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A Mayflower turned Titanic

The Metamorphosis of Political Patriarchy in Romania

Mihaela Miroiu

Introduction[1]

I will admit to sounding like an old-fashioned political theorist. A mature scholar from Eastern Europe, I was deeply thrilled 15 years ago when I first discovered the Western feminist political and cultural continent, at the height of its post-modern stage, knocking on the Third Wave's door. Then I was right to be so impressed. Today I have a better understanding of what it means to be living in an advanced "baroque" (read: postmodern) society and culture without having passed through the whole "classicist" (read: modern) era first, while ignoring its developmental lessons. Based on research done by myself and my colleagues, I shall try to offer a comprehensive picture, regarding what happened for better or worse with the feminist political agenda as two long separated worlds came together after the Cold War.

The personal was never political

Over the past 70 years of Romanian history, from a liberal point of view, *the personal was never the political* for women. Apart from first wave feminism which had a strong and consistent tradition[2] (see Mihăilescu 2001, 2002), women's interests *qua women* were never put on the political by way of self-organization. Women's interests *qua women* are those which focus on their own experiences (see Miroiu 1999): a) those exclusively related to women, like pregnancy, contraception, abortion, and menopause; b) those generally related to women, such as child-rearing, housekeeping, domestic violence, rape, pornography, and prostitution (sometimes shared with male servants); c) those mainly related to women, involving dependency, subordination, anonymity, and marginalization (often shared with other classes, races, ethnic minorities, people from different cultures); and d) symbolic associations, i.e. with nature (shared in the past with "barbarians" and slaves), as well as e) images of helplessness (shared with children and the disabled).

Women's inequality as justified "by nature" (open or hidden, even in the postmodern stage) continues to be the last and ultimate one. Irrespective of other categories, subject or not to unequal treatment, in each category people are divided up into women or men.[3] Women are always treated as less equal and less capable than men, whether formally or informally, just because they are women. As a matter of fact, gender is a mainstream feature of regular politics and its consequences. "Mainstreaming gender", the new strategy entering European politics, is just a recent public recognition of the

inevitable backlash against the oldest, widespread form of injustice, emphasized by feminism long time ago.[4] For most politicians, ranging from local politicians to "Eurocrats", gender issues now appear to be a part of their new "enlightened" wisdom. Many ignore past feminist battles and achievements, just as most women ignore painful historical efforts to bring about the recognition of rights they enjoy now. This "ignorance" and ingratitude is partly due to the reserved, even apolitical feminisms of our times (cf. Faludi 1991; Superson/Cudd 2002), found not only in Eastern but also in Western Europe and the United States.[5] Over the past decade, I have noticed that even in Western circles people, especially the young ones, are reluctant and even ashamed to use the term feminism, as its consequences were embarrassing. As the "newcomer" replacing "feminism", the term gender is not merely more inclusive – an advantage – but also less threatening, which is not always an advantage. It sounds and really is less offensive.

When a Western reader asks herself about the ways in which policies and institutions are born, she may answer: politics occurs when a number of people share a problem and display common interests. They will organize themselves in order to have their problems included into the public agenda and to have them resolved by political means. Second wave feminism offers an excellent example in this respect. But this kind of political strategy never emerged under communism, at least not in Romania (Olteanu 2003). Except for elections, the political sphere is still perceived to be mainly tied to the agenda of the political class, or possibly to that of our EU supervisors, but it has little to do with the political interests of average citizens. By the time communism collapsed, we could directly jump to the conclusions displayed by the West's second-wave feminist agenda, as demonstrated by the imposed adoption of the EU's *acquis communautaire* (i.e. the body of EU law), as our condition for "joining the club". The world to which I had belonged offered long-term training in accepting an imposed political agenda. The Communist Party proclaimed itself as the politically conscious part of the society: ordinary people were not considered to be sufficiently conscious of their own interests. (The core of the Party ideology was a radical anti-individualism based on the idea that the main moral value is not to achieve personal autonomy and self assertion, but to work under the Party's command for the imposed collective goal: a communist classless society). Only a collective entity was deemed politically capable of understanding and promoting the collective interest: the Communist Party. The state was more than patriarchal, it was parental. Coercion and "care" went hand-in-hand[6] (see Verdery 1996; Kligman 1998; Fitzpatrick 1999; Tismăneanu 2003).

I was always amazed reading about Western socialist, especially Marxist feminists. They shared some basic "naïvite" concerning the determinant relations between market economy and patriarchy, as well as about a potentially happy marriage between Marxism and Feminism (see the critiques of Hartmann 1981; Young 1981). The communist and post-communist experience shows that irrespective of the existence or non-existence of a market economy, political patriarchy tends to occupy its own place.

It is not a "male conspiracy", but rather a logical consequence of politics and its gender effects when political feminism is missing or treated as marginal.

A general supposition mainly shared by left-wing feminists (socialist feminists) and by conservatives who often think of women as permanent candidates for a victim's agenda is that market economy *per se is* inimical to women. Even now mainstream politics is very similar.[7] The political programs of the Romanian parties, for example, still include women within the chapter dedicated to "Social protection" together with children, the elderly and the disabled. I argue that the absence of substantial market competition is no less inimical to women than its presence. In order to remedy gender inequalities by way of equal opportunities policies there must be fair market competition, at a minimum. For more than a decade, this was neither the case in Romania, nor in the broader Eastern region.

From Mayflower to Titanic[8]: The post-communist transition

A multi-faces Mayflower

Communism placed gender equality in the framework of a general, programmatic elimination of economic and political competition. Women and men were equally non-competitive. They had to cooperate in a statist economy liberated from free-market conditions but not from a hierarchy of economic priorities: the state budget[9] in which all industrial sectors and all salaries were decided upon and planned by the Communist Party within a politically established hierarchy. Whether or not by chance, all masculinized social spheres and industries enjoyed top positions within this hierarchy, in terms of their political "importance", the level of actual investment, and in terms of salaries. Heavy industry, constructions, and defense were especially favored, while all feminized industries and services, involving textiles, food industry, commerce, health, and education, for example, were ranked at the bottom with respect to political "importance", investments and salaries. Income levels were set at the "mercy" of the Party, as political decisions rather than at the "mercy" of the market (see also Pasti 2003; Popescu 1999, 2004). Communism created its own gender hierarchies, even if the differences were not very big, since officially no one could earn more then five times the salary of anybody else. It was a road to some economic independence for women, if not a road to interdependence between women and men.[10] But it was certainly not a road to female autonomy and self-assertion. In a non-competitive, statist society based on *dirigisme* at the macro and micro level, on the one hand, and an ideology of self-sacrifice at the social and individual level, on the other, self-assertion and autonomy are utterly void of meaning (see Miroiu 1994, 1997).

By the end of communism women's and men's status and incomes were much closer together, but remained hierarchic. Both entered the new world as non-owners, having formerly been integrated into socially extended firms that were organized as self-sufficient entities. Most people had no direct relationship with state institutions at the

national or local level. Despite the increasing scarcity their places of work gave them not just jobs, but also their flats, access to hospitals, nurseries, schools, play grounds, resort hotels, sports and entertainment. In fact, a socialist enterprise offered everything except cemeteries. Hypothetically a person could spend her whole life wedded to the same firm, until retirement or death did part them. When communism collapsed, a whole way of life ended for most people. By the time of its collapse, people came face to face with the state – but empty handed as individuals. In short, the communist legacy consisted of little more than an official ideology of gender equality, an established gender hierarchy within the economy, and the perpetuation of traditional gender relations within the family. In this sense, I consider the idea of a "feminist communism" as a contradiction in terms.

The wrecking of gender equity

If the competition is the general rule of the society,
it's a tyranny to get rid a priori of a half of the competitors. (Taylor 1970)

Until the end of 1999, Romania remained situated in a political grey or 0-zone.[11] Unlike Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Slovakia or Slovenia who's European "fate" was politically decided early on by the EU, other countries (including Romania) have spent a whole decade trapped in a sort of national loneliness and confusion, trying to build an original and amateurish democracy and to mimic market economy. For Romania, Bulgaria, and some other East European political "leftovers", it was and sometimes still is not very clear who will win: a domestic political coalition who whishes to join the West supported by the Council of Europe, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Found; the external pressure from Russia, or some privileged new capitalists who certainly dislike foreign monitors and competitors. The result was a "showroom-democracy", a survival society grounded in clientelistic capitalism (Pasti et al. 1997). In spite of the original equality it had once offered, the post-communist "social contract" became a bargaining game between groups with very unequal powers of negotiation.

From a "capitalist" point of view, the main recipe for economic and social reform (even the one promoted by international organizations) solely consisted of privatization for more than a decade, with little emphasis on fair competition, anti-trust laws, building institutions and fostering best practices.[12] Since economy had collapsed mainly because of state ownership, privatization was posited as the cornerstone for general prosperity. It was neither that simple nor a self-fulfilling prophecy. Socialist enterprises differed from capitalist ones not only in terms of their economic efficiency: they were also radically different as far as their economic, political and social functions were concerned.

The privatization process was marked by different stages. As long as Romania remained in the grey, risky zone (1990-1999), very few honorable transnational companies

went there in order to help build a proper capitalist framework in terms of rules, institution and economic habits. Many foreign entrepreneurs who had the "courage" to enter the no man's land after the collapse of communism had another agenda, not that of transforming Romania into a capitalist state. They bought up state companies for a symbolic sum of money. The taxes they had to pay were either very low, or they were not subject to taxation at all. The requirements for environmental protection were also very low. Most of the new privatized enterprises (especially heavy industries) were closed, sold once the value of the land increased significantly, or were eliminated from international competition (e.g. steel companies).

The first stage of privatization was merely open to local, newly invented entrepreneurs. Many of them had held privileged positions as managers of socialist companies or as members of the nomenclature. According to the ex-communist hierarchy, most of them were men.[13] They encouraged a hybrid post-communist, pre-capitalist economy with the state operating as the main or exclusive supplier and client. This hybrid also gave rise to so-called "local barons" (but not to "local baronesses"), men who enjoyed power monopolies as employers in a small geographical region.

The state did not promote fair-play in terms of the politics of redistribution, but rather promoted political privilege. Men were privileged not only as victims and losers but also as political clientele and thus winners. Workers in the heavy and defense industries were included in the first category, since most of those firms had collapsed. Given their leading role in the communist past, their trade unions became the new promoters of left conservatism, favoring slow reforms, unemployment payments (for more than 10 years in the case of defense industry, steel industry, and mining), and high compensatory salaries for those displaced by closed working places. Most of the budget for industry consisted, in fact, of masked social protection for its workers, continuing for some throughout 2004, and for a few even until nowadays. They voted massively for the Social Democratic Party that, in turn, advocated extended social protection for them. This party had a mixed strategy, oriented towards both the privileged victims (the industrial working class)[14] and clients who benefited from privatization and doing business with the state as their main partner.

Women were the cheapest victims of transition, if not completely free of costs. 1990 (the year when women were able to vote freely for the first time in Romanian history) also marked the onset of their neo-political isolation. Many not only lost their working places and their own safety nets but also all state support for child-rearing (see Corrin 1992; Funk/Müller 1993; Einhorn 1993). As soon as they lost their jobs, they were forced to become "housewives", generally considered an apolitical status. Some entered the illegal sex-market (Johnson/Robinson 2003). Once again, they had no political representation (Popescu 2004). Another choice was to become illegal migrant workers (harvest workers, housekeepers, nurses), with little or no social protection and, for sure, with no political representation. The lucky women got jobs in the privatized firms early on. The feminized branches of industry were less affected by the

shock of market economics.[15] The food and textile industry, tourism and commerce were easily privatized, none of these sectors is unionized. Their workers have the lowest salaries and slim social protection (if any). Other women continue to work in traditionally low paid fields: health, education, and public administration. Not even our international and European monitors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, or the European Commission have touched the "traditional" budgetary hierarchy. The main paternalist imperative for political reforms claimed by our governments reads: "The EU mandates it!" *(EU dixit!)*, never referring to the hidden political hierarchy that dictates salaries within these budgetary sectors.[16] Women in the educational, health and public administration sectors follow the "tradition" implicit in budgetary hierarchies as if it were "natural".[17]

Modern patriarchy arose before our ("blind") feminist eyes, during the first decade of post-communist transition. For the first time in Romanian history women became disproportionately dependent on men's incomes (Pasti 2003; Miroiu 2004a, 2004b).[18] Curious for the Western reader is the fact that this process had very little to do with the market economy and competition; on the contrary, it is connected with the absence or the distortion of both.

Even if it was not intended, the first 15 years of transition subjected gender equality to a Titanic-style shipwreck. The hopes that Mayflower would take us to the promised land of unlimited opportunity proved to be a fleeting memory. In short, men used political decisions to become the predominant owners and controllers of incomes and capital. The strategy consisted of the redistribution policies defined in accordance with male-normed privileges. We can hardly speak about existing respect for the employment law regarding temporary labor, social protection, support for higher qualifications, or professional ethics. In such a working environment the implementation of the Law of Equal Opportunities (adopted in 2002) remains normative fiction.

Liberals understand competition in terms of markets, not of privileges. Liberal feminists agree that competition is not gender-neutral and thus needs correction, be it in the form of non-discrimination policies, socialist feminism, or equal opportunity policies. What happens, however, when there is neither proper competition inside or around the market? We failed by thinking we could mechanically imitate the Western model of our times. What was most needed for women was to forge a political movement with the explicit intention of *Reclaiming the state!*[19] This debate never rose in the public space.

Feminist "original sins"[20]

Having described the broader processes of post-communist transition, I would argue that we feminists got lost in the labyrinth of micro-politics, pursuing non-threatening images of civil society and debating academic approaches, but did not involve ourselves in macro politics (Pasti 2003; Miroiu 2004b; Popescu 2004). None of us noticed that the macro-bargaining game for power and resources had already been played and

that the post-communist social contract had already excluded women. We were lost in postmodern discourse and agenda-setting, borrowed from our intellectual sources abroad. Before creating a civic-political movement or even before we conducted our own empirical quantitative research on gender relations in Romania, we worked to develop Feminist Studies, most of them being fully inspired by the latest American and European sources. Between 1990 and 1999, we actually knew much more about postmodernism than about women's issues and gender inequalities in Romania. We engaged in normative meta-discourses before articulating a descriptive discourse. The first prominent NGOs that we built primarily focused on postmodern topics; two organizational examples are *Gender. The Study of Women' s Identities* and *AnA. The Society for Feminist Analyses*. Our academic feminism was not a consequence of an expressed need for argumentative know-how in order to support the feminist movement (which simply was not there); instead it developed as a substitute for such a movement, to inspire a hypothetical demand and a movement in the future. While we remained busy with our Foucaultian, post-structuralist and Lacanian approaches, focusing on the sophisticated meanings of power, the big redistribution of the state resources took place.

The Europeanization process

Room-service state feminism

In December 1999, the EU's decision to accept Romania as candidate for joining the EU marked another new historical stage, still at the beginning. In order to become autonomous citizens living in a modern world we have accepted the legitimate "paternalism" of the EU. As a result of this new paternalism we have come to directly import what I metaphorically call "costless room-service state feminism". Usually room-service is private and expensive. In our case room-service stands for the "Euro-service" and is a public matter. But because the "customer" (read: the state) is reluctant to spend too much money on the implementation of such a "service", we are dealing with a "costless state feminism".

I define "room-service feminism" as the offer of a gender sensitive legislation for Central and Eastern Europe through the authority of international political actors, in particular European ones, before internal public recognition of such a need, or before an explicit, coherent and internal political demand has arisen. These international political actors are usually the EU, the IMF and World Bank, and even the 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 (Anm. der Hg.: hierunter fällt in Ostmittel- und Osteuropa auch der Feminismus), the acceptance of "integration" as a messianic solution for all social evils and forms of injustice (Miroiu 2004b, 215).

State feminism as practiced by the EU is far more "convincing" than all of the stra-

tegies emerging from our local NGOs and academics. We have imported necessary laws that will work to women's advantage, like parental leave, anti-discrimination norms, directives on domestic violence and equal opportunity jurisprudence. This finally creates a necessary institutional basis, mainly the *National Council for Combating Discrimination* (CNCD) and the *National Agency for Equal Opportunities* (ANES). However, we are still missing important structures as well as policies needed for free and fair competition, although they will have to be implemented very soon as a condition for EU accession. By the time the Romanian institutions responsible for non-discrimination policy and equal opportunities started to work, public property and funding had already been redistributed in gendered terms: all significant resources had already been negotiated and allocated. Women simply missed the moment. As women, we have already lost the battle, blind as we were to its specifically macro-political character, because our actions had been non-political, civic, cultural, isolated, defensive and "harmless" in character.

The type of programs and goals that are taken as examples of left-liberalism in the United States (somewhat analogous to European social-democracy) were not introduced by the state but rather via *Soros* projects during the first post-communist decade in Romania. The main mechanisms for ensuring non-discrimination and equal opportunities were established by civic and cultural NGOs. They were primarily financed by the *Open Society Foundation* and its main collaborators: AnA, Partnership for Equality Center, FILIA: The Center of Curriculum Development and Gender Studies, Equal Opportunities for Women (see Grunberg 2000). As was true of groups campaigning for minority rights and ecological causes, the only entities publicly involved in gender policies were the NGOs. The Social Democratic parties meanwhile pursued left-conservatism and clientelistic capitalism. There was no proper political left (in Western terms) that would have allowed for situating the women's agenda in the political realm. Women's political interests, as mentioned, were at first related to improve the functioning of the market economy, but the liberal parties remained blind to this primary group of possible supporters. Our feminism posed no threat because, apart from disturbing a few conservative, misogynistic intellectual habits and fighting back on a few issues (in a very noisy anti-feminist environment), training some people, and producing books and articles. It did very little to consolidate a women's civic movement and nothing to build a political one. In the first decade we deeply missed the experience of independent association and political movement that we had inherited from our own recent (1989) past.

From civic to political feminism: a personal her/story

Paraphrasing Astrid Henry's book-title (2004), *Not My Mother's Sister*, we are not exactly the sisters of our Western generational counterparts from a political and cultural point of view. Indeed, we missed out on the whole period of second-wave feminism: Our post-communist starting point in 1989 was rooted in state patriarchy

(Miroiu 2003). Women had been emancipated through their employment, not by exercising their individual rights. The communist quota system that required the promotion of women to higher social positions had nothing to do with political representation embedded in democratic participation (see Phillips 1997; Young 2000). The term "communist feminism" is one completely devoid of meaning insofar as personal, moral and political autonomy was the main enemy of the totalitarian politics and ideology. Feminism was nowhere to be found (cf. in detail Miroiu 2004a; also Popescu 2004).

How did feminism enter the 0-zone? In the context of an overwhelming ignorance the American feminism was better known and more influential than the European one in Romania. It is easy to say today that those feminists "colonized" and "patronized" us. Indeed, for years we had no real partnerships with Western feminists. Instead our ideas and stories served as raw materials for *their* research, which we served as free and volunteer subjects. Sometimes this is painful but it is understandable. Today I can say that this experience amounted to a kind of "legitimate maternalism", albeit as a necessary step on the road to autonomy. The feminism of that stage, minimalistic as it was, fit in totally with some of the islands of civil society and academic life we created for ourselves, generating little public impact and no political consequences (see Grunberg 2000; Daskalova 2000). Public impact can be measured in terms of the opening of some doors to important Romanian cultural and political magazines such as *22, Observator Cultural (Cultural Observer)* and a few TV cultural programs, but very little appeared in the newspapers and TV talk-shows. Apart from these examples, one of the most prestigious publishing houses in Romania, *Polirom*, has produced a whole collection in Gender Studies. This collection has become more influential over the last five years. The main reason is that local research on women's status has increased significantly. Romanian feminism remained unknown and unrecognized in crucial political circles until very recently.

During the first decade one of our vulnerabilities was our tendency to deeply personalize each "foreign" approach, such as the minority rights issues, feminism and ecology. Quite a few people were "in charge" of the whole issue and were perceived at best as having a bizarre "hobby" – when they weren't being viewed as participants in a well paid Western "conspiracy" against national identity and values. This small group played and continues to play a distinct role in our evolution from a shy, harmless civic and academic feminism to a political one.

I shall not dwell on civic feminism (see, for example, Gal/Kligman 2000), but I will mention the oldest, most prominent initiatives: Laura Grunberg and I founded the first feminist NGO: AnA. Society for Feminist Analyses (1993) (www.anasaf.ro), as well as the first and only feminist journal in Romania AnALize; Eniko Maghiary Vincze founded the Interdisciplinary Group for Gender Studies in Cluj (www.euro.ubbcluj.ro/gender); Dina Loghin founded Equal Opportunities for Women in Iasi (www.sef.ro); Roxana Tesiu managed a NGO called Partnership for Equality Center

(www.cpe.ro), Otilia Dragomir and recently the new president, Oana Baluta, have created and developed FILIA: Center for Curriculum Development and Gender Studies (www.politice.ro). Other feminists supported women while cooperating in other types of NGOs (for example Liliana Popescu within the Central European Project and the UNDP Program for Romania). All of them still are feminists exercising civic, cultural and political influence and making important contributions to local research and academic knowledge. Sometimes, when the "post-feminist" media ease their silent embargo on the subject, they can even have a public impact.

Some feminists have succeeded in securing important political offices. Renate Weber led the Open Society Foundation (Soros Foundation) from 1998 to 2004. She is well known as a defender of women's and human rights, as a promoter of NGOs, feminist know-how and projects for gender policies.[21] In addition, she served as a very prestigious legal advisor of the President of Romania in 2005. Together we coordinated the first *Gender Barometer*,[22] a national survey on gender relations and gender perception in the region (Open Society Foundation 2000).

Monica Macovei possesses a strong public reputation as human and minorities' rights defender within the Helsinki Committee. She published the first studies on women's rights and domestic violence in Romania. She is currently the Minister of Justice, having an impressive activity record in promoting the rule of law and anti-corruption policies. Both women have a history as open feminists. Mona Musca is one of the most popular, citizen-oriented politicians we have. She was the vice-president of the Liberal Party and Minister of Culture in 2005. Musca is very impressive, having slowly converted from a gender-blind liberal into a liberal feminist, not due to the unconditional obedience required by the EU "directives" (as is the case for many Romanian politicians), but because of her relations with Romanian feminists and her attention to the know-how they have produced during the last 15 years. Often in the spotlight, she is an encouraging role model as a successful woman in politics. Together with other Members of Parliament, she is also an important figure in promoting the *Law for Preventing and Combating All Forms of Discrimination*, the *Law against the Domestic Violence*, and the *Equal Opportunity Law*.

Other women are advancing EU gender politics within the Parliament. Minodora Cliveti, the Head of the Commission for Equal Opportunities, learned many lessons from her activities in the Council of Europe, becoming more sensitive to gender issues and local feminism.

In recent years newly created agencies for nondiscrimination (2003) and equal opportunities (2005) have started to train staff at the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, the most experienced university in Gender Studies and research (with a particular attention on gender politics).[23] Looking back and forwards the progress is obvious. I hope that we have learned all the lessons we need regarding the costs of apolitical feminism, of an over-emphasis on micro-politics as well as regarding the dangerous split between academic, civic and political feminism. Most of us

have also learned that some "paternalisms" (e.g. the EU paternalism) are good in terms of promoting gender equity politics and that some forms of political autonomy can be worse than some kinds of external "patronage". Once the gender political constraints of communism were released, the political and cultural patriarchy took its own place with no consistent resistance. I think that the next generation of feminists will have to face and respond to other kinds of challenges, some of them domestic, others global, most of them relating to work migration and parental responsibility, the restructuring of the public budget taking women's needs into account, the decrease of men's education, employment, and incomes, as well as the renegotiation of the gender roles within the growing digital economy and globalization.

Conclusions

"Romanian feminism looks like a disembodied mind" (Mircea Cartarescu)[24]

Male norms and clientelistic redistribution policies have led to a ship-wreck of state equality policies for women during the post-communist transition (1989-1999), leading to the creation of a modern patriarchy. Civic and academic feminism ran rather parallel to the macro-political negotiations and bargaining, blinding it to gender consequences. It acted throughout the "grey" times as *porta voce* for a Western agenda and had little internal political impact. Once the EU accession process began in December 1999, the first five years looked more like a "costless room-service state feminism". Women fully paid the costs of the transition, while the state is only investing a symbolic amount of money for gender equality policies, which eventually just serves a minimal functioning of some "showroom" equal opportunity institutions and norms. The recent past offers another lesson regarding the metamorphosis of political patriarchy, namely, that gender interests never prevail when they are added as simple *footnotes* to the political agenda. One thing is sure: Unless the EU insists in the near future on local investments in education, on gender mainstreaming in politics, on gender budgeting, as well as on gender equality in and across the political spectrum, it is very predictable that local politicians will neglect these issues in Romania.

However, local expertise concerning gender politics is significantly increasing, though it is still more interesting for academic than for political circles. In fact what we have now is:

– Academic knowledge and epistemic authority – but we are still far from being a mainstream influence.
– European laws and institutions – albeit without or only very small budgets for implementing the laws.
– 10.6% women in the Parliament but less then 5% women participating in the Local Councils. That leaves almost 12 million women whose political interests are unexplored or not properly represented. There are some people in the parliament,

government and civil society who are able to speak the "Kabbala" of gender politics well learned in European institutions. They are trying now to adapt themselves to the internal gender dynamics of political issues.
– A very incipient, but promising stage of a political feminism.

There is room for further significant changes in the near future. Once politics begins to professionalize experts in public policy, the two rather separate worlds of civic and academic feminism and of the political activity will tend to work together. It is still difficult to predict what will happen, political awareness concerning women's interests is what is needed to end their political isolation.

Notes

1 I want to express my deep gratitude to Joyce Mushaben for her comments, criticism and for her English copy-editing, to Eva Maria Hinterhuber, for her important contribution to the improvement of the content of the article as well as to the co-editor Gesine Fuchs. Anm. der Hg.: Unser Dank gilt darüber hinaus Christine Holike für ihr englisches Lektorat.
2 The civil rights women's movement started in 1815, the movement for political rights in 1848.
3 If it is not a gender exclusive category.
4 Starting with Mary Wollstonecraft's work (1792), feminist theorists as well as activists shared the idea that the fundamental discrimination is the one based on gender: men never suffered discrimination because of their sex, but women did and still do (see also Lerner 1986).
5 In the US, for example, a lot of programs in Gender Studies are focused on "sexualities".
6 It is important to mention that the Romanian communist regime had some specific characteristics. When the de-stalinization process in the Soviet Union and other East-European countries started, the Romanian communism formed a nationalist Stalinism. The so-called independence from the Soviet Union was a positive, and for several years, also a popular pretext, which was used by the last communist leader Ceausescu in order to build a totalitarian regime that turned to a pro-natalist politics of maternity in the state service.
7 For an explanation of the lack of a feminist agenda among post-communist liberal parties see Matland/Montgomery (2003), and Ishiyama (2003) for unsuccessful women's parties among middle-class women in the former Soviet Union.
8 I like to use the metaphor of Mayflower as an analogy for the equal gender starting point after the crash of communism. Mayflower was the first ship reaching New England in 1620. The passengers (or pilgrims) were the earliest Europeans, equally empty handed individuals facing the New Western World. The metaphor of Titanic (the British ocean liner which sank in 1912) is a metaphor for the crash of gender equality in the first decade of the post-communist transition.
9 The notion of "public budget" was void of meaning and referential.
10 In the past communist decades the scarcity forced women and men to be interdependent because otherwise they had no resources to survive.
11 By 0-zone I mean the *"origo"* point after the fall of communism. It was the point at which we were confronted with a "desert" of awareness of any feminist tradition in Romanian culture and politics.
12 Ex-socialist firms were sold, but many became private monopolies instead of state monopolies (e.g. the National Phones Company is a Greek Company now), the Oil Company *(PETROM)*, the Water Company *Apa Nova*, the Gas Company *DISTRIGAZ*, even parking spaces were monopolized by private companies which dictated the level of prices.
13 The Review *Capital* (November 2005) published the list of the first 300 millionaires in dollars in Romania (most of them are Romanians). There were no women in the top of the classification (apart from a few "families"). At the bottom end were seven women.
14 See also other tendencies of "inventing needy" in Haney (2002).
15 The masculinized ones (mines, heavy industry), in contrast, had only few chances of surviving in the market economy.

16 E.g. in the last 15 years the "internationals" and the EU Commissioners always claimed that we have a huge problem with abandoned children (which was true). As a consequence, large and necessary measures were taken for them. EU Commissioners never attended to the issue of children in poor, unemployed families. Their condition is now far worse then that of children brought up in orphanages. Having to solve too many problems with a very small budget, our officials felt released from taking care of the abandoned children and from offering very minimal, untargeted care to the others: a very low level, but universal allocation, as well as milk and pretzels for all school-children.
17 As part of the general strike in education in November 2005, trade-union leaders stressed the topic of unjust distribution of the public budget, yet without relating this to gender inequality.
18 Before communism 80% of the population lived of agriculture and was gender interdependent. Women were not housewives, but family workers.
19 By analogy with the famous feminist movement motto: *Reclaiming the night!*
20 I shall paraphrase Mary Daly's formula concerning women's "original sin": the lack of self-esteem for being women (Daly 1984, 216). In our case it was a lack of self-esteem for being Romanian women.
21 See for example the volume *Women 2000* she has edited with Watson (Weber/Watson 2000).
22 It was the first time when we were able to understand properly how deep the patriarchal beliefs and behaviours in our society are.
23 NSPSA offers an MA in Gender and European Politics (coordinated by myself) since 1998. Under this program, research on women and gender policies was produced. Numerous papers were published, including a series focused on Gender Studies at one of the most famous Romanian publishing houses, *Polirom* (see www.politice.ro).
24 Mircea Cartarescu is considered as the most famous Romanian writer. He has given classes in Gender and Popular Culture at NSPSA. He made this comment in 1999; it was a private dedication to me, as a pro-feminist, from author to author.

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