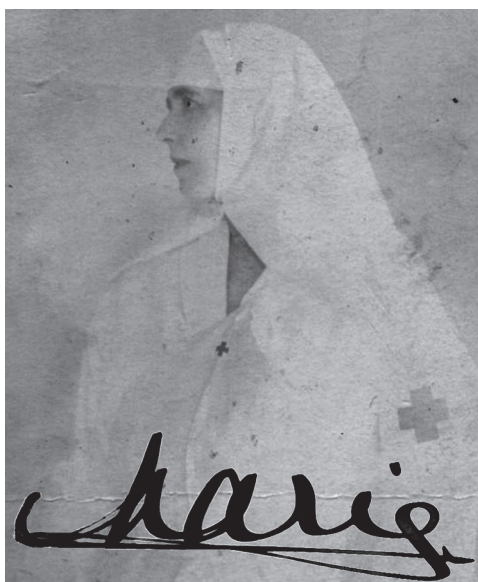


Wartime Diaries from the First World War The Chronology of a Collective Destiny

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Queen MARIE, charity sister.

SOURCE: <http://www.marelerazboi.ro/razboi-catalog-obiecte/item/regina-maria-sora-de-caritate-2>.

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UNDOUBTEDLY, THE contemporary interest in diaries of yore is based largely on their human and historical nature.¹ As historical documents of their time, diaries raise the great issue of the meaning of history within the personal narrative. The individual who communicates with history via a diaristic voice moves away from the autobiographical space *sensu stricto*, as the experience of personal history (small-scale history) and the history of the epoch (large-scale history) becomes a fact of consciousness and a memento of having lived the two. Thus, turning existence into conscience and biography into destiny means that the diarist's voice narrates while encompassing the contents of History in a privileged and conscious experience.

However, being considered subjective literature, given the constant association of the intimate event with the historical one they imply, diaries have been used reluctantly as historical documents proper. The reason behind this is a skepticism stemming from the overpowering importance that diarists

might place on their image capital. Yet, as signs of a destiny in the making,² especially in the case of people who take on the characteristics of the times they live in, diaries become complex indirect historical testimonies, at times more subtle than a detailed chronicle.³ Those who wrote history, being credible witnesses to history, such as Queen Marie of Romania (1875–1938), Jeana Fodoreanu (?–?), Alexandru Averescu (1859–1938) and Gheorghe Băgulescu (1890–1963), embraced their role adamantly. Their diaries from the First World War can be read as refined chronicles⁴ of their century. Silent witnesses to the Great War, the diaries of a queen (Queen Marie), a woman-soldier and Red Cross physician (Jeana Fodoreanu), an active-duty general (Alexandru Averescu), and a captain of the mountain infantry troops (Gheorghe Băgulescu) complete with significant details the events recorded in history books. Such diaries have been and are still read as mere “timelines” of individual destinies. However, they do depict nationally and internationally relevant historical times, which is why we believe they should be re-read as a “chronology” of a collective destiny, where the time of the events almost overlaps with the time of the confession narrative. In other words, in these diaries, where a name and social status are associated to the narrator, history or the narrative past dwells in simultaneity with the writing of history or the analytical present.

Queen Marie of Romania starts her regular diary entries on 14/27 August 1916,⁵ when Romania enters the First World War, and she writes continually, showing great discipline, until her death in 1938. Although Queen Marie’s first attempt to keep a diary of her privileged and conscious experiences dates back to two years earlier, to the death of King Carol I of Romania (1839–1914) and her coronation as queen of Romania, she gave up after just a few days. Nonetheless, she resumes her diary entries the day she feels that her personal history blends with her people’s history to the point of coalescence. The 101 notebooks written in English constitute probably the most extensive diary known in Romania. Queen Marie understands that being a royal is not merely a destiny, but a capital that needs to be nurtured and put to use. Shaken to the core by the greatness of the historical events she witnesses not just passively and metaphorically, but also literally and actively, Queen Marie illustrates the uniqueness of an individual on the cusp of centuries trying to capture the way in which historical time has shaped the diarist’s destiny as well as the role played by the diarist in history.

The first 14 notebooks cover the war and Queen Marie later turns them into a three-tome memoir titled *The Story of My Life*, first published in English in London–Toronto–Melbourne–Sydney (Cassell & Company), between 1934 and 1935, and in New York (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934, 615 pp.). The book is then translated into Romanian by Mărgărita Miler-Verghy under the title *Povestea vieții mele*. The memoir was published in three volumes between 1934

and 1936 and subsequently reprinted multiple times after 1989, among the first editions being those of Moldova Publishing House (Iași, 1990–1991) and Eminescu Publishing House (Bucharest, 1991). The third volume is different from the first two from a narrative point of view, as it mainly includes a selection of personal diary notes from between 1916 and 1918. The diary excerpts Queen Marie chose to use at the end of her memoir start on 14/27 August 1916. These notes are subject to a self-censorship meant to silently eliminate or mitigate the sincere outbursts, impressions or discontent concerning the king's, the Crown prince's or the Romanian political elite's attitude, which she deemed unfit to be made public at that time.

The recent publication in three volumes (vol. 1, 1916–1917; vol. 2, 1917–1918; vol. 3, 1918) of the Romanian translation of Queen Marie's diaries written during the war under the title *Jurnal de război* (Wartime diary) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2014–2015) complements the Queen's portrait with "passionate pages" teeming with the "life," "spiritual turmoil" and "tension" of those days. Previously, the Queen was chiefly seen as a nurse, an image she herself turned into a symbol, but which solely linked her to the humanitarian and medical efforts of the Red Cross, thus overshadowing her missions as a soldier and diplomat, as well as her roles of wife, mother and friend during the war.

The notes in her personal diary were written as the events unfolded, abiding by the rules of simultaneity and *calendarity*.⁶ Consequently, the times she experiences and describes in the text provide the background for the narrator's view on World War I in particular and on history in general. Recognizing that nothing is immutable, that everything is subject to change, that human beings are enslaved by the passing of time in a perpetual becoming that is itself subject to the times that wear, alter, and transform, Queen Marie lends a pathetic note to her gestures. She does not look for theoretical tools to define a moral, but has the power to turn the common moral into a royal political practice that gives her a strong touch of heroism and gains her the title of "the last romantic."⁷

In March 1910, when she begins the autobiography that will later become her personal diary, Queen Marie confesses in the very first lines her desire to write down her memories, thoughts, and experience, lest she might forget them. She thus hopes that such an exercise in mnemonics will help her later recall them.⁸ It is, however, only on the morning of 14/27 August 1916 that she becomes acutely aware of the individual and collective memory loss brought about by a two-year discontinuity of the diary due to the death of King Carol I on 2/15 October 1914. Henceforth, as history rushes into her life—"today I can think of nothing else but the fact that there is going to be a war"⁹—neither listlessness nor other concerns can keep her from writing daily, thus bestowing immortality upon fleeting moments.

Colonel Jeana Fodoreanu of the medical staff, who, in 1913, fights alongside Queen Marie against the cholera epidemic during the Balkan Wars, also writes a wartime diary between 1916 and 1919. She only publishes it in 1928, under the title *Femea-soldat* (Woman soldier), to honor the memory of the heroes and fellow-soldiers killed in battle. The volume is dedicated “To H.M. Queen Marie, a homage of devotion, faith and love.” The late publication of the wartime notes is explained in the Foreword as the result of the discontent following a fruitless wait and a wish that “others, more capable people and better writers, would speak about and remember those who carried out their duty under the flag of the Red Cross.” Therefore, after ten years of futile hope, Jeana Fodoreanu considers it appropriate to “reveal the almost daily recollections” written during the war, all the more for having “actively” and “directly” participated in the Great War, “from the first to the last day of the conflagration,” acting as a “living example” on duty, “animated” by Queen Marie’s advice and exhortation.¹⁰

During the same period, General Alexandru Averescu also publishes a wartime diary titled *Notițe zilnice din războiul 1916–1918* (Daily notes from the 1916–1918 war)], first as a feuilleton in the *Îndreptarea* (The Right Way) newspaper and a few years later as a book. In its 1935 Foreword, the author feels compelled to justify his own diary: being aware from the outset of the “huge extent of the drama that was starting to unfurl in front of the whole of humanity,”¹¹ and directly involved in the military operations on the front, he starts putting down the events as they are happening. His interest is sincere; on the one hand, he is up to date with the “real state of affairs” both inside the country and abroad and, on the other hand, he is able to realize without fear of mistake “how bloody events are going to ensue.”¹² Moreover, upon reading other memoirs of the time, he realizes that the latter are full of “inaccuracies” regarding circumstances he himself is well acquainted with for having been a direct participant. Therefore, as a soldier and out of respect for the accuracy of historical information, Alexandru Averescu deems it appropriate to restore the truth by publishing diary notes written in the midst of the events. He knows, nonetheless, that, given the rules of the genre, diaries eventually sacrifice beauty for the sake of the truth—told with “absolute sincerity” and “untainted honesty”—in order to serve “future scholars” and become “teachings from other people’s experience.”¹³

Captain Gheorghe Băgulescu also publishes a book that can be read as a wartime diary, in 1918 (in the town of Târgu-Neamț). Its title is *Zile de energie: Impresii și povestiri de pe front 1916–1917* (Days full of energy: Impressions and accounts from the battlefield) and it tells of the Romanian army’s victories in the “death triangle,” in order to “let it be known” to contemporaries and descendants alike what sacrifice the army made to fulfill the ideal of the unification of all Romanians. In the Foreword, the author admits that the lines about the “times

full of energy” were written when the “maelstrom of the battle” offered some respite. A footnote to the Foreword of the book’s second edition, published in 1919, mentions that the Foreword was initially written on 22 February 1918, when Romania was completely isolated from its allies, surrounded by enemies or treacherous allies and forced into an unfair peace. Nevertheless, the author does not shy away from speaking about “the Greater Romania of tomorrow,” a creed for which Romanian soldiers continued to fight until the final victory: “In the years to come, the children of those who carried out their holy duty to the end, the future citizens of tomorrow’s Greater Romania—great indeed, for great was our sacrifice, and great is our soul—may wish to be acquainted with the epic of our times.”¹⁴

With their on-the-spot writing,¹⁵ diaries anchor the personal time in the social, daily time, thus giving rise to the pair *personal time/historical time*, which translates as an opposition between memory and oblivion, a paradoxical association of historicism and amnesia. Aware of the ephemeral character of “historical reality,” the diarist’s self turns the narrative not into a mere “storage space,” but into a “conservation space” for emotional memory.¹⁶ While it is usually an “archive” of one’s interiority, the diary now becomes a silent witness to history.

If we consider that the addressee of the diary’s message is its very author, then Queen Marie seems to have set a rendezvous between her future self and her daily notes. She reads them to her close friends right after she writes them, but subsequently goes through the diary again and re-writes the text. It is as if she envisages either lifetime or posthumous publication, which means that the message is now endowed with the pragmatic intentionality of a discourse made available to the public, whom we believe to have been the addressee in the first place. An ego-document, interesting to historians who want to evoke “the atmosphere” of the times, the personal diary has often been said to be a genre relating to situations of crisis or existential changes that have fractured the inner balance of the diarist. Consequently, the notes in Queen Marie’s diary on Sunday, 14/27 August 1916, inform us that, following two years of neutrality and a few weeks of secret preparations, the “big day” has come for the country, a day full of emotion, hope and fear. The daily note then reveals the “painful ordeal” nestling in King Ferdinand’s soul as he places the “honor” of being King of Romania first, before his Hohenzollern name, “at an overwhelming time of supreme sacrifice for the country.” He officially acknowledges the Romanian entry into the war alongside the Triple Entente, which is regarded as a vital decision in the pursuit of the Romanian people’s national ideal. The following day, Queen Marie notes that on St. Mary’s Day the whole country received the important news and that it was met with sober and not boisterous enthusiasm, as the Romanian people felt that it was going through “a solemn moment—a dreadful moment, a great moment.”¹⁷

Jeana Fodoreanu begins her wartime diaries on the same day, 15 August, when she jots down, like any good Romanian would, the emotion she felt: “An emotional day! A shattering day! The moment has arrived for Romanians to show *who they are, what they are capable of*.”¹⁸

General Averescu, appointed commander of the 2nd Army by a decree on 14 August, starts his personal diary, subtitled *Războiul nostru* (Our war), on 21 August 1916, when he takes command. On 23 August, he copies the 2nd Army’s Orders for Day 1, whose addressees are his officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers. When writing, he has “in mind the holy image of GREATER ROMANIA”:

*The cause for which this country takes her sons into battle is just and holy and it will give us the strength to come out victorious. For centuries a desire has been felt throughout all the territories inhabited by Romanians to merge the Romanian spirit into one and single body. What was for our fathers and forefathers but a beautiful and distant dream is meant to become for us a reality accomplished by us.*¹⁹

The fragmentary character of the diary, which acquires an epistemological status in the Romantic aesthetics,²⁰ seems to suit very well the diarists we analyze. They manage to seize the meandering movements of the history they witnessed and the disparate fragments eventually coalesce in a layout resembling a mosaic, a tapestry, a musical variation.

Queen Marie is born on 30 October 1875, as the first daughter of Prince Alfred, the second son of Queen Victoria, duke of Edinburgh and later duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and of Mary, grand duchess, daughter of Tsar Alexander II. She marries Prince Ferdinand of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (1865–1927), crown prince of Romania, in 1893. In 1914, she becomes Queen of Romania.²¹ With the memory of a happy childhood alive in her heart, Queen Marie begins her “oriental adventure” with naive innocence and spontaneity, without fear or anxiety, ready to love the new country. A great lover of nature, she roams through the country, wanders off the beaten paths, both in order to discover places that few have ever seen before and to become familiar with her adoptive homeland: “I love these places in the countryside, they comfort my soul and their perfect tranquility heals me.”²² She believes in the mission of monarchs, but also in their rights.²³ Confident and cheerful, she sees the good, the bright side in everything; she is royal in every sense of the word.

However, Marie becomes Queen of Romania in a time of global crisis. Under the pretext of a new world hegemony, she is informed of “a cynical political plan,”²⁴ a plan with greedy objectives and based on family relationships. Yet, the Queen has the courage to counter it by betting on one idea: the national

idea along the lines of the revolt of those risking being humiliated and of the natural national claims that followed. And perhaps it is her extensive diary, virtually accompanying her life from a certain moment on, which turned her into a legend by providing a self-portrait in motion. This self-portrait reveals not only the love and respect she enjoys, but also her moral energy, great stability, confidence in the natural justice of time, in fair reward. The diary also reveals physical injuries and grief (the death of her youngest child, the disappointment with the crown prince's behavior, the impotent humiliation during the forced peace, etc.). Hardships are also confirmed by other diarists of the time. Jeana Fodoreanu, for example, often refers to Queen Marie in her war diary; she recalls gestures and situations illustrating the Queen's aura. The days of 29 and 30 August 1916 are days full of "disquiet" for this diarist, Jenica, as she is called. Among the wounded in the hospital is her brother Puiu (Petre), injured when the troops crossed the Olt River. Queen Marie visits the hospital and brings him a bouquet of roses with two branches, oak and green laurel, tied together with a tricolor ribbon. She hangs it to the patient's bed and, "without any reluctance," kisses the bandages that covered his head. The diary recounts the Queen's gesture but, unable to suppress her emotion, her full admiration, the author adds a personal comment: "When you see so much compassion from such a Queen, you can face the cannons and the machine guns like a madman."²⁵ The days go by, the war continues, and Jeana Fodoreanu writes again about the Queen's behavior, this time during the truce at the beginning of 1918. She describes the way in which the monarch becomes the "moral foundation"²⁶ of the dynasty she's building: "This woman, our Queen, endured so much, she cried so much, she prayed so much to the God of triumphs! When I see her big blue eyes gazing towards the horizon, I have the feeling that she has already seen! Far, far beyond Bucharest, to the west... from where we all expect salvation."²⁷

Moreover, during the offensive of the German army led by Field Marshal August von Mackensen on the Siret front, Queen Marie goes to the battle front, ignoring the bombs. Her silhouette wearing the white uniform of the Red Cross mobilized the living and alleviated the suffering of the wounded.²⁸ And, although the Russian army betrays its allies and the Treaty of Bucharest is the beginning of a "disastrous" peace (24 April/7 May 2018), the Queen does not give up for a second the hope of victory. On 28 April 1918, she writes in her diary: "Officially, they all try to put a smile on a mask of absolute tragedy; because of this, I slowly creep into despair. At least we should be honest with ourselves and face the circumstances."²⁹

Amidst a prolonged tragedy that gripped the entire world, her personal notes complement, at a different pace, her contemporaries' writings in testifying the direct experience of history, either on the front line, where military operations

were taking place, or at the Red Cross. Romania's entry into the war—true, in the name of a great ideal—proves from the very outset to be tough for the royal family and the army, as well as for civilians. In the midst of the storm, Queen Marie tries to remain calm and objective. In her diary, she notes very discouraging news from the recently opened front and, for several days, her attention is focused on the Tutrakan frontline, eagerly awaiting the news. While, on 22 August 1916, she writes about the resistance of the Romanian army in the area, the next day the Queen mentions that bad news pours in from this very endangered line of the front, then the following day she writes that the news is worse with every hour that passes and then, inevitably, that Tutrakan has fallen. As a sort of epilogue to the event, on 25 August the diarist considers it important to jot down a detail from the area that is hard to believe: the Bulgarians are said to have killed all the Romanian prisoners in Tutrakan.³⁰

Jeana Fodoreanu, now at the head of the Despina Doamna Institute, turned auxiliary hospital, lists in her diary the important news of the day. On 22 August 1916, she describes the “terrible disaster” at Tutrakan in terms of the number of injured people admitted in the hospital and with... frightening non-official information from the battlefield:

Such torment! Such pain! The terrible disaster at Tutrakan is announced in Bucharest! What could I say? It's madness; it is horrible to hear what people say—the word betrayal is quite often used . . . 28 of these poor wretches arrived at the hospital from Tutrakan. 17 are not severely injured, 5 are blind, and the others have pneumonia, among the latter there are those who escaped by swimming across the Danube. The blind were found wounded, crushed, lying in ditches; Bulgarian women pulled out their eyes with savage cynicism. Among these poor people, there's a major, a handsome, strong, big man, whose eyes are now... two bleeding holes.

*He's asking me, poor man, to give him poison. If anyone could satisfy his wish! And there are so many others are like him!*³¹

Even though General Alexandru Averescu did not participate directly in the military operations in the area, on 25 August 1916 he describes in his wartime diary the bitter outcome of the first confrontation between the Romanian Army and the Bulgarian-German army. As a military man, he would like to have explanations, to know who is responsible for this: “There has been a real disaster at Tutrakan: forces the size of an army corps were partly slaughtered, partly captured. Only the wounded escaped as they were evacuated in the early phases of the battle. Who will pay for the loss of so many lives and this shame? Who?”³²

Of course, the objective presentation of a historical event should contain strict timelines, topographic details, a numerical inventory of mobilized person-

nel, losses, etc. Therefore, the battle of Tutrakan as a historical fact is recounted in the specialized literature as follows: “The bridgehead of the Romanian army on the right bank of the Danube, across the river from Oltenița, was the scene of a bloodbath between September 1 and 6 (new style), 1916, and ended with a crushing victory of the Bulgarian-German forces. More than 6,000 Romanians died and were injured and nearly 30,000 were taken prisoner.”³³

However, any historical event inevitably involves an *atmosphere* that can be revealed and recovered through and with the help of diaries. This would complete the objective presentation of the historical moment in which people were involved; it would recover its subjective side: it seems, for example, that in the darkest despair caused by the Tutrakan defeat of 1916 the Romanians found the optimism and heroism which allowed for the victory at Mărăști in 1917. The battle of Mărăști went down in Romanian history as the first victory of the Romanian army 11 months after the country’s entry into the war. Such an event could not miss an entry in the wartime diaries of the time.

With unconcealed joy, Queen Marie writes on 25 July/7 August 1917, about the “wonderful determination” of the Romanian troops, which so amazed the German troops “that they fled in all directions, officers first.” To highlight this piece of information, she adds a brief ironic comment: “which Germans seldom do.”³⁴

General Averescu, commander of the army between 1916 and 1918, still remembered today as the architect of the victory at Mărăști, provides expert and precise details about the preparation of the attack. On 30 June, he is unhappy that an operation prepared for 6 months, for which orders were issued more than 2 months in advance, is still postponed. On 9 July, he confesses in his diary that he firmly believes his troops will be successful: “I am convinced that the action starting today will be a title of glory for our soldier and a reason of pride for our country.”³⁵ The next day he exhibits the same confidence in success: “I am perfectly confident. We will win.”³⁶ On 11 July, the general celebrates the victory: “The explosions of our projectiles covered the entire attack sector, from Mărăști to Încărcătoarea. An incredible, truly emotional scene.”³⁷ On 12 July, he notes with delight that “the enemy is running for his life”³⁸ and, on 13 July, he concludes that it has been “a brilliant victory.”³⁹ The results of the battle of Mărăști are recounted by Averescu in the foreword to the volume published by Gen. G. A. Dabija in 1935, *Armata română în războiul mondial* (The Romanian army in the World War). There, the general mentions all the operational instructions given to the 2nd Romanian Army, the purpose and assignments of the mission, the technical details and military tactics, but not the emotion of victory.

The atmosphere on the battlefield of Mărăști, the state of mind of the soldiers who wrote this Romanian page of glory in the Great War can be found in G.

Băgulescu's volume *Zile de energie*. This "soldiers' Bible" written by someone who "knows things from within and is emotionally involved"⁴⁰ can be easily read as a wartime diary. The notes of 12 July to July 17 complete the information about the event in Mărăști with details from the front. After talking about the "proper" bombardment—also mentioned by General Averescu in his writings—which "took the Germans out of their lair" and chased them in their slippers and vests,⁴¹ the diarist stresses the reaction of civilians when they realize that the soldiers are Romanians ("Our boys have arrived!" they shout) and puts emphasis on the collective emotion sparked by the joy of the encounter. "Our boys have arrived! I cannot anticipate what the old man is about to do, but he takes my hand in his trembling hands and leans forward to kiss it. His tears drip into the dust of the road. My eyes flicker, the road starts to go up and down, moving before me; two strips of fire roll down my cheeks and more and more drops fall into the dust of the road."⁴²

Unlike General Averescu's wartime diary, which strictly observes the rules of the genre and describes in detail the moments of waiting between bombings, the preparation of the attacks and the events that followed the clash on the front line, Gheorghe Băgulescu's stories are closer to the literary-subjective genre of the wartime diary, sometimes hidden behind a narrative told both in the third person and the first person: "I have tried to depict some moments of the times of energy, determination, bravery and sacrifice the Country has been through, to describe, here and there, just a few of the countless deeds of bravery of this holy ground's sons, as well as emotional impressions, reflecting the hopes and pains of an entire Nation."⁴³

General Alexandru Averescu was decorated immediately after the success at Mărăști by King Ferdinand, and his feats on the battlefields of the First World War turned him into a sort of "national hero," an image that also contributed to his recognition as a politician. He is prime minister in January–February 1918, 1920–1921 and 1926–1927, and in 1930 becomes Marshal of Romania. As for Gheorghe Băgulescu, the former mountain infantry captain on the battlefields of Mărăști and Oituz, he also enjoys a well-deserved recognition: on 1 December 1918, he is sent as a delegate of the Romanian Army at the Alba Iulia Assembly and is in charge of taking to Bucharest the official act of the Great Union. Between 1935 and 1939, he is sent by the Romanian government to Japan, first as a military, naval and aeronautical attaché, then, a few years later, once he becomes a general, as a plenipotentiary minister (1941–1943).

The main tense used in the diary is the present, and sometimes a detail accurately described by the narrator's self can metonymically recreate an entire atmosphere or event. Thus, once Romania's "Golden Dream" becomes true, on the train taking her back to Bucharest, Queen Marie recalls in her diary the

tragedies, the suffering, the misfortunes, but also the hope of the previous two years. She understands the lessons learned in exile, the love of work and charity, she also realizes that it is total dedication to a creed that has made it possible to return home with the “great dream” of a United Romania fulfilled. Sunday, 18 November/1 December 1918, is described by the Queen in notes full of the joy of triumph, which still seems unbelievable, though true. The festive atmosphere on the streets of Bucharest is rendered in the diary in vivid words which try to convey the emotion of the moment: “The town had gone absolutely mad. It was as though the houses as well as the pavement were cheering with the crowd. We passed through a great deal of deafening cheers.”⁴⁴

For Jeana Fodoreanu, however, 1 December means, first of all, a heartbreaking personal toll: she has lost her brothers and father on the battlefield, and in the meantime her mother has died in the capital occupied by the Germans. She is back at her home, but she does not attend the parade celebrating the return of the royal family to Bucharest and honoring the glory of the “victory” flags. As she explains in her diary, it’s because she’s convinced she has fulfilled her mission towards the country:

*There’s nothing left for me to see. Go see that magnificence, you, who have suffered under the enemy’s yoke, go see the smiles of our proud Queen and our Great King. I saw how many tears they shed as a price for the magnificence of today. I know how much it cost them to make our country, their country, great. I cannot say **Country** without saying **They**, I cannot say **They** without saying **Country**. This is because the two images are closely linked in my mind and heart: **Country and They**.⁴⁵*

Queen Marie awarded Mrs. Jeana Fodoreanu (born Ioana General Dr. Ștefănescu) the decoration Queen Marie Cross, 1st Class for her service at the Despina Doamna auxiliary hospital and on the medical train no. 3 during the First World War (1916–1919). But, apart from the details in her diary, we do not have any other biographical information about this woman-soldier, who served the country and the Queen with such courage and devotion. Since in a wartime diary the author’s voice is both a real person and the source of a discourse, the “self” possessing its own name, although initially unknown to the reader, becomes known thanks to the discourse produced. Through the monologue, the diary gives the author an identity, and the hope of being published (during his/her lifetime or posthumously) betrays the diarist’s desire to become known to the others, to explain himself/herself in all liberty. Colonel Jeana Fodoreanu’s wartime diary can also be read as a personal example of the spirit of the “emancipated woman” present in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century⁴⁶ and, as such, it has saved at least part of the biography from the anonymity whose victims must have been

many who served, under the leadership of Queen Marie, the Red Cross organization during the Great War.

IT IS unanimously acknowledged that eras of collective restlessness stimulate written confessions and create a horizon of expectation which favors the intimate diary.⁴⁷ Thus, this literary genre is defined less by formal elements and more by a “reading contract.”⁴⁸ Therefore, through this reading pact, the wartime diary can be read as a subjective version of the narrator’s own experience and acquires the validity of a historical document. And, while in the confessional writings it is not truth but authenticity⁴⁹ which is of the essence, the voices in the wartime diaries under consideration assume not only the responsibility of the writing and its public appearance but also the truth of the narratives. In a diary of this kind, the narrator takes the liberty of telling⁵⁰ history from his/her point of view, and the *self*-character is always accompanied by the events of history. In times of war, the personal diary turns into a wartime diary and, if kept regularly, besides a social function, it also has a spiritual and apotropaic one: “It is the way s/he presents the facts of history that determines his/her credibility as a witness and his/her credibility as a character in a narrative that wants to put history in a story and transform a life into a destiny.”⁵¹

And, if the past survives today, the choice of a diary during history’s turning points can be justified by the fact that this fragmentary writing makes it possible to concentrate on details, fugitive shades and instant impressions, all guarantees of authenticity. While the diary is not coherent per se, a “subtle coherence”⁵² is nevertheless present, due to the writer who transforms his/her biography into destiny. The diary plays a reminder role, recording deeds (*acta*), thoughts (*cogitata*), feelings (*sentita*), preserving them for the use of both the author and the reader. A wartime diary can even become of interest to an entire nation. “I received two Transylvanians who have come to help us achieve the union. The fulfillment of Romania’s golden dream is such a wonderful thing that I do not dare consider it certain,”⁵³ as Queen Marie, for example, writes on 8/21 November 1918.

As it is a time of war, the diary has the appearance of an external chronicle interwoven with intimate notes. The diarist’s voice does not obscure the reality s/he is living. The author approximates it through the details and suggests it by using snapshots, fragments of the global truth. The small time lapse between the event and its recording, in which the emotion of the experience lived is still preserved, as well as the fact that the narrator ignores the outcome of the story s/he is writing gives uncertainty to the text. The ambiguity of life condemns the author to always have a partial and relative vision of things.⁵⁴ A chronicle of the events of the *inner* and *outer* person, the wartime diary is not “paral-

le” to history, because personal time overlaps and constantly intermingles with historical time, the two overlapping sometimes until they become one and the same. Although the distance between historical time (social, national, European) and subjective time is considerable in an ordinary personal diary, it seems suppressed in wartime diaries. The Great War diaries authored by Queen Marie, Colonel Jeana Fodoreanu, General Alexandru Averescu and Captain Gheorghe Băgulescu testify, between the lines, about the narrators living their own time as a historical event and about the way their destinies became one with the meaning of history. Through these diaries, they seem to have built a *refuge self*,⁵⁵ this writing practice making it possible to internalize the crisis of the time as one of collective identity. While fully assimilating the national idea, narrators use this subjective literary formula as if to live the same experience twice; they take control of the memories they keep, catalogue, and analyze by writing beautiful pages of historiographical collective memory. □

Notes

1. See Ioana Mihaela Bonda, “Aspects of 1918 from the Journal of a Theologian,” *Transylvanian Review* 27, Suppl. no. 2 (2018) (*Matters of War and Peace*): 203–216.
2. See Jean Paul Bled, “Le Journal de Guerre du Capitaine Marcel Fontaine,” *Transylvanian Review* 27, Suppl. no. 2 (2018) (*Matters of War and Peace*): 129–134.
3. Cf. Smaranda Ghiță, *Lumi interioare: Jurnalul între document și ficțiune*, foreword by Dumitru Irimia (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași, 2009), 115.
4. See Mihaela Bedecan, “The Memoirs of the Great War: General Considerations,” *Transylvanian Review* 24, 4 (2015): 3–20.
5. The two dates correspond to the Old Style (Julian) and New Style (Gregorian) calendars.
6. See Eugen Simion, *Genurile biograficului*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, 2008), 7.
7. Hannah Pakula, *The Last Romantic: A Biography of Queen Marie of Roumania* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).
8. See Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1916–1917: Precedat de însemnări din 1910–1916*, translation from English by Anca Bărbulescu, edition coordination and foreword by Lucian Boia (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2014), 21.
9. *Ibid.*, 101.
10. Jeana Col. Fodoreanu (N. Gen. Dr. Ștefănescu), *Femei-soldat, cu aprobarea M. S. Regina Maria a României* (Oradea: Tip. Adolf Sonnenfeld, 1928), 9.
11. Alexandru Averescu, *Notițe zilnice din război*, vol. 2, 1916–1918 (*Războiul nostru*), edition coordination, introduction and notes by Eftimie Ardeleanu and Adrian Pandeia (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1992), 9.

12. Ibid., 6.
13. Ibid., 9.
14. Căpitan G. Băgulescu, *Zile de energie: Impresii și povestiri de pe front 1916–1917*, including a letter by Nicolae Iorga, 2nd edition (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice C. Sfetea, 1919), 8.
15. Cf. Jacques Le Rider, *Jurnale intime vieneze*, translation from French and foreword by Magda Jeanrenaud (Iași: Polirom, 2001), 52.
16. Ibid., 88.
17. Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1916–1917*, 9.
18. Fodoreanu, 11.
19. Averescu, 14.
20. Ghiță, 130.
21. Jean-Noël Grandhomme, “La Monarchie roumaine sous le regard des officiers de la République française: De la méfiance à la fraternité d’armes, 1914–1922,” *Transylvanian Review* 27, Suppl. no. 2 (2018) (*Matters of War and Peace*): 11–12.
22. Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1917–1918*, translated from English by Anca Bărbulescu, edition coordination, foreword and a brief chronology by Lucian Boia (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2015), 68.
23. See Nicolae Iorga, *Regina Maria cu prilejul încoronării* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1923), 6.
24. Ibid., 59.
25. Fodoreanu, 19.
26. Iorga, 64.
27. Fodoreanu, 70.
28. See Iorga, 79.
29. Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1917–1918*, 103.
30. See Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1916–1917*, 119–122.
31. Fodoreanu, 15.
32. Averescu, 18.
33. Cf. Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1916–1917*, 122.
34. Ibid., 107.
35. Averescu, 143.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 145.
39. Ibid., 146.
40. Iorga, apud Băgulescu, 2.
41. Cf. Băgulescu, 165.
42. Ibid., 171.
43. Ibid., 7.
44. Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1917–1918*, 421.
45. Fodoreanu, 73.
46. See Le Rider, 21–22.
47. Cf. Ghiță, 54.

48. Cf. Philippe Lejeune, *Pactul autobiografic*, transl. Irina Margareta Nistor (Bucharest: Univers, 2000), 6.
49. See Simion, 135.
50. Ibid., 21.
51. Ibid., 22.
52. Ghiță, 130.
53. Maria, Regina României, *Jurnal de război 1917–1918*, 406.
54. Cf. Ghiță, 42.
55. See Le Rider, 27.

Abstract

Wartime Diaries from the First World War: The Chronology of a Collective Destiny

The present paper focuses on the wartime diaries written by Queen Marie of Romania, Colonel Jeana Fodoreanu, General Alexandru Averescu and Captain Gheorghe Băgulescu between 1916 and 1918, in the attempt to capture how historical time shaped the diarists' destiny, as well as the role diarists played in history. Our hermeneutical approach puts forward an interpretation of the pair *personal time/historical time*. It further focuses on this pair's modulations when it comes to the diaries written by individuals who created or actively participated in the creation of a given period's history. Our research also points to how wartime diaries can be interpreted as historical documents that complete with significant detail the events of World War I as depicted in history books. This analysis posits that paying attention to the polyphony of voices in wartime diaries may result in their becoming a benchmark for a collective destiny's *chronology*, thus raising the great issue of the meaning of History. When read as a text that doubles as a parameter of one's own interpretations, the wartime diary is complementary to the diarist's "classical" biography, and by interlacing small-scale and big-scale history it also illustrates how an individual's career may influence the fate of a whole nation, as the general, objective history encompasses the personal one.

Keywords

wartime diary, World War I, personal time/historical time, collective memory, Queen Marie of Romania, Col. Jeana Fodoreanu, Gen. Alexandru Averescu, Capt. Gheorghe Băgulescu