FEMININE SINGULAR PRONOUNS WITH NEUTRAL VALUE

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Abstract. The goal of this paper is two-fold: to offer, for the contemporary language, an inventory of the feminine pronominal forms with neutral value and a description of their uses and, especially, to compare the nowadays situation to the situation in the old language. For old Romanian, the analysis is based on the examination of a corpus of texts dating back to the 16th-18th centuries. The comparison shows that the entire inventory of feminine forms with neutral value is the same in the present-day language as in the old language. Their usages show slight differences.

Key words: feminine singular pronouns, neutral value, individuality of Romanian, nowadays language, old language.

1. THE DATA OF THE PAPER

● **The usage of the feminine pronouns with neutral value** is mentioned in all the fundamental descriptive works on Romanian (see Lombard 1974: 124, 166, 173, 216, 220, 221, 226; Sandfeld, Olsen 1936: 105-7; 1962: 43-4; Avram 1997: 160, 176 among others). The phenomenon is also mentioned in the studies with special regard to clitic doubling (Iliescu 2007 [1988]), anaphora (Zafiu 2004: 246), or pronominal clitics (Pană Dindelegan 1994; Zafiu 1996).

● In Romanian, the category of feminine pronouns with neutral value comprises: o**On the one hand**, global anaphors, in the case of which the referential source is either a simple sentence or a complex one (1a); **on the other hand**, certain units which show a very weak connection if any to the referential antecedent; this means the disambiguation through the antecedent is impossible.

The effect of the loss of the connection to the referent results either in a vague meaning (1b-c) or in complete bleaching, which gives rise to expletive uses (1d):

(1) a. [Că e bolnavă]$_i$, ([**asta**]$_i$) **o**$_i$ ştiu de mult.
'I have known for a long time that she is ill'
b. **Asta**-i bună!
'This beats all!'

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c. **Una** e să fii profesor, **alta** e să fii parlamentar!
'It's one thing to be a teacher, and it's another thing to be an MP!'
d. A luat-**o** razna, A pornit-**o** spre casă!
'He has gone mad', 'He is on his way home!'

The syntactic effect depends on the degree of desemanticization: while in (1a-c) the pronoun occupies certain syntactic positions, in (1d) the accusative clitic does not fill any syntactic position and behaves like a formative of frozen idiomatic constructions.

● In the Romanian linguistics, the phenomenon of feminine singular pronouns with neutral value was considered an individual feature of Romanian among the Romance languages. In this regard, Romanian resembles Balkan idioms such as Aromanian[2] or Albanian, where this phenomenon is available for different types of pronouns (Sandfeld 1930: 132-3). The Romance corresponding pronouns have masculine singular forms (Reinheimer, Tasmowski 2005: 111).

Nevertheless, sporadically, some Italian varieties display the same situation as Romanian and Balkan languages. Ferro (2003: 139) mentions that a feminine singular pronoun with neutral value, similar to the proximal demonstrative *asta*, occurs in dialectal Italian, more exactly in Tuscan varieties.

A recent and extensive article of Teresa Espinal (2009) signals, for Catalan, French, Italian, Spanish, and Greek, the existence, in verbal idiomatic constructions, of a pronominal clitic (in the accusative feminine singular or plural, and sporadically in the genitive), similar to the expletive clitic in the idiomatic Romanian constructions such as (1d). Given these data, "the myth" of the phenomenon's Balkan origins seems to lose credibility.

2. SYNTHESIS FOR CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN

2.1. In Contemporary Romanian the pronouns with neutral values are: the demonstratives ***asta / aceasta*** 'this', more rarely ***aceea*** 'that', the indefinite pronouns ***una*** 'one thing', ***alta*** 'another thing', the compound relative pronoun ***ceea ce*** 'what', and the personal clitic *o*, functioning either separately or resuming a demonstrative.

● **The demonstratives *asta / aceasta*** 'this', employed as pro-sentence anaphorics, occur either in the subject / object argumental positions (2a-c), or embedded in certain quasi-idiomatic PPs (2d-h) functioning as reason (2d), purpose

[2] The clitic ***o*** occurs with a neutral value in Aromanian as well (for the Arom. ***u***, see DIARO, 307, 326, 425). In Aromanian, there is also a corresponding form of the relative pronoun *ceea ce*, made up of the feminine singular demonstrative, namely *aţea ţi*: ***Aţea ţi*** *s-feaţi nu-ari marđini!* '**ceea ce** s-a făcut nu are margini', Engl. 'what has been done has no limits'; ***aţea ţi*** *vrei tini nu s-faţi.* 'ceea ce vrei nu se face / nu se cuvine', Engl. 'what you want shouldn't be done'(DIARO 8).

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(2e), additive positive (2f), substractive (2g), or additive negative (2h) adjuncts (*de asta* 'this is why'*, pentru asta* 'because of this'*, pe lângă asta* 'besides this'*, în afară de asta* 'except for this'*, în loc de asta* 'instead of this'):

(2) a. [Am fost în Anglia]$_i$. [**Asta /Aceasta**]$_i$ s-a întâmplat de mult.
'I travelled to England. This happened long time ago'
b. [Ion e bolnav]$_i$. [**Asta / Aceasta**]$_i$ o ştiu de mult.
'Ion is ill. I have known this for a long time'
c. [Unde ai fost?]$_i$ Ion m-a întrebat [**asta / aceasta**]$_i$ de nenumărate ori.
'Where have you been? Ion asked me this plenty of times'
d. [Am fost bolnavă]$_i$. Pentru / De [**asta**]$_i$ am lipsit.
'I was ill. That's why I didn't come'
e. [Îmi trebuie o anumită carte]$_i$. Pentru / De [**asta**]$_i$ merg la bibliotecă.
'I need a certain book. That's why I am going to the library'
f. [E destul de bolnav]$_i$. Pe lângă [**asta**]$_i$, e şi tare comod.
'He is rather ill. Besides this, he is also very lazy'
g. [Citeşte cu mare plăcere]$_i$. În afară de [**asta**]$_i$, nu-l interesează nimic.
'He really enjoys reading. Apart from this, he is not interested in anything else'
h. [A căutat un loc liniştit]$_i$. În loc de [**asta**]$_i$, a găsit mult zgomot.
'He searched for a quiet place, and he found a noisy place instead'

As far as the frequency of the two demonstratives ***asta*** vs. ***aceasta*** is concerned, it was highlighted (Nicula 2009: 182) that, even in the formal written language, the demonstrative ***asta*** is dominant. There are large contexts in which ***asta***, functioning as a global anaphor, cannot be replaced by *aceasta*:

(3) a. Asta / *Aceasta-i bună!
'This beats it all!'
b. Asta / *Aceasta e! N-am ce face.
'This is it! I can't do anything.'
c. Asta / *Aceasta e interesant!
'This is interesting!'

Note that in example (3c) there is an agreement mismatch: the adjective (in the masculine singular) does not agree with the demonstrative subject (in the feminine singular).

The usage of the distal demonstrative ***aceea*** 'that' as a pro-sentence anaphora is limited to a few occurences within quasi-frozen prepositional phrases: *de aceea, pentru aceea* 'that is why', *după aceea* 'afterwards':

(4) a. [Am fost bolnavă]$_i$. De [**aceea**]$_i$ / Pentru [**aceea**]$_i$ n-am putut veni.
'I was ill. That's why I couldn't come'

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b. [Am stat câteva luni în spital]$_i$. După [**aceea**]$_i$ am plecat din oraş.
'I spent several months in the hospital. Afterwards I left the town'

● **The indefinite pronouns *una*** 'one thing'***, alta*** 'another thing' function as bleached, de-semanticized substitutes:

(5) a. Totuşi, **una** e partid prezidential şi **alta** e partidul dictatorial! (internet)
'However, presidential party is one thing, dictatorial party is another thing!'
b. Mi-a povestit **una-alta** / **una** bună / **alta** şi mai bună.
'She told me different things / a tough one / another one just as tough'

● **The complex relative pronoun *ceea ce*** 'what' (the first part of which is in the feminine) is used:
− in headless (free) relatives, in free variation with ***ce*** (6a);
− in (pseudo-)cleft constructions (6b-c);
− in constructions in which it lost the linking value, and it functions only as a pro-sentence anaphoric. In such contexts, it behaves similarly to the neutral demonstrative ***asta*** (6d):

(6) a. Face [**ceea ce / ce** i se cere]
'He does what he is told to do'
b. [**Ceea ce** este **interesant / nou**] / e procedeul pe care l-au folosit
'What is interesting / new is the method they used'
c. [**Ceea ce** m-a supărat din cale afară] a fost [că toţi m-au părăsit]
'What upset me the most was that everybody abandoned me'
d. [A învăţat tot semestrul]$_i$,[**ceea ce / asta**]$_i$ i-a dat mai mare siguranţă
'He has studied all semester long, which made him more confident'

The pronoun *ceea ce* 'what' specialized for [–Animate] referents; in example (6b) there is an agreement mismatch between the pronoun in the feminine singular and the masculine singular adjective. This mismatch functions as evidence for the neutral usage of the pronoun.

● **Ordinal numerals** occur rarely, in a sequence of fixed collocations such as *una la mână* 'firstly'*, a doua la mână* 'secondly'*, a treia la mână* 'thirdly'. This sequence functions as a textual connector (it is similar to the adverbial structures *în primul rând* 'in the first place'*, în al doilea rând* 'in the second place' or to the nominal phrases *primul argument* 'the first argument'*, al doilea argument* 'the second argument'):

(7) Sunt supărată pe tine, fiindcă ai exagerat, **una la mână**; n-ai spus că am glumit, **a doua la mână**; n-ai spus tot, **a treia la mână**.

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'I am angry with you. To start with, you exaggerated; for another thing, you didn't say it was a joke; and thirdly, you didn't say everything' (conversation between students)

● **The personal clitic *o*** displays two types of uses, which are syntactically and stylistically different.

On the one hand, it occurs in the spoken language – colloquial or slang – with non-referential use (8a-i); for a thorough analysis of this pattern, see Pană Dindelegan 1994: 10-2). Although it is a "neuter accusative", the clitic can combine with intransitive verbs (8i) or with verbs which contextually display intransitive usages (8c, g), without making the verb functioning as transitive (the verb does not change its meaning). In such cases, the clitic functions as an expletive.

(8) a. a **o** apuca (la dreapta)
'to turn right'
b. a **o** băga pe mânecă
'cry craven'
c. a **o** da (în ninsoare / pe româneşte)
'start snowing / speaking Romanian'
d. a **o** drege
'mend it'
e. a **o** duce (de azi pe mâine / într-un chef / bine, rău / încă şase luni)
'live hard up / paint the town red / get along well, bad / continue living for six months'
f. a **o** face lată, fiartă / pe nebunul
'drop a brick / play the fool'
g. a **o** lua la fugă / la sănătoasa
'take to one's heels'
h. Sl. a **o** mierli ("a muri")
'kick the bucket'
i. a **o** porni (la drum / de jos / cu stângul) etc.
'set out' / 'begin as obscure' / 'put the wrong leg foremost'

On the other hand, it occurs in the formal language, functioning as a pro-sentence anaphoric, either separately (9a) or doubling the neutral demonstrative *asta* 'this' (9b):

(9) a. [S-a furat calculatorul]$_i$. Ştiu bine că
CL.REFL.ACC.3SG=(he)has stolen computer.DEF.NOM (I)know well that
n-ai făcut-**o**$_i$ tu
not=(you)have done= CL.ACC.F.3SG you.NOM
'The computer was stolen. I am sure you didn't do it'

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b. [Că mă înşală]$_i$, **(asta$_i$)** **o$_i$** simt de mult
that CL.ACC.1SG is unfaithful this.F.ACC CL.ACC.F.3SG (I)feel since long
'I have known for a long time that he is unfaithful to me'

As far as the frequency of the nowadays usage of the pro-sentence anaphora ***o*** is concerned, it was noticed the extension of the phenomenon during the 20th century in the high register, under French influence (Reinheimer, Tasmowski 2005: 112). Iliescu (2007 [1988]: 139) remarks that the omission of the feminine clitic ***o*** with neutral value is more frequent than the omission of its French or German corresponding forms. In present-day Romanian, the clitic is frequently omitted in negative formulas (10a-b), but it is obligatorily expressed after the verbal anaphoric *a face* 'do' (9a):

(10) a. Nu Ø cred / Nu Ø ştiu,
not (I)believe not (I) know
'I do not believe it' 'I do not know it'
b. A acționat fără să Ø ştie
(he)has acted without SĂ know.SUBJ.3SG
'He has acted without knowing'

2.2. The pronouns with neutral value are usually in the feminine singular (see above), but any of the forms that were mentioned previously can also occur in the feminine plural. *Ceea ce* 'what' is an exception, as it occurs only in the singular.

Compared to the already investigated inventory, there are certain quantifiers in the feminine plural (*toate* 'all', *multe* 'many') which may display a neutral value, either separately or combined with demonstrative / indefinite pronouns:

(11) a. (**Multe**) **Altele** mă interesează pe mine acum
'I am interested by (many) other things now'
b. (**Astea**) **toate** / **Toate astea** mă iritau
'(All) these were irritating me'

In contemporary spoken Romanian and in slang, even the personal clitic occurs in the plural (Avram 1997: 160; Zafiu 1994) in the following constructions:

(12) a. Sl. Nu **le** are cu matematica
'He doesn't get the hang of mathematics',
b. **Le** vede bine la matematică.
'He gets the hang of mathematics'.

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3. OLD ROMANIAN

An investigation of a corpus of old Romanian texts shows that the entire range of feminine pronouns with neutral value is **early** in language. However, there are slight differences in usage and frequency.

Similarly to the contemporary language, the singular forms are the most frequent (see below), but the plural forms are not excluded. In certain cases, more pronouns with neutral value may combine (13a-c):

(13) a. Înțeles-ați **acestea toate**?, Coresi, în *Texte*, 559
'Have you understood all these?'
b. Iară păscariul Petru **unele de acestea** făcând, Antim, 128
'and Petru the fishman doing some of these'
c. Şi **alte multe ca aceste** îl pârâsă ciocoii, Neculce, 377
'And the boyars accused him of many such things'

● **The demonstratives *asta / aceasta*** 'this' ***/ aceea*** 'that'

Their occurence as global anaphors (in argumental positions – direct object or secondary object – or complement of preposition) is frequent in language:

(14) a. **Aceasta** ne rugâm domnilor voastre, SB, 48[19]
'And we pray to Your Highnesses for this'
b. *Întrebare*: Cu ce veri adevăra că eşti creştin? *Răspuns*: Cu **aceaea că** m-am botezat în numele tatălui şi fiiului şi duhului sfânt, Coresi, în *Texte*, 102
'*Question*: How will you prove that you are a Christian? *Answe*r: I will prove this by the fact that I was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'
c. Şi **aceasta** învaţă pre noi Dumnezeu, **să** nu ţinemŭ pizmă, CC_2, 47
'And this is what God teaches us, not to hate each other'
d. Şi domnul nostru IIsus Hristos **aceasta** ne învaţă în sfânta Evenghelie: „Cĕreţi (zice) şi să va da voao", Antim, 227[20]
'And this is what our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us in the Holy Gospel: Ask (he says) and you shall receive'

At the same time, the usage of certain reason or purpose prepositional phrases (headed by the prepositions ***de, derept / direpț, pentru / păntru*** 'for'), as well as of temporal ones (headed by the preposition ***dup(ă)*** 'after') containing either the proximal or the distal demonstrative in the feminine (***(a)cĕsta*** 'this', ***(a)cĕa*** 'that') is frequent.

(15) a. **De ačĕsta** rugămъ pre dumiĕvostră, SB, 93[14]
'For this we ask you'

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b. **Dĕ cĕsta** scriem la domnile vostre, SB, 87[29]
'This is why we are writing to Your Highnesses'
c. **De ačasta** dăm ştire domilor voastre, SB, 76[6]
'This is why we are writing to Your Highnesses'
d. **Direptъ ačĕ** mă rog dumitale, SB, 85[14]
'That is why I'm begging you'
e. **Dup' ačasta** dau ştire domilor voastre, SB, 77[4]
'After this I will announce Your Highnesses'
f. **Dupâ aceea** simtъ patru oamiri, SB, 73[23], 47[3], 52[2]; see Coresi in *Texte*, 555
'After that, there are four men'
g. **derept aceaia**, Coresi, CC $_2$, 5, 23, 26, 56, 66, 78, 88
'for that'
h. **pentru aceaia**, Coresi, CC $_2$, 87, 92; see Coresi, in *Texte*, 565, Palia de la Orăştie, in *Texte*, 568, 569, 570, 571.
'for that'

As can be noticed from the examples above, both the proximal and the distal demonstratives (*aceasta* 'this' – *aceea* 'that'), as well as the demonstrative with or without aphaeresis of the initial vowel (*aceasta – ceasta*) were used the same frequently. The association of the distal demonstrative with the proximal is an interesting feature, which occurs as early as the 16th century, at Coresi:

(16) a. dereptŭ **aceaia** grăiaşte **aceasta**: vinŭ şi untŭ să vearse, Coresi, CC_2, 393
'That is why she is speaking: let the wine and the butter spill over'
b. După **aceaia** amu, **acestea toate** le auzimŭ şi văzumŭ, Coresi, CC_2, 93.
'After that, we saw and heard all these'

Also note the equivalence of the feminine demonstrative with neutral value *aceaia* 'that'/ *aceasta* 'this' to a complementizer phrase introduced by ***că*** or ***să*** (14c-d). The pattern is as early as the 16th century.

● **The indefinites *una*** 'one thing'**, *alta*** 'another thing' (also with the archaic variant ***altă***)

In the old language, their usage as global anaphors has been frequent since the first writings. The feminine singular is the most frequent (17a-d), but the feminine plural is not excluded (17e); there are also cases when the feminine singular form is accompanied by the negative pronoun *nimic(ă)* (17d):

(17) a. **alta** rog pre domneta Mihail voievod, DÎR, 23
'There is another thing that I'm asking you, Michael the Brave'
b. Şi acum iară **de alta** vă dămu în ştire, DÎR, 11
'And now we are announcing you another thing'

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c. **De alta**, de veţ întreba domniia-voastră, DÎR, 17
‘Then, if Your Highness 74asks…’
d. Că cine va creade aceastea şi le va priimi, **nemică altă** nu-i mai trebuiaşte spre credinţă a ispiti, Coresi CC_2, 133; see also 371, 479
‘Because he who will believe in these and will receive them will need nothing else to be tempted into belief’
e. împărţâtori afară **unele-altele**, Corbea, 409.
‘the people who share different things’

What is surprising in the usage of the indefinites *una, alta* with neutral value is their recurring presence, as early as the 16^{th} century, as bleached units, functioning as textual connectors. Their function is to add new arguments to the discourse (18a-c), to change the topic (18d), or to organize the arguments (18e):

(18) a. **Алътъ**, dăm ştire dumitale ca alui nostru părinte, SB, 91^4
‘We announce you one more thing, as if you were our father’
b. **Alta,** iarăş pohtim pre dumnĕta, SB, 85^8
‘Secondly, we ask you…’
c. **Altă,** pohtem pre dumnĕta ca pre un bun priiatin, SB, 82^{17}
‘Secondly, we ask you as a good friend’
d. **Al<ta**>, de veţ avĕ a şti Măriia vostră, SB, 87^2, 60^{11}
‘Secondly, if Your Highness will find out’
e. **Alta**..., **alta...**, **alta...**,; **alta** [...], SB, 74^{6-15}
‘an argument…, another argument…, another…, another’

Even though the texts we are referring to are original letters, we agree with Al. Rosetti, the editor, who claims that in those configurations there is “un certain nombre de phrases, formules stéréotypées”, representing “procédés de langue écrite” (SB: 42).

However, the indefinites *una, alta*, showing the same textual-pragmatic function, also occur in the 16^{th} century translated writings (see (19a), in CC_2) and in subsequent learnèd texts as well (see (19b-c), at Varlaam or Antim Ivireanul). This fact functions as evidence that textual stereotypes have functioned all along the history of the old language:

(19) a. **una..., alta..., a treia..., a patra,** Coresi**,** CC_2, 377
‘firsly..., secondly..., thirdly..., fourthly’
b. Pentru aceea, fiii mei întru Hristos iubiţi, scris-am asupra acestui catihizmus nou, **una**, pentru să puteţi sta împotrivă; **alta,** pentru ca să vă aflaţi întru învăţăturile preavoslaviei întăriţ, Varlaam, 188
‘That is why, my beloved sons onto Christ, I wrote onto this new catechism, firstly, so that you could stand against it; secondly, so that you could find yourselves strengthened in the holy teachings’

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c. Şi oare pentru ce au zis „Să iubeşti pre aproapele tău, ca însuț pre tine”? Pentru **doao lucruri**: **una**, pentru ca să arăț dragostea carea au arătat şi arată totdeauna Dumnezeu către tine **şi alta** pentru căci fieştecare om să iubeşte pre sine mai vîrtos..., Antim, 122.
‘And why did he say: *Love your neighbour as yourself*? It’s for two reasons: firstly, in order to show you the love that God had and always have for you, and, secondly, because every man loves himself more’

In example (19c), it is obvious that the selection of the feminine form is not the consequence of the agreement with the generic noun *lucru* ‘thing’, to which the pronoun is attached. Its selection is related to the neutral value of the feminine pronoun.

● Ordinal numerals

In the list of feminine singular forms with neutral values there are also **ordinal numerals**; they display a close value to the indefinite pronouns *una, alta*, functioning as textual and argumentative markers. They occur in extensive sequences in which the first member is the invariable numeral *întâi* ‘first’ (20); seldom, the indefinite pronoun *una* may also occur with the same function (see (19a) above), and the next (up to eight) members are ordinal numerals in the feminine singular. The frequency of such series shows that in the old written language the pattern was functioning as a stereotype of textual organization. The pattern is as early as the 16th century, occuring at Coresi:

(20) **întâi**..., **a doa**..., **a treia..., a patra**, Coresi, CC_2, 322.

The same textual organization pattern surfaces in the following centuries, at Varlaam (21a-b) and Antim Ivireanul (21c):

(21) a. nemică alt nu iaste fără numai aceaste trei ce le scrie Pavel apostol către corinteani... **Întâi, ...; a doa,...¸a treia, ...**, Varlaam, 191
‘there is nothing else except for these three things that the Apostle Paul writes to Corinthians: first...; second...; third...’

b. **Întâiu, ... A doa..., A treia..., A patra,..., A cincea,...A şeasea, A şeaptea,.... A opta, ..., A noa**..., Varlaam, 229-230
‘the first argument…, the second…, the third…, the fourth…, the fifth…, the sixth…, the seventh…, the eighth…, the ninth ’

c. pentru aceasta s-au rânduit aceste sfinte zile: **una** pentru ca să ne odihnim şi noi şi dobitoacele noastre...; **a doua,** pentru ca să mulțemim şi să dăm laudă lui Dumnezeu....; **a treia,** să auzim cântările şi slujbele..., Antim, 141.

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'This is why these holy days were given: firstly, for us and our animals to rest; secondly, in order to thank God and praise Him; last, to listen to praises and sermons'

● **The compound relative pronoun *ceea ce* 'what'**

The neutral relative pronoun *ceea ce* 'what' was attested as early as the 16th century, at Coresi [1581] (22a). Then, it occurs at Varlaam [1645] (22b); in Eustatievici's *Grammar* [1757] it occurs both in the actual text (most frequently in definitions (22c)) and in grammatical explanations, in which case ***ceea ce*** 'what' is cited as a distinct pronominal form (22d)):

(22) a. Vărsă untŭ şi vinŭ, cuvântulŭ învăţăturiei: untulŭ amu, **ceaia ce** cheamă cu dulceaţă şi cu blânzie, iară vinulŭ, **ceaia ce**-i mai înfricoşază de scoate spre bunătăţi, Coresi, CC_2, 392
'He spilt the butter and the wine, the words of wisdom: the butter, which is sweetness and kindness, and the wine, which make them fear and do good'

b. Cum zice iarăş svântul Pavel că «n-avem aicea cetate stătătoare, ci **ceaea ce** vine să cercăm», Varlaam, 193
'As Pavel the Saint says again that we won't settle here, we have to try what comes next'

c. Ce este ortografia? Este partea cea din întâi a gramaticii, **ceea ce** ne învaţă […], Eustatievici, 12
'What orthography is? It is the first part of grammar, which teaches us...'

d. Acest în loc de nume (*în loc de nume* „pronume") *care* sau *cel ce, **ceea ce*** să încuviinţează [...], Eustatievici, 98.
'This noun-substitute (*în loc de nume* 'pronoun') *care* or *cel ce*, which is used…'

● **The pro-sentence personal clitic *o***

In the Romanian linguistics, this phenomenon is considered to have occurred rather late; it is a loan translation from French, characteristic of the formal language. Indeed, the corpus shows that its usage is related to the formal language, but its attestations are earlier. It is frequently employed by Antim Ivireanul, collocated with verbs of saying (*o adeverează* 'confirms it', *o dovedeşte* 'proves it', *o mărturiseşte* 'confesses it', *o zice* 'says it' (23a-b)), with cognitive or perception verbs (*o ştiu* 'I know it', *o vedem* 'we see it' (23c)), or with the verb *a face* 'do', used as a verbal anaphor (23d).

(23) a. Îş deşchide mai vîrtos uşa ceriului, a luminii cei adevărate. **O zice** Isaia la al nouaolea cap. [...]
O adeverează David la psalomul 16. **O mărturisĕşte** marele Pavel cătră corinthĕni, Antim, 257

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'He is opening the door of heaven, of the true light even more powerfully. Isaiah says it in the 9th chapter. David confirms it in the 16th psalm. Paul the Great confesses it to Corinthians'

b. Şi **voi dovedi-o**, Antim, 235
'And I will prove it'

c. Iar împăratul Arcadie i-au răspuns: **o ştiu** eu aceasta de mult, Antim, 239
'And The Emperor Arcadius answered: I have known this for a long time'

d. Iară noi acum, de facem cuiva vreun bine sau vreo îndemână, **o facem** mai mult cu fățărie, Antim, 121.
'And now, when we do good, we will dissimulate it'

In Neculce's chronicle, characterized by a strong non-standard and spoken character, the pattern occurs sporadically, and only when it resumes other feminine pronouns with neutral values:

(24) Vădzind acel lucru, tare s-au bucurat, că **una ca acie** să să facă de mult **o** aştepta, Neculce, 126.
'Seeing that, they strongly rejoiced, as they have been waiting for a long time for such a thing to happen'

4. SUMMARY

The usage of feminine pronouns with neutral value **is early in language**. In the 16th–18th centuries, the same forms and, to a great extent, the same usages as in the contemporary language were employed: (i) in argumental positions, most frequently in the very well represented position of the secondary object; (ii) in (idiomatic) prepositional phrases: *de aceea / de aceasta* 'that / this is why'; *drept aceea / aceasta; pentru aceea / aceasta* 'for this / that' (iii) with a discourse-pragmatic function of textual connectors or organizers.

Certain patterns, considered to be late loan translations from French, were attested earlier (see the pronominal ***o*** as a pro-sentence, frequent at Antim Ivireanul [1692–1714]).

The distal demonstrative reduces its usage as a pro-sentence anaphoric, while the "simple" proximal demonstrative *asta* specializes as a pro-sentence anaphoric.

The usage of the investigated pronouns as textual markers becomes less frequent, which means that certain textual stereotypes specific to the old language were eliminated from language.

The new feminine pronominal form with neutral value *ceea ce* emerged as early as the 16th century. The pronoun diversified its usages from relative pronoun to pro-sentence anaphoric. The two usages co-exist in the contemporary language.

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