carried out for various exhibitions, events, national or international events, my interest was focused on analysing folk traditions and on reinterpreting them in a contemporary context.

The research I did for my doctoral thesis came about very naturally in the context of permanent search related to the identity of the costume and to the traditional world. In most cases, these sources of inspiration were interpreted in an abstract manner, in order to avoid visual clichés. Symbols, signs, forms, lines, ideas that belong to the traditional heritage were collected, filtered through my own perception and then transposed in artistic projects which have strong emotional meaning, because I frequently recall my own experiences.

From the first exhibition to the projects that are still unfolding I have traced a sort of a personal line which has not been isolated, but was rather a permanent dialogue with aspects of the artistic background. This dialogue is essential in order to stay firmly in the present, but also to define an original vision that guides the future projects.

In the field of decorative art, I have explored a series of subjects which are complementary to those I examined through the collections. The decorative art piece has a particular status, and there are multiple ways in which it can be created.

2. TEACHING ACTIVITY

The teaching activity of the past twenty years in the Textile Art section – field of Fashion Design of the University of Cluj – Napoca, is marked by a series of complex projects whose purpose is to cover as many aspects of contemporary fashion with reference to important historical events and to the effervescence of the artistic background.

All projects were conceived so that they follow the curriculae and, at the same time, so that they are compatible with the ideas and trends of current fashion. Each subject – from *Composition for fashion design* to *Concept development* or the *Methodology of design* were also doubled by an interest for extra-curricular national or international projects.

The contemporary wedding to which correlations with traditional areas of inspiration are often made (either the ritual or the spectacle) is an extremely offering subject, explored by means of educational projects. The multiple sides of the contemporary wedding – from the ostentation and nobility of the royal weddings to the grotesque kitsch of the weddings in different social background, is a subject that must be approached through projects and collections.

The out of the ordinary contemporary weddings, which have been discussed in a previous chapter, were the starting point for the subject „*An insight into contemporary weddings*”. In approaching this subject, I have discussed several stages that refer to the different moments of the wedding, comparisons between traditional wedding and wedding made popular by the media, from the marriages of some historical figures to those of celebrities.