

**MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI, CERCETĂRII, TINERETULUI ȘI SPORTULUI
UNIVERSITATEA „1 DECEMBRIE 1918” ALBA IULIA
FACULTATEA DE ISTORIE ȘI FILOLOGIE**

DOCTORAL THESIS

(abstract)

Scientific Coordinator:
Prof. univ. dr. Mircea Popa

Ph. D. Candidate:
Elena-Claudia Călinescu (Anca)

**Alba Iulia
2012**

**MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI, CERCETĂRII, TINERETULUI ȘI SPORTULUI
UNIVERSITATEA „1 DECEMBRIE 1918” ALBA IULIA
FACULTATEA DE ISTORIE ȘI FILOLOGIE**

**WOMEN’S DIARIES
IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD**

(abstract)

Scientific Coordinator:
Prof. univ. dr. Mircea Popa

Ph. D. Candidate:
Elena-Claudia Călinescu (Anca)

**Alba Iulia
2012**

CONTENT

Argument	5
Chap. I. The diary: a fundamental form of confessional/ autobiographical writing	8
I.1. The personal diary – a brief history of the genre	8
I.2. Diary and other forms of autobiographical writing	15
I.3. „The clauses” of the diary	18
I.4. The functions of the confessional text	23
I.5. The literarity of the journal	25
I.6. The instances of the diaristic text	27
I.7. The personal diary – a feminine vocation?	33
Chap. II. Feminine, feminity, feminine literature	40
II.1. Woman as alterity – stereotypes in feminity representation... ..	40
II.2. The woman’s condition in Romania (the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century)	45
II.2.1. The social status of the woman.....	45
II.2.2. Aspects of the feminine education	49
II.2.3. The feminine elite and the social activism.....	52
II.2.4. The feminist press – item of feminine emancipation	55
II.2.5. The high society sociability	61
II.3. The women and the literature. The feminine literature – a controversial concept	65
Chap. III. Feminine confessional voices from inter-war România	75
III.1. Group portrait: two generations	75
III.2. Queen Mary	78
III.3. Martha Bibescu	84
III.4. Maria Cantacuzino-Enescu	88
III.5. Simona Lahovary	91
III.6. Yvonne Blondel	93

III.7. Pia Alimăneștianu	95
III.8. Arabella Yarka	96
III.9. Elisabeta Odobescu Goga	98
III.10. Lucia Țenovici	99
III.11. Alice Voinescu	100
III.12. Elena-Margareta Ionescu	103
III.13. Jeni Acterian	105
III.14. Alice Botez	107
Chap. IV. The First World War in feminine diaries	110
IV.1. The feminine war: stereotypes and clichés of the First World War	110
IV.2. The women and the war in Romania.....	113
IV.3. Queen Mary of Romania: from „the mother of the wounded” to „the mother of the nation”	115
IV.4. A princess during the war: Maria Cantacuzino-Enescu	119
IV.5. Arabella Yarka – a journal about love and war.....	122
IV.6. Yvonne Blondel – the war on the south front of Romania.....	124
IV.7. Journals from German occupation period: Martha Bibescu, Pia Alimăneștianu, Elisabeta Odobescu, Lucia Țenovici	130
IV.7. 1. The writing during the occupation.....	130
IV.7.2. One representative of “the Arges dynasty”: Pia Alimăneștianu	132
IV.7.3. The wife of captain Tenovici: provincial intellectuals ..	136
IV.7.4. The resistance of the Triple Entente: Elisabeta Odobescu Goga	140
IV.7.5. A controversial character: Martha Bibescu	143
Cap. V. Corporeality dilemmas	151
V.1. The corporeality: element of the self image constitution in diaristic writing	151
V.2. Women in front of the mirror	153
V.2.1. Jeni Acterian: teenage narcissism	153
V.2.2. Alice Voinescu: corporeality abnegation..	157
V.3. The disease and death obsession	159
V.3.1. The fear of death to Jeni Acterian	159
V.3.2. Alice Voinescu: under the sign of the announced death	160

V.4. The maternity experience	162
Chap. VI. Eros hypostasis	169
VI.1. Love during the war. The throes of Arabella.....	169
VI.2. Royal love stories	173
VI.2.1. Maria Cantacuzino-Enescu: three famous love stories.....	173
VI.2.2. Martha Bibescu: the games of seduction and power	177
VI.3. Elena-Margareta Ionescu. <i>The journal with and without Nae Ionescu</i>	184
VI.4. Alice Voinescu – an unhappy marriage and the essentialization of the Eros through death	187
Chap. VII. The dialogue with the divinity	190
VII.1. Alice Voinescu – existence and faith	190
VII.2. Regina Maria between Anglicanism, Orthodoxism and Baha’i religion.....	194
VII.3. Martha Bibescu – the history of a conversion and a great friendship.....	199
VII.4. Alice Botez and the sacred dimension of the fantastic	205
Chap. VIII. Feminine beings and symbolic topos during the inter-war Romania	209
VIII.1. Mogoșoaia	209
VIII.1.1. Brâncoveni inheritance.....	209
VIII.1.2. The mistress of the Mogoșoaia Palace	211
VIII.2. Tescani	217
VIII.2.1. Culture and history in Tescani	217
VIII.2.1. The aforetime boyars.....	220
VIII.2.1. The childhood in Tescani	222
VIII.3. Balchik	224
VIII.3.1. Balchik – a cultural paradigm of the inter war Romania	224
VIII.3.2. Balchik and the Queen Mary.....	228
VIII.3.3. Holidays in Balchik.....	232
Conclusions.....	237
Bibliography.....	240

Key-words: diary, feminine literature, inter-war period, corporeality, Eros, The First World War, Queen Mary, Martha Bibescu, Maria Cantacuzino-Enescu, Simona Lahovary, Arabella Yarka, Yvonne Blondel, Pia Alimăneșțianu, Lucia Țenovici, Elisabeta Odobescu Goga, Jeni Acterian, Alice Voinescu, Alice Botez, Balchik, Tescani, Mogoșoaia.

The thesis *Women's diaries in inter-war period* puts into discussion two controversial concepts, often unvalued – *the diary* and *the feminine literature*. The theme needed a complex theoretic mise en scene that took to a multidisciplinary approach, the valuing data from specialty studies in different fields: literary theory, critics and history, history of mentalities, arts history, sociology.

In *Argument* there has been justified the choice of the theme, the novelty and the originality of the approach, as well as some methodological specifications. Both the intimate journal, the confessional literature generally, as well as the feminine literature, represent new research fields, but there isn't any study that could offer a general view over the feminine diaristic production in Romania. The work proposes the analysis of the feminine intimate journals during the inter-war period, valuing the general and personal history data, through recovering the details of the social, political, cultural and personal realities with which the authoresses directly dealt with.

The first chapter, *The intimate journal, fundamental species of confessional literature* is preponderantly theoretical and it has as a starting point the main studies in the field belonging to some Romanian and foreign researchers: Eugen Simion, Mircea Mihăieș, Philippe Lejeune, Georges Gusdorf, Alain Girard, Béatrice Didier. There had been taken in view the definition of the term and the realization of a short history of the gender. My conclusion is in accordance with the opinion of the majority of historians and literary critics – the coming out and the development of the intimate journal had been supported by the romantic sensibility growth at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, and the literary high reputation of the journal dates from the inter-war modernism period.

The specific of the intimate journal had been emphasized through the connection with other species of the biographic (memoirs, correspondence, autobiography). There had been defined a part of the “clauses” that lie at the basis of the diaristic text: the fragmentarism, the calendar method, the simultaneity, the sincerity, the authenticity and the privacy. There had also been analyzed a part of the confessional text functions (the self-knowledge instrument, the confident, the aide-mémoire etc.), as well as the journal's belonging to literarity and the diaristic text circumstances. The theoretic concepts had been illustrated through examples from the

Romanian and European diaristic, being equally valued through fragments from the feminine journals of the inter-war periods.

The sub-chapter the *Intimate Journal – a feminine vocation?* refers to a stereotype of the social representation of the woman at the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The 19th century mentality associated the practice of the diaristic writing with the women, placing it in a marginal area of the literature. If, at the beginning, the feminine journal was used as a pedagogical instrument, a mean of practicing the drawing-up and moral exercise, gradually the journal becomes an escape space, of proving the individual liberty, besides the social constraints, assuring the artistic creativity premises in case of some authoresses with literary talent.

The second chapter of the work, *Feminine, feminity, feminine literature*, puts into discussion the feminine condition and the feminity perception, using data from sociology, philosophy, anthropology and the mentalities history. The traditional philosophic-historical discourse perpetuated the idea of the woman perceived as an alterity of the man, as “the other one”, as an inferior being who took to a marginalization from a juridical, social, political, educational, cultural point of view, the woman being limited to the domestic field, having the role of wife and mother, an unchanged situation until the beginning of the 20th century. Starting from the premise that the autobiographical self is influenced by the historical, social, cultural configuration where the diarist is located, I presented some aspects concerning the feminine condition in Romania space at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century: the woman’s social status, the feminine education and the social activism, the high society sociability, the feminist press, the authoress appearance and the feminine literature development on Romanian territory.

The third chapter offers a general view over the feminine intimate journal in Romania during the inter-war period. Following the occidental/western model, the young girls from the high society taught abroad were keeping journals, most of them in French language, starting with 19th century. The Romanian feminine diaristic developed almost synchronically with the European one, through the contribution of some women from the aristocratic and intellectual environment. The journal authoresses are personalities from the cultural, social, political from the inter-war period, without necessarily being writers: the queen Maria, Martha Bibescu, Maria Cantacuzino-Enescu, Simona Lahovary, Arabella Yarka, Yvonne Blondel, Pia Alimăneșțianu, Lucia Țenovici, Elisabeta Odobescu Goga, Jeni Acterian, Alice Voinescu, Alice Botez. Only three from the authoresses published parts of their life notes, the rest of the journals being kept in manuscripts and being rediscovered after the communist years. The recent publication of these journals represent a real revelation, for the reading public and for the specialists too, allowing a

resize of the women role in Romanian society and culture from the first half of the 19th century. Having in view that most of the authoresses are less known, I considered the presentation of some biographical data really necessary, fact that enriches/supplements the information about the general issue of each journal.

As for the journals, a strict division into periods of time is rather impossible, the majority of the analyzed notes being started around or during The First World War. The War generated a proliferation of the feminine confessional writing, and a series of journals are kept from that period, journals that allow a re-evaluation of women's role during the wars, bringing in the foreground the notion of "home front", insufficiently exploited in specialty Romanian studies. The chapter *The First World War in feminine journals* puts into discussion the women's role during the wars, the traditional view over the war being centered on the masculine. The studies about women's involvement in wars are recently dated, our main contribution being due to Maria Bucur, but her works, written in English, are published in the United States and have not been translated.¹

The women have not been passive witnesses of the world conflict but they were fighting that way, behind the front, bringing their own contribution to the well-development of the war, being also subjected to permanent risks through attacks, hostile air raids, as well as the trenches. For the women, the war meant, on the one side, a long and painful waiting, being unable to find some news from their relatives, or friends from the front, especially for those who were in the occupied territories. On the other side, the war meant an active implication of the women in volunteering actions: caring the wounded on the front, canteens for the poor, orphanages for the poor, etc. The nurse experience is a central theme of the feminine journals from the First World War. It is to be remarked a (self) identification of the authoresses with the nurse's stereotype – "the white angel", "the mother of the wounded" – devoted, kind, active, full of abnegation, patriotism, the emblematic image of this representation being the Queen Mary.

A sub-chapter treats the feminine journals written during the German occupation. For the population remained in the occupied territories, the journals fulfilled many functions, besides the confident role, they represent a form of resistance, generally surprising a hostile attitude towards the occupiers. The four analyzed journals record different experiences; three of the authoresses come from the Bucharest high society, while the fourth one is a representative of the province intellectuality. Pia Alimăneștianu and Elisabeta Odobescu Goga placed themselves between the resistances of the Triple Entente being also involved in actions with subversive character, as well as that of printing of some statements against the occupiers, publishing some protest articles in

¹ 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 History”, Summer, 2000, p. 30-56; Maria Bucur, Nancy M. Wingfield, *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, Indiana University Press, 2006.

the press, hiding some escaped war prisoners. In the case of Lucia Țenovici, the German teacher from Craiova, the change of attitude is very interesting, the war and the occupation moving her beliefs acquired through the education under the admiring spirit towards the German culture and civilization. Martha Bibescu has been a controversial character of the First World War in Romania, her friendships with important personalities at an international level (both in France, England, Germany), being in the same accused of collaborationism and espionage.

An important theme of the feminine journals from the inter-war period is corporeality, being in a lasting relation with the self-image, then diaristic writing being by excellence an analyze of the profound selfness and the inner/outer relations, identity/alterity. The theme of corporeality is complex and implies aspects as the identity relation vs. alterity, sexuality, maternity experience, disease, oldness or death. In the centre of the analysis there were discussed the journals signed by Jeni Acterian and Alice Voinescu, these representing two different models of perceiving the corporeality. Jeni Acterian appears as a young woman who looks at herself and offers herself to the others' look, her vision over the corporeality being possibly integrated to a definition of Simona Sora concerning the inter-war body: „ The inter-war body is also the place of a paradox: interiorly exalted through sport, balneary holidays, cinema, it is also the new symbolic residence of the profound selfness, the face turned towards the world of an intimacy that is described and recomposed as a memory and authenticity. ”² On the other side, at Alice Voinescu we retrieve many images of the distance towards the own corporeality, the destructured images of the selfness being extended to whole person's level. The two journals are almost alike through the disease and death obsession, the death anxiety being associated with physical degradation through the disease. In spite of the fragile physic and the heart pain, Alice Voinescu survived the detention experience, meanwhile, for Jeni Acterian, the forebodings from the journal being true, being killed by Hodgkin disease at her 42 years old.

The experience of the maternity in the feminine journals offer a new perspective over a concerned theme watched for centuries from a masculine point of view, through the perpetuation of a stereotype with a myth value that limited the woman at the stage of wife and mother. The journals present aspects ignored by the men, as well as the experience of the pregnancy, birth and children upbringing, tight connected themes to the feminine corporeality. The maternity was analyzed in the confessional writings of the Queen Mary, Martha Bibescu, Elena Margareta Ionescu and Alice Voinescu, pointing out different aspects, from the pregnancy experience and the births more or less difficult, of the children upbringing with fulfilling and disillusions, the tragic experience of losing a child but also the failure of maternity. The demystification of

² Simona Sora, *The retrieval of the intimacy. The body in Romanian inter-war and post-december prose*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească Publishing House, 2008, p. 75.

mother's traditional image is very interesting, fact that does not belong to the reception pattern used in the collective mind of the end 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, dominated by the patriarchal thinking.

The chapter *Hypostases of the Eros* talks about the theme of love in some diaries from the inter-war period. The journal is the confident to whom the diarists entrust all their secrets, trying to analyze the moral supports of their own feelings and attitudes related to the beloved person. A common note is that of the marriage failure, in some cases the relationship crisis generating the need of confession that lead to journal's writing. This is also the case of Arabella Yarka, a young woman who hesitates between reason and feeling and whose love story develops on the background of the First World War. The love experience has been presented also in the confessional notes of the two most courted and admired women of the inter-war Romania: princesses Maria Cantacuzino-Enescu and Martha Bibescu. The failure of the marriage with the prince Mihai Cantacuzino lead to, in the case of Maria Cantacuzino-Enescu to a real "love-story novel" that contains two famous reference names of the inter-war period: George Enescu and Nae Ionescu. At Martha Bibescu the theme of love is presented in a soft way along the daily notes. Among her numerous admirers, there were kings, princes, diplomats, writers or famous artists. The feeling of love is animated by the power of temptation and the feeling of History, the princess searching the company of those men who were in the middle of the important historical events and who gave the possibility of a spiritual and intellectual fulfilling. In the journal of Elena-Margareta Ionescu we can feel the disappointment and a hidden feeling of failure the unhappy evolution of the relationship with Nae Ionescu being the main theme of her notes.

An unforeseeable of the erotic feeling evolution appears in the journal of Alice Voinescu: if, from the very beginning the husband Stello is perceived as a possible indiscreet lecturer of the journal from who she hides her note, a jealous man, illegitimate, party person, in the second part of the journal, after dying, Stello is idealized and becomes the notes' addressee from the journal, drawn up almost exclusively under a epistolary form.

The seventh chapter of the working presents the relation with the divinity in the feminine journals from the inter-war period. The religious feeling is also a motivation and a theme of the confessional feeling. We stopped over the journals drawn-up by Alice Voinescu, the queen Maria, Martha Bibescu and Alice Botez. The dialogue with God is a constant of the journal drawn – up by Alice Voinescu, one of the most „spiritualized” confessional writings from Romanian literature. The divinity knows a lot of hypostases and the diarist attitude oscillates between anxiety and disgust, fervor ad fervor, being defined through two verbs that establish an existential dichotomy: *to believe* and *to know*.

In the case of the queen Maria, the religious aspect has been an element of debates and conflict, from the childhood intuiting the mentality differences between persons belonging to different religions. Brought up by an Orthodox mother, baptized according to Protestants and married to a Catholic, the queen Maria has been attracted by Baha'i religion that promotes the peace and the universal fraternity. An important role in the evolution of the religious conception of the sovereign belonged to the American evangelist Frank Bukhman, the founding of the Oxford "Group". Formed under the influence of many religions, Maria has not found herself in any of them, avoiding as far as possible the ecclesiastical rituals and dogma that did not attract her. Her relation with the divinity was a personalized one, searching for her own way, creating her own prayers. She was always looking for a stability of the faith, harmony and communication that could eliminate all the obstacles and differences between people imposed through religion.

On the other hand Martha Bibescu showed from her childhood, the attraction for Catholicism, explained in a large manner through the attachment towards France, where she spent a large part of her life; her religious things were in French and the authors studied belonged to catholic Occident. In the same time, a holiday to Biarritz during her childhood, Martha has been fascinated by the calm and mysterious atmosphere of the contemplative nuns' monastery from Anglet, all along the life the monasteries kept on representing a harmony for her, collectedness, self reconciliation place, where she can take refuge during the critical moments of her existence. The spiritual evolution of Martha Bibescu has been marked by her meeting with the abbot Mugnier, a prelate who represented a special image in Paris from the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Known mainly for his big literary friendships and the permanent presence in the literary saloons from Paris Belle Époque, the abbot Mugnier became the confessor and the devoted friend of the princess, supporting her in the process of Catholicism conversion.

The unusual journal of Alice Botez entitled *The book of fantastic realities* offers an original vision towards the relation with the divinity. The authoress permanently looks for the world's essences and senses by penetrating the fantastic. It is the adventure of a „homo religiosus” (describing Mircea Eliade), being at the limit between sacred and profane that discovers breaches to metaphysic and fantastic in the reality of the normal things. We are assisting to a succession of oneiric visions which are in fact the same hierophanies.

The last chapter, entitled *Feminine beings and symbolic topos during the inter-war Romania* brought to the front three places with special importance to the interwar Romanian history, culture and spirituality: Mogosoia Tescani and Balchik. Each of these themes have been animated by memorable feminine appearances (Martha Bibescu Maria Cantacuzino Enescu,

Queen Mary), the evocation of themes in the confessing writings of the mentioned authors being supplemented by their portraits in the writings of some contemporaries.

In the interwar period Mogosoia is indissolubly linked to the name Martha Bibescu. The Palace built by Constantin Brancoveanu regained its brightness by the restoration responsibly initiated and supervised by the princess, the old Romanian and Venetian architecture being the sources of inspiration for this. During the interwar period Mogosoia received important visitors: statesmen, diplomats, journalists, writers, artists from across Europe and the United States, so that the biographer of Diesbach Ghislain compares Mogosoia with what Geneva represented for Europe : "the meeting place of the international elite."

Tescani Mansion, another cultural landmark of the interwar period, blends with the history of Rosetti-Tescanu family. The most extensive and profound evocation was made by Maria Cantacuzino Enescu in her memoirist work *Shadows and Lights. Memories of a Moldavian Princess*, where the author defines her identity in close connection to the estate of Tescani, her birth and childhood place, but also the cradle of his ancestors. The boyars are evoked in memorable pages and the author identifies herself with her family values and, more than that, with the social values of the class to which she belongs to: the old local aristocracy. The cultural tradition of Tescani was strengthened by the presence of George Enescu, where he composed some of his important works. By the act of donation to the Romanian state, the mansion continued to be a shelter and a creation place for the artists from various fields up to these days.

The last of the debated themes was a real summer cultural capital of the interwar Romania. After acquiring the Quadrilateral in 1913, Balchik, a small picturesque harbour at the Black Sea, has drawn the attention of the artists, especially of painters, fascinated by the brightness and exoticism of the place, but also of the writers, becoming a favorite topic of the inter-war literature. Balchik has focused the efforts of the interwar intellectual elite in creating a major cultural project, materialized in the establishment of the Silver Coast Free University, where important personalities lectured on various fields. The prestige of Balchik has been increased by the interest shown by Queen Mary, who built a castle here, thus becoming the sovereign's dearest place and an attraction for tourists.

The *Conclusions* stressed the research results, the analysis of interwar female diaries allowing the rediscovery of some personalities who have been forgotten by the communist regime. The publication of these journals nowadays has caused only little interest in specialists, but they provide a rich documentary material, open for research in various fields. Even when they don't excel in aesthetic, literary virtues, the notes offer the feeling of authenticity, the

honest painting of the realities of the past; the reader discovers exceptional individual destinies designed on the background of important historical events.