

**“There is an hour of which I have never spoken...”<sup>1</sup>  
– Excerpts from the Diary of Queen Marie of Romania –**

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**Abstract:** The present work brings to the readers’ attention two manuscripts of Queen Marie of Romania found in the collection of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library from Cluj-Napoca. The manuscripts, unknown until today, belong to Queen Marie’s journal known to the public as *Daily Entries*. The importance of these documents stands in their authorship and in the information disclosed to the readers.

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*As* an autobiographic genre, the personal journal started to gain prevalence in the Romanian literature at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first Romanian author of the genre – in the modern sense – was Titu Maiorescu,<sup>2</sup> the creator of the vastest personal journal of Romanian literature which covers almost 50 years. Another important moment of the history of the genre was the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when – under French influence – many political and cultural personalities left to the successive generations, besides official documents, daily entries, notes and memories. These texts represent important documents that complete official information. Such type of evidence remained from the members of the Romanian royal family, especially from queen Marie, from whom more than one hundred notebooks with memories and daily entries have been preserved.

Born on October 14/29, 1875, in Eastwell, Kent, Great Britain, queen Marie of Romania<sup>3</sup> was the second child of Prince Alfred, duke of Edinburgh<sup>4</sup> and Grand

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<sup>2</sup> Titu Liviu Maiorescu (1840–1917) was a lawyer, literary critic, essayist, esthetician, philosopher, teacher, politician and writer, prime minister during the period 1912–1914, minister of internal affairs, founding member of the Romanian Academy.

<sup>3</sup> Queen Marie, *Povestea vieții mele* (The Story of my Life), vol. I (Bucharest: „Adevărul” Publishing House, 1934); Guy Gaultier, *Missy, regina României* (Missy, the queen of Romania) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Alfred (1844–1900) – Duke of Edinburgh, and after 1893 Duke of Saxa-Coburg-Gotha – was the second son of Queen Victoria of Great Britain and Prince Albert.

Duchess Maria Alexandrovna,<sup>1</sup> as it is also confined in *The Story of my Life*. In the year 1892, at the age of 17, she marries prince Hohenzollern Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Romania, and in the year 1914, after the passing away of king Carol I of Romania on September 28 / October 11<sup>2</sup>, she becomes queen of Romania.



**Teodora Cosman**, *Ah! Mamaia 4/12*, from the series “The Memories of the New Man” (now destroyed), 100 x 60 cm, acrylic on synthetic tissue, 2008

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Alexandrovna (1853–1920), Princess of Edinburgh, the only daughter of Tsar Alexander II of Russia and Empress Marie.

<sup>2</sup> The first date corresponds to the Gregorian calendar used in Romania until 1919, while the second date corresponds to the Julian calendar.

After World War I, queen Marie and king Ferdinand were crowned queen and king of the Greater Romania as part of a ceremony organized in Alba Iulia on October 15/27, 1922, the choice of location being given by the fact that Mihai Viteazu's reign of Walachia, Transylvania and Moldavia had also been established here. Queen Marie died on July 18, 1938, at the age of 63.

She manifested herself as a writer, publishing short stories and novels for children.<sup>1</sup> Among the published works, her personal journal entitled *Daily Entries*<sup>2</sup> and her memoirs edited with the title *The Story of my Life*<sup>3</sup>, had an important role. Some of her works became known to the Romanian and foreign public during the time of her life due to the manuscripts offered to the members of the royal court by the author herself, or through the publishment of the works in the country and abroad.

After World War II, the royal family's works were subject to the censorship of the communist regime.<sup>4</sup> In the paper *Publications prohibited until May 1 1948*, published in Bucharest in 1948, summarizing all lists of authors and works forbidden at that time, removes all works published by the kings and queens of Romania, as well as the ones referring to the institution of monarchy.<sup>5</sup>

Currently, queen Marie's manuscripts are kept at the National Archives of Romania, as parts of the fund "Royal House".<sup>6</sup> It includes an extensive correspondence,

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<sup>1</sup> In the first volume of the 1991 edition of *The Story of my Life*, in the Note of the edition Ioana Cracă enumerates some of queen Marie's works. See: Queen Marie, *Povestea vieții mele* (The Story of My Life), vol. I (Bucharest: Eminescu Publishing House, 1991), 14–15.

<sup>2</sup> The work became known to the public in the time of the queen's life, due to her readings to the close ones. The last published edition, printed in the period 1997–2007, contains seven volumes of *Daily Entries*, the first one beginning from December 1, 1918, and the last volume ending with December 31, 1925.

<sup>3</sup> The book was first published in English translation under the title *Story of my life* in three volumes between 1934 and 1936. Meanwhile, it was translated into English, French, German, Swedish, Greek, Polish, Czech, Italian, Serbo-Croatian and Hungarian, representing a true "best-seller". At the same time, the three volumes were also published in Romanian, at the Publishing House "Adevărul", enjoying a real success. See: Queen Marie, *Povestea vieții mele* (The Story of My Life), vol. I (Bucharest: Eminescu Publishing House, 1991), 13–15.

<sup>4</sup> On December 30, 1947, king Michael I was forced to abdicate and proclaim the Popular Republic of Romania, which marked the undertaking of power by the Communist Party. See: Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins etc., *Istoria României* (The History of Romania) (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1998), 480.

<sup>5</sup> *Publications prohibited until May 1, 1948*, quoted in Victor Frunză, „*Cartea cărților interzise*” (The Book of Prohibited Books) (Bucharest: EVF, 2003), 81–82, 144, 266–267.

<sup>6</sup> According to the information on the website of the Romanian National Archives: “After the abolition of the monarchy following the forced abdication of King Michael on December 30, 1947 and the precipitated departure of the royal family from the country, a commission was established in January 1948, whose chairman was academic professor George Oprescu. The Commission kept inventory of all the valuable things found in the buildings that had belonged to the royal family. This Commission noted that “there are books, paper manuscripts, documents in each drawer and corner.” These documents, which got to the National Archives through several stages, constitute the archive fund “Royal House” in the amount of 200 rms.” The ordering of these documents was made based on some criteria, resulting in the four major structural parts of the “Royal House” fund: Officials, Personals, Castles, Palaces and the Central Administration of

as well as plays, sketches, stories for children, and the 102 notebooks that make up queen Marie's personal diary, written in English, during the period 1914–1938, completed by her photos and those taken of the royal family and the royal residences, made both at home and during trips abroad.

This diary is an important documentary source for completing the information given by official documents relating to the history of Romania, but also for the reenactment of the royal court's life.<sup>1</sup>

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The collections of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library from Cluj-Napoca have been enriched over time, due to the valuable donations made by people of Romanian culture. Among the donations made to this institution, the documents belonging to the royal family of Romania have an important role, and are preserved in two of the mentioned funds. The first one, in terms of chronology, is the Kremnitz Mite<sup>2</sup> donation from the year 1971, which includes – along with documents belonging to the creator of the fund – documents of the royal family. Among these there are two photos of king Carol I (Mite Kremnitz Fund, Ms. 6454), the correspondence of queen Elisabeth, alias Carmen Sylva,<sup>3</sup> (Mite Kremnitz Fund, Ms. 6457, Ms. 6469 – Ms. 6474), the manuscripts of Carmen Sylva (Mite Kremnitz Fund, Ms. 6464 – Ms. 6468). Besides these, there is a handkerchief that belonged to queen Elisabeth and a lock of hair (Mite Kremnitz Fund, Ms. 6477).

The second fund that includes documents of the royal family of Romania is the Ionnițiu Fund.<sup>4</sup> This includes letters of queen Elena<sup>5</sup> (Ionnițiu Fund, 23), the correspondence of king Michael of Romania (Ionnițiu Fund, 61–62), king Michael's oath (Ionnițiu Fund, 51), speeches and agendas (Ionnițiu Fund, 52), documents related to

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the Crown Estates. The manuscripts of queen Marie belong to the “Royal House” fund – Personals, containing 75 mrs of documents.

<sup>1</sup> National Archives of Romania,

<http://www.arhivelenationale.ro/index.php?lan=0&page=125> (accessed April 3, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Mite Kremnitz (1852–1916) was a German writer and translator, married to the doctor Wilhelm Kremnitz. She was a court lady of queen Elisabeth, whose works she translated from German into Romanian, and they wrote together a series of plays and novels. See: Lucian Predescu, *Enciclopedia României Cugetare* (The Encyclopedia of the Thinker Romania) (Bucharest: Saeculum, Vestala, 1999), 469.

<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth de Wied (1843–1916) was queen of Romania, married to Carol I Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, the first king who belonged to the renowned German Hohenzollern dynasty. As a writer, she signed her works as Carmen Sylva. See: *ibid.*, 304–305.

<sup>4</sup> Mircea Ionnițiu (1921–1990) was secretary to king Michael until the year 1947. After the communists undertook power, he emigrated to the USA, where he lived until the end of his life. The Ionnițiu Fund got into the possession of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library through Mircea Carp's mediation, in 2007 (Mircea Carp a journalist and director of Radio Free Europe).

<sup>5</sup> Queen Elena of Romania (1896–1982), daughter of Constantin I, king of Greece and his wife Sophia, was wife of king Carol II of Romania and mother of king Michael I of Romania.

the royal strike<sup>1</sup> (Ionnițiu Fund, 53), the king's discussions with Andrei Vâșinski<sup>2</sup> (Ionnițiu Fund, 54) and those with the members of the Inter-allied Commission (Ionnițiu Fund, 55), documents about the events of December 30, 1947<sup>3</sup> (Ionnițiu Fund, 56–57), speeches (Ionnițiu Fund, 58), interviews with king Michael and queen Elena (Ionnițiu Fund, 59–60).

Besides these, but not being part of neither fund, there are two manuscripts belonging to queen Marie, included in the manuscript collection of the Special Collections Department, signed by the shelf mark Ms. 6940/I, respectively Ms. 6940/II.

The manuscripts are parts of queen Marie's diary, edited with the title *Daily Entries*. The texts are unique, not being included in any printed edition so far.<sup>4</sup> They illustrate two dramatic moments of our history: the revocation of the I. C. Brătianu government and the royal family from Bucharest, and the beginning of the refuge to Moldova (November 20 / December 3, 1916), in the spring of 1918, respectively the week before Easter, when Romania, weakened of war, abandoned by Russian military support (during the revolution), was forced to sign the preliminary peace treaty at Buftea, with the Central Powers, which caused humiliating territorial losses and economic conditions.<sup>5</sup>

The first text from February 23, 1917, entitled "Bucharest" represents an evocation of the events that happened three months earlier, namely the occupation of Bucharest by the German troops on December 6, 1916. The author describes the pain suffered as the sovereign of a country at war at that time, a pain increased by the impossibility of disclosing her feelings to the close ones. This moment is described as being "an hour of darkness and sorrow". The queen confesses to her journal, given that her position does not allow her to publicly express any feeling of weakness related to this event, which she considers "unbearable", being aware of the role she plays – "others depended upon me" – both in the affairs of her country and family and in the relations with other countries – "all eyes were turned towards me".

The withdrawal to Iași after the moment of territorial losses had to be made "very simply, very quietly", not to cause even more panic among the population.

We note that, although born and raised in foreign lands, the signer identifies with the Romanian nation, calling it "my people" and sharing all their suffering – "...I

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<sup>1</sup> On August 21, 1945 the "royal strike" started, through which king Michael refused to collaborate with the Communist Party, ceasing to promulgate regulations and laws issued by the government. This state of affairs went on until January of the following year. See: Ioan Scurtu, Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX (1918-1948)* (The History of Romanians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1918–1948)) (Bucharest: Paideia, 1999), 512–513.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Vâșinski (1883–1954), deputy of the minister of external affairs of the USSR, was sent from Moscow to support the Romanian communists' struggle to undertake power. During the meeting with king Michael he asked him to create a government headed by Petru Groza. See: Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins etc., *Istoria României*, 472.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 10.

<sup>4</sup> The texts are dated February 23, 1917, respectively July 1918, but the first volume of *Daily Entries* begins with December 1918. In *The Story of my life*, volume III, a part of the queen's notes from the years 1916–1918 are reproduced, however, the presented texts do not appear in the book.

<sup>5</sup> See: *ibid.*, 417–418.

have heard their cries, and hoped their hopes and feared their fears. Months in which I have struggled with them and wept with them doing all that was in my power to ease their burden and to dry their tears...” “...I want ye all to know that I have wept with you, that there are none of your griefs that I /<sup>6</sup> have not shared, none of your despairs that I have not understood, none of your sacrifices that I have not appreciated but this message would I bring you: hearts are bound more closely together in days of sorrow than in days of joy, in days of war than in days of peace...”

The pain felt over the territorial losses as the sovereign of the country is increased by the suffering of the mother who lost her son. The death of the youngest child is portrayed as a sacrifice – “When he died, the popular belief was that the Heavens had claimed from me a sacrifice, that God had taken my child from me that in his perfect innocence he should plead [sic!] for the country he has destined to quit so soon!”

With all the pain felt, Queen Marie does not lose hope, being confident in the victory to come, imagining the moment of return – “So let it be! For I believe [sic!] in the day of return, I believe [sic!] in the hour of victory, I believe [sic!] that the blood of our heros [sic!] has not been shed in vain! One day thy arms will be opened wide to receive us oh! mother-town. Flags will fly from thy windows, thy streets will be strewn with branches, and those who return to thy embrace [sic!] will not know if their hearts are breaking with sorrow or with joy!”

The second text, entitled *Sâmbăta morților* (Saturday of the dead) written after almost a year and a half from the first, has a tone different from that of the previous one. While in the first part the author expresses her hope for the successful end of the war, in this text she rhetorically asks why all these sacrifices, if the dream the sacrifice was made for cannot be achieved. This dream, for the accomplishment of which Romania entered World War I. and which was shared by the queen, was the union of all local territories.

The title of the segment refers to a traditional festival during which the dead are remembered – “A day of remembrance, a day of grief, a day when flowers are carried to the cemeteries, day when little tapers are lighted upon many graves, before many altars; a day when from all churches prayers rise towards the skies, prayers for those that are no more... no more here upon earth...” This memory determines queen Marie to recall the sacrifices of the nation during the war, as well as her own sacrifice. At the same time, she describes the country ravaged by conflict, with its cemeteries where women and children mourn the deceased.

She is aware of her own weaknesses, nevertheless she wants to send people hope for a positive resolution of all issues. As if foreseeing these moments, the narrator described them in one of her earlier works in which the king asks the same questions that she asks herself in the times of suffering and despair – “Once, long ago, before the great suffering came over us, I put strange words into the mouth of a sovereign who existed only in one of the legends I then loved to create. In an hour of distress that sovereign cried aloud, asking if one heart can be large enough to carry every sorrow, if one brain can be wise enough to lead millions to their good, if one courage can be great enough to meet every foe, if one soul can be just enough to sit in judgement on others – little knowing that one day, so soon afterwards, those same questions would also be mine –

and the cry that rises from my lips at this hour is: can one heart be large enough to carry every sorrow! and that heart a woman's heart!"

However, she expresses confidence in a better future – "Somehow I cannot think, oh! ye silent ones, that this can really be the end of our road.", "But turning my face back from the dead to the living, this message would I cry out to those still sorrowing here upon earth: Ye are taught to believe [sic!] in the hour of resurrection, with every fibre of our beings let us cling to that faith; let not your souls be shaken by adversity, believe [sic!] me oh! ye mourners, that that hour will come, and when it comes, oh! this let me tell you, when that hour comes, it will not only be a resurrection of the dead!"

The two manuscripts have the format in-8 (22,2x15,7 cm), each one containing 14 separate pages, numbered by the author herself. The text is written on laid paper, only on the front, the first one with black, and the second one with brown ink.

The identification of the signatory was easily made in the case of the first manuscript. The author signs the text at the end with the name "Marie" and mentions the date. Corroborating the information about her with the time of writing the text, the historical data and the information found in the text itself, we can determine that the manuscript was written by queen Marie in Iași, in the period of the retreat during World War I.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of the second manuscript, being unsigned, the determination of the authorship was done by comparing the script with that of the first one. Thus we deduce based on the identical calligraphy the common origin of the two manuscripts. The signer mentions the month and year of writing, but not the day. From the text, it appears that it was written during the refuge in Moldova.<sup>2</sup>

The manuscripts are written in English and present the linguistic peculiarities specific to this language at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each page is numbered by the author. They became part of the collection of the Library in the year 1924, a fact determined based on the inventory numbers: Ms. 57/1924, respectively Ms. 58/1924. Knowing that in 1924 the royal family was in Cluj, where they visited the University and the Library – event recorded by the book of honour of the institution – we conclude that the two manuscripts were given to the University Library by queen Marie.

The transcription of the text was made without interfering with it. The overwritten words were lowered in line without marking them with special characters. The pages were separated with a slash [/], and the page numbers were noted with overwritten characters. Archaic word forms were kept. Where the manuscript was damaged, letters were put in square brackets added by the editor. The obvious writing

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<sup>1</sup> The Romanian army's defeat in the fall of 1916 led to a general withdrawal and to the occupation of Bucharest by the German troops at November 23 / December 6. Subsequently, the front was established in southern Moldova along the rivers Siret and Danube. More than half of the territory of the country was occupied by the enemy. In these circumstances the government and the Royal Court withdrew to Iași. See: *ibid.*, 417–418.

<sup>2</sup> The royal family returned to Bucharest at the end of the year 1918, after the Romanian troops led by king Ferdinand entered Bucharest on December 1, 1918. See: *ibid.*, 419.

mistakes were marked by *sic!* in square brackets, but without mentioning the correct forms. The abbreviations used by the author were also kept.

Contrary to expectations, in queen Marie's manuscripts – especially in those described in this paper – we do not find much historical or political information, as we expected. Instead, they highlight the emotional and moral side of the author, her kneading as a queen of a country at war and the compromises that she had to make for the good of the country, as well as her pain as a mother who lost her son.<sup>1</sup> However, the text of the journal is an important documentary source – knowing who its author was –, a source that complements the existing information in official documents, revealing the lesser known aspects of Romanian history. Finally, the texts represent an important source of information about life at the royal court.

Translated by Boglárka Németh

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<sup>1</sup> Queen Marie and king Ferdinand had six children: Carol, Elisabeth, Marie, Nicholas, Ileana and Mircea, the latter dying of typhoid fever during the war, in the autumn of 1916.



Appendix

Bucarest

There is an hour of which I have never spoken – an hour of darkness and sorrow that I could share with no one, an hour when I had to carry my head very high so that none should see the tears in my eyes, an hour when naught else remained to me but look beyond the things of this earth towards shadowy Futures that belong only to God.

I had to be strong at that hour, not to cry out, not to complain, but to lead the way into exile very singly, very quietly, so as to avoid all panic, so that no one should be afraid . . . . Others depended upon me

Bucarest

There is an hour of which I have never spoken – an hour of darkness and sorrow that I could share with no one, an hour when I had to carry my head very high so that none should see the tears in my eyes, an hour when naught else remained to me but [to] look beyond the things of this earth towards shadowy Futures that belong only to God.

I had to be strong at that hour, not to cry out, not to complain, but to lead the way into exile very simply, very quietly, so as to avoid all panic, so that no one should be afraid....Others depended upon me <sup>/2</sup> all eyes were turned towards me to see how I would bear that which was unbearable, so I was silent; at that hour silence alone could help.

Three months have passed since then, tree long months – months that could be years so full are they of anguish and pain and grief. Months that I have lived close to the heart of my people, months when I have heard their cries, and hoped their hopes and feared their fears. Months in which I have struggled with them and wept with them doing all that was in my power to ease their burden and to dry their their tears... <sup>/3</sup>

But if there are hours when silence alone can render bearable the duty one has to perform, there are others when one has a right to lift up one's voice and to cry out one's longing & one's regret.

It is tree months since Bucharest was taken from us, since the ennemy [sic!] struck at the heart of our land! Three months... and today I want all those who love and all those who weep and all those who regret to turn their faces with mine towards that far off distance and to remember that which we have lost....

It is to me as though I must climb some very high mountain, up up till I <sup>/4</sup> reach its summit, so that from there I might perceive at least the smoke rising from that town which once was our loved and cherished center and that now lies chained and silent 'neath the ennemy's [sic!]ntless sway.

Yes indeed, heart of our land! pulsing centre that held us together, fed our energies and filled us with pride. Who of us will ever forgot those lost days of anguish, when hope became always less when from all sides the voice of the cannon called out its fearful message, called out its warning, telling us that danger was coming ever nearer – that soon it would be flight and exile and sorrow and darkness... <sup>/5</sup>

Difficult it is to speak of one's own sorrow when the suffering of all was so great, yet if today I speak of mine, it is because I know that it is to my country's sorrow, that a thousand thousand voices are echo to mine when I talk of that of that for which we are mourning, of that which lies beyond the line of fire, that like a wound upon a mother's breast cuts our dear country in two!

It is I your Queen who am speaking to you, and I wish my voice to reach every heart, to penetrate into every home, to go towards to most miserable, to search out the hero on his bed of snow, I want ye all to know that I have wept with you, that there are none of your griefs that I <sup>/6</sup> have not shared, none of your despairs that I have not understood, none of your sacrifices that I have not appreciated but this message would I bring you: hearts are bound more closely together in days of sorrow than in days of joy, in days of war than in days of peace...

I cannot know for which special sorrow each man is mourning – I know not what house, what spot, what face he sees in his dreams, I know not to what hope he clings to what joy he desires to go back; there is a national sorrow and there is a personal sorrow, this last one each each man carries alone in his heart.

Bucarest! thy name conjers [sic!] up <sup>/7</sup> pictures without end in the mind of those who have been obliged to surrender thee to the hated foe. We remember thee with all thy faces in sunshine in rain and in snow, we remember thee busy yet smiling, within thy streets all seemed happy, it is to us, now that we are torn from thee, as through we had know naught but joy within thy embrace.

What is thy face of today oh! Bucarest? Most thou veiled thy self in mourning because so many of thy children have fled? or dost thou wear a smile of false acquiescence, so as not to draw down upon they trembling inhabitants the wrath of those who now call themselves masters and who perchance <sup>/8</sup> keep thee in better order than thine own children ever did!

Have thy proudest buildings been desecrated with flags that are not dyed in the three holy colours before which each Rumanians uncovers his head? Have the blinds of thy windows been drawn down so that those who have remained should not see men in pointed helmets marching to and fro before the house of thy King? Are the hospitals we prepared so tenderly for our wounded, filled with foreigners that speak not our language, that mock at our sorrow, rejoicing over the misery they have strewn over our land?

Oh! Bucarest I left thee without a word <sup>/9</sup> of farewell, I who so often have been acclaimed in thy streets! I was told I must steal away from thee in the silence, show no sorrow, say no good-bye, betraying no emotion so as to awaken no panic in the hearts of those who were to stay!

Like a traitor did I feel, like a coward to live thee thus to thy Fate! to go away to know naught of thy sorrow to leave thee unprotected to those who soon would suck thy heart's blood!

And Cotroceni! house that I love, house that little by little I have modelled to my taste, house that knows the voices of my children, in whose garden their baby-feet have toddled about. Cotroceni! I left thee taking no leave of those who were to remain to protect thee, casting hardly <sup>/10</sup> a look upon the rooms that once had been my pride – I had the courage to smile into the face of the old family servants who looked at my anxiously as though devining [sic!] that my silence hid some awful truth. Yes I left thee – and from one, one only did I take leave. But that one was so small and so silent that never will he relate what his mother said to him in that hour before her flight!

It was evening – the shadows were already stealing into the church, and with them I slipped into the sanctuary where a heap of white flowers spread a mystic light. And there beside that grave but so recently closed I tore from me the mask that all day I had worn, and cried out my pain to the little one, lying there beneath the stones... <sup>/11</sup>

I confessed to him that I was going – going, not knowing when I would come back. I asked him to forgive me for forsaking him, to forgive his mother for taking the five others with her, whilst she left him lonely, he who was smallest of all! left him to the mercy of those who soon would take possession of the places we had loved!

As I wept there in a solitary despair, it seemed to me that I heard the tread of the appro[a]ching armies, and shudderingly I realized that it was the breasts of our soldiers that were forming a rampart around our threatened home! I thought of all those who still

must fall before the ennemy [sic!] could reach this sacred door! and with anguish I realized that I would no more be <sup>/12</sup> there to bind up their wounds, to console their defeat...

Perhaps it was so that some vital part of my being should remain in our capital even after our retreat, that I was destined to leave my youngest there beneath the cold slabs of the church. Did perchance God tear him from as a sign that all this sorrow, all this sacrifice is but a passing horror, that because Mircea lies there awaiting my return, that surely surely I must come back?

When he died, the popular belief was that the Heavens had claimed from me a sacrifice, that God had taken my child from me that in his perfect innocence he should plead [sic!] for the country he has destined to quit so soon! <sup>/13</sup>

So let it be! For I believe [sic!] in the day of return, I believe [sic!] in the hour of victory, I believe [sic!] that the blood of our heros [sic!] has not been shed in vain!

One day thy arms will be opened wide to receive us oh! mother-town. Flags will fly from thy windows, thy streets will be strewn with branches, and those who return to thy embrace [sic!] will not know if their hearts are breaking with sorrow or with joy!

It lies in God's hand if I your Queen am to share that solemn hour with you – but this one boon do I ask of my people [sic! that if my feet should not enter the dear city with you, carry all the flowers that you would have given me, to the church where my <sup>/14</sup> little one lies, carry them there to his grave, heap them in masses above him, in fill the whole church with flowers, so that he who so long was lonely should have share in your songs of praise!

Marie

February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1917

### Sâmbăta Morților 1918

Sambăta Morților... the day set apart for the dead. Sambăta Morților. A day of remembrance, a day of grief, a day when flowers are carried to the cemeteries, day when little tapers are lighted upon many graves, before many altars; a day when from all churches prayers rise towards the skies, prayers for those that are no more.. no more here upon earth...

How many today will be praying for the dead? At this time last year, we were in full action; now a heavy silence lies over our country, all excitement has died down and with it, the enthusiasm that upheld our spirits, giving us hope amidst adversity, courage in spite of the great dangers that stared us in the face.

Last years on this day the dead lay under the sod, patiently awaiting the hour when those who were [sti]ll fighting, should have time to remember <sup>/2</sup> them, time to light tapers over their graves... and they were glad thus to wait. Yes, down there with crossed hands and closed eyes, they gladly waited, for were not others carrying on the struggle that they had begun, that they had shared in, the struggle that was to bring victory, deliverance and glory....

This year the cannons have stopped their sinister calling, the trenches are being filled up, the sound of battle no longer shakes the mountain sides, no more blood is being spilt, there is silence – but is it the silence of peace?

Sambăta Morților! This year the dead may be remembered, those that had joined forces for a goodly fight, have let the sword fall from their hands; today they have time to turn their feet towards the shadowy sanctuaries, where mothers, wives, sisters and little children are praying for the dead.

I too am on my knees, praying for dead. /<sup>3</sup>

I have fled into the silence of the hills, and there, not far from the battle-fields of yesterday, I pray with all my soul for those who gave their lives for a dream they beleived [sic!] in, for a dream I shared with them – for a dream that faded...but that is not dead.

I have learnt to pray during those years of tribulation. In happier days I thought I understood the meaning of prayer, but since I have lived in sorrow, I thing I have learnt to pray differently, that when I talk to my God, my voice has another sound.

Oh! but how I long to be in communication with those that are no more, how I long talk to the dead. In my hours of doubt, when no light seems reach my soul, I would like to cry out to them: that their share is beat – that some battles are worse than death, battles that have to be fought in silence, battles that last and last, till courage wanes and the heart becomes old and weary & sick... But I, their Queen, must send them another message, over into the silence /<sup>4</sup> that separates me from them – my message must not be one of discouragement but must even now be one of hope!

Once, long ago, before the great suffering came over us, I put strange words into the mouth of a sovereign who existed only in one of the legends I then loved to create. In an hour of distress that sovereign cried aloud, asking if one heart can be large enough to carry every sorrow, if one brain can be wise enough to lead millions to their good, if one courage can be great enough to meet every foe, if one soul can be just enough to sit in judgement on others – little knowing that one day, so soon afterwards, those same questions would also be mine – and the cry that rises from my lips at this hour is: can one heart be large enough to carry every sorrow! and that heart a woman's heart!

Oh! Ye dead to whom I am talking today, can Ye realize what it means to be Mother of a torn and bleeding country, whose every child turns to her, asking for help, /<sup>5</sup> for food, for clothing, for encouragement, for justice, and... for hope! of a mother who has become poor herself? whose hands are tied, whose tongue is tied, who, with anguished eyes stares around her, wondering whence help can still come! And who has to stand up meeting her fate without flinching [sic!], without giving either sign of fatigue or despair.

On this day set apart for the dead, I want for a while to tear myself away from the voices of the living and seek refuge with you who have found silence and peace and rest, so that something of that peace should come to my soul from the unknown regions into which you have flown.

There are many things I want to tell you today and the first of them is: that I consider that the living have a debt to pay towards to the dead; and that because of that dept, my courage shall not fail me, that even if at times, I am poor of spirit and am tired of the voices of the living. I nevertheless /<sup>6</sup> shall hold on because of the dead... yes because of the dead...

Then I want you also to know that I honour your graves, your many many graves; that I search out your places of rest, however far and scattered they may be, that I go to them wherever I can, whenever I can.

I have climbed to solitary spots where single crosses stand, beckoning [sic!] to me from steep mountainsides, spots where the bitterest battles were fought and when you fell suddenly, face to the enemy, to be hurriedly buried by friend or by foe, so that no name is carved upon the rough boards that mark the end of your road.

I have also been to big, well-tended cemeteries where in tidy rows lie side by side, often ten of you in one grave, cemeteries, where flowers have been planted and where small children and weeping women come to pray for the rest of your sons.

To desolate, forsaken little grave-yards /<sup>7</sup> have I been, where bare mounds are huddled together like sheep lost in the desert. Lonely little heaps, over which the wind tears, chanting dirges other voices were no there to sing; melancholy, miserable little graves, that few visit, of which the crosses look tired and depressed and that the dust of the high roads covers with its pall of grey.

I have been to greener spots, where is sweeter to lie; where tall trees stood like patient sentinels that neither time nor seasons can tire. And once, as the sun was setting I came to a quiet convent, where the bravest of the brave lay beneath the shadow of an old wooden church. A weather-beaten building it was grey with age that conferred [sic!] on it a dignity and beauty, it had probably never possessed in its youth. It stood in a wooded hollow, shut in by giant beeches that Spring had decked with tenderest green. Three venerable apple-trees, bending beneath /<sup>8</sup> the weight of their blossoms, grew close to the church as though protecting with their drooping branches those who slept beneath them. The last rays of the sun hovered lightly over everything like a blessing, touching with divine [sic!] radiance forest, flowers and rustic crosses that marked the graves of the dead.

I have sometimes come quite unexpectedly upon single crosses standing like lost souls at the side of the road, or at the outskirts of a wood, or sometimes man-high, overlooking the plains from a bare height, like a silent watcher put there on guard. All these crosses are of rough wood, loosely [sic!] put together, gone grey beneath sun and rain. Before each have I paused to murmur a silent prayer.

But the place I go to most often, is the grave-yard close by the hospital near the front, where last year I used to work.

It lies high above a river that flows from bluey mountains down towards /<sup>9</sup> the widening plains.

From the land of my childhood, seeds and bulbs had been sent me by friends to plant or sow upon those humble graves. Owing to the length of the road they had made till they reached me many of the plants were too dry to grow, and as this year the heavens were against us and no rain came to soften the earth, few of those flowers from that far-distant country lived to bloom on my soldiers' graves.

Yet a hand-full bravely pierced the dry and stony ground, shooting up in stars of white. Pink or purple like a sweet miracle it is difficult to understand.

Four ragged shepherd-boys help me to keep tidy this small garden of rest; they shared with me the mystery of those fragile flowers that had been sent me from over the seas. With large dark eyes full of wonder they looked up into my face when I told them that I, their Queen, had also come from that far-far /<sup>10</sup> country to share their joys,

sorrows and griefs, and related to them about that other people, so strong and faithful, that people that are also fighting for the same great cause...

I taught them to care for this place of peace, taught them that the dead must be honoured always above all those, fallen for their country's sake. They understood my words, and when I am absent it is they who look after my graves.

Generally it is at the hour of dusk, that I visit my silent sleepers and I am always closely followed by my bare-footed shepherds who talk of this cemetery as of a very precious garden loved by their queen...

With them I wander about amidst the graves and remember those that lie there, many of which had breathed their last sighs into my heart.

A tall oaken cross, erected [sic!] in the center stands, huge and solid against a hazy horizon of mountains - a cross that /<sup>11</sup> can be seen from far.... At the hour when the sun is sinking it becomes shadowy and seems to grow excessively and to stretch out its [sic!] arms towards the burning skies. Far beneath, the silvery river reflects the glow from above, the water becomes reader and reader [sic!], as though from secret depths the blood of many sacrifices were dying its [sic!] slow-flowing floods...

Often have I stood beneath the shade of that great cross, watching the mystery of the sun's farewell to the day, drinking into my soul the sad world's beauty whilst my lips murmured prayers for the dead...

Sâmbăta Morților... and is it not natural that on this day of all days, I should return to that garden of peace, there to ponder over the sacrifice of so many young lives that perchance may seem to have been thrown away in vain.... Why so many tears, so much suffering, so many death – cries /<sup>12</sup> so many mourners, when the goal was not reached? What does it mean? What does it mean oh! Ye dead!

Perhaps ye are wiser now than we are and ye understand, and ye do not regret. Perhaps ye are in a world where strife and hatred does not exist, in a world where you can meet your foe face to face and remember only that he too died bravely for a cause in which he believed! [sic!]

But sorrow has remained with us and the heavy burden of the tears of those who weep; perhaps it is because their eyes are blinded by tears that those upon earth cannot see clearly what lies beyond?

Our road was long and thorny, is strewn with shattered illusions [sic!] and broken dreams but do ye think that we have reached the end? Somehow I cannot think, oh! ye silent ones, that this can really be the end of our road...

Over there in home to which I do not /<sup>13</sup> yet dare to return, there is a small tomb that awaits me, a small tomb that others have secretly tended beneath the stares of those who were not friends, whilst I was sowing flowers on your many fold graves; but at those hours of sunset when I stood amongst you in that far-away place, it was as though from all that surrounded me, I were turning my yearning face towards that far-off waiting tomb...

He was my great sacrifice, the great “why” my soul asked of Fate! Yet perchance it was written that he should be torn for me in an hour of darkness so as to remain there as guardian, as a link with the things that had been. Lonely little sleeper in the old church in the old home, patiently he lies as ye fallen ones, scattered far and wide, also lie in perfect silence, awaiting the hour of resurrection – that hour when all shall arise!

But turning my face back from the dead to the living, this message would I cry out /<sup>14</sup> to those still sorrowing here upon earth: Ye are taught to believe [sic!] in the hour of resurrection, with every fibre of our beings let us cling to that faith; let not your souls be shaken by adversity, believe [sic!] me oh! ye mourners, that that hour will come, and when it comes, oh! this let me tell you, when that hour comes, it will not only be a resurrection of the dead!...

June 1918