GENDER(ED) DISCOURSE: IMAGES AND EXPERIENCES IN 19TH CENTURY WOMEN'S WRITING

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Abstract: Based on the way society is reflected in nineteenth century novels and short stories, the doctrine of separate spheres sought to restrict women's rights while simultaneously glorified women and praised the family in an era of individualism. Although the women's emancipation movement of the late nineteenth century contributed to the transformation of women's social roles, it did not reject a separate, unique female identity. Thus the latter half of the 19th century was a time of remarkable change and emancipation for Romanian women with regard to political engagement, legal status, access to higher education, and their entrance into the professions and public life. In addition, their visibility in the professional world of literature and arts enabled them to start forging a tradition of their own. The present article focuses not only on the writings of canonical writers (Sofia Nădejde, Veronica Micle) but also on a number of writers who were neglected by critics, like Eugenia Ianculescu de Reuss, Constanţa Hodoş, Emilia Lungu, Adela Xenopol, Constanţa Marino-Moscu, Smaranda Gheorghiu; those who wrote their work in foreign languages, (Martha Bibescu, Elena Văcărescu, Dora d'Istria), the foreign born writers Maria Rosetti, Otilia Marchiş, Bucura Dumbravă, the queens, Elisabeth (Elisabeta de Neuwied, Queen of Romania) and Marie of Romania (Marie Alexandra Victoria, previously Princess Marie of Edinburgh).

Keywords: 19th century Romanian women's gender(ed) discourse and writing

The entry of Romanian women into the profession of writing was a slow process that became clearer at the end of the 19th century. Most of the first Romanian women writers stepped on the public stage as journalists or translators and their writings were addressed especially to women. Their first translations covered a wide range of topics and genres: poetry, drama, prose, and non-fictional works such as speeches, memoires or newspaper articles. In the Romanian Principalities, the how-to manuals for women, *Căminul* (*The Home*),[1] Ecaterina Steriadi – *Buna menajeră* (*The Good Housekeeper*), 1874, or Safta Ştirbei, *Educaţia copiilor* (*Children's Education*), 1848, were very much in demand and urged young women to seek fulfillment in marriage and maternity. Maria Rosetti was the editor of the journal *Mama şi copilul* (*Mother and Child*): Bucharest, 1865–1866 while Constanţa de Dunca-Schiau (1843-1924?) (pen names E. D'Albon, Constantia Dunca de Sajo, Camille d'Alb) ran the feminist newspaper *Amicul familiei* (*The Friend of the Family*) Bucharest, 1863–1865, both of them drawing the readers' attention toward women's emancipation by presenting a comparative approach to this issue, the Western influence upon the Romanian Principalities. Other women writers focused their creation and articles on folklore and Romanian traditions, thus they set up journals in accordance with their preoccupations: Smaranda Andronescu-Gheorghiu (1857-1944) edited *Altiţe şi bibiluri* (1893-1894) while Elena Didia Odorica Sevastos (1864-1929) edited *Rândunica* (1893-1894). In Bucharest, Adela Xenopol set up the journal *Dochia* (1896–1898) dedicated to feminine writing and she used to write most of the articles for it. Later she was the editor-in-chief for other three journals: *Românca* (*The Romanian Woman*), 1905–1906, *Viitorul româncelor* (*The Future of*

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Romanian Women), 1912–1916, and *Revista scriitoarei* (*The Woman Writer's Journal*), 1926–1928. Emilia Tailler was the editor of *Jurnalul femeii* (*The Woman's Journal*) and Eliza V. Cornea edited the journal *Rolul femeii* (*The Woman's Role*), Bucharest, 1883. Constanţa Hodoş, published (1905–1907, 1914–1916), in Bucharest, *Revista noastră* (*Our Journal*), a literary, artistic and social journal.

The first novel written by a woman was published under the pseudonym Doamna L (Maria Boucher Movila), *Omul muntelui* (*The Man from the Mountains*) (1858) and there is not much information about the real identity of the writer. In 1960s there were few literary debates concerning this writer but they concluded by supposing she was a French governess who lived in Romania for a period of time. She was supported by the writer V. A. Urechia (some critics believe both of them wrote the novel, in fact) who was running the journals *Zimbrul şi Vulturul* (*The Wisent and the Eagle*), *Steaua Dunării* (*The Danube's Star*) where the novel and a short story, *Amelia Stefănescu*, were published. Other women writers also used pen names: Dora d'Istria (Princess Elena Ghica), Smara (Smaranda Gheorghiu) or Carmen Sylva (Elisabeta de Neuwied, Queen of Romania). When Queen Elisabeta wrote together with Mite Kremnitz (born Marie Charlotte von Bardeleben, pen name George Allan), both of them used the pseudonyms Dito and Item for novels such as *From Two Worlds* (1884) and *Astra* (1887), as well as for the volume *Revenge and other Novels* (1888).

Sofia Cocea (1839 -1861) wrote articles for unionist journals *Tribuna* (*The Tribune*), *Reforma* (*The Reform*), *Gazeta poporului* (*The Gazette of People*), *Zimbrul* (*The Buffalo*), *Foiletonul Zimbrului* (*The Wisent's Column*), *Românul* (*The Romanian*), *Dacia*, *Steaua Dunării* (*The Danube's Star*), *Gazeta de Moldavia* (*The Gazette of Moldavia*). In her articles she approached many aspects of the social life: the situation concerning the education and the national culture, the role of women in society, female illegitimacy (Kraus, 2011), the hard life of the peasants or the foreign affairs of the Romanian Principalities.

The French-Hungarian author of Romanian origins Otilia Marchiş (1873-1951), born in Satu Mare, was a famous international writer and artist, who embarked for an Oriental trip, as Martha Bibescu, to Japan, the Indies and the East and stops in Port-Said, Bombay, Colombo, Calcutta, Singapore, Hong-Kong, Shanghai, Yokohama and Tokyo. She sent articles for the journals such as *Budapesti Naplo*, *Uj idök* (*New Times*), *Szatmarnemeti Közlöny* (*Satu Mare Herald*), and *Luceafărul* (*The Morning Star*) and sometimes signed with the pen name Kémeri Sándor.

The first women journalists appeared on the public stage signing their contributions with pen names a "rhetorical mechanism" that as Jenny Coleman observes "allowed literary women in the nineteenth century to deal with their socially prescribed subordination was to write under an instrumental pseudonym that simultaneously embraced their identities as women while challenging the socially constructed and prescribed nature of what it meant to be a woman" (Coleman, 2011: 2), thus, Ariel (Mărgărita Miller-Verghi), D. Şerban (Claudia Millian), Elena A. Tănăsescu (Elenea Codreanu), Fatma (Elena Farago), Laura Vampa (Libertatea Bruteanu), Maura Prigor (Coralia Costescu), others chose more than one pseudonym: Fulmen, Laura, Lorica (Ecaterina Raicoviceanu). Emilia Lungu Puhallo (1853-1932) used many pen names, "Bănăţeanul," "Bănăţeanul Călător," "Bănăţeanul June," "Bănăţeanul Moş," while signing the articles for *Familia* (*The Family*), *Biserica şi şcoala* (*The Church and School*), *Amicul familiei* (*The Friend of Family*), *Drapelul* (*The Flag*).

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Thus, towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century an increasing number of educated women involved in the writing business and contributed to periodicals and newspapers by writing articles, stories, translating women's writing, because as Lorna Shelley remarks the female journalist was frequently upheld as a positive role model in journals aimed at young educated middle-class girls who may have been contemplating a writing or journalistic career. Persuasive periodical accounts of women journalists emphasized both the rigors and attractions of the profession, often casting the female journalist as a heroic New Woman figure adaptable to modern and challenging work environments (Shelley, 2009: 4)

In her journal *Femeia română* (*The Romanian Woman*), "a social, literary and domestic" journal (1879-1881), Maria Flehtenmacher wrote many reports on international conferences concerning women's emancipation and translated into Romanian the keynote speeches delivered by important feminists from France, England, and United States. For example, she translated some articleswritten by Eugénie Potonié-Pierre (1844–1898), a member of the Congress of Women in Paris and the founder of the Federation of French Feminist Societies in 1892, "Mama" ("The Mother") (1879), "Un răspuns" ("An Answer") (1879), "Femeia medic" ("Medicine Woman") (1879), "Munca şi salariul" ("Labor and Salary") (1879).

There are a lot of anonymous translations published in installments that may be attributed also to Maria Flechtenmacher, like *Moartea Rachelei* (*Rachel et la tragedie*) (1878) by Jules Janin, *Florile şi artiştii* (*Flowers and Artists*), (1878), a short story written by Madame de Genlis (1878) or *Bancherul* (*The Financier*) by M. E. Braddon (1880).

Translations represented for women another way to enter the public space, even if some of them translated without signing their versions while others used only the initial letters of their names. In the present article we will try to focus only on the translations from books written by women authors. In a chronological order, the first Romanian women translators were: Catica Faca who translated Jeanne Louise Henriette Campan's *Thoughts on Education* (1834) and Catinca Samboteanu who worked on Alain-René Lesage's *Le diable boiteux* (1835).

In 1839, Ermiona Asachi, (1821, Viena - 1900, Paris), Edgar Quinet's wife, translated one of Emile Deschamps' short stories, *Rene-Paul and Paul-Rene*, and Karoline Pichler's biblical poem *Rut*. In 1843 she translated the philosophical work of Silvio Pellico, *Despre îndatoririle oamenilor* (*Dei doveri degli uomini*). In Paris she wrote (signing as Hermione Quinet) *Memoires d'exil* (1868) and *Cinquante ans d'amitie. Michelet-Quinet* (1871).

In the same year, 1839, Adelaida Cristanovschi (?-?), a translator whose biography is totally unknown, translated *Adelaïde, mémoires d'une jeune fille* written by the French author Julie de Quérangal, Madame Augustin Thierry (1802-1844) while, in 1852, Sofia Cocea translated Madame de Genlis' *Palmira and Flaminia*.

Maria Rosetti (1819-1893), who ran the journal *Mama şi copilul* (*Mother and Child*) for which she wrote most of the articles, as a translator she worked on Madame Genlis' *Zuma ou la découverte du quinquina, suivi de la belle Paule, de Zénéide, et des roseaux du Tibre* (1866) and Alexandre de Saillet's *Micii hoinari fricoşi* (1866).

Mărgarita Miller Verghi (1865–1953) translated poems of the English writer Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1912) and the English-born Romanian Queen Marie of Edinburgh, the

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volume *Visătorul de vise* (*The Dream Dreamer*) in 1914 and *Patru anotimpuri din viata unui om* (*Four Seasons from a Man's Life*) in 1915. Eufrosina C. Hommoriceanu (1853-?) submitted to the journal "Femeia Română" patriotic poems about the War of Independence (1877-1878), like *Armata Română în 1877* (*Romanian Army in 1877*), *Românii au învins* (*The Romanians Were the Winners*) and translated *România înaintea Europei* (*Romania in front of Europe*) by Enrico Croce, 1879 and Caroline de Barrau's *Femeea şi educaţiunea* (*La Femme et l'Education*).

Carmen Sylva was a prolific writer and all her writings were well received by readers all around the world and they were translated by women in many languages, besides those translated into Romanian by Livia Maiorescu, Elena Rosetti, Lia Hârsu or Hélène Poénaro. The Dutch writers Cornélie Huygens and Marie de Bunsen translated five of the queen's books, *Castel Pelesch, Door alle eeuwen, Er wordt geklopt, Gedachten Naar* as for Cornélie and *Op lydenspaden* for Marie. Dona Faustina Saez de Melgar translated into Spanish *Flores y Perlas*. Edith Hopkirk translated into English *From memory's shrine* and *A Beai Queen's Fairy Tales* while Helen Zimmern worked on the cycle of tales *Pilgrim Sorrow* and Helen Wolff translated *Shadows on Love's Dial*. Harmath Lujza and Lina B. Büttner translated into Hungarian *Ket vilàgbol* and respectively *Egy ima*. *Omul et Cetatea Babei* and *Piatra Arsă. Caraimanul. Vîrful cu dor et Furnica* were translated into Russian by Madame B. D. Porozovsky.

At the literary level, the novels and the short stories written by women writers depicted the end of nineteenth century Romanian society as one controlled by the power of money. A woman who lives in this society could reach the standards of a good material situation only by associating with a man. In other words, a woman does not have a direct power and she would always depend on a male protector. As a consequence, her dependence means the assurance of the material security and the society's goodwill, as well as an extreme limited life. Therefore, the woman is caught in a trap of societal rules generated by the material situation that makes her a simple adornment in the man's life.

The restrictions imposed on women from all social categories influenced the themes that were debated in women's writings as well as the literary genres chosen by women to express themselves (Branişte, 2006). Due to the fact that most of the women from the middle or high class spent almost all their time indoors, their fiction tended to concentrate on the private sphere and brought up many topics considered taboo in the 19th century: divorce, adoptive mother, stepmothers, abortion, feminism, prostitution, domestic violence, incest, deficiencies in girls' education, interethnic marriages.

The women writers approaches many subjects concerning marriage and family life presenting women as mothers, daughters, wives, sisters: Constanţa Marino-Moscu's *Ada Lazu*, abortion: Sofia Nădejde's *Patimi* (*Passions*), incest (Constanţa Hodoş' *Din acelaşi sânge* (*From the Same Blood*) and Smara' (*The Ice Floe*), prostitution: Elena Văcărescu's *Vraja* (*The Spell*) or Smara's *Fata tatii* (*Daddy's Girl*), domestic violence: Constanţa Hodoş's *Trei surori* (*Three Sisters*), interethnic marriages, Constanţa Hodoş's *Evreica* (*The Jewish Girl*), abusive behavior of an adoptive mother: Sofia Nădejde's *Puterea banilor* (*The Power of Money*), the widow, Constanţa Hodoş's *In doliu* (*The Mourning*). At the end of the 19th century women were the first ones who wrote about divorce Constanţa Hodoş's *Trei surori* (*Three Sisters*), until then I. A. Bassarabescu was the only representative of the male authors

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who talked about this controversial issue in a short story, *Leandrii* (*The Oleanders*), where the protagonists divorced.

The women writers presented women in the paid workforce and women's unpaid work in the household economy, financially independent woman: Sofia Nădejde's *Robia banului* (*The Slave of Money*).

In her article "Divorţul" ("The Divorce"), written for the journal *Femeia Română* (*The Romanian Woman*), the feminist writer Nelli Cornea pointed at the lack of education for girls as being one of the main causes that led to the numerous divorces. In this sense, on the 7th of February 1863, Constanţa Schiau de Dunca presented to the Legislator Chamber a project concerning the organization of the Romanian girls' education, which stipulates that: I. The elementary education is *compulsory* and *free of taxes.* II. The setting up of primary-elementary schools for girls, in a sufficient number in order to apply the law that would make the education *compulsory*. III. The prioritized admission of Romanian women to the public directive system, as teachers. IV. The setting up of Normal Schools, in order to train capable Romanian school-teachers and professors. V. The setting up of superior-primary schools for girls. The setting up of an education system that corresponds to the gymnasium for boys. VI. The setting up of schools of arts and feminine professions, namely "vocational schools." VII. The setting up of laws which place the girl's education system supervised by women inspectors and mixed inspection committees. These took effect under the form of the Primary public instruction Law from 1864.

In two of her short stories, *Mânuşiţa* (*The Little Hand*) and *Brăţara* (*The Bracelet*), Constanţa Hodoş talks about the deficiencies of girls' education within the system performed by nuns in monasteries and she also draws attention to the lack of sexual education.

In her writings, Constanţa Marino-Moscu talks about liberal issues like woman's emancipation, social injustice, religion and education, marriages based on moral obligations not on legal contracts. Such an example is depicted in the short story *Ada Lazu*.

The feminist attitude of some women writers is also reflected in the construction of their female characters. In her novel *Spre emancipare* (*Toward Emancipation*), Eugenia Ianculescu de Reuss proposes a unique identity model for that time: the main character is a feminist writer, a missioner. While she is giving lectures in public all around the country, Corina often stops in villages in order to make the countrywomen aware they need to be educated. She travels around the country in order to set up asylums for women lacking moral and financial support, as well as to deliver speeches in which she focused on social activity guidance and achieving the feminine ideal. The novel *Spre emancipare* (*Towards Emancipation*) is a manifest for women education in all the social and family fields.

Among the women who composed their writings in foreign languages, Martha Bibescu who "represents a reference point in the so-called Romanian Francophony," (Botezat, 2013: 259) conducted a successful literary career of both novels and nonfiction during the first half of the twentieth century, being a laureate of the French Academy and appointed member of the Royal Belgian Academy of French Language and Literature. Written in French, her works, as to mention the most famous ones, *Isvor, le pays des saules* (1924) and *Le Perroquet Vert* (1924), are signed "Princess Bibesco" and a series of fiction stories are published under the pseudonym "Lucile Decaux."

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Dora d'Istria (Princess Elena Ghica) traveled a lot through Switzerland, Greece, France, Belgium, Germany, the United States, and Italy where she settled permanently in Florence. She wrote on ethnological matters from Balkan folklore (Romanian, Albanian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek) with "key topics such as Albanian nationalism, popular songs, Swiss customs, Greek inheritance" (Oktapoda, 2012) but also about the problem of the Balkan nations (Romanian, Greek, Albanian) under Ottoman occupation. She made her voice while sustaining all the Romanians should get united in a modern national state.

Besides being more a nationalist or folklorist, Dora d'Istria was also a feminist writer who presented in two important books the life of women both in Occident and Orient spaces, *Femmes en Orient* (1859-1860) and another titled *Des Femmes par une femme* (1865).

Bucura Dumbravă, also known as Františky Jozefíny Szekuliszovej or Francisca Iosepha Szeculici or Fany (Fanny) Seculici, born in Bratislava, was one of Queen Carmen Sylva's ladies in waiting. Being strongly supported by the Queen she started to write in German. Her two novels depict historical and social events having as main characters Iancu Jianu, *Haiducul* (*The Outlaw*) and Tudor Vladimirescu for *Pandurul* (*The Pandour*). In 1905, as a Romanian folklore promoter, Bucura Dumbravă created the "Chindia" Society in order to make known the Romanian dances and folk costumes. She loved hiking and she was one of the first women in the world who escaladed the Mont Blanc. She wrote *Cartea Munţilor* (*The Book of Mountains*) as a guide for people fond of crossing mountains. Later she became interested in theosophical studies and she translated Jiddu Krishnamurti's book *At the Feet of the Master* (1924), and then she met the author at a congress. In 1925, she set up the Romanian theosophical lodge in Bucharest and she went for a trip to India. On her return she got sick on the sailing vessel and died in Port Said. The notes taken during this last trip were published post mortem, in 1927, by Emanoil Bucuţa bearing the title *Pe drumurile Indiei. Cele din urmă pagini. Scrisori* (*On the Roads of India. The Last Pages. Letters*).

At the level of non-literary examples refer to newspapers articles (most of the Romanian women writers wrote for journals, too), speeches: Constanţa de Dunca Schiau, *Feminismul în România* (*Feminism in Romania*) (1904), memoirs: Lucia Hossu Longin *Amintiri 1880-1930* (*Diary of 1880-1930*) (1932), letters and critical work Iulia Aricescu, who wrote the monographic work *Opera şi viaţa Doamnei Sophia Chrisoscoleu, născută Cocea* (*The Work and Life of Mrs. Sophia Chrisoscoleu, born Cocea*) (1862), Smaranda Gheorghiu wrote the study *Veronica Micle* (1892) while *Impresii literare* (*Literary Impressions*) (1908), written by Izabela Sadoveanu-Evan, is another notable work of literary criticism. Later, in 1935, Mărgărita Miller-Verghi and Ecaterina Săndulescu compiled an anthology *Evoluţia scrisului feminin în România* (*The Evolution of Women's Writing in Romania*). In the case of literature and arts role-generating areas, for instance, besides women who worked in the field of arts (the actress Agata Bârsescu, the pianist Ana Voileanu-Nicoară), or theatre reviewers (Maria Flehtenmacher), the literary texts will include short stories and novels in which the main characters are women artists Eugenia Ianculescu de Reuss, *Spre dezrobire* (*Toward Emancipation*).

The expansion of women's political influence after the War of Independence laid the foundation for the greatest political mobilization of women in Romanian history – through the setting up of many committees for women. Between the time of its founding in Iassy, in 1877 and the height of its influence even two years later, *Comitetul Central al femeilor în frunte cu*

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Maria Rosetti Roznovanu (*The Central Committee Led by Maria Rosetti Roznovanu*) became an umbrella organization for a multitude of social undertakings, including woman's suffrage, in many other towns as Fălticeni, Piatra Neamţ, Roman, Tecuci, and Bârlad.

Women founded many feminist societies, the first one *Reuniunea femeilor române* (*The Reunion of the Romanian Women*) in 1886, in Iassy, when Cornelia Emilian also initiated actions to support the emancipation movement. Later, in 1895, she founded *Liga femeilor române* (*The League of the Romanian Women*), the first Romanian society with statutes and a printed bulletin *Buletinul Ligii femeilor* (*The Bulletin of the Women's League*), that urged women to fight for their political rights and showed how women reformers and gender-specific issues they championed helped advance class-specific issues during a time of fundamental social, economic, and political transition.

The writer and the journalist Elena Bacaloglu, an ardent admirer of fascism, set up the National Italo-Romanian Cultural and Economic Movement in 1921 and wrote a book *Movimento nazionale fascista italo-rumeno* in 1923. In 1910, Alexandrina Cantacuzino set up the Societatea Naţională a Femeilor Ortodoxe (National Orthodox Society for Women) while in 1921, together with Calypso C. Botez, Elena M. Meissner, Cornelia Emilian and other feminists she initiated Consiliul Naţional al Femeilor Române (National Council of Romanian Women), and later, in 1929, she founded the first feminine political party Gruparea Naţională a Femeilor Române (The National Group of Romanian Women). In 1912, Maria Baiulescu set up Uniunea Femeilor Române (The Committee of Romanian Women), an organization intended to represent the women from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Maria Baiulescu (1860-1941) was an ardent feminist supporter and a fighter for liberation of Romanians under the Hapsburg domination. She made her literary debut by publishing translations from French, English, and German literature (Saltîkov-Şcedrin, L. de Meurville, H. Bernstein, F. Freiligrath, Fr. Schiller, H. Sudermann, W. Shakespeare, J. W. Goethe) and she signed them using the pen name "Sulfina." Later she submitted articles for: *Vatra* (*The Heath*), *Familia* (*The Family*), *Gazeta Femeii* (*Women's Gazette*), *Tribuna* (*The Tribune*) *Universul literar* (*The Literary Universe*). While she strongly militated for the women's rights she delivered speeches in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, and Romania trying to make an international network of women's movements.

The end of the nineteenth century offered Romanian women both in Transylvania and in the Romanian Principalities ways to make their names on the public stage due to their involvement in political and literary issues, thus opening the road to modernization and emancipation as Romania granted women the right to vote much earlier than many Western countries and that thing could happened as to share Katherine Hunt's opinion while analyzing J. S. Mill who fought for women's rights and called "for a legal basis of equal rights of opportunity for women as a necessary step toward women's and men's moral regeneration, this was insufficient. Mill called for individuals in society to recognize women as human beings whose subjection is detrimental to humanity. The modern and moral progress of humanity depended, for Mill, upon people substantively altering their attitudes through reasonable self-reflection and critical assessment of their surroundings (Hunt, 2013: 44).

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1. my translation. All the references to the Romanian books or publications are in my translation.

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