Ramona Mihăilă

EDITOR



Carmen Sylva

A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning

This volume constitutes a comprehensive scholarly examination of Carmen Sylva, the literary pseudonym of Queen Elisabeth of Wied (1843–1916), the first queen consort of Romania and an eminent cultural figure of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. It situates her dual identity as sovereign and author within the broader political, cultural, and intellectual contexts of her time, emphasizing her marriage to King Carol I in 1869 and her subsequent role in consolidating both the political authority and the cultural prestige of the Romanian monarchy.

Particular attention is devoted to her extensive literary production, encompassing poetry, prose, and translations, composed primarily in German yet profoundly informed by Romanian folklore and Romantic aesthetics. The volume further analyzes the transnational reception of her oeuvre, which circulated widely and was critically engaged across Germany, France, Britain, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Japan, and the United States.

This work also explores Sylva's commitment to cultural diplomacy and humanitarianism, highlighting her literary collaborations, especially with women writers, as well as her philanthropic initiatives, such as the establishment of hospitals during the Russo-Turkish War and the creation of the Queen Elisabeth Society. Her patronage of the arts, manifested in salons, musical activities, and the promotion of traditional crafts, and her influence on architectural projects, notably the design of Peleș Castle, are examined as integral components of her cultural legacy.

Ultimately, the volume presents Carmen Sylva as a paradigmatic case of a royal figure who transcended the conventional boundaries of dynastic duty, emerging as a writer, cultural mediator, and patron whose contributions shaped both Romanian identity and European cultural exchange.

Editor:
Ramona Mihăilă

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Efstratia Oktapoda Université Paris-Sorbonne, Paris IV
Sophie Rochefort Guillouet Sciences-Po Paris
George T. Sipos West University of Timişoara
Silvia Irina Zimmermann Research Center Carmen Sylva
of the Princely Archive of Wied, Neuwied

Carmen Sylva –

A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning

Editor:
Ramona Mihăilă

ADDLETON ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS • NEW YORK



Addleton Academic Publishers
www.addletonacademicpublishers.com,
editors@addletonacademicpublishers.com
30-18 50th Street, Woodside, New York, 11377

ISBN 978-1-942585-26-8
eISBN 978-1-942585-27-5
Library of Congress Control Number: 2025949462

Publishing Executive Editors for the series
INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES TO GENDER AND SOCIETY

Ramona Mihaila (Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Bucharest)
Efstratia Oktapoda (Université Paris-Sorbonne, Paris IV)
Nancy Honicker (Université de Paris 8)
Nancy Isenberg (University of Rome III)
Isabel Lousada (Nova University, Lisbon)

Cover Photo: Queen Elisabeth of Romania, Public domain

© Addleton Academic Publishers 2025

Addleton Academic Publishers is an imprint of RIOTS, New York.

Addleton Academic Publishers has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of urls for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Addleton Academic Publishers, or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Addleton Academic Publishers, at the address above. You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Produced in the United States of America

CONTENTS

Introduction [9]

Part 1.

Carmen Sylva's Works: A Cross-Cultural and Global Perspective

Carmen Sylva's Britain: Her Vision, Her Legacy [21]
LAURA NIXON

A Crowned Poetess. Carmen Sylva and the Artefacts of Royal Celebrity in Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Periodicals [38]
ZSUZSA TÖRÖK

Queenship and Literature: The Case of Carmen Sylva's Reception in France [60]
EFSTRATIA OKTAPODA

Carmen Sylva, a Royal French Favourite [69]
SOPHIE ROCHEFORT GUILLOUET

The Bulgarian Reception of Carmen Sylva in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century [82]
NADEZHDA ALEXANDROVA

Beyond *Japonisme*: The Queen Poet Carmen Sylva and Japan [96]
GEORGE T. SIPOS

Transatlantic Impressions: The Female Readership of Carmen Sylva's Writings in the United States [107]
RAMONA MIHĂILĂ

"Poeta Regina Mater, Mulier, etcétéra, Carmen Sylva la Mamma:" The Reception of the Poet Queen in the Netherlands [143]
ROB VAN DE SCHOOR

Carmen Sylva as the Promoter of Romanian National Heritage in Germany of Her Time [164]
MIHAELA HRISTEA

Part 2.

Crossroads of Literary Innovation and Artistic Collaboration

Literary and Decorative Art Works of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva) During Her Exile (1891-1894) [173]
SILVIA IRINA ZIMMERMANN

'La femme du monde est difficilement la femme de son mari': The Artistic Collaboration of Dora Hitz and Carmen Sylva [184]
SHONA KALLESTRUP, NATALIE GUTGESELL

Mite Kremnitz and Carmen Sylva [208]
GEORG KREMNITZ

Mama Regina and the Sphinx [219]
ALICE NĂSTASE BUCIUTA

Two Destinies: Carmen Sylva and Bertha von Suttner [227]
CRISTINA-ADRIANA REITER-POPESCU

Carmen Sylva and "The Venetian Drama" [235]
RĂZVAN STAICU

Architectural Features during Royal Times: King Carol I and Queen Elizabeth (Carmen Sylva) [250]
MATEI STOIAN

Part 3.

Exploring Narrative Techniques and Language in the Works of Carmen Sylva

The Ideal of Motherhood in Carmen Sylva's Writings [263]
ALINA BRUCKNER

Translating Societal and Family Matters into Storytelling in Carmen Sylva's Writings [271]
ONORINA BOTEZAT

From Lorelei to Ialomița: Carmen Sylva's Romanian Reimagining of a Germanic Myth [286]
MARIA-LUIZA DUMITRU OANCEA

Carmen Sylva and the Modernization of the Romanian Culture [294]
LUIZA MARINESCU

Queen-Writer: Construction and Deconstruction of an Image [314**]**
DANIELA VARVARA

Eternal Afterlife or Eternal After Sleep in Carmen Sylva's Poetry [330]
SARA HUNZIKER

The Difficult Path of Women: The Translation of a Short Story by Carmen Sylva and Its Framing in "An Investigation about Forgotten Women" [336]
SUSANA VENTURA

Linguistic Versatility in Pursuit of Simplicity. *Der Schmetterling* from Carmen Sylva's Perspective [350]
CRISTINA NICULESCU-CIOCAN

Carmen Sylva, Queen Elisabeth of Romania, and the Invention of a Royal Children's Literature [359]
MARIA IORDAN

Notes on Contributors [371]

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 9-18

Introduction

Pauline Elizabeth Ottilie Louise (1843–1916), born in Neuwied, Germany, became Queen Elisabeth of Romania upon her marriage in 1869 to Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, later known as King Carol I of Romania. Her transformation from a German princess to a Romanian queen was marked by a deep commitment to her adopted homeland, which she embraced not only in her public role but also through her extensive cultural and literary work. Queen Elisabeth, under the literary pseudonym *Carmen Sylva*, became one of Romania's most important cultural ambassadors. She brought Romanian traditions, legends, and popular culture to the attention of the European literary world through her writings and translations, giving visibility to a country then little known outside its borders.

One of her most celebrated achievements was the translation and adaptation of Romanian folklore into German, French, and English. *The Bard of the Dimbovitza*, a collection of Romanian folksongs rendered as lyrical poems, became a cultural sensation across Europe and beyond. Collaborating with Hélène Vacaresco for the French edition and Alma Strettell for the English version, Carmen Sylva successfully introduced Western audiences to the depth and beauty of Romanian oral tradition. The popularity of this collection inspired composers across Europe and North America—such as George Enescu, Sir Hubert Parry, Arnold Bax, Charles T. Griffes, and Arthur Foote—to set these lyrical pieces to music, thus expanding the influence of Romanian folklore into the realm of art song and classical music.

Beyond her interest in folklore, Queen Elisabeth was a prolific writer across many genres, publishing poetry, short stories, novels, memoirs, and plays. Her first published poems, "Sappho" and "Hammerstein" (Leipzig, 1880), marked the beginning of a lifelong literary vocation. When writing solo, she used the pen name *Carmen Sylva*; when collaborating—most notably with her close companion and lady-in-waiting, Mite Kremnitz—she published under the shared pseudonym *Dito and Idem*. This partnership produced a range of fictional works that explored themes of identity, morality, and the

human condition, often reflecting the tensions between tradition and modernity in Romanian society.

A woman of remarkable education, Queen Elisabeth was fluent in several languages and possessed a truly cosmopolitan literary voice. She wrote with ease in German and French and frequently translated her own works, a rare skill that enhanced her accessibility to multiple audiences. Her linguistic dexterity made her popular across Europe, where her works were eagerly translated into English, Spanish, Italian, Russian, and other languages. In an age when national literatures were often closed systems, Carmen Sylva stood out as a cultural phenomenon that bridged Eastern and Western European literary traditions. Her open, charismatic personality and her elevated social status further amplified her influence, drawing the attention of literary and artistic circles across the continent.

Elisabeth's court in Romania became an intellectual hub, where artists, writers, and musicians—both Romanian and foreign—found a welcoming and stimulating environment. Her literary salon was not merely a courtly accessory but a vibrant space for cultural exchange and creation. The speed and frequency with which her works were published and translated demonstrate the appetite that European and transatlantic audiences had for her writing. Her position as queen did not inhibit her literary creativity but rather amplified its reach, making her one of the most widely read female authors of the period and a model of cultural diplomacy through the arts.

The idea of compiling a volume dedicated to Carmen Sylva emerged during my research tenure at the Library of Congress, where I discovered a wealth of materials that underscored her significant cultural contributions. The Library's extensive holdings include works such as *Letters and Poems of Queen Elisabeth (Carmen Sylva)*, edited by Henry Howard Harper, and *Suffering's Journey on the Earth*, translated by Margaret A. Nash. These texts, among others, highlight her literary prowess and her role in introducing Romanian culture to the broader European and American audiences.

The Library of Congress also houses visual documentation of Carmen Sylva's life and legacy. Such materials provide invaluable insights into her personal and public life, enriching our understanding of her multifaceted identity as both a monarch and a literary figure.

This volume, marking the centenary of Queen Elisabeth's death, honors her legacy by gathering interdisciplinary research from the fields of literature, linguistics, mythology, folklore, music, history, cultural studies, and visual arts. The essays presented here aim to

reexamine and celebrate the diverse and lasting contributions of Carmen Sylva. Through the lens of scholarly inquiry and renewed cultural interest, her literary innovation, collaborative spirit, and role in shaping Romania's international cultural image are given the recognition they so richly deserve.

The opening section of the volume explores Carmen Sylva's extensive international reach and the diverse receptions of her works across various cultural landscapes. Laura Nixon begins by examining Sylva's impact in Britain, revealing how her poetry and public persona were embraced within Victorian literary circles. Nixon highlights Sylva's role as a cultural bridge connecting Romanian and British identities, emphasizing her legacy that transcended national boundaries and resonated with audiences far beyond her homeland.

Zsuzsa Török investigates Sylva's reception in Hungary, focusing on how nineteenth-century Hungarian periodicals shaped and promoted her celebrity as both a monarch and a literary figure. Török's analysis sheds light on the complex interplay between royalty and literary prestige, revealing broader European trends surrounding royal authorship and Sylva's navigation of these intersecting spheres.

Efstratia Oktapoda explores Sylva's reception in France, emphasizing the aesthetic and thematic qualities of her poetry that appealed to French literary circles. Oktapoda demonstrates how Sylva's literary persona adapted to the French cultural context, illustrating the fluidity of her identity and her capacity to engage with diverse national traditions.

Sophie Rochefort Guillouet examines Sylva's place as a beloved figure in French cultural circles, highlighting how her royal status and literary talent combined to make her a favored presence among French elites. Guillouet's analysis positions Sylva as a figure who bridged political and cultural spheres, using her influence to foster artistic exchange between France and Romania.

Nadezhda Alexandrova identifies Sylva's influence in Bulgaria, situating her writings within the country's national awakening and cultural consolidation. Alexandrova shows how Sylva's work inspired Bulgarian audiences during periods of political and social transformation, highlighting her significance as a transnational literary figure in Eastern Europe.

George T. Sipos offers a unique perspective on Sylva's engagement with Japanese culture, moving beyond typical Western Japonisme. Sipos analyzes how Sylva incorporated Japanese aesthetics and philosophies into her work, reflecting her cosmopolitan

outlook and ability to dialogue with non-Western traditions in a global literary vision.

Ramona Mihăilă reviews the multifaceted reception of Sylva's works in the United States, analyzing how various critical frameworks such as feminist, postcolonial, and comparative literature have engaged with her writings. Mihăilă highlights the ongoing relevance and adaptability of Sylva's legacy within contemporary American literary and academic spheres.

In his chapter, Rob Van De Schoor examines the critical reception in the Netherlands (1875–1925) of the literary work of Queen Elisabeth of Romania, better known by her pen name Carmen Sylva. Celebrated during her lifetime as the "poet queen," her writings reached Dutch audiences through translations by authors such as Frits Smit Kleine, Cornélie Huygens, Fiore della Neve (M.G.L. van Loghem), B. de Graaff-Van Cappelle, and Marie van Buuren, whose efforts were widely acknowledged in literary journals. Carmen Sylva consciously fashioned her public image as that of a modern, socially engaged woman, promoting philanthropic initiatives and inviting European intellectuals to Bucharest to strengthen cultural ties. While contemporaries admired her for her openness and dedication, modern historiography offers a starkly different image—portraying her as vain, eccentric, and entangled in court intrigues—illustrating how cultural memory and historical interpretation have shifted over time.

Mihaela Hristea focuses on Carmen Sylva's efforts to foster a positive image of Romania in Germany. The literary reception of Carmen Sylva was preceded by the earlier wave of translations of major German Romantic poets—Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Nikolaus Lenau, and, notably, Heinrich Heine—introduced to Romanian readers from the second half of the 19th century onward. These translations served not only to infuse Romanian literature with European intellectual currents but also to catalyze the assimilation of new aesthetic and thematic elements. Among them, Heine held a particularly privileged position, attaining an almost mythical status in the Romanian literary imagination.

The second section of the volume delves into Carmen Sylva's vibrant interactions with other artists and intellectuals, emphasizing how collaboration shaped her literary and artistic legacy. Silvia Irina Zimmermann's insightful exploration of Queen Elisabeth of Romania's literary and decorative art works during her exile from 1891 to 1894**.** This period marked a pivotal phase in Carmen Sylva's creative output, where the tensions of political displacement inspired a

rich artistic expression. Zimmermann reveals how the queen's exile was not only a moment of personal reflection but also a fertile ground for her literary and artistic production. The chapter emphasizes the interplay between her visual artistry and literary endeavors, demonstrating how the two forms complemented each other to express themes of identity, resilience, and cultural heritage. This interdisciplinary approach provides a nuanced understanding of Carmen Sylva as both a creator and a symbol of national and personal perseverance.

Shona Kallestrup and Natalie Gutgesell explore Sylva's creative partnership with the painter Dora Hitz, highlighting how their collaboration blurred boundaries between visual art and literature. Their study reveals the complexities of artistic and personal relationships, emphasizing the negotiation of gender roles and identities in the late 19th century.

Georg Kremnitz focuses on Sylva's long-standing relationship with Mite Kremnitz, a key literary collaborator and confidante. This partnership was instrumental in shaping much of Sylva's output and public image. Kremnitz's chapter sheds light on the synergy between the two women and their shared contributions to Romanian and German literature, illustrating the power of female literary networks during a time when women's voices were often marginalized.

Alice Năstase Buciuta's contribution offers a symbolic reading of Sylva's persona, exploring how she cultivated an enigmatic and multifaceted public image. This chapter engages with themes of mystique, power, and femininity, portraying Sylva as a figure who embodied both maternal care and inscrutable depth.

Cristina-Adriana Reiter-Popescu juxtaposes the lives and legacies of Carmen Sylva and Bertha von Suttner, the Austrian pacifist and Nobel laureate. By comparing these two influential women, Reiter-Popescu highlights their differing approaches to activism, literature, and public life, revealing how Sylva's literary career intersected with broader political and social movements of her time.

In his analysis of "The Venetian Drama", Răzvan Staicu showcases Sylva's engagement with theatrical arts and her efforts to innovate within the dramatic genre. Staicu discusses how Sylva adapted and infused the Venetian dramatic tradition with her own narrative voice, contributing to the modernization of Romanian theater and enriching the country's cultural scene.

Finally, Matei Stoian explores the royal influence on the interwar architecture of Bucharest, connecting Sylva's cultural legacy to the city's urban and artistic development. Stoian's chapter illustrates how

royal patronage and artistic collaboration extended beyond literature into the visual and spatial realms, highlighting the interplay between monarchy, culture, and modernization in early 20th-century Romania.

The last section of the volume opens with Alina Bruckner's study that delves into the ideal of motherhood as represented in Carmen Sylva's writings**,** underscoring its centrality in the queen's literary imagination. Bruckner unpacks the multifaceted portrayals of motherhood, ranging from nurturing and sacrifice to empowerment and legacy. Through a close reading of key texts, the chapter situates Carmen Sylva's maternal ideal within broader nineteenth-century discourses on gender and family, illustrating how the queen's work negotiates traditional roles while also subtly challenging them. This analysis highlights how motherhood serves as both a personal and political motif, enriching the emotional texture and social commentary of Sylva's oeuvre.

Maria-Luiza Dumitru Oancea's chapter showcases Sylva's ability to reinterpret and localize mythological narratives. By drawing on the German Lorelei legend and transforming it within a Romanian cultural and geographic context, Sylva asserts a national literary identity while engaging in a broader European dialogue of myth and folklore. Oancea's analysis illuminates the process of mythic adaptation as a creative act that simultaneously honors and innovates traditional stories. This chapter highlights Sylva's skill in weaving myth and landscape to articulate themes of enchantment, danger, and femininity.

The literary activity of Queen Elisabeth of Wied offers in Luiza Marinescu's opinion a unique opportunity to revisit the pioneering role she played in the mediation, promotion, and cultural marketing of Romanian literature on the European stage. For the first time in Romanian cultural history, such efforts were carried out with a remarkable degree of rigor, precision, and strategic vision, blending literary artistry with deliberate transnational outreach. This study seeks to illuminate the transdisciplinary framework underlying Carmen Sylva's approach, examining how her royal status, multilingualism, and cross-cultural networks were harnessed to position Romanian literature within broader European literary currents. By integrating literary creation with promotional acumen, Carmen Sylva not only enhanced the visibility of her own works but also contributed to shaping Romania's cultural image abroad in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Daniela Varvara's extensive chapter offers a critical examination of the complex public persona Carmen Sylva cultivated as a queen

and literary figure. Varvara traces how Sylva's image was carefully constructed through her writings, public appearances, and patronage, yet also deconstructed through contemporary critiques and evolving cultural narratives. This tension between the regal and the artistic roles allows readers to see Sylva not just as a monarch with a pen but as a dynamic figure navigating conflicting expectations of gender, power, and creativity. The chapter enriches the volume by contextualizing Sylva's literary production within the politics of image-making and identity in late nineteenth-century Europe.

Sara Hunziker's evocative contribution explores metaphysical themes permeating Sylva's poetic work. Focusing on motifs of death, sleep, and transcendence, Hunziker analyzes how Sylva negotiates the boundary between life and eternity, reflecting the spiritual preoccupations of her era. The chapter offers a sensitive reading of the poetic language and symbolism, revealing a nuanced contemplation of mortality that blends religious, philosophical, and personal elements. This reflection on afterlife imagery deepens our appreciation of Sylva's lyrical voice and her engagement with existential questions.

In her chapter, Susana Ventura examines the difficult path of women through the translation of one of Carmen Sylva's short stories**,** framed within the broader project "An Investigation about Forgotten Women," sheds light on the socio-cultural challenges faced by women in Sylva's time. Ventura discusses not only the literary content but also the translation's role in reclaiming women's voices and histories that have been marginalized. This chapter underscores the ongoing relevance of Sylva's narratives as they resonate with contemporary feminist concerns about representation, memory, and agency. Through translation and critical framing, Ventura's work emphasizes the importance of revisiting historical texts to recover silenced experiences and enrich literary discourse.

Cristina Niculescu-Ciocan investigates Carmen Sylva's poetic craft, focusing on her ability to distill complexity into concise, fluid expression enriched with sensory effects and vivid imagery. In "Der Schmetterling," her symbolic metaphors evoke the volatility of human nature and the fragility of decision-making, while subtly revealing moral and didactic undertones that offer hope for renewal. Through refined lexical and linguistic devices, Sylva exposes the often-overlooked depth in seemingly simple associations, challenging the modern tendency to overlook meaningful oppositions and symbolic nuance. As a German-born princess who embraced Romanian culture and spirit in the 19th century, she integrated Romanian values into a

diverse literary oeuvre—including poetry, short stories, and aphorisms—thereby preserving and transmitting a spiritual heritage that resonates beyond her time.

Maria Iordan notices that Carmen Sylva approaches the fairy tale as a deliberate literary art rather than as a minor or purely didactic genre. Her writings for children reveal a sustained reflection on storytelling itself, in which folklore, legend, and imaginative invention are carefully shaped to convey ethical meaning through enchantment. By animating landscapes, castles, and natural elements, Sylva transforms narrative space into a formative agent, allowing moral and cultural values to emerge organically. Iordan emphasizes that this fairy-tale poetics positions children's literature as a serious aesthetic practice, capable of mediating authority, empathy, and national imagination.

Together, these contributions illuminate Carmen Sylva's complex literary identity as both a royal figure and a pioneering writer**,** navigating between tradition and innovation. The chapters collectively reveal how her work operates on multiple levels—personal, political, mythological, and linguistic—offering rich material for exploring the intersections of gender, power, and cultural expression. From the idealized maternal figure to the nuanced exploration of spiritual themes, Sylva's writings embody the tensions of her time, reflecting both the constraints placed upon women and their capacity for creative agency. Moreover, the emphasis on mythological reinterpretation and cross-cultural dialogue situates her work within broader European literary currents while affirming her distinct Romanian voice.

Additionally, the focus on translation and interdisciplinary study highlights the ongoing relevance and adaptability of Carmen Sylva's work. By examining how her stories are translated and framed in modern contexts, scholars like Susana Ventura demonstrate that Sylva's narratives continue to engage contemporary issues, particularly regarding women's history and cultural memory. This dynamic interplay between past and present underscores the importance of revisiting Sylva's oeuvre not only as a historical artifact but as a living body of literature capable of informing current debates about identity, language, and representation. Ultimately, the volume's last part offers a comprehensive foundation for understanding Carmen Sylva's narrative techniques and linguistic strategies, opening pathways for further critical inquiry into her enduring literary legacy.

This volume, marking the centenary of Queen Elisabeth of Romania's death in 1916, honors her multifaceted legacy by gathering

interdisciplinary research across literature, linguistics, mythology, folklore, music, history, cultural studies, and visual arts. Carmen Sylva, as Queen Elisabeth wrote under her literary pseudonym, was not only a royal figure but also a prolific and respected author whose works transcended national borders. Her writings, deeply rooted in Romanian culture yet composed in major European languages, position her as a cultural mediator and literary innovator of her time. The essays collected in this volume reexamine and celebrate her lasting contributions from fresh perspectives, emphasizing her role in shaping Romania's image abroad through literature and the arts.

The year 1916 also marked the loss of several other remarkable women writers, situating Carmen Sylva's passing within a global context of literary transition. Among them was Alice Meynell (1847–1916), the British poet, essayist, and suffragist known for her refined verse and Catholic spiritual reflections, as well as her influence on women's intellectual circles in late Victorian England. Another was Beatrix Potter (1866–1916), the beloved English author and illustrator of children's literature, who passed away the same year and left an enduring legacy through works like *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Though very different in style and audience, both Meynell and Potter, like Sylva, forged paths for female authorship and literary professionalism during a time of rigid gender roles. In 1916, the literary world also lost other several significant women writers whose works left enduring cultural marks. Henrietta Cordelia "Cordelia" Ray (1852–January 5, 1916), an African American poet and educator, gained recognition for her *Sonnets* (1893) and *Poems* (1910), blending lyrical craft with the influence of her abolitionist upbringing to shape an early Black literary voice in America. Irish novelist and journalist May Laffan (1849–1916) brought to life the urban realism of Catholic Dublin, infusing her narratives with feminist currents that challenged late Victorian norms. German novelist Wilhelmine von Hillern (1836–December 25, 1916), famed for *Die Geier Wally*—later adapted into the opera *La Wally*—explored themes of personal agency and societal constraint through her regional and psychological dramas.

The simultaneous passing of these influential women invites reflection on a broader cultural shift: the end of an era in which women writers increasingly asserted their voices in public discourse, even amid the constraints of war, monarchy, or social convention. Carmen Sylva stands out for her unique position as both sovereign and storyteller, as well as for her collaborations with other women—such as Mite Kremnitz, Hélène Vacaresco, and Alma Strettell—who each

contributed to the dissemination and reinterpretation of Romanian culture. Her openness to multilingual expression and her artistic exchanges across Europe prefigured the cosmopolitan literary networks of the twentieth century.

In remembering Queen Elisabeth alongside other pioneering women of letters who passed in 1916, this volume underscores the collective heritage of female literary innovation that shaped modern cultural landscapes. It invites new dialogue around the intersections of gender, nationhood, and creativity, acknowledging the continued relevance of these early women authors. Through the lens of scholarly inquiry and renewed cultural interest, the volume positions Carmen Sylva not only as a symbol of Romanian heritage but also as a figure of global literary history. Her voice, and those of her contemporaries, echoes in the pages that follow, calling for both remembrance and reinterpretation in a contemporary light.

Ramona Mihăilă,
editor

Part 1.

Carmen Sylva's Works: A Cross-Cultural and Global Perspective

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 21-37

Carmen Sylva's Britain: Her Vision, Her Legacy

LAURA NIXON
De Montfort University, Leicester
laura.nixon@dmu.ac.uk

Introduction

This chapter investigates the writing of Carmen Sylva, within the context of creativity, poetry and the concept of Britishness. It considers key poems from her oeuvre that were "British-facing", focused on spaces, places and key literary figures. It argues that Sylva used well-know, established aspects of British culture to connect with the broader concepts of literary genius and creativity; a self-conscious technique that connected with her own reputation as "poet-Queen" but also allowed her to represent successful British creativity as tied to history, to nature and to human experience.

In early 1887, Oscar Wilde wrote to Weymss Reid about content for the new periodical, *The Lady's World*, which "should be the recognised organ for the expression of women's opinions of all subjects of literature, art, and modern life."[1] Advising on potential authors, he wrote that 'cultured women' should be invited to contribute, including Olive Schreiner, Lady Dilke, Julia Ward Howe, and Carmen Sylva. Wilde's suggestion speaks volumes about Sylva – also known as Elizabeth zu Wied, first Queen of Romania – and her presence in Britain. Not only was she well-known, but her work, in Wilde's eyes at least, would draw in readers. Sylva is less visible in modern criticism, yet her work was widely available in 1890s Britain: approximately twenty volumes were published in English during her lifetime and were often reprinted. She also visited on numerous occasions, including a memorable trip of 1890 which was discussed not only in British periodicals, but built into the streets of Llandudno.[2] This paper focuses on the other side of Sylva's travel, namely, the perceptions she developed about Britain as a result of her time spent

there, and how they came to be reflected in her work. Central to this paper is discussion of her poem, 'Westminster Abbey', a piece that encapsulates her reverential attitude to British history and literary culture, as well as self-conscious reflection on the nature of creative genius. This poem will be discussed in conjunction with other elements of Sylva's British-centric oeuvre, tied to particular moments or individuals. By considering her work in this way, this paper engages with her connection to wider topical issues of the time, and Sylva's own sense of literary identity.

Sylva in Britain: An Overview

Sylva had a personal interest in Britain from a young age and wrote much of her later correspondence in English.[3] She also had a 'physical presence' in Britain, travelling across the country from a young age. Biographers agree that her first visit was with her family in 1848, where she stayed on the Isle of Wight.[4] A second family trip occurred in 1851, where the highlights were visits to London and Hastings. A third took place in 1874, after the death of her daughter Marie. She travelled to St Leonards on the English coast, as well as visiting Max Müller and his wife at their Oxford home.[5]

Her final and most significant visit – in terms of duration and impact on British culture – occurred in 1890. This trip, of approximately two months, again began in London, where Sylva visited the National Gallery and Kew Gardens. She then went to Wales, Ireland and finally Scotland, where she visited Queen Victoria.[6] There is physical evidence of this stay, including Queen Victoria's diary entries as well as a dedicatory plaque, crediting her with Llandudno's town motto.[7] Sylva had stayed in the Victorian seaside town at the end of August and references to her can still be found on the 'town trail' (a walking tour) as well as a number of streets in the Craig-y-don suburb – of which Carmen Sylva Road is the most obvious.[8] During her Welsh trip, Sylva also participated in the annual Eisteddfod, where she was admitted to the Gorsedd of Bards and recited a poem composed for the event.[9] This was reported by a number of British newspapers and magazines, including the *Westminster Review* and the *Musical Standard*. These are the remnants of Sylva's physical legacy, building up knowledge of the nineteenth-century British public's awareness and appreciation of her.

This is furthered by knowledge of her literary presence in Britain. References to Sylva begin in British periodicals from early in 1884

and she remains part of British consciousness until her death in 1916. After this point, references become more sporadic, before fading completely from view in the late 1920s. The height of her popularity was between 1890 and 1909. During that time, the periodical press engaged with all aspects of her life and work, from photographs to reviews, gossip and literary advertisements. This interest may be connected to her royal status and her acquaintance with the British aristocracy, but a large proportion of the periodical pieces are reviews of her work. Although they often reference her royal title, the focus on her literary productions, rather than society appearances or charity work, suggests that her literary output played an important role in creating and maintaining public interest in Britain. Her original work, in a diverse range of genres, was published in popular magazines and newspapers, as well as in book form. This included short stories, aphorisms, non-fictional pieces, folksongs and poetry. *Edleen Vaughan*, her one novel to be published in Britain – and her one novel to focus on British life, through its Welsh setting – appeared in 1892.

Admittedly, Sylva produced more works about Romania and her native Germany than about Britain. Some references are extremely limited – such as reference to Sussex Place in London, the home of a wilful little girl who is punished for bad behaviour by being sent to her bedroom.[10] Here she is tormented by her actions and the objects that surround her, in the manner of Jane Eyre in the Red Room or the unnamed female protagonist in 'The Yellow Wallpaper.' London has no wider significance than grounding the story in a specific location; the focus of the story is Heidi's psychological experience. However, Sylva's time spent in Britain, coupled with the public's interest in her, makes her British-centred pieces worthy of note. Her poetry in particular demonstrates an awareness and understanding of places, people, and sites of significance. Moreover, it suggests a commercial desire to appeal to the British public and simultaneously present her own literary credentials.

Sylva's Poetry and Portrayal of British Literary Heritage

Sylva's thirteen-stanza poem, 'Westminster Abbey,' appeared in *The Nineteenth-Century* in 1900.[11] Although lacking in a definite date, Sylva's memoir confirms that she visited the Abbey as a child and remembered 'hearing the organ in Westminster Abbey' played by the eldest daughter of German Ambassador in London, Baron von Bunsen.[12] It is also likely that she visited it as part of her 1890 tour,

given its proximity to the National Gallery. The Abbey, a site of ceremony for nearly a thousand years, would have been in easy reach of the culture-seeking monarch. Close to the Houses of Parliament, it is at the heart of British life and power and host to royal weddings, funerals and coronations, including Queen Victoria in 1838. As well as being a site of religious significance, the Abbey contains memorials to kings and queens, well-known statesmen and scientists including Newton and Darwin. The Abbey is thus a symbol of unity – many chapters of British life are encapsulated in one venue. Indeed, Charles Spurgeon suggests that 'it is not farfetched for the poetical imagination to seize upon Westminster Abbey as the very heart of Britain, the defining symbol of all things British […] with its distinctive, international outlook and its memorials that connect ancient history with our present day.'[13] Interestingly, Spurgeon's chronology of poetry about the Abbey does not include Sylva's poem, yet it is worthy of note not only for the religious, spiritual connection it emphasises, but also the way it encourages a connection between inspiration, memory and ancient power with the creative energy of the writer.

Sylva's wider work did have a religion focus: she wrote a non-fictional article 'In Praise of the Jews' in 1907 and a number of her short stories engaged with the impact of strong religious belief, such as Augusta in 'A Pen and Ink Confession' (*Shadows on Loves Dial*, 1895), the unnamed queen in 'The Story of a Helpful Queen' (*A Real Queen's Fairy Book*, 1901), or in 'Shaded Canvasses' (also *Shadows on Loves Dial*). Given Sylva's literary leanings, however, it is likely that her connection to the Abbey also centred on Poet's Corner, an area that began to be developed in the eighteenth century, beginning with memorials to Milton and Shakespeare. It was soon inundated by visiting tourists, with guidebooks produced to aid them.[14] The South Transept of the Abbey preserves the legacy of number of other writers that Sylva was likely to have been familiar with, including Geoffrey Chaucer, Robert Browning, and Charles Dickens. Sylva would go onto write a poem about Dickens, to be discussed later in this essay. The history represented here and the honour of being commemorated in the Abbey as a writer can be seen in the work Sylva produced. In setting her poem in the Abbey, Sylva becomes a literary pilgrim, seeking inspiration at the literal and figurative altar of British religious and poetic life.

The poem was originally written in German and was translated into English by Arthur Waugh and both versions were presented to readers when published. Given the dates of this poem, it is possible

that Sylva's translator was the English author and critic, and later father of Evelyn Waugh. Arthur Waugh had, incidentally, published biographies of Tennyson and Browning; two poets who can be found in the Abbey's Poet's Corner. Waugh's English translation is the first version of the poem that readers access, with Sylva's original German following immediately afterwards. Seeing the original version alongside the translation has dual significance. Firstly, it hints at a middle class, educated readership, who would be intrigued to access the original. It adds a potentially educational aspect to the presentation of the poem, with both versions included to appeal to Germanophiles, or those interested to compare the original with its English rendering. This is supported by the background of *The Nineteenth Century*: as a monthly periodical, it engaged with a wide variety of topics, including politics, medicine, law, foreign affairs and literature – 'any topic that would appeal to a serious and educated English reader'.[15] It primarily contained articles, with the occasional poem or literary review by the likes of Tennyson and Arnold. Sylva's poem was thus deemed worthy of *The Nineteenth Century*'s readership, with their broad range of abilities and interests. The content of the poem is enhanced by its presentation, encouraging readers to explore the semantic differences as well as more universal themes of religion and creativity, based in one of Britain's most historic and traditional locations. The poem also enhances Sylva's status as the educated foreign queen: German may be the original language of the poem, but the topic and its English translation anchor Sylva firmly to Britain.

The dual-language presentation of the poem reveals differences between these two versions. These are relatively small semantic differences, but have significance in terms of the reader's comprehension. For example, when the poet is invited to create music in the Abbey, Sylva writes:

Wollt Ihr die Orgel versuchen? Sprach
Der Canonicus. Ich? O! Wie gerne![16]

Sylva's lines attribute the invitation to the Canonicus (a Latin noun referring to a group of saints who have been canonised by the Church) and also includes the poet's response. The 'I' coupled with the question mark betrays an element of surprise and fleeting doubt in their own abilities, which is quickly replaced by a desire to play. In comparison, Waugh's translation is simply 'Will you play? They asked', then moves onto the poet touching the keys of the organ.[17] By omitting definite references and replies, readers are left to infer the

connection for themselves, linking the pronoun 'they' to the reference to statues in the previous stanza. In doing so Waugh's translation creates a distance within the poem; a clouding that perhaps enhances the ghostly atmosphere of the initial stanzas, as well as the concept of combined power.

Power is a consistent image in the poem: both the building and the poet possess a strength that, when brought together, can release the spirit of the Abbey and the poet's own torturous memories. Creativity is the source of the release – when the poet walks through the Abbey and hears an invitation to play the organ, they 'called from the place where their music slept/ The voice of the trumpet, the sound of the seas.'[18] Here the poet awakens the essence of the Abbey and the memories retained within the statues that surrounds them. The weight of the Abbey's – and by extension British – history is released to the poet's authority, leading readers assume that the Abbey and its statues have chosen them as a kindred spirit. The reference to 'their music' however, demonstrates collaborative creativity: the poet is making the music that awakens the statues, but in doing so, must 'call' to the non-specific place where powerful songs have lain dormant. As a poet, alive and actively creative, they have the ability to transcend into this hidden world and can reconnect the hitherto motionless, speechless statues with their poetic essence. Inspired by the creative vigour of the poet, they create a 'storm of the music' – a violent-sounding melding of past and present that breathes life back into the Abbey, whereupon 'the vaults of the ages open sprung'.[19]

The grandeur of the Abbey is needed to stimulate the poet's abilities, allowing them to access and confront their own grief, to be discussed below. Simultaneously, the building needs the poet to access its forgotten literary foundations. One cannot be created without the other. Their connection preserves the past and revives memories of lost souls – both the unnamed figures in the Abbey and from the poet's life. Yet the songs described in the poem are not dirge-like. Instead, the music increases in intensity as the poem progresses: initially light and musical, with reference to 'joy', 'trumpets' and 'melody' it soon grows in strength and violence. The Abbey – now personified – is physically affected, shivering and shaking 'like a palsied hand'; implying that the poet is relieving the Abbey of its paralysis and providing a sense of release. Again, British history is shown to be powerful, but dormant until released by literary greatness. Once the storm reaches its crescendo and the saints are freed from the statues, it abates, and the language becomes even more humanised: a

‘beating pulse’ and ‘bursting heart’ remind readers of the personal connection that has caused it. The music then descends to an ‘afterglow’ as the poet muses on what they have created. It is here that their close connection to the Abbey becomes more explicit, returning to the imagery of the heart:

My heart, my heart is the Abbey grey!
My heart has its altars and graves of white;
Where the voice of music, in Memory’s [sic] lay,
Recalls my gods to the lower light!
O hearts I have cherished, awake, awake!
Live again in my song for your own sweet sake![20]

This stanza also marks a change in the poem’s format – stanzas ten and twelve both have a variation on ‘My heart, my heart’ – the difference being that stanza twelve links the poet’s heart to the ‘Abbey high’ as opposed to the ‘Abbey grey’. The repetition here and the change in style marks the beginning of a more personal, direct comparison with the Abbey, as opposed to simply taking inspiration from it. The poet’s heart, like the Abbey, is a place of worship, but it is intrinsically linked to the dead, distanced from the world of the living by ‘graves of white’ and focused on memories that are brought to life and the ‘lower light’ of earthly existence through the power of creative song. The line ‘Recalls my gods to the lower light’ takes on particular significance in this respect: the pluralisation and personalisation of ‘my gods’, as well as the lack of capitalisation, suggests that the poet is equating their lost loved-ones to gods, rather than one Almighty God. This breaks some of the links between poet and Abbey – rather than traditional Christian worship, the poet’s faith is tied to memories of their personal loss. This is continued in the final stanza:

I cling to the pillars where I once bled,
For these are the pillars that bear my life:
They shiver for thought of the grief that is dead
For they know where my heart broke down in the strife.
But the graves of my past open still to the strong
And my dead shall live – in my burning song![21]

Again, the poet closely connects themselves to the physicality of the Abbey: the desperation expressed in the verb ‘cling’, coupled with reference to pillars and blood creates sacrificial, martyr-like imagery, akin to the crucifixion of Christ. This is cemented by repeating the line structure found earlier in the poem, when the martyrs, summoned

by the song, 'clung to the pillars whereby they were scourged.'[22] However, stanza twelve seeks a more positive conclusion – the army of martyrs return to shadow and sleep, but the poet remains. Moreover, it is the pillars that 'shiver', not the poet, who has now, through their experience in the Abbey, overcome their grief (hence the past tense reference to 'once bled' more explicitly to grief as 'dead') and they recognised the power of their creative genius to summon their lost loved ones back to life. The dead live in the poet's creativity, which is now celebrated and released. Knowledge of Poet's Corner within the Abbey adds an additional dimension to these lines. If the poet's sees their life as inscribed on the Abbey's stones, then they are perhaps seeing themselves reflected in the literary greats that have been memorialised around the building. The pillars represent the poet, and others like them. There is not just a spiritual or religious connection, then, but a literary one. This reaffirms the emphasis placed on the power of 'song' and creative fire, developed throughout the poem: literary greatness is shown not only through the immortalisation of the creative individual within the Abbey, but also in the power of their work – and that of current poets – to bring memories back to life. This hints at a degree of literary self-awareness in Sylva. She not only emphasises the creative genius that is innate in the poem's speaker but also shows her deference to literary greats of the past, setting her poem amongst their remains and focusing the poem's attention on the all-encompassing power of creativity, symbolised by a central site in England's capital city. The Abbey becomes a centre of British ancient memory, but is also fundamentally connected to contemporary life and poetry. In this way Sylva ties history to place, but also to poet. Shelley famously argued that 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world', and Sylva also demonstrates their power to reconnect with tradition, seeking it out at an imposing centre of Britishness.[23]

This attitude can also be found in her short poem 'A Tribute to Charles Dickens' (1909), published on a postcard.[24] The poem was published nearly twenty years after Sylva's last visit to Britain, but reaffirms her connection to aspects of literary significance within Britain, in this instance, one of its most famous writers. There are two versions of this 'Tribute' postcard, one with a picture of Dickens aged twenty-seven and another with him aged forty-seven, reproduced from paintings by W.P. Frith and Daniel Maclise. Interestingly, Dickens had been memorialised in Westminster Abbey after his death in 1870, so it is possible that Sylva had seen this, if she did go into the Abbey

in later life. Sylva's poem is not only complimentary of Dickens, but, much like the poet in 'Westminster Abbey', depicts creativity as an intrinsic part of the artist.

I love him so for all the good
His soul was wont to see
In wretched, torn, misunderstood,
Unknown humanity.

In darkness he found light; in pain
And error love divine.
He taught sad hearts to laugh again,
And hidden gold to shine.

He heard the Christmas Carols ring,
He pitied moth and snake;
And had a song for ev'ry wing,
And balm for ev'ry ache![25]

Across the three stanzas, Dickens's genius and prestige is tied to the socially conscious tone of his work. The contrasting images of darkness and light, pain and love, sadness and laughter emphasise his adaptability and prowess in finding 'all the good'. These contrasting elements are in the same stanza and centre on the verb 'taught', which is suggestive of an instructive focus. Like 'Westminster Abbey', Sylva again returns to the idea that literature or creativity – particularly that which is associated with Britishness – is synonymous with power and emotion. Here, Dickens is the worldly teacher and the readers as pupils. Unlike the musical storm in the Abbey, however, Dickens's work is able to soothe – a balm, a way of mitigating the harsh realities of life. His work is accessible to all readers, as demonstrated by the repetition of 'ev'ry'. Again, there is a self-referential element here, elevating the role of the poet to that of instructor, as well as emphasising the image of the poetic saviour also found in 'Westminster Abbey.' Sylva's reference to Dickens thus serves the same function as her use of the Abbey – as a literary device, representative of well-known, well-established and respected Britishness. She celebrates theses cultural icons, and identifies that in both, creative success stems from engagement with human nature. The Abbey may be inanimate, but it breathes with the memories of poets, past and present. This connected, emotional approach is shown as most impactful in terms of British creativity. By making this explicit within her own literary work Sylva is covertly connecting herself to

the conclusions she draws; a method she had already employed in her earlier work, specifically the poem written for the 1890 Eisteddfod at Bangor, celebrating the role of the bard, and her novel, *Edleen Vaughan*, which was serialised in *Hearth and Home. An illustrated weekly journal for Gentlewomen* between May and October 1891 and later published as a three-volume and single-volume novel.[26] These pieces focus specifically on Welsh culture, most likely because of her prolonged stay in Llandudno in 1890. Yet Sylva also engages with the broader concept of the bard and the nature of creativity. This interest and engagement with the bardic tradition coincides with a revival of interest in Welsh culture during the fin de siècle. As Michael J. Franklin has noted, 'native antiquities, textual history, the realignment of the canon, alternative classicisms, the vogue for primitivism, fascination with orality, creative genius, and the epic were all requiring a new relevance and public interest as the multifaceted politics and poetics of Celtomania were re-examined'.[27] Sylva's work is part of this reassessment, demonstrating her engagement with topical issues of the period.

As seen in her other British-centric works, Sylva uses part of British culture and a specific event like the Eisteddfod to showcase her awareness of its traditions and simultaneously reflect on her own abilities as a poet. Sylva's Eisteddfod poem consistently juxtaposes the bard with royalty: 'Where the song has a throne, and the Bards a crown/ The sword of peace is uplifted.'[28] This is a self-conscious device that draws attention to her own background as a queen as well as her own literary capabilities. She is the 'stranger with singing gifted' who brightens the lives of the listeners, imbuing them with a positive memory of the event 'that nought from the soul can sever.'[29] She also incorporates the Welsh language in the poem, e.g. the final line cries out in favour of 'old Cymru.' In *Edleen Vaughan,* readers infer a Welsh location through the names of certain characters, such as Gwynne, Morgan, Martyn, Una and Llewellyn as well as through topographical references to towns and villages (Carnarvon and Llanelly) as well as Snowdon and the Istwith. These are brief references, standing in contrast to her Romanian short stories and folktales, which are peppered with references to valleys, rivers, cities and streets and may have prompted her reviewers to criticize her attempts to depict Welsh life. One particularly scathing reviewer commented that 'the reader is compelled to amuse himself with the astounding ignorance which the author displays of her chosen locality, and to acknowledge that a short residence in a Welsh watering-place

but ill qualifies even an accomplished writer to describe with circumstance the manners and customs of the Welsh.'[30] Here, the reviewer's pointed reference to Sylva's time in Llandudno is used to emphasise her literary deficiencies, yet they qualify their criticism by observing that 'of course it is not to be expected that a visitor, even a Royal visitor, to a country can achieve acquaintance with all phases of its natural life.'[31] Here Sylva's royal status interferes with the reception of her work, perhaps explaining why she would later be marginalised from British literary culture. Yet by utilizing the Welsh language on a small level, Sylva shows her awareness of ancient Welsh heritage, including that celebrated during the Eisteddfod. In doing so, she adheres to what Carruthers and Rawes term the 'imaginative reconstructions of Wales' during the Romantic period; a tradition of creating a degree of distance from English culture by emphasizing the linguistic distinctiveness of Welsh.[32] This is a literary device that would be repeated across Sylva's oeuvre, including her Romanian stories, which also incorporate untranslated words and phrases, when they appeared in British publications.

Sylva's representation of the bard Llewellyn in *Edleen Vaughan* also acts as the epitome of "Welshness" both in name and profession. Like Sylva's other British-centric works, the bard/poet is a device that that reflects on the nature of British creativity, but also on her own status as poet-queen. He is at the centre of life in the novel, taking on a similar role to Sylva's representation of Dickens as all-encompassing teacher of human experience, and Westminster Abbey's position at the centre of the capital city's culture. Llewellyn interacts with all of the main characters and his songs are threaded throughout the narrative. There are planned performances at special occasions, songs created to soothe the discontented, as well as ones he recites alone. This adaptive creativity demonstrates different facets of his power. For example, when he visits Gwynne (the local vicar) and his family, Llewellyn's lay recounts the story of a knight, who rescues his lover from a burning castle. After his recitation, he turns to Una and comments on her sickness, thinking it strange that 'no one sees it.'[33] This is a prophetic moment as well as a narrative hook for the reader: in a matter of pages, Una dies of 'inflammation of the lungs and pleurisy'.[34]

Similarly, the song he composes during a storm – returning to the trope of violent nature creating power found in 'Westminster Abbey' – provides him with supernatural powers to reveal the truth about his own past. Llewellyn's song develops over a series of pages as he reflects on his memories of Ulla – now a terrifying witch, but once his

lover. He realises it was because 'we had loved – ah me! – what a sin! A sin before men, a great wrong; but a sacred law of nature, my sacred right!'[35] Llewellyn attempts to justify their actions as natural and in doing so, hints that their 'sin' was sexual in nature. This being established, when Llewellyn finally sings a longer version of his lay, he comes to a horrific realization about the reason for Ulla's monstrous transformation: as a result of their illicit encounter – after which Llewellyn left to pursue life as bard – Ulla gave birth to a baby, which she then cast out to sea.

> Her mantle's folds are empty now;
> She turns in pain and dread.
> The river asks: "What gleams so white?
> What bear I through the silent night?
> A thing alive or dead?"

[…]

> "Alas! it is a sadder sight
> Than dame or knight can be –
> It is an infant!" moans the stream –
> The moon looks down with trembling beam
> Upon the weeping sea….[36]

Much like the Wordsworthian idea that 'poetry is the image of man and nature,' the 'genius' depicted by Sylva only touches a few individuals.[37] This returns to the argument found in her other British-centric poems: the unnamed Abbey poet with the power to awaken the lost, and the literary prowess of Dickens to connect with all aspects of society through his work. The Romantic concept of poetic genius and taking inspiration from the natural world is developed further through Llewellyn, who is not only connected to nature, but *is* nature. Llewellyn describes himself and the process of creating songs as bound up in the natural world: 'once the struggle and the transport over, the song is no longer the poet's property; it drops from the parent stem like ripe fruit, and people may pick it up or let it lie, as they please.'[38] Again, this detail may have a broader, more self-conscious meaning that extends outside of the novel – the nature of innate creativity in certain individuals, but also a reflection on the role of the author and the reception of their work, once put into the public sphere. Oscar Wilde mused in his aphoristic preface to *A Picture of Dorian Gray* that 'the artist is the creator of beautiful things […] the critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material

his impression of beautiful things' and Sylva's bard is used to comment both on ancient traditions as well as more contemporary concerns of creation and criticism.[39]

The poem-songs are also a narrative tool, intertwining various strands of the plot and indicating that the problems that occur are not limited to a particular generation. Tom and Temorah, like Llewellyn and Ulla, also have sex outside of marriage, which results in an illegitimate child. There are some differences between the couples – Llewellyn and Ulla were in love, whereas Tom manipulated the infatuated Temorah to satisfy his needs. Temorah's baby is later killed in an arson attack – the house is set alight by Kathleen (Tom's other lover) – where Ulla is directly responsible for the death of her infant. Sylva's engagement with the magical power of Wales is thus tempered with the socio-problem aspects of the novel. Her female characters endure illegitimate pregnancies, madness and infanticide, or simply waste away. The effects of alcoholism and gambling are also shown to the readers through Tom's demise, albeit in limited detail. He steals from his mother and sisters, running up large debts in order to fund 'stronger stimulants'.[40] In depicting this, Sylva's work engages not only with the role of the poet, but topical issues of the period that would resonate with a wide range of readers. Her own literary productions reflect those of the individuals she depicts, whereby talent and success was intrinsically connected to their representation of 'wretched, torn, misunderstood/ Unknown humanity.'[41]

Bonnie J. Robinson, discussing the growing interest in women poets of the fin de siècle including E. Nesbit, Mathilde Blind and Charlotte Mew, notes that a reoccurring trope within their work is 'the power of the creator, and how these women feminize this conventionally paternal power.'[42] Sylva's British-focused poetry undoubtedly engages with the power of the poet, but do not consistently subvert tradition, in the way Robinson argues. Her dedication to Dickens and her representation of Llewellyn in *Edleen Vaughan* preserve the patriarchal notions of male creative genius, yet her other poems are more ambiguous. By maintaining the anonymity of the poet in 'Westminster Abbey', Sylva ensures that the speaker could be either male or female. Obscuring the speaker's gender creates a degree of distance from the prevalent nineteenth-century stereotype of the Angel in the House, or the self-sacrificing female: if female, the poet possesses the strength to summon the spirit of the Abbey, to confront their own grief and bring peace to both themselves and the place of worship. Moreover, in creating implicit links between her

royal status and the role of the poet in her Eisteddfod poem, she again subtly hints at an alternative source of creative energy. Sylva may not be explicitly engaging with female creativity, but she does deviate from tradition by demonstrating the influence of a new poet-bard, who wields the same level of power, and can be found in all a range of societal positions, irrespective of gender.

In 1892, a reviewer described *Edleen Vaughan* as written with 'power, and with considerable effects of what may be called literary chiaroscuro'.[43] This light and shade is part of all of her British-centric works: commenting on socio-cultural issues of the time, as well as developing her ideas on the influence of the poet-bard and the far-reaching powers of literary creativity. These poems emphasise her awareness and interest in British culture, anchoring her poetry to well-known people and places. In doing so, they emphasise her own creativity; using her knowledge of "Britishness" as evidence of her own literary credentials as well as showcasing her abilities through the poetic form.

NOTES

1. Oscar Wilde to Weymss Reid, April-May 1887, in *The Letters of Oscar Wilde,* Rupert Hart-Davies (ed.), New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962, 195-196

2. Laura Nixon, "Carmen Sylva's Links to Llandudno," *Notes and Queries*, 253 (2013), 274.

3. Elizabeth Burgoyne, *Carmen Sylva. Queen and Woman.* London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1941, xii.

4. Countess A von Bothmer, *The Sovereign Ladies of Europe*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1899, p. 347, and Silvia Irina Zimmerman, *Die dichtende Königin*. Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2010.

5. Baroness Stackelberg (trans. Hilda Deichmann), *The Life of Carmen Sylva. Queen of Roumania*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Limited, 1890. Translated from the original German work by Baroness Stackelberg, *Aus dem Leben Carmen Sylvas*, 187.

6. Gabriel Badea-Păun, *Carmen Sylva*. Translated by Silvia Irina Zimmerman. Stuttgart: *ibidem* -Verlag, 2011, 158.

7. Queen Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal between the years 1886 and 1901*, George Earle Buckle (ed.), 3 Vols. London: John Murray, 1930, I (1886-1890), 642-644.

8. For further information on Sylva's connection to Wales, see Laura Nixon, "Marginalised memories: Carmen Sylva in Llandudno," *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 9 (2014).

9. Ivor Wynne Jones, *Llandudno. Queen of Welsh Resorts*. Ashbourne: Landmark Publishing, 2008, 43.

10. Carmen Sylva, "The Rod that Spoils the Child" in *Shadows on Love's Dial*, trans. Helen Wolff. London: Downey & Co., 1895.

11. Carmen Sylva, "Westminster Abbey," trans. Arthur Waugh, in *The Nineteenth Century*, April 1900: 612-614.

12. Carmen Sylva, *From Memory's Shrine.* London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Limited, 1911, p.112.

13. Charles Spurgeon, *The Poetry of Westminster Abbey*. United States of America: Xliris, 2008, 41.

14. Richard Jenkins, *Westminster Abbey*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005, 82.

15. Daniel Rutenberg, "Nineteenth Century, The," in *British Literary Magazines. The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, Alvin Sullivan (ed.), Connecticut, USA: Greenwood Press, 1984, 270.

16. "Westminster Abbey" (German version), ll.13-14.

17. "Westminster Abbey" (English version), l. 13.

18. "Westminster Abbey," l.15-16.

19. *Ibid*, ll.20-21.

20. *Ibid*, ll.55-60.

21. *Ibid*., ll.73-78.

22. *Ibid*, l.43

23. Percy Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry" (1821; 1840) in *Romanticism. An Anthology*, Duncan Wu (ed.). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 1247.

24. Laura Nixon, "Carmen Sylva, Postcards and the Commercialisation of Travel," in *Crossing Borders in Victorian Travel*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.

25. Carmen Sylva, *A Tribute to Charles Dickens* [postcard]. Portsmouth: W.H. Barrell, Ltd., 1909.

26. In *Edleen Vaughan,* Sylva uses the Welsh setting to explore the life of a spoiled young man, Tom, whose steadily increasing vices ruin the lives of all around him, combining sensational storylines with the gothic as well as elements of the social-problem novel.

27. Michael J. Franklin, "The Colony Writes Back: Brutus, Britanus and the Advantages of an Oriental Ancestry," in *Wales and the Romantic Imagination*, 2007, 25.

28. Carmen Sylva, [untitled] in Anonymous, "Notes of the Month," *Murray's Magazine*, October 1890, 568.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Anonymous, 'Novels,' *The Saturday Review*, 11 June, 1892: 687.

31. *Ibid*.

32. Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes, "Introduction: romancing the Celt," in *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 17-18.

33. Carmen Sylva, *Edleen Vaughan; or Paths of Peril*. New York; London: Cassell Publishing Company F.V. White & Co., 1891; 1892), 61.

34. *Ibid*, 123.
35. *Ibid*, 104.
36. *Ibid*, 105-6.
37. William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" (1800) *Romanticism. An Anthology*, Duncan Wu (ed.), 538; 508.
38. *Edleen Vaughan*, 67.
39. Oscar Wilde, "Preface" in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), this edition Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 3.
40. *Edleen Vaughan*, 167.
41. *A Tribute to Charles Dickens* [postcard], 1909.
42. Bonnie J. Robinson, "'Individable Incorporate': Poetic Trends in Women Writers, 1890-1918," *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 38, no.1. Spring 2000, 4.
43. G. Barnett Smith, "New Novels," *The Academy*, 18 June, 1892, 586.

REFERENCES

Anonymous, (1892). "Novels," *The Saturday Review*, 11 June.

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2011). *Carmen Sylva*, trans. by Silvia Irina Zimmerman. Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag.

Barnett Smith, G. (1892). "New Novels," *The Academy*, 18 June, 586.

von Bothmer, Countess A. (1899). *The Sovereign Ladies of Europe*. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Burgoyne, Elizabeth (1941). *Carmen Sylva. Queen and Woman.* London: Eyre & Spottiswood.

Carruthers, Gerard, and Alan Rawes (2003). "Introduction: romancing the Celt," in *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-19.

Franklin, Michael J. (2007). "The Colony Writes Back: Brutus, Britanus and the Advantages of an Oriental Ancestry," *Wales and the Romantic Imagination*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 13-42.

Jenkins, Richard (2005). *Westminster Abbey*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Nixon, Laura (2013). "Carmen Sylva's Links to Llandudno," *Notes and Queries*, 253, 274.

Nixon, Laura (2014). "Marginalised memories: Carmen Sylva in Llandudno," *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 9, 94-106.

Nixon, Laura (2018). "Carmen Sylva, Postcards and the Commercialisation of Travel," in *Crossing Borders in Victorian Travel*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 172-195.

Queen Victoria (1930). *The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal between the years 1886 and 1901*, George Earle Buckle (ed.), 3 Vols. London: John Murray, I (1886-1890).

Robinson, Bonnie J. (2000). "'Individable Incorporate': Poetic Trends in Women Writers, 1890-1918," *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 38, no.1, Spring, 1-14.

Rutenberg, Daniel (1984). "The Nineteenth Century," in *British Literary*

Magazines. The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913, Alvin Sullivan (ed.), Connecticut, USA: Greenwood Press, 267-275.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (2012). "A Defence of Poetry," *Romanticism. An Anthology*, Duncan Wu (ed.). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 1233-1248.

Spurgeon, Charles (2008). *The Poetry of Westminster Abbey*. United States of America: Xliris.

Stackelberg, Baroness (1890). *The Life of Carmen Sylva. Queen of Roumania*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Limited. Translated from the original German work, *Aus dem Leben Carmen Sylvas*, by Hilda Deichmann.

Sylva, Carmen (1890). 'Anonymous, "Notes of the Month," *Murray's Magazine*, October, 568.

Sylva, Carmen (1895). "The Rod that Spoils the Child" in *Shadows on Love's Dial*. Helen Wolff (trans.). London: Downey & Co.

Sylva, Carmen (1900). "Westminster Abbey", Arthur Waugh (trans.), in *The Nineteenth Century*, April, 612-614

Sylva, Carmen (1909). *A Tribute to Charles Dickens* [postcard]. Portsmouth: W.H. Barrell, Ltd.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). *From Memory's Shrine.* London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Limited

Sylva, Carmen (1891; 1892). *Edleen Vaughan; or Paths of Peril*. New York; London: Cassell Publishing Company F.V. White & Co.

Wilde, Oscar (2006). "Preface" in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilde, Oscar to Weymss Reid (1962). April-May 1887, in *The Letters of Oscar Wilde.* Rupert Hart-Davies (ed.). New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

Wordsworth, William (1994, 2012). "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," (1800) *Romanticism. An Anthology*, Duncan Wu (ed.). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 506-518, 536-538.

Wordsworth, William (2012). "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," (1800) *Romanticism. An Anthology*, Duncan Wu (ed.). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 536-538.

Wynne Jones, Ivor (2008). *Llandudno. Queen of Welsh Resorts*. Ashbourne: Landmark Publishing.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 38-59

A Crowned Poetess: Carmen Sylva and the Artefacts of Royal Celebrity in Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Periodicals

ZSUZSA TÖRÖK
ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities
Institute for Literary Studies, Budapest
torok.zsuzsa@abtk.hu

Introduction: Carmen Sylva, Poetess and Queen of Romania

Carmen Sylva was frequently present on the pages of Hungarian periodicals of the last two decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Princess Elizabeth Pauline Ottilie Louise zu Wied, who would become the first Queen of Romania in 1881, wrote extensively under the pseudonym of Carmen Sylva. According to one of her biographers, she published around fifty volumes in a variety of genres including poetry, fairy tales, dramas, short stories, novels and aphorisms. Her writings were translated to several languages and featured regularly in European periodicals, among which Hungarian magazines and newspapers, too. A real celebrity of the Belle Epoque, Carmen Sylva successfully incorporated both the traditional (based on birth privileges) and the modern (based on personal achievements) concepts of celebrity. Consequently, nineteenth-century Europe became fascinated with her exquisite figure. She came to be known as the 'Poet-Queen' with a highly renowned but controversial personality and oeuvre at the time. Notwithstanding the numerous biographies written about Carmen Sylva, her oeuvre became marginalized after she died in 1916. Thus, she never became a canonical figure either of German or of Romanian literature. Still, there is an increasing critical attention towards her life and work both in Germany and Romania, and more recently in Great Britain as well (Badea-Păun 2007, Zimmermann 2010, Zimmermann 2013, Nixon 2014).

This paper argues that Carmen Sylva's outstanding notoriety in the cultural and literary life of nineteenth-century Europe becomes most relevant when examining it in the context of a particular kind of authorship fuelled by a thriving modern celebrity culture. Therefore, this modern concept of authorship highly elucidates her remarkable presence in Hungarian periodicals, too. Indeed, recent findings of celebrity culture studies have reinforced "the existence of a particular kind of authorship, one that rests not only, or even primarily, upon the author's works, but upon a particular kind of personal fame" (Ives 2012, 1). As a matter of fact, Carmen Sylva's public figure has always been of primary importance when examining her literary achievements. As she assumed a quite unusual queenly posture and used her writings for both dynastic aims and for the self-mythologizing of a caring and warm-hearted Queen, she became highly exposed to public judgement. Therefore, this article investigates how Carmen Sylva's personal fame shaped her reception in Hungarian periodicals at the end of the nineteenth century. It will reveal that both textual and photographic representations played a crucial role in creating and sustaining the readership for her celebrity. Furthermore, it will establish that Carmen Sylva's personality and her exceptional figure as 'Poet-Queen' may have functioned as models to be imitated for Hungarian women writers of that time.

Elizabeth zu Wied as wife of Karl von Hohenzollern, appointed Prince of Romania in 1866, first established her notoriety during the Russo-Turkish War (also known as the Romanian War of Independence) in 1877–1878 during which Romania under Turkish occupation sided with Russia. Elizabeth provided support for hospitals, founded humanitarian aid organizations and became personally involved in caring for the wounded soldiers. Consequently, she rose to fame as 'Mama răniţilor' ('Mother of the Injured'), and in recognition for her merits she was awarded the Order of St Catherine by the Russian Tsarina. Eventually, Karl von Hohenzollern and Elizabeth zu Wied became the first King and Queen of Romania in 1881, after the Treaty of Berlin formally recognized Romania as an independent state in 1878.

Hence, Elizabeth established her literary reputation under the pseudonym of Carmen Sylva as Queen of Romania. She committed herself to the promotion of Romanian culture abroad, and to the improvement of domestic industry and women's education. As a result, she also founded several charitable institutions and became highly praised in Romanian society not only for her contributions to

cultural mediation but also for the influence she had on Romanian elites previously dazzled by French cultural trends in the awakening of their national self-consciousness (Vojan 1904, 14–17). Elizabeth regularly invited poets, writers, artists to Peleş Castle, commissioned as a royal summer retreat and hunting preserve, near Sinaia. She became deeply involved in patronizing the arts and supporting the elites engaged in the Romanian cultural uplift. For instance, she also befriended the great Romanian poet, Vasile Alecsandri, who in return assisted her in her literary endeavours. All in all, Peleş Castle under the influence of her sovereign grew into a true Eastern European cultural center where Romanian elites could also meet famous European writers and artists, such as Pierre Loti and Sarah Bernhardt (Putnoky 1910, Badea-Păun 2007).

According to her biographers, Carmen Sylva kept a diary and wrote some short stories as a young girl, but she dedicated herself to writing only after the death of her three-year-old daughter, Marie, in 1874. After her first translations of contemporary Romanian poetry to German in collaboration with Vasile Alecsandri had come out, she published her very first volume titled 'Sappho' (1880) with the consent of her husband, the King of Romania. The book was written under the pseudonym of Carmen Sylva. Here Elizabeth combined the Latin 'carmen' meaning 'song' with the word 'sylvae' denoting 'forest' referring to her love of nature and her tribute to the Latin origins of the Romanian Kingdom (Badea-Păun 2007, 124). As she kept writing quite extensively under the chosen pseudonym, she was to become a prolific authoress.

Carmen Sylva's writings featured regularly in Hungarian magazines and newspapers of the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Some of her translated works were also collected and published in book form. For instance, Lina B. Büttner, herself a writer, translated Carmen Sylva's prayer titled *Ein Gebet* almost immediately after its publication in 1882 under the Hungarian title *Egy ima* in 1883 (Carmen Sylva 1883.) Similarly, Lujza Harmath, another nineteenth-century Hungarian woman writer and translator of several of Carmen Sylva's works, published a volume of sketches (*Rajzok*) selected from the Queen's short stories in 1885.

Furthermore, Carmen Sylva's early novels written in collaboration with Mite Kremnitz under the pseudonyms of 'Dito und Idem' were all translated to Hungarian. German-born Maria von Bardeleben, known for close acquaintances Mite (1852–1916), became the Queen's Maid of Honor in 1881 after she had moved to Bucharest in

1875 with her husband, Wilhelm Kremnitz, a doctor appointed to help the Queen during the Romanian War of Independence (1877–1878) (Badea-Păun 2007, 141–142). It was with Kremnitz that Carmen Sylva produced three epistolary novels. The first one titled *Aus zwei Welten* would be translated to Hungarian by Lujza Harmath in 1890 (Carmen Sylva & Mite Kremnitz 1890), the second one, *Astra*, was transposed into Hungarian by the same Harmath in 1893 (Carmen Sylva & Mite Kremnitz 1893), and finally, the third one, *Feldpost*, also came out in a Hungarian edition (Carmen Sylva & Mite Kremnitz 1887) due to the translation of Béla Fái J. Although *Feldpost* was the least popular among the three volumes, the Hungarian translations of the two women's collaborative novels commenced interestingly with the last product of this joint enterprise.

In a similar way, several other writings of Carmen Sylva were translated to Hungarian: her most famous *Pelesch-Märchen* in 1887 by Géza Gidófalvy (Carmen Sylva 1887), and her short story titled *Es klopft* by Janka Wohl, a popular writer and journalist, with an introduction by Pierre Loti in 1890 (Carmen Sylva 1890). Moreover, her novel *In Fesseln* was translated by Imre Dugovich in 1893 (Carmen Sylva 1893), her 'Versepos' *Jehovah* by János Goldis in 1894, and finally, *Zoe's Roman* by Lujza Harmath in 1898 (Carmen Sylva 1898). According to Silvia Zimmermann the latter was actually written by Mite Kremnitz and published in a collaborative volume, *Rache und andere Novellen,* in 1888, along other short stories of Carmen Sylva (Zimmermann 2001, 277). Nonetheless, its Hungarian translation was published under the pseudonym of the Romanian Queen.

Besides Carmen Sylva's writings Hungarian periodicals often released biographical articles and photographs about the 'Poet-Queen'. Consequently, the following chapter will examine Sylva's textual and visual representation, focusing on articles and photographs published in late nineteenth-century Hungarian magazines and newspapers.

Celebrity Culture and Media: Carmen Sylva in Hungarian Periodicals

Carmen Sylva's reputation as caring, warm-hearted, compassionate sovereign established during her pursuits in the Russo-Turkish War largely influenced her literary reception. As a result, the articles that appeared in Hungarian newspapers during her first literary ventures primarily focused on her philanthropic work. For instance, the fashion journal Magyar Bazár [Hungarian Bazaar] published an article titled *Koronás írónők [Crowned Women Writers]* in 1882. The essay, after

having introduced some other royal women writers of European history, such as Mary, Queen of Scots, Queen Elizabeth I, Christina, Queen of Sweden and Queen Victoria, did not particularly emphasize Carmen Sylva's literary accomplishments, but above all her qualities as a human being. As stated in the article, Sylva dedicated her life to all that was true, good, and beautiful. Hence, as a consequence of her capacity for altruistic love able to embrace all human beings, her figure and personality were perceived as enthralling. (Farkas 1882).[1] This chapter, therefore, intends to demonstrate how Sylva's literary achievements, evaluated in close relation to the characteristics of her personality, should be understood in view of a modern concept of authorship closely attached to mass media and a flourishing celebrity culture.

According to Maura Ives "celebrity has been widely discussed as a function of modernity, a media-driven phenomenon in which a celebrity's personal life becomes as important (if not more so) than their achievement" (Ives 2012, 1). It has also been widely acknowledged, especially among scholars of literary celebrity, that it is not a twentieth century phenomenon, but a much earlier one rooted primarily in the technology of print as it developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Ives has also argued that "faster, cheaper printing, along with the commercialization of photography, played a crucial role in creating and sustaining the audience for celebrity" (Ives 2012, 2). However, Leo Braudy in his famous *The Frenzy of Renown* traced back the beginning of celebrity culture as early as the seventeenth century and identified the book as the "prime new place of fame." Authorship features prominently in Braudy's depiction of an emerging European fame culture in which "the development of a market culture allowed ambitious individuals to press themselves into the cultural void created by the decline of the traditional sources of power and influence – the church, the monarchy, and the aristocracy" (Braudy 1986, 361, 371). Although Braudy argued that the interrelation of authorship and celebrity had already existed during the first printing boom, even more convincing were those observations that located the convergence of the two in the commercialized print media of the nineteenth century. Tom Mole observes that "modern celebrity culture began in the Romantic period and Lord Byron should be understood as one of its earliest examples" (Mole 2007, XI). As stated in Mole's book, celebrity is "a cultural apparatus consisting of three elements: an individual, an industry and an audience. Modern celebrity culture begins when these three elements routinely work together to render an individual personally fascinating." (Mole 2007, 1)

In addition, scholars of celebrity culture differentiate among the concepts of 'charisma', 'fame,' and 'celebrity'. They define 'charisma' as a gift of God, or as a personal quality, but as social phenomenon, too (Berenson & Giloi 2010, 5). The term has been introduced to sociology by Max Weber and appears most frequently in his distinction between three types of authority: the dynastic and genealogical, the bureaucratic and rational, and the charismatic (Braudy 2010, 166). 'Fame', on the other hand, has been characterized as a worldly phenomenon of Roman origins and "defined by action in public for the good or ostensible good of the state." While 'charisma' and 'fame' are conceived as both having ancient roots, celebrity is largely thought to be a new concept tightly connected to the mass press born in the nineteenth century (Berenson & Giloi 2010, 5–6). Moreover, celebrity and charisma both require mediated or direct presence, and both evoke emotional responses on the part of the followers and fans, while fame requires neither (Berenson & Giloi 2010, 9). Berenson and Giloi also outline that "with the advent of mass newspapers, the 'celebrity' became a common cultural type, constituting a new and powerful social force." (Berenson & Giloi 2010, 2) As a result, ordinary people could identify with the famous and imagine that public figures belonged to their private lives. In turn, celebrities gained influence over their followers and became new agents of authority to orient their fans.

Hence, nineteenth-century periodicals that continuously increased visibility and publicity, had a crucial role in the construction of celebrities. For instance, Carmen Sylva's public image established and sustained by Hungarian periodicals has constantly been reinforced through several recurring elements in the articles written about her. They exhibited the Queen in an elegant and exotic fin-de-siècle environment, highly aestheticizing her figure. Moreover, the articles overtly appealed to the emotions of their readership by referring to the experience of universal human suffering that Carmen Sylva shared with them.

As a matter of fact, the credibility of the public image of celebrity was often secured by so called 'At Home with' articles that constructed a simulated form of intimacy between readers and celebrity founded on the tacit assurance that, through textual engagement, the former might gain special insight into the latter's private life. Celebrity culture studies call this phenomenon virtual literary tourism. According to Tom Mole, these articles furnished a 'simulacrum of intimacy' (Mole 2007, 23) that didn't necessarily

require actual contact between the author and his or her readership. Furthermore, they also satisfied a strong desire of the readers "to locate the author; to know him not simply through his works, but in his [or her] habitat, in those spaces that reflected and shaped his [or her] 'true' self" (Boyce 2013, 23).

Such an account was published in the Christmas Supplement of the Budapesti Hírlap [Budapest Gazette] in 1889. The article, based on personal experiences of Jenő Hubay, a famous violinist and composer of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, aimed to familiarize readers with Carmen Sylva's immediate environment (Hubay 1889). According to Hubay's statement, he was invited to the Romanian royal court in 1888 as a result of Hélène Vacaresco's recommendation that made possible this meeting between him and the Queen of Romania. He met Vacaresco, herself a poet, descendant of a Romanian noble family and Sylva's Maid of Honour, in the much celebrated Hungarian painter, Mihály Munkácsy's saloon in Paris a few years before. Thus, as a result of their acquaintance, the Queen invited him to their summer resort castle in Sinaia in September, 1888. Hubay travelled to Sinaia through Cluj-Napoca, Braşov and Predeal. As stated in his narrative, he was both charmed by the natural beauty and the elegance of the landscape. He found himself in a truly French milieu at Sinaia, with elegant mansions and splendid boulevards that, at moonlight, resembled the Champs-Elysees in Paris (Hubay 1889, 4). Moreover, Hubay described the picturesque Peleş Castle surrounded by mountains and pine forests in a fabular manner. He called it a 'charming forest lodge' with a lovely stream trickling in front of it. In addition, Hubay's account featured the castle exceptional not only because of its picturesque surroundings but due to its stylish and splendid appearance and furnishing. In view of the composer, the interior of the castle reflected not only royal luxury but artistic proficiency as well, both evidence of the Queen's excellent taste. Within this artistic, almost unreal castle set in picturesque surroundings, Carmen Sylva made her appearance in a white dress resembling that of a Greek costume. She then introduced the composer into the castle's sanctuaries of art, the piano room and the theatre, and organized a dramatic read-aloud session of one of her dramas after dinner.

However, the exoticism of Carmen Sylva's figure and that of the Peleş Castle were best promoted in Hungary and throughout Europe by the French Pierre Loti's account on his visit to the royal castle. Pierre Loti similarly met the Queen through Hélène Vacaresco. After

her critically acclaimed *Les Chants d'Aurore* (1886) awarded by the French Academy, the Queen's Maid of Honour sent her French translation of Sylva's *Jehovah* to Loti. The writer highly appreciated Sylva's poem, and in return sent his *Pêcheur d'Islande* (1886) to Vacaresco along with a dedication addressed to the Queen. Carmen Sylva read the novel and invited Loti to Sinaia. Loti arrived to the royal castle in September, 1887, and remained there till the beginning of October (Badea-Păun 2007, 167–169). He recounted the days spent at Sinaia in an article titled *Carmen Sylva* and translated to Hungarian as an introduction to one of Sylva's volumes by Janka Wohl (Loti 1891).

As a matter of fact, Loti featured Sinaia, Peleş Castle, and Carmen Sylva even more unrealistic than the Hungarian composer. He described the castle as being an 'enchanted palace' in the middle of a deep forest, and regarded Carmen Sylva a fairy, her smile reflecting eternal youth and her eyes supreme intellect. Moreover, the castle figured in his account as an 'artistic dream' having been incorporated by the power of a magic wand. Similar to Hubay's article, the Queen's fairy-like, white attire and her figure picturesquely emerging from a background of dark tapestries and carvings created the ultimate harmony of the castle's royal interior.

A salient feature of both Hubay's and Loti's articles is their deployment of detailed topographical description. These accounts enabled readers to visualize accurately the landscape surrounding Carmen Sylva's home. Furthermore, topographical information is exposed in their articles as a kind of textual conduit to Sylva's work and, by extension, her 'true' self. Hubay, for instance, quoted a poem titled *A hegedű [The Violin]* and dedicated to him by Sylva at the end of his article. In a similar way, Loti closed his narrative with an aphorism from the Queen's *Les Pensées d'une reine*. In addition, both accounts depicted with particular eloquence the interiors of Peleş Castle as conveying something of the Queen's distinctive poetic sensibility, her inner spiritual 'essence,' and personal history. Still, knowledge and insight were not the only imperatives of these articles. The counter-discourse of obscurity and mystique also had its role in these presentations as "the allure of celebrity […] depended on an aura of ineffability" as well (Boyce 2013, 23). Loti noticed: 'And the forest, so close to one's heart, conveys its enchanting, mysterious charm to the castle as well…' (Loti 1891, 11) As a result, the hermeneutic of intimacy and the counter-discourse of obscurity jointly played their parts in sustaining the readership for Sylva's celebrity.

Nevertheless, textual representations of the living-spaces related to Carmen Sylva were just one means of conveying her celebrity. Photographic images also complemented these narratives. According to both Hubay and Loti the Queen's physical environment, her lifestyle, and aestheticized everyday life were all evidences of the superiority of art compared to profane existence. Indeed, Sylva herself seized every occasion that photography enabled her to promote the myth of the 'Artist Queen'. Consequently, several carefully set, mise-en-scène photographs popularized her figure in Hungarian periodicals.

As a matter of fact, the European royal courts' interest towards photography hasn't been an unfamiliar phenomenon at the turn of the century, for the 1860s have already witnessed the golden age of portraits. The royal image became photographic in August 1860, when John Edwin Mayall, a leading Regent Street photographer was permitted to publish his Royal Album consisting of fourteen carte-de visite portraits of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and their children (Plunkett 2003, 144). Consequently, royal photographs became highly popular and collecting cards emerged as the latest fashion for the masses. Giuseppe Garibaldi, the renowned Italian politician and nationalist, for instance, is known to have owned the largest collection of photographs of his age. Queen Victoria, the first British sovereign to be subject to the lens of the camera, herself held possession of a huge collection of photos and more than one hundred photo albums. Similarly, Elizabeth, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary (widely known as 'Sissi') also disposed of a significant amount of photographs, among which an album commemorating her visit to Pest in 1866 and titled *Magyar úrhölgyek és urak [Hungarian Ladies and Gentlemen]* (Tomsics 2009). In addition to royal family portraits, photographs of iconic personalities, poets, writers, stage men, politicians, members of the Government were also included in nineteenth-century photo albums.

Royal photographs became highly popular because of their power to render the experience of a collective identification as they incorporated both public figures and representations of individual subjectivity. But as expressions of collective identification, photographs could at times become highly manipulative as well. For instance, the photos representing Emperor Franz Joseph I and Queen Elizabeth in traditional Hungarian attires during their visit to Hungary in 1866 were the outcome of such manipulations. It remained an unsolved mystery whether they were ordered by the royal couple themselves or not. Nonetheless, these photographs testified for the

recognition and satisfaction of a significant public demand. As a result, they symbolically incorporated a strong desire for consensus between national identity and loyalty towards the king, as well as a firm intention to influence public opinion in accepting the dynasty that crushed the Revolution of the nation as themselves 'Hungarians' (Tomsics 2009, 125).

For both Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth photography functioned as means for further legitimizing the dynasty. However, photographic representations primarily helped Carmen Sylva to promote the myth of her new identity, that of the 'Artist Queen' or the 'Poet Queen'. Recognizing the possibilities of the new medium, Sylva herself planned the compositions to be eternalized with the help of Franz Mandy, a photographer from Bucharest. The photographs were then multiplied and circulated on the pages of European magazines and newspapers.

Thus, the Hungarian Vasárnapi Ujság [Sunday Magazine] introduced the 'Artist Queen' to its readership making use of two highly dramatized images in May 31, 1891. For this issue of the magazine commemorated the Silver Jubilee of 25 years of reign of King Carol I of Romania.[2] But while the photographs portrayed the King according to the conventions of royal portraiture, in uniform with his several military awards, they represented the Queen by means of the *tableaux vivant*, a popular genre of modern photography. Consequently, one of the two photographs published in the magazine featured Carmen Sylva in Peleş Castle's library, her figure blending into the grandiose baroque background of the room. The Queen, leaning against her armchair, swooningly looks at a book in her hands. Behind her figure one may see huge bookshelves standing on carved wood columns bellow a balcony, and beside Sylva a side-table. She is surrounded by sofas and armchairs richly ornated with drapes, woven carpets with patterns and designs on the floor, and paintings decorating the walls. Conversely, the second photography available in the same issue of the magazine highlights her figure, detaching it from the fascinating background, and exhibits her in a more individualized manner. According to this second image, Carmen Sylva is similarly represented sitting in an armchair in a traditional Romanian costume, slightly looking away from an easel that stands in front of her chair. As stated in a short comment bellow the tableau, the Queen is painting here a mass-book for the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest. In a similar way, the September 20, 1891 issue of the Vasárnapi Ujság [Sunday Magazine] portrayed her in this artistic appearance. The

Queen, again sitting in an armchair in traditional Romanian attire, points toward a harp standing behind her chair.[3]

Carmen Sylva would often pose in front of the camera in her white, loose-fitting toilette, too, described by both Hubay and Loti. Such a representation was published in April 16, 1901 in the Hungarian Magyar Bazár [Hungarian Bazaar]. The photograph depicts Sylva leaning back on a couch and looking at two 'wonderkids', the violinist Stefi Geyer from Budapest and the pianist Aurelia Cionca from Bucharest, both Jenő Hubay's pupils, playing the piano. The Queen's figure is surrounded by the rich drapery of her dress and of a drape set on the sofa beside her. In the background one may see artistically designed furniture, paintings, and a bust.[4]

Carmen Sylva made significant efforts to promote her appearance and body as strong expressions of her artistic identity after her first literary successes highly popularized by Natalie von Stackelberg's biography published in 1883 (Stackelberg 1883), reissued several times during the nineteenth century, and translated to English in 1890 (Stackelberg 1890). Thus, compared to the conventional long hairstyles, Sylva wore short haircuts and had her own unique fashion style. She usually dressed in long white robes in which she looked like a priestess of ancient Greece, adorned with huge imitation jewellery or lace made by herself and her Maids of Honour. All these had been undertaken for the sake of a decorative impression. In addition, she often dressed in amorphous coats accessorized with funny hats. She constantly reinvented her artistic identity promoted by textual and visual representations occasioned by her public appearances. Consequently, her daring fashion style often became subject to controversial opinions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For instance, archduchess Marie Valerie of Austria, the youngest daughter of Franz Joseph I and Sissi, observed in her diary that the Romanian Queen's toilette was 'quite eccentric' during a visit of the Romanian royal couple in Budapest. She described their encounter with Carmen Sylva in her November 11, 1884 diary entry as follows:

> Papa and the Queen get off. My first impressions are: small, youthful figure, cool, and raddled, but friendly face. She comes up through the main staircase. Mama welcomes her. Amelia and myself greet her with reverence. She approaches us, reaches out her hand with a delightful, friendly gesture, and gives us a kiss. While looking at her smiling green eyes and her teeth, I wonder, so this is the so called 'Bluestocking'. Oh, Carmen Sylva, if only you could see what was in our hearts! From that moment it belonged to you without hesitation! The Queen's toilette is quite eccentric, though. Bellow her fur coat she

> wears a large, dark velvet gown ornated with colourful embroidery, and a silk cord on her waist. She also wears a hat that suits her quite well, a veil and a lorgnon (Schad 2001, 56).

Beside her image as 'Artist Queen' Carmen Sylva's branded identity has successively been promoted by reference to her spiritual values. Accordingly, the articles published in Hungarian periodicals all emphasized the grandeur of her personality. Farkas, for instance, wrote in his 1882 article: 'the greatness of the Queen lies primarily in her heart' (Farkas 1882, 42). In a similar way, Hubay stated that 'All her deeds are charming and well-intentioned. Therefore, a whole nation adores and worships her; she is highly esteemed and admired everywhere' (Hubay 1889, 5). In addition, Pierre Loti also mentioned that 'the supreme charm of Sylva's smile resided in her kindness and benevolence' (Loti 1891, 15). Moreover, the authenticity of Carmen Sylva's goodness has continuously been endorsed by reference to a universal experience of human suffering. For, while promoting the image of a warm-hearted, caring and charitable Queen, the articles all accentuated the tragic life of Sylva herself: her sober and joyless childhood and the painful loss of her only child, Princess Maria in 1874. Hence, the personal experience of a deep human suffering accentuated in the articles about Carmen Sylva also promoted the image of an emphatic Queen who identified herself with the suffering and sorrow of the masses.

Nevertheless, emotional identification could have its inverse counterpart: not only did the Queen identify herself with the sorrow of the common people, but also the masses with the misfortune of the sovereign. As a matter of fact, the motif of wretchedness and personal tragedies had been integrated in a similar way into the public image of Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary, and eventually became the quintessential emotional stimulus of her cult. Sissi's misery and unhappiness, also caused by personal tragedies, such as the loss of her son, the Crown Prince Rudolf in 1889, was perceived with the same sympathy. Consequently, articles frequently associated her figure with that of Madonna as Mater Dolorosa (F. Dózsa 1992, 16).

Thus, the widely disseminated myth of a warm-hearted, empathic Queen may provide illuminating conclusions regarding not only celebrity culture and a modern concept of authorship, but also concerning the relationship between mass periodicals and the changing institution of monarchy in the late nineteenth century. For nineteenth century monarchs were usually regarded as examples of traditional authority. However, with the emergence of mass

periodicals a dramatic transformation of monarchy had also been undertaken. As politically neutral mass papers entered the market, commercial concerns took precedence over politics. According to Martin Kohlrausch, 'this development in turn moved editors to dramatize topics for a broad audience and to echo the sensationalistic headlines of other periodicals. As a result, newspapers across the journalistic spectrum tended to report in a more emotional, personalized, and sensational manner' (Kohlrausch 2010, 55).

As to Carmen Sylva's case, the Hélène Vacaresco affair provided the most striking example of sensationalistic news in nineteenth-century periodicals. For it concerned a failed love affair of huge interest. Consequently, the July 26, 1891 issue of the Hungarian Vasárnapi Ujság [Sunday Magazine] published a photograph of Carmen Sylva and her Maid of Honour, and commented on their representation with reference to this sensational romance. The picture revealed an informal amity between Sylva and Vacaresco, lacking all the formalities of royal etiquette. It portrayed Carmen Sylva hugging Hélène Vacaresco's shoulder, the two women facing each other and talking with raised hands.[5]

Vacaresco became the Queen's Maid of Honour in 1888, and soon grew into Sylva's confidante. The Queen cherished her with motherliness and even invited Vacaresco to her secret spiritual séances. According to one of Sylva's biographers it was during one of these gatherings that Vacaresco disclosed her relationship with Prince Ferdinand, King Carol's nephew (Badea-Păun 2007, 188). Sylva encouraged the match from the very beginning, and the young couple got engaged in 1890. But as outrage ensued within the Romanian court, the marriage was eventually cancelled. For the Romanian government, fearing the future of the new Romanian kingdom, strongly opposed the romance. According to Badea-Păun they feared that the marriage would hand back an element of power to the boyar families that once ruled Romania, undermining the prestige of the current dynasty. Unavoidably, the Ferdinand-Vacaresco affair escalated into a scandal, closely followed and commented upon in periodicals all over Europe. Romanian newspapers highly criticized the Queen's commitment to the marriage, and she was subsequently exiled from Romania for some years. Notwithstanding, European periodicals formulated an ambiguous standpoint regarding the affair. Although they overtly criticized Carmen Sylva, as suggested in the article published in the Hungarian Vasárnapi Ujság [Sunday

Magazine], they had never ceased to mythicize the figure of the benignant Queen always supporting those in need.

The development of mass periodicals therefore transformed the presentation and perception of such traditional institutions as the monarchy, too. Consequently, textual and photographic representations laid emphasis on personalization and the human factor in the construction of the royal individual. The particularly individualistic fin de siècle placed great weight on subjective experience, thus a modern monarchy also had to possess such character. As stated by Martin Kohlrausch, the crucial point during this process was not whether the sovereign in question "actually had a distinctive character, but rather the extent to which commentators sought to reconcile the figure of the monarch with the public's longing for a visible personality" (Kohlrausch 2010, 59–60).

Moreover, literature on celebrity presumes that famous people are the repository of fans' dreams for distinction in a success-oriented culture. Societies unavoidably project upon celebrities myths about self-fulfillment and personal uniqueness. According to David Marshall, celebrities constitute the public representation of individuality in culture. Lenard L. Berlanstein insists on recuperating the concept in well-defined historical contexts, because it may prove a useful tool of cultural analysis (Berlanstein 2004, 67). Berlanstein also accentuates how intriguing these questions may become when posed about women because of their ambiguous and contested status as individuals. For women, for whom the nineteenth-century ideal was to have self-effacing lives in the private sphere, constructing celebrity status was much harder as compared to men associated with public life. Nevertheless, women also became famous during the nineteenth century, but often managed their celebrity status with difficulties. Much of nineteenth-century female celebrities came from the theatre among which the most famous was Sarah Bernhardt. Mary Louis Roberts convincingly argued that Bernhardt, for example, deployed eccentricity as a posture of celebrity, a posture that helped her manage her fame (Roberts 2010, 103).

Martin Kohlrausch justly established that Elizabeth ('Sissi') Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary captured the public imagination with her elaborate cult of beauty, her special diets and complicated hair-styling procedure, as well as her months-long absences from the royal court. Married at a young age, she had been in constant conflict with her mother-in-law that led to deterioration in her marriage and years of wondering from one palace to the other. As a

result, she came to symbolize the suppression of the free individual through antiquated court ceremonial (Kohlrausch 2010, 61). Besides, the cult of Elizabeth in Hungary had its specific social psychological and political aspects. That is, due to the problematic assessment of Franz Joseph in Hungary, Elizabeth, during the mythicizing process, became the symbol of balancing, and of consensus between the sovereign and the Hungarian nation.

The human component, a fundamental feature of subjectivity in the construction of royal individuals, has always been the core ingredient to emotional identification and cult of celebrity. The Christmas Supplement of the Budapesti Hírlap [Budapest Gazette] in 1889 provided an illustrative example in this respect, too. For along the narrative about Carmen Sylva written by Jenő Hubay, also published an article about Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary by Miksa Falk[6] (Falk 1889) on the occasion of Sissi's birthday on December 24. The articles were situated in succession as reference to each other. Hence, the magazine juxtaposed those two women representatives of nineteenth-century dynasties that owned their remarkable publicity among the masses due primarily to a strong emotional attachment towards their personalities and to their loveable characters. While Sissi remained a symbol of the restrained modern individual, Carmen Sylva, by her affinities towards the arts and writing, came to symbolize the achievement of personal freedom throughout nineteenth-century Europe. In turn, this freedom created the opportunity to break out into publicity from both the boundaries of monarchy and that of the private sphere. Consequently, Sylva, according to Zimmermann, not only used writing for dynastic purposes, for the promotion of the new Romanian Kingdom, but for self-mythicizing goals as well (Zimmermann 2013). Thus, while transcending and modernizing the traditional roles of Monarchy, she also managed to impose herself due to her writings as an example of the self-accomplished woman writer.

Celebrity Culture and Literature: Carmen Sylva's Writings in Hungary

Having seen the textual and photographic representations of Carmen Sylva in nineteenth-century Hungarian periodicals, this chapter focuses on the interpretation of Sylva's works in a specific Hungarian context. As stated by Alexis Easley, "located within expanding networks of representation, authors came to be viewed as exemplary men and women who embodied the anxieties and ideals of modern life" in the second half of the century (Easley 2011, 11). As for

Carmen Sylva, she would have deliberately avoided that specific pieces of her literary oeuvre, especially those written in collaboration with Mite Kremnitz, be interpreted as 'women's literature'. However, the Hungarian reception of her writings situated and promoted them in this very specific context.

Consequently, a long, three-part article written by Lujza Harmath, the aforementioned translator of the novels *Aus zwei Welten* and *Astra* and of the short story titled *Ein Brief,* was published in Magyar Bazár [Hungarian Bazaar] in 1891 (Harmath 1891). Harmath accentuated the main focus of her interpretation in the title of her article: *Carmen Sylva és kiválóbb nőalakjai [Carmen Sylva and Her Prominent Female Characters].* Hence, she described Sylva's female characters as being closely related to the personality of their author, that is Carmen Sylva herself.

The first part of her narrative introduced the Queen and the nature surrounding Peleș Castle in the spirit of the virtual literary tourism. Making use of such topoi as the ones recurring in the articles examined in the previous chapter, Harmath's narrative located the Queen in a mythical environment, a sort of a fairy palace built on a wonderful piece of land. She authenticated the facts of her narrative through a direct, unmediated, and self-experienced account on the site. Then she provided a detailed description of Carmen Sylva's spiritual greatness. According to her narrative, she gathered information from 'the gurgle of the Peleș brook'. As stated in Harmath's article, the most important feature of Carmen Sylva's personality was the overcoming of human sufferings and self-sacrificing love that made the Queen respected and adored almost like a saint. Harmath further mythicized Elizabeth by staging her personal encounter with the sovereign. In addition, the hypnotic outcome of this meeting also had its effect on the interpretation of Sylva's works for it constituted the utmost premise to an authentic interpretation of her writings. Text interpretation, thus, is assumed by Harmath to be a hermeneutic act during which the unfolding of the concealed meanings of the text is provided by the evoking and re-experiencing of the interpreter's personal impressions. Carmen Sylva's mythicized living-space and figure thus functioned as key elements of analysis in Lujza Harmath's article. These facts not only influenced text interpretation, but also the way Harmath conceptualized women's writing as a profession. According to her, the criterion of an authentic women's writing lies, similarly to Carmen Sylva's attitude, in devotion and in an utmost inner urge. Harmath exhibits Sylva an idealist whose writings

counterpoint the prosaic nineteenth-century literary realism. She interprets her works closely connected to the Queen's figure, and even identifies the narrator of Sylva's writings with their author. Consequently, the women characters of Sylva's novels and short stories become intimately linked to Carmen Sylva herself. As stated by Harmath, Sylva inscribes her inner self into her female characters; since she herself is an ideal of femininity, this ideal is being transposed by the act of writing into her works, too. The distinctive features of her female characters are faith, love, and sense of duty, therefore, according to nineteenth-century domestic ideology, they are all being regarded 'angels in the house'.

The woman protagonist of the novel *Két világból* (originally: *Aus zwei Welten*) is a daughter of a princely family. While reading an aesthetic treatise, she meets a young, independent minded teacher. They start exchanging letters, and when they finally meet at a musical event, desperately fall in love with each other. The novel then relates the spiritual struggles of the girl between her sense of obedience and compliance towards her father who opposes the marriage, and her love towards the young teacher. Sylva's novel *Astra* relates the story of a young girl who has just left a boarding school and finds herself caught in a moral dilemma by certain events. That is, after leaving the school, she lives in the house of her married sister. As a consequence, she falls in love with her brother-in-law, who suggests to discard her 'pure moral concepts' and run away with him. Of course, Astra refuses him, and as means of self-protection, marries another man. However, an unfortunate event finds her in an ambiguous situation with her brother-in-law later. Her sister gets suspicious about their relationship, and commits suicide along with her child. Astra, eventually, also dies as a consequence of her continuous self-reproach. In a similar way, the female protagonist of the short story *Egy levél* (originally: *Ein Brief*) finds herself in continuous suffering and caught in a moral dilemma. She, again, chooses misery and self-sacrifice instead of personal happiness and fulfilment.

According to Lujza Harmath, the above mentioned characters are ideals of female dignity, sense of duty and noble-mindedness, of the 'True Woman', like Carmen Sylva herself. In other words, the women protagonists of Sylva's writings reflect the true self of their author. As a result, the process of interpretation becomes again a cultic act in which the interpreted works stand for something else than for themselves; they reinforce their author's cultic image. Overall, Harmath's interpretation of Carmen Sylva's writings fall into the same

context in which the myths projected on the Romanian Queen and the virtues they embody become patterns to be followed for the readers of the fashion magazine, and in which the public image of the author unavoidably influences the interpretation of her works.

Conclusion

The aim of the article has been to demonstrate how Carmen Sylva's personal fame shaped her presence and reception in late nineteenth-century Hungarian periodicals and at the turn of the century. For, while readers frequently met Sylva's name and writings in nineteenth-century newspapers and magazines, her work became entirely marginalized, even forgotten in today's Hungary.

Therefore, the article established her as a nineteenth-century celebrity whose oeuvre hadn't succeeded in outliving her personal fame. Her nonconformist personality and lifestyle that questioned and reconceptualised both traditional dynastic and women's roles, created increased sympathy among her contemporaries, an interest fuelled and continuously sustained by mass periodicals. As stated by Alexis Easley, "with the proliferation of new media came a corresponding obsession with the lives, homes and bodies of literary celebrities" (Easley 2011, 11). Consequently, celebrities not only brought about the emergence of role models to be imitated, but also represented commodities that exposed competing artistic and commercial demands that circulated around their figure.

It is then possible to conclude that Carmen Sylva's presence in nineteenth-century Hungary becomes most instructive in the context of a modern concept of authorship closely connected to the periodicals of her time. Therefore, she becomes an illustrative example of a nineteenth-century famous author with a favorable reception influenced primarily by her personal fame and not by the aesthetic value of her writings.

Moreover, her outstanding personality and nonconformist lifestyle as a Queen also display a conduct pattern that might have had a certain appeal to nineteenth-century women, a pattern that flattered female authors, despite their controversial social acceptance, with some hope for an increased prestige as well.

NOTES

1. The figure of the 'good Queen' features prominently in Hungarian folklore, too. She is a most loyal partner of her husband, protector of those in need, compassionate and with the love of a mother towards her nation. Her character highly influenced the narratives disseminated about Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary. (Landgraf, 2001).

2. [n. n.] (1891): I. Károly román király uralkodásának negyedszázados jubileuma [The Silver Jubilee of King Karol I's Reign]. *Vasárnap Ujság* [Sunday Magazine] 38(22): 347–348; »Carmen Sylva«, Erzsébet román királyné. [»Carmen Sylva«, Elizabeth, Queen of Romania]. *Vasárnap Ujság* [Sunday Magazine] 38(22): 351–352.

3. Carmen Sylva. *Vasárnapi Ujság* [Sunday Magazine] 38(38): 616. Nineteenth-century monarchs have often worn folk costumes for dynastic purposes. This gesture may be interpreted as an endeavour towards the sympathy of the nation. For the myth of the dynasty lost most of its face as a result of nineteenth-century national awakening and the rise of modern bourgeois society. However, traditional folk costumes conveyed a symbolic union with the nation, or in case of Hungary, with the 'adopted' nation. Consequently, this strategy has widely been employed by several European dynasties. Their members were often photographed in traditional folk attires, and their photographs disseminated all over the monarchy. (Fülemile, 1998).

4. Geyer Stefi Carmen Sylvánál [Stefi Geyer at Carmen Sylva], *Magyar Bazár [Hungarian Bazaar]* 36(15): 3.

5. A román királyné és Vacarescu kisasszony [The Romanian Queen and Miss Vacarescu], *Vasárnapi Ujság [Sunday Magazine]* 38(30): 489.

6. Miksa Falk gave lectures to Queen Elizabeth of Hungary on Hungarian language, history and culture. The Queen herself requested him to instruct her in 1866. (F. Dózsa, 1999: 47.)

REFERENCES

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2007). *Carmen Sylva. Uimitoarea regină Elisabeta a României*. Bucureşti: Humanitas.

Berenson, Edward; Giloi, Eva (2010). "Introduction," Berenson, Edward; Giloi, Eva (ed.). *Constructing Charisma (Celebrity, Fame and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe)*, 1–17. New York: Oxford.

Berlanstein, Lenard R. (2004). "Historicizing and Gendering Celebrity Culture: Famous Women in Nineteenth-Century France," *Journal of Women's History* 16(4): 65–91.

Boyce, Charlotte (2013). "At Home with Tennyson: Virtual Literary Tourism and the Commodification of Celebrity in the Periodical Press," Boyce, C.; Finnerty, Páraic; Millim, Anne-Marie, *Victorian Celebrity Culture and Tennyson's Circle*, 18–52. Palgrave Macmillan.

Braudy, Leo (1986). *The Frenzy of Renown: fame and its history*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Braudy, Leo (2010). "Secular Anointings (Fame, Celebrity and Charisma in the First Century of Mass Culture)." In Berenson, Edward; Giloi, Eva (ed.), *Constructing Charisma (Celebrity, Fame and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe)*, 165–182. New York: Oxford.

Carmen Sylva (1883). *Egy ima (Elbeszélés) [Ein Gebet]*. ford. [transl.] B. Büttner, Lina, Budapest: Aigner Lajos.

Carmen Sylva (1885). *Rajzok [Sketches]*. ford. [transl.] Harmath, Lujza, Budapest: Aigner.

Carmen Sylva (1887). *Peleş meséi [Pelesch -Märchen]*. ford. [transl.] Gidófalvy, Géza, Nagy-Szeben: Reissenberger Adolf.

Carmen Sylva (1890). *Ki kopog? [Es klopft]* ford. [transl.] Wohl, Janka, Budapest: Athenaeum.

Carmen Sylva (1893). *Házasság szerelem nélkül [In Fesseln]*. ford. [transl.] Dugovich, Imre, Budapest: Könyves Kálmán.

Carmen Sylva (1894). *Jehovah*. ford. [transl.] Goldis, János, Arad: Ungerleider Ny.

Carmen Sylva (1898). *Zoé regénye [Zoe's Roman]* ford. [transl.] Harmath, Lujza, Budapest: Orsz. Irodalmi Rt.

[Carmen Sylva; Kremnitz, Mite] *Dito és Idem* (1887). *Tábori posta [Feldpost],* I–II, ford. [transl.] Fái, J. Béla, Budapest: Singer és Wolfner.

[Carmen Sylva; Kremnitz, Mite] *Dito és Idem* (1890). *Két világból [Aus zwei Welten]*. [transl.] Harmath, Lujza, Budapest: Magyar Háziasszony Kiadó.

[Carmen Sylva; Kremnitz, Mite] Dito és Idem (1893), *Astra*. ford. [transl.] Harmath, Lujza, Győr: Gross.

Dózsa, Katalin F. (1992). A szerep, egyéniség és mítosz konfliktusa Erzsébet királyné életében [Role, Individuality and Myth. Conflicts in Queen Elizabeth's Life]. In *Erzsébet, a magyarok királynéja* (Kiállítás a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban 1992. május 18.–1993. január 15.) [Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary. (An Exhibition of the Hungarian National Museum, May 18, 1992–January 15, 1993)], 16–20. Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum.

Dózsa, Katalin F. (1999). Iszonyú magyar honvágyam van. Erzsébet és a magyarok [My Terrific Hungarian Homesickness. Elizabeth and the Hungarians]. *Rubicon*, 10(9/10): 46–48.

Easley, Alexis (2011). *Literary Celebrity, Gender and Victorian Authorship 1850–1914*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.

Falk, Miksa (1889). December 24-én, Erzsébet királyné születése napján [On 24th of December, Queen Elizabeth's Birthday]. *Budapesti Hirlap* [*Budapest Gazette*] 9 (Dec. 25): 2–4.

Farkas, Aladár (1882). Koronás irónők [Crowned Women Writers]. *Magyar Bazár* [*Hungarian Bazaar*], 17(6): 41–42.

Fülemile, Ágnes (1998). Királyok nemzeti viseletben. (Példák a nemzeti elemek megjelenésére a 19. századi európai udvari öltözködésben) [Kings in Folk Costumes. National Characteristics in Nineteenth-Century European

Court Toilette]. In Szilágyi, Miklós (ed.), *Társadalomnéprajzi tanulmá*nyok [Studies in Social Ethnography], 91–108. Budapest: Akadémiai.

Harmath, Lujza (1891). Carmen Sylva és kiválóbb nőalakjai [Carmen Sylva and Her Prominent Female Characters], *Magyar Bazár* [*Hungarian Bazaar*] 26 (18, 22, 23): 137–138, 169–170, 178.

Hubay, Jenő (1889). A román királynénál (Visszaemlékezés Sinaiában töltött napjaimra) [At the Romanian Queen (Recollections of the Days Spent at Sinaia)]. *Budapesti Hirlap* [*Budapest Gazette*], 9 (Dec. 25): 4–5.

Ives, Maura (2012). "Introduction: Women Writers and the Artifacts of Celebrity." In Hawkins, Ann R.; Ives, Maura (ed.), *Women Writers and the Artifacts of Celebrity in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 1–12. England, USA: Ashgate Publishing.

Kohlrausch, Martin (2010). "The Workings of Royal Celebrity. Wilhelm II as Media Emperor." In Berenson, Edward; Giloi, Eva (ed.), *Constructing Charisma (Celebrity, Fame and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe)*, 52–66. New York, Oxford: Berghalm Books.

Landgraf, Ildikó (2001). Erzsébet, a magyarok királynéja – második Szent Erzsébet [Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary – Saint Elizabeth the Second]. In Barna, Gábor (ed.), *A szenttisztelet történeti rétegei és formái Magyarországon és Közép-Európában. A magyar szentek tisztelete [Cult of Saints and Their Historical Aspects in Hungary and Central-Europe. The Cult of Hungarian Saints]*, 109–123. Szeged: Néprajzi Tanszék.

Loti, Pierre (1891). "Carmen Sylva." In Carmen Sylva, *Ki kopog? Elbeszélés.* [*Es klopft*], ford. [transl.] Wohl, Janka, 5–28. Budapest: Athenaeum.

Mole, Tom (2007). *Byron's Romantic Celebrity (Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy)*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nixon, Laura Elizabeth (2014). *The 'British' Carmen Sylva: recuperating a German-Romanian writer.* Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham.

Plunkett, John (2003). *Queen Victoria First Media Monarch*. Oxford: University Press.

Putnoky, Miklós (1910). *Carmen Sylva élete és művei* [*Carmen Sylva. Life and Works*]. Lugos: Auspitz Adolf.

Roberts, Mary Louise (2010). "Rethinking Female Celebrity. The Eccentric Star of Nineteenth-Century France." In Berenson, Edward; Giloi, Eva (ed.), *Constructing Charisma* (*Celebrity, Fame and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe*), 103–116. New York, Oxford: Berghalm Books.

Schad, Martha & Horst (s. a. r.) [ed.] (2001). *Mária Valéria főhercegnő, Erzsébet királyné kedvenc lányának naplója 1878–1899* [A Diary of Archducess Marie Valerie of Austria], ford. [transl.] Simon, László, Budapest: Gabo.

Stackelberg, Natalie Freiin von (1883). *Aus Carmen Sylva's Leben*. Heildelberg.

Stackelberg, Natalie Freiin von (1890). *The Life of Carmen Sylva (Queen of Roumania)*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.

Tomsics, Emőke (2009). Királyi öltöztető babák. Az 1866-os királylátogatás képei [Royal Dress-Up Dolls. Photographs of the Royal Visit to Hungary in 1866], *Fotóművészet*, 52(1): 117–125.

Vojan, Alexandru P. (1904). *Carmen Sylva (Studiu critic)*. Arad. Tipografia Tribuna George Nichin.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2001). *Die dichtende Königin. Elisabeth, Prinzessin zu Wied, Königin von Rumänien, Carmen Sylva (1843–1916). Selbstmythisierung und prodynastische Öffentlichkeitsarbeit durch Literatur*. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde des Fachbereichs Germanistik und Kunstwissenschaften der Philipps-Universität Marburg.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2010). *Die dichtende Königin. Elisabeth, Prinzessin zu Wied, Königin von Rumänien, Carmen Sylva (1843–1916). Selbstmythisierung und prodynastische Öffentlichkeitsarbeit durch Literatur*. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2013). *Regina poetă Carmen Sylva. Literatura în serviciul Coroanei*. (*The Poet-Queen Carmen Sylva. Literature in the Service of the Crown*). With a Preface by H.R.H. Prince Radu of Romania. Translated from German by Monica Livia Grigore, Bucharest: All.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 60-68

Queenship and Literature: The Case of Carmen Sylva's Reception in France

EFSTRATIA OKTAPODA
Sorbonne University, Paris
efstratia.oktapoda@sorbonne-universite.fr

Introduction

Carmen Sylva, the literary persona of Queen Elisabeth of Romania, held a unique and influential place within French intellectual and artistic circles in the late 19th century. Deeply drawn to French culture, she engaged actively in its literary life not merely as a foreign aristocrat, but as a respected author whose voice resonated with French tastes and values. Her *Contes du Pélech* (1884), a volume of fairy tales drawing from Romanian folklore and her own poetic sensibility, was warmly received in France and marked her as a literary ambassador of Romanian culture. The refined language, evocative imagery, and moral undercurrents of her stories captured the attention of the French intelligentsia, who saw in her writing both exoticism and universal depth. Her presence and correspondence with leading French figures made her a notable conduit between Romanian tradition and the European literary canon.

Carmen Sylva's cultural presence in France went beyond literary appreciation; she became a living symbol of transnational intellectual exchange. French writers, musicians, painters, and sculptors found in her both inspiration and collaboration. She was perceived not only as a royal figure but also as a cultivated European woman who embodied the ideals of artistic refinement and moral sensibility. Her salons and literary gatherings were points of convergence for conversations on art, feminism, philosophy, and national identity. Through her published works and public persona, she reinforced Franco-Romanian ties, bringing visibility to Romanian literature and values in a time of European transformation. Her muse-like status among French creators

positioned her as a powerful example of how a woman—royal and writer—could shape cultural diplomacy through art and intellect.

Carmen Sylva in France



Pauline Elizabeth Ottilie Louise zu Wied (1843-1916) was born in Neuwied, Germany and she became Queen Elizabeth of Romania by marrying (1869) Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who would become King of Romania in 1881. She adopted Romania as her own country and she introduced it to the whole world by her writing about the Romanian legends, ballads, folksongs and stories. Most often she did not present herself as a writer-queen or a queen-writer: during her whole life she would write under pseudonyms: either (when signing as sole author) 'Carmen Sylva', or (when publishing together with Mite Kremnitz, her lady-in-waiting 'Dito and Idem'. She did not immediately and not always use French for her publications. Romanian folklore and culture were her first concern, for the dissemination of which she used her broad linguistic expertise.

Being helped by Hélène Văcărescu (1864-1947), the Queen collected Romanian legends and tales that she published under the title *The Bard of the Dimbovitza* in 1890 in French and in English in 1891, written together with Alma Strettell (1856-1939). The popularity of this book and of many others resulted in the exposure of Romanian culture to the world, and inspired composers in Europe and America to set songs to its verse (Arnold Bax, Charles T. Griffes, Arthur Foote, George Enescu, Stanley Hawley, or Sir C. H. Parry).

Important to note that she had started publishing before being a queen. Once being queen, one of her first publications was a volume of aphorisms, written in French and in which she uses her role and position as a queen. It is entitled *Les Pensées d'une Reine* (Paris, 1882). For this book she received, in 1888, the Prix Botta, a prize awarded triennially by the French Academy. Her writing in French – which had been submitted without any name or pseudonym – was recognized by the supreme French judges. However, she was one of those who did not write exclusively in French, next to French she wrote in German, in English and in Romanian. In that sense she was an international figure, perhaps more as a writer than as a queen.

Her international status as a queen may have helped her acquire an international reputation as an author. Her French texts will have been a most important factor – be it those written by herself in French or those which were translated in particular by two men, Louis Salles and Felix Salles.

By her pen, Carmen Sylva brought nations closer, she brought Romania closer to France, and France closer to Romania.

By the present article I intend to highlight the transnational connections Queen Elisabeth of Romania accomplished by dedicating her life to writing and translating from French literature and culture in Romanian and offering support to all the gifted Romanian or foreign and French artists and writers who attended her literary salon at the Peleș Castle.

Finally, I would like to underline that Carmen Sylva was more famous than the Queen Elisabeth of Romania not only because her works had a huge reception all around the world, but above all because it has disseminated French and foreign literature and culture in her country, Romania.

1. Carmen Sylva in French Cultural Life



Carmen Sylva, the pen name of Queen Elisabeth of Romania was attracted by the French life and she played an important cultural role in the intellectual life as a writer in France. Carmen Sylva was a pole of attraction for all Europe, a cultural phenomenon and a bridge of knowledge between the two countries, Romania and France. She attracted the spotlight and she influenced the whole intellectual life in France. Carmen Sylva was a Muse for French intellectuals. Due to her book *Contes du Pélech* (1884), she inspired writers, musicians, sculptors and painters without distinction. She inspired the French composer Claude Debussy (1862-1918), the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), the French master glassmaker Emile Gallée (1846-1904), as

also Dutch painters Alma-Tadema and even more Van Gogh who was talking about Carmen Sylva in his *Letter to Theo* (about September 20, 1889) speaking about the copy of "La pietà" by Delacroix.

She fascinated especially the French author Pierre Loti (Louis Marie Julien Viaud) (1850-1923) who was literally captivated by her personality, by her beauty, by her knowledge and who was an indefinite admirer of the Queen. His novel *Pêcheur d'Islande* (1886) (*An Iceland Fisherman*) obtained the 'Vitet Prize' of the French Academy and the honor of being translated into German by Carmen Sylva, Queen of Romania.

As a writer, Carmen Sylva was a very polygraph person. She wrote a lot, she wrote in French, and the French public loved her texts. I must say that her social status intrigued very much the public in France, which was attracted by all texts written by the Queen. Also, we are in the midst of the movement of Romanticism (1800-1843) and the Queen was impregnated of the romantic verve. So, she has been adopted unanimously in France. In addition, her writings were impregnated of an erudite style and her strong and powerful personality. That is the principal reason that her writings have really adopted in France.

The writings of the Queen made known to the French the Romanian nation, has influenced cultural and literary life in France, and in Europe, and contributed to the intellectual and intercultural exchanges between the two nations.

Carmen Sylva and the French Literature

Carmen Sylva was a popular writer in France. French people read immediately everything the Queen wrote and they were fascinated by his writings. Several reasons contributed to the popularity of the queen and writer Carmen Sylva.

First of all, the currents and movements of the time played in her favor. Bathing in a cosmopolitan milieu due to her origins, her high Romanian and international education, Carmen Sylva enjoyed a large openness and tolerance between peoples and nations. Second, the Queen and by extension the writer Carmen Sylva was very popular at her time, she was the "star of the Belle Epoque". The third reason is that the Queen who was a Latinist writer, was also a Germanist writer, and heiress of Heine who was very popular in France. The fourth reason, but not the least, for Carmen Sylva's popularity in France was that she wrote directly in French.

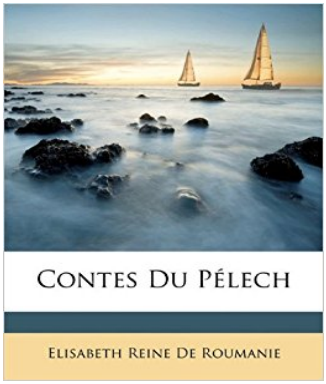
Her books were published in France by major publishing houses. Therefore, the public had easy access to her books and they could easily find them in bookstores, if we judge of multiple editions and reprints of her writings.

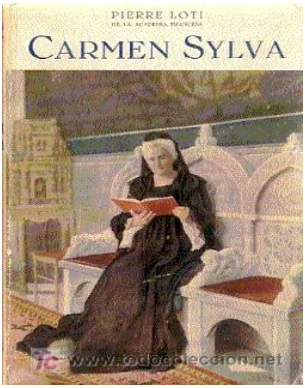
Add to that a fifth reason not negligible: Carmen Sylva spoke several languages and translated French books into other languages. She translated directly books from French to German, as *An Iceland Fisherman* of Pierre Loti and *The Two Masks* of Paul de Saint-Victor.

Then, finally, in the effervescence of the literature and the circulation of ideas that dominated romantic Europe at the time, not only did the French public love Carmen Sylva and read her texts, but French writers loved Carmen Sylva, especially the romantic writers, who loved her poetry. The Romanian poet herself was in admiration of Pierre Loti and of French poet Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894).

Moreover, Carmen Sylva received in her castle of Pelech, in Sinaia, writers with whom she was discussing literature. Her castle was a kind of literary salon, very popular in nineteenth century in France. At this time, she was a great European literary figure. All these reasons had contributed to the popularity of Carmen Sylva in France and in Europe and created the Myth Carmen Sylva.

Carmen Sylva and Pierre Loti





Loti recalled with delectation his visit to the castle of Pelech in the middle of the forest, “in a primeval forest” (“dans une forêt primitive”) in Romania, and his literary chats with the Queen who devoted articles in *Le Figaro*, *Sunday Literary Supplement* (Fund

BnF, Figaro. Literary Supplement, 1876-1929 collection. Issue 17, Saturday, April 28, 1888). In the Summary of this Supplement we can read Loti's text entitled "Carmen Sylva. Memoirs" ("Carmen Sylva. Souvenirs"). Loti writes: "When the French Academy offers an exceptional price to Her Majesty the Queen of Romania, in literature Carmen Sylva, we thought that our readers would read with pleasure a few pages on Pierre Loti reception that made this charming Augustus and his graceful fan. Aware of my life, it happened to me to stop once in a castle enchanted, at a fairy's house".[1]

Loti added below: "[...] Daughter of the North and Queen of the East, speaking all languages and making each of them a charming music for always, she has the gift to throw around her, sometimes nothing else but her beautiful smile, a kind of beneficent charm that calms and consoles."[2]

Loti was charmed, captivated by the queen, and by the mere sound of her voice. "Her voice was like music." Loti fondly remembers that the Queen appointed him to sit in front of her. Ecstatic, he listened to the Queen reading chapters of her own books. Loti writes: "[I] had the honor of attending a reading that Her Majesty was doing to the ladies by the Court of certain chapters of my books. I no longer recognized my work as it seemed embellished, transfigured."[3]

Loti who had visited so many countries and met so many people of all kinds during his travels through Europe and the East, was literally captivated by Queen Elizabeth, her personality, her beauty, her knowledge. He compares her to a fairy "une fée à la baguette magique" ("a fairy with a magic wand").

The Artwork of Carmen Sylva in French Language

A great woman of letters, a writer at heart, Carmen Sylva brought East and West closer through her texts and served as a bridge between the transnational European nations, between Romania and France, and between France and Germany.

Carmen Sylva wrote a comedy in French for the Bucharest company: *Ghosts and Revenants* (*Revenants et Revenus*). She wrote a lot of aphorisms, both spiritual and often of a deep philosophical meaning, which appeared later in Paris under the title *Thoughts of a Queen* (*Pensées d'une Reine*). In most painful years, she wrote *Sappho*, *Hammerstein*, *Ueber den Wassern* and the first chapters of *Leidens Erdengang*.

The Queen decided to give in to the instances of her entourage and then to sign under the pseudonym of Carmen Sylva. So, the two poems of *Sappho* and *Hammerstein* were printed under her pseudonym of Carmen Sylva. Then, in 1882, *The Witch* (*die Hexe*) was published. She was inspired by the statue of Charles IV carved by the German sculptor Ludwig Cauer (1866-1947).



Tales of Pelech (*Les Contes du Pélech*) were published under the title *The Kingdom of Carmen Sylva* (*Du royaume de Carmen Sylva*) in 1883, translated into several languages. The preface is aimed to children, but the book is for "delicate of all ages, and it will be given to understand and enjoy the ones that attracted the charm of poetry united to charm simplicity" writes down Felix Salles, translator of *Les Contes du Pélech* at the publisher Leroux in Paris, in 1884 (See Felix Salles, "*Étude biographique sur Carmen Sylva*").[4]

Carmen Sylva's Studies in French



Very few studies have emerged in French on the writer Carmen Sylva. This is due to the difficulty of access to her work in the specialized libraries in France. The last years from 2000, but more especially since 2010, we observe a renewed effervescence for the Queen and her writings. Many reprints of Carmen Sylva's works emerged over the past seven years in France, which shows the interest of the public and of researchers for this atypical writer.

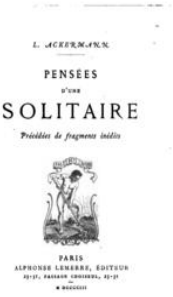
Among the most important works to point out is the work of Gabriel Badea-Paun, *Carmen Carmen Sylva, reine Elisabeth de Roumanie* (*Carmen Sylva, Queen Elisabeth of Romania*), published in Versailles, in 2011 by Via Romana publisher. The book makes the historical reconstruction of the portrait of Queen Elizabeth. I would point out the collection of Silvia Irina Zimmerman who worked for her doctoral thesis on the complete edition of Carmen Sylva thoughts in German and French. Her work focuses on *Gedanken einer Königin* (for German) and *Les pensées d'une reine* (for French). Silvia

Zimmermann has gathered all thoughts and epigrams that the Queen published in German and French during her lifetime. However, Silvia Irina Zimmerman's book *Gedanken einer Königin* brings together a selection of thoughts of Carmen Sylva which are written only in German.

Two years after the centenary of Carmen Sylva's death (in 2016), it seems very interesting to revisit the artwork of the Queen, retrace the writer's career and transcribe the atypical literary itinerary of this great figure of Letters who has marked France and Europe.

Carmen Sylva: *The Thoughts of a Queen*

Carmen Sylva wrote many texts in French. Her works are scattered in different libraries, because they are the original editions of the time. Thus, there are many works to collect and research, often requiring full-time work in libraries and in specialized funds in France. Particular attention should be paid to the study of the Queen's flagship works, beginning from: *Les Pensées d'une Reine - The Thoughts of a Queen*.


L. ACKERMANN

PENSÉES

SOLITAIRE

Précédées de fragments inédits

PARIS

ALPHONSE LEMERRE, ÉDITEUR

About this manuscript, we have to say that there is only one copy in the Library of the Institut de France (in Paris). I will study and analyze it in order to deepen the Queen's thoughts, and ideas, as well as her ideas on revolutionary France, French literature, French society and on women: the status of woman, woman's rights, marriage, social achievements, in comparison, if necessary with the status of the Romanian woman.

NOTES

All the references to French books are in my translation.

The images in this document have been obtained from publicly available online sources.

1. "Au moment où l'Académie française offre un prix exceptionnel à sa Majesté la Reine de Roumanie, en littérature : Carmen Sylva, nous avons poensé que nos lecteurs liraient avec plaisir quelques pages de Pierre loti sur la réception que fit à ce charmeur son Auguste et gracieuse admiratrice. Au courant de ma vie errante, il m'est arrivé une fois de m'arrêter dans un château encghanté, chez une fée".

2. “[...] fille du Nord et reine d'Orient, parlant toutes leslangues et faisant de chacune d'elles une musique charmeuse toujours, ayant le don d ejeter autour d’elle, quelquefois rien qu’avec son bon sourire, une sorte de charme bienfaisant qui relève, qui rassérène, qui console. [S]a voix [de la reine] était une musique”.

3. “[J’ai] eu l’honneur d’assister à une lecture que Sa Majesté faisait aux dames de la courde certains chapitres de mes livres, je ne reconnaissais plus mon œuvre tant elle me paraissait embellie, transfigurée”.

4. “les délicats de tout âge, et il ne sera donné de les bien comprendre et de les goûter qu’à ceux que séduit le charme de la poésie uni au charme de la simplicité”. In Felix Salles, “*Étude biographique sur Carmen Sylva*”.

REFERENCES

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2011). *Carmen Sylva, reine Elisabeth de Roumanie*. Versailles, Éditions Via Romana.

Bengesco, Georges (1904). [Broché], livre français (2010), *Carmen Sylva: Bibliographie et Extraits de Ses Oeuvres*. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing.

Bengesco, Georges (1905). *Carmen Sylva intime*. Paris: Librairie Felix Juven.

Merle, Roger (1999). *Carmen Sylva : L’extravagante reine Élisabeth de Roumanie, 1843-1916* [Broché]. livre français, Editeur: M. Ittah.

Sylva, Carmen (1884). *Contes du Pélech*. Traduction française autorisée de L. et F. Salles. E. Leroux, éditeur. Paris: Librairie Hachette.

Sylva, Carmen (1886). *Nouvelles*. Traduites de l’allemand par Félix Salles. Paris: Librairie Hachette.

Sylva, Carmen (2001). *Le roman d’une princesse* [Broché]. BookSurge Publishing.

Sylva, Carmen (2012). *Marié !* [Broché]. Livre français. General Books.

Sylva, Carmen (1884). [Broché] *Contes du Pélech*. Louis Salles et Félix Salles traduction en français de l’allemand. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing (2010).

Sylva, Carmen (1884). *Elisabeth (reine de Roumanie; 1843-1916)*, *Contes du Pélech*. Paris: E. Leroux

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (ed.) (2012). *Carmen Sylva: Gedanken einer Königin – Les pensées d’une reine*, avec une préface de S. I. Zimmermann, *édition complète des pensées en allemand et français et des épigrammes de la reine Élisabeth de Roumanie*, née princesse de Wied, pseudonyme littéraire Carmen Sylva (1843-1916), avec des photographies de l’Archive Princière de Wied (Neuwied), Stuttgart: Édition Ibidem.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 69-81

Carmen Sylva, A Royal French Favorite

SOPHIE ROCHEFORT GUILLOUET
Sciences-Po University, Paris
sophie.rochefortguillouet@sciencespo.fr

« Le bonheur est comme l'écho: il vous répond mais il ne vient pas. »

Carmen Sylva's literary works were highly praised in France where they were abundantly commented and discussed. The fact that she was best known as Elisabeth of Romania did a lot for her popularity out of the literary Parisian circles. Being a royal character and having been awarded an Académie française prize for her book, *Les Pensées d'une reine*, she was a leading figure of both the European aristocracy and the artistic scene. At the time of her successes as an author, the governments in Paris and in Bucharest had developed strong diplomatic ties. Paris was the intellectual place to be for artists and writers, so that being acknowledged in the elite circle contributed to the international fame of Carmen Sylva and to her prestige outside Romania.

It might seem strange to start a short essay on Carmen Sylva and France by mentioning Anna de Noailles. The two poets have a lot in common in fact and they embody the flamboyant society of the *Belle époque* in Paris. Later, Valerie Rusu explores the "double" presence of Paris in the Romanian soul and spirituality. She observes how Bucharest was known, until World War II, as "little Paris"—not only for Romanians, but across the Balkan Peninsula—and how Romanians living in Paris came to associate the city with a symbolic "Romanian village," evoking not only the native village, but the village as a cultural matrix of both popular and learned Romanian culture (Rusu 2001). Born Anna Bassaraba de Brancovan, Anna de Noailles belonged to the highest nobility, having ancestry in Romania and in Greece and was married to the Comte Mathieu de Noailles. As a poet, her style was personal, bold, lyrical and somehow introverted. She was would deal with nature, spirituality, passion and the passing of time, in a learned kind of disillusion and with a refined spleen. Very

authentic and heartfelt, her poems reflect emotional tension plus a taste for classical culture in the expression. Anna de Noailles had a *salon*, quite selective a cenacle, where she would entertain famous people at the turn of the century.

One could meet these celebrities from the French and foreign literary circles, musicians and artists, critics and politicians - for some of whom she was a dear friend, a muse or a *mécène*. Proust was an acquaintance, as were Claudel, Valery, Cocteau or Loti (much admired by Queen Elisabeth), Max Jacob or Georges Clemenceau. Having cosmopolitan connections, being a gifted polyglot and a talented poet; she became one of the most important figures of the European intelligentsia in Paris. She was honored with the distinction of a *Légion d'honneur* in 1919, the same year Proust and Colette received theirs. A literary prize was named after her, she was the first woman writer to be admitted as a member of the *Académie royale de Belgique*. She was granted recognition by the *Académie française* too and eventually at the origin of the famous literary prize *Femina* still existing today.

There is no clue that the two authors, Carmen Sylva and Anna de Noailles, ever met but they were both celebrated during their lifetimes, being influential female characters in a world very much dominated by male rulers and artists. Anna de Noailles was born in 1876, she died in 1933. Carmen Sylva was born in 1843 and passed away in 1916. They both had a tremendous influence as they claimed to be poets and not to write dull or insipid verses as some sort of a pastime for gentry ladies. In their different ways, they did a strong impression on their contemporaries, morally and aesthetically speaking.

Furthermore, Carmen Sylva's poetry was probably celebrated the most in Paris as people there were under the spell of her charm and as she spoke French as a native speaker would. Indeed, if we take a look at the list of her works either directly written in French or translated from German or Romanian into French, it is in France that her works were the most published.

Princess Bibesco (1854-1902), Anna de Noailles' aunt and a Parisian high society iconic character, was a close friend of Elisabeth of Romania. The famous Bibesco family supported the independence process of Romania from the Ottoman Empire and pleaded for the unification of the Romanian provinces under the rule of one monarch. It is highly probable that Elena Bibesco, a virtuoso pianist, encouraged an evolution in Carmen Sylva's tastes to a bolder appreciation of arts, taking her from a quiet academic stance during her youth to

supporting *avant-garde* artists in her later years. She introduced her for instance to the glass and ceramic artist Emile Gallé. His work was very much in fashion and quite innovative. Princess Bibesco and Queen Elisabeth commissioned him two delicate pieces. The *edelweiss vase* the latter commissioned was lost but we can still admire the twin version the former received. Queen Elisabeth was grateful to her friend. She treasured the vase, writing in French a letter to Gallé, adding to her warm thanks a dry nosegay of the tiny white mountain flowers, along with a volume of her poems with an autograph note (Succession Gallé, 14/061899).

In it, she referred enthusiastically to Gabriele D'Annunzio and to Alphonse de Lamartine, to the Romanian folk tales she enjoyed so much and to Venice. She also described her writing place, a very personal room, artistically decorated.

« *Cher Monsieur Gallé,*
Votre admirable cadeau m'a causé une de ces joies rares et profondes de la vie, qui vous remplissent l'âme de reconnaissance et de beauté. La petite boîte charmante ne me quitte ni jour ni nuit, depuis l'heure de son arrivée, je la tourne, je la retourne, je parle aux chères fleurs, parmi lesquelles les fleurs mourantes d'en dessous ont ma sympathie toute particulière, et puis je l'ouvre, et c'est tout un poème! Je frissonne quand mon œil plonge dans l'abîme, sur lequel vole et plane l'emblème de la résurrection, l'ami de la lumière, avec la chère devise, et puis je contemple l'autre, et les nuances exquises des tons de ce bloc de cristal, si éloquent, et si chaud!
[…]
Et puis cela m'inspire de si belles pensées, justement au moment où l'on me prie de donner une contribution pour le livre qui sera imprimé moitié en français et moitié en roumain pour l'exposition. J'ai une si jolie idée, et je voudrais seulement trouver la forme la plus finement artistique. Il y a une rivière en Roumanie, qui charrie de l'or, et cet or appartenait autrefois à la Princesse du pays, la rivière porte le nom de Râul Doamnei, la rivière de la Princesse! Alors moi je voudrais faire la légende, et trouver l'origine de cet usage, qui doit venir d'une grande charité et d'un grand dévouement quelconque. Ce sera l'occasion de décrire le pays, avec toutes ses admirables couleurs.
[…]
Je voudrais vous montrer le coin où je travaille, en ce moment, il n'y a de lumière que sur mes mains, car il est à peine trois heures du matin, mais le jour il n'y a que lumière, puisque tout le plafond est en verre, et le plancher aussi, pour donner du jour en dessous, les murs sont bleu grisâtre comme du grès, et là-dessus foule de tableaux joliment éclairés. Les miroirs sont sans cadre, et s'enfoncent dans l'étoffe des murs, car ils n'ont d'autre but que de répéter les tableaux, et d'agrandir la pièce qui est par-dessus le marché un quinconce, car elle est faite d'une ancienne cour intérieure, et cela a été mon idée d'en faire un

boudoir. Il y a un piano, et quatre tables à écrire, excepté la table au-dessus de ma couchette, moitié lit moitié divan, où j'écris, car pour le moment je suis obligée d'être toujours couchée, alors le bienfait de la machine est immense, sans parler de sa rapidité. On ne peut pas bouger dans cette chambre, mais ce n'est pas nécessaire, on y travaille seulement. Le vase avec l'Edelweiss se détache comme une glace, sur un magnifique tableau, représentant le Canal Grande, et je reste à rêver devant cette combinaison, bien des fois, quand je veux trouver une belle forme à une belle pensée! A vous de toute mon âme, et en vous remerciant chaque fois que mes yeux reposent sur le pur et le beau qui sortent de votre cœur et de vos mains."

Carmen Sylva, *Song of the forest* / *le chant de la forêt*, is the pen name Queen Elisabeth chose it when she became *Reine-Poète.* Born in Neuwied, she would first write in German but she learned several European languages and was fluent in all of them. She mastered Romanian, French and English. As a princess, married to a German prince chosen to rule in Romania as Carol I, she had a high profile and was famous in the press abroad for her writings as well as for her elegant dresses and veils, her journeys, her involvement in Romanian and European affairs. During her lifetime she was mostly celebrated for her poems and her prolific correspondence. From her native country and her education in Germany, she inherited a romantic attachment to nature, a sensitive way of expressing feelings, a spiritual approach to friendship and love.

When visiting her place of residence *in* Peleș castle, one can capture a faint echo of what she experienced there, some reminiscence of the *Sturm und Drang* movement but in an idyllic setting. In Latin, *carmen* is the word for verse but it also means charm and incantation, or even magic spell. This name has to do with the power of verses, as in Orpheus' myth, when the *vates* captivated the listeners in the woods while he sang and played on his luth, enchanting even beasts and stones.

A monarch of the nineteenth century, a century metamorphosing at quick pace towards modernity, Queen Elisabeth appeared as a socially distant person, because of her position in the social hierarchy, but also as a very human character. She touched the newspapers readers by her melancholy poses and graceful looks. Her lavish dresses and royal elegance became a fashion reference. The loss of her only child, a young daughter, made people grieve with her in Romania but also abroad as she expressed her eternal bereavement and mourning with dignity and delicacy.

Moreover, Elisabeth of Romania conquered the public opinion in France; the French being moved by the way she devoted herself to the wounded soldiers during the independence war. Romanian took side

with Russia in the 1877-18778 fight against the Ottoman Empire. In wartime, she supported the patriotic feelings of her people and when peace came, she gave her support to develop a care system for the visually impaired and the blind. In Romania, she is also credited till nowadays for collecting the myths, tales and stories and for publishing them, saving the oral narrative legacy for the next generations to enjoy and study.

Georges Bengesco, a diplomat, a *Francophile* and *Francophone* writer (calling himself *un ami de la France* and being a scholar on Voltaire's works), was married to a lady in waiting of Queen Elisabeth. He wrote a biography in French (Bruxelles, 1904, Editions Paul Lacombez) which did a lot for the popularity of the Queen and of her *alter ego,* the poetess. His book could be referred to as a hagiography but it is also a source to follow step by step her journey as a writer. He opened the volume with a sonnet:

[...] Quand Elle passe, Auguste, Imposante et Sereine, Tous les bras sont tendus, tous les cœurs sont ouverts ; De toute âme qui pense, Elle est la Souveraine.
[...] Comme une étoile d'or, Son gracieux génie brille d'un vif éclat au ciel de Roumanie, L'illuminant de jour, de soleil, de clarté; Elle exerce deux fois un tout puissant empire : Reine par la naissance et par la Majesté, Poète au noble cœur, qui chante et qui soupire.

First published in German literary reviews, Carmen Sylva's poems were written under the pseudonyms of F. de Laroc and of E. Wedi (Anagram of Wied, her maiden name). The signature of ***Carmen Sylva*** appeared only with the poem *Sappho*, written in 1880. Queen Elisabeth provided the explanation herself in 1882, in a poem called *Mon Repos*, which is the name of the castle in Germany where she spent her youth:

« *Carmen signifie: chant et Sylva : forêt*
Chanté par elle-même, le chant de la forêt résonne
Et si je n'étais pas née dans la forêt
Pour redire ce chant, mon luth serait muet
C'est aux oiseaux que je l'ai emprunté
C'est la forêt qui m'a tout murmuré. »

Camille Doucet, the Secretary General of the Académie française, would write about the prize she was awarded in 1882: « *Le nouveau prix Botta ne pouvait être inauguré dans des conditions plus favorables, plusieurs ouvrages composés par des femmes s'étant fort à*

propos présentés à ce concours, comme si l'Académie les y eût spécialement convié. L'un d'eux… – celui-là mérite à coup sûr une attention particulière. Intitulé « Pensées d'une Reine », il venait à nous sans bruit, comme tous les autres, signé d'un nom charmant mais modeste, qui voulait nous dissimuler sa véritable origine : Carmen Sylva ! Ce faux nom, déjà très célèbre à Paris comme à Bucarest, aucun de nous ne l'ignorait. Ces pensées étaient bien les Pensées d'une Reine; d'une Reine amie des lettres et des arts, philosophe et poète […] »

The volume was soon sold out and was reprinted several times during the Queen's life time. The book was composed with entries, including aphorisms or maxims, short and striking, simple in expression, calling to mind a philosophy of modest happiness and of virtue found in moderation. They show attachment to compassion and duty, enjoyment of nature and praise of beauty in everything and everyone. Some of the *pensées* were quoted in the press and became widely known in the gentry and French bourgeoisie. Artists were not immune either. Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo and to his sisters that, when tormented, he would always find the *Pensées d'une Reine*, soothing to his heart and mind.

Her inspiration was diverse, her talent eclectic. She was indeed a prolific author, writing more than a thousand poems, four volumes of short stories, four novels, play dramas, thousands of letters. Carmen Sylva was not afraid to try her talent at difficult genres, she for instance wrote *Jehovah*, a long and quite ambitious poem on Ashaverus, *the wandering Jew*, a piece written in 1887 and translated into French by her close friend, Hélène Vacaresco, who also translated Mihail Eminescu's poetry and contributed to his recognition in France. Carmen Sylva dedicated a tragedy to another queen, Ann Boleyn, who knew glory before meeting a dreadful fate. She even wrote poems in English, *Sweet hours*, in 1904. One might regret that she did not fulfill a project she had to write her memoirs, a more personal and maybe be bolder work than fiction texts or poetry. « *La gloire*, wrote Germaine de Staël, *est le deuil étincelant du bonheur…* » Sometimes underneath the prose surface and the author's equanimity, one can imagine sufferings and untold truths about a queen's daily condition and the burden of creativity. To express writing difficulties, she naturally found a French reference: « *Si seulement chaque production ne vous prenait pas un morceau de votre vie, comme le dit si bien Alphonse Daudet dans* « *L'homme à la cervelle d'or* » *et dans les* « *Lettres de mon moulin*.»

Being a celebrated writer, Carmen Sylva became in turn an inspiration to contemporary French poets and novelists. She engaged in correspondence with many of them. She was blessed with many talents, played the piano beautifully, sang, loved painting and illuminating, she was also involved in the political life of her time and worked actively to promote a broader access to education in Romania. She was part of the intellectual elite in her country, being admitted to the Romanian Academy for arts and literature in 1882. In France, symmetrically, her poems enabled her to join the *Académie des Jeux floraux*, a poetry institution created by Louis XIV, the Sun King, to succeed the *Académie poétique* founded in Toulouse in the fourteenth century by famous *troubadours* (minstrels). Gabriel Badea-Păun portraits *Carmen Sylva, reine Élisabeth de Roumanie* as *« Fille des contrées du Rhin chantées et dessinées par Victor Hugo, héritière d'un Heine si populaire en France, plongeant par ses ancêtres dans le glorieux Moyen Âge féodal du Saint Empire, Carmen Sylva (1843–1916) plut aux Français par son charme, sa forte personnalité et le royaume lointain et latin sur lequel elle régnait à côté de son époux. »* (Păun, 2011)

Encouraged by her friend Hélène Bibesco, Queen Elisabeth started to patron innovative artists and to commission artworks. For instance, she commissioned a tapestry to Aristide Maillol in 1894, a piece called le *Concert des femmes*.

French musicians dedicated pieces to her as well. Charles Gounod had the project to set to music a *hymn* (cantique) she composed. Camille Saint Saëns dedicated to her his « *Fantaisie* en ré bémol majeur pour orgue, opus 101 » written in 1895. This *fantaisie* is a majestuous and romantic piece. This *langue des forêts,* which gave her a pen name, deeply touched Maeterlinck whose poetical work Debussy would later turn into an opera. We have a card written to Gabriel Fauré by the Queen after she heard one of his sonatas played by Princess Bibesco and Georges Enesco. This musician and prominent composer lived in Paris but he was invited on many occasions to visit the Queen and to stay at Peleș castle. Seduced by the themes and the musically of Carmen Sylva's poetry, he composed between 1898 and 1908, fifteen melodies for piano and voice based on her poems (*Der Bläser, Zaghaft, Armes Mägdlein, Der Schmetterlingskuss, Reue, Schlaflos, Frauenberuf, Junge Schmerzen, Maurenlied, Königshusarenlied, Mittagslaüten, Ein Sonnenblick, Regen, Die Kirschen, Morgengebet*). Between 1898 and 1900, he set in choral music *Waldgesang*, (*the forest song*), based on texts by Carmen

Sylva and Nicolae Rădulescu-Niger. In 1898, he was inspired by her poem *Sphinx* to compose an ambitious canon piece for six voices.

We already mentioned Carmen Sylva's attraction to folklore, her activism in collecting ballads and tales probably saved some from falling into oblivion as they were told and not published in a corpus. Her contribution in this domain is not only literary but also ethnographical. She gave a second life to many myths and popular stories unknown outside of Romania and provided thus material for linguists and historians as well. One example is enough to make this point. She wrote a drama, *Meister/Maître Manole*, taking place in Curtea de Argesh, close to Pitesti, between 1512 and 1520. The play was staged for the first time at the opera house in Vienna, from April to May 1891. It was performed by the comedians of the Burg imperial theatre with some success. The storyline is about a character, an architect partly real and partly legendary, who is said to have sacrificed his beloved wife to be able to build a monastery. A curse prevented him from finishing the works. Such a myth about creation asking for a sacrifice is a recurrent pattern in many countries from the Balkans to Greece. It will be studied thoroughly by Romanian philosopher and historian of religions Mircea Eliade (in *Commentaries on the Legend of Master Manole*). The theme fascinated him, a young woman being in most versions sealed up alive in a wall to ensure the success of her husband as an architect in achieving a masterpiece building, or to defeat the Devil who tries and prevents him from finishing a construction. Marguerite Yourcenar would also refer later to such a tragic deal in *Le Lait de la mort* (in *Nouvelles Orientales,* Paris, 1938), adapting then an Albanian version.

Elisabeth of Romania seduced the French who had become republicans in 1870, but were still paradoxically yet imperturbably fascinated with royalty. Furthermore, at the end of the nineteenth century and before WWI, Paris and Bucharest recognized each other as a historical soul mates, Latin European countries and allies among the growing perils. For prominent artists, musicians and writers, their international recognition would come from the Parisian critics. On the other hand, around 1900, Bucharest attracted French architects who flocked to Romania in such a number that a district in Bucharest is nicknamed *le Petit Paris* to this very day. When Queen Elisabeth looked for a comparison to describe the capital city, described by Bogdan Andrei Fezi as le « petit Paris des Balkans » (Fezi 2004), and Romanian temperament, she found the following one: « *Jamais le Roumain ne s'étonne de rien. L'admiration n'est pas est dans son*

sang: il est né blasé. L'enthousiasme est chose inconnue pour lui. Les paysans moldaves mordus par des loups enragés qu'on avait envoyés à Pasteur n'ont pas été plus étonnés de Paris que si c'eût été leur propre village ». (In *Bucharest*)

Romania was now free from Ottoman influence and turning towards the west. Occidentalizing was on the way, modernization would follow. The Queen was well aware of the process and described it with a pinch of salt and some political sense as well. *« Nous tâchons même d'avoir des socialistes pour être à la hauteur de la civilisation moderne. Seulement le socialisme prend difficilement dans un pays purement agricole, sans industrie, où les fermiers viennent, naïvement, demander conseil à leur propriétaire pour savoir s'ils feraient bien de se révolter, si ce serait un moyen d'obtenir plus de terrain, comme les agitateurs le leur ont fait accroire. La Roumanie est en train de devenir ce que le roi Charles a rêvé qu'elle devint: une artère vivifiante en Europe. Lorsqu'on offrit au jeune prince de Hohenzollern la couronne de ce pays, dont il ignorait presque jusqu'à l'existence, il ouvrit l'atlas, prit un crayon, et, ayant vu que la ligne tracée entre Londres et Bombay passait par la principauté qui l'appelait à sa tête, il accepta la couronne, en disant: « Cela, c'est un pays d'avenir! ».*

Coming back to literature, many French authors recognized quite early Carmen Sylva's talent and they contributed to her fame and prestige in France as a poet. Literary friendships and a numerous correspondence were keys to her success. She met or was in epistolary contact with some of the celebrated writers of her days, artists who had access to the most fashionable salons and to academic circles. She met theatre actors such as Réjane, authors such as Sully Prudhomme who would get the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1901. She read and commented Guy de Maupassant's or Frédéric Mistral's works. Queen Elisabeth admired Victor Hugo and Leconte de Lisle who was quite admirative in return. She met the poet, leader of the Parnassian movement, in Paris in 1888. He was quite familiar with the Romanian cenacles in Paris. Deeply moved by his chiseled and refined prosody, Carmen Sylva translated some of his poems into German and had them published in a luxury edition.

She knew Anatole France as well. They exchanged for years on many topics, from literature to art and politics. Some writers she was acquainted with were also literary critics, such as Edmond de Goncourt or Catulle Mendès. Thanks to them, she would publish texts on a regular basis in such literary reviews as the very selective *Revue de Deux-Mondes*.

She also did a lot, in fact, to promote and spread works she admired. To that purpose, she translated into German two very famous books: *Pêcheur d'Islande* by Pierre Loti and *Les Deux Masques* by Paul de Saint-Victor.

Pierre Loti (1850-1923) was a sailor, an eccentric adventurer, a celebrated socialite; he was fascinated by Queen Elisabeth. After meeting her and having been invited as a guest to Peleș Castle, he wrote the Queen' biography: *L'exilée - la vie d'Élisabeth de Roumanie*. *« Au courant de ma vie errante, il m'est arrivé une fois de m'arrêter dans un château enchanté, chez une fée. » Cette fée est la reine Élisabeth de Roumanie […] La reine est grande, aux yeux bleus, et son regard, un peu embrumé, semble chercher les regards des autres pour deviner plus vite le fin fond de leurs pensées. Des cils fins, très mobiles, des lèvres harmonieuses, habituées au sourire, laissant entrevoir des dents blanches, étincelantes. C'est sous cette apparence avenante, faite de bonté, d'intelligence et de sincérité, qu'elle accueille ses hôtes. Derrière, plane cependant l'ombre d'une modestie profonde, d'où l'étonnement ingénu qui pointe lorsqu'on l'appelle « Votre Majesté ». Ce ne sont pas les ors de son rang qui font ressortir la lumière maîtrisée qu'elle répand sur son passage. »*

Queen Elisabeth also left a testimony about her translation of Pierre Loti's novel, published in 1886: *« En ce moment même je poursuis ce but, et traduis le plus beau livre qu'ait produit la littérature moderne: « Pêcheur d'Islande » de Pierre Loti […] C'est une épopée en prose, simple, grandiose et vraie. La traduction me fait éprouver toutes les satisfactions d'un travail personnel, sans aucune de ses angoisses. Que ce livre est beau! J'ai l'impression que la lecture de Pierre Loti m'a fait faire un sensible progrès. Un bon livre développe plus sûrement l'esprit que ne ce qu'on croit d'ordinaire. »*

By the way, if she spent much time in Sinaia, she also lived by proxy in Paris, knowing all about *la vie Parisienne* from the distance, namely the literary events, the yearly Salon de *l'Académie des Beaux-Arts*, the must be seen exhibitions of modern artists. When Edmond Rostand became a member of the *Académie Française*, Carmen Sylva trusted one of their mutual friends, who was very close to Rostand and had performed in his plays, to give her compliments to the new academician. On the very same day, she asked the same friend to congratulate the Vicomte de Vogüé who had become a member of the *Institut de France*. In her diary, she wrote down the impressions she got from reading the speeches of the newly elected members and the praises they received, as if she indeed had been there: *« Rostand*

pouvait se passer de vers. Il semait les fleurs sur son passage comme un Dieu de l'Inde, et nul autre que Vogüé ne devait le recevoir. C'était comme la résonnance d'un temple majestueux aux sons de la voix d'un troubadour... Je voudrais faire comme les enfants qui donnent des commissions, vous retenir par la manche, et répéter pour la centième fois: Dites-leur encore; — et dites-leur aussi cela ; — et surtout n'oubliez pas de leur dire! — et dites tout, tout! Dites que je les bénis pour les heures exquises que je leur dois, pour la consolation profonde, pour la paix lumineuse qui émane d'eux. Répandez ma reconnaissance aux pieds de mes chers poètes en leur disant que c'est le pèlerinage à rebours de la Princesse lointaine venant vers eux! » (Dated from Sinaia, June 24th 1903)

Yet, the refined world of Queen Elisabeth, the borderless cenacle of Carmen Sylva was soon to disappear. Queen Elisabeth had endlessly advocated the complementarities of the German and the Latin nations in Europe. All her dreams and hopes collapsed at the outbreak of the Great War. Originating from a German aristocratic family, King Carol I was a Francophile at heart. He tried to remain neutral in 1914, but shortly after his death, Romania engaged in war with the Allies. The *Belle époque* was no more; the trauma resulting from WWI would prevent any hope of coming back to this golden age. To catch an echo of this period, reading Carmen Sylva's poems is a relevant way. Some letters or verses might seem a bit over lyrical or conventional or even faded from the passing of time but grace is still there, as in this *Ode to nightingales*: *« O rossignols charmants! O chères créatures! Vous revenez toujours, fidèles à vos nids, Et l'on entend, au sein des nuits calmes et pures, Couler le flot sacré de vos chants infinis ! Célestes messagers, amis de mon enfance, Puissé-je, m'inspirant de votre art merveilleux, Conter, en des récits pleins de magnificence, Les hauts faits du passé, les exploits des aïeux! »* (In *Sommets et abimes*).

One can though still feel the simplicity of style, the quietness of tone and the vivid colors and sounds, all expressed in a rich vocabulary. Is it only ancient souvenirs from German romanticism? *« Chaque fleur se penche, et chaque brin d'herbe / Mollement s'incline, ému, transporté; Réveillé, debout, le rocher superbe / Donne la réplique avec majesté! Toute la nature en fête, en délire, / Frémit de plaisir, de joie et d'amour; L'arbre au vert feuillage est la douce lyre; Le vent qui soupire est le troubadour! »* (In *Sommets et abimes*)

Some critics pointed out sentimentality, idealism, Antiquity or Christian inspiration, classicism in style without audacious images

used or modern themes tackled. Lyrically expressed joy or sadness and a quite decent feminine sensuality led to think of her poetry as the work of a privilege highly educated woman, restrained in her writings by self-imposed codes because of her rank. Poetry could be revolutionary in France with Baudelaire, Verlaine or Rimbaud, yet her models and peers were quieter, the Symbolists and the Parnassians. She was never engaged in social issues in her poems but eager to celebrate timeless beauty, nature and a classical European culture she shared with her cosmopolitan readers. Let us nonetheless remember that she personally wrote to Auguste Rodin who was still a controversial sculptor at the time, to warmly express her admiration to him … and to kindly request his patronage and help for a young Romanian sculptor she thought highly of. This promising young man, living in Paris, having already made a name for himself in Romania as a sculptor, was no less that Constantin Brâncuși. Soon, he was to leave a revolutionary mark in history of arts. Brâncuși indeed worked with Rodin but for a month only, in 1907 and then left, taking his independence, simply stating that "nothing grows under high trees."

France played a part in the promotion and in the spreading worldwide of Carmen Sylva's work. The admiration the French had for Queen Elisabeth helped too. She returned them their affection. Born in Germany but in love with French language and culture, Elisabeth de Wied preached endlessly for reconciliation between the countries she loved. France during the *Belle Époque* would have its say on literary reputations. Recognition in Paris was often a prelude to international glory.

Queen Elisabeth was famous in Romania, in Germany and in England, she soon became known as well outside of Europe. Translations of her works include versions in Italian, Polish, Danish, and Armenian… to name just a few. Neither the form, style nor content could be truly called original but hers are great sincerity and a genuine wish to touch readers by whispering to their ears words from a dissolving past we feel nostalgia about. The last words in this study will be from her *protégé*, Georges Enesco, who genuinely wrote about himself in his *Souvenirs*: « La perfection, qui passionne tant de gens, ne m'intéresse pas. Ce qui importe, en art, c'est de vibrer soi-même et de faire vibrer les autres.»

We may now conclude with a poem of a Queen dreaming to be a Queen, in an oneiric atmosphere, the ultimate melancholy *mise en abyme* of an iconic character. *« AU PAYS DES RÈVES, Je voudrais être reine en un royal château, Si ma couronne était faite de fleurs*

écloses, Si l'araignée avait tissé mon long manteau, Si la rosée était mes brillants et mes roses! J'aurais le blond soleil pour maréchal de Cour, Pour carrosse uni nuage errant et solitaire; Les neuf Muses seraient mes neuf dames d'atour, Et je contemplerais avec orgueil la terre! Mon royaume serait l'esprit, les arts vainqueurs, L'immensité des bois, les cimes élancées, Et le don de charmer et d'entrainer les cœurs, Et les grands sentiments et les nobles pensées Mais puisqu'un pareil vœu n'est qu'un rêve ébauché, Que les couronnes sont souvent de lourdes chaînes, Je préfère rester l'humble ruisseau caché que la roche moussue ombrage au pied des chênes ! » (In *Sommets et abimes*).

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Web site *Gallica* (Bibliothèque Nationale de France):

Carmen Sylva, *Les Pensées d'une Reine*, Contes et nouvelles, *Jéhovah*, œuvres choisies en vers et en prose, éditions conjointes de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France avec Hachette Livre.

Oeuvres choisies (prose et vers) / Carmen Sylva ; publiées par Georges Bengesco ; avec une introduction de Edmond Haraucourt, Paris 1908.

Lettre autographe d'Elisabeth de Roumanie à Gabriel Fauré, 1899.

Carmen Sylva, *Souvenirs de guerre*, bulletins des Sociétés internationales de la Croix Rouge, Revue N°141, Janvier 1905.

"Les pensées d'une Reine" / Carmen Sylva (in "La Nouvelle revue", janvier 1882) ; "S. M. Élisabeth, reine de Roumanie" / Angelo Mariani (extrait de "Figures contemporaines" tome 11)

La Revue félibréenne. Hommages à la Reine Elisabeth de Roumanie, en littérature : Carmen Sylva, N° 1-2, janv.-févr. 1889, Paris.

Secondary Sources

Badea-Päun, Gabriel (2011). *Carmen Sylva, Reine Elisabeth de Roumanie*. Editions Via Romana.

Bengesco, Georges (1904). *Carmen Sylva* (Sa Majesté la reine Elizabeth de Roumanie). Bibliographie et extraits de ses œuvres, Bruxelles, Editions Paul Lacombez.

Bengesco, Georges (1905). *Carmen Sylva intime : la famille, l'enfance, l'éducation, les fiançailles, le mariage, la maternité, l'oeuvre littéraire et l'oeuvre philanthropique*, Paris, F. Juven.

Fezi, Bogdan Andrei (2004). Bucarest, le « petit Paris des Balkans ». L'architecte roumain Duiliu Marcu, diplômé de l'École des beaux-arts Bodgan Andrei Fezi, Livraisons d'histoire de l'architecture. 8, 41-5.

Loti, Pierre/Carmen Sylva (2016). *Avec l'exilée, Sinaia, Bucarest*, *Venise*, Editions Bleu Autour.

Rusu, Valerie (2001). « Paris, village roumain ? De Brâncuşi à Ionesco et Cioran » in *Cahiers d'études romanes*, 6, 77-97.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 82-95

The Bulgarian Reception of Carmen Sylva in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century

NADEZHDA ALEXANDROVA
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
n.alexandrova@slav.uni-sofia.bg

Introduction

This chapter is the first critical glimpse of the Bulgarian translations of Carmen Sylva's literary activities. It starts with a quantitative analysis of the twenty-four translations, found in books and newspapers, and categorized by their numbers, year and place of publication, occupation and gender of the translator. The influence of Carmen Sylva seems to grow right from the very beginning of her life as a royal persona. As early as the 1871 there are evidences of her philanthropic activities in favor of Bulgarian women's association in Tărnovo. Then in 1904 the diary of the famous Bulgarian intellectual and politician Ivan Shishmanov provides clear signals of the beginning of an affectionate friendship with the queen during his official visit to Bucharest. After providing account of these interpersonal relations between Bulgarians and Carmen Sylva, this article continues with an analysis of the most frequent translations of her texts in Bulgarian. The prevailing topics concern the Medieval royal history, the wartime effects on family and community, as well as a more universal touch on humanism and compassion. Carmen Sylva's works clearly show a point of convergence between the national agendas of the two neighboring countries, mirrored in literature.

When Elisabeth of Wied became Queen of Romania in 1869 Bulgarians were still under Ottoman rule; when she died in 1916, the intellectual life in the young Bulgarian kingdom was already flourishing.[1] Interaction between local and foreign writers as well as translation of literary texts into Bulgarian were among those lively forms of cultural life. Under the pseudonym Carmen Sylva the

Romanian queen was known and cherished by the neighbors on the South of Danube. Although this essay is just an initial step of discovering the Queen's presence in Bulgarian culture, it is already obvious that both her personality and her writing have gathered vast popularly. Before the independence from Ottoman rule Queen Elisabeth was regarded as a philanthropist and role model in the era of evolving women's emancipation. During the *fin de siècle* period her poetry and prose transcended the political boundaries between Bulgaria and Romania, and displayed a certain artistic style that encompassed social responsibility and imagination beyond excess – requirements that were often expected from the first Bulgarian women writers as well.

The translations into Bulgarian of Carmen Sylva's works display a lucid tendency of introducing the current waves of European modernism into Bulgarian literature. In addition, they suggest a similarity in the drive for ornamentation of folklore in modernist literature that clings to the general air for romantic representation of the past in both countries at the turn of the 19th c. From the number of translations and personal accounts of meetings which have rarely been studied, one can draw the conclusion that for the Bulgarian intellectuals of the late 19th and early 20th century the Romanian queen was an admirable person and an authority for performing international diplomacy of mutual interest. Speaking of diplomatic accounts, as those of the famous Bulgarian politician, scholar and intellectual Ivan Shishmanov, there are even speculations of a possible love affair between him and the Romanian queen after his visit to Bucharest in 1904.

But instead of letting the rumors overshadow the impact of Carmen Sylva in the Bulgarian literary scene, as it is usually done with a number of famous literary couples who have left accounts of mutual sympathy, the article will provide first the numbers and types of sources available for the study of the reception of the works by this woman writer in Bulgarian. Secondly, it will draw attention to her image as a philanthropist during the late Ottoman period, and the aspirations which Bulgarian women activists, such as Evgenia Kisimova have had in order to accomplish their goal to provide more chances for higher education for girls abroad. In the last part of this paper, I will touch upon the accounts left by Ivan Shishmanov in his diary of the meeting with the Romanian royal family. The notes from the first meeting between the Bulgarian and the Romanian Queen can be used as a basis for the affirmation of mutual sympathy. Moreover, they are valuable source for the overall reception situation of Carmen Sylva's literary works in Bulgaria at the time. In the end, the analysis

of the volumes and specific works that have gained significant translation record can illustrate the entanglements of the Balkan literatures that have made possible simultaneous process of adherence to a potential nationalistic storyline in representing the female figures of the Bulgarian Medieval kingdom. In Carmen Sylva's texts and articles, translated in Bulgarian, there is a strong tendency of depiction the image of Romanian Medieval female rulers and an effort for establishing a legacy between herself and her Medieval foremothers. In a similar stance, yet without the inference of royal succession, there are the novels and short stories of the Bulgarian women writers from the same period, such as Vela Blagoeva and Anna Karima, who are also interested in the role of women in Bulgarian past. But they stand on the left part of the political spectrum and no direct influence by the Romanian writer on their works has been found so far. It is rather the shared nationalistic trend and vision of the social role of women that explains the similarity in their choice of topics.

Analysis of the Gathered Reception Data

From 1895 to 1938 there are twenty-three publications of works by Carmen Sylva in Bulgarian. They are translations of eleven texts by this author – nine in prose, one in verses, and a play. Among them there are five literary texts that are printed several times in different journals or books (four in prose and one in poetry). The most popular of all these translations is the allegoric novella "The man" ("Omul") which has seven separate publications as a book in the course of seventeen years (1921-1938). The second most cherished work by the Romanian woman writer is "The Mother of Steven the Great" ("Mama lui Ștefan cel Mare") which appeared four times in different journals between 1898-1911, which were either issued in Sofia or in the provincial city of Sliven. Other two of her historical tales – "Piatra Arsă" from the volume *Tales from the Peleş* (*Pelesch-Marchen*) and "The Queen's Rocks" ("Pietrele Doamnei") from the volume *Through the centuries* (*Durch die Jahrhunderte*) are translated two times. The short-stories "Bukur", "Dragomira" and "In Vrancea" are translated once in literary supplement of a daily periodical for literary and cultural life, called "Mir" in 1911. Besides Carmen Sylva's prose, there are also two translations of a poem. Its title in Bulgarian means "The most beautiful name". There is also a large journal article, entitled "The Romanian woman", and a play "The intrigue" (whose original has not been identified so far).

The works have been published both as separate books and in periodicals. This is valid for "The man", "Piatra Arsă" and "The Queen's rocks". But the most substantial places for Carmen Sylva's creative visibility are the Bulgarian periodicals. Her texts appear in six different periodicals, published in various cities, such as Varna, Shumen, Sliven, Sofia, Plovdiv. Among the translators we can distinguish some of the most popular intellectuals of the time, such as Kiril Hristov, Konstantin Velichkov and Stefan Gidikov. There are also three women translators. Elena Gorbunova-Posadova is the translator of the Bulgarians most cherished story "The man". Ljuba (whom we cannot distinguish by just her first name) is the translator of a version of the story "The Mother of Stefan the Great". Stefania Mirska, one of the most distinguished women writers and teachers of the end of the 19th c., is the translator of the short story "Piatra-Arsă". Stefania Mirska is the daughter of the first woman translator in Bulgaria – Stanka Nikolitza Spasso-Elenina. She must have considered translation of women's literature as her mission.

This brief reception picture clearly shows that the Bulgarians tend to translate mostly Carmen Sylva's prose. Perhaps those who read fluently in foreign languages have come across her poetry, just like Kiril Hristov, a translator from Italian and French, who has published one of Carmen Sylva's poems in his anthology of translated foreign authors. The least known aspects of her works are her theatre plays.

Carmen Sylva as A Philanthropist for Bulgarian Women's Education during the Ottoman Rule

The first mentioning of Carmen Sylva can be found in the beginning of 1870s, just a year after her wedding to the Romanian king Carol I. At that moment Bulgarian women's organizations have increased in numbers and have been securing funds and possibilities for young women to study in colleges and universities abroad, since there were no such distinguished institutions in the Bulgarian territories within the big empire.[2] The letters from Evgenia Kisimova, the head of the women's association in Tarnovo ("Milosardie"/"Charity") to the Romanian queen, contain a request of sponsorship for Bulgarian girls to study in a Romanian college for girls. A gift, handwoven by Kisimova, is sent to Bucharest in honor of the Queen. It was a dress with a special design with embroidery that was initially created as part of an exhibition of Bulgarian manufacturing in Constantinople in 1863. A letter with a request for financial and administrative support

for Bulgarian girls to study in Bucharest accompanied the dress (Kuleliev 1936: 41). Perhaps Evgenia Kisimova had received a positive answer from Carmen Sylva, because in the following year she wrote a letter to Madame Davila, the headmaster of the women's school in Bucharest, inquiring about the admission process. She mentioned that this initiative was possible because of the "benevolence of the Romanian queen". In addition, a third letter from October 1871 already announced the names of two girls – Todora Ilieva and Sofia Kochova who were appointed to study in Ana Davila's educational institution. The letter finished with the gesture of respect and gratitude for Ana Davila and Elisabeth of Wied: "Our women's association will always be grateful to you, and to Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth". Although the archival documents do not contain the responses of these distinguished Romanian women, it becomes clear that in 1870s formal as well as informal networks of communication existed not only on a national level - between the members of the Bulgarian women's associations themselves, but also internationally - between Bulgarian and Romanian women activists and intellectuals.

Queen's Sympathy for the Bulgarian Intellectual Ivan Shishmanov

Another interesting aspect of the reception of Carmen Sylva in Bulgarian is her meeting with one of the greatest Bulgarian intellectuals of the time – Ivan Shishmanov (1868–1928). He was one of the first Bulgarian university professors in comparative literature. He graduated from the pedagogical high-school in Vienna, and then studied in Jena, Genève and Leipzig, where he received his doctorate. Shishmanov had a great impact on the creation of the Bulgarian literary canon, especially by creating parallels between the Bulgarian Revival period of the 18th and 19th c. and the European Renaissance.

In addition to his wide corpus of academic research there is also his contribution to the young Bulgarian state as a Minister of Education (1903–1907). During his mandate as a minister he was invited for a formal visit to Romania (24-29 May 1904). In his diary he has written a very detailed account with his impressions during the audiences to Carmen Sylva, King Carol I, and Dimitrie Sturdza. He was welcomed cordially by all of them. The king and the prime-minister Sturdza inquired about Bulgarian politics, social affairs and common acquaintances. A reception was organized for the Bulgarian politician at Sturdza's house. According to the notes in the diary the

most powerful impression in the Royal castle came from the figure of Carmen Sylva. She got acquainted with him on 24 May 1904. He enjoyed her swift switch of languages between German and French, and her opinion on women's rights and women's education. She was very much in favor of gender equality both in the private sphere and publicly.

It seems that there was such a frank and sincere conversation between them that Ivan Shishmanov got infatuated. He wrote in his diary: "Black dress, with a short cleavage. The face is painfully red, oval, as of a young girl, almost no wrinkles; very curious, small and vivid, deep blue eyes, an angel's soul floating behind them. I ask for forgiveness to bother her but I tell her that it was a teenage dream of mine to see the queen, the poetess, who is not only the first of her nation but also the first of her gender (son sexe). I had to thank her personally for the pleasure, which the pages from "Peleş Tales", "The Thoughts of a Queen" and "Meister Manole", etc. had given to me."

In turn Carmen Sylva was very considerate and kind with her visitor. She also expressed her grief for her lost child. She told him her disappointment from the way she was presented in the memoires of her former co-author and friend – Mitte Kremnitz. In an intimate conversation she shared her opinion on her understanding of marital love with a king: "I was never loved; I was never in love". The relation with the kind is articulated as one of "open and decent response that after some time lead to exhaustion". Then Carmen Sylva told Shishmanov about her opinion on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and about the contemporary Romanian writers. She also revealed the meaning of her pen name ("Sylva" is a Latin word for "forest" and "Carmen" – her favorite song").

This four-page episode from Ivan Shishmanov's diary is full of fascination for the queen. Shishmanov's notes have even become a reason for some rumors about a possible love affair between him and Carmen Sylva. So far in his archive we have not found love letters or other signals of a possible intimate relationship. Yet, the written account in the diary shows enough evidence for the popularity that the Romanian writer had abroad. It seems that Ivan Shishmanov had read her in other European languages, and he also inquired about her latest book at that time "Rapsode de Dimbovitza". He was a very renown expert in anthropology and folklore, seeking similar motives in neighboring Balkan folklore traditions. In that train of thoughts, in his diary he mentioned his interest in Carmen Sylva's tragic play "Meister Manole" (1892). The play dealt with the motive of the builders who needed a human sacrifice to make their building strong. This motive

was very common also in the Bulgarian folklore ballads. It inspired several distinguished Bulgarian writers (Nayden Gerov, Petko Slavejkov, Pencho Slavejkov) from the 19th c. to use it in their poems. Despite this common interest in one and the same motive, Carmen Sylva's version was not among the translated works in Bulgarian. However, the diary of Ivan Shishmanov reveals that this influential intellectual has read the piece and it is very probable that he has shared his impressions with the Bulgarian writers from his circle.

Overview of the Most Common Topics in Queen's Prose in Bulgarian

The stories about Romanian Medieval history of resistance to foreign invasion are among the most popular ones in the Bulgarian reception context. Such are "Queen's rocks", "Bukur", "The mother of Stefan the Great", "Dragomira", and "In Vrancea". The translations are predominantly from the collection "Durch die Jahrhunderte". Such plots make the local audience identify with the common imperial past. Bulgarians lost their Medieval kingdom succumbing to the Ottomans in 1399. The invasion of Romania by the Ottoman troops, depicted in Carmen Sylva's stories, made Bulgarians imagine their own surrender. That may explain the interest of Bulgarian audience to stories such as "The Queen's Rocks" and "Dragomira". In the latter there is another very popular folklore motive in Bulgarian culture – about conversion and loyalty to a Muslim sultan, and a further incest marriage between a brother and a sister, divided by that ruler in the *selamlik* and the *harem* of the sultan's castle. The recognition and tragic love between them, as well as their fatal separation in monastic seclusion in the epilogue of the story resemble very much not only Bulgarian folklore songs but also 19th c. novellas, such as Luben Karavelov's early work, called "Turkish pasha".[3]

Another common feature of all translations on historical themes is the repetitive presence of a very strong female personage with a noble origin. In "The Queen's Rocks" this is Queen Elena Raresh, and in several other stories this is the Queen mother who does not allow her son - the king to desert from the battlefield. She urges him to return and fight against the enemy ("The mother of Stefan the Great", "In Vrancea"). Perhaps on those images of powerful women rulers Carmen Sylva imposes the legacy of the Romanian woman, which actually she claims openly in the article "Romanian woman", translated in 1911 in "Mir" newspaper. Carmen Sylva makes an effort to connect the contemporary Romanian monarchy with its Medieval

predecessors, which reveals a strong nationalistic drive. It is useful in the current historical moment for the formation of the Romanian state. It can be regarded also as a kind of cultural diplomacy by means of literature. The German born Elisabeth of Wied was speaking fluently also French and English. Her works spread in Europe as soon as they were published and received international attention. The Queen who is a bohemian personality and a writer was an ambassador of the folklore and Medieval legends of Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia to the awareness of the foreign reader.

In times of evolving nationalism in the Balkans, literature had a share in the distribution of the images of the proper nation. At the end of the 19th c. and the beginning of the 20th c. both Romania and Bulgaria needed an unequivocal confirmation of their existence as modern nations on the map of Europe and any effort in this direction was welcomed. In her historical writings Carmen Sylva fulfilled the self-identification strategy to confirm the historical legitimacy of Romanian monarchy and in effect this message transcended the political borders. It reached the audiences in Bulgaria and contained in idea of sameness yet difference in the experience of the Ottoman dominance in each of the two nations.

Besides the tales from the volume "Durch die Jahrhunderte", there are two more very popular works by Carmen Sylva in Bulgarian. The first one, and perhaps the first in appearance in the press in 1895 is the story "Piatra-Arsă". It has two translations – in the journal, called "Iskra", and published in the small town of Shumen and in a book, published in Varna. It tells the story of the peaceful loving relationship between Păuna and Tanas, which was put to the test during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878. The traumatic wartime experience of the couple comes from the difficult choice between love for the nation and intimate love. The story ends with a clear message that war can be damaging but for the true lovers of the nation it gives a second choice.

The ending displays the reunion between the crippled wartime survivor Tanas, and his wife, who had become a nurse. The story about the devastated battlefield at Piatra-Arsă, where Pauna searches for her wounded beloved, and the reunification of the lovers Păuna and Tanas must have moved the hearts of the Bulgarian readers. For them this was a "Liberation war", yet, it also brought traumatic experience to the soldiers who fought in it. It put forward the feeling of stoicism and the drive for philanthropy – both of them reenacted during the Balkan wars and the WWI.

Carmen Sylva's novella "The man" circulated among the Bulgarian readers in the post-WWI period (1921–1938). It put emphasis on humanistic values of compassion, care for the weak and poor, and respect for those who experience hardship. The hypothesis about this phenomenon in the Bulgarian reception context is related to the universal message of the novella. It is a story about martyrdom – "the man" gives up his noble status and privileges and helps the poor and destitute people as this was the testament left by his mother. The expulsion of a royal family – a mother and her son Emanuelle, from the castle is very much retold in the style of the legend about Geneviève de Brabant. Wandering in desolated places, they found their new life among the ordinary people. They were remembered for exercising values of mercy and compassion. The recognition of Emanuelle, the main character of the novella, as "the man", corresponds with the idea about the loss of humanistic values and the hope for their retrieval in the Interwar period. The allegorical potential of this novella about humanity is the possible reason for its long-lasting life among the Bulgarian readers of Carmen Sylva.

If such distinguished persons from the Bulgarian intellectual elite as Ivan Shishmanov, Kiril Hristov, Konstantin Velichkov, etc. have been involved in the reception of Carmen Sylva in Bulgaria, then it is very likely that there were also women authors who read her, because the above mentioned men belonged to literary circles, in which men and women were present in the discussions of new ideas and books. However, there is still no evidence of such transfer of influence. We can only distinguish the names of several women-translators and project similarities between the choice for historical plots, evident both in Romanian and in Bulgarian women's literature of this period. This is a hard task in view of the marginal status of women's literature, and especially of women authors who were translated and later forgotten. The quantitative analysis undertaken in this short article, together with a short analysis of the main movies and topics, found in the twenty-four works by the Romanian queen provide a hopeful perspective for such future efforts.

NOTES

1. Bulgarians were under Ottoman rule from 1396 to 1908. Already after the Russian-Turkish was of 1877–1878 The Bulgarian Monarchy was created in the lands between the Danube and the Balkan mountain with Sofia as a capital of the Bulgarian kingdom. The province of Eastern Rumelia joined the Bulgarian kingdom in 1885 with the political act of Unification. Finally, in 1908 in the town of Veliko Tărrnovo the Bulgarian king Ferdinand announced the declaration of full independence from the Ottoman Empire.

2. There were 61 women's associations that were predominantly acting in favor of philanthropic and educational causes but in the late 1870s they also took part in helping the developing network of revolutionary movement. The associations, which were organized around the Bulgarian communities in the neighboring big cities, such as Istanbul, Beograd, Bucharest, established contacts with local authorities and maintained connections also with the internal network of Bulgaria women's associations in the provincial areas of the country. (Alexandrova 2014: 318–320).

3. Luben Karavelov (1834-1879) was a Bulgarian writer, journalist and intellectual who explored the condition of Bulgarians under Ottoman rule in his numerous works. In his novella "Turski pasha" (Turkish pasha") the forceful separation between a brother and a sister who were enslaved as kids and sold at the Istanbul slave market, lead eventually to their conversion and distancing from their Christian past. Falling in love and getting married, they accidentally realize that they have committed and incest marriage. Shocked by the news they run away, to seek comfort for their souls in hermitage and sorrowful wandering (Karavelov 1954: 35-97).

REFERENCES

Alexandrova, Nadezhda (2014). "Zhenskite druzhestva," *Encyclopedia na Balgarskoto vazrazhdane*, tom 1. Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BAN.

Karavelov, Luben (1954). "Turski pasha." *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, tom.1. Sofia: Balgarski pisatel, 35-97.

Kirova, Milena (2009). Neslucheniat kanon. *Balgarski pisateliki ot Vazrazhdaneto do Vtorata svetovna vojna*. Sofia: Altera

Kuleliyev, Yordan (1936). "Pisma na Evgenia Kisimova," *Devicheskoto obrazovanie v V.-Tarnovo predi Osvobozhdenieto*. Tarnovo: Izdanie na tarnovskoto druzhestvo "Radost".

Shishmanov, Ivan (2015). *Dnevnik i dosieta 1879–1927*. Sofia: Prozoretz.

Sylva, Carmen (1896). *Intrigata, drama v tri dejstviya*. Sofiya: Pechatnitza Kiril i metodii Publishing House.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). "Dragomira," *Mir-literaturno kulturna pribavka,* Danchev Sofiya (ed.), no: 9, issue 3273, 8 June.

Sylva, Carmen (1898). *Dve noveli – Kralitzinite kamani i Bukur*. Sofiya.

Sylva, Carmen (1899). “Skalite na kralitzata,” *Letopisi*, K. Velichkov (ed.), Plovdiv, 1:19.

Sylva, Carmen (1899). “Majkata na Stefan Veliki,” *Zhivot.* St. Gidikov (ed.), Sliven: no: 2, 2.

Sylva, Carmen (1905). “Majkata na Stefan Veliki,” Sofiya: Antologia na prevodni poeti za 1905 i 1907.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). “Majkata na Stefan Veliki,” *Mir*- literaturno-obshtestvena pribavka, ed. P. Danchev, Sofyia: no: 8, 4367, May.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). “Majkata na Stefan Veliki,” Sofiya: *Hudozhestvena kultura*, no: 17-18.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). “Naj-hubavoto ime, stihove ot Karmen Silva,” *Priblizheni horizonti*, Kiril Hristov (ed.), Sofiya.

Sylva, Carmen (1897). *Piatra-Arsă - istoriya za istinskata lyjbov*. Varna: Pechatnitza G. Nikolov.

Sylva, Carmen (1897). “Piatra-Arsă – istoriya za istinskata lyjbov,” *Semeyno ognishte*, ed. M. Nedyalkova, Shumen: Iskra.

Sylva, Carmen (1922). *Prisadata.*Troyan: Izdatelstvo Balkan

Sylva, Carmen (2018). *Poveştile Peleşului.* Silvia Irina Zimmerman (ed.). Bucharest: Corint.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). “Rumanskata zhena,” *Mir-literaturno kulturna pribavka.* Danchev. Sofiya (ed.), no: 1, issue 3229, 9 April.

Sylva, Carmen (1908). “Stihove ot Karmen Silva”, *Prelgled*. Kiril Hristov (ed.), Sofiya, no: 1 – Zatureni poeti.

Sylva, Carmen (1927). “Shtastie, radost, uteha” – tchovekat-legenda. Plovdiv: Spoluka

Sylva, Carmen (1921). “Tchoveka”– trite izpitaniya. Sofiya: Ljybov.

Sylva, Carmen (1924). “Tchoveka”– trite izpitaniya. Plovdiv.

Sylva, Carmen (1924). “Tchovekat” – trite izpitaniya – Razkaz. Sofiya.

Sylva, Carmen (1923). “Tchovekat” – legenda. Sofiya: Hemus.

Sylva, Carmen (1934). “Tchovekat” – legenda. Sofiya: Hemus.

Sylva, Carmen (1938). “Tchovekat” – legenda. Sofiya: Hemus.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). “Vav Vrancea,” *Mir-literaturno kulturna pribavka.* Danchev. Sofiya (ed.), no: 12, issue 3290, 26 June.

Works of Carmen Sylva in Bulgarian					
Title in Bulgarian	Title in English	Original version	Year of translation	Book, publishers/ Journal, editor	Translator/ gender
"Интригата," драма в три действия	"The Intrigue", a three-act play		1896	Book, Sveti Kiril i Metodii, Sofia	G.A. Petrov
"Пйатра – Арса": разказ за истинската любов	"Piatra-Arsă": a tale about true love	Carmen Sylva, "Piatra Arsă," in vol.: *Poveştile Peleşului*, Ediție îngrijită și postfață de Silvia Irina Zimmermann, Corint, București, 2016.	1895	Journal Semejno ognishte, M. Nedyalkova (ed.), Iskra, Shumen.	Stefania Mirska - female
"Пйатра – Арса": разказ за истинската любов	"Piatra-Arsă": a tale about true love	same as the above	1897	Book, K. Nikolov publisher, Varna	Stefania Mirska- female
Две новели ("Кралицини те камъни" и "Букур")	Two novellas: "The Queen's Rocks" "Bukur"	Regina Elisabeta a României (Carmen Sylva), "Pietrele Doamnei," *Durch die Jahrhunderte*, Emil Strauss, Bonn – Leipzig, 1885; trad. de L.T. in vol.: *De prin veacuri*, Biblioteca pentru toți, 2 vol., Edit. Universală Alcalay", București, 1894-1902.	1898	Book, Sofia	I.M.
"Скалите на кралицата"	"The Queen's Rocks"	Regina Elisabeta a României (Carmen Sylva), "Pietrele Doamnei," in vol.: *Durch die Jahrhunderte*, Emil Strauss, Bonn – Leipzig, 1885; trad. de L.T. in vol.: *De prin veacuri*, Biblioteca pentru toți, 2 vol., Universală Alcalay, București, 1894-1902.	1899	Journal Letopisi, ed. K. Velichkov, 1st year, issue 19, Plovdiv	D. Kachemakov

“Човекът – трите изпитания” 1921, 1924, 1924 “Човекът – разказ” “Човекът-Легенда” 1923, 1934, 1938, “Щастие, радост и утеха или изпитанията на човека” (1927)	“The Man – Three life-trials”	Carmen Sylva, “Omul,” în vol.: *Poveștile Peleșului*, Ediție îngrijită și postfață de Silvia Irina Zimmermann, Corint, București, 2016. (pp. 49-63). Carmen Sylva, “Bucur,” in vol.: *Durch die Jahrhunderte*, Emil Strauss, Bonn – Leipzig, 1885; trad. de L.T. in vol.: *De prin veacuri*, Biblioteca pentru toți, 2 vol., Edit. Librăria Universală Leon Alcalay, București, 1894-1902. in vol.: *Insula Șerpilor [și Bucur]*, Biblioteca scriitorilor celebri”, București, An. I, Nr. 3, Ed. Steinberg, f.a. [1919]	1921 1923 1924 1924 1927 1934 1938	books	Elena Gorbunova-Posadova-female
“Майката на Стефан Ве лики”	“The mother of Steven the Great” (known only from bibliography)	In vol.: *Durch die Jahrhunderte*, Emil Strauss, Bonn – Leipzig, 1885; trad. de L.T. in vol.: *De prin veacuri*, Biblioteca pentru toți, 2 vol., Edit. Universală Alcalay, București, 1894.	1898/99	Journal Zhivot, ed. by Stefan Gidikov, Vol. 2, issue 2, Sliven.	G. Stoynov
“Майката на Стефан Велики“	“The mother of Steven the Great”	same	1911	Journal Mir, ed. Danchev, literary-cultural supplement no: 8, issue 4367 from May 1911 Published in Sofia	Georgi Nikolov
“Майката на Стефан Велики“	“The Mother of Steven the Great”	same	1911	Journal *Hudozhestvena kultura*, issue 17-18, 1911.	Ljuba-female
“Майката на Стефан Велики“	“The Mother of Steven the Great”	same	1905	an *Anthology of translated poets* with two editions 1905 and 1907	Stoyan Atanasov

“Румънската жена”	“The Romanian woman”	Carmen Sylva, “Femeia română,” in: *Telegraful Român*, 31 august/12 septembrie 1896, anul XLIV, Nr. 98; 3/15 septembrie 1896, anul XLIV, Nr.99; 5/17 septembrie 1896, anul XLIV, Nr.100, Sibiu.	1911	Journal Mir, ed. Danchev, literary-cultural supplement, no: 1, issue 3229 from 9 April 1911 Published in Sofia	Georgi Nikolov
“Драгомира”	“Dragomira”	Carmen Sylva, “Dragomira,” in vol.: *Durch die Jahrhunderte*, Edit. Emil Strauss, Bonn – Leipzig, 1885.	1911	Journal Mir, ed. Danchev, literary-cultural supplement, no: 9, issue 3273. 8 June 1911	Georgi Nikolov
“Във Вранча”	“In Vrancea”	În vol.: *Durch die Jahrhunderte*, Edit. Emil Strauss, Bonn – Leipzig, 1885.	1911	Journal Mir, ed. Danchev, literary-cultural supplement, No: 12, issue 3290, 26 June 1911	Georgi Nikolov
“Стихове на Кармен Силва”	“Poems by Carmen Sylva”, (known only from bibliography)		1908	Journal Pregled, ed. Kiril Hristov, collection “Zatureni poeti”	Kiril Hristov
“Най-хубавото име-стихотворение от Кармен Силва”	“The most beautiful name” - a poem by Carmen Sylva		1911	Poetry book “Priblizheni horizonti” from 1911 (a collection of his translations of poetry from past publications)	Kiril Hristov
“Присъдата Разкази” от Кармен Силва, Ги дьо Мопасан, С. Зиванович, А. Ахаронян. Изд.Балкан, Троян	“The verdict.” Short stories by Carmen Sylva, Guy de Maupa-ssant, S. Zivanovich, A. Aharonyan		1922	Izdatelstvo Balkan, Trojan	T. Tzonevski

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 96-106

Beyond *Japonisme*: The Queen Poet Carmen Sylva and Japan

GEORGE T. SIPOS
West University of Timişoara
george.sipos@e-uvt.ro

Introduction

Carmen Sylva, the pen name of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (Pauline Elisabeth Ottilie Luise of Wied, 1843-1916), was a prolific writer and translator known for her literary contributions in multiple languages. Her work includes poetry, prose, drama, and translations. Her writing often drew upon her personal experiences, Romanian folklore, and themes of spirituality and nature.

Well-known in Europe during her active literary career, Carmen Sylva seems to have always been fascinated by Japan, and alongside her husband, King Carol I (Karl Eitel Friedrich Zephyrinus Ludwig von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, 1839-1914, r. 1881-1914) was swept in the *japonisme* trend of her time.[1]

The queen's interest for *japonisme* was not solely limited to collecting *objets d'art*, although her introduction to Japanese (and by extension to other East Asian) cultural artefacts was most likely facilitated by the popular trend of the artistic elites which occurred in the wake of the opening of Japan during the final years of the shogunate (Bakumatsu Period, 1853-1867) and of the Meiji Restoration of 1868, but it went further with her purposeful engagement with Japanese artists and literati who passed through the young modern Romanian kingdom during her and Carol I's reign.

Japonisme

As was the case with most of Europe at the time, Carmen Sylva's introduction to Japan and things Japanese likely occurred during the

Japan's Meiji Period (1868-1912), when Japan was rapidly modernizing and opening up to Western influences. Japanese intellectuals and literary circles were increasingly interested in Western literature, and translations of European works were becoming more common.

As shown in recent research works, such as those by Radu Leca and Steluţa Călin-Boroghină, the introduction to and interest for Japan in Romania occured in stages (which Leca identifies as "staggered diffusion" and defined as not simply an immediate import of Japanese culture, but a gradual, staggered process that was shaped by Romania's particular social, political, and cultural context). Key figures in the literary and artistic circles were drawn to *japonisme* in the context of their search for modernity.

Romanian writers, such as Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817-1891) and Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917), who were familiar with European developments, were some of the first to introduce Japanese ideas into Romanian intellectual debates. They saw Japanese culture as a symbol of the exotic and a way to rejuvenate and enrich Romanian art and culture.

Within this context Carmen Sylva came in contact with Japanese art and culture and took a keen interest in the building of collections of various art pieces not only from Japan, but also from China and Persia, developing a veritable royal collection of East Asian, Persian and Turkish art. The queen's deep fascination with Japan and Japanese culture is well documented in Călin-Boroghină's 2023 work *A Century of Romanian Collections of Far Eastern Art*. As a widely traveled and cosmopolitan figure, Queen Elisabeth encountered *japonisme* through her exposure to the broader European intellectual and artistic circles.

She was, of course, part of a growing group of European aristocrats and intellectuals who were drawn to the aesthetic innovations of Japanese art. Japan's unique artistic traditions, including *ukiyo-e* prints, ceramics, and calligraphy, were highly admired and influential among European elites in the late 19th century. The queen's attraction to Japanese art was likely inspired by the widespread European fascination with exoticism during this period. However, Călin-Boroghină emphasizes that Carmen Sylva's interest was not just superficial; she deeply appreciated the symbolic and spiritual aspects of Japanese culture, seeing it as a source of inspiration for Romanian art and culture.

Călin-Boroghină goes on to explain that Queen Elisabeth played a critical role in the formation of Romania's royal collections,

particularly in acquiring Far Eastern and Oriental objects. Her personal taste in art strongly influenced the royal collection, which became one of the most significant in Romania. Among the objects she collected were Japanese prints (especially *ukiyo-e*), Chinese porcelain, Japanese screens, and decorative arts, which were carefully curated and displayed in the royal residences, such as the Peleș Castle in Sinaia and other Romanian royal palaces.

The Queen was actively involved in procuring these pieces, either by purchasing them directly from art dealers or through diplomatic gifts from other European courts. The royal family's collection was not only a personal interest but also an expression of Romania's aspiration to modernity and desire to be part of the European cultural scene. Moreover, Călin-Boroghină argues that Carmen Sylva's collection was strategic, reflecting a desire to use Japanese culture as a means of connecting Romania to the broader European elite and to show that Romania, despite its relative political and economic challenges, was culturally aligned with the major powers of the time.

Queen Elisabeth's personal engagement with *japonisme* reflected broader cultural trends in Europe, where Japanese aesthetics was seen as a means of breaking away from traditional European art forms. The queen was particularly attracted by the simplicity, elegance, and naturalism of Japanese art, which stood in contrast to the academic realism that had dominated European art for centuries.

The interest of the poetess queen in *japonisme* was undoubtedly part of the larger movement of cultural modernization in Romania, where artists, intellectuals, and the ruling elite sought to engage with international trends in art, literature, and design. Her patronage helped validate Japanese culture within the Romanian cultural landscape, which was still developing a distinct identity in the aftermath of Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1877. Moreover, the royal family's artistic taste helped Romania's intellectual and artistic circles become more aware of East Asian art and its influence, which would in turn inspire Romanian artists to incorporate similar motifs into their own works, not unlike many famous Western European counterparts. Artists such as Theodor Pallady (1871-1956) began experimenting with minimalism, landscape themes, and symbolism, all of which were inspired by Japanese aesthetics.

Carmen Sylva's engagement with Japanese culture was not limited to her personal collection. She was a fervent advocate for the appreciation of Asian art and cultures within Romanian society and

actively promoted cultural exchange and international dialogue between Romania and Japan, including supporting art exhibitions, lectures, and cultural events. As a writer and translator herself, she found particularly compelling the way in which concepts such as spirituality, mysticism, and beauty were reflected in Asian cultures overall and in Japanese culture in particular. To her *japonisme* was more than just an aesthetic trend. It represented a form of modernity and enlightenment. Carmen Sylva saw Japan's ability to maintain its cultural integrity while embracing modernization as a model for Romania, which was similarly navigating on its path toward becoming a modern European nation. The spiritual and philosophical aspects of Japanese art also appealed to the poetess in her, who was deeply interested in literature, poetry, and the symbolism of art. She believed that Japanese art had a purity and philosophical depth that could contribute to Romania's cultural renaissance. Her advocacy ultimately helped broaden the understanding of non-European cultures in Romania and made East Asian art a significant part of the intellectual and artistic discourse of the period.

In essence, the queen played a critical role in promoting *japonisme* in Romania and developing the royal collections of East Asian art. Her personal passion, cultural patronage, and intellectual engagement with Japan and other Asian cultures helped establish Romania's connection to global cultural movements, and her legacy continues to resonate in the ways that Romanian artists and intellectuals engage even today with Asian aesthetics and art history.

In conclusion, Queen Elisabeth's contribution to Romania's *japonisme* movement was far-reaching, positioning her not just as a royal patron, but also as a cultural ambassador who helped Romania engage with the wider artistic and cultural currents of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Queen and Japanese Artists

As a celebrated European writer herself, Carmen Sylva could not miss the opportunity to meet and discuss with Japanese *literati* and artists visiting Romania, as part of larger European tours. Over the years of her reign, she met and most likely carried on animated discussions with several Japanese artists.

As detailed by Edda Binder-Iijima in her 2015 chapter, "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller" (The View from Outside: Carmen Sylva in the Works of Japanese Writers)[2]

and by Irina Holca in her 2016 paper, "Romania and Japan: Real and Imaginary Encounters at the Turn of the Century,"[3] the Romanian queen met at least two of the Japanese writers who visited Romania, during her reign, journalist and historian Tokutomi Sohō (1863-1957), the renowned editor of the magazine *Kokumin no tomo* (Citizen's Friend), who undertook a European tour in 1896. Sohō was deeply involved in the social and political reforms of Japan during the late 19th century and became known for his historical novels and essays that promoted modernization while retaining elements of Japanese tradition.

Carmen Sylva's interactions with Sohō can be viewed as part of the queen's broader intellectual diplomacy to build cultural bridges between Romania and Japan. Both intellectuals were interested in fostering a deeper understanding of their respective cultures, and as artists, shared a fascination with how literature and art could play a role in national modernization and global cultural exchange.

Sohō would later write in his autobiography about the meetings with the crowned heads of Romania: "We met the famous King Carol, and, what's more, we even met his wife, known to the entire literary world of Europe under the pseudonym of Carmen Sylva. (...) At that time Romania was trying to expand its army more than befitted such a small country; its main enemy was the great Russia. (...) Back then, both Romania's and Japan's efforts must have looked like little more than an ant trying to dig through a mountain; not even together would they have been able to impress the Russians! But the ant too has gall, so this feeling of self-importance must have been good for the two little countries."[4]

The queen impressed Sohō with her knowledge of the European literary and artistic scene and he expressed admiration for her wide recognition as a *literata* and a diplomat.

Ten years later, his younger brother, novelist Tokutomi Roka (1868-1927) met with the queen as well, and mentioned the meeting in his travelogue *Junrei kikō* (Notes from a Pilgrimage, 1906).[5] As was the case with the Sohō meeting, the details of the two novelists' encounter are not recorded, although it is easy to imagine the effervescence of a conversation ranging in topics from poetry and fiction to cultural diplomacy and modernization of the two respective countries and societies. While the similarities between Japan and Romania on their path to modernization and modernity had significantly diminished after Japan's victory over Tsarist Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, there were still in 1906 sufficient parallels in the course the two countries had taken, one since

the 1868 Meiji Restoration and the other since the 1878 War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire (The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878).

Roka was clearly impressed by the sight of the "famous" river, the Danube, which he crosses on his way from Bulgaria to Romania, and that led him to include a *tanka* poem in his *Notes from a Pilgrimage*. The poem reads: *It must be destiny/ that brought me here./ To see these rainshowers/ on the famed Danube.*[6] In Bucharest, the Japanese writer finds himself dazzled by the lights and the night life: "Upon arriving in the capital, Bucharest, the lights were as bright as day, and an exhibition was taking place. Because I was in a hurry, I immediately walked through the city and arrived at the North Station. With six million inhabitants, Romania is a small country; in general, the people are neat and intelligent, while its capital, Bucharest, with its electric lamps, trams, pavements, avenues, and buildings, is particularly beautiful at night, which, in my opinion, was to be expected from the Romanian capital city, given that it has Carmen Sylva as its mother."[7]

Not only was Roka pleasantly surprised by Bucharest and mentioned the anniversary exhibition celebrating King Carol I's 40th anniversary on the throne, but he concluded "unexpectedly (…) that these pleasant impressions of the city and its people met his expectations because Romania had a mother such as Carmen Sylva. That can only mean that the queen was familiar to him, and since he doesn't use her official name, Queen Elisabeth, it is her literary and artistic persona that takes central stage and is connected to the city's modernity. A European traveler would have more likely associated that with the king's work, but [to Roka] it is the queen's influence that plays the more important role."[8] It is also interesting to note here that Roka could have been familiar with Carmen Sylva from his own literary knowledge of European literature and/or possible translations of the queen's poetry or fiction into Japanese, as well as from his brother's Sohō stories about his own previous encounter with her. One way or the other, Roka throws her name in his text with ease indicating clear familiarity and knowledge of the queen as a writer. Moreover, Roka's own understanding of the Japanese monarch as the "father" of the nation, as Emperor Meiji was constantly being presented to his subjects, projects the Romanian queen's status into that of a "mother" of her people.

Another significant encounter between Carmen Sylva and a Japanese artist was the one with famed actress and theatre pioneer,

Sada Yacco (1871-1946), a *geisha* who was a prominent figure in the *shingeki* (new theater) movement in Japan and performed in Paris, London, and New York between 1900 and 1902, gaining recognition for her dramatic skill and introducing Japanese theater to Western audiences. Her style blended traditional Japanese theater with Western influences, and she was a trailblazer in making Japanese theater known internationally.[9] Once again, the queen poetess's interest in all things Japanese must have made the encounter between the two female artists a must.

From the other side, Japanese artists and members of the Meiji intelligentsia were clearly familiar with the Romanian queen's writings and translations from Romanian folktales and literature and expressed their admiration for her in their writings. The most relevant such text was produced by the renowned author and military surgeon general Mori Ōgai (1862-1922), author of such representative works of fiction as *Maihime* (The Dancing Girl, 1890), *Vita sexualis* (1909), and *Gan* (The Wild Geese, 1911-1913). As mentioned by Irina Holca, Ōgai never met the queen, but, in his 1914 piece "Taikan shijin" (The Crowned Poets), he framed his thoughts and memories about his friendship with General Nogi Maresuke (1849-1912) with Carmen Sylva and a poem she sent to the Japanese general following his trip to Romania between July 17 and 21, in 1911, the year before his death by ritual suicide *junshi* following the passing of the Emperor Meiji.

The Japanese writer opens his piece with the following paragraph: "Since ancient times, it has been extremely rare to hear of kings or queens who are also poets. In our country, poems by emperors and members of the imperial family are handed down from generation to generation, but such examples are few in other countries. It is unique that our former, revered Emperor Meiji composed so many poems, as it is unique that his poems are recited by citizens and, in honoring the imperial virtues, are highly regarded. If one looks at other countries today, to my knowledge, there is only the Romanian Queen Carmen Sylva who can be honored as a poet. As the hearse of the late Emperor Meiji left the palace gates, General Nogi Maresuke and his wife died. General Nogi had traveled to Romania and met the Queen there. After he returned to Japan, the Queen sent him a poem she had written herself. The poem was written on paper with grass and flowers painted on it, somewhat larger and thicker compared to the colored paper commonly used in Japan. General Nogi had this poem translated by someone, but since he didn't know if the translation was accurate, he asked me to look over it again and compare it with the original, and he

had an *aide-de-camp* bring the poem to me. The translation was in prose, but since it matched the wording, I returned it without correction. In my opinion, the Queen's poem, along with that translation, should be part of General Nogi's estate."[10]

It is evident from Ōgai's text that following Nogi's visit to Romania, where he was well received both in Bucharest, as well as at the Peleș Castle, where the Romanian royals were spending the summer, a correspondence ensued between the Romanian queen and the Japanese general, which resulted in Carmen Sylva sending a poem to the celebrated army man. Binder-Iijima indicates that the queen's qift, the poem accompanied by a tablecloth which she had embroidered, were her return gift to the general's branch and leaves of the famous *momiji* Japanese maple tree pressed on paper.[11] While the queen is only briefly mentioned again at the very end of the piece, the fact that she frames the entire text is indicative of the importance she was given as not only a crowned head of the world, but also as a writer.

As Edda Binder-Iijima concludes, "Even if Carmen Sylva is not the main topic of this story, she is stylistically highlighted in the title, mentioned at the beginning and the end, and then her poetic activity makes her be the only European monarch en par with the Japanese emperor. She is the only one of the multitude of letters and other documents that Nogi received who is deemed worthy of being mentioned by name and addressed in more detail."[12]

Some of Carmen Sylva's work was also translated into Japanese, although there is no detailed record of what might have been made available in Japanese during her life or shortly after. A brief research through the digital collection of the National Diet of Japan reveals one book in Japanese published in 1911 in Tokyo, at the Seibunkan Publishing. Most likely it is the translation from English by Ohara Yoitsu (Mugen) of the volume *From Memory's Shrine: The Reminiscences of Carmen Sylva*, and bearing the Japanese title *Joō to jinsei* (Queen and Life). Currently the book is only held by one library in Japan, the Osaka Prefectural Library. There is no record of any of her poetry having been translated in book format, and the rest of the holdings currently recorded and with Japanese titles are song and waltz collections on her verses, one of the main aspects through which the queen seems to have remained better known in Japan.

That, of course, does not mean that translations via third languages, such as German, French or English would not have been done in Japan during the queen's life, and published in literary magazines.

Conclusion

Carmen Sylva's sustained engagement with Japanese culture exemplifies not only a personal aesthetic passion but also a deliberate cultural strategy that connected Romania to global artistic and intellectual movements during a pivotal time of modernization. Her deep appreciation for Japanese spirituality, symbolism, and artistic expression shaped her personal art collections, influenced Romanian cultural discourse, and fostered an early foundation for East-West literary and artistic exchange. By interacting with key figures such as Tokutomi Sohō, Tokutomi Roka, and Sada Yacco, Queen Elisabeth helped create a dynamic intercultural dialogue, reinforcing her role as both a patron of the arts and a cultural ambassador.

Moreover, Sylva's efforts transcended mere admiration for the exotic and demonstrated a nuanced understanding of Japan's own journey toward modernity—one that mirrored Romania's evolving national identity. Through her writings, patronage, and encounters with Japanese artists and intellectuals, Carmen Sylva left a legacy that bridged continents and ideologies. Her influence contributed to the shaping of a modern Romanian cultural identity that was outward-looking, cosmopolitan, and receptive to global influences. In this light, Carmen Sylva's *japonisme* was not just a reflection of a European trend, but a meaningful act of cultural positioning and intellectual engagement that continues to offer insight into early 20th-century transnational and transcultural exchanges.

NOTES

1. Several recent works deal with the topic of *japonisme*, with specific focus on Central and Eastern Europe cultures. Among them, *Japonisme in the Austro-Hungarian Empire* (Budapest: Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts, 2020), and, within the Romanian context, Radu Leca, "Staggered Diffusion: Towards a History of Romanian *Japonisme*", in *East/West: Journal of Romanian Studies,* vol 8(1), 2016, 73-88 and Steluţa Călin-Boroghină, *Un secol de colecţionism românesc de artă extrem orientală. Contribuţiile elitelor aristocratice, medicale şi artistice la istoria japonismului românesc* (A Century of Romanian Collections of Far Eastern Art: Contributions of the Aristocratic, Medical and Art Elites to the History of Romanian *Japonisme*. Oneşti: Magic Print, 2023). Călin Boroghină dedicates an entire chapter to the royal collections of Japanese and East Asian arts to whom the following section is overwhelmingly indebted.

2. Edda Binder-Iijima, "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller." In *"Ich werde noch vieles anbahnen": Carmen*

Sylva, die Schriftstellerin und erste Königin von Rumänien im Kontext ihrer Zeit. Silvia Irina Zimmermann (ed.), Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2015, 173-90.

3. Irina Holca, "Romania and Japan: Real and Imaginary Encounters at the Turn of the Century," *Annals of Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University. Linguistics, Literature*, vol. 1, 2016, 178-190.

4. Quoted in Holca, "Romania and Japan: Real and Imaginary Encounters at the Turn of the Century", 180.

5. Holca, ibid.

6. In Tokutomi Roka, *Tokutomi Roka shū* (Tokutomi Roka Anthology) in *Meiji bungaku zenshū* (Complete Works of Meiji Period Literature). Vol. 42. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1966, 166. Quoted in German translation in Binder-Iijima, "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller", 185.

7. Quoted in German translation in Binder-Iijima, "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller", 186.

8. Binder-Iijima, "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller", 187.

9. Extensive research on Sada Yacco (Sadayakko) in Leslie Downer, *Madame Sadayakko: The Geisha Who Seduced the West.* London: Review, 2003. On her European tours, see Stanca Scholz-Cionca, "Circulation: Theatrical Mobility and Its Profesionalization in the Nineteenth Century." In Peter Marx (ed.), *A Cultural History of Theatre in the Age of Empires (1800-1920)*. London: Bloomsbury, 2019, 113-133.

10. Mori Ōgai, *Mori Ōgai zenshū* (Complete Works of Mori Ōgai). Vol. 26. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 463. Quoted in German translation in Binder-Iijima, "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller", 179.

11. Binder-Iijima, "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller", 182.

12. Binder-Iijima, "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller", 183.

REFERENCES

Binder-Iijima, Edda (2015). "Der Blick von außen: Carmen Sylva in Werken japanischer Schriftsteller." (The View from Outside: Carmen Sylva in the Works of Japanese Writers), *"Ich werde noch vieles anbahnen": Carmen Sylva, die Schriftstellerin und erste Königin von Rumänien im Kontext ihrer Zeit*. ("I will initiate many things": Carmen Sylva, The Writer and First Queen of Romania in the Context of Her Time). In Silvia Irina Zimmermann (ed.), Stuttgart: Ibidem: 173–90.

Călin-Boroghină, Steluţa (2023). *Un secol de colecţionism românesc de artă extrem orientală. Contribuţiile elitelor aristocratice, medicale şi artistice la istoria japonismului românesc* (A Century of Romanian Collections of Far

Eastern Art: Contributions of the Aristocratic, Medical and Art Elites to the History of Romanian *Japonisme*). Oneşti: Magic Print.

Downer, Leslie (2003). *Madame Sadayakko: The Geisha Who Seduced the West.* London: Review.

Holca, Irina (2016). "Romania and Japan: Real and Imaginary Encounters at the Turn of the Century," *Annals of Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University. Linguistics, Literature*, vol. 1: 178-190.

Leca, Radu (2016). "Staggered Diffusion: Towards a History of Romanian *Japonisme*," *East/West: Journal of Romanian Studies*. Vol 8(1): 73-88.

Scholz-Cionca, Stanca (2019). "Circulation: Theatrical Mobility and Its Profesionalization in the Nineteenth Century," *A Cultural History of Theatre in the Age of Empires (1800-1920)*, Peter Marx (ed.), London: Bloomsbury Press, 113-133.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). *From Memory's Shrine: The Reminiscences of Carmen Sylva*. Translated from the German, by Her Majesty's desire, by her former Secretary, Edith Hopkirk. Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lippincott Company.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 107-142

Transatlantic Impressions: The Female Readership of Carmen Sylva's Writings in the United States

RAMONA MIHĂILĂ
Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Bucharest
ramona.mihaila@ucdc.ro

Introduction

Carmen Sylva, the literary pseudonym of Queen Elisabeth of Romania, received notable critical acclaim in the United States, where her poetic voice and imaginative prose were praised for their emotional depth and vivid imagery. American literary critics frequently commended her lyrical style, noting its graceful articulation of themes such as nature, love, and national identity. The uniqueness of her dual identity, as both a sovereign and a creative artist, was repeatedly emphasized in American periodicals, which highlighted the sincerity and passion evident in her work. This distinctive perspective, blending royal insight with artistic sensitivity, resonated with readers and critics alike, securing her a place within the American literary consciousness of the time.

Beyond the literary sphere, Carmen Sylva's writings significantly contributed to the cultural awareness of Romania in the United States. Through both original compositions and translations, she introduced American audiences to Romanian folklore, traditions, and values, thus fostering a greater appreciation for her native country's cultural heritage. Her efforts facilitated early forms of cultural diplomacy, promoting dialogue and mutual curiosity between Romanian and American readers. Her status as a cultural bridge was reinforced by the media portrayal of her not only as a literary figure but also as an advocate for philanthropic and social causes. American newspapers and magazines often emphasized her humanitarianism, particularly her commitment to child welfare, education, and the arts, thereby

enhancing her public image as a compassionate and progressive royal figure that leveraged her position to inspire positive change.

Moreover, Carmen Sylva's influence in the United States was supported by her literary connections and broader cultural outreach. She maintained correspondence with several American writers and intellectuals, which helped to expand the reach and understanding of her work within transatlantic literary networks. Although she did not personally visit the United States, her influence was extended through Romanian cultural envoys and representatives who organized events, exhibitions, and lectures to promote her work. These engagements facilitated a lasting cultural exchange, reinforcing her status as a prominent literary and cultural ambassador for Romania. Through a combination of artistic achievement, public engagement, and symbolic diplomacy, Carmen Sylva carved out a respected and enduring legacy in the cultural and literary imagination of the United States.

The present chapter offers a comprehensive review of Carmen Sylva's presence in American journals at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, examining the multifaceted ways in which her literary works, public persona, and philanthropic endeavors were received and represented in the United States. By surveying a broad range of periodicals—including literary magazines, cultural reviews, and general-interest newspapers—the analysis reveals how Carmen Sylva captured the attention of American audiences not only as a royal figure but also as a prolific and respected writer. The study categorizes these journalistic mentions into thematic clusters, such as critical responses to her poetry and prose, public and media perceptions of her dual role as queen and author, and references to her charitable activities and cultural advocacy. It also traces the influence of her literary network and the indirect forms of cultural exchange she fostered through translations and correspondence. In doing so, the study highlights both the depth and the diversity of her transatlantic reception and situates Carmen Sylva within a broader discourse on women writers, international literary visibility, and the intersection of art and royalty.

Silvia Irina Zimmermann observes that Carmen Sylva's writings, with their practical character and distinct cultural-political orientation, have so far escaped thorough analysis or dedicated research. Instead, most biographies have reinforced the notion that the queen avoided political involvement and focused her poetry mainly on themes of love. In contrast, her works demonstrate a deliberate and sustained effort to establish herself as a "queen-poet," consciously using

literature as a tool to serve the Romanian Crown. This calls for a reevaluation of the strikingly different portrayals of her—ranging from depictions of "genius" to accusations of "dilettantism," from the image of a "naïve" and "foreign" queen to that of a "maternal" and "socially engaged" monarch devoted to her people—as well as reconsideration of her varied placement within literary history, which has linked her to almost every major movement of her era.

This chapter examines how Carmen Sylva was received in U.S. newspapers and journals, with particular attention to her collaborations with other women writers, translators, and critics. The selection draws from over one hundred articles, many of which address aspects of the writer-queen beyond purely literary concerns, highlighting perspectives shaped by a feminine viewpoint.

American Women's Literary Responses to the Royal Pen of Sylva

During her literary peak, Queen Elizabeth of Romania—writing under the pseudonym *Carmen Sylva*—captured the attention of American readers and critics alike. Her work was widely reviewed in U.S. periodicals, with critics often praising her poetic style, vivid imagination, and emotional depth. Many noted the uniqueness of a reigning monarch producing such prolific and heartfelt literature, especially fairy tales and philosophical reflections that spoke to both children and adults. Her dual identity as both queen and writer fascinated the American public, and her fairy tales in particular were embraced as moral, charming, and rich in cultural texture. Some reviewers appreciated the mystical and folkloric elements of her writing, linking them to Romanian traditions that were still little known in the West.

Interestingly, not all the American literary critics signed their reviews, which was common in that era for short or anonymous editorial commentary. Whether from modesty or editorial custom, unsigned pieces often expressed a mix of admiration and curiosity toward Carmen Sylva's literary persona. These anonymous reviewers sometimes marveled at her ability to balance the roles of sovereign and artist, while others hinted at skepticism about royalty engaging in the literary world. Still, the overall tone was respectful and intrigued—her popularity as a writer often overshadowed political considerations, allowing her artistic voice to stand apart. Her reception in the U.S. press reinforced her international standing as more than a queen—she was a genuine cultural figure.

In her article, P.J. Popoff highlights the intriguing use of pen names among women writers, emphasizing how many female authors, including royalty like the Queen of Romania (writing as Carmen Sylva), adopted pseudonyms to navigate the literary world, which often marginalized women's voices. This strategy allowed them to publish more freely and gain credibility in male-dominated literary circles. For example, Elisabeth Gluck wrote under the name Betty Paoli, and Carmen Sylva used a poetic pseudonym that reflected her romantic and nationalistic leanings. The trend extended beyond Western Europe, as seen in the powerful, politically charged writings of Russian Countess Endoxy Rostopchin, whose poetic commentary was so influential that it alarmed the Tsar. These pen names offered not only anonymity or protection but also a creative identity that allowed women to assert intellectual authority and shape public discourse despite societal constraints (Popoff, 142).

Queen Elizabeth of Romania was a remarkably talented and industrious woman whose literary accomplishments—including novels, poems, dramas, and fairy tales—earned her international acclaim. Her latest volume of fairy tales, published simultaneously in eight countries, is just one example of her prolific output. In addition to her writing, she was a skilled painter, musician, nurse, and multilingual conversationalist, admired for her warmth and intellect. Rising as early as 4 a.m. to write, even in winter, she maintained a rigorous routine and tireless dedication to her craft. Her literary influence became so profound that one day each month in Romanian schools was devoted to reading her works—her pen ultimately wielding more influence than her royal title. ("A Real Queen's Fairy Tales. By Carmen Sylva," *Zion's Herald*, 1910; 2)

Mabie W. Hamilton discusses the fact that despite her age and fragile health, Carmen Sylva led an incredibly active and disciplined life. Her days were devoted to overseeing her many charitable institutions, writing, and managing an enormous correspondence in multiple languages. She was known for her sharp memory, warmth, and remarkable attention to detail, which further endeared her to the Romanian people. Her interactions were never superficial—she remembered conversations and faces from decades past, leaving lasting impressions on everyone she met. Her kindness, gracious manner, and approachable demeanor were balanced by a regal dignity that commanded respect and admiration.

The Queen's favorite residence was in Sinaia, a once-remote mountain village that she and King Carol transformed into a vibrant

summer resort. They first lived in a restored monastery before the completion of the German-style castle, Peleş. The castle, surrounded by flowers and open to respectful public access, symbolized the court's blend of refinement and simplicity. Life there was quiet, intellectual, and rich in cultural engagement. Carmen Sylva maintained close ties with literary and artistic circles and admired thinkers like Tolstoy and Queen Victoria. Her deep patriotism was reflected in her attire and her decision to keep the court free from excessive pomp, believing in the moral responsibility of monarchy. Through her example, she created not only a unique and hospitable royal court but also a legacy of national uplift and enduring inspiration.

Mabie Hamilton describes the "*Legends of River and Mountain*." Ten of the stories are taken from the German of Carmen Sylva, and the remaining collected from various German sources, the endeavor being to supply the voracious demand of young readers for the entertainment and interest of the unfailing story legend of the fairy. H. A. Guerber, who has already made so many collections of legends, has brought into a small volume (by the same house), illustrated by reproductions of well-known paintings, the "*Legends of the Virgin and Christ*," with special reference to literature (Hamilton, 33).

The significance and poetic sound that are well mingled in "Carmen Sylva", the pseudonym chosen by Elizabeth, Queen of Romania, for her songs and ballads of the soil, so delightfully translated by the American poet of untimely death, John Eliot Bowen, are much discussed by Annie Russell Marble (Marble, 58).

The American writer Lucretia M. Davidson (1808-1825), writes an article dedicated to the queen. Castle Peleş, located in Sinaia, serves as the favored residence of Elizabeth, Queen of Romania, who is esteemed not only as the sovereign of her kingdom but also as a beloved figure among her people due to her many natural talents and virtues. It is within this setting that she, known in the literary world as *Carmen Sylva*, finds her greatest inspiration for her creative endeavors. Nestled within a dense forest, Castle Peleş boasts a picturesque location and stands as a prime example of early German Renaissance architecture, a style that seamlessly blends with its natural surroundings. Construction of the castle commenced in 1875 and was completed in 1877, resulting in an architectural masterpiece that reflects both artistic refinement and harmony with the landscape. The Queen dedicates a significant portion of her time to literary pursuits, often beginning her work as early as 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. Her Romanian subjects hold deep admiration for her talents

and never miss an opportunity to express their love and respect for both her artistic achievements and her benevolence.

Beyond her literary contributions, she is deeply committed to the welfare of her people, striving to improve their social conditions and elevate their intellectual standards. Her dedication to humanitarian efforts was particularly evident during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, when she devoted considerable time to nursing the wounded. It was during this period that the *Elizabethan Order of Nurses* was established, reflecting her enduring commitment to public service and the well-being of her nation (Davidson, C6).

Edith Sellers writes her article by reflecting on the deep patriotism of Romania, particularly its youth, and introduces Queen Elizabeth (Carmen Sylva) as a central figure. The author recalls a visit to Romania, where they observed the Sunday military drill of young boys who were excited to learn how to defend their country. Despite their poverty, these boys were motivated by a sense of duty and pride in Romania's independence. Queen Elizabeth, known for her strong cultural and nationalistic influence, symbolizes the embodiment of this patriotism. The Queen was deeply involved in encouraging national pride and was honored for her contributions to Romanian culture and the defense of the country.

The article then contrasts Romania's intense sense of patriotism with other countries, including Switzerland and Bulgaria. It discusses how young Romanians, inspired by leaders like Queen Elizabeth, view military training as an important part of their national identity. While Romania's youth enthusiastically engage in training for the defense of their country, the broader Romanian society, including its Queen, emphasized the sacred responsibility of preserving Romania's freedom. Queen Elizabeth, through her support of the arts and sciences, also fostered a sense of national pride that transcended traditional boundaries and inspired the people to take action for their country's future.

The article concludes by highlighting the unity and determination in Montenegro, where every man is seen as a soldier. While the focus shifts to Montenegro's readiness for defense, the spirit of patriotism shared across the Balkan region ties back to Queen Elizabeth's influence in Romania. Her legacy as both a monarch and a national figure was not just limited to arts and literature but also played a key role in nurturing Romania's sense of duty and pride, symbolizing the ideal of a unified, proud nation ready to defend its sovereignty (Sellers, 272).

In *The Summer Life of the Queen of Rumania*, Zoé de Balatchano recounts her visit to Queen Elizabeth at Sinaia in 1878, just after Romania's independence. At the time, the royal family still resided in a monastery amid the scenic Carpathians, as Castle Pélès was under construction. De Balatchano vividly describes her journey through the mountains and her awe upon meeting the queen, whose presence was marked by both regal grace and warmth. Elizabeth, with her distinctive medieval-inspired attire and luminous personality, made guests feel instantly welcome. Their conversation ranged from literature to art, revealing the queen's depth, intelligence, and modesty. She was passionately involved in creative endeavors, such as illuminating manuscripts and writing poetry, drawing inspiration from her surroundings and her experiences during the war.

The Queen's life at court blended artistic passion with charitable dedication. Whether caring for the sick, nurturing artistic talent, or leading an active cultural circle at Sinaia, Elizabeth lived with purpose and empathy. Her court was vibrant yet unpretentious, and she created a sanctuary for the arts in the monastery until the completion of Castle Pélès. Despite personal tragedies—most notably the loss of her child—she channeled her sorrow into poetry and service. Her creative resilience and maternal compassion earned her the love of her people, who called her *Maica răniţilor* ("mother of the wounded"). Even as time passed and her hair turned white, Queen Elizabeth remained a passionate, thoughtful presence, ever inspired by beauty, truth, and the human spirit (Balatchano, 107).

Voices in Harmony: Women's Partnerships in Translation and Creation

It is no small praise to claim that a new poetry collection adds meaningfully to the world's literary heritage, yet *The Bard of the Dîmbovitza*—a compilation of Romanian folk songs gathered by Helene Vacaresco and translated by Carmen Sylva and Alma Strettell—deserves such recognition, admits Charles Moulton Wells. Though Vacaresco's romantic connection to Carmen Sylva's son, the Crown Prince of Romania, may color public sentiment, these verses stand on their own as hauntingly beautiful expressions of peasant life and emotion. The journey from the voices of rural Romanian girls, through the sensitive editing and translation process, into lyrical English verse is a long one, yet the soul of the songs remains intact. Their poetic power lies not only in language, but in the primal, emotional resonance they awaken. Vacaresco's dedication—living

among villagers, collecting refrains and improvisations—gives the collection an authenticity and simplicity that is both touching and profound. Many of the songs, meant to be sung with a lute or performed at spinning gatherings, possess a rhythmic, poignant charm. The tradition of spinning-songs, described vividly in Sylva's introduction, offers a glimpse into a living folk culture that is both graceful and deeply human. Beautifully published, this volume appeals equally to seasoned poetry lovers and casual readers drawn to the charm of heartfelt folklore (Moulton, 45).

Katherine de Forest remark in her memoirs that "nowhere but in Paris, it seems, could one attend an event quite like Hélène Vacaresco's *matinées littéraires*, one of which took place just a few days ago. Vacaresco, the close friend and former maid of honor to the woman Mark Twain once described as "that most charming and lovable German princess and poet, Carmen Sylva, Queen of Romania," holds a distinguished place in European literary and social circles. She is also a friend of Queen Alexandra of England and Queen Margherita of Italy, yet her greatest pride in these relationships stems from the fact that they were forged through her talent as a poet. Widely regarded as one of Europe's most brilliant conversationalists, she possesses a rare intellectual and cultural breadth. Vacaresco's unique sensibility blends the poetic dreaminess of the Slavic spirit with the clear, precise logic of the Latin mind. Her extensive literary knowledge, spanning five or six languages, is complemented by her worldly experience, gained through travel across many countries. Though her permanent residence is in Bucharest, she spends part of each year in Paris, where she hosts exclusive literary gatherings at the *Hôtel des Ministres*, her temporary home. These intimate salons, often referred to as "literary five o'clocks," bring together a remarkable assembly of distinguished personalities. The entertainment is entirely provided by poets—both men and women—who recite their own verses, making each gathering a rare and vibrant celebration of literature and conversation (De Forest, 10).

The book review published in *New York Observer and Chronicle* refers to *Kings and Queens I have known. By Helene Vacaresco. Illustrated.* The author, Helene Vacaresco, serves as a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth (Carmen Sylva) of Romania. Like her queen, she is an accomplished poet, and in the volume at hand, she presents a poetic and eloquent depiction of the influential figures of Europe. Few individuals have had the privilege of engaging with royalty as extensively as Vacaresco. Her own charismatic and captivating

personality earns her admiration wherever she goes. Moreover, her deep respect for the dignity associated with monarchy allows her to craft both a lively and accurate account of European sovereigns. The work seamlessly blends personal anecdotes and gossip, ensuring that every paragraph is engaging. The final two chapters, focusing on Pope Leo XIII and Queen Victoria, are particularly compelling, while her portrayal of William of Germany will undoubtedly pique the curiosity of readers.

Folk literature was an area where Carmen Sylva's talents particularly flourished. A.M. Williams, in his study of folk songs, recognized her contributions alongside those of Alma Strettell and Hélène Vacaresco. Williams praised their translations and discussions, emphasizing the richness of Romanian folk-song traditions within a broader European context. He noted that folk-song was the "iridescent side" of folklore, illuminating cultural truths through poetic simplicity (Williams, IIA).

One of the most celebrated literary collaborations involving Carmen Sylva was *The Bard of the Dîmbovitza*, a collection of Romanian folk songs edited by Helene Vacaresco and translated into English by Carmen Sylva and Alma Strettell. Charles Moulton Wells praised the collection for preserving the authenticity and emotional depth of rural Romanian life. Despite Vacaresco's romantic connection to the Romanian Crown Prince, the work stood on its own merits. Through this collection, the voices of peasant girls and village traditions were carried into elegant English verse, preserving the rhythm and poignancy of the original songs (Moulton, 1212).

The collection's popularity rivaled that of Edward FitzGerald's translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. Sylva not only wrote the introduction to the first edition (1892) but also deeply shaped the poems' tone and style. She asserted that these folk songs, specific to the Dîmbovița region of Romania, were born of the dramatic geography—misty mountains and plaintive plains—reflected in refrains such as: "*Across the mountains the mist hath drawn / A cov'ring of bridal white; / The plains afar make lament*". This imagery framed works like *The Soldier's Tent*, which was later set to music by Sir Hubert Parry in 1900 (Sylva, *McClure's Magazine*, 1911–1912: 3).

Details about this interesting volume are revealed by a long article, "The Bard of the Dîmboviţa" – A Testament to Romanian Soul and Song**.** *Originally published in The Critic: A Weekly Review of Literature and the Arts (Jan 9, 1892; Vol. 17, No. 516: 17).* Hélène Văcărescu, inspired by the oral traditions passed down through

generations of Romanian peasants on her father's estate, dedicated four intensive years to gathering and preserving the folk-songs that pulse with the emotional and cultural rhythms of rural life. These songs—raw, evocative, and deeply rooted in the everyday experiences of a disappearing world—capture the essence of a people bound to the land, to sorrow, and to joy in equal measure. This remarkable anthology, rendered into English verse by the collaborative efforts of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (writing under her literary pseudonym, *Carmen Sylva*) and Alma Strettell, emerges as both a literary artifact and an act of cultural preservation. Carmen Sylva's introduction to the volume paints a vivid picture of the challenges Văcărescu faced during her fieldwork—whether by quietly joining spinning circles or eavesdropping from hiding places in cornfields—to catch the ephemeral songs sung by peasant women, Romani travelers, and wandering minstrels. These were not merely songs but living expressions of rural Romanian identity.

The collection is organized thematically into sections such as *Lute-players' Songs* and *Spinning-Songs*, often framed with refrains—sometimes echoing the central themes, sometimes serving as hauntingly abstract anchors. A pervasive melancholy permeates the entire volume, giving the songs a haunting beauty. Among them, "The Dead Soldier" stands out: a poignant lament of a warrior who perishes in battle, his spirit forever restless, denied even the knowledge of whether his side emerged victorious. What makes this collection particularly striking is its authenticity and emotional immediacy. Unlike the polished refinement of conventional poetic forms, these verses retain a raw, untamed quality that speaks directly to the human heart. They are not merely transcriptions of songs, but vessels of memory, emotion, and the shared cultural consciousness of a people whose voices rarely reached the printed page. Their elemental force lies in their origins—from mouths that sang them not for fame, but from necessity, grief, and hope. The volume is further imbued with personal drama: Hélène Văcărescu's own love story with the Romanian Crown Prince—Carmen Sylva's nephew—came to a tragic end, adding a layer of poignancy and emotional complexity to the project. Carmen Sylva, despite her declining health, contributed to the translations, deepening the collaborative spirit and emotional resonance of the work. In its pages, *The Bard of the Dîmboviţa* offers more than mere poetry—it preserves a vanishing world and renders it timeless. This is a book of echoes: of voices fading but not forgotten, of love denied but immortalized, and of a culture captured at the cusp

of modernity. It stands as a significant contribution to world literature—at once historical, lyrical, and achingly human.

Laura Nixon remarks that "assessing the interest of Sylva's nineteenth-century readers is an important step when explaining her literary presence. Limited interest in her work, both from publishers and readers alike, could explain her later marginalisation. Sustained interest, however, would hint at alternative explanations, not necessarily tied to her literary productions. Advertisements provide evidence that publishers, as well as the British reading public, were interested in her work. Republishing certain volumes demonstrates a market for her work, which remained years after its initial publication. *The Bard of the Dimbovitza* is a good example in this respect. Sylva only produced the German translation of these folksongs, but this collection is included in her bibliography because it was consistently associated with her by British publishers in their promotional material. *The Bard of the Dimbovitza* received the most promotional advertising of all works connected to Sylva. Where advertising for other works was limited to a few months, this collection was advertised across a number of years." (Nixon, 98) In this respect, we can add the Advertisement 8 - No Title, from the *The Book Buyer (1867-1903);* Oct 1, 1894; 11, 9; American Periodicals, p. 460, announcing the launching of *The Bard of the Dîmboviţa*, Romanian Folk-Songs, Second Series, Collected from Peasants by Hélène Vacaresco. Translated by Carmen Sylva and Alma Strettell. With an Introduction of Carmen Sylva. Printed on hand-made paper. "The poems have the wild melancholy and the fierce simplicity of all true popular ballads, with an undertone of ghastly mystery that reminds one of the Highland second-sight and Irish fairy tales."

Alma Strettell once recounted that it was a particularly good day when Carmen Sylva, the late poet-Queen of Romania, invited her to visit in Holland to discuss an English rendering of a remarkable collection of folk songs. These songs had been discovered by the Queen's maid-of-honor and close friend, Hélène Vacaresco, among the peasants on her father's estates. The meeting came about through the composer Auguste Bungert, who had previously set some of the Queen's own lyrics to music—lyrics Strettell had already translated into English.

It was arranged that they would meet at a small seaside resort in Holland, where the Queen was staying with her brother, the Prince of Wied, and his family. The journey from England was short, but for Strettell the country felt unfamiliar in more ways than one. She arrived

in the evening, brought by Bungert from the steamer to the modest chalet where the royal party was lodged. At the top of the steps stood Carmen Sylva, tall, lovely, and gracious in white. Their greeting nearly ended in mishap when Strettell's attempt to curtsey and kiss the Queen's hand—complicated by her position on the steps—caused them both to almost lose their balance. The awkward moment dissolved into warm informality, and the Queen asked her brother to escort Strettell to the nearby small hotel reserved for extra guests.

A dark wood separated the chalet from the hotel, and it was impossible to maintain formality while stumbling with a prince over unseen tree roots. This easy tone characterized the rest of Strettell's visit. She lunched with the Queen and the Vacaresco sisters, noting with amusement how the Queen cheerfully permitted them to gnaw pigeon bones, remarking that "Queen Victoria allows these liberties at Balmoral; I think we may do so here!" Strettell felt even more at ease when the Queen asked her to teach her to swim in the rough waters of the North Sea—a task made more daunting by their difference in height.

Despite such lighthearted moments, their time together was largely devoted to serious literary work. On sunny mornings the Queen would gather her guests on the sand dunes and read aloud new lyrics she had composed, her rich voice carrying over the sea breeze. Local children in quaint dress would occasionally approach with flowers or shy greetings, to which the Queen responded with kindness, sometimes inviting them to sing their own peasant songs.

Eventually, the discussion turned to the Romanian folk songs collected by Hélène Vacaresco, who explained the difficulty of separating the words from their traditional chants, often having to listen to peasants sing them at work, during celebrations, or at weddings and funerals. The songs were so unusual in style that both women suspected they were the legacy of an unknown poet whose influence persisted in the district's oral tradition, much as Tuscan *rispetti* retained echoes of medieval poetry.

Strettell had already read the Queen's German translation of the songs and her own attempt at rendering them into English. While the Queen's English was excellent for a non-native speaker, Strettell realized that it lacked the poetic precision the task required. Telling the Queen this truth seemed daunting, but encouragement came from a loyal lady-in-waiting, who urged her to be candid, insisting that even great talents must not be shielded from criticism.

The opportunity presented itself when the Queen asked Strettell to prepare—immediately before lunch—an English version of a song

recently set to music by Bungert, as her own version did not fit the composition. Strettell complied successfully, prompting the Queen to say with generous spontaneity: “I see! I give you carte blanche, Miss Strettell—revise my translations or rewrite them as you think best.” The following summer, during the Queen’s visit to England, Strettell met her in Llandudno, Wales, and presented the completed volume. The Queen approved it, and in the following year *The Bard of the Dîmbovitza* was published, quickly gaining recognition in both England and America. By then, the two women had become friends, and Strettell might have accompanied the Queen to Romania had she not married instead.

Later, Strettell acted as the Queen’s companion in London following her visit to Balmoral, arranging meetings with Sir Henry Irving and Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the latter of whom considered producing one of the Queen’s plays, though it was ultimately deemed too tragic for English tastes. She also introduced her to the studios of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema and George Frederic Watts, where the Queen found an unexpected kinship with Watts, lingering so long that they nearly missed her train to Germany.

At Victoria Station, a crowd gathered to see her off, among them a working man who never failed to greet her with a posy of flowers. As the train began to move, the Queen called out to Strettell: “Remember, I am always in Romania.” Strettell would never take up that invitation, nor wander with her friend through the forests surrounding the beloved Castle of Sinaia, which the Queen had so often described (Harrison, Alma G.V., 7).

Shared Pages: Women, Critique, and Literary Collaboration

Carmen Sylva garnered notable attention in 19th-century American periodicals, reflecting a growing interest in European royal authorship and transnational literary culture. U.S. magazines and literary journals frequently engaged with her poetry and prose, often framing her work within the context of exoticism and romantic nationalism. Critics appreciated her lyrical style and emotional depth, though American reviewers sometimes viewed her writings through the lens of her aristocratic status, which colored their interpretations and expectations. This fascination with Carmen Sylva highlighted broader 19th-century American curiosity about European literary figures who bridged the worlds of royalty and art.

Literary criticism in U.S. periodicals during this era tended to emphasize Carmen Sylva's unique voice as a female monarch-turned-writer, exploring how her regal background influenced the themes of melancholy, nature, and spirituality in her work. While some reviewers praised her for bringing a refined European sensibility to American readers, others debated the literary merit of her contributions, oscillating between admiration and skepticism. Her writings were often discussed in relation to contemporary trends in poetry and romantic literature, situating her within transatlantic dialogues about gender, authorship, and cultural identity. Overall, Carmen Sylva's reception in 19th-century American literary criticism reveals the complexities of engaging with a royal author outside traditional national and class boundaries.

Helen Mckerlie presents a biographical analysis of Queen Elisabeth's life and works, beginning with the assertion that in the opening lines of her poetry collection *Meine Ruh (My Peace)*, Carmen Sylva explains the origins of her self-chosen name. 'Carmen,' meaning song, symbolizes the source of her joy and tranquility, while 'Sylva,' referring to the woods, reflects the place where she, amidst the birds, learned to sing. She further reveals that the "contents of the volume are her readers"; the legends, thoughts, and emotions within the work are not entirely hers, but belong to the world. In her diary, she expresses a desire to write in such a way that "each one might feel he had written it himself." While Sylva encourages readers to overlook her personal identity within her works, a subtle temptation persists after reading her poetry. Even if readers follow her suggestion to dismiss her personality, either through indifference or obligation, they are often drawn to seek a deeper understanding of the remarkable and harmonious voice of the German woods' great songstress (Mckerlie, 178).

The American-born opera singer who reinvented herself as a journalist and author, Blanche Roosevelt (1853 - 1898), spent much of her career in Europe, where she moved with ease through salons and royal courts, forging connections with prominent artists, writers, and intellectuals of her day. Among the figures who fascinated her was Carmen Sylva, whose poetry, prose, and translations were celebrated across the continent. Carmen Sylva often engaged in collaborative projects with other women writers, offering a rare example of female literary solidarity in a period when women's voices were still struggling for recognition. Together or in parallel, these two figures embodied a transnational network of women who used art, literature, and translation to bridge cultures and expand the boundaries of female authorship.

In her sketch of the life of "Elizabeth of Romania" (Carmen Sylva), advertised in "Library" *Once a Week: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, 1891, Blanche Roosevelt tells a curious story of the first meeting between the queen and her husband. The gifted princess, while visiting the Court at Berlin, came tripping hurriedly down the grand stairway one day, when suddenly she stumbled and-fell blushing into the arms of an utter stranger, Prince Charles, afterwards King of Romania. Carmen Sylva now confesses that she loved him at first sight. One of the books by Roosevelt, published posthumously, included *Elisabeth of Roumania – a study* (*Carmen Sylva*) (1891).

An article reports about "A New Volume in Casell's Blue Library", a novel *Edleen Vaughan; Or, Paths of Peril*, by Carmen Sylva (Queen of Romania), "a tenderness and charm pervade "Carmen Sylva's" writings that commend them to mothers as well as to their daughters. "Edleen Vaughan" had both of these qualities, and at the same time it has more, and will do much to enhance the author's reputation" ("Advertisement 5 -- No Title," 1891, 19).

Minot Vredenburgh explains how Carmen Sylva was not only a distinguished writer but also a deeply philosophical thinker whose moral reflections, particularly on the themes of reincarnation and karma, align closely with Theosophical teachings. Born a German princess and later Queen of Romania, she used her literary platform to explore profound spiritual concepts. Her essays in *Geflüsterte Worte* (*Whispered Words*), particularly in the piece titled *Reinheit* (*Purity*), reflect a strong belief in the soul's journey through multiple lives. She considered reincarnation a natural law of human development, where each soul progresses through various incarnations, evolving morally and spiritually. Her reflections suggest that human beings may be responsible for choosing their own earthly conditions—such as family and life circumstances—based on their past actions, thus connecting to the law of karma. Sylva's view that suffering and hardship may be self-imposed for the soul's purification underscores a compassionate but morally accountable understanding of human life.

Her writings further emphasized the importance of not judging others, as one cannot know another's soul history or divine potential. She proposed that love, especially the profound connections between souls, transcends physical lifetimes and is rekindled across incarnations, forming karmic bonds that underlie familial and intimate relationships. By suggesting that roles such as king or servant may be exchanged across lifetimes, she challenged rigid social hierarchies and class divisions, promoting spiritual equality and humility. Her

reflections on past lives, personal transformation, and soul evolution resonate with universal spiritual values and mirror Theosophical ideals. Through her poetic and philosophical prose, Carmen Sylva made significant contributions to cross-cultural spiritual discourse, offering American and European audiences a unique blend of Christian compassion and Eastern-inspired metaphysical insights. (Vredenburgh, 27).

An article signed with 2 pseudonyms, Aunt Edythe, Aunt Esther, describes the fairy tales written by the queen. *The Fairy Tales of a Queen* introduces the enchanting world of Queen Elizabeth of Romania, who wrote under the pen name "Carmen Sylva." This beloved monarch created a collection of fairy tales for Romanian schoolchildren, and her stories have delighted young readers worldwide. Her tales, featuring characters like little Hans and the brave Arnold, transport readers into a world of adventure and magic. Beyond her fairy tales, the most poignant story is the account of her childhood, where, growing up in a castle without modern conveniences like electricity, she formed deep connections with nature. As a young princess, she found joy in feeding birds, talking to blind-worms, and wearing glow-worms in her hair as if they were diamonds. This deep empathy for nature and its creatures shaped her into the kind and beloved Queen she became.

In *The Bees of Loma-Land*, the focus shifts to the fascinating world of bees, as observed by children at the Raja Yoga School. These bees, known for their preference for purple flowers, are presented as creatures of great wisdom and order, with a life regulated by remarkable laws. The story alludes to the belief that bees were brought to Earth by Wise Ones to teach humanity valuable lessons in industriousness, punctuality, and brotherhood. The narrative emphasizes how ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptians and Greeks, revered bees, recognizing their significance. The final tale, *The Prisoner's Mouse*, tells of a prisoner who formed a bond with a mouse during his time in jail. After his release, the mouse followed him, a symbol of the unexpected connections that can form even in the most unlikely circumstances. Together, these stories convey the importance of compassion, order, and unexpected companionship in life (Aunt Edythe, Aunt Esther, 7).

The poem, "Couronne Marine" (in French) *Marine Crown*, expresses a deep sense of sorrow and longing as the speaker mourns their deceased lover. They have cast flowers into the fierce sea, where their beloved rests at the ocean's depths. The sea is asked to be gentle,

to cradle the lover's dreams and grant eternal peace, while the speaker remains anchored to the shore, unable to join their love in the ocean's depths. The poem evokes themes of loss, separation, and the power of nature as a medium for emotional expression, with the sea serving as both a place of rest and an unattainable distance for the speaker. Sylva, Carmen (Sylva, 54).

The poem "My Three Friends," translated from the German by Mary Morgan, pseudonym Gowan Lea (1845-1930), explores the deep bond between the speaker, nature (symbolized by the Wood and the Rhine), and their own creative expression through songs. The opening stanza paints an intimate picture of harmony, where the speaker, the forest, and the river coexist as companions, sharing thoughts, dreams, and melodies under the gentle moonlight. This suggests a profound unity between the poet's inner world and the natural environment, where creativity flows as naturally as the river itself. The tone is serene and nostalgic, emphasizing the peace and inspiration derived from this close relationship with nature.

However, the poem takes a turn when the speaker is called away by fate to settle in a distant land, the East, creating a poignant tension between longing and duty. The Wood and the Rhine resist leaving, representing the rootedness and stability of the speaker's original home and source of inspiration. Yet, even separated from the physical place, the speaker finds solace in the enduring presence of their songs, which seem to follow and comfort them in the new home. This ending conveys that creative spirit transcends geography—though one may leave their homeland, their art remains a faithful companion, bridging distance and sustaining identity (Sylva, 64).

In the poem *Gypsy Song*, Carmen Sylva evokes a profound sense of sorrow and longing. The speaker, portrayed as a gypsy queen, laments the persistent absence of a beloved whose presence is missing from every treasured part of her world. Through vivid imagery, she describes familiar settings—the path that leads to the plains, the blossoming garden, the murmuring brook, and the doorstep where she spins her thread and sings—all infused with natural beauty and gentle life. Yet, despite their romantic allure, these places are haunted by his absence. He does not tread the well-worn paths, he does not listen to her song, and he shares in none of her daily joys (Sylva, 187). The poem's emotional climax emerges in the final stanza, where the speaker confesses her quiet desperation. She gazes out the window, consumed by dreams and hopes for a love that would give life meaning—or take it away. Yet her beloved neither returns nor dies,

leaving her in a state of suspended sorrow. The repetition of phrases like “he... not” in each stanza emphasizes the echoing silence left by his absence, highlighting the depth of her unreciprocated devotion and emotional paralysis.

This deep emotional sensibility finds resonance in the broader cultural and historical landscape of Romania, particularly in its capital, Bucharest. A vibrant and multicultural city, Bucharest has long been home to a population of around 250,000 people of varied nationalities. The city’s character reflects a blend of Roman, Greek, Oriental, and Romani (Gypsy) influences, shaped by centuries of foreign domination and cultural exchange. Romania, once a contested region, achieved independence in 1878 and was declared a kingdom in 1881. King Carol I and Queen Elisabeth (Carmen Sylva) were widely admired for their dignity, cultural engagement, and compassion toward the people.

Bucharest’s urban landscape presents a striking contrast. Alongside elegant royal buildings and boulevards like the Calea Victoriei, and picturesque parks such as the Cişmigiu, are modest homes and neighborhoods still bearing scars from a devastating earthquake a century ago. The city pulsates with social activity—its lively cafés and fashionably dressed citizens earning it comparisons to Paris—yet beneath this cosmopolitan sheen lies a reality of hardship. Social divisions persist, as seen in the lives of governesses struggling to maintain dignity amid limited opportunity, and in the lingering effects of class systems despite the abolition of slavery.

Religion plays a pivotal role in Bucharest’s cultural identity. Numerous churches of Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Jewish faiths shape the spiritual life of the city. The Metropolitan Church, housing revered religious relics, serves as a center of devotion, testifying to the enduring influence of religious tradition.

Charity and education are equally integral to Romanian society. Institutions like the Elena Doamna Orphanage, founded by Dr. Davila and supported by the royal family, offer not only shelter and schooling but also a means for orphaned girls to find respectable marriages. This institution exemplifies the blend of modern humanitarian values and traditional social expectations that characterize Romania’s transition into modernity (Robinson, 73).

In both Carmen Sylva’s poetry and Bucharest’s historical reality, we witness an interplay of beauty and sorrow, tradition and change. Her literary voice, echoing the personal and national longing for

connection and meaning, resonates deeply within Romania's evolving cultural narrative.

Elizabeth Iore North (1853-1931) analyses how Queen Elisabeth is constantly busy with the many demands that are the result of her success. She often puts a touch of fancy, of fairyland, in her illustrations, and in Carmen Sylva's "Fairy Tales" her love of the dainty mysteries of elves and fays has free expression. Her work appears in "Harper's" especially, but is not confined to the issues from that press (North, 271).

The American author Esther Birdsall recounts a memorable summer visit to Sinaia, a mountain resort in Romania favored by the royal court and wealthy locals. After spending time near Constantinople, they traveled through Romania, meeting a young musician connected to Queen Elizabeth of Romania, also known as Carmen Sylva. Through a letter of introduction, the group was invited to tea at the Queen's castle. Despite initial anxiety about the formalities and etiquette, they were warmly welcomed by the gracious and accomplished queen, who personally engaged with them and shared her love of the Carpathians, likening them to California's Yosemite.

The tea party was a refined and intimate affair, featuring simple English-style refreshments and lively conversation in French and English with other guests. The queen later entertained them with Romanian folk songs she composed. The visit left a lasting impression on the narrator, who treasures a signed photograph from the queen inscribed "In fairyland." The queen's life was marked by tragedy and divided loyalties, yet her artistic and personal grace brought joy far beyond her troubled existence.

The narrative concludes by reflecting on the unique charm of California holidays, illustrated by a vibrant, open-air Christmas celebration in Berkeley. The event featured a historic sled dog, Baldy of Nome, symbolizing bravery and tradition as he brought festive cheer to children. The author cherishes the deep cultural heritage and natural beauty of California, affirming that home celebrations, especially in a place as rich and varied as California, hold the most heartfelt meaning (Darling, 47).

The English composer and pianist, Cecile Hartog (1857–1940), talks about Elizabeth, queen of Romania was for some time the queen of the Félibres, and has taken a vivid interest in the movement. She has herself contributed, under her nom de guerre of Carmen Sylva, many charming poems and stories to the Provencal literature. The movement now flourishes in four provinces (Provence, Catalonia,

Aquitaine and Languedoc) where the Félibrige has taken the form of a large academy. Each province has a maintenance presided over by a syndicate. Félibrige was a literary and cultural association founded in 1854 by Frédéric Mistral and other Provençal writers. Its primary goal was to defend and promote the Occitan language (also known as the langue d'Oc) and its rich literary tradition. Mistral, who later won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1904, played a crucial role in revitalizing the language and culture of southern France. The Félibrige movement was instrumental in preserving Occitan literature, folklore, and traditions. It also contributed to the standardization of the language and encouraged its use in poetry, prose, and even everyday life. The association still exists today and continues its mission of cultural preservation and promotion (Hartog, 203).

Edith Heyer discusses in an article about Queen Elizabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva) Portrait Bust by Henry H. Kitson, (1863? – 1947), an English-American artist who sculpted many representations of American military heroes. The queen knighted him after he sculpted a marble bust of her in the early 1900s (Heyer, 6).

Susan Hayes Ward reviews the poems printed during the years 1885 and 1886. Among their authors is a long line of English poets, including such names as Tennyson, Lang, Dobson, Gosse, Marston, Locker, Stevenson, Graham R. Thomson, whom we now know as Mrs. Marriott, and Charles and Eric Mackay, not to mention the Romanian poet and queen, "Carmen Sylva" (Ward, 1420).

The German poet, Johanna (Voigt) Ambrosjus (1854–1939), also dedicated Carmen Sylva a poem that explores themes of idealized beauty, love, and the transcendence of earthly existence through the speaker's admiration for a woman who remains unseen, yet whose beauty is imagined as a harmonious fusion of both the celestial and terrestrial realms. The speaker's devotion to this woman seems to be rooted in the perception of her as an epitome of perfection, so beautiful that she transcends the physical world. The poem is a celebration of beauty in its most elevated form, presented as a divine force that bridges the gap between the earthly and the spiritual. The speaker's emotional reaction suggests that the pursuit or admiration of such beauty—whether real or imagined—holds a transformative power, elevating the speaker beyond the mundane into a space where beauty itself becomes a force for spiritual contemplation and awe (Ambrosjus, 7).

The American poet Emma Lazarus (1849–1887), author of poetry, prose, and translations, as well as an activist for Jewish and Georgist

creeds, dedicated the poem *To Carmen Sylva*, as an homage and a plea. Written to Queen Elisabeth of Romania, the work weaves together biblical allusions, national imagery, and a personal appeal for justice. Lazarus frames her poetic voice as yearning for the prophetic power of David's harp or Isaiah's utterance—suggesting that only a divinely inspired song could bridge the distance between poet and queen. By invoking such sacred and powerful precedents, she positions her request as part of a moral and spiritual tradition, not merely a personal entreaty.

The poem's middle stanzas paint Carmen Sylva as a ruler and artist of rare sensibility, crowned not only by political authority but also by genius and sorrow. Lazarus evokes the landscapes and rivers of Romania, imbuing them with mythic life and tying them to the queen's identity. Yet this praise is not without purpose—it creates a moral contrast between the queen's celebrated maternal role toward her people and the plight of a single "son" left unrecognized and unrewarded. Here, Lazarus uses maternal imagery to appeal to both compassion and moral duty, highlighting the queen's symbolic motherhood against the suffering of an excluded figure.

The closing stanzas sharpen the poem into a call for action. The "son" is not just an individual but a representative of a marginalized group—likely the Jewish population of Romania, whose civil rights were still limited despite the nation's liberation from Ottoman control. By aligning this cause with biblical heritage, Romanian national pride, and Christian sacrifice ("His brother—Christ!"), Lazarus builds an argument that transcends religious and political boundaries. In doing so, *To Carmen Sylva* becomes not merely a personal address to a fellow woman writer, but a powerful intersection of art, diplomacy, and advocacy, urging a queen-poet to act in the spirit of both her art and her reign (Lazarus, 923).

Helen Zimmern (1846–1934) was a pivotal cultural mediator in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Born in Hamburg and later naturalized as British, she devoted her career to introducing English-speaking audiences to the literature, philosophy, and art of continental Europe. Zimmern's translations included major figures such as Nietzsche, Lessing, and Dante, and she was also an astute critic and essayist in her own right. She often acted as a bridge between national literatures, helping to contextualize European works for a British readership without losing their original nuance. This work was not merely linguistic—it was interpretive and curatorial, shaping how authors were received in the Anglophone world.

Her career fits squarely into the network of women—like Blanche Roosevelt, Carmen Sylva, and Natalie von Stackelberg—who were active in the overlapping worlds of authorship, translation, and literary criticism at a time when such roles gave women a form of cultural influence otherwise denied them in formal politics. Zimmern's work illustrates how translation could also be a form of advocacy, fostering intellectual exchange across borders.

Her essay, "Carmen Sylva, Queen of Roumania", explains that Elisabeth was known for her artistic talents, compassion, and strong character. Raised in a modest, thoughtful household, she received a broad and practical education, excelling in languages, music, poetry, and even domestic skills like cooking and sewing. Her upbringing was marked by personal tragedy—illness and death in the family—which nurtured her empathy and independence.

From a young age, she showed a deep love of nature, learning, and helping others, often playing and even teaching local village children. Her strong imagination and poetic spirit earned her the name Carmen Sylva, meaning "Song of the Forest." Despite attempts by her mother to keep her grounded in realism, she secretly wrote poetry and read fiction. As queen, she brought a warm, human touch to the Romanian court, contrasting with the austere nature of her husband. Her background gave her a genuine connection to ordinary people, and her charm, intellect, and generous spirit earned her widespread admiration. Her love for both her homeland by birth and her adopted Romanian nation was reflected in her literary and humanitarian work (Zimmern, 524).

The life of Carmen Sylva stands out among that of queens, not because of her royal status, but because she would have been an extraordinary woman even without a crown. Her story, as recounted by Baroness Stackelberg, is full of charm and spirit—like the time she ran away as a child to attend school with the bailiff's children, showing early signs of her poetic and democratic nature. She began writing poetry at the age of ten and ambitiously started a novel by twelve. Driven by a deep curiosity and a hunger for knowledge, she dedicated herself to learning and succeeded in passing demanding academic exams. Natalie, Freiin (Baroness) von Stackelberg — usually given simply as Natalie (Baroness) Stackelberg — is the author of a widely circulated 1890 biography of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva) titled *The Life of Carmen Sylva (Queen of Roumania)*. The book was originally written in German (often given under a title like *Aus dem Leben Carmen Sylvas*) and appeared in

English translations and reprints in the late 19th century. Stackelberg's life-and-letters approach frames Carmen Sylva not only as a sovereign but as a cultivated woman of letters whose poetry, translations, and salon culture intersected with European literary circles. Because Stackelberg wrote from a late-Victorian continental perspective, her biography mixes affectionate reminiscence, anecdote, and cultural interpretation—useful for understanding how Carmen Sylva was publicly imagined at the time, though modern readers should read it alongside critical scholarship for context and bias. Carmen Sylva's intellect was as impressive as her heart. She mastered multiple subjects—languages, history, literature, philosophy, and economics—and could confidently engage in conversation with even the brightest college sophomores in the intellectual hubs of the world, including those near Boston (*Michigan Farmer*, 6).

Conclusions

The transnational literary presence of Carmen Sylva, Queen Elisabeth of Romania, offers a striking example of how European royal authorship both captivated and challenged 19th-century American literary culture. Her reception in U.S. periodicals was shaped by a fascination with the intersection of monarchy and artistry, a pairing that lent her work an aura of romantic nationalism and exoticism. American reviewers consistently engaged with the tension between her aristocratic identity and her poetic voice, alternately praising the refinement and emotional depth of her prose and poetry while questioning whether her royal position colored her sincerity or artistic independence. This dual perception placed her in a unique position within the broader literary landscape: she was both an admired artist and an emblem of the European court, a figure whose creative authority was as much personal as it was symbolic.

The American engagement with Carmen Sylva's work mirrored the wider cultural curiosity about European royalty as participants in intellectual and artistic exchange, rather than as distant political figures. Through collaborations with other women writers, translators, and critics—figures like Blanche Roosevelt, Helen Zimmern, and Natalie von Stackelberg—she became part of a transnational network of female authorship. These partnerships and mutual endorsements reinforced her identity as more than a solitary royal voice; they placed her in dialogue with a community of women who navigated literary culture as a space for cross-border solidarity and influence. Whether

through her fairy tales for Romanian schoolchildren, her philosophical reflections on reincarnation and karma, or her richly symbolic poetry, Carmen Sylva positioned her art as a medium for cultural diplomacy, linking Romanian heritage to broader European and even global spiritual and literary movements.

In the American literary imagination, her work resonated with contemporary debates about gender, authorship, and national identity. Critics often read her themes of melancholy, nature, and spirituality as reflections of a monarch's inner life shaped by both privilege and loss, while her ventures into folkloric and philosophical writing aligned her with trends in romantic and symbolist literature. At the same time, the framing of her work in U.S. magazines—whether in reviews, biographical sketches, or translations—underscored the ways in which cultural gatekeepers mediated European voices for American audiences. This process was deeply embedded in the late 19th-century transatlantic literary marketplace, where exoticism could be both a point of appeal and a lens of distortion.

Ultimately, Carmen Sylva's American reception reveals the complexity of engaging with royal authorship in a democratizing literary culture. Her artistry was inextricable from her political and cultural identity, allowing her to serve as both a cultural emissary for Romania and a participant in broader European intellectual currents. By bridging worlds—courtly and common, national and transnational, personal and philosophical—she exemplified the possibilities of literature as a vehicle for crossing social and geographical boundaries. In this way, her career anticipated later developments in global literary culture, where questions of authorship, identity, and cultural translation remain central to understanding how voices travel, transform, and endure beyond their native contexts.

REFERENCES

Ambrosjus, Johanna (1904). "To Carmen Sylva," *New Century Path (1903-1907)*; Mar 13; 7, 18; *American Periodicals*, 7.

Aunt Edythe, Aunt Esther (1904). "The Children's Hour: The Fairy Tales of a Queen. The Bees of Loma-Land, The Prisoner's Mouse," *New Century Path (1903-1907);* Jan 17; 7, 10; *American Periodicals*, 15.

Balatchano, Zoe De (1902). "The Summer Life of Queen of Rumania," *Century Illustrated Magazine (1881-1906);* May; LXIV; *American Periodicals*, 107.

Darling, Esther Birdsall (1930). “Holidays,” *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine (1868-1935)*; Feb; Volume 88, Number 2; *American Periodicals*, 47.

Davidson, Lucretia M. (1900). “Carmen Sylva.: The Gifted Queen Elizabeth of Romania and Her Literary Work,” *Detroit Free Press (1858-1922);* Nov 18; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Detroit Free Press, C6.

Forest, Katharine De (1902). “Recent Happenings in Paris,” *Harper’s Bazaar (1867-1912);* Nov; 36, 11; *American Periodicals*, 10.

Harrison, Alma G.V. (1908). “Days with Carmen Sylva,” *The Christian Science Monitor (Current file); Jul 25, 1993; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Christian Science Monitor*: 7.

Hartog, Cecile (1894). “Poets of Provence,” *Littell’s Living Age (1844-1896);* Dec 1; 203, 2630; *American Periodicals*, 562.

Heyer, Edith (1902). “An Old World City-Assisi,” *The Art Interchange (1883-1904);* Jun 1, 1902; 48, 6; *American Periodicals*, 133.

Lazarus, Emma (1888). “To Carmen Sylva: (The Last Poem of Emma Lazarus),” *Century Illustrated Magazine (1881-1906)*; Apr; XXXV, 6; *American Periodicals*, 923.

Marble, Annie Russell (1930). “Pseudonyms and Sobriquets,” *The Bookman; a Review of Books and Life (1895-1933);* Mar; 71, 1; *American Periodicals*, 58.

Mckerlie, Helen G. (1888). “Elizabeth: Queen of Roumania,” *Littell’s Living Age (1844-1896)*; Jul 28; 178, 2300; *American Periodicals*, 220.

Moulton, Wells, Charles (1892). “Books and Authors: Recent Books of Verse-I,” *Christian Union (1870-1893)*; Jun 18, 45, 25; *American Periodicals*, 1212.

Nixon, Laura Elizabeth (2014). The ‘British’ Carmen Sylva: Recuperating a German-Romanian Writer. University of Nottingham, Ph.D. thesis. Nottingham ePrints
https://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/13946/1/Laura_Nixon_-_PhD_thesis.pdf

North, Elizabeth Iore (1904). “Women Illustrators of Child Life,” *Outlook (1893-1924)*; Oct 1; *American Periodicals*, 271.

Popoff, P. J. (1886). “Concerning Female Authors,” *The Critic*: 138.

Robinson, Mary Gay (1895). “Bucharest and Roumania,” *New York Observer and Chronicle* (1833–1912); Dec 5; 73, 49; *American Periodicals*, 865.

Sellers, Edith (1912). “Patriotism Here and Elsewhere,” *The Living Age (1897-1941)*; Jan 20, 1912; 272, 3524; *American Periodicals*, 155.

Sylva, Carmen (1903). “Couronne marine,” *Smart Set (1900-1923)*; Jan 1; 9, 1; *American Periodicals*, 54.

Sylva Carmen (1888). “My Three Friends. Translated from the German by Mary Morgan (Gowan Lea). *The Open Court, a Quarterly Magazine. Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science...*Nov 15; 2, 64; *American Periodicals*, 1315.

Sylva, Carmen (1890). “Gypsy Song,” *Little’s Living Age* (1844–1896); Oct 4; 187, 2414; *American Periodicals*, 2.

Vredenburgh, Minot (1924). “Thoughts of Carmen Sylva on Reincarnation,” *The Theosophical Path (1911-1935)*; Aug 1; 27, 2; *American Periodicals*, 150.

Ward, Susan Hayes (1908). “Poetry,” *The Independent ... Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, His...*Dec 3, 19; 65, 3131; *American Periodicals*, 1420.

Williams, A. M. (1895). “Studies on Folk-Song and Popular Poetry,” *The Critic*, Jul 13, IIA.

Zimmern, Helen (1884). “Carmen Sylva, Queen of Roumania,” *Century Illustrated Magazine (1881-1906)*; Aug; XXVIII, 4; *American Periodicals*, 524.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2013). *Carmen Sylva – The Poet Queen: Literature in the Service of the Crown*. Translated by Monica Livia Grigore; with a preface by His Royal Highness Prince Radu of Romania. Bucharest: All.

*** (1905). “A Glimpse of the Book Table: Many Volumes from Harper & Brothers. *New York Observer and Chronicle (1833-1912)*; Sep 28; 83, 39; *American Periodicals*, 405.

*** (1901). “A Real Queen’s Fairy Tales. By Carmen Sylva,” *Zion’s Herald (1868-1910)*; Dec 4; 79, 49; *American Periodicals*, Davis &Co.: Chicago, 2.

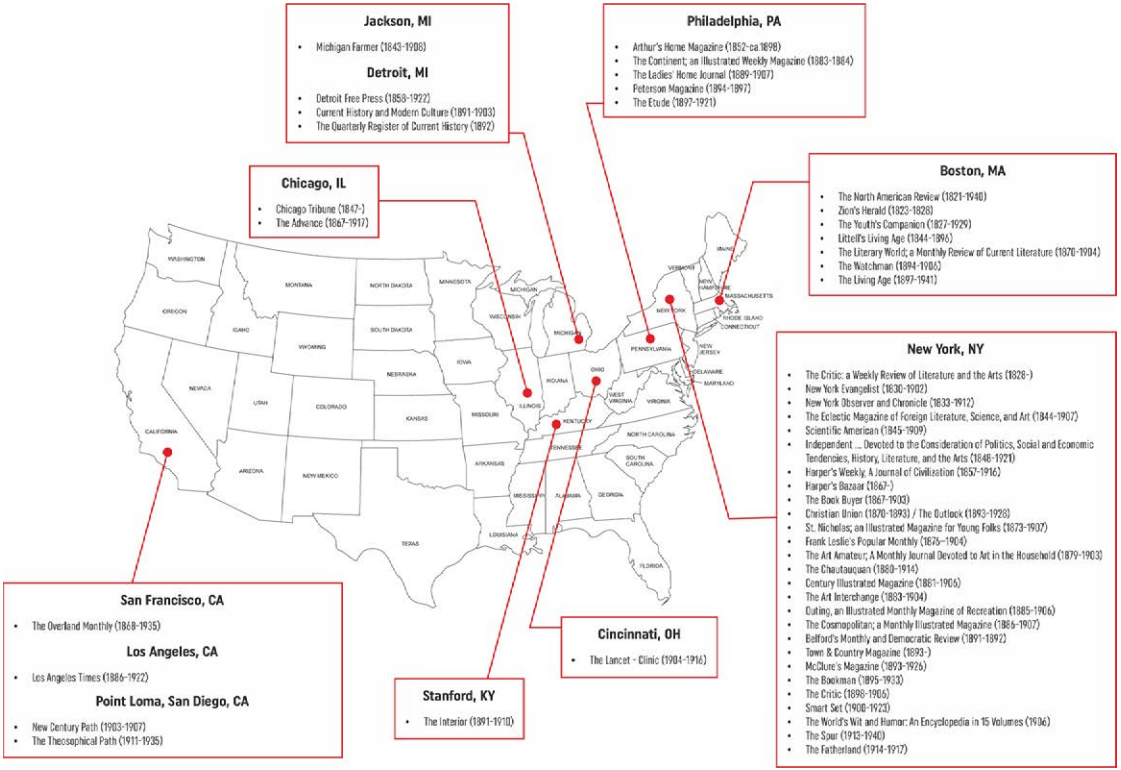
*** (1894). Avertisement 8 - No Title. *The Book Buyer (1867-1903)*; Oct 1; 11, 9; *American Periodicals*, 460.

*** (1891). “Advertisement 5 - No Title,” *Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)*; Nov., 19, 2; *American Periodicals*, xxiv.

*** (1891). “Library,” *Once a Week: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper (1889-1895)*; Jul 7; 7, 12; American Periodicals, 6.

*** (1890). “Carmen Sylva, the Poet-Queen,” *Michigan Farmer (1843-1908)*; Sep 6, 21, 36; 6

*** (1888). *The Open Court, a Quarterly Magazine. Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science...*Nov 15, 2, 64; *American Periodicals*, 1315.


Jackson, MI
Michigan Farmer (1843-1908)
Detroit, MI
Detroit Free Press (1858-1922)
Current History and Modern Culture (1891-1903)
The Quarterly Register of Current History (1892)
Philadelphia, PA
Arthur's Home Magazine (1852-ca 1898)
The Continent; an Illustrated Weekly Magazine (1883-1884)
The Ladies' Home Journal (1889-1907)
Peterson Magazine (1894-1897)
The Etude (1897-1921)
Chicago, IL
Chicago Tribune (1847-)
The Advance (1867-1917)
Boston, MA
The North American Review (1821-1940)
Zion's Herald (1823-1828)
The Youth's Companion (1827-1929)
Littell's Living Age (1844-1896)
The Literary World; a Monthly Review of Current Literature (1870-1904)
The Watchman (1894-1908)
The Living Age (1897-1941)
New York, NY
The Critic: a Weekly Review of Literature and the Arts (1828-)
New York Evangelist (1830-1902)
New York Observer and Chronicle (1833-1912)
The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art (1844-1907)
Scientific American (1845-1909)
Independent ... Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts (1848-1921)
Harper's Weekly, A Journal of Civilization (1857-1916)
Harper's Bazaar (1867-)
The Book Buyer (1867-1903)
Christian Union (1870-1893) / The Outlook (1893-1928)
St. Nicholas; an Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks (1873-1907)
Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly (1876-1904)
The Art Amateur; A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household (1879-1903)
The Chautauquan (1880-1914)
Century Illustrated Magazine (1881-1906)
The Art Interchange (1883-1904)
Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation (1885-1906)
The Cosmopolitan; a Monthly Illustrated Magazine (1886-1907)
Belford's Monthly and Democratic Review (1891-1892)
Town & Country Magazine (1893-)
McClure's Magazine (1893-1926)
The Bookman (1895-1933)
The Critic (1898-1906)
Smart Set (1900-1923)
The World's Wit and Humor: An Encyclopedia in 15 Volumes (1906)
The Spur (1913-1940)
The Fatherland (1914-1917)
San Francisco, CA
The Overland Monthly (1868-1935)
Los Angeles, CA
Los Angeles Times (1886-1922)
Point Loma, San Diego, CA
New Century Path (1903-1907)
The Theosophical Path (1911-1935)
Stanford, KY
The Interior (1891-1910)
Cincinnati, OH
The Lancet - Clinic (1904-1916)
WASHINGTON
OREGON
CALIFORNIA
IDAHO
NEVADA
MONTANA
WYOMING
UTAH
ARIZONA
COLORADO
NEW MEXICO
NORTH DAKOTA
SOUTH DAKOTA
NEBRASKA
KANSAS
OKLAHOMA
TEXAS
MINNESOTA
IOWA
MISSOURI
ARKANSAS
LOUISIANA
WISCONSIN
ILLINOIS
MICHIGAN
INDIANA
OHIO
KENTUCKY
TENNESSEE
MISSISSIPPI
ALABAMA
GEORGIA
FLORIDA
SOUTH CAROLINA
NORTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA
WEST VIRGINIA
PENNSYLVANIA
NEW YORK
MAINE
VERMONT
NEW HAMPSHIRE
MASSACHUSETTS
RHODE ISLAND
CONNECTICUT
NEW JERSEY
DELAWARE
MARYLAND



Arthur's Home Magazine
(1852–ca.1898)



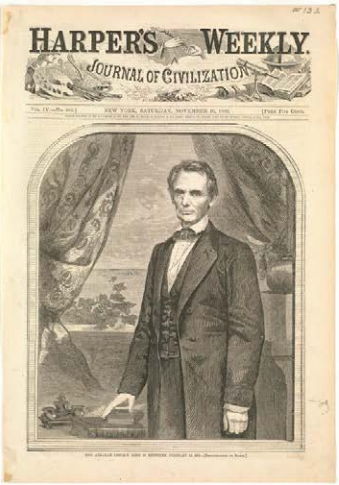
Belford's Monthly and Democratic Review
(1891-1892)



Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly
(1876–1904)



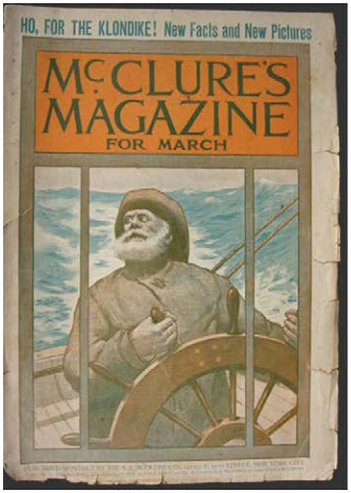
Harper's Bazaar
(1867-)



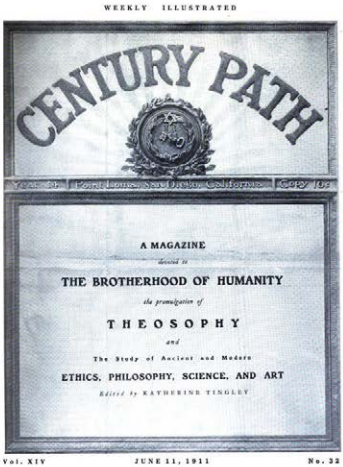
Harper's Weekly, A Journal of Civilization
(1857-1916)



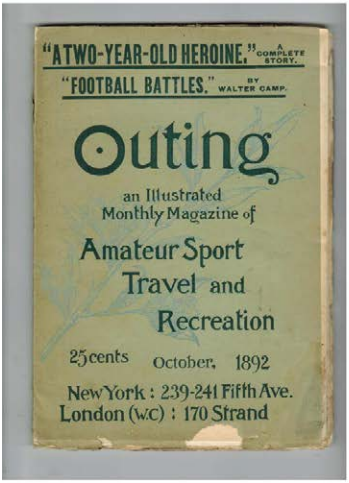
Littell's Living Age
(1844-1896)



McClure's Magazine
(1893-1926)



New Century Path
(1903-1907)



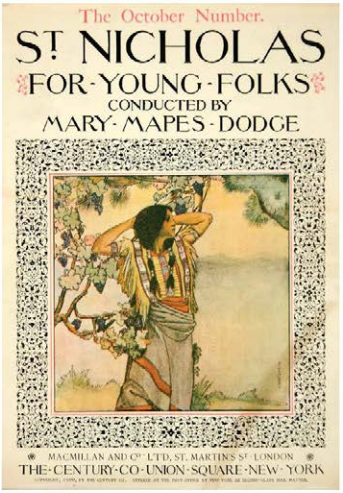
Outing, an Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation
(1885-1906)



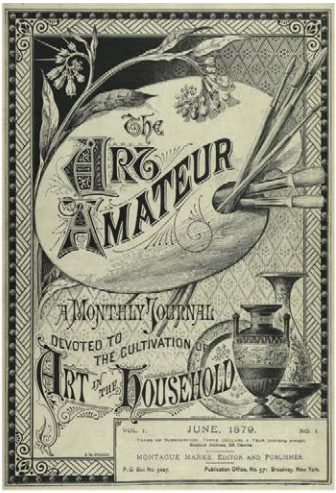
Peterson's Magazine
(1894-1897)



Smart Set
(1900-1923)



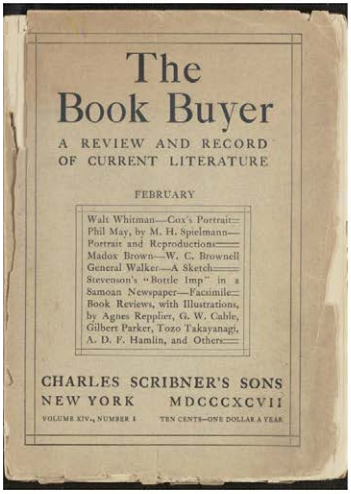
St. Nicholas; an Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks
(1873-1907)



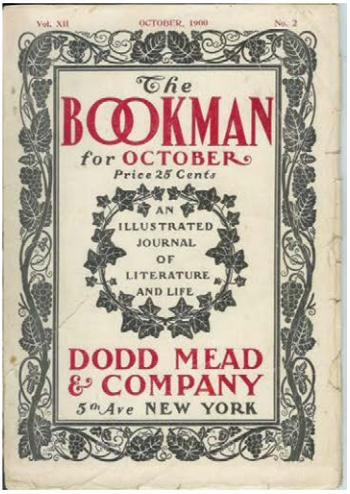
The Art Amateur;
A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household
(1879-1903)



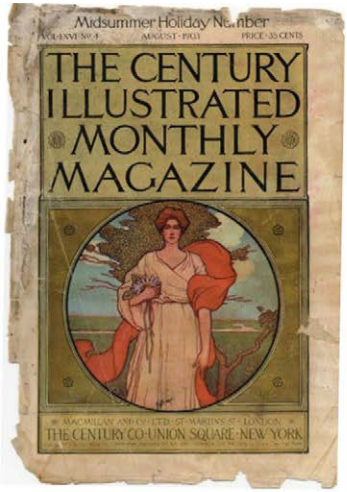
The Art Interchange
(1883-1904)



The Book Buyer
(1867-1903)



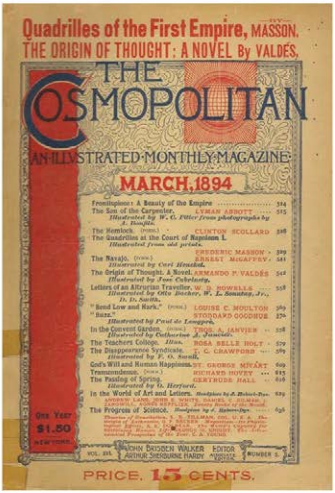
The Bookman
(1895-1933)



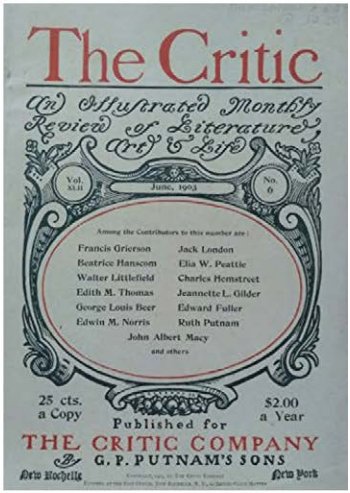
The Century Illustrated Magazine
(1881-1906)



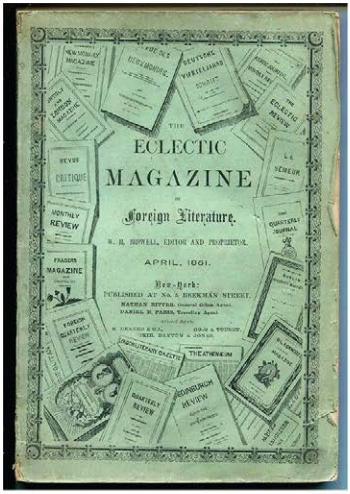
The Continent; an Illustrated Weekly Magazine
(1883-1884)



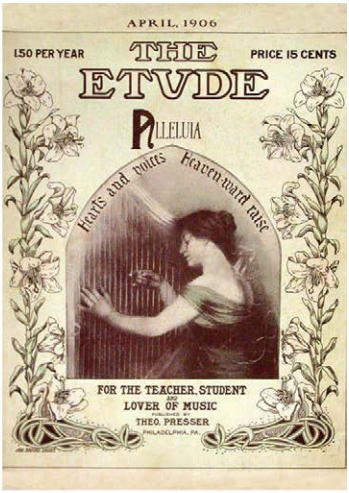
The Cosmopolitan;
a Monthly Illustrated Magazine
(1886-1907)



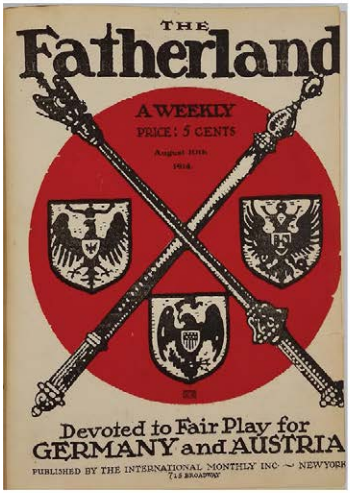
The Critic
(1898-1906)



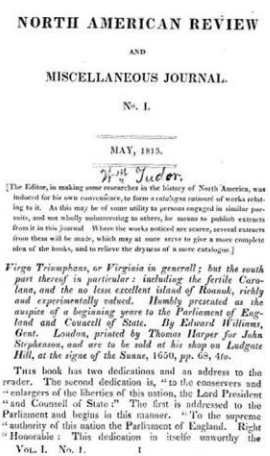
The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art
(1844-1907)



The Etude
(1897-1921)



The Fatherland
(1914-1917)



NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

AND

MISCELLANEOUS JOURNAL.

No. I.

MAY, 1815.

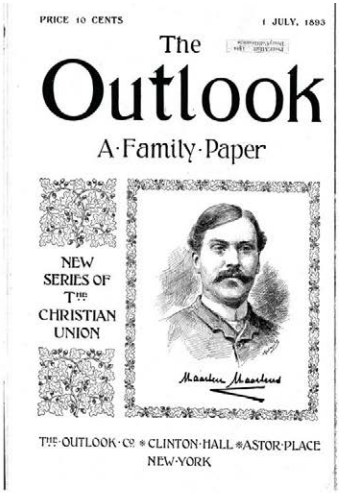
Wm. Tudor.

[The Editor, in making some researches in the history of North America, was induced for his own convenience, to form a catalogue raisonné of works relating to it. As this may be of some utility to persons engaged in similar pursuits, and not wholly uninteresting to others, he means to publish extracts from it in this journal. Where the works noticed are scarce, several extracts from them will be made, which may at once serve to give a more complete idea of the books, and to relieve the dryness of a mere catalogue.]

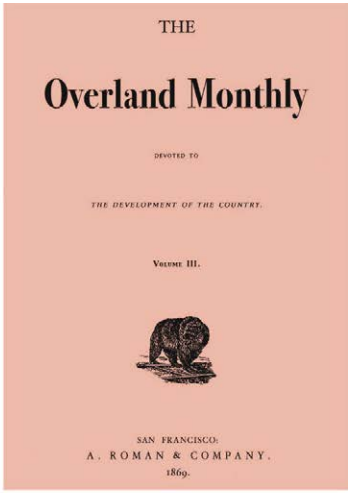
Virgo Triumphans, or Virginia in generall; but the south part thereof in particular: including the fertile Carolana, and the no lesse excellent island of Roanuk, richly and experimentally valued. Humbly presented as the auspice of a beginning yeare to the Parliament of England and Councell of State. By Edward Williams, Gent. London, printed by Thomas Harper for John Stephenson, and are to be sold at his shop on Ludgate Hill, at the signe of the Sunne, 1650, pp. 68, 4to.

This book has two dedications and an address to the reader. The second dedication is, "to the conservers and "enlargers of the liberties of this nation, the Lord President "and Counsell of State:" The first is addressed to the Parliament and begins in this manner. "To the supreme "authority of this nation the Parliament of England. Right "Honorable: This dedication in itselfe unworthy the

The North American Review
(1821-1940)



Christian Union (1870-1893) /
The Outlook (1893-1928)



The Overland Monthly
(1868-1935)



The Theosophical Path
(1911-1935)



Zion's Herald
(1823-1828)



Chicago Tribune
(1847-)



Detroit Free Press
(1858-1922)



Los Angeles Times
(1886-1922)



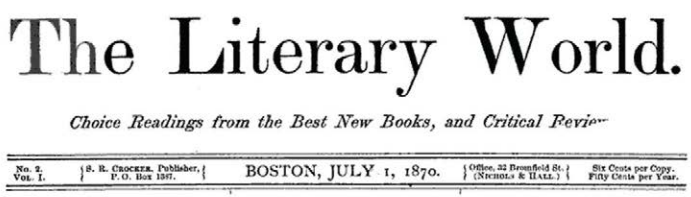
The Ladies' Home Journal
(1889-1907)



Scientific American
(1845-1909)



The Interior
(1891-1910)



The Literary World;a Monthly Review of Current Literature
(1870-1904)



The Youth's Companion
(1827-1929)

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 143-163

"Poeta Regina Mater, Mulier, etcétéra, Carmen Sylva la Mamma:"[1] The Reception of the Poet Queen in the Netherlands

ROB VAN DE SCHOOR
Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen
Rob.vandeschoor@ru.nl

Introduction

This paper deals with the critical reception in the Netherlands (1875-1925) of the literary work of the Romanian queen and writer Carmen Sylva, less well known by her maiden name Elisabeth zu Wied (1843-1916). Her books were translated into Dutch by such writers as Frits Smit Kleine, Cornélie Huygens, Fiore della Neve (M.G.L. van Loghem), B. de Graaff-Van Cappelle, and Marie van Buuren; each translation was noted and often extensively reviewed by literary magazines. Carmen Sylva was celebrated as the "poet queen" who had gained widespread respect through her philanthropic work after the death of her only child. The queen herself carefully modelled her image as an engaged modern woman, concerned about social issues and political justice. With a keen eye for the publicity this would generate in intellectual circles, she invited writers and artists from all over Europe to visit her in Bucharest. Several biographies of Elisabeth were published during her lifetime, with Mite Kremnitz's *Carmen Sylva* (1882, 1903) being the most influential. Though not uncritical as to her literary achievements, Carmen Sylva's co-author and maid of honour Kremnitz praised Elisabeth as an extraordinary woman, with a great interest in Romanian culture and tradition, without any royal pretentions, filled with an ardent ambition to promote female emancipation. This image has undergone drastic revision in modern historical studies, in which she is depicted as whimsical, conceited, obsessed with the paranormal, and an eager intriguer in private court affairs.

The present paper examines biographical essays, letters, and reviews for clues that reveal the disparity between, on the one hand, her self-fashioning and the resulting cult of celebrity and, on the other, the objections raised by Dutch writers – men more than women, who applauded her feminist achievements – to her books and her public presence. The doubts some critics felt concerning the literary quality of her prose and poetry and the sincerity of her fairy-tale manifestation were obscured by a veil of reverence but nevertheless become clear in private correspondence as well as in some published reviews.



Fig. 1: Portrait of Carmen Sylva, pseudonym of Pauline Elisabeth Ottilie Luise zu Wied, queen of Romania. By Franz Mandy. Ca 1890. Fürstlich-Wiedisches Archiv Neuwied.

Elisabeth zu Wied, scion of a noble family, married Karl von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (1839-1914), the ruler of Romania, in 1869. During the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) she cared for wounded soldiers; it was victory in that war, in which Romania fought on the side of Russia that gave the country its independence. In 1881, Karl became king (as Carol I) and Elisabeth queen. In 1870 Elisabeth had given birth to a daughter, who died aged three. After that traumatic event, she devoted herself entirely to charity work, female emancipation, and literature. Under the pseudonym "Carmen Sylva", she published collections of poetry and novels, some of which she co-authored with her biographer Mite Kremnitz, under the double pseudonym *Dito und Idem*.[2]

The present paper focuses on the reception of the work and person – especially as far as it was represented in her literary phantasies – of Carmen Sylva in the Netherlands in the period from 1880 to 1920, in

particular on how the queen and her writings were depicted in Dutch publications, mostly in the periodical press. That depiction was framed by the two biographies (1882, 1903) that Mite Kremnitz wrote about the queen during the latter's lifetime, as well as by the markedly autobiographical content of Carmen Sylva's prose and poetry.[3]

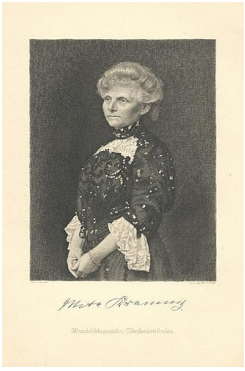


Fig. 2: Portrait of Mite Kremnitz (née Marie von Bardeleben). Etching by Johann Lindner. Ca. 1905.

This study derives its relevance from two issues of concern to literary scholars, namely the significance attributed by readers (i.e. literary criticism) to how an author presents himself or herself in the text and the value of a biographical reading of fiction for the appreciation of a writer's work. Both issues are connected here with the insights offered by *Cultural transfer* (*Kulturtransfer*, *transfer culturel*).[4] In this approach, the transformation is studied that texts undergo when they move from one cultural space to another. The principle of *Cultural transfer* is the assumption that language regions (that often can be identified as cultural spaces) should be seen as the home of dynamic cultural identities, as perceived by the inhabitants of these regions themselves, as well as by others. Here we are confronted with poetry written by a German princess, published in Rumania and translated into Dutch. The subject of interest, femininity in all its aspects, follows the same itinerary as it changes from one culturally defined hue to another.

Not only were Carmen Sylva's literary achievements the subject of discussion in the Dutch periodical press, but her extra-literary *posture*[5] also attracted a great deal of attention, her manifestation as a modern, emancipated woman and as a genius – a multi-talented woman

excelling in various fields simultaneously. Carmen Sylva manifested herself as a "star", and the present study therefore enters the domain of "celebrity studies".[6]

But Carmen Sylva was in a different league to celebrities from the world of dance, theatre, and music.[7] Reviewing two (translated) poems by her in *De Gids* in 1883, the critic J.N. van Hall called her "an exceptionally attractive phenomenon, in which nobility of birth combines with that of the spirit".[8] Van Hall is hinting at a view that remains unspoken in the reception of Carmen Sylva's literary work but is nevertheless very much present, namely that both royalty and artists were blessed with a dash of divine genius. In a debate in *De Kroniek* in 1896, that view is directly expressed (and passionately contested); a writer such as Maurits Wagenvoort articulates it in his review of Louis Couperus' novel *Majesteit* (1894).[9] Artists are on a par with kings; a queen with a talent for literature reveals a double majesty. Mite Kremnitz posits another link between royalty and artistic genius: never could an artistic nature develop so perfectly, unhindered by the cares of everyday life, as in the guise of an autonomous monarch.[10]

After a section in which the realism of Carmen Sylva's self-representation, as perceived by her readers, is discussed as well as the guiding influence of Mite Kremnitz's biography, this paper goes on to investigate the motives of Carmen Sylva's translators – who were her Dutch advocates – and deals with a number of longer publications about Carmen Sylva: two essays, a lecture, and several articles in literary journals. Needless to say, the "ladies' magazines"[11] paid a great deal of attention to the poet queen; the literary magazines that were not specifically aimed at a female readership adopted a more critical tone. To challenge the obvious assumption that these literary magazines aimed at a male readership, the periodicals are labelled as "gentlemen's magazines".

No separate attention will be paid to the hundreds of publications in newspapers. Those reports, often no more than just a few lines, usually offer little more than brief news items about the queen's life.[12]

The Appeal of an (In)Credible Self-Representation and the Influence of the Biographer

It is remarkable that appreciation for the poet queen Carmen Sylva in the Netherlands and the reception of her literary work there proceeds along the lines set out by the writer herself in her (quasi-)

autobiographical prose and poetry and also in the most important biography devoted to her during her lifetime, that by the Romanian writer Mite Kremnitz: *Carmen Sylva. Eine Biographie* (Leipzig 1903).[13] Parts of that biography were published in Dutch translation in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* of 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, and 21 January 1882.[14] Every account of Carmen Sylva's literary work refers to Kremnitz's biography. The critical tone adopted by Kremnitz from time to time, together with her increasingly strained relationship with Carmen Sylva, suggests that the queen had no involvement in the writing of that work.

In her writings, Carmen Sylva portrays herself as a *child of nature* who grew up by the romantic Rhine (*Mein Rhein*, 1884; *Heimath*, 1891; *Mein Penatenwinkel*, 1908) and was lovingly received by the simple people of Romania, who lived close to nature (*Rumänische Dichtungen*, 1881); as a melancholy *mother* who had transmuted grief for the loss of her little daughter into compassion with suffering humanity (*Leidens Erdengang*, 1882; *Meine Ruh'*, 1884); and as a dutiful *woman* harmoniously fulfilling her roles as queen, artist, and wife (*Gedanken einer Königin*, 1882, 1888). This self-fashioning is without any political aspiration, as can be deduced from a cartoon in the weekly magazine *De Amsterdammer* (7th April 1907). Mite Kremnitz confirms the queen's literary self-representation, but renders it realistic by pointing out the unconscious self-deception [*unbewusste Selbsttäuschung*][15] and shortcomings in the queen's imagining, such as her 'unrealistic' characters and predominant subjectivism. Her portrayal of the "real" Carmen Sylva might have made the latter especially attractive for self-confident Dutch women who were intimidated by an ideal beyond their reach but found inspiration for their view of life and identity in such "ladies' magazines" as *De Hollandsche Lelie*, *De Lelie* and *De vrouw en haar huis*, or for adolescent girls, who were seeking an ideal to which they could relate in *Lelie- en Rozeknoppen*. Perhaps these shortcomings were perceived as marks of unworldliness, that would not suit the female readers of these magazines, but that did become a person living in another, sublime reality.



Fig. 3: *De Amsterdammer. Weekblad voor Nederland*. 7 April, 1907.

Writers who were less well disposed towards Carmen Sylva and her literary work expressed their objections in accordance with Kremnitz's analysis of her prose and poetry in both editions of her biography. For the "Eightiers" [*Tachtigers*] (an influential group of Dutch writers who became active around 1880 and advocated the autonomy of literature) and their contemporaries, Carmen Sylva's work was too improbable; they found it "lacking in logic and motivation", as did the naturalist novelist Marcellus Emants.[16] Her work was ridiculed as pulp literature. At the same time, the image of the writer queen was dismissed as implausible, too goody-goody, and too rosy – prissy even.

An interesting intertextual reference to Carmen Sylva's novels in Dutch literary fiction reveals the status of her work within the Dutch reception at the time. In his novel *Eline Vere* (1888), set in upper-class Hague society, Louis Couperus characterises Marianne, the daughter of Théodore and Truus van Erlevoort, as foolish and silly by making Carmen Sylva's melodramatic novel *Ein Gebet* her favourite book.[17] *Ein Gebet* is the story of a priest who must officiate at the wedding of a girlfriend of his sister, with whom he is still passionately in love, and a young man with whom the sister herself has become infatuated.

The priest murders the bridegroom with a poisoned host: a denouement that must have made modern writers burst out laughing. Mite Kremnitz wrote of *Ein Gebet*: [*Die Novelle*] *ist kraftvoll geschrieben, entbehrt aber der feineren Ausarbeitung. Eine gewisse Naivität in bezug auf die Wahrscheinlichkeiten im Leben gewöhnlicher Sterblichen haftet allen Arbeiten der Königin an. Ausserdem beschreibt sie ihre Gestalten zu sehr, sie lässt sie nicht selbst lebend heraustreten, sondern führt sie stets bei der Hand; nie vergisst man die Erzählerin; sie gibt jeder Geschichte von Anfang bis zu Ende ihr subjektives Gepräge.*[18]



Fig. 4: Postcard with photograph of Queen dowager Elisabeth of Romania, Carmen Sylva. Featured here behind a writing desk with her typewriter.

Kremnitz succeeds in presenting her criticism as the result of the special position of the author-narrator, which entails "a certain naivety" [*eine gewisse Naivität*]. This might make the novel all the more exciting for those female readers who read it because it was written by an exceptional woman, who is always present in what she recounts, and is unfamiliar with the lives of ordinary mortals. At the same time, it is clear that this style of writing – telling rather than showing, implausibility rather than realism, and an emphatic narrator-author rather than impersonal narrative technique – was in flagrant contradiction to the prevailing modern conception of literature, as propagated by the Eightiers.

Carmen Sylva did in fact agree with Kremnitz's observation, however, being quoted in the biography as having said: *Es ist sehr schwer, persönliche Gefühle in unpersönliche Gedanken umzusetzen, und vielleicht ist schon alles nicht mehr wahr, sobald man es verallgemeinert .... Nicht wahr, es ist alles recht unbedeutend, was ich da schreibe? Ist gewiss schon hundertmal besser gesagt worden?*[19]

Transforming personal perceptions into general insights is the craft of the writer, whether writing prose or poetry. Carmen Sylva is well aware that her literary imagination, according to her own opinion, falls short of such transformation; it is thus unsurprising that critical readers thought it was *her* voice that they could hear throughout. One might argue that the objectivation of personal feelings is a demand resulting from a 'masculine' poetics (as opposed to a more female 'confessional' writing style), but Carmen Sylva, in the quoted sentences, does not challenge this demand. She even regrets her incapacity to comply with it.

The two questions posed in the above quotation – which are in fact evidence of critical self-awareness and which raise, from a present day's point of view, Carmen Sylva above the throng of insignificant writers who never reflected on this transformation – were answered in the affirmative by the *Eightiers* and their contemporaries. Frits Smit Kleine, the champion of the poet queen, was another victim of the vilification directed at her. Lodewijk van Deyssel reviled Smit Kleine as the "unattractive, talentless, dreary bourgeois *mainteneur* of a German bluestocking like Carmen Sylva".[20] Elsewhere he writes mockingly: "You are the literary consul of the great Carmen, who is the Synthezis that the world has always been seeking for, uniting Royalty and Poetry."[21]

The Queen's Translators

From 1882 on, Frits Smit Kleine (1845-1931) endeavoured to promote the literary work of Carmen Sylva – prose and poetry – in the Netherlands through translations, studies, and lectures.[22] In an article in *De nieuwe courant* in 1913, he wrote that it was the painter Christoffel Bisschop (1828-1904) who in 1882 had revealed to him who was concealed behind the pseudonym Carmen Sylva. Smit Kleine's interest in her work and person continued undiminished for more than thirty years, and it was a great disappointment to him that illness prevented him from meeting her in person during her stay in Domburg.



Fig. 5: Christoffel Bisschop – Portrait 'H.M. de Koningin van Roemenië' Carmen Sylva - S05891 - Fries Museum, Leeuwarden.

By the early 1880s, Smit Kleine had lost touch with the literary vanguard. Initially he had been associated with Marcellus Emants; with him he founded the literary magazines *Quatuor* (1869-1871), *Spar en Hulst* (1872) and *De Banier* (1875-1880), but when the *Eightiers* appropriated naturalistic prose, Smit Kleine abandoned literary innovation: he found modern prose unpolished and vulgar.[23] Under the pseudonym "Piet Vluchtig" he wrote *Haagsche hopjes*, little columns on various subjects (sketches from the civil service), which he published as a collection in 1883.[24]

Like Fiore della Neve (M.G.L. van Loghem), the translator of Carmen Sylva's *Mijne rust*, Smit Kleine was among the writers commemorated in the anthology *Al bleef ik eeuwig ongelezen* [Even if I remain unread for evermore], authors who were ignored or vilified by the *Eightiers Movement*.[25] It is entirely appropriate that Fiore della Neve was attracted to the poetry of Carmen Sylva, accessible verse with attention to precise formulation which invites the reader to join in with the poet's feelings.

Among the female translators, Cornélie Huygens and Titia van der Tuuk are deserving of special attention. They were emancipated women: Cornélie Huygens (1848-1902), a writer with socialist sympathies, and Titia van der Tuuk (1854-1939), a feminist, atheist, and freethinker.[26] The liaison between these progressive feminists and the noble princess Elisabeth zu Wied is a curious one; it is hard to understand what moved these women to promote her work in the Netherlands, other than the sober conception of female emancipation that the Romanian monarch could

afford to engage in. The vague religiosity in Carmen Sylva's poetry will have held little appeal for them.

Two Essays and a Lecture on Carmen Sylva

Two contributions about Carmen Sylva appeared in the series *Mannen (en vrouwen) van beteekenis in onze* dagen [Significant men (and women) of our days],[27] the first by W.J. Manssen (XIV, 1883) and the second by Henri van der Mandere (XLI, 1911).[28] These extensive essays are interesting because of the strategies the writers used to modify modern celebrity to fit the somewhat old-fashioned concept of 'importance' – originally restricted to men. The clergyman Manssen examines the poet's philosophy of life, which he viewed as being determined by her "conception of suffering" [*lijdensbeschouwing*]. However, the significance that Carmen Sylva attributes to suffering, in the search for consolation and truth, especially in the poem *Ahasverus*, Manssen finds wanting. Her insights are deflected by his "theological breastplate" [*theologisch borstkuras*]; she offers both too much and too little for his taste: "too much for those who have consigned God to the museum of human error; too little for those for whom religion is still a reality".[29] This is an understandable judgement: after his endless wanderings, Ahasverus [Ahasuerus] discovers that God is "infinite becoming" [*eindeloos worden*].

He quotes with approval a number of pronouncements in *Pensées d'une Reine* about the subordination of women and the privileged position of men, for example: "A woman is stoned for an act that a perfectly decent man can commit with impunity." [*Een vrouw wordt gesteenigd voor een daad, die een volmaakt fatsoenlijk man straffeloos kan bedrijven*.] or: "Your wife must bear the whole burden of love, suffer to become a mother, share your worries, run your home, bring up your children, and moreover be kind and loveable. And still you dare in the same breath to call her weak?" [*De vrouw moet den ganschen last der liefde torschen, lijden om moeder te worden, deelgenoot zijn van uw zorgen, uw huis bestieren, uw kinderen opvoeden; bovendien aardig zijn en beminnelijk. En nog durft ge in één adem haar zwak noemen?*]

But sometimes the poetess goes too far, with Manssen accusing her of cynicism, materialism, and pessimism in statements such as: "Whenever a woman gives herself, she considers she is giving a world, while the man thinks he has been given a plaything; the woman believes she is offering an eternity, while the man thinks he has

received a fleeting pleasure." [*Zoo vaak de vrouw zich geeft, meent ze een wereld te geven, en denkt de man een stuk speelgoed te hebben gekregen; de vrouw gelooft een eeuwigheid te schenken, en de man meent het genot van een oogenblik te hebben ontvangen*.]

Manssen discusses successively the queen's main poetry collections and prose works; in them he recognises the happiness and sorrow that befell her. He concludes his essay with a brief account of her life, for which he consulted Mite Kremnitz's biography.

Van der Mandere proceeds the other way round, but he too consults Mite Kremnitz's volume. He presents the life story of Elisabeth as an idealised fairy tale, dealing with her work where it illustrates the main events of her life. In her idealism, he also notes her devotion to world peace, an issue that greatly interested him and about which he had published.

According to Van der Mandere, the queen's literary work is distinguished by three particular features: her admiration for the history and beauty of Romania, her attachment to the landscape of her youth (the environs of Neuwied and the Rhine), and her love of all that is good and beautiful, her plea for gentleness and meekness, patience in suffering and sorrow, and the overcoming of one's own shortcomings.

Neither of these two essays displays any critical detachment by the author; there is no testing of the idyll against reality. In Mite Kremnitz's idealised portrayal of Elisabeth's life and in Carmen Sylva's literary work, Manssen and Van der Mandere do however seek what occupies them most, be it a religious conviction or a political ideal.

A similar kind of appropriation can be found in comments on Carmen Sylva by the Roman-Catholic poet and Dante translator Joan Bohl (1836-1908). On 3 March 1884, he gave a lecture for the *Académie Royale de Belgique* entitled *Deux fois reine. L'Œuvre poétique et philosophique de Carmen Sylva.* Bohl refers to Carmen Sylva as a sister of Goethe, but celebrates her above all as a successor to Dante.

Bohl sees her recreation of the story of the eternally wandering Jew, in her poem *Ahasverus*, as a Dantesque quest for God: "C'est le scepticisme du siècle à la recherche de Dieu."[30] In the poem we meet Dante, returning from his travels to hell, purgatory and heaven, and seeking God in our world. He recognises Him in "Das Werdende, das ewig wirkt und lebt". It is remarkable that the Catholic Bohl is content

here with Carmen Sylva's invention "that which becomes" [*das Werdende*] as equivalent to God.

He begins his lecture by considering the genius within women and the essence of genius. To pave the way for his bombastic praise of Carmen Sylva, he notes that genius is bound up neither with masculinity nor femininity. However, anyone who might welcome this assertion is immediately corrected: there is nothing more monstrous than a woman who adorns herself with male characteristics, who strives for genius – and in doing so fails.[31]

All three authors – Manssen, Van der Mandere and Bohl – do their best to tailor Carman Sylva's fame and genius to fit their personal ideals, be they religious, political or literary. Manssen's interpretation of Carmen Sylva's self-representation as her "conception of suffering" prevents him from approving the more provocative statements by the poet queen about the unjust treatment of women; for Bohl her sex is an impediment for a full blossom of genius.

Gentlemen's and Ladies' Magazines

Frans Netscher (1864-1923) – a former "naturalist" and later literary journalist – devoted an extensive "Character Sketch" to Carmen Sylva in the second year of his magazine *De Hollandsche Revue* (1897). Right at the beginning of his essay, he apologises for selecting the poet queen as the subject for his "Character Sketches" column: "It is true that she is not an artist of extraordinary ability or importance, that her poetry is not of brilliant passion or subtle emotion, that her manifestation as an artistic entity is not of exceptional weight – but as a poet of worthy ordinariness, of not inconsiderable moderateness, sometimes fine sentiment and pleasing remarks, she can nevertheless claim as much attention from the poetry-reading public as many a poet or poetess of supposed reputation enjoys within the narrow confines of their country."[32]

At the end of the article, Netscher returns to this choice, which he again attempts to justify: "One may perhaps ask why we have chosen as the subject of this character sketch a person who writes poetry which is no better than the versifying of the breed of Dutch poets of the 1850s, and who writes third-rate prose?"

Our answer would be as follows. "We have chosen Elisabeth of Romania not only as *Carmen Sylva*. For that she is not eminent enough as an artist; her manifestation is not of sufficient importance."[33]

But as an "ordinary figure" [*algemene figuur*] she can pass muster. Underlying the characteristics that qualify Carmen Sylva as a type, lies a rather unedifying opinion of women and of femininity: (maternal) suffering, self-sacrifice, compassion for those in difficulty (including women and girls) and – beauty. Her art casts a golden glow over all these fine things.

De Hollandsche Revue, filled by the writing of Frans Netscher, can serve as an example of the leading literary "gentlemen's magazines" that reported on Carmen Sylva. The male authors writing in those magazines criticised the Romanian poetess and viewed her with some suspicion. Ladies' magazines, on the other hand, reported enthusiastically on Carmen Sylva's life and work. The queen was presented as an exceptional yet still ordinary woman, devoid of royal pretension; a mother, mourning the loss of her child; a writer who did not neglect her female duties; and a woman who stood by her husband (and her people) in difficult times. Her principal quality, self-sacrifice, is emphatically demonstrated, in her life as well as in her poems.

Elise Soer (1854-1948), one of the first female members of the prestigious literary society *Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, wrote positively about this 'value' of self-sacrifice: "Queen Elisabeth never speaks of herself in her works, but [she is] engaged so much with heart and soul in her material, so at one with it, that one encounters her personality unceasingly. […] In the midst of her literary labours, Elisabeth of Romania still finds time to fulfil the many duties her lofty position imposes on her: to receive, to paint, to make music, to occupy herself with needlework, to visit hospitals, etc., etc. But first and foremost, she is never so busy that she cannot find time to devote to her husband and to make life pleasant for him."[34]

Only a single man makes himself heard in the ladies' magazines, namely the Flemish author Jules Persyn (1878-1933) who – probably because of his position as a lecturer at the Catholic Flemish College for Women [*Katholieke Vlaamsche Hogeschool voor Vrouwen*] – was able to gain access to *De Lelie. Maandelijksch katholiek dames-tijdschrift*.[35] His assessment of Carmen Sylva was: "This is [...] one of the best and most complete people of our time" [*Het geldt hier* [...] *een der beste en volledigste menschen van onzen tijd*].[36] The poet queen is presented here as an outstanding species of mankind, not as a 'complete' woman.

But Carmen Sylva was the object of attention not only in articles dedicated to her person and work. She serves as a reference in diverse contributions, with her most appealing verses often as page-fillers:

“There is but one joy:
Duty.
There is but one consolation:
Work.
There is but one delight:
Beauty.”

Carmen Sylva was probably thinking not least of herself when she wrote the lines that, translated into Dutch, found their way onto many a decorative tile to hang on the wall, and even into... the popular Belgian comic strip *Suske en Wiske* [*Spike and Suzy*], no less! (*The Frozen Fire*):

The loveliest name in the world
The loveliest name on everyone’s lips
Is Mother.

Der schönste Nam’ im Erdenrund,
Das schönste Wort in Menschenmund
Ist Mutter![37]



Fig. 6: Suske en Wiske. *Het bevroren vuur*, 1952. Standaarduitgeverij Antwerpen, Willy Vandersteen

Conclusion

One could argue that the reception of Carmen Sylva's work unfolded along the lines of autonomy and emancipation, as propounded in the Netherlands through the work of the *Eightiers*. Autonomy was men's business, emancipation that of women. Writers like Van Deyssel, Netscher, and Emants acted as gatekeepers of modern literature, which had liberated itself from an idealistic view of the world, i.e. literature that wished to encourage and console. The women who wrote about Carmen Sylva in such "ladies' magazines" as *De Hollandsche Lelie* or in a "gentlemen's magazine" such as *De Nederlandsche Spectator* – "Holda"[38] – and the emancipated women writers who translated her work, such as Cornélie Huygens and Titia van der Tuuk, recognised in her prose and poetry the modern, self-confident, talented woman who claimed her place in society without renouncing her "true femininity". The main exception to this (crudely) sketched male-female contrast is, of course, Frits Smit Kleine. Writers such as he – following in the path of innovation but sometimes stealthily glancing back at what they had lost – often came up with surprising choices and opinions.

From the view-point of *Cultural transfer*, a changing interpretation can be noticed of what could be described as 'the complete devotion to an ideal', as Carmen Sylva's poetry as well as her self-fashioning were transferred from Central-Europe to the Netherlands. This devotion can be interpreted in a conservative way, as the devotion to a marriage, to hospitality and care, but also progressively, in a feminist way, as the ideal is dissociated from a homely meaning. Either way, the notion of an uncompromising devotion is of a romantic nature, that attracted the ridicule of modernist male critics and at the same time was applauded by a female readership.

For her admirers, Carmen Sylva represented feminine genius. That genius manifested itself not so much in an artistic nature but in the ability to excel simultaneously in a number of different fields. A female genius combines extraordinary intellectual gifts with practicality; she explores the mysteries of life but is also there to support her husband when he is troubled and to work with needle and thread. This idealised image was created in ladies' magazines and in biographical sketches of Carmen Sylva; it still exists today. It was underpinned by a biographical reading of her literary work, especially her poetry, in which a lyrical "I" sings about the troubled vicissitudes of a woman's life.

In her biography, Mite Kremnitz attempted to reconcile the idealised image of the artistic genius Carmen Sylva with a perspective that has since become dominant: the poet queen as a vain and fickle spiritualist. Kremnitz writes that "fantasists" [*Phantastische Menschen*] like Carmen Sylva are prone to exaggeration, to delusions that make the everyday and the insignificant appear to be of the utmost importance. What is genuinely meaningful and important, they are unable to see: "*Wo alle nur mögliche Emotion stündlich auf das Kleine vergeudet wird, bleibt wenig übrig für das Besondere, das Seltene. Phantastische Menschen empfinden oft Liebe, Eheglück Erfolg und Ruhm als Enttäuschungen; denn sie hatten sich das eigene Glücksgefühl dabei so viel mächtiger vorgestelt und ausgemahlt!*"[39]

They therefore risk succumbing to sensationalism and artificial ecstasies. They seek fulfilment of their exorbitant desire for happiness and satisfaction in spiritualism. They expect to be able to blossom outside this world, beyond the limits of what is conceivable and possible. Meanwhile, they have distanced themselves from those who attempt to understand them.

As to the relevance of this investigation of Carmen Sylva's critical reception for literary studies (cited in the introduction), one might conclude that the author's self- fashioning as a devoted queen mother may have been responsible for the female reader's appreciation of her work. The flaws in this self-fashioning noted by her biographer – her naivety, her unfamiliarity with the real lives of ordinary people, and her inability to objectivise personal experience – may have even enhanced the appeal of her work for her readers. It is not unlikely that they forgave the author such imperfections, considering them to be a proof that she belonged to another, sublime reality. At the same the connection Mite Kremnitz made between the author's life experience and her prose and poems – the queen's grief, her compassion for those who suffered and felt oppressed, and her firm sense of duty – might have made the idealised poet queen more tangible. But all this is only true for a *woman* writer, a *woman* biographer and for a *female* readership. As soon as Carmen Sylva's work falls into the hands of male critics, the relationship between her life and her work is ridiculed and her self-fashioning ignored or found insignificant.

This last finding is at odds with Mary Louise Roberts's assertion that the embrace of eccentricity, of strangeness, was an important strategy of female celebrity in the nineteenth-century.[40] She argues that Sarah Bernhardt and Rosa Bonheur managed their celebrity by discarding all that was recognisable and suitable for a "role model" in

everyday life. The only way to explain these contradictory strategies may be that eccentric female celebrities challenged the boundaries imposed on female behaviour – an endeavour that may have had less appeal to the female readership of Carmen Sylva's poems and stories, who craved precisely such a role model to help them to overcome the hardships of their everyday lives. For these women, the readership of ladies' magazines such as *De Hollandsche lelie*, eccentricity lacked what were considered to be essential female qualities.

Translation: Paul Gretton (Gretton & Willems translations v.o.f.)

Note: A slightly changed version of this article has been published as Rob van de Schoor (2023), "Poeta regina Mater, mulier, etcétéra, Carmen Sylva la mamma": The reception of the poet queen Carmen Sylva in the Netherlands, *Image & Narrative*, Carlijn Cober, Floris Meens and Tom Sintobin (eds.), 24/2, 143-161.

NOTES

1. Lines from the verse with which Carmen Sylva thanked Top Naeff for her contribution to the tribute album [*Hulde-album*] that was presented to the queen as a gift on her seventieth birthday.

2. Together with Mite Kremnitz she wrote, *inter alia*, three epistolary novels: *Aus zwei Welten* (1884), *Astra* (1886) and *Feldpost* (1887). On the increasingly strained collaboration between Carmen Sylva and Mite Kremnitz, see Grebing 1976, 66-83.

3. Zimmermann [2019]; including: "Carmen Sylvas Leben und Werk in Selbstzeugnissen, Zeitdokumenten und Fotografien des Fürstlich Wiedischen Archivs". Regarding her poetry collection *Meine Ruh'* (1884), Carmen Sylva wrote: "On pourrait reconstituer un journal de ma vie d'après les seules dates des poésies que j'y ai recueillies." (Bengesco 1905, 212.)

4. Bundschuh-van Duikeren, Missinne & Konst 2014; Espagne & Greiling 1996; Espagne 1999.

5. Meizoz 2007, 43. By the "*posture*" of an author, Meizoz means "l'ensemble de ses auto-figurations dans le champ littéraire" (45). Meizoz adopts the distinction drawn by Dominique Maingueneau in his theory of discourse analysis between the biographical *personne* of the writer, *l'écrivain*, who operates within the literary field, and the *inscripteur*, the voice that is to be found in the text and which the reader holds responsible for the organisation of the literary text. These three manifestations of the author are inextricably linked (Maingueneau 2004, 106-109).

6. Berenson and Giloi 2010. This work devotes a great deal of attention to the role of the periodical press: "[…] it was nineteenth-century journalism that incessantly tallied the myriad celebrities of daily life […]." (176)

7. Van de Schoor 2006; Van de Schoor 2012.

8. "Letterkundige kroniek", in *De Gids* (1883), I, 602.

9. Fontijn 1993; Vosmeer de Spie 1894.

10. Kremnitz 1903, 3-4.

11. For ladies' magazines, see: Jensen 2001.

12. An article on Carmen Sylva in the German journal *Rhein-Maas* 13 (2024) focuses on the newspaper coverage of appearances of Dutch artists in Bucharest, the tribute album [*Hulde-album*] that honoured the monarch on her 70th birthday, and her stay in Domburg.

13. Grebing 1976, 185-187. The biographer sought to correct the prevailing view that Carmen Sylva had brought civilisation to Romania by focusing on the folk art, traditional dress, and storytelling traditions in which the queen had taken a keen interest. The German press praised her book because the author had avoided the "byzantinism" that characterises other biographies of the queen. In her chapter "Das Erinnerungsbild Carmen Sylvas", in *Die Feder in der Hand bin ich eine ganz andre Person*, Zimmermann discusses other contemporary biographies, which do not appear to have played any role in how the queen was viewed in the Netherlands.

14. Mevr. Mite Kremnitz, "Carmen Sylva (Elisabeth, koningin van Rumenië). Een levensschets der dichteres".

15. Kremnitz 1903, 5: "Um […] zu wissen, was sie wirklich ist, nicht was sie zu sein glaubt oder in unbewusster Selbsttäuschung scheinen möchte, muss man nur zwischen den Zeilen lesen und ihr Tun und Lassen im Leben verfolgen." Kremnitz replaces "self-delusion" by unexpected outstanding qualities.

16. Emants' assessment of Carmen Sylva's novel *Astra*. Letter of 18 October 1886, in Dubois 1982, 61-62.

17. Karel Reijnders 1968, 180; Couperus 1991, 435.

18. Kremnitz 1903, 169.

19. Kremnitz 1903, 191.

20. Prick 1964, 84-92: 92. A *mainteneur* is a man with a *maintenée*, a "kept woman", i.e. a mistress.

21. "Æolie of den wind door Den Gulden Winckel", in *De XXe Eeuw* 8 (1902), 11, 443-462; included in *Verzamelde Opstellen* VII, 67-88, citation there 82.

22. See Smit Kleine [1886].

23. Gerard van Eckeren, "F. Smit Kleine", in *Den Gulden Winckel* 14 (1915), 4 (15 April), 53-54; "F. Smit Kleine tachtig jaar", in *De Hollandsche Revue* 30 (1925), 7, 248-249. Van Eckeren writes: "As a literary and philosophical essayist, Smit Kleine ... has always devoted his attention chiefly to those in whose attitude of mind he has found that certain distinction towards which his admiration is directed." His aversion to naturalism is evident in the parody he wrote under the pseudonym Ixo: *Naturalistische passie-cyclus van elf zangen met voor- en achterdeur.* The Hague 1889.

24. On Smit Kleine as a literary networker, see Van Kalmthout 1993.

25. Alberdingk Thijm project group 1974.

26. Levie 2007. For Cornélie Huygens, see Harmsen 1992; for Titia Klasina Elisabeth van der Tuuk, see Everard 1986.

27. "*en vrouwen*" [and women] was added to the title of the series from volume 26 (1894/1895) onwards. See Maas 1979.

28. W.J. Manssen (1842-1923) was a Lutheran minister in Zaandam. He was interested in female emancipation, in his own time and in the past, as appears from his study *Het Christendom en de vrouw* (1877). Henri van der Mandere (1883-1959) was a journalist who published items, *inter alia*, about future world peace. He was a member of the committee that put together a tribute album for Carmen Sylva.

29. *Mannen van beteekenis* (1884), 208.

30. Bohl 1884, 30.

31. Bohl 1884, 12: "C'est ici que se vérifie l'adage: 'du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas!' Car si la métamorphose ne produit pas un chef d'œuvre, la nature a manqué son coup, et au lieu de l'image d'un dieu elle ne donne que la caricature de l'homme: l'être féminin bizarrement accoutré en masculin. Une figure grotesque se dresse devant nous, dont les bons cœurs plaignent le triste sort, parce qu'elle est raillée par les étourdis, les écervelés, les sceptiques… c'est à dire par la majorité du genre humain."

32. Netscher 1897, 650.

33. Netscher 1897, 658.

34. Soer 1890, 228-231: 230.

35. Persyn 1914.

36. *De Lelie* 5 (1913-1914), 6, 165.

37. Carmen Sylva 1884.

38. Holda 1886. "Holda" was the pseudonym of the progressive writer A.J.F. Clant van der Mijll-Piepers (1842-1909).

39. Kremnitz 1903, 9.

40. Roberts 2010.

REFERENCES

Bengesco, George (1905). *Carmen Sylva intime*. Paris.

Berenson, Edward and Eva Giloi (eds.) (2010). *Constructing Charisma. Celebrity, Fame, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Europe.* New York, Oxford.

Bohl, Joan (1884). *Deux fois reine. L'Œuvre poétique et philosophique de Carmen Sylva*. Paris.

Bundschuh-van Duikeren, J., L. Missinne & J. Konst (eds.) (2014). *Grundkurs Literatur aus Flandern und den Niederlanden. I. 12 Texte – 12 Zugänge*. Münster.

Carmen Sylva (1884). *Meine Ruh'*. Berlin.

Couperus, Louis (1991). *Eline Vere. Een Haagsche roman.* (= *Volledige werken Louis Couperus 3*.) Amsterdam/Antwerp.

Dubois, Pierre H. (ed.) (1982). *Marcellus Emants / Brieven aan Frits Smit Kleine. Ingeleid en van aantekeningen voorzien door Pierre H. Dubois.* Amsterdam.

Espagne, M. (1999). *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands*. Paris.

Espagne, M., and W. Greiling (eds.) (1996). *Frankreichfreunde. Mittler des französisch-deutschen Kulturtransfers (1750-1850)*. Leipzig.

Everard, Myriam, lemma (1986). "Titia Klasina Elisabeth van der Tuuk," *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme en de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (iisg.nl/bwsa).

Fontijn, J. (1993). "8 mei 1896: Marius Bauer arriveert in Moskou. Het debat tussen socialisten en estheten in De Kroniek," M.A. Schenkeveld-van der Dussen (ed.), *Nederlandse Literatuur, een geschiedenis*. Groningen, 557-561.

Grebing, Renate (1976). *Mite Kremnitz (1852-1916). Eine Vermittlerin der rumänischen Kultur in Deutschland*. Frankfurt am Main, Bern.

Harmsen, Ger, lemma (1992). "Cornélie Lydie Huygens," *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme en de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (iisg.nl/bwsa).

Holda (pseudonym of A.J.F. Clant van der Mijll-Piepers), (1886). "Allerlei-praatje," *De Nederlandsche Spectator*. 8 (20 February), 67-68.

Huygens, Cornélie (1889). *Ellen*. Amsterdam.

Jensen, Lotte (2001). *'Bij uitsluiting voor de vrouwelijke sekse geschikt'. Vrouwentijdschriften en journalistes in Nederland in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw.* Hilversum.

Kalmthout, Ton van (1993). "Frits Smit Kleine en de kunstkringen van Haarlem," W. van den Berg, Henk Eijssens and Ton van Kalmthout (eds.), *Haarlemse kringen. Vijftien verkenningen naar het literair-culturele leven in een negentiende-eeuwse stad.* Hilversum, 193-213.

Kremnitz, Mite (1903). *Carmen Sylva. Eine Biographie*. Leipzig.

Levie, Sophie (2007). "Een vergeten vertaalster: Titia van der Tuuk," *Filter*. *Tijdschrift over vertalen,* 14, no. 3 (October), 13-21.

Maas, Nop (1979). "*Register op Mannen (en vrouwen) van beteekenis in onze dagen*," *De Negentiende Eeuw. Documentatieblad Werkgroep 19e eeuw* 3, 4, 235-258.

Maingueneau, Dominique (2004). *Le discours littéraire. Paratopie et scène d'énonciation.* Paris.

Meizoz, Jérôme (2007). *Postures littéraires. Mises en scène modernes de l'auteur. Essai.* Geneve, Slatkine.

Netscher, Frans (1897). "Karakterschets. De Koningin van Roumenië (Carmen Sylva)," *De Hollandsche Revue*, 650-658.

Netscher, Frans (1898). "Het boek van de maand. *Barthold Meryan* door Cornélie Huygens," *De Hollandsche Revue* 3, 145-151.

Persyn, Jul. "Vrouwen van Beteekenis. Carmen Sylva," *De Lelie. Maandelijksch katholiek dames-tijdschrift* 5 (1913-1914), 6 (February 1914), 165-169; 7 (March 1914), 210-214; 10 (June 1914), 314-319; 11-12 (July-August), 337-341; continuation in year 1914-1915.

Prick, Harry G.M. (1964). *Lodewijk van Deyssel/Dertien close-ups*. Amsterdam.

Reijnders, Karel (1968). *Couperus bij Van Deyssel. Een chronische konfrontatie in beschouwingen, brieven en notities.* Amsterdam.

Roberts, Mary Louise (2010). "Rethinking Female Celebrity. The Eccentric Star of Nineteenth-Century France," Berenson and Giloi, 103-116.

Schoor, Rob van de (2006). "Ik vind geen passie genoeg". *Holland in beroering door de optredens van de joodse tragédienne Rachel uit Parijs, 1846-1853*. Voorschoten.

Schoor, Rob van de (2011) [online in 2012]. "Op en onder de Juggernaut. Idolisering en debunking van Isadora Duncan in de vroeg twintigste-eeuwse periodieke pers," *Interférences littéraires/Literaire interferenties*. Multilingual e-Journal for Literary Studies, No. 7, November, 43-60.

Smit Kleine, F. (1886). *Carmen Sylva (H.M. de Koningin van Rumenië). Haar leven en hare werken beschreven en toegelicht door F. Smit Kleine. Met het portret der Dichteres, afbeelding van het kasteel Pelesch en een facsimile*. Haarlem.

Smit Kleine, Frits (1891). *Schrijvers en schrifturen*. Haarlem.

Soer, Elise (1890). "Carmen Sylva," *Lelie- en Rozeknoppen* 9 (1889-1890), 29 (14 May), 228-231.

Vosmeer de Spie [= Maurits Wagenvoort] (1894), *Louis Couperus en Majesteit*. Amsterdam.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2019). "Die Feder in der Hand bin ich eine ganz andre Person". *Carmen Sylva (1843-1916), Leben und Werk. (= Schriftenreihe der Forschungsstelle Carmen Sylva, Fürstlich-Wiedisches Archiv,* Volume 8.) Stuttgart.

*** Alberdingk Thijm project group (1974). *Al bleef ik eeuwig ongelezen. Tijdgenoten der Tachtigers die Tachtig meden of bestreden. Een bundel romantische en opstandige verzen bijeengebracht door Lukas Peregrijn* [= Alberdingk Thijm project group]. Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, The Hague.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 164-170

Carmen Sylva as the Promoter of Romanian National Heritage in Germany

MIHAELA HRISTEA
Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Bucharest
mihaela.hristea@ucdc.ro

Elisabeth was the first queen of Romania who managed to get out of the anonymity of the daily preoccupations of the court and to get out of the shadow of the king's personality. After the death of her young daughter, Maria, she found solace in literary creation and channeled all her energy into the effort to promote the Romanian culture in Germany and around the world.

Through her numerous writings, Queen Elisabeth of Romania with her full name Elisabeth Pauline Ottilie Luise zu Wied popularized, in Germany, both the Royal Crown and her works. She begins to use in her works the pseudonym Carmen Sylva (The Song of the Forest), which recalls its origin and which, probably, at King Carol's advice, should have made a distinction between the person of the queen and the poet.

Particularly through her volumes published in her native homeland, the author envisioned to achieve a process of mutual influence and communication between the two cultures, Romanian and German. This action is beneficial to Romania, because of the historical context at the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, a troubled period in Europe followed by the First World War.

In the approaches of the two cultures, the woman writer Carmen Sylva was preceded by the translations of the Romanian poets made since the second half of 19th century, especially from the German romantic lyrics of Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Nikolaus Lenau and not of the last of Heinrich Heine. These versions had the role, not only to give European intellectual impulses to the Romanian culture but also to act as a catalyst in the assimilation of new elements. The Romanian romantic poets gave Heinrich Heine a

mythical status, creating a 'Heinean' ideology in the Romanian literature. Likewise, the Romanian translators of the works of the German woman writer with blue blood have tried to equate in the Romanian language as many writings, both to popularize her literary activity and to create a myth of the author in the Romanian culture (Badea-Păun, 2010: 70-71).

Through the translations, the two cultures became entangled and then they influenced each other through a complicated phenomenon of communication and expression or they coexisted as in the case of this author. Some of her anthologies denote the joining of German elements with the Romanian ones so that they contain legends stories or motifs that belong to both cultures.

Her lyrics are written in a romantic style and the poetic universe of her poems presents new aesthetic categories, namely the sublime, the magical, and the creative fantasy. The lyrical confession and the poetic meditation of the author stimulate the readers' imagination and reflection. The author promotes the dream as the only way to escape from everyday life.

The lyrical confession of the writer is, in particular, erotic, but sometimes it is loaded with philosophical conceptions, such as reflections on the genius man, on the time and the universal space.

Although the works of Carmen Sylva in their style are anachronistic and antagonistic concerning the realism and naturalism that manifested in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; they enjoy much popularity. A proof of this is a large number of books published, some in several editions, but also their critical reception.

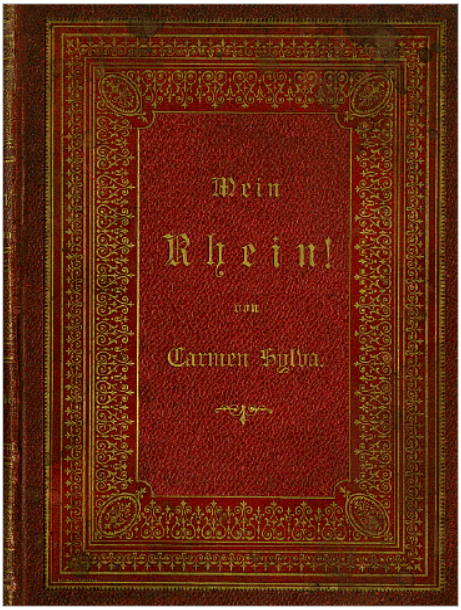
The author's writings fit better through their romantic style in the Romanian literary context of this period, because in Romania the romanticism persisted until near the end of the 19th century. Romantic features are kept in the creation of Romanian writers until the beginning of the twentieth century when the place of romanticism is taken also to us by the new currents. We recognize a romantic thread especially in the lyrics of the minor writers from the crossroads of centuries, then to the *sowing*-poets and the symbolists.

At the beginning of the twentieth century appears new different literature with a much more dramatic focus, in which the realism combines with the tragic characters that faced with situations of deep psychological crisis, especially caused by the Two World Wars.

Printed at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the author's books attempt to create an alliance between Romania and Germany of the time.

The lyrical creations of the queen under a pseudonym took place over almost three decades (1880-1916), and the first literary writings are under the sign of an intense influence of the German tradition, both in terms of form and content (Cioroianu, 2019: 90-91).

The author published in Leipzig for the first time in 1880 two volumes of lyrics namely *Hammerstein* (*Hammer Track*) and *Sappho*. These are mostly written in the romantic style, although some of them still retain a classic reminiscence through the prediction for perfect forms, with rhythm and rhyme. The historical epic poems, *Sappho* and *Hammerstein*, which were included in the volume of poems *Stürme* (*Storms*) published in Bonn in 1881. The following year it is printed the book with the title *Jehovah* (in two editions, one in Leipzig and the other in Bonn). In the same year, in Berlin, there were published two novels, namely *Die Hexe* (*The Witch*), *Ein Gebet* (*A prayer*), and an anthology of stories entitled *Leidens Erdengang* (*The Pilgrim Sorrow*). *The Witch* and *Jehovah* are characterized by fantastic motifs, fairy tale-specific elements, the history of religion, and mythical aspects.



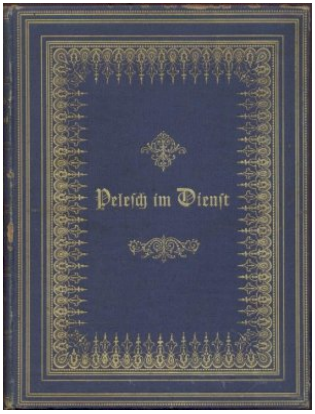
The volume of poems, *Mein Rhein!* (*My Rhine!*) is printed in Leipzig and it is a nostalgically evocation of the legendary German river (another edition of this book also appears in Berlin). The volume *Mein Buch* (*My Book*) is published in Düsseldorf in the same year and also contains some poems of the author.

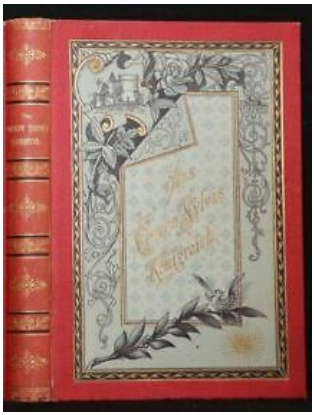
In the following year they are printed at Berlin four volumes of the poems, namely: *Balladen und Romanzen* (*Ballads and Romances*), *Hohen*

und Tiefen (*Heights and Depths*), *Mutter und Kind* (*Mother and Child*) and *Weltweisheit* (*The Wisdom of the World*).

In *Mutter und Kind* (*Mother and Child*) there are lyrics that denote emotional romantic accents. Carmen Sylva evokes in these poems the grief of the child and the unconditional love of the mother for the baby.

In 1885 it appears in Bonn the volume of novels *Durch die Jahrhunderte* (*Through the Centuries*) dedicated to Vasile Alecsandri, a close friend of the writer. This book is an anthology of the history of Romania which is written on the childbearing and in which besides the stories of the lived battles there appear also many Romanian legends.





In 1887, it is printed in Regensburg the novel *Es klopft* (*Knock at the Door*) and the next year, it is published in Bonn, the volume of stories *Pelesch in Dienst* (*Serving the Peleş Castle*) in which the author describes both the routine of life at the royal courtyard and especially all the events that determined her to establish her residence at the Peleş castle, which he loved very much as we understand from another book about Peleş respectively (*Peleş Stories*) which was printed in several editions, first of them appearing in 1882. The book, *Peleş Stories*, is an anthology of stories and legends where we find both Romanian but also German popular motifs. Through this work, the queen made it easier for readers from abroad to get to know the exotic and mysterious Romanian landscape at the foot of the Carpathians. The work represents from a literary point of view, a successful symbiosis between German and Romanian motifs from folk tales, as well as a success, in terms of cultural mediation.

In the period 1884-1889 she published novels and volumes of short stories in collaboration with the Mite Kremnitz (1852-1916), a woman writer in Romania of German origin. The novels are

conceived in epistolary form and remain a literary success of the two writers. The queen's collaboration with Mite became known to the public under the pseudonym "Dito and Idem". Carmen Sylva had a preference for autobiographical themes, human nature, women in the family and society, marriage, motherhood, moods, season, suffering out of love, discord of society, and matters of faith. The success of the first novels written in collaboration with Mite increased the respect with which Carmen Sylva was seen as an author and mediator between cultures.

Carmen Sylva published then in 1890 in Berlin the volume *Ilustrierte Quartausgabe* (*The forth illustrated edition*), and in Bonn, the novel *Deficit* and the play *Frauenmuth* (*The Courage of the Woman*). Next year, in Leipzig, it was published the volume of thoughts *Gedanken Büchlein. Gedanken aus Carmen Sylva's Werken* (*The Little Book of Thoughts. Reflection from Carmen Sylva's Works*) which will be published in a new edition in Regensburg, in 1903.

Three volumes of poems are printed in Bonn in 1891, respectively: *Handwerkslieder* (*Songs of Craftsmen*), *Heimat* (*The Homeland*) and *Meerslieder* (*Songs of the Sea*). Carmen Sylva uses in these books romantic themes and motifs combining the nostalgia with huge humanitarianism. In the poems of these anthologies, the author evokes both the love for the homeland of the persons who left away with nostalgia and longing for the native land, but also the admiration for the beauty of the sea. They express also the compassion for those who earn their bread with the sweat of their hands. In *Songs of the Sea*, the author evokes with admiration the immensity of the water and the unlimited space and she projects on this background her philosophical conceptions on the human being, on its life, and its ephemerality.

In 1892, Carmen Sylva published in Bonn the four-act tragedy *Meister Manole* (*The Master Builder Manole*) which has as a model the Romanian popular ballad folk poem *Monastirea Argeşului* (*The Monastery on the Argeş River*).

In the last part of her life, the writer loses her lyricism and dedicates herself mostly to confession and memories. In 1900 she published in Bonn the volume of confessions *Seelen Gespräche* (*Words Spoken from the soul/ Soul Conversations*) and the one entitled *Thou*.

Carmen Sylva wrote two volumes, one of the stories with the title *Märchen* (*Stories*) and the other entitled *Märchen einer Hönigin* (*The Stories of a Queen*) which she published in Bonn in 1901. In the same year there were published two other books, one of poems *Blutstrophen*

(*Sprinkles of Blood*) and the other, an anthology that comprises the most important confessions from the author's works bearing the suggestive title *Mozaick* (*Mosaic*).

In 1902, the writer published in Berlin the novel *Es ist vollbracht* (*It Has Been Fulfilled*), a work that marked a significant moment in her literary journey by showcasing her refined narrative voice and spiritual themes. The publication was well-received in German literary circles, reflecting the author's growing stature beyond the Romanian borders. The following year, in 1903, the volume *Unter der Blume* (*In Bloom*) appeared in Regensburg. This collection deepened her poetic engagement with nature and emotional symbolism, offering a delicate exploration of inner life through the lens of floral imagery, a theme often dear to her sensibilities. That same year, 1903, the city of Leipzig saw the release of her introspective work *Geflüsterte Wörter* (*Whispered Words*), a volume of confessions that opened a rare and intimate window into the writer's personal reflections, spiritual doubts, and poetic meditations. In 1904, Carmen Sylva further broadened her literary scope by publishing a Romanian novel in German titled *In der Lunca* (*In the Meadow*). Dedicated to her close friend and national composer George Enescu, the novel blended folklore, musicality, and lyrical descriptions of the Romanian countryside, reflecting both her cultural diplomacy and her artistic kinship with Enescu.

The year 1905 brought another notable publication, *Rheintochters Donaufahrt* (*The Trip on the Danube of the Rhine's Daughter*), released once again in Regensburg. This work is a nostalgic and elegiac evocation of the Romanian landscape, viewed through the metaphorical eyes of a Rhine maiden traveling along the Danube. Combining myth, memory, and nature writing, the volume stands as a poetic tribute to the Danubian world and to Romania, a land that had become a second home to the writer-queen.

Towards the end of her life, in 1908, the queen turned to memoir with the deeply personal volume *Mein Penatenwinkel* (*The Corner of My Penances*), which was published in Frankfurt. This final work serves as a literary sanctuary, a place where she recorded her memories, reflections, and regrets with a blend of humility and grace. It encapsulates the wisdom of a life lived between art and duty, capturing not only her personal struggles but also the spiritual strength that defined her enduring legacy as both a queen and a writer.

In 1912, Carmen Sylva published in Leipzig the novels *Aus dem Leben* (*From life*) and another book which contains her correspondence *Bridge einer einsamen Königin* (*Letters of a Solitary Queen*).

Most of Carmen Sylva's works which are written in the German language were translated into Romanian still during the author's lifetime. From the best translators of her books we can mention St. O. Iosif, Livia Maiorescu, Liviu Rebreanu, Mihail Sadoveanu, George Coşbuc, Elena Poenaru, Adrian Maniu, A. Toma, Ighel Deleanu and Al Tzigara-Samurcaş (Podlipny – Athen, 2001: 80-81).

The works of Carmen Sylva, especially those published in Germany, constituted a bridge between the two cultures. To this intercultural mediation, the author contributed with her translation from the poems of the well-known Romanian poets of that time, respectively Mihai Eminescu and Vasile Alecsandri, but also the Romanian popular lyrics (Zimmermann, 2013: 55-56).

Carmen Sylva was a poet, prose writer, essayist, memoirist of German and Romanian expression and at the same time a literary translator in the Romanian and European cultural landscape from the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Through her many works Carmen Sylva had a big influence on the promotion of the Romanian culture not only in Germany, but also in the entire world.

REFERENCES

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2010). *Carmen Sylva, uimitoarea regină Elisabeta a României (1843-1916)* (*Carmen Sylva, the Astonishing Queen Elisabeth of Romania*). Translated from French by Irina-Margareta Nistor. Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House.

Cioroianu, Adrian (2019). *Elisabeta, Carmen Sylva. Prima regină a României. Suverana artistă.* (*Elisabeth, Carmen Sylva. The First Queen of Romania. The Artist Sovereign.* Bucharest, Curtea Veche.

Podlipny – Athen, Annemarie (2001). *Carmen Sylva*. Translated from German by Marlen Heckmann Negrescu. Timișoara, Solness Publishing.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2013). *Regina poetă Carmen Sylva. Literatura în serviciul coroanei*. Cu o prefață de A.S.R. Principele Radu al României, traducere din germană de Monica Livia Grigore, cu numeroase fotografii din Arhiva Princiară de Wied din Neuwied. (*The Poet Queen Carmen Sylva. Literature in the Service of the Crown.* With a preface by H.R.H. Prince Radu of Romania, translated from German by Monica Livia Grigore, with numerous photographs from the Princely Archive of Wied in Neuwied.) Bucharest, All.

Part 2.

Crossroads of Literary Innovation and Artistic Collaboration

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 173-183

Literary and Decorative Art Works of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva) during Her Exile (1891–1894)

SILVIA IRINA ZIMMERMANN
Research Center Carmen Sylva of the Princely Archive of Wied, Neuwied
silvia.irina.zimmermann@gmx.de

Introduction

In Queen Elisabeth's letters to King Charles I of Romania, during her exile from 1891 to 1894, she is referring to several literary and decorative art works elaborated by her during this period. At the beginning of her exile, the queen declared to her husband, the King, that her activity as a writer and poet had ended, and that she would only prepare her lately written works for a publication. Still, the documents held in the Princely Archive of Wied and the National Archives of Romania show that the queen was writing further prose and poetry, fictionalizing her reflection of the exile experience, and some of the works created by the Queen during her exile were published later, after her return to Romania, under her pen name Carmen Sylva.

The exile letters of the queen to King Charles I also mention some decorative artworks of the queen created during this time, which are kept today in Romanian museums. During the exile spent by Queen Elisabeth at Pallanza, from September 1891 until June 1892, André Lecomte du Noüy, the architect and conservator of the Royal House of Romania, supervised the painting activity of the queen. Lecomte collaborated with the queen in some of her literary and decorative art works, and he illustrated a children's book of the queen, created at Pallanza and published first in Bucharest in 1898 – a fact widely unknown before the published edition of the German correspondence of the first royal couple of Romania (2018).

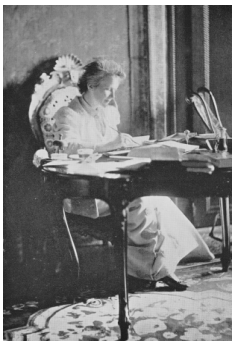


Image 1: Queen Elisabeth at Venice, Hotel Danieli, summer 1891 (from: Burgoyne, 1941).

Queen Elisabeth of Romania is widely known as a poet and writer under her pen name Carmen Sylva and as a promoter of Romanian culture, especially of literature, arts and music. Her biography shows a break in the years from 1891 to 1894, when she lived outside Romania, the first year in Italy and then in Germany, at her family's residence in Neuwied. The queen's interference in the marriage of the hereditary prince of Romania, Ferdinand, with Elena Văcărescu, a descendent of a Romanian noble family – a marriage not accepted by the political class in Romania by that time – had led to a major conflict and domestic disturbance between King Carol and Queen Elisabeth.[1]

When the queen left to Venice for the summer holidays in 1891, she was suffering from a paralysis of her legs. Eventually, the King decided to separate her from Elena Văcărescu and to move her to Pallanza, in order to recover there. Because she still did not get well, the queen was then led to stay with her family in Germany, in order to get well there. Finally, it took more than 3 years for the queen to able to walk again, and thus she returned to Romania in September 1894.

The Italian and the German periods of the queen's exile are as follows: Venice: from July 1891 to September 1891; Pallanza: from September 1891 to June 1892 and Segenhaus (near Neuwied, Germany): from June 1892 until July 1894.

Literary Works of the Queen during her Exile:

Published volumes in the exile years 1891-1894:
1891: *Heimath* (Home) and *Meerlieder* (Songs of the Sea), both poem books were written before her exile, but published at Bonn in 1891. *Weihnachtskerzchen von Pallanza* (Little Christmas Candles from Pallanza) – a poem book written and published at Pallanza, editore Vercellini in December 1891. The book was a gift for friends and family for Christmas and it contains many poems about Christmas in German, French, English and Romanian.
1892: *Meister Manole* (Master Manole, stage play): the German manuscript was corrected at Pallanza in 1892 and published in Bonn in 1892.
1893: *Um ein paar Stiefelchen* (A Pair of Boots) is a German stage play published at Neuwied in 1893.

Works in manuscript, prepared during the exile period for a later publication:

Monsieur Hampelmann – a fairy tale, written at Pallanza from 1891 to 1892 and illustrated by André Lecomte du Noüy, conservator of the Royal Court of Romania. The first edition of the book was published in 1898 in Bucharest.



Image 2: Facsimile from the first edition of the book *Monsieur Hampelmann* by Carmen Sylva [text] and André Lecomte du Nouy [illustrations], dating by the illustrator on the last picture: *Pallanza 7 avril 1892* (private collection Silvia Irina Zimmermann).

Geflüsterte Worte (*Whispered Words*) - The French writer Pierre Loti, who visited the queen in Venice in the summer 1891, mentioned in his journal a manuscript of a "book of the soul" ("Livre de l'âme"), and he said that the manuscript got lost.[2] But this book was published in German after the Queen's return to Romania, the first volume in 1903 in Regensburg, and the following volumes from 1906 to 1912.

Das Leben meines Bruders Otto (*The Life of my Brother Otto*): an autobiographical book about the short life of the youngest brother of the queen, Prince Otto Nicholas of Wied, who was born in 1850 with an organic malformation and who died in 1862.

Decorative Art Works of the Queen during her Exile:
Queen Elisabeth received painting lessons and advice from several professional painters during her exile period:

At Pallanza from the architect and conservator André Lecomte du Noüy, of whom I will talk later in detail.

Also at Pallanza, the queen painted together with Sophie Browne, Countess Sofia Della Valle di Casanova, who also was a painter. Sofia Browne was living in the Vila Remigio at Pallanza, where she and her husband Count Silvio Della Valle di Casanova had designed their own ideal garden.

The Queen wrote to King Carol from Pallanza on the 18th of March 1892: "We are all working a lot for mother's bazaar, we are painting on wood and on stone, Lecomte Sophy Browne and I, and I shall send a huge amount of things. I am working in my bed, because I am feeling too weak to stand up."[3]

At Segenhaus, the queen got painting lessons from Marie von Bunsen in September 1892 (and for a brief stay in August 1893). Marie von Bunsen was a German watercolour painter, a traveller and writer. The Queen wrote to King Carol from Segenhaus, on 14th of September 1892: "It is a great joy to savour everything together with a real artist like Marie Bunsen. She never escapes any spot of colour. […] Now I can go wild with colour as I did last winter with Sophy Browne."[4]

Also at Segenhaus, from August till September 1893, another painter visited the queen and offered painting advice: Kate Bisschop-Swift, an English born Dutch painter, who was married with the Dutch painter Christoffle Bisschop. The Dutch painters Christophle Bisschop und Kate Bisschop-Swift had also painted a portrait of Queen Elisabeth in Romanian costume in 1883. The Princely Archive of Wied holds a photography[5] of the Dutch painter couple Christophle Bisschop und Kate Bisschop-Swift together with André Lecomte du

Noüy, the French architect who served King Carol of Romania as a conservator of different monuments, like the Monastery of Curtea de Argeş. The architect has also been a guest of the queen in Neuwied in August 1890, at the anniversary of Prince Wilhelm of Wied, Queen Elisabeth's brother.

The Queen's Collaboration with André Lecomte du Noüy during Her Exile at Pallanza from 1891 to 1892

The architect and conservator André Lecomte du Noüy visited the queen and stayed with her at Pallanza for 7 months: from October 1891 until the end of April 1892.The Queen wrote about André Lecomte du Noüy in her letters from Pallanza to King Carol, and here are some examples:

On November, 25th 1891: "The best thing is when I am painting or singing. The work on the gospel book is moving on fast, under Lecomte's advice."[6]



Image 3: André Lecomte du Noüy and Queen Elisabeth of Romania in her painting workroom in Castle Pelesch (from: Damé, 1907).

On December, 31st 1891: "I have now recovered again from Christmas, but I am not allowed to make any efforts, my hands, my back, head and eyes deny every service. [..] I am not doing anything, just lying on the sofa, while Lecomte is painting for me, Catherine is writing my letters at the window, and Bungert [the musician] is composing the Christmas songs at the grand piano."[7]

On March, 16th 1892: "I cannot miss Lecomte yet, for he is reading to me for hours, the most beautiful, noble and sublime things. I couldn't bear the narrow mindedness, I never could."[8]

After Lecomte's leave, the Queen writes to King Carol, on April, 28th 1892: "I miss Lecomte very much because of his clarity and finesse."[9]

During the exile period at Pallanza, André Lecomte du Noüy painted a miniature portrait of the Queen, according to the King's mention in his journal from 20th April 1892: "Received from Elisabeth a painted flower of ivory and her portrait painted by Lecomte."[10]

Some of the works of decorative arts created by the queen during her exile period:

The Gospel Book of Curtea de Argeş, 1886–1892: At Pallanza, the queen painted some more parchment pages with gospel texts from the Bible, ornaments and miniatures in the style of the Middle-Age Gospel books. The actual owner of the Gospel Book is the Monastery Curtea de Argeş. One example for a page created during the exile period is the page number 50 of the Gospel Book[11] with the miniatures of the builders of the church: Prince Negoe Basarab and the architect, Master Builder Manole ("Pietro Manolo"), and the conservators King Carol I of Romania, and architect André Lecomte du Noüy.

In a letter of the Queen from November 1891 from Pallanza she wrote to the King her initial idea for this parchment page: "I painted with joy for the first time yesterday, and I made Lecomte's head for the Gospel Book. For the first time I painted after nature and not after a photography, and I was so much delighted upon the richness of colours, that Lecomte was pleased, too, to sit for me. Everyone is saying, the miniature portrait looks very alike him. And now, there comes Manole from my memory, as a *pendant*, on top Neagoe and Despina, in the middle both of us, and all around the legend of Manole painted in *camajeux*. It might become a beautiful page."[12] Eventually, the queen did not add the wives of the princes, Despina and herself as Queen of Romania, as she first intended – maybe it was because she was an exile queen by that time. Thus, the result of this page is much soberer and prosaic with the gospel text in the middle, and surrounded by the flower ornaments and the four portrait medallions.

The Marble Top of a Table for King Carol I from 1892: was a gift for King Carol at his visit at Segenhaus in June 22nd 1892. The currently owner of the table is the Peleş Castle Museum.[13] From Pallanza on 28th April 1892, Queen Elisabeth wrote as follows to the king: "During the last weeks, I was very busy with the bazaar in Neuwied and with a surprise for you."[14] In July 1892 Elisabeth was

also painting another marble top for a table for the Grand Duchess Luise of Baden, as she wrote in a letter to the king.[15]

About Lecomte's instructing the queen in oil painting, the queen wrote further: "You could take a photography of the table I painted for you. If you see Lecomte, tell him that I am hoping to bring honour to my excellent master teacher of last winter. I draw very carefully, as he showed me. Now, I realize how much I have learned from him. Every walk with him was a lecture in history of art, and in observing and reproducing the nature. Thus, I completely forgot my wheel chair and my pains."[16]

An Ivory Sheet painted with Song Notes and Lyrics, 1892: This was a gift for the anniversary of her brother, Prince Wilhelm of Wied, in August 1892 (currently in a private collection).[17]

The "Wanderstab" - Book (i.e. walking stick), **1892**: was a wedding gift for Crown Princess Maria of Romania. The book contains ivory plates painted with quotes and miniatures in the style of the Gospel Book of Curtea de Argeş. The gold cover is made by the German goldsmith Hermeling from Köln. The currently owner is the History Museum in Bucharest.[18]

The Baptismal Lace-Cover for Prince Carol, 1893. The currently owner is the Peleş Castle Museum.[19]

The Ornamental Wood Plates with Quotes from the Bible and Floral Ornaments were a gift of the queen for the Church in Niederbiber (near Neuwied, Germany). The queen painted them during her exile period at Segenhaus from 1892 to 1894. These plates are currently lost (they were hanging on the walls in the Church Niederbiber until 1935).

A Prayer Book for King Carol I from 1894 was a gift for the silver wedding (25th anniversary of their wedding on 15th November 1894). It was written and painted in the style of the Gospel Book of Curtea de Argeş and had a leather cover. It was mentioned by the writer Paul Lindenberg in his book *Castle Peleş and His Inhabitants*,[20] and by the time of the royal couple Carol and Elisabeth this book lay on the praying desk in the chapel near the royal bedroom in Peleş Castle. Apparently the book is not available at the Peleş Castle any more, and thus the currently owner is unknown.

Monsieur Hampelmann, written in 1892, is a fairy tale book for children, in 4 languages (German, Romanian, French and English, in the same book), with handwritten pages in German and a cover illustration by the queen Carmen Sylva, and with illustrations by André Lecomte du Noüy. The book was first published some years

later, after the return of the queen to Romania, in 1898 in Bucharest. In her exile-letters to the king, Queen Elisabeth mentions this book, and that she has finished it already during her exile period at Pallanza. Thus, on 12th December 1892 she writes: "I have written, painted and translated Hampelmann for the Otto-House, who is in debt."[21] The Otto-House was an orphanage in Neuwied, named after her youngest brother, who died in 1862.

Conclusions

The collaboration with André Lecomte du Noüy is the most important for the exile period of the Queen, as he helped her to create the most beautiful works of decorative arts she realized during this period. Thus, it would be interesting to search further details about the collaboration of André Lecomte du Noüy with the royal couple in the letters and documents of the conservator and to add new information about it. There are still too little facts known about the work of the conservator André Lecomte du Noüy and about his relation to the royal couple. In addition, there are only few facts known about the contribution of his brother, the painter Jean-Jules Lecomte du Noüy, during his stay in Romania in 1895 and 1897, who was mistaken as the collaborator of the book of the queen's *Monsieur Hampelmann* in the recently published literature about the painter. The conservator of the Romanian Court, André Lecomte du Noüy, first introduced his brother, the painter Jean-Jules Lecomte du Noüy, to the royal couple of Romania in 1895, when he was on his way to Constantinople and had taken a short stay to also visit his brother (as all the bibliographical sources mention this).[22] Elizabeth Bourgoyne (a biographer of Queen Elisabeth of Romania) explained in her book how the Queen named the two Lecomte-brothers in order to differentiate between them: "When the Queen speaks of the Lecomte du Nouÿs, she calls André 'Lecomte' and the painter 'du Nouÿ'."[23]

Despite her illness during her exile, Queen Elisabeth of Romania worked on several literary texts and decorative works, and many objects were meant for the charitable bazaars in Neuwied. Nevertheless, some of her decorative art works are nowadays on exhibition in Romanian museums. The most important works of the queen remain the Gospel Book at the Monastery of Curtea de Argeş (1886-1894), the miniature book *Wanderstab* (1892), held in the treasure house of the Romanian History Museum in Bucharest, the table with marble top and the baptismal lace-cover for Prince Carol in

the Museum of the Peleş Castle. They all show that the queen was not inactive during her exile period, but tried to work further, demonstrating her willingness to return from the exile and back to Romania and to serve the country as a queen again. The literary and decorative art works are thus a testimony for this extremely dramatic period in the life of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva).

NOTES

1. See the German correspondence of Queen Elisabeth an King Carol I of Romania during this period, in: Silvia Irina Zimmermann (editor): "*In zärtlicher Liebe Deine Elisabeth*" – "*Stets Dein treuer Carl*". *Der Briefwechsel Elisabeths zu Wied (Carmen Sylva) mit ihrem Gemahl Carol I. von Rumänien aus dem Rumänischen Nationalarchiv in Bukarest. 1869–1913*. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Schriftenreihe der Forschungsstelle Carmen Sylva/ Fürstlich Wiedisches Archiv, 2 volumes: Vol. I: 1869–1890; Vol. II: 1891–1913, Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2018.

2. Pierre Loti wrote in his *Diary* on August, 14th, 1891, in Venice: "*Le livre de l'âme*! Je regardais le manuscrit inachevé, sur la table de la souveraine, sorte de chant de cygne, chef-d'œuvre de douleur, qui n'aura jamais été entendu que d'un tout petit nombre d'initiés, – et dont les feuilles peut-être ont été détruits déjà par des mains de pharisiens." (Quella-Villégier, A., Vercier, B., Pierre Loti, Journal, vol. III, 2012, 387).

3. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 119.

4. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 185.

5. Published in: Zimmermann, 2017b, page 27 and 2017c, page 96. Also published in Willscheid, 2016, 68.

6. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 85.

7. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 107.

8. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 118.

9. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 131.

10. Docea, 2014, 297.

11. I owe many thanks for the images of the *Gospel Book* to Ms. Carmen Tanasoiu, who published recently an article about the *Gospel Book* in a monography about the Monastery of Curtea de Argeş, 2015, 94–125.

12. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 80–81.

13. See a photograph of the table and the marble top published in the catalogue of the Peleş Museum: *Regina Elisabeta a României*, 2016, 207.

14. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 131.

15. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 142.

16. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 142.

17. See photography of the ivory sheet published in: Willscheid, 2016, 21.

18. Muzeul Naţional de Istorie a României (Muzeul virtual): http://www.muzeulvirtual.ro/zoom?id=9#145 date of access: 03.03.2018.

Queen Elisabeth (Carmen Sylva) also encouraged Crown Princess Marie of Romania to write literature and they both published several fairy tales, essays and novels in British and American editions. Zimmermann, 2020, 7-79.

19. See photography published on the cover of the catalogue of the Museum: *Regina Elisabeta şi Arta Dantelei cu Suveica*, 2011.

20. Lindenberg, 1913, 131.

21. Zimmermann, 2018, vol. II, 254.

22. More about the book *Monsieur Hampelmann* in: Zimmermann, 2017a: http://revista.biblacad.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_2_1_10.pdf (18.3.2018)

23. Burgoyne, 1941, note 1, 180.

REFERENCES

Burgoyne, Elizabeth (1941). *Carmen Sylva. Queen and Woman*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.

Damé, Frédéric (1907). *Bucarest en 1906*. Bucureşti: Socec.

Docea, Vasile (ed.) (2014). Regele Carol I al României (King Charles I of Romania), *Jurnal*. *1888–1891*, volumul 2. Iaşi: Polirom.

Lindenberg, Paul (1913). *Schloss Pelesch und seine Bewohner*. Berlin: Otto v. Holten.

Quella-Villégier, Alain, Vercier, Bruno (ed.) (2012). Pierre Loti: *Journal. 1887-1895*, vol. III. Paris: Les Indes savantes.

Regina Elisabeta şi Arta Dantelei cu Suveica (2011). Catalogul expoziţiei Muzeului Naţional Peleş, Sinaia. (Elisabeth, Queen, and the Art of Shuttle Tatting (2011). Exhibition Catalogue of the Peleş National Museum, Sinaia.)

Regina Elisabeta a României. Un secol de eternitate. (*Queen Elisabeth of Romania. A Century of Eternity*) (2016). Catalogul expoziţiei Muzeului Naţional Peleş, Sinaia.

Schmidt, H. E., Radetzky, E. (eds.) (1999). *Die Förderung von Kultur und Bildung in Rumänien durch die Königin Elisabeta geb. Prinzessin zu Wied "Carmen Sylva" (1843–1916). Eine Grenzgängerin zwischen zwei Kulturen*, vol. II, Neuwied.

Sylva, Carmen (1892). *Meister Manole*. Bonn: Strauss.

Sylva, Carmen (1908). *Mein Penatenwinkel*. Frankfurt: Minjon.

Sylva, Carmen (2003). *Colţul penaţilor mei* (*The Corner of My Penates*). Translation in Romanian by Dumitru Hîncu, Bucharest: Vivaldi Publishing House, vo1. 1: 2002, vol. 2.

Sylva, Carmen, Lecomte [du Noüy], André (1898). *Monsieur Hampelmann*. Ediţia princeps. Bucharest: Carol Göbl.

Tănăsoiu, Carmen (2015). "Evanghelia de la Curtea de Argeş scrisă şi pictată de Regina Elisabeta a României" ("The Gospel of Curtea de Argeş, Written and Illustrated by Queen Elisabeth of Romania"), *Catedrala Manastirii Argeşului. Crestomaţie de studii şi documente*. Curtea de Argeş: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Argeşului şi Muscelului, 94–125.

Willscheid, Bernd (ed.) (2016). *Carmen Sylva. Eine Königin aus Neuwied*. Roentgen-Museum, Neuwied.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina, Willscheid, Bernd (eds.) (2016). *Heimweh ist Jugendweh. Kindheits - und Jugenderinnerungen der Elisabeth zu Wied (Carmen Sylva)*, Schriftenreihe der Forschungsstelle Carmen Sylva, Fürstlich Wiedisches Archiv, Band 4. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2017). "Exilul Reginei Elisabeta a României şi prelucrarea lui literară într-o carte de poveşti ilustrată împreună cu André Lecomte du Noüy" ("The Exile of Queen Elisabeth of Romania and Its Literary Reworking in an Illustrated Storybook Together with André Lecomte du Noüy"), *Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române*, Anul 2, Nr. 1, 133–150.

http://revista.biblacad.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/ 09/2017_2_1_10.pdf

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (ed.) (2017). Carmen Sylva & André Lecomte du Nouy: *Monsieur Hampelmann - Domnul Pulcinel. Ein Märchen aus der Exilzeit der Königin Elisabeth von Rumänien. O poveste din timpul exilului Reginei Elisabeta a României*, Schriftenreihe der Forschungsstelle Carmen Sylva, Fürstlich Wiedisches Archiv, Bd. 5. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (ed.) (2017). *Domnul Pulcinel. O poveste a Reginei Elisabeta a României (Carmen Sylva). With illustration by André Lecomte du Noüy*. Bucharest, Vremea.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (ed.) (2018). "*In zärtlicher Liebe Deine Elisabeth*" – "*Stets Dein treuer Carl*". *Der Briefwechsel Elisabeths zu Wied (Carmen Sylva) mit ihrem Gemahl Carol I. von Rumänien aus dem Rumänischen Nationalarchiv in Bukarest*. 1869-1913. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Schriftenreihe der Forschungsstelle Carmen Sylva/ Fürstlich Wiedisches Archiv, 2 volumes: Vol. I: 1869–1890; Vol. II: 1891–1913, Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (ed.) (2020). *The Child of the Sun: Royal Fairy Tales and Essays by the Queens of Romania*, Elisabeth (Carmen Sylva, 1843-1916) and Marie (1875-1938). Selected and edited, with an introduction and bibliography by Silvia Irina Zimmermann. Series of the Research Center Carmen Sylva - Princely Archive of Wied, vol. 9, Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag (Ibidem Press & Columbia University Press).

*** Arhivele Naţionale ale României (*The National Archives of Romani*a), Bucharest, Fundaţia Casa Regală, Regele Carol I and Regina Elisabeta, *personal correspondence*.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 184-207

'La femme du monde est difficilement la femme de son mari': the artistic collaboration of Dora Hitz and Carmen Sylva

NATALIE GUTGESELL
Coburg
info@nataliegutgesell.de

SHONA KALLESTRUP
University of St Andrews
sk61@st-andrews.ac.uk

I am absolutely convinced that the exercise of a profession – which is an intellectual act – demands absolutely everything of a human, both physically and mentally. Dora Hitz [1]

I think that I am first a wife, then the mother of my country, and then a poetess. Carmen Sylva [2]

Introduction

The artistic collaboration of Carmen Sylva and the Bavarian painter Dora Hitz is not widely known*. Yet it offers a fascinating instance of the European artistic circulations which underpinned late nineteenth-century art and which are now being used to challenge the selective and national constructs of art history's traditional canons. At the same time, it allows reflection on the challenges facing professional women artists in the period, obstacles that have impacted their place in history ever since. Bringing to light Hitz's œuvre in Romania, this article focuses in particular on the series of paintings she executed after Carmen Sylva's writings for the Queen's music room in Castle Peleș in the 1880s. It argues that the paintings not only show a transnational awareness of European developments, but also map Sylva's constant preoccupation with the role of women in the arts.

Both Hitz and Sylva left thoughtful reflections on the challenges – and sacrifices – of being a female artist in the late nineteenth century. Commenting on the impossibility of being simultaneously a wife and painter, Hitz explained her decision to forego marriage and focus

solely on her professional career: 'The trial to fulfill one or the other task will definitely lead to failure, or – what is even worse – you will not satisfy even half of the demands on yourself. Each side needs the whole person.' In addition, she noted the importance for a woman artist of being financially secure:

> Young women and girls who have in mind to devote themselves to art, should in my view only do so when they do not have to worry about earning their living. Many talented female artists have had to deny themselves and paint in order to earn a living and are totally dependent on popular preferences.[3]

Carmen Sylva, in contrast, was in the rare position of being both a writer and the consort of King Carol I, which meant that while she had the means and leisure to practise, she had to prioritise her duties to her husband and country as the symbolic 'mother' of Romania. She drily encapsulated the situation in *Thoughts of a Queen*: 'The profession of Queen demands but three qualities: Beauty, bounty, and fecundity', further stating – not without irony – that, 'To be the friend of a sovereign you must be without passion, without ambition, without egotism, clear-sighted and far-sighted; in short, not a man'.[4] That passion, ambition and egotism – vital correlates of the successful artist – were considered male prerogatives demonstrates the difficulties facing female artists, automatically excluded from the pantheon of 'genius' and relegated to the ranks of the amateur, dilettante, or practitioner of 'minor' arts.

Omission from the canon and new frameworks for analysis

While Sylva and Hitz were well-respected figures in the literary and artistic milieux of their day, both women's work has suffered from the vagaries of history. Sylva's multi-lingual writings, in her time internationally circulated and widely cited, have only recently begun to see revived interest.[5] Hitz, a professional artist, court painter, active member of the Parisian art scene, founder of her own art school, co-founder of the Berlin Secession and committee member of the *Frauenkunstverband*, has likewise been a victim of changing tastes. The political erasures of communism have also played a part, since Hitz's most important body of work was for the Romanian royal family, with Castle Peleș in Sinaia holding the largest collection of her paintings in the world. With the regime change after the Second World War, Carmen Sylva was gradually written out of Romanian

history books, while Hitz's works were classified as 'paintings without value' in the 1948 inventory of the royal collection. Little recognised even in her hometown of Altdorf, near Nuremberg, Hitz's œuvre, like that of Sylva, merits re-inscription. But what is the best framework for doing this? Canonical art and literary histories offer little space to such figures. Not sufficiently avant-garde, too closely associated with the establishment, they have been relegated to the morass of the 'not-quite', operating in the field of humdrum nineteenth-century romanticism, sentimentalism and academicism. As those working in so-called 'peripheral' areas know, canonical frameworks cannot do justice to work that does not overtly respond to their criteria of subversion, formal complexity and originality. This is a problem long highlighted by feminist critics who have argued that the social conditions of women artists and writers have persistently excluded them from master narratives.

In the search for alternatives to exclusionary canons and hierarchical models of centre and periphery, recent years have seen the development of more fluid methodologies that try to engage with the gaps in history and acknowledge diversity. For example, by reframing liminal spaces in a positive way, there is now increasing focus on concepts of circulations and cross-border flows that highlight exchange and reciprocity.[6] Another approach, related to reception theory, thinks about the 'lives of things', engaging with both the materiality and the biography of artworks in order to explore their meanings to different people at different times. One positive outcome of all this has been a new consideration of artists who previously slipped through the nets of both national/geographical art histories and international surveys, either by virtue of being too transnational, or because their production did not fulfill formalist criteria of analysis. Hitz is a case in point. Despite the significant body of work she produced in relation to Romania, she does not fit comfortably into Romanian art histories. Although praised internationally in her day, she has not been recognised to any extent by German or French art historians.[7]

Our aim is to address Hitz's works for Sylva not in relation to some wider canon, vertical criteria or relationship to a perceived 'centre', but in terms of the context of their production and the transnational circulations that underpinned them. Painted for a German patron, but infused with awareness of French artistic developments, they were significantly positioned at the heart of Castle Peleș, the so-called 'cradle' of the new dynasty and young Romania.[8] As an example of the period's lively, pan-European flow of artists and

ideas, they challenge art history's tendency to separate and hierarchise East and West. On a more private level, they also relate to Sylva's personal world of art, suffering and literary catharsis. Central to our endeavour is the recovery of Hitz's works with clear or probable reference to Romania and her friendship with Sylva: forty have been identified so far and are listed at the end of this article. These range from book illustrations, to genre paintings of Romanian peasants, to a major cycle of works for Sylva's music room in Peleş, which will form our main focus.

Early Collaboration

Emilia Barbara Dorothea Hitz (1853–1924) was the second child of the painter Johannes Hitz and his wife Anna Elisabeth Meyer. From the age of thirteen she studied at the Munich Art School for Girls, as well as in the private studio of Wilhelm Lindenschmit the Younger. She came to Carmen Sylva's attention at the 1876 Art and Industry Exhibition in Munich where the Princess bought her painting *Still Life with Roses* (now lost). A friendship was formed and Sylva invited the young artist to come to Romania to paint at her court.[9] The impetuosity of this offer – to a little-known, twenty-three-year old female artist – says much about Sylva's personality. At this point, Sylva had been in Romania, then still not an independent kingdom, for barely six years. The country's art scene (in the western sense of the term), the court and the royal palaces were all in their infancy, with the foundation stone of Peleş laid only the previous year. In Bucharest Sylva employed Hitz to teach painting and drawing at the Elisabeth Athenaeum near Cotroceni, an institute she had set up to train the most talented pupils of the Elena Doamna Orphanage.

Few works have emerged from this first stay in Romania (1878–82). The most significant seem to have been six watercolour illustrations painted in 1879 for Sylva's now lost cycle of poems *Ada*. In 1881 Sylva gave these to Auguste Viktoria of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg on the occasion of her wedding to the future Emperor Wilhelm II.[10] Their importance lies in the fact that they appear to be one of the earliest known examples of word and image collaboration in Sylva's œuvre. Hitz's second key work, probably of the period, is significant not so much in itself as in its indications of the broader artistic projects of the royal court. It is a small oil-on-ivory painting, *Viennese Noblewoman and her Daughter* (undated, private collection), copied from a miniature by the Austrian

Biedermeier artist Emmanuel Thomas Peter. Most likely it relates to Carol and Elisabeth's widespread commissioning of copies of artworks to enlarge their collection and decorate Peleş. This project involved a number of artists, most famously the Künstlerkompanie of the young Gustav Klimt, as well as other female protégées of Carmen Sylva: the painters Lätitia von Witzleben (also from Bavaria) and later Otilia Michail Oteteleşanu.

The copies were commissioned after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78 that interrupted building work on Peleş and led to Romanian independence. Having realised the nation's dream on the battlefield, Carol now redoubled his efforts to be seen as the peacetime bringer of civilisation. This was to be done at speed: as well as supplementing his growing art collection with imitations, he also bought ready-made interiors, such as the Turkish salon exhibited at the 1873 Vienna World Exhibition that was transplanted to the castle in 1885. In an interesting parallel to Sylva's writing and Hitz's painting, Peleş has not found a comfortable place in teleological histories that prioritise modernism: the castle's overwhelming eclectic historicism and parvenu aspect have led some to condemn it as fanciful kitsch. In 1937 the English writer Sacheverell Sitwell called Peleş 'a sort of tropical Balmoral […] in a German Gothic, with Byzantine and Renaissance features, forming an incongruous jumble of styles that can find few admirers in the present day'.[11] Yet connoisseurs of historicism, such as Stefan Muthesius, have pointed out the quality of Peleş's *altdeutsch* interiors and their value as well-preserved exemplars of the style.[12]

Carmen Sylva and Interior Decoration

Interestingly, the interiors do not appear to have been entirely to Sylva's taste which was seemingly much simpler, as claimed by the Swedish feminist critic and philosopher Ellen Key in her famous tract *Beauty in the Home* (1899). Key, who equated beauty with simplicity, honesty and usefulness and saw the transformation of the domestic environment as a means to wider social reform, quoted extensively from Sylva's ideas on interior decoration. Arguing that 'a room does not have a soul until someone's soul is revealed in it', she warned that one must

> take care not to judge people too quickly on the basis of their home, for they are not always free to shape it according to their own wishes. A good example in this context is the Queen of Romania, the author Carmen Sylva.

Key cited Sylva's desire for uncluttered rooms, decorated in fresh greens, blues and whites, 'with furniture in a clean, simple style' and 'no salon but rather a music room and a very big library', concluding, 'We do know, though, that however much she may be Queen, Carmen Sylva has not been able to fully realize her ideal!'[13]

Curiously, Sylva herself attributed this difficulty to her failure as a mother and her metaphorical inability to create a 'home' for a robust royal dynasty. She claimed that after the death of her only child in 1874 she did not have the right to ask for funds for design projects. Commenting on Crown Princess Marie's new Golden Salon in Cotroceni (designed in 1900–1), she wrote in some anguish, 'I have nearly as good taste as the Princess! The ideas are not wanting in my head! But I never dared to ask for anything from the hour I ceased to be a mother'.[14] This is a little ingenuous as, less than a decade after her daughter's death, Sylva began a major redecoration of Peleş's music room. This appears to have been a project of artistic catharsis: many of the paintings Hitz made for the room between 1883–90 relate to Sylva's preoccupation with suffering which, according to royal biographers, was the spur that launched her literary career.[15] Significantly, the paintings also represent one of the first distinctly modern notes in Peleş's historicist decoration, coinciding with the decorative friezes for the palace theatre commissioned in the same period from Gustav and Ernst Klimt and Franz Matsch.[16] Hitz's paintings were created not in Romania, but in Paris, following her move there in 1882. It says much that she was willing to give up the financial security of her court position in order to pursue her development as a painter under the tutelage of Luc-Olivier Merson, Gustav Courtois, Eugène Carrière, and Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant. That Hitz had the funds to sustain her years in Paris must, however, have been due in part to the generous sums received for her music room commissions (between 1000 and 2500 francs per painting), delivered in five batches between 1884 and 1890.[17]

The Music Room Paintings

Of the thirteen known paintings Hitz created for Peleş, eleven were for the music room (only nine remain in situ today) and two flanked the entrance to the dining room. The first four music room canvases, painted in 1883–84 at a cost of 1000 francs each, illustrate characters from Sylva's 1882 book *Pilgrim Sorrow* (*Leidens Erdengang*), a collection of twelve allegorical stories describing the effects wrought

by Life, Strife, Sorrow, Peace, Patience, Courage, Märchen and others as, personified, they wander the earth (fig. 1). Helen Zimmern, in her preface to the 1884 English version of the book, stated: 'it is impossible to ignore that this is an autobiography, that the soul of the queen is laid bare before us'.[18] Hitz depicts each character the moment before their story begins. *The Child of the Sun* (1883), for example, which illustrates the first tale of the collection, offers a painterly realisation of Sylva's opening lines:

> Life was a radiant maiden, the daughter of the Sun endowed with all the charm and grace, all the power and happiness which only such a mother could give to her child […] Flowers dropped from her hands, seeds sprang into life from beneath her footsteps; sweet scents and songs of birds floated around her.[19]



Figure 1. View of the music room showing Hitz's *The Child of the Sun*, *Märchen* and *Sorrow* (all 1883). © Muzeul Național Peleș

Hitz's delicate palette and light brushwork lend a subtle luminosity to the *plein air* scene and highlight the moment of innocence before Strife emerges from his volcano and abducts Life to be his wife. The union results in two children, Sorrow and Death. In a gender reversal of the expulsion from Eden, it is the male character who causes, in Sylva's words, 'an end of the earth's paradise. That is why Life is no longer a radiant maiden, but a grave woman, full of useful power'.[20]

The next painting, visually similar in its loose brushwork and interest in dappled forest light, is *Märchen* (1883), the happy-go-lucky embodiment of legends and fairy-tales. Hitz perches her on a tree trunk, dipping her toes into the water of a brook.

> 'Oh Märchen, Märchen', the brook began to sing, 'will you not bathe to-day?' […] So Märchen laid distaff and spindle among the moss of the tree trunk, twisted her hair into a knot, let fall her linen garment, and, seizing hold of two twigs, let herself glide down to the surface of the brook, and then began to swing merrily to and fro, her feet touching the water as she swung.[21]

Next second she falls 'like a shower of spring blossoms' into the brook, causing a despairing poet downstream suddenly to find inspiration. In theme and composition, one might argue for the influence of Hitz's early teacher Lindenschmit (for example his 1866 painting of Goethe's poem *The Fisherman*), as well as Courtois (his undated *Daphne and Chloe*), yet her painterly handling of the forest landscape taps into a vein of naturalism not seen in either.

These happy scenes are followed by the main protagonist of the tales, *Sorrow* (1883), the personification of melancholy:

> a lovely slender child with dark hair that framed her pale face. Her delicate lips were nearly always closed, her black eyes looked deadly weary, so that none could behold her without weeping. The poor child had no home and wandered restlessly from place to place.[22]

Although Sorrow longs for company, every home she visits is struck by misfortune. Hitz paints her alone and weeping as, barefoot, she wanders the earth. In a letter thanking Hitz for the delivery of her first three paintings to Sinaia, Sylva wrote that *Sorrow* was her favourite.[23]

Conceived as a group and dominating the central section of the west wall, these three works are flanked by smaller rectangular sopraporte. To their left is *Peace* (1884), a dreamy youth lying under a rhododendron bush by 'a deep, silent mountain tarn'.[24] Hitz depicts him the moment before Sorrow enters the scene and shatters the idyllic atmosphere. The right-hand sopraporta (fig. 2), while compositionally similar to *Peace* in its foregrounding of a horizontal recumbent figure, is actually a pendant to the spandrel painting on the opposite wall (fig. 3). Both are scenes from Sylva's poem *The Witch* (*Die Hexe*), published in 1882, the same year as *Pilgrim Sorrow*.



Figure 2. Hitz, *The Prostrate Witch*, 1884/5. © Muzeul Național Peleș



Figure 3. Hitz, *The Witch*, c.1885. © Muzeul Național Peleș

This is an interesting instance of ekphrasis: the dramatic poem was itself inspired by the German sculptor Karl Cauer's 1874 marble work *The Witch*, illustrated on its title page. Opening with a mighty storm, the poem tells of the enchantress Dämona who stands on a 'splintered summit/ Swathed in storm, beside a black gulf'. She is 'Heavenly beautiful', yet her beauty kills and destroys.[25] A young hunter,

beholding her on her lonely height, falls desperately in love with her and she, unwillingly, with him. Refusing to acknowledge her feelings, she pursues him, only to spare him the moment before death; repenting of her sins, she flees to a desert and falls despairingly on the sand. Hitz's two paintings capture the polarised moments in the witch's tale, embodying the nineteenth-century preoccupation with the dangerous femme fatale on the one hand, and the fallen woman/repentant sinner on the other. The spandrel painting compositionally maximises the awkward wall-space with its voluptuous contrapposto figure of the bare-breasted witch on her stormy cliff-top. In contrast to Cauer's neo-classical sculpture, Hitz's witch has overtly symbolist overtones, her dangerous eroticism, translucent garment, billowing red hair and serpent-encircled forearm offering a heady synthesis of Eros and Thanatos. The other painting, according to Jakob von Falke (Director of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna who wrote an appraisal of the castle in 1893), depicts 'the witch in despair in the desert sand'.[26] Despite the sensuous auburn accents of hair, nipple and drapery, this work displays a more realist handling of subject matter, its landscape more reminiscent of northern European sand dunes than a desert.

The Prostrate Witch (*Die Liegende Hexe*) appears to have been painted first and sent in the second delivery of work (c.1885), while the other witch came with the third (c.1885–86); both earned 1000 francs. The only other painting in the third delivery was a scene from one of Sylva's earliest published poems, *Sappho* (1880). Margaret Reynolds notes that the ancient Greek poetess was a 'powerful Muse figure for the Victorian women poets' and by the end of the century had become a role model for independent, educated women.[27] It seems that Sylva saw herself in Sappho, 'surrounded by young girls to whom she taught the art of poetry'.[28] Contemporary biographers noted the liberties she took with the Greek story: Zimmern commented on the distinctly Germanic nature of Sylva's Sappho 'who lives with her daughters and companions in a fabled castle, which for all its Greek name must have stood somewhere in German lands',[29] while Baroness von Stackelberg noted how Sylva changed the traditional narrative so that Sappho's suicide was driven not by anguish over a man, but by love for her daughter.[30] This elision of Sylva and Sappho is made literal in Hitz's painting, now housed in the Romanian National Museum of Art under the title *Woman with a Harp (Carmen Sylva as Euterpe)*: Hitz's Sappho, wandering with her lyre at the sea's edge, is recognisably Sylva herself.

Of the four remaining paintings for the music room, three were hung as a group on the wall above the Queen's organ. The earliest of these, *Sakri*, was sent in the fourth delivery of work in 1887 and cost 2500 francs. The other two, *Ahasverus* and *The Muse of Music*, were sent in the fifth delivery in June 1890 (cost unknown). Both are dated 1890 and must have been completed around the time Hitz returned to Paris from a study period under Walter Crane at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. *Sakri* (fig. 4), the largest of all the paintings for the music room was, according to the King's librarian Léo Bachelin, taken from Sylva's unpublished story of a Nubian princess carried off by pirates and tied to a ship's mast while her captors played dice to decide her fate.[31]



Figure 4. *Sakri*, 1887. © Muzeul Național Peleș

It most clearly shows the influence of Hitz's teacher Benjamin-Constant who, in the 1870s and early 1880s, was painting rich orientalist works; here the gentle palette of Hitz's earlier paintings has given way to vibrant colours and a typical orientalist delight in exotic materials and the sensuous contrast between the pale-skinned princess and her African captors. This should be considered in relation to Carol and Elisabeth's broader orientalist interests at the time. Their belief that the modernisation of Romania necessitated the wholesale adoption of western forms meant that the country's own eastern heritage was initially overlooked in favour of the western fashion for contrived orientalism. Following the installation of the Turkish Salon, the French architect Émile André Lecomte du Noüy was commissioned to create an

exotic 'Moorish Hall' in Peleș in the 1890s. Lecomte's brother, Jean-Jules-Antoine, was also an accomplished orientalist; his painting was much appreciated by Carol and Elisabeth who invited him to Romania to make a number of royal portraits in the 1890s.[32]

Ahasverus is the final scene from Sylva's poem *Jehovah*, published in 1882 (fig. 5). It depicts the wandering Jew, Ahasverus, on his knees, arms outstretched as he praises God: having doubted His existence his whole life, he finally finds Him in the face of death.



Figure 5. Hitz, *Ahasverus*, 1890. © Muzeul Național Peleș

Hitz seems to have identified with his constant searching: in a letter to the Jewish art historian Wilhelm Stein, she wrote, 'If I had to characterise myself, I would say I am a constant seeker'.[33] Next to *Ahasverus*, the allegorical *Muse of Music* is the only painting in the room not directly illustrating Sylva's writings (fig. 6).



Figure 6. Hitz, *Muse of Music*, 1890. © Muzeul Național Peleș

The richly adorned muse sits with her lyre on an elaborate throne, accompanied by two realistic child putti. In a similar fashion to Klimt's friezes for the palace theatre, a tension is set up between meticulous attention to human form and elements of flat decoration: the fully-frontal Muse is flanked to right and left by golden borders decorated with stylised floral patterns.

The final work for the music room is now in the Episcopal Palace at Curtea de Argeș. Entitled *A Prayer*, it was positioned to the left of the spandrel witch and was possibly removed when the entrance was altered during Karel Liman's renovations of Peleș between 1893 and 1914. Sylva's story (*Ein Gebet*), published in 1883, tells of the very different siblings Raoul, who becomes a priest, and Berthalda, who poisons his best friend Editha. According to Bachelin, Hitz painted the moment when Berthalda confesses her crime to her brother.[34] This was a major work, costing 2500 francs, and was sent to Sinaia with *Sakri* in the fourth delivery in 1887.

The Vestibule Paintings

Hitz painted two further works for Peleș, sent in the second delivery with *Peace* and one of the witches in c.1885. These larger paintings, 2500 francs apiece, flanked the entrance to the dining room. That they

were planned in parallel to the first music room paintings is clear from a letter Sylva wrote to Hitz in 1883 which mentions 'the two vestibule paintings. Select whatever you want from Hammerstein & Prayer; maybe you prefer something else'.[35] Ultimately Hitz chose scenes from *Hammerstein* and *Red Leaves* (*Blutbuche*), two Germanic medieval tales by Sylva set in the Queen's home county of Wied. As such, they fitted the tone of Peleș's dining room, a fine example of German neo-Renaissance interior design by the Mainz firm of A. Bembé. Hitz's style of historical realism, with its meticulous attention to details of costume and interior decoration, was in keeping with the historicist aspect of the palace, praised by contemporaries for embodying the chivalric ideals and picturesque grace of early sixteenth-century German architecture.[36]

Hammerstein, now housed in the Romanian National Museum of Art under the title *German Princess and her Daughter*, is a scene from another early epic poem published, like *Sappho*, in 1880.[37] Set on the rocky outcrop of Hammerstein by the Rhine in Neuwied, it is a tragic tale of medieval romance during the conflict between Henry IV and his son Henry V. Two young girls, Else and Agnes, fall in love with men from different factions, Else with Bodo von Braunsberg who supports the aged emperor and Agnes with Wolf, a henchman of Henry V, for whose gain he pillages the region. Both sisters die during an attack on their father's castle. Rather than depicting violence, Hitz chooses a scene of quiet interaction in a window embrasure below the Wied coat of arms. The Countess of Wied comforts a suffering Agnes who has refused Wolf's love rather than betray her father and king.

Laura Nixon discusses how the self-abnegating woman, as well as the nineteenth-century preoccupation with suicide as a result of unrequited love, are frequent subjects in Sylva's work.[38] They appear again in *Red Leaves*, one of eleven stories from the collection *Shadows on Love's Dial* (*Handzeichnungen*) published in 1884. The painting, a 'symmetrical canvas' to *Hammerstein*, is now in the Episcopal Palace at Curtea de Argeș.[39] Once again, the narrative takes place in the Rhineland, in Niederbiber, next to Nothausen and the River Wied. The story recounts the ill-fated love affair between a travelling minstrel, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, and the poet Jutta, unhappily married to a man who does not understand her love of verse. Under pressure from an unpitying priest who tells her she has mentally committed adultery, the remorseful Jutta sacrifices the relationship (and her creative dreams) in order to remain faithful to her husband, fleeing to the forest where she stabs herself by a copper

beech tree, thus staining its leaves red. Nixon interprets the narrative in terms of what it reveals about patriarchal and church control of women's lives, in particular 'the conservative associations of woman and angel'.[40]

Other Romanian Work

A number of other paintings and drawings related to Hitz's time in Romania have emerged. After her move to Paris she returned for further stays at least twice, in 1885 and 1886–7. In contrast to the palace paintings, many of the other works deal with Romanian subjects, realistic sketches of peasant life that offer an interesting parallel to Barbizon-trained Romanian artists like Nicolae Grigorescu and Ion Andreescu. In the mid-1880s, as demonstrated by the exhibitions of the Intimate Club (*Cercul artistic literar Intim Club*), the Romanian art scene was increasingly polarised between the academic styles favoured by the Schools of Fine Art and the more realist-impressionist, *plein air* approach of artists driving the debate around the creation of a 'national' art. Stylistically, Hitz's work is in line with the latter, with sketches such as *Peasant Woman* (before 1887) suggesting an awareness of Grigorescu in particular (fig. 7). Her other works offer a range of rural scenes: a cart and buffalo crossing a river, goose-keepers, shepherds, women at the well or in the fields, old peasant couples, wandering Roma, tight-rope walkers and bears. The freshness and realism of the sketches, presumably made in situ, offer some insight into Hitz's awareness of ordinary life in Romania, perhaps encouraged by Sylva's interest in folk culture, legends and traditional dress. Indeed, her music room paintings hang alongside one of Peleș's rare references to Romanian folk tradition: stained glass windows depicting three folk tales (*Ciocîrlia*, *Ana Doamna* and *Mărgărita*) collected by the President of the Intimate Club, the poet Vasile Alecsandri. Unlike Hitz's sketches, however, these make no attempt at ethnographic accuracy: designed by the Munich-based Zettler workshop, their protagonists are dressed in the same courtly robes as the chivalric stained-glass figures elsewhere in the castle.



Figure 7. *Peasant Woman*, drawing, before 1887. Reproduced in Lindenberg (1913)

Finally, mention should be made of three large-scale oil paintings (now lost) that Hitz made at Sylva's request to illustrate Pierre Loti's 1886 novel *An Iceland Fisherman* (*Pêcheur d'Islande*). Sylva's special relationship with Loti, which allegedly began after her lady-in-waiting Elena Văcărescu translated *Jehova* into French and sent it to him, is well-documented.[41] The Queen was so enraptured by Loti's novel that she translated it into German in only fifteen days and invited the poet to visit her in Sinaia in November 1887.[42] Hitz possibly met him there; certainly between 1887-89 she travelled to

Brittany to study fishing communities for her three paintings, *Letter from Iceland* (fig. 8)*, The Wives of the Shipwrecked* and *The Anxious Wait*, exhibited at the 1889 Salon and World Exhibition in Paris. Known today only from engraved copies, the focus of the paintings is not the story's main protagonists, nor heroic maritime scenes, but the anxious waiting and suffering of the Breton fishwives left at home.



Figure 8. Charles Baude, engraving after Hitz's *Une lettre d'Islande*, published in *Le Monde illustré*, 11 janvier 1890

Conclusion

Taken together, Hitz's paintings for Sylva constitute an important body of work, both in terms of offering unmatched, large-scale illustrations of the Queen's early literary output, and as a testimony to her patronage of promising female artists. They demonstrate the strength of Sylva's artistic contacts in her German homeland, at the same time offering a vehicle of contemporary French taste with their interest in light, painterly brushwork and vivid colouristic effects absorbed from Hitz's teachers in Paris. They were also symptomatic of the young art scene in Romania, at this stage still largely developing within a framework of imported foreign models. As such, the music room paintings not only marked one of the freshest stylistic

notes in the historicist first phase of Peleș's decoration, but also offered a good example of the transnational circulation of artists and ideas that underpinned the European art networks of the time.

From a feminist perspective, Hitz was a successful, independent artist, employed and empowered by an unusual female patron. While both women's work embodied specific nineteenth-century female stereotypes (the femme fatale, fallen woman, repentant sinner, 'sacred' mother, or self-abnegating wife), they were nonetheless able to overcome many of the challenges facing professional women, as encapsulated in Sylva's oft-repeated *pensée:* 'La femme du monde est difficilement la femme de son mari'.[43] While Hitz chose to be solely 'la femme du monde', Sylva managed to elide her art with her role as 'mother of Romania', increasingly using her writing to raise the international profile of her adopted country. Despite the ambiguities and quirks of her output, she can with some justification be regarded, in Daiana Gârdan's words, as one of 'the pioneers of Romanian feminist literature'.[44] Hitz, on the other hand, who had started her career in Franconian and Bavarian genre and flower painting, used Sylva's Romanian patronage as a springboard for professional development in Paris and London. Throughout her life she campaigned for the rights of women artists, most notably teaming up with her close friend Käthe Kollwitz to oppose Director Anton von Werner's vehement refusal to allow women students entry to the Berlin Academy of Art.[45] Perhaps this was why she founded her own art school for women in 1894; she also maintained her involvement in vigorous international networks of circulation and exchange. As a professional artist, Hitz lived and worked successfully in Munich, Bucharest, Paris, London, Dresden and Berlin; her long list of contacts included figures from the worlds of art, literature, theatre and collecting. Arguably her most important and enduring contact was Carmen Sylva, with whom she maintained a friendship until the Queen's death in 1916. In an essay penned for the latter's seventieth birthday in 1913, Hitz recognised the impact this had had on her career, writing: 'I consider it my life's good fortune that as a young woman I was allowed to live for a while in Carmen Sylva's kingdom under her special protection'.[46]

[*] It should be noted that this article was written in 2019. Since then, much of its material has been updated and published in two exhibition catalogues: Gutgesell and Kallestrup (2024a) and Gutgesell and Kallestrup (2024b). See also Schrohe (2024) and Krieger, Schrohe and Wasensteiner (2024).

Acknowledgements: The authors are particularly grateful to Macrina Oproiu and the staff of Peleş National Museum for their assistance with this research. Shona Kallestrup's work was supported by an ERC Starting Grant (ArtHistCEE 2018-21).

NOTES

1. Dora Hitz in 1908, quoted by Kleinlauth, p. 308.
2. Carmen Sylva, quoted by Stackelberg, p. 201.
3. Dora Hitz, quoted by Voß, pp. 234–235.
4. Sylva (1890), pp. 127 & 125.
5. See, for example, Zimmerman, Nixon, Badea-Păun (2007).
6. For an example, see Kaufmann et al..
7. See Gutgesell (2019), pp. 13 & 217.
8. An aspiration chiselled into Peleş's foundation stone and realised with Romanian independence after the Russo-Turkish War.
9. Radetzky, p. 211.
10. Kleinlauth, p. 302.
11. Sitwell, pp. 23–24.
12. Muthesius, p.103.
13. Key, pp. 35–36.
14. Burgoyne, p. 212.
15. 'It was always the royal poetess Sylva who never considered herself too high above others not to see the troubles, worries and often unacknowledged anguish of suffering humanity.' (Hitz, quoted by Radetzky, p. 212). 'She found that Sorrow had made her an artist'. (Zimmern, in Sylva [1884], p. 12).
16. See Kallestrup (2006), pp. 27–34.
17. See Hitz's three letters to the royal administration (5 & 20 Nov 1887 & 23 Oct 1890) in the Romanian National Archives, fond Castele şi Palate, dos. 19/1890 & dos. 25/1887.
18. Zimmern, in Sylva (1884), p. 6.
19. Sylva (1884), p. 17.
20. Ibid., p. 34.
21. Ibid, p. 224.
22. Ibid., p. 37.
23. Letter from Sylva to Hitz in Paris, 9 August, 1883, private collection.
24. Sylva (1884), p. 52.
25. *Die Hexe*, translated by Sir Edwin Arnold and quoted by Stackelberg, p. 251.
26. Falke, p. 42.
27. Reynolds, p. 125, quoted by Nixon (2014), pp. 40–41.
28. Sylva, quoted by Stackelberg, p. 247.
29. Zimmern, p. 529.
30. Stackelberg, p. 247.
31. Bachelin, p. 59.
32. Kallestrup (2008), pp. 160–163; Badea-Păun (2005).
33. Letter from Hitz to Wilhelm Stein, 3 Feb 1913, Bröhan-Museum Berlin Inv.-No. A-05-001-167.
34. Bachelin, p. 59.

35. Letter from Sylva to Hitz, 9 August 1883, private collection.
36. See, for example, Falke's 1893 panegyric.
37. Both were also included in Sylva's 1881 collection *Stürme*.
38. 'Carmen Sylva and the ideal woman', in Nixon, pp. 173–208.
39. Bachelin, p. 54.
40. Nixon, pp. 202–203.
41. See, for example, Badea-Păun (2007), chapters XVI & XVII.
42. Burgoyne, p. 121.
43. Sylva (1890), p. 14. This remains un-translated due to the double meaning of *femme* as 'woman' and 'wife'.
44. Gârdan, p. 114.
45. Gutgesell (2019), pp. 195–196.
46. Quoted by Radetzky, p. 211.

REFERENCES

Bachelin, Léo (1893). *Castel-Pelesch. Le château royal de Sinaia*. Paris: Firmin Dido et Cie.

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2005). "Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte du Nouÿ (1842–1923) à la cour royale de Roumanie," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français*, 257–281.

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2007). *Carmen Sylva. Uimitoarea Regină Elisabeta a României* (*Carmen Sylva. The Amazing Queen Elisabeth of Romania*), Bucharest: Humanitas.

Burgoyne, Elizabeth (1940). *Carmen Sylva. Queen and Woman*. London: Thomas Butterworth.

Falke, Jakob von (1893). *Das Rumänische Königsschloß Pelesch*. Wien: Gerold's Sohn.

Gârdan, Daiana (2018). "The Great (Female) Unread. Romanian Women Novelists in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: A Quantitative Approach," *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory,* 4.1, 109–124.

Gutgesell, Natalie (2019). *Dora Hitz – Fränkische Künstlerin, rumänische Hofmalerin, europäische Avantgardistin*. Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag.

Gutgesell, Natalie (2020). "An das Vorbild denke ich mit vollendetem Vergnügen mit dem man an eine Blume denkt," *Beiträge zur Weimarer Geschichte*, 15–20.

Gutgesell, Natalie and Shona Kallestrup (2024a). Carmen Sylva și Dora Hitz: cuvânt și imagine/ Carmen Sylva and Dora Hitz: word and image. Onești: Editura Magic Print.

Gutgesell, Natalie and Shona Kallestrup (2024b). Dora Hitz: Aus Franken nach Rumänien in die Welt. Halle (Saale): Mitteldeutscher Verlag.

Kallestrup, Shona (2006). *Art and Design in Romania 1866–1927. Local and international aspects of the search for national expression*. Colorado: East European Monographs.

Kallestrup, Shona (2008). "Between East and West: the Role of the Orient in Romanian Art in the 19th and early 20th Centuries," *Centropa*, vol. 8, no. 2, 160–171.

Kaufmann, Thomas DaCosta, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, eds., (2015). *Circulations in the Global History of Art*. New York: Routledge.

Key, Ellen (1899). “Beauty in the Home,” *Modern Swedish Design. Three Founding Texts*, L. Creagh, H. Kåberg & B. Miller Lane (eds.). New York: Museum of Modern Art (2008), 33–57.

Kleinlauth, Brigitte (2009). “Dora Hitz (1856-1924). Malerin und Autorin,” *Fränkische Lebensbilder*. Erich Schneider (ed.), Vol. 22. Würzburg: Gesellschaft für Fränkische Geschichte c/o Verlag Ph.C.W. Schmidt.

Krieger, Viktoria, Rahel Schrohe and Lucy Wasensteiner (2024). Dora Hitz. Mit dem Alten um das Neue kämpfen. Liebermann Villa am Wannsee: Sandstein Verlag.

Lindenberg, Paul (1913). *Schloss Pelesch und seine Bewohner*. Berlin: Otto v. Holten.

Muthesius, Stefan (2009). *The Poetic Home: Designing the 19th-century domestic interior*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Nixon, Laura (2014). *The ‘British’ Carmen Sylva: Recuperating a German-Romanian writer*. PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

Radetzky, Elfriede (2001). “Carmen Sylvas Förderung der deutschen Malerin Dora Hitz,” *Heimat-Jahrbuch 2001 des Landkreises Neuwied*. Weißenthurm: Doktor Druck.

Reynolds, Margaret (2003). *The Sappho History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schrohe, Rahel (2024). Dora Hitz. Wechselspiele von Weiblichkeit und Raum. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.

Sitwell, Sacheverell (1938). *Roumanian Journey*. London: B. T. Batsford.

Stackelberg, Baroness Natalie von (1890). *The Life of Carmen Sylva (Queen of Roumania)*, trans. Baroness Deichmann. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co.

Sylva, Carmen (1882). *Die Hexe. Zu der Statue von Carl Cauer* [A poem], Berlin: Alexander Duncker.

Sylva, Carmen (1882). *Jehovah* [A poem]. Leipzig: Verlag Wilhelm Friedrich.

Sylva, Carmen (1887 [1883]). *Ein Gebet*, Berlin: Alexander Duncker.

Sylva, Carmen (1884). *Pilgrim Sorrow. A Cycle of Tales*, trans. and with an introduction by Helen Zimmern. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

Sylva, Carmen (1889 [1881]). *Stürme* [Four poems: *Sappho, Ueber den Wassern, Hammerstein, Schiffbruch*], Bonn: Emil Strauß.

Sylva, Carmen (1890). *Thoughts of a Queen*, trans. H. Sutherland Edwards. Covent Garden: Eden, Remington & Co.

Voß, Georg (1895). “Die Frauen in der Kunst,” *Der Existenzkampf der Frau im modernen Leben*, edited by G. Dahms. Berlin: R. Taendler.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2013). *Carmen Sylva. Regina poetă. Literatura în serviciul Coroanei* (*Carmen Sylva. The Poet Queen. Literature in the Service of the Crown*). Bucharest: Editura Allfa.

Zimmern, Helen (1884). “Carmen Sylva, Queen of Roumania”, *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* XXVIII (4), 524-532.

Inventory of works by Dora Hitz related to Romania

1) *Ada*
Six watercolours
Dimension unknown
1879
Whereabouts unknown

2) *Viennese Noblewoman and her Daughter*
Oil on ivory
13 x 10.5 cm
Signed lower right *D. Hitz*
c.1876–1880
Private collection

3) *Peasant Woman*
Drawing
Dimensions unknown
Before 1887
Whereabouts unknown

4) *Water Bearer*
Drawing
Dimensions unknown
Before 1887
Whereabouts unknown

5) *Goose Keeper*
Drawing
Dimensions unknown
Before 1887
Whereabouts unknown

6) *Goose Keeper from Wallachia*
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
Painted in Sinaia in 1886/87
Exhibited at the Third International Art Exhibition at the Glaspalast Munich in 1888
Whereabouts unknown

7) *Return from The Fields*
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
Painted in Sinaia in 1886/87
Whereabouts unknown

8) *Mother giving a Posy of Roses to her Son in her Arms.*
Oil on canvas
82 x 49 cm
Signed and dated bottom right *Dora Hitz 1887*
Whereabouts unknown

9) *Violet Seller*
Watercolour over pencil
30.8 x 18.3 cm
Inscribed and dated *Zu Chiwa's Veilchen v.Th.Simons, 18 April 81*
Private collection

10) *Old Peasant Couple Eating Soup*
Gouache on paper
60.96 x 50.80 cm
Signed and dated lower left *Dora Hitz 81*
Private collection

11) *Peasant Couple*
Watercolour and ink on paper
40 x 29 cm
Signed and dated lower left *Dora Hitz / 2 M 1883*
Private collection

12) *Young Romanian Women Working in the Fields*
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
Exhibited at the Paris *Salon* in 1885
Whereabouts unknown

13) *Goat Herder*
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
Exhibited at the Paris *Salon* in 1886
Whereabouts unknown

14) *Thinker*
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
Exhibited at the Paris *Salon* in 1886
Whereabouts unknown

15) *Before the Christening*
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
Painted in Sinaia in 1886/87
Exhibited at the Paris *Salon* in 1887, at the Third International Art Exhibition, Munich, in 1888, at the

German Art Exhibition, Bremen, in 1890, at the Artists' Association, Dresden, in 1891
Whereabouts unknown

16) *On the Bleachery*
Oil on canvas
Dimension unknown
Before 1887
Whereabouts unknown

17) *Romanian Shepherd Scene*
Oil on canvas
Dimension unknown
Before 1887
Whereabouts unknown

18) *Wandering Roma*
Drawing
Dimensions unknown
Before 1887
Exhibited at Maria Kunde's *Graphisches Kabinett*, Hamburg, in 1924
Whereabouts unknown

19) *Camp in the Forest with Roma Mothers Feeding their Babies*
Drawing
Dimensions unknown
Before 1887
Exhibited at Maria Kunde's *Graphisches Kabinett*, Hamburg, in 1924
Whereabouts unknown

20) *Resting Tightrope-Walkers and their Bears*
Drawing
Dimensions unknown
Before 1887
Exhibited at Maria Kunde's *Graphisches Kabinett*, Hamburg, in 1924
Whereabouts unknown

21) *Romanian River Crossing*
Pen-and-ink and brush drawing in grey with white highlights, over pencil on paper
24.3 x 31.4 cm
Inscribed lower left *Dora Hitz / rumänischer Flussübergang*
Before 1887
Exhibited at Maria Kunde's *Graphisches Kabinett*, Hamburg, in 1924
Städel Museum Frankfurt am Main Inv.-No. SG 863

22) *Bunch of Primroses and Buttercups*
Oil on canvas
67 x 52 cm
Signed and dated lower left *D. Hitz. / 1881 / Sinaia*
Muzeul Național de Artă al României Bucharest Inv.-No. 8889/923

23) *Forest Scene*
Oil on canvas
105 x 64 cm
1881
Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 23016. Donated by the family of Wied in 1994.

24) *Two Women At The Well*
Oil on canvas
73 x 101 cm
Signed lower left *Dora Hitz*
Before 1891
Private collection

25) *Bathing Woman at the Forest Creek*
Oil on canvas
93 x 117 cm
Signed lower left *Dora Hitz*
1883
Private collection

26) *River Bed*
Oil on canvas
60.5 x 77 cm
Signed and dated lower left *D. Hitz / 1883.*
Private collection

27) *The Child of the Sun*
Oil on canvas
250 x 110 cm
1883

Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 7732, PFV. 497, P. 319

28) *Märchen*
Oil on canvas
250 x 110 cm
1883
Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 7734, PFV. 499, P. 321

29) *Sorrow*
Oil on canvas
250 x 110 cm
1883
Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 7733, PFV. 498, P. 320

30) *Peace*
Oil on canvas
105 x 170 cm
Signed lower right *D. Hitz*
1884
Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 7731, PFV. 496, P. 318

31) *The Prostrate Witch*
Oil on canvas
200 x 175 cm
c.1884-85
Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 7730, PFV. 495, P. 316

32) *Red Leaves*
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
c.1884-85
Episcopal Palace, Curtea de Argeș

33) *Hammerstein*
Oil on canvas
219 x 136 cm
c.1884-85
Muzeul Național de Artă al României, Bucharest Inv.-Nr. 8956/990

34) *The Witch*
Oil on canvas
105 x 170 cm
c.1885
Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 7735, PFV. 500, P. 322

35) *Sappho*
Oil on canvas
204 x 163 cm
Signed lower right *D. Hitz*
c.1885-86
Muzeul Național de Artă al României, Bucharest Inv.-No. 64869/1095

36) *Sakri*
Oil on canvas
163 x 275 cm
1887
Muzeul Național Peleș, Inv.-No. 7729, PFV. 494, P. 315

37) *A Prayer (Raoul)*
Oil on canvas
Dimensions unknown
c.1886-87
Episcopal Palace, Curtea de Argeș

38) *Ahasverus*
Oil on canvas
163 x 135 cm
Signed and dated lower left *D. Hitz / Paris 1890*
Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 7727, PFV. 492, P. 314

39) *The Muse Of Music*
Oil on canvas
163 x 215 cm
Signed and dated lower left *D. Hitz 1890*
Muzeul Național Peleș Inv.-No. 7728, PFV. 493, P. 317

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 208-218

Mite Kremnitz and Carmen Sylva. Some Impressions on This Literary Friendship

GEORG KREMNITZ
University of Vienna
georg.kremnitz@univie.ac.at

In memory of Klaus Heitmann (1930–2017), the great connoisseur of Romania and its literature

Introduction

In the recent decades, a lot of ink has flown[1] about Mite Kremnitz, only to emphasize her literary activity and her importance as a cultural mediator, a relevant feature of her life, while her relations with Carmen Sylva, however, are mostly on the sidelines. They will be given an in-depth approach in the below lines.

Mite Kremnitz, a Short Biography[2]

Before going into detail, it will make sense to have a brief discussion on the first part of Mite Kremnitz's biography. Marie-Charlotte, later called Mite, Bardeleben was born on January 4, 1852 in Greifswald. Her father, Heinrich Adolf (von) Bardeleben (1819–1895), was a surgeon and University Professor. In 1868, he was summoned to Berlin and was appointed the Director of Charité, a position he held for a long time. In this dual position, he was a major player in the German medicine of the late 19th century. He was also the attending physician of Emperor Frederick III (1831–1888). In 1891, he was granted hereditary nobility title by Emperor Wilhelm II. Two of his sons, Karl (1849–1918) and Adolf (1861–1914), were also important physicians.[3] Mite's mother, Auguste Sophie, born Zumpt (1823–1869) died at a young age, hence her then seventeen-year-old daughter may

have suffered very much due to this loss.[4] Her father, whom she apparently very much admired, married in the same year of 1869, the daughter of the Berlin legal counselor George Bernhard Alexander Kremnitz (1807–1885), Helene Sophie Pauline (1844–1890),[5] a family with whom he had already had marriage relationships, in the sense that Kremnitz's wife, Therese Henriette Ulrike, born Zumpt (1816–1880), was a cousin of Mite's mother. Another daughter of Kremnitz, Clara Marie Therese (1839–1892), had married in 1862 a young Romanian scholar living in Berlin at the time, who was none other than Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917).[6] This intricate network of family ties became even more complicated when the assistant and brother-in-law of Bardeleben, Wilhelm Bernhard Kremnitz (1842–1897), married his daughter from his first marriage, Mite, in 1872. According to the ongoing evidence, the relations between Bardeleben and Kremnitz were not that good, presumably financial worries were added to the young couple. Here comes the decision to follow Maiorescu's initiative in the fall of 1874 and to move to Bucharest (Grebing 1976, 7). Maiorescu was appointed Minister of Culture and Education from 1874 to 1876.

In spite of the obviously difficult beginnings, Kremnitz quickly launched a career in Romania: he made a name for himself (he had already gained a vast experience in the 1870–71 war) thanks to the successful treatment of the wounded in the Russo-Turkish War at the Brâncovenesc Hospital, where he had been a surgeon since 1877 and appointed Director in 1889. On March 5, 1878 (old style calendar) he was raised to the rank of Knight of the Order of the Star of Romania. He was the attending doctor of the King and, above all, of the ailing heir to the throne Ferdinand (1865–1927), whom he cared for and cured during the latter's severe typhoid fever. During that time, he suddenly died on July 31, 1897 in Sinaia. He was buried in Poiana Ţapului, near the source Urlătoarea Falls[7] (his sudden death then fueled the rumor mill). There must have been a close relationship between Kremnitz and the royal couple; and the reason for this statement is that he received an official funeral (his widow actually wanted to have him transferred to Berlin). In addition, his grave was adorned with a poem written by the Queen.[8] He seemed to be more people in one person. While obviously the royal family and the Germans in Romania appreciated him, he did not receive rave reviews from some Romanian writers.[9]

Mite herself had literary interests starting in her youth. She quickly learned Romanian after moving to the country, where her

brother-in-law Titu Maiorescu brought her in contact with the circle of *Junimea.* She did not take long until she began doing translations from Romanian. As early as 1877, the first volume was published under the title *Rumänische Skizzen*, followed in 1880 by *Neue rumänische Skizzen.* In the same year, she had the short stories volume *Fluch der Liebe* published under the pen name of George Allan (which she used several times). All those years, Maiorescu was the mentor of the young woman,[10] as he introduced her to many Romanian authors, not least Mihail Eminescu.[11] She started entertaining a literary salon in Bucharest, with some success (as she will do in Berlin much later, with less echo). During that time, her friendship with the then Princess Elisabeth (Queen, since 1881) started. The exact circumstances are not known, yet Grebing (1976, 10–13) provided more hypotheses. In any case, the probability of a direct encounter was quite high, Mite Kremnitz was officially, since 1881, a lady-in-waiting and lector in the service of the Queen.

She was already known at that time as a poet and, above all, as a muse of fine arts. Elisabeth, who had married Prince Carol I of Romania in 1869, lost her only three-year-old daughter Maria in 1874, an event which she seems to have been deeply affected by. From then on, she intensified her literary interests, which quickly found a reverberation (as a poet, she was known as Carmen Sylva). Not least under the framework of *Idée latine*, which played a certain role in the conservative circles in France and other Romance language states after the war of 1870–71,[12] she was constantly honored (which, in view of her commitment to German culture, was not without irony). Officially esteemed by the representatives of the Occitan Renaissance, Mistral dedicated the first song of his epic *Nerto* (1884) to her and she was appointed *Maîtresse ès Jeux Floraux* (in Toulouse), in spite of the fact that she had not participated in any *Félibres* event, as I know. She was not only perceived as a writer in Germany, but mainly in France. When the two still young women, with similar literary interests, met, a partnership was a natural step; however, differences in artistic conceptions became noticeable from the very beginning.

The volume of *Rumänische Dichtungen* was already published in 1881, translated by Carmen Sylva and has additions and comments made by Mite Kremnitz. The volume appeared at Kröner in Leipzig, thanks to the Queen's prestige, which was a sign that the book was entitled to a prestigious publishing house (in 1889, it was at its third edition).

Dito und Idem – The Time of Partnership

It must have been this first success that the idea of writing in collaboration came about. As already known, they used the pseudonym *Dito und Idem*, which was a formal change in the names of *Dido* and *Mite* (see Grebing 1976, 66). The first step was made by the Queen (otherwise would have been impossible, due to the social positions.) This professional closeness prompted Mite Kremnitz to write her first, rather enthusiastic biography: *Carmen Sylva. Ein Lebensbild der Dichterin* (Breslau: Schottländer und Deutsche Bücherei, 1882).

The preferred literary form coming from the collaborative work of *Dito und Idem* was the epistolary novel, where each of the two authors taking on a role. First, there was *Aus zwei Welten* (Leipzig, 1883), followed by *Astra* (Bonn, 1886), *Feldpost* (Bonn 1886), *Anna Boleyn*, a play (also Bonn 1886), the collection of short stories *In der Irre* (Bonn 1888) and finally *Rache und andere Novellen* (Bonn, 1889). The first of these works had eight editions in less than twenty years, hence it can be considered a popular success. The others, too, had quite high sales. However, success may be due to a considerable extent of the social rank of one of the authoresses, and less to the literary quality of the work.

The Queen was, as always reported, less open to newer trends in literature, had occult tendencies, and she was, to some extent, scarcely self-critical. Mite Kremnitz, on the other hand, was interested in Realism and Naturalism, although not considered a great innovator. Some of the jointly published volumes survived quite well despite this tension; in the course of time, this tension lost some of his interest.[13] After 1889, the two authoresses went separate ways in publishing their works.

These are relation dramas that only sometimes end well. For a contemporary audience, they are difficult to understand: it is about the difficulty to overcome social hurdles, especially for women, who are seeking a way out of the confined possibilities allowing the social conventions. One can say that the (cautious) emancipation comes from the parts of text belonging to Mite Kremnitz, as Carmen Sylva was more conservative in life, yet claiming sometimes progressive social opinions. Moreover, Mite Kremnitz welcomed the awards and secular honors with great reserve. And this comes from her old Prussian features, recognized elsewhere as such.

A first personal alienation was observed in connection with the so-called Văcărescu affair. The Romanian noblewoman Elena Văcărescu (1864–1947), who later wrote as Hélène Vacaresco in French and

achieved a certain success in Paris, was appointed by Elisabeth to be the lady-in-waiting; In the winter of 1888-89, she gave the Queen a number of old (?) manuscripts intended to contain Romanian folk poetry, but they were surprisingly in French; the Queen considered them authentic (Romanian scholar Bogdan Petriceicu-Hasdeu soon proved the contrary) and in 1889 she published a translation into German entitled *Der Rhapsode der Dimbovitza*.[14]

Mite Kremnitz was skeptical about the genuineness of the lyrics,[15] but she considered the Queens idea of marrying the young noblewoman to the successor to the throne, Ferdinand, even more alarming (which, according to the Constitution, would not have been possible at the time). Due to these events, which tarnished the reputation of the Crown, the Queen had to leave the country for a few years and lived in Italy in exile. It was not until 1894 that she was able to return.

It would probably not have been possible to resume their joint work even without this contact hiatus. The spiritual worlds of the two authors were now too far apart: the one uncritical, optimistic and impulsive, the other, namely Mite Kremnitz, skeptical, yes, almost nihilistic: "Her [=Mite's] disappointments in childhood and youth and the study of the philosophers Schopenhauer and Nietzsche make her lose their belief in the goodness of people and the power of truth at an early age" (Grebing 1976, 192).

In addition, the claims to his own texts were unequal: Mite Kremnitz regretted the literary weakness of the common texts, which she attributed to the impatience of the Queen. Renate Grebing, who has a good overview of the work of Mite, also notes: "The joint writings with Carmen Sylva are definitely among Mite Kremnitz's weakest creations."[16] The Queen saw it in a totally different light.

The Rift and Afterwards

The estrangement is said to have come after the death of Wilhelm Kremnitz. An immediate occasion was said to be a conversation in which the Queen offers the ultimately Buddhist idea of transmigration as a way out of mourning. Mite Kremnitz is said to have spurned this, since she believed in a Christian-Jewish tradition of a continuance of the soul in God. The queen felt this as an attempt to influence her.[17]

This interpretation does not seem all too plausible, given a letter from Mite to linguist and pastor Lorenz Diefenbach (1806–1883) dated February 22, 1882, in which she writes: "I know that there can

be no God, but I often see Him and ask Him in decisive and burdensome moments of life, and He always tells me that I have to do, which is the most difficult for me." (quote from Grebing 1976, 79)

Such an attitude makes it baffling to think of an attempt at conversion, rather than a low tolerance threshold on the part of the Queen. At least other aspects may have contributed, like Mite Kremnitz being some more critical of the queen than at the beginning and they would contradict each other since they had difficulty to acquiesce. The different path of literary concepts and creative circles may also have played a role. In addition, the Queen seemed more and more easily irritated by her (former) confidante.

On the other hand, the reports of the shock felt by the royal couple about the sudden and completely unexpected death of Wilhelm Kremnitz and their efforts at the funeral tell a different story. At the moment of his demise, Mite was at her summer house in Brand (Vorarlberg), and she took four long days to get to Sinaia, due to floods on the way. This was how long the funeral was deferred for. Of course, to the question arising as to why Mite was in Brand at that specific time, there is no known answer. However, such a collective shock *alone* cannot account for a break shortly thereafter. Plus, there must still have been a close relationship between the royal family and the Kremnitzs, as pointed out by several observers, especially Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș, who had close contacts with both sides (see footnote 23).

Perhaps we might be considering another moment that we need to look at: the Queen was out of the country for almost four years, while Mite Kremnitz spent most of her time in Bucharest.

These were the years when the King gave her access to his documents and in this matter allowed her to write his four-volume biography, a still important historical source, published between 1894 and 1900 by Cotta in Stuttgart. A second edition that was probably published in 1914 and a French translation was made between 1899 and 1904. How would the Queen feel about to see this spiritual closeness between her husband and a woman from whom she had herself removed away?

Last but not least, the relationship between the Kremnitz couple was not a smooth ride, as shown in various notes of Maiorescu (Mite had known him since her youth, while he was a French teacher for the Kremnitz and Bardeleben families). Other observers would also confirm his statements.[18] It is known that Eminescu was in her close vicinity for

a long time,[19] but she would be more devoted to Maiorescu. The role this situation might have played can only be assumed.

After her husband had passed away, Mite Kremnitz decided to move to Berlin with her two sons, Georg Titus (the middle name indicates Maiorescu as his godfather) and Emmanuel (Manoli). One of the reasons may have been that Manoli (1885-1930) was still in school while Georg (1876–1951) was about to join the professional life; after some hesitation, he became a career officer. In mid-1898, the decision was taken. This was made easier for her by the fact that the King awarded her an annual salary of 12,000 lei, as a pension.[20] Mite Kremnitz settled down in Berlin in the still independent Wilmersdorf district (it was only incorporated in 1920). In addition, she lived in the summer house in Brand in Vorarlberg.

After the separation, both authoresses independently pursued their literary careers. The Queen had some success in her lifetime, then the interest dropped. Mite Kremnitz published her most mature works in the remaining twenty years of her life.

A certain amount of interest today can be stirred in regards to her observations on the Romanian society, along with her nature depiction that is quite dynamic.[21] The problems with love and marriage, which she also liked to deal with, are hardly up to date in that form today. However, she is very much aware of the prejudice and moral laws of those times and wanted to make her own feelings the measure of judgments. She was quite distant from the social order of her time. Fifteen fictional prose works were written back then, to which a comedy was added.

Her historiographical works are in a better standing, especially the four-volume biography of King Carol of Romania, *Aus dem Leben König Karls von Rumänien* (this work was not authored first, but only a mention was made, 'Records of an eyewitness', which made some people think that it was actually the King who did the writing himself), of which a one-volume summary was later published.[22]

This great work is still a relevant source of Romanian history and not only. There are also two biographies of the Queen (one in 1882 and the other one in 1903). While the former is largely uncritical about the great qualities of the she-monarch, the latter is at the other end of the spectrum. She is talking about the Queen's qualities but also about more unsettled issues. Despite this, she sees the literary qualities of the royal and she is quite objective towards them. She is said to have regretted that the Queen refused to read her biographical work. On the other hand, Mite Kremnitz is more critical of the courtly

customs in her work *Am Hofe von Ragusa* (Berlin: Schlesische Verlagsanstalt, 1902), which is perceived as a roman à clef. In addition, the little booklet *Herr Baby* (Breslau: Schottländer, 1901) is probably one of her most successful works (*Baby* was the name given to Georg Titus Kremnitz in Romania).[23]

In this context, it should not be less important to note that Carmen Sylva obviously broke off contact with Mite Kremnitz, while the King did not. According to the copies of the Guest Book at Brand (Vorarlberg), he came to visit several times, even after 1897, when he was in Bad Ragaz in the canton of St. Gallen for his treatment.

Conclusions

Although Mite Kremnitz returned to Germany in 1898, she was torn towards the end of her life between the two cities, Bucharest and Berlin. On the one hand, she confessed in a letter sent to writer Nicu Gane (1838–1916) that she would always remain an outland in Romania and, therefore, she would be better off not "getting rumanianised." But on the other hand, she did not feel well in Berlin either, as she wrote to the same Gane years later, on March 7, 1904: "Before going to Romania, I was too young, and now I may be too embittered, but staying in Berlin has been a nightmare for me. In autumn, when Manoli graduates from high school, I will leave this dreadful city."

Moreover, she also made known her yearning for Romania. In the same letter, she mentioned: "The only thing I am doing is to spread the glory of 'our' little country; without flattering it, for I love it, and one never flatters those whom one loves, I find that it can serve as a good model to the great empires."[24]

In Berlin, she was surely in contact with the great playwright Ion Luca Caragiale, who has been living there since 1904, in a self-imposed exile. He also lived in Wilmersdorf, again in her vicinity. A document to prove their cooperation is the German translation of his 1884 published play *O scrisoare pierdută (A Lost Letter)*, which posthumously appeared under the title *Die Kammerwahl*. Hermann Kienzl, the heir of the literary estate, published it in Munich[25] in 1918. Mite Kremnitz referred to the existence of her translation in a letter dated 21st January 1909.

Mite Kremnitz passed away in Berlin, on 18 July 1916, outliving the Queen by a few months (Bucharest, March 2, 1916) and shortly

before Romania joined the opposing powers during the war. Her death thus spared her a great disappointment.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The most important work is Renate Grebing's dissertation, initiated by Klaus Heitmann. *Mite Kremnitz (1852-1916). Eine Vermittlerin der rumänischen Kultur in Deutschland.* Frankfurt a.M./Bern: Lang, 1976.

Some additions can be found in Georg Kremnitz, "Mite Kremnitz écrivain et son importance pour les relations culturelles entre la Roumanie et l'Allemagne," *Dacoromania*, VI, 1981–1982 [1987], 257–272, more complete in "Mite Kremnitz als Schriftstellerin und ihre Bedeutung für die deutsch-rumänischen Kulturbeziehungen," G.K., *Sprachen in Gesellschaften*, Vienna: Braumüller, 1995, 197–213; G. K. "Mite Kremnitz und ihre Rolle in den deutsch-runänischen Beziehungen. Mit einigen biographischen Anmerkungen zu Wilhelm Kremnitz," Huberty, Maren / Mattusch, Michèle (ed.), *Rumänien und Europa - Transversale*. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2009, 121–133. Earlier biographical outline, mainly from writer Hermann Kienzl, are not always completely reliable information, due to the time circumstances.

2. I take over here a lot from Kremnitz in 2009.

3. Each of the two marriages of Bardeleben produced four children; the youngest was Gerta von Bardeleben (1879–1968), from whom I learned much about the family's history.

4. See Grebing 1976, p. 4.

5. Neither Bardeleben women reached an old age.

6. The marriage was dissolved in 1886. A daughter came out of it, Livia Maiorescu Dymsza (1863–1946), who is known to have played a role in the history of *Junimea*. Livia married the Polish-Lithuanian architect and harbor designer Eugen von Dymsza (1852–1918) and lived mostly in Poland and Lithuania. She is said to have returned in 1945 with her two surviving daughters Janina (Countess Plater-Zyberk) and Livia to Romania.

7. I was able to visit the grave in the year of 1972.

8. This writing was no longer available in 1972 (but it was there in the 40's, as a friend of my father proved); it had to be avoided, due to the abolishment of the monarchy. It is reproduced in the annex to Kremnitz 1981–82.

9. See the positive Kremnitz 2009, to the negative Grebing 1976, v.a. 13/14. About Wilhelm Kremnitz see Valeriu L. Bologa, "Soțul Mitei Kremnitz ("Mite Kremnitz's Husband")," *Tribuna* (Cluj), XV, 5/1971 (on 4. 2. 1971), 13.

10. The fact that he was not only a mentor is evident in his diaries; see Grebing 1976, v.a. 58–66, as well as Maiorescu's diaries.

11. On Mite Kremnitz and Mihail Eminescu, see Grebing 1976, 30–58.

12. See Roger Barthe, *L'idée latine*. Toulouse: Institut d'Etudes Occitanes, 1962.

13. See the content in Grebing's work 1976, 66–76. In all other

representations, the discrepancy between the exuberant temperament of the Queen and the greater realism of her co-author is emphasized, as easily noticed by the observers, depending on their own positions, leading to different assessments of the authoresses.

14. There were also several translations into other languages.

15. The "finds" of such collections and the question of their authenticity have played a role in many cultural renewal movements; this begins with Jean de Nostredame, who published in 1575 *Les vies des plus celebres et anciens poetes provensaux, qui ont floury du temps des Comtes de Provence* (Lyon: Marsilij), an anthology, in which he incorporated his own poetry, the most famous example being James Mcpherson with his *Ossian* (1760), who is synonymous with the beginning of the Scottish renewal movement. Several other examples could be attributed to these two. The authenticity of these collections plays only a minor role; their reception by (uncritical) societies is important in the sense of an (important) step towards the birth of a modern nation.

16. Grebing 1976, 82. The (not numerous) publications written on her own, published during the joint writing time, seem more independent and conclusive.

17. See Grebing 1976, 78.

18. See Grebing 1976 and Kremnitz 2009, Fn. 8.

19. In this context, there is an anecdote I can share now with you, after so many years: while I was travelling through Romania in 1972, I was introduced to Augustin Z. N. Pop (1910–1988), a great specialist in Eminescu's works. When he opened the door to his house, he said, instead of an introduction: "There are people to claim that your great-grandmother was intimate with Eminescu. I can assure you nothing like that happened. There are all lies." The vigor he had told me that validated the gravity of that issue, embraced by some people, even after such long time. Augustin Z. N. Pop and I became friends afterwards and I am so grateful for the information he provided me with on Romania and Eminescu.

20. Grebing 1976, 16.

21. She was a gifted watercolorist; Some of her watercolors are now owned by the University Library Cluj.

22. *König Karl von Rumänien* (Lebensbild). Berlin: Schlesische Verlagsanstalt, 1903.

23. This name was known in Romania until the end of his life. Still in the few pieces of correspondence received around 1950, Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş (1872–1952), a close friend of the family and famous Romanian art historian, spoke of a chapter in his memoirs dedicated to the Kremnitz family and to "Mr. Baby", cf. now Tzigara-Samurcaş, Alexandru, *Memorii*, I (1872–1910), Bucuresti: Grai si Suflet, 1991, 38–43. Samurcas also prompted Mite Kremnitz to write down her memories of Eminescu, which was published in the Romanian *Convorbiri Literare* (*Literary Conversations*), monthly literary journal under his direction, many years after her death (1933); According to Grebing, the Romanian version is not very reliable. For her interpretation, she therefore used the manuscript kept at the Romanian Academy.

24. All three quotes according to I [lie] E. Toroutiu, *Studii şi documente literare (Studies and documents)*, Junimea. Bucharest: Institutul de arte grafice 'Bucovina', vol. III, Bucharest, 1932, 280 and 303, respectively.

25. As it can now be proven, Kienzl changed the translation. In 2002, Octavian Şchiau gave the authentic Mite's translation, the source of the manuscript: Caragiale, Ion Luca, *O scrisoare pierdută (A lost Letter)* / Kremnitz, Mite, *Der verlorene Brief*, Bucharest: România Press.

The comparison of the two translations shows (despite some insignificant reading errors of Schiau that Kienzl has made significant, sometimes biased, changes to her translation. However, as an heir, he was formally entitled to it.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 219-226

Mama Regina and the Sphinx

ALICE NĂSTASE BUCIUTA
The Romanian Language Institute, London
alice@revistatango.ro

There are destinies meant to intersect, like the destiny of George Enescu (1881–1955), the *greatest Romanian musician of all times*, and Queen Elisabeth of Romania (1843–1916), the wife of King Carol I (1839–1914), who are linked in many ways, even before they met. Their hypersensitive way of seeing and understanding the world contributed to their artistic approach of life and to their enormous contribution to the arts. The Poet-Queen, well known under her pen name Carmen Sylva, first Queen of Romanians, protector, and upholder of arts, restless ambassador of Romanian traditions had a decisive influence on George Enescu's career, being the provider of his first scholarship, when he was 13 years old, despite the fact that the two of them had not yet met at the time. With the help of this scholarship, George Enescu studied composition in Paris, under the guidance of prestigious personalities, such as Jules Massenet or Gabriel Fauré, and made immense progress.

There are destinies meant to intersect, even if there are ages, people, or unfavorable circumstances set in the path of their meeting. The great meetings of great personalities have something of the inexorable splendor of great love.

Princess Elisabeth of Wied (1843–1916), Queen Elisabeth, Poet-Queen, Carmen Sylva, first Queen of Romanians, protector, and upholder of arts, restless ambassador of Romanian traditions, has been linked in countless ways to George Enescu (1881–1955), the greatest Romanian composer, violinist, teacher, pianist, and conductor – he himself a king of the most beloved of the world's arts. Firstly, they were linked in a strange, impossible to unravel in another way than looking in reverse to the passage of time, through a great suffering

which has put a mark on their lives, differently but yet in an excruciatingly deep way. During a wave of scarlet fever epidemic, in 1874, the Queen lost her only child, her adored daughter, aged four, Princess Maria. That was the same disease which took, only a few years later, five of the seven children of Costache and Maria Enescu, the other two being lost as well at a very young age, a few years prior to the quintuple tragedy.

George Enescu would be the eighth child of the family, paradoxically, the only child of the Enescu family. The survivor was the inheritor of his mother's terrible trauma, a trauma that was transformed in his genes and in his veins into a sensibility that was often difficult to endure.

"My mother's fear, a real terror, was effective during her pregnancy, the fear nested in her soul being transmitted to me before I've even seen the daylight" (Manolache, 2005, p. 426) says George Enescu in one of his interviews[1] in which he makes a confession about his hypersensitivity, a feature he was constrained to put to sleep in order to save himself. "During my childhood, due to my excessive sensitivity, the slightest misunderstanding between my mother and my father became a real misfortune. This hypersensitivity has an explanation, it was a heritage from my mother."[2]

In the Queen's way of being, the loss of her little girl was perceived exactly in the same way, in a hypersensitive way of seeing and understanding the world, a way the Queen has transfigured, like George Enescu did, into an artistic plan. The pain of losing the child was the reason that has deepened her in the world of images and metaphors beyond the concrete real world that has caused her so much suffering. It was also the reason why the Queen felt the urge to uphold and protect young artists whom she looked at as her own children.

Would the life of and the signed work of Carmen Sylva have been as comprehensive if she had been saved from such suffering? Would her desire to expand the Romanian intellectual elite have been as devoted as it was? Would Enescu's genius have been the same without the load of suffering and fear grown within himself along with his mother's fear of not losing her eighth child? Probably yes. But the encounter of the two personalities would have been different for sure.

At the age of seven Enescu was accepted in the Vienna Music Conservatory, which he graduated with silver medal, and when he was 13 years old, he went to Paris to continue his musical studies, with a scholarship offered by Queen Elisabeth, despite the fact that the two of them had not yet met at the time. Like a premonition of the great

affinity of the Queen towards the young musician, the entourage of the Royal Palace initially objected to the presentation of the virtuoso violinist at the court. The Marshal of the court, George Filipescu (1840–1902) "feared of the captivation of Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth, whose goodwill towards young artists had been often exploited" (Manolache, 2005).[3] However, their meeting was soon to take place.

Princess Elena Bibescu, well known as a great piano player, took Enescu, a friend of her son Prince Anton Bibescu, under her protection. In Elena Bibescu's elitist salon young, George Enescu would make his entrance as a musician in Paris. In his memories, George Enescu would call the Princess "first vice-mother", giving recognition to her merits regarding his career.

At Princess Bibescu's recommendation, French conductor Edouard Colonne accepted the symphonic suite "Romanian Poem" Op. 1 by George Enescu to be performed in Colonne's concerts, in 1898. After the great success of the symphonic suite "Romanian Poem" Op. 1, Enescu was invited to the Court and that was the crucial moment of the encounter with Carmen Sylva, who, beyond her dedication and interest towards literature, was playing the piano with great passion, mainly for chamber music ensembles. Queen Elisabeth, the writer Carmen Sylva, would become the second "vice-mother" of George Enescu, from whom he did not separate until her death, in 1916. She was also the one that likened him to a Sphinx, often addressing him, in letters or in their meetings, by this nickname. At the Queen's death, on February 18th, 1916, George Enescu, although ill, shivering in a hotel room, kept by an illness which tormented him, nevertheless orchestrated in one night the music of the *Andante* of Schubert's *Trio in C minor*,[4] the favorite musical piece of the Queen. On the day of the royal funeral, the orchestra performed, in the mortuary room of the palace across the road, the *Andante* arranged by George Enescu, in memoriam of his protector Queen.

In Paris, George Enescu studied composition under the guidance of prestigious personalities, such as Jules Massenet or Gabriel Fauré, and made immense progress. Princess Elena Bibescu, well known as a great piano player, who had also been a laureate of the Vienna Music Conservatory, took Enescu, a friend of her son Prince Anton Bibescu, under her protection. In Elena Bibescu's elitist salon, in which many great artists of the time performed – such as Franz Liszt, Richard Wagner, Anton Rubinstein, Ambroise Thomas, Ignatius Ioannes Paderewski, Marcel Proust or Anatole France, as well as Romanian

celebrities of literature, Ana de Noailles, Ion Ghica or Vasile Alecsandri, young George Enescu would make his entrance as a musician in Paris. Princess Bibescu felt that Enescu was a musical genius and she supported him unconditionally, firstly by organizing auditions for him and then by accompanying him at the piano on diverse occasions.

George Enescu gladly accepted this protection. In his memoirs, he would call the Princess "first vice-mother", giving recognition to her merits regarding his career. At Princess Bibescu's recommendation, French conductor Edouard Colonne accepted the symphonic suite "Romanian Poem" Op. 1 by George Enescu to be performed in Colonne's concerts, in 1898. Enescu's work was an immense success and had praiseworthy chronicles. Colonne was even reprogramming this work to be performed twice within a month.

The echo of the unexpected success of the symphonic suite "Romanian Poem" Op. 1 created effervescence among the ladies of the Royal Court in Bucharest, and finally Enescu was invited to the Court and was overwhelmed by gifts and honors. Years later, the final part of the "Romanian Poem", the "Romanian Suite", became the hymn of Romania's Royal House. Enescu dedicated this composition to Queen Elisabeth of Romania and declared that "In this symphonic suite I tried to translate childhood memories, stylized (…). They were like an echo from afar: the poem revived the familiar images of my country that I had left eight years ago. I still find in it the perfume and the landscapes of my homeland"[5] (Gavoty, 151).

That was the crucial moment of the encounter with Carmen Sylva, who, beyond her dedication and interest towards literature, was playing the piano with great passion, mainly for chamber music ensembles.

Queen Elisabeth, the writer Carmen Sylva, would become the second "vice-mother" of George Enescu, from whom he did not separate until her death, in 1916. She was also the one that likened him to a Sphinx, often addressing him, in letters or in their meetings, by this nickname. "She used to say that she was my second "vice-mother", the first being Princess Elena Bibescu, born Epureanu. Confess, Sphinx – she said I had a look of a sphinx in my eyes - that I am your second vice-mother."[6]

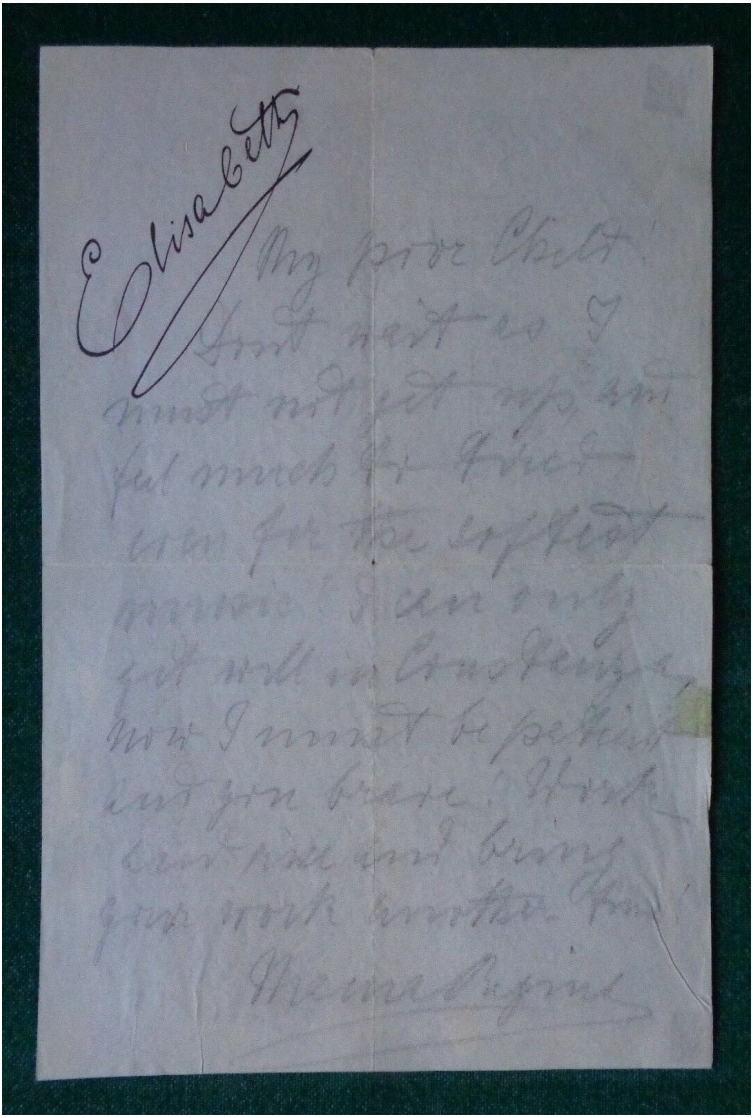
"For me, Carmen Sylva is a reincarnation of Saint Elisabeth… That is how Queen Elisabeth of Romania used to be, giving everything that she had, stripping herself of all goods and doing everything with generosity. (…) Also, the writer dedicated her book,

"Sun and Gospel", to me, addressing it to Her "spiritual child", referring to me, the most unworthy. Not to mention Her letters, which were soul guiding writings. She used to type them on the typewriter herself."[7]

Every summer, Enescu spent weeks at Peleş Castle, where the Queen invited him with all the love of her heart. They had, along with other musicians, a strict musical agenda consisting of practice for two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. They played quartets and ensemble music and the Queen was often writing poems, short stories, or cogitations, reading them to the musicians who had inspired her with their musical performance. More than once George Enescu put her poems on music, poems he considered sprung from a generous and genius spirit which he admired totally.

"You ask me about the time I've spent at Peleş – and your question stirs up precious memories. Peleş! Just saying this word makes my eyes fill with tears. I was not even seventeen… I see my room, the music room, and The Lady of that place, the unforgettable Queen Carmen Sylva. Immortal hours of spiritual elevation and of togetherness in the proximity of the all comforting goddess – Music. Carmen Sylva was – and it isn't useless to repeat this – an exceptional human being. The poet-queen lived only for others; careful and amiable, she used to guess what would make people happy and she scattered gifts with true royal generosity. For me, she was like a mother, "the other mother" as she called herself. Her first book "In the Meadow" bears this inscription: *"Meinem lieben Seelenkinde, George Enescu"* ("To my dear spiritual child")."[8]

Even during the years when she was sent in exile to Neuwied, while her lady was waiting for Elena Vacarescu, who had been exiled to Paris – as a result of the romantic plot in the name of forbidden love between Elena Vacarescu and the King's nephew Ferdinand, heir to the throne –, the Queen continued the correspondence with George Enescu, in English, signing her letters as "Mama Regina".



“For me She was a superhuman presence, a haloed being, far from ordinary people, shedding only light and kindness. I still have a photograph of her, picturing her in the Peleș music salon, together with the four of us, the ones who played the ensemble music and some

people from the society who attended our concerts. The photograph has a few lyrics written in Her own handwriting: "*Ordella: he that reads me [when I am ashes] is my son in my wishes. And those chaste dames that keep my memory. Singing my early requiems are my daughters*."

These lyrics from Beaumont and Fletcher were chosen by the Poet-Queen to express the imperishable bond between people through art and veneration."[9] Indeed, the musical connections proved to be imperishable and healing within Queen Elisabeth's destiny. When learning about the death of princess Bibescu, heavy news for Enescu and all the people who knew her, Carmen Sylva said in deep sorrow: "Helene is dead! Today we will only make music". Music was for her both joy and consolation.

At the Queen's death, on February 18th, 1916, music was called to help alleviate the suffering and to ennoble Her passage into the world beyond, with the sounds that elevated her spirit during her lifetime. George Enescu, although ill, shivering in a hotel room, at "Metropol",[10] kept by an illness which tormented him, nevertheless orchestrated in one night the music of the *Andante* of Schubert's *Trio in C minor,*[4] the favorite musical piece of the Queen. The next day, the orchestra performed, in the mortuary room of the palace across the road, the *Andante*, arranged by George Enescu, during a night of shivering fever, in memoriam of his protector Queen, Enescu saying goodbye to his Queen, his "vice-mother", his "Mama Regina" only through the sounds coming from the open windows.

The Queen passed away one year and a half after the death of King Carol I and was buried next to him, her husband, in the church of Curtea de Argeș Monastery. Although initially their little girl, Maria, was buried at Cotroceni, she was exhumed on that occasion and buried between her two parents. The Trio that Enescu orchestrated for his Queen prolonged into a trio of spirits who went on a journey that certainly does not lack stellar harmonies.

NOTES

1. Manolache, Laura, *George Enescu – Interviuri din presa românească* (*Interviews in the Print Press*) (*1898-1946*), Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 2005.

2. Interviu (*Interview*) de Liviu Artemie, *Rampa*, Bucharest, 14, nr. 4096, 16 septembrie 1931.

3. *Ibidem*, 426.

4. Ibidem, 349.

5. Gavoty, Bernard, *Amintirile lui George Enescu*, Bucharest, Curtea Veche Publishing, 2017, p.151.

6. Manolache, Laura, op. cit, Interviu (*Interview*) de Ioan Massoff, Rampa, Bucharest, 16, nr. 4131, 26 octombrie 1931, p. 302.

7. Enescu, George, *Amintiri despre Carmen Sylva*, Revista Fundațiilor, Bucharest, 10, no. 12, 1 decembrie 1942.

8. Manolache, Laura, op. cit, p. 416.

9. Interviu de A. Eugen, *Gazeta din București*, 92, vol. I, 1 ianuarie 1936.

10. Enescu, George, *Amintiri despre Carmen Sylva*, Revista Fundațiilor, Bucharest, 10, no. 12, 1 decembrie 1942.

REFERENCES

Enescu, George (1942). "Amintiri despre Carmen Sylva," ("Recollections of Carmen Sylva") *Revista Fundațiilor*. Bucharest, 10, no. 12, 1 decembrie.

Gavoty, Bernard (2017). *Amintirile lui George Enescu* (*The Memories of George Enescu*) Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing.

Manolache, Laura (2005). *George Enescu – Interviuri din presa românească (1898–1946)* (*Interviews in the Print Press*). Ediția a doua. Bucharest: Editura Muzicală.

Rădoi, Corina, Hasnaș, Irina (2007). *Întâlniri magice: interviuri, confesiuni, evocări* (*Magical Encounters: Interviews, Confessions, Evocations*). Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român.

Voicana, Mircea (coord.) (1971). *George Enescu – Monografie* (*Monograph*). volumul I, Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 227-234

Two Destinies: Carmen Sylva and Bertha von Suttner

CRISTINA-ADRIANA REITER-POPESCU
Goethe German College, Bucharest
ghinda.cristina@yahoo.com

In this chapter, I explore the extent to which the fight for peace in Europe has remained a metaphor rather than a tangible political and cultural reality. Following the Balkan Wars, it became increasingly difficult for prominent pacifists like Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914) to sustain the discourse of peace amid rising nationalism and militarism. In 1889, von Suttner published her seminal novel *Die Waffen nieder!* (*Lay Down Your Arms!*), a passionate denunciation of war and a call for disarmament. For her, war was not a catalyst for cultural or national progress, as many political leaders of the time claimed, but rather a destructive force that stifled human dignity and moral advancement. Her commitment to peace placed her at odds with powerful figures who branded pacifists as naïve or even traitorous.

One of the most intriguing and underexplored aspects of von Suttner's advocacy is her connection to Romanian Queen Elisabeth, also known under her literary pseudonym Carmen Sylva. A collection of previously unpublished letters—either addressed to or written by Carmen Sylva—has long remained a hidden treasure in the archives of the National Library of Romania. These letters reveal a deeply human dimension to the intellectual and emotional struggle for peace during a period of intense political upheaval. They also shed light on the networks of solidarity among European intellectuals, especially women, who sought to resist the cultural glorification of war and instead envisioned an alternative ethos grounded in compassion, diplomacy, and education.

Bertha von Suttner (photo of her, c. 1906), often referred to as the pacifist voice of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, attempted to persuade monarchs and policymakers that militarism could be dismantled not





through force, but through persistent moral appeal and personal dedication. She wielded the written word as her primary weapon, crafting speeches, essays, and novels aimed at shifting public consciousness. Yet, the question remains whether her vision has endured or whether it has been relegated to the realm of historical utopia. In an age when armed conflict continues to shape the geopolitical landscape of Europe, von Suttner's legacy challenges us to ask whether peace remains a poetic ideal—or if, with renewed commitment, it can once again become a political imperative.

A true treasure has been hidden for years in the National Library National Library of Romania, in Bucharest under the name of "Unpublished letters to Carmen Sylva"[1] (or even unpublished letters from Carmen Sylva).

The Writings' Appeal provides insight into the reason why the Romanian King and Queen received this unique collection of documents. On 10/23 May 1906, Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth of Romania celebrated the 25th anniversary of her coronation, while King Carol marked 40 years of his reign around the same time. In honor of this double celebration, a case containing 161 commemorative writings from prominent authors was presented to the royal couple. The inscription on the left side of the case reads: "*Sincere greetings from Austria to the poet and Queen Carmen Sylva*," while on the right it states: "*Homage to the Coronation Celebration of 1906, reverently performed by Alfred von Lindheim.*"

Among these tributes, Rainer Maria Rilke's dedication stands out, though the collection also includes literary works and messages from distinguished figures such as Bertha von Suttner, Peter Rosegger, Ferdinand von Saar, and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. The beautifully crafted case, adorned with colorful monograms "CS" (a

reference to Carmen Sylva, Queen Elisabeth's literary pseudonym meaning "Song of the Forest"), was designed in 1906 in Vienna. It was commissioned by Ritter Alfred von Lindheim, the Romanian consul in Vienna, and executed by the renowned artist Koloman Moser in the Art Nouveau style. Moser received a fee of 700 krones for the work, underscoring the significance and prestige of the occasion.[2]

The presence of Bertha von Suttner among the contributors highlights the case's symbolic role in envisioning a spiritually unified Europe—one in which literature, peace, and diplomacy intersect. The collection speaks not only to the shared cultural values of early 20th-century Europe but also to Austria's central position in fostering intellectual exchange. The need to understand Eastern Europe is both a scholarly imperative and a public right, and literature functions as an essential bridge between cultures. These 161 dedication texts are more than ceremonial tributes; they are fragments of poetic memory, each addressed to a real or imagined interlocutor. When we explore these archives, we are not merely cataloguing documents; we are recovering a shared literary consciousness. Questions naturally arise: For whom do we search these archives? Are such rediscoveries meaningful for the poet or for literary history? Do they possess bibliophilic, historical, or emotional value? And finally, does the modern audience still feel the need to access such texts—perhaps even in translation—as a way to reconnect with Europe's cultural soul?

Should any of the 161 dedications be translated and recontextualized for Romanian readers today? This is a question that warrants careful reflection. At this stage, one must consider the original addressee. Were these tributes intended solely for Queen Elisabeth (Carmen Sylva) in recognition of her literary persona and noble status, or do they serve a broader diplomatic purpose—addressed, in effect, to the Romanian people? The involvement of high-ranking cultural figures and diplomats, such as Ritter Alfred von Lindheim, suggests that these literary offerings carry symbolic weight beyond private homage; they function as gestures of international esteem and cultural diplomacy.

In literary terms, it is essential to clarify the role and implications of the dedication as a genre. According to theorist Gérard Genette,[3] dedications belong to the category of "paratexts"—those threshold elements (titles, prefaces, dedications, etc.) that frame and mediate the reception of a literary work. Historically, dedications were sometimes transactional in nature, serving as formal offerings to patrons in exchange for material or social support (mecenat). Over time,

however, they evolved into a means of expressing recognition, gratitude, or intellectual alignment. The ambiguity remains: why is a particular figure being honored, and what unspoken values or affiliations does the dedication imply? Although readers today may not always focus on the historical functions of such texts, the poetic language itself continues to exert a compelling emotional and aesthetic pull.

What makes these dedications particularly powerful is their dual nature: they are both intimate and public. In publishing a poem as a gift, the author opens a private emotional gesture to public scrutiny. In the case of the Romanian royal celebrations of 1906, the recipient is not only Queen Elisabeth, but symbolically, the Romanian nation—especially when "sincere greetings" are conveyed by a diplomat on behalf of Austria. The poets, in this context, renounce the spotlight and redirect it toward the Queen-poetess. Their act of giving poetry instead of material tributes is moving, especially in a historical moment when cultural diplomacy shaped international relations. Translating these texts today is not only a linguistic or literary exercise but a cross-cultural gesture.

While the Romanian public may not be familiar with all the original authors, these dedications offer rich material for scholars, critics, and biographers—particularly those studying the German-speaking world or French influences like Rilke. They are not just evidence of poetic subjectivity, but markers of a cultural milieu. In this sense, Carmen Sylva's position—as a poet with two homelands and two languages—makes her a compelling figure for rethinking Europe's cultural identity. Her literary legacy, rediscovered through these dedications, may well hold a key to understanding the interconnectedness of past and future European traditions.

The spiritual and diplomatic elite surrounding King Carol I of Romania consistently used literature and language as tools of diplomacy. At the dawn of the twentieth century, favorable relations with neighboring states were often modeled after ceremonial declarations at the court of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Within this context, artistic expression, particularly through poetry and formal addresses, functioned not merely as cultural embellishment but as symbolic political gestures. Thus, diplomatic gifts—including literary tributes—often bore layers of political significance beyond their aesthetic form.

The imperial ethos of the Austrian court, rooted in a constant pursuit of excellence, extended into Romania's cultural-diplomatic

practices. Only the most accomplished poets were invited to contribute to such commemorations, a practice institutionalized under King Carol I, who incorporated the value of literary expression into the national image of Romania. This cultural diplomacy was strengthened by the monarch's commitment to modernizing Romania's international representation. In line with the principle of *la carrière ouverte aux talents*, King Carol valued diplomats who were not only linguistically gifted and culturally literate but also politically loyal and artistically inclined. Figures such as Charles Adolphe Cantacuzino (1874–1949), a Romanian poet and diplomat who served in Paris, The Hague, and Brussels, exemplify this ideal. Cantacuzino's work was well received in both French and Romanian literary circles, reflecting his dual cultural function. Similarly, Ritter Alfred von Lindheim, an Austrian diplomat and cultural envoy, played a key role in the presentation of commemorative gifts to the Romanian court.

Among the many distinguished contributors to the 1906 royal jubilee was Bertha von Suttner (née von Kinsky, 1843–1914), who submitted both a poem and signed a collective appeal. The relationship between Bertha von Suttner and Queen Elisabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva) is multifaceted: both were noblewomen, authors, and activists engaged in cultural and humanitarian work for the benefit of humankind. Their shared values were also publicly recognized—in 1903,[4] a European readership ranked them among the most influential women of their time in a *Berliner Tagblatt*[5] poll: Suttner received 156 votes, while Carmen Sylva followed closely with 142. The poll also included notable figures such as Sarah Bernhardt (139 votes), Eleonora Duse (132), and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach (71). Though geographically separated from many of their readers—Suttner lived for a time in the Caucasus—they sustained extensive correspondences and cultivated significant literary networks, which reinforced their influence across Europe.

Bertha von Suttner began her literary pursuits during her exile in Georgia with her husband, Arthur von Suttner, who had been estranged from his aristocratic family. Her early writings, often romantic tales produced to secure financial stability, gradually gave way to more socially conscious literature shaped by her commitment to realism and pacifism. In *Inventarium einer Seele* (1883), she articulated her early philosophy of progress. Following her mother's death in 1884, she returned to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where her political and literary activities gained new momentum. Despite numerous rejections from publishers, her perseverance bore fruit

through works such as *Maschinenzeitalter* (The Age of Machines) and *Die Waffen nieder!* (Lay Down Your Arms!, 1898), which secured her financial independence and moral authority as a peace advocate.

Key to her evolution from novelist to activist was her increasing public engagement. Her sojourns in Paris and Venice and her acquaintance with Alphonse Daudet broadened her intellectual scope and introduced her to influential literary circles. She actively sought funding and patrons for the Austrian Peace Society, which she founded in 1891, using her novels and public lectures to promote her cause. One of the most significant relationships in her life was her long-standing correspondence with Alfred Nobel. Though she had briefly worked as his secretary in Paris, it was their shared ideological vision that cemented their bond. She played a crucial role in persuading Nobel to include a Peace Prize in his will—an act that immortalized both their legacies.

Alfred Nobel was not only a significant figure in Bertha von Suttner's career, but also a committed supporter of her peace efforts. Although Nobel's letters to Suttner have been lost, his surviving notes reveal both literary engagement and a measure of intellectual vulnerability—he reportedly feared her critical acumen. Nonetheless, his admiration prevailed: he became a member of the Austrian Peace Society, which Suttner had founded, and provided her with financial support, underscoring his commitment to her cause and to the broader peace movement.

In this context, it is also noteworthy that Nobel employed Aristarchi Bey, a Turkish diplomat, as an advisor on peace-related issues. This choice reflects not only Nobel's internationalist outlook but also the strategic value he placed on informed, cross-cultural dialogue in matters of diplomacy and disarmament. At the same time, the Romanian Queen, Carmen Sylva, demonstrated her alignment with the cause by co-signing the *Women's Declaration of Peace* at the First Hague Conference in 1899. This act highlights the extent of Bertha von Suttner's influence among Europe's monarchs, as well as her ability to mobilize support across national and social boundaries.

Bertha von Suttner emerged as a central figure in the early peace movement, which sought concrete measures to counter the prevailing ethos of militarism and perpetual war preparedness that dominated late nineteenth-century political thought. Her 1889 novel *Die Waffen nieder!* (*Lay Down Your Arms!*), published in the symbolic year of the French Revolution's centennial, served as both manifesto and literary catalyst. The book's title became a succinct and powerful rallying cry

for pacifists. As contemporary observers noted, "The things of this century, good or bad, were made by men. Men make history. But now a woman dared an intellectual insurrection against the very root of masculinity: the militarized mindset of rival empires."[6]

Suttner rejected the dominant cultural narratives that framed war as the engine of civilization, virtue, or heroism. Against this prevailing ideology, she exposed militarism as a systematic enabler of mass violence—"a genocide sanctioned and committed for reasons of state." Her work challenged the moral authority of institutions—governments, churches, and the press—that sanctified war, and laid the ideological groundwork for the twentieth century's international peace initiatives.

Dedication[7]

Fürs Vaterland der Geistestat
Die Frucht der Arbeitskrone
Doch uns'res Herzens Todessaat
Begehrst du nicht, o Land!

Fürs Vaterland in Ewigkeit
Sei jedes Herzens Schlaf
Doch unsere Kinder vor der Zeit
Zermäht an einem Tag.

Was wir Todesspiel geschenkt
Mit Mühen brachten gross
Das Feld mit ihrem Blut getränkt
Ihr Haupt im Erdenschloss...

Nicht forderts von den Müttern mehr
Von Frieden redet nie:
Das ganze grosse Doppelheer
Ist Kinderschar für sie!

For the Fatherland of the Spirit
The fruit of the working crown
But our hearts are dying
Do not desire, O land!

For the Fatherland in Eternity
Be every heart's sleep
But our children before time
Mowed in one day.

What we gave Death Game
With effort brought great
The field soaked in their blood
Your head in the ground...

Not demanding more from the mothers
Peace never speaks of:
All the big double army
It's child char to them![8]

NOTES and REFERENCES

* The photographs included in this article are sourced from publicly available materials on the internet and are free to use.

1. Unpublished letters Carmen Sylva's special fund, National Library of Romania, 10.353-10.514.

2. *Catalogue* of the Museum for Applied Arts, Vienna. https://www.mak.at

3. Gerard Genette *Paratexte. Das Buch vom Beiwerke des Buches*, 1992, Campus, Frankfurt am Main.

4. Dinu, Rudolf: "Diplomația vechiului Regat 1878-1914," *Monitorul oficial*, presa universitară clujeană, Bucharest, 2014, 185.

5. Berliner Tagblatt 7.5.1903.

6. Bertha von Suttner: *Die Waffen nieder! Eine Lebensgeschichte*, E. Pierson's Verlag in Dresden u. Leipzig 1889.

7. Unpublished letters Carmen Sylva's special fund, National Library of Romania, 10.353-10.514.

8. Transcript and translation: Cristina Reiter-Popescu

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 235-249

Carmen Sylva and "The Venetian Drama"

RĂZVAN STAICU
University of Bucharest
razvanstaicu24@yahoo.com

Introduction

Romanian history remembers the German-born Princess Elisabeth Pauline Ottilie Luise zu Wied (1843–1916) as the first Queen of Romania following her marriage, in 1869, to Prince Karl von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who on 10 May 1881 became King Carol I of Romania. Her devotion to her adoptive country, manifested through her active participation in its political, economic, social, and especially cultural life, uplifted her to the status of a representative and much respected figure. In this article I have considered, firstly, one particular episode in the Queen's biography, later to be known as the "Văcărescu Affair", and secondly Elisabeth's "Italian exile", or "The Venetian Drama", as it featured in the news headlines.

An interesting perspective on this exile is offered by the memoirs and correspondence of the writer Duiliu Zamfirescu, who at that time served as legation secretary of the Romanian Embassy in Rome, and was charged with the diplomatic mission of meeting the Queen upon her arrival in Venice. This was the starting point of the writer's involvement in "The Venetian Drama". Queen Carmen Sylva's dignified and courageous attitude, as it transpires from this episode, represents a model of female emancipation in a century (the nineteenth) in which this issue was only very timidly surfacing in Romanian society.

A German Princess in the United Principalities

The German-born Princess Elisabeth Pauline Ottilie Luise zu Wied (1843–1916), daughter of Hermann, Prince of Wied, is recorded by our

history as the country's first queen, a title she acquired as the result of her marriage to Prince Karl von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who would later – on 10 May 1881 – become King Carol I of Romania.

Her devotion to her adoptive country, manifested through her active participation in its political, economic, social, and especially cultural life, uplifted her to the status of a representative and much respected figure. It is well known that she became involved in philanthropic activities and organisations, in raising funds for charitable purposes, in the medical and first aid systems of the time, in supporting both morally and directly the Romanian soldiers who had been wounded in the 1877 War of Independence, in education, through active encouragement for the creation of a scholarship system, in the promotion of traditional crafts, through the creation of a specialised centre near the royal palace in Sinaia, or in supporting the country's participation in the Universal Exhibition repeatedly hosted by Paris in 1867, 1889, and 1900, with traditional objects, tapestries, and embroideries. In fact, the Queen herself organised an exhibition in Berlin, dedicated to the feminine presence in Romanian crafts and artistic tradition.[1]

Yet among all these interests, the Queen's artistic sensibility and her inclination towards art and culture turned her into an authentic Maecenas of Romania's arts, and at the same time into a writer with a penchant for poetry but with no less talent for other literary genres, such as the theatre or the essay, stories or novels. Thus, her name, or rather the pen name she loved the most among all, the one she used to sign her works, would also go into the history of Romanian literature – Carmen Sylva.[2]

In an age of intense manifestations of the patriotic ethos, of effective and categorical affirmation of the Romanian people's national identity, of openness to a future which promised a new political and social construct, one of civilisation and progress, the manner and forms into which Carmen Sylva's personality comes to light allow us to dare draw a parallel – despite the historical distance and the cultural prestige of spaces and époques which are evidently very different – between two cultural and artistic feminine models: one is Carmen Sylva, or Elisabeth, the adopted and adoptive Queen of the Romanians; the other is Isabella d'Este, one of the most influential female figures of the Italian Renaissance.

The Italian noblewoman was born in the ducal family of Ferrara on 14 May 1474, and even before she turned 16 (1460) she became, through her marriage to Francesco II Gonzaga, the Marchioness of Mantua. After a dazzling appearance on the streets of her native

Ferrara[3] and a wedding that prompted her new residence,[4] the city of Mantua, to dress in festive garb, Isabella d'Este would, together with her husband, become one of the most important aristocratic figures of the Renaissance, who at the time sponsored and protected celebrated artists, scientists, philosophers and humanist men of letters, cultivators of and often practitioners in the fields of the sciences and the arts.

The Mantuan court offered ample manifestation space for the creativity of such artists as Andrea Mantegna, the court painter, with whom Isabella d'Este became acquainted upon arrival in Mantua. Already a connoisseur and a passionate collector of art objects, jewellery, and of precious items in general, she tried to attract Leonardo da Vinci to the court of Mantua. The decisive help she received from Mantegna in establishing her own *studiolo* in the ducal palace of San Georgio, in the *reggia* of the Gonzagas, consolidated his position and secured his official employment until the end of his life. Artists such as Giovanni Bellini or Perugino were, for one reason or another, compelled to refuse certain commissions they were offered at the suggestion of the marchioness's arts counsellors, commissions for the fulfilment of which Mantegna had to resort to changes in his usual style and themes (lively colours, allegories, complex sceneries and portraits). At the time, these *studioli* were to all effects closed museums containing private art and book collections of inestimable value, and Isabella d'Este was known as the only woman to possess such a collection.

Many other artists worked for Isabella d'Este, among whom Giovanni Bellini, Perugino, Giorgione, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Correggio or Titian. Under the patronage of the Marchioness of Mantua a number of humanist men of letters, such as Ludovico Ariosto, Baldassare Castiglione, Pietro Bembo or Pietro Aretino, served as court officials and wrote their books there.

Whether true or just a legend, among the many possible sources of inspiration for Leonardo's mysterious Mona Lisa, known also as La Gioconda (a portrait which nowadays graces the Louvre), Isabella d'Este is a candidate many art critics take into serious consideration.

Over three and a half centuries later, coming to Romania from powerful Germany and finding here a nation which was still far from western civilisation, but to whom she quickly gave her love and devotion, Princess Elisabeth zu Wied, later Elisabeth of Romania, took very seriously her role as the first woman of the realm, the wife of the sovereign, a carrier of light and emancipation to the country which destiny had chosen for her. Among the activities she undertook

to raise the cultural level of the nation she now represented, including in the relations with the great royal and princely courts of Europe, the patronage of the arts was one she favoured. Vasile Alecsandri became a close friend. Due to him, and at the insistence of Titu Maiorescu, she had an oscillating relationship with Mihai Eminescu, who judged her poetic talent with considerable reserve. Carmen Sylva, on the other hand, showed constant appreciation for the poet, and supported the careers of painter Nicolae Grigorescu and composer George Enescu.

Duiliu Zamfirescu and the Queen's Venetian Exile

The personality of Carmen Sylva is well known by now thanks to a rich bibliography, which is furthermore increasingly better documented and in continuous expansion. Nevertheless, for this article I have chosen primarily one episode in the Queen's biography which political and cultural history remembers as the "Văcărescu Affair", and concentrated especially on the consequences of this episode – i.e. Elisabeth's exile, or "The Venetian Drama", to quote the contemporary headlines.[5] In short, a love story began between Prince Ferdinand, the heir to the throne, and Elena Văcărescu, the Queen's lady-in-waiting and daughter to Ion Văcărescu, "recently appointed Minister of Romania to Rome."[6] King Carol, who at first seemed to encourage the relationship, abandoned the idea of giving the House of Hohenzollern a Romanian character through the marriage of the Prince to a local noblewoman, when he was confronted not only with a breach of the princely code, but also with the opposition of the political parties, and in particular of the Liberals, for whom "Ferdinand's marriage to a descendant of the Văcărescu family would have turned the royal family into the instrument of one political faction, in this case the Conservatives."[7] The Queen, on the other hand, did not abandon the plan.

> … [S]he became the protectress of the two young people's love in spite of the political parties and of the press, which ceaselessly fought against a possible marriage. In that tense atmosphere, the depressed and ill Queen Elisabeth went into exile accompanied by Elena Văcărescu, threatening the King with a divorce, while Ferdinand, from his seclusion in Sigmaringen, was threatening suicide (Titu Maiorescu, *Însemnări zilnice*, 14/26 iunie 1891).[8]

As the legation secretary of the Romanian Embassy in Rome, Duiliu Zamfirescu was assigned the diplomatic task of receiving the Queen

on her arrival in Venice. This moment, which marked the writer's involvement in "The Venetian Drama", was mentioned by Zamfirescu himself at the end of a letter to Titu Maiorescu, dated "Porto d'Anzio, 3/15 July '91".

> One more word from Rome. This evening I'm leaving for Venice on high orders to meet the Queen. Mavr[ocordat] left this morning. I know nothing of Her Majesty's projects.[9]

But Duiliu Zamfirescu was not to be merely a neutral official on a diplomatic mission. In another letter, this time to Trandafir Djuvara, sent from Rome on 2 September 1891, he showed his displeasure at the Romanian newspapers mentioning him as being deeply involved with the Queen's immediate circle.

> I have been to Venice twice: the first time was when the Queen arrived, and the second when, in passing through, Pierre Loti[10] came to salute our sovereign. In both these cases I was together with Mavrocordat and, of course, I sailed in a gondola (this being the only means to get around) with the Queen and the people who were there. I am baffled and displeased that I should be the only one the newspapers mention; and this because it smells of insufferable publicity.[11]

He indignantly proclaimed his neutrality to the cause, and declared that his presence there was merely the expression of his devotion to the sovereign, and that his official position situated him above the gossip raging in the country.

> We went to Venice out of a feeling of profound duty to the sovereign of the country, which you will easily understand. I need not concern myself with what has been going on in Bucharest; so long as Carmen Sylva is the Queen of Romania and I a mere state official, I reckon I cannot do otherwise…[12]

But on the other hand, he expressed his views on the circumstances in which the Queen found herself at the time, a thing he after all deemed to be within his right to do in a private letter to his friend. He testified to her agony, which from one of the soul turned into one of the body, and whose roots, as the tone of the letter suggests, were also to be found in Elisabeth's inner turmoil, caused in its turn by the events which had taken place and into which she had invested all her energies.

> Now, my opinion on the whole situation… It's hard for me to tell it to you because I myself have not yet clarified it. But since you appeal to me as you would to a brother, I will, in a brotherly spirit, tell you my impression.

> The Queen is ill, and more gravely so than it is generally believed. Her legs barely carry her – the servants lift her from the chair and, on their arms, take her to the gondola and back again. […] When I was in Venice, she was suffering atrocious pains in the back of her neck and palpitations most probably caused by her anaemia.[13]

And yet, what above all characterises Carmen Sylva of Duiliu Zamfirescu's vision is an aura of transcendence, a certain nobility of spirit which rises above the everyday tribulations of the human being and to which a feeling of maternal affection for Elena Văcărescu is added.

> She otherwise keeps her spirit intact, with its characteristic transcendental formula. She reads out in a clear voice, with the same painful expression on her face; she shows the same concern any sweet mother would towards Miss Văcărescu; she talks slowly and kindly… This is the Queen I met in Venice.[14]

Duiliu Zamfirescu oscillates between the objectivity imposed on him by his diplomatic mission and the emotional subjectivity of an intellectual man attuned to the suffering of his Queen, whom he got to know better due precisely to those dire circumstances. The writer captures, with a keen eye for significant details and in very few, yet suggestively accurate words, the atmosphere surrounding the exiled monarch, the dejection, anxiety and fear of being spied on which characterised the ambiance of the royal entourage.

> There was in general an environment of dejection and misery, a touch of exile, a perpetual fear of spies which outraged me…[15]

This might very well constitute the beginning of a tale of romance, tempestuous feelings and mysteries, of plots, hidden enemies, faithful counsellors and unhappy love affairs, with a *sfumato* nineteenth-century Venetian background. But the writer's temptation immediately gives ground to the outrage felt by Duiliu Zamfirescu in his other capacity, one which he approaches with spontaneous versality – his capacity as a state official animated by high moral principles and patriotic devotion to the sovereign that has been wronged and chased away from her country.

> Well, one may be guilty as sin, but when the person in question is a woman, as is the Queen, and the sovereign of your country, she must be treated as a sovereign – in which case the whole thing has to be ended somehow.[16]

The Queen's initial concerns regarding Zamfirescu, whom she suspected of being a government "spy", made him react with indignation and confess to Trandafir Djuvara his insistent efforts directed at dispelling any doubts the Queen might have had about him.

> Can you imagine that the first few days she was afraid that we had come there to spy on her on behalf of the government?... And being convinced of this, she was, or believed she was compelled to receive us at her table. Fancy that – I, a spy! I was so outraged I couldn't prevent myself from intimating for the second time to the Queen that never, not even if circumstances reduced me to earning my living with my bare hands, would I commit such ignominies.[17]

A more substantial account of "The Venetian Drama" than that given in this letter is to be found in Duiliu Zamfirescu's daily memoir entries, which he began making in 1914-15 and to which Al. Săndulescu refers in an ample note[18] to the letter quoted here. He includes a long fragment from these memoires and remarks not only on the documentary character but especially on the vigour of Duiliu Zamfirescu's writing, "the diplomat-writer who, behind a formal attitude, hides an artistic and epicurean spirit forever sensitive to beauty."[19]

Thus the quoted fragment, which I am considering here, shows Duiliu Zamfirescu as a true memoire writer, and Carmen Sylva more like a literary heroine than a historical figure. The picture of a hostile political class and of a press whose journals "wickedly construed the Queen's thoughts" becomes not just the pretext but the determining cause of her decision to leave the country in a self-imposed and reluctantly accepted exile.

> Under such circumstances, the Queen, now abandoned by everybody, left the country. Her shattered nerves induced a bizarre *infantile paralysis* which prevented her from walking; this is why she asked to go to Venice, where the gondola allows any cripple to believe that nobody makes use of his legs.[20]

His bit of irony about the gondola was rather meant for the correspondents of the tabloid press, who wanted to know everything so that they may inform a curious public, but it was also a subtle praise for the Queen's discretion.

Ordered to leave Rome in order to greet Elisabeth on her arrival, the writer mentions the place where she stayed together with her retinue.

> We of the Legation in Rome received orders to put ourselves at Her Majesty's disposal. […] When we arrived in Venice, the Queen had already taken up residence at the Danieli Hotel…"[21]

Zamfirescu was referring to the luxurious and refined Danieli Hotel in Venice, which still occupies the Gothic-style building of a famous fourteenth-century palace – Palazzo Dandolo – on Riva degli Schiavoni, near Piazza San Marco. The Danieli Hotel had hosted or would host many members of the royal houses of Europe as well as important names from the world of literature and the arts, among whom J.W. Goethe, Marcel Proust, Alfred de Musset and George Sand, Honoré de Balzac, Wagner, Percy B. Shelley, Charles Dickens, Claude Debussy, Jean Cocteau or Eugenio Montale.[22]

The Queen arrived in Venice in the company of a small "court" which gave the writer the opportunity to sketch a few portraits, with an ironical and satirical verve that here and there lapses into sarcasm. Subjective and at times downright visceral in his judgement of some personages of the day, a feature often visible in his correspondence as well, Duiliu Zamfirescu apparently perceived some members of the Queen's entourage as obstacles to his having a closer relationship with her. This is the reason why we often find them at the receiving end of his quill, probably because he thus wanted to hint at his own superiority and therefore his right to a position as close to the Queen as possible.

Thus, Prince Mişu Ghica, "a sinister character" who "had been dug up in Florence, where he had been rotting away for many years", was also a "boring fellow", who "used to make a scene every day, either because he had not been given the place of honour at the table, or because people did not utter *mon prince* with enough conviction, until he was finally sent whence he had come from."

The peculiarity of Mr Scheffer, the Queen's secretary and treasurer, "was that he was always laughing, probably in order to show his teeth." And although the Queen seemed to appreciate "the noisy gaiety of that Switzer, who appeared honest, though crude," time would later show "that crude indeed he was, but honest, not in the least." When "sent packing" after Elisabeth's return to the country, he published "a despicable novel, in which the Queen was described as afflicted by love and he, the hero, as a decadent aesthete."[23]

His new sojourn in Venice (he had been there before) gave Duiliu Zamfirescu "abundant spare time", which he dedicated to taking long walks. The Romanticism of this declared classicist surfaces in the

nostalgic aura with which he bathes the description of the city, as contemplated by him from the Lido.

> In the morning, when the Queen had no command for me, I was free. […] Therefore, it was in the morning that I went to the Lido, a place where, on the delicate background of its waters, the Adriatic seemed to adorn itself in the brightness of the purest light. One of Carlo Dolci's Madonas, a blue veil covering her maiden brow. The spiritual need for an ideal world, with the real one shooting in like a bird coming from afar, suffocated me. I could not tell exactly what it was, but it was all at the same time: godless-eyed women in white clothes; flowers hanging down from balconies; orange fisherman's sails fluttering against the blue of the sky; my vigorous youth, whose eternal yearning for beauty would have liked to conquer the air, the water, the past, the present and the future, all encapsulated by the adorable Venice.[24]

The youth mentioned by Zamfirescu at the end of this description is in opposition to the moment evoked in these writings. Hence the meditation of the "epicurean spirit" remarked by Al. Săndulescu, a meditation concentrated on the young man's "spiritual need for an ideal world" which would create the (less epicurean) feeling of suffocation. The comparison between reality and "a bird coming from afar" points to a predisposition for escapism and living on an ideal plain, which reverberates from the past and is possible due precisely to the act of contemplating "the adorable Venice."

The description of the lagoon is interrupted in order to make room for the mention of the ceremonial surrounding a lunch with Carmen Sylva. The presentation of the guests briefly reminds one of the satirical verve displayed by Dickens in a scene from his famous novel *Our Mutual Friend*.

> At two o'clock we were gathered round the table. The Queen only ate lettuce and fruit, lying down on a glorious sofa and with a high table drawn near. Doctor Theodori picked at his morsels like an old horse pulling from the rack only the tender trefoil; Miss Theodori did not even look at what she was gobbling up, ready as she was to rush forth at the Queen's smallest gesture; "Prince Mişu" gummed ominously; Edgard Mavrocordat spoke hoarsely and drank willingly. So it was that only one person there was actually eating – myself. […] It was plain to see that I was performing this animal function with the sincerity of a healthy man who does not pick and choose and also does not joke about holy things.[25]

With Duiliu Zamfirescu, self-irony never really goes all the way, because a strong self-love always derails his argumentative train of

thought and directs it towards emphasising his own qualities, which, fortunately, is never done without humour. Thus, the remark that his absence from the table robbed the Queen of any appetite inevitably leads to the mention of "a royal decree I have kept to this day, signed 'Elisaveta', by which I was revoked the right to accept any lunch invitations, 'for the greater good of the dynasty.'"[26]

A walk followed the meal and the siesta, and this of course was along the Venetian canals, by a royally adorned gondola.

> Descending the stairs in a litter, the Queen would then settle into her elegant gondola, whose purple-hemmed trappings floated on the water like a mantle. We wandered far on the Giudecca Canal and in the lagoons to the surrounding villages, and we would often encounter weddings, funerals, serenades, all manner of processions full of colour and originality.[27]

Like Vasile Alecsandri, who was surprised at his gondolier's knowledge of Alfieri and his tragedy *Saul* (recounted in his *Diary of My Travels through Italy*), Duiliu Zamfirescu was no less amazed by the Venetian fishermen's habit of reciting together whole stanzas from Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*.

> This unbelievable thing is true and real. Simple, illiterate fishermen inherit from their fathers a man's "written" poem, which they learn by heart precisely because it echoes their national spirit like no other poem – medieval bravery, heroic love stories, the brilliant lights of the Orient towards which Venice never ceased to aspire.[28]

Carmen Sylva, with her artistic and poetic sensibility, was the astonished spectator of this show, spontaneous and paradoxically unique in its habitual evening manifestations in the lagoon, and rooted in an ancient tradition. The Queen herself was part of the spectacle the diplomat-writer described in his diary.

> Still as a statue, the Queen listened how the fishermen's chore on the left bank answered with a whole stanza to the fishermen on the right bank, who in turn sang the next stanza, until they reached the end of the *Canto*.[29]

His closeness to Elisabeth's entourage would also be the cause of great discomfort for Duiliu Zamfirescu, who at a certain point was vehemently accused by the Romanian press of being involved in the "correspondences" from Venice which were published in the newspaper *Constituţionalul* and signed Loredano.[30] Following his repeated protests to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or thanks to his friendship with the likes of Titu Maiorescu and Trandafir Djuvara,

Zamfirescu was granted a public disclaimer from *Constituţionalul* regarding his alleged identity as the bearer of the afore-mentioned pen name. Yet the truth continues to remain elusive, and it seems that his transfer to Athens (1 June 1892) and then to Brussels (3 November 1892 – 1 October 1894) was done on disciplinary grounds, though the suspicions were never proved.[31]

Carmen Sylva and the Model of Female Emancipation

New rumours and speculations, this time regarding the close relationship between the Queen and her protégée, Elena Văcărescu, determined King Carol I to pay an urgent visit to his wife in Venice, where he categorically demanded that Miss Văcărescu be expelled from the Queen's circle. The young woman was thus forced to leave for Milan and, later on, for Paris. The Queen would never see her again.[32]

In order to pacify the national press, and seeking to protect the Queen's health, Carol decided to move Elisabeth to Pallanza, a resort near Lago Maggiore. And there she would remain until early June 1892, when she left Italy for Castle Segenhaus, situated in the vicinity of her native Neuwied. It was only after Ferdinand's engagement to Princess Marie, and the passage of two more years, on 10 September 1894, that Carmen Sylva finally returned to her country and to Sinaia.[33]

It would be interesting to draw a conclusion to the "Văcărescu Affair", or "The Venetian Drama", from the point of view of Carmen Sylva, the artistically sensitive woman, of Elisabeth, Queen of Romania. Referring to the first months of the Queen's Italian exile, Silvia Irina Zimmermann says,

> Upset by the fact that her plan to Romanize the dynasty through a marriage between the Prince and a Romanian woman had been rejected by the entire political class, the Queen was in anguish because of her separation from Romania […]
> The royal couple's correspondence during the Queen's exile reveals a marriage crisis that had gained the proportions of a state affair. Queen Elisabeth's letters show how upset and disappointed she was that her plan had not been understood, not even by her august husband, and at the end of a lifetime marked by sacrifices for the country, all her efforts appeared to have been in vain. From the royal correspondence we also find out about King Carol's exhortations and repeated attempts to make the Queen change her pessimistic attitude so that she may regain her health and be once again his devoted and beloved partner in life and on Romania's throne.[34]

Beyond the sentimental aura of the "affair", Carmen Sylva's attitude demonstrates the vision of a political mission and the courage to express it, with the accepted consequences.

Going further than the royal couple's "marriage crisis", it is difficult not to notice a general situation characterising nineteenth-century Romanian society. And I refer particularly to the status of women at that time. Ramona Mihăilă says,

> What characterises the 19th century is the fact that women from all social classes are […] condemned to resignation, to being what religion and moral-based institutions require them to be. The images of womanhood, of the feminine nature presented and imposed on them by society are the ancient ones: woman as wife and mother. […] The woman who questions her destiny, or tries to discover her personality and "live", will be an unhappy one. Yet she tries, because from unfathomable depths rises a will to "live" that is a manifestation of the desire for liberty and happiness.[35]

This attempt to "live", to self-affirmation by transcending a condition imposed by tradition and custom, will lead to the state of "being unhappy", and implicitly to causing "a scandal." And still, Ramona Mihăilă concludes, "scandals are part of a heroine's destiny."

> There appears a tension that shakes the feminine universe. She lives in a society which cannot and will not liberate women, a society ossified by rules oppressing women regardless of their social background. The rejection of life [suicide…], the retreat into solitude [to a nunnery] and rebellion [the curse, abandoning … the family] are sometimes the consequences of this contradictory situation.[36]

Politics, backed up by the princely code, could after all have represented a space and the rules of the male power in its absolute form, and the active presence of a woman – albeit of the Queen of Romania herself – was tantamount to "heresy" and deserving of a "punishment." Carmen Sylva writes in *Fluturi sărutându-se (Butterflies kissing)* that,

> Selfishness leads men to make laws more severe for women, without ever suspecting that, in doing so, they elevate women to a position higher than their own.[37]

Out of a woman's dignity and the generosity of her spirit, Carmen Sylva chose for a while "the retreat into solitude", a solitude that this time took the form of self-exile. But the Venetian exile was not so much a form of penitence as it was a form of "revolt", the revolt of a

woman who, in order to express her right to an idea – one which, moreover, served to consolidate the State she, as Queen, represented together with its King – found the courage to challenge, with dignity, a political class terrified of change, a network of norms and deep-rooted customs, and even her husband, the King.

NOTES

1. *Die Frau im Kunst und Beruf* (*Femeia în artă și meșteșuguri*), Berlin, 1912.

2. Latinised name meaning "song of the forest".

3. Cf.G. R. Marek, *The Bed and the Throne: The Life of Isabella d'Este*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1976, 30.

4. See Daniele Bini (supervised by), *Isabella d'Este. La primadonna del Rinascimento*, in: *Quaderno di civiltà mantovana*, Ed. Il Bulino Modena, 2001,11.

5. See Al. Săndulescu, note 3, letter 10, *Către Trandafir Djuvara*, in vol.: Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Opere*, vol. VII: *Corespondența A-M*, published under the supervision of and with an introductory study, notes, comments and index by Al. Săndulescu, Bucharest: Minerva, 1984, 513-519.

6. Ibid., 513.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Opere*, vol. VII: *Corespondența A-M*, op. cit., 262.

10. See Al. Săndulescu, note 1 to the letter addressed to Trandafir Djuvara, in vol.: Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Opere*, vol. VII: *Corespondența A-M*, op. cit., 512-513: a French writer of sentimental and exotic novels, he "kept Queen Elisabeth company during her Venetian 'exile' […] and dedicated her a novel titled *L'Exilée*."

11. Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Opere*, vol. VII: *Corespondența A-M*, op.cit., 34.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 34-35.

14. Ibid., 35.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. See Al. Săndulescu, note 3, letter 10, *Către Trandafir Djuvara*, in vol.: Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Opere*, vol. VII: *Corespondența A-M*, op.cit., 513-519.

19. Al. Săndulescu, nota 3, letter 10, *Către Trandafir Djuvara*, in vol.: Duiliu Zamfirescu, op.cit., 514.

20. Duiliu Zamfirescu, Ms.10.533, B.C.S., reproduced by Al. Săndulescu în *România literară*, no 6, 14 Nov.1968; apud. Al. Săndulescu, note 3, letter 10, *Către Trandafir Djuvara*, in vol.: Duiliu Zamfirescu, op.cit., 516.

21. Ibid.

22. See Marcello Brusegan, *I palazzi di Venezia*, Rome, Newton &

Compton, 2007, 101-104; Andrea Fasolo, *Palazzi di Venezia*, Arsenale editrice, 2003, 102-103.

23. Duiliu Zamfirescu, Ms.10.533, B.C.S., reproduced by Al. Săndulescu în *România literară*, no 6, 14 Nov.1968; apud. Al. Săndulescu, note 3, letter 10, *Către Trandafir Djuvara*, in vol: Duiliu Zamfirescu, op.cit., 516-517.

24. Ibid., 517.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 518.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. See Al. Săndulescu, note 3, letter 10, *Către Trandafir Djuvara*, in vol.: Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Opere*, vol. VII: *Corespondența A-M*, op.cit., 518.

31. Ibid., p. 519.

32. See Gabriel Badea-Păun, *Carmen Sylva. 1843-1916. Uimitoarea regină Elisabeta a României*, translated by Irina-Margareta Nistor (original title: *Carmen Sylva. 1843-1916. La Fantastique reine Élisabeth de Roumanie*), Bucharest: Humanitas, 3rd edition, 2012, 199-200.

33. Ibid., 201, 208

34. Silvia Irina Zimmermann, "Exilul Reginei Elisabeta a României și prelucrarea lui literară într-o carte de povești ilustrată împreună cu André Lecomte du Noüy," *Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române*, Year 2, no 1, January-June 2017 (133-150), 135.

35. Ramona Mihăilă, *Construcția identității personajului feminin în proza secolului al XIX-lea*. Bucharest: Fundația România de Mâine, 2008, 175.

36. Ibid., 207.

37. Carmen Sylva, *Fluturi sărutându-se (Butterflies kissing)* (cugetări și poezii). Preface by Prince Radu of Romania, chorological table by Gabriel Badea-Păun, musings translated into Romanian by Doina Jela Despois, poems in Romanian by George Coșbuc, Ilie Ighel Deleanu, Șt. O. Iosif, Elena Poenaru, ed. Curtea Veche, București, 2013, 61.

REFERENCES

CORPUS:

Carmen Sylva (2013). *Fluturi sărutându-se (Butterflies kissing)*. Preface by Prince Radu of Romania, chronological table by Gabriel Badea-Păun, musings translated into Romanian by Doina Jela Despois, poems translated into Romanian by George Coșbuc, Ilie Ighel Deleanu, Șt. O. Iosif, Elena Poenaru. Bucharest: Editura Curtea Veche.

Zamfirescu, Duiliu (1968). "Ms.10.533", B.C.S., reproduced by Al. Săndulescu. *România literară*, no. 6, 14 Nov., 9-10.

Zamfirescu, Duiliu (1984). *Opere*, vol. VII: *Corespondența A-M*, published under the supervision of and with an introductory study, notes, comments and index by Al. Săndulescu. Bucharest: Editura Minerva.

Zamfirescu, Duiliu (1985). *Opere*, vol. VIII: *Corespondenţa M-Z*, published under the supervision of and with notes, comments and index by Al. Săndulescu. Bucharest: Editura Minerva.

STUDIES:

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2012). *Carmen Sylva. 1843-1916. Uimitoarea regină Elisabeta a României*. Translated by Irina-Margareta Nistor (original title: *Carmen Sylva. 1843-1916. La Fantastique reine Élisabeth de Roumanie*). 2003; 2012. Bucharest: Humanitas.

Bini, Daniele (supervised by) (2001). "Isabella d'Este. La primadonna del Rinascimento," *Quaderno di civiltà mantovana*. Daniele Bini (ed.). Modena: Ed. Il Bulino.

Brusegan, Marcello (2007). *I palazzi di Venezia*. Rome: Newton & Compton.

Fasolo, Andrea (2003). *Palazzi di Venezia*. Venice: Arsenale editrice.

Marek, George R. (1976). *The Bed and the Throne: The Life of Isabella d'Este*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

Mihăilă, Ramona (2008). *Construcţia identităţii personajului feminin în proza secolului al XIX-lea* (*The Identity Construction of Female Characters in 19th-Century Prose*). Bucharest: Fundaţia România de Mâine.

Săndulescu, Al. (1984). "Notes to the correspondence" in vol.: Duiliu Zamfirescu, *Opere*, vol. VII: *Corespondenţa A-M*, published under the supervision of and with an introductory study, notes, comments and index by Al. Săndulescu. Bucharest: Minerva.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2017). "Alecsandri, Grigorescu și Enescu și influențele lor asupra operei literare a reginei Elisabeta a României" ("Alecsandri, Grigorescu, and Enescu and Their Influences on the Literary Work of Queen Elisabeth of Romania"). *Saeculum*, year XVI (XVIII), no 1 (43)/2017, 176-190.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (2017). "Exilul Reginei Elisabeta a României și prelucrarea lui literară într-o carte de povești ilustrată împreună cu André Lecomte du Noüy" ("The Exile of Queen Elisabeth of Romania and Its Literary Adaptation in an Illustrated Storybook Created Together with André Lecomte du Noüy."). *Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române*, year 2, no. 1, January-June, 133-150.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 250-260

Architectural Features during Royal Times: King Carol I and Queen Elizabeth (Carmen Sylva)

LUCA MATEI STOIAN
Center of Excellence in Architecture, Arts and Audiovisual, Bucharest
ceaaa.news@gmail.com

Introduction

In the context of the prosperous economic environment and the general programs aimed at modernizing the country, the Crown constituted for Romania one of the factors that brought the country to the core of European civilization. The work of foreign architects (French, German, Austrian, Italian) along with Romanian ones built remarkable monuments - during the last decades of the 19th century was also continued through the residences of the Romanian aristocracy, in the first decades of the 20th century, by representations of leaders of the Romanian school of architecture who also created a style specific to Romanian architecture and cultural identity.

The name of Queen Elisabeta and King Carol I will always be associated with the consciousness of the fulfilled duty. They ruled the country through the hardest and greatest moments of its history. The Crown placed Romania's interest above their blood connection and their country of origin. The fidelity with which the Romanians gathered around the Crown was the foundation of the political and diplomatic struggle of the statesmen for the recognition of the union of the historical provinces and the consolidation of the Romanian influence in Europe.

A small nation like the Romanian one had no way of deciding its own destiny because it risked being crushed by political neighbors, but it did not wait passively, at the mercy of the great powers either. The double election of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, obtaining the recognition of the double election, the unification of the institutions,

the great modernization reforms were not creations of the great powers, but embodiments of the Romanian national will, expressed in the program of the Romanian Revolution of 1848-1849. The same happened later, when the representative bodies of the Romanian people prevented the division of the country by bringing in the foreign prince, adopted the Constitution (1866), the national currency (1867), created the Romanian Academy (1866), proclaimed independence from the state and determined its conquest (1877-1878), facilitated the unification of Dobrogea (1878), decided the creation of the National Bank (1880), established the Kingdom of Romania (1881), recognized the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church (1885) and campaigned for the union of the Romanian provinces with the Country in 1918.

The Era of King Carol I and Queen Elizabeth

From many points of view, the Ruler, then King Carol I was not only a founder of a dynasty, but also a founder of a country. Although he was not the first choice of those who decided that the United Principalities needed a leader from European ruling rank, Carol I knew how to act, from the moment of his arrival in his new homeland, as an infrastructure builder, a far-reaching modernizer and an actor of the continental nation-building process of his time.

The first generation of this work of national construction is the one that offers not only an edified image of new political constructions (Wallachia and Moldova united in a single state), but also valid works in this aesthetic manner, under the species of representative edifices of the state, from orthodox cathedrals to administrative palaces, coexisting for a time with the eclectic architecture of the French school (often, thought up by French architects themselves, or who, like Ion Mincu himself, obtained their architectural diploma at Beaux-Arts, in Paris), for so that, later on, it becomes the manner predominantly used by the state to express its own values.

If, regarding the modernization of the state, Carol I was a modernizer, the same cannot be said about his own tastes in architecture, which we see best illustrated by the Peleş Castle. There, the King and Queen will order the construction of a strictly German ambience, likely to accommodate the nostalgia for a lost home, perhaps, but found much further east, outside the Carpathian arc. And this retro-nostalgic manner will, however, be successful, the aristocracy of the time locally emulating the royal example, building noble residences in a manner similar to the one at Peleş Castle (and,

later, at Pelisor Castle) and spreading, strictly in the Prahova Valley, a way of making architecture that the Romanians will (re)discover only after the Union of 1918, with the fortified churches in southern Transylvania and with the edifices in the cities of the same historical province, but built long before, even from the first Saxon dismount, in the 12th century.

At the time of reckoning, King Charles I emerges triumphant, as shown by Meštrović's equestrian statue (only recently restored, with modifications, by Florin Codre): a rigorous soldier, not willing to compromise, who won not only battles on the field battle of the War of Independence from 1877-78 and in the Balkans before his death, but a visionary, who tried to modernize his kingdom and forge his own identity in the European context of his time.

Bucharest, the Capital of the Kingdom

Due to King Carol I and Queen Elizabeth, Bucharest, the capital of the Kingdom, became the destination of an extensive modernization activity, according to the tendencies of those times.

The medieval city, with caravanserais and monasteries, begins to acquire a new street structure, building equipment and edifices matching the economic development and the establishment of a new nation.

The king, with his military background, ordered the construction of defense forts around the capital, too often the destination of punitive expeditions of the former suzerain power. This had not allowed the extra-Carpathian cities to be (anymore) fortified, so the courageous gesture of the Prince, later King Carol I, was, beyond the defensive role, one of affirming the country's independence. One by one, over former central inns or even over the ruins of a monastery, the buildings of the Stock Exchange, banks, a Military Circle (House of the Army), the Roman Athenaeum, the Palace of Posts, a Court, ministries - almost all in French styles (eclectic, renaissance) and very rarely German (The cart with beer), buildings designed by architects with Beaux-Arts studies in Paris, be they French or, more and more, Romanian ones.

King Carol I himself gives an example of rewriting the tradition, offering along with Queen Elizabeth a significant part of the Royal Palace garden to be opened as a public garden (the current Cişmigiu Park). The whole process aims to rewrite from the ground up a monumental capital, decorated and equipped accordingly, in terms of building and urban planning.

The National Bank built two palaces in two different eras in the historical center of Bucharest. The first one, eclectic and with French architectural origins (the preliminary designs being drawn up by Cassien Bernard and Albert Galleron), was put into operation under the supervision of architect N. Cerkez, appointed by Eugeniu Carada as main architect of the construction, between 1882 (the year of the acquisition of the land of the former Șerban Vodă Inn) and 1890 (although the year written on the frontispiece is 1889). The second building, a neoclassical one, was designed by architect Radu Dudescu in 1940. The first palace is part of the reconstruction of the historical center of the capital under the reign of King Carol I and Queen Elisabeta and is adjacent to some of the most important buildings of Bucharest: the CEC Palace, the Roman Athenaeum, Bursa, Cercul Militar (Casa Armatei), which are practically contemporary in expression and urban attitude. The medieval layer of the city is disappearing due to this massive process of urban restructuring: several inns and monasteries disappeared, and Bucharest acquired its reputation as a small Paris, which it carries to these days, too.

The General Exhibition of 1906, Bucharest

The Royal Exhibition of 1906, the anniversary, with great pomp, of forty years of glorious reign, of the Prince, then King Carol I, together with his wife Queen Elizabeth. The exhibition celebrated the achievements of this unique period in the history of the Kingdom of Romania. Creators of institutions, modernizers, if not downright creators of infrastructure, industry and buildings, the king and queen saw this exhibition as a glorified work of national construction.

The exhibition was dedicated to neo-Romanian architecture as the official style of the Romanian state. This is the place where monumental versions of this way of thinking about Romanian identity in the building environment were tested for the first time. However, none of the temporary buildings went beyond the so-called National Romanticism, which was to be found in parallel with, or instead of, Jugendstil / Sezzesion architecture in Central and Eastern Europe and represented, in essence, another way of decorating the bodies symmetrically, inherited from eclecticism. The architecture exhibition, purified from the care of functions, allows it to focus on formal expression, on experiment and on architecture parlante. The current Carol I Park barely reminds of its glorious past, when pavilions with different destinations

surrounded the central lake. However, a few of the former pavilions have survived until today, despite a turbulent history of the place.

First Residence of Queen Elizabeth and King Carol I

Since the two princely palaces in Bucharest - the one on Calea Victoriei and the one in Cotroceni - did not offer much comfort, Prince Carol decided to build a residence worthy of the rank of a German prince belonging to the Hohenzollern family. Located at the foot of the Bucegi Mountains, near the water of Peleş, above the Sinaia Monastery - in a wild, but picturesque place, known as the Piatra-Arsă mountain - the castle will be the favorite residence of King Charles I and Queen Elizabeth, who will oversee carefully all construction works until 1914.

In order to accomplish the plans for the much-desired summer residence, Prince Carol I invited to Sinaia, on August 22, 1872, the Viennese architect Wilhelm Doderer, a professor at the Polytechnic School in the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Peleș Castle was built on an estate of the future King Carol I and Queen Elizabeth, which they received it in exchange for another, not so well placed. The proximity to Bucharest was certainly a factor, as was probably the proximity to the border with Austria-Hungary, facilitated by the opening of the Ploiesti-Braşov railway in 1879. The place itself, well sunny, allowed a beneficial location of the falls, with an unobstructed perspective on the mountains that surround it, the Viennese architects Doderer and Schultz, plus Karel Liman, who will remain the architect of the Royal House, designed a set of architectural gestures and styles that reminded the king of his native Germany. Not much further north of Sinaia, in the Transylvanian plateau, hundreds of years before, another Germanic wave made its presence, which left behind a number of fortified churches.

Peleș Castle introduces, south of the Carpathians, a romantic way of treating, with nostalgia, a Germanic revival insert, a steep vertical landscape and, as an entourage, some buildings for the castle staff (two more will be built, Pelişor and Gazebo). Almost immediately, this allogeneic implant was assimilated, because the aristocracy built their own villas in the immediate vicinity of the royal domain, many of them inspired by the examples set, over time, by the country's monarchs. This is why Sinaia and its surroundings are Germanic in holiday architecture, with elements of neo-Romanian style appearing later on. Of course, the legends also appeared, related to the alleged

discovery on the royal domain of some undeciphered written inscriptions and drawings to this day, but attributed to the ancient Dacian tribes. Much more interesting, however, is the real influence that the taste of the kings had on the whole area.

The works carried out during 1893-1914 were entrusted to the Czech architect Karel Liman, who left a strong mark on the style of the castle and who also built the other buildings of the complex. Originally from Czechoslovakia, Karel Liman was for many years the assistant of the French architect Lecomte du Noüy, with who collaborated on the renovation of the Trei lerarhi and Sfântul Nicolae Domnesc churches in Iaşi.

An architect of great value and talent - characterized by Eugeniu Buchman, who knew him very well - he is in fact the true creator of Peleş Castle and Vodă Carol had in him not only a technical advisor, but also a collaborator with the soul of an artist, a tireless worker and an honest man. Suffice it to say that, after a lifetime of work, he died poor. Almost every day the king visited him in the architecture office located near the castle and there they both discussed with great passion the works designed by the king who, like many other sovereigns - liked to build, but did not have much skill in architecture and, above all, he lacked imagination, so the drawn plan did not really tell him enough and the architect had to present the model in plaster, reduced, so that the king could understand exactly how it was going to be in reality planned construction. (...) What was said above sufficiently explains the special consideration that the king had and showed for Liman, in all circumstances. He often invited him to breakfasts at the castle and to the most important celebrations, and Queen Elizabeth, who also had great sympathy for him, did not forget to invite him to her teas or to the musical auditions that took place several times a week.

They stand out for their splendid decoration, which perfects their beauty: the Hall of Honor, designed in 1911 by Karel Liman, with late walnut paneling, in which statuettes and alabaster reliefs are framed, and with a glass ceiling; Hall of Arms, built between 1903-1906 in the style of the German Renaissance; The boardroom, decorated in 1914 in the same style; King Carol's study, finished in 1883 and decorated with pieces from the Heymann workshops in Hamburg.

The same rich decoration can be found in the old Music Hall transformed, after 1905, at the request of Queen Elisabeta, into a salon for literary evenings, the Florentine Hall (Great Salon), with a carved ceiling of gilded linden wood; The Moorish Hall, designed in the Hispano-Moorish style by Lecomte du Noüy; The living room in the

style of the German Renaissance, work of August Bembé, The climbing room, with silk embroideries; The theater hall, the concert hall or the Imperial Apartment, furnished in 1906 in the 'Maria Teresa' style, with Cordoba leather wallpaper.

Peleș Castle has a nostalgic architecture, but a very advanced technology for its time and suitable for the role of builders of a new country, of King Charles I and Queen Elizabeth. The power plant brought electric current not only to the Peleș domain, but also public electric lighting to the small town, Sinaia, where it is located. It had an elevator, a skylight above the central hall that moved, on summer days, to capture the precious light (and quite little present, by the way) inside, also helping to ventilate the space. It also had a central cleaning facility and a high-performance heating plant still in operation. All the technical innovations introduced by the king and queen in his castle are still present today and in perfect working order. The location of the castle also required complex earthworks and drainage of the springs present on the site, which will undergo a complex restoration after more than one hundred and thirty years of impeccable constructive behavior.

Apart from the terrace system that surrounds the building, the built ensemble also arranges itself around some inner courtyards, giving the illusion of a public space in a German settlement, intended, most likely, to participate in the illusion of a sense of home lost by the monarch. The convergence of works helping the architecture itself is also impressive, from stonework and scholarly stereotomy to the sometimes flamboyant ironwork, to the use of glass in the windows in the manner of Gothic stained glass and in the manner of constituting the interior atmosphere of the castle, as can still be seen in the photographs vintage. Here, especially in the spaces intended for her, Queen Elisabeta also made a contribution, who, being a writer (under the pseudonym Carmen Sylva), surrounded herself with the most diverse artists, George Enescu being, for example, one of the frequent visitors of the Queen's music room.





The Large Music Room

Built according to the plans of the architect Karel Liman and decorated by Anton Pössenbacher in the English neo-Renaissance style, the hall hosted the musical evenings of Queen Elizabeth. Talented musicians, such as George Enescu, Dumitru Dinicu, Eugene Ysaye, were among the queen's distinguished guests. Inspired by the decoration of the Hall of Honor of Hatfield Castle (England), the ensemble consists of walnut paneling, coffered ceiling with gilded stucco and Flemish embossed leather wallpaper. Above the fireplace is the canvas of the painter Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte du Noüy, made in 1897, entitled "Queen Elizabeth listening to the voices of the forest". The electrically operated organ was manufactured by the Rieger Company (Bohemia) in 1903 and presents a special feature: the two consoles are arranged in two adjacent rooms, thus creating the possibility of interpretation from both spaces Passionate about classical music, Queen Elizabeth often performed works by her favorite composers.

The Small Music Room

The small music hall was intended for Queen Elizabeth's musical auditions. In this space is the second console of the Rieger organ. The showcases in which precious pieces of Far Eastern art are exhibited today come from the interwar period: garden pots made of Chinese ceramics, 'Celadon' pieces from the 18th century, Japanese faience by Imari and Arita and Persian vessels from the 17th-19th centuries. On the upper level there is a "U"-shaped dais balcony with benches, accessible by a small staircase built into the wall. The balustrade and ceiling are made of stucco, perfectly imitating wood. The internal spiral staircase leads to the floor of second in the suite of the queen's wardrobe, and brings a surplus of beauty to this environment. It is worth noting the teak wood salon set, made in India at the end of the 19th century, the showcase-case made of exotic wood, crystal, mother-of-pearl and ivory, made in 1937, especially for the promotion to the rank of sub-lieutenant of the Grand Voivode of Alba-Iulia, the screen, the vessel for burning scented essences and the painted earthenware trays, created in Far Eastern workshops.

The Literary Salon

Located on the southern side, the hall was built in 1883 and modified in 1906. It was also used as a literary salon. The ensemble consists of walnut and curly ash panels, German furniture and polychrome stained glass windows executed in the Zettler (Munich) workshops, illustrating scenes from Romanian fairy tales collected by the poet Vasile Alecsandri: "Înșir'te mărgărite," "Ana Doamna" and "Ciocârlia." The suite of canvases with allegorical characters from ancient German legends, Queen Elisabeth described in her writings, are works by the German painter Dora Hitz. The pieces that remind of the musical evenings at the castle are the *Orchestration* (Atelier Welte, Freiburg Germany, 1890) – a unique piece in our country, the Herman Carl Bechstein piano, the Italian harp, the violin and Queen Elisabeta's favorite musical pieces. Known under the literary pseudonym Carmen Sylva, Queen Elisabeta studied philosophy and art at prestigious universities, such as Heidelberg and Berlin. She was a musician, painter and writer. The Crown Council convened by King Carol I in the old Music Hall decided Romania's neutrality in the First World War, on August 3, 1914.

Queen Elizabeth's Painting Workshop

The painting workshop, built according to the plans of the architect Karel Liman in 1906, is the place where Queen Elizabeth used to draw and paint. The spacious room, with Art Nouveau architecture, formally takes the silhouette of a Viking ship, and the unevenness spaces and secluded corners, the interior staircase with wooden balustrade and the bright, elevated gallery, complete the interior appearance. The walls are decorated with panels of pine wood and other resin essences brought from the Himalayan mountains; the Venetian crystal mirror is framed by a gilded linden wood frame, representing a tree with rich ramifications, while the large windows offer a view of the Bucegi mountains.

The eclectic furniture recalls the original purpose of the room through the presence of Louis-style Bergère armchairs XVI, which are joined by walnut wood tables, fixed sofas and the queen's easel. The interior decoration is completed with small pieces of decorative art in Limoges enamel, saucers, bowls in Swiss enamel faience, delicate cups in pink Murano glass, as well as Viennese vases, the wax

sculpture, entitled “The Unknown of the Seine”, and the bust of Princess Mărioara enriches the decoration of the hall.

Queen Elizabeth’s Study Room

Queen Elizabeth’s study room, set up in 1883, and redecorated in the Italian neo-Renaissance style at the beginning of the 20th century, is a space that includes a semicircular sitting room, organized in the small tower, and a library on two levels, accessible through a spiral staircase. The walls and ceiling are richly decorated with marquetry walnut paneling. The wallpaper, made of textile material and metallic thread, gives the room an elegant look. The room furniture, executed at the end of the 19th century, bears the stylistic accents of the Italian Renaissance and consists of a richly carved desk, chairs, armchairs and banquettes in walnut wood. The stained glass windows depict scenes from the fairy tales “Snow White” and “The Beautiful Melusine” and are executed in the Zettler workshops in Munich.

Conclusions

The extraordinary level of creativity of the Romanian and foreign architects who were in the service of the Romanian Crown demonstrates that the vast production of architectural works had an important role, with visible effects in the development of the Romanian identity.

The Peleş Castle remains entirely the creation of the first king of Romania, who, together with his wife, Queen Elisabeta (Carmen Sylva), imposed his style on the sumptuous residence in Sinaia. Thus decorated, the Peleş Castle was able to fulfill the role of a royal residence, as Cotroceni (The President’s Palace at present) and other royal palaces in Bucharest could not do. Although it was a summer residence, Peleș decisively marked its existence to the sovereigns of Romania, where most of the life of the Royal Court of Romania took place, with all that it meant. “At the Peleş castle, Eugeniu Buchman says, all the importance and brilliance of both Courts was concentrated. The most important breakfasts and lunches were given there, military missions from abroad were received there, which always arrived in the country when the sovereign was in Sinaia”.

Peleș stood out not only for the beauty of its architecture, but also for the splendid interior decorations. Among the decorators who

worked at the castle, August Bembé and the cabinetmaker, Bernhard Ludwig-the Son, the main decorating artist of Peleș, were distinguished. The furniture of the castle was ordered from foreign companies: Heymann from Hamburg, Bembé from Mainz and Ludwig from Vienna. King Carol and Queen Elizabeth were great art lovers, managing to gather in Peleş an impressive collection of paintings, tapestries, sculptures, weapons, books, carpets, table services, ceramics, furniture, etc.

Of all the royal palaces and castles, Peleş is undoubtedly not only the most beautiful building, but also the first residence that Queen Elizabeth and King Carol I built in Romania.

REFERENCES

Note. All photos in this article were taken by the author.

Buchman, Eugen (1908 and 1914). *Diary* (copy in The Central National Historical Archives).

Condurățeanu-Fesci, Simona, Mariana Ionescu (1994). *Grădinile și parcurile Terrei* (*The Gardens and Parks of Terra*). Bucharest, Albatros Publishing House.

Haret, Mihai (1924). *Castelul Peleş. Monografie istorică, geografică, turistică, pitorească, descriptivă* (*Peleş Castle. Historical, geographical, touristic, scenic, descriptive monograph*). Bucharest, Cartea Românească S.A.

Maria, Queen of Romania (1991). *The story of my life*. Iași, Moldova Publishing House.

Neagoe, Stelian (1992-1993). *Memoriile regelui Carol I al României. De un martor ocular* (*Memoirs of King Carol I of Romania. By an Eyewitness*), vol. I (1866-1869), Volume II (1869-1875). Bucharest, Scripta Publishing House.

Stoian, Luca Matei, Răzvan Theodorescu (2017). *Interwar Architecture of Bucharest and Royalty*. Translation: Ramona Mihăilă. U.A.R., Bucharest.

Stoian, Luca Matei (2022). *Italian Architectural Interferences in Modern Romanian Architecture*. Răzvan Theodorescu (foreword), Narcis Dorin Ion (foreword), Ramona Mihăilă (translation). Bucharest, Igloo Media.

*** The Central National Historical Archives (hereinafter: A.N.I.C.), *Castles and Palaces. Peleş Castle.*

Part 3.

Exploring Narrative Techniques and Language in the Works of Carmen Sylva

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 263-270

The Ideal of Motherhood in Carmen Sylva's Writings

ALINA BRUCKNER
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi
alina.bruckner@uaic.ro

Introduction: A German Princess on the Romanian Throne

Carmen Sylva was a rather successful writer during her lifetime not only due to the topics she dealt with in her writings, but also as a result of her social position as queen of a newly founded, rather unknown monarchy. The particularity of this writer lies primarily in her self-imposed role as cultural intermediate, which influences to a great extent most of her writings, the autobiographical touch being thus emblematic Carmen Sylva.

This paper however focuses on the way in which Carmen Sylva chose to depict women in her literary pieces, the autobiographical note being noticeable in this case, as well. Nevertheless, in Carmen Sylva's opinion, the ideal of womanhood represents in fact motherhood. It is precisely the image of the ideal mother that this paper analyzes, both in the poetry, as well as in the prose of Carmen Sylva. Interestingly enough, the ideal of motherhood turns out to be depicted under two forms, both however focusing around the idea of martyrdom.

A German-born princess and the first Queen of Romania, Elizabeth of the House of Wied and married Hohenzollern, remained known in the history not only as Queen Elisabeta, wife of King Carol I of Romania, but mainly under her literary pseudonym Carmen Sylva.

Though emblematic for the women belonging to the European aristocracy of the time, her literary activity is to be regarded rather as an expression of cultural awareness. Being first ruler, then queen of a newly founded monarchy, Elizabeth saw her royal position as a cultural mission and made it her goal to promote the Romanian culture. In her writings – published mainly in German language and German publishing houses – the queen deliberately chose to deal with

Romanian motifs, myths and legends. In this regard worth mentioning are her German translations of Romanian folk poetry,[1] as well as her volume of stories and tales *Pelesch Märchen*, which are actually adaptations of old Romanian legends.[2]

Apart from her literary activity, the queen also sought to promote the Romanian culture in various European fairs and exhibitions, being in fact the first who drew the attention upon the Romanian national costume, but also by means of her personal example: In all situations she identified and depicted herself as the committed Romanian queen and, consequently, the European periodicals of the time often had articles about various events, be they major or rather less important, occurring in the Romanian monarchy. For instance, the French periodical *L'Echo de Paris* had at the beginning of the 1890s a weekly section dedicated to the Romanian queen, who by that time had already acquired the fame of a *Belle Époque* diva.[3]

However, leaving aside the trivial aspects surrounding her personality, one may consider Carmen Sylva as an illustration of genuine intercultural communication.

A Childless Mother

The mission of any ruler, especially in the hope of founding a new monarchy, is to secure the dynasty by means of heirs. The long-awaited heir, though not male, was born in 1870, in a period of turmoil and crisis not only in Romania, but also in Europe. The birth of Princess Maria caused great joy, which can be seen in the many poems written by Elizabeth in her diary.[4] However, just four years later, the little princess passed away, which left the ruling couple not only in mourning but also childless for the rest of their lives.

This decisive moment in the life of Elizabeth and Carol caused not only a constitutional crisis, but was also the turning point in the literary activity of the future queen, for it was not long after the death of her daughter that Elizabeth began translating Romanian poetry into German. At first, this literary exercise was seen as a therapeutic means of overcoming the sorrow caused by the unexpected death of her daughter, since her initial translations focused either on lullabies, or the so-called *doine*, i.e. folk poems marked by melancholy and gloom: "On the 25th April 1874, that is sixteen days after the incredible tragedy, the suffering mother took the pen in her hand. […] One of the Romanian ministers [i.e. Vasile Alecsandri] convinced her to research into the Romanian literature, in the hope that she might find

something worth translating into German. […] This proposal really did come at the right time."[5]

In time however, the childless queen discovered a new mission in life, namely building a symbolic bridge between the Romanian and German cultures, by promoting young Romanian artists, on the one hand, but also by dedicating herself to the literary activity, on the other hand. In a letter written by Elizabeth to her mother, she wondered: "Is it not strange how the heavens take away my love with one hand, but with the other hand give me the greatest of joys!"[6]

Landesmutter: The Queen as Mother Figure

As a result of the Russian - Turkish War from 1877/1878, in which Romanian troops were also involved, Romania was declared monarchy, independent from the Ottoman Empire. It was during this war that Elizabeth, due to her personal involvement, began to gain the reputation of *Landesmutter*, literally meaning "the mother of the country". As a queen, Elizabeth supported not only the implementation of efficient health and social insurances system (i.e. for instance pension for everybody or social help for people in need), but also the establishment of the first Romanian cultural foundation, which had a decisive influence upon the scientific research and education of students.

It was also in this period that the queen began publishing her translations under a literary pseudonym. First attempts were made under the pen-names E. Wedi (an anagram of Elisabeth Wied) and F. de Laroc (an anagram of "Femme de Carol") and finally decided for the name "Carmen Sylva", which in its turn should be regarded as emblematic for the queen's endeavor to build the symbolic cultural bridge, since this pen-name is a connection to the Romanian culture, by means of Latin.[7] From this moment on, the queen had a very rich literary activity, publishing poems, short-stories, novels, tales and even dramas.

The contemporary literary critics – both from Germany and from Romania – however found it difficult to make a clear distinction between the queen and the writer and quite often misjudged one for the other. It is indeed problematic to draw a perfect line between the historical and the literary figures, but then I wonder: Why should one want to separate the queen and the poetess, since they had constantly influenced each other? To analyze the figure of Queen Elizabeth without making any mention of the writer Carmen Sylva would be if not impossible, at least tremendously difficult. In her writings

Elizabeth depicted herself as merciful queen and dealt with personal aspects of her life, such as the lack of a child. Thus, it is not astonishing that the mother figure is a constant topic in Carmen Sylva's writings.

The Mother in Carmen Sylva's Writings

The image of the mother is perfectly encompassed in the more complex theme of the ideal woman, which is to be found both in poems, as well as in short stories. Though sometimes depicted as *femme fatale*, in the form of a beautiful witch, the preference of Carmen Sylva is to show the woman as *femme fragile*, in the sense of a suffering woman hiding her tears behind a smile.[8] The autobiographical touch is here recognizable, all the more so as the overcoming of sorrow, as feature of the female nature, should not be understood as the helplessness of the woman, but as her strength to continue living uncomplainingly.

The greatest sorrow mentioned in Carmen Sylva's poems is the death of a child – and here again one may see the autobiographical touch. In the 1884 poem *Zum letzten Mal* (*For the last time*), the mother, whose child dies, is no longer weeping, but is depicted as a strong female character who can overcome the tragedy, thus positioning herself above any suffering, unlike the father who kneeling near the bed of the dead child, silently cries.[9] The theme of the war is also touched upon when creating the ideal portrait of a mother, who after having lost her son in a battle, understands her mission and her duty towards the country, thus becoming not only the mother of a hero, but also a mother-hero.[10]

Therefore, the autobiographical dimension of motherhood appears in the writings of Carmen Sylva not only as a suffering figure in elegies and poems, but also as a symbolic mother of the people, the so-called "Landesmutter", which represents in fact an idealized form of motherhood and martyrdom. In the 1884 poem *Die Landesmutter*, the image of the female character goes far beyond the motherhood archetype, resembling a godlike figure, who, despite personal grief, should act as compassionate mother to millions of suffering people.[11]

The ideal of motherhood, in its double perspective, is dealt with not only in poetry but also in prose, such as the 1903 short story *Es klopft* and even in drama, like the 1892 *Meister Manole*. Both examples depict female figures that are ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of family, which should be mainly understood as a union

not between husband and wife, but between father and mother; childlessness is thus regarded as tremendous curse and the image of a woman is inconceivable outside of family.[12]

Even *Pelesch Märchen,* the volume of tales for children, deals with images of women, who become ideal because they are either portrayed as mothers or possess features of a mother. Any other female characters that are not mothers are depicted as being flawed. Such is the case of the beautiful and hardworking young Viorica from the story *Die Ameise* (*The Ant*), who breaking the archetype of womanhood and implicitly the ideal of motherhood in Carmen Sylva's opinion, does not want to get married and even considers a husband to be a burden.[13] Typical to a fairy-tale, magical elements appear, in this case talking ants that make Viorica their queen.

However, the girl falls in love with a prince she accidentally sees one day, yet cannot break her promise to the ants, that of being their queen forever and thus remains tormented and unhappy for the rest of her life. The tragedy of this female figure resides in her realization that she actually misses the world of humans; however she is to remain forever tormented, which is described by the author as a punishment for breaking the traditional social norms. Not only did Viorica want to become estranged from other human beings, but also – which is probably a far greater sin – she showed no interest in having a family. Thus, from being beloved queen of a magical realm, she becomes a prisoner of her own sufferings.

This female figure is at first glance, according to the traditional literary canon, a typical positive character of stories and fairy-tales, possessing all the stereotypical noble features: beauty, diligence, kindness. Yet, she is doomed to a tragic destiny and eternal sorrow, because in Carmen Sylva's view, she represents the very opposite of the ideal image of a woman, by her refusal of having a family and implicitly becoming a mother. From my point of view, this tragic female figure is emblematic of Carmen Sylva's perspective upon womanhood: regardless of beauty and kindheartedness and even regardless of social status, for instance being queen, no woman can be considered an ideal unless she is a wife and mother.

Even a stereotypical negative character, such as the witch Baba Coaja from the tale *Die Hexenburg* (*The Fortress of the Witch*) is humanized and partly depicted in a positive aura, only due to the fact that she is a mother loving her daughter.[14] In a typical clash between the magical realm and the world of humans, the witch should stand for the evil in this tale, which is written according to all literary norms of

fairy tales and stories. However, whereas the good, represented by the witch's daughter, Alba, is a clear category, the evil, represented primarily by the witch Baba Coaja, is only partial, since the witch is only trying to protect her daughter from the greed of humans. The pure, yet naïve daughter does get caught between the two worlds, ultimately becoming a tragic victim, but in this whole process her mother, though a witch, also becomes a tragic figure, the death of Alba bringing about the symbolic death of Baba Coaja, as well.

This hypostasis of the protective mother is also presented in the tale *Die Jipi*, where Frau Roxana, the mother of the two twin brothers, who are in love with the same woman, commits the ultimate sacrifice to remain with her children.[15] Towards the end of the tale, the two brothers are transformed in two rocks, trying to stop and embrace the woman they both love, who is in turn transformed in a waterfall. Despite her premonition of danger, mentioned even from the beginning of the story, the mother cannot change the implacable destiny of her two sons, her only choice at the end being to join her children in their magical yet tragic transformation. The mother is transformed into moss, forever surrounding the two rocks which were once her sons. This mother figure is emblematic for Carmen Sylva's ideal of the motherhood, bravely and openly accepting any sacrifice in the name of her children. Furthermore, the metaphor of moss trying to cover the two rocks, as if embracing them, can be understood as the ultimate archetype of the mother in her permanent attempt to protect her children.

And even when the mother is no longer living, she is depicted as an ideal and model in the life of her orphaned children.[16]

From my point of view, the most autobiographical example of the ideal of motherhood in Carmen Sylva's writings is the 1901 story *Das Märchen von der hilfreichen Königin* (*The Story of the Helpful Queen*) included in the volume *Märchen einer Königin* (*Stories of a Queen*). Apart from the title itself, which is an indication of the role Queen Elizabeth had assumed in real life, the queen figure in the story also experiences the death of her only child, who changes into an angel and brings about a sort of spiritual peace. The childless mother thus discovers a personal fulfillment in her mission as queen, who from this privileged social position can now help everybody in need – this is, therefore, the metaphor of the transformation from childless mother into *Landesmutter*.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the female characters in Carmen Sylva's writings often possess extraordinary and idealized features,

which may be seen as an expression of the incipient movement of women's emancipation, the image of the ideal woman is still deeply rooted in the realities of the 19th century, namely the woman is portrayed as wife or at least in connection to a male figure: For Carmen Sylva, therefore, the ideal of the woman is to be understood only in the context of a family, being in fact limited almost exclusively to the role of mother.

Conclusions

The life of Queen Elizabeth, marked by greater or smaller tragedies, did indeed exert tremendous influence upon the activity of the writer Carmen Sylva. The projection of the self in most writings is to be understood not only as an autobiographical note, but also as an idealization of the self, especially in the role of *Landesmutter*.

However, notwithstanding the personal tragic destiny, it seems that the Queen herself was prone to an extraordinary side of life, as the future Queen Marie of Romania wrote in her diary: "Carmen Sylva was a poet and saw everything through the prisms of her romantic imagination. […] To her the world was a great stage, and she was the central figure of all scenes enacted upon it, a tragic figure, but full of benevolence and comprehension of the sufferings of humanity." (Marie, Queen of Romania, 1934: 268)

NOTES

1. See, for example, *Lieder aus dem Dambovitzatal (*alternative title: *Der Rhapsode der Dambovitza*) is a collection of folk poems and legends collected by Elena Vacarescu and translated in German by Carmen Sylva.

2. This volume of tales may also be considered an example of propaganda for the newly founded Romanian Monarchy, the Castle Peleş being seen as a symbol of the Hohenzollern Dynasty in Romania.

3. According to Gabriel Badea-Păun, *Carmen Sylva – uimitoarea regină Elisabeta a României*. Foreword, 7 ff.

4. Such poems, as well as other diary entries are mentioned by the queen's biographer Mite Kremnitz in her book *Carmen Sylva – eine Biographie*, 1903.

5. Mite Kremnitz, 1903, 116 (my own translation from German into English).

6. Mite Kremnitz, 1903, 117 (my own translation from German into English).

7. The Queen herself explains the choice of her pen-name "Carmen Sylva" in her volume *Märchen einer Königin* (Engl. *Tales of a Queen*).

8. See the poem *Die graziöse Frau* in the volume *Meine Ruh'*, 1884.

9. See the poem *Zum letzen Mal* in the volume *Meine Ruh'*, 1884.

10. See the poem *Die Heldenmutter* in the volume *Meine Ruh'*, 1884.

11. See the poem *Die Landesmutter* in the volume *Meine Ruh'*, 1884.

12. See the short story *Es klopft*, 1903, in which the main female character, Leonie, develops hate towards herself and her body for not being able to bear children.

13. See the tale *Die Ameise* in the volume *Pelesch Märchen*, 1886.

14. See the tale *Die Hexenburg* in the volume *Pelesch Märchen*, 1886.

15. See the tale *Die Jipi* in the volume *Pelesch Märchen*, 1886.

16. See the tale *Der Mann* in the volume *Pelesch Märchen*, 1886.

REFERENCES

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2003). *Carmen Sylva – uimitoarea regină Elisabeta a României* (*Carmen Sylva – the Remarkable Queen Elisabeth of Romania*). București: Humanitas.

Carmen Sylva (1884). *Meine Ruh'*. Berlin: Dunker.

Carmen Sylva (1886). *Pelesch Märchen*. Bonn: Verlag von Emil Strauß.

Carmen Sylva (1892). *Meister Manole*. Bonn: Strauß.

Carmen Sylva (1901). *Märchen einer Königin*. Bonn: Strauß.

Carmen Sylva (1903). *Es klopft*. Regensburg: Wunderling.

Kremnitz, Mite (1903). *Carmen Sylva – eine Biographie*. Halle: Tham.

Marie, Queen of Romania (1934). *The Story of My Life*. London: Cassel.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 271-285

Translating Societal and Family Matters into Storytelling in Carmen Sylva's Writings

ONORINA BOTEZAT
Bucharest University of Economic Studies
onorina.botezat@gmail.com

Introduction

The late 19th century witnessed a transformative period in European literature, where societal and family issues were intricately woven into narratives reflecting prevailing socio-cultural norms. Amidst burgeoning industrialization and urbanization, literary works scrutinized class disparities and the rise of industrial capitalism, often mirroring societal attitudes, portraying divorcees and non-conformists with moral ambiguity. Within this literary landscape, Carmen Sylva defied expectations, delving into poverty, education, family, and women's rights through her writings. Sylva's compassionate nature emerged from firsthand exposure to the struggles of the less fortunate. Her journey across Europe enriched her understanding, particularly towards women facing adversity. As a female writer, Sylva's occasional feminist perspectives challenged societal norms, advocating for expanded opportunities for women. Through her literary endeavors, the author illuminated the struggles and triumphs of individuals within society, leaving a lasting imprint on late 19th-century European literature. She fearlessly tackles themes of marital discord, divorce, and domestic violence, shedding light on the complexities of human relationships and societal norms in *Short Stories*. In essence, Carmen Sylva's legacy as both a queen and a literary luminary is defined by her unwavering commitment to championing compassion, social responsibility, and cultural celebration. Through her timeless works, she continues to inspire generations, inviting readers to embark on a journey of introspection

and enlightenment, while reminding us of the enduring power of literature to shape hearts and minds alike.

The Portrayal of Societal and Family Matters in late Nineteenth Century European Literature

In late 19th-century European literature, the portrayal of societal and family issues was often influenced by the socio-cultural norms and values of the time. The literature of this time was deeply influenced by the prevailing socio-cultural norms and values, and this is especially evident in the portrayal of societal and family issues. The late 19th century witnessed the peak of industrialization and urbanization in Europe. This had profound effects on society, with a shift from agrarian and rural lifestyles to industrial and urban living, aspects often depicted in literary works that questioned the impact of these changes on individuals and families. Literature of that also explored the rise of industrial capitalism that led to increased social stratification and class disparities. Works such as Honoré de Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* are examples that examine societal frames.

On the other bank of the English Channel, on the contrary, the Victorian era literary writings often reflected and reinforced these societal attitudes, portraying divorcees, for example, as morally questionable and socially undesirable. Characters who sought freedom of living by their own rules were frequently depicted as facing social ostracism or personal tragedy. Gender roles and expectations played a significant role in the portrayal of family issues in literature. Women were often portrayed as victims of marital strife or divorce, highlighting the challenges faced by women in a society that limited their options and independence. Divorce narratives were sometimes used to challenge traditional gender roles or advocate for women's rights, with female characters who sought divorce depicted as heroic figures fighting against oppressive social norms.

The late 19th century saw the rise of literary realism, which aimed to depict everyday life with greater accuracy. This realism extended to the portrayal of family issues, offering nuanced depictions of marital discord, infidelity, and the impact of societal expectations on individuals. Some authors used their works as a form of social critique, challenging prevailing attitudes toward divorce and family matters. They sought to expose the flaws and hypocrisies within societal norms, advocating for a more compassionate understanding of

human relationships. Family issues were often intertwined with social class distinctions. Literature explored the impact of family secrets, hidden scandals, and the pressure to maintain appearances, particularly among the upper classes. The maintenance of an image of respectability was paramount, leading to the suppression of family problems. Novels frequently delved into the contrast between the public façade of a family and the internal struggles they faced, with the revelation of a family secret or the unraveling of a carefully constructed image serving as a central theme in these narratives.

Charles Dickens often explored the darker aspects of family life and societal expectations. In works such as *Bleak House* (1853), Dickens exposed the legal intricacies of family disputes and the destructive nature of hidden scandals. The novel's central court case, Jarndyce and Jarndyce, reflects the corrosive impact of long-standing family secrets on both individuals and society. Parental authority and filial duty were recurring themes in literature of the period. Conflicts between generations, particularly between parents and rebellious youth, were explored in relation to societal norms and changing values. Novels often examined the tension between individual desires and familial obligations, with characters that resisted parental authority or societal expectations portrayed grappling with the consequences of their choices. In *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Oscar Wilde satirized the obsession with maintaining appearances, using mistaken identities and concealed parentage to highlight the absurdity of societal expectations. The play explores the lengths to which individuals go to uphold a façade of respectability. Thomas Hardy's novels, such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), scrutinize the impact of family secrets and societal judgments on individuals. Tess's hidden past and Jude's struggles with societal expectations showcase the destructive consequences of concealing truths and the pressure to conform to societal norms.

French literature in the mid to late 19th century reflected societal changes and concerns through various themes and trends. French authors like Gustave Flaubert and Émile Zola adopted realism and naturalism to objectively represent everyday life. They also criticized social hierarchy, industrialization, and political changes. Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas explored themes of passion, individualism, and social justice while Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé presented themes of decay, mysticism, and symbolism. Feminist literature emerged with George Sand and Colette addressing gender

roles, women's rights, and challenges faced by women in French society. French literature during the 19th century was shaped by societal changes, artistic experimentation, and responses to political developments. Unlike Victorian England, French literature portrayed a more liberal and nuanced view of marital relationships and family dynamics. Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* explore the impact of financial considerations on marital expectations and the consequences of unfulfilled desires within the constraints of marriage. Émile Zola's novels, *Une Page d'Amour* (1878) and *La Bête Humaine* (1890), explore family relationships and the challenges faced by characters in their marriages. The first novel delves into the complexities of marital discord and infidelity, while the second novel focuses on the impact of heredity and societal influences on the psychological themes of family relationships. Both novels touch upon the tension within family structures, including the potential for marital discord, but divorce is not a central theme. It is important to note that although divorce was not always explicitly portrayed in 19th-century French literature, the works often examined the intricacies of marital relationships, societal expectations, and the impact of familial dynamics on individuals.

Carmen Sylva, the pen name of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (1843–1916), depicted the customs of her times through her literary works. She was known for her contributions to literature, particularly poetry, essays, and short stories. Her writings often reflected the cultural and social milieu of late 19th-century Europe. Being a queen herself, Carmen Sylva offered a unique perspective on royal life and the customs associated with the aristocracy. Her works sometimes provided glimpses into courtly etiquette, ceremonies, and the expectations placed on royalty, but she is also known for addressing social issues of her time through her writings, shedding light on matters such as poverty, education, family and women's rights.

Pierre Loti confesses in his writing *L'exilée* (1893, 17-20) that he was marveled at her superior articulation on profound subjects. Despite her role as a queen, marked by a perpetual display of regality, there was an assumption that she might remain oblivious to certain intricacies and sorrows of the human soul. Contrary to Loti's expectations, he discovered that she intimately understood the distress and miseries experienced by individuals from all social classes. Loti considers that her compassionate nature, shaped by an austere and sorrowful upbringing in a Northern castle, played a pivotal role. Raised away from courts and exposed to the struggles of the poor on

her family estate, her early education mirrored that of her mother and aunt, emphasizing simplicity and familial values. Later on, embarking on a pilgrimage across Europe with her aunt, Grand Duchess Hélène of Russia, she encountered diverse cultures and received teachings from eminent masters.

These experiences distilled a transcendent knowledge, encapsulating the essence of various literatures and human wisdom. Loti underlines that the queen's empathy extended particularly to women facing adversity – widows, the abandoned, mothers without children, and girls without mothers. He also suggests that this extraordinary capacity for detached and unconditional compassion, forged through time, suffering, disappointments, and ingratitude, has become an integral part of the queen's identity. Despite enduring personal challenges and navigating the complexities of her role, she has cultivated a demeanor characterized by an otherworldly smile, transcending earthly tribulations. Thus, her works often depicted the struggles faced by individuals in society. As a female writer, Carmen Sylva was sensitive to women's issues, and her works occasionally reflected a feminist perspective, while she questioned the societal norms that restricted women's opportunities and roles.

In works like "Nine Days," she intricately explores the depths of human emotion and the complexities of forgiveness, challenging conventional norms and stereotypes associated with gender and relationships. As we delve deeper into Sylva's literary universe, we encounter stories like *A Heart Regained*, where themes of personal sacrifice and maternal love intersect with societal expectations and familial complexities.

Carmen Sylva's *Short Stories*

Handzeichnungen are first published in 1884 (Berlin: Duncker). In 1886, Félix Salles translated into French Carmen Sylva's *Short Stories*, with the queen's approval. Published by Librairie Hachette, the work included a biographical note by Salles. In 1888, the Romanian version, titled *Nuvele* (*Short Stories*), was translated by Gheorghe Ionescu-Gion and published by Editura Librăriei Socecu & Comp. The Romanian version contained eleven stories, following the order of the German edition *Handzeichnungen*, but lacked a preface or translator's note. In 1895, only six stories translated by Helen Wolff from *Handzeichnungen* are published in English, under the title *Shadows on Love's Dial* (London: Downey & Co.)

An arranged marriage is the main topic of the first story in the Romanian edition – *O scrisoare* (*A Letter*). The narrative unfolds the story of two female friends, Agata and Sofia, whose lives are revealed through a series of letters exchanged after sixteen years of silence. Agata, who dreamt of true love, fulfilled her familial arrangements by marrying a wealthy man. In contrast, Sofia, envisioning a rich and conflicted Don Juan, married a simple man devoid of poetic qualities. Sofia, eager for communication after the prolonged silence, presumes Agata's happiness through motherhood might prompt her to write. Drawing from the author Carmen Sylva's autobiographical tendencies, the act of putting significant events on paper is emphasized as a means to remember them. As Agata sits down to respond, the tension is palpable. The opening line becomes a delicate dance, with Agata grappling with different ways to begin. Carmen Sylva intricately captures the spectrum of emotions women experience when reconnecting with old friends, including panic, hypocrisy, the desire to appear successful, and the fear of seeming less accomplished. Agata's letter becomes a reflective journey through her life, prompting her to confront the disorder in her husband's behavior. Mental illness, hidden behind family arrangements, is miraculously cured in the end.

The letter unfolds societal stereotypes proposed by the author, touching on topics like the superficiality of politeness and domestic violence. In her communication with Sofia, Agata navigates the complexities of an unhappy marriage and societal expectations. The letter becomes a medium for exploring feelings, societal norms, and challenging traditional beliefs. Agata's revelation of her husband's violence, jealousy, and the challenges she faced caring for a sick child sheds light on the hardships women endure within societal expectations. The letter takes a poignant turn when Agata recalls her emotional turmoil, the duty to remain devoted, and the unconventional support she receives from Herbert. As the narrative unfolds, Agata's strength shines through, and her modern arguments regarding choices and consequences bring depth to the story. The letter concludes with Agata expressing gratitude for the memories, acknowledging the absence of a home for a young boy, and thanking her old friend for the therapeutic effect of reminiscing. The intricate narrative, rich in emotional exploration and societal commentary, provides a nuanced portrayal of women's experiences, societal expectations, and the complex dynamics of relationships.

An **unhappy marriage** is also the pivot of another short story, written in the epistolary style, that would grow and develop more

during the collaboration with Mite Kremnitz, under the nom de plume Dito and Idem, *Simplu de tot* (*As Simple As That*) sets up a scene in which a young lady – Susănica married to Leon – confesses to her mother her unhappy marriage and the difficulty that she has to deal with the prejudices of the society: "Oh, my, one year of marriage and no sign of a child!" (Sylva, C., 1888: 135). The story is filled with examples of gender differences, in a short and condensed exposure: "Men are absolutely different from us. They don't understand a lot of things. For example, they don't know what offenses and hurts us, and each minute they find something that is neither decent nor opportune" (Sylva, C., 1888: 136) or "Leon would say Oh! Women; caprices and nerves!" (Sylva, C., 1888: 139). Comparing the Romanian version to the French translation, one can observe the difference of syntactic choices Salles and Gion make when translating the text: while the first puts a question mark after the idea "Men are absolutely different from us," thus creating a question of a young married woman addressed to her more experienced mother, the second puts a period, turning it into a statement, more of a general truth. The differences occur in the way Salles and Gion cut the ideas into paragraphs, the French translation presenting long paragraphs that gather more ideas within while the Romanian edition of the *Short Stories* designs for each idea a layout space. There are sematic differences as well, Gion chose a French expression "un casse-tête chinois" and a French calque "pasiență" for patience, both in italic letters and added to the text, in order to underline Susănica's point of view towards the marriage that she found "a game of patience" (Sylva, C., 1886: 145 and Sylva, C., 1888: 205).

She is so desperately unhappy in her marriage that she wishes to die. Like Isi, Susănica does not believe in love: "Oh! mother! Why could not I remain forever a girl?! I can't stop laughing when I hear some people talking about the honey moon, and when I see the young ladies burning of wish to know something about those happy times! Those sweet weeks are at home! near father and mother the months are made of honey, and the years are short as days. When you marry, then days become years! Oh! You cannot imagine how old I feel! I wonder that I don't have wrinkles or white hair, that old I feel" (Sylva, C., 1888: 136-137)

The story addresses another issue in marriage, the lack of communication. Leon finds the letter before she has the time to send it and the outcome dismisses all the prejudices enounced, he promises to change and is thankful to have found the letter, and otherwise they would have been miserable of their lives.

Universal themes, such as the **dynamics of destroyed and reconstructed families**, the poignant love children harbor for departed parents, and the challenges introduced by **step-parenting** are explored in the short story *În voia vântului* (*A Stray Leaf*). The narrative begins with a child's cry, expressing the universal desire for a mother. Set beneath a tree on a hill, the child, Luisa, pleads with a woman, Isi, not to leave, emphasizing the significance of their connection. The poignant scene introduces the complexities of step-parenting and the emotional turmoil it brings. Carmen Sylva, known for her keen observations, meticulously details the characters, highlighting physical attributes and emotions. Isi, the stepdaughter, resists her stepmother's attempts at bonding, remaining loyal to her departed mother. The impending second marriage of Isi's father introduces strains, with Isi expressing disdain for her father's choice, yearning for her deceased mother.

The narrative explores the challenges of step-parenting, portraying the disruptions it causes in Isi's life. Carmen Sylva captures the nuances of the situation, including the replacement of a father's guidance with a nanny, the solitude of scheduled walks, and the shifting dynamics within the family. Isi's stepmother attempts to win her over, but the emotional resistance remains strong. As the story unfolds, Isi confronts her father about the difficulties of accepting her stepmother. A poignant moment arises when Isi declares it is not a sin to love both her parents, highlighting the complexity of emotions in stepfamily relationships.

The text introduces the reconstructed families of both Isi's father and mother, exploring the tensions and inequalities among stepsiblings. Isi, torn between her parents, ultimately chooses to live with her mother, leading to a series of challenges and hardships. The inequalities persist, with financial disparities affecting Isi's education compared to her stepsiblings. Jealousy and strained relationships surface, both between Isi and her stepmother and among the stepsiblings. Isi's mother adds to the turmoil by expressing jealousy over her father's preoccupation with Isi. The author subtly addresses societal expectations, family dynamics, and the challenges faced by stepfamilies. The narrative takes a tragic turn with Isi's return to her father's house, only to find him dying. The emotional reunion, coupled with Isi's rejection of her stepfather's inappropriate advances, adds layers to the complex family dynamics. Isi's subsequent journey, living with her father's sister, introduces a period of growth, education, and self-discovery.

Carmen Sylva carefully crafts Isi's transformation from a troubled stepdaughter to a refined young woman, poised for societal acceptance. Carmen Sylva skillfully employs the technique of overhearing conversations to reveal painful truths, adding depth to the narrative. Isi's eventual marriage to an older man, Von Rune, unfolds as a pragmatic choice driven by financial considerations rather than genuine affection. The story concludes with Isi's evolution into a cold and indifferent woman, driven solely by her devotion to her brother. The revelation of her brother's true parentage and his subsequent departure perpetuates the theme of family secrets and their impact on individuals. The story's closure, with Isi choosing to disappear for the sake of Bertha Rune's children, echoes the unresolved complexities of family relationships. Isi's introspective words, comparing herself to her mother, encapsulate the enduring impact of familial struggles and societal expectations.

Carmen Sylva's *Nine Days*

As Laura Elizabeth Nixon (2014) suggests it, in Germany and Britain, early feminist discourse aimed at improving women's status also celebrated motherhood as a foundation for women's dignity, equality, and expanded roles in both public and private spheres. Despite advocating for change, many women distanced themselves from radical views to emphasize the respectability of their movement. Women's writing and societal perceptions of women's roles became more nuanced than previously acknowledged. The emergence of the New Woman in the 1890s spurred significant debates about women's roles, characterized by contradictory discussions and 'boomerang plots' that oscillated between rebellion and conventionality. Nixon underlines that the 'grey area' found in Carmen Sylva's fiction reflects a blending of gender boundaries and the fusion of traditional and deviant elements.

The Queen's writing incorporates both traditional and radical ideas, challenging the dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' female behavior and disrupting stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. The stories explore gender equality, portraying men and women as equally responsible for marital issues and equally punished for transgressions. An example of this blend is seen in 'Nine Days,' a short story published in *Belgravia* in 1889, where **themes of adultery, loveless marriages, madness, suicide, and infanticide** are explored against the backdrop of a rabid dog bite in Bucharest. In the beginning

of the story, the narrator, Anna, subtly suggests that her relationship with her husband Louis is more of a convenient arrangement, and they haven't lived together harmoniously for years. As the story unfolds, Anna eventually discloses the reason behind their marital discord. She reveals that since discovering her husband's infidelity, she has not spoken kindly to him or tried to bring joy to his difficult life. Instead, she sought pleasure and enjoyment with other men, initially to show her indifference and later because it amused her. Upon the bite of a mad dog, she awaits nine days – to die or to heal, according to popular sayings, and during this time she agonizes about all issues in her life. In the touching conversation between Anna and Louis, the atmosphere was filled with deep sadness knowing that they would soon have to say goodbye. Anna came to terms with her own mortality and Louis, with a firm expression, revealed that he couldn't bear to watch her suffer. A pen that had been dropped and a letter revealed a somber plan that would ensure Anna's safety until the following Sunday.

However, Anna was determined to keep her fate a secret and refused any help. The discussion shifted to a more pressing matter, their child. Despite appearing composed, Louis emphasized the urgency of addressing their child's future. The revelation that Anna's departure would lead to their child's demise elicited a horrified response from Louis. Anna, on the other hand, remained firm in her decision. She calmly revealed her fear of death, which was amplified by the thought of leaving their child behind. As their dialogue unfolded, questions of life's value arose. Anna's acknowledgment of suffering for Louis' sake hinted at a profound resignation to her fate. The discussion inquired into the complexity of emotions, with fear, regret, and a mother's relentless love weaving through the narrative and bringing forward yet another stereotype of a hurt wife that transfers her deep suffering towards her children, "Your son? The child is mine, mine alone. What have you done that you deserve to have still a voice in any matter concerning him?" (Sylva, 1889, 45)

The set of a prospective tragedy of both spouses dying because of a made dog's bite is framed by the author to twist the outcome and while the family embarks on an eight-day journey to Vienna, it is time for both to forgive and heal, and discuss openly about their respective infidelities. After some time, she was suddenly awoken by a sharp pain in the bitten area around midnight. Even though it seemed to have healed earlier in Vienna, the wound now reminded her of the reality of the past eight days. She wrote about her situation, acknowledging the lessons she learned from her husband's actions.

Anna understood the strange look in Louis's eyes when he examined the sick child and realized that he was anticipating their separation. He hoped that God would reunite them. Louis had silently endured more suffering than Anna and had orchestrated the false reports in Vienna to keep her from the harsh truth. Anna knew from medical books that the disease would soon overpower her. However, she decided to keep this knowledge from her beloved husband until she requested the poison. Anna planned to fabricate a story about sending their son to her sister and part from Louis with a smile on her face. She had to execute the plan soon to ensure that her son would remember a happy image of his mother. In essence, Sylva's narrative weaves a tale of profound emotions, complexities in relationships, and the human struggle to confront mortality. The nuanced exploration of gender roles, marriage dynamics, and the intertwining of tradition and rebellion contributes to a rich and thought-provoking literary discourse. The story subverts expectations as it unfolds, revealing forgiveness and healing during the eight-day journey to Vienna. Sylva challenges traditional dichotomies of female behavior and disrupting stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, exploring themes of adultery and unhappy marriages.

Carmen Sylva's *A Heart Regained*

Es Klopft – the original title in German, published in 1887 (Munich: Knorr et Hirth) was translated into Romanian by L.M. in the same year, under the title *Bate la uşă* (Bucarest, Socec et C^{ie}) and into English – *A Heart Regained* by Mary A. Mitchell a year later and published in the United States (Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1888). As it was the case with the *Short Stories*, the translations vary in number of parts and chapters; this short story comprises six parts in the German version and only five in the English version, "A Stormy Night," "Baldo," "Wilma," "Altwehringen" and "At Rest."

In Georges Bengesco's Bibliography and Excerpts of Carmen Sylva's writings (1904), the author quotes the Queen's personal assessment of the book, referring to it as her greatest accomplishment: "[…] c'est ce que j'ai réussi de mieux, d'autant plus que le fond est vrai, et que je n'ai imaginé que le cadre. Quand on ne veut pas se montrer trop discret, la réalité offre à l'écrivain un champ plus vaste que la fantaisie. […]; le rôle du romancier doit se borner à débrouiller la cause de chaque événement : ce qui demande un grand effort autant pour l'esprit que pour le corps." (N. Fev. Stackelberg, *Aus Carmen*

Sytca'e Leben, 1890, p. 256 *apud* Bengesco, Georges. (1904). *Bibliographie de Carmen Sylva*. Bruxelles : Paul Lacomblez, 59.)

Countess Léonie, first introduced to the reader as "girlish figure," deeply in love with her husband, experiences a growing sense of dread as a profound gap widens between them. On a stormy night, she finds herself all alone, immersed in sorrowful contemplation. The author creates a tragic atmosphere by describing the weather outside, which is both foreboding and ominous. As she sits in her desolate home, Léonie reads a letter that reveals a secret love affair and an illegitimate child born to her husband. Devastated by this news, she finds in herself the humanity of considering the mother of the child even more unhappy than her. However, the greatest distress of the night comes when a dying woman arrives at her door, clutching a child. The woman is revealed to be Mary, her husband's mistress, who has given birth to his child but is now on the verge of death. In her final moments, the unfortunate woman confesses to the countess that she has been seduced, abandoned, by a man that she did not know was married and she bequeaths her child to the one who betrayed her, although she thought he loved her. Léonie adopts the child with the secret hope that he will bridge the emotional distance between her and her husband, filling their home with the joyful cries of a child.

Despite the heart-wrenching loss of the adopted child, the once vibrant halls of the noble residence fall into a heavy silence. Countess Léonie, driven by an unwavering commitment to her husband's well-being, contemplates an even more profound sacrifice. She bravely broaches the topic of divorce, urging her husband to embark on a second marriage in the hope that it might yield the coveted heir he so desires. In a gesture of extraordinary generosity, Countess Léonie steps back from the bustling life of her former home, retreating to a secluded manor. This withdrawal paves the way for the entrance of a captivating young woman who takes up residence in the countess's stead. The initial trials faced by the new union are perceived by the count as a form of divine retribution for his perceived abandonment of his first wife. However, as time unfolds, a sense of celestial benevolence appears to shine upon the household. In a twist of fate, Burkhard's second wife experiences the joyous news of her impending motherhood, a development that brings not only happiness to the retired countess but also a glimmer of fulfillment to the count. The narrative delicately weaves a tapestry of sacrifice, resilience, and unexpected blessings, demonstrating that even in the face of profound trials, hope and joy can find their way into the intricacies of human relationships.

Tragically, the count's glimpse of happiness is short-lived as he passes away before witnessing the birth of his child, uttering Léonie's name in his final moments. The child, a girl, is born at the cost of her mother's life. Countess Léonie becomes the orphan's sole guardian, raising her with love. In the final chapters of the narrative, the tale unfolds to reveal the poignant culmination of Countess Léonie's selfless journey. As the adopted daughter matures into a young woman, the aging countess finds herself on her deathbed, surrounded by the warmth and tenderness that she had showered upon the girl throughout her upbringing. In her final moments, a sense of anticipation and revelation permeates the room. The countess, on the brink of departing from the mortal realm, asks Mona to promise "that children will ever be a blessing to [her], and that each newcomer will have the welcome of the first" (Sylva, 1888, 128) and suddenly utters the poignant question, "Who knocks?" Her visage lights up with a luminous glow, and with fervor in her fading gaze, she articulates, "Someone is knocking. — Yes, I come. Burkhard! Friedlein! They are all there, and heaven is open." This enigmatic statement encapsulates a transcendent moment of spiritual connection, as if the departing countess perceives the presence of departed souls awaiting her reunion. As she peacefully closes her eyes for the last time, a serene acceptance pervades the room. The countess leaves behind a legacy of sacrificial love and unspoken forgiveness. The count's daughter, now a young woman molded by the grace and wisdom of her adoptive mother, stands as a testament to the enduring impact of compassion and generosity. The narrative concludes with a profound sense of closure, encapsulating the complex tapestry of human emotions, sacrifice, and the enduring strength of maternal love.

Conclusions

Through her writings, Carmen Sylva brought into attention to societal challenges and called for compassion and social responsibility. As Queen of Romania, she also showed a deep interest in promoting Romanian culture and identity. Her writings also celebrated Romanian folklore, traditions, and customs, contributing to the nation's cultural consciousness during a period of nation-building. Incorporating in her works elements of traditional stories, she contributed to the preservation and dissemination of cultural customs and beliefs embedded in folk narratives.

In *Short stories* (1888), Carmen Sylva addresses important issues ahead of her time, approaching social and familial problems, framed in short stories based on simple, everyday situations, thus drawing a picture of the Romanian society at the end of the 19th century. She openly sets scene for the unhappy marriage – Agata and Reinhold in *A Letter*, Susanica in *As Simple as That*, the divorce – as a legal choice for an unbearable situation, like the observation that one could get a divorce, if the spouse was mentally ill, without committing a crime, in *A Letter*. The author approaches the divorcee's children's trauma as well, underlining the fact that a child may choose to love his real parents, even if they are apart, as Isi who couldn't call two women mother and two men father, in *A Leaf in the Wind* framing the whole picture of reconstructed families. We find the social blamed topics like bigamy in *A leaf in the Wind* and the domestic violence, in terms of verbal and physical abuse: confronting jealousy Agata cut her hair to stop her husband being jealous, Wolfang, Isi's brother was beaten by his stepfather and Isi was abused by her stepfather. Carmen Sylva depicts female insecurity, depending on a marriage, lack of money for children's education and the maternal love – Heny, *A Letter*, Isi, *A Leaf in the Wind* or Susănica, *As Simple as That*.

"Nine Days," defies conventional norms by deeply exploring the intricacies of relationships and the inherent human struggle to confront mortality. Through the narrative lens of Anna and Louis, Carmen Sylva challenges established dichotomies of female behavior, dismantling stereotypes associated with masculinity and femininity. The short story intricately interlaces a rich tapestry of profound emotions, exploring themes of adultery, discontent in marriages, and the intricate layers of forgiveness and healing. The transformative eight-day journey to Vienna defies expectations, steering away from the anticipated tragedy of spouses succumbing to a mad dog's bite. Instead, it emerges as a period of openness, forgiveness, and a renewed understanding between Anna and Louis. Sylva's storytelling skillfully unravels the complexities of human emotions and relationships, offering a thought-provoking literary discourse that transcends societal norms and expectations.

The short story, *A Heart Regained*, not only explores the depths of personal sacrifice and maternal love but also delves into societal and family complexities. The tale navigates the impact of betrayal, societal expectations, and the lengths one goes to ensure familial happiness. Countess Léonie's journey becomes a microcosm reflecting the intricate tapestry of human relationships, resilience in the face of societal norms,

and the enduring strength of a mother's selfless devotion. The story serves as a timeless reflection on the profound interplay between individual choices, societal pressures, and the redemptive power of love within the intricate fabric of family dynamics.

A celebrated literary figure, the Queen of Romania promoted compassion and social responsibility while celebrating Romanian culture, under the pen name of Carmen Sylva. Her literary works addressed societal issues beyond her time, such as unhappy marriages, divorce, and domestic violence. She openly challenged norms and stereotypes while exploring complex relationships and human struggles, personal sacrifice and maternal love amidst societal and family complexities, offering timeless reflections on individual choices and the redemptive power of love within the dynamics of a family.

REFERENCES

Bengesco, Georges (1904). *Bibliographie de Carmen Sylva.* Bruxelles : Paul Lacomblez.

Iorga, Nicolae (1935). *Pour se souvenir de la reine Elisabeth de Roumanie*. Bucarest : Impr. Datina Românească.

Loti, Pierre (1893). *L'exilée*. Paris : Calmann Levy.

Nixon, Laura Elizabeth (2014). *The 'British' Carmen Sylva: recuperating a German-Romanian writer*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham.

Sylva, Carmen (1882). *Les pensées d'une reine*. Paris: Calmann Levy.

Sylva, Carmen (1886). *Nouvelles*. Traduites de l'Allemand avec l'autorisation de l'auteur et précédées d'une étude biographique d'après des documents originaux par Félix Salles. Paris : Librairie Hachette et C^{ie}.

Sylva, Carmen (1888). *A Heart Regained*. Translation by Mary A. Mitchell. Boston: Cupples and Hurd.

Sylva, Carmen (1888). *Nuvele* (*Short Stories*). Traducțiune de Gion. Bucuresci: Editura Librăriei Socecu & Comp.

Sylva, Carmen (1889). 'Nine Days,' *Belgravia.* A London Magazine, Vol. LXX, November, December and the Belgravia Annual, 1889, London: F. V. White & Co., 39-55.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 286-293

From Lorelei to Ialomița: Carmen Sylva's Romanian Reimagining of a Germanic Myth

MARIA-LUIZA DUMITRU OANCEA
University of Bucharest
luiza.doancea@gmail.com

Introduction

In the enchanting volume *Poveștile Peleșului* (*The Stories of Peleșului*) by Queen Elisabeth of Romania (alias Carmen Sylva), we encounter a captivating legend of the Ialomița River. This tale not only reflects Romanian folk beliefs about the river's legendary origins but also reinterprets the well-known Germanic myth of the Rhine, particularly Heinrich Heine's poem *Lorelei*, through a Romanian lens. Moreover, the author weaves in elements of ancient Greek mythology, creating a narrative that blends European enchantment with psychological depth.

Among the tales in *Poveștile Peleșului* lies a beautiful and eclectic hydronymic legend titled "Peștera Ialomiței" (*The Cave of Ialomița*). This story not only valorizes Romanian folk narratives about the mythical birth of the Ialomița River but also reimagines the Germanic legend of the Rhine in a distinctly Romanian context, drawing symbolic parallels with the native myth of the Zburătorul (the Winged One). Additionally, the narrator incorporates motifs from ancient Greek mythology, fusing them with indigenous traditions to create a narrative that is both culturally rich and psychologically evocative.

The legend unfolds with a lyrical tone, immersing readers in the mystical Carpathian landscape where natural elements become animate and emotionally charged. The Ialomița River is personified, echoing the Romantic fascination with the sublime and the mysterious forces of nature. Much like the Lorelei, the river becomes a symbol of feminine allure and tragic beauty, luring travelers into its depths. Yet unlike Heine's Lorelei, who is a seductress leading men to their doom,

Queen Elisabeth's river spirit possesses a dual nature—both benevolent and melancholic—emphasizing inner conflict and emotional depth over fatal seduction.

This reinterpretation also draws attention to a key cultural shift: while the Lorelei myth embodies the fatalistic melancholy of German Romanticism, the Romanian adaptation leans toward redemptive transformation. The sorrow of the river spirit is not purely destructive; it hints at renewal, reflection, and an unresolved longing for love and freedom. These emotional layers align with the Romanian folk motif of the Zburătorul, often depicted as a spectral lover who visits maidens in their dreams—an ethereal figure embodying romantic yearning rather than doom. The tale thus becomes a space where cultural archetypes and psychological exploration merge.

Finally, by incorporating elements of ancient Greek mythology—such as nymphs, Orphic echoes, or river gods—the story achieves a pan-European mythical resonance. This not only elevates the legend beyond local folklore but also asserts Romanian cultural narratives within a broader, classical framework. Queen Elisabeth's literary vision is cosmopolitan yet rooted, forging a unique voice that brings together the poetic sensibilities of multiple traditions. In this way, *Peștera Ialomiței* becomes more than a local legend; it is a mythopoetic meditation on love, loss, and the enduring spirit of nature.

The Tale of Ialomița

The story centers on a fearsome sorcerer named Bucur, who kidnaps beautiful girls from their homes and wedding altars, reminiscent of the Zburătorul from Romanian folklore. Unlike the Zburătorul, who invades the secret chambers of young brides at night, tormenting them with passionate dreams until dawn, Bucur lures his victims into his cave so deep and winding that no one has ever returned from it alive.

The cave's labyrinthine nature evokes the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, where Daedalus constructed a maze to imprison the monstrous creature—a metaphor for the inner turmoil and dark impulses that haunt the human psyche. In Bucur's cave, the abducted girls are transformed into stalactites and stalagmites, their humanity lost, petrified into lifeless forms. This haunting metamorphosis underscores the sorcerer's power as an agent of annihilation and eternal silence, turning youthful vitality into mineral stillness.

In the village of Rucăr, a beautiful and spirited girl named Ialomița declares that she will never fall under Bucur's spell. She has a suitor,

Coman, a virtuous and diligent young man, but she is unmoved by his affection, consumed instead by the desire to confront the sorcerer and avenge the vanished girls. Her determination is marked not only by bravery but also by a certain obsession—an internal struggle between fear, vengeance, and curiosity.

This obsession becomes dangerously tangible when Ialomița encounters Bucur at a Sunday dance. The mysterious stranger, cloaked in charm and danger, plays a magical melody on his flute that enchants the entire gathering. As she listens, entranced, Coman urgently whispers, "Ialomița, I tell you, this shepherd is none other than Bucur the Sorcerer!" This moment introduces a powerful Orphic motif, where music holds dominion over the human will, but here the tale diverges. Bucur, rather than remaining the sole master of enchantment, entrusts the enchanted flute to Coman, passing on the power—and its burden.

As Coman plays the flute, he discovers an overwhelming beauty in the music, surpassing anything he could have imagined. Yet with this gift comes an unexpected curse: he cannot stop playing. The sorcerer's influence lingers within the instrument, and Coman becomes a vessel for the same spell that once enthralled the village. This transformation marks a pivotal shift in the narrative, suggesting that heroism is not immune to corruption and that even noble intentions can be co-opted by forces beyond understanding.

Ialomița, now caught between the enchantments of two men—one overtly dangerous, the other gradually ensnared—must confront her deepest fears. Her final act, which involves reclaiming the flute and descending into the cave herself, embodies the archetype of the hero's descent into the underworld. Here, feminine agency is fully asserted: she does not await rescue but enters the source of terror to break its curse. Her actions serve as a symbolic reversal of the mythic pattern, transforming a tale of female victimhood into one of courage, sacrifice, and spiritual restoration.

The Metamorphoses

The story unfolds a series of metamorphoses, not merely through the nature of the transformations (e.g., falcon, butterfly) but through their conditions. Initially, Bucur transforms into a stallion, a change without consequence, circling Ialomița affectionately. All subsequent transformations of Bucur are echoes or negative responses to the girl's desires for metamorphosis, following the antithetical hunter-prey

schema but reversed (prey-hunter), as Bucur's transformations are conditioned or drawn by the girl's desires for transformation. Among the transformations, only two are traditional changes of the *Zburătorul* (snake, sunbeam = fire roll); the rest are innovations by the author:

Ialomița (prey)	**Bucur the Sorcerer (hunter)**
Dove	Falcon
Flower	Butterfly (hanging from flower)
Trout	Fishing net
Lizard	Snake
Nun	Icon
Cloud	Wind
Grain of sand	Barefoot peasant searching for gold, removing the grain of sand from the bottom of the water
Deer	Eagle
Dewdrop on a basil	Sunbeam that absorbs it
Wild goat	Hunter
Stream (the Ialomița River)	Rock to dam the stream with its arms

Thus, Ialomița's desires for metamorphosis traverse all kingdoms together: human (nun), animal (dove, trout, lizard, deer, wild goat), mineral (cloud, sand grain, dew, stream), and vegetal (flower). The innovation in this series of metamorphoses lies in the fact that Ialomița imposes the type of transformation on the sorcerer, not the other way around. Ialomița tries and even succeeds in becoming, from prey, a hunter, despite the girl's seemingly helpless or humble appearances (dove, lizard), for she draws Bucur into the series of metamorphoses, not the other way around.

Ialomița does not remain paralyzed by desires in the face of Bucur; instead, she seeks to enter the vortex of becoming, to understand what is happening to her, and to find a solution to escape the mire. Her swift traversal of all earthly kingdoms clearly indicates that the girl's experience is cognitive, eagerly sharing all possible states and thus penetrating the hidden mysteries of Eros.

At the same time, Ialomița embraces the ultimate transformation into a stream as a transfiguration or sublimation of the burning intrinsic erotic impulse, condemned to suffer in the dark depths of caves, in a continuous outpouring of love and generosity, in her desire to share with the whole world what she had already come to know

through psychological experiences. She is the only one who manages to remain in motion (as a stream), while Bucur petrifies in his passion, which he cannot transfigure, imprisoning him like his selfish gesture of gathering his arms in the blind desire to retain love, to strangle it to be consumed by it.

The episode breathes the accents of the myth of Medusa Gorgon, whose gaze petrified anyone daring to look into her eyes to confront their own monstrous essence. The strike of his own flute forces Bucur to confront himself, petrifying him.

This mythic logic of transformation reveals Ialomița not only as a heroine but also as a figure of profound mythopoetic wisdom. Her movement through all kingdoms—animal, vegetal, mineral, and human—evokes an alchemical cycle of purification, dissolution, and regeneration. Unlike Bucur, who remains fixated on possession and control, Ialomița's journey is one of fluidity, vulnerability, and transcendence. Each metamorphosis becomes a stage in her inner evolution, a shedding of form in order to attain essence. In this process, she does not renounce desire but reshapes it—transforming Eros from a consuming fire into a flowing stream that nourishes life beyond herself.

The myth thus reimagines classical gender dynamics, replacing the passive, cursed nymph archetype with an active, choosing subject. Ialomița's final transformation into a stream is not a defeat but a conscious act of sublimation. In contrast, Bucur's inability to evolve or relinquish his narcissistic grip over others renders him static, literally petrified. This dual outcome reveals a philosophical core: that love, to survive, must flow outward, must relinquish the desire to dominate. Bucur, who clutches at love to keep it, becomes stone; Ialomița, who lets it pass through her, becomes water—forever moving, forever present.

Moreover, the tale recasts the Medusa myth in a new light. While Medusa's petrifying gaze traditionally signals fear of the feminine and the monstrous within, Bucur's downfall comes not from Ialomița's gaze but from his own reflection through the magical flute—a metaphorical mirror. His destruction arises not because he sees her clearly, but because he finally sees himself. This moment of self-recognition, forced by the very instrument he once used to enchant others, turns the spell inward. The myth, then, becomes a meditation on the dangers of unchecked desire and the redemptive power of self-awareness, positioning Ialomița as a symbol of eros elevated into spiritual insight.

Carmen Sylva's tale ultimately performs a literary alchemy—transforming folkloric elements into a symbolic journey of personal and collective consciousness. Through the metaphorical layering of Ialomița's metamorphoses, Sylva reclaims the female voice not merely as an object of enchantment, as in the Lorelei, but as an active agent of transformation. This narrative inversion is essential in differentiating the Romanian retelling from its Germanic source: while Heine's Lorelei bewitched men into their doom, Ialomița overcomes the seduction of darkness through knowledge, resistance, and spiritual resilience. Her passage through the animal, vegetal, mineral, and human realms becomes a rite of passage—a test of wisdom, will, and emotional maturity.

The symbol of the enchanted flute adds another layer of allegorical significance. In transferring the instrument from Bucur to Coman, and eventually transforming it into a weapon of deliverance, the tale critiques blind romanticism and the seductive force of art when divorced from ethical grounding. Music, once an instrument of entrapment, becomes the means through which the monstrous force is confronted and neutralized. Coman, serving as Ialomița's conscience or moral anchor, underscores the idea that eros must be tempered by reason and conscience, only then the transformation can lead to liberation and not self-destruction.

At its core, "Peștera Ialomiței" is a celebration of feminine autonomy through mythopoetic language. Sylva's rewriting of the Zburător (The Flying Goblin) myth not only preserves the haunting power of folklore but channels it toward a redemptive, rather than tragic, resolution. The tale reframes eros not as a destructive passion that reduces women to silence or stone but as a catalyst for spiritual and psychological individuation. Ialomița's final transformation into a flowing stream, vital, fertile, eternal, contrasts starkly with Bucur's petrification, a metaphor for stagnant desire and emotional imprisonment. Her continuous motion as a river suggests a feminine principle that gives life, nourishes the world, and preserves memory through perpetual becoming.

This reinterpretation aligns with Carmen Sylva's broader literary and cultural project: to elevate Romanian folklore to the dignity of European myth while embedding it with a unique, modern sensibility. The tale's rich intertextuality, drawing from German Romanticism, Greek myth, and Romanian oral traditions, demonstrates Carmen Sylva's skill as a cultural mediator. More than a passive transmitter of tales, she transforms them, inscribing new ethical and psychological

meanings that resonate with her broader feminist and humanist concerns. The Ialomița legend thus stands not only as a rewriting of Lorelei myth but as a landmark in the literary empowerment of feminine mythic consciousness.

What distinguishes Sylva's approach is her ability to reframe folklore as a space of existential and philosophical inquiry. By reimagining mythic structures around a heroine who actively seeks knowledge, transformation, and moral agency, Sylva expands the symbolic possibilities of traditional narratives. Ialomița's journey is not merely a response to trauma or threat but a proactive engagement with the very essence of desire, mortality, and memory. In this way, Sylva's tale becomes a myth of consciousness—an exploration of how the feminine can inhabit eros without being destroyed by it, and how the self can emerge whole through surrender rather than domination.

Furthermore, the tale suggests a reevaluation of masculine power in myth. Bucur, initially cast as the all-powerful sorcerer, is ultimately revealed to be fragile in his incapacity for change. His defeat is not the result of external force but of his refusal to evolve beyond possessive love. The story thus offers a subtle critique of patriarchal archetypes: the hero-sorcerer is unmasked as emotionally stagnant, while the supposed victim becomes the true creator of meaning. This inversion speaks to a broader feminist reimagination of myth, in which agency, wisdom, and transformation are not confined to male figures but are fully embodied by the feminine protagonist.

In this light, *"Peștera Ialomiței"* serves as a powerful allegory for cultural and psychological renewal. The cave, traditionally a place of entrapment, becomes a crucible of rebirth. The river, often associated with the unconscious in psychoanalytic thought, becomes the medium through which the feminine self transcends her historical silencing. Sylva's literary gesture is thus twofold: she honors the ancestral voice of folklore while simultaneously infusing it with a liberating modern ethos. Through Ialomița, she offers a myth that does not end in lament, but in flowing continuity—a myth that remembers, heals, and endures.

Conclusions

"Peștera Ialomiței" speaks of the triumph over the power of the *Zburătorul*, associated with temptation or sexual impulses, not through innocence but through knowledge and humility. It constitutes, we believe, a continuation and a happy conclusion of this popular myth, which until now had only opened toward tragic plots.

In sum, *"Peştera Ialomiţei"* stands as a richly layered myth that transcends its folkloric roots to offer a nuanced reflection on transformation, agency, and the redemptive power of love. Queen Elisabeth, writing as Carmen Sylva, elevates a regional legend into a universal narrative by weaving together archetypes from Romanian, Germanic, and Greek traditions. Yet the story's true innovation lies in its reorientation of mythic energy: it is the feminine force that initiates change, confronts darkness, and ultimately redefines the meaning of eros—not as fatal obsession but as the wellspring of self-realization and collective healing.

The tale's psychological and symbolic architecture positions Ialomiţa not only as a character within the myth but as a metaphor for storytelling itself—fluid, generative, and enduring. Her transformation into a stream echoes the continuity of myth through time, its ability to adapt, flow into new meanings, and nourish successive generations. As such, Sylva's legend operates on multiple levels: a literary homage to Romanian landscape and folklore, a reworking of European mythical heritage, and a philosophical inquiry into the nature of desire, identity, and memory.

Ultimately, *"Peştera Ialomiţei"* is a myth for our time as much as for its own. In an era increasingly conscious of gender, ecology, and the complexity of emotional life, Sylva's narrative invites us to reflect on how stories shape our understanding of power and vulnerability. It challenges the dichotomy of victim and villain, revealing the fluid interplay between transformation and stasis, love and control. In doing so, it offers not just a tale to be remembered, but a myth to be lived—one in which healing, agency, and motion are the truest forms of resistance and renewal.

REFERENCES

Sylva, Carmen (2016). *Poveştile Peleşului* (*The Stories of Peleş*), edited and with an afterword by Silvia Irina Zimmermann. Illustrations from the princely archive of Wied, Bucharest: Corint Books.

Vulcănescu, Romulus (1987). *Mitologie română*. (*Romanian Mythology*) Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 294-313

Carmen Sylva and the Modernization of the Romanian Culture

LUIZA MARINESCU
University of St. Kliment Ohridsky, Sofia
luizamarinescu700@gmail.com

Introduction

The work of the Poet Queen Elisabeth zu Wied (1843–1916), who signed the pseudonym of Carmen Sylva during the period 1880–1916, represents an important and unique occasion for recalling the mediation, promotion, and cultural marketing efforts made with a characteristic rigor and preciseness, truly innovative for the first time in Romanian literary culture.



This study further intends to outline the complex transdisciplinary designs of the mediation, promotion, and marketing strategy carefully developed and articulated by Carmen Sylva, the remarkable Poet Queen.

The Market of Cultural Services and Products in Romanian Old Kingdom during Queen Elisabeth's Reign



Carmen Sylva, the literary penname of Queen Elisabeta of Romania (i.e. princess Elisabeth Pauline Ottilie Luise zu Wied, born on the 29th of December 1843, Neuwied, Germany – died on the 18th of February /the 2nd of March 1916, Curtea de Argeș, Romanian Kingdom) is famous for her pioneering activity as a patron of arts from the Kingdom of Romania (1881-1916), as the founder of some charitable institutions, well-known as a poet, an essayist, a playwright and a novelist. In 1893, she founded the Charitable Society Queen Elisabeta (*Societatea caritabilă Regina Elisabeta*).

Regarding her pioneering activity in the cultural marketing from Romanian Old Kingdom, it is important to underline that Queen Elisabeth, (who signed since 1881 using the penname Carmen Sylva, in order to separate her literary activity from her official one, as a Queen), is the innovator of new concepts with respect to the cultural propaganda, a stategy meant to make the young dinasty, Romanian Old Kingdom and its culture known through the Queen's literary creation. Carmen Sylva organised at her Court a net of empoyees, imvolved in producing, correcting, translating and preoccupied in the literary difusion and popularization of the Queen's books. This net was formed by secretaries, writers, the noble ladies from Queen Elisabeta's Court. This net created and financialy supported the intelectual relationship with personalities involved in cultural activities from different European countries, who became close friends and associates. These intelectuals were well-known writers and famous musicians, very much appreciated in the western cultural and artistic societies.



The cultural department organized at her Court by Carmen Sylva was an activity which supposed an effective

supply, delivery, providing and make the link between the literary activity of the Queen Poet and the material means of her activity and the object of her cultural department's activity (obtaining the popularity, the recognition of her cultural merits at any costs, by hook or by crook). Important is the fact that this strategy of literary marketing, which allowed the Queen to become in 1881 a Member of Honour of the Romanian Academy (the Literary Section) and to receive the famous prize Botta from the French Academy in 1888, was lately useful for the former ladies from the Queen's Court: Elena Văcărescu, member of the French Academy; Ana Elisabeta Brâncoveanu or Anna de Noailles, member of the Académie Royale Belge de Langue et de Littérature Françaises (The Royal Academy of Belgium for French Literature and Language), and then, member of the exclusive French Academy, being the first woman rewarded with the order of Commander of the Legion of Honour; Martha Bibescu, the author of the book *Les Huit Paradis* (*The Eight Paradises*, 1908), which was rewarded with the prize of the French Academy, a member – since 1955 of the Royal Academy of French Language and Literature from Belgium, Brussels, in the academic chair previously occupied by the Countess Elisabeta Brâncoveanu or Anna de Noailles. The recognition in France of any important Romanian writer generated adulation, obsequious flattery, excessive admiration or praise.

The cultural department from Queen Carmen Sylva's Court was diversified and they fulfilled the functions of research, education, supply, distribution, recycling and reevaluation of the cultural products and cultural services. The function of research in this cultural department from the Royal Court began when, in a dramatic context, the Queen tried in a desperate way to pass over the worst shock that a mother could ever suffer: the loss of her baby.



The image of the Crown Heiress, the little Princess Maria, symbolically carried as a heavy luggage or as a burden torture or as an encumbrance is evident in the iconography of

that era in which the Queen wrote: “I strive to be first a wife, then a Sovereign and only in the end a poet” … “The sovereign profession requires three qualities: kindness, beauty and fecundity.” (Carmen Sylva, 2012)

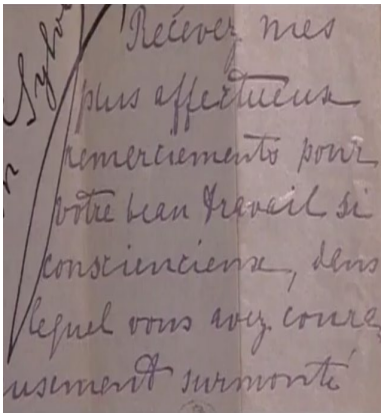
In a country with a filo-French bourgeoisie, this Renan daughter of Germany married in Romanian countries and founded in 1875 the first Association for the Poor and a Society for translating the books for children in French and in Romanian. In the iconography of 1873, Princess Maria was the beloved daughter of her both royal parents and, especially of her father, who protected her, making her sit as an equal (their height apparently seemed to be the same), as a royal precious young branch or offshoot. Queen Elisabeth was looking at them both from a lateral point of observing, behind her royal husband and the crown heiress, the first born daughter. Queen’s profile shows her loyalty, her honest love and special attention for her first born child.



Junimea and the Royal Literary Cenacle of the Royal Court: Cultural Objectives and Strategies

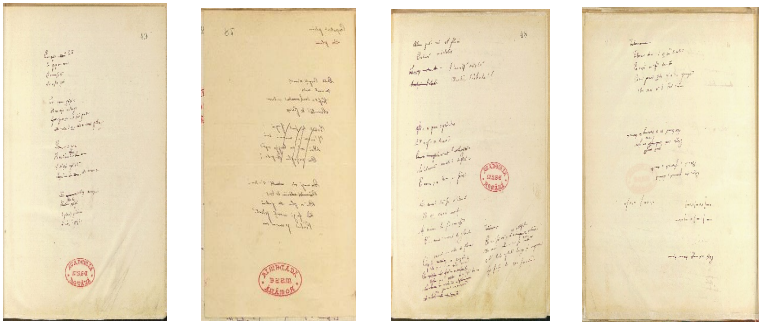
After the death in 1874 of the young Princess Maria because of scarlet fever, Queen Elisabeth’s spiritual anatomy changed completely forever, because of a deep depression, which she wrapped it in hard, exhausting work, uninterrupted activity, accompanied by the work of the ladies of honor from the Queen’s Court. The charitable activity for the royal propaganda made possible the change of the royal image, the Queen becoming a symbol of the motherhood for her people and a cultural ambassador for her country. This Rheine’s daughter, who sang the love for her birth place, Germany, preferred to escape, to flee in writing and in the memories regarding the persons whom she

sympathizes with. Beginning as a therapy, her writing activity was changed in a strategy. “In politics,” Carmen Sylva wrote, “the woman has to be the echo of her husband” (Carmen Sylva, 2012). Technically, she created a cultural trust to promote Romania in western European countries. In the iconography of the year 1875-1876, Queen Elisabeta is photographed from the profile, as a medal of sufferance, with her eyes looking far away, without seeing anything, surrounded by the foreign sad children, as apathetic as the dark dressed Queen, who stand in front of her little desk or sécrétaire, with her back to the dog and the children, looking at the photos from her desk. The compositional symbolist indicates the fact the Queen will turn to writing. The anti-German and anti-Dynastic atmosphere from the Court of Bucharest should be pondered in a way or another, in order to compensate the image of the Queen, who lost the Heiress Princess. The group of the ladies from the Court and the secretaries were actively involved to correct the image, to construct a strategy, to promote literary masterpieces, to promote cultural services adapted to the market needs, to adapt the quality of the books to the level of instruction of the public, to correct, to edit and to obtain, in the shortest time the books, with a reduced cost of production and a maximum benefit for those who need to be protected.


Recevez mes
plus affectueux
remerciements pour
votre beau travail si
consciencieux, dans
lequel vous avez couru
usement surmonté

At that time, the most influent literary association, which imprint the new cultural orientation in Romanian literature was *Junimea* literary society and, from that reason, the Queen would establish cordial relationship with the members of this cultural group, consisting in intellectuals with French and German instruction. Mite Kremnitz, Queen Elisabeta lady of honor was also the sister in law of Titu Maiorescu, *Junimea*’s leader and mentor. From this collaborative literary work numerous cultural projects have made known to the German world the literature from Romanian Old Kingdom: *Rumanische Märchen* (*Romanian Fairy Tales*), Leipzig, 1882; Carmen Sylva. *Rumänische Dichtungen* (*Romanian Poems*), deutsch von Carmen Sylva, hrsg. und mit weiteren Beiträgen versehen von Mite Kremnitz, 1. Auflage,

Kröner, Leipzig, 1881; translating together with Carmen Sylva) from the works of Vasile Alecsandri, Mihai Eminescu, Iacob Negruzzi, Dimitrie Bolintineanu, Th. Șerbănescu; Carmen Sylva. *Rumänische Dichtungen*, deutsch / von Carmen Sylva; hrsg. und mit Weiteren Beiträgen versehen von Mite Kremnitz. 2-e Aufl. Bonn: Verlag von Emil Strauss; *Neue rumänische Skizzen* (*New Romanian Sketches*), 1881. The Queen established collaborative relationship with Romanian writers from *Junimea* literary association. The writer Vasile Alecsandri became the Queen's adviser and friend, who encouraged her to make the writing a noble and royal duty. He was always present at the Royal Court. The literary critic Titu Maiorescu sent his daughter, Livia, to be one of the ladies, educated at the Queen's Court.



Ion Luca Caragiale offered the Queen the topic for her short story "*The Revenge*". Mihai Eminescu, whom the Queen always compared him in her writings with Faust or Manfred, has translated her ballad "*Vârful cu dor*" ("*The Peak with Miss*") in 1879, signing it M. E-scu:, "*Vârful cu dor- baladă românească pentru soli, cor şi orchestră, textul de F. de Laroc, traducere de Eminescu*" ("*The Peak with Miss – Romanian ballad for solo, choir and orchestra, text by F. de Laroc, translated by Eminescu*"). This ballad was a vaudeville text played in Sibiu on the 18th or the 30th of November 1879. The Queen's penname LAROC was an anagram of King's name, CAROL, written in the mirror and F comes for *forest* (French *fôret*). The translation manuscript made by the poet Mihai Eminescu from Carmen Sylva's text is kept in the custody of the Library of Romanian Academy from Bucharest: "*Verful cu dor- Baladă Română în trei părţi. Textul de F. de Laroc. Muzica de Ladislaw Lubicz. Traducere română de M. E-scu*" ("*Ballad in three parts; text by F de Laroc. Music by Ladislaw Lubicz. Translated by M. E-scu*"). Introduced as a musical comedy in the volume edited in 1905, by Ilarie Chendi, this ballad is a

masterpiece of Eminescu's translation art from 1879, translation praise by Frédéric Damé, when it was first presented on stage of the National Theater. Luis F. Paganini, the *dragoman* (i.e. the translator) of the Italian Agency and Consulate work at Italian version using as a model Mihai Eminescu's Romanian translation.

From the literary cooperation with the German writer Mite Kremnitz there came a series of novels signed with the penname 'Dito und Idem': *Aus der rumänischen Gesellschaft* (*From Romanian Society*), two novels, Kröner, Leipzig și Bonn, 1882; *Anna Boleyn*, a historical drama, Strauss, Bonn, 1886 (Germ.); *Astra*, an epistolary novel, Strauss, Bonn, 1886 (Germ.); *Astra*, republished Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011 (translation); *Feldpost* (*The Military Post*), epistolary novel, Strauss, Bonn, 1886 (Gem.); "*In der Irre*" ("*To the Will of Chance*"), short stories, Strauss, Bonn, 1888; "*Rache und andere Novellen*" ("*Revenge and Other Short Stories*"), Strauss, Bonn, 1889 (Gem.)

How to get Popularity? Study on the Wishes and Cultural Needs of the Consumers of Knowledge in the Romanian Old Kingdom

More and more frequently, the penname of the Queen Writer Carmen Sylva appeared in the cultural world and the pre-Raphaelite painter George Frederic Watts compared Queen Elisabeth with an "intellectual monster", who discovered that "writing consoles better than the religion could do and it tortured better than the Inquisition" (Carmen Sylva, 2012):

"Carmen is the verse, Sylva is the forest,
The song itself is meant to sound
And if I were born and grow up elsewhere,
My songs would have nothing to say.
I stole them from the birds,
The forest freak told me of them,
My heart then added the rhythm,
The rhyme and the forests are my rest."

(*English version by Luiza Marinescu*)

After 15 years from Princess Maria's death, in a fragment of a letter send to Mite Kremnitz in the autumn of 1888, Carmen Sylva thought that she could have been the grandmother of all the kids in this world, if God would ever permit her to make them happy, through her writings dedicated to them: "The forest song. Carmen Sylva. This is my name. A name under which I've hidden myself for a long time (…) and which, right now, I am revealing it; it is because many beloved children wished that and because, right now, I've got white hair and I could have been grandmother of all the kids and never say no, when they ask me something." (Kremnitz, 1903: 279)



Carmen Sylva was convinced that her popularity was the result of the fact that her books were read by a various public: "To become popular you have to be sang by children, soldiers, students and drinkers, but never be a melancholic person." (*The Aphorism* A 438 d 111 in Carmen Sylva, 2012: 171)

The Translations "Do not make a Literature", but They Are a Means of Cultural Mediation


Urteil der
Königin von Rumänien
über die „Erika":
Die neue Erika-Schreibmaschine ist ganz ausgezeichnet und zumal für alle Kurzsichtigen eine Wohltat, da man sie in nächste Nähe bringen und auf diese Weise zum ersten Male sehen kann, was man schreibt.
Elisabeth, Carmen Sylva.

The Queen's Court has also the function to supply, to harvest the most valuable nutritional sources of a spirit that wished to transform her job of a writer and a translator in a part of her royal activity. Carmen Sylva's loftiness and majesty consists in her metamorphosis capacity of her creative energy, in a viable strategy, which her contemporaries and the writers who followed adopted it, with amazing results for their writing art to be recognized. Carmen Sylva succeeded in investing her powers in noble ideas, with an ethical and humanistic motivation. "*The Stories of Peleș Castle*" made a very good propaganda for the country whose

Queen she was, and the accounts of the Royal House for the charitable actions have been filled by the money obtained from advertising. In front of her writing machine, Carmen Sylva was the first Queen, who appeared in the advertisements of this invention, perfected by Americans (Fay-Sholes Typewriter) or by Germans (Erika-Schreibmaschine).

Carmen Sylva, the most prolific Queen writer from the 19th century offered to the public more than one thousand poems, ninety short-stories, thirty dramatic texts and four novels. As a beneficiary of a polyglot education, she wrote fluently in German, French and



English. She learned Romanian and, at her Court, she encouraged the tradition of hand made products: popular Romanian clothes, Romanian popular costume, which she elegantly wore, together with the ladies from her Court. Always delighted with the linguistic tidings, she became an admirer of Esperanto international language. In 1908 she became the President of Esperanto Society from Romania and in 1910, the President of the European Esperanto Society. The admiration and the support for founding the Theosophical Society in Romania and especially the support for actors, determined the Austrian emperor Frany Joseph to criticize her.

The Royal Literary Cenacle and its Guests



The function of education of the cultural department from the Queen Elisabeth's Court is underlined by the importance given to instruction. This was one of the parts intensively cultivated and included in the long-term cultural strategy of Carmen Sylva's Court. Understanding that in modern world the economic growth suppose a greater investment in human capital, because economic growth has traditionally been attributed to the accumulation of human and physical capital, Queen Elisabeth founded a system of scholarships for young and talented Romanian artists. This way, the Queen was always surrounded by lots of artists, poets, musicians, writers and painters such as: Mihai Eminescu, Romanian national poet; Elena Văcărescu, Bucura Dumbravă, Livia Maiorescu, writers and ladies from the royal Court; Nicolae Grigorescu, the well-known Romanian painter; Martha Bibescu, the writer; George Enescu, the 16 years old violin player, conductor and composer of the "Romanian Rapsody", for whom she has built a concert hall near the Peleș Castle and to whom she offered in 1897 a precious present of 9000 francs (Enescu's father gave the other 10 000 francs) for buying from Stuttgart "*the Cathedral*", an old valuable violin made in 1736 by the famous luthier, craftsman, violin maker Bartolomeo Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesu (1698-1744). He was appreciated as one of the most important violin makers, known as del Gesu (i.e. *Jesus's*), because his labels always incorporated the letters IHT (Greek acronym for Jesus Christ) and a roman cross. His instruments have a unique style, changing the tradition of his family of violin makers.

Most famous violin players of the 20th century as Grumiaux, Menuhin, Heifetz, Kogan, Kyung Wha Chung, Rabin, Silverstein, Stern, Perlman, Midori, Rachel Barton Pine, Szeryng, Sarah Chang and, of course, George Enescu, played on instruments made by Guarnieri del Gesu; Other artists invited at the Royal Court were:

Grigoraș Dinicu, the violin player; Cella Delavrancea, the piano player; Vasile Alecsandri, the famous poet; Titu Maiorescu, the mentor of *Junimea* cenacle; Ion Luca Caragiale the playright; Șt. O. Iosif, George Coșbuc and Octavian Goga, the poets. In Sinaia's Castle there were heard, for the first time, the leads composed by George Enescu on Carmen Sylva's texts. Without showing forgiveness for herself for the loss of her royal heiress, in her confessions Carmen Sylva was observing herself in the healing process, from which forgiveness, honor, integrity and the respect of the given word are very important steps: "Now I became as a linden: there are many singers protected by my branches and they are singing in my house; there are a lot of bees, because in my house all the people are working hard; all are active, industrious, hardworking, and diligent from morning till night, my bees are flying all around the place. And I am starting my job the earliest of all, because on winter and on summer too I get up long before the sun is rising; Nor in winter time, neither during the summer time my hand is not stopping to write songs and stories; in winter time and, also in summer time, my shuttle is flying through my lace, my brush is painting religious books." (Kremnitz, 1903: 335)



The main remark regarding this strategy of accumulating is that all this energy was invested in the creation and motivation of the myth or the story of the "Good Queen", generated by her "sin" or "her generous mistake" of her wish "to piously change the Earth into a Paradise". The retrospective autobiographical idealization, the comparison with St. Elisabeth of Turingia (St. Elisabeth of Hungary: 1207-1231) starting from her charity for sick and poor people and, most of all, the confession linked with the somatization of the sufferings of the people around her, illustrates the covered, blurred drama generated by the inner unsolved conflict of a soul, who is trying to answer to the question *why*. This answer to the question became a way of life. One of her prayers was heard by God, just as it was uttered: "If only I could take all the sufferance with me..." (Carmen Sylva, 1901: 1-8)



As a consequence, the Queen somatizes one after another, all the sufferings of the people, she develops all the diseases' symptoms in the absence of a medical explanations about the reasons of her diseases. She is able to convert an unbalanced passing mood in a permanent pathological one, because she is not able to understand the importance of purifying herself. She is spreading her energies, she is investing useless her energy hoping to heal herself, instead of protecting herself. She is confused about the maculation and being immaculate or transfigured. She has the impression that her beautifulness and her youth will be multiplied forever, as a reward for her charity and her charitable efforts: "After that, she felt sick, suffering a disease after another: she became blind, deaf, she had got fever. After all these situations, she became, more and more, younger, nicer and more transfigured." (Carmen Sylva, 1901: 1-8)

Once, the Queen heeled with plants a sick boy, the sun of a poor mother. The self-prophecy is coming together with this victory over the disease. The energy invested in this case, the Queen will lose forever, without the possibility to recover or regain it: "This time, after coming back home, she didn't feel tired as usual. In spite of this, she was expecting to be punished with a bad illness, even with death." (Carmen Sylva, 1901: 1-8)

This myth is also an investment in the past and a useless spreading of the present energy, but in another way. It is the result of a dream with her baby daughter, who was leaving the Earth for the Heaven and who came to tell her mother why she was so cruelly punished by God. The idea of a God of revenge, and all the dreamy explanation are in contradiction with all the ideas expressed since then by the Queen's writings. All the Earth is a valley of Gehenna (from *the Septuagint* in Greek *Γέεννα)*, a place in the southern Jerusalem, where – respecting the tradition from the 6th century B.C. - the people are burning their children (boys or girls) as a gift for the deity Moloch. Even in the *Old Testament* this place is named, in the *Book of Joshua.* Although Jeremiah's prophecy predict that Jerusalem will become such an idols'

altar such as Gehinnom valley, i.e. Gehenna valley and the altar from Tophet, destroyed by the king Josua, the place where they were sacrificing children (Jeremiah 19: 2-6; 19:11-14). "The poorness must exist, the same as the disease, injustice and war. All is happening for human purifying and for our forgiveness and for helping mankind. That is why all the people who are helping the other sick people, with all their power, sacrifice and energy, they are happy. But to transform the Earth into Heaven, this change is not allowed, because the Earth is a machinery, which, after mundane thinking, it is called Hell or Inferno or the Gehenna fire." (Carmen Sylva, 1901: 1-8)

The fact that the myth of "the good Queen" appeared in that onirical description resembling *Old Testament*, demonstrates that even the Royal cultural department was deeply involved in the process of preparing a popular cultural product, a sort of literature designed for mass consumption. The Poet Queen wrote in an intercultural context and her efforts were legitimated by her sacrifice, which confirms both the spiritual metamorphosis, and also the process of spiritual production. Carmen Sylva's work consists of poems, fairy tales, stories, memories, literary translations from French to German, from Romanian to German, novels written in collaboration with Mite Kremnitz and a novel written on her own. Publishing at least three books per year between 1880-1916 is remarkable.

The Friendships Matters: Why Pierre Loti?

Carmen Sylva's Cultural Department gave a great importance to the function of diffusion of the literary works, without which, no book is accessible to its readers. This action contains the majority of the technical and economical operations, which are taken place from the moment when the products are leaving the printing house till the moment when the book is finally read.

They said that this activity of spreading "the golden little volumes" use by "delicate women hands" (Häntzschel, 2000: 56-57) translated in international languages was rather expensive, but it had an impact on the educated bourgeois women through cultivating specific themes for the house-keepers universe, regarding friendship, maternity, love, obedience, family, choosing the loving partner, love for the mankind, the sufferance which make the people to understand better solidarity, disrespectful of their social position. It is important to understand that from her point of view, a woman could only be a consumer of lyrics and light belletristic writings.

In the cultural context of the 19th century and the 20th century confluences, at Carmen Sylva's Court it appeared the idea of cultivating the literary/cultural German-Romanian relationship, through the contacts with very popular contemporary writers, such as Joseph Viktor Scheffel, the author of the novel in rhymes *Der Trompeter von Säckingen, ein Sang vom Oberrhein* (*The Trumpet Player from Säckingen, a Upper Rhine Song,* 1853), of a novel *Ekkehard* (1855), about the life of a monk Ekkehard II from the monastery St. Gallen in Switzerland and a joyful, merry party song from the volume *Gaudeamus* (1867), including Romanian names and places:

Das Schloß Gradesco'	**Grădescu Castle**
1. Auf dem Schloße von Gradesco,	*1. In the castle from Grădescu,*
Hinterwärts von Temesvar,	*Down Timişoara's road,*
Saß der tapf're Fürst Bibesco,	*Sit the brave prince Bibesco,*
Serbiens greiser Hospodar.	*The majestuous ruler of Serbia.*
2. Sprich, was tat der Fürst Bibesco,	*2. Tell us, what was Bibescu doing,*
Serbiens greiser Hospodar.	*The majestuous ruler of Serbia,*
Auf dem Schloße von Gradesco,	*In the castle from Grădescu,*
Hinterwärts von Temesvar?	*Down Timişoara's road?*
"3. "Sliwowitz" trank Fürst Bibesco,	*3. "Şliboviţă" drinks Bibesco,*
Serbiens greiser Hospodar.	*The majestuous ruler of Serbia,*
Auf dem Schloße von Gradesco,	*In the castle from Grădescu,*
Bis er schwer betrunken war.	*Until he falls drunk on foot.*

(*Translation by Luiza Marinescu*)

Carmen Sylva read German lyrics written in the popular German language by Fritz Reuter, an author well known in Germany as a novelist. She also read the ballads written by Moritz Karl Wilhelm Anton Graf von Strachwitz, ballads inspired by Nordic legends. From the literary society of Munich, Carmen Sylva cultivated relationship with: Paul Johann Ludwig von Heyse (born March, the 15th 1830, Berlin - died the 2nd of April 1914, Munich), Nobel prized for literature in 1910 with a remarkable contribution as a short-story writer; the playwright and poet Emanuel von Geibel (1815 – 1884); the attorney, writer and historian Felix Ludwig Julius Dahn (1834,

1912); Moyses Baruch, well-known German novelist and playwright and Jew ethnic writer under the penname Berthold Auerbach (1812 – 1882); the Baron poet and novelist Friedrich Adolf Axel Detlev von Liliencron (1844 – 1909); Austrian poet and writer Peter Rosegger (Roßegger) (1843 – 1918, Krieglach); the playwright and novelist Richard Voss (Voß) (1851 – 1918); the writer and the diplomat Ernst Adam von Wildenbruch (1845 – 1909); Swiss German language writer Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825 – 1898).



From the society of Royal writers of Europe, the Empress Elisabeth of Austria (Sisi), Emperor Franz Joseph's wife visited Carmen Sylva and appreciated her. They have both in common the spiritual love, the wise, wide culture, their love for literature and philosophy, for Greek art and for Greek lyric poet Sappho from Lesbos Island, to whom Carmen Sylva had dedicated a poem. Sisi and Carmen Sylva have both in common the detachment from superficial things, honors and falsity, which from their position of Empress or Queen they had to look at them smiling. They were both against the court protocol. And, above all, they have in common an unhappy marriage, not so full of life and love, and they both decided to write about the absurd of marriage (Hamann, 2012) because "love transforms you, marriage without love, not at all" (Carmen Sylva, 2012). About Carmen Sylva's presence in Wien in 1884, Marie Valerie, 16 years old daughter of Sisi, wrote to her mother, referring especially at the way of dressing of the Queen Poet: "Carmen Sylva's way of dressing was very special. Under her fur coat, the Queen was wearing a cloth very similar to a dressing gown, a peignoir or a negligée made from dark red velvet, garned with colorful embroidery and strengthened round her waist by a silk cord, similar to a rope. She was wearing a dark hat and she has got a veil in the top of which she put her *pince-nez*. They called her a savant woman. I was thinking as I was looking at her green great eyes, which were laughing, her chicks still colored by the youth freshness, her gorgeous teeth, as white as snow: if Carmen Sylva can see the soul of people, she should know

that, for an hour, all that was ours was her own, I belonged her entirely now." (*Translated L.M. from Hamann, 2012*)

The Empress Elisabeth had a very good opinion about the realistic way of life that Carmen Sylva had, when she visited her:

I didn't go to visit the Court,
I didn't go to visit the Queen,
Just the Poet I wanted to see,
I came for Carmen Sylva." (*Translated by L.M. from Hamann, 2012*)

Carmen Sylva's Court was the place where Schopenhauer's *Aphorisms* were first translated in Europe: Zizin Cantacuzino and Titu Maiorescu were reading French translation, a model for translating philosophical literature of Arthur Schopenhauer. In comparison with Wien's Court, Romanian literary Court was in accordance with the Queen's artistic taste. When Franz Joseph received on the occasion of the New Year's Eve one of Schopenhauer's *Aphorisms*, as a blessed wish from the Empress, Sisi, the Emperor said that "Schopenhauer was right in that *Aphorism,* but generally his philosophical workings are so confused that they are also confusing the readers." (*Translated by L.M. from Hamann, 2012)* The story was told by Katharina Schratt, the beloved actress, who was also the Emperor's "best friend".

In a letter send by the Empress Sisi to her daughter, Marie Valerie, she wrote: "Carmen Sylva is very nice, happy, interesting, but she is very realistic, with her feet firmly connected to the earth of this world; she could never understand me, although I sympathized with her, I care about her." (*Translated L.M. from Hamann, 2012*) The death of her only son and his mistress, Mary Vetsera, in a murder–suicide at his hunting lodge at Mayerling in 1889 was a blow from which the Empress never recovered. When Sisi died travelling in Geneva in 1898, when she was stabbed to death by an Italian anarchist named Luigi Lucheni, Carmen Sylva wrote: "It was very normal for Sisi to love Heine's poetry, most of all the poets, because he also was very disappointed because of the falsity in this world and he never found enough words to throw away everything that is empty!

What she could never forgive at our level is that we have a lot of falsity around us and it looks that everything can be deceiving; we have such a huge problem in reaching the essence, in discover the core of things. She could never forget that people would like to see us as the Olympian Gods and they don't like to see us crying, sobbing or groaning like them. They placed us on a pedestal, at an upper level, where they like to see us smiling forever and being as happiest as it is possible on this earth. But at this point there is a cruel and impossible

lie... In Heine's works she found comfort for all these external appearances that she felt so deep; she discovered the bitterness with which, her cruel and solitary destiny was fulfilled; only her fidget and disobedient style, who was also a part of her personality, has brought to light such an original and amazing existence." (*Translated L.M. from Hamann, 2012*)

Carmen Sylva had not given up to the language of pain from all her narratives observing that, in fact, this is the only aspect that the public enjoyed. "There is no happiness but duty. There is no consolation but work. There is no joy but the beautifulness." the Queen used to say.

At Carmen Sylva's Court the function of "maintenance" of the cultural products, of repairing and remaking or recombining their values of using was a part of her long-term strategy of imposing the Queen as a popular writer. Her lady of honor, Elena Văcărescu sent to Pierre Loti, the youngest of all the French Academy's members, a sailor and a famous writer, the French translation of the poem *Jehovah* composed in German by Carmen Sylva. Soon after that, Carmen Sylva received the book, *The Fisherman from Ireland*, with a warm dedication of the author. The Queen made the German translation of the French novel, and, in a sunny day of September, according to Pierre Loti's story from his diary, Carmen Sylva received him at Peleș Castle as her guest, bringing him in the music hall, surrounded by her ladies of honor from the Court. The Queen played at the pipe organ a *Prelude* by Johann Sebastian Bach and after that, she descended the wooden circular stairs with a German version of Loti's novel. At his turn, Pierre Loti (wearing high heels shoes to look higher, to the great disappointment of the young ladies of honor, who imagined him to be an athletic man, as the characters from his novels) he was listening astonished the Queen's reading.

Soon after that, Pierre Loti began to cooperate with the Queen's Court and to polish "*Les Pensées d'une reine* (*The Forethoughts of a Queen*)", the *Aphorisms* published in 1888 at Calmann-Lévy Publishing House and which would bring Her Majesty the Botta Award of the French Academy in November the 16th the same year.

The Academic Recognition: A Good Cultural Product that Sells Itself

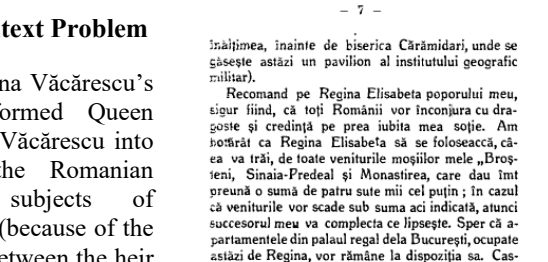
Inn 1881, Carmen Sylva became a honorary member of the Romanian Academy (literary field) and the recognition of her literary merits by the French Academy in 1888 represented an asset or a jackpot for her

brand image as a Queen Writer in a national state, which had already fight and gained its independence in 1877-1878.

King Carol I and Queen Elisabeth got involved in the modernizing of their country and, the westernization of Romania, from the cultural and spiritual point of view, was the Queen's specialty. Through her activity of mecenate, by her sponsorship, encouraging the cultural spiritual Romanian life, through her own literary works realized in a symbiotic composition between the Romanian elements and motifs, Carmen Sylva remained a romantic character, with an activity stimulating the promotion, very useful to Romania's modernizing and westernizing. She was also a loyal Queen for King Carol I and for Romanian Old Kingdom. "I will go wherever you will go, I will stay wherever you will decide to stay. Your people is my people. Your God is my God I will die wherever you will die and I wish to be buried there." (Carmen Sylva, 2012)

Popularity as a Context Problem

After the issue of Elena Văcărescu's exile, which transformed Queen Elisabeta and Elena Văcărescu into taboo topics for the Romanian newspapers and subjects of international tabloids (because of the ephemeral marriage between the heir prince Ferdinand and Elena Văcărescu) in Carol I's *Will,* the sovereign expressed his gratitude for Carmen Sylva's loyalty, more than for her love. "I do recommend Queen Elisabeta to my people, being sure that all Romanians will surround her majesty, my beloved wife with love and faith." (Carol I, 1914: 7)



– 7 –

înălțimea, înainte de biserica Cărămidari, unde se găsește astăzi un pavilion al institutului geografic militar).

Recomand pe Regina Elisabeta poporului meu, sigur fiind, că toți Românii vor înconjura cu dragoste și credință pe prea iubita mea soție. Am hotărât ca Regina Elisabeta să se folosească, câta va trăi, de toate veniturile moșiilor mele „Broșteni, Sinaia-Predeal și Monastirea, care dau împreună o sumă de patru sute mii cel puțin ; în cazul că veniturile vor scade sub suma aci indicată, atunci succesorul meu va complecta ce lipsește. Sper că apartamentele din palaul regal dela București, ocupate astăzi de Regina, vor rămâne la dispoziția sa. Castelul Peleș îl hotărâsc ca reședință de vară pentru mult iubita mea soție. Întreținerea acestei reședințe este în sarcina succesorului meu, căruia las moștenire Castelul împreună cu întreaga moșie «Sinaia-Predeal» cu toate clădirile și stabilimentele. Moșia mea Broșteni din județul Suceava revine asemenea viitorului Rege al României din casa de Hohenzollern. Moșia mea Monastirea din județul Ilfov va deveni proprietatea strănepotului și finului meu, Principele Carol al României, din ziua majorității sale, din veniturile acestei moșii însă nu se poate dispune înainte de moartea Reginei Elisabeta. Moșia mea Slobozia-Zorleni din județul Tutova, cumpărată din moștenirea mea părintească, am destinat-o printr'un act deosebit *) iubitului meu nepot. Prin-

*) Depus la Sigmaringen.

Conclusions



Since her coming in Bucharest after a trip by ship which lasted for three days and till the end of her life, Carmen Sylva kept the measure of her valuable reign in words representing her work, her hard working together with her husband and King in culture, arts and Romanian craftsmanship, attracting the attention of Europe over the Romanian values at the International Exhibitions from 1867, 1889 and 1900. In 1912, she organized in Berlin an exhibition entitled *Woman in Arts and Kraftmanships* asking for the train Orient Express to stop in Sinaia for Peleș Castle. After Carol I's death, she retired at Curtea de Argeș, the place where the King's grave was situated, living a quiet, retired, reclusive and full of memories life. "We are extraordinary sovereigns, because we wanted to accomplish in twenty-five years what others have done in centuries." "Romania is about to become what King Carol dreamed of becoming: a fresh artery in Europe. When the young prince of Hohenzollern was given the crown of this country, which he did not even know it, he opened the geographical atlas, took a pencil, and seeing that the line drawn from London to Bombay passed through the Romanian Principalities, he accepted: "This is a country of the future!" (Carmen Sylva, Loti, 2016: 106)

REFERENCES

* Note: The photographs included in this article are sourced from publicly available materials on the internet and are free to use.

Carol I (1914). *Testamentul Regelui Carol I* (*King Charles I's Will*), *in extenso* and with a *codicil*. Bucharest: Grossmann Publishing House.

Dito und Idem (1886 a). *Astra*. *epistolary novel*. Strauss, Bonn.

Dito und Idem (1886). *Anna Boleyn*. *historical play*. Strauss, Bonn.

Dito und Idem (1886b). *Feldpost* (*Poșta militară*), *epistolary novel*, Strauss, Bonn.

Dito und Idem (1888). *In der Irre* (*La voia întâmplării*). *Stories*. Strauss, Bonn.

Dito und Idem (1889). *Rache und andere Novellen* (*Răzbunare și alte povestiri*). Strauss, Bonn.

Dito und Idem (2011). *Astra*. Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House.

Dito und Idem (1882). *Aus der rumänischen Gesellschaft* (*Din societatea românească*), două romane, Kröner, Leipzig și Bonn.

Hamann, Brigitte (2012). *The Reluctant Empress. A Biography of Empress Elisabeth of Austria*. Translated from the German by Ruth Hein. London: Farber and Farber Ltd.

Häntzschel, Günter (2000). "Geschlechterdifferenz und Dichtung. Lyrikvermittlung im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert." York-Gothart Mix (Hg.): *Naturalismus. Fin de siècle. Expressionismus. 1890 - 1918* (Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart 7). München, Wien: Hanser, 53-63. Zugleich: München Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag (dtv 4349).

Loti, Pierre (2016). Carmen Sylva Regina Elisabeta a României. *Povesiri încrucișate. În jurul Exilatei la Sinaia, București, Veneția texte reunite și prezentate de Alain Quella-Villegër.* (*Crossed Stories. Around* The Exilate *in Sinaia, Bucharest, Venice — texts collected and presented by Alain Quella-Villegér*). Preface by Gabriel Badea Păun, Translated by Silvia Colfescu. Bucharest: Vremea Publishing House.

Sylva, Carmen (1881). *Rumänische Dichtungen* (*Poeme românești*), deutsch von Carmen Sylva, hrsg. und mit weiteren Beiträgen versehen von Mite Kremnitz, 1. Auflage, Kröner, Leipzig, 1881; traduceri în colaborare cu Carmen Sylva) din opera lui Vasile Alecsandri, Mihai Eminescu, Iacob Negruzzi, Dimitrie Bolintineanu, Th. Șerbănescu, etc.

Sylva, Carmen (1901). *Dar Märchen von de hilfreichen Königin* în *Märchen einer Königin*. Bonn, Straus, 1-8.

Sylva, Carmen (2012). *Gedanken einer Königin – Les pensées d'une reine (Cugetările unei regine). Aforismele complete în limba germană şi franceză şi epigramele Reginei Elisabeta a României, n. Prinţesă de Wied (1843-1916). Ediţie îngrijită şi cu o prefaţă de Silvia Irina Zimmermann, cu fotografii din Arhiva Princiară de Wied* (*Neuwied*). Stuttgart, Ibidem Publishing House (in German and French).

Sylva, Carmen (2012a). *Gedanken einer Königin (Cugetările unei regine). Aforisme alese ale Reginei Elisabeta a României, n. Prinţesă de Wied (1843-1916). Ediţie îngrijită şi cu o postfaţă de Silvia Irina Zimmermann, cu fotografii din Arhiva Princiară de Wied* (*Neuwied*). Stuttgart, Ibidem Publishing House.

Sylva, Carmen (f.a.). *Rumänische Dichtungen*, deutsch / von Carmen Sylva; hrsg. und mit Weiteren Beiträgen versehen von Mite Kremnitz. 2-e Aufl. Bonn: Verlag von Emil Strauss.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 314-329

Queen-Writer:
Construction and Deconstruction of an Image

DANIELA VARVARA
Poet and literary critic
danivarvara@yahoo.com

"How, Lord, can I also/ have talent?
Would it be justice to give to me, even me
some divine gift the over-righteous fate?
Too big would be my luck!/ I'm just a Queen! //
(...)The poet must, as much as he/
she can feel and observe all,
Living in the turmoil of the world -
And I live in fairytale and dream,
Because I am only a Queen!"
(Carmen Sylva)

Although she approaches literature and writing from her adolescence, the one who will become Romania's first queen is first and foremost identified with her royal status and then with that of a writer. Not only the above-mentioned verses, reproduced from *Queen's Tales* (2012), but also the other poems and stories, as well as some personal statements prove this. Moreover, apart from being a queen, she is a woman and she assumes this role, as we will observe in her attitude and confessions (diaristic or poetic). In a time of deeply patriarchal Romania, or even of a Europe with a mentality still trivial to traditionalism in terms of gender identity, the queen knows that first of all she must be a devoted wife, a woman who has to ensure a successor to the throne. That was in fact the thing that most distressed Elisabeth of Wied, the queen who signed her literary work with the pseudonym Carmen Sylva.

In our work, we propose an analysis from the perspective of gender studies, of the role, image and literary work of the first queen

of Romania, the writer-queen, Carmen Sylva. Elisabeth of Romania built her own myth, in his lifetime. It is a myth of the queen's writer. It imposes the image of a queen in multiple roles: as a writer, as wife, mother, cultural promoter, charity woman etc. The image and roles of Elisabeta-Carmen Sylva are analyzed both in her own writings and acts, and in her photos and postcards.

Born on 29 December 1843 in Neuwied, Germany, and deceased on 18 February 1916 in Curtea de Arges, the Kingdom of Romania, with the full name Elisabeth Pauline Ottilie Luise zu Wied, is one of the remarkable figures of modern Romania, not only socially and politically, but also artistically, as a writer and especially as a cultural promoter. After a high-class education she received in the humanist and natural sciences, after long periods of residence at the European royal courts, in 1869, at the age of nearly 26, Princess Wied marries the prince of the United Romanian Principalities, Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. On 10 May 1881, he becomes the first king of Romania, known as Carol I, to whom Romania owes greatly the emancipation, the modernization of the state and its European recognition. During his 48 years of reign, Carol I obtained the country's independence, regained the Dobrogea region, and established specific institutions for a modern state. Queen Elisabeth is the one who opens the doors to Europe through culture, through her writings, through promoting the Romanian music, literature and culture. She had contact with the literary world from a younger age, in the European royal saloons, but she was not encouraged by her family and she was unknown to the audience.

She had an editorial come out in 1880, at Leipzig, with the epic poem *Sappho*, then, in the same year, also in Germany, and also in German, she publishes another epic poem: *Hammerstein*. Her first published writings date back to 1878 and they are, actually, German translations from the contemporary poets Vasile Alecsandri and Mihai Eminescu: *Examples of recent lyrical, translated after the original in the German language by E. Wedi*, in the journal *Die Gegenwart*, number 19, and a year later, in 1879, under a different pseudonym, F. de Laroc, an opera's libretto, "Vârful cu dor", a three-part Romanian ballad, accompanied by Z. Lubicz's music (Romanian adaptation by Mihai Eminescu). The main books translated into Romanian, with multiple editions are: *A queen's thoughts* (1882, 1889, 1910, 1939, 2001), *The stories of Peleș Castle* (1882, 1894, 1898, 1908, 1933, 1937, 1990, 1991, 1997 etc.), *Novels* (1888), *A queen's poems* (1897),

The story of the benefactress queen (1899), *By the waterside. Romanian idyll* (1905), *A queen's stories* (1906, 1914, 2013).

She used to write in German, English, French, Romanian, more than 1,000 poems, 90 short stories gathered in 4 anthological volumes, 30 dramatic works and 4 novels, librettos, articles, essays, memoires, aphorisms, translations to German of Alecsandri and Eminescu's works and traditional Romanian texts. She also wrote a few dramatic works in collaboration with Mite Kremnitz, Adrian Maniu, and so on. Over 30 biographical volumes are dedicated to her. In 1888, she receives the French Academy's prize and two years later, she becomes an honorary member of the Romanian Academy.

The Image of Elizabeth - Carmen Sylva and Her Times

The royal couple will fail to give another direct descendant to the throne, which will grind the Queen, but will not prevent exercise her role model for society, to build herself a picture of a beneficent Queen, mother of the country (not coincidentally she is nicknamed in the epoch "mother of the wounded"). It is a myth that, as suggested by some researchers of her activity, she tries to build during her lifetime.

Although she loves the sea more than the mountains, as stated in several notes (1905, 1911, 1913), she chooses her pen name to be Carmen Sylva, and she signs with it for the first time in 1880. She translated it as "song of the forest" (see Carmen Sylva, *Marchen einer Königin*, 1901: 338-339, apud Zimmermann, S.I., 2013: 30), perhaps because she identifies herself with the place of Peleş Castle, where she lived long, in the mountainous area of Sinaia, space seen as the founder of the dynasty, perhaps as an identification with the mystery and supremacy of the forest, of the mountain in reference with other elements of nature. The "literary" explanation of her name is associated by the queen to a social motivation in choosing the vocation of a writer, as shown in the following paragraph of the quoted book: "Song of the forest, Carmen Sylva is my name [...]; it belongs to all the children who want to listen and it wants to bring joy to them all equally [...] the song of the forest loves evenly everyone who approaches it and sings heart fully to glorify the good God [...]" (ibid.). Abreast, we can interpret this choice of pseudonym as closely related to the folk-naive style of her lyrical creations, as the song of the forest can be deciphered (inspired folk).

Reception of her work

Carmen Sylva writes much, very much, although she has her debut in volume at the age of 35. At first, her writings are published in German, in Germany, in France, then her works are translated or she writes in Romanian and publishes her books in her adoptive country. The recognition of her merits (cultural rather than literary, we might say) comes immediately by Pierre Loti's mediation, on behalf of the French Academy, and on this track, also from the Romanian cultural elite, Francophile. Silvia Irina Zimmerman, an exegete and a biographer to the discussed author, shows that around the year 1880 there was planned the public appearance of the aphorisms and epigrams of Elisabeth of Wied who became the Queen of Romania (1881) in many European countries, then, after 1900, even on other continents, so explaining their existence (unusual to the epoch) in parables and aphorisms anthologies from the early twentieth century. Also, the epistolary novels published in Germany encountered success, written in collaboration with one that will become her first biographer, Mite Kremnitz. The Romanian and German press of that time signaled almost regularly the editorial appearances or the staging of plays by the Queen as well as the social events or the charities she patronized.

In the kingdom of Romania, at some point, the book *Stories of Peleş*, which combined Romanian and German motives from the folk tales and is one of her most successful writings, aesthetically speaking, was distributed to students as a prize for good results at the end of a school year. Criticism regarding the lyric opera is not favorable (rightly), but this does not deter her from continuing to write, nor does it prevent the publication. Among the literary voices, only Alecsandri encourages her in the poetical composition journey.

Immediately after the queen's death, her work falls into obscurity in both countries; at a time (the interwar period and then, explainable, in Stalinism and communism, in Romania) she has been forgotten, even deliberately unmentioned. Only a few editions were produced sporadically. A study devoted to the queen-writer appears in 1936, also written by a woman: Lucretia Carandino-Platamona, *Carmen Sylva. The first Queen of Romania*.

G. Călinescu, considered the most important literary critic and historian of the interwar period, in his book, *The History of the Romanian Literature from Its Origins to the Present*, does not devote her an author study, but mentions her as a patron, promoter of artistic and cultural acts. A few literary critics bent on the queen's creation; however, there were more biographical writings. The reasons for this

situation could have been: the poetics was anachronistic, outdated aesthetically: a naive-sentimental writing, idyllic, or, on the contrary, with tendency; It was situated in terms of theory and literary history, either in the neo-romantic current or in the 'Biedermeier' period, of the German restoration, either in populism (in our country), or idyllic expressionism; there were even critical voices who considered that she cannot be included into a particular literary current, but only placed in a conjunction, in a crossing of currents and styles specific to the period between the two decades; the epoch shows little interest for the female writers (very few when compared to men, even in the interwar period); there is, in a first phase, the risk of including a too recent literature material; the literary historians talked about the politics of that period (in totalitarianism); the political paradigm of the postwar period is not favorable of royalty in general; the writer self-imposed the royal authority at the expense of the writing.

After 1990, with the flourishing of feminism and gender studies in Europe and in our country, Carmen Sylva's work is put in circulation again, mentioned in some histories and encyclopedias (Romanian and German) as: *The Feminist Encyclopedia of the German Literature* by Friederike Eigler and Susanne Kord, 1997, a doctoral thesis in Germany, *Carmen Sylva, the Queen-poet. Literature in the service of the Crown*, 2013 by Silvia Irina Zimmermann, other volumes of the same author, written and published in German in 2010-2013. The Romanian-born author, settled in Germany, initiated and founded the Carmen Sylva Research Center of the Princely Archive of The Wieds in Neuwied. A special interest was manifested especially after the fall of the communism in Romania, as an attempt of recovering the national values and of what represented the Royal House (and not necessarily as a reappraisal of the feminine/ feminist literature).

Constructing and Deconstructing Identity

Carmen Sylva, unlike the second writer proposed in this study, deliberately and gradually builds her image of queen-writer in an era dominated by men. For the end of the nineteenth century especially, but also for the beginning of the next one, the concept of female writer was something extremely rare (especially in our country, dominated by patriarchate more than the West). Moreover, women were not promoted in any public function. We are speaking of a society eminently represented at the peak by males, a traditional society that promotes women only in the ancient gender roles: as wives, mothers,

sisters. We are dealing with a society where national identity has led to an official construction of the gender identity. Subjects are constructed / situated on well-defined social positions, which exclude an image of the woman as equal to the man or her image as a participant in power plays. The whole symbolism - identified in the collective consciousness, of the representative art, then the social and political power representation, shows a clear tilt of the balance in favor of masculinity. We identify an imaginary of an era where social life is represented not by the marginal histories (narratives of women, of those / considered to be in the periphery), but by the holders of power: men, representatives of the official power elite etc.

The clear evidence that women, regardless of their rank (nobility), have no access to the decision-making power is the exile in which Queen Elizabeth herself is sent when she tries to impose her desire (by no means using her authority towards the husband/king) in connection with the marriage of Crown Prince Ferdinand. Elizabeth encouraged the marriage of his nephew with one of the ladies from court- Elena Văcărescu, who will prove to be of great value in the sphere of culture and diplomacy only abroad, in Paris, where she is sent into exile, from the Crown King and council's wish. For example, it is excluded at that time, the influence of women in the decision-making sphere.

In this context, however, the queen makes a name for herself and a reputation as a writer, but also as a feminine queen model. From this point of view - of educating women through the role that the queen assumes, as in terms of the topics addressed in his writings, we can speak of a feminism (social, and not as a philosophical position) as it relates to Carmen Sylva.

As well remarked by Irina Silvia Zimmermann, Carmen Sylva uses literature in the service of the Crown. Moreover: in the service of emancipation, of the moral education of Romanian society. Through thematic and conceptions on world and life, on the role of individuals in society whose exponent she is, she chooses (diplomatically) conservatism. She declares herself - explicit or implicit- against that eroticism that excludes the spirit of sacrifice in a relationship, against infidelity, but also against domestic violence. She promotes reciprocal conjugal respect, as we see in an extract from a philosophical work: *Geflusterte Worte* (*Whispered Words*), Regensburg: Wunderling 1922, vol. 1, "About patience" with the subtitle that appears in Zimmermann's 2013 version, "The problem of feminism". It does not refer to feminism in the philosophical way, but in a social one, that is an approach to the roles in marriage, to the woman's behavior mostly,

and to the problems she had to solve (from an inferior position, because the Queen does not want to break the common laws of that time). Here is an example: "The problem of the feminism and its exaggerated solution may have something good: in this way, young women step with greater independence in marriage and they do not seem so childish to men, but they can become partners from the beginning... Mutual respect is more precious than love, mutual politeness is very useful, grace and loveliness, but not the horrible neglect [...]." (Zimmermann, S.I., 2013: 107)

If initially she wants (and succeeds) to become a cultural mediator between Europe and the new country she represented as sovereign, promoter of national cultural values (she promotes Alecsandri, Eminescu, George Enescu and not only those) in the last three decades of her life, she is more concerned with her image of a writer, with the spread of her writings.

She is perceived as an emblematic figure, traditionally feminine model (woman as wife- unconditional aid for the husband invested in the highest function of the state, for a short time, the protective figure of the family and of the society), very socially active, educated, emancipated, involved. Also known as the 'mother of the wounded' she initiates and supports charity, encourages the empowerment of women, education, medicine, develops patient care institutions, and the building of schools, etc.

Through her writings, she consciously and actively seeks the creation of an autobiographical myth, that of a Queen writer. This, despite the fact that in the beginning she was discouraged by the reaction of men and by the rigid education she received (governed by the autarchic masculine models who repudiated literature as something frivolous, unworthy of a princely figure) and renounced to affirm her talent and dream, she signed under a pseudonym that indicates obedience to the authority of her husband-king. F. Laroc is an anagram of the French phrase *Femme de Carol* (1879).

The Image of the Queen in Photographs and Postcards of the Time

As it is well known, an image has a greater impact on the viewers, to the detriment of the written text. The socio-political context requires practically an 'advertisement', a praiseworthy presentation of the Monarchy (taking into account the fact that it was a change of political regime in the Romanian Principalities, but also considering the non-Romanian origin of the reigning family – the Hohenzollern –

Sigmaringen dynasty). Naturally, in any dynasty or form of leadership there is a certain strategy of imaging, contouring and spreading an icon to serve its interests, a communication strategy with the population, with other institutions. Finding us discussing a timeline of more than a century ago, when mass media was not so developed, it is expected that the photographic image and official writings of the Dynastic House or ordered by it to be of greater importance.

Royal House photos are made by famous photographers, then transmitted to newspapers, magazines, royal houses collections in Europe, or converted to postcards with a wide circulation. We will try to sketch in the next lines how the queen creates her photographic image and especially what she wants to convey through this. One of the ways shows her Romanian nationality (even if not by birth) and promotes the Romanian traditional costume.

Ever since she became a princess and settled in Romania, she sought to know the culture and values of the adopting country, to become an integrant part of this spirituality. How she wanted to convey through image that she appreciates and identifies herself with the nation that adopted her is observed in the photographs: she takes on the Romanian folklore traditional clothes, she visits the country wearing the traditional costume, and she has meetings with the peasant women, whose emancipation she wishes. So, in order to become a model to them, she tries to understand them, to appreciate their beauty (such as folk costumes) and she puts into circulation such images.



Image 1. Photo dating probably from 1883, taken from 'Aus Carmen Sylvas Leben' (From Carmen Sylva's life), the first biography made by Natalie von Stackelberg. It's a circulated and well-known photograph. It appears in several studies or articles dedicated to the first queen of Romania, including the cover of Zimmermann's 2013 book.

Earlier, in 1870, when she was still a princess and not a queen, Franz Duschek portrays Carmen Sylva photographically in a popular costume, with a string of beads over her fairly combed hair, and other jewels specific to the Romanians, accessories around her neck and wrist hand. The same photographer, the same year, Elisabeth appears in the center of another photo, this time, surrounded by the ladies of honor, all dressed in popular clothes. Both photos are found in the Wied Princess Archive and are reproduced by Silvia Irina Zimmermann in 'Carmen Sylva. Queen Poet. Literature in the service of the Crown.'

Moreover, her daughter, little Maria, is photographed in a folklore costume, as can be seen in a photograph whose author is the same Duschek and which is in the same princely archive, a photograph reproduced in the book cited above.



Image 2. Maria (Itty), the only daughter of Carol I and Elisabeta (1870-1874).

In this archive, there is also the picture of a painting in a private collection (in oil on canvas) from 1883, in which painter Christophle Bisschop depicts the queen in another national costume, with a transparent kerchief that seems to be made of silk, with hand sewing embroidery.

In 1910, as shown by Zimmermann (2013), in the photographs reproduced, the queen poses in front of a handloom in the Royal Palace Library in Bucharest, and the simple quote 'Elisabeta' refers not only to the traditional occupation of the Romanian women but also to the role which women must assume for the construction of the nation: "The future of the country is woven by the woman."

The dictum is consistent with the queen's actions, her desire to emancipate the women, even from the age-specific gender (wife and mother) role.

Another way promotes culture (including Romanian), literature, music, folklore. Many photographs show the queen in front of books or pages she writes, engravings, with a book in her hands or arms. Others, weaving, or spinning. Others, especially the group photos, with the ladies of honor, in front of the piano, while the ladies or even little girls in the music room play on various instruments. The message thus conveyed is that spiritual values bring great benefits to the soul, ennoble and enlighten it, that education must be done in this sense.

The images are doubled by the queen's words, either in her own books or in magazines or in various social campaigns of charity.

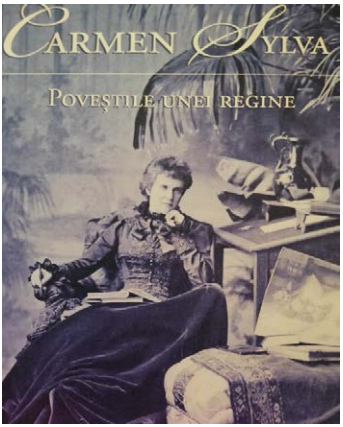


Image 3
(the cover of the book, 2012)

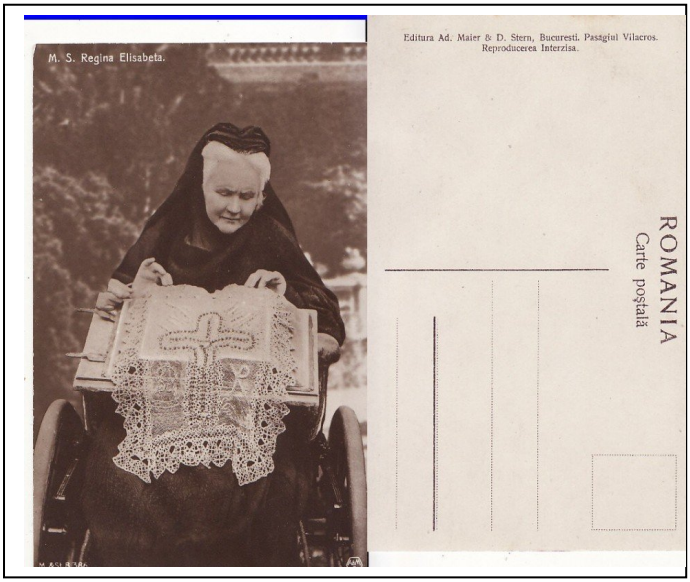


Image 4

In 1910, as shown by Zimmermann (2013) in the photographs reproduced, the queen poses in front of a handloom in the Royal Palace Library in Bucharest, and the simple quote 'Elisabeta' refers not only to the traditional occupation of the Romanian women but also to the role which women must assume for the construction of the nation: 'The future of the country is woven by the woman'.

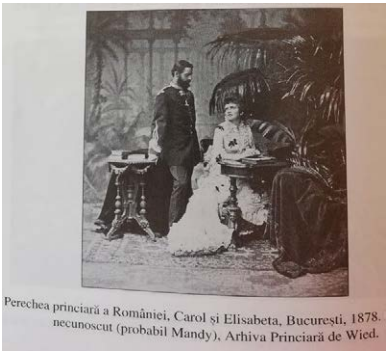
The dictum is consistent with the queen's actions, her desire to emancipate the women, even from the age-specific gender (wife and mother) role.

The post cartoon put up for sale (on internet), depicting M.S. Queen Elizabeth in mourning in recent years at Peleș. Embroidery prints the major symbol of Christendom, the cross, along with Romanian motifs. Although she can no longer move, she does not cease to engage in old, women-specific things: embroidering, sewing.



Another way promotes the role of the queen consort, the royal family image, happy to be in the service of the people she leads




Perechea princiară a României, Carol și Elisabeta, București, 1878. necunoscut (probabil Mandy), Arhiva Princiară de Wied.

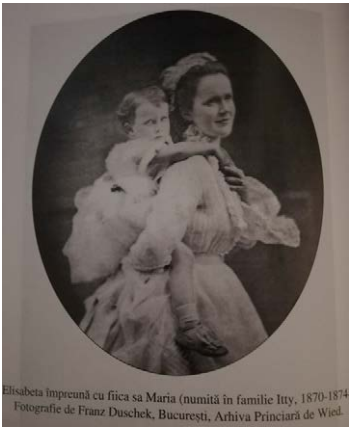
Carmen Sylva has a double role: the wife of the King and, for shortly, a mother. She tries to understand and help the Romanian women in these traditional roles, called "the double burden" or "the second shift" (first summarized under this concept by Arlie Russell Hochschild and Anne Machung in *The Second Shift*), it refers to the burden is put on women to find a balance between housework and childcare.

A fourth way promotes the image of motherhood and charity. The royal family has a daughter: Princess Maria, who dies in 1874, at the age of almost 4 years, after she is contaminated with scarlet fever from an orphanage she visited with her mother. After the death of her only daughter, Elisabeth finds refuge in writing, now taking it as a mission. Although she had only one daughter, the queen wanted other children and, as a consort queen, she felt unfulfilled because she failed to provide a natural successor to the throne. In diary and other writings, she regrets this fact, but she will console somehow by 'throwing' herself into writing. Her role as a woman is ensured not only through maternity but also through her protective spirit, charity oriented, associated with maternity most often. It is known that she fought for the modernization of the Romanian society through education and the development of medicine and the construction of buildings dedicated to the care of the sick. Just as she served her country in the war, engaging in the Red Cross campaigns, walking personally to the camps to relieve the pain of the wounded. All of these are also projected into images.

Perhaps the best-known symbolic picture of Elisabeth's motherhood is the one carrying her own daughter in her back: a bright image that emanates fulfillment, joy, with a mother in a posture not only protective but also playful, happy.

Another maternal image is where the queen leans in, hugging a little girl with an instrument in her hand (like a mandolin) in Peleș Castle. The position of the queen's body, and the mimic indicate the protection and delight of being close to a child (about 10 years old), but at the same time suggests that she encourages the artistic development of the children. This can be seen in other photos in the Royal House collection, where children with different instruments are in different groups, sometimes accompanied by the queen, and always under her patronage and the royal court's (represented by the ladies of honour). Both postures (maternity and charity) are specific gender-driven roles. Beyond this role, Elizabeth of Romania seeks to consolidate her image of a protective woman of the nation, as a mother who seeks to develop what is most beautiful in her children, to

promote and to take pride in them, so that in turn to receive their honor, the gratitude of the whole nation. The next images say that:



Elisabeta împreună cu fiica sa Maria (numită în familie Itty, 1870-1874
Fotografie de Franz Duschek, București, Arhiva Principiară de Wied.



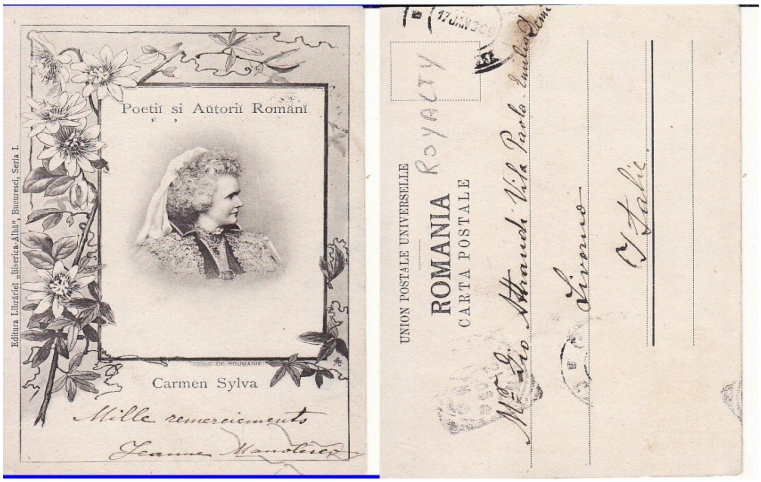
Queen Elizabeth of Romania completed her ruler husband by her literary work and the cultural and social work she had patronized. Considered to be the organizer of social assistance in Romania, Elisabeth established up to 1906, 14 philanthropic and national societies.

Another way promotes the image of the Queen-writer.
In the epoch, there circulated many postcards with Elizabeth's face, either in the queen position (with the headings of Her Majesty Queen of Romania, Queen Elizabeth), or in a writer's quest, or rather, queen writer (signed with her literary pseudonym).



A postcard imitating an Art Nouveau style lithography is signed by hand by Carmen Sylva and dated in 1907. As it can be seen, it has been put into circulation (the image is on a sales site dedicated to postcards with the royal family). Noticeable is the writing imprinted

on the bottom of the page, written in German, which translates: Original painted by Her Majesty, the Queen of Romania, in favor of the 'Queen Elisaveta Luminous Vatra' Foundation. Like in that photo: Another illustrate shows Elizabeth of Romania in the series 'Poets and Romanian authors', thus imposing the image of the queen writer: (the source: Internet)



So the queen builds and strengthens her image as a writer, especially after losing her daughter and the hope of having children. She escapes in writing, as evidenced by her testimonies, certain poems and photographs that were being circulated, some which, become postcards.

The Romanian Queen writes with a tendency, constructing her personal myth. Although contemporary with Alecsandri, Eminescu, Macedonski, Coşbuc and others, the creation of Carmen Sylva is a different aspect. Even if, on certain aspects she can be situated in populism, her written lines clearly show that she wants to promote and impose certain ideas. One of the sides of her writings is the moral teaching tendency, in which she seeks to bring light to the people, to offer instruction, morality, education.

Little is known that the queen used her image for commercial purposes as well. She appeared in the world's first advertising

campaign, a testimonial advertisement for a writing machine company, then in other advertisements.

The Romanian magazine *Historia* presents, in a number, the story of the advertisement of cigarettes bearing the name of the first queen of Romania. One of the authors discovered a 'Carmen Sylva' cigarette advertisement at a flea market in Berlin. We do not know very clearly who was producing the cigarettes, but from the international press we know something else: Elisabeth was among the crowned faces of Europe smoking, at a time when the custom was not related to the beautiful sex, on the contrary. The presence of the Old Kingdom's emblem removes any coincidence of names that a disbeliever might suspect. We do not know who the producer of these luxury cigarettes was yet. We know, however, that the queen appeared in several contemporary advertisements for various brands of writing machines not only in Germany.

An article in the New Zealand newspaper *The Star*, January 19, 1907, entitled *Woman's world*, sums up, in a few paragraphs, the activities of important women of the world at the time (Queen of Spain - a perfect musician, the queen of Italy - devoted to her husband and children, and so on). We read about the Queen of Romania: "Carmen Sylva, Queen of Romania, is always interesting, even if we talk about small things. She received a letter from a cigarette manufacturer in Bucharest these days, announcing that he named his best cigarettes 'Carmen Sylva'. The Queen went to the exhibition and wanted to see the cigarettes, and, at the request of the manufacturer, The Queen filled her purse with 'Carmen Sylva' cigarettes, motivating that she would take them to her husband and that "they will calm him while I read my poems" (source: National Library of New Zealand).

In the same digitized archive, including several New Zealand publications, we also come across the following statements: <Carmen Sylva>, the talented queen of Romania, writes her poems under their inspiration" (writes *Evening Post*, February 25, 1899) the queen of Romania ('Carmen Sylva') smokes continuously. She is a woman with increased nervous tension and has publicly stated that cigarettes have a calming effect on her, more than the solutions offered by doctors" (in *The Star*, February 7, 1908).

The queen's notoriety in Europe and the world begins to be slowly rediscovered and analyzed today. If at the beginning of the twentieth century journalist and writer Radu D. Rosetti met in northern Norway a local teacher who read part of the queen's literary work and two or three years later, this time in Punta Arenas, in southern Patagonia, a

feminist American woman was sympathetic to a Romanian colleague about the role of the queen in the emancipation of the woman in the country at the mouth of the Danube, after 1916 the queen's personality passed in unmerciful oblivion. It was not until the 1990s, when a certain kind of feminism grew in cultural discourse, that the Queen's poet name was more often taken into account and discussed. Thus, in the European anthologies, biographers of the young generation grant her research spaces (Gabriel Badea-Păun, the one who signs the monographic book, *Carmen Sylva, the amazing queen of Romania*, but also the one who cares for the editions of her writings, Silvia Irina Zimmermann etc.).

So, our first queen was recognized in his time as a writer, as an emblematic image of the royal house of Romania and of the European culture. Elisabeth Pauline Ottilie Luise zu Wied become the first our queen, Elisabeth of Romania, and our queen-writer, Carmen Sylva.

Her image remains an effigy of femininity, of the Romanian kingdom, of the development and emancipation of the Romanian nation and culture. She is the writer-queen of Romania.

REFERENCES

Badea-Păun, Gabriel (2003). *Carmen Sylva, uimitoarea regină Elisabeta a României* (*Carmen Sylva, the Amazing Queen of Romania*), Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House.

Eigler, Friederike Ursula and Susanne Kord (eds.). (1997). *The Feminist Encyclopedia of the German Literature*. Westport, Connecticut / London: Greenwood Press.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell, Anne Machung (eds.) (1989). *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. New York: Viking Penguin.

Sylva, Carmen (2012). *Poveştile unei regine* (translates to *Queen's Tales*). Bucharest, Curtea Veche Publishing.

Sylva Carmen (1901). *Marchen einer Königin*, 338-339, apud Zimmermann, S.I., 2013: 30

Sylva, Carmen (1922). *Geflusterte Worte* (*Whispered Words*), Regensburg: Wunderling 1922, vol. 1, "About patience" with the subtitle that appears in Zimmermann's 2013 version, "The problem of feminism".

Zimmermann, Silvia I. (2013). *The Poet Queen Carmen Sylva. Literature in the Service of the Crown*, preface by H.R.H. Prince Radu of Romania, translated from German by Monica Livia Grigore, with numerous illustrations from the Princely Archive of Wied in Neuwied, Bucharest, All Publishing House.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 330-335

Eternal Afterlife or Eternal After Sleep in Carmen Sylva's Poetry

SARA HUNZIKER
Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Bucharest
sara.she76@gmail.com

An encyclopedic personality by excellence, Carmen Sylva mastered various art fields, such as music, painting and literature. Not only a prodigious mind, Sylva's illustrious intellect was doubled by a remarkable personality. The most famous Romanian composer, George Enescu, who, as a young student had benefited of her generous patronship, was characterizing her as "an angelic woman, a being with an aula, surpassing by far the ordinary people and spreading around light and kindness." (George Enescu apud. Caracostea: 506, *my translation*).

Author of numerous poems, short-stories, essays, novels and autobiographical writings, Carmen Sylva is also known for having been a pioneer in many fields such as art, history, education, politics, etc. Still, taking into account that she openly proclaimed her Lutheran creeds in an orthodox country, could she be considered a pioneer in a religious field too?

Well, while the mainstream religious and philosophical trend accepted in Romania at that time considered that there was something of the individual's being that survived death and continued living, either in a bright happy afterlife – also known as Heaven, for the good ones – or in a never-ending tormenting fire – the most feared Hell –, Sylva majestically challenged these creeds by openly making known her Lutheran tenets according to which the Holy Scripture stayed the supreme authority in all matters of faith.

An excerpt from her diary, *The Memory Shrine*, reveals the way she related with the mystery of death since a very young age. For instance, the traditional religious view on the matter is that the dead ones have to be placed on a catafalque in a quite mystic environment,

surrounded by incense and candles and no one has to intrude that overwhelming silence, as the dead ones are ready for their journey to Purgatory and every word that is uttered louder than a whisper might hamper that religious rite of the big passing.

Contrary to this traditional view on the funeral rites, Sylva describes in her diary a quite different picture. The poetess is recalling being with her best teenage friend, Marie von Bibra, and attending the funeral rite before the burial of her best friend's sibling: "It was on a cold dull May day- how unlike the May mornings of poetry and legend! – that I stood with her beside the coffin in which her brother had just been laid, and together we afterwards wove the garlands that went with him to the grave." (Sylva, *Memory Shrine*: 244–245)

The death of Berthold, the favorite sibling of her best friend, Marie, and one of the poetess's own closest playmates, was to leave an undeletable imprint in her soul. However, far from being fearful or nervous by a mystic passage of their friend, the two girls express their profound grief but behave as in the presence of someone who is only asleep. It is a serene spring day and the two teenagers discuss the sad episode, take a close look at the deceased one and weave flower garlands for his funeral. In spite of an all-pervasive grief, there is no trace there of the multitude of superstitions spread by the traditional religions and that build a kind of unbreakable and otherworldly wall between the dead and the living ones.

Also, in *The Carpenter*, one of Carmen Sylva's most touching poems, as the mother moves to her eternal house in the graveyard, the poetess is flooded with the sense of the complete, fragile and fleeting senselessness of the human condition:

My lot grew lighter day by day;
The children grew apace;
I built a little house last May--
No palace like that place.
(Sylva: *The Carpenter*)

After having built a splendid house, whose matchless beauty cannot be expressed in words, after having strived together with her mate for a lifetime and grew their children, the mother has to be laid in a different type of house made by 'the undertaker', and not by the carpenter. Her daughter's heart is broken and suffers for the tragic loss in as much that she can't even pray near the corpse of her dead mother. It is only the pastor the one who, in a formal loud tone, says

the grace. Regrettably, there is not too much left after a lifetime of toil.
After visiting her childhood house for the last time, where her mother also used to live, the daughter decides to sell it.

Fast barred is every window-blind-
I care not what is said;
Yes, sell the house! I do not mind
The mother, she is dead.
(Sylva: *The Carpenter*)

Everything that could remind to the living ones about the deceased mother is estranged. Material things do not have any sense without the person who once animated them. Carmen Sylva's view on the senselessness of the human condition is somehow resonant with that of the *Holy Scripture* in 1 Timothy 6: 7: "For we have brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out."

Carmen Sylva's vision on the implacability of death is pervaded by bitterness. She sees death as an all-annihilating process that has the power to delete everything, even the memories of those who passed away.

A similar disturbing image on the inexorability of death is rendered in Carmen's Sylva's other poem: *In the Rushing Wind*. Here the wind becomes a metaphor for the life that passes too quickly.
The colors of the leaves are rapidly changing like in a set of surrealist paintings that alternate in a dream-like state. As they already lived their lives, the golden leaves have to fly away, like the broken wings of butterflies.

Love has also lasted for a very short summer period and is now gone with the leaves that are remorselessly leaving the branches of the trees, leaving them bare and brown. They join piles of countless other rotten leaves that are getting degraded on the earth. No one can tell now what they used to look like or what was their shape and color. Youth and the passion and consummated love are also forgotten in the abyss of oblivion:

The wind hath whirled the leaves from off the tree.
The leaves were yellow, they had lived their time,
And lie a golden heap or fly away,
As if the butterflies had left their wings
Behind, when love's short summertime had gone,
And killed them.
(Sylva: *In the Rushing Wind*)

A metaphor for Time itself, the annihilating, all-destroying wind mercilessly cuts down the heads of the trees and uproots them. Just like in *The Carpenter's Song*, the unforgiving time is also erasing any memories about those who strived, loved, hated or just lived there.

Unlike in the traditional mainstream religious views, we do not find here any trace of eternal punishment for those who sinned.

In fact, the stanza is strongly reminiscent of the *Book of Ecclesiastes*, chapter 9, where King Solomon is castigating the futility of the human destiny that absurdly ends and permanently blacks out any reminiscence of those who once strived hard to make a difference, to achieve a goal, to make a big name for themselves, just as well as of those who did not take the pain to be 'the main actors' in their own lives: *Ecclesiastes 9*:

3 This is a distressing thing that happens under the sun: Because all have the same outcome, (...)

5. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing at all, nor do they have any more reward, because all memory of them is forgotten.

6. Also, their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished, and they have no portion anymore to time indefinite in anything that has to be done under the sun. (NWT: *Book of Ecclesiastes*)

The image of an all-engulfing blind and inescapable Death, is reiterated in many other poems by Carmen Sylva, such as for instance in her poem *Pământ* (*Mother Earth*, my translation). The Earth awfully suffers when it has to receive back its untimely dead children. The cradle of life, from which God is said to have taken the original components in order to create the first human creature, the Earth keeps on burying the corpses of the immaturely dead children, excruciatingly shedding bitter tears for it.

What an awful pain in your soul
Oh, Earth, you bear
As you keep on burying dead kids
For thousands of years.
(Sylva: *Mother Earth*, my translation)

Here, the Divinity is begged to intervene and have pity for the Earth, who becomes like a real mother, powerlessly embracing all the dead kids at her breast.

We do not find anywhere in the poem the popular tenet according to which the children who die are in fact called by God to live next to him in Heaven and to be turned into angels. Rather, death is seen as the end of existence.

Permanent biographical obsession, the haunting image of the dead child stays like a tattoo on the soul of the Romanian Queen, being tragically reflected in most part of her full of sensitivity poetry. *In The Rushing Wind*, the green and soft corn is smiling at the sun, growing in a child-like ignorance of what lays ahead of it. In a similar manner, the human breath- the robe of Destiny- is sweeping on, sweeping past, till the day when it falls into an unconscious dreamless sleep.

Contrary to the widespread religious belief of the time, according to which, after death, the deceased ones enjoy a happy afterlife in a mysterious heavenly land, Sylva sees death as an unconscious dreamless sleep:

The breath- the robe of Destiny-
Sweeps on, sweeps past, and never lists that hell
And heaven have awaked, in shrieking anguish,
But blows the clouds away, laughs at the sun,
And falls into unconscious, dreamless sleep.
(Sylva: *In the Rushing Wind*)

The last verse of the poem echoes again the words of *the Ecclesiastes*, who in chapter 9, verses 9 and 10 strongly urges its readers to enjoy life to the full, as they still have the gift of living, since in the grave, there is no memory, no knowledge, no reward and no any further activity: *Ecclesiastes 9*: 9 Enjoy life with your beloved wife all the days of your futile life, which He has given you under the sun, all the days of your futility, for that is your lot in life and in your hard work at which you toil under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do with all your might, for there is no work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the Grave, where you are going. (NWT: *Book of Ecclesiastes*)

However, though doubtlessly based on the sacred texts of the *Holy Scripture*, Sylva's Lutheran beliefs on what happens after death do not seem to include anything about the hope of resurrection given to those who die and often mentioned in the same book she seemed to have known very well. Didn't she agree with this tenet? Or was she too sad and embittered to mention in her poetry anything about a brighter perspective? The discussion stays open. We trust though that a future article might find an answer to these questions.

REFERENCES

Caracostea, Dumitru (1943). "Dinastie și creativitate" ("Dynasty and Creativity"). *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, anul V, no 12, 483-504.

King James Bible.
https://www.jw.org/en/publications/bible/king-jamesversion/books/

NWT, New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.
https://www.jw.org/en/publications/bible/nwt/books

Stackelberg, Natalie (1886). *The Life of Carmen Sylva*. Nebelberg: Carl Winter.

Sylva, Carmen (1888). *Songs of Toil*. New York: Stokes and Brother.

Sylva, Carmen (1911). *Memory Shrine*. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

Sylva, Carmen (1904). *Sweet Hours*. London: R. A. Everett and Co.

Zimmern, Helen (1884). "Carmen Sylva, Queen of Romania." *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*.

*** "Rossetti, Christina Georgiana." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
https://www.britannica.com

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 336-349

The Difficult Path of Women: The Translation of a Short Story by Carmen Sylva and its framing in "An Investigation about Forgotten Women"

SUSANA VENTURA
University of São Paulo
enturarosas@gmail.com

In the scope of the research that I am currently carrying out with the Program of Graduate Studies in Aesthetics and Art History at the University of São Paulo, the short story "The Queen of Ants," by Carmen Sylva is part of a corpus of short stories written by women who do not yet have a critical reception in Brazil, partially due to the lack of translations in the country and mostly due to editorial deletion of works of female authorship that were not enshrined by successive foreign editions that are, as a rule, models for new editions. Like this, I translated this interesting and unusual tale, in which the most feminine virtues praised by the West turn against the protagonist in order to determine her a terrible fate and it will be examined in dialogue and counterpoint in the future with tales by Juliana Horatia Ewing (1841-1885), Laura Gonzenbach (1842-1878), Mary de Morgan (1850-1907) and Rokheya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932).

I would like to present the translation and signal that what stands out from the set analyzed and the difficult path taken by the protagonists of the stories, women confronted with the most diverse situations and that act incessantly to improve their living conditions. With very different writing projects, short stories chosen by these five writers show peculiar ways of living challenging realities and that sometimes place them in front of limit situations.

The investigation is in process, but I believe that the dissemination of the translation of "The Ant," can immediately collaborate to expand knowledge around the work of Carmen Sylva.

"The Ant" is a literary fairy tale written by Queen Elisabeth of Romania using her pen name, Carmen Sylva. Originally published in

the 1883 volume *Poveștile Peleșului* (*The Tales of Peleș*), the story was later included in the 1892 English-language collection *Legends from River and Mountain*, translated by Alma Strettell(1856–1939), a British poet, translator, and literary editor**.** She played a significant role in introducing Romanian folklore and literature to English-speaking audiences in the late 19th century. Her most prominent contribution was the English translation of *Legends from River and Mountain* (1892), a collection of Romanian folk tales authored by Carmen Sylva. Through her sensitive and poetic rendering, Strettell preserved the lyrical and mythical qualities of the original stories while making them accessible to a wider literary public.

In addition to her translations, Alma Strettell was part of the broader Victorian literary and cultural milieu, contributing poems and articles to journals and anthologies. She was respected for her refined literary sensibility and her interest in spiritual, folkloric, and cultural narratives from across Europe. Strettell's work exemplifies a unique collaboration between royalty and intellectual women, and her translations remain a testament to the cross-cultural literary exchanges of the time.

The story tells of Viorica, a young, hardworking girl who is kidnapped by a mysterious swarm of ants and taken underground. As she serves the Ant Queen, her patience, kindness, and selflessness eventually lead to her release and reunion with her beloved. The tale emphasizes the virtues of labor, loyalty, and love, and is steeped in Romanian folklore and natural symbolism.

"The Ant" (*Furnica*) by *Carmen Sylva* blends literary storytelling with motifs rooted in Romanian folklore and mythological symbolism. The tale revolves around Viorica, a humble village girl whose virtue and industriousness attract the attention of a mystical race of ants. In traditional Romanian folklore, animals and insects often act as messengers between the human and supernatural worlds. The ant—small, communal, and tireless—symbolizes hard work, perseverance, and a connection to the earth. By personifying ants as an underground society ruled by a queen, Sylva reimagines this natural creature as a guardian of moral order, rewarding the virtuous and punishing the idle. This transformation echoes mythological narratives where characters descend into a hidden world, undergo trials, and emerge transformed—a structure reminiscent of classical myths like those of Persephone or Psyche.

The story also reflects archetypal patterns found in European and Balkan oral traditions, where young women are often tested through

service or captivity in magical realms. Viorica's journey underground represents not only a physical descent but a symbolic rite of passage, common in mythological cycles. Her time among the ants resembles the folkloric motif of the "initiation in the other world," where a heroine earns spiritual or emotional insight through suffering and loyalty. Upon her return, she is no longer merely a village girl but a figure of mythic stature—blessed by the supernatural for her patience and purity. Carmen Sylva's reinterpretation of these folkloric structures serves not only as an homage to Romanian peasant traditions but also as a subtle critique of vanity and greed, celebrating instead the quiet heroism of simplicity, love, and inner strength.

Furnica
Carmen Sylva
Tradução de Susana Ventura

Era uma vez uma bela donzela chamada Viorica. Tinha cabelos como ouro, olhos como um céu azul, faces como cravos vermelhos e lábios como cerejas. Seu corpo era tão gracioso como são as águas de um rio fluindo. Todos ficariam gratos por estar ao lado de tão maravilhosa donzela, não apenas por sua beleza mas também por sua grande diligência. Quando ela ia à fonte com seu cântaro na cabeça, carregava sua roca presa ao cinto e fiava enquanto se abastecia. Ela podia tecer também, e ainda bordar como uma fada. Suas blusas eram as mais belas de todo o vilarejo, tecidas em linhas negras e vermelhas e com uma larga faixa bordada ricamente na altura dos ombros. Ela havia adornado sua saia e até mesmo suas meias dominicais com flores bordadas da mesma forma. Parecia que suas pequenas mãos nunca tinham descanso. No campo e nas veredas ela fazia tantos trabalhos quanto os de casa e todos os rapazes voltavam seus olhos para a bela Viorica que seria um dia uma renomada dona de casa. Mas ela nunca olhou para eles e nem podia escutar falar em casamento. Viorica dizia que não tinha tempo para isso, pois devia zelar por sua mãe idosa. Ouvindo isso, sua mãe franzia o cenho e dizia que pensava que um genro poderia ser uma ajuda adicional. Mas isso perturbava a jovem, que perguntava se ambas não eram suficientes para levar a vida, uma vez que a mãe sugeria a necessidade de ajuda para a casa.
- Os homens fazem pouco além de trazer mais trabalho para nós – dizia Viorica – pois ainda devemos fiar, costurar e tecer para eles como o fazemos para nós mesmas, e desse jeito nunca acharemos tempo para finalizar o trabalho nos campos.

Então a mãe suspirava e pensava no filho que havia morrido, para quem ela havia tecido tão belas camisas e as lavado até que ficassem tão brancas que todas as donzelas do vilarejo não podiam tirar seus olhos dele. Ela nunca havia sentido que isso era muito trabalho. Mas as mães são assim, o que elas não fazem sem se sentir sobrecarregadas?

Mas chegou a hora em que Viorica teve que admitir que sua mãe estava certa em querer um genro. Parece que algo a avisava de que a mãe não estaria mais por muito tempo neste mundo. Ela começava a falhar e todo o amor de sua filha não foi capaz de mantê-la sobre a terra. A bela donzela teve de fechar os olhos de sua amada mãe e então se sentou sozinha em sua pequena casa. Pela primeira vez suas mãos ficaram paradas em seu colo. Para quem, realmente, deveria trabalhar agora? Ela não tinha mais ninguém.

Um dia, quando estava sentada e olhando tristemente o horizonte, ela vislumbrou algo comprido e negro se movendo em sua direção. Eis que era uma longa procissão de formigas! A fila avançava pela estrada sem que se visse seu início e ninguém poderia dizer a distância de que provinham. Mas pararam e formaram um enorme círculo ao redor de Viorica, e algumas delas deram um passo adiante e falaram:

- Nós a conhecemos bem, Viorica, e sempre admiramos sua capacidade de trabalho que a aproxima de nós mesmas – uma coisa que não vemos muito em humanos. Nós sabemos também que agora você está sozinha no mundo, então convidamos você para ser nossa rainha. Iremos construir um palácio para você, maior e mais belo do que a maior casa que você jamais viu. Apenas você deve nos prometer que jamais voltará a viver com os humanos e que ficará conosco por toda a sua vida.

- Ficarei com vocês com prazer – respondeu Viorica – pois não tenho nada mais que me prenda aqui, exceto o túmulo de minha mãe. Eu quero visitá-lo e trazer flores, vinho e bolo, para rezar por sua alma.

- Você poderá visitar o túmulo de sua mãe, mas não deverá falar com ninguém no caminho, do contrário estará sendo infiel a nós e nossa vingança será terrível.

Então Viorica foi com as formigas por uma longo, longo caminho até que encontraram o lugar que pareceu mais propício para a construção do seu palácio. Viorica pode constatar como as formigas eram muito mais habilidosas do que ela mesma. Como elas foram capazes de construir um tal edifício em tão pouco tempo? Havia galerias, uma após a outra e elas levavam a espaçosos átrios e, para além deles, aos berçários onde as formigas recém-nascidas ficavam e eram cuidadas. Elas eram levadas para tomar sol e trazidas rapidamente de volta para os berçários, tão logo ameaçava chover. Os quartos eram belamente atapetados com pétalas de flores. As paredes eram recobertas por ramos de pinheiro e Viorica aprendeu a fiar teias de aranha, a partir das quais dosséis e cobertores foram feitos.

Os prédios cresciam e ficavam mais e mais altos, mas o quarto que foi preparado para Viorica era mais bonito do que qualquer um com que ela pudesse ter sonhado. Muitos corredores levavam a ele, de modo que ela podia receber mensagens sobre todos os assuntos que a interessavam com grande rapidez. Os pisos desses corredores eram cobertos com pétalas de papoula, e assim os pés da rainha repousavam sobre puro carmim. As portas eram feitas de pétalas de rosas e as dobradiças eram de fios de teias de aranha, sendo sempre abertas sem ruído. O piso do quarto era coberto por um grosso e aveludado carpete de edelweiss no qual os pezinhos rosados de Viorica se

afundavam suavemente, fazendo com que ela não precisasse de sapatos ali. As formigas haviam sido bastante desajeitadas e tinham trazido o carpete de flores em peças. As paredes tinham sido ornadas com uma tapeçaria inteligentemente tecida com cravos, lírios do vale e amores perfeitos, e essas flores eram constantemente renovadas, para que seu frescor e perfume fossem permanentemente inebriantes. O teto era forrado por um tecido entremeado por botões de lírio. A confecção da cama levara semanas de trabalho de uma equipe de diligentes formiguinhas e era feita de pólen de flores, o mais suave que elas puderam encontrar e era recoberta por roupa de cama feita dos tecidos que Viorica teceu a partir das teias de aranha. Quando Viorica deitava-se ali para dormir ela ficava tão adorável que as estrelas teriam caído do céu se a tivessem visto. Mas isso não era possível pois as formigas haviam construído os aposentos dela no mais secreto e bem guardado espaço para garantir enciumadas o perfeito descanso e bem estar de sua rainha. Mesmo elas não ousavam observá-la em seu sono.

A vida no formigueiro dificilmente podia ser mais feliz e boa do que era. Elas pareciam orgulhosas e ocupadas em realizar tudo o que pudessem para se superarem diante de sua industriosa rainha. Eram tão rápidas quanto a luz ao executarem qualquer comando, embora a rainha nunca desse muitas ordens ao mesmo tempo nem pedisse nada fora do razoável, mas sim falasse com voz tão gentil que parecia que, ao invés de dar ordens, estivesse apenas oferecendo sugestões ou dando amigáveis conselhos, e seus olhos expressavam uma gratidão solar.

Com frequência as formigas diziam que tinham abrigado o próprio sol dentro de casa e se congratulavam por sua boa sorte. Haviam construído um terraço especial para Viorica onde ela podia usufruir de ar puro e luz do sol quando seu quarto lhe parecesse um espaço muito confinado e dali ela podia observar o progresso do edifício que já estava tão alto quanto uma montanha.
Um dia ela estava sentada em seu quarto bordando um vestido, sobre o qual havia costurado asas de borboletas; ela usava fios de um bicho da seda, que as formigas haviam trazido para ela. Nada a não ser seus dedos super treinados teriam sido capazes de deslindar aquela tarefa. De repente, houve um tumulto na base da montanha, o som de vozes subiu até ela, e, num momento, todo o reino estava posto em alarme, e várias súditas estavam diante da rainha gritando:

- Estão destruindo nosso palácio! Homens maus estão colocando nossa morada abaixo. Duas, não, três galerias foram derrubadas e uma quarta está ameaçada. O que faremos?

- É tudo? – perguntou Viorica calmamente – Eu vou dizer para que parem com isso e, em alguns dias, as galerias estarão novamente em pé.
Ela correu através do labirinto de galerias e saiu em seu terraço. Olhando para baixo ela vislumbrou um jovem esplêndido que acabava de desmontar de seu cavalo e, com alguns seguidores estava colocando o formigueiro abaixo com espada e lança. Mas, quando ela apareceu eles se detiveram imediatamente e o nobre jovem ficou parado, olhando para ela com olhos vidrados em sua figura radiosa. O cabelo dourado de Viorica caia em cachos até seus pés e seus olhos

brilhavam como estrelas. Ela baixou-os por um momento ante o olhar do jovem mas logo os levantou novamente, abriu sua boca rosada e gritou em tom imperativo:

- Quem são vocês que colocam essas mãos rudes em meu reino?

- Perdoe-nos, bela dama! – respondeu o jovem – E tão certo quanto eu sou um cavaleiro e filho de rei eu serei seu mais zeloso defensor. Como eu poderia adivinhar que uma fada – não, uma deusa! – reinava aqui?

- Não, obrigada – respondeu Viorica – Não preciso de nenhuma proteção a não ser a de minhas próprias súditas, e tudo o que peço é que nenhum humano ponha os pés no meu reino.

Com essas palavras ela desapareceu e foi como se a montanha a tivesse engolido. Assim, ninguém de fora pode ver como centenas de formigas beijavam seus pés e a escoltavam em triunfo de volta ao seu quarto, onde ela retomou calmamente seu trabalho como se nada tivesse acontecido. Do lado de fora, diante da montanha, o filho do rei ficou parado, como num sonho, por várias horas e não podia ser convencido a remontar seu cavalo. Continuou ali, pensando que a bela rainha podia reaparecer, mesmo que fosse para olhar feio e dizer palavras zangadas, ao menos ele poderia vê-la uma vez mais. Mas ele só viu formigas e mais outras formigas numa fila interminável, ocupadas em reparar os estragos que seu excesso de energia e exuberância juvenil haviam ocasionado. Ele poderia havê-las pisoteado com raiva e impaciência, pois elas pareciam ignorar ou não compreender suas perguntas e passavam diante dele como que tomadas por um recém descoberto senso de segurança. Por fim ele montou seu cavalo, muito a contragosto. Pensando e planejando como podia ganhar a adorável donzela cuja visão seus olhos jamais esqueceriam, ele adentrou a floresta e cavalgou pela noite para grande descontentamento de sua comitiva que desejava que tanto o formigueiro quanto a donzela fossem para o diabo quando pensavam na mesa da ceia e nos copos de vinho que estavam à espera deles há já tantas horas.

Viorica foi descansar mais tarde que suas súditas todas. Tinha por hábito visitar sozinha o berçário e olhar se as caminhas estavam suficientemente macias e então ela foi de ambiente em ambiente, levantando as cortinas de flores uma após a outra, com um vagalume pendurado em seus dedos e parecia enternecida após o curto passeio. Então voltou para seu quarto e dispensou todos os vagalumes que tinham iluminado seu trabalho por tantas horas. Apenas manteve um consigo, até que fosse se deitar. Normalmente, ela caía imediatamente no sono mais profundo e tranquilo, mas nessa noite ela se virou sem repouso de um lado para o outro, passando as mãos pelos cabelos, sentando-se na cama e depois voltando a se deitar durante toda a noite e se sentindo com tanto calor – tanto calor! Nunca antes ela havia sentido uma falta de ar em seus domínios, mas agora ela teria corrido para o ar livre se não temesse dar mau exemplo às súditas. Não tivesse sido ela obrigada, sob muita pressão das súditas, a dar mais que uma sentença dura, que banir algumas formigas do reino por terem se desviado em passeios proibidos e até condenado à morte, com o coração partido e ainda tido que assistir à morte de algumas?

Na manhã seguinte ela se levantou antes das demais e surpreendeu-as mostrando uma das galerias que construíra sozinha. Sem dúvida ela mesma não tinha se dado conta de que enquanto construía lançava, vez por outras, olhares para a floresta e tinha ficado atenta a ruídos que vinham de lá.

Ela acabava de chegar de volta ao seu quarto quando algumas das formigas correram até ela aterrorizadas, gritando:

- O homem mau que veio ontem voltou e está cavalgando ao redor de nossa montanha!

- Apenas deixem-no! – respondeu a rainha Viorica, bem calma – Ele não nos fará nenhum mal.

Mas o coração de Viorica, a doce donzela, batia tão rápido que ela mal conseguia respirar.

Uma estranha inquietude tinha se abatido sobre ela. Ela andava pelo palácio mais do era seu hábito, sempre pensando se as formigas-bebê não estavam tempo suficiente à luz do sol e carregando-as pessoalmente de volta ao palácio, para depois fazer o contrário rapidamente e dar ordens algo contraditórias às demais. As formigas não sabiam o que fazer para atendê-la e dobraram seus esforços para realizar todas as tarefas rapidamente e bem. Elas a surpreenderam com um átrio novo e deslumbrante mas Viorica mal reparou nele e mal elogiou o trabalho realizado.

O som dos cascos dos cavalos cercava a montanha dia e noite, e por muitos dias Viorica não saiu ao terraço. Uma necessidade desesperada de conviver com humanos, que ela jamais havia sentido, cresceu dentro dela de repente. Ela pensou em seu vilarejo natal, no jardim, em sua pequena casa, em sua mãe e no seu túmulo que ela não havia voltado a visitar.

Após alguns dias ela anunciou às súditas que havia decidido visitar o túmulo da mãe e a isso as formigas perguntaram, alarmadas, se ela não estava mais feliz com elas, já que havia voltado a pensar em sua casa novamente.

- Oh, não – respondeu Viorica – Eu apenas quero ir por algumas horas e estarei de volta entre vocês antes do cair da noite.

Ela recusou qualquer companhia, mas uma ou duas formigas a seguiram, disfarçadamente, de longe.

Tudo lhe parecia muito mudado e ela pensou que deveria ter estado longe por muito tempo. Ela começou a se dar conta de quanto tempo havia se passado para que as formigas construíssem a grande montanha onde agora se abrigavam e disse a si mesma que possivelmente haviam se passado anos. O túmulo de sua mãe não pode mais ser encontrado. O lugar estava tão tomado pela grama e pelas raízes que Viorica vagou pelo jardim da igreja chorando, e também ali ela não era mais que uma estranha. A noite chegou e Viorica ainda procurava pelo túmulo que não era capaz de encontrar. Então, bem ao seu lado, ela escutou a voz do filho do rei. Ela tentou escapar mas ele a segurou rapidamente e falou com ela sobre o grande amor que sentia com tão doces e tocantes palavras que ela ficou parada com a cabeça baixa, escutando-o falar de amor e de amizade. Ela só se lembrou que não era uma pobre órfã, mas sim uma rainha esquecida de suas obrigações quando a noite estava já escura e foi quando também se lembrou de que as formigas haviam-na proibido de ter

contato com os humanos. Ela então começou a caminhar e deixou o filho do rei para trás. Mas ele a perseguiu dizendo palavras cativantes até chegarem aos pés da montanha. Ali ela pediu e depois implorou para que ele a deixasse, mas ele consentiu em partir apenas quando ela prometeu encontrá-lo novamente na tarde seguinte.

Ela deslizou para dentro sem fazer ruído, intuindo os caminhos pelas galerias e olhando com medo para trás pois lhe parecia estar ouvindo o som de patinhas que caminhavam rápidas e também vozes que sussurravam por toda parte. Sem dúvida que se tratava das batidas ansiosas do seu coração pois assim que ela parou, tudo ficou silencioso. Por fim, ela alcançou seu quarto e afundou exausta em seu sofá, mas nenhum sono reparador fechou suas pálpebras. Ela sentia que havia quebrado sua promessa e quem agora a respeitaria se sua palavra não era mais sagrada? Ela lutava com seu orgulho que se revoltava contra qualquer segredo e então ela soube que conhecia as formigas bem demais: seus ódios implacáveis, suas punições cureis. Muitas vezes ela levantou o tronco e apoiada no cotovelo pôs-se a escutar, e a cada vez lhe pareceu escutar os barulhos apressados de milhares de patinhas, como se toda a montanha estivesse viva.

Quando ela sentiu que a manhã se aproximava, ela abriu a cortina de pétalas de rosas para sair ao ar livre. Mas, para seu espanto, ela encontrou a porta completamente pregada por agulhas de pinheiro! Ela tentou outra porta, e depois uma terceira, até que tentou todas elas. Em vão – todas as portas estavam bloqueadas. Então ela chamou alto, e oh, as formigas apareceram em hordas, se esgueirando por incontáveis e pequenos orifícios.

- Eu preciso ir para fora – disse Viorica num tom de comando.

- Não – responderam as formigas – Não podemos deixá-la ir ou iremos perdê-la.

- Vocês não me obedecem mais?

- Sim, em todas as coisas menos nessa. Pisoteie-nos para nos punir se você desejar. Estamos prontas para morrer para o bem de nossa comunidade e para salvar a honra de nossa rainha.

Viorica abaixou a cabeça e lágrimas brotaram de seus olhos. Ela implorou às formigas para restituírem sua liberdade, mas as teimosas criaturinhas ficaram em silêncio e logo ela se viu sozinha naqueles átrios escuros.

Oh, como Viorica chorou e lutou e puxou seus belos cabelos. Então ela começou a tentar cavar um buraco com seus dedos macios, mas tudo o que ela cavava era reposto tão rápido que finalmente ela, exausta, se atirou no chão em desespero. As formigas trouxeram-lhe as mais doces flores e néctares e mel para matar sua sede, mas todos os seus lamentos ficaram sem resposta.
Com medo que seus lamentos pudessem ser ouvidos do lado de fora, as formigas construíram mais e mais até que a montanha ficasse tão alta quanto o pico Vârful cu Dor, e eles chamaram sua montanha de Furnica, ou ´a Formiga´. O filho do rei há muito desistiu de cavalgar ao redor da montanha, mas, no silêncio da noite, pode-se ainda ouvir o som do choro de Viorica...

…….

Furnica (*The Ant*)

There was once a beautiful maiden, Viorica by name; she had hair like gold, and eyes like the blue sky, and cheeks like carnations, and lips like cherries, and her body was as lithe as the rushes that sway by the riverside. All men rejoiced when they beheld this fair maiden, yet not so much on account of her beauty as because of her wondrous diligence.

When she went to the spring with her pitcher on her head she carried her distaff in her girdle and spun the while. She could weave too, and embroider like a fairy. Her shifts were the finest in the whole village, wrought with black and red stitches, and with wide seams of broidery on the shoulders. She had adorned her petticoat, and even her Sunday hose, with flowers wrought in the same way. In short, it seemed as though the little hands could never rest; in field and meadow she did as much work as in the house; and all the lads turned their eyes upon the fair Viorica, who should one day be such a notable housewife.

But she never turned her eyes toward them; she would hear no talk of marriage; there was plenty of time for that, she said, and she had to care for her old mother. Thereupon the mother would bend her brows, and say that, for her part, she thought a stalwart son-in-law would be but a prop the more. But this troubled the little daughter, who would ask whether she were of no more use at all, that the mother should be so set upon having a man into the house.

"The men do but make a deal more work for us," said she; "for we must spin and stitch and weave for them as well as ourselves, and then we never find time to get the field-labor done."

Then the mother would sigh, and think of her dead son, for whom she had made so many fine linen shirts, and washed them so dazzlingly white that all the village maidens gazed their eyes out, looking after him.

It had never been too much trouble for her--but then, what will not a mother do, indeed, and never be weary!

The hour came when Viorica had to own that her mother had been right to wish for a son-in-law, even as though something had warned her that she was not much longer for this world. She began to fail, and all her daughter's love was powerless to hold her upon earth. The fair maiden had to close the beloved eyes; and now she was all alone in the little house. For the first time, her hands lay idle in her lap. For whom, indeed, should she work now? There was no one left to her.

One day, as she sat upon her threshold and gazed sadly forth, she sawsomething long and black moving across the ground towards her; and, behold! it was an endless procession of ants. No one could have told whence the creeping host had travelled, it reached so far into the distance. But now it halted, forming into a mighty circle round about

Viorica, and one or two of the ants stepped forth and spoke thus:

"Well do we know thee, Viorica, and oft have we admired thy industry, which we may liken to our own; and that is a thing we seldom notice among mortal men. We know, too, that thou art now alone in the world, and so we pray thee to go hence with us and be our Queen. We will build thee a palace,

finer and larger than the largest house thou hast ever seen. Only one thing thou must promise--that thou wilt never return to dwell among men, but stay with us faithfully all thy life long."

"I will stay with you gladly," replied Viorica, "for I have nothing more to hold me here except my mother's grave; but that I must still visit, and bring flowers, wine, and cake to it, and pray there for her soul."

"Thou shalt visit thy mother's grave; only thou must speak with no man on the way, else wilt thou be unfaithful to us, and our revenge shall be terrible."

So Viorica went forth with the ants, a far, far way, until they reached the spot that seemed most fitting for the building of her palace. Then Viorica saw how far the ants surpassed her in skill. How could she have raised up such a building in so short a time? There were galleries, one above another, leading into spacious halls, and farther yet, into the innermost recesses where the pupæ, or infant ants, dwelt, that were carried out whenever the sun shone, and brought quickly under shelter again as often as there was a threatening of rain. The chambers were daintily decked with the petals of flowers, fastened on to the walls with pine needles; and Viorica learnt to spin cobwebs, out of which canopies and coverlets were fashioned. Higher and higher grew the building, but the apartment that was prepared for Viorica was more beautiful than any vision of her dreams. Many galleries led to it, so that she could hold communication with all her subjects with the greatest rapidity. The floors of these galleries were laid over with poppy-leaves, so that the feet of the Queen should rest on nothing but purple. The doors were of rose-leaves, and the hinges were spiders' threads, so that they could open and shut noiselessly. The floor of the room was covered with a thick velvety carpet of edelweiss, into which Viorica's rosy feet sank softly down; for she needed to wear no shoes here, they would have been far too clumsy, and would have trodden the flower-carpets to pieces. The walls were hung with a tapestry cunningly woven of carnations, lilies of the valley, and forget-me-nots, and these flowers were constantly renewed, so that their freshness and perfume were always entrancing. The ceiling had a tent-like covering of lily-leaves stretched across it. The bed had taken the diligent little ants many weeks to prepare; it was all made of pollen, the softest they could find, and a cobweb of Viorica's spinning was spread over it. When she lay there asleep she was so lovely that the stars would have fallen from heaven, could they have seen her. But the ants had built her room in the most secret recesses of the palace, and guarded their beloved Queen jealously and well; even they themselves scarcely dared to look upon her in her sleep.

Life in the ant-hill could scarce have been made happier or fairer than it was. One and all, they took a pride in doing the most they could, and trying to surpass each other in pleasing their industrious Queen.

They were as quick as lightning in carrying out her every command; for she never gave too many orders at once, and never unreasonable ones; but her gentle voice sounded ever as though it were but giving some friendly advice or opinion, and her eyes expressed her thanks in a sunny glance. The ants often declared that they had the sunshine dwelling within their house, and

exulted over their good fortune. They had made a special terrace for Viorica, where she could enjoy air and sunlight when her room grew too confined; and from thence she could observe the progress of the building, which was already as high as many a mountain. One day she sat in her room embroidering a dress, upon which she had sewn butterflies' wings with the threads from a silkworm that the ants had brought in for her. None but her dainty fingers could have accomplished such a task. All on a sudden there was a tumult round about her mountain; the sound of voices rang forth, and in a moment all her little kingdom was thrown into alarm, and her subjects came breathlessly crowding about their Queen and crying, "They are overthrowing our house; evil men are trampling it down. Two, nay, three galleries have fallen in, and the next is threatened. What shall we do?"

"Is that all?" asked Viorica calmly. "I will bid them stay their course, and in a few days the galleries will be built up again." She hurried through the labyrinth of galleries, and appeared suddenly upon her terrace. Looking down, she beheld a splendid youth, who had just dismounted from his horse, and was engaged with some of his followers in turning up the ant-hill with sword and lance. But when she appeared they all stopped short, and the noble youth stood shielding his dazzled eyes with his hand as he gazed upon the radiant figure in its shining draperies. Viorica's golden hair fell in waves to her very feet, a delicate colour flooded her cheeks, and her eyes shone like stars. She dropped them, indeed, a moment before the young man's glance; but soon she raised them again, and from her rosy mouth her voice came ringing forth--

"Who are ye that have laid such rude hands upon my kingdom?"

"Forgive, fairest lady!" cried the youth, "and as surely as I am a knight and a king's son, I will henceforth be thy most zealous defender! How could I guess that a fairy--nay, a goddess--reigned over this kingdom?"

"I thank thee," answered Viorica. "I need no other service save that of my faithful subjects; and all I ask is, that no foot of mortal man shall intrude upon my kingdom."

With these words she disappeared as though the mountain had swallowed her up, and those outside could not see how hosts of ants were kissing her feet and escorting her back in triumph to her chamber, where she took up her work once more as calmly as though nothing had happened.

And outside, there, before the mountain, the king's son stood as though in a dream, and for hours could not be prevailed upon to remount his horse. He still kept hoping that the beautiful Queen would appear again--even though it were with angry word and glance, he would at least see her once more! But he only saw ants and yet more ants, in an endless stream, busying themselves with all diligence in repairing the mischief that his youthful thoughtlessness had occasioned. He could have crushed them under foot in his anger and impatience, for they seemed not to understand, or perhaps not even to hear, his questions, and ran quite boldly in front of him, in their new-found sense of security. At last he dejectedly mounted his steed, and so, plotting and planning how he might win the loveliest maid his eyes had ever beheld, he rode on through the forest till nightfall, to the great discontent of his followers, who

consigned both ant-hill and maiden to the devil, as they thought of the supper-table and the bumpers of wine that had long been awaiting them.

Viorica had gone to rest later than any of her subjects. It was her wont to visit the nurseries herself, to see to the infants and feel if their little beds were soft enough; so she glided about, lifting one flower-curtain after another, with a fire-fly clinging to her finger-tips, and looked tenderly after the little brood. Now she went back into her room, and dismissed all the fire-flies, who had been lighting her about her work for many hours. She only kept one little glow-worm beside her while she undressed. She was used to fall at once into the deepest and quietest sleep, but to-night she tossed restlessly to and fro, twisting her hair about her fingers, sitting up and then lying down again, and all the time feeling so hot--oh, so hot! Never before had she been sensible of a lack of air in her kingdom, but now she would gladly have hurried forth, only that she feared to be heard and to corrupt others by her bad example. Had she not already, though under much pressure from the others, been obliged to pass many a harsh sentence, to banish some ants from her jurisdiction, because they had indulged in forbidden wanderings--nay, even to condemn some to capital punishment, and, with a bleeding heart, to see them ruthlessly stung to death?

The next morning she was up earlier than any of the rest, and gave them a surprise by showing them one of the galleries that she had built up all alone.

Doubtless she herself did not know that whilst doing so she had cast several glances towards the forest, and had even stood listening for a few moments.

She was scarcely back in her chamber again before some of the ants hurried to her in terror, crying, “The bad man who came yesterday has returned, and is riding round our hill!”

“Let him be,” replied Viorica, the Queen, quite calmly; “he will do us no more harm.” But the heart of Viorica, the lovely maiden, beat so fast that she could scarce draw breath.

A wondrous unrest had come over her; she roamed about far more than was her wont; she was always thinking that the baby-ants were not enough in the sunshine, and carrying them out herself, only to bring them in again as quickly; and she often gave contradictory orders. The ants could not tell what had befallen her, and took twice the pains to do all their tasks quickly and well. They surprised her with a splendid new vaulted hall, too; but she gazed at it with an abstracted air and praised it but scantily. The sound of horses’ hoofs was now constantly heard, both late and early, round about the mountain; but for many days Viorica never showed herself. A desperate yearning for the companionship of human beings, which she had never yet felt, now seized upon her. She thought of her native village, of the Hora, of her little house, of her mother, and of her mother’s grave, which she had never again visited.

After a few days she announced to her subjects that she thought of making a pilgrimage to her mother’s grave, and at this the ants inquired, in alarm, whether she were no longer happy with them, since she had begun to think of her home again.

"Nay," replied Viorica, "I would go for a few hours only, and be back among you before nightfall."

She refused all escort, but one or two of the ants followed her, unobserved, afar off. Everything looked greatly changed to her, and she thought she must have been away a long time. She began to reckon how long it could have taken the ants to build the great mountain wherein they dwelt, and said to herself that it must have been years. Her mother's grave was no longer to be found, the spot was so overgrown with grass and weeds, and Viorica wandered about the churchyard weeping, since here too she was nought but a stranger. Evening drew on, and still Viorica was seeking for the grave she could not find.

Then close beside her she heard the voice of the King's son. She would have fled, but he held her fast and spoke to her of his mighty love, with such gentle and moving words that she stood still with bowed head, listening to him. It was so sweet to hear a human voice once more, and to hear it speak of love and friendship. Not until the night had grown quite dark did she remember that she was no forlorn orphan, but a Queen forgetful of her duties, and that the ants had forbidden her to hold any further converse with mankind. Then she broke away and fled in haste from the King's son; but he pursued her, with caressing words, to the very foot of her mountain. Here she prayed and implored him to leave her, but he would only consent upon her promising to meet him again the following evening.

She glided noiselessly in, feeling her way along the galleries, and looking fearfully behind her, for she fancied she heard the sound of hurriedly tripping feet and whispering voices all around. No doubt it was but the anxious beating of her heart, for as soon as she stood still all was silence. At last she reached her chamber and sank in exhaustion upon her couch, but no soothing sleep fell on her eyelids.

She felt that she had broken her promise; and who would now hold her in respect, since her word was no longer sacred? She tossed uneasily to and fro; her pride revolted against any secrecy, and yet she knew the ants only too well--their implacable hate, their cruel punishments.

Many times she raised herself on her elbow to listen, and always she seemed to hear the hurried tripping of thousands of little feet, as though the whole mountain were alive.

When she felt that morning drew near, she lifted one of the rose-leaf curtains to hurry out into the open. But what was her amazement when she found the doorway completely stopped up with pine-needles! She tried another, then a third, until she had been the round of them all. In vain--they were all filled in to the very roof. Then she called aloud, and lo! the ants appeared in hosts, creeping in through countless tiny, invisible openings.

"I must go forth into the air," said Viorica in commanding tones.

"Nay," replied the ants, "we cannot let thee forth, or we shall lose thee."

"Do ye then obey me no more?"

"Yea, in all things, save this one. Crush us under foot in punishment if thou wilt; we are ready to die for the good of our community, and to save the honour of our Queen."

Viorica bowed her head, and tears gushed from her eyes. She implored the ants to give her back her freedom, but the stern little creatures held their peace, and all at once she found herself alone in those dark halls.

Oh, how Viorica wept and wailed and tore her beautiful hair! Then she began to try and dig an opening with her tender fingers, but all she scooped out was filled in again as quickly, so that she was fain at last to throw herself upon the ground in despair. The ants brought her the sweetest flowers, and nectar and dewdrops to quench her thirst, but all her prayers for freedom remained unanswered.

In the fear that her wailing might be heard without, the ants built their hill higher and higher, till it was as high as the peak Vîrful cu Dor, and they called their mountain Furnica, or "the ant." The King's son has long since left off riding round about the mountain, but in the silence of the night one can still hear the sound of Viorica's weeping.

* (extraído de Project Gutenberg – ebook ´Legends from River & Mountain´ By Carmen Sylva (H.M. the Queen of Roumania) e Alma Strettell (compiladora e tradutora do alemão). London: George Allen, 1896.

REFERENCES

Sylva, Carmen (Queen Elisabeth of Romania), *Poveştile Peleşului* (*Pelesch-Märchen: Märchen und Mythen aus Rumänien*). First published in German in Leipzig (1882, 1883) and later in Bonn (1886, 1899).

Sylva, Carmen (1896). *Legends from River & Mountain*. Translated by Alma Strettell. It includes translations of stories originally found in *Pelesch-Märchen*. London: George Allen, 1896. Illustrations by T. H. Robinson; Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., Ballantyne Press.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 350-358

Linguistic Versatility in Pursuit of Simplicity. *Der Schmetterling* from Carmen Sylva's Perspective

CRISTINA NICULESCU-CIOCAN
National University of Physical Education and Sports, Bucharest
cristina.niculescu@gmail.com

† In memoriam our beloved **Cristina Athu**:
You have touched our souls in the same way the butterfly touches air:
never enough, never the same. (R.O.C.)

Introduction

In a world where choices are abundant and variety is the key element, Carmen Sylva engages in a world of conciseness and fluid development rendered with sensory effects and vivid imagery alike.

The rich symbolism of the metaphors suggests the volatility of humankind and nature, the incapacity to make proper decisions that could unveil smooth development in all the aspects of life, the weakness and lack of reliability that people generally avoid facing or discussing.

However, when we delve into the lexical and linguistic devices of the poem "Der Schmetterling", we find underlying structures and effects that prove to be essential in deciphering the didactic message and hope for a better future.

It is often claimed that simplicity is the most difficult goal to achieve considering the wide variety of options surrounding us nowadays. The culture as most people currently perceive it seems to have lost track of the apparent visibility that hides depth, of associations that are triggered by simple metaphors, but somehow become inconspicuous, of oppositions that lack meaningfulness.

In a world where we believe almost everything has been analyzed and interpreted according to multiple criteria, we find out that we are still trying to find the real nature of an originally German princess

who lived a Romanian life and willingly acquired the Romanian culture and spirit in times when they were real personal and social values. But what is even more impressive is that she managed to convey Romanian spirituality in all her literary works – poetry, short stories (Sylva 2012), or even aphorisms written in the 19th century.

Carmen Sylva's poetry and prose are rich with both literary and linguistic devices that enhance their aesthetic and emotional impact and that can be noticed on all levels. She was a prolific writer, whose works were warmly received by readers worldwide and translated into many languages, including Romanian. (Mihăilă 2018). Although her literary works are apparently concise and simple as far as their form is concerned, we have identified complex means that unveil messages regarding nature, humankind, human development, Romanian folklore, antagonism, association, women's status and their active role, culture in general, history, and many more other themes (also see Mihăilă 2013).

Her literary force can also be depicted in a linguistic analysis, hopefully while highlighting the beauty and superiority of the messages she has sent out to Romanian people and the wider cultural, geographic, political, and social environments that she knew and managed so well (Negrilă 2018). By means of language, structures like phonemes, words, phrases, or (complex) sentences can add fine nuances, can alter the meaning of the arrangement they describe, or even create an original meaning for the purpose of the interpreted text.

Linguistics. Levels of Analysis

Starting with *the phonetic and phonological levels of analysis*, we can identify *alliteration, assonance, and consonance*. They are part of phonetics while they refer to the articulatory and acoustic properties of sounds, but they are mainly phonological since they are engaged in patterns and structures of sounds that appear in specific contexts and meet clear criteria.

Alliterations like "silken skies" or "whispering winds" create a musical environment and have the role of emphasizing ideas, images, or even wide themes by means of consonant repetition in the initial position of words. It is a literary and a linguistic method alike: it supports the text ideologically and stylistically, but it also contributes to the overall sound structure and pattern of a piece of the text.

Assonance focuses on a different type of repetition: that of vowel sounds within words. Instances like "mellow meadows" and "hollow

sorrow" are meant to create internal rhyme and enhance the musicality of her verses.

Consonance, or the repetition of consonant sounds within words or in the final position of the phonological arrangement, may provide harmony and emphasizes a particular idea, just like the example of the phrase "silent night", that can be found in other authors, as well.

When moving to *the morphological level of analysis*, we encounter devices such as *compounding* ("moonlight" or "waterfall" for instance) or *affixation* (e.g. "unfathomable" or "enchantment"). The compounds prove to be essential in enhancing the vivid imagery generally in in poems, while affixation has the role of creating new words, possibly even changing meaning in certain cases. They both add complexity and specificity, they are rich in nuances and may add meaningfulness and appropriateness to the message.

Syntax is the linguistic field where *parallelism, inversion, and ellipsis* arise and define a special, unique literary style in Carmen Sylva's poetry and can be noticed in her short stories or aphorisms, as well.

The first strategy involves the use of repeated structures in syntactic sequences such as sentences or merely phrases. "To live in the light, to love in the light" creates a specific rhythmicity and highlights the significance of light.

Inversion may render a different note and draws attention to key aspects by reversing the usual word order. In the sentence "In the forest deep, shadows lay" we can observe an archaic note to some extent due to this device and we believe that the location is more significant that the actual state described by the verb "lay". At the same time, there is an effect of innovativeness that removes the obsolete idea of fixed syntactic arrangement and grammatical rules that are necessarily obeyed by authors. All readers' expectations are replaced by novelty and they no longer need to feel complacent with the classical forms and norms.

Ellipsis may prove to be dramatic by simply leaving out syntactic structures and bringing a highly general aspect into the discussion. Thus, it invites the audience to seek meaning, coherence, in some cases even to come up with solutions for the context provided by the poem, for the (sometimes rhetorical) questions used as literary devices. "To dream... to awaken..." conveys a sense of mystery and leaves interpretation open to the readers, which gives them a profound sense of (literary) dialogue and a strong feeling of participation in the major decisions made within the message of the poem.

Shifting our focus from the formal organization of elements, we consider *semantics* a key area of interpretation where the boundaries between the two scientific and academic fields – literature and language – can be crossed and where the common features are more important than the distinctive items.

Metaphors, or rather *cognitive metaphors* require depth and emphasis on associations. According to the philosophers and cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature"[1] (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 3). Under these circumstances, people make use of common knowledge to describe abstract notions, and the connections are subjected to literary and semantic analysis. "The moon is a silver lantern in the night" creates a vivid image and conveys beauty, reliability, and strength to the Earth's natural satellite once readers gain access to the linguistic code.

On the other hand, *similes* can be deciphered more easily and are more accessible to poetry enthusiasts. A comparison similar to "Her smile was as bright as the sun" uses a familiar image while enhancing the description itself.

Symbolism is also a complex device because of its rather subjective nature. In Carmen Sylva's poems, flowers are considered to be the best example to represent innocence, naturalness, depth, authenticity, and beauty.

Pragmatics, our final level of analysis, emphasizes the contribution of *context* and contextual interpretation. One of the main aspects regarding this linguistic area is the historical and cultural aspects, highly significant when Romanian folklore or historical characters and events create the actual framework and provide the depth that readers await (also check Nixon 2014 and Nixon 2016). Connectivity to similar life experiences provides the basis for shared knowledge, beliefs, and evaluation of the proposed situation. We can assume that Carmen Sylva's personal *reflections* on nature and humanity create an intimate and contemplative atmosphere more than often.

From the perspective of speech acts, we have encountered *declarative sentences* that suggest wisdom and close observation of her environment. They have a descriptive role as far as natural scenes are concerned and have the power of evoking imagery.

Here are some examples:

"The night is calm, the stars are bright." (in the poem "Nightfall" from *Selected Poems of Carmen Sylva*),

"The river flows gently through the valley." (in Carmen Sylva's poem "The River's Song" from *Complete Works of Carmen Sylva*),
"In the garden, roses bloom in vibrant colors." (in her poem "In the Garden" from *Collected Poems and Prose of Carmen Sylva*),
"The mountains stand tall, kissed by the morning sun." (in the poem "Mountain Majesty" from *Essential Works of Carmen Sylva*), and
"The wind whispers secrets through the trees." (in author's poem "Whispering Winds" from the volume *Selected Poetry and Prose of Carmen Sylva*).

Pragmatically, these utterances cannot be challenged against the truth criterion and may be considered rather static, as they describe a scene that occurs in nature (in the examples above) and may have a repetitive reading in some contexts, but it is believed that declaratives lack development and dynamism and require a passive attitude from its readers. Literarily, on the other hand, they provide unique images, unveil unparalleled beauty, and provide wisdom.

Implicatures are also engaged to make the auditors participate in the analysis and decoding of the message. The antagonism established between freedom and control is clear evidence that the first one is and should remain the ultimate goal.

Carmen Sylva's works are rich with linguistic devices at all levels of interpretation. They all combine to create deeply evocative, highly visual, memorable, and resonant literature. Her mastery of language allows her to explore complex themes and emotions with great wisdom and engage a variety of linguistic means (Zimmermann 2020).

"Der Schmetterling" by Carmen Sylva

Philosophical reflection blends with vivid images to convey a message regarding one's development and the transient nature. These essentially Romantic descriptors should remind us that life needs to be highly appreciated. Physical and spiritual growth are equally significant and even ephemeral aspects are to be enjoyed while they last and they are able to provide people with beauty.

Der Schmetterling	*The butterfly*
„Mitten im Meer	In the middle of the sea
Flattert daher,	Flutters along,
Feucht schon und schwer,	Moist already and heavy,
Ein Schmetterling.	A butterfly.
Rosen im Grün,	Roses in the green,
Die lieblich blüh'n,	That're blooming sweetly,
Duftend für ihn,	Fragrant for him,
Albernes Ding,	Silly thing,
Die liess er steh'n,	He left them standing,
Auf Nimmerseh'n,	For a long time to come,
Folgend dem Weh'n	Following the waving
Falschen Zephyrs.	False zephyrs.
Nun sinkt er bald,	Now he'll soon sink,
Todmüd und kalt,	Dead tired and cold,
In die Gewalt	Into the power
Des Schuppentiers."[2]	Of the pangolin.[3]
(www.projekt-gutenberg.org/)	(Author's translation)

The symbolism around this poem and selected theme is complex. The ideas of transformation, ephemerality, beauty, freedom, and spirituality create a network of feelings that are very difficult to exist in the form of isolated entities. They describe the complexity and variability of natural beings, of their existence, and the hope for the best outcome.

From a linguistic perspective, we are dealing with abundant information and devices from its subfields that may support the literary analysis (www.nytimes.com/).

Alliteration, assonance, and consonance coexist here and they play different roles: while the first phonological technique creates a sense of fluidity, the other two highlight the difficulties that sometimes occur in life. The alliteration around the sound /f/ in both the original (German) poem – "Folgend dem Weh'n/ Falschen Zephyrs" – which can be noticed in author's translation "Following the waving/ False zephyrs" indicate movement as a natural activity (the fluttering of the butterfly).

The assonance created by the repetition of the vowel sound /ɔ/ in both versions “Feucht schon” (“Moist already”) symbolizes heaviness, difficulty, and the consonance caused by the repetition of the consonant /d/ in “Todmüd und kalt” (“Dead tired and cold”) emphasizes the exhaustion of the beautiful creature.

Morphology supports complexity. Both the processes of *compounding* (“Schuppentier” – Engl. “pangolin”) and *affixation* (for instance: “folgend”/ Engl. “following”) suggest dynamism and elaboration. It can also be noticed that the presence of adverbs and adjectives intensifies the description.

Parallelism, inversion, and ellipsis are the three *syntactic devices* that I have identified in the poem. The parallel structure in the lines “He left them standing,/ For a long time to come,/ Following the waving/ False zephyrs” (Ger. “Die liess er steh’n,/ Auf Nimmerseh’n, /Folgend dem Weh'n/ Falschen Zephyrs“) emphasizes the butterfly’s choices and their consequences.

The inversion of the usual word order in the structure “Now he’ll soon sink,/ Dead tired and cold” (Ger. “Nun sinkt er bald,/ Todmüd und kalt“) puts emphasis on the action and suggests dynamism, energy and emotional vividness.

The ellipsis in the lyrics analyzed under the phonological context (Ger. “Folgend dem Weh’n/ Falschen Zephyrs”/ En. “Following the waving/ False zephyrs”) creates a clear, direct, and remarkably vivid and stylistic expression.

The most visible *metaphor* that requires thorough analysis is that of the butterfly, that can be cognitively associated with beauty, naivety, and fragility. There is the metaphor of zephyrs that stand for illusion, false hope, and deception. The pangolin can be the representation of consequences, of harsh reality. Carmen Sylva has included complex *symbolism* that needs to be deciphered and interpreted accordingly.

The personification of the roses turns them into agents, or active participants who are offering their fragrance to the butterfly: “Roses in the green,/ That’re blooming sweetly,/ Fragrant for him” (Ger. “Rosen im Grün,/ Die lieblich blüh'n,/ Duftend für ihn”).

As far as the area of *pragmatics* is concerned, it engages implicature: the butterfly’s journey and eventual fall imply a moral lesson about the dangers of following false hopes and neglecting genuine beauty and opportunities.

The cautionary tale also triggers the three-tier *speech acts*. The underlying message indirectly advises the readers to be extremely

careful in their endeavors by means of the butterfly's story and provides assistance in the hope that the perlocutionary act will include awareness and attentiveness from the receivers of the lyrical message.

The poem reflects Carmen Sylva's philosophical reflections regarding one's choices in life and the consequences of being misled by illusions. The message is conveyed by lexical choices, literary components, and linguistic approaches. Starting with phonological aspects that set the soft tone which is initially appropriate for the butterfly, moving on to the morphologic descriptors in the form of adjectives and adverbs that provide a comprehensive imagery and to the sentence structure that emphasizes straightforwardness at the beginning and inevitability towards the end, all the aspects create a web of clues.

The semantic aspects are incredible, as they include metaphors such as: the butterfly as a representative of beauty and freedom, the roses that symbolize real opportunity and beauty and are ignored by the butterfly, the misguided pursuit and its consequences which indicate the pangolin. Pragmatics complements the overall image and message, sets the stage for reflection and caution, generates a critique of choosing fleeting pleasures over natural beauty, and warns the audience that decisions are followed by consequences.

Carmen Sylva makes use of a unique combination of linguistic devices, engages royal sensitivity in the poem *Der Schmetterling*, and conveys a simple, yet deep message about the human condition, the pursuit of dreams, the appreciation of current beauty, and the inevitable end that awaits all living beings.

NOTES

1. Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark, *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2. https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/elisabet/poettage/chap170.html
3. Author's proposal - English version/translation

REFERENCES

Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mihăilă, Ramona (2013). "Gender(ed) Discourse: Images and Experiences in 19th Century Women's Writing," *The Proceedings of the International*

Conference Literature, Discourse and Multicultural Dialogue. Section: Language and Discourse, 1, Tîrgu-Mureş, Arhipelag XXI Press, 734-741.

Mihăilă, Ramona (2018). "Recuperating Royal Women Writers: Carmen Sylva's Reception across the World", I. Lousada, R. Fina (direcção), S. Patrício, L. Pinheiro, M. Matiassi Cantarín (coordenação), *Cultura, Literatura, Memória e Identidades: por ocasião do centenário de Cláudia de Campos (1859-1916)*, Lisboa, CLEPUL/CICS.NOVA /Câmara Municipal de Sines, 407-415.

Negrilă, Ana-Maria (2018). "Carmen Sylva – the Forgotten Writer," *EgoPhobia*. E-Magazine. No. 53. https://egophobia.ro/?p=12093

Nixon, Laura-Elizabeth (2014). *The 'British' Carmen Sylva: Recuperating a German-Romanian Writer*. Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (July 2014).

Nixon, Laura (2016). "An 'inexhaustible subject for investigation': The Eastern Gothic of Carmen Sylva and Bram Stoker," *The Modern Language Review*. Vol. 111. No. 1 (January 2016), 61-84.

Sylva, Carmen (2012). *Poveştile unei regine* (*Tales of a Queen*). Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing House.

Zimmermann, Silvia-Irina (ed.) 2020. "The Child of the Sun. Royal Fairy Tales and Essays by the Queens of Romania, Elisabeth (Carmen Sylva, 1843 - 1916) and Marie (1875 - 1938)," *Schriftenrheie der Forschungsstelle Carmen Sylva*. Fürstlich Wiedisches Archiv. Band 9. Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag.

Carmen Sylva – A Cosmopolitan Touch of Royal Penning
ISBN: 978-1-942585-26-8, pp. 359-370

Carmen Sylva, Queen Elisabeth of Romania, and the Invention of a Royal Children's Literature

MARIA IORDAN
Coventry University
Maria.Iordan@coventry.ac.uk

Introduction

Building on recent scholarship on royal authorship and children's literature, this article argues that Carmen Sylva's writings for young readers should be understood not as marginal or purely didactic productions, but as a coherent literary project with distinct aesthetic, cultural, and political ambitions (Nixon, 2014, Zimmermann, 2020, Introduction). Writing at a moment when the Romanian monarchy was consolidating its symbolic authority, Sylva mobilized the fairy tale and the legend as privileged genres through which to articulate an affective relationship between sovereign, land, and people (Mudure, 2023; Zimmermann, 2020, Introduction). Her children's literature thus participates in broader European debates on education, morality, and national culture, while simultaneously responding to the specific historical and cultural conditions of a newly established kingdom at the fin de siècle (Nixon, 2017, Zipes, 2012; Warner, 1994).

By foregrounding landscape as a narrative agent, Sylva transforms Romanian geography, rivers, mountains, forests, and especially Peleș Castle, into spaces of moral formation and cultural memory (Mudure, 2023; Zimmermann, 2020, Introduction). These texts encode ethical values such as perseverance, compassion, cooperation, and social responsibility within stories that render abstract concepts accessible to child readers (Nixon, 2017; Zipes, 2012; Warner, 1994). At the same time, they offer a gendered model of authority in which the queen appears as educator, mediator, and moral guide, rather than as a distant political figure. In this respect, Sylva's juvenile writings contribute to the construction of a compassionate and pedagogical

monarchy, one that relies on cultural intimacy and emotional literacy as sources of legitimacy (Mudure, 2023; Nixon, 2014).

The article also emphasizes the importance of translation and mediation in shaping the reception and afterlife of Sylva's children's literature. Written primarily in German, adapted into Romanian, and circulated in English-language editions for family and juvenile audiences, these texts exemplify a layered process of transcultural transmission (Mudure, 2023; Nixon, 2014). Rather than moving through straightforward one-to-one translation, Sylva's stories were often selected, reframed, and recontextualized for different readerships, with the author herself frequently acting as cultural broker (Zimmermann, 2020, Introduction; Nixon, 2017). This multilingual and transnational circulation not only expanded the reach of her work, but also aligned Romanian cultural narratives with broader European literary traditions (O'Sullivan, 2005; Zipes, 2012).

By situating Carmen Sylva alongside other "writing queens" of the period, the article contributes to a reassessment of women's royal authorship and its role in shaping modern children's literature (Zimmermann, 2020; Mudure, 2023). Sylva's fairy tales and legends reveal how children's texts could function simultaneously as literary artifacts, pedagogical tools, and instruments of cultural diplomacy (Nixon, 2014; Zipes, 2012). Through their themes, narrative strategies, and publication histories, these works illuminate the intersections of gender, power, and literature, demonstrating how the imaginative world of childhood became a key site for negotiating national identity and sovereign representation at the turn of the twentieth century (Warner, 1994; Nixon, 2017).

A queen with a child's ear

Elisabeth of Wied, German-born consort of Carol I and Romania's first queen, wrote prolifically under the pseudonym Carmen Sylva, a pen name she has chosen for the meaning, 'song of the forest,' a Latinate echo of her beloved woods. In an autobiographical tale for children she explained how she combined carmen (song) and sylva (forest) to craft her pen name (Zimmermann, 2021).

As a child, Elisabeth of Wied, was influenced by her father, who "had a keen interest in metaphysics and published a monograph on the subject" (Nixon, 2017). Her creativity was highly aided by extensive travel, especially in Britain, where she also met Queen Victoria. After her marriage with Prince Karl of the prominent family of

Hohenzollern, in 1869, she started learning Romanian during their honeymoon spent in Romania where her husband, now known as Carol, became the Sovereign Prince of Romania (Nixon, 2017).
Carmen Sylva was not only "a well-known royal figure, but also a prolific writer" (Nixon, 2014). During her life time, she published more or less than fifty volumes, investigating vast genres, from poetry to short stories and aphorisms. She was well-known in British literary landscape while she lived, however, she became "marginalized" after her death, with a new interest in recent years to recuperate her valuable contribution to the field, not only in her native Germany, but also France. (Nixon, 2014). It is clear a keen interest in understanding the literary work of Carmen Sylva, however, as Nixon (2014) states: "reassessing Sylva's forgotten fiction becomes a way to recognize the biases, both in contemporary and modern criticism, which have caused her work to be neglected".

What is more, her memory in the literary history can be summed up by a quote from Mihaela Mudure's paper, "Carmen Sylva (Queen Elizabeth of Romania): A Trans-National Writer" (2023): "Carmen Sylva's transnational personality, her in-between-ness status from the perspective of both German and Romanian cultures came to be discussed more in depth only very recently when globalization stimulated the interest in expatriate writing, in writers with allegiances to several national literatures. Anna Hausdorf, Laura Elisabeth Nixon, Alina Bruckner, or Silvia Irina Zimmermann pointed, in various ways, to Carmen Sylva's fluid literary identity. Romanian misogynism and Francophilia (so powerful at the time) prevented the ample and balanced evaluation of her work. She was either overpraised as a queen writer or she was diminished as a woman whose writing made her too visible." (p. 150).

Her literary interest began long before she moved to Romania, however, her children's writing—intersecting with poetry, aphorisms, and folk retellings—emerged from the 1880s onwards and achieved broad European circulation in German, English, and later Romanian editions highlighting this aspect of Sylva's literature. From this point of view, "Carmen Sylva is an interesting case of a European trans-national literary identity" (Mudure, p. 146).

From Peleș Castle to printing world

Beyond its immediate literary appeal, *Pelesch-Märchen* functions as a carefully constructed instrument of symbolic governance, in which the

fairy-tale genre is mobilized to naturalize dynastic authority and embed it within the cultural imagination (Mudure, 2023). By situating the narratives in and around Peleș Castle, Carmen Sylva transforms the royal residence into a mythic locus, where the legitimacy of the monarchy appears organic, timeless, and morally grounded (Zimmermann, 2020; Zipes, 2012). The castle is no longer merely an architectural or political structure, but a narrative space through which ideals of continuity, harmony, and moral order are conveyed to readers, particularly to younger audiences for whom the fairy tale serves as a primary mode of ethical and cultural learning (Warner, 1994; Nixon, 2017).

At the same time, *Pelesch-Märchen* exemplifies Sylva's broader strategy of cultural mediation, in which folklore-inspired storytelling becomes a means of translating Romanian identity into forms intelligible to both domestic and international publics (Mudure, 2023; Zimmermann, 2020). The collection blends local legends, invented fairy motifs, and didactic elements in a manner that aligns Romanian cultural specificity with broader European fairy-tale traditions (Zipes, 2012, O'Sullivan, 2005). In doing so, it situates Romania within a shared cultural framework while preserving the distinctiveness of its landscapes and symbols (Nixon, 2014; Mudure, 2023). The continued scholarly interest in the volume underscores its dual function: as a foundational text in the history of Romanian children's literature and as a revealing case study of how narrative, place, and power intersect in the cultural politics of nation-building (Zimmermann, 2020; Zipes, 2012).

Pelesch-Märchen (1882/1883), originally written in German, did not circulate through a single, complete translation into other languages. Rather, its international reception was shaped by a fragmented and mediated translational history, consisting primarily of partial translations, adaptations, and selections of individual tales. Romanian versions appeared in journals, anthologies, and pedagogical publications, often without explicit attribution to a single translator and frequently accompanied by editorial interventions that reframed the texts for national and educational purposes. In the Anglophone context, several stories entered circulation through adapted collections of legends and fairy tales, produced with the involvement of Carmen Sylva herself and collaborators such as Alma Strettell. This mode of transmission, characterized by selection, recontextualization, and authorial mediation rather than by full-volume translation, underscores the text's function as a transcultural and pedagogical project, whose meanings were actively reshaped across linguistic and cultural

environments (Mudure, 2023; Zimmermann, 2020; Nixon, 2014; Sylva and Strettell, 1896).

Thematic areas from landscape mythopoesis and moral pedagogy

Sylva's writings embed an animated landscape that features as an agent in morally written dramas, such as "Peaks that Yearn" (Vârful cu Dor), "Industrious Anthills" (Furnica), and testing "Caverns" (Ialomița). Through motive plots, place-names gain narrative memory, turning the Peleș valley into a story-bearing river similar to the Rhine (Gutenberg Project). These tales combine and use German and Romanian motifs and sit within a Romantic poetics of the marvelous while anticipating modern fantastic for youth (Sass, 2016).

Carmen Sylva's fairy tales are deeply infused with moral, natural, and spiritual symbolism, shaped by her romantic sensibilities and her desire to elevate Romanian cultural identity through story. Her symbolism is especially visible in tales such as "The Child of the Sun," "The Cave of Ialomitza," "The Serpent-Isle," and "The River of the Princess." These appear in the major scholarly edition *The Child of the Sun: Royal Fairy Tales and Essays by the Queens of Romania* (Muellner, 2022).

Her didacticism is clear but playful. In *A Real Queen's Fairy Tales*, the allegories teach about language, truth, and responsibility, often via personification (Sylva, 1901). Another important theme identified in her writings is the maternal ethos, shaped by the loss of her only child and by philanthropic work, which leads to a deep compassion toward the weak and the sick, aligning personal grief with public service (Nixon, 2014, p. 112-115; Mudure, 2023, p. 149-151;Zimmermann, 2020, p.13-16).

Contemporary comparative work places Sylva among women who reimagined female agency within fairytale forms, subverting passivity without abandoning the marvelous (Warner, 1994; Zimmermann, 2020).

Voice, form, and translation as mediation

Legends from River and Mountain openly acknowledges amplifying concise source legends and blending variants so that they read as engaging stories for children, an honest signal of adaptation for

audience. Sylva's German prose mimics oral cadence (repetition, rhythmic triads) while remaining carefully composed.

Carmen Sylva's fairy tales rely on a symbolic system in which landscape, metamorphosis, and folklore articulate both psychological and cultural meanings. In "The Serpent-Isle," the barren coastline of Tomis, described as a desolate world of sand, marshes, and a "black and cheerless" sea, functions symbolically as an external mirror of Ovid's emotional exile, illustrating Sylva's broader pattern of projecting inner states onto the natural environment (Carmen Sylva and Alma Strettell, 1896/2016). The serpent, imagined by Ovid as a spell-bound princess and serving as his sole source of comfort, symbolizes transformation, imaginative resilience, and the fluid threshold between myth and lived reality, motifs consistent with the emphasis on metamorphosis documented in contemporary scholarly editions of Sylva's works (Zimmermann, 2020). Beyond individual tales, Sylva's sustained use of Romanian landscape and folkloric symbolism contributes to a cultural project of promoting national identity and fostering intercultural understanding, a role emphasized in research examining the literary contributions of the Romanian queens and the editorial framing of "The Child of the Sun" (Zimmermann, 2020).

As translator-mediator, Carmen Sylva (Queen Elisabeth of Romania) played a key role in introducing Romanian folksong and folklore to Anglophone readers through *The Bard of the Dimbovitza*, produced in collaboration with Alma Strettell**.** This volume functioned not merely as a literary translation, but as an act of cultural mediation, shaping a Western reception of Romanian oral tradition by adapting it to the aesthetic expectations of an English-speaking audience.

The English volume was itself based on the French collection *Le Rhapsode de la Dâmboviţa* (1889), compiled and authored by Elena Văcărescu, who gathered Romanian peasant songs and ballads from direct oral sources and rendered them into literary French. In this layered process of transmission, Văcărescu acted as the primary collector and cultural interpreter of Romanian folklore, while Carmen Sylva and Alma Strettell assumed the role of translators and mediators, ensuring the further circulation of this material into the Anglophone world.

The same cross-cultural readability shapes her children's prose, with descriptive scaffolding and illustration-friendly scenes that travel well between languages.

Royal nation-branding for the nursery

Scholars stress Sylva's role as a "poet on the throne," leveraging literature as a form of soft power to generate sympathy and legitimacy for the newly established Romanian kingdom. Volumes such as *Pelesch-Märchen* and their Romanian reprints explicitly associate the name "Peleș" with a dynastic symbol, transforming the royal residence into a cultural landmark and promoting an early form of literary and cultural tourism centered on Sinaia. In a similar vein, *Legends* reimagines the Carpathians as a fairy-tale geography for child readers, mapping Romanian landscapes onto a universal imaginary and thus rendering them intelligible and attractive to Western audiences (Gutenberg Project).

Zimmermann's 2020 conceptualization of the "writing queens" further clarifies this strategy, emphasizing how both Elisabeth (Carmen Sylva) and Marie of Romania fashioned an ideal model of sovereignty grounded in education, moral instruction, and cultural mediation. Through their literary production, these royal authors positioned themselves not merely as symbolic figures of authority, but as active educators and cultural brokers, capable of translating national history, folklore, and values into forms accessible beyond the borders of the Romanian state. Writing thus became a tool of nation-branding, in which monarchy, pedagogy, and literature converged to articulate a coherent image of Romania as both culturally distinctive and fully integrated into the European imagination.

Case readings

"Vârful cu Dor" (*The Peak of Yearning*) functions as an etiological legend that translates the culturally dense and largely untranslatable concept of *dor* into a narrative intelligible to child readers. Rather than defining *dor* abstractly, the text embodies it through landscape and action, associating longing with perseverance, endurance, and the ethical value of memory. The mountain peak becomes a mnemonic site where emotional attachment is inscribed into geography, allowing *dor* to be understood as a formative force that binds individuals to place and history. In this way, the legend performs a dual pedagogical function: it introduces children to a core Romanian affective concept while simultaneously naturalizing national sentiment through the Carpathian landscape.

"Furnica" (*The Anthill*) adopts the structure of a fable to convey a moral lesson centered on cooperation, collective responsibility, and industriousness. While the narrative draws on the universal symbolism of the ant as an emblem of labour and discipline, it anchors these values in a clearly identifiable Carpathian setting. This localization transforms an otherwise generic moral tale into a culturally situated lesson, reinforcing the idea that social virtues emerge organically from the land itself. The anthill becomes a microcosm of ideal communal organization, implicitly modelling social harmony and productivity as natural extensions of the Romanian rural environment.

"'Stand! Who Goes There?'" operates as an allegory of conscience and identity, employing personified abstractions to render complex ethical dilemmas accessible to younger audiences. Through the dramatization of internal moral conflict, the text invites readers to reflect on self-recognition, responsibility, and ethical choice without recourse to overt didacticism. The use of personification allows abstract concepts such as duty, fear, or integrity to take on narrative agency, transforming moral introspection into a legible and engaging story. In this respect, the tale functions as a formative exercise in ethical self-awareness, aligning personal moral development with broader questions of identity and belonging.

Taken together, these texts exemplify a literary strategy that combines folklore, moral pedagogy, and national symbolism. By embedding ethical instruction within landscapes, legends, and allegorical figures, they contribute to a cultural imaginary in which emotional depth, social values, and moral conscience are presented as integral to both individual formation and collective identity.

Reception and afterlives

During her lifetime, the literary production of Carmen Sylva enjoyed broad critical reception and institutional recognition, factors that significantly enhanced the cultural authority of her juvenile and folkloric writings. Reviews in German, French, and English periodicals frequently emphasized the moral seriousness, stylistic accessibility, and educational value of her work, while also foregrounding the symbolic significance of a reigning queen engaging in literary authorship. Honors and prizes conferred upon Sylva reinforced her public image as a cultivated and benevolent sovereign, lending additional legitimacy to texts intended for children and family audiences.

In the Anglophone world, the circulation of Sylva's juvenile writings was facilitated by illustrated editions marketed explicitly to families and young readers, particularly volumes such as *Legends* and *Stories from the Hill of Peleș*. Rich visual para texts, frontispieces, decorative borders, and landscape illustrations, played a crucial role in rendering Romanian geography and folklore visually legible to Western audiences. These editions positioned Sylva's works alongside Victorian children's literature, aligning Romanian legends with familiar pedagogical models that combined moral instruction with imaginative storytelling. The presence of illustrations also softened cultural distance, enabling readers to approach the Carpathians, Peleș Castle, and Romanian folklore through an aesthetic of fairy-tale familiarity.

In Romania, the afterlife of Sylva's writings followed a different trajectory, shaped by national pedagogy and cultural memory. Romanian reprints, particularly those published in the early twentieth century and in later critical or school-oriented editions, increasingly emphasized her role as cultural mediator and educator, rather than solely as royal author. Editorial introductions and annotations framed her juvenile texts as instruments of moral formation and national education, highlighting their function in transmitting folklore, ethical values, and attachment to place. Modern editions often underscore the translational and adaptive dimensions of her work, drawing attention to the layered processes through which folklore moved from oral tradition to literary rewriting and, subsequently, to international circulation.

The pedagogical afterlife of these texts is especially evident in their continued inclusion in anthologies of children's literature, folklore collections, and educational materials. Stories such as "Vârful cu Dor" or "Furnica" have been read not only as literary artifacts, but as formative narratives that teach perseverance, cooperation, and moral responsibility through culturally embedded symbols. In this sense, Sylva's juvenile writings have remained durable precisely because they operate at the intersection of education, ethics, and cultural representation.

Taken together, the reception and afterlives of Carmen Sylva's works reveal a dual legacy. In international contexts, her texts functioned as vehicles of cultural diplomacy, introducing Romanian landscapes and traditions to foreign audiences through familiar literary forms. In the domestic context, they became tools of pedagogical mediation, contributing to the shaping of moral and cultural sensibilities across generations. This sustained circulation across languages, media, and educational frameworks underscores the lasting impact of Sylva's literary project and confirms her role as a

foundational figure in the transnational history of children's literature and cultural mediation.

Conclusions

Carmen Sylva's children's literature makes places speak and lets children listen. It offers a durable program of cultural translation and moral pedagogy where mythopoesis, empathy, and place-based identity meet. By animating landscapes and embedding ethical lessons within rivers, mountains, and castles, Sylva transforms geography into a formative narrative agent, one that teaches children how to inhabit space ethically and imaginatively. Her stories cultivate an affective literacy in which belonging is learned through attention, memory, and care, rather than through abstraction or coercion.

The durability of this program lies in its adaptability across languages, media, and historical contexts. Circulating through German originals, Romanian adaptations, and Anglophone selections, Sylva's texts exemplify a model of children's literature shaped by mediation rather than by fixed national boundaries. Translation in this context is not merely linguistic transfer but a cultural practice that recalibrates stories for new audiences while preserving their ethical core. This layered transmission accounts for the continued afterlife of Sylva's works and their capacity to resonate with diverse readerships beyond their original moment of production.

Moreover, Sylva's children's literature articulates a distinctive vision of authority grounded in care, instruction, and moral example. As a "writing queen," she reframes sovereignty through pedagogy, presenting the monarch not as a distant ruler but as a storyteller, guide, and listener. This feminized model of power, centered on empathy, moral persuasion, and cultural mediation, challenges dominant political imaginaries of the fin de siècle and opens children's literature as a site where alternative forms of leadership can be imagined and rehearsed.

Reading Carmen Sylva's juvenile writings today invites a reassessment of children's literature as a serious cultural and political medium. Her fairy tales and legends demonstrate how texts for young readers can function simultaneously as aesthetic compositions, ethical frameworks, and instruments of cultural diplomacy. In giving voice to places and inviting children to listen, Sylva's work models a form of literary education that remains relevant: one that binds imagination to responsibility, identity to empathy, and storytelling to the shared work of cultural understanding.

NOTES

1. Silvia Irina Zimmermann, ‘How I came to take the name of Carmen Sylva as my nom de plume,’ ars reginae (2021), https://www.sizimmermann.de/arsreginae/archives/167.

2. ‘Elisabeth of Wied,’ Wikipedia, and ‘Elizabeth of Wied (1843–1916),’ Encyclopedia.com, for biographical overview and multilingual publication context.

3. Carmen Sylva, Pelesch-Märchen, ed. Silvia Irina Zimmermann (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2013).

4. Carmen Sylva and Alma Strettell, *Legends from River and Mountain* (London: George Allen, 1896), Project Gutenberg eText, with compiler’s introduction.

5. Carmen Sylva, *A Real Queen’s Fairy Tales*, tr. Edith Hopkirk (Chicago: Davis & Co., 1901), Internet Archive / Google Books previews.

6. Silvia Irina Zimmermann (ed.), The Child of the Sun: Royal Fairy Tales and Essays by the Queens of Romania (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag; New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

7. Gutenberg Project. *Legends from River and Mountain*, contents including ‘Vîrful cu Dor,’ ‘Furnica,’ ‘The Caraiman,’ ‘The Cave of Jalomitza,’ and ‘Rîul Doamnei.’

8. ‘Transcendence of the Mundane… in Carmen Sylva’s Fairy Tales,’ Studii de Știință și Cultură 12.1 (2016).

9. A Real Queen’s Fairy Tales (1901), esp. ‘Stand! Who Goes There?’ and ‘A Revolution in the Dictionary.’

10. ‘Elizabeth, Queen of Rumania – History’s Women’ and Encyclopedia.com entries noting philanthropy and public image.

11. Anja Rekeszus, ‘Meet three forgotten women who wrote fairytales…,’ The Conversation (2024), on Woltmann, Sylva, and Gonzenbach.

12. Hélène Vacaresco (Elena Văcărescu), *The Bard of the Dimbovitza*, tr. Carmen Sylva and Alma Strettell (London, 1891/1892), HathiTrust/Stanford records; Elfinspell online introduction.

13. Corint, *Poveștile Peleșului* (modern Romanian edition with commentary), catalogue pages; Europeana metadata on the 1908 reprint.

14. Project Gutenberg author page and contemporaneous notices of honors (e.g., Botta Prize), plus brief popular summaries.

REFERENCES

Mudure, Mihaela (2023), "Carmen Sylva (Queen Elisabeth of Romania): A Trans-National Writer." *Gender Studies, 22*(1), 144-167.

Muellner, B. A. (2021), "A Force of Nature: Narrative Strategies of Autobiography in the Work of Poet-Queen Carmen Sylva." In K. Herges & E. Krimmer (Eds.), *Contested Selves: Life Writing and German Culture* (pp. 51–72). Chapter, Boydell & Brewer.

Nixon, Laura Elisabeth (2014), *The 'British' Carmen Sylva: Recuperating a German-Romanian Writer*. Laura_Nixon_-_PhD_thesis.pdf

Nixon, Laura Elisabeth (2017), "Forgotten Short Fiction by E. Nesbit and Carmen Sylva: Everything in Moderation." *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, *60*(1), 78–97.

O'Sullivan, Emer (2005), *Comparative Children's Literature*. London: Routledge.

Rekeszus, Anja (2024), "Meet Three Forgotten Women Who Wrote Fairytales," *The Conversation*.

Sass, Maria (2022), "Rheintochters Donaufahrt – Carmen Sylva's Travelogue: A Historical Period as Seen Through the Eyes of a Queen." *Transilvania*, no. 8: 50-58.

Sylva, Carmen (2013), *Pelesch-Märchen*. Ed. Silvia Irina Zimmermann. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag. A modern critical edition of the Peleș cycle, with scholarly afterword.

Sylva, Carmen and Alma Strettell (1896), *Legends from River and Mountain*. London: George Allen.

Sylva, Carmen (1901), *A Real Queen's Fairy Tales*. Chicago: Davis & Co.

Vacaresco, Hélène (Elena Văcărescu) (1891/1892). *The Bard of the Dimbovitza*. London.

Warner, Marina (1994), *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Zimmermann, Silvia Irina (ed.) (2020), "The Child of the Sun." Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag; New York: Columbia University Press.

Zipes, Jack (2012), *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and social History of a Genre*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Notes on Contributors

Dr. **Nadezhda ALEXANDROVA** is an associate professor at the Faculty of Slavic Studies at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bulgaria. Her interests are focused on Ottoman and Balkan literature and culture from the 18th and the 19th c. and on history of emotions. She has published three monographies on various entanglements between writing and traveling of people and ideas that happened in the Ottoman space during that period. She is the head The Bulgarian Society for Eighteen-Century Studies, member of ISECS, and a board member of The Bulgarian Association of University Women. She is also at the editorial board of BRILL publishing series "Women Writers in History".

Onorina BOTEZAT (BA in Philology and Law, MA in Law, Ph.D. in Theory of Literature) is an Associate Professor in French and English at Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania. Her areas of research include travel writings and cultural transfer, imagological and literary studies, and legal terminology. Her most recent publications are *Mapping Cultural Identities and Intersections: Imagological Readings*, (edited with Mustafa Kirca, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019) and *Romanian Authors Writing in Foreign Tongues* (edited with Corinne Fournier Kiss, Ramona Mihăilă, Pro Universitaria, 2021). She has been a member of several European projects, serves as a reviewer for various journals, and was the Editor in Chief of *Annals of Linguistics, Literature and Methodology of Teaching* (2017-2023).

Alina BRUCKNER, Ph.D. Associate Professor at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, is currently specialized in German from the perspective of intercultural communication. After a Ph.D. thesis dedicated to the personality of Carmen Sylva, which was afterwards published in Germany, the author Alina Bruckner focused her research area on German – Romanian or German – English cross-cultural communication and transfer. Thus, whereas several articles published in journals indexed in international databases focus on Carmen Sylva, the latest articles published deal with various social and economic issues regarding the German-speaking cultures.

Mihaela HRISTEA is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures within Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Bucharest. She holds her Ph.D. in Philology with the thesis: *The reception of Heinrich Heine in Romanian literature*. She graduated from the Faculty of Letters, Romanian language and literature–German language and literature, University of Bucharest. Her publications cover a large variety of articles and books on literature and didactics, e.g. *The Reception of Heinrich Heine in Romanian literature*, *Theater im Unterricht*, *Selected poems*, and *Metaphor and Symbol in Tudor Arghezi's Writings*.

Maria IORDAN is a Fellow Lecturer at CU Coventry University, where she teaches undergraduate students on Early Childhood Development and Learning BA (Hons). She is an active member of Early Childhood Studies Degree Network, Centre for Research in Early Childhood and Together and Committed to Young Children. Maria's research portfolio spans several significant areas, including higher education, inclusive practice, and international perspectives on child development, with a particular research focus on the impact of grief and loss on child's development, an area in which she is pursuing her doctoral research on. Her contributions to academic literature include co-authoring papers examining cultural bias, high quality teaching methodologies, the pedagogy of belonging and gender representation gaps in the early years sector and in higher education.

Alice NĂSTASE BUCIUTA (BA in Philology, BA in Psycho-sociology, MA in Communication, Ph.D. in Political Science) is a Romanian journalist and writer, publisher and editor-in chief of *Marea Dragoste* Magazine and *Cărţile Tango* Publishing House and also an independent researcher in the field of Gender Studies and Women Magazines Studies. She has a more than 25-year experience in media as a reporter, journalist, TV moderator and TV producer. As a writer, she published more than 10 books in Romanian language – novels, essays, interviews collections, anthologies, and two books in international translations: *Avon Book of Love: 13 Years of Passion, Life Stories, Miracles, Love* (Humanitas, 2010) and *Querer. Probar. Comprar. Cuentos de amor en tiempos de rebajas* (Alcala Grupo Editorial, 2014).

Dr **Natalie GUTGESELL** is a Lecturer at the Institute of Art History, Philipps-Universität Marburg. Her fields of research are nineteenth and twentieth century art, in particular female painters related to Eastern Europe, and the art of the parks of Weimar during the eighteenth century. She is the author of the monograph, *Dora Hitz – Fränkische Künstlerin, rumänische Hofmalerin, europäische Avantgardistin* (2019), *Alexandra von Berckholtz – Malerin und Mäzenin im 19. Jahrhundert* (2017) and *Joseph Victor von Scheffel als bildender Künstler* (2014), as well as a number of articles on nineteenth and twentieth century art.

Sara HUNZIKER is an Associate Professor at Dimitrie Cantemir University in Bucharest, where she teaches Medieval Literature (BA), Shakespearean Drama (BA) and Cultural Anthropology (MA).
She got her PhD. in Literary and Cultural Studies from the University of Bucharest,with the thesis, *Shakespearean Antecedents in the Theatre of the Absurd*, that offers a significant contribution to the field of Comparative Literature by examining thematic and stylistic links between Shakespeare and a series of modern playwrights from Ireland, France, Canada, and England. She also holds an MA in Foreign Literatures Written in English from the same university. Dr. Hunziker has published several scholarly articles and textbooks, with academic interests spanning from Medieval and Elizabethan Literature, to Avant-Garde Theatre, and Cultural Anthropology.

Dr **Shona KALLESTRUP** is an Associate Lecturer in the School of Art History, University of St Andrews, and a specialist in East European and Scandinavian art and architecture. She has been involved in the ERC-funded project *Art Historiographies in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry from the Perspective of Entangled Histories* at New Europe College, Bucharest (PI Dr Ada Hajdu). Her publications include *Art and Design in Romania 1866-1927: Local and international aspects of the search for national expression* (East European Monographs, 2006), as well a range of articles on Romanian and Scandinavian art and architecture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Georg KREMNITZ, *1945 Ellwangen/Germany, studies of romance philology, history, politics, and philosophy at Göttingen, Berlin (FU), Montpellier, Tübingen. 1974–86 prof. of French language and literature at Münster, 1986–2012 ord. prof. of romance philology at the University of Vienna, Emeritus. Correspondent member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (2014), officer of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France, 2014). Invitations: EHESS Paris, Buenos Aires, Nice, Bahia Blanca, Leipzig, etc. Fields of interest: sociology of communication, sociolinguistics (especially of romance minority languages), languages in contact and conflict, social multilingualism, literary multilingualism, etc.

Luiza Catrinel MARINESCU is the author of nearly 100 articles on Romanian and comparative literature and 10 books. She has written on Romanian literature between its canon and its modernity, the history of Romanian literature from the beginning to the time of the great classics, Carageali, a family of writers, Mihai Eminescu – Jorge Luis Borges the interferences of postmodern culture, Umberto Eco in the labyrinth of the novel postmodern, Synthesis of Romanian literature. She is also a producer of TV programs, e.g. 'Why do we love Romanian literature?'. She is a lecturer in Romanian Language and Literature at the Institute of the Romanian Language in Bucharest, and at the University of St. Kliment Ohridsky in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Ramona MIHĂILĂ is the Head of the Secretary of State's Office at the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, Romanian Government. She is also a professor Ph.D. at Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Bucharest, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on women's writing, gender studies, literature, urban cultures. She is the (co)-author and (co)-editor of 30 books concerning women's writing, gender studies, narrative strategies. She has been visiting professor and research fellow at international institutions. She has been a coordinator and a member of European projects on gender studies, women's writing, literary urban places, social placemaking. She serves as the executive publishing editor of the *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, Addleton Academic Publishers, New York.

As an experienced professor engaged in higher education at National University of Physical Education and Sports, Bucharest, who unveils her passion for communication sciences and literature, Dr. **Cristina NICULESCU-CIOCAN** has pursued her passion for linguistics through formal education and academic research over the years. She perceives language as a powerful intangible tool that requires diplomacy and appropriateness to achieve rewarding results and believes in linguistic mastery, as all her academic publications reveal.

Dr. **Laura NIXON** received her Ph.D. from the University of Nottingham in 2013 with a thesis titled *The "British" Carmen Sylva: Recuperating a German-Romanian Writer*, exploring Sylva's literary presence in British culture. Her research focuses on women's and marginalized writing, especially 19th century short fiction. She has taught at the University of Nottingham and Loughborough University, delivering courses on Victorian fiction, the Gothic, modern literature, and the nineteenth-century literary field. She has published on Carmen Sylva's short stories in *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, *Modern Language Review*, *Notes and Queries*, and the *International Journal of Regional and Local History*. Her work also includes a chapter on Sylva in *Victorian Travel and Imperial Spaces*. She currently teaches at De Montfort University.

Luiza Maria OANCEA DUMITRU is an associate professor Ph.D. at University of Bucharest, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, The Department of Classical Philology and Neo-Greek Language. She 318 has intensively delivered papers at conferences and published as author, co-author, editor, contributor, translator and reviewer many works on her research directions: Folklore, Greek Literature (Archaic and Hellenistic Époques), Cultural Anthropology, Didactics, Greek Morphology, Greek Syntax.

Efstratia OKTAPODA has been teaching at the University of Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV) since 1997 and has served as the Delegate for Gender Equality at the Sorbonne Presidency since 2017. She holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Paul Valéry–Montpellier III University, with expertise in 19th to 21st-century European and Francophone literatures. A member of numerous scientific committees and an expert for AUF (Canada) and CLN extraductions (France), Oktapoda is the author of *Au Pays de la littérature comparée* and co-author of several edited volumes, including *Gender Studies in the Age of Globalization*. Her scholarly interests include women's writing, exile, memory, and multiculturalism, with ongoing research on global women's literature, particularly Chinese women writers and the impact of globalization on literary expression.

Cristina REITER-POPESCU is German language teacher (Deutsch als Muttersprache) with First Degree certification at the Goethe German College in Bucharest. She has published several academic and literary studies, including *Der Ursprung und die Zukunft Europas* by Manfried Riedel, *Nachrichten im Überblick 1991–1995*, and critical essays on *Neue Rundschau*, *Kultronik*, and Mircea Eliade's *Sânziene Night*. Her article *Access to History through Literature – A Newly Discovered Poem by Rilke* appeared in *Ich werde noch Vieles anbahnen* (Germany, 2015). She has delivered numerous papers at conferences, such as on the *Forschungsstelle Carmen Sylva Wied*, diplomatic elites, cultural life in 1918 Romania, and Romanian demographic trends in the 19th century.

Sophie ROCHEFORT GUILLOUET, Alumna of the Ecole Normale Supérieure (Sèvres-Ulm), the Sorbonne University (Paris IV) and the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, currently in charge of the Comparative History of Europe and Asia Lectures on the Asia Pacific campus of Sciences-Po Paris in Le Havre. Lecturer in History of Arts and Ancient civilizations (Elective seminar on Arts and Major classes on The Silk Roads). Lecturer in Literary humanities at the University in Rouen. Member of the Académie des Sciences, Belles Lettres et Arts de Rouen.

Rob VAN DE SCHOOR is an assistant professor at Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands, in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures. He teaches nineteenth-century Dutch literature in its international context and has published on renowned women such as the French *tragédienne* Rachel (Élisabeth Félix), the dancer Isadora Duncan, and the poet-queen Carmen Sylva. His research also focuses on cultural transfer, reception history, and the role of women in shaping European literary traditions.

George T. SIPOS is Associate Professor at the West University of Timişoara, Romania, where he teaches Japanese literature, language and culture. His research focuses on modern and contemporary Japanese society and literature from a transcultural perspective, in particular on comparative research on Japan and Romania/Eastern Europe's modernity, modern nation state, activism, and resistance against authoritarian state oppression. He published extensively on modern and contemporary Japanese literature, as well as five volumes of Japanese literature in Romanian translation. His most recent publications include research articles and book chapters on the works of Dazai Osamu, Mishima Yukio, Kawabata Yasunari, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Miyamoto Yuriko, among others.

Răzvan STAICU has been a lecturer at Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University of Bucharest and University of Bucharest. He has taught courses of Italian literature, translation theory, in Italian and Romanian. He graduated BA and MA from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest (Italian and Romanian language and literature), where he defended his Ph.D. thesis, *Italy Perceived in the 19th Century Romanian Memoirs*. In 2015, he published the work *Visible lightness of the writing. Italian postmodernism, from the memos of Italo Calvino to the text of Alessandro Baricco*.

Luca Matei STOIAN is a Ph.D. architect, member of the Architects' Order in Romania, member of the Union of Architects in Romania, the Union of Visual Artists in Romania, visual artist, designer, "Vasile Pârvan" scholar (2012-2014) at "Accademia di Romania", Rome, Italy, where he opened personal and collective international exhibitions of art and architecture. He has delivered speeches and lectures at faculties of architecture in Italy, Germany and Denmark. At present, he is the president of the Center of Excellence in Architecture, Arts and Audiovisual (C.E.A.A.A.).

Zsuzsa TÖRÖK is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Literary Studies, ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest. Her academic interests are in nineteenth-century literature, women's history, and periodical studies. She has published extensively on these topics in leading Hungarian and international journals. She is the author of *Petelei István és az irodalom sajtóközege: Média- és társadalomtörténeti elemzés* (2011) and the co-editor of the special issue of the *Journal of European Periodical Studies – JEPS* (2024.1). She currently serves on the editorial board of JEPS, the flagship journal of the European Society for Periodical Research (ESPRit).

Daniela VARVARA, Constanţa, Romania. Writer (poet and literary critic) and teacher of Romanian language and literature. Ph.D. in Philology (*Ovidius* University, Constanţa). Member of Romanian Writers Union. Editor of *Albatros/Albatross* and *InterArtes*, permanent contributor of *Ex Ponto*-magazines from Constanta and contributor of other national magazines. Books: *Lodebar. Jurnal din casa uitării* (poems), 2017, *Biblical Myths and Symbols in Romanian Neomodernist Poetry*, 2016, *A-* (poems), 2012, *Înaripata* (poems), 2011, the latest received the Inception Award, from Romanian Writers Union, Dobrogea Subsidiary, and *Ex Ponto* Magazine Award.

Susana VENTURA holds a Ph.D. in Letters from the University of São Paulo, specializing in Comparative Studies of Portuguese Language Literatures. Her research explores literature, language, and culture across Portuguese-speaking countries, with particular attention to contemporary works from Brazil, Portugal, Cape Verde, Angola, and Mozambique. She has published extensively in comparative literature, children's and youth literature, and Portuguese language education. A dedicated writer for young readers, she draws inspiration from oral traditions and folk culture in Portuguese-and-Spanish-speaking regions. In addition to her scholarly activity, she works as curator, coordinator, and editor of children's book collections and serves as consultant for projects promoting the cultural diversity of the Portuguese language.

Silvia Irina ZIMMERMANN, Ph.D., Coordinator of the Research Center Carmen Sylva of the Princely Archive of Wied, Neuwied. Studies at the universities in Sibiu and Marburg (German studies, English studies, history of arts, sociology); Ph.D. in German literature with a thesis on the literal work of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva); interdisciplinary research, editorial activity, translations, publications in German and Romanian about Queen Elisabeth of Romania and the Court of King Charles I of Romania; initiator and co-founder of the Research Center Carmen Sylva of the Princely Archive of Wied in Neuwied (Forschungsstelle Carmen Sylva des Fürstlich Wiedischen Archivs), coordinator of the center from 2012 till today; co-editor of the series of the center Carmen Sylva (9 volumes).


Addleton
Academic
Publishers
ISBN 978-1-942585-26-8
9 781942 585268