

## **HARDLY A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN. GENDER AND COLLABORATIVE WRITING IN THE PREWAR ROMANIAN NOVEL**

Throughout literary history, collaboration between writers has been a recurring and significant phenomenon, ranging from formal co-authorships to more informal yet deeply intertwined intellectual partnerships. Informal collaborations are particularly interesting, as they often involve sustained personal and intellectual exchanges that blur the boundaries of individual authorship<sup>1</sup>. A notable and common example is the relationship between Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Although they did not exactly publish co-authored works, their philosophical and literary projects were developed in close proximity over decades. Feminist scholars, such as Margaret Simons, have rightly disputed the reductive claim that Beauvoir's work was in any way derivative of Sartre's. However, the closeness of their personal and intellectual bond inevitably fostered a form of reciprocal influence<sup>2</sup>.

Other literary relationships reveal similar dynamics of support and collaboration, even when only one partner was formally recognized as a writer. Vera Nabokov, for example, played a crucial editorial and managerial role in the career of Vladimir Nabokov, acting as his typist, translator, editor, and literary advocate. Though rarely acknowledged in traditional literary histories, her contribution was indispensable to the production and preservation of his work. Further back, Sophia Tolstaya, wife of Leo Tolstoy, not only served as the copyist for his voluminous manuscripts but also managed their household and raised thirteen children, an amount of labour without which Tolstoy's writing life would scarcely have been possible.

Conversely, the case of Virginia Woolf and Leonard Woolf exemplifies a collaborative partnership in which editorial and publishing support flowed in the opposite direction. As co-founder of the Hogarth Press and Virginia's editor, Leonard played a critical role in shaping the trajectory of her career. Their relationship underscores the way creative labour often depends on forms of collaboration that remain unacknowledged by conventional literary narratives. Not only did he make sure she had "a room of her own", but, as we find out from

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Ede, Andrea Lunsford, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1990, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret A. Simons, *Beauvoir and The Second Sex: Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001; reprinted 2013, p. 107 (EPUB).

Elaine Showalter's book *A Literature of Their Own*, Leonard was also taking care of her physical health and her diet, as she suffered from anorexia<sup>3</sup>.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that literary production is frequently embedded in relational contexts, romantic, intellectual, or domestic, that challenge the myth of the isolated genius.

When examining instances of same-gender collaborative writing in literary history, we find that such collaborations have been far more visible among male authors. Notable examples include the partnership between Ford Madox Ford and Joseph Conrad<sup>4</sup>, whose co-authored works exemplify an enduring literary alliance, as well as the collaboration between Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in *The Gilded Age* (1873). The British Romantic period also offers the famed intellectual and poetic companionship of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, whose mutual influence helped define an entire literary movement. But they weren't the only ones. Shelley too was "keen to establish such a communal site of productivity"<sup>5</sup>.

By contrast, examples of literary collaboration between women are significantly less visible, often obscured by the constraints of patriarchy and the historical marginalization of women's authorship. When women did collaborate, it was frequently under a shared male pseudonym, which complicates both recognition and attribution. Two key cases are that of Michael Field, the pen name adopted by Katherine Bradley, and Edith Cooper, an aunt and niece who co-authored numerous works of poetry and drama in Victorian England<sup>6</sup>, and that of E.D. Gerard, the pseudonym adopted by sisters Emily and Dorothea Gerard<sup>7</sup>. The deliberate concealment of their identities, while allowing for greater public acceptance of their work, simultaneously reinforced the structural invisibility of female literary partnership. At the same time, female writers created true feminist bonds when writing together, and this is very well exemplified by Violet Martin and Edith Somerville. As Elaine Showalter puts it:

In the lives of feminists, the bonds of the female subculture were particularly strong. The feminists were intensely devoted to each other and needed the support of close, emotional friendships with other women as well as the loving adulation of a female

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<sup>3</sup> Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 269.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, *The Inheritors: An Extravagant Story*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Page & Co., 1920.

<sup>5</sup> Heather Bozant Witcher, *Collaborative Writing in the Long Nineteenth Century: Sympathetic Partnerships and Artistic Creation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Annachiara Cozzi, "Exploring Late Victorian (Co-)Authorship: Two Models of Popular Literary Collaboration", *Victorian Popular Fictions*, 3, 2021, 1, p. 44.

audience. In this generation, which mainly comprises women born between 1860 and 1880, one finds sympathetically attuned women writing in teams<sup>8</sup>.

Yet not even these powerful teams that worked their way through the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s stood out sufficiently. This erasure extends to certain male-female collaborations as well, particularly when women's contributions were subsumed under male names, or obscured through joint pseudonyms. The early 19<sup>th</sup>-century novel *Rose et Blanche* (1831), published under the name Jules Sand, was in fact co-authored by Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin (later known as George Sand) and Jules Sandeau. While Sand would go on to establish her own formidable career, this early instance reflects the broader dynamics of gender and authorship that have shaped how collaboration is recorded and also remembered in literary history.

These patterns suggest that gender not only influences who collaborates, but also how such collaborations are perceived, preserved, and canonized. The collaborative work of women, and especially of gender-marginalized individuals, has too often been rendered invisible by publishing conventions and historical biases, highlighting the need to revisit authorship as a relational and often political fact<sup>9</sup>. As Zoë Thomas observes, there were numerous literary couples, many of them co-authors, where “the middle-class wife’s historic role as behind-the-scenes ‘helpmate’ who enabled her husband to build his career – through clerical support, hosting soirées, or even as unrecognized author”<sup>10</sup> was central to the couple’s literary output. Thomas also highlights this dynamic by noting that in some cases, couples preferred to publish under the man’s name alone, reinforcing existing gender hierarchies in authorship and public recognition. This pattern reveals the way women’s literary labour was often made invisible to preserve the cultural authority of the male partner:

Certain couples began by only listing the husband’s name on their book covers, but from the 1890s there was realization that including both names could provide the unique recipe for literary success in an ever more competitive marketplace. For Egerton and Agnes Castle’s first “four or five books”, they used solely his name “because we fancied that they would sell better under a name that was already known” and out of concern there would be “prejudice against what some people will look upon as a divided, instead of a united, authorship”<sup>11</sup>.

Bette London makes the same point in her book *Writing Double: Women’s Literary Partnerships*:

<sup>8</sup> Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>9</sup> See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, “Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship”, in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, pp. 78-121.

<sup>10</sup> Zoë Thomas, “Marriage, Collaboration, and the Literary Mass Market in the English-Speaking World, c. 1870–1939”, *The Historical Journal* (first view, published online March 12), 2025, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

Women's more complex authorial engagements, however, have tended to be dwarfed by the dominant model of spousal collaboration that defines most cross-gender writing arrangements – a model that relegates women to the roles of helpmeet and amanuensis<sup>12</sup>.

This article, however, does not seek to present writers in abstract or romanticized terms, as some of the existing literature on collaborative writing tends to do. For instance, Linda Brodkey's *Academic Writing as Social Practice* portrays the writer as a solitary figure, detached from broader social contexts. A similar stance is evident in Andrea A. Lunsford and Lisa S. Ede's *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*, where they offer a historical overview of joint authorship and collaborative writing practices, but often remain within traditional frameworks. Nevertheless, Brodkey's work, despite its primary focus on academic writing, offers an important insight: collaboration frequently serves as a crucial facilitator for marginalized communities<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, her observations resonate with feminist critiques, particularly those of Elaine Showalter, who highlights the fact that women writers of the nineteenth-century English novel similarly embraced collaboration as both a strategy for survival and a means of creative empowerment. Besides, collaboration did not even have to necessarily mean co-authorship, as Bette London highlights:

As these instances suggest, collaborations exist in a range of "authorial" activities not necessarily named authorship: acts of assistance and inspiration; acts of mentoring or mutual influence; acts of revision or editorial input. Seen in this larger context, "collaboration" plays a more central role in the history of women's authorship than might at first appear evident, taking in such examples as Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop, H. D. and Bryher, Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby. It includes the Bronte sisters, not just in their juvenilia, where collaboration was a constitutive feature, but in the novels they wrote and published in close consultation with each other<sup>14</sup>.

This initial exploration into the realm of global literature, largely shaped by Eurocentric canons and dominant literary traditions like the English one, serves as a preliminary framework for a broader, more critical inquiry on peripheral literatures, like Romanian literature. While the collaborative dimensions of literary production in these contexts offer valuable insights, they also reflect a set of assumptions about authorship, visibility, and literary value that are not universally applicable. Collaboration, whether explicit or implicit, has indeed been a persistent but frequently undervalued aspect of literary history. However, this article seeks to shift the analytical focus: rather than treating collaboration as a hidden or supplemental feature of literary creation, it investigates the political and cultural

<sup>12</sup> Bette London, *Writing Double: Women's Literary Partnerships*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Linda Brodkey, *Academic Writing as Social Practice*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1987, p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> London, *Writing Double*, p. 19.

significance of collaborative writing practices within marginal literatures, specifically within the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Romanian novel. Therefore, I would first like to know if collaborative writing has historically supported the marginal novel written by women – whether due to the author's gender, the language of composition, or country of origin. In the case of Romania's first women novelists, these marginalizing factors often converge<sup>15</sup>. Notably, the first Romanian novel written by a woman recorded in the *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până în 2000* [*Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel from Its Origins to 2000*]<sup>16</sup> was a collaborative work between a female and a male author. Published in 1857–1858 under the pseudonym Doamna L. [Madam L.], *Omul muntelui* [*The Mountain Man*] was co-authored by V.A. Urechia and Marie Boucher. One cannot help but question why the first recorded Romanian novel by a woman was, in fact, a collaborative effort – written by both a man and a woman, yet presented under a (seemingly) female pseudonym.

While scholars like Elaine Showalter, Bette London and Lorraine York have shown that collaboration and shared literary labour could empower women writers in more established literary traditions, a more peripheral space like the Romanian space complicates this notion. When the first female-authored novel is, in fact, a collaboration between a man and a woman, one must ask whether this was a revolutionary act or merely a reflection of the limitations placed on women in peripheral literatures. Lorraine York presents all collaborations as challenges to the *status quo*<sup>17</sup>. Rather than a liberating strategy, collaboration in this context may have been a necessary condition for a woman to enter the literary field at all – an indication that legitimacy required male partnership, established connections, or access to an accepted literary genealogy. In such a system, co-authorship was not necessarily a space of creative equality, but a means of negotiating access to publication in a deeply gendered and hierarchical cultural landscape. But above all, I agree with York's stance about the fluidity of the act of collaboration:

More recently, women collaborators have mused over an array of other possible metaphors: sibling relationship, erotic bond, mixed salad, stew, operatic duets, and much else from this ongoing I take as a cautionary note besides. But what is a

<sup>15</sup> See Daiana Gârdan, "The Great Female Unread. Romanian Women Novelists in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: A Quantitative Approach", *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, 4, 2018, 1, pp. 109-124.

<sup>16</sup> See Adrian Tudurachi (ed.), *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până în 2000* [*Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel from Its Origins to 2000*], vol. I–II, revised and expanded edition, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2023, p. 9. See also Ștefan Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc: secolul al XIX-lea* [*The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel: The 19<sup>th</sup> Century*], Sibiu, Complexul Național Muzeal ASTRA, 2019, and *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc: 1901–1932* [*The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel: 1901–1932*], Sibiu, Complexul Național Muzeal ASTRA, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Lorraine York, *Rethinking Women's Collaborative Writing: Power, Difference, Property*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 3.

valuable reminder to define collaborative writing challenge are not relationships (like all others) that collaborative writing classifiable objects. static, austere classifiable objects<sup>18</sup>.

Let us turn our attention to some of the most prominent writers of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Romania. At first glance, it becomes apparent that those who engaged in literary collaboration tend to be lesser-known figures. Beyond the previously mentioned Marie Boucher, other examples include Olimpia Teodoru, who collaborated with her brother Doru Teodoru, a partnership I intend to revisit later, and Carmen Sylva, who often wrote under the pseudonym *Dito*. Sylva collaborated with Mite Kremnitz, herself known by the pseudonym *Idem* (as well as others like *Allen George*). While the primary focus of this article will be on mixed-gender writing partnerships, I wish to briefly address the collaboration between Dito and Idem. This female-female partnership is particularly noteworthy as it represents one of the few examples of women collaborating in Romanian literature during this period, exemplified by their 1887 novel *Astra*<sup>19</sup>. Its significance lies not only in its rarity but also in the way it challenges the predominant literary norms of the time:

We are dealing with a handwritten book, born out of the friendship between two erudite German-speaking authors whom life brought together in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century among Romanians, two women separated at times by social constraints, yet united by their passion for writing, the circles they frequented, and a shared feeling of a kind of exile in a world different from the one in which they were born. *Astra* is an epistolary novel in which the strong echoes of late Romanticism clearly resonate<sup>20</sup>.

Furthermore, as Ioana Moroșan notes, in the nineteenth century women's restricted access to formal authorship often redirected their literary expression toward correspondence, which gradually came to substitute fictional writing<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, as has been accurately observed, these two women came from markedly different worlds, one of them being Elisabeth of Wied (1843–1916), the first Queen of Romania and wife of King Carol I. This example illustrates a common pattern in literary partnerships, where the social status of one partner provides certain advantages or greater visibility than the other's. However, unlike many cases

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> See Dito și Idem, *Astra. Roman epistolar* [*Astra. Epistolary Novel*]. Transl. from German, preface and notes by Grete Tartler, București, Humanitas, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Răzvan Mihai Năstase, "Lucașul uitat" ["The Forgotten Evening Star"], *România literară*, 44, 2012, 13, p. 22: "Avem de-a face cu o carte la patru mâini, izvorâtă din prietenia a două erudite autoare de limbă germană pe care viața le-a adus în cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea printre români, două femei despărțite uneori de rigorile sociale, dar apropiate de pasiunea pentru scris, de cercurile pe care le frecventau și de sentimentul unui soi de exil într-o lume diferită de cea în care s-au născut. *Astra* este un roman epistolar în care răzbat limpede ecouri puternice ale unui romantism târziu". Unless otherwise stated, the quotations are translated into English by the author of this paper.

<sup>21</sup> Ioana Moroșan, "From the Revolutionary Patriotic Mothers to the Contemporary Nationalist Discourse", *Dacoromania Litteraria*, 2025, 12, pp. 80-97.

where gender is a defining factor in such dynamics, here the distinction lies primarily in social class and rank. Their collaboration therefore sheds light on how social hierarchies, rather than gender alone, shaped literary relationships and opportunities during this period.

Before turning to mixed-gender literary partnerships, it is important to consider the broader context of women writers in Romania during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many of these women who pursued careers in writing maintained significant connections with male writers or other influential figures, which often shaped their literary trajectories and public reception. Many of the women who wrote collaboratively or under pseudonyms remained relatively obscure in Romanian literary history, suggesting that those who achieved greater recognition, such as it was, were often closely connected to men. In an article published in *Metacritic Journal*, Ioana Moroșan explores the mechanisms of masculine domination within Romanian literature and the writing profession, revealing how women writers were systematically excluded from the structures of literary production, largely controlled by male elites. Even those women who managed to gain some visibility, particularly those who gathered around various platforms and journals like *Femeia română* [*The Romanian Woman*], often did so by inheriting or relying on the cultural, social, or economic capital of their husbands, fathers, or brothers:

In other words, the occupation of writing remains tributary to the acceptance of the father's heritage and his literary capital. In this way, they reproduce the cultural and social capital gained by the writer/intellectual – fathers or male relatives – without homologating their dominant position due to restrictions imposed by their gender identity. So, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many important women from the Romanian literary field accede to the literary (liberal) professions through the status of their fathers', relatives', or husbands' intellectual affiliation, mobilising either paternal inherited capital or their relational capital<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, although “female writers who were proposing a feminist imagery and topics through their writing, such as Sofia Nădejde, Eugenia Ianculescu, Adela Xenopol or Aida Vrioni and Natalia Negru delimit themselves and their writing from the male-dominated literary doxa”<sup>23</sup>, it is also true that these women had undeniable connections to paternal or male family figures, which could distinguish their careers from those writers lesser known than themselves (like the ones I will later discuss in this article). The fact that, as Moroșan notes, “these authors had never been mentioned within activity reports such as *Sburătorul*”<sup>24</sup> only underscores their determination to distance themselves from male counterparts.

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<sup>22</sup> Ioana Moroșan, “Romanian Women Writers and the Literary Profession during the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Exclusion, Feminisation and Professionalisation of Writing”, *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, 8, 2022, 1, p. 108.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 120.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

With this context in mind, let us consider some of the most prominent names among Romanian women writers of the time. One of the best-known is Sofia Nădejde, married to Ioan Nădejde, a Romanian publicist and translator. Another key figure is Eugenia de Reuss Ianculescu, an important voice in early feminist activism. Coming from an aristocratic family on her father's side, she grew up on an estate in Bucovina and had the opportunity to travel frequently to France and Italy. Her access to education abroad was instrumental in shaping her involvement in feminist movements and publications<sup>25</sup>.

Similarly, Elena Bacaloglu, often mentioned alongside Nădejde as a major Romanian literary figure, also came from a prominent and well-educated family. She was initially married to Radu D. Rosetti, a successful lawyer and poet, and later to literary historian Ovid Densusianu, from whom she eventually divorced before moving to Italy, where she became involved with the Fascist Party<sup>26</sup>. Another notable example is Adela Xenopol, a feminist writer and journalist associated with publications such as *Femeia română* and *Dochia*. She was the sister of historian A.D. Xenopol and also benefited from studies abroad<sup>27</sup>.

This is not to say that these women's feminist commitments should be discredited because of their privileged backgrounds. Rather, the point is to recognize that their ability to articulate and promote a feminist agenda was made possible, at least in part, by the social and cultural capital they inherited. It is also worth noting that in the cases of Bacaloglu, Nădejde, and Adela Xenopol, literary historians often foreground these biographical details as central to understanding their intellectual and public trajectories, which can be harmful.

Thus, the question I wish to raise is whether, in peripheral literary cultures such as Romania's at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the mixed-gender novel serves less as a neutral collaboration or purely artistic partnership, and more as a strategic avenue for women writers to access male cultural capital. In other words, could the mixed-gender novel often be a pretext through which women could gain entry into the literary sphere by aligning themselves with male authority, whether through co-authorship, pseudonymous collaboration, or association with a well-positioned male figure?

Moreover, can such collaborations still be considered subversive, even when they are grounded in inherited forms of power, whether paternal, fraternal, or marital? If a woman writer's access to publication, readership, or recognition is facilitated by her relationship to a man, does that invalidate the feminist or

<sup>25</sup> See the entry for Eugenia Ianculescu de Reuss in Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2006, pp. 463-466.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Bucur, "Romania", in Kevin Passmore (ed.), *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003, pp. 107-108.

<sup>27</sup> See "Adela Xenopol", in de Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary*, pp. 613-615.



disruptive potential of her work? Or can we understand these strategies as a form of negotiation with the structures of literary authority, where subversion does not necessarily require full independence, but rather operates from within systems of inherited privilege?

In order to better understand this phenomenon and to answer these questions within the Romanian context, I will further structure this article in two main sections. The first will examine the broader literary and socio-political landscape at the time of the publication of the first novel co-authored by a woman and a man, a moment which also marks the appearance of the first novel written by a woman in Romania. This section will explore the surrounding cultural context, including press coverage, contemporary newspaper articles, and women's literary activity in periodicals of the time. The second section (and last before the conclusions) will focus on the reception of a small corpus of novels written by women in collaboration with men, as well as the individual works authored by these same women, where relevant. This will allow for a comparative perspective on collaborative versus solo authorship by women, tracing developments up to the outbreak of the Great War.

#### *Contextualizing Romania's First Mixed-Gender Collaborative Novel*

First and foremost, I would like to examine the Romanian literary and socio-cultural landscape around the time of the publication of *Omul muntelui*. Beginning in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly from the 1850s onward, we witness the emergence of the first organized efforts toward women's empowerment in Romanian society. One of the earliest such initiatives was the founding of *The Romanian Women's Association for the Support of Raising Poorer Romanian Orphan Girls* in 1850, in Braşov, Transylvania<sup>28</sup>. This marked a significant step toward social engagement by and for women. Similar associations soon followed in other Transylvanian cities such as Sibiu, Blaj, Hunedoara, and Deva, signalling a growing awareness of women's roles in both education and public life.

However, the ideological groundwork for the emancipation of women had been laid even earlier in the Romanian Principalities. In 1837, the prominent writer and intellectual Ion Heliade Rădulescu founded a literary and scientific journal entitled *Curier de ambe sexe* [*Courier of Either Sex*]. His motivation for setting up this publication was rooted in the belief that public opinion needed to be cultivated and prepared to accept what he referred to as "advanced ideas of women's emancipation". Rădulescu emphasized this need by declaring: "Half of

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<sup>28</sup> Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc. Antologie de texte (1838–1929)* [*From the History of Romanian Feminism. An Anthology of Texts (1838–1929)*], Iași, Polirom, 2002, p. 23.

contemporary humanity is of the fair and distinct sex, and it too can claim in society the human rights pertaining to its nature"<sup>29</sup>.

This early advocacy for gender equality was echoed by other influential figures of the time, including the main actors of the 1848 generation, who strongly believed women's emancipation will imply "the achievement of the fundamental objectives of the bourgeois-democratic revolution: the elimination of feudal privileges, the end of foreign domination, and the realization of state unity"<sup>30</sup>. In 1853, politician and writer C.A. Rosetti addressed Romanian women directly in an open letter. He reminded them that political and social transformations, including revolutions and reforms, were not abstract phenomena but matters that concerned them intimately. He wrote:

There is no political or social matter, no change, no revolution [...] that does not directly concern you [the women, ed. note], your happiness, and your life. You can see that those who wish the Romanian nation to be one single body, just as it is one single soul, know very well that unity will not be complete and lasting if the family remains enslaved and mutilated, as ours is today. You can see that those who demand freedom and equality for all are also demanding your liberation and happiness. You can see that those who ask for laws to be made and upheld by all, without distinction, protecting everyone's rights without wronging anyone, are through this also asking for your liberation and your rights<sup>31</sup>.

It is fair to say that women had begun to enter spaces that were traditionally and predominantly male-dominated. However, it remains ambiguous whether some political figures genuinely supported these changes out of a sincere commitment to women's rights, or if their alignment with such progressive shifts was motivated more pragmatically, out of the realisation that appearing in step with global movements could secure them certain privileges and liberties as well. This tension invites a deeper theoretical reflection, which can be illuminated by Nirmal Puwar's influential work, *Space Invaders* (2004). Puwar interrogates what transpires when bodies that are traditionally marginalized or deemed "out of place" occupy positions of power or visibility within established institutions. She describes a dynamic reminiscent of a primordial response, where the presence of the "unexpected" or "strange" generates unease, disruption, or even a form of symbolic

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> C.A. Rosetti, *Prima epistolă către femeile claselor privilegiate* [*The First Letter to the Women of the Privileged Classes*], Paris, Tipografia E. Soye, 1853, apud Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului*, p. 13: "Nu este nici o chestie politică și socială, nici o schimbare, nici o revoluție [...] care să nu se atingă de-a-dreptul de tine [de femeie – n.n.], de fericirea și de viața ta. Vezi că cei ce voiesc ca nația română să fie un singur trup, precum este un singur suflet, știu foarte bine că unirea nu va fi deplină și temeinică dacă familia va fi robită și trunchiată, precum este astăzi a noastră. Vezi că cei ce cer libertatea și egalitatea pentru toți, cer dezrobirea și fericirea ta, [...] vezi că cei ce cer ca legile să fie făcute și păzite de toți, fără osebire, apărând dreptul fiecăruia fără a năpăstui pe nici unul, cer prin aceasta dezrobirea și drepturile tale".

terror. This framework helps us understand the complex social anxieties and resistances triggered by women entering (and sometimes challenging) male-dominated domains, as well as the ways institutions and individuals negotiate these shifts in power and identity:

Intrinsic to the dynamics involved in the amplification of numbers is the phenomenon of visibility, threat and terror. As bodies out of place or unexpected bodies, they are highly conspicuous. This is a visibility that comes from not being the norm. It is a process that is not all that different from the way in which racialized minorities are visible on the street, and especially in particular locations heavily demarcated as white places. Lest we think that what is involved here is simply a curiosity about newcomers, strangers or the unknown, coupled with the issue of numbers is the question of terror. The amplification occurs not only because they are unknown, but precisely because they are already “known” in ways which are seen to threaten the spurious claims on space for a coherent superior identity. There is a terror of numbers, a fear of being swamped<sup>32</sup>.

Publications such as *Femeia română* (1878–1881), a biweekly periodical under the supervision of Maria Flechtenmacher and *Revista noastră* [*Our Magazine*], guided by Constanța Hodoș, contributed significantly to the broader development of Romania’s first women’s organizations. These periodicals provided a platform for articulating early feminist concerns and for fostering a sense of collective identity among women involved in cultural and social reform. The first formal organization dedicated to women’s emancipation in Romania was founded in 1911 by Eugenia de Reuss Ianculescu. Closely tied to this emerging movement were some of the country’s earliest explicitly feminist publications, edited under the guidance of Adela Xenopol. These included *Dochia* (Iași, 1896–1898), *Românca* [*The Romanian Woman*] (Iași, 1905–1906), and *Viitorul românelor* [*The Future of Romanian Women*] (Bucharest, 1912–1914). Yet all of these initiatives came well after the first known contribution by a woman to the Romanian novel. When what is now considered the earliest Romanian novel written by a woman appeared, the cultural climate remained cautious and unreceptive to female authorship. This context may explain why neither author chose to publicly claim authorship at the time.

The authorship of *Omul muntelui* remained a matter of debate long after its publication in 1857–1858. As late as 1959, literary critic D. Păcuraru was still attempting to determine the true identity of the novel’s author. In his article, he notes that following 1855, new efforts in Romanian novel writing did not emerge until 1858, citing *Omul muntelui* as one of the few examples from that year:

A telling example in this regard is offered by the work on the beginnings of the Romanian novel by T. Virgolici, published a few years ago. The author discusses the

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<sup>32</sup> Nirmal Puwar (ed.), *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*, 2004, Oxford, Berg Publishers, p. 49.

novel, considered to be by a “certain Madam L.”, with exaggerated and entirely unjustified severity. “After 1855”, says T. Virgolici, “new attempts at the novel are made only in 1858. In this year, two works are published: *Radu Buzescu* by Ioan Dumitrescu and *The Man of the Mountain*, described as an original novel, by a certain Madam L... The ‘novel’ of Madam L., *The Man of the Mountain*, is, of course, nothing more than the result of a few bored hours of a sentimental woman, with no connection whatsoever to literature”<sup>33</sup>.

D. Păcuraru considers the harsh assessment of *Omul muntelui* to be unjustified, arguing that it reflects a superficial reading of the text. His defence of the novel stems primarily from his belief that the work was, in fact, authored by C.A. Rosetti, a prominent political figure of the time. “Our assertion”, Păcuraru writes, “is based on the fact that one of the fragments, published in *Romînul*, no. 8, January 28, 1848, under the subtitle *original romance by Madam L.*, is signed at the end by C.A. Rosetti”<sup>34</sup>.

Another piece of evidence supporting Rosetti’s authorship lies in the biographical connection: his wife, Maria Grant, of Anglo-French origin, had worked as a governess in the Odobescu household – a family closely connected to both Rosetti and Alexandru Odobescu. Notably, the plot of *Omul muntelui* revolves around a young woman of French descent who works as a governess in the home of a Moldavian noble family. Her life takes a dramatic turn when she falls in love with a political outcast, a character with clear parallels to Rosetti himself, an encounter that ultimately transforms her destiny.

It was only in 1961 that the authorship of the novel was finally clarified: Doamna L. [Madam L.] was indeed a woman writer, though not the sole author of the work:

Since the matter seemed thus fully clarified, you can imagine our surprise when we found out that Madam L. was, in fact... a woman! In the volume *Complete Works (Short Stories, Reflections, Feuilletons, Various Bibliographies)* by V.A. Urechia (Bucharest, 1883), there appears, among other things, under the title *Woman*, a series of reflections dedicated to “Miss M. Boucher” (*op. cit.*, p. 63 and following). In the final notes of the volume, V.A. Urechia evokes the late Marie Boucher as a “guide

<sup>33</sup> D. Păcuraru, “Un romancier necunoscut din veacul trecut” [“An Unknown Novelist from the Past Century”], *Viața Românească*, 12, 1959, 12, p. 142: “Un exemplu edificator în această privință ni-l oferă lucrarea despre începuturile romanului românesc a lui T. Virgolici apărută acum câțiva ani. Autorul discută romanul, considerat al unei ‘oarecare Doamnă L’ cu o severitate exagerată, întru nimic justificată. ‘După 1855’ – spune T. Virgolici – ‘noi încercări de roman se fac abia în 1858. În acest an se publică două lucrări: *Radu Buzescu* de Ioan Dumitrescu și *Omul muntelui* denumit *romans original*, de o oarecare Doamnă L... ‘Romanul’ Doamnei L., *Omul muntelui*, nu este, desigur, decât rezultatul unor ore de plictiseală ale unei femei sentimentale, fără nici o contingență cu literatură”.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*: “Afirmația noastră pornește de la faptul că unul din fragmente, publicat în nr. 8 din 28. I. 1858 al *Romînului*, purtînd în subtitlu *romantz original de Doamna L.*, este semnat la sfîrșit C.A. Rosetti”.

[...] on the literary path”, a “friend and adviser”. “Miss Boucher”, V.A. Urechia further states, “was, I might say, a co-author with me”<sup>35</sup>.

The same two writers also collaborated under a different pseudonym, Maria Movilă, producing additional works such as *Lupu* (1870) and *Cei șapte munți* [*The Seven Mountains*] (1881). Unfortunately, there is very little information available about Marie Boucher’s life, making it difficult to reconstruct her biography. The few known facts come from the same 1961 article by Șt. Cazimir, and even these are filtered through the recollections of her collaborator, V.A. Urechia, whom she met in 1850 while they were both teaching at the same institution. Although it cannot be stated with certainty, there is no indication that their relationship extended beyond literary collaboration. Urechia describes her as a 20-year-old woman, neither particularly attractive nor unattractive, raised in a French monastery, and intellectually gifted, comparing her talents to those of George Sand. Motivated by a desire to learn Romanian, she became Urechia’s student. Studies show, however, that his contribution to this novel was limited:

A number of elements in the novel lead us to believe that V.A. Urechia’s contribution to its composition was quite limited. The notably poor depiction of peasant life stands in stark contrast to his earlier novel *Coliba Măriucăi* [*Măriuca’s Hut*] from 1855, in which, particularly in the chapter titled “Claca”, Urechia demonstrated that he was the most perceptive observer of rural life among the prose writers of the time, capable of capturing with great authenticity the psychology, gestures, and speech of the peasantry. In *Omul muntelui*, the frequent use of terms such as *român*, *româncă*, and *compatriot* suggests the perspective of a foreign author. The text also contains numerous parenthetical glosses, such as *domniță* (*demoiselle*), *deplinitate* (*perfection*), *scârpoase* (*escarpées*), *recugetat* (*recueilli*), *singuratic* (*isolé*), *viclenii* (*ruses*), and others. These suggest that the novel may have originally been written in French, with the Romanian version including the original French expressions in parentheses wherever the Romanian equivalent was inadequate or appeared unsatisfactory<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Șt. Cazimir, “Misterul Doamnei L.” [“Madam L.’s Mistery”], *Viața Românească*, 14, 1961, 11, p. 170: “Lucrurile părănd astfel pe deplin elucidate, se înțelege surpriza noastră atunci când am aflat că doamna L. a fost totuși... o femeie! În volumul *Opere complete* (Novele, cugetări, foiletoane, bibliografii varia) de V.A. Urechia (Buc., 1883), figurează între altele, sub titlul ‘Femeia’, o serie de cugetări dedicate ‘d-rei M. Boucher’ (op. cit., p. 63 și urm.). În notele finale ale volumului, V.A. Urechia o evocă pe defuncta Marie Boucher, ca o ‘călăuză [...] în calea literară’, ‘amică și sfătuitoare’. ‘D-ra Boucher – arată în continuare V.A. Urechia – a fost scris în colaborare, pot zice, cu mine’”.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 171: “O serie de aspecte ale romanului ne fac să susținem că participarea lui V.A. Urechia la alcătuirea lui a fost foarte limitată. Prezentarea cu totul deficitară a vieții țăranilor contrastează cu romanul *Coliba Măriucăi* din 1855, prin care (mai ales în capitolul “Claca”) V.A. Urechia se dovedise, între prozatorii epocii, cel mai bun observator al satului, capabil să surprindă cu mult adevăr psihologia, gesturile și vorbirea țărănească. Prezența frecventă în *Omul muntelui* a unor termeni ca *român*, *româncă*, *compatriot*, atestă perspectiva autoarei străine. Apar de asemenea numeroase paranteze – glose: *domniță* (*demoiselle*), *deplinitate* (*perfection*), *scârpoase* (*escarpées*), *recugetat* (*recueilli*), *singuratic* (*isolé*), *viclenii* (*ruses*) etc. Ele ne fac să bănuim o redactare inițială

Thus, it appears that V.A. Urechia enjoyed a relatively prolific literary and scholarly career<sup>37</sup>. Among his most important works are *Istoria românilor* [*The History of Romanians*] and the four-volume *Istoria școalelor de la 1800–1864* [*The History of the Schools between 1800 and 1864*] (1892–1901), which was awarded the Romanian Academy Prize. In addition to his work as a historian, Urechia played a prominent role in the Romanian press. He served as director of several periodicals, including *Adunarea națională* [*The National Assembly*] (1869) and *Informațiunile bucureștene* [*The Information from Bucharest*], and was an editor at publications such as *Revista contemporană* [*The Contemporary Magazine*], *Revista literară și științifică* [*The Literary and Scientific Magazine*], and *Pagini literare* [*Literary Pages*]. His writing also appeared in numerous other journals and newspapers, including *Literatorul* [*The Literator*], *Revista literară* [*The Literary Magazine*], *Convorbiri literare* [*Literary Talks*], *Revista nouă* [*The New Magazine*], *Vieața* [*Life*], *Universul* [*The Universe*], *Universul literar* [*The Literary Universe*], *Apărarea națională* [*The National Defence*], and *Secolul XX* [*Twentieth Century*], among others.<sup>38</sup>

By contrast, Marie Boucher, his collaborator on several novels (either under Doamna L., like the novel mentioned before, or under Maria Movilă) published only in conjunction with his name and did not pursue a separate literary career. She lacked access to the public platforms and intellectual networks that supported male writers of the period. Coming from a poor family, she did not benefit from the structural advantages that enabled other women to engage in literary and feminist activity. As I have shown earlier, the early movement for women's emancipation in Romania was largely driven by women from educated, bourgeois families who had access to formal schooling, cultural capital, and social influence. As Moroșan aptly notices in the article quoted before:

Writing is either an act of acceptance of the father's heritage, or it is regulated by the male relatives, mainly partners, and, as such, the access to writing and women's writing tradition remain mainly a bourgeois and urban calling [...]. As a consequence, the plots of many women's literary works are largely inspired by the bourgeois, middle-class or upper middle-class lifestyle. The initial insertion of women as literary agents through a preponderantly masculine vision predicts right from the beginning a statutory predicament that will continuously affect women's literary careers. As an effect, the institutionalisation of masculine domination and women's exclusion from

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franceză, din care traducerea a consemnat în paranteză expresia originală de cite ori echivalentul românesc era sau părea nesatisfăcător”.

<sup>37</sup> For an analysis of V.A. Urechia's individual literary contributions, including his novel *Coliba Măriucăi*, inspired by Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, see Maria Chiorean, “Emotional Excess and Racialisation in the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Romanian Novel”, *Dacoromania litteraria*, 2025, 12, pp. 98-120.

<sup>38</sup> Gabriela Drăgoi, “Urechia, V.A.”, in Eugen Simion (ed.) *Dicționarul general al literaturii române* [General Dictionary of Romanian Literature], second revised and extended edition, vol. 8, București, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2021, pp. 486-489.

the hierarchical structure of the field becomes immanent and foretells a challenging struggle for women as it regards the acquisition of literary legitimacy<sup>39</sup>.

In this context, Marie Boucher's limited presence in the literary field reflects the broader exclusion of working-class and impoverished women from the early stages of feminist and intellectual history in Romania.

### *Women's Literary Voices in Collaboration and Alone*

The other collaborative novel I would like to highlight has received even less attention and remains largely obscure in literary histories. Although at first glance it appears similar to other joint writing efforts of the time, this case is markedly different. Olimpia Teodoru, who also wrote under the pseudonym Olteo, was both a writer and a schoolteacher. Very little biographical information is available about her, aside from her decades-long career in education and her contributions to children's literature. A 1939 article in *Universul*, titled "Romanele d-nei Olimpia Teodoru-Olteo" ["Mrs. Olimpia Teodoru-Olteo's Novels"], notes that she initially gained recognition for her patriotic poetry, later turning to prose fiction. Among her most notable works are *Iubire fatală* [*Deadly Love*] and *Un proces pierdut* [*A Lost Trial*], the latter written in collaboration with her brother, V. Teodoru-Doru. The dedication to their parents on the opening page of the novel suggests that this literary project was more of a sentimental family undertaking than a professional or commercial venture – especially since neither sibling went on to establish themselves as prominent literary figures. Unlike the other authors previously discussed, V. Teodoru-Doru was not well received by contemporary critics. In fact, one review regarding his novel *Vlahula* (1925) was particularly harsh:

Why was Mr. V. T. unable to develop a novel? Because he lacks imagination, because he does not have the gift of seeing into souls and naturally expressing what they feel, because he is not a poet, because even the dictionary of his own language does not assist him... (Etc.!)<sup>40</sup>.

This biting critique reflects not only the literary standards of the time but also the challenges faced by amateur or semi-professional writers who attempted to enter a field dominated by more institutionally supported voices. The literary collaboration between the Teodoru siblings, though modest and largely overlooked by critics, can serve as a poignant example of personal investment in literary expression outside the mainstream canon. In contrast, Western literary partnerships have often followed a seemingly different trajectory. As Zoë Thomas highlights in her article

<sup>39</sup> Moroșan, *Romanian Women Writers*, p. 108.

<sup>40</sup> G. Bogdan-Duică, "V. Teodoru (Doru), *Vlahula*", *Națiunea*, 1, 1927, 181, p. 2: "Pentru ce dl V. T. nu a putut desvolta un roman? Pentru că i lipsește fantasia, pentru că nu are darul de-a vedea în suflete și de-a exprima firește ce ele simt, pentru că nu este poet, pentru că și dicționarul limbei sale nu-l ajută... (Etc.!)".

on married authorial partnerships, such collaborations frequently involved couples who jointly carved out enviable new positions within the literary field. Thomas argues that these partnerships should be recognized as a growing socio-cultural phenomenon of the era, rather than viewing women's professional paths solely through the lens of marital status<sup>41</sup>. This framework, however, does not necessarily apply to the Teodoru siblings, nor does it accurately reflect the nature of most collaborative novels produced in prewar Romania. The fact that Olimpia Teodoru went on to write two additional novels, forming a trilogy with *Un proces pierdut* under the title *Cununa tinereții* [*The Garland of Youth*], suggests that her partnership with her brother was primarily sentimental. Her literary career appears to have developed independently and did not rely on his involvement. Her career, however, was never as promising as that of the women writers discussed in the first half of this paper, yet her name was not as obscure as that of Marie Boucher, Romania's first woman novelist, whose existence was practically hidden for a little over a century.

Before drawing any firm conclusions, it is worth revisiting briefly *Dito & Idem*, the only known case of women's collaborative authorship in the Romanian prewar literary context. This situation mirrors developments in the West, where such examples were also rare. As Lorraine York notes, "before the last few years, women's collaborative authorship has been as 'vast' an unlit 'chamber' as Virginia Woolf imagined for her Chloe and Olivia"<sup>42</sup>. Carmen Sylva and Mite Kremnitz shared a long and prolific literary partnership, co-authoring several volumes, many of which remain untranslated and unpublished in Romanian. Importantly, both women also cultivated independent literary careers. Their collaboration was marked by a unique creative bond, yet it was undoubtedly facilitated by their social privilege: Carmen Sylva was of royal blood, and Mite Kremnitz, married to the royal family's physician, entered that elite circle through marriage. Their proximity to power and cultural capital played a central role in enabling both their individual visibility and their sustained literary partnership<sup>43</sup>. While both authors appeared to have prolific literary careers, there is little substantive commentary on the reception of this novel at the time of its publication, aside from the single observation mentioned earlier<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, "Marriage, Collaboration", pp. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> York, *Rethinking*, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> See "Informațiuni" ["News"], *Ziua*, 1916, 696, p. 2: "Moartea dnei Mite Kremnite – Miercuri a încetat din viață, după o lungă suferință, la Wilmersdorf lângă Berlin, cunoscuta scriitoare Mite Kremniz, fiica ilustrului chirurg profesor de Bardeleben, măritată la 1875 cu dr. Wilhelm Kremnitz, medicul familiei regale române" ("The Death of Mrs. Mite Kremnitz – On Wednesday, after a long illness, the well-known writer Mite Kremnitz passed away in Wilmersdorf near Berlin. She was the daughter of the distinguished surgeon Professor von Bardeleben, having married Dr. Wilhelm Kremnitz in 1875, who had served as the physician to the Romanian royal family").

<sup>44</sup> See Năstase, "Luceafărul uitat".



### Conclusion

As Heather Bozant Witcher notes in *Collaborative Writing in the Long Nineteenth Century*, her work aims to offer “a fresh framework for viewing art and personal expression with an eye toward community building and solidarity”<sup>45</sup>. This article takes inspiration from that goal but also turns a critical eye toward the subversive dimensions of cross-gender literary collaborations. Specifically, it asks whether male–female co-authorships might have masked an unequal power dynamics or concealed strategic motivations, particularly on the part of male collaborators. Witcher offers a broad definition of collaboration that includes not only co-authorship but also companionship, mutual inspiration, and shared intellectual space<sup>46</sup>. This capacious understanding allows for a re-examination of how gendered collaboration operates beneath the surface of literary production. This concern resonates with Lorraine York’s observation that

once collaboration became the object of greater scrutiny in the early 1990s, the male–female collaborative relationship tended to attract most attention, particularly those cases where a man received credit for what was, in actuality, a joint production and a silencing of women’s creative labour<sup>47</sup>.

With this in mind, the article also seeks to uncover how such dynamics might have played out in Romanian literary history, where collaborative practices often went unexamined and where the female contributor’s role was easily overshadowed or erased. I observed a notable rise in women’s organizations beginning as early as the 1850s, accompanied by the emergence of journals dedicated to women’s writing and a nascent form of feminist activism, exemplified by the publication of *Femeia română* in 1878. These spaces were not isolated but were actively shaped by influential cultural figures of the period, including Sofia and Ion Nădejde, Panait Mușoiu, Constantin Mille, Paul Scorțeanu, Adela Xenopol, and C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, among others. At the same time, as previously noted, novel writing in Romania experienced a period of decline around the 1850s, although the early prewar novel is marked by this urge to try to rebuild, in the space of half a century, “many of the novelistic trends of continental modernity”<sup>48</sup>. This historical moment may help explain why the collaborative work of V.A. Urechia and Marie Boucher failed to gain significant attention, perhaps a result of unfortunate timing, or perhaps due to the unconventional choice of pseudonyms. Notably, both of the names used to sign their joint work were feminine (Doamna L. – Madam L. – and

<sup>45</sup> Witcher, *Collaborative Writing*, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> See chapter “(Re) Defining Collaboration”, in Witcher, *Collaborative Writing*.

<sup>47</sup> York, *Rethinking*, p. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Ștefan Baghiu, “Patimile și banii” [“Passions and Money”], in Sofia Nădejde, *Patimi* [Passions], second edition, București, Publisol, 2021, 12. See also Anca-Simina Martin, Ștefan Baghiu, “Writing the Life of Servants in Early Romanian Feminist Novels”, *Dacoromania litteraria*, 2023, 10, pp. 103-125.

Maria Movilă), a decision that raises questions about authorial identity, reception, and the strategic use of gender in public literary discourse.

My focus here was specifically on collaborative writing in the form of the novel, understood as a concrete, published object, in order to examine whether women writers in Romania relied on this kind of platform to enter the literary field. As it turns out, they did not necessarily require collaboration with male writers. Rather, as Ioana Moroșan also points out in her article, what many women needed was not the act of writing alongside a man, but the presence of a man willing to offer them a platform. This access often came through family lineage, marriage, or broader social connections. Such dynamics are particularly visible in the trajectories of prewar female publicists, essayists, and established literary figures like Sofia Nădejde, Adela Xenopol, and Elena Bacaloglu. These women did not always collaborate with male authors, yet their professional visibility was frequently mediated by male authority or approval. To return to the perspective offered by Zoë Thomas:

The elevated reputation of these couples relied on being viewed as more unusual than they actually were. Couples, and the press, constructed the idea they were exceptional in their intellectual partnerships, which enabled their “modern” collaborative working lives to be tolerated and even extolled. As part of this, such couples contributed to the formalization of a pervasive professional, creative culture where marital status played a significant role in accruing and maintaining social status, for instance through positioning the prestigious “married literary home” as a central node for network building and socialization<sup>49</sup>.

For some women writers, however, collaborative work may have functioned as a strategy for surviving the broader erasure that women were experiencing in the literary field during that period. This possibility is suggested by the choice of female pseudonyms in the collaborative works of Marie Boucher and V.A. Urechia, which may reflect an effort to foreground a feminine authorial identity despite the constraints of their time.

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<sup>49</sup> Thomas, “Marriage, Collaboration”, p. 24.

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## HARDLY A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN. GENDER AND COLLABORATIVE WRITING IN THE PREWAR ROMANIAN NOVEL (Abstract)

This paper examines the early contributions of Romania's first women novelists, who frequently collaborated with male writers in their literary endeavours. Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women were almost entirely excluded from public discourse, facing significant barriers to participation in both literary and broader intellectual domains. It was not until the latter half of the century that women began to gain limited representation, often facilitated by their connections to prominent men, either as daughters or wives, or through intellectual exchanges with male contemporaries. Figures such as Sofia Nădejde, Adela Xenopol, and Constanța Dunca-Șchiau exemplify this dynamic, reflecting the way familial or social ties often provided the initial platform for their literary presence (Baghiu 2021; Moroșan 2022). The gradual incorporation of social and political themes into female-authored novels during the pre-war period, where mostly sentimental novels were emerging, parallels the broader sociopolitical instability and the systemic under-representation of women (Cohen 1999). This tentative engagement with social and political narratives may also reflect the fear of public ostracism and severe criticism, which likely compelled many women to collaborate with male authors as a strategic approach to gain credibility and avoid marginalization (Gărdan 2018). Working around the novels of V.A. Urechia and Marie Boucher, as well as the writer duo Olteo (Olimpia Teodoru) and Doru Teodoru, this paper aims to investigate the driving forces behind these collaborations and the

broadier implications for women's representation in Romanian literature during this period. Alternatively, this paper seeks to explore whether women novelists who lacked connections to prominent male literary figures had any realistic prospects of gaining recognition or achieving success in the pre-war Romanian literary scene. By delving into the socio-cultural and literary dynamics of the era, the article examines the extent to which independence from male networks or patronage influenced the visibility and reception of female-authored works during this formative period in Romanian literature.

*Keywords:* collaborative writing, prewar Romanian novel, feminist literature, sentimental novel, Romanian women novelists.

## NICI MĂCAR O CAMERĂ DOAR A EI. GENUL ȘI SCRITURA COLABORATIVĂ ÎN ROMANUL ROMÂNESC INTERBELIC

(Rezumat)

Acest studiu analizează contribuțiile timpurii ale primelor romaniere din România, care au colaborat frecvent cu autori bărbați în demersurile lor literare. Până în secolul al XIX-lea, femeile au fost aproape complet excluse din discursul public, confruntându-se cu bariere semnificative în ceea ce privește participarea atât în domeniul literar, cât și în cel intelectual, în sens larg. Abia în a doua jumătate a secolului femeile au început să obțină o reprezentare limitată, adesea facilitată de legăturile lor cu bărbați influenți, fie în calitate de fiice sau soții, fie prin schimburi intelectuale cu contemporani de sex masculin. Figuri precum Sofia Nădejde, Adela Xenopol și Constanța Dunca-Șchiau ilustrează această dinamică, reflectând modul în care relațiile familiale sau sociale au constituit, de multe ori, prima platformă pentru afirmarea lor literară (Baghiu 2021; Moroșan 2022). Integrarea treptată a temelor sociale și politice în romanele scrise de femei în perioada premergătoare Primului Război Mondial, într-un context dominat de apariția romanelor preponderent sentimentale, este paralelă cu instabilitatea sociopolitică generală și cu subreprezentarea sistemică a femeilor (Cohen 1999). Această abordare timidă a narațiunilor sociale și politice poate reflecta, de asemenea, teama de ostracizare publică și de critici severe, care le-a determinat probabil pe multe scriitoare să colaboreze cu autori bărbați ca strategie de obținere a credibilității și de evitare a marginalizării (Gârdan 2018). Plecând de la romanele lui V.A. Urechia și Marie Boucher, precum și de la cuplul de scriitori Olteo (Olimpia Teodoru) și Doru Teodoru, acest articol își propune să investigheze forțele care au stat la baza acestor colaborări și implicațiile mai largi asupra reprezentării femeilor în literatura română a perioadei. În același timp, studiul urmărește să exploreze dacă romanierele lipsite de conexiuni cu figuri masculine proeminente din câmpul literar aveau șanse reale de a obține recunoaștere sau de a cunoaște succesul în scena literară românească antebelică. Prin analiza dinamicilor socioculturale și literare ale epocii, articolul examinează în ce măsură independența față de rețelele sau patronajul masculin a influențat vizibilitatea și receptarea operelor scrise de femei în această perioadă de formare a literaturii române moderne.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* scrisul colaborativ, roman românesc antebelic, literatură feministă, roman sentimental, romaniere române.