

# ELITES AS SYMBOLS. QUEEN MARIE AND ROMANIAN TRANSYLVANIANS AT A TURNING POINT – THE YEAR 1916 IN THE PRESS\*

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**Abstract:** *Greater Romania was born in the aftermath of the First World War as a result of tremendous efforts both on the battlefield and on the diplomatic arena. Queen Marie was one of the personalities who had a significant impact upon the events' unfolding and, given that she was the queen and thus not responsible for political choices, she could become the embodiment of this centuries-old dream, namely the union of all Romanians into a single state. The present study reveals part of this transformation process through which a person came to be regarded as a national symbol by quantitatively and qualitatively analysing a number of articles that were published by Transylvanian periodicals around a key moment of the conflagration, i.e. Romania's entry into the war. The pieces of news containing information about Queen Marie that appeared in 1916 before this event (from January until 27 August) were compared with those that convey facts about her during the period in which the Romanian army occupied part of Transylvania (August-October) and after it was forced to abandon these territories (October-December). Given this intricate context, it is not that surprising that the first of these three distinct periods comprises roughly 80% of all the information about Queen Marie available to Transylvanians in 1916. Whilst at a closer look some differences between these three periods emerge, it is important to emphasise that none of the analysed articles was totally negative with regard to Queen Marie, but merely polemical in some cases. As a result, the image of a talented, extremely beautiful and kind-hearted queen doing her utmost to serve the needs of her subjects was easy to adopt by Transylvanians as a symbol of unity and contributed to stimulating their loyalty towards their future sovereigns.*

**Keywords:** Queen Marie, Transylvanian periodicals, Greater Romania, World War I, 1916

## Introductory aspects

World War I profoundly shook all previous establishments and led to dramatic changes in the map of Europe. Romania was one of the beneficiaries of this new state

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of affairs, as its territory and population doubled in size at the end of the conflagration. One of the major acquisitions was Transylvania, a multiethnic and multid denominational province, cherished by Moldavians and Wallachians as the home of their oppressed brothers.

This paper's aim is to bring to light part of the means employed by the inhabitants of this former possession of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in order to cultivate their ties with Romania during the conflict. In this sense, a number of political, religious and literary periodicals were thoroughly researched so as to provide a complete picture of the ways in which Queen Marie of Romania was presented to ordinary Transylvanians shortly before and after a key moment of the conflict, namely Romania's entry into the war on 27 August 1916.

This important modification occurring on the Eastern front clearly impacted upon the activity of the Transylvanian press and upon the news it could convey about the Empire's new enemy. The unfolding of subsequent events, particularly the campaign in Transylvania (27 August – 26 September 1916) and the fact that (a small) part of the province was occupied by Romanian troops roughly until the battle of Braşov (7-8 October 1916) also affected the number and tone of articles about Queen Marie, as the following pages will demonstrate.

In a similar manner, not just the year chosen for analysis, but also the personality had in view is a momentous one, an affirmation endorsed by one of historians' advantages: hindsight. Undoubtedly, Romania's neutrality offered Transylvanian journalists the chance of portraying one of the most admired sovereigns of her time in a favourable light and without fuelling the Hungarian authorities' fears. In fact, such positive representations of Queen Marie partly continued even after Romania's declaration of war because, as queen, she was not held directly responsible for the country's political options. This arguable conception ("arguable" particularly when considering the role she played during the war), facilitated journalists' work and thus contributed both to the creation of a mindset compatible with Greater Romania and to Transylvanians' ever-increasing attachment to the Romanian dynasty, as sympathy towards her could be expressed more or less openly, particularly before August 1916.

Another important argument that supports the inclusion of Queen Marie amongst those who played a part in the making of Greater Romania is connected with the subject of this collection of papers, namely elites, because this political achievement could not have been possible without their existence. And although this social category can be defined in multiple ways, Queen Marie was clearly a member of the elite, irrespective of the viewpoint adopted.

Apart from being placed *ab initio* amongst the elites<sup>1</sup> based on her social status<sup>2</sup> and in accordance with the definitions of the “statist-oligarchic”<sup>3</sup> theoretical school, Queen Marie was a representative of this category because both other members of the elite and ordinary people alike were ready to follow her and be led by her in a number of actions, some of which could even pose health risks and/or endanger their lives. Therefore, the recognition element of the equation was present<sup>4</sup> and it was mostly based on her apparently irresistible charisma. Consequently, we can consider that more than being a member of the power elite in the sense defined by C. Wright Mills, namely those who “are in positions to make decisions having major consequences”, Queen Marie had a role similar to that of “professional celebrities”, i.e. she possessed “the power to distract the attention of the public or afford sensations to the masses, or, more directly, to gain the ear of those who do occupy positions of direct power”<sup>5</sup>. Whilst this role was probably not so obvious in 1916 (but became clear in 1919 on the occasion of her unofficial visit to Paris and London, during the peace talks that took place after the end of World War I), her ability to motivate both the soldiers and those behind the front line, as well as to make herself heard by politicians became evident immediately after Romania’s entry into the war.

However, in addition to being viewed as a celebrity and a member of the charismatic elite<sup>6</sup>, her artistic merits and literary talent situate her without doubt

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<sup>1</sup> Different meanings of the term and the quintessential ideas of several important theorists of the field are mentioned in Valery Golofrast, Tatiana Protassenko, Oleg Bozhkov, “The Elite of St. Petersburg as Seen by the City Inhabitants”, in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 1997, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 406.

<sup>2</sup> As Viorella Manolache, *Elite. Legitimări juridice moderne*, Sibiu: Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2006, pp. 7-8 shows, monarchs were included amongst the elite given their role as members of the governing system starting with the earliest works concerning elites. However, whilst this might seem obvious in the case of the one who actually exercised power, the consort’s position might be subjected to debate because, in defining elites, “upper class” membership is habitually not enough in itself, but is correlated with the exercise of power and/or with the role of decision-maker; Mattei Dogan, “Introduction: Diversity of Elite Configurations and Clusters of Power”, in Mattei Dogan (ed.), *Elite Configurations at the Apex of Power*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Andreea Oana Dăncilă, *Elite culturale românești în Transilvania în prima perioadă a secolului al XX-lea*, Ph.D. thesis, Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> For more details, see A. O. Dăncilă, *Elite culturale românești...*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, New Edition, With a new Afterword by Alan Wolfe, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> According to V. Manolache, *Elite...*, p. 10, “charismatic elites” are characterised by their “positive, hypnotic impact on the masses”. Maria Bucur also considers that “it was the fascination with Marie’s charisma that transformed her from a monarchical to a celebrity figure before the war”; Maria Bucur, “Between the Mother of the Wounded and the Virgin of Jiu: Romanian Women and the Gender of Heroism during the Great War”, in *Journal of Women’s History*, 2000, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 41. In a

amongst Romania's cultural elites of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And given her involvement in the First World War she certainly satisfied the conditions imposed by interwar Romanian thinkers with regard to membership of the elite category (or what other theorists more narrowly defined as moral elite<sup>7</sup>), namely demonstrating an irreproachable moral conduct, placing the community's interests above one's own, receiving validation from the public and having unconditional authority over it, even if the person in question does not have any real political power<sup>8</sup>.

It becomes obvious from this classification attempt that Queen Marie transgressed a series of borders stipulated by theorists in order to settle their research field. Thus, she could be included in several different elite categories all at once<sup>9</sup> and still some nuances of her elitist position would remain unaccounted for. Nonetheless, she undoubtedly was a member of the elite defined as "people of superior character and energy"<sup>10</sup>, qualities superbly displayed during a time of great turmoil for her country.

### Sources and predicaments

Queen Marie's image in Transylvania throughout the year 1916 was extracted from relevant press articles published in nine journals with political, religious or literary profiles. Given that the war took its toll on the periodicals' activity, the following alphabetic review of the sources includes some information about their relevance for the topic had in view.

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recently published study, Brian Cowan reviews the senses given to the word "celebrity", the alteration of its meaning during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the media's role in this process; Brian Cowan, "News, Biography, and Eighteenth-Century Celebrity", available at <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935338-e-132>, accessed on 15.09.2016. For a discussion concerning the relationship between celebrity status and (multiple types of) capital see Lisa Ann Richey, Alexandra Budabin, "Celebrities in International Affairs", available at <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935307.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935307-e-3>, accessed on 15.09.2016.

<sup>7</sup> See Giovanni Sartori's classifications, summarised in Codrina Șandru, *Comunități etnice și elite locale*, Brașov: Editura Universității „Transilvania”, 2007, pp. 55-56. More details about the moral role of the elite as seen by philosophers (namely Plato and Aristotle) and early Christian thinkers are available in V. Manolache, *Elite...*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> A. O. Dăncilă, *Elite culturale românești...*, p. 13. Contrary to this definition, according to other theories, especially those that seek to define the "elite" from a political standpoint, "the elites are inconceivable without one of their attributes, power, just as power is inconceivable without the representatives of the superior segment of the social pyramid, that of the elites"; Constantin Iltu, *Elite și putere în Europa heraldică a secolelor XII-XVI*, Sibiu: Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu, 2004, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> In other words, "functional elite diversity" defined as "the differentiation of elites according to structural functions – political, economic, administrative, military, cultural, etc." is not applicable in her case. For more details about "functional elite diversity" and "elite cohesion" see M. Dogan, "Introduction...", pp. 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> C. W. Mills, *The Power Elite*, p. 13.

*Biserica și Școala. Foaie bisericească-școlastică, literară și economică* [*Church and School. A churchly-scholastic, literary and economic newsheet*; hereinafter: *Biserica și Școala*] was issued in Arad in order to provide various types of news to its public of Orthodox faith. It seems that the periodical was tremendously attached to its main purpose, so that in 1916 there is only one article mentioning Queen Marie of Romania and, moreover, this is a mere reference to the sovereign's artistic talent and practice of charity included in Queen Elisabeth's obituary: "Queen Marie and her daughter princess Maria, taking after their great aunt, are artistic forces in the country and with their noble heart[s] fill the skies with their Samaritan deeds"<sup>11</sup>.

*Cultura Creștină* [*Christian Culture*], a Greek-Catholic periodical issued in Blaj, does not contain any mentions of Queen Marie of Romania during 1916, although it too published an obituary occasioned by "The death of Queen Elisabeth of Romania"<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, mainly due to its profile, *Drapelul. Organ național-politic* [*The Flag. A national-political organ*; hereinafter: *Drapelul*] is more useful in what concerns Queen Marie and details about her are part of several types of pieces of news (political, literary, general external information, war-related facts). As a result, this periodical issued in Lugoj provided a total of seven relevant articles, including the publication of one of Queen Marie's short stories in three consecutive numbers of the newspaper<sup>13</sup>.

*Foaia Poporului. Foaie politică* [*The People's Newsheet. A Political Newsheet*; hereinafter: *Foaia Poporului*] also comprises several articles about Queen Marie, part of which represented topics that were tackled by other journals as well (as it will be revealed in the following sections).

*Gazeta Transilvaniei. Ziar politic național* [*The Transylvanian Gazette. A national political newspaper*; hereinafter: *Gazeta Transilvaniei*] is by far the most informative of the sources, the peculiarities surrounding its issuance during 1916 making it worthy of being dealt with in a separate section of this article (see below). However, as a general summary regarding the relevant facts published about Queen Marie, we can note here that the periodical issued in Brașov has informed its readership about the sovereign's artistic merits (several articles give details about her literary works, some of which also became plays, but her talent as a painter is also praised), about the relationship with her subjects, about declarations given to foreign press representatives, about various domestic trips, accompanied or not by

<sup>11</sup> *Biserica și Școala*, Year XL, No. 8, 21 February (5 March) 1916, "† Regina Elisabeta a României" ["† Queen Elisabeth of Romania"], pp. 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> *Cultura Creștină*, Year VI, No. 5, 10 March 1916, the "Cronică" ["Chronicle"] column, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> *Drapelul*, Year XVI, the "Foița «Drapelului»" ["«The Flag»'s (Literary) Sheet"] column, "Povestea unui dor nestins" ["A Story of Great Longing"], in No. 37, 26 March (8 April) 1916, pp. 1-2, No. 38, 29 March (11 April) 1916, pp. 1-2 and No. 39, 31 March (13 April) 1916, pp. 1-2.

other members of the royal family, about her activity as a nurse or merely about her as a person, as seen by one of her Moldavian subjects.

Although its profile might have predisposed it to publishing texts written by Queen Marie, *Pagini literare* [*Literary Pages*] does not include any (mention) of her works. However, the periodical issued twice a month in Arad was extremely short-lived, having solely eight numbers that have appeared in 1916 from March until June, and this explains to a large degree why the sovereign's name is not present in the periodical's pages.

Generally speaking, *Românul* [*The Romanian*] provided fairly detailed data about what happened across the Carpathian Mountains, in Romania, but the relevant information about Queen Marie available in this periodical for the year 1916 is extremely limited, given that it was suspended by the Hungarian authorities in March. As a result, the present paper includes only 4 pieces of news stemming from this journal issued in Arad as the official organ of the Romanian National Party.

*Telegraful Român* [*The Romanian Telegraph*] has had a more auspicious fate than that of *Românul* (its religious profile may have constituted an advantage from this viewpoint) and therefore it was able to convey more facts about Queen Marie. However, although it managed to publish nine such pieces of news before August 1916, the situation created by Romania's entry into the war forced the periodical from Sibiu to cease its issuance between August and October and during the last two months of the year only two relevant articles have appeared.

*Unirea. Foaie bisericească-politică* [*The Union. A churchly-political news-sheet*; hereinafter: *Unirea*], another religious periodical, issued in Blaj, was also a valuable source of information for its readers in what concerned Queen Marie's personality and activity, but, unfortunately, this affirmation is restricted to the period January-August 1916. After Romania's declaration of war on Austria-Hungary no mention of the Romanian sovereign can be found in the periodical's pages, although in the first part of the year it had published twelve pertinent articles, some of which were quite detailed.

In conclusion, the present study comprises data gathered from nine Transylvanian periodicals that appeared during 1916, out of which two (namely *Cultura Creștină* and *Pagini literare*) provided no relevant articles. From the other seven periodicals I extracted a total number of 66 pieces of news that were analysed in detail with regard to the image they conveyed about Queen Marie. It is worth noting that some of these pieces of news overlap, in the sense that the same fact was published in several journals, sometimes even in exactly the same phrasing. Apart from obvious reasons such as having a higher frequency of issuance or more pages per issue, the fact that the vast majority of these articles (namely 52, representing roughly 80%) have appeared prior to Romania's entry into the war (i.e. between January and August 1916) is due to other factors as well: part of the journals ceased their activity or were suspended before this event (e.g. *Pagini literare* and *Românul*,

respectively), they did not appear for a period of time after the Romanian troops crossed the Carpathian Mountains (this is the case of *Telegraful Român*, for instance) or simply did not provide any details about Queen Marie after August 1916, although they previously had and they continued appearing until the end of the year (but sometimes with a reduced periodicity, as, for example, *Unirea*).

Given the sources' peculiarities, data about Queen Marie was analysed by taking into consideration the chronology and the specific constraints imposed by the war. As a result, I have defined three significantly different periods, which are detailed below. Articles about Queen Marie published in the Transylvanian periodicals used as sources between January and August 1916 are categorised and discussed according to their topic, the period August-October 1916 is reviewed separately as, with a single exception, information about Queen Marie is available only in *Gazeta Transilvaniei*<sup>14</sup>, which appeared under special circumstances during these months, whilst the special features of the few relevant pieces of news that were published in the last quarter of the year required the delimitation of another category. The graphs presented below summarise the situation of the articles about the Romanian sovereign accessible to Transylvanian Romanians during the pertinent timescale.

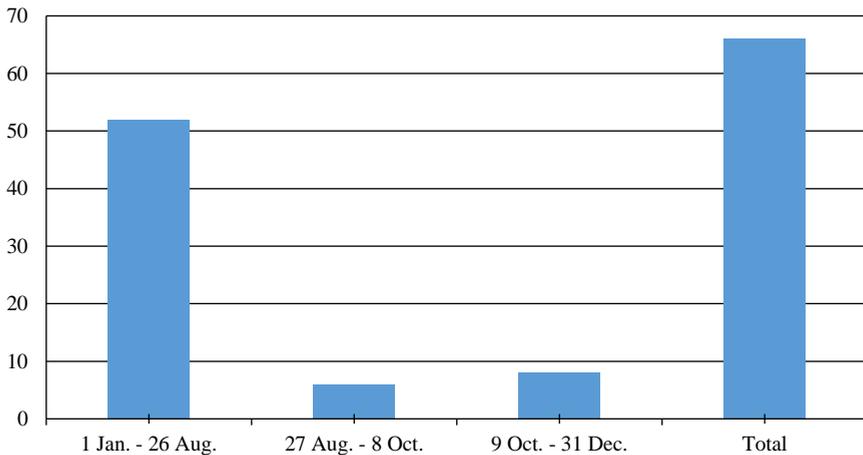


Figure 1: Chronological distribution of articles about Queen Marie before and after Romania's entry into the war

<sup>14</sup> Five out of the six relevant articles for this interval were published by *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, whilst the sixth, which appeared in *Drapelul*, Year XVI, No. 104, 8 (21) September 1916, p. 3, as part of the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, does not actually add anything to the overall picture, because the fact that "the Queen of Romania has organised a hospital in the royal palace, which she manages herself" was also announced by *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 185, 7 (20) 1916, p. 2, in the column entitled "Din București" ["From Bucharest"] and in a more detailed manner.

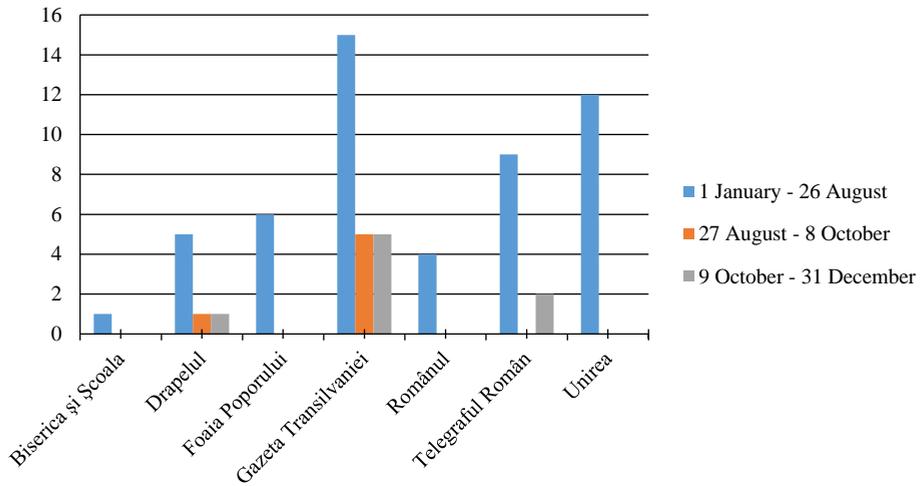


Figure 2: Distribution of articles about Queen Marie in the seven Transylvanian periodicals that served as sources

### January-August 1916

#### Literary and artistic activity

Queen Marie's literary achievements were popularised from the beginning and her contemporaries clearly considered her a member of Romania's cultural elite. Moreover, as opposed to the meaning given to the term "elite" in political science, where membership of this social category is defined by the possession of power and not necessarily by remarkable traits, culturally-wise a member of the elite has to demonstrate his or her intellectual value<sup>15</sup>. In this latter sense, Queen Marie excelled and she received straightforward recognition from the Romanian Academy. In the general session that took place when this highly prestigious cultural forum celebrated 50 years of existence, the institution's president wished the royal family a glorious reign and mentioned that "the Academy has had the great joy of celebrating 40 years since the birth of Her Majesty Queen Marie, she herself a distinguished literate and artist and a warm supporter of art and literature"<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Bogdan Ivașcu, *Nașterea unei noi elite: Transilvania (1945-1953)*, Arad: Gutenberg Univers, 2008, p. 17. When discussing the conceptualisation put forth by Vilfredo Pareto, other authors suggest that such a distinction was not possible according to his theory, given that for him superior qualities represented an intrinsic component of the elite; see C. Șandru, *Comunități etnice...*, pp. 24-26 and Oscar Hoffman, Ion Glodeanu, *De la mediocrație la meritocrație – societatea cunoașterii și noile elite*, Bucharest: Expert, 2007, p. 73.

<sup>16</sup> *Foiaia Poporului*, Year XXIV, No. 29, 10/23 May 1916, p. 2, article entitled "Sesiunea generală a Academiei Române" ["The general session of the Romanian Academy"]; *Gazeta*

Apart from this formal recognition of her cultural merits, Transylvanians were also aware of Queen Marie's talent given that news about her publications reached them by means of the press. Thus, the periodicals' pages include data about her newest works, such as *Ilderim*, *Crinul vieții* [*The Lily of Life*] or *Floarea visului* [*The Dream's Flower*] and/or about their dramatisation<sup>17</sup>. For example, *Floarea visului* received a very favourable review in *Foaia Poporului*<sup>18</sup>, as it was considered that it represented "an esthetical contribution to her literary conception; the battle between real and ideal and the yearning for the soul's freedom in order to attain supreme beauty". Moreover, "the work of H. M. Queen Marie appears thus as a fortunate esthetical embodiment of a high religious and philosophical conception, and 'Floarea visului' represents a new contribution to the delicate[,] suave and profound manner of comprehending beauty in poetry, as well as in painting... Let us all remember the silver flowers – fingers of a fairy! – in whose skilful painting the Queen of Romania has long ago distinguished herself!" And besides all this, the (unknown) author of these lines also appreciated the fact that "in everything she wrote H. M. Queen Marie drew her inspiration from our folk poetry and literature. That is why 'Floarea visului' seems a Romanian fairy tale arranged for the stage".

Her activity as a painter and Maecenas of the arts was also acknowledged on the occasion of an exhibition held at the beginning of the year in Bucharest at the Romanian Athenaeum where, not only a group of women painters under her patronage, but the queen herself presented their works<sup>19</sup>.

On the other hand, the fact that Queen Marie was perceived as a member of the cultural elite is proven by the attention given to her declarations. For example,

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*Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 99, 8 (21) May 1916, p. 2, the "Din România" ["From Romania"] column; *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 53, 25 May 1916, p. 4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Deschiderea sesiunii Academiei Române" ["The opening of the session of the Romanian Academy"]. See also the report published by *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 50, 14/27 May 1916, pp. 1-2, the "Foișoara" ["Leaflet"] column, subtitle "De la Academia Română – Raport asupra lucrărilor făcute în 1915-1916" ["From the Romanian Academy – Report on the works accomplished in 1915-1916"].

<sup>17</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 15, 21 January (3 February) 1916, p. 2, the "Din România" ["From Romania"] column, No. 21, 28 January (10 February) 1916, p. 2, the same column, subtitle "O nouă lucrare a Reginei Maria" ["A new work of Queen Marie"] and No. 62, 19 March (1 April) 1916, p. 2, the "Știri" ["News"] column, subtitle "Știri din România" ["News from Romania"]; *Românul*, Year VI, No. 22, 11 February (29 January) 1916, p. 7, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "O nouă lucrare teatrală a reginei Maria a României" ["A new theatrical work of Queen Marie of Romania"]; *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 2, 9/22 January 1916, p. 3, the "Noutăți" ["Novelties"] column, subtitle "Piesa reginei" ["The queen's play"].

<sup>18</sup> *Foaia Poporului*, Year XXIV, No. 34, 24 May (6 June) 1916, pp. 3-4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Floarea visului" ["The Dream's Flower"].

<sup>19</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 15, 21 January (3 February) 1916, p. 3, the "Știri" ["News"] column, subtitle "Expoziție de pictură în București" ["A painting exhibition in Bucharest"].

*Gazeta Transilvaniei* published, without any comment, some of the sovereign's reflections on the ongoing war, which originally appeared in another journal. According to this source, Queen Marie considered that "in the present war the machine revenges itself on man", as "man attempted to invent things beyond human power and now he is learning the eternal lesson of his limitations"<sup>20</sup>.

### **Symbol of compassion**

Queen Elisabeth's death occasioned a surge in news about the Romanian royal family in the Transylvanian press and although Queen Marie was clearly not the main character of the events, she nevertheless stood out through her kindness and compassionate care for her aunt. Certainly, the image that took shape from her behaviour in this situation was a positive one, illustrating precisely what was expected of a faithful close relative: "The sovereigns immediately came by their august aunt's side, who stretched her right arm and took those of the sovereigns"<sup>21</sup>, "Queen Marie and all the princes and princesses spent the entire day by the ill sovereign's bedside"<sup>22</sup>, "Today, 18 February (2 March) 1916, at 8:30 in the morning, Her Majesty, Queen Elisabeth, the diligent and faithful companion of Romania's first king, has departed this life, in the royal palace from Bucharest, as a result of pneumonia, in the presence of Their Majesties, the King and the Queen and of His Royal Highness, the heir to the throne"<sup>23</sup>, "Whilst in the royal palace's court the coffin was placed on the hearse, H. M. Queen Marie, together with Their Royal Highnesses Princesses Elisabeth, Maria and Ileana sat in one of the balconies of the royal palace and watched whilst crying the sad burial ceremony for the dear and unforgettable Queen Elisabeth"<sup>24</sup>.

Notes about Queen Marie in relation to her predecessor's death were published also due to Queen Elisabeth's will, as through this document the latter left a sizable amount of money to charity, part of which was to be administered and distributed by Queen Marie and her successors<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, the religious ceremonies that were

<sup>20</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 79, 16 (23) April 1916, p. 2, article "Regina Maria a României și războiul european" ["Queen Marie of Romania and the European war"].

<sup>21</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 23, 7 March 1916, pp. 2-3, article "Moartea Reginei Elisabeta" ["The death of Queen Elisabeth"].

<sup>22</sup> *Românul*, Year VI, No. 39, 20 February (4 March) 1916, pp. 2-3, article "Moartea reginei Elisabeta a României" ["The death of Queen Elisabeth of Romania"].

<sup>23</sup> *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 22, 27 February (11 March) 1916, pp. 1-2, article "Moartea și înmormântarea Reginei Elisabeta" ["The death and funeral of Queen Elisabeth"].

<sup>24</sup> *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 23, 1/14 March 1916, pp. 1-2, article "Moartea și înmormântarea Reginei Elisabeta" ["The death and funeral of Queen Elisabeth"].

<sup>25</sup> Queen Elisabeth's will is available in *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 22, 27 February (11 March) 1916, pp. 1-2, article "Moartea și înmormântarea Reginei Elisabeta" ["The death and funeral of Queen Elisabeth"].

held according to traditional customs at certain periods of time after the late queen's death (for example, 9 and 40 days) also involved Queen Marie's presence<sup>26</sup>.

If kind gestures towards a member of the family might have been considered normal, Queen Marie's gracious attitude towards her subjects may have surprised many Transylvanians, especially when it came to actions that were not so common for royal persons, such as her visit to the Văcărești penitentiary. A summary of the visit was published by *Foaia Poporului* and *Gazeta Transilvaniei* in exactly the same form<sup>27</sup> and, following the enumeration of the officials that greeted the queen, it is mentioned that "after the sovereign visited the jail's workshops, lingering in the one of typography where Her Majesty has published her last literary work, she addressed comforting words to those arrested who were deeply touched by the queen's kind words".

A piece of news that received ample coverage in Transylvanian newspapers<sup>28</sup> refers to the sum of money King Ferdinand allotted to the poor from his own revenues on the occasion of his accession to the throne. Given the complicated political context, journalists were not able to comment upon this gesture. Instead, they merely published the letter sent by the Romanian sovereign to prime minister I. C. Brătianu<sup>29</sup>. In this letter, King Ferdinand emphasised that "the queen and our children would feel great contentment if they could be associated with this deed of mutual assistance by taking part in the aid's distribution". This indeed happened<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 25, 5/18 March 1916, p. 3, the "Noutăți" ["Novelties"] column, subtitle "Parastas pentru Regina Elisabeta" ["Memorial service for Queen Elisabeth"]; *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 39, 15 April 1916, p. 4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Parastasul de la Curtea de Argeș pentru Regina Elisabeta" ["The memorial service from Curtea de Argeș for Queen Elisabeth"].

<sup>27</sup> *Foaia Poporului*, Year XXIV, No. 17, 10/23 April 1916, p. 9, the "Știrile săptămânii" ["News of the week"] column, subtitle "O regină între pușcăriași" ["A queen amongst convicts"]; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 73, 2 (15) April 1916, p. 2, the "Știri" ["News"] column, the same subtitle as in *Foaia Poporului*.

<sup>28</sup> With the exception of *Românul*, which was already suspended in April, all of the periodicals used as sources have published this piece of news.

<sup>29</sup> *Drapelul*, Year XVI, No. 45, 16 (29) April 1916, p. 2, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle: "Darul Regelui României pentru săraci" ["The gift of Romania's King to the poor"]; *Foaia Poporului*, Year XXIV, No. 21, 19 April (2 May) 1916, p. 2, the "Din România" ["From Romania"] column, same subtitle as in *Drapelul*; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 80, 14 (27) April 1916, p. 1, piece of news entitled "Un dar al regelui României. 1.250.000 lei celor lipsiți" ["A gift from Romania's King. 1.250.000 lei to the destitute"]; *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 40, 16/29 April 1916, p. 3, the "Noutăți" ["Novelties"] column, subtitle "Pentru familiile sărace" ["For the poor families"]; *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 43, 29 April 1916, p. 4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, same subtitle as in *Drapelul* and *Foaia Poporului*.

<sup>30</sup> Queen Marie mentioned this fact in her memoirs: Maria, Regina României, *Povestea vieții mele*, Bucharest: Rao, 2013, Vol. III, p. 28.

and some periodicals recorded that in the subsequent months Queen Marie visited for this purpose at least Jassy<sup>31</sup>, Craiova<sup>32</sup>, Ploiești<sup>33</sup> and Galați<sup>34</sup>.

The last piece of information concerning Queen Marie that was published by the Transylvanian press before Romania's entry into the war detailed the sovereigns' reaction when faced with a horrible accident, namely an explosion that occurred at the ammunition factory of Dudești. The tragic event resulted in 118 deaths, whilst more than 300 other people were injured<sup>35</sup>. King Ferdinand, Queen Marie, Prince Carol and numerous ministers and officials attended the victims' funeral and perhaps many Transylvanians were moved by the fact that "Their Majesties the King and the Queen, with their eyes filled with tears, then headed towards the unconsolated beings left by the unfortunate victims, embracing them and trying to encourage them. The pain was too large and the sorrow [was] general"<sup>36</sup>.

### Political role

Obviously, Romania's attitude towards the ongoing conflagration was frequently tackled by the Transylvanian press, but most of the times the queen was left out of the debates. However, in February, *Drapelul* published a leading article that discussed the Romanian monarchs' attitude until that moment by comparing it to that of the Greek sovereign and highlighting that

"King Constantine of Greece has exposed himself excessively in this conflict [...], whilst in Romania the dynasty has sought to cement in every way

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<sup>31</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 48, 13 May 1916, p. 4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Suverana României distribuie din banii donați de rege" ["Romania's Sovereign distributes part of the money donated by the King"]; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 88, 23 April (6 May) 1916, p. 3, the "Știri" ["News"] column, subtitle "Regina României la Iași" ["The Queen of Romania at Jassy"].

<sup>32</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 69, 6 July 1916, p. 4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Regina Maria a României la Craiova" ["Queen Marie of Romania at Craiova"].

<sup>33</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 138, 29 June (12 July) 1916, p. 2, the "Din România" ["From Romania"] column. The author of this brief piece of news mentioned that "From Ploiești she will leave for the towns Focșani, R. [âmnicu]-Sărat and Buzău".

<sup>34</sup> *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 79, 30 July (12 August) 1916, p. 3, the "Noutăți" ["Novelties"] column, subtitle "Săraci bogați" ["The rich poor"].

<sup>35</sup> For details see *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 82, 12 August 1916, p. 4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Mare explozie într-o fabrică de arme din România" ["A great explosion in an ammunition factory from Romania"] and No. 84, 17 August 1916, p. 4, the same column, subtitle "Despre dezastrul de la Pulberăria din Dudești (București)" ["About the disaster from the gunpowder works of Dudești (Bucharest)"].

<sup>36</sup> *Foaia Poporului*, Year XXIV, No. 64, 7/20 August 1916, pp. 2-3, the "Din România" ["From Romania"] column, subtitle "Înmormântarea morților de la pulberăria din Dudești" ["The funeral of the dead from the gunpowder works of Dudești"].

the natural ties between the King and the people. Whilst the King of Romania repeatedly emphasised that he is a constitutional ruler, leaving the entire responsibility for the situation to his government, the Queen sought to make the dynasty's ties with the country as intimate as possible by attending courses at the university, by participating in and organising exhibitions, by demonstrating a special interest towards the country's cultural, literary and artistic movements, even by becoming one of the authors of national literature. Thus whilst in Greece we witness a declared straining of the relations between ruler and people, in Romania, on the contrary, we witness that the most intimate ties are being cemented"<sup>37</sup>.

As compared to the other categories of news concerning Queen Marie, her political role is perhaps the least commented upon. However, every now and then, Transylvanian journalists revealed that they were aware of the sovereign's influence in this domain, an influence that could be equated with the potential or latent form of power characterising elites (the other form being manifest power)<sup>38</sup>. In this sense, *Românul*, for example, informed its readers that "newspapers from Bucharest emphasise that Mr. Nicolae Filipescu, before leaving for Russia, was received at the Romanian court by the queen and not by King Ferdinand"<sup>39</sup>. Unfortunately, no clear reasons that would have motivated such an attitude are given and, although we might infer some arguments in this regard (for example, Queen Marie's kinship with the Tsar), we cannot assume that they were self-explanatory and universally known by Transylvanians. Moreover, irrespective of the queen's family relations, political views or potential influence, she was not the decisional factor if it came to a choice of allies and foes.

### Minor news

The Romanian royal family's relation with its subjects was visible to Transylvanians even in minor pieces of news, such as the one regarding the fact that the sovereigns had organised a celebration of the Christmas tree for children aged 8 to 10 together with their parents, who were officers of the garrison in Bucharest. This nice gesture clearly pleased the over 300 children that attended the celebration, whilst this article's readers could appreciate the fact that "Their Majesties caressed the children with a lot of kindness, distributing beautiful presents to them"<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> *Drapelul*, Year XVI, No. 15, 4 (17) February 1916, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> More details on this topic are available in C. Șandru, *Comunități etnice...*, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> *Românul*, Year VI, No. 32, 25/12 February 1916, pp. 4-5, article entitled "România și Bulgaria" ["Romania and Bulgaria"].

<sup>40</sup> *Românul*, Year VI, No. 7, 12/25 January 1916, p. 6, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "O serbare originală în București" ["An original celebration in Bucharest"].

In theory, news about the queen's health status should not be considered "minor", but given that the rumours about a grave illness that had affected her were not true, I deemed it suitable to include this information here. It is worth noticing, however, that several periodicals considered that a change in the sovereign's health was relevant enough to be noted, thus arguing that the level of interest surrounding her was rather high in Transylvania. *Drapelul*<sup>41</sup>, *Telegraful Român*<sup>42</sup> and *Unirea*<sup>43</sup> announced that Queen Marie was seriously ill and that the court's physicians had to hold several councils in this regard, but only *Telegraful Român*<sup>44</sup> contradicted the news after it became apparent that it was false.

In this same category of minor news we can also invoke Queen Marie's mediation for a means of transport, namely a special train, for a "committee of ladies from Romania's high society", who wanted to attend a short religious service held in Queen Elisabeth's memory at her grave in Curtea de Argeş<sup>45</sup>. Facts about the ceremonies occasioned by the anniversary of 50 years since the monarchy's instauration in Romania also pertain to this same category of news, particularly as no details about Queen Marie's participation are given<sup>46</sup>.

Similarly, the various shorter or longer trips undertaken by the Romanian royal family are specified by the Transylvanian press, but habitually such pieces of news cannot be used in an attempt to portray Queen Marie from the readers' viewpoint. However, in order to complete the review of the facts about her available in the sources, I can mention that Transylvanians were aware that in 1916 she spent Easter at Curtea de Argeş<sup>47</sup>, that she made a trip on the Danube in May/June<sup>48</sup> and that she went to Sinaia in July<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> *Drapelul*, Year XVI, No. 27, 8/16 [sic!] March 1916, p. 3, the "Știri mărunte" ["Petty news"] column.

<sup>42</sup> *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, 9/22 January 1916, p. 3, the "Noutăți" ["Novelties"] column.

<sup>43</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 19, 26 February 1916, p. 4 and No. 27, 16 March 1916, p. 4, both articles being included in the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column.

<sup>44</sup> *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, 5/18 March 1916, p. 3, the "Noutăți" ["Novelties"] column.

<sup>45</sup> *Drapelul*, Year XVI, No. 49, 28 April (11 May) 1916, p. 2, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Pelerinaj la mormântul Reginei Elisabeta a României" ["Pilgrimage to the grave of Queen Elisabeth of Romania"].

<sup>46</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 54, 27 May 1916, p. 4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Aniversarea familiei domnitoare în România" ["The anniversary of the ruling family in Romania"].

<sup>47</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 80, 14 (27) April 1916, p. 2, the "Știri" ["News"] column, subtitle "Știri din România" ["News from Romania"].

<sup>48</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, 27 May (9 June) 1916, p. 3, the "Știri" ["News"] column, subtitle "Familia regală română pe Dunăre" ["The Romanian royal family on the Danube"].

<sup>49</sup> *Foaia Poporului*, Year XXIV, No. 56, 16/29 July 1916, p. 4, the "Informațiuni" ["Information"] column, subtitle "Familia regală română la Sinaia" ["The Romanian royal family at Sinaia"]; *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 150, 14 (27) July 1916, p. 2, the "Știri" ["News"]

### Atypical articles

As a rule, most articles published by Transylvanian newspapers about Queen Marie until Romania's entry into the war are neutral in tone. However, there exist some exceptions to this rule, in which cases the editors clearly specify that they are merely reprinting something from another source. Two of these surprisingly positive images of Queen Marie were published by *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, after her visit to Jassy in May/June on the occasion of the commemoration of 104 years since Bessarabia had been annexed by Russia<sup>50</sup>. The first of these articles, signed by Costin G. Sturdza and reprinted from a periodical from Jassy, described Queen Marie as a sovereign deserving of being beloved:

“She is no longer a foreigner and she is not entirely Romanian. Maybe precisely this makes her charm special.

The woman is a bizarre mixture of exoticism and local colour; the queen is a fortunate combination of goodwill and imperial majesty.

A queen who does not forget that she is a woman; a woman who does not forget that she is a queen.

Without doubt, a beloved queen. We love her for what she promises us; for what she says and for what she thinks; for how she reveals herself to us and for how we suppose she is”<sup>51</sup>.

A few days later, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* provided a detailed overview of the queen's sojourn at Jassy, this second article being written in the same vein as the one quoted above with regard to the ones who interacted directly with Queen Marie:

“Precious memories were preserved by: the poor of Jassy who were relieved by the sovereign, the sick from the hospitals who received royal gifts and consolation, the school-aged youth who acclaimed the Royal Family, the entire elite and all official persons who could be around the sovereign at the various receptions, in a word, Jassy in its entirety, which had the extraordinary pleasure of intersecting the gracious sovereign's path”<sup>52</sup>.

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column, the same subtitle; *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 76, 27 July 1916, p. 4, the “Informațiuni” [“Information”] column, the same subtitle.

<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the fact that Russia's image in the first of these articles is negative contributed to its approval by the censor.

<sup>51</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 110, 24 May (6 June) 1916, p. 1, article “Regina Maria” [“Queen Marie”].

<sup>52</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 112, 26 May (8 June) 1916, p. 2, the “Știri” [“News”] column, subtitle “Regina României în mijlocul ieșenilor” [“Romania's queen amidst the inhabitants of Jassy”].

Another extremely positive article about Queen Marie was published by *Unirea* in three consecutive numbers and, interestingly enough, the author of the lines quoted below was a Hungarian. Adorján Andor's opinion of the Romanian sovereign was published in the column habitually occupied by literary works and bore the title "The most beautiful queen". The author, who apparently gathered information on site, revealed that

"Whilst the person of the king is sometimes the object of tasteless jokes, the inhabitants of Bucharest fanatically adore the person of the queen, who is the most beautiful queen from Europe. All the windows of the more elegant shops from the capital display the queen's photograph. In one place as a photograph, in another as a picture postcard, over there embroidered on a handbag or as a decoration on boxes of sweets. It is sufficient to walk for half an hour on the boulevards with a larger circulation in order to recognise from hundreds of drawings this very beautiful queen, who for the entire capital is like a national saint. And what is even more astounding. This homage represents not so much sentiments of loyalty towards the crowned head, but especially deference towards a blonde and beautiful lady, who despite her age of forty, is the embodiment of beauty and not that [beauty] borrowed from Merlin cosmetics, but the natural one, because this gives her the elegance that cannot be borrowed and the charm of the perfect woman"<sup>53</sup>.

The same author further strengthens the image of a member of the charismatic elite, as seemingly women in Romania admired the Queen due to her physical qualities. According to Adorján Andor, who in the end agrees with his interlocutor, during a conversation with a lady the latter remarked that

"Queen Marie serves as role model to each Romanian woman...

– As a mother? I asked.

– Also as a mother. But besides that the Queen serves as an example of how to preserve our delightful beauty even when you [sic!] have fully grown boys and daughters to wed, [of how] the unwithered crown of the goddess of beauty should glide over blonde locks.

...For this is Queen Marie especially adored and this puts her above the rank of a queen in women's eyes. Her beauty is so perfect, inimitable and unfading"<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 67, 1 July 1916, p. 2, the "Foița" ["(Literary) Sheet"] column, subtitle "Cea mai frumoasă Regină – După Adorján Andor" ["The most beautiful queen – By Adorján Andor"].

<sup>54</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 67, 1 July 1916, p. 2, the "Foița" ["(Literary) Sheet"] column, subtitle "Cea mai frumoasă Regină – După Adorján Andor" ["The most beautiful queen – By Adorján Andor"].

Moreover, the Queen's looks were matched by her artistic vocation, because "this beautiful queen – is also a writer and is filled with enthusiasm for everything that is art". But in comparison with Queen Elisabeth, "Queen Marie is more of an aristocratic woman. The queen's fantasy, which, given her blood of Slavic origin, soars towards unrealism, this fantasy is guided with iron hands by the cold Anglo-Saxon nature". And the Hungarian author seemed almost compelled to give more details on this topic and he noted that "there are three years since this queen-poet of an adorable beauty is engaged in writing. Nothing had previously given away her talent as a writer. It was known that she had scrutinising eyes; a qualified connoisseur, she has an inclination towards fine irony and her opinions are sovereignly based on her own judgement"<sup>55</sup>.

In fact, Queen Marie's literary talent was acknowledged by the Hungarian author as he assisted the dress rehearsal of one of her plays, performed with philanthropic purposes for families whose members had been mobilised. He declares he was astonished to discover members of the royal family (the sovereign was accompanied by two of her daughters) as spectators, particularly whilst in mourning after Queen Elisabeth. However, this incident allowed him both to notice the monarch's and her daughters' beauty and to ironically comment upon court usages: "Going to the theatre is not in contradiction with the strictest mourning, if the room is not illuminated in its entirety". Clearly, "the queen cares much more about the product of her fantasy than to renounce the dress rehearsal"<sup>56</sup>, but, nonetheless, all the actors and ballerinas were happy to have her there and were striving to "do everything according to the taste of the queen, [who is] everyone's idol"<sup>57</sup>.

The Hungarian observer also confessed that, after seeing her up close on a few other occasions, he was taken aback by what he deemed as a stark contrast, namely the one between her tremendous zest for life and her preference for white lilies (viewed as apathetic flowers). Moreover, the time spent in Bucharest enabled him to become cognizant of the various rumours brought about by the queen's collaboration with writer Victor Eftimiu and he sympathetically reproduced her alleged reply in this matter: "I believe that you are not ashamed either – she said to Victor Eftimiu – that both of us suffered ignominy for 'Ilderim'"<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 68, 4 July 1916, pp. 2-3, the "Foiața" ["(Literary) Sheet"] column, subtitle "Cea mai frumoasă Regină – După Adorján Andor" ["The most beautiful queen – By Adorján Andor"].

<sup>56</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 68, 4 July 1916, pp. 2-3, the "Foiața" ["(Literary) Sheet"] column, subtitle "Cea mai frumoasă Regină – După Adorján Andor" ["The most beautiful queen – By Adorján Andor"].

<sup>57</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 69, 6 July 1916, p. 2, the "Foiața" ["(Literary) Sheet"] column, subtitle "Cea mai frumoasă Regină – După Adorján Andor" ["The most beautiful queen – By Adorján Andor"].

<sup>58</sup> *Unirea*, Year XXVI, No. 69, 6 July 1916, p. 2, the "Foiața" ["(Literary) Sheet"] column, subtitle "Cea mai frumoasă Regină – După Adorján Andor" ["The most beautiful queen – By Adorján Andor"].

Although some of this article's final part was censored, we may still note that, in the author's opinion, "pride and paradoxical graciousness are united in this beautiful queen's nature" and that "in general she does not get involved in political affairs, [but] now, contrary to habit, she is working with a lot of interest so that the renowned theatrical Moissi Reinhardt would be released from French captivity".

### **An interesting intermezzo: *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, August-October 1916**

Immediately after the declaration of war, the Romanian army crossed the border into Transylvania and achieved a few rapid and short-lived successes. Consequently, the town of Braşov was occupied by the Romanian troops for about a month and a half, during which time *Gazeta Transilvaniei* appeared "with the approval of the military headquarters"<sup>59</sup>. Throughout this interval, Romania's and its sovereigns' images presented by the periodical were particularly positive and Transylvanians were able to read Romania's declaration of war towards Austro-Hungary and King Ferdinand's manifesto in which "the union of Romanians from both sides of the Carpathians" was explicitly mentioned. Moreover, this newspaper's journalists announced that the Romanian army had entered Braşov "triumphantly" and that priests representing all the relevant denominations prayed for the Romanian sovereigns during "solemn divine services"<sup>60</sup>.

Within this context, Queen Marie's merits in relieving the wounded Romanian soldiers were highlighted<sup>61</sup> and the announcement concerning the inauguration of the hospital established by her in the royal palace was completed by a piece of information about the sum donated to the benefit of the "Queen Marie" ambulance service, namely 1,592,872.50 lei<sup>62</sup>.

In the same vein, an article published originally in Bucharest and signed by Emil Nicolau was probably reprinted by *Gazeta Transilvaniei*<sup>63</sup> in order to illustrate the unusually close relation between queen and soldiers. The author affirmed that "in the forefront of Romanian women in what regards charity and kindness stands our gracious Queen Marie" and that she and her daughters visited hospitals for the wounded "from morning until evening, distributing gifts and flowers to our soldiers

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<sup>59</sup> This situation characterises No. 175 to 199, issued between 24 August/6 September and 23 September/6 October 1916 respectively. Starting with No. 200, 27 September/10 October 1916, Romanians were labelled "hyenas".

<sup>60</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 175, 24 August (6 September) 1916, pp. 1-2.

<sup>61</sup> Details about Queen Marie's activity as a nurse during the war are available in M. Bucur, "Between the Mother of the Wounded..." pp. 41-45.

<sup>62</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 187, 9 (22) September 1916, p. 1, the "Din Bucureşti" ["From Bucharest"] column.

<sup>63</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 188, 10 (23) September 1916, p. 1, article "M. S. Regina Maria şi soldatul român" ["H. M. Queen Marie and the Romanian soldier"] by Emil Nicolau.

as praise for their brave deeds from yesterday and as an incentive for those that they will accomplish tomorrow". But, even more importantly, the queen imparted "words of encouragement and of comfort that exalt their patriotic feelings to the highest degree" and thus those on the front became aware that "the Romanian dynasty takes part not only in this country's joys, but also in its sorrows".

The sense of devotion instilled by Queen Marie in soldiers' hearts was eagerly evoked by Emil Nicolau, who claimed that in a conversation with an injured soldier the latter declared to the sovereign that his greatest wish was to see her as empress<sup>64</sup>, allowing the author to conclude that "happy are the countries with such soldiers, but just as happy those with such queens".

Another and last relevant article about Queen Marie published by *Gazeta Transilvaniei* whilst Braşov was occupied by the Romanian troops represented a reprint from *Le Petit Parisien* and by its content it had the potential to stir up Romanians' allegiance towards the royal pair. In a declaration to a correspondent of some American journals given prior to Romania's entry into the war, Queen Marie had apparently said that irrespective of their origins and blood relatives, both King Ferdinand and her "desire more than anything Romania's happiness and we think only of Romania's interest, as we know what the duties and responsibilities imposed by our situation are. [...] What we desire is a great, prosperous Romania and we also desire that under our reign she will fulfil her legitimate national ideals"<sup>65</sup>. Moreover, Queen Marie ensured the correspondent that in case of war she will readily devote herself to women's "sacred mission", that of taking care of the wounded, which was already illustrated by members of her family. Hence, the periodical's readers were able to ascertain that she indeed kept her word both by visiting hospitals and even by establishing one in the royal palace from Bucharest.

### **October-December 1916**

A recurrent announcement concerning the Romanian sovereigns that was published during this period referred to the demise of Prince Mircea, the royal family's youngest child, who died before his fourth birthday as one of the first victims of the typhoid fever epidemic that struck Romania in 1916. With the notable exception of *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, the other periodicals used as sources did not place too much emphasis on this piece of news and the prince's death was barely

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<sup>64</sup> Although this episode might seem entirely propagandistic, in her memoirs Queen Marie repeatedly mentioned that when visiting wounded and even dying soldiers they expressed their desire to acclaim her as "Empress of all Romanians", which brings further proof that the queen was perceived as an embodiment of Romanians' centuries-old unity desire. See, for instance, Maria, Regina României, *Povestea vieţii mele*, Vol. III, pp. 63-64.

<sup>65</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 198, 22 September (5 October) 1916, p. 1, article entitled "Regina Maria a României despre război" ["Queen Marie of Romania about the war"].

mentioned as part of the “Information” column<sup>66</sup>. Moreover, the terms used to describe the event were neutral and no reference to his parents’ suffering was made, as the journalists were probably thus trying to avoid any suspicion of fraternisation with the enemy on the part of the harsh wartime censorship system<sup>67</sup>.

The situation was different for *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, which had to restore the Hungarian authorities’ confidence in its good faith after it was only too eager to serve the invading Romanian army. Therefore, it was more polemical with regard to this event, but nevertheless this following rather cruel comment contained a glimpse of sympathy noticeable in the dying child’s description:

“Prince Mircea, the Romanian ruling family’s youngest boy, has died Thursday [...]. We wonder if his parents, King Ferdinand and the beautiful Queen Marie, looking at the little prince’s sunken cheeks and pale lips, have thought of the hundreds of innocent children from the peripheral parts of Transylvania who have faded away at the edge of the roads, in the trains’ stuffiness and overcrowdedness, as a result of their fatal policy?”<sup>68</sup>.

Given that Romania’s entry into the war seriously complicated the already intricate situation of the Transylvanian periodicals, it is no wonder that articles about Queen Marie were particularly scarce during the last three months of the year. Interestingly enough, however, some facts about her could be disseminated, particularly if they were reprinted from Hungarian newspapers and consequently considered without risk by the authorities. This was the case of a peculiar article from *Telegraful Român*, which referred to the role played by four women in Romania’s declaration of war. The author of the lines translated and published in the above-mentioned periodical was a “correspondent from Bucharest of the newspaper *Világ*” who allegedly provided an informed opinion on “The motives for declaring war”. Apart from the negative, but, to some degree, romantic view on the influence had by a number of women in Romanian politics, the article is interesting because it also allowed its reader to grasp the extent of Queen Marie’s involvement in the war effort from the very beginning:

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<sup>66</sup> *Drapelul*, Year XVI, No. 124, 25 October (7 November) 1916, p. 3, the “Informațiuni” [“Information”] column, subtitle “† Prințul Mircea al României” [“† Prince Mircea of Romania”]; *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 89, 1/14 November 1916, p. 3, the “Noutăți” [“Novelties”] column, subtitle “† Principele Mircea” [“† Prince Mircea”].

<sup>67</sup> Some details on this topic are available in Ioana Elena Ignat Kisanovici, “Censorship in Transylvania during First World War: Correspondence Overview”, in *Research and Science Today*, 2015, No. 2 (10), pp. 7-14 and in Ioana Elena Ignat Kisanovici, “Preventive Censorship in the Romanian Press in Transylvania: A Case Study”, in *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Thought*, 2015, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 299-304.

<sup>68</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 208, 26 October (8 November) 1916, p. 1.

“There are particularly *four women* about whom it is believed even now, - says the correspondent, - that they have contributed to this bellicose policy, namely: Brătianu’s wife, Queen Marie, Take Ionescu’s wife and the daughter of the former French representative at the court of Bucharest. (None of these four, except one [sic!], is of Romanian origin, but French and English.)

About Marie, the Queen of Romania, he writes: Born from English blood, her relatives and acquaintances live in Russia. I don’t believe that after the war began she did indeed say: «C’est ma petite guerre!» (It’s my war!) In Bucharest no one knows anything about this. I’ve seen the beautiful woman’s picture in a Romanian illustrated newspaper. Her fully developed and warm beauty comes to light even more from under the peasant kerchief, her face is grieved, her look [expresses] suffering, [she wears] the Red Cross’s uniform. Under her portrait it’s written: *Queen Marie, mother of the sufferers*. She has visited the hospitals, has taken care of the wounded, has comforted them, and in her palace three hundred wounded Romanian soldiers have found shelter. But nevertheless it is certain that together with Brătianu’s wife they [sic!] have promoted the cause of war, influencing their husbands in this sense”<sup>69</sup>.

And the Hungarian journalist concluded:

“In Russia and in Romania [...] one can still find modern Pompadours, who in our democratic epoch lead a policy of intrigues above the people’s millions of heads. The thousands of Romanian mothers might not love this policy, but nobody is asking the thousands of Romanian mothers... Many of the secrets of Romania’s war are buried in the salons, boudoirs and bowers from over there”.

Articles about Queen Marie are not absent from *Gazeta Transilvaniei*’s pages even after the end of the intermezzo previously defined, nor do they become negative in tone, but at best controversial, as illustrated by the piece of news about Prince Mircea’s death quoted above. Therefore, Transylvanians could be informed that Queen Marie had started writing articles concerning “the Romanian people, its mores and national traits” for a British magazine in order to donate the resulting incomes, namely 100 Pounds (or 2500 Korona) per article, to the Romanian Red Cross<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> *Telegraful Român*, Year LXIV, No. 102, 31 December 1916 (13 January 1917), p. 3, article “The motives for declaring war”.

<sup>70</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 213, 10 (23) November 1916, p. 2, the “Știrile zilei” [“News of the day”] column, subtitle “Regina României ca ziaristă” [“The Queen of Romania as a journalist”]. It is interesting to notice that literary genres were habitually tackled by female writers in a reverse order than that mentioned for Queen Marie: “In the Romanian Principalities, the first women

But, on the other hand, the above-mentioned Transylvanian periodical was extremely eager to cast doubt on the Romanian royal family's loyalty towards its subjects and presented rumours about a potential flight of the sovereigns to Russia as certain news<sup>71</sup>. Given that neither King Ferdinand nor Queen Marie (and not even their children) left Romanian soil during the war, although at some point this had been discussed, we can consider that the manner in which these tentative plans were brought to the public's attention represented a deliberate attempt to diminish the Romanian monarchs' prestige from the part of *Gazeta Transilvaniei*'s editor.

### Concluding remarks

The year 1916 was an especially relevant one for the relations between Transylvanians and their fellow nationals from across the Carpathian Mountains. In the context of World War I, any ties that could be maintained or even strengthened were particularly important and Queen Marie became one of the elements that facilitated the creation of a bridge over the borders that were on the verge of collapsing.

With her complex personality, Romania's sovereign could be admired by Transylvanians not only for her physical qualities and charisma, but also for the traits that included her amongst the elite. Given her upbringing, Queen Marie possessed the first form of cultural capital as defined by Pierre Bourdieu, namely incorporated cultural capital resulting from her education and knowledge, but throughout her life she also accumulated the second such element, i.e. symbolic cultural capital, and became a legitimising factor in what regarded certain literary and artistic values or standards<sup>72</sup>. Moreover, her activity during the First World War, an activity whose direction became obvious immediately following Romania's entry into the war in

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writers were initially known as journalists. After a while, some of them started to write poems and novels"; Ramona Mihăilă, "Gender and Power in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Romanian Women's Writing", in *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 2014, Vol. 4 (1), p. 389.

<sup>71</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, Year LXXIX, No. 223, 8 (21) December 1916, p. 4, the "Știri diverse" ["Various news"] column, subtitle "Familia regală română se află în Rusia" ["The Romanian royal family is in Russia"], No. 229, 22 December 1916 (4 January 1917), pp. 1-2, the "Știri diverse" ["Various news"] column, subtitles "Regina română la Petersburg" ["The Romanian queen at Petersburg"] and "Refugiarea regelui și guvernului român" ["The flight of the Romanian king and government"].

<sup>72</sup> For more details regarding cultural capital, see A. O. Dăncilă, *Elite culturale românești...*, p. 48. Other theoretical delimitations concerning elites and their role in society are available in C. Șandru, *Comunități etnice...*, pp. 15-16.

1916, clearly defines her as a public intellectual<sup>73</sup>, preoccupied with improving her subjects' condition and life circumstances<sup>74</sup>.

Unfortunately, the attempt on reconstructing a complete image of Queen Marie as seen by her future subjects from Transylvania throughout the year 1916 is greatly affected by problems associated with the sources, as many of the periodicals taken into consideration ceased appearing or reduced their frequency and/or number of pages during the year, particularly after Romania's entry into the war. This caused an imbalance in the pieces of news about her available in Transylvanian periodicals before and after August 1916, with roughly 80% of them being published before this key moment. Moreover, each of the three distinct periods discussed is characterised by its own peculiarities, whilst some elements remain as constants throughout the entire year.

During the period January-August 1916, articles about Queen Marie cover a wide range of topics, from her literary and artistic activity, her political role or warm attitude towards her subjects to minor pieces of news concerning domestic trips undertaken with various purposes and to atypical articles in which her beauty and grace are emphasised to a very large degree. The period August-October 1916 stands out because *Gazeta Transilvaniei* was issued after the Romanian troops had seized Braşov and, as a result, news about the Romanian sovereigns are particularly benevolent and presented in a positive light. After the end of this intermezzo, the articles that appeared in the last three months of the year mostly had in view the death of Prince Mircea, Queen Marie's youngest son, but also some rumours concerning the royal pair's flight to Russia as the events of the war became exceptionally unfavourable to the Romanians.

It is interesting to note that from the 66 articles mentioning or concerning Queen Marie that have appeared in Transylvanian periodicals during 1916, not a single one was entirely negative; indeed, habitually the tone used was positive or at least neutral, even after Romania's entry into the war. Thus, the attributes that most often described the sovereign were "beautiful", "graceful", "kind", "good", "beloved" or "talented" and it becomes obvious that this bright image played its part in stimulating Transylvanians' loyalty towards the Romanian sovereigns and in reifying Greater Romania, which became embodied in Queen Marie. Moreover, it should be emphasised that, given the extremely complicated political context, expressing one's sympathy for her was easier than doing so for King Ferdinand, particularly as even Hungarians and other foreigners appreciated her. Besides all this,

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Bottomore, cited by C. Şandru, *Comunităţi etnice...*, pp. 40-41, detailed the problems associated with defining the elite category of the intellectuals and with establishing their influences on the society.

<sup>74</sup> Her memoirs provide numerous examples in this regard, particularly during the First World War. For more details, see Maria, Regina României, *Povestea vieţii mele*, Vol. III.

this practice was commonplace in Romania as well, where, at least during the war, journalists focused more on her persona and activity than on those of King Ferdinand in order to engender dissociation between the Romanian royal house and the Germans' blameable actions<sup>75</sup>.

Nevertheless, by incessantly emphasising her feminine attributes journalists placed her at a somewhat inferior level in comparison to the men of the hour, who were considered genuine political factors and not secondary actors. In other words, her political merits and role are never fully recognised or are even trivialised (as in the article about the four women who had seemingly brought war upon Romania). However, despite prejudice and despite all the problems related to the sources, my research supports what one author has recently asserted about Queen Marie, namely that she "has become a cultural icon that translates Romanian otherness into the familiar language of a westernized social reality"<sup>76</sup>, a role she started fulfilling in 1916 and that was superbly played in 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference.

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<sup>75</sup> M. Bucur, "Between the Mother of the Wounded...", p. 43.

<sup>76</sup> Onoriu Colăcel, "The narrative of clan clustering in two American novels", in *Speech and Context*, 2014, 1 (VI), p. 77.