



Women's emancipation movement in Old Kingdom Romania. Sequences of a paradigm shift

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Abstract

The present paper highlights some of the contrasts and inconsistencies accompanying women's emancipation process in the Old Kingdom of Romania. In the second half of the 19th-century, Romanian society witnessed a paradigm shift best translated into the increasingly active role of women in society. It wasn't a sudden change in women's status but a gradual adaptation of the collective mind to new cultural contexts (political, social, economic, and technological). Withal, the women's emancipation movement can be understood as part of the modernization puzzle, "the best of all worlds," requiring the full involvement of both sexes. Urban elite representatives, organized in feminist societies, campaigned for women's civil and political rights, overcoming the official discourse centered on the "natural" differences between men and women. Another battle was fought to dismiss the socially constructed gender differences that destined men to public spaces and power roles while women remained cloistered in their homes. In other words, the Romanian society was willing to cultivate the woman only in her capacity as a mother (metaphorically, mother of the nation), wife, and good Christian, and less as a full-fledged citizen. As Romanian society matures and culture increases, the "feminist cause" gains more consistency, advocating for legal and economic equality, followed by political rights. Also, by navigating the list of permissions and prohibitions, women found new ways to overcome the sexual division of roles.

Keywords: feminism; biologic determinism; cultural determinism; conflicting morals; social change

1. Introduction

In the second half of the 19th century, Romanian society witnessed intense transformation that marked public and private spaces. On an individual level, the contrasts experienced led to the redefining of personal identity.

After the Romanian Independence (1878) and Kingdom proclamation (1881), modernization intensified, especially by assimilating the patterns of Western civilization development. A keen observer of the paradigm shifts in the Western world, Stefan Zweig wrote: "[...] there have been more changes and alterations in this half-century than in ten generations." (Zweig, 2014, 8)

Until the outbreak of the First World War, Romania gained a new appearance and a new velocity, determined by the amazing inventions that connected the country, in real-time, to the daily realities from the farthest corners of the world. The change in mentality is best noted in the increasingly active role of women. The representatives of the urban elite, organized in feminist associations, began campaigning for women's civil and political rights. The questioning of traditional social roles has been met with resistance in conservative groups, generating discussions and controversy about the "nature" of women and their purpose in society. Thus, the woman's body became an ambivalent character, on the one hand, idealized in sentimental short stories and novels, when covered in conventions, and on the other hand, "dissected" by the fiercest critics when it dared to provoke the status quo, to disregard the established idea of femininity.

Throughout the Romantic century, legislators, moralists, pedagogues, physicians, politicians, and philosophers strongly argued that women, by their "nature," were inferior to men, destined to weakness and disease, with inherently pathological physiology. Moreover, doctors regarded women's intellectual work with suspicion, believing that, especially at puberty, it interfered with the normal development of the female reproductive system. This so-called "natural" difference between a man and a woman translated, to a large extent, into the established distribution of gender roles in society (Mihăilescu, 2009, 211). Romanian women emancipation during the Old Kingdom fought to overcome both biological and cultural determinism. A woman's body acquired social consistency as an extension of her home and family, a reality supported by religious and secular authority. In other words, the Romanian society was willing to cultivate the woman only in her capacity as a mother (also metaphorically "mother of the nation"), wife, and good Christian, and less as a full-fledged citizen. (Ciupală, 2003)

2. The "given nature" question

Since the beginning of the 19th century, the "woman's issue" became a central theme in various studies conducted by American and western European physicians, philosophers, and social commentators (Ellis, 1839; Lewis, 1839; Walker, 1840). They emphasized the differences between the sexes, concluding that a woman's mind and body were "naturally" more inclined to domestic life and feelings. In contrast, men were just as "naturally" more rational, thus superior. The biological disparity between men and women is a natural justification of the socially constructed distinction between the sexes, especially the sexual division of labor. (Bourdieu, 2003)

The theoretical counter-offensive follows shortly after (Reid, 1843; Cobbe, 1863; Taylor, 1868). The work of Harriet Taylor, "The Enfranchisement of Women," originally published in the Westminster Review in July 1851, constructs a powerful and logical argument that rejects the notion of women's "natural" domesticity and submission to men. It questions the idea of women's "inability" to participate in public life, insightfully emphasizing that the rules against such participation were superfluous. If a woman could not succeed in public, then the restrictive laws were obsolete. John Stuart Mill's "The Subjection of Women" (1869) exposes the inequalities between men and women in Victorian society. Considering Mill's opinion, the "weaker sex subordination to the strongest sex" is based only on theory rather than facts. He also compares the restrictions imposed on women to the horrible system of slavery.

Medical and biological arguments certified traditional roles and blocked women's access to education, various professions, or reproductive control. For example, scientists considered that women have a smaller head and brain, weaker muscles, and nervous system, and an intuitive but primitive moral sense compared to men, limiting their role in society to domestic work. Moreover, some physicians (Clarke, 1874) believed that a women's body, especially her central nervous system, was controlled by her uterus and ovaries. Edward H. Clarke, a physician and professor at Harvard, argued against women's admission to higher education. According to Clarke, the exercise of "intellectual power" could irreparably affect the students' health, leaving them infertile. As a result, Clarke concluded that separate schools for girls are needed to set a mandatory rest period of four days a month, according to their menstrual cycle.

In 1876, Mary Putnam Jacobi, an eminent physician, won the prestigious Harvard Boylston Prize for her response to Clarke's hypothesis. Her book, "The Question of Rest for Women during Menstruation," showed that education and work don't impact women's health. Like other health reformers in America, Putnam believed that a better diet, fresh air, exercise, and education secured health, regardless of gender. The new theories were disseminated across the ocean.

The increasingly secular approach to human nature promoted by the 19th-century philosophy and science reached the Romanian principalities, being popularized in specialized works (Theodori, 1825; Vasici-Ungureanu, 1830; Episcopescu, 1843) as well as in periodicals (e.g., *Curierul Românesc*, *Albina Românească*), thus addressing a wider audience. Foreign publications dedicated to the "nature" of women circulated in the Romanian intellectual circles. A few translations (Mill, 1895; Bebel, 1911) appear only towards the end of the century.

Following the Western example, the local scientific authority (doctors, physiologists) insists on the biological disparity between the sexes. "The system of spinal innervation in women is more pronounced, and the brains are undeniably smaller. Hence, the women's senses are more developed than her intelligence" (Negură, 1873, 18), not allowing her to attend higher education or hold decision-making positions. The differences are both physical and psychological (Șăineanu, 1905). Dominated by feelings and passions, women cannot claim to fulfill the same tasks as men do and should be satisfied to remain "the heart of the social body" (Ciupală, 2003, 109). Even men who accepted gender equality felt that women should not interfere in political affairs (Ienibace, 1890), as it would exhaust them.

The response given by intellectual and social elite women reveals their concern for personal identity defining. In 1879, woman's rights activist and innovative journalist Adela Xenopol argued that women are not inferior to men, as some try to accredit (Femeia Română, 1879). Feminine qualities and abilities are equal to men's (Lazarus, 1885), but only education can bring them to light and turn them into effective. Her theory was proved by the example of many women, who have successfully passed exams designed for the rational intelligence of men. We mention only Christina Cutzarida, who held a Doctorate in Medicine in the 1880s and Sarmiza Bilcescu, the first woman to become a Doctor of Law at Sorbonne (1890). Later, Cecilia Cuțescu-Storck became the first female professor in an art university in Europe, chair of decorative art and painting department (1916). She denounced the cruelty with which women were treated by society and its laws, expressing this stance, in incisive lines and sober colors. (Cuțescu-Storck, 2006)

In a percussive article, Sofia Nădejde (Femeia Română, 1879), a writer and supporter of the Romanian woman's rights movement, addresses the issue of proportionality between brain weight - intelligence - gender superiority. In her opinion, weight is not a relevant measure, gray matter structure prevailing. If weight counts, the ratio between the brain and body weight should also be considered, in which case women would win in brain/ kilogram (Contemporanul, 1881/1882). Also, physical anthropology studies have shown a decrease in brain volume in both sexes during the history of humankind.

Because of her exacerbated impulses and passions, scientists believed that women lead a relatively intuitive life, in constant need of supervision. Their opinion complements the Christian perspective perpetuated in traditional society. In rural Romania, women were considered the second creation, therefore dependent on men. The community did not recognize her right to think or to make decisions, as it was man's privilege as "head of the family" and "pillar of the house." The predominantly negative evaluation of women in the rural mentality also originates in women's physiology, especially in the misunderstanding of menstruation (Huluță-Mihalache, 2003). Menstruation was considered impure, holding destructive potential; the claim affected women, permanently sealing their status. Marriage and motherhood opened a gate of salvation. Moreover, through marriage, the fairer sex obtained protection from a severe illness that threatened women's health: hysteria. Marriage was defined as a physiological necessity because "sexual intercourse regulates moods, and good marital hygiene avoids hysteria, hence the woman's happiness and her family's". The generation that reached maturity in the early 20th century embarked on a difficult path; it demanded the right to sexuality outside of marriage and fought to separate sexual identity and its manifestation from public respectability. (Ciupală, 32)

3. The social body. Between seclusion and civil rights

To follow women's emancipation movement in the Old Kingdom of Romania, we refer to the specialized literature, increasingly rich in social history studies (Vasile, 2009; Olariu, 2005; Ciupală, 2003; Ungureanu, 1996; Vintilă-Ghițulescu, 2013). Also, the woman's image and condition are traceable in works discussing modernization, the history of daily life, the reception of foreign influences, or the foreign travelers' perspective on Romanian society (Berindei, 2002; Bulei, 2004; Pârvulescu, 2005). Complementarily, 19th century memoirs, fiction, and the press give us additional information about the immediate feelings, the assimilation of foreign customs and fashion.

The women's condition in the Old Kingdom of Romania was precarious, officially accepted by law and unofficially by the collective mind. We find the exceptions among the elite, whom, despite the lack of political rights, became influential through status and financial power, opening doors to the workforce or social activism.

However, for most women, the efforts to modernize Romanian society in the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century did not increase their autonomy or involvement in public life. The low access to education, to exercise certain professions, and the dependence on men, as husbands or fathers, channeled their existence into the automatism of domestic work and raising children. The legislative syncope goes beyond the boundaries of the Old Kingdom:

"Until the end of the 19th century, women couldn't pursue university studies in the provinces inhabited by Romanians. Until 1920, women in Wallachia and Moldavia couldn't profess as lawyers. Until 1932, married women in Romania couldn't own property, sign contracts, appear in court or be guardians of their children. Until 1946, women in Romania were not considered citizens; they did not have the right to vote in parliamentary elections, they couldn't be elected to parliament nor lead ministries." (Văcărescu, 2014, 94)

More than ever, in times of modernization, Romanian society was driven by countless contradictions, including the role of women in society. As a result, an insurmountable abyss opened between theory and practice.

Until the age of marriage, young women were isolated from life, placed under family control, and "restricted in their free physical and spiritual development" (Zweig, 2014, 100). Afterwards, they changed their parents' authority with that of the spouses, who were often more interested in the value of the dowry and less in the intellectual qualities or physical appearance of the future wife (Vasile, 2009). In turn, women were condemned for marrying to have a carefree life or be considered respectable ladies. In Ethel Greening Pantazzi's work (2015), a beautiful story about Romanians at the time when the bright Belle Époque gave way to the dark Grande Guerre, we discover that the situation had not changed significantly on the eve of war: "The girls here have so little freedom. They are usually raised by foreign governesses and then sent to boarding houses in France, Germany, or Switzerland. At the age of 18, they return and are immediately shown in "le monde," constantly followed by eagle eyes; they are not allowed to go shopping or play tennis without being accompanied by an older relative. If they are charming, attractive, or, most importantly, if they have a considerable dowry, the suitors show interest, through a mutual friend, whether the parents would agree to accept them in the family. If all goes well, papa informs his daughter, and if she has no objections, the young man shows up with a bouquet and a gift for his new fiancée - usually a diamond jewel. Fiancées are never left alone. For this reason, engagements are short, as they are tiring for the family. It is only after marriage that they become free for the first time and have a little fun." (Greening Pantazzi, 2015, 90)

Marriage outlined a shield of good morals. It was considered the first condition of social order and the first step toward a moral life. Only in this equation women's fragile nature could metamorphose positively into the first educator-moralizer of her children. By exercising virtues, by her unconditional love, she could aspire to become: "angel of the house," "lady of the house, the providence of the family," or "queen of the home." (Lipan, 1886)

At the end of the 19th-century, married women's legal status framed a sad reality. If the woman had wealth and dowry, her husband would administer it. The so-called "paraphernalia", the property not provided in the dowry, couldn't be alienated by the woman without her husband's consent. The woman couldn't sue anyone without her husband's permission. She couldn't give nor receive money or other valuables; she couldn't receive or refuse inheritances without her husband's knowledge. While the man had the right to withdraw money from the bank, the woman depended on her husband's will. If the woman requested separation from her husband, the law urged her to stay in the family house during litigation, no matter how dangerous the environment. The man was given children's custody regardless of his condition. The woman was not the subject of legal action with one exception: she could make her will without her husband's permission. Calypso Botez, in the article "Problema feminismului – O sistematizare a elementelor ei/ The problem of feminism - A systematization of its elements", criticizes the Napoleonic civil code applied in Romania, which regulates the family under the man's absolute authority. This code, says Botez, took a step back from the Callimachi Code, by which the married woman had almost the same rights as the man.

Inspired by J.S. Mill works, Sofia Nădejde describes the social relationship between the sexes in terms of vassalship, only that "the woman is subject to more obedience than the vassal" (Femeia Română, 1879) because of her legally and socially established status.

In the second half of the 19th century, the "dowry affair" was slightly amended. The Civil Code required spouses' consent to meet the terms of the marriage (art. 129). "The consent had to be voluntary, personal, and solemn, and the parties were required to be present "in corpore" to sign the marriage contract precisely to prove their will, not external pressure or violence, because without free consent, marriage was void" (Vasile, 2009, 125). Of course, the presence did not rule out previous pressures. Moreover, article 131 allowed future spouses, age 21 and more, to marry without the parents' consent. (Vasile, 2009, 125)

Love was ultimately considered a panacea for all the shortcomings of women's condition. The term appeared in the Romanian Encyclopedia only in 1900, certifying the efforts to introduce love in the social mentality. Aglae Ghica, the mother of Radu Rosetti, showed her disgust for those who married other than out of love. "It's just a prostitution of a man or a woman." (Rosetti, 2017, 454)

The article "Din carnetul unui om de ieri/ From a yesterday man's notebook" (Viața Românească, 1910) summarizes the sentimental transformations of the previous century. The author observes that the foundations of marriages have become more solid, a strength that is due to "the bonds of the soul", duty and family honor. Of course, marriages of convenience were still the norm, but in choosing the future spouse, the physical and moral qualities prevailed.

Apart from the sentimental choice, how did the alleged freedom of the married woman manifest itself? J.W. Ozanne (2015) writes about the privilege to manage a household, to shine at social events, and about the right to divorce, exerted nonchalantly by men, but especially by women. Twenty years later, Maude Rea Parkinson believed that Romanians profit of the Church's indulgence, which allowed three divorces, seeking separation under the most trivial pretexts, such as temperament incompatibility (Parkinson, 2014). Contrary to Mrs. Parkinson's opinion, although permissible, divorce remained a radical measure for most

couples. The action reflected the reprehensible acts committed by the partner in public or private: adultery, excess, cruelty, or insult. As a violation of the marital faith, adultery can also be seen as an extreme decline of freedom inside marriage. The "sideslips" that took place among the elite happened because of lack of entertainment, to get revenge for the partner's similar action, or simply to be fashionable (Ionescu, 1903). It was also considered a consequence of age differences between spouses, the physical impotence in fulfilling the marital duties, or the woman's nature, susceptible to falling prey to temptations. Public opinion blamed a woman's adultery additionally. She was guilty of being unfaithful, of seeking other pleasures outside marriage. Sometimes the woman was condemned for her husband's adultery, as she refused to satisfy his biological needs.

The married woman gains freedom by navigating the list of permissions and prohibitions that she masterfully adapts. The litany of the latter seemed endless: you must obey your husband, take care of the house, the children, the servants, the guests, etc. Impeccable behavior, a spirit of sacrifice, and unconditional devotion to the family portrayed the "heroine," whose superpower was the regeneration of the core of civilization (the family). If she owned a substantial dowry mismanaged by her husband, she could ultimately resort to threats of divorce (which involved the return of the dowry) as a strategy to tip the balance of duties and rights in her favor. (Olariu, 2004)

Motherhood was considered a sacred obligation, cancelling the woman's genetic and acquired impurity. It also describes a physiological reality with profound symbolic and social implications. The inability to comply with nature's laws turned a woman socially inefficient, drawing her to the contempt or pity of the community, and the husband was entitled to divorce if he wished (Huluță-Mihalache, 2003). In return, children were the cause of countless worries that, depending on their number, channeled their mother's attention. The presence of nannies and governesses did not disconnect her from duty, her role as a mother surpassing all other aspirations.

Many women accepted seclusion, the lack of civil and political rights in exchange of a successful marriage, protection, some decision-making power, and the opportunity to complete their education. Beginning with the Russian occupation of 1828-1834, high society ladies experienced the euphoria of mundane events, first balls, then theater performances, concerts, or dancing parties. In fact, until the end of the century, dance remained the favorite "sport" of the aristocrats. The livelier the evenings, the more predictable the days. Etiquette required high society women to be very open in maintaining guests, even twice a day. They also had to return visits, which made them revolve more and more around households. Ms. Pantazzi noted in her diary: "Since I moved here, the sofa has become a central element of my social life" (Greening Pantazzi, 2015, 86). Increased interaction led to exchange of ideas, the dissemination of fashion or customs, and aroused among the elite the desire to associate for cultural purposes, primarily philanthropic.

4. The emancipation movement. Social and cultural activism

How did women claim their civil and political rights in this contrasting context, of social inclusion and exclusion? What are the mechanisms of paradigm shift? It wasn't a sudden change in women's status but a gradual adaptation of the collective mind to new cultural contexts (political, social, economic, technological). This process comprises more than a

century, involving several generations. Women's emancipation movement can also be understood as part of the modernization puzzle, "the best of all worlds" requiring the full involvement of the "weaker sex". As Romanian society matures and culture increases, we witness the synthesis of a specific feminist ideology.

"Where do we see the first social inequality? In the slavery of women. Her emancipation is the first contributing element to the new life. A completely emancipated woman, prepared from birth, by a decent, proper growth, to form a legislator, a thinking and executing citizen [...] when received in society, she would bring such ennobling to laws and customs! The most beautiful, richest hand of humanity is untapped! Then, let poetry emancipate women, let them release love." (Bolliac, 1846)

The fragment belongs to a leader of the 1848 Revolution and expresses one of the most advanced perspectives on Romanian women's emancipation from the first half of the 19th century. However, Bolliac's conception of women's participation in political and civic life will remain a poetic artifice with no concrete claims. 1848 revolution generation, influenced by the cultural ideals of the Enlightenment, attributed women a civilizing role, unattainable without complex instruction. The 16th point of the Islaz Proclamation (June 9, 1848, in fact, the program of the Wallachian revolution) provided: "equal instruction for all Romanians of both sexes"¹. Provided the best education, the "angel" could be removed from the oriental apathy and transformed into a moral authority, one nevertheless limited to domestic life.

The foundation of Romanian women's emancipation movement can be traced back to the educational reform envisaged by the 1848 political thinkers. Subsequent policymakers could not overlook the urgency of standardized training; otherwise, women would lack the skills to bring up the country's future citizens. Complementary, the scientific authority started regarding women's education as means for curing neurosis, depression, providing freedom and happiness.

As early as 1859, Sofia Cocea, in a letter addressed to "Către damele române/ The Romanian ladies", called for association and involvement to organize schools: "The time has come for us to do something for our country; [...] Today, our homeland needs arms, money, and schools [...]. We cannot enlist in the militia [...]; but let us not pass to anyone out duty to organize schools, educational institutes, and charities." (Mihăilescu, 2001, 60-62)

The instruction that young women received in public or private schools aimed first to prepare them for the role of spouses. Through theoretical and practical courses they also gained skill for professionalization. High society ladies who managed or patronized such establishments acted in virtue of the "habit of the land", caring for girls without financial means. In the absence of dowry, education could guarantee a livelihood, protecting them from prostitution.

In the second half of the 19th century, due to the education system reform, the options for girls increased, from secondary or vocational schools to higher education institutions. Depending on their family's financial status, the students will specialize in professions closer or further away from the traditional female labor sector, becoming nurses, midwives, teachers, clerks, workers in the food or textile industry. Young women in high society preferred to complete their studies abroad, few of them choosing local universities. Others

¹ http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/wiki/Proclama%C5%A3ia_de_la_Islaz

were absorbed in the performance of domestic duties, "accessorized" by occasional involvement in charitable work.

Some conservative voices rejected the emancipation of women through institutionalized education, suggesting limiting their instruction to the narrow circle of family "under the supervision of their mother, who alone has the calling and experience necessary for it." (Familia, 56)

The efforts to increase the intellectual level of Romanian women were complemented by the moralizing struggle. By embodying the Christian virtues, the elite representatives aimed to reform the masses, through social and cultural projects. During the War of Independence (1877-1878), women's committees formed to support the front. Their activities were encouraged by Queen Elizabeth and their actions varied in scope and degree of individual involvement, from organizing charitable events to joining "the front line", as nurses. In addition, Queen Elizabeth set up hospitals, ambulances, care services and procured medicines for the wounded. Simultaneous, from the feminist press, the public gained awareness about the living conditions of women: *Femeia Română/ The Romanian Woman* (Bucharest, 1878-1881), under the direction of Maria Flechtenmacher and with collaborators such as Sofia Nădejde or Adela Xenopol, *Gazeta Femenină/ Women's Gazette*, *Familia/ The Family*, *Munca/ The work* (1889), *Rândunica/ The swallow* (1893), *Buletinul Ligii femeilor/Women's League Bulletin* (1895), *Dochia* (founded by Adela Xenopol, 1896), *Românca/ The Romanian Woman*, *Uniunea femeilor române/ Romanian Women's Union* (1908), *Viitorul româncelor/The Future of Romanian Women*, *Drepturile femeii/Women's Rights* (1912). The writings also challenged the elite to formulate pertinent points of view about the urgency to emancipate Romanian women from all strata and to configure social reform projects adapted to the Romanian context.

The wartime committees will continue to manifest in new formats, as feminist societies, well-connected to the agenda of international organizations: charitable, educational, political, economic, and civil rights emancipation associations. Charitable societies (*Societatea femeilor sărace din București/ The Society of Poor Women in Bucharest* and *Asociațiunea femeilor române Sprijinul din București/ The Romanian Women's Support Association in Bucharest*) complemented the centralized efforts, aiding those in need. With generous donations, they set up schools, sanatoriums, nursing homes, homes for single mothers, and so on. By organizing workshops, educational societies (*Liga femeilor din Iași/ Women's League of Iasi* and *Cultura profesională a femeilor din București/ Women's Professional Culture of Bucharest*) encouraged the practice of domestic work as a method of supplementing family income and to promote the Romanian household industry. They focused on "removing the woman from her underage status and from all interdictions [...], help her earn economic prosperity, provide her with the means to improve the cultural status, and give her options to ensure means of existence." (Mihăilescu, 2001, 271-277)

After Independence, women began to work in various productive branches, although they were paid much less than men (printing, shoemaking, bag factories, pyrotechnics, weaving); they joined labor associations, participated in strikes, demanding an increase in wages and the suppression of abuses.

In the last two decades of the 19th century, as cities vary the spaces of public expression, the demands of the women's emancipation movement became more and more powerful. The new

perspective crosses the distance from the cultural ideal of educating women to real emancipation; it involves the liberation of women in society and the equalization of their status with that of men. The socialist movement, addressing the women's emancipation demands, was the most radical movement. In 1883-1884, during the first and second congresses of the Social Democratic Party of Workers in Romania (Partidul Social-Democrat al Muncitorilor din România), the leaders proclaimed: "1. Universal, equal, direct, secret vote ... regardless of gender [...] 5. Equalizing the legal and political conditions of women and men" and "Regulation of women's work." (Câncea, 1976, 41-42)

In March 1896, the Romanian Women's League (Liga Femeilor din România) submitted to the Assembly of Deputies a petition signed by 100 supporters calling for change in the legal status of women: the removal of married women from underage status, the right to manage their wealth, and the legal responsibility of men for their children. Although it was not considered by legislators, the action will help reach the critical mass to shift the paradigm.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the "feminist cause," gained momentum and claimed legal and economic equality, followed by political rights. In an article published by the Women's Rights (from January 1912) magazine, the leader of the Romanian Women's Emancipation Association (Asociația Emanciparea Femeii Române), (from 1913-Drepturile Femeii/Women's Rights) Eugenia de Reuss-Ianculescu summarizes the hopes of its members: "1. The amendment of the Civil Code and other codes [...] as regards to the legal status of women; 2. The removal of the woman's civil incapacity; 3. Concerning the children, the mother's rights are equal to those of the father; 4. The search for paternity; 5. Extending women's rights to guardianship [...]; 6. Suspension of legal prostitution; 7. The economic independence of the married woman; 8. "Equal work, equal pay" principle enforcement; 9. The admission of women to so-called liberal careers, lawyer, notary, etc.; 10. The access of women traders to chambers and courts of commerce; 11. The admission of women in higher education institutions, also as hospitals and hospices managers; 12. The admission of women as workers in corporations, charities, and public assistance, on equal footing as men." (Mihăilescu, 2001, 403)

Despite the sustained activities of feminist associations and the numerous petitions submitted to the decision-making forums, women's civil and political rights were not included in the 1917 Constitution. Also, the involvement of women in war or outside the front, supplementing the lack of workforce, didn't receive the recognition it deserved.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, in the Old Kingdom of Romania, the women's emancipation was incomplete, oscillating between inclusion and social exclusion. This polarization reflects the contrasts of the Romanian society experiencing modernization: East-West, traditional-modern, religious-secular, natural-artificial, passive-active, masculine-feminine, etc. Therefore, like any other fashion or "form" of the West, the "woman's question" will be analyzed and adapted, acquiring national characteristics and a specific path.

Between the two coordinates of this paper, seclusion and liberation, lies the "golden age of constancy" (Zweig, 2014, 15), a period as devoted to progress as insincere in its conventions, in which women were bound by duty, waiting for the validation of their "nature." The elite representatives, less restricted in their movement, found new ways to overcome the sexual

division of roles, obligations, and spaces. They extended the limits of duty to encompass society, whose moral redemption became their life project. Educated, "the Romanian woman proved to be worthy in all things" (Romanian Women's Petition of June 16, 1917, to the Romanian Senate (1917), 498-499). Then, she demanded civil and political rights; requirements honored far too late. Another history of emancipation, subversive and discreet, developed in parallel with the official one, aiming to liberalize morals. The severe and very restrictive etiquette succumbed to the tremors of an increasingly turbulent age.

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