THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT:
FROM NECESSITY TO AVANGARDE

Valentina Tănase*

Abstract
This study is dedicated to the overall approach of the feminist evolution issue or
the fight for women’s rights. In this regard, if in the middle of the 19th century, when
we can already talk about such a feminist movement, first we must have in mind the
incentive of economic, social or political necessities, today, almost the whole issue
regarding these rights is covered by legislation, therefore this movement can no longer
be regarded as a necessity. This article tells a short history of feminism, both Western
and Romanian, as an integral part of the European one. As the feminist movement first
manifested itself by publishing some works in which they protested against woman’s
inferiority, these works are mentioned in this article.

Key Words: feminism, equality of rights, voting rights, civil rights, political
rights.

1. Introduction
The feminist movement or feminism represents a campaign of obtaining equality
between men and women regarding economic, social and political rights.

In Romanian historiography, the studies dedicated to the status of women in
general and feminism in particular, follow a path of research that is still
underdeveloped, the majority of these studies represent the point of view of some
names that have truly imposed themselves through seriousness and depth in
researching this field. Names like Mihaela Miroiu, Oana Bâluță, Ștefania Mihăilescu,
Liliana Popescu or Laura Grümberg have adopted various issues of gender policy.
Regarding the status of women over time, things are even worse. In this respect there
are some studies by Alin Ciupală, George Marcu or, more recently, in 2016, Nicoleta
Roman’s study regarding the status of women from Muntenia in the 19th century, that
was issued by Humanitas Publishing House and Cristina Sircuţa’s study about
women’s lives in Interwar Romania that was issued by Oscar Print Publishing House,
however, in Romanian historiography to this day, there isn’t a detailed study that covers
the whole issue of women (if we have in mind the fight for rights), either a history of
women or of their status in Romanian society over time.

I have made this difference in order to emphasize the fact that the history of
women is not synonymous with the history of feminism, however, in our country, both
approaches took over a legacy from the communist regime which led to a
marginalization of women in public life.

This study aims to portray the evolution of feminism as a movement, both in the
Western World and on Romanian territory, in order to emphasize the fact that, in time,
the fight for rights – mostly covered by legislation today – has become a place of
competition between men and women with negative effects especially in the social
familial field.

*Ph.D. Student, Doctoral School of Humanities Sciences - “Ovidius” University of Constanta, Romania
(e-mail: valentina_tns@yahoo.com)
In the research undertaken I didn’t plan to exhaust this subject in any other way, my aim is to present a perspective on an open subject.

2. Conceptualization. The Outline of the Feminist Movement

Imagine a world in which, just because you are not a man, you can’t sign a contract, you can’t own a property or you can’t have access to education? Your only alternative would be homemaking and taking care of children. Today, even the thought of such a perspective is revolting.

Feminism is a movement that appeared as a response to (gender) social injustice, in a power regime in which women are treated with inferiority, are disadvantaged or devalued for the simple fact that they are women. Thereby, differences of biological nature between sexes are transformed into a source of discrimination against the complete affirmation and contribution of women in social, economic, political and even religious life.

Feminist political actions developed more poignantly starting with the 19th century and their goal was contesting the legal, economic, social, political and cultural inferiority position of women.

These political action didn’t appear suddenly but were preceded by the apparition of the first written works that had women’s rights as a subject, that led slowly but surely to form a way of thinking, a mentality

Things evolved slowly. The belief that woman was inferior to men was “sanctioned” even by Christianity. At the beginning of The Old Testament we find out that God created Eve as an equal to Adam. Subsequently “the role attributed to women in The Old Testament reflects a changing attitude towards woman as both society and religion became more patriarchal.”

The biblical „image“ of woman that played an important part in determining her position in society, is that of the fall of man in original sin, with the snake that temps Eve and then Eve temps Adam. This image inoculated the idea that the woman is the cause of falling in sin and because of that all its suffering.

---

81Within this trend many orientations have developed that influenced each other. We can speak of orientations such as: liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, postmodernist feminism, ecofeminism, revolutionary feminism or separatist feminism. In this present study I didn’t set out to thoroughly approach each of these orientations but to diagnose feminism in its entirety, these subsumed orientations will probably be the objects of future studies. For details in this regard see Otilia Dragomir, Mihaela Miroiu (ed.) Lexicon feminist, (Iaşi: Polirom, 2002), 121-146; Maria Bucur, Mihaela Miroiu. Patriarhat şi emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești, (Iaşi:Polirom, 2002); Mihaela Miroiu, Drumul către autonomie. Teorii politice feministe, (Iaşi: Polirom, 2004).

82Ioana Vlad, "Feminism", in Mihaela Miroiu (ed.), Ideologii politice actual. Semnificaţii, evoluţii şi impact, (Iaşi:Polirom, 2012), 105. See also Leon P. Baradat, Ideologii politice. Origini şi impact, (Iaşi: Polirom, 2012), 286, Chapter 12 entitled "Feminism and Ambientalism" where the author underlines the fact that „the feminist purpose, seen as a dynamic and complex movement, is to put an end to gender, racial and ethnic inequalities and other forms of inequality. Feminism tries to free the woman from artificial constraints that were imposed to her from ancient times and to allow her to take charge over her destiny or first personally and then professionally.”


84Ibid, 11.

Following the same path, sometime later, the Roman laws that subsequently influenced the entire European legislation, presented women as being men’s property. 86

Slowly but surely a whole mentality is shaped, taken over by all traditional societies in which the girls’ education was limited to homemaking.

The Age of Enlightenment and The Industrial Revolution provoked economic and social changes. From an historical point of view, the debut of the feminist movement was the European Enlightenment Speech. 87 "Liberty - Equality – Fraternity" also start to be applied in the relationship between sexes, even though the Napoleonic Code was based on the Roman laws that maintained women’s legal incapacity and the omnipotence of man and that of father of the family.

The first changes or trends of change for women appeared in the industrialized countries. Women were bound to integrate in large numbers as labor force in industries for economic needs. However, they will have to deal with one problem: for the same amount of work done they will receive half or less than half of the salary received by men. However, women start to acquire a status and an economic independence, realizing that they no longer depend on marriage and of a husband to support them, this thing leads to the appropriate rise of their social independence. 88

These first changes in collective mentality do not take place all over the world in the same time. In pre-industrial, agricultural societies, it is still considered that woman’s vocation is that of cooking, having children and is therefore limited to housework. In catholic and orthodox countries the change takes place with the same difficulty, the church being opposed to feminism for the reason that it could destroy the patriarchal family. 89 Therefore, the emancipation is affected in the negative sense by the religious sentiment that firstly emphasizes the importance of woman as a mother. This thing has made feminism, as a movement, to be more successful at the beginning in protestant countries.

3. Western Feminism

When, with the outbreak of The French Revolution in 1789, the woman begins to detach herself from the domestic area, it took a long period of time to reconfigure her status. Therefore, feminism evolves from the initial one, that of equality also entitled

justification, even quotes one of the first patristic writers, Tertulian, "Woman – you must always walk in pain and rags, with eyes full of tears. You are the one that brought ruin to the human to the human race." 86

Emil Molcuţ, Dan Oancea, Drept Roman, (Bucureşti: “Şansa” S.R.L. Printing Press, 1995), 97-99. Therefore if at their birth girls were under the power of some pater familias (that could be the father, grandfather or great-grandfather) after marriage she was under the power of her husband (in Manus marriage – that was characterized by "the fall of woman under men’s power"; In the marriage without manus, the woman still remained under the power of her pater familias of origin).

Olga Rusnac, Feminismul, https://www.academia.edu/5269966/Feminismul, accessed on December 12, 2017


First-wave feminism\textsuperscript{90}, to that of difference and liberation, entitled Second-wave feminism (mid-20th century)\textsuperscript{91} and Third-wave feminism that is contemporary, and is in progress since the 90’s.

The beginning of modern feminism can be placed towards the end of the 18th century when Mary Wollstonecraft published the work "A Vindication of the Right of Women"\textsuperscript{92} in which the author firmly supports the fact the women are not inferior to men, showing that the importance of education is the same for both sexes.\textsuperscript{93} Her ideas will be resumed in the second half of the 19th century, when British Stuart Mill published the volume "Subjection of Women" (1869) in which, following the ideas of his lover and later his wife, Harriet Tayler, he supported the necessity of equal rights between women and men, Mill being the first British MP that proposed vote for women in 1867, his proposal being rejected.\textsuperscript{94}

Great Britain can be named the country of origin of modern feminism because it seems that the term of feminism was first used here towards the end of the 19th century.

Also in the 19th century, a feminist movement starts to develop in the USA, its foundation act being the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, where over 300 people took part, the big majority being women. During this convention "The Declaration of Sentiments" was publicly read (modeled after The Declaration of Independence), in which it was requested among other things, the abolition of all forms of sex-based discrimination and also the right to vote. The latter is granted gradually, beginning with 1869. However, in some American states, the process of universal suffrage was a long one.\textsuperscript{95}

At the outbreak of World War I the suffragette movement intensified (supporters of feminist movement who were after obtaining political rights), sometimes having radical aspects.\textsuperscript{96} Suffragettes from USA and United Kingdom militated for obtaining changes of legal nature.

World War I simply changed the traditional way of life of women, who had to assume new social responsibilities.\textsuperscript{97} They have adopted the masculine way of life, such as clothing, education, and participation in society. The women in industry took on new roles, such as working in factories and on farms, which led to a redefinition of gender roles.

\textsuperscript{90}This was firstly set on the stipulation in the Constitution of equal rights and was interested in obtaining an equal judicial status for women in relation to men. See Otilia Dragomir, Mihaela Miroiu (ed.), \textit{Lexicon Feminist}, 136-138.

\textsuperscript{91}In the period usually named Second-wave feminism, the emphasis is not put on equality and emancipation, new themes are approached such as equal salary for equal work or free access to any kind of profession and education.

\textsuperscript{92}Mary Wollstonecraft, \textit{În apărarea drepturilor femeii}, translated by Anca Costea (Bucureşti: Herald, 2017).

\textsuperscript{93}This work is a call to revolutionize girls’ education and to an identical education for both women and men” says Gisella Bock. Gisella Bock, \textit{Femeia în istoria Europei. Din Evul Mediu până în zilele noastre}, (Iaşi: Polirom, 2002), 99. See also Mihaela Miroiu, \textit{Drumul către autonomie}, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{94}Otilia Dragomir, Mihaela Miroiu, \textit{Lexicon feminist}, 136-137.

\textsuperscript{95}\textit{Ibid}

\textsuperscript{96}Suffragettes from Women’s Social and Political Union, led by Emeline and Cristobal Pankhurst for their cause have supported civil disobedience. Suffragettes became more violent after the government had several attempts to introduce women’s suffrage in a limited manner. Therefore, in 1912 they have resorted to fires and later suffragette Emily Davison threw herself in front of the king’s horse at that year’s Derby and died. Jan Palmovski, \textit{Dicţionar Oxford}, vol. II, 423.

\textsuperscript{97}The outbreak of war and the mobilization decreed in 1914 have caused a disorganization of economy as a consequence of men’s incorporation and requisitioning the means of transport by the army. Therefore, in Germany, until the end of the war, women represented 1/3 of the industrial labor force and more than half in some compartments of the munition industry. In Russia, women labor force from the war industry
as pants suit, short haircut, comfortable clothing, appropriate for an active woman. Even women from educated circles start smoking, a habit associated in those times with self-security and detachment (characteristics which, up to that point, were attributed to the male side). Women start to get noticed in all domains, as secretaries, typists, cashiers, teachers, but also lawyers and doctors. They even begin to practice sports (tennis, ice skating, equitation).

If First-wave feminism unfolds under the equal rights sign and ends with obtaining suffrage for women in some civilized countries (some American states in 1869, and Great Britain in 1928), starting with mid-20th century we are talking about Second-wave feminism, which emphasizes on differences and equality. Themes such as equal pay for equal work, free access to any kind of education and profession, harassment issue, protecting the environment, counteracting racism or sexual violence form the feminist agenda of the Second wave.

The Second-wave coincides with women’s movement from the 60s and 70s which is characterized by claiming demonstrations of citizens from highly industrialized countries such as Great Britain, France and USA. The movement aimed to influence political decisions through street actions (with claims over counteracting racism or protecting the environment).

Among reference works from the Second wave we have, *Le deuxième sexe* by French writer Simone de Bouvoir, issued in 1949 and *The Feminine mistique* by American writer Betty Friedan, issued in 1963. Both work aim to clarify why women are viewed and treated as inferior citizens.

After the 70’s some feminist movements paid attention to some issues that were outside traditional policy, namely the fight against prostitution, pornography, and body exploitation of women. These issues will be approached within Third-wave feminism that is pending progress and began in late 20th century. This wave is characterized by new other issues such as family violence, prostitution and trafficking of women. However, these new issues claimed by Third-wave feminism do not occur from lack of rights equality between women and men (the pillar of feminism), they represent issues of contemporary society.

In the last years more and more legislative measures were taken in order to limit the negative effects of these issues among female population. In this regard, The
European Union legislation from the last years that is responsible to the fullest extent of the issues of contemporary world, must be followed. Today, human rights are applied regardless of sex. The existence of equality from a legislative point of view is a certitude, however, there are still particular issues of women from certain societies or cultures, but these can’t be regarded as issues of mankind altogether.

4. Romanian Feminism

Romanian feminism occurred in the first half of the 19th century and developed at the same time with the one from the western countries but relating with Romanian social, cultural and political realities. If the debut of Romanian feminism took place at the same time with the western one, subsequently, during the communist period, due to the intolerance over other ideologies and policies, the feminist movement couldn’t develop either, nor its research in this sense. However, after the ‘90s, feminism has gradually resumed its role both in cultural and research areas.

In regard to the Romanian space, we can talk about feminism (generally) and political feminism (especially) beginning with the first half of the 19th century (1815). First-wave Romanian feminism was approximately synchronized with the Western one and got off from a series of doctrinal similarities. The development of Romanian feminism was due to a restricted category of women, namely that of educated women, who had access to international information. Hence, within Romanian space, we are talking about feminism of the elite, due to the fact that, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Eastern-European space was dominated by the peasant population, The Industrial Revolution reaching a small part of the population of this area. Therefore, it was very difficult for a large scale feminist movement to develop outside the urban educated circles.

The incentive of forming a Romanian feminist movement was firstly women’s inferior normative status, which is why a beginning of a struggle takes place whose aim is to change the legislation.

---

104 When we are talking about Romanian feminism, we have in mind the type of patriarchal traditionalist society with all the consequences that convert from here. Of course, Romanian feminism had a certain evolution due to this structure of society, however feminism is the object of this present study.

105 Otilia Dragomir, Mihaela Miroiu (ed.), Lexicon feminist, 122-123.

106 Up until 1815 we can’t talk about feminism regarding the Romanian society, the studies and articles prior to that year approached various aspects dealing with women’s lives. In this regard, an interesting approach, that of Georgeta Fodor who, in an article about the challenges of everyday life from the 15th to 17th centuries, talks about the women from that period, especially wives and daughters of rulers, boyars and nobles who, during military conflicts, were left home, without protection and there were vulnerable to the abuses that came even from a part of the family. In front of these situations there were some women in our history with a typically feminist attitude, even though the term is not used for the period prior to the 19th century, because we can’t talk about a consistent, conscious feminist movement for those times. In support of this idea see Georgeta Fodor, "Provocările vieții cotidiene. Aspecte privind viața femeilor din Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în secolele XV – XVII", in Studia Universitas Petru Maior, Seria Historia, no. 10, (Târgu Mureș: "Petru Maior" University, 2010), 13-28. For the same thing see also Vasile Papadopol, Românce văzute de străini, (București: Corint, 2016); Constantin Gane, Amărăte și vesele vieți de jupânești și cucoește, (București: Corint, 2016); Nicolae Iorga, Femeile în viața nașului nostru, (București: Cortex, 2014); Idem, Scrisori de femei, (București: Vremea, 2014).

107 Mihaela Miroiu, Drumul către autonomie, 60.

108 The documents of that period show that Romanian women’s judicial status was humiliating. According to tradition, in a marriage the man was the master. The codex of Vasile Lupu and that of Matei Basarab consecrated man’s supremacy who had the right to punish his wife if she made mistakes (to seize her, to
The first document that deals with gender equality is "The Islaz Proclamation" from 9 June 1848, which provided in article 16 "equal and entire instruction for all Romanians of both sexes". However, in education as well as other areas Romania developed slowly compared to the western world, this significantly influenced the way in which Romanian women had access to quality education and also to a series of functions that were matching their training possibilities.

Subsequently, between 1856 – 1859, from all provinces inhabited by Romanians supported the unification of Moldavia with Wallachia.

The documents of the time are proof that women were present at the 1848 Revolution from the Romanian Principalities, the 1856 – 1859 Unionist Movement and the 1877 – 1878 War of Independence, historical events that were the basis of the birth and consolidation of Modern Romania. Women like Ana Ipătescu, Maria Rosetti, Elena Cuza, Palaghia Roșu, Sevastița Bâlcescu, Zoe Golescu were actively involved and fought for the cause of the 1848 Revolution, their acts being equal to those of the women that were involved in the French or Habsburg Empire Revolutions. According to the 1866 Constitution, the electoral system was based on a high census, which excluded exercising the right to vote of the great majority of the population. The amendment of the 1848 Suffrage Law by reducing the number of colleges from IV to III did not change the situation. In these conditions women’s suffrage was almost out of the question. The Romanian Civil Code from 1866, modeled after The Napoleonic Code, declared the incapacity of married women in drawing up public documents. Also, women weren’t able to draw up any kind of administrative documents unless they had the approval of a husband or justice, if she married a foreigner she would lose her citizenship, she was compelled to have her residence established by her husband and other similar things.

During The War of Independence, women’s committees were created all over the Romanian provinces, in order to take care of the wounded soldiers or war orphans.

After 1878, the fight of Romanian feminists for civil and political rights, intensified. This fact can easily be observed if we have in mind the great number of associations and societies, which were active towards the end of the 19th century, especially in the urban area. The main objectives of these institutions were either the improvement of women’s conditions in general or social, cultural and economic objectives.


109Apud Damian Hurezeanu, Gheorghe Sbâră, *Partide și curente politice în România 1821 – 1918. Programe și orientări doctrinare. 150 de surse originale*, (București: Eficient, 2000), 86. Among those who became known as devoted fighters of the period are: Maria Rosetti, Catina Caracș, Ana Ipătescu, Maria Eliade Rădulescu, Elena Cuza, Zoie Golescu ș.a. The fight for instruction rights didn’t not occur at the 1848 Revolution. Previously in 1815 Romanian Women Society from Buda, having over 30 members including Maria Roja, Pelaghia Papacosta, Maria Nicolić who came from macedo-romanic merchant families and its aim was the financial contribution at „supporting national orthodox from the Kingdom of Hungary” Ștefania Mihăilescu, "History of Romanian Political Feminism (1815 - 2000)” in *Lexicon feminist*, 200.


112Idem, 18-19.

113Alin Ciupală, *Femeia în societatea românească a secolului al XIX-lea*, 84. At footnote 41, the author lists a number of such societies and associations such as the Charitable Society from Iasi (1881) under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth; "Furnica" (1882) – for the encouragement and development of the household industry; Romanian Women Association - "Sprijinul" (1900) – founded by Ecaterina Arbore
World War I also gave women the chance to demonstrate their abilities. The War of Independence already offered women the possibility to leave their salons, these were being replaced by military hospitals and settlements for recovery of the wounded. Almost the entire feminine elite took part in the war effort, their biggest contribution was in healthcare.\textsuperscript{114}

With the outbreak of World War I, the role that women assumed or had to assume, surely determined a change in their role in society.\textsuperscript{115} We have in mind not just the nurses mobilized in military hospitals behind the front, the female workers from Romanian factories that had to support the war effort or the wives of politicians but also the peasant women from Romanian villages who had in their care the entire household. Most certainly the psychological assumption of new engagements have determined changes in women’s mind who were aware of the fact that they were capable or could do more than they were allowed not only by the legislation that chained them but also by the whole mentality of a patriarchal society (which hasn’t changed much to this day).

Romanian women also had an intense activity regarding their fight for rights in the period preceding the drafting of the 1923 Constitution. Among the personalities that made their mark in this sense are: Eleonora Stratilesescu, Alexandrina Cantacuzino, Calypso Botez, Elena Meissner.\textsuperscript{116}

In 1919, Eleonora Stratilesescu, synthesized a study entitled "The Basis of the Feminist Movement and its Goals", the requests of the Romanian feminist, their claim list were similar to those of the international feminist movement. Therefore, economically speaking they requested the following: equal pay for equal work; labor protection for women; child mortality prevention among the poor. From a cultural point of view the requests were: access to any kind of professional career and all its hierarchical steps, access to all forms of education and training, settling the career - motherhood conflict. Regarding the family, equality was requested between spouses both by law and education; equal rights for the spouses over children and common assets; control over their wealth; part of the husband’s income to be granted to the wife for her work in the household, and other. From the social-political point of view the main requests were dealing with equality in civil and political rights; women’s participation in public institutions, functions and dignitaries.\textsuperscript{117}

In 1923 a new Constitution enters into force that doesn’t include women’s suffrage but establishes that, by special law, "conditions under which women can exercise political rights" will be determined.

In 1929, women acquire the right to vote and the right to be elected in local and county councils, this right being reserved to certain categories of women and granted

\textsuperscript{114}Idem, 85.
\textsuperscript{115}Idem, Bătălia lor. Femeile din România în primul război mondial, 25. The author asks himself if by any chance the Great War was a cause of accentuating the process of feminine emancipation and offers several examples in support of an affirmative answer. The author ends his work with a phrase worthy of being mentioned more often. "The First World War did not belong only to men, this is why history must make room for the women."
\textsuperscript{116}Mihaela Miroiu, Drumul către autonomie, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{117}Apud Ştefania Mihăilescu, Din istoria feminismului românesc, 224 – 225.
\textsuperscript{118}Article 6 of Romanian Constitution, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, no. 282/29 March 1923.
only if they fulfilled a number of criteria. Therefore, when this law came into force, suffrage was granted to women who graduated from secondary, lower secondary, general or higher education, state, county or local clerks, war widows, women who were decorated for their war activities and those who were running cultural, charitable or assistance societies.\textsuperscript{119}

The 1938 Constitution (also called "Constitution of King Carol II") granted women’s suffrage, but, in the same time, stated that the rules and conditions imposed in order to take part in the elections will be established by an election law\textsuperscript{120}. The 1939 Election Law brought under regulation women’s suffrage, they were granted this right provided that they were over 30 years of age and were able to read and write\textsuperscript{121}. This led to a severe limitation of women’s participation at voting, the dictatorship of Carol II making the right to vote impossible.

Once The Iron Guard ideology spread, the feminist movement starts to be subjected to some serious counteroffensive. Therefore feminism both as an ideology and as a movement were practically annihilated with the dictatorial regimes that marked the history of Romania. \textsuperscript{122}

Decree no. 2218 from 13 July 1946 regarding the exercise of legislative power, under Article 2, final paragraph stipulated that "women have voting right and can be elected in the Chamber of Deputies under the same conditions as men". These provisions established the equality of women and men regarding political rights. The same decree introduced at Article 3, the principles of universal suffrage, equal, direct and secret.\textsuperscript{123}

Afterwards, the Constitution from April 13, 1948, prohibited every form of discrimination and enlisted the declaration of principles of equality of all citizens regardless of sex, nationality, religion, race, level of education.\textsuperscript{124} Also, the 1952 Constitution provided that the "working people, citizens of the People’s Republic of Romania, regardless of nationality and race, are ensured by the full equality of rights in every domain such as economic, political and cultural lives".\textsuperscript{125} In this regard the fundamental law stipulated that "women have the same equal rights of men in all domains of economic, politic, state and cultural lives", the equality of rights in „work, salary, rest, social security and learning" being specifically provided. Furthermore „the state protected marriage and family and defended the interests of mother and child and granted help to mothers with many children and single mothers, granted paid holidays to pregnant women and promised to make maternity hospitals, nurseries and children’s homes”.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{119} Article 375 of Law no. 167/3 August 1929 for organizing local administration, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, no. 170/3 August 1929.
\textsuperscript{120} Articles 61 and 63 of Romanian Constitution, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, no. 48/27 February 1938.
\textsuperscript{121} Article 5 of Law Decree over Electoral Reform, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, no. 106 bis/9 May 1939.
\textsuperscript{122} Ioana Vlad, "Feminismul", 109.
\textsuperscript{123} Royal Decree no. 2281/ 13 July 1946 on the exercise of legislative power, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, no. 161/15 July 1946.
\textsuperscript{124} Article 16 of Constitution of the People’s Republic of Romania, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, no. 87 bis/13 April 1948
\textsuperscript{125} Article 81 of Constitution of the People’s Republic of Romania published in the Official Gazette of Romania, no. 1/21 September 1952.
\textsuperscript{126} Idem, Article 83
In regard to electoral rights, the 1952 Constitution provided that they were carried out "by universal vote, equal, direct and secret" by the citizens of People’s Republic of Romania "who were over 18 years of age, regardless of race and nationality, sex, religion, level of education, profession and residence duration".\textsuperscript{127}

Equality of rights regardless of nationality, race, sex or religion was also provided in the 1965 Constitution and the state guaranteed the citizen’s equality of rights. "No restriction of these rights and no difference in their exercise are allowed on the grounds of nationality, race, sex or religion".\textsuperscript{128} The 1965 Constitution provided equal rights between men and women stipulating that "the state protects marriage and family and defends mother and child interests". In regard to electoral rights, the universal vote, equal, direct and secret was maintained for citizens over 18 years of age. In addition to previous Constitutions, it was specifically provided the equality regarding salary ("for equal work, equal pay") and it was stipulated that by law "special measures to protect women and youth labor" were established.\textsuperscript{129} Also, it was stipulated that the right of the citizens of Socialist Republic of Romania to associate with various kinds of organizations such as trade unions, women and youth.\textsuperscript{130}

Therefore every Constitution from the communist period proclaimed rights and liberties regardless of sex, but, in the context of totalitarian communism, all these were violated, the first free elections taking place in 1990. Under these conditions, Second-wave feminism could not develop here in the same time as the western countries were the so-called difference feminism was developed.

The ideology of the Communist Party that promoted "the new man" but "without gender and personality"\textsuperscript{131} produced an „emancipation” of women by work and maternity. The defining elements of the feminine condition were the profession and the role of mother. The pro-natal demographic policy from the period underlined "the multiple roles of the woman" as mother, worker, wife (or life comrade as she was called in that period) or housewife.\textsuperscript{132}

Although equality between men and women was legislated, it didn’t really exist in the public or private life. There was a hierarchy of the economic branches, the women occupied the work that was considered easy and this was reflected in payroll hierarchy.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Idem, Articles 93 and 94.
\item Article 17 of Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Romania, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, no. 1/21 August 1965.
\item Idem, Article 18.
\item "Citizens of the Socialist Republic of Romania have the right to associate with trade union, cooperative, youth, women, social-cultural, organizations, creative associations, scientific, technical, sports associations as well as other public organizations. The state supports mass and public organizations, creates conditions for developing the material basis of such organizations and protects their patrimony" - Article 27 of Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Romania (1965).
\item Mihaela Miroiu, Drumul către autonomie, 73.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
After 1990, Romanian feminism started to reaffirm and to fight for the recovery of difference feminism but also for changing a mentality that associated women’s political participation with Elena Ceauşescu or rather her dictatorship.

Here, difference feminism (Second-wave feminism) takes places simultaneously with Third-wave feminism, that of power and independence. The 2003 Constitution has included the principle of equal rights between men and women\textsuperscript{133} and the recent legislation that was forcefully adopted under pressure of accession to the European Union, covers to great extent the problems the female population have to deal with. Among these normative acts we have: Law on Equal Chances between Women and Men (2002)\textsuperscript{134}; Law on Prevention and Combat All Forms of Discrimination (2002)\textsuperscript{135}; Law on the prevention and combating of domestic violence (2003)\textsuperscript{136}.

Today, Feminism has sometimes reached the extreme side (see Lesbianism or the female organizations for who "God Is a Woman") in the conditions where, the majority of the rights that women fought over time were obtained (lowering wage inequality, women’s massive participation in the labor market, the increase of women’s purchasing power, the medialization and enactment of domestic violence, sexual harassment, prostitution, and so on). In this regard, it can be said that feminism has reached its goal, the equality between men and women was obtained and today we are witnesses to a fight that overcomes the one for rights with negative consequences in the social plan, such as the decline of the marriage rate and the masculinization of women.\textsuperscript{137} On the other hand, the fight for rights has transformed itself, especially in patriarchal societies, like the Romanian one, in the fight against misogyny, which does nothing else than feeding it.

5. Conclusions

Therefore, the fight for civil and political rights represent a domain, but a major domain, in the history of women. Historiography with feminine/feminist themes, recorded especially in western countries also had impact on Romanian territory and today, studies that approach feminine issues try to cover a gap in the Romanian historiographic field.

In this article I have tried to paint an overview of women’s fight for rights, seen as an ample process of change and modernization which is, from my point of view, directly connected with social evolution, the Romanian feminism being an integral part of the European one. Here, the communist dictatorship has increased women’s marginalization in public life and prevented the development of Second-wave feminism (a situation that deserves to be approached separately, probably in a future study).

\textsuperscript{133} Article 16 of Constitution of Romania (2003)
\textsuperscript{134} Law no.202/19 April 2002 regarding equal chances between women and men, published in Official Gazette of Romania no. 301/8 May 2002.
This present study tries to emphasize the long and winding path that women had to undertake in order to reach a level of equality with men regarding political and civil rights.

I am convinced that, in today’s situation, once obtained, the majority of these rights (legislated both internally and nationally), this fight has lost its purpose and has become a demonstrative or a competitive fight (in relation to the man) and has as consequence the loss of women’s main characteristics such as femininity, sensibility and emotion. Following the emancipation, women obtained equal rights with men and have become more productive at their work place. However, they have entered a competition with men and have begun to behave like them, which resulted in a masculinization of “the weaker sex”.

We can say that, in time, the feminist movement and women’s fight for rights omitted the fact that women’s emotional role is as important as men’s rational role.

At the beginning of the 21st century it is worth noting that human rights are also women’s rights and the non-discrimination and equality between women and men are the main principles of human rights law. However, women from all over the world still suffer a series of violations of their rights, the achievement of equality between sexes requiring a global understanding of the way women deal with discrimination, this is also because women’s realities change constantly. It is therefore necessary to have appropriate strategies to eliminate all forms of discrimination if we also have in mind cultural realities from certain parts of the world.

Finally, I would like to mention that the approach of this article is a global one, but one that tries to emphasize the fact that feminism as a movement or the movement for women’s rights can be approached not just in the typical style of gender studies, as it is generally approached, but also from an historic perspective, as an integral part of feminine history.

Bibliography
Decree no. 2281/ 13 July 1946 on the exercise of legislative power.

---

138For a more detailed study in this matter see *Women’s Rights are Human’s Rights*, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/WHRD/WomenRightsAreHR.pdf


Iorga Nicolae, Femeile în viața neamului nostru, București: Cortex, 2014.


Law no. 167/3 August 1929 for organizing local administration.

Law over Electoral Reform/9 May 1939.

Law no.202/19 April 2002 regarding equal chances between women and men.

Law no. 48/2002 for the approval of Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding prevention and sanction of all forms of discrimination.

Law no. 217/2003 on the prevention and combating of domestic violence.


Rusnac Olga, Feminismu, https://www.academia.edu/5269966/Feminismul


