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Cultural Appeal: The *Hard* Attribute of a *Soft Trans-Ideology*

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Abstract
The study investigates feminism, still based both on the arguments of socialism and liberalism, but also maintained as an *alternative-cultural* realm. This working hypothesis is tested from a philosophical perspective, in relation to several authors and theoretical frames, situating specificity and the threat of marginalization in the light of modernism, postmodernism and trans-modernism. If, ideologically, the terrain of feminisms seems mined by the theory of the control of the intervention spaces, recognizing only the victory of passing from episodic to structural importance, *the cultural place of the feminisms* remains a strongly individualized manifestation. Only in solidarity and within a cultural space can feminism move away from the margin and create a *centre effect*, freed from any tutelary forum, as a *"natural" form*. Beyond this exhausting anchoring in *sex appeal*, *cultural appeal* (as a practical-cultural reconsideration of the concept of "representation") assumes precisely the status of reply, or counter reply hoping to impress by cultural charisma, renouncing the position of perfect objectivity, freeing feminism of the ideological clichés and schemes, and installing the primacy of the "surrounding post-feminisms" as necessary context. The authors conclude that feminism has a better prospect as a cultural dimension than an ideological one, in its aim of transforming society at a deeper level.
Keywords: *feminism, socialism, liberalism, specificity, marginalisation, postmodernism, trans-modernism*

1. Cultural appeal filtered by Romanian feminisms

This argument is haunted by the disconcerting dilemma of the existence or inexistence of a Romanian feminist movement. The presence of Romanian feminism has a certain history and it is delivered by the loud and popular Romanian representatives in a discourse seasoned with the intellectualizing interventions concerning feminist representation in relation with feminist ethics, orthodox feminist theology, political science, feminist sociology, history, the sciences of education, anthropology, psychology, linguistics. At stake is the overcoming of the definitive anchoring process, whether of a *reforming movement* or of a *denouncing one*, exclusively speaking.

The present study aims to investigate the affirmation that while feminism is still based both on the arguments of socialism and liberalism, it is also maintained as an *alternative-cultural* realm, within postmodern *soft ideologies* but employed in a rather *hard* manner. (The present study uses the term *culture* from a cultural studies diachronic perspective, as a particular medium related to ideology, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality and/or gender, as a shift from Althusser´s works that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one of a renewed conception of hegemony as rearticulating powers.)

Malinowski's perspective defines culture as following: "Culture is a well organized unity divided into two fundamental aspects—a body of artefacts and a system of customs." According to Geertz, culture is "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols." Feminism represents an intrusion in this patriarchal historically transmitted pattern of meanings and aims to make deconstruction part of a popular manner of understanding society. Judith Butler proposes a subject seen in relation to the social, which means for her the others and their norms. For us too, this cultural given heritage is beyond the control of the subject. The subject is formed by consequential limitations. The feminine subjective ethical responsibility and obligations is thus a consequence of the limits of social narrative. The feminist subject interrupts the "social narrative" acknowledging every account of her-self partial and failed, but it nevertheless triggers a specific type of individual activism.

Our investigation notices the total attachment of Romanian feminism to the Western trends and waves assuming that central type of *active individuality*, conscious of the data and rules describing the political system where that person acts, presumably with a communicational competence, counting on the situation within the various "currents of disenchantment." This positioning is an achievement of

subjectivity and engendered identity (in the cultural and politic apprehensions and not the sexual and physiological ones); a subjectivity which does not vindicate a right to equality, but a *right to specificity*.

The topic is rather outdated in all its genuine or disguised aspects, with the claims of localization or de-centring, the feminist subject is to a certain extent always under the shadow of marginalization. This remains, in Genettian terms, a *specification* and less an effective *prescription* of the *weak model* to which it belongs, impossible to place inside a scheme of unidirectional and hierarchic inclusions. Thus, an approach of reconsideration of the openings (and limits) of a marginalizing philosophical space envisions *a network of oppositions creating, as a consequence, a constellation of centres and sub centres*. From a moral and political perspective we understand that if *hard thought* presupposed the victory of one of the elements found in opposition, the *weak thought* leads toward a dissolving into irenic approaches, and consequently, tolerance.

Within the limits of this tolerance, following the intellectual trail of the debate initiated and hosted by *Free Inquiry,* one could (re)invest feminism as a *hard* attributed *soft* ideology, with the stake of the *action cultural program.* This statement is (re)placed within the tradition of continental and analytical philosophy (via Brentano – Husserl or Frege) may offer a *cultural answer* to the attempts of investigating feminist philosophy from the perspective of marginality and as a *weak* theory, and in relation to questions such as representation, philosophical relativism, articulation of a discourse astray from the "serious" rules of the masculine (masculinising) text (see Rosi Braidotti or Clifford Geertz).

Overcoming this false pretext – of conferring feminism the "maternity" of *hard* systems ⁄ manners of thought – *the hypothesis launched and assessed by this study considers that feminism has to remain an alternative, mature and equidistant movement as well from socialisms as from liberalisms, nevertheless loaded with cultural and political stakes*. Beyond this temptation of a "regulation of difference," the novelty of this study stays in the affirmation of a "principle of reversibility," as a subjectifying cultural and political alternative of the power relations, contesting the "natural" and "apolitical" alternatives.

The canonical assessments refers to the fact that if feminists, of any description, are to eliminate patriarchy and substantially reform social and cultural norms they - first and above all - have to conquer political power. Without it, feminists and like-minded activists would not be able to pass the laws and the rules that would force those in society who will resist social transformation to change their ways. In fact, the argument of the present study - *that within cultural space feminism can move away from the margin and create a centre effect* – refers exclusively, to a form of reacting, philosophically and politically, in order to conquer a solid grounded position and not to obtain political, social, economic rights, in fact to check out a modernist agenda. This affirmation is a pondered one, in the light of the postmodernism effects of re-positing towards the great narratives, deconstructing the centered/masculine discourse, that of instabilities, and fulfilling *a soft agenda,* etc.

Postmodernists and cultural feminists are known for their advocacy of subjectifying endeavours and cultural approaches to issues of power. To the extent where there is a particularizing context of Eastern Europe and, especially, Romania, a space of regained "natural state" reconceptualising after the '90s the role of the self and individual in democracy, the novelty of this study stays in the cultural studies' perspective on feminism.

The principle of reversibility as a self-interested calculation can be invested with a multi-faced interpretation, pressuring the *ethics of care* from outside morality, leaving space for a Kantian particular cognitive ability in order to give the proper answer to the immediate decisional context. Extracting reversibility from metaphysics' formula of searching fundamental statements about existence and change, this indicates that a real (causal) process relating changes of any nature (physical, mental) and any sort (quantitative, qualitative, and substantial) reverses the order of its action, influence, operation or products. The present study identifies the process of causality as an intersection of trajectories corresponding to a homogeneous process, noticing that a reversible process is a cyclical one of interrelating objects-substances- things.

The article is divided in subchapters related to one another and approaching the cultural appeal, noticing the overcoming of the incomplete stages (trough feminisms ⁄ post-feminisms) and accepting cultural appeal as a trans-feminist "brand."

We have to mention here that this study does not fall for the temptation of *post- soft ideologies* to parade the philosophical and political space seemingly conquered, and particularly not for the

arrogant reactions indebted to automatisms, claiming unilaterally the registers of cultural production or/and the authority over meaning. Our approach proposes to sustain the cultural cleavage between the *depersonalized identity* and *subjective products*, provided that the schools of psychoanalytical inspiration place under the question mark even the concept of personality, as a plea for a suppler and more relativistic approach. On the field of feminist studies, according to Kathy Acker (1994), *the early identification, the sublimation, the supra-ego, the sadism* – become marks of the libido, within a joint combination of group processes. This state of affairs relates to identity, to groups' communication organized after the principle one-one-one. Group psychology is relevant in its reference to crowd psychopathology; a diluted nihilism, a new construction of an *antibody*, freed in a Freudian manner from the demonology of the father and injected into the blood vases of the system to form a new skeleton of a novel constructed identity.

Placing the feminist cultural trajectory within a crowded cultural and historical trajectory, marked by moments related to the register of socialism and liberalism (and related to the unfolding rhythm of these intervals), feminism is to be detached from the need to deliver "en gross" critical opinions, adorned by "personal conclusions," as it happens, with few exceptions, also within the Romanian public space.

There is a (relative) Romanian feminist specificity. Romanian feminism is as heterogeneous as the host of Western feminisms is and it is constructed in relation to the great instances of feminist literature. Historically, the waves of Romanian feminism followed a different timeline. The suffrage right for women is granted in Romania since 1938. Communism brought about an important breakthrough, namely, the election of women in power positions. At the same time, communism imposed in Romania the doctrine of the "new man" genderless, undifferentiated and subjected to the pre-established political order. And this Romanian third wave represented actually a setback for feminism. For all Romanians the gendered acknowledgement of reality was forbidden as "anti-system" and outdated. Post 1989, the process of adopting the principles of the European Union, brought about a feminist rhetoric of the equal opportunity rights society and the anti-discrimination legislative previsions overlapping the resilient patriarchal models and mentalities. The "trouble" with Romanian feminism is the avowed adhesion to western feminism, while the deeply ingrained patriarchal processes and mentalities tend to survive as a diffuse package that could be best referred to as "common sense" and nostalgia for the golden age of traditional, pre-communist, "normality."

We can easily notice a gap between the academic and activist feminism and the social indifference to feminist issues as such. The academic feminists are often over trained or considered so by the activist NGOs, who tend to find it difficult to collaborate with them, while the general population consider that the existence of advanced feminist legislation included in the Romanian codes via the European accession is the answer and the end of feminism, too.

However, the argument of this study emphasizes that feminism (self) cultivates, culturally, the (subversive) intention to refuse both the *hard commandment and ideologies*, since it is situated in a *soft manner on its own.* Feminism is thus neither a hard ideology nor a hard philosophy. It legitimates from philosophical, ideological and cultural perspectives possible analogies, opening and access paths, as well of channels of communication among genders. It legitimates a dignity of alterity and delegitimizes the very concept of a secondary gender. In a way, feminism is a project of marginality reconsidered and described again as a progressive taming of things, phenomena and subjects and as an intention to rename alterity as receptor (of the feminist view).

Interpreting the Romanian cultural and feminist projects we notice a centrality of the *saeculum*, as well as of the synchronism principle (of accession to the Western model), of the cultural dimension of feminisms, as well as that of the socialist heritage. The main Romanian feminist cultural sources were the journals *Dochia* (Jassy, 1896-1898), *Românca* (Jassy, 1905-1906), *Viitorul Româncelor* (Bucharest, 1912-1914), *Unirea Femeilor Române* (Jassy, 1909-1916), *Revista noastră* (1905-1915) or *Cuvântul femeilor*, *Foaia gospodinelor*, *Femeia Română,* etc. Of interest for the current topic is the contemporary relevance of the answer provided in 1923 to the question "*What is feminism?*" as "a movement by which women ask for emancipation through *culture* (our emphasis), by the formation of her personality, consciousness and by the affirmation of her individuality"; "feminism, in a wider apprehension, means that social movement by which women vindicate their participation in the life of the state, to the social life by the exercise of their integral political rights, as well as in all the duties and benefices deriving from these rights."

Overcoming the (a)flux of the feminist waves, we mention the contemporary partial retrieval of the cultural-feminist intermediated imperatives by the journal of feminist studies *AnALize* (1998–2002). Romanian cultural space remains focused on the multidisciplinary research of the gender issues, treated both theoretically and empirically, but also as concrete preoccupations for the social realties including aspects related to gender for a competent, but not quite specialized public.

Concerning the theories of gender as a manner/modality of the social relations, this relational approach inquires into the status of being affiliated to the institutions producing meaning, and it is not a mere replacement of the determinism of nature with the determinism of culture. Nowadays, the various producers of meaning seem to state that feminism is no longer a priority for the postmodern woman, but this statement is a consequence of the depletion of ideology of its (re)active elements. This affirmation confirms the status of feminism as *alternative ideological and cultural space*, placed *beyond* (*trans-*), by the constancy of the refusal to adopt the masculine cultural model, promoting instead the feminine model, as a counter-weight for alienation a cultural dominant consequence of the rules of the "masculine monologue."

2. The overcoming of the incomplete stages: Feminisms∕Post-feminisms

Situating feminism – on the foundation of Mary Astell's (1986) ideas – as a part of political theory that overpasses its limits, C. Pateman (1989) detached feminism from liberalism, socialism or other projects of progress, considering it a distinct project separated from the "masculine" foundation of the contemporary liberal society.

This observation becomes the pretext to discover within the liberal theory a particularly constraining dynamics, emanating illiberal consequences, mark of an implicit sexual contract. Investigating this aspect from the perspective of the rules of power with which masculine discourse operates, Luce Irigaray (1993) overlapped the cultural register on that of political symbolic realm to argue the status of woman as a prisoner within a socio-cultural horizon, delivered on the market as sexualised object.

The assessment of the cultural space brings to the fore a myriad of feminist implications inviting to the rethinking of the feminist ideology. Anne Phillips (1991) denounced the *strong (political) currents* of contemporary democratic thought – including liberal democracy, participative democracy and civic republicanism – considering that each of these operate with a supposedly gender neutral understanding of the concept of citizenship, which continues to favour men. According to Phillips (1993), we should notice the dominant understanding of political representation in contemporary liberal democracies: the representative organisms are elected to filter the opinions, the preferences and the ideas of their constituent members, considering their sexual, racial or ethnic characteristics irrelevant. The symptoms cannot be too far from the obstinate rendering themes of the gender – race connections, structured into common spaces in the attempt of finding a functional "politics of difference". We have to note that, within these landmarks, starting from the middle of the '80s; feminism consolidated an uncomfortable position within liberalism, to the extent where contemporary liberalism insists to remain a rigid and closed ideology.

These aspects bear clear proof that *nowadays feminisms can* be considered *liberalisms* by the accent on the progress of the individualist values and by the effort of promoting women as individuals, as a reconsideration of the liberal politics of gender emancipation, a reordering originating in late modernity and characterized by the renouncing at the idea of an exclusive masculine and patriarchal society, insensitive to gender issues and minority rights. Feminisms *can* belong to the space of liberalism, just as a result of the emancipation sustained by this current, opposed to the instituted power under the pretext of "objective" neutrality, constantly disinterested in minority rights, which are both morally inalienable and necessary from the pragmatic perspective of increasing political participation – a stringent aspect of the functioning of democracy.

Anchoring this clarifying theme on the "soil" of philosophy, in an interview for *LA Weekly* with Jacques Derrida by Kristine McKeena (2002), Derrida answered the question "Why aren't women philosophers?" denouncing the *de facto* state of our human universal society, considering the very philosophical discourse a structure which "marginalizes, suppresses and reduces to silence women , children, animals and slaves." Within his position Derrida confirms the existence of a cultural space of thought neighbouring and maybe basic for philosophy – "there were great women among the

thinkers" – overcoming philosophy as just a "particular manner of thinking among other manners of thinking." Thus it is not at all surprising the unrestrained adhesion of the philosopher to the open beliefs of the feminine cultural space – "I am the ally of the feminine culture" – a space that is not really engaged in philosophy, where Derrida relied on the deconstruction of the phallocentrism and on the positioning of deconstruction in the centre of his philosophical discourse.

There is a feminist cultural assault on the philosophical, political, social and economic landmarks which are apparently closed; in this respect, feminism is delivered as a *reforming ideology*, a cultural project which does not aim necessarily at the conquest of political power, yet insisting for legitimacy. Wilson E. and A. Weir (1968) show that "feminism brings together many theories, as it is not only one discrete theory or a unique and coherent approach concerning the political subordination of woman. It is rather a political engagement – to confer women their real value. It is not even possible to sustain that it is an engagement toward equality, as long as feminists argued and argue the importance of the separation of the spheres of influence, emphasizing rather the complementarities than the equality."

The present study attempts to avoid the well-known conceptual trajectory (be it biological of Greek genesis, of the Amazons, or the materialist individualist feminism, of the "great revolution" associated with the 19th century dome, or even, the radical feminism during 1967-1975, with the entire constellation brought about by the concretization of a paradisiacal model of social-matriarchal society), reaffirming these *cultural-creative feminisms*, beyond the gains of the feminist epistemology, within Habermas' critical and emancipative niche modus: the world can be known and "exposed" through language. The theme of the *place* and that of the *dislocation* through language is present also in the interventions of the *postcolonial feminist discourse,* with reference to the critique of domination and exploitation of the *Other*, differentiated from a cultural standpoint.

The affirmation "there is no such thing as feminism, but feminisms" is a mark of the parting of the ways with the conceptualization of feminism as political ideology built around *women* as a distinctive social group, as life *experience*, as manner of sharing common feelings and opinions and as common experience of *oppression* (with different degrees of intensity). In a *weak* meaning, feminisms are all expressions of the renegotiated multiplicities of roles and symbols, of relativist attitudes type "*anything goes*" and of the instituting policies ("green" policies, new economic policies, etc.). The different versions of feminisms as ideologies (liberal, radical, socialist, etc.) were useful stages for creating an awareness of the shared experiences and their criteria of validation, as well as of their limited solutions. Feminism is seen as a heterogeneous whole with a ramification structure, from a common body of thought consisting in the reconsideration of woman and the world she lives. The concepts of "woman" and "world" are refused as given products of male traditional thought, or at least re-discussed and reinterpreted. From this perspective, we can understand all this diverse feminist philosophy, epistemology and ideology with a unitary dimension. This is a re-comprehension of the human being and of the world from a renewed non-patriarchal standpoint, with the result of modification or replacement of the previous views.

There are interventions contesting the possibility of reducing feminism to ideology, or to an ideological nucleus. On the one hand all ideologies borrow from philosophy their legitimating elements of world description, although it is a feminist liberalism, republicanism, conservatism, communitarians and a feminist socialism. But even the feminist policies and the activism for feminist rights do not aim first and foremost at the seizure of power, but rather at a reforming infusion of feminist philosophical views into the social practices and into *the popular culture*.

Considering the universal philosophical aspiration, feminism can be either seen as philosophy or it can be included *in* philosophy: "Here we revisit the question of the appropriateness of a universalist aspiration in philosophy, and we arrive at the heart of that aspiration: the idea that philosophy is specially placed to reveal the necessary aspects of human practices. If a philosopher discovers that a given practice – an epistemic or an ethical practice, for instance – exhibits a necessary dependence on operations of power, then an eminently respectable sort of philosophical truth will have been revealed: a necessary truth about that sort of practice (Fricker 1998). Thus the socialized conception of the human subject as a rational–social being (always an abstraction) which is encouraged by the internal conception of feminism's relation to philosophy, is able to produce universalist conclusions of a kind to which the discipline has quintessentially aspired." In the process of finding their own

voice (Irigaray) women have to better assess and comprehend the ideological, epistemological and philosophical spheres in their own perspectives and at their pace.

This is why this study investigates feminisms as a re-describing body of thought marked by important postmodern contributions. We can identify an interesting double critique in relation to post-feminisms: a feminist and internal one stating that the critique of rationality leads to losing sight of the criteria of objectivity and it renders feminism a mere particular thought and an external one advocating that the critique of rationality forbids the very possibility of reception of the feminist voices. Yet, we can notice that even the more conservative, humanistic and romantic feminism that does not take a clear distance from the superior model of western rationality attempts to correct /complete the model, by the integration of the "feminine" values and characteristics. The feminine "ethics of care" is more a reality that completes and adjusts the masculine "ethics of justice" than a radical alternative to it.

For Michael Freeden (1996), feminism remains closer to the traditional ideologies than the adepts admit, even when it does not insist on the political and on the more general social–human engagements. The concept of *cultural feminisms* in the present study envisions the importance of the infusion of feminist philosophy into social practices: the principle of multiple identities (forged in social and political particular contexts) imposes the feminist culture as a strengthening factor for the social fabric firstly through an increased awareness toward gendered relationships. From this perspective, what we investigate, a *feminism of cultural alterity* relies on the increased contemporary sensitivity to what Sherry B. Ortner (1972) called "the secondary status of woman in society" as a "pan-cultural fact", although with specific and diverse cultural conceptions. Our analysis is motivated by the hypothesis that social structures favour a cultural expression of asymmetry, over imposed on the dichotomy domestic sphere vs. public sphere which continues to entertain the conviction that women are closer to nature and domestic sphere, while men are closer to culture and the public sphere in the middle of the processes of domination and transformation. This is why feminisms are closer to many ideologies and especially to the colonial thought, infusing social thought and social practices with elements that represent all various attempts to free a specific genealogy of the collective culture from the burden of inherited patriarchal "colonial" culture through inter- and multi-cultural strategies.

We witness the power of reformation and transformation of the *feminist waves* which we see in comparison with the model of topological transformations of the Möbius Band, as the invisible structures with square faces marked by lack of directionality and enantiomorphism, assembled / coupled in various relatively opposable and relatively complementary manners: *the political wave* – of the *suffragettes*; *the ideological wave* – of a *liberal type*, the foundation and the promoter of more or less contradictory derivates, translated either by *ideology*, or by *activism*; *the cultural wave* – translated by the failure of the postmodern co-involvement of the feminist approaches and their "cast" into the space of *trans-feminisms*.

The critical analysis of liberal democracy confirms the fact that feminism remains engaged into this tense relationship with deliberative democracies, liberalism, civic republicanism and critical theory, offering enough critical arguments for the perspective "closing" describing current liberalism. A similar position is found in case of communitarian or conservatory political philosophies. As a compromising solution: John Horton and Susan Mendus (1999), analyzing the eroded relationship between the public sphere and the private, consider that civic republicanism *can be* able to articulate a feminist alternative solution. This perspective is embraced by Anne Phillips (1993) in her interrogation of the conceptual phrases that are fundamental for contemporary democratic thought ("liberal democracy," "participative democracy," and "civic republicanism"), as she emphasizes also in her interpretation the fact that the private constraints are structuring public involvement.

Her arguments are well founded and sustained to the extent where *civic republicanism* actually offers an alternative to the close debate the liberals and the communitarians, re-describing the realities from the perspective of a (republican) *political community*. This concept is enriched in comparison to the notion of the liberal mainstream and less homogenized and not at all exclusive when compared to the offer of communitarian nationalism. Although diffuse, and situated in dialogue with both liberalism and socialism, *civic republicanism* has a central importance within the realm of contemporary political philosophy, sustained by the victory of liberal democracy, of the critical line drew by the communitarian philosophers and the reserves concerning the re-signification of the notions community, citizenship and the moral purpose of politics.

However, there are globalizing challenges and new re-evaluative descriptions of the traditionalist forms of the "nation-state" approaching conceptual frames organized around sovereignty, exclusivity, selfishness, indicating that the substance of the ideas of political thought and democracy are basically unthreatened. As a consequence, "republic" should be seen as a "common place" for the reasonable confrontations and for the divergent doctrines, different from the liberal model. A republic should not be organized after masculine principles described as neutral and objective, but a "plural-cultureless," a compromising mixture of complementary elements, whichever appear most reasonable. Bu who decides what is reasonable at a certain time and according to which criteria?

On the background of republican liberalism, there is a homogeneous political community able to accommodate, to borrow and even to update the various versions of multiculturalism and human rights for (minority) groups whichever they might be. Despite the absence of a singular public sphere and "demos", paradoxically, political space seems equipped with modalities to employ a "single deliberative politics" destined for a *multiple "demoi."* From this standpoint, "plural-cultureless" is a version of cultural pluralism coexisting with the reinvention of a minimal set of political values.

This way, republican thought places political freedom within the collective self-determination realm, by the appeal to the dependency of tastes and values on social forms concretely determined. In this context, *civic friendship* can be replaced by solidarity, with all the constellation of meanings supposed by the parting of the ways with the Aristotelian perspective, while approaching the perspective of personal-voluntary relations.

3. Feminisms in the alternative space of "trans-"

Staring from the idea that postmodernism is a dual concept, both *modern* and *premodern,* we notice that within this landscape the cultural spaces have been infiltrated by the ideological involvement of the New Left, presented as "political correctness" that goes from a code of politeness to censorship, with all sorts of intermediary stages aiming to assault the *mythical thought*, the *traditional values*, the *religions*, or the very *western way*. Postmodernism becomes thus ambivalent from a political standpoint, too, through these ambiguous codes, both accomplice and contesting in relation to the closing of the key terms within a parody politics.

Related to the parody use of the "doxification" – a move outside dogmas and as a type of disenchantment – feminism seen as postmodern political movement attempts to explain the crisis of legitimacy described by Lyotard (1993) in terms of patriarchal ideological action, of the oppression of women and of other minority groups. Minority movements, as ecologist and feminism bring to the fore postmodern representations of the self, unveiling a new consciousness about representation, a new understanding of the contexts and of the particularities of the gender experience. These movements attain the aspect of a conscious affirmation, at times contradictory and (self) undermining. The symbolic and cultural meaning of postmodernism in relation to feminism presupposes a ceasing of imitation and a re-conquest of the political realm and mostly of the productive and constructive aspects of the act of representation, in a paradigmatic manner.

From the perspective of another conceptual (pre)fix than "post" and as alternative *trans-modernity,* Rosa María Rodríguez Magda (1989) retrieved the temptation of cultural-political alternatives to return to the strong directions and of modernity: Hegelianism, utopian socialism, Marxism, and mostly "the philosophy of suspicion" (Paul Ricœur, referring to Marx, Nietzsche and Freud).

Trans-modernity marks the return, copying and survival of the weak attribute of modernity in its *light* form (by fiction, eclecticism, replacement of models), as a travesty of postmodernity, the latter deprived by its innocent separation from modernity (in the attempt to avoid ending in barbarian cybernetics or media). The access key to this alternative model stays in *trans-justification* and in an overcoming of paradigms, as random complex of pre-imposed strategic situations, by the abandonment of representation and by the sovereignty of the simulation. Ironic toward the Hegelian theses, *trans-modernity* renounces to represent an increase of the absolute and becomes a virtual state by the abandonment of the pyramidal and tree-like structure of the system and by the undertaking of self-multiplications of the interconnected models, within a sort of prolific crystalline structure.

Beyond the trap of the "-isms", *trans-modernism* resists as a cultural attempt of articulating an answer for both modernism and postmodernism, under the imperative: *I answer although I shall be transformed*!, preoccupied b the central position of the dialogue, by integrative ideas and processes,

characterized by an ecological thought, appreciating diversity in unity, opposing the multicultural to mono-cultural, the *intercultural*, to orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and to the spiritual truth and, finally, opposing to postmodern paranoia, a *metanoia*.

For James Parker (2001), recent research (from comparative anthropology, performance theory, human evolution, neuroscience, time studies, cosmic physics, ethnology and chaos theory) suggest a (re)consideration of the entire (modern or postmodern) aesthetics and promise the (re)thinking of the entire humanity in a radical manner, too. Trans-modernists sustain collective and normative truth without capitulating in favour of a naturalistic scientific quality, affirming the moral truths of values and virtues, related to the challenges of the postmodern term as a logical extension of modernism or, Anthony Giddens's terms, *as a radicalisation of modernity.*

Trans-modernism rejects all the totalising and synthesis types, going around the meta-narratives, similarly to postmodernism. Marxism is thus led *outward*, in the name of democratic socialism, in the hypostasis of viable future. Unlike postmodernism, it does not permit polysemous enterprises, but, in turn, it privileges certain voices to the detriment of other, thus going beyond the postmodern (de)construction. The vitalising meaning of social democracy as a necessity and as pseudo-Keynesian economic mixture becomes the *weak attribute* of *trans-politics*.

Within this context, Riane Eisler (1996) is concerned with the types of private actions that are either protected or not, from the perspective of the right to intimacy or by that generated by the principle of autonomy. Within the same register, Charlotte Bunch (1990) considers that the role of community dedicated to human rights, in the attempt to react and respond to "systematic and brutal" violation of women rights is to overcome the norms defined from masculine perspective, by the examination of the patriarchal predispositions and tendencies and the understanding of women rights as human rights. The governments are to end their political or cultural war against women, each state "having the responsibility to intervene to eliminate the abuse of women rights within its borders and to end the understanding with the forces perpetuating such violations in other countries". Such an imperative is situated by Margaret Farley (1996) under the sign of *sexism*, a concept including attitudes, systems of values and social models that express or sustain dichotomised principles (such as superiority/ inferiority, etc.).

Emphasising the operative concepts of *trans-modernity*, we can notice that it reactivates notions such as *feminism, relation, family* [terms which have in turn as priority the (re)activation of the notions of subculture and supra culture, the capitalisation and improvement of the relationships of affection and the renewed accent on the notion of family], *social ecosophy* – the development of specific practices, tending to modify and reinvent the existential modes of the family, of the urban context and of work. These transformations should take place by a reconstruction of the human assemblies termed as groups, not only by the "communicational" interventions, but also by certain existential mutations of the notion of subjectivity. This leads to the appearance of the *subject-group*, a sort of community, whose institutionalisation remains sufficiently fluid and un-hierarchical to cease blocking the life of the group by rites and conventions, capturing the energy of the subjective forces that are also the source of subjectivity for the global society.

For Anne Phillips (1997), *post-metaphysic* did not lead to the overcoming of metaphysics; *post-historic* marked neither surmount of history, nor its end; and *post-humanism* did not lead to the overcoming of humanism, converted into neo-humanism. In this view, *postmodern relativisms* are opposed to the *synthesis* in *syncretism*, as a return to tradition, by recovery and re-launching, emphasising an agreement between modernity and newer postmodern trends.

From this perspective of transgressing accents (in the soft context of *post-feminisms*) from the *tensions of the secondary* in relation to the re-evaluation of the effects resented within the realm of strong ideological views, in the search of *outward* (*beyond* borders) cultural tradition, we near two ideological varieties that scan and update the vortex at the core of the conceptual prefix "trans-": the *philosophical-cultural-social version of trans-disciplinarily* and the *ideological-political option of trans-feminism*. We have to notice that both these trends count on postmodern emancipation understood in Vattimo's terms (1995), as a freeing from the homologation imposed from the centre, as emancipation from roots and from traditional foundational values, freeing plurality, and exiting the incidence of the globalising pressures with consequence in cultural limitation, too.

In *philosophical, cultural and social dimensions*, reconstructing the prefix "trans-" in an interpretation of *personalised manifesto*, Basarab Nicolescu (2007) pleas with a *trans-discipline*

attitude (an aptitude to maintain a stand; individual or social capacity to keep a constant, immutable orientation regardless of the complexity of the situation or the chances offered by life), for the double traverse of the levels of Reality, by the duality *efficiency-affection*, and considering the gender difference of two types of knowledge: the *masculine* one, of the assembly of Reality levels and the *feminine*, of the levels of perception. According to the manifesto, favouring or disfavouring any element has the unavoidable consequence of the commercial logic, placing *affection* in the light of *efficiency*, which leads to the social marginalisation of woman. The project suggested by the conceptualisation of "*trans*" envisions *social feminisation*, by the reconciliation of the contrary elements, by compromise, plurality and open unity.

Trans-disciplinarily remains the personal manner to offer for the prefix "*trans-*" the *meaning of feminised (or even feminising) change*, a plural reaction directed against the severe fragmentation and polarisation characteristic for the inclusive policies, from the perspective of the *ideological-political manifesto*. "*Trans-*" is an inclusive prefix, used to denounce the violations of the gender norms, the discontinuity of the biologic datum and the gender ∕ expression identity. *Trans-feminism* is organized as emancipation movement, counting on a coalition of the feminist politics, to define the *woman* or the *true feminism* (despite the allergy or the resentment found in the east-European space for feminism as yet another ideologically perverted reality). Overlapping the construction of the socio-cultural space and the register of sex and gender, the ideology of *trans-feminism* reconsiders gender as social construct based on a physiologic-biological reality. The approach of the doctrine presents *trans-liberty* in relation to the attempt to recover the model of individual self-definition and an exit from the sphere of medical, religious or political authority, under the incidence of strong (and definitive) social-political constructs.

Nothing new here, to the extent where, following M. Foucault (2007), the techniques of the self are those "that permit individuals to perform, by themselves or with the help of the others, a particular number of operations on their body and soul, on their thoughts, behaviour and manner of being; to become transformed, as well, to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality." In this view, *the body* remains a current topic for the debates concerning the rights, the obligations, the liberties and the limitations (with appeal to refigure the debates around the existing relationships within the limits of modernisation, discipline, traditionalism, liberalism, authoritarianism and nationalism, between the individual and society). This is an imperative (surprisingly) different from the Foucault-ian analysis of the appearance and development of "noso-politics" and modern medicine with social character (or the *social feminism* discussed by Nicolescu, 2007), or, briefly put, of the relationship between *bio-politics* and the emergence of the modern state.

Although modernity recognises the importance of the biological identities and necessities, it disposes freely of the power to exile within intimate sphere and civil society alike as "places" from which the versions of *bio-identity* cannot (re)enter politics. This happens because the birth of politics itself imposes, according to H. Arendt (1999), the total separation of the economic space (the territory of the manifestation for wishes and needs that are biologically co-determined, and for the satisfaction of the needs) from the open space of the political and ethical practices. For Arendt (1999) essential is the process guiding *homo laborans* through the biological life taken into possession with the progressive conquering of the centre of the political scene of modernity. She attributes the transformation and decadence of the public space of modern societies precisely to this primacy of natural life over political action.

4. Cultural appeal as a trans-feminist "brand"

Considered technically a project or a programme unequally spread inside ideologies, feminism is inscribed as a perpetual product of a secondary dynamic of a cultural order, and as production and (re)adaptation of a *double inclusion* or as a *cultural consolidation* of the position of secondary significant in the situations of communication, in discourse, despite de equal status of representation imposed more and more by contemporary social norms. This double inclusion justifies the intersection and the embedding of feminism in the *manner of cultural reaction* within the schemes of unique and hierarchical inclusions, in fact, within a rather equal cultural relation of forces.

If, ideologically, the terrain of feminism seems mined by the theory of the control of the intervention spaces, recognising only the victory of passing from episodic to structural importance, *the cultural*

place of the feminism remains a strongly individualised manifestation. This individualisation is unconceivable though in the absence of a sense of solidarity in front of the same challenges, oppressions, rights violations, and effects of marginalisation. It is an individualisation marked by personal aspects and points of view, but part of a unitary movement of contestation, and part of a network of opposition points. Only in solidarity and within a cultural space feminism can move away from the margin and create a *centre effect*, freed from any tutelary forum, as a *"natural" form*.

The plural referential landmarks of such rule are present in the Romanian space since 1923 trough the constant attempt of the feminist to withdraw *from ideology into culture*, a movement recognisable nowadays, too, in the current, double, feminist option: either *absolute conformity*, or *marginalisation* (secondary place, fragmentation, pulverisation, amorphous state, and lack of "confluence" with society). The situation of feminism in culture shows that the dialectics of difference and fragmentation could derail and modify the implacable traits and the levelling energies of globalisation, massification and postmodernisms, but also the liberal classicising energies of enrolment in the canon. Mary B. Hesse (1980) has already *centred* "the feminist point of view" felt within the cultural space, a reaction sustained by the introduction of personal style, opposed to the impersonal one characteristic for the "androcentric" argumentation, constituting an alternative of "successive science", loaded with "feminine virtues." Proposing to bring back into attention the pressure exercised by meditation on the epistemological turn, Hesse (1980) favours *epistemological reconstruction* and *not deconstruction*, as a marginal mark of the weakening phallocentrism. Thus, a *new epistemology* starts from the useful classifications of objects, materials and processes (and not from the so-called "real categories"), from the relative specific and local (marginal) enunciations of the regularities of the processes (and not from "natural laws ", universally quantifiable). This is a pragmatic type of epistemology and it is neither a feminist expurgation of science, nor deconstructive approach at all costs.

After the experiences of *sex appeal* and *ideological appeal*, feminism reinvents itself as object of manifestation of *cultural appeal*, to the extent where, ideologically, the relationships entertained with modernity and postmodernity too, presupposed a formal ambiguous "agreement" (since the presence of feminism was not at all of consequence in the postmodern debates of the '60s until the '80s). The effort is recognized in the attempt of feminisms to establish a link between the gender differences and the ideological power, with the (voluntary or the involuntary) aim to confer postmodernism a cultural definition of its politics.

Outing postmodernity is overcoming obstacles, the refusal to accept politics as exclusively a part of the masculine public sphere, with implications that prove, according to Linda Hutcheon (1997) that feminism may confer (from *cultural* standpoints) *political value to the cultural strategies of resistance*. On the track of this new epistemology described also by Hesse (1980) there is a consonance with what Z. Bauman (2000) termed by displacement from the epoch of the pre-allocated "reference groups," toward the epoch of "universal comparison." In the cultural space, the destination of the individual tasks of self-construction remains endemic and incurably undecided, thus open to several versions of emancipations, to the personal projects, subjected to numerous and profound change.

Following a novel research of the Romanian weekly magazine *Sex-Appeal* from 1933 (a magazine unfairly ignored in the Romanian space after 1989 by the intellectual stars sustaining one or the other of the masculinising standpoints), we can sustain that the Anglo-American notion of *sex-appeal* was a dynamic presence in the Romanian intellectual realm. It was considered in the pages of the magazine an abuse of the notion, in Stendhal understanding, as a *promise of pleasure* and as "charms spreading around a being, rising by its presence conscious or unconscious desires," all gathered around the essential attribute of *whim*. The publication was mostly unbiased. It protected the journalists by anonymity and also by a dilution of ideas via inserts of astrology, contests and interactive activities. It planned trips: "in the trips organized, each participant is to wear an outfit "speaking" of the humanity of the excursionists, a uniform of good taste and beauty, so that everyone stands out with sex-appeal" (*sic*!). Anyway, the magazine answered the "objectives" of *Sex Appeal League*, discussing "different scientific matters, episodes from the great war, historical novels, poetry and prose, correspondence and various news, book reviews, commercials".

Beyond this exhausting anchoring in *sex appeal*, *cultural appeal* assumes precisely the status of reply, or counter reply hoping to impress by cultural charisma, renouncing the position of perfect objectivity, freeing feminism of the ideological clichés and schemes, and installing the primacy of the

"surrounding post-feminisms" as necessary context. *The de-politisation of perception* and of the political-cultural discourse (re)sets in discussion the *cultural appeal* as a relationship of *production* (and not a *whim),* with interest in revising the nature and importance of the categories of cultural "consumption" and cultural "answer." This is a practical-cultural reconsideration of the concept of "representation," where the *reflection over the means does not constitute anymore a host of exterior and distinct elements from the cultural practice.* On the contrary, they become the constitutive factors of a new "action adventure".

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