

CONSOLIDATING FEMINISMS IN ROMANIA – A CONTERFACTUAL ANALISIS

Diana Elena NEAGA*

Abstract

In Romania, only after almost quarter-century since the fall of communism we can talk about feminismS. Furthermore, we can also talk about left feminism (anarchist and socialist formal and informal activist groups) and about the upsurge of a more and more grass-roots women's rights movement. What are the variables that can explain such a state of affair and what lessons can be learned from this experience are the main questions that I am trying to give possible answers in this paper. In doing so I will first use a descriptive approach for presenting a brief summary of the way Romanian feminist/women's rights movement has developed and I will use a methodology mostly based on documents analysis. Some locally developed theories are definitely important here: feminist vs Phoenix organization theory, state men-market women theory, the theory of the feminism lost opportunity in transition, the contradiction between communism and feminism theory, the domination of liberal feminism etc. More than that, my proposal is a counterfactual meta-analysis of the data first presented using here, beside the critical approach, also my subjective experience as a scholar and activist form more than 7 years of participative observation in the field of feminist phenomenon in Romania.

Keywords: *feminism mouvement, postcomunism, postfactum analysis, Romania.*

Introduction

Even though the history of women struggles, especially the western one, is already consistent, with multiple demands and theorizing ways, I believe it is never enough to try a new (meta)analysis of facts and contexts and to learn from these sort of academic experience. As much as it would seem trivial, we cannot just learn from the experiences of others, but mostly we can use these experiences in order to set out expectations and strategies for actions in conformity with the objectives that we assume at a given point. I believe this is even more important when it comes to social movements for rights (human rights) and even more social movements of marginalized groups (women, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, etc.) Why? Because I have a feeling of urgency in developing strategic actions with concrete results in public policies and grass roots projects (civic action and civil society as a service provider), substantial and directly beneficial to those claiming the statue of citizen, not just formal, but especially substantive (see the concept of substantive citizenship). In this respect, and also from the personal need to clarify and conceptualize the evolution of the women's movement/s in post-communist Romania I my aim in this paper is on the one side to do a short and compressed presentation of the history/evolution Romanian women's movement, in parallel with a review of some theories developed on this issue, and on the other side to do that in order to review the

facts trough a critical post-factual framework of those data.

The women's rights movement in Romania still remains marginal and outside the spectrum of public and political discourse, even after 25 years from the communist revolution. Most women involved in politics rush into declaring their non-feminism; male politicians (especially right wing ones, but not only) decry the "lost masculinity" caused by this "unnatural" development¹; the mass-media discusses issues linked to women interest only from sensationalist perspectives and trough tabloidization it perpetuates patriarchy and misogynistic attitudes; gender studies remain concentrated at the level of superior studies and it can be found in just a few higher education centers across the country (3 to be exact- Bucharest University, The National School for Political and Administrative Studies, Babes Bolyai University from Cluj). All this while Romania "occupies a shameful 91th place in regard to political representation of women, fact that substantially affects the presence of women interests on the political agenda."² Romania, a Member State of the European Union (EU), lags far behind the rest of the EU in advancing the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescents and women (according to official statistical data, the maternal mortality rate in Romania is twice the EU average); the country has the highest number of live births among girls under 15 years of age; the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (U.N.

* Political Studies and Public Administration Department, Nicolae Titulescu University, Calea Văcărești, no. 185, 0040 740 28 60 10, (e-mail: diana_elena_neaga@yahoo.com).

¹ See Mihail Neamțu's article from Adevărul "Criza bărbatului occidental" (The Crisis of The Occidental Man), accessible at http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/criza-barbatului-occidental-1_55f040c1f5eaafab2c6d7aa1/index.html

² Mihaela Miroiu (coord.), Andreea Molocea, Ioana Vlad, Cristian Ionuț Branea, *Mișcări feministe și ecologiste în România (1990 - 2014)* (Feminist and ecologist movements in Romania), Polirom, Iași 2015, pp. 14.

CESCR) has called on the Romanian government to revise its laws and policies to ensure access to reproductive health care for women and adolescents in the country (in its recommendations, issued on 28 November 2014, the Committee stressed that in order to comply with its international human rights obligations, the Romanian government should adopt a national strategy on sexual and reproductive health and implement comprehensive mandatory policies on sexual and reproductive health in schools to reduce teenage pregnancies); U.N. also expressed concerns at the increasingly common practice of health professionals refusing to perform legal abortions based on personal and moral objections etc.³.

In this context, seen from outside, Romanian feminism remains an alternative movement, elitist, urban, academic, just a coquettishly of women who can afford to be different, and at the level of public perception stereotypes and classic prejudice regarding feminist are dominant (woman are hysterical, they hate men, lesbians, etc). In the same time, issues approached in diverse campaigns seem to endlessly repeat (violence, political representation and mostly integration on the work market (sic!) etc.), as if there was no generational capitalization of the knowhow in this domain that would be able to generate add value and awareness regarding gender equality. From my personal experience, but not only, the filing you have when you join the movement is that all needs to be done, that everything is new and that you become part of some sort of guerilla that promotes atypical values and principles that were developed by the first feminists.

Regardless, who is truly interested in the way in which feminism in Romania evolved over time could maybe be surprised to know that the movement is a consistent one, genuinely alive in its demands and transformation. We might even speak of a tradition for such attitudes and manifestations in Romania, solid proof for this being the archive research made by Stefania Mihalescu and published in two volumes which have the purpose of preserving the memory of Romanian feminism (see *From the history of Romanian feminism*, vol. 1 and 2). Even more, a closer look on the phenomenon, can highlight serious and sustained preoccupations in this regard, research books and articles, projects, campaigns, legislative proposals, etc – not few and not lacking in impact in their historical periods (see for example the collection of gender studies books published by the Polirom Publishing House, multiple petitions at the National Council for Combating Discrimination through which different persons were sanctioned, and even stopped offensive media

campaigns, improved legislature, etc). What's more, in the past years we might even speak of feminisms, of a rearranging of the movement in respect with the ideological orientation, but also regarding strategies of action (grass-roots organizations), fact that can be seen as proof of a growing up movement overlaid on a period of transition. As Mihaela Miroiu says: "our programmatic omogeneity from the 90s and the period of pre-adheration to the EU is over. Except for some successful influences on the political agenda, the substantial growth of the knowledge in the area of gender policies and gender representation, the understanding of the social state of women, the most significant success is represented by the internal diversification of feminism and its transformation in a movement (including a critique dimension)"⁴.

Thus appears the paradox for a living movement, in his way for consolidation, that still remains invisible and seemingly developing a dynamic that seems to emanate from the reality of the social needs clearly identified through statistics (see here the eternal accusations of elitism brought up against feminists).

Of course the most convenient explanation, one of intrinsic value, for such a state of affairs is in fact which brings into discussion the patriarchal domination, the masculine hegemony which in virtue of its character leaves permanently in offside any anti-hegemonic initiatives. Another category is that of an intrinsic nature, more precisely those that try to relief characteristics, evolutions, facts from inside the movement meant to highlight the way in which the internal dynamic this time contributes or not to the construction of a solid alternative discourse, with a wide impact. The second way of interpreting facts will be developed in the following pages.

As I was saying, I prefer to present the evolution of the feminist movement in post-communist Romania by mainly referring to theories elaborated by Romanian scholars that will be presented in the following pages because above their explicative value per se, these can be used also in the sense of a critical post-factual/post-contextual approach with the effect of generating much information for theoreticians and activists involved in this sort of research. So, the work method I will employ in this paper will be that of a post-factual meta-analysis that implies: a) critical analysis of events and theories generated from these; counterfactual analyses or what would could happen if not, work method that implies approximation of the effects and if possible referencing to a reference group as basis for comparison. "The basic idea of

³ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women February 26th, 2016, accessed at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ROU/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ROU_23166_E.pdf

⁴ Mihaela Miroiu (coord.), Andreea Molocea, Ioana Vlad, Cristian Ionuț Branea, *Mișcări feministe și ecologiste în România (1990 – 2014) (Feminist and Ecologist Movements in Romania)*, Polirom, Iași 2015, pp. 190.

counterfactual theories of causation is that the meaning of causal claims can be explained in terms of counterfactual conditionals of the form “If A had not occurred, C would not have occurred”⁵, b) understanding elements of context that led to such evolutions.” In recent years a great deal of attention has been paid to the context-sensitivity of causal statements (...) Those who accept the arguments above for the context-relativity of causal statements think that the canonical form of causal statements is “c rather than c*caused e rather than e*”, where the contrast situations c* and e* are supplied by context⁶. Counterfactual analyses of causation focus on counterfactuals that tell us what would have been the case if the world had been different. In the main, they focus on counterfactuals concerning temporally successive, suitably distinct events that describe cases and events that occurred.⁷

Debates in Romanian post-communist feminism

From my point of view some big debates animated the feminist scene in post-communist Romania, being further used in order to explain and defend certain positions and strategies of action. I will make in the following pages a chronological presentation of these in order to surprise the way in which the context has contributed to such references, but mostly to propose a critical analyses meant to underscore empowering elements that were in a way or another “failed” exactly in virtue of this immersion in the context. So, the milestones I will be analyzing are:

o) **Constructing civil society for women’s rights** – between Phoenix and feminist organizations (the first divide) – the need to impose ideas through appealing to epistemic authority thus falling in the trap of elitism.

p) **State man, market women** – feminism in transition, the last inequality and the failed chance of women to negotiate a better representation of their interests.

q) **The domination of liberal feminism, room-service feminism and the second break** (femismS – consolidation of Romanian feminism through settling on diverse ideological formulas, through criticizing mainstream feminism, “liberal feminism” and the risk of dissociation from within the movement).

Constructing civil society for women’s rights.

Passing from a totalitarian regime to a democratic one meant also for women rights filed starting process of constructing the civil society. But what is important to mention for the current endeavor is the break that characterized the process of constructing the feminist/women rights civil society in Romania - phenomena I will further call ‘first break’ – namely that between the Phoenix organizations and the feminist organizations, the one between the former “party organizations” (tolerated in the communist period) who made efforts to adapt to the new context and “new” organizations⁸. “On the basis of a strong anticommunist current present in the public space in that period, the fact that immediately after the revolution we witness the emergence of women organizations such as The Association of Women in Romania (it was mentioned as the first women organization in Romania, with subsidiaries in all districts and tens of thousands of members) later gave rise to sentiments of suspicion towards feminist NGOs (who were born years later). This suspicion was also based in the fact that this organizations rooted in old structures were in a conflictual state <There was a battle on the field of this organizations who were being revitalized and the young organizations feared to enter in this game>”⁹.

Even if the struggle for women’s rights represented for both types of organizations the assumed objective and thus the relevant criteria for solidarity, in that context the intense need to take distance from the communist regime seems to had priority, being reinforced also by the fact that the power was in fact taken by reformed ex-communists led by Ion Iliescu (see here the Piata Universitatii phenomena). Thus, in a very natural manner, even though the Phoenix organizations had generous infrastructure and assumed objectives linked to women emancipation, even if the left ideology per se (if we assume these organizations kept also an ideological substratum) encompass more than the right wing ones formulas of women emancipation, the dominant cleavage (communist/anticommunist) broke the possibility of solidarity for the cause. More than that, it feed from my point of view another break, that between the professional feminists (generally of a academic background) and women involved in diverse actions against inequality and the organizations they formed.

It was, even if not explicitly, a fight to legitimize the discourse for women rights starting

⁵ Menzies, Peter, “Counterfactual Theories of Causation”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/causation-counterfactual/>

⁶ Menzies, Peter, “Counterfactual Theories of Causation”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/causation-counterfactual/>

⁷ Final Paul, “Counterfactual theories of causation”, accessed at <http://www.lapaul.org/papers/paul-counterfactual.pdf>

⁸ Mihaela Miroiu (coord.), Andreea Molocea, Ioana Vlad, Cristian Ionuț Branea, *Mișcări feministe și ecologiste în România (Feminist and ecologist movements in Romania)(1990 - 2014)*, Polirom, Iași 2015, pp. 23.

⁹ Mihaela Miroiu (coord.), Andreea Molocea, Ioana Vlad, Cristian Ionuț Branea, *Mișcări feministe și ecologiste în România (Feminist and ecologist movements in Romania)(1990 - 2014)*, Polirom, Iași 2015, pp. 25.

from the implied question: “who has the right to bring the issue of inequality on the public agenda?”. And the answer was one intensified by the context, one in which a main figure was Mihaela Miroiu and her connections with the West (emancipated and a source of inspiration for a Romania longing for democratization and implementation of capitalism) have put the basis of an academic feminism, elitist in its essence, but who fulfilled very well at that moment the function of detachment from communism, but also enforcing an anti-patriarchy discourse by appealing to ‘scientific’/‘intellectualist’ arguments. So, the organizations existing on this side of the barricade, the feminists – from whom the most representative remains the Society for Feminist Analyses Ana – developed ” while remaining circumscribed to academic feminism, which was probably deemed as the best transmission vehicle in a society in which any form of affirmative policy was associated with communism and rejected from the start. Therefore, emancipative ideas seemed to sell best if they were wrapped in scientific arguments coming from credible experts, from the ranks of the academic-intellectual elite, and this is the development path followed by academic feminism”¹⁰. On the other side there remained women organizations that could access a large number of women, who had infrastructure, but who lacked authentic feminist knowhow but who organized projects “mainly for raising awareness and charity”.¹¹

Of course a post-factual analyses underlines the fact that at that moment there was available a combination of resources and even the energy necessary to lay the foundation of a feminist/women rights movement and that essentially, having in consideration the common cause, could have materialized in collaboration and consolidation. In spite of this fact this only happened punctually in the case of a few collaborations (seminaries, workshops) that could be considered by opportunity (see here the examples presented by Andreea Molocea in her study¹². So it seems the need for legitimization in an unstable ideological context generated by the regime change canceled the coagulant potential of the cause and more than that, it turned it into a

potentially divisive argument in the sense in which it imposed definition and identification formulas on the one hand regarding the ex-regime, and on the other hand reported to the feminist-non-feminist dichotomy (or just “by/for women”). The fact that some of these organizations had connections with the party nomenclature could as well been a variable, but not an ultimate criteria for deconstructing legitimization, even more as we well know that not rarely, collaborating with the party was in fact a survival strategy in a totalitarian system and can’t be blamed per se, even more as there was also a sort of acceptance for the epistemic authority that the feminists offered – “here there were very helpful Mihaela Miroiu and AnA. In fact, this was our biggest advantage, was that we could either find ourselves the arguments, what we found reading or talking to Mihaela or Laura Grunberg, or we asked them. And then, it was certain”¹³ (interview with M.S. 2012 – Molocea, in Miroiu et al, 2015, e28). Even more than that, many other aspects could be brought up in discussion to generate some sort of coalition of these categories of organizations such as for example common experiences linked to the pro-natalist policies of Ceausescu, but these variables remained subsidiary to the dominant cleavage – communist/anti-communist.

This need for legitimization and differentiation regarding any formula associated with the past gave rise, from my point of view, to the elitism for which even today the first generation of feminists in post-communist Romania is so criticized, the communist/anti-communist cleavage having a big say in this matter also. More precisely, the “intelighentia” represented in Marxist ideology as exploitive and dominant is reborn after 89’ and is detached from the past party nomenclature seen as incompetent¹⁴, position mostly sustained by the cadre policy from the communist period and even more the PMR position “in favor of a severe standard ‘of cleaning the party’ on priory ideological and class criteria, with the intentional reduction of the percentage of party members that were part of public servants or intellectuals categories”¹⁵.

It is also worth mentioning the fact that Mihaela Miroiu, Laura Grunberg, Anca Jugaru –

¹⁰ Neaga Diana Elena, Nicolescu Valentin Quintus, “Shaping the agenda: feminist strategies of civic and political action in post-communism”, *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, 2013, pp. 23.

¹¹ Mihaela Miroiu (coord.), Andreea Molocea, Ioana Vlad, Cristian Ionuț Branea, *Mișcări feministe și ecologiste în România (Feminist and Ecologist movements in Romania)(1990 - 2014)*, Polirom, Iași 2015, pp. 27.

¹² Mihaela Miroiu (coord.), Andreea Molocea, Ioana Vlad, Cristian Ionuț Branea, *Mișcări feministe și ecologiste în România (Feminist and ecologist movements in Romania)(1990 - 2014)*, Polirom, Iași 2015, pp. 27.

¹³ interview with M.S. 2012 – Molocea, in Miroiu et al, 2015, pp. 28.

¹⁴ To see here also the mainstream literature that brings to discussion the competence of the ex-nomenclature staff, especially in the period of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu, period in which “means the replacement of competence with the documentation of the staff file in which the criteria of selection were manly political and subjective ones” (Cornel Ilie, Șerban Constantinescu, “Cultul personalității” “The Cult of Personality”, accessible on www.comunismulinromania.ro).

¹⁵ Apud. Alina Tudor-Pavelescu, *Politica de cadre a Partidului Muncitoresc Român, Studiu introductiv*, p. VIII-IX, în Andrei Folrin Sora, “Staff files of communist nomenclatura”, în History Institut George Barițiu Year Book, Cluj Napoca, Romanian Academy Publishing House 2013, pp. 65/6.

central figures of the Romanian post-communist feminism were members of the informal Câr-Mâr, a group of intellectuals critic about the past regime¹⁶.

Also, a very important element in maintaining the elitist tendency of feminism, which must be mentioned and also related with the need of legitimization of such a discourse is that of ideas dynamics in a hegemonic framework. In other words, in the above mentioned context, were necessity to construct a modern society is manly connected with reason as an incontestable value, the consolidation of a contra-hegemonic formula in rapport with patriarchy couldn't neglect the appeal of some sort of epistemic authority. Gramsci himself acknowledges the role that the elites (intellectuals) should have in constructing contra-hegemonic discourse, just that it seems in the case of Romanian feminism this construction was halted at the "traditionalist intellectuals" and didn't manage but very little to have contact with grassroots movements. "The intellectual realm, therefore, was not to be seen as something confined to an elite but to be seen as something grounded in everyday life. The role of informal educators in local communities links up with Gramsci's ideas on the role of the intellectual. The educator working successfully in the neighborhood and with the local community has a commitment to that neighborhood."¹⁷

So, in a profound patriarchal society, in which passing from communism to democracy also meant the relapse from a state patriarchy to a traditional patriarchy¹⁸, for feminism, this exotic movement, would have been difficult to generate a space for action if it would not appeal to elitist, academic formulas meant to produce legitimacy. Proof for this resides also in the fact that in the academic space we can easily identify a consolidation of feminist thought (see here de gender studies master from SNSPA, the one from Bucharest University, the one from Cluj, more and more doctoral thesis on the subject) which is at least debatable if it much later sustained the apparition of a movement and actions more of a grassroots type (see here also the subchapter **Domination of the liberal feminism, room-service feminism and the second break (appearance of feminismS)**).

Feminism in transition – state men, market women – the last inequality and the failed chance for women. The transition period meant of course for Romania vast reforms, especially in the

economic sphere. If in the social sphere from the point of view of gender relations we might say we had to face a recoil generated by the return to traditional patriarchy (salvation from the communist indoctrination came as returning to tradition¹⁹), regarding the economic sphere things were completely different. Studies and research realized in the transition period lead us to the conclusion that there were important changes that could have been used in the interest of women, but this thing did not happen. "The restructuring of the industrial sector mainly impacted the men as much economically, as ideologically. From an ideological point of view, the restructuring contested and eliminated the list on industrial and economic priorities of socialism. Mainly male dominated extractive industry, the metallurgic and the car construction industries not only went through a severe process of diminishing, which very fast became a process of decay, but were also dethroned ideologically. From their statue as "industrial citadels, the big male dominated enterprise become "a bunch of scrap metal" or the giants with massive losses of the Romanian economy, condemned to massive restructuring equivalent to closing. The result was a spectacular restructuring of the salaried work force, in favor of women."²⁰

Vladimir Pasti discusses in this sense about the failed chance of women, and Mihaela Miroiu about the state's men and the women of the market – "during the Romanian post-communist transition, due to left conservatism, men have successfully appropriated the state, while women were simply delivered to the market"²¹ – with direct reference to the fact that masculine industries benefited from compensatory policies, in the meanwhile women got into direct competition on the market, industries such as the textile one for example never being paid attention by the governing body for measures of support and professional reorientation. While Pasti offers sociological arguments for such a state of affairs (perceived as an anomaly and that being the motif for which women failed to fructify the context²²), Mihaela Miroiu offers an arguments closer to the way in which I personally interpret post-factum the realities of the transition – more precisely men have managed to form coalitions and to back up their interests, while the women acted mostly as individual agents in virtue of the fact that there were

¹⁶ Vezi Mihaela Miroiu, "Mihaela: Câr - Mâr", in Miroiu Mihalea, Miclea Mircea, *Restul și Vestul (The Rest and The West)*, Polirom, 2005, pp. 162 – 174.

¹⁷ Burke, B. (1999, 2005) 'Antonio Gramsci, schooling and education', *the encyclopedia of informal education*, <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-gram.htm>

¹⁸ Mihalela Miroiu, *Drumul către autonomie, (The Road to Autonomy)* Polirom, Iași, 2004, pp. 44.

¹⁹ Mihalela Miroiu, *Drumul către autonomie, (The Road to Autonomy)* Polirom, 2004, Iași, pp.215 – 216.

²⁰ Vladimir Pasti, *Ultima inegalitate (The Last Inequality)*, Polirom, 2003, pp. 152.

²¹ Miroiu M., "State men, market women. The effects of left conservatism on gender politics in Romanian Transition", *Mujer I Participacion Politica*, Monica Moreno Seco, Clarisa Ramos Feijoo (coord.), 2004, Feminsimo/s, 207 – 234.

²² Vladimir Pasti, *Ultima inegalitate (The last inequality)*, Polirom, 2003, pp. 157.

no consolidated organization capable of representing them, or we couldn't talk about the lack of organic intellectuals, but also we couldn't talk of one of traditional intellectuals as Gramsci says in the case of women²³. In other words, men managed to keep their domination using the advantages of structural patriarchy while women didn't manage to use a favorable economic context clearly observable by statistics, one explanation being the lack of a political feminism "without political feminism structural patriarchy remains untouched"²⁴, but mainly because of the absence of a feminist movement connected to the daily realities of women's lives.

It is interesting to observe the fact that in their presentations, none of the two authors makes references to the feminist/women's movement as a relevant actor in the equation of under-representation on women's interest in transition. Nevertheless, we should obviously ask: where were the women's rights organizations doing at that time and how come they didn't manage to capitalize that favorable context? And the answer is a relatively easy one – they were consolidating organizationally and were contributing to the consolidation of the civil society (as an essential element in the process of democratization – see here the financing programs like UNDP, UNFPA, ILO, USAID, etc.), all this effort in itself distancing them from the function of mediator between citizens and the political sphere. In other words, feminists were preoccupied by institutional consolidation which they needed so much, but also by defining their area of study (academic feminism), while Phoenix organizations got underway with small social support programs for different categories of women. Obviously, Mihaela Miroiu is right by saying that feminists in Romania lacked the conscience that political in personal during transition, powered again by the acute need for legitimacy which manifested also by a distancing from politics (seen as dirty – see the parallel with the assumed elitism) and this kind of politics. More than that, the employed strategy seems to have been a non-belligerent one (maybe also in order not to fuel the prejudice towards the movement) – with

interventions mostly in the field of education and as partners in the process of democratization, fact which led to the permanent placement of women's interest at the bottom of the priority list and to the isolation of the feminist approaches (politics with power, feminists with their small academic and community projects), thus fueling the fact that feminists were not able to create a "system of solidarity" in the Romanian transition period.

Domination of the liberal feminism, room-service feminism and the second break (appearance of feminismS). Maybe now we can understand a bit more clearly why the Romanian feminism after 89 was one with a dominant liberal ideology. So, this ideological affiliation was overlaid by two existent needs in the transition period, but none of whom, as ironic as it may seem, were in conformity with the needs and interest of women (see the failed chance of the transition): **the need to distance from communism and the need to construct a legitimate identity through solidarity with western, liberal democracies.** In the framework of this debate we cannot forget the relevance of Mihaela's Miroiu papers *Feminism was a state patriarchy, not a state feminism* (Aspsia, vol 1, 2007) and *Retro Society* (1999) in which she discusses the ideology of left conservatism as being collectivist, statist, skeptical in front of economic growth and inspired by egalitarianism, religion and nationalism²⁵. A very interesting observation is made here by Roxana Cheschebe who remarks in Mihaela Miroiu's case the lack of doctrines as options in evaluating the historic evolution of Romanian feminism. "If one agrees in explaining the evolution of historical feminisms in terms of equal vs different or individualist vs relational, then it is unclear why the author (see Mihaela Miroiu) chose to draw a Romanian historical tradition only for the liberal and socialist feminisms and not for the communitarian feminism also presented in her book. One answer might lie in Miroiu's interest in promoting the development of a liberal feminism in contemporary Romania in order to counteract the 'leftist conservatism' installed after the dismissal of the communist regime"²⁶. In the same time,

²³ "Traditional intellectuals are those intellectuals linked to tradition and to past intellectuals; those who are not so directly linked to the economic structure of their particular society and, in fact, conceive of themselves as having no basis in any social class and adhering to no particular class discourse or political discourse. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, are more directly related to the economic structure of their society simply because of the fact that "every social group that originates in the fulfillment of an essential task of economic production" creates its own organic intellectual (...) Traditional intellectuals, important in civil society, are more likely to reason with the masses and try to obtain 'spontaneous' consent to a social order. Yet, in the struggle of a class aspiring for hegemony the organic intellectuals created by that class operate on the level of pursuit for direct consensus and as such hold no position in the coercive political structures to operate on a coercive basis. Hence, it would seem that in the struggle for social hegemony these organic intellectuals must reason with the masses and engage in a decisive 'war of position' to consolidate the hegemonic status of the class the interests of which they share." (Velriano Ramos, *The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism*, *Theoretical Review*, March – April, 1982, Transcription, Editing, Markup Paul Saba, accessed at <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/theoretical-review/1982301.htm>)

²⁴ Miroiu M., "State men, market women. The effects of left conservatism on gender politics in Romanian Transition", *Mujer I Participacion Politica*, Monica Moreno Seco, Clarisa Ramos Feijoo (coord.), 2004, *Feminismo/s*, 230.

²⁵ Mihaela Miroiu, *Societatea retro (The Retro Society)*, Editura Trei, București, 1999, pp. 150 – 151.

²⁶ Roxana Cheschebe, "Reclaiming Romanina Historical Feminism. History writing and feminist politics in Romania", *Aspsia*, 2007, vol. 1, pp. 262.

Romanian feminism did develop in close connection and reaction to Western models of women's emancipation and to the idea that Romania ought to follow the developmental trajectory similar to that of western countries. In this perspective, "Mihaela Miroiu assumes that Romanian feminism had important doctrinal commonalities with a first wave feminism, that is with a equal rights liberal feminism. This was because, although Romanian feminism emerged in different conditions than those in the West, the same concern with altering the legal inferiority of women motivated the first Romanian feminists."²⁷ But this perspective is criticized by Roxana Cheshebec in relation with eluding the nationalist dimension of Romanian feminism and can be understood as an ideological bias generated by the context and local particularities, in which the need of a ideologically coherent feminism, generally by comparison to the west, has put in brackets the diverse forms of manifestation that seemed not to fit. "Yet, Romanian feminist formulations of women's emancipation do not fall easily into predetermined theoretical categories. The usual mixture of 'individualist' with 'relational' arguments in Romanian feminist formulations for women's emancipation and their support Romanian nationalist politics prevents such attempts. Miroiu answer some of these difficulties by downplaying the exclusionary dimensions of Romanian nationalism usually ascribed as its extreme right variant (...) At the same time all Romanian feminists engaged within suffragist militancy are subsumed under the category of liberal feminism".²⁸ If we add here the ingredient that Mihaela Miroiu has intellectually enriched in the school of western feminism²⁹, but also her defining contribution to the construction of the first and possibly the most productive feminist school in Romania (at SNSPA)³⁰ it becomes clear the fundament which intensified a dominant liberal feminism in Romania.

In this context another interesting phase in the analysis of Romanian feminism was constituted by the adherence of Romania to the EU, phase that the same Mihaela Miroiu defines as that of the room-service feminism. „The most semnificative modernization in gender relations trough political decision happen trough the influence si intervention of international organisms, especially in the context of adherence to the EU. As these new norms regarding gender equity are often not the result of movements of politically active women or politics motivated explicitly by rezolving internal injustices, the most frequent phenomena is that of the divorce between the partnership of legal norms and the patriarchy of institutions and practices. We are dealing with (...) a room-service feminism."³¹ So we can observe the missing variable in this equation is the feminist movement itself, who couldn't manage to bring on the formal agenda the women's interests also because of anti-politic rhetoric that functioned in a context of a very young democracy like the Romanian one. As Laura Grunberg writes "Significantly Romanian Women's NGO's contribute to their own marginalization because they lack open dialogue with the very women they purport to represent (...) Women in particular, although they are redefining the politics of reproduction, social, welfare and education resist the notion that their activities are political"³². What is certain is that we cannot talk in the case of Romania of a diversity of feminist opinions regarding the EU entering, this also in virtue of the countless legislative and institutional gains (even if from top to bottom and unrelated to the realities in the field) who came once with the beginning of the process of adherence³³. We might call this period as a phase of solidarity, characterised trough a large consensus regarding the necessity of integration in EU, but also in NATO.

In the same time, in this phase of solidarity we can also identify the ferment of the second break, which I personally see more as a phase in which the

²⁷ Roxana Cheshebec, "Reclaiming Romanina Historical Feminism. History writing and feminist politics in Romania", *Aspasia*, 2007, vol. 1, pp. 262.

²⁸ Roxana Cheshebec, "Reclaiming Romanina Historical Feminism. History writing and feminist politics in Romania", *Aspasia*, 2007, vol. 1, pp. 261 – 262.

²⁹ Vezi aici din CV-ul acesteia Visiting Fellow, Institute for Advanced Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, March-April, 2007; Fulbright research grant, Department of Political Sciences, Indiana University, Bloomington, September, 2003 February, 2004; Institute for Advanced Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, April, 2001 (Visiting fellow). Central European University, Gender and Culture, 1995-1996 Feminist Ethic; Central European University, 1994-1995: Towards a Philosophical Ecofeminism.

³⁰ The initiation of Gender Studies in Romania, 1993; The first classes in Feminist Philosophy, Philosophy Faculty, Bucharest University (1994); The first Romanian book in Feminist Philosophy *Gandul umbrei* (The Shadow's Thought), 1995; The first book on Feminist Ethics (Convenio, despre natura, femei si morala (Convenio. On Nature, Women and Morals), 1996: convenience theory; The first book on Feminist Political Theory: *Drumul catre Autonomie* (The Road to Autonomy) (2004); The first dictionary on the topic: *Lexicon Feminist* (Feminist Lexicon) 2002, as co-editor with Otilia Dragomir; The initiation of the first MA in Gender Studies in Romania: 1998; The initiation and coordination of the first collection series in Gender studies, Polirom Publishing House, since 1999.

³¹ Mihaela Miroiu, *Drumul către Autonomie, (The Road to Authonomy)* Polirom, Iași, 2017.

³² Laura Grunberg, 'Women's NGO's in Romania', in Susan Gal, Gail Kligman, *Reproducing gender. Politics, publics and everyday life after socialism*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2000, 308 – 311.

³³ Paternal leave legislation, legislation regarding prevention and combating of all forms of discrimination (2002), The law for preventing and combating domestic violence (2003). Marital rape and sexual harassment have been recognized as felonies. At the end of the year 2003, Romania adopted a new constitution which recognizes the principle of equality of chances for women and men. Two agencies were created: The National Council for Prevention and Combating of All Forms of Discrimination (2002) and The National Agency for equality of chances for Women and Men (2003).

movement is maturing by transforming itself from a dominant liberal feminism in feminismS. One of the events that has marked this break was the anti-NATO protest in 2008. We are in fact talking of one of the symbolic events unwound by an incipient anarchist movement in Romania, movement which had also an implicit feminist dimension. This movement, whose roots we can identify somewhere in the year 1994 when the first Punk/Underground Zine appears in Romania, seems to have also lost the start generated by the context of the transition period, exactly as Pasti describes what happened to the mainstream feminist movement. Thus, the chaotic period of the 90s-2010s is seen as a period in which the alternative movements seem to „lose an important space for expression (...) the public could have been slowly educated to buy zines and music (...), and through reviews of concerts the public could have been educated regarding the importance of real and active participation of every individual in the frame of the movements concerts”³⁴.

Still, the otherground movement generated what I call „the second break” of Romanian feminism, the ideological rupture that marks this time the process of maturation, of ideological refining so fundamental necessary in a democratic society, unlike the first rupture (Phoenix organizations vs feminist organizations) that can be better understood through the lens of ideological immaturity generated by a very strong cleavage that dominated Romania’s past 25 years – communist/anticommunist. Maybe not by chance, this break overlays also a generational organic break, in which many of the feminists formed in the school developed by Mihaela Miroiu are starting to think with their own heads, this meaning a critical detachment from that who was their mentor. In this sense, in a dialogue with Daniel Cristea Enache, Mihaela Miroiu discusses what she names a cultural matricide born from the need to escape the mainstream. „I didn’t even suspect that, after nine years, the Romanian leftist feminism will be born intensely criticizing the Romanian mainstream liberal feminism which, ultimately finds its intellectual source in *The Road to Autonomy*. With this critic, a part of the new generation feels the need of a cultural matricide necessary in order to evade the mainstream. I am in a phase when I feel the bitter-sweet taste of ripe intellectual maturity. I am happy that the ones that are coming have a person to hit so that they might find their place under the sun.”³⁵ Some of the representatives of the new current we can remember organizations and informal groups such as: Claca, Grupul Fia, Quantic, Grafittia, Sofia Nadejde, Biblioteca Alternativă, Macaz – Bar,

theater and Cooperative, and as publications *Gazeta de Artă Politică*, H.A.R.T.A group publications, Hecate Publishing House.

Conclusions

The development of post-communist feminism in Romania was, without a doubt, irretrievable marked by the force with which the communist/anti-communist cleavage has manifested, but also by the political immaturity of feminists during the transition generated by the same contextual variables (see here the dictatorial regime and a mostly dependent political culture) which made the action of coping with the power and political sphere unfrequentable, despicable practice. This state of affairs has on one hand detached the feminist movement from the ones it should have represented, including through the development of a liberal feminism that failed in bringing on the table themes as poverty, reconciliation between family life and career, the lack of care infrastructure, themes linked to intersectionality in virtue of the fact that it concentrated on the women’s accession on the market, the construction of a formal-legal frame, undoubtedly necessary for more consistent reforms, with emphasis on competence and competitiveness. All this while, on the other hand, women in Romania were better adapting than men on the work market, not because they were supported by a movement of women, not because they were supported by the state but because in patriarchy they interiorized very well the ideology of sacrifice, and also of being disconnected from power. Thus they lose the chance to politically capitalize this trump and this fact mainly happened in virtue of the spill over effect generated by the internal dynamics of the women’s/feminist organization – see the first break. The need for hyper-legitimation (see here also the Elena Ceausescu syndrome) in rapport with the dominant patriarchal structures, but also the need to detach from the ex-regime casts away Romanian transition feminism into a spiral of desolation and elitism. It is a spiral that was internally productive (see studies, volumes, written reports) and who, in virtue of this productivity offered the seeds and ferment for its own critique and transformation which will in turn into the second break. Started either from the other-ground (see the beginning of the punk movement and anarcho-feminists in Romania) either from within the same social sciences schools that have been penetrated by feminist ideas (meaning from within the ivory tower), the critique of liberal feminism, of the elitist, academic, mainstream feminism and the birth of

³⁴ The Fanzine of Fanzines TM. 20 years of fanzines and otherground publications in Timisoara (1994 - 2014), pp. 5.

³⁵ „Anul acesta împlinesc douăzeci de ani de donquijotism”, (This year marks my twentieth year of donquijotism), Mihaela Miroiu in dialogue with Daniel Cristea-Enache, accessible at <http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/13213/Mihaela-Miroiu-Daniel-Cristea-Enache/Anul-acesta-implinesc-douazeci-de-ani-de-donquijotism.html>

feminismS in Romania marks in fact the birth of what could have been the natural continuity and diversity of a movement, if we could have taken out

of the equation the context variable, concentrated in this case in the formula – transition and post communism.

Bibliography:

- "Anul acesta împlinesc douăzeci de ani de donquijotism", (This year marks my twentieth year of donquijotism), Mihaela Miroiu in dialogue with Daniel Cristea-Enache, accesable at <http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/13213/Mihaela-Miroiu-Daniel-Cristea-Enache/Anul-acesta-implinesc-douazeci-de-ani-de-donquijotism.html>
- Andrei Folrin Sora, Andrei Folrin Sora, "Staff files of communist nomenclatura", în History Institut George Barițiu Year Book, Cluj Napoca, Romanian Academy Publishing House 2013, pp. 65/6; Burke, B. (1999, 2005) 'Antonio Gramsci, schooling and education', *The encyclopedia of informal education*, <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-gram.htm>
- Fanzinul Fanzinelor TM. 20 de anu de fanzine și publicații otherground în Timișoara (The Fanzine of Fanzines TM. 20 years of fanzines and otherground publications in Timisoara) (1994 - 2014), pp. 5;
- Feijoo (coord.), 2004, *Feminsimo/s*, 207 – 234;
- Final Paul, "Counterfactual theoris of cauzation", accesed at <http://www.lapaul.org/papers/paul-counterfactual.pdf>
- <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/theoretical-review/1982301.htm>
- Gal Susan, Kligman Gail, *Reproducing gender. Politics, publics and everyday life after socialism*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2000;
- Menzies, Peter, "Counterfactual Theories of Causation", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/causation-counterfactual/>
- Miroiu Mihaela, Molocea Andreea, Vlad Ioana; Branea Cristian Ionuț, *Mișcări feminist și ecologiste în România (Feminist and Ecologist Movements in Romania)(1990 - 2014)*, Polirom, Iași, 2015;
- Miroiu Mihaela, 'State men, market women. The effects of left conservatism on gender politics in Romanian Transiton', *Mujer I Participacion Politica*, Monica Moreno Seco, Clarisa Ramos Feijoo (coord.), 2004, *Feminsimo/s*, 207 – 234;
- Miroiu Mihalea, Miclea Mircea, *Restul și Vestul (The Rest and the West)*, Polirom, Iași, 2005;
- Miroiu Mihalea, *Drumul către autonomie (The Road to Autonomy)*, Polirom, Iași, 2004;
- Neaga Diana Elena, Nicolescu Valentin Quintus, "Shaping the agenda: feminist strategies of civic and political action in post-communism", *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics*, 2013;
- Roxana Cheșchebec, "Reclaming Romanina Historical Feminism. History writing and feminist politics in Romania", *Aspasia*, 2007, vol. 1;
- *Theoretical Review*, March – April, 1982, Transcription, Editing, Markup Paul Saba, accesed at Transiton", *Mujer I Participacion Politica*, Monica Moreno Seco, Clarisa Ramos;
- UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women February 26th, 2016, accesed at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ROU/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ROU_23166_E.pdf
- Velriano Ramos, The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism;
- Vladimir Pasti, *Ultima inegalitate (Last Inequality)*, Polirom, Iași, 2003.