

IS SURVIVAL RESISTANCE?

Experiences of Gypsy Women under Holocaust

By

Anna Szász

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Supervisor: Professor Anna Loutfi

Second reader: Professor András Pap

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Abstract

My thesis claims that politics calls people's existence constantly into question, that there are moments of transience and unpredictability built into humanity, endowing individuals with the consciousness and therefore the capacity to conceive themselves differently from the requirements of subjectification. I will approach the Roma Holocaust in Hungary by looking at forms of resistance which took shape and aimed to challenge every abuse of power. My purpose is to suggest another path, to read the Holocaust through subordinate groups' prolonged effort to resist. I will take women's experiences, and using them as resources for social analysis guided by the assumption that relations of domination are in a dialectical relationship with relations of resistance and are able to contest the aim of political authorities to preserve humanity as well as establish collectivities in atomized formations. I assume that individuals have the consciousness, capacity and intent to question the existing social order, and to offer other discursive strategies which enable them to promote their vision of world and thereby survive. If the individual is trying to thwart, defy, subvert the aims of an oppressor, he or she is engaged in resistance.

I. Introduction

Culture can be understood as an open and never-ending, unstable set of interactions as well as a process of negotiating meanings. Taking the context of the nation-state it appears to be as a successful compromise of these sets of cultural differences between social groups and could be regarded as the ideal of equality, solidarity as well as freedom, based on the exchange of political loyalty and obedience for promise of security and participation. However, the frame of the nation-state orders a vast number of different groups into the formation of cultural compromise, and those collectivities that are weaker or have not participated before are forced to address themselves to coercively imposed forms of collective representations. Since plurality and heterogeneity are often regarded as threats to any society's 'unity,' alternative ways of making sense of the world are not understood, and thus may be quickly marginalized in public debate. In consequence, not only social inclusion and equality but also exclusion is a basic element in the operation of a nation-state. The process of exclusion offers several methods for the reestablishment of the prevailing cultural compromise, such as assimilation or integration. However if the above-mentioned methods fail to serve the state's perceived interests, then more violent strategies take precedence, such as persecution or extermination.¹

This paper wishes to apply the idea that states may resort to persecution and extermination when assimilation or integration fail in the context of the Gypsies communities in Hungary, focusing on Gypsy² women's experiences in particular. The Roma, with an unassimilated meaning-system as well as an interpretation of values and events differing from that of the mainstream in Hungary represented the 'Other' within Hungarian society. The failure of inserting them into the majority's 'way of living' and the threat originated from it

¹ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998)

² I use Gypsy and Roma as synonyms.

legitimized the attack on their very essence, on their humanity and existence via executive directions to ‘let them die.’³ The Gypsy Holocaust in Hungary, between 1944 - 1945, justified the above profound demand to eliminate what cannot be integrated. According to the archives it took a huge toll of human lives, an estimated number in-between 30.000 and 60.000.⁴ The excluded and marginalized, did not however comply by becoming accomplices to their own subjugation and oppression. Rather, they were able to design discursive strategies concerning their ideas of what is just and unjust, holy and profane as well as to articulate their vision of the world. In those special spaces accessible only to themselves, they were able to develop an offstage self-disclosure, a set of low-profile forms of resistance which kept them alive and let them survive.

Why is it relevant to deal with the Gypsy Holocaust and why focus on women’s experiences of it? Gypsies, like Jews were regarded by the Hungarians as a degenerate race and were stigmatized as a source of danger to an exclusive vision of ‘Hungarian’ society. In order to more fully comprehend how racially “imagined communities”⁵ construct a complex – and often contradictory – logic of Us vs. Them exclusions, that is to say in order to understand more fully what the Holocaust was in all its dimensions, it is necessary to thematize the ways in which Gypsies, too, were targeted by European totalitarian regimes. In Hungary the Gypsy Holocaust was less documented as well as less organized, and occurred in a much shorter period of time than that of its Jewish counterpart. However it is still necessary to explore this ‘different’ Holocaust as one dimension of a broader political picture: its power relations, its processes of forced categorization, the clashes of different political interests and inspirations,

³ The term is taken from: Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey. Lectures at the College de France (1975-1976) (London, Penguin: 2003)

⁴ László Karsai, *Holokauszt*. (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2001)

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1991)

and testimonies of survivors. I will argue that the evidence of the witnesses provide deep understanding of the ways communities resist domination. Furthermore, as reframed memories they have been carefully worked into the contemporary collective memory of Gypsies, and are constitutive elements in their narrations offering a fascinating window into Gypsy subject positions in Europe today. Women's experiences are foregrounded in order to provide a hitherto neglected aspect of this collective remembrance of the Nazi onslaught and to explore how violence is gendered – again in the interest of developing a richer and more finely nuanced understanding of the slippage between imagined solidarities and totalitarian state violence.

I have preliminary some remarks considering the legitimacy of focusing on women on the one hand, on the other hand regarding the validity of my assumption of Roma resistance under domination. First, I was inspired to write this thesis by a presentation at the Central European University given by Lenore J. Weitzman on Jewish women's resistance in Poland's Grodno and Bialystok ghettos during World War II. The women involved in this movement were generally in their twenties, unmarried and were not easily identified as being Jewish. They managed to deliver information from one ghetto to the other, smuggle food and weapons, and finally help people escape from there. They had no hope of destroying the Nazis or of sabotaging their war effort, but they wanted to resist by fighting for the sake of humanity and honor. However it was important that they were women, since they were invisible and were able to demonstrate a different notion of resistance without agendas and daily struggle but with a silent and offstage discourse. Considering the differences between the Gypsy and the Jewish experiences of the Holocaust in terms of time frame, preparations and documentation, but also keeping in mind that both collectivities were targeted for extermination, dehumanization and atomization I would assume that there was also some form of resistance among Roma within the internment camps – with a special focus on the

Csillagerőd/Komárom labor and relocation camp as well as on the Auschwitz/Birkenau death camp. I thus claim that relations of domination invoke relations of resistance, in a dialectical dynamic, I assume that individuals have the consciousness, capacity and intent to question the existing social order, and to offer other discursive strategies which enable them to promote their vision of world and thereby survive. If the individual is trying to thwart, defy, subvert the aims of an oppressor, he or she is engaged in resistance.

I wrote above ‘humanity’ and ‘honor’ as two main values they fought for. By looking at the Holocaust, its operation in terms of humiliation and complete dehumanization one could raise the question what it means for a human being to be ‘non-human,’⁶ to be deprived of any material, mental and physical needs. Is there anything which separates humanity of a human being from biological humanity?⁷ As Bruno Bettelheim writes,⁸ deportees had to give up responding to the environment, and become objects therefore they lost the very essence of their humanity. Following Agamben⁹ I argue that what at stake: is remaining a human being or not. Thus the aspiration of preserving humanity, self-respect and honor is a way of contesting power. It can not be translated into corresponding actions but into a silent strengthening of the community and a resistance to live.

Research questions

My thesis claims that politics calls people’s existence constantly into question, that there are moments of transience and unpredictability built into humanity, endowing individuals with the consciousness and therefore the capacity to conceive themselves

⁶ The term – meaning a limit-life between human and inhuman, between life and death - is taken: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

⁷ Ibid., p.55.

⁸ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart*. (New York: The Free Press, 1960), p.152.

⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.54.

differently from the requirements of subjectification. I will approach the Roma Holocaust in Hungary by looking at forms of resistance which took shape and aimed to challenge every abuse of power, “to give new impetus as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.”¹⁰ My purpose is to suggest another path, to read the Holocaust through the often fugitive political conduct of subordinate groups and their prolonged effort to resist. I will be guided by the assumption that relations of domination are in a dialectical relationship¹¹ with relations of resistance and contest the aim of political authorities to establish collectivities in atomized formations. With neither discursive freedom, nor social existence and consciousness the Roma in Hungary during the Holocaust managed to negate domination as well as act on those ‘values’ of domination.

Therefore my aim is two-fold. First, relations of domination should be exposed. How does power operate within the context of a nation-state? How could both life and death be placed at its center? How is it possible that a world in which states proclaim the value of life above all else is also a world in which states enact mass murder? Is it feasible to define as well as draw distinctions between democracy and totalitarianism, in this regard? How does the formation of such categories support and maintain power relations? Why was the Gypsy population targeted by the National Socialists? Why and how did the question of Gypsies turn into ‘a problem to be solved’?

An analysis of relations of resistance is at the heart of my research. I will ask: can the subaltern speak truth to power? Is it possible that under a process of absolute dehumanization individuals can preserve their humanity? Can simple survival be regarded as resistance? Does a research have the validity and the relevance to deal with women in the context of Holocaust? How can the inadequacy of language be solved concerning testimonies?

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” (“Qu'est-ce que les Lumières ?”), in P. Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp.32-50.

¹¹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

Methodology

Regarding methodology there are three main possible ways to find the application of a general structure of theory in practical scientific disciplines. These are the following: listening to informants, observing behavior and examining historical records, settings and structures.¹² It means that feminist researchers listen carefully to how women informants think about their lives as well as men's lives, and analyze with a critical mind how traditional social scientists conceptualize¹³ or even construct women's and men's lives. Adding experiences of women¹⁴ into the analysis could be accomplished in three ways. First through the appreciation of female social researchers and theorists second, the study of women as victims of male as well as racial dominance, and finally, the examination of women's contribution to activities in the public world.¹⁵ My approach will take women's experiences, and using them as resources for social analysis that might have implications for the interpretation of social structures or historical records of the Gypsy Holocaust. It might broaden the knowledge on Holocaust, help us understand the historical impact of women upon society as well as power-relations and hierarchical positions within society and might contribute for a better understanding of domination. However, Holocaust scholars disagree over whether women and men should be considered as two distinct populations in the study of ethnic destruction. Writers such as Lawrence Langer have challenged the notion that women should be studied separately in historical and social analyses of mass extermination. "The pain of loss and the relief of

¹² Sandra Harding ed., *Feminism and Methodology*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.2.

¹³ There is a way of feminism which blames traditional social theorists that they apply theories in ways that make difficult to understand women participation in social life. Methods, language of academics, conceptual schemes, perspectives, issues which are relevant to understand our experience and the conditions in which we live are all incorporated to a masculine world. It means that there are inbuilt inequalities which favor masculinity placing women into the role of the 'Other.' Further in general, feminism is primarily interested in power-relations and hierarchies.

¹⁴ I use plural enhancing that neither the notion of man nor the notion of woman is universal. However I will argue that bearing in mind class, religion, language, cultural differences there are some kind of universalities. Further I take Gypsy women as a specific category and a 'thread of analysis.'

¹⁵ Sandra Harding ed., *Feminism and Methodology*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 4-5.

survival remain entwined in the memory of those lucky enough to have outlived the atrocities. All efforts to find a rule of hierarchy in that darkness, whether based on gender or will, spirit or hope, reflect only our own need to plant a life sustaining seed in the barren soil that conceals the remnants of two-thirds of European Jewry. The sooner we abandon this design, the quicker we will learn to face such chaos with unshielded eyes.”¹⁶ In contrast, scholars such as Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman maintain¹⁷ that the study of women in the Holocaust is not only valid but necessary to redress the absence of women’s lives and experiences in the documentation of Holocaust history and the preservation of Holocaust memory. In this latter vein, I will assert that the inclusion of women in historical narratives of nationalist discourse not only sheds light on the ways in which women are rendered exclusively biological reproducers, boundary markers, signifiers of ethnic purity and vehicles of ideological reproduction of the collectivity but also brings out the ways in which they contest biopolitical/nationalist discourses as active participants in national, ethnic and military struggles.¹⁸ Gypsy women’s subordination in Hungary during the Holocaust was personal, invisible and intimate. Thus the specific forms of domination and resistance in which they were part a radical critical analysis able to address the public/private dichotomies that have so far served to render their experiences ‘invisible’ to non-Gypsies. I wish to present this totality from the women’s perspective as well as the ways they entered the struggle preserving and using their own means.

My thesis will be grounded on autobiographical oral histories collected through tape-recorded personal interviews. In these “the course of the individual interviewee’s life is what determines both the form and the content of the oral history. Even when one interviews a

¹⁶ Lawrence Langer, ‘Gendered Suffering? Women in Holocaust Testimonies,’ in. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman eds. *Women and the Holocaust*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 362.

¹⁷ Dalia Ofer and Leonore J. Weitzman eds. *Women in the Holocaust*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998)

¹⁸ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*. (London: SAGE Publication, 1997)

group of women who participated in the same kind of activity, the question will be tailor-made to each individual's experience and the information will be recorded as part of a total memoir."¹⁹ Regarding the interview methodology I began each by introducing myself and sharing my own feelings about the interview. Then I asked some basic background information on family history, the description of their social environment, work and social relationships. Starting from the 'old times'²⁰ we slowly touched upon the Holocaust and what it meant to my informants.

I conducted interviews with women in two Hungarian cities: Esztergom and Székesfehérvár. I have chosen Esztergom for the reason that it is located close to Hungary's biggest Holocaust interment camp: the so-called Csillagerőd, which functioned between 1944 and 1945. I first visited there in March 2008, following this with several additional trips, culminating in a six day stay in April, 2008. The city has three main ghettoized settlements: Ságvári telep, Esztergom/Kertváros and Töltéssor. All my interviewees – Flóra (first generation²¹), Sárköziné (Holocaust survivor), Margit (first generation), Marika (Holocaust survivor), Bora (Holocaust survivor), Guszti (first generation) as well as Ilonka (second generation), Bori (second generation) and Lakatos Andrásné (first generation) – were living in the second two settlements. In selecting the women to interview, the question of cultural likeness, including race, class, ethnic, regional and language arose. Because of my light hair, the way I dressed, the language I spoke - and I can easily continue the list – the whole community positioned me as an 'outsider.' However, in the course of time as well as through a process of 'soft' socialization into their community we got to know each other more and more and mutually promoted trust and openness.

¹⁹ Susan H. Armitage – Patricia Hart – Karen Weathermon eds., *Women's Oral History*. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), p.5.

²⁰ 'Régiség' as all of my informants said. The interviews started with questions touching upon the interviewees' and their parents' childhood.

²¹ I mean by 'first generation' the children of a Holocaust victim and by 'second generation' the grandchildren of him/her.

Following Bora's memory on Falat who was both her sister-in-law and a survivor of the massacre happened in Várpalota in early 1945 I happened to travel once to Székesfehérvár in order to complete the story. There I met Lakatos Ferencné (first generation) who was talking about Falat and took in the story another woman called Mici as the second and the last survivor of the fusillade.

Structure and theories

In the first chapter I will provide the theoretical background for my paper focusing on the concept of power in modernity and the specific ways resistance is formulated. Grounded in the work of Michel Foucault²² and Hannah Arendt,²³ who are concerned with the relationship between human life and the modern type of sovereign,²⁴ I will proceed and supplement their approach with Giorgio Agamben's theory of the relations between power, life and death.²⁵ Agamben provides a more sophisticated inquiry in terms of presenting the intersection between the juridical and institutional, political models of power, and claims that, besides life, death is also at the center of modern power resources. I will rely on his approach in order to show how the persecution of people achieved through political and juridical techniques made it possible for the Hungarian state both "to protect life and authorize holocaust."²⁶ Elaborating a theory of resistance useful for my research findings I am both

²² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*. (New York: Vintage, 1975)

²³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958)

²⁴ The type of sovereign underwent a transformation in the beginning of the nineteenth century: life and death had been at the hands of the sovereign which was changed later and placed life in the center-point of society as the most relevant resource for the functioning of power. The change in terms of punishment itself can be summarized by two things. First, all punishment was removed from the public eye taking place frequently behind the walls of prisons. Also, punishment moved away from being 'corporal' to being 'physical.' By this I mean that the body itself was no longer the target of punishment. Instead, it became a forum in which control over the self, or the soul, was fought for. Instead of torture, there was confinement and regulation. One's spatial and temporal possibilities were controlled - and the inner self was the target. Finally, discourse became prevalent: medical, psychological, sociological.

²⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

²⁶ Michel Foucault is quoted by Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.3.

grounded and guided by the work of James C. Scott on domination and arts of resistance.²⁷ Within the frame of resistance, on the one hand I will present the idea of the ‘public transcript,’ which is a set of open practices between the elite and the oppressed however, on the other hand I will offer to apply to the concept of the ‘hidden transcript’ by James C. Scott to this paper as an offstage dialogue among subordinates consciously questioning power and preserving the collectivity to survive.

Since I claim that in order to understand resistance it is necessary to be aware of the operation of power, I will analyze in the second chapter what I understand by the public transcript. First, I will provide a brief description of the Gypsy populations and broad understandings of the status of women within Gypsy communities – primarily with reference to the work of Michael Stewart²⁸ and Paloma Gay y Blasco²⁹ - and also looking at how their relationship with the Hungarian majority took shape. Taking a judicial – institutional viewpoint I will examine how the already existing ‘Gypsy-question’ turned into a ‘problem,’ as well as the ways power leaked into every-day life defining interactions and power relations.

In the third chapter, I will present the hidden transcript where resistance appears offstage and is influenced by the counterforce of surveillance as well as punishment brought to bear by those dominant. To prove its validity and legitimacy I will use the testimonies of Gypsy women on the Roma Holocaust. According to this paper, within the frame of resistance, preservation and strengthening of the communal spirit is in the center-point as well as constitutes the fundament of resistance. Fantasy, courage, oral culture, language and collective memory are basic elements of it.

²⁷ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

²⁸ Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997)

²⁹ Paloma Gay y Blasco, *Gypsies in Madrid. Sex, Gender and the Performance of Identity*. (Oxford: Berg, 1999)

II. The concept of power and the 'transcripts'

Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault

In discussing the idea of power in the age of modernity Hannah Arendt studies the functioning principles of totalitarianism as well as the link between regulating, shaping and controlling the *Volkskörper* (body of the people) and killing people marked as 'life not worth living.'³⁰ She relates power to both knowledge and to administration, claiming that power is a concentrated political action which reduces people to mere specimens living in a world of constant danger and being managed as resources. Therefore, human activity in modern societies serves as a means to feed the ongoing dynamic processes of the political. In other words, the newly emerging sphere of the social is in a constant need for 'life' – for both the individual's and the whole population's lives – in order to maintain the operation of a larger system. Taking a normative perspective³¹, Arendt mourns the loss of a public sphere and refers to an absolute idea of politics as an activity that forms an end in itself. Further, she argues that human beings are in a constant transformation of chaotic conditions which led in the twentieth century to the rise of totalitarian systems. As a 'by-product' of mass societies' atomization, and transformation eroded the common world and left people homeless. This "social and spiritual homelessness"³² invoked totalitarianism as a system which made human action static and stable by shutting down spaces where freedom could have been exercised. Arendt makes clear that 'solitude' was not invented by the Nazi regime, since following the World War I, people became refugees, homeless and stateless due to expatriation, flight or

³⁰ Conclusion of Socrates in Plato's Crito. <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/crito.html>

Regarding Hannah Arendt's studies see: *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1968).

³¹ I do not mean by 'normative perspective' the study of social norms which identify a group through empirical researches. I rather make a shift from 'norms' to 'violators' and claim as Arendt does that the notion of public society has always been a part of a 'conjuring trick.' It has been maintained for the sake of the political and the perceived boundary between public and private has served as the fetishized foundation for the concept of modern power.

³² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1968), p. 352

expulsion. In a modern nation-state, the ‘refugee’ represents a disquieting element. This is so because by breaking up the equation among territory, nation, and state, the refugee is able to be the visible sign of the crisis of the sovereign. Following Arendt I claim that Gypsies as nomads or unsettled travelers were also refugees within the nation-state. Hence, they were believed to be marginal figures but deserved rather to be in the center-point of political history as the internalized ‘Other,’ as a ‘group of people’ which has the capacity to represent difference. These people “belonged to the human race in much the same way as animals belong to a specific animal species.”³³ They were one with nature meaning that they were “imprisoned in the privacy of their own body”³⁴ exposed to all kinds of unequal treatments. While it was the Nazi state which declared some lives were ‘not worth living’ and accordingly destroyed them, the Stalinist Soviet Union also classified political adversaries in biopolitical terms, as “dying classes or parasitic races.”³⁵

Michel Foucault’s work highlights the formative stage of the bond between power and modernity characterized by an ultimate technocratic domination over the body of living beings through medicine, psychiatry, biology and the carceral society.³⁶ He claims that the classical theory of sovereignty, - the right of life and death attributed to the sovereign - underwent a transformation in the nineteenth century and resulted in an absolute focus on life, “the power to make live and let die.”³⁷ This type of power, he calls it ‘biopower’, has two directions which mutually support and complete each other. On the one hand it is centered on the individual body practicing control over itself through the separation and spatial distribution of bodies as well as the organization of a whole field of visibility. Power appears

³³ Ibid., 302

³⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p.102.

³⁵ Kathrin Braun, “Biopolitics and Temporality in Arendt and Foucault,” *Time and Society* 16, no.5. (2007), p. 10.

³⁶ Regarding Michel Foucault’s studies see: *The History of Sexuality. Vol. I: An Introduction*. (New York: Vintage, 1988); *Discipline and Punish*. (New York: Vintage, 1975).

³⁷ Michel Foucault, ‘*Society Must Be Defended*,’ trans. David Macey. Lectures at the College de France (1975-1976) (London, Penguin: 2003)

through a disciplined and an individualized mode to ensure techniques of the self by which the individual is unconsciously forced to bind himself/herself to his/her identity and at the same time to an external power. On the other hand there is the study of invisible political techniques, with which the State manages to integrate the natural life of people as man-as-living-being into its very center. This double bind is constituted by the individualization and totalization of modern power structures.

How do the above speak to power? Because as far as Arendt and Foucault are concerned, totalitarianism is not a particularity but built on ideal and practical elements inherent to modern life. It is not the life of the human but the life of the society, the never-ending dynamic process of the political which ranks as the supreme good. Life either as a product or as a resource is counted as the fundament of the knowledge-based administrative power which on the other hand easily casts out people who hurt its dynamics. This paper argues that it is important to use this power concept since Nazism can be examined on the terrain of biopolitics and within a biopolitical horizon. However not just 'life' but also 'death' is in the center of the operation of power, since totalitarian power introduced an absolute transformation of humans into inhabitants of zoe³⁸ - bare life - which exclusively sustains political spheres of power. It was done through stripping these people of their civil rights, social positions and political as well as human status. There was no room for political self-expression but only for exercising obedience and command. It was a complete transformation of humans into animals whose lives were "at issue"³⁹ without taking into consideration types

³⁸ The complete absorption of zoe into bios is the fundamental ambition of political life in the West. "As if politics were the place in which life had to transform itself into good life and in which what had to be politicized were always already bare life." Politics must enact its internal distinction from bare life and must repeatedly define itself through the exclusion of bare life. This inclusive exclusion is the necessary 'other' as well as eternal field of self-definition for the political.

³⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.188.

or categories of lives but simply the fact that of being a human. Killing people became one of the tools of power, among assimilation, marginalization, and persecution for the achievement and preservation of dominance.

With this in mind, can individuals be valued as conscious and free political subjects or is it man's bare life which counts above all? How is it feasible to define as well as draw a distinction between democracy and totalitarianism? How is it possible to live in an age in which there is constant danger, and which proclaims the value of life above all else, but which is also an age of genocidal mass murder?⁴⁰ If the idea of power in the age of modernity focuses on life how can death as a privatized notion of power relationships play a leading role in a political system centered upon its opposite?⁴¹

Giorgio Agamben

My thesis will be grounded on biopower, and will furthermore be supplemented by Giorgio Agamben's theory.⁴² Agamben claims that politics, which used to be an additional capacity of life, has become the essence of modernity, and that human life has become the primary object of it. He reflects on Foucault's and Arendt's suggestion that interrogates the link between life and power, but provides a more sophisticated inquiry in terms of presenting the intersection between juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power. I will rely on Agamben's approach and show how the persecution of people achieved through political and juridical techniques which made it possible both "to protect life and authorize holocaust."⁴³ Death in some sense – and this is what distinguishes Agamben from both Arendt

⁴⁰ Jeffrey C. Isaac, "A New Guarantee on Earth: Hannah Arendt on Human Dignity and the Politics of Human Rights," *American Political Science Review* 90, no.1. (1996), p.65.

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, 'Society Must Be Defended,' trans. David Macey. Lectures at the College de France (1975-1976) (London, Penguin: 2003)

⁴² Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

⁴³ Michel Foucault is quoted by Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.3.

and Foucault - has always been the target and definite object of politics. Since “every man has a Property in his own Person”⁴⁴, the political sphere has always found its foundation and its highest value in human life. However the emergence of a new type of power since the beginning of the nineteenth century has targeted as well as placed the existence of living beings constantly into question. Power misses its foundation, as Aristotle suggested, based on a binary opposition between ‘zoe’ and ‘bios’, ‘bare life’ and ‘good life’.⁴⁵ This perceived boundary serve only as a fetishized foundation for the Western tradition of political philosophy, in that life was clearly distinguished from politics and was rendered under the realm of private sphere. Agamben claims that on the threshold of modernity, this opposition is steadily dissolving and entering into the real zone of indistinction, through the process of placing biological life at the heart of the state, by uniting bare life and good life. The modern concept of power defines itself through the negation of bare life, excluding it from and capturing it within the political order. This inclusive exclusion, says Agamben, means that instead of a complete extermination, rather, a state of abandonedness occurs, in which the exception becomes the original structure of order and nourishes power in an obscured form. What exactly does this imply? The system which takes shape from chaos requires a decision to establish borders as well as to define a set of values. The decision on the exception is simply the reemergence of the border-setting power.⁴⁶ Politics is the realization of the human capacity to structure a just common life in the community’s non-coercive, deliberative

⁴⁴ John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*.

⁴⁵ Greeks used two different terms for ‘life’. Zoe is the “simple fact of living common to all living beings”, it is natural and qualified life which is good in itself. Bios is the polis, the politics, “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group.” This is the life identified with the Roman figure, Homo Sacer, the man who can be killed by anyone without it being homicide and whose killing can never be sacrificed. For Agamben the state appropriates zoe as bare life as a form of life not worth living. In Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

⁴⁶ For instance in the theater of war the ‘exception’ is more knowable than the norm, in other words the side effect defines the very essence of governance. However the number of war-casualties is negated by the government it becomes the way power is realized and measured.

reflection upon the question of what justice is.⁴⁷ Therefore the political dimension is the realm where justice is pursued, where the way of being suggested by Socrates could be achieved: ‘the really important thing is not to live but to live well.’⁴⁸ The exceptional state puts the happiness and freedom of the people into play, in the place that marked bare life, meaning that it is a state where people do not have the power of their own lives and as a consequence they cannot enslave themselves to anyone. Life there is subjected to power over death and exposed to abandonedness. In this sphere it is permitted that killing is not homicide,⁴⁹ that the victims are both inside and outside of the political and are in fact already dead.

State racism

Moving within the context of the modern Western-type of nation-state as well as taking the notion of power in modernity, the question becomes one of whether democracy can save life? How is it possible to live in a world in which there is constant danger and which proclaims the value of life above all else, but that also plays host to an age of mass murder? If the idea of power in the age of modernity focuses on life, how can death as a privatized notion of power relationships play a leading role in a political system centered upon its opposite? The redefinition of ‘peoples’ and ‘nations’ was a process of structural changes and changing orientations in modern nineteenth-century societies. Nationalism ensured the salience of a novel view of government that could legitimize the transformation of social orders and establish a new system on the premise of equality, sovereignty, fraternity and freedom.⁵⁰ This new approach to government embraced two new entities: the nation and the individual.

⁴⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

⁴⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.1. and Andrew Norris, “Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the Living Dead,” *Diacritics* 30, no 4., (Winter, 2000), pp.38-58

⁴⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 71.

⁵⁰ Liah Greenfeld, ‘Nacionalizmus és modernitás (Nationalism and modernity),’ in *Nacionalizmuselméletek: szöveggyűjtemény* (Collection of nationalism theories), ed. Zoltán Kántor, trans. Gábor Sisák (Budapest: Rejtjel Kiadó, 2004), pp. 183-204.

However hierarchy is embedded in human nature, as well as speaking to an ideal state of equality and sameness, the creation of modern societies invoked fetishized ambiguities under the veil of homogeneity. Despite the ideological aim of unity, modern nation-states have historically amounted to institutionalize difference. Class, gender, ethnicity, religion, region are all examples for the never-ending struggle which nationalism has to pursue to establish its utopian world based on equality and sameness. Identities of women and men of different ethnicity are constituted by their prescribed social positions shaped by ideologies, policies and institutions and even by their subjectivities through which they perceive themselves within significant social relations.⁵¹ Those entities, individuals who do not fit into the concept of the political, are pushed to the margins and become both subject – generator of the discourse - and object of state power.

This paper claims that modern societies are capable of establishing an order which focuses on the notion of life based upon a fetishized structure of violence. Since the notion of territory lost its importance and failed to serve the interest of the nation-state as such, the major concern of ‘population’ – as a pure biological entity - started to fuel and correspond to the state’s supreme functioning principles. Recently, people who make up the nation, the ethnic and gendered composition of the population have been both the subject and the object of political interests. It is ‘the population’ as an entity that is to be kept alive or be killed, depending on the particular racial profile of the political. Therefore, violence is primarily ethnicized and sexuated.⁵² What this means is that modern societies are both gendered and ethnicized, i.e. based on a system of difference structured by both gender and ethnicity, since no nation-state gives women and men or different ethnicities equal access to resources and

⁵¹ Anne McClintock, “*Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family*,” *Feminist Review* 44, (Summer, 1993)

⁵² Rada Ivekovic, “The Fiction of Gender Constructing the Fiction of Nation: On How Fictions are Normative Produce Exceptions.” in *Gender and Nation in South-Eastern Europe. Anthropological Yearbook of European Cultures*, eds. Karl Kaser and Elisabeth Ktsching-Fasch (Vol.14, 2005), pp.19-38.

rights. Individuals are equally born⁵³ into a hegemonic order where the ethnicized and gendered construction of the self is a cultural and social process. Patriarchy⁵⁴ and ethnocracy⁵⁵ are the main driving forces of 'society,' which controls consciousness, provides access to resources, and legitimates the socially constructed order as natural. Yet the coexistence of 'biopolitics' and violence is veiled. I will be guided by the assumption that racism, as "primarily [a] way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die"⁵⁶ is inscribed in the mechanisms of the modern nation-state as well as in the basic mechanisms of modern power, although it operates invisibly. Every state does make the distinction between those it keeps alive, and those it kills (foreign enemies in war, criminals, etc.) together with those it exposes to greater risk of death (old citizens, the poor, different ethnicities, individuals under gendered oppression etc.). I use this definition of racism given by Michel Foucault to support my argument that struggles in society between domination and submission have always been racial, or in other words, ethnicized. This involves the idea of the nation as race and as an entity which is racially homogenous, which has been present since the nineteenth century, in two ways. First, this idea asserts that nation-states are made of a homogenous people and thus denies that the conflict stemmed from the different meaning-systems within society is fundamental, in favor of the conflict between the group and the outside world. Second, this idea holds that the never-ending ethnicized struggle of the group vs. another group is necessary, and serves as the internal dynamic of every society. This paper is grounded in the idea that state racism is a driving force in the self-definition of the nation state, and is

⁵³ Each individual - as the new entity of modernity - has to make equally its own 'social contract' with the State.

⁵⁴ Patriarchal gender regime means inbuilt inequalities favor the masculine roles. Patriarchy functions both through gender stereotypes and institutional arrangements. Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996)

⁵⁵ Ethnocracy organizes power relations according to ethnic affiliations.

⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, '*Society Must Be Defended*,' trans. David Macey. Lectures at the College de France (1975-1976) (London, Penguin: 2003), p.254.

intimately connected with the emergence of biopolitics. This means, however, that life is in the center-point of the operation of a modern nation-state: everything is about survival in line with ethnicity and gender. However, state racism allows people to be killed as letting them die. Hence, the aim of biopolitical technology to keep people alive therefore killing goes indirectly through stigmatization or a higher vulnerability and defencelessness to death. I will follow the Foucauldian approach claiming that “the modern state can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point, within certain lines and subject to certain conditions (...).”⁵⁷

Democracy and totalitarianism

I argue that modern democracy and totalitarianism are both guided by the same principles ethnicism and sexuation and that neither are able to accept plurality or difference. However, the operation of the two systems diverges in terms of the level of fetishization. This ‘inner solidarity’⁵⁸ and the transition from democracy into totalitarianism are shaped by the interaction of political sphere and life as well as by the intensity of the dialectic between states of exception and of power. Since the distinction between politics and bare life cannot ever be completed, the decisive fact is that the more interaction happens between political and bare life, the harder it is to find the distinctive features of the two, and the exception “comes more and more to the fore as the fundamental political structure and begins to become the norm.”⁵⁹ Life, which was once a hidden foundation of democracy, comes to be the conceptual foundation of societies in a similar but more open manner turning, them into totalitarian regimes. The state of exception becomes the rule coinciding with the collapse of the normal order. This is what I call totalitarianism.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.254.

⁵⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.20.

I claim that this transformation is fuelled, structured, governed and maintained by the potentiality of law since, law has little or nothing to do with freedom, neither it is emancipated from necessity, but represents a judgment, a dangerous fusion of bare life and good life since ethical categories and judicial categories can not ever be distinguished. This leads easily to totalitarianism from a democratic modern nation-state. How could it happen? The ultimate end of law is to produce judgment; “(...) but judgment aims neither to punish, nor to extol, neither to establish justice nor to prove the truth. Judgment is in itself the end (...).”⁶⁰ Bringing into the discourse a juridical perspective, law can be seen as providing a boundary marker between what is included and what is not, what is regulated, and what is outside the scope of law. The ‘rule’ gives rise to the exception by means of defining the norms, and therefore leaving off the exception alone. It means that the state of exception becomes the source of identification for the political. The ‘exception’ is left abandoned but not excluded, exposed and threatened through a constant negation as well as maintained its state through law.

It is important to note that there is an inherent link between categories and power through their contamination by law, since law in modernity is not anymore the establishment of justice but rather a judgment on categories.⁶¹ It makes the state or status of the exception unquestioned, regarding law itself as the substitution for truth. In other words, categories cease to be juridical ones, but are raised to the status of ethics, which then represents a set of values and norms necessary for negation as well as for the self-definition of authority.

I take the process of creation of categories as one of the first steps in establishing and maintaining power. Categorization constitutes the definition of people, groups or ideas which can then be ‘exceptionalized’ through the use of law as a boundary marker that signifies what

⁶⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p.19.

⁶¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

is integral to the group and what is outside it. In Nazi Germany, the official categorization of Gypsies as foreigners began in 1935.⁶² The regime used fingerprints and photos sent to the Police in order to be able to persecute Gypsies as natural-born criminals. In Hungary during the census of 1893 Gypsies had already been sub-categorized according to their lifestyle, whether they were traveler, settled or semi-settled. However, the decrees and provisions focused on traveler Gypsies exclusively, for example that of the 1st of March 1938 stigmatized the Roma as collectively unreliable. This allowed them to be persecuted, chased, and deported to labor as well as concentration camps. The above categories interlinked with power, framed the state of the exceptional by strengthening the dialectical relationship between the political and bare life, therefore pushing the latter into ‘the arms of the former.’ As a result, the persecution and killing of the ‘already-abandoned-but-still-living-dead’ individuals cease to be punishable. Killing those categorized as such was not considered as murder. The physical elimination of entire categories of individuals’ – and what is more striking: citizens’⁶³ – became possible because they did not fit into the political system as constructed and their lives were unnecessary to it.

Even taking into account that modern nation-states are assumed to recognize each individual as equal and free,⁶⁴ the exceptions are still produced – those excluded are left as outcast and pushed to the margins invisibly, silently. The exception in this case does not subtract itself from the rule, or in other words the majorities ‘way of being’, but rather the rule

⁶² George Case (director), *The Forgotten Holocaust*, (48.min), Open Society Archive. However in March 1899 an Information Service on Gypsies by the Security Police in the Imperial Police Headquarters was set up. “Here, for the first time, the total registration of an entire population was planned and organized.” Karola Fings - Herbert Heuss - Frank Sparing, *From 'Race Science' to the Camps*. (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), p.23.

⁶³ For instance in 1935 Austria the Nurnberg Laws divided German citizens into ‘full citizens’ and ‘citizens without political rights;’ or in 1926 the Fascist regime in Italy revoked the naturalization of those citizens who had known themselves to be unworthy of Italian citizenship.

⁶⁴ Claimed by the social contract theorists for instance. See, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes.

suspending itself gives rise to the exception and maintains itself through the exception.⁶⁵ In totalitarianism – in the Nazi era - for this lack of identity it was compensated with the concession of state identity which itself became the source of obvious racism.

Resistance

Regarding that power assumes the presence of resistance, I am primarily interested in the way it operates I will be both grounded and guided by the theory of James C. Scott on domination and arts of resistance.⁶⁶ His notion of resistance is associated with a soft understanding which attempts to put forward that besides physical struggle a consciously motivated set of acts can take shape to focus on preserving humanity and collectivity. Authority posits itself as a substitute of horizontal links among subordinates to attain the state of solitude, the primary condition of total submission. Within a system of dehumanization, the phenomenon of maintaining and preserving social interaction or survival, the strength of individual not to let the community be atomized but promote cooperation is the way subordinates can question and resist domination as well as can distance themselves from control. His idea of public transcript a way of describing the open interactions between subordinates and those who dominate represents an institutionalized arrangement for appropriating labor and service from a subordinate group. Subalterns have no political and civil rights and their status is fixed by ethnicity. It is a performance guarded by ideology, personal rule and physical pressure which comprises not only speech acts but also conformity in facial expression as well as practical obedience to commands that are humiliating. The power of the dominant thus uses a continuous performance of forced respect, admiration, obedience that serve to further assure ruling elites that their claims are valid by seeing the social evidence before their eyes. Affirmation, concealment, stigmatization and the forced

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.18.

⁶⁶ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

appearance of deference and unanimity seem central to the domination analyzed here. In contrast with the public transcript there is the notion of hidden transcript as a contestation of power behind the scenes. Resistance occurs in-between structure and agency. It is a creation of a social space offstage, a reflection of culture through a hidden transcript which dissent of the official power relations. Using James C. Scott's term of *infrapolitics* as a "wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name"⁶⁷ issues of preserving dignity and autonomy generate the practices and rituals of resistance.

Since I will use oral history to support my thesis what needs to be taken into account is that Holocaust is an event without proper words. This means that language should give way to non-language in order to show the impossibility of bearing witness.⁶⁸ It implies that the problem is not the survivors' limits of memory but of the inadequacy of language to express all they have seen and experienced. It is an event without witnesses since "those who have not lived through the experience will never know; those who have will never tell; not really, not completely... The past belongs to the dead...."⁶⁹ Neither dead nor living dead can truly speak.⁷⁰ With the Holocaust not just the representation itself was taken into question and excluded as viable modes of expression, - meaning philosophical, literary, artistic - but the language itself became inappropriate, irreplaceable. "The Holocaust is presented as the ultimate traumatic point where objectifying historical knowledge breaks down, where it has to acknowledge its worthlessness before a single witness; and simultaneously, the point at which

⁶⁷ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.19.

⁶⁸ For instance Theodor W. Adorno and his supporters initially considered silence as the only proper response to the tragedy of Holocaust. Although it has already been acknowledged that speaking/memory/poetry fails to do justice, it is equally clear that „to remain silent would surely only compound to evil.“ Hilda Schiff, *Holocaust Poetry*. (New York: Saint Martin Press, 1995), p.xxii.

⁶⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p.33.

⁷⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

the witnesses themselves have to concede that words fail them that what they can share is ultimately only their silence as such.”⁷¹ Moreover it is necessary to consider that Gypsies whom I am dealing with have turned the “experience of living in a state of constant jeopardy into a positive celebration of the present moment. (...) being unable even to dream of re-assembling the past into a coherent present, they had turned their faces to the future, ignoring the chaos that Chronos wreaks behind them.”⁷² It seem to me after getting to know them better as well as living them for several days that past and memories live on in people’s lives. Generations live in the same Gypsy settlement where grandparents and parents keep on telling their children stories of the past. In addition, children have been treated as autonomous individuals since early in their childhood and have been allowed to be participants in conversations among adults which let them make familiar with memories, be a part of a process of remembering and a sharing of a narrative history. The Roma do not forget but live with a different perception of past. “A world in which Roma are the superior party in a world divided between themselves and the ‘foolish’ or ‘stupid’ gaze, does not leave much narrative space for the massive historical defeat that was the Holocaust.”⁷³

The above theories and theoretical approaches might provide a deeper understanding for the coming chapters as well as might let the reader interpret processes from an unusual perspective. It relies on the concept of ‘biopower’ enhancing the ultimate and invisible presence of power in every moment of the individual’s life through (self-) control and (self-) discipline. However the fetishized concept of death is also integrated into its very center since categories of individuals are negated and excluded from the political sphere as well as exposed to great risk of being killed. Further, juridical techniques sustain the way domination

⁷¹ Slavoj Zizek, *Laugh Yourself to Death: the new wave of Holocaust comedies!* <http://www.lacan.com/zizekholocaust.htm>

⁷² Michael Stewart, “Remembering Without Commemoration: the Devices and the Politics of Memory Among East European Roma,” *J.R.A.I.* 10, (2004), pp.561-582.

⁷³ Ibid. p.572.

operates making judgments on categories and claiming that these judgments are unquestionable, grounded on truth and ethics. In the next chapter I will proceed by analyzing the concept of power and domination in Hungary within the context of the Gypsy-question.

III. Campaign against witnesses

Introduction

Before analyzing the resistance of Gypsy women under the Holocaust to the Nazi regime it is necessary to explore the ways resistance has been theorized in relation to specific dynamics of power. James C. Scott has stated that domination does not exist on its own momentum.⁷⁴ Resistance, following Foucault “is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.”⁷⁵ In this chapter my primary interest is to deconstruct authority in order to discover the ways that a particular framework restricts knowledge, silences forms of expression, plurality, and directs to obey or to practice deference. The study of power brings to light hierarchies, asymmetries, relations of dominance, positions, and interests, as well as what I choose to call ‘arts of resistance.’

First I will provide a brief description of the heterogeneous Gypsy populations and broad understandings of the status of women within Gypsy communities – primarily with reference to the work of Michael Stewart⁷⁶ and Paloma Gay y Blasco⁷⁷ - and also looking how their relationship with the Hungarian majority took shape. I will argue that since states exist they have been against every kind of plurality which has been considered as harmful for the fragile structure of their way of operation. Therefore difference based on either ethnicity or gender or both is always marginalized and placed into an exceptional status however is used as a necessary tool for the nation’s self definition. As a case study I will then consider that Gypsies in Hungary especially focusing on the city Esztergom in the 1940’s were taken as an internalized ‘Other’ and by the above ‘state racism’ they were incorporated to the nation’s narrative but excluded. They did not as well as could not have the same access to all the

⁷⁴ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1988-1990), p.95.

⁷⁶ Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997)

⁷⁷ Paloma Gay y Blasco, *Gypsies in Madrid. Sex, Gender and the Performance of Identity*. (Oxford: Berg, 1999)

resources as the majority does or can have. Their language, their concept of pureness and dirtiness or their attitude towards work, life and family were despised, judged by prejudices as well as serve for comparison. I will proceed by analyzing how the state of exception, the treatment with the Gypsies became the norm under the Roma Holocaust in Esztergom. Here I will approach the operation of power in the light of a shift from the ‘Gypsy-question’ to the ‘Gypsy-problem’ and conduct this inquiry by presenting a juridical – institutional perspective which intimately intersects with biopower. Then I will present four different ways of the operation of power relations. I will conclude that the framework of a modern nation-state simply abandons individuals who are for some reason worth not being integrated to the society. It happened under the Roma Holocaust when the Gypsy population was exposed to death without regarding the act of killing as homicide.

Let me start with a decree issued in Székesfehérvár, Hungary in 1948, which demonstrates the politicization of life as a ‘societal resource,’ or ‘political strategy.’

The use of the Gibbet Law means that any member of the Camp Security Service a.) is entitled to shoot captured and wanted deserters, escapees from military-plants and army work; b.) may shoot captured spies, looters, rebels, escapees and those found colluding with the enemy.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ “A felkoncolási jog azt jelenti, hogy a Tábori Biztonsági Szolgálat tagja jogosult agyonlőni: azt a tetten ért, illetve körözött katonaszökevényt, hadüzemi és a munka-hadseregbeli munkás szökevényt; b) ellenben köteles agyonlőni: tetten ért kémeket, fosztogatókat, erőszakos rombolást végzőket, lázadókat, zendülőket, megfutamodókat és az ellenséggel bármilyen egyetértésbe bocsátkozókat.” János Bársony - Daróczy Ágnes (eds.), *Pharrajimos. Romák Sorsa a Holocaust Idején*. (Pharrajimos. The Fate of the Roma under the Holocaust.) (Budapest: L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2004), p.64.

Individuals to whom the decree applied were to be taken to court at once, and if charges were verified they were executed or shot down on the spot. Mainly Gypsies were meant by these individuals and were accused of looting, being source of danger to the society.

I claim that the above decree reflects what I choose to refer to as ‘quasi-systematic campaign of death’⁷⁹ waged against the heterogeneous Gypsy population in Hungary, homogenizing them as a marker of difference between two ‘national’ groups – Magyars and Gypsies. Within the Gypsy population, women represented a further source of distinction. Since my paper deals with Gypsies, especially women before and at the time of World War II, I will provide a description of Gypsies in Hungary as an ethnically as well as gendered point of collective difference. I then elaborate further on the concept and operation of power, dynamics of the above mentioned ‘campaign against witnesses.’

The heterogeneous Gypsy population in Hungary

According to the census conducted in 1941 Gypsies consisted 0.6 percent (in-between 57.700 and 74.000 individual) of the whole populations which was at that time 14.6 Million people.⁸⁰ The city of Esztergom and its region in the 1940’s had the smallest Gypsy community – according to the census: 223 individual⁸¹ – and was characterized by three main groups of Gypsies: Romany, Romungro and Boyash. The Vlach or Romany-speaking Gypsy group is the only which can be called Rom. “Their ancestors had come in several waves of migration from Transylvania and the Romanian principalities during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and they now lived dispersed through the country. (...) A majority were Vlach, that is to say, immigrants from the Romanian provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia at

⁷⁹ I mean by quasi-systematic campaign against the Gypsies that it was less organized and there was a lack of legitimacy in the way of their persecution comparing with the solution and execution of the Jewish-problem.

⁸⁰ László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz.* (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), pp. 1-30.

⁸¹ Ibid. p.22.

the turn of the last century; a minority were from other Transylvanian groups.”⁸² Talking with Guszti who belonged to the Romany-speaking Gypsies it turned out that the most important boundary marker as well as main characterizing feature of the groups is language. First time we met we were sitting in a bar and talking about the old times and how the parents were not afraid of sharing with children their past experiences.

In my childhood my parents did not keep in secret memories related to wartime as well as they told us in how bad conditions they lived and situations they went through. Nothing was concealed or shameful. The thing is that they [Romungro] are different. We [Rom] speak our language, we practice our culture.⁸³

No matter how harsh the past was or how unpredictable the future is, common language has the capacity to preserve the community's unity, keep it in the present and be an external boundary marker between Magyars and Gypsies as well as an internal one in order to maintain the heterogeneity of the Roma.

The Hungarian Gypsies, or the so-called Romungro, are “descendants of Gypsies whose ancestors had spoken the Carpathian dialect recorded by Archduke Franz Josef in his dictionary in 1893. One hundred years later most of these spoke only Hungarian (...).”⁸⁴

They have no culture apart from playing music. They do not speak their language either. They were making music and unburnt sun-dried bricks.⁸⁵ - said Guszti.

⁸² Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.11.

⁸³ Guszti (19/April/2008, Esztergom)

⁸⁴ Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.10.

⁸⁵ Guszti (19/April/2008, Esztergom)

Then finally there were the Boyash Gypsies “living mostly in the southern counties where their ancestors had arrived from Romania and Serbia at the end of the nineteenth century. They spoke an eighteenth-century dialect of Romanian (...).”⁸⁶ According to Guszti

they speak their mother-tongue, which I do not understand, and which we Vlach Gypsies do not speak. They dealt with tub-carving and fabricated wooden-spoons, i.e. wooden-made goods.⁸⁷

The Gypsy way of living

I have conducted interviews among Rom and Hungarian Gypsies in Esztergom and Székesfehérvár. My choice of interviewees was not to sort out them according to their origins but to select them on the basis of sex. All, without exception remembered a time in their family history when they were travelers.

Once upon a time our grand-grandmas lived as travelers. They had a canvas-vehicle and a horse and they went village by village. They collected feather – goose and duck feathers – and picked pieces of leather and metal as well as rugs and they sold them. This is how they lived. And when they settled down, they bought a house and a garden in Esztergom where my grandmother and my mother were born. My mother started to work and we went to school.⁸⁸

Living in great poverty in ‘ghettoized’ settlements, stigmatized as Gypsy and being constantly under the pressure to conform to the majority resulted that the ‘inside’, the settlement, represented a ‘safe place’ where they could construct their identity in the present relations with others. According to Guszti this happened in Esztergom too.

⁸⁶ Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.10.

⁸⁷ Guszti (19/April/2008, Esztergom)

⁸⁸ Bori (17/April/2008; Esztergom)

I can tell you that the Gypsies were always pushed to the edge of the cities. They could not live with us. So, when the Gypsies settled down 4 km-s away from Esztergom on the way to Szentendre right next to the coast of the Danube, they were bothered constantly. However they stayed 4 km-distance from the Magyar populated area. And there the Magyars drove the cattle afield crossing Gypsy settlements. But the stock-breeders were afraid of infections as well as contamination of their stock. And they did not make an effort to cure the possible illnesses or whatever, or to move the whole settlement into a new place with better conditions, or to do anything. They rather replaced them into the TÁti street, where they were carried away by the first heavy rain. And a lot of them died.⁸⁹

“These Gypsies were nomads but a place of their own was not in the end a place at all, rather it was a fragile realization of an intangible quality of life together.”⁹⁰ Pursuing a nomadic lifestyle Gypsies were able to perceive the forms and limits of the political community through questioning the old trinity of state/territory/nation. It means that they did not show deep affiliation towards a specific territory, were left as well as stayed as outcast from state regulations and broke the premise of homogeneity of the nation-state. Further, they built their identity in the present defining themselves against Gazos (non-Gypsy) or even against other Gypsy groups, however as Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems claim they were economically and socially more integrated in Western European society as one might have thought.⁹¹ They were regarded as a talented folk due to their music abilities as well as were an inherent part of society through filling out occupation niches derogated Magyars. Public initiatives to tolerate

⁸⁹ Guszti (19/April/2008, Esztergom)

⁹⁰ Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p.72.

⁹¹ Leo Lucassen - Wim Willems, *The Weakness of Well Ordered Societies. Gypsies in Europe, the Ottoman Empire and India 1400-1914*, Paper for the NIAS-Conference ‘Accommodating cultural and religious differences’ (Wassenaar, 5-7 July 2001)

Gypsies and assimilate them into 'mainstream Hungarian society' took shape in different ways such as offering them jobs or housing, improving their access to education or public health care. However Gypsies worked, educated their children, they did it in their own way to defend themselves and their quality of relationship with each other. Let me give a list of ways the Gypsies were able to distinguish themselves from the majority and as a consequence to formulate their identity.

The only extended contact with the Magyars took shape in the economic sphere, where self-employed Romas provided for Gazos goods and services. The type and functionality of Gypsy work gave an impression of difference from the Hungarian notion of life and attitude towards work. They were working in family units, had mainly an itinerant life and were self-employed. The most important economic niche for Gypsies were trading, hawking, peddling.⁹² They not only traded from door to door, but also on streets or at fairs. One of the best-known activities was the horse trade,⁹³ which together with kettle-mending and the making of music was regarded as a typical Gypsy occupation. Another important economic niche were itinerant crafts, especially for repair work, such as kettle-mending, chair-bottoming and knife-grinding. The third important economic sector for Gypsies and other itinerant people was entertainment: wandering musicians, animal-performers, acrobats, owners of freak shows and showmen. In contrast to the itinerant craftwork, these occupations were not monopolized by men. Many Gypsy women earned money through fortune-telling often combined with hawking or entertainment. They gave advice in the case of theft and bewitching, but most of them talked with their clients about the highs and lows in life, such as marriages, travels (emigration), the possibility of evading conscription, accidents or death.⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid. p.2.

⁹³ Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997)

⁹⁴ Leo Lucassen - Wim Willems, *The Weakness of Well Ordered Societies. Gypsies in Europe, the Ottoman Empire and India 1400-1914*, Paper for the NIAS-Conference 'Accommodating cultural and religious differences' (Wassenaar, 5-7 July 2001)

Most of the Gypsies combined all kinds of crafts and services to survive harder times which represented their economic flexibility. As a result of efforts to settle them down they became more engaged in seasonal work the one of the few agricultural occupations that involved wage labour.

Naming, language and playing were other strategies that Gypsies used in boundary maintenance. They owned a Hungarian name besides the Gypsy one whereas singing created a perfect collective perspective on Gypsy life as well as an ideal unity of the community.

The perception of the body through the notions of cleanliness/dirtiness – on which I will elaborate more later – was also a system of beliefs aiming to establish an order of moral universe from where both impure and immoral were missing.

As I have explored above “the term ‘Gypsy’ includes ‘Them’ and ‘Us’, their reality and the conceptions which we frame on the basis of it as well as their presence and the way we behave with them. It implies the whole set of relations between them and between us.”⁹⁵

As a stranger existing in a society, it does not mean absence or being out of the society but it suggests that the perspective of existence differs from the dominant one. The Gypsies presence shakes long-existing meanings and frames, in addition particularizes the absolute set of values of a society. The ‘system of the dominant’ does not dare to challenge its own validity but rather is violently opposed to every kind of plurality within it therefore puts the debated issues, elements of the society into the margins and stigmatize them as exceptional. We shall see that anti-Gypsy sentiments⁹⁶ were incorporated at an early date into the state’s narrative in order to establish a nation-state and achieve unity. Gypsy ways of living show

⁹⁵ Patrick Williams, “A helyszínen és a korban,” (In the Space and the Time.) in *Cigányok Európában I.*, (Gypsies in Europe.) Csaba Prónai (ed.), (Budapest: Új Mandátum), pp. 263-274. (p.269)

⁹⁶ For instance the Case Dálnoki in Hungary in 1907 or Chancellor Bismarck’s letter in 1886 to all the component states of the empire to unify the decrees in force against Gypsies. The expulsion of Gypsies was recommended „in order to free the territory of the country completely and permanently from this plague”. In Karola Fings - Herbert Heuss - Frank Sparing, *From ‘Race Science’ to the Camps*. (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), p.50.

alternatives of how each society as an ‘imagined community’⁹⁷ can be organized since “communities are to be distinguished... by the style in which they are imagined.”⁹⁸ However ‘imagination’ is directed and managed by the dominant sensitive to difference therefore no other ways are allowed. Contemporary expressions of Gypsyess do not succumb exclusively to the ravages of globalization and do not borrow their content from Western discourses or nation-state modalities. Gypsyess is lived in different ways, challenges authority with notions of plurality and difference.

Brief historical background on Gypsy persecution

Before turning to oral testimonies I would like to give some brief historical background on the Gypsy persecution in Hungary providing a parallelism with Germany and further how the system became total by the operation of power in every way of life.

In the nineteenth century the Prussian police tradition⁹⁹ conceived cities as fortresses under Gypsy occupation since Gypsies could have been found in each of them. As a consequence police placed the population under surveillance by the military. Wilhelm II. was the first who defined ‘*Zigeunerfrage*’ (Gypsy-question) as a social danger and threat to the society on biological grounds.¹⁰⁰ Gypsies were stigmatized by the Prussian state as social deviants and a Munich based special institution¹⁰¹ was also established to cope with the risk they imposed on Germany but the ‘question’ was not formulated as a burning social ‘problem’ until the National Socialists came to power, the same as with the Jews. The Gypsies exceptional condition meant before the Nazi regime that on the one hand they were exposed

⁹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1991)

⁹⁸ Ibid. p.15.

⁹⁹ The notion of the police state was first developed in Prussia during the eighteenth century seeking to protect population, protect the welfare of the state and its citizens. It had primarily coercive and regulatory functions.

¹⁰⁰ Karola Fings - Herbert Heuss - Frank Sparing, *From 'Race Science' to the Camps*. (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997)

¹⁰¹ János Bársony - Daróczi Ágnes, *Pharrajimos. Romák Sorsa a Holocaust Idején*. (Pharrajimos. The Fate of the Roma under the Holocaust.) (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2004), p. 14.

to some atrocities¹⁰² but on the other they were able to preserve the place of their own which represented the hidden ground of self definition for the majority.

The fact that in Hungary there was a *Cigány* (Gypsy) population¹⁰³ was acknowledged by the majority however they were never recognized equally and differences were always maintained. The second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century treated with the Gypsy population as problematic from the points of view of hygiene and public security.¹⁰⁴ There was a common agreement on that the Gypsies - though regarded as a talented 'folk'¹⁰⁵ - should have been forced to settle down in order to achieve assimilation. As Count Károlyi Mihály¹⁰⁶ notes:

As we keep Gypsies to play music because we are too lazy to do that, so do we keep Jews to let them work instead of us.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² About 1830 numerous police journals were issued in the German states which were preceded by mainly private publications compiled by policemen gained themselves a reputation as criminologists. In these articles people were harried because their apparently aimless itinerant lifestyle as well as there was a growing tendency to label them as Gypsy. However Gypsies did not play a relevant part in the life of a Prussian state, there was a Gypsy list established in 1787/8 called Schäffer-list and a major trial against Jakob Reinhardt better known as Hannickel. In Prussia authorities did organize 'colonies' for Gypsies and tried to allow them to give up their itinerant lifestyle and settle down. Although all these efforts were not fruitful "for the moment it seemed that the civilization offensive launched by enlightened authorities subdued somewhat the tendency to equate criminals and wandering people Gypsies and therefore the category was not used as a generic term for all sorts of unwanted wandering people." Leo Lucassen, "'Harmful Tramps': Police Professionalization and Gypsies in Germany 1700-1945," in *Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups: A socio-historical approach*, Leo Lucassen - Wim Willems - Annemarie Cottaar (eds.) (London: MacMillan, 1998), pp.74-93.

¹⁰³ Before 1941 there was one census dealing with the Gypsies in 1893 saying that in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarch the approximated population of the Gypsies is 270.000. It also constructed the categories for Gypsies dividing them into three: settled/traveler/semi-traveler. In László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz.* (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), p.15.

¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that on the 21st of July in 1907 István Szarvas, his wife and daughter were killed with brutality and the Hungarian traveler Gypsies were collectively accused of committing that crime – the Dálnoki case. This event implies that Gypsies were never accepted and included by the Hungarian majority however this abandonedness did not take yet an institutionalized form.

¹⁰⁵ Roma economic activities were varied and involved a range of activities, for instance: metal-working, performance and circus-related work, market trading, making unburnt sun-dried bricks, tub-carving and fabricating wooden-spoons. Furthermore, Gypsy music was recognized and appreciated for a very long time.

¹⁰⁶ In 1910, Károlyi was elected to Parliament as a member of the opposition Party of Independence. During the First World War, Károlyi had started out as supporter of the war. On January 11, 1919 the National Council formally recognized him as President.

¹⁰⁷ „Amint a cigányokat azért tartjuk, hogy muzsikáljanak, mert mi túl lusták vagyunk hozzá, úgy a zsidókat azért tartjuk hogy dolgozzanak helyettünk.” László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz.* (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), p.34.

Apart from the sense of derogative treatment towards Jews and Gypsies, the sentence – regarding the word ‘we’ two times – presents a picture of self-definition for the Hungarians. However lazy the majority is, it is able to keep and control two populations. Gyula Szekfű,¹⁰⁸ one among the then famous thought provoking writers wrote about liberal Jews as well as civic radical elements in society but did not pay any attention to Gypsies. Ferenc Szálasi who was the Prime Minister of Hungary of the last three months of the country’s participation in World War II. did not mention a word about Gypsies neither about their persecution in his program.¹⁰⁹

The transformation of the ‘*cigánykérdés*’ (Gypsy-question) into a ‘*cigányprobléma*’ (Gypsy-problem) occurred smoothly from marginalization and exploitation into persecution through institutionalization and forced categorization, parallel with the events in Germany. Categories which once had been abandoned developed more and more interfaces with the political sphere due to legislative measures and judgments. As a result the blurring of boundaries between *zoe*¹¹⁰ and *bios*¹¹¹ placed the state of exception, or in other words the internalized ‘Other’ as a norm into the center-point of the normalizing¹¹² society. As I have claimed before, legislation has the potentiality to define what is accepted and what is not therefore can be regarded as the most successful as well as within the frame of modern democratic nation-state an accepted and hardly questioned tool which creates the state of exception.

¹⁰⁸ Historian (1883-1955). Drafted the official ideology of the counter-revolutionary systems after 1918-1919 in Hungary.

¹⁰⁹ László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz.* (Gypsy-guestion in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), p.35.

¹¹⁰ Zoe is the “simple fact of living common to all living beings”, it is natural and qualified life which is good in itself.

¹¹¹ Bios is the polis, the politics, “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group.”

¹¹² It functions according to norms. Law is a judgment based on the unquestionable truth and ethics, as well as sustains the dominant system in an invisible and sophisticated way.

Juridico-institutional techniques of power

How was state identity created and strengthened by the role of law as well as how the rise of a new type of sovereign took shape which corresponded to the ambiguities of abandonedness and turned to be absolute?

In Hungary, Article No. XXI/1913 on ‘vagrants who are public menace’ mentioned that traveler Gypsies and individuals responsible for indictable offence were suable and could be obliged to do communal work.¹¹³ However Gypsies meant an administrative problem for the state since the beginning¹¹⁴, this article was the first which provided a legal frame to send ‘traveler Gypsies and other individuals’ into the penal institution of workhouses. Following this article the question of traveler Gypsies and their assimilation managed within both the scope of the Ministry of Interior and the municipalities by provisions. The achievable aims without the sake for its completeness were to settle them down, to deprive them from their animals as well as to force upon them a different concept of hygiene and pureness. The provision No. 15000/1916 ordered a census for traveler Gypsies and offered a definition on them saying that those individuals belong to that group who cannot certify a *proper* place of residence can be deported back to his/her place of origin.¹¹⁵ Following the provision took effect the first large-scale round-up occurred country-wide against Gypsies. Several years later, parallel with the German legislation¹¹⁶ in 1928 was issued provision No. 257000 on legalized police round-ups formulated officially by the Ministry of Interior. The round-up was thus presented as an inevitable step on imposing preventive security measures on a group who were indiscriminately considered as socially dangerous. The new definition on traveler

¹¹³ Ibid. p.54.

¹¹⁴ Especially since 1902 when a scientific conference was organized by Széll Kálmán resulting that a) the question of traveler and Vlach Gypsy groups is administrative; b) it could only be solved by restraining certain rights of their freedom (for instance the freedom of movement). In János Bársony -Daróczi Ágnes, *Pharrajimos. Romák Sorsa a Holocaust Idején.* (Pharrajimos. The Fate of the Roma under the Holocaust.) (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2004), p.35.

¹¹⁵ Barna Gyula Purcsi, *A Cigánykérdés "Gyökerez és Végleges Megoldása."* (The Gypsy-question's Final Solution.) (Budapest: Csokonai Kiadó, 2004)

¹¹⁶ In Prussia in the year 1926 a provision legalized both the regulation and the expulsion of traveler Gypsies from the country.

Gypsies included not just those who were not able to present an official certificate of their homes but also those who were said to be vagabonds, workshys, unemployed or seasonal workers as well as those who were travelling by job (i.e. itinerant artisans). Round-ups - organized twice a year since the beginning of 1929 - intended to close in on every single traveler Gypsies, closed the borders for Roma newcomers and carried into effect hygienic and penal measures. It should be noted here that according to the abovementioned both in Hungary and in Germany¹¹⁷ discrimination appeared long before the handover of power to the National Socialists – concerning the operation of a modern nation-state according to the paper's concept on power and its link with violence and biology - but since the beginning of the 1930's the for the sake of the state's redefinition the Gypsy-question was answered on the basis of biological paradigm fueled by both the potentiality of destruction and the remodeling of legal framework in order to allow the persecution of Gypsies. László Endre sub-prefect of Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County demanded both the deportation of traveler Gypsies and the sterilization of Gypsy men. Later he was appointed state secretary in the Ministry of Interior and was given far-reaching power in ghettoization and deportation over the county's Jewish and Gypsy population.

Before the Szálasi regime¹¹⁸ took power in October 1944, Gypsies were taken as dangerous elements on the society from the points of view of public security, hygiene and public morals. This was an important precondition for round-ups, which were organized to

¹¹⁷ In 1933 an Agreement by the States to Fight the Gypsy Plague harmonized the statuses of states and gave them validity. In the same year Hitler issued the Decree for the Protection of the People and the State which suspended the Weimar Constitution's personal liberties. The Racial Office of SS in Berlin started to promote the sterilization of Gypsies and semi-Gypsies. A Race Hygiene and Population Biology Research Center was established under the direction of Robert Ritter in 1936 becoming a link between science and persecutors. Meanwhile in April 1938 special operations took place aimed against workshy. Gypsies were excluded from this category but in June they were also brought into the circle of those affected and were deported into concentration camps as workers for the fulfillment of the Four Year Plan. In December 1938 a Decree for the Fight against the Gypsy Menace was published in which a final resolution on the basis of race was announced. In: Karola Fings - Herbert Heuss - Frank Sparing, *From 'Race Science' to the Camps*. (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), pp.25-33. and László Karsai, *Holokauszt*. (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2001)

¹¹⁸ The Arrow Cross Party - pro-German, anti-semitic, national socialist party - was founded in 1935 by Ferenc Szálasi. It ruled Hungary from October, 15 1944 to January 1945.

settle down or eliminate them. The Nazi political transition in Hungary transformed the ‘question’ into a ‘problem’ but the complete and final decision on it came later in Kőszeg in February 1945 when Budapest finally fell to the Allies.¹¹⁹ Gábor Vajna, National Socialist Minister of Interior, proclaimed the final resolution on racial lines in the following way:

I have started to implement the final, entire, and if it is necessary draconian solution of both the question of the Jews and the question of the Gypsies which is required by reason of the two races behavior.¹²⁰

The importance of the above decree is that it treats the two races compatibly as part of the same ‘problem.’ Stigmatizing their behavior as troublesome might correspond with the statement of Count Károlyi, – “As we keep Gypsies to play music because we are too lazy to do that, so do we keep Jews to let them work instead of us.” – and can be traced back to the fact that Jews worked hard and Gypsies were good at arts also pursued a different way of life from the majority. The justification of the above decree was that Gypsies and Jews were cooperating with the Soviet soldiers in the harassment of the citizens. However on the one hand the two populations suffered from dissimilar and not equally elaborated treatments, on the other hand the level of making policies and the level of execution were not equivalent with each other. To provide a better understanding for the latter it should be noted that the decree was not proved to be enough for all the regions to legitimize the process of persecution. Further, counties Hungary-wide¹²¹ sabotaged the proper implementation of the

¹¹⁹ János Bársony -Daróczi Ágnes, *Pharrajimos. Romák Sorsa a Holocaust Idején.* (Pharrajimos. The Fate of the Roma under the Holocaust.) (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2004), p. 10.

¹²⁰ „A zsidókérdés és a cigánykérdés maradéktalan, ha kell drákói rendezését megkezdttem, amit e két nemzetidegen faj magatartása tett szükségessé.” In László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz.* (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), p.132.

¹²¹ The archives provide sufficient data on the opposition of two regions: Zala and Vas. In László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz.* (Gypsy-question in Hungary between

decree since the Nyilas regime's power was standing on weak legs due to the more and more visible presence of the Soviet Red Army as well as the realization of the decree's aim would have been hardly achievable in those circumstances. Moreover, the detailed history¹²² of the Hungarian Holocaust demonstrates that by the end of the year 1944 the Szálasi regime had not made any special effort to 'solve' the 'Gypsy-problem' uniformly and entirely. Under the dissolution of the Nyilas system¹²³ the leaders did not even aspired to find a 'final solution' for the Roma persecution, but local municipalities, police, authorities proposed and controlled the deportations.

However it was not well-organized and prepared as the treatment with the Jews which was systematic, well-documented, deeply rooted in the public discourse: Gypsies were deported first to work-camps (for example: Szekszárd, Nagykáta, Pécsvárad, Marcali, Komárom, Kisvárd, Szentkirályszabadja) and then – especially from Komárom/Csillagerőd – it was followed by their internalization into concentration camps (for example: Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, Dachau and mainly to Auschwitz/Birkenau IIe). It means that the state legitimated a socially constructed order taken as natural following principles of biology and race. The already existing way of operation, as I argued above, through targeting human's life and death, became visible and was legitimated by techniques of law placing the state of exception into the state of norm or rather the exception created the normal situation.

Juridico-institutional techniques in Esztergom – horses and women

Focusing on the city Esztergom it is important to note that it was among the first settlements which imposed restrictions on the Roma. Esztergom refused to accept the

1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), pp.132-135. and Barna Gyula Purcsi, *A Cigánykérdés "Gyökeres és Végleges Megoldása."* (The Gypsy-question's Final Solution.) (Budapest: Csokonai Kiadó, 2004)

¹²² As much as it is possible and the archives have the potential to provide data.

¹²³ A synonym for the Szálasi regime originated from the Hungarian National Socialist Party called 'Arrow Cross' led by Ferenc Szálasi.

proposal of the city Győr in 1921 that “traveler Gypsies are parasites on the body of the nation and this disease can not be tolerated any longer, (...) therefore action is required. (...) We suggest that *horses* belong to them should be confiscated, individuals must be internalized where they are not allowed to get out from till they get used to decent way of life and work.”¹²⁴

As the provisions show, both horses and the concept of the bodily purity and dirt were central to the enactment of Gypsy persecution. Considering the heterogeneity of Gypsy communities, regional and cultural differences as well as the diversity of customs I claim that there still could be a universe, a common interpretation of events, and understanding of signs. Women and men can be portrayed differently in each community,¹²⁵ but some bodily features combined with non-bodily elements might make up a universal reading which of course is not ascribed and fixed but contextualized and continually being adjusted. Accordingly, in the context of Hungary taking the horse as the symbol of women and the dirtiness of the body which is also appropriated with women, I argue that the Gypsy persecution can be approached from a gendered perspective. It means that although both sexes were equally targeted by Nazi policies, and I do not intend to establish a hierarchy of them but on the level of both symbolism and practice I say that discrimination with harassment differed regarding men and women.

Among the Rom women were equated with horses. Horse symbolized freedom, provided the absolute autonomy from Magyar peasants and it was the most precious belonging of a Gypsy community. Boys became men through the control of horses whereas girls became symbolically linked with horses since it was a symbolic form of femininity.

¹²⁴ László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz.* (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), p.47.

¹²⁵ Paloma Gay y Blasco, *Gypsies in Madrid. Sex, Gender and the Performance of Identity.* (Oxford: Berg, 1999)

Horses like Gypsy women were part of a symbolic – masculine – order in which they signified the unpredictable the strange but also the economic ‘center of the things.’¹²⁶ In a community of ‘brotherhood’ keeping horses meant wealth whereas women maintained the economic order by being the property of men, doing housework, and bringing up children. Just as there were rumors that a man “who never beat his wife was, in effect, allowing her to become a whore, so the men seemed to beat their animals to remind them who was in control. Having provoked a degree of waywardness in the animal, the men would attack it with a fairly brutal beating. They were also, of course, in the way beating the Gazo (non-Gypsy) in the horse, since Gypsy horses were, in principle, never hit.”¹²⁷ Horse trading was one of the most common activities among the Roma which could be translated into an event where the exchange of women took place. Trading became to represent a form of male potency while horses symbolized women. In a horse-trading event the male managed to express their control over their women. Whereas taking away of horses meant a deep trauma for any Gypsy community, the concept of dirtiness/pureness was a dimension of boundary maintenance between Gypsy and non-Gypsy.¹²⁸ The Magyar legislation associated with Gypsies disease, death, lice, pollution and failure. It should be noted here that however Gypsies regarded Magyars as the polluters outside the community, inside the separation of dirtiness and cleanliness was gendered. Cleanliness was linked with “non-Gypsies, Gypsy women, disease, death and bad luck.”¹²⁹ For the Gypsies the center of ritual purity was the head, more specifically the mouth and the upper part of the body. The most potent danger of pollution emanated from the woman’s lower body. Further a woman can defile a man by touching him

¹²⁶ Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), pp.164-181.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p.172.

¹²⁸ As Mary Douglas notes, “to protect the political and cultural unity of a minority group,” the concept of dirtiness/cleanliness is used as a boundary marker. In. Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997)

¹²⁹ Carol Silverman, “Negotiating “Gypsiness.” *Strategy in Context.*” *Journal of American Folklore* 101, no. 401. (1988), pp. 261-274.

in public with an article of clothing from her lower body. Being polluted as a man was the greatest shame and “the only way to vanish pollution was by convening an arbitration council composed of respected men.”¹³⁰ The sexes were segregated in any public event as well as strict (washing, clothing, eating etc.) regulations were enforced to achieve the symbolic separation of their body through which they denied their involvement in biological reproduction in favor of social reproduction and it let them be separated from the Gazos.¹³¹

Turning back to the Gypsy policies of Esztergom, the city decided to stand for another position based on its previous experiences claiming that “an institution is not capable of altering those deeply rooted, unchangeable Gypsy racial characteristics.”¹³² In 1942 a draft provision ‘On the Regularization of Gypsy Life Domiciled at Esztergom’ proposed to discipline Gypsies and transform them into moderate, decent, civilized and hard-working citizens. By Gypsy it meant every individual with Gypsy origin (i.e. there is no distinction between traveling and settled Gypsies) as well as those who live with them. Regular round-ups were organized to clean out the ghettolike settlements where Gypsies had been forced to move in. They were subjected themselves to medical examinations, work or education. The proposed provision came into force in the year 1944. Concluding, however the initiative for setting up Gypsy interment camps and deporting them started in spring 1944, it had no formal legal basis apart from the euphemized ‘final solution’ in Germany focusing rather on Jews but still involving the Gypsy population.¹³³

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 204-231.

¹³² László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz*. (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), p.47.

¹³³ Ibid. pp.47-48.

Public transcript

I argued in the beginning of this chapter that introducing as well as analyzing the modern concept of power is necessary for a better understanding of arts of resistance. Since the operation of power invokes a set of rules and ways of open interactions between subordinates and those who dominate, using the term of James C. Scott¹³⁴, the *public transcript* provides the codex or the guide book for securing the proper operation of authority. It represents an institutionalized arrangement for appropriating labor or service from the subordinate for the sake of the dominant. As I believe in and argue for the consciousness of subordinates that they can form a critique of power to protect what they are as a result of their fear or sheer frustration, so I claim that power acts upon will and consciousness either.¹³⁵ By looking at a documentary¹³⁶ on Gypsy Holocaust, a survivor explained that when she realized that her brother had been murdered and then his body was thrown upon a pile of bodies, she climbed up to him, kissed along his body and gave him her own shirt. On the way of saying the last good-bye and leaving she burst into tears when a soldier came there and said “You are not allowed to cry! It is forbidden to cry!” The little girl did something which if he had done would have questioned his own existence as well as the legitimacy of the camp. It would have made him recognize and accept the fact that their task was the sheer destruction of individuals, their complete dehumanization and letting them die. I claim that there is a set of

¹³⁴ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

¹³⁵ A ‘deep structure’ necessarily characterizes the historiography of the Holocaust, comprising a tension between its positioning in ‘universalism’ and ‘particularism’ narratives. While the former conceptualizes the Holocaust as an abstract human tragedy and explains its occurrence in terms of processes common to modern societies, the latter casts its analysis in ethnic and national categories: the Holocaust as an exclusively German and Jewish affair. These narratives possess important implications for the balance of structure and human agency in the explanation of the Holocaust: where the universalism narrative emphasizes the role of impersonal structures in mediating human action, the particularism narrative highlights the agency of human actors. Although historical accounts usually combine these narratives, recent research on the Holocaust tends in the universalist direction, and this bears on the sensitive issue of responsibility for the Holocaust by problematizing the common-sense notion of the perpetrators’ intention and responsibility. Goldhagen is responding to this trend by retreating to the particularism narrative. It is time to rethink the concept of intention in relation to events like the Holocaust. In: Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) and A.D. Moses, ‘Structure and Agency in the Holocaust: Daniel J. Goldhagen and His Critiques,’ *History and Theory* 37, no.2, (May, 1999), pp.194-219.

¹³⁶ George Case (director), *The Forgotten Holocaust*, (48.min), Open Society Archive.

techniques upon authority either visibly or invisibly leaks into life, moreover violence which is inherent to the operation of modern nation-state is well-grounded on the judicial-institutional system. This way of operation of power breaking down into the level of individuals requires instead of acting as it is told rather agency, consciousness, willingness and preference to kill.

Why is it necessary to design a transcript to affirm and naturalize the power of dominant? If the ruler comes to be in hegemony then it has to make out an ideological case which might resonate among the subordinates.¹³⁷ Public transcript marks the authority. However if there is a great disparity in power between the two and it is exercised arbitrarily then the above mentioned 'ideological case' would draw sharp boarder between dominant and subaltern. It means that the public transcript would take on a stereotyped, ritualistic cast on the one hand, and on the other hand it would create a thick counterpart, a masked but conscious resistance on behalf of the subaltern. Public transcript is a self-portrait of the dominant, represents its narrative and the way it sees itself.

First form of the public transcript: concealment

How does the above speak to the function of the transcript as a flattering image of elites and as public 'performance and pedagogy?'¹³⁸ First it 'appears' through *concealment*. "By controlling the public stage, the dominant can create an appearance that approximates what, ideally, they would want subordinates to see."¹³⁹ Concealment can be realized in the way the Gypsy population was treated by the majority since that minority was always invisible and marginalized. The Roma as a nation within the nation represented the internalized 'Other' providing a flattering self-definition for the majority. Going deeper into

¹³⁷ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.18.

¹³⁸ The terms are borrowed from Homi K. Bhabha. In. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1994)

¹³⁹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.50.

the term ‘concealment’ I have to say that forced labor-, internment- and concentration camps were never mentioned in public. The institution of camps held great weight and was first proposed by a judge in 1942 in Hungary.¹⁴⁰ In the period following the Nyilas power takeover it led to numerous proposals from minor officials for the setting up of different camps scattered Hungary-wide. In spring 1944 the deportation of Gypsies into work camps was initiated officially. The one in Komárom was a relocation camp, since people able to work were picked out and sent into concentration camps outside of Hungary, mainly to Ravensbrück and Auschwitz/Birkenau.¹⁴¹ However reading a book written by László Karsai, the *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz*, he expresses that due to the lack of resources and public proclamations no accurate information is available on how and when the official deportations occurred.¹⁴²

This argument is supported by a Gypsy survivor, Erik, as well:

I was discharged from the Army as a non-Aryan. We weren’t regarded as Aryans. I was called to the General Staff. Oh yes... There were two captains there. When we were almost finished one hit the bench and said ‘Are we going to win the war with that? [The context is the process of conscription.]

Then he and his brother were sent to Auschwitz/Birkenau.

¹⁴⁰ „Legcélszerűbb volna a kóborcigányok munkatáborba való beszállítása és munkáltatása (...)” (23/12/1942) In László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz*. (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), p.52.

¹⁴¹ János Bársony -Daróczi Ágnes, *Pharrajimos. Romák Sorsa a Holocaust Idején*. (Pharrajimos. The Fate of the Roma under the Holocaust.) Budapest, L’Harmattan, 2004) and Barna Gyula Purcsi, *A Cigánykérdés “Gyökerez és Végleges Megoldása.”* (The Gypsy-question’s Final Solution.) (Budapest: Csokonai Kiadó, 2004)

¹⁴² László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz*. (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992)

We knew from the outset that there was something amiss. We came to the camp at Auschwitz and there we happened to see work-gangs coming in. They were carrying bodies just as a hunter carries the game he has shot, like a deer. They had a pole and something from it bound by its hands and feet. It was a corpse. Two corpses. And blood. Blood everywhere. That gave us food for thought, it had not occurred to us that the same might happen to us. But then we had to move on and we arrived to Birkenau.¹⁴³

Gypsy women and men were equally targeted by discriminatory policies for death, however their paths were paved by different regulations. The difference can be grasped several ways. Inside the labor camps the Nazi delegated leadership to men as well as there was a traditional division of labor. A third difference was the initial focus on Gypsy men outside the camps for arrest and incarceration. The most infamous distinction between the sexes was the treatment of pregnant women. Either compulsory abortion or pregnancy automatically condemned a woman to death.

They kicked the baby out of her [Julianna Sárközi; the grandmother of the interviewee] belly on the way to the fortress.¹⁴⁴

Pregnancy was also a life-threatening event in the camps, since visibly pregnant women were selected immediate killing. The last distinction is that women in general were more likely than men to subjected to sexual harassment and rape.

¹⁴³ George Case (director), *The Forgotten Holocaust*, (48.min), Open Society Archive.

¹⁴⁴ Flóra Horváth interviewee (March/2008 – Esztergom)

They dragged him out, put a gun to his head, rifle whatever, and then the other girls run down the stairs. They were raped in front of their parents. They suffered a lot.¹⁴⁵

Women were immediately denounced as traitors of the nation, and rape as a weapon of war was entirely positioned within one category of ethnicity, whereas women were turned into metaphors. To Judith Butler's insight, the sex is always already gendered,¹⁴⁶ and in this case gender became ethnicized since its primary target was the category of Gypsy women.

Further the Gypsy's concept on dirtiness/cleanliness and the perception of their body were ignored.

They masked their faces with both smut and feathers to conceal their beauty and not to be liked by the soldiers. However the soldiers were 'foxy'. There used to be a basin with soap in every household. The soldiers warmed up water in the basin and ordered the women to have a shower. And they had to clean their faces, comb their hair. The soldiers adored them and then raped them. In front of their parents eyes. They did.¹⁴⁷

As I have written above there was a symbolic separation of the body among Gypsies. According to their understanding, the lower part was polluted and any dirt coming from there should not have contaminated objects that passed into the mouth or associated with the upper body. Forcing women to have a shower in front of other people's eyes as well as smashing the border metaphorically and literally between cultures by ignoring the division of body was a proclamation of the soldiers' superiority.

¹⁴⁵ Margit (20/04/08; Esztergom)

¹⁴⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 109-110.

¹⁴⁷ Margit, 20/April/2008 – Esztergom

Second form of the public transcript: euphemization

Regarding the public transcript and its four ways of operation I turn to the second point which can be described by the word ‘*euphemization*.’¹⁴⁸ “It is used to obscure something that is negatively valued or would prove to be an embarrassment if declared more forthrightly. (...) The imposition of euphemisms on public transcript plays a similar role in masking many nasty facts of domination and giving them a harmless or sanitized aspect. In particular, they are designed to obscure the use of coercion.”¹⁴⁹ I regard the presence of euphemistic language obvious in legislation. Gypsies appeared in provisions as dangerous elements of social stability which - as the provision claimed - was the result of their vagabond workshy lifestyle. Their persecution and discrimination was organized on the basis of biology and race science. For instance in spring 1936 the Race Hygiene and Population Biology Research Center, Germany was established under the directorship of Robert Ritter I order to “reveal with exact methods the root causes of social developments in the biological, i.e. ultimately in the laws of heredity in order to legitimize the eradication of the unintegrated and the unproductive.”¹⁵⁰ Further, words such as ‘Final Solution,’ ‘Gypsy Menace,’ ‘Gypsy plague,’ and the list could be continued represent a concealment or masking of the real meaning of the system. However euphemism is not confined exclusively to language but may be seen in gestures, in public ceremonies which are planned to veil the reality.

Third form of the public transcript: stigmatization

Third, the process of euphemization and the creation of groups followed by categories imply the possibility to *stigmatize* people. With the rise of the new, modern type of sovereignty the process of stigmatization has been working on the grounds of the biological

¹⁴⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.52.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p.53.

¹⁵⁰ Karola Fings - Herbert Heuss - Frank Sparing, *From 'Race Science' to the Camps*. (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), p.58.

paradigm as well as has been taking shape by a range of legislative actions such as categorization which process has already been mentioned before.

Fourth form of the public transcript: unanimity

Finally the notion of *unanimity* must be established among the elite and the appearance of consent among the subalterns.¹⁵¹ Disagreements, informal discussions were kept to a minimum among the elite and wherever it was possible they were trying to establish social integration – in education, public appearances and ceremonies as well as more informal, social sites, such as family life. Under the Gypsy persecution, perhaps the most extensive use of public unanimity was the forced marching of shaved Gypsies to the camps.

Conclusion

To conclude the chapter let me summarize the above-written thought. I have taken the concept of modern nation-state as a violent framework for institutional arrangements and techniques which marginalize, inclusively exclude or just simply abandon individuals who are for some reasons worth not being integrated into the political system. This physical elimination of categories of citizens into a state of exception remains always in a relationship with power. The exception explains the general since it becomes a boundary marker and the more interaction takes place between power and subaltern the more the exception becomes the rule and the paradigm of life as it happened under the Gypsy Holocaust. The Roma population is always meant to be the essential ‘internal Other’ for Hungary excluded and refused to get access all the resources equally with the majority, but still maintained and claimed to be necessary for the proper and flattering self-definition for the Gazos. The life of this category of individuals in the state of exception was exposed to death without regarding the act of killing as a homicide. Under the Holocaust with the emergence of the totalitarian state by the

¹⁵¹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.55.

driving force and the potentiality of the juridical order there was a zone created for indistinction between outside and inside as well as between norm and exception.

I believe that dealing with domination is important for a better understanding of resistance. For this reason I dedicated the chapter as a ‘preliminary requirement’ to acquire a deeper knowledge on the operation of power. However brutal, invisible and violent it is I argue that relations of domination invoke relations of resistance. To remain human, to preserve dignity and even to survive resistance must be claimed.

The danger of death had a different meaning for those who stayed back, because they were always threatened by it. Those women who took care of the children at least knew that their death would not be meaningless, they would die for something. They lived to resist and they resisted to live.¹⁵²

In the next chapter I will focus on and analyze Gypsy women memories on the Holocaust and show how resistance in its sophisticated way filled out their everyday lives.

¹⁵² Ferencné Lakatos interviewee (March/2008 – Székesfehérvár)

IV. Voice in the silence

Introduction

Can we talk about heroism in the context of the Holocaust and define its heroes and heroines? In search of heroism how can this term be applied to a person, ignoring the dichotomy between epic¹⁵³ and tragic¹⁵⁴ hero via a theoretical development towards another hero typology? How can heroism be thematized in the absence of Greek and Western-European traditions with their emphases on narcissism, bravery, courage, strength, luck and additional 'heroic' attributes? Thinking about the Holocaust as well as reading testimonies these questions are always in my mind without keeping still and in peace. One of the key concepts of understanding an individual's urge to heroism is the idea of narcissism which is approached by the tragedy of the mythical Greek Narcissus¹⁵⁵ hopelessly absorbed with himself; heroism permeates Greek myths and the Anglo-Saxon tradition in the figure of Beowulf.¹⁵⁶ It is therefore hard to provide a different meaning and construct an unusual concept for heroes and heroines. However "we are like to be reminded that our central calling, our main task on this planet is the heroic,"¹⁵⁷ thus the world is to be essentially the theatre for heroism, the notion of it is individualized and appropriated with the above mentioned prototypes. Below I claim that heroic characteristics are gendered and that a heroic action tends to be associated with particular actions or qualities that are considered to be more masculine or more feminine; in other words heroism reflects institutionalized gendered

¹⁵³ Epic hero is a larger than life figure from a history or a legend, usually favored by deities, but aligned more closely with mortal figures in popular portrayals. It illustrates traits, performs deeds, and exemplifies certain morals that are valued by the society from which the epic originates. For instance: Beowulf, Odysseus, Achilles.

¹⁵⁴ The tragic hero should be neither better nor worse morally than normal people: usually has an epic battle with a counterpart where they fight to the death for what they believe in; must see and understand his doom, and that his fate was revealed by his own actions; must be intelligent enough to have the opportunity to learn from his mistakes; must be faced with a very serious decision; suffering of the hero must have meaning. As Aristotle once said that "A man doesn't become a hero until he can see the root of his own downfall." For instance: Aristotle's Hamartia, Shakespeare's Macbeth.

¹⁵⁵ A hero from the Greek mythology who was renowned for his beauty. This a moral tale in which the proud and unfeeling Narcissus is punished by the gods for having spurned all his male suitors.

¹⁵⁶ Old English heroic epic poem of anonymous authorship dates to between the 8th and the 11th century.

¹⁵⁷ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*. (New York: Free Press, 1973), p.1.

hierarchies. Therefore conceptions of heroism refer to excellent actions or qualities that are associated with spaces or traits that are socially defined as male or female as well as incorporate traditionally defined feminine and masculine understandings. Due to this tendency I argue that women in the context of heroism cannot be seen in their own quality, are invisible, marginalized or even trivialized.

I suggest that anyone who manages to stay alive in extremity without losing the will to carry on in human ways is heroism. What this kind of struggle entails and what I mean by 'humanness' are in the main focus of this part of the paper.

In this chapter I will offer a re-evaluation of the canonical perception of heroism that moves beyond the above interpretations towards an appraisal which emphasizes the humanist and idealist characteristics, introduces a new perspective, a 'quasi-hero' which possesses besides classical heroic several other 'anti-heroic' attributes. This new 'prototype' appears in resistance and includes moral steadfastness, spiritual confrontation, daily struggle for survival as well as the preservation of the community's unity and each individual's humanity. I hope that in the end of the chapter I will be able to make a more complete picture of the Holocaust by taking Roma women's experiences and activities into consideration. I will combine the Scottian notion of resistance,¹⁵⁸ which takes silent, invisible forms of opposition parallel with the onstage operation of power and an anti-heroic notion of heroism which primarily aspires to survive and stay human whatever the latter means since it is hard to define "what the 'ultimate' sense of belonging to the human species is."¹⁵⁹

I will present the 'hidden transcript' as a framework for the paper by James C. Scott where resistance as 'infrapolitics' appears offstage and is influenced by the counterforce of

¹⁵⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

¹⁵⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p.59.

surveillance as well as punishment brought to bear by the dominant.¹⁶⁰ To prove its validity and legitimacy I will use the testimonies of Gypsy women on the Roma Holocaust. I will analyze elaborate more on memory as well as introduce the problem of the inadequacy of language to describe and explain what took place in the Holocaust. Finally I will establish the link between soft resistance and heroism and argue that under the Roma Holocaust we should recognize the subaltern and its aspiration to “live to resist and to resist to live.”¹⁶¹

As I have argued in the previous chapters the public transcript incorporates first a domain of material appropriation (such as taxes, labor), second a domain of public mastery (such as rituals of hierarchy, punishment, control, deference or humiliation), and finally an ideological justification for inequalities (for instance the world view of the dominant elite). While the extraction of labor and taxes from a subordinate population are common or rather have a generic quality, personal degradation and the shape of domination is always cultural-, and thus system-specific. I have focused on system-specific attributes of power. Therefore resistance as the offstage response to domination not just simply originates from material appropriation but also form the pattern of personal humiliation. The bond between material exploitation and symbolism of subordination is inseparable, so does resistance appear in two fronts. “The hidden transcript is not just behind-the-scenes griping and grumbling; it is enacted in a host of down-to-earth, low-profile stratagems designed to minimize appropriation.”¹⁶² Considering the hidden transcript I will elaborate on first the creation of the relatively unmonitored agents – women – and social sites – spaces in the camp and language – in order to provide the environment for a better understanding of silence under domination. I

¹⁶⁰ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

¹⁶¹ Ferencné Lakatos (March/2008 – Székesfehérvár)

¹⁶² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.188.

mean by the latter specific forms of resistance which have the capacity to form a critique on power without a hearable voice. According to this paper the preservation as well as the strength of the sense of community is in the center-point and constitutes the fundament of resistance. Fantasy, courage, oral culture, language and collective memory are basic elements of it. I claim that it would provide a better understanding for the experience of resistance if instead of material exploitation the analysis tries to look behind the scene to see how under given conditions, such as control, surveillance and punishment, veiled ideological opposition dared to take shape.

Women as agents

In this paper I take women as agents and claim that in their invisibility and position at the lower end of the hierarchical strata, women are to a certain extent not bound by social conventions - they are capable of an original attitude towards accommodation, opposition and self-definition. Their resistance is not exclusively a fight for life but also small sets of activities motivated by conscious attempts to defy the Nazis and thwart their goal of depriving Gypsies of their humanity. Women have a particular link to the nation-state since both their role and the family are constituted, as central dimensions, around the relationships of collectivities of the state as Nira Yuval-Davis highlighted.¹⁶³ On the one hand women and men are members of a collectivity and important parts of the nation-building project where women in particular have been appealed to as a prime vehicle of nation building and the education of citizens within the family. On the other hand, women's 'familial' duties have resulted in women having been historically excluded from various types of social, economic and political forms of citizenship. As a category and as a fetishized foundation of modern nation-states they are a special focus of state concerns. It is important to note, however, that

¹⁶³ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*. (London: SAGE Publication, 1997)

the way the state treats women and the attempts to conceptualize the link between women and the state are violent and sexuated. There are inbuilt inequalities within the society which construct men and women differently thus preclude to fulfill 'equality' one of the premises upon modern nation-states are established. The category of women is an excluded but important pillar of the state to maintain or even modify social processes. For instance the policy for the attainment of citizenship, or in other words, the expression of the relationship between state and its individuals was far from being gender-neutral but favored masculinity.¹⁶⁴

I keep in mind that it would be a mistake to take Gypsy women as a homogenous group thus homogenizing the Gypsy population either. This unity of Gypsies has been both phrased and challenged within frameworks such as cultural, linguistic or biological.¹⁶⁵ Further given the fact that Gypsy groups very often do not recognize each other as belonging to the same social and value community I would rather take an approach which primarily focuses on gender then ethnicity and therefore claim that there is a universal or a common meaning system which although depends on the context but can be applied to women in general. Following Nira Yuval-Davis there are five major ways in which women tended to participate in ethnic and national processes and in relation to state practices.¹⁶⁶ First, women are biological reproducers of collectivities. It means that specific policies target the collectivity's reproduction which relate to women and try to affect and have a power on their reproductive capacity either by encouraging or discouraging to give birth on the grounds of state interests. As an example, all

¹⁶⁴ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988); Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*. (London: SAGE Publication, 1997); Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Family, Fraternity and Salaried Labor." in *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000); Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Enikő Magyari-Vincze, "Gender, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Social Order: a View from Below in the Context of Romania." in *Gender and Nation in South-Eastern Europe. Anthropological Yearbook of European Cultures*, eds. Karl Kaser and Elisabeth Ktsching-Fasch (Vol.14, 2005)

¹⁶⁵ Paloma Gay y Blasco, "Gypsy/Roma Diasporas. A Comparative Perspective," *Social Anthropology* 10. no.2. (2002), pp.173-188.

¹⁶⁶ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*. (London: SAGE Publication, 1997)

the Gypsy women mainly in Ravensbrück and Birkenau were affected by one method of extermination: sterilization. National Socialist doctors carried out their experiments on Gypsy (as well as Jewish) women who were regarded by the National Socialist as racially and socially inferior. Second, women are reproducers of boundaries of ethnic groups. They are controlled in terms of 'proper' behavior, embody cultural norms and taboos. The fact that they practice the language, the frequency of their interactions with Magyars, their absence from the moments of exchange of animals and their place as observers in a community draw lines inside and outside for the community. Further, during my research I learned that a relevant difference between a Gypsy and a Magyar woman is that the former has the strength – coming from a particular social habitus – to control herself not to have any sexual intercourse before marriage. However a Gypsy man is allowed to feel shameful desire towards a Gazi,¹⁶⁷ moreover each Gazi is counted as a trophy but marriage can be conceived exclusively with a Gypsy woman.¹⁶⁸ Another point of Yuval-Davis is that women are participants in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity. They are cultural carriers and without a 'public face' one of their main duties is to bring up children as well as take care of the family. Fourth they are signifiers of ethnic differences constituting the symbolic manifestation of the community. The ways how Gypsy women dress up, talk to each other, the length of their hair and their concept of bodily purity are all cultural markers embodied on the woman and drawing the boundaries visibly. Finally they participate in national, political, economic and military struggles. I argue that total war exists if women are active agents, struggling participants in it and play an outstanding role in representing the given collectivity.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Non-Gypsy woman.

¹⁶⁸ Paloma Gay y Blasco deals with this topic and conducts her research in Madrid, Spain within a Gitanos community. There the sign of virginity is the 'honra' which is taken away by the husband and carried a lifetime long by him after the wedding. In Paloma Gay y Blasco, *Gypsies in Madrid. Sex, Gender and the Performance of Identity*. (Oxford: Berg, 1999)

¹⁶⁹ Franz Fanon, "The Algerian Family," in *A Dying Colonialism*. (New York: Grove Press 1967), pp.99-120.

I do not say that resistance was conducted at the level of a systematic social doctrine, since Gypsy persecution was quasi-systematic, less documented and not as well-prepared as the Jewish Holocaust. Further it had a particular time period, dated mainly from October, 1944 when the Szálasi regime came to power and ended up in spring, 1945. Nevertheless I do claim that there was a counter-ideology that effectively provided a general normative form to resistance practices invented in self-defense by the subordinate Gypsy group. This counter-ideology was nothing less than the establishment of women's responsibility towards each other, a mutual help to survive. This wilful gesture of negation of atomization and elimination insisted on making a nearly solid wall, an autonomous life for the powerless where they mutually emptied themselves entirely in the 'campaign of death' and aimed to keep the collectivity alive in the present.

Social sites

Why is it important to enhance the dialogue of hidden transcript? It is relevant simply for the reason that none of the transcripts exists without a public. As there is the target group of the public transcript which performs as well as practices the prescribed patterns of behavior so there appears a public for offstage subculture where negation can be articulated. As a consequence, the hidden transcript is a product of social interactions and is real only when it is practiced, enacted as well as disseminated. Hence it is the result of power relations and the stronger cooperation happens among subordinates, the harder it is to penetrate and destroy the essence of the community. Therefore the hidden transcript within the camp was a self-disclosure which provided a safe articulation of hostility and fear on the one hand, but on the other hand it made possible to create a discourse of the refusal of the system and of the preservation of humanity. To practice resistance a social site has to have been carved out as a space which was free from surveillance or control and was able to formulate patterns of

opposition. It did not mean physical distance from the powerful. Within the camp women tried to create homelike places and language was also an articulated form of expression, as long as linguistic codes, dialects or gestures were deployed.

Preservation of community: a care for each other

During the Roma Holocaust, Gypsy women's resistance and survival can be considered as a form of heroism. The whole system of domination aimed to atomize collectivities and therefore keep them under close observation, control and punishment.

The first impression that we had of Auschwitz was terrible. (...) The barracks had no windows, only shutters for air. The floor was made of clay. In a barracks which had room for perhaps 200 people they often put 800 or more. That in itself was already terrible suffering, this being accommodated amongst so many people. My aunt came over to me. We looked at each other and for both of us tears began to flow. The impression. It was awful. The people sat motionless in these bunks and just stared at us. I thought, I am dreaming, I am in hell.¹⁷⁰

What happens in the above circumstances under atomization is the total abolition of any social realm where discourse could occur, and as a consequence the hidden transcript which might be generated among subordinates could not be formulated due to the lack of dialogue. This totalitarian fantasy takes place by aiming to achieve the state of complete solitude which "is the primary condition of total submission."¹⁷¹ This is the reason why I regard collectivity as the first way of silent resistance under domination. It was demanding for women to organize life in line with two different obligations: on the one hand they had to

¹⁷⁰ Elisabeth Guttenberg on Auschwitz/Birkenau IIe. In Karola Fings - Herbert Heuss - Frank Sparing, *From 'Race Science' to the Camps*. (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), p.96

¹⁷¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) , p.237.

obey, accept and act according to the code-system of the public transcript, on the other hand children, husband and the unity of the whole community were at stake and had to be kept together. Gypsy women were able to keep the collectivity together, support each other even establish relationships among themselves which helped the survival and the capability to adapt to the new circumstances.

She felt like dying. She wanted to throw herself on the wires, but other women held her down.¹⁷²

The strength of non-conformity and consciousness depended on the cohesiveness of the subordinate group as well as the establishment of horizontal links among themselves. It made it possible to keep the group alive. The desire to fight atomization and solitude was in opposition to the permanent aim of the elite which meant to break into pieces communities. This complete use of ignorance by women to thwart domination and question its success led Eric Hobsbawn to say, “The refusal to understand is a form of class struggle.”¹⁷³ However the process of killing them by letting them die attacked their very essence through objectification and dehumanization, and the circumstances differed camp by camp; women had the strength to establish informal networks among them, keep the family alive, bring up and even give birth to children.

I will focus on two main sites of resistance: Komárom, in Hungary and Birkenau, in Germany since all my interviewees were deported either both or one of the camps.

¹⁷² Marika interviewee (20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

¹⁷³ Eric Hobsbawn, “*Peasants and Politics*.” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1, no.1. (October, 1973), p.13. In. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.133.

Taking care of children and husbands

The so-called *Csillagerőd* internment camp in Komárom started to function in October, 1944. The Roma from different parts of Hungary were deported to the fortress which was as a working camp on the one hand, but on the other hand it sorted out individuals who were able to work and for them it was the last stage before reaching the German concentration camps. The first deportation to Germany of some 1200 people including miners, Gypsies musicians as well as Gypsy women, men and children began in November, 1944.¹⁷⁴

Inside Csillagerőd some women had no or little interaction with their children, but they still managed to keep in touch with them.

I had my baby and they took him away. I don't know where. My daughter was in another block, she was 2 years old. Oh, I'm crying because I want to be back on that block to see her. I can't go outside because it was locked-out. (...) But I used to run away at night to see her.¹⁷⁵

In this remembrance there are two eye-catching momentums. First, the argument that the Gypsy family camp in Birkenau was established to eliminate Gypsy 'disobedience' stemmed from strong family bonds might have some validity. Second, the variation of present and past tenses – "I'm crying (...); But I used to run (...)." – indicates the never-ending pain as well as the inadequacy of language to express or describe what there exactly happened. By conducting the interviews many of the interviewees interrupted the discussion with exclamations or short remarks, such as "Hajjajjjaj!"; "They suffered a lot."; "Not many

¹⁷⁴ Bársony János - Daróczy Ágnes (eds.), *Pharrajimos. Romák Sorsa a Holocaust Idején*. (The Fate of the Roma under the Holocaust.) Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2004), pp.68-78.

¹⁷⁵ A woman in Auschwitz. In George Case (director), *The Forgotten Holocaust*, (48.min), Open Society Archive.

survived. Not many. All my relatives died. All of them. Yeah.”¹⁷⁶ In testimony there is something like an impossibility of bearing witness. “To have ‘really seen with his own eyes’ a gas chamber would be the condition which gives one the authority to say that it exists and to persuade the unbeliever. Yet is still necessary to prove that the gas chamber was used to kill at the time it was seen. The only acceptable proof that it was used to kill is that one died from it. But if one is dead, one cannot testify that it is on account of the gas chamber.”¹⁷⁷ The speechless one, the witness who is already dead makes the speaking one to speak, but for the one who is speaking it is impossible to articulate feelings and emotions or even provide a description on the events, “[since] the silent and the speaking, the inhuman and the human enter into a zone of indistinction in which it is impossible to establish the position of the subject, to identify the ‘imagined substance’ of the ‘I’ and along with it the true witness.”¹⁷⁸

Concerning the camp in Csillagerőd Julianna’s¹⁷⁹ testimony has also additional value to enrich and put different but useful tone on the picture of the Pharrajimos¹⁸⁰. Her family were traveling Gypsies worked in Esztergom by the time the Gypsy’s registration took shape in 1940. In 1944 Julianna and her family including her ten children were transported to the fortress where they were forced to work. On the basis of the traditional division of labor men were working on railway lines while women were taken to the field. Julianna was pregnant when the deportations started. As a performance of power relations, Gypsy people had to march from Esztergom to the fortress accompanied by Nazi soldiers and whoever was

¹⁷⁶ „Szenvedtek sokat.” „Nem sokan maradtak. Nem maradtak. Nincs is a rokonokból senki, meghaltak már. Mind. Biza.” etc.

¹⁷⁷ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1988) quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999), pp.34-35.

¹⁷⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p.120.

¹⁷⁹ Julianna’s story was told by Flóra Horváth interviewee (March/2008 – Esztergom)

¹⁸⁰ A synonym of the Gypsy Holocaust.

presumably weak was shot down or left behind. On the way to the internment camp, Nazi soldiers

kicked the baby out of Julianna's belly.¹⁸¹

Since women had to do both obeying and taking care of children, their response was to adapt to the new circumstances on the surface and practice the public transcript, but invisibly they refused to ignore the sense of belonging to a community, and thus tried to preserve their humanity. Women, including Julianna, trained their children, aged between five to seven years, in how they should look after and protect their sisters and brothers while working in the fields. Women became 'camp sisters,' supporting each other and this phenomenon of social interaction as a source of strength permitted adaptation and individual survival.

While in Csillagerőd there was a narrow bunker where children were put inside and women and men were separated from each other, *Auschwitz/Birkenau IIe* was unusual in that sense that families were interned. It was a complex of thirty-two living barracks and six hospitals to accommodate the mass deportation of Gypsies begun in February of 1943. Over the course of 1943 the deportation trains brought some 19,000 Gypsies to Birkenau. By the summer of 1944 a further 2,200 had been delivered to the camp. The majority (63%) were of German nationality, while 21% came from the Czech lands, 6% from Poland and the remaining 11% were of other nationalities including Hungarians.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Flóra Horváth (March/2008 – Esztergom)

¹⁸² Karola Fings - Herbert Heuss - Frank Sparing, *From 'Race Science' to the Camps*. (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), pp.94-95.

As Bora who was two years old at the time of the deportations explained that first the family was taken to Komárom/Csillagerőd and then they were deported further to Auschwitz/Birkenau.

We stayed with her [mother], in a big room, and when there was the possibility we went with her to work. I accompanied my mother and held her skirt.¹⁸³

Mothers who could not manage to let their children follow their steps faced with two choices. They either taught the elder ones how to take care of the youngsters and the babies, or shared work among themselves and during work some women stayed back to look after children. As Julianna and her fellow sufferers relied on their daughters and sons to pay attention to one another, so Sárköziné's¹⁸⁴ community cooperated to attain a feeling of safety concerning their children while the majority of the women were forced to work. Sárköziné's testimony is specific and relevant for one more momentum. She put in plain words that besides children, husbands as 'living dead'¹⁸⁵ on the edge of complete exhaustion needed the breast-milk of the mothers to regain energy. It demonstrates first, that against total dehumanization and elimination of life 'not worth living,'¹⁸⁶ giving birth was not impossible within the camp, and second, the never-ending frustration, fear and stressful environment was not enough to take the milk away and deprive women from feeding their babies.

¹⁸³ Bora (18/April/2008 – Esztergom)

¹⁸⁴ Sárköziné (March/2008 – Esztergom)

¹⁸⁵ The term is taken: Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999),

¹⁸⁶ The term is taken: Ibid.

The role of fantasy and oral culture

In the evenings when they gathered to go to sleep women had the additional strength to tell bed-time stories to the children in order to placate them, as Bora recalled it.

It was a big room. After work my mother told me stories of her childhood when they had horses and played with them and slept under the stars. But once I can remember I did not fall asleep and heard them crying while they were talking about their pains and their fears that they would not survive.¹⁸⁷

The development of fantasy and the courage to place themselves into a different world through stories is an illustration of the veiled cultural resistance of the subordinate. I would like to stop here for a while and elaborate more on the function of fantasy in the context of oppression. Fantasy is expected to have two tasks. On the one hand it should be able to mask one's feelings and gestures by placing the individual into a different world, and on the other hand it is a means to control what would be a natural impulse of rage, anger and frustration.¹⁸⁸ At its most elementary level the hidden transcript represents an acting out in fantasy.

Since tales rooted in memories of the self invoke 'old times' suggesting a line of interpretation of the present in terms of the fragile realization of what they really are. These stories also celebrated as a source of pride and satisfaction and made it possible for both Gypsy women and children to deliver up the public performance required of them by small gestures indicated their lack of enthusiasm. Finally, I believe that oral history as a sign of a

¹⁸⁷ Bora (18/April/2008 – Esztergom)

¹⁸⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

language¹⁸⁹ community as well as a set of personal interactions between generations could have a collective significance and could be an ideal vehicle for resistance.

Simply due to the articulation of expressions which necessarily controls and imposes a disciplined form on the group, language becomes the property only of that community. Further, within the given frame of language informal speech between intimates is likely to take greater liberties in the usage of syntax, grammar and phrases than formal speech, and anonymity “possible within oral culture derives from the fact that it exists in only impermanent forms through being spoken and performed.”¹⁹⁰ Therefore each interaction and discussion is unique as time, space and participants differ as well as oral history achieves the anonymity of collective property by being situational, constantly adjusted and contextualized. For this reason the real of private conversations, such as story telling between a Gypsy mother and her children, is the most difficult for powerful apparatuses to penetrate. It might seem to be the least satisfying way of resistance but I claim that it is able to achieve something that backstage can never match. It carves out space for an autonomous cultural expression of dissent. It created perfect collective perspective on Gypsy life as well as an ideal unity of the community. Even if it is anonymous and concealed it is not hidden and can speak to power.

Providing extra food

As it turned out from the interviews, the hardest issue for a woman was to provide the necessary amount of food for her children. All my interviewees highlighted the ways how mothers were using out all their informal networks, aspiring to give the best to their kids. A former Auschwitz prisoner Lucie Adelsberger, who worked as a nurse in Birkenau IIe, describes this:

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. p.160.

The children were like adults, all skin and bone, without muscles and without fat, and their parchment-like skin chafed on the hard edge of the bones and burst into festering wounds... Thirst, unsatisfied thirst was one of the great plagues of Birkenau. The children crept at night from the Section and scrambled secretly on all fours to the bowls of washing up water, and drank them dry... The children were brought from the Section together with their dirty blankets, from the straw sacks in which maggots were wriggling, and they lay on the cold stone of the stove or on the clay floor. They were washed together with their blankets and everything was dragged into the bed, the sick, wet children and the sopping wet blankets.¹⁹¹

Under these conditions many illnesses and diseases could spread through the Section therefore mothers felt the need to make extra arrangements secretly and feed their children. Bora recalled fights among prisoners by giving them different portions of food, as well as she said that her mother's major concern had been to struggle against hunger since living conditions had been much worse than in the other sections of Birkenau and had been not suited to a family camp.

The food was just this: one loaf of rye bread per a day among five or more people, plus warm water instead of soup. Sometimes we ate a spoon of jam and margarine. Distributions were carried out in a way that often led to fighting. Dead people were left behind often. We were hungry. Then my mother went to work [worked in the kitchen in the Family Section] she stole an extra slice of bread from the kitchen and put it into her apron. She gave me that or I accompanied her. It was very dangerous.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Karola Fings - Herbert Heuss - Frank Sparing, *From 'Race Science' to the Camps*. (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), p.102.

¹⁹² Bora (18/April/2008 – Esztergom)

The Family Section in Birkenau was in many respects different from the other section of the camp. Its inmates had to spend the whole day huddled together. With a very few exceptions no one was sent to work outside and so there was no opportunity to acquire help in the form of food parcels from outside. Many of the women were working on the fields or in construction brigades. In those cases when the mother either did not have the capacity to work or the type of work did not mean extra food, children were trained by them to be cunning and brave. In Esztergom within the ghettoized settlement I conducted interview with two Romungro women, Margit and Marika. They were neighbors and when I was there they were preparing the Sunday lunch for Margit's extended family. While Margit had clear memories on the events of the Soviet occupation and was able to recall her parent's narration regarding the Holocaust, Marika was a Holocaust survivor. She was three years old when her mother and the eight siblings were deported to Birkenau. Her mother did not have the capacity to do both work and bring up children therefore it was the younger generation's duty to seek for extra food. She taught them that however the elements were unchangeable, it was still possible to adopt an attitude toward that situation which then allowed them to have a liveable life.

Our mother told us in German 'Go to the pharmacy and get some paprika!' So we went there and asked the pharmacist and said to him in German 'Little Kindern' and that we were little and needed something. He asked what we needed. We answered in German that our mother sent us here for paprika. He did not intend to give us claiming that it was poisonous. We inclined to get some. Finally he gave. At home I explained to my mother that the pharmacist hardly gave us anything since he believed it was poisonous. 'Go back and invite him out for lunch!' suggested my mother who cooked a kind of stone-soup. I returned back to the pharmacy. Note I was a little kid. I grabbed

his coat and said in German ‘Come my mother invites you for lunch!’ First he declined but then he changed his mind. He did not eat anything while we were having lunch. Neither did he eat when we finished and started to play. After a while when he realized that we were still alive started to taste the food.¹⁹³

The invitation of the pharmacist showed the children the human side of the enemy,¹⁹⁴ and then Marika told me that they could establish a relationship without a sense of fear with the German Nazi soldiers who could have become the source for additional food supply.

They offered us a seat in their cars and went together to the garbage-hill. And we ate from there. We took those big pieces of bread and throw them upon the track. It did not matter whether it was moldy or not. We immersed them into water and then ate them. (...) Then we queued for pudding. We took a pot with us and started to complain that ‘little Kinder, we have no food left!’ We went there two or three times. We did not have any other solution. Then we got it. We were standing in the queue. One of us brought the pot of pudding home and the other came back for another turn. We did it by turns. We did not have anything to eat. I would not wish to experience the same again. I was such a little kid. We were bold.¹⁹⁵

As I recall Marika’s face while telling me this story and writing down these words, two momentums strike me. On the surface she believed what they did were right and the only solution to survive. She was grateful to her mother to taught them these tricks. Typically the

¹⁹³ Marika (20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

¹⁹⁴ Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997)

¹⁹⁵ Marika (20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

‘trickster’¹⁹⁶ makes the way out of the dominant environment not by strength but by wit. Women were weaker and smaller than their antagonists. Therefore only by knowing the habits of the enemies, by deceiving them and taking advantage of their miserliness did Gypsy women manage to ‘escape’ and save their families. On a deeper level Marika accused the system, the powerful elite of placing children in situations like these. The accusation sounds much sharper if the context is viewed as those Nazi soldiers who were considered as friends let children suffer from hunger. Moreover, I would not say that the fact that they were bold was painful in a symbolic sense – in terms of that a different hygiene concept was forced upon them – but I rather claim that the little child became sensitive to this way of humiliation of the body through her mother. By looking at her mother’s pain over the loss of her hair, her cry over the children’s lost beauty and purity ‘burnt into Marika’s memory.’¹⁹⁷

Reestablishing homes

Following the liquidations of the fortress and concentration camps Flóra told me that:

My mother said it was unbelievable. By all means people tried to find their relatives.

Imagine roads were ‘crowded’ with both cyclists and pedestrians to seek out and reunite families.¹⁹⁸

Post-war period challenged Gypsies and required from them to have extra capacity in order to create a home as a social space free from surveillance where their Gypsy way of life could

¹⁹⁶ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

¹⁹⁷ “There is perhaps nothing more fearful and more terrible in the entire pre-history of human beings than the technique for developing his memory. We *burn* something in so that it remains in the memory. Only something which never ceases to cause pain stays in the memory.” – writes Nietzsche

<http://209.85.135.104/search?q=cache:R4L2CQOGKFAJ:www.mala.bc.ca/~Johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogy2.htm+nietzsche%3B+memory%3B+burn%3B+genealogy+of+morals&hl=hu&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=hu>

¹⁹⁸ Flóra Horváth (March/2008 – Esztergom)

have been further preserved and practiced. Following a complete campaign of death and years of direct torture the period after war showed that the collective hidden transcripts were not merely abstract exercises, but they were embedded in the Gypsy life, practices and value-system. They provided the ideological basis for the continuation of their 'way of doing.' The Roma had to find their places and spaces in the society as well as reinsert themselves as a subculture to the majority's reality. However broken families, the lack of home and work as well as the shortage of food challenged and victimized survivors.

We arrived back to Hungary and the house was empty. My mother asked 'So kids, where are we going to sleep?' We said her in German 'On the floor!' We said on the floor. We slept there. Since the Russians destroyed and burnt everything including our beds we found rugs and slept on them. Later we found some rickety, old beds. I was around six years old. One night I said to my mother. It was ten o'clock. 'Mum, someone knocked the door.' 'It is in your fantasy dear.' We were lying on the floor, seven of us. My mum was the eighth. But I still heard that noise. Our father came home eight years after. From the war. 'Mum, someone is standing under our window.' He was dirty. My mother came out and came back with our father. Jesus. We barely recognized him. He asked immediately whether all the children were alive or not. He was looking for me. The youngest, in his eighth months died in the camp in typhus. Then they said, 'Everything is alright kids. We will eat what we will find.' Then my father became ill, my mother followed him. Both died and three of my brothers and sisters.¹⁹⁹

The story of Mici and Anna

The head of the Hungarian National Socialist Party in Fejér region József Pintér was endowed with power in November, 1944 after the Szálasi regime had been established. He

¹⁹⁹ Marika (20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

imposed legislative measures which favored German soldiers in Hungary, and aspired to manage to solve the situation of the Gypsies within the territory where his scope of power reached. However Székesfehérvár was surrounded by the Soviet Red Army between January and February in 1945, Pintér possibly made several appointments with Gábor Vajna, National Socialist Minister of Interior who proclaimed the final resolution of the Gypsy-problem in Kőszeg in February, 1945.²⁰⁰ The persecution of Gypsies occurred in the end of January when approximately 230 Gypsies were taken from both Székesfehérvár and the surrounding cities to Várpalota. They were forced to dig their own graves before being shot down.²⁰¹ Prior to the event the Roma found an escape to Győr as the only way to save their lives.

When I was speaking with Bora, she said some words on the post-war period and her trips with her father on trading purposes.

B. I went everywhere with my father [after war]. We were also in Székesfehérvár. Do you know where it is? There the Gypsies were all shot down. One woman stayed alive. She was my sister-in-law. Called 'Falat.' Anna is her Hungarian name. She lost both her elder brother and his woman. She was the only survivor, imagine. The dead people fell upon her and she got one shot in her leg. This was the reason why she was limping. Her Gypsy name is Falat.

A. How is she your relative?

B. She was my brother's wife. He had died earlier than she did.

A. Did he die in the fusillade?

B. Yes, and she survived but had a crippled leg. Yes, a lot of Gypsies died then. They were shouting and crying and everything was covered with blood. When we went to

²⁰⁰ I have started to implement the final, entire, and if it is necessary draconian solution of both the question of the Jews and the question of the Gypsies which is required by reason of the two races behavior. In László Karsai, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945. Út a cigány Holocausthoz.* (Gypsy-question in Hungary between 1919-1945. The way which led to the Gypsy Holocaust.) (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992), p.132.

²⁰¹ János Bársony- Daróczi Ágnes (eds.), *Pharrajimos: Romák sorsa a Holocaust idején.* (Pharrajimos. The Fate of the Roma under the Holocaust.) (Budapest, L'Harmattan: 2004)

the market in Székesfehérvár the Gypsies kept on showing where it had happened. They had to dig out a pit where they fell in after the fusillade. It was dangerous and the a few people left.

A. What did Falat do after the massacre?

B. She left it.

A. Székesfehérvár?

B. Yes, she left Székesfehérvár and moved to Esztergom where she got married. She might have had five or six families [children] here.²⁰²

I went to Székesfehérvár where Ferenc (Füles) Lakatos and his wife Ferencné told me the story of Mici Lakatos who was the sister of Ferenc's grandfather as well as one of the two survivor of the mass-killing happened at the end of February, 1945.²⁰³ The grandfather of Füles had four children: one daughter and three sons. Since there was a chance to escape to Győr the way was supposed to be demanding he decided to leave behind his three sons along with other Gypsy families. Mici, who was at that time twenty-five years old, and several other young, single Gypsy women sacrificed their chance of living in order to stay in Székesfehérvár and nurse the children left behind. The women alongside with the children were taken to Várpalota and were executed. Mici, the only survivor according to the narration of the Lakatos family, dedicated her life after the Nazi terror to keep the cohesiveness of the Gypsy collectivity. I found her testimony in the book edited by János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczi.²⁰⁴ She explained the hard condition they had to face with in Várpalota. Together with the children they were locked in a hut. It was heavily raining, they were hungry and the children were shouting as well as crying.

²⁰² Bora (19/April/2008 – Esztergom)

²⁰³ Ferencné Lakatos and Füles interviewees (March/2008 – Székesfehérvár)

²⁰⁴ János Bársony- Daróczi Ágnes (eds.), *Pharrajimos: Romák sorsa a Holocaust idején.* (Pharrajimos. The Fate of the Roma under the Holocaust.) (Budapest, L'Harmattan: 2004), p.105.

The men were obliged to dig the pits early in the morning. They did not turn back, all of them were shot down. By the time we arrived there they had already been dead. Then it was our turn. I was pregnant at that time. The baby was expected to July. Got eight shots: to my hand, to my leg, to my side and to my thigh. Eight shots. I survived and another little girl. When silence was unbroken soldiers came to ensure that there was no survivor. I was lying in the pit without moving. When they left and silence came I pushed everyone around my body to see who else stay alive. I touched the young girl. She stung me back. Asked: Who are you? Which one are you? She answered: It is me. Falat. I asked her for her help because I was not able to move.²⁰⁵

Her personal experience turned into shared memory in Székesfehérvár. It did not pass as an event without trace, but burnt into the continuous presence by a non-textual practice through telling. Mici dedicated her life after the Nazi terror to bringing up Falat and keeping the cohesiveness of the Gypsy collectivity in Székesfehérvár.

Conclusion

I claim that however offstage discourse depends heavily on the severity of the domination, there is always possible to formulate a hidden transcript as a self-disclosure. In this chapter I approached women as agents played a relevant role in the creation of social sites as well as in practicing resistance without a hearable voice. On the basis of women's experiences hidden transcript can be translated into the desire to keep alive a collectivity as well as the performance of fantasy and language as properties. Individuals are able to gain consciousness and favor the development of a distinctive subculture with a strong Us/Them imagined dichotomy. Of course, if subordinates are completely atomized it is impossible to assume a public for the hidden transcript which is based on dialogue, a complex discourse,

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

mutuality and self-identification. Therefore the cohesion of the hidden transcript is depended on both the togetherness of subordinates and the homogeneity of domination. This resistant subculture of collectivity and humanity is created as well as promoted by a strong will to survive aware of the never-ending pressure of violence, fear and terror. I claim that it is necessary to put aside the classical way of dealing with resistance expecting agendas, well-elaborated plans and aims, demonstrations and social subversive activities. But give truth to the statement that “when the rare civilities of open political life are curtailed or destroyed, as they so often are, the elementary forms of infrapolitics remain as a defense in depth of the powerless.”²⁰⁶ Especially placing women into the center-point of the analysis and examining power relations through that lens offers an additional value and perspective on Holocaust. I do not mean any external ground or unsexed sphere for universalism and generalization or the establishment of hierarchy beyond male power. Rather I argue that an absolute struggle exists when women and men mutually demonstrate disaffection, sheer frustration or fear. Under the Pharrajimos a hidden declaration existed and authority was challenged softly. This softness is the essence of both the transcript and their existence. It shows a way they can be free and easy, but “intransigent when power infringes on the universal.”²⁰⁷

Communities of fate in the camp created their distinctive and unified subculture by developing “their own codes, myths, heroes, and social standards.”²⁰⁸ Turning back to the starting point of this chapter on heroism as well as regarding infrapolitics as a sophisticated way of resisting domination I take the daily struggle for survival and the preservation of the community’s unity, each individual’s humanity as characteristics of a hero, an individual, an agent – which is in this context a woman – and therefore transform the traditional notion of

²⁰⁶ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.201.

²⁰⁷ Michel Foucault, “Is it useless to revolt?” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 8, no.3. (1981)

²⁰⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.135.

heroism. Being able to survive with a constant fear in the heart but without a demand on individualism, without a sense of visible greatness represents the resistant's heroism.

V. Final conclusion

In this thesis I aimed to uncover signs of resistance in the historical context of Gypsy Holocaust with a primary focus on women. My purpose was to suggest another path to read Holocaust through the often fugitive political conduct of subordinate groups and their prolonged effort to resist. I was guided by the assumption that relations of domination are in a dialectical relationship with relations of resistance and contrary to the aim of the authority to establish an atomized collectivity with neither discursive freedom, nor social existence and consciousness the Roma managed to negate domination as well as acted on those values however given their position.

By the analysis of relations of domination – since I claim that dealing with domination is important for a better understanding of resistance – I argued that since states exist they have been against every kind of plurality which has been considered as harmful for the fragile structure of their way of operation. Therefore difference based on either ethnicity or gender or both is always marginalized and placed into an exceptional status however is used as a necessary tool for the nation's self definition. As a case study I analyzed legislative measure targeting the Gypsy population Hungary-wide with a special focus to the city Esztergom.

Turning to relations of resistance I assumed that there was an offstage discourse on behalf of the subordinates influenced by the counterforce of surveillance as well as punishment brought to bear by the dominant. To prove its validity and legitimacy I used testimonies of Gypsy women on their own experiences concerning Holocaust. These testimonies demonstrated what I assumed in the beginning. The will to survive, putting the preservation of community in the center-point constituted the fundament of resistance.

I took women as active agents and claimed that being invisible and at the lower end of the hierarchical strata, to a certain extent women are not bound by social conventions - they

were capable of an original attitude towards accommodation, opposition and self-definition. Their resistance was not exclusively a fight for life but also small sets of activities motivated by conscious attempts to defy the Nazis and thwart their goal of depriving Gypsies of their humanity.

I am concerned that a critique of James C. Scott's work might revolve around the argument that it is over-romanticized²⁰⁹ as well as not applicable to testimonies given by individuals. Further, perhaps the notion of heroism, I introduced, might be regarded as banal. All the above necessitate to raise the question whether survival is resistance. Can those men and women be considered as heroes and heroines who strived to keep life and spirit intact in the state of 'non-human'? I came to see the survivor as a figure that fought oppression by staying alive, and the most significant fact about this struggle was that it based on fixed and silent activities: on constant dialogue, on keeping humanity and collectivity active. When the individual had to face with months of steady danger, death-threat and weakness, they suffered the most not from cultural but biological destruction. Therefore their reliance on 'life' itself, their relation to life, had the power to let them survive. However the desire to stay alive could never be enough. There must have been a move to a sheer and fierce determination which overcame fear and took up the burden of bravery, a concept of future, and a faith in life. This is what I call heroism, manifested in arts of silent resistance.

I do believe that the authority of the survivor consists of her ability to speak "in the name of the incapacity to speak – that is, in her being as a subject."²¹⁰ These testimonies interpreting them as evidences of an event, of a complete campaign against witnesses which committed to attack their very essence, their existence and their humanity could serve as a source of

²⁰⁹ Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Resistance." *American Ethnologist* 17, no.1 (February, 1990), pp.41-55.

²¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: the Witness and the Archive*. (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p.158.

strength in the future for the community. They thus guarantee not the factual truth of the statement but the necessity to tell the truth beyond memory and forgetting. Since they reveal immemorial relation between sayable and unsayable, testimonies with every word refute the isolation of survival from resistance. “It is because there is testimony only where there is an impossibility of speaking, because there is a witness only where there has been desubjectification.”²¹¹

²¹¹ Ibid.

VI. Appendix: Words Cited

Bare life: a human creature's life in-between 'zoe' and 'bios' according to Aristotle. It is life 'not worth living.'

Biopolitics: power concept of modernity. It is a political technology that „brought life and its mechanisms in the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge/power an agent of transformation of human life.”²¹² It involves two main sets of techniques: on the one hand the individual's life is targeted and disciplined, on the other hand human life-processes are regulated.

Bios: “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group.”²¹³ It is the space where 'good life' can be practiced, a life which is 'worth living.' Political is the realization of the human capacity to structure a just common life in the community's non-coercive, deliberative reflection upon the question of what justice is. Therefore the political dimension is the realm where justice is pursued. The place where the way of being suggested by Socrates could be achieved: 'the really important thing is not to live but to live well.'

Ethnicized violence: power relations are organized according to ethnic affiliations.

Gender: socially and culturally produced ideas about female - male difference, power and inequality that structure the reproduction of these differences in the institutionalized practices of the society. It is a “primary way of signifying relationships of power.”²¹⁴

Hidden transcript: critique and contestation of power behind the scenes. It is an offstage self-disclosure dissent of the officially acknowledged behavior.

Infrapolitics: “wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name.”²¹⁵

Patriarchal gender regime: inbuilt inequalities favor the masculine roles. Patriarchy functions both through gender stereotypes and institutional arrangements.²¹⁶

Public transcript: set of open interactions between the elite and the oppressed. It is a performance on both sides guarded by a dominant ideology, personal rule and physical pressure which comprises not only speech acts but also conformity in facial expression as well as practical obedience to commands that are humiliating.

²¹² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1988-1990), p.143.

²¹³ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

²¹⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.), p.42.

²¹⁵ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p.19.

²¹⁶ Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996)

Racist state: violence is embedded in the nation-state's structure and is inscribed as the basic mechanism of it. Its coexistence with biopolitics results racism as "primarily [a] way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die."²¹⁷

Sexuated violence: power relations are gendered.

State of exception: means those entities, individuals who do not fit into the concept of the political are pushed to the margins and become both subject – generator of the discourse - and object of state power. It is a state where life is subjected to power over death and exposed to abandonedness.

Totalitarianism: is a condition when the state of exception becomes the rule, the norm.

Zoe: "simple fact of living common to all living beings."²¹⁸ It is the space for reproduction and life organized by the familial household. For Giorgio Agamben, zoe is appropriated with bare life, with a life not worth living.

²¹⁷ Michel Foucault, '*Society Must Be Defended*,' trans. David Macey. Lectures at the College de France (1975-1976) (London, Penguin: 2003), p.254.

²¹⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998)

VII. Appendix: Translated interviews

Amikor én gyerek voltam apámék ilyen háborúval kapcsolatos dolgokat nem titkoltak el, meg hogy milyen rossz körülmények között éltek. Milyen rossz helyzeteken mentek keresztül. Hát ez nem volt titkolnivaló, hát ez nem szégyen volt. Most az volt a helyzet, hogy ők nem azok a fajta cigányok mint mi vagyunk. Mi beszéljük az anyanyelvünket, mi tudjuk a népi kultúránkat. Guszti (19/April/2008, Esztergom)

Hát nekik a zenélésen kívül más kultúrájuk semmi. Ők sem beszélnek a nyelvet. Ők ilyen vályogvetéssel, meg zenéléssel foglalkoztak. Guszti (19/April/2008, Esztergom)

Hát, beások azok is beszélnek az anyanyelvüket amit én nem értek, meg mi oláh cigányok nem értünk. Hát ők a teknővályással, meg a fakanál, tehát faáru készíttéssel foglalkoztak. De most már ezek a szakmák kihaltak. Guszti (19/April/2008, Esztergom)

Valamikor régen a dédnagymamájék azok úgy éltek, hogy vándoroltak. Ponyvás kocsijuk volt, lovuk volt és mentek faluról falura. Tollat gyűjtöttek, - libatollat, kacsatollat – és ilyen bőroket szedtek össze, rongyokat vasakat azt adták le, és úgy éltek. És mikor megállapodtak vettek házat, kertet Esztergomban és akkor úgy születtek meg a nagymama, meg anyám. És akkor munkába állt az édesanyám, mink meg iskolákba jártunk. Bori (17/April/2008; Esztergom)

Ezt el tudom mesélni, hogy már azt mondja, hogy mindig a perifériára tették ki a cigányokat. Egyszerűen nem bírnak velünk élni. (...) No most, amikor a cigányok Esztergomtól 4 km-re Szentendre fele telepedtek le közvetlen a Duna partjára, ott is nem hagyták őket békén. Pedig aztán a lakott területtől 4 km-re voltak. (...) És ott is ugye a magyarok hajtották ki az állatokat a legelőre, és a cigány telepen keresztül kellett kihajtani az állatokat. És azok az állattartók féltették az állataikat a fertőzéstől, hogy megfertőződnek. És nem azon próbáltak megoldást keresni, hogy szüntessék meg a különböző lehetséges betegségeket vagy mittudom én, vagy kulturáltabb helyre vagy valamit csináljanak. Hanem inkább azt csinálták, hogy onnan, arról a telepről áttették őket ide a TÁTI útra ahol a legelső dolog az volt, hogy az árvíz elöntötte a cigányokat. És rengetegen meghaltak. (...). Guszti (19/April/2008, Esztergom)

Előszedték, akkor a fejéhez tették a pisztolyt, puska nem tudom, és akkor a padlásról szaladtak le a többi lány. És ott a szüleik előtt erőszakolták őket. Úgyhogy sokat szenvedtek nagyon. Margit (20/04/08; Esztergom)

Meg akkor hogy, bekenték magukat ilyen korommal, meg tollakat hogy csúnyák legyenek, ne tetszenek a katonáknak. És olyan rafináltak voltak, hogy ilyen lavór volt akkorába, meg ez a mosószappan. Azt melegítettek vizet, és mondták nekik hogy mosakodjanak meg. És meg kellett mosakodni, megfésülködni és mondta a katona hogy 'szép', hogy 'szép', és akkor na, akkor is ugye? Anyjuk, apjuk előtt. Megcsinálták velük. (Margit, 20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

Meg akart halni. A kerítésre vetette magát, de visszafogták a többiek. Marika (20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

Kirúgták a hasából a gyereket. Flóra Horváth (March/2008 – Esztergom)

Hát így maradtunk vele, hogy egy ilyen nagy terembe, már amikor ilyen hely volt ott kimentek dolgozni. Én mentem az idesanyám után, fogtam a szoknyáját is. Igen. Bora (18/April/2008 – Esztergom)

Ilyen nagy terem volt. Munka után édesanyám mesét mondott arról mikor gyerek volt és lovak voltak azokkal játszottak meg csillagok alatt aludtak. Aztán egyszer emlékszem, mert nem aludtam, hogy sírtak úgy beszélgettek mind hogy meg fognak halni. Bora (18/April/2008 – Esztergom)

Ennivaló nem volt sok: egy darab száraz kenyér ötünknek és leves helyett forró víz. Néha kaptunk egy kanál lekvárt és vaját. Ám az elosztásnál általában harcok voltak. Voltak halottak is. Éhesek voltunk. Hát amikor kiment a mamánk dolgozni, akkor szerzett ott a szakácsoktól egy kis kenyeret a köténybe benyomta. Úgy hozott nekem vagy vele mentem. Úgyhogy, nagyon veszélyes volt. Bora (18/April/2008 – Esztergom)

Azt mindig mondta anyu németül, hogy 'Menj a patikába, kérjél pirospaprikát.' Elmentünk a patikároshoz. Mondtuk németül, hogy 'Kicsi Kindern', hogy én kicsi vagyok kérek valamit. Azt mondja, hogy 'Mit?'. Mondtuk németül neki, hogy anyu küldött pirospaprikáért. 'Á, hogy az nem jó! Méreg.' Mondom nem, kértük! Na ad. Hazavittük. Mondom anyunak hogy nem akart adni a patikárius bácsi, mert azt mondja hogy méreg. Menj vissza, németül, mondd meg neki – főzött valami giz-gaz levest, hát amit tudott szegény – hívjuk el ebédre. Na megyek vissza, kicsi csipszar voltam én. Megyek meghúszom a kabátját neki, mondom németül, gyere Mamika hív, a Mama. Erre Ááá, hogy ő nem. Na eljött. Megvárta míg eszünk, meg megvárta azt is hogy befejezzük, játszottunk, szaladtunk. Akkor állt enni, akkor jött rá, hogy ez nem méreg. Marika (20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

Beültettek autóba azt mentünk ki a szeméttelre. És onnan ettünk. Fogtunk ilyen nagy kenyereket találtunk, dobáltuk a kocsira, vittük be. Nem számított, ha penészes volt, vagy akármi. Feláztattuk vízzel azt ettük. (...) Az anyukám, jó hát az nem tudott ott dolgozni semmit, mert voltunk heten, na. A nyolcadik az ott halt meg fejtífuszban. Mert heten voltunk, én voltam a legkisebbik. Úgyhogy nagyon sokat szenvedtünk. Akkor sorba álltunk pudingért. Vittünk ilyen edényt azt mondtuk, hogy kicsi Kinder nincs enni. kétszer, háromszor fordultunk be a pudingért. Hát mást nem tudtunk csinálni. Azt kaptuk. Sorba álltunk. Azt akkor hazavitte az egyik, akkor jött vissza. Megint sorba álltak. Vittük haza sorozatba. Ott más nem volt enni. Azt ettünk na. Nem kívánnám még egyszer azt. Kis csipszar voltam. Kopaszok voltunk. Marika (20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

Anyu mesélte, hogy elképzelhetetlen volt. Mindenki kereste a rokonait. Az utak tele voltak biciklis vagy sétáló emberekkel, hogy megtalálják a családjukat. Flóra Horváth interviewee (March/2008 – Esztergom)

Hazajöttünk Németországból, nem volt semmi a házban. Azt mondja anyu: 'Na gyerekek! Hol alszunk?' Hát, nem tudtunk magyarul. Mondtuk németül: 'Földön.' Azt mondtuk a földön. A földön aludtunk. Ami rongyokat találtunk, amit az oroszok kidobáltak mindent,

ágyunkat mindenünket eltűzeltek az égegyadta földön, amit találtunk azon feküdtünk. Azt akkor, nagy nehezen szereztünk ilyen lim-lomokat, ágyakat. Na hát az, voltam olyan 6 éves? Akkor mondom anyunak, este 10 óra volt. 'Anyu, valaki kopog.' 'Á, ábrándozok.' Mondom jól van, de a földön feküdtünk, elfértünk heten. Anyu volt a nyolcadik. Csak kopog valaki. 8 évre gyűtt haza apám. A háborúból. Mondom 'Anyu', mondom 'egy ember áll az ablak alatt.' Szőrös volt, koszos volt, szutykos volt. Kimegy az anyu, bejön, hát apánk volt. Jézusmária. De nem ismertük meg hát, én jobban már nem ismertem meg. Ez akkor mindjárt mondja, hogy: 'Meg van mindegyik gyerek, megvan?' Mindjárt keresett. A legkisebbik, az én utánam volt 8 hónapra rá, az meg fejtífusban meghalt, ott Németországban. És akkor aszongyák, hogy: 'Jó van gyerekek', aszongya, 'azt eszünk ami lesz.'. Utána szegény apám elkezdett beteg lenni, anyu is, minden. Akkor ők sorba meghaltak a szüleim, a 3 testvérem. Marika (20/April/2008 – Esztergom)

Én meg mentem mindenfele a papával. Volt Fehérvárba. Fehérvár, tudod hol van? Ott a cigányok ahogy voltak. Mind lelövöldözték, mind. Egy asszony maradt. A sógornőm volt. Falat. Anna a magyar neve. A bátya és az asszony is meghalt. Azt az az egy asszony megmaradt képzeld el, szép nagy derék asszony volt. A halottak mind rajta estek és egy lövést kapott csak a lábába. Hibás volt így a járása. És cigányul Falat volt a neve.

Anna: És hogy rokon?

Bora: A bátyámnak a felesége volt, de a bátyám hamarabb meghalt.

Anna: Ő meghalt a sortűzben?

Bora: Igen, és akkor ő megmaradt de hibás volt a lábán. Igen. Ott nagyon sokan. Ahogy voltak a cigányok mid lelövöldözték őket. Úgy sírtak, sikoltottak, a vér mindenütt, juj juj. Mink mikor mentünk úgy a vásárra, már az én papámmal Fehérvárra, mutatták a cigányok hol lövöldözték le őket. És saját magukkal ástak ki egy ilyen árkot. És oda berakták, oda nyomták be őket. És hogy nagyon veszélyes volt az, sokan is ott maradtak, s kevesen maradtak.

Anna: A Falat mit csinált utána?

Bora: Á, elgyűtt onnan.

Anna: Eljött Székesfehérvárról?

Bora: Elgyűtt onnan, igen. Elgyűt és akkor itt ment férjhez Esztergomba. Már volt neki, nem is tudom, 5 vagy 6 családja. Bora (19/April/2008 – Esztergom)

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