

STATE MEN, MARKET WOMEN. THE EFFECTS OF LEFT CONSERVATISM ON GENDER POLITICS IN ROMANIAN TRANSITION¹

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You may adorn yourself with someone else's feathers,
But they won't give you wings to fly (Lucian Blaga).

1. INTRODUCTION

The title of this study is inspired by Jean Bethke Elshtain's book, *Public Man, Private Woman*. What I propose to show here is to highlight the ways in which, during the Romanian post-communist transition, due to left conservatism *men have successfully appropriated the state, while women were simply delivered to the market*. I argue that in post-socialist countries like Romania the main features of modern patriarchy have taken shape during the transition period, having been missing under communism. Feminist ideology –as oriented mostly towards the «personal is political» and insufficiently towards the «political is personal»– played a favorable, though unintentional role throughout the transition process.

1. My paper is based on research on gender relations in Romania. Many of them were coordinated by me: *Barometrul de Gen*, București, Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă, August 2000; ȚĂRANU, Andrei and HERCIU, Amalia: *Femeile în programele partidelor politice românești actuale*, Raport de cercetare, București, SNSPA, 2001; PASTI, Vladimir and ILINCA, Cristina: *Discriminarea de gen o realitate a tranziției*, Raport de Cercetare, București, Institutul de Studii ale Dezvoltării, 2001; OLTEANU, Cristina (ed.): *Femeile în România comunistă*, București, Politeia, 2003; VASILESCU, Maria Luiza: *Evoluția publică și privată a feminismului românesc actual*, Raport de cercetare, București, SNSPA, 2002; MARINESCU, Valentina: *Muncile casnice în satul românesc actual*, Iași, Polirom, 2002; PASTI, Vladimir: *Ultima inegalitate. Relațiile de gen în România*, Iași, Polirom, 2003. I am grateful to some extraordinary people for their contributions to the evolution of this research paper: to Vladimir Pasti, an excellent co-timer, to Maria Bucur, for her intellectual support and for her help with the English version of my paper, to Jean Robinson for her great and provocative comments and encouragements, to Jeffrey Isaac for our enlightening dialogues on left and right conservatisms and for the precious academic environment he shared with me. I will treasure each moment at Indiana University.

We are dealing with a «harmless feminism» of the civil society which leaves the «power over power» untouched. This approach nourishes the political acceptance of women rather as victims than competitors.

In the current international context of European Union (EU) enlargement towards Central Eastern Europe (CEE), a particular type of feminism is developing –I will call it «room-service feminism»–. This type of feminism has become a superficial substitute for the development of local political feminism. The backlash against feminism in the West, along with the post-feminism promoted by the media, in turn affects negatively the development of a political feminism in CEE.

2. BACK TO THE «POLITICAL IS PERSONAL»

2.1. The role of political feminism

I believe in a politically engaged take on women's issues and see feminism as only a as a theory², but also as an ideology for women's emancipation from an inferior status. Because of its anti-patriarchal agenda, feminism cannot be substituted by any other ideology, such as liberalism or social-democracy. Even though sometimes it assumes features of liberalism³ or socialism⁴, feminism remains fundamentally oriented against a common enemy, the patriarchal order.

Briefly put, patriarchy is the ideology (explicit or tacit) according to which what men think, express, and do is by definition more important, valued, and better rewarded than what women think, express, and do. This «more», which shows a structural power difference, has not disappeared in capitalist societies that are liberal democracies, nor has it disappeared from predominantly social-democrat societies (for instance, in the Scandinavian countries, the champions of «state feminism»⁵, where men have migrated from politics to business –the real seat of power– and women have taken on more roles in politics). Patriarchy has not disappeared from communist societies and in fact it has been recreated in the post-communist countries by the governmental politics, the rebirth of tradition and by media, regardless of the particular circumstances. This assertion of gender

2. I believe that a significant criterion of the success of feminism is the increase in the degree of women's autonomy.

3. See, in precommunist Romania XENOPOL, Adela: «Drepturile femeii» (1896), in Ștefania Mihăilescu: *Din istoria feminismului românesc, Antologie de texte (1838-1929)*, Iași, Polirom, 2002, pp. 104-109 and BOTEZ, Calipso: «Drepturile femeii în Constituția viitoare», in *Constituția din 1923 în dezbaterile contemporanilor*, București, Humanitas, 1990, pp. 96-115. And in today's liberal feminist theory: EISENSTEIN, Zillah: *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1984 and OKIN, Susan Moller: *Justice, Gender and Family*, New York, Basic Books, 1989.

4. See in precommunist Romania Nădejde (1879), and in today's socialist feminist theory: HARTMANN, Heidi: «The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism», in Lydia Sargent (ed.): *Women and Revolution: A Disscution of the Unhappy Marriage of Feminism and Marxism*, Boston, South End Press, 1981, pp. 1-41; JAGGAR, Alison: *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, Totowa, N.J. Rowman & Allenheld, 1983 and YOUNG, Iris Marion: *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1990.

5. I borrowed this expression from the title of the volume edited by MCBRIDE STENTSON, Dorothy and MAZUR, Amy: *Comparative State Feminism*, London, SAGE Publications, 1995.

superiority can lead only to either social hierarchies that disempower women, or, worse, to women's political, legal, economic, and symbolic dependence on men.

Patriarchy is a form of political apartheid. Even if it doesn't create *de jure* political segregation, it creates *de facto* segregation. In the best case, this segregation can contribute to allowing women to voice their particular issues in the political agenda (e.g., the whole agenda inspired by the second wave of feminism –abortion, parental leave, marital rape, domestic violence, pornography, prostitution, anti-discrimination and equal opportunities laws-). But even when these successes are real, women's power to influence the fundamental choices in the society remains still very weak. The glass ceiling remains. In other words, where such successes have occurred, the achievements of the feminist agenda have been in the area of political and civil rights, or policies and laws that correct injustices towards women's position, mostly as electorate, females, and mothers, and less as citizens participating in shaping the «power over power».

One of my basic tenets is that feminism as an ideology varies in a social context. My problem, and that of many feminist authors from Central and Eastern Europe or interested in this area, is to identify what kind of feminist ideologies can rise and eventually succeed in a post-communist country (in my case, Romania), starting from the specific problems of women in the region.

The international context plays a double role for Eastern feminism: on the one hand it helps us (see, for instance, what I identify below as «room-service feminism»); on the other hand, it impedes us. This negative feature is linked fundamentally to the post-feminism promoted by the Western mass-media and by the retreat of the feminist agenda into the private realm, sometimes with an overwhelming focus on sexuality. This type of agenda is coherent with the motto of the second wave of feminism: «personal is political», bringing out of the closet sexuality issues, giving them the dignity of a public discourse and of a scholarly subject.

It is indeed good that private issues have become public and have achieved acceptable legal solutions. But it is problematic that fundamental political choices such as the content of most laws, the distribution of public budget, fiscal policy, social welfare, education and health policies, defense, all marginalize or exclude women from direct participation in major decisions. And it is also very problematic that this very absence almost lacks from the feminist agenda. It seems a political «gynaeceum» for women has been created with feminist's tacit consent along the lines of the motto «the personal is political». To keep the feminist agenda almost exclusively at the level of micro-politics and in «the personal is political» means to consent to amnesia regarding the fact that the «political is *also* personal»; in other words, that any policies have an impact on the lives of both men and women. Originally, the feminist discourse was precisely the one that demanded bringing women out of the gynaeceum in the sense of their full participation in public life. And these ideas become even more significant in our days when we look at CEE countries.

Problems apparently unconnected to women's issues are deeply affecting women even if they are not recognized formally as gender policies. The main example is the radical redistribution of power and resources during the post communist transition. Feminism has to concentrate also below the obvious forms of discrimination against women in order to influence macro-politics.

In the Eastern European academic circles and even among public intellectuals there is a paralyzing fear of ideologies⁶. Few assume openly their ideological commitments, opting instead to declare themselves proponents of the free market. Feminism has encountered an even greater resistance. A series of studies shows that even militant women who have fought for women's rights have shown a certain embarrassment to declare themselves as feminist, sometimes going so far as to negate the opportunity of feminist politics after communism⁷. This is an embarrassment nourished by public intellectuals also in order to reinforce the assumption that feminism is an attempt to take away men's power and authority and that women, the «real» ones (those who assume their radical gender difference), do not wish power in its «masculine» embodiments. Feminism must no longer be «political» in the sense of macro-politics but may develop at the most at the micro-political level⁸.

By feminism I mean all kind of ideas, theories and policies that promote and lead to the exercise of women's rights to autonomy, self-assertion, as well as to public influence and power. Feminism is, *par excellence*, an emancipation strategy. Gender policies can be feminist or just pro-women. It is not necessary that certain policies are feminist. They can help women to cope better with their lives (for example, a better maternal leave), but it doesn't mean that women will have more access to the production of knowledge or to the main political choices within the society. Protective policies are not necessary feminist policies. For example, at the beginning of communism a sort of «state proto-feminism» and emancipation agenda were promoted⁹. After the seventies, this approach was

6. There is a widespread rejection of messianic ideologies, while feminism is usually associated either or with communism, or with radicalism or lesbianism. In each case there is a pejorative connotation.

7. Most such views are expressions of the prejudice that women's emancipation is a «heritage of communist times». It is striking that persons who initiated Gender Studies in Central and Eastern Europe led some counter-attacks against feminism. Jirina Siklova, a highly appreciated dissident, and member of Charter 77, founded the Gender Studies Center in Prague. She claimed: «We are skeptical of every form of messianism, and skepticism is directed to feminism as well. Slogans like «sisterhood is global» rings bells of Marxist slogan like «Proletarians of the world, unite!»—and they are simply suspicious to us» (in EINHORN, Barbara: *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender and Women's Movements in East Central Europe*, London, Verso, 1993, p. 182).

8. See MANN, Patricia: *Micro Politics, Agency in a Post Feminist Era*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

9. In many texts and discussions the image of the emancipated women in communism was ironically identified with the «tractor driver». I hardly understand the irony, because becoming a tractor driver meant for those women a significant, and positive change in their social statute; for the alternative to becoming a tractor driver was the manual labor in agriculture, by far one of the most difficult and associated with a low social status.

dramatically changed into a maternalist conservative policy, oriented through the reconciliation of women's burdens taken as women's duties¹⁰.

Thus, the theories and policies that lead to correcting abuses against and the injustices suffered by women are overwhelmingly protective, but not necessarily emancipatory. They are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for emancipating women from subordinate and inferior positions.

Feminism is not opposed to capitalism or communism, but to patriarchy, regardless of its faces. Women can fully maneuver the theoretical and practical tools of empowerment, for instance. But without political feminism they cannot come together politically and cannot act as an interest group; they are not prepared to utilize the opportunities created by the restructuring of power relations that occurred during the post-communist transition. Moreover, during the same period men had patriarchy at their disposal and used (even if implicitly and unintentionally) the mechanisms of patriarchy to dominate the redistribution of social resources (see here the conclusive results of the *Gender Barometer, Romania, 2000*). In such a context, the wholesale borrowing from the West of post-feminism and of the backlash against feminism¹¹ is just as inadequate as the preventive anti-feminism in the East. In the West feminism is taken for granted, in the East we are dealing with an empty space. The statement «all the feminist dreams come true» in post-feminism is false even for the countries where the history of feminism has had a full run and where one can show that the feminist agenda was successful: the post-feminist lifestyle is in fact the product of women's economic and sexual independence¹².

The main reason I consider such an appropriation as inadequate is that in post-communist countries like Romania the structures of modern patriarchy are very recently created. A growing percentage of women, especially young ones, are just now beginning to experience the economic and status dependency vis-à-vis men¹³. Introducing postfeminist themes in such a context lacks any links with social reality; postfeminism can only develop as a cultural choice. And postfemi-

10. See for e.g. FUNK, Nanette and MULLER, Magda (eds.): *Gender Politics and Post Communism*, New York, Routledge, 1993; ROBINSON, Jean: «Women, the State and the Need for Civil Society. The Liga Kobiet in Poland», in Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy Mazur (eds.): *Op. cit.*, pp. 203-220; Kligman, Gail: *Politica duplicității. Controlul reproducerii în România lui Ceaușescu*, București, Humanitas, 1998; GHEONEA, Elena and GHEONEA, Valentin: «Femeile în propaganda regimului comunist», in Cristina Olteanu (ed.): *Op. cit.*, pp. 52-83. Jean Robinson, e.g., explains the move from the «heroic socialist tractor driver» in the 60' to Matka Polka, who represents procreation and reproduction, in the 80'. During the transition period this later status continued to strengthen. «The notion of the social construction of gender is still not speakable», while the Solidarity and the Catholic Church joined their efforts in focusing on Matka Polka (ROBINSON, Jean: *Op. cit.*, p. 217).

11. See FALUDI, Susan: *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women*, New York, Crown, 1991; GREER, Germaine: *The whole woman*, London, Transworld Publishers, 2000 and SUPERSON, Anita and CUDD, Ann: *Theorizing Backlash. Philosophical Reflection on the Resistance to Feminism*, Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002.

12. See ARNEIL, Barbara: *Politics & Feminism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1999, Chapt. 7.

13. *Barometrul de Gen*, București, Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă August, 2000.

nism can become a risky political option, because it obstructs future attempts to achieve gender equity. This position has also been implicitly promoted by commercial women's journals and many women's television shows¹⁴.

2.2. The Meanings of Power

Post-communist transition has meant a great social experiment with regard to the dramatic recasting of power. Everything was renegotiated. We are dealing with a struggle among power groups for what can be redistributed in society. To operate only from a qualitative, non-conflictualist approach of power in such a context is irrelevant to gender politics. During the transition women's position in the labor market worsened, but not as much as men's. But, as we shall see below, because they were not as well organized to defend their interests, women did not act as a group; even though they had a «competitive» advantage their massive entry in the market economy, they did not use it. The only form of power which remained untouched during this period was patriarchy in gender relations. As I will argue here, this fact has had a significant consequence. *Men have succeeded to appropriate the state, while women were simply delivered to the market.* Even if all forms of power were renegotiated, women did not truly participate in the process as a contractual party. If feminism was somewhat present in state policies, this has taken place rather through international organizations (EU, for e.g.) than as integral part of the internal power struggle.

In the context of the transition East European feminism has landed in full postmodern times: the time of differences, localism, multiculturalism, micro-politics. In other words, it has arrived directly at the stage of the consequences borne by adopting the agenda of «the personal is political». When East European theoreticians revisited the current discourses of power (in the countries with a longer history of feminism or in the west), nothing encouraged them to look towards the conflict and competition among interest groups, because the postmodern theories in general, and the current feminist ones in particular overwhelmingly emphasize the feminine meanings of power (a normative perspective derived from a life-style¹⁵). Indeed, the conflictual meaning of *power over power* and over a particular group has become marginalized in the current theoretical discourse.

According to the recent Western feminist researchers, women do not have the same access to resources of power and often do not give the same meaning to power¹⁶. The starting idea is that since women's experiences are different from men's, their perspective on power seems to also be different. This notion, which can be correct in describing a reality, doesn't however lead us to a normative and exclusive cultivation of difference, because this would mean some risks in assuming the notion that «what is political is personal». Any adept of patriarchal

14. See DRAGOMIR, Otilia (coord.): *Femei, cuvinte și imagini, Perspective feministe*, Iași, Polirom, 2002.

15. HARTSOCK, Nancy: «Foucault on Power. A Theory for Women?», in Linda Nicholson (ed.): *Feminism/Postmodernism*, Routledge, New York, 1990, pp. 154-172.

16. See SQUIRES, Judith: *Gender in Political Theory*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1999, p. 39.

thinking can only rejoice at the idea that women define power differently and feel guilty if they exercise power to dominate and not only to empower the others. The idea that women are using power continuously, but to benefit others (as empowerment) is entirely benign for patriarchy. Jean Baker Miller, for instance, theorizes starting from the case studies in which women describe their own successful assertion of power self-deprecatingly: «what I did was nothing»; or, if women recognize their own success, this only happens in the context of empowerment of the others: the only meaning of power which should be celebrated is to develop others' resources, not to gain resources for oneself. From a «feminine» perspective the desire for power is considered selfish and the exercise of power a source of depression and destructiveness. In the traditional sense, femininity cannot be reconciled with power understood as domination¹⁷. If we add collectivism and the communist ideology of self-sacrifice to such an understanding of women's relationship with power, we see the full picture of the «unhappy marriage between women and power.» To cultivate specificity is to feed conservatism. «Women fear to recognize that they need 'power over'; but without power, women are again powerless and 'cannot effectively bring about anything'»¹⁸. Maybe it is true that power is more difficult to reconcile with the female condition, but it *is* perfectly reconcilable with feminism.

This following argument is an invitation to reinvigorate macro-political feminism. To enable it, I will return to older definitions of power than those given by empowerment (see, for instance, Hannah Arendt's definition –energy, potential, ability, as well as the position of critical realism¹⁹), not because I do not agree with the more recent definitions, but because such an approach would involve the risk of losing the conflictualist meanings of power in some contexts, especially when the whole power structure is reshaped. I will address mostly the access to decision-making and to economic and social resources, to the conflictual meanings and to power as the ability to *avoid* conflict²⁰, to power not only as making decisions, but also as the ability *not* to make decisions²¹. I will revisit in particular the concept of «power over», even though timid approaches of the sort –to ask for power does not mean to take it away from some, but rather to give it to others– is especially moral²². I think that to limit feminist discourses to empowerment in fact helps maintain the status-quo in gender relations. In a democracy, even the «underground» meaning of women's power (see the concept of «bedroom

17. MILLER, Jean Baker: «Women and Power», in Thomas Wartenberg: *Rethinking Power*, New York, State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 224 and 247.

18. *Ibid.*, p.243.

19. ISAAC, Jeffrey: «Beyond the Three Faces of Power: A Realist Critique», in Thomas Wartenberg: *Op. cit.* p. 47.

20. See LUKES, Steven: *Power. A Radical View*, London, Macmillan, 1974.

21. BACHRACH, Peter and BARATZ, Morton: *Power and Poverty*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1970.

22. For the attempts to extend the ethics of care into politics, see TRONTO, Joan: *Moral Boundaries. A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, New York, Routledge, 1993.

politics») is incorrect, because it is a non-transparent power, a pseudo-lobby that legitimates the clientelist mode of power distribution.

How are these ideas relevant to the post-communist countries? By embracing the narrow notion that empowerment is the most important path for feminism, we have missed the opportunity to represent women's interests in the great redistribution of resources that took place during the transition. We developed civil society feminism, with a predominantly cultural and ethical role. In addition to the fact that such a position has meant the marginalization of feminism in the mass media, this type of feminism has also failed to become political and mass ideology. We have been prisoners of our times, falling into the trap of «post» in the vacuum of political identity²³.

If we were to return to the primary, genuine meanings of feminism (as opposed to what I call «harmless feminism»), we would see that this discourse was and is meant to bring women and the feminine out of the gynaeceum and to give them a place in the public space, including politics. Because the original meaning of feminism was linked to the idea that «political is personal». Great macro-political decisions influence equally the lives of women and men. In a democracy both should be able to influence the political agenda. Women in Eastern Europe need an ideology that would generate a set of expectations. Such as an ideology does not rise *ex nihilo* in the minds of feminist intellectuals, but is in fact the expression of processes that take place in society (in so far as these processes are researched²⁴).

2.3. «Room-service feminism»

For women in the countries in the process to join the EU (Romania, in particular), the West is the source of inspiration of liberal ideologies of emancipation. The large public does not know about the Romanian feminist tradition (in particular, this subject is missing from history textbooks), which was interrupted for 50 years under communism. Romania is a rare case in the former communist bloc, which revitalized its historical parties after 1989, attempting transition from communism by appealing to pre-communist political traditions. Many times this particularity has meant simply that Romanian politics were reduced to a confrontation between left-wing conservatism (as framed in the communist tradition) and right-wing conservatism (as framed during the interwar years), i.e., politics formulated in the context of «golden ages» nostalgias. There was no room in this

23. See also GRUNBERG, Laura: «Women's NGO's in Romania», in Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (eds.): *Reproducing gender. Politics, Publics and Everyday Life after Socialism*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 307-337; VASILESCU, Maria Luiza: Op. cit.

24. Research studies on gender relations are relatively very new, and this has made the development of a feminist ideology, as well as of a political feminist agenda a very slow process. With the exception of specific studies carried out in the first decade of the transition period, in Romania the depth of gender relations increased significantly with the first national survey *Gender Barometer*, 2000, and continued with important research, especially connected with the group created within the National School for Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest and Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj.

political discourse for the feminist tradition, which had its beginnings in 1815, and during the pre-communist period had been very similar to western feminisms, especially the American, British, Australian, and New Zealander movements²⁵. The policies imposed from the outside by the process of joining the EU became a new layer on top of the conservative policies outlined above. Thus, the Romanian feminism of transition started rootless (only now, have Romanian feminists begun to locate these roots, after a long and difficult process of reconstituting this past). This feminism has been overwhelmingly Western oriented and often unrealistic. The preponderance of imports has led, for instance, to shaping the research agenda along the lines prevalent in the West, to the detriment of research focused on rural patriarchy, or the hard-core patriarchy of Roma communities. In such a context, even the feminism of the first wave of formal equality seemed difficult to accept.

I define «Room-service feminism» as the imposition of a gender sensitive legislation in CEE through the authority of international political actors, in particular European ones, before the internal public recognition of such a need. These international political actors are usually the EU, the International Monetary Fund, The World Bank²⁶, and even NATO (concerning women in the military force, for instance). It is a strategy of emancipation from above, that in fact covers the weakness of a post communist society: the rejection of ideologies, the acceptance of «integration» as a messianic solution for all social evils and forms of injustice (the integration in EU and NATO are «The Solution»), and the dominance of a hidden left-wing conservatism as the most popular political choice. Generally speaking, even liberalism is a «room-service» offer, in the form of market-oriented neo-liberalism, due to the globalization process²⁷.

In last decade many women's and feminist organizations asked for women-centered changes all along, but they had not enough «public authority» to change the political agenda²⁸. These kinds of political demands were not included in the political agenda. Women's parties²⁹ (created in Easter Europe) were not feminist

25. See the important texts on Romanian political feminism gathered in MIHĂILESCU, Ștefania: *Din istoria feminismului românesc, Antologie de texte (1838-1929)*, Iași, Polirom, 2002.

26. See the Hungarian case mentioned by GOVEN, Joanna: «New Parliament, Old Discourse? The Parental Leave», in Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (eds): *Op. cit.*, pp. 286-306. The Law of Parental Leave was approached in a very conservative manner by the Hungarian Parliament and in a feminist manner by the representatives of the World Bank. The Parliament encouraged women as mothers, while the World Bank encouraged women to continue their careers.

27. See HELD, David: *Democracy and the Global Order*, Standford, Standford University Press, 1995; ESCHLE, Catherine: *Feminism, Social Movements and the Globalization of Democracy*, Boulder CO, Westview Press, 2001 and STEGER, Manfred: *Globalism: The New Market Ideology*, New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002.

28. See for e.g. GRUNBERG, Laura: «Women's NGO's...», *op. cit.*; FUSZARA, Malgorzata: «New Gender Relations in Poland in the 1990s» and DASKALOVA, Krassimira: «Women's Problems, Women's Discourses in Bulgaria», in Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (eds.): *Op. cit.*, pp. 337-370.

29. It is interesting to mention the Women's Parties, created in Russia, Armenia and Lithuania. These Women's parties were very similar with workers parties that never discovered Marxism or utopian socialism, even after their decline. Hardly one can recognize a feminist approach on their agenda, if any.

in the emancipating sense³⁰. East European Feminism was tolerated rather as a civic exoticism, but not as a politically relevant movement³¹.

The CEE countries in general, Romania in particular, *looked to accept* more paternalism from international sources of authority, even a paternalistically imposed liberalism, if the *Pater* was the E.U or U.S. But these kinds of states paid very little attention to internal voices, except those of the big trade unions of the ex-socialist heavy industry that occupied a large and popular space of left-wing conservatism³². In this respect, the legislation promoted through international pressure was for simply a room-service feminism that substituted the lack of political receptivity for the local feminism.

Eastern Europe is itself profoundly «feminized» in the sense of lacking the ability to make normative decisions³³. The resistance to market values and to neo-liberal approaches is seen on many occasions as an expression of the inability to rule over oneself. The relation between East European countries, on the one hand, and the EU and international organizations, on the other hand, is structurally patriarchal: in order to have equal rights, one country has to obey the rules, not to conceive them. This is patriarchy with a human face, even with a feminist content. Is that an evil in itself? Obviously it is not. It is important to distinguish between democratic power (in the sense of domination) and undemocratic power. Domination can be used both to subjugate others, but also to initiate and maintain democracy, including movements for emancipation³⁴. Thus, the EU intervention in the enlargement process means the adoption of anti-discrimination, equal rights, anti-domestic violence, and gay protection laws. Otherwise, the Romanian legislators had a different agenda, including the criminalization of birth control and abortion³⁵ and, of course, the maintenance of anti-homosexual laws.

Due to the adoption by all the candidates of the European legislation (The *Acquis communautaire*) in the EU accession process, CEE countries have more and more laws that express gender fair policies as emancipation from above. The great achievements of Western feminism (the second wave agenda) from the period of communism in East Europe are becoming public goods in legal form even before a publicly recognized demand, even before the formulation of a political program that reflects certain needs. For example, in the last five years Romania adopted The Law of Parental Leave (1998), The Law for Preventing and

30. See ISHIYAMA, John T.: «Women's Parties in Post-Communist Politics», *East European Politics and Societies*, 17-2 (2003), pp. 266-304.

31. E.g. GRUNBERG, Laura: «Women's NGO's...», op. cit.

32. See MIROIU, Mihaela: *Societatea rero*, București, Trei, 1999.

33. Ibid.

34. YEATMAN, Anna: «Feminismul și puterea, în Shanley, M. L. și U. Narayan», in *Reconstrucția teoriei politice, Eseuri feministe*, Iași, Polirom, 1997, p. 199.

35. The Romanian Christian-democrat senator Moisin advanced in 1998 a bill on the prohibition of abortion and contraception, which was even more draconic than the famous Decree of Ceaușescu (1966). The parliamentary opposition this project faced did not derive, however, from feminist views, but from its close resemblance to what looked to be a return of symbol of Ceaușescu's most hated policy.

Combating All forms of Discrimination (2000), The Law of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2002), The Law for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence (2003). In the last two years marital rape and sexual harassment were recognized and criminalized. At the end of 2003 Romania adopted a new Constitution that recognizes equal opportunities between men and women. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the new laws, two National agencies were created: The National Council for Preventing and Combating all forms of Discrimination (2002) and the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (December, 2003).

From a normative point of view the public in the countries in the process of joining the EU, sees the protection for and empowerment of women as a result of «europeanization,» not of feminism. It is as if the EU Parliament and Commission possess a trans-ideological wisdom that is not, in fact, the result of decades of feminist struggles for the public recognition of the laws mentioned before³⁶.

3. THE MEANINGS OF LEFT-WING CONSERVATISM

In Romania after the fall of communism left-wing conservatism has become the ideology with the largest mass support³⁷. The current public discourses do not recognize sufficiently this reality. This is not surprising: in the well-known western theories and political ideologies the only conservative tradition is of the right-wing variety, aimed against progressivism, both liberal and socialist. In the developed liberal democracies the main enemy of feminism is *right-wing* conservatism. However, in the post-communist transition the main enemy is *left-wing* conservatism³⁸.

It is difficult to sustain the notion that conservatism exists in an essential form (just like liberalism or feminism). Rather, one can speak of a conservative political position or attitude in a given context. The current East European one is heir to a radical left-wing tradition, the communist one. It is in fact more of a state of mind than an ideology. Conservatism is part of life, a reticence towards change arising from the fear of the unknown and greater faith in experience than in theoretical projections³⁹. The East European parties against radical reforms and emancipatory strategies do not call themselves conservative parties. They are rather situated under a broad and diverse umbrella of socialism and social

36. See, among others, DWORKIN, Andreea: *Pornography. Men Possessing Women*, London, The Women's Press, 1981; MACKINNON, Catharine: *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1989 and OKIN, Susan Moller: *Justice, Gender and Family*, New York, Basic Books, 1989.

37. Nationalist populism is agreed, although by a smaller number of people. Liberalism is more and more accepted, but the dominant option is still for a left conservatism (MIROIU, Mihaela: *Societatea reo...*, op. cit.).

38. During the period of transition, the development of feminism was opposed by the return to some interwar traditions. The Romanian political thought remained to a large extent a patriarchal one (see BUCUR, Maria and MIROIU, Mihaela (eds.): *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești*, Iași, Polirom, 2002).

39. CECIL, Henry: *Conservatism*, London, Thornton, Butterworth, 1992, p. 9.

democracy. They defend the interests of the electorate that wants to conserve some of the features of their familiar world, their lifestyle, including features of a non-competitive (or barely competitive) society. The main candidates among the electorate for conservatism come from rural areas, small towns, the elderly, or the lesser-educated people. Women are also better candidates for the left conservatism. Usually these categories of voters do not empathize with a different lifestyle and oppose change⁴⁰.

Collectivism is an important feature of this type of conservatism and reflects the belief in state property rights or the control over property in the interest of one or particular groups, maintaining that such a position brings material advantages to the disadvantaged. In our case we are talking about the «privileged victims» of the transition. This conservatism is especially linked to rural values, rather than industrial and post-industrial ones, and has little chance to lead to economic growth. This conservative state is focused more towards needs than freedoms, promotes political patronage and laws to assist, it is supported by populist propaganda, encourages the tyranny of the majority, charity, and clientelism⁴¹. The process of liberalization is fundamentally conditional upon de-collectivization⁴².

Post-communism⁴³ represents for many a dramatic change. We adapt spontaneously to changes for the better, but with great difficulty to those that demand relearning⁴⁴. It is obvious that most people want the means to lead a decent life for oneself, his or her family, and for those who are close, as well as some control over one's life, an identity, respect for oneself and others⁴⁵. For now, however, most people have been the losers of the transition period⁴⁶. The end of communism brought about a tremendous collapse of identity, which men have experienced more dramatically than women⁴⁷.

40. MACRIDIS, Roy and HULLIUNG, Mark: *Contemporary Political Ideology*, New York, Harper Collins College Publishers, 1996, p. 79.

41. See for e.g. VINCENT, Andrew: *Modern Political Ideologies*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, p. 56.

42. See TISMĂNEANU, Vladimir: *Reinventarea politicului*, Iași, Polirom, 1993 and VERDERY, Katherine: *What is Socialism and What Comes Next*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1996.

43. Even the prefix «post» is a mark of a lack of identity. We know what something is not anymore, but we know less what it is. Or what identities became «fluid».

44. See QUINTON, Anthony: «Conservatism», in Robert Goodin and Philip Pettit: *A Companion to Political Philosophy*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993, pp. 245-246.

45. HONDERICH, Ted: *Conservatism*, London, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 15.

46. I have in mind especially the people living in rural areas, in the small desindustrialized towns, or to those who, although live in larger cities, are unemployed or prematurely retired, i.e. to the large majority of the population. See in this sense PASTI, Vladimir, MIROIU, Mihaela and CODÎȚĂ, Cornel: *România. Starea de fapt: Societatea*, București, Nemira, 1998 as well as report on poverty (DICULESCU, Vasile and CHIRCA, Constantin: *Coordonate ale sărăciei în România. Dimensiuni și factori*, București, Raport UNDP, 1998 and ZAMFIR, Cătălin: «Politici sociale de prevenire și reducere a sărăciei», in *Sărăcia în România 1995-1998*, volumul II, Bucharest, United Nation Development Project, 1999, pp. 82-148.)

47. Some studies emphasize the destructive and self-destructive behavior, as a result of unemployment and a low social status (DICULESCU, Vasile and CHIRCA, Constantin: Op. cit.).

Conservatives are great supporters of the status quo and reluctant to change. This doesn't mean, however, that they like society as it is and do not have their own vision for improving their life. The difference between conservatives and liberals does not reside in the latter's dream of a better world and the former's belief that they are living in the best of the possible worlds. Conservatives may wish for a better future just like the liberals (without conflicts and major suffering). In other words, conservatives know what they do *not* wish, but they do not know exactly what they want and believe that the current situation is what is best affordable for the moment. They oppose change, not because they do not want development, but because they do not think it will lead to something better. In short, they only support small, incremental changes. Their energies are spent defending the existing system, not its change. Conservatives justify current institutions and traditions through their past value. This tendency is natural since most people have a low threshold for lack of order and are not long distance runners⁴⁸: «They are even willing to suffer a system that is somewhat harmful to their interests rather than go through any kind of abrupt dislocation in the pattern of everyday lives. Order, then, is a powerful selling point for the conservative philosophy»⁴⁹.

Left-wing conservatism doesn't oppose capitalism and democracy directly and explicitly, but rather opposes those types of changes that deeply upset safety and stability. It is a matter of the comfort of institutionalized routine. Thus, any emancipatory ideology is hostile to conservatism⁵⁰ (feminism even more). Since it focuses primarily on survival, left-wing conservatism promotes the organic growth of market economy from the dirigisme and the democracy from authoritarianism. It is a paternalist conservatism. It doesn't represent a strategy focused on individuals and rights, but rather on collectivities and redistribution of resources. The attractiveness of such an ideology is shown by the opinion surveys taken during the transition time⁵¹, by the systematic electoral victories of parties

48. See BARADAT, Leon: *Political Ideologies. Their Origins and Impact*, Seventh Edition, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2000, pp. 24-27.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

50. Oakeshott theorizes the risks of the intellectual projects imposed on social evolution (OAKESHOTT, Michael: *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, London, Routledge, 1962). Similarly, there is a large opposition to ideologies, seen as dangerous social engineering (see for e.g. BELL, Daniel: *The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in 1950*, New York, Free Press, 1965).

51. The idea of an organic growth of capitalism out of socialism is consistent with the results from the nation opinion surveys: a large majority of people agree that the state should maintain its important role in economy, and that material safety is by far more important than freedom, self-assertion, or risk taking. Nearly 60 % of the people are not satisfied with the way in which they are living; 45% do not know what right and left mean; 70% do not know if their position is on the right or on the left; only 11% are aware that their views are on the right, and 9% are aware that their views are on the left (*Barometrul de Opinie Publică*, Octombrie 2003, Centrul de Sociologie Urbană și Regională CURS, <http://www.osf.ro/bop/cercetare.html>, p. 44). People agree with a more extended role of the state in income regulations, in creating new jobs, in social protection (66%), but are much less interested in increasing the legislative, fiscal role of the state (11%). People want mostly that the state should create itself new jobs (44%) or at least support their creation in the private sector (42%) (*Ibid.*, p. 51), to put a limit on the income of the rich people (63%). The associative life is extremely low: 93% of people never take part to any non-profit activity, and 91% do not belong to any associations (*Ibid.*, p. 62).

that have these kinds of platforms, and by the content of unions' protests after 1989. As we will see, the groups that mattered in the process of redistribution of resources have been overwhelmingly constituted by men.

In democratic regimes the parties that want to be representative must be aware of the wishes of the electorate. Thus, in the absence of a firm external opposition⁵², the leading economic strategy in Romania has been that of very slow reform, which has favored a phenomenon I will simply call «state men, market women». Unlike right-wing conservatism, which tends to «diminish public sphere, to dismantle the public sector, to privatize governmental functions»⁵³, left-wing conservatism is linked to the request for excessive government –an extensive state sector and broad functions for the state–. The state is thus taken over by interest groups. In Romania these groups are either the great unions of the state industries (all exclusively male dominated), either by the political clients of privatization, also completely male dominated⁵⁴, as women tend not to be favored as state clients. Thus, during the transition women have managed to become neither privileged victims nor favorite clients.

Since in Romania we had reparatory politics focused on victimization, it is easy to see how each social group began to compete with others for the status of «privileged victim» of the communist regime or the transition. This competition took place in the name of «reparatory justice»⁵⁵.

This competition didn't take place among winners, something that would have been emancipatory for many categories of people, but rather among victims: on the one hand, the victims of communism; on the other hand, the victims of the transition. The privileged victims of the transition were workers from the heavy industry –mining, iron, and heavy machinery–. For this privileged category the state created a policy of redistribution, not of protection. Such a reparatory agenda is perfectly in line with left-wing conservatism, which recognizes a privileged role for the working class in society, and furthermore, an internal hierarchy of the working class, with heavy industry workers at the top. Women and ethnic

52. This opposition from abroad became more substantial in the past years, in the context of the process of EU integration.

53. ISAAC, Jeffrey: *The Poverty of Progressivism. The Future of American Democracy in the Time of Liberal Decline*, Oxford, New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003, p. 18.

54. According to a survey carried out in 2002 by the magazine *Capital* out of the first one hundred richest people in Romania are only two women; however, they are the daughters of a very rich man (G. Voiculescu).

55. The victims of the communist regime have been identified with the groups of those who were prosecuted by the regime, whose houses and other assets were nationalized, as well as with their successors. The policies of *Restitutio in integrum* were primarily addressed to them. On the other hand, in one sense the entire population was regarded as a victim of the regime. They were provided incentives to buy the apartments in the blocks of flats they were living in at very cheap prices, and were endowed with shares of the to be privatized socialist firms. To these we may add the groups consisting of the victims of the transition period: miners, employees in metallurgical and other heavy industries; as it happened, in most of these sectors the majority of employees were men.

minorities were added to the victim agenda later, under heavier international than internal pressure.

Protests played an important role in the development and perpetuation of left-wing conservatism. Any attempt at substantial reform had to confront major protests from the unions. These organizations became the initiators of survival strategies in opposition to the strategies for change⁵⁶. The large unions of the leading industries from the ex-socialist economy (still owned by the state) put on the «mineriads»⁵⁷ (a term coined by the Romanians in a bitter analogy with the competitions of the Olympics, «Olympiads» in Romanian), blocked traffic and access to public institutions. There were even extreme cases when these protests became a threat to the state's stability. Women, whose unions disappeared at the same time as the privatization that occurred in the very first years of the transition⁵⁸, became individual agents, unlike men, who remained collective agents in the «privileged victim» market, being represented both by unions and by political parties.

Like any other conservatism, the left-wing one also tends to defend existing hierarchies. Even communism, contrary to its over egalitarian ideology, constructed its own hierarchies, in which gender was an important component. Although formal inequality was eliminated, under communism a patriarchal regime was reformed under the hegemony of the paternalist state⁵⁹: «Communist gender policies were meant to reproduce men's dominance in society. Starting with the flag which represented man as hammer and woman as sickle, the value labor was already set into a clear hierarchy»⁶⁰.

The most obvious mechanism through which socialist patriarchy was implemented was the economic hierarchy based on the «social importance of labor». According to the original Marxist doctrine, prices were not established on the market on the basis of demand and supply, but instead reflected labor as incorporated in the finished product. Thus, women's work became identified with an inferior labor status. What they performed in areas dominated by women was treated as socially less valuable⁶¹. The policies for constructing labor hierarchies

56. See VOINEA, Liviu: «Greu de ucis: Industriile tradiționale românești în perspectiva convergenței la Uniunea Europeană», in *Harta actorilor integrării europene*, București, Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă, 2003 <http://www.osf.ro/initiative/harta>; MUNTEANU, Aurelian: «Sindicatul și integrarea în Uniunea Europeană», in *Harta actorilor integrării europene*, București, Fundația pentru o Societate Deschisă, 2003 <http://www.osf.ro/initiative/harta>.

57. See the «mineriads» (the miners violent protest movements) in June 1990, September 1991 and January 1999.

58. They were employed massively in the light industry and services.

59. See VERDERY, Katherine: «From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe», *East European Politics and Societies*, 8:2 (1994); MIROIU, Mihalea; *Societatea zero...*, op. cit.; DASKALOVA, Krassimira: Op.cit; MAGYARI-VINCZE, Eniko: *Diferența care contează*, Cluj Napoca, Desire, 2002 and PASTI, Vladimir: *Ultima inegalitate...*, op. cit.

60. PASTI, Vladimir: *Ultima inegalitate...*, op. cit., p. 102.

61. In fields like education and health care the proportion of women increased very much in the past decades. This process was accompanied by the decrease of the relative magnitude of wages, as well as of social status of those working in these fields.

were implicitly gender policies. Industry was more important than services. Inside the industrial complex, steel was more important than textiles. This hierarchy of economic activity was then translated into a hierarchy of social status of those working in the respective economic areas. Superiority meant access to higher positions in economy and the Party apparatus, higher salaries, material and symbolic advantages, and generally speaking, an ideological-political domination: «In the female-dominant industries, men were automatically bosses because they were men...Official gender relations stopped at the factory gates»⁶².

But even if there were income differences, in Romania men entered the transition almost as dependent on women as women were on men. What took place during the transition confirms Bachrach and Baratz's idea that political systems mobilize their assumptions, dominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures. The rules of the game systematically and consistently favor the beliefs and interests of certain groups and individuals at the expense of others. Those who benefit in this process are placed in preferential positions, to defend and promote interests closest to their own skin⁶³.

4. MEN AND THE STATE, WOMEN AND THE MARKET

Several research studies I coordinated in the last few years illustrate the ways in which communist patriarchy turned into transition patriarchy. Included are *Gender discrimination – a reality of the transition*, Vladimir Pasti and Cristina Ilinca (2001) and *The Last Inequality. Gender Relations in Romania* (2003). They followed a national survey entitled *Gender Barometer* (2000), which I coordinated with Renate Weber.

The point of this study is not to reconstitute the empirical results of those researches, but rather to offer an explanation of the ways in which left-wing conservatism has succeeded on the one hand to determine men's orientation as salaried workers towards the state, and the state's orientation towards the areas in which men predominantly work; and on the other hand, to determine women's orientation towards the market both as salaried workers and also as «merchandise». In other words, I explain in this study the ways in which the transition in Romania has led to the transfer of women towards the capitalist areas of the economy and the preservation of men in the socialist, state controlled ones. If the state retreated from the economy during the transition, it was primarily vis-a-vis women. Government policies have directed women towards making it on their own in the marketplace. Women do not have salary privileges, nor compensation as transition victims. On the contrary, they pay a heavy part of the taxes used to sustain the state industries dominated by men, who in turn receive a good portion of these taxes in the form of privileged salaries, overwhelmingly higher than those of the women working in the private sector. Women are paying indirectly for sustaining this artificial hierarchy. Thus, women have become dependent on

62. PASTI, Vladimir: *Ultima inegalitate...*, op. cit., p. 107.

63. BACHRACH, Peter and BARATZ, Morton: Op. cit., p. 44.

men not because of the vicissitudes of the free market, but because of the state policies regarding budget allocation and salary hierarchies.

In a way, the research results are counterintuitive. Usually, in crisis times and along the lines of the patriarchal ideology of helplessness, women are treated like those who need most protection, including protection against the consequences of the market economy. We find this kind of protective approach among women's parties in Eastern Europe and in the chapters on social welfare, minors, elderly, and dissability of other political parties's platforms, where women's issues are usually relegated⁶⁴.

In the Romanian context Iris Marion Young's words are well suited, even though her socialist-inspired language (e.g., words like exploitation, oppression) are difficult to digest after the traumas of the communist years:

«Women's oppression consists not merely in an inequality of status, power and wealth resulting from men excluding women from privileged activities. The freedom, power, status and self-realization of men is possible precisely because women work for them. Gender exploitation has two aspects, transfer of the fruits of material labor to men, and the transfer of nurturing and sexual energies to men»⁶⁵.

As we will see, it isn't even necessary for women to be formally excluded from high positions or incomes. It is simply enough for a public activity to become feminized in order for it to lower its social status. Thus, we can use the concept of discrimination to describe women's position, although it is methodologically individualist and connotes «conscious actions and policies by which members of a group are excluded from institutions or confined to inferior positions»⁶⁶. Discrimination as a concept can also refer to a group, so long as we are dealing with politics that excludes or marginalizes a whole category of people. In our case, women are oppressed because they are discriminated against, and they are discriminated against because they are women⁶⁷. I personally consider that in the post-communist context it is best to use the liberal concept of discrimination, especially since, as I will show below, women's diminished status and dependency are not the result of liberal policies but, on the contrary, of the continuation of a socialist policy. Women would have had more to gain if meritocratic and free market criteria were in operation, instead of those linked to reparatory justice of the left-wing conservatives. Of course, we cannot speak here of a deliberate discrimination state policy against women with regard to resource redistribution. The important unions of the male industries, like the governments that supported them, were not intentionally directed against women, but the consequences of their actions were precisely discriminatory against women⁶⁸.

64. ISHIYAMA, John T.: Op. cit. and ȚĂRANU, Andrei and HERCIU, Amalia: Op. cit.

65. YOUNG, Marion Iris: «Five Faces of Oppression», in Thomas Wartenberg: Op. cit., p. 183.

66. Ibid., p.176.

67. Oppression is mainly the concept of the socialist left; but oppression is the result of discrimination, and this is mainly the concept of the liberal left.

68. See Michel Foucault's view that it is not necessary that an oppressed group be related to an identifiable and intentional oppressor (FOUCAULT, Michael: *Surveiller et punir*; Paris, Gallimard, 1975).

4.1. How did women arrive predominantly in the marketplace?

In the free market economy «women are winners among losers»⁶⁹. They have arrived at this «privileged» status by several means: through the prioritized privatization of industries and services that employed women, through migration, and as merchandise, in the role of «sexual objects».

a) Through privatization

Romanian communism had a megalomaniacal economic strategy. The guiding assumption was that industry had to lead to complete autonomy from the economies of other countries. Thus, a vast under-performing production was developed, from airplanes to thumb nails, technologically outdated from start and ready to go bankrupt as soon as came contact with the free market (which is what happened after 1989). The economic collapse affected primarily the male dominated industries: mining, steel, and machine building. The ideological collapse meant the transformation of these «industrial fortresses» from sources of prestige and large salaries for men into «piles of old metal» and sources of bankruptcy. The areas that employed predominantly women –textiles, food, public services– privatized quickly, turning socialist employees into capitalist ones. Thus, the transition established the growth of men's economic vulnerability vis-à-vis women, as the latter turned out to be the main work force in the new capitalist economy⁷⁰.

As a result, in the private sector the recent Romanian capitalism uses especially women as a work force, precisely because this labor market is free, with little regulation by the state. On this market the male-dominated industries are sparsely represented, because they are still overwhelmingly owned by the state. Women work in the light industries, commerce, and tourism. This market has remained unregulated for over thirteen years and has become the core of transition patriarchy⁷¹. Around 40% of the free market has remained «black» or «gray», with employees lacking any protection, and the employers evading taxation and social welfare benefits. Here the eight-hour workday or the 40-hour workweek, vacation time, sick time, parental leave, work conditions, protection equipment, minimum wage, on-time salary payment are mainly fiction⁷². There is a market in which approximately 70.000 men, employ one million women, generally young, for whom any small salary is better than nothing –in ways in which even the most market oriented neo-liberalism doesn't even dare to conceive-⁷³.

69. GRUNBERG, Laura (ed.): *Good Practice in Promoting Gender Equality in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe*, Bucharest, UNESCO-CEPES, 2001.

70. PASTI, Vladimir: *Ultima inegalitate...*, op. cit., pp 152-155.

71. In 2003 a new Labor Code, more fitted to the demands of a market economy, was enforced.

72. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Labor more than 1,5 million persons work on the black market (MINOIU, Stelian: «Procesul de sărăcire în România din perspectivă macro-economică», in M. S. Stănculescu (ed): *Sărăcia în România*, București, PNUD, 1999, vol. I, p. 23).

73. See PASTI, Vladimir: *Ultima inegalitate...*, op. cit., p. 208.

b) Through migration

Retreating from industry, many men have migrated towards rural areas, where, together with elderly women, they engage in self-consumption production and have at least the symbolic chance to remain «head of the household»⁷⁴. Women's participation in the «informal» sector, which was estimated at between 10 and 25 % of the GNP in 1997, has seen a spectacular growth⁷⁵. And since women are more closely linked to market opportunities, they have migrated more towards urban areas (63% of women and 56% of men between 15 and 44 live in the city) and towards other countries⁷⁶ in search of employment (54% of migrants are women⁷⁷). Women's migration from Eastern Europe towards the West in search of work has resulted in a significant part of the GNP being made up of these migrant women's income (see especially the Republic of Moldavia). These «migratory» women work especially as agricultural hand-pickers and as domestic servants, regardless of their previous professional qualification. This is the fortunate case when their migration is by choice. In the unhappier scenario, these women are sold as white slaves through the underground sex traffic.

c) Through the sex market

«Cinderella goes to market»⁷⁸ not just as Cinderella, but also as «merchandise». The sex market was among the first to become liberalized. At the beginning of Perestroika the publication in the soviet bloc of journals with women as sex-symbols on the cover appeared as a sign of freedom⁷⁹. The elimination of state control over Romanian women's reproductive capacities has also brought about the freedom to pursue an income on two sad markets: the sale of children and prostitution⁸⁰. Developments such as the private adoption market in Romania or the sterilization by request market in Eastern Germany are already well-known by products of the transition⁸¹.

On the sex market –street prostitution, legal and brothels, sex publications and sex shows– young women hold a position with which men could never compete. On this market, especially of the forced⁸² or voluntary prostitution, patriarchy is constructed and reproduced in radical forms. In the sex industry the work force is

74. This aspiration to rule over something, even if the only thing to be ruled is a donkey, prevents women in a patriarchal system from ruling over anything, whatever pretext is offered for this prohibition (GREER, Germaine: Op. cit., p.151).

75. *Economia informală în România*, București, PNUD and ICCV, 2001, pp.17-18.

76. Women from Eastern Europe became useful for the Western Europe: they are 'gatherers' –of raspberries, of olives, or maybe of data on gender issues in their countries–.

77. SANDU, Dumitru: *Spațiul social al tranziției*, Iași, Polirom, 1999, pp. 162-163.

78. See the title of Barbara Einhorn's book (Op. cit.).

79. See DASKALOVA, Krassimira: Op. cit., p. 351.

80. According to the present regulations women are eliminated for two years from the labor market: women receive maternity benefits that are significantly high for women with a lower level of qualification. But there are no legal incentives to develop the day care system; however, this kind of policies are to a larger extent fitted the needs of the career women.

81. See GAL, Susan and KLIGMAN, Gail (eds): Op. cit., Introduction, p. 3.

82. The traffic on women is today a very sad reality in Eastern Europe.

almost exclusively female, while the capital, management, and organization and consumers are almost exclusively male.

The attitude towards throwing women on the prostitution market is ambiguous: it oscillates between abolition accompanied by illegal practice in a context in which not only sex, but women themselves are merchandise (as in the case of traffic with women), on the one hand, and a tendency towards regulation in conservative-patriarchal forms (to protect men from the risks posed by prostitutes⁸³) or legalization with a focus on the rights of male prostitutes and clients⁸⁴, on the other hand. In all these cases public discussion has focused either on tax evasion by the prostitutes and their pimps or on the idea that decriminalization will lead to the growth of tax revenues. Prostitutes are treated like all other women who have gone on the free market through privatization –they are seen as potential tax-payers, rather than as rightful beneficiaries of the public budget–.

5. THE POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF MALE POWER

5.1. Men's drama is *The Drama*

In good patriarchal tradition, men's loss of supremacy in the labor force through de-industrialization, in favor of light industries and services (ie. in favor of female areas of the economy), has become more than a personal drama. When women are forced to retreat into the home, their drama remains personal and apolitical⁸⁵. The housewife is not a political subject.

«Unemployed, masked as «head of an agricultural household», or as a person looking for work, men have managed to secure a superior social status not only vis-à-vis home makers, but also wage-earning women –through the promotion of low wages and work on the black market for women, and through the transformation of women into merchandise on the sex market–. Moreover, men have succeeded to turn their own inferiority on the labor market –as a result of de-industrialization– into a major political problem in society, without problematizing in the same fashion the transfer of a significant part of the female labor force into unpaid housewives. At the moment, unemployment has become one of the major political problems, while the growing number of housewives is a phenomenon almost invisible»⁸⁶.

Men have tried several options to overcome this personal drama. The *laissez-faire* one was their migration to agriculture⁸⁷. But such a strategy means also

83. In 2002 the Greater Romania Party (nationalist and populist) proposed such a project with the title: The Law for the Prevention and Combating the Sexual Transmitted Diseases (Constanta Popa, MP).

84. The Stoica-Vilău proposal, The Democrat Party, 1998.

85. In the Romanian communism women represented 47% of the employees.

86. PASTI, Vladimir: *Ultima inegalitate...*, op. cit., p. 240.

87. In Romania man's status as the head of the household and of the family is maintained over time. Specifically in rural areas its impact is still very important. Even more, official statistical data continue to use this concept in a discriminatory sense. Of course, if men are heads, then by implication women continue to be identified with other parts of the body; no surprise, their identification with genitals is quite frequent.

the loss of control over the state and, often also protection by the state. Most men, however, have not given up control over resources and redistribution, nor over state protection. Their strong weapons were (and still are) the unions⁸⁸. The third of workers are included in unions. The unionization is made up of men and dominate the area of male industries «hard to kill», of the socialist industries (still owned by the state), i.e., those which nourish left-wing conservatism. Politics alone has prevented men's complete economic collapse.

5.2. Sources that ensure male domination

The main sources that have ensured male economic domination has been the decisions regarding the nomination of the «strategic domains», their place in investments, their higher salary policies and access to capital.

a) Strategic domains

A significant part of the economy has remained under state ownership and control, preserving its socialist features. 40% of the economy was organized in autonomous spheres after 1991, which in 2001 became «national companies»: power, utilities, a part of transportation, and communications. Education, health care, social assistance, administration, pensions and other similar insurance programs also remain under state control.

The economy was divided into strategic branches (which would have to receive credit and subventions) and non-strategic ones (to be left to the whim of the market). It is unnecessary to repeat how the two types of branches reflected gender divisions. In fact, political criteria, not economic ones having to do with efficiency, led this economic policy. The Romanian industries with the largest exports in 2002 were: clothing, steel, textiles, leather and shoes, chemical and synthetic fibers, and woodwork. Three of these top five exporters are industries dominated by women. So at least these three could have been designated as strategic branches, based on their performance. But government support, funding and credits went to the armament, tractors, trucks, bus, and mining industries, as well as other male dominated industries, all bankrupt.

Another plausible explanation for this policy might be that governments define as strategic branches not those significant for economic performance, but rather those whose power to protest against policies are a threat to the stability of the government. Women do not have the reputation of threatening protesters, they do not put on «mineriades», do not bloc roads, do not protest forcefully, and in fact, because of privatization, have gone on to work mostly in un-unionized jobs. Politically, they belong to nobody⁸⁹.

88. See MUNTEANU, Aurelian: «Sindicatelor și...», op. cit.

89. See MIROIU, Mihaela: «Despre politica 'ultimei inegalități'» (prefață), in Vladimir Pasti: *Ultima inegalitate. Relațiile de gen în România*, Iași, Polirom, 2003.

b) Wage policies

Male dominated branches (coal mining, electricity, and oil) have higher wages than the female dominated branches (the postal service, communications, health, education, and administration).

The government social policies have defined categories of jobs whose loss has lead to the creating of a particular state budget category –compensatory salaries, equal to the salary one had before losing one’s job–. These categories are the armament industry, mining, steel, machine manufacturing –in other words, the male dominated large industries–. Depending on the significance of an economic branch, the number of compensatory salaries per person varied between 12 and 36 monthly salaries. Thus men were paid in fact to leave their jobs, while women were not:

«The wage policies meant to ensure the continued superiority of the industrial male worker vis-à-vis the female worker was replaced with wage policies to ensure the superiority of the male worker employed by the state vis-à-vis the female worker employed by the state. This patriarchal wage relation, strongly supported by unions, whose protest movements have always had as a model the socialist wage hierarchies, was easily reproduced by all the governing powers that followed the revolution... What these regimes did was to subsidize not only their working places, but also the *social prestige* of some men at the top of the worker wage hierarchy»⁹⁰.

State employees who work in fields with male workers –utilities, transportation, oil, the army, the policy and intelligence services– all benefit from wage levels higher than those who work in the health, education, and public administration sectors, where the majority of workers are women.

Male domination was not an intentional policy in the process of redistribution, but rather the effect of a tradition in the hierarchy of wage and labor value. This policy, consistent with the dominance of left-wing conservatism during transition, could not counteract endlessly the impact of globalization and international pressure, including room-service feminism. Under the impact of these processes women have gained a stronger economic position, while men have become more vulnerable, as soon as economic restructuring (undertaken especially under IMF and EU pressure) impacted male-dominated areas⁹¹.

c) Higher incomes and access to capital

Through compensatory wages, higher wage plans, and access to capital, men have succeeded in dominating the areas that give access to higher incomes. In itself, this is not a major problem in developed societies. In transition, however, this type of domination has resulted in the establishment of modern patriarchy, i.e. women’s dependency on men’s incomes⁹². The proportion of women without

90. PASTI, Vladimir: *Ultima inegalitate...*, op. cit., p. 196.

91. See in *Anuarul Statistic al României*, 2001, statistics concerning the employees.

92. See *Barometrul de Gen...*, op. cit. and MIROIU, Mihaela: *Guidelines for Promoting Gender Equity in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe*, Bucharest, UNESCO-CEPES, 2003, pp. 56-61.

any income is four times higher than that of men, and almost half of women have no income or an income under the subsistence level⁹³. When they *have* their own income, it is generally lower because labor hierarchy places them in lower positions⁹⁴. Almost two thirds of young women make less than they need to survive⁹⁵. The young men in the same category represent a quarter⁹⁶.

In the absence of a feminist backlash, traditional gender relations are considered «natural» both by men and also women and, despite persisting egalitarian ideologies, the double work-day [or double burden] continues on the ideological basis of women's competence in domestic matters⁹⁷.

Men have had almost exclusive access to capital, mostly through clientelist means. From this point of view, women are of little interest for the state as political «clients». The current Romanian elite (approx. 10% of the population) was created from the link of money to power; here women are situated on the periphery although, theoretically, they were present together with men on the same «Mayflower» at the beginning of the transition⁹⁸. We are left with the conclusion that, by seizing on the left-wing conservatism of the transition, traditional patriarchy together with the communist one morphed into a new patriarchy –little theorized and politicized–.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The developments of the transition show that «state men» have gladly consented to take on the burden of macro-politics, leaving women in charge of micro-politics. Thus, women would not upset the establishment for any other types of policies than those focusing particularly on women as women. I come to Anette Brochorst's idea that «policies of vital significance to women are not recognized formally as gender policies by the political system»⁹⁹. Neither have those of the post-communist transition.

Unfortunately during the transition women have not attempted to bring power relations back into equilibrium, even though circumstances were favorable to them and they did participate to governing in a very limited way¹⁰⁰. The men in

93. This state of affairs is to a large extent the result of women's migration to domestic labor and to the black market labor.

94. In the Romanian economy women are majority in fields like services and commerce (71,7%), public administration (73%), they share with men highly qualified jobs (49,9%) and agriculture (52,8%); but they are the minority in management (26,4%) and in industry (28,2%) (*Anuarul Statistic al României*, 2001).

95. A very significant source of dependency of women stems from the existence of one half of a million single mothers (out of a population of 22 million).

96. PASTI, Vladimir and ILINCA, Cristina : *Discriminarea de gen...*, op. cit., p. 7.

97. Inside families, women have in 70% of the cases a «monopoly» of children care. Partenerial behavior is to be met in only 5% of families (*Barometrul de Gen...*, op.cit).

98. See MIROIU, Mihaela: «Despre politica 'ultimei inegalități'» (prefață) in Vladimir Pasti: *Ultima inegalitate...*, op. cit., p. 24.

99. BORCHORST, Anette: «A Political Niche. Danemark's Equal Status Council», in Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy Mazur (eds.): Op. cit., p. 69.

100. During the period 2000-2004 in the Romanian Parliament there were only 6% women members of the Senate and 11% women members of the Chamber of Deputies. Out of 263 cities

power showed an «empathy gulf»¹⁰¹ towards women and displayed genuine empathy only towards other men. Sometimes this empathy was supplanted by the fear of «men on the streets», which never had a counterpart among «women on the streets», and much less «women of the streets».

Without political feminism structural patriarchy remains untouched, including pro-women legislation. In Romania, like in other East European countries¹⁰², in fact, feminism developed in the area of civil society, with rare and limited influence over the political agenda¹⁰³. Civil society has been one of the valuable goods that have grown during the transition, but it does not generate institutional changes, ideological platforms, and it doesn't mobilize political power. Without bringing feminism out of what for the current regime is a comfortable ghetto, it is not possible to have a gender politically coherent strategy and an «authoritative allocation of values»¹⁰⁴ and resources on the national scale. Although excellent, the activities of civil society do not produce large-scale politics or social reform.

One important movement would be the mutual support between liberalism and feminism, since in a country like Romania liberalism is itself an emancipatory project that also struggles against left-wing conservatism. Legislative changes meant to ensure women's greater protection were on the platform of especially social-democratic parties. I want to stress, however, that in a society like ours, where left-wing conservatism is the dominant ideology, overcoming the current patriarchal regime towards emancipation and autonomy for all citizens demands a strategic alliance with liberalism.

The Romanian transition is a paradigmatic case that allows for the study of the transformation of patriarchy in the context of great power restructuring; it is also a good lesson about the endemic character of patriarchy when vigorous political

and towns only two have a woman as a mayor. Out 2688 communes, only 107 have women as mayors. Five women were members of the cabinet heading important positions: Ministries of Education, Health, Justice, European integration, Small and Medium Enterprises. But in 2003 men replaced three of them.

101. This expression belongs to Shapiro and concerns the relation between the rich and the poor, including the *de facto* apartheid (SHAPIRO, Ian: «Why the poor don't soak the rich», *Daedalus. Journal of the Academy of Arts & Sciences*, (2002), p. 119).

102. See GRUNBERG, Laura: «Women's NGO's...», op. cit. and JOHNSON, Janet Elise and ROBINSON Jean C. (eds.): «Living with Gender in Postcommunism in Central and Eastern Europe», 2003, unpublished.

103. Usually feminist organizations are required by the Parliament and the ministries to express their views when regulations concerning women are at stake, or when National Agencies dealing with monitoring the situation of women or the equality of opportunity are to be established. However, this is done under the pressure of the Beijing process of or the EU accession. Important organizations are: AnA Society for Feminist Analyses, SEF (Equal Opportunities for Women), Open Society Foundation, FILIA, Center for Gender Studies and Curricular Development, SECS (Society for Contraceptive Education), etc.

104. See ISAAC, Jeffrey: *The Poverty of...*, op. cit., pp. 129 and 146; the expression refers to the benefic, although limited role of civil society in the context of the dissolution of the progressivism characteristic of left conservatism in the USA.

State men, market women...

feminism is missing and cannot preserve a just balance between the «personal is political» and the «political is personal.»

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