

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On Tuesday, August 7, 1877, Marie complains to fate: “To die! My God, to die! To die without leaving anything behind me? To die like a dog, like hundreds of thousands of women whose names are barely engraved on their tombs?”

When my mother retired in 1973 after twenty-five years of teaching, she came across a copy of Mathilde Blind's English translation of Marie's Journal at a friend's garage sale and discovered a new passion that focused her efforts over the next two decades. Having encountered Marie in a graduate school course on Shaw and Ibsen at the University of Southern California back in the 1930's, she had already read George Bernard Shaw's praise of Marie's independent and modern spirit. As she looked for more materials, she learned that the original manuscripts had been deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris by Marie's mother. She ordered microfilms of the manuscript, purchased a microfilm reader, and began transcribing and translating the Journal with the dedicated help of several of her women friends—Edith Gay, Veronica Gregs, and Kathryn Charon.

My mother set out to bring the real Marie alive for readers of English. As she compared versions of the diary with what she read in the manuscript, she realized how completely Marie's true voice had been suppressed. While all earlier translations had been based on the falsified Theuriet edition,¹ my mother wanted modern readers to encounter Marie as she had come to know her—her anguish, her anger, her pride, and her hope. She found a new Marie, uncut and unvarnished, in the manuscript pages and never lost her commitment to let Marie's life appear with all its difficulties, many seemingly of her own making. She saw the vitality, honesty, and desperation in Marie and wanted to alter the false picture given by the earlier editions.

Taking on my mother's project after her death in 1991, I have found both women and men who have similarly dedicated themselves to Marie. The works of many women contributed to the translation now in front of you. Mme Colette Cosnier wrote (in French) the first modern biography (1985). Mme Ginette Apostolescu transcribed (in French) the entire Journal (1991-2005). Mme Lucile Le Roy brought out (in French) a scholarly edition of Books 75-86 of the Journal (1999). Mme Tatiana Shvets organized a conference on Marie in Poltava in the Ukraine in 2008 (the 150th

¹ Please see the Introduction for more details.

anniversary of Marie's birth) and produced two volumes filled with scholarly essays (in French and Russian).

My mother sought to present Marie without analysis or interpretation, simply providing the text as it stands. I have tried to do the same. Marie was a girl born too early, into the wrong century, when what she aspired to was not proper or possible for respectable females. The changes in the world in the century and a half since Marie's birth in 1858 have led many men to become advocates for Marie, her life and her works. I have been astonished at how many men wrote to me after the first volume of our translation of the Journal came out from Chronicle Books in 1997. Like Shaw, they found her vitality and her self-assertion an affirmation rather than an affront. They wanted to know what happened in the second volume—how Marie's life had developed, what her griefs and her triumphs were.

One of these men, my editor Vincent Nicolosi at Fonthill Press, is responsible for spearheading and carrying through this current edition, which revises the first volume *I Am the Most Interesting Book of All* and provides for the first time the second volume *Lust for Glory: Gloriam Cupiditate*. He has responded meticulously to the translation itself, looking closely at Marie's narrative for coherence and substance. His admiration for Marie and his delight at her infinite variety have led him to shape the Journal into an illustrated edition that will offer glimpses of Marie's world, along with a selection of photographs of Marie and her art works. I am deeply indebted to him for his faith in this project and in Marie.

Over the twenty years since my mother's death, I have received various forms of support, including two sabbaticals, for my work on Marie from Linfield College, where I teach. Colleagues have helped with linguistic, historical, and artistic issues raised by the text. Many students at Linfield have worked with me at various stages in preparing the text and researching the glossary—Erin Annis, Amber Ball, Meredith Blake, Sarah Breeze, Hannah Bressler, Karen Churchill, Carolyn Flannery, Stephanie Fry, Sherra Inman, Tanya Matthews, Krista Olsen, Diana Polhamus, Alita Putnam, Kaitlin Seitz, Allison Smith, Kathryn Tippetts, and Nichole Tyska.

My greatest debt is to my husband, Charles Strong, who has endured the last two decades of obsession with Marie largely without complaint. Though he has reservations about Marie's character (especially in her treatment of her family and the young men who had the misfortune to fall in love with her), he champions her struggle against the odds and acknowledges her promise as an artist. His sensitivity to idiomatic English has kept me from falling into awkward "translator-ese" when I could no longer see past the French to the shape of natural, modern English.

His Introduction to Marie follows this Preface. It will prepare readers to enter Marie's nineteenth-century world and to discover a narrative based on a genuine life, rather than a fictional one shaped to an aesthetic end by an author.

Though Marie escaped the fate of those *hundreds of thousands of women whose names are barely engraved on their tombs*—she has, after all, a magnificent monument inscribed both with her name and the titles of her works of art—her real story, conveyed by her Journal, has not yet been available to the reader of English. We hope that these volumes will make her live again for a new audience.

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