

**``GEORGE EMIL PALADE`` UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE, PHARMACY,
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF TÂRGU MUREŞ
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF LETTERS, HUMANITIES AND APPLIED
SCIENCES
SPECIALIZATION: PHILOLOGY**

THESIS

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TÂRGU MUREŞ

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**VALUES OF ROMANIAN WOMEN'S PROSE IN THE
INTERWAR PERIOD**

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The condition of woman, as an essential part of the human universe, has known throughout history periods of affirmation and of marginalization. If Antiquity presents to us, through the words of Demosthenes, a fragmented vision regarding the role of woman — wife, concubine or courtesan —, the Middle Ages bring a first recognition of the feminine status through the figure of the castellan, raised above the husband or brother by cultural and spiritual authority. The Renaissance, in its turn, offers a spectacular intellectual emancipation, but of short duration and limited to the privileged elites. Throughout time, feminism has taken on multiple forms: the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill, the pragmatism of the suffragettes, the existentialist vision of Simone de Beauvoir, or even more radical currents. In essence, feminism defines itself as a doctrine of equality and emancipation, contesting rigid hierarchies and patriarchal structures. Nevertheless, it does not constitute a unitary ideological system, but rather a plurality of perspectives and experiences, united by a few fundamental aspirations: self-realization, equality, solidarity, and the recognition of personal experience. This plurality is also found in interwar Romania, a period marked by institutional modernization, the consolidation of the national state, economic crises, cultural conflicts and ideological struggles. In this paradoxical context, the condition of woman becomes a central subject of public debates. Access to education and to professions, until then reserved for men, represented essential steps in emancipation. At the same time, women began to participate actively in literary life, in the press of the time, in civic movements and in public debates. The feminist movements gained strength through organizations such as the Group of Romanian Women and the National Council of Women. Personalities such as Alexandrina Cantacuzino, Ella Negruzzi, Elena Meissner or Calypso Botez became strong voices of modernization and of feminine affirmation. In the literary field, women writers tried to legitimate themselves in a space dominated by men, transforming literature into a symbolic field of struggle for intellectual authority.

The objective of the present research is to bring into the foreground the complex image of the condition of woman in interwar Romania. The interdisciplinary analysis follows the educational, juridical, professional and cultural dimensions, with a particular emphasis on feminine literature, in order to highlight both the progress and the limitations of the epoch. In this way, the contribution of women to the social, political and cultural life of Romania becomes visible and finds its rightful place in the history of modernization. The analysis of the Romanian interwar period cannot be limited to the factuality of political history; it demands the inclusion of a philosophical-ideological lens capable of explaining the profound mechanisms that have shaped the cultural field. After 1918, Europe passes through a total crisis — material, demographic and axiological — following the collapse of the empires and the reconfiguration

of political geography. The general sentiment of instability fuels a “moral crisis” perceived as a regression of European consciousness, with visible effects in the reorientation of cultural discourse. Upon this ground overlaps a pronounced opening toward mysticism and oriental spiritualities, interpreted with nuance by the Romanian elite: for Al. Philippide, the crisis is real, but can be overcome through a “moralization” of the intellectual; for Lucian Blaga, mysticism becomes a state of fact of the epoch, with fertile effect even upon the sciences; for Rădulescu-Motru, the same phenomenon takes the shape of a cultural fashion produced industrially, that is, a “commodity” flooding the symbolic market. Beyond divergences, all capture the same diagnosis: technical and economic modernization reconfigures the place of the individual and strains the relation between reason and spirituality. On the internal plane, this tension nourishes the Great Debate regarding the direction of development of Romania: the Europeanists (Eugen Lovinescu, Ștefan Zeletin) explain Romanian modernity through Westernization and integration into the circuit of capitalism (since Adrianople), associating the appearance of the autochthonous bourgeoisie with profound economic transformations; the traditionalists (Nichifor Crainic, Lucian Blaga, Nae Ionescu) claim the primacy of Orthodox spirituality and of the rural world as depository of the Romanian “style,” expressing conservative ideas in a modern language. Between these two poles, Virgil Madgearu formulates a third way — “The Doctrine of Agrarian Romania” — which proposes an economy centered on the family farm and a peasant state capable of responding to the needs of the majority, avoiding Western mimicry and Eastern collectivism. The socio-economic structure reflects these options: agriculture remains the backbone of the economy, while industrialization gains ground; the bourgeoisie — although numerically minoritarian — acquires a major political and cultural weight. Everyday life is marked by social polarization (differences of income, access to resources, urban mapping on socio-spatial circles), and the quality of life of many townspeople is affected by insufficient salaries in relation to costs. In contrast, the rural environment is described as a space of simplicity and affective resilience, in spite of severe material conditions — an antinomy that speaks much about the “emotional geography” of the epoch.

The historical fixation of feminine emancipation requires a chronology which begins at the crossroads of the eighteenth century, when the egalitarian ideals propagated around the Declaration of the Rights of Man become an occasion for the public articulation of the feminine voice. From then on, “emancipation” does not remain a univocal label, but a veritable process, reconfigured by each historical conjuncture and, especially, by class belonging. It traverses successive stages — from bourgeois philanthropy to democratic-bourgeois reformism, utopisms and socialism — preserving as teleological nucleus the cultural, economic, social and

political equalization. Capitalist industrialization accelerates the entry of women into the sphere of production, but grasps emancipation within a paradoxical regime: economic utilization concomitant with salary devaluation and political exclusion. While a conservative discourse circumscribes them to the family and reproductive roles, the reformist currents claim access to education, liberal professions and public service, underlining that the appointment of certain women to “top” positions does not resolve structural inequality.

In the Romanian space, the tradition of feminine representations conjoins cultural archetypes (the sacrifice of Ana from the ballad of Master Manole) with historical figures who participate in the national construction (from Lady Stanca to Maria Rosetti and Elena Cuza). After 1918, in the atmosphere of political and social reorganization, the feminist movement becomes institutionalized: the Association for the Civil and Political Emancipation of Romanian Women coagulates democratic elites (Eleonora Stratilescu) and submits a petition with aristocratic and bourgeois support (Olga Sturdza, Moruzi, Știrbey), demanding full civil and political rights. The parliamentary debate reflects the polarization of the epoch: between the recognition of the merits and of the “de facto governance” of women, and their reduction to luxury objects within a regime of “modern slavery.”

On the axis class–environment, the differences are striking. The urban elites benefit from private/pension education, linguistic cosmopolitanism (French), salons and balls as institutions of sociability and symbolic capital; in the rural space, the traditional-patriarchal mentality maintains strict roles. Everyday modernity changes the visibility of the body and of leisure time: sports appear (swimming, athletics), the beach, the bicycle, while clothing shortens skirts and introduces trousers, signaling autonomy and functionality. Cultural controversies are intense — from the irony of Tudor Arghezi to the defense of Camil Petrescu, who reads in feminine fashion a symptom of economic-social integration. The interwar feminine press (*Jurnalul femeii*, *Mariana*, *Revista scriitoarei*, *Domnița*) offers a double forum: on the one hand, it records the militant woman, on the other it normalizes self-care, elegance and good manners. This double register is not contradictory, but complementary: affirmation in the public space does not exclude individual aesthetics, but re-semanticizes it as an identity resource. On the front of exemplarity, the interwar period produces a gallery of pioneers: Elvira Popescu — reference of the European stage; Sofia Ionescu — the beginnings of a career in neurosurgery (since 1944); Aurora Gruescu — the first woman forestry engineer in the world; Elisa Leonida Zamfirescu — engineering and applied research; Silvia Creangă — doctorate in mathematics; Florica Bagdasar — physician and first woman minister (1946); Ștefania Mărăcineanu — contributions in radioactivity; Hermina Walch Kaminski — public medicine; Virginia

Andreescu Haret — architecture. These trajectories confirm that professional visibility is not an exception, but a current coexisting with persistent barriers. Finally, modern consumptions (cinemas, cosmetics, fashion) and the universe of advertising reconfigure aspirations and class landmarks; sometimes to excess (so-called “miraculous” beauty devices), other times as a vehicle of urban standardization. In spite of urban enthusiasm, the rural woman remains relatively unchanged, which underlines the unequal character of modernization. The interwar period is, thus, the matrix of an incomplete emancipation: it extends rights, multiplies models, changes the imaginary, but leaves open the social fractures which will continue to mark the condition of woman.

The Romanian interwar period, described by V. Fanache as an interval “structured between tradition and modernity,” coagulates an aesthetic climate in which autochthonous energies universalize themselves. Within this framework, feminine writing ceases to be a mere curiosity and constitutes itself as a coherent field of practices: from the forerunners of the second half of the nineteenth century to the interwar pleiad and up to the late reverberations of the second half of the twentieth century. The Francophone filière and the reception of psychoanalysis — both creatively internalized — accelerate a fiction of interiority: confession, introspection, analysis of consciousness. This local “women’s writing” does not imply a ranking on inferior levels; on the contrary, it represents a legitimate modality of articulating subjectivity. In the 1920s–1930s, prose written by women knows an unprecedented expansion: the urban becomes a stage of self-modeling, while the “psychological epic” — related to European modernism — offers techniques of probing the self. Although exposed to critiques with misogynistic undertones, this prose claims a place in the canon through the consistency of its themes (identity, vocation, autonomy) and the maturity of its technique. Literary emancipation has a double genealogy. On the axis of reading, the feminine public — nourished by libraries, salons and periodicals — creates demand and models of reception. On the axis of writing, from the masculine pseudonyms of the nineteenth century to the normative program formulated by Virginia Woolf (“money and a room of her own”), the women authors negotiate access to time, space and symbolic capital. In Romania, the first novels signed by women (from Doamna L./Marie Bucher to other pioneers) are often tributary to sensationalism, but they open the path toward the professionalization of interwar feminine prose.

In all this new situation, Eugen Lovinescu occupies a paradoxical place: theoretician of synchronist modernity, director of conscience at *Sburătorul*, he combines practical support (promotion of women writers, canonization of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, praise of Lucia Demetrius, Cella Serghi, Sorana Gurian) with residues of patriarchal thinking (the opposition

between “masculine vocation” and “feminine lyricism”). Precisely this ambivalence makes visible the moment of transition: women’s writing passes from the “minor” zone into the normative zone of value, together with the consolidation of psychological prose. In parallel, conservative criticism (with voices such as G. Călinescu) hesitates to accept the psychologism and aesthetic autonomy of feminine writing, reactivating clichés about the “gender difference” in art. And precisely the interwar novels contradict these expectations through the complexification of typologies. The feminine gallery moves from Ana — the victim of patriarchal order — to Ghighi and Laura — signs of discrete modernization —, from Nadina Iuga — avatar of aggressive worldliness — to Otilia — social mobility through seduction and ambiguity —, from Ella Gheorghidiu and Diana Slavu — education, profession, autonomy — up to uninhibited, eroticized or scandalous figures (from *Rusoaica* or *The Bed of Procrustes*). The narrative woman thus becomes a conscious actor of her own destiny, while literary masculinity loses its monopoly over lucid introspection. This typological mutation is consonant with the change of cultural infrastructure: salons, journals, book markets, a growing public. Consequently, “feminine literature” no longer means only sentimentalism and intimacy, but a strategy of knowledge: a way of investigating the world, of reconfiguring it through the lens of feminine experience. The canon widens, and the rigid opposition masculine/feminine becomes aesthetically inoperative, even if it survives socially. Therefore, the interwar period fixes the premises of a tradition: it professionally legitimizes the “feminine voice,” diversifies the imaginary and produces memorable characters, whose ethical, affective and social dilemmas are not women’s dilemmas, but those of modernity.

The interwar period represents a particularly important stage in the social and cultural history of Romania, marking institutional consolidation, the affirmation of national identity and profound transformations in the structure of society. Together with the completion of the Great Union (1918), one can feel, through the cultural momentum, the desire for social and economic change having at its nucleus the status of woman. The epoch becomes one of emancipation, in which the marked role of women in the public space takes shape: they claim for themselves an active place in culture, civic life and, especially, in literature. The interwar women writers converge toward the same goal: the consolidation of the position of woman in society and the configuration of the image of a strong femininity. The preferred themes aim at self-determination, identity and gender equality. Immediately after the First World War, Romanian society enters into a cycle of accelerated modernization. The influence of European feminist ideas and the extension of access to education for women open concrete opportunities for affirmation, beyond the domestic sphere: participation in the labor market, professionalization

and the growth of public visibility. In literature, this new voice valorizes themes such as relations of power, the condition of woman and the new rights acquired. Among the representative figures of the interwar period are Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Cella Serghi, Henriette Yvonne Stahl, Lucia Demetrius; through their works — from the struggle for social emancipation to psychological introspection — they become the voice of a generation, demonstrating that women represent a shaping force of culture and society. Their work remains a testament of creativity and courage, born from a powerful inner experience, between suffering and fulfillment, destined to inspire the reevaluation of the role of woman in family, history, society and literature. In spite of a persistent patriarchal mentality, the critical reception of interwar feminine writing was, often, favorable. Leading critics recognized the finesse of psychological analysis and the compositional complexity of these works. Nevertheless, gender prejudices sometimes generated marginalization or reproaches linked to “excess of emotionality” or to “themes too personal.” Even so, the position of these creations in the literary field consolidated itself, and criticism emphasized both the aesthetic contribution and the boldness of introducing authentic feminine perspectives and new themes in the Romanian landscape. In the Romanian interwar space, prose affirms itself as an urban and intellectualized discourse, born from psychological turmoil and narrative experiments, which legitimizes the appearance of new fictional formulas.

One pole of this modernization is constituted by the literature cultivated by women writers, having as pivot Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, a figure that marks the transition from classical realism to analytic modernism. Her formation within an intellectual milieu and the decisive contact with the *Sburătorul* circle sustain her consecration as creator of the urban novel and as a voice of European breadth, doubled by a favorable attitude toward feminine emancipation and democratic reforms. The aesthetics she proposes is modernist and investigative: it dismantles stereotypes of femininity, probes mentalities and exposes patriarchal prejudices, surpassing the simple sentimental dramatization. The focus upon the feminine universe is explained by the social constraints of the epoch, which limit the mobility of women to the familial and social spheres; literature thus becomes the space of symbolic compensation and of a freedom of self-construction. Biographically, the interdiction of university studies and the “escape” through marriage reveal the tension between cognitive aspiration and conservative norms, a tension which her work converts into psychological analysis and formal innovation. The ensemble configures an aesthetic and thematic model through which feminine writing acquires manifest status, contributing decisively to the professionalization of prose and to the establishment of modernism in Romanian literature. Within the register of European interwar

modernism, a new orientation of feminine sensibility takes shape, founded upon psychological truth, balance and authenticity. This direction pursues the articulation of an autonomous feminine identity, not through aggressive militancy, but through the refinement of the techniques of the modern novel — reflector-character and interior monologue — and through the thematization of the urban universe, of the family and of the war. The emphasis falls upon the freedom of woman in the domestic space and upon the dismantling of patriarchal prejudices, not upon explicit political revendications; reading becomes at the same time a space of solidarity for female readers. In the Bengescian prose, the family functions as laboratory of moral dissolution: marriage is represented as contractual, utilitarian institution, oriented toward social ascension and material protection, not toward affective community. The series of arranged or interested unions (up to limit-situations, with incestuous potential) exposes the logic of moral and spiritual sacrifice, doubled by snobbery and worldly-bourgeois immorality. The ensemble configures an “inner revolution” of femininity: the exploration of experiences, of bodily constraints and of domestic power relations produces a typology of heroines who refuse submission, seek experience and meaning, and redefine marriage as false substitute of protection. The result is an aesthetic paradigm in which writing becomes knowledge, refuge and gesture of emancipation, imposing within interwar literature a model of feminine representation that is profound and credible.

In Bengescian prose, eros functions as a field of deviation from the normative: adultery and even incest are trivialized until they become structural mechanism of the narrative, while the idea of the “normal” couple dissolves into social convention. The study of the character Aneta Pascu from *Rădăcini* highlights the psychic genesis of this deviation: suspected filiation, a conjugal climate dominated by distrust (abortions supervised by the father), lack of affective-sexual education and maternal violence. The result is the neurotic profile (in the sense of Otto Rank's typology): revolt without finality, fear of failure and reflex of withdrawal. A parallel is offered by Ina from *Străina*, herself formed in abuse and isolation — a novel known in fragments, which nevertheless announces a young generation oriented toward identity and progress, with the possibility of reconfiguring the family on affective bases. The Ina–Lucian couple illustrates this tension. Lucian appears in a double hypostasis: either balanced spirit, raised in the Christian ethos and tempted by the domestic model, or chaotic figure, with a *mariage blanc* and two other failed marriages, dominated by an egotism that refuses procreation. The egocentric reaction to the loss of pregnancy and the absence in key moments lead to the rupture of the relationship; the subsequent reconciliation converts eros into fraternity, transforming the “conjugal ideal” into a bland cohabitation devoid of erotic meaning.

The ensemble configures a social and psychological diagnosis: the corrosive familial environment and bourgeois hypocrisy reproduce neuroses and affective triangulations, while the modern impulse to humanize marriage and to confer autonomy upon woman remains incomplete, caught between the desire for progress and the inertia of a decrepit moral code. In the Bengescian novel, the characters — especially the heroines — are followed in their interior crisis, against the background of a corrosive bourgeois milieu, whose cultural refinements mask arrivisme and hypocrisy. The neurotic portrait, troubled by unfulfillment and anxiety, is investigated through meticulous introspection and through the association of memory in the Proustian sense, used as instruments of rational research of the affective “origin.” Temporality has a circular form: biographies start from a place of “roots” and return to it, without however obtaining reconciliation with themselves. The novel *Rădăcini* marks artistic maturity: ample construction, sophisticated technique, panorama of typologies of love and fractured destinies, doubled by a lucid probing of the dark zone of consciousness. The “roots” become metaphor of identity (family, place, memory), while uprooting explains the oscillation of the characters between wandering and the nostalgia of stability. Marriage, frequently social contract or strategy of material protection, proves unfit for fulfillment; the family project fails systematically, from apparently solid couples to visibly dysfunctional ones. *Fecioarele despletite*, the first novel of the Hallipa cycle, inaugurates the modernist psychological laboratory: interior analysis, multiple and ambiguous perspective, interior monologue, free indirect discourse, discourse fragmented by the subjective perception of time. In its ensemble, the Bengescian novel converts prose into a “clinic” of the modern soul, in which the theme of identity, of family and of memory is reconfigured under the pressure of individual neurosis and of social conventions.

Henriette Yvonne Stahl outlines herself as one of the major voices of Romanian interwar prose, through an aesthetics of introspection and psychological analysis of great finesse. Her multicultural formation (French and German origins, birth in Paris, childhood in Romania), plurilingual education and early contact with the French and German canon offer her a hybrid perspective, converted into an elegant, reflective style, dense in metaphor. The privileged themes — inner conflict, human relations, the condition of the person — are investigated as spaces of tension between knowledge and conscience, between desire and self-control, while the motifs of love and sacrifice become instruments of probing subjectivity. On the historical and sociocultural plane, accelerated modernization, the emergence of nationalist ideologies and the reconfiguration of gender roles impose a double stake: aesthetic innovation and legitimization of the feminine author in a literary field dominated by men. In

proximity to other prose writers of the epoch (Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Cella Serghi), she contributes to widening the horizon of Romanian prose, validating feminine writing as a discourse of authority and not of marginality. The result is an artistic profile that combines formative cosmopolitanism with psychological rigor, renewing the paradigms of interwar narration through thematic depth, stylistic subtlety and acuteness of observation regarding the human condition. The literature of Henriette Yvonne Stahl configures itself around several defining directions. First, psychological introspection: the characters are placed in limit-situations meant to reveal the deep layers of consciousness and motivations. Second, moral ambiguity: the narratives avoid categorical solutions and suspend the ethical verdict, inviting the reader to critical deliberation. A third marker is the autobiographical vein, which confers affective authenticity and experiential density to the epic constructions. Finally, thematic universality: although anchored in the Romanian context, the texts surpass the local frame, articulating dilemmas with transnational and atemporal resonance. These coordinates coagulate exemplarily in the debut novel, *Voica* (1924). Structured as a short-length text, with witness-narrator and unitary epic thread, the novel alternates concise episodes with descriptive sequences of rural life, obtaining an effect of ethnographic authenticity. The thematic stake is double: the confrontation between duty and desire and the tension between tradition and modernity. The characters are caught between community imperatives and individual aspirations, and their inner conflict becomes the main vector of the action. Through the precision of psychological observation and through the realism of evocation, the prose offers a nuanced tableau of the interwar village and of the impact of traditional norms upon personal choices. The critical reception was promptly favorable. Major names of the epoch remarked upon the analytical lucidity of the author, the rigor of construction and the direct knowledge of the rural universe. It was also underlined the solidity of her early intellectual formation and her precocious access to cultural debates of breadth, circumstances which explain the amplitude of her documentation and the maturity of her vision. In its ensemble, the work imposes a model of psychological prose in which the examination of consciousness, ethical indeterminacy and the universal breath of themes converge into a distinct and durable artistic voice.

Inscribed in the constellation of interwar feminine prose, Cella Serghi imprinted a defining mark upon Romanian literature, imposing herself especially through her debut novel, *The Spider's Web* (*Pânza de păianjen*). Her writing distinguishes itself through the finesse of observation and the rigor of psychological analysis, qualities which conferred upon her a privileged status in the literary field. The present work examines the author's oeuvre and biography, as well as her cultural impact, highlighting the relevance of her contributions for

Romanian literature of the twentieth century. Cella Serghi (born Marcoff, October 21, 1907, Constanța) ties her formation to the space of the Pontic seashore, later transformed into a leitmotif of her prose imaginary. Although she pursued law at the University of Bucharest, her intimate option for literature, active since childhood, decisively oriented her intellectual trajectory. Interwar Bucharest, with its density of personalities — Mircea Eliade, Camil Petrescu, Mihail Sebastian — constituted the catalytic milieu of her cultural maturation, offering her access to circles, practices and aesthetic models of urban modernity. The affective biography of the author is marked by her encounter, in 1927, at the Kiseleff swimming pool, with Camil Petrescu, an event which her memoirs fix under the sign of a sentimental revelation. Portrayed through discrete physical traits and through a certain temperamental harshness, the writer becomes the center of an unfulfilled love, whose tensions would be converted into literary matter. The reunion a year later finds the young woman as a Law student and married to the engineer Alfino Seni; although the object of her fascination remains constant, Camil's interest manifests itself rather utilitarian, oriented toward the technical information of the husband. In the following years, aspiring to intellectual and affective proximity, Serghi gravitates deliberately around the Camilean-Petrescian circle, transforming admiration into a program of cultural life. The relationship, maintained epistolarily and through social convergences, nevertheless stabilizes itself in the register of masculine indecision and feminine devotion. The recurrent endearment "Moft" notes the ambivalence of a closeness that does not institute itself as matrimonial project and remains, in the biographical plan, a scenario of renunciation. Out of this sublimated frustration, however, the narrative vocation decants itself: personal experience is transfigured aesthetically, and unfulfillment converts itself into creative energy, sedimenting the premises of the author's literary affirmation.

Sidonia Drăgușanu inscribes herself exemplarily within the "new generation" of interwar intellectual women, symbolically associated with the "bad girls": autonomous women, willing to assume their destiny, to negotiate their identity publicly and to sustain, through work and attitude, the causes of femininity, feminism and emancipation. Her biography — marked by passionate loves, ruptures and a constant public visibility — directly nourishes the literary imaginary, where the recurrently approached themes (failed love, infidelity, unfulfilled femininity) are counterbalanced by an ethos of resilience: "life goes on." Born in 1908, in a non-traditional family for the epoch, with a much older father (hospital administrator) and a very young mother who would reconfigure her destiny alongside officer Puiu Dumitrescu (later general, through his connection with King Carol II), the author early

converts her experiences of social milieu into literary material. Adolescence spent at a pension favored her dramaturgic debut: plays performed within the Choisy-Mangiru Pension attest a precocious vocation, later consolidated into a polyvalent career — journalist, prose writer, playwright. Her journalistic activity, oriented toward counseling women and mediating the “intimate crises” of the epoch, culminates with her role as announcer of the radio broadcast *Curierul inimii*, a platform for debating the feminine condition. Her public profile — charismatic, tonic, self-ironic — transpires from her writing, while her literary trajectory, launched under the sign of feminist and progressive ideas, arouses mixed yet influential critical receptions (G. Călinescu, Eugen Ionescu). Her intellectual friendships, among which stands out the durable bond with Eugen Ionescu, indicate a real integration into the cultural networks of interwar modernity. Within the same constellation of artistic affirmation stand, as generational references, Gelu Naum and Geo Bogza in literature, respectively Ligia Macovei and Magdalena Rădulescu in the visual arts. The interwar period offered the frame of an accelerated modernity, favorable to aesthetic experiment and social repositioning, in which women writers likewise assert unequivocally their thematic and formal freedom. In this context, Sidonia Drăgușanu illustrates an attitude of tempered emancipation, oriented rather toward the refinement of moral observation than toward programmatic provocation. Her debut, the novel *Într-o gară mică* (1934) — awarded the prize “The Most Beautiful Novel of Adolescence” by Cugetarea Publishing House, in a competition with over sixty participants — proposes, with narrative discretion, the story of the friendship of two adolescent girls, Dudu and Luiza, within a universe dominated by patriarchal codes; the contrast between the pampered prosperity of one and the precariousness of the other functions as device of analysis of class and chance inequalities. The public profile of the author, contoured by a direct, supple style, ironized through fine allusions, generated an intense relationship with her readers, comparable today to the status of “influencer”: she was often addressed in the urban space (Calea Victoriei) to comment on fictional destinies or to offer existential counseling. Her civic dimension surpassed the page: contemporary testimonies (Valeriu Sârbu) capture her actively involving herself in elucidating cases with moral and juridical stakes, sign of an ethics of social responsibility. Biographically, her affective trajectory is marked by her marriage with Miron Radu Paraschivescu and by the experience of an asymmetric love, aesthetically converted into literary matter and reflected, on the other side, in fictionalizing transpositions of the partner (epistolary form, focused on censorship, precarity and the erotic within the interwar climate). At 38, the author published under the pseudonym “Catrinel” in the magazine *Femeia și Căminul*, where her column of confessions and advice acquired a therapeutic and documentary function; the

epistolary corpus became thematic reservoir for the novel *Una dintre noi e de prisos*. Beyond the playful tone of public masks, a background of personal unfulfillments is profiled, transfigured into a prose of empathic lucidity, preoccupied with feminine autonomy, affective justice and everyday dignity.

The study argues that the historical differences between women and men were configured by the original division of roles (the hunter–gatherer paradigm), transformed into patriarchal norms that fixed for the man the position of public authority and for the woman the domestic sphere. Against the background of the scientific recognition of the intellectual equality between the sexes, late modernity permitted the gradual dismantling of these constraints, opening women’s access to education, professions, civic rights and cultural visibility. The figure of the “career woman” is defined through the assumption of professional responsibility and orientation toward ambitious objectives, although it remains subject of social debate. On the theoretical plane, the Jungian anima/animus schema offers a hermeneutic key for understanding identity dynamism and the tension of self-assertion in relation to gender norms. Applied to interwar Romania, the analysis reveals a social field situated between tradition and accelerated modernization: major gains — the extension of education, entry into “masculine” professions, the right to vote, the emergence of feminist activism and the increase of social freedom — coexist with persistent mental resistances. In the literary sphere, women writers constructed a distinct space of expression, thematizing identity, maternity, love, alienation, education and inner freedom; from the analytic prose of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu to the urban sensibility of Cella Serghi, the interwar feminine corpus demonstrates not only aesthetic quality, but also a struggle for legitimization within an androcentric cultural system. The conclusion proposes the systematic recovery of feminine experience as essential part of social and cultural memory. Such a historical re-reading facilitates the reevaluation of the contemporary condition of woman and clarifies the way in which discourses about gender shape identity, power relations and collective memory.