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Marriage-making among Roma in Central and Eastern Europe

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Unpacking "Tradition"

Liberalization and Change

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Page 3: Photos by **Vladimir Bulza** taken in the exhibition *Tokmeala* (September 24-October 25 2020, National Museum of the Romanian Peasant).
The photos on pages 15, 16, 75, 76, 151, 152, 172, 189, 190, and 214 are from the album *Be Good*, by German-Romanian photographer **Maria Sturm.** *Be Good* is a work about underage married Roma teenagers in Romania, their traditions and rituals of the wedding(night), the importance of virginity and the burden of proof. The book *Be Good* was self-published in 2016 and continuously exhibited since 2012. http://mariasturm.com/. The photos were taken in and around Giurgiu, Sighișoara and Bucharest (Romania), in 2012.

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To the memory of Prof. Vintilă Mihăilescu,

who blazed a trail for both of us, and so many others,

in anthropology

and contributed to the formation

of Roma scholars and activists in Bucharest

- C.T. and A.C., associate editors

Introduction: Roma Marriage-Making, Between the Constraints of "Tradition" and the "Choices" of Liberalization

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The notion that Roma marriages are typically concluded by arrangement and among minors is deeply entrenched in popular imagination, and it has not been radically challenged by academic accounts. Indeed, while refuting moralizing overtones around the age and "free will" of the spouses (e.g., Stewart 2018), scholars working with Romani populations have often depicted marriage-making among Roma as an institution that resists change and encapsulates the essence of Romani distinction. To be sure, our own research, conducted among two distinct, but equally "traditional" Romani groups, gave some credit to this claim, while also indicating that marriage-making is a prime venue of social change. The people we worked with ascribed to marriage not only the moral norms that undergird their notion of who they are, but also their aspirations, their wealth, and their affects.

These contradictions inscribed onto the marriage-making processes that we have encountered invited a broader comparative approach. Hence this *Special Issue*, where we have collected in-depth accounts and analyses—ethnographic, legal, and visual—of marriage-making processes among various Roma populations in Central and Eastern Europe, seeking to account for how marriage can be at once a means of change and a vehicle of continuity. Furthermore, we sought to understand how it mediates between affects and social hierarchies, or between individual aspirations and collective moralities, and how it legitimizes such heterogeneous if not contradictory claims to "identity" as those exposed by so-called traditional groups and by "assimilated" Roma.

Our rationale for taking up this topic is then emphatically twofold: academic as well as societal. In what regards the latter, Roma marriages have long been a contentious topic among the wider public, as periodic "scandals" surfacing in the media amply illustrate. Whether we recall the marriage of Luminiţa Cioabă, the daughter of Romanian Roma "king" Cioabă, at fourteen, back in 2003, or the most recent incident as this issue goes to print, when two extended families in the east of Romania got into a serial conflict over the separation of a couple, with the local mayor commenting that the source of the conflict was the practice of arranged marriages "specific" to Roma, there is always something "scandalous" about Roma marriages. The same goes for the ostentatious display of wealth, the notion that wives are "bought," the control of women's virginity, and more legalistic issues such as "arranged" and "early-age" marriages. While we do not dwell extensively on the perception of Roma marriages among majority populations, and instead favor the emic point of view, the articles collected here confront these misconceptions head-on and dispel them.

Academically speaking, marriages are central to the social life of most Romani populations—not just to the "traditional" groups that have constituted the habitual focus of ethnographies, but also to "assimilated" populations that have been proletarianized,

1) I have done much of the editorial work for this issue during my fellowship at the "Law & Anthropology" Department at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale), Germany. I gratefully acknowledge the hospitality of the Department and their influence on shaping my thoughts for this piece, and well beyond it.

have embraced a trend of renouncing Romani identity, and have been far less explored ethnographically. Our argument in this *Special Issue* is that, due to its relevance across the diverse populations that self-identify as Roma, marriage-making constitutes an excellent heuristic device to understand the life and values of these populations, as well as their relations to the surrounding world. Certainly, similar values are shared by numerous other societies across the world and are not in themselves specific to Roma; what seems to be specific, however, is how central marriage is both to the Roma notion of themselves as a collective and to their conception of personhood, both in "traditional" and in "assimilated" contexts, and everywhere in-between.

Our issue engenders a comparison, which has been scarcely undertaken thus far (initiated by Piasere 2015, in whose footsteps we follow), between the modes and the roles of marriage among a broad range of populations, from the more "traditional," kin-based Romani-speaking Gabori studied by Olivera to the quasi-assimilated Lăutari described by Beissinger. All of these instances indicate that marriage is central both to the maintenance of social organization and to social change and mobility. As Racleș shows, groups which see themselves as integrated ("Romanianized") cite their "free choice" marriage-making as the prime example for their progressiveness and adherence to the majority societal norms. Conversely, self-avowed traditional groups cite their own "proper" marriages as proof that they are true Roma and maintain that it is only through observing this practice that one becomes a full-fledged (Roma) person. Such contradictions indicate that marriage-making is not only a practice in and of itself, a mode of coupling and establishing a family, as Euro-Atlantic modernity claims, but a thoroughly societal process which amounts to nothing less than these populations' sense of who they are. Indeed, in Roma marriage-making, social reproduction entails not only the material reproduction of the nuclear family, but also the symbolic reproduction of the group of reference, be they "real" or "Romanianized" Roma.

Because so much is at stake in Roma marriage-making, this process espouses vast societal trends that reflect onto these populations: migration, financialization, ongoing precarization, racialization, proletarianization, and a myriad other phenomena that become most visible at the margins of society because that is where they are most acutely manifest. This claim is perhaps most visible in Mateescu's historical contribution to this issue, which documents the impact of slavery and its consequences—in terms of residence and interdictions—on shaping marriage processes among the Roma as compared to the Romanian sample of non-slaves.

It would have been epistemologically fruitful if this volume had also included accounts of marriage-making among the populations in the midst of whom Roma live; failing to include these detracts from our comparative endeavor. All the more so since most of the articles gathered here, particularly those in the second section, allude to the cultural and social influences that the surrounding populations exert over the Roma. Yet we believe that the juxtaposition we present here, between kin-based communities and populations with a penchant for "the outside," remains instructive in grasping the commonalities and contrasts among Roma and non-Roma, constituting an initial step in the direction of this broader comparison that is yet to be undertaken.

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Even though popular notions of Roma marriage and scholarly accounts have both essentially maintained that Romani marriage-making is an eminently conservative institution, the articles collected here give only partial credit to this notion and show that marriage is just as well an arena of social change. Specifically, more than half of the contributions to this volume portray those Roma who were largely neglected by anthropological studies,

namely those who "want in," who have long been absorbed into wage labor, and who have been making visible efforts towards assimilation. In contradistinction to so-called traditional Roma, the former not only conduct their marriages by love and free choice, but also conclude mixed marriages. As Kovai shows in her contribution, the contradictions embedded in the marriages of assimilated Roma reflect the tensions between the reliance on kinship ties, on the one hand, and embracing hierarchical relations and relying on state institutions, on the other.

There is more to this oscillation, however, given that Roma who attempt to move beyond their kin and "integrate" into the majority society will continue to face discrimination and prejudice, while those who choose to stay amongst kin will be less equipped to face the world outside. Beissinger discusses a growing number of marriages concluded with Romanians among the young generations of Lăutari Romani musicians from southern Romania, yet we are not instructed on how enduring are the relations of those who married out with their original Romani families. In this sense, Larcher notes that people who move out of their community by means of marriage are left out of the memory and stories of their families in the span of a few generations. Looking at all these examples, we endorse Beissinger's contention that the realm of marriage and weddings is paradigmatic for understanding the identity struggles of people whose notion of themselves is to various degrees imposed from the outside.

Secondly, the articles collected here show that, in communities which see themselves as "traditional" and practice "arranged marriages" or marriage alliances, marriage did not outrun change. Quite the contrary: marriage has changed significantly, and Cousin's contribution documents not only the changes in the practice brought about by the recent migration, but also the transformations that emerged as early as the 1980s. And yet, the notion that marriage is an alliance between extended families, and for this reason it shapes the relations within the wider group, has stayed the same: at the core of Cousin's account is the claim that a marriage alliance can put an end to long-time enmity. In his turn, while looking at a kin-based society where those who marry out are left out for good, Olivera analyzes marriage as the realm of regeneration and burgeoning of the community. In time, tinged by modernity, mobility, globalization, etc., marriage has changed in kin-based or "traditional" Roma societies to a similar degree as it has in "assimilated" societies, and its significance and ritual elaboration have shifted accordingly. However, both of these texts indicate that marriage has also remained a political institution, whereby social order and morality are perpetuated and the individual achieves personhood.

Thirdly, we felt it was necessary to complement the ethnographic point of view presented in the first two sections with the legal and the feminist points of view, so as to forge a dialogue between ethnography and social and ideological norms. Having seen how marriage-making works in various Romani groups, how it has changed or stayed the same, what social and moral values it encompasses, and how it brings together social order and affects, we wanted to see how these marriages are understood and tackled by the law, and how feminist activists make sense of them. To this latter end, we invited contributions from Romanian Roma feminists, but they unfortunately declined our invitation. This dialogue is urgent and necessary, as it could contribute to solving an epistemic dilemma that anthropologists have been facing for several decades now, if not more: patterns that arise from "the field" do not align with the metropolitan concepts of activism and political theory. So, when faced with the choice between cultivating the "otherness" of the people we work with and "mainstreaming" them to fit broader concepts and principles, we find ourselves between a rock and a hard place.

This is why we included a section on the visual representation of Roma marriages, where the challenges of representing a discriminated population and/or potentially problematic practices are brought to the fore. As a way to

sample and tackle the representation of Roma, we have included in the issue archival photos alongside photos from our authors' fieldsites to show how dynamic and diverse this representation has been. Lastly, we included a sample of the photos taken by Maria Sturm about underage married Roma teenagers from her album *Be Good* (2016), documenting a world of ingenuity, resignation, pride, tenderness, and deprivation. All of this is to show that Roma marriage-making escapes neat binaries, such as change vs. tradition, individuality vs. collectiveness, freedom vs. coercion, legality vs. morality, and so on. Instead, it serves as a reminder that renewed attention to patterns of continuity and disruption, both spatial and temporal, individual and collective, affective and political, will engender a more nuanced account of worlds that have been understood through their cultivation of distinctiveness, but that have never been truly self-contained.

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Olivera' s article takes us into the world of Gabori Roma in Romania, a case that is paradigmatic for the so-called traditional, endogamous Roma whose marriages were best depicted by Williams (1984). Marriage alliances prevail among the Gabori, and they are a means of endorsing the social differentiation that the ideology of descent (*viți*) brings about. Yet the ideal shared, albeit not really practiced, by the Gabori is marriage by elopement that articulates with a utopian egalitarianism advocating that any boy could marry any girl, irrespective of their *viți* extraction. Marriages are thus seen as a realm that brings about and resolves the tensions between two contradictory values specific to the Gabor social order, egalitarianism, and hierarchy.

Mateescu analyzes data from the first two general modern censuses in Romanian history, conducted in 1838 in Wallachia and 1859 in Moldavia, to show the extent to which factors such as residence, employment, social status, and freedom (or slavery) have influenced marriage patterns among Roma and non-Roma with reference to age, choice of partner, number of children, and strength of family ties. While the Moldavian census was taken shortly after the emancipation of Roma slaves, the Wallachian sample mostly included slaves, who coresided with their non-Roma owners. Comparing this data, Mateescu shows that the kinship networks of slaves, albeit numerous, were looser than those of non-Roma, or of the freed Roma of the Moldavian sample. This serves to argue that marriage and kinning patterns are not solely shaped by a "cultural" predisposition and inherent "values," but are instead molded by broader, external institutions and structural situations.

And yet, **Cousin**'s contribution touches on something that could be approximated as "values," as he draws on research among a network of Vlax Romani-speaking families originating in southeastern Romania, some of whose members live abroad. It tells the story of a marriage that, albeit fueled by the love and free choice of the young spouses, can only be concluded with the consent of their families. In the context of the two families' ongoing feud caused by a several decade-old murder, the text discusses whether and how alliance ultimately conquered enmity. This is a reappraisal of Lévi-Strauss's classical take on the exchange of women as a means to create alliances and avoid conflicts between groups. Yet Cousin's analysis qualifies the preeminence of men in these exchanges—or what Bourdieu (1977) termed "official kinship"—and proposes that old women arbitrate between men and make the transaction possible. We are presented here with the case of a marriage that combines love and arrangement, showing that the two do not exclude each other. Although the people involved interpret the free choice of spouses as a way of emancipation from old marriage patterns, we learn that the Roma under scrutiny customarily practiced elopement. Although we are not explicitly told in what consists the difference between the so-called "traditional" elopement and the rather modern marriage based on love, we are left to guess that Čoroman marriages have always accommodated a blend of choice—at least by

one of the spouses—with the consent of the families.

Racleș discusses the intriguing case of "Romanianized" Roma who illustrate their quasi-assimilation into the world of non-Roma by referring to the fact that their marriages are based on "love" or "free choice," as opposed to *other* so-called traditional Roma (whom they see as "backward" or "uncivilized"). However, as Racleș shows, the notion of "free choice" is in fact a bundle of different constraints pertaining to notions of respectability maintained by the surrounding non-Roma. In short, "free marriages" are made to stand for social mobility and transformation. In this phrase, then, "freedom" cannot be taken too literally: rather than connote absolute choice (an ideological construct in any case—see Day 2010), it signals the "Romanianized" Roma's adherence to a different social code than that of *other* Roma or of their own ancestors.

Beissinger argues that marital and wedding practices among L*ăutari* (Romani musicians) from south Romania are reflective of a hybrid identity that draws on both Romanian and Romani culture. Lăutari, as Romani musicians playing at Romanian weddings, vacillate between the two cultures, with a tendency among younger generations to conclude mixed marriages and renounce their stigmatized Roma identity. Much like the people in **Racleș**'s article, Lăutari self-identify as "Romanianized" Roma; unlike the former, however, who see the distinction between Roma and non-Roma in rather exclusive terms, Lăutari simultaneously deny and embrace, or accommodate, these two diverging identities.

Larcher's contribution provides an intimate account of the manifestations of feelings of love that surround couple formation, as they co-exist with a moral order whereby the so-called "fear of God," which promotes reciprocity and compassion, constrains the choices of the youth, and with the parents' interventions, concerned with issues of family extraction and pedigree. In so doing, it raises the question of the empirical manifestation of the analytical distinctions between marriages by love and by arrangement. A diachronic take on how people have been marrying in țigănie—a neighborhood in a village not far away from Bucharest—where the author himself married and carried out his research, the article reveals changes in the practice that converge in a process of individualization of the youth and a receding role of the parents in the former's decisions.

Kovai's article is based on long-term fieldwork in a proletarianized Romungro community in Hungary, where marriages are "free" and often mixed; however, she shows that marriage remains a central institution for the Romungro, encapsulating ethnic and class distinctions alike. The "freedom" entailed by "love matches" is then a way to mitigate structural constraints and to transcend the "Cigány/Hungarian distinction" in an attempt to forge social mobility—if not for the entire group or family, then at least for oneself—while carefully cultivating the kinship resources that one falls back on in situations of precarity.

Nikolova's article gives an overview of how Romani marriages are treated by courts in Bulgaria. Largely falling under the verdict of "statutory rape" or "underage cohabitation," court cases involving marriages concluded among Romani minors are often initiated by Roma litigants themselves and, for better or for worse, are judged as "culturally neutral" by courts. Whether the "cultural defense" would provide more accurate verdicts or would further the enclavization of Romani population is of course a topic that remains open to debate between legal scholars, practitioners, and anthropologists, and we are excited to signal this topic here.

Furthermore, we debated the very relevance of our theme with Romani sociologist and feminist **Angéla Kóczé**, in an attempt to forge a dialogue, however candid, between ethnographers and critical Romani scholars. Her insistence to pay close attention to the racialization and to the systemic forces that structure Romani livelihoods and practices is certainly *de rigueur*, but ethnographers have yet to find a way to work these large-scale phenomena into their accounts of daily life "imponderabilia."

In her feminist essay, **Haşdeu** revisits her long-term ethnographic experience, alongside landmark anthropological analyses of marriage, to reflect on how the "exchange" or circulation of women between households in marriage reflects notions of value in their communities, and how women's "sorority," expressed both collectively and individually, might challenge patriarchy and racism.

Then, we interviewed actress **Alina Şerban** about her experience playing Roma characters and seeing them represented in film and theatre, while cinematographer **Ileana Szasz** discussed the ethical challenges and responsibilities of shooting a documentary about Roma, as well as the reactions of the people in front of the camera to her inherent hesitations.

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We did not ambition to propose new theoretical developments in this *Special Issue*. While individual articles do make theoretical arguments, as regards the collection as a whole, its *raison d'être* is rather descriptive and exploratory. This is because we feel that received anthropological wisdom has reached an impasse and has remained somewhat too particular and too "vernacular" in relation to the more systemic developments that have shaped Romani livelihoods, practices, and identities in the past decades. It remains to be seen which ethnographic findings remain valid after "marrying" them to these societal forces. The very diverse contributions that we have collected here announce a change of paradigm in this direction; the shape and relevance of this change relies greatly on the dialogues we can forge not only with the existing literature, but also with parallel approaches to Romani lives and epistemes. At the same time, our endeavor is meant to recuperate the analytical potential of ethnography as a source of analytical concepts with a wider relevance, and to encourage explicit attention to the tension between description and prescription in our accounts. Much about what our interlocutors say about marriage *is* prescriptive and encapsulates a notion of how people *ought* to live—in the same way that popular misconceptions and state regulations regarding (Roma) marriages are inherently moral. Herein lies the common ground where ethnographic, legal, activist, and societal accounts of marriage-making can be brought into dialogue. Insofar as they embody moralities and are part of greater social systems, marriages speak both to the particular and to the relational. This collection of articles shows that the "vernacular" dimension of ethnographic analysis is in a productive tension with the local, national, regional, and the systemic, and that this relation, however contradictory, contested, or transient, is always fraught with moral significance, which makes it at once political and deeply personal.

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I. Unpacking “Tradition”: Genealogies, Contingencies, Ideologies

Entre idéologie nobiliaire, utopie égalitaire et circonstances singulières : le « bon mariage » chez les Roms Gabori

The "Good Marriage" among Gabori Roma: Between Aristocratic Ideology, Egalitarian Utopia, and Singular Contingencies

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ABSTRACT

The Gabori Roma of Transylvania present themselves and are perceived as a "traditional Roma community" claiming to be highly endogamous. For these Roma, as for others, marriage constitutes the "crucial point" of their society, to borrow Patrick Williams' phrase: marriage validates, publicly embodies, and reproduces belonging to the group. This article focuses on how Gabori marriage practices accommodate two essentially dissonant sets of values: on the one hand, the brotherly utopia that proclaims absolute equality among Roma, and, on the other, the ideology of descent that describes a "Gabori nation" structured along noble ranks. The two repertoires variously materialize, clash, or mix within the realm of marriage, revealing how Roma society never ceases to develop in complex and dynamic ways.

KEYWORDS

Gabori, marriage, utopia, ideology, contradictions.

Les Gabori forment un ensemble de groupes familiaux originaires du centre de la Transylvanie (une quinzaine de communes rurales autour de la ville de Târgu-Mureș). Ils seraient quelques milliers, dispersés depuis les années 1960-1980 sur l'ensemble du territoire roumain (mais aussi en Hongrie, ailleurs en Europe occidentale et même, pour certaines familles, en Amérique du Nord). Généralement perçus comme « Tsiganes traditionnels », ils se distinguent notamment par un costume bien à eux : (très) large chapeau de feutre noir, costume sombre, favoris et longues moustaches pour les hommes ; jupes longues (très) plissées et fichus colorés pour les femmes.

Contrairement à d'autres Roms de Roumanie, ces Gabori possèdent donc un ethnonyme distinctif dont l'usage s'est largement diffusé à partir des années 1990. Mais ils n'utilisent cette appellation qu'en parlant roumain ou en hongrois. Lorsqu'ils s'expriment en romanès, dans l'entre soi, ils se disent simplement *Ňoma* (« Nous, les Roms… » - « *Ame, ol Ňoma*… »). S'il faut préciser à un esprit obtus (par exemple l'ethnographe tatillon qui veut savoir « Mais quel type de Roms... ») ils diront *řomane Ňoma*, c'est-à-dire « Roms roms ». Ces *řomane Ňoma* ce sont « les nôtres » (*amare* en romanès, *ai noştri* en roumain), soit l'ensemble de celles et ceux avec lesquels celui qui parle *assume*, même virtuelle-

ment, des liens de parenté plus ou moins proches. Les contours de cet ensemble sont à la fois parfaitement évidents pour le locuteur et, dans le même temps, à géométrie variable puisque, d'une part, tous ceux qui se disent Gabori ne connaissent pas personnellement l'ensemble de ceux qui se disent Gabori – alors même qu'ils possèdent bel et bien des liens de parenté – et, d'autre part, que les limites de ces réseaux de réseaux familiaux ne possèdent pas, par nature, de position fixe, comme on le verra. Il n'empêche que l'existence de ce que ces *Ňoma* appellent leur « nation » (*naţia*) et son intégrité ne font aucun doute à leurs yeux : ils sont bien « *les* Roms » – *ol Ňoma*. Et se distinguent naturellement des *Gaže* (les Roumains, Hongrois, etc.) tout autant que des *ţigani*.

1) N.B. : Sauf prévision contraire, dans la suite du texte les termes Roms et *Ňoma* ne désigneront que les seuls Gabori.

La présente contribution, basée sur une recherche de terrain extensive essentiellement menée entre 2000 et 2007 (cf. Olivera 2012) mais nourrie de séjours réguliers en Roumanie depuis, voudrait rendre compte des différents registres de valeur qui tout à la fois motivent et justifient les pratiques matrimoniales chez ces Roms. S'intéresser à l'hétérogénéité de ces valeurs, à leur expression et à leur mise en acte dans le mariage (que celui-ci soit une réussite ou un échec) permet de souligner le fait que le modeste « collectif gabor » (ce que les observateurs appellent généralement la « communauté » et les intéressés leur « nation ») est tout autant « imaginé », pour reprendre l'expression de Benedict Anderson (1996), que le vaste « collectif national » des sociétés dites modernes (Chivallon 2007). Et si « la communauté [rom] se présente comme un bloc » (Piasere 2015 : 125), la constitution et l'entretien de ce « bloc » est loin d'être un long fleuve tranquille. Rien ne se fait tout seul : il faut de la volonté, des choix, des actes, des arrangements et des interprétations partageables.

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Certains Roms de Roumanie pratiquent le « prix de la fiancée » : les Gabori les regardent comme des sauvages. De leur point de vue, une femme « ne s'achète pas », bien au contraire même, dans l'idéal « elle se vole » (*čiora la*). Tous sont d'accord sur le fait qu'autrefois, « il y a longtemps » (*maj del mut*), c'est ainsi que procédaient les anciens : ils repéraient une jeune fille (*şejoŕa*), évaluaient rapidement la situation afin de savoir si celle-ci pouvait être enlevée (surveillance éventuelle des parents, des frères) et, le cas échéant, l'attrapaient, la jetaient sur le cheval ou dans la carriole et partaient avec. Le mariage était officialisé quelque temps après, si la jeune fille ne s'était pas enfuie.

Le « vol » de la *şejoŕa* n'est pas une fuite amoureuse, les *Ňoma*[1] n'en parlent pas en ces termes. Il n'a pas pour fonction d'établir une union qui aurait peu de chance d'aboutir par la voie « légale ». Il s'agit bel et bien d'un acte franc, unilatéral, arbitraire presque, idéal type (ie. jamais réalisé) de l'union romani. On ne m'a jamais donné de cas concrets illustrant cette « ancienne pratique » mais tout le monde la tient pour certaine. Il m'a en revanche été rapporté le cas, ancien, d'un jeune garçon, saoulé par un Rom et ramené inconscient chez celui-ci, afin d'être « uni » à sa fille. Le lendemain matin, mis devant le fait accompli les parents du garçon ne purent que reconnaître l'union. C'est parce qu'il n'avait pas les moyens (sociaux, économiques) de marier sa fille à un garçon de « bonne famille » que le Rom coupable commit cette infamie. Cette histoire, jugée scandaleuse, représentait l'exacte inversion de ce mariage « idéal » qu'est le « vol » de la jeune fille : celui-ci est un acte franc et direct, nourrissant l'utopie d'une pure égalité entre Roms, et non le fruit d'un calcul malicieux visant à contourner l'inégalité régnant *de facto* entre *Ňoma*. D'après mon interlocuteur, la vie du garçon « marié de force » ne fut d'ailleurs qu'une succession de malheurs.

Ce mythe du « vol de l'épouse » établit une identité profonde entre tous les *Ňoma*,

primordiale et immédiate : il affirme qu'idéalement, tout *șavo* (garçon) peut prendre toute *șejoŕa* (fille) pour femme. Peu importent les circonstances et contingences, les avis et statuts socioéconomiques des uns et des autres. Cette forme d'union « naturelle » est valorisée parce qu'elle renvoie directement à la pure égalité qui *devrait* exister entre *phrala* (frères), et que la vie sociale ne cesse de démentir. Comme on va le voir, le « vol » nie en particulier l'idéologie lignagère des *viți* qui structure la « nation » (*nația*) des Gabori, et conteste la hiérarchisation sociale qui en découle. Car là où l'utopie affirme la pure identité et l'interchangeabilité des individus, un « bon mariage » est, dans la réalité, celui qui *doit* être, unissant *tel* garçon à *telle* jeune fille, et par là *telle* famille à *telle* autre famille, en fonction de leur statut et, plus encore, des circonstances particulières. L'« union idéale » (celle du vol) et le « bon mariage » se situeraient ainsi aux antipodes sur un continuum allant du fait naturel et arbitraire à la surdétermination des pratiques sociales. Ce qui suit vise à mieux saisir comment ces registres de valeurs *a priori* antinomiques que sont l'utopie égalitaire et l'idéologie lignagère s'opposent où, à l'inverse, peuvent se conjuguer dans les pratiques matrimoniales chez les Gabori.

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Quelle(s) endogamie(s) ?

Nația *et* vița : *noblesse nationale et hiérarchie sociale*

Tous les *ŕomane Ŕoma* sont de la même *nația*, tous sont *rajkane the patjivale* (« nobles et respectables »). *Ame Ŕom sam* (« nous sommes [tous] des Roms ») disent-ils, affichant ainsi cette égalité des « frères » (*phrala*) d'après laquelle aucun Rom n'est, dans l'absolu, plus important qu'un autre. Et dans l'absolu, là encore, tout Rom pourrait aller demander pour son fils la main de la fille d'un autre Rom (ie : membre de la *nația).* Les Gabori sont donc idéalement tous des « Roms nobles » – *rajkane Ŕoma*, qui appartiennent tous à de nobles *viți*.

En roumain, *vița* signifie littéralement « vigne » (*vița de vie*), au sens général du terme, c'est-à-dire un arbrisseau sarmenteux grimpant. Le dictionnaire nous précise qu'en botanique le mot arbrisseau désigne une « plante ligneuse se ramifiant dès la base ». On apprend au passage que « sarmenteux » signifie « dont la tige longue et grêle s'appuie sur des supports » (Rey 2000). En mettant bout à bout les définitions, on obtient donc : « *vița*-vigne = plante ligneuse se ramifiant dès la base dont les tiges longues et grêles s'appuient sur des supports ». *Vița* peut aussi désigner chacun des liens/fils qui, par nattage ou tressage, donnent forme à un objet (DEX 1998). Métaphoriquement, cette dernière signification correspond particulièrement bien au sens qu'a pris le mot *vița* chez les Roms, dans le domaine de la parenté. Les *viți* sont tout à la fois le contenu de la *nația* des *Ŕoma* et son contenant, à savoir ce qui lui donne sa forme.

Le terme *vița* (certains auteurs l'écrivent *vica*, d'autres *vitsa*) est assez répandu parmi les différentes communautés que l'on rattache à l'ensemble linguistique « rom vlax ». Dans son étude sur des Roms américains, Anne Sutherland écrit : « According to Yoors […] the Rom are divided in four races (*rasa*), the Lowara, Churara, Kalderasha and Machwaya. Each "race" or "nation" is further sub-divided into *tsera* (or *vitsa* as the Kalderash call them), and each *tsera* (*vitsa*) includes the descendants of one ancestor and may be named after this ancestor ». Elle estime toutefois que « the *vitsa* therefore is not a pre-determinated unit of persons and involved an element of choice. […] the *vitsa* is primarily a unit of identification » (Sutherland 1975 : 181-2). Patrick Williams a quant à lui abondamment discuté la notion de « vica » chez les Roms de Paris. Il part du fait général que « ce terme désigne

un groupe de personnes unies par des liens de parenté » (Williams 1984 : 107) et montre par la suite qu'on ne saurait traduire « vica » par « lignage » puisque, comme le notait déjà A. Sutherland (1975), il s'agit bien plus d'un mode d'identification de l'individu que d'un groupe de descendance au sens sociologique du terme ; même si les Roms Kalderas de Paris « se plaisent à se représenter comme une société à lignages, composée de groupes fondés par un ancêtre patronyme où se comptent tous les descendants en ligne agnatique » (Williams 1994 : 173).

Les noms de *viţa* chez les Gabori (comme dans la plupart de ces noms dans les groupes dits « vlax ») sont ainsi formés à partir d'un substantif (le plus souvent un nom propre, celui d'un ancêtre à 5 ou 6 générations en amont, mais pas toujours) complété du suffixe *–eşti*. Pour comprendre ce suffixe il faut se tourner vers les anciennes réalités paysannes roumaines. Neagu Djuvara écrit que dans la paysannerie d'autrefois (en Moldavie-Valachie comme chez les Roumains de Transylvanie)

> « le village entier se considérait comme descendant d'un ancêtre commun (un *moş*) et l'on gardait parfois par écrit la filiation des différentes lignées […]. Pour être accepté dans un tel village (sauf par alliance), il fallait prouver qu'on appartenait à la lignée. Le village portait d'ailleurs le plus souvent le nom de cet ancêtre éponyme, d'où la profusion de localités dont le nom se termine en *-eşti*, suffixe pluriel désignant „les descendants de", „ceux de" » (Djuvara 1989 : 234).

Chez les Gabori également, les *viţi* sont idéalement des groupes de descendance en ligne agnatique. Comme les Kalderas de Paris, les Gabori « se plaisent » à se représenter en lignages patrilinéaires, les *viţi*, lesquels formeraient ensemble la *naţia* des *řomane Řoma,* mais la réalité sociologique ne cesse de contredire cette idéologie. Tandis que Philippe Lemaire de Marne interroge un Gabor sur son identité, celui-ci lui déclare : « Je suis par mes grands-parents, par le père de mon grand-père paternel, par son père, par le père de son père, membre de la nation des rom Gabor » (Lemaire de Marne 1990 : 17). Le Rom poursuit toutefois en évoquant la généalogie de sa mère, ainsi que celle de sa grand-mère maternelle. Les Roms sont ainsi nombreux à se rattacher (ou à rattacher un autre Rom) à une *viţa* par une femme, mère, grand-mère ou arrière-grand-mère. Un même individu peut donc se relier, ou être relié, à plusieurs *viţi*, selon les circonstances. Enfin, pour finir de mettre à mal l'idéologie lignagère, les *viţi* sont tout à la fois des groupes endogames et exogames : les individus s'entremarient *de préférence* à l'intérieur de leur *viţa*, mais les mariages exogamiques sont fréquents.

Tous les *Řoma* sont donc d'accord sur le fait que l'ensemble des *řomane Řoma* correspond aux différents membres des différentes *viţi*, mais tous ne sont pas d'accord sur le nombre et les noms de celles-ci. Pour résumer la situation des Gabori, on peut dire, idéalement (et, entre parenthèses, la relativité de l'idéal), que :

- la *naţia* des Gabori est composée de différentes *viţi*, (même si les Roms ne sont pas d'accord sur leur nombre ni même sur leurs noms) ;
- ceux qui sont *řomane Řoma* appartiennent à telle ou telle *viţa* (mais peuvent appartenir selon les circonstances du discours à plusieurs *viţi*, quoique jamais simultanément) ;
- la *viţa* est de préférence endogame (mais aussi exogame, souvent) ;
- l'ensemble des *řomane Řoma* sont ceux avec qui chaque *Řom* possède des liens de parenté, par la filiation ou l'alliance, à quelque degré que ce soit, c'est-à-dire les membres des différentes *viţi* ;
- la *naţia* est donc endogame : les *řomane Řoma* ne se marient qu'avec des *řomane Řoma* (mais étant donné les points précédents concernant le flou des frontières effectives…).

On ne sort pas de la tautologie tout en la rendant nécessaire : « Les *řomane Řoma* sont ceux avec qui j'ai des liens de parenté ou ceux avec qui j'en ai *potentiellement* puisque mes ascendants en ont eu. » « Nous sommes tous parents puisque nos aïeux l'étaient et que, pour cette raison, nous nous entremarions aujourd'hui. » Dès l'instant ou plusieurs arbrisseaux sarmenteux poussent les uns à côté des autres et, plus encore, les uns *avec* les autres en s'entre-ramifiant depuis plusieurs générations, il devient difficile de se faire une idée précise et définitive sur telle ou telle feuille : à quel pied appartient-elle ? À quelle ramure ? La *viţa* est une manière de mettre de l'ordre dans l'écheveau du *niamo* gabor, tout en rendant cet écheveau nécessaire.

La Règle (élastique) de l'« endogamie vraie »

Tous les *Řoma* sont ainsi *rajkane* (nobles) de naissance. Mais peut-on être tous nobles, également et sans distinction ? Il semble bien que non. Les notions de noblesse et d'honorabilité induisent un principe de hiérarchie : non seulement vis-à-vis des Autres, perçus indistinctement comme des roturiers, mais aussi parmi les semblables, à travers une mise en ordre des différents groupes familiaux formant la « classe nobiliaire », la *naţia*. Certains *Řoma* appartiennent ainsi à des *niamuri* plus *rajkane* que d'autres, c'est du moins ce qu'ils affirment : leurs « vieux » (*phure*) ont eu davantage de *taxtaja*[2], ils ont été plus riches (*barvale sa*'), plus connus (*prinžengle, veştime*), ils sont simplement de plus « haute lignée » (*o niamo maj laşo*), qu'importe. Cette hiérarchie ne correspond pas à des statuts ou à des pouvoirs particuliers. Comme l'a montré Louis Dumont, elle est avant tout « l'attribution d'un rang à chaque élément par rapport à l'ensemble » (Dumont 1966 : 121), et non une forme d'organisation politico-économique immuable exerçant mécaniquement son empire. Du reste, les Roms sont loin d'être d'accord sur la manière de hiérarchiser les *viţi*. Il y a autant de manières d'ordonner les *niamuri* de *Řoma* que de *viţi*, voire de locuteurs… La hiérarchisation des *viţi* est néanmoins un principe structurant et solidarisant l'ensemble gabor, bien plutôt qu'une forme rigide d'organisation le fractionnant.

Selon certains Roms, trois *viţi* sont particulièrement nobles, celles dans lesquelles des *taxtaja* ont « toujours » circulé : ce sont les *Djureşti*, *Gaboreşti* et *Kuneşti*. Je n'ai personnellement jamais eu de contacts approfondis avec des Roms « *de ande'l Djureşti* » (des *Djureşti*), mon réseau de relations parmi les *Řoma*, déterminé par la position de ma « famille adoptive », s'étendant essentiellement dans les *viţi Kuneşti*, *Gaboreşti* et *Pitjokeşti*. Du point de vue de nombreux *Kuneşti* et *Gaboreşti*, les *Djureşti* forment « la plus noble *viţa*, la première » (*e maj rajkani viţa*, *e dintuni*). Pour quelle raison ? La réponse reste toujours assez évasive : « Parce que ce sont les plus nobles… ». Certains s'empressent toutefois de relativiser en précisant que si, aujourd'hui, quelques *Djureşti* sont très riches et renommés, la plupart sont pauvres. Comme on le comprend rapidement, la noblesse des *viţi* est bien plus une évidence fondatrice et nécessaire qu'un fait précis, même s'il semble plausible qu'elle prenne sa source dans des réalités historiques régionales. Certains Roms évoquent avec honneur leurs aïeux ayant fait la guerre et sont eux-mêmes fiers de parler de leur service militaire : les photos en uniforme sont toujours bien affichées dans les cadres qui ornent les murs des maisons. On m'a par ailleurs parlé d'un Rom important qui se promènerait toujours avec un sabre de cavalerie à la ceinture, en signe d'honorabilité. D'après les *Řoma*, ce n'est toutefois pas parce que les uns et les autres ont été militaires ou portent un sabre qu'ils sont « nobles », mais l'inverse.

Selon leur appartenance de *viţa*, les Roms ne sont ainsi pas tous d'accord sur la hiérarchie : ensemble, *Kuneşti* et *Gaboreşti* peuvent dire que les *Djureşti* sont « haut

2) Chez les *Řoma*, les *taxtaja* sont la preuve de l'honorabilité et de la noblesse des *viţi* : ce sont de vieux calices en métal, le plus souvent en argent (*rupuno*). Les ancêtres étaient *rajkane* (nobles) et respectés parce qu'ils possédaient ces précieux *(kučí) taxtaja*, ceux-ci ont été transmis « de père en fils », transmettant ainsi la noblesse. Il n'y a pas de début à cet état de fait, pas d'avant. Les *taxtaja* sont *La* preuve matérielle de la noblesse, l'archétype même de l'héritage. Les Roms qui en possèdent aujourd'hui sont rares : ce sont des gens importants. Mais sont-ils importants parce qu'ils détiennent encore un *taxtaj* ou en possèdent-ils un parce qu'ils sont importants ? Ce qui est certain, c'est qu'il existe des Roms importants qui n'en ont pas, mais aucun dont les ancêtres n'en aient pas transmis, à un moment ou à un autre. Dans la plupart des cas, les *taxtaj* ne sont plus là, mais la noblesse se transmet toujours. Ce qui compte pour les *Řoma* n'est donc pas tant de détenir maintenant un *taxtaj* (sauf, bien évidemment, pour ceux qui en ont un) que d'avoir un aïeul qui en a possédé, ou de simplement *pouvoir le dire* en étant cru (sur les *taxtaja* chez les Roms *cortorari* voisins des Gabori, cf. Tesar 2013 & 2018).

dessus » (*si maj opre*), qu'eux-mêmes sont d'égale valeur, tandis que les *Pijtokeşti* sont moins « nobles » (*naj laşo niamo sar amaro*). Mais séparément, loin de leurs beaux-frères et belles-sœurs, des *Kuneşti* diront que « c'est évident, notre *niamo* est plus respectable ». Les *Gaboreşti* feront de même de leur côté, tandis que les *Pitjokeşti* passeront peut-être moins de temps à disserter sur leur « valeur nobiliaire », sans doute parce que leurs vieux n'ont pas eu « autant » de *taxtaja*, tout en affirmant que ces *Ŗoma* qui « se vantent » (*den pe bare* – « font les grands ») feraient mieux de ne pas oublier « d'où ils viennent » et que, eux aussi, sont des Roms comme tout le monde. Et s'il se trouve là à ce moment, un *Kuneşti* sera bien d'accord avec son beau-frère *Pitjokeşti* sur ce point : *Ame Ŗoma sam, či jek naj maj thele sar aver* (« Nous sommes tous des Roms, aucun n'est moins bon qu'un autre »). Ce faisant, l'un et l'autre se ménagent la possibilité de pouvoir dire, par ailleurs, que si « personne n'est moins bon qu'un autre », il y en a bien « qui sont meilleurs que d'autres… ».

Les discussions publiques sur les valeurs respectives des *viţi* ne sont cependant pas très fréquentes et, dans tous les cas, ne donnent pas d'explication à ce fait. La « noblesse » de *viţa* ne se commente généralement qu'entre membres d'une même *viţa* et jamais bien longtemps, puisqu'à part reconnaître « nous sommes tous nobles », il n'y a pas grand-chose à dire. Que les Roms sont « respectables » (*patjivale*), en revanche, il est possible d'en discuter longuement : le respect est affaire de pratiques, quotidiennes, contrairement à la noblesse qui n'est, elle, qu'un donné. Il y a d'autre part un certain risque à discourir de manière trop insistante de son « noble *niamo* » : du fait même de l'exogamie des *viţi*, on trouve toujours des gens dans l'assemblée (la plupart du temps des femmes) qui pourraient en prendre ombrage et se sentir insultés. Les *Ŗomnia* ont été nombreuses au cours de mes séjours à me tirer par la manche, tandis que leurs maris étalaient les histoires de famille et de « noblesse », pour me dire : « Tout ça c'est du passé. C'est fini aujourd'hui… » (*Maj del'mut kade sa'. Akana na maj naj…*). « C'est du passé… », peut-être. Il n'empêche que c'est par les *viţi*, les ancêtres et les *taxtaj* que la *naţia* gabor est « noble », en idéologie et en pratique.

On peut en effet constater que ce ne sont pas les individus qui sont, à titre personnel, plus ou moins « nobles » que d'autres, mais bien les *viţi*. La noblesse est familiale. Chaque individu en est le dépositaire en tant que maillon dans la chaîne de sa transmission, mais ce n'est pas cette qualité *donnée* qui fera de lui un homme respectable et respecté, ce sont ses faits et gestes, et eux seuls. Un Rom de « bonne famille » qui se comporte mal, ne vit pas romanès et ne respecte pas ses semblables ne sera pas respecté, peu importe son pedigree. Inversement, un Rom de *niamo* jugé plus modeste mais démontrant un savoir-vivre exemplaire avec ses semblables et une belle réussite socioéconomique sera respecté, au même titre que tout autre Rom, quelle que soit son extraction. L'honorabilité n'est ainsi qu'une *potentialité*, un état de nature qu'il s'agit de cultiver dans les rapports sociaux, avec les semblables mais aussi avec les *Gaže*. Lorsque c'est le cas, la noblesse est bien vérifiée et en un sens sublimé, la pratique révélant l'idéal. Dans le cas contraire, la noblesse n'a plus de valeur, et finit parfois même par être totalement perdue et oubliée, comme on le constatera avec les mariages mixtes. Les hiérarchisations familiales opérées par la notion de *viţi* différenciées ne sont donc pas des obstacles à l'égalitarisme idéal selon lequel un *Ŗom* vaut n'importe quel autre *Ŗom*. Cette noblesse est à la fois un état collectif et un idéal individuel, vers lequel chaque personne doit tendre. Cet idéal ne peut jamais être pleinement réalisé, voilà pourquoi il faut toujours d'autres *niamuri* « plus nobles », et d'autres « moins nobles », au sein de la « nation ». Ce n'est qu'ainsi que les positions des uns et des autres demeurent toujours relatives et que l'égalité peut toujours être affirmée.

La tension entre, d'un côté, l'affirmation égalitaire assurant que tout le monde peut se marier avec tout le monde, et de l'autre, cette idée de « meilleur *niamo* » (*niamo maj laşo*), d'après laquelle il vaut souvent mieux se marier dans sa *viţa* avec des gens d'égale valeur, est donc un élément structurant des relations de parenté chez les *Ŗoma*. Et contrairement aux apparences, les deux dimensions permettent d'affirmer, en se conjuguant, une égalité fondamentale : celle de l'endogamie de *naţia*. « Il faut que dans toute société, à côté des choses qui circulent, qui bougent, il y ait des points fixes, des points d'ancrage des rapports sociaux et des identités collectives et individuelles ; ce sont eux qui permettent l'échange et en fixent les bornes », estime Maurice Godelier (Godelier 1996 : 221). Les *viţi* et, symboliquement, les *taxtaja*, sont ces points fixes (ce qui ne signifie pas figés) qui autorisent la circulation des individus et des identités dans la société gabor, en « en fixant les bornes ». Et cette circulation est indispensable, car les membres d'une *viţa* ne sont pas tous, *concrètement*, du même niveau socioéconomique. La société gabor n'est pas plus homogène de ce point de vue que la société roumaine dans son ensemble : certains Roms roulent en monospaces flambant neufs tandis que d'autres n'ont pas les moyens de payer le bus. Il y a des pauvres et des très pauvres chez les *Kuneşti*, il y en a tout autant chez les *Gaboreşti* et les *Djureşti*, tout comme il y a quelques riches et des très riches dans toutes les *viţi*. Or, les mariages sont idéalement le moyen de perpétuation de la lignée (officiellement en ligne agnatique), mais ils sont aussi, et surtout, un lieu d'alliance entre deux parties, qui ont chacune besoin l'une de l'autre, *hic* et *nunc*.

Lorsque les familles du marié et de la mariée sont de la même *viţa,* ont un même niveau de vie et s'entendent bien, le mariage est relativement simple : « qui se ressemble s'assemble », les idéaux d'égalité et de noblesse sont respectés et assurés d'être perpétués, ensemble. Mais dans d'autres cas, le futur marié et sa famille (ou la future mariée et sa famille) ne trouvent pas (pour des raisons pratiques), ou ne veulent pas trouver (pour des raisons personnelles) le conjoint « qu'il faut » (*sar trebul*) dans sa propre *viţa*. Le mariage sera alors exogamique d'après la logique « lignagère », mais endogamique d'un point de vue socioéconomique : le futur marié et sa famille chercheront dans une autre *viţa*, dans laquelle ils ont des affinités, une jeune fille malgré tout de « bonne famille » et de même niveau de vie. L'idée de *naţia* également noble, bien que traversée par des inégalités relatives entre *viţi* (lesquelles *motivent* en retour la noblesse « nationale »), permet ces ajustements nécessaires.

Aux confins de l'endogamie de la *naţia,* se trouvent ceux que certains *Ŗoma* appellent les *Čurara*. Les *Ŗoma* ne sont généralement pas d'accord sur qui sont ces *Čurara*, mais se retrouvent pour dire que *dans d'autres viţi* il y a pu y avoir des intermariages avec eux : certains diront que la femme d'Untel était une *Čurariţa*, d'autres que « pas du tout, elle est des *řomane Ŗoma* par son père et sa mère » ; il arrive également qu'on dise de certains Roms qu'« avant » ils étaient *Čurara*, mais « plus maintenant », cela semble évident puisqu'ils se sont entremariés avec des parents de celui qui parle… Aucun Gabor ne m'a ainsi jamais dit être un *Čurari*. Car, sans être insultant, le terme est relativement péjoratif[3]. D'une manière générale, *Čurara* désigne une catégorie floue de *niamuri* moins « nobles », situés du point de vue du locuteur à la frontière de la *naţia*.

Les Gabori s'estiment ainsi *strictement* endogames mais, on l'a constaté, cette endogamie de *naţia* est, dans la pratique, bien élastique, ses éléments constituants, les *viţi*, n'étant jamais définissables une fois pour toutes : ils dépendent des locuteurs et de leur position respective dans la société des Roms. C'est précisément cette relativité élastique des *viţi* qui permet en pratique à l'endogamie de *naţia* d'être *toujours* vraie et vérifiée. Les *viţi*, préférentiellement endogames mais aussi exogames, font de la

3) D'autres Roms de Transylvanie peuvent se dire *Čurara*. Ça n'a pour eux rien de honteux, c'est ainsi qu'ils désignent leur « nation ». Une très courte anecdote permettra de mieux saisir ce qu'évoque le terme pour les *Ŗoma* : Tandis que Şamu, douze ans, martyrise la miche de pain avec son couteau en s'en taillant une tranche, son père excédé lui prend l'outil des mains en vociférant : « Même un Čurari ne coupe pas comme ça !! » (*Či jek Čurari na şinel kade* !!). Dans d'autres sociétés roms la catégorie « *čurara* » désigne de tels semblables, tout à la fois très proches et moins « civilisés » (cf. Williams 1984 et Yoors 1995).

naţia un ensemble évident et tautologique. Sans elles, la *naţia* ne serait qu'un *niamo* parmi d'autres, un fait brut et naturel : si, par exemple, les *Kuneşti* étaient purement endogames, ils n'auraient pas « besoin » de la notion de *viţa* pour désigner leurs semblables, *niamo* suffirait puisque les deux termes ont fondamentalement les mêmes qualités et propriétés, chez les *Gaže* comme chez les *Ňoma*. Mais une telle éventualité n'a, sociologiquement et conceptuellement, aucun sens : les *Kuneşti* n'existent en tant que groupe imaginé que parce qu'ils ne sont précisément pas seuls dans la *naţia* des *řomane Ňoma,* qu'il y a d'autres *viţi*, peu importe leur nombre final et leurs formes réelles. Ceux qui se disent *Kuneşti* sont nobles *a priori* parce qu'ils descendent de nobles, mais ils ne peuvent le demeurer que parce qu'ils sont liés à d'autres *Ňoma*, également nobles, d'autres *viţi*. L'existence en tant que « Roms roms » de ceux qui se disent aujourd'hui *Kuneşti* tient au fait qu'ils sont *de préférence* endogames mais aussi *obligatoirement* exogames. Et cette exogamie de *viţa* fait apparaître l'endogamie à un niveau supérieur, celui de la *naţia*, correspondant à ce que Lévi-Strauss désignait par l'expression « endogamie vraie », qui délimite le champ des semblables (1967 : 49-60).

Des exceptions qui confirment la Règle : les mariages mixtes

L'endogamie vraie est pour les *Ňoma* une évidence bien plus qu'une prescription explicite. Il n'est en effet pas interdit au sens juridique (aucune assemblée ne viendra condamner publiquement la chose) de se marier avec des non-Roms (*Gaže*, *Ňumunguri,* ou autres Roms). De telles unions demeurent minoritaires mais non exceptionnelles, et sont la hantise de tout parent. On va comprendre pourquoi à travers quelques exemples.

Le vieux Mati a une fille qui s'est mariée avec un *Gažo* et vivrait aujourd'hui en Hongrie. J'emploie le conditionnel car il n'est jamais publiquement question d'elle dans les conversations. Il semblerait qu'elle rende parfois visite à ses parents, seule (sans mari ni enfants), mais elle n'entretient aucun rapport social avec les *Ňoma*. Si elle dit « nous » avec son père et sa mère, c'est au même titre que ceux-ci disent « nous » avec leurs voisins *Gaže*. Et encore… ces derniers ont aujourd'hui bien plus en commun avec Mati que cette fille devenue étrangère.

Autre situation : la tante Veta est mariée depuis trente ans à un ţigan (donc non-Gabor, personne ne dit *Ňumungur*, par politesse), duquel elle a eu un fils. Ils ont toujours habité dans le même village que les frères de Veta. Celle-ci, son mari et son fils parlent donc romanès comme tous les *Ňoma* du village, avec qui ils ont des contacts quotidiens. Ces derniers sont d'ailleurs tous, généalogiquement, des oncles et tantes, cousins et nièces, etc. Lorsqu'il était enfant, le fils de Veta passait ses journées avec ses cousins, mais ce n'est plus le cas depuis l'adolescence : il a d'autres occupations et centres d'intérêt. Veta et les siens se tiennent toujours à part, ne participant pas aux fêtes et repas organisés ou improvisés. À l'enterrement de sa propre mère, la *Ňomni* est demeurée très en retrait, loin de ses frères et belles-sœurs qui œuvraient au bon déroulement de la veillée. Son mari n'y a quant à lui fait qu'une brève apparition, sans prendre la parole devant le corps, comme le font les Roms. Malgré la proximité familiale et géographique, la famille de Veta ne vit donc pas romanès. Et s'ils n'habitaient pas ce village, ils n'auraient aujourd'hui plus aucun contact avec les *Ňoma*.

Autre village, autre famille : j'ai un jour été surpris d'apprendre au détour d'une conversation que certains voisins, quotidiennement désignés comme *Ňumunguri* par mes interlocuteurs, étaient, généalogiquement, cousins de ceux-ci. Les uns et les autres ne se reconnaissaient toutefois en rien parents, même s'ils avaient évidemment conscience des liens qui *auraient pu* les unir.

Enfin, j'ai connaissance de plusieurs cas de jeunes hommes partis seuls, à leur majorité, en Europe occidentale. Ils s'y sont établis définitivement et quelques-uns se sont mariés. Là-bas, ils se disent roumains ou « d'origine roumaine » et vivent exactement comme des *Gaže*. Les parents reçoivent régulièrement de leurs nouvelles (par courrier ou téléphone), parfois aussi de l'argent. Les photos jointes aux lettres montrent des jeunes hommes habillés à la dernière mode occidentale, torse nu et lunettes de soleil, posant devant de grosses berlines, jeune fille au bras, etc. Censés illustrer leur « réussite », ces clichés ne sont en réalité presque jamais exhibés aux membres de la famille élargie : ils ne sont pas « convenables » au sens romanès du terme et incarnent bien plus un « succès » *gažikano*, voire *řumunguro*, que l'idéal romanès.

Il y a ainsi dans toute famille élargie un ou plusieurs cas d'individus (jeunes ou moins jeunes) qui se sont éloignés de la société des Roms, volontairement ou non. Certains ont définitivement intégré celle des *Gaže*, en Roumanie ou ailleurs, mais la plupart sont « devenus » des *Řumunguri*. Dans tous les cas, les mariages hors de la communauté des *Řoma* se soldent par une sortie définitive de l'individu concerné de cette dernière. C'est dans les familles éprouvant le plus de difficultés économiques et sociales que les unions « mixtes », par lesquelles un jeune homme ou une jeune fille sort du romanès, sont les plus fréquentes. L'absence de ressources économiques mais aussi, cela va avec, relationnelles (parmi les *Řoma* mais aussi parmi les *Gaže*) favorise la distension des liens familiaux et contraint l'individu à investir d'autres relations sociales, avec d'autres semblables, non-Gabori. Ce n'est donc pas la réussite socioéconomique, ou une « bonne intégration » dans l'économie globale, qui met à mal le romanès, bien au contraire. C'est toujours une situation problématique qui pousse certains à sortir de la société des Roms. Les intéressés le vivent alors généralement comme un succès, puisque c'est ainsi qu'ils ont pu tenter de « s'en sortir » à titre individuel, mais leurs parents (au sens large) perçoivent toujours cette situation comme une sorte d'échec.

En toute logique, il devrait exister des exemples inverses, c'est-à-dire des cas de jeunes filles ou de jeunes garçons, mariés à des non-Gabori, ces derniers rompant avec leur milieu d'origine et intégrant totalement la société des *Řoma*. De nombreux Roms ont les yeux clairs et des cheveux blonds ou châtains : certains observateurs évoquent alors des intermariages anciens avec d'autres populations de Transylvanie (Saxons ou Hongrois – communication personnelle d'Alain Reyniers, 2002). S'il paraît très probable que de telles situations ont bien existé et existent encore, je n'en ai jamais entendu parler. Quoi qu'il en soit, tous les cas de mariages *reconnus* comme mixtes dont j'ai eu connaissance ont abouti à une sortie du romanès de l'individu. On peut penser que lorsque ce n'est pas le cas la mixité est effacée, niée ou oubliée. Parce qu'enfreindre la Règle d'endogamie vraie n'est pas *possible*. Il faut donc que les individus concernés changent de *nature*, dans un sens ou dans l'autre. La Règle n'est pas modifiée, c'est l'élément qui s'est altéré. Ce fait devient alors manifeste : les *Řoma* ne peuvent se reproduire (à tous les sens du terme) qu'avec des *Řoma*.

« Nous sommes tous parents » disent fréquemment les *Řoma*. On comprend dorénavant mieux ce que peut signifier cette expression, et l'on saisit par-là même la force des représentations qu'elle mobilise et nourrit. Les *Řoma* sont (idéalement) tous parents, parce que (idéalement) leurs aïeux l'ont été et que (idéalement) leurs descendants le seront. Que des individus « sortent » de cette parenté (ou que certains individus y soient « ingurgités » au fil du temps) ne met pas en péril le principe même d'apparentement : l'endogamie vraie ne peut être remise en cause, son fondement n'étant pas *dans* le monde social mais la possibilité même de celui-ci. Le *niamo* des *rajkane Řoma* se caractérise par cette noblesse, primordiale selon les intéressés,

dont le contenu nous est toutefois apparu bien mince. Mais l'important est qu'elle se transmette. C'est elle qui inscrit les Roms dans la continuité et fait de la *naţia* un objet clos, tautologique et, idéalement, homogène, quoique fort malléable…

• • • • • • • • •

En-deçà et au-delà des valeurs : le mariage en pratiques

Généralités

Comparés aux *Gaže* voisins, les Roms se marient jeunes : généralement entre quinze et dix-huit ans pour les filles, seize et vingt ans pour les garçons. Les unions ne sont toutefois jamais décidées longtemps à l'avance – sauf peut-être dans quelques très riches familles pour lesquelles mariage et transmission du patrimoine sont indissociables. Lorsqu'il est déterminé, le jeune homme fait savoir à ses parents, par des moyens détournés ou une déclaration très officielle, peu importe, qu'il veut se marier : *Kamav te lav Ŕomni* (« Je veux prendre femme »). Ceux-ci ayant toujours réfléchi à la question bien avant leur fils, c'est leur rôle, ils ont une idée des choix possibles et se sont tenus au courant des pistes à investiguer : « Le Loïka de Geoagiu a une fille de seize ans, c'est ce que m'a dit Bobi. Il l'aurait refusée l'année dernière à Minie, de Dobra, le beau-frère de Bobi, qui la voulait pour son fils. Peut-être que maintenant… »[4].

De l'âge de quatorze ans jusqu'à son mariage, la vie d'une jeune fille est ainsi relativement anxiogène : tout véhicule se garant à proximité de la maison et duquel descend un groupe de *Ŕoma* tirés à quatre épingles peut être synonyme de demande en mariage. Il est cependant bien rare qu'une telle venue n'ait été précédée de signes annonciateurs, comme on le verra. Toujours est-il que les unions se décident et sont célébrées dans un laps de temps assez court : généralement une dizaine de jours, parfois quelques semaines, rarement plus.

Le mariage est une conjonction de « choix privés », ceux du futur époux, de la future épouse, des parents de l'un et de l'autre. Chez les *Ŕoma* comme dans de nombreuses sociétés, ce sont officiellement les parents qui marient leurs enfants. Dans la pratique, les futurs époux participent toutefois directement : le garçon prospecte dans telle ou telle direction et suggère le choix d'une jeune fille à ses parents, la jeune fille peut refuser tel ou tel prétendant. Ce refus n'est pas public, mais les parents en tiennent compte. Il s'agit néanmoins de ne pas décliner indéfiniment car, les années passant, les soupirants de valeur se raréfient…

Les *Ŕoma* ne se marient ni à l'église (*cununie* en roumain), ni à la mairie (*casatorie* en roumain)[5]. L'union « légale » n'est qu'une formalité administrative et intervient généralement après la naissance du premier enfant (dans tous les cas elle ne peut pas avoir lieu avant les seize ans de la jeune fille). Le mariage, *o biav*, est ainsi le seul rituel majeur pour lequel les Roms ne dépendent que d'eux-mêmes, dans son organisation comme dans sa réalisation. Contrairement à la naissance (baptême = *bolhimo*) et à la mort (enterrement = *praxumo*) qui font intervenir d'autres acteurs qui ne sont pas les *Ŕoma*, notamment les prêtres (*raşai*), o *biav* est un fait proprement romanès, fait par, pour et avec les Roms.

Après le mariage, les uns et les autres disent :

- l'époux : « j'ai pris femme » = *lom Ŕomni* ;
- l'épouse : « je suis allée me marier » = *galom ŕomete* ;
- les parents de l'époux : « nous avons ramené une bru » = *anda bore* ;
- les parents de l'épouse : « nous avons donné notre fille » = *da amari şejoŕa*.

Les parents des époux deviennent les uns pour les autres *xanamica*, les époux *Ŕom* et *Ŕomni*. C'est bien le mariage qui fait

4) « O Loïka de ando Geoagiu sile jek şejora, 16 beşenge, phenda o Bobi. Berş akana, či da'la ko Minie de ande Dobra, le Bobeke şogoro. Kon ženel akana… ».

5) Certains néo-protestants (pentecôtistes, baptistes, adventistes, Témoins de Jéhovah) peuvent faire dire une bénédiction avant l'union, mais celle-ci ne sera réellement célébrée que devant les Roms.

des *Řoma* les *Řoma,* activant cette qualité transmise par les ascendants, jusqu'ici potentielle, et en affirmant publiquement que l'on compte la transmettre à son tour. *O Řom* (le Rom) c'est l'homme marié, *e Řomni* la femme mariée. C'est par extension que *ol Řoma* (les Roms) désigne l'ensemble des semblables, et d'une certaine manière les enfants n'y sont pas inclus à titre individuel. Ils n'y figurent que parce qu'ils sont filles et fils du *Řom* et de la *Řomni.* On n'est pas *Řom* sans *Řomni,* et inversement. On ne peut donc pas être *Řoma* sans *xanamica*.

« Le but du mariage n'est pas tant d'obtenir une femme que de se procurer des beaux-frères », écrit C. Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss 1956 : 105). Adaptons le principe à nos Roms en considérant que « le but du mariage n'est pas tant d'obtenir une *Řomni* que de se procurer des *xanamica* ». Et de bons *xanamica*.

Le terme *xanamic* désigne donc ce que sont les uns pour les autres les parents des mariés (*cuscri* en roumain). Par extension, les parents de deux *xanamica* peuvent s'appeler *xanamic* : comme d'autres termes de parenté roms, celui-ci s'étend à toute une catégorie de parents. Voici deux exemples :

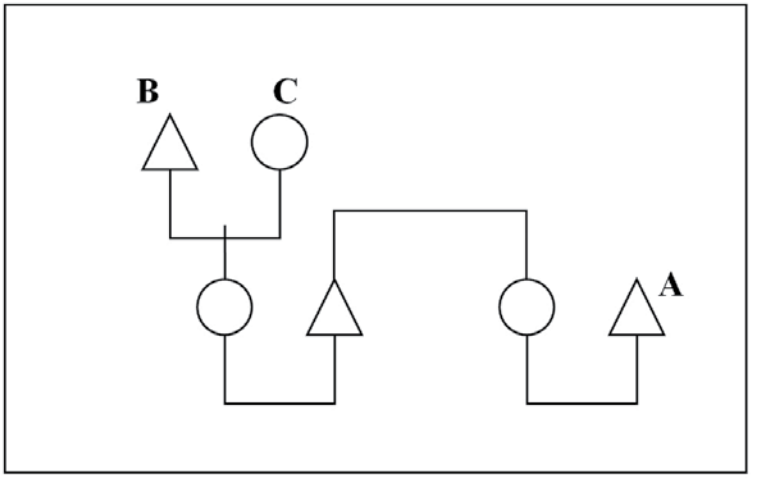


Fig 1. A, B et C s'appellent entre eux *xanamica.*

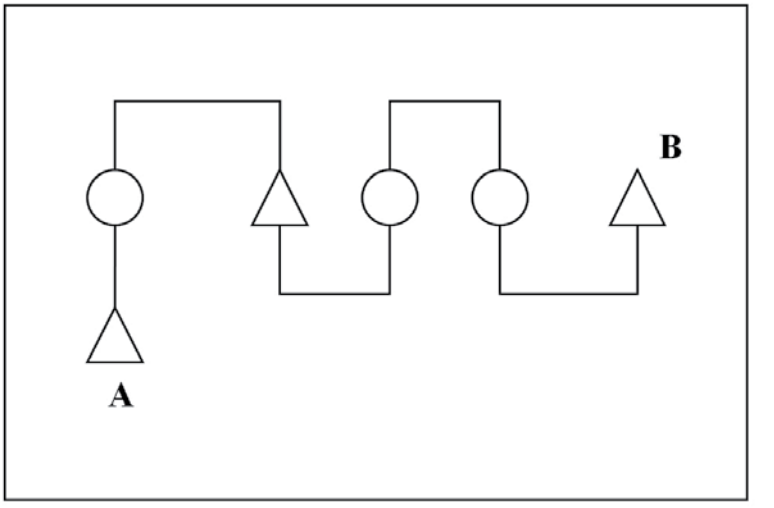


Fig 2. A et B s'appellent entre eux *xanamica.*

Lorsque deux Roms n'ont pas d'autres liens de parenté connus, ils ont peu de chance de se tromper en s'appelant réciproquement *xanamic*. Ils le sont certainement, à un degré ou à un autre. Et comme le terme désigne d'abord ceux qui marient leurs enfants, il affirme une identité profonde entre deux individus. Ils ont pu ou peuvent *potentiellement* échanger filles et fils. Cet usage extensif de x*anamic* est alors l'expression même de l'« endogamie vraie » telle que définie par Lévi-Strauss : dans la première des figures ci-avant (fig. 1), les trois hommes sont de trois *viți* différentes, déjà reliées entre elles.

« *Maj lașe xanamica sar tume na trebul ame* ! » : « Nous n'avons pas besoin de meilleurs *xanamica* que vous ! » Cette phrase, fréquemment entendue, est l'expression même de l'égalité rom. Qu'échangent les *xanamica* hormis la reconnaissance d'être fondamentalement semblables ? Sur le moment, rien. Seul le père de la fille donne celle-ci au père du garçon. Il n'y a pas chez les Gabori de « prix de la fiancée », c'est la jeune mariée qui amène avec elle sa dot (*zestre*) en allant s'installer avec son mari chez ses beaux-parents (ou à proximité). Elle devient alors « belle-fille », *bori*, et intègre le groupe domestique de son *sastro* (beau-père). Le marié « gagne » quant à lui non seulement une *Ňomni* et des beaux-parents (*sastro* et *sasui*), mais aussi, bien souvent, un ou plusieurs beaux-frères : *șogore*. Bien plus qu'avec ses éventuels frères, c'est avec son *șogoro* qu'un Rom passe généralement du bon temps et s'allie pour le travail. J'ai entendu infiniment plus de souvenirs heureux et d'anecdotes savoureuses mettant en scène des beaux-frères que des frères de sang…

Le « vrai beau-frère » d'un Rom, son *șogoro,* est celui qui a épousé sa sœur. Deux *șogore* ont ainsi en commun une *Ňomni,* sans que cela ne puisse prêter à mésententes ou confusions : les relations dans ce triangle sont parfaitement univoques. L'égalité de « frères » entre les deux Roms est d'autre part mise en valeur par le lien préexistant entre leurs parents respectifs qui se sont reconnus comme de bons *xanamica*. La relation de *șogore* est en quelque sorte un ré-enchaînement d'identité doublement positif : elle conjugue noblesse et fraternité, non pas contre ou en dépit d'un mariage, mais *grâce* à celui-ci. C'est dans ce rapport social que l'adéquation entre idéologie, utopie et réalité particulière est maximale. Cela ne signifie évidemment pas que tous les beaux-frères s'entendent parfaitement bien, mais qu'une relation positive entre eux est jugée « normale » et particulièrement appréciée, tandis que celles entre frères sont bien souvent plus problématiques (et anticipées comme telles). Les *șogore* sont les vrais « frères » roms. Notons à ce titre que les femmes n'emploient pas ce terme pour désigner leur beau-frère, mais celui, proche du roumain, de *cumnato* : *șogoro* correspond à une relation exclusivement masculine, fraternelle.

« Ni trop loin, ni trop près », les choix matrimoniaux sont encadrés par deux principes limitatifs indépassables : l'endogamie vraie et la prohibition de l'inceste. On a pu voir précédemment comment la Règle d'endogamie vraie était *toujours* vérifiée, même lorsque des individus ne la respectaient pas. Autre dimension de la Règle, les unions interdites sont celles proprement incestueuses entre frères et sœurs, enfants et parents, enfants et frères et sœurs des parents, enfants et grands-parents. De telles relations renvoient à la notion de souillure absolue : *marxime*[6]. En dehors de ces prohibitions évidentes pour tous, toutes les unions sont possibles, mais certaines sont peu fréquentes, voire peu recommandées : celles avec un cousin ou une cousine jugée « trop proche » et, inversement, avec quelqu'un de « trop éloigné ». Cet éloignement n'est évidemment pas à entendre en termes spatiaux mais sociaux : s'il le faut, un jeune homme et ses parents préféreront demander la main d'une jeune fille habitant à plusieurs centaines de kilomètres plutôt que chez des Roms voisins. Les « choix privés » aboutissant *finalement*

6) *Marxisarda leki șei* = un père qui abuse de sa fille.

à un mariage sont donc encadrés par les grands principes qui régissent la parenté (prohibition de l'inceste, endogamie vraie, endogamie préférentielle de *viţa*) et motivés par les goûts et personnalités des parents et des futurs conjoints, les positions sociales et économiques des uns et des autres, la situation réelle du marché matrimonial à ce moment-là, des événements totalement fortuits… Sans être directement prescrits, les mariages sont toujours le produit d'une multitude de facteurs qui jouent chacun un rôle essentiel. Ces facteurs convergent en un point, l'endogamie socioéconomique. Celle-ci correspond souvent à une endogamie de *viţa* mais pas toujours. C'est de cette manière que les Roms, ayant instauré une certaine hiérarchie lignagère délimitant le champ de l'endogamie vraie, parviennent à affirmer l'égalitarisme fondamental : grâce à l'endogamie et à l'exogamie fonctionnelles.

Tâchons de comprendre ce qui rend le mariage possible (voire souhaitable) entre *tel* garçon et *telle* fille ou, inversement, ce qui est de nature à compromettre une union. Deux exemples particuliers aideront à s'en faire une idée.

Un mariage « parfait » ? : Le cas de la famille S.

Il y a plus d'une vingtaine d'années, Gabor eut un grave conflit avec certains de ses beaux-frères (une histoire de *taxtaj* selon certains, autant dire, très prosaïquement, des questions d'argent…). Il habitait à l'époque dans un gros bourg aux environs de Târgu-Mureş avec sa femme et ses deux jeunes fils. Afin d'échapper à des menaces physiques, il fut contraint de déménager avec sa famille et s'installa à 300 km de là, dans le Banat. Il y habite toujours aujourd'hui, dans un village à l'écart des grandes routes, avec son épouse et leurs deux derniers enfants, vivant de l'agriculture et d'occasionnels travaux de ferblanterie. Les ressources de la famille sont très modestes. Gabor n'a pas de parents directs dans les communes alentours, son épouse non plus : tous sont à Târgu-Mureş. Les familles gabori les plus proches se trouvent à une vingtaine de kilomètres et, tout en étant des parents éloignés, ces Roms sont d'un niveau socioéconomique supérieur. Leurs revenus ne les autorisent pas à de réguliers voyages vers Târgu-Mureş et leur *niamo*. La famille S. est donc géographiquement et socialement très isolée. Ils ne reçoivent ainsi que rarement de la visite, et eux-mêmes ne se déplacent que très occasionnellement au-delà de Lugoj (la ville la plus proche – 50 000 habitants). Le fils aîné de Gabor est parti il y a plus de trois ans pour l'Espagne grâce à des relations (des *Gaže*). Il s'est marié l'année passée avec une espagnole d'origine roumaine et ne compte pas revenir au pays. D'après ses parents, il travaille et va avoir des papiers. Son cadet l'a rejoint il y a quelques mois, pour travailler lui aussi. Lorsque les parents parlent de leur aîné installé en Espagne, ils sont toujours gênés, même s'ils affirment qu'ils sont fiers de lui, qu'il a une belle situation là-bas et qu'il ne manque de rien. Sans jamais l'exprimer directement, tout le monde sait bien que ce grand garçon ne vivra jamais comme les *Ŗoma*, qu'il est définitivement parti mener son existence comme et, surtout, avec les *Gaže*. Ses parents ne le lui reprochent pas, mais l'on perçoit toujours un fond de tristesse lorsqu'ils parlent de lui. Gabor et son épouse Mândra vivent donc actuellement avec leur dernier fils (seize ans) et leur fille de dix-sept ans.

Lorsque nous leur rendons visite, ça n'est pas totalement par hasard. Tout en étant heureux de revoir Gabor et sa famille, Mihaï et Resi que j'accompagne ont une idée derrière la tête. Resi est la sœur de Mândra. Mihaï et Gabor sont donc beaux-frères (*şogoro*). Mihaï a lui-même un frère aîné, Demeter. Ce dernier cherche actuellement une femme pour son fils de dix-sept ans. Resi se dit que sa nièce, la fille de Gabor, serait exactement la bonne personne. Pourquoi regarde-t-elle cette union comme parfaite ? Parce que, selon elle, les deux jeunes et leurs familles respectives « se correspondent »

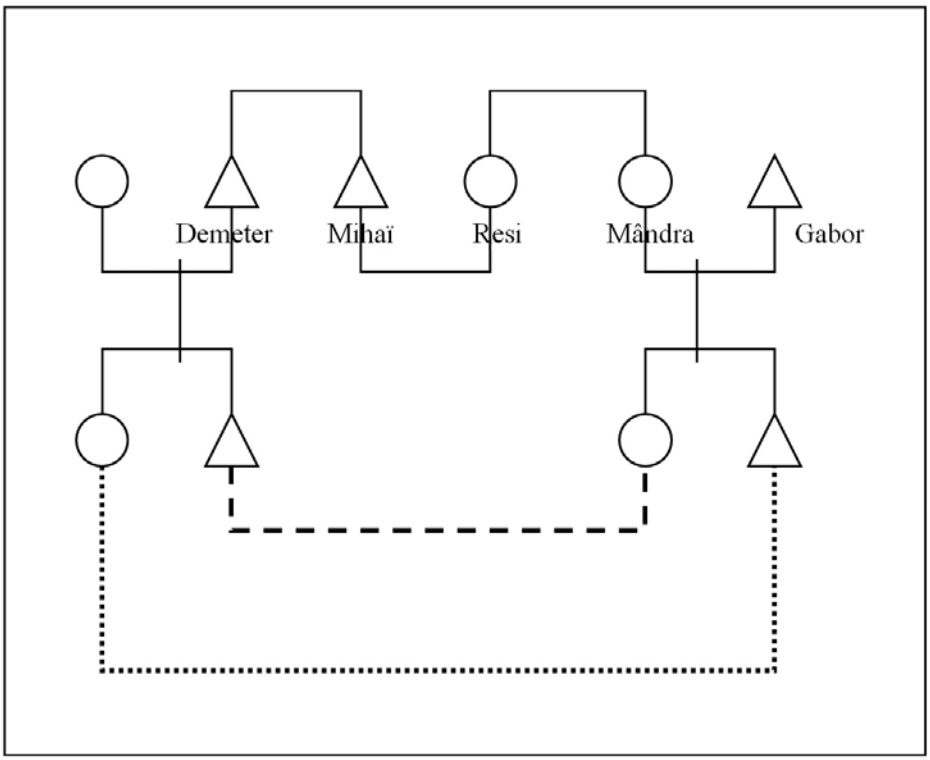


Fig. 3 Échange de filles envisagé

tout à fait. Et tous ceux qui ont eu vent du projet sont tombés d'accord sur ce point. Les familles de Gabor et de Demeter sont déjà apparentées, par l'alliance (cf. Fig. 3), elles sont donc d'un même *niamo*, bien que Gabor et Demeter ne soient pas de la même *viţa*. Les deux familles sont de plus d'un niveau socioéconomique comparable et, l'une comme l'autre, ont affronté de nombreuses difficultés au cours des décennies passées : après une jeunesse mouvementée et un premier mariage Demeter, a eu plusieurs enfants dont il ne s'est pas réellement occupé et qui sont aujourd'hui vus comme des *Ňumunguri*[7]. Prenant d'une certaine manière un nouveau départ, Demeter s'est remarié il y a seize ans avec une *Ňomni* (veuve avec une grande fille) et a eu trois autres enfants, l'aîné étant ce garçon qu'il veut maintenant marier. Le Rom a près de soixante ans, il est en mauvaise santé, ce fils est le premier de ses enfants qu'il pourrait marier comme il se doit à une fille (*şejoňa*) de « bonne famille » (*laşo niamo*) et l'aider ainsi à devenir quelqu'un de respectable. De leur côté, Gabor et son épouse sont également peu fortunés, et eux non plus n'ont pas beaucoup de possibilités pour marier leur fille et lui assurer un avenir, à moins qu'elle ne parte à son tour en Espagne pour ne pas en revenir... Mihaï et Resi ont ainsi demandé à Gabor et à son épouse ce qu'ils pensaient d'une éventuelle visite de demande en mariage de Demeter pour son fils : les intéressés répondirent qu'ils en pensaient *a priori* le plus grand bien et que Demeter pouvait venir quand il le souhaitait.

Les projets ne s'arrêtèrent pas là et, de retour chez lui, ayant fait savoir à Demeter la réponse de Gabor, Mihaï finit par exprimer devant son frère ce qui serait, selon lui,

7) Pour ceux-ci, le fait de s'être « modernisés » et de ne pas vivre comme des ţigani traditionnels « arriérés » est bien entendu un fait positif.

l'idéal : Gabor donnerait sa fille en mariage au fils de Demeter, et ce dernier donnerait sa fille au fils de Gabor. *Kade maladjol* ! « C'est comme ça doit être ! » (litt. : « ça frappe comme ça ! »). Dans la pièce, les personnes présentes sont toutes d'accord pour dire que, « oui, c'est bien comme cela qu'il faut faire », c'est ainsi que s'entraident les « pauvres gens » (*ol čioře manuşa*) pour être des *Ňoma patjivale*, « c'est comme ça que c'est bien ». Demeter est d'accord : « oui, c'est vrai, c'est ça qui serait beau » (*Igen, čači, kade' şukar*)[8].

Les familles de Gabor et de Demeter sont très concrètement menacées dans leur devenir par les aléas de la vie et des conditions socioéconomiques défavorables. Chez les uns et les autres, on trouve un ou plusieurs enfants qui sont sortis du romanès. Cet échange de filles permettrait à tous de renouer avec un cycle vertueux et représenterait une alliance parfaite entre Roms d'égale valeur, familiale et socioéconomique, permettant aux uns (parents) et aux autres (enfants) de faire ce que *doivent* faire des Roms respectables pour continuer d'être des *řomane Ňoma.* Interrogés en particulier, le fils de Demeter et la fille de Gabor ne s'y trompent pas et regardent cet éventuel mariage comme une chance. Ces unions ne seraient évidemment en rien la garantie d'une réussite économique, elles permettraient néanmoins l'inscription de chacun des intéressés (à leur place respective) dans des réseaux de sociabilité et de solidarité fondamentaux, créant des liens et (re)donnant à tous une place positive dans la société des *Ňoma*.

Le mariage de Victor : un contre-exemple exemplaire

À l'approche des fêtes de fin d'année, Victor, dix-neuf ans, envisage de se marier. C'est en effet bien souvent autour des dates importantes de Pâques ou de Noël qu'a lieu ce genre de réjouissances : les Roms peuvent ainsi coupler des dépenses qui seraient séparément trop élevées. D'autre part, les uns et les autres se trouvent alors chez eux (*khere*), en famille, et non par monts et par vaux pour le travail.

Victor est dans une situation bien particulière. Il a perdu son père étant jeune et sa mère s'est remariée avec un autre Rom, d'une autre *viţa*, ayant lui-même des enfants d'une première union (voilà déjà un mariage exogamique d'« ajustement fonctionnel »). Durant toute son adolescence, Victor ne s'est jamais trop entendu avec son beau-père, et celui-ci le lui a bien rendu. Le jeune homme a ainsi économisé lui-même l'argent nécessaire à son mariage, alors que ce sont habituellement les parents qui assument publiquement les dépenses (même si le futur marié s'y joint en donnant ce qu'il a pu gagner). Et une fête de mariage (*biav*), même modeste, coûte de l'argent.

Tout commence lorsque les parents du futur marié, après s'être renseignés sur telle et telle jeune fille, font savoir aux parents de celle-ci, par le biais d'autres Roms, qu'il est possible qu'ils viennent demander la main de celle-ci pour leur fils. Ceux-ci font savoir, par les mêmes chemins détournés, qu'ils « peuvent venir… » (*amborik aven*)[9]. Rien n'est joué ou décidé, mais tout devient alors possible. Il faudra ensuite que les premiers se rendent effectivement chez les seconds, en s'annonçant, là encore de manière indirecte, durant les semaines précédentes (des parents communs qui laisseront entendre que…). Les parents de la mariée doivent se tenir prêts à recevoir leurs éventuels futurs *xanamica* : nourriture, boisson, etc.

Dans le cas de Victor, celle qu'il veut épouser (c'est lui qui l'a « trouvée », non ses parents, et la jeune fille est d'accord) habite à 250 km de là, dans le village d'origine de sa mère, près de Tîrgu-Mureş. Cette dernière, investie dans le mariage de son fils, fait ce qu'il faut pour que les parents de son éventuelle future bru (*bori*) soient prévenus. Le père adoptif de Victor regarde quant à lui tout cela d'un œil à la fois distant et ironique : il ne porte pas une grande estime à ces éventuels futurs alliés. Ceux-ci sont *Kunești*, tout comme Victor et sa mère,

8) P. Williams discute également ce type de mariage « idéal » chez les Roms de Paris, appelé par eux « *paruimos* » (« échange ») (Williams 1984 : 284-286).

9) S'ils ne font rien savoir, c'est qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de se déplacer…

lui est *Gaboreşti*. Plus fondamentalement, ils ne sont pas riches, habitent un village isolé, bref… ce ne sont pas à ses yeux des alliés de valeur. Il ne s'oppose toutefois pas au mariage, Victor n'est pas son fils. Le Rom fait cependant bien comprendre à qui veut l'entendre que, d'après lui, c'est une bêtise. C'est ainsi Victor qui, le jour venu, paiera la route et les dépenses annexes afin d'aller chercher sa future femme (*te ža pala e şejoŕa*).

Pendant ce temps, les parents de la jeune fille se préparent à recevoir les Roms « qui vont venir » (*aven ol Ŕoma*) : acheter des poulets, des boissons, préparer éventuellement du chou farci (*şax/sarmale* en roumain), maintenir la maison propre et ordonnée. Ils doivent aussi « préparer » leur fille : lui acheter des vêtements, faire faire de nouvelles jupes, car, si tout se passe bien, lorsque ses futurs beaux-parents et mari viendront la chercher, elle repartira avec eux le soir même[10]. Le mariage en tant que tel n'est célébré que quelques jours plus tard, lorsque les parents de la mariée accompagnés de proches se rendent à leur tour chez leurs nouveaux alliés. Nouveau repas, nouvelles discussions, puis, un peu avant minuit, les cheveux de la jeune fille sont « attachés » (*thon o bal opre*) : la mère et la belle-mère de la mariée défont chacune l'une des deux nattes, les renouent avec un nouveau ruban (*pantiče*), les réunissent en chignon et apposent un fichu (*kozno*) sur la tête de la nouvelle *Ŕomni*. Pendant ce temps-là les femmes chantent, le plus souvent en hongrois, les hommes restent assis à table, faisant mine de continuer leurs discussions, et la jeune fille, elle, pleure.

Mais nous n'en sommes pas là. Pour le moment nous sommes sur la route avec Victor, sa mère, son beau-père et le fils aîné de ce dernier. Nous roulons vers Târgu-Mureş et le village de la jeune fille. Durant tout le trajet, le beau-père de Victor fera des remarques ouvertement désagréables sur le *niamo* et la *viţa* de son futur *xanamic* : si celui-ci est *Kuneşti* il préfère le rattacher aux *Pitjokeşti*, parce que, par sa mère, il est en partie *Pitjokeşti*, « Aaah mais ces Roms-là sont des pauvres gens ! » (*Kole Ŕoma sî čioŕe manuşe* !), « Qui sait si on pourra tous tenir assis dans la maison ? [en référence aux nombreux enfants du couple et à la modestie de leur demeure] » (*Kon ženel ? Ala te resa ando'kher* ?), « Le pauvre, il n'a su faire que des filles » (*Kodo Ŕom nu maj şejoŕe žengla te kerel…*), etc. Victor et sa mère ne disent rien, tandis que le Rom rit de ses bons mots avec son aîné. Lorsque nous arrivons sur place, tout se passe comme il se doit : nous rentrons, les *Ŕoma* se saluent, demandent des nouvelles, s'assoient, commencent à discuter, à porter quelques toasts (avec du soda puisque les chefs de famille sont tous les deux néo-protestants : l'un pentecôtiste, l'autre témoin de Jéhovah), à manger, etc. Les parents de la future mariée ne sont évidemment pas seuls, il y a là un frère du père de famille ainsi qu'un neveu : ces choses-là doivent être publiques. C'est alors le père du jeune homme qui, habituellement, après plusieurs heures de discussions faussement innocentes, doit faire la demande de mariage, et personne d'autre. Le père de la fille doit alors affirmer que non, il est hors de question qu'il laisse sa fille s'en aller (*či mukav la !*), le futur allié insiste, etc. La discussion est généralement animée jusqu'à ce qu'ils tombent d'accord sur le fait que, chez son père ou son beau-père, la jeune fille sera toujours dans une même famille, avec des *Ŕoma*, et que c'est cela l'important.

Dans le cas de Victor, tout le monde comprend au bout de quelque temps que son père adoptif ne jouera pas le rôle du père et qu'il ne demandera rien du tout. C'est donc la mère de Victor et le père de la jeune fille qui, de fil en aiguille, parviennent à rendre explicite la demande. Il n'y a pas de « dispute » et nous finissons par repartir moins de deux heures plus tard avec une personne de plus dans la voiture. Les deux parties se sont entendues pour décider que les parents de la future mariée viendront chez leur *xanamic* trois jours plus tard, pour le mariage (*biav*) proprement dit. Le jour venu, Victor et son demi-frère font la

10) C'est la jeune fille qui apporte son trousseau, en forme de dot (*zestre*).

tournée des *Ňoma* des alentours afin de les convier aux festivités. Arrivés chez le Rom le plus important de la ville, celui-ci leur fait comprendre qu'il ne viendra que si Victor lui paye *mita*, c'est-à-dire un « pourboire ». Celui qui réclame une *mita*, même symbolique, pour se rendre à un mariage marque ainsi sa supériorité hiérarchique : il peut, voire *doit*, se permettre de demander une « indemnité » pour honorer de sa présence ce rassemblement.

La fête ayant lieu dans la maison des parents de Victor, son père « adoptif » a, cette fois-ci, mis la main au portefeuille. Tous les Roms de la ville seront présents, il veut sans doute les impressionner, leur démontrer qu'il a les moyens de faire de grandes fêtes, même pour ce « fils » qui n'est pas le sien : boissons chères (*Cognac Napoleon* « six étoiles »), viandes (*mas*) de toutes sortes en quantité, chou farci (*şax*), etc. Cet étalage de richesse n'a toutefois rien d'une marque de respect pour son nouveau *xanamic*, arrivé par le train quelques heures auparavant… Il s'adresse aux autres Roms de la ville jugés importants et, notamment, au *Ňom baro* qui s'est fait payer pour venir « parrainer » ce mariage.

Alors que le mari de la mère de Victor avait ostensiblement refusé toute forme d'alcool lorsqu'il était chez le père de la mariée (déclarant, la main sur le cœur : « Non, moi je suis un bon chrétien, pas de boisson chez nous » – *Me laşo creştino som, amende kanşi pimo na da*), on trouve ce soir-là de la bière, du cognac, du vin… Le Rom n'en consomme pas mais il ne manque pas de faire servir ses invités. En dépit d'une débauche de vivres et de boissons de marque, ce *biav* ne resta toutefois pas dans les mémoires comme un « beau mariage ». D'autant que, quelques semaines plus tard, la jeune fille retournait chez ses parents… Les enjeux familiaux avaient eu raison du jeune couple, lequel était pourtant à l'origine moteur de son union. Victor s'est remarié quelques mois plus tard, sans cérémonie, et est parti vivre dans la famille de sa femme, comme gendre (*žamutro*), en Hongrie.

Cet exemple est bien entendu un cas particulier et largement inhabituel. Il fait néanmoins ressortir les tensions entre les différents idéaux qui président à l'alliance de deux individus et, au-delà, de deux familles, soulignant ce qui ne s'est pas passé *comme il le fallait*. Le cas personnel de Victor, orphelin de père, montre bien comment l'alliance est compromise dès lors que la filiation elle-même est problématique. Un bon mariage ne peut se faire sans de bons beaux-parents, de bons *xanamica*. Et de « bons *xanamica* » sont ceux qui se reconnaissent mutuellement comme tels, de valeur égale, ici et maintenant, en arrangeant et en manipulant l'idéologie lignagère pour nourrir l'utopie confraternelle. Lorsque ça n'est pas le cas, les contradictions existantes entre ces deux systèmes de valeurs ne peuvent pas être intégrées par la réciprocité identitaire des *xanamica* et le mariage s'en trouve profondément menacé.

Conclusion : complexité de la « tradition »

Distinguant les « représentations officielles » de la parenté et sa pratique « ordinaire », P. Bourdieu constate que « l'observation et la statistique établissent que la grande majorité des mariages, dans tous les groupes observés, appartiennent à la classe des mariages ordinaires, [...] ceux dont on a rien à dire, comme de tout ce qui a toujours été ainsi de tout temps, ceux qui ne semblent pas avoir d'autre fonction, hors la reproduction biologique, que la reproduction des relations sociales qui les rendent possibles » (Bourdieu 1972 : 148-9). Chez les *Ňoma* comme ailleurs, l'immense majorité des unions n'a pas pour finalité de valider officiellement l'idéologie lignagère, pas plus qu'il ne s'agit d'incarner l'utopie égalitaire de confraternité. Ce sont bien plutôt ces deux registres de valeurs qui sont mobilisés (et aménagés) afin d'interpréter,

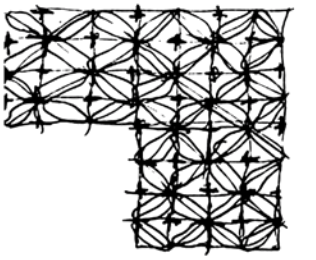
sur le moment ou *a posteriori*, un mariage en dépassant les circonstances toujours particulières qui le motivent et, ainsi, « reproduire les relations sociales qui l'ont rendu possible ».

J'ai employé à dessein deux termes distincts pour bien différencier « l'*idéologie* nationale de noblesse » et « l'*utopie* confraternelle/égalitaire ». Dans leur *Dictionnaire critique de la sociologie*, R. Boudon et F. Bourricaud distinguent deux types de système de « croyances », ou « valeurs » :

> « Lorsque les valeurs ou plus généralement les croyances sont intégrées dans un système dont les éléments sont connectés les uns aux autres de manière plus ou moins floue, on parlera de *vision du monde*. […] On parlera d'*idéologie* lorsqu'un système de valeurs ou plus généralement de croyances, d'une part ne fait pas appel aux notions de sacré et de transcendance, d'autre part traite particulièrement de l'organisation sociale et politique des sociétés ou, plus généralement, *de leur devenir* » (Boudon et Bourricaud 1982 : 296).

Suivant cette définition, il me semble bien que l'on peut parler pour les *Ďoma* d'*idéologie* nationale de noblesse, nourrie de la filiation agnatique idéale des *viți*. Il s'agit bel et bien de transmission et de perpétuation, dans un environnement complexe et changeant. C'est cette idéologie lignagère qui permet aux Gabori d'être et de demeurer une collectivité, intègre et évidente, la *naţia* des *Ďoma*. Mais cette idéologie n'épuise pas les « valeurs » ayant cours chez les Roms. D'autres représentations s'expriment au quotidien, donnant sens à certains rapports interpersonnels, ce que j'ai appelé l'*utopie* confraternelle et égalitaire. Boudon et Bourricaud écrivent d'ailleurs dans l'article « Utopie » du même ouvrage : « [L'utopie correspond à] une forme d'organisation sociale censée incarner un Idéal réputé absolument bon. [Elle] se constitue en opposition avec les valeurs dominantes de la société dans laquelle elle a pris naissance. […] Le désirable social se construit en rupture, *contre* certains aspects du vécu mais aussi par *projection ou idéalisation* d'autres aspects » (Boudon et Bourricaud 1982 : 656).

Ces notions d'idéologie et d'utopie sont davantage usitées pour l'étude des sociétés dites « modernes » que dans celle des communautés « traditionnelles », censées vivre en adéquation (plus ou moins relative) avec leur « idéal », d'où leur dénomination. Ce que nous montrent les *Ďoma*, c'est qu'une société pouvant être qualifiée à bien des égards de « traditionnelle » (taille réduite, endogamie affirmée, tradition orale, centralité de la parenté, etc.) se nourrit tout autant que nos sociétés dites « modernes » de contradictions, ici deux systèmes de valeurs *a priori* antinomiques. Ces contradictions n'en sont en réalité que pour l'observateur qui tente de donner une cohérence *hors contexte* à des faits variés et à différents ordres de la réalité. Les *Ďoma* savent bien qu'ils ne sont pas tous « frères ». De même qu'ils connaissent parfaitement la relativité de l'idéologie nobiliaire et agnatique, puisqu'ils sont les premiers à la souligner… Mais la manière dont, précisément, ils relativisent l'idéal me semble justifier cette distinction entre *idéologie* et *utopie* : la première est l'idéalisation d'un état, la seconde est la manifestation d'une aspiration. Ce sont bien deux registres de valeurs différents pour les intéressés. Ils ne les confondent pas, et ne les prennent pas pour la pure réalité, aussi « traditionnels » soient-ils.



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Roma camp, Transylvania, approx. 1875-1910. Photo by Leopold Adler (1848-1924).
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Marriage and Family Life of Romanians and Roma: Aspects Reflected in the First Two Modern Romanian Censuses

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ABSTRACT

This research constitutes a historical and micro-demographic approach to the subject of marriage and family. Despite the expected uniformity of many social behaviors or demographic patterns characteristic of a preindustrial society as the one studied here, the Romanian and Roma communities under scrutiny appear to still have been marked by important differences in terms of urban/rural residence, employment, residential status, social status, freedom or lack thereof, differences that had the potential to influence close ties between individuals. Social stratification in urban Wallachia offers the best examples of how domestic service, employment, and slavery can be framed from the point of view of family and private life. Even so, since the field of micro-demographics is relatively new in Romanian historiography, the goals of this paper are not centered on a particular research question. Instead, they are largely exploratory and overlap with those of my unpublished doctoral thesis. I did, however, incorporate the aforementioned contextual elements into the analysis, but as pathways of interpretation, and not starting points of discussion. I used nineteenth-century population lists to glean as much as I could on marriage, widowhood, the presence of children, and overall belonging to a nuclear family. Next, I translated the data thus gleaned into different indicators, which I then applied in analyzing different population groups, with a focus on Romanians and Roma. The sources I used are the first two general modern censuses in Romanian history, which were conducted in 1838 in Wallachia and 1859 in Moldavia.

KEYWORDS

Wallachia, Moldavia, Romanian censuses, slavery, household.

A historical demography approach: advantages and pitfalls

In this study, I rely on census information to determine differences between different population groups in terms of marriage and family life. More precisely, I inquire if specific behaviors varied according to occupation, social status, or residential status. In this article I focus on marriage and the number of children. Given the scarcity of similar studies and the lack of research on family and household demography for this particular space and period, this research was designed as an exploratory effort. In my endeavor, I did not start from a single or a particular question, other than those that would have anyway arisen on the exploratory path taken. This path includes the following focus points:

1. Timing of first marriage: Stages such as late adolescence and early adulthood are indicative of the timing of the first marriage. If a population group experienced early marriage more often than others, it would translate into a higher share of young(er) individuals ages 15–19 and 20–24. Similarly, lower shares of widowhood at much older ages can be interpreted as higher rates of remarriage.

2. Widowhood: How did it vary across ethnicity?
3. Number of children: Like remarriage, it fluctuated according to birth and death rates, not to mention remarriages. At the same time, this indicator correlates well with others, such as the share of married people. In this respect the two can influence each other, if no outside variables interfere randomly. For example, early or premature marriage should show a lower number of children in their teens.

Marriage and family life were topics that made their way into Romanian historiography especially after 1990. Social history written from the perspective of grand historical themes such as class struggle and modernization gradually lost attractiveness and gave way to micro-history. The works of Violeta Barbu, Gheorghe Lazăr, Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, Florina Constantin, Nicoleta Roman—to name just a few—reflect a strong influence of the Annales school. Instead of subordinating social relations to strict paradigms related to economics and class, historians turned to conceptualizing and analyzing close ties between individuals and the norms that regulated them. Researching legal and administrative records gave more insight into marriage, divorce, family and marital strategies, childhood, and wealth transmission. In particular, with respect to Roma and their history of slavery in the Romanian Principalities, the paradigm shift did not take place, since a robust social history of slavery is yet to emerge. A more in-depth history of marriage and family life exists primarily for middle and upper classes. Romanian historians were firstly preoccupied with the princes and the nobles. Several themes of discussion were developed around the geopolitics of matrimonial ties between governing houses, or political and social goals of marriage between noble families. Marriage was not only an instrument to forge political alliances, but also economic ones, in order to accede to the nobility or to maintain one's status and save the family pride and wealth (Lazăr 2006; Iancu 2004; Atanasiu 2015; Cernovodeanu 1997). For the lower classes, there are the more in-depth studies of Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu (2011), focusing on the late eighteenth century.

For slaves, given the laws and practices described below, marriage was especially problematic (as compared to free people). Practically, the slaves experienced an additional layer of regulations, consisting of interdictions. The extent to which these applied and shaped social realities and family life is debatable. General opinion about slavery, among both academics and the wider public, often resorts to extreme judgments in evaluating the effects of slavery, i.e., it either minimizes or maximizes the impact of slavery. Legal constraints—including the owner's will and authority—are either seen as having been brutally enforced or are disregarded as meaningless, accompanied by examples of slaves escaping the grasps of their owners. However, such discussions take place in the absence of a social history of slavery. Historical demography provides an alternative to the study of the abovementioned topics. It, too, contributes to our knowledge of the past, to the point of establishing new paradigms, theories and concepts, heavily used by non-demographers alike. In the West, studying kin and family ties, life inside the household, as well as the impact of industrialization and urbanization, can hardly be imagined without the contributions of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, of its collaborators and followers across the world, or of different other schools of quantitative history. Needless to say, this approach experiences its own flaws and setbacks, from source quality to methods and even the relevance of some of its results. Possibly the most frequent criticism is that historical demography lacks context and interpretation. Or, to put it more bluntly, it offers numbers, not words.

To some extent, this criticism is justified, but it still fails to see these results as more than mere numbers, i.e., as historical facts. And not only facts, but facts that would otherwise be harder to obtain, and that come in a form that allows for comparisons between epochs and spaces. We don't need advanced statistics to assume that domestic service was practiced in towns across modern or pre-modern Europe, or that in Eastern European countries, ages at marriage were lower than in most Western countries. However, if we want to engage in something more relevant, such as studying the extent and nature of domestic service, as well as variations in ages at marriage, historical demography provides the best pathways. Ultimately, what historical demography can offer us, given the right sources, methods, precautions, or adjustments, is the overall impact of multiple factors on a population group. And this should be relevant enough in its own to justify its undertaking as an independent research field.

Further reconstructing context and the interplay between these factors can be taken as separate, without necessarily placing it in the area of non-serial or non-statistical sources. Some demographic sources already contain fundamental contextual elements that should be prioritized over those from other materials. A census form provides us not only with the names and marital status of individuals, but also with their age, wealth, occupation and position inside the household. Given the richness of this material, one has to consider the opportunity of exploring interpretations for statistical results by formulating hypotheses and testing them using the same source, before adopting a broader framework. This approach could be even more effective applied to Romanian history studies, where additional resources can be very scarce or partially incompatible. There are no substantial thematic inventories of Romanian archival sources, sources published in extenso, whereas databases are only now emerging.

As a result, my attempt here to glean as much data as I could from old Romanian censuses and to provide a detailed analysis that follows social history topics are both very new approaches in the Romanian landscape. After a promising start made by Ecaterina Negruți in the 1980s (see especially her 1984 book *Satul moldovenesc în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX -lea: contribuții demografice* [The Moldavian village in the first half of the nineteenth century: demographic aspects]), family and household demography of the former principalities failed to take off. Subsequent contributions were partial and scarce, among them those of historians Georgeta Filitti, Spiridon Cristocea, or Alexandru Vlădureanu. Unfortunately, they were far from matching the progress made in Western academia, and even the work of other Eastern European historians, such as Maria Todorova and Rudolf Andorka, not to mention the works of the Cluj-Napoca historical demography school (for Transylvania). The field covering slavery is even more underdeveloped, but, in both cases, new historiographic trends are emerging. A sample of the 1838 Wallachian census was included in the MOSAIC database (Mosaic Project 2015), and more recently, in 2018, an effort to study the Roma using the same source (and others) emerged as an international project led by David Gaunt.[1] Hopefully, upcoming years will see the writing of a new chapter in the historical family demography of Moldavia and Wallachia.

Similarly to most nineteenth-century European countries, there are three main types of demographic sources covering Romania and the two principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia: population lists, vital records, and aggregates of information extracted from the two.[2] The first two categories are usually more fruitful, as they contain information at the individual level, but the last category should not be disregarded either. The advantage of using these sources is that they enable the

1) "Mapping the Roma communities in 19th century Romania," financed by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen), hosted by Södertörn University, Stockholm.

2) Such as published or unpublished census results or population movement statistics.

measuring of the extent of specific behaviors, like the timing of marriage, or the rates of remarriage, widowhood, and celibacy. Interpreting specific results based solely on demographic results can be problematic. On the one hand, one of the main criticisms about historical demography studies is that they lack interpretation and context. On the other hand, this stance fails to take into account that it is often difficult to contextualize statistical analysis because of the nature of historical sources in general, not just that of censuses and lists of events. The results of statistical analysis can be considered the outcome of an entire set of factors, without revealing much about the weight of each factor.

This study draws on population lists compiled as census forms. They are classified as cross-sectional demographic sources, meaning that they record the entire population at a single moment in the span of history. I do not have access to information about the individuals before or after the moment of census taking—in contradistinction with sources like vital records, which cover the entire lifetime of an individual, and are thus referred to as longitudinal sources. It is evident that in the field of historical demography, the latter are better suited to the studying of marriage, as illustrated by the research work on Transylvania done by Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Bolovan, Luminița Dumănescu, Crinela Holom, Daniela Deteșan, and Oana Sorescu-Iudean. Still, censuses should not be ignored. By looking at the characteristics of individuals by age, I can infer the extent to which specific stages of life were marked by specific statuses or patterns. The significant risks involved here are twofold. First, some behaviors can only be studied indirectly through proxy indicators. In our case, remarriages are the most apparent problem. I cannot measure the exact frequency of second marriages, but only infer if some groups remarried more often than others, by comparing the levels of widowhood. The more numerous the widows, the less frequent were remarriages, and vice versa. A second risk is that important variables are invisible in the census. So, I cannot measure their impact, not even on a proxy level. Such is the case for death rates, birth rates, and mobility (both spatial and social). Widowhood is again connected with death rates, and so is the number of children and the age pyramid of the population. Often, the historical demographer is left guessing the impact of invisible demographics.

At their best, censuses can undoubtedly be used to show age-specific demographic patterns. These patterns should be taken either as indirect proof or as running hypothesis for social practices, rather than as a direct expression of them, as I will exemplify.

Historical context

The context under investigation refers to Moldavia and Wallachia, the two Romanian principalities that, in 1859, united to form Romania. Formally under Ottoman rule, the two countries often found themselves the battleground of the neighboring powers or used as tokens of negotiation. However, nineteenth-century attempts to maintain more balanced power relations in South-Eastern Europe led to international protection for the Romanian principalities, first from Russia (1829), then from Western European powers (after 1856). This paved the way not only for their union, but also for important legal and social reforms. Written law prevailed over customs. Civil codes had already been adopted in 1817 in Moldavia (Code of Calimach) and in 1818 in Wallachia (Code of Caradja), while other penal and commercial codes gradually replaced old edicts in the following decades. Parts of the older laws were used to regulate Church matters and family life, as explained in the next paragraphs. In 1831–2, under Russian supervision, the

first constitutional laws took effect, i.e., the Organic Regulations. At the same time, modern forms of administration were established, as well as new branches of government: healthcare, education, communication, statistics, alongside those already existing. It was also around this time that the first modern general censuses were conducted, the same ones that this paper uses. The first was commissioned in Wallachia at the end of 1837, with the population being recorded during that winter. It was followed by two censuses carried out in 1859, after the reform of the statistical bureaus. That year, as a result of the 1858 Paris Convention and of internal factors, the principalities were formally joined in a single country and continued to unify their institutions over the following years.

In the two principalities and throughout nineteenth-century Romania, marriage was governed by three authorities: Church law, secular law, and customs. Until 1865 the Church had the monopoly over officiating marriages and divorces, its decisions and ceremonies being recognized by secular authorities. This changed when the Government started recognizing only civil unions and separations, introduced by the newly adopted civil code and placed under the authority of multiple institutions. This paper covers the period of the pre-civil union decades of the nineteenth century. However, the interplay between different systems of norms should be carefully examined.

Church law established the fundamental principles of the act of marriage and the conditions that the individuals had to fulfill (both individually and as a couple) in order to get married. These principles were drawn from several sources. Since 1652, the code *Îndreptarea Legii* [Guide to the Law] was used in Wallachia both by Church and State in civil and penal matters. A similar code was being used in Moldavia since 1646. Both were inspired by, but not limited to, Byzantine Canon Law (Canons of the Apostles and Ecumenical Councils). Since civil and penal codes gradually replaced most of their provisions by the nineteenth century, the Church still relied on these codes to govern family life, priesthood, and monasticism. Regarding marriage, the main principles that the Church enforced through its law and moral teachings were (Vintilă-Ghițulescu 2011: 127):

a) discouragement of celibacy (except for monks);
b) a generally low age at marriage, compared to that promoted in the Catholic world;
c) a higher age of the husband than of the wife;
d) interdiction to marry blood relatives (up to the seventh branch);
e) interdiction to marry spiritual kin (between families tied by god-parenthood);
f) interdiction to marry individuals from other denominations;
g) interdiction to engage in polygamy.

These principles lasted throughout the nineteenth century (after *Îndreptarea Legii* [Guide to the Law] was no longer in use), through sets of internal rules issued to priests and courts, sometimes complementing or overwriting the old ones, in the sense of establishing clearer bounds. The difficulty lies in clarifying what changed, when, and by what means, since there is no known chronology. In Wallachia, for instance, the old canons were compiled into a new code that was published in 1851 under the title *Manual de pravilă bisericească sau legiuiri trase din canoanele Sfinților Apostoli, ale Sfintelor Soboare și ale altor Sfinți Părinți* [Guide in ecclesiastic law, or laws originating in the Canons of the Holy Apostles, Holy Councils, and other Holy Fathers]. But, shortly after, the newly issued rules had to be amended, since, surprisingly, the new code did not cover all aspects regarding marriage. An early 1853 memorandum circulated among the priests

set out, in short, the following conditions for marriage[3]:

a) Minimum age 20 for men and 14 for women;
b) Consent from the parents or guardians;
c) Good physical and mental health;
d) Regular participation in communion and confession of the persons about to get married;
e) Knowledge of a few prayers that were recited during the liturgy;
f) A specific spousal age difference. The husband could be older than the wife, but not vice versa. Also, the difference between them should not exceed one third of the wife's age.

3) Dolj County Archives, *Fond Protoeria Județului Dolj*, file 23/1855, 6.

So, most of the principles applied in previous centuries were kept, with the addition of an increased minimum age and more attention towards the religious life of the parishioners.

Secular law was applied differently to free people than to slaves. For the general population, it contained provisions on various civil matters related to marriage, mainly endowment, inheritance, regulated through the civil codes. However, in the case of slaves, secular law accompanied Church law, enforcing a separate set of underlying requirements that had to be fulfilled in order for a marriage to take place. These were: the knowledge and consent of the slave owner and the interdiction to marry free people. If the marriage took place in breach of these obligations, then two main scenarios could unfold, according to the law. If they were both slaves, and if none of the newlyweds asked for permission from their owner, then the couple would be legally separated (with the decision pronounced by a Church court of justice). If only one owner knew about the marriage, then he had to compensate the other owner. If one of the newlyweds was a free man/woman, and if the owner knew and approved of the marriage, then the slave would also become free; if the owner did not approve, then the marriage would be dissolved. All of these were designed to use marriage as a means of controlling the slaves and enforcing ownership over them.

The examined population fitted very well east of the "Hajnal line," a general divide made popular by John Hajnal (1965), used to describe Eastern versus Western European marriage behaviors. So, as my own population samples show, celibacy was very rare, and marriage occurred relatively early, with most individuals marrying between their mid-teens and mid-twenties. Still, the urban population had higher ages at marriage, as well as higher shares of widows and widowers. Widowhood and remarriage were connected. Men remarried more often than women, a trend that can be observed in other countries as well, and up to this day. The hypothesis for this might as well apply beyond Romania and the Romanian principalities, i.e., the widowers held a stronger economic position (as compared to the widows), in an age where men, in general, were more advantaged by social norms. Also, women might have been more reluctant to join with a new partner, since domestic abuse was not uncommon. For a woman, widowhood could have offered a window not only out of an abusive relationship, but also to economic opportunities. After the death of their husbands, women could more freely use their endowments and the overall resources of the household (Roman 2018).

The choices behind marriage and remarriage ultimately meant a negotiation between several factors: social norms, economic incentives, and economic pressures, not to mention the master's will (in the case of slaves). For both upper and lower classes, marriage meant fulfilling a social ideal—that of being part of a family. For lower classes especially, remarriage was sometimes motivated by economic pressure. Peter Laslett (1988) coined the term "nuclear hardship" to discuss the difficulties encountered by nuclear family households, in comparison with extended family or multiple family households. But

the discussion can just as well consider nuclear families *per se*, and not just within households. One-parent families would have had more difficulties than two-parent ones. Urban economy was less reliant on physical labor, thus workforce needs were lower. Unfortunately, I did not have the proper data to test these theories.

Households, however, can be good indicators of social status. Their structure varied according to labor intensity, employment of domestics or workers (together with apprentices and journeymen), social norms (like caretaking for the elderly), ownership over slaves; all of these factors interacting with the physical limits imposed by living premises. One factor that can be considered when dealing with household structure and formation is government intervention or influence. Different taxes or building regulations could have incentivized specific living arrangements—for example, sharing the same dwelling in order to pay less taxes. In Wallachia and Moldavia, this was not the case. The vast majority of obligations imposed upon the population (government taxes, local taxes, military conscription, labor duties), together with jurisdictions (like parishes or schools allocated per village) were regulated using the "family" as working unit, and not houses or households. Above all, people were subjected to (or exempted from) the same taxes regardless of their living arrangements. This is not to say that governments were not preoccupied with habitat and dwellings. A process of systematization of settlements began in 1832 in Wallachia, which coincided with a failed attempt to ban underground dwellings (*bordeie*). I would assume that, even if successful, these reforms did not affect the demographic aspect of the household, but only the location of houses (or their type, in the cases of underground dwellings). Later, in Romania, more significant regulations were put into place that affected living quarters: the 1864 land reform prevented the selling of land received from the Government, while building regulations imposed a minimal size of houses. We can argue that both sets of measures favored the demographic complexity of households, but for the historical context of this research, I will assume that government regulations had a minimal impact, and living arrangements were shaped by social and economic relations instead.

Slavery and marriage among slaves: a complex landscape of norms

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the call for social reform was dominated by two issues. Firstly, the problem of landless peasants, which formed the majority of the rural population and had their obligations to the landlords gradually increased, while their rights reduced. Secondly, the dire material condition of the Roma and their status as slaves, which had lasted since the Middle Ages. This section will address and contextualize Roma slavery.

Let me begin by clarifying a confusion arising from the semantics of the category of slave. *Robie* was the Romanian term used to refer to the status of the Roma. When the word *sclavie* (neologism derived from *slave)* entered the vocabulary, the two terms became synonyms and were often used interchangeably, along with their derivatives. They all meant one thing: human property, as opposed to people that were considered free. For example, in the sources used here, the table header of the 1859 census form contains the word *dezrobiți* ("emancipated," derived from *robi*), a column is titled "*cui proprietate au fostu*" (whose property they were). On one page the census taker noted "*foști sclavi a(i) răposatului Toaderi Balși, fostul caimăcanu*"[4] (former *slaves* of Teodor Balș, former governor). The identical meaning of *sclavi* and *robi* was something that in the

4) Iași District Archives, *Fond Isprăvnicia Iași*, file 4972, 65 (village Schinoasa).

age was taken for granted, including among Wallachian and Moldavian abolitionists.

Nowadays, however, the word *robi* can stir up a bit of controversy. One argument was made that *robie* should be treated distinctly from *slavery*, since the Roma that were *robi* were treated differently than those who were slaves in different historical times (like in ancient Rome or in America). However, the assessment that Roma were not *slaves*, but *robi*, ignores the obvious fact that *rob* meant being human property under the law, which is the very definition of *slavery*. Admitting that in different historical contexts slaves had different sets of rights or obligations, or that the limits of the owner's authority varied, should prompt researchers to compare these variants and not to change fundamental terms or definitions. Using either term is fine in Romanian. Nevertheless, I am adamant that using *slave* in an English paper is preferable and should not constitute a topic of controversy for the aforementioned reason. Additionally, there is a conflation of *slaves* and *serfs*, and I was often asked: "Don't you mean *serfs* and not *slaves*?" Without a doubt, *slavery* is the right word to describe the experience of the Roma, as I explain in the next paragraph.

As used in this paper, the word *slave* should be taken in the literal sense. Individuals were considered property and were treated as such: priced, bought, sold, exchanged, donated, inherited, or disputed upon in courts of justice. Their workforce was due to serve their masters, meaning that they had to perform tasks without expecting compensation, or had to pay the owner for the simple fact that they were considered property. Some could perform independent occupations, outside the owner's household or economic establishment, but still had to pay a tribute as a slave (see the 1840 case of Gheorghe, the coachman, in Mateescu 2014a: 233). Their private lives depended much on the will of the owner, who decided or approved where the slaves lived, with whom, if they traveled, if they married. The power of the owner, however, was not absolute. The law did not grant power over the slave's life, and customs usually established some codes of conduct: the owners were not to physically or sexually abuse their slaves, nor were they to split different nuclear families. They also had to ensure humane conditions for their slaves, including to clothe them. Breaching such rules happened often and did not result in punishments for owners. The full details of these norms and institutions are still blurry, as solid research on the legal aspects of slavery in the Romanian principalities is sorely needed. Many laws were not published, some were often forgotten by some authorities while applied by others, and some civil aspects were more or less left to customs. In some cases, there was not a singular and widely applied rule, not even under the customs. For example, when it came to the rights of slave owners over the slaves' possessions, civil institutions found themselves in conflicting stances.[5]

Since modernization brought reforms in education, justice, taxation, governing over slaves was complicated even for the authorities. Could slaves represent themselves in court? Could slaves benefit from public education and healthcare? Should slaves pay certain taxes?[6] These were questions raised by contemporaries, but later overlooked by historians. A comprehensive and in-depth study on the full set of rights and obligations of slaves in this period (after 1830) does not exist. Ignoring a serious discussion on the matter is what caused the confusion around the first abolition law in Romanian history (see below). Only solid research on the system of norms that regulated slavery can clarify such matters, the kind that Florina Constantin (2018) produced in her detailed analysis of medieval Wallachia.

Slaves were usually categorized according to the different categories of owners. The "slaves of the nobility" were a category encompassing individuals owned by private individuals. Not all of their owners seem to have been of noble rank, but since

5) See the 1847 court case from Dolj County (NAR, *Fond Ministerul Justiției Civile*, file 258/1847).

6) Numerous cases can be found in archives of the former Ministries of Justice, of the Interior, and of the Office of Prisons, all held at the NAR.

most of them were, the term *boierești* ("of the nobility") was used to describe these slaves, by contemporaries and historians alike. Institutions owned another type of slaves. The most important among these institutions was the Orthodox Church, owner of a large number of so-called "monastery slaves." Yet, it is worth pointing out that the term was purely generic, since it was not only monasteries that owned slaves, but other religious institutions too—such as the Metropolitanate (in Bucharest) and its branch in Târgoviște, episcopates, as well as low-level establishments, such as hermitages. Lastly, the prince was another prominent slave owner, although the Crown slaves were fewer than the other two categories (for general population figures, see Achim 1998). After 1830 different laws abolished slavery for each category of slaves. In Moldavia, Crown and Church slaves were freed in 1844, and slaves of private owners in 1855. In Wallachia, the emancipation of Church slaves took place in 1847, while slaves of private owners had their freedom proclaimed in 1856.

Concerning the emancipation of Wallachian Crown slaves, different publications and unpublished sources referred to different laws or events. The emancipation is traced either to the Organic Regulations (1831), or the law allowing marriages between free people and former Crown slaves (1838), or the law of administrative reform of 1843, or the law that emancipated Church slaves in 1847, not to mention a supposed event that happened in 1837 (cited by foreign historians, most likely a confusion with the 1838 law). Today's mainstream historiography mostly cites the 1843 law that transferred the administrative authority over the former Crown slaves from the fiscal bureau within the Office of Prisons to other offices of the Ministry of Interior. This event was treated as self-explanatory by the historians who interpreted it as an emancipatory law. By way of example, Viorel Achim writes about the Crown slaves that: "The abolition of the slave status was carried out by the removal of these Gypsies from the tax records of the Prison authority, and their transfer to the civil authority" (2004: 115).

The text of the law did not touch upon the issues of freedom or slavery; the individuals themselves were not referred to as slaves or free men. Hence, from a historian's perspective, the point is to demonstrate that it was indeed an emancipatory law, and not to simply state its bureaucratic provisions. A few obvious questions arise here: Did the Government cease to be a slave owner? Did the individuals gain any rights? What were those rights? To whom did the rights apply? The free people or the taxpayers in general? Viorel Achim did not address these questions, nor did other authors that adopted the same stance on the 1843 law. Having found no evidence that this change coincided in any way with a change of status of the individuals themselves, I opt instead for the free marriage act of 1838, the only law that proclaimed the slaves' freedom.

As stressed previously, slavery poses the problem of not only clarifying written laws, but also how they interacted with customs. I will structure my findings so far in the form of the following marriage rules for slaves:

Owner's consent: It was widely applied and was probably the most observed provision.

Interdiction to marry free people: It was also widely applied under both written laws and customs. A special case was that of the former Crown slaves after 1831. From 1831 to 1838, even though they were no longer considered property, there is no data on whether they could marry other free people or not. Instead we know for sure that they were forbidden to marry slaves. The interdiction was vaguely covered in the Organic Regulations (point 30 of Appendix A to article 65), but enforced more clearly through a Government Order from November 1832.[7] Both provisions were observed in practice (for evidence, see Mateescu 2014a: 26–7, 137–9, 148–9). The consequences of a slave (illegally) marrying

7) Argeș County Archives, *Fond Subocârmuirea plășii Pitești*, 110(6299)/1832, 2.

a free man were another point of contention. According to the Wallachian law (Code of Caradja, chapter VII, article 10), the slave was to be set free (if the owner agreed to the marriage). Apparently, representatives of the Church, including the Metropolitanate itself, wrongfully claimed the opposite: in the case of marrying a slave, the free man was to be enslaved. While enslavement in such cases was enacted in Moldavia, it was clearly not the case in Wallachia, where the secular authorities enforced the Wallachian civil law (Mateescu 2014a: 40).

Interdiction to marry certain categories of slaves: Less visible in historical sources, absent from historiography, were practices of slave owners that limited the marital market of slaves to certain categories, defined by space and/or ownership. Such practices were not contradictory to the written law, but were judged as inhumane and were lifted following complaints from slaves. Sometimes they originated from a simple lack of knowledge of the laws or regulations. To give one example, the abbot of Sadova Monastery appears to have barred the slaves from marrying those of other owners because he was unaware that they could legally do so. I managed to document similar instances in several cases of Church establishments. Monasteries like Cozia, Govora, Dintrunlemn, Sadova, and establishments like the Târgoviște branch of the Archdiocese, all seem to have had, at certain points in time, forbidden their slaves to marry slaves of other owners (Mateescu 2014a: 47–8).

Another challenge for historians is to go beyond laws and customs (whatever form they came in) and study how these norms shaped the private life of families and individuals, and how their effects were countered or enhanced by other social and economic factors. What social and economic strategies were employed at marriage, and how flexible were they within the bounds of regulations? How did demographic, spatial, and cultural constraints act? It is more than plausible to assume that individuals often adopted an economically oriented marital strategy, in which choosing a spouse (for oneself or one's child) meant finding the best scenario of becoming relatives to a family of wealth and power. Since marriage coincided with the transfer of wealth between generations and relatives, the social entanglements should be carefully studied.

Sources, samples and source related problems

The sources used in this research are also at the heart of my PhD dissertation (Mateescu 2017), namely the first two modern censuses in Romanian history, the 1838 census of Wallachia and the 1859 of Moldavia. In the age, official census taking was carried out in one of two instances. First, for taxation purposes, under the supervision of the Ministries of Interior and Finance, and following approval from the Legislature, which in turn followed the provisions of the Organic Regulations (and subsequent amendments). Second, official statistics existed separately from operations that involved subjecting the population to various obligations. They had the role of gathering information that was envisaged for long-term reforms or knowledge alone. The governmental body in charge of these works was Section III of the Ministry of Interior, and, since 1859, the Statistical Office subordinated to the same ministry. This arrangement existed in both principalities and led to the gathering of an enormous amount of information on population, economy, settlements, and environment. The two censuses were themselves the product of official statistics (and not of financial planning) and can be seen as high-marks of Romanian census practices of the age, since they recorded not only population but a whole array of topics, from forests and habitat to textile consumption. The Moldavian one was probably the most

detailed pre-WWI Romanian census, taken by filling thirty-two types of forms. Summing up all the columns from these forms would result in a table of hundreds of columns. So even a presentation would require a separate paper, which is why I only focus here on very general aspects. I will point out the distinction between forms and aggregate results. The latter were published in the age,[8] but the releases exclude most of the types of recorded information. The Wallachian aggregates exclude data on property, settlements, estates, establishments (churches, taverns, distilleries, etc.), and houses, focusing only on population and agricultural yields. The same pattern can be observed in Moldavia: the official publication focuses on population figures, although in far more detail than in Wallachia; but excludes income, literacy, wealth, habitat, consumption, etc. So the published results reflect a process of aggregation that is far from complete. For historians interested in studying the data and deepening the inquiry, accessing the forms is the only option, but not lacking obstacles. For Wallachia, the amount of preserved material is enormous, covering about three-thirds of the recorded population (~1 mil. people), but the published material only covers a few urban settlements and mainly villages from Brăila.[9]

What is more concerning is the dominance of paper format over scientific databases. As far as I know, only a small sample of 20,000 individuals from this census is publicly available in the MOSAIC database (Mosaic Project 2015) at the time this paper is written. However, two databases are in the process of being constructed: the MAPROM project (Södertörns University and the Romanian Academy); and the Dem-Ist database (Romanian Academy). Both are directed towards sampling population forms from 1838, and will hopefully cancel the disbalance between paper format and digital editions. The Moldavian census, on the other hand, received far less attention. It is true that far less has been preserved, mainly for rural Iași, but also for the town of Piatra-Neamț and the village of Bălțați (Vaslui County), totaling information on some 50,000 individuals. Not as much as for its Wallachian counterpart, but certainly not negligible and, at the same time, none of it was published.

The present research used the original forms from both censuses, by creating datasets, representing population samples. Part of my dissertation, the samples consisted of: (1) 43,224 rural inhabitants from Moldavia; (2) 38,154 rural inhabitants from Wallachia; and (3) 53,619 from urban Wallachia. This paper will analyze only the first and third samples, since research on rural Wallachia is being presented more thoroughly in a separate publication (Mateescu 2019). This being said, the Wallachian urban sample consists of 53,619 individuals from twenty settlements (towns and market towns),[10] Bucharest, the capital city and the most populous urban settlement was left outside my endeavor because of its size (almost that of our current sample). I did, however, include Craiova, the second largest town, numbering 11,253 people. The Moldavian sample is composed practically of all the material accessible at the time of the research (2017–2018), for rural Iași, covering 133 villages—some three quarters of the county's recorded rural population.[11]

The samples contain all of the information available in the historical source, referring to: socio-demographic topics (age, gender, civil state, nationality, occupation), as well as economic information (wealth and/or income), in addition to others. For 1838, presentations of the census have already been published for some time (Retegan 1965), but the same cannot be said for 1859. Unfortunately, I cannot compensate here, because of the vastness of the operations.

An essential component of my methodology is uncovering any flaws in the historical information that might affect the statistical analysis. Again, present editorial constraints do not allow me to elaborate on

8) For Wallachia, see *Almanahul Statului pe anul 1842*, as well as *Analele Parlamentare ale României*, 1898: 1163-1169. For Moldavia, *Lucrări statistice făcute în anii 1859-1860*, 1861.

9) Multiple publications exist, by Spiridon Cristocea, Dinică Ciobotea, Gabriel Croitoru, Ion Dedu, Emanoil Barbu, Mariana Comănescu, Stanca Bounegru, Alinta Vidis, Gheorghe Iavorschi, and Cristian Filip.

10) The archival material used is held at the NAR (Central Office), *Fond Catagrafii*, as follows: Buzău: I/96; Câmpina: I/74; Caracal: I/33; Cerneți: I/8; Craiova: II/40; Filipești: I/73; Focșani: I/104; Găești: I/60; Giurgiu: I/70; Mavrodin: I/48; Mizil: I/89; Pitești: I/46; Râmnicu-Sărat: I/102; Ruși de Vede: I/52; Slănic: I/90; Slatina: I/38; Văleni: I/90; Zimnicea: I/52. For Călărași, I used the census register held at Ialomița District Archives, *Fond Prefectura Ialomița*, file 74/1837.

11) The archival material used to compile the sample is held at Iaşi County Archives, *Fond Isprăvnicia Iași*, under the following files numbers: for subdivision Bahlui, units: 4967, 4969-4973, 5046; for Branișteа: 5013-5022, 5025-5045, 5062; for Cârligătura: 5004, 5008-5011, 5057-5061; for Codru: 4979, 4981-4984; for Copou: 4975-4978, 5012; for Stavnic: 4958-4959, 4961-4966, 4968, 5047-5051; for Turia: 4980, 4985-5003, 5005, 5006.

the quality of the information contained in these sources, to the full extent of my findings. Nonetheless, I will point out the most important ones and provide the reader with my resolution to these problems.

Lack of uniformity: In an age of emerging modern bureaucracy, instructions on census taking could be quite general and vague, leading to a variety of interpretations of the surveyed topics, from one census taker to another. Some of them were more precise than others, while others resorted to gross approximations, general terms, or just omitting required information, thus ignoring instructions completely. Sometimes this coincided with the population's own reluctance to provide the answers needed to fill the form, out of fear of taxation or social stigma. This leads to a situation in which the same concepts can have slightly different meanings across circumscriptions. In a practical sense, it could distort statistical results to one degree or another.

Marital status: In the census instructions, the Government ordered that every individual should be marked by general labels such as "not married," "married," or "widowed." Sensitive issues like informal unions, informal separations, or divorces were not considered. As a result, such cases are either missing from the census or simply masked as a general and legitimate status. "Married" could just as well mean joined in a *de facto* union; „widow/-er" can also mean abandoned by the spouse.

Status in the household proved especially problematic since the administrations had no experience and established practices regarding residential units and groups. In Moldavia, the instructions can be interpreted as somewhat contradictory, or, in any case, difficult to apply. Census agents had to group individuals by socio-economic categories, then by fiscal category, but at the same time by house. Two or more individuals from different categories could have shared the same dwelling, but the Government did not provide exact details as to how the three criteria of recording would apply all together. The result is that in only two of Iași's subdivisions (*ocoale*)—Codru and Stavnic—the census agents found a way to navigate the incomplete instructions and present the Ministry of Interior with the desired result. In all other subdivisions, individuals were recorded solely by fiscal family. The instructions for Wallachia too were interpreted as contradictory by some historians, although in my view they were in fact clear in this regard: all individuals living in the same house had to be recorded together, meaning consecutively and in the same grouping unit (under the same number), regardless of fiscal or occupational differentiation. In my view some census agents failed to carry out this order out of sheer lack of discipline.

Specific information on slaves: Slavery in the Wallachian census proved especially problematic to record, as it required additional information. Namely, the census agent had to specify the slave's owner. Unfortunately, this detail is missing from many registers, and in some extreme cases, I could not even tell if the individual was a slave or not. The word "Gypsy" specified under the column *Ethnicity* had a double meaning in the age, designating both ethnicity and the status of slave. Flaws of the censuses could be blamed on different causes: the slaves' reluctance to respond or the negligence of the officer. The latter might seem more plausible, since other information was also missing, even when it was more accessible. One big problem is the absence of the slave's marital status, as well as their relation to other slaves, when living with their masters. One can sometimes infer certain relations by the order in which names are listed. A man followed by a woman of similar age, followed by small children, can be interpreted as a couple (married or not) and a nuclear family with children, in the absence of direct information. Still, information on single individuals is more difficult to process.

These were the main flaws in the sources that affected my analysis. Unfortunately,

there was not much I could do to try to correct the information, just ways to go around it and use models that would minimize the contamination with errors. I used the household analysis criteria only for Wallachia, where the overall quality of the source is much better than for Moldavia, at least in this regard. For the latter, I employed only the individuals, couples and CFUs as units of analysis. One major issue in the Wallachian sample, however, was the failure to register full information on slaves in some circumscriptions. Here I decided to filter out the material from the settlements in which coresidence was better recorded. So, I isolated a subsample that I considered to be of better quality, made up of all the individuals from: Rușii de Vede, Pitești, Giurgiu, Slatina, Alexandria, Caracal, Focșani, Râmnicu-Sărat and Văleni (in total, 24,681 individuals). I analyzed data both by total sample (henceforth abbreviated "TS") and by subsample ("SS"). In many cases, the results were roughly the same, but I still felt I should provide the reader with the two sets of results.

Unfortunately, there was not much I could do about the relativeness of marital status, I had to analyze the information as it was.

Moreover, given the great diversity of the population from the Wallachian sample, also given the limited space of this paper, certain criteria had to be prioritized over others. Concerning ethnicity, this study focuses exclusively on ethnic Romanians and Roma. Moreover, since urban living patterns were more complex than rural ones, I considered accounting for this factor and performed the analysis by status in the household as well. In this sense, I operated with three core concepts:

- The *household*, comprising all of the individuals that in the census were enumerated under the same number, meaning that they were living in the same house.[12] In turn, this group can be composed of one or more:
- *Conjugal family units* (or CFU): A CFU is a variant of the nuclear family concept, applied to information specific to population lists. It takes into account only individuals that were living together, and only the ties between partners and between parents and unmarried children. Therefore, there are three kinds of CFUs (Garett et al. 2006: 59): married couple without never-married children; couple with never-married children; and single parent with never-married children. Individuals that were not part of a CFU are considered and termed *single individuals*.
- *Householders:* meaning the householder (the head of the house) and the members of his CFU (if any);
- *Coresidents:* Those household members that were not part of the householder's CFU. For example, relatives (such as retired parents or parents-in-law), servants, lodgers.

1838 urban Wallachia

An additional contextual aspect I will point out is the ethnic composition of the provincial urban population. About two-thirds of individuals were recorded as Romanian, with two important minorities from a numerical point of view: South Slavs and Roma, comprising 18 percent and 9 percent of the population, respectively. Other ethnicities were represented in much smaller shares: Greeks (3 percent) and Jews (2 percent). Some barely registered, including Germans, Hungarians, Armenians, Turks, Poles. One important nuance that should be noted in breaking down this aggregate is that towns were significantly more diverse than market towns.[13] In the latter, Romanians were the majority with a share of 80 percent, while they drop to just 61 percent in towns. In Giurgiu and Alexandria, Romanians were the minority. The vast majority of Roma inhabiting these settlements were enslaved. Even with gaps in information in both the total sample and

12) Some historical demographers, beginning with Peter Laslett, exclude lodgers from household analysis, and instead include them into a separate concept, the houseful (Hammel and Laslett 1974: 77–8). For the sake of simplicity, I did not follow this differentiation and referred to all co-dwellers as a household.

13) In this age, urban settlements were usually classified as towns (*orașe*) and market towns (*târguri*), but these terms were not accompanied by a legal definition. However, there are prevailing differences between them. Towns were usually larger and hosted institutions with territorial jurisdictions, such as prefectures and justice courts. Moreover, towns were ruled by a *maghistrat*, a type of local council composed of six members, while market towns were headed by a *comisie* of two members.

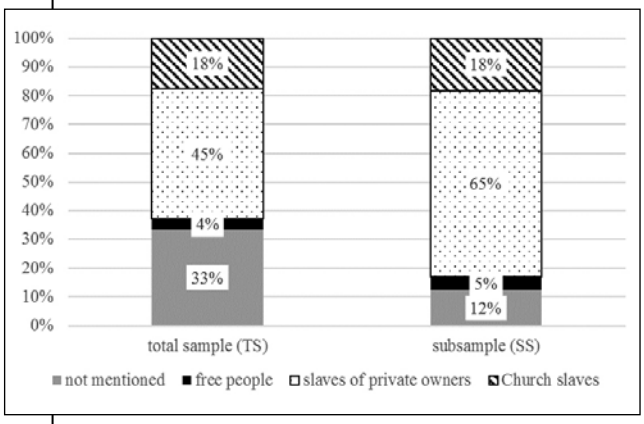


Figure 1: The share of Roma by social status; data for 6,480 individuals (4,638 in the total sample, 1,842 in the subsample), 1838 urban Wallachia.

the subsample I can tell that most of them belonged to private individuals, while the second-largest category was that of Church slaves. Roma that could be documented as free, including the former Crown slaves, were few—some 4–5 percent of the population group, as the following figure shows: (Figure 1)

Given their slave status, and given the large number of private slave owners, another important difference between Romanians and Roma is coresidence. The image of the urban slave that might transpire from traditional sources is usually

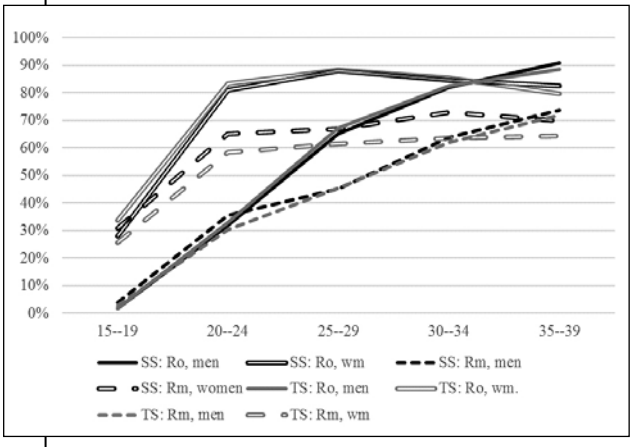


Figure 2: The share of married persons by age group, ethnicity, and sample; data for 39,781 individuals (35,226 Romanians, 4,555 Roma) in the total sample; the subsample includes 15,619 Romanians and 1,771 Roma*), 1838 urban Wallachia.

* The figures for Roma are slightly lower than those presented earlier because this analysis excludes cases where marital status was marked as unclear.

that of individuals living in the same households as their owners. I found that only half of them lived as coresidents with their owners or someone else of different ethnicity, while the other half lived alone or only with their nuclear family. However, the share of coresidents among Roma is far more significant than among Romanians, with only around 15 percent of Romanians being coresidents. Even fewer Romanians lived in a household that was headed by a non-Romanian householder. This is a clear mark of the impact that slavery had on the private lives of individuals. It is because of this special pattern of living arrangements that analysis will have to include residential status as an additional filter, since the socio-demographic profile of individuals could vary greatly according to this factor.

Regarding the timing of first marriages, I found both similarities and differences between Romanians and Roma. One behavior they shared was the age difference between genders. Women tended to marry earlier than men, again confirming what I expected from an Eastern European preindustrial society. In the age group 15–19, the share of married individuals is negligible among men, but significant among women, over 25 percent, depending on the sample ethnicity. In the total sample, early-age marriage showed to be slightly more important among Romanian women, with a level of 34 percent compared to 26 percent among Roma. But, again, the sample should be taken cautiously in this regard. When looking at the subsample—which should be considered more precise—the difference is inverted, although the gap narrows: 31 percent Roma and 28 percent Romanian. But the real differences begin in the next age groups. While the number and share of married individuals begin to rise in both populations, they rise far higher among Romanians than among Roma. In the 20–24 tier, 81–88 percent of Romanian women appear as married, compared to just 58–65 percent Roma women. In the next tier (25–29), significant differences

appear in both genders: 88 percent vs 62–67 percent for women; 67–65 percent vs 46–45 percent for men. So, at a first glance, what these basic figures suggest is that Roma men and women tended to experience a more prolonged celibacy, since the share of married persons rises slower than in the case of Romanians.

In interpreting these patterns, I once more urge caution, as I do not know the size and characteristics of the omitted population. If similar proportions of married/unmarried persons would miss from the census for both ethnicities, the variance would not affect the conclusion regarding the differences between them. Taking only what was directly available to me, excluding simulation models and/or cross-source analysis, I could formulate explanations by only further disseminating the data. I broke down marital status by residential status: the share of married individuals among those living as coresidents and among those living as householders (including their families). As expected, I found that living as coresident was associated with celibacy rather than with marriage and family life (which dominated the life of ordinary householders). However, with some exceptions, Roma men and women showed higher ages at marriage than Romanians, both as householders and as coresidents (Figures 3 and 4). These results overturn the pattern of the general population (presented in Figure 2) and might seem contradictory to the previous analysis. In fact, the two sets of results are not opposed to each other, but, combined, should be taken as a very sensitive nuance when dealing with urban society, especially during times of slavery. Roma tended to marry earlier, but because more of them were coresidents, this raises the share of unmarried individuals in the overall sample (coresidents + householders), more than it does for Romanians.

This leads me to further examine family structure based on household patterns, in order to understand better how different

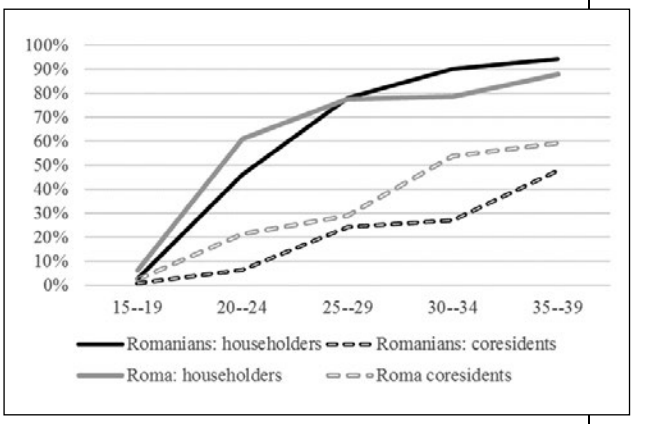


Figure 3: The share of married men by ethnicity and general residential status; data for 6,689 Romanian and 479 Roma householders and/or members of their families, as well as 1,331 Romanian and 476 Roma coresidents, 1838 urban Wallachia, subsample.

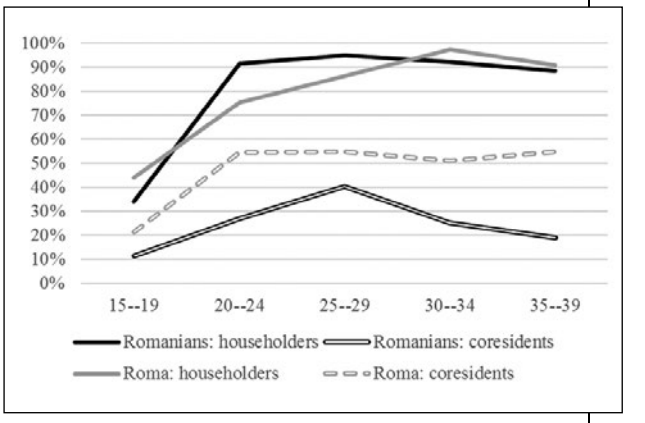


Figure 4: The share of married women by ethnicity and general residential status; data for 6,590 Romanian and 424 Roma householders and/or members of their families, as well as 1,007 Romanian and 392 Roma coresidents, 1838 urban Wallachia, subsample.

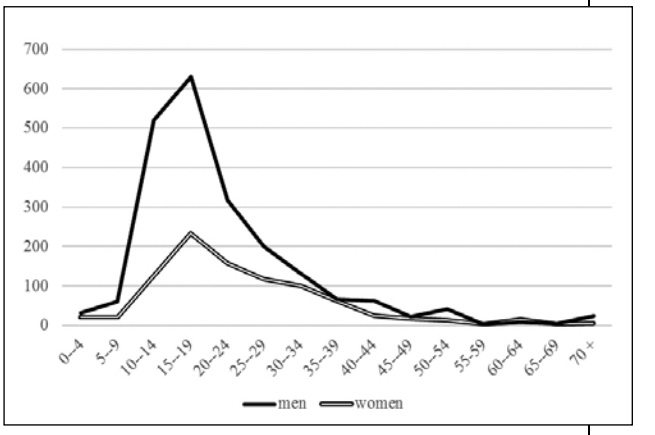


Figure 5: The number of non-Roma employees and their CFU members living as coresidents, by gender and age group; data for 3,056 individuals (2,129 men and 927 women), 1838 urban Wallachia.

functions of coresidence influenced family life. In this respect, I observed different demographic profiles of different coresidents. Non-Roma employees (servants, coachmen, workers) had the distinct characteristic of being dominated by young unmarried men, alongside fewer—but still young—women, as the following figure shows. (Figure 5)

Roma coresidents taken as a whole, on the other hand, were highlighted in my results as being more balanced both gender- and age-wise. Men among them are slightly more numerous than women, but the proportion is still closer to equality, far from the disproportion shown by non-Roma. But their demographic profile does not match that of Roma that lived independently. I already showed the lower proportions of married individuals, which are connected to fewer children, in turn translating into an abnormal age pyramid. The earliest stages (ages 0–10) are better represented than in the case of non-Roma coresidents, but are weaker when compared to the „regular" population—that of the householders.

In order to better understand this complicated demographic landscape, I can imagine a ladder composed of three steps, representing different degrees of cohesion of the nuclear family: low, medium, and high. By cohesion, I mean the degree in which individuals belonged to a CFU—a nuclear family with which they shared the same living premises. The more a group or a community was organized as such, the more we would expect to find the traits of a stable population: a balanced ratio between genders and an age pyramid specific to preindustrial societies (where the young and very young outweigh the old). On such a scale, Romanian and non-Roma coresidents would occupy the lower step, as the group with the fewest nuclear families. On the highest step, we would find the population composed of householders and their families, Romanians and Roma alike. Between the two are Roma coresidents: not organized in families to the full potential of the population size, but also not scattered as single individuals.

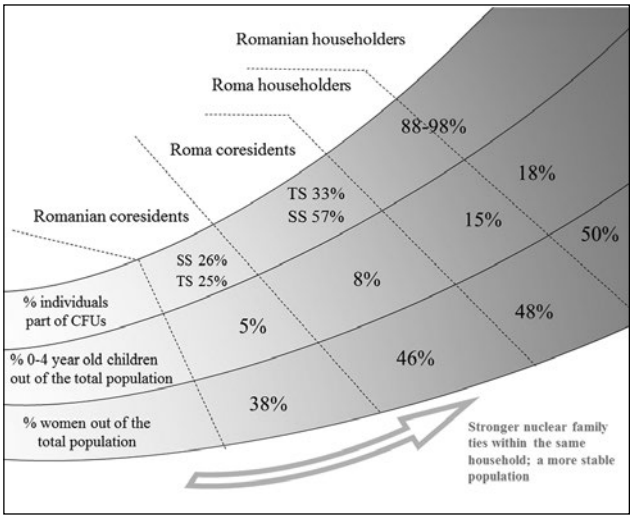


Figure 7: Approximate and mixed-scale representation of the degree to which individuals belonged to coresidential family units and to a stable population, 1838 urban Wallachia.

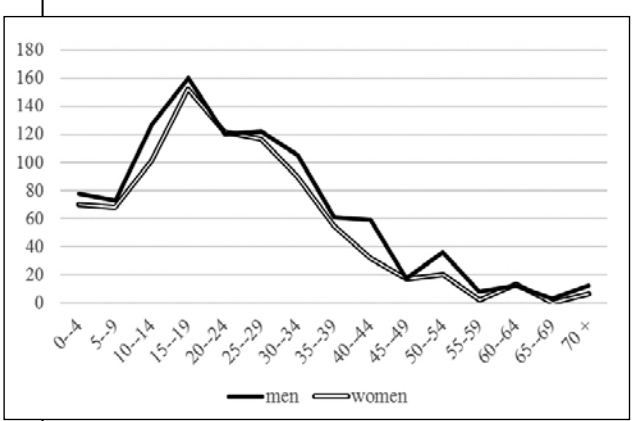


Figure 6: The number of Roma and their CFU members living as coresidents by gender and age group; data for 1858 individuals (993 men and 865 women), 1838 urban Wallachia.

The situation of coresidents can be framed in terms of several functions of co-residence. The most obvious would be domestic service. Like for other contemporary contexts, I can consider two main patterns in which domestic service was practiced. Both of them are the result of labor demand and supply, which in turn can be seen as a negotiation between the expectations of the employer, as well as the choices and constraints of the employed. In the first instance, I can conceptualize it as "life-cycle domestic service," as historians

and historical demographers call it (Laslett 1977, to give just one example). Individuals became servants only at certain stages of life, to compensate for low income or wealth. In the case of young people, wealth was needed when establishing a household. It both provided for the basic material needs, as well as attracted a partner. In the case of poor men and women, and/or of those deprived of endowment, working as a servant meant building up one's financial resources that were necessary for fully entering adulthood and becoming a respected family man or woman. For the employer, the presence of young unmarried servants also had its advantages: they provided higher work capacity, yet had less consumption and housing needs since spouses or children did not join them. In the case of the elderly, working as a servant could have provided shelter, food, as well as some form of caretaking or mutual assistance when family members could not play such roles. The second instance would be that of long-term domestic service: individuals working as servants over long periods of their lives, often marrying and raising a family while performing this job and sharing the same quarters, provided by the master.

In the case of urban Wallachia, coresidence involving non-Roma was dominated by the first instance. Ultimately, forming a family was the social goal, and being a servant meant only a temporary stage until one could enjoy living in one's household. From the perspective of marriage patterns, it meant postponing marriage for a great deal of young individuals, thus explaining why Wallachian towns had higher marriage rates than Wallachian villages.

For Roma coresidents, however, the demographic profile suggests a mixture of the two domestic service patterns: life-cycle and long-term. It is more than plausible to assume that these arrangements coincided with decision making that was less in the hands of the Roma, and more in those of slave owners. Given the intricacy and the intimacy of such level of planning, by multiple actors, it is hard to reveal the full chain of causalities that led to the structure of Roma groups. Since more families were prevalent among Roma coresidents, it is evident that some owners preferred keeping or forming such families. This could have been in order to use the labor of adults and children and/or to later gain from selling the individuals; or to transmit them just like any other form of movable property (through inheritance, endowment, donation, exchange).

On the other hand, more numerous coresident groups raised the issue of quartering and feeding the slaves. Not all owners could afford to host large families. It is possible that some slave owners would have preferred maximizing the benefits from the work performed by fewer slaves, and ended by opting for non-marital arrangements between their slaves. Tackling such research perspectives by cross-checking sources was not within the possibilities of the current framework. What is sure for now is that slavery impacted the Roma population in the sense that lifelong domestic service forced families to live in non-Roma headed households; while at the same time preventing more individuals from forming families (prolonging celibacy for more individuals?).

Of course, such scenarios can be hypothesized even in the absence of current data. What I am emphasizing here is their impact on family life, as shown by the census: fewer family ties than the Roma would probably otherwise have had. At least this is what I conclude when I compare Roma coresidents (the vast majority of slaves of private owners) with Roma householders.

So far, I have presented what I considered the most important results in comparing Roma to Romanians. Others can be added. Widowhood too manifested differently according to ethnicity, gender, and residential status. As expected, widowhood was associated more with coresidence than with independent living. This was a result

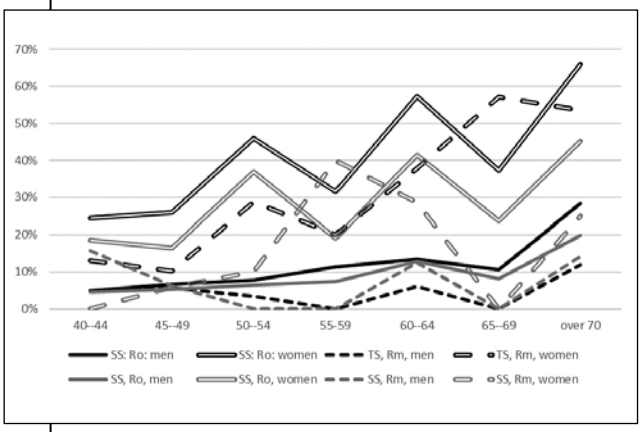


Figure 8: The share of widowed individuals over 40 years old, by ethnicity, gender and age group, and sample, 1838 urban Wallachia.

of the social role that some instances of coresidence fulfilled, that of caretaking for the elderly, especially older women. In terms of ethnicity, Roma showed far fewer widows than Romanians. If I assumed that death rates were about the same, it would mean that Roma remarried more often than Romanians.

Building on conclusions from a previous study (Mateescu 2015b), I put forth that Roma had fewer children recorded in the census. Just like for marriages, the reason becomes clearer when I refine my analysis using the same criteria. The results are shaped in the same manner: Roma show

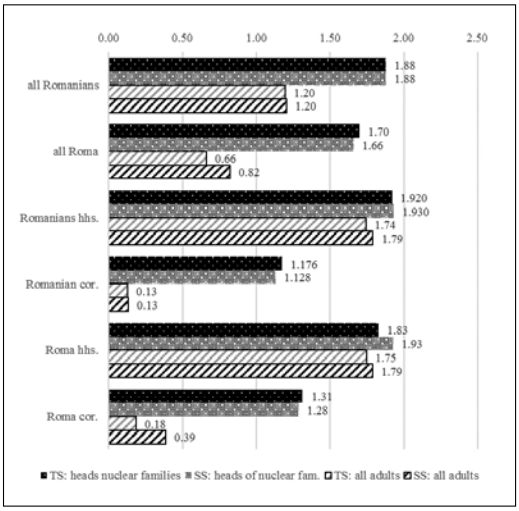


Figure 9: The average number of children per adult, by ethnicity, family status, residential status, and sample, 1838 urban Wallachia.

fewer children because a greater part of them were coresidents, and coresidents in general had fewer children than householders. If I adjust the results by residential status, then they tend to even out or invert. I see that Romanian and Roma householders don't differ much; but Roma coresidents have more children than Romanian coresidents. A conclusion can be drawn along the same lines as previously: (forced) coresidence might have prevented more Roma from having children, but also meant that, as compared to Romanians, more families who had children were forced to live in non-Roma headed households.

1859 rural Moldavia

In this sample, both ethnicities held higher proportions than in the previous. Romanians were the vast majority with a share of 83 percent of the total population, while Roma were about 12 percent. Here, Roma seemed to have married earlier than Romanians, especially women, but this time this is reflected from the overall population, without being broken down by residential status (which I could not document for all of the villages). While married men ages 15–19 are extremely few, slightly over half of Roma women (54 percent) from the same age group were married. In the Romanian cohort, the share was considerably smaller: 39 percent. In the next age group (20–24), the vast majority of women were married on both sides: 94 percent Romanians and 90 percent Roma. Among men, differences were even smaller.

Widowhood followed the same pattern as in the urban sample: Roma of both genders showed levels 5–15 percent lower than Romanians, suggesting higher rates of remarriage.

The number of children was similar to that from the urban sample, with the usual nuances. Again, Romanians counted more

children than Roma, using either of the two metrics from the point of view of the adults: all adults or only heads of nuclear family. However, refining the analysis, I saw that more babies and toddlers were present in Roma families than in Romanian ones. This would suggest that, in fact, birth rates among Roma were slightly higher, and the reasons for the overall lower number lie with other factors. One would suspect earlier marriages, conclusion supported not just by results previously presented, but also by the lower number of teens in Roma families. So, depending on the age of the children, I encountered opposite situations when comparing ethnicities: Roma families have more young children (0–1; 0–5 years old) and less adolescents (over 15 years old); the opposite holds true among Romanians.

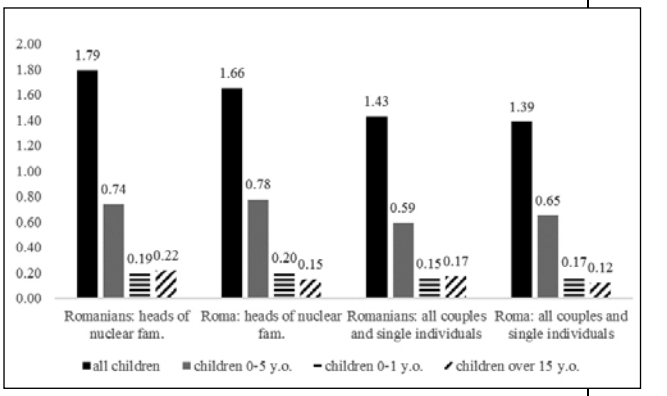


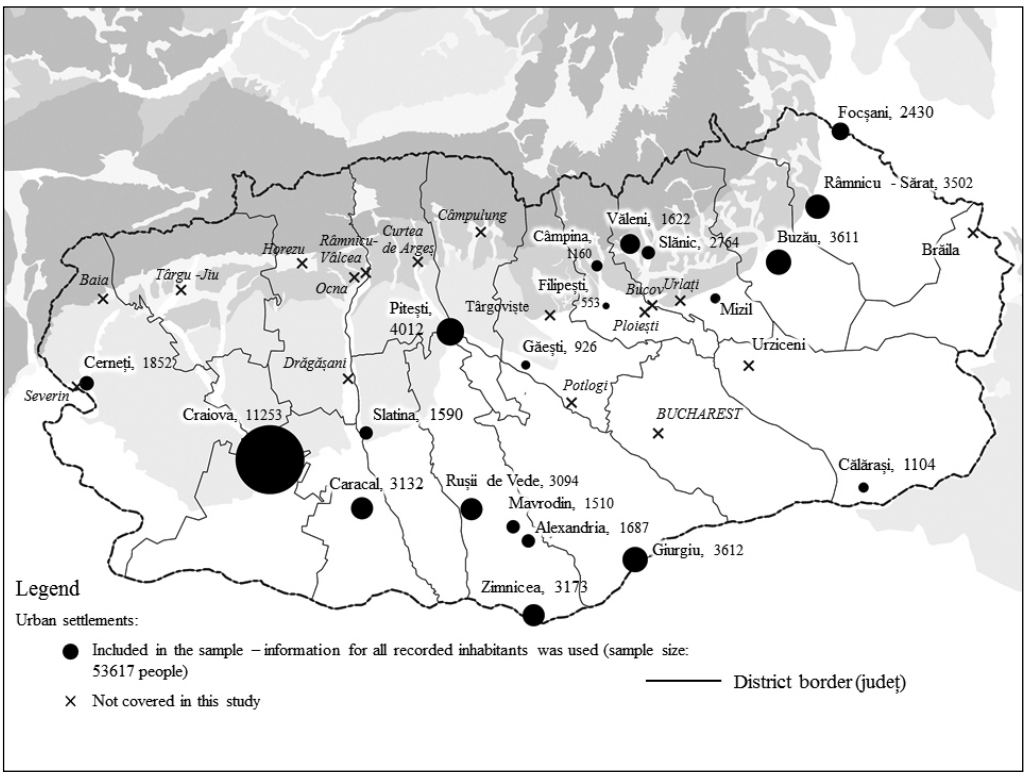
Figure 10: The average number of children in a CFU, per adult, by ethnicity, family status, and ages of children, 1859 rural Moldavia.

Conclusions

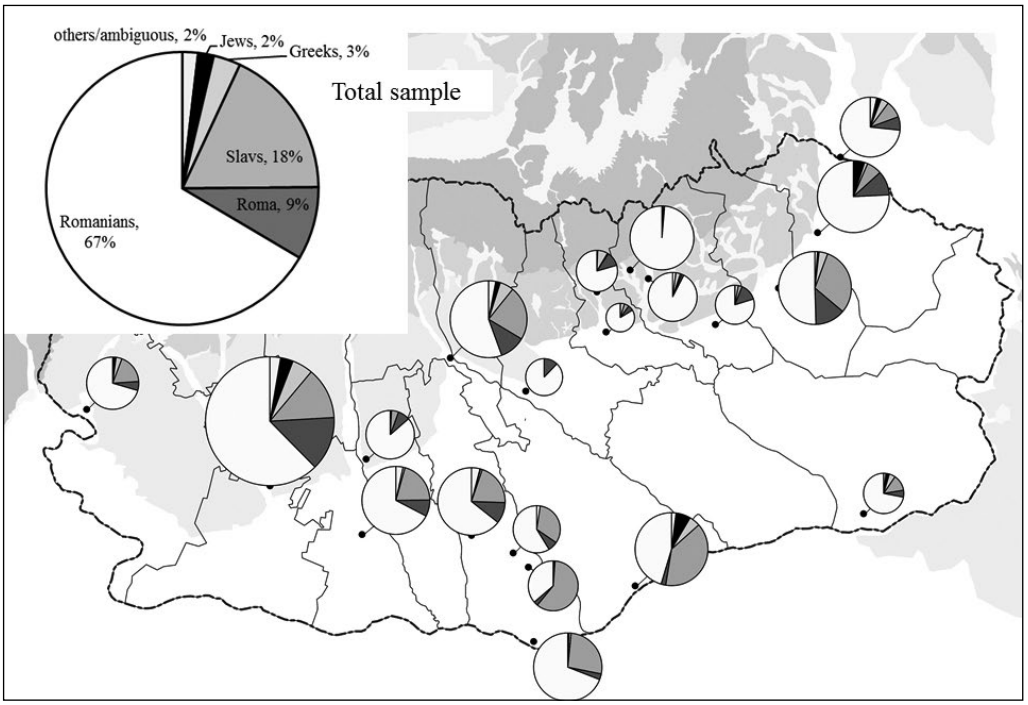
The results of my analysis showed both differences and similarities between the two ethnic groups. Most similarities were shown by the 1859 rural sample, from post-slavery Moldavia. Here, marriage took place at a relatively young age; in both ethnic groups, men married later and remarried more often than women, the only major difference between the two ethnicities being that Roma married slightly earlier than Romanians. The Wallachian urban sample, based on a census conducted when the vast majority of Roma were slaves, showed the most pronounced specificities. In towns and market towns, family life started later than in villages. Even though the two samples are from different principalities, my previous studies on Wallachia can confirm that this assertion can be generalized. The main explanation for this lies with a greater degree of employment in domestic service, in turn coinciding with living as coresidents. However, this acted very differently for Romanians as compared to Roma. Most Romanians that worked as servants did so in their late teens and into their early adulthood, certainly during their pre-marital years. This was most likely the result of timing both their work and the start of their family life, in such a manner that would allow for a certain accumulation of wealth, while not postponing marriage after the age of thirty. At the same time, marriage seemed to have coincided with forming a distinct household, which in its turn can be seen as one of the social ideals of the age. For a greater part of Roma, however, domestic service was long-term, and family life often coincided with living as coresidents. Half of the Roma included in the censuses lived in a household headed by a non-Roma, most often their owner. Slaves living in such arrangements were somehow "caught between two worlds" (Roman 2014). They had more family ties among themselves than Romanian servants, but not as intense as those of Roma that lived independently from owners. Slaving for their masters seems to have loosened family relations that they otherwise would have cultivated, if they had lived separately, or had been free people.

Lastly, a few further nuances should be added, all the while maintaining caution in interpreting the results. These censuses do not capture the entire lifespan of the individuals, nor do they reveal their entire social networks. The fact that the ones alive

Map 1. The settlements included in the Wallachian urban sample and their size.



Map 2. Ethnic composition of the Wallachian urban sample, by settlement.



in 1838 were recorded in certain households doesn't mean that they lived there all of their lives, as households often changed form. A slave might have shared different houses throughout his life: living only with his family, living with his owner, living alone and only paying duties to his owner, living in the home of someone else who was not his owner, rejoining his owner and raising a family there, switching owners (hence homes) as a result of exchanges or sales—just to imagine a hypothetic life course. This is why my results should be taken as representative not for each individual case, but for wider social and demographic contexts. Slaves were indeed likely to change residence, but it still meant that they were more likely to live as coresidents for a longer period than Romanians. Just as well, the fact that the censuses show some individuals with no spouse or child, doesn't necessarily mean that they had no family; most likely, it could mean that they did not live together. A slave that appears as a single adult serving by his master might have had his nuclear family living somewhere else, even if he was wrongly recorded as unmarried or widowed. But, again, the fact that single individuals were observed more among Roma coresidents than among Roma householders is still relevant, showing a weaker kinship network, even from a spatial point of view.

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« O abjáv kaj sas maškár aménde pharadà e dušmania »[1]. Généalogie d'un mariage

"O abjáv kaj sas maškár aménde pharadà e dušmania" [The marriage between our families has ended the enmity]. Genealogy of a Marriage

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ABSTRACT

The outcome of an inquiry into a family saga, this article discusses gender relations in a Roma community in eastern Romania. Focusing on the events and negotiations that lead to the establishing of a marriage, I show how the apparent male domination is nuanced by the sometimes victorious struggles of women to impose their own choices. Observing marriages and their structures from the viewpoint of the women involved, this work both provides new empirical knowledge and sheds light on the male bias in anthropological research of kinship structures.

KEYWORDS

Gender, agency, marriage, structuralism, conflict, Roma.

Juin 2004, Roumanie, Tulcea, extérieur jour. Catincoi[3] est assis à une grande table. Il a 64 ans, est petit et fin, vêtu d'une chemise à manches courtes bleu clair et d'un grand chapeau noir. Il discute avec un homme de sa génération assis à ses côtés. Les signes de la maladie d'Alzheimer, qui l'emportera quelques années plus tard, ne sont pas encore visibles, à part peut-être, le geste de sa femme, Sultana, qui le taquine tendrement en poussant son chapeau en avant. Son fils, Petrache, parle avec sa conjointe, Elisabeta, un verre à la main. Dans la cour familiale, quelques musiciens jouent ; Catincoi regarde les membres de sa famille danser. Quelques heures plus tard, Sevastian, son petit-fils, se mariera avec Rada. En 2019, dans le petit appartement d'une résidence à Saint-Denis, en France, je regarde ces images tremblotantes, gravées sur une cassette VHS retrouvée après avoir été longtemps égarée. Elisabeta visionne avec moi la vidéo, passant du rire aux larmes, souriant en voyant les enfants si petits et pleurant les êtres chers qu'elle a perdus.

1) Trad. : « Le mariage qui fut au milieu de chez nous, détruisit l'inimitié ». Les citations longues du texte sont la traduction en français d'extraits d'entretiens effectués en romanès. Pour mener ces entretiens, je fus assisté par Florin Ciobotaru, Ionela Padure et Christian Padure. J'ai cherché à garder dans les traductions la syntaxe romanès. Les termes romanès sont transcrits selon la transcription proposée par Georges Calvet (1998), les mots roumains sont reproduits dans leur orthographe roumaine.

2) Ce chapitre présente les résultats du projet de Recherche *Net-Rom Early Marriage between Dynamism of Social Network and Legal Autonomy : The case of transnational Romanian Roma.* Ce projet, porté par l'Université de Vérone, fut financé par l'Union Européenne dans le cadre du programme Horizon 2020, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions individual fellowship (Grant Agreement no. 794108). Je tiens à remercier Leonardo Piasere, Norah Benarrosh-Orsoni, Catalina Tesăr, Ana Chiriţoiu, Julie Lacaze et Ionela Padure pour leurs relectures.

3) Les noms ont été modifiés.

Dessin 1 : Catincoi et Sultana au mariage de Sevastian. Crédits Mathilde Lacaze, Juillet 2020.

En 1975, Catincoi déménage du quartier du Tabor, la *țigănia* (le quartier tsigane) de Tulcea, qui borde le combinat d'aluminium-charbon, et s'installe de l'autre côté de la ville, dans la dernière rue avant la campagne marécageuse du Delta. Dans ces marges urbaines délaissées, il construit, avec ses fils, quatre maisons. Peu à peu, la famille s'agrandit, ses enfants ont à leur tour des enfants. Petrache, le deuxième fils de Catincoi, enlève Elisabeta en 1983. Il a dix-sept ans ; elle en a treize. Sevastian, leur fils ainé, naît deux ans plus tard. Les filles de Catincoi, à l'exception de l'aînée, partent vivre avec leurs maris. Certains couples se séparent ; celui formé par Elisabeta et Petrache tient. Dans la cour délimitée par les quatre maisons, les fils de Catincoi et leurs épouses partagent leur quotidien ; les cousines et cousins germains grandissent ensemble.

Après la chute du régime communiste, Petrache, ses frères et leurs épouses tentent leur chance à l'Ouest : d'abord, en Allemagne puis, à partir de 1994, Petrache et Elisabeta font la navette entre la France et la Roumanie. Ils prennent avec eux leurs jeunes enfants. Sevastian, l'aîné, est confié à sa grand-mère, Sultana, et reste en Roumanie poursuivre sa scolarité jusqu'en 2002. En 2004, après son mariage avec Rada, Sevastian rejoindra ses parents établis en France sur le *platzo* (le lieu de vie) du Hanul, à Saint-Denis (Olivera 2014), où nous faisons connaissance en 2009. Au fil de ces années, Petrache, Elisabeta, Sevastian et Rada s'ancrent définitivement en France, accédant à des emplois salariés stables et à des logements

sociaux. La cour, Tulcea et la Roumanie deviennent des lieux familiaux, fréquentés à l'occasion des fêtes de Pâques ou des vacances d'été.

Durant les dix dernières années, j'ai mené auprès de cette famille et de leurs parents, les Čoroman[4], une observation flottante (Pétonnet 1982) au long cours. Je passe plusieurs fois par mois les visiter, le temps d'un café, d'une cigarette, pour demander ou rendre un service, à l'occasion d'un anniversaire ou d'un repas de souvenir. Je me rends chaque année entre une semaine et un mois à Tulcea. Je suis intégré à un cercle de cousins avec qui je traîne aux mariages, lors des fêtes religieuses, dans les cimetières, à la pêche… Et je tiens, le soir, après mes visites, un carnet de terrain où je note les évènements, les scènes du jour. L'accumulation sur dix années de ses notes m'offre une note de fond, une ambiance, des détails. Elles me donnent la consistance du temps me rappelant, à la relecture, des évènements oubliés. Pour accorder une plus grande profondeur historique au présent anthropologique que je saisis par le terrain, j'ai effectué des recherches dans les archives administratives locales qui m'ont permis de documenter l'existence et la vie sociale du groupe entre 1927 et 1948 (Cousin 2017). Enfin, j'ai adjoint à l'observation et aux archives, douze entretiens longs enregistrés et retranscrits. Ces entretiens sont fondamentalement différents des conversations informelles que j'ai eues par ailleurs sur le terrain. Effectués en public, ils ont pour but de recueillir une parole politique : la mise en récit par des chefs de famille, de leur vie. C'est à l'occasion de l'un de ces entretiens, en 2013, alors que je l'interroge sur son histoire migratoire, que Sevastian me raconte sa rencontre avec son épouse :

> « Je suis allé à l'école jusqu'en onzième, puis j'ai arrêté car il me plaisait d'avoir une femme encore jeune. Chez nous les Roms, on fait comme cela : quand tu te prends une femme, il faut que tu sois fort et que tu fasses de l'argent. J'ai rencontré ma femme à l'école. Je me suis assis avec elle et nous avons parlé. Je lui ai demandé comment elle s'appelait, et j'ai vu qu'elle était *romni* comme moi, de ma *ţigănia*. Je suis resté deux ou trois ans avec elle. Elle était alors en huitième, après trois ans, elle était ma femme. Je suis allé chez sa famille, chez sa mère et son père et je l'ai demandé : elle me voulait et moi, je la voulais. Les pères se sont mis d'accord rapidement. Ils ne pouvaient pas refuser. Toutefois, il y avait entre nous de grands problèmes, nos vieux étaient en conflit, mais le mariage entre nous mit fin à l'inimitié. Nous avons fait la paix entre les familles. »

À l'écoute de la parole de Sevastian, une interprétation anthropologique de son mariage s'impose d'elle-même : sa volonté de prendre une femme dans une autre famille a rétabli la paix. Cela ressemble à la façon dont Lévi-Strauss [2009 (1949)] interprète le mariage : les hommes, en se mariant, échangent des femmes et fondent ainsi des alliances qui empêchent la violence. Toutefois, on le sait, ce modèle est aujourd'hui fortement discuté.

Agentivité et anthropologie des mariages *romanès*

En 1984, dans son ouvrage *Mariage tsigane*, Patrick Williams analyse le mariage au sein de la communauté *kalderash* de Paris. Il raconte que les *Kalderash* eux-mêmes affirment que les filles sont données en mariage par leurs pères dans l'espoir d'un don futur (Williams 1984 : 63). Il est alors évident que ces sociétés considèrent le mariage comme un échange, au sens de Lévi-Strauss, et Patrick William de conclure que, dans ce processus, c'est l'égalité au long cours, entre les chefs de famille, qui est visée (Williams 1985 : 123). Le concept d'échange a été peu à peu remis en question au début des

4) Catincoi, Sultana, Elisabeta, Sevastian, Rada et les autres personnages que cet article met en scène appartiennent au même *neam*. Ce terme, qui signifie nation en roumain, est utilisé par mes interlocuteurs pour désigner une communauté de parents, signification que j'utiliserai dans la suite du texte (dans un sens différent de Martin Olivera dans ce volume). Mes interlocuteurs nomment leur *neam*, les *Čoroman* ou encore *Amaré Romà* (nos Roms).

années 2000 notamment par Laurent Barry (2008 : 213) qui démontre que l'échange n'existe que dans les sociétés qui pensent le mariage en termes d'échange. En prenant en compte cette critique, et en regardant les connaissances ethnographiques disponibles (Beluschi Fabeni 2013 ; Olivera 2012 ; Tesăr 2018), Leonardo Piasere (2015 : 41) affirme que l'échange de femmes semble présent dans l'ensemble de l'espace rom vlax. De mon côté, je ne peux pas affirmer que le mariage de Sevastian et Rada peut être considéré comme un échange, car, au sens de Laurent Barry, ils ne m'ont pas dit explicitement le concevoir comme tel, bien qu'ils considèrent qu'il a entraîné une alliance entre leurs familles.

Dans sa critique désormais classique, Gayle Rubin [1998 (1975)] explique qu'en pensant le mariage en termes d'échange de femmes, l'anthropologie souscrit à une vision masculine du monde dans laquelle les femmes ne sont pas des agents. Aussi, la domination des hommes sur la conclusion des mariages devrait être qualifiée de trafic de femmes et non pas d'échange. De plus, il n'y a pas de raison de lier ce phénomène à la naissance de la culture, sauf à faire de l'oppression des femmes une réalité humaine indépassable. Cette critique du structuralisme est adossée à ce qui sera plus tard conceptualisé comme l'agentivité (Butler 2004), c'est-à-dire de la capacité d'agir des femmes au sein et malgré la domination masculine. La théorie de l'échange des femmes cache la capacité agissante de celles-ci dans la conclusion des mariages. Bien sûr, les Roms se racontent que leur société est dominée par les hommes. J'en discute souvent avec les Čoroman immigrés en France, qui pensent que les Français laissent beaucoup (trop) de libertés à leurs femmes... Cette affirmation franche de la domination masculine me met toujours mal à l'aise, mais quand je m'en suis ouvert à mes interlocuteurs, ils ont moqué mon hypocrisie. Selon eux, nous partageons la même pulsion masculine universelle pour la domination mais le brigand que j'étais, la niait pour mieux séduire les femmes. Cette remarque fait réfléchir. Je suis d'une génération de garçons pour laquelle l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes est devenue un sujet majeur, ou tout du moins de distinction. Dans la société française, dans mon milieu professionnel et familial, si les hommes jouissent objectivement de la domination masculine, il est socialement préférable de la blâmer. Aussi, cette duplicité me pousse-t-elle à m'interroger sur l'affirmation, d'apparence si franche, des hommes roms concernant leur position de domination. Sont-ils vraiment, comme ils le disent, en position de domination totale et exclusive ? Mon impression globale du terrain ethnographique est que les femmes sont effectivement dominées, mais pas soumises, et qu'elles développent des stratégies et des tactiques pour imposer leurs intérêts et leurs choix, malgré le contexte de domination masculine[5]. Qu'en est-il en matière de mariage ? Le rôle des femmes est-il réellement mineur ? Peut-on repérer, sous l'idéal de domination portée par les hommes de la communauté, des formes réelles de puissance féminine ?

Afin d'explorer les volontés individuelles des femmes, à l'intérieur des structures de parenté, je me suis basé sur dix années de notes de terrain et la transcription des entretiens. Malgré la documentation large à ma disposition, j'ai dû creuser au-delà de l'évidence : le rôle des femmes dans la production des mariages n'est pas, usuellement, un sujet de discussion. Aussi, pour ethnographier cette question, j'ai choisi de documenter une situation conflictuelle exceptionnelle dont la résolution nécessite l'explicitation, plus que d'usage, des rôles et des stratégies matrimoniales. Pour ce faire, je suis reparti des propos de Sevastian que j'ai tenté d'éclairer et de contextualiser.

5) Voir Haşdeu (2007 : 141) ou Haşdeu dans ce volume pour une lecture féministe de l'anthropologie des Roms.

Une fille de chez nous

Sevastian raconte qu'il a reconnu que Rada « était une *romni* comme (lui), de (s) a *ţigănia* »[6] après l'avoir abordée et lui avoir demandé son nom. Elle parlait le même romanès que lui. Quelle est la signification de cette reconnaissance identitaire ? Pour Sevastian l'humanité est organisée à travers des cercles concentriques. Au centre, il y a les *Amaré Romà* (Nos Roms) : les Čoroman[7]. La littérature montre que cette définition identitaire plaçant en son centre Ego et « ses Roms » est commune aux mondes romani (Piasere 1985). Les limites du *neam* des Čoroman sont, par définition, mouvantes car chaque locuteur place sa famille proche au cœur du groupe ; et les limites du groupe sont discursives (Williams 1988). Les Čoroman nomment *Rakaré* les Roms qu'ils considèrent comme proches du fait des liens familiaux, mais extérieurs au groupe de parents. L'appartenance d'un individu aux Čoroman ou aux *Rakaré* peut faire l'objet de longues discussions en fonction de la volonté des interlocuteurs de souligner la proximité ou la distance.

Issus d'un groupe itinérant qui s'est sédentarisé après la seconde guerre mondiale (Cousin 2017), on dénombre entre 1000 et 2000 Čoroman, installés dans les villes de Tulcea, Constanța, Brăila et Galați. D'après Marushiakova & Popov (2004), ils seraient apparentés à un groupe plus large, réparti sur un arc allant de la côte bulgare à Odessa. En Roumanie, les relations entre les différentes familles sont irrégulières, mais la migration et la vie commune sur le *platzo* de Saint-Denis ont renforcé, ces dernières années, les liens communautaires. Les adolescents de la même génération sont peu nombreux et se connaissent généralement depuis l'enfance. Aussi, il est étonnant, dans le récit de Sevastian, qu'il ait rencontré Rada seulement à l'adolescence et via l'école.

Le deuxième cercle concentrique de l'humanité est celui des Roms qui appartiennent à d'autres communautés. C'est le cercle mettant en jeu les relations internationales (Balandier 1978 : 44) du groupe. Il y a quelques années, à Saint-Denis, un jeune homme, *Kangljar* de Țăndărei, a harcelé une jeune femme Čoroman. L'intervention des frères de cette dernière, puis de la famille du jeune homme a fait dégénérer rapidement le conflit en une bataille rangée entre les Roms de Țăndărei et ceux de Tulcea. Seule les interventions conjointes de la police municipale et d'arbitres appelés par les parties et venus spécialement de Roumanie[8] ont permis de mettre fin à un conflit qui mettait dangereusement aux prises deux collectifs. À l'inverse, les Čoroman entretiennent des rapports matrimoniaux denses avec les *Korben* de Brăila, depuis l'entre-deux-guerres. Leurs relations matrimoniales vont dans les deux sens. Après plusieurs générations d'intermariages, leurs identités de groupe restent distinctes et sont déterminées par l'origine du père et par le lieu de résidence. Des alliances plus récentes existent également avec les *Vlaxi*, les *Argentari*, et les *Ursari* de Dobrogea. Depuis 1989, les rencontres avec des Roms d'autres communautés ont lieu en migration, en France, dans les *platzo*. Les Roms de Tulcea nouent peu à peu des liens matrimoniaux répétés avec les *Geambáș* de Timișoara. Ces mariages avec des hommes ou des femmes issus de groupes romani géographiquement éloignés marquent les bouleversements politiques qu'ont vécus les Čoroman. À l'inverse, il y a des groupes avec lesquels, immigration ou non, l'alliance matrimoniale est inconcevable. À Tulcea, les Čoroman ont des rapports conflictuels avec les *Xoraxané*. J'ai demandé à plusieurs interlocuteurs s'il existait des intermariages entre les Čoroman et les *Xoraxané*. Cette question fut considérée comme offensante.

Le cercle suivant est celui des *gažé*. Les mariages avec les Roumaines et les Roumains sont, au moins d'un point de vue idéel, mal vus. Le terme dépréciatif *kaštalo*

6) Le terme « ţigănia » désigne habituellement un quartier rom. Sevastian l'utilise métaphoriquement au sens de groupe rom restreint.

7) Il s'agit de l'ethnonyme le plus courant. D'autres termes sont utilisés par les membres de cette communauté pour se nommer comme *Rom dobrogean*.

8) Cette intervention d'un arbitrage juridictionnel par des lors d'un conflit qui s'appelle parfois la *kriss* et, dans le cas des Čoroman, le *judecata* est un mode de résolution de conflit que l'on retrouve dans plusieurs groupes romanis. (voir Piasere 2005 : 27). Le point intéressant quant au mariage des Čoroman, est que la possibilité d'organiser un *judecata* les mettant en prise avec un autre groupe, montrerait, selon eux, une proximité rendant plus aisé les mariages.

(Benarrosh-Orsoni 2019 : 95) pour parler des enfants de ces couples marque la réprobation des mariages mixtes. Ainsi, Beretta me disait à propos de sa voisine : « Ah Non ! Ce n'est pas ma famille ça, c'est une *kaštali*, sa mère est roumaine ». Les mariages avec des membres d'autres minorités locales, comme les Bulgares, les Machedons, les Lipovens sont eux, mieux considérés. Il me fut bien précisé, avec force d'exemples, que les *gažé* qui ont épousé des *Romnja* et qui se sont intégrés aux Čoroman, étaient en fait des Lipovens. Aujourd'hui, la réprobation du mariage mixte avec les Roumains reste forte, mais paradoxale. Ces dernières années, les garçons ont multiplié les mariages avec des Roumaines. Ce phénomène a de multiples causes : la petitesse du groupe de référence ; la désirabilité des Roms, du fait de leur accès aux ressources de la migration ; la multiplication des contacts entre Roms et Roumains en milieu scolaire, au travail, à la plage, en discothèque ou sur les réseaux sociaux… Enfin, selon les garçons, les *Gažia* sont désirables, car elles seraient plus disponibles sexuellement[9] et il n'est pas nécessaire de donner de l'argent à leur famille. Malgré un mouvement de fond touchant toute la communauté, les jeunes couples mixtes n'échappent pas encore tout à fait à la désapprobation. Elisabeta me confiait, en parlant de ses autres garçons : « Bien sûr que cela m'embête que mes fils se soient mariés avec des Roumaines, mais ce n'est pas moi qui décide, maintenant, ce sont les garçons ! » Dans les faits, Elisabeta a d'excellentes relations avec ses *borja*[10] roumaines et elle les a parfaitement intégrées à la maisonnée et aux tâches domestiques classiquement partagées entre *romnja* et *borja* (Haşdeu 2007 : 107).

Somme toute, les mariages ne se font pas tous, loin de là, au sein du *neam* des Čoroman mais, lorsqu'ils ont lieu, ces mariages sont considérés comme les plus faciles comme les plus réussis pour les parents. C'est pourquoi rencontrer Rada était pour Sevastian une divine surprise, étant à la fois Čoroman et inconnue. Sevastian et Rada sont cousins à la fois par leurs mères (MFZDD)[11] et par leurs pères (FMFBSSD)[12]. Si l'on regarde à l'échelle de la communauté, les mariages entre cousins au second degré sont courants et de tous types. La densité des liens familiaux des Čoroman m'a, dans un premier temps, porté à rechercher des règles prescriptives qui ordonneraient les relations matrimoniales en structure élémentaire (Lévi-Strauss 2009 : 34). J'ai maintenant abandonné cette approche car les Čoroman pensent simplement que les mariages idéels se font en leur sein sans autres règles. Ainsi, leur structure de parenté pourrait être qualifiée de système complexe d'alliances matrimoniales (Copet-Rouget 1991) qui se déploie préférentiellement dans un groupe restreint.

Les Čoroman prohibent les relations sexuelles entre ascendants et descendants, ainsi qu'entre latéraux jusqu'au troisième degré civil. Les mariages entre cousins au premier degré sont rares et sont strictement prohibés lorsque les personnes ont grandi dans la même maisonnée. L'inceste de deuxième type (Héritier 1994) est un sujet de moquerie courante, notamment à propos des relations entre le gendre et sa belle-mère. Il y a une trentaine d'années, une femme de la communauté s'est remariée avec le frère de son époux. Elle est depuis considérée par la communauté comme *marimé* (souillée). Mis à part ces interdits, les liens matrimoniaux vont dans toutes les directions et constituent un bloc de parenté (Piasere 2015 : 125), reliant toutes les familles de la communauté depuis au moins la Première Guerre mondiale (Cousin 2017). Toutefois apparaît, dans ce réseau dense, une faille, un trou structural (Burt 1995) : les lignes descendantes de Raskanu, le grand-père de Rada, et de Catincoi, le grand-père de Sevastian, n'ont, entre 1975 et 2004, aucune relation matrimoniale.

9) La prohibition de certaines pratiques au sein des couples a pu être interprétée comme étant liée à l'impureté du bas du corps qui ne doit pas souiller la bouche (Haşdeu 2007 : 205). À Tulcea, les garçons m'ont simplement dit : « chez nous, les filles ne le font pas ».

10) *Bori* (pluriel *borja*) signifie belle-fille. Il s'agit d'un statut central dans le fonctionnement de la famille, c'est généralement à elle qu'incombe l'exécution des tâches domestiques.

11) MFZDD est l'acronyme en anglais de la chaine de parenté : Mother-Father-Sibling-Daughter-Daughter ce qui signifie que Rada est la fille de la fille de la sœur du père de la mère de Sevastian.

12) FMFBSSD est l'acronyme en anglais de la chaine de parenté Father-Mother-Father-Brother- Son-Son-Daughter ce qui signifie que Rada est la fille du fils du fils du frère du père de la mère du père de Sevastian.

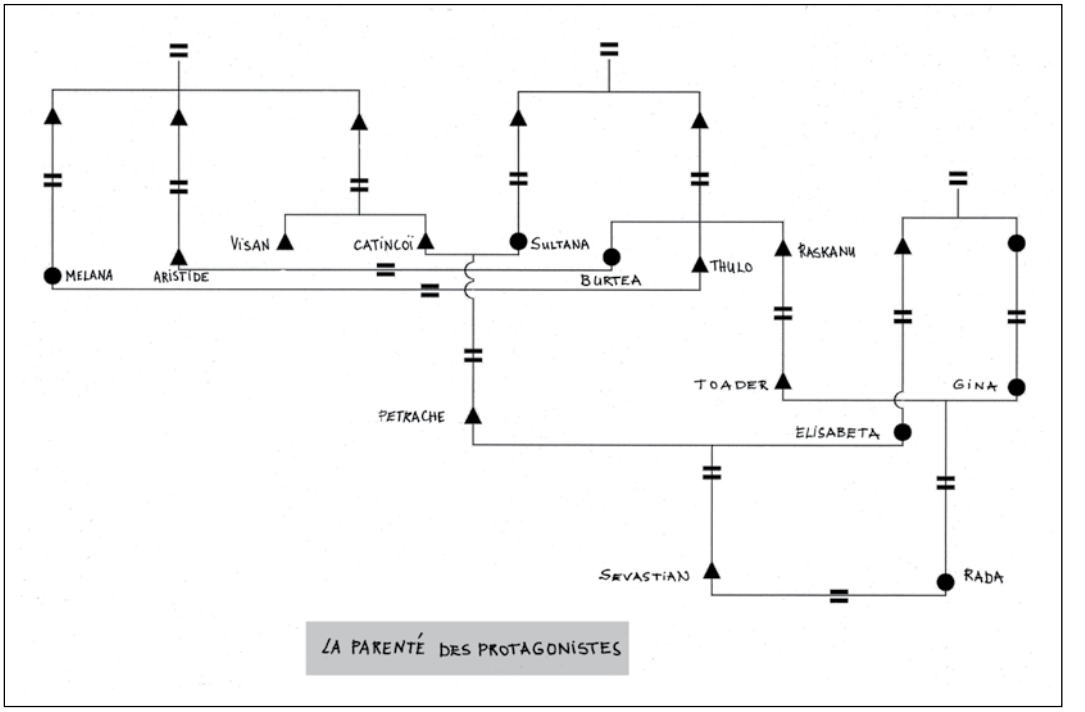
La mort d'Aristide

Cette brèche généalogique fut provoquée par un événement qui s'est déroulé en 1975. Cette année-là, la mort violente d'un homme mit fin aux relations entre les familles de Catincoi et de Raskanu. Sevastian avait pudiquement évoqué cet événement tragique quand, en 2013, il m'avait dit : « Il y avait entre nous de grands problèmes, nos vieux étaient en conflit ». J'ai mis plusieurs années à reconstituer, à partir de récits contradictoires, ce qu'il s'était passé. Il me faut préciser préalablement combien cet événement, vieux de 45 ans, est un cas unique d'homicide au sein de la communauté. C'est justement parce qu'il s'agit d'une catastrophe initiale exceptionnelle qu'il m'a semblé être un point d'observation du déploiement de la capacité des Čoroman à éteindre les conflits en leur sein.

Les protagonistes de cette affaire sont d'une part Catincoi et son frère Vișan et d'autre part Raskan, son frère Thulo et Melana, l'épouse de ce dernier. Melana est également la cousine germaine des frères Catincoi et Vișan et de leur cousin Aristide. Ce dernier était marié à Burtea, la sœur de Thulo et de Raskanu ; de la sorte, il se trouvait entre les deux familles. C'est également le cas de Sultana, l'épouse de Catincoi, qui est la cousine de Thulo et Raskanu.

À l'époque, ils habitaient tous dans le quartier du Tabor, derrière le combinat d'aluminium-charbon. Un soir d'été, il y avait une fête chez Catincoi. Vișan, qui avait la réputation d'être coureur, était ivre. Il s'en prit à Melana, il voulait l'obliger à danser avec lui. Elle refusa. De dépit, il s'exclama, pour que chacun puisse l'entendre, qu'il l'avait prise et qu'il la reprendrait. Thulo, le mari de Melana, fut offensé. Il repartit chez lui, avec son épouse, sans faire de scandale. Ils sortirent dans la rue où Vișan les suivit. Arrivés devant chez Thulo, ils commencèrent à se disputer et à en venir aux mains. Vișan frappa violemment Thulo.

Schéma 1 : La parenté des protagonistes. Crédits Grégoire Cousin, Juillet 2020.



Aristide, qui avait peur que la situation dégénère et qui les avait rejoints, tenta de les séparer. Melana se précipita dans la maison pour réveiller Raskanu et cria : « Ils sont en train de tuer ton frère ! » Raskanu attrapa sa hache et se jeta dans la bagarre. Alarmé par les éclats de voix, Catincoi accouru également, armé d'un timon de chariot.

À la fin de la bagarre, Aristide était mort. Raskanu avait le crâne ouvert et fut transporté à l'hôpital entre la vie et la mort. Ce soir-là, la police n'arrêta personne, mais un homme était mort, il fallait un coupable. Qui a tué Aristide ? Quarante ans plus tard, les avis divergent encore : est-ce Thulo, Raskanu ou Catincoi ? Le lendemain de la bagarre, Catincoi parla à Thulo : « Mon cousin est mort à cause de toi. Prends la faute ou ce sera la guerre, nous sommes nombreux et tu es seul, Raskanu est entre la vie et la mort ». Thulo s'accusa auprès des autorités et fit vingt ans de prison. Les familles réunirent un *judecata,* durant lequel fut départagée la responsabilité de chacun. Les arbitres arrivèrent à la conclusion que Thulo avait bien tué Aristide et que Vișan avait, par son comportement, apporté la mort. Il fut exclu de la communauté, il a depuis disparu. Catincoi déménagea du Tabor pour s'installer seul avec sa famille de l'autre côté de la ville. Le *judecata*, l'exil de Vișan, et la peine de Thulo firent que la catastrophe initiale d'une bagarre générale, qui se termine par un homicide, ne dégénérât pas en guerre entre les familles ; mais resta l'inimitié. Raskanu et Catincoi ne se sont jamais reparlé. Raskanu mourut en 1998. Au début des années 2000, Catincoi développa une maladie d'Alzheimer dont il décèdera en 2015. Thulo sortit de prison en 1995 et ne reverra que furtivement Catincoi avant de décéder en 1997. La rupture des relations familiales a particulièrement touché Sultana, l'épouse de Catincoi. Raskanu et Thulo sont ses cousins parallèles plus âgés ; ils furent élevés dans le même groupe domestique et déportés ensemble en Transnistrie. Après la mort d'Aristide, il fut impossible pour elle de ne pas être aux côtés de son mari. Elle dut alors rompre publiquement avec eux. Toutefois, Sultana croisait parfois l'épouse de Raskanu quand elle allait au marché. Le caractère fortuit de la rencontre l'autorisait à échanger quelques mots avec cette dernière, prenant ainsi des nouvelles des enfants et, bientôt, des petits-enfants. La rupture entre les deux familles eu des répercussions dans tout le bloc de parenté, bien au-delà des deux familles. Les autres familles se sont bien gardées de prendre parti, mais les uns et les autres faisaient attention de ne pas provoquer des rencontres entre les familles en conflit comme, par exemple, à l'occasion d'événements familiaux. Cette attention est particulièrement pesante dans un monde de liens multiples et rencontres permanentes. Aussi, passé un délai raisonnable d'une vingtaine d'années et la mort ou le déclin des principaux acteurs, la pression collective poussait-elle plutôt à l'apaisement.

La part des femmes

Le récit de la mort d'Aristide parle de la violence des hommes et du déchirement du corps social qui en résulte. Dans le propos de Sevastian, sa volonté et celle de son père ont engendré le mariage et mis fin à l'hostilité entre les familles : ce que les hommes ont défait, les hommes le refont. Il appartenait aux hommes adultes de se choisir mutuellement comme *xanamico* (cf. Olivera dans ce volume sur la centralité de ce rapport de parenté) pour fonder une nouvelle alliance. Pourtant, pour paraphraser Bourdieu (2000 : 75), *cette représentation officielle des structures sociales* qui m'était offerte *est une représentation produite par l'application du principe de structuration dominant, sous un certain rapport,* dans ce cas, un rapport de genre. Mais qu'en était-il en pratique ? En amont de la parenté officielle produite par

Dessin 2 : Discussion avec Rada et sa grand-mère. Crédits Mathilde Lacaze, Juillet 2020.

l'application de la domination masculine, il y a la construction active de la parenté, par les actions comme les tractations en vue du mariage. Dans les années qui suivirent l'entretien avec Sevastian, j'ai peu à peu découvert le rôle prépondérant des femmes dans la réalisation du mariage de Rada et Sevastian et un contre récit me fut révélé : ce sont les efforts conjugués des femmes qui ont réparé la violence des hommes. La version féminine du récit concernant le mariage me fut racontée, en 2018, par Rada, par Elena, sa grand-mère maternelle, et par Elisabeta, sa belle-mère.

Il fut rapporté à Toader, le père de Rada, que celle-ci flirtait à l'école avec Sevastian. Pour lui, cette relation était impossible. D'une part, elle aurait été une insulte à son père Raskanu ; d'autre part, l'affaire de 1975 démontrait la violence de la famille de Sevastian et il ne voulait donc pas mettre sa fille, qui n'avait que 14 ans, en danger. Afin de mettre fin à leur relation, il retira Rada du collège et lui interdit de sortir de la maison. Toader commença à discuter de mariage avec le père d'un autre garçon. Il espérait, en trouvant un autre mari, convaincre sa fille de renoncer à sa relation avec Sevastian. Rada me raconta qu'elle eut, à ce moment, des altercations très dures avec son père : « Je suis devenue folle, j'ai fait un scandale immense, j'ai dit que je voulais mourir, me jeter dans le Danube ». Les discussions sur la conduite du père se sont répandues dans le groupe. Pouvait-il ainsi décider seul du futur mari de sa fille ? « C'est son père, c'est normal qu'il décide. Mais si les enfants se sont choisis, refuser est sans cœur ».

Les parents de Sevastian firent le premier pas. Ils se rendirent au domicile de Toader et demandèrent la main de Rada. Toader refusa. Il avait peur que la famille de Sevastian fasse payer à leur bru le conflit passé. Mais Rada ne voulait rien entendre et redoubla ses menaces. Quelques jours plus tard, Elisabeta, la mère de Sevastian, revint

seule, en qualité de cousine germaine de la mère de Rada. Forte de ce lien de parenté, elle plaida de nouveau la cause de son fils et dit à Toader : « Tranquillise-toi. Le passé est passé depuis longtemps, on ne va pas lui faire de mal. Ta fille, je vais la respecter comme la mienne ». Elisabeta repartie, Toader expliqua à sa fille qu'elle avait choisi seule Sevastian et qu'elle ne devrait jamais lui reprocher de l'avoir donné à des fous ; à cette condition, il ne s'opposait plus au mariage. Tout le *neam* a suivi les avancées secrètes du mariage. Comme m'a expliqué Elisabeta avec humour : « Chez nous, les *Tiganii*, on parle, on parle, on parle et ainsi les choses se font ». Lorsqu'un mariage est dans l'air, il devient le sujet de discussion numéro un. J'ai retrouvé à l'approche des mariages des Čoroman, cette atmosphère de tractations infinies, emplie de secrets de Polichinelle, décrite par Patrick Williams (1984). Discuter c'est intervenir dans le mariage, c'est faire entrer le regard collectif dans les tractations entre les pères de famille. Toader ne pouvait pas paraître sans cœur. L'opinion collective résultant des murmures de l'ensemble de la communauté est, en matière de mariage, un contrepoids puissant à la volonté, idéalement souveraine, du père.

En 2004, Sultana, la grand-mère de Sevastian, venait de recevoir 1 500 dollars. Durant la seconde guerre mondiale, elle avait, enfant, été déportée sous le régime des *țigani nomazi* (tsiganes nomades) dans un camp du département de Golta[13] du gouvernorat de Transnistrie. La somme lui avait été versée au titre de la dernière tranche des compensations de guerre[14]. Le jour du mariage, elle donna l'intégralité de cette somme au père de Rada. Elle versa le paiement, usuellement dû par le père du garçon au père de la fille. Pourquoi Sultana a-t-elle payé pour l'épouse de Sevastian ? Sûrement parce que Petrache, le père de Sevastian, vivait à l'époque en France, dans des conditions de marginalité extrême. Il n'avait donc probablement pas le capital disponible. Par ailleurs Sultana a élevé Sevastian en l'absence de ses parents et elle était émotionnellement investie dans la réussite de son mariage.

L'action de Sultana ne peut pas être comprise comme l'exécution d'une stratégie familiale décidée par son mari, mais comme l'action d'un sujet qui fait basculer au sein du couple *l'équilibre de stratégies individuelles dépendantes d'intérêts différents en fonction du sexe*. (Bourdieu 2000 : 127). Elle est dans une situation exceptionnelle : une épargne importante et un mari diminué lui laissent la possibilité de jouir de son argent à sa guise ; de plus, sa position de femme âgée[15], dotée de surcroît d'un fort charisme, assoit son autorité auprès des hommes plus jeunes. D'un point de vue *pratique*, Sultana a aidé son petit-fils qu'elle aimait, à partager sa vie avec la petite-fille d'un cousin auquel elle était également attachée. Mais quel sens structural a l'action de Sultana ? En utilisant son argent pour fonder une alliance entre ses consanguins, elle produit une parenté dont chacun sait qu'elle constitue la position centrale. Épouse de Catincoi, elle n'en est pas moins liée à ses propres consanguins. Marier Sevastian et Rada, c'est renouer définitivement avec la famille de ses cousins, c'est redonner du poids, dans sa descendance, à sa propre famille d'origine[16].

Le schéma FMFBSSD liant Rada et Sevastian pourrait être lu, dans une lecture anthropologique où les hommes prennent ou échangent les femmes, comme le réenchaînement d'une alliance entre les descendants de deux lignées patrilinéaires différentes, celle de Catincoi et de Raskanu. Du point de vue de Sultana, la parenté qui est bouclée par le mariage est tout autre : elle est à la fois la grand-mère de Sevastian et la cousine du grand-père de Rada. Elle paye pour sa petite-nièce. Une approche par la pratique implique de regarder concrètement qui s'implique dans ces alliances et dans le cas de Rada et Sevastian, c'est la consanguinité entre les femmes qui est le moteur et la structure utile de ce mariage. A l'occasion de la publication en France

13) La partie nord-ouest de l'actuel Oblast de Mykolaïv en Ukraine.

14) Les survivants de la déportation des Roms en Transnistrie par le régime d'Antonescu durant la seconde guerre mondiale purent toucher à partir des années 2000 des compensations de guerre versées par un consortium de banques suisses et la fondation EVZ « Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft » au nom de l'Etat allemand.

15) Sur l'accroissement de la capacité d'action des Romnja passé un certain âge, voir Tesăr (2012).

16) Sur la lutte d'influence au sein de la famille sur le poids des lignages, voir Meillassoux (1982 : 118).

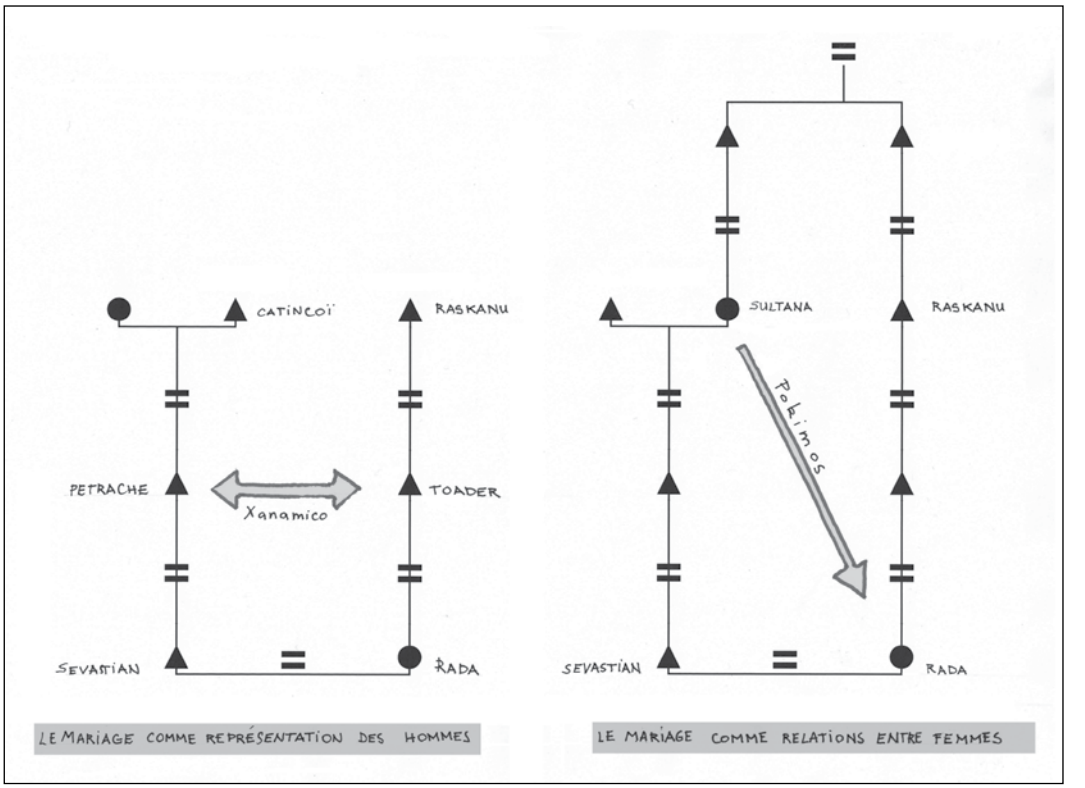


Schéma 2 : Les représentations concurrentes du mariage. Crédits Grégoire Cousin, Juillet 2020

de l'article de Rubin et du débat qui suivit, Levi-Strauss précisa qu'*il est indifférent à la théorie que les hommes échangent les femmes ou bien l'inverse* (cité dans Gestin & Mathieu 2010 : 67), pourtant le cas du rôle de Sultana montre bien que le changement de la position d'observation transforme l'ensemble des positions structurales autour du mariage et l'échange n'en est plus un.

Dans un système virilocal, comme chez les Čoroman, le renouvellement d'une alliance est structurellement plus l'intérêt des femmes que des hommes, car il permet à celles-ci de maintenir la relation avec leur famille. La capacité des femmes à agir sur la parenté dans le sens du maintien de leur centralité structurale ressort particulièrement dans le cas de Sultana car, du fait de son âge et de la maladie de son mari, elle n'a pas de préséance à laisser à une parenté officielle masculine. Toutes les femmes ne parviennent pas à une telle capacité d'action mais la volonté, elle, est généralement présente et affirmée à qui veut l'entendre. J'ai, durant mon enquête, ressenti la lutte quotidienne des femmes pour transmettre et maintenir les relations avec leur famille d'origine. Ainsi, lors de mes conversations collectives avec les membres âgés du foyer sur la généalogie de la famille, la première parole revient généralement à l'homme, patriarche reconnu de la maisonnée. Cette préséance ne veut pas dire qu'il est l'unique voix produisant une représentation des parents. Son épouse intervient souvent rapidement et tient à faire entendre la voix et la légitimité de sa famille d'origine. Le problème historique du structuralisme est son androcentrisme (Gestin & Mathieu 2010 : 73) : la représentation masculine du mariage est souvent perçue par les observateurs comme celle de toute la communauté. Ce biais est d'autant plus fort lorsque l'ethnologue travaille dans une société, comme celle des Čoroman, où les hommes se vivent et s'affirment

comme dominants. Sevastian pense qu'il a conclu son mariage à l'aide de son père alors même que ce sont sa mère et sa grand-mère qui furent déterminantes, mais sa représentation de la parenté structurée par domination masculine l'empêche d'énoncer la réalité pratique du rôle des femmes.

Le mariage comme institution historicisée

La capacité des femmes comme Rada et Sultana à imposer, ou non, leur choix et leurs intérêts dépend à la fois de leurs positions propres et d'un état historique des rapports sociaux. Aussi est-il nécessaire de replacer l'étude de cas dans la dynamique de transformation de la pratique du mariage afin de saisir le champ des possibles qui s'ouvrait à elles. Les discussions dans la communauté ont aidé Rada à arracher un accord à son père mais l'obligèrent également : dès lors que son flirt était connu de tous, elle ne pouvait plus retarder le mariage avec Sevastian. Un jour que nous discutions d'une jeune fille de 24 ans qui n'était pas encore mariée, Rada me confia : « je me suis mariée trop tôt, je n'ai pas eu le choix, mais par contre j'ai choisi mon mari ». Les questions du consentement des jeunes filles, de l'âge lors du mariage et de sa forme sont profondément imbriquées dans celles des dominations masculines et générationnelles. La capacité limitée, mais réelle, de Rada, en 2004, à choisir son mari correspond à un état des rapports de forces entre générations et entre femmes et hommes à ce moment. Les cousines de Rada qui se sont mariées ces dernières années se sont mariées plus tardivement – autour de vingt ans – et elles ont choisi leur mari sans que leurs parents n'aient réellement leur mot à dire. Ce changement s'accompagne d'autres éléments qui semblaient peu concevables il y a une dizaine d'années quand j'ai commencé à fréquenter les Čoroman : plusieurs jeunes filles non mariées ont leurs permis de conduire et circulent seules en ville. Rada appartient à la première génération de femmes qui imposent publiquement leur choix à leur père. En comparaison, Sultana raconte : « quand j'ai connu mon mari dans les années 50, lui et sa famille travaillaient aux fermes, chez les Boyards. Mon père est allé parler avec sa famille, ils ont organisé le mariage et voilà… Si les parents veulent, ça y est ! »

Toutefois, le mariage n'était pas entièrement sous l'empire de la génération des parents, il pouvait être réalisé par l'enlèvement de la jeune fille[17]. Cinquante ans après son mariage, Luluži, une tante éloignée de Sevastian, me parle de son mariage avec une colère jouée et un drôle de sourire : « ce cochon m'a volé ». Son mari Pépéné n'est pas à l'aise, il aimerait disparaître sous la table. Un peu plus tard, dans la discussion, alors que sa femme est sortie, il me raconte qu'il a combiné l'enlèvement avec les frères de Luluži. En avaient-ils discuté avec leur sœur ? Le cas de Pépéné et Luluži n'est pas exceptionnel : jusqu'aux années 1980, les mariages étaient réalisés pour la plupart par fugues ou par vol, comme c'est le cas dans d'autres communautés romani (Piasere 2015 : 59). Qu'il soit arrangé par les parents ou suite à un enlèvement, le consentement des femmes n'est pas une question pertinente dans la représentation dominante du mariage.

À partir des années 1970, le mariage des Čoroman se transforme. Un flux financier systématique apparaît, allant du père du marié au père de la mariée. Pour expliquer ce paiement, les Čoroman racontent, avec quelques variantes selon les récits, que le paiement trouve ses origines dans l'imitation d'un dédommagement qui aurait été initialement effectué lors d'un conflit. Par exemple, Culai, un cousin de Pépéné, raconte :

> « C'est ce qui arriva lors du mariage de Berdano. Ce Berdano est de notre communauté et il prit Roza chez Constantin,

17) L'expression *vo lel la* (Il la prend), signifie à la fois l'acte sexuel et le mariage. C'est nécessairement l'homme qui prend la femme. Au contraire, le reflexif *von len pe* (ils se prennent) n'est utilisé que pour le mariage.

> un Rom de Galați. Alors cela arriva pour la première fois. Chez tous nos Tsiganes, on ne se prenait pas d'argent, alors on se faisait des cadeaux, la noce, on mangeait. Et celui-là demandait dix-mille ! En 1970, c'était beaucoup d'argent. Le monde se demanda, mais pourquoi on ne prend aucun argent à personne, et lui il trouve un prétexte comme quoi Berdano l'avait enlevé, tu comprends ? Il l'avait enlevé, et il vient et lui demande cinq mille, et ce qui lui arriva, les autres commençèrent à le faire et maintenant on se prend de l'argent. »

Pour comprendre cette translation, il faut repartir du mariage par fuite ou par vol qui reste aujourd'hui le plus courant et qui est un idéal partagé par les hommes et les femmes. Les tractations se déroulent comme suit : après avoir publiquement disparu et avoir eu une relation sexuelle, le couple se présente chez le père de la mariée ; le garçon est accompagné de sa famille ; la fuite est discutée avec un *judecata* qui estime qu'il faut *pokinel* (payer) au père *o lažav la šaoràke* (la honte de la fille), autrement dit le dédommager. Giuseppe Beluschi Fabeni (2013 : 12) explique dans une description du mariage des Roms korturare :

> « La dissimulation des deux personnes déclare publiquement qu'elles ont eu une relation sexuelle et que la femme a perdu sa virginité, ce qui dégrade son innocence sexuelle, déshonore sa famille et entraîne une "perte" de l'autorité parentale sur elle (…) Dans la fugue, le paiement est une compensation du *lažav* et de la perte d'un membre du noyau domestique. » (Traduction de l'auteur).

Cette explication de la honte centrée sur le contrôle de la sexualité féminine est convaincante. Chez les Čoroman, la virginité est également perçue comme une qualité importante des jeunes filles. Je voudrais proposer une autre interprétation possible au déshonneur auquel l'auteur fait référence ou à « la honte de la fille », comme le disent les Čoroman. Dans le cas où un homme s'enfuit avec une femme mariée, il devra également payer à l'ancien mari pour « la honte de la femme ». Ici la honte n'est donc pas la perte de la virginité mais la trahison de la femme (ou l'abandon de son mari). Par métonymie, « la honte de la fille » serait la trahison de la fille et l'abandon du père. Dans cette interprétation, le sujet agissant de l'action dolosive est la fille et sa nouvelle famille paye pour elle.

Un élément clef des mariages par fuite ou par enlèvement est, comme le note Leonardo Piasere (2015 : 57), la difficulté à établir une distinction nette entre enlèvement de la mariée et fugue consentante lorsque les pratiques ne sont pas distinctes d'un point vue linguistique. Pour raconter les fugues, les Čoroman utilisent indistinctement les expressions : *vo našavel la*, c'est-à-dire « il l'enlève » et *vo* čorel *la*, soit, en français, « il la vole ». Dans ces expressions qui sont les plus courantes, le consentement de la femme ne peut être connu car l'homme est linguistiquement le sujet de l'action (Beluschi-Fabeni 2013). Les jeunes utilisent parfois l'expression *vo našel lasa*, ce qui signifie « il s'enfuit avec elle », dans laquelle transparaît le consentement de la jeune fille. J'ai même entendu : *voj* čorel *lo*, traduit en « elle le vole ». Ce retournement du masculin vers le féminin du sujet actif était utilisé dans un contexte d'énonciation particulier où un garçon soulignait la qualité de voleuse de sa cousine, qui avait réussi à faire partir avec elle un homme marié. Les femmes se racontent qu'elles ne laissent aux hommes que l'illusion du choix. L'utilisation de la magie permet, selon elles, de choisir son époux et de le forcer, tout en le lui laissant croire qu'il a décidé de la voler[18]. Pour reprendre les termes de Lockwood (1974 : 260 cité par Piasere 2015 : 69), le jeu entre le vol réel et le vol fictif de la mariée permet une « *social maneuverability* » dans les relations familiales.

Dans le cas du mariage de Rada et Sevastian, comme dans les autres mariages

18) Les recettes magiques sont transmises exclusivement entre femmes et me furent racontées par une amie qui a longtemps vécu avec les Čoroman. Ces recettes consistent à amener l'homme à transgresser le tabou des menstrues.

négociés que j'ai pu observer, les époux se sont d'abord choisis, indépendamment de la volonté des pères. Sevastian dit : « elle me voulait et moi, je la voulais. Les pères se sont mis d'accord rapidement ». Au fond, même si Toader, le père de Rada, était hostile au mariage, il était obligé par la volonté de sa fille. Il a donné ce qui lui aurait été arraché par la fugue. Il lui restait à négocier les modalités du mariage et le lieu de résidence des époux. Aussi, je pense que le mariage négocié est une forme d'atténuation et d'anticipation du mariage par fugue. Le versement d'une somme d'argent à cette occasion est assimilable au dédommagement du vol, qu'il vaut mieux avoir négocié en amont entre pères plutôt qu'être mis devant le fait accompli. Goody (1973 : 6) décrit le *prix de la fiancée* comme l'organisation d'un flux financier d'une famille à l'autre excluant les jeunes mariées. Ce flux entraîne un contrôle du choix du conjoint par la génération précédente. Le paiement par les pères effectué par les Čoroman est très différent car il découle de la centralité de la fugue, autrement dit de la volonté en dernière instance des jeunes. Le mariage devient une modalité d'émancipation, un premier acte autonome. Le père du marié paye, même lorsqu'il désapprouve le mariage car, m'a-t-on expliqué, « chez les Čoroman les pères se doivent de payer pour les bêtises des fils ». Cette norme mérite que l'on s'y arrête doublement. En premier lieu, fuguer avec une femme est une « bêtise » qui est grave pour les acteurs mais qui est vue avec le recul comme faisant partie d'un idéal de vie bien remplie. En second lieu, réparer les actes déviants des jeunes hommes et les protéger des conséquences les plus graves, permet aux pères d'être des pères en acte.

La dernière transformation majeure est celle de l'âge au mariage. Dans les années 1960, les mariages des Čoroman étaient plus tardifs que pour le reste de la population roumaine. Les hommes et les femmes se mariaient alors généralement autour de 20 ans (bien que l'on trouve des mariages dont les protagonistes ont entre 14 et 15 ans). Dans les années 1980, 1990 et 2000, les personnes se marient plus tôt. Les jeunes épouses ont souvent entre 13 et 14 ans et les garçons deux ou trois ans de plus. C'est le cas de Sevastian et Rada qui ont respectivement 14 et 19 ans lors de leur mariage en 2004. Ces cinq dernières années, les jeunes gens se marient plutôt la vingtaine passée, comme dans les années 1950, et l'écroulement de l'âge au mariage semble avoir été un état transitoire (Gamella-Mora, Beluschi-Fabeni & Gómez-Oehler 2015), qui a duré une trentaine d'années. Comment expliquer ce mouvement ? Une première interprétation tiendrait aux transformations macroéconomiques de la Roumanie. L'âge au mariage s'abaisse durant la crise économique de 1980 et la crise de transition ; alors que l'État recule, les mariages précoces permettent de sécuriser la famille et le groupe comme espace de solidarité organique. A l'inverse, l'amélioration économique globale des familles depuis une dizaine d'année, liée aux ressources de la migration et l'amélioration économique en Roumanie ferait reculer aujourd'hui l'âge au mariage. Une explication plus anthropologique consiste à lier l'abaissement de l'âge au mariage et la transformation de la forme de ce mariage. Contre intuitivement, le mariage précoce et l'instauration du prix de la fiancée à Tulcea sont des effets d'une première autonomisation des jeunes filles et de leur agentivité. Fuir jeune force la main du père qui ne peut pas organiser plus tard un mariage avec le gendre de son choix. Dans un monde où la frontière entre rapt et fugue n'est pas nette, un monde où les hommes se racontent qu'ils volent leurs femmes, se marier jeune était et reste, pour les femmes, aussi une manière d'éviter le viol et le mariage non consenti. Le recul de l'âge au mariage montre une capacité de décision accrue où il n'est plus nécessaire, comme cela était pour Rada, de se marier jeune pour pouvoir choisir son conjoint.

Conclusion

Peut-on parler de politique d'alliance chez les Čoroman ? L'alliance est pensée en tant que telle lorsqu'un mariage avec une famille éloignée est envisagé, mais penser l'alliance reste une question dépendant de la position d'Ego. Ainsi, pour Petrache, le père de Sevastian, le mariage de son fils est l'occasion de gagner un *xanamico* (co-beau-père) avec qui il s'entend bien. De même Sevastian fréquente maintenant les cousins de Rada. Pour Sultana, le mariage est vécu autrement : il ne s'agit pas de conclure une alliance avec une puissance étrangère mais bien de réconcilier les fragments d'un même tout, à savoir sa propre famille. Fermer les circuits consanguins de parenté est important pour les mères et grand-mères car cela permet de faire entrer leurs familles d'origine dans leur descendance, alors même que la virilocalité et la domination masculine ont tendance à les minorer (sans les nier). Les garçons ne poursuivent pas une politique de l'alliance. Les qualités individuelles des jeunes filles président à leurs choix : « est-elle belle ? N'a-t-elle pas trop d'ambition ? Sa famille est-elle prospère ? » Aussi l'exogamie leur est-elle plus facile. La vie sociale du mariage, de cette institution partagée par les femmes et les hommes, dépend du quiproquo fondamental existant entre eux sur le sens de cette institution. Chez les Čoroman, se marier c'est aussi, par-delà la famille, construire des sociabilités de genre entre le beau-père et son gendre, entre la belle-mère et sa bru. Après son mariage, Sevastian est parti directement faire une saison avec son beau-père dans le secteur agricole en Espagne. Cette uxolocalité inhabituelle était, probablement, le dernier acte d'apaisement concédé par la famille de Sevastian. Par la suite, une fois établies des relations d'amitié et de confiance entre Toader et Sevastian, le couple s'installa avec les parents de Sevastian, à Paris, et dans la cour à Tulcea. Seulement alors, Rada devint la *bori* d'Elisabeta.

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II. Marrying In, Out, and Sideways: Liberalization and Change

"Free Choice" in Marriage-Making among *Romanianized* Roma

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ABSTRACT

Anthropological research with Roma has consistently shown the significance of marriage-making practices in the reproduction of distinctiveness relative to non-Roma. Yet, my research with Ursari Roma—who identify as *Romanianized* Roma—indicates that marriage-making and family ideals can also bring out commonalities between Roma and non-Roma, thus complicating the notion of clear-cut Roma/non-Roma distinctions. In this article, I analyze how free choice claims assist Roma in negotiating similarity and distinction between "we-*Romanianized* Roma" and *other* Roma, non-Roma, and own ideals of the past. I suggest that the claimed freedom to choose whom to marry/love and the asserted capacity to choose between "viable" and "unviable" practices are central to the repertoire of self-identification as *Romanianized* Roma.

KEYWORDS

Free choice, marriage-making, *Romanianized* Roma, self-identification, Ursari.

Introduction

During my research in the town of Rotoieni,[1] I found that when talking about what made them similar to non-Roma and rather different from *other* Roma, the Ursari Roma there emphasized freedom of choice with respect to marriage-making practices and family ideals. In reference to "traditional" Roma/*țigani*, they positioned themselves as people who were free to marry whom they liked or loved; whose marriages were not arranged based on predetermined decisions made by the family; whose gendered relations and behaviors were not shaped by pollution rules; who didn't approve of child marriages; and for whom having their children schooled was important. It was in these terms that the "*Romanianized*[2] Roma"—as Roma from Rotoieni self-identified—explained what being a *Romanianized* Roma was about. In this paper I discuss the role of marriage-making practices and family ideals in the reproduction of this form of togetherness.[3] Subsumed to this inquiry, the question that the article revolves around is how claims and ideas of free choice assist *Romanianized* Roma in negotiating distinction and similarity relative to *other* Roma, non-Roma, as well as to their own ideals of the past.

In addition to the significance of marital practices and unions in the process of achieving Roma/Gypsy personhood (Okely 1975; Gay y Blasco 1997; Tesăr 2012), anthropological analyses indicated the centrality of endogamous marital alliances in the social reproduction of Roma togetherness and distinctiveness relative to both other Roma/Gypsies and non-Roma (Engebrigtsen 2007; Gropper 1975; Stewart 1997). In this sense, the argument made

1) This research in Rotoieni was possible with the financial support that I received during my PhD fellowship (2013-2016) from the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (Justus Liebig University, Giessen). Both the name of the town and the names of the interlocutors quoted in this article were anonymized.

2) Translated from Romanian *"românizați."* Since this is the term used by local Roma and non-Roma (so it is not a concept I propose as such), I italicize the word "Romanianized" throughout the article.

3) My use of "togetherness" is indebted to Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka who explains the difference between "belonging to" and "belonging together" –i.e. togetherness– based on the meanings that reside in the German terms "Zugehörigkeit"and "Zusammengehörigkeit" respectively (2011, 2013). According to Pfaff-Czarnecka, "belonging (to)" refers to socially negotiated individual experiences, while togetherness "draws upon and results in both intersubjectivity in the sense of a person's feeling/ enacting/ experimenting the sense of common belonging as well as in collective practices and collective representations" (2013: 13-14).

by Patrick Williams according to which the pattern of endogamy is essential for the reproduction of Parisian Rom sociality and "basic for maintenance of any such community" (1982: 317) has been extremely influential. In Rotoieni, while most Roma are married to other Roma from Rotoieni or its surroundings, their marriage-making practices and family ideals do not convey a set of moral considerations specific *only* to them. What underpins their self-identification as *Romanianized* Roma and the reproduction of this kind of sociality seems to be the commonalities and similarities between Roma and non-Roma marriage-making practices and values.

The discussion is also relevant because it calls into question the notion of an unambiguous distinction between Roma and non-Roma sets of moral orders. By putting perceived similarities—as claimed by the Roma in my research—at the forefront of this discussion, but also by dealing with the ambivalences that stem from these claims, I point at the permeability of boundaries between "us" and "them" and at the unfixed character of what "us" and "them" implies. While ethnographic research convincingly shows that "in-betweenness" is rather impossible for some Roma (see Stewart 1997: 93; Horváth 2012), the case of Ursari Roma in Rotoieni provides ways to think with other scholars (Gay y Blasco 2011; Theodosiou 2003, 2010, 2011) about conditions of possibility for "in-betweenness."

In the first section of the article I introduce the marriage-making practices and family ideals of Roma from Rotoieni. In a second step, I discuss the *Romanianized* Roma's ideas and claims of free choice and connect them to other Roma/Gypsy views on freedom tackled in the literature. We will see that the assertion of freedom of choice in matters relating to marriage and family ideals espouses the Roma's endorsement of normative prescriptions regarded as "mainstream." Next, I analyze three ethnographic encounters: with Iulian (the head of the family that hosted me for about four months in the area called *țigănie*); with Ioana (the wife of a man whose family is among the wealthiest Roma families in Rotoieni); and with Aurel (father of three teenage daughters, living in a house located far from *țigănie*). The exploration of these three encounters shows that my research participants self-identify as *Romanianized* Roma by pointing at their marriage-making practices and family ideals as what distinguished them from the so-called "traditional" Roma/*țigani* (Iulian), from their ideals of the past (Ioana), and from the Roma living in *țigănie* (Aurel). The examples analyzed will show that both the articulation of similarities and distinctions permeated by claims of free choice are not devoid of ambivalences.

It will come to the surface that idioms of "civilization" and a pervasive concern with "normality" are intrinsic to the repertoire of self-identification as *Romanianized* Roma. While my interlocutors' employment of the attributes "Romanianized," "civilized," and "just normal" seem to be used interchangeably, they index the following nuances: *Romanianized* Roma refers to "we, the Ursari Roma" in (or from) Rotoieni; "civilized" defines those Roma whose lives are shaped by social mobility trajectories, including migrating out of Rotoieni and moving out of *țigănie* (thus living among non-Roma); "just normal" refers mainly to the engagement with "average" practices and ideals of marriage-making.

The Roma in Rotoieni

Rotoieni is a north-eastern Romanian town located in Moldova, the region known as the poorest and the least "developed" of the Romanian regions. My first stay there lasted two months (March-April 2014), and I lived with a non-Roma couple in the center of town. From August to November of the

same year (and during shorter stays in April and September 2015), I lived in the hilly area known as *ţigănie,* with a Roma family: Maria, Iulian, and their four children (two daughters and two sons). Located on the south-western outskirts of the town, *ţigănie* was the area known as the Roma/*ţigani* neighborhood. Based on official figures provided by the local authorities in 2013, between eight and nine per cent of the town's inhabitants (fewer than ten thousand) identified as Roma.

There is a consensus shared by Roma and non-Roma that the local Roma are "the *Romanianized* kind" ("*din ăia românizaţi*"). In fact, a few non-Roma suggested to me that there was not much to research about the Roma in Rotoieni as they "had become more like *Romanians*"[4] and "had forgotten their traditions."[5] These warnings probably say more about my non-Roma interlocutors' projections regarding what I was "in search for," than about the local Roma. For a non-Roma librarian, conducting research among Roma in Rotoieni couldn't have led me to any other finding except their "laziness," "unworthiness," and "filthiness," particularly for the Roma who lived in *ţigănie*. But just as my being a non-Roma woman shaped my interactions with the non-Roma in town, so it did my relationships with the Roma. The ways in which they talked to me about free choice, marriage-making practices, and about themselves as *Romanianized* Roma are expressions of the rapport between them as Roma/*ţigani* and my person embodying the perspective of "particular producers of hegemonic visions" (Haşdeu 2016: 187). But I also consider the research situation to be an arena where people perform, negotiate, and imagine their identities (Sletto 2009), and get a chance to self-identify and dis-identify. Hence, in the analysis of my findings I follow Theodosiou's warning regarding "the cynical trap of treating the dynamics of social identification as nothing more than strategic" (2010: 344) and thus refrain from assigning a higher heuristic value to the "doings" than to the "sayings."

Another general consensus about the local Roma is that they are Ursari. We know about Ursari (bear leaders) that at the time of the emancipation (in the mid-nineteenth century) many were "slaves owned by the State" (also called "Gypsies of the Crown") and had to pay taxes regularly to the Crown (Achim 2004: 33). They had a nomadic life, lived in tents, and practiced activities like bear taming, rearing mules, and manufacturing iron objects (Achim 2004: 89). Despite the general view that the Roma in Rotoieni are Ursari, a few Roma mentioned that there were a handful of Lăieşi in town and that they did not differ much from the Ursari, except in the dialect they spoke.[6]

At the time of my research only a few parents were speaking to their children the Romani dialect spoken by local Roma/*ţigani* (the Ursari dialect). Classes of Romani were provided for the pupils in seventh and eighth grade at the local school known as the "*ţigani* school."[7] The teacher used to be one of Iulian's brothers, also the first Roma in town to get a university degree. But it was only a few parents that seemed to encourage their children to attend those language classes. Others dismissed them reasoning that the content taught in school was not the Romani dialect that they spoke in Rotoieni or that they (as parents) didn't want their children to speak Romanian with an accent (i.e. "a Romani accent"). In a way, one could say that the case of Ursari Roma in the region where I did fieldwork is one of those "theoretically more challenging cases of monolingual or apparently more assimilated Gypsy populations whose enduring distinction is a puzzle to both assimilationist states and cultural anthropology," a category that Stewart opposes to that of "the more exotic Romany-speaking Roma" (2013: 424).

Before the fall of communism, a shoe factory was the largest employer in the area. Most of the people of Roma background I met during my fieldwork proudly recalled

4) In this article, I italicize the word "Romanians" to flag those cases in which my Roma and non-Roma research participants used this term to mean "non-Roma" (i.e., the majority population), thus distinguishing it from the use of "Romanians" with the meaning of "citizens of Romania."

5) My feeling is that such statements did not convey a comparison between the local Roma in the past and in the present, but rather a comparison between the local Roma and the general stereotypes of Roma/*ţigani* who strictly keep to their "traditions." I am led to think this by the fact that such statements were usually followed by comparisons to Roma we-collectives (mostly *Căldărari*) that have never lived in Rotoieni.

6) Lăieşi belonged to the same category of "slaves owned by the State" and worked mostly as blacksmiths (Achim 2005: 33). One of the few times I heard about Lăieşi in Rotoieni was from a woman whose husband came from a Lăieşi family. As his family spoke no Romani at home, the couple ended up speaking only Romanian among themselves and so did their two sons.

7) The school is located near the central market, at approximately two kilometers from *ţigănie*. It is not supposed to cater only for Roma pupils, and, indeed, it is not only Roma children who attend classes there. However, as I was often told, non-Roma avoid having their children attend this school due to the high number of Roma students.

having worked or having had relatives who had worked in that factory. The making and selling of combs has been often referred to as "the traditional occupation" of Roma in Rotoieni, which nevertheless stopped being profitable shortly after 1989. At the time of my research, apart from those relying on welfare benefits, many Roma had been engaging in formal or informal commercial activities. Iași and Suceava are the main urban centers where they bought merchandise to sell mostly at the local market. While most Roma had official documents and licenses to conduct small-scale commerce, a few others peddled cigarettes at the local market, whispering to potential customers that they had cheap cigarettes for sale.

In the absence of formal employment, another income source was day labor in private construction and renovation projects, as well as farming, mainly in the local Lipovans' gardens. In Rotoieni, Lipovans are referred to as "the other ethnic minority" besides the Roma. According to figures from 2013 provided by the local authorities, Lipovans were just over eight percent of the local population. They are descendants of old-rite orthodox believers who objected to the religious reforms imposed by the Russian Orthodox Church and went into exile in the second half of the seventeenth century (Dobrinescu 2015). Well-known in the region for their activity as vegetables growers and sellers, the Lipovans play an important role in the local social and ethnic figuration, viewed as the opposite of the "lazy" and "unworthy" Roma/*țigani*. I was once told that an outsider could easily identify the Lipovan neighborhood by their large houses and gardens located in the north-western part of the town. By contrast, the households in *țigănie*[8] are rather precarious two- or three-room houses clustered along the railway tracks. While most Roma in town live in *țigănie*, a few Roma families live in other areas of Rotoieni, including in the Lipovan neighborhood. Not living in *țigănie* was often mentioned as one aspect that distinguished one's family from the Roma/*țigani* families who lived there (a point which I discuss more in-depth in the fifth section of this article).

8) At times, it was referred to as *ursărie* (derived from the ethnonym Ursari).

Marriage-making in and around Rotoieni

The practices around the formation of marital unions seem to vary greatly in Rotoieni. Among those who were part of a marital union, most of the Roma that I met (with ages ranging from 16 to 60) had or used to have Roma partners. Some had formalized their marriages, by having both a civil and a religious ceremony, while others had married only in church for "it is not the papers that keep us together," as a woman in her mid-fifties pointed out. This was not Maria and Iulian's case. Maria married Iulian in 1994, wearing a white dress, both in the Orthodox church and at the City Hall, as she recalled having always wanted her wedding to be like that—"I wouldn't have married otherwise." She was 22 and Iulian was 27 when the wedding took place. Like most of the other Roma in town, after getting married and before building their own three-room house, they lived in a small, three square meter kitchen (as Maria put it), in her parents' house located in *țigănie*. (photo)

For the younger generation, currently in their twenties, the wedding seemed to be a highly meaningful social event, as well as an expensive one that could be organized only by those whose parents could afford it. Those whose parents couldn't provide this support (whether Roma or not) aimed to go abroad, work there temporarily, and save enough money to organize a wedding at home. While such "dream weddings" are envisaged as events taking place in Rotoieni, so that relatives and friends can join in, I met a couple who organized their wedding and the baptism of their child as one single

Maria and Iulian's religious ceremony (digital photograph from the author's research archive. August 2014)

event in the Basque Country where they lived with their extended family on a rather permanent basis. Laura, the young man's mother, proudly showed me the wedding pictures and the invitation they used to spread the word about the event that took place in a banquet hall in Guernica, in Spain: "We wanted to be with our people, speaking our language [Romanian] (…) Both *țigani* and *Romanians* joined us… We had a wedding like the ones at home!" Laura recalled enthusiastically.

Marriages with Roma, preferably from the surroundings, seemed to be indeed what parents preferred for their sons and daughters. My interlocutors, who have lived for years in western Romania or Spain, expressed their preference that their children would find spouses from back home in Rotoieni. Lina, for instance, a woman I met in 2015 in Zamora, told me that she would have liked her first-born to have a Romanian wife instead of the Spanish *gitana* that he was (and still is) in a relationship with. Another woman whom I encountered in Zalău, Ioana, expressed similar concerns regarding her sons. The mother of two sons of marriageable age, Ioana mentioned that their family travelled often from Zalău to Rotoieni (mainly on occasions such as Christmas, Easter, or Saint Mary's celebration on August 15) so that the two young men "could find girls from home to marry." Ioana herself, who grew up in Zalău since her parents moved from Rotoieni to western Romania, met her husband, Radu, on one of her visits to Rotoieni and settled back there with him, until later when the couple moved together to Zalău.

I met couples who had been together since they were young (like Ioana and Radu), as well as couples where one of them had separated from a previous spouse (like Lina and her current partner). I heard stories about elopements and the commotion that such occurrences generated, but mostly tales about parents who met and agreed upon the future of their daughter and son who had reached marriageable age, after the two had previously "freely" decided to be together. As many Roma from Rotoieni engaged

in commercial activities that required travelling to western Romania to buy merchandise or sell it at local fairs, people found spouses beyond the boundaries of Rotoieni or Moldova. In any case, many of my research participants' stories about how they met, became a couple, and/or married were mostly narrated as stories about free-choice love matches and recounted in terms of "we liked each other" or "we fell in love with one another."

There were only a few Roma men and women who had or used to have a non-Roma partner, and the notion of mixed couples prompted mixed feelings. When they talked about how Rotoieni was an "intercultural town" where Roma, Lipovans and the others lived together harmoniously, both Roma and non-Roma suggested that the existence of mixed marriages was an indicator of this conviviality. In other instances, coming from a mixed family was a source of pride for the Roma individuals and was depicted in terms of social mobility. This resonates with Kovai's discussion (in this issue) about mixed marriages as a strategy to exit the realm of the socio-economically vulnerable and stigmatized *Cigány* position. Based on the example of Kisjutka, the daughter of a Romungro family from a Hungarian village who married a Hungarian man, Kovai shows how this strategy is tightly connected to the pressure to become Hungarian. Without implying that a symmetrical comparison is possible here, this example reminds me of a single man in his forties from Rotoieni who took great pride in having had a "*Lipovancă*"[9] mother. In contrast to Kisjutka, who continued to nurture and respect her relationship with her *Cigány* family and relatives while being part of a mixed marriage, this man, whose father was a Roma, insisted that he had nothing to do with "these *țigani*" from *țigănie*. I remember the uneasiness that his attitude caused in his sister-in-law and brother's house (located in *țigănie*), as he expressed that sense of superiority based on the fact that he had lived his entire life among the Lipovans (i.e., among the "hardworking" and "reliable" people of Rotoieni).

All in all, the idea of mixed couples did not seem to vex the Roma in Rotoieni, but occasionally, it did bring out considerations about "Roma morality." I was once told that "a *Romanian* survives among *țigani*, but a *țigan* doesn't [among *Romanians*],"[10] meaning that a Roma can hardly have a good life married with a non-Roma. In this logic, what differentiates Roma from non-Roma is a human quality specific to Roma, which allows them to treat with respect and accept a non-Roma in their midst, but which non-Roma completely lack. This brings to mind Maria's hope that her daughters (both underage at the time of my research) would marry Roma men, which, in her view, would protect them from experiencing racism inside their own families: "I don't want them to be called 'ugly *țigancă*' in any little fight they might have with their [non-Roma] husbands." By invoking the Roma/non-Roma distinction, Maria seems to signal that, even when *Romanianized*, a Roma woman cannot escape her position of "*țigancă*" that determines the possibilities of choice relative to whom she ought to marry in order to have a good life.

Freedom of choice?

Free-choice and love marriages (as opposed to arranged marriages) are mentioned in the anthropological accounts of the Roma in the context of discussions about Roma's concern with the "civilized" standards theoretically associated with non-Roma ways (Engebrigtsen 2007: 80-82; Stewart 1997: 82-91). For instance, Engebrigtsen (2007) notes that the preference for arranged marriages coexists with the approval of love marriage among the Rom from the Transylvanian village where she conducted fieldwork. Mostly endorsed by the Roma whose marital alliances were love-based,

9) The feminine singular of Lipovan.

10) Translated from the Romanian: *"Un român trăiește printre țigani, dar un țigan nu."*

Engebrigtsen suggests that this endorsement should be understood in relation to the non-Roma peasants' view of arranged marriages as uncivilized (2007: 82; see also Lemon 2000: 136). At the same time, the tendency to go along with love marriages (regarded as the result of individual choice) is justified by the high value that Roma attach to the individuals' personal autonomy and will power (2007: 81; see also Stewart 1997: 91).

In fact, transgressions of marriage-making rules are viewed in various Roma communities as individual choices (Engebrigtsen 2007: 79) that often lead to exclusion (Gay y Blasco 2011; Gropper 1975: 187-189; Olivera 2012: 186-188). Gay y Blasco (2011) presents the story of a Gitano woman, Agata, whose individual choices informed by the ideal of love-based marital unions had drastic consequences for her position within the Gitano community from Madrid. Agata's life choices (such as leaving her Gitano family and moving in with a non-Gitano man) conflicted greatly with the ideals of female behavior encompassed by the "Gitano law," which never ceased to be present in her life.

The idea of a "Ursari/Roma law" doesn't exist in Rotoieni, and much less the idea of a "*Romanianized* Roma law." The very fact that there is no such law dictating their marriage-making practices is commonly invoked by Roma as what makes them *Romanianized*. In opposition with other Roma we-collectives (as those referenced above) that tend to regard individual choices as interfering with their specific structuring principles of marriage-making, *Romanianized* Roma claim that it is mainly individual choices and the ideal of love-based marriages that structure their marital practices. Yet, we know that marriage-making as a mode of social reproduction of togetherness and distinctiveness is never about individual choices only, and that family is "a major intersection between personal choice and social compulsion" (Coontz 1988: 2). While they contrast their claimed freedom of choice with what they represent as "traditional" Roma social constraint strictly exerted on the individual, the Roma in my research do not talk about the normative prescriptions they submit to as coercive. As non-Roma adhere to similar prescriptions regarding marriage-making and family ideals, Roma in Rotoieni don't interpret the compliance to those prescriptions as a matter of social constraint, and instead frame it in terms of how things *ought* to be. Agata's Gitano relatives or the Rom in the hamlet where Engebrigtsen did fieldwork are just as likely to view the "laws" that shape their lives as non-coercive. The next vignette is meant to illustrate the idea of a common normative horizon that sets the parameters of what marriage-making *ought to* look like.

Maria, Iulian's wife, who hosted me in their house from *țigănie,* often expressed her concern with the fact that I was unmarried while in my late twenties. The mother of four, Maria regularly stressed that, as the years passed by, my chances to make a "meaningful" life—with a husband and children—also passed me by. On one occasion, she told me, less subtly than usual, that in order to find a husband I had to do the following: "[You should] go with your parents to spend your holidays in your hometown, maybe for a month or so (…) So that you can find someone like you [to get married with], from your town, from your social class, someone *Romanian*, educated… like you!" Members of my extended family (also living in north-eastern Romania) used to express concerns in a similar vein. I remember one illustrative example at my cousin's wedding in 2015, a quite extravagant event with around 165 attendees. The husband of one of my mother's sisters introduced me to a young man and made supposedly random comments regarding my unmarried status. He also suggested I should forget about that man living in Latin-America (with whom I had a long-distance relationship at the time) and start looking for a Romanian partner. Whether I wanted or not to get married, it

was suggested to me that my choices had to be channeled in the direction of a partner whose origins and social background were similar to mine.

There was nothing in what both Maria and my non-Roma uncle intimated that suggested I couldn't have married whomever I chose and loved, as long as I married or at least I didn't stay single. A long-distance relationship did not even seem to really count. Far from being isolated cases, these similar concerns expressed by Maria and my uncle convey a set of prescriptions for how a woman in her later twenties should and could find a husband. According to these prescriptions, a woman should find a male partner whose origins coincide with hers, who has a similar socio-economic background, preferably the same level of education and who belongs to the same we-collective as she does; that parents should participate in the process of finding someone for her to marry (and implicitly approve of that process and person); and that "finding someone to marry" and actually getting married are essential for one's fulfilment as a woman and as a social persona, because postponing it puts you at a disadvantage. As long as one considered these normative parameters, the freedom of choice and to marry whomever, whenever and however one wanted was granted.

The notion of freedom has been of particular interest for scholars concerned with notions of morality and ethics in anthropology over the last two decades. James Laidlaw (2002, 2014) is one of the most quoted anthropologists when it comes to ways of ethnographically describing "possibilities of human freedom" (2002: 315). Among those who draw on Laidlaw's perspective, Joel Robbins (2007) identifies two main tendencies in the way anthropology deals with notions of freedom. One of them defines social action as moral as long as it is anchored in the normative, whereas the other considers social action as moral only when people make free choices and are conscious of the fact that they do so. In Rotoieni, Roma represent their marriage-making practices and family ideals as revolving around freedom of choice regarding whom to marry, when or what rules should or should not regulate the couple dynamics. As already pointed out, this affirmation of freedom comprises a self-comparison with *other* Roma (particularly "traditional") that Ursari Roma view as being subjected to "unreasonable" social constraint. What is implied as "the choice" not to practice prescriptive rituals or not to comply with certain gendered norms (such as clothing-related) and the subscription to, as it were, non-Roma civility-oriented morals (such as girls' education before marriage) are thus affirmed as insignia of their distinction from these *other* Roma. But neither this disapproval of beliefs and practices that Roma in my research deem as coercive, nor their ideal of individual choice-based marriage indicate that Roma in Rotoieni are "less normative" than the *other* Roma or than the non-Roma, as the vignette above suggests.

Before moving on with the analysis of the three ethnographic encounters announced in the Introduction, I would like to recall Povinelli's conception of freedom (2006). According to the critical theorist, freedom has little to do with individual choice. It is mostly about a "socially significant normative shift that begins with struggles aimed at freeing persons from some *specifiable form of social organization or social injustice* within a field of tactical power but ends with a devotion to freedom as a radical and ultimate break from all social conditions/horizons" (2006: 184; italics in original). It seems to me that the assertion of their freedom of choice vis-à-vis the "traditional" Roma, deemed as hostages to Roma/*țigani* specific laws, is indicative of this sort of "devotion to freedom," which more likely indicates their *Romanianizedness* than it is an approval (even verbal) of those laws.

Differently than *other* Roma: "just normal"

According to Stuart Hall, identification is "a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption," a process that "obeys the logic of more-than-one" (1996: 3). As a "never completed process," identification as defined by Hall differs from the common understanding of identification as a gesture of "recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity" (1996: 2). Instead, it "operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of 'frontier-effects'" (1996: 3). It is this sort of discursive endeavor, one that binds and marks symbolic boundaries, that I contemplate here in relation to marriage-related practices as central in the repertoire of identification as *Romanianized* Roma/*țigani*. To illustrate, take the following excerpt from one of my first conversations with Maria's husband, Iulian:

> This [other] kind of *țigani* have gold coins at the weddings of their children. These are [their] unwritten laws. But not with us [*la noi*]… For us, the Ursari… Our children [sons and daughters] get married without any conditions; if they like each other, they will get married. We organize a wedding, an engagement, if possible, and all is fine. The *other* [Roma] communities consider the girl's beauty, her honor, her dowry, and then a [bride] price of I don't know how many gold coins is established (…) They [*other* Roma] meet in Costești at a festival, where all the relatives meet (…) But we, as Ursari, we don't practice such *țigănească* law [*judecata țigănească*] […] We are an *etnie* [ethnic group] that we consider ourselves (*sic*) to be *Romanianized țigani*. (Recorded conversation, March 2014)

The statement that daughters and sons of *Romanianized țigani* have liberty to get married without any prescribed conditions is followed though by an "if": they marry "*if* they like each other." The focus on choice-based matches conditioned by mutual feelings and self-made decision enables Iulian to illustrate what is the ideology related to marriage-making politics *la noi* as compared to the ideology *la ei*. Elsewhere I discuss the dichotomy conveyed by the two Romanian expressions: *la noi* and *la ei* (Racleș 2018). Their verbatim translation would be "at us" and "at them" meaning "in our places" and "in their places" respectively. As such, these expressions carry the idea of place-based togetherness that distinguishes those "here" who "are, think and do like us" as compared to those "there" who "are, think and do differently." In Iulian's account, *la noi* is meant to refer here to the Ursari we-collective whom he then levelled as *Romanianized țigani*. *La ei*, which in this excerpt is only implicitly referred to, points at Roma who engage (or are imagined to do so) in marriage practices regarded as unviable by Iulian, and, according to him, by Roma in Rotoieni. What is worth noting is Iulian's reference to laws (*legi*) said to determine the matches within *other* Roma communities. While *la noi* (among Ursari, thus *Romanianized* Roma) young people marry if they like each other, *la ei* (among *other* Roma) young people's marriages are bound to rules respected and secured by the members of those "communities" by virtue of their membership, thus turning into matter of constraint.

Interpretations based on anthropological research with Roma who, according to Iulian, "consider the girl's beauty, her honor, her dowry and (…) practice the '*țigănească* law'" would contradict his statement by arguing that the older generations' involvement in the match-making is far from being a matter of constraint. Instead, this involvement is essential for the reproduction of the specific Roma sociality and for the maintenance of the moral parameters that

frame political and gendered relations. In his book about Gabor and Cărhar Roma in Transylvania, Peter Berta writes: "According to the most common Roma ideology, this division of labour between generations is justified, because young people have only superficial knowledge of the social and economic situation of the families of potential husbands or wives and cannot decide of their own 'who will be a good, the right spouse for them'" (2019: 39). Without explicitly addressing the choice–social constraint continuum, Berta goes on mentioning that, in Iulian's terms, *la ei* (Gabor Roma) personal preferences and wishes are rather insignificant in matters related to marital alliances, as compared to *la noi* (*Romanianized* Roma), where choosing and liking each other are the preconditions for a match.

Iulian seems to set the freedom to marry whom one likes in absolute contrast with those "laws." But at the same time, he invokes a series of practical considerations that enable the *other ţigani*'s commitment to those laws and that, by extension, make the Ursari Roma's engagements with them impossible. By referring to "gold coins," Iulian implies that *la ei* people can afford, for instance, to pay a bride price. Meanwhile, as the Ursari cannot cover such expenses, the only 'choice' is to allow the youngsters to marry at will. Thus, the relation between choice and constraint treated as dichotomic by Iulian and others in Rotoieni surfaces as a convention since practicing those "laws" is inextricably interlinked with practical considerations.

The same dichotomic relation between constraint and free choice has been also suggested in relation to clothing (*portul*). As I mentioned before, clothing was indicated as what differentiated between "we, *Romanianized* Roma" and "they, *other* Roma" (*ăştialalţii*), with particular reference to women's long skirts and head scarves. Consider the following excerpt from my conversation with one of Iulian's male cousins who lives with his extended family in a household located in the Lipovan neighborhood:

> *Căldărarii, lingurarii, spoitorii, cortorarii* and *rudarii* [women] wear long clothes. We… [our] women wear regular skirts, over their knees, just *normal*. Also, their women don't go out without a scarf on their heads. Or… there's one more habit, [in the public sphere] women stay separated from their men. But we, *ăştialalţi*… we all stay together.[11] The woman with [her] man, they [the couple] don't separate. That's the way we do… not as *they* do: women on one side, men on the other side. (Recorded conversation, March 2014)

Clothing is intimated here as a token for gendered rules that structure the relations between men and women. While implying that the clothing codes index men's entitlement to exercise control over their wives' lives, Iulian's cousin emphasizes that *la noi* (the *Romanianized* Roma) the dynamic of the couple is not regulated by norms that require women to wear certain clothes or forbid them to dress in ways they like to.

These ways of talking about marriage-making where personal choice supersedes compliance with laws are based on the following logic: while the *other* Roma's compliance with "their laws" supposes constraint, siding with mainstream prescriptions is matter of being and acting "just normal." In Robbins's perspective, values do more than determine "the relative importance" of beliefs since they "serve to produce hierarchies of more or less valued elements" (2007: 296). In such a hierarchy of the Roma in my research, "normality" occupies one of the top positions. It is a valued element, which *Romanianized* Roma unceasingly reiterate as opposed to an excessive commitment to, as it were, outdated ceremonials, women's subjection to illiberal touchstones or excessive commitment to traditions. In the next section, I discuss these issues based on my

11) Lemon noted about settled Gypsies in Russia that they "value certain traditions—songs and dances—but eschew practices considered repressive and uncivilized, especially arranged marriages or gender-segregated tables" (2000: 136).

encounter with a Roma woman who moved from Rotoieni to north-western Romania years ago.

Differently than "before": free to go with the times

Ioana moved from Rotoieni to Zalău with her parents and four sisters when she was only a few months old. Like all her sisters, Ioana married a young man from Rotoieni after having met him at Christmas: "I grew up here [in Zalău], but we always went home [to Rotoieni] to spend the holidays. That's how I met Radu [her partner]; we were neighbors. My brothers-in-law are also from there, from Moldova. My sisters' husbands. We didn't marry men from anywhere else [but from home]." Shortly after marrying Radu, the son of one of the wealthiest families in Rotoieni, the couple started their life in Rotoieni and had their two twin sons. Later, when the children were seven, they moved to Zalău with the support of Ioana's parents.

In 2015, when I met them in Zalău, Ioana and her husband were in their late thirties. They were living in a fully equipped and modishly furnished three-room flat that they owned in town. Ioana's life seemed to gyrate mostly around the administration of the family's clothing store located in the city center. Throughout our conversation, I asked her whether she remembered the "Abduction from the Seraglio" kind of wall-carpets[12] that people used to hang on the interior walls of their houses in Rotoieni. That was when she first said: "Well… we have been *Romanianized*, I really don't see the point in that habit." To my question what it meant to have been *Romanianized*, Ioana cited a variety of doings or not-doings that distinguished them (her family) from *other* Roma. Most of the referenced doings or not-doings were the same markers of differentiation mentioned by the other people of Roma background that I had met in Rotoieni: a loosening of a strict allocation of gender roles; men-women equality in making family-related decisions; a relaxed attitude towards marriage-related ceremonials perceived to be backward; and the absence of clothing-related proscriptions. In her own words, in comparison to those *other* Roma:

> We [*Romanianized* Roma] wear... For instance, if I want to wear a short skirt, I go for a walk in a mini-skirt, what's the problem with that? Or there are persons who do not pass in front of the men, [I mean] women. They're dumb [*tâmpite*] … Why wouldn't I walk in front of the man? What if I do it? These are some issues... or for instance when the woman is pregnant she cannot... whatever. This is just... nonsense [*bălării*], *la ei*! *La noi*... we don't do that. If I want to sit down and have a drink with my husband, I do so! (Recorded conversation, June 2015)

Underlying her claim about her freedom to choose from different manifestations of physical intimacy—for instance, how to dress or how to perform her womanhood in her husband's or other men's presence—is the presumption that one can free oneself from social constraints. In fact, operating with this notion that one can free oneself from social constraints becomes one of the aspects that underpin the self-identification as *Romanianized* Roma. The social constraints implied are those seen as deriving from her position as a Roma woman, which Ioana sees as proscriptive to the extent of what choices can be made. But apart from assigning individuals their positions within the social structure, the family is also the sphere within which they negotiate those positions and redefine themselves as individuals and members of the society (Coontz 1988: 12-13). So, both the negotiation of the Roma woman position assigned to Ioana by her family and the redefinition of herself as *Romanianized* Roma happens within,

12) The practice of hanging wall-carpets was one of the main empirical foci of my PhD research.

through and in relation to the family. From Ioana's perspective, the redefinition as *Romanianized* Roma has to do with one's capacity—as individual and as family—to reflexively assess the social viability of certain practices or behaviors. In this logic, this capacity crystallizes in the ability to free herself from the constraints associated with practices that are unviable both from the perspective of the family and of the majority population. When Ioana stresses that she does not see a point in holding back from wearing a mini-skirt, from having a drink with her husband or merely from walking in front her husband, Ioana endorses her own capacity to discern between viable and unviable manifestations of intimacy, and moreover, to align herself along the lines of what she deems as the parameters of "normality."

Roma's claim of and aspirations to "normality" that I noticed in Rotoieni could be regarded as ways of implicitly countering the more or less tacit accusations of backwardness or excessive traditionalism, generically made by members of the majority non-Roma population. Whether we can see it or not as a response to such accusations, an idiom of civilization is employed by Roma who identify as *Romanianized* in relation to their capacity to set up their lives according to up-to-date standards of intimacy and sociality. This idiom of civilization as emancipation is not used only in reference to *other* Roma, but also to one's own past marriage-making ideals. Here is another insightful excerpt from my conversation with Ioana:

> Today I wouldn't like my daughter-in-law to go through the sheet test ceremonial to publicly prove her virginity, I wouldn't find it [right]… I even asked my son: 'Would you still marry someone if she wasn't a virgin?' And he said: 'Yes, I would, if I loved her, I would.' It's not the end of the world, everybody has the right to life. And if a stupid one [man] lied to her, telling her he loved her and that he'd marry her… Poor girl. But in the past, it wasn't like that. For instance, we were virgins, but nowadays it's not like that anymore. These are different times. (Recorded conversation, June 2015)

In this example the phrases "today" and "in the past" set the parameters of self-referentiality. While the excerpts discussed above illustrate the use of an idiom of civilization in reference to *other* Roma as those "whom we are not like," this one translates into "we are not who we used to be; times change, we change." This kind of self-referentiality resembles Cortorari's claim that "we've become civilized" discussed by Tesăr (2016) in relation to the mansions that they build, thus making visible for themselves and the non-Roma others their economic betterment and social upward mobility incompatible with living in tents. In a way, while the Cortorari mansions in Transylvania operate as "signs of upward mobility and of a project of *Gaže*-oriented civility" (Tesăr 2016: 194), Roma from Rotoieni resort to a free-choice-based way of making and conceiving of marriage and family to illustrate how they used to be and what they have become.

By locating love (as what drives marriage-making) above the related moral codes, Ioana asserts her and her family's capacity to distinguish between viable and unviable practices, and, by that means, her family's higher position on an imagined "civilization" ladder. This echoes the following "feedback loop" as conceived by Coontz: "As families assign people their initial place in the social order, so changes in people's place in the social order help them to reconstruct their families, while new family relationships help them to further affect their place in the social order" (1988: 14). The changes in the place assigned to Ioana by her parental family (a Roma woman) contributed to the reconstruction of her nuclear family into a "civilized" and, thus, *Romanianized* one. In turn, this "family reconstruction" shapes the relationship to her sons and is prone to affect the way of relating to her daughters-

in-law (i.e., by reconsidering the primacy of the virginity).

Ioana's kind of discourse seems to be at odds with anthropological accounts about other Roma populations' codes and practices related to gendered relationships, dressing code, and sexual behavior, which mark the symbolical boundaries between "we" (Roma) and "they" (non-Roma) (Gay y Blasco 1997; Grooper 1975; Haşdeu 2014; Okely 1983). Conversely, Ioana seems to cultivate those "terrains of commonality" (cf. Theodosiou 2011: 94) with those who are not "typically" complying with the moral rules of sexual behavior, the non-Roma. By debunking virginity as a precondition of marriage Ioana aligns herself and her family with another group, in contradistinction with those who treat premarital sex as evil. Yet, such discursive demystification of virginity and malleability regarding premarital sex do not automatically amputate the relevance of such rules in people's lives. While labelled as an "unviable practice," the significance of virginity seems to reside now in its quality as an ideal of the past belonging to the *Romanianized* Roma.

Ioana's comment that "now it's not like that anymore," after mentioning that her sisters and herself married before ever having had sexual intercourse, is loaded with a sort of nostalgia vis-à-vis a normative shift. This takes me to suggest that it is not the value of guarding virginity as such that Ioana reconsiders and refutes. What she reconsiders is the viability of practices that derive from this valuation of women's virginity, which in her view reproduces an oppressive and socially punitive treatment of women. What seems to be at stake here is a devotion to an ideal of freedom manifested by Ioana as a means of self-fashioning and positioning herself as someone who has the freedom and capacity to righteously assess the world that surrounds her and her family. Povinelli notes that the power of self-sovereignty resides in its ability "to make a personal event a normative mission and a civilizational break" (2006: 191). Ioana's stance provides a means to think particularly about such a "civilizational break" that many Roma in Rotoieni point at and enact when it comes to their self-identification as *Romanianized* Roma and dis-identification relative to *other* Roma.

What is notable about my research participants' claims is this link between their attribute as "civilized" people and the capacity to "freely" choose, thus circumventing constraint. This link is quite counterintuitive given that internalizing self-restraint is essential in processes of negotiating inferior positions (Elias and Scotson 1994), as well as in "civilizing processes" (Elias 2000). In fact, anthropological research has documented Roma/Gypsy views according to which compliance with clear-cut norms and self-restraint relative to shared taboos is what distinguishes between "we-the civilized ones" versus "they-the uncivilized Gadzo." For instance, the reason why Mānuš consider themselves civilized and the Gadzo uncivilized or "barbarous" (Williams 2003: 31) is the respect for the dead that the Mānuš ought to pay through various forms of abstinence and observance of taboos. Another example is the view expressed by an elderly Gitano man from Jarana, according to which the Gitano were the "truly civilized" as they "knew how to live a proper, decent, human life" in contrast to the Payos who don't (Gay y Blasco 2003: 211).

In the ethnically mixed and stigmatized neighborhood in Bucharest where Pulay conducted his research, "the claim of being 'civilized'" does not point essentially to a Gypsies/non-Gypsies distinction. But it does refer to a concern with being "an obedient citizen" (2017: 97). In Pulay's account, "civilized" is one of the "behavioural codes" that play a central role in people's "negotiation of worth and their quest for social distinction" (2017: 99). For the Roma in my research, the claim of being civilized is also part of such a process of reproducing social distinction from *other* Roma and

difference from their own ideals of the past. But while they signal this distinction by asserting free choice, Roma from Rotoieni seem to recraft 'old' prescriptions (that derive from their belonging to a Roma we-collective) in light of practices and ideals shared by non-Roma. The process of recrafting these 'old' and allegedly unviable prescriptions facilitates their assertion of similarities with non-Roma.

Beyond the "*ţigănească* mentality": choosing "school before boyfriends"

In Rotoieni, the affirmation of a "moral superiority" relative to *other* Roma as legitimized by non-Roma co-citizens (see also Stewart 2013: 422) has been also articulated in connection to the importance of schooling. Roma would often emphasize that school should prevail in girls' lives before they should be thinking about boyfriends and marriage. A similar observation was made by Theodosiou (2011) in regard with the Parakalamos Gypsies (in north-western Greece) who did not want to be confused with what the term *Tsinganoi* epitomized.[13] One of those aspects stressed by the Parakalamos Gypsies as what made them different from *Tsinganoi* was the fact that their children were brought up like *Balame* children and thereby went to school like *Balame* children (*Balame* being the Gypsy term for non-Gypsy) (Theodosiou 2011: 96).

"School before boyfriends" insisted Aurel, father of three daughters and husband of Sorana. His family lived for about ten years in his parents' two-room house located relatively far from *ţigănie*. The couple's first born, Gianina, is currently twenty-one years old and recently got engaged. On the afternoon that I spent with them in October 2014, our chat revolved around the variety of temptations that they depicted as prospective distractions from what they insisted the girls' priority should be: school. Monopolizing the chat, Aurel turned it into a sermon to his daughters, albeit held in a joking tone. He regarded school as the only way they could potentially become financially independent women and capable to contribute to their future families' income. Hence, school had to come before boyfriends and "facebooks" (as he put it). Gianina, who was fifteen at that time, was the main target of Aurel's remarks.

Seeking my backup, he asked me to count how many years I had studied and to tell whether doing both—falling in love and focusing on studies—was feasible. After we did the calculation, the father concluded that my long-distance relationship was a proof that allowing oneself to fall in love and focusing on one's studies and career were not exactly compatible. In a way, Aurel seemed to deem my long-distance relationship a result of this incompatibility and of the fact that I had given priority to "school over [falling in] love."

Earlier in the conversation, addressing Gianina directly, he said that he of course agreed that she could have a "friend or something" ("*un prieten, un amic… ceva*") when she would be 17 years old.[14] The "friend" was supposed to be someone Gianina could exchange texts and Facebook messages with, but "nothing more than that: a friend." "It's something normal," the father put it, while emphasizing that the "friend" should not impede her focusing on studies and aspiring to "become someone." In addition, both the father and the mother stressed that Gianina should be constantly vigilant so as not to become the subject of gossip for anyone in town—whether Roma or non-Roma. Inappropriate behavior in public space, such as kissing and hugging the "friend," was referred to as what would easily make Gianina the subject of gossip in town. The father went on, recalling: "Just like I did when I saw that [non-Roma] friend of yours. Remember? I knew that the train station was in a different direction, not

13) In the Greek context the term *Tsinganoi* refers to Gypsy groups represented as nomadic, non-local (Theodosiou 2010: 329), who inhabit a site "of drugs and crime; an irredeemably Gypsy, poor, illiterate and violent place given to all sorts of excess, degradation and decay" (2011: 96).

14) The mother insisted that Gianina should not have a "friend" before the age of 18.

there [in the park] (…) Loitering in the park [after school] and waiting for her boyfriend to come, hug and kiss [her]. Is that still school?"

This conversation sheds new light on the discussion about freedom and constraint, in particular on the normative parameters that outline the limits within which choices can be made. On the one hand, Gianina's parents deem that "falling in love" prevents the youngsters[15] from focusing on school. In the elaboration of this view, I was not only the reference that Gianina's parents used in order to "show" their daughters that "falling in love" and school achievements were not compatible. Regarded as a non-Roma who had put studies above "boyfriends," I also became the audience in front of whom they could mobilize those socially desirable views that made them different from the Roma in *țigănie*. In contrast to Iulian and his male cousin, Gianina's parents did not refer to *other* Roma, meaning "traditional" Roma, when pointing at those aspects that made their family different, but to the Roma in their proximity—the Roma in *țigănie*. More precisely, they did not speak about "we-Ursari Roma" vis-à-vis "traditional" Roma, but about "we-(*Romanianized*) Roma" vis-à-vis the stereotyped representations about Roma/*țigani* that operate locally and more broadly in Romanian society.

On the other hand, both parents agreed that "falling in love" (even at an age that they approved of) was what might turn a young woman into the subject of gossip in town if an "improper behavior" was involved. The parents' approval of a "friend" (*amic*) excludes sexual intimacy and comes with other restrictions meant to prevent any "improper behavior" (i.e., physical proximity such as kissing and hugging in public areas) and therefore the gossip. The fact that the danger of gossip resided in the family's relations to both *țigani* and Romanians suggests that the normative prescriptions regarding teenagers' public displaying are endorsed by both Roma and non-Roma. Another aspect that is worth emphasizing here is that "falling in love" at an approved age (17-18 years old) and engaging in friendship relationships with young male "friends" is framed in terms of normalcy. One could assume that the "abnormal" (and probably unapproved) thing to do would be to delay the formation of a heterosexual couple, to be single for a dubiously long period of time or, very likely, to be in a long distance relationship, as also suggested by Maria and my uncle, whom I mentioned previously in this article.

Aurel sporadically alluded to Gianina's lack of involvement in household chores. With the intention to mock her, he asked me whether I wanted coffee with the disclaimer that my chances to get a proper coffee were low. While teasingly finger-pointing at his daughters' lack of acquaintance with the household chores, he did mention his wife's merit of having brought up their children "properly": "I thank God and I thank my wife. I don't want to praise her to the skies, but she did well what she did; [their daughters] have been educated, always neat, with their homework done—they never went [to school] without their homework (…) But this didn't bring us money." This last remark referred to their previous complaint, namely that Sorana had never worked outside the household until recently. As Aurel's salary alone was not enough to cover the household's expenses, they decided that Sorana needed to get a job to supplement the family's income.

What is of particular relevance is Aurel's retroactive self-assessment according to which having insisted that his wife focused solely on raising their children was the "stupid thinking [*gândire proastă*]" of a young man: "I said to myself that I'd go to work and my wife would stay home, but, to put it straight, this was *țigănească* mentality [*mentalitate țigănească*], having a wife who stays at home, washing, cleaning, grooming the children, so that they don't go out unkempt [*jegos*]." This sort of self-assessment is symptomatic of how Aurel sees his own family. "We

15) He told us that, as a teenager, he stopped being interested in school once he started dating.

are different, I told you," repeated Aurel several times during our chatting while Sorana and Gianina approvingly supported his utterances. But as hinted at above, the distance that they take does not primarily translate into a social distance from the Roma in *țigănie* (including their relatives and acquaintances). It is rather a distance that is meant to mark the differences between their family and the stereotypical representations of Roma/*țigani* that revolve around notions of filthiness, backwardness, unreliability, and women's subordination to men's authority. Aurel's reference to the "*țigănească* mentality" as belonging to his past, but not to his present, points to the process he went through after he moved from the area near *țigănie,* where they used to live until Gianina was a few years old. He recalled the times when they used to live near *țigănie* as a set of episodes involving fights, trickeries, and the imprudent behavior of the *țigani* living there. Aurel asserted that what was acceptable for the people living in *țigănie*, was not acceptable for them, as they wanted a "normal" life for their daughters, far from those "uneducated *țigani*."

Part of this repertoire of distinctiveness was also the fact that Gina, Aurel's mother-in-law, is a non-Roma. Gina and her late husband had met in Suceava, in 1975, when she was sixteen and he was eighteen. They got acquainted through his uncle who, as Gina recalled, strongly encouraged the young man to get together with her for she was a "very good girl." Three days later, the betrothal took place and Gina moved to Rotoieni to start her new life. Ever since, Gina has lived in *țigănie*. But unlike Gina, who expressed a sense of belonging to *țigănie* and for whom her house there constituted her home, Aurel conveyed mostly aversion towards that lack of discipline and morals which he and others in Rotoieni (Roma or non-Roma) assigned to the Roma in *țigănie*. During that and other conversations that I had with Gianina, she mentioned that, when she visited her grandmother in *țigănie*, girls of her age would throw at her comments like "You think you're *Romanian* [*te crezi românc*ă*?*], or what?" Gianina and her family interpreted this kind of comments as symptoms of the envy that the Roma in *țigănie* felt and nurtured in relation to the socially mobile Roma, as they saw themselves. In any case, such comments indicate that being *Romanianized* Roma does not suppose thinking about oneself as "less Roma/*țigan(-că).*" If it seems to happen, it does not remain socially unsanctioned.

The identification as *Romanianized* Roma, which operates as the enactment of the social distance from Roma in *țigănie* or from *other* Roma social forms, refers thus to a process. As Judith Butler intimates, identification is not something that "happens," for identification "does not belong to the world of events" (1993: 105). Quoting Butler further, "identifications belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal cohabitation (…) they are incessantly reconstituted and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability" (*ibid*.). To the repertoire of identification as *Romanianized* Roma pertain such efforts of alignment that imply a disapproval of marriage-related practices stereotypically considered to be specific to Roma/*țigani* and a reiteration of aspects historically and socio-politically constituted as "typically" non-Roma.

Togetherness in between?

In this article, I discussed the role of marriage-making practices and family ideals in the reproduction of togetherness for *Romanianized* Roma. I have shown that Roma's claims and ideas of free choice assist them to reproduce mostly distinction from *other* Roma and similarity to the non-Roma, as well as to articulate difference from who they or their kin were in the past. Empirically, being *Romanianized* Roma

means being in the social world, thus doing things in accordance to what is understood as "normal": marrying whomever, whenever and however one wants; abandoning and invalidating marriage-making practices regarded as backward and/or coercive; dressing in "normal clothes"; organizing intimacy "normally," thus making marriage "normally." Ideas of normality are reiterated in opposition to the ways of *other* Roma while being articulated as compatible with, as it were, "non-Roma ways." Nonetheless, being *Romanianized* Roma implies neither being the same as non-Roma, nor being "less Roma." Instead, it means to make a life that fits into a normative horizon often hegemonically prescribed and reproduced that gives the measure of what a "civilized" and "normal" life implies. Analytically, "*Romanianized* Roma" designates a repertoire of identification—discourses and enactments—that enables Roma to imagine and reproduce social distances between themselves and what is locally understood as the ways of *other* Roma/ *țigani,* as well as between who they are *now* as compared to who they used to be *before*. It is a means by which they negotiate the perceived boundaries between themselves as *Romanianized* Roma and non-Roma (as those who claim that they, by default, engage in "normal practices"), cultivating similarity to rather than distinction from the latter.

Keeping in mind that "analytical categories and concepts should never be mistaken for reality" (Olivera and Poueyto 2018: XVI), this article does not claim that my research participants' self-identification as different from *other* Roma might constitute a scholarly argument according to which Ursari Roma would be essentially different from other Roma populations described in the literature by virtue of being *Romanianized.* Building on their self-identification, however, the article suggests a three-fold contribution to cognate debates. Firstly, while a great amount of anthropological studies with and about Roma have shown the immense significance of marriage practices in the reproduction of distinctiveness from non-Roma, this paper opens a discussion about ways of making marriage that enable the articulation of similarities to rather than differences from non-Roma. Secondly, the article contributes to considerations of freedom and individual choices. Ethnographies (Engebrigtsen 2007; Stewart 1997) suggest that Roma/Gypsies tolerate transgressing marriage-making social norms up to a point in light of the value that they assign to the individuals' personal autonomy and will power. The case of the *Romanianized* Roma brings to the fore a view of individual choice as a structuring principle of marriage-making practices and family ideals. The freedom of choice here is not only about choosing whom to marry and love, but also about "choosing" between viable and unviable marriage-making ideals and practices. Yet, this viable/unviable dialectic suggests that the capacity and freedom to "choose" is necessarily tied to a normative horizon. Lastly, marriage-making practices and family ideals asserted as what makes one—as individual and as family—both different from and similar to Roma and non-Roma provide means to think about the porosity of boundaries and the conditions of possibility of in-betweenness. Based on the findings that I presented and interpreted here, I cannot argue that *Romanianized* Roma togetherness is a grey area between, as it were, a Roma and a non-Roma ideal type. Instead, the tensions, ambiguities and continuities that fluctuate at the intersection of Roma and non-Roma lives (as in Rotoieni) lead me to concur with Lemon's remark that "Roma do not live between 'two worlds' but in one world of many overlapping spaces" (2000: 211).

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Girl from Argeș region/ Muscel. Unidentified photographer, cca. 1910. Ethnological Archive of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Inventory no. CS-0596.

Lăutari playing music at a Romani wedding on the outskirts of Bucharest, approx. 1927-1928.
Photo by Iosif Berman (1890-1941). Ethnological Archive of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, inventory no. B-5604.

Lăutari playing music music at a Romani wedding on the outskirts of Bucharest, approx. 1927-1928.
Photo by Iosif Berman (1890-1941). Ethnological Archive of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, inventory no. B-5605.

"*Lãutar* Space": Marriage, Weddings, and Identity among Romani Musicians in Romania

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ABSTRACT

This article treats, through the lens of marriage and nuptial practices, how *lăutari* (professional male Romani musicians who perform at Romanian weddings) and their families self-identify as *Romanianized* Roma. *Lăutari* assume hybrid forms of identity, drawing on both traditional Romani and mainstream Romanian culture as they perpetually create and recreate their own composite sense of "*lăutar* space." *Lăutari,* like many Roma, preserve basic norms of traditional matrimony, and weddings provide an arena in which they express emblems of Romani culture. Yet *lăutari* also invoke their "elite" status vis-à-vis "other Gypsies" by refuting what they view as "backward" marital praxes. Moreover, they both appropriate certain Romanian nuptial traditions as well as sustain a basic distrust of Romanians as non-Roma. While *lăutar* culture has evolved significantly over the twentieth century, younger family members are carving out their own shifting forms of "*lăutar* space" in unprecedented ways, often fueled by educational opportunities. This article examines how *lăutar* identity is nurtured through a dynamic merging of Romani and Romanian cultures and how marriage and wedding practices inform these intersections.

KEYWORDS

Lăutari [Romani musicians], identity, marriage, weddings, hybridity, process.

Lăutari (sg. *lăutar*) are professional male Romani musicians. They self-ascribe as a distinct community in ethnic as well as occupational terms: Romani performers who have long monopolized traditional music-making, especially for Romanian society. *Lăutari* were originally slaves in the Romanian Principalities: along with other Roma who migrated north, they were systematically subjugated by the state, church, and nobility starting in the late fourteenth century (Achim 1998). As male musicians, *lăutari* were settled house slaves (*ţigani de vatră*) who performed for upper-class Romanians and formed a select rank among the enslaved (Beissinger 1991). Following the full abolition of slavery in 1864, *lăutari* continued to pursue music-making for public consumption, a niche that still exists today. They have cornered the market on traditional music-making in southern Romania for generations, earning most of their livelihood performing at Romanian weddings (Beissinger 2005; 2016). *Lăutari* are indispensable musicians and "guardians of tradition" at nuptials for Romanians.

Lăutari perpetuate their occupational skills through the male kinship line. Sons begin to learn the art of music-making as young boys within the home, often assuming professional standing by the time they are in their late teens. Playing instruments is a gendered activity reserved

for men, while singing can be pursued by both male and female family members; some *lăutar* wives sing with their husbands' ensembles. "*Lăutar*" as a term incorporates ethnicity, gender, and vocation (Beissinger 2001). Strictly speaking, *lăutari* are Romani men who make music as their occupation. But another dimension is also critical to understanding *lăutari*: *lăutar* family members. They are primarily the wives and daughters of *lăutari*, who identify with the distinct culture of music-making perpetuated by the husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers in their midst. Among *lăutari,* families provide the gendered milieu in which music performance as a calling is perpetuated from father to son; wives and mothers are expected to enable their husbands' and sons' careers.

1) All quotes are from conversations (between 1998 and 2019) with *lăutari* and their family members in Romanian, which I have translated into English.

Most Roma in Romania recognize the fundamental role of marriage as constitutive of personhood, a conviction that permeates and reinforces *lăutar* culture as well. At the same time, *lăutari* reject various aspects of traditional Romani wedlock, viewing them as "uncivilized" and "old-fashioned," while they appropriate certain features of Romanian matrimony. *Lăutari* occupy a complex, intermediary position in society. They self-ascribe not only as superior to "other," "traditional" Roma but also as quasi-assimilated Romanians—due largely, I argue, to their proximity to majority society through music-making, especially at weddings. Indeed, *lăutari* proudly self-identify as "the most Romanianized (cei mai românizați) of all Roma."[1] These distinctions are reflected in their understanding of marriage and celebrations of it. I explore, in this article, how Romani and Romanian marriage and wedding practices intersect among *lăutari* and their family members and how this informs their self-identification as both "Romani" and "Romanian." Based on ethnographic fieldwork, I examine how marriage furnishes a case in point for considering the role that *lăutari* and their family members assign themselves as *Romanianized* Roma. My discussion focuses on *lăutari* who came of age in the communist period as well as their "millennial" sons and daughters, who likewise self-ascribe as Romanianized but often in contemporary ways that depart from those of their parents.[2] Millennials in *lăutar* families now have educational opportunities that earlier generations did not. Accordingly, some of them are evolving in their views of marriage and family and making changes in their lives that involve increased contact with mainstream Romanian society. The concept of hybridity in identity-formation, including the notion of a "third space" in-between other discrete categories (Bhabha 1994), provides a useful framework for understanding the image that *lăutari* construct of themselves in society. It is primarily traditional Romani and mainstream Romanian communities that define the "symbolic boundaries" (Hall 1996: 3) within which *lăutari* create and perpetuate a composite "third space," what I term "*lăutar* space." *Lăutari* regularly interact with Romanians through performance in ways that many other Roma, whose worlds are less integrated into majority society, do not. It is these Roma whom *lăutari* view as "traditional" (such as depicted in Achim 1998; Engebrigtsen 2007; Tesăr 2012, 2018; and Berta 2019). As musicians, *lăutari* represent and enjoy a "plurality of identities" (Tremlett 2009). As I have repeatedly observed, *lăutari* never cease proclaiming and upholding their distinctly multifarious identity, one that overlaps in diverse ways with both (high-status) Romanians as well as (lower-status) Roma. As Stuart Hall maintains, identification is "a construction, a process never completed—always 'in process'… [It] is in the end conditional, lodged in contingency" (1996: 2-3). Hybrid identity as "*lăutar* space" is open-ended, constantly evolving, perpetually ambiguous. Being *lăutari* is not a static condition but rather an ongoing "journey" of belonging and becoming.

2) Millennials were born roughly between 1981 and 1996.

I explore this "journey" through the experiences of several generations of *lăutari* and their families who simultaneously embrace as well as reject both Romani and Romanian cultural influences in their lives. My sample consists of twenty *lăutari* and their families, many of whom I have known for over two decades, as well as a secondary group consisting of other *lăutari* with whom I have had more sporadic contact over the years. I have attended numerous weddings and other events at which *lăutari* perform in south-central Romania and have conversed at length with them and their families in their homes.[3]

I begin, in the following pages, with a brief discussion of *lăutari* as *Romanianized* Roma and then examine *lăutar* marriage and weddings through the lens of "traditional" Romani as well as "mainstream" Romanian nuptial practices. I argue that *lăutari* (and *lăutar* family members) inhabit and express hybrid identities of "*lăutar* space"—crafted as a result, in large part, of the niche that they occupy as Romani musicians hired at Romanian weddings. I explore how "*lăutar* space" is a dynamic arena where ethnic and cultural "identities" intersect and where musicians and their families are continually changing, updating, and redefining their lives and expectations. My focus is on how marriage norms and customs performed by *lăutari* draw from both Romani and Romanian ethnic and cultural experience, creating a "third space" that is uniquely *lăutar*.

Lãutari as *Romanianized* Roma

Lăutar relations with both Roma and Romanians are complicated: *lăutar* identity is a constant negotiation between Romani and Romanian "spaces." Depending on context, *lăutari* exploit but also eschew various ethnic and cultural emblems that either benefit or hinder their quest for status, recognition, economic security, and a sense of belonging. *Lăutari* and their families express and nurture deep, organic ties to Romani culture. Life for them is experienced through the joy of sharing, abundance (especially of food), and hospitality (Stewart 1997; Olivera 2016; Berta 2019); presentism or living for the moment (Stewart 1997; Gay y Blasco 1999; Day et al. 1999); and the power of music (Stoichiţă 2008; Bonini Baraldi 2013). But *lăutari* also self-identify as an elite within Romani society, sometimes voicing distance from "other Gypsies" whom they view as old-fashioned and whose cultural markers are vastly different from their own.[4] Indeed, self-ascribed "civilized" Roma not infrequently elevate themselves in their discourse above other subgroups (Gay y Blasco 1999; Olivera 2016; Grill 2016). *Lăutari* and their family members often belittle other Roma (such as Spoitori ["Tinkers"], Ursari ["Bear-tamers"], and Căldărari ["Coppersmiths"]), not to mention "other backward Romani ethnic groups," as an accordionist recently lumped them together for me.

This sense of distinction among *lăutari* is often coupled with their avowed affinity to Romanian culture, quasi-assimilation, and self-professed *Romanianized* Romani status. "Romanianized," a term used among *lăutari* and other Roma, refers to perceived similarities to Romanians (see also Racleş, in this special issue, on R*omanianized* Roma). *Lăutari* frequently express kinship with majority society, declaring that they are "just like Romanians" when it is a question of being "civilized." This is articulated in terms of cultural behavior such as speaking Romanian as opposed to Romani, dressing "like Romanians" instead of traditional Roma; and/or rejecting "outmoded" marital traditions undertaken by "others" in the Romani community (Szeman 2018). Due to their profession, *lăutari* have mingled with Romanian society for centuries and have been vital to their celebrations and entertainment. Familiarity

3) I have spent periods in the field virtually every year since 1998 among *lăutar* families in Bucharest and surrounding towns and villages. I wish to express my gratitude to all of them (whose names will remain anonymous) for so graciously sharing their lives with me. I also thank the International Research and Exchanges Board and the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research for their support of my fieldwork.

4) I use the term "Gypsy" when my interlocutors do, but otherwise employ "Roma" and its derivatives.

with Romanian society provides them a source of cultural capital. Yet *lăutari,* like most other Roma, also see Romanians as their quintessential "other." It is axiomatic that Roma acknowledge a deep division between themselves and non-Roma (*Gadže*) (Hancock 1991). What Michael Stewart calls deep "disregard and … disdain for the non-Gypsy way" (1997: 13) widely informs Romani views. Roma (*lăutari* included) not infrequently consider non-Roma parsimonious and unsympathetic (Stewart 1997; Engebrigtsen 2007; Scheffel 2010). *Lăutari* virtually always complain, after performing at Romanian weddings, that they have been underpaid. And with other transactions, they typically feel that non-Roma lack generosity and never deliver "enough" (Stewart 1997). Furthermore, *lăutari* point out that Romanians are "cold" and "unfeeling" when it comes to making music. *Lăutari* perpetually juxtapose this with their own "exclusive, innate" talent and musical abilities as "Gypsies," a dimension of *lăutar* identity that they market and exploit as a useful prop for their profession (van de Port 1999; Silverman 2012).

Marriage

Marriage as the primary means among Roma to achieve personal fulfillment and realize the traditional role expected of them has long been recognized (Sutherland 1975; Miller 1975; Liégeois 1987; Okely 1996; Gay y Blasco 1999; Kovai 2011). For many Roma in Romania, endogamy, patrilocality, family and offspring, early-age and arranged marriage, and permanent alliances form the pillars of matrimony (Grigore 2001; Engebrigtsen 2007; Voicu and Popescu 2007; Tesăr 2012, 2018; Berta 2019). Wedlock, which for most Roma is not viewed separately from family (having children), is an expected and inevitable social process. Indeed, in "traditional Romani families, the scope of marriage is the continuity of the *neam* [subgroup]" (Grigore et al. 2005: 66). Marriage is regarded as a permanent relationship, not only for the couple but also for the families involved. It comprises the central social structure within Romani life. *Lăutari* subscribe to this world view; it is fundamental to their ethos. A rural *lăutar* recently told me, when his daughter was already in her early thirties and still unwed (and, he thought, might never marry and have a family), that unless she got married in the near future, "Nothing will make any sense to me anymore!"

How *lăutari* understand wedlock corresponds in large part to praxes among traditional Roma. *Lăutari* embrace in-group marriage, virilocality, children as constitutive of family, co-parent-in-law bonds, and the stigma of divorce. At the same time, contemporary *lăutari* proudly reject particular Romani nuptial practices (early-age and arranged marriage as well as marital alliances), thereby aligning themselves with Romanian society. The amalgam of norms that *lăutari* observe furnishes a telling reflection of how they self-identify as a distinctive, hybrid community and construct "*lăutar* space." Moreover, certain patterns are also shifting as some millennials intermarry, refuse to dwell in parental households, and are wedding—and having children—significantly later than previous generations.

Fundamental to questions of who marries whom, endogamy among Roma has long been perpetuated as a mechanism for in-group maintenance and cohesion. *Lăutari* virtually all have Romani wives. Among their daughters and granddaughters, however, interethnic relationships are starting to become more common. An elderly rural *lăutar* recounted how, as a young man, he had been in love with a Romanian woman. His parents forbade his marrying her, and so he broke off the relationship, wedding a Romani woman instead. Almost two decades ago, his son (also a *lăutar*) and daughter-in-law

expressed that they would insist, when the time came, that their children (then thirteen and seventeen) marry Roma. This had been imposed on their parents and them, they told me, and they intended to impose it on their own children. Today their daughter (aged 36), who has university and post-graduate degrees, recently married a Romanian, reflecting the extent to which change is occurring. By contrast, their *lăutar* son (now 33) has been married for seven years to the daughter of a *lăutar*. Indeed, marrying within the subgroup is a norm among many Romani communities in Romania (Grigore 2001; Engebrigtsen 2007; Olivera 2012; Tesăr 2018; Berta 2019). Most *lăutari* assert that not only endogamous marriages but also unions between members of *lăutar* families—that is, "endogamy 'within the trade'"—ensure "continuity within the musician profession" (Könczei 2012: 167). Moreover, such marriages produce the ideal environment for music-making since *lăutar*-family wives "understand best" the challenges of the life that *lăutari* lead (Kompár-Romer 2017). Fifteen years ago, an urban *lăutar* couple told me that they hoped their children (then eight and twelve) would wed spouses from *lăutar* families. Their son (a *lăutar* now in his early twenties) has. In a pattern that resembles the aforementioned sister-and-*lăutar*-brother pair, his older sister, however, who has a university degree, is still single (and is not likely to wed a *lăutar*).

When *lăutari* do not marry *lăutar* daughters, they prefer, as do many other Roma, "marriages to those of comparable status," a form of "intra-ethnic status segmentation" (Acedo 2016: 75, 71). A rural cimbalom-player recounted how he did not "find" a suitable bride from a *lăutar* family, so he married the daughter of a *Fierar* (Blacksmith). He specifically told me that Blacksmiths are "almost as 'civilized' as *lăutari*."[5] An urban accordionist (married to the daughter of a *lăutar*) summed it up with "It's okay if a *lăutar* takes a wife whose parents aren't *lăutari*, as long as she's from a family of civilized people, that is, Romanianized Gypsies."

One of the most decisive factors in whether and whom millennial daughters of *lăutari* choose to marry is post-secondary education (see Beissinger 2018). Those who seek degrees beyond high school are more likely to date and marry men who are not *lăutari* or Roma but rather men who share their own experience as educated professionals; most of these men are Romanian. One *lăutar* daughter grew up in a village but attended the University of Bucharest (earning several degrees). She only dated Romanians, who comprised the vast majority of men in her academic and professional circles. She waited until her thirties to settle down and recently married a Romanian whom she met at her work place. They live in a large, modern house in a Bucharest suburb that differs immensely from the rural milieu in which she grew up. If asked ten years ago, her parents would have preferred that she wed a Rom, but by now they are just glad that she is "finally" married and well-situated. Her education and career—both enormous achievements—have contributed to her upward mobility. But so has her finding a Romanian husband. Her mother and father are at peace with the fact that she has an interethnic marriage since she is thriving both personally and professionally. Moreover, although she now lives a "Romanian life," she also maintains close ties with her parents. While her hybrid ethnic identity is no doubt complicated (especially since she and her husband now have a baby), her loyalty to her *lăutar* family is strong. She is working out her own personal "*lăutar* space."

In this and other interethnic unions, wives often assimilate to the ethnic and cultural identity of their husbands, not vice versa, suggesting the influential role that gender also plays in this process. Another variant of a mixed marriage involves a village *lăutar* who found love (in the 1980s) with a Romanian who "became" Romani. "She's just like a Gypsy woman!" I have

5) Blacksmiths are considered by other Roma high on the Romani social ladder (Guy 2001; Scheffel 2010).

been told by *lăutari* and their wives who know the couple. She sings in her husband's ensemble, further "evidence" of her identity as a *lăutar* wife. The couple's two daughters, who were raised in a Romani household, have also married Roma. Gender and ethnicity both clearly play significant roles in the complex criss-crossing of identity factors among *lăutari*.

Although millennial *lăutari* sons generally maintain a strong connection to the family tradition of professional music-making and typically combine this with finding brides who are Romani, often from within the *lăutar* pool, an unprecedented freedom of choice in terms of marriage partners is emerging among millennial *lăutar* daughters (see also articles by Racleş and Kovai in this issue). *Lăutar* boys are socialized to commit to the occupation of their fathers and grandfathers. They find security in perpetuating the tradition that has been "handed down" to them (and passing it on to their sons) by marrying women who understand this way of life, preferably from *lăutar* (or other "elite" Romani) families. By contrast, through "free choice" and the opportunities that education offers them, some young women from *lăutar* families are carving out new forms of "*lăutar* space" by marrying Romanians. The tangible by-products of post-secondary education and intermarriage for them are upward mobility and shifting class identification. To what degree *lăutar* identity will inform their futures and those of their children is debatable. Middle-aged *lăutar* parents whose daughters have married (or likely will marry) outside the group express that while endogamy still remains their ideal, they cannot dictate their children's lives in today's world. They are extremely proud of their successful daughters. And so, they accept that the upward mobility that daughters are choosing goes hand-in-hand with a certain "freedom of choice," increasingly including Romanian spouses.

Patrilocality is a mainstay of traditional Romani life in Romania (Engebrigtsen 2007; Tesăr 2018; Berta 2019). It profoundly affects marriage, family, and gender dynamics, reinforcing kin-based households and male dominance as well as the predilection for male offspring (Voicu and Popescu 2007; Bitu and Morteanu 2010; Tesăr 2012). *Lăutar* homes are "ideally" distinguished by virilocality which is relatively common among rural and urban families. There has traditionally been a slight degree of preference for sons due, in part, to the need for musicians in the family. Sons are encouraged at a young age to play instruments (learning from their fathers) and adopt a *lăutar* lifestyle. Traditionally performing in family ensembles and living with or near parents was—and still is for some—crucial for their occupation. It provides an exemplary "*lăutar* space" for "safeguarding" the profession of family music-making. *Lăutari* often take for granted their sons' living with or close to them. By contrast, a daughter's ties to her parents in *lăutar* (and other Romani) homes are effectively transitory since she will predictably get married and become a member of her husband's family (Tesăr 2012; Beissinger 2018), an explanation, in part, for why interethnic marriage among *lăutar* family members is most frequent between daughters and Romanian men.

In traditional *lăutar* homes, the only or youngest son remains permanently with his parents, and during the communist period, this was commonplace. But rejection of patrilocal residence also informs "*lăutar* space" among millennials. A rural accordionist who got married in the 1980s had lived (with his bride) for several years in his parents' home until his younger brother, also a *lăutar*, brought his own bride to live permanently in the parental household. When I first met the accordionist, his wife, and two children, they were living in their own home (just down the road from his parents), and their only son, then eleven, was learning to play the accordion with his father. The family occupied the first floor of

Lătari playing music for a Romanian dance (*hora*). Unidentified photographer, approx. 1910.
Ethnological Archive of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, glass plate negative, inventory no. CS-0194.

the house, which had been built ten years earlier. The second story, which was then unfinished, would house their son when he got married, along with his own anticipated family. The son, now a practicing *lăutar*, is married and has a child, but the second floor of his parents' village house remains unfurnished. He and his wife refuse to live there, preferring to dwell in Bucharest. This has generated significant tension in the family, causing his parents anguish and challenging their understanding of the traditional terms of marriage. The son's denial of virilocal residence illustrates a partial denunciation of his parents' way of life. Yet he is still perpetuating his *lăutar* identity: like his father, he is a professional musician, and he has married a *lăutar*'s daughter. Moreover, he loyally continues to perform with the family ensemble in the village, commuting there regularly to join them when there are jobs. How this hybrid identity has materialized hinges on the son's education. He attended a music high school in Bucharest when he was a teenager and then the conservatory, later earning a master's degree. His upward mobility has secured him lucrative career opportunities (including teaching music in a school in Bucharest that caters to Romanian students), resulting in his partial identification with a non-Romani class of urban, educated musicians. In short, he has created his own complex "formula" for "*lăutar* space" based on rejecting some Romani cultural traditions (virilocality) and embracing others (endogamy), as well as appropriating certain aspects of urbane Romanian society.

Children are an expected and cherished consequence of Romani marital unions and are at the center of family life (Grigore et al. 2005; Tesăr 2018; Berta 2019). Accordingly, *lăutari* assume that soon after marriage couples will have children—but not "too many." Among *lăutari* in my fieldwork, the

average number of children per family is 2.5 (fewer than in other Romani but more than in Romanian households).[6] Half of the *lăutar* couples I know have had only two children by choice, including couples during the communist period when birth control and abortion were illegal.[7] This preference is motivated by a desire to provide children with good living conditions, something *lăutari* pride themselves on, pointing out that other Roma usually have more children and thus less to offer them. *Lăutari* view their smaller families as superior to the larger families of other Roma and similar to Romanian families.

The imperative of children and the permanence of marriage among Roma go hand-in-hand. Marriage is viewed as a lifelong commitment, particularly when there are children, and divorce is fairly uncommon (Grigore et al. 2005).[8] If it happens, it typically occurs among newly-weds before they have a family (Engebrigtsen 2007). Alternatively, a couple's inability to have offspring may be grounds for dissolving a marriage (Berta 2019). Moreover, adultery happens, to be sure, but rarely results in a couple's breaking up. Indeed, children are the primary disincentive to divorce. If there are children in a *lăutar* family, divorce is highly unlikely.[9]

Mutual, enduring ties between co-parents-in-law (cuscri) also contribute among Roma and *lăutari* to the stability of a marriage (Grigore 2001; Engebrigtsen 2007; Tesăr 2018). For traditional Roma, a marital alliance between the co-fathers-in-law reinforces the couple's nuptial bond (Berta 2019). *Lăutari* do not undertake such alliances, viewing them as "backward," but they respect relationships established between co-parents-in-law. "*Lăutar* space" within the context of the family, then, is constructed and secured as couples regulate family size for the welfare of their children, eschew divorce, and nurture bonds between co-parents-in-law.

Early-age and arranged marriages are typical among traditional Roma. Neither is sanctioned by the state in Romania, the minimum age at which one can legally marry being eighteen (Bitu and Morteanu 2010). Romani girls marry, on average, at age seventeen (Surdu and Surdu 2006) although arranged wedlock often happens earlier (Grigore 2001; Engebrigtsen 2007; Bitu and Morteanu 2010; Berta 2019). *Lăutari* and members of their families denounce child- and early-marriage as "primitive" "Gypsy" traditions, claiming that neither has ever been a part of the *lăutar* experience. The wife of a rural *lăutar* recollected how an Ursar ("Bear-tamer") couple had recently stopped on the road to chat and relay "happy news": their twelve-year-old son had just married a fourteen-year-old girl from a "good family." In recounting this to me, the *lăutar* wife expressed strong disapproval. *Lăutari* implicitly champion "free choice" in mate selection, the inverse of arranged marriage, and insist that they "marry for love."

During the communist period, women in *lăutar* families married, for the most part, in their late teens. But among millennial *lăutar* female family members, matrimony is happening a few years later. Women who marry in their early twenties may or may not finish high school and generally follow traditional trajectories, soon becoming mothers. There are also women from *lăutar* households who are getting married in their mid-to-late twenties and even thirties (more like contemporary Romanian women[10]), most of them having pursued post-secondary and, in some cases, graduate degrees. For them, education provides a clear "escape route" from marrying "too" early (Székelyi et al. 2003). Today's young *lăutar*-family wives typically have children somewhat later than their mothers did, and some significantly later. One *lăutar* daughter (who has several university degrees and recently married a Romanian) has had her first child at 36, an age at which some traditional Romani women are already grandmothers.

6) The average number of children per Romani family in Romania is 3.19 (Cace et al. 2002: 12) and per Romanian family, 1.21 (Mihai and Butiu 2012).

7) *Lăutar* wives have told me that their most common birth control is abortion

8) In some cases, the birth of a son confirms the permanence of marriage (Tesăr 2018).

9) One daughter of a *lăutar* separated from her husband when their only child was a teenager, but many years later, the couple has still not gotten divorced.

10) The average age at (first) marriage for women in Romania is 26.7 (Misachi 2017).

Before the 1989 Revolution, *lăutari* were typically in their early-to-mid-twenties when they got married. But while today's *lăutari* marry somewhat later than both previous generations and other male Roma, they still become husbands considerably earlier than Romanian men.[11] Like their fathers, many *lăutari* do not finish high school since they are socialized early on to adopt a career path as musicians and assume they do not need secondary-school diplomas. These men typically marry in their early-to-mid-twenties. Few *lăutari* pursue higher education, but when they do, they, like women, invariably marry somewhat later. Two rural millennial *lăutari* are the first men in their families to earn post-high-school degrees (and now live in Bucharest). One was married at 26, while his *lăutar* father was 22 (and his grandfather, twenty). Another is still single at 32, while his *lăutar* father and grandfather married at 24 and twenty respectively.

Taken as a whole, these marriage patterns mirror the evolving, hybrid nature of "*lăutar* space." Romani marital norms furnish a general frame within which *lăutar* nuptial practices function although the contours of these norms are increasingly shifting. While *lăutari* generally advocate endogamy, especially "within the trade," intermarriage is beginning to effect the erosion of ethnic and class boundaries. Patrilocality is also an ideal but is starting to break down as *lăutari* adjust to 21st century conditions. Offspring is anticipated, but small families are preferred, and children contribute, along with strong in-law relations, to the permanence of marital unions. Some Romani praxes are rejected, however, as "outmoded" and "uncivilized," while *lăutar* understandings of matrimony are linked to those of the Romanians with whom they cohabit. These rejected praxes include early-age and arranged marriages as well as marital alliances. Finally, among millennials, the advent of educational opportunities has caused profound changes, creating new "*lăutar* spaces" in between tradition and innovation where blended identities are cultivated. Through a selective confluence of factors, *lăutari* create a space, within marriage conventions, that is uniquely their own.

11) Men's average age at (first) marriage in Romania is 30.2 (Misachi 2017).

Weddings

The weddings of *lăutari* and their family members likewise represent a convergence of Romani and Romanian traditions, vividly illustrating how they create and sustain their composite character as *Romanianized* Roma, occupying distinct "*lăutar* spaces." Romani marriages are "legal (registered before the marital status delegate) or of concubinage" (Bitu and Morteanu 2010: 32). Although *lăutar* couples sometimes elope and/or live together at the beginning of committed relationships, most of them intend eventually to celebrate formal nuptials. For most Roma, as for *lăutari,* weddings are celebrated with excessive commensality, pure joy of the moment, and cherished in-group social song and dance genres. At the same time, contemporary *lăutari* refute certain traditional Romani wedding conventions: formalized wooing, bride price, dowries, and rituals that confirm the bride's virginity. Moreover, reflecting their self-aware *Romanianized* identity, *lăutari* embrace various Romanian traditions: state- and church-sanctioned (Orthodox Christian) wedlock, as well as Romanian customs and dress. Some of the millennial *lăutar*-family sons and daughters are likewise making choices for their nuptials that distance them from traditions that their parents uphold. In the pages ahead I treat elopement, pre-wedding, wedding-day, and post-wedding practices.

Romani couples sometimes elope. They do so if families cannot afford a wedding or do not approve of the union, if grooms

cannot pay the bride price, or to evade arranged marriages (Grigore et al. 2005; Engebrigtsen 2007; Matras 2015). Some *lăutari* couples also elope, although it is somewhat disparaged. In one case, a 25-year-old rural *lăutar* from a relatively poor family escaped with his eighteen-year-old "bride" to his aunt's home in another village. This solution was chosen to avoid the cost of a wedding. The couple stayed there for a week and then returned to the *lăutar*'s parents' home, where they still live as a "married couple" with their two children. They intend to have a "real" wedding someday, but twenty years have passed since they eloped, and plans are still on hold. Another *lăutar* elopement was in Bucharest in the 1990s. The *lăutar* "groom" was in his early twenties, while the daughter of a *lăutar,* with whom he took flight, was sixteen. Her mother deemed her too young to marry, so the couple eloped. The "bride" made a dramatic escape jumping from the balcony of the family apartment block to join her "groom." After eloping, the couple was considered married and several years later held a large, festive wedding. They are now grandparents; their son is a fine young accordionist, and their *lăutar*-family daughter-in-law recently gave birth to a little girl. Eloping and then celebrating a "legitimate" wedding is a quintessential example, once again, of "*lăutar* space": merging traditional and mainstream ways to wed in a distinctly meaningful *lăutar* way.

Among traditional Roma, formal wedding invitations are not issued before the wedding since it is understood that the in-group community is welcome and will attend (Grigore 2001; Engebrigtsen 2007). At *lăutar* nuptials, as well, family and close friends know in advance and are expected to join the festivities. When I have been invited to *lăutar* weddings, I too have simply been told in person the dates—a contrast to the more formal invitations typical among Romanians.

Most of the pre-wedding-day events that traditional Roma observe are refuted by *lăutari* as "backward." *Lăutari* repeatedly stress the differences between themselves and "other Gypsies" in connection with wooing, bride price, and dowries. They eschew the traditional process whereby the parents of the potential couple confer, decide upon marriage partners, and orchestrate the wedding and marriage alliance (Grigore 2001). At the same time, some "wooing" conventions are undertaken by *lăutari* when they decide to be wed. These represent a set of traditions drawn from both Romani and Romanian practices, thus forming a "third" *lăutar* way. The comments of a rural accordionist explain how *lăutari* go about wooing:

> The two sets of parents-in-law meet and talk about the couple and about when the wedding will take place. But the [groom's] parents don't ask for the bride in marriage; the groom asks the bride to marry him. I was with my parents at [my bride-to-be's] parents', but *I* asked [her] to marry me, and my brother did the same.

What he describes represents a blending of customs: future co-parents-in-law are clearly involved, but couples marry for love and take the initiative themselves to get married.

Bride price, as part of these arrangements, is also disparaged by *lăutari* as well as by Romanians, who consider it "uncivilized" (Engebrigtsen 2007). "Purchasing" brides, I have been informed by *lăutari*, was never a part of their culture. They tell me "*Lăutari* don't buy brides; that's what other nations of Gypsies do; we're not like them—we're like everybody else" or "*Lăutari* aren't like Ursari ('Bear-tamers') and Spoitori ('Tinkers'); we *lăutari* are like Romanians—that is, we are more refined." They distance themselves from "other Gypsies," thereby identifying with Romanians. In addition, traditional Romani brides contribute a dowry (zestre) to the groom's home consisting of domestic items, clothing, and articles of value: gold

or cash (Grigore 2001; Grigore et al. 2005; Tesăr 2016; Berta 2019). *Lăutari* relate that "their" brides of yesteryear assembled dowries, but that "they were not elaborate." One remarked that the dowry of his mother (in 1959) was furniture, and that his own wife and brother's wife (at their weddings in the 1980s) also brought furniture to the home of his parents when they moved in. In contemporaneous Romanian village marriages, dowries likewise included furniture and textiles (Kligman 1988). But in 21st-century Romania, *lăutari* inform me, dowries are passé. One told me, "Now, *lăutari* rarely have dowries. But other Gypsies do." A rural *lăutar* wife, underscoring the contrast between *lăutari* and the practices of "other Roma" who engage in early-age marriage and the "outmoded" customs that go with it, recounted how she had encountered a 25-year-old Spoitor ("Tinker") woman who had told her that she needed money to pay bride price and dowries for her sons' and daughters' upcoming weddings. The *lăutar* wife was judgmental and critical, dissociating herself from this young Spoitor mother and what she represented. Rejection for such pre-wedding traditions underscores how *lăutari* concretely see themselves "unlike" many other Roma and by extension "just like" Romanians.

The festivities of the wedding day in south-central Romania typically last about 24 hours. For *lăutari*, this period of celebration underscores the hybrid character of *lăutar* nuptials—and identity—as they undertake events that are both Romani and Romanian but, as I argue, above all "*lăutar*." *Lăutari* schedule their own weddings on weekdays or Sundays in order to be available to perform at Romanian weddings (which usually take place on Saturdays) should they be hired. In other words, *lăutar* weddings take place on days when Romanian weddings do not. Moreover, *lăutar* weddings conspicuously display Romani identity, especially through music, celebration, and food. But Romanian wedding culture is also evident in both traditional and religious ways: *lăutar*-family brides and grooms wear Western wedding attire and embrace longstanding Romanian customs, and the religious ceremony takes place in church.

Music is key to Romani weddings. This is especially true for *lăutari*, who insist on music almost continually. Throughout the wedding day, *lăutari* perform, and members of the wedding party dance. Sometimes, particularly at urban weddings, this means setting up amplifiers and making music on sidewalks right outside apartment blocks. Tables laden with food and drink are assembled outdoors, and the musicians perform at extremely high volumes as guests dance and passersby watch. This bold display of celebration in public, regardless of the time of day, is typical to *lăutar* weddings and represents a type of joyous transcendence of the moment. At one *lăutar* wedding in Piteşti, this took place at 4:00 a.m. outside the apartment block until neighbors called the police, who arrived to break up the party.

Traditional Romani brides are typically clothed in colorful, flowery skirts and special blouses, while grooms wear suits (Engebrigtsen 2007; Berta 2019). By contrast, like contemporary Romanians, *lăutar* brides don white gowns and veils, and grooms wear formal suits, often tuxedoes. "Getting the bride ready" on her wedding day includes one of the most important rituals in Romania, the performance of "Cântecul miresei" (The Bride's Song). At south-central Romanian weddings, it is sung to the bride by *lăutari* twice: in the morning, after she has put on her gown, as her godmother and other female kin arrange her hair and veil, and then again near the end of the banquet. Romanian renditions of "Cântecul miresei" express the separation of the bride from her family and are filled with flower imagery as a metaphor for the maiden who leaves her past behind (Kligman 1988; Beissinger 2020). It typically elicits the bride's tears as

she ponders the meaning of her "departure" and the important step she is taking to become a married woman.

Performances of "Cântecul miresei" at *lăutar* weddings are often quite different, with musical interpretation and words that are especially expressive. Most *lăutar*-family brides find this ritual song deeply moving. One wept poignantly as a *lăutar* (a close friend of her own *lăutar* family) sang a personal, emotional "Cântecul miresei" in their Bucharest home. In this rendition, the bride's separation and flower trope were missing, replaced by verses that expressed the pride and joy of her parents that their daughter, depicted instead as an angel (*înger*), was becoming a wife and, by extension, a mother. Urban *lăutar* performances of this ritual song are distinctive and voice the fundamental significance of traditional Romani marriage: the perpetuation of the family and ongoing generations. In other words, *lăutari* appropriate the classic Romanian genre at their weddings but compose their "own" lyrics that reflect Romani cultural meaning. "Cântecul miresei" is a quintessential metaphor for "*lăutar* space": it merges Romanian song form and Romani lyric content in a uniquely expressive *lăutar* moment.

A recent *lăutar* wedding illustrates how one millennial couple, eager to be "mainstream" and "modern," redefined their nuptials, eschewing "old-fashioned" traditions that they did not find meaningful. The village *lăutar* groom, who was educated in Bucharest, and his bride, the daughter of an urban *lăutar*, categorically refused to have their wedding in the village ("too rustic"), thereby rejecting many of the practices so dear to the groom's *lăutar* parents who had wanted it to take place there. Among some traditional Roma, the bride's family bears the cost of the wedding (Tesăr 2018), whereas at *lăutar* (and Romanian) weddings, the groom and his family foot the bill. On the wedding day, the groom's parents hosted a huge outdoor feast for their own family and friends in their village courtyard where well-known *lăutari* provided the music. The groom underwent the traditional "shaving of the bridegroom" (*bărbieritul ginerelui*) by his godfather or best man: a Romanian custom marking the groom's coming of age that *lăutari* have adopted. As the groom is "shaved," *lăutari* render ritual songs that express his entry into adulthood. It was, for this *lăutar* groom, the only ritual that he was willing to undergo in the village. Later the family headed to the godparents' and bride's parents' flats in Bucharest, where huge spreads awaited the guests. At the bride's parents' home, "Cântecul miresei" was also performed by *lăutari*. The bride, intent on her "untraditional" wedding, however, seemed to experience this iconic moment in a notably perfunctory way: unmoved, she seemed anxious to "get it over with." A white limousine (now in fashion at both *lăutar* and Romanian weddings) then took the couple and their godparents to the church for the ceremony.

Traditional Roma in Romania "marry without any interference from the state or the church" (Engebrigtsen 2007: 78). Such weddings incorporate elaborate rituals and a celebratory repast but no religious service (Berta 2019). By contrast, *lăutari*, who (like Romanians) are by and large Romanian Orthodox, aspire to both church- and state-sanctioned marriages. Their weddings include church ceremonies attended by family and close friends and take place before the evening banquet. Godparents play critical roles in Romanian nuptials (Kligman 1988) and function in *lăutar* weddings as well. They are crucial during the church ceremony and supersede the couple's parents there.

The feast that brings people together to celebrate the marriage of husband and wife is the culmination of Romanian and *lăutar* weddings and begins in the evening, after the church ceremony. For *lăutar* couples, it also combines Romani and Romanian effects. In south-central Romania, banquets

(eating, drinking, and dancing) last all night and are extremely pricey. Even though gift-giving (daruri), which is cash, serves as a means to recoup some of the costs, the banquet is an event of great expense for which families plan for years. Some *lăutar* couples live together at the beginning of long-term relationships or obtain marriage certificates and then save money for a "proper" wedding. One daughter of a *lăutar* and her groom waited for ten years to amass the resources for their long-anticipated nuptials. Some *lăutar* couples—who wait to hold their weddings until they have saved sufficient money but in the meantime have started a family—combine their church ceremony with their baby's baptism (botez). This is a practical way to cut costs since baptism celebrations (the second most common event at which *lăutari* are hired) are also exorbitant events. Such combined wedding-baptisms are not uncommon among Romanians as well.

Status at *lăutar* weddings is explicitly mirrored not only in where the event is held but the quality and quantity of the food served and which musicians perform. It too reflects both Romani and Romanian influences. The *lăutar* banquets that I have attended took place in urban restaurants (most of them large and upscale) where Romanian managers, cooks, and servers are in charge. They were huge spectacles of conspicuous consumption. Yet not one of the *lăutari* in my fieldwork has any wealth to speak of (all of them constantly bemoan their lack of income). One *lăutar,* who indulged in a lavish wedding to the daughter of a *lăutar* in the 1990s, told me, "When I got married, I didn't even have an accordion! I was poor and had sick parents." More recent millennial *lăutar* nuptials that I have attended—where *lăutar* sons have married daughters from *lăutar* families—were also extravagant. Yet the parents of the grooms can barely eke out a living, always lamenting that they do not get hired frequently enough to support their families.

Lăutar wedding banquets, marked by unabashed abundance and celebration, are informed by the proverbial timelessness and "commitment to the present moment" (Day et al. 1999: 2) accorded to Roma. Yet the banquet reflects Romanian culture as well. Multiple courses that follow an identical "Romanian wedding menu blueprint" comprise the lengthy meals at restaurants although sometimes a favorite "Gypsy" dish is also served at *lăutar* banquets. So many courses are served, in fact, and the plates are so heaped with food that guests usually leave much uneaten. At a recent *lăutar* wedding, I remarked upon how much of the fare was discarded, asking the *lăutar* father of the groom why these courses could not be downsized, thus reducing both cost and waste. He looked at me incredulously, saying "We have to serve this much food—if we don't, people will laugh!" A perception of plenty is key to the reputation of the groom's family. Spending enormous sums of money on banquets provides public testimonial to *lăutar* standing.

Lăutari are sometimes hired to perform at traditional Romani nuptials. But they also let me know, in judgmental pronouncements, that there are plenty of "Gypsies who just hold their weddings in a field, where their own musicians [not *lăutari*] sing Gypsy songs." Some of the disdain expressed by *lăutari* for "(non-lăutar) Gypsy singers" is acerbic. I have also witnessed *lăutari* just as brazenly denigrate (and mockingly imitate) Romanians who perform at weddings. *Lăutari* can be dismissive and arrogant as they assert and defend their own professional space as neither "Gypsy" nor "Romanian" but rather *lăutar.* While at most wedding banquets music is a requisite component, for *lăutari*, whose professional lives revolve around music-making, it is of supreme importance. *Lăutari* do not perform at their own children's weddings since they prefer to relax and enjoy themselves. But they make sure to engage *lăutari* of great stature for family weddings, not only to ensure superb music but also to reflect their own status.

Music at *lăutar* weddings is the most

telling emblem of both Romani and *lăutar* culture. Music invokes culture and ethnicity; it "conjures racial meaning" (Radano and Bohlman 2000: 1). The music in south-central Romania that *lăutari* play at their own (and other Romani) banquets differs significantly from the music that they perform at Romanian banquets—something that *lăutari* are quick to point out. The hora mare (large hora) and sârba—both circle dances—are icons of "national" culture that *lăutari* regularly perform at Romanian banquets. At their own banquets, however, the social song and dance repertoire is virtually all Romani: *muzică lăutărească* (*lăutar* music) and *manele* (Balkan ethnopop) (Beissinger 2007; Beissinger et al. 2016). *Muzica lăutărească,* "urban music performed by [*lăutari*] at their own celebrations" (Giurchescu and Rădulescu 2016: 14), is the music most beloved by *lăutari*. It includes *hore lăutăreşti/tigăneşti* (*lăutar*/Gypsy horas) that are danced individually and *cântece de ascultare* (songs to listen to): expressive songs performed when guests are eating. Manele, a Balkan "Oriental" ethnopop song-dance genre that in Romania is associated with Romani culture, are danced solo, resembling the čoček/kyuchek style of South Slavic Roma (Silverman 2012). These in-group urban genres were virtually unknown by Romanians throughout most of the twentieth century. After 1989, as restrictions in society were rapidly lifted, however, *manele* and *lăutar* horas also became popular among Romanians. By now some of this novelty has worn off, and *muzica uşoară* (pop music) is increasingly performed at Romanian weddings.

A conversation that I was privy to between a *lăutar* couple, whose daughter would soon be marrying a Romanian, underscores the cultural identity that music represents at *lăutar* weddings. The *lăutar* parents expressed their apprehensions regarding the music at the future banquet. The groom, who does not particularly like Romani music, may not employ *lăutari*, which would mean that no Romani genres would be performed. This prospect is causing the bride's parents concern. For them, Romani music is a "mandatory" part of the nuptial event, and its absence at their own daughter's wedding would be painful. And yet, since grooms are in charge of their own weddings in Romania, the parents of the bride have little say. The angst over the possible lack of *lăutar* music at this wedding is perhaps a metaphor for the tension the parents feel about the interethnic marriage their daughter is embarking upon. The groom's decision, however, may well be the last word, symbolically representing the *lăutar* daughter's assimilating to her groom's "culture" and her "becoming Romanian."

The godparents at both Romanian and *lăutar* weddings occupy an important place at the banquet. They prominently sit at the head table with the couple, while the co-parents-in-law are seated elsewhere. *Lăutari* often seek prestigious godparents, even if this sometimes simply means being Romanian. An urban *lăutar* daughter and her groom chose Romanian neighbors to be their godparents when they got married, despite the fact that they were not particularly close. And the "modern" *lăutar* couple who did not want their wedding in the village where the groom's parents lived replaced the groom's rural childhood godparents by a young Romanian couple in Bucharest. Many *lăutar* couples deliberately invite Romanians, emblems of distinction, to be their ritual kin, carving out—in this "interethnic" way—their own "space."

Post-wedding events include the ritual validation of the bride's virginity (*rachiu*[12]), a critical, culminating moment for traditional Roma (Grigore 2001; Tesăr 2012). After the bride's honor is publicly confirmed, additional commensality marks the bride's reception into her new family (Grigore 2001). Contemporary *lăutari* do not undergo *rachiu*. But the younger couples of yesteryear, however, did. A rural *lăutar* told me that his mother (who was wed in 1959 in her teens) and grandmother

12) *Rachiu* literally means "brandy," and in this context it refers to the (alcoholic) beverage that the two wedding parties consume together to celebrate the virginity of the young bride, thus becoming a synecdoche for the whole ritual.

had to demonstrate their virginity through *rachiu*. His bride (whom he married in 1982) did not, although she has told me that she was a virgin on her wedding night. She has also mentioned that Romani, including *lăutar*-family, brides are still expected to be "pure" when they marry. This matter is complicated, however, by the fact that *lăutar* couples rarely marry in their teens anymore. Moreover, they typically live together before their actual wedding, whereas traditional early-age Romani couples do not. In any case, it is clear from my conversations with *lăutari* and their family members that they consider the public showing of virginity "old-fashioned." An urban *lăutar* expressed impatience when I asked him about *rachiu*, declaring that "of course *lăutari* don't do that!" although "other Romani ethnic groups" do. He and his wife lived together starting in the early 1990s, had two children, and then, after saving enough money, had a "real" wedding in the late 1990s (that their children attended). So, the "virginity test" on their wedding night was a moot point. He also proudly told me that neither his own mother nor his mother-in-law (who married in the 1960s and 1970s respectively) underwent *rachiu* at their urban *lăutar* weddings.

The event that brings closure to the marriage celebration among *lăutari* is perhaps a remnant of the meal among traditional Roma marking the bride's virginity and entry into the groom's family. Once the all-night wedding banquet is over and everyone has rested during the day, the family and close friends gather again that evening for the last nuptial feast. In the city, this takes place at restaurants, and in the village, it is often held at private homes. In one *lăutar* family, the groom's parents, having hosted a gathering the day before at their village home (prior to the ceremony and banquet in Bucharest), put out a festive spread once more in their courtyard, where well-known *lăutari* again performed. While the bride and her family had not attended the previous day, on this day they did as she, a new daughter-in-law, publicly joined her husband's family. *Rachiu* is, admittedly, rejected by contemporary *lăutari* as a remnant of the past. But a post-wedding repast, complete with *lăutari* performing, formally welcomes the daughter-in-law—having figuratively "passed" the "purity" test—into the family. The meal signals that she is "honorable." This was purely symbolic since the couple had been legally married for over a year when the wedding took place. The celebration, with much food and music, represented one last "*lăutar* moment": a ritual of the past that has been redefined for contemporary newlyweds.

Lăutar weddings are quintessential displays of "*lăutar* space." They are composite productions of identity. Elopement as well as pre-wedding, wedding-day, and post-wedding events all mirror the blending of Romani and Romanian effects that *lăutari* embrace in their unique position as Romani musicians who perform at Romanian nuptials. Wooing, bride price, dowries, and *rachiu* are robustly repudiated by *lăutari* as relics of a "Gypsy" world that they do not relate to. Thus, they see themselves more like Romanians. Yet vestiges of the role of co-parents-in-law and the symbolic honor of the bride in Romani tradition remain in their consciousness. The wedding day among *lăutari* produces an amalgam par excellence of customs and practices. Attire, godparents, separation songs and rituals for both bride and groom, the church service, and restaurant are statements of Romanian affiliation. Intersecting with these symbols are the Romani ideologies of presentism and abundance that *lăutari* simultaneously embrace: the proverbial "permanent, timeless present" (Day et al. 1999: 2) and the "huge quantities of food," "way beyond what [can] be eaten" (Stewart 1997: 187). Most of all, *lăutar* music, performed virtually non-stop, resonates most deeply among *lăutari* at their own weddings. As for how *lăutari* are adjusting to the future, already during the last century, they were progressively casting off norms and

rituals of traditional Romani matrimony as they deemed them passé. And now, as the first decades of the 21st century unfold, millennial *lăutari* and their family members continue to revise wedding practices as they seek to become more "mainstream" and less traditional. They are influenced especially by education and ever greater familiarity with Romanian society.

Conclusion

I have argued, in the preceding pages, that *lăutari* and their families generate a composite identity that draws from both Romani and Romanian cultural reservoirs to form a distinctive "*lăutar* space" and that their marriage and wedding practices provide a telling reflection of this constructed, complex process. *Lăutari* function at the intersection of Romani and non-Romani society. Similar to various other Roma who are also performers in multicultural communities, they are "not constrained by one ethnic identity" (Tremlett 2009: 162). Much like the Romani actors in the Moscow "Teatr Romen" whom Alaina Lemon describes as "Russified," *lăutari* are likewise "proud of being Romani, and especially of being… performer[s]" yet "also self-consciously" what *lăutari* call *Romanianized* (2000: 212). Closer to home, as Stewart observes, Romani musicians in neighboring Hungary "used their Gypsiness when it suited them, but denied it when it did not," demonstrating "the possibility of some form of mediation with *gaźo* culture" (1997: 93). Russian, Hungarian, and Romanian Romani performers all find meaning and fulfillment through weaving their identities back and forth between the "powerful" non-Romani and the "empowering" Romani influences in their midst. Through these maneuvers they find an agreeable, useful, and relevant "third space" within which to be the artists they need to be in order to support their families. As performers, this works for them—but it is notably messy, complicated, and even contradictory at times. For south-central Romanian Romani musicians, "*lăutar* space" is rooted in a profound acknowledgement of Romani cultural identity yet a defiant sense of superiority over "other Gypsies." *Lăutari* constantly insist upon what they see as dramatic contrasts between themselves and traditional Roma. This is deeply engrained in their outlook. Moreover, while *lăutari* recognize a considerable cultural divide between themselves and the dominant, privileged, and "unsympathetic" in society, they repeatedly maintain that they are "just like Romanians," affirming their intimacy with them.

I have also charted how, unlike some more autonomous Roma, *lăutari*—while at home in their "third space"—have never been inert or immobilized by traditional constraints. *Lăutari* and their family members exhibit what Paul Gilroy terms "unfinished identities" (1993: 1). This is illustrated in the ongoing changes that *lăutari* and their families have made, not only as they have adapted socially and culturally over the course of the twentieth century but perhaps more vividly as some millennials among them have expressed a new sense of purpose and unprecedented ways to make choices. Millennial members of *lăutar* families are increasingly carving out their own shifting forms of "*lăutar* space," often enabled by educational opportunities. For women, in particular, it is through education that ethnic- and gender-based scripts embedded in *lăutar* culture can be subverted.

The identities that *lăutari* and their families in contemporary south-central Romania adopt and perpetuate are informed by their intermediary position between Romani and Romanian society. *Lăutari* assume fluid, composite forms of identity, drawing from multiple communities as they perpetually create and recreate their own multifarious sense of self and pursue

ways to sustain their niche as indispensable traditional musicians. This journey "of identity" is distinctively articulated and represented in the matrimonial convictions, norms, and practices of *lăutari* and the members of their families. "*Lăutar* space" is a complex, hybrid, ever-mutating "third space" where *lăutari*—exquisite, resourceful, confident, and resilient performers of traditional music—and their families seek belonging. Yet *lăutar* identity "is never a proper fit, a totality" (Hall 1996:3) but always in a state of becoming. "*Lăutar* space" is formed through a dynamic intersection of cultures; it is perpetually evolving and finding meaning.

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Tout n'est qu'histoire d'amour. Une chronique personnelle sur les sentiments et la crainte de Dieu en « tsiganie »[1]

There is a Love Story in Everything. A Subjective Chronicle of Sentiments and Fear of God in a Romanian *Tsiganie*

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ABSTRACT

This text reflects back on my research in a Roma/Gypsy settlement, or *țigănie*, as my interlocutors called it, in Dițești, a village eighty kilometers north of Bucharest. The main focus lies on field notes and stories that emerged out of my doctoral research. At the center of the analysis, I place my love relationship and marriage to Maria, whom I met during my field research in the *țigănie,* as I try to account for how love and couple formation are experienced by the youth and how they are apprehended by their parents. Deep within the love stories, the affective geography of the village is defined, as well as a moral order where "fear of God" (*frica de Dumnezeu*) weighs as much on the sexual desires of young couples as it does on the parents' choices and interventions in their children's love life.

KEYWORDS

Intimacy, affects, ethnography, sexuality, moral order, Gypsy families.

1) Mes remerciements les plus chaleureux à Cătălina Tesăr et à Ana Chirițoiu pour leur patience et leur bienveillance sans lesquelles ce texte n'aurait jamais été écrit. Les commentaires précis et attentionnés d'Elisabeth Tauber, de Cătălina Tesăr, d'Ana Chirițoiu et d'un relecteur ou d'une relectrice anonyme de la revue *Martor* m'ont été d'une grande aide, qu'ils en soient chacune et chacun remerciés.

« On ne connaît pas d'abord quelque chose pour ensuite y être empêtré, mais connaître et être empêtré, c'est tout un, ou, comme nous préférons dire, surgir et être empêtré, c'est tout un ».

— Wilhelm Schapp (1992 [1953] : 179)

« Nous sommes d'abord des êtres à qui arrivent des histoires, des êtres empêtrés dans un réseau d'affaires qui, avant de se raconter, constituent des conjonctures de sens, dont le seul invariant irrécusable serait l'extension dans la durée ».

— Renaud Dulong (1994 : 275)

Introduction

Depuis 2007, je réalise une longue enquête dans les rues tsiganes du village de Dițești, 80 kilomètres au Nord de Bucarest (Roumanie). Réalisée en partie caméra au poing, cette recherche porte d'abord sur l'écologie des images de ce quartier : les vidéos et photographies réalisées par mes interlocuteurs ou à leur demande, ainsi que les images qu'ils regardent, commentent et utilisent au quotidien, que ce soit par les réseaux sociaux ou l'interprétation des rêves. Au

cours de l'un de mes séjours, j'ai rencontré Maria. Cinq ans après mon premier terrain en « tsiganie » (*țigănie*), nous nous sommes mariés à Dițești puis installés dans la région parisienne, où nous avons eu deux enfants.

Dans cette enquête, pensée depuis les interactions filmées, et s'inspirant à la fois des travaux des pragmatistes, d'Erving Goffman et de l'ethnométhodologie, la parenté n'a jamais constitué un objet d'étude comme il l'est d'habitude en anthropologie – avec ses schémas, ses cartes, ses chronologies. Elle s'est d'abord révélée comme une série d'intrigues, d'histoires d'amours, de sexe, de tromperies, de jalousie et d'« inimitié » (*dușmănie*), dont l'enchevêtrement a pris forme dès lors que j'ai commencé à y prendre part, composant avec l'atmosphère de méfiance généralisée qui enveloppe la vie sociale à Dițești. Le point de départ de l'écriture de ce texte sur les histoires d'amour en « tsiganie » consista donc à laisser provisoirement de côté les données principales de mon enquête, pour reprendre le fil des notes éparses prises sur des documents numériques, des carnets ou de feuillets volants. Ni journal familial, ni journal d'enquête, ces notes, dont la réécriture était toujours remise au lendemain, se tenaient le plus souvent à la marge de mes recherches. Avec l'aide précieuse de Maria, j'ai reconstitué et même très souvent complété les histoires qui compose cette chronique. Elle m'a ainsi offert le contre champ féminin des pratiques du « flirt » (*găgicăreală*) observées pendant mon enquête, tout en précisant, avec maints détails, ma mémoire des sentiments amoureux en « tsiganie ». Ce texte dresse donc une chronique de l'amour au sein de cette communauté, décrivant comment l'amour – qui est communément désigné par le terme *dragul* quel que soit le sujet aimé (mari, épouse, enfants, parents) ou *iubire* quand il s'agit de la vie au sein du couple conjugal – est un affect central de la vie des Tsiganes (*Țigani*) de Dițești[2]. Si les histoires d'amour sont aussi prégnantes en « tsiganie », c'est aussi parce qu'entre les lignes, se dessinent d'autres histoires ; de jalousie – ponctuée parfois de violences conjugales –, d'inimitié entre familles, et de report de l'amour du conjoint vers les enfants.

Devant la diversité des liens d'amour en « tsiganie », j'ai choisi de concentrer mes récits et descriptions sur les affects et les désirs qui prévalent à la formation du couple conjugal, et persistent ou se transforment avec le temps. Ce choix m'a tout d'abord été imposé par le contenu de mes notes et mon propre itinéraire au sein des rues et des familles du village. Le texte se focalise ainsi particulièrement sur cette période de la vie vécue des jeunes amoureux, en adoptant leur position et regardant de biais les enjeux de la filiation, qui sous-tendent l'intervention des parents, dans un monde social stratifié, et où les règles de filiation, de localisation du jeune couple, et les modalités pratiques de l'alliance font toujours l'objet de négociations entre belles-familles. L'idéal de l'amour, particulièrement éprouvé par les jeunes hommes et jeunes filles à ce moment de leur vie, est toutefois indissociable d'obligations morales qui encadrent, même de manière lointaine, leurs sentiments et désirs. C'est ici l'autre raison motivant cette focale sur la formation du couple conjugal. Dans une société où aucune forme d'autorité politique ou civile ne prévaut, l'ordre moral – mentionné comme la « crainte de Dieu » (*frica de Dumnezeu*), non pas au sens d'une piété religieux, mais d'une soumission commune à la compassion et la réciprocité – est très souvent révélé par les aventures, mais aussi les faux pas et les tromperies qui émaillent la vie des jeunes couples[3].

Faire l'histoire orale de l'amour est aussi un défi méthodologique. Observer la parenté en passant par les sentiments amoureux m'a souvent conduit dans des situations comiques, composant à la fois avec la défiance, mais aussi la « honte » (*rușine*), que pouvait ressentir mes interlocuteurs et interlocutrices. Demandant à Rodica, ma belle-mère, comment ils étaient tombés amoureux elle et Tincuță, elle me répond

2) J'emploie le terme « Tsigane » à dessein, suivant l'usage qu'en font mes interlocuteurs pour se designer en roumain. N'étant pas locuteurs du *romanès*, ils emploient ainsi le même terme pour désigner l'un des membres de la communauté, *țiganul* ou *țiganca* (le Tsigane, la Tsigane), et juger d'un comportement conforme aux stéréotypes du *țigan* et de la *țigancă* – répandus dans la société roumaine.

3) En ce sens, l'étude des sentiments amoureux en « tsiganie » s'inscrit dans une tradition de recherche sur l'ordre moral et social de sociétés d'interconnaissances, qui ne sont dotées d'aucune autorité politique. Voir en particulier le chapitre que Fred Myers (1991) consacre à l'étude des émotions (la compassion et la honte) et de l'idéal de réciprocité dans sa monographie sur les Pintupi en Australie.

par un rire gêné. Reprenant la question, Ileana, ma belle-sœur, lui demande frontalement si elle a aimé son père (*ți-a fost drag de el* ?). Nous éclatons de rire, et c'est finalement Ileana qui livre les premières réponses et réussit à tirer les vers du nez de sa mère. Pour prétendre à connaître le jeu des filiations et des alliances à Dițești, il faut bien souvent montrer qu'on en maîtrise déjà les règles. Rodica en dit finalement peu. Elle se souvient être sortie dans la rue pour rejoindre Tincuță, et sur un coup de tête, ils « ont fui » (*au fugit*) à Ploiești, la préfecture, où ils ont passé plusieurs nuits. En effet, son père, Costică, *lăutar* (musicien) de « bonne famille » (*familie bună*), s'opposait au fait que sa fille « prenne » (*să ia*) un *lăutar*. Tincuță était *lăutar*, formé à la musique par son père, musicien roumain, marié à une Tsigane de Dițești. Pour son père, il valait mieux que Rodica choisisse un homme « qui prenne soin de l'argent » (*care să tragă de bani*) et qui « fasse une maison » (*să facă casă*). À leur retour au village, ils étaient mariés aux yeux de tous. Derrière la chronique des sentiments amoureux, sur plusieurs décennies, se dessine une histoire (encore à faire) de l'évolution des formes d'unions depuis plus de quarante ans et des catégories utilisées par mes interlocuteurs pour en rendre compte.

Après une première partie dressant un portrait de ces quelques rues d'un village où le terme « tsiganie » fait l'objet de nombreuses instrumentalisations, tant dans les interactions avec le monde extérieur que dans les bavardages le long de la route (*pe șanț*), les seconde et troisième sont consacrées aux géographies et temporalités de la drague, partant de la rue pour se diriger vers l'espace domestique. La dernière partie esquisse une enquête sur la mémoire de l'amour et de ses sentiments mêlés en « tsiganie », dressant le portrait dynamique d'une communauté, où l'intervention des autorités morales et des parents – concernant le couple conjugal – n'ont cessé d'évoluer au fil des ans. Cette chronique doit une dette immense à l'égard de Maria. Elle est pour partie l'aboutissement d'une co-formation, à l'ethnographie, par mes nombreuses prises de notes, parfois même contemporaines à ses récits, et à la vie en « tsiganie », où j'ai appris l'art de raconter des histoires (les miennes ou celles que j'observais) pour que mes interlocuteurs me jugent digne d'écouter les leurs.

La « tsiganie » de Dițești

Depuis mes premiers terrains à Dițești, il m'a été souvent demandé, par les Roumains proches de la communauté, comme les pasteurs pentecôtistes de l'église locale, « Qu'est-ce qu'il fait d'eux des Tsiganes hormis le fait d'habiter "rue de France" (*strada Franceză*[4]) ? ». Autrement dit, hormis leur inscription territoriale dans ces quelques rues d'un village roumain – la « tsiganie », – qu'est-ce qui les caractérise comme Tsiganes ? À première vue, pas grand-chose. Se jouant avec ruse des acceptations du terme *țigănie* – un terme qui désigne « une totalité de Tsiganes qui vivent dans une collectivité », ou de manière plus dépréciative une « sale conduite » ou « une enclave géographique[5] » – mes interlocuteurs font de l'inscription au village à la fois le socle de leur conception du groupe, mais aussi l'un des stigmates duquel ils se jouent, parfois avec succès, parfois moins. Les habitants de Dițești maîtrisent un art répandu dans la société roumaine où *tout le monde peut-être tsiganisé* (« être fait tsigane » ; *să fie făcut țigan*), et chacun *peut jouer au « tsigane »* (*să fac pe țiganu'*). Leur défiance à se présenter comme *Țigani* en dehors du monde social du village correspond avec un goût prononcé pour la dissimulation de leur identité et une affection pour un usage « rusé » (*șmecher*) et équivoque du terme *țigan* dans leurs relations avec les *români* (« roumains ») – les non-Tsiganes, les « gadjé »[6]. De fait, le terme *Romi* (Roms) renvoie pour eux à une altérité,

4) Alors que plusieurs rues du village indiquent des rapprochements clairs entre toponymie (*strada Badoieștî*) et onomastique (les familles Badoi), la « rue de France » n'entretient aucun lien, en tout cas dans la mémoire de mes interlocuteurs, avec l'établissement d'une minorité francophone à Dițești.

5) Pour une précision sur ces différents sens, voir *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române (ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită)*, 2009 [en ligne] : https://dexonline.ro/.

6) Cet usage du malentendu est observé dans différents mondes romanès. C'est le « *quiproquo* assumé » structurant l'« ontologie romanès » des Gabori en Roumanie (Olivera 2012). Ce sont les « ruses » des lăutari pour ne pas se soumettre totalement aux commandes de leurs clients (Stoichiță, 2008). Ce sont les instrumentalisations du stéréotype « des Gitans » par les Tsuhara, leur permettant de demeurer « invisibles » malgré plus d'un siècle et demi de présence sur le territoire français (Foisneau 2016).

celle constituée des « autres Tsiganes ». Cette dissimulation des marqueurs ethniques, au sens de la société majoritaire, est pour partie l'héritage d'une pratique des *lăutari* ; le métier de prédilection des hommes (et de quelques femmes) depuis des générations. Si pour beaucoup de jeunes garçons, devenir un *lăutar* est un idéal, peu d'entre eux se forment à la pratique de l'instrument ou de la voix, et parmi ces derniers rares sont ceux qui réussissent à en faire leur 'métier'. Dans le prolongement de la période communiste, où tous travaillaient à l'usine, la plupart des hommes et des femmes de Dițești sont aujourd'hui employés sur les chantiers, dans les abattoirs ou les quelques usines encore en activité dans la région. Des activités professionnelles qui s'accommodent d'une dissimulation des marqueurs ethniques. Ne parlant pas le *romanès*, les habitants de Dițești ont même fait de la ressemblance aux Roumains un idéal de leur culture matérielle : construire son portail ou une clôture « comme les Roumains », décorer la salle de fête du mariage « comme les Roumains » est *unanimement* loué et reconnu comme un succès dans la communauté. Les rues tsiganes se distinguent seulement par la vie abondante sur les bas-côtés de la route en soirée, hiver comme été.

Bien qu'ils se jouent constamment des stéréotypes, le plus souvent dépréciatifs, du *țigan* et de la *țigănie,* mes interlocuteurs savent reconnaître les membres du groupe d'interconnaissance formé par les liens de filiation et d'alliance, et l'inscription territoriale[7]. Pour se situer ou se mouvoir dans le monde social de la țigănie chacun réfère aux catégories de « bonne famille » (*familie bună*) et de « mauvaise lignée » (*neam prost*) – qui regroupe plusieurs familles autour d'un ancêtre, le plus souvent décédé. Si l'appartenance d'une personne à un *neam* est rarement discutée, celle à une famille est constamment débattue. La différence d'échelle entre ces deux catégories participent de l'asymétrie entre une petite élite et une « multitude de rang » ; la première se distinguant de la seconde par son « bon caractère » (*caracter bun*) et sa propreté, plus rarement sa richesse. Bien qu'il existe une nette préférence pour la patrilocalité, le lieu de résidence du couple fait l'objet d'âpres négociations et compétitions entre « beaux-parents » (*cuscri*), manifestées notamment par de nombreux dons à l'égard du jeune couple. En raison notamment des mariages exogames à Dițești depuis plusieurs générations, plusieurs familles échappent à l'appartenance à un *neam* avec un ancêtre clairement identifié, elles n'en demeurent pas moins de « mauvaise lignée ». Dans son usage courant, la catégorie de *neam* désigne le plus souvent une altérité – contrairement à ce qui s'observe dans d'autres groupes romanis[8]. Depuis le début du XX[e] siècle, pour la génération née dans le tournant des années 1910 à 1920 – les parents des « vieux » (*bătrâni*) rencontrés en « tsiganie » –, les mariages exogames renouvellent la communauté locale et disséminent les familles dans un mouvement de déplacement vers des villages avoisinants, ou de migration vers les métropoles nationales (Ploiești, București, Brașov, Târgoviște) et, depuis le début des années 1990, vers les grandes métropoles européennes. Ces couples formés en dehors du groupe et installés à l'extérieur de la « tsiganie » unissent des hommes et, plus souvent, des femmes de Dițești avec des « gadjé », des *Țigani* d'autres municipalités alentours, des Roumains de bien plus loin (*Moldavi*, *Ardeleni*), et, plus rarement des citoyens européens ou extra-européens [voir photographies 1 et 2]. Le mouvement inverse s'observe aussi depuis plusieurs générations. Des hommes – et surtout des femmes – de la société majoritaire se sont mariés et installés dans leur famille d'alliance en *țigănie*. La tolérance d'une relative exogamie a toutefois ses limites. Les couples conjugaux formés avec d'autres Tsiganes et Roms locuteurs du *romanès* – qui se réduisent dans leurs termes aux Ursari (historiquement les « montreurs d'Ours » du roumain *urs*[9]) – sont extrêmement rares,

7) À propos de l'importance de l'inscription territoriale dans la formation de l'identité d'un groupe romani, voir le travail de Márcio Vilar Calon Welten (2020). Je remercie Elisabeth Tauber pour m'avoir fait découvrir ses recherches.

8) Le *neamo* comme catégorie d'action parmi des groupes romanis s'observe chez les Rom Cortorari (Tesăr 2018) ou les Rom Gabori (Olivera 2012).

9) À Dițești, le terme est strictement utilisé comme une catégorie d'altérité, sans aucun lien avec l'activité historique des montreurs d'ours.

et jamais pérennes. Cette quasi absence d'union s'explique par l'attitude générale des habitants de Dițești envers ceux qu'ils considèrent comme des *Țigani* archaïques, dotés – selon eux – d'une propension au scandale et dépourvus de toute disposition pour le raffinement, parlant mal le roumain, ou avec un très fort accent. Dans d'autres situations ces Ursari sont cependant considérés comme des Roms authentiques, « véritables » (*adevărați*), comme ces Roms dansant et chantant à la télévision dans des shows folkloriques. Inexorablement associé à ces Ursari, le *romanès* est à la fois perçu comme rugueux et laid, tout en étant considéré comme un outil puissant, à la fois pour ne pas être compris des « gadjé », et pour se faire comprendre d'autres *Țigani*, en contexte migratoire notamment. Des regrets à propos de l'ignorance du *romanès* sont même parfois formulés en *țigănie* : « nous sommes des Tsiganes demeurés » (*suntem niște Țigani proști*), « nous sommes tsiganes, mais seulement de nom » (*doar cu numele suntem Țigani*). Cette ignorance – du *romanès* et des imaginaires linguistiques qui lui sont rattachés – explique, selon eux, qu'aucune des familles d'Ursari ayant résidé pendant près de 10 ans dans leur voisinage (au cours des années 1980) n'aie souhaité marier leurs enfants à des jeunes de Dițești.

Dans le cas des couples formés et installés en dehors de la « tsiganie » depuis une ou deux générations, les familles maintiennent des liens le plus souvent jusqu'à la mort des derniers survivants de la fratrie la plus âgée (grands-parents ou arrière grands-parents). Pour quelques individus, dont les parents sont nés en *țigănie* puis installés en ville, cette invisibilisation prend la forme d'une "mise au placard" de l'identité tsigane dans la vie professionnelle ou conjugale, et surtout la transmission des histoires familiales aux enfants. Ces *passings* sont peu fréquents – et critiqués – et ne correspondent pas aux modalités "normales" de sortie des récits de la *țigănie*. Engagée dans de nouvelles alliances, empêtrée dans de nouvelles histoires, une partie de ces personnes (maintenant grands-parents ou décédées), disparaissent progressivement des intrigues, des histoires d'amour et de jalousie qui tissent les liens sociaux entre « Nos Tsiganes » (*Țiganii nostri*)[10]. Plus fondamentalement encore, leur présence s'estompe dans ces lieux de l'intimité familiale que sont les rêves (de la maisonnée et des morts), les prémonitions sur la santé d'un tel ou d'une telle, et les interminables débats sur la transmission du « caractère » (*caracter*) et de « la mentalité » (*mentalitatea*) des anciens – morts ou vivants – aux plus jeunes générations[11]. Le partage de ces histoires suit les limites de la famille – qui peut comprendre les alliances de la maisonnée et de la famille proche, et les liens de la filiation sur deux ou trois générations – sans pour autant recouvrir l'ensemble d'une descendance ou d'un *neam*.

Installés dans les rues du village, les mariages exogames prennent place dans le récit et les généalogies qui forment les ramifications de cette parenté pour partie négociée et pour partie attestée par la co-localité, la commensalité et les attachements spirituels aux proches parents.

10) Cette disparition évoque des phénomènes observés par les anthropologues depuis plusieurs décennies : que ce soit l'« isolement » comme source de l'acculturation des Rom Kalderash de l'Est parisien (Williams 1984), ou la dispersion des familles et l'inscription dans de nouveaux réseaux de pratiques professionnelles observées par Stefania Pontrandolfo dans son étude de cas sur la disparition d'une communauté Rom de l'Italie du Sud (2016).

11) Sur l'importance de considérer les relations spirituelles au sein de la parenté pour une approche holistique des mondes romanis, voir l'analyse et l'auto-ethnographie fascinantes que livre Elisabeth Tauber sur le rêve des morts parmi une communauté Sinti en Italie (2019).

Temps et lieux de la drague

Dans un tel contexte, me marier à Maria s'inscrivait dans les alliances observables en *țigănie*. Toutefois se marier sur son terrain d'enquête ne fut pas pour moi la garantie automatique d'un accès *immédiat* – instantané et non médiatisé – à la culture, aux routines, aux connaissances de la communauté de pratique formée par les habitants de Dițești. J'étais très loin d'être cet « ethnographe parfait » qui « s'est tellement imprégné de la culture d'autrui qu'il n'a plus aucune interprétation à proposer, il a [...] atteint une coïncidence absolue » (Piasere 2010 : 215). Chacune des différentes étapes de ma vie avec Maria, notre « fréquentation » (*vorba*), notre mariage, la naissance de nos

deux enfants a constitué autant d'histoires dans lesquelles nous étions pris, donnant prise à nos interlocuteurs et amis, qui nous racontaient à leur tour leurs histoires.

Dès le début de mon enquête, par mille et une plaisanteries ou questions, frontales et sommaires, j'ai dû constamment narrer mes aventures sentimentales et sexuelles – ou justifier leur absence, tant cela semble peu probable pour un jeune homme en « tsiganie ». Mes interlocuteurs s'attendent à ce que je me conforme à la conception du genre masculin qui prévaut à Dițești. Mon mariage n'est en cela qu'un moment d'une recherche constamment ponctuée d'injonctions à me comporter, non seulement comme un être sexué, assigné à des places genrées dans le monde social de Dițești, mais bien « en tant que sujet sexuel[12] ». Je suis sommé de prendre part au jeu, des pratiques de dragues aux conversations sérieuses sur l'amour et les relations sexuelles. Dès mes premiers contacts avec la famille de Lucian, mon hôte jusqu'à mon mariage, parents et adultes me demandent si je suis marié, et les plus jeunes m'interrogent sur les « copines » (*gagici*) que je me suis fait parmi les filles « de chez nous » (*de la noi*).

Au quotidien, les conversations des adolescents et jeunes hommes tournent constamment autour des pratiques et des fantasmes sexuels. Ces sujets, abordés prudemment dans l'espace domestique pour ne pas offenser les parents, peuvent au contraire résonner dans l'espace de la rue, « entre garçons » (*între băieți*), lorsqu'ils échangent sur les derniers exploits de chacun et les rumeurs qui circulent à propos des filles. Sur le bord de la route, Cristi[13], un ami, m'indique ainsi une fille, à qui il n'est pas apparenté, d'un geste du menton : « tu te la ferais ?... je me la suis faite ! C'est une dévergondée » (*vagabondă*) ; « elle fait l'amour avec tout le monde, elle fait tout, et très bien »[14]. Quand je lui demande si lui aussi « fait tout », il me répond par l'affirmative, « c'est normal, comme les garçons [entendre ici les jeunes hommes non mariés] » (*e normal, ca băieții*). « Et toi, tu fais quoi ? Tu la frottes ? (*ce faci ? o freci ?*) ». L'adresse est à la fois une salutation et une taquinerie – pour qui est capable de distinguer la plaisanterie derrière l'ellipse. Depuis le bas-côté de la route, les silhouettes, les couples et les individus sont passés en revue. Face à ces sociabilités de rue très masculines, les jeunes filles préfèrent discuter de leurs désirs et sentiments dans l'espace de la maisonnée (incluant les cousines proches et quelques rares amies), sur un ton qui relève plus de la confidence que de la plaisanterie ou de la fanfaronnade[15]. Pour échapper à l'examen de la rue les jeunes amoureux prennent des précautions, se donnant rendez-vous en soirée, dans les recoins moins éclairés [voir photographie 3]. En raison de cette hyper exposition de la rue et des commentaires moqueurs qui la traversent constamment, bon nombre de jeunes se fréquentent dans les espaces domestiques, en présence (ou pas) de parents, avant de « montrer » leur relation en public. Ce sont ces mêmes précautions que nous avons suivies Maria et moi au commencement de notre relation amoureuse. L'impétuosité du désir sexuel masculin – louée et redoutée tant pour son pouvoir de conviction et de « corruption[16] » – est très souvent naturalisée en « tsiganie », aussi bien par les garçons, que les adultes mariés, hommes ou femmes. Au même titre que l'hyper-visibilité des sociabilités de rue, la hardiesse des jeunes garçons (et des hommes) participe pleinement aux développements des rumeurs. Elle a aussi pour pendant d'alimenter la jalousie des femmes (mariées), et plus rarement celle des hommes. Ce sentiment de jalousie, moins présent au moment de la formation des jeunes couples – une jeune fille peut tout à fait fréquenter plusieurs « petits copains » (*gagici*) –, devient, au fil des ans, un élément central de la vie conjugale. Visite à un ami ou un membre de la famille, service au sein de l'église, déplacement en voiture, plaisanterie échangée au travail ; aucune activité n'échappant à une stricte séparation des genres, c'est rapidement toute la vie en

12) Ce sont avant tout les anthropologues gays et féminins (hétérosexuels ou homosexuels) qui ont mis en avant cette position de l'anthropologue en tant que sujet sexuel (voir Kulick & Willson 1995 ; Lewin & Leap 1996).

13) À quelques endroits du texte, les prénoms ont été changés, à la demande des intéressés ou sur suggestion de Maria.

14) Sans juger du caractère réel ou fabulé de ces flirts et de ces aventures sexuelles, la plupart des jeunes filles à propos desquelles circulaient de telles histoires se sont mariées en dehors de la « tsiganie ».

15) Maria m'a narré plusieurs récits de ces situations, qui me sont inaccessibles, sans toujours m'en livrer les confidences.

16) Il est courant d'entendre dire à propos d'un jeune homme ou d'une jeune fille qu'il, ou elle, a corrompu(e) son amoureuse, ou son amoureux (*l-a corupt* ou bien *a corupt-o*).

dehors du foyer qui peut faire l'objet de suspicion pour la femme ou le mari jaloux[17].

La présence ou l'absence des parents marque très souvent la différence de respectabilité d'une relation amoureuse, qui peut aller du « flirt » (*gagicăreală*), à un engagement qui se veut plus officiel – dans ce cas, les parents ne sont jamais très loin. On dit alors que les « amoureux » (*iubiți*) se fréquentent ou « parlent » (*vorbesc*), sous-entendu qu'ils « ne vivent pas ensemble » (*nu trăiesc împreună*). En suivant Lucian pendant mes premiers mois de terrain, alors qu'il cherche à se marier, je me retrouve ainsi dans des soirées entre jeunes gens [photographie 4]. Le plus souvent, l'absence des parents dans la pièce ou la chambre attenante permet une plus grande liberté dans l'expression du désir et des sentiments. Les couples formés se regroupent sur le lit face à la télévision et regardent une telenovela ou des vidéoclips de *manele* ou de *muzica ușoară*, chantant les amours naissants et déçus. De la sorte, si les parents arrivent, les caresses s'arrêtent, les mains se retirent, et tout le monde regarde sagement le poste. Lorsque la surveillance des adultes est beaucoup plus laxiste, les enlacements se complètent de danses et d'embrassades qui peuvent former l'antichambre d'une relation sexuelle qu'il faut planifier par la suite avec soin car les lieux et les occasions sont rares, et à Dițești « tout s'entend » (*totul se aude*). Dans le courant des années 2000, les maisons comprennent rarement plus de deux ou trois chambres (les parents, les garçons, les filles), et les surfaces des terrains sont divisées en plusieurs parcelles depuis plusieurs générations, afin d'accueillir plusieurs membres d'une fratrie les uns à côtés des autres, réduisant ainsi les cours à quelques mètres de largeur [voir photographie 5].

La prudence est de mise, mais elle varie en fonction du « sérieux » avec lequel est envisagé cette relation, et en fonction de la virginité (ou non) de la jeune fille. Avant notre mariage, alors que Lucian était encore « célibataire » (*cavaler*), je me suis souvent retrouvé auditeur de ses négociations « entre garçons » visant à établir le lieu et l'heure d'une « aventure » (*aventură*). Il pouvait s'agir aussi bien d'un garçon qui n'est pas en couple, que d'un homme, dès lors que la *gagica* (petite copine) n'était ni vierge ni mariée[18]. Si la fille est vierge, les choses deviennent plus graves, j'y reviens dans un instant. Si la femme est mariée à un *Țigan*, les lieux d'une possible relation sexuelle se limitent souvent au jardin ou à la voiture, des lieux hautement visibles, contribuant facilement à leur découverte par un voisin, puis aux rumeurs et aux commérages. Ces différentes histoires d'amour extra-conjugal, de la *găgicăreală* à la relation sexuelle, traversent la *țigănie* depuis 20 ans, impliquant des jalousies et des inimitiés durables, des séparations, et parfois même un remariage des amants. Elles participent toutes à l'atmosphère de défiance généralisée de la « tsiganie ».

Empêtré dans cette géographie affective du village, les facéties et plaisanteries qui m'étaient adressées continuellement par mes interlocuteurs s'expliquaient parfaitement. En somme, me prêter des *gagici* (petites copines) imaginaires alors que j'étais célibataire était un moyen de décrire et donner du sens à mes visites, dans un monde social où, les visites régulières ne se font qu'entre membres de la même famille (au sens désigné plus haut), ou éventuellement sur des périodes précises pour les personnes ayant « une affaire » en commun (une noce pour les *lăutari*, un chantier, etc.). Ces rumeurs faisaient d'autant plus sens dans une société obnubilée par la formation des couples conjugaux. Ainsi, mes sentiments et désirs, provoqués, encouragés, encadrés, dirigés par mes enquêtés ont été, pour eux, autant de prises sur mon attention et sur mes recherches.

Cette forme d'engagement « en tant que sujet sexuel » a donné à mon ethnographie « cette sensibilité accrue à la position, cette conscience augmentée de la partialité, et – ce qui est peut-être le plus pertinent – cet engagement accru dans le jeu » (Kulick

17) Elisabeth Tauber a justement remarqué que les implications d'une telle conception de la sexualité, présente dans plusieurs groupes roms, gitans et tsiganes, ouvrent un large champ comparatif qui dépasse le cadre de ce seul article.

18) Je n'évoque ici que les situations où la fille est de la « tsiganie », celles qui impliquent une femme ou une fille de la société majoritaire ne nécessitent pas autant de précautions.

1995 : 16). Ces situations et ces expériences ont toutefois mis du temps à faire partie de mon enquête. Mon premier doute était déontologique ; que faire de toutes ces histoires d'amours, de flirts, d'aventures, d'infidélité, quand elles m'étaient confiées par des personnes, qui n'étaient pas impliquées ou concernées ? Comment appréhender et raconter la description que me livrait Petre à propos de l'une de mes interlocutrices et amies proches ? Quel crédit accordé à un récit élaboré par un homme ivre, rencontré pour la première fois trente minutes plus tôt ? Faut-il en reprendre tous les détails au motif qu'ils sont confirmés par les hochements de tête de l'assistance silencieuse ? Mon second doute était plutôt disciplinaire, et s'appuyait sur la littérature critiquant avec justesse la figure de l'"ethnographe parfait" qui, en se mariant sur son terrain, pense ainsi l'épouser et "devenir indigène" (*going native*[19]). Une défiance qui s'observe aussi – malheureusement – dans la manière dont la discipline limite à ses marges les enquêtes ethnographiques conduites et présentées par le prisme de l'amour, avec tous les désirs et les troubles que peut induire l'intimité avec une personne sur/de son terrain[20].

19) Voir notamment les propos de Margaret Mead dans un entretien avec Gregory Bateson conduit par Stewart Brand (Brand 1976).

20) Pour une version romanesque d'une telle enquête, voir le récit de l'anthropologue Kenneth Good narrant ses onze années parmi les Yanomami et son amour pour Yarima (1990). Sur la manière dont l'amour sur le terrain permet de repenser les hiérarchies entre « sachant » et « informateur » voir le texte écrit à quatre mains par Robert O. Ajwang' et Laura Edmondson (2003).

Désir sexuel et « crainte de Dieu »

Le mariage en « tsiganie » est attesté par la communauté dès lors que les jeunes gens rendent manifestes leur première relation sexuelle, quand « ils ont vécu ensemble » (*au trăit împreună*). « Prendre pour femme » (*a lua de nevastă*), ou « se prendre » (*a se lua*) revêt différentes formes : celle de la fugue, celle du mariage, ou celle de la simple installation de la jeune femme chez son homme. Le mariage civil est une formalité inutile, excepté pour les chrétiens pentecôtistes qui en font une condition pour les adultes vivant en couple souhaitant se faire baptiser. La première relation sexuelle, son contrôle, est donc au centre de la formation du couple.

Mes premières expériences sur la dissimulation et le contrôle des relations amoureuses se sont bien évidemment poursuivies tout au long de notre relation avec Maria. À l'été 2011, elle fait déjà l'objet de rumeurs dont je perçois certains échos. Si certaines jeunes femmes, de mon âge ou plus âgées, prennent un air pincé ou m'expriment leurs meilleurs vœux avec retenue, Maria étant de onze ans mon aînée – fait peu ordinaire en *țigănie*, où la différence s'observe le plus souvent dans le sens inverse –, tous les garçons en revanche me rassurent sur un point : « on n'a rien entendu à son propos » (*nu s-a auzit nimic despre ea*), évoquant ainsi sa virginité et sa respectabilité. En *țigănie* – et exception faite des « repentis » (*pocăiți*), membres de l'église pentecôtiste locale – seule la virginité féminine est considérée et valorisée. Dițești n'est pas pour autant une société de l'honneur car le défaut de virginité d'une jeune fille ne provoque pas systématiquement la honte de ses parents masculins (père ou frères) et ne représente pas toujours un affront pour le jeune marié qui aurait été trompé[21]. Rien de systématique donc, car si la fille « n'est pas à sa place » (*nu este la locul ei*), les reproches du père, plus rarement des frères, se font dans l'espace domestique et leur intensité varie d'une famille à l'autre. Dans la mesure où la perte de sa virginité ne rend pas pour autant impossible toute alliance au sein de la communauté (et encore moins en dehors), les attitudes et pratiques des parents sont diverses, surtout s'ils étaient opposés au jeune homme avec qui « a vécu » leur fille. Cette union brisée provoque à la fois des inimitiés durables, mais aussi des appels à la « justice divine » (*dreptatea lui Dumnezeu*), comme ultime autorité morale.

La virginité est avant tout décrite comme une qualité propre à la jeune fille, à même d'infléchir les sentiments de son « petit copain » (*gagic*) ou de son « amoureux » (*iubit*) : en fortifiant son amour, la rendant ainsi plus chère à ses yeux, ou en attisant sa

21) Bien que les notions de respect (*respect*), de honte (*ruşine*), de ridicule (*de râs*) soient déclinées sous beaucoup de formes en « tsiganie », il n'est pourtant jamais question d'honneur, au sens où a pu le définir Julian Pitt-Rivers (1977).

crainte. Pour beaucoup, mépriser ou « se moquer de » (*a-și bate joc de*) la virginité d'une jeune fille de la « tsiganie » suscite la « punition de Dieu » (*pedeapsă de la Dumnezeu*). Il est en effet courant d'entendre les uns et les autres s'exclamer « Que Dieu me batte » (*să mă bată Dumnezeu*) pour faire valoir à leurs interlocuteurs leur intégrité morale. Autorité morale avant d'être considérée comme une déité, Dieu s'inscrit, avec le diable (*dracu*' ou *satana*) dans une paire relationnelle qui oppose le don et le principe de la réciprocité à ceux de l'intérêt (*interes*), du profit, de l'usure, de l'envie (*invidie*) – une relation asymétrique reposant sur une logique d'accumulation et de distinction, contrairement à la jalousie, souvent comprise comme un pendant de l'amour et de l'intrépidité du désir sexuel. Dans les situations où se font et défont les intrigues et les rumeurs, il est ainsi courant d'entendre des exclamations comme : « il est de Dieu ! » (*e al lui Dumnezeu*) ou « il est du diable ! » (*e al dracu*', *e satana !*). La crainte la plus répandue étant que la « justice de Dieu » (*dreptatea lui Dumnezeu*) puisse s'exercer sur les enfants – ce qu'il y a de plus cher pour « Nos Tsiganes ». Ce manichéisme apparent peut donner l'impression d'une influence importante de la foi et du « patois de Canaan » des évangéliques pentecôtistes dans le monde social de Dițești. Si plusieurs campagnes d'évangélisation, après la révolution de 1989, ont suscité l'apparition de plusieurs églises pentecôtistes et de nombreuses conversions, et adhésions pour un temps, les deux assemblées installées à Dițești ne comptent aujourd'hui qu'une petite centaine de membres. À l'échelle de la « tsiganie », il ne s'agit que d'une minorité[22]. L'incarnation d'une autorité morale par une « crainte de Dieu » précède, dans la mémoire des « anciens » en particulier, l'arrivée du pentecôtisme et le « réveil spirituel[23] » (*trezirea spirituală*) en « tsiganie ». Si la forme et le moment des noces dans la vie des couples varient selon leur confession, depuis une dizaine d'années, les orthodoxes comme les évangéliques invoquent cette « crainte de Dieu » comme un impératif social auquel chacun doit se soumettre quotidiennement, et de façon plus accrue encore lors des premiers amours, un moment susceptible de changer le sort d'un garçon, d'une fille et de leur descendance.

Le temps des premiers amours passé, les récits entourant la formation des jeunes couples conjugaux donnent parfois une importance capitale à la « crainte de Dieu ». Dans les situations de drague et de « fréquentation » (*vorba*) au sein de l'espace domestique, quand les amoureux sont seuls, cette « crainte de Dieu » compose avec des conceptions contrastées de la féminité et de la masculinité. De manière fort similaire à cette « dualité des standards moraux » appliquée à la sexualité féminine et masculine, observée par Paloma Gay y Blasco parmi les Gitans de la région de Madrid[24], les hommes et les femmes de Dițești conçoivent non seulement le désir mais aussi son contrôle de façon complètement différente.

Tout au long de notre « fréquentation », les longues discussions que nous avons le soir, sur le canapé de la chambre utilisée pour les réceptions, font l'objet d'une double vigilance. Il est primordial que mes amis *lăutari* ne me voient pas quitter la maison trop tard la nuit, pour ne pas provoquer des rumeurs et des ragots. Par ailleurs, il est aussi important que les cousines de Maria, informées de nos veillées, ne pensent pas que je sois fait « de bois » (*de lemn*) mais bel et bien « de sang » (*de sânge*), de sorte que ma virilité ne soit pas mise en doute – selon ce principe qui, en « tsiganie », associe étroitement la virilité et l'impossibilité de contrôler le désir sexuel. De foi pentecôtiste, son souhait (le nôtre), était de conserver sa virginité jusqu'à la célébration civile et religieuse de notre mariage.

Indépendamment de la forme que prend l'union reconnue par la communauté, celle-ci doit composer avec les désirs sexuels féminins et masculins. L'une des constantes des unions en « tsiganie » réside dans leur temporalité. Même celles célébrées au sein

22) Surtout, cette dichotomie laisse une place importante à l'ensemble des pratiques qui, de « la ruse » (*șmecherie*) aux « escroqueries » (*hoții*) permettant d'adapter le labeur à la rémunération, sont saluées par cette même exclamation : *e al dracu'*, accompagnée de rires ou de sourires en coin.

23) Sur l'usage contrasté du terme de « phénomène » ou de « réveil » pentecôtiste, comme catégories respectivement étique et émique aux communautés évangéliques, je renvoie le lecteur à la discussion engagée par Patrick Williams (1984) et le pasteur Clément Le Cossec (1985) par articles interposés dans la revue *Études tsiganes.*

24) Voir en particulier le chapitre « Desire, Control and Dual Moral Standards » de sa monographie *Gypsies in Madrid* (Gay y Blasco 1999).

de l'église évangélique, qui encourage pourtant à suivre une chronologie étirée dans le temps (fiançailles, entente entre belle-famille – *tocmeală* –, mariage, puis relations sexuelles), se forment en quelques mois [photographie 6]. Bien sûr, il existe des « relations » (*vorbe*) extraordinaires par leur temporalité, mais paradoxalement elles ne se concrétisent pas sous la forme d'une union ou d'un mariage [photographie 7]. Ces histoires d'amour viennent plutôt alimenter les jalousies et inimitiés pérennes entre familles. La raison principalement évoquée pour expliquer la formation rapide des couples est le désir masculin, reconnu comme impétueux et difficile à maîtriser. De la sorte, les conseils des proches aux jeunes filles est souvent le même ; « ne joue pas avec le feu » (*nu te juca cu focu*'). Hormis le cas des fugues, considérées comme un compromis entre le désir des deux amoureux, les relations sexuelles qui parachèvent rapidement un flirt entre deux amoureux sont toujours commentées et expliquées par l'attitude de la femme et sa faculté (ou non) à contrôler son propre désir, celui de l'homme tendant à être naturalisé. Comme l'a justement remarqué Paloma Gay y Blasco, dans son enquête auprès des Gitans de Madrid, l'agentivité de la jeune fille est par moment réduite à son incapacité à résister aux « avances » du désir masculin, *a contrario* elle est parfois mise en avant comme une ruse des femmes sachant « gagner » ou « corrompre » leur amoureux en « leur donnant ce qu'il fallait » (*i-a dat ce trebuia*).

25) Une telle appréhension se retrouve également parmi les Sinti. Comme le montre Elisabeth Tauber, les discussions à propos des mariages et des alliances portent particulièrement sur le respect dû aux morts de la belle-famille que l'épouse doit accepter de rendre (Tauber 2006).

Contrôle et tactiques des parents

S'il y a une intervention des parents dans le mariage elle est le plus souvent racontée comme étant à l'initiative des parents de la fille, qui ont su jouer de l'autorité morale de « la crainte de Dieu », ou ont su pallier au manque de virginité de leur fille pour gagner l'amour du gendre. L'intervention des parents du garçon est aussi possible, et même attestée, mais elle n'est jamais articulée avec la sexualité du jeune couple. En contrechamp de l'idéal de réciprocité attaché à la formation du couple conjugal, l'intervention des parents est toujours conçue comme asymétrique. Bien qu'elle fasse partie du jeu elle ne cesse d'inquiéter. La persistance en *țigănie* des récits (remplacés aujourd'hui par des plaisanteries) autour des « sorts » (*vrăji*) que les beaux-parents auraient jetés ou fait jeter sur leur gendre ou belle-fille sont pour partie les symptômes d'une pratique de l'alliance et de l'amour qui, en dépit des standards et idéaux moraux, laisse une place importante aux tactiques, à la ruse, ou plus rarement à « la force » (*japca*) ou aux sorts.

Si la forme d'une union est pour partie déterminée par la force des sentiments et le contrôle de la sexualité – ou son instrumentalisation – elle fait aussi l'objet d'une négociation entre le jeune couple et les beaux-parents. De nombreuses histoires d'amour font état de désaccords, de sentiments résistant aux refus des parents de voir leur fille partir avec tel garçon, ou de voir leur garçon amener dans la maisonnée telle fille. Pour les parents, les discussions qui s'engagent autour des unions et des alliances soulèvent avec passion les questions de l'identité des familles, de la manière dont elles peuvent la transmettre sans se compromettre (avec le « caractère » d'une autre famille[25]) [photographie 8]. Lors de mes séjours de terrain avant notre mariage, entre 2007 et 2012, je n'ai pas toujours eu des informations sur les nombreux couples qui se sont formés – surtout quand les mariages ont conduit les filles de Dițești en dehors de la « tsiganie ». J'ai toutefois pu suivre quelques-unes de ces histoires, comme celle de Lucian, de Mihai ou des témoins de notre mariage. C'est finalement en fréquentant Maria, en participant aux sociabilités féminines de sa famille, et en nouant des amitiés fortes avec des jeunes couples mariés de notre génération, que j'ai perçu

la mémoire des histoires d'amour à Dițești. En écoutant un peu plus attentivement les intrigues de ces couples qui se font, et parfois se défont, en « tsiganie », la manière de « prendre » femme ou homme à Dițești semble avoir connu une évolution depuis les deux dernières décennies.

Dans les années 1980 et 1990, ce qui correspond à la période où Maria a pu observer les mariages d'elle-même, l'équilibre entre les pratiques de mariage était sensiblement différent. Quand il y avait une entente entre les deux belles-familles et que les parents du garçon pensaient, avec confiance, que la fille « était à sa place », c'est-à-dire vierge, ils organisaient une noce. À certaines occasions, et selon le « caractère » de la famille, la soirée et la fête pouvaient être marquées par l'exhibition d'une chemise tâchée du sang de la jeune mariée, pour prouver sa virginité. Cette pratique a aujourd'hui disparue. Parfois, le linge et les draps tâchés par les premiers rapports sexuels sont gardés et montrés – par la femme – aux amies intimes, permettant ainsi de « faire savoir » (*a trimite vorba*), qu'elle était vierge au moment de son mariage. Quand la confiance entre beaux-parents n'était pas établie, ou que les moyens financiers manquaient à l'organisation d'une noce, le couple s'installait ensemble, simplement. En cas d'opposition de l'un des parents, les deux amoureux fuyaient en ville pour plusieurs nuits. Le plus souvent le refus venait des parents de la jeune fille au motif qu'elle était trop jeune, ou que le jeune homme ne provenait pas d'une « bonne famille », n'était pas suffisamment débrouillard ou était laid – trop « noir », « trop *țigan* » au sens de la société majoritaire.

Depuis le milieu des années 2000, les modalités pratiques de formation des couples évoluent. Les noces revêtent ainsi un enjeu totalement différent. À l'exception d'une poignée de mariages, organisés au sein des églises pentecôtistes, l'intégralité des noces – que j'ai pour partie filmée sur commande – était organisée par des couples

Photographie 1. La tante de Maria (à gauche) en compagnie de ses filles, de sa petite fille et de son gendre, Mahmud, dans leur appartement à Bucarest. De nationalité égyptienne, Mahmud s'est marié à Claudia au milieu des années 1990 (date approximative de la photographie). Cliché tiré de l'album de famille de Maria, scanné et reproduit avec son aimable autorisation.

des années après leur union, et bien souvent après la naissance de plusieurs enfants. Cette célébration des noces est avant tout au service de la monstration des richesses matérielles et relationnelles du couple et des beaux-parents – on se vante bien plus souvent du nombre d'invités que de l'argent dépensé ou des dons reçus à la fin du repas [photographie 9]. Les noces, en nette augmentation depuis quelques années, proportionnellement aux conditions matérielles d'existence, s'inscrivent dans un principe de circulation des dettes et des dons qui se distingue des logiques prévalant à la formation des couples conjugaux. Depuis quinze ans, la majorité des mariages

sont actés par une relation sexuelle (très souvent dans la maison de l'homme), et l'emménagement de la jeune femme chez celui-ci. Parce que le passage du statut de « jeune fille vierge » à celui de femme est rendu difficilement visible, de nombreuses rumeurs circulent sur le moment à partir duquel les jeunes amoureux ont réellement « vécu ensemble ». Le mariage par la « fuite » en ville reste la dernière possibilité de former une union. Elle est cependant de moins en moins courante. Alors que de mémoire, les femmes se rappellent que les unions "par fuite" des années 1960 et 1980 ont « tenu » (*au dăinuit*), comme celles des années 1990, plusieurs unions "par fuite" ont récemment provoqué de nombreuses conversations car rien ne s'est passé comme d'habitude. Pour plusieurs d'entre elles, les parents de la jeune fille se sont fermement opposés en allant parfois même jusqu'au commissariat pour porter plainte au motif que leur fille était mineure (mais pas son *gagic* – petit copain) – cette différence est courante mais solliciter la police est totalement inhabituel. Or, non seulement ces unions « n'ont pas tenu » (*n-au dăinuit*), mais les hommes et les femmes se sont finalement remariés chacun de leur côté au sein de la « tsiganie ». Ces nouvelles unions en partie réorganisées sous la pression des parents, ou « par ambition » (*la ambiție*), ne se sont jamais faites avec amour.

Pour mes interlocuteurs l'échec de ces unions "par fuite" s'inscrit dans un mouvement de plus grande envergure qui voit augmenter significativement, depuis la fin des années 1990, le nombre de séparations et de remariages en « tsiganie ». La génération des grands-parents (et arrière grands-parents) conçoit cela comme une disparition de la « crainte de Dieu » – qui correspond tantôt avec une simple nostalgie et parfois avec une collapsologie mêlant l'attente messianique des chrétiens évangéliques et une reprise de théories du complot. Dans un monde social où les unions et les filiations sont un thème de prédilection des discussions, ce sont surtout des situations inédites qui alimentent cette peur de la disparition de la « crainte de Dieu ». Ces histoires impliquent des mères ou même des grands-mères quittant leurs enfants et maris pour une « aventure », ce qui était encore impossible quelques années plus tôt. Comme me le dit Maria à propos de son père : « tu penses que Tincuță n'a pas rencontré de belles femmes lors de ses noces ? » – ayant bonne réputation parmi les « gadjé » de Câmpina, où il était ouvrier[26], il jouait de l'accordéon pour les noces, les baptêmes et les fêtes du sud de la vallée de Prahova. Elle répond d'elle-même « bien sûr que si, mais, il a eu la crainte de Dieu... c'est comme ça chez les Tsiganes ». Ses potentielles conquêtes font ainsi l'objet de plusieurs histoires au sein de la maisonnée. Toutes finissent de la même façon, « il a eu peur que Dieu le punisse », autrement dit, il a eu peur que Maria tombe malade, sa fille en qui « il avait placé tout son amour, toute son affection » (*și-a pus tot dragul*).

Au-delà de ces discours et récits mettant l'accent sur l'évolution de la morale en « tsiganie », le village de Dițești connaît bien des transformations des conditions de vie matérielles qui affectent la manière dont les hommes « prennent » femme et inversement. Avec les premières migrations de travail des *lăutari*, puis des anciens ouvriers vers l'Europe occidentale, de nombreuses familles ont investi une partie importante des sommes acquises « dans la pierre », construisant de nouvelles maisons, avec de nombreuses chambres (idéalement une par enfant, parfois plus pour les futurs petits-enfants). Les pratiques de la drague se déroulent ainsi de moins en moins sous la surveillance explicite des parents, et les unions qui se concrétisent par une relation sexuelle sous le toit de la famille du garçon (rarement de la fille) sont fréquentes.

La transformation des unions s'explique aussi par un changement de l'attitude des parents à l'égard de leurs enfants. De moins en moins de parents sont en effet disposés à s'opposer frontalement aux sentiments de leurs enfants, en raison de leur expérience,

26) Situé à une vingtaine de kilomètres de Dițești, la ville de Câmpina accueillait, sous le régime communiste, plusieurs usines où travaillaient une partie des hommes et de femmes de la « tsiganie ».

parfois douloureuse, de l'intervention de leurs propres parents dans leurs premiers amours ou leur couple. Les changements les plus notables s'observent parmi la génération de parents qui ont "marié leurs enfants" autour des années 2000. L'histoire d'Adriana est particulièrement frappante. Fille de « bonne famille », elle a connu son premier amour très jeune, au début des années 1970. Elle « a vécu » (*a trăit*) pendant un mois avec son homme, après s'être enfui en ville pendant plusieurs jours. Sa mère s'opposant à cette union, elle s'est finalement remariée avec un homme de la « tsiganie » provenant d'une « plutôt bonne famille » (*cât de cât era de familie*). Quand elle raconte son histoire, Adriana est amère, elle n'a pas connu l'amour avec le père de ses enfants. Pis encore, cette union est le fruit d'un « sort », jeté par une « Roumaine » de la municipalité avoisinante à la demande de ses beaux-parents[27]. Elle l'a appris quelques années plus tard, quand la « Roumaine », prise de remords, « a fait entendre par quelqu'un » (*a lăsat vorba pe cineva*) qu'elle lui avait jeté un sort à l'aide d'une photographie. Lorsque dans les années 2000 sa fille cadette, faisant-fi de l'opposition de sa mère, s'enfuit avec son amoureux pour quelques jours en ville, Adriana finit par céder : « quand Raluca m'a dit : "que veux-tu que je fasse si je l'aime ?"... Je l'ai laissée partir ». L'histoire d'Adriana est connue parmi les femmes de la « tsiganie », et beaucoup parmi la génération de Maria tirent deux conclusions ; il n'est pas bon que les parents se mêlent de l'amour de leurs enfants, et, de toute façon, plus aucune femme ne résisterait comme Adriana aux crises de jalousie de son mari.

Conclusion : quelle histoire de l'amour ?

En ouvrant le texte par une citation tirée des écrits de Wilhelm Schapp, je faisais le pari de montrer que les histoires d'amour, vécues par mes interlocuteurs, n'ont été audibles – et d'une certaine manière visibles – qu'à partir du moment où je m'étais prêté au jeu de la drague, puis à celui, plus sérieux, de l'amour conjugal. Engagé dans une histoire d'amour – empêtré dirait Wilhelm Schapp – j'ai bien sûr observé des situations par moi-même, et relevé la géographie affective du village. Toutefois, si la forme du texte suit en filigrane celle d'un récit de vie – que ce soit la mienne ou celle de mes amis – c'est aussi parce que le sentiment et l'expérience de l'amour sont très souvent perceptibles sous la forme d'une histoire, de rumeurs, d'exploits sexuels, de jalousies, d'inimitiés et d'infidélités.

En essayant de décrire dans le détail les histoires d'amour, depuis le moment et l'expérience de la formation du couple conjugal jusqu'à la transformation du sentiment amoureux, ce texte a placé au centre deux dimensions centrales de la vie vécue à Dițești. La première est l'ordre moral de la « tsiganie ». Particulièrement mobilisée et invoquée lors de la formation des couples conjugaux, cette « crainte de Dieu » est en réalité l'ultime autorité – non incarnée par une entité – d'une société d'interconnaissance où chaque famille, se pense comme singulière, dotée d'un « caractère » qu'elle ne souhaite en aucun cas perdre par des alliances avec des « mauvaises lignées » sans pour autant se dédouaner du principe de réciprocité qui doit prévaloir entre *Țigani*[28]. La seconde dimension, historique, est celle de la transformation des modalités de « prendre femme » ou de former un couple, particulièrement visible (ou audible) dans la manière dont les autorités morales et les parents interviennent dans la formation du couple des jeunes amoureux. Le recul de la « crainte de Dieu » et la focalisation de la formation du couple conjugal autour de l'amour ont des conséquences paradoxales sur le contrôle des parents. L'apparition de la possibilité du remariage est contemporaine à la modification du contrôle du flirt et des relations sexuelles, désormais plus proches de l'espace domestique, et d'un

27) La pratique des ensorcellements se fait également au sein de la « tsiganie », même si elle est hautement condamnée, surtout quand celle-ci porte moins sur le couple conjugal ou sur des amoureux (c'est le cas le plus fréquent), que sur des enfants de *Țigani* ; ces sorts suscitent une condamnation selon le principe de la « crainte de Dieu ».

28) Michael Stewart, notamment, a décrit avec acuité les tensions tant morales que matérielles qui peuvent apparaître dans une société romani qui combine une « individualité radicale » et une « hypersensibilité à l'égalité » (Stewart 1997 : 92).

contrôle éventuel (mais peu contraignant) des parents. Quand, par ailleurs, les histoires d'amour en « tsiganie » depuis près de vingt ans ont acté la disparition des unions asymétriques que pouvaient sceller les « sorts » et le caractère malheureux des interventions autoritaires des parents sur la formation des jeunes couples. Cette chronique lève le voile sur ces deux dimensions de l'amour et de la vie en « tsiganie », nul doute qu'elles pourrait faire l'objet de développements ultérieurs.

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Photographie 2.
Viorel (à droite), le défunt frère de Maria, prend la pause avec des voisins et lointains parents du village de Mărginenii de Jos où il s'est marié au début des années 1990. Introduit par son père à la musique des *lăutari*, il jouait de la guitare. Photographe inconnu, cliché du 6 juin 1992 tiré de l'album de famille de Maria, scanné et reproduit avec son aimable autorisation.

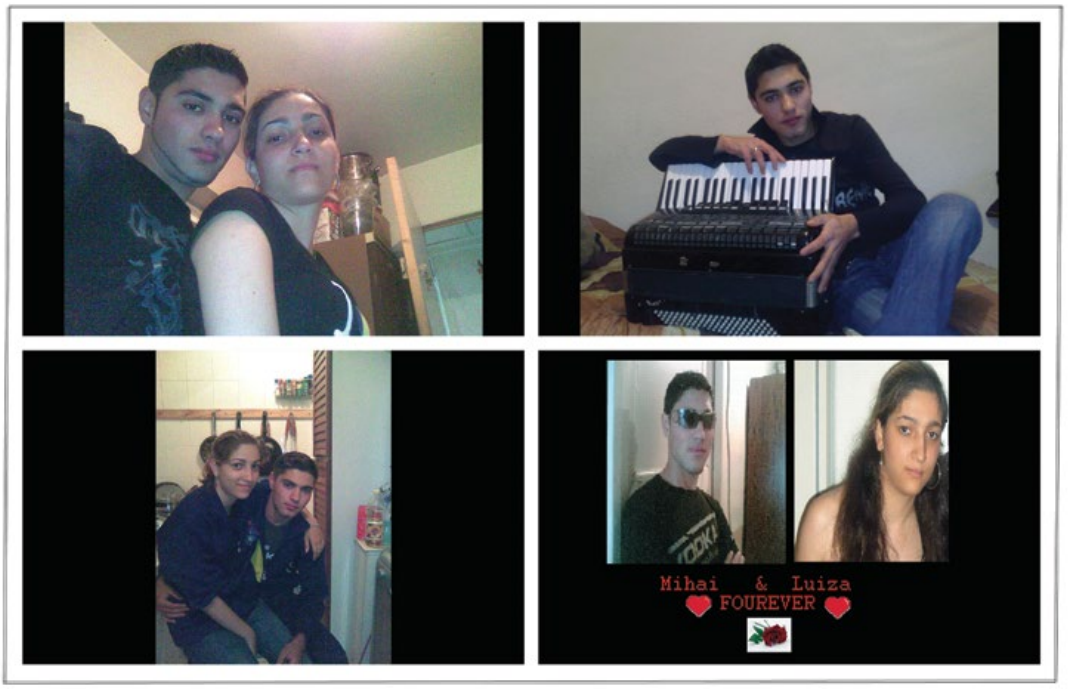
Photographie 3. Les petites rues mal éclairées du village étaient, à la fin des années 2000, un endroit idéal pour les jeunes amoureux. Ils pouvaient ainsi se tenir enlacés en dehors des regards des parents et des voisins. Crédit : Jonathan Larcher

Photographie 4.
Mon hôte, encore célibataire au début de mon enquête de terrain, entouré de deux amies lors d'une soirée entre jeunes organisée chez lui.
Crédit : Jonathan Larcher.

Photographie 5. La veille maison de famille (*casa bătrânească*) de Maria au début des années 2000. La proximité des maisons voisines, juste derrière, et les clôtures minimales, participent à cette géographie affective où beaucoup se voit et tout s'entend. Avec la construction de nouveaux portails, maisons et clôtures, cette géographie s'est modifiée. Photographie tirée de l'album de famille de Maria, scannée et reproduite avec son aimable autorisation.

Photographie 6. Membres de l'église pentecôtiste de Dițești, Crina et Cosmin, en compagnie de Maria (à droite), photographiés devant la mairie lors de leur mariage en mai 2007. Ils avaient alors 21 ans. Cliché tiré de leur album de famille, reproduit avec leur aimable autorisation.

Photographie 7. En décembre 2008, Mihai me demande de réaliser un montage vidéo à partir de photographies réalisées avec son amoureuse, une tsigane de Bucarest rencontrée en France. Elle lui a proposé de fuir avec lui, mais il a hésité, puis refusé, en raison des parents de la jeune fille – trop envahissants à son goût. Le clip est l'occasion pour lui de faire le deuil de leur amour. Montage vidéo : Jonathan Larcher et Mihai "Stamalan" Știrbei.



Photographie 8. Au cours d'une discussion très informelle, Margareta (à droite) et Ana (à gauche) finissent par s'engager dans une série de louange à propos de leur fille et fils respectifs, laissant entendre qu'ils feraient un bon parti l'un pour l'autre. Vidéogramme tiré des rushes de Jonathan Larcher.

Photographie 9. En août 2010, Costel et Tamina, ici avec leurs filles, célèbrent leur noce après deux décennies de vie commune. Filmée et photographiée à leur demande, la noce est surtout l'occasion de faire la fête (et d'entretenir les dons et les dettes qu'ils partagent avec leurs amis). Crédit : Jonathan Larcher.

Constraints on "Free Choice": The Role of Marriage in a Hungarian Romungro Community

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ABSTRACT

Marriage has been studied by anthropologists usually in so-called "traditional" Roma communities. These communities are said to have "successfully" avoided assimilation and the process of proletarianization. According to classical anthropological studies, marriage plays an important role in maintaining the organization of these communities and their "cultural system" (Gay y Blasco 1999; Okely 1996; Sutherland 1976; Tesăr 2012; Williams 2000). Based on long-term ethnographical fieldwork from 2000 to 2013, my paper will discuss the meanings that marriage takes in a Hungarian Romungro community,[1] which is highly affected by processes of assimilation and proletarianization. I will point out that although the concept and practice of marriage here are different from those of non-proletarianized communities—for example, the notion of "arranged marriage" does not exist among Romungros—marriage seems to be the most significant institution in the everyday life of the community. The institution of marriage can be interpreted through intersectionality, along with the kinship system and gender relationships, but it should not be separated from ethnic identity, everyday practices of ethnic distinctions, and class position either. Drawing on two case studies, I will show how the institution of marriage relates to the extended family, the *Gypsy/Hungarian* distinction, and the class positions within this community, and how the process of proletarianization affects the role and concepts of marriage.

KEYWORDS

Marriage, kinship, ethnic distinction, social classes, social mobility.

1) Romungro are a Hungarian-speaking Roma group in Hungary. They are the largest Roma group in Hungary, i.e., about 500,000 persons or 70 percent of the Hungarian Roma population.

Introduction

"You cannot command the heart" goes the most popular phrase about marriages among the Romungros. In these communities, the concept of marriage is strongly related to the notion of "freedom of choice" and "free love." However, when studying everyday marriage practices, we can see that these "free" emotions also depend on social relations. It is a basic assumption in sociology that a free-choice marriage or a marriage for love is also controlled by structural constraints. Our relationships and choices of partners are strongly determined by social relations, which in turn are organized by class or ethnic inequalities. As Max Haller (1981) stresses, marriage is still one of the main institutions that help preserve and perpetuate class positions, playing an important role in maintaining hierarchical ethnic relationships. At the same time marriage can be one of the main mobility strategies to help the individual gain a better position in the system of social inequalities. Consequently, a love-based match cannot be interpreted outside of structural factors. Moreover, as Illouz (2012) emphasizes, emotions are also shaped by social relations

and institutions. It was no different in my research site, among Romungro communities living in Hungarian villages. To reveal the constraints on, and the pathways of, the practice of marriage in this community, first we need to account for the wider structural determinations that influence the lives of people from these communities.

In my research experience, in the Romungro communities, one's chances in life are determined by the class position in conjunction with ethnicity. In these rural communities, if we "get to know" that someone is *Cigány* (Gypsy),[2] this will tell us where this person lives (one of the Roma settlements in the village); what kind of job he/she has (seasonal work, unskilled work, public work scheme[3]); the person's level of education (mostly elementary education); economic status (poor); and, last but not least, where this person chooses a partner. In short, the attribute of being *Cigány* affects almost every area of this person's life, and it subsumes every aspect of their social position.

Furthermore, the social position of *Cigány* communities is shaped by wider economic and political processes, particularly the expansion and contraction of stable wage labor. While in times of economic growth Roma have a chance to secure jobs on the lowest level of the formal wage labor ladder, in times of "crisis" they are excluded from it, and they can only make a living working in the informal/semi-formal economy. Because of such cyclical changes, it seems that these communities are constantly in the process of proletarianization, as well as being caught in a similarly never-ending process of assimilation. Being able to stay in the system of formal wage labor is not simply the most evident form of social mobility for them, but it also gives them a chance to shake off the stigmatizing meanings of being *Cigány*, since the ethnic distinction could dissolve in the worker status. This permanent transition determines aspirations related to both class position and ethnic distinction in these Romungro communities. In these aspirations, the desired social mobility is entangled with the pressure to assimilate and leave behind the label of *Cigány*, or at least conceal their descent.

The entanglement of class position and ethnicity influences the possibilities of "free" marital choices. The category of *Cigány* comes with such a low status position, lack of resources and stigmatization that marriage can be a means to either get away from, or gain resources within, the community. In this article I present these different possibilities through the stories of two sisters. In the first case, marriage is a tool for social mobility and for complying with the pressure for assimilation, while in the second case marriage helps to gain resources within the *Cigány* community. Before introducing the two cases, I present how the social status described above is related to the *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction, and how it affects the relations within *Cigány* communities and the role of marriage.

Halfway towards proletarianization and assimilation

Since the Second World War the proletarianization of the *Cigány* population seems to have been both continuous and permanent. This situation is assumed to be transitional and is conceptualized differently by different social science traditions. Based on the above-described situation of these populations, in Marxist terminology we can consider them to be a "reserve army of labor" or a "relative surplus population" (Quijano 2000; Rajaram 2018; Sanyal 2007; Wallerstein 2000). At the same time we can also refer to them as "the precariat," since the lack of stable, permanent jobs and income, and consequent lack of security and predictability determines their status

2) Throughout the paper, I use the term *Cigány* instead of *Roma*, on the one hand because it is used in my field, on the other hand, because it expresses their social position as experienced by these communities. Similarly, I use the term *Hungarian* as it is used in my field to refer to non-Roma people; so, in this sense, *Hungarian* doesn't mean Hungarian citizen, but non-Roma.

3) The Public Work Scheme is a workfare framework in which unemployed people are expected to work eight hours a day in order to receive their benefits.

and strategies (Han 2018; Millar 2017, 2014; Standing 2011). In addition to these, the concept of semi-proletariat household suggested by Dunaway (2019) is also useful. According to her description, these households gain their income partially from formal wage labor and partially from other sources, and the combination of these determines the relations within and among households (Dunaway 2019). Regardless of what concept we choose, two facts strongly connected to each other follow from the above: the first is the central role of ethnicity in maintaining class inequalities, and the second is the increased significance of kinship in the social organization of these *Cigány* communities. Both are important factors that shape the role of marriage and the strategies related to it.

In the rural communities where I conducted my field research, ethnicity, more specifically the category of *Cigány*, supports the maintenance of class division and draws the line between people with more or less predictable and stable employment and income and those who are temporarily or permanently excluded from that (Petrovici et al 2018; Rajaram 2017; Szombati 2018; Grill 2018; Kovai 2017). In these rural settlements, the former takes the form of the *Hungarian* majority and the latter that of the *Cigány* position. Moreover, in most cases, independent of their actual descent, those who are in the more disadvantaged position are considered to be *Cigány*. As a result of the articulations of class and ethnic positions, for the *Hungarian* majority, the *Cigány* have become an embodiment of their own existential fears. In times of economic hardships, these fears get stronger, as earning a livelihood regarded as legitimate is harder for the middle-class, too. In these times people outside the realm of formal wage labor are deemed as "surplus population;" they are simply not welcome and getting rid of them is considered beneficial for the villages and towns nearby. In less harder times this racist claim is scaled back to expectations of assimilation. The wish that the *Cigány* people should not exist forces people living in the *Cigány* position to be ashamed of their *Cigány* identity and to leave it behind or make it invisible for *Hungarians*.

The pressure of assimilation on *Cigány* people makes the role of kinship important in the Romungro communities, since kinship is constituted as the only field where being a *Cigány* appears to be an acceptable identity. In addition, similarly to other disadvantaged, stigmatized social groups, deflecting the stigma and becoming protected from it leads to fragmentation (Wacquant 2009; van de Port 1998; Fanon 1985). From the individual's point of view, there will always be other *Cigány* who fit to the negative image of the majority about them and are perceived to embody that image. At the same time, the individual's we-group provides him/her with the safety of the "decent *Cigány*" community that follows the hegemonic norms of the majority. In the *Cigány* communities, where extended kinship and the household are the manifestations of the safe we-group, fragmentation happens along these lines.

During my fieldwork, I found three main extended, partly overlapping kinship networks: the Balogh, the Rostas, and the Farkas families. From the perspective of the protagonists of my case study, the two sisters, Kisjutka and Betti, this safe space takes the form of the village Gömbalja, on the one hand, and of the extended kinship network of the Balogh family to which they are related through their mother, on the other hand. However, this safety provided by kinship and locality creates danger zones and points to other *Cigány* who are said to embody danger. From the Baloghs' point of view, the Rostas embody danger, as well as the people who disown their *Cigány* identity in their attempt to fit the hegemonic norms of the majority and adapt to a fake-Hungarian pose, as illustrated by the Farkas family. Having grown up with the mental map described above, for Kisjutka and Betti, as for any teenager, their marriage choices

entailed extraordinarily high stakes, since their future relationships could take them away from the safety of kinship and maybe also from the village of Gömbalja. Marriage always reconfigures the kin networks and with them the terrain and limits of a safe *Cigány* identity.

The high value that these communities place on kinship is not simply a consequence of stigmatization, it also stems from their disadvantageous social position. These networks mean resources, social capital, and a way of organizing that can help maintain existential safety. Obviously, this feature is not unique to the *Cigány* communities that I researched: a number of studies have documented the relationship between a vulnerable structural position and reliance on kinship (Kelly 1998; Stack 1974; Du Bois 1996; Dominguez and Watkins 2003; Baumann 1995).

This importance that these structurally vulnerable communities place on kinship, however, entails the weakness of other types of social relations, which is balanced by the stability of kin networks and roles. The structure of kin is often perceived as given: according to Edwards and Strathern, it is considered to be unrelated to the political and technical manipulation of the world, and it appears to be natural and unquestionable (2000: 147–69). Considering kinship to be natural is a huge resource, even if it is not naturally given, and even if groups living under the ideology of kinship are constantly negotiating and reconsidering the limits of "the natural" (Edwards and Strathern 2000; Carsten 2004; Tesăr 2012; Gay y Blasco 1999). But what do these natural and unquestionable relations protect such groups from? In the system of formal social institutions such as the formal job market, education, bureaucracy, or healthcare, *Cigány* occupy a disadvantageous position, as they are often subject to the selection and exclusion mechanisms of these institutions. It seems that being *Cigány* means being unprotected, on the periphery of reluctant or dismissive institutions. At the same time, from the peripheral perspective of *Cigány* communities, relations with the institutions of the majority, as well as their requirements or advantages, seem haphazard—temporary and unreliable—as opposed to the "naturally given" and permanent nature of kinship.

The easiest way to access the resources of kin networks is through marriage. On the one hand, the locality and possibilities of individuals are determined by their parents' marriages, and, on the other hand, individuals constantly reconfigure these networks through their own marriages. Marriages are not simply opening up or closing down pathways to access the resources of kinship, they can indeed affect the class-based *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction. As we have seen, the role of kinship networks is extremely important from the perspective of livelihood and identity, but marriage is the main factor in this environment, so nuclear families remain the main economic units, despite their openness. Marriage decides which networks are relevant for the individual, what main strategies to make a living are available to her/him, her/his status in local relationships, and in general in what sense she/he can be *Cigány*. Marriage fundamentally defines the individual's course of action, which is not independent from kinship and the class-based *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction. In the following section, through the stories of Kisjutka and Betti, I show that free marital choices are controlled by both social constraints and the possibilities that marriages can open up. However, these are all highly dependent on the position of the parents.

Parents: the "decent Cigány"

Jutka and Tibi, the girls' parents, managed to gain a stable and relatively advantageous position in their community, by the early 2000s. They did so by cleverly applying assimilation strategies, in which the

involvement of kinship networks played a major role, as well as accepting the village as an integrative social field. Tibi and his wife were among the first *Cigány* families to move out of the *Cigány* settlement and into the village. Tibi was a descendant of the Vásárhelyis, a well-established family of Gömbalja that the majority *Hungarian*s respected as "our *Cigány*," in opposition to the new-comers who had only moved to the area one generation before. Tibi's family moving into the village was also considered a well-earned status change, a legitimate milestone on their social mobility pathway, granted only to a few *Cigány*. At the same time the Vásárhelyis did not have a central role in the *Cigány* kinship network, while the kin connections of Tibi's wife Jutka, were more substantial. Jutka had five siblings and many cousins living in the village as members of the large Balogh family. The advantageous relationships with *Hungarians* were provided by Tibi's network, while the important role in the *Cigány* community was guaranteed by Jutka's network. Regarded as "decent *Cigány*" only in Gömbölja, they could gain advantages only through their relationships in the village,[4] which meant relative safety in spite of the disadvantages of their ethnicity and class position. Therefore, Jutka and Tibi wanted to cut off the kinship relations outside Gömbalja, since these could endanger their position.

Jutka and Tibi's everyday strategies were aimed at safeguarding their "decent *Cigány*" image that was supposed to provide their children with a safe background and a chance of becoming *Hungarian*. Providing this "security" was a fulltime job, since they had to stay *Cigány* while constantly managing the meaning of this attribute. On the one hand, they were keen on distancing their behavior from the negative stereotypes connected to the category of *Cigány*, and on the other hand, they had to pay attention not to be related to people who embodied the degrading meaning of *Cigány*, i.e., "backward," "filthy," "displaying a shameful behavior in the eyes of the *Hungarian*s." Not only did they and their children have to stay away from those people, but also from their kinship, despite the latter's providing security to them. Therefore Jutka and Tibi acted as inner supervisors within the community, checking constantly if the behavior of their relatives met the hegemonic norms of the *Hungarian*s. But they also had to pay attention not to step out of the realm of their *Cigány* identity, since a large part of their resources came from kin relationships.

Jutka and Tibi's daughters, however, were not entirely aware of these taboos. Their parents guaranteed them the position of decent *Cigány* through the totality of the local context and through kinship, which spared them from most of the dangers associated with their class position. The girls could move around the village freely from one relative to another, and they did not wish to go anywhere else, so their parents did not have to hold them back. Kisjutka and Betti went along the path opened by their parents; nevertheless, they got to different places through their marriages.

4) For example, Tibi got a job from local Hungarians.

Marriage and social mobility: Kisjutka's case

Heart and structure

As we could see above, marriage is the relation with the strongest impact on the protection provided by locality (the village) and kinship: it can substantially weaken or strengthen it. Marriage does not simply determine the types of essential personal connections; it is also the most important source of bonding for individuals and of alliances that enable them to keep or gain advantageous positions. Although in rural *Cigány* communities like the one I am describing here marriage has a strong influence on the position of the individual

or the group, as is the case of the Balogh family, marriage-related ideologies are not concerned with kinship norms, but quite the opposite, they claim the primacy of overwhelming emotions without any social regulations and rationality. "You can't command the heart," as the proverb goes; and it is used even if the relationship breaks other important norms, for example, those related to heterosexuality or motherhood. While the recognition of the freedom of emotions undoubtedly gives individuals some room for maneuver, more often than not the heart makes its "autonomous" decisions according to certain social meanings. Although the heart rarely leads to unknown paths, in most cases it still brings a change in the network of kinship and generates new relations within it. These new relations are often foreign for the parents' generation, so in many cases, these are quite vehemently opposed to the love-based relationships of their children. Marriage also provides an individual network, since the individual becomes related to the parents and siblings of her/his spouse and will be connected to the community where her/his spouse is from. These new relationships are hers or his alone, and an individual's parents and siblings can only benefit from these relationships via the individual.

The acknowledgment and praise of emotions not only leave room for individual choices, but also generate a collective imaginary about the chances of transcending social distinctions. If "you cannot command the heart," then it is possible to have emotions that are not constrained by social distance, for example, a *Hungarian* boy can fall in love with a *Cigány* girl. For many, even today, this daydream about the power of love means the only real chance to transcend the *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction and escape poverty. Among teenagers today, just as it was back when Kisjutka was a teenager, to date a *Hungarian* girl or boy is a huge increase in prestige. As Frantz Fanon (1986) notes, romantic relationships are a way out of the stigmatized social context and position, namely here being *Cigány*. And indeed, many teenager fantasies in the *Cigány* community are about fair-skinned *Hungarian* girls or boys. Rottenberg (2003) takes this analysis a step further: to desire the "white," the privileged "race"—here a *Hungarian* privileged girl or boy—comes from the undesired and unacceptable nature of being *Cigány*. Desiring the privileged *Hungarian* girl/boy is the only possibility to identify with this position in an oppressive regime that makes being *Cigány* unacceptable (Rottenberg 2003: 435–451). In the early 2000s, the teenagers in the settlement were enthusiastically reading youth magazines populated by fair-skinned *Hungarian* young people in fashionable clothing. The girls could see the real-life versions of the magazine posters when they strolled through the village and looked at the non-*Cigány* teenagers. *Virág Tomi*, *Fülöp Laci*, many names of *Hungarian* pretty boys can still be seen carved inside a heart onto the walls of houses. Back in the day, Kisjutka could have very well been one of the authors of these carvings.

Before fulfillment

When I met Kisjutka, she lived together with her *Hungarian* boyfriend in a town near Gömbalja. There had been many preconditions for their relationship. Kisjutka had grown up almost entirely in the village and had attended school in a "normal" class, i.e., where most students were *Hungarian*. Her place of residence, her fair skin and her parents' relatively favorable economic and social status had made it possible that, under specific circumstances, her being *Cigány* could become irrelevant. Although I didn't know Kisjutka back then, and I can only rely on her stories, it seems that, even if only for some life-changing moments, the assimilation pact was made real. Within

the safe environment of state institutions, the *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction could dissolve into the universal categories of workers or students. After finishing primary school in the village, Kisjutka went to a vocational school in town, where she trained to become a seamstress. At the vocational school, she had similar experiences as in primary school. She had good memories of her teenage years. Gömbalja still had a disco, and local youth would go out in their village much more than today, when they prefer to go out to the bigger town nearby. The village, just like the school and later the workplace, was a field where the *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction dissipated into other differences in social position and into the shared experiences of being students, co-workers, or teenagers.

Because of her parents' efforts and the fairness of her skin, Kisjutka accessed many situations where her descent became irrelevant for whole chains of interactions. The sentimental girls' novel story of assimilation came true for her, but a number of preconditions and experiences were necessary to enable this free choice of her heart. After finishing vocational school, her profession of choice proved to be a dead-end career, as it did for many others. She could work as a seamstress only for a short period of time, and after the textile factory was closed, she had to say goodbye to her craft. However her career was determined not by her formal training but by her experiences. She managed to find work in a factory nearby as a cleaner. The workplace community was similar to the school community, and work almost dissolved the *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction. It was in this environment that she met her future husband Zsoci.

Zsoci lived in a town near Gömbalja. The youngest child of a religious family with seven children, he worked as a welder at the car factory where Kisjutka got a job. Their relationship was made possible by common experiences too, which could overwrite the *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction. Since Zsoci's family had so many children, their resources were far from abundant, and the experience of poverty was very familiar to him too. In the schools he had attended and at his lower status jobs, he got acquainted with *Cigány*, and therefore the descent of Kisjutka and her experiences related to that were also not foreign to him. He would say:

> And what if someone is *Cigány*? It doesn't mean anything. I had this and that in school, we didn't care about that. There are only normal people and the ones who are not normal. Like my mother-in-law's family, they don't deal with people who are really below the level, only with the normal ones. It's the same, who is normal, you can get along with, and who is not, you can't. There are *Hungarian*s who are more brutish than the worst *Cigány*, and there they are, they're *Hungarian*.

What Zsoci meant was the fulfilment of the promise of assimilation. He really believed that if a person behaved "properly," that person could actually leave the *Cigány* stigma behind and share in a common social position with him. Zsoci repaid that with the greatest possible gift: his love. As for Kisjutka, as someone in a relatively privileged position in the social order aiming for assimilation, she could easily fulfill his expectations.

Complications of a mixed marriage

The young couple had to meet other expectations too, not just those of one another. Behind Kisjutka, there were her parents, siblings, and through them an extended kinship network, a whole community, who were informed about the big news: "Kisjutka has a *Hungarian* husband!" This information is always shared almost in a whisper, and with undeniable praise. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, in these communities, there was no bigger achievement than being in a long-term relationship with a *Hungarian*

boy or girl. It was a matter of huge pride and an accomplishment that was shared by the whole family and the wider kinship network. At the same time the mixed-marriage also raised fears that the success would push that person too far away from the community. Kisjutka handled the privilege very smartly and prevented it from becoming a scandal. Indeed, this wide-shared but usually impossible dream coming true for her had the potential to make her disown her family and being *Cigány*.

Although Zsoci and Kisjutka's relationship counted as unique, it wasn't a strange exception either, since it was made possible by already gained experiences and a shared social position. In the life of Kisjutka, this relationship fitted into the continuum of events, and keeping the relationship with her home and her people wasn't too difficult. Kisjutka lived together with Zsoci in the town nearby. She visited home often and went to the settlement to see her grandmother, which meant keeping in touch with the wider kin. On these occasions, instinctively or half-consciously, she would always pay attention not to display any difference that could ignite jealousy. When her *Cigány* relatives would gather at her grandmother's or uncle's houses, she sat on the ground, showing that she did not disown her ancestry. Kisjutka, like her parents, was happy to participate in the conversations and discourses of the kin and other members of the *Cigány* community. Although she did not articulate her opinions as vehemently as her parents, the ideal of "decent *Cigány*" was valuable for her too, although with a smaller stake.

Kisjutka's marital choice didn't change her social relations and the course of events radically—rather it was the next leg of a journey that had started long before. As she followed the assimilation path through her marriage, she could hold on to the financially safe position of a lower middle-class wage laborer that dissolved the exclusive *Cigány*/*Hungarian* distinction too. At the same time this position meant a challenge for the practices of ethnic identity and solidarity of the kin network. Although Kisjutka had gained a financially safer position than that of her parents, her siblings, and her extended family, as a housewife or a low paid wage laborer, she did not have control over the financial means of this safety. The position of Kisjutka, in spite of the obvious social mobility, did not appear as something much different from that of her parents: it only presented different risks and required different strategies.

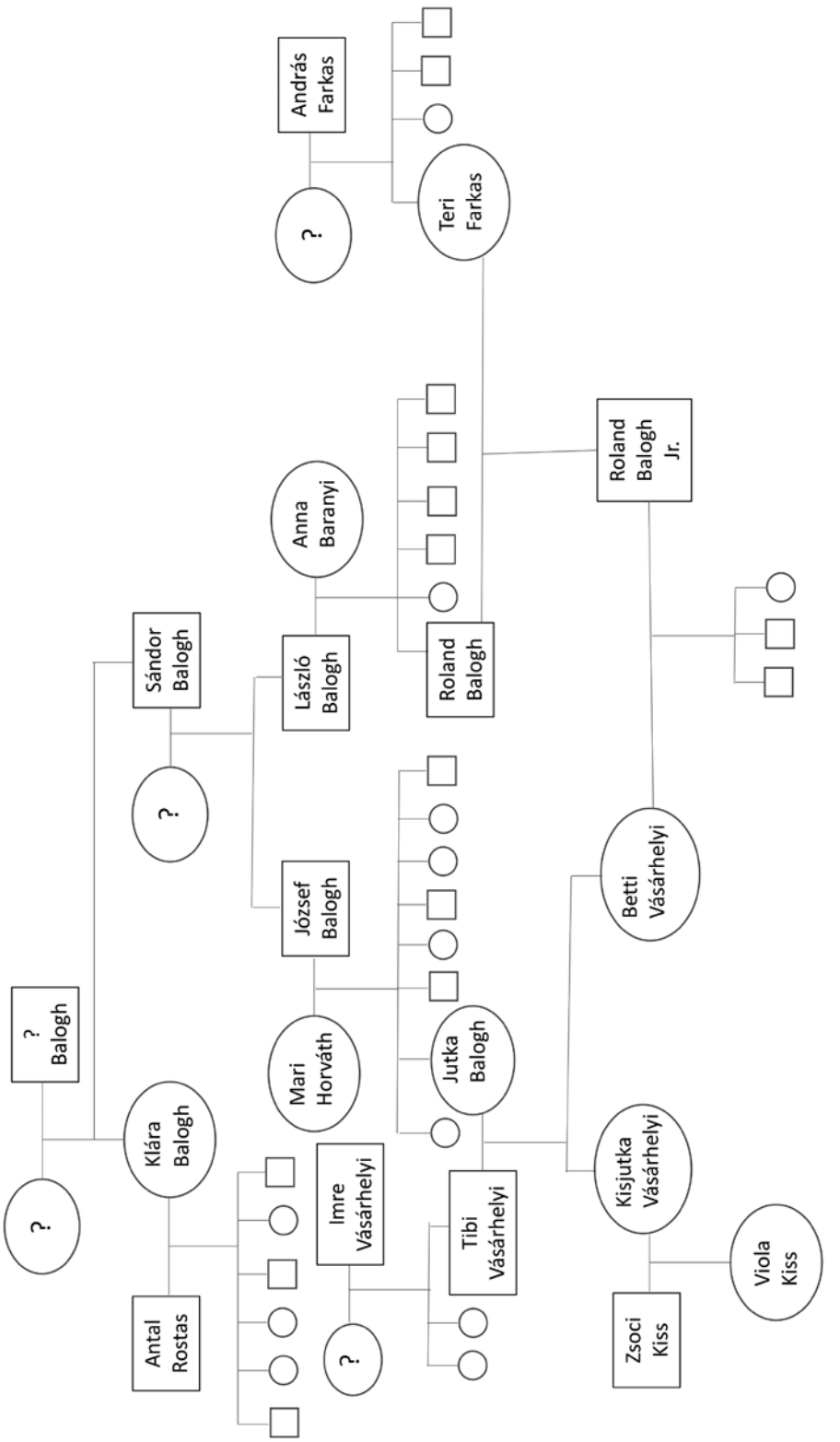
When Kisjutka was in the community, she always had to perform the proof of her identity, be it by sitting on the ground for an afternoon or making frequent visits to her relatives. However, the most important proof was the familiarity with "ugly" (meaning *Cigány*-like) speech. If she didn't reply with a joke to a greeting such as: "*Dikh*, Kisjutka, you came to Gömbalja to lie because nobody believes you in M. [the town where she lived] anymore," or if she was offended by the jokes about the different colors of male genitals, she would be instantly labeled "squeamish," "arrogant," or said to be behaving like a *Hungarian*. While for a *Hungarian* these are given attributes, since *Hungarians* are thought not to understand jokes anyway, for a *Cigány* this behavior can only be faked, so it cannot be a genuine gesture, and the person who does that disowns being *Cigány* and "acts as if she/he were *Hungarian*." Kisjutka could understandably act like that, since as we have seen, she had fulfilled the dream of many generations: a marriage like hers was not only a chance for social mobility but also a chance to transcend ethnic differences and a way to become *Hungarian*. But not to react to the banter with humor would have had a much bigger impact, and it would have meant Kisjutka disowned her *Cigány* descent that tied her ethnicity to her class position. Kisjutka never wanted to "become *Hungarian*" in this sense. She got the jokes and was always amused by them, and she didn't have any problem with the banter.

Her "quasi-*Hungarian*" position wasn't constructed by disowning her *Cigány* descent; she didn't need that since she benefitted the most from the ideal of being a "decent *Cigány*," protected by her extended family and her village.

The mixed marriage required Kisjutka to stay on the narrow path that allowed her to feel that her belonging to the *Cigány* category was irrelevant in some situations, without however disowning her descent. Kisjutka tried to keep her distance from the degrading meanings of being *Cigány*. The most significant way for her to achieve that her peculiar way of controlling childbearing. Similarly to her female peers, for Kisjutka work wasn't a strong alternative compared to childbearing. Her profession was not very marketable, and her chances to get a job were slim. In spite of this, she always claimed vocally that God forbid she should bear a child, signaling the distance from the shameful *Cigány* attributes. Kisjutka's being childless was another proof of her being quasi-*Hungarian* according to the aspirations of her parents. Kisjutka had to keep her *Cigány* and quasi-*Hungarian* positions at the same time. The performances to prove her *Cigány* identity were only compulsory among her relatives, since most of her relatives were *Cigány*. In environments further away from the kin networks, *Cigány* attributes were deemed obsolete, irrelevant, non-existent, something that she had left behind due to her social mobility.

One could think that Kisjutka's belief in the promise of assimilation was fulfilled due to the expansion of formal wage labor, that class mobility abolished ethnic distinctions. At the same time, it is important to note that her mobility was realized through marriage and not with the help of school education or the job market. However these aspects are not independent since Kisjutka could make use of the relatively advantageous position of her parents on the market of marriages. This marital form of mobility is not to be underestimated, rather it calls attention to the fact that other avenues of social mobility are even harder to use.

Zsoci and Kisjutka had a daughter, Viola. Viola spent a lot of time with her grandparents, and on some occasions she visited her "nannies," "uncles," and "siblings." "So, here you are a peasant [pejorative *Cigány* term for *Hungarian*s] girl!" Kisjutka's aunt, Vali, would greet the little girl with a friendly tease. "And you are *Cigány*, aunty Vali," the girl would reply jokingly. "And what are you, aren't you *Cigány*?" the aunt would go on. "I'm not!" Viola would say. "Only you are *Cigány*, only you, I'm *Hungarian*!" and everybody would laugh at the *Hungarian* girl's banter in *Cigány* style. While Kisjutka's marriage stands for the fulfilment of a wish for social mobility and acceptance, which brings the unattainable *Hungarian* position closer, Viola, the little girl, has a less predictable future. Not only because she is young and her story has only begun, but because the social relations have changed since she was born. By the late 2000s, the promise of assimilation, which had been made impossible by the political regime change of 1989, was widely considered to have been broken. It could no longer sustain the life strategies of hundreds of thousands of people. After the economic crisis of 2008 the public discourse about the *Cigány* minority took a pervasive racist turn, threatening Viola's position: her *Cigány* descent could become more relevant for her than for Kisjutka. At the same time, Viola's *Hungarian* position is not just a "realistic" performance of a strong collective imagination, but a real social position equipped with resources and chances, and it could even overcome the ethnic distinction tied to the class position. The possibilities for Viola to be *Cigány* or *Hungarian* are not known yet, and her story will be written maybe by herself. I would rather continue with the story of her oldest aunt, Betti.



Filiation and affinity among the Balogh, Farkas, and Vásárhelyi families discussed in the article.

Safety of kinship and locality: Betti's case

A questionable relationship

If it were to sum up the marriage-related ideologies in these *Cigány* communities in one word, then it should be *exogamy*: marriage between blood relatives is undesirable. Many of them believe it is a sin, and the children of the sinners will be punished with various illnesses. However it is quite common that, in respected marriages, the spouses turn out to have common ancestry, and are often quite close relatives. Everybody knows about these marriages, but, except for a first time when the relationship is routinely subject to judgment in the community, the "sinful" nature of the match is rarely discussed. So what lies behind this contradiction? Why are they still quite common in spite of being discouraged? In the story of Betti we can find answers to these questions. The answer essentially lies in the relations between *Cigány* ethnicity, class position, locality and kinship, which fundamentally determine the practices of love-based matches.

Kinship and home

To understand the ambivalent role of blood relatives in marriages, we have to observe the meanings of this concept. The phrase "blood relative" is rarely used, instead the word "race" is preferred to designate these relations. The use of this word points to the unquestionable connection between persons, while also being related to the expression of *Cigány* identity. The expressions "disowning her/his race" and "she/he takes a stance to protect her/his race" refer to both the *Cigány* community and blood relatives. However, in most situations, being affiliated to the *Cigány* community means a secure connection combined with having relatives in the community. Outside the family, serious dangers lurk. This is an ambivalent bonding that can be found in many situations where the safety of being *Cigány* was only secured after some sort of family relations between the persons involved were discovered. Finding common ancestry and relatives is always the first step when "strangers" meet. Kinship networks are extended around the neighborhood and even the region to many villages and towns. A young person can move along these networks and find new acquaintances and her/his future partner. If we imagine the possible pathways for a teenager in Gömbalja as a network, the center of that is Gömbalja. From there the young person can get to other *Cigány* settlements in the surrounding villages and towns through her or his parents or already married siblings.

Tibi and Jutka's daughters, on the other hand, don't go anywhere since their mother and father are from Gömbalja, their aunts and uncles as well, so almost all of their first cousins live in the village and being second cousins is not a strong enough bond to dissolve the strangeness of the place. Although kin relations easily cut through geographical and social distances, the locality also shapes the meaning of being *Cigány* in a way similar to kinship. Just like being in a kin network, living in a particular place also has an attribute attached to it. So leaving the village means that the person becomes a different kind of *Cigány*, and can become "thieving," "arrogant," or "backward."

The village and the kinship networks together provided a place where Betti could grow up safely. In the early 2000s, when Betti grew into a teenager, this connection with the family and the village was at its strongest. The Balogh family was strong, on both sides of the family the grandparents were alive and held together the children and siblings to form a core. At large celebrations the family gathered and paid close attention to setting the boundaries of kinship. While her parents' generation invested a lot of

energy in protecting the Balogh family from the new relations made by marriage and keeping their siblings for the "family," Betti's generation took these relations that marriages created as natural. Betti had no problem to go to the *Cigány* settlement on Dankó Street where her cousins born out of a marriage between the Farkas and the Balogh families lived. For her parents, this always caused unease, since the Balogh family considered the Farkas family to be "arrogant" and "looking down on others." In spite of these negative opinions there were more marriages between the two families, and for Betti's generation the two kinship networks became strongly connected. Hers was a privileged generation anyway. At the time of their birth, there was a small-scale baby boom in Gömbalja as the generation that had grown up there became parents. So the teenagers of the mid-2000s could enjoy the benefits of being established residents of Gömbalja and the support of their large families, and in addition they could have a lively social life with their cousins.

Betti had an easy and joyful life in the safe space created by kinship and locality. Her parents proclaimed her a kind of *Cigány* beauty queen, her femininity and her *Cigány* identity, or her way of being a *Cigány* woman, setting an example for others. Betti's queen status was guaranteed by her fair skin and the gentle way in which she fit to her parents' position. Betti accepted quietly and humbly the aspirations of her parents, she tried to be acceptable in all social situations because of her position in the community. She attended school with the *Hungarian*s instead of the segregated class (or, to use the hypocritical Hungarian official terminology, the class that needed extra support) together with three-four other *Cigány* classmates. Her school results were not exceptionally good, but this did not affect her legitimacy among her *Hungarian* classmates. Betti seemed to easily learn the attributes of the assimilated *Cigány* that supposedly were no different from *Hungarian*s. But, as opposed to her parents and older sister, she took a different role in keeping the position of the "decent *Cigány*." Instead of judging her relatives who were less apt for this role, she rather helped these family members with her knowledge. When, for example, one of her cousins finished kindergarten, she corrected the "mistakes" of her dress for the banquet careful not to offend the family. She "weeded out" every element of her dress that could get her younger relative the shameful label of being an "embarrassing *Cigány*." She perfectly knew the dress code and the norms of the school from her own success in becoming assimilated.

In her case school could be a field where certain positions overwrote the *Cigány*/*Hungarian* distinction. Distinctions between teachers and students and grownups and children took precedence during the time spent in school. Similarly to her older sister, Betti claimed that her being *Cigány* was relatively irrelevant at school, although it was obvious that after school Betti had no connection with her non-*Cigány* classmates. It was quite unconceivable that they might do something together or visit each other during the summer vacation. When I asked Betti and her cousin in a similar position, I got obscure replies. "Because they are not like that," said Betti. "What do you mean, you said they are good guys," I asked her. "Well," her more vocal cousin intervened, "you can't be yourself with them, not like when we are with Imrus (he is our cousin), there you can say anything, you can do anything, we are a gang." "The girls at school are kind of squeamish, although they are alright!" said Betti trying to explain her problem.

It seems clear that being among *Hungarian*s came with a pressure to correct and censor themselves. This is illustrated by the following incident where Betti's being *Cigány* was suddenly revealed in an inadequate context and the kind of humor it produced. For months, Betti's parents repeated a story about her secondary-school interview to everybody's amusement,

including Betti's. The selection committee noticed that Betti was anxious given the circumstances and tried to lighten up the mood: "Well, Betti, do you like to go to the disco?" they asked. The question took Betti by surprise, she forgot about her pose, and replied instantly: "*Dikh, he*! I'm not even allowed to go!" revealing her *Cigány* descent by using the *Cigány* interjection *dikh, he*. The parents thought the story was funny, while taking for granted that Betti had failed to be admitted to secondary school because she had accidentally revealed her *Cigány* descent.

Constantly concealing the differences stemming from her being *Cigány* and from her lower class position is obviously a hard task for a young teenager like Betti. And this might account for Betti's missing her own primary school banquet, despite claiming to be in good relations with her classmates. As it appeared, the party her parents threw her for graduating was more emotionally important to her. It took months to organize the party, since this is the family's main occasion to display their connections. The child's finishing school and her achievements in school and personality are usually less important than who gets to be invited and who does not. If someone is invited to two families, because there is a similar significant event happening in her/his spouse's family, then everybody discusses the dilemma of which event this person will choose to attend. Betti never got involved in these discussions, but her parents used all their money for this party, so they didn't have anything left to cover the costs of the school banquet. Being poor is one of the main experiences and attributes of being *Cigány*, the most marked "sign" of the "embarrassing" *Cigány* status. But Betti was not very sad about not attending the school banquet, since she had much more important relationships, which replaced the relationships with classmates, in the form of the "gang," i.e., the group of local *Cigány* teenagers of her age.

The tight embrace of the kinship

Everything seems to have been just right for happy teenage years at that time in Gömbalja, but one thing was vexing the youths though: "If you look at it, everybody's a relative of mine here. One way or another they're all my brothers," complained the girls. The boys approached the question with the irony of proverbs: "She's not a sister below the waist," said one of them. "In the morning she's my sister, in the evening I do her," said another one. Of course, they would use "brother" and "sister" even for very distant relatives, as long as they had common ancestry, such as a great-great-grandmother. The only way out of this closed network of relatives was meeting outsider boys and girls. Partly for this reason, many came to Gömbalja to visit their relatives or friends and found their match this way, while others found someone when they visited other villages or towns nearby. Although marriage among blood relatives was avoided and considered shameful, in practice it was less problematic than marriage to a stranger outside the kin network.

Having a relationship with a stranger, as we saw above, is very risky since she/he is related to another kin network and familiar with the relations of another village or town. This person can turn out to be *Cigány* in a different way and therefore take her/his partner out of the safe space of being *Cigány* as constructed by the family and arising from the position in the local order. Of course those who were less privileged in the local order than Betti were more open to being in relationships where their partners came from unknown backgrounds. Betti and other youths like her, whose parents were already tying family and locality closely together through their marriages, had much more to lose by being in a relationship with a stranger. "Oh," Betti would say every now and then, "I'd never leave Gömbalja, but for what, like another village?! What for?! I'd rather move to Tardos [a larger town

nearby], if I had to move," she daydreamed. But Tardos seemed to be more of a girl's fantasy about mobility than a real possibility. Staying *at home* meant that Betti could only meet cousins whose role as a "sibling" was overcome by the gender roles in the gang, especially when the boy and the girl grew up in different settlements so the neighborly relations didn't strengthen the family relationships. The gang was held together by the family relations, the common social position, and the chosen subculture, which meant following the African-American rap music and style connected to urban poverty. These factors created a strong sense of belonging, encouraging the youths to experience sexuality and being *Cigány* with each other's help. Through the *gettós* [ghetto dweller] or *rapper* style, the young men could find a way to mainstream fashion and at the same time they could do without the constant self-censorship related to being *Cigány*. This was manly and appealing for the girls and Betti. As a result, the "sibling" and family relations and the sexual desire were entangled, and one could override the other.

Of course it would seem natural to suppose that secondary school could provide a solution to overcoming these entangled relations, with its networks not organized by kinship. I followed curiously the secondary school trajectory of the youths, and among them Betti's, and how their relationships were shaped. As almost everyone in this community, she continued her studies in one of the vocational schools in the nearby town. These were very large institutions, with often several thousand students, different from the school in Gömbalja. "There is no studying here, only nonsense [acting like cattle]," as Betti summed up the situation. In addition, because they had to study for five incredibly long years to obtain a degree of very questionable use, the dropout rate was high. Most of the students, Betti included, left the school after one or two years. At that time she was tied to Gömbalja by more than sisterhood: she had been dating her second cousin Roland for a year.

Betti and Roland's relationship seemed to be stable in spite of the secrecy. It was strengthened by a number of factors that could overcome the prohibition of love relationships between "siblings." As I showed, Betti had a quite advantageous position among the local relations. She lived outside the "Gypsy settlement," which meant high prestige; her parents were at the top of the hierarchy of families and settlements; they were important and respected figures for keeping the values. Betti's femininity and the way she dressed were an example for others. Roland belonged to the Balogh family on his father's side, which made him Betti's second cousin. However he was a member of the even more prestigious Farkas family on his mother's side. Since he had grown up in the *Cigány* settlement on Dankó Street, which counted as the Farkas's turf, he was connected to his relatives on his mother's side more closely than to those on his father's side.

At least in everyday life, all of the above strengthened the construct that Betti and Roland were "strangers" to each other. Even if there was common knowledge that they were "brother and sister." Their parents emphasized first the "elementary" differences between the Farkas and Balogh families and then the distinction between the two sides of the Balogh family. Therefore, Betti and Roland met as *quasi*-strangers and could see each other as potential partners. Roland and Betti, as leading figures in the gang, were 'eminent' practitioners of being an acceptable "*cigány csaj*" [girl] and "*csávó*" [guy]. The parents were proud of how their daughters and sons were experiencing their adolescence and sexuality in a way that was free of the shame of being *Cigány*. The parents never considered the gang dangerous, since it kept their children away from a lot of things that would make any parent of a teenager anxious. Those fears were related to the children's autonomy, mostly with loitering.

In other words, the children would step outside the safe spaces protected by kinship and locality and face the dangers of meeting "*Cigány* strangers" and *Hungarian*s.

The school was seen to be such a place. The parents were helpless about their children's failures in school. On the one hand, they had no experience at all about these environments, on the other, their fears were stronger than the aspiration to support their children to learn a profession. Here is Jutka "reassuring" herself with loitering-related horror scenarios:

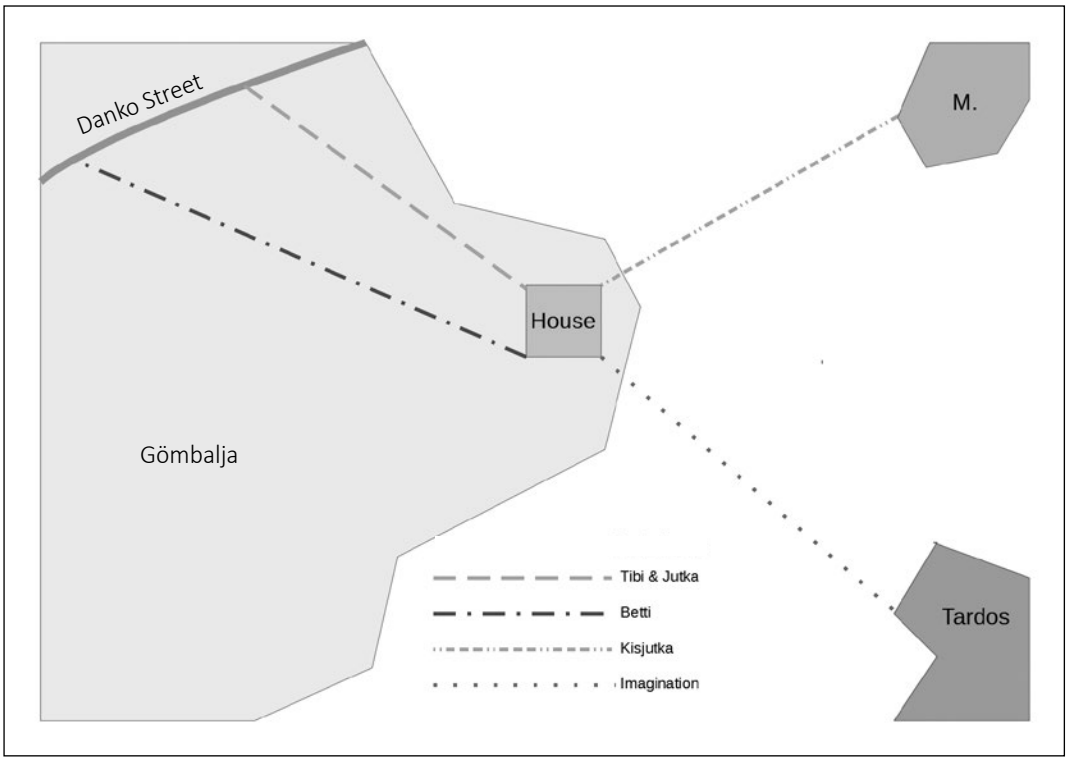
> Well, if Betti doesn't want to go to school, what can I do? Should I beat her? Their father has never laid a finger on any of them. Well, if she doesn't want to! She should rather stay here at home with us instead of saying she goes to school and then loiter in Tardos, with who knows what kind of junkies! Don't you think, Vali [Jutka's younger sister]? *Hé*! Csutak Gyuszi's daughter, Mercike, she's seen around the station all the time, with potheads and whores from Tardos, and her mother thinks she's at school!

The gang built on family relations kept their children in the village, and this couldn't be any other way since its creation, strength and significance derived from the relations built around the home. Once they stepped out of that space, the youths seemed to lose their grip, and couldn't hold on to the environment of secondary school that was completely foreign for them. Therefore the only course of action they could follow was determined again by kinship networks. The "embrace" of the family closely connected to the locality guaranteed for the parents the safety and protection of their children from the vulnerable social position of being *Cigány*. At the same time, as a consequence of the closed network, their sons and daughters saw themselves taking another offensive and stigmatizing meaning of *Cigány* upon themselves, the marriage between relatives. Still this seemed less risky than endangering the safety guaranteed by family and locality by marrying "strangers."

An average relationship in an average place

Betti and Roland had to keep their relationship secret from their parents for years, to the extent possible in such a context. When it finally "got out," meaning the parents could no longer pretend that they didn't know about it, they tried to interpret the situation as positively as possible. First, it seemed more important to them to establish why Betti and Roland were strangers to each other. "I didn't raise my daughter to become a dweller of Dankó Street," Tibi would say indignantly, thus expressing all his parental fear that his child, especially a daughter, was going to live among "stranger *Cigány*." In this sense, Betti was no exception, Roland and his family counted as strangers. Second, because of Betti's relationship, the conversation turned often to couples who were related. Tibi cited well-respected couples, who successfully doubled the strength of the kin and the locality through their marriages and thus could escape the disadvantageous class position that comes with being *Cigány*.

A few months after their relationship was revealed, with the help of the careful interpretation work done by their parents, Betti and Roland were a legitimate couple standing on the cusp of adulthood without a profession or a permanent job, like so many others. In their case, this period between childhood and adulthood turned out a little longer than for others. Like her older sister, Betti was also reluctant to bear children. "I don't have the nerves for that yet," she would say. But she didn't go back to school either, since going back could have threatened her finally legitimized relationship. Since the school is not controlled by kinship and locality relations, jealousy is inevitable, therefore teenagers in steady relationships usually quit school. In the following years, Betti and Roland lived in the home of



A schematic representation of the protagonists' trajectories between the main locations mentioned in the article.

their parents, and when they wanted more autonomy, they moved to one of the last adobe houses on Dankó Street.

After a few years, lacking any prospects, Betti and Roland had a little daughter. But in the meantime, many things happened: the girls' grandparents saw the core of the Balogh family "die," as the kinship network became fragmented into smaller but growing nuclear families. The only institution where all of Gömbalja's social strata were represented, albeit according to a hierarchy, the local school was also gone. When the local school became a "*Cigány* school," it was a devastating blow for the village as an integrating social environment, and also a necessary condition for the advantageous position of Betti and her family.

At the same time, protecting the power of locality and kinship through marriage ensured that resources were not wasted and there was even an accumulation of social capital. Betti and Roland had three children whose kinship network reached the housing estate of the town nearby where Kisjutka, Zsoci, and Viola lived as members of the local majority lower middleclass. This shows that kinship networks can indeed transcend class and ethnic limits through marriages. Although these family relations are important for Betti's family—for example, they could make it possible for one of her children to go to a more prestigious primary school—their relations associated with locality and *Cigány* descent seemed to be more important for them. Betti did learn a profession in the end, with the help of a local *Cigány* association founded by one of her aunts. This didn't however help her find a job, but the activity of the association is part of her everyday life, in the form of programs mostly for children, traveling, as well as adult education and common celebrations. Roland could get unskilled work in the construction business due to one of his uncles, which provided a minimal income even during the 2008 economic crisis. Betti and Roland's children have been

raised in Gömbalja, where there are hardly any strangers since marriages slowly tied together the fragmented kinship networks. We don't know how they will create safety among the threats of class-based ethnic distinctions, but probably marriage will play a significant role in that for them too.

Conclusions

In this article, I showed how free-choice marriages in Roma communities affected by proletarianization and assimilation are determined by structural factors. In addition, "the free choice of the heart" is shaped by social relations, with love-based matches giving the individuals some room for maneuver among structural constraints. In these rural Romungro communities, the practice of marriage is significantly influenced by hierarchical class-based ethnic distinctions. Ethnicity, here the category of *Cigány*, reinforces the boundaries between the population with stable jobs and incomes, the *Hungarian* majority position, and those who are permanently or partially excluded from that, the position of *Cigány*. Consequently the wish for social mobility is connected to the desire to leave the position of *Cigány* or the pressure for assimilation. The entanglement of ethnicity and class position influences the possibilities of "free" choice in marriage, since being *Cigány* means a low status, stigma and resource deprivation, which are to be either left behind through marriage or compensated with resources obtained via different marriage strategies.

Marriage practices modify the individual's social position and with it the configuration of her kinship networks. Because of the *Cigány* ethnicity and the disadvantageous class position, as well as scarce access to the resources provided by society's formal institutions (the job market, system of education, etc.), kinship networks and the role of locality are highly valued in these communities. Relatives (the extended family) and the locality (village, *Cigány* settlement, or neighborhood) provide protection against the dangers of the stigmatizing meanings of *Cigány* and against the vulnerabilities of their class position. The most obvious way to access these resources is through marriage. At the same time, marriages are also eroding the limits of the safe and acceptable meanings of being *Cigány*, creating new pathways. So marriages are not just personal, *individual* matters, since they affect the position of others in the kinship network. These networks can span over the hierarchical class-based *Cigány/Hungarian* divides. Transcending the *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction also means social mobility at the individual level, and this is most often reached through mixed marriages. At the same time, the mixed marriage is only the most extreme example of how marriage is in fact the most obvious method for someone to change their social position. The free choice of the heart is thus very much controlled by these factors above.

In my paper, drawing on the cases of two sisters, I showed how free love-based marriage and social constraints work together. In the first case, marriage contributes to the social mobility tied to the pressure for assimilation. In the second case, marriage contributes to the exploitation of resources related to the *Cigány* identity while reinforcing the protection of kin and locality. In both cases, new directions have opened up in the network of kin and in the workings of the *Cigány/Hungarian* distinction. The consequences of these changes are not clear yet, since they are also dependent on broader social and economic processes still in the making.

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III. Law and Activism in the Case of Early Age and/or Arranged Marriages

Parents, Children, Marriage: Bulgarian Courts' View on Romani Marriage-making

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ABSTRACT

This commentary deals with customary early marriages as practiced by some Romani communities in Bulgaria, and the ways in which they are represented in judgments issued by the criminal courts. It traces the legal routes by which this practice is prosecuted, explores who typically faces charges under the relevant criminal texts, and provides examples from case law. The main aims of the text are to demonstrate the value of court records as sources for ethnographic enquiry, to offer examples of the application of these sources to projects of interest to (legal) anthropology, and to encourage their use by both social scientists and lawyers.

KEYWORDS

Roma, customary marriages, early marriages, Bulgaria, criminal justice system, court records, ethnographic sources, legal anthropology.

The jurisprudence of statutory rape: an overview

In summer 2015 I started working on a case of "statutory rape," representing a thirteen-year-old victim.[1] I was a practicing lawyer in Bulgaria at the time, focusing on women's rights and sexual violence. My work on this particular case, with its factual simplicity and procedural complexity (a paradoxical difficulty that most sexual violence cases seem to share) led me to discover anthropology as an invaluable lens through which I could better grasp the details of my case. It also helped me view judicial practice—case law—as a profoundly rich source of ethnographic material, recording the worldviews, choices, customs, and disputes of people whose practices the law may happen to both prohibit and accommodate, sometimes without formally intending to do so. I am referring in particular to the case law that handles customary Romani marriages, which are commonly known in the international legal discourse as "early marriages" or "child marriages." While the case from which my interest in this topic stemmed did not concern a Roma family, what follows below is an account of how my work led me to explore in more detail this particular type of case law, of my subsequent interest in the parental responsibility engaged in a great number of these cases, and some insights from my current research into the matter.

My client and her family were EU nationals living in Bulgaria. The man who was charged with the crime was a local Bulgarian man, ten years the victim's senior. The incident had occurred in a small town in rural Bulgaria and was an acquaintance rape, notoriously hard to prove. Besides, it also contained the typical feature of a "lost cause" rape case, which prosecutors and courts in any European country still

1) Article 151 (1) of the Bulgarian Criminal Code (1968) defines the crime of statutory rape (or underage intercourse, as it is known in Anglo-Saxon jurisdictions) as follows: "A person who has sexual intercourse with a person below fourteen years of age, insofar as the act does not constitute a crime under Article 152 [*rape*], shall be sentenced to imprisonment from two to six years."

find very difficult to convict: there was no evidence of physical struggle—although this is the predominant form in which rape occurs.

In what began as the investigation of a rape, unsurprisingly, the investigating police officer was soon experiencing evidentiary challenges. The prosecutor on the case was finding it difficult to ensure that the charges of rape would stand up in court. He decided to charge the defendant with the "lesser" crime of statutory rape, because of the victim's young age: the defendant did not deny having had intercourse with the victim, he denied only her lack of consent, which constituted evidence enough for the charges of statutory rape to be brought against him, since the victim's consent is irrelevant under this text. Losing the chance to have the case prosecuted as rape was devastating, but not entirely unexpected, in my experience, and I began to explore my options in getting as much remedy as possible for the victim and her family from the trial that was going to unfold under the new charges.

At the time, I was working primarily on "classical" sexual violence cases, i.e., simply put, cases defined by their non-consensual nature, such as rape. In contrast, the young victim's consent, which may as well be present (in a non-legal sense) in a given situation, is not relevant for the crime of statutory rape. The law prohibits her from agreeing to sexual intercourse,[2] and the presence of her consent would not affect in any way the criminal nature of the act. Therefore, trying to ensure a successful prosecution and a guilty verdict for a rape complaint through the "neutral" and limited scope of underage intercourse, as far as the prosecution service was concerned, was the best route to take, legally. However, in terms of ensuring effective sentencing, which would correspond to the actual harm caused, the likelihood was altogether not very high.

As I prepared for this case, I researched approximately forty judgments issued by different courts in Bulgaria on cases prosecuted for the crime of statutory rape in order to make an assessment, based on the current case law, about our chances of securing a conviction, as well as about the sentencing formula—the amount and type of penalty we were to expect.[3] I was mainly concerned to prevent the trial from ending with a mere slap on the wrist for the defendant, which was not completely out of the question. One could expect that the majority of cases reported under this article of the Bulgarian Criminal Code (henceforth CC) would be initiated by the concerned parents of a young girl who had sexual intercourse with her boyfriend, and that the two partners would be very close in age; or, alternatively, the scenario could involve a couple with a greater age difference, where although coercion *per se* may not have been present, nevertheless, under the law, and on the initiative of the girl's parents or guardians, the man (the perpetrator) would be prosecuted for underage intercourse. I expected the sentencing practices employed by the courts to reflect both their level of disapproval of this type of conduct and their attitude that since coercion was, allegedly, not involved, then it would be disproportionate to penalize the defendant harsher than necessary, depending on the circumstances.

My supposition was correct. The sentences issued by the courts in the case law I examined rarely contained effective imprisonment,[4] and were instead limited to suspended sentences of imprisonment or fines.[5] My presumed scenario about the victim and the perpetrator, however, was correct only in a very small share of the cases. In contrast, the majority of the cases revealed a recurring feature that I did not expect at the time. With a few exceptions, in all of the judgments I found,[6] both the perpetrator and the victim were Roma ethnics, and all of the cases contained claims of either customary engagement or elopement, as a form of *cultural defense*.[7]

2)The age of sexual consent is fourteen under the Bulgarian legislation. However, intercourse with a person over fourteen would also constitute a crime if that person could not or did not correctly understand the purpose or meaning of the act in which he or she participated (Art. 151 (4) of the Criminal Code).

3) Although the Criminal Code prescribes a specific punishment for each crime, in practice, it frequently happens that the formal prescriptions are derogated by a procedural exemption or reduction, which can result in a different type or amount/duration of punishment. Therefore, current case law is the best indicator of what to expect from a conviction.

4) The penalty prescribed by the CC for the crime of statutory rape is two to six years of imprisonment (Art. 151 (1) of the CC).

5) Unsurprisingly, the case that I was working on ended with a conviction and a suspended sentence for the defendant, in line with the established case law.

6) Through a search by article of the CC using the Ciela electronic legal database. Bulgarian courts typically publish their judgments in an electronic format after the personal data of the participants is redacted. This makes online access to case law in Bulgaria very easy—through a free public website, or through subscription-based legal data banks.

Judicial records as sources of ethnographic material

Before I continue with presenting examples of such judgments, it is worth discussing judicial records as sources of ethnographic material. The cases I examined were found in individual judgments published in an electronic form by the Bulgarian courts, and so the collection of judgments contained cases from different regions of the country. All of the judgments were issued by first-instance courts—the district courts, where the cases were heard for the first time. The actual record I could access through a legal database was just the text of the judgment, containing the number of the case and the date of the judgment, but with the personal details of the parties redacted. No other documents, which would be part of a case file, are accessible via legal database banks in Bulgaria. Therefore, what the judgments reveal to us is the end result of a situation, a conflict, which began and developed "behind the scenes" and reached its conclusion in the judgment. All information relating to how and by whom the case was reported; how it was initiated; what the witnesses relayed in their testimonies; and any data about the motivation of the parties and of the authorities to come together in each trial are mostly invisible to us, when examining only the judgments. The case file is archived in the court where the trial took place, and it is available for examination only in person, only by a lawyer or the parties to the case, and usually after receiving permission from the court administration. Consequently, the electronic banks of published judgments are a rare and valuable point of access to court records as ethnographic sources, which are otherwise not so easy to reach.

Attempting to reconstruct the original situation from which the trial originated requires carefully working back in time from the text of the judgment, trying to locate among the factual information and the judges' comments any mention of events that would help piece together the circumstances that led to the criminal investigation. In the majority of cases this is impossible, since the reporting of the case is rarely included in the facts considered relevant to the prosecution, the charges, and the verdict.

In certain cases, the mention of who reported the case and why would be included, if such information was directly linked to establishing the sequence of events, and therefore relevant for the court. For example, in one case of elopement, the judgment's factual part contained a mention of the young victim's grandfather being the one who reported the case to the police, after he learned of her elopement, of which none of her family knew. In contrast, where the cases concerned "proper" customary marriages, i.e., approved by the families of both the bride and the groom, there would be no mention of who reported the case and why, and how it came to be prosecuted as a criminal offence.

The celebration of the customary engagement would, usually, constitute a relevant fact in the proceedings, and therefore it would be included in the text of the judgment. This fact's relevance to the examination of the case gives the judgment its ethnographic value; alternatively, if the prosecutor did not deem it necessary to include such data in their submission, and if the issue was not raised in court, this background information would not appear in the text of the judgment. However, the reporting of the crime and the reasons for doing so are in fact the ones that provide some of the most valuable ethnographic data since, if the customary marriage were approved of by both sets of parents and celebrated openly, then there would be no reason to report it as a crime. So, why was it reported?

Ethnographic literature on Romani customary marriages can answer these questions. However, the link between the customary marriage practices of Bulgarian Roma and their arrival in criminal

7) The wording of the judgments varied, but usually contained references to "engagement," "Romani traditions," "customs," and also, occasionally, the judges' comments relating to marriage at a very early age, or marriage between children. The expression "cultural defense" is not found in any of the case law I reviewed.

court has not benefited from detailed interdisciplinary research so far, and the data that exists is informative but brief. One of the sources that came to my attention points to disputes or disagreements arising between the two in-law families after the fact of the customary wedding, possibly related to the (failed) fulfillment of spousal duties or material arrangements related to the union.[8] My research shows that examining the reporting of statutory rape cases by Roma would provide, undoubtedly, valuable ethnographic data to help understand the nature and internal dynamics of the human rights issue of "early marriages," and it presents court records as highly important sources of anthropological material. As I clarify below, in comparison, the cases in which the parents are on trial, and not the groom, predominantly start with the reporting of a pregnancy or birth by the medical personnel or the social services, who become aware of the fact in the course of their work.

8) A very brief remark on this topic is included in the Report on early marriages prepared by Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance – V. Tarnovo (2011), a Bulgarian Roma rights NGO. Titled *Preventing Early Marriages*, the Report covers Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece.

Statutory rape vs. underage cohabitation

The example of a statutory rape case below (Case 1) shows a typical scenario found in the case law prosecuting grooms for underage intercourse.

Case 1[*]

In December 2009, M., a fifteen-year-old young man, and his girlfriend D., who was thirteen at the time, both Roma, decided they wanted to live together, after dating for several months. They announced their decision to their parents who, having assured themselves that the young couple were resolved to start their life together, agreed to their decision. A customary engagement was celebrated, after which the couple consummated their union.

The two youngsters started living as a family at the home of the boy's parents. D. became pregnant and gave birth in August 2010. Sometime later, M. and D. had a formal (legal) civil marriage.

In early 2013, M. was charged with the crime of statutory rape under Article 151 (1) of the Criminal Code.

The prosecution service recommended as punishment probationary measures for a period of six months on the grounds that the defendant had been a minor at the time of the commission of the offence.

The defense claimed that M. did not possess an awareness of the unlawfulness of his actions because he had acted in accordance with the Romani traditions.

The court found the defendant not guilty.

* The case descriptions are my own summaries of individual judgments issued by Bulgarian courts.

Some of the statutory rape judgments examined included the judge's reasoning on the choice of charges that could be brought against the defendant who claimed to be a groom (and examples of what can be described as a cultural defense). The circumstances of these cases revealed very similar scenarios, and all included the element of underage intercourse[9] in the alleged context of a customary marriage. This way the groom could, alternatively, be prosecuted for another crime, i.e., "underage cohabitation," if he was not a minor himself, and, especially, if the bride was older than

9) To reiterate, what is commonly known as "statutory rape" within the common law jurisdictions is defined under Bulgarian law as the crime of intercourse with a person under the age of fourteen. Children below the age of fourteen are legally not able to consent to sexual intercourse, and therefore the crime is prosecutable irrespective of any evidence as to the victim's voluntary participation in intercourse.

thirteen.[10] Cohabitation with a girl under the age of sixteen constitutes a crime under the CC, as illustrated by the example in Case 2 below.

The issue of the close connection which exists in practice between the two crimes—statutory rape and underage cohabitation—in the context of Romani customary marriages was made very clear from a number of judgments I examined. This prompted me to explore next judgments issued in trials of underage cohabitation, a crime under Article 191 of the CC.

A search for judgments issued on cases of underage cohabitation presented the customary engagements/ marriages case law in a new light—a large share of these judgments concerned trials *against the parents* of young Roma who had entered into a customary marriage. The parents were charged with the crime of *facilitating* underage cohabitation, under Article 191 (2) of the CC.

10) If the bride is over the age of thirteen, charges of underage intercourse cannot be brought. Cohabiting with a girl under the age of sixteen constitutes a crime for which only adults can be prosecuted, i.e., the groom must be at least eighteen (Article 191 (1) of the CC). Therefore, depending on the specific circumstances of each case, the prosecution service will have to assess which of the two crimes would fit the case best.

Case 2

The defendant F., aged eighteen, and his girlfriend A., fifteen years of age, were in a relationship. On August 6, 2018, they decided to get engaged and start living together. Initially their parents objected, but soon accepted their decision. A. moved into F.'s home.

In September 2018, their parents organized a Romani customary engagement celebration for the young couple.

On August 14, 2018, the social services in the town of B. were informed by a local gynecologist that A. was four months pregnant. The social services visited A.'s home, and it was established that she was residing not with her parents, but with F., as his wife.

Consequently, the defendant F. was charged with underage cohabitation under Article 191 (1) of the Criminal Code and found guilty.

As the case law examples show, customary early marriages, as encountered currently among Bulgarian Roma (and irrespective of how they are prosecuted), typically take place according to the following scenario: the two young people, both (or one) of them below the age of eighteen, and sometimes below the age of sixteen, decide to become a family—this does not appear to be always solely the parents' decision, but, as the judgments show, in many cases the boy and the girl start going out together and take the decision themselves. They always have to receive the permission or approval of the parents, because otherwise this would be a case of elopement, which is not approved of, and may cost the couple the support of their families.

The marriage is consummated as a form of officiating the union, and this is where criminal law first becomes relevant. When the girl is under the age of fourteen, intercourse constitutes statutory rape, which is a crime under Article 151 of the CC. After the consummation of the union, sometimes the sheet carrying evidence of the girl's virginity is displayed during the celebration.[11] It is primarily during the monitoring of a pregnancy of the underage bride that the authorities are alerted by the medical staff or the social services, and charges against the parents for facilitating an early-age marriage are brought under Article 191 (2) CC.

What does underage cohabitation look like according to the judicial records of Bulgarian courts? Underage cohabitation is

11) From the case law examined we learn that the sheet with the evidence of the bride's virginity is collected as evidentiary material by the prosecution. That is how ethnographic data on this particular practice becomes secured in case law.

a crime under Article 191 of the CC, which forbids "living together as husband and wife" with a girl under the age of sixteen. An example typically found in the case law would be the customary marriage between a boy under or close to the age of eighteen and a girl under the age of sixteen. In many cases both are minors, while in some the groom is an adult, and the bride is underage. It appears that in the majority of the cases processed by the Bulgarian courts the age difference between the two is never significant. In the cases that attract more attention and end up on the desks of the municipal authorities or in criminal courts, both the boy and the girl are under the age of sixteen, which is not uncommon. For the first six months of 2020 alone, ninety-three judgments on underage cohabitation were issued by courts across the country.[12] Another nineteen judgments concerned the crime of facilitating underage cohabitation—trials against parents.[13] The majority of the cases appear to be, again, customary Romani marriages.

Although the legislative texts that criminalize underage cohabitation contain no reference to custom or culture, judicial practice shows that an overwhelming majority of all the prosecutions for the crime of underage cohabitation, including parental prosecutions, involve what appears to be Romani customary marriages. This is not to say that non-Roma cases are exempt in practice from prosecution. Rather, the reason for this demographic discrepancy may be found, on the one hand, in the absence of the practice among Bulgarian non-Roma youth to cohabit as spouses at an early age, at this point in time. On the other hand, however, the reasons may also lie in the specific ways in which underage cohabitation is approached, formed, negotiated, carried out, and settled among the groups or families who practice it, and in the internal reasons for which it ends up in criminal court.

Criminalizing underage cohabitation: a historical overview

The crime of underage cohabitation[14] entered Bulgarian legislation in 1968, when the new Criminal Code (currently in force) was passed by the Parliament. Before that, the Criminal Code of 1951 did not contain any provisions criminalizing this conduct. This is relevant to the questions of when and how familial patterns involving minors as spouses became a matter of concern for the then government, what justified their conceptualization as harmful and led to their subsequent criminalization.[15] The initial assumption is that the number of occurrences of this pattern on the territory of the country came to justify its formal regulation, and that the conduct in question was frowned upon. Apart from the internal reasons for legislative reform, the political motivation to criminalize certain practices or modes of conduct also, typically, develops in collaboration with the international community in the context of supranational projects, such as the participation in international agreements and membership in international organizations. Global allegiances, such as membership in the UN,[16] could have been one of the external contributing factors to the introduction of this law reform.

In 1954 the UN issued a General Assembly Resolution titled *Status of women in private law: customs, ancient laws and practices affecting the human dignity of women*. In this resolution, the General Assembly "*[u]rges* all States, […] to take all appropriate measures […] with a view to […] abolishing such customs, ancient laws and practices by ensuring complete freedom in the choice of a spouse; […] eliminating completely child marriages and the betrothal of young girls before the age of puberty and establishing appropriate penalties where necessary."[17] At the time, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948) had already provided in

12) The electronic legal database used to access Bulgarian legislation and case law is Ciela.

13) Art. 191 of the Criminal Code (1968): (2) Any adult who persuades an underage male and female who have not reached the age of sixteen to start living as spouses or facilitates their living as spouses without entering into a marriage, shall be punished by imprisonment for up to two years or by probation.

14) Art. 191 of the Criminal Code (1968): (1) Any adult who, without having entered into a marriage, starts living as husband and wife with a female who has not reached the age of sixteen, shall be punished by imprisonment for up to two years or by probation, as well as by public reprimand.

15) It is also noteworthy that some present-day European domestic criminal legislations (such as that of Belgium, for example) apparently do not contain a text formally criminalising such practices. I received this information from a Belgian judge during a discussion at a conference.

16) Bulgaria has been a member state of the United Nations since December 14, 1955.

17) A/RES/843(IX), December 17, 1954.

Article 16 (2) that "[m]arriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses."[18] These instruments were followed and built upon by the UN Convention on consent to marriage, minimum age for marriage, and registration of marriages of 1964, which in its preamble made a specific reference to the above resolution. Article 2 of the Convention stated that "States Parties to the present Convention shall take legislative action to specify a minimum age for marriage. No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interest of the intending spouses." The new Bulgarian CC entered into force, criminalizing underage cohabitation only several years later, in 1968.

The explicit criminalization of existing practices, such as customary marriages, which a government is attempting to eradicate, is a method of regulation that is complementary to the formal introduction of age limitations for the purpose of defining a "legally binding" marriage. This is necessary because *de facto* living as husband and wife with an underage girl is practiced by groups or individuals who may not require, or routinely do not resort to, a formal registration of marriages. In this way, the provision of a minimum age requirement for entering into a legal marriage is, in itself, not sufficient to prevent the practice of cohabitation with a minor.

In 1979 the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women employed the language of the resolution to condemn directly and explicitly "the betrothal and the marriage of a child," and did not limit itself to the setting up of boundaries to entering into a marriage. Article 16 (2) stated that "[t]he betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory."

In the following decades the attention of the international communities to the issue of child or early marriages progressively intensified, generating a substantial number of initiatives, research and instruments to explore, define and regulate early marriages with the means of international law. A 2014 UN recommendation issued jointly by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child[19] provided the following definition:

> Child marriage, also referred to as early marriage, is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under eighteen years of age. The overwhelming majority of child marriages, both formal and informal, involve girls, although at times their spouses are also under eighteen years of age. A child marriage is considered to be a form of forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties have not expressed full, free and informed consent. As a matter of respecting the child's evolving capacities and autonomy in making decisions that affect her or his life, a marriage of a mature, capable child below eighteen years of age may be allowed in exceptional circumstances, provided that the child is at least sixteen years of age and that such decisions are made by a judge based on legitimate exceptional grounds defined by law and on the evidence of maturity, without deference to culture and tradition.[20]

As noted above, underage cohabitation, as defined in the Bulgarian CC, is a culturally neutral text. It could include both an "informal marriage" (according to the meaning in the recommendation above, as a customary practice that may be marked by a ceremony) and any instance of an adult living with a girl under the age of sixteen in any form of quasi-spousal scenario.

In 1982 the CC was amended to include also the facilitation of entering into cohabitation with a minor (Article 191 (2)

18) The UN Declaration of Human Rights can be accessed at: https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/.

19) Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ General comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices, November 14, 2014.

20) Ibid., para. 20, section B.

of the CC). The wording is, again, basic and neutral, and although it does not specify the persons who may bear liability for this crime, the established case law shows that these are almost exclusively the parents of a bride or groom cohabiting according to the Romani marriage tradition.

Charges of facilitating underage cohabitation are at the core of the case law dealing with the issue of parental liability for enabling early marriages. In practice, when the groom and the bride are both underage, the authorities who have been alerted to the situation have a choice of what charges to bring against whom. Charges could be brought against the parents of the two children for facilitating underage cohabitation, if the parents had approved of the marriage and provided a home for the new couple. Usually the parents who are housing and supporting the couple financially and otherwise are the ones who are charged and prosecuted. Both parents stand trial for this crime as co-conspirators.

21) The term "cultural defense" is never used in the judgments that I examined. The explanations given by the defendants about the context in which the criminal offence for which they were charged was committed, when obviously ethnographic or related to customs or difference, can be considered a tacit cultural defense from the perspective of the multiculturalist vocabulary and discourse, but this is not so obvious a conclusion from the court's perspective. Formally and overtly, the defense under Article 9 (2) of the CC, which is frequently attempted, is purely legal in nature—the claim being that their actions did not endanger anyone and therefore they should not be seen as criminal.

Parental liability for underage cohabitation

The following case study illustrates the prosecution and conviction of a parent who enabled an underage couple to begin living as spouses.

In early 2014, S. (a fifteen-year-old boy) and A. (a fourteen-year-old girl), both Bulgarian citizens of Romani origin, decided to enter into a customary marriage after a two-year relationship. They informed their parents of their intentions. The parents agreed, and a customary engagement in the community was celebrated on the March 8, 2014. On that date the couple started living together as a family at the groom's mother's house. Sometime later the couple had a child.

In late 2016 or early 2017, the mother of the groom was charged with facilitating underage cohabitation under Article 191 (2) of the CC. The father of the groom was also charged, but his case was heard separately because he had a criminal record, and different proceedings applied to him.

The first-instance court found the defendant guilty as charged. On appeal before the Regional Court, the defendant, through her lawyer, claimed that her conduct posed an "insignificant threat to society," a defense under Article 9 (2) of the CC. She maintained that her conduct did not possess enough of the element of a "threat to society" to pass the threshold of a criminal offence; that she was only helping the young couple; that she was unemployed; and she also raised in her defense the customary practices of the Romani communities in Bulgaria.[21]

The appeals court confirmed the lower court's guilty verdict. The court did not credit the defendant's claim that, while her conduct may fall under the terms of the criminal offence she was charged with, it did not pass the threshold of posing a significant threat to society, and that the customary practices of her ethnic community could justify her behavior. The court stated that under the domestic legislation, as well as according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), every person under the age of eighteen should be treated as a child, unless the relevant laws prescribed that majority is reached at an earlier age. Therefore, the court concluded that the two minors (her son and his bride), whose cohabitation had been facilitated by the defendant, were children in the meaning of the law, and as such they required specialized care as they are presumed mentally and physically immature, unable to make independent decisions, and cannot be held responsible for their actions. The court pointed out that according to Article 27 of the Convention every child has the right to a standard of living in accordance with the child's needs, and that the State and especially the parents of the child hold the obligation to

A clarifying note that may be useful for non-lawyers or lawyers unfamiliar with Continental legal systems. Article 9 of the Bulgarian CC reads: "(1) A criminal offence is an act that is dangerous to society (action or inaction), which has been culpably committed, and which has been declared punishable under the law. (2) An act is not a criminal offence when, although it formally contains the elements of a criminal offence as set out in the law, because of its insignificance is not dangerous to society or its danger to society is obviously insignificant". The element of being a threat—the quality of endangerment, or gravity—is an inherent feature of what is considered by positivist legal doctrine "a crime" or a "criminal offence." A crime is an act (or an omission to act) which is included in the Criminal Code (or other criminal legislation), i.e., it is criminalized, because it is considered too serious, too dangerous for society not to be penalized by criminal law. However, if the act committed formally fulfills the scenario described in a criminal text, but does not possess in itself, in its context, the level of danger which justifies its treatment as a crime proper, then such an act is not a crime, because in fact it lacks the quality of being a threat (the exception under Article 9 (2) of the CC), and therefore should not be prosecuted and punished as a crime but as a lesser offence, or not at all. This exemption can be used as a form of defense. It is particularly appropriate in the context of cultural diversity where a cultural defense can be introduced to allege that because the act committed has an emic meaning, different from the one attributed to it by the legislature, therefore it is not dangerous, it does not pose a threat to society, and it should not be penalized. The case study discussed gives an example of such a defense.

provide that. The court went on to conclude that, for that reason, the defendant's conduct was not only of nature to pose a threat to society, but that it was unlawful and punishable under the law.

The degree to which a criminal conduct poses a threat to society is an integral feature of any criminal offence under the law. Under Article 9 (2) of the CC, a conduct cannot be considered criminal under the law if it does

Another example of this stance taken by the courts in line with the established legal practice of drawing a firm line between childhood and adulthood is found in a judgment of the following year, 2018, on a case of underage cohabitation against the groom, where the court stated: "Bulgaria is a member state of the European Union and a signatory to a number of international instruments protecting the interests of the child. It is of paramount importance therefore to prioritize the protection of the personal inviolability of children. It is unacceptable to create conditions allowing for the discrimination of children on the grounds of ethnic, cultural, or social background and gender, with the excuse that an ethnic group in the country has certain traditions. Under Article 6 of the Constitution all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law. No exceptions to the full enjoyment of rights and privileges are permissible on the grounds of nationality, ethnicity, gender, background."

not pass the threshold of posing a threat to society, or if this threat is insignificant. Because the quality of posing a threat to society—both by the perpetrator and his or her conduct—must be considered by the courts when deciding on the type, length, or amount of the punishment in each case, if the "insignificant threat" defense is successful, then the defendant would be acquitted, or at least given a lower penalty if found guilty. In the majority of cases of underage cohabitation the courts do not tend to grant an acquittal under Article 9 (2) CC, but typically grant the administrative sanction exemption (see below), if the requirements of the law are met.

In the majority of the judgements on customary early marriages, the courts appear to place the existence of a custom to enter early marriages into the group of mitigating circumstances,[22] which are directly linked to decisions of lower penalties. Moreover, in most of this repetitive case law the initial punishment recommendation made by the prosecution service is an exemption from criminal punishment with substitution for administrative sanctions.

22) An illustration of how this consideration features in the judicial narrative can be seen in a judgment on a case of underage cohabitation against the groom, in 2018, where the court noted: "In its assessment of the specifics of the case this court took into consideration also the particular norms of the ethnicity to which the defendant belongs."

Following the recommendation of the prosecutor in the first-instance proceedings, the court decided to apply a legal exemption allowing for a criminal penalty to be substituted for an administrative sanction (a fine), applicable to cases where the punishment prescribed by the law is less than three years of imprisonment, the defendant has no criminal record, and no damage to property has resulted from the crime. The minimum amount under the law was meted out (BGN 1000, approx. EUR 500). The appeals court found that the application of the criminal punishment exemption and its substitution for an administrative sanction in the minimum amount was appointed correctly by the lower court and confirmed the verdict.

The court refused the request of the defense to apply Article 9 (2) of the CC and to acquit on grounds of "insufficient threat to society," and decided to confirm the guilty verdict. The court, however, readily accepted that the criminal penalty exemption rule was appropriate in this case, and that the application of harsher criminal measures was not justified under the circumstances.

By accepting the prosecution's recommendation to apply the administrative penalty exemption the court not only followed the established judicial practice in sentencing on cases of underage cohabitation, but also made a point that while early marriages should not be tolerated in principle, harsh punishments for these customary practices would not produce a favorable result or resolve the issue. Effective or suspended sentence of imprisonment is typically not meted out. The penalty formula in this case belongs to a consistent judicial practice on similar cases, in which the defendant is found guilty.

Considering mitigating and aggravating circumstances for the purposes of sentencing is the court's obligation under the law, and therefore the inclusion of the defendant's cultural views among the mitigating factors leads to the conclusion that the acknowledgement of such perceptions did contribute to—or supported—the decision of the court to prescribe an exemption from criminal punishment, and a financial sanction in the minimum amount.

The judgment described above is an example of a very specific and narrowly uniform group of cases within the larger case law on underage cohabitation—the prosecution of a parent. In the present case, the prosecution of the young groom was not a legal option, because he was a minor, aged fifteen at the time of the ceremony. Consequently, the charges were brought against the parents of the boy, with whom the couple lived as husband and wife. The appeals court justified its decision to confirm the guilty verdict of the lower court with the argument that the protection of the child's interests takes priority before

customary practices, and that legal norms take priority before religious or customary norms, if the latter contradict them.

The court considered that the obligation to ensure the well-being of minors lies with their parents and that this obligation is of paramount importance under domestic and international law. In the words of the court:

> The existence of specific customs of the Romani ethnic communities, characteristic of which is the cohabitation of children as spouses, cannot in itself negate the element of a "threat to society," because in contemporary societies priority is given not to religion or custom as regulators of social conduct but to legal norms, the compliance with which is the responsibility of everyone in the interest of the protection of each individual. Moreover, assuming that Romani customs should exclude criminal liability in respect of the members of that community would mean that only non-members of that community should bear liability [*for that crime*], which would lead to unequal treatment under the same law. In addition, every child, irrespective of the child's ethnic origin, until they reach the age of eighteen, have a right to protection that can guarantee the child's normal intellectual, spiritual, and social development.

It is clear that the rift between the logic and nature of the practice of early marriages among Bulgarian Roma, on the one hand, and the courts' reasoning and justification of their verdicts (especially the verdicts against the parents) on the other, hinges on the conflicting perceptions about maturity and adulthood, but even more so on their (ir)relevance to *being* or *becoming* married. While, for a judge, the state of being a spouse is a state which may endanger or damage, psychologically and/or physically, a person who has not yet reached legal adulthood, i.e., a child, irrespective of their gender, for the communities who practice early marriages, according to some accounts, being married is a form of protection of the young people from psychological and/or physical harm, and of other social and cultural values, at a time when they are at their most vulnerable.[23] The more pertinent, although less visible, question however is whether the current judicial practice of prosecuting and punishing conduct falling within the scope of customary early marriages among the Roma is striking the "right" balance between accommodating cultural diversity and upholding the competing values promoted by formal justice.

23) The absence of a prominent division between adulthood and childhood is being addressed in ethnographic detail by Stewart (2018). The issues with assigning moral value by the standards of formal Western legislative reform on sexual violence to cultural normativities inherent at the time to Papua New Guinea have been discussed by Strathern (1997).

Conclusion

My review of judgments from Bulgarian courts in which ethnographic evidence of customary Romani marriages is found indicates two main trends in the prosecution of these cases: they are either prosecuted as "underage intercourse" or as "underage cohabitation." The number of cases in both groups involving Roma ethnics (both parties to the case are Roma) is considerably greater than that involving Bulgarian ethnics. This observation points to a stable practice, which, as it happens, is very narrowly culturally specific, although it is processed by the courts under culturally neutral legislative texts.

Furthermore, the research suggests that these neutrally worded criminal texts appear to be frequently utilized by a community in Bulgaria whose members, of their own free will, initiate proceedings under these articles. The number and similarity of these cases and their frequent occurrence in criminal courts beg the question of whether this voluntary litigious behavior is well-informed as to the processes and consequences and strategically planned. In other words, is resorting to criminal law a consciously selected mechanism of handling interpersonal tension, possibly

related to failed marital attempts such as elopements, bride kidnapping, failure to fulfil customary expectations that were impossible to settle within the community, as opposed to these cases being simply instances of spontaneous reporting of one's grievances to the authorities? Research of Romani use of the police and the courts in Romania,[24] which bears certain contextual similarities to the data found in Bulgarian courts, suggests that low standing within the community and the lack of access to (or influence with) internal conflict resolution mechanisms might prompt the disappointed party to decide to take the case to the formal courts.

24) Ana Chirițoiu, personal communication.

One of the aims of this text was to emphasize the value of court records and case law in general as a primary source of rich ethnographic material, specifically related to the topic of early marriages as practiced by local communities. Another aim was to comment on the legal diversity of this practice's representation within domestic case law, which could result in the prosecution of either the groom or the parents, as well as on the complexities and the peculiarities of the decision making related to the prosecution and sentencing of this practice.

The particular question of the shared contribution to the creation of this case law—both by Romani litigants and the justice system itself—if thoroughly researched, could provide data on topics such as litigation-related decision making, agency and adulthood, the relative and combined value of the formal judicial system and informal customary dispute resolution techniques, and could provide insight into the phenomenon of the fluctuating stages in the life of legal norms that are maintained by repeated conduct external to mainstream society.

Because this text is intended only as an introductory commentary on the appearance of ethnographic evidence within Bulgarian court records, its ultimate goal is to draw (again) the attention of anthropologists to a subject that is familiar but remains, in many ways, remote, and to a source of data, which is still, to a large extent, underutilized for the purposes of interdisciplinary inquiry.

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"What's the Point of Studying Kinship if You Don't Connect It to the Broader Power Structure?" A Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

Angéla Kóczé, one of the leading sociologists associated with the "Critical Romani Studies" direction, and director of the Roma Graduate Preparation Program at CEU, has a dialogue with this issue's associate editor, Ana Chiriţoiu. They discuss points of contention between "Roma ethnographies" and "critical" scholarship, especially with a view to the relevance of marriage and kinship, this issue's topics, in relation to the broader issues that Roma are facing. Kóczé argues for an approach that pays more attention to the racialization of the Roma and to the structural processes that shape their lives, and criticizes the euphemistic overtones of the term "ethnicity." She is decidedly against any "romanticization" of poverty and modes of making-do and of approaches that celebrate "cultural distinctiveness." Instead, she says, we need to understand the processes of exclusion and dispossession that cause some Roma communities to become closed or isolated. Moreover, Kóczé argues that the reliance on kinship and neopatrimonial practices are just as frequent, if not more, in broader society, and would be best understood comparatively and in a more extensive analysis, rather than through a monolithic focus on Roma.

KEYWORDS

Racialization, othering, exclusion, structural violence, dispossession, Critical Romani Studies.

Ana Chiriţoiu: I would like us to start from a remark you made at the book launch of Cecilía Kovai's book, *A cigány–magyar különbségtétel és a rokonság* [Gypsy-Hungarian distinction and kinship], from which we are publishing an article in this special issue. You said then that ethnographers of Roma populations are somewhat too fixated on kinship, perhaps to the detriment of other, more urgent topics. Could you perhaps elaborate on this critique?

Angéla Kóczé: I can see there is a new generation of anthropologists who try to de-naturalize whatever was taken as commonsensical about Roma, such as seeing the Roma as a homogenous group, with very specific cultural characteristics and language, and very distinguished from the society around. As I see, your approach is more nuanced: you show that these groups are not so homogenous, there are various groups and traditions that they follow, that even marriage as an institution works differently in various groups, or even within the same group, at different points in time. I think you try to take some steps further from the earlier anthropologists who had a more monolithic zoom.

That being said, I have another observation which comes from my disciplinary stance as well as from my own political stance, namely that Central and Eastern European anthropologists didn't go through the same kind of decolonization process which went on in the U.S. in

the 1970s–'80s, and they don't seem to care about the colonial baggage that we are carrying. They ask that, since we didn't have any colonial past, any colonies, or any black people here in CEE, why should we deal with these issues? However, several articles show how the Roma have become the European racialized others—but anthropologists don't even use the term of "racialization!" Everyone is fixated on ethnicity, which is a term that carries much more cultural overtones. "Ethnicity" is less reflective of hierarchical power relations than the term "racialized" and gives a primacy to cultural variables. For these reasons, I think "ethnicity" is more of a euphemism, because it does not capture the real meaning of what is going on with a historically racially oppressed group. I am deliberately referring to Roma as "a racially oppressed group" because the structural approach to racism and racialism is under-theorized in the European academic discourse, and particularly in the Central and Eastern European one. In Roma-related studies, racism is conceptualized mainly as a visible act of violence or a socio-psychological issue, such as personal attitude that can be measured by the level of prejudice, hostility towards a specific group. However, the structural feature of racism which is under-theorized refers to the socially and culturally embedded, invisible exclusionary forces that have produced and reproduced it through process of symbolic and material capital accumulation and dispossession.

So, when it comes to studying "ethnicity," then Romanians or Slovaks are ethnic groups as well, why aren't we studying them? In addition, there is this kind of fixation on class-based ethnicity, which is not always articulated explicitly, but there's an implication that if you're Roma then you're from another distinctive culture and class, you're working class, proletariat, under-class, or surplus population. This is then analyzed through the inward- and down-looking gaze of anthropologists, which is a fixed posture and position. Many times, this culturally grounded class position of Roma leads to the justification and rationalization of inequality.

Also, as far as I think, anthropology can't be just about studying a specific group of people. I really think that this has to have some built-in idea of antiracism, transformation or liberation for the people whom we are talking about, and of relating them to others to develop some kind of relational or comparative view, instead of focusing on the inner "quarantine" of "Roma, Roma, Roma." How about relating these issues to the world-system theory, or to broader global economic and political systems, or looking at how they relate to other racialized groups in the hierarchical economic system? But, as I said, we're not even talking about race or racialization, these terms are simply not theorized or used in CEE anthropological discourse.

Ana Chiriţoiu: What I find difficult, speaking of racialization, is to mitigate the ways in which the Roma I worked with claim themselves to be different, and sometimes better, than the non-Roma. This is certainly a way in which they respond to discrimination and exclusion, but I don't want to reduce their feeling equal or superior to non-Roma to a compensation for being subaltern, because they try very hard not to be subaltern, and they mobilize a lot of resources to this end. But certainly, this group does not speak for all the subgroups out there.

Angéla Kóczé: And what is the political relevance of such a research? What can be changed by that? Or what is the motivation, what is the academic drive behind that?

Ana Chiriţoiu: I think the political relevance is to show that this is a group that doesn't only suffer under structural marginalization and exclusion, but rather turns it around and acts on it. A lot of groups

don't have the resources, either material or symbolic, to turn stigma into something to be proud of, but this group does, and I think that's worth understanding.

Angéla Kóczé: I understand that's what ERIAC, Barvalipe are trying to do, how to be proud of who we are and where we come from and use it as a cultural capital. Anyway, we need to have more discussions and dialogue and try to understand how we can go further and create some alliances and solidarity in academia. If we want to create a manifesto for a new humanity, we should focus on the commonalities, rather than create new divisions. And we need to stop using Roma as a counter-culturally distinctive icon, either during state socialism, or now during precarious capitalism, showing how wonderfully they can operate on the basis of kinship and support each other without state institutions and redistribution. For me, this raises the question, "Where does this take us?" Basically, this kind of approach is using cultural essentialization to conceal structural racism and violence and claim restitution.

If you look from a macro position, most of the Roma, yes, live under the poverty line, you can check the statistics of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights—more than 80 percent of Roma in Europe live under the poverty line. Meanwhile, ethnographers come and tell us that Roma are wonderfully happy in their devastating situation—and so what? It's painful for me to even talk about it. Sure, kinship is wonderful, people support each other, class is really important, marriage can serve to sustain kinship and promote social mobility. However, we have to put this in a broader perspective and analyze it via the undoing of democracy and the failure of the welfare system in a precarious neoliberal capitalism.

I hope I'm not being too harsh, but it's not just my sociological perspective that compels me to ask these questions, it's also the fact that I am very much attached to this group and I come from this place, I know what it means to live in structural poverty and carry the accumulation of dispossession. We like to talk about Roma in a very romanticized way, kinship, marriage, clothes with flowers, agency, but there is a profoundly oppressive violent system around us, and somehow that is diminished in this kind of approaches. Yes, it's great that they are "resisting," but that's not going to induce any structural changes, the result is that their kids are still going to lag behind the non-Roma in school, and they will never have the same opportunities as the others who are better off. Of course, I don't want to dismiss their "agency," and how proud they are of their identity, but meanwhile we function in a society which still racializes and minoritizes them, and for me that's much more important. I don't want to dismiss anyone's work, but I feel very strongly about this.

Ana Chiriţoiu: This is one of the first times when we try to forge an honest dialogue between, let's say, the side of the "ethnographers" and the side of "Critical Romani Studies," so it's quite natural to disagree on many things.

Angéla Kóczé: I also think anthropological studies of Roma usually tend to remain on the margins of anthropology within academia, as if we're reproducing this "outsider" position. For me, "Romani Studies" are more about the political economy of racism, the working through the structures of violence and oppression in our society, and how the structures and institutions relate to them. Critical Romani Studies focuses on racism as a relational concept and racialization as a discursive and structural process of hierarchization, inferiorization, subjugation, and oppression. It is a set of practices, structures, and representations based on perceived "cultural" differences that transformed into an intersected structural inequality. These various inequalities, such as race,

gender, class, etc. are intersected in specific temporal and spatial locations. While the linguistic- and ethnographic-centered Romani Studies focus on the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of Roma identity, Critical Romani Studies interrogate structural racism and deconstruct the culturalist transcript, both of which result in an intersected inequality and justify exclusion.

Academia is not free from the invisible structural racism. If you look around until recently only and exclusively non-Roma have benefited from researching the Roma; receiving grants, being promoted, having platforms, travelling to conferences, and having a voice for talking on a "Gypsy" theme. Somehow it is understandable—although not acceptable—that non-Roma scholars are suspicious of Roma scholars, as if the former never thought that Roma could ever be in the academia. Though, today some minor attempts are being made through the use of reflexivity and dialogue, however, I am still missing this kind of critical reflection pretty much like we are having right now. Sometimes, I have a visceral reaction to research that romanticizes, "beautifies" poverty through a narrow conceptualization. Anyway, I self-identify as a sociologist, not as a "Romani scholar," that's my identity in the academia.

Ana Chiriţoiu: Kinship is one of these thorny issues that have created divisions between ethnographers and critical scholars. So, let's imagine that you and me, a sociologist and an anthropologist, got a research grant to study kinship among Roma. How would you go about it, in a way that also squares with your scholarship and politics?

Angéla Kóczé: Maybe in this day and age I would study the oligarchic kinship of Mészáros Lőrinc[1] or Orbán Viktor, I think that would be much more challenging and interesting, don't you think? All these family members who are close to the government are taking advantage of the system and extracting resources from our public goods, public money becomes privatized by various clans in our societies—this is very interesting, particularly in CEE, connected to capitalism. I know you're interested in Roma, and I think this kind of behavior exists there as well, as a mimicry of the majority society, as a mirror to their acts of corruption. Why would the Roma behave differently than our top politicians? Corruption is a social norm, it is totally authorized and empowered by the political elite and the silent members of our society. So, why are the Roma the ones who shouldn't engage in it? It would be good to study Roma kinship in connection to non-Roma kinship, nepotism, and corruption. How do the Roma reflect the practices of the majority? This reflection and refraction can be used as an explanatory framework in a comparative project.

Ana Chiriţoiu: It's interesting you should say this, because my research proposal for my PhD actually started from corruption, neo-patrimonialism and dependencies, and these phenomena are clearer in a group that is seen as other and is at the margins of society, but there is no question that they reflect back on the bigger society. Except in the bigger society they may be normalized. Among Roma you see kinship working more organically and you understand better why people resort to it and how, and what morality it has, because it's the ultimate trust bond, then you can see better how it works in the other camp. I don't think it's enough to say that Orbán is corrupt, you also need to understand how this corruption works in fact, and how the trust he has from others work, and why he has it.

Angéla Kóczé: Yes, if we have a racialized group then our perception is very selective, so we can recognize immediately if the Roma do something which is not OK. Because if a Roma steals a basket of potatoes

1) One of the most prominent members of the Fidesz party and one of the richest men in Hungary, Mészáros Lőrinc is a childhood friend of prime minister Viktor Orbán and the long-standing mayor of Orbán's native village, Felcsút.

it becomes more visible and maybe it is more relevant for a specific context than these big guys taking the big money without it being traceable—it's so far away from us that it doesn't even seem to matter in our lives. And this has created a lot of conflicts in various localities. Particularly in CEE, if we think about Roma and their internal migration between villages and cities, in the 1990s when they lost their employment and housing opportunities in the cities and were forced to move to villages at the periphery of the country. For instance how non-Roma react to Roma getting social benefits, or if a Roma steals their bicycle, these things have sparked numerous conflicts and meanwhile the big guys are taking much more money, the degree of corruption is unspeakable, but still the bicycle or the social benefits are much more important. By the way, in Hungarian politics, when the bad guys become demonized, rumors appear that they are Roma: now people say Orbán Viktor and János Áder, the Hungarian president, are possibly Roma, it's the kind of talk you hear in the hair salon. That sort of selective attention that makes bad things become associated with Roma works very similarly with other racialized groups. So, going back to kinship, the only way that it would make sense for me is to connect the two, otherwise it's a game: it's really nice this zooming in and studying people up close, but then what's the point if you don't connect it to the broader power structure? I'm missing the context, the outside world, and its relation with that kind of narrow perspective.

Ana Chiriţoiu: Actually I think the topic of marriage is interesting in this respect, and has a lot to say about the connection between whatever particular Roma group one writes about and the broader context, because marriage is regulated by the state, right? So, it's interesting to look at cases when the state decides not to intervene, or to treat Roma marriage as a cultural exception from the law, or turn a blind eye to early marriages. And this enclave is created by the state, or by its absence, it's like saying to people, "You guys do whatever you want, because we don't care anyway as long as you stay out of our way."

Angéla Kóczé: I think this is tricky, because this is again closing the circle, and leaving Roma in their own cultural confinement or how you want to call it. It's the same kind of logic when the state doesn't want to intervene in domestic violence, because it's an issue in the family, and the police won't come, or if they come they won't be able to protect the woman. I think this is really dangerous, because it reinforces the cultural otherness of Roma, isolating "them" from "us." Some scholars call this a form of "new racism". Basically, it does not rely on the biological racism, but rather it "appropriates the concept of culture" and the "right to be different." Hence, the appropriation of culture undergirds and sustains structural racism.

Ana Chiriţoiu: On the other hand, pragmatically speaking, in many communities, whether Roma or not, marriage is in fact one of the only means available to women to access a better life and a higher status. And if that is not available then what else is? She would have to be on her own. In more traditional communities, women have to belong, so marriage can be this source of social mobility in a way.

Angéla Kóczé: Yes, in a closed society, if you talk about that kind of traditional community. But in that way, they still remain inside that society; inside the society they can have some kind of social mobility, but they're still stuck in that closedness. This is why I would be interested in a broader perspective, why and how did these communities remain closed? What are the mechanisms which promote and perpetuate their isolation? Is there any way to access a "better life"? Yes, that's why education is so important. I emphasize again access

to quality education, also in traditional communities, if education were fulfilling its original role to provide opportunities and create social mobility and a path for a better life.

Ana Chiriţoiu: Education is a right, and to be protected from domestic violence is also a right, but is it not somehow paternalistic to intervene in these communities and tell them what to do, how to live?

Angéla Kóczé: I think it is again a matter of "cultural appropriation" and the "right to be different." It is better to exempt ourselves under the banner of "cultural distinctiveness" than face the lack of willingness to create structural opportunities. Do you think it is better to live eternally uneducated? I know we're discussing something which is really tricky and sensitive, but "beautifying" their isolation and "respecting" that they don't want to go to school saying, "Yeah, it's great, keep your traditions and your culture"—it just doesn't take us anywhere. Moreover, we always think in terms of assimilation, on the one hand, and full agency or isolation and "own culture," on the other hand—but there are so many things in-between! Certainly, if you are not educated and you don't have an opportunity to get out of that very closed society, you never really know what you aspire to, what your "agency" really is. This is not to deny that everyone has a capacity to decide what they want to do, but that only holds true when you are fully informed and know what your choices are, when you *have* real choices, not when you're stuck in the same position which does not allow you to see things from any other perspectives.

Ana Chiriţoiu: The women I worked with seemed perfectly aware that *gadgi* women have better lives and better opportunities, but they also said that living the way they did is what made them who they are—otherwise they would become *gadgi*, they would no longer be *romnea*. This was frustrating for me, that many of these young women grew up abroad, saw a lot of things, spoke foreign languages, etc., but they still got married back in Romania and were now at the orders of their mothers-in-law.

Angéla Kóczé: This is not going to change and go away overnight. We have a long collective experience of subordination, inferiorization, and humiliation—when you're not loved and welcomed, when you're pushed into isolation, you build up some kind of protection. Naturally, you want to shield and protect yourself. And maybe it's better to stay in this closed circle, to protect yourself, because it can be too much mentally, emotionally to go into the *gadge* world. In my own family, I had a cousin who studied at the university for four years, and after four years she went back to her village and got married to a guy who is in prison now; she has two kids, and she gave up all the studies. She could have finished them.

Ana Chiriţoiu: But this drives you crazy, no? Both as a woman and as someone who loves her!

Angéla Kóczé: Yes. But it's just so complex. So, the question is: Do you really have that kind of protection, support from home, the kind of collective knowledge that you already received through generations? I think many of us are missing that. Those of us who come from very underprivileged and deprived families—I just don't know how people do it, this social mobility that we went through. I'm not talking about middle-class Romani elite families who went to universities, but for the first generation it's a huge step, and you need enormous emotional, social, intellectual, economic support to go and pursue your dream. I see this with our students in the Roma Graduate Preparation Program at CEU, who come from very deprived communities, how hard it is for them—not because they don't have the capacity to function in an academic context, but because they have very fragile

foundations in their lives. You can fall back any minute. And every minute you have to fight some gestures, gazes or body language that indicate this is not your place. It is a huge emotional drain.

Ana Chiriţoiu: In light of what you said about racialization and systemic exclusion, in what context, if at all, do kinship and marriage still matter in any sense? And how can we talk about them, with regards to Roma? Do you think it matters at all, for research purposes, or is it something to be thrown out with the older paradigm?

Angéla Kóczé: So, thinking about the issues that we are facing in these days and the urgency of political, social, economic crises, the impact of COVID-19 and many other things, for me marriage is not a central theme. I'm sorry to disappoint you. I'm repeating myself but for me this interest in kinship and marriage would make more sense in a comparative approach, this "Roma, Roma, Roma" zoom is not the most important issue. Yes, your approach may be important, and it's more refined and more nuanced than previous approaches, *but then again, what is the purpose*? Maybe if I came from anthropology, then I would be more interested in marriage and kinship. But as it is, when I write about feminism and Romani women, marriage does come up as an issue, but not as a central focus. It can come up around the topic of what kind of conflicts can be created by the political activism of women in a marriage. How does it reflect in their marriage, or how does their marriage inform their political activism? In our edited volume[2] Nicoleta Bițu is talking about that, how her activism was influenced by Nicolae Gheorghe, and how their relationship was based on political activism. But beyond such examples, marriage is not a central issue for me. And also at the local level, in the fieldwork I did at Szikszó, I was looking at what kind of conflicts were created in the family by the fact that these women were politically active and they became recognized at the political level, so their husbands became somewhat overshadowed by the women. But I am not so focused on this internal dynamic. I don't want to deny that this kind of dynamic in the family influences and shapes or informs their political activism as well, but that's not the main point.

I would emphasize the point that, since the Roma are so often racially excluded from society, it makes sense that the family becomes even more important for them. Our capitalist society focuses on the family as an institution and a source of support, and racialized and marginalized people are always discussed as a "bad family" and as distinctive "communities." So, on the one hand we have worthy *families* as a unit, and on the other hand we have culturally distinctive *communities*—which has a "tribal" overtone. Moreover, the downfall of social institutions, like social and health care, public schools, puts pressure on families, which only goes to show that the family as an economic unit remains important for capitalism altogether, not just for Roma.

2) Kóczé, Angéla, Violetta Zentai, Jelena Jovanović, and Enikő Vincze, editors. 2019. The Romani Women's Movement: *Struggles and Debates in Central and Eastern Europe.* New York and London: Routledge.

Les femmes rom[1], entre statut de *Romni* et démocratie sexuelle. Essai d'anthropologie féministe

Roma Women between *Romni* Status and Sexual Democracy: An Essay in Feminist Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

The article draws on more than fifteen years of ethnographic experience among Romanian Roma in different local and national contexts and on classical anthropological literature on marriage. Its aim is to highlight the importance of women as individual and collective subjects within marriage, deemed to be as much an alliance as it is conjugality, meaning a significant relation and a space of their own. This is considered in two main domains: (1) the acknowledgement of the value of women as exchange items by women themselves within a "bride-price-like system," and (2) the role of women as counter-power to the brotherhood-based masculine domination, as played within the purity symbolic order. Last but not least, the article examines how anthropological research focusing on the Roma women's perspective and subjectivities, whether feminist or not, can contribute to both an understanding of the Roma marriage outside the new public discourse of "sexual democracy" and to a political "sisterhood" position as "we" women against patriarchy and racism.

KEYWORDS

Women, conjugality, purity, subjectivity, sisterhood.

Cosmin, homme rom de 27 ans, que je rencontre régulièrement à Genève depuis 2013, originaire de Mureș (centre de la Roumanie) parle ainsi de la fête de son propre mariage à organiser au pays:

> Chez nous, tu sais comment sont les mariages, il faut de l'argent, on ne rigole pas. J'économise pour ça. Comme moi j'ai été à 50 mariages environ, ces gens se sentent maintenant redevables envers moi, car tu te sens comme ça si tu es invité. Et même si tu ne peux pas aller en personne, tu envoies l'argent du don…environ 250 euros. 500 euros si tu vas à la fête. Moi maintenant, je n'ai pas l'argent pour faire le mariage que je souhaite, mais depuis tout petit je me rêve en marié… Et bien sûr qu'il y a de la perte parfois, entre ce que tu as dépensé et ce que tu récupères en cash, mais les gens ne le disent pas pour ne pas être moqués.

Parti pour une migration de plusieurs années, Cosmin économise de l'argent pour gérer ces dons et contre-dons dans sa communauté d'origine à plus long terme. Dans nos conversations il se montre tiraillé entre le sentiment d'éloignement par rapport à ces injonctions et l'angoisse de perdre sa place s'il ne respecte pas les règles. Les anthropologues accueillent avec joie ce type d'analyse émique, produite par un « anthropologue » na(t)ïf comme Cosmin, car elle illustre la théorie des échanges

1) Toutes les personnes ethnographiées et citées ici se disent elles-mêmes d'origine « rom ». Néanmoins, celle que j'évoque en dernier ne parle pas le *romanès*. Hormis son caractère politiquement correct, les scientifiques (linguistes, ethnologues, historien-en-s) attestent qu'il s'agit d'un terme dont l'utilisation a été très variable selon les époques et les lieux, bien que dans certaines communautés, se dire « Rom (masc.) / Romni (fém.) », comme terme auto-attribué, apparait comme une évidence. Pour comprendre l'historicité et les enjeux politiques y relatifs, dont j'ai considéré que la place n'est pas ici, je renvoie à la discussion très complète sur le sujet, apportée par le dialogue entre Leonardo Piasere (2019) et Yaron Matras (2019) *dans ANUAC*. J'ai choisi d'utiliser ce terme comme ethnonyme et aussi à la manière rom pour désigner les statuts d'homme et de femme marié-e-s, mais pour simplifier la lecture, je n'accorde ni l'adjectif, ni ne décline les substantifs, conformément aux règles du *romanès*.

matrimoniaux vus « comme un des instruments les plus sûrs qui se trouvent proposés dans la plupart des sociétés (et encore dans les sociétés contemporaines) pour assurer la production du capital social et du capital symbolique, tout en gardant le capital économique » (Bourdieu 1994 :9).

Selon des anthropologues comme Williams (1984) ou Stewart (1997), cette gestion des liens passant par la matérialité des valeurs échangées dans le mariage montre la solidité de la communauté rom autour d'une idéologie fondamentale, celle de l'égalité, réelle ou fantasmée, entre hommes et entre unités familiales. Dans ce sens Olivera remarque que : « Le but du mariage n'est pas tant d'obtenir une *Řomni* [épouse] que de se procurer des *xanamica* [co-beaux-parents]. Et de bons *xanamica*. Car lorsqu'ils ne s'estiment pas d'égale valeur, les problèmes apparaissent » (Olivera 2012 : 197)

Dans ce qui suit, je présente dans un premier temps une vision alternative à celle de Cosmin. Elle me parait être le fruit d'un point de vue féminin, articulé collectivement et individuellement. Ma réflexion représente l'aboutissement du travail de terrain entrepris auprès et au sujet de Roms roumains de différents groupes et dans différents contextes nationaux et locaux, à savoir en Roumanie, Belgique et Suisse, conjugué avec la lecture de la littérature des anthropologues et des philosophes féministes. Mon intention est d'argumenter qu'en complément à la reproduction économique et sociale communautaire à long terme, le mariage mérite d'être vu comme conjugalité et comme destin culturel de la plupart des femmes. Je considère les femmes non seulement comme personnes, mais aussi comme une catégorie et comme un point de vue sur le monde, différent de celui des hommes.

Dans un deuxième temps, j'aborderai l'implication de la chercheuse sur le terrain, auprès des femmes. En tant qu'anthropologue femme, vivant moi-même dans un monde patriarcal, je m'intéresse au mariage comme dispositif normatif de création et de reproduction du genre, afin de mieux comprendre et pouvoir analyser le statut des femmes ainsi que leur capacité d'agir en tant que sujets. Dans ce sens, le positionnement que j'ai adopté est défini par un engagement féministe[2], conçu depuis une « women centered ethnography » à la manière dont Nancy Scheper-Hughes le définit (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 25).

Enfin, ce double cheminement me conduira à défendre une anthropologie féministe des subjectivités, des solidarités et de la sororité que je situerai dans le contexte des luttes et des enjeux politiques actuels. A ce propos, il est important de noter que ces vingt dernières années, la sociologie critique a observé la production de la « démocratie sexuelle » par le nationalisme et le néo-colonialisme de l'idéologie des droits (Fassin, 2011), notamment au sujet des femmes musulmanes portant le voile en France et aux Etats Unis[3]. Pourtant, on retrouve pleinement la pression de la démocratie sexuelle également dans le discours médiatique et politique produit en lien avec le mariage des jeunes Roms légalement mineur-e-s (Fosztó 2009). Dans ce sens, cet article présente ma contribution à la critique de la démocratie sexuelle.

1. Le mariage comme reconnaissance de la valeur des femmes

En règle générale, les mariages rom que j'ai ethnographiés ne sont pas enregistrés comme civils, ni officiés religieusement, sauf rares exceptions dues à des contraintes administratives ou à des raisons pratiques immédiates[4]. Si pour cette raison, ils relèvent d'une relative illégitimité aux yeux des Gadje, en revanche, à l'intérieur des communautés, la recherche de la légitimité conjugale est un fondement de vie sociale.

2) Différentes versions du concept d'anthropologie engagée sont proposées par des anthropologues contemporain-e-s tels Renato Rosaldo, Michael Burawoy, Didier Fassin, Nancy Scheper Hughes, Sally Cole, Philippe Bourgois, Loic Wacquant, Michel Agier, Saba Mahmoud, Aiwa Ong - et la liste est bien entendu incomplète.

3) Eric Fassin, Nacira Guénif Souilamas, Joan Scott et Mayathi Fernando, parmi d'autres, ont écrit des nombreux textes sur ce sujet. Une synthèse très claire est proposé par un article récent de l'anthropologue Mondher Kilani (2019).

4) Comme obtenir plus facilement un permis de séjour après une migration, échapper aux amendes adressées à son nom en prenant le nom de son épouse etc.

En 2001, à ma première arrivée chez Silvia à Bălteni (à 40 km Nord-Est de Bucarest), c'était la joie. Son fils aîné, âgé à l'époque de 18 ans, venait de se marier : « Nous avons une *bori*, nous avons une *bori*. Venez la voir ! ». Quelques mois plus tard, lors de mon deuxième séjour, c'était la tristesse. La *bori* (bru, jeune mariée, belle-fille) de 17 ans avait profité d'une visite dans le village de ses parents, à 70 km de distance environ, pour décider, de concert avec eux, de ne plus retourner dans la maison de mes amis, sa nouvelle belle-famille. J'ai aussi appris que les deux jeunes en étaient chacun à leur deuxième mariage et que, par ailleurs, pour suivre le fils de mes amis, la mariée, Fraga, avait laissé sa fille de deux ans à la charge de ses ex-beaux-parents, dans ce même village. Retourner auprès de sa fille était d'ailleurs une des raisons avancées pour rompre ce nouveau mariage. Cet exemple n'est pas isolé : tout le long de mes séjours à Bălteni (une douzaine de mois sur trois ans), les mariages faits/défaits/refaits ont constitué un leitmotiv[5].

En suivant la théorie classique, faire (et défaire) des mariages représente une circulation des femmes entre unités domestiques (Lévi-Strauss 1967). On sait que cette circulation des femmes (simple ou déférée) structure la stratification sociale, l'accès aux ressources, le partage des marchés commerciaux, l'échange des biens et des personnes, la pacification des relations comme dans beaucoup de sociétés connues. D'après Lévi-Strauss, pour certaines sociétés, ces échanges de femmes[6] peuvent être établis entre des personnes morales appelées « maisons » :

> détentrices d'un domaine composé à la fois de biens matériels et immatériels, qui se perpétue par la transmission de son nom, de sa fortune et de ses titres en ligne réelle ou fictive, tenue pour légitime à la seule condition que cette continuité puisse s'exprimer dans le langage de la parenté ou de l'alliance, et, le plus souvent, des deux ensemble (Lévi-Strauss 1975 : 177).

Dans ce sens, Williams (1984), Olivera (2012) et Tesăr (2012) décrivent chez les Roms étudié-e-s, respectivement, une forme de mariage qui rappelle celle existant dans les sociétés « à maisons » pensées par Lévi-Strauss. Avec son étude longitudinale à travers plusieurs générations, Williams montre que, chez les Roms *Kalderash* de Paris, les mariages ont tendance à se conformer de plus en plus à une norme endogamique qui stabilise les chefs de famille comme égaux entre eux et harmonise ce qui n'était auparavant que stratégie de recomposition familiale : « Les mariages ont tendance à se répéter, ils unissent des gens déjà liés. A des liens de consanguinité s'ajoutent des liens d'alliance qui entrainent de nouveaux liens de consanguinité, bientôt redoublées à leur tour par de nouveaux liens d'alliance » (Williams 1994: 174). Chez les Roms *Cortorari* de Transylvanie, Tesăr (2012) montre que la transaction des femmes ayant pour gage les calices (des biens précieux transmis de père en fils) suit la même logique.

Ainsi, le mariage rom est une très bonne illustration de l'échange des femmes comme essence du lien social tel qu'on le retrouve dans la théorie des structures élémentaires de la parenté (Lévi-Strauss 1967). Mais les anthropologues, à commencer par Lévi-Strauss lui même, ont du mal à reconnaitre l'objectualisation des femmes dans « le dialogue matrimonial des hommes » et préfèrent l'euphémisme : « comme les paroles, des choses qui s'échangent » (Lévi-Strauss 1967 : 569). Mais si on me dit que « chez nous les femmes sont payées, non pas données pour rien, comme chez vous les *Gadje* », c'est bien la notion d'une *valeur* d'échange qui est invoquée. Le prix de la mariée représente à la fois la compensation de la perte d'une capacité reproductive et d'une main d'œuvre dans la famille d'origine, l'achat de la singularité des qualités de la personne et le gage d'un lien de confiance entre les deux familles. La notion de « prix de la mariée », et celle plus large de « prestations matrimoniales » (somme d'échanges dans

5) D'autres anthropologues, comme Gropper (1975), Stewart (1997) ou Tesăr (2018), parlent également des séparations.

6) Selon Lévi-Strauss (1967) l'échange des femmes peut être simple (des sœurs) ou différé dans le temps.

les deux sens : dot, prix de la mariée, échange rituel des cadeaux, etc. Testart et al. 2002) ne répondent pas à la question de savoir si les femmes sont elles-mêmes assimilables aux « objets échangés » entre deux parties « échangistes ». En commentant la théorie de Lévi-Strauss, l'anthropologue féministe Gayle Rubin (1975) considère pourtant que c'est bien de cela qu'il s'agit : les femmes se retrouvent objectualisées dans la série des biens – ici aux côtés des jupes, fichus, appareils électroménagers, seaux de savon et dans d'autres cas aux côtés des nattes, coquillages, bétail, etc. J'adopte également ce point de vue matérialiste, pour penser une valeur objective des femmes dans l'échange matrimonial, valeur que les femmes s'emploient à s'approprier.

Michael Stewart (1997), qui étudie pour sa part des Roms *Vlach* de Hongrie, décrit une forte et élaborée fraternité entre hommes, frères, beaux-frères, pères, au point que le terme *beau-frère* (*sogoro*, mot hongrois, que curieusement les Roms de Balteni utilisent également) est rarement utilisé et presque tabou, car il altère la portée de cette fraternité (*phralipé*). Selon l'anthropologue, les hommes adultes rejouent rituellement le fantasme d'un statut d'hommes non-mariés (*chave*), et ce dans des liens économiques spécifiques (le marché de chevaux) et symboliques (le chant), alors que le mariage (et plus largement, le foyer) s'y oppose étant une « nonbrotherly relation » (Stewart, 1997: 60) : « [Marriage] suggested an ideological alternative to the idea that social relations should be conceived as brotherly, and it founded households inside the doors of which the demands of the brothers could come to seem unreasonable and importuning » (*Ibid.* : 73).

Sans pouvoir approfondir des liens masculins similaires , en raison de mon genre, j'ai retrouvé néanmoins des éléments semblables à Bălteni, ainsi que chez des Roms migrant-e-s rencontré-e-s ultérieurement à Bruxelles ou Genève. De fait, les pères-frères-beaux-frères-cousins se retrouvent en tant que sujets masculins qui aspirent à être égaux, même quand les occasions de se réunir se font plus rares (migration). Dans ce sens, la fête de mariage est une telle scène d'actualisation de la masculinité des hommes, qui se comportent comme de garçons non-mariés – les vidéos des dédicaces des hommes, formulées auprès des stars de la musique *live*, et évoquant le plus souvent d'autres hommes (tel le beau-père, le parrain, l'oncle d'un lignage ou de l'autre) postés sur la chaine Youtube en témoignent[7].

En même temps, suivant la logique matérialiste considérant la circulation des femmes et leur valeur d'échange, ces dernières apparaissent comme une catégorie de nature différente dans un monde fait pour et par les hommes, une « classe » subordonnée car l'égalité ne vise que les hommes - sujets et elle se sert des femmes comme objets (Rubin 1975 ; Meillassoux 1977 ; Delphy 1998 ; Tabet 1998). Pour le dire autrement, le mariage aurait la capacité de légitimer l'alliance entre frères et beaux-frères au dépens des femmes[8]. Stewart, qui n'est pas intéressé par ce raisonnement, reconnait néanmoins l'asymétrie de genre. Il explique la fragilité des mariages par la tension entre relations égalitaires et asymétriques : les « frères » qui tissent la communauté masculine se confrontent en permanence au foyer et à la relation conjugale, à la domesticité et à l'individuation du couple.

L'ensemble des personnes rencontrées au cours de mon travail de terrain à Bălteni, étaient à leur deuxième, voire troisième mariage. Dans les séparations, on renégociait le prix de la mariée, payé par le père du jeune garçon (ou en absence de celui-ci, par ses frères), comme si la valeur de la femme n'était pas fixe mais fluctuante dans le temps, ou comme si l'on oubliait l'entente initiale pour la rediscuter. A mes yeux, cette relative fragilité des mariages semblait être corrélée non seulement avec l'antagonisme asymétrie hommes-femmes/ égalité entre hommes mais aussi avec l'instabilité économique qui avait créé davantage

7) A titre d'exemple, voici l'enregistrement d'une telle fête à New York : la star du folk-pop rom de Bucarest, Florin Salam, performe ces dédicaces dans un groupe d'hommes (appelés « la nouvelle génération ») et il improvise en disant « on ne peut pas vivre l'un sans l'autre » : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhsIMWPpe04 – min 1h25' et suiv.

8) Rubin (1975) reproche à la théorie de l'échange des femmes d'être une théorie implicite de l'oppression de sexe, car considérer l'oppression comme intrinsèque à la culture c'est la naturaliser.

d'inégalités entre les ménages. Relancer les transactions matrimoniales était une forme de compensation de ces nouvelles inégalités. A Bălteni, durant les années 2000, l'économie locale était caractérisée par l'engouement pour le commerce d'aluminium, suivi par la dérive et le tarissement de cette activité dans le contexte du démantèlement de l'industrie des petites villes environnantes. En effet, quelques hommes rom pratiquant ce commerce qui impliquait des liquidités et des déplacements plus importants que les autres commerces pratiqués auparavant, avaient, eux, des relations amoureuses et sexuelles extra-conjugales. Ces relations avec des femmes d'ailleurs, surtout non-rom, étaient parfois durables et accompagnées de naissances d'enfants que les hommes voulaient faire accepter comme légitimes auprès de leurs parents au village. Ces pratiques étaient devenues une référence à la fois contestée et convoitée. J'en ai déduit qu'il s'agissait d'une nouvelle scène, adaptée à la situation, où la masculinité des *chavé* se déployait

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afin de mettre en valeur leur puissance économique. Les femmes roms avec qui je m'entretenais à ce sujet nommaient ces relations aussi « mariages » en essayant de se trouver une place dans l'équation :

> Le mari de ma nièce, la fille de ma sœur Tita, s'est marié à une autre femme à Constanţa, une Roumaine, dans un appartement de bloc, et encore une autre à Craiova, trois femmes en tout, et il a des enfants avec toutes. Et ma nièce va très bien, il lui emmène de l›argent, il lui a fait une grande maison, elle ne peut rien dire, elle devrait être contente – disait Silvia en 2003.

A Bălteni, on retrouvait aussi des gendres demander de manière acharnée le retour de leur belle-mère après un nouveau mariage, des frères revendiquer le retour de leurs sœurs, bien après la consommation de la transaction matrimoniale. A mes yeux, cela représente une sorte de compétition globale et permanente qui semble briser la force rituelle de la transaction initiale (la parole donnée, la confiance etc.) tout en réaffirmant cette idéologie égalitaire entre hommes.

On pourrait aussi penser qu'en vertu de cette dernière (qui dépasse le pur registre symbolique), les hommes étendent leur droit de possession égal sur les femmes indifféremment de l'âge et du rapport de parenté – et qui plus est, ici, en tout cas, au-delà même de la frontière ethnique. Cette compétition masculine semble dépasser et inclure en même temps la tension entre relation égalitaire entre « frères » et inégalitaire entre hommes et femmes, comme pour chercher à atteindre un contrôle idéal masculin de *la* femme générique. En tous les cas, il m'apparait que l'essor du commerce d'aluminium arrangeait bien ce dispositif structurel.

En 2007-2009, en Belgique, j'ai rencontré des Roms originaires de Timişoara et Arad, sans aucun lien avec les personnes connues à Bălteni (Haşdeu 2011). Il en est ressorti à nouveau la centralité du mariage. Quelques femmes et hommes rom rencontré-e-s à Bruxelles m'ont fait part de leur souci de remarier une parente séparée de son conjoint et ayant un enfant. Le frère ainé, tout comme son père lui avait trouvé une épouse quinze années plus tôt, avait pris le chemin de Bruxelles pour Timişoara (ville située à l'ouest de la Roumanie) pour chercher un mari pour sa sœur. Bien que la situation était inversée – on cherchait un gendre et non une belle-fille – la remarque de Daniela, la belle-sœur de la future mariée fut : « C'est ça que les Roms aiment plus que tout. Ils adorent aller de village en village pour chercher la meilleure belle-fille ».

« Chercher la meilleure belle-fille » serait donc se distinguer des non-Roms, qui ne comprendraient pas l'importance de ce processus. A maintes reprises sur le terrain à Bălteni, cela apparaissait comme une forme de supériorité morale ayant pour idée sous-jacente que « chez vous (*Gadje*), on se marie n'importe comment, chez nous (Roms), c'est sérieux ». Un « bon mariage » n'est donc pas seulement un mariage destiné en premier lieu à maintenir et/ou élever les statuts des hommes et des familles (typique pour les sociétés à maisons, modèle évoqué plus haut) mais aussi l'espace social ou la femme « a de la valeur ». Ainsi, le point de vue des femmes apparait comme différent de celui des hommes (qui cherchent, comme nous avons vu, une scène de compétition généralisée afin d'être/ rester des *chave*).

2. Contre-pouvoirs : l'agentivité des femmes

L'anthropologue féministe Paola Tabet (2002) s'interroge à juste titre sur ce que les femmes donnent et reçoivent dans ce qu'elle appelle « transactions économico-sexuelles », dont le mariage n'est qu'un cas particulier. Autrement dit, les Roms cherchent la meilleure belle-fille, mais que cherche la belle-fille, en tant que femme

rom ? Selon Tabet, si la sexualité et la capacité reproductive sont la monnaie d'échange des femmes dans les sociétés patriarcales et viriarcales, les femmes n'en sont pas moins actives, actrices, sujets. Pour parler de cet aspect, j'utilise le terme « contre-pouvoirs » que je considère synonyme à celui de « tactiques », expliqué par Michel De Certeau : « bon tours du 'faible' dans l'ordre établi par le 'fort', art de faire des coups dans le champ de l'autre, astuces de chasseurs, mobilités manœuvrières et polymorphes, trouvailles jubilatoires, poétiques et guerrières » (De Certeau 980 : 91).

Pour les femmes de Bălteni, la séparation conjugale visait à quitter un mari ivrogne ou violent. L'annonce de cette intention se faisait parfois publiquement par l'exposé verbal et gestuel très dramatisé de la situation. En lisant la trajectoire d'Agata, femme gitane de Madrid ayant quitté sa famille pour vivre une relation avec un homme non-gitan, de quinze ans son cadet, retracée par Gay y Blasco (2011), on voit une lutte désespérée pour exister en tant qu'individu, pour et par ses propres sentiments, quand même toute la famille les voit comme illégitimes. J'ai également pensé à cette lutte en apprenant neuf ans plus tard, que Carmen, la mariée bruxelloise évoquée plus haut, s'était à nouveau séparée de son mari (celui trouvé par son frère en Roumanie) et qu'elle vivait « bannie » de sa famille avec un autre homme marié, lui-même membre de la communauté rom roumaine bruxelloise. Cette situation a duré plus d'une année jusqu'à ce que la séparation de l'homme de la première épouse soit admise par les familles et reconnue publiquement, notamment au moment au Carmen est tombée enceinte.

La reconnaissance publique des torts subis est également importante – se couper spontanément une ou les deux tresses lors d'une dispute conjugale était par exemple une façon reconnue à Bălteni de signifier la protestation contre un mari trop abusif, infidèle et/ou violent. Ainsi, il m'est apparu que l'agentivité des femmes ne pouvait pas être ignorée dans l'équation du mariage, malgré son statut de « tactique », invisibilisée par l'idiome égalitaire entre hommes.

Ayant comme angle de vue ces actes de contre-pouvoir des femmes, regardons maintenant leurs deux statuts-rôles : l'épouse et la mère.

2.1. L'épouse

Le statut de la femme mariée rom varie à travers les âges de la vie adulte. J'ai constaté que c'est principalement dans la dynamique et la dialectique de la *bori* (épouse, bru) et de la *romni* (femme mariée, catégorie englobant la première mais en représentant son émancipation) que se joue, parfois de manière très violente, le contrôle et l'autonomie des femmes : on se bat pour *avoir* une *bori* et pour être une *romni*, et on peut avoir des *borea* quand on est *romni*. La naissance d'un ou de plusieurs enfants dans le couple est un facteur d'émancipation et de stabilité. Mais c'est surtout au moment de devenir belle-mère que se stabilise le statut de la femme, cantonné jusqu'alors le plus souvent à celui de *bori*. On devient aussi *romni*, quand on s'éloigne des beaux-parents, en construisant sa propre maison ou en démultipliant les sorties en couple.

Ainsi, si les hommes tentent de démultiplier les situations où ils se revivent comme *chave* (garçons), leurs femmes, elles, les souhaiteraient *roma* (hommes mariés) afin qu'elles-mêmes soient des *romnia* (femmes mariées). A Bălteni, plus le commerce avec des métaux de récupération des pairs masculins s'intensifiait, moins les femmes avaient l'opportunité d'être quotidiennement avec eux (Haşdeu 2007). Eloignées de la possibilité d'affirmer leur couple, les *borea*, sous la surveillance des beaux-parents, étaient encore plus souvent accusées d'insolence, paresse, légèreté des mœurs et alors violentées ou renvoyées dans la famille d'origine. Ainsi, durant le troisième mariage du même fils ainé de mes amis déjà évoqués, sur une période de

quatorze ans, les retours de la *bori* chez ses parents après de violentes querelles ont été nombreux et durables, au point qu'une de filles du couple a été pratiquement élevée par sa grand-mère paternelle. Ces aller-retours de la *bori* entre les deux maisons (celle de ses parents et celle de sa belle-famille) ont cessé quand elle et son époux ont enfin réussi à se construire leur propre maison. Cette trajectoire des femmes entre plusieurs rôles, en traçant des méandres entre l'instabilité et la stabilité relative tout le long de leur vie, ainsi qu'entre plusieurs maisons (celle d'origine, celle des beaux-parents, celle du couple) représente la géographie du devenir femme.

Avec l'avancée en âge, les statuts et le mouvement centrifuge qui part de la famille vers son extérieur (village, communauté) conduisent à une quasi-égalisation formelle de statuts entre l'homme et la femme qui culmine avec leur statut-rôle de *xanamika*. Autrement dit, plus la femme mariée est capable de se repositionner dans ce rapport, à la fois géographiquement (en s'éloignant de la famille de son mari avec l'activité itinérante, en construisant sa propre maison, éventuellement en restant assez proche de sa famille d'origine etc.) ou statutairement (en ayant ses propres *borea* en tant que *xanamiki)*, plus elle a formellement des raisons pour prétendre (sans y parvenir complètement) à l'égalité avec son rom. Comme si l'on devenait *romni*, sans jamais parvenir complètement toute sa vie.

A côté de ces aspects statutaires et économiques, le potentiel souillant du corps sexué de la femme constitue le contenu des contre-pouvoirs des femmes à Balteni.

On est *Romni/Rom* – femme et homme romani, *parce que* marié-e (*rom* et *romni*). On le devient une fois marié-e, à savoir au premier rapport sexuel légitime ou légitimé après sa consommation. C'est donc bien le mariage qui consacre l'âge adulte et non la fin d'une scolarité ou un diplôme, par exemple[9]. Méconnaissant la sexualité, le coït, le mariage, la séparation, les remariages, les rôles sociaux genrés, les enfants sont des êtres incomplets et non de vraies personnes.

Ce devenir « rom/romni » initiatique – insuffisant, incomplet mais crucial – par et dans l'union conjugale explique le sens de la pureté/souillure. L'ethos de la souillure d'origine sexuelle se retrouve sous différentes formes plus ou moins spécifiques chez des communautés roms très diverses et éloignées les unes des autres – France (Williams 1984), Grande Bretagne (Okely 1983), Etats Unis (Sutherland 1977), Roumanie (Olivera 2012 ; Tesăr 2012), Hongrie (Stewart 1997).

Les femmes mariées sont responsables de veiller au respect des règles de pureté qui divisent le corps en deux : la partie supérieure au-dessus de la taille, considérée comme pure, et la partie inférieure, contenant le sexe, impure. A Bălteni, une femme mariée doit constamment séparer au lavage les pièces vestimentaires qui se trouvent en contact avec la partie inférieure du corps, soit celle qui intervient dans l'acte sexuel, du reste des habits. Les vêtements des enfants sont lavés dans un lavabo à part, avec le morceau de savon qui leur est destiné. On peut y mélanger les fichus, les habits du haut, ainsi que le tablier, entièrement purs. Les jupes des femmes, considérées comme particulièrement impures en raison du sexe « ouvert » des femmes, sont lavées dans leur propre lavabo et avec un savon dédié, de même que les pantalons des hommes. En outre, des jupes déchirées ne doivent pas être séchées dans la trajectoire de la fumée des feux, car ainsi leur souillure pourrait contaminer l'air que l'on respire. Bien qu'il soit impossible de s'acquitter de ce devoir de séparation-purification sans se tromper et dans tous les cadres de la vie quotidienne (Sutherland 1977 : 384), cela représente une compétence et en même temps une charge très importante, qui occupe une grande partie du temps et de l'esprit des femmes au quotidien.

Dans une dimension métaphorique, la séparation symbolique pur/impur s'incarne dans le corps féminin et son allégorie : les sirènes peintes sur les murs de quelques

9) A Bălteni, rares étaient les garçons qui suivaient l'école primaire jusqu'en terminale, leur but principal étant de pouvoir passer le permis de conduire, essentiel pour les activités commerciales.

10) Si les registres symboliques pur/impur déterminent donc des classifications de personnes à l'intérieur de la communauté rom, ils établissent également une classification par catégories ontologiques : les nouveau-nés et les morts sont souillés, les enfants sont purs, les *Gadje* peuvent parfois se faire intermédiaires entre le pur et l'impur (le pope, la marraine, etc.), et les femmes sont plus souillées que les hommes du fait de leur sexe ouvert. Une géographie des espaces suit la même logique : le chemin ordinaire, séparant les maisons, est souillé « par toutes ces romnia qui marchent avec leur jupes parfois trop longues » et donc gare à laisser les oies dehors ; l'extérieur du village - les champs peuvent supporter la souillure ; alors que la maison est par définition un lieu pur, on n'y met pas des enfants au monde comme on n'y dépose pas les corps des défunts.

maisons ou des charrettes (Haşdeu 2008). La sirène représente une figure du double dans la jonction entre l'animal et l'humain, le corps-sexe visible (les seins nus) et invisible (la queue de poisson). La métaphore du double du monde, transcrite dans le corps féminin, attire aussi l'attention de Stewart – chez les Roms *Vlach* hongrois, la femme n'est considérée rom qu'à moitié, le mari parle à sa femme « as a methaphorical gazi », et plus encore, le sexe en général qui serait vu comme *gadjo* (Stewart 1997 : 226-227). De même, Judith Okely (1975) voit l'ensemble des oppositions du monde dans lequel vivent les *Gypsies* britanniques comme transcrites dans le corps féminin.

Comme le remarque également Okely, de ce principe de souillure découlent des règles, et implicitement des interdits : sexuels, hygiéniques et alimentaires, d'usage de l'espace et des objets. Cela conduit à un codage du public et du privé, de la parole, de l'argent, des relations avec les autres. Sutherland (1975 : 1977) et Okely (1975) voient le système de la pureté/souillure comme une métaphore généralisée qui trace des séparations et mettent de l'ordre entre des instances tels féminin/masculin, enfant/adulte, nourriture/non-nourriture, afin de toujours maintenir la frontière symbolique avec les Gadje et d'assurer la survivance des Roms comme groupe[10].

Cette idéologie complexe alimente la domination masculine au sein de laquelle la femme mariée assume les tâches domestiques les plus pénibles et répétitives – comme laver et cuisiner, qui sont placés dans le registre de la protection contre la souillure.

Cependant, les femmes mariées utilisent le même idiome qui les asservit pour revendiquer une paradoxale place émancipatrice. Par leur corps potentiellement souillant, elles peuvent gâter un arrangement ou s'opposer à une décision injuste – en proférant publiquement des insultes. Une de ces insultes est l'acte extrême, grave, exceptionnel, mais significatif, de soulever ses jupes :

> C'est une famille qui est venue s'installer ici de Fierbinți (village), des voleurs, des gens qui faisaient venir tout le temps la police qui s'en prendrait à nous tous…une fois, *bulibaşa*[11] a demandé à sa femme de les souiller, pour qu'ils s'en aillent. Elle est allée vers eux et a jeté sa jupe sur la maison. Tous étaient dehors. Et quand ils ont vu ça, le vieux a vidé de l'essence d'un pot et a mis du feu sur toute la maison. Ils ont laissé tout brûler, jusqu'aux murs et après, ils ont écrasé aussi ce qui restait des murs. Tout a brûlé, habits, meubles, les pots du gras de cochon, les salamis, ils venaient d'égorger un cochon… Tout. Deux mois après, *bulibaşa* lui a donné trois pièces d'or comme ils ont convenu au *kris*[12] pour reconstruire sa maison.

La souillure inscrit dans le corps la métaphysique du monde dual : le monde ordonné de *ces* Roms et, à l'opposé, ce qui est en son extérieur (la mort, la sexualité, les Gadje, les autres Roms). A travers l'idiome de la souillure[13] le mariage apparait comme une union symbolique défiant le danger, en même temps que le lieu par excellence des règles pour le contenir - d'ailleurs trop de séparations, trop d'escapades sexuelles des hommes, trop de promiscuité spatiale entre les couples d'une même famille risquent de déstabiliser l'équilibre précaire de la pureté, d'ailleurs toujours plus idéale que réelle. Le mariage comme union conjugale statue que Rom et Romni, respectivement homme et femme marié-e, sont des ethnonymes : nous avions donc affaire à « une communauté de gens mariés » (Haşdeu 2014) – le « nous » se définit par le fait de savoir gérer la souillure sexuelle. Du point de vue des Roms de Bălteni, d'autres Roms qu'eux et elles sont tout aussi soupçonnables que les Gadje de ne pas suivre les prescriptions de pureté, d'où l'importance de l'endogamie. Ainsi, le territoire de la gestion de la souillure est un espace de pouvoir d'un « nous Roms » et de contre-pouvoirs des femmes « de chez nous ». Autrement dit, les femmes sont les « expertes » de ce champ et elles peuvent

11) Chef, en partie reconnu, en partie autodésigné, dont les prérogatives concernent surtout le dialogue avec les autorités non-rom.

12) Assemblée publique de dialogue et tribunal ayant pour missions d'appliquer des sanctions et rétablir la paix.

13) Les enjeux de la pureté se cristallisent dans le cadre des rapports de domination : pour un groupe minoritaire, se protéger de la souillure signifie se défendre comme unité politique et culturelle (Douglas 1967). Dans la même logique, pour les Roms, la dialectique pur/impur est aussi une réponse à l'exclusion de la part de la société environnante, une clé de la survie dans le repli en tant que groupe. Dans ce sens, il est vrai que les Roms de Bălteni, qui ont des pratiques de traitement de la souillure étayées et diversifiées, pourraient être vu-e-s comme bien différent-e-s d'autres Roms connu-e-s ailleurs. Toutefois, j'ai pu apprendre que faire tourner à vide une machine à laver entre le linge des parents et ceux du jeune couple était une pratique banale dans la famille rom provenant de Timisoara et connue à Bruxelles. De même, en exposant mes observations sur la pureté auprès d'une équipe assurant la gestion d'un abri de nuit pour personnes sans domicile à Lausanne, un des membres de cette équipe s'est exclamé : « je comprends maintenant pourquoi ces femmes sont tout le temps en train de laver quelque chose et consomment autant d'eau ». Ces éléments laissent supposer que ces croyances et pratiques s'adaptent et changent de forme tout en survivant, selon des éléments contextuels variés, en opérant toujours symboliquement l'ex/inclusion sur plusieurs plans.

jouer avec, ce qui fait du mariage un lieu féminin.

2.2. La mère

Quant au rôle de mère, il ne faut, certes, pas minimiser la pression sociale concernant la procréation : les enfants sont très valorisé-e-s et un couple qui n'en a pas est vu comme une anomalie – si on n'a pas d'enfant on n'aura pas l'occasion de lui préparer son mariage, donc à quoi cela sert-il de travailler, voire de vivre ? Cependant, vu les séparations conjugales décrites plus haut, les enfants élevé-e-s par une autre femme que leurs mères biologiques ne manquaient pas à Bălteni. De plus, malgré son côté indésirable, le déficit de fertilité pouvait être compensé en argent. Il y avait donc à Bălteni toute une série de conditions pour une maternité sociale. Ainsi, la fertilité et la féminité me sont apparues en tension plutôt qu'en conditionnement réciproque. Cela expliquerait la non-coïncidence de la figure de *bori* et de *romni* avec celle de mère [*dei*]. On peut être *romni* et *Romni* (ethnonyme) sans être mère, mais non sans avoir été auparavant *bori,* belle-fille. Tout comme la compétition généralisée égalise le statut des hommes, les statuts des femmes tendent vers l'égalisation non pas en tant que mères reproductrices, mais en raison de leur transformation généralisée en biens à circuler et à contrôler, autrement dit, leur permanente potentialité d'être (ou de redevenir) *bori*, aussi bien que de cette compétence culturelle cruciale de gestion de la souillure. Cette constatation soulève un doute sur la prééminence de la « valence différentielle des sexes » basée sur la fonction reproductive (Héritier 1996). Comme le montrent Collier, Rosaldo et Yanagisako (1997) la capacité reproductive des femmes ne suscite pas le même intérêt partout[14]. A leur façon, les Roms seraient caractérisé-e-s par une certaine distance envers les enjeux symboliques de la maternité. Dans tous les cas, il m'a semblé que ce que les hommes rom veulent contrôler dans les femmes, ce n'est pas tant leur fécondité, mais bien un autre « pouvoir exorbitant » (pour reprendre le syntagme d'Héritier 1996), celui d'être souillées et de manipuler la souillure sexuelle, acte fondamental pour tracer la démarcation entre les Roms et les non-Roms.

14) Par exemple, des groupes pratiquant la chasse-cueillette « show little fear or respect about mothers, birth rituals are virtually lacking, women celebrate sexual prowess » (Collier et al. 1981 : 279).

3. Subjectivités : les femmes comme individus et comme totalité

Quand la littérature anthropologique sur les populations d'origine romani est écrite par des femmes, les autrices semblent donner une place importante au couple conjugal et aux contre-pouvoirs que les femmes opposent aux lois dictées par le monde dans lequel elles vivent, en s'opposant au fait d'être des simples valeurs matérielles objectualisées dans des transactions. Première à le faire, Okely (1975) met au centre de son travail les femmes *gypsy* montrées au sein de la double contrainte de la fidélité sexuelle et de la séduction active envers les hommes *gorgios* (équivalent de Gadje). Pasqualino, quant à elle, s'intéresse au pouvoir domestique des femmes (Pasqualino 1998). A partir des années 2000, on observe dans ces écrits d'anthropologues femmes une attention pour la subjectivation et l'individualisation des femmes ethnographiées. Ainsi, après avoir mis en évidence le monde des femmes dans son ouvrage de 1999, Gay y Blasco montre dans le texte de 2011 la confrontation de Agata avec les normes patriarcales. La thèse de Tesăr (2012) commence par l'histoire de Lina, une jeune femme de 18 ans décédée suite à une fausse couche, qui prend vie à travers les discussions empressées suivant sa mort, afin que le gage de l'union représenté par le calice puisse être récupéré – à moins que le mari veuf n'épouse la sœur de la défunte. Cossée (2002) détaille, elle, le malaise de Mossa, gitane qui met en scène de façon théâtrale

sa propre histoire en dévoilant des secrets intimes qui l'excluent de sa communauté.

Pour ma part, j'ai raconté plusieurs histoires de femmes, dont celle de Tita, maltraitée physiquement et symboliquement quand elle est obligée, par sa mère et ses frères, de manger du foie de poulet cru, pour être punie après sa fugue avec un amant en ayant quitté ses enfants en bas âge (Haşdeu 2007). Des figures individuelles, des vies singulières, des situations difficiles et des émotions qui nous affectent – « break your heart », comme le dit l'anthropologue américaine Ruth Behar (1996). Avec en arrière fond le cri étouffé de protestation contre des structures patriarcales cruelles et injustes, qui brisent les rebelles autant que les plus fragiles et qui déprime les anthropologues femmes.

Une conscience silencieuse du patriarcat, en même temps que les tactiques de son apprivoisement semblent unir les femmes rom et non-rom : ainsi, à Bălteni, pour « garder mon mari », il m'a été conseillé d'appliquer une méthode vernaculaire, à savoir acheter une pièce de monnaie en or et la faire transformer en quatre couvre-dents à mettre sur nos canines supérieures respectives :

> […] car dessus [sur la surface de la pièce] il y a cette croix [partie de l'enseigne de l'Empire Austro-Hongrois de la pile de la pièce de monnaie en or, une aigle tient dans son bec un crucifix] et si à l'Eglise en secret tu fais lire au pope une prière pour bénir la croix dans vos bouches, vous seriez ensemble pour toujours.

Les anthropologues femmes semblent davantage préoccupées par la conjugalité que par l'alliance : le mariage non seulement comme une structure qui relie quatre co-beaux-parents, un couple, et engage la communauté, mais une relation, un lien, un destin et un lieu de vie pour Lina, Mossa, Agata, Daniela, Tita ou Fraga.

Qui plus est, qu'elles se disent ou non féministes, les chercheuses citées

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ci-dessus ne se limitent pas à problématiser l'asymétrie du genre dans le couple, comme le faisaient déjà leurs collègues masculins, mais font le choix de raconter des subjectivités, des émotions, des révoltes, des fins tragiques ou des actions subversives. A noter ce que Okely confesse : « Durant mon terrain, j'avais été subjuguée par l'indépendance indomptable [des femmes Gypsy] que mon propre milieu culturel bourgeois ne m'avait pas inculquée. Les femmes tsiganes étaient battantes, téméraires et prêtes à en découdre quand on les défiait » (Okely 2008 : 55).

Est-ce que ce choix fait écho à leur propre vie de femmes, en même temps que celui de l'engagement subversif auprès des voix subalternes auxquelles elles s'identifient ? Tauber va jusqu'à se marier avec un Sinto et vivre en caravane (Tauber 2018) une vie de femme sinti, non seulement quotidienne mais de longue durée.

A l'heure des mobilisations virtuelles de *toutes* les femmes contre les agressions sexuelles subies de la part des hommes[15], la question du consentement individuel se pose, non seulement pour des jeunes mariées rom, mais plus que jamais, pour nous *toutes*, dans les termes de Nicole-Claude Mathieu :

> Dans les sociétés patriarcales […], il y plusieurs normes *contraires* pour une femme. Contraires, mais qui, si elles sont vécues de façon contradictoire au niveau *psychologique* par les femmes – la

15) Suite à la révélation publique, en octobre 2017, des comportements de harcèlement sexuel du producteur hollywoodien H. Weinstein, une vague sans précédent de témoignages virtuels sur les réseaux sociaux de la part des victimes d'agression et harcèlement sexuels (#meetoo/moiaussi ; #balancetonporc) est devenue un fait de société à l'échelle globale.

> contradiction permanente étant justement un facteur d'aliénation des femmes (qui fait que céder n'est pas consentir) – ne sont *pas* du contradictoires au niveau *sociologique* (Mathieu 1985 :178-179)

L'expression des émotions contrastées et ambivalentes liées à la conjugalité est ainsi un moyen d'exorciser un malaise individuel et sociétal qui dépasse les frontières d'une communauté ethno-culturelle particulière. Personnellement, j'y vois une forme d'empathie et de résonance, de co-vulnérabilité (Behar 1996), de *sororité* entre femmes. Cela signifie relation, reconnaissance et amitié, en même temps qu'une manière de faire de l'anthropologie *en tant que* femmes, *parce que* femmes.

Si je parle ici de *sororité*, je ne prétends pas viser le partage de l'expérience historique et de mémoire collective, en particulier liées au racisme, que les femmes roms vivent, qu'elles soient au village, en bidonvilles des métropoles ou sur les bancs d'université. Des féministes de couleur marquantes de notre temps, comme bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Gayatri Spivak, Gloria Anzaldúa, notamment de l'autre côté de l'Atlantique, thématisent dès les années 1980 dans leurs écrits cette sororité dans la lutte militante auprès de leurs communautés racialisées, face notamment à l'oppression de l'Etat blanc et colonisateur et à la blanchité de la culture dominante (Lorde 1984 ; Dorlin 2008). Cette visée politique de la sororité est réactualisée d'ailleurs à présent dans le mouvement global *Black Lives Matter*. Ces écrits s'inscrivent dans la veine du combat marxiste et dans celui des droits civiques des personnes racisées, intersectés au mouvement de libération des femmes et à la lutte pour les droits des peuples indigènes et des populations colonisées. Il s'agit d'une production intellectuelle et politique qui inspire fortement les féministes d'origine romani depuis les années 2000 (Oprea 2012 ; Biţu et Magyari-Vincze 2012 ; Rea 2012 ; Dorobanţu et Gheorghe 2019 ; Kóczé *et al*. 2019).

Au-delà de sa portée politique, mon argument ici est que la notion de sororité peut être utile en anthropologie pour décrire la reconnaissance réciproque issue d'une profonde amitié que peuvent avoir les anthropologues femmes avec leurs informatrices (Gay y Blasco et Hernandez 2020) et la coalition entre savoir et agir politique (Gardey et Kraus 2016). Si dans la sociologie critique anglo-saxonne on parle depuis les années 1980 de « méthodologies féministes » notamment en lien avec le choix des catégories d'analyse à partir des expériences des femmes et la réflexivité (Harding 1987 ; Keller et Longino 1996), en anthropologie cette approche est bien moins instituée. Dans ce sens, aux USA, les anthropologues autrices de *Women Writing Culture,* édité par Ruth Behar et Deborah Gordon en 1995 expriment l'importance des émotions et des vécus féminins dans leurs terrains respectifs. Chez les anthropologues européen-ne-s, assumer cette sororité, ainsi qu'une vision féministe dans la recherche, reste exceptionnel. En français par exemple, le livre pionnier de Camille Lacoste-Dujardin, *Dialogue des femmes en ethnologie* de 1977 est resté inconnu jusqu'à sa réédition en 2002. Cécile Canut reprend à son compte cette expérience précisément auprès d'une femme rom bulgare avec qui elle co-écrit (Canut et al. 2016), mais aussi dont elle publie et traduit les textes (Nikolova 2011).

Retenons que ces chercheuses interrogent, chacune à sa manière, le lien secret et profond, corporel et émotionnel, entre anthropologue et informatrice privilégiée, elles pratiquent parfois le dialogisme du texte ethnographique et la co-écriture, elles construisent une sororité dans la complicité tactique contre le patriarcat.

Les résistances académiques à tout cela sont de taille. Selon Marilyn Strathern, l'anthropologie et le féminisme « appear irrelevant to each other » (Strathern 1986: 292) malgré leur intérêt commun pour la différence et pour l'expérience vécue.

L'anthropologue est sceptique quant à la pertinence d'une anthropologie des femmes faite par les femmes, vue comme « manufacture of a subdiscipline » (Strathern 1981), dans le sens d'un découpage artificiel/inadéquat d'un objet d'étude. Ma démarche proposée ici montre que je ne partage bien évidemment pas cette vision mais bien celle d'une « méthodologie féministe » car je ne crois pas en une discipline anthropologique homogène et en un prétendu point de vue a-idéologique. Au contraire, je considère que nous produisons de la connaissance *avec* et non *sur* des sujets humains, et nous faisons apparaitre des vérités partielles depuis un point de vue situé (Haraway 1988 ; Harding 1991 ; Haşdeu 2019) : le mien est celui d'une femme non-rom, éduquée, de classe moyenne, cis-genre, mère et vivant en couple hétérosexuel dans un monde patriarcal. C'est depuis cette position que je pense les possibilités d'émancipation de mes semblables, et celle des minorités oppressées plus largement. Je considère important de nommer et d'assumer ce point de vue situé, ainsi que de me référer à la tradition féministe postcoloniale et aux expériences de complicité féminine en anthropologie. La sororité m'apparait comme une partie nécessaire de mon identité professionnelle et politique. C'est pourquoi je tiens à réaffirmer ici ma conviction qu'en tant que femmes, non seulement nous pouvons, mais nous devons penser, pratiquer et écrire l'anthropologie contemporaine en défendant la cause féministe.

4. Conclusion : *un espace à soi* dans un monde divisé

S'il y a une chose sur laquelle les anthropologues sont entièrement d'accord à propos des Roms et autres populations d'origine romani, c'est ce que Stewart appelle l'« espace à soi » de celles-là: « They defined a sphere of action with the gazos that allowed them a much more profound sense of autonomy and self-direction » (Stewart 1997 : 241).

La présence et l'action des femmes sont de première importance pour figurer et maintenir la frontière interethnique à l'intérieur d'un idiome qui établit un rôle central de la femme mariée. Ainsi, dans ce dynamisme parfois dramatique intrinsèque à la relation conjugale, il s'agit de voir non seulement des hommes qui échangent, traquent, violentent les femmes, – sans jamais le nier – mais également des femmes qui revendiquent une valeur, une position, une compensation financière, une réparation morale, un nom, une reconnaissance et un statut, celui de *romni* et de *Romni*. Qui plus est, cette capacité féminine d'agir participe de la frontière nécessaire aux Roms pour créer leur « espace à soi ».

Portée principalement par des anthropologues femmes, qui se considèrent – ou pourraient se considérer – dans un rapport de sororité, de reconnaissance réciproque, avec les femmes d'origine romani, la connaissance des significations de la conjugalité rom peut apparaitre ainsi comme un lieu d'émancipation et de lutte féministe où femmes et anthropologues, rom et non-rom, se rencontrent.

Cette conclusion me semble avoir des conséquences directes sur les enjeux politiques du discours que l'on tient sur les femmes « autres » dans nos sociétés. Définissant les mariages des Roms comme « culturels », le discours médiatique et politique expédie la complexité de ces communautés sans considérer cet espace à soi (Oprea 2005 ; Volpp 2006). Cela est propre à notre époque de manière plus générale, car les gouvernements instrumentalisent les lois concernant l'égalité de genre dans un ordre national néo-colonial, ou comme le dit Bilge : « notre époque est témoin d'un nouveau mouvement politique dans lequel les discours libéraux des droits de la personne, plus spécifiquement des droits des femmes et des homosexuels servent à

réaffirmer *La Kulturnation* et à fournir un profil politique de l'individu qui est qualifié pour en faire partie » (Bilge 2010 : 198). C'est aussi ce que Fassin nomme l'application autoritaire de la « démocratie sexuelle », non pas comme principe démocratique pour améliorer sur le plan de l'égalité de genre une société dans sa globalité, mais comme technique de tri entre ceux et celles qui sont considéré-e-s comme aptes à la démocratie et ceux et celles qui ne le seraient pas : « If sexual democracy is about sexual freedom and equality between sexes, its application to the exclusion of 'others,' that is its racialisation, can eventually transform these lofty ideals into a practice that hinders sexual liberty by racializing sexual discrimination » (Fassin 2010 : 523).

Ainsi, à partir des discussions occasionnelles, ainsi qu'en lisant des textes qui retracent leurs parcours (Auzias 2009 ; Bitu et Morteanu 2009 ; Dorobanțu et Gheorghe 2019), j'ai compris l'effet de cet ethos sur certaines féministes rom. Elles se sentent tiraillées entre d'une part, la sentence humiliante des institutions gadje affirmant que leur « communauté/culture » n'est pas apte à la démocratie sexuelle et d'autre part, leur propre capital socio-culturel et logique de classe moyenne européenne, sur base desquels elles ne peuvent pas s'identifier aux mariages précoces et/ou arrangés.

Il ne me revient surtout pas, en tant que *gadji*, de donner des leçons de féminisme à ces intellectuelles, car pour la plupart, elles sont bien plus engagées et plus actives politiquement que moi et, comme je l'ai déjà dit, elles ont un rapport profond et historique à la sororité, vue comme unifiant des victimes de plusieurs systèmes d'oppression, dont le racisme. Cependant, avec cet essai je suggère qu'en étudiant le mariage avec les anthropologues femmes, on peut contrer en partie ce malaise ainsi qu'étendre la sororité au de-là des barrières ethno-culturelles.

Epilogue

Un moment particulier est venu coaguler mes réflexions, plus précisément, il a représenté pratiquement le déclic pour l'écriture de cet article :

> Rebeca, femme rom trentenaire originaire de Bucarest et vivant à Genève, est divorcée et mère de trois garçons, tous aux yeux et cheveux noirs : « …celui-ci du milieu, est le plus noir, mais lui il dit à tout le monde qu'il est Roumain, pas Tsigane [rires] », souligne-t-elle. On se revoit par hasard dans un tramway à Genève : elle me confie sur un ton amical : « J'ai fait un rêve…tu vas halluciner ! J'étais habillée en robe de mariée. Tu vas rire... tu sais qui était le marié ? Un des policiers, ilotier, un gars sympa et jeune, avec des yeux bleus que je côtoie quand je vais au boulot. Tu m'imagines avoir maintenant une fille comme ça, blondinette ? » (septembre 2018).

Le rêve de Rebeca de créer du métissage racial parle d'une stratégie féminine de faire avec le malaise raciste et patriarcal tout en délimitant un espace à soi. Cette stratégie prend la voie de la femme mariée, en créant une passerelle idéale du point de vue rom, entre Roms et Gadje, entre la femme rom et son « ennemi principal » (Delphy 1998). Elle exprime l'effort de la protagoniste de penser le mariage comme lieu d'aliénation *et* en même temps d'émancipation féminine, car comme on le sait, l'émancipation est souvent imaginée à partir des catégories et des termes du dominant. L'espace matériel et symbolique délimité par la robe de mariée – symbole de la domination masculine par excellence - représente cet *espace à soi – lieu fragile* où s'articulent la compassion, la sororité, les contradictions, la complicité et la reconnaissance entre *de très nombreuses* femmes...

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IV. Visual Representations of Roma Marriages

"We Start Our Lives from Different Positions." A Dialogue[1]

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ABSTRACT

Alina Șerban is an award-winning film and theater actress, playwright, and emerging director of Roma origin. Born in Bucharest in 1987, she overcame poverty and discrimination, becoming the first in her family to graduate from university and to continue her studies abroad. She pioneered Roma feminist political theater in Romania with her one-woman show *I Declare at My Own Risk*. In cinema, she had leading roles in Marta Bergman's feature film *Alone at My Wedding*, which premiered at the Cannes International Film Festival in 2018 and earned her several Best Actress awards, and in Huseyin Tabak's *Gipsy Queen*, which had its premiere in 2019 and earned her, among other awards, The Best Actress in Germany in 2020. She has recently debuted in film directing with a short about Roma slavery. In the interview conducted with her, this issue co-editor Cătălina Tesăr followed three lines of inquiry: (1) how ethnicity influenced Alina's life trajectory and her career, (2) how Alina perceives the representation of Roma in art and public spaces, and (3) how she perceives early age marriages. The interview was conducted on the phone, and Cătălina and Alina had not met in person prior to the interview.

KEYWORDS

Roma identity, representations, early age marriages, discrimination, Romania.

1) This text has been edited for brevity and clarity.

2) I am grateful to Ciprian Voicilă for transcribing this interview, and to Ioana Miruna Voiculescu for translating it from Romanian.

Cătălina Tesăr: I'd like us to discuss about the representations of Roma and Roma marriages, as well as your views on early age marriages. But until we get there, I'd like you to reflect a bit on your own life story. Because, as I see it, it relates to questions raised in the current issue of *Martor* journal, which includes accounts of both communities where marriages are arranged and more "assimilated communities," which appear to be more open, mixed, and to be living somehow in-between. On a related note, I feel that in *I Declare at My Own Risk*—your one-woman show that I so greatly admire—you speak precisely about your experience of being in-between. You tell, for example, of how you had a Romanian boyfriend and you were anxious about bringing him home to your family and disclosing your ethnicity, or how you embraced education, a thing which was seen as not very Roma by the traditional side of your family. Can you tell me how it feels to aspire to the *gadge* world while being a Roma? What was your experience of living in-between? Last but not least, it seems to me that lately you've been in a position where you want to embrace your ethnicity very openly, haven't you? I don't perceive anymore the uneasiness of being Roma that you expressed ten years ago, in *I Declare at My Own Risk*. But then there are many who want to escape their ethnicity. Do you feel 100 percent Roma? I imagine it is difficult to draw the line.

Alina Șerban: Right, you've touched several topics, and I'm not sure I can give you rational answers because they are about the processes that a person has to go through

Alina Şerban. Photo credit: Denisa Silas.

before embracing an identity, and these are pretty complex. This identity is never fixed, it is constantly changing, and anyway you cannot distance yourself from it. About the question whether I feel 100 percent Roma or not, I believe this is not something you can quantify… Now, whether you make war with these things or you openly embrace them, you cannot change your background, where you were born and raised. Even if I no longer live with my father's family, I still live in Romania and in the world, where being Roma is not something enjoyable—whether as an artist or whatever else.

I say this because, above all else, I believe in representation. Growing up, I couldn't find any people that looked like me or my family and that I could admire portrayed in the media. So I can only hope that things will change and the next generations will

feel better about their identity. In the audience to my play *The Great Shame*[3] today, I saw Roma girls much younger than me, who knew about Roma slavery and were aware that the big problem is that we're not put in a context. That the position of the Roma in society is not necessarily the one they chose, but the result of a racist, classist, etc. system. And they also knew that the Roma have made their contribution to this country and that things are not what they're said to be: there is no black and white, as the media would have it. So, about my being in-between, this is to some extent true, at least as an artist.

As a person, I have much more to say about that. Whether I like it or not, I cannot renounce my identity. It is what it is, I remain Roma, no matter what. I've been born and I've lived with this knowledge. Like in London I could have passed for just Romanian, not mentioned my ethnic identity. This is a kind of choice some can make, others can't, in a given context maybe. But in practical terms making this choice wouldn't sever me from my past, even if I changed the story I told the world, you know? I don't know how to explain that. Even if I had told my course mates at the Royal Academy "I'm just Romanian," this wouldn't have changed in any way the fact that I had spent my formative years in the traditional household of my father's Spoitori (Tinker) family, and that I knew how it felt to be rejected because of your ethnicity, etc. Trying to manufacture a new identity for myself, I expect would have been even more tiring, I don't know… (*laughter*)

Cătălina Tesăr: Come to think of it, you were a success in all the films you acted in, but most of them were not produced in Romania. I saw you in that Romanian short film, *Written/Unwritten*[4], which I think is amazing. Yet I'm not sure how many people this short has actually reached. On the contrary, I feel that the foreign films you were in, like *Alone at My Wedding* and *Gypsy Queen*, had more impact. Do you think that your being sought by foreign directors more than by Romanian directors has to do with Romanians' attitude towards Roma compared to a more open attitude in the West?

Alina Șerban: Do you mean more open to the subject or to me as an actress? Because these are different things. In Romania, they aren't producing films with non-stereotypical women as leads. They're starting to make films featuring the odd Roma kid character, but I think we're far from doing it on a regular basis. Diversity isn't really a subject for Romanian films, plays, or the media. So first it would have to become something regular—to see ads featuring Roma eating cookies, biscuits, beats me…

There are no normal representations of us out there. We are either portrayed as criminals, like when the Romanian media make sure to mention the criminal's ethnicity, or as exotic people, like when they say, "OK, let's listen to them too," but this representation isn't any more human. Hence the lack of empathy for Roma, Roma kids. If we hear of forced evictions of Roma people at the height of winter, we don't really feel sick in the stomach. If that happened to some dogs, we'd jump to save them, you know? Because we've lived with the same portrayals of Roma for centuries. Indeed I was lucky enough to be able to show the grey area, the things left unsaid about the Roma. Now, about this area, about what it is to be in-between, the fact that I try to bring in this human side, and I am one of the first voices to do it, well, I try to do it against stereotypical representations. I've never made use of my ethnic traditional clothing, although I could've done it. I've never talked about early marriages in my own family to draw your attention, to make everybody feel good that we're the savages, so different from you. On the contrary, what I mean to convey is that we're as human as you are, only that we don't have equal access to resources, historically, we were placed on a different floor, in the basement.

3) A play written and directed by Alina Șerban, drawing on the history of Roma slavery.

4) A short drama by Adrian Silișteanu (2016).

Cătălina Tesăr: Coming to the topic of marriages, Alina, I'd like to bring in what I do. If you have the time, you might want to see this exhibition I made, *Tokmeala. A Bride and Wealth in the Bargain*,[5] which might or might not be about marriages since I like to present it as being about marriage alliances and politics. I don't aim to exoticize, but I believe that you need to show things for what they are sometimes. If you make sure to show things from a human perspective, I'm not sure it's about exocitizing so much.

5) An exhibition based on my (Cătălina Tesăr) PhD research, opened from September 24 to October 25, 2020, at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, Bucharest.

Alina Şerban: What bothers me the most about the topic of early marriages is that it is never put in its historical context. Now, if we don't talk about how it has come to early marriages, we can only judge the people and blame them. If it weren't for Roma slavery, we wouldn't have early marriages. I don't approve of early marriages, I believe they should be stopped. To have underage persons entering into marriage is clearly a crime. And I don't believe either that objective research of the phenomenon is possible, especially if done by non-Roma. Anyway, this is a very sensitive topic. But again to study Roma like animals, that's really problematic. I think it is very difficult for a Roma to present the issue of early marriages, let alone for a non-Roma! Because unless we put it in a context and explain where it originated, namely in the non-Roma oppressive system, I'm not even remotely interested in starting the conversation. What I mean is that unless we explain that it originated with Roma slavery and that the whole Romanian system is to blame for tolerating it, I believe we're not really dealing with it.

Cătălina Tesăr: Just to clarify, how are in your opinion early marriages connected to slavery?

Alina Şerban: This goes back to the times when the boyars, the state, everybody owned Roma as if they were things—many rapes and mixed marriages between Roma and non-Roma, which weren't necessarily marriages, happened then, generations of mixed Roma and non-Roma children resulted from them. Also, when the same boyars would bring in Roma virgin girls at their parties, the excuse of the betrothal was used to protect them: "No, boyar, she's betrothed." "How can she be betrothed? She's only thirteen." "But she's married, boyar. I lie you not." Not that this would save all of them, but we need to explain that the practice is connected to slavery and the non-Roma, even if today the Roma are still the ones to get blamed for it, while we're all oblivious of the context.

Let's also talk about today's social context. After all, the lack of education, resources, the poverty, they're all connected with early marriages. And I'll give you an example that shut me up completely, and I hope it would many others. I'm talking about the early marriages made in my family's courtyard, I'm talking about my family, I'm not talking from books or just showing off that I know. No, I have the legitimacy of my own and my family's experiences. They were my own cousins that I had grown up with, and as they were about to enter their teen years, I was aware of the danger they were in to be married off and leave the courtyard. So, I wanted to protect them but I had no way to do it. What could I change about that context? And second, when I asked my aunt Mariana, their mother, "Aunty, what are we doing? She's thirteen! This cannot be!" "And how am I supposed to provide for them, my girl?" she replied. "Can't you see I don't even have bread?" So, in that situation, I couldn't show them a way out of the riddle, give them or their family that bread. I wasn't in a position of power that would allow me to say: "I'll give you the solution."

Cătălina Tesăr: And what is in your opinion the connection between today's Roma social context and early marriages?

Alina Şerban: I don't think the two can be separated. The position of Roma in society

is, as I said, marginal, not least in terms of their ability to maintain their culture. And speaking of culture, this also applies to the topic of early marriages. You cannot say, "Oh, this is a purely cultural thing. How 'nice' that they're meeting and making these early marriages." But when your language, your clothing, your culture are so important to you, what's going on outside of that culture is relevant too, don't you think? Outside of our context, we cannot speak our language everywhere, we cannot wear our traditional clothing because they wouldn't even let us go into a café. I believe that outside pressure, poverty and the lack of access to the same resources as the others lead to increased pressure inside the closed community. "No, we need to hold on to what we have, we have to do it our own way, because the others won't accept us anyway. There's no way we can make it through with them around. They've always hated us and they always will." This is pretty much how it goes. If you feel rejected your whole life, you'll never believe that you'll make it through the first chance you get.

Look at me. I'm the first in my family to have graduated from high school. I come from a traditional family. My father was a traditional Roma man, and I used to live in a traditional household. And then there was my Rudari[6] mother. In my formative years, eleven to seventeen, I lived in a traditional Roma courtyard. At eleven, when I first moved there, I looked at its members with non-Roma eyes and I blamed them. "Why don't you send your children to school? Why do you have early marriages? Aunty, why are you doing this?" And I tried to understand these mechanisms from inside, to see how they are all connected. Because I had someone to help me with my homework: my mother. I used to play the lazy girl, "No, mommy, I'm too sleepy, I have a belly ache." And my mum would make me do it, saying, "No, you have to do your homework. Come on, I'll help you do it." My mother can read and write and understands the importance of education. This wasn't the case for my male cousin, who lived two houses away from us. So the way this die is cast depends on so many things: your living conditions, and so on. They married him very early, and a boy being married in fourth grade did become the talk of the school, and I, who lived in the same courtyard, would hear it.

Cătălina Tesăr: And how are you now perceived in that traditional family? Since you're not married, you didn't follow the customs?

Alina Șerban: I was perceived positively all the time. When I was studying for the high school admission tests and living in that courtyard, they'd turn down the music, keep quiet, because "Alina is studying." They had some sort of respect for my determination to do this. Now, you shouldn't think aunt Veta didn't send my cousin to school. She did. She'd wake him up in the morning and tell him, "Come on, get up, school is starting!" The problem was, as I said, that within the family, among our own, some had privileges that others lacked. My parents could read and write. But aunt Veta couldn't read or write, she couldn't help Bebi with his homework. But in that whole context, I was perceived positively. Although I was constantly rebelling against them: "Why do you do that? Why is he like that? I don't want to speak your language. I don't want to wear the skirt." I was their niece, we were blood relatives. My father was Veta's brother, we were all blood relatives. I could see that our faces looked alike. There was no doubt in my mind that I was related to these people. But I did it out of self-loathing, because I wanted the Romanians to like me in school and to stop calling me a "crow"—my skin was much darker back then.

And my family's situation wasn't exceptional in that, I think. It was the same for other families. There are still lots of Romanians living in villages who cannot read and write and marry their girls off at

6) Population who have never spoken Romani and who do not acknowledge their Roma origin living in Romania, as well as in Hungary and the Balkans (where they are known as the Boyash).

thirteen or fourteen. I don't think this topic is more taboo among Roma than among Romanians living in rural areas today. Let's not forget that non-Roma aren't faring too well either when it comes to early marriages. On the whole, Romania has the highest rate of teenage mothers. So this effectively takes us out of the paradigm of ethnicity. It is a country-wide problem that we don't have sex ed in schools, that the Romanian Orthodox Church exerts control over many issues still, and we're still not out of the cave on this topic and others. I mean, we cannot have the fastest Internet connection and the highest share of underage mothers at the same time.

Cătălina Tesăr: I'm not sure we are really ranking first. When I was studying in the UK, I'd read the press there, and I remember they had their own problem with teenage mothers. As you say, this problem is a structural one, being caused by the lack of sex ed in schools, by poverty…

Alina Şerban: By poverty, by the lack of education. Romania has the highest rate of mothers aged ten to seventeen. When we talk about early marriages and Roma, I'm interested in looking at how they are tied to a context, namely the Romanian racist and classist context. Besides this system that we're still fighting, to put it that way, there's also a past of genocide and suffering that also impacted early marriages. I mean, first people were enslaved and never had the same rights as the other citizens, then came the Holocaust, then the communist period when you couldn't be Roma, you couldn't be any ethnicity other than Romanian… Bearing all this in mind, can we really say that Roma were ever given equal opportunities?

Cătălina Tesăr: I wonder if the age at marriage and age of first birth haven't in fact dropped after the fall of communism and the arrival of democracy. From what I've seen in the community where I do research, they married and had children later under the communist regime, because it forced them to finish eighth grade. Currently, it would be the responsibility of the state to come into the family and inquire why people are pulling their children out of school after a certain age. Legally, the mandatory eight grades system is still in force today. Apart from the state's lack of involvement, I see it as a malfunction of the educational system that it cannot take action when children drop out of school because of poverty. The issue seems to be very complex, and, indeed, we have to consider the social and historical contexts too.

Alina Şerban: Right, you mentioned the malfunctioning of the educational system, and I can tell you that there are huge problems in the child rights' protection system too. I mean, they're supposed to protect the rights of the children, right? From what I see, this system is often more interested in having as many children as possible in its care. And there are many more institutions… As for you and I, as humans, we cannot cut ourselves off from the context we lived and developed in. I am who I am today because I went through some specific experiences, I was there, I knew X and Y, they helped me… If I make a mistake today, you'll have to judge me in a context, to say, "Look, she made this mistake, but let's see what it was that made her end up like this." Like this woman who was trafficked and ended up in the US, and she killed her kidnapper in self-defense. Instead of trying to understand what she had been through, that she had been kicked out of her home early in her life, when she was a teenager, or how she ended up working as a prostitute, how she ended up getting in that man's car, she was simply charged with murder. We don't see that it was self-defense, we don't consider the wider context of her life. Or when we speak of some men—I'm talking about the American system here but also the Romanian one. If a man from a good family rapes a girl at a party, he'll get a less

serious punishment because he has his life ahead of him. "Let's not ruin the poor boy's future," they say.

That's how it goes. We start our lives from different positions and we lead very different lives depending on the color of our skin, what family we happened to be born in, if we were lucky to meet someone who believed in us in school, who didn't force us to sit in the last row. That's yet another topic. "Look at them, Roma kids, they just don't want to go to school." Are you kidding me? How are they really treated in school? Are they treated well? And is education really free? It's not exactly free. It's free on paper, but in practice, it's not. Everything costs. Let's compare a Roma kid to a non-Roma kid. A Roma girl and a non-Roma girl sharing a desk. If the non-Roma girl wants to be friends with the Roma girl, she'll get told off, "Why do you play with that Gypsy girl (*țigancă*), that crow? Her people are always up to something bad." That's what you hear all the time. And how will that make the Roma girl feel? Of course, feeling rejected, she'll either withdraw or attack in her turn. And the girls will grow up. Which one of them will be most likely to go to university? And which one will be most likely to become a teenage mother? It's obvious.

I was lucky that my parents, although my father was a traditional Roma man and my mum a more progressive Roma, they understood the importance of education. And there are many other Roma parents right now who do the same—lots and lots of parents in villages who deprive themselves to make sure their children don't end up like them. It's all you want, something better for your children. On the other side of my family, my mother's side, our relatives are, as far as I know, Jehovah's Witnesses. They also had many children and managed to send them all to school. These children all have jobs today. My cousin's daughters, for example, they weren't teenage wives. They all married after turning nineteen—and this is the same family we're talking about. These girls have their own children, although they're younger than me, they're in their twenties. One of my nieces, the daughter of a first cousin, she's twenty-two and already the mother of two, both of them going to kindergarten. In the village of Gălbinași, lots and lots of Roma go to school, they don't fit the stereotype this way, plus they have their own tradition due to their religion, which adds this extra dimension to their lives. They have values that, even if I don't practice them myself, I understand and value. It makes me happy to see how they grew a community of their own—which is not covered in the media since it's not exotic enough for the media. But I'm still very happy that they have this tight community. And if their relationship with God, their religion, makes them develop their own identity and community, why not?

Cătălina Tesăr: That was one intense interview, Alina. You're probably quite used to interviews by now, as you are involved in many film and theater projects at this point in your life. You have what it takes to both be a role model for the community and speak to the world about slavery and about Roma in a way that is new for the majority.

Alina Șerban: I'm used to speaking more about my artist work. As for the things we say about Roma, I believe that we all have to be incredibly responsible. I got a lovely message the other day from a Roma woman—I don't even know where she lived. This goes to show how much this means to me but to other Roma too. I get this kind of messages quite often, and this is what actually makes me go on. The fact that I'm shown by people that what I do makes things a little bit better.

Cătălina Tesăr: What I admire most about you is that your work is focused on doing away with prejudice, stereotypes using not so much discourses as life stories. I admire

you for being honest, but also for being able to work with yourself and tell your own life story and to reveal the human side of your and your father's family's experiences. Though you didn't agree with them, you succeeded in conveying the human side, making the viewer feel closer to and want to get to know the Roma. I believe that much of the rejection comes from a lack of social interaction or the fear of the unknown. That's why getting to know the people and getting closer to them matters so much.

Alina Şerban: Right, that's the source of all problems. We don't know each other. The Roma do know Romanians, trust me they do, but not the other way around. I know my privileges, how I get to go places where I'm clearly the only Roma in the room. *It's lonely*, and it comes with responsibilities, and so on. I realize that I shouldn't be the only Roma in the room. If only we knew more about each other, we wouldn't be afraid of each other. That's precisely what's missing: representations of Roma as human. And this is what I'm most interested in. Of course, I have the legitimacy of speaking from my own experience, which is both traditional and more or less Romanianized, to call it that way.

There are still many stories to tell. We need allies aware of the responsibility that comes with representation. That's why I'm happy about the projects I worked on, where I was given the opportunity, or claimed it for myself, to have a say in the work, to have creative and decision-making power over the stories I told about the Roma. This is what I mean by the responsibility that comes with representation, as it shouldn't forgo complexity. If you look at Romanian films, you'll find portrayals of all sorts of Romanians. They cry, they have desires, they have defects. But the Roma are not portrayed the same way. Like it was a normal thing to *deport* them at 5 a.m., in December—because that's what happened when three hundred people were forcefully moved from Cluj-Napoca to the Pata Rât landfill. How was that normal? Don't they feel pain? How is it normal that those children have to live next to an eight-story high pile of garbage? Just because they're Roma, they have no feelings, they're not human like us.

This representation of Roma as savages who refuse to send their children to school, who choose to live on the margins of society feels dated, unrealistic to me. You're supposed to perceive other humans just like you perceive yourself, right? Bottom line, when I see someone rummaging through garbage, it hurts as if he or she were my brother or my sister. I can't look at that person and say this one is a Gypsy woman (*țigancă*), the other is Romanian. That's a suffering human being in front of me. That's what it is. And it is the responsibility of us all to build a better life for the generations to come. If I ever have children, I hope with all my heart that they won't hate their roots the way I hated mine. And I didn't hate them because of my family, but because of what I heard from those outside my community, because I knew they wouldn't accept me. Even today, after Cannes and the Royal Academy, I'm still not perceived as 100 percent Romanian, although I'm a Romanian citizen. The phone doesn't ring for me as an artist but as a Roma artist. We don't get to see any diversity on TV—gay, black, disabled people, Muslims—life as it really is, instead we only see the same few types of people. This obviously distorts our self-image and our image of what normal, beautiful, etc. is. In Romania, being poor is still shameful, as if it were your fault. I can only hope that, after some years will have passed, many more diverse voices will take the mike, and together we'll propagate this message of a new normal that comes in all possible colors and shapes. Because that's how life actually is. A message of solidarity that we still lack here. There is still so much to do.

Dare to Record! The Ethics of Decision Making in Fieldwork Documentary Practice

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ABSTRACT

The ethics of documentary practice is often brought into discussion after the screening of the film, when the production is already finished. Except for a minimum formal requirement of consent, there is no standard set of rules that filmmakers are compelled to follow during fieldwork, regulating their relationship with the people in front of the camera. Viewers make ethical judgments based on cultural expectations regarding consent, disclosure, motive, and structure. The diversity of fieldwork situations is considered the main reason for the lack of formal guidelines in this practice. Fieldwork behavior is shaped by the responsibility the practitioners assume towards the people filmed, the other team members, and their personal professional goals based on their own set of moral standards.

Grounded in my experience as a cinematographer for a documentary shot in a Cortorari Roma community in a Transylvanian village, the article discusses the ethical challenges I faced in the decision-making process while filming on location. Accounting for the particularities encountered during this fieldwork—from the language barrier, secrecy and rumors to tensed conversations and open conflicts—I discuss the factors that influenced my choices. The analysis aims to reveal how the perception of responsibility and power roles that emerged in this context determined when and what was to be recorded and made available for editing and disclosure.

KEYWORDS

Documentary film, documentary practice, visual anthropology, ethics.

"Dare!" said Costică cutting the air with his hand like an ax, when he saw me hesitating to have a glass of wine. "If you want to be here, you have to dare!" It was the only thing he asked me to do during my time in his house. He wanted me to be direct about what I wanted and not be elusive. He was referring to food and drinks, but his imperative urging has come to embody for me the quandaries of being in the field and of how power roles are played when filming on location. Daring stands on the thin line between being bold and being defiant, having the courage to overcome one's fears and insolently overstepping or intruding. Recording the realities of people's lives is a daring engagement. The fieldwork of documentary filmmaking is a process during which there is an ongoing negotiation of the boundaries between the ones in front and the ones behind the camera. Unless the subjects are involved in decision making during editing and postproduction (i.e., a reflexive mode of engagement), filming on location is always a collaborative process. So, how does a cinematographer dare to create video records of real people? What are the ethical challenges that arise in the decision-making process? How can intimacy and trust be developed, and what are the implications of the openness and acceptance that come along with this? Using an autoethnographical approach, I will discuss my involvement

Anthropologist and filmmaker Cătălina Tesăr chatting with one of her long term friends from the field, one of the main characters in the film, Băra. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

DOP and visual anthropologist Ileana shooting a foal immediately after its delivery. Photo credits: Cătălina Tesăr.

as a cinematographer in the production of a documentary[1] shot in a Cortorari (Tent-Dwellers) Roma community in Transylvania.[2] I intend to describe and create a reflexive analysis of my personal experience (Ellis 2011) in the wider frame of the ethics of documentary filmmaking. In the absence of an articulated, formal frame of conduct norms within documentary production, what are the inevitable ethical dilemmas that arise in the decision-making process on a daily basis?

Throughout the years as a practicing filmmaker the camera has granted me the privilege of entering people's lives and being a witness and sometimes a participant to their experiences. Documentary film director Albert Maysles (2011) has compared the camera to "a passport for travel and experience." But the power of such a tool does not lie only in that it can give the person who controls it access into an unfamiliar world, but also in that it allows one to capture and bring back strips of the realities one encounters. Like the practice of photography, cinematography multiplies the world and fragments its continuity (Sontag 1977). The possession of these images creates possibilities of control over the representation of this world. Being aware of such possibilities brings forth the question of the responsibility for the effects and the role of the filmmaker's presence in the life of others (MacDougall 1991). What are then the implications of using such a "passport" and of the complex interplay between access and entitlement? What responsibilities fall on the cinematographer during fieldwork and what does the cinematographer hold herself accountable for?

The study of the decision-making process in fieldwork documentary practice is limited by the scarce possibility of making observations of the on-site interactions during the shooting of a film. In most cases, with the exception of big budget television productions, documentaries are independent initiatives that explore private lives or small communities, relying on developing intimate and trusting relations. For these reasons, most of the times, shooting on location involves minimal equipment and small teams of no more than three people. The chances of having more people accompany the film crew are therefore very slim. Discussions about the ethical challenges of documentary practice are often based on the analysis of the final products of the projects, the completed films (Gross et al. 1988, 2003; Rosenthal 1988; Nichols 1991, 1994). Yet another possible undertaking is gathering data drawn from interviews with the filmmakers as Patricia Aufderheide has done in her 2012 study of the common ethical challenges in US documentary filmmaking. Yet another option to tackle the subject is the case study analysis of the embodied experience of the writer. David MacDougall has discussed extensively questions of power imbalance and truthfulness based on his experience as a practicing filmmaker (1991, 1992, 2000). Similarly, this article will discuss ethical judgments and their implications by considering a case study from my own professional practice.

The ethics of documentary filmmaking refers to the implementation of general, culturally accepted moral standards in the filmmakers' practice. With the exception of the signed agreements for the right to use their image, there are no other institutionalized forms of regulating the relationship with the people filmed. In most cases, ethics is called into question when the film is presented to audiences. This debate is premised on claims of documentaries being an honest and truthful representation of actual facts, of "saying something honestly about something that really happened" (Auderheide 2012: 362). The relationship between filmmakers and subjects is judged based on notions of consent, rights, and power (Ruby 1988: xiv). Obtaining consent is one of the basic norms of documentary practice, and the option to grant it or not is a legally guaranteed right. Having this choice does not however dismiss the

1) Provisional title: *The Chalice. Of Sons and Daughters* (currently in postproduction). A film by Cătălina Tesăr; Camera: Cătălin Muşat, Ileana Szasz, Cătălina Tesăr; Editors: Dana Bunescu, Ciprian Cimpoi. Funded by a Fejos Postdoctoral Grant of Wenner Gren Foundation.

2) For written analysis of the Cortorari community, see Tesăr (2012, 2015, 2018).

A secondary male character, Nina's grandfather, resting on a haystack in front of his sheep pen. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

concerns of third parties about whether the rights of the people filmed have been protected or not. When put under scrutiny, the ethical standards of documentaries are judged based on four criteria: consent, disclosure, structure, and motive (see Katz, and Katz 1988: 119–34). In spite of the legal framework that regulates consent, suspicion and doubts are being raised about the level of information the subjects have received and if the agreement has been voluntary.

The process of documentary filmmaking is one in which none of the people involved knows exactly what the end result will look like. There is limited knowledge about the development of the story, how the film will be structured during editing, and what the effects of the distribution will be. To what are the subjects then consenting to? How can they decide "how much, to whom and when disclosure about oneself are to be made" (Pryluck 1976: 24)? The production team can inform the people they film

only about their intentions. Having people signing agreements based on anticipations often implies strategies of reassurance or imposing a point of view that the viewer is not aware of. Two of the most common questions from the public during Q&A sessions are if the people depicted have seen the final product and if they have agreed to being filmed in certain vulnerable situations. These questions are about knowing the level of control the subjects had over the way they were portrayed and avoiding feeling complicit to an invasion of privacy.

If how the story is being structured and the motivation of telling it are mainly in the hands of the director, during the fieldwork activity, controlling the camera places the cinematographer in a position between the director and the subjects being filmed. This grants her the power and the responsibility to mediate and directly negotiate the limits of what the camera records. As my role in the production of the film mentioned at the beginning of this article was that of the cinematographer, I will discuss the decision-making process at those moments that highlight how consent and disclosure were negotiated between me and the people who had agreed to be a part of this film.

Establishing roles, anticipating concerns, and preemptive planning

By the time of my involvement, the film was in a late stage of production. The director, Cătălina, had been working for two years on this documentary about a Cortorari Roma community in Transylvania, where she did her PhD field research. I knew very little about the subject, but I had some ideas about the struggles she was going through trying to create a filmic portrayal of some aspects of the lives of the Cortorari. We had had a previous discussion about my coming to work as a cinematographer on her project. At the beginning of the project, she had worked with a male film director, and together they had done the camera work until that moment. As tensions started to build up in their team, the production seemed to be stuck. Cătălina was looking for someone committed to filming. But her experience so far had revealed some concerns about being able to suddenly bring someone new on board and just pass on the camera task. First and foremost, there was the question of access and the level of trust and intimacy that a new crew member would have to achieve with the

subjects. Cătălina had been engaging with the members of the community for over a decade. Additionally, the male co-director had been successful in developing close relationships with the Cortorari men he had been filming by getting involved in common practices of entertainment.[3] When I came on board and went to film on location, their co-directorship work had already covered one and a half years, and the film seemed to be almost finished.

3) Cortorari Roma are characterized by high gender sensitivity, and both in everyday activities and at ceremonial events men and women do not intermingle.

With the male director no more part of the team, and most of the rushes already edited, our goal was to shoot some parts that were missing in the construction of the narrative. The film follows the story of a young married couple, Nina and Peli, who are trying to conceive a baby boy in order to comply with local customs related to the inheritance of some male putative objects, chalices. Chalices come from the forebears and are passed on ideally from father to son. When a man gets married, his family entrusts their chalice to the bride's parents until the newly wedded couple gives birth to a boy. Then the chalice is passed back to its original owners. At that time, Nina and Peli only had one daughter, and hence the chalice had not yet been returned to Peli's family. The depiction of their story would end with the couple's decision to terminate a pregnancy out of which they would have had another daughter. The filmic account of the two characters' experience was to be completed by footage of local practices that would provide a better understanding of the community life and customs, some descriptive shots that would create a clearer description of each of the protagonists and the space they inhabited, and an oral narration of their story by a supporting character that would help explain the intricacies of their lives.

The concerns discussed during the preparatory meetings I had with Cătălina were not cleared away, if anything, some more concerns were added about the obvious replacement of one crew member. During the previous shootings on location, Cătălina would film the women and the ex-co-director, the men. This was the case not only because daily activities in the community are deeply gendered and seldom overlap, but also because the characters would open up more in front of the camera when handled by someone of the same gender. As exclusive male activities were not a priority in the storyline, and with Cătălina taking on the role of director, we decided that mostly I would be the one handling the camera. We planned to stay for two weeks and chose the time of Easter celebrations for two main reasons. First, it was on this occasion that all family members returned from Italy where Peli and his parents earned an income from begging activities. Second, with most community members at home, the chances of them engaging in communal practices seemed to be higher.

Entering the field and introducing the camera

Documentary fieldwork fragments the lives of its practitioners and often requires overnight adjustments to the lives of others. Filming on location impacts their lives, but at the same time it impacts and disrupts the lives of the ones being filmed. The latter become part of the film but the process becomes part of their biographies too. Like the film itself, the filmmakers are not "outside the situation [they] describe," they are also "inside someone else's story" (MacDougall 1991: 8). The "fly on the wall" claim can be achieved through the film language by asking the subjects to ignore the camera and then editing for an apparent unawareness of the camera's presence. However, such a position does not describe the actual relationship between the film crew and the people filmed. Their interactions shape and structure the events recorded.

Although I had had previous experiences filming in rural and ethnic communities,

it was my first engagement with Cortorari Roma. The shooting locations were two households in a Transylvanian village. One belonged to Nina's family and the other one, where the couple was living, belonged to Peli's family. In spite of our concerns, my presence there did not stir up discussions, only some questions about the absence of the former director.

I decided to have the camera with me at all times. First because I wanted to create a clear statement of my role and intentions there, and second to make the camera become a familiar object, an extension of my body, and not an exceptional device to be activated in exceptional situations. As Sontag (1977) noted, when you point the camera at someone or something, you make a statement that your point of focus is important, that it matters. This type of statement often triggers reactions from the people in front or around the camera. What I wanted was to make everything exceptional so that my filming would become banal and I could blend into this new domestic dynamic. Though sometimes ignored, pointing the camera at an event also generates responses. Either questions are raised regarding my interest for ordinary activities, or direct requests to stop filming are made when tense situations occur, or people make visible behavior adjustments and jokes when they become aware of my filming. Here the situation was no different. As one of my goals was to record a visual description of the households and individual depiction of the characters in their domestic environments, I would get questioned about or even made fun of for wanting to shoot what seemed trivial, like house chores. But although my interest for the seemingly banal caused some stir, it was not the only thing that would determine what I could get on camera. Trying to get a heads up or establish an appointment for filming daily activities turned out to be not realistic and eventually sabotaged my desire to anticipate shots.

Staging and reenacting trivial activities, or sometimes even more important events, is "part and a parcel of documentary

A secondary female character, Nina's mother, busying herself with two recently slaughtered veals. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

filmmaking process" as long as "it doesn't distort their lives" (Auderheide 2012: 377). Although I had previously engaged in this type of practice, I considered the current situation to be not quite an appropriate context for this. In the past, I had asked people to enter a room, pour a glass of water, watch TV, or do other small activities for the purpose of creating shots. But this was either when I was under extreme time constrains– I would have only one day for shooting, for example–or when I had more time and I had developed such a relationship with the people filmed that I would consider this for mainly esthetic purposes. The context in which I was filming this time did not require or even allow such an approach. My intention was to interfere as little as possible in the daily lives of the two households. The two weeks' time I had seemed enough to get the descriptive shots I planned without asking the people I filmed to stage any activities. Moreover, as I considered that previous rushes by Cătălina and the former director had been made without a high commitment to esthetics (the movement of the camera was shaky, some shots were out of focus or not straight, etc.), the pressure was actually to find a compromise in my filming technique so as to avoid it clashing with the overall style of the film.

Language, rumors and unpredictability

The upfront challenge was to observe and film people who most of the times were communicating in a language (Romani) I did not understand. My initial concern was that I would not be able to make out the relevant discussion topics and so I would not know when to start recording. Not only the language itself, but also the tonality and pace of their speech were hardly giving me any clues on the subject matter. Raised voices and fast talking were not an indicator of quarrels as I was accustomed to. Apparent hassling and spontaneous outbursts were common features of interaction. If in the beginning, I was relying on the director's mediating role and her subtle signals to start recording, this dependence faded away as I started to become familiarized with the nonverbal language of the Cortorari families. This apparent impediment in the end contributed to the acceptance of my sudden intrusion in the domestic privacy of the two households. As I had no idea what the people were talking about, they didn't refrain from engaging in conversations in my presence. I sometimes seemed to get ignored to the point of the "fly on the wall" feeling. But this also brought forth questions about consent and disclosure. A level of privacy could be preserved by the language barrier in my presence, but it did not guarantee the same for the presence of the camera. Playing out my strategy to make the camera become a common object incorporated in their domestic world and thus to make them not aware when it was recording meant that they had no control over what they were willing to disclose. But if they were oblivious of the camera, not only as a device per se, but also of its function as a tool for sharing what it had recorded with strangers, how could consent be guaranteed? Initial consent is based on the information one has of the director's intentions. Still, even if truthfully presented, the director can only predict to a certain extent the development of the reality she/he wants to represent in the final outcome. The decision and negotiation of what was being recorded was, in this case, delegated almost entirely to me. Between my unawareness of what I was filming and the Cortorari's unawareness of when I was turning on my camera, the power over what was being disclosed was left to the editing process.

Planning ahead to film a certain activity was initially "sabotaged" by my lack of understanding of the gap between *what the people were saying* and *what was they were actually doing.* The discrepancy between

Anthropologist and filmmaker Cătălina Tesăr sharing a meal with the female characters. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

the original speech act and the spontaneous way of acting required of me a higher degree of vigilance when using my camera. In my previous experiences, whenever I would begin filming in a new location, I would observe people's routines and discuss with them and try to anticipate their actions. This helps me prepare my shots and have the camera ready while diminishing my interference in their activities. For several days I tried to be present when either Nina or Peli went to feed the animals and clean the stables in the morning. I would ask about the time they planned to do that in the morning and showed up with my camera ready. As it turned out, predictability was not something I could rely on. Although I did not expect them to change their schedule to accommodate me, their routines turned out to be quite flexible, so it took me some time to "catch them in action." Some mornings I would be there at seven, and they had already finished, or they postponed for different reasons, and I would miss it because I was shooting something else. The unpredictable character of their daily activities and the uncertainty of acting on the verbalized intentions, made it difficult to anticipate what I could film.

Recording the shots became an act of watching out for the unplanned. But the stakes were not as high for the domestic activities, because, as unpredictable as they might be, they still had a repetitiveness on which I could rely. What actually required a keen observation of what and if something was about to unfold were the negotiations for marriage arrangements and the display of a chalice. The negotiations for marital alliances are a practice that Cortorari engage in with no warning or planning whatsoever. It involves members of two families starting to discuss and negotiate, most of the time surrounded by witnesses. It is a complex ritual that we wanted to record as it seemed it would create a deeper understanding of the community Nina and Peli were a part of. Rumors of upcoming betrothals existed the whole time we stayed there, but they never materialized.

The chalice, the central symbol of the film, the one that triggers the tensions in the development of the couple's story, became the "white whale" of our time there. The director had known the community for ten

years and had never seen a chalice. As far as we knew, the tension between the two families was high due to the fact that the chalice was not to be returned to Peli's family until he begot a son. The couple had been married for several years, and Peli's father Costică kept on asking Nina's parents to let him see the chalice. It was never clear to me why and how that would reassure Costică, and why Peli's parents-in-law were refusing to do so. Cătălina warned me that at family gatherings, the subject of revealing the chalice would be brought into conversation. Rumors circulated about this while we were there, as the celebration of Easter would bring the two families together. This gave Băra, Peli's sister, a feeling of unease, as she was married to Nina's brother and living with his family. She was worried that she might suffer the repercussions of such a situation. The conflicts between the in-laws had had consequences on Băra's wellbeing in the past. As she confessed to Cătălina, her husband's family had retaliated many times by mistreating her in different ways. Hence, we became aware of how our hope to be able to catch a (recorded) glimpse of the chalice could come at high costs for the people involved.

However essential it might have been to the storyline, filming the reveal of the chalice was clearly not something we could stage by asking them. We had to rely on reading into the rumors and statements that implied that this event was imminent. Even though this might not occur, I tried to capture on camera conversations about the chalice that would create a clear picture of the implications this object had for the lives of the Cortorari community and the lives of the two families. In the film narrative such dialogues overshadow the development of relationships, the interactions and decisions of the characters. Although the public might never see the chalice, still one could understand its role and the tension generated by its alleged existence.

Hearsay, statements that implied something was happening or about to happen and intentions never acted upon seemed almost like a parallel reality to the one I was able to record. Thoughts and ideas about events and people were sometimes concealed to others and spoken of in whispers or private conversations with third parties in the presence of the camera. Sometimes they would contain relevant information for the film's story. As I didn't understand the language, I was limited to deciding whether to turn the camera off rather than on and to rely on people's agency to ask me not to continue recording. Not asking me to turn off the camera still did not mean that their passive consent was based on their awareness of how the content of the images would be used. A preemptive protective attitude was based rather on reading the body language attitude towards my presence.

Recording disclosure of things concealed

The question of disclosure in documentary filmmaking rests on the subject's willingness to disclose. It implies that the subject's consent to sharing information or an event she/he is experiencing is not only voluntary but also evident. Filmmakers are often condemned by audiences when the people they portray don't seem to have power over what they want to reveal. But what if someone doesn't want some aspects of their lives to be revealed by someone else? What are the implications when someone is pressured into not disclosing?

One of the main things we planned on filming was an interview with Băra, Peli's sister, which was to be used partly as a voiceover narration that would help untangle the complexities of the story. She had been previously recorded in an unplanned interview, which revealed her powerful ability to tell the story of the two families and depict the community. Unfortunately, it was poorly shot, and the image was unusable. The reshooting faced a double challenge. First, as it often happens when shooting a planned interview, there

were no guarantees that she would engage the same emotional force and depth. When going through the story or description the second time, people might become more detached, they might not allow themselves to become emotional and try to be more in control, they might be in a different state of mind or just change perception of how they see things. The second challenge was to have the chance of a private talk with Băra. Filming her when no people from her husband's family were around seemed an impossible task. They wanted to have control over the things she might disclose about Nina's story, so they made sure Băra was never left alone with me or Cătălina. Sometimes I would follow her and start shooting while she was doing house chores. But it always took just a few minutes before one of her husband's relatives walked in. Băra and Nina's narratives about the tense relationship between the two families were divergent. In the aftermath of quarrels or disputes Nina complained to her parents and grandparents about the hard time she was having living with her parents-in-law, mostly due to Peli's father heavy drinking. Băra on the other hand criticized Nina for playing the victim and considered her to be privileged on the grounds that she didn't suffer any verbal or physical abuses as she herself did. The previous recording of her contained confessions about being pressured into having a sex selective abortion, about the backlash she faced whenever the families would get into conflicts, and so on. Getting Băra through this process again implied a (re)consideration and negotiation of the limits set by herself, by her husband's relatives, and of our own self-imposed boundaries.

In the quest to get the disclosure of concealed information or experiences on camera one must consider the potential consequences the people involved might have to face. Our active pursuit and the prior knowledge of the content and emotional weight of such an interview required a higher awareness of our responsibility towards Băra. Even if the information is shared voluntarily, still the very act of engaging in this might inflict pain. This time it was not to be a spontaneous confession, but we were asking her to recollect and go through the stories again knowing how it might affect her. Moreover, the whole process implied a form of deception of her husband's relatives, which could expose her to a certain risk. How can such choices be then justified? The purpose of the interview was not only to help the film's narrative, but also to create an opportunity for Băra to present her uncensored point of view. It was a chance for her to have a voice and for us to hear her voice in her own depiction of the realities of the Cortorari community. While filming her, we didn't take the chance of initiating an inquiry while other people from her household were in the proximity and might have overheard her. The precautions we took almost made it impossible to make the interview. It was only an hour before our departure that we accidentally found her alone in her parents' house, with no one around, and seized the opportunity to sit down and record her story. We've had plenty of time to go through all the things from the previous interview. However, although the content of the stories was similar, her state of mind, the way she spoke, and her emotional involvement were not the same. The spontaneity of the first interview could not, of course, be reenacted. In the previous interview, her swiping the floor while telling the story created a feeling of detachment from the presence of the camera. During the seated interview on the other hand, it seemed she was more engaged with the camera and more detached from the things she was saying. It is hard to give an interpretation of the difference in attitude. She may have been in a different state of mind. Or maybe having prior information of our intentions had an impact on her attitude. Certainly, her consent to be interviewed was explicit this time, and her disclosure of information was not conveyed by the same disclosure of emotions.

Negotiating the presence of the camera in tense situations

On Easter day the two families gathered for lunch in the courtyard of Nina's family. Tension was high as everyone feared that Costică would ask to see his chalice, which was held in trust by Nina's family. Although we did nothing to directly or indirectly encourage or stimulate Costică's actions, our hope for that to happen felt seemingly ungrateful. Professional goals and the sense of responsibility towards the people we were filming came into conflict. On the one hand we hoped to have the chance to get the mythological object on camera, on the other we wanted that the people who welcomed us and our camera into their lives to have an enjoyable Easter celebration.

I had one eye on the camera and the other on Cătălina who understood the conversations around the table. After a couple of hours, the tension faded, and it seemed to turn into a peaceful afternoon with people having a good time. I relaxed and joined the table, considering I got all the shots I needed of the atmosphere and dynamics of the people. As I was randomly playing with the camera, I heard a beer bottle loudly breaking. I reframed on the pieces of glass on the floor when another bottle got smashed right in my shot. Costică bitterly asked to see the chalice. Nina's family refused. In just a second a fight broke out. I got out of the way and up on a chair and continued shooting. I stayed there until Nina's brother (Băra's husband) shouted out while clenching Costică's shirt telling me to turn off my camera. Had I dared too much? Had my attitude proven inappropriateness of being keener on recording than on waiting, as everyone did, for things to calm down? My brief decision to keep rolling came as a need to get into the convention of my role there. Although I was more exposed, I also felt it was a refuge into my comfort zone from the unpredictability of the conflict. There were no quandaries about good composition, just the focus on subject material. I have made the choice to film and hence engage in the first step of disclosing something over which they had no control up to a point. Was their initial consent valid in this kind of unpredictable situations? Even though I was asked to stop, in the aftermath of the conflict, none of the family members requested that the images be deleted or kept out of the film. Moreover, Nina's mother asked me to forgive her son's impulsive attitude.

Conclusions

The conditions of fieldwork practice in documentary filmmaking are diverse just as they are unpredictable. Therefore, standard conduct norms are hard to implement. The circumstances of producing this documentary filmed in the Cortorari community have created a new context for discussing unquestioned professional standards. As in many cases, the decision-making process relied mostly on individual choices. By bringing forth my experience working as a cinematographer on this documentary, I endeavored to illustrate the dilemmas I was confronted with while creating records of the Cortorari's lives in order to disclose aspects of their reality and intimacy. The limitation of my role by the lack of control over what happened with the images recorded made me more aware of my responsibility for the content of the recordings. The choices made during the shootings were determined by my trust that the director's ethical standards were very similar to mine, as the former would subsequently influence the decisions made in the editing process and would ultimately shape the film. The director's stated intentions to me of how the film would be structured and her motivation were some of the key variables that influenced the content of the recorded material.

My trust was manifested at moments of uncertainty, when I started recording based on confirmations that something relevant for the film was being discussed and that it was indeed something disclosable. The consequences of these choices reflect in the way the Cortorari are represented by the options available when editing the narrative of their reality.

Informed and voluntary consent to what and how was being disclosed was a practice of ongoing negotiation with the people in front of the camera throughout the whole process of filming on location. The necessity of such a process was emphasized in this case by the language barrier, which required strategies to create a constant awareness that I was recording and to obtain different forms of consent, whether explicit confirmation or an understated acceptance when noticing the camera on rec. The particularities of communication in the Cortorari families I have spent time with entailed adjustments in my practice as a cinematographer. Not understanding the content of the conversations made it difficult for me to anticipate intrusion. In the context of the background tensions between the two families, my aim was to have a preemptive protective attitude towards the people filmed by not revealing things they might not have wanted revealed. The first step in the materialization of disclosure is in the hands of the one capturing the images. Voluntary consent to the filming of private conversations or activities surfaces in the images recorded through the comfort and sense of control expressed by the attitudes of the people portrayed. To achieve such a relationship with the people filmed one must create a space of trust and intimacy where boundaries can be set with no restrictions. Costică's demand of straightforwardness helped me understand what it would take from my part to achieve the openness and acceptance of the people in front of the camera. Throughout the spontaneous conflict, when the thin line between having access and being entitled was blurred, the request to stop filming during the conflict was a form of asserting control of one's image and setting the limits of intrusion. My daring to record tested the bounds of privacy. It created the context for expressing the perception of power within our relationship through the spontaneous and direct withholding of consent.

My experience as a cinematographer for this documentary adds to the diversity of fieldwork situations and the ethical challenges that can arise in documentary practice. Although the dilemmas were defined by the particularities of the context, still I have found that the values that guided my choices have largely overlapped with those of other filmmakers. Ruby (1988) considered that ethical decisions stand at the intersection of the obligations towards the production team, towards the viewers, towards the people filmed, and towards the filmmaker's personal and professional goals. Aufderheide's study shows how ethical conflicts emerge due to the high degree of responsibility filmmakers see themselves to have when dealing with non-fictional stories: "They portray themselves as storytellers who tell important truths in a world where the truths they want to tell are often ignored or hidden" (2012: 382). I refrain from describing the recordings I made as "truths," instead I see them rather as aspects of the reality of the people in the Cortorari community. Framing and cutting parts of reality has (in this case as in previous ones) come with an awareness of the responsibility of this practice manifested through a commitment to a truthful attitude towards the Cortorari, the director, the viewers, and myself.

The two main male characters of the film, Costică and Peli, resting on Easter Day, April 2018. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

Anthropologist and filmmaker Cătălina Tesăr helping and chatting with women in the kitchen of Nina's parents' house. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

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V. Book Reviews

Norah Benarrosh-Orsoni. 2019. *La maison double. Lieux, routes et objets d'une migration rom.* Nanterre : Société d'Ethnologie, 250 p.

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This book is the first anthropological monograph that touches upon a phenomenon that has received growing attention in Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain and subsequent EU enlargement, namely the East-West circular migration of Roma. Meritoriously, not only does it look at both ends of the migratory route, in this case Romania and France, but it also depicts the journey of both people and objects between the origin and destination countries. Last but not least, the book endeavors to account for people's enterprise of lodging or anchoring themselves in both places ("*double ancrage*," in French) by simultaneously building a house and tending to their home in their native village in Arad region and establishing a home in the Parisian region of Montreuil. And this is, I believe, one of the book's strengths, namely that it challenges the public representation of Roma as eternal nomads, a stereotype derived from the ease and frequency with which Roma move between places, portraying them instead as people attached to places. Moreover, and here I identify another strength of the book, it nuances the anthropological knowledge that has been taken without a grain of salt that the Roma, as opposed to their neighboring populations, do not show an interest in the material world,[1] and furthermore, ideologically speaking, they play down the importance of the house and the household (Stewart 1997). Drawing on the work of Romanian sociologist Stahl (1973), who proposed the household (*gospodărie*, in Romanian) as the central social unit of the Romanian rural world, Benarrosh-Orsoni advances the concept, central to her work, of the transnational household ("*maisonnée transnationale*," in French) to be comprised of the family members who would have lived under the same roof had it not been for migration and who, despite living dispersed in two countries, continue to organize themselves and cooperate as a family unit (p. 14). The seven chapters of the book are dedicated to answering the question that drives her ethnographical inquiry, namely: *"Comment la migration c'est elle imposée pour eux [les Roms, m. n.] comme le meilleur moyen de devenir un jour des adultes respectables parce qu'accomplis?"* (How can one explain the fact that Roma have embraced migration as the main way of one's becoming a respectable and thus accomplished person?) (p. 13). The book is illustrated with twenty-eight photos of the domestic life of Roma both at home and abroad, taken by the author, plus two maps of the two places between which the Roma on whom the study focuses move. The ethnographic material was gathered over almost a decade: in 2006 the Roma in Montreuil caught the author's attention, and in 2007 she befriended the families she was later to accompany along their journeys back home.

In the Introduction to the book, the author connects the transnational shuttle circulation of Romanian citizens (including the Roma) that started in the early 2000s with the internal migration for agriculture work that prevailed during communism in Romania, which had allegedly kindled

1) One noteworthy exception to this view is the recent publication by Berta (2019).

in people a disposition for movement. Moreover, she foregrounds the theoretical framework of the ethnography, namely the material culture approach to the relation between objects and people. Learning about the author's first encounters with the characters of the book, the reader is warned about the gender bias of the research: as a woman the author spent time with women and hence the domestic space and the family became the main loci of analysis.

The first chapter, *Du squat á la ville. Domestiquer les espaces de vie* (From the squat to the city. Domesticating the spatial realms of life), describes the subjective geography of the migration town, as perceived by the Roma, and how they move from their dwelling places to the spots in the town where they earn their livelihood. It presents the changes that the Roma experienced in their housing conditions in Montreuil in relation with the degree of openness of local politics towards accommodating them. In the early 2000s, the Roma squatted abandoned houses and lived in open spaces in the streets. In 2008 they were allocated caravans and later, flats in the town. The chapter stresses on the one hand, the Roma's propensity for domesticating their different living spaces and on the other hand, the contrast between the state institutions' and NGOs' ways of thinking about housing and the Roma conceptions of dwelling. Out of the anonymous spaces of the caravan, the Roma carve a place and a home of their own to match their conceptions of relatedness. The women scavenge for food and clothes in town, activities that the author praises for their recycling qualities.

The second chapter, *Courir après l'argent* (Chasing money), details the combination of economic activities providing the earnings that are saved to be later invested in the houses at home: from different activities deployed in the street (begging, selling newspapers) to employment and social benefits.

The third chapter, *Prendre la route. Des circulations humaines et matérielles* (On the road. The circulation of people and objects), takes the reader behind the closed doors of the informal organization of return trips between Romania and France. These are carried out in minibuses run by ethnic Romanian families—who serve networks of Roma related people—and are characterized by the lack of planning, flexibility, and unexpectedness. The objects that travel in the trunks of the minibuses—food and medicine from Romania and furniture, cosmetics, and clothing from France—index the affection and the care that infuse the relationships in which the people at both ends of the trip are embedded.

The fourth chapter, *Au téléphone. Technologies familiales et communautaires* (On the phone. Family and community technologies), describes how the Roma, who take great pleasure in telling stories and chatting, make use of the phone in order to feed sociality both across countries and inside the local community. They also rely on other technologies, such as Mp3s or YouTube, to make the religious—since the Roma of this book were converted to neo-Protestantism—seep into their domestic places. Particularly, the phone is used to consult with local religious fortune tellers, *plorocita*.

In the fifth chapter, *Au village. Espace de parenté et de voisinage* (In the village. The realm of relatedness and neighborhood relations), we learn how migration and the money derived from it influenced the local forms of dwelling that saw a transition from the adobe house to the modern house. Here we are led by the hand into the courtyards of Roma who move freely between neighboring households, not bothering about thresholds or boundaries, in a way reminding of Stewart's (1997) Hungarian Rom symbolically breaking down the walls of the house. Central to the social order of Roma is marriage, and here marriage allocates people to houses: the bride goes to live with her husband

and his parents. The cadet stays with his parents, while his elder brothers move out with their wives, once they can afford it, into new houses. The house thus offers the newly formed couples an avenue for independence from the old generation. The chapter pays special attention to the hardships a daughter-in-law (in Romani, *bori*) faces in her marital house, the source of it being her mother-in-law.

The sixth chapter, *Dans la maison. Espace et gestes domestiques* (At home. Domestic spaces and gestures), describes how the Roma make use of the space they dwell, which is mainly characterized by the lack of intimacy. The interior of houses is dominated by what the author calls the aesthetic of opulence reflected in the cabinets and the "good rooms." This is the realm of women who decorate it and endeavor to keep it clean.

The seventh chapter, *Eriger la maison moderne* (Raising the modern house), chronicles the process of building a house in the home village with the money earned abroad: houses are raised by Romanian workers under the complacent gaze of the Roma.

The Conclusions to the book propose that the appropriation of the space by the Roma both at home and abroad could be read as a double anchoring, hence a double presence. This nonetheless opens questions about, for instance, the double absence of the migratory Roma from both their Romanian homes and their homes abroad.

I strongly believe that the book is a must read not only for scholars of Romani studies or those interested in migration and its material culture, but also for a wider readership from both home and migration countries, Romania and France, for whom Roma remain a mystery. Relatedly, I must admit that I found the reading of the book to be at times hindered by the theoretical accounts given in a pedagogical tone. Moreover, the multitude of characters and names does not help the narrative. These drawbacks might prevent the book from reaching beyond an academic audience. Yet leaving aside these small downsides, I heartedly recommend the ethnography to students in anthropology. And I also hope to see a Romanian translation of the book one day.

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Rachel Humphris. 2019. *Home-Land: Romanian Roma, Domestic Spaces and the State.* Bristol: Bristol University Press, 240 p.

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This volume is the second title in a new series published by Bristol University Press under the generic title *Global Migration and Social Change*. In his preface, Nando Sigona, one of the editors (the other editor is Alan Gamlen) explains that the idea of this series emerged in 2016 in the midst of political reactions brought about by the unauthorized border crossings at the southern limits of the European Union, the newly elected president Donald Trump's promise to build an impermeable wall at the US-Mexican border, and the vote of the citizens of the United Kingdom in the referendum to leave the European Union. Against the background of these global processes and macro-social transformations, this volume by Rachel Humphris investigates the most intimate spheres of the social interaction with the street level bureaucracy of the state. The main actors involved in the interactions described and analyzed are the street level social "frontline workers" of the British child protection system and the "Romanian Roma" migrant mothers and their families who are subject to their interventions.

The "frontline workers" are acting on behalf of a legally and bureaucratically complex child protection system, which is growing increasingly restrictive or even oppressive in "post-welfare" Britain. These women, because many of the frontline workers are female, are inspired by genuinely philanthropic sentiments and values, some of them having some migration history of their own. Although situated at the very bottom of the social protection system, they have received, due to the recent restructuring of local authority, an unwanted authority and responsibility to take "discretionary decisions" with regards to migrant families. As such, they struggle to meet their increasing responsibilities with decreasing resources from the system. This shift is at the core of the transformation of the British state in times of emerging mobility within the enlarged European Union. Located at the very bottom of this system, frontline workers grapple to offer their services to the most marginal EU citizens who enter their jurisdiction.

Their clients belong to the category of "Romanian Roma," which is far from being a homogenous group. Humphris makes clear that this category is socially constructed for the purposes and needs of state bureaucracy. The people who are subsumed under this category come from different parts of Romania, speak different dialects of Romani, and have diverse migration experiences living in different European or Latin American countries prior to their arrival to Britain. Their legal statuses vary, from being totally invisible to the administration, through having different degrees of recognition with or without national insurance numbers, social and housing benefits, to being registered as self-employed with permits for unlimited stay. The legal basis for these migrants' entrance into the orbit of the social system is most often connected to their children. Roma women are subject to the attention of social workers mainly for being mothers. The main channel through which they

enter the purview of frontline workers is connected to the local Roma Pentecostal Church. The pastor and the volunteers of this church help to render visible the previously "invisible Roma" to the local child protection workers.

The volume is divided in two main parts, each consisting of three chapters. The first three chapters present the field from alternate perspectives. Starting with the shifting positions of the researcher, continuing with the positions of the frontline workers, and then turning to the position of the migrants, and how they are perceived in the host country. These chapters set the scene and the analytical angle of the approach. Part two, consisting of chapters four, five and six, analyzes in detail the encounters between the actors involved, how the interactions play out, and how the state is reproduced through these interactions. These chapters describe and interpret the scenarios of the racialized and gendered social hierarchies and the process of social bordering which are built into these encounters. Finally, a concluding chapter reminds the reader how the encounters with the state in the intimate domestic sphere influence the everyday lives of the families engaged in these encounters. It also revisits the understanding of citizenship and conceptions of bonding and social care.

The book was built on research that used anthropological methods. Rachel Humphris carried out long-term fieldwork in Luton (not far from London) during 2013 and 2014. She lived in the homes of different Roma families, learning the Romani language, and sharing the everyday hardships and joys with the participants in her research. Still the resulting book is not an anthropological monograph in the classical sense, because it does not aim to cover all aspects of the life of a population, group, or "people." Rather it is focused on the "intimate encounters" between the state, as represented by the frontline workers, and the Roma mothers and their families. Through the methodological window of these encounters we learn not only about the lives of the migrants, but probably even more, about the way the state bureaucracy operates. The book is packed with analytical insights into ideas of citizenship and its connection to moral values, and how preconceptions about race, gender shape, guide, and inspire everyday interactions.

The "encounter" is a central concept framing both the research methodology and the analysis. Focusing on the encounters as part of the methodology enables the author to highlight that her shifting positions are always situationally embedded in the interactions she was involved in. Living with a certain family at one point, she was seen as a friend or even sister of the Roma women, while the frontline workers perceived her as an outsider with a special status within the families and they were also aware of her work as a doctoral student. They, or their colleagues, also turned into research participants at a different moment when Humphris visited their office for a more formal interview. Distinguishing between the situations or even keeping the different roles apart is a crucial skill for the ethnographer. She could not act as an agent of the "system" within the families nor could she freely share her observations or exchanges with the mothers. While situations of this kind are not unknown to anthropologists, and the ethical aspects of the fieldwork must always prevail, the nature of this research foregrounded them even more. Moreover, Humphris states clearly (p. 27) that she consciously decided not to include in her book events and stories about the families which might further stigmatize or marginalize them but only to use them to inform her analysis and understanding.

Analytically the concept of "intimate encounter" is utilized in multiple ways. At the most practical level most of the interactions between the Roma mothers and the frontline workers are described and can be understood as exchanges during visitations to the homes of the Roma. A general preconception about the "Romanian

Roma" suggests to the social workers that home visits are the only effective way to check and assist these families, since they are not willing to come to their offices or keep appointment dates. Humphris points out that visits to the homes of the poor or marginal have a long social history in Britain where interactions initiated by members of the upper classes usually took the form of visitations. Today these "intimate encounters" have also become part of the prevailing system of state surveillance. The ethnographical details offered by the book are among the finest illustrations of how the securitization and surveillance of recent migration controls operate on the ground in Europe.

There is yet another level of encounters, the confrontations of values, conceptions, and different worldviews. There are clearly different expectations by the volunteers or frontline workers regarding how migrant mothers and their spouses should conform to their ideas of a good life. These values inspired by middle-class values, education about child development, or gender roles or by working patterns characteristic of the mainstream might clash with practices and situations observed during the home encounters. The ethnography of the encounter between these different worlds is never reduced to simple interpretations by the author (for example invoking "culture" as explanation). Instead she reveals in detail the differences and their underlying practical multifaceted and often highly morally charged aspects. Divergences from the expectations can result in perception of the family as "undeserving" or the labeling of the mothers as "despicable," and in extreme cases referring the family to authorities who might enact rules for "child safeguarding," taking away their children.

While the historical moment, the topic of the book, and a good part of the sources of its analysis could make it an example of "dark anthropology" (Ortner 2016), this volume is about more than exposing the injustices and inhumanities of an ever-present bureaucracy and pervasive surveillance and the vulnerability of the marginal in the face of the governmentality adopted by the post-welfare state. The protagonists are depicted as real human actors with their values and moral dilemmas, and even if most of the encounters are focused on the reproduction of marginality, the racialization and the discrimination of Roma migrants, there are glimmers of hope about humanity in the text. The brief interludes inserted between the chapters act as reminders that other aspects of life, which could not be easily captured in a focused analysis, are always present.

The volume can be recommended to anybody interested in the dynamics of mobility within the European Union. It provides a major contribution to the understanding of the "governance of marginality" at the grassroots. It can provide a rich case study to scholars and students in social work, social policy, migration studies, sociology, and social anthropology.

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Paloma Gay y Blasco, and Liria Hernández. 2020. *Writing Friendship. A Reciprocal Ethnography.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 189 p.

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Recent decades have seen a proliferation of training in research methods and of ethical committees overlooking the ways in which anthropologists and other researchers working with human subjects go about collecting their data. This is an important development in many ways, and our discipline owes it a plethora of exciting debates about our methods and our ethics. However, two questions that ethnographers routinely face have remained largely unaddressed. One of them is how we engage with the different value systems of the people we work with—not how we describe them analytically, but how we make sense of them for ourselves, and how, or whether, we can intervene in their lives when the gap between our professional commitments and our human beliefs and values grows too wide. The second, and connected, issue is that of comparison—finding similarities between the "other" people we set about to research and ourselves and seeing how all our lives are affected by similar processes, albeit in different ways.

The unusual book written together by anthropologist Paloma Gay y Blasco and her Gitana friend Liria Hernández, *Writing Friendship. A Reciprocal Ethnography*, addresses these questions and many others that have plagued anthropological practice and representation in recent decades: Can the informant speak? Can the informant disagree with the ethnographer's representation of her, and/or represent the ethnographer in turn? Should the truth of ethnography be put in the service of the good, and can it then remain true? When does an informant cease to be just that and becomes a friend? And, when the informant becomes a friend, how do we decide between helping her rebel against the values and practices of her group and our professional commitment to protect, or at least not denounce, these same values?

The book tells the story of two women's friendship: they are of the same age, and they are both born and raised in Madrid, Spain. One of them is an anthropologist who has studied and worked in major universities in the UK, conducted fieldwork with Gitanos in Madrid, and published influential studies about them; the other is a Gitana who has hosted and taught the anthropologist, and who, twenty years into her exemplary marriage, decides to run away with a much younger Moroccan immigrant. Her flight, and Paloma's involvement in it, exposes not only these two women's friendship but also the ambivalence that plagues the relations between ethnographers and informants.

The core narrative is that of Liria's decision to leave her family and neighborhood behind, after which she finds herself no longer sheltered by her family (in fact, worse: she is hunted by them with a vengeance), becoming just another face in the world's precariat, with fewer ties and resources. This is when Paloma intervenes directly, helping her out with money and connections, and decisively takes her side in her personal and courtroom confrontations with the Gitanos. She did not take lightly the decision to defy the trust and the mores of the people to whom she was so indebted, but she took it without hesitation. In this sense, the book is intended as much as "an invitation to reflect on the ways

anthropologists take stances and determine their allegiances when they enter into their informants' lives" (p. 27) as an urge to "anthropologists to ask whether our discipline can open up to those we study" (p. 139). And one way to open up this conversation is to also disagree with them sometimes.

This second topic, of opening up one's world to one's research participants and looking for similarities alongside differences, is also treated with forceful subtlety. Growing up in the upper-class environment of Madrid, Paloma arrived into the marginal neighborhood where the Gitanos lived as a PhD student from Cambridge. She came of age in a Madrid where *La Movida* was taking shape and sexual liberation from Catholic conservatism could also be conducive to abuse. Liria had lived all her life in her neighborhood, left school after a few classes, and was married off to an older, morose man when she was sixteen. Hers was a conservative environment, where the main rule was to show respect for one's father by preserving female virtue before marriage, and by enduring hardships during it.

Despite these differences, the two women's dialogic narratives demonstrate how their parallel lives were similarly impacted by the social and ideological changes of post-Francoist Spain, and how they felt these changes onto their female bodies in ultimately similar ways. Later, when Liria and her partner Younes struggle to make ends meet, Paloma draws comparisons between the hardships they were facing and the very similar ones faced by her own sister and brother-in-law during the economic crisis. Moreover, she brings this sister and Liria into dialogue, and the two share their experience of material deprivation and of becoming invisible for others because of it. In her turn, Liria talks about the affinity she felt towards a group of Latin American women whom she met at the Baptist church: although Liria was in her own country, her family's repudiation made her feel that she had much in common with these women's experience of crossing the ocean in search of a new life. The hardships and marginalization that these women had all encountered were stronger than the differences between them. Much like in her friendship with Paloma, this notion of suffering shared by women, that constitutes the core topic of the book, and of the friendship it documents, overrode all separations.

The understanding of Gitano and other marginal lives that the book proposes is framed by the understanding that Liria herself achieves about immigrants and Payos, and about how sheltered from the outside world she had been in the midst of the Gitanos who place more importance on belonging than on individual ways of getting around in the world. But, by sharing the experience of disenfranchised Payos, undocumented migrants, and single mothers, Liria concludes that the things they all strive for are the same: "I always thought that it was us Gitanos the ones who suffered marginalisation and scarcity. (…) But when I opened my eyes to a parallel, non-Gitano world, my heart was hurt by so much injustice" (p. 135). This shared experience of being outcasts—what Gay y Blasco calls "a radical discontinuity" (p. 133)—is not only social, but becomes internal and corporeal, and is experienced by the more downtrodden whose lives are narrated in Chapter 5 as a "persistent sense of crisis, and even menace" (*ibid.*). The book sheds light on this experience not only as lived by a Gitana, but also by many others, in an intimately comparative endeavor that has remained rare in our discipline.

This type of comparison, while often implicit in good ethnographies, when the author turns her self, her environment, and her own life story into a resonance chamber for the values and beliefs she encounters in the field, takes a certain amount of self-disclosure that is far from common in our field. Paloma reasons on this in the final chapter of the book, and on the challenges of exposing her life and offering it up to interpretation not just to her friend, but also to the academic community. Among anthropologists, injunctions against "self-

indulgence" are just as frequent as those against "going native," and usually with good reason: while both are caricatures of ethnographic practice gone astray, none of them does the work ethnography is supposed to do, which is to help us understand and find similarities with, and ideally respect for, people living different (yet similar) lives.

Writing Friendship successfully avoids such pitfalls: Paloma's own disclosures are economical, just enough to give some context for Liria's life story, and even though she firmly takes action to support Liria, she never formulates her rejection of the Gitano values that had driven her friend away from home. Indeed, there is one third exhortation that ethnographers are faced with, usually coming from non-anthropologists, and that is the suspicion of moral relativism, of failing to "take a stance" and condemn unsavory, immoral or outright illegal practices, such as arranged and/or early-age marriages, domestic violence, the control of relatives over women's bodies and life choices, etc. Again, this is a path the book steers clear from, as it subtly shows that "taking a stance" is more often an exercise in self-righteousness than one in discernment. The strength of our discipline is that it enables understanding, so that the reader can draw her own conclusions, rather than receive ready-made outrage against populations she is barely familiar with. In an undeservedly eccentric niche of anthropological writing, this understanding is achieved not only through description and analysis, but through the kind of self-representation that Liria has managed in this book—adding that writing is to her a type of freedom she never knew existed—which no doubt took a lot of work from both authors, but which is very much worth their while.

So far, I have mainly discussed the terms "reciprocal" and "ethnography" (which includes "writing") from the book's title, but what about "friendship"? The term notoriously "evades definition" (Killick and Desai 2010: 1), and its treatment in anthropology has been inconsistent at best. In this book, "friendship" appears as a relationship forged precisely because it was unlikely: the two women are separated by class, education, religious orientation (or lack thereof), and, most notably, ethnicity—as Liria clarifies, her signaling of these differences, especially that of being Gitana/Paya, is meant to emphasize that their friendship happened in spite of them. What is then the basis of this friendship and of Paloma's decision to intervene in her friend's life? Liria mentions that women's friendship is based on an "awareness of a shared suffering" (p. 130): a sense of commonality which is at once basic—it is mostly based on being a wife, a daughter, and a mother—and evasive. While the title *Written on the Body* was taken, a title like *Writing Womanhood*, which might have been more accurate about this topic, would have also made these women's friendship somewhat too specific and, in this day and age, would have attracted an audience with different expectations, who may have then been disappointed by the absence of any feminist theorizing. But who needs theorizing when the practice is so compelling?

To conclude, I believe the book will find its audience way beyond the field of Romani Studies and even beyond the anthropological guild: its story of solidarity overcoming difference in life as much as in writing is bound to interest many readers. On my part, I have promptly recommended the book to a young Roma friend, my own version of "Liria," and we have spent many hours dissecting it and discussing our answers to the many questions it poses. The last time we were both so enthralled was with Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan series, so it's all the more remarkable that this time it was not a novel, but an anthropology book that prompted our effervescence—an experience I can only wish upon any reader.

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Killick, Evan, and Amit Desai. 2010. "Introduction: Valuing Friendship." In *The Ways of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Amit Desai and Evan Killick, 1-19. New York and London: Berghahn Books.

This issue brings together in-depth accounts and analyses—ethnographic, legal, dialogic, and visual—of marriage-making processes among various Roma populations in Central and Eastern Europe, and accounts for how marriage can be at once a means of change, and a vehicle of continuity. Furthermore, it shows how marriage mediates between affects and social hierarchies, and between individual aspirations and collective moralities, and how it legitimizes such heterogenous, and even contradictory claims to "identity" as those espoused by so-called traditional groups, and by "assimilated" Roma.

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