

# FEMALE REPRESENTATIONS AND PRESENCES IN ROMANIAN FIRST WORLD WAR COMMEMORATIVE ART

Georgeta FODOR

George Emil Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science and Technology of Târgu Mureș, ROMANIA  
georgeta.fodor@umfst.ro,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7438-5666>

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## ABSTRACT

Art does not represent reality, but it can be an expression of it. Artists always used real-life experiences, including such events as revolutions, wars, etc. as a source for their works. At the same time, political and religious leaders used artistic, visual language for promoting their military victories or the supremacy of their power or faith. So, artworks, buildings, sculptures, or paintings were valuable tools for propaganda. Art can be used as a manifestation of political power or as a form of protesting against it. Sometimes artists were asked to represent abstract values like liberty, victory, peace, or the nation. In such circumstances, artists used the feminine form and not only because the notions were feminine nouns. Considering these general premises, my study explores the female representations and presences in Romanian First World War commemorative art. The study examines how the feminine form was used in the First World War monuments. The personification of abstract notions was examined, together with the presence of real feminine figures in this type of art, and Romanian women's involvement in creating and sponsoring these kinds of monuments. In addition, the study intends to assess the impact and the extent to which people in general, and women in particular, resonated with these monumental works of art. The main sources for this approach were the public monuments built during the interwar period as part of the commemoration practices of the war. Given the context, reference is also made to other works of art having female representations, created by the same artists who created the monuments under review.

Keywords: gender, women, collective remembrance, public monuments, memorial sites

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## INTRODUCTION

Art is contextualised. It can echo the challenges and crises a community experiences at one moment in time. Moreover, the visual language was also used for propaganda. But it can also function as a form of therapy. Sometimes, propaganda and the therapeutic value merge in the same artistic manifestation. This is what happened, for instance, in the act of commemorating past, dramatic events such as wars. These events were sometimes subject to visual representations. We refer to mausoleums, triumphal arches, or columns. They function as honorary and commemorative *lieux de mémoires* as Pierre Nora argued. They are the palpable result of communities' and individuals' efforts. People needed to remember and make sure that no one forgot the bad as well as the "good things" caused by the war (Nora, 1989).

The First World War remains one of the events that generated a real campaign of monuments. Their role was a commemorative one. They were a form of remembrance required and promoted by both individuals and public authorities. Different forms of visual language like stamps, postcards, public monuments, sculptures, or paintings became part of a complex system of commemorating the losses and appreciating the gains of war. In this sense, I agree with J. Winter when arguing that remembrance became, after the Great War, part of the landscape. I refer to war memorials that dot the countryside, in cities, villages, market squares, churchyards, schools, and obscure corners of hillsides and fields (Winter, 1995). These initiatives are visible in all the combatant countries. Pierre Nora and other authors such as E. Hobsbawm include in the list museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, and sanctuaries, as well (Hobsbawm, 1990). The former considers that all of them function as a 'boundary stone' of another age, part of the "collective practices of remembrance" (Nora, 1989). People felt the need to remember and commemorate, to search for a 'meaning' of the Great War. This quest began as soon as the war began, being visible in towns and villages throughout Europe. Almost everywhere, communities sponsored memorials of different kinds to recall the 1914-1918 war and the sacrifices it entailed (Winter, 1995).

Considering the importance that remembering practices had during the interwar period, this study approached this practice through art. I analysed public monuments with *ronde-bosses* (sculptures in the round) and relief sculptures from a gender perspective. I was concerned with the 'version of war' people wished to recall, the story they chose to tell in stone. Moreover, I tried to understand how the female form and real women appeared in such artistic expressions. Moreover, I analysed how they resonated and understood these forms of visual language. My premise is that these monuments invite us to recall more than the central facts of loss of life and bereavement in the Great War (Winter, 1995). More precisely, what I explored was the presence of the female form and women personalities in three circumstances. First, as subjects, then as commissioners, and third, as artists of such monuments of war. This approach seeks to prove that we should not exclude or treat the collective remembrance of the First War as only masculine. All the more since one should not forget that every family was in mourning. Almost everyone lost a relative, a father, a son, a brother, a husband, a friend, a colleague, a lover, or a companion (Winter, 1995). Thus, we have enough strong arguments to assert the necessity to (re)consider the women's presence and involvement in the collective practices of remembrance.

## METHODOLOGY

The subject is based on the extensive literature that studied commemorative practices. Out of the extensive literature, besides Pierre Nora's studies, significant are those of Winter (1995, 2006), who focuses on the European commemorative practices of the World Wars. For the Central and East European regions, a relevant contribution is the volume coordinated by Luthar (2016). For the gender perspective on the subject, besides the above-mentioned texts, a recently published volume by Finkelstein (2021) should be considered. For the Romanian commemorative practices, I used the studies by Mihalache (2007) and Hariton who focused actually on war monuments (Hariton, 2011; Hariton, 2015). And for the gender perspective on the subject, I referred to Bucur's volumes (Wingfield & Bucur, 2006; Bucur, 2019). In fact, Bucur is the author that introduced the gender perspective in Romanian historiography. Another author who uses a gender perspective on war and was useful for the present approach is Chioveanu (2009). The general perspective outlined by the main readings in the historiography

of the subject was then used for the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the main monuments built in Romania between 1919 and 1939.

I focused on public monuments: memorial sites, and sculptures, in *ronde-bosse* and relief. I searched for the presence of women as subjects of the artworks. The monuments examined use two female forms. The allegorical type is either the personification of such abstract notions as Victory, Liberty, Motherland, etc. or a 'living allegory'. In the second category, I included sculptures in *ronde-bosse* and reliefs of real Romanian women. Besides the representations of women in war memorials, I also explored the ways in which women created or contributed to the creation of commemorative art. Women are involved either as individual artists or collective initiators of such projects, though, most often, in different associations and as anonymous members of local communities.

#### THE COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES: DOES REMEMBRANCE HAVE A GENDER?

I will not approach the debates and controversies generated by Pierre Nora's article (1989) but rather give a synthetic view on commemorative practices. The aim is to understand why and how people used such art forms with certain female figures on the monuments to commemorate the Great War. Then, I address the issue from a gender perspective. I studied women and how their need to remember, commemorate, or be acknowledged as contributors to the war is reflected in the war monuments. Thus, I approached the subject considering several premises. First is that from the Acropolis to the Arc de Triomphe, war memorials have been central to the history of European architecture and public sculpture, being places where people grieved, both individually and collectively (Winter, 1995). Secondly, men and women lived the first 'great war' as trauma. They understood it as an overwhelming, sustained, and mass experience (Winter & Sivan, 1999). This trauma had to be exteriorised. One choice was to act in public, by creating associations, by writing memoirs, by producing films, and by speaking out. So, remembrance practice became a social activity after the Great War (Winter & Sivan, 1999).

Moreover, collective remembrance is neither exclusively private nor entirely socially determined, but rather somewhere in between, where "is the palpable, messy activity which produces collective remembrance" (Winter & Sivan, 1999, p. 10). Of course, the most visible, palpable form this collective remembrance took was the form of the 'holy icons': monuments. These should be seen in their three dimensions: material, symbolic and functional (Nora, 1989) which coexist. The sites of memory, in which we included public forms of art, are places that arose out of the post-war search for a language in which to reaffirm the values of the community for which soldiers had laid down their lives (Winter, 1995). But these sites, as mentioned above, also act as a sort of therapy. They can help to exteriorise and share the pain of losing loved ones with others in the same situation. This brings, as it were, to the discussion also the gender dimension of remembrance, where we refer to women's relationship with these sites of memory. Thus, we acknowledge their need to get their share of recognition for the role they played and the sufferings they endured during the war. As scholars have argued, men and women tend to remember differently (Loftus et al., 1987; Alexievich, 2017). Furthermore, they are expected to take care of the collective rituals imposed by these places of memory. For instance, Maria Bucur connects the rituals of commemoration with the ancestral rituals of commemorating the dead. The author considers, and I agree with her, that these rituals had a profound gender dimension (Bucur, 2019).

There are also other key aspects to consider before analysing the presence of the female form in this type of art. For instance, the fact that commemoration was a political act, it could not be neutral (Winter, 1995). As well, we need to focus on the motifs found in these war memorials. What was intended, and how were contemporaries supposed to remember the war? Two main motifs are present in virtually all post-war memorials: war as both noble and uplifting, and tragic and unendurably sad (Winter, 1995). We should not forget also that, despite the powerful currents of feeling about the need to express the indebtedness of the living to the fallen and the near universality of loss in many parts of Europe, the commemoration was and remained a business, in which sculptors, artists, bureaucrats, churchmen, and ordinary people had to strike an agreement and carry it out (Winter, 1995). Sometimes, the monuments reflect the financial compromise, or sometimes the initiators restrict the artists' liberty of creation.

#### WOMEN AND COMMEMORATIVE ART. THE ALLEGORY OF THE FEMININE BODY: THE PERSONIFICATION OF ABSTRACT NOTIONS

War memorials such as monumental sculptures placed in public places or war cemeteries have a level of generalisation. All war victims no matter what their role or contribution was must be able to identify with the story they told. Thus, war memorials used collective expressions to help individual people, mothers, fathers, wives, sons, daughters, and comrades-in-arms to accept the brutal facts of death in war (Winter, 1995).

Furthermore, for Romanians, these monuments were used for making people aware of the achievements the war brought to the nation. This might be one of the reasons why Victory is so often represented on public monuments; so, the collective remembrance takes shape in the form of public art, through allegories on a monumental scale. Some artists used the symbolic form of the female figure. The choice was almost natural, as artists had used the female form since ancient times as an expression of desiderata and virtues (Warner, 2001). Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war, is the pattern for the armed maidens, invulnerable epitomes of the nation (Warner, 2001). It was Nike, the Greek goddess of Victory transmuted into the Roman Victoria, whose descendants are poised on triumphal arches in the capitals of Europe (Warner, 2001). Allegories of Victory and the Motherland – *Patria* (in Romanian) – are the most frequent representations of the female form on the commemorative monuments built in the interwar period. The artistic choice of the sculptors can be explained by the fact that, through such an artistic convention, abstract notions could be made understandable for everyone and identifiable with anyone. Such representations of the female figure, do not refer to particular women, do not describe women as a group, and often do not even presume to evoke their natures, yet they stand for us regardless of sex (Warner, 2001). The Romanian case is not different from the general European ones. Of the monuments I examined, 79 in total, 29 include personifications in life-sized monuments or sculptural reliefs. I focused first on the monuments on which Victory is represented. It is the most common female form in war monuments. I examined them according to the following criteria: author, date, and type of monument (Table 1). The selection and analysis were based on the lists of the monuments and memorial sites available at the National Heritage Institute and also on the list available at the National Office for the Cult of Heroes (Ministerul Culturii, n.d.). We compared these data with the facts and figures from other lists existing on the websites of local authorities.

A synthesis of the results is presented in the tables below (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1: List of the monuments and memorial sites with feminine allegories

No.	Date	Location	Author/initiator	Name of the Monument/Type	Type of allegory
1.	1921	Mizil, Prahova	Ion Iordănescu	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	The Motherland History
2.	1922-1936	Bucharest, Ilfov	Ion Jalea, Cornel Medrea, Constantin Baraschi, Mac Constantinescu, Alexandru Călinescu, Dimitrie Paciurea, Costin Petrescu	<i>The Arch of Triumph</i> Reliefs	Victory
3.	1923	Robănești, Dolj	I. Constantin Dimitriu-Bârlad	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory
4.	1924	Bucharest Ilfov	Vasile Ionescu Varo	<i>Monument to the Heroes from 1916-1918</i> Sculpture in the round	The Motherland
5.	1924	Bucharest Military Museum	Ion Iordănescu	<i>They Shall Not Pass</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory/The Motherland
6.	1924	Băilești, Dolj	Ion Iordănescu	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory
7.	1926	Telega, Prahova	I. Constantin Dimitriu-Bârlad	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Relief	Victory
8.	1926	Sibiu, Sibiu	Ion Pavelescu-Dino	<i>Monument to the Romanian Officers</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory/The Motherland
9.	1927	Caracal, Olt	Ion Schmidt-Faur	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory/The Motherland
10.	1927	Iași	Olga Sturdza	<i>The Union Monument</i> Sculpture in the round	The Motherland, Three feminine allegories
11.	1927	Iași	I. Constantin Dimitriu-Bârlad	<i>Attacking Cavalryman Statue</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory
12.	1929	Slănic, Prahova	Ioan Schmit-Faur	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory
13.	1930	Bucharest	Ion Jalea, Corneliu Medrea	<i>The Monument to the Railway Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory/The Motherland, Another feminine allegory, the wife and mother
14.	1930	Predeal, Brașov	Oscar Han	<i>Monument to the soldier and poet Mihail Săulescu</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory

No.	Date	Location	Author/initiator	Name of the Monument/Type	Type of allegory
15.	1930	Oltenița, Călărași	Ion Iordănescu	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory
16.	1932	Bucharest	Rafaello Romanelli	<i>Sanitary Heroes Monument</i> Sculpture in the round Relief	Victory Nurse/Charity sister
17.	1932	Afumați, Ilfov	Ion Iordănescu	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory
18.	1933	Drobeta Turnu-Severin	Theodor Burcă	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory
19.	1933	Huși, Vaslui	Mihai Onofrei	<i>Monument to the Glory of the Romanian Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory/The Motherland
20.	1934	Tișița, Vrancea	Oscar Han	<i>Statue of Victory</i> Sculpture in the round	Ecaterina Teodoroiu as Victory
21.	1936	Mărășești	Ion Jalea and Corneliu Medrea	<i>Mausoleum of Mărășești</i> <i>The Glory Dome</i> Relief	Victory
22.	1936	Târgu-Jiu	Milița Pătrașcu	Ecaterina Teodoroiu's Mausoleum Relief	Victory/The Motherland
23.	1937	Azuga, Prahova	Ion Iordănescu	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Victory
24.	1938	Constanța	Gheorgiu Zoanel	<i>Monument to the Heroes of the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment</i> Relief	Victory
25.	1939	Târgu Neamț	Theodor Burcă	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Relief	Victory/The Motherland

Source: Own elaboration, based on data from the lists of the monuments and memorial sites at Ministerul Culturii (n.d.)

Table 2: List of monuments and memorial sites dedicated to women/living allegories

No.	Date	Location	Author/initiator	Name of the Monument/Type	Character
1.	1920	Târgu Jiu	Collective	<i>Memorial Plaque to "the elder, the women, the scouts and children of Gorj"</i>	Women are mentioned in the inscription
2.	1922	Bucharest	Ion Jalea	<i>Monument to the French Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Nurse/Sister of charity at the Red Cross Allegory
3.	1922- 1936	Bucharest	Ion Jalea, Cornel Medrea, Constantin Baraschi, Mac Constantinescu, Alexandru Călinescu, Dimitrie Paciurea, Costin Petrescu	<i>The Arch of Triumph</i> Relief	Queen Mary

No.	Date	Location	Author/Initiator	Name of the Monument/Type	Character
4.	1923/ 1925	Slatina	Dimitrie Mățăuanu	Statue of Ecaterina Teodoroiu Sculpture in the round	Ecaterina Teodoroiu
5.	1927	Iași	Olga Sturdza	<i>The Union Monument</i> Sculpture in the round	Queen Mary
6.	1928	Brăila	Vasile Ionescu Varo	Statue of Ecaterina Teodoroiu Sculpture in the round	Ecaterina Teodoroiu
7.	1936	Târgu-Jiu	Milița Pătrașcu	Ecaterina Teodoroiu's Mausoleum Relief	Ecaterina Teodoroiu
8.	1932	Bucharest	Rafaello Romanelli	<i>Sanitary Heroes Monument</i> Relief	Queen Mary
9.	1934	Tișița, Vrancea	Oscar Han	<i>Statue of Victory</i> Sculpture in the round	Ecaterina Teodoroiu as Victory
10.	1936	Mărășești	Ion Jalea and Corneliu Medrea	<i>The Glory Dome</i> Relief	Queen Mary
11.	1937	Azuga, Prahova	Ion Iordănescu	<i>Monument to the Heroes</i> Sculpture in the round	Ecaterina Teodoroiu

Source: Own elaboration, based on data from the lists of the monuments and memorial sites at Ministerul Culturii (n.d.)

Most often, Victory appears as a woman. She has a God-like shape, barefoot, winged, but not always, with an upheld arm, a laurel wreath in her hand, a symbol of triumph and military victories. Sometimes, instead of her arm raised, Victory holds a trumpet, heralding the victory. Yet, the trumpet might also be a symbol or attribute of Fame. For sure, this representation is an allusion to the sacrifices made by soldiers. Such monuments are those by sculptor Ion Iordănescu for the communities in Băilești, Oltenița), and Afumați. As well, the one from Drobeta Turnu-Severin, by Theodor Burcă (Figure 1) (Kovacs, 2016).

Figure 1: Monument to the Heroes by Theodor Burcă, Drobeta Turnu-Severin

Source: Andrea, 2013

Ion Iordănescu also created the monument in Azuga (Figure 2). I will mention it again when discussing real feminine allegories because, in this monument, besides Victory, appears Ecaterina Teodoroiu.



Figure 2: Victory and Ecaterina Teodoroiu – Monument to the Heroes by Ion Iordănescu, Azuga, Prahova

Source: Fodor, 2022

Sometimes, Victory carries a sword, most often held downwards, an allusion to the fact that the war was over, and the victory achieved. There are two monuments, atypical of the rest, but very similar to one another: the one in Robănești, Dolj (Figure 3), and the one in Iași, “The Attacking Cavalryman Statue” (Figure 4). They were both realised by sculptor I. Constantin Dimitriu-Bârlad. They represent Victory in a fighting posture, with the sword raised, flanking a cavalryman. The sculptures suggest that the goddess is urging the soldier towards victory. In these two monuments, the artist replaced the laurel wreath with oak leaves.



Figure 3: Victory – Monument to the Heroes by I. Constantin Dimitriu-Bârlad, Robănești, Dolj

Source: Primăria Robănești, 2022



Figure 4: The Attacking Cavalryman Statue

Source: Miehs, 2015

Another symbol of Victory is the shield. It appears, in the Victory sculpted by Rafaello Romanelli for the Sanitary Heroes Monument in Bucharest (Figure 5). This artistic choice alludes more to the Greek goddess Athena-Nike.



Figure 5: Sanitary Heroes Monument (relief representing Queen Mary as a nurse)

Source: Google Street View, 2021a

A winged Victory appears also in the monument realised by Oscar Han in Predeal, 1930. The same allegory is on a bas-relief from the monument in Constanța, realised in 1938 by Gheorghe Zuanel. Victory is also on the monument in Băilești (Figure 6). It is 'The Union' realised by Ion Iordănescu. Victory, sounding the trumpet, looks as if she raises from the back of a wounded soldier. The suggestion is obvious: only through sacrifice and hard effort can one win the war.



Figure 6: Victory – Monument to the Heroes by Ion Iordănescu, Băilești, Dolj

Source: Google Street View, 2022

Usually, Victory is not represented alone. Most often she is part of a statuary group. She appears on the verge of crowning with the laurel wreath a male figure. Victory crowns the king, in Ion Iordănescu's 'We shall not pass' sculpture from 1924 in the Military Museum in Bucharest (Constantin, 2019). A soldier is crowned by Victory in Ion Iordănescu's Monument to the Officers in Oltenița; Raffaello Romanelli's Sanitary Heroes Monuments in București; and Theodor Burcă's Monument to the Heroes in Drobeta Turnu-Severin. A similar iconography appears also in the reliefs placed on other public monuments. See for instance the immense frieze, 100 meters long, on the Glory Dome at the Mausoleum of Mărășești (Figure 7). Here, artists Ion Jalea and Corneliu Medrea realised a winged Victory flanked by Queen Mary and King Ferdinand.



Figure 7: Relief Queen Mary – The Glory Dome by Ion Jalea & Corneliu Medrea, Mărășești

Source: Mausolee din România, 2022

A sculptural relief is also on the monument by Theodor Burcă in Târgu Neamț (Monumente istorice din Neamț, n.d.), though this could also have a double meaning. Such is the case of I. Constantin Dimitriu Bârlad's relief, a winged Victory on the monument in Telegă, Prahova. The goddess helps a wounded soldier. She has a flag and a laurel wreath, thus she could either be the allegory of Victory or the allegory of the Motherland. The last two examples, female figures, with a double or mixed significance, are not the only ones.

In fact, there are several monuments in which these female figures symbolise either Victory or the Motherland, or both at the same time. It looks as if Victory, merged in symbolism, with the allegory of the Motherland – *Patria*. In most cases, the goddess-like posture is preserved. The female figure has the laurel wreath or the sword, but she also wears such national symbols as the garment, the flag, or the national emblem. See for instance the monument realised by sculptor Ion Iordănescu for the city of Mizil (Figure 8). Here, Victory wears a national garment and has a national flag (Teodorescu, 2000).



Figure 8: The Motherland and History – Monument to the Heroes by Ion Iordănescu, Mizil, Prahova

Source: Primăria Oraşului Mizil, 2021

One of the most iconic monuments of this type was realised by the sculptor Vasile Ionescu Varo: the Monument to the Heroes from 1916-1918, placed in Bucharest (Figure 9). It is a 2.20 m-high bronze statuary group composed of two characters: the feminine one is for sure the allegory of the Victory-Motherland as she is dressed in the national costume, holding the national flag in one hand, a laurel wreath at her feet.



Figure 9: The Motherland – Monument to the Heroes from 1916-1918 by Vasile Ionescu Varo, Bucharest

Source: Miehs, 2014

A similar artistic convention can be seen also in the monument dedicated to the Railway Heroes placed in Bucharest (Figure 10). The monument is the result of a collaboration of two Romanian sculptors, Ion Jalea and Corneliu Medrea. They represented the female figure, dressed in the national garment, holding a laurel wreath above a railway worker's head. It is a merged Victory-Motherland allegory.



Figure 10: Victory/The Motherland, the allegory of the Family (the wife/ mother and the child) – The Monument to the Railway Heroes by Ion Jalea and Corneliu Medrea, Bucharest

Source: Miehs, 2011

The monuments of I. Schmitt-Faur in Caracal and Slănic also represent the Motherland in the posture of Victory. She has the national flag as well as the laurel wreath. Whereas in the one in Târgu Neamț, realised by Theodor Burcă, the female figure holds the national emblem. It is rather difficult to say for sure which notion they personify in the case of two of the monuments on the list, the ones in Huși and Sibiu (Figure 11). They might represent either Victory or the Motherland, or both. In the public imagination, as in many other cases, they are seen as representations of the Motherland.



Figure 11: Monument to the Romanian Officers, Sibiu

Source: Fodor, 2022

One monument steps out from the list for two reasons. First, because it was realised by a sculptress (one of the few monuments created by a woman), Olga Sturdza, and secondly because the allegory of the Motherland is different from what we have seen and discussed so far (Figure 12). The allegory of the country is represented in a mother-like posture, embracing 'three daughters', each representing the personification of one of the three united provinces. What is important is that the allegory of the Motherland has the features of Queen Mary (Vlasiu, 2012). This is the reason why the monument is also on the list with the monuments representing real women. Thus, I will refer to the monument again, in the next pages. I must mention that this kind of monument is different from the others. It is a war monument that commemorates the war's major outcome: the creation of Great Romania. As well, we know that the monument was inaugurated in the presence of Queen Mary (Vlasiu, 2012).



Figure 12: The Union Monument by Olga Sturdza, Iași – Queen Mary as the allegory of Romania, postcard

Source: Clișeu Union, 2021

Although the personifications of Victory and Motherland are the most frequent ones, there are also others. History/Clio, the Family/the Mother appear in *ronde bosse* or reliefs either on the same monuments with Victory and the Motherland or on other monuments alongside masculine figures. The allegory of History appears on the Monument to the Heroes realised by Ion Iordănescu in the city of Mizil. She appears as a seated woman holding a book. Next to her, there is a soldier whom she guides while writing his name in the book of eternity. The message is evident: his sacrifice assures him a place in the Book of History; his sacrifice will not be forgotten. In the monument of Ion Jalea and Corneliu Medrea, the Monument to the Railway Heroes in Bucharest, besides the allegory of Victory-Motherland, placed on one side of the pedestal, there is another female figure with a child. She is the allegory of the wife and mother – the Family. This is the most obvious interpretation as next to them there is a young soldier who looks and cares for them. It is a very suggestive representation not only of the glory and victory but also of the sorrows and sufferings ordinary people had to endure. The first tragic moment was when saying goodbye to the families. From a different perspective, the monument is a visual representation of the motivational discourse led by the authorities during the war years. It focused on the sense of duty to the country but also on the protection of the family.

On the Monument to the French Heroes by Ion Jalea in Bucharest (Figure 13), there is the female figure of a nurse, one of the most iconic representations of women. Perhaps it is the most significant one in terms of female public resonance, as this was the women's main role in the war. So, to a certain extent, this choice of representation could also be understood as a visual tribute to the women and the efforts they also made.



Figure 13: Nurse/Sister of charity at the Red Cross Allegory – Monument to the French Heroes by Ion Jalea, Bucharest

Source: Вокруг Света За 80 Лет, 2018

There is another sculpture, though not a public monument, realised by Theodor Burcă. It is relevant in the present context for two reasons: first, because it is a different allegory from the ones we have discussed so far, and secondly, because it reveals that artists, when not being limited by the artistic conventions of the public monuments, worked, and expressed more freely the dark face of the war. So, this sculpture represents the allegory of War as a nude woman resting on a pyramid made of human skulls, a symbol of the war's horrors and deaths (Neagoe, n.d.).



Figure 14: The War's Horrors by Theodor Burcă, Craiova Art Museum

Source: Neagoe (n.d.).

Overall, I counted around 25 monuments where there are one or more feminine allegories. In most cases these represent allegories of abstract notions – inspired by mythology and visible in the character's outfit, attributes, and posture; few are 'hybrid', a merged Victory-Motherland version. On these monuments, all realised by famous artists of the time, many of whom were also combatants in the Romanian army, women tend to be passive subjects. The female form is used as an artistic convention. They were not a tribute to the women's involvement in the war. However, beyond these artistic conventions, there is for sure a significance for the women in these monuments as they could identify with the female figures, even though this was not the artists' intention. As for other allegories, like the nurse or the mother, one can observe a gender perspective in the sense that women appear as they were expected to behave during the war: they are *the mothers*, who needed protection, or *the nurses* comforting the wounded. Thus, women, for sure could have understood this visual narrative and identified with it.

### THE "LIVING ALLEGORIES"

This category includes those kinds of monuments dedicated to 'the living allegories' (see Table 2). By this, I understand real individuals but presented as the incarnation of abstract ideas or values as well (Burke, 2001). The monuments I have studied so far prove that the Romanian female pantheon is limited to only three characters: Ecaterina Teodoroiu, Queen Mary, and the child hero, Maria Ion Zaharia. Ecaterina Teodoroiu, 'the soldier-woman', fought and died on the battlefield of Mărășești and her sacrifice made her a legendary figure together with Queen Marye, the wife of King Ferdinand, whose involvement in the war was recognised by contemporaries, Romanians, and foreigners alike. As for Maria Ion Zaharia, she is less known when compared to Ecaterina Teodoroiu and Queen Mary, but she also sacrificed her life to aid the Romanian army fighting at Mărășești. She was 12 years old when she lost her life. Her historical destiny is interesting as she was turned into a legendary figure through historical movies and legends during the communist regime (the movie *Baladă pentru Măriuca* [Ballad for Măriuca], 1969, directed by Constantin Neagu-Almaș, 2005).

It should be noted, also, that some of the monuments dedicated to their memory were built after 1939, the time limit I chose for this study. For instance, the two monuments dedicated to Maria Ion Zaharia, from Haret, were both erected in 1977 (see Tulai, n.d.). In addition, some of them were destroyed during the communist regime, as a form of iconoclasm against the royal figures. In these circumstances, Ecaterina Teodoroiu dominates in public artworks. Out of the list of approximately 32 monuments with a female figure, either as *ronde-bosse* sculptures or reliefs, six are dedicated to Ecaterina Teodoroiu, and two more were commissioned in 1976 and 1978. All eight have common traits. Usually, Ecaterina wears a military uniform. The most significant ones are those in Slatina (Figure 15) and Târgu-Jiu (Figure 16). The one in Slatina is the creation of Dimitrie Mățăuanu. It was the first monument built in her honour. It was commissioned in 1921 and inaugurated in 1925 in the presence of Queen Mary. Moreover, it was the result of a public initiative for which a committee was organised. This was under the patronage of Queen Mary.



Figure 15: Ecaterina Teodoroiu monument, Slatina

Source: Radu, 2011

The other one (Figure 16) is the monument in Târgu Jiu, sculpted by Milița Pătrașcu. This initiative belonged also to women: it was the Women's League in Gorj. It is a sarcophagus with reliefs from Ecaterina's life. Besides the reliefs, at each corner of the monument, there is a female figure, all dressed in national garments, a laurel wreath in their hands. We cannot say for sure if the Women's League chose to work with Milița Pătrașcu for she was a woman or because she was a very talented artist. Perhaps both reasons were decisive. Milița Pătrașcu also realised another public monument. It is the Monument to the Heroes of the Regiment 13 Artillery in Constanța.



Figure 16: Ecaterina Teodoroiu's Mausoleum, Târgu Jiu

Source: Rasub, 2020

As for the representation of Queen Mary, two are in Bucharest. The royal effigies from the Arch of Triumph (Figure 17) were removed by the communists.

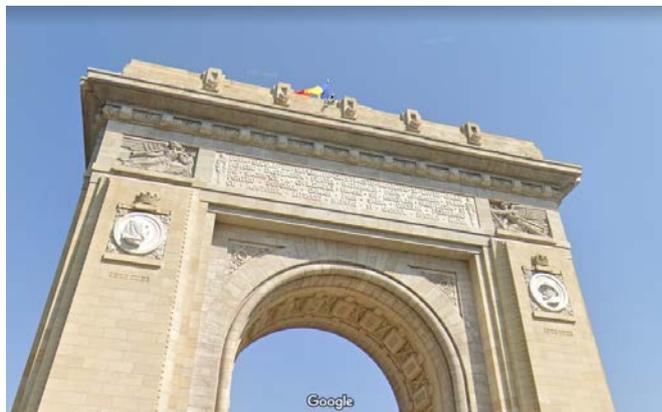


Figure 17: Relief – detail of Victory – The Arch of Triumph

by Ion Jalea, Cornel Medrea, Constantin Baraschi, Mac Constantinescu, Alexandru Călinescu, Dimitrie Paciurea, Costin Petrescu, Bucharest

Source: Google Street View, 2021b

The other one is also a relief on the Monument to the Sanitary Heroes (Figure 18). Romanelli represented the Queen wearing the uniform of the Red Cross nurses. Beside her is Princess Elisabeta, her daughter. As mentioned above, the Queen's figure appears on the Glory Dome's frieze on the Mărășești mausoleum.



Figure 18: Sanitary Heroes Monument

Source: Google Street View, 2021c

Queen Mary appears on the monument created by Olga Sturdza in Iași, as I mentioned before. The monument was destroyed by the communists after 1947 (Iftimi, 2003). I know the original from a postcard dated 1927, as well as from the replica realised in the 1990s by the sculptor Constantin Crengăniș. The monument represented three female figures dressed in national garments, an allegory of the three united territories, protected by the allegory of the Motherland. She is represented as a woman dressed in a military mantle with the face of Queen Mary. To a certain extent, this unique artistic choice recalls the painting of Theodor Aman, “The Union of the Principalities”.

In these kinds of representations, the message is more explicit than in the one with the personification of abstract notions, though they are not difficult to read, either. But in these cases, female characters are real, so people, of both sexes, can resonate with them. Thus, we could say that in this type of monument, the female figure is no longer a passive presence. Moreover, the postures they appear in are objective in the sense that they reflect the role these women played in real life during the war years: Ecaterina as a military war hero and Queen Mary as the mother of all Romanians, a queen, and a nurse.

#### THE MANY ANONYMOUS WOMEN OF THE WAR

With the few exceptions noted above, women in commemorative art are not very present. But when they appear they are represented collectively, as victims who needed protection, as we saw in Ion Jalea’s and Corneliu Medrea’s Monument to the Railway Heroes. This is the case as well as in the small, more private works. Their absence in the public ones can be easily explained. For public artworks, artists had to obey the artistic conventions. But in the others, they did not have to be so triumphalist in style. For instance, the artists portrayed anonymous women, in the posture of the victims. Thus, they can reveal and focus on the tragedies caused by the war. These are rather private forms of remembrance through art, which perhaps deserve to be the object of another study. For the time being, I mention some of this kind of work. See paintings by Ștefan Dimitrescu, “The Dead, in Cașin”, remembering the bombardments there. Similar subjects are in the works of Nicolae Tonitza, “The Soldier’s Mother”, which shows a mourning mother, dressed in black, kneeling at her son’s grave; “Women in the Cemetery”, a group of three

ordinary women in a graveyard, or “The Line for Bread”, dominated by women, all anonymous with indistinguishable facial features (as with all the characters in the painting), an acknowledgment of the common sufferings during war. I include also the bronze sculpture by Corneliu Medrea, “The Refugee”, representing a desperate young woman with two children trying to run away from the invaded territories. For sure, this work captures the dramatic dimension of war: all the sufferings endured by the real woman left behind by the fathers and husbands who were at the front. Some of them can be seen on the webpage of Muzeul Virtual al Unirii [Union Virtual Museum].

To what extent do these memorials target a female public? What do they tell us from a gender perspective? If we take into account the precarity of the female presence in commemorative art, we might conclude that this preference for allegorical figures suggests a male-dominated perspective of the war, focused on exalting the victory and soldiers’ sacrifices. Yet, this conclusion is too simple to accept. One should not limit it to this but rather consider lots of evidence that suggest the women’s need and honest wish to be involved in the creation of such visual forms of commemoration. This might have also influenced the artistic choices. Moreover, the representations of Ecaterina and Queen Mary prove that women were not ‘second-class’ citizens. This brings us to the point of addressing the issue of women as producers and commissioners of such projects of war memorials. This approach will prove that there was a real need for female heroes as well. This was a way by which women’s efforts and sacrifices were acknowledged. Moreover, their initiatives also proved how women accepted the duty of honouring the deaths, as one of the duties of their gender.

#### WOMEN AS ‘PRODUCERS’ OF COMMEMORATIVE ART

This category is compulsory for understanding the choice for the female representations as well as for women’s involvement in the creation of the monuments of war. Thus, we can argue that women were not just passive presences but actively involved in the act of creation. In addition, they needed such representations. This is the subject that for sure needs further study as part of the research into the cult of heroes, from a gender perspective, in interwar Romania. To reveal women’s role in creating commemorative war memorials, we used the same list of monuments commissioned during the period 1919-1939. According to it, women’s involvement arises in three circumstances: as artists, as commissioners, either individually or as members of women’s associations, and as part of the local communities. In such cases, they appear on the monuments’ inscriptions, anonymously and collectively under such forms as ‘women’, or ‘widows’. They are among others who contributed to the respective monument. On the list, we have only two women artists. And as for associations, the ones that stand out are the Women Reunions and the Society of Romanian Orthodox Women. Women Reunions emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were very actively involved in cultural activities. During the War, these reunions turned to philanthropic activities especially helping and caring for the wounded (Soroștineanu, 2016). The same shift in activities can be seen also in the Society of Romanian Orthodox Women. During the war years, the society organised hospitals for the wounded as well as kindergartens for the soldiers’ children (Negru, 2016).

Women as artists – I already mentioned the sculptors that realised the commemorative monuments. The only ones are that of Olga Sturdza in Iași and the one of Milița Pătrașcu previously discussed. It is difficult to appreciate whether or not their choices were gender determined. But we should not reject this possibility.

As, for the collective initiatives, the monumental project of Mărășești Mausoleum remains the most important one, and not only because it was commissioned by a women's reunion. The Society of Romanian Orthodox Women had the initiative. The entire process, the initiative, and the fulfilment of the project are well documented in the reunion's archive (Negru, 2016). So, to women belonged one of the first initiatives of creating a monument to commemorate the war. Their effort must be connected with women's roles in the funerary cult which imposed the responsibility for commemorating the lost ones. The members of the society made every effort to construct this memorial site. It was a project that took almost 15 years to complete (1923-1938).

A formal initiative of building a monument belongs to the Women's Reunion in Brașov who had this initiative in 1939 (Figure 19). It is the statue of the Unknown Hero. There is no female figure on the monument. But the monument's inscription lets people know that the Women's Reunion financed it.



Figure 19: War monument in Brașov

Source: Fodor, 2021

The National League of Women in Gorj had a similar initiative. They contributed to the monument of Ecaterina Teodoroiu in Târgu Jiu (Nichifor, 1988).

As the examples above prove, the local communities had these sorts of initiatives. One should mention also War Widows Associations. They contributed, together with the local community members, to the building of the Mausoleum in Soveja. So, the most frequent initiatives are collective, local authorities and citizens of both sexes made efforts to have a memorial site to remember the lost ones. In these situations, women are part of the anonymous collectivity. Yet, they are present and actively involved in all the ceremonies organised there. Indeed, they are rather on the organising committees and seldom in the foreground. This does not mean that they are not actively involved in the effort of remembrance. Once again, Queen Mary stands out as she is the leading character of the commemorative practices. We see her at the inauguration ceremonies, praying and visiting the war cemeteries. If during the war years, she gave the example to be followed by all Romanian women, now she set the example for the commemorative practices. Her role during and after the war made Romanians recognise her as the incarnation of all feminine virtues.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our findings prove that a gender perspective is useful to understand how men and women coped with all the horrors and tragedies of the war. Moreover, the focus on this type of visual narrative can explain also people's choice of how to remember the First World War. As for the women, they were present in the commemorative art production as subjects, artists, and commissioners. Indeed, the last category is the richest one. We called this: 'the category of the many anonymous women of war'. See, similar cases in Britain, France, or the United States. In all these countries, and not only, there was a 'memorial boom' as most often it was the initiatives of private men, women, and local groups that led to demands for the erection of war memorials (Jacob & Kenneth, 2019).

For the Romanian case, the number of each type of monument is presented in Figure 20. Note the fact that, in some cases, the same monument has more than just one female representation.

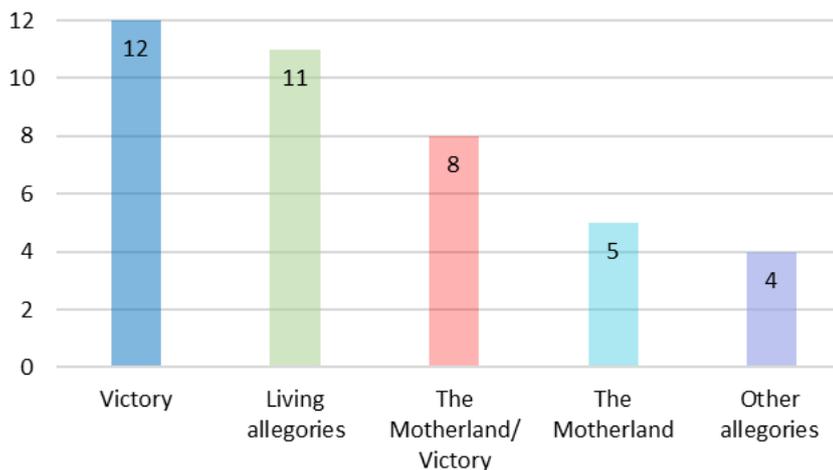


Figure 20: Distribution of monuments according to the female presences and representations

Source: The author

As subjects, the predominant female representations are those of allegories of abstract notions – Victory and the Motherland, sometimes in a hybrid syncretic merger. In certain cases, the female figure is an allusion to Queen Mary. This type of representation is in the category of the 'living allegories'. They are images of real persons who gained a strong sense of abstraction. They become incarnations of noble values: patriotism, sacrifice, maternity, and victory. Less in number, are the busts and reliefs dedicated to Ecaterina Teodoroiu. She was the only Romanian woman to gain a mythological dimension so shortly after her death.

Besides these female representations on monuments, women were present in the commemorative art also as sponsors, and as artists. There were only two sculptresses who created such public commemorative monuments according to the list. As for the first case, it is significant that some of the first, and one of the most grandiose memorial sites, were led by women. This definitely must be connected with the role women had in the funerary rituals. Indeed, most initiatives were collective. This is normal as these types of monuments required huge efforts on the part of local communities.

We can appreciate also that women were actively involved in all the stages of creating memorial sites. They were either sponsors, artists, or participants in events. This is, for sure, strong evidence that they resonated with these visual narratives. Moreover, there are documents such as public speeches, fundraising campaigns, or press articles that prove that women assumed a duty to honour the sacrifices made by the Romanian army. See for instance the articles written by women, and published in the journal *Cultul eroilor noștri* [The Cult of Heroes] (Doneaud, 1920). The Queen is also among the few women authors who write in it. The journal was a sort of official gazette of the national society dealing with the cult of heroes, *Societate mormintelor eroilor căzuți în război* [The Society of the Graves of Fallen Heroes]. The Queen is the one who imposes the attitudes for the commemorative practices (MS Regina, 1920). We add here that the Queen's words are on several monuments as well: "you should not cry at the heroes' grave but rather honour them in songs so that their name becomes an echo in the legends over the centuries" (MS Regina, 1920). Such is the case of the Monument to the Heroes in Săcele (Figure 21) or the one in Scornicești (Figure 22).



Figure 21: War monument in Săcele

Source: Google Street View, 2012



Figure 22: War monument in Scornicești

Source: Google Street View, 2019

So, for sure women resonated with these visual representations dedicated to the commemoration of the war. After all, women, like men, felt the need to remember and mourn. Yet, differently from men, and considering the gender stereotypes, they could exteriorise their grief at these memorial sites.

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