CARNIVALESQUE COMPASSION:

THE SYMBOLIC ECONOMY OF A HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION IN A VILLAGE IN TRANSYLVANIA

By

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Abstract

Much of the striving critique of humanitarian interventions keeps a keen focus on the macro politics of this topic. In this thesis, I present an ethnographic account of such an intervention done in the aftermath of a violent event with ethnic overtones in a village in Transylvania. I analyze how, building on bureaucratic testimonies of the irreducibly intimate experience of trauma, notions such as compassion or compensation become disembedded from their contexts, causing suspicion, reifying the feeling of injustice, and feeding into an overall commoditization of trauma. By looking at how the subjects of the intervention reproduce the administrative language in which their experiences have been translated by civic entrepreneurs, at how they store their testimonies in documents and "declarations", and at how the body is employed as ultimate evidence to reclaim the compassion of an abstract governance, I argue that this array of acts of mimicry serves as a distorting mirror for the humanitarian governance.

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Introduction

In September 1993, in the Transylvanian village of Hădăreni, a fight burst out between four men. As the son of one of them came to his father's defense, he was stabbed to death by one of the other three men, which caused a number of villagers to pursue the three perpetrators; these sought refuge in a nearby house, which was set on fire by the angry mob. Two of the men decided to give in for fear they might burn alive, but the crowd fetched them and beat them to death; the third one burned to death inside the house. The mob then set more than a dozen of houses on fire.

What caused this gruesome incident to gain unprecedented attention and to become the starting point for a series of governmental interventions is the fact that three of the four victims and the owners of the houses set ablaze were Roma ethnics. Consequently, Roma rights activists described the event as the pinnacle of the "conflict epidemics" targeting the Roma in Romania in the early nineties, and argued that, throughout the years, "the Hădăreni pogrom... has come to stand, for many, as the paradigmatic event of the Roma rights world" (ERRC 2008). Twenty years later, in May 2013, one of the main Roma activists involved in the case declared this case the "failure test" of the strategies that have been employed to address it.

This thesis analyses the "critical event" (Das 1999) related above as a case-study of post-conflict intervention in order to interrogate the relation between the humanitarian notion of "trauma" and the governance regimes that it legitimizes. To this end, it is first of all an exploration into the effects that these interventions have generated among their subjects, which, as my research will illuminate, pertain to such notions as commodification of trauma, biolegitimacy (Fassin 2012) and subversion. Furthermore, by exposing the "work of categorization" (Bourdieu 1985) comprised in the labeling of the event, which is indicative of the framing strategies (Goffman 1997) that various layers of governance underwent in order to build their power over the case, my analysis will evolve against the background provided by an inquiry into the Romani movement.

The political economy of failure

"We activists always thought that we were supposed to come up with solutions, and our harm was to find solutions and impose them" – such was one of the conclusions that Nicolae Gheorghe, a prominent actor in the European Romani movement, and one of the initiators of its Romanian branch, formulated about the Hadareni case, in which he played an important role. He was then the leader of the Roma Ethnic Federation ("FER") – an umbrella-organization which joined together many of the emerging NGOs dedicated to the protection of Roma rights, and which, alongside other organizations, sought to address the consequences of the event in Hădăreni.

I interviewed Nicolae Gheorghe on the occasion of the launching of a collection of articles titled *From victimhood to citizenship. The path of Roma integration. A debate* (Guy 2013), whose co-author he was. Nicolae's own contribution, dedicated to an expert and/or activist readership, starts from the premise that "The time has come to suggest some serious changes in Roma civil society" (Gheorghe and Pulay 2013:41). This is supported by the claim that the latter finds itself in a crisis to which new solutions need to be found; in consequence, the overview he makes of the Romani movement in Romania and of his own role in it is rife with self-criticism. His text shows with various arguments that the striving number of programs and projects which have been designed over the past twenty years to address the phenomena lumped together under the name "Roma exclusion" has thus far hardly managed to meet this goal.

Indeed, social exclusion is arguably one of the most severe and enduring processes that the European Roma minority has been subject to up to this day. As such, the term has stood for many varying phenomena, ranging from poor access to education to forced evictions and from discrimination to ethnic conflicts, which have occasioned repeated expressions of concern, and a striving policy-making process, on behalf of European institutions, national and local governments,

non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"), and international development organizations ("IDOs") alike. However, despite all these efforts, until now the overall process has failed to render significant results, since, according to documents from a wide array of sources, ranging from the European Commission to small-scale local NGOs, "the majority of the Roma population continues to live severely deprived of essential human rights" (European Commission, 2011). Furthermore, the large number of alarming studies, reports, or petitions that denounce one or another form of Roma exclusion, as well as the increasing institutionalization of the efforts made by various actors to address these phenomena immediately become the basis for further attempts to redress this situation, which their in turn are later criticized, amended, and reemployed, and so on – a process I would call the political economy of "failure."

This curious trend has also been picked up on within the academia, and has become the object of close scrutiny in a number of texts which finally bring Romani studies into dialogue with broader fields, among which the study of contemporary power (van Baar 2012). However, as I explain in more detail in my literature review chapter, despite the valuable contribution that they bring to the study of the strategies and technologies employed by the Romani movement in order to create its subjects, most of these inquiries manage to shed very little light upon the explanations of the failure I referred to above. One of the reasons why this is so is that, by concerning themselves with the strategies and the results of the attempts to address Roma exclusion, these analyses fall prey to the very paradigm that they seek to criticize. The present research, then, seeks to avoid such pitfalls by looking into the "black-box" of this process. It does so by ethnographic inquiry into a case-study which, as mentioned before, became, in its ways, "paradigmatic."

"Smashed", "hammered", "clubbed to death"

As such, the case reached wide international attention. An article in *The New York Times* dedicates four paragraphs to the minute description of the "devastation" that the "violence" resulted in, and it does so by using words such as "charred", "broken", "awry", "dilapidated", "smashed", "hammered", and "wrecked" (Kamm 1993). These four paragraphs conclude by saying that these visible marks are not even the worst outcome, since the conflict resulted in the death of four people – the climax is thus orchestrated to introduce the next paragraphs, which present the conflict as a consequence of "resentment" and "long-repressed feelings". Quotes from interviews also prevail, most of them issued by authorities such as the mayor, the deputy mayor, the county prosecutor, but also the chief prosecutor in the human rights section of the Supreme Court to the Government's Secretary General, which the author then counterpoints by quotes issued by Roma organizations, and gives the final word to the local authorities, for a few distinctively racist words about the gypsies – thereby the article seemingly suggesting that local institutions are flawed beyond repair. The article in *The Independent*, on the other hand, takes fewer words to describe the outcome of the conflict, which he sums up with the strongly connoted term "pogrom", and only gives attention to how the three Roma were killed by the mob: "clubbed to death", "charred remains", "torched" (Bridge 1993). This article also uses quotes by locals to illustrate their attitudes towards the Roma, but this time it's "regular people" rather than authorities; a large part of the article is used to explain how such attitudes that might seem made by "neo-Nazi extremists" or "lifted straight out of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*" gained ground in post-socialism, in the context of ethnically-divided Transylvania, demise of the authorities in response to what locals denounce as "gypsy crime", the large number of Roma who lost their jobs after socialism, sectarian media coverage, and lack of response by the authorities in punishing similar cases of anti-gypsy violence. Interestingly, as a conclusion for his article, the author in *The Independent* explains the recent engagement of state officials to sort out the case through the detail that, in the month that the conflict occurred, Romania had just been accepted into the Council of Europe. The article's "cynical" implication, then, is, that international bodies can force Romanian institutions into (mimicking) a state of "law and order", where minorities are not discriminated

against, even though it might cost them some popular support. Which, as I shall explain later, is similar to how most actors saw things back then.

The aftermath

Indeed, most likely due to international pressures[1], which can also be accounted for by the intense lobbying undergone by the civil society, mainly by the Roma Ethnic Federation and "Pro Europa" League, a human rights NGO, the Romanian government allocated money for the reconstruction of the houses. However, the money ran out before all the houses were finished. In what regards the legal consequences, in the face of a prolonged trial, which had not produced any trials as late as 1997, "Pro Europe League" assisted 25 victims to sue the state first with the European Commission of Human Rights, and later, in 2000, with the European Court of Human Rights ("ECHR"), with the help of the Budapest-based European Roma Rights Center ("ERRC"), who represented them before the ECHR.

In 2004, the ECHR mediated a "friendly settlement" between the government and eighteen of the applicants, as the government offered them an all-inclusive amount of EUR 262,000, sincere regrets, and a set of measures aimed to harmonize the community (among which, "removing the stereotypes, prejudices and practices towards the Roma community", "stimulating Roma participation in the economic, social, educational, cultural and political life of the local community"). The other seven applicants who did not enter the friendly settlement started a new case, which was solutioned one year later by holding that the state pay the applicants various sums of money, between EUR 11.000 and EUR 95.000 "in respect of pecuniary damage and non-pecuniary damage." (ECHR 2005)

[1] For instance, the US State Department discussed it in her proceedings, and Amnesty International and the UN committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights take stands on the situation of the Roma in Romania.

The measures outlined by the agreement to "friendly settlement" came to imply a large number of various institutional actors, ranging from several ministries to NGOs, among which the United Nations Development Program ("UNDP"), and it ran, with various difficulties, for almost two years, until 2008. In the next year, the financing stopped altogether, and the program stagnated. By this time, although some of the objectives that had been spelled out concerning the entire village population had been attained – such as the building of a kindergarten, and the refurbishment of the school and of the community center, the program was generally conceived of, by most of the actors involved in it, let alone media comments, as having failed.

Against this backdrop, my analysis seeks to contribute to the striving critique of humanitarianism, by providing an exploration of the effects that the interventions described above produced among their subjects. This endeavor found theoretical inspiration especially in the literature concerned with post-conflict interventions, whether humanitarian or developmental, as the two frequently come overlap, both with respect to their "guiding principles", their technologies, and to their effects. Even though the post-conflict paradigm generally refers to situations when humanitarian intervention is called in in the siege of mass murder and armed conflict, the categorization strategies outlined above justify, I think, why it is nonetheless an appealing perspective. Moreover, much like the anthropological explorations in this field, I investigate humanitarianism as a discourse rather than as a practice.

Human rights activists count that there have been about 30 cases of mob violence against the Roma in the 1990s in Romania, whereby "hundreds of houses were burnt and several people were lynched" (Haller 2010). This is, then, at least partly, and in more ways than one, also an inquiry into violence – a theme that, due more to paradigmatic than to geopolitical shifts, has been reclaiming increasing attention in anthropology, not in the least because she has been exercising it herself (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2008). Similarly to how I engage with the topic of humanitarianism, here, too, I more look at the narratives about violence from the point of view of their production, reproduction, appropriation, negotiation, and reflection amongst the actors of this entire endeavor.

Setting and methodological issues

The setting

Hădăreni is one of the four village which comprise the Cheţani commune, located in Mureș county. It is situated halfway between the towns Târgu-Mureș and Cluj-Napoca. As is the case with many Transylvanian villages (Verdery 1983), its population is ethnically mixed, i.e. apart from a large ethnic Romanian population, which amounts to almost 800, it is also inhabited by some one hundred Hungarians and Roma (currently 99 people). As far as the housing goes, the three population groups do not live in separated neighborhoods, but in a mixed housing arrangement. There are, however, three churches: an Orthodox one, frequented by Romanians, a Protestant one, frequented by Hungarians, and, as of a few years, a Pentecostal praying-house, to which most of the Roma are affiliated. Each of these denominations has its own cemetery. Mixed marriages sometimes occur between the three groups. Ethnographies located in Transylvania have richly illustrated how ethnic processes dynamically fold and unfold as allegiances become reenacted by various circumstances (Brubaker 2006). Hădăreni makes no exception: its people rub against each other, as they are neighbors and might borrow each other's cooking pans, but gates are also closed sometimes, and they actively engage in boundary-maintenance work, such as speaking different languages or making remarks about their different belonging. In other words, when ambivalence sets in, "cultural difference is a particular idiom of sociality." (Harrison 2003:357)

During state socialism (Verdery 1996, Kideckel 1996), the village population was employed either in the large state-owned agricultural enterprises making use of the wide arable land which surrounds the whole area, or in the industrial factories set in neighboring towns – mostly in Câmpia Turzii. Following the change of regime and the land restitution (Verdery 2003), several villagers joined their lands into a few agricultural cooperatives, while others practice subsistence agriculture to

this day. On the few occasions that I had to talk to them, many expressed their concern with the current lack of employment opportunities after the industrial venues were closed down throughout the nineties. Nonetheless, at least judging by the appearance of the houses, the village does not seem particularly impoverished.

Some of the Roma families in the village had been trading sheep even during state socialism (which is a relevant detail in connection to the case, as this was the grounds on which they required – and received – financial compensation in exchange for the goods that had been destroyed in the fires). After 1990, most of them practiced commerce, mainly in former Yugoslavia, which they recall as a great source of livelihood, enabling them to reconstruct their houses and gain certain affluence. Currently, many of them, especially the younger ones, live abroad, at least temporarily.

Methodological issues

In order to give an account of the local effects that the multiple interventions which I describe as "humanitarian" produced in the locality they were aimed at, I carried out most of my ethnographic research in the village of Hădăreni in April 2013.

A quick survey of the news related to Hadareni is enough to convey the idea that the results of the humanitarian intervention that followed the ECHR decision are highly disputable, and resulted in animosity towards the Roma on behalf of the non-Roma, especially due to the compensation money granted to several families. Against this background, the strategy that I had initially designed to grant me a more thorough insight into the aftermath of the intervention was to engage my interlocutors in a narrative about the postsocialist history of the village; I was expecting that in this way I would come across instances of "active forgetting" (Swedenburg 1989), especially on behalf of the non-Roma villagers, and that I could contrast the resulting "ethnography of silence" to the "noise" produced by the policies aimed to develop the village and its inhabitants and by the overall labeling strategies that I

summarized in the introduction. To this end, I was planning to find housing outside the village, so as to prove my "neutrality" to the entire population, and thus elicit their thorough and sincere responses.

This strategy had to be abandoned in the face of logistic shortcomings: for instance, the inn where I was planning to stay had no free rooms, and there was no other option of "neutral" hosting within reasonable distance. Thus, I ended up being hosted by one of the Roma families in the village. In these circumstances, it soon became clear that most of the non-Roma villagers would be reluctant to engage in talks with me – a fact which I only tried to overcome the first days, and without much success. Suffice it to say that the non-Roma which I contacted because of the functions they fulfilled in the village – the mayor, the former mayors, and the orthodox priest – all asked where I was staying and nodded cautiously at my answer; moreover, I soon found that a one-hour talk with them was not always enough to evade the framing that I was thus being ascribed. In a similar vein, some NGO employees or the Roma representative at the county hall which I contacted throughout my research would ask "where I am from", expecting me to reply with the name of an organization. This suggests that the locality is foremost conceived of as a territory of governance, at least by those who exercise it.

Similarly, many of my Roma informants initially assumed that I was there to "help" them. As this is a critical aspect of my field experience, I discuss the aspects of my situation in the field more thoroughly in the analysis. For now, I only note that I tried to solve this confusion, as well as other aspects concerning my position, by making it clear that I am a student on research, and that I am not affiliated with any NGO or institutions.

This was, however, only partly successful, both because locals, regardless of their ethnic belonging, are accustomed that foreign presence in the village is connected to the case, and because I had visited the village before, in August 2012, as part of a research group with the mandate of evaluating the community development program which had been done in the locality after the ECHR decision. I was then an employee of a Roma-profiled NGO, which gained me access to various internal documents and, most significantly, acquaintance with people I might have otherwise not

contacted so easily. This undeniably came to reflect on the manner in which those Roma interlocutors whom I had met before, starting from the fact that they were willing to accommodate me in their homes.

I am aware, however, of the limitations that such privileges entail, one of which being the likely expectations on their behalf that my research reproduces an activist agenda. This prompted me to engage with such expectations cautiously and critically throughout my paper. Although a discomforting procedure, in that it also prompts a judgment about one's own past allegiances, challenging the received consensus was prompted by the very nature of the data I gathered throughout my stay in the village; needless to say, apart from keeping to the accuracy of my data, this was also an intellectually rewarding exercise.

I will proceed to explicate further and more relevant "downsides" that might be associated with this double identification, first as an "activist", and then as a student, in the empirical section of this paper, and show that in fact they provided me with an enriched insight into the very matter of my research. For now, I briefly note my realization that, in a field which is subject to such framing procedures as those outlined above, it was more purposeful to allow for a management of my personas by my interlocutors rather than to attempt to impose one on them or to stubbornly pursue my pre-designed research agenda.

Apart from the time I spent in the village, I also contacted actors from outside the village whom were indicated to me as key-actors in the aftermath of the conflict. I interviewed István Haller, who was then the head of the human rights office of the "Pro Europa" League, an NGO located in Targu Mures which offered juridical assistance to the victims so that they could send their case to be judged by ECHR, as part of my former mandate. Prior to my fieldwork, in April 2013 I did a few more interviews in Bucharest: one of them with a representative of the government, who wished to remain anonymous in my paper. I also interviewed one of the activists who had visited the village shortly after the event, as part of the team of Nicolae Gheorghe. And, lastly, I interviewed Nicolae Gheorghe on the occasion of his presence in Budapest for the release of his most recent book.

Literature review

Humanitarianism and researcher's position

"What… is gained and what lost, when we use the terms of suffering to speak of inequality, when we invoke trauma rather than recognizing violence… more generally when we mobilize compassion rather than justice?", asks Fassin in the introduction to him compelling critique of humanitarianism, *Humanitarian Reason* (Fassin 2012:8). This concern is by no means recent, as it has been addressed in the past half of century most prominently by such writers as Hannah Arendt (1975 [1951]), and Jacques Rancière (2004); what is more recent, however, is its striving topical examination in the field of anthropology. A growing number of authors investigate the effects that humanitarian governance produces in the localities it seeks to address, and speak back to the paradigm by exploring the contingencies in which it is imbricate (Fassin 2012, Fassin and Pandolfi 2010, Bornstein and Redfield 2011).

For a long while, scholarship which tackles post-conflict intervention has been disproportionately concerned with the design and efficiency of the interventions, and, whether critically or approvingly, with the macro-politics of the endeavors – especially when such examinations emerge in the areas of political science or international relations, but also in political economy. Within this academic division of labor, the effects of these translocal flows are seemingly left for anthropologists to tackle. Recent scrutinies of such ethnographies of governmental intervention point out their author's frequent tendency to balance this lack of attention given to the subjects of governance by overemphasizing theirs, and sometimes decidedly siding with them. This falls back to an older debate.

The authority of ethnography altogether have been seriously and, to some extent, constructively challenged with the emergence of postmodern anthropology, which opened itself to the

deconstructivist denouncement of the power relations embedded in acts of representation such as writing the other (Clifford 1986). Even though he is credited with the establishment of interpretive anthropology, part of which nurtured such musings extensively, Geertz evocatively captured one of the pitfalls of this approach as "epistemological hypochondria" (1988:71, cited by Shokeid 1992:465); it is a good reminder that, in the words of Salzman, "moral enthousiasm guarantees neither understanding nor humanity" (cited by Shokeid 1992:468). What's more, as Sherry Ortner reminds, ethnographies of resistance that treat power and its subalterns as Manichean categories "are thin, because they are ethnographically thin: thin on the internal politics of dominated groups, thin on the cultural richness of those groups, thin on the subjectivity – the intentions, desires, fears, projects – of the actors involved in these dramas" (Ortner 1995, cited in Li 2007:157).

One of the most prominent current problematiques in recent contributions to the critique of humanitarianism are the issues pertaining to the researcher's position in fields that, one way or another, tackle violence, including the predicaments, obligations, and the overall epistemology in relation to the "good intentions" of the aid industry, finally and rightfully gain central attention in more recent. By drawing a distinction between "speech" and "voice", Das (2007) acknowledges that it is the field's compelling and impossible duty to make the *voices* of those about whom we speak heard. Echoing recent sociological debates which seek to reconcile Pierre Bourdieu's "critical sociology" (1990) and Luc Boltanski's "pragmatic sociology of critique" (2011 [2009]), Fassin (2011) approaches "the moral untouchability of humanitarianism" head-on, and proposes a "distanced interiority" both in what regards the deconstruction of its ideology, and in what regards the "moral imperative" of its ethos. By the same token, Englund (2011) takes issue with "the external register of humanitarian outrage" that permeates through many contributions to this field, thus rendering them populist and prey to the very power asymmetries that they seek to examine. This is not to argue in favor of some relativist perspectivism or revisionism, but rather to emphasize that the ethnography of humanitarianism is "a practice contingent on the conditions in which it is deployed" (Guilhot 2012:90). Or, in the words of Pandolfi (2011), "the knot of urgency, utilitarianism and compassion"

can best be disentangled by means of an "ethnography of disorientation," which is what this research also seeks to illustrate.

Whither resistance

The perspective of the "subjects" of governance interventions has been increasingly put forth by critiques of governance interventions, whether developmental or humanitarian, most notably in the field of postcolonial studies. James C. Scott (1985, 1998, 2008), Ong (1987), Comaroff and Comaroff (1991), and Tania Li (2007) are amongst the most famous to discuss this perspective in terms of the Foucauldian "strategic reversibility" of power relations or of the "resistance" posed by development's subjects', which, in the cases that they discuss, is often supported by the striving movements concerning "indigeneity". In my case, however, the legitimacy to formulate claims and the notion of entitlement are rooted most visibly, and especially on behalf of the victims themselves, in the grammars of violence, suffering, compassion, and humanitarianism – similar to what Petryna (2002) calls "biological citizenship" – illuminating how "the damaged biology of a population has become the grounds for social membership and the basis for staking citizenship claims" (Petryna 2002:5), and Fassin (2012) nominates as "biolegitimacy". Similarly, James (2004, 2010) proposes the paradigm of "the political economy of trauma" in order to discuss the rise of "compassion economy", in relation to which trauma becomes commodified. My analysis will show that this notion also pertains to the case I am looking at. However, instead of the "resistance" that the authors above account for in their fields, I will argue that, in my case, the subjects' reactions to the humanitarian regime which infiltrated their lives can better be understood in terms of subversion, parody, distortion, and reappropriation.

Governmentality meets Romani studies

It was only recently that the field of Romani studies began to abandon its "splendid isolation" (Willems 1997:305-306) and to receive inputs from such domains as the anthropology of the state, institutions, development, and globalization, as well as sociology, political studies, international relations etc. (e.g. Vermeersch, 2006; Trehan and Sigona, 2009; Szalai, 2009; van Baar, 2011; Sigona and Vermeersch, 2012). Until this critical turn, the bulk of the literature consisted of, on the one hand, essentializing approaches that construct the Roma as a distinct, homogenous social group, with very particular cultural features, such as language, occupations, or kinship patterns, but also nomadism (Fonseca, 1995; Okely, 1983), marginality (Lucassen, Willems, Cottaar 1998; Gropper 1975), deviance (Gmelch 1986; Gronfors 1979), or even sexuality (Nirenberg and Bila, 2011). However, around the fall of state socialism throughout Central and Eastern Europe, another strand of academic literature about the Roma gained momentum, which was dealing primarily with the patterns of exclusion that the Roma had been subject to either during communism, or during the so-called transition (Pogány 2004; Molnár and Schafft 2003; Havas and Kemény 1995). By exploring processes of exclusion in terms of poverty (Havasi 2002), access to education (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010), or employment (Kertesi 2004), this approach tends to reproduce the liberal paradigm of human rights, rather than criticize it. There are, of course, exceptions. Such work has indeed informed actual processes of policy-making, thus blurring the boundaries between academic and activist literature, as well as those already widely problematized between interpreting the world and proceeding to change it.

A strand of literature which similarly ambitions to put matters in a structural perspective and which, unlike much of the bulk of literature discussed above, does engage more critically with the language of governmentality, is the one dealing with Roma identity politics. This topic is mainly tackled with respect to the Romani movement's interaction with various institutions and levels of power – most notably, those which make up what one could call "the European Project" (Jenne 2000,

Sobotka 2001, Klímová-Alexander 2005, Vermeersch 2001, 2006, 2012, Liebich 2007, van Baar 2008, 2011). Despite notable differences in the analysis perspectives that they employ, most of these authors share a political science/ international relations theoretical approach, but hardly ever step outside this macro perspective in order to engage ethnographic arguments, which is why their contribution to the anthropology of the Romani movements is, in my opinion, limited.

Klímová-Alexander (2005) authors a detailed description of the steps undertaken by Romani activism to establish itself as a voice in world politics, specifically in relation to the UN, in terms of political power and influence, and how these efforts shape this activism in their turn. She bases her demonstration on minute discourse analysis undertaken in the archives and throughout interviews she conducted with leading members of the International Romani Union, as well as on the theoretical paradigm of political opportunity structure. This perspective is taken further in Vermeersch' analysis (2007) of the 'Roma' category as a transnational political actor. As these authors point out, this is an actor which curiously failed to mobilize the people it claims to represent, and their explanation of this failure has to do with the fact that the problems that this actor set to solve were not formulated as grievances (Vermeersch 2007:219), but in too technocratic a vein, which was hence too abstract to lead to mobilization.

This analytical perspective is also employed by van Baar in his analysis of the ways in which the post-1989 transnational governance of the Roma minority (and its being constructed as such) is shaped and shapes in its turn renewed practices of welfare and humanitarianism. He then looks at the consequences of this neo-liberal policy-driven technocracy in the shaping of new (non/ de-)political subjects and consequently proposes that the research agenda should orient itself towards an investigation of how policy failure articulates with what, under the label of "emancipation", comes to occur as further de-politization, exclusion, and fragmentation. Even though the author does pledge for the importance of documenting how neo-liberal governmental technologies articulate locally, he scarcely provides any "grassroots", local-level illustrations of his arguments. Sigona and Trehan (2009) similarly note that the marginalization of Roma citizens becomes overwhelmingly embedded

in a discourse of human rights, which further becomes "NGOized", to highly debatable effects, perhaps the most disturbing of which being that the singling out of the "Roma" category as a group in need for special attention provides discursive material for the striving anti-Romany political agenda in several European countries (Stewart 2012, Vermeersch 2012).

One of the most prominent pitfalls that many of these contributions exhibit is that they oftentimes remain embedded in the very logic that they seek to criticize – that is to say, they are more concerned with the *results*, rather than the *effects*, that the forms of governance which they discuss arrive at. Conversely, in my own research, the governmental perspective of the post-conflict interventions becomes of secondary relevance in relation to the local responses that it generated.

"Thinking between the Posts"

One last note needs to made here about my use of several postcolonial concepts throughout the analysis. By way of arguing for their relevance to my own research, I remind of Verdery and Chari's plea (2009) that the understanding of processes and technologies of contemporary power – specifically, imperialism and neo-colonialism – would benefit significantly if researchers ventured beyond the Cold War divide between postsocialism and postcolonialism, and traced parallels between the two more thoroughly. I am aware that, while their text is rightly critical towards how the separation between postsocialist scholarship and postcolonialism impedes upon the study of hegemony, and argues that its local manifestations need to be investigated beyond this divide, the argument does not necessarily work the other way around; specifically, the understanding of localities and of the processes that govern them can oftentimes be restrained, rather than illuminated by the framework set forth by this comparison. Throughout this research, it is not my foremost intention to expose the workings of various hegemonies as they instantiate in the village of Hădăreni, but rather to point out that the analytical relevance of postcolonial concepts does not have to be restricted to the

geographical postcolony, but in fact pertains to localities far beyond it, in which nonetheless similar processes have come to occur.

Declarations

On the night of my arrival to the village, my host, Ileana, sits waiting for me together with her in-laws, Mariana and Toader – the parents of her son's 21 year-old wife. They express their worries about my driving at night, all alone, and for a second their concern makes me feel I'm being cared for, as if visiting some distant relatives in the countryside. They urge me to lock my car, even though it's parked in their courtyard, behind locked gates, and they show me to a room where Ileana's husband, Victor, lies down in bed. He has been paralyzed for a few months now and he cannot speak. We sit down on and around his bed, our eyes away from him, facing each other. On a nearby couch, a child is sleeping, ignorant of our voices. My late arrival and the presence of a sick man and a sleeping child within a few meters prompt me to apologize for the trouble I'm causing and to thank them for hosting me. "You're here to help us, how could we not help you?", comes the reply that I was afraid to hear.

When I had called them, the week before, to let them know I would arrive, their voices were alert and inquisitive; they complained that my report had omitted their situation, and inquired whether I had sent it already "to Strasbourg" – where the ECHR has its headquarters – and when would something be done about their house. I had to decline any knowledge and explain that I a student, so I can't really help them with anything – in fact, it's them who are helping me, which I greatly appreciate. I repeat this upon my arrival. They nod and mention the names of a few activists from Bucharest whom they had been in contact with, and ask me how they're doing, as if they would politely inquire about the members of my own family. I reply that I never even met most of them, as we sadly function separate from one another and I remind them that in the past year I've been living in Budapest anyway.

Mariana complains a few times that she forgot to bring along her sister's documents (*acte*), which she wanted to show me. I reassure her that I'd be here for a few more days, and that I don't know much about legal documents anyway. She seems to take my statement as a sign of modesty or

disengagement, and in the coming days she will keep mentioning to members of the family that she's calling with that I'm here "for the houses". Later at night I would write down in my fieldnotes about my uneasiness with how my being here seems to cause one big misunderstanding. I tell them what I know from the discussion I had with the government representative the other day, namely that the reconstruction of the remaining houses – three, said the government; four, they insist, since my host's house had only been rebuilt very partially, as they had told me the year before – was stuck because the owners did not have their property papers in order. They nod again and complain that "there's so much discrimination, God forbid" – this is perhaps why a number of them, whose houses hadn't been rebuilt, had recently filed a complaint with the National Council for Combating Discrimination. They have a photocopy of it, somewhere in a stack of papers, half of which bear the heading of the ECHR. It's handwritten and it is titled "declaration"; it's a list of people who declare themselves discriminated against "considering that in Hădăreni in the year 1993 houses were set ablaze, in 2007 the houses which had been set ablaze started to be repaired". My host's name is the fourth: "M.I. likewise considers herself discriminated against, because in 2007 not even a single nail was beat in for the house that had been set ablaze. She had been promised they would come to begin working at her house in 2008 but they didn't show up to this day".

Ileana almost starts crying when she recounts all the times she was discriminated against. For instance, she tells me how she went to the town hall after she found her house burnt down and the mayor took her by the shoulders – she shows me how, and grabs Toader by the shoulders; his gaze seems lost, as if he's contemplating all these past instances of abuse – and he pushed her outside and told her never to return again, and how she felt she could break his head on the spot, but was afraid she'd go to jail, so she swallowed her anger and went away. And then she returned many other times and she even cried – she mentions crying like an alternative form of petition, and so does the mayor, when I visit him, and he concludes, "what can you do, she comes here and cries, you have to help her" – but still nothing was ever done for them, she swears to God and she has documents to prove it, because she bought all the materials herself, she took money from loan sharks and had to pay them double, and even "the big Roma" from Bucharest hardly ever step outside their car when they come

here, and they can't be convinced to go behind the house and see the half-built wall which they then report as a repaired house, even though "nobody can live with half a wall and a roof, could you, dear miss?, you couldn't, you need four walls, because you're not an animal". I try to follow all the details and even take notes, but the stories, the time frames, and the voices all mix up in one pitiful pandemonium of violence, discrimination and neglect. By now it's only the two women who are speaking. Ileana's husband cannot speak anyways, and Toader only intervenes shyly to echo some of the women's words. Their voices occasionally turn high-pitched and overlap, and then he remains quiet. From time to time, Mariana makes comments in Romani, which sound like stage directions. Ileana says she could call people in Bucharest about all this discrimination, but she doesn't want to, because this mayor is a good man and she doesn't want to hurt him. Now it's my turn to nod, while I ponder whether I should try and describe how the conjuncture between the various levels of governance that she mentions works, but I doubt that I am able to explain it, since this is in fact why I'm here. Besides, in the midst of all these local reflections of distant powers that engulf the lot of my interlocutors, and the entire "Roma community", as it would become apparent in the coming days, like a game of Chinese shadows played by too many hands, it would sound absurd to acknowledge out loud that I came all the way here just to see how this conjuncture works on the ground, and to assess how alienated it is from its objects.

The next moment the voices fall silent and Ileana makes a helpless gesture to show me her husband's body lying immobile. "This is what it all lead to, dear miss, sick people," she says. I nod again in sympathy. "But there is justice," she goes on, "because those who set the gypsies' houses on fire are also sick or dead by now. God isn't sleeping." All of my interlocutors would use this sentence as we talk about "the fires" and the injustices that followed suit. Heavenly justice seems to perfect the errors left behind by an incapable or ill-intended human/e intervention. Contested as it was in its results, the entire compensation seems, in this perspective, an alien intervention into a matter which God alone was able to sort out.

After another brief moment of silence, Mariana inquires about other kinds of money or assistance that they can get: what about this new agricultural subvention, for instance?, she asks, her smile displaying a mixture of hope and embarrassment. I sigh and say I have no idea about it. By now it probably dawned on my hosts that my presence here is rather useless to them, but they choose to think I'm only tired, so they urge me to go to sleep. We go to the other house, the larger one, which I hadn't entered on my prior visit, because it's the house of Ileana's son. He doesn't live here though, but lives together with his wife and in-laws, a few streets further away. The house is fully furnished, but it has scarcely been inhabited. While all three of them solicitously prepare my bed, Mariana giving directions in Romani, Ileana clarifies again that her son paid for the house himself, from doing commerce in Serbia for a few years, and that her own house had only been repaired briefly, and the rest she did herself, also from commerce. Once the bed is done they assure me that the blankets are all clean and of good quality – they're brought from Serbia, and have never been used. They wish me a good night and urge me to rest, so that I can get everyone's declarations tomorrow.

At first encounter, the effects I was after reveal themselves as a choir of contradictions, claims, and misunderstandings which come to substantiate a series of points that Sampson makes in a polemic with Borneman (2003), who praises the effects of the so-called reconciliation processes after ethnic cleansing in the face of contributions preoccupied with voice, which "tend to emphasize the authority of the location of the speaker and to be concerned with the constructedness and autonomy of discourse – over and against the truth-value of the message and its relation to listeners" (Borneman 2003:295). In reaction to Borneman's unmitigated trust in "the truth-value of the message", Sampson rightfully reminds Borneman that "it is not the truth as such that sets us free, but rather the practice of truth-assessing and the public frameworks created by such assessments" (Sampson 2003:184). The vignette above exposes such a framework, with all the practices that construct it; apart from those related to truth-assessing and to various forms of testimonies (notably, on behalf of the victims), it

also exposes how such practices are reenacted not only by means of voice, but by an entire "political economy of trauma" (James 2004, 2010), which I explore in more detail further.

Testimonies, bodies, and documents

It would be impossible to obtain a clear image of the events that took part in Hadareni on September 20-21 1993 only by putting together the narratives of my informants. Their recollections have been altered not only, as it could be expected, by time and by processes of memory, but also by their own repeated reproduction – a process which has rendered them schematic and conflicting. This is not unusual for memories of trauma altogether, as Kirmayer (1996) points out through his very suggestive term of "landscapes of memory": "the narrative reconstructions of memory are not so much managed as lived in – offering vistas that reveal and conceal. Others may dwell within the same landscape, though, inevitably, they see it from different vantage points" (Kirmayer 1996:182). What results, then, is a picture drawn in thick brushwork, contours fading into each other, colors shaded, and yet with distinguishable details, as if painted by an early expressionist, such as Oskar Kokoshka.

Thus, one of the most recurrent elements in the narratives of what happened on that respective evening is the very graphic imagery of the three men's death, and details of the their bodies' torment – such as the limbs of one of them having been severed from his body before he was thrown back into the fire, or other forms of torture, which were never probed by investigations, and which none of my interlocutors could have witnessed. The stories of their own disasters, however, are blurred to various degrees. This makes it oftentimes difficult to distinguish how they found out that Roma houses were being set on fire, whether anybody was at home when their house was set on fire, and if yes, what happened, where they ran – all narratives mention crossing a water, but they indicate different directions in which they ran, while the river only flows south-west of the village –, how long they remained away from the village, or other details pertaining to the factual details of the event. But

these facts don't speak the language of humanitarianism, they don't tease out the suffering to its true proportions, so then the story focuses more and more on things that do express this suffering, even if the resulting narrative is disarticulated. As Antze and Lambek explain, "the self of memory can be imagined as a player in the larger narratives of a community. However, where conflict prevails, the reception of the narrative… may be fraught with tension. Memory becomes a locus of struggle over the boundary between the individual and the collective or between distinct interest groups in which power becomes the operative factor" (Antze and Lambek 1996: xx). In the face of this struggle, the ultimate point of reference remains the body. And then diseases are enumerated, while sometimes my informants check whether I write them all down, bags of medicine are turned upside down, so that I can be convinced that they are indeed ill and suffering, and my fingers are directed to touch lumps – a display of infirmities all of which were caused "by the fires".

From time to time, Ileana takes out from the depths of the furniture a bundle of papers, comprised of receipts for materials she says she used to rebuild the burned house – bricks, cement, rainwater pipes –, pages from the ECHR decision on the case, correspondence from the institution, pages from the status of her brother's NGO, medical letters, crumbled family photos on the back of which there are phone numbers of NGOs from Bucharest, various hand-written affidavits, and flattened medicine packaging – all in all, disjointed metonymies of everything that ensued after "the fires." When we leave home, she takes it with her. "It's all here, so that you know I'm not lying, dear miss," she says, even if a few minutes earlier she would call me by my first name. Personal pronouns and appellations often changed to polite forms once we started talking about "the fires" and mostly about their consequences. "There is no justice and there is no God. Here are the papers, because I'm not lying and I don't need to lie. We slept here in the ruins (*dărîmături*), on beds made from grass."

There is little else than the memory of her own body that can ascertain this, even though numerous people in the village (and outside of it, from institutions and organizations) can testify to it. In fact, a few times, she even says, "I have no way to feel your pain. You alone know your own pain,"

which sounds as a compassionate pact of sorts, much like Genette's narrative pact – "the willful suspension of disbelief" – except now it is not done in the name of fiction, but, quite contrarily, in the name of truth – and even, the truth of suffering, perhaps the most gruesome truth of all, which cannot but remain exclusively intimate. Her remark also seems to allude, even if vaguely, to the ultimate impossibility of empathy, and therefore to the aporia of compassion. My research, however, does not deal with compassionate feelings, but rather with compassionate bureaucracies.

On the second day of my arrival, as soon as I wake up, I find that the sister of my host had come early in the morning all the way from an village a few kilometers away to visit us. She asks me if "there's going to be a file again" (*dosar*), because she doesn't want to be left out, and she starts giving me a few details pertaining to my supposed administrative gaze: that she is the legal successor of her dead brother, Iulius, whom she took care of in the last years of his life, as he was paralyzed; prior to the fires, he had been trading sheep to Syrians, even during communism, so that, when his house burned, he was rich; hundreds of sheep skins were in the house as it burned, as well as money; moreover, after "the fires", it was her who gave him three thousand Deutsche Mark to set up an association "so that he could take care of things". She mentions names of NGO workers in Bucharest, whom she presumes I must know, to prove her familiarity with the apparatus. She also complains that she forgot to bring the documents, to prove that she's not lying, but urges me to visit her some day and take a look at them. Now we wouldn't have time anyway, because Ileana wants to go together to the marketplace in a nearby town, so that I can get the "declaration" of one of her daughters, Angela, who had been around 12 at the time of the event. She instructs her sister to take care of Victor and make some food while we're away.

At the market, we find Angela selling second-hand shoes. In-between debating with picky or tight-fisted clients, from the middle of her tens of rows of neatly aligned shoes, Angela tells me things like, "Yes, it was a great trauma – I got ill and had to be operated on. Some say [my disease] was older, but there are documents [to prove it]". Since this is obviously not the best time to take a

"declaration", we leave. Later the same week, Angela calls her mother on the phone to say she couldn't speak too freely in front of other people, because she doesn't want them to know the whole story. "She's ashamed," says Ileana, "because other people don't know what was here. If you had a faint heart you'd have died." Ileana also mentions that her other daughter, who's now abroad, threw away some "documents" connected to her own sicknesses when she got married, because she was "ashamed", though these documents might be useful now. She tells me the costs of each of the surgeries and treatments of her daughters, in the thousands of euro, like she told me the costs of the materials she bought to reconstruct her house. She hopes that at least some of this money will be paid back to her, and she puts her trust in those fifteen years-old receipts, which she photocopied, to ensure that they don't get broken or lost. The body, with its sicknesses, and ideally with the proofs thereof – a medical letter or, at least, a flattened medicine pack – is called in as ultimate evidence to petition an abstract, dislocated authority, which can be located in Bucharest, in Târgu-Mureș, or in Strasbourg at the same time. When citizen rights fade into human rights and Roma rights, and when statements are made on behalf of the state and of international institutions, in other words, when such high stakes are invoked, in the face of the irreducibly intimate experience of pain of all sorts, who can assess anything anymore about the value of compensation? Indeed, both Nicolae Gheorghe and the government representative acknowledge that "the subjective feeling of justice cannot reflect in the justice that a law court judges" and, respectively, that "a person's life cannot be repaid". The compensations might as well, then, be a lottery. Especially that the promise for compensation came, and rendered little results, and the actual compensation, as I shall show further, is contested by everybody, and Ileana too finds it partial, if only because other people got more money, based on criteria that was never apparent to any of the beneficiaries and it might be even worth wondering if it was not the same with those who were part of the governance. The quotes above seem to indicate that the ultimate rationale of humanitarianism eludes its human subjects and its practitioners alike.

The broad array of reactions posed by the subjects of humanitarianism to its governance can be brought together, I argue, under the notion of subversion. This entails elements of parody – when a Roma man passing by our courtyard asked Ileana's son who I was, the son replied: "A, the miss came

here from Bucharest to give money to the gypsies" –, performance, creative interpretation, reenactment, and, ultimately, mimicry. Bhabha argues that mimicry "locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized" (Bhabha 1984:125), thus being indicative of the ambivalence of colonial discourse. Thereby it stands in direct relation with hegemony.

Another features which invites the notion of (theatrical) performance to describe the narratives ("declarations") I've been collecting is what might appear as abrupt shifts that occurred throughout my visits, without any exception, from talking about the conflict and its consequences to completely unrelated topics. One of my female interlocutors asked me for my opinion about what color of nail polish she should associate with a dress she would be wearing at an approaching wedding, and used the occasion to guide me through her wardrobe, full of "occasion dresses" and pricey shoes. The nephews of another interlocutor started to talk about the fast cars they had been owing and mishaps with the police due to speeding or driving without a license. On another occasion, a man started talking about his experience in prison, which he recalled as a form of joyous socialization, when he was "the boss" of everyone else. Another woman started talking about her sons, who were working abroad and seldom ever call her, which brought tears to her eyes. At other times, interlocutors I visited more than once gave me solicitous advice about how to deal with men, illustrating it with stories from their own past experiences. Finally, a family asked me if I could help repair their cable tv or at least call the cable company to come and fix it.

Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity (1992), Paul Antze (1996) extracts the notion of multiple personality from the narrow sense in which it is used in psychotherapy and proposes to discuss it as a cultural idiom, arguing that, by engaging with the narrative that it puts forth, "the language of multiplicity can at times articulate moral ambiguity, a complex imaginative engagement with the past, and a sense of self rooted in ethical commitments" (Antze and Lambeck 1996:1). It is, then, illuminating to also consider my interaction with each of my informants as a whole and conclude that, while in the internal grammar of these interactions the shifts in topics that I've recounted might

pertain to a notion of performance, the overarching logic that guides them throughout their mode of occurrence is that of conveying a more complete sense of personhood than that of the victimhood that they had been recounting. This showcases that for my interlocutors the victimized persona that they have been trained to represent in relation to external visitors who might be able to reward them for it fails to fully represent them as persons. Their proven ability to reconstruct their houses, their lives, and their personal relations to their aggressors and the rest of the villagers on their own, away from the efforts made by NGOs, only comes to substantiate this observation. One of the activists who addressed the conflict early after it occurred admits that, "[even though] I do believe that some of them really were victims, I think we exaggerated, and people internalized this victimhood and discrimination discourse, even some of them who were not victims." Similarly, Nicolae Gheorghe explains that "they have been programmed, in a way, that they can demand compensations for the children's traumas… People are pragmatic; they understood this is also a way to make gains", and expresses admiration for their own "power to survive and to adapt," for how "they built their houses by their own means and prospered." This realization invites a discussion about how, as subjects of humanitarian intervention, the Roma from Hadareni refute the label that they've been assigned not by means of resistance, but rather by means of subversion.

After the compensation money arrived, Ileana started building a third house in her courtyard, for her daughter who is now abroad. She confesses that she only started building it because "the big Roma from Bucharest" reassured her that more money would come from a separate trial that reclaimed compensations for the suffering of the children who were of minor age at the time of the fires. If she knew the money wouldn't come, she wouldn't have started it, she says. They could have at least helped her pay for the roof and remaining walls – "I wouldn't even mention the windows or the furniture, because, when you come and put in a nail, I also come and put in a nail." Nobody heard any news about the minors' process for years. This is why every family I visit asks me about it. Since at first I didn't know what they were referring to, a new story had to be told about the fires and the

running away, and suffering and shame, but this time it featured the minors as its main characters – where they had to hide, how their health was in danger, and how the children and the teachers at school wouldn't want them in class afterwards, so that many of them ended up being illiterate. This ordeal should be compensated, like the one of the adults, because they also endured through the same conditions. Other informants tell me, however, that the former minors are now illiterate because their parents didn't send them to school, but instead took them along to help them with their trading abroad.

Ileana's house is far from being finished. In fact, if seen from a distance, the construction might pass for the ruin of the house which was burnt down: only some of the walls are erected, there is no roof, and the openings where the windows should be are empty. The household garbage is collected here, in the projected rooms, and chicken scratch through them all day long, among the weeds that grow where the floors should be. At sunset, Ileana and I sit down together on the ledge of this skeleton and she shows me how she is going to arrange it after she makes some money: "I'm going to plant flowers here, and there on the side there will be grass, and when you come back we can have a barbecue there, in the grass." If "the money for the minors" still fail to arrive, she'll make her own money, as she did before. And when she does, she will probably keep the receipts for all the materials, and pile them up together with the old ones – the debris left behind by an abstract governance, so universal that it could only be alienated from its subjects.

Law and disorder in postsocialism

"The global impact of legal nongovernmental organizations on postcolonial consciousness is such that it is not uncommon nowadays to hear the language of jurisprudence in the Amazon or Aboriginal Australia… Postcolonies, in sum, are saturated with self-imaginings and identities grounded in the jural," write the Comaroffs (2008: 26). Even more so, I would add, in places where several notions of law find themselves competing.

On the one hand, in the declarations they gave after the conflict, the perpetrators of the aggression argued that many Roma were breaking the law – for instance, by letting their horses graze on the land of the non-Roma – and that the police failed to react; the few non-Roma that I managed to talk to during my fieldwork still maintained this position, even though some of them were not even living in the village at the time. This is also what some activists say, adding that they were not so willing to admit this back then, for fear it might backfire and strengthen stereotypes about "Gypsy crime". Moreover, some Roma in the village have a similar stance when we talk about the origins of the fires: that some gypsies were being unlawful, and because of those the whole group had to suffer. By that, they usually refer to two incidents: either to a crime that had been committed by three Roma against a fourth one, almost two weeks before the conflict occurred, which agitated both the police and the locals, but the three perpetrators of which, however, had been captured and were going to be put in detention; or to the fact that, as many of my informants put it, the three Roma men who lost their lives on September 20th 1993 "were not saints", and that they would live off by cheating the locals and also people from neighboring villages (for instance, by asking for loans which they would never pay back). What's more, according to one of my informants, one of them had been convicted to prison for having raped and tortured a Roma woman from a more distant town in order to convince her parents to give him their money, and, after he was trialed, his mother managed to have him released on bail. The attitudes of my informants towards the alleged criminal record of the three victims varies, however, and cannot necessarily be correlated to kinship ties: while some of them eagerly draw a line between themselves and the family of the three dead men, by maintaining that this was a family which was foreign to the village, which had only moved there recently, and that they are to blame for everything that followed, others say that it was not up to the crowd to punish them, but to the police, according to the law. The notion of law that predominates in this segment of the event relies on the functioning of the institutions of the nation-state.

These were, however, institutions of what my activist interlocutors described as "a failing/ absent state" – for instance, they recall that the police were being corrupt, either by their own sense of power, or by bribes from the Romanians, or from the Roma. Similarly, a local representative of the

police summed up the post-1990 situation by saying that "we were like chicken back then, freshly out of the hatches," thus admitting that the framework within which the institution had functioned before were being dismantled, and it was still unclear what would replace it. When I asked him what changed since then, he uttered a vague sentence in which words such as "non-discrimination" and "human rights" stood out as if highlighted. It needs to be reminded perhaps that my interview with him took place in relation to the case in Hădăreni and that we had just talked about the programs aimed at training the police on these topics, which had been done by an NGO as part of the community-building program which ensured after the ECHR decision.

As a consequence of the apparent dismantlement of what was being referred to as "the law" and, further, of institutions which symptomatically allowed the personal opinions or agendas of those who fulfilled their functions to become their new *modus operandi*, a new notion of law is invoked, together with international corpuses that are supposed to implement it and coerce the nation-state into respecting it: the universal human rights doctrine. In relation to the Hădăreni case, this came to acquire two sets of meanings.

For actors like István Haller and the NGO whose HR director he was, the "Pro Europa" League, one of the main arguments in this procedure was that Romania should become a "European" state, i.e. operate a clear break from its communist past and pursue alignment mechanisms in order to get "back to Europe" – the all-encompassing aim of the new elites (Sampson 2003:298). The position expressed by István Haller can be described as one of political dissidence, in the sense that the term acquired in relation to state socialism, but gained its wide reception mostly afterwards. Throughout the interview he granted me, when pointing out the procedural vices of the case, Haller was critical of the political party which was in power in the early nineties – a prolongation of the communist regime, as several people were still in function since before 1989. As a HR activist, Haller was denouncing a form of "criminalization of the state" not so much in terms of "bad governance" over public resources such as finances or power, as it is usually discussed (Scott 1972), but rather in moral terms. Thusly, his position embodies a meaning of "civil society" used largely before the change of regime to refer to

the opponents of the political repression, while afterwards the notion became correlated with "democracy aid", which was granted to local initiatives organized in the form of NGOs (Sampson 2004:315).

This second meaning is more representative of the perspective put forth by actors like Nicolae Gheorghe and other members of the emerging Roma movement, for whom this international framework, together with the institutions defending them, presented an opportunity (Klímová-Alexander 2005) to pursue their project of "Roma emancipation", which would be practiced in the form of projects addressing components, or "domains of intervention", such as education, anti-discrimination, income-generating activities, habitation, or gender equality. However, whether ethnic or national, this was, then, a project of emancipation and development, as it were.

The critical reflections that Nicolae Gheorghe has now on this endeavor are also indicative, in retrospect, of the notion of law that the humanitarian paradigm helped then conceive:

"At that time our main agenda was to protest about discrimination, so we claimed these pogroms targeted Roma communities in general, even though we noticed that mob violence was not directed against entire Roma communities in an undifferentiated way and were also told by non-Roma and police that distinctions were made. However we did not want to publicise negative aspects in case it spread the idea that all Roma are criminals. Retrospectively I regret we did this, although at that historical moment it seemed wiser not to mention these kinds of local knowledge… Roma activists, backed up by international human rights organizations, framed their protest in terms of pogrom and discrimination, while portraying Roma as victims." (Gheorghe and Pulay 2013:92)

I turn to some of the actors of the Hădăreni intervention in the following section.

Emotions and procedures

I left the meeting with Istvan Haller, fuelled with moral indictment; my Roma colleague even more so, since the whole discussion centered around how the state authorities failed to address the consequences of the conflict, either by sheer incompetence, or because they lacked any will to do so. Haller's opinion subtly favored the latter perspective. After we parted with him, we headed back to Hădăreni, where we would witness people crying, as part of our research routine, since in the first two days since we were there we hadn't managed to properly audit all the families. It was a particularly frustrating posture, to present yourself as an activist, to listen to people expose their grievances, and to only be able to take notice of how your predecessors had not managed to turn their "will to improve" into satisfactory results. Apart from indignation, though, the discussion with Haller had also filled us both with the immense (and often disproportionate) motivation that activists sometimes experience, that their activity is worth pursuing, despite all the wrongs in the world. Significantly, such moments of energy are especially occasioned by fellow activists; as far as the "subjects" go, it's more frequently dishearten.

The articles written by Haller about the situation of the Hădăreni case (Haller 1998, 2005) similarly produce indignation, even with the umpth rereading. Neatly documented from a wide array of sources, they portray a minutely detailed image of how, in the hands of state authorities, the case became nothing short of a farce, albeit a tragic one. They read as an absurd collection, much like Jacques Carelman's surrealist *Catalogue d'objets introuvables* ("Catalog of unfindable objects") – with the sobering difference that these do exist, and have impacted lives in more ways than one. I enumerate only a few: the declaration of a policeman sounds as if quoted from a giggle ("I cannot provide an explanation for the inconsistencies between my declarations… I think I spoke the truth each and every time"); the village mayor takes notice of the villagers' requirement that the mother of the two of the Roma men who died during the conflict should not return to the village, so he proposes that "in case the money [for reconstruction] will be allocated, the inheritors should build their house wherever they see fit"; the suspects for murder and

destruction who are detained 3 years after the events are released from police custody "so that they can cultivate their land" – which, as Haller notes, surprised them, since they were not agricultural workers –; one villager who called the police to report the event recalls that "the policeman told me to mind my own business… and swore at me and hang up on me"; in a rally held shortly after the events in the village, the head of the county office of the party in power congratulated the villagers for their deed; etc., etc.[2]

Apart from this wide array of seemingly burlesque turns taken by the case, the articles also contain graphic descriptions of the lynching of the two Roma men who escaped the house where they were hiding. Furthermore, Haller's minute narratives of are punctuated with rhetorical questions – to which, he notes, "there are no rational answers, justified by the judiciary" (juridic motivabile) – and a few remarks such as "The Roma in Hadareni lived through great hopes and great disillusions" (2005), which disrupt his otherwise obstinately sober tone. This is, clearly, the chronicle of a world turned upside down, much like the Bakhtinian carnival – and like it, it also has medieval tones, with enraged peasants seeking justice with forks and torches, like some foreign media was also alluding, as discussed in the introduction. The redress could only consist in implementing the "rule of law" upon a state gone berserk. And, indeed, the lawyer of the victims notes in an address to the law court that "the political games are much stronger than the penal law, which should be equal for all, so that we think that without the political help of Roma organizations and with pressures directed at the

[2] Other incidents include: some of the policemen present when the three Roma locked themselves up to seek refuge from the angry crowd, are reported to have recommended the villagers to "do as you please, as far as we're concerned you may as well set the house on fire"; the villagers addressed a letter to the president of the republic, in which they demanded that the Roma "should go where they came from"; the case was sent back and forth between various law courts, for years; the parliamentarian subcomission appointed to investigate the case found that "the event originates in causes which can be imputed to some of the Roma families"; a judge moralized the victims, saying that "it's not such events that are a source of income, but work"; for years, verbal altercations between Roma and Romanians were fined by the police for "disturbing public order", but the fines are only directed at the Roma; the government and county council both declare that the funds for the reconstruction should be granted by the other institution; the first compensation to be paid in this case by the state is addressed to a Hungarian villager, who had been convicted because of his alleged involvement in the events, but was able to prove that he hadn't taken part, and was subsequently compensated for the error, and so on. For a comprehensive summary of the case, with a focus on the outrages and aberrations, see Haller 1998, 2005.

presidency of the republic, the cause will never ever be solved." "Civil society" is openly invited to partake in the political game.

And it does, by entering an open competition with the state. In his first article, Haller mentions that the "The NGOs which *investigated* the case… reached different conclusions than those of the police" (1998, my emphasis). NGOs were, then, to duplicate the work of the juridical, and resignify it. Their legitimacy to denounce state abuses and to correct them relies on the universals of human rights, which come to represent the narrow (and only) escape from this judicial and moral chaos. What's more, Haller also notes that the Ethnic Roma Federation (FER) recommend the villagers to refuse governmental help, as this might result in "moral pressure" for them to give up pursuing the juridical solution to the case. Nicolae Gheorghe similarly points out the difference between FER and another NGO, "Pro Europa" Roma Party[3], which in the meantime became an ethnic political party with seats in Parliament: the latter "were playing a double game, because they were funded by the state."

As the Comaroffs remark, "there has certainly been an explosion of law-oriented organizations in the post-colonial world… Situated at the intersection of the public and the private, nongovernmental organizations of this sort are now commonly regarded as the civilizing missions of the twenty-first century." (Comaroff and Comaroff 2008:25)

Whose civilizing missions did the activity of these NGOs embody, then? Wilson's (2010) analysis on how the notion of "humanity" is employed by international criminal courts delivering judgment on racially-motivated crimes casts some light upon the way in which institutions such as ECtHR build their legitimacy. Through a case-study of the International Criminal Court for Rwanda, the author posits that "the laws of humanity carry both the conditions of their own legitimization and internal contradictions that undermine the coherence of their decisions from within" (Wilson, 2010:

[3] The similarity in title with Haller's "Pro Europa" league is purely coincidental, but very indicative of which particular hegemony it was that the local civil society desired.

54). This assertion needs to be correlated to Wolf's remark that "power is… never external to signification—it inhabits meaning and is its champion in stabilization and defense" (Wolf, 2001: 396).

It was quite recently that the articulation between the activity of the ECtHR and global governance began to be investigated (Christoffersen and Madsen, 2011) and its relation with civil society spelled out, with an emphasis on how social activism transgress the national state by means of supranational litigation. In 2010, Haller publicized an article titled "The mendacious government", in which he summed up the "implementation of the Romanian Pogrom Judgments." As far as the Hădăreni case – "one of the most severe conflicts between Roma and non-Roma in Romania" (Haller 2008) – is concerned, the community development program aimed to address the consequences of the conflict is reported by Haller to have been severely vitiated by the government's late provision of the funds towards the organizations which had undertaken the programme components and a year later it was stopped altogether. And yet, "no Council of Europe sanctions have been applied to Romania and no other organization has been able to supply sufficient pressure on the Romanian government to resolve the situation" (Haller 2010:27). All that once seemed solid vanished into thin air.

The explanation of a government representative for the apparent impasse in which the program found itself was, unsurprisingly, a technical one *par excellence*: there are still three houses and two others buildings to be erected, and, while the government is willing and able to fund them, the procedure is stuck because the three beneficiaries of the houses do not have their property documents in order. According to the representative, this is something that the numerous NGOs which showed interest in the case should have solved, "but we have NGOs which receive grants two times a year in order to decry how inactive the state is, instead of paying three lawyers to carry on with the proceedings". His critique of NGO performance is rooted in their inability to communicate with the community, which he explains through their uprootedness – "How can an NGO from Bucharest or Cluj do community development in Hadareni?", goes his rhetoric question. This alienation from "the community" is further substantiated by the fact that "usually, when we go there, we provoke conflicts, rather than compound them. Don't you think it's normal that when you go there – I step out of a black

governmental car, dressed up in a suit, and an NGO worker steps out not of a bus, but of a limousine, pulls out a voice recorder, and starts asking questions which contain at least a quarter of the answer, they [the locals] might become aggressive?"

Yet another reason for this alienation was the fact that, in his opinion, NGOs refuse to stick to the rights and procedures and frequently allow for their "emotions" to overcome their work; this is why "the attention of those who take – or took – care of the case was drawn more towards the sensational rather than on the consistency of the case and on its particularities" and on "sensationalism", while the discussion should center not on emotions, "but on one's legal right to address the ECHR because they found themselves discriminated against by the last law court in Romania." In fact, at the end of our interview, the government representative recommended me that I don't commit the common mistake of allowing myself be overcome by emotions.

Interestingly, the topic of emotions also makes a constant apparition throughout my interview with Nicolae Gheorghe. Towards the end, he recalled that one of the ideas of their initial intervention was to open "a museum of Roma suffering" in the former synagogue situated in the nearby town, Luduș. The intention goes against what scholars like Fonseca (1995) or Clendinnen (1999) described as the "art of forgetting" (Fonseca 1995:276, cited in Stewart 2004:568), which Roma in particular employ in order to endure such events, especially as these go beyond the concerns for everyday livelihood. Stewart brings a relevant functionalist argument by stating that "the Gypsies... are 'without history' not because they lack inscribed (textual) history but because they lack any commemorative, calendrical, or other rites of re-enactment and ground their 'identity' not in a shared past but in shared activity in the present" (Stewart 2004:574). Moreover, in a manner that is perhaps symptomatic for subaltern populations, Stewart goes on, "the Roma do not need commemorations to remember – the rest of the world does it for them on a daily basis" (Stewart 2004:576).

The museum of Roma suffering projected by Nicolae is an eloquent case in point of the politics of representation that the Hadareni case was invested with by the activist movement which took issue with it. Firstly, Gheorghe remembers that they insisted to call the wave of anti-Roma attacks a pogrom; back then they thought that, by raising the stakes, it would be possible to stimulate a more decisively justitiary reaction, especially from international fora, even if this implied to ignore "local knowledge" (Gheorghe and Pulay 2013:92-93), i.e. the "loaded" criminal records of some Roma families. "Back then we were decided to protest and to have justice be made", another activist also recalls. It was also intended from very early on that the case should be "taken all the way" and, after it was, "it managed to create a precedent". "We did this as a political platform for which we are or I am responsible", Gheorghe admits. "But the idea was to stop [the conflicts]. And a second idea – and maybe here we were wrong again – was how to raise Roma issues on the OSCE agenda, as a matter of security, not as a matter of poverty or human rights, but as a matter of ethnically-motivated violence."

It is, however, not illegitimate to base identity politics on such highly "emotional" matters. Quite the contrary: "there were two people who burned alive, regardless of our exaggerrations, this was a reality which produced an impression... It wasn't just burnt houses, there were corpses." In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt discusses the notion of "Men's Rights" as being ultimately grounded in the body and, as such, "they are the rights of those who have no rights, the mere derision of right", as Rancière puts it. This is what Fassin would describe as "biolegitimacy" – "the recognition of life as the highest of all values – life that must be understood in the sense of being alive. This life lies at the core of humanitarian government." (Fassin 2012:249) And, further, "With the entry of suffering into politics, we might say that salvation emanates not only through the passion one endures, but through the compassion one feels" (*idem*:250).

The government, however, does not so easily conceive of compassion, as its representative repeatedly pointed out. We arrive, then, at a point of dissent, indicative of an aporia of governance. This is, perhaps, why Nicolae Gheorghe envisaged that a theater play be staged at Hadareni, which

could “express all those tensions which elude court decisions and reports” and bring about a catharsis. But even that might be of limited use, since, at the end of our interview, he concluded that “only death will cure the memory [of the conflict].”

Conclusions

This thesis is an ethnographic exploration of the effects of a humanitarian intervention employed in the Transylvanian village of Hădăreni in the aftermath of an event which has been described as "the paradigmatic event of the Roma rights world" (ERRC 2008). Following the death of four people and the destruction of more than a dozen houses belonging to Roma by an angry crowd, and in the face of a weak and/ or malevolent state, civil society demanded that justice be done and the rule of law be brought to Romania. International opinion was mobilized in order to coerce a state gone berserk into "European" discipline. The case thus reached the European Court of Human Rights, which granted the victims financial compensation for their traumas and mediated a "friendly settlement" between them and the state, as the latter took it upon itself to finance a comprehensive community development program that was aimed to bring ethnic peace in the village. However, despite all the resources mobilized into this intervention, several of the actors involved, and, most significantly, the "beneficiaries" deem that the program failed.

Throughout my analysis, I look into the "black box" of this asserted failure by means of spelling out diachronically the "good intentions" of some of the actors who claim responsibility for mobilizing the humanitarian apparatus. I lay emphasis specifically on an analysis of the symbolic economy displayed by their aspirations, beliefs, and practices, in order to grasp the failure in its full contingency.

This "political economy of trauma" (James 2004, 2010) spells out how the appropriation of the symbolic capital generated by this "critical event" (Das 1997) in order to summon the "universal values" of "Europeanness" ends up in an impasse which only alludes to the alienation of this humanitarian governance. In the face of this conundrum, I argue that, when citizen rights are transformed into human rights and/or Roma rights by means of compassion (Fassin 2012), and when civil society mobilizes to coerce the state, and when grand statements are made on behalf of

international institutions, high stakes come into play. Building on bureaucratic testimonies of the irreducibly intimate experience of trauma of all sorts, the notion of compensation becomes disembedded from its contexts, causing discontent, suspicion, and reifying the feeling of injustice.

The first part of the analysis traces this process as it reflects into the reactions of its subjects/ victims. As my ethnography shows, these respond to the humanitarian gaze spelled upon them by recourse to a wide repertoire of reactions. Firstly, they reproduce the administrative language in which their experiences have been translated by civic entrepreneurs; they spell out their traumas in such a way that these pertain to the standardized language compassion. Secondly, they store their testimonies in documents and "declarations" by which they seek to confirm the truth of their experience and to catch the attention of the humanitarian gaze. Thirdly, a broad collection of infirmities is probed, confessed, shown, and touched – the body is called in as ultimate evidence to petition an abstract, dislocated authority on the compassion of which the compensations for losses and suffering have come to depend. In the face of this arbitrariness, entitlement becomes embodied. Fourthly, parody, reenactments, performances, mutual suspicions, denunciations, accusations of witchcraft, crying and prayers occur to supplement the pandemonium. I argue that this broad array of resources build on trauma as a form of capital, and that this carnivalesque commoditization serves as a distorting mirror for the humanitarian governance. This is a critique by means of mimicry (Bhabha 1984). But it's not only that.

In his first chapter of *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993), titled "In some way or another one can protect oneself from the spirits by portraying them," Michael Taussig takes up a colonial account of the wooden figurines used by Cuna Indians in healing, which in fact resemble Europeans in 18th century dress, in order to describe "the magic of mimesis": "the making and existence of the artifact that portrays something gives one power over that which is portrayed" (Taussig 1993:13). Similarly, the "declarations" of the victims of the events in Hădăreni, in their attempt to mimic the humanitarian discourse that has been exercised on/about them, are more than distorted reflections of the hegemony or mere effects of the resubjectivation which was attempted at them. It remains to be investigated

further how these "declarations" are also prompted by their authors' will to capture the power of those discourses. Similarly, the "compensations" that they invoke are not only commoditizations of their traumas, but also a means to reappropriate an experience that was appropriated from them.

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