

## IN MADAME'S CARE. FOREIGN GOVERNESSES IN ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: DIPLOMATIC AND CULTURAL APPROACHES

MARINA ÎNGUSTU\*

**Abstract.** The aim of this article is to place in a wider political and diplomatic perspective an evolution that the private education system was undergoing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the Romanian Principalities: the employment of foreign governesses. Drawing on primary sources such as consular documents, contracts of the governesses, a travel account, memoirs, correspondences and news from the era, this research aims to depict the governesses as actors who, by establishing the *pensionnats*, by drafting several study programs for girls and carrying out diplomatic efforts in favour of their educational institution from the local space, made a significant contribution both in the dissemination of a Western cultural model – especially the French one – and in the modernization of the Romanian educational system for girls. Concerning foreign women, this research also sheds light on aspects related to stereotypes, alterity and class identity, all placed in the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalism, which redraws the mental and cultural maps.

**Keywords.** *Governesses; Private Education; Diplomacy; Cultural Influence, Class Identity; Girls' Education*

### *On their Way to the Romanian Principalities: Diplomacy Opportunities, Expectations and Stereotypes*

In the Romanian Principalities, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, girls were still excluded from the existing educational institutions, as society considered that the ideal life course projected for them did not make it necessary to learn the theoretical knowledge taught in schools, knowledge being considered redundant for the female existence. Girls would follow their maternal vocation, not a future public life, the future household being the environment in which the little ones had to evolve. And the skills for taking care of a household – cleaning, cooking, crafting and other tasks, to which, moreover, they were accustomed from a

---

\* PhD student at Doctoral School in Letters (Literary Studies), Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, Romania; email: marina.ingustu@yahoo.com, marina.ingustu@s.unibuc.ro.

young age –, but also a minimal catechism from which the girls would understand the repercussions of deviating from the Christian morality, all these were acquirable from the women of their own kin, or, as in the case of the wealthy families, from nurses. But social expectations were different for the girls of the high society, girls who were supposed to also master a culture of refinement that should reflect their noble status, a culture that made essential another type of female guidance. The solution came from the West, where, as far as the seventeenth century, educated women, namely, governesses, were employed to instruct the girls of the French Royal Court.<sup>1</sup> This fashion of hiring a governess was rapidly embraced in the European space: if it debuted in seventeenth century France, at the end of the eighteenth century we can already find governesses working for the Russian noble families. In many instances, they were educated women from the French nobility, who arrived in the Russian Empire as refugees of the French Revolution. And, to subsist, they were constrained to teach their knowledge to the daughters of the Russian aristocrats.<sup>2</sup>

The change in the political context brought governesses to the Romanian space as well. At the end of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, concluded with the victory of the Russian Empire ruled by Empress Catherine the Great, in July 1774, the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardji was signed. According to these new peace conditions, Russia gained access to the Black Sea and gained the right to freely undertake commercial exchanges on the seas controlled by the Ottomans.<sup>3</sup> The diplomatic configuration of the Balkan space also underwent some changes that ranged from administrative details to regulations that marked the degeneration of the *Eastern question* and the anticipation of a new *balance of power*: the independence of the Crimean Khanate was recognized<sup>4</sup>, the status of Russian ambassadors was established in Istanbul, and various aspects of the protection of the diplomatic corps (called *dragomani*) were reevaluated. Russia gained the freedom to establish consulates in the Ottoman territory, acquired the right to be a protector of the Orthodox living in these territories and to intercede at the Sublime Porte in favor of the Romanian Principalities.<sup>5</sup> Therewith, Phanariot rulers from Wallachia and Moldavia gained the right to have a diplomatic agent in Istanbul, agent called *capucheia*, who was also a Phanariot.

All these developments turned the end of the eighteenth century into the debut of a period in which the commercial relations between the Romanian Principalities and the West increased, an occasion for the Great Powers to allow the state actors with economic interests to establish consulates on the Romanian territories. Starting in 1781, Russian, Austrian, French and British consulates were founded and a new category of residents, called *sudiți*, was created. They were foreigners who enjoyed the protection of the consulates and who had several

<sup>1</sup> Nicoleta Roman, "Educating the Other: Foreign Governesses in Wallachia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", in *Aspasia*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 2020, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Tertecel, "Tratatul de Pace Ruso-Otoman de la Küçük Kaynarca (1774)", in *Revista Română de Studii Eurasiatice*, Year I, No. 1, Constanța, 2005, p. 173.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 187.

privileges: their domicile was inviolable, they were allowed to undertake retail commerce activities, they could be land owners and their cases in court were judged in the presence of the consul.<sup>6</sup> As stated by Keith Hitchins, even if *sudiții* contributed to the economic development of the local space, symbolically, they were the embodiment of the Great Powers' influence in the Principalities.<sup>7</sup>

In this new diplomatic context, among the foreign staff attached to the consulates, we could often find governesses as well.<sup>8</sup> The women were to teach either in the *pensionnats* established under the patronage of the consuls<sup>9</sup> and dedicated to foreign minorities, or, on recommendations, they ended up employed by the wealthiest families of the Romanian elites.<sup>10</sup> Here, governesses had to teach the boyars' daughters foreign languages, a basic knowledge in humanities, they had to accustom their pupils with a set of Western norms and, first of all, with a code of conduct indispensable for girls from high society, a society that had just began to look towards the Western cultural models: having good manners, mastering the art of polite conversation or social dancing and playing an instrument – especially the piano – all these constituted the main set of etiquette and, also, the main mechanisms of socialization that must have been taught by governesses.<sup>11</sup> And, even if all these prescriptions and behavioural skills were integrated in an informal sort of feminine education, their role was to consolidate the identity of the elite class as well.<sup>12</sup> Inspired by the *social graces* or *the accomplishments* taught in the British schools for girls<sup>13</sup>, painting, music and a good command of good manners were leisure and agreement arts, meant to easily introduce the girls in the polite society. As a consequence of a different and tardive pace of development of the private education for girls and as a result of different social and cultural dynamics, but also of a previous pre-eminence of Greek pedagogues – and those employed to educate male princely offspring –, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Romanian space couldn't create such a category of female personnel in the Romanian professional spectrum. Therefore, governesses were exclusively allogeneic people, results of some Western societies in which girls of modest social status, but with a good reputation in the community and in possession of some elementary knowledge, were recommended as instructresses.<sup>14</sup>

The foreign governess arrived from the West was invested with a stereotypical personality profile, that could have influenced her selection process in the service of boyars: if a *Mademoiselle* from France (whom we find called *Madama* in

<sup>6</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Românii. 1774-1866*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, translation by George Potra, Delia Razdolescu, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, pp. 91-92.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 93.

<sup>8</sup> Nicoleta Roman, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, "Deznădăduită muiere n-au fost ca mine". *Femei, onoare și păcat în Valahia secolului al XIX-lea*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, "Educating the Other: ...", *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> For the importance of musical culture for boyars' sons see, also Dan Dumitru Iacob, *Elitele din Principatele Române în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Sociabilitate și divertisment*, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press, Iași, 2015, p. 251.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 252.

<sup>14</sup> Nicoleta Roman, "Deznădăduită muiere n-au fost ca mine" ..., *op. cit.*, p. 212.

Romanian, a term sometimes extrapolated to any type of governess) was perceived as a tolerant and genteel woman, a *Fräulein* from the German space or a polite *miss* from the British space – already a protagonist in the novels of Victorian classics – were the choices of the parents that wanted a more rigid model of education for their daughters.<sup>15</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was the century of nationalism, an occasion to redraw the imagological maps and to reconceptualise the alterity. As foreigners arrived in a province of the Ottoman Empire, governesses came to the Romanian Principalities accompanied by their own expectations and even preconceptions. Their way of thinking was as well influenced by the reasons that drove them in this process of professional mobility, most governesses coming here either as refugees that fled an unstable political context – as in the case of French governesses –, either as employees, acquaintances or relatives of the diplomatic corps, or as women with a modest social status, for whom migration to Romanian space represented an economic opportunity: if, in the West, the labour market began to be oversaturated by this type of female worker who already had a professional recognition, the urban areas of the Romanian Principalities offered a new labour market, worth exploring.

According to Nicoleta Roman, governesses “generally did not have a colonizer’s agenda”<sup>16</sup>, but, as in the case of many foreign travellers that crossed these places<sup>17</sup>, women could have been influenced by the superior look – at that time, conventional – of the civilized Westerner who arrived in a peripheral world and was a promoter of cultural refinement, charged with a civilizing role.<sup>18</sup> Or, as we may find in some travel accounts, this underdeveloped world was idealized and perceived as an exotic space. This is the latter case of Maude Rea Parkinson, an Irish woman, who worked as a foreign languages’ teacher and as a governess in the house of Take Ionescu, future Prime Minister of Greater Romania. At her departure, the Irishwoman struggled with the stereotypical thinking both of her compatriots, who wondered “«Why, you must be quite mad to think of going so far away to a country of which nobody knows anything at all»”<sup>19</sup>, and of the London agencies, which did not even consider Romania a place in Europe.<sup>20</sup> She confessed that “I will frankly admit that the glamour of the Arabian Nights was all over my thoughts and ideas about Romania”<sup>21</sup> and, motivated by this image, but also by some pecuniary interests, she arrived in the Kingdom of Romania, in 1889.

The cultural interaction that this type of private education involved generated, on both sides, some preconceptions, either reluctances or ambitions that, sometimes,

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*, “Educating the Other...”, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Lidia Trăușan-Matu, “The Doctor and The Midwife. A Study of Two Medical Professions in The Romanian Society of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (1831-1874)”, in Constantin Bărbulescu, Alin Ciupală (eds.), *Medicine, Hygiene and Society from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, p. 84.

<sup>19</sup> Maude Parkinson, *Twenty Years in Romania*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1921, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

were not to materialize. However, it is certain that the boyar families from the Romanian land, families who resorted to the services of a governess, still represented a progressive minority, receptive to the Western model of female education, even if their primary purpose remains the consolidation of class identity. If, in a traditional world, a young girl was educated according to religious morals, now her instruction ends up in the hands of a foreign woman who, in many cases, is a promoter of a moral education, not a confessional one. At the same time, and a relevant fact for a still pre-modern culture, the traditional world didn't value women who didn't accomplish their maternal vocation. If not justified by the choice of a monastic life, celibacy and the lack of children turned these women into a threat for the moral order of the community.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, we see how the families from high society began to consent to host and leave in the proximity of their girls such young governesses, women with different values – not only cultural, but also religious ones. When employing such “exotic” women, it was better for the boyars looking for governesses to turn to the recommendations or acquaintances of other members of the elites. For instance, in a correspondence from September 1822, Nicolae Brăiloiu, a boyar from Craiova city, asks Păunica Pop to search for a governess for his daughter: according to Nicolae's request, the desirable employee should “know French and German well, both language and writing. And, if it cannot be found to know both languages, to know at least German; but she should be a mature and honest woman, to give good education to the young girl”<sup>23</sup>.

Informal networks and recommendations had a voice in Mary Grant's famous case, as well. She was born in Guernsey – controlled by the British crown – in 1819, as the daughter of Captain Edward Effingham Grant. In the 1840s, following her brother, the consul of Great Britain in Bucharest, Mary Grant arrived in Wallachia, where, as result of a recommendation, she was chosen as the governess for the children of Colonel Ion Odobescu.<sup>24</sup> It is in his social circle that she met the revolutionary C. A. Rossetti, her future husband. She supported the revolutionary causes of 1848, and, in addition to her political activism, in 1865 she became the founder of the first Romanian magazine dedicated to children, named *Mother and child – Mama și copilul*<sup>25</sup> – a marginal publication, with a very short destiny, of not even a year, but which brought to attention both children as a new category of readers and the press as a tool with educational potential.

Considering that the governess was “not really a servant, but also not really a lady”<sup>26</sup>, she could have an *undefined*<sup>27</sup> and, thus, uncomfortable status in a household. Instead she had an educational authority. The way that the

<sup>22</sup> Nicoleta Roman, “Deznădăjduită muiere n-au fost ca mine” ..., *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>23</sup> Nicolae Iorga, “Contribuții la istoria învățământului în țară și în străinătate (1780-1830)”, June 1906, in *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secției Literare*, Tome XXIV, 1906, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Nicoleta Roman, “Educating the Other...”, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, “Pentru o istorie a copilăriei românești”, in Nicoleta Roman (coord.), *Copilăria românească între familie și societate (secolele XVII-XX)*, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015, pp. 16-17.

<sup>26</sup> Carolina de Mello Guimaraes, “The Figure of the Governess in Victorian Gothic: A Symbol for Class and Gender Tensions in Victorian Society”, in *Curitiba*, Vol. 7, No. 13, July 2019, p. 151.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

governesses were treated, their relationship with their pupils and other affective data of their activity often remain in the shadows of private life. About their service we may have brief mentions in the memoirs of the elites or mentions in the institutional documents, but documents that are more stiff, formal and by nature full of material considerations. It is plausible, however, that the governess was not a simple employee of the residence, considering that her role wasn't a minor one in the dynamic of the house and wasn't limited to educational duties. This can be inferred from the contract signed on 2 July 1813, in Iași, between Madame de Belleville and Scarlat Callimah, ruler of Moldavia and father of three girls: Ralu, Eufrosina and Maria. According to the document, the French governess was supposed to live in the princely house, in the room placed next to the pupils' bedroom. She was supposed to oversee the moral of her pupils, so that the ruler invested the governess with parental authority – "elle exercera sur ces élèves l'autorité paternelle"<sup>28</sup>. Madame de Belleville was to provide a holistic education, both moral and theoretical: etiquette, *bon ton*, history and mythology, epistolary writing, geography, grammar and French; and 250 Dutch guilders was the annual remuneration for her work. Artistic education was the responsibility of other teachers, who, according to the contract, also had to be recommended by the governess, who thus became a person placed in the upper levels of the hierarchy of house employees.<sup>29</sup> Living in the family she served, she was a permanent presence in the life of her pupils: for instance, in his memoirs, a Russophile boyar from Wallachia, Colonel Lăcusteanu, mentions how German governesses hired to teach his daughters, Mița and Lina "haven't missed a day in our house in thirty years and that continues today."<sup>30</sup>

*On their Way to Little Paris: Governesses, Consular Discourses  
and the Dissemination of French Culture*

The work of foreign governesses wasn't lacking regulations; it wasn't a type of informal work. A certificate issued by the government authorities was necessary<sup>31</sup>, and their activity was subject to the observation of foreign authorities. So, their work was accompanied by a whole bureaucracy, from contracts and various types of written agreements to receipts attesting every salary or benefit. For instance, a receipt from 1816, from Moldavia, certifies that Prince Alexandru Mavrocordat has paid all the money and benefits stipulated in the contract of Ms. Caumont, the French governess employed for the ruler's children.<sup>32</sup> A significant fact is that the receipt's text mentions that a copy of the contract is also in the possession of M. Forneti<sup>33</sup>, the French consul in the Principality of Moldavia, an evidence of

<sup>28</sup> Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor (1763-1844)*, vol. X, *Rapoarte consulare prusiene din Iași și București*, I. V. Socescu Graphic Establishment, Bucharest, 1897, p. 555.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> *Amintirile colonelului Lăcusteanu. Text integral, stabilit după manuscris*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2015, p. 71.

<sup>31</sup> Nicoleta Roman, "Educating the Other...", *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *op. cit.*, p. 558.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.



an activity that acknowledges the interference of foreign authorities. In general, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the involvement of foreign consuls in issues related to private education was not only limited to controlling the governesses' activity, but also knew explicit forms and constituted an instrument for increasing foreign cultural influence in the Principalities. The intention was noticeable in the case of the French consuls, representatives of a Great Power.

In Bucharest, in 1823, the French consul Hugot came into conflict with the ruler and Wallachian authorities, who had embezzled the funds dedicated to foreign teachers hired at St. Sava National College.<sup>34</sup> Hugot campaigned for the establishment of French teachers in the Principalities, but also for sending the boyars' sons to study in France and, for the sons of boyar Filip Lenș, he personally facilitated a mobility to Paris.<sup>35</sup> A few years later, in 1834, in a memorandum addressed to Count de Rigny – French Minister of Foreign Affairs – Baron of Bois-Le-Comte, a French diplomat, described “the intellectual state”<sup>36</sup> of the inhabitants of the Principalities, recording the fact that fourteen young men, who had already returned from studying in Paris, are now occupying important positions in the Romanian administration.<sup>37</sup> This evolution is important because, according to the consul, “the ideas and the way of looking and feeling of this young people completely influence the social movement”<sup>38</sup>, strengthening the French influence and bringing the two administrations closer together. In agreement with researcher Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, it is the young people that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are the “actants of modernization”<sup>39</sup>, modernization that has France as a model and Russia as an agent of mediation.<sup>40</sup> This discussion of the prevalence of certain Western model already constitutes a different and prolific research subject, a polemic popularized by Pompiliu Eliade's thesis<sup>41</sup> and applied both to cultural and social history, as well as to the history of literature and other arts, placed in the context of reception of the Romantic movement. But certain is that, specifically, when referring to the plan of private education and the subsequent development of public education for girls, the French cultural model is the dominant one.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Violeta Anca-Epure, “Instrucția și educația în Principatele Române prepașoptiste. Observatori și aporturi franceze de la 1821 până în ajunul Revoluției de la 1848 (II)”, in *Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabesiensis*, Vol. 8, 2016, p. 280.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 280.

<sup>36</sup> Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor (1825-1846)*, vol. XVII, *Correspondență diplomatică și rapoarte consulare franceze (1825-1846) culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, publicate după copiile Academiei Române de Nerva Hodoș*, Bucharest, Institut of Graphic Arts Carol Göbl, 1913, p. 353.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Evgheniți, ciocoi, mojiți. Despre obrazye primei modernități românești (1750-1860)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2015, p. 331.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> Pompiliu Eliade, *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public în România*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, *passim*.

<sup>42</sup> Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 331; Neagu Djuvara, *Între Orient și Occident. Țările Române la începutul epocii moderne (1800-1848)*, translation by Maria Carpov, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2018, p. 362. Obviously, the German cultural model is not to be neglected. The Romanian elites also speak German and, starting with 1866 – with the coming to the throne of Charles I, born in Sigmaringen –, the German culture will be imported and promoted by the Royal House. Economic, the number of German-Romanian joint companies increases in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, in the oil sector, German investments hold the supremacy.

This reception of French influence generated not only institutional transformations in the sphere of private education, but also involved the importation of various cultural products: especially since 1830s, the number of the Romanian translations of the works of Voltaire, Jean Racine or Molière<sup>43</sup> increases, as well as the number of translations of French grammar manuals. The French merchants settled in the Principalities established libraries and, starting in 1832, in Iași, people could attend the French performances of theatre led by Baptiste Foureaux.<sup>44</sup> Material culture was not neglected either, furniture pieces, clothing and various types of decorations being imported with preference also from the French Empire.<sup>45</sup>

Certainly, in the Romanian Principalities, employing a governess was not a generalized practice, but a prerogative of the wealthy families from the urban space. Beginning with the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this type of education for girls began to be given an institutional framework, the governesses often becoming founders of the *pensionnats*, schools that would later produce female educators.<sup>46</sup> In this case also, it is noted that, in both Principalities, at first, all the *pensionnats* were established by former French governesses<sup>47</sup> and were mentioned in the diplomatic correspondence regarding the reception of the French cultural influence: “*Toutes les pension de demoiselles sont tenues par des dames de notre nation. Il y en a quatre à Iassy, deux à Botochan, une à Galatz*”<sup>48</sup>, mentioned consul Duclos, regarding the situation in Moldavia, in 1843. And in Bucharest, the *pensionnats* of Madame Buvelot, Bonnet, Vaillant and Madame de Comble were founded starting from 1830.<sup>49</sup>

For the case of Moldavia, in 1940, T. G. Bulat discovered the archives of a *pensionnat* for girls, established even earlier (in 1811), in Iași, by Madame L. F. Germont. The French governess’ initiative was subjected to bureaucratic efforts that required gaining as many guarantees as possible from the authorities, implicitly from the foreign ones, the occupation ones. Therefore, for the opening of the school, Madame Germont elaborated the project of the institution, which was presented to the Russian President of the Divans, Krasno Milasevic<sup>50</sup> and also requested the protection of the French government, and managed to obtain 400 gold coins from the Moldavian treasury; coins which were to be returned a year later.

Once the bureaucratic tasks were completed, the activity of the *pensionnat* whose services were enjoyed, for the time being, only by nine pupils started in 1812. The young women studied foreign languages – French, Italian, Greek and German – notions of arithmetic, history and geography, playing the harp and the

<sup>43</sup> Violeta Anca-Epure, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 285.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 284.

<sup>46</sup> Nicoleta Roman, “Educating the Other...”, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> Violeta Anca-Epure, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>48</sup> Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *op. cit.*, p. 971.

<sup>49</sup> Elena Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, “Școala Centrală de Fete din București (cu 43 figuri)”, în *Boabe de grâu. Revistă de cultură*, Year 5, No. 12, Official Monitor and State Press, Bucharest, 1935, p. 713.

<sup>50</sup> T. G. Bulat, “Un pension de domnișoare la Iași în 1811”, în *Cercetări istorice 13-14*, No. 1-2, 1940, p. 414.



piano, vocal playing, drawing, embroidery and dancing. Concomitantly, the moral behaviour of the pupils was to be supervised by the school's staff. In addition to the expenses necessary for procuring the mandatory school uniform, the bed linens and other items indispensable for boarding school life, the cost of theoretical courses was 80 ducats per year, music and fine arts lessons being paid for separately.<sup>51</sup> Except for the Greek teacher, Madame Germont mentioned that all the other teachers were female. And, if in the Romanian Principalities, a teaching staff made up of educated women didn't exist, it is plausible that foreign governesses were those employed by Madame Germont, the school becoming an economically relevant institution through its ability to attract this foreign workforce.

The reason for the authorities' support for the establishment of this institution is also significant. In a report signed by hetman Nicolae Stratilat and dedicated to Senator Milasevic, is mentioned the necessity to create a *pensionnat* that would meet the educational needs of the small boyars and families of modest status, since, at the time, only the wealthy elites of Moldavia managed to send their daughters to the famous *pensionnat* from Odessa. Therefore, supporting Madame Germont's initiative meant creating a similar but more accessible educational framework in the local space.<sup>52</sup> It is a rhetoric that seems to anticipate in the Romanian space a phenomenon already existing in the West: the generalization within the middle class of the recourse to education provided by governesses, be it performed privately – by governesses who, for a lower income, accepted to work in a modest family – or in the *pensionnat*.

Starting with the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the foundations of a modern state are laid, with the Union of The Romanian Principalities taking place in 1859; in 1877, following the Russo-Turkish War from 1877-1878, the Principalities gain their independence from the Ottoman suzerainty. Once these political aspirations are met, the consolidation of the national modern state requires the design of new social and educational policies, the creation of a trained and educated population mass becoming the main desideratum. The democratization of knowledge and the spread of literacy begin to dominate the elite's discourses, and education performed in the national language is now in the foreground. Once the *Law on Education* (1864) is implemented, the primary public schools' attendance becomes mandatory, dedicated to both sexes and tuition-free. In reality however, for the mass of the children, school abandonment, rejection of schooling and illiteracy will remain a problem throughout the whole century, especially when talking about girls, whose place was considered to be inside the household.

Hiring a foreign governess remains an alternative for the elites, but an alternative which, since the second half of the century, is accompanied by the opportunity of sending a girl to the recently created private schools for girls. In Wallachia, in the capital city, the first primary school institution appeared and was dedicated to girls between the ages of 7 and 11: in 1843, the wife of ruler

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 417.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 418-419.

Barbu Știrbey, Elisabeta Știrbey established the first school for girls, with teaching in the Romanian language.<sup>53</sup> But the pattern of the institution remained an elitist one, only the girls from high society being admitted to the school, with the exception of the children of some functionary whom the ruler wanted to reward by offering his daughters a place in the private school.<sup>54</sup> Later, in 1852 and also in Bucharest, in Manuc House on Moșilor Avenue (Calea Moșilor), *The Princely Pensionnat For Girls* was founded, a higher school which became the *Central School*, in 1864.<sup>55</sup> The project had already been conceived in 1832, in the logic of the Organic Regulation<sup>56</sup> and belonged to the initiatives of Barbu Știrbey, former Schools Commission (Eforia Școalelor) clerk, who, at the beginning of the Tsarist protectorate period, was tasked by General Kiseleff with drafting school programs for girls' boarding schools.<sup>57</sup> As in the case of the school founded by Elisabeta Știrbey, however, enrolment or obtaining a scholarship at the *Princely Pensionnat For Girls* remained the exclusive prerogative of some *demoiselles nobles*, daughters of boyars, officers, clerks or other employers (*amplœiați*)<sup>58</sup>, application for admission to the institution being approved by the ruler himself.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, this elitist character and the public to which the school was dedicated were another echo of the French influence – mediated by Russian influence – exercised in the sphere of private education: this similar kind of imperial *pensionnats* was already operating in Russia and was inspired by *Maisons d'éducation de la Légion d'honneur*<sup>60</sup>, from France.

Even if *Princely Pensionnat For Girls* was the result of a princely initiative, governesses and foreign female personalities were the ones charged with administration, leadership and teaching. Supported to occupy this position even by Petrache Poenaru – who, in turn, had been schooled in Paris –, the principal of the institution was Ana Iacobson, born in 1798 in Kherson Governorate of the Russian Empire and educated in French language schools for girls. She married Arnold Jacobson, a German ethnic, military officer in Russia, later settled in

<sup>53</sup> Adrian Majuru, *Copilăria la români. Schițe și tablouri cu prunci, școlari și adolescenți*, Bucharest, Compania Publishing House, 2006, pp. 96-97.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 97.

<sup>55</sup> Elena Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, *op. cit.*, p. 706.

<sup>56</sup> The *Organic Regulations* were quasiconstitutional laws, promulgated in both Romanian Principalities, starting from 1831-1832, documents that – as a desideratum – have already stipulated the foundation of “elementary schools for both sexes”. *Regulamentul Organic al Valahiei*, in Paul Negulescu, George Alexianu (eds.), *Regulamentele Organice ale Valahiei și Moldovei*, Vol. I, “Eminescu” Enterprises, Bucharest, 1944, Ch. VIII, Art. 366, p. 129. In Moldavia also, in 1834, following the proposal of Mihail Sturdza, a public school for girls, with a three-year program, with teaching in Romanian language and a more democratic admission regime – the social status of the parents not being a criterion – will operate in the precinct of St. Ilie Monastery. V. A. Urechia, *Istoria școlilor de la 1800-1864. Cu o scurtă introducere cuprinzând note din istoria culturii naționale anterioare secolului al XVIII-lea și cu numeroase facsimile de documente, semnături, autografe, etc.*, tome I, State Printing, Bucharest, 1892, pp. 270-273.

<sup>57</sup> Elena Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, *op. cit.*, p. 707.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 712.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 711-712.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 711.

Wallachia – in 1828, during a Russo-Turkish conflict – and future prefect of Brăila County.<sup>61</sup> Ana Jacobson was the one that dealt with the organization of the school, drawing up the study program and hiring the ideal governesses, called *institutrițe*<sup>62</sup>. Thereby, in 1851, making use of her skills and relations in the highest circles, Mrs. Jacobson visited the famous Odessa Girls' Boarding School, to recruit three governesses, women who were to teach foreign languages in her Princely Pensionnat.<sup>63</sup>

*Pensionnats* had a closed and select regime, but, due to the nature of the teachers who worked there and who often derived their income from several lucrative sources, they became places that could outsource certain educational services to the young girls from the capital. In the December 1856 issue of *Romanian Messenger (Vestitoru Românesc)*, professor Franz Horn announced that he “still has a few hours a day free and he wants to give clavier lessons. He also teaches in French, German and English”<sup>64</sup> and may daily be found at Madame Baillant's *pensionnat* for girls. Thus, *pensionnats* were institution that attracted foreign labour<sup>65</sup> and which sometimes ended up diversifying the nature of their educational services to meet the financial needs of the school board or employees. All the more so, in a Romanian world still defined by an endemic pauperism, *pensionnats* weren't the most profitable businesses and the cases in which their activity was a long-lived one were rare.<sup>66</sup>

Approaching the end of the century, the trend of employing a governess still endures, especially as the Romanian Kingdom steps into Belle Époque and the French fashions and way of life dominate the cultural climate of the elites, French language taught by the governess remaining *the polite language* recorded in the memoirs of Maude Rea Parkinson.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, overall, in the eyes of the population, the stereotypical image of the foreigner is experiencing new changes, changes dictated both by political transformations and by the sharpening of the nationalist discourse. Imagologically, but also diplomatically, France and its citizens are still admired, especially as a consequence of the French support offered to the Romanians in the efforts to recognize the Union of The Romanian Principalities.<sup>68</sup> However, unlike the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the status of the foreigner *per se* is no longer a privileged one. If, after the adoption of the

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 716.

<sup>62</sup> From French *instituteur*.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 718.

<sup>64</sup> *Vestitorul Românesc: Gazeta semi-oficială, ese de două ori pe săptămână: Miercurea și sâmbăta*, Year XXI, No. 93, 12 December 1856, Bucharest, p. 372.

<sup>65</sup> Nicoleta Roman, “Educating the Other...”, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47.

<sup>67</sup> Maude Parkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 167. Maude Rea Parkinson also complained about the lack of sufficient pedagogical materials written in Romanian, which created uncomfortable situations for the children from private schools, who were instructed in French but forced to take national exams in Romanian language. *Ibidem*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>68</sup> Florin Pădurean, “Indicating the Enemy: Ethnic Stereotypes in Romanian Cartoons in the Nineteenth Century”, in Dagnoslaw Demski, Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska (eds.), *Images of The Other in Ethnic Caricatures of Central and Eastern Europe*, Warsaw, 2010, p. 129.

Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardji, governesses and foreigners could be included in the favoured category of *sudiți*, this institution is abolished once the Kingdom of Romania gains its independence.<sup>69</sup>

Foreign governesses are still active in the royal family and in the families close to it. In the newly established Romanian Royal House we will find two British governesses, selected by King Charles I as teachers for little Prince Charles (who we will later know as the future King Charles II): the first one will be Mary Green, who will stand out as a woman who imposes upon the King himself.<sup>70</sup> Starting from 1899, Miss E. Saxton Winter will be the second employee, the one who will instruct Prince Carol until he will start his elementary classes, under the supervision of a male teacher, Ion Cionca.<sup>71</sup> Also, Queen Elisabeth's maid of honour, Zoe Bengescu, hires for her daughters several foreign teachers, such as Madame Charlier – “who had an extraordinary number of pupils among *polite society*”<sup>72</sup> – and Miss Clark, a British woman.<sup>73</sup>

But for the mass of the population, even the alternative of sending the girls to a *pensionnat* remains an expensive private education service: in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, annual *pensionnat* fees increase<sup>74</sup>, the highest being recorded in the capitals, but always remaining lower than in institutions dedicated to boys.<sup>75</sup> In the context of a wider phenomenon of professionalization, starting from 1864 and with the reorganization of the educational system, the profession of governess acquires a legal recognition and, at an ideational level, governesses become more prominent actors on the Romanian social scene, being associated with the emancipation of girls through education.<sup>76</sup> They continue to work either in high society families or in *pensionnats*, as school teachers or foreign language teachers<sup>77</sup> and, sometimes, in order to gain financial stability, they end up hired by several families simultaneously. Regardless of the path chosen, significant is that, throughout the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century, through their individual activity or transposed into some wider institutional efforts, governesses were the main trainers of a future generation of educated Romanian women.<sup>78</sup>

### Conclusions

The arrival of the foreign governesses in the Romanian Principalities had several effects, some primary, immediate ones, felt economically – namely, filling a professional gap that existed in the Romanian labour market –, as well as some

<sup>69</sup> Keith Hitchins, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>70</sup> Stanca Scholz-Cionca, *Cărluță și primul lui dascăl: din ucenicia Principelui Carol al României*, Corint Publishing House, Bucharest, 2022, pp. 14-15.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Zoe Cămărășescu, *Amintiri*, Baroque Books & Arts, Bucharest, 2019, p. 75.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 76-79.

<sup>74</sup> Dan Dumitru Iacob, “Copii de boieri la pension. Educația în familia postelnicului Iancu Costache-Negel (1838–1861)”, in Cătălina Mihalache, Leonidas Rados (eds.), *Educația publică și condiționările sale (secolele XIX-XX)*, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, Iași, 2015, p. 179.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>76</sup> Nicoleta Roman, “Educating the Other...”, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 46.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47. And even starting from 1854, in Bucharest, we can find a Romanian woman as principal of a private school for girls.

cultural and institutional ones, these female personnel being a personification of the fact that the elites began to look towards the West as an aspirational model. Governesses had an acculturative and a modernizing role by promoting girls' education, by disseminating the Western cultural and intercultural values and by becoming the founders of many *pensionnats* that, as in the case of Madame Germont's school, could also spread the ideal of female education within the ranks of the emerging bourgeoisie. Although these were private initiatives in the educational field, they were circumscribed to much more important and wide-ranging purposes: while the Schools Commission commenced to promote the idea of national education, on the other hand, the consulates and the Russian occupiers, who supervised or even dictated the pace of the cultural dominance of the state actors they represented, all of them placed the activity of the governesses in discourses related to the influence and prevalence of a certain cultural model, of which, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the French model seemed to triumph.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary sources

- Amintirile colonelului Lăcusteanu. Text integral, stabilit după manuscris*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2015;
- Bulat, T. G., "Un pension de domnișoare la Iași în 1811", in *Cercetări istorice 13-14*, no. 1-2, 1940;
- Cămărășescu, Zoe, *Amintiri*, Baroque Books & Arts, Bucharest, 2019;
- Eliade, Pompiliu, *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public în România*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000;
- Hurmuzaki, Eudoxiu de, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor (1825-1846)*, vol. XVII, *Correspondență diplomatică și rapoarte consulare franceze (1825-1846) culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, publicate după copiile Academiei Române de Nerva Hodoș*, Institut of Graphic Arts Carol Göbl, Bucharest, 1913;
- Idem*, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor (1763-1844)*, vol. X, *Rapoarte consulare prusiene din Iași și București*, I. V. Socecu Graphic Establishment, Bucharest, 1897;
- Iorga, Nicolae, "Contribuții la istoria învățământului în țară și în străinătate (1780-1830)", 9 June 1906, in *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secției Literare*, Tome XXIV, 1906;
- Negulescu, Paul, Alexianu, George (eds.), *Regulamentele Organice ale Valahiei și Moldovei*, vol. I, "Eminescu" Enterprises, Bucharest, 1944;
- Parkinson, Maude, *Twenty Years in Romania*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1921;
- Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, Elena, "Școala Centrală de Fete din București (cu 43 figuri)", in *Boabe de grâu. Revistă de cultură*, Year 5, No. 12, Official Monitor and State Press, Bucharest, 1935;
- Urechia, V. A., *Istoria Școalelor de la 1800-1864. Cu o scurtă introducere cuprinzând note din istoria culturii naționale anterioare secolului al XVIII-lea și cu numeroase facsimile de documente, semnături, autografe, etc.*, tome I, State Printing, Bucharest, 1892;
- Vestitorul Românesc: Gazeta semi-oficială, ese de două ori pe săptămână: Miercurea și sâmbăta*, Year XXI, No. 93, Bucharest, 12 December 1856.

### Secondary sources

- Bărbulescu, Constantin, Ciupală, Alin (eds.), *Medicine, Hygiene and Society from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2011;
- Demski, Dagnoslaw, Baraniecka-Olszewska, Kamila (eds.), *Images of The Other in Ethnic Caricatures of Central and Eastern Europe*, Warsaw, 2010;

- Djuvara, Neagu, *Între Orient și Occident. Țările Române la începutul epocii moderne (1800-1848)*, translation by Maria Carpov, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2018;
- Epure, Violeta Anca, "Instrucția și educația în Principatele Române prepașoptiste. Observatori și aporturi franceze de la 1821 până în ajunul Revoluției de la 1848 (II)", in *Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabesiensis*, Vol. 8, 2016, pp. 279-295;
- Hitchins, Keith, *Românii. 1774-1866*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, translation by George Potra, Delia Razdolescu, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013;
- Iacob, Dan Dumitru, *Elitele din Principatele Române în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Sociabilitate și divertisment*, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press, Iași, 2015;
- Majuru, Adrian, *Copilăria la români. Schițe și tablouri cu prunci, școlari și adolescenți*, Compania Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006;
- Mello Guimaraes, Carolina de, "The Figure of the Governess in Victorian Gothic: A Symbol for Class and Gender Tensions in Victorian Society", in *Curitiba*, Vol. 7, No. 13, July 2019, pp. 149-163;
- Mihalache, Cătălina, Rados, Leonidas (eds.), *Educația publică și condiționările sale (secolele XIX-XX)*, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press, Iași, 2015;
- Roman, Nicoleta (coord.), *Copilăria românească între familie și societate (secolele XVII-XX)*, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015;
- Idem*, "Deznădăjduită muiere n-au fost ca mine". Femei, onoare și păcat în Valahia secolului al XIX-lea, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016;
- Idem*, "Educating the Other: Foreign Governesses in Wallachia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", in *Aspasia*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 2020, pp. 37-56;
- Scholz-Cionca, Stanca, *Cărluța și primul lui dascăl: din ucenicia Principelui Carol al României*, Corint Publishing House, Bucharest, 2022;
- Tertecel, Adrian, "Tratatul de Pace Ruso-Otoman de la Küçük Kaynarca (1774)", in *Revista Română de Studii Eurasiatice*, Year I, No. 1, Constanța, 2005, pp. 173-196;
- Vintilă-Ghițulescu, Constanța, *Evgheniți, ciocoi, mojici. Despre obrazy primei modernități românești (1750-1860)*, II<sup>nd</sup> edition, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015.