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**THE GREAT (FEMALE) UNREAD. ROMANIAN WOMEN NOVELISTS IN  
THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A QUANTITATIVE  
APPROACH**

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**Abstract:** The following paper intends to investigate the main junctures and disjunctures of Romanian prose written by women in the first half of the twentieth century from a quantitative perspective. The paper will employ a macroanalysis of both the novels written in this period and the prose written by female writers, in order to establish a pattern in the modernisation and institutionalisation of Romanian literature in the inter-war period, more specifically in the 1930s, the decade that saw the emergence of the main canonical Romanian novels. The paper will also delve into the main principles and discussions surrounding early Romanian feminism. Aspects such as import literature, translations, and the circulation of Western literary trends in the Romanian cultural field will be critical to understand how Romanian prose written by women evolved over the course of the twentieth century and established an alternative literary canon.

**Keywords:** Romanian literature, World Literature, women's writing, macroanalysis, canon.

Cultural import in marginal countries such as Romania is almost always a matter of quantity. Whether the concern is the circulation of literary theory, literary movements, or early stages of emancipatory social movements, a bird's-eye-view on the matter could help straighten out several clichés that critical discourse has

established at a certain time (I will touch on this later in the paper). This study offers a panoramic view of the novels written in Romania by women in the first half of the twentieth century by means of quantitative research based on the data made available by *The Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel from its Origins to 1989* and *The Chronological Dictionary of the Translated Novel in Romania from its Origins to 1989*, as well as a close analysis of this data in relation to both the Romanian novel (in the general sense) and to the early feminist discourse of this period. In regard to the feminist discourse, the paper will also consider the international feminist movements encountered by the Romanian cultural space. The main motivation behind this interdisciplinary approach is explained by the rather unique formation of Romanian feminism, which was developed by importing Anglo-American feminism and literature written by the same women who took part in the feminist movement, which had a different cultural heritage (predominantly French, as is the case with the better part of Romanian literature of the time). The synthesis of these two main features has created an interesting brand of literature that I will try to analyse in this essay.

Before I attempt to further explain this phenomenon, I will first justify the methodology employed. The most recent trends in literary theory and criticism propose new modes of reading and understanding the literary product. Perhaps the most significant contribution in this sense belongs to Franco Moretti, whose methods and theories bring about the main transformations in both methodology and our understanding of how we research literature today. By developing his theories of distant reading, quantitative research and a broad Darwinist view in relation to literature, he moves the discussion from a select group of canonical texts (that dominated both discourse centred around national literatures and comparative studies) to what he calls *the great unread*: the 99% of literary production that stays behind as a type of white noise. In a sense, Moretti proposes a discourse focused on the recovery and democratisation of literature. The sheer impossibility of operating with close-readings on large quantities of literary products has urged the import of methodologies belonging to hard sciences, such as statistics and macroanalysis, as well as employing softwares that were initially created for economic and mathematical studies (starting with Matthew L. Jockers). By setting aside close-reading and promoting a more distant approach to the literary object, even the so-called “second-hand reading”, Moretti promotes a type of “less is more” methodology,

meaning that a research that works with thousands of literary products cannot be conducted outside the conventions of hard sciences and outside its instruments, as “[t]he more ambitious the project, the greater [the distance must be]” (Moretti 57). This methodology is of particular significance in what interests me in this paper. In my handling of the subject of Romanian novels written by women, I infer that the literary products of the first two decades of the twentieth century can be seen as a catalysing phenomenon for the development of both the novel written by women in the ‘30s and for the modern Romanian novel in general. As my main instruments I used *The Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel from its Origins to 1989* (*Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până la 1989*) and *The Chronological Dictionary of the Translated Novel in Romania from its Origins to 1989* (*Dicționarul cronologic al romanului tradus în România: de la origini până la 1989*), which presently constitute the only two instruments on which a quantitative study of the Romanian novel can be based<sup>1</sup>.

### **Masculine novels, feminine novels**

Romanian literary historiography has proposed a series of delimitations of the autochthonous novel which caused a confusion between the concepts of “feminine novels” (which concern the gender of the author and refer to novels written by women), and “*feminine* novels”, as Nicolae Manolescu proposes in his essay on the Romanian novel, *Noah’s Ark* (*Arca lui Noe*). The latter model is borrowed by the Romanian critic and is explained, by way of demarcating *masculine* and *feminine* novels in a demonstration solely focused on novels written by men. Manolescu’s demonstration not only focuses on close readings on Romanian novels written by men, but also on comparative readings of Western literary products written by men. For Manolescu, the masculine novel has the attributes of an active virile imagination and develops into a social and/or political novel which explores the exterior world and is anchored into the palpable real world. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the feminine novel is equated with the erotic novel and focuses on psychological interiorised aspects (Manolescu 16). Masculine novels are also equated with the Balzacian novel, while for the second formula the critic proposes the Proustian

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<sup>1</sup> Both printed and digital editions of the dictionaries were used for my research in order to index the novels under the established criteria (subgenre, author’s gender etc.), and only novels that were published in printed editions and in feuilleton variants were considered for this research. The different categories used to filter the novels indexed in my research mainly use the descriptions provided by the collaborators of the dictionaries.

model. It can be observed that the “feminine” model is paramount to the evolution of the Romanian novel, and even though Manolescu applies it to the novels written by Camil Petrescu and Anton Holban, the model overlaps in many of its elements with the concept of the “feminine *novel*”.

The critical reception of Romanian novels written by women has almost always placed this category at the periphery of minority literature, having been subjected only in a few isolated cases to global readings, be it in anthologies or articles written in feminist magazines. Despite having a rather effervescent feminist discourse in the early publications of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the emancipatory reflexes were seldom transferred to the critical discourse. The main labels associated with novels written by women still entertain the cultural cliché of the “soft” feminine voice in opposition to the “hard” genius of the male voice. Moreover, the differences between the literary and social activities and stances of Romanian female writers create a series of paradoxes that merit further exploration, especially in the discrepancies between the activist discourse present in the cultural press and the naivety of the literary discourse found in feminine prose.

Feminist ideologies permeate the Romanian cultural space of the nineteenth century rather differently from other neighbouring countries. Ștefania Mihăilescu traces, in one of the most important anthologies of feminist and feminine discourse in Romanian culture – *From the History of Romanian Feminism (Din istoria feminismului românesc)* –, the adherence of Romania to the cultural rebellions that emerged from industrialised countries such as England, France, Sweden or the United States, while also indexing the ties between different Romanian feminist associations and Western countries.

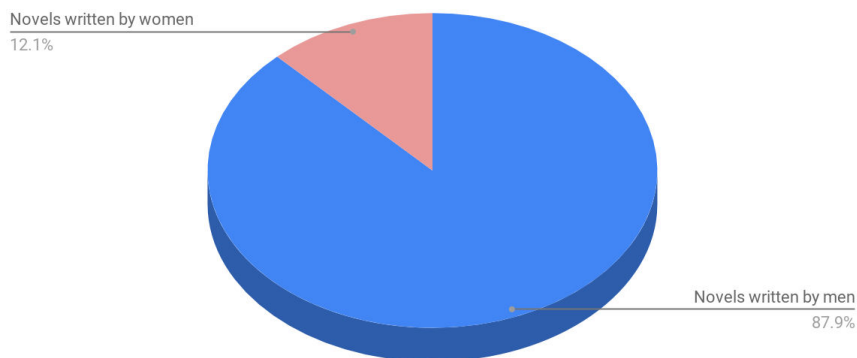
The prestigious publication *The Romanian Woman (Femeia Română)* regularly reported on the most important events of feminist movements from other countries. From 25 September to the middle of October 1878, the main debates and resolutions of *The First International Congress of Women’s Rights* convened in Paris were reproduced in the pages of this publication, supporting the creation of the first women associations of the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia that were in their early stages of development. (...) *The League of Romanian Women of Iași (Liga Femeilor Române de la Iași)* joined the *International Union of Women*, set in London, having received constant support. (...) The women of Romania have answered the call of *The International Socialist Congress* in Stuttgart, Copenhagen,

and Basel. (...) Elena Văcărescu proposed, at the *Preliminary Congress for the Foundation of the League of Nations* (London), the formation of its *Feminist Branch*. (Mihăilescu 48-49)<sup>2</sup>

The same anthology notes how detrimental the early formation of feminist publications was in the process of emancipation of women both as social individuals and as artistic instances. The prevalence of female cultural journalism in this period can be explained by the urgency for women's rights, a more pressing matter than literary emancipation. Furthermore, fighting for women's rights in Romania was an obvious first step towards winning a foothold in the literary canon. Despite all of these aspects, Romanian novels written by women, while never actually having won the canonical battle (except for Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu), are detrimental – in their alternative stance – to the understanding of the modernisation of the Romanian novel.

### The feminine novel. A distant reading

fig 1



### The distribution of novels written by men and women from 1900 to 1940

<sup>2</sup> „Prestigioasa publicație *Femeia Română* informa cu regularitate despre evenimentele mai importante ale mișcării feministe din alte țări. Începând din 25 septembrie și până la mijlocul lunii octombrie 1878, în paginile sale au fost reproduse dezbaterile și rezoluțiile *Congresului internațional pentru drepturile femeilor, întrunit la Paris, în vara anului 1878*, venind astfel în sprijinul primelor asociații de femei din Principatele Unite, aflate în etapa de cristalizare a programelor și statutelor lor. (...) *Liga Femeilor Române de la Iași* s-a afiliat la *Uniunea Internațională a Femeilor*, cu sediul la Londra, din partea căreia a obținut un sprijin real (...) Femeile din România au răspuns la chemarea *Congreselor internaționale socialiste* de la Stuttgart, Copenhaga și Basel (...) Elena Văcărescu va propune, la *Congresul pregătit al înființării Societății Națiunilor* (Londra) constituirea *Secției feminine* a acesteia” (All references from Romanian are translated by me).

As the above graph shows (**Figure 1**), less than 15% of Romanian novels were written by women in the first half of the twentieth century. The prevalence of novels written by men can be explained by the restricted access to higher education for women, as well as their general position in the intellectual sphere. A more nuanced observation is given by Bianca Burța-Cernat in her 2011 study, *Group Photo with Forgotten Writers. Interwar Feminine Prose (Fotografie de grup cu scriitoare uitate. Proza feminină interbelică)*, in which she demonstrates how Romanian women's literature starts off as a luxury occupation for higher class women. Their social status, as Burța-Cernat notes, granted the female authors the opportunity to develop a sort of creative system. This can be evidenced through a close look at the names of the female authors who not only produced early feminine prose in Romanian, but also laid the cornerstone of Romanian feminist discourse: Hermiona Asachi-Quinet, Emilia Maiorescu, Maria Rosetti, Iulia Hașdeu, Adela Xenopol, as well as the pioneers of Romanian feminist literature Dora d'Istria (Princess Elena Ghica), Carmen Sylva (Elisabetha de Wied), Elena Văcărescu (the niece of Ienăchiță Văcărescu and descendant of the Rosetti family), countess Anna de Noailles (Ana Bibescu Brâncoveanu, the daughter of Prince Grigore Bibescu), Princess Marthe Bibesco, Queen Marie of Romania (Marie of Edinburg)<sup>3</sup>. These are all, in Dora Pavel's words, "inertial existences in the shadow of their great men"<sup>4</sup> (Pavel 3). The professionalisation of female writing takes place only after the First World War. The production of novels written by women grows exponentially in the 20s, as can be seen in **Figure 2** below, with oscillations in the next decade, in which the Romanian novel is stabilised as a major literary genre and shows a general growth. The apex of the feminine novel is reached in 1934, the year in which 12 out of a total of 69 novels are written by women (17.39%).

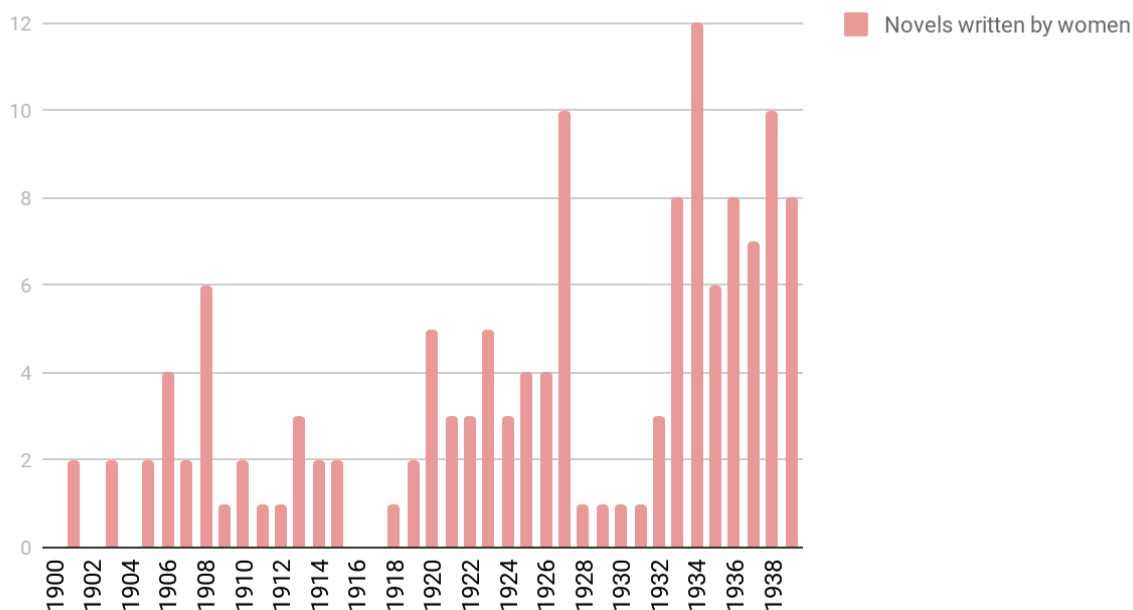
I will now overlap the production of feminine prose with the one written by men in order to get a general sense of the proportions and the relations of production between the two categories.

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<sup>3</sup> The latter short list is recovered in Margarita Miller-Vergy's 1935 anthology *Evolution of Feminine Writing in Romania (Evoluția scrisului feminin în România)*, București: "Bucovina", 1935.

<sup>4</sup> "existențe inerțiale în umbra marilor bărbați".

fig 2



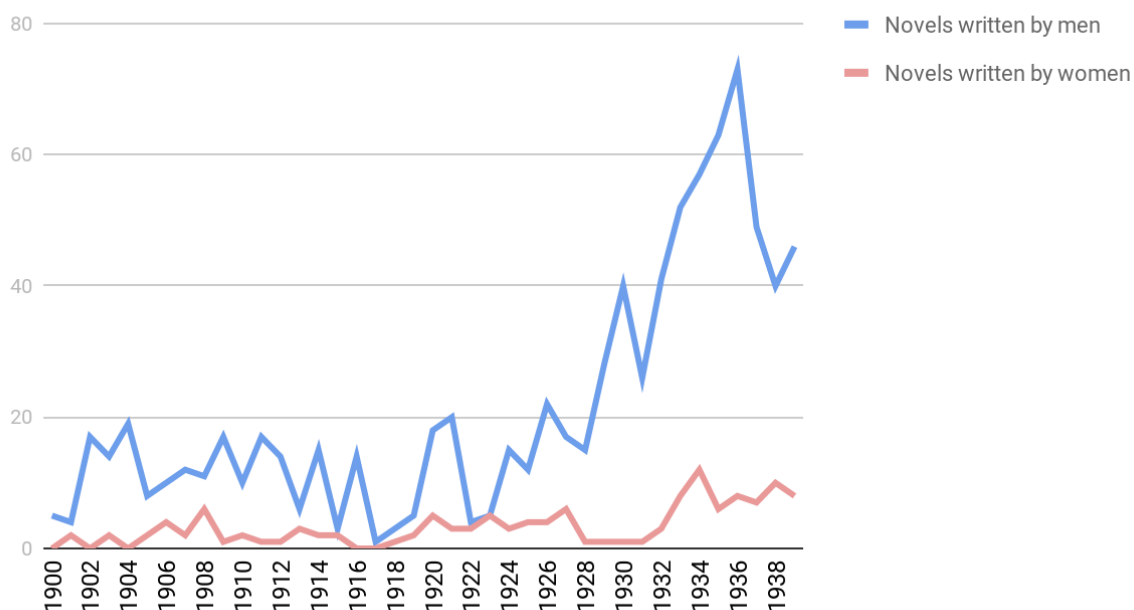
**The evolution of the novel written by women from 1900 to 1940**

The year 1927 is a rather productive year for feminine prose, as shown in **Figure 2**, for it is the first time that the number of novels written by women exceeds eight per year. Furthermore, **Figure 3** illustrates certain moments of collision and superposition between masculine and feminine novels. At different proportions, the first half of the twentieth century reveals an almost identical trajectory between the two types of novels. Despite the existence of feminine novels in the period before the 30s, the general artistic value of these productions is not yet relevant<sup>5</sup>, but it does reveal the existence of a formation ground for the feminine prose of the next decades. In retrospect, literature written by women at the beginning of the twentieth century is more of an activist act rather than an aesthetic one. As Ioana Postelnicu notes, “the women’s act of creation demonstrates an attitude of rebelliousness, independence, courage, lack of prejudice in direction of the general dependency towards men, rights and social restrictions. Their literature is a literature of outpouring”<sup>6</sup> (Postelnicu 5).

<sup>5</sup> A different analysis of this literary corpus can be read in Liana Cozea, *Female Writers of Modern Romanian Literature*, Oradea: Familia, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> „[A]ctul de creație al femeilor demonstrează o atitudine de frondă, de independență, de curaj, de lipsă de prejudecată față de dependența de soț, legi și îngrădiri sociale. Literatura lor este defulare a refulărilor”.

fig 3

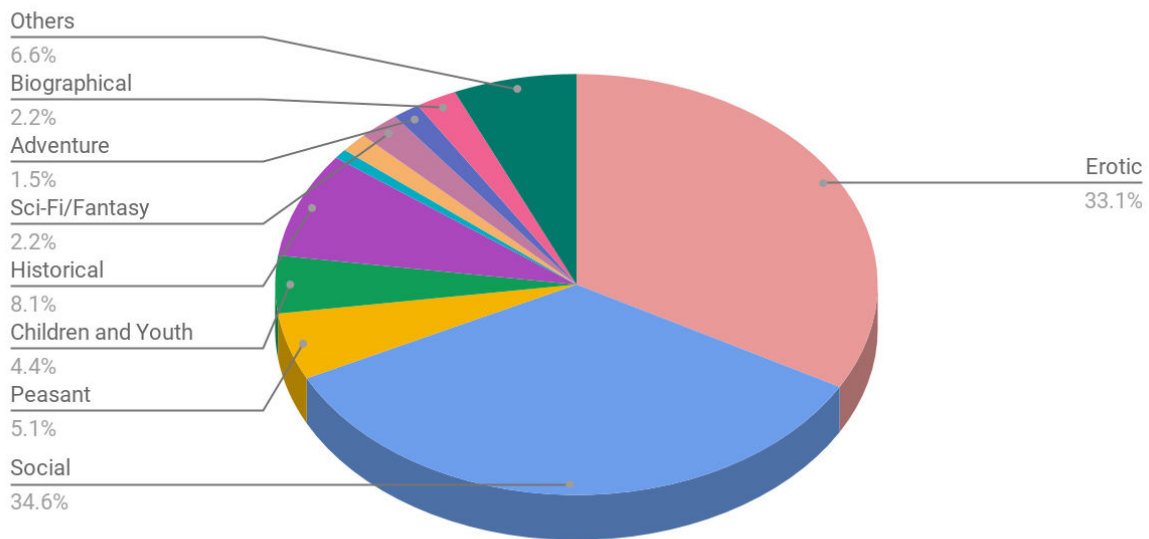


#### Evolution of novels written by men and women from 1900 to 1940

The critical discourse regarding literature written by women is circumscribed by a profoundly misogynistic attitude. Feminine prose is prominently defined as “alcove” literature: sentimental, minor and incapable of relevant artistic expression. These clichés are only in part grounded in reality, as if we look at **Figure 4**, the erotic plot does represent a significant portion of feminine prose. The prevalence of this subgenre, while relevant quantitatively, has little to say about aesthetic relevance, having been ripe with romance novels and sentimental love stories (See Burța-Cernat, Cozea). What interests me is, however, not the erotic and rural novels written by women authors, but the social one, more precisely the general lack of any critical reception towards this subgenre, even though it does represent the statistic majority in **Figure 4**.



fig 4



### Distribution of sub-genres in novels written by women between 1900 and 1940

In contrast, the novels that employ rural plots (5.1% of the total) benefitted from a far greater critical reception. Eugen Lovinescu, promoter of aesthetic autonomy and mentor (at the “Sburătorul” literary circle) to many women writers that have gained some sort of critical acclaim, is also a major influence to the most malign preconceptions on feminine prose<sup>7</sup>:

[M]istress and mother, these are the two paradigms of the eternal feminine. Between a dove and a woman there are certain correspondences that bring them together, (...) the same powerful instincts that guide and rule them: the dove and the woman love the same way, and, in the face of danger, protect their offspring with the same maternal devotion. If doves had a literature, it would be no different to the literature of the greatest contemporary female writers (...). Yet society and social life model suppress their instincts. Between a cat desperately caterwauling for love on the roof of the house and the woman that suppresses her's is not a difference of biology, but one of education and social constriction. (...) As a woman whispers, and does not talk, implies, and not declares, her literature becomes cryptography: a rumour of mysterious words, half-covered sensations, a poetic vague, a literature with a key.

<sup>7</sup> A broad exposition of Lovinescu's attitude towards the women writers of the period can be seen in Elena Zaharia-Filipaș, *Studies on Feminine Literature (Studii de literatură feminină)*, București: Paideia, 2004.

Devoid of any initiative in love and incapable of clear expression of her heart's beats, the woman gave us, understandingly, a literature of shadows and whispers, of mystery and alcove<sup>8</sup>. (Lovinescu, qtd in Filipaş 7-9)

This type of discourse will have echoes long into the 30s, when feminine prose reaches its apex in aesthetic maturity. The height of maturity in Romanian feminine novel is reached with Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, the only woman novelist that will have pages written about her in Lovinescu's *History of Contemporary Romanian Literature* and will be acknowledged as a fully formed novelist. But even in the case of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu his critique will follow the general misogynistic and parochial patterns, with tropes along the lines of "feminine mystery". At the same time, the feminine/masculine dichotomy employed in the critical discourse of the 30s will still retain the underlying power structure in which feminine prose cannot be defined outside its relation to the "hard" masculine literature, so even in this context Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu remains a minor author:

Starting with the sincere, almost cynical attitude towards the matters of the soul in general, and to femininity in particular, does she (Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu) escape the usual subjectivity and romanticism of feminine literature. Although the material is exclusively feminine, her attitude is virile, lacking sentiment, gentleness, sympathy even, driven by a pure thirst for knowledge and achieved by eliminating any soulfulness and replacing it with rigorous scientific procedures<sup>9</sup>. (Lovinescu 302)

Apart from Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, a writer who manages to achieve canonical status, the vast majority of female prose writers from the first half of the twentieth

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<sup>8</sup> "[A]mantă și mamă, iată cele două tipare ale eternului feminin. Între o porumbiță și o femeie sunt corespondențe ce le aproprie (...) aceleași instincte puternice le stăpânesc și le conduc: porumbița și femela iubesc la fel, iar, în fața primejdiei, își apără puiul cu același devotament matern. Dacă porumbițele ar avea o literatură, s-ar asemena cu literatura celor mai mari scriitoare contemporane (...) Viața socială modelează și înfrânează totuși instinctele...Între pisica, ce-și cânta cu desperare amorul pe streșina casei, și femeia care și-l înăbușă în piept – nu e atât o deosebire pe scară biologică, cât una de educație și de constrângere socială. (...) Cum o femeie nu vorbește, ci șoptește, nu se declară, ci sugerează, literatura ei devine o adevărată criptografie: un zvon de cuvinte misterioase, de senzații acoperite pe jumătate, un vag poetic, o literatură cu cheie. Lipsită de orice inițiativă în dragoste și fără putința expresiei clare a bății inimii sale, femeia ne-a dat, în chip firesc, o literatură de umbră și de șoapte, de mister și de alcov capitonat".

<sup>9</sup> "Odată cu atitudinea sinceră până la cinism față de fenomenul sufletesc, și în specie față de feminitate, iese din romantismul și subiectivismul obișnuit al literaturii feminine. Deși materialul este exclusiv feminin, atitudinea scriitoare e virilă, fără sentimentalism, fără duioșie, fără simpatie chiar, pornită din setea cunoștinții pure și realizată, cu eliminarea dulcegăriei, prin procedee rigurose științifice".

century remain in the background of Romanian literature. In her book, Bianca Burța-Cernat declares that the other prominent women writers of the interwar period are case studies in failure, but a failure that comes from two sides, one of female marginalisation in a social context dominated by the unwritten rules of patriarchy, and another pertaining to their own interiority, as these women are only half-revolted (See Burța-Cernat 10-11).

The general premise of Burța-Cernat can easily be confirmed if one considers the paradox noted earlier in this study. Take, for example, Adela Xenopol, one of the most vocal feminists in the period. Founder of *The Woman Writer's Magazine* (*Revista Scriitoarei*), a militant for both women's rights and the emancipation and professionalisation of feminine writing, Adela Xenopol formulates a feminine discourse of great impact at the time in the pages of her magazine, in which she encourages young women to publish their writing:

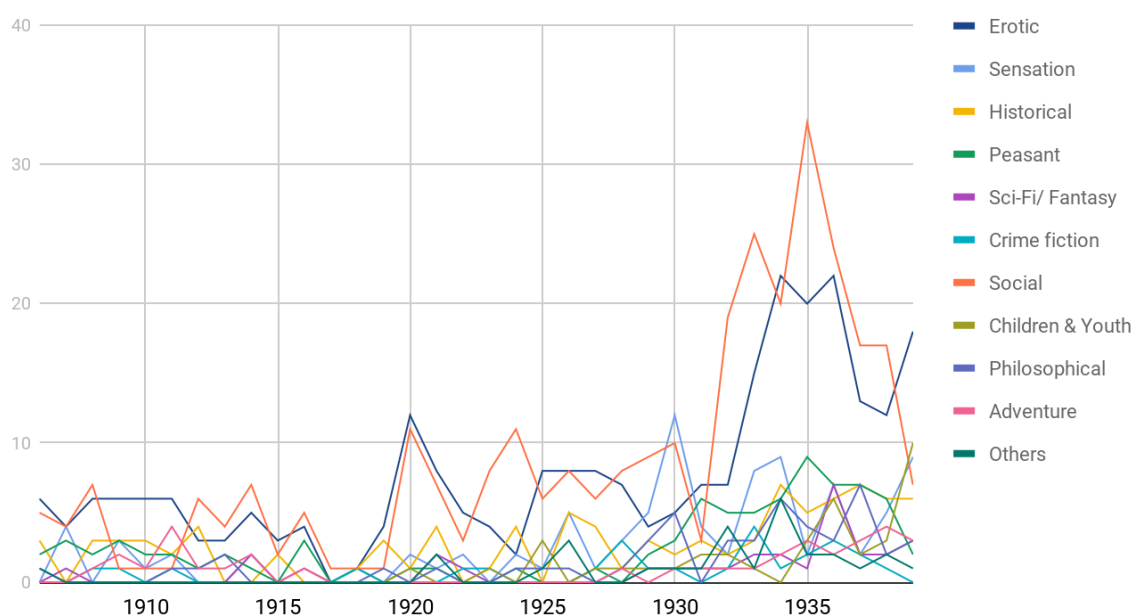
The woman writer has not yet emerged with her just value, but with the one by which she tries to accommodate the expectations of the literary critic, the master of all publicity. The woman writer is not yet invested with the rights of intellectual property, she does not present herself, she merely insinuates<sup>10</sup>. (Xenopol 1)

Her parallel trajectory as a woman novelist is however lacking. Adela Xenopol's prose is formulaic and ostentatious at best, not managing to escape the general clichés of feminine writing. Another paradoxical case is one of Sofia Nădejde, a biting advocate for women's rights that debuts in journalism at the *Romanian Woman* (*Femeia Română*) magazine, but whose novels are moralising, with rural material and fatalist conceptions in her plot developments. Even in the case of Eugenia de Reuss Ianculescu, who manages to transcribe her feminist ideology into her novels, one can find few critical mentions in regard to her prose.

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<sup>10</sup> "Scriitoarea nu a pătruns încă cu adevărata ei valoare, ci cu aceea sub care binevoiește să o prezinte critica scriitorului stăpân pe toată publicitatea părtinitor. Scriitoarea nu este încă investită cu drepturile de valoare intelectuală, ea nu se prezintă ci se strecoară".

fig 5



### Evolution of plot models in Romanian literature between 1900 and 1940

It is relevant to note that, while there is not much in the way of aesthetic accomplishments when talking about Romanian feminine prose, another aspect of great importance can be revealed through quantitative research. The Romanian “*feminine*” unread speaks about the modernisation and professionalisation of the novel just as well as the novels written by men not by aesthetic achievement, but by plot employment. In this respect, **Figure 5** can support the hypothesis of an alternative canon represented by the feminine novel that mirrors almost perfectly the process of modernisation of the Romanian novel<sup>11</sup>. The very same tendencies can be identified when looking at aspects such as literary emulation, thematic correspondences (the prevalence of eroticism in both male and female written prose), urban scenery and social plot. These aspects are fundamental for the evolution of the modern Romanian novel. Moreover, the triadic formula proposed by Moretti in

<sup>11</sup> In *World Literature in a Postcanonical, Hypercanonical Age*, David Damrosch proposes a system of differentiating the different nodes of the literary canon (*hypercanon*, *counter-canon* and *shadow canon*), where the *shadow canon* is composed of the literary nodes that are the first to be forgotten in a classic canonical system. In the same logic, it is possible to include feminine prose in this *shadow canon*. See David Damrosch, *World Literature in a Postcanonical, Hypercanonical Age*, in Haun Saussy (ed.), *Comparative Literature in the Age of Globalization*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, p. 43-53.

*Conjectures on World Literature*<sup>12</sup> is relevant for the discussion of the scale of cultural import in Romanian prose (be it Balzacian, Proustian or Gidian narrative formulas). Even though feminine prose did not employ such devices, rather shifting from a subjective point of view to an objective one (the case of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu is well known in this respect, having been “peer-pressured” into changing her narrative formula), the thematic aspect remains relevant, as feminine prose is responsible for first exploring the narrative formulas that led to the evolution of Camil Petrescu and Anton Holban’s subjective prose, which further led to the full synchronisation of the Romanian novel with Western literature.

### **Early Romanian feminism between cultural models and literary import**

The relationship between Romanian feminist activism and the evolution of feminine prose can best be explained by exploring another paradox, this time pertaining to the inter-cultural clashes between Romanian female writers and Western thought. The period between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth is the most pertinent in discussing the ties between Romanian feminists and the Western feminist movements. It is in this cultural segment that we can observe a distancing from the dominant French cultural influence and a closeness to Anglo-American cultural spaces. In 1878, Maria Flechtenmacher writes:

Through work, mountains have been flattened; it is through work that we can prove that we want to be what women in the United States, England, Italy and Germany want to be. We will say nothing of France, for George Sand, de Sevigné, Staël, de Girardin have died and, for the moment, we can only see beautiful dresses, lace and hats worn by the women of France, let others judge us, but we also see, and judge<sup>13</sup>.  
(qtd. in Mihăilescu 76)

The same attitude towards France can be seen in Elena Manicatide-Venert’s *Foreword* at the Romanian women’s assembly for claiming equal civil and political

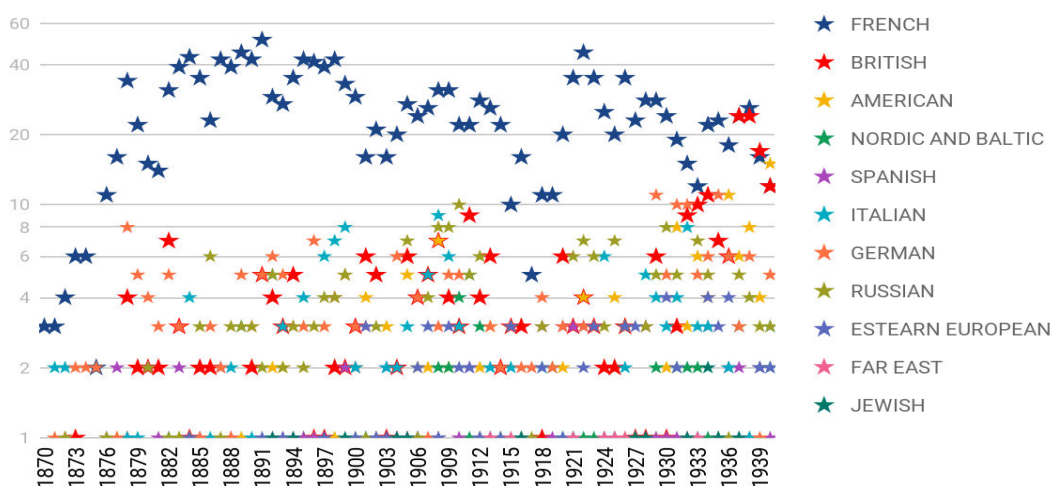
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<sup>12</sup> “For me, it’s more of a triangle: foreign form, local material – and local form. Simplifying somewhat: foreign plot; local characters; and then, local narrative voice; and it’s precisely in this third dimension that these novels seem to be most unstable” (Moretti 65), he notes, and it is interesting how this formula, while functional in the case of Romanian literature, contains a reversal: it is not the plot that is imported, but the narrative model.

<sup>13</sup> “Cu lucrul s-au răsturnat munții; cu lucrul vom proba că voim a fi aceea ce sunt femeile în Statele Unite, în Anglita, în Italia și în Germania. Nu zicem Franța, căci vedem că au murit d-nele George Sand, de Sevigné, Staël, de Girardin etc. și pentru moment, nu vedem decât rochiile frumoase de la femeile din Franța, dantele și pălăriile, judece-ne cine va voi, dar vedem și noi, și judecăm”.

rights in 1923: “In France, clericalism could be a cause for the lateness of granting women political rights, but we do not have this impediment and we hope to claim our just rights sooner than in France”<sup>14</sup> (qtd in Mihăilescu 245). The adherence of the feminist movements to the Anglo-American cultural space coincides with moving away from the influence of France. A general hostility towards France pervades feminist discourse, even though literary patterns are still tributary to French culture. The gap between the cultural import of Anglo-American feminism and literary French import can also be seen when investigating the translation of novels in this period. **Figure 6** statistically demonstrates the obvious inadequacies between the literary and the social dimensions of Romanian feminism. The prevalence of novels translated from French in the height of Romanian feminism speaks to the exact same paradox. Only starting with the 30s do translations from English reach the same height, but not the same intensity, as translations from French. The American and German novels have a relatively constant path, but are both dwarfed in comparison to French influence. Alongside the steady and large numbers of translation, the French novel is at an almost annual basis refreshed with author series such as Jules Verne, Balzac or Zola.

fig 6



### Translated novels in Romania between 1870 and 1940

The contribution of Romanian women writers towards the emancipation of Romanian culture is all but indisputable for at least two reasons. Firstly, the role of

<sup>14</sup> “În Franța, clericalismul poate fi o cauză care a întârziat acordarea drepturilor politice femeii, dar la noi n-avem această piedică și sperăm că o să putem obține mai curând ca în Franța drepturile noastre complete”.

feminism in the development and mentalitary synchronisation of Romanian culture with the West, and secondly the emancipation of women from a legislative and social standpoint that automatically transcribed into a chance of re-developing the creative regime of the writer – in the case of women, from privilege to profession. Their contribution is reported in several historical documents, such as *Le vote municipal pour les femmes en Roumanie* from 1929, which notes that “The Romanian women have won, after centuries of struggle, a brilliant victory, because they are the first among the Latin women who have obtained the right to vote and eligibility in municipal and county affairs”<sup>15</sup> (qtd in Mihăilescu 312). I tried to show the extent to which feminine prose helped shape the Romanian modern novel as it is known today, from its early stages as a literary exercise in form to its latter evolution as a major literary genre that was formally synchronised with the rest of European literature. Last, but not least, while the feminine novel has not achieved canonical status (neither historically, nor retrospectively), its merits as an integral part for the transformations of the Romanian novel have to be taken into consideration in any study focused on the evolution of autochthonous literary forms.

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<sup>15</sup> “Les femmes roumaines viennent d’obtenir, après des siècles de lutte, une victoire éclatante, car elles sont les premières parmi les femmes latines qui aient obtenu le droit de vote et d’éligibilité à la Municipalité et au Département”. (My translation)

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