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Diverse Xenophobia?

Anti-Romani Stereotypes in Private Discourse in Hungary in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

Abstract

This study examines, through a comparative analysis of diaries, the images that diarists associated with Romani in Hungary. The results indicate that diarists from the urban middle class did not associate mainly negative images with the Roma. On the other hand, the study also shows that diarists who were anti-Semitic were not necessarily anti-Roma. In other words, two quite different images of Gypsies and Jews prevailed in public thought and discourse both during and before the Second World War, one clearly anti-Jewish and the other less anti-Roma. This study interprets the intensity of anti-Gypsy images in the context of a historical perspective. In the final section, I will analyse the question of how and why an anti-Jewish Hungarian society between the two world wars became anti-Gypsy today.

Introduction

Sociology and social psychology traditionally use interviews and questionnaires to study societal prejudice; however, these tools cannot be used for retrospective analysis, which means they are inadequate for capturing the contemporary prejudices of previous eras. Diaries, on the other hand, are suitable for conducting historical analysis of the social imaginaries of individuals, and a comparative analysis of diaries allows us to study the worldviews of both individuals and society as a whole. I argue that diaries are especially suitable for exploring how the majority group regarded social groups perceived as alien or Other, and how they viewed their own social group, including self-stereotyping, since an individual's perception of their ingroup will determine their conceptions of outgroups.

The present historical analysis of Romani stereotypes was prompted by the fact that recent research on prejudice in Hungary reveals that Hungarian society has become strongly anti-Romani. This correlates not only with covert and overt discrimination against Romani, but also with anti-Romani violence.¹ A tragic consequence of this was a series of murders committed against Romani in 2008 and 2009, in which far-right terrorists killed six people, injured fifty-five, and set sixteen houses on fire using Molotov cocktails.²

This study finds that diarists who were explicitly anti-Semitic were not necessarily also anti-Romani, because the majority of Hungarian society perceived Romani and Jewish people in entirely different ways. While Jews were openly discriminated against based on racial antisemitism, prejudices against Romani were milder in na-

1 Miroslav Mareš, "Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Hungary at the Beginning of the 21st Century", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (December 2018): 123–135.

2 Wolfgang Benz, *Sinti und Roma: Die unerwünschte Minderheit* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2014), 80–81; Klaus-Michael Bogdal, *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner: Eine Geschichte von Faszination und Verachtung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014).

ture. In the Horthy era,³ xenophobia was not automatically triggered by all social groups perceived as alien or Other. At the same time, the study does not claim that Hungarian society was not prejudiced against Romani, and it does not question their persecution and oppression in the interwar period;⁴ it merely demonstrates that anti-Romani racism was different from antisemitism and manifested differently in interwar Hungary. Romani were perceived in a completely different manner from Jews, and their social images were radically different in every way.

This study begins with a methodological overview in which diaries are presented as a potential source of research on historical stereotypes. It then explores how Romani were presented in the examined diaries, what emotions they evoked in diarists, and what associations and images were attached to Romani. In contrast, a detailed analysis of anti-Semitic representations will be eschewed due to spatial constraints, partly because these have already been explored in another study⁵ and, based on my previous research, I concluded that in interwar Hungary antisemitism did not go hand in hand with anti-Romani racism. It is important to note that the contemporary media was an important channel for disseminating majority views on Romani and Jewish people, and Jews were consistently demonised over Romani.

The second part of this study analyses the potential reasons for entirely different perceptions of Romani and Jews in the interwar period and in the time of the Holocaust, which was the largest genocide committed in Hungarian history. These discussions shall be framed by a wider historical and social historical overview to explore the potential reasons behind the fact that today, in the first decades of the twenty-first century, anti-Romani racism has become widely prevalent in Hungary. What changed in the seventy years following World War II, and how did an anti-Semitic society become anti-Romani? The reasons behind this change are explored in the last section of the study.

This study is confined to a descriptive analysis of heterogeneous xenophobia, and it can only give potential reasons and tentative interpretations. In other words, I do not claim to have a definitive answer to explain the change and transformation of the mentality of Hungarian society. The question mark in the title was a deliberate choice to denote the inconclusive conclusions of this study.

Methodology

In the past three decades, Hungarian researchers have become increasingly invested in the Romani image cultivated by Hungarian majority society and the function of constructing that particular social image. These interdisciplinary studies are usually based in sociology, art history, or visual anthropology, which means that they study visual sources and therefore primarily examine the visual representations of historical stereotypes, rather than verbal representations found in different types of narratives. One important source for these studies was a series of exhibitions or-

3 "The Horthy era" as a term refers to the period between 1920 and 1944, when Miklós Horthy was the head of state. It was a conservative, national, Christian, and authoritarian political system.

4 László Karsai, *A cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919–1945: Út a cigány Holocausthoz* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó, 1992); Csaba Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története. Történelem a cigánykutatók tükrében, 1890–2008* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2009).

5 Gergely Kunt, "A Female Adolescent Bystander's Diary and the Jewish Hungarian Holocaust", *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 17, no. 3 (September 2015): <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2647>; Gergely Kunt, "The Self-Reflexive Antisemitism of a Young Hungarian Woman during and after World War II (1940–1947)", *Holocaust. Studii și cercetări* 7, no. 8 (2015): 59–80.

ganised in recent decades at the National Museum in Budapest and the Kunsthalle Krems in Krems an der Donau.⁶ Research based on the analysis of these images confirms the subordination of Romani in majority visual representation and discourse alike. As Péter Szuhay, the prominent researcher of Romani representation, pointed out, the exhibited paintings and photographs were defined by the views of artistic and scientific schools on Romani people, meaning that they were not as much about Romani people as they were about the authors or artists and their perceptions and ideas of Romani.⁷ This led to images that represented a stereotypical “Gypsy” image conceived from outside and above by members of the majority group.⁸

Romani portrayals changed over time and, in the nineteenth century, what made Romani people interesting or worthy of representation was their different lifestyles and behaviour setting them apart from majority society.⁹ According to Éva Kovács, “Gypsies” are an inherent part of the self-image of Hungarians because they demonstrate aspects of Hungarian culture; the majority group’s image of Romani was essentially the negative side of their own self-image because “Gypsy” as an umbrella term for Romani stereotypes had become an important element in constructing one’s Hungarian identity. These modern representations of Romani mirror the subconscious of Hungarian society, which created its own “blackness” by confining Romani to the category of “primitive” in a manner similar to Western Europe’s portrayal of African and Asian peoples.¹⁰ In these representations, Romani were portrayed as living in an uncivilised manner and belonging to a world to which bourgeois society and “civilised people” can no longer return.

As discussed above, the artistic representation of Romani in Hungary is well researched, but there is little to no research on how ordinary people identified with the Romani image presented to them in the press and in artistic works. When it comes to Romani stereotyping, there are barely any historical sources beyond private egodocuments that individuals wrote to someone other than the authorities or created for private use because they pertained to the individual themselves or their immediate environment. Such sources include memoirs, letters, autobiographies, and diaries. Since the aim of this study is to explore the contemporary perception of Romani, the only egodocuments suitable for that purpose are diaries and letters, as the other sources are retrospective in nature.

The greatest value of diaries as historical sources is that they document an individual’s thoughts, observations, feelings, and experiences, which were recorded in

6 Péter Szuhay, ed., *Cigány-kép – roma-kép: A Néprajzi Múzeum “Romák Közép – és Kelet-Európában” című nemzetközi kiállításának képeskönyve* (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 1998); Péter Szuhay and Antónia Barati, eds., *Képek a magyarországi cigányság 20. századi történetéből* (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 1993); Péter Szuhay and Antónia Barati, eds., *“A világ létra, melyen az egyik fel, a másik le megy”: Képek a magyarországi cigányság 20. századi történetéből* (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 1993); Tanja Pirsig-Marshall, “Die Darstellung der Roma und Sinti anhand der ‘Zigeunerikonographie’ der klassischen Malerei”, in *Roma & Sinti: “Zigeuner-Darstellungen” der Moderne*, eds. Gerhard Baumgartner and Tayfun Belgin (Krems: Kunsthalle Krems, 2007), 11–14; Gerhard Baumgartner and Éva Kovács, “Roma und Sinti im Blickfeld der Aufklärung und der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft”, in *Roma & Sinti*, eds. Baumgartner and Belgin, 15–24; Péter Szuhay, “Zur Darstellung der Roma und Sinti in der ‘Zigeunerfotografie’ des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts”, in *Roma & Sinti*, eds. Baumgartner and Belgin, 24–30.

7 Péter Szuhay, *A magyarországi cigányok kultúrája: etnikus kultúra vagy a szegénység kultúrája* (Budapest: Panoráma Kiadó, 1999); Péter Szuhay, “Az egzotikus vadembertől a hatalom önnön legitimálásáig. A magyarországi cigányokról készített fotók típusai”, *Beszélő* 7–8, no. 7 (July 2002): 97–106.

8 Andrea Tóth, “Látható és láthatatlan: Cigány kép – roma kép”, *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat* 7, no. 1 (2017): 148–163.

9 Ágnes Szöllőssy, “Cigány a képen. Cigányábrázolás a XIX–XX. századi magyar képzőművészetben”, *Beszélő* 7, no. 7 (July 2002): 72–81.

10 Éva Kovács, “Fekete testek, fehér testek. A ‘cigány’ képe az 1850-es évektől a XX. század első feléig”, *Beszélő* 14, no. 1 (January 2009): 74–92.

real time or within a few days of the event. This means that a comparative analysis of diaries showcasing individual mentalities and worldviews allows us to explore the contemporary public opinion pertaining to a social group or event. In this case, it allows us to explore the associations, stereotypes, and emotions evoked by Romani, thereby revealing how Romani people were present in the everyday reality of majority society, if they were present at all.

The use of the term “majority society” can be misleading for the reader, which is why I think it is very important to clarify its meaning clearly. By “majority society” I mean all groups who were not considered as Romani by their environment or the authorities and who did not have a Romani identity. In this study I also consider Jews as part of the majority society. Whether we think of the Jews as an ethnic or religious group, their social status and their assimilation into the Christian middle-class way of life have largely determined how they have been perceived by the Romani population.

For this study, I have examined several diaries written between the start of World War I and the end of World War II, and confined my sources to diaries that pertain to the social imaginaries of majority or non-Romani society. In this regard, it is especially interesting to examine to what extent other minority groups, such as Jewish people, adopted the Romani image of the majority group, and whether there were preconceptions or perceptions of Romani that could only be found in the diaries of Jewish individuals. The examined diarists come from different social groups and backgrounds, and include aristocrats, middle-class and lower-middle-class citizens, and members of the rural intelligentsia. Only a few of the examined diaries were written during World War I, while the rest were kept during the 1930s and World War II.

Diaries are indispensable for researching and understanding past mentalities and value systems, particularly stereotypes and prejudices. It is important to note that, despite a certain degree of self-censorship being present in the examined diaries, the suppression of the diarist’s genuine opinions did not pertain to minority groups and prejudices. Holding negative views was not only not violating social norms, but voicing and disseminating these opinions privately as well as publicly was socially acceptable, even encouraged. Accordingly, prejudices and discrimination against Romani and Jews were expressed freely and without self-censorship and, in diaries reflecting on private worldviews and interpretations of society, they were recorded without any distaste. In contrast, a sense of violating social norms and a need for secrecy was tangible regarding topics such as sex life and sexuality, which several diarists considered taboo.

Several of the diarists mentioned both Romani and Jewish people when recording their everyday social experiences, meaning that, of the historical sources available to us, perhaps diaries are the only sources that allow us to simultaneously explore the different views of a given individual. The social imaginaries regarding Romani and Jews fundamentally differ in intensity and, in the diaries, this manifests in the number of mentions, the emotions evoked by these two minority groups, and the different social images pertaining to each.

The examined diaries clearly support the claim that “the Gypsy issue” was less present in public discourse than “the Jewish issue”, and it was therefore barely mentioned in the diaries.¹¹ There are several complex reasons for this, but the two most important reasons are that the social status and demographic profiles of the two minority groups differed. In the interwar period, the number of Romani was estimated

¹¹ Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság*, 94.

at between 0.5 per cent and one per cent of the Hungarian population, while the Jewish population constituted approximately five to six per cent, vastly outnumbering Romani people.¹² These differences fundamentally affected the visibility of the two social groups and how or to what extent the two were present in everyday life, and to what extent they were identifiable by the majority group. Diary writing as an activity was primarily present in modern society, which makes it clear that Jewish people as an urban population were present in urban spaces, while Romani people were primarily present in rural areas with the exception of professional musicians. The perception of these two minority groups was only similar inasmuch as both were perceived as Other on the basis of race, and behaviours perceived as violating social norms were used to “identify” them. As a result, the conception of Romani and Jewish stereotypes followed different paths and therefore triggered different emotions and associations in the examined diarists. It is especially important to discuss the emotional charge in mentions of Romani and Jewish people by individual diarists, because anti-Semitic prejudices triggered significantly stronger emotions and modes of conduct in urban diarists, while these same diarists did not exhibit strong emotions towards Romani people at all.

It is also important to analyse the language used in the examined diaries to describe Romani people, as it is revealing of the diarist’s own social and cultural relations. People use language to create systems of meaning and thereby shape their own reality, which is created as a result of these interpretations. Therefore, the language use and choice of topics in diary entries are the result of a series of choices and decisions that are highly telling of the diarist’s worldview. The very thoughts or events an individual diarist chose to record are already telling of their selection process, which included not only thinking about Romani, but also about the diarist’s social environment and the groups with which they identified or not.

Cultural Colonisation as Positive Stereotyping: The “Gypsy Musician”

In the examined diaries, most diarists associated positive and instrumentalising stereotypes with Romani. To majority society, especially in urban areas, Romani were first and foremost present when playing music, which made them a part of everyday life.¹³ For generations until the emergence and spread of radio, members of majority society were socialised to expect Romani to provide music at venues and special events, which meant that Romani were present at every important life event from baptisms to weddings, anniversaries, and funerals. In interwar public discourse, “the Gypsy” denoted a musician by profession rather than ethnic origin. The definite article “the” is often used for nouns that are unknown, which in this case signalled objectification. If we were to say that the music was provided by “the Gypsy” instead of the radio, we would be marking a distinction between live music and broadcasted music, but it would also be a means of dehumanising the musicians by presenting them as sound devices.

12 Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* (Budapest: Osiris Tankönyvek, 2001), 213, 216.

13 Anna G. Piotrowska, “Introduction: The Space for/of Romani Music”, in *European Roma: Lives beyond Stereotypes*, edited by Eve Rosenhaft and María Sierra (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022), 168–178; Erika Nyerges, “Húzd rá cigány, te örök, te áldott ...”: *A kávéházi cigányzene története* (Budapest: Személyes Történelem, 2020); Tamás Hajnáczy, ed., *Cigányzenészek harca a két világháború közötti Magyarországon: Magyar Cigányzenészek Országos Egyesülete* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2019).

The historical reason behind the image of Romani as musicians was that, for generations, this was the only profession that served as a means of social mobility for Romani in Hungary. This did not mean that they were not present in other professions, but in majority society they were mostly present through the music that they played. The stereotype of the “Gypsy musician” arose from the fact that members of majority society usually only met Romani when the former were requesting a musical service and, when Romani were not playing music, the majority did not or barely perceived their presence. It was thus majority society that created and sustained the social practice of recognising and allowing Romani to socially rise through music only.

There is a colonialist perspective at play in employing Romani as musicians, since they never played their own ethnic music, but music that reflected the tastes and expectations of majority society, in which Hungarian and Romani musical elements intermingled.¹⁴ This genre was referred to as “Hungarian tunes”, and what it constituted differed according to the expectations of the employers and the audience. In this exchange, the power imbalance between majority society and Romani musicians was part of the everyday practice of music as service: Romani musicians constantly depended on the changing groups and changing tastes of their employers.

The image of the Gypsy musician needs to be nuanced and not only positively assessed, because ambivalence surrounds the figure of the Gypsy musician. Indeed, music is associated with joy and celebration, and thus has an apparently positive connotation, but it is also associated with regression or loss of control (alcoholism, drunkenness). Thus, the image of being out of control and unruly was also associated with Gypsies and Gypsy musicians. These images were also an integral part of anti-Romani prejudices in the period.

The Image of the “Gypsy Musician” in Diaries

The diaries examined in this section all record the perspectives of majority society, meaning that the entries below were recorded from a position of power in which the diarists were in a dominant position over Romani culturally, economically, and socially as well.

Countess Ilona Andrassy (1886–1967) was the granddaughter of Gyula Andrassy, the most prominent minister of foreign affairs during the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In 1909, she married Count Pál Esterházy, and the couple lived in their castle in Pápa until the start of World War I, when Andrassy became a nurse for the Red Cross and her husband entered military service. The manuscript that would later be published as Andrassy’s diary was found in 1971 during restoration efforts at Cziráky Castle in Dénesfa, in a compartment in one of the walls.¹⁵

In Andrassy’s diary, the figure of the “Gypsy musician” always appeared as part of the entertainment, and as such became a symbol or synonym for partying and merriment. But it is important to note that such persons almost exclusively appeared in excerpts pertaining to Andrassy’s husband, while she herself never wrote about par-

14 Gábor Fleck and Péter Szuhay, *Kérdések és válaszok a cigányságról – Kérdések és válaszok* (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2013), 43–44.

15 Lajos Kovács, “A gróf és a vérbíró. Gróf Cziráky Józsefné Andrassy Ilona grófnő és gróf Cziráky József feljegyzései a Szamuely Tibor vésztörvényszéke elé történt beidézésről (1919. június 9–10.)”, in *Arrabona 48/2. A Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Múzeumok közleményei*, eds. István Kelemen et al. (Győr: Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Múzeumok Igazgatósága, 2010), 183.

trying to Gypsy music. This suggests that, for women, partying to Gypsy music was considered improper. Meanwhile, in the stories recounted by Andrásy's husband, "Gypsy" appeared as a synonym for former merriment, and always denoted the activity of partying to Gypsy music: "Pál told many stories of his life as a young man in Debrecen: Gypsy, champagne, merry women, foolish tricks, or hussars' pranks (...) I listened wordlessly and sadly."¹⁶

Gypsy music was consistently present in the life of majority society, which meant that it also played a prominent role in the recruitment and sending off of soldiers to the war front. However, the meaning of Gypsy music as a symbol also varied between individuals and situations, as did the emotions and associations it evoked in certain contexts. For Andrásy, after her husband was sent off to the front, Gypsy music became a symbol of the happier times they had spent together, cut short by the war: "In the evenings, through my open window I could hear Gypsy music. The music pained me so much that I could not bear to listen; it was driving me up the wall. Not a moral, but a physical pain!"¹⁷

Andrásy later served at the war front as a volunteer nurse, which was physically and emotionally exhausting for her. In this situation, Gypsy music once again reminded her of peace and her former happiness, and in this manner it contrasted with the bloody reality of wartime life: "We dropped by a small pub, where a single Gypsy played a few fairly decent tunes, and I accompanied it with my blubbing like a ninny. Maybe I have managed to wean myself off of feeling good. I could only see suffering around me and inside myself."¹⁸

Gypsy music and the "Gypsy musician" were also symbols of Andrásy's former youth: "In that small dining parlour, we had lunch and talked of the first year of our marriage, when every night, the Gypsy played by the door, and the two of us were so childish, so young. The memories make me sad. It is better to not to speak of them."¹⁹ It is important to note where the Romani musician is located in this memory: instead of sharing the same space, the musician occupied a transitional space in the doorway between the room and the outside world, on the threshold of private and public space, because it was not the musician but the music that mattered to Andrásy and her husband, and from the doorway it could spread more freely into other spaces.

Gypsy music also evoked positive emotions abroad because travelling Hungarians associated it with their homeland, as shown by the diary of Countess Eleonóra Zichy, who in 1919 visited Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. One night, she and her companions went to see a cabaret and later had tea at a hotel that employed Romani musicians: "We had tea at [Hotel] Hugenin by Gypsy [music]. We listened to the sounds of our homeland with such gratification that I forgot to watch the clock, and we just barely made it to the last ship."²⁰ Again, it is important to note that it was first and foremost the music carrying symbolic meaning that mattered to members of majority society, rather than the musicians.

For each middle-class diarist in the interwar period, Romani were only present in the context of entertainment, including Ferenc Zsindely, a lawyer in Miklós Kállay's government who served as Minister of Transport and Trade between March 1943 and March 1944. His diary supports the argument that Romani were only present in

16 Ilona Andrásy, *Mindennek vége! Andrásy Ilona grófnő első világháborús naplója* (Budapest: Európa Kiadó, 2014), 24.

17 *Ibid.*, 52.

18 *Ibid.*, 154.

19 *Ibid.*, 156.

20 Eleonóra Andrásy Gyuláné Zichy, *Napló 1917–1922* (Budapest: Szépművészeti Könyvek, 2018), 177.

the context of entertainment and exclusively as musicians: “From Park Club, we soon went over to the Cuckoo to listen to Gypsy [music] with Weizsäcker and company: Klári, Teleki Miskáné, Pista Bárczy and myself. It was fairly pleasant.”²¹

Gypsy music was not only a part of Hungarian gatherings for friends and family, but also played a role in official international visits, and Zsindely’s diary confirms that members of the political and social elite also considered it evident that Gypsy music was part of the entertainment. According to the press, in March 1939, Joseph Goebbels spent two days in Budapest at the invitation of the German ambassador to meet several Hungarian public figures; however, only Zsindely’s diary mentions how Goebbels had spent the night, as his last official and public event was seeing a performance at the Hungarian Opera House. Afterwards, Goebbels was escorted to the Cuckoo (*Kakukk*) restaurant in Budapest, where he partied with German Ambassador Otto Erdmannsdorff, Zsindely, and Zsindely’s wife. Zsindely noticed that Goebbels quickly adopted the condescending attitude of Hungarians requesting music from the Romani musicians: “Some two years ago, Goebbels was here once, and we had fun at the Cuckoo. Gypsy played, Goebbels got tipsy and he tried rather clumsily to request songs – in other words, we had quite a time.”²² This shows that Goebbels himself considered it natural that Romani provided the music in Hungary.

A Gendered Reading of “Gypsy Music” as a Service

If we examine mentions of Romani musicians in diaries from the perspective of gender, it becomes clear that they formed part of men’s social world or the social sphere dominated by men. This is confirmed by every examined diary written by women, including Andrassy’s diary. In diaries written by women, Romani appear as a part of men’s life, while the women themselves either did not interact with Romani or only interacted with them in exceptional cases. This is especially true of entries involving Romani musicians, who were always presented as being under the dominion and control of men, as men exerted their dominance by instructing and paying Romani musicians. In the interwar period, and as early as the age of dualism, partying to Gypsy music was a means of self-representation among Hungarian men.

As mentioned earlier, Gypsy music was tied not only to joy, but also to grief and death. Andrassy’s diary shows that it played an integral part in her husband and his friends’ mourning for one of their fallen comrades, Count Oszvald Wolkenstein, who fell in action in 1915:

We were now in Pest, where day after day, dinners, Gypsy, and gaities were the fashion. We participated in everything. We were everywhere, pretending to have a good time. To me, life had never seemed so dark, but humanity was dancing in a craze, and so did we. We had a lot of acquaintances, soldiers on leave who wished to be merry and to forget. Wolkenstein had fallen in action, and in the evening, the Hussars of the seventh regimen said their farewells by way of Gypsy [music]. Pál only came home in the morning, very much cast down and depressed. I was surprised that he could party all night to Gypsy [music], to which he replied, “Women wouldn’t understand. A Hussar who fell on the battlefield should not be mourned by his mates cry-

21 Ferenc Zsindely, *Miniszter a frontvonalban: Zsindely Ferenc naplója (1941. február 25.–1946. március 9.)* (Budapest and Pécs: ÁBTL and Kronosz, 2021), 94.

22 *Ibid.*, 109.

ing. All night we had them play [Wolkenstein's] tunes and talked about him. This is the proper way of saying farewell." I could believe that women wouldn't understand. When I am melancholy, I cannot listen to music.²³

To Andrassy, Gypsy music or partying to Gypsy music was incompatible with grieving, while for the soldiers the opposite was true, as the music played an integral part in honouring the memory of their fallen comrade. This closely correlates with social norms pertaining to when, where, how, and to what extent men and women were allowed to express their emotions. Based on these norms, men and especially soldiers did not have socially acceptable or proper outlets: the only acceptable means of expressing and venting emotion was partying, which meant that men were expected to show mirth not only in periods of joy but also in periods of grief and suffering, and Gypsy music naturally formed part of this ritual.

Hungarians as "Gypsies"

In some diaries, haggling and begging are presented as a Romani habit or character trait, including in the diary of Zsigmond Móricz (1879–1942), one of the most prominent rural Protestant Hungarian writers of the first half of the twentieth century. Haggling is based on a reversal of positions of power, in which it is not the customer but the seller who dictates the rapidly changing price of a product or service. Haggling implies that there are no set terms for either party because price is determined by supply and demand and, in this exchange, the oppressed had a chance to temporarily and symbolically triumph over the socially dominant. This real or imagined reversal of positions of power also held true for begging if the begging party succeeded in making the other party do something against their original will or intention.

Both haggling and begging were generally considered as violating social norms. Consider the following excerpt in which Móricz compared his nephew to a haggling "Gypsy" and contrasted the nephew's behaviour with what he considered acceptable and socially expected behaviour:

He was unbelievably good at begging. It was his maternal inheritance. Only Gypsies can cadge like that. This was his power; this was how he maintained himself. Now he has a son in the second year of high school, and he's instructing him how to beg in letters: he shall teach him how to be a Gypsy yet. My own father would have broken my hand if in my second year of high school I had the audacity to ask, plead, beg, and humiliate myself in such a manner.²⁴

The image that majority society had of the Romani in the first half of the twentieth century is too complex in general to dismiss it as clearly and exclusively negative, and it is important to understand that the image of the Other changed as the majority group's self-image changed, since the two mutually shaped and informed one another. Consequently, one aspect of literary and intellectual discourse in Hungary involved viewing or comparing Hungarians to Romani as a means of self-flagellation or self-hatred. In this context, comparing Hungarians to Romani suggested an uncivilised existence and a partial or superficial integration into (Western) European culture. In other words, it signalled a lack of cultural development, and poverty was only a secondary or tertiary meaning.

²³ Andrassy, *Mindennek vége!*, 158.

²⁴ Zsigmond Móricz, *Naplók 1930–1934* (Budapest: Noran Libro, 2016), 525.

In the 1945 diary of Hungarian writer Sándor Márai, comparing Hungarians to Romani appears as a literary tradition. From the German occupation until 1946, Márai lived in Leányfalu by the Danube River and, in his diary, he attempted to use his local experiences to understand Hungarian society's behaviour in a state of crisis. Due to Hungarian society's general willingness to collaborate with the Germans, its enthusiastic participation in the persecution of Jewish people, and its uncritical support of the authoritarian Horthy system, Márai was extremely critical of the moral state of Hungarian society. In this context, his comparison of Hungarians with Romani stemmed from the Hungarians' eschewing the moral laws of Western civilisation: "And how rotten Hungarian society is, in its unculturedness how greedily corrupt, Gypsy-like, immoral!"²⁵

Regarding the state of Hungarian society, Márai considered his own responsibility as a writer, whose traditional role would be to guide and educate the masses by pointing out their faults to them:

To maraud, to live without ethics or law, both lords and peasants are now cutthroat enough to live in such a cynical manner ... This process, which began last year on March 19 [the date of the German occupation] and has become unsustainable; this is the deep end of moral degeneration. Who will write laws for the people that used to be strong and disciplined in the time of the Árpád dynasty, and today resemble a thieving hoard of Gypsies governed by greedy voivodes? Who shall teach law and ethics and honour at Cambridge or Oxford, and what is more important, in elementary schools? Who shall fill the souls of children with reverence for other people's personhood and property? I do not see any such teachers, nor sense any intention of doing so.²⁶

According to Márai, a civilising mission was necessary in Hungary, where similarly to Romani, uncultured Hungarians needed to be civilised:

I observe the great storm in the small puddle in which I live. This beggar nation, which is so Gypsy-like in seeing conjectures in everything that happens (...) and I notice and experience in a state almost desperate how corrupt everything is here, how much we need to start from scratch, and how nothing but education can help us.²⁷

As early as 1946, the bleak prospects for the moral development and civilisation of Hungarian society forced Márai to consider leaving the country:

To the writer, all foreign languages are sign language. And yet we must leave this place, because [Hungarian] is now spoken by a brood worse than the Gypsy, daring to call themselves great lords ... But rather perish slowly, stuttering and deaf, than argue with these immoral, thieving, cowardly, greedy, cruel people.²⁸

According to Márai, Hungarian society defied education, and as such he used "Gypsy" as a synonym for an almost barbaric defiance of moral laws and resistance to integration into European culture; that is the barbarism in which, in his mind, Hungarians surpassed "Gypsies". At the same time, the phrase "daring to call themselves great lords" being applied to Hungarians suggests that, for Márai, the comparison held a more complex meaning because, unlike Romani, Hungarians were arrogant nationalists who considered themselves the ruling class. That was the rea-

25 Sándor Márai, *A teljes napló, 1945* (Budapest: Helikon Kiadó, 2006), 23.

26 *Ibid.*, 23.

27 *Ibid.*, 73.

28 *Ibid.*, 130.

son why the Hungarians became morally inferior to Romani, whom Márai viewed as savage by nature, and therefore exempt from any such expectations. In other words, unlike Hungarians who lauded themselves as a people of culture, Romani were seen as rejecting even the most fundamental human values.

The Romani Image by Jewish Diarists

Christian and Jewish diarists formed part of majority society and thus shared several elements of Hungarian culture, including a number of stereotypes that were not divided based on denomination. Their image of Romani was more or less shared, with only individual rather than group-level differences, meaning that differences emerged based on individual experiences and situational associations. In general, they associated the word “Gypsy” with poverty, deviant behaviour, and unsettled affairs; the word technically denoted the opposite of their own lifestyle, but it is also important to note that this opposition was not based on race but on lifestyle and served to emphasise the contrast between the ingroup and the outgroup.

Fanni Gyarmati (1912–2014) was the wife of one of the greatest Hungarian poets of the twentieth century, Miklós Radnóti (1909–1944). Both of them hailed from non-religious Jewish families and worked as high school teachers, but due to the anti-Jewish laws, neither was allowed to work for state institutions. In Gyarmati’s diary, in terms of lifestyle, everything that radically differed from her own self-representation and did not fit the framework of a middle-class bourgeois lifestyle was considered a characteristic of Romani people. Regarding one of her friends who had temporarily become homeless and lived with others, she wrote that “Gyuri and his family live with them now. They live quite a topsy-turvy Gypsy life, poor things.”²⁹ In another entry, Gyarmati also used the term “Gypsy” to describe another friend engaging in the opposite of socially acceptable behaviour, or “not very correct”³⁰ behaviour, in her words. In that case, “Gypsy” was essentially used as a synonym for violating social norms, similarly to an adjective denoting quality.

Simon Kemény (1882–1945) was a journalist and poet born to a Jewish family,³¹ and in his diary, similarly to Fanni Gyarmati, he categorised behaviour meant to be deceiving or dishonest as Romani behaviour, as was demonstrated in his reaction to Prime Minister Kállay giving a statement to a neutral Turkish newspaper. In his analysis, Kemény argued that Kállay’s sole purpose was to conceal his pro-Nazi policies from the Allied Forces:

At the beginning, he said that Hungary went to war for Christianity and to defend European culture. Then he said, “We will continue this war for Hungarian independence. For our honour, for Hungary. Our Hungarian policies are exclusively self-serving. However, Hungarian policy is impossible without integral and honest cooperation with Germany. Our fight therefore, the fight against communism and the Russians, is a national fight.” Alright, but what sort of fight are we waging against England and America? Kállay believes that everyone is stupid, that with speeches worthy of a cunning Gypsy defendant, he can fool the world. They are egregiously

29 Fanni Gyarmati (Miklósné Radnóti), *Napló 1935–1946* (Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó és Kereskedelmi Kft, 2014), 1:426.

30 *Ibid.*, 2:486.

31 Gábor Gyáni, “A háborús napló mint kordokumentum. Kemény Simon és Fenyő Miksa önvallomásai”, in *Háborús hétköznapiak hadsziéntéren, hátszágban, 1939–1945*, eds. György Gyarmati and Judit Pihurik (Budapest and Pécs: Virágmandula Kft, 2015), 37–60.

and unscrupulously squandering the last piece of Hungary before our very eyes.³²

A few weeks later, Kemény also compared Kállay to a “Gypsy musician” who attempted to simultaneously please the Allied Forces and the Germans in order to benefit from both: “He bellowed and he whispered, he played it like a good Gypsy so his tune would please everyone.”³³

Romani and Jews in Auschwitz

In the examined diaries, there were no differences in the way Jewish and Christian diarists perceived Romani in general. However, there was a special group of Jewish diarists who began to view Romani as fellow sufferers on account of the fact that Romani people were also deported to Auschwitz in 1944. A Romani camp had been established in Auschwitz before the arrival of Hungarian Jews, which was not only one camp among many, but the camp with the highest number of Romani deportees from different parts of Europe.³⁴ This camp consisted of forty wooden barracks, and as it was not segregated by gender, the deportees lived there in families. The Hungarian Jews deported to Auschwitz lived in view of the Romani camp, and therefore directly witnessed the suffering of approximately 23,000 Romani from horrible conditions, outbreaks of typhoid fever, and Mengele’s pseudoscientific experiments.

Due to the fact that Hungarian Jews were being deported to Auschwitz en masse, the death camp was over capacity, and in order to make room for new victims, the Nazis planned to eradicate the Romani camp.³⁵ Originally, by the time of the mass deportations starting on 15 May 1944, they had planned to murder the entire population of the Romani camp, but these plans were postponed due to revolts.³⁶ Their mass murder took place on the night of 2 August 1944, by which time every able-bodied Romani had been transported away, and the remaining children, women, and elderly were unable to resist.³⁷ Within one night, almost 3,000 people were killed.

Until the mass murder at the Romani camp in August 1944, Hungarian Jews and Romani lived side by side in Auschwitz, and this proximity inspired sympathy in a number of Hungarian Jews. In her immediate post-war memoir, Olga Lázár (1926–), who had worked as a cosmetician and was deported from Miskolc,³⁸ wrote of her time in Auschwitz as follows:

The Poles gave us quite an earful about how we had no idea that concentration camps existed, when they had been suffering there for years. I often remembered the three months spent in Auschwitz, full of horrors, among them one bloody night, when the residents of the Gypsy camp were burned alive at the stake. The sky was crimson from that terrible great flame and those horrifying cries of woe ring in my ears to this day! The wind brought

32 Simon Kemény, *Napló 1942–1944* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1987), 394.

33 Ibid., 436.

34 Ari Joskowitz, “Separate Suffering, Shared Archives: Jewish and Romani Histories of Nazi Persecution”, *History and Memory* 28, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 110–40.

35 Michael Zimmermann, “Cigányok és zsidók: a náci népiirtások összehasonlítása”, in *A holokauszt Magyarországon európai perspektívában*, ed. Judit Molnár (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2005), 383.

36 Tamás Kisantal, *Az emlékezet és a felejtés helyei. A vézskorszak ábrázolásmódjai a magyar irodalomban a háború utáni években* (Pécs: Kronosz Kiadó, 2020), 281.

37 Szabolcs Szita, ed., *A cigánység a második világháború idején (1939–1945). Az üldöztetés tanintézeteti feldolgozásához* (Budapest: Velcsov Bt, 2002), 28.

38 Olga Lázár, *Életem szörnyű naplója: Birkenau, Allendorf* (Miskolc: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén Megyei Levéltár, [1988]).

us the stench of flesh burned alive. How could our dear Lord bear to watch this, I shall never understand!³⁹

Ágnes Rózsa (1910–1984), a teacher from Nagyvárád, arrived in Auschwitz in June 1944, and was transferred in October to the Siemens factory in Nuremberg, meaning that she had personally witnessed the liquidation of the Romani camp in August. She began to keep a diary in December 1944 while working at the factory, and she dedicated several entries to the months that she had spent in the death camps.⁴⁰ Rózsa consistently viewed Romani as fellow sufferers, both during and after her time in Auschwitz.

Mentions of Romani held two meanings in Rózsa's diary. On the one hand, she considered them lucky, as Hungarian Romani were not deported in such numbers and as systematically as Hungarian Jews. When one of the SS overseers at the Siemens Factory in Nuremberg attempted to insult Hungarian Jews, she called them *Zigeunervolk*, meaning "Gypsies". However, she did not realise that, in the eyes of Hungarian Jews who had already been to Auschwitz, the word carried a different meaning: "She referred to us in this manner, and meant it as an insult. I had to laugh! Now I would have gladly swapped places with the Gypsy woman from whom you had bought flowers for me every day on the way home from school."⁴¹

Another entry in Rózsa's diary shows that Auschwitz as a symbol of the shared suffering of Jewish and Romani people could overwrite the negative stereotypes Jewish people held about Romani. After experiencing Auschwitz, Rózsa found it outrageous that her Jewish peers called each other "Gypsy" as an insult. A few days after their liberation in May 1945, Rózsa met a former deportee who had been detained in Auschwitz at the same time as her, and upon beholding Rózsa's poor state of health and shabby clothing, the man insulted her in the same way: "I hope you're not going home to your husband like this. You look like a lowly Gypsy woman!" (It seems that he had already forgotten our fellow sufferers in the Gypsy lager, thought I).⁴² This entry clearly shows that even among Jewish survivors of Auschwitz, "Gypsy" as an umbrella term for negative stereotypes only faded from use on an individual level, and did not disappear from the collective consciousness.

The Feared "Gypsy", or the Romani Image of a Village Diarist

Based on the examined diaries, the majority group's image of Romani was influenced more by place of residence than by denomination or national identity. A comparative analysis of diaries suggests that, in urban areas, Romani were predominantly perceived or imagined as musicians and Romani stereotypes only included petty crimes. This meant that Romani were viewed without strong dislike or hostility, while in rural societies like villages, farms, and small towns, the local majority population was more openly prejudiced against Romani in the first half of the twentieth century and presumably even earlier. To the urban majority, the word "Gypsy" stood for a musician, while in rural areas, the smaller a settlement was, the more the association with music faded and gave way to the image of marauding and dangerous migratory Romani.

39 Ibid., 41.

40 Gábor Gyáni, "Jövölesók", avagy A trauma genezise", in *Homoklapátolás nemesércért. A 70 éves Ständeisky Éva tiszteletére*, eds. Eszter Balázs, Gábor Koltai, and Róbert Takács (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2018), 78–87.

41 Ágnes Rózsa, *Nürnbergi lágernapló 1944–45* (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1978), 112.

42 Ibid., 298.

The associations made in rural areas in the interwar period are well documented by the diary of Gergely Molnár, a priest who kept his diary in the first half of the 1920s while living in the village of Orgovány in southern Hungary. His diary is an extremely valuable source because it contains information on events and rumours that influenced the discourse of the local population and fundamentally determined the ways in which Romani were perceived. In conversations at the village pub and familial or religious gatherings, negative Romani stereotypes and prejudices were frequently discussed and transmitted as a means of preserving the memory of ethnic conflicts.

Molnár's diary is an example of the ways in which Romani were perceived and imagined in rural discourse and private conversation. On account of the high number of fugitive soldiers in the wake of World War I, Molnár wrote about a series of robberies in the middle of March 1917. However, in his account, he barely mentioned the crimes committed by these soldiers, and instead wrote in great detail about the robberies committed by Romani people and the response of the authorities. This confirms that, in rural consciousness, migratory Romani were viewed as the fearsome and worthy opponents of the authorities:

A whole platoon of Hussars marched against the marauders' camp. They surrounded the camp in a line; inside, Gypsies were making merry. A girl was stationed outside as sentry. When she signalled that there was trouble, the Gypsies took apart the ceiling of the room and climbed up to the attic to make their escape from there. But they could not. The noose had tightened around the house; it was a veritable siege on the attic. The Gypsies fired back. The Hussars were unscathed, but two Gypsies remained dead in the attic. The rest surrendered. They also had the weapon with which they had shot that woman from Bócsa in the shoulder. In the room, they had rum in a barrel, and white sugar in a sack. They were having tea.⁴³

In rural majority society, the mythical figure of the marauding migratory Romani often surfaced in conversations and anecdotes. At the same time, the following excerpt from Molnár's diary also documents how frequent and commonplace it was in a rural milieu to fantasise about "punishing" Romani. The excerpt does not specify when and where the following instance of private justice took place, but its veracity is more than certain, and it was presented as reminiscing about the good old days:

Elek Baký now served as chairman of the Board of Guardians in Zombor. During the Serbian campaign in 1915 and 1916, he was the government commissioner of Temes County, and he said he had "rendered a lot of ethnic pests harmless". One time, a Hungarian gendarme major asked him, the omnipotent government commissioner, "What do I do with the stray Gypsies we rounded up for disturbing the public safety?" "Have them shot, and then report to me that you have buried them!" The next day, he received a report that they had been buried.⁴⁴

The excerpt above shows that Molnár did not moralise or exercise self-censorship when writing about the execution of Romani, which he viewed as the right thing to do in order to restore public order, and he was not the only person to think that way.

In rural areas including villages and small towns, communicative remembrance played a key role in immortalising the former robberies, murders, and real or imagined crimes of Romani in public memory for years or decades to come, which was a

⁴³ Gergely Molnár, *Orgoványi napló* (Budapest: Kortárs Kiadó, 2002), 70.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

means of continuously feeding the majority group's prejudices and fears. Molnár's diary offers a good example, in which he reminisced about one of the most widely discussed crimes allegedly committed by Romani in the age of dualism.

In 1907, in the village of Dános, unknown perpetrators robbed the local inn and killed four people, and the authorities eventually arrested migratory Romani on charges of murder and robbery, but without any direct evidence. The case continues to raise questions to this day, which suggests that the authorities attempted to placate the public and close the case as soon as possible by turning Romani people into scapegoats. Interestingly, none of the accused were sentenced to death despite public pressure. The case was discussed by the press for months,⁴⁵ and became so popular with sensationalist media that, in 1908, a silent news film was made titled *The Lives of Wandering Gypsies, the Murderers and Robbers of Dános*. Unfortunately, this news film is known only from descriptions, as the footage itself did not survive, but it is known that actors were used to reconstruct the events and present them as the truth at a time when the distinction between the real and the fictional was unclear to the contemporary viewer.⁴⁶ At the time, several hundreds of rural and capital residents saw the film, and many believed it to be an authentic account of the events. As researcher Bálint Magyar notes: "Basically, it was a sensationalist anti-Gypsy film preying on lowly impulses, where they even showed real criminals at the end for greater emphasis."⁴⁷

Prejudices Towards Romani in the Light of Antisemitism

Diary entries mentioning Romani and Jewish people show that, in interwar Hungary, anti-Romani racism and antisemitism vastly differed in terms of intensity. Diarists from a variety of social backgrounds immediately associated Jewish people with negative stereotypes and interpreted their appearance and existence through anti-Semitic tropes, but even those who were explicitly anti-Semitic held milder prejudices towards Romani. Public consciousness and discourse operated with a clear anti-Semitic interpretive framework, while prejudices towards Romani were less widespread. In this section, I give an overview of potential reasons behind this difference.

In the interwar period, media and public education played a key role in shaping the social imaginaries pertaining to Romani, and part of that involved incorporating certain poems from the period of nation-building into public education and consciousness. The most important poem in this regard was Mihály Vörösmarty's 1854 poem titled "Old Gypsy", about the last violin solo of an old Romani musician. This poem was already part of high school literary education at the turn of the twentieth century, which meant that tens of thousands of students learned the stereotypes rooted in the romanticised period of nation-building: in the wake of the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, Romani were romanticised as symbols of independence, a love of freedom, and resistance in the face of impossible circumstances.⁴⁸ In short, Romani were depicted as poor but free, which made them an important symbol of Hungarian independence in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, literary

45 György Gaál, "A dánosi rablógyilkosság – és ami mögötte van", *Médiakutató* 8, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 7–25.

46 Roland Perényi, *A nyomor felfedezése Bécsben és Budapesten. Szociális riportok a 19–20. század fordulóján – Budapest* (Budapest: Budapesti Történelmi Múzeum and Napvilág Kiadó, 2018), 125.

47 Andrea Pócsik, *Átkelések. A romaképkészítés (an)archeológiája* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2017), 112.

48 Kovács, "Fekete testek", 82.

works emphasising the fellowship of Jews and Hungarians or Jews and Christians were not present in Hungarian public education, neither in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy nor afterwards.

The massive anti-Semitic propaganda campaign in interwar Hungary played a key role in normalising prejudice against Jewish people, while the same racial bias was completely absent in diary entries pertaining to Romani: none of the diarists emphasised their racial difference or even their Otherness, because public opinion fundamentally saw the difference as stemming from a difference in lifestyles. The marginalised position of Romani effectively protected them from being seen as general scapegoats, which of course does not mean that the Dános case did not spark an anti-Romani press campaign, but villainising Romani was not a general practice in the press, unlike anti-Semitic attacks, which were consistently present in interwar media.

In examining the role of the media in influencing public opinion, I do not argue that there were no anti-Romani statements made by the press, but rather that their intensity, frequency, and dissemination was different from the general pervasiveness of antisemitism. In his monograph about the Roma in Hungary, Csaba Dupcsik points out that, regarding “the Gypsy issue”, measures like forced sterilisation, forced assimilation, internment in concentration camps, and deportation to Soviet territory had all been considered before the German occupation.⁴⁹ For instance, Ferenc Orsós, a doctor and professor of pathology, demanded a ban on mixed marriages between Romani and “Hungarian” persons based on the racially motivated ban on Jewish and “Hungarian” marriages in 1941, which were partially based on the racist Nuremberg laws.⁵⁰ According to Dupcsik, Hungarian public opinion on Romani in the interwar period was predominantly characterised by apathy and disinterest,⁵¹ and the abovementioned racist desires were primarily voiced by members of the urban intelligentsia. However, these racist views did not become widespread in public discourse because their dissemination and impact was very limited, and the examined diaries confirm this reading.

The issues discussed above are perhaps better represented in research on antisemitism in Germany, which has explored the role of the press and the media in general in reshaping German public consciousness in the interwar period by spreading “scientifically informed” anti-Semitic views. Claudia Koonz studied the “antecedents” of the Holocaust from the perspective of the rise and entrenchment of antisemitism in Germany during the interwar period, which caused German citizens to gradually accept and support the process of genocide.⁵² Vulgar Nazi antisemitism and racism were first validated by racial research in certain branches of science (human anthropology, ethnology, and eugenics in particular), producing “results” that were presented in popular informative literature to reach wider and wider audiences. Naturally, the media had a crucial role in the dissemination of “scientific” antisemitism, as it caused the German population to associate certain unique characteristics and physical features with Jewish people. At the same time, internalising these stereotypes also redefined the majority group’s conceptions of themselves, which led to the

49 Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság*, 126–129.

50 László Karsai, “A cigány holokausztól a porajmosig, a legújabb szakirodalom tükrében”, in *The Roma Holocaust in Eastern Europe*, ed. Attila Landauer (Budapest: “Eötvös József” Gypsy-Hungarian Pedagogy Association, 2019), 1:59–78.

51 Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság*, 94.

52 Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 46–69, 190–221.

emergence of a new German identity based on “ethnic fundamentalism”⁵³ and habitual atrocities committed against the members of certain outgroups. As these ideologies continued to spread, the concept of eugenics and ethnic fundamentalism were embraced by the German intelligentsia. Meanwhile, in Hungary, the anti-Romani racism of the right-wing Hungarian intelligentsia was not spread by popular newspapers but remained the view of a small pro-German circle, which meant that the prejudices and romantic images associated with Romani were not replaced by a widespread collective hatred of Romani.

Antisemitism presented Jewish people as oppressing Hungarians and threatening their very existence in every possible way, but in the case of Romani, the perceived threat was rarely present. Unlike Jews, Romani were not imagined to be rich or powerful, which meant that they did not pose a threat to the majority group’s social position or opportunities for upward mobility. The majority group did not view Romani as equals, but they also did not imagine that Romani people as a whole were dangerous to Hungarians in the way that they held this widespread belief about Jewish people. Additionally, there were no political priorities tied to Romani in the way the majority group imagined Judeo-Bolshevism, for instance.

We can argue that, in the interwar period in Hungary, Romani were defined by a predominantly romanticised image. In the examined diaries, Romani were never discussed as immigrants or as not belonging to the nation, while the racial features of Jewish people as presented by anti-Semitic propaganda were often mentioned in the diaries. In light of this, it appears that anti-Romani racism was not widespread in interwar public thinking in Hungary, and despite their drawbacks, romanticised perceptions were less dangerous to Romani than racism. Meanwhile, there were no generally positive stereotypes connected to Jewish people comparable to the figure of the “Gypsy musician”. Gypsy music, even if it carried a simplifying and misleading meaning, had fostered associations of personal, familial, and communal bonding in members of the majority group. We could argue that, in the interwar period, when Hungarians heard the word “Gypsy”, they primarily associated it with live music, partying, and merriment, while negative stereotypes and prejudices were only occasionally or distantly connected to the word. Meanwhile, the word “Jew” was exclusively associated with negative images and stereotypes in anti-Semitic propaganda, which meant that nothing counterbalanced antisemitism on a macro level.

Closing Remarks

In Hungary today, anti-Romani racism is much more prevalent than antisemitism, which makes the analysis of diaries from the Horthy era and the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy all the more interesting. One of the most important measurements of the “mental state” of a society is its relationship with minorities, because bleak prospects, poverty, and mass unemployment tend to cause members of society to project their frustrations and fears onto a minority group and scapegoat the said minority group as the source of their problems.⁵⁴ In Hungary, the two traditionally scapegoated groups have been Jews and Romani, and recent studies show that Jews have become the most accepted and Romani the most rejected outgroup in

53 Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience*, 13.

54 Ferenc Erős, *Az identitás labirintusai. Narratív konstrukciók és identitás-stratégiák* (Budapest: Janus/Osiris Könyvtár, 2001), 95.

Hungarian society.⁵⁵ It is important to note, however, that the decline of antisemitism and the rise of anti-Romani racism is partly an illusion because, at this point in time, it is not considered proper to express anti-Semitic sentiments even within the context of sociological research on prejudice. This means that we may speak of a certain latent antisemitism in Hungary,⁵⁶ while anti-Romani views are expressed without any sense of violating social norms, both in and outside of studies.

Since the end of World War II, two to three generations have grown up in Hungary, and in the last seventy years the intensity, dissemination, and content of negative views pertaining to Romani have changed completely. According to the majority of studies, the rise of anti-Romani prejudice can be attributed to the general frustration and uncertainty experienced by the majority of social groups in the wake of switching from a plan-based economy to a market economy.⁵⁷

Research first began to observe the transformation of scapegoating in Hungary in the 1990s, and the question posed by one of the first studies on the subject was “How did the Gypsy become a scapegoat, when this role had been assigned to the Jew half a century before?”⁵⁸ In this study, János Kenedi pointed out that, following the change in political system, the proliferation of anti-Romani hatred in Hungary was fundamentally inspired by a perceived existential threat: “anti-Romani hatred is motivated by the fear that one could sink to their level”.⁵⁹ In the eyes of the majority group, Romani became living symbols of poverty and pauperisation who threatened the achieved social status of others.

According to Kenedi, one of the attractions of anti-Romani prejudice in Hungary is a reconciliation between discontent and a lack of future prospects, while another attraction is that it does not require a theoretical basis, not even racism, since the division between “us” and “them” is not drawn along racial lines, but by the relative and imagined lines of poverty, which is what truly seems to separate “Hungarians” from “Gypsies”. As Kenedi puts it: “Those who are poor are not even considered Hungarian; one need only look at the Gypsy.”⁶⁰ On the other hand, in the market economy, the Romani – never considered a partner and equal by Hungarian society – suddenly became a competitor. The Romani became a competitor in the labour market and in the competition to maintain living standards. The Romani were seen by many as a group that was out to take jobs, thereby threatening the social status and wealth that Hungarians had acquired.

The above discussion must be supplemented with a few crucial factors. Following the almost complete annihilation of the Jewish population, Hungarian nationalism and by extension Hungarian racism needed a new and thoroughly oppressed minority against which it could define itself, one that would be easily and widely perceived in contrast to the some tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors and their descendants who had completely assimilated into Hungarian society in urban areas, and therefore had become imperceptible to the majority living in rural areas. This also played a role in Romani replacing Jews as the new scapegoat.

55 Szilvia Balassa, “Antiszemiták, cigányellenesek, xenofóbok”, in *Mindennapi előítéletek. Társadalmi távolságok és etnikai sztereotípiák*, ed. Boglárka Bakó, Richárd Papp, and László Szarka (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2007), 206.

56 Balassa, “Antiszemiták”, 206; Gábor Hamp, Özséb Horányi, and László Rábai, *Magyar megfontolások a Soáról – Pax Romana Könyvek* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1999), 292.

57 *Ibid.*, 207.

58 János Kenedi, “Miért a cigány és nem a zsidó a bűnbak?”, in János Kenedi, *A halál és a leányka. Válogatott esszék* (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 1992), 9.

59 *Ibid.*, 10.

60 *Ibid.*, 16.

Another factor to consider is that, under the guise of the civilisation of Romani, socialism dismantled the stereotypes and social practices that had been widespread in the interwar period. The forced settlement of Romani and the construction of Romani ghettos fundamentally transformed the social visibility of Romani, which had been rather small in the Horthy era. One more crucial change was the elimination of Gypsy music as entertainment. This development was a side product brought on by changes in the consumption of music in the Kádár era following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. By that time, live music was gradually being replaced by radio and then by television, which caused “Hungarian tunes” and the figure of the “Gypsy musician” to more or less disappear from everyday life by the time of the change in political system in 1990. With these changes, the core of the stereotype of the “Gypsy musician” disappeared, and so did the positive associations and emotions connected to it, leaving only negative stereotypes and prejudices that were no longer counterbalanced by positive representation.

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Biography

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