Some Aspects of Romanian Feminism

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Abstract

The Feminism has experienced three major waves, with various nuances of each of them: 1) that of equal rights between women and men (especially under the legislative aspect – voting rights, access to education, divorce, custody of children, the right to possess property); 2) the second wave is one of differences within the role of the social changes after The Second World War, flower-power movement – the right to dispose of her body (abortion, contraceptive pill, eroticism, marital rape), equal remuneration for equal work; in the same time is set up more and more organizations promoting and defending the rights gained; 3) the third wave it is situated in the rhetoric of postmodernism – the partnership between genres, customizations (for example, the situation of women of color, the other Caucasian race than that, differences between the platform on which category of women white middle-class and African-American women low-class, countries with legislation regarding domestic violence harassment solved and countries with loosely regulated or no situation, the access to ecclesiastical hierarchies etc.). A history of Romanian feminism integrates evolution stages of the society in general. Status of women count, in some degree, to the princely courts, where wives of boyars and of the princes were founders of religious settlements, together with husbands, as emerges from the Chronicles and votive pictures. For a long time the visible position of women was the exclusive preserve of the elites, so it was natural that desire to change signal to come from here. In the 19th century, as a result of access to reading books from West and studies followed abroad appear and literary salons and for debating of the ideas through which women promotes especially the access to education (Elena Sturza’salon). Left-wing movements from the latter part of the 19th century turn for a radicalization political discourse regarding the role of women in society, the emancipation of the woman from all levels of life (Sofia Nădejde). Also now appear publications which disseminate information on this type of discourse: ”Femeia română”, ”Gazeta femenină”, ”Buletinul Ligii femeilor”, ”Românca”
etc. Now appear associations supporting practically the political discourse: „Asociația pentru Emancipare Civilă și Politică a Femeilor Române”, „Liga femeilor române” etc. In 1929 women receive, in part, the right to vote. These institutionalized instruments promote equal rights on multiple plans: social, economic, political, cultural, and familial – with legislative foundation. The Communism gives an important role to women, on the one hand, putting Elena Ceaușescu in the center of female imaginary, so the feminism it’s a pretext for the personality cult, and on the other hand, the famous Decree 770 from 1966 controls the births, prohibiting abortion and making it unaffordable birth control pills. The contemporary period has made great progress on legislative and organizational area, there are numerous NGOs, but there is still a large discrepancy between legislative support, and patriarchal mentality of a large segment of the Romanian population, mostly middle-aged and old age. I consider the Romanian feminism a corrective one for this type of mentality.

Key-words: Romanian Feminism; Emancipation; Diachronic, Social and Legal Status.

Introduction

The worldwide events known as the “Feminist Movement” led to a general mobilisation of women with a view to overcoming attitudes of conservatism and whetting their appetite for activism. This was the first step in the transition from prudish and gracious innocence to the repression of stances of intense and bitter hostility. In a broad sense, feminism is “the doctrine that propagates the emancipation of women and the extension of women’s rights” (Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language 1990: 199). The term spread and gained traction in the second half of the nineteenth century, but, in fact, the issue of women’s rights had emerged long before, in Ancient Egypt (where women were allowed to participate in the management of certain forms of business), subsequently undergoing changes, depending on each territory. Paradoxically, with the passage of time, one can notice a certain involution of the feminist phenomenon, a tense attempt of permanent suffocation and vehement eradication. The concept of “womanly rights”, not valued at its just worth, tends to disappear, and this unexpected dissolution will be the cause for tremendous and fierce insurrections. Rosemarie Buikema argues that the development of feminist theory has progressed through three paradigms: gender equality, sexual difference and deconstruction.\(^1\)

The equality paradigm aims to eliminate social differences between women and men: this desideratum remains deeply embedded in the program of any militant group. Equal access to

education, culture, social and political life has been vehemently demanded by the partisans of
the movement that revolutionised the world. The paradigm of sexual difference captures the
essence of feminism or, in other words, it is a synthesis of the causes that triggered the
universal revolt of women: the desire to dismantle the myth that man is the one who holds the
key to the mysteries of the world and, by virtue of being a superior entity, he has the right, or
even the obligation, to subjugate woman and to dominate her in all aspects of life. Due to this
aspect, there were set up several feminist groups that promoted notions such as “women’s
voices”, the “experience of women” or femininity”, and concerned the idea that woman is not
inferior to man, particularly since, without a doubt, the possibility of perpetuating the species
is owed to her. The deconstructive paradigm proposes a balance between the aforementioned
two theories, encompassing both aspects of social equality between women and men and
aspects related to the problems of perception caused by sexual differences. Differences are
recorded also among women, without the idea of gender being involved. Women have
demonstrated to each other that life experiences are also influenced by criteria that are
deemed to be cultural: ethnicity, age, religious affiliation or sexual orientation.

The eighteenth century brought a wind of change in France, an impending desire for
altering the status quo. The climactic moment occurred when Olympe de Gouges drafted the
*The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*, a document that stated for
the first time the idea of the equality of rights between individuals of the opposite sex. Driven
by this momentum and by a desire for equity, Parisian women set off several uprisings. The
guilds of the shopwomen and laundresses were feared for their unaltering determination.
Having as a model *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, Olympe de
Gouges formulated *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*, which
stabilised the role of women in society by adapting each item of the former document. She
replaced the phrase “man or husband” with “woman and man”, so as to highlight the desire
for equality of rights, obligations or privileges. Similarly, in all her articles, the term “female
citizen” appeared written next to the word “(male) citizen”. De Gouges also set out to change
attitudes about marriage. Starting from Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, she developed the work
*The Social Contract between Man and Woman*, a work in which she proposed that marriage
should be performed on the basis of an agreement granting both parties equal rights.
Moreover, the activist managed to stand up to Rousseau and his followers on the issue of the
woman’s image as a mother. Despite the claims of the Enlightenment philosopher, Olympe de
Gouges considered that women deserved full access to public life and decisions, as they
played the main role in the wonderful process of the creation and perpetuation of the species.
Her attempts failed, and in 1793, de Gouges was executed. In this light, her words in the Declaration acquire all the more weight: “Woman has the right to step up to the scaffold. Hence, she must also have the right to step up to the rostrum to address the crowd.” With the removal of the main threat, the General Assembly prohibited women from grouping together in associations, and The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen was considered to be outside the law.

In the same way, in 1848, feminist militants in the United States of America drafted the Declaration of Sentiment, relying on the idea that, by birth, men and women are equal, and the status of equality should be maintained throughout life. The first conference on the topic of discrimination against women was held in Seneca Falls, New York State, in 1848. Most of the participants had been involved in various protests aimed at abolishing slavery, so they were very well informed about human rights and privileges. The followers of the feminist movement demanded the right to own property and to have an income, the right to obtain custody of children after divorce, greater access to education and the right to vote. Like Olympe de Gouges, American women activists drew up their own declaration, the Declaration of Sentiment, starting from the Declaration of Independence of 1776 and relying on the idea that, by birth, men and women are equal. If there are no natural differences in terms of birth, the status of equality should be maintained throughout life, the feminist activists claimed, unwilling to accept the notion of man’s position of superiority. This refusal was not the result of some unnatural fatuousness, but of long repressed frustrations caused by humiliating and abusive treatments. In the same context, twelve resolutions were drawn up calling for women’s right of access to public, social and economic life. The grievances of the feminists were not taken seriously, and women had to face the irony and sarcasm of a society dominated by an unfairly authoritarian masculinity.

**Premodern Romania**

Among the “legacies” of the Middle Ages is the conception according to which women were, without exceptions, subordinated to men. The Middle Ages were, and still are, perceived as a period of prevailing masculinity. Subordination and inequality were, therefore, the keywords that described the legal profile of women. However, during the Middle Ages, the female representatives of high society and the wives of rulers often abandoned their tedious cloistered life to support their husbands when these were confronted with delicate political situations. Some were involved in battles for the throne, either by helping their spouses to (re-)gain it, or by supporting their sons in battles of succession, or even in their leadership of their country. The term of “founder” describes all the persons who made a
concrete contribution to the construction of a place of worship or to ensuring the conditions for its defence and survival. The founders could be individuals, both women and men, legal entities, communities, associations or entire settlements. The women of the ruling families in Walachia turned their attention on the construction of religious edifices, the donation of villages, vineyards, ponds, apiaries, various religious objects, icons, coverings for the lectern, silver trays, chalices, and crosses made of precious metals to some places of worship in the country or on Mount Athos. Under these circumstances, monasteries played the role of real treasuries in which precious donations were kept. Objects donated to churches suggest that the donors’ economic and social status was more important than their gender, because women could provide gifts similar to those of men, being just as pious and concerned about the fate of the soul after death as men were. Beyond the portraits depicting families of founders, and featuring ladies alongside their fathers, husbands, brothers, or sons, there were initiatives in which the woman kept her place of first foundress. The first testimony concerning an act of foundation carried by a lady of Moldova can be found in a document of confirmation issued by Petru I and refers to the building of a Catholic church in Siret, for the Order of the Dominicans, commissioned by Lady Margareta Mușata, wife of the ruler Alexandru cel Bun. Another wife of the same ruler – Lady Ana – offered a number of villages to Moldovița Monastery in the fifteenth century. In 1470, Lady Chișina, daughter of Alexandru cel Bun and Lady Marina, gave Neamț Monastery an apiary, in memory of her father, during the reign of her grandson, Ștefan. Maria of Mangop Paleologina, a descendant of the Byzantine imperial dynasty of the Crimean Mangup and wife of Prince Ștefan cel Mare, became one of the church founders through the donations she made to Gregoriou Monastery of the Holy Mount Athos.

In the sixteenth century, Bogdan III’s daughter, Maria, left a donation to Dobrovăț Monastery, for her remembrance; with that money the monks bought a village in 1548. On 1 September 1558, Voivode Alexandru Lăpușneanu and Lady Ruxandra offered Slatina Monastery a cross made of carved cypress wood, with three arms, clad in gilded silver. Lady Ruxandra Lăpușneanu built an infirmary (a hospital), around the year 1560, at Dionisiu Monastery. The endowments made by these noble women or the help the monks requested offered them, in fact, the possibility of the forgiveness of sins and salvation, serving also as an occasion for social activism, in keeping with the local customs and mores of those times. Lady Elena-Ecaterina, widow of Voivode Petru Rareș, deserves special mention: she carried out the repairs started by her husband at Dionisiu Monastery from the Holy Mount. In 1550, Lady Elena ordered such a manuscript, without specifying in the dedication note which
church it was intended for. The library of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem preserves a copy of the Gospels locked at the request of “Elena Despotovna of the late ruler Io Petru Voivode and mother of Voivode Iliaş” and bestowed upon Probota Monastery, proving an interest also in the written word. In the autumn of 1551, Lady Elena endowed the princely church in Botoşani, and then a monastery – the so-called Monastery “of the Lady” – in Hârlău. Votive portraits painted on the walls of the churches show that not only the voivodes and the boyars were donors and benefactors, for those foundresses are also represented on the walls of places of worship.

Regency cases were much rarer compared to Western Europe, but they existed, so women could find themselves, for a while, at the helm of a state. This proves that legislation, theoretically, permitted this, although customs limited as much as possible the exercise of this right. Such were the cases of Ruxandra Lăpuşneanu, Chiajna and Elisabeta Movilă, in Moldova, and of Catherine of Brandenburg, in Transylvania. The latter case was unique by the fact that she ruled over the Principality as “prince”. Otherwise, in politics, women played a tragic-passive role: they were taken or sent as hostage, they were offered as political guarantee for the actions of their husbands or fathers, and many of the daughters were “used” for political or military purposes by their fathers, being handed over in arranged marriages, just like in all the monarchies of Europe.

Women in the Romanian Countries (especially in Moldova and Wallachia) were stranded somehow between West and East: in the Western and in the Romanian Middle Ages women had the same status of inferiority, consecrated and perfected by the Church (Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed). The men’s supremacy was constant, though it should be noted that medieval Romanian literature did not find it necessary to argue or even to get involved in a dispute of the sexes like in the western world. At a discursive level, Western medieval literature was much more aggressive in the negative definition of women.

**Romanian Feminism in the nineteenth century – modernisation**

Women ardently wanted equal access to education, because they had waited too long for the “age of the cultivated woman” to come and the end of the nineteenth century was promising in that regard. They did not claim to have had remarkable results until the late 1800s, but this was fully justifiable due to how distant they had been from the field of education. They knew instead that they had potential and that, by having access to culture, they would be able to write works as valuable as those of congener writers. They considered that the endless and monotonous series of domestic activities had failed to provide them with anything but a consistent entrapment in mediocrity, and the fact that they had always been
confined to house chores had simply barred their access to culture and education even more. Women had not been given the opportunity to develop, to learn, to accumulate. They had always been stigmatised, and judging by the way in which children and the household were presented to them, these were the only standards by which they had any hope to be appreciated. In other words, woman was a modern slave and wanted to get rid of this status in favour of acquiring a new one, that of companion to the one who had not long ago been her master. The nineteenth century proved to be the way of entry into a new world, with unsuspected borders for the activists on the territory of Romania. With the modernisation of the whole world, in the name of the need for evolution, more and more women stood out through their intense activity in the public and political sphere. International events did not remain without echo in Romania. The visibility of Romanian women in the public space was demanded and promoted by the elites. Many of the wealthy Romanian families decided to send their daughters to study, for building a spiritually harmonious profile, but this was the prerogative of the higher social classes: “Differentiation in education mattered much, on the one hand, for the orientation of women towards the areas with a lower social position of the employed population, and, on the other hand, for a substantial reduction of their social mobility, especially vertical mobility. Vertical mobility was, of course, not prohibited, but its conditions were so formulated that for women it was much more difficult to attain. The education system played an important role in this process” (Pasti 2003: 108). Starting with the second half of the nineteenth century, extensive movements of emancipation of the fairer sex were recorded on the territory of our country. With the participation of women in various important historical events (the Revolution of 1848, the Unification of the Romanian Principalities in 1859, the Independence War of 1878, the establishment of the Unitary State in 1918), there appeared a number of women’s organisations that “campaigned with ambition and perseverance for the modernisation of Romania, but also for synchronisation with Western civilisation” (Dragomir, Miroiu 2002: 199). The organisations were composed of women belonging to all social classes, so the proposed reforms targeted all categories of people and addressed all manner of shortcomings. Following the line drawn by the great powers of the world and complying with it or, on the contrary, revolting against the historical context imposed by them, women activists in Romania managed to become a strong voice and to make a considerable difference. With enthusiasm, persistence and an abiding faith that, together, they could bring about major changes in the collective mentality, by rebuilding from the ground up the way in which they were perceived, women activists in Romania became a model of vehemence and integrity for all conservative women who were wary about their
chances of real evolution. Various professions until then inaccessible to women became new territories that needed to be explored, and equality of rights gradually gained shaped, as a natural consequence. There appeared publications dedicated exclusively to women, and the entertainment media turned into a consistent series of advice (from hygiene and cosmetics, to serious medical problems). Employment in an institutionalised field of work was another innovation supported fiercely by feminists, since, in the name of equality, there could be no situation in which a woman should feel inferior to man. Enrolled in unions that represented their interests, “working women” became an emblem of the new, a jumpstart towards the destruction of preconceived ideas and a springboard to a world with fewer and fewer prejudices. Simultaneously with the innovative spirit of the era, the phenomenon of massive migration from rural to urban areas provided an increased opportunity for assuming and displaying feminist principles. However, “leaving the countryside for the urban area to find work was a light form of women’s emancipation, for all they did was change the family environment with a business one. The real change was to happen only they were actually paid for the work done” (Dărăbuș 2004: 177).

As a consequence of the transition to capitalism, we should note the importance of raising awareness about the need for a recognition of equal rights, regardless of ethnicity, sex or religious beliefs. People showed similar capacities to conduct work and establish inter-human relations, so capitalists considered it inappropriate to maintain some barriers on ethical or ethnic grounds. Reforms needed to be implemented on a compact ground, generated by a united society, not by one that was divided or stigmatised by various cultural, political or social prejudices. Hierarchy existed, but was referring to a division into social classes based on wealth or training, and no longer took into account skin colour, sexual orientation or religious denomination. The envisaged changes were useful, but they occurred gradually, over time and with much perseverance in their application. “Feminism, as an organised and vindicative social movement, is a natural product of the modern age” (Mihăilescu 2002: 11). With the exit of society from feudal confinement, mentalities and visions of the future changed and became increasingly bold and courageous by comparison with the pre-existing pattern. Bourgeois revolutions, called by historians also “revolutions of modernity”, represented a first, important factor generating novelty and fuelling general mobilisation towards capitalism. The goals of the revolutionaries were to overcome the constraints and abuses of the medieval world, to create new types of relations between social categories, to guarantee the right to freedom and equality between people and to propel society towards
development on the basis of modern political principles, the respect for the natural rights of the citizens and the sovereignty of the people.

Modernisation promised a new, freer world, without unfair constraints. The changes that were taking place concerned all areas of activity and, in particular, they announced new economic ideas. In order for a society to prosper, it needed to have a solid economy based on the efficient division of labour. In this context, two phenomena occurred simultaneously, both having the effect of emancipating the role of women in a society that promised to exploit their potential at its true value. On the one hand, the mechanised industry gained great momentum, thus managing to lead to a consistent decline in the domestic economy. Many women no longer found their place in society, as they could only do what had been expected of them until then: keep households and raise children. The wind of modernisation promised a major change in this area, too, allowing women to engage in any kind of activity and no longer constraining them to certain types of work. On the other hand, with the industrialisation and mechanisation of the entire society, a number of factories and plants were opened, which required attracting an impressive number of human resources. Thus, women were given a real chance at social affirmation, a chance they had never had before. Divided by sectors, according to physical capabilities, women and men carried out their work under the same roof, no longer allowing any form of discrimination. If they carried out their work together, contributing equally to the development and consolidation of a new society, women were no longer confined to the boundaries of their own households and their economic, political and legal rights began to be recognised. They formed alliances for the purpose of claiming their just privileges and were able to receive what until then had been truly utopian: equal rights with men. Changes among women, their inclusion in the labour market, the demand for rights, the granting of privileges, the formation of alliances and support groups among the women bears the name of the “Women’s Emancipation Movement” and is synonymous with the term “feminism”.

The modernisation of society and the new movement’s alignment with the national aspirations led to women becoming perceived as important components of humanity and as essential participants both in family life and in the society of which they were part. Women began to be seen, understood and considered as equal to men. Ever greater demands were made for the emancipation of women, for their release from the anonymity to which they had been confined by doing strictly domestic work and for allowing them access to the higher ranks of society and to positions that could provide them with the comfort and happiness that had previously been reserved exclusively for men. The vast political and social actions of the
time took into account the emancipation of the fair sex and oriented their discourse and principles accordingly: “There is no change, no revolution that envisages you directly, woman, your happiness and your life. You can see that those who wish the Romanian nation to be one body, as it already is one soul, know very well that the Union will not be full and complete if the family is enslaved and truncated, as ours is today. You can see that those who demand freedom and equality for all, demand your liberation and happiness [...] you see that those who call for laws to be made and guarded by all, without distinction, defending the right of each and every one and oppressing none, call thus for your freedom and your rights” (Rosetti 1853: 5). This undifferentiated treatment of women determined them to take courage and get involved in public life, both in the socio-political and in the literary milieus. Thus, there appeared a series of texts, studies, research projects and documentations drawn up by women, materials that, in many cases, deserved to come out of dusty drawers and see the light of print. In order to meet the new requirements imposed by the era, Ion Heliade-Rădulescu founded a literary and scientific magazine in 1837, which he suggestively entitled Curierul de ambe sexe (Courier of Both Sexes). The need for this publication was justified in an extremely pertinent manner: “Half of humanity today belongs to the fair and special sex and they can also claim in society the human rights referring to their kind” (“Corespondența între doi români, unul din Tara Românească și altul din Moldova”, in the magazine Muzeul Național, no. 37, of 18 November 1836). In the same publication it was noted that “women fulfil half of the duties of mankind” (Ibidem) and that they ensured peace and tranquillity in the family, maintaining thus the comforting environment that men needed. Establishing thus the importance of the role that women played in society, Heliade-Rădulescu considered it necessary that they should have access to moral and religious education, all the more so as, in their capacity as mothers, they could give their babies a solid education and an enduring civic culture, “together with their milk and their love” (Ibidem). Also, reference was made to the prehistoric couple, when woman walked side by side with man and, together, they discovered the world; even if man was in charge of outdoor activities and woman of those inside the shelter, they were equal before God and the trials of life. The author admitted that conflicts most often occurred within the family, and that man’s tendency was to accuse his consort. However, he advised the representatives of the so-called “strong sex” not to rush, but to see that the real culprits were those who had raised their wives, that is, their fathers, those who had deprived them of education and of the right to express themselves. The exhortation, in keeping with the modern vision, was to change something, starting with the generation of young women at that time, as they had the chance to become refined adults and respectable
members of the community. The parent who discriminated against his female offspring by investing only in the education of boys, and not in that of girls, was compared to Satan, with an “enemy of the future generation’s happiness” (*Ibidem*). The discrepancy between the two sexes and the intentionally perpetuated social barriers had simply maintained an oppressive state of conflict and opposed the establishment of real and much needed civilisation. “By publishing *Curierul de ambe sexe* all I do is desire, ceaselessly, that you have access to education and perfection; and the deed lies with you” (Ion Heliade-Rădulescu, *Curier de ambe sexe*, no. 2 of 1837, pp. 43-48).

Gradually, comparing the situation to the West, society began to realise the importance of women’s influence on a people’s civilisation. As mothers, women were the first to build the foundation of their children, of the future men. Starting from this aspect, the role of women was reconsidered. Seeking to prevail over the slave system and the one dominated by chivalry, women had to fight to overcome the obstacle of legislative inequality regarding the granting of rights. The public opinion was still undecided, and women were trapped in an unfortunate middle ground between their spirit that felt increasingly free and eager to express itself and the conservative mores of society. The main desire of the feminist militants was not to reverse roles and hold supremacy, as men once did. Feminism envisioned the “happiness of all people” (Buțureanu 1913: 370), i.e., it imposed an atmosphere of calm and peace, and aspired towards a society in which all would have equal rights and in which the poor would be helped. In other words, the main objective of feminism concerned the fairness and civilisation of the social environment. At first, not all women joined the feminist movement. Many women, sceptical about change, preferred to stay away and pity their more vehement compatriots, fearing repercussions. In time, women’s voices became ever stronger and people started to understand that a person whose rights were limited to the domestic sphere could not become good citizens and good mentors and educators for their own children. “The fully free woman, deeply cognizant of human life, shall lift mankind” (*Ibidem*). Ideas that made a career in the era, such as freedom, equality or democracy, seduced the female audiences (see Elena Sturdza’s famous salon). Women were much more open to assuming a type of innovative political discourse, mainly due to their egalitarian aspirations in the public space.

An economic approach to the problem allows us to capture some aspects related to the protection of wives from being abused by their husbands. In this respect, Cuza’s Civil Code brought to a higher level the previous legislative provisions. Thus, one of the strengths of feminist discourse in the second half of the nineteenth century was aimed at facilitating the
girls’ access to education and reconsidering those educational patterns that prepared women exclusively for the roles of wife and mother.

The female descendants of aristocratic families continued to refine their intellectual profile in famous European capitals, while the heirs of the rising bourgeoisie chose the Romanian higher education system (in 1908, approximately 21.64% of the students were women). The benefits of the new economic configuration were reflected in the self-perception of Romanian women. Almost financially independent, consuming Western literature and fashion, they gradually learned to articulate their claims before the society to whose functioning they contributed. The explicit wording of the claims was assumed by the various associations of women that were set up in that period. Interested in performing acts of charity as an expression of cultivating the tradition of the feminist movement, these organisations hoisted, in time, the flag of the feminist cause. The periodical publications associated with them facilitated the exchange of ideas, as well as the popularisation of the feminist discourse.

**Romanian modernism and feminism. The turn of the twentieth century; the interwar period**

The beginning of the twentieth century revealed a strong, hardened and brave woman, a woman ready to face the hardships of life. The First World War outlined new hypostases for Romanian women, who, until shortly before, had been strictly confined between the walls of their own households. The petition submitted by these women to the Senate of Romania, a petition drawn up on 16 June 1917, illustrates the portrait of a woman who was already detached from the strict desire of affirmation and emancipation: “The Romanian woman has proved that she is capable of doing anything she sets her mind to: in the conduct of affairs, she has replaced the men who left to do their duty for the country” (Mihăilescu 2002: 186).

Women had therefore become equal to men in terms of duties, but not of rights, proving themselves to be extremely committed to acts of humanitarian aid. No one could contest their social position any more, since all the measures taken by the representatives of the fair sex were necessary for rebuilding a world ravaged by the atrocities of war. In most cases, women made their contribution by taking care of the patients on the front, involving themselves in the administration of hospital units. Also, they cared for the poor, the refugees or orphaned children. Through work, dedication and perseverance, women devoted themselves to these noble causes and decisively contributed to the rehabilitation of society. Taking into consideration the phenomenon according to which “from teachers to university professors, doctors, secondary teachers, instructors, Senate clerks, commercial employees and down to the most modest women in the country, they all demonstrated their dedication and skill!”
(Mihăilescu 2002: 186), the Romanian women felt entitled to demand the cancellation of their condition of social inferiority, which had been maintained by the laws in force at the time (1917), and the adoption of a democratic vision, the only one that could dismantle any idea of material or moral bondage.

The (until then utopian) idea of “women’s rights” became more and more widespread, while the notion of woman as a “servant to human savagery” (*Ibidem*: 186) became more and more ridiculous. Women clamoured for the rejection of the Enlightenment views according to which all they could do was take care of the household and the children. Despite the fact that they were deemed to be too sensitive and fragile for political life, a series of women were increasingly drawn to the legislative and decision-making sphere at the state level. The measures they suggested, the interest they showed and the devotion with which they supported their cause recommended them fully for being granted equal rights and for creating a better world. “A better world does not mean, as the Germans believed, a world in which everyone has more bread, but one in which there is justice for all” (Vlahuţă 1918: 1).

Throughout the interwar period, several women’s associations were founded. They had a common goal, to demonstrate and certify the competences of women to get involved in the political, social and cultural life of our country. Against this background, the name of Alexandrina Cantacuzino (1876 – 1944) remains a benchmark of the emancipation movement. Her personality was both admired and contested by the important figures of the time. Born in 1876 as the daughter of General Theodor Pallady, Alexandrina married Grigore Gh. Cantacuzino, a conservative politician. The Cantacuzino family claimed they were descended from the Byzantine imperial family, so its members used the respective titles. For instance, the name of Alexandrina Cantacuzino appeared in various publications in the form of “Princess Alexandrina”. A special project bearing the signature of this militant feminist was the organisation of the National Council of Romanian Women in 1921. Due to the fact that women’s associations and groups existed throughout the country, Alexandrina Cantacuzino considered it appropriate to establish a legal entity that would gather under the same umbrella all the societies that had this common purpose: supporting the feminist cause and joining all forces in order to serve the state and the family. The headquarters of the NCRW was in Bucharest and, within its framework, activity was carried out in several sections: social assistance, hygiene, legislation, labour, suffrage, peace, and moral unity” (Popescu, https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/portret/articol/alexandrina-cantacuzino-si-miscarea-feminista-romana). The executive committee was to meet six times a year and only in emergency situations, and any member’s absence for three months without justification was to
be sanctioned with the exclusion of that person from the decision-making body. The funds came from individual contributions worth 200 lei annually, but also from “celebrations and donations”. The NCRW provided a sense of belonging to a group of and about women. Militant feminists complied with a number of internal rules, respected a series of clearly specified standards, met on a regular basis and managed, together, to evolve into a larger and better knitted group. Their numbers grew thanks to their being joined by the Association of Minority Women, the Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women, the League for Female Suffrage and the Solidarity Association. Divorces increased, compared to the pre-war period. In 1936, 176,790 divorces were registered; of these 141,067 were registered in rural areas and 35,723 in urban ones. About 70% of divorces occurred during the first five years of marriage, when the spouses came to the conclusion that they could not form a solid family.

In 1929, Alexandrina Cantacuzino took an important step in her political career, but her initiative was very much commented on by her collaborators. The vision of the brave princess was not shared by the other women’s rights activists, but this did not prevent the establishment of the National Group of Romanian Women. This organisation was envisaged as an independent women’s party, which would prevent any attempt, on the part of men, to use women so as to increase membership of already existing political parties, bringing no benefit to the causes supported by feminists. The main goal of the National Group of Romanian Women concerned the education of ladies for becoming active participants in political life and included a series of extremely bold proposals for that period. First of all, it required a reassessment of the idea of social aid and a thorough check of those who were in a precarious financial situation but could work. Assistance based on mercy alone had to cease and only those who proved to be physically incapacitated were to receive regular aid. The women did not want to evade any kind of collective action. Moreover, they even proposed a similar activity to the military service of men, which should start at different ages for women, depending on their intellectual training (17 years for working women and 24 for those with an education). During this period of “sacrifice”, women confronted the hardships of life head-on to discover their maternal purpose and capabilities. The NGRW also wanted to initiate reforms in the education system. In a first phase, at stake was the construction or rehabilitation of buildings in which young people could have access to education, and then changes were to be brought to the curriculum: “We ask that the secondary education curriculum should cease turning our children into knowledge-recording machines, developing instead their spirits of synthesis which can enable them to identify the essential aspects of

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things.” Students were not forgotten either. The political group aimed to pay special attention to them particularly since they were at a vulnerable age and could easily fall prey to alcohol addiction.

To demonstrate that they were capable of engaging in all areas of social life, militant feminists proposed solutions regarding modern urbanism, aspiring to a harmonious development of cities in parallel with the new architectural techniques, but also through the development of a set of rules designed to maintain the cleanliness of urban settlements. A leading pioneer of Romanian feminism in the interwar period, Alexandrina Cantacuzino became involved both in the political and in the socio-cultural spheres. She believed that by adopting the feminist doctrine, humanity at large could progress and she trusted that women had the power to rally their forces and change the world. Her initiatives gave courage to other women, and her legislative approaches were milestones in the development of modern Romania. Left alone in 1930 following the death of her husband, the princess kept her widow status for the rest of her life, demonstrating (once again, as if that was necessary) that women were strong and could carve their own path in life.

As the feminist phenomenon grew, social equity campaigners felt the need to spread their ideas and concepts. In this context, a decisive role was played by the written press. *Gazeta femeii* (The Woman’s Gazette) and *Gazeta femeilor* (The Women’s Gazette) were the first publications to assume the role of propagating at national level the desiderata of women from the interwar society. At the same time, there were other newspapers such as *Femeea de mâine* (The Woman of Tomorrow), *Jurnalul femeii* (The Woman’s Journal), *Tribuna femeii* (The Woman’s Tribune), but they ended up being distributed only to readers from the urban milieus. Because feminism advocated equal rights regardless of the individuals’ backgrounds and vehemently supported the notion of access for all to information and education, publications such as *Femeia satelor* (The Village Woman) or *Albina* (The Bee) were set up. They were meant to disseminate feminist innovations in rural areas, too. Even if campaigning for the same purpose, the desire to decisively win over the target audience segment led to certain animosities between the editorial staff members, particularly at two publications with almost identical names: *Gazeta femeii* and *Gazeta femeilor*. Bearing the subtitle “Independent weekly organ of information and defence of women’s interests”, *Gazeta femeii* was published for the first time in Bucharest, in 1931, under the leadership of Catherine B. Muller and aimed to be a worthy defender of the cause of women all over the country. The four-page newspaper appeared twice a month and paid great attention to social and labour law issues, insisting on

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the protection of working women. The issue of 15 January 1936 opens with an article by
doctor Jean Ilie Ghiulea, in which he talks about the need to grant voting rights to women,
since “illiterate peasants enjoy this citizen privilege, while educated women do not” (Ghiulea
1936: 1). Next, the doctor recommends that women should choose their professions according
to the degree of empathy that their tasks entail. He suggests especially the professions aimed
at helping people: internal medicine, obstetrics or pediatrics. Women who help women: this
was the motto whereby society was to operate in order to progress and evolve. This is what
doctor D. Galian also emphasised. He published an article on 7 July 1936, calling for the
concentration of collective efforts to stop the “decline of women’s morality and to bring about
a restoration of moral values” (Galian 1936: 4). Many women had developed alcohol
addiction and, due to financial lack and the impossibility of access to education, they had
come to practice reprehensible activities. However, if the right attitude was adopted with
regard to this social category, women could be helped to find another way to make a
satisfying living and to cause the “dismantling of houses of ill repute”.4 In order to achieve
such results, legislative measures had to be taken to allow women access to education and
professional training.

Another approach undertaken by Gazeta femeii was to bring to the public attention the
cases of women who had managed to form a career in the field of justice or to occupy other
public positions in the administrative hierarchy. By presenting their stories, the intention was
to stir the élan of Romanian female readers and to encourage them to assert themselves. In the
issue no. 87-88 of 10 July 1939, Maria Baiulescu wrote a short article about the appointment
of Mrs. Maria N. Pop “to the New Senate as a result of the achievement of women’s rights by
virtue of the new Constitution of His Majesty King Carol II, in order to equalise the situation
of women with that of men” (Baiulescu, 1923). The female senator had risen from the ranks
of the activists, in 1917, being one of the founders of the Association for the Civil and
Political Empowerment of Romanian Women and a constant participant in all the congresses
organised both in Transylvania and in Craiova. Therefore, any woman could assert herself in
spheres of activity that had until then been inaccessible. The only conditions that had to be
met concerned the perseverance and involvement in all activities organised by the feminists so
as to always be aware of any possible changes. Despite the constant efforts to inform the
Romanian public (especially the female one) and to offer them models of conduct and topics
for reflection that needed to be transformed into legislative measures very quickly, Gazeta
femeii did receive criticism. A reproach that was frequently brought against it and that

4 “Apel către femei”, in Nihil sine Deo, no. 97, 3 June 1923.
launched a wave of ironies was that on one and the same page of the newspaper there was published both advice related to caring of the body and useful instructions for the kitchen. Of course, the feminist press was at the beginning and was tentative about making a big mark in the world. Inadequate funds and the contributors’ insufficiently honed skills were the reasons behind those small editorial shortcomings.

Among the most important personalities of the feminist movement for the granting of full political rights to women there were: Calypso Botez, Alexandrina Cantacuzino, Eleonora Stratilesescu. Elena Maissner, and Maria Buţureanu. The demands of the Romanian women at that time were synthesised by Eleonora Stratilescu and covered several spheres: economic – equal pay for equal work; the protection of women’s work and their results; measures to combat infant mortality among the poor; cultural – access to all forms of training and to all types of careers, in all the hierarchical career stages; settling the conflict career-maternity; mixed education; raising individuals in the spirit of the same values and conditions, irrespective of gender; marriage and the family – equality between spouses by law and education; control of one’s own fortune, regardless of sex; a part of the man’s income should go to the woman for her work in the household; the elimination of the double moral standard; the reform of the marriage laws through the abolition of marital authority; the elimination of prostitution; paternity investigation; social and political – equal civil and political rights; the participation of women in all public institutions, dignities and functions, alongside and similar to men; and the political training of women for the exercise of their rights.

The Romanian feminist movement had some support from the liberal political elites, including from: C. A. Rosetti, Cezar Bolliac, Ion Ghica, and Ştefan Zeletin. However, these politicians argued rather that women could bring their contribution to the moral education of the people, as their role was to sacrifice themselves for the nation and the family. Although their moral superiority in private life was recognised, women remained politically inferior, being excluded from public life. In 1923, the most democratic Constitution of Romania from the precommunist period entered into force, but it did not give the right to vote to women, even though it mentioned that this right would be granted at the appropriate time, by a special law. In 1929 women gained the right to vote in local elections. Only in 1929 did women have the right to vote in Romania, but this was conditioned by their involvement in philanthropic or social activities. The constitution of 1939 and the Election Law recognised the voting right of women who had reached the age of 30 years, but given the circumstances of the dictatorship, this right was practically not exercised.
Feminism in the interwar period desired not only cultural emancipation and ascension to public leadership positions, but also a removal of housewives and of rural women from anonymity, as these represented an extremely important component of the developing modern society. There were special gazettes that were strictly aimed at guiding the female villagers and the housewives by addressing topics of specific interest. Femeia satelor (The Village Woman), published in Deva between 1935 and 1939, was intended as a “life guide”, but also as a promoter of traditional Romanian values in the education of the new generations. The first issue opened with the speech delivered by Grigore Comșa, Bishop of Arad, who addressed women in a Christian manner, the only way they could understand entirely and with which they resonated very strongly: “We call on the pious women of our villages, first, the wives of the priests, the female teachers, the wives of notaries and other leaders to embrace their duty and guide the other women’s lives” (Comșa 1935: 3). Therefore, worthy role models were needed to lift the entire peasant society from ignorance. On the one hand, rural women had to be familiarised with the rules of a healthy life, with rules of hygiene, with basic health notions that would make it easier for them to raise their children, and on the other hand, they had to be made aware of the ancient traditions: the wearing of the national costume, the continuation of ancestral activities, such as spinning, weaving, braiding – and ensuring their perpetuation by the future generations. Under no circumstances were women to be separated from their area of origin, for the idea according to which only by valorising the past could one hope to shape a prosperous future had become generalised.

As soon as the basic norms were fixed, the topics addressed by the magazines destined for village women were diversified and enriched spiritually. In 1936, there was introduced a rubric for intimate confessions, where women could speak about their problems in order to receive various suggestions and recommendations. Under the title “Soul stop”, the advice column wanted to show that there was a huge solidarity among women from all over the country. Also here were mentioned the extraordinary activities of some women who deserved to become models for their guild colleagues. Since women from the countryside needed to broaden their horizons and see that the world was not limited to the boundaries of their native villages, the newspaper Femeia satelor (The Village Woman) introduced a periodical column initiated by Maria Pârvulescu, which bore the title of “What I have seen”. There were noted a series of impressions from various journeys undertaken, details about the tourist sights and everything that was considered relevant for whetting the readers’ appetite for visiting the areas described. In 1938, financial problems arose, and the magazine Femeia satelor reduced its format to eight pages, keeping, however, the rubrics with which the public had become
accustomed. It transformed shortly afterwards into Revista de cultură și educație gospodărească (Magazine of Household Culture and Education) and included various headings, from “Choosing one’s husband” to “Planting fruit trees”. Still, it failed to cope with the competition and, in 1939, it published for the last time practical tips for household hygiene and work.

The feminist doctrine was aimed at including as many women as possible in the field of work, in keeping with their training and physical health. Female workers represented the majority of women in interwar Romania. In this context, it is no wonder that a series of magazines and newspapers appeared, directly addressing this social category and pointing out various aspects of specific or general interest. In the sixteenth issue of 1932 of the magazine Femeia muncitoare. Buletinul Uniunii Femeilor Muncitoare din România (The Working Woman. The Bulletin of the Romanian Working Women’s Union), Dr. S. Cohl, chief physician of the “New Maternity” Hospital in Bucharest, wrote an interesting article about maternity, which started with the motto “A woman is not a baby-making machine!” Women were explained that repeated pregnancies and prolonged breastfeeding were likely to damage the woman’s health, so in order to avoid possible pregnancy termination situations, they could use a number of means of contraception. Those means should not be seen as immoral acts synonymous with abortion. Therefore, an attempt was made to educate women in order to maintain an optimal health and topics that no one had dared to talk about until that time were now approached. The figure of the woman who was a mother, a wife and a housekeeper without the right of appeal was to be left behind; in her stead there appeared the figure of a refined, educated woman, who had access to information, thus managing to make the decisions that suited her best.

Of course, the magazine Femeia muncitoare contained a vast series of articles dedicated to the women’s working environment and daily activity. The eighteenth issue, of August 1933, printed a programme-article in which, among other things, all working women were compelled to break away from the model of their colleagues in the Jiu Valley and refuse to be subjected to unions governed entirely by men. The districts in which women were active had to be run and managed strictly by those concerned, without outside help. The magazine became an emblem of the socialist woman and managed to maintain itself solely from internal contributions. In 1932 it expanded its format and reached a circulation of three thousand copies, with a regular monthly appearance. “We recognise that the gazette has many shortcomings, but this is due only to the fact that it is too small and, hence, it cannot publish
everything which would interest the readers”. The development of the feminist press and the growing number of articles written by women for women could not remain without an echo from the already established publications. The image of women fluctuated over time and acquired various contours, from that of a submissive slave to that of a versatile creature.

With all the appreciation they had of women in general, some journalists could not miss the opportunity to express their ironical disapproval of the feminist propaganda, carried sometimes to the extreme. In the Bucharest magazine Bilete de papagal (Parrot Tickets), Tudor Arghezi wrote an article about a certain Badea Ion who considered himself “the oldest feminist born by a woman” (Arghezi 1928: 1). He had spent his entire life surrounded by women (four sisters, eight daughters and a lot of granddaughters), thus becoming “more feminist than the most authentic of feminists” (Ibidem). Of course, Arghezi mockingkly attacked the coalitions formed by some women who considered their cause as the only important aspect in society, responding exclusively to feminist principles.

Not all the women in interwar Romania joined the project of feminist individualisation and emancipation. Although most were quickly seduced by the changes that were expected to take place and by the fact that, for the very first time, they had found their true calling, other representatives of the fair sex remained reserved and sceptical, but did not trust their own forces sufficiently. Thus, the gazette from Braşov Nihil Sine Deo, published in 1921 the opinion of a lady who wished to remain anonymous: “Some of us ladies have developed a new taste, that of asking for rights. How nice! But before asking that, let us stop to think how wealthy and happy life was in the past when woman kissed the hand of man, when the man sat in front of the woman in church, when the man steered the horses and the woman sat at the back of the carriage without a care in the world, what was good for the gander was good for the goose, in the old days, and what the man said was sacred and it was good, better than today. Now we want rights. After men, out of the goodness of their hearts, have taught us and given us the knowledge to live in the world, do we also want to take away their right to rule? No, my darlings! No offense! Let’s leave it to the men. They have the power, they have the strength, they should have the leadership.”

Various antifeminist opinions were frequently voiced in the period between the two world wars, but they were sporadic and served as mere occasions for dispute. Feminists would not allow themselves to be demoralised or distracted by unfavourable concepts and continued to print with composure and determination periodical publications addressed to the female half of the population. Through those writings they intended to educate women, to provide

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5 Editorial article in Femeia muncitoare, year III, no. 18, August 1993.
6 “Datoria femeii de astăzi”, in Nihil Sine Deo, no. 54, 16 October 1921.
them with examples and to lay down rules of civic conduct in a society that was beginning to leave patriarchy behind.

**Feminism in the communist period**

The recognition of the right to vote for women came late and was not devoid of interferences from the newly established regime. Romanian women voted for the first time in free elections in 1990. Feminism in the communist period followed a conception of emancipation that was fundamentally connected with productive work. In this period, it was impossible to develop feminist theories that promoted women’s rights as individuals and that contributed to the autonomy of women, for the totalitarian regime did not tolerate a different ideology than the communist one. As Oana Băluţă has rightly noted, “The various types of ‘communist egalitarism’ must be dissociated from feminism because the ratio between feminism and communism is one of *contradictio in terminis* considering that communism did not endorse the autonomy of women” (Băluţă 2010: [http://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/tema-saptamanii/articol/feminismul-romanesc-si-valul-sau](http://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/tema-saptamanii/articol/feminismul-romanesc-si-valul-sau)).

At the beginning of the communist regime, between 1946 and 1964, Romania followed the Stalinist model, which meant the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, led by a unique party that represented the working class, stipulated state ownership over the means of production, sought to eliminate class enemies, and deployed communist propaganda. Women played an important role during this period, as they actively participated in the modernisation and industrialisation of the state. Representing half of the active population in the state, they helped enforce policies towards the drastic reduction of illiteracy and emancipation through labour. The image of women was promoted by communist propaganda, which emphasised their twofold role in the productive and reproductive spheres. Thus, the women’s work day doubled, in effect.

In 1966, the women’s reproductive role gained in importance, with the implementation of the pronatalist policies laid down by Decree 770, which banned abortions and stipulated the criminalisation of women who resorted to abortion. Although the state claimed to contribute to the raising of children, by increasing the number of nurseries, by granting maternity leave, medical care and allowances for children, in practice these measures were not implemented properly and they never met the real needs of women. The provisions of the decree made many victims among women, so this was among the first laws abolished after the fall of the communist regime.

Women acquired access, in communism, to the political sphere, to jobs, social status, relative economic independence from men, state assistance in raising children, promotion to management positions, as well as to access to all levels and types of education. In reality,
however, women did not pursue their own interests, but complied with the single party’s agenda. Considering the hierarchies of economic branches, it was mostly women who performed jobs that were assumed to be easier, and this aspect was reflected in a hierarchy of remuneration. Management was mostly the prerogative of men. During the communist period, the emphasis was placed on women’s rights in public life, rather than in private life.

**Postmodern feminism**

Postmodernism inherited a communist legacy that associated the political leadership of women with the dictatorship of Elena Ceaușescu and that considered feminism a bourgeois and reactionary ideology; a hierarchy of gender labour and remuneration; a political scene that was dominated by men: 98% in the Romanian Parliament, 98.4% in the local councils and 100% in the Romanian Government; an unrestricted freedom of expression, which did not impose penalties for acts of misogyny, sexism, chauvinism or anti-Semitism; the bankruptcy of the heavy industry, which had predominantly employed men, and the privatisation of the light industry, which exposed women to a market economy without the protection of trade unions.

In this context, in the period 1990-2000 there appeared: the first organisations for the protection and promotion of women’s rights: the AnA Organisation, established in 1990 and officially registered in 1993, which launched the first and only magazine of feminist analyses, called *AnAlize*; the Centre for Curriculum Development and Gender Studies FILIA was established in 2000. The first university courses on gender studies were introduced at the National School of Political and Administrative Studies, in Bucharest; civic activism developed and merged with political activism; external funding was brought in to restore the social and human sciences; the legislative proposal for the adoption of the Law on paternal leave was submitted in 1998 and was promulgated as Law no. 210/1999; Ordinance no. 137 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination was adopted in 2000;

At the end of 1999, the Treaty of Romania’s Accession to the European Union was signed, making the *acquis communautaire* mandatory for the candidate states. A number of draft laws favourable to the Romanian feminist agenda were adopted:
* Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and treatment for women and men;
* Law no. 217/2003 for preventing and combating domestic violence;
* With the amendment of the Constitution in 2003, equality of opportunities became a constitutional principle;
* The National Council for Combating Discrimination was established in 2001;
* The National Agency for Equal Opportunities (ANES) is established as an autonomous agency, together with County and Local Councils for Gender Equality (COJES);
* all political parties had organisations for women, but these did not have real contributions to feminist policies;
In 2007, Romania became a member of the European Union and changes began to take place:
* in 2010 ANES was disbanded as an autonomous agency and was incorporated into the Ministry of Labour;
* none of the articles of the Equal Opportunities Act was enforced;
* the discrimination of women’s wages increased, indirectly, especially in the public sector (only 1/5 of the budget employees are men, and they get 40% of the budget salaries);
* the process of democratisation becomes laxer and there is a considerable setback in the level of democracy in Romania;
* the influence of the civil society decreases;
* after a slight increase in the representation of women in Parliament and Local Councils, there is registered a further decrease;
* the economic crisis has a considerable impact on the feminisation of poverty;

Against the background of these dramatic repercussions, since 2011, the protest actions of feminist organisations have intensified and acquired regularity. Currently, the number of organisations actively promoting women’s rights, protecting victims of gender violence and combating gender discrimination is increasing. Among these we should mention:

- TRANSCENA Association, Bucharest
- ARTEMIS Association of Women Against Violence, Cluj-Napoca
- SENSIBLU Foundation, Bucharest
- GRADO Association - Romanian Group for the Human Rights Defence, Bucharest
- The Centre Partnership for Equality foundation, Bucharest

The conclusions of a research undertaken last year (the project “Social Exclusion in Romania and Third Wave Feminism”, coordinated by Professor Mihaela Miroiu), regarding the types of feminist discourse in Romania today are extremely useful for overcoming this dilemmatic situation. In Romania, feminist discourse was pluralised after 1989; thus, a hybrid feminism can be identified. It encompasses the features of the second wave and third wave discourses, as well as postmodern and postfeminist tendencies.

**Conclusions**

The perpetuated masculine model is the result of pre-modern, modern and postmodern accumulations, “in agreement with an image of man that combines the nineteenth-century West-European model of man as breadwinner of the family (the one supports the family financially), the head of the patriarchal family from the semirural/semiurban societies at the beginning of the twentieth century (the owner of the household who has the power of decision in family matters and represents the highest authority in the family), the stereotypical image of the successful lawyer or broker on Wall Street, presented by American movies (the modern image of the affluent man, who has money, a good social position and the prospect of a
prosperous career) and a little of the macho-romantic atmosphere of the cowboy from the Marlboro commercials (derived from the vision of a strong man, untamed by civilisation, sure of himself and somewhat self-sufficient” (Pasti 2003: 87-88). The feminine model did not have the same evolutionary rhythmicity, developing in leaps and bounds. Feminism has experienced a range of forms and manifestations throughout history. A concept that was denied or approved, disproved or ardently supported in equal measure, the feminist phenomenon created a stir in society, regardless of the century to which refer. Viewed across the arc of time, feminism has accumulated ideas and reaction models based on the stringent needs of the population, proposing to change mentalities and to shape a fair world for all. Feminism arose from women’s need to feel protected and respected, to address their vulnerabilities and to demonstrate to the whole world that they had more to offer than they had been given credit for before. Thus, seen as both a defensive and an offensive movement, feminism is, after all, a philosophy that advocates the equality of rights for women and men. Unlike the so-called “era of the patriarchy”, the new world that started to open up with the adoption of the feminist principles does not want the feminist camp to dominate, in retaliation for the inequities of olden times, but to fight for equal opportunities and fair treatment in the face of society and laws. Sociology and social psychology pay attention to the individuals in the context of the environment they are a part of, trying to capture their traits and to interpret them in terms of the way in which they try to adapt to the entire system to which, consciously or not, they belong. Personality, in its vastness, is taking shape with the help of all the facets that an individual allocates and appropriates in relation to the situations in which he or she is engaged. The interchangeable facets that each of us can resort to justify their kind and consistency in relation to the roles that society distributes to us throughout our lives.

The first wave of feminism Romanian manifested around the same time as the one in the West, even though it did not have the same magnitude. It was a feminism of the elites, promoted by women with a high level of education and with access to Western culture. In particular, the Romanian feminist movement was predominately urban, since at that time the Romanian society was largely agrarian, with about 80% of people living in rural areas, and industrialisation had reached only a small part of the population. This is why the movement was not a broad one and did not encompass women from the entire Romanian space, regardless of their background. In Romania feminism appeared around the time of the Revolution of 1848, when the ideals of the revolution supported the feminist cause and women, in their turn, massively supported the ideals of the revolution. Contrary to the trend of those times, Romanian feminism was inspired not by French, but by Anglo-American
feminism. In the contemporary period, we can say that legislation has been aligned to Western standards, but the mentality still remains, especially in the rural environments, tributary to patriarchalism. The questions surrounding the current debates are: What should we choose in Romania? Synchrony or diachrony? Synchrony with the Western developments of the third wave, which have raised serious issues concerning the inclusion of second-wave feminism and its positions regarding the various categories of women and the problems they are facing? Or diachrony, because, in fact, the linearity of the transformations undergone by “Western feminism” has outlined changes that cannot be skipped over? Simplifying, can we unreservedly embrace the third wave of multiple differences between women, which divides women into different groups, without having had a second wave that points out that women share common problems? Can we uncritically integrate the perspective of multiple differences between women given that the common problems faced by women are visible neither theoretically, nor practically and that they are addressed politically only to a very small degree and in unsystematic manner? The answers are more firmly drawn as mentalities evolve towards the achievement of equal opportunities among the younger generation, trained in the spirit of a rejection of the patriarchy.

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