

REZUMAT

Feminist research is still underrepresented in Romanian literary studies, despite the fact that it has been a fundamental field of study in Western academia since the end of the 20th century. Collections and studies by and about women's literature are still few and far between, reflecting the strong resistance of academia to address authors underrepresented in the literary canon and to create feminist scholarship. Moreover, the Romanian literary milieu has traditionally perceived this field and its practitioners as secondary, if not 'non-academic'. Given Romania's rather recent and arguably tragic Communist history, and the fact that feminist literary approach is originally a spin-off of Marxist ideology, feminist literary criticism can be, to a certain extent, justifiably susceptible to prejudice in Romanian academia. Moreover, the current foundations of feminist literary studies are the culmination of a long series of often contradictory attempts in the field. Consequently, the lack of degree programmes in feminist literary studies means that its institutional status has never been sufficiently consolidated to encourage specialisation in the discipline. At the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest, where I graduated, Feminist and Gender Studies has never functioned as a research field in its own right. The solution, therefore, would be a systemic, balanced approach to feminism in literature, through the adoption of informed mentoring and research directions tailored to the particularities of Romanian culture.

In this thesis, I will discuss how I have integrated my scholarly passion for feminist literary and gender studies with my function as a mentor over the course of my twenty-five

academic career years. I have completed a course of study in Romanian Philology at the BA, MA and PhD levels, at the University of Bucharest, followed by post-doctoral research at different academic institutions abroad. I started my academic career as a teaching assistant, then became a lecturer and associate professor. Looking back, my interest in feminist literary history has grown organically, showing continuities, desertions and comebacks due to unexpected routes and discoveries. Keeping in mind the theoretical concepts that converge in current feminist scholarship, this research interest could be comprised of three main areas: 1. **the literary canon and its relation to censorship**; 2. **intimacy and its relation to spatiality**; and 3. **digital humanities at the intersection with feminist literary studies** - still innovative in Romanian literary studies.

My first book, entitled *Masculin-feminin în romanul postpașoptist. O abordare de gen* (Brumar 2011), examined the exponential occurrence of translations and subsequent adaptations of French sentimental novels into Romanian, from a phenomenological perspective. The aim of my research was to show that women's reading practices, broadly speaking, triggered the profound reform of Romanian society in general in the nineteenth century, determining new ways of thinking, seeing, reading and writing. This book, as well as the lectures and papers I have presented at national and international conferences on feminist critical theory and literary history, have all sought to offer a feminist methodological perspective, to challenge feminist theoretical assumptions, and to promote a more balanced view of Romanian literature. My postdoctoral work allowed me to extend my research interests beyond reception to female authorship. In my second book, *Critica literară feministă. Perspectivă comparatistă* (Pro Universitaria 2012), I have tried to show how - in both British and Romanian nineteenth-century literature - feminist themes, which span the personal, political, social and economic spectrum, are best accommodated within the structure of the novel, of prose in general, with the sentimental novel proving to be one of the most interesting

platforms for feminist claims. I have also published articles, participated in research projects, presented papers at international conferences, edited or co-edited a number of volumes and special issues of academic journals, and designed courses that have inspired students.

All these activities in the aforementioned research areas provided opportunities to test concepts for forthcoming publications, as well as to build relationships and academic networks with researchers from Romania and abroad. By conducting research through conferences and student-focused workshops, over time I have been able to establish strong international academic collaborations and joint initiatives that have enhanced my standing as a feminist literary scholar. I firmly believe that the survival of a 'niche' field of study, such as feminist literary theory and criticism, within the Romanian academic community depends heavily on the mentoring of students, from the undergraduate level onwards, in order to encourage them to pursue their interest in the field and to develop intellectual skills that are applicable to a variety of professional settings and career paths. Regardless of one's intellectual commitment to a research topic or methodological standpoint, professionalism is undoubtedly required. However, I believe that maintaining an open mind and flexibility towards the current tenets of the field of feminist literary studies is an extremely important undertaking and is equally important in both my research and teaching. Ultimately, what makes growth possible is the ability to adapt one's perspective in the light of the texts one reads and the colleagues one interacts with, in order to be a true Mentor to students.