Film

BUILDING A *LIEU DE MÉMOIRE* IN ROMANIAN CONSCIOUSNESS: FROM SORIN ILIEŞIU'S DOCUMENTARY "QUEEN MARIE – THE LAST ROMANTIC, THE FIRST MODERN WOMAN" TO THE GOLDEN ROOM IN PELIŞOR CASTLE

Marina-Cristiana ROTARU
Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest

e-mail: marina.rotaru77@gmail.com

Abstract: *In 2018 Romania will celebrate the centenary of the Union of 1918, or the Great Union, when all Romanian provinces united into one state, Great Romania, a national ideal Romanians strove for and achieved on the battlefield, an ideal confirmed by the Trianon Treaty of 1920. For such a time as this hundredth anniversary, it is only natural to call to mind people who made this ideal come true. Queen Marie is rightly considered one of the artisans of the Great Union, being regarded at the time and afterwards as "the living consciousness of Romanian unity, the symbol of confidence in final victory" (Boia 2001: 208). This article aims to investigate the manner in which the queen's memory is kept alive and draws on two distinct attempts to portray the queen: Sorin Ilieşiu's documentary Queen Marie – The Last Romantic, the First Modern Woman and the Golden Room in Pelişor Castle, Queen Marie's official residence in Sinaia, the royal resort in the Carpathians. These two attempts illustrate how present-day Romanian society tries to regain parts of a common memory that was purposefully obliterated by the communist regime, and strives to rediscover and remap places of their shared memory. My analysis of Ilieşiu's portrayal of the queen is circumscribed to the field of social semiotics, mainly to the concepts of "distance", "angle" and "gaze" which Theo van Leeuwen uses in the visual representation of social actors. In my investigation of memory remapping, I draw on Pierre Nora's concept "lieu de mémoire" and aim to prove that the Golden Room in Pelişor Castle, a place that reflects the personality of the chatelaine and where the queen symbolically reconnected with her origins, has turned into a realm where Romanians have access to a part of their memory which communism did its best to extirpate*.
Key words: Queen Marie of Romania; historical documentary; visual representation; lieu de mémoire; social semiotics.

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Introduction: The historical film in communist and post-communist Romania

Since the fall of communism in 1989, Romanian cinematography was able to investigate the historical past free from the restrictions and censorship of the totalitarian regime. The age of constitutional monarchy, which overlaps the development of Romania from a pre-capitalist country into a modern European state, is one of the periods in the country's history that the communist regime falsified in order to legitimize its hold on power. After 1990, Romanian filmmakers were able to focus their lenses on the more recent past and highlight key moments in Romania's modern history as well as portray powerful personalities and inspiring and visionary leaders that left their mark on the country's evolution and growth. In spite of the benefits democracy has brought to society at large, such as freedom of choice and freedom of expression, the production of historical films in post-communist Romanian society has decreased. The reasons for such a change are both political and financial. During the communist regime, the historical film was intensively used as an appealing, bewitching means of ideologizing an entire nation, especially beginning with the 1970s. Thus, the year 1971 is generally seen as a mark of the outbreak of the Romanian "cultural revolution" when the relative (and closely monitored) openness of the regime towards the Western world abruptly ceased to manifest. The communist power switched towards an excessive nationalist discourse in order to justify its move and started to instill in the minds of people "the vocation of unity", understood as

> "the subordination of the individual in the face of the national organism and, at the same time, a strict delimitation of their own nation in relation to others" (Boia 2001: 77).

The last two decades of Ceauşescu's regime were marked by "a notable shift from the contemporary towards origins" (Boia 2001: 78) while communist nationalism was articulated in a peculiar form, that of protochronism (Boia 2001: 79), which became a powerful tool for self-legitimation. Coming from the ancient Greek terms "protos" and "chronos", meaning "first in time" (Verdery 1991: 167), the term "protochronism" was coined by the Romanian literary critic Edgar Papu, who used it in an article entitled *Protocronismul Românesc* (Romanian Protochronism) published in the Romanian review Secolul XX (The 20th Century) in 1974 (Papu 1974: 8-11). Papu's protochronism criticised and broadly opposed Eugen

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Lovinescu's synchronism[10], a theory according to which modern Romania's development was brought about by an integration of Western European values into the Romanian ethos, which allowed Romania to catch up with Europe. Unlike Lovinescu, Papu, for instance, claimed that Romanian literary tradition "was highly original" and that "Romanian literary creations had often anticipated creative developments in the West", for instance surrealism or Dadaism (Verdery 1991: 174). Protochronism gave expression to "a concern with Romania's self-image and with the relation of Romanian values to the rest of the world" (Verdery 1991: 176) and reflected "a reaction against cultural contempt and cultural domination from the West" (Verdery 1991: 177). Aiming to present Romania as a leading cultural actor on the world's stage, protochronism instinctively appealed to the country's political elite, much interested in raising "Romania's image in the esteem of the world" (Verdery 1991: 168) in an attempt to legitimize themselves and their political decisions in the eyes of the people.

Against this political background, it was not surprising for Romanian cinematography to turn towards emblems of the past. A series of historical films followed, depicting famed Romanian voivodes and heroes, acclaimed for their courage on the battlefield and fortitude in times of distress: *Mihai Viteazul* (1971, directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu) was meant to mark the three hundredth anniversary of the first attempt to unite the three Romanian provinces (Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania) in one state, by the Wallachian Prince Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave) in 1601; *Ştefan cel Mare – Vaslui 1475* (1975, directed by Mircea Drăgan) marked the five hundredth anniversary of the victory of the Moldavian Prince Ştefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) against Sultan Mohamed II; *Pentru Patrie* ("For the Fatherland", 1978, directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu) was produced to celebrate the centenary of the Romanian Independence; *Burebista* (1980, directed by Gheorghe Vitanidis) depicts the life of the ancient Dacian king Burebista and his efforts to unify his people and reject the attacks of the Roman army; *Horea* (1984, directed by Mircea Mureşan) aimed to celebrate two hundred years since the Transylvanian Peasants' Uprising of 1784 led by Horea, Cloşca and Crişan, the leaders of the Romanian and Hungarian peasants that were fighting against feudal oppression in Transylvania; *Mircea* (1989, directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu) is another historical film that portrays the life and reign of Prince Mircea of Wallachia, who managed to block the expansion of the Ottoman Empire in Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These are just a few of the films that are part of a series

[10] Eugen Lovinescu is a Romanian literary historian and critic and theoretician of culture, the author of the theory of synchronism, according to which the development of the Romanian society was triggered by a synchronization with the European models.

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of national celebrations organized by state propaganda (Hentea 2014: 175-177) that served the communist party's national and protochronist politics. These movies highlight the role of the masses, rallied around the voivode (the embodiment of the state and of people's ideals) in the achievement of national desiderata. The theme of unity present in numerous political speeches of Nicolae Ceauşescu is echoed by the films *Mihai Viteazul*, *Mircea*, *Ştefan cel Mare – Vaslui 1475* and *Burebista.* Moreover, *Burebista* is a clear example of the protochronist nationalism used by the communist party for self-legitimation. The ideological manipulation and indoctrination manifest in the movie turn into ridicule when the Institute of Party History of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party claimed that 1980, the year of the release of *Burebista*, marked the two thousand and fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the "unitary and centralized" Dacian state under Burebista. Hence, the Dacian king provided Ceauşescu "the supreme legitimacy" since Burebista's state ("unitary, centralized, authoritarian, respected by the 'others'") "prefigured" the type of state which the Romanian dictator had in mind (Boia 2001: 78).

Ideological manipulation is also manifest in *Pentru Patrie*, a film celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Romanian independence. The major contribution made by Prince Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, the reigning prince of the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, to gaining independence is opacified, prominence being given to the Romanian troops as embodiment of the masses, the key-players in the communist discourse of the development of the Romanian state. Thus, Prince Carol's crucial position as supreme commander of the Romanian and Russian armies at Plevna is intentionally underestimated (Marcu, n.d., para 1). Similar political intrusions are manifested in *Horea*, the film depicting the uprising of Transylvanian peasants (both Romanian and Hungarian) against the feudal lords in 1784. Focusing on the social aspect of class clashes between Romanian serfs and Hungarian landlords, the movie tackles the events in protochronist fashion and turns Horea into more than just the leader of a peasants' revolt. He becomes the head of a revolutionary movement which preceded the French Revolution of 1789 (Hentea, n.d., para 14). The mystification of the past, manifest in Romanian films, was initially promoted by school books, which are usually taken for granted by young pupils and thus become ideal means for ideological manipulation. Hence, both education and films as a form of leisure were wickedly exploited for ideological purposes by the communist regime.

Financially speaking, some of these films were particularly expensive for those times. *Mihai Viteazul* is considered to be the most expensive project of the Romanian cinematography during the communist regime. Aware of the propagandistic power of the moving image, the State was

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willing to provide financial support to such historical films that were particularly suited to serve the party's political aims. Filmmakers and film studios were also helped in getting the necessary number of personnel on the set, the army providing the extras for many historical films.

Naturally, after the antinational phase of Romanian communism which overlapped the end of the 1940s and last throughout the 1950s, the historical film, with its portrayal of emblematic Romanian personalities and representation of key moments in national history could not have displeased the large public. On the contrary, such films appealed to audiences in spite of the fact that the scripts did not always and entirely approach the subject in accordance with historical documents. What seemed to be "a recuperation" of Romanian past was, in fact, "a *manipulation*" (Boia 2001: 77) many Romanians, already ideologically indoctrinated through the education they had received in schools, were not fully aware of. Consequences of this "exacerbation of nationalism" (Boia 2002: 77) acclaimed by the communist party are still visible today.

After 1990, the production of historical films decreased, the new political and economic realities making it more difficult for filmmakers to gather the necessary financial resources. In addition, after having replaced the communist propaganda apparatus, the new political power was incapable of, or, perhaps, disinterested in using Romania's cultural capital as a means of promoting the country and its potential abroad. The state lacked coherent cultural policies and the Ministry of Culture was one of the least financed departments in the government. Against this background, post-revolutionary Romanian cinematography proved unable and unequipped to remain as prolific as it was before the fall of the communist regime. However, a new generation of young and talented directors and script writers has managed to find its way and overcome the hardships of a capitalist economy, making films that were acclaimed and praised abroad. But the historical film has been shown less interest than before in spite of the fact that Romanian history does not lack in characters that would turn films into intriguing, instantly absorbing experiences. King Carol I – the founder of modern Romania –, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie – two of the architects of Great Romania –, leading politicians of the Brătianu family, who greatly contributed to the modernization of the country, are just a few of the Romanian historical personalities that could certainly become vigorous film characters, adding value and substance to the cinematic experiment.

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The paucity of historical films that characterizes the post-revolutionary period in Romanian cinematography[11] was slightly challenged by the same Sergiu Nicolaescu who managed to make a few: *Oglinda* (The Mirror) also known as *Începutul Adevărului* (The Beginning of Truth) in 1994, *Triunghiul Morţii* (The Triangle of Death) in 1999, *Carol I – Un Destin pentru România* (Carol I – A Destiny for Romania) in 2009. In spite of the intriguing and captivating historical facts on which the movies are based, the director could not break away from that nationalistic ideology that characterizes his previous films. In general, the reviews were, if not scathing, at least poor.

A case in point is *Oglinda*, which depicts a significant act in Romanian contemporary history: the Act of 23 August 1944, also known as the Coup d'État of 23 August 1944, when King Michael I of Romania, supported by a small group of political leaders and army representatives, broke the alliance with Nazi Germany forged by the *de facto* head of State at the time, Marshall Ion Antonescu, arrested the marshall and sided with the Allies. The movie represents Sergiu Nicolaescu's biased attitude towards Marshall Antonescu and King Michael. While the marshall is depicted as a national martyr, the monarch is described as having "the traditional profile of a young revolutionary head who gives orders"[12] (Caranfil 2008: 650). After the fall of the communist regime in Romania in December 1989, director Nicolaescu continued to establish influential relationships with the new political power in Bucharest and became a senator and a member of Ion Iliescu's party, a former member of the Romanian Communist Party and the first president of Romania after 1989. The early 1990s where characterized by the new power's extreme hostility towards King Michael, who was trying to return to his country. In October the same year the monarch tried again to return to Romania in order to take part in an academic event marking fifty years since Romania had sided with the Allies, in 1944. He was forced to re-embark on the plane that had taken him to Bucharest only minutes after he had stepped off the telescopic ladder of the aircraft. The film *Oglinda* is considered to be, by some voices in the public "an undisguised propagandistic support"[13] (Hentea, n.d., para 23) from senator Nicolaescu to president Ion Iliescu.

The manner in which history has been approached by Romanian historical films is, in a way, counterbalanced by the documentary film. Take, for example, the history of constitutional monarchy, manipulated and re-

[11]*Aferim*, a 2015 film, is one of the few Romanian historical dramas made after 1990 that were not signed by Sergiu Nicolaescu. The story is set in Wallachia in the nineteenth century and depicts the life of gipsy slaves in the Romanian principality at the time.

[12]My translation (In the original: "tradiţionala figură a unui tânăr şef revoluţionar care distribuie indicaţii).

[13]My translation (In the original: "un sprijin propagandistic făţiş").

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written in accordance with the precepts of Soviet ideology. Many documentaries produced after 1990 attempt to make the general public aware of the massive mystification of history and invite people to reconsider what they had been taught in schools, during the communist regime, about the history of their country. As far as the age of constitutional monarchy is concerned, two documentary makers stand out: Sorin Ilieşiu, a Romanian director, and John Florescu, an American-born producer of Romanian descent[14].

Sorin Ilieşiu has signed documentaries about the political turmoil that marked Romanian society in the early 1990s: *Te iubesc, libertate* (I Love You, Freedom) in 1990, *Piaţa Universităţii – România* (University Square – Romania) in 1991; about famous personalities of the Romanian exile: *Petre Ţuţea – Emil Cioran* in 1991, a film about two renowned Romanian philosophers, for which he signed the script, *Apocalipsa după Cioran* (The Apocalypse according to Cioran) in 1995, a film-interview with the Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran and one of his disciples, Gabriel Liiceanu. Sorin Ilieşiu has also focused on Romania's monarchic history and its personalities. In 1992, he made *Monarhia salvează România* (Monarchy Saves Romania), a documentary about King Michael's historic Easter visit to Romania in 1992, when approximately one million people (according to CNN) gathered in the streets of Bucharest to witness the event and welcome the king. Then, Ilieşiu continued with a few well-received and award-winning short reel and full length documentaries about Queen Marie of Romania: the fifteen-minute documentary *Pasiunea pentru frumos. Jurnalul Mariei, Regina României* (Passion for Beauty. Queen Marie's Diary), made in 2002, was awarded the Special Prize at Dakino International Film Festival of Bucharest in 2008. In 2006, he made a twenty-three-minute documentary about the queen, entitled *Câte ceva despre Regina Maria* (A Few Things about Queen Marie). The queen's part was played by the distinguished Romanian actress Maia Morgenstern[15], and was awarded the prize "Made in Romania" the same year, at the Astra Film Festival, by the Romanian Cultural Institute. In 2011, Ilieşiu transformed this short reel film into a full length documentary and entitled it *Regina Maria: Ultima Romantică, Prima Femeie Modernă* (Queen Marie: The Last Romantic, the First Modern

[14] John Florescu focuses on the image of King Michael of Romania and the role the monarch played in breaking the alliance with Nazi Germany and joining the Allied forces, and dismantles myths about the king and his contribution to the events, myths that the Soviet-supported communist power created and cultivated in order to falsify and manipulate the monarch's identity and legitimize their political leadership.

[15] Maia Morgenstern is a celebrated Romanian actress, who received international acclaim for her role in Mel Gibson's drama, *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), in which Morgenstern played Mary, Mother of Jesus.

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Woman), keeping Maia Morgenstern in the role of the queen. The same year the film was presented, *hors concours*, at Astra Film Festival of Sibiu, the leading documentary film festival in Central and Eastern Europe. Although Ilieşiu's films about Queen Marie are presented as documentaries, they are not documentaries in the strict sense of the word. A documentary is a "factual film […] whose materials are selected and arranged from what already exists (rather than being made up); and whose methods involve filming 'real people' as themselves in actual locations, using natural light and ambient sound" (Kuhn, Westwell 2012: 126). Ilieşiu's films dedicated to the queen, especially *Regina Maria: Ultima Romantică, Prima Femeie Modernă*, are rather a hybrid genre, a peculiar type of documentary where the boundaries between documentary and other types of cinematic forms are overstepped and where the filmmaker can explore and develop his creativity in original ways. I maintain that Ilieşiu's film, *Regina Maria: Ultima Romantică, Prima Femeie Modernă*, is a mix of a compilation movie (a form of documentary) and a few elements of a feature film. The compilation elements are represented by a combination of previously recorded footage, most of it archive footage, but rearranged in order to reflect the intention of the director, and new video materials and commentary. Ilieşiu's production comprises archive video footage with the queen or archive pictures of the queen in various moments of her life as well as Ilieşiu's own additions to the movie, such as the filming of the queen's private diaries where her handwriting is very clear and decipherable. Although Ilieşiu cast Maia Morgenstern in the role of the queen, the only role in the movie, Morgenstern's distribution does not turn this film into a feature film. The meaning of Morgenstern's presence is circumscribed and equally shaped by the script: fragments from Queen Marie's own diaries and autobiographical writings, selected by Ilieşiu, which the actress recites. Morgenstern does not play a role in a feature film, but rather a monologue, rendering the queen's words and revealing the sovereign to the audience.

Queen Marie: The Last Romantic, the First Modern Woman

Sorin Ilieşiu's fifty-two-minute documentary is a portrayal of the personality of Queen Marie. The film is based on a selection of fragments from Marie's diary, which she conscientiously kept from 1916, when Romania entered the First World War, siding with the Entente, until her death, in 1938, and on the queen's autobiography, *Povestea Vieţii Mele* (The Story of My Life).

British-born Princess Marie of Edinburgh, granddaughter of Queen Victoria of Great Britain and of Tsar Alexander II of Russia, was married to the German Prince Ferdinand of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, heir to the Romanian throne. Thus, Princess Marie became Crown Princess of Romania

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and settled in her country of adoption. Through this matrimonial alliance, King Carol I, the Romanian sovereign (himself a Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen), hoped that the young Romanian dynasty would be secured and become related to the leading reigning houses of Europe and that the relationship between his kingdom and the neighboring powers would be improved. By the time Marie became Queen Marie of Romania, she had already turned into a much loved and admired figure while her courage and efforts to help the Romanian army and her people during the First World War, and her commitment to and identification with the Romanian ideals won her the nation's affection and loyalty.

The film introduces both the queen and the woman to the Romanian public in a sort of confessional manner as if Marie had been talking directly to her people. The queen discloses her self-awareness related to the public belief that she was one of the most beautiful queens of her age, and maintains that it is simply an exaggeration because there were neither too many, nor too beautiful queens in her time. It is a remark that reveals not only her feminine coquetry, but also her intelligence and sense of humour. She goes on with thoughts about her hobbies such as horse-riding and gardening, her passion for building houses as cozy retreats, her residences in Balchik, on the Silver Coast of the Black Sea, or Bran, her royal residence in the Carpathians, or Pelișor Castle, her official residence in Sinaia. Then, the queen shares her thoughts about her husband, King Ferdinand, and the moment they became sovereigns, Romania's entrance into the war in 1916 and the king's sacrifice to side with the Entente in spite of the fact that he was a German. Marie talks about her contribution to the war effort, her constant presence among the Romanian troops, boosting their morale and bringing comfort to the wounded. She also mentions her presence at the 1919 Paris Conference, lobbying for her country and convincingly pleading the cause of Great Romania. She expresses clear opinions about the revolution in Russia, the murdering of the Tsar and his family. She also proudly reveals her thoughts about the social and political reforms her husband had promised to implement after the war: the land reform and the universal vote. Her opinions about the Bolsheviks and the Hungarian communists led by Béla Kun are well-argued and instantly absorbing, revealing a level-headed woman, capable of understanding politics and aware of the dangers that rising communism may bring about to her country.

One of the remarks that highlight the queen's attachment to her country of adoption, Romania, makes reference to an art society called *Tinerimea Artistică* (Artistic Youth), founded in 1901, whose royal patron Crown Princess Marie, later Queen Marie, became. The aim of the society was to develop fine arts in Romania and give original expression to the Romanian ethos. In the queen's words, the artistic movement hailed by the society

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aimed at reinventing an authentic national style that would put a stop to the slavish imitation of Western styles. The queen indirectly makes reference to Titu Maiorescu's theory, known as the theory of *forms without substance*. Maiorescu, a nineteenth-century Romanian literary critic and member of the Conservative Party, with valuable contributions to the development of Romanian culture, criticized the country's ceaseless imitation of foreign models in its rush towards modernization. Queen Marie's reference to this amaranthine imitation may indicate that she was aware of Maiorescu's theory of *forms without substance* and that she understood the damage that poor imitation may cause to a young nation, in search of its own identity.

One of the eye-catching features of Ilieşiu's documentary is the fact that Queen Marie's part is played by Maia Morgenstern. It was not the first time she embodied the queen. In 1999, Morgenstern as Queen Marie had the supporting role in Sergiu Nicolaescu's film, *Triunghiul Morţii*, a story about the courage of the Romanian troops in the First World War. Unlike Ilieşiu's documentaries dedicated to Queen Marie, *Triunghiul Morţii* is a feature film (based on a true story, the actors embody real people, with a narrative line circumscribed to a particular time frame and space). In 2006, Sorin Ilieşiu chose Morgenstern to play the queen in his short reel documentary *Câte ceva despre Regina Maria*. Hence, the decision to cast her in the full length documentary *Queen Marie – The Last Romantic, the First Modern Woman* came naturally. By distributing Maia Morgenstern in the role of the queen, Ilieşiu borrowed an element from the feature film (an actress interpreting a character) and combined it with traditional documentary materials (previous video footage and archive documents). Ilieşiu's aim was not to use Morgenstern to reenact certain historical moments although the queen makes reference to many of them. The director's aim was to depict the queen and offer the audience a captivating portrait of the sovereign in her own words. Morgenstern's role is thus, a static one, so to speak, but not a monotonous one. The particular blend of elements from different genres allows the on-looker to discover the queen at various levels of intensity and profoundness. Ilieşiu stated that Maia Morgenstern's countenance and voice were able to reflect the queen's personality: that of a forty-year-old woman in her prime, romantic and modern at the same time and a beautiful, energetic, seductive and determined queen (Fulger, Ilieşiu 2011). Morgenstern's curly hair and short haircut feature the queen's look as captured in official photographs. In the film, Maia Morgenstern wears black, a colour which the queen often used for artistic photos in order to add a dramatic touch to her appearance and create striking effects, thus revealing the romantic side of her personality. Throughout the documentary, Morgenstern as Queen Marie is shown from the right side, a small and fine detail that will be analyzed below and that contributes to the articulation of the relationship between the queen and her

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people in a convincing and captivating manner. Morgenstern's scenes are combined with vintage pictures and video footage of the queen, having a peculiar visual impact on on-lookers and stirring their interest in discovering and understanding Marie's personality. In addition, the overlapping of Morgenstern's voice and photographs of the queen makes the character more real and seems to diminish the temporal distance between the queen and the present-day Romanians. It draws the queen's life into our times and renders her more approachable to present-day people, allowing them to hear her thoughts and understand her, her personality and her out-of-the-ordinary destiny that was inexorably linked to that of the Romanian people.

The fact that Ilieşiu uses authentic pictures and video footage of the queen is natural in a documentary. They are part of those constituents that make a documentary film true to life due to their powerful "'denotative' message" (Barthes 1977: 17). But Ilieşiu's aim for and achievement of a professional work, though enough to justify his deep concern for authenticity, reveal other aspects of the director's commitment to historical accuracy. Through authentic pictures of the queen, Ilieşiu challenges our memory of the sovereign and of her deeds. He positions us face-to-face with the queen and compels us to search our mind archive for those pieces of memory that, when stimulated, may bring back reminiscences of the queen's life.

Since 1990 books about the queen have been published or re-edited regularly. The queen's autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, her daily notes as well as Hannah Pakula's biography of the queen, the only biography so far, have quickly become bestsellers, underlining the public's genuine and robust interest in the sovereign's life. Such attitude is not at all surprising. Under communist rule, people had to, if not fully repress their own memories of the queen, at least vigilantly censor them in order to avoid being interrogated by the regime's police. In spite of serious risks they exposed themselves to, Romanians did manage to save pieces of memorabilia, such as stamps and postcards with the queen, that could be hidden in safe places. Facts of the queen's life which the elders told to their children and grandchildren as family stories in a cautious and succinct manner, revealing, on the one hand, the elders' desire to mention and remember the queen and, on the other hand, their need to protect themselves and their families, worked like seeds which need first to germinate before they can sprout when time comes. Once the communist regime collapsed, the young people's curiosity about the queen, provoked by their parents's genuine, yet deliberately hushed-up affection for her, has turned into interest.

Through his documentaries about Queen Marie, Ilieşiu creates *lieux de mémoire*, a concept that will be enlarged upon later. Archive photographs and video footage, which are tangible, real things, help circumscribe *lieux de*

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mémoire since memory "takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects" (Nora, 1989: 7). The boosting interest into the life of the queen, and the need to build *lieux de mémoire* are the logical and inevitable outcomes of what had happened to the Romanian ethos before the fall of the communist regime. According to Nora, *lieux de mémoire* do not appear randomly in history, but at

> "a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists" (Nora, 1989: 7).

The year 1989 in Romania's history may be held to represent the moment when Romanians' consciousness of a break with the past and awareness that their memory had been manipulated manifested itself. Memories of the monarchic past were intentionally removed from our collective memory, but some, such as personal pieces of memorabilia, have managed to survive surreptitiously. They now contribute to building *lieux de mémoire*, habitats where "memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Nora, 1989: 7).

Representing the queen

When representing social actors, three factors converge: distance, angle and gaze (Van Leeuwen 2008: 141). Social semiotics helps us understand the role these elements play in establishing a relationship between on-lookers and characters captured in paintings, photographs or on film. The distance from which we see people, the angle from which we look at them as well as the gaze the people portrayed fix on on-lookers help establish a particular relationship between the former and the latter.

The distance captured in pictures "becomes symbolic" and "indicates the closeness, literally and figuratively, of our relationship". Hence, people portrayed from a "'long shot', from far away, are shown as if they are strangers, people shown from 'a close-up' are shown as if they are 'one of us'" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 138). In Ilieşiu's documentary, Queen Marie is shown from a close-up. On the one hand, the short distance established between the on-looker and the queen underlines the closeness that Marie had built with her people all her life; on the other hand, this little distance emphasizes the manner Romanians regarded her: as belonging to them, as being one of them. In addition, for present-day audiences, the close-up invites people to consider the queen as 'one of us' and rediscover her personality.

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The second element of social representation is the angle from which we look, which establishes the social relation between the people shown in pictures and the on-lookers. The vertical axis of the angle places on-lookers in a position from which they can see the person portrayed "from above, at eye level, or from below" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 139). The horizontal axis allows the on-looker to see the person depicted "frontally or from the side, or perhaps from somewhere in between" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 139). The two axes reveal "two aspects of the represented social relation between the viewer and the people in the picture: power and involvement" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 139). The vertical angle underlines "power differences":

To look down on someone is to exert imaginary symbolic power over that person, to occupy with regard to that person, the kind of "high position" which, in real life would be created by stages, pulpits, balconies, and other devices for literally elevating people in order to show their social elevation. To look up at someone signifies that the someone has symbolic power over the viewer, whether as an authority, a role model or something else. To look at someone from eye level signals equality (Van Leeuwen 2008: 139).

As far as the vertical line is concerned, Maia Morgenstern as Queen Marie is portrayed from the eye level. The equality thus suggested does not imply that the social relation established between the queen and the people is one of class equality. It is a different equality, that equality of membership, of a sense of identity that the queen and her people shared. They were Romanians and she was the Queen of Romania, sharing their fate and embracing and fighting for their national ideals.

The horizontal line, on the other hand, "realizes symbolic involvement or detachment" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 139). In real-life, the horizontal angle marks "the difference between coming 'face to face' with people, literally and figuratively 'confronting' them, and occupying a 'sideline' position" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 139). The sideline position may often be ambiguous, leaving the decision to the on-looker:

What in one context may be "ignoring each other" (e.g. sitting next to a stranger in a train) may, in another, be "experiencing something together" (e.g. listening to a concert with a loved one) (Van Leeuwen 2008: 139).

In the documentary, the queen is portrayed from one side. But the position does not signal royal detachment (Van Leeuwen 2008: 139). She is not represented as ignoring us. The queen invites us to experience something together: she reveals her thoughts to us, making us witnesses of her hopes and fears, of her joys and sorrows. While listening to her, we are invited into her world and are given the possibility to know her and understand her better, thus developing strong emotional bonds with the sovereign.

The third constitutive element of social representation is the gaze, which creates a particular social interaction. The gaze reveals whether or not

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"the depicted people look at the viewer" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 140). In case the people shown ignore us, "they are, as it were, offered to our gaze […]" and we are made to look at them "as we would look at people who are not aware we are looking at them, as 'voyeurs', rather than interactants" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 140-141). In case the people in the picture fix their attention on us, "the picture articulates a kind of visual 'you', a symbolic demand" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 141). What they demand is

> "signified by other elements of the picture: by facial expressions, by gestures, and also by angles, e.g. by whether they look down at us or not, and whether their bodies are angled towards us or not" (Van Leeuwen 2008: 141).

The queen does not look at us. We see her from one side. Thus, the director offers the queen to our gaze for scrutiny and encourages us to engage in a sort of almost mutual experience with the sovereign. Ilieşiu's approach is meant perhaps to stimulate our curiosity about and interest in the queen much as the queen herself had done when publishing her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, revealing some of her private self to the public.

In spite of the ingenuity of Van Leeuwen's approach to photographs, the scope of his investigation is somehow restricted by the fact that, in establishing a relationship with a character in an image, the on-looker is, in some way, left alone in making sense of the background of the image. Van Leeuwen's taxonomy offers us a potential explanation of Ilieşiu's choice of filming Maia Morgenstern, personifying Queen Marie, from one side. How about the background? Wouldn't it enrich the message of the shot? The queen's profile is projected against an empty, black background, which is intriguing. What would the on-looker make of such a detail? Relying on some of Morgenstern's physiognomy features, Ilieşiu aimed at representing the queen in a true to life fashion. But what is the meaning behind Ilieşiu's choice for black background? Paradoxically, Ilieşiu's simple, unsophisticated background reveals its meaning through controlled lighting and exposure. Allowing no other detail on the screen, the queen's profile is framed against the black background, and light falls on her face in such a way as to outline the clear, elegant features of her countenance. The director wants to capture our attention and channel it entirely on the queen's face (symbolically creating physical proximity) and on her message (thus reinforcing the bonds that the queen herself wants to build with her people). Black, therefore, does not manifest here as a veil, aiming to cover something or mask feelings. On the contrary, it potentiates Ilieşiu's intention of rendering the queen as true to life as possible. The queen's robust personality and unwavering

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determination (rendered convincingly by Maia Morgenstern's appearance and voice) are suggestively and ingeniously foregrounded by the black background.

Pelişor Castle – a mirror of Queen Marie's personality

When people leave the parental home and settle elsewhere, it is not uncommon to take with them pieces of memorabilia such as a photograph, a painting, a childhood toy or a book. Such objects help connect people with their places of origins, with their roots and keep alive part of their identity which they do not want to lose. "Exported" from Britain to Romania, Princess Maria nourished the bond with her native country, ties which gave her strength to carry on in her struggle to adapt to the new milieu. Numerous decorative elements in Pelişor Castle (the queen's residence in the Romanian Carpathians) reflect this bond and they are given a highly original expression in Princess Marie's quarters such as the Bedroom, the Drawing Room and the Chapel, the Sitting Room, the Boudoir and the Golden Room. The most frequent motifs are the Celtic crosses and the interlaced rings and loops, the griffin, the four-legged beast with its head turned towards its tail, the serpent and the lily, all beautifully decorating or carved into pieces of furniture: beds, chairs, armchairs, tables. The interior design and ornamentation of these rooms, combining Celtic, Scandinavian, Byzantine and traditional Romanian motifs illustrate Princess Marie's own and unique version of Art Nouveau.

Numerous Art Nouveau decorative elements in Pelişor Castle reflect the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement with its particular interest in the vernacular. British archaeologist John Romilly Allen underlined the concern manifested by the Arts and Crafts movement in reviving the artisan crafts:

> "[...] in seeking for models [...] it is far better to seek inspiration from the works of art produced either by our ancestors, or by those peoples in Europe who are nearest akin to ourselves [...]" (Allen, 1897: 11).

The old symbols of the early inhabitants of the British Isles, the Celts, the Saxons and the Scandinavians, revived by the Arts and Crafts movement, found distinctive expression in the royal residence of a former British princess through the medium of the Art Nouveau decorative style.

The distinct feature of Queen Marie's style, a hybrid style, is the harmonious blending of foreign elements and the traditional motifs of the Romanian Renaissance style also known as the Brancovan style, typical to the Principality of Wallachia during the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. The Drawing Room, the Chapel or the Sitting Room

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display architectural elements of the Brancovan style: archways, vaults in the form of arches, columns carved in stone, small niches in the white-painted walls or the traditional Romanian fireplace situated in the Sitting Room. These Romanian architectural elements reflect the princess's growing interest in the traditional artistic forms of the people whose queen she would become.

Mapping her territory: the Symbols of the Golden Room

Perhaps the room with the richest symbolism, a unique example of Art Nouveau decoration, is the Golden Room, situated at the top floor of the castle. The decorative elements are entirely designed by Queen Marie and illustrate her ecclectic taste and complex personality. The walls are coated in gilded stucco from floor to ceiling and moulded in the form of thistle leaves. At the centre of the vaulted ceiling there is a large skylight in the shape of a Celtic cross overlapping a solar disc. The pieces of furniture are carved in linden wood, ornated with gold sheets and decorated with Celtic and Scandinavian symbols and mythological creatures. One may experience a sense of awe upon entering the room, enhanced by an almost mystical atmosphere created by the glitter of the gilded stucco and the dim light filtered by stained glass windows. The function of the room, apparently related to that of the Chapel, is quite distinct. I claim that it is not so much a room for religious meditation strictly speaking, as the Chapel suggests through its very name, but rather a place for a particular type of recolletion directly linked to the British dimension of the princess's identity. It is a mysterious space, like those mentioned in the old legends, which allows access to another world if the tresspasser is able to read the signs, to decode the symbols. Drawing on Pierre Nora, it can be reasonably argued that the Golden Room is a particular space where the memory of Marie as a British princess "is crystallized, in which it finds refuge" (Nora 1996: 1). Having come of age, Princess Marie must have understood that, although she was a British princess by birth, her new status and future role in the life of the country require a particular type of sacrifice from her: a difficult and often painful metamorphosis into the queen her new country needed, a queen willing and ready to identify with and reflect her people's ideals. This transformation did not necessarily require a total abandonment of her British nature. However, Marie may have guessed that in the process of metamorphosis, some degree of abandonment is inevitable. Having left her native country at the age of seventeen, the age when one's personality starts to take a firmer shape and one becomes more aware of their self, Marie probably understood that the bonds with her native country may break under the unforgiving forces of time. She must have known that she could no

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longer return to Britain as often as she would have wanted, that Britain was no longer her home. She may well have feared that time and distance would turn her into a stranger in the eyes of her British relatives. In fact, in her memoirs, she mentions the feeling of discomfort when, visiting her grandmother, Queen Victoria, she felt she was an alien to the British royal family (Maria, Regina României 1990: 242).

Her design of the Golden Room may have originated at a time when "a sense of rupture with the past" (Nora 1996: 1) – marked by her identification with the country of adoption – became "bound with a sense that a rift [had] occurred in memory" (Nora 1996: 1) – a rift probably produced by time irreversible and by the imperatives of her new life. But, as Nora underlines, the fact of becoming aware of the rift stimulates "memory sufficiently to raise the question of its embodiment: there are sites, *lieux de mémoire*, in which a residual sense of continuity remains" (Nora 1996: 1). Thus, the Golden Room turns into a *lieu de mémoire*, which Nora defines as

> "any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (Nora 1996: xvii).

The Golden Room becomes a particular realm where a particle of the queen's British identity survives and manifests itself in artistic forms. It is a place of recollection where Marie may have come to reconnect symbolically with her British roots, origins which she never denied, ancestry she wanted other people to be aware of, a particular heritage from which she always drew the strength to carry on.

An interpretation of various decorative elements of the Golden Room may help sustain this point of view. Once into the room, the on-looker's attention is captured by the large skylight in the form of a Celtic cross. The symbolism of the cross is twofold. On the one hand, the cross is the most important Christian symbol, "a sign both of Christ himself and of the faith of Christians" (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia, Vol. 3 2003: 753). At the same time, the middle of the cross represents an ancient Celtic motif, the so-called shield knot. Traditionally used to decorate shields, as its name suggests, it is an early symbol of protection, guarding people against evil spirits and warriors in battles (Castleden 2013). The Celtic symbol must have struck a chord with the queen, a fighter at heart as she would later prove in the First World War. The solar disc, against which the Celtic cross is set, is harmoniously integrated into the symbolism of the skylight. The sun stands for "the divine eye, the active principle and the source of life and energy" (J.E. Cirlot 2001: 320). Looking down from the ceiling towards the

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floor, one's gaze rests on the gilded thistle leaves which completely cover the walls. The thistle leaf, the traditional symbol of Scotland, makes reference to a particular component of the queen's former identity: that of princess of Edinburgh, her father, Prince Alfred, having inherited the royal title of Duke of Edinburgh.

Two pairs of gilded chairs contribute to the unique character of the room. They reproduce a medieval Scandinavian piece of furniture, the Tyldalens chair, the carved wooden chair from Tyldalens Church in Østerdalen, Norway. The original represents a fine example of the Scandinavian woodworking of the early Christian Age, combining Christian and Pagan motifs. The Scandinavian chairs in the Golden Room very much resemble, in form and structure, the Tyldalens chair. As far as the carved motifs are concerned, Queen Marie adapted the original elements to her own vision. The main figure of the Tyldalens chair, carved on the centre of the Celtic cross forming the front side of the back of the chair is that of a man "contending with two beasts and grasping them with both hands", his feet "fettered with serpents intertwined" (Allen 1897: 17). In Queen Marie's version of the Tyldalens chair, the central part of the Celtic cross which forms the front side of the back of the chair represents a dragon with its head turned towards its back, a universal mythological beast and a creature emblematic to the Celtic and Scandinavian legends, too. Although in many cultures it is seen as "the primordial enemy with whom combat is the supreme test", a symbolism manifest in the well-known Christian icon of Saint George slaying the dragon (Cirlot 2001: 86), the beast is equally endowed with positive attributes: it is a "strong and vigilant" creature, with "exceptionally keen eyesight". Consequently, the dragon "was given the function […] of guarding temples and treasures (like the griffin), as well as being turned into an allegory of prophecy and wisdom" (Cirlot 2001: 87). The vigilance and the role of guardian attributed to the dragon seem to be a fitting reflection of Queen Marie's wish to protect and nurture her British roots.

The mystical character of the room is intensified by the dim light filtered by the stained glass windows and the skylight. The interest in this form of art and craft, characteristic of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Western Europe, was stimulated in the nineteenth century by the Gothic Revival movement and the representatives of subsequent artistic movements such as William Morris, the ideologist of the Arts and Crafts Movement, or Louis Comfort Tiffany, one of the leading artists of Art Nouveau, attracted by the effect produced by the light filtered by coloured glass (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia, Vol. 11 2003: 203). The stained glass windows in the Golden Room represent floral or solar motifs, popular Art Nouveau designs. In addition, what appealed to Morris and Tiffany,

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namely the spectacular effect of light upon colour, may have appealed to Queen Marie, too, interested in creating a particular atmosphere that would invite the soul-searching individual to recollection.

Another decorative piece which contributes to the mystical atmosphere of the room is the Tiffany lamp known as the Wisteria table lamp (Baal-Teshuva 2001: 153), which Queen Marie received as a gift from Pauline Astor, a friend of hers (Constantin 2007: 192). The Favrile glass of which Wisteria lamp is made makes it a fitting source of light for the Golden Room. This special type of glass invented by Louis Comfort Tiffany, also known as opalescent glass, is characterized by "glowing colours and an exciting iridescence" (Baal-Teshuva 2001: 28) which causes surfaces to shine softly. It creates "a muted, mysterious light that symbolizes the essence of art nouveau" (Sterner 1982: 162). The symbolism of the lamp in general also helps integrate the Wisteria lamp into the coherent whole of the Golden Room: as a source of light, the lamp can be a metaphor for "wisdom and the dissemination of knowledge". Furthermore, the very fact that the lamp spreads light, thus making darkness disappear, underlines its protective and guiding functions (Evseev 2001: 96).

Another highly significant piece of furniture of the Golden Room is its access door. The design of the interior side of the door completes the artistic composition of the place. It is an arched top door somehow resembling the medieval arched doors. Painted in bronze green, it is decorated with a white lily, stylized in Art Nouveau fashion. It was one of Queen Marie's favourite flowers, carved into or painted on numerous pieces of furniture in her apartments, its rich symbolism appealing to the queen's eclectic style. In medieval Christian iconography, the lily is associated with Virgin Mary (Cirlot 2001: 188). For the Christian world, the lily also symbolizes "the surrender to God's will" (Chevalier, Gheerbrand 2009: 295), an abandonment of people's earthly worries in the hands of the Divine Providence, as illustrated by two verses in Saint Matthew's Gospel in the New Testament referring to the Sermon on the Mount: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They don't toil, neither do they spin" (The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 6, Verse 28). An earlier symbolism of the lily must also have appealed to the queen: it was "a sign of royalty" in the Byzantine culture and for the Christianized Franks (Cirlot 2001: 189). This symbolism could not have escaped Queen Marie, a woman with a strong self-consciousness, well aware of her royal pedigree and of her future role.

But a door is more than just a piece of wood that fills an opening into a wall. Its symbolism goes deeper. Allegorically speaking, the door marks a passage between two worlds (Chevalier, Gheerbrand 2009: 744). In its most common symbolic sense, the door represents a transition from an unconsacrated to a consacrated area as symbolized by the gates of cathedrals or temples (Chevalier, Gheerbrand 2009: 745). As far as the Golden Room is concerned, its

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door does not only separate the open areas of the house or the rooms used for entertaining other family members and guests from the more private places. Depending on whether it was left open or not, the door allowed or blocked access to a unique place where the queen's personality revealed itself, a place that needed to be protected, a place that was not for everyone. The morphology of the room reduces its visibility and permeability.

The concepts of visibility and permeability, which illustrate how accessible the interior of a house can be, may help understand the peculiar significance this room had for Queen Marie. Visibility points to "whether or not the interior of the dwelling can be seen from the street, or to whether it is possible to see clearly from one part of the domestic interior into another" (Hanson 1998: 123). Given that the room is situated at the top floor of the castle and the presence of stained glass windows, the interior could not be seen from the outside. It is difficult to claim with certainty that the inside of the room could have been seen from the interior of the castle because it is unlikely that there is anyone today able to say whether the door of the Golden Room was always kept open or shut or sometimes left ajar. However, small details may indicate that the door was designed to be kept shut. First of all, the shape, the look and the thickness of the door, resembling the medieval doors that protected the royal apartments in the old castle suggest that the door of the Golden Room was also meant to protect the interior and to bar an easy access. Moreover, the brass tacks which decorate the door of the Golden Room point symbolically to the medieval iron nails used to make doors more solid and fitter for protection. Visibility also refers to "whether space is used to manifest objects and behaviours or to conceal them", and underlines "the relative transparency or opacity of the domestic setting" (Hanson 1998: 123). The objects present in the room point to its central function, that of recollection. But the act of recollection, by its nature, is a very private one which is not always illustrated explicitly, by particular and easily recognizable gestures and behaviours. If the interior of the Golden room were compared to the interior of other rooms in Pelişor Castle used by Queen Marie, such as her bedroom, her drawing room and chapel, her sitting room, her boudoir or the breakfast room, the transparancy of the rooms is evident even in the denomination of these interiors. The Golden Room, however, has quite an opaque denomination. You may infer that it has something to do with gold, but little prepares the on-looker to what he is about to see upon entering the room. Therefore, it may not be far-fetched to conclude that unlike the above-mentioned rooms, the Golden Room displays a low degree of visibility.

The other variable of a domestic interior, permeability,

> "refers to the amount of control exercised over the way in which it is possible to move from one space to another" and it may be illustrated by whether "doors are kept shut or locked" (Hanson 1998: 123).

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Taking into consideration the shape of the door of the Golden Room, its width and some of its decorative elements (the brass tacks), which underline that the door may well have been meant to be kept shut, one can reasonably maintain that in this case permeability has a low score. Therefore, these two characteristics, visibility minus and permeability minus, underline that the Golden Room was not a room where access was granted easily. As a place where the queen probably used to recollect herself and symbolically strengthen the invisible bonds with her origins, the Golden Room needed some sort of defense against the outside forces in order to protect its quasi sacredness.

A resting place for the queen's heart: our *lieu de mémoire*

According to the queen's will, after her death, the heart was removed from the body and sealed inside a silver box which was then placed inside the small Orthodox Chapel "Stella Maris" on the queen's royal estate of Balchik in Southern Dobrudja. In September 1940, when Romania lost this southern territory because of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement, Princess Ileana, Quen Marie's youngest daughter, took her mother's heart from Balchik and brought it to Bran Castle, in Transylvania, where it was laid to rest inside a cliff overlooking the castle. As video archives show, each year until the abdication of King Michael, a requiem mass would be celebrated for the queen in the presence of members of the royal family and local people coming from the neighbouring villages. Soon people would make pilgrimages to the queen's heart. But the cliff near Bran Castle was not to remain the resting place for the queen's heart. In the late 1960s, communist authorities were determined to remove the heart from the cliff in order to prevent "possible manifestations of mysticism"[16] (Niculescu Bran 2015: 143). Thirty years after her death, people's memories of Queen Marie still manifest, a fact that the communist leaders could not afford to take lightly. Hence, the queen's heart was temporarily kept in a safe in the Museum of Bran Castle. Then, in 1974, the heart was taken to Bucharest and kept in one of the warehouses of the National History Museum until 2010 when, after being subjected to conservation treatment, was sealed in a vacuum box (Niculescu Bran 2015: 144).

After lengthy negotiations between the Romanian royal family and the representatives of the National History Museum in Bucharest, a settlement was reached. The royal communiqué informed that, by King Michael's decision, Queen Marie's heart would be laid to rest in the Golden Room of Pelişor Castle where it had beaten for the last time seventy-seven years before, when the queen died. On 3 November 2015, in a military procession,

[16]My translation (In the original: "eventuale manifestări de misticism").

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Queen Marie's heart left the National History Museum and travelled to Pelişor Castle. Interestingly, in the royal communiqués, the queen's heart was written in capitals (in Romanian: Inima Reginei). The detail was not meant to suggest an overblown attitude of the royal family. It simply indicated the status which the royal family ascribed to the queen's heart: that of symbol of the queen's genuine and abiding love for and firm commitment to the country she adopted.

What turns Pelişor Castle and the Golden Room from *lieux d'histoire* (places associated with notable events in one's history) into *lieux de mémoire* is, according to Nora, "a will to remember" (Nora 1996: 14). This will was first manifested in 1993 when Pelişor Castle became a museum and was open to the public. The curators of the museum, with the help of documents from the archives, tried to recreate interiors as accurate as the original rooms. The second time the will to remember was manifested publicly was in 2015 when King Michael decided that the queen's heart should be sheltered in the Golden Room. What further contributes to the transformation of the Golden Room into our *lieu de mémoire* is the strong personality of the queen: an authentic leader who, when called upon to assume the responsibilities of sovereignty, answered promptly and courageously. She was the image of the Romanian people during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Her total identification with the needs and ideals of her nation made the people consider her one of their own. Hence, she became "a symbolic element of the memorial heritage" (Nora 1996: xvii) of the Romanian people. In addition, the rich symbolism attached to heart burial in the Western European tradition, a symbolism Marie may have been aware of, reinforces the emblematic dimension of the Golden Room. Unprecedented in Romanian history, the queen's decision to have her heart interred apart from her body may have been triggered by "the Western mystique of the heart of Christ"[17] and the funeral tradition of the Templar knights (Niculescu Bran 2015: 47). The Bible attaches various values to the heart. It is, for instance, "the seat of wisdom, of loyalty and of selfless love"[18] (Niculescu Bran 2015: 48). In the Gospels, the heart is the seat of emotions, intelligence and memory (Niculescu Bran 2015: 49). It is also the seat of the faith in God (Niculescu Bran 2015: 50). Queen Marie was not a non-catechized churchgoer. Born in the British royal family, she must have been acquainted with the teachings of the Protestant Church. Then, the years spent at the royal court of Coburg made her familiar with the Lutheran culture, which completed her spiritual make-up. With an Orthodox mother, a Catholic husband and all of her

[17] My translation (In the original: "mistica occidentală a inimii lui Cristos").
[18] My translation (In the original: "sediul înţelepciunii, al loialităţii şi al dragostei dezinteresate").

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children baptized in the Orthodox Church, Queen Marie, a soul searching individual, must have become receptive to Christian symbolism and diverse Christian traditions. Moreover, for her romantic personality, the Crusaders' custom to bury their heart in the Holy land, the land they fought for, must have appealed to the queen.

Hence, the queen's heart represents more than an anatomical organ. It has become "by dint of human will or the work of time" (Nora 1996: xvii) a symbol of the queen's love for her country, of her outstanding courage in troubled times and of her crusader-like devotion to the land she fought for, Great Romania. It is this dimension of the queen's heart that the capital "I" of "Inima Reginei" (the Queen's Heart") used in the royal communiqué points at. The Queen's Heart itself has become our *lieu de mémoire*, a realm of memory that needs to be treasured. The Golden Room, minutely designed by the queen herself, and decorated with thistle leaves, allegorical protectors of the heart (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 2009: 245), becomes a symbolically fitting place for the Queen's Heart.

Present-day Romanian society is in search of its own identity, which can only be regained and maintained through access to memory. The struggle against communist brainwashing results in the birth of *lieux de mémoire*. Pierre Nora notices that realms of memory "exist because there are no longer any *milieux de mémoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience" (Nora 1996: 1). The generation of Romanians that fought against communism, a generation represented by people from all social classes, of various faiths and ethnic origins, represented a *milieu de mémoire*. Physically exterminated in communist prisons and labour camps, it became a generation we lost. Its extermination meant the disappearance of a *milieu de mémoire*. To honour their memory, Ana Blandiana and other leaders of the civic society helped create the Sighet Memorial, a *lieu de mémoire*.

The fact that Pelişor Castle shelters the Queen's Heart invests it with a powerful spiritual dimension. Those who visit it and who are aware of the presence of the Heart are no longer simple tourists. They become pilgrim-tourists and the castle changes into a place of pilgrimage. A visit to the Golden Room is transformed into a symbolical rite of passage, which reveals truths people were unaware of. Hence, the Queen's Heart, the seat of memory, metamorphoses the Golden Room into our *lieu de mémoire*.

Lieux de mémoire, as Pierre Nora underlines, do not appear at random and without reason. They are born when people become aware of "a break with the past" accompanied by "the sense that memory has been torn" in such a way as to raise the question of "the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists" (Nora, 1989: 7). After the fall of the communist regime, Romanians have become aware of the fact that, throughout the decades of communist rule, the historical continuity of their state had been

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broken and that the memory of their nation had been manipulated in order to alienate the nation from itself. The manipulation of collective memory was conducted systematically and affected the whole society since the new regime aimed at inventing a new man, with no memory of his own and with an identity commanded from the ideological laboratories of the new political power. In spite of the communists' efforts to eradicate the nation's memory completely, in certain places, a feeling of historical continuity survived even though it was not visible. The manner in which Queen Marie's memory survived is a case in point. Her castle, Pelişor, although closed to the public during the communist regime, was not demolished, but turned into a retreat house for artists and writers. In addition, the pieces of memorabilia depicting the queen, which numerous Romanians kept in photograph albums or old shoe boxes hidden carefully in the attics or basements of their houses, may be said to represent those sites of memory mentioned by Nora where a feeling of continuity, even if faint and suppressed, endured. The queen's heart, though closely guarded and secretly kept by the communist regime, survived total destruction by a striking twist of fate. These secluded places of memory avoided being crushed by the regime's repressive system. Once the communist rule was overthrown, these sites of continuity could reveal themselves and turn into *lieux de mémoire.* The cinema and the power of the moving image contribute to the crystallization of *lieux de mémoire* and help revive collective memory if historical fact is respected and not manipulated as it had happened during the communist regime. The film is able to bring back to life historical characters and reconnect people with them in ways which can make audiences vibrate. The British drama "The King's Speech" and the television series "The Crown" are just a few examples of the manner in which the moving image helps memory survive time through the creation of *lieux de mémoire*. The documentary film, too, tries to keep memories alive through its use of authentic materials such as archive video footage or photographs, costumes or filming in actual locations. Focusing on the facts of an event, documentaries give birth to a type of environment where memory, something immaterial, can take a solid shape and generate itself. New cinematic productions and the very survival of Pelişor Castle, coupled with the fact that the Queen's Heart rests there allows *lieux de mémoire* to be born and give substance to our collective memory, violently manipulated by a cruel regime.

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