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A QUESTION IN HISTORY, A HISTORY IN QUESTION:  
ROMANI POLITICS AND POLICIES IN STATE SOCIALIST HUNGARY

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the origins, life, and afterlife of one social question—the so-called “Gypsy question” [*cigánykérdés*—as it was presented and acted upon by political and parapolitical actors within state socialist Hungary (1949–1989). It further examines how Roma of the Hungarian People’s Republic lived under and resisted its descriptions. It argues that, despite regime change, the state socialist approach to this question evinces continuities with assimilatory and exclusionary practices pursued within the Habsburg monarchy and, after 1920, the independent state of Hungary. Further, this question persists into the present and finds frequent uptake in contemporary speech.

Its analysis is built upon two contentions. First, there is no “Gypsy question” without an underlying “Magyar [Hungarian] question.” Historical and present-day expressions of the “Gypsy question” serve to stabilize an ideal of the Magyar. Second, if the “Gypsy question” appears as a stable constant in Hungarian history and politics, it is because uncertainties remain about how one is to live as a Magyar. “Solutions” to this question—before, during, and after state socialism—evinced tight linkages with other, though not always clearly stated social questions. These include labor and migration, population and demography, and even what it means to consume in an orderly way.

Drawing upon historical, ethnographic, and linguistic anthropological methods, I examine state socialist “solutions” to this question first, by tracing its origins in Habsburg policy and through the academic debates that supported them. I then undertake an analysis of four sites of intervention in Romani life pursued by the Hungarian socialist state after 1949: 1.) labor and its reproduction; 2.) love and the structure of the family; 3.) housing and spatial organization; and 4.) consumption and health. Each of these chapters argues that, despite the stated aim of socialist

policy to facilitate the “social integration” of Roma into the Magyar majority, its actual effects upon everyday Romani life produced ambiguous results. Labor politics aimed at “sedentarization,” for example, may have fit Roma into the labor market, but this often entailed labor mobility and commuting. To take another example, housing policies to effect Romani home-buying within Magyar-majority communities deepened spatial segregation rather than resolved it.

The recurrence of the “Gypsy question” in academic and everyday discourse, this dissertation contends, reveals something important about the way historical actors reinterpret the past in order to reanimate the present. Change therefore coils around continuity as so-called “solutions”—before, during, and after state socialism—have become enfolded into and so renewed the seemingly singular question itself.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Cs-lakás-es	Reduced value or reduced comfort-level dwellings [ <i>csökkentett értékű/komfortfokozatú lakások</i> ]
DISZ	Union of Working Youth [ <i>Dolgozó Ifjúság Szövetsége</i> ]
DVTK Stadion	Diósgyőr-Ironworks Athletics Club Stadium [ <i>Diósgyőr-Vasgyári Testgyakorlók Köre Stadion</i> ]
EPOL	Society of Public Health [ <i>Egészségpolitikai Társaság</i> ]
Fidesz	Alliance of Young Democrats [ <i>Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége</i> ]
HU BAZML	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Archive (Miskolc) [ <i>Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén Megyei Levéltár</i> ]
HU BFL	Budapest City Archive [ <i>Budapest Főváros Levéltára</i> ]
HU MaNDA	Hungarian National Digital Archive [ <i>Magyar Nemzeti Digitális Archívum</i> ]
HU MNL	Hungarian National Archive (Budapest) [ <i>Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár</i> ]
HU OSA	Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives (Budapest) [ <i>Vera és Donald Blinken OSA (Nyílt Társadalom) Archívum</i> ]
HU OSZK	National Széchényi Library (Budapest) [ <i>Országos Széchényi Könyvtár</i> ]
HU SZSZBML	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Archive (Nyíregyháza) [ <i>Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Levéltár</i> ]
ICPC	International Criminal Police Commission
IM	Youth Magazine [ <i>Ifjúsági Magazin</i> ]
KISZ	Communist Youth League [ <i>Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség</i> ]
MDP	Hungarian Working People's Party [ <i>Magyar Dolgozók Pártja</i> ]
MigSzol	Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary
MSZMP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party [ <i>Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt</i> ]
MSZMP KB	Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party [ <i>Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Központi Bizottsága</i> ]
NEKI	Office for the Protection of National and Ethnic Minority Rights [ <i>Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségi Jogvédő Iroda</i> ]
NEM	New Economic Mechanism [ <i>Új gazdasági mechanizmus</i> ]
NEP	New Economic Policy [ <i>Novaya ekonomicheskaya politika</i> ]
NPP	National Peasant Party [ <i>Nemzeti Parasztpárt</i> ]
OTP	National Savings Bank [ <i>Országos Takarékpénztár</i> ]
RFE	Radio Free Europe

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It is a truism, but one that bears repeating, that research—archival, ethnographic, or otherwise—rarely goes as planned. My own was no exception. The experiences that shaped the central questions of this dissertation began in 2015, when I, in Budapest to study the Hungarian language and to begin visits to local archives, found myself living little over four blocks from what would become an international symbol of the rapidly unfolding “migration crisis” of that year, the Eastern railway terminal. It was there, working alongside a number of organizations—all grassroots, some affiliated with the now displaced Central European University—that I came into conversation with activists and academics who changed my understanding of a place that had, hitherto, been my sometime home. I thank Kate Coyer, Szabolcs László, Colleen Sharkey, and Imre Szabó for teaching me what hospitality can look like, even amidst circumstances of everyday cruelty and indifference.

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## **INTRODUCTION: THE “HUNGARIAN QUESTION” WITHIN THE “GYPSY QUESTION”**

At first sight, even until today, the Gypsy settlement stands in its century-old motionlessness. The freestanding chimneys of the huts [*putri-s*]<sup>1</sup> emit smoke from their mud and beaten clay, and in the barren courtyards scamper about the Gypsy younglings.<sup>2</sup>

— Mihály Kovács, writing for the *Fejér County Newspaper*, September 1957

In other words: it is not inconsequential that, in respect to the vital function of the vast majority of workers, there also exists beside them a—although not significant—parasitic layer that poses a threat to health, morals, and in the economic domain; an encumbrance to progress, its children are doomed to wander in no man’s land.

From this point of view, it is absolutely justified and necessary to address the “Gypsy question” not as a matter of race, but in terms of their class status. Because it is, and moreover their way of life is a living anachronism in collective societies, our own included.<sup>3</sup>

— Tibor Bartha, writing for the *Fejér County Newspaper*, May 1958

What does it mean for a way of life to be described as “motionless,” a “living anachronism?” In little more than the first half of Hungary’s tumultuous twentieth century, Roma had endured total war; they had survived deportations, forced internment, and genocidal violence during the Holocaust; and they had witnessed the creation of the People’s Republic under the unitary leadership of the Hungarian Working People’s Party [*Magyar Dolgozók Pártja*, MDP] in 1949 and, little over seven years later, the failed “counterrevolution” [*ellenforradalom*] of 1956.

Within the socialist state, they had experienced mass labor drives and the wholesale

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<sup>1</sup> Whenever possible, I have provided the uninflected nominal singular form of Hungarian terms in text. These are given in italics. When plurals are necessary, I have adopted the convention of indicating these with an unitalicized suffix, -s. In those cases where a Hungarian noun concludes in an s-sound, I have given the plural with the suffix, -es. I have done so in order to reduce confusion—Hungarian plural nouns take the suffix -k, but the linking vowels that precede this plural marker vary according to the rules of vowel harmony.

<sup>2</sup> “Látszólag még ma is több száz éves mozdulatlanságában áll a cigánytelep. Füstölögnek a sárból, agyagból vert putrik szabadkéményei, s a kopár udvaron nyüzsögnek a cigányrajkók.” Mihály Kovács, “A cigányokról” [About the Gypsies], *Fejér Megyei Hírlap* [Fejér county newspaper], September 24, 1957. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

<sup>3</sup> “Magyarán: nem mindegy, hogy életfunkciói tekintetében a dolgozók túlnyomó többsége mellett egy—bár nem jelentős—parazita réteg is létezik, amely veszélyt jelent egészségügyi, morális és gazdasági területeken; kerékkötője a haladásnak, gyermekei arra vannak kárhóztatva, hogy egy senki földjén kallódjanak. Ebből a szempontból feltétlenül indokolt és szükséges, hogy nem faji, de osztály helyzetük szempontjából nézve foglalkozzunk a cigánykérdéssel. Mert van, és hovatovább élő anakronizmust jelent életmódjuk a kollektív társadalmakban, így nálunk is.” Tibor Bartha, “Végre megmozdultunk” [In the end, we moved], *Fejér Megyei Hírlap* [Fejér county newspaper], May 7, 1958.

reorganization of their work within and alongside state enterprises and collective farms. To mid-century journalists like Kovács and Bartha, nevertheless, it was as if the more things changed in Hungary, the more Roma stayed the same. The “Gypsy” [*cigány*] was stuck in ahistorical time.<sup>4</sup> And yet, as Bartha’s article reveals, what so concerned him, and many other journalists and political elites over the four decades of the People’s Republic (1949–1989), was not necessarily the endurance of this “anachronistic” time. Nor was it strictly a question of how those who ostensibly occupied it might be brought into socialism’s promised modernity. Rather, it was, on the one hand, what “anachronism” augured for the viability of the national collective: a generalized threat to public health, a decline in morality, and the stagnation of the economy. On the other, it was a matter of international reputation, of how the endurance of this perceived “anachronism” reflected negatively on the project of building socialism in Hungary, especially in the press of the capitalist West.<sup>5</sup> It was, in short, the “anachronism” of both the “Gypsy” *and* the

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<sup>4</sup> I have opted to use the term *cigány* [English: “Gypsy”] in this dissertation to reflect official usage during the period. I have given the English term “Gypsy” in scare quotes throughout. I do so, on one hand, to maintain a degree of critical distance from the term, whose use many Roma advocate against and consider offensive, and on the other, because it is an inadequate translation of the Hungarian. “The term ‘Gypsy’ in English,” Iulius Rostas asserts, “unlike . . . its derivatives . . . used in Central and Eastern Europe, does not sufficiently reflect the negative connotation of the hatred and fear directed towards Roma.” Iulius Rostas, *A Task for Sisyphus: Why Europe’s Roma Policies Fail* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2019), 11. When referring to Roma outside of non-Romani discourses, I have used the term Rom (plural: Roma; adjective: Romani). Although some communities in Hungary positively identify with the term *cigány*, it often carries pejorative connotations in everyday speech, as discussed further in this introduction. Importantly, as many Romani and non-Romani academics and activists have asserted, as ethnonyms, *cigány* and “Gypsy” are derived from one, or perhaps two, historically inaccurate exonyms. The terms may be corrupted forms of “Egyptian;” this contention is amply supported by historical records which refer to Roma as migrants from Egypt. David M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 2; Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1995), 2; Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 417–45; Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe’s Gypsies* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 15; and Yaron Matras, *The Romani Gypsies* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015), 20 and 164–70. Others link the term to the Greek word *Ἀθίγγανοι* [Athinganoi], meaning “untouchables” and referring to a heretical sect within the Byzantine Empire, which, as Angus Fraser notes, came to be “applied to the Gypsies because both groups enjoyed a similar reputation for fortunetelling and sorcery.” Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 46. See also Kenrick and Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe’s Gypsies*, 15; and Rostas, *A Task for Sisyphus*, 11. This etymology, however, is challenged by Yaron Matras, who argues that aside from the sound similarity between Athinganoi and the various ethnonyms related to “Gypsy,” little historical evidence from Byzantine records proves this link and it is thus likely coincidental. Matras, *The Romani Gypsies*, 21–22.

<sup>5</sup> This concern was raised perhaps most forcefully by the director of the Nationality Department [*Nemzetiségi Osztály*] of the Ministry of Education, Sándor Vendégh, who, in a 1959 speech delivered to representatives of the

“Gypsy question” [*cigánykérdés*] that demanded resolution, and what this means requires investigation.

This dissertation examines the development, life, and afterlife of the “Gypsy question” as it was posed by state socialist Hungarian political and parapolitical actors, and how Roma of the People’s Republic lived under and resisted its descriptions. It argues that, despite the political economic and ideological changes that accompanied the creation of the People’s Republic in 1949, the ways in which the “Gypsy question” was addressed demonstrate unexpected continuities with initiatives developed from the late eighteenth century onward. Perhaps more surprisingly still, these endure beyond Hungary’s transition to market capitalism following 1989. In doing so, it explores a longstanding concern in early modern and modern European social and intellectual history, namely, the so-called questions that arose out of Enlightenment-era emancipation debates. Understanding the seemingly endless appetite for questions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—a veritable “queristic mania” as historian Holly Case calls it—demands that we investigate what questions matter even as these remain unsettled.<sup>6</sup>

This dissertation attends to one question, the “Gypsy question,” through the following three vectors. First, it tracks how the “Gypsy question” was addressed by political and

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county councils, pressed the urgency of “solving” the “Gypsy question” because of negative international press, especially from western Europe, while also criticizing these reports as in bad faith. “A completely different sign comes from the capitalist press agencies who showed and show a great interest in the Gypsy question, for they think they may use it, a ‘delicacy’ so to speak, and of course to our detriment. Well, we may tell them, that they need not fear, and need not shed crocodile tears for Hungary’s Gypsy populace. We shall solve this problem without them, what is more, without racial discrimination or racial extermination as they, the colonisers did, but in the spirit of socialist humanism and with the widest spectrum of rights for Hungarian citizens of Gypsy origin.” HU MNL XXVIII-M-8. 1. D. 3 tétel – Géppel írt tisztázat: Sándor Vendégh, “A magyarországi cigánylakosság között végzendő munka időszerű feladatai” [Current tasks among Hungary’s Gypsy population], November 13, 1959 in Tamás Hajnáczy, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality: Documents Concerning the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party’s Gypsy Policy, 1956–1989*, trans. Andrew Mile (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2019), 108.

<sup>6</sup> Holly Case, *The Age of Questions: Or, a First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

parapolitical institutions in ways that drew upon and interacted with the lived experience of Roma. Second, it traces the development of concepts and methods utilized by Hungarian sociologists and ethnographers who sought to formalize the “Gypsy question” in the name of social change, at times with the support of and at others in opposition to the state. Third, it discerns how Roma themselves strategically responded to and resisted efforts at categorization. As the excerpt from Bartha’s 1958 article suggests, “addressing” the “Gypsy question” was not a minor or peripheral concern for the socialist state, though this did not always mean that its leadership pursued a single or even clearly defined policy. This was especially the case before the 1961 resolution of the Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party [*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Központi Bizottsága*, MSZMP KB], the successor of the MDP, titled “About particular tasks related to improving the situation of the Gypsy population” [*A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról*].<sup>7</sup> However, as this dissertation argues, this social question and the community it sought to address were central to the state socialist emancipatory project in theory, even as this exacerbated, in practice, a day-to-day reality of extreme scrutiny and special treatment.

It proceeds from two simple propositions. *First, there is no “Gypsy question” without a “Magyar question.”*<sup>8</sup> At base, historical and present-day expressions of the “Gypsy question” in

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<sup>7</sup> “A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról: Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának határozata, 1961. június 20,” [About particular tasks related to improving the situation of the Gypsy population: The MSZMP KB Political Committee Resolution] in Barna Mezey, ed., *A magyarországi cigánykérdés dokumentumokban, 1422–1985* [The Hungarian Gypsy Question in Documents, 1422–1985] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1986), 240–42. As historian Tamás Hajnáczy has explored, the “Gypsy question” in the first decade of the People’s Republic was largely considered an issue to be “solved” through law enforcement and public health measures. Until 1961, in the absence of a directive from the Political Committee, the question was turned over to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Health. Tamás Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” *Romani Studies* 30, no. 1 (June 2020): 81–82.

<sup>8</sup> This insight is in part inspired by Hannah Arendt’s writings on the formation of the “Jewish question” in the late eighteenth century and, in particular, how it was posed by German Romantics. What was at stake for Romantic era writers, Arendt contends, was a question of how to account for the differentiation that emerged between peoples from an original sameness. That is to say, the “Jewish question” was always already a comparative question on the development of national peoples. The explanation arose out of a framing of history as definitive of a nation; for the

Hungary function to stabilize an idea of the Magyar and the ideal expression of Magyar life.<sup>9</sup> Posing the “Gypsy question” works to produce normative descriptions of what it means to work, live, love, and even dress in a Hungarian way. Statements about Roma in Hungary are never just about Roma. They operate through contrasts, sometimes implied though often explicit, that over and again abstractly posit the *cigány* outside of time and place—indeed, in their very disorder—so as to make concrete declarations about the history, present, and future horizons of the *magyar* and the Hungarian nation itself.

“Given any fixed condition or fact—a river Nile, a range of Alps, an alien race, or a national idea—and problems of society will at every stage of advance group themselves about it,” wrote W. E. B. Du Bois in his 1898 essay, “The Study of the Negro Problems.”<sup>10</sup> Social questions are produced by social change, he argues, and they function as rallying points through which the complicated work of responding to this change finds expression. When applying Du Bois’s general definition to how the “Gypsy question” was presented by Kovács and Bartha, what is especially striking is that it is the *absence* of change that comes to define the *cigány* in Hungarian everyday and official discourses. Accounting for change in Hungarian social and political life seemed to require creating an antonymic figure that existed in the present but, at the same time, stood outside of it, as a stable point of contrast.

My second and corollary proposition follows. *If the “Gypsy question” appears as a stable constant in Hungarian history and politics, it is because deep uncertainties remain about*

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“foreign” nations within Europe—of which Johann Gottfried von Herder counted Jews, Roma, and others—their history had to both be acknowledged *and* given up in the name of assimilating into the German nation. “Thus the Jews became a people without a history within history.” Hannah Arendt, “The Enlightenment and the Jewish Question,” in Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 10–15.

<sup>9</sup> Magyar is the Hungarian word for “Hungarian.” For the sake of drawing out the distinction, we might understand it as a way of glossing an ideal of Hungarian authenticity.

<sup>10</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Study of the Negro Problems,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (March 2000): 16–17.

*how one is to go about a Magyar life.* Articulations of the “Gypsy question” expose underlying anxieties about Magyardom. As this dissertation argues, social and economic policy advanced in the name of “solving” the “Gypsy question” in Hungary repeatedly reveals tight linkages with other, though not always clearly stated, social questions. Many of these questions exhibit their own durability over time: migration and the reproduction of labor; population panics, demographic decline, and the death of the nation; and the failures of the state to deliver greater opportunities for consumption and enjoyment. Put directly: the “Gypsy question” functions as a readymade script through which Hungarian state actors justify policy interventions, criticize past failures, and counterpose their favored mode of governance to its antecedents. The result is a counterintuitive one: the “Gypsy question” serves to make history thinkable and actionable even as it silences and denies, categorically and in the idiom of “anachronism,” the place of Roma within it.

### **I. 2018: Orbán Comes to Miskolc, or, the “Gypsy Question” within the “Migration Crisis”**

To clarify and substantiate these propositions, let me offer a contemporary example from a recent political speech on the “Gypsy question.” I do so in part to illustrate how this particular question continues to figure centrally in public discourse. In the lead-up to Hungary’s first parliamentary elections following the “migration crisis” of 2015, during which more than 1.3 million people applied for asylum across the twenty-eight states of the European Union, there was never any question as to what would dominate the campaign: immigration.<sup>11</sup> On March 1,

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<sup>11</sup> Phillip Connor, “Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015,” *Pew Research Center*, August 2, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/> (accessed December 7, 2021). Drawing upon the work of Annastiina Kallius, Daniel Monstrescu, and Prem Kumar Rajaram, I use the phrase “migration crisis” to refer to the cluster of social and political questions invoked by rightwing populist leaders (including Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán), members of the ultranationalist right, and humanitarian actors to both justify and criticize national and EU-level responses to the largest movement of displaced persons globally since the Second World War. As Kallius, Monstrescu, and Rajaram

2018, a little over a month before the April parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Fidesz [Alliance of Young Democrats]) made a special visit to Hungary's fourth-largest city, Miskolc, where he addressed voters directly through a speech at city hall and home visits. Miskolc, the pundits warned, would be a "hard nut" to crack.<sup>12</sup> Candidates for its two parliamentary constituencies faced an electorate divided in near equal parts between Orbán's nominally center-right, but increasingly hard-right Fidesz, as well as two opposition parties. On the left was the Hungarian Socialist Party [*Magyar Szocialista Párt*], historically the region's strongest, and on the far-right was the ultranationalist Jobbik (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom* [Movement for a Better Hungary]), which came, through the 2018 campaign, to establish itself as the second-most powerful party nationally. Though the election was scheduled for April 8—a date celebrated since 1990 as International Romani Day in commemoration of the first meeting of the World Romani Congress in 1971 in Orpington near London, England—this coincidence would go unremarked by Orbán.

Although immigration was indeed the political frame of the parliamentary elections of 2018, Orbán's March televised campaign interview on Miskolc Televízió encoded this "problem" in ways that would be legible to the local constituency. For centuries, Miskolc stood at the very center of the nation's industrial heartland. In the post-socialist present, however, its industrial base has been decimated and many of its residents have traveled to the west of Hungary and beyond in search of employment. "Every parliamentary election in the countries of

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argue, such crisis framing produced contradictory and tense narratives that, on the one hand, depoliticized mobility and on the other, resulted in concrete political actions that sought to facilitate it. Annastiina Kallius, Daniel Monstrescu, and Prem Kumar Rajaram, "Immobilizing Mobility: Border Ethnography, Illiberal Democracy, and the Politics of the 'Refugee Crisis' in Hungary," *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 1 (February 2016): 25–37.

<sup>12</sup> Sándor Joób, "Orbán Viktor ott teszi oda magát, ahol rizikós a helyzet" [Viktor Orbán places himself where the situation is risky], *Index*, March 6, 2018, [https://index.hu/belfold/2018/valasztas/2018/03/06/orban\\_viktor\\_kampany\\_eger\\_miskolc\\_dunaujvaros\\_jozsefvaros\\_billego\\_korzetek/](https://index.hu/belfold/2018/valasztas/2018/03/06/orban_viktor_kampany_eger_miskolc_dunaujvaros_jozsefvaros_billego_korzetek/) (accessed December 8, 2021).

the European Union is about whether to turn into an immigrant country or not,” Orbán declared.

He continued,

I don't want to talk about this at length, because I don't think you have to talk about this in Miskolc, because in Miskolc people know what immigration is . . . people immigrated en masse from outside the city. The people of Miskolc saw what became of that, they already experienced this. And these people who came to Miskolc came from the territory of Hungary. Now imagine when they come from outside the country, people who are completely different from us in their culture, customs, and outlook on life. The people of Miskolc should know that migrants always go to big cities, ghettos are formed there, no go zones [*no go zóna-s*] are created there, parallel societies, all the difficulties of coexistence, the deterioration of public security.<sup>13</sup>

To clarify, Miskolc was not a site of refugee and asylum seeker movement in 2015. The cities of Szeged and Pécs, located to the country's south and proximate to the Serbian and Croatian borders, along with the capital of Budapest, were; these three cities occupied central nodes in the so-called “Balkan route” of Syrian, Afghani, and other refugee movement throughout the summer of 2015. Long-term residents of Miskolc, for their part, would most likely have encountered refugees and asylum seekers through regular “migration updates” aired on the state broadcaster M1, especially in the leadup to the government's national consultation on “migration and terrorism” held on October 2, 2016, rather than in their everyday lives.<sup>14</sup> So what was Orbán on about?

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<sup>13</sup> “Tehát minden parlamenti választás az Európai Unió országaiban arról szól, hogy akkor bevándorló országgá alakul-e . . . Én nem akarok erről hosszan beszélni, mert szerintem Miskolcon nem kell erről sokat beszélni, ugyanis Miskolcon az emberek tudják mi az a bevándorlás . . . Látták mi lett belőle. Ezt a miskolci emberek pontosan tapasztalták már. Pedig ezek az emberek, akik ide bejöttek, ők Magyarország területéről jöttek be Miskolcra. Most képzeljék el, amikor az országhatáron kívülről érkeznek, kultúrájukban, szokásaikban, életfelfogásukban tőlünk teljesen különböző emberek. A miskolciaknak azt érdemes tudniuk, hogy a migránsok mindig nagyvárosokba mennek, a gettók is ott alakulnak ki, a no go zónák is ott jönnek létre, a párhuzamos társadalmak, az együttélés minden nehézsége, a közbiztonság romlása ott jelenik meg.” “Bölcsességet kívánok, hogy jó döntést hozzunk? - beszélgetés Orbán Viktor miniszterelnökkel” [“I wish you the wisdom to make a good decision”: interview with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán], *Minap* [Miskolc today], March 1, 2018, <https://arhiv.minap.hu/cikkek/bolcsesseget-kivanok-hogy-jo-dontest-hozzunk-beszelgetes-orban-viktor-miniszterelnokkel> (accessed December 10, 2021).

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of Hungarian grassroots activism in Szeged and Pécs, especially through the informal network MigSzol, see Sara Svensson, Andrew Cartwright, and Peter Balogh, “Solidarity at the Border: The Organization of Spontaneous Support for Transiting Refugees in Two Hungarian Towns in the Summer of 2015,” *Solidarity in European Societies: Empowerment, Social Justice and Citizenship—SOLIDUS*, Working Paper Series, 1 (2017); and Céline Cantat, “Governing Migrants and Refugees in Hungary: Politics of Spectacle, Negligence and Solidarity in a Securitising State,” in *Politics of (Dis)Integration*, eds. Reinhard Schweitzer and Sophie Hinger (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020), 183–200.

Situated at the foothills of the scenic Bükk Mountains some 190 kilometers northeast of Budapest, Miskolc and its surrounding Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county are, more than thirty years following the “system change” [*rendszer váltás*] of 1989, still in the throes of transition.<sup>15</sup> An economic and industrial powerhouse of steel manufacture from the late Habsburg monarchy through the state socialist era, its Diósgyőr Steel Works [*Diósgyőri Acélművek*] stands today as a hulking reminder of the challenges and disappointments of post-socialist privatization, liberalization, and globalization in the name of European economic integration. Once the largest employer in Miskolc—and the largest in Hungary during its time as the Lenin Metallurgical Works [*Figure 1*]<sup>16</sup>—after bankruptcies, liquidations, and international acquisitions, first by the Slovak group VSŽ Holding, then Italian Cogne Acciai Speciali, and finally, Ukraine-based, Russian-backed Industrial Union of Donbass Corp, it ceased operations in 2008, its last 878 workers laid off in April and May of the following year.<sup>16</sup> Although the Turkish steel manufacturer CVS Makina expressed interest in the firm, its fate was already sealed.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> János Kornai, “Mit jelent a ‘rendszer váltás’? Kísérlet a fogalom tisztázására” [What does ‘system change’ mean? An attempt to clarify the concept], *Közgazdasági Szemle* [Economic review] 54, no. 4 (April 2007): 303–21.

<sup>16</sup> Bence Kriván, “Végérvényesen bezár a diósgyőri kohászat” [The metallurgical works of Diósgyőr will close permanently], *Népszabadság* [People’s freedom], February 23, 2009, [http://nol.hu/gazdasag/vegervenyesen\\_bezar\\_a\\_diosgyori\\_kohaszat\\_\\_-321741](http://nol.hu/gazdasag/vegervenyesen_bezar_a_diosgyori_kohaszat__-321741) (accessed January 9, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> Miklos Iván, “Mikor indulhat újra a diósgyőri kohászat?” [When can the metallurgical works of Diósgyőr reopen?], *HVG*, July 8, 2011, [https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20110708\\_dam\\_diosgyor\\_vagyon\\_ukran\\_orsz\\_torok](https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20110708_dam_diosgyor_vagyon_ukran_orsz_torok) (accessed January 9, 2022).



FIGURE 1. Lenin Metallurgical Works, 1965

Gergely Ötvös, “Lenin Kohászati Művek” [Lenin metallurgical works], 1965, *Fortepan*, image number 77907, <https://fortepan.hu/hu/photos/?id=77907> (accessed February 23, 2022).

So concluded more than two hundred years of metallurgical production in the city. Its legacy, however, remains stamped on the city and country. Parts of the complex remain visible just beyond the newly constructed 15,000-seat Diósgyőr-Ironworks Athletics Club Stadium [*Diósgyőr-Vasgyári Testgyakorlók Köre Stadion, DVTK Stadion*]. A little more than a kilometer south of the city’s tramline, the main works occupy a vast 130 hectare brownfield, a veritable “lunar landscape,” which is to say, out of place and out of time, no longer of this world.<sup>18</sup> Back in the nation’s capital, Budapest, the supporting beams of the Millennium Underground Railway, constructed as part of the 1896 celebrations and the third-oldest underground line in the world, bear the imprint of this now empty steelworks [*Figure 2*].

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<sup>18</sup> Judit Doros, “Diósgyőr romjain” [Diósgyőr in ruins], *Népszabadság* [People’s freedom], May 22, 2016, <http://nol.hu/belfold/diosgyor-romjain-1616353> (accessed January 15, 2022).



FIGURE 2. Imprint of the Diósgyőr Steel Works on a Supporting Beam of the Millennium Underground Railway

Budapest, 2021. Photograph by author.

“Miskolc is the Hungarian city with the brightest future,” wrote Hungarian novelist Zsigmond Móricz in 1930 in an article that appeared in the nation’s preeminent literary journal, *Nyugat* [West]. Móricz noted that although the city’s industrial and agricultural potential remained largely untapped by the state, its economic horizons seemed limitless: “[Miskolc] could be the first city in the country after Budapest, and for that reason alone no government could neglect its interests.”<sup>19</sup> Miskolc would indeed become the country’s second-largest city during the state socialist period, with more than 200,000 residents by the 1980s. Today, Miskolc and its surrounding region are less associated with its glorious industrial past and economic potential than with chronic under- and unemployment, as well as its purported status as a “Gypsy

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<sup>19</sup> “Miskolc a legnagyobb jövőjű magyar város . . . [Miskolc] Budapest után az ország első városa lehetne s akkor már csak emiatt sem hanyagolhatná el érdekeit semmiféle kormányzat.” Zsigmond Móricz, “Mai napok: Miskolc” [Today: Miskolc], *Nyugat* [West] 23, no. 2 (1930): 673–75.

city.”<sup>20</sup> The county is, to quote a common local expression, not only a place but a destiny, a unique historical burden: “Borsod is your fate” [*Borsod sorsod*].<sup>21</sup> For many of the residents of Borsod county, especially Roma, it is a condition of “getting stuck” as much as it a point of departure.<sup>22</sup> The approximately 3700 forint (€10) one-way ticket to Budapest is at best an uncommon luxury or, at worst, a prohibitive expense.

Orbán’s reference to the tacit “knowledge” that his Miskolc audience had of immigration could only have meant Romani movement. Along with Roma who had come from surrounding villages to Miskolc in search of employment, what this meant, in most recent memory, was none other than the policy of forced displacement that the city government pursued to clear the way for the construction of a parking lot to serve the DVTK Stadion. Roma, living in the so-called “numbered streets” [*számozott utca-s*] near the city’s shuttered Diósgyőr Steel Works, were forcibly evicted from their homes in 2014 and 2015 against demonstrations mounted by the Miskolc Roma Self-Government [*Miskolc Város Roma Nemzetiségi Önkormányzata*], coverage by local and international NGOs, condemnation by the Office for the Protection of National and

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<sup>20</sup> According to official government statistics, unemployment peaked in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county at 18 percent in 2012. Year-end figures for 2021 suggest that unemployment rates now stand at 7 percent. “Munkanélküliségi ráta, megye és régió szerint” [Unemployment rates by county and region], Központi Statisztikai Hivatal [Central Statistical Office], [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_files/mun/hu/mun0171.html](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/mun/hu/mun0171.html) (accessed February 22, 2022). However, these figures remain contested, as hundreds of thousands of unemployed Hungarians were required to enlist in Public Works Projects in order to continue receiving state support. These Projects generally encompass labor-intensive and physically demanding work in public infrastructure construction and maintenance, as well as digging drainage channels, agricultural work, and street cleaning. In 2016, approximately 223,000 Hungarians (a significant number of them Roma), no less than 5 percent of the national labor force, were nominally employed through these programs, though remuneration for this work stands well below the minimum wage. Michelle Hassine, “The Public Works Schemes in Hungary: Achievements and Policy Challenges,” *International Monetary Fund European Department* 17, no. 124 (April 2017): 37–45.

<sup>21</sup> Such sentiments are perhaps most immediately captured in graffiti found around Miskolc, reading simply: “Borsod is your fate” [*Borsod sorsod*]. It also the title of a documentary film, *Sorsod Borsod* [Hard lines], released in 2009, which follows the lives of two Miskolc teenagers, one Magyar, the other Romani, through the Juvenile Probation Supervision Office. *Sorsod Borsod*, dir. István Nagy (Miskolc: Kunt Ernő Képző Műhely Egyesület, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Mobility and the ways in which it shades into frequent moments of “getting stuck” is explored in Melinda Hinkson, *See How We Roll: Enduring Exile between Desert and Urban Australia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

Ethnic Minority Rights [*Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségi Jogvédő Iroda, NEKI*], and court rulings.<sup>23</sup> With few options and resources to find housing within Miskolc, for hundreds of Roma this meant relocating to Lyukóvölgy, the former site of a miners' and factory workers' retreat from the state socialist era, situated on the hilly outskirts of the city, two kilometers north of the DVTK Stadion. A site of cramped housing without access to municipal water or nearby schools, along unnamed, unpaved roads, Lyukó, as it is often known in Miskolc, had already become the "largest slum in the country" by 2014.<sup>24</sup> Purchase agreements in Lyukó are typically made informally with the private owner of the site, creating a hazy legal situation of tenancy. Orbán, an avid football fan who made stadium construction a central plank of his platform of national revitalization, never misses an opportunity to visit the Diósgyőr Club: "It's a matter close to my heart."<sup>25</sup>

How could this parallel between Hungarian Roma and Syrian, Afghani, and other refugees and asylum seekers be understood, and even be effective, given that Roma in general, and Roma in Miskolc in particular, have been living within Hungary for centuries? The answer is that Roma are culturally connected to mobility by Magyars, as much in the imagination of elites

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<sup>23</sup> "Miskolci számozott utcák – már minden létező fórumon elmarasztalták a magyar hatóságok Miskolc Önkormányzatát" [The numbered streets in Miskolc: The Hungarian authorities have already condemned the Miskolc municipal government in every existing forum], *NEKI*, January 25, 2016, <http://dev.neki.hu/miskolci-szamoszott-utcak-mar-minden-letezo-forumon-elmarasztaltak-a-magyar-hatosagok-miskolc-onkormanyzatat/> (accessed December 10, 2021); "Numbered Streets': The Hungarian Neighbourhood Where Everybody Could Be Left Homeless," *Amnesty International*, August 21, 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/08/numbered-streets-the-hungarian-neighbourhood-where-everybody-could-be-left-homeless/> (accessed December 13, 2021); and Gábor Sárközi, "Száműzött utcák: Így tesz földönfutóvá a stadionépítés" [Exiled streets: stadium construction runs into the ground], *HVG*, February 2, 2015, [https://hvg.hu/itthon/20150202\\_Szaz\\_csalad\\_valhat\\_foldonfutova\\_a\\_stadion](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20150202_Szaz_csalad_valhat_foldonfutova_a_stadion) (accessed December 13, 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Ákos Albert, "Milyen az élet az ország legnagyobb nyomortelepén?" [What is life like in the country's largest slum?], *abcúg* [Down with him], November 6, 2014, <https://abcug.hu/milyen-az-elet-az-orszag-legnagyobb-nyomortelegen/> (accessed December 17, 2021).

<sup>25</sup> "Utána kimentem a Stadionhoz. Részben, mert két évvel ezelőtt jártam már ott, részben, mert szívügyem . . ." "Bölcsességet kívánok, hogy jó döntést hozzunk," *Minap*, March 1, 2018.

as for the “ordinary” viewer of Orbán’s interview on Miskolc Televízió.<sup>26</sup> It worked, in sum, because it reinforced an already existing contrast of Magyar rootedness against an assumed Romani hypermobility. However, the realities of the flight of industrial capital and Magyar labor from Miskolc in fact suggested an inversion of this imagined contrast—the Magyar future of Miskolc increasingly appeared in doubt because many Roma remained in or on the periphery of the city, while thousands of the city’s Magyar residents had left in search of employment elsewhere. This is an example of the two propositions outlined above in historical motion. To some Magyars, then, what was really at stake was anxiety over the “Gypsification” of the city, the impending collapse of the contrast pair of *cigány* and *magyar*.

On the online message board *Gyakorikérdések* [Frequently asked questions], one poster, inquiring after opinions of Miskolc and its surroundings, posed the following questions to fellow users: “Would you move there, what do you think of it? What is the major negative criticism of the city and [Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén] county [where Miskolc is located]? Who lives there and thinks like that? What are the people like there? Are there really a lot of Roma?”<sup>27</sup> In a popular reply, a user cut to the chase: “The city of Miskolc is the city of Gypsies.”<sup>28</sup> It is difficult in English to capture the glibness of this parallelism, but to readers, its reduction would likely have been plain. Subtly but importantly, this anonymous responder, whether from Miskolc or not, changed the terms of the original poster’s question—“Roma” [*Roma*] becomes “Gypsy”

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<sup>26</sup> For a treatment of Hungarian Romani migration, as well as Magyar everyday attitudes and official positions on Romani movement, see András Kováts, ed., *Roma Migration*, trans. Dezső Bánki and Ákos Farkas (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Minority Research – Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> “Költöznél oda, mi a véleményetek róla? Mi ez a nagy negatív kritika a városról és BAZ megyéről? Aki ott lakik hogy vélekedik erről? Milyenek ott az emberek? Tényleg sok a roma?” *Gyakorikérdések.hu*, January 30, 2010: [https://www.gyakorikerdesek.hu/kultura-es-kozosseg\\_nepszokasok\\_\\_632443-miskolc-mi-a-velemenyetek-miskolcrol-es-kornyekerol](https://www.gyakorikerdesek.hu/kultura-es-kozosseg_nepszokasok__632443-miskolc-mi-a-velemenyetek-miskolcrol-es-kornyekerol) (accessed August 22, 2021).

<sup>28</sup> “Miskolc város cigány város” *Gyakorikérdések.hu*, January 30, 2010: [https://www.gyakorikerdesek.hu/kultura-es-kozosseg\\_nepszokasok\\_\\_632443-miskolc-mi-a-velemenyetek-miskolcrol-es-kornyekerol\\_\\_oldal-2](https://www.gyakorikerdesek.hu/kultura-es-kozosseg_nepszokasok__632443-miskolc-mi-a-velemenyetek-miskolcrol-es-kornyekerol__oldal-2) (accessed August 22, 2021).

[*cigány*]. Thus, Miskolc and its post-transition disappointments come to stand for “Gypsy life” while, at the same time, Hungarian stereotypes of so-called “Gypsy life” come to characterize Miskolc. The post, then, was a less-than-subtle word of caution to fellow users of the message board, couched as a humorous cheap shot at the city. Miskolc is better avoided for all the reasons Magyars associate with *cigány*, the grammatically flexible and historically long-lived pejorative:<sup>29</sup> a propensity for criminality [*cigánybűnözés*; “Gypsy crime”], unassimilability into Magyar life amounting to difference that warrants suspicion and fear [*cigánykérdés*; the “Gypsy question” or “Gypsy problem”], and the shameful debasement of place, space, and status [*elcigányosodás*; the “Gypsification” of something].<sup>30</sup> Though by no means exhaustive, the following table [Table 1] presents some of the various ways in which the term *cigány* is adapted into everyday magyar speech, as attested in the mid-century *Interpretive Dictionary of the Hungarian Language* (1959–1962).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> In a Political Committee report from 1979, state socialist planners acknowledged the widespread (and even increased) pejorative use of the term *cigány*, though concrete measures to resist this were understood primarily as an issue of positive media representation. These were to highlight the efficacy of socialist policy. HU MNL M-KS-288. f. 5/1979/770. ő. e. – Géppel írt tisztaát: “Jelentés a Politikai Bizottságnak a magyarországi cigánylakosság helyzetéről” [Report to the Political Committee concerning the situation of the Gypsy population], April 18, 1979 in Hajnóczky, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality*, 284.

<sup>30</sup> As Susan Gal explores, within the context of the “migration crisis” of 2015, the language of “Gypsy crime” [*cigánybűnözés*] moved from the register of the far-right Jobbik party to one increasingly embraced by governing Fidesz. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, Jobbik obtained approximately twenty percent of the national vote, in part because it had successfully mobilized a segment of the electorate through appeals to a “long-standing axis of differentiation” of purportedly Magyar “plainspokenness” [*szókimondó*] against Romani “deceitfulness.” This, Gal observes, reveals a tactical maneuver that involved drawing out an underlying second-order indexicality (that is to say, an index of an index): because Fidesz did not employ this language of *cigánybűnözés*, Jobbik candidates alleged, only Jobbik could be trusted to tell the “truth about Roma.” Within this context, racist slurs against Roma made by Jobbik candidates became a sign of Jobbik’s honesty. Thereby, Jobbik candidates cast Fidesz, as well as the other parties standing in the election who eschewed Jobbik’s way of speaking, as guilty by association of exhibiting qualities of “Gypsy deceitfulness”—a powerful example of a process Gal terms “fractal recursion.” Susan Gal, “Making Registers in Politics: Circulation and Ideologies of Linguistic Authority,” *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 23, no. 5 (November 2019): 455–56. For a discussion of how Jobbik’s speech “clasps” the arena of action (national politics) with the arena it names and describes (Roma) as a coherent and recognizable “register,” see Susan Gal, “Registers in Circulation: The Social Organization of Interdiscursivity,” *Signs and Society* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 7–12.

<sup>31</sup> *A magyar nyelv értelmező szótára* [Interpretive dictionary of the Hungarian language], eds. Géza Bárczi and László Országh, 7 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959–1962).

TABLE 1. Lexical items derived from the word *cigány*, with paraphrased definitions as listed in the *Interpretive Dictionary of the Hungarian Language*, 1959–1962

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<i>cigányasszony</i> n. (lit., “Gypsy” woman):	woman belonging to the Gypsy people, frequently acting as a beggar, fortune teller, or carpet seller
<i>cigányélet</i> n. (lit., “Gypsy” life):	1.) disordered or financially insecure life, without regard to social conventions; 2.) quarrelsome family life
<i>cigánygyerek</i> n. (lit., “Gypsy” child):	child belonging to the Gypsy people, but used comparatively to express a state of disorder or uncleanness
<i>cigányhal</i> n. (lit., “Gypsy” fish):	an extremely cheap thing
<i>cigányképű</i> adj. (lit., “Gypsy faced”):	a dark-skinned, dark-eyed, dark-haired person
<i>cigánykodik</i> v. (lit., “to Gypsy”):	1.) to speak in a crafty or flattering way; 2.) to haggle or swindle; 3.) to quarrel; 4.) to lie
<i>cigányos</i> adj. (lit., “Gypsyish”):	1.) reminiscent of the custom of the “Gypsies” (speech, pronunciation, dress); 2.) messy, sluggish, thieving; 3.) intrusive, unsolicited; 4.) characteristic of “Gypsy” music, with free rhythm and ornamentation
<i>cigánysor</i> n. (lit., “Gypsy” row):	1.) the part of a town or village in which “Gypsies” alone live; 2.) the total population of this part of a town
<i>cigányputri</i> n. (lit., “Gypsy” hovel):	1.) a dwelling dug into the ground, often built of adobe bricks, and located on the outskirts of a village or town; 2.) a small, primitive, dirty, and smoky dwelling
<i>cigányút</i> n. (lit., “Gypsy road”):	an incorrect path, especially when eating or drinking (e.g., “it went down the wrong pipe” [ <i>a cigányútra ment</i> ])

## II. The *cigány/magyar* Axis of Differentiation

As I have suggested, the Hungarian “Gypsy question” hinges upon an implied or explicit contrast between, on one side, the image of *cigány*, and, on the other, *magyar*. As this dissertation demonstrates, it is the longevity and readaptation of this contrast pair that gives the “Gypsy question” its enduring social and political force. Further, as the question itself is an expression of an underlying anxiety about the past, present, and future of the Magyar nation, part of what motivates calls for its solution are attempts to stabilize this contrast. We can observe this in Bartha’s article, for example, through its suggestion of a generalized peril presented by a so-called “parasitic layer.” In the discussion of Miskolc that unfolded through Orbán’s 2018 speech and the online message board, this anxiety found expression as a historical epitaph, as if to mark the city as already lost to the Magyar nation because of its “Gypsification.”

But what gives these images coherency, and how do they operate to structure contrasts between *cigány* and *magyar*? Drawing upon the work of Susan Gal and Judith Irvine, I argue that this contrast functions through an *axis of differentiation*.<sup>32</sup> Gal and Irvine define the axis of differentiation in the following way:

Contrasting, complementary qualities—formulated as defining each other in some socio-historical imaginary—constitute an axis. Axes usually consist of large clusters of paired, contrasting qualities that make two contrasting multidimensional images. Since the qualities of these contrasting pairs are complementary, one “side” of the contrast is ideologically defined by what the other is not.<sup>33</sup>

In the case of Orbán’s 2018 speech on Miskolc Televízió, what enabled a linking of Hungarian Roma to Syrian, Afghani, and other refugees and asylum seekers was a common association, or ideological imaginary, held by many Magyars of a purported Romani rootlessness and hypermobility. For Orbán’s Miskolc audience, “immigrant” [*bevándorló*] could be recognized as a sign, linked to ideas of non-belonging (“parallel societies”), social dissolution (“the difficulties of coexistence”), and threats to national safety (“the deterioration of public security”). Implied in Orbán’s speech was an antagonism, and therefore a counterposed understanding of *magyar* qualities, *i.e.*, as constitutive of and contributing to the nation itself, invested in and protective of its endurance. Here, *magyar* functions as not only an antonym to “immigrant” (*i.e.*, person of movement) but an antidote. An axis of differentiation is not fixed but can be expanded or adjusted through various acts of conjecture that modulate the abiding contrast pair, their moral counterpositioning, and associated qualities. “Everything in the world can be swept up” in the schema that orders the axis of differentiation, Gal and Irvine write, encompassing “evaluative, ethical, and activity dimensions.”<sup>34</sup> The following table [*Table 2*] aggregates language from

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<sup>32</sup> Susan Gal and Judith T. Irvine, *Signs of Difference: Language and Ideology in Social Life* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 117–22.

<sup>33</sup> Gal and Irvine, *Signs of Difference*, 118.

<sup>34</sup> Gal and Irvine, *Signs of Difference*, 120.

historical and recent documents analyzed throughout this dissertation to provide a partial list of the abstract qualities that order the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation as it was and continues to be expressed in Hungarian ordinary and official speech, in literary and filmic representation, as well as in journalistic writing in the state socialist period and beyond.

TABLE 2. The Axis of *cigány/magyar* in Hungarian Speech

“Gypsy” ( <i>cigány</i> )	Hungarian ( <i>magyar</i> )
primitive ( <i>primitív</i> ); rudimentary ( <i>kezdetleges</i> ); natural ( <i>természetes</i> ); reluctant to adapt to something ( <i>kelletlen hozzászokott valamihez</i> )	cultured ( <i>kulturált, művelt</i> )
anachronistic ( <i>anakronisztikus</i> ); backwardness ( <i>elmaradottság</i> )	progress ( <i>haladás</i> )
foreign ( <i>idegen</i> ); wandering ( <i>kóbor, vándor</i> )	indigenous ( <i>őshonos</i> )
disorderly ( <i>rendetlen</i> ); wild ( <i>vad</i> )	proper, orderly ( <i>rendes</i> )
not normal ( <i>nem normális</i> )	normal ( <i>normális</i> )
deceitful ( <i>csalós</i> ); cunning ( <i>ravasz</i> ); disingenuous ( <i>álnok</i> ); coaxing ( <i>hízeltkedő</i> ); liar ( <i>hazudozó</i> )	honest ( <i>őszinte</i> ); plain-speaking ( <i>szókimondó</i> )
indolence, grift ( <i>dologtalan</i> )	productive, meaningful work ( <i>dolog</i> )

As Gal and Irvine explain, the abstract qualities (e.g., “primitive” and “cultured”) that are clustered through an axis of differentiation provide for the interpretation of their real-time instantiations, or *qualia*. Through experience, they observe, participants “must learn what aspects of linguistic form and nonlinguistic features are likely to show the relevant *qualia*; they also learn how a particular quality—softness, loudness, sharpness—is recognizable in various media and modalities, in linguistic and nonlinguistic sounds, or in clothing or food.”<sup>35</sup> As the substantive chapters of this dissertation demonstrate through historical analysis, the schematizing of the

<sup>35</sup> Gal and Irvine, *Signs of Difference*, 118.

*cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation is located in qualia spanning a vast array of cultural practices, in language, and in economic life that, as we will see, have marked connections to the category of time.

### III. The Category of the Peasant [*Paraszt*] within “Hungarian Authenticity”

I have drawn out the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation through the example of Orbán’s 2018 campaign stop in Miskolc to frame the historical inquiring into the “Gypsy question” and its uptake before, during, and after the state socialist period. As the English transposition “authentic Hungarian” suggests, *magyar* is not a straightforward category. Indeed, it is worth detailing a more specific instantiation of *magyar* upon which this general category is scaffolded prior to and during state socialism—the peasant [*paraszt*].<sup>36</sup>

In their classic and compendious fourteen-year study of *paraszt* life in an east-central Hungarian village in the 1950s and 1960s, ethnographers Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer illuminate how relationships to land and labor come to structure social organization and ideas of belonging within a rural community. What they discover was the remarkable longevity of an ethic of order

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<sup>36</sup> The following discussion draws upon the work of anthropologist Michael Stewart, who maps the figure of the peasant [*paraszt*] within Romani self-understandings of labor and belonging in the late 1980s. Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 114–23. By Stewart’s analysis, distinct Romani understandings of “Romani work” [Romani: *romani butji*] within one *Oláh* community stabilize the *cigány/magyar* contrast pair by linking *romani butji* with exchange against *magyar* wage labor. This serves to maintain a sense of community even amidst the elevation of labor as the central ordering principle of citizenship within state socialist Hungary. Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 17–23. However, as Kata Horváth has argued through ethnographic research in a village in Borsod county, adopting paid work does not entail a concomitant loss “of the Gypsy way of making a living.” Kata Horváth, “Gypsy Work – *Gadjo* Work,” *Romani Studies* 5, vol. 15, no. 1 (June 2005): 40–47. For discussions of Romani-peasant relations in communist Czechoslovakia, see Celia Donert, *The Rights of the Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 93; and Josef Kandert, *Každodenní život vesničanů středního Slovenska v šedesátých až osmdesátých letech 20. století* [The everyday life of villagers in central Slovakia from the 1960s to the 1980s] (Prague: Karolinum, 2004). For a meta-analysis of anthropological descriptions of Romani labor vis-à-vis non-Romani, see Jan Grill, “‘Endured Labour’ and ‘Fixing Up’ Money: The Economic Strategies of Roma Migrants in Slovakia and the UK,” in *Gypsy Economy: Romani Livelihoods and Notions of Worth in the 21st Century*, eds. Micol Brazzabeni, Manuela Ivone Cunha, and Martin Fotta (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 88–106.

and propriety [*rend*] among Magyar *paraszt*-s. These findings might strike Fél and Hofer's contemporary readers as unexpected, given that Magyar *paraszt*-s had also experienced massive upheavals in the organization of rural labor at the time, not least of which being the state socialist drive to collectivize agricultural production in the late 1950s and 1960s. "Átány [where Fél and Hofer conducted their research] people often refer to themselves as 'proper peasants' [*rendes paraszt*-s], by which they underline the traditional peasant characteristic of their way of life as contrasted with other communities of the area where the traditional way of life has been more dissipated."<sup>37</sup> Fél and Hofer's study, thus, becomes an extended ethnographic exercise in unpacking *rend* and how its valorization structures *paraszt* life.

The ownership of land and its cultivation was no mere "work" [*munka*] for the *paraszt*. It implied a veneration of the soil ("one ought to love the earth, not only to work it") and a sense of belonging to it ("the people of the soil").<sup>38</sup> As the sociologist and later state socialist politician Ferenc Erdei described this relationship in his sociographic study of *paraszt* life in interwar Hungary, the *paraszt* was neither master of the land nor of nature but part of their very essence: "[The *paraszt*] himself lives as if he were rooted to the ground. His enlightened consciousness and keen awareness are just like the splendor of the flowers of the fields: his root and seed are aligned with the laws of the earth."<sup>39</sup> To the *paraszt*-s Fél and Hofer spoke with, "real" *paraszt*-s were born within the boundary [*határ*] of Átány and wished to be buried there, just as their ancestors had been. It was on their farms—as they said, "on the *határ*"—where the *paraszt*-s

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<sup>37</sup> Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer, *Proper Peasants: Traditional Life in a Hungarian Village* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 10. The *paraszt* self-identification as *paraszt*, however, could be fraught as it carries in some contexts the pejorative meaning of "simpleton." Ferenc Erdei, *Parasztok* [Peasants], 2nd ed. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973), 5–10.

<sup>38</sup> Fél and Hofer, *Proper Peasants*, 57–58.

<sup>39</sup> "Az ember maga is úgy él, mintha földre gyökeredett volna. Világosodó tudata és lelkes eszmélése csak annyi, mint a mezők virágainak pompázása: gyökere és magva a föld törvényeihez igazodik . . ." Erdei, *Parasztok*, 20.

could work for their own benefit. Being on the *határ* implied having “things to do” [*dolog*].<sup>40</sup> As sociologist Martha Lampland explains, “the word *dolog* means both thing and activity; to have things, to have activities (*dolgom van*), is to labor continuously, to be engaged in everyday affairs.”<sup>41</sup> Being able to work for oneself conferred prestige; working for another entailed a fall in social standing.<sup>42</sup>

It is in contrast to the *paraszt* that many Roma in Hungary defined themselves during the state socialist period, a distinction extensively documented in interviews conducted by Hungarian sociologist István Kemény and his research team in a field-defining 1971 representative study of Hungarian Romani life.<sup>43</sup> Anthropologist Michael Stewart similarly notes this Romani self-distinction, drawn from ethnographic research he undertook in one *Ólah* community, just north of Hungary’s Great Plain in the 1980s.<sup>44</sup> Many anthropologists and sociologists tend to oppose Rom to *gádzsó* (Romani: *gažo*), which they typically parse as “non-Rom.” Stewart, however, observes a crucial detour through which his collaborators used the word to convey a much more precise meaning. “The Hungarian Rom were, however, more specific,” he writes, “and glossed the term [*gažo*] into Hungarian as ‘peasant’ (*paraszt*)—thereby using basic aspects of peasant identity to talk metaphorically about all non-Gypsies.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Fél and Hofer, *Proper Peasants*, 57–58.

<sup>41</sup> Martha Lampland, “Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary,” *American Ethnologist* 18, no. 3 (August 1991): 466.

<sup>42</sup> Lampland, “Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary,” 466–67.

<sup>43</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gipsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973.

<sup>44</sup> In common Hungarian usage, *Ólah* typically refers to Roma whose primary language is Romani, though in some regions—for example, in southern Transdanubia—this can include Roma who speak Boyash (*Beás*), a language which began as a dialect of Romanian and diverged after the seventeenth century. HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gipsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 2–3. *Ólah* should be distinguished from the technical term *Vlax*, which within Romani dialectology refers to dialects of Romani spoken in southeastern Europe, and to a limited extent within Hungary, though the primary dialects of Romani spoken in Hungary are categorized by linguists within the Central Romani group. *Ólah* also differs from the term *Vlah/Vlach*, which historically and in present-day linguistics refers to speakers of Balkan Romance languages.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 115. Stewart argues that because of a prolonged contact with a “proper peasant ethic” in the pre-socialist era, Hungarian Roma developed a counterposed identity as “sons of the market” [Romani: *foroske šave*] which valorized trading, exchange, and attentiveness to interpersonal engagements with all

As Fél and Hofer observe, there are other classes of non-peasants against whom *paraszt*-s differentiate themselves, such as gentlemen (large landowners, pastors, teachers, etc.) [*úr*-s], craftspeople, or shopkeepers. However, the differentiation between *paraszt* and *cigány* functions unlike these contrast pairs in that it goes beyond mere relative differences in class and labor to absolute differences in historical consciousness and moral character. Although the structure of rural labor meant that Roma were often in close working proximity to *paraszt*-s, their homes were located outside of the village. But more than a spatial separation, the *paraszt*-s with whom Fél and Hofer spoke invoked a deeper kind of difference: “In the eyes of the *Átány* peasants the difference is not simply that the ‘Gypsies’ make their living in a special way but that they are people of a lower sort, ‘being created different’: they are ‘no Hungarians’ [*nem magyar*-s].”<sup>46</sup> As these *paraszt*-s further explained, what evinced *cigány* difference was their manner of work, which, rather than productively engaged in the cultivation of the land, tended to be clustered around professions held in lower esteem, including home painting (“daubing”), building ovens, and firing adobe bricks.<sup>47</sup> To the *paraszt*-s, the *cigány*-s lacked the deep connection to the land that was the condition of possibility for carrying out meaningful work with others [*dolog*] and becoming the kind of people who do so. *Cigány* labor, then, was of a different order according to the moral economy of the *paraszt*. *Dolog* implied using one’s time purposefully, in the name of both production and social reproduction, rather than selling it piecemeal, by the hour or by the day. By contrast, and again from the perspective of the *paraszt*-s, the work of *cigány*-s implied being *dologtalan*, whose literal meaning of “work-less” should be understood as “lazy, shiftless,

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manner of people. Michael Stewart, “Gypsies, the Work Ethic, and Hungarian Socialism,” in *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Local Practice*, ed. Chris M. Hann (London: Routledge, 1993), 194.

<sup>46</sup> Fél and Hofer, *Proper Peasants*, 227.

<sup>47</sup> Fél and Hofer, *Proper Peasants*, 247.

unwilling to work; it also carries the connotation of thievery.”<sup>48</sup> This discussion of the *paraszt*-s, and within it, their definition of *cigány*, bears mentioning because, as this dissertation demonstrates, the contrasting qualities described above find parallels with those made by writers, academics, and representatives of the state before, during, and after the state socialist period.

#### IV. Making Time Make Difference

Having explained the structure and dynamism of the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation and its scaffolding upon the *cigány/paraszt* contrast pair, we can now return to the category central to the posing of the “Gypsy question” in this introduction’s epigraphs: time. Time, in the non-Romani telling of Romani histories, becomes an important abstract quality upon which the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation hinges, scripted in state socialist era news items as “anachronism” [*anakronizmus*]/“progress” [*haladás*]. It bears noting that however problematic this instantiation of difference might be, it may also be evidence of the keen interest of state socialism in problematizing history in order to set the future on a different course.

To non-Roma [*gádzsó*-s], the historian Pál Nagy remarks, alongside cultural, linguistic, economic, and physical difference, there is also a distinctive Romani time.<sup>49</sup> Together with mobility and migration, community organization, and familial structure, “the unique rhythm of changes” in Romani communities and “the self-governing cyclicity of Gypsy history” provide

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<sup>48</sup> Lampland, “Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary,” 466.

<sup>49</sup> Whether a singular Magyar temporality exists is a matter of historical debate. In his examination of the public reception to Pál Schiffer’s 1978 documentary, *Cséplő Gyuri*, György Majtényi argues that Hungarian state socialist modernization should be understood as operating through “multiple modernities,” rather than a singular homogenous and homogenizing process. Modernization by this definition is a “multifaceted process that takes place in a different way, at a different pace, in different regions of Europe,” and even, making a scalar shift, “within certain countries, societies, and smaller communities.” György Majtényi, “A Beautiful, Sad Tale about Nonexistent Socialism in Hungary: The Story of Gyuri Cséplő,” *Critical Romani Studies* 2, no. 2 (December 2020): 66. See also Michael David-Fox, “Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* [Yearbook of East European history] 54 (2006): 535–55; and Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, 2 vols. (Boston: Brill, 2003).

a unifying idea of their identity among Magyars.<sup>50</sup> A temporal misalignment emerges in Nagy's account of the tension between an imagined experience of Romani time and its less frequently attended to lived reality: cultural and ideological transformations occur over many centuries while economic shifts pass over mere decades. Two further factors complicate this understanding of Romani time, and whether such a sense of time can even be distinguished from its apprehension from the *gádzsó* perspective. On the one hand, there is a historical inattention to the ways in which time itself has been experienced and narrativized by Roma, and, on the other, an ethnographic tendency to interpret cultural practices as autochthonously Roma that were once (and, in some respect, may even still be) shared by Roma and Magyars.<sup>51</sup> Among the examples Nagy provides of this second case are childbirth rituals and dietary habits.<sup>52</sup> Difference, in other words, for all of its practical uses in describing how people live in and across time, has a historical existence of its own as a history-defining concept.

With the Communist consolidation of power in the postwar, the historical time of economic activity would provide the hinge for this axis of differentiation. In this configuration, the work of “backward Gypsies” was presented as a bourgeois holdover—a feudal, even capitalist remnant—whose modernization, according to state planners, could only be ensured through agricultural and industrial collectivization. Otherwise, they contended, the “Gypsy” would fall back into “wheeling and dealing” [*kupeckedés*], “usury” [*üzérkedés*], and the

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<sup>50</sup> Pál Nagy, “‘Kicsinségemben elszakattam’: Cigány közösségek, szocializáció és gyermeksors Magyarországon a 16–19. században” [“I was torn apart in my smallness”: Gypsy communities, socialization, and childhood in Hungary in the 16–19th centuries], *Educatio* [Education] 2 (1999): 320–22.

<sup>51</sup> Nagy's provocation remains lively in Romani studies today. Anthropologist Enkeledja Sula-Raxhimi has called for a political and historical reckoning of totalizing national narratives through Romani “counter-memories” and “counter-narratives.” Although they remain officially unrecognized and discontinuous with official memory practices and narratives, these “counter-memories” and “counter-narratives” speak, she argues, to show how historical trauma remains lived in the present. Enkeledja Sula-Raxhimi, “Reading the Present through the Past: The Roma in Postwar Kosovo,” *Nationalities Papers* 47, no. 2 (2019): 217–31.

<sup>52</sup> Nagy, “‘Kicsinségemben elszakattam,’” 321.

exploitation of the labor of others.<sup>53</sup> We see here that “anachronism” indexes economic activities associated with grift [*dologtalan*] whereas “progress” indexes the possible transformation of historical subjects previously given to *dologtalan* towards a life of *dolog*, whose bearers enjoy a sense of rightful belonging, no longer to the Hungarian peasantry à la *paraszt* but to the state socialist citizenry (“the working people” / *a dolgozó nép*).

The argument that many forms of Romani labor were, at base, speculative, capitalistic, and individualistic in orientation and thus inimical to the collective project of building socialism was a common one across Communist states. Brigid O’Keeffe demonstrates that during the years of the New Economic Program (NEP) in the Soviet Union (1921–1928), Bolshevik moral campaigners targeted Romani song and dance acts within cafés and restaurants as examples of a purported alliance between the “bourgeois experts” of the NEP and Russka Romani performers. According to these moral campaigners, Romani musicians and dancers—in their terms, peddlers of *tsyganshchina*—not only pandered to the “bourgeois decadence” of their NEP patrons, but further threatened the sober body and mind of the new Soviet worker. To paraphrase one prominent critic, Boris Shteinpress, *tsyganshchina* occupied a place alongside vodka and religion as threatening a return to the old way of life.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 124.

<sup>54</sup> Brigid O’Keeffe, *New Soviet Gypsies: Nationality, Performance, and Selfhood in the Early Soviet Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 194–204. To provide another example, Celia Donert explains that in the early years of state socialism in Czechoslovakia, liquidation of private enterprise and its subsequent nationalization made many forms of “niche” Romani trades “not only unprofitable, but also illegal.” For example, she details the bell and chain making of one Romani blacksmith in Jelšava who sent his wares across the border into Hungary so that his brother could finish them in his workshop. These were subsequently returned to his shop for sale. As contemporary researchers explained, this was done in order to avoid tax payments that would have otherwise made the craft unprofitable. Even more pressing for early Czechoslovak economic planners and security forces was the alleged practice of some “nomadic” Roma who would acquire rations cards and blank identity documents and sell these for profit. This “petty crime of capitalist nature,” officials argued, necessitated the so-called Action Nomadic Persons (*Akce Toulavé Osoby*), carried out between August 1952 and April 1953, in order to gather information on “nomadic Gypsy groups” and to register their locations. Donert, *Rights of the Roma*, 68–69 and 95.

We see how once again an anxiety about Romani time is bound up with concerns over how to define and produce non-Romani normativity. To appreciate the continuity in how this axis of differentiation can be mobilized by different historical actors according to their own political positioning within the course of Hungarian history, an example from the late state socialist period is illuminating. Critics of the state and its economic policies described Communist rule as nothing less than a “Gypsification” of the nation. Michael Stewart observed in interviews with Magyars during his ethnographic research that discussions of the “Gypsy question” could quickly shift to sweeping condemnations of the state. “Behind all this anger,” he writes,

lay a curious perception among ordinary Hungarians that Communists themselves were, in effect, people with a Gypsy mentality. Unlike a diligent Magyar person with “things to do” [*dolog*] the Communist officials had “nothing to do/make” [*dologtalan*] but spent their time calculating which way the wind was blowing and orienting themselves accordingly to benefit from policy changes . . . One villager told [the ethnographer Peter Bell in 1984] that the Gypsies were taking over the village, while another made a slightly more poignant point, claiming that “now the people [Magyars] are Gypsy.”<sup>55</sup>

Descriptions of the functioning of the socialist state effectively reoriented the axis of differentiation, in which the state itself could be described as backward and disordered, and thus *cigány*. But it was not just the state that could fall on the condemned side of this axis of differentiation, but the very citizenry that this state had, in theory, so actively cultivated. By learning to navigate this disorderly [*nem normális* or *rendetlen*] state of affairs, some Magyars also came to understand themselves as having lived in a “Gypsy” way.

For Hungarians and those who study them—categories that I will leave open—tracking these reversals and reassertions of the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation as it pertains to time can be disorienting. Over and again, what arises are seemingly novel instances of historical

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<sup>55</sup> Stewart, *Time of the Gypsies*, 132–33. Stewart’s analysis draws upon the work of Peter Bell. See Peter D. Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition: Life in a Collectivized Hungarian Village* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 289 and 294.

anachronism. As we will see from over five hundred years of Hungarian academic and political discourse, the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation continually repositions Roma as a historical abstraction antecedent to what the present *should* be. This positioning serves to reinforce, even reify a Magyar course of history against a Romani time-less-ness, a characterization that nevertheless retains considerable force within time, as it motivates criticism and condemnation in the name of better future to come. In humanist philology of the early modern period, the “Gypsy” stands for the primitive in antiquity; in Enlightenment ethnology, they are the benighted middle age; in state socialism, they are the feudal order. And for many Magyars today, the figure of the “Gypsy” stands as both a representative and proxy for attacks on Communist rule. Within this formation of the axis of differentiation, Roma are never quite in time as they are metaphorically linked with an uncomfortably proximate and rejected past, and yet, paradoxically, when cast in this abject position it is their imagined lack of historical consciousness that appears for all the world as an engine of Magyar history.

## V. Literature Review

Recent historical interventions into the origins, life, and afterlife of the “Gypsy question” elaborate its centrality to nation-building projects across Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, part of larger efforts to create populations legible to the bureaucratic state and available for counting, categorizing, and “rational” analysis.<sup>56</sup> Political economy and mobility thus function as primary drivers of this bureaucratic turn. In his examination of the Danubian

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. David Gaunt and Julieta Rotaru, “The Living Conditions of Gypsy Slaves in Early Nineteenth-Century Wallachia,” *Romani Studies* 31, no. 1 (June 2021): 29–55; Gábor Havas, “Cigányok a szociológiai kutatások tükrében” [Gypsies as reflected in sociological research], in András Bíró et al., *A cigányok Magyarországon* [The Gypsies in Hungary] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1999), 21–44; Eliza Johnson, “Counting and Categorizing: The Gypsy Census in the Kingdom of Hungary, 1893,” *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 5, vol. 8, no. 2 (1998): 83–115; and Mihai Surdu, “Why the ‘Real’ Numbers on Roma Are Fictitious: Revisiting Practices of Ethnic Quantification,” *Ethnicities* 19, no. 3 (June 2019): 486–502.

Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, Viorel Achim observes that, rather than abolitionist or humanitarian concerns, it is the financial interests of the Principalities that ultimately led to the emancipation of enslaved Roma from the period of the Organic Regulations (1831/1832) until 1856. In effect, Roma were transferred first as property from private ownership by the Orthodox Church and the boyar nobility to the lists of state-owned slaves under the authority of the Department of Prisons, and then finally, onto tax rolls as (marked) citizens.<sup>57</sup> Nineteenth century emancipatory debates drew upon already existing calls for assimilation in the name of the national economy and its fiscal health.

In addition to the political economic interests of the state, historians emphasize the ways in which the category of “Gypsy” was made by state bureaucrats in the name of defining a national people and stabilizing national borders. As Jennifer Illuzzi contends, the category of the “Gypsy” remained a contested and nebulous one within the newly unified nation-states of Germany and Italy, at once bound up with but also set apart from larger attempts to police the mobility and labor of so-called “vagabonds” and “itinerants.” Under the often-unclear directives of state bureaucrats and administrators, members of the military and local police discriminately targeted those they categorized as “Gypsy,” even as the category lacked a clear legal definition. This, she argues, following Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben, amounted to the creation of a “state of exception” that violated constitutionally guaranteed equal protections in the interest of making “foreign” Roma deportable without clear legal recourse. In this way, exclusive nationalist claims to belonging, central to the project of building the nation-state, could be reconciled with liberal juridical and legal norms.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 103–112.

<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914: Lives Outside the Law* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

The interconnected concerns of migration, mobility, and labor, Tara Zahra explores, motivated policies within the Habsburg monarchy from the eighteenth century onward that first, attempted to deport “wandering Gypsies” over borders, and later, proposed internment as the most expedient “solution” to the “Gypsy question.” With the rise of mass migration in the nineteenth century, the figure of the “Gypsy” appeared to officials as a test of state sovereignty, a challenge to its ability to assert its borders, and as a threat to its self-image as a modern state. These Habsburg-era policies, she argues, are critical to our understanding of how migration and mobility are policed by east-central European states today in the context of the 2015 “migration crisis”: they “created important precedents for later practices directed at unwanted minorities and refugees,” she writes.<sup>59</sup>

As sociologist Huub van Baar argues in his meta-analysis of the past thirty years of Romani studies, there is a “clear tendency” within the literature to draw continuities between policies toward Roma within the Habsburg monarchy—especially the Enlightenment-era “Gypsy edicts” promulgated by empress Maria Theresa (r. 1740–1780) and her son, emperor Joseph II (r. 1780–1790)—with those adopted by its successor states.<sup>60</sup> As he observes, this literature links eighteenth century “political, cultural, and scientific approaches to the Roma—including the

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<sup>59</sup> Tara Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge’: Roma, Migration Panics, and Internment in the Habsburg Empire,” *The American Historical Review* 122, no. 3 (June 2017): 702–26.

<sup>60</sup> Huub van Baar, “The European Roma: Minority Representation, Memory, and the Limits of Transnational Governmentality,” PhD diss. (University of Amsterdam, 2011), 82. Within the literature on Hungarian state socialism, scholars have highlighted continuities between Romani policies of the People’s Republic with Theresian and Josephinian reforms (Bárány, Purcsi, and Stewart) and the interwar Christian nationalist period under Regent Miklós Horthy (Dupcsik and Majtényi and Majtényi). Zoltán Bárány, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94; Barna Gyula Purcsi, “Fekete személyi igazolvány és munkatábor” [Black personal identification cards and the labor camp], *Beszélő* [Commentator] 6, no. 6 (2001), <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/fekete-szemelyi-igazolvany-es-munkatabor> (accessed March 27, 2022); Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 4; Csaba Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigánység története: Történelem a cigánykutatások tükrében, 1890–2008* [The history of Hungarian Gypsies: History as reflected by Gypsy research, 1890–2008] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2009); and Balázs Majtényi and György Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion: The Roma Issue in Hungary from 1945 to 2015* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016).

emergence of the field of Gypsy studies itself—[with] the period of Romanticism to the Nazi genocide of the Sinti and Roma, and from communism and Western European ‘welfarism’ to post-communism.”<sup>61</sup> To take one example relevant to this present study, within political scientist Zoltán Bárány’s comparative investigation of east and east-central Communist Romani policy, Bárány draws explicit linkages between “crude attempt[s] at social engineering driven by pragmatic considerations” pursued by Maria Theresa and Joseph II with “those of the East European socialist states two centuries later.”<sup>62</sup> The origins and ends of late eighteenth century Habsburg policy, however, remain contested and scholars differ in their interpretation of its overall coherency and legacy.<sup>63</sup> Further, many historians question the real effects these policies had upon Roma, due to, on the one hand, a lack of enforcement, and on the other, a lack of resources to carry out the wide-sweeping transformative project envisioned by the Habsburg state. Whatever the ambitions of the Theresian and Josephinian “Gypsy edicts” promulgated in the eighteenth century, they argue, their actual effects on Romani life were mitigated by the

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<sup>61</sup> van Baar, “The European Roma,” 82. Among examples of this work, van Baar references: Bárány, *The East European Gypsies*; Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies*; Fraser, *The Gypsies*; David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities, 1500–2000: From Epigcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to the Final Solution* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).

<sup>62</sup> Bárány, *The East European Gypsies*, 94.

<sup>63</sup> Academics disagree on whether the “Gypsy edicts” of empress Maria Theresa and emperor Joseph II should be interpreted as demonstrating continuities or ruptures with earlier policies of persecution. Ian Hancock, for example, argues that the “Gypsy edicts” of empress Maria Theresa and emperor Joseph II were no less than the culmination of centuries of European policies of expulsion and extermination. Ian F. Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution* (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma Publishers, 1987), 51. David Crowe, however, observes a definite break in Habsburg policies in the mid-eighteenth century: while Maria Theresa’s early edicts may have continued the repressive approach of her father, emperor Charles VI / Hungarian king Charles III (r. 1711–1740), by the 1760s, in the spirit of “humanitarian and economic considerations,” her approach shifted to prioritize the “integration” of Roma into Hungarian society over expulsion. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies*, 73–76. That the Theresian and Josephinian “Gypsy edicts” were a break with past state persecution of Roma in the name of Enlightenment reformism is the majority position within the literature, though it bears mentioning that this literature also highlights the violence such policies could entail. See, among others, Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, 69–78; Bárány, *The East European Gypsies*, 93; János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi, *Patterns of Exclusion: Constructing Gypsy Ethnicity and the Making of an Underclass in Transitional Societies of Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 60 and 192; and Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 4. For a further examination of this debate within Romani studies, see van Baar, “The European Roma,” 118–19.

diffusion of real political power across regional and local governments and within the complex structure of municipal administration.<sup>64</sup>

But part of what structures this academic debate over continuity and legacy is that an ambiguity lies within these policies themselves, oscillating as they do between calls for expulsion, to assimilation, and back again.<sup>65</sup> As I argue, this reveals something important about the “Gypsy question” itself. Rarely are these policies strictly about Roma, though it is upon Roma that they are imposed. Rather, they are bound up with other questions that, over time, have attempted to stabilize non-Romani normativity, state financial and demographic health, and the integrity of borders. The ambiguity of the “Gypsy question,” in other words, is its very endurance and continuity. What remains to be addressed is why. Why, despite regime change—or even because of it—does the “Gypsy question” still arise as a pressing political concern? Answering this question requires that we consider the question form itself, how it functions to make *cigány/magyar* difference and indeed, stabilize it against its seeming disorder.

This dissertation further contributes to an emerging literature on the rhetorical and political form of what Holly Case has dubbed the “x question.” Case’s *The Age of Questions*, which examines the interconnections between more than a dozen “x questions” over the course of the (very) long nineteenth century, makes no more than two references to the so-called

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<sup>64</sup> See, for example Claudia Mayerhofer, *Dorfzigeuner: Kultur und Geschichte der Burgenland-Roma von der Ersten Republik bis zur Gegenwart* [Village Gypsies: Culture and history of the Burgenland Roma from the First Republic to the present] (Vienna: Picus, 1988), 27; Eszter Varsa, *Protected Children, Regulated Mothers: Gender and the “Gypsy Question” in State Care in Postwar Hungary, 1949-1956* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021), 74–76; and Michael Zimmermann, “Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerdiskurse im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts” [Gypsy politics and Gypsy discourse in twentieth century Europe], in *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung: Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* [Between education and extermination: Gypsy politics and Gypsy research in twentieth century Europe], ed. Michael Zimmermann (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 35. However, as historians Csaba Dupcsik and Pál Nagy observe, some aspects of the “Gypsy edicts” were not merely restricted to paper but were indeed regularly enforced throughout the Kingdom of Hungary. This was especially true in the case of child removals, discussed in Chapter 1. Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 53; and Nagy, “Kicsinségemben elszakattam,” 330–31.

<sup>65</sup> van Baar, “The European Roma,” 119.

“Gypsy question,” one oblique, one explicit.<sup>66</sup> In the latter reference, she observes that this particular question arises again in the Hungarian present, though with the caveat that invocations of the “Gypsy question” have a long history but today are limited to the political Right.<sup>67</sup> Through its examination of the continuity of the *cigánykérdés* in Hungarian politics—before, during, and after state socialism—this dissertation expands Case’s historical periodization and demonstrates the variety and range of uptakes of this particular question. If, as Case suggests, the nineteenth century “queristic mania” dissipates in the postwar—in part because of the association of the “question and solution” form with genocidal politics and the Holocaust—why does the everyday and official Magyar enthusiasm for one “x question,” the *cigánykérdés*, persist? Is there something distinctive about it? By Case’s own account, her work aims at broad European comparisons across multiple “x questions” rather than specific question studies. But an appreciation of the ways that the “x questions” of the nineteenth century interact, I argue, does help explain why the *cigánykérdés* continues in Hungarian politics. What lasts, as this dissertation demonstrates, is not just the “Gypsy question,” but other questions that have become encoded through it.

Finally, in emphasizing the continuities in “solutions” to the “Gypsy question” pursued before, during, and after the state socialist era, this dissertation contributes to a body of academic literature that explores the durability and longevity of moral and aesthetic orders across the seeming break of 1949 (and, we may add, 1989). Together, this literature elaborates how both Stalinist (1949–1953) and post-Stalinist Hungary perpetuated and even deepened value systems of the pre-socialist era.<sup>68</sup> As sociologist Martha Lampland has explored in her ethnographic study

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<sup>66</sup> Case, *The Age of Questions*, 46, 71, and 254 fn. 168.

<sup>67</sup> Case, *The Age of Questions*, 254 fn. 168.

<sup>68</sup> Fél and Hofer, *Proper Peasants*.

of village life in 1980s Hungary, although liberal, capitalistic values of individualistic responsibility and utilitarianism can be observed in the interwar, the socialist state did not bring an end to these. Rather, the changes effected by the reorganization of labor within factories and collective farms occurring during the 1950s in fact strengthened these values, binding them to the commodification of labor.<sup>69</sup> In engaging with this literature, this dissertation makes the case for how the endurance of specific practices of difference making—between *cigány/magyar* and *cigány/paraszt*—function to order social life, even as its horizons and the language to describe it seem in doubt.

## VI. Sources and Methods

Research for this project followed a bottom-up approach. Rather than starting with government policies and archives, my work began by analyzing the scores of in-depth interviews transcribed by Hungarian sociologist István Kemény's sociological research team in 1971, part of their groundbreaking representative study of Hungarian Roma. Kemény's research notes, reports, and transcripts are housed today at the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives [HU OSA] in Budapest. Each interview ranges from approximately five to twenty pages. Together, these enabled me to identify the key themes that structured the substantive chapters of this dissertation, as I will detail shortly: labor, love, housing, and taste. Although these interviews provide a powerful and rich window into how state socialist Romani policy was experienced in both quotidian and exceptional ways by Hungarian Roma, this source base is admittedly not a wholly transparent one. As the historian György Majtényi has observed, Kemény's 1971 study was in part shaped by an implied research interest: namely, on the endurance of poverty and social

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<sup>69</sup> Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in State Socialist Hungary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1–22.

stratification even within the conditions of real existing socialism.<sup>70</sup> That is to say, Kemény's entry into the how the "Gypsy question" was lived by Hungarian Roma was one that also stood as a proxy for other, though politically taboo, social questions that bore upon Hungarian life more generally. But what I found so powerful about these interviews was the ways in which state policy could find radically different presentations than that officially sanctioned, or even expected by the interviewers themselves. Adding to this body of interviews, I consulted government policies and conducted an analysis of state media—including press items and film—to understand how state socialist Romani policies were presented to the public. Attending to the variety of these sources required that I adopt methods of history, ethnography, and linguistic anthropology.

## **VII. Dissertation Outline**

Subtending this inquiry into the formation of social questions is one final set of questions: How did the post-Second World War remaking of European statehood and national identity transform Hungarian Romani communities, their social life, and political trajectories? How does this history continue to shape minority groups today, and vice versa? How have Hungarian Romani historians and activists written the history of a European project that has and continues to question their legitimacy?

By critically examining the continuity of the Hungarian "Gypsy question," this dissertation casts new light on conceptual categories and the sorts of governmental and social actions they capacitate. So doing, it expands established historical and sociological narratives of Romani marginality by demonstrating that Romani everyday life and politics played and continue to play a central role in the making of state socialism and in the development of

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<sup>70</sup> Majtényi, "A Beautiful, Sad Tale about Nonexistent Socialism in Hungary," 64–81.

twentieth century Hungarian social and political life and beyond. It draws together materials gathered through two years of archival work and discourse analysis of historical media. These sources allow me to trace out the historical development of academic and public discourses on the Hungarian “Gypsy question” following the Second World War, along with continuities and ruptures in government policy and Romani responses through the state socialist period. I elaborate the historical forms of these state socialist assimilatory projects through five substantive chapters, exploring: 1.) the development of the “Gypsy question” before state socialism, 2.) the reorganization of Romani labor within heavy industry in the postwar, 3.) state-produced and everyday narratives on Romani-Magyar love and intermarriage, 4.) housing loans as an instrument of financial inclusion and spatial marginalization, and 5.) taste as a metric of social inclusion and exclusion.

Chapter 1 focuses on the making and remaking of the “Gypsy question” as a matter of academic debate and state policy from the sixteenth century onward. It provides a broad overview of how *time* has been, time and again, posited as the distinctive marker of a putative Romani difference from the peoples of Europe. It traces how, through linguistic, historical, and ethnological research, some self-proclaimed Enlightenment “Gypsy” experts availed nearly every aspect of Romani life as the basis for academic conjecture on the question of “Gypsy” origins. This academic debate both informed and responded to sweeping “reform” measures pursued by the Habsburg monarchy, most notably, under empress Maria Theresa and her son, emperor Joseph II.

In the years following the Second World War, the new socialist government of Hungary operationalized an understanding of disorderly Romani time in an effort to regulate and discipline Romani labor-time, the focus of Chapter 2. This understanding of disordered *cigány*

labor-time intersected powerfully with longstanding ideas of meaningful work [*dolog*] as emplaced. Although socialist policy in theory supported the sedentarization of Roma through regularized employment within state industrial concerns and collective farms, as a practice, recruitment of Romani workers to fill labor shortages within the burgeoning mining, metallurgy, and construction sectors often encouraged, and even demanded, cross-regional and cross-country commutes. While Roma may have been “settled” in the state labor market, this settling often presupposed even greater mobility.

The political, economic, and social upheavals in Hungary following the Second World War entailed profound changes in the organization of Romani communities, spatially and affectively. Chapter 3 shifts attention from labor relations and workplace hierarchies to how Romani-Magyar relations and intimacy were discussed in the socialist press and in contemporary interviews. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, one feature of the Hungarian state press and film were stories of Romani-Magyar star-crossed lovers. In Romani accounts and in the state socialist press, intimate relationships between Roma and Magyars became sources of optimism and tragedy, indexes of social integration, and evidence of still unresolved mutual suspicion.

Chapter 4 considers a further dimension of intimacy and proximity between Roma and Magyars: the spatial arrangement of communities and the place of housing within them. In 1965, the socialist state introduced a new financial instrument in order to facilitate the “social integration” of Roma within Magyar-majority communities: interest-free housing loans. These loans, while intended to improve material living conditions for Romani families and to encourage home buying in Magyar-majority neighborhoods, often produced and deepened social marginalization in a variety of ways. First, Roma were subject to special loan review by state banks and required to prove two years of continuous employment for approval. However, those

jobs which qualified Roma to hold state loans were typically not remunerated adequately for families to meet repayment schedules. Second, homes designated as eligible for state-subsidized loans were determined by local housing councils and were frequently located within small sections of villages, towns, and cities that already had large Romani communities.

With the development of a Hungarian state socialist mass consumer culture in the late 1950s, not only the home as a structure, but its interior would function as an index of Romani civilizational progress and integration for state socialist planners, journalists, and academics, examined in Chapter 5. State socialist aesthetic judgment drew upon the longstanding axis of differentiation between *cigány/magyar*—and with it, *cigány/paraszt*—in its framing of Romani consumption as inherently disordered [*rendetlen*] and thus, in need of transformation. Within this moralized and politicized aesthetic regime, “taste” [*ízlés*] was taken up a metric of civilizational progress. In some cases, loans were to furnish Roma “buying into” their own integration. As contemporary interviews attest, Roma did access loans and used these to sustain familial connections, even if these uses were, at times, in opposition to their “proper” [*rendes*] use.

## **CHAPTER 1: RELIGHTING CLIO'S TORCH. MAKING THE "GYPSY QUESTION"**

### **BEFORE STATE SOCIALISM**

Nor shall [history] ever explain [the cause of their migration]; because such a people, driven from their ancestral homeland, scattered, and forced into pitiable wandering, can no longer take a place in the pages of history. The muse of history has turned down her burning torch, extinguishing it.<sup>1</sup>

— György Rozvány, writing for the literary journal *Centuries* [*Századok*], May 1895

The flow of the migration into the countries of Europe, with which the east flooded the west, had its last wave at the beginning of the fifteenth century. It was a small group of Gypsies. No one knows from whence they came, nor did they know where they were going. Their appearances were peculiar, fantastical, and phenomenal. They told marvelous stories about the reason and purpose of their migration; the peoples [*nép-s*] believed them and dealt graciously with them. As it turned out, they were deceitful, and they became robbers. For this reason they were persecuted unto death in every country. They could not be exterminated. A more humane era followed. They wished to civilize and resettle them. This also failed. Thus, they defied the influence of education and retained their rudimentary culture, as it had been a half millennium before. In this way they were a puzzle of the new era. But the secrets of beings, origins, and languages have been explained with increasing success by science for a century, becoming one of the most interesting objects of study everywhere. And their most significant roles are in Hungary, where they act as custodians of national music . . . and where from the perspective of national economy and national growth they can also count as important factors.<sup>2</sup>

— Introduction to the *Pallas Great Encyclopedia* entry on "Gypsies," 1893

Time features as a recurrent topic in academic research and political speech pertaining to the "Gypsy question" from its earliest expressions in Europe through to the present day. Such

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<sup>1</sup> "Nem is fogja kimagyarázni soha; mert az ilyen, őshazájából kivert, elszórtan, szánalmas vándorlásra kényszerített nép már nem foglalhat helyet a történelem lapjain. A történelem múzsája lefelé fordítá felette az égő fátylát, eloltásra." György Rozvány, "Czigányaink történetéhez" [On the history of our Gypsies], *Századok* [Centuries] (May 1895): 577 as quoted in Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 29.

<sup>2</sup> "A népvándorlások árjának, melylyel kelet előzőnlötte nyugatot, utolsó hulláma a XV. sz. elején folyt szélylyel Európa országain. A cigányok kis csapata volt ez. Jöttek, senki sem tudja honnan, mentek, maguk sem tudták hová. Megjelenésök sajtáságos, fantasztikus, tüneményserú volt. Vándorlásuk okáról és céljáról csodás regéket meséltek; a népek elhitték s kegyesen bántak velök. Kiderült, hogy ámitók voltak, rablók is lettek. Erre minden országban halálra üldözték őket. Nem tudták kiirtani. Humánusabb idők következtek. Civilizálni, letelepíteni akarták őket. Ez sem sikerült. Így dacolnak a műveltség hatásával s nagy részök olyan kezdetleges kultúrája, mint félezer évvel ezelőtt. Így voltak ők az újkor rejtvénye. De lények, eredetök, nyelvek titkait egy század óta mind több sikerrel fejtegeti a tudomány, mely a tanulmányok egyik legérdekesebb tárgyául ismerte meg őket mindenütt. De legjelentékenyebb szerepök Magyarországon van, hol a nemzeti zeneművészet letéteményeseiként működnek . . . s hol a nemzetgazdaság és nemzetgyarapodás szempontjából is mint fontos tényezők jöhetnek számba." "Cigányok: Külön melléklet a Nagy Lexikon IV. kötetének 360–364. lapján levő Cigánynyelv és Cigányok cikkhez" [Gypsies: A separate appendix to the Great Lexicon vol. IV pages 360–64 for the articles on the Gypsy language and on Gypsies], in *A Pallas nagy lexikona: Az összes ismeretek enciklopédiája* [The Pallas great lexicon: The encyclopedia of all knowledge], vol. 4 (Budapest: Pallas Irodalmi és Nyomdai Részvénytársaság, 1893), i (following page 364).

interrogations can, at times, serve as much to substantiate ideas of non-Romani progress as to allege a Romani rootedness in the past, even as Roma are described as a “people without history” [*történelmi nélküli nép*].<sup>3</sup> For example, among historians, philologists, and others from the sixteenth century onward, “Gypsies” find description as descendants of the peoples of the Bible and classical antiquity. By the eighteenth century, one concern above all else defined inquiries on the Roma: their origins and the cause of their arrival within Europe. To some academics, nearly every observable characteristic of a putatively “Gypsy” way of life or habit of mind was available for interpretation as evidence of an alleged past-in-the-present; in the absence of a definitive written chronical, they analyzed Romani life itself as nothing less than an archeological record that promised to reveal the truth of their origins.<sup>4</sup> They embraced an idea of the “Gypsy” as historically removed from the “European” and, in the process, developed a self-consciously public theory and method of comparison that was as much an art as a science. From this, they made recommendations for the possible transformation of the “Gypsies” into full subjects of the state.

This academic work would inform and comment upon the edicts introduced by Habsburg empress Maria Theresa (r. 1740–1780) and her son, emperor Joseph II (r. 1780–1790) to compel the assimilation of “Gypsies” into peasant [*paraszt*] life in the Kingdom of Hungary, and later, in Transylvania. These emperors, their Councils of Governors, and the academics who supported

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<sup>3</sup> Dupcsik relates this perceived ahistoricity to a wider social field of groups who have, until recently, been ignored by the historical record, including “peasants, women, ‘primitive’ ethnic groups, lepers, homosexuals, persecuted heretic groups, and so on.” Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> The matter of Romani origins and their relationship to Romani ways of life was a contentiously debated issue during the eighteenth century. As this chapter will explore, some, though not all academics engaged in the question of origins adopted a singular understanding of “Gypsy” difference to justify their claims to a putatively essential and deviant character in need of transformation. Others, most notably among them, the linguist Johann Christian Christoph Rüdiger, took a more sympathetic approach, identifying the cause of Romani social exclusion as a consequence of the “racial hatred” [Volkhass] they experienced throughout Europe. Matras, *The Romani Gypsies*, 28.

their work sought to describe, define, regulate, and control nearly all aspects of “Gypsy” life, spanning domains as seemingly dissimilar and disconnected as migration and sedentarization, economic livelihood, education, marital practices and customs, parenting and the structure of the family, and sartorial norms and culinary taste. “To an increasing extent,” writes Huub van Baar, “[the Habsburg edicts] aim at the full direct regulation of Romani lives . . . to regulate the status of Romani groups in the Empire in a way as detailed and all-encompassing as possible.”<sup>5</sup> From the eighteenth century onward, the “Gypsy question” would become a *total* social question, embedded within cameralist debates about poor relief, state finance, and population politics, but also a test of the limits of state power in transforming the relations between the Habsburg monarchy’s subjects and between the monarchy’s subjects and the state.

The two representative examples of late nineteenth century cultural criticism cited in this chapter’s epigraph indicate, then, how an alleged outsider relationship to history simultaneously characterized the “Gypsy” and repeatedly renewed their legitimacy as a question for learned inquiry and political intervention. Literary critic György Rozvány and the anonymous author(s) of the *Pallas* encyclopedia entry are both mindful of long-standing interest in the *cigány* relationship to time and the many unsuccessful prior attempts at redirecting it, some merciless and some “gracious.” Yet even their gestures to the unanswerability of this version of the “Gypsy question” did not so much extinguish as rekindles its importance. Indeed, if anything, their respective versions of a disclaimer about past attempts to crack the puzzle of the Romani sense and use of time only further stoked a presumed non-Romani reader’s interest therein, by pointing to time as the royal road into the “secret” of Romani character. The fact this waxes sympathetic—a public recruitment to the noble task of relighting Clio’s torch the better to usher

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<sup>5</sup> van Baar, “The European Roma,” 122.

Roma onto the pages of history which Magyars presumably inhabit unquestioningly—does little to change the fact that, once again, if there is a would-be “solution” to the “Gypsy question,” then it lies in interrogating Romani difference as a disoriented sense and use of time.

Sixteenth century interest in the “Gypsy” as an epistemic and political foil to stabilize European historical consciousness and political subjectivity primed the uptake and consolidation of the “Gypsy question” as a matter of state concern in the eighteenth century, reflected in the aura of public interest emanating from nineteenth century expressions of cultural criticism, itself reworked in everyday and official speech among Magyars into the twentieth century under state socialism, which takes on new coordinates in the historical present. How is this possible? What accounts for the remarkable self-sameness *in* historical time of the “Gypsy question” as a problem *of* temporal difference, and an urgent one at that? This chapter argues that rather than Romani life, it was forms of political, ethnographic, and literary description of Romani life by non-Roma that remained static, caught in “century-old motionlessness.” This continuity built up a fount of epistemic, discursive, and narrative resources that sustained the dynamic intellectual activity of observers of Roma and their practical counterparts in positions of political authority as they sought to reorient the course of European history. I begin by explaining how the question of “Gypsy” origins from the sixteenth century onward gave rise, on the one hand, to metropolitan expressions of orientalism that stabilized an emerging idea of European territorial integrity and, on the other, appeals to the state’s responsibility for appreciating, elevating, and cultivating Europeanness (Section I). I then turn to the eighteenth century “Gypsy edicts” of emperors Maria Theresa and Joseph II, which were in explicit conversation with emerging scholarship on the “Gypsy question” in ways that simultaneously politicized and operationalized its assumptions of historical difference (Section II). Understanding these continuities as a matter of academic, state,

and public enthusiasm for drawing moral conclusions from conjecture about what time *is* and how European subjects *should* inhabit it helps illuminate the arena of social and political interventions pursued by the Hungarian state socialist government after 1949, as examined in subsequent chapters.

### I. Turning “Gypsy” Origins into Questions

Academic research conventionally begins any discussion of Romani history through one of two starting points: 1.) with some speculation as to the cause and date of their departure from the Indian subcontinent (or elsewhere); or 2.) with some speculation on the cause and date of their arrival within Europe. By contrast, histories of the Magyars do not typically preface arguments through speculation on the precise location of their Uralian homeland or through an explanation of their arrival in the Carpathian basin. More recent historians have called attention to this seeming requirement of Romani research. In an ironic metacommentary on this obligatory historical frame, Csaba Dupcsik begins the first substantive chapter of his monograph, *The History of Hungarian Gypsies* [*A magyarországi cigányság története*] by noting that: “‘The Gypsies come from India...’—countless texts about Roma, sometimes even three-page, non-historical articles, begin in a similar way.”<sup>6</sup> Even writing critically of narrative conventions on this framing of Romani history, namely, the demand that one begins with Romani outmigration(s) from the Indian subcontinent, in some way acknowledges their overwhelming force.

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<sup>6</sup> Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 29.

By all accounts, the first arrival of the Romani people within the Kingdom of Hungary is difficult to date with precision.<sup>7</sup> Recent scholarship, however, traces the outmigration of the Romani people from northern India to sometime during the last two centuries of the first millennium CE, and their entry into the continent of Europe via the Byzantine Empire to some point after 1100.<sup>8</sup> Debates over this first arrival, however, have long occupied a central place not only within Hungarian and Transylvanian historical and ethnological research, but in European studies of Roma writ large.

From at least the eighteenth century onward, academics have cited the date 1417 as the first definitive record of the arrival of Roma within Hungary, often drawing upon two citations given by the north German monk, historian, and chronicler Hermann Korner (ca. 1365–1438) in his manuscript, *Chronica Novella* [New history] of 1420–1435.<sup>9</sup> Though the modern “discovery” of this date of arrival has traditionally been attributed to eighteenth century German linguist Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann (1756–1804), it is the case with much of his writing that he borrowed this periodization from other contemporary (if today less well-known) academics.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> As Pál Nagy asserts, scant data exists on the history of the Roma in Hungary before 1526, that is to say, in the early modern era. Pál Nagy, “*Fáraó népe*”: *A magyarországi cigányok korai története (14-17. század)* [“The Pharaoh’s people”: The early history of the Hungarian Gypsies (14th to the 17th centuries)] (Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem BTK Romológia és Nevelésszociológia Tanszék, 2004), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Hermann Korner, *Die Chronica Novella des Hermann Korner* [The New History of Hermann Korner], ed. Jakob Schwalm (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1895).

<sup>10</sup> Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies, Being an Historical Enquiry, Concerning the Manner of Life, Economy, and Their Origin*, trans. Matthew Raper (London: G. Bigg, 1787), 93. As is typical of Grellmann’s work, in this citation, he draws upon the research of others, though reanalyzes it in order to support his own conjectures about the origins of the “Gypsy.” Here, Grellmann cites the work of the Hungarian Jesuit abbot and historian Georg (György) Pray (1723–1801) and the Venetian polymath and naturalist Francesco Griselini (1717–1787). In his chronicle, Pray contests the “Egyptian” origins of the “Gypsies,” a group whom he describes as a “filthy and wandering people” (“sordidæ vagæque genti”), by arguing that they were in fact Tartars that had been driven into Moldavia, Wallachia, and Hungary by the armies of Timur (Tamerlane) by 1417. Griselini, by contrast, argues against Pray’s contention, one that he regards as having “neither proof nor observation” (“weder Beweis noch Beobachtung”), to advance his own theory that those he identifies as “Gypsies” are, in fact, a people of mixed Egyptian, Troglodyte, and Ethiopian origins. Cf. Georg Pray, *Annales Regum Hungariae: Ab Anno Christi CMXCVII Ad Annum MDLXIV* [The annals of the kings of Hungary: From the year of our Lord 997 to 1564], vol. 4 (Vienna: Augustini Bernardi, 1767), 273–74, fn. u; and Francesco Griselini, *Versuch einer politischen und natürlichen Geschichte des temeswarer Banats in Briefen an Standespersonen und Gelehrte* [An attempt at a

Indeed, the 1417 date, as well as a citation to Grellmann, is given in the inaugural article of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* issued in July 1888. The editors of this new literary forum, however, did so more to spur on the work of a new generation of researchers than to provide a definite statement on the matter.<sup>11</sup> For the debate over the proper origins of nineteenth century “Gypsies” was closely bound up with a discussion of the propriety of fifteenth century “European” policy: the issuance of letters of safe passage by the Hungarian King, and later, Holy Roman Emperor, Sigismund (1368–1437) for the protection of so-called “Little Egyptians” from the excesses of manorial lords upon recommendation of the Palatine of Hungary, Garai II Miklós (ca. 1367–1433).<sup>12</sup> Historical records from 1416 attest to the appearance of a group of “Egyptians” in the Transylvanian city of Brassó (Braşov), who were extended support from the city treasury and granary.<sup>13</sup> A year later, further Transylvanian records record a gift of forty sheep to “Egyptian” religious pilgrims, given so they might return to Jerusalem and intercede on behalf of the family who had offered the gift.<sup>14</sup> The Saxon count of Sibiu, likewise, extended food and fodder to “people of the Holy Land” in 1418.<sup>15</sup> Yet it was in response to mistreatment from local authorities that royal letters of protection were issued, which emphasized the unique status of the “Gypsies” as recent arrivals from the Orient. In lieu of an extensive discussion of this fifteenth century history, what bears noting is that subsequent academic attention to this putatively decisive moment of historical contact is itself riddled with controversy. This

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political and natural history of the Timisoara Banat in letter to notables and scholars], vol. 1 (Vienna: Verlag Johann Paul Krauß, 1780), 211.

<sup>11</sup> “Preface,” *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 1, no. 1 (1888), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Miklós Tomka, “A cigányok története” [The history of the Gypsies], in *Cigányok: Honnét jöttek, merre tartanak?* [Gypsies: Whence did they come, whither shall they go?], ed. László Szegő (Budapest: Kozmosz Könyvek, 1983), 38–39. See also Donald Kenrick, “Hungary,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Gypsies (Romanies)*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), 117.

<sup>13</sup> Tomka, “A cigányok története,” 38

<sup>14</sup> David MacRitchie, “The Privileges of Gypsies,” *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 2, vol. 1, no. 4 (1908), 307.

<sup>15</sup> Tomka, “A cigányok története,” 38.

controversy extends to conjecture that these letters patent, and perhaps the historical accounts of their issuing, too, were unscrupulous forgeries. In the guise of learned academic inquiry into statements of fact about the arrival of Roma in Europe is thus a pressing concern for explaining European responses to Roma; it reads contrasting qualities of deceitfulness/authenticity onto the historical record itself.<sup>16</sup>

Questioning Romani origins is an academic enterprise with roots dating back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>17</sup> As the historians Robert Born and David Suckow observe, the work to acquire knowledge on the “Gypsies” of Transylvania in particular would take on increased urgency in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries alongside the enlargement of the Habsburg territory through its military victories against the Ottoman Empire

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<sup>16</sup> Even absent an ostensible investment in solving the “Gypsy question” and therefore inhabiting the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation, there can be something disorienting to the question of origins. Though thirteenth and fourteenth century documents attest to familial and place names that appear visually similar to the present term *cigány*, historians and linguists contend that these older names are unlikely to be linked etymologically. For example, historian Miklós Tomka includes the familial names Czigány, Zigány, and Zigény; onomast and linguist Katalin Fehértói provides a far longer list of familial and place names, including, *i.a.*, Czyganfalwa and Chyganfalu (*falva* and *falu* meaning village). While Tomka contends in his article that definitive research remains lacking to prove these connections, Fehértói is more categorical, arguing that these names are likely of Slavic origin, unknown in meaning, and pronounced quite differently in the middle ages than *cigány* would have been. Katalin Fehértói, “A középkori cigány helynevek és személynevek” [Medieval gypsy place names and personal names], *Névtani értesítő* [Onomastic bulletin] 12 (1987): 5–17; and Tomka, “A cigányok története,” 37. See also: Nagy, “Fáraó népe,” 2. Fehértói’s work engages and refutes earlier etymological and historical linguistic research on the origins of the term *cigány* undertaken by linguist Dezső Pais. Dezső Pais, “Cigány, Zigány,” *Magyar nyelv* [Hungarian language], 32, 7–8 (1936): 233–36.

<sup>17</sup> Researchers since the 1980s have applied the terms “Gypsiologists” (*e.g.*, Judith Oakley and Wim Willems) and “Gypsylogists” (*e.g.*, Thomas Acton, Ian Hancock, Ken Lee, and David Mayall) to collectively describe researchers in this field, although they do not necessarily adopt a single definition of who should be included under these labels. Many emphasize the orientalist turn in research on the origins of the Romani people that followed the publication of Grellmann’s text of 1783 that focused, in part, on the Indic roots of Romani, discussed extensively in this chapter. In general, critics of Gypsyology and Gypsylogism draw connections between historical linguistics and more recent research on Roma, which, as they argue, have constructed a homogenized idea of the “Gypsy,” limited the academic space in which Roma can speak on their own behalf, and, at times, have avoided overtly critiquing the essentializations that underwrote centuries of prior research. Cf. Ken Lee, “Orientalism and Gypsylogism,” *Social Analysis* 44, 2 (2000): 129–156; Mayall, *Gypsy Identities, 1500–2000*, 23–24; Judith Oakley, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 7; Jan Selling, “Assessing the Historical Irresponsibility of the Gypsy Lore Society in Light of Romani Subaltern Challenges,” *Critical Romani Studies* 1, 1 (May 2018): 45–61; and Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy*, 294. Linguist Yaron Matras, however, has challenged these categories of “Gypsyology” and “Gypsylogism,” arguing that “anti-Gypsiologist” and “anti-Gypsylogist” have emerged as their own identity categories through which academics justify their positions within the field, and, in the process, have flattened the academic debate over origins. Yaron Matras, “Who are the ‘Gypsylogists?’” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, University of Granada, Spain, September 2005.

during the Great Turkish War (1683–1699). The “Gypsy” would find depictions alongside the other minority peoples of Transylvania, illustrated in the pages of albums that formed a new genre of “mosaic” ethnography.<sup>18</sup> As Sándor Bene notes, following the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699) which concluded the seventeenth-century Ottoman wars, the new southern and eastern borderlands of the Habsburg monarchy emerged as “a fascinating laboratory where elite [Habsburg] intellectuals tried to come to an agreement about the frames of the would-be collective discourse: what and who should be the communities that would (perhaps) create their own patriotic discourse, where should they live, what language should they speak.”<sup>19</sup> With this historical debate over first arrival, then, we observe tight linkages between academic speculation over the origins of the Romani people and projections about the course of all future subjects of the monarchy.

The work to historicize and reveal the origins of the “Gypsies” and their arrival in Europe brought together a diverse array of researchers, employing the methods of philology, linguistics, jurisprudence, and ethnology within an increasingly international academic milieu.<sup>20</sup> Alongside the development of ethnological studies of the peoples of the Habsburg monarchy and in particular, Transylvania, discourses emerged that cast the “Gypsy” as an oriental Other within east-central Europe against an emergent “national” concept.<sup>21</sup> This work drew upon a substantial,

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Born and Dirk Suckow, “Brigands and Virtuous Musicians: Representations of Roma (‘Gypsies’) as Oriental Other in the Eastern Part of the Habsburg Monarchy during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Constructing Race on the Borders of Europe: Ethnography, Anthropology, and Visual Culture, 1850–1930*, eds. Marsha Morton and Barbara Larson (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 87–88.

<sup>19</sup> Sándor Bene, “Illyria or What You Will: Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli’s and Pavao Ritter Vitezović’s ‘Mapping’ of the Borderlands Recaptured from the Ottomans,” in *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe*, eds. Balázs Trencsényi and Márton Zászkaliczky (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2010), 352.

<sup>20</sup> Born and Suckow observe that as no Protestant universities existed with the Habsburg monarchy, Calvinist ministers from Upper Hungary frequently studied in the Netherlands, while Transylvanian Saxon and Slovak Lutherans studied in Wittenberg, Halle, and Göttingen. There, these students acquired familiarity with the methods of anthropology and comparative linguistics and participated in the development of a new Central European discourse on “Gypsies.” Born and Suckow, “Brigands and Virtuous Musicians,” 89.

<sup>21</sup> Born and Suckow, “Brigands and Virtuous Musicians,” 85.

already existing body of research on the origins of the “Gypsy.” A partial reconstitution of sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century linguistic, philological, and ethnological debate over these origins reveals the remarkable variety of its working theories.<sup>22</sup> Within the field, adherents to various theories were classed, even by contemporary scholars, according to the territorial, cultural, and linguistic connections they drew between ancient and present-day “non-European” peoples and the “Gypsies.”

To take one early example, from 1684, the Saxon historian Martin Kelp observed in his systematic study of the peoples of Transylvania that, among the Hungarians, the “Gypsies” were frequently referred to as “the peoples of the Pharaoh” [*Pharao népek (sic)*], that is to say, Egyptians.<sup>23</sup> As will be discussed further, this was not just a vernacular quirk of Hungarian, but rather the dominant academic position for centuries.<sup>24</sup> However, Kelp posits a different history,

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<sup>22</sup> Anna Tkáčová’s summary analysis of early historical and ethnographic research includes the following locations as all considered, before the late eighteenth century, as possible “origins” of the “Gypsies:” the African province of Zeugitana; the city of Singar in Mesopotamia; the Caucasus; ancient Thrace or Chaldea; Persia; Syria; and Mongolia. Anna Tkáčová, “Rómovia v Abovskej, Šarišskej a Turnianskej stolici v druhej polovici 18. storočia” [Roma in the capitals of Abov (Abaúj), Šariš (Sáros), and Turnian (Torna) counties in the second-half of the eighteenth century], PhD diss. (Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, 2016), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Further attestation of this exonym is given in the work of seventeenth century Transylvanian Saxon historian, Lorenz Töppelt. While Töppelt’s *Origines et occasus Transsylvanorum* [Origins and downfall of the Transylvanians] (1667) focuses centrally on establishing the Roman (Dacian) origins of the Romanian people, he nevertheless dedicates some six pages of elaborate and colorful prose to justify the overwhelming negative attitude he observes among the “honorable” [*honestos*] against those he identifies as “Gypsies.” Among the faults Töppelt cites are their “impiety” and unfamiliarity with the tenets of Christianity, their early marriages and “fecundity” [*ſæcundi*], the “cheapness” of their dress, their propensity to quarrel, and, perhaps most damning for Töppelt, their work as torturers and executioners. Lorenz Töppelt, *Origines et Occasus Transsylvanorus* (Lyon: Hor. Boissat and Georg. Remeus, 1667), 55–60.

<sup>24</sup> This theory proved especially long lived. Consider, for example, the writings of English industrialist and author Samuel Roberts (1763–1848). Roberts, rejecting linguistic arguments on the Indian origins of the “Gypsies,” set out an alternative history that endeavored to link the “Gypsies” to the peoples cast out of Egypt during the time of Moses. That Roberts could observe no direct connections between ancient Egyptians and contemporary “Gypsies”—whether in religion, custom, dress, or otherwise—was not a weakness of his theory, he contended, but in fact its most persuasive proof. This “debasement” was rather part of God’s punishment for their idolatry: “The hand of God is thus made visible in their case, on the supposition that the Gypsies are the ancient Egyptians: for instance, the Egyptians prided themselves most particularly on the magnitude and durability of their structures, whether palaces, temples, or tombs. The Gypsies have not any of these. A slight, moveable, perishable covering of cloth, serves them to be born, to live, and to die in. The Egyptians regarded themselves, and were regarded by others, as the wisest and most learned people on the face of the earth; looking down with contempt on all others. Few of the Gypsies, even in countries where the poorest are learned, (Scotland,) know a letter; nor was there ever, as far as I know, a single sentence written in their language since their dispersion. The Egyptians were luxurious in their eating, beyond most,

suggesting that the “Gypsies” were in fact descendants of the Biblical Amorites, with little evidence other than the observation that some “Gypsies” referred to themselves by the ethnonym “Morre.” Whether settled on the outskirts of villages, towns, and cities, Kelp writes, or “crawling” [*perreptant*] through Transylvania plying magical arts, “a prouder nation is scarcely more visible under the sun than this people.” Their visibility, he concludes, was in part a result of their “ornaments . . . of red silk or red cloth” paired with dilapidated shoes, a combination that Kelp deemed so absurd that it could “stir up the laughter of [the famously ‘weeping philosopher’] Heraclitus.”<sup>25</sup> More than simply a pejorative aside, Kelp’s description of “Gypsy” dress spoke back to the ancient world, revivifying it in the contemporary European imagination, in a way much like an archeological discovery. Even as his text moves to place the “Gypsy” within the world of Biblical Canaan, the “Gypsy” is brought, albeit humorously, into intimate proximity with early Greek philosophy. Time, it would seem, could also be a historian’s game to play.<sup>26</sup>

In rejecting the Egyptian origins of the “Gypsy” through linguistic and sartorial evidence, Kelp not only repudiated the “common” [*vulgaris*] speech of Transylvanian Hungarians, but moreover, the dominant academic theory on the origins of the “Gypsies,” so authoritative that the later linguist Grellmann, whose influential text we will turn to shortly, would characterize it “as

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if not all the nations of antiquity. The Gypsies subsist on the plainest food, even the carcasses of dead animals that are thrown out or left to rot. The Egyptians were splendid in their attire, vain in their dress, and of their great riches. The Gypsies are generally clothed in rags, abjectly poor, and despised by the vilest of the meanest people. . . . ‘They shall be desolate amidst the countries that are desolate,’ said the Lord; and there is no people in the civilized world so desolate, that the Gypsies would not appear among them more so. This *must* be the Lord’s doing, it is indeed marvellous to our eyes!’ Samuel Roberts, *The Gypsies: Their Origin, Continuance, and Destination; Or, the Sealed Book Opened*, 5th ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1842), 60–61.

<sup>25</sup> “Vix extat sub sole magis hoc populo superba natio. . . . ex holoserico vel panno rubro satis habeatur ornamenti, etiamsi caligarum & calceorum rimæ & affumenta vel Heraclito risum moveant.” M. Martin Kelp, *Natales Saxonum Transsylvaniæ* [Birth of the Saxons of Transylvania] (Leipzig: Brandius, 1684), chap. II, sec. 14.

<sup>26</sup> B 52 DK. (With apologies to Heraclitus.)

old as the existence of these people in Europe.”<sup>27</sup> This tradition found a primary, though by no means first or only proponent in the Flemish humanist Bonaventura Vulcanius (1538–1614).<sup>28</sup> In the final decade of the sixteenth century, Vulcanius, equipped with a list of Nubian words he had acquired from the French classicist and Calvinist religious leader, Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), conducted a comparative study of this short lexicon with the language encountered among the “Gypsies” of Italy.<sup>29</sup> Based upon the affinity of three words, Vulcanius not only asserted the Nubian origins of the Romani language, but further detailed a speculative history of the causes of their migration out of northern Egypt, which he dated some 160 years prior to his writing in 1594. By his account, the “Gypsies” were driven out by the Egyptian (Malmuk) Sultan and, as mendicants, passed through Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor before crossing into the territories of Thrace and the Danube.<sup>30</sup>

Whether of Amorite or Egyptian, Nubian or Indian origin, the “Gypsy” that appears in these texts is frequently defined as the personified, structural antonym of the “European.” For an example of how starkly this antonymy could be demarcated, let us now turn to Grellmann’s 1783 work, *Die Zigeuner, ein historischer Versuch* (translated in English by Matthew Raper in 1787 as

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<sup>27</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 114.

<sup>28</sup> For an analysis of Vulcanius’s opusculum *De Literis et Lingua Getarum sive Gothorum* [On the letters and language of the Getaeans or Goths] in which his analysis of the Romani language appears, see Toon van Hal, “Vulcanius and His Network of Language Lovers: *De Literis et Lingua Getarum sive Gothorum* (1597),” in *Bonaventura Vulcanius, Works and Networks: Bruges 1538 – Leiden 1614*, ed. Hélène Cazes (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2010), 387–402.

<sup>29</sup> In the introduction to this brief text, Vulcanius admits that his study of the “Gypsy” language deviates from the overall project set out by the work—that is, a commentary on the Gothic languages of Europe—but nevertheless included it as he assumed that this language of “wanderers” would be of interest to his readers. Bonaventura Vulcanius, “De Nubianis erronibus quos Itali Cingaros appellant, eorumque lingua” [On the Nubian wanderers whom the Italian call Cingaros, and their language], in *De Literis et Lingua Getarum sive Gothorum* [On the letters and language of the Getaeans or Goths] (Raphelengium, 1597), 100–105.

<sup>30</sup> “Ante hos CLX. plus minus annos à Sultano Aegyptij sedibus suis pulsi Palæstinam, Syriam, & Asiam minorem mendicorum specie peruagantes, traiceto Hellesponto, Thraciam & circum Danubianas regiones incredibili multitudine inundarunt.” Vulcanius, “De Nubianis erronibus quos Itali Cingaros appellant,” 101. This reading would be challenged point-by-point by the orientalist and Ethopic scholar Hiob Ludolf. Hiob Ludolf, *Ad suam Historiam Æthiopicam antehac editam Commentarius* [Commentary on the previously published history of Ethiopia] (Frankfurt: Johannis David Zunneri, 1691), 214–15.

*Dissertation on the Gipsies*). The wide circulation this text received was likely a function of its studied borrowing (even plagiarism), translation, and interpretation of other scholars' observations of the "Gypsy" and the alluringly Manichean arrangement in which the author set them. "Let us reflect how differently they are from Europeans;" he writes in the introduction,

the one is white, the other black. This cloaths himself, the other goes half naked. This shudders at the thought of eating carrion, the other prepares it as a dainty. Moreover these people are famed, and were even from their first appearance in Europe, for being plunderers, thieves and incendiaries: so that the European not only dislikes, but hates them. For the above reasons, Europeans have always driven the Gipsies away from them, and it is only a few simple people, who have made a nearer acquaintance, in order to consult them in matters of superstition.<sup>31</sup>

*Europeans have always driven the Gipsies away from them*, as though opposing, magnetized poles; to Grellmann, it was only the "simple" [*Einfältige*] and the "rabble" [*Gesinde*] who were capable of doing otherwise.

Lest his point be unclear, Grellmann describes not only the "thinking" [*Denkart*] of the "Gypsies" but also their cultural endurance as products and evidence of their "oriental" origins. By Grellmann's analysis, if the "backwardness" of the "Gypsy" pointed to an "oriental" origin, it was the persistence of this "backwardness" within a European milieu that proved its "oriental" character. "The Gipsies are an eastern people," he argues,

and have eastern notions. It is inherent in uncivilized people, particularly those of Oriental countries, to be strongly attached to their own habits: every custom, every conception, which has once been current among them, be it ever so pernicious and ridiculous, is invariably preserved; or any affection which has once predominated in their minds, retains its dominion even for ages. Innovations do not easily succeed with them.<sup>32</sup>

Imposing "innovations" on "Gypsy" thinking and life and moreover, ensuring that they "take root," Grellmann contended, would require nothing less than "cunning and force" on the part of European states. Mark how this observation clears the way for renewed

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<sup>31</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, xv.

<sup>32</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, xvi.

antagonism: it is the allegedly observable inability of the “Gypsies” to change their ways that preemptively authorizes the “European” to keep at trying to change them.

As will be detailed below, to Grellmann, the most promising examples of these innovations were to be found in the assimilatory policies of the Habsburg monarchs Maria Theresa and Joseph II. Never one to miss an opportunity to advance his own program for “Gypsy” improvement, Grellmann argued that the only solution that could guarantee the end of the “deceit” that “Gypsies” carried out upon the “simple” peoples of Europe was if “every Gipsy is constrained to acknowledge some country, and to have some ostensible mode of gaining a livelihood.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, to Grellmann, bringing the “Gypsy” into modern time—and so removed from antiquated “fancy” of the “middle age” and a “deceitful” future—entailed a process of state intervention which would emplace the “Gypsy” within the borders of the nation through forced sedentarization and embedded within its economic life through labor. (Although Grellmann’s *Die Zigeuner* extensively lists the various trades employed by “Gypsies,” from smithing to gold washing, he nevertheless sets these aside by describing all “Gypsies” in need of transformation through a pedagogy of labor.)

As Born and Suckow observe, it is with direct reference to Grellmann that German philosopher and theologian Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) staked his claim that the “Gypsies”—along with Jews, Arabs, and Turks—were “foreign peoples” within Europe, each figuring as physical and spiritual threats to the growth and development of (European) national identities.<sup>34</sup> Herder’s is an overwhelmingly negative and pejorative description of the “Gypsy”: not quite of this world but “subterranean;” not familiar but “foreign;” not of any known faith, but

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<sup>33</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 34–35.

<sup>34</sup> Born and Suckow, “Brigands and Virtuous Musicians,” 91. For a further discussion of Herder’s presentation of the “Jewish question,” and alongside it, the “Gypsy question,” see: Alfred Apsler, “Herder and the Jews,” *Monatshefte für Deutschen Unterricht* [Journal of German studies] 35, no. 1 (1943): 1–15.

“heathen.”<sup>35</sup> As Herder writes in the sixteenth book of his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [Outlines of a philosophy of the history of man] (1784–1791), being removed from their homeland and all that might be considered divine, the “Gypsies” were descendants of “a reprobated Indian cast” that nevertheless remained “true to this degrading designation after the lapse of ages.”<sup>36</sup> Characteristic then of Herderian Romantic idealism on the development of the peoples of the world through the nexus of language, culture, and territory, the possibility of national development was necessarily foreclosed to the “Gypsies” as a consequence of their distance from their ancestral homeland. They were, at least in Europe, rootless among the “garden” of the peoples, removed from their natural form which nature itself could provide. As did Grellmann, Herder concludes his discussion of the “Gypsies” with recommendations to states seeking the “speedy” alteration of their manners. By Herder’s estimation, state actors need not heed humane considerations of fellow feeling but should, above all else, prioritize the economic and political interests of the state. His recommendation: “military discipline.” Indeed, military discipline would form just one component of the “Gypsy edicts” enacted by the Habsburg crown in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

What can thereby be observed is that, especially from the late eighteenth century onward, some academics engaged in answering the “Gypsy question” not only endeavored to relate “Gypsy” language and culture to their place of origin, but moreover, those traits that they defined as characteristic of the “Gypsy” were at once presented as an endurance *and* proof of their “oriental” manner of thinking and way of life. It was these characteristics that demanded the most radical forms of intervention. For Grellmann, this assumed emplacement in a double sense:

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<sup>35</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* vol. 2, 2nd ed., trans. T. Churchill (London: Luke Hansard, 1803), 357.

<sup>36</sup> Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* vol. 2, 357.

through territorial sedentarization and incorporation into the structure of local labor. For Herder, this assumed a singular form of discipline provided by the extension of military order to all aspects of life. (Herder’s vision of “transformation,” it is implied, focused squarely upon “Gypsy” men.) Such state interventions, as will be explored below, were in fact already in place at the time of both Grellmann and Herder’s writing, within the borders of the Habsburg monarchy.

## II. The “Gypsy Edicts” of Maria Theresa and Joseph II

A considerable body of ethnological research was ready at hand in the eighteenth century when Habsburg empress Maria Theresa (r. 1740–1780) and her son, emperor Joseph II (r. 1780–1790) pursued reform measures within the Kingdom of Hungary. Grellmann’s education, work, and the immediate reception of his 1783 dissertation coincides with these measures and, as we shall see, he offers a running commentary of their social import for Europe that inscribes them within the historical record.<sup>37</sup> The reform program sought not only to rationalize state institutions, but also to regulate social relations between subjects otherwise “captive to tradition.”<sup>38</sup> This not only entailed regulations on conduct between members of national groups, but also, on their internal communal structuring. For example, regulations upon marriage *between* “Gypsies,” introduced through imperial edict by Maria Theresa in 1773 in the Kingdom of Hungary and again, a decade later, by Joseph II in Transylvania, made such unions a privilege conditional upon evidence of orderly conduct, encompassing normative physical, material, and spiritual behavior.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> In this respect, Grellmann’s text is an early example of the genre trouble characteristic of the (non-Roma) telling of Romani history, which mixes academic normative retrospection with journalistic opinionated speculation.

<sup>38</sup> Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 117.

<sup>39</sup> The Hungarian Council of Governors would again issue an order to this effect on March, 9, 1775. Péter Tóth, “A magyarországi cigányság története a feudalizmus korában” [Hungarian Gypsy history in the feudal era], in *Alapirodalmak a hazai cigány/roma népességre vonatkozó társadalomtörténet, társadalomismeret oktatásához* [Foundational literature on the domestic Gypsy/Roma population for the teaching of social history and social

Concretely, orderliness was defined through assimilation into “peasant” [*paraszt*] economic life, sartorial taste, parental practice, and Catholic confession. In other words, desire dictated how “Gypsies” of the Kingdom of Hungary could enter into marriages, but this desire was to be oriented first and foremost through the state and its institutions, proven through continuous employment, acceptance of peasant dress, and regular church attendance and attested to by letters of good conduct from manorial lords.

Equality within the centralized Habsburg model, historian Miklós Tomka reminds us, entailed not only the principle of equal duties and obligations to the state, but also a single model of adaptation to the state form.<sup>40</sup> Exercising the right to marriage presumed that those wishing to wed also desired to be “new peasants” [*új-paraszt-s*], “new inhabitants” [*új-lakos-es*], or “new settlers” [*neocoloni*], the official categories that were to replace “Gypsy.” The monarchy’s desire for specific kinds of subjects, then, mediated how “Gypsies” were to express their desire to form families, but also to join in the family of peoples of the monarchy.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the familial life, sexuality, and desire of the *neocolonus* was to become a domain of disciplinary power, not only through confession of past “deviance” presumed inherent to the marked category of the “Gypsy,” but also as an individual act of testifying to the state that one had remade oneself into an assimilated subject.

As the following section examines, Theresian and Josephinian “Gypsy edicts” (and with them, the studies of researchers on the “Gypsy question” who supported these reform measures) not only forbade acts defined as characteristic of the “Gypsy” but set the scope of and terms by

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knowledge], ed. Tibor Cserti Csapó (Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem BTK NTI Romológia és Nevelésszociológia Tanszék, 2015), 192–200.

<sup>40</sup> Tomka, “A cigányok története,” 47–48.

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of how desire continues to orient the politics of assimilation and integration, here, through comparative cases of Canadian, British, and Dutch immigration exams, see Jessica L. Merolli, “Manufacturing Desire and Producing (Non-)Citizens: Integration Exams in Canada, the UK and Netherlands,” *Citizenship Studies* 20, 8 (November 2016): 957–72.

which royal authority could pronounce upon the ordinary lives of all non-Romani subjects. When considered together, these edicts composed a total category of the “Gypsy” with a singular, definitive nature in need of holistic transformation according to a model, if only speculative, of *paraszt* sociality. The bearer of the category “Gypsy” was always already presumed to be in a state of social and moral transgression until proven otherwise. Following Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, we might add “Gypsy” as a precursor to the “fine names for heresies” he enumerates that emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as objects of expert attention and public panic. For example, Foucault’s description of the historical shift from legal prohibitions on sodomy to the creation of the homosexual—a personage, even species, bearing a marked biography and morphology—over the course of the nineteenth century finds parallels with the earlier marking off of the “Gypsy” as a purportedly disordered sexual being in the Habsburg monarchy. “It was everywhere present in him,” Foucault writes, “at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away.”<sup>42</sup> Rather than casting the “Gypsy” as an untouchable pariah, Theresian and Josephinian “Gypsy edicts” presumed (which is also to say asserted) proximity between the state, its representatives, and the *paraszt* on one hand, and the “Gypsy” on the other. From child fostering to intermarriage, the “Gypsy edicts” sought to impose propinquity, at times violently, and in the process, suffused the “Gypsy question” with the sensuality of power and the power of sensuality.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 43.

<sup>43</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 44–45. What this historical overview on the “Gypsy question” as a matter of desire and sexuality contends is an outcome of processes of internal colonization of Europe. It thereby offers a metropolitan corollary to Ann Stoler’s argument that the colony gives crucial momentum to the reconfiguration of political power as a productive and not simply repressive force: “In short-circuiting empire, Foucault’s history of European sexuality misses key sites in the production of that discourse, discounts the practices that racialized bodies, and thus elides a field of knowledge that provided the contrasts for what a ‘healthy, vigorous, bourgeois

Together forming what Zoltán Bárány has dubbed the “textbook example of forcible assimilation,” the “Gypsy edicts” issued by Maria Theresa between 1749 and 1773, supported by decrees from the Royal Hungarian Council of Governors [*Magyar Királyi Helytartótanács*], imposed state oversight and control over near all aspects of “Gypsy” life, although enforcement was a decidedly uneven process throughout the Kingdom.<sup>44</sup> Four edicts promulgated by the empress between 1758 and 1773 constituted the cornerstone her policy on “Gypsy” assimilation; in addition to these, the historian Péter Tóth counts no fewer than seventeen decrees issued by the Council of Governors from 1758 onward, providing some indication of the importance assigned to posing and “solving” the “Gypsy question.”<sup>45</sup>

The first of these edicts, issued on December 1, 1749, attempted to remove “nomads and foreign beggars” from the Kingdom, a policy that historian David Crowe relates to broader Theresian efforts to “solve the problem of poverty” through forced evictions.<sup>46</sup> Such policies took their inspiration from the writings of Italian religious historian and social reformer Lodovico Muratori (1672–1750) who drew distinctions between undeserving “foreign beggars, vagabonds, and general riffraff” and a deserving poor, the latter of whom would be best served, Muratori argued, if the state were first to rid itself of the former.<sup>47</sup> While the four decades of Maria Theresa’s reign may have been defined by only tentative interventions into charity and poor relief, the era was nevertheless marked by repressive policies toward and frequent police

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body’ was all about.” Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 7.

<sup>44</sup> Bárány, *The East European Gypsies*, 93.

<sup>45</sup> Tóth, “A magyarországi cigányság története a feudalizmus korában,” 192–200.

<sup>46</sup> David M. Crowe, “From Persecution to Pragmatism: The Habsburg Roma in the Eighteenth Century,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 37 (2006), 113; and Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 157.

<sup>47</sup> Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Gedanken über die Abschaffung des Bettelns und Verpflegung der Armen* [Thoughts on the abolition of begging and feeding the poor], trans. Peter Obladen (Innsbruck: J. S. Siedler, 1784), 45–49, cited in Peter Bernard, “Poverty and Poor Relief in the Eighteenth Century,” in *State and Society in Early Modern Austria*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1994), 242.

searches for “beggars” [*Bettler*-s]. From the Theresian perspective, such measures were a necessary precondition for the eventual solution to the larger problem of rural poverty, although the matter was already becoming one of growing public discussion and interest.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the edict of 1749, ordinances issued in 1746, 1750, 1753, and 1754 authorized local magistrates to round up anyone found without adequate proof of citizenship and to march them, under armed guard, across the Transylvanian border.<sup>49</sup>

The first of Theresa’s four “Gypsy edicts,” promulgated in 1758, partly reaffirmed restrictions on “Gypsy” movement and mobility imposed by her father, emperor Charles VI / Hungarian king Charles III (r. 1711–1740).<sup>50</sup> Drawing a clear distinction between the putatively foreign “Gypsy” and native “inhabitants of the country,” this edict proposed to “protect” the latter from the “horde of stray, thieving, robbing Gypsies” by requiring that all “Gypsies” admitted by manorial lords commit themselves to regular employment, an orderly life, and permanent residence; those “Gypsies” who refused sedentarization and emplacement were to be driven beyond the boundaries of the territory (decreed by the Council of Governors on November 27, 1760).<sup>51</sup> The Council of Governors decree of November 27, 1760 additionally required that “Gypsies” adapt to Christian morality in the name of the civic good. In what van Baar describes as a shift away from “external” assimilatory pressure to “internal interference” in

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<sup>48</sup> Martin Scheutz, “Demand and Charitable Supply: Poverty and Poor Relief in Austria in the 18th and 19th Centuries,” in *Health Care and Poor Relief in 18th and 19th Century Southern Europe*, eds. Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham, and Bernd Roeck (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 62.

<sup>49</sup> Eleonore Zlabinger, *Ludovico Antonio Muratori und Österreich* [Ludovico Antonio Muratori and Austria] (Innsbruck: Kommissionsverlag der Österreichischen Kommissionsbuchhandlung, 1970), 145, cited in Bernard, “Poverty and Poor Relief in the Eighteenth Century,” 243.

<sup>50</sup> Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 156. This edict was supported by a decree issued by the Council of Governors on April 16, 1758. Tóth, “A magyarországi cigányság története a feudalizmus korában,” 192. That this edict exhibits continuities with those of Charles VI stands in contrast with Bárány’s contention that Maria Theresa was motivated to pursue a more moderate assimilatory approach in response to the “heavy handed[ness]” of her predecessors. Bárány, *The East European Gypsies*, 93.

<sup>51</sup> Fejér megyei Levéltár Apf. XXV. No. 75 1758 in János Heiczinger, “Fejezetek a cigánykérdés alakulásáról” [Notes on the evolution of the Gypsy question], *Fejér megyei történeti évkönyv* [Fejér county historical yearbook] 12 (1978), 175–76.

Romani life, a second edict of 1761 banned the use of the term “Gypsy” on penalty of a fine (affirmed by decree of the Council of Governors on December 10, 1761) and named duties and obligations that Roma were to provide to the Crown, notably, against the backdrop of the Seven Years’ War, compulsory military service for men above the age of sixteen (affirmed by decree of the Council of Governors on February 15, 1762).<sup>52</sup> The Council of Governors’ decree of December 10, 1761, mentioned above, further provided specifications on the regulation of “Gypsy” employment and mobility by ordering that “Gypsies” be admitted into guilds, requiring mandatory labor to manorial lords or public works, restricting horse trading and wagon ownership, banning the issuance of travel documents to “Gypsies,” and invalidating those of foreign “Gypsies,” who were to be expelled to their earlier places of residence (extended through decrees of the Council of Governors on February 17, 1766, and July 24, 1769). Maria Theresa’s third edict of 1767 eliminated the traditional power of the *vajda* (a Romani leader and tax collector), required children to receive training in a craft, obliged “Gypsies” to adopt the sartorial norms of the Magyar peasantry, and forbade children from appearing in public without dress (Council of Governors decree of December 10, 1767).<sup>53</sup>

The reputation that “Gypsy” women regularly transgressed gendered sartorial norms, it bears noting, likely motivated Theresian efforts to regulate their dress. In a paradoxical fashion characteristic of this kind of ethnographic writing, “Gypsy” dress could be at once described as

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<sup>52</sup> van Baar, “The European Roma,” 121.

<sup>53</sup> Tóth, *A magyarországi cigánység története a feudalizmus korában*, 194. See also Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, 70; Bárány, *The East European Gypsies*, 93; Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, 73–76; Crowe, “From Persecution to Pragmatism,” 113; Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 156–57; István Kemény, “History of Roma in Hungary” in István Kemény, ed., *Roma of Hungary*, trans. Andrew Gane (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2005), 16; Tomka, “A cigányok története,” 47–48; and Danijel Vojak and Neven Kovačev, “Theresian and Josephine Reform Efforts in the Regulation of the Socioeconomic Position of Roma in Croatia and Slavonia.” *Povijesni Prilozi* 55 (December 2018): 285–304.

“apparitionlike” in its concealment and too corporeal in its deconcealment [Figure 3].<sup>54</sup>

“Occasionally [women’s] dress partakes of the other sex, as they wear breeches or some other male habiliment,” Grellmann writes, before, just a paragraph later, condemning these very same women for defying nature in another way: by revealing too much of their bodies. “They are as fond of dress as the men, and equally ridiculous in it,” he writes, “they often wear a dress cap, while their rotten linen jacket, scarce cover those parts which nature instructs us to conceal, or leave their smoaked breasts open to view.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> József Benkő, *Transsilvania; sive, Magnus Transsilvaniae principatus, olim Dacia Mediterranea dictus* [Transylvania; or, the Great Principality of Transylvania, formerly called Dacia Mediterranea], 2nd ed. (Cluj: Lycei Regii, 1834), 504.

<sup>55</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gypsies*, 21. “Smoaked” here refers to the belief that “Gypsies” darkened the skin of their children artificially by placing them near fire or lying them out in the sun when covered with dye so that “the black penetrates the deeper.” In the seventeenth century, German jurist and historian Jakob Thomasius (1622–1684), citing a poem by Dutch humanist writer Caspar Barlaeus (1584–1648), remarked that that “Gypsies” not only darkened their appearance through dyes and sunlight, but could lighten their skin through the use of lye solutions. Caspar Barlaeus, “Cheiromantis,” in *Antverpiani Poemata. Edition IV, Altera plus parte auctior: Pars I. Heroicorum* [Antwerp poems. Edition IV, a continuation of: Part I. On the heroic] (Amsterdam: Ioannem Blaeu, 1645), 673; and Jakob Thomasius, *Dissertatio Philosophica de Cingaribus* [Philosophical dissertation on the Gypsies] (Leipzig: Johann-Eric Hahn, 1671), para. 63.



FIGURE 3. Eighteenth Century Ethnographic Illustration of Romani Dress

Illustration and accompanying poem included in the eighteenth century German translation of Jakob Thomasius's *Dissertatio Philosophica de Cingaris* (originally printed in 1671). Jakob Thomasius, *Gründliche historische Nachricht von denen Ziegeunern, darinnen nebst andern Merckwürdigkeiten dieses Volcks insonderheit desselben Ursprung und erstes Vaterland, Ankunfft, Fortpflanzung und Ausbreitung in Teutschland und andern europäischen Ländern aus bewährten Geschicht-Schreibern kürzlich gezeiget und erwiesen wird* [Foundational historical information on the Gypsies, in addition to other curiosities of this people, in particular on the same origins and first homeland, arrival, reproduction and spread in Germany and other European countries from trusted historians, recently shown and proven] (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1748).

*Poetic translation of caption:*

At home everywhere and yet nowhere in the land,  
 Propheying fortune and woe from the lines of the hand,  
 On occasion singeing, burning, robbing, and engaging in murders,  
 Who learns neither the arts, nor is suited to our orders.

Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt.

Intervening yet further in Romani life and community order, the fourth and final Theresian “Gypsy edict,” issued in 1773, attempted to hasten the assimilation of “Gypsies” by ordering intermarriage between *paraszt*-s and *cigány*-s (further decreed by the Council of Governors on March 9, 1775) and confirmed earlier regulations on permanent residence and peasant dress. It introduced seven additional areas of social control. First, infractions of dietary norms (*i.e.*, the consumption of carrion) were to be punished through an enforced, monthlong fast on bread and water and imprisonment in the jail of the magistrate. Second, horses owned by “Gypsies” were to be sold off, with two-thirds of value to be retained by the former owner with the remainder paid to the notifier of the auction. Third, the edict attempted to decouple migration from trade by ordering that musicians and smiths could only ply their trades on condition that they owned a home in the village and that their family members were not “idlers.” Fourth, and perhaps most infamously, children were to be removed from their “Gypsy” parents and placed in the care of peasant households, “resulting,” as Bárány observes, “in the virtual kidnapping of approximately 18,000 Gypsy children from their families.”<sup>56</sup> Fifth, children were to be educated for free in parish schools and to be recruited into guilds. Sixth, use of the Romani language was strictly prohibited on threat of severe punishment. And finally, seventh, for the purposes of taxation, the edict ordered that “Gypsies” be entered into the tax registers as serfs or as married or unmarried tenant farmers under the category of *új-paraszt* [new peasant] (further decreed by the Council of Governors on February 22, 1773).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Bárány, *The East European Gypsies*, 93. This language finds parallel with Grellmann’s writing that Theresian family policies functioned to sever “intercourse with the Gypsy race.” Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gypsies*, 84. Erin Jenne states that in the year 1780 alone, some 17,000 “Gypsy” children were removed from their parents and placed with foster families. Erin Jenne, “The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe: Constructing a Stateless Nation,” in *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe: State Building, Democracy, and Ethnic Mobilization*, ed. Jonathan P. Stein (Armonk, NY: East-West Institute, 2000), 195.

<sup>57</sup> Tóth, “A magyarországi cigányság története a feudalizmus korában,” 196.

In an inversion of the oft-repeated canard that Romani parents bear children exclusively to access social welfare benefits, but one that nevertheless exposes the equivalence of the lives of children with capital on state budgetary ledgers, the edict attempted to incentivize *paraszt* families to foster “Gypsy” children through direct alimony payments from the county in the amount of three kreutzers per day per child, so long as the child was unable to work. On these payments, rates of alimony were variable by age and determined by the amount of labor the child was assumed to be able to perform in service of the foster family: twelve Gulden annually for boys to the age of twelve and girls to the age of ten, thereafter reduced to four Gulden per year for girls between the ages of ten and fourteen.<sup>58</sup> As a Council of Governors decree of January 3, 1774 clarified, only children above the age of two but below the age of twelve could be removed from their parents; those older were to be directed into guilds, a policy exemplary of the ways Theresian reformists understood labor itself as parental tutelage. Furthermore, “Gypsy” children were to be placed with Catholic peasants whenever possible; exceptions could be made for non-Catholic fostering should Catholic homes prove insufficient in number, though always on the understanding that the parish priest would ensure the Catholic upbringing of the child.<sup>59</sup>

Historians have argued that these removals were limited in scope due to the absence of state control mechanisms as well as Romani resistance and escapes.<sup>60</sup> And yet, recent research carried out in regional archives suggests that, far from an uncommon practice, the scope of these removals and the length of these fostering arrangements were in fact far more extensive and longer lasting than previously understood.<sup>61</sup> As Pál Nagy emphasizes, these fostering

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<sup>58</sup> Johann Heinrich Schwicker, *Die Zigeuner in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen* [The Gypsies in Hungary and Transylvania] (Vienna: Karl Prochaska, 1883), 54.

<sup>59</sup> Tóth, “A magyarországi cigányság története a feudalizmus korában,” 196.

<sup>60</sup> Zimmermann, “Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerdiskurse im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts,” 35.

<sup>61</sup> For an examination of these policies in the northeastern counties of the Kingdom of Hungary, see Tkáčová, “Rómovia v Abovskej, Šarišskej a Turnianskej stolici v druhej polovici 18. storočia.”

arrangements carried a decidedly economic function, wherein children placed with peasant families were expected to provide labor and domestic service over the age of twelve for an equal number of years as they had been fostered. Moreover, Romani children were not always directed to *paraszt* families but could also be placed with craftsmen; in 1773, the Council of Governors encouraged such placements of Romani boys over the age of twelve, indicating that demands for increased labor-power determined ways in which children were placed within households. Regional economic differences also shaped the enforcement of these policies: the economic benefits conferred by fostering appealed to *paraszt*-s growing cash crops in Somogy, to German tobacco growers in Szulok, to wealthy landlords for kitchen work and domestic labor, and to members of the middle class—including doctors, teachers, and clerks—to perform various household and business activities. Age limits and periods of service could extend past their “intended” ranges, at times, a result of outright coercion. Nagy documents that in the 1774 census among the 167 Roma living with foster parents in Fejér county, many were above twelve years of age, with a few even in their thirties.<sup>62</sup>

We could say, then, that childhood fostering bore more than a passing similarity to an arrangement of indentured servitude, disordering Romani families even as these policies were pursued in the name of instilling a sense of order within Romani children. The alimonies received by foster parents and the labor extracted from fostered children could significantly elevate the social and economic status of the fostering family. These annual alimonies were of no trifling amount—alone, they were sufficient for peasants to pay the quitrent [*robotváltság*] due to the manorial lord, thus functioning as a form of tax forgiveness.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Nagy, ““Kicsinségemben elszakattam,”” 330–31.

<sup>63</sup> Nagy, ““Kicsinségemben elszakattam,”” 331.

Child removals, however, were not the only familial dimension of the Theresian “Gypsy edicts.” In a policy intended to, as Bárány argues, “dilute Romani bloodlines and speed up their assimilation,” the fourth edict (1773) ordered that marriages between “Gypsies” be prohibited unless it could be proven that the would-be groom possessed a sufficient economic basis to provide for a wife and children through a craft or some other “legal” means (supported by the Council of Governors decree of March 9, 1775).<sup>64</sup> Should a “Gypsy” woman wish to wed, she must provide documentation that she had served dutifully in the household of a peasant, burgher, or nobleman, and that she was competent in the fundamentals of the Catholic faith. Upon providing this letter of good conduct, she was to be granted a dowry by the state in the amount of fifty Gulden.<sup>65</sup>

In *Die Zigeuner*, Grellmann gives an overwhelmingly favorable evaluation of the “Gypsy edicts.” Though these “wise dispositions” may have indeed employed “compulsory” means, he writes, such force was not only justified, but moreover, “necessary, and the only [means] capable of insuring success.”<sup>66</sup> Grellmann, however, does not shirk from recounting the everyday and extraordinary violence entailed by the Theresian “Gypsy” family policies, though it bears noting that he does so to emphasize, appraisingly, the lengths to which agents of the state would go in order to ensure their implementation. If Grellmann is critical of anyone, it is of the laxity of local officials who chose to ignore the edicts. “At Fahlendorf, in Schütt, and in the district of Pressburg,” he writes,

all the children of the New Boors (Gipsies) above five years old, were carried away in waggons, in the night of the twenty-first of December 1773, by overseers appointed for that purpose; in order, that, at a distance from their parents or relations, they might be more usefully educated, and become accustomed to work. Those Boors who are willing to receive and bring up these children, are paid eighteen guilders yearly from Government.

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<sup>64</sup> Bárány, *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, 93; Tóth, “A magyarországi cigánység története a feudalizmus korában,” 196; Vojak and Kovačev, 291.

<sup>65</sup> Schwicker, *Die Zigeuner in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen*, 54.

<sup>66</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 85.

On the 24th of April 1774, between five and six o'clock in the morning, the children of the Gipsies, which had been growing up, from December of the foregoing year, were again removed from Fahlendorf in Schütt and Hideghid, for the purpose of being put under the same course of discipline as the others. Among the former was a girl fourteen years old, who was forced to submit to be carried off in her bridal state. She tore her hair for grief and rage, and was quite beside herself with agitation: but she has now (1776) recovered a composed state of mind, having, in Fasching, obtained permission to accomplish her marriage.<sup>67</sup>

*At a distance from their parents or relations, they might be more usefully educated, and become accustomed to work.* Rather than distinct from Theresian policies of sedentarization and labor, child removals and regulations on marriage were rather to serve these ends by making the family and its reproduction the site for violent, coercive enactments of assimilatory transformation.<sup>68</sup>

That parenting and marriage would be the relation through which the empress and the Council of Governors would seek to impose the disciplinary function of the state is revealing of the heightened suspicion with which Habsburg authorities—and, too, academics—treated “Gypsy” child rearing and unions. “Gypsy” marriages in particular were often denigrated in language similar to that used to describe “Gypsy” nature, migration, custom, and dress, that is, with reference to its purportedly “wild” [*vad*] nature (*i.e.*, as “wild marriage” [*vadházasság*, a calque of the German expression *wilde Ehe*]).<sup>69</sup> Unions between a woman and man without official recognition by public authorities or the church were, it bears noting, historically common in many Romani and *paraszt* communities throughout the Kingdom of Hungary, in some cases, for the simple reason that the offices where such unions could be registered legally were at an

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<sup>67</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 84–85.

<sup>68</sup> For discussions of indigenous child removal policies in settler colonial contexts, see Cindy Blackstock, Muriel Bamblett, and Carlina Black, “Indigenous Ontology, International Law and the Application of the Convention to the Over-Representation of Indigenous Children in Out of Home Care in Canada and Australia,” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 110, 1 (2020): 1–11; and Antonio Buti, “The Removal of Aboriginal Children: Canada and Australia Compared,” *University of Western Sydney Law Review* 6 (2002): 25–37.

<sup>69</sup> Linguist Katalin Sipőcz gives the first attestation of *vadházasság* to 1796. Katalin Sipőcz, “Vadvíz,” in *Etimológiai szótár: Magyar szavak és toldalékok eredete* [Etymological dictionary: origins of Hungary verbs and suffixes], ed. Gábor Zaicz (Budapest: TINTA Könyvkiadó, 2006), 784. Historically, the word not only denoted “unlawful” cohabitation, but also concubinage. Friedrich Schmitthenner, “Die Concubine,” *Kurzes Deutsches Wörterbuch für Etymologie, Synonymik und Orthographie* (Darmstadt: Friedrich Metz, 1837), 50.

inconvenient distance from the couple's home. While such unions were generally looked upon as binding relationships, in vernacular speech, references to "wild marriages" nevertheless made explicit connections to their supposed "Gypsy" character, for example, in the expression, a marriage in the "Gypsy faith" [*cigányhit*].<sup>70</sup> To Grellmann, "Gypsy" marriages were uniquely uncivilized and disordered, as much the consequence of lax parental authority as of an overabundance of adolescent male sexual desire. The "Gypsy" marriage was a product of excess liberty bordering on libertinism, absent external social or internal moral restraint. Overwhelmingly, Grellmann depicts all "Gypsy" marriages as heedless and thoughtless, motivated almost exclusively by sexual urge. "There is not, perhaps, any other people among whom marriages are contracted with so little consideration," he writes,

or solemnized with so little ceremony, as among the Gipsies. As soon as a boy has attained the age of fourteen or fifteen years, he begins to perceive, that something more than mere eating and drinking is necessary to him. Having no fear of consequences, nor being under any restraint from his parents, he forms a connection, with the girl he most fancies, of twelve, or at most thirteen years old, without any scruple of conscience, whether she be his nearest relation, or an entire stranger. . . . The term of courtship is very short, often only long enough for the parties to communicate their mutual inclination. They do not wait for any marriage ceremony, as it is a matter of no consequence to them, whether it be performed afterwards, or not at all. Yet they do not seem to be entirely indifferent about matrimony, not on account of conforming to any institution, but a pride they have in imitating what is done by other people, lest they should appear to be inferior to them: As the very early age of the parties, or some other irregularity, might meet with objections from a regular clergyman, they frequently get one of their own people to act the priest, and tack the decent couple together. . . . Should his wife commit a fault at any future time, he gives her a dozen boxes on the ear, or very likely, for some trifling cause, turns her off entirely. . . . It is always to be remembered, that a Gipsej never marries a person who is not of the true Gipsej breed."<sup>71</sup>

Under Joseph II, Theresian reforms would be extended to Transylvania through two further edicts. The first of these, titled *Opinione de domiciliatione et regulatione Zingarorum* [Opinion on the settlement and regulation of Gypsies] and promulgated on September 12, 1782,

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<sup>70</sup> Judit Morvay, "Vadházasság," in *Magyar néprajzi lexikon V. (Sz-Zs)* [Hungarian ethnographic dictionary vol. 5 (Sz-Zs)], ed. Gyula Ortutay (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982), 456–57.

<sup>71</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 45–46.

reprised many of the concerns addressed by the four Theresian edicts and the decrees of the Council of Governors. Among its points, it required that Romani children attend school and families attend church services, forbade children from appearing in public undressed and children of different sexes from sleeping in the same bed, prohibited the ownership of horses, obligated landowners to provide Roma with land when available and Roma to work it, and restricted Romani musicians from performing (unless no work could be found in the fields).<sup>72</sup> In the following year, on October 9, 1783, Joseph II issued a final, fifty-nine-point decree, known as the *Hauptregulatio* [Main regulation], now to cover both the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania. No longer were Roma to live in tents, it ordered, and children above the age of four were to be placed with foster families. The *Hauptregulatio* forbade nomadism and the use of the Romani language on the threat of punishment by twenty-four lashes. The changing of names was similarly prohibited, as was begging and vagrancy. To ensure implementation, the edict demanded that local authorities provide monthly reports on those Roma living within their district.<sup>73</sup>

Grellmann, writing in support of these Theresian and Josephinian reforms, however commented that more could be done, especially in the domain of enforcement: “Should [Joseph II’s] undertaking succeed, and he should, moreover, revive this business with good effect in Hungary, where it seems to have fallen into oblivion; it will be an additional jewel in his crown, nor will it be the last among his other achievements, transmitted to posterity, that upwards of eighty thousand miserable wretches, ignorant of God and virtue, deep sunk in vice and brutality,

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<sup>72</sup> Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, 72; David Cressy, *Gypsies: An English History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 28; and Mayerhofer, *Dorfzigeuner*, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, 72. The *Hauptregulatio* is reproduced in “II. József rendelkezése, 1783” [Order of Joseph II, 1783], trans. János Heiczinger, in Mezey, ed., *A magyarországi cigánykérdés dokumentumokban*, 85–94.

like only half men, wandering in error, were by him drawn out of their delusion, converted to human creatures, and made good citizens.”<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

Defining the “Gypsy” as a self-consistent non-European other within the heart of Europe was a project that traversed academic debate into state policy and practice and back again, all with the aim of stabilizing a positive and normative description of “European” peoples and their civilizational acculturation. This debate played out even as the idea of Europe underwent processes of more or less directed historical transformation (*i.e.*, self-differentiation) that, if confronted on its own terms, might otherwise have been open to political and moral criticism. In their linguistic, historical, and ethnological research, humanist and Enlightenment academics made the “Gypsy question” in the name of uncovering the origins of the “Gypsy” and with it, made recommendations on how the “Gypsy” could be brought out of the obscurity of the past and into the present. This research in turn informed and commented upon policies pursued by European monarchs, most notably, in the “reformist” edicts issued by Habsburg emperors Maria Theresa and Joseph II in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Historical analysis of the Theresian and Josephinian edicts typically focus on the practical aspects of these policies, that is, on their enforcement and what this can reveal about the organization of power and authority within the enlightened absolutist Habsburg monarchy. Recent examinations of specific policies—namely, those of child removal and fostering—suggest that while not all of these eighteenth century “Gypsy edicts” may have been carried out, some were. The silences of the archive make it difficult to reconstruct how these edicts were

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<sup>74</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 87–88.

experienced by the Roma required to forcibly assimilate into the Hungarian *paraszt*. We can only imagine the fear and pain felt by Romani parents as their children were taken away by police, by couples who were forbidden to marry.

What the archive is not silent on is the legacy of these policies. In the centuries that followed, including through the state socialist period and into today, Hungarian political speech on the “Gypsy question” makes frequent references to these “Gypsy edicts,” though often obliquely. The excerpt from the late nineteenth century *Pallas* encyclopedia, with which this chapter began, puts the matter succinctly: “A more humane era followed. They wished to civilize and resettle them. This also failed.” In this way, the Theresian and Josephinian “Gypsy edicts” become not just responses to the “Gypsy question,” but in fact part of the question itself.

Many of the domains of intervention taken up by the Theresian and Josephinian edicts—among them, labor, the structure of the family, sedentarization, and taste—are taken up directly in state socialist policy, though in the name of historical materialism and as setting a new course in history itself. But subtending these policies is a similar understanding of the “Gypsy question” as a matter of attending to a *cigány* out-of-placeness in *magyar* time, a backwardness [*elmaradottság*] that demanded the radical transformation of their labor, their family lives, and their domestic spaces in the name of order [*rend*]. It is to Romani work, and the role it played in the Hungarian socialist state, that we now turn.

## **CHAPTER 2: LABOR ON THE LINE. TIME, WORK, AND THE NEW (ROMANI)**

### **SOCIALIST PERSON**

When [Magyars] say “we [Roma] don’t work,” or “don’t want to work,” how do they forget that in Hungary there is no land in which Roma people would not work? I am asking whether the roads, bridges, and houses are not recalling our work?<sup>1</sup>

— Hungarian Romani activist and historian Ágnes Daróczy, 2021

Pál Schiffer’s first documentary for the Balázs Béla Film Studio, *Fekete Vonat* [Black train], released in 1970, opens onto the crowded rail platform of Budapest’s Eastern railway terminal [*Keleti pályaudvar*].<sup>2</sup> Men in jackets and shirtsleeves wait beside a train’s long row of carriages. Others lean out of its windows, enjoying a final cigarette. In a steady, familiar cadence, the disembodied, tinny voice of a female rail announcer intones the order of stops for the train’s impending outward journey: “Attention! The workers’ train departs for Cegléd – Szolnok – Debrecen – Záhony at 15:15.” The journey begins, though not all its passengers seem ready, running to board even as the train begins its egress. As the carriages recede to an increasing blur before the viewer, a voice calls, “Hello!/Farewell!” [*Szervusztok!*] The call serves as much as a welcome to the cinemagoer watching this quotidian, though rarely represented scene of Hungarian workaday life as it does to mark the end of the workweek in the city within the frame.

Cut to the interior of the train, no less cheek-to-jowl than the platform seen moments before [*Figure 4*]. Equipped with a handheld camera and microphone, cinematographer Tamás Andor and director Schiffer shift between the men onboard to commence a composite interview with them, some exhausted and half asleep, others standing in impatient agitation. We quickly learn that this mixed group—many of whom are Roma, though by no means exclusively—had

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<sup>1</sup> Ágnes Daróczy, “Történelem és identitás” [History and identity], (online, Barvalipe Online University, Budapest, October 19, 2021), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pa\\_6uN08BB4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pa_6uN08BB4) (accessed October 27, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> *Fekete Vonat* [Black train], dir. Pál Schiffer (Balázs Béla Film Studio, 1970).

just concluded a week of work in and around Budapest and had commenced a journey that would last as long as, or even longer than, the shifts they had completed. Ten-hour trips with transfers were far from exceptional. It was a familiar if expensive journey. Monthly, they paid four hundred forints or more to travel from their homes and families in towns and villages across east and northeastern Hungary to the steel works in Budapest’s southern district of Csepel, to its Kőbánya gasworks, to its construction sites and warehouses, and elsewhere. One rider, with a mixture of pride and frustration, recounted that over the last twenty-two years, he had commuted to many of the country’s larger cities, including Győr, Miskolc, and Nyíregyháza, all to earn bread for his family.



FIGURE 4. Interior of the “Black Train” on Its Return Journey to Szabolcs-Szatmár County Still from Pál Schiffer’s 1970 documentary, *Fekete Vonat* [Black train].

The lives of these commuters—sometimes known as “bundlemen” [*batyus-es*], “double dwellers” [*kétlaki-s*], or “commuters” [*ingázó-s*—were far from exceptional within state socialist Hungary.<sup>3</sup> This was especially the case for rural Roma, who, as this chapter explores,

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<sup>3</sup> Eszter Zsófia Tóth, “A *Fekete Vonat*, *Cséplő Gyuri*, a *Pártfogolt* – ingázók a dokumentumfilmekben” [The *Fekete Vonat*, *Cséplő Gyuri*, and *Protégé* commuters in the documentary films], *Eszmélet* [Consciousness] (April 2008):

were frequently targets of both state policy and firm management for recruitment into industries in Budapest and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the “black train” [*fekete vonat*] itself became associated with Roma in the popular imaginary, bound up with associations of the moving carriages as a space and metaphor for purportedly “deviant” [*deviáns*] and “socially condemnable” [*társadalmi elítélendő*] behavior, which the film does not shy away from representing.<sup>5</sup> No matter the vital contributions of such commuters to the Hungarian economy, for state planners, this social stratum, because it occupied an uncomfortable interstice between the traditional life of the village and the modernity of urban agglomerations, lacked deep roots to the working class and was therefore lacking in class consciousness.<sup>6</sup> As this chapter explores, the moralizing critique of the purportedly rootless commuter has a long history within Hungarian everyday and official speech.<sup>7</sup> Such associations intersected powerfully with state discourses after 1949, connected to

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[https://www.eszmelet.hu/toth\\_eszter\\_zsofia-a-fekete-vonat-cseplo-gyuri-a-partfogol/](https://www.eszmelet.hu/toth_eszter_zsofia-a-fekete-vonat-cseplo-gyuri-a-partfogol/) (accessed October 21, 2021). Donert observes similar practices and official condemnations of commuting in Czechoslovakia; the express train between Košice and Prague came, as early as 1951, to be known colloquially as the “Gypsy” train. Firm and collective farm managers at times attempted to directly recruit Slovak Roma onboard this train, circumventing official labor practices. Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 64–65.

<sup>4</sup> In 1976, a report circulated by the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee [*Tárcaközi Koordinációs Bizottság*] counted some 70,000 Roma as living or commuting to work in Budapest. If the report’s estimates from 1971 (that 8 percent of all Roma lived in Budapest) held true for the 1976 data, this would mean a full-time residential Romani population of 28,000 in the capital (of an estimated national population of 350,000). Accordingly, we could speculate that as many as 42,000 Roma commuted into the city for work. However, the report does not specify the lengths of these commutes, nor what percentage of Roma traveled into the city via long-distance rail journeys. HU MNL XIX-A-83-b 3280/1976 (777. d.) – Géppel írt tisztázat: Lajos Papp, “A cigánylakosság helyzetének javításával foglalkozó” [Concerning the improvement of the situation of the Gypsy population], May 13, 1976 in Hajnáczy, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality*, 252.

<sup>5</sup> Tóth, “A Fekete Vonat.” These associations persist, perhaps most readily observed in the name of the Romani rap group Fekete Vonat, formed in the latter half of the 1990s. Sarah Elizabeth Simeziane, “Roma Rap and the *Black Train*: Minority Voices in Hungarian Hip Hop,” MA thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Tóth, “A Fekete Vonat.”

<sup>7</sup> Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*, 56–83; Richard S. Esbenshade, “The Populist-Urbanist Debate in Hungary and the Divided Construction of Hungarian National Identity, 1929–1944,” PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz (2006); and Martha Lampland, *The Value of Labor: The Science of Commodification in Hungary, 1920–1956* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 29–48. The ethnographic, sociological, and political moralization of commuter labor is not unique to the Kingdom of Hungary and the People’s Republic. Cf. David Blackbourn’s social history of nineteenth century commuter labor in Germany. David Blackbourn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Nineteenth-Century German Village* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

associated and longstanding framings of Romani labor as hypermobile, and thus in need of disciplinary control and regulation, if not to say ideological reeducation.

This chapter explores throughlines across regime change of, specifically, the descriptions of Romani time to understand the official labor policies they supported, a descriptive two-way street. As I argue, the Romani working day, its patterns of labor-based migration, and its place within the temporality of collective society stood at the very heart of state socialist Hungary's modernization efforts and its drive to recruit Romani labor into the project of building socialism in the years following the Second World War. Rather than a change in the overall ambition of the Hungarian state vis-à-vis Roma, this represents a continuation of nineteenth century regulatory practices—though directed toward different industries and with a new ideological gloss after 1949.

Inspired by historian Celia Donert's examination of socialist labor politics in postwar Czechoslovakia, this chapter seeks to push past policies and official narratives and their metaphorizations of Romani time and labor to understand how these processes were experienced by Roma. In her intervention, Donert observes that, at first glance, it may seem "far-fetched" to posit the development of a "Stalinist Gypsy worker" as the ideal citizen of the new regime following the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948. The creation of a "new socialist man," however, was not a unilateral process, but one negotiated in multiple ways: between Central Committee and local councils, local councils and workplaces, workplaces and Romani laborers. Unpacking the "surprisingly diverse ways in which Roma, Sinti, and other citizens responded to these plans," she contends, complicates our understanding of the terms of citizenship in the Stalinist era.<sup>8</sup> Extending these arguments, I show that if, in a classical Marxian

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<sup>8</sup> Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 48.

sense, the encounter with industrial production necessarily transforms the subjectivities of laborers, for Hungarian Roma in the late-1940s and through the waning years of the People's Republic, these transformations may not have occurred in ways expected by socialist planners. The outcomes of such social transformation were necessarily unknowable to state authorities, but they still held expectations of its direction. What would they do to keep these on the rails? If a transformation of Romani subjectivity occurred through labor, who were they to dispute its results? As Donert reminds us, the abstract concepts of state socialism, not to mention its underlying political philosophy, can fail to capture how the postwar decade was lived and experienced amidst new social and political conditions.<sup>9</sup>

Romani labor was a social question and, at the same time, a lived reality over the course of the four decades of state socialist government in Hungary; what is not self-evident is the relationship between these parallel historical characterizations. To understand the extent and scope of the transformation effected by state socialist labor policies on Romani life, this chapter begins with an analysis of the structure of Romani work at the turn of the twentieth century, in 1893, the year of the Kingdom of Hungary's Gypsy Census (Section I). It then moves to the immediate postwar years, mapping the drives and dynamics of state socialist Romani labor recruitment in heavy industry, especially mining, metallurgy, and construction. If much of the labor recruitment detailed in this chapter occurred on a voluntary basis, archival sources suggest the persistence of coercive state strategies that envisioned forced labor as an effective strategy to "sedentarize" Roma (Section II). Outside of forced labor, nominally free labor was also marked by workplace hierarchies. Though constitutionally equal to their Magyar coworkers, hierarchical structures within state concerns often resulted in unequal remuneration schemes that depended

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<sup>9</sup> Celia Donert, "'The Struggle for the Soul of the Gypsy': Marginality and Mass Mobilization in Stalinist Czechoslovakia," *Social History* 33, no. 2 (May 2008), 136.

upon Romani labor to extract the necessary surplus value to reward “skilled” Magyar labor (Section III). And yet, I demonstrate, as labor recruitment often encouraged Romani labor-based migration to meet state demands, especially growing energy and construction needs, “settlement” as a matter of location seems at most a secondary concern for socialist planners. To “settle” then was not a geographic designation, but rather a “settlement” within the labor market itself.

### **I. Interpreting Romani Labor in the Kingdom of Hungary**

Reconstituting the variety, social organization, and economic scale of Hungarian Romani labor before the foundation of the People’s Republic in 1949 presents several conceptual, historical, and methodological challenges. Part of this difficulty arises from the terms usually applied to Romani labor. As sociologist Gábor Havas observes, discussions of pre-socialist Romani work are typically marked by romantic characterizations of timeless, inherited, and ancient crafts [*ősi mesterség-s*], passed through the generations of a family as though without change or alteration from their migration from India.<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that families and groups are not marked by traditional crafts [*hagyományos mesterség-s*], nor that they do not associate strongly with them, both as a matter of history and as an emotional connection to this past. Rather, within the Kingdom’s overwhelming agricultural and quasi-feudal mode of production—one that would endure into the early twentieth century<sup>11</sup>—Romani laborers specialized in crafts and trades that were otherwise unfilled by *paraszt-s* but were nevertheless vital to the functioning of local and

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<sup>10</sup> Gábor Havas, “Hagyományos mesterségek” [Traditional crafts], in *A magyarországi romák* [The Hungarian Roma], ed. István Kemény (Budapest: Press Publica, 2000), 85.

<sup>11</sup> Although feudalism was formally abolished in the Kingdom of Hungary in 1848, the economic and social order that followed in its wake bore many similarities. Lampland, *The Value of Labor*, 29–48.

regional life. This resulted in both a high degree of labor specialization but also vulnerability and exposure to shifts in the market and to industrialization.<sup>12</sup>

A paucity of statistical data poses further historical and methodological challenges. Although the Habsburg monarchy had, from the eighteenth century onward, gathered statistical data on the “Gypsies,” the only comprehensive study conducted within the Kingdom of Hungary to focus on their economic life dates to the Gypsy Census [*Czigányösszeírás*] of 1893; subsequent representative sociological research of its scale would wait nearly another eighty years.<sup>13</sup> Earlier censuses do, however, attest to Romani specialization in metallurgy, gunsmithing, and blacksmithing, all critical industries for rural life, though this did not always afford economic stability. While eighteenth century Theresian and Josephinian edicts attempted to encourage Romani guild membership, these were rarely enforced in practice, producing a precarious material environment in time and foreclosing the accumulation of transgenerational wealth over time.<sup>14</sup>

While the 1893 Census is indeed far more detailed in its description and categorization of Romani employment than previous censuses, further historical and methodological caveats are necessary. As is the case with any census, especially one intended to increase the state’s capacity to represent, surveil, and intervene upon a marginalized group, we should be mindful, on the one hand, of its methods of gathering data, and, on the other, of the descriptive limits of the data presented. This is especially the case with the 1893 Census. Rather than a transparent window into either the structure of Romani labor or the complex dynamics of rural economies in the

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<sup>12</sup> Havas, “Hagyományos mesterségek,” 86.

<sup>13</sup> This survey was undertaken prior to the Treaty of Trianon (1920), in which newly independent Hungary ceded approximately two-thirds of its territory to the surrounding successor states of Austria-Hungary. Consequently, distinctions must be drawn between its summary findings and those that correspond to Hungary’s postwar territory. The analysis provided below attempts to distinguish where possible between data compiled within the borders of postwar Hungary, and those outside of it.

<sup>14</sup> Havas, “Hagyományos mesterségek,” 86.

Kingdom of Hungary, the Census served to create a manipulable and analyzable statistical “Gypsy” in the service of social policy.<sup>15</sup> The overall strategy devised by the director of the National Hungarian Royal Statistical Office [*Országos Magyar Királyi Statisztikai Hivatal*], József Jekelfalussy, and ethnologist Antal Hermann, placed the matter of ascription within the hands of the census takers, which included police, ethnologists, and statisticians, with the instruction that they act on “visual inspection” and “public opinion.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, the power to determine who was to be included within the survey was a matter not to be decided by Roma on their own terms, but by Magyar representatives of the state—and this was the point.<sup>17</sup> In ways similar to earlier historic and ethnological research detailed in the previous chapter, “ancient craft” and language would figure prominently in the definition of the “Gypsy” put forward in the Census.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this—or, perhaps, because of it—little clarity or consensus existed between ethnologists and state officials on how to identify “Gypsies,” and indeed, some localities, including Győr and Budapest, returned no data at all.<sup>19</sup> Revealing the ambiguities over “Gypsy” as a category, but also suggesting how starkly the axis of differentiation between *cigány* and *magyar* functioned at the end of the nineteenth century, the officials responsible for providing

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, “Counting and Categorizing,” 107. See also Havas, “Cigányok a szociológiai kutatások tükrében,” 30.

<sup>16</sup> Surdu, “Why the ‘Real’ Numbers on Roma Are Fictitious,” 491.

<sup>17</sup> Such practices, however, were neither uncommon nor limited to the 1893 Census. As sociologist Péter Szuhay notes, István Kemény’s 1971 and 1993 representative Roma studies similarly empowered Magyars to define who was a “Gypsy” within their schools, workplaces, and communities. Péter Szuhay, “Constructing a Gypsy National Culture,” *Budapest Review of Books (English Edition)* 5, no. 3 (1995): 113.

<sup>18</sup> Havas, “Cigányok a szociológiai kutatások tükrében,” 23.

<sup>19</sup> Although Jekelfalussy and Hermann were aware that inconsistencies arose in the reports returned by officials and made a point to reject obviously falsified or incorrect data, they nevertheless made sweeping national generalizations and drew comparisons between localities. Thus, conflicts in methods of acquiring and tabulating data were effectively obscured in the service of bolstering claims to the representativeness of the study. Johnson, “Counting and Categorizing,” 104. For a parallel discussion on the ambiguities that emerged between bureaucratic ideas of the “Gypsy” and how these were variously interpreted by the executive authorities charged with carrying out orders (e.g., police and gendarmerie), here, in nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany and Italy, see: Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1941*, especially chapters 2–4.

data from Budapest gave the following justification to Hermann and Jekelfalussy for failing to turn over the requested data: “the Gypsies living in the territory of the capital are permanently settled, with orderly [*rendes*] dwellings, family lives, and bourgeois [*polgári*] occupations, so in all respects they are treated and registered in the same way as the other inhabitants, and some of them are so civilized [*polgárosult*] that *they can no longer be counted as Gypsies.*”<sup>20</sup> As Tara Zahra argues, although contested and amorphous as a matter of historical reality, as an ethnographic description the category of “Gypsy” was racialized whereby “nomadism and criminality [became] . . . increasingly treated as essential attributes of ‘Gypsy’ character.”<sup>21</sup> We might then expect that the Census, whose very undertaking was informed by these racializing assumptions, would invariably produce results that confirmed them. As we shall see, however, though this may have been true of the conclusions drawn by its primary researcher Hermann, the actual data collected by census takers reveals a complex picture of Romani working life within the Kingdom of Hungary in the decade before the twentieth century.

Within the territory corresponding to Hungary’s postwar borders, the Census records approximately 65,000 Roma divided between three main language groups: approximately 79.5 percent spoke Hungarian, while 10 percent spoke Romani (*Oláh*) and 4 percent spoke Boyash (*Beás*), a language which began as a dialect of Romanian and diverged after the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> These linguistic groups are to some degree linked to familial trades and territorial regions within Hungary. While it would be reductive to assume employment based upon

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<sup>20</sup> “A főváros területén tartózkodó cigányok állandóan meg vannak telepedve, rendes lakással, családi élettel és polgári foglalkozással bírnak, szóval összes vonatkozásaikban a többi lakosokkal ugyanazon elbánás és nyilvántartás alá esnek, sőt azoknak egy része annyira polgárosult, hogy *cigány számba nem vehető*.” Antal Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei* [The Hungarian Gypsy Census carried out January 31, 1893] (Budapest: Athanaeum R. Társulat, 1895), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge,’” 708.

<sup>22</sup> István Kemény, “The Roma/Gypsies of Hungary and the Economy,” in *The Gypsies/The Roma in Hungarian Society*, ed. Ernő Kállai (Budapest: Teleki László Foundation, 2002), 55; and István Kemény, “Az 1893 összeírás,” in Kemény, ed., *A magyarországi romák*, 11–12. For a discussion of the term *Oláh*, see page 21, footnote 44.

language alone, we can note, for example, that of the 6,000 woodworkers and craftspeople supplying villages in Baranya, Somogy, and Tolna counties in the country's southwest with goods including spoons, spindles, and tubs, the vast majority were Boyash. These trades were especially common among Boyash, Havas argues, as they supported the social division of labor that occurred across the countryside at the conclusion of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> That is to say, with the intensification of agricultural production, trades that had once been performed within a *paraszt* farm were taken up by nearby Boyash craftspeople.

The 1893 Census registered a total of 274,940 Roma across the Kingdom, of whom approximately 174,000 were of working age (*i.e.*, fifteen and above).<sup>24</sup> Of these Roma (both male and female), the Census counted 143,000 as earners (approximately 81.5 percent), divided across the following fields: 64,190 agricultural day laborers [*napszámos-es*] (44.9 percent); 50,506 manufacturers [*iparos-es*] (35.3 percent); 17,000 musicians [*zenész-es*] (11.9 percent); 5,847 small-scale agricultural producers [*őstermelő-s*] (4.1 percent); and 4,453 engaged in various forms of commercial activity and acting as traders [*kereskedés-es*] (3.1 percent).<sup>25</sup> However, distinctions between these categories can be misleading. Roma engaged as day laborers often took up seasonal agricultural work alongside tasks within village households.<sup>26</sup> With this in mind, when combined with those surveyed who worked primarily in agriculture, nearly half of all Roma (approximately 70,000) were engaged in agricultural work to provide a greater or lesser part of their income. Romani women were nearly as likely as Romani men to be

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<sup>23</sup> Havas, "Hagyományos mesterségek," 88.

<sup>24</sup> Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 59; and Kemény, "History of Roma in Hungary," 33–43. For a breakdown of age cohorts by gender and dwelling type, see: Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> Kemény, "History of Roma in Hungary," 33–43; and Pál Nagy, "Cigány csoportok Magyarország történetében" [Gypsy groups in Hungarian history] in *Alapismeretek a cigány, roma közösségekről* [Foundational knowledge on Gypsy/Roma communities], ed. Tibor Cserti Csapó (Budapest: Magyar Cserkészszövetség, 2018), 48.

<sup>26</sup> Kemény, "The Roma/Gypsies of Hungary and the Economy," 53.

so employed, although their availability to work outside the home was circumscribed as they often bore the burden of childcare. However, it should be noted that if later ethnographic research is any indication of the social organization of Romani labor at the turn of the century, many Romani women continued to support families by raising livestock, a form of labor and source of income that otherwise went unaccounted for in the 1893 Census.<sup>27</sup> As many Roma lived on village outskirts, performing either agricultural work or day labor required traveling into town. As such, one form of work acted as a supplement to the other as needed. In either case, agricultural work and day labor were tightly bound to seasonal demand. Winter and spring provided few opportunities for work, meaning that Romani (and Magyar) day laborers had to earn nearly their entire yearly income in summer and fall.<sup>28</sup>

Within the context of the late nineteenth century and beyond, the term day laborer [*napszámos*] was hardly a value neutral term, whether applied to Roma or Magyars. In ways that would be echoed decades later in state socialist discourse about the “commuter” [*ingázó*], the *napszámos* appeared to contemporary writers as symbolic of the economic backwardness of the Kingdom, a fluctuating and impoverished social layer distinct from the propertied, but only marginally more economically secure small-holder *paraszt*.<sup>29</sup> As the 1980 Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon [*Magyar néprajzi lexikon*] would describe the *napszámos*, this group carried out labor under the direct and constant supervision of employers—here, manorial farm bosses and others—and figured as “the most typical representative of the destitute,” forming the largest segment of the Kingdom’s “three million beggars” [*három millió koldus*], an unemployed “reserve army of capital” [*a tőke munkanélküli derékhada*] without class consciousness or a

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<sup>27</sup> For example, see Michael Stewart’s discussion of Romani women’s domestic agricultural activities and livestock rearing in the 1980s. Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 85–86.

<sup>28</sup> Kemény, “The Roma/Gypsies of Hungary and the Economy,” 52.

<sup>29</sup> Lampland, *The Value of Labor*, 29.

sense of culture.<sup>30</sup> Despite this negative description of the *napszámos*-es and their manner of living, they played a critical role within seasonal production, especially on manorial estates that, even into the twentieth century, in sociologist Martha Lampland's description, bore a striking similarity to colonial plantations. Though many *napszámos*-es resided in nearby villages, scores of others would temporally relocate to these estates during the summer months. Doing so at times required traversing large distances. For their labor, both settled or migrant estate workers were rewarded with poor pay and often equally poor treatment. Their purported foreignness—a designation that extended even to settled laborers, and one that generations of labor relations could not erase—rendered them suspect, “little more than animals.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, labor did not strictly refer to work performed. Implicit in this categorization were associations with landedness and property ownership, what made for being a *paraszt* given to meaningful work [*dolog*]; the absence of a concrete claim to land thus reduced the *napszámos* to a permanent status of outsidership if not outright indolence [*dologtalan*].

Within Hungarian political discourse, therefore, the *napszámos* figured as the antithesis to the *paraszt*, as “the self-supporting, proud, and deeply nationalist peasant landowner.”<sup>32</sup> During the Christian nationalist interwar period, questions over whether such *paraszt*-s existed at all became a matter of profound concern for academics, journalists, essayist, and others, primarily but not exclusively from the political left, whose extensive writing on the topic during the period formed the basis of the new literary genre of sociography. But let us stay, for now, with the implications of this axis of differentiation between the *napszámos* and *paraszt* as it pertained to the structure of Romani labor and its presentation in the 1893 Census. What bears

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<sup>30</sup> Imre Katona, “Napszámosmunka,” in *Magyar néprajzi lexikon III. (K-Né)* [Hungarian ethnographic dictionary vol. III (K-Né)], ed. Gyula Ortutay (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 694–95.

<sup>31</sup> Lampland, *The Value of Labor*, 30–31.

<sup>32</sup> Lampland, *The Value of Labor*, 32.

underlining is that the delegitimization of work performed by Roma, both as a moral concept and as a direct contributor to the national economy, intersected with framings of Magyar *napszámos* labor as disorderly, unreliable, and of dubious productivity. This does not mean that there were no Romani landholders at all. The Census did record a number of Romani small-holders and tenant agriculturalists (10,088), whose total land holdings accounted for 5,238 acres. Even in the massively unequal distribution of land in the Kingdom of Hungary, this placed the average Romani small-holder or tenant agriculturalist well in the bottom third by mean land property size across the Kingdom. Without exploring the causes of this inequality, Hermann simply noted that “Gypsies,” who made up 1.8 percent of the population of the country, held less than 0.011 percent of the total domestic arable land.<sup>33</sup>

On the other side of this moral calculus of labor stood Romani musicians—the large number of whom recorded in the 1893 Census requires qualification and explanation.<sup>34</sup> Hermann himself remarked that 17,000 was surely an undercount as a significant percentage of Roma in the capital, whose data was not included in the Census, found employment as musicians.<sup>35</sup> It was among the musicians that Hermann believed that the “most intelligent” [*legintelligensebb*] and,

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<sup>33</sup> Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 18. Such inequalities in land ownership were not unique to the Kingdom of Hungary. David Gaunt and Julieta Rotaru, for example, utilize late nineteenth century Romanian census data to draw similar comparisons between Romanian peasants and formerly enslaved Roma. Gaunt and Rotaru, “The Living Conditions of Gypsy Slaves in Early Nineteenth-Century Wallachia,” 29–55.

<sup>34</sup> For a historical and ethnographic overview of Hungarian Romani music and musical groups, see: Lynn Hooker, “Controlling the Liminal Power of Performance: Hungarian Scholars and Romani Musicians in the Hungarian Folk Revival,” *Twentieth-Century Music* 3, no. 1 (2007): 51–72; Lynn Hooker, *Redefining Hungarian Music from Liszt to Bartók* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Katalin Kovalcsik, “A cigányok és a zene – A magyarországi cigányok népzeneje” [Gypsies and music: The folk music of Hungarian Gypsies], in Kemény, ed., *A magyarországi romák*, 41–49; Bálint Sárosi, “Cigányzenészek, ‘cigányzene’ [Gypsy musicians, ‘Gypsy music’],” in Kemény, ed., *A magyarországi romák*, 49–66; and Bálint Sárosi and Sándor Dörnyei, *A cigányzenekar múltja II. 1904–1944: Az egykorú sajtó tükrében* [The history of the Gypsy orchestra volume II, 1904–1944: As reflected in the press of the era] (Budapest: Nap Kiadó, 2012). On the spatial representation and commemoration of Romani musicians in *fin-de-siècle* and interwar Budapest against the backdrop of increased social and political repression, see Árpád Bak, “The Spatial Politics of Romani Visibility in Interwar Budapest,” *Critical Romani Studies* 3, no. 1 (December 2020): 102–138. For a parallel study of the popularity of Romani music and the emergence of a Romani bourgeoisie in pre-Revolutionary Russia, see: O’Keeffe, *New Soviet Gypsies*, 27–35.

<sup>35</sup> Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 11.

from a national perspective, the “most handsome” [*legjelentékenyebb*] group could be found.<sup>36</sup> And yet the social elevation experienced by Romani musicians was a distinctly nineteenth century phenomenon and an uneven one at that; through the eighteenth century, and in the time of the Theresian and Josephinian “Gypsy edicts,” musicianship and performance provided few opportunities for social elevation for Roma, though exceptions existed, perhaps most notably, the famous Romani female band leader [*primás*] and violinist, Panna Czinka (ca. 1711–1772).<sup>37</sup>

This would change over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century with the rise of the Hungarian nationalist movement and the increased popularity of *verbunkos* music played by Romani bands [*cigánybanda*]. The *verbunkos* sensation of that century brought Romani musicians into close and intimate contact with members of the bourgeoisie, the nobility, and Hungarian nationalist leaders. Romani musicians accompanied national parliaments during the 1848–1849 War of Independence [*Szabadságharc*], creating a “musical language for the movement of national renewal.”<sup>38</sup> With the rapid expansion of the Hungarian economy that followed the 1867 Compromise [*Ausgleich*]<sup>39</sup>—that is to say, the formation of the Dual Monarchy—the development of a Hungarian middle class, as well as higher earnings of landowners and *paraszt*-s also afforded greater opportunities for Romani musicians to perform at weddings and festivals.<sup>39</sup> The origins of the Romani labor movement can also be told through the history of its musicians, who, in 1918, formed the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ National Association [*Magyar Cigányzenészek Országos Egyesülete*] and successfully lobbied for state recognition in 1923. The 1923 foundational charter of the Association enumerated its goals, which included progressive aims of “the attainment of better working conditions and protection

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<sup>36</sup> Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 59.

<sup>37</sup> Havas, “Hagyományos mesterségek,” 86–87.

<sup>38</sup> Sárosi, “Cigányzenészek, ‘cigányzene,’” 51; and Kemény, “History of Roma in Hungary,” 41.

<sup>39</sup> Kemény, “History of Roma in Hungary,” 42.

of acquired rights” as well as the creation of a retirement fund, and nationalist protections (upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Interior), for example, the restriction of “the operation of uninvited musicians and those arriving from foreign lands.”<sup>40</sup> Under the interwar Christian nationalist government of Regent Miklós Horthy, the Association, whether out of nationalist zeal or pragmatic considerations, embraced a “patriotic role,” which included support for the revisionist claims of the state.<sup>41</sup> This however would prove insufficient to guarantee the survival of the Association, which, beset by financial difficulties and internal division, dissolved by 1933, only to be reformed two years later, in 1935.

As for industry and manufacture, approximately 18.4 percent of Roma were employed in these sectors according to the 1893 Census, more than three-times the rate of the general population (5.45 percent).<sup>42</sup> Although Romani men were approximately twice as likely as women to be engaged in manufacture (33,930 men to 16,576 women), Romani women’s industrial employment was nevertheless more than twice the national average (487 Romani women to 1000 Romani men versus 171 Magyar women to 1000 Magyar men).<sup>43</sup> Though many manufactures were linked to gender, it should be noted that these forms of industry were largely carried out in the home. As homes were the primary sites of production, gendered divisions of labor were not necessarily clear cut. For example, rope and brush making, yarn spinning, lacework, mat and sack weaving, and feather plucking were typically women’s occupations across Romani communities. However, though tin and copper smithing, bell and drill making, and locksmithing were predominantly men’s occupations, Hermann, in his 1895 research report drawn from the

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<sup>40</sup> Pál Nagy, ed., *Források a magyarországi cigányság történetéből (1758–1999)* [Sources on the history of the Hungarian Gypsy population (1758–1999)] (Gödöllő: Emberei Erőforrások Fejlesztése Alapítvány, 2011), 248 as quoted in Tamás Hajnáczy, “Hungarian Gypsy Musician’s National Association: Battles Faced by Gypsy Musicians in Hungary during the Interwar Years,” *Social Inclusion* 8, no. 2 (2020): 328.

<sup>41</sup> Hajnáczy, “Hungarian Gypsy Musician’s National Association,” 328.

<sup>42</sup> Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 58.

<sup>43</sup> Kemény, “History of Roma in Hungary,” 37.

Census, attests that 378 Romani women were registered as blacksmiths and 139 as cauldron-makers and repairers, working within the family trade.<sup>44</sup> As an absolute number, then, more women were employed in these fields of metallurgy than in some industries Hermann classifies as women’s occupations (*e.g.*, lace making). The economic importance of Romani blacksmithing, he observes, was especially great in the countryside. “[Blacksmiths] account for 36.5 percent of Gypsy men engaged in industry . . . For centuries, they have provided crafts essential to farmers. Guild blacksmiths fought against them in many cities, but they could hardly be replaced in villages, especially in poorer areas. In many locales, they hold contracts with the village, and commercial blacksmiths live in the village blacksmith’s house.”<sup>45</sup> A thorough review of these modes of Romani participation in the Hungarian political economy reveal a complex and rich set of labor relations [Table 3].

TABLE 3. Organization of Romani Industries by Type and Gender Division as Recorded in the 1893 Census

Occupation	Absolute number of Gypsies working in each industry		
	Men	Women	Total
<b>A. Exclusively, predominantly, or largely male occupations</b>			
<b>I. Metalwork</b>			
Tinsmiths	60		60
Bellmakers	41		41
Drill makers	370	10	380
Knifemakers and grinders	43		43
Ironsmiths	175		175
Blacksmiths	12,371	378	12,749
Locksmiths	217	4	221
Copperworkers	81		81
Nail makers	1,624	36	1,660

<sup>44</sup> Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 50–51. The itemized table lists 378, but in his analysis, Hermann gives this figure as 379.

<sup>45</sup> “Legtöbben vannak kovácsok, a kik iparral foglalkozó cigány férfiak 36.5%-át teszik, de az ország összes kovácsainak is (kik közül a 1891-iki népszámlálás 7146-ot mutat ki a házi és népipar rovatában, 47,710-et pedig rendes iparosul) 22.5%-át. Századok óta üzük itt kivált a gazdára nézve nélkülözhetetlen mesterségöket. Városokban sokat perlekedtek ellenök a czéhbeli kovácsok, de falun, főleg szegényebb vidékeken, egyelőre alig volnának pótolhatók. Sok helyen a községnek szerződéses, kommenziós kovácsai a községi kovácsházban laknak.” Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 51.

TABLE 3. Continued

Occupation	Absolute number of Gypsies working in each industry		
	Men	Women	Total
Cauldron makers and repairers	1,938	139	2,077
Other	100	37	137
<b>Total</b>	17,020	604	17,624
<b>II. Woodwork</b>			
Spoon makers	1,291	685	1,976
Lumberjacks	44		44
Spindle makers	43	160	203
Bowl makers	2,474	494	2,968
Charcoal makers	72	6	78
Other	214	70	284
<b>Total</b>	4,138	1,415	5,553
<b>III. Reed, cane, and associated work</b>			
Mat and bag weavers	14	60	74
Basket weavers	575	388	963
Broom makers	423	613	1,036
Sieve makers	621	146	767
<b>Total</b>	1,633	1,207	2,840
<b>IV. Construction</b>			
Plasterers	3,005	2,293	5,298
Brick and tile makers	2,480	1,468	3,948
Adobe throwers	3,433	2,234	5,667
Masons	432	15	447
Chimney sweeps	35		35
<b>Total</b>	9,385	6,010	15,395
<b>V. Clothing</b>			
Boot makers	384	2	386
Boot repairers	251	6	257
Cobblers	148		148
<b>Total</b>	783	8	791
<b>VI. Transportation</b>			
Haulers	100	9	
Porters	30		
<b>Total</b>	130	9	139
<b>VII. Animal flayers and skinners</b>	431	7	438
<b>B. Predominantly female occupations</b>			
<b>VIII. Rope and brush makers, etc.</b>			
Rope makers	7	385	392
String spinners	6	1,992	1,998
Brush makers	4	49	53
Scrub brush makers	11	1,709	1,720
<b>Total</b>	28	4,135	4,163

TABLE 3. Continued

Occupation	Absolute number of Gypsies working in each industry		
	Men	Women	Total
<b>C. Exclusively female occupations</b>			
<b>IX. Textile manufacture</b>			
Lace maker		127	127
Spinners and weavers		1,261	1,261
Garter makers		68	68
Women's handiwork		1,074	1,074
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,530</b>	<b>2,530</b>
<b>X. Other women's industries</b>			
Workers in the tobacco industry		55	55
Whitewashers		66	66
Washerwomen		255	255
Feather pluckers		32	32
<b>Total</b>		<b>408</b>	<b>408</b>
<b>D. Limited numbered workers in mixed industries</b>			
Assorted industries	382	243	625
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>33,930</b>	<b>16,576</b>	<b>50,506</b>

Even as a historical document of questionable veracity, the 1893 Census makes for striking reading. What emerges is that, despite persistent and pervasive stereotypes of the “Gypsy” as “nomadic,” Hungarian Roma, even according to a demographic instrument with ostensibly disciplinary ends, occupied stable positions within the economy of the Kingdom of Hungary. The overwhelming majority, some 243,432 (88.5 percent), had permanent places of residence, which Hermann’s report categorizes as permanently settled. The Census counted 8,938 (3.3 percent) as wandering [*vándor*] “Gypsies” and another 20,406 (7.4 percent) as semi-nomadic, that is to say, occupying the large part of the year in one place.<sup>46</sup> A significant number of Roma so categorized would likely have been employed in construction (of which, the Census counted 9,385 men and 6,010 women). Despite growing demands for construction within towns

<sup>46</sup> Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 12; Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge,’” 708.

and villages across the Hungarian Kingdom in the latter half of the nineteenth century, limited opportunities to carry out this craft within a single town or village meant that Romani brickmakers had little choice but to move almost constantly during the building season. This required that brickmakers supplement their income through incidental agricultural work in summer and fall, day labor during the winter, and sometimes, by playing music, itself an occupation that could require travel upon demand.<sup>47</sup> Hence, even while such Romani laborers may have been mobile, they were nevertheless “settled” into the needs and rhythms of the economic system of production and exchange.

These findings make it all the more perplexing that in Hermann’s summary report, he emphasizes mobility as definitive of “Gypsy” difference, an ethnicizing or racializing move (Hermann uses both terms) that depended upon redescribing the economic reasons for Roma to travel in culturalist terms and, accordingly, dehistoricizing their deep and everyday understandings of the structure of the market in fin-de-siècle Hungary. Moreover, despite being statistically exceptional, he posited the case of the “wandering” or “semi-nomadic Gypsy” as representative of the totality of Romani life, which he both metaphorized with and naturalized as animalistic movement. Hermann begins his summary evaluation of the 1893 Census with the following justification, given in a high literary—even poetic—register:

In every cultivated [*művelt*] nation there remains moving elements that did not develop into the solid forms of organically evolving social life, but flow dangerously in search of gaps and voids of public order [*közrend*] in which they can take root; these vegetate from the waning of civilization, in an unworthy condition that impinges upon the enforcement of the law and facilitates its transgression. These elements thus hinder even and universal intellectual and material progress [*haladás*], make administration more difficult, endanger public safety, and deteriorate the public morality.

. . . In our country, alongside some features of the geographical situation and ethnic [*ethnikus*] nature of the population and some decline of public conditions, it is in some respect our primitive [*kezdetleges*] economic relations and imperfect administrative

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<sup>47</sup> Gábor Havas, “Korábbi cigány foglalkozások” [Former Gypsy occupations], in *Cigányvizsgálatok* [Gypsy studies], eds. Mihály Andor and Péter Hidy (Budapest: Művelődéskutató Intézet, 1982), 163–64; and Kemény, “The Roma/Gypsies of Hungary and the Economy,” 56.

organization that seem to favor, here and there, the appearance of social parasites, the culture of vagrants [*csavargó-s*] . . . .

In our case, the majority of vagrants arise from roving Gypsies [*kóbor cigány-s*]. These are the general international characteristics of vagrants, and in our particular circumstances, they show a definite and special racial [*faji*] nature. Their vagrancy is a special wandering. Almost always they migrate in caravans and groups, often traversing certain routes periodically. They are nomads, nomads of some permitted and forbidden industries, whose peregrinations are a certain instinct, a periodic and natural regularity like the passing of migratory animals or the curved transit of comets.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the “time of the Gypsies,” by Hermann’s account, was biological, inherited, and determined their movements in ways wholly independent of the demands of the largely agricultural Hungarian economy which they nevertheless met. Hermann did not shy away from placing some of the blame for Hungary’s “backwardness” on the primitivity of its social relations and the failures of its administration. But what made these “gaps and voids of public order” dangerous and in need of urgent repair was that they could be seized upon by “roving Gypsies,” who would, parasitically, pull the state into a further spiral of intellectual, material, and moral decay. Securing a future for the Hungarian nation, by Hermann’s account, implied not only a rationalization of agricultural production and greater security for the *paraszt*. It demanded a solution to the “Gypsy question,” not least of which because the “Gypsies” themselves came to

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<sup>48</sup> “Minden művelt országban vannak még mozgó elemek, melyek nem alakultak ki a szerves fejlődésű társadalmi élet szilárd formáiba, hanem bizonytalanul szétfolynak, keresvén a közrend réseit és hézagait, hogy belevegyék magokat; melyek a civilizáció fogyatkozásából tengődnek, méltatlan állapotban, mely megnehezíti a törvény érvényesülését és megkönnyíti áthágását. Ez elemek így akadályozzák az egyenletes és egyetemleges szellemi és anyagi haladást, megnehezítik a közigazgatást, veszélyeztetik a közbiztonságot és rontják a közérkölcöket. . . . Nálunk a földrajzi helyzetnek és a lakosság ethnikus természetének némely vonása mellett, közállapotainak némely fogyatkozása, némi tekintetben kezdetleges közigazgatási viszonyaink és nem kifogástalan közigazgatási szervezetünk itt-ott kedvezni látszanak a társadalom élődíjei, a csavargók tenyészetének. . . . Nálunk a csavargók legnagyobb része kóbor cigányokból áll. Ezek a csavargóknak általános nemzetközi tulajdonságai, s a mi sajátosság viszonyainkkal összefüggő némely külön vonások mellett határozott és speciális faji jelleget mutatnak. Csavargásuk sajátosságos kóborlás. Rendszerint karavánokban, csapatokban vándorolnak, gyakran bizonyos útvonalakat időszakonként bejárva. Nomádok ők, némely megengedett és meg nem engedett primitív iparágak nomádjai, a kiknek bolygásaiban van bizonyos ösztönszerűség, időszakosság és természetes szabályosság, mint a vándor állatok vonulásában vagy az üstökösök görbe pályáiban.” Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 3. See also Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge,’” 709.

stand in as a representative vanguard of disorder, the ebbing of culture before the rising tide of nature.

More than sixty years later, within state socialist press and government policy, this metaphorization and naturalization of putative Romani difference persisted and continued to subtend the so-called “Gypsy question.” Solving this question, then, was a matter of bringing “the time of the Gypsies” into alignment with the temporality of the workplace and disciplining it to the pace and rhythm of industrial modernity. For both Hermann, but so too for social planners after the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949, this was not a secondary task but one that attested to the efficacy of the modern state. “The purpose of [solving the ‘Gypsy question’] for society is that the Gypsies are endowed with human dignity,” Hermann writes, “its civilized and happy members, useful citizens of the state, they will be sons of the nation and the homeland.”<sup>49</sup> It was nothing less than the state’s most urgent task.

## II. Machines, Plants, or People? Forced Labor in the People’s Republic

[X’s] letter is very interesting. Comrade [X] subscribed an amount equal to three weeks of his earnings [to the Peace Loans]. On this, he writes that “we Gypsies were not only oppressed in the old system, but we were not even included in the numbers of humanity. We are especially grateful to the glorious army of the Soviet Union for liberating us. We are grateful to the Party and Comrade Rákosi that we can work in the Recski [copper] ore mine, that we can participate in the building of socialism, and for the implementation of the five-year plan.”<sup>50</sup>

— Letter excerpted in the October 15, 1951 issue of the newspaper *Bányamunkás* [Mine worker]

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<sup>49</sup> “Ennek célja pedig, hogy a cigányok a társadalomnak emberi méltósággal bíró, civilisált és boldog tagjai, az állam hasznos polgárai, a nemzet és haza hű fiai legyenek.” Hermann, *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott cigányösszeírás eredményei*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> “Nagyon érdekes [X] levele. [X] elvtárs háromheti keresetének megfelelő összeget jegyzett. Ezzel kapcsolatban azt írja, hogy “mi cigányok nemcsak elnyomva voltunk a régi rendszerben, de még emberszámba se vettek bennünket. Mi különösen hálásak vagyunk a Szovjetunió dicsőséges hadseregének, hogy felszabadított bennünket. Hálásak vagyunk a pártnak és Rákosi elvtársnak azért, hogy a Recski Ércbányában dolgozhatunk, mi is részt vehetünk a szocializmus építésben, az ötéves terv megvalósításában.” “A bányászok a kölcsönjegyzéssel is bebizonyították, hogy harcolnak a békéért” [The miners proved by also signing the loan that they are fighting for peace], *Bányamunkás* [Mine worker], October 15, 1951.

Labor, and the place of Roma within it, mattered for the nineteenth century state and ethnographers like Jekelfalussy and Hermann for one further reason: its mobility, what it symbolized, and its implications for the demographic health of the nation. As has already been discussed, the framing of Romani *napszamos*-es as unreliable and inefficient drew upon common associations of the day laborer (whether Romani or not) as foreign, *in* but not *of* the settled, property-owning life of the *paraszt*. But the issue of mobility mattered for another reason. Jekelfalussy and Hermann conducted their Census and wrote their report as a wave of mass migration swept the Dual Monarchy, in which more than 100,000 citizens of the Hungarian Kingdom departed annually for economic opportunities in western Europe, the United States, and beyond. Domestic labor mobility stood for the disorder and backwardness of the nation; this disorder and backwardness, in turn, impelled emigration from the Kingdom, which augured the demographic decline of the nation and imperiled its economic future. It is this broader context of *transnational* labor mobility and its regulation that must be taken into account in order to understand how freedom and constraint structure Romani labor as a social question and lived reality.

Demographic panics—and warnings of “demographic revolution”—show a remarkable durability in Hungarian political discourse throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and into the present day, across political regimes and dominant ideologies. Historically, these demographic panics have centered the purported physical collapse and moral disaster of the Hungarian nation because of emigration and declining birthrates. Although Europe’s long nineteenth century is often remembered as an “age of unfettered mobility,” in fact, as Tara Zahra contends, government and public responses to the realities of mass migration over the past 150 years are neither consistent across time nor space, and rather reveal ways in which ethnic, racial,

and religious difference was and continues to be produced and regulated.<sup>51</sup> For many Europeans in the first half of the twentieth century, the profound political and psychological break with this old order of “freedom of movement,” introduced with the onset of the First World War, is vividly captured through Stefan Zweig’s novel *The World of Yesterday*, published in 1942:

Indeed, nothing makes us more sensible of the immense relapse into which the world fell after the first World War than the restrictions on man’s freedom of movement and the diminution of his civil rights. Before 1914 the earth had belonged to all. People went where they wished and stayed as long as they pleased. There were no permits, no visas, and it always gives me pleasure to astonish the young by telling them that before 1914 I travelled from Europe to India and to America without passport and without ever having seen one. One embarked and alighted without questioning or being questioned, one did not have to fill out a single one of the many papers which are required today. The frontiers which, with their customs officers, police and militia, have become wire barriers thanks to the pathological suspicion of everybody against everybody else, were nothing but symbolic lines which one crossed with as little thought as one crosses the Meridian of Greenwich. Nationalism emerged to agitate the world only after the war, and the first visible phenomenon which this intellectual epidemic of our century brought about was xenophobia; morbid dislike of the foreigner, or at least fear of the foreigner. The world was on the defensive against strangers, everywhere they got short shrift. The humiliations which once had been devised with criminals alone in mind now were imposed upon the traveler, before and during every journey. There had to be photographs from right and left, in profile and full face, one’s hair had to be cropped sufficiently to make the ears visible; fingerprints were taken, at first only the thumb but later all ten fingers; furthermore, certificates of health, of vaccination, police certificates of good standing, had to be shown; letters of recommendation were required, invitations to visit a country had to be produced; they asked for the addresses of relatives, for moral and financial guarantees, questionnaires, and forms in triplicate and quadruplicate needed to be filled out, and if only one of this sheaf of papers was missing one was lost.<sup>52</sup>

Note the indignity of having to produce documentation in order to enable mobility, the “humiliations” visited upon the subject, a veritable debasement unto criminality in the name of population control by states newly paranoid about porous borders. Zweig is likely unaware that the very protocols of photographing, fingerprinting, credentialing, and questioning the unmarked “traveler” were developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to regulate and regularize Romani movement within and between European states. In short, as recent academic

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<sup>51</sup> Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2016), 9; and Zahra, “Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge,” 702–3.

<sup>52</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1964 [1943]), 409–10.

investigations demonstrate, the creation of passport regimes and border policing that Zweig classifies as a wartime and interwar phenomenon tied to rising nationalism and xenophobia have a longer history across Europe. The emergence of such regulation prior to the consolidation of the nation-state, especially as it came to the regulation of Romani movement, evinces transnational police intelligence gathering and sharing as well as political debates that may rather be considered expressions of “illiberal internationalism.”<sup>53</sup>

In the nineteenth century, Malthusian policies that encouraged the “shovel[ing] out of paupers” stood alongside concerns of nation builders and politicians who attempted to curb mass migration in the name of national health and out of fear that departing Europeans, especially those from the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian empires, were being sent into conditions of exploitation and misery in the United States.<sup>54</sup> Although the Constitution of 1867 granted citizens the right to leave the Habsburg monarchy, in practice government authorities and administrators acted through the police and military to restrict mobility, often by targeting emigration agents and other middlemen. However, these actions were undertaken arbitrarily, and were often guided by a desire to maintain the numerical superiority of the national community over other groups. These practices became official policy in the Kingdom of Hungary by 1881, when all emigration agencies were placed under the direct supervision of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>55</sup> Until 1870, the number of citizens emigrating from the Hungarian Kingdom never surpassed more than a few hundred per year. However, with the onset of economic depression in

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<sup>53</sup> The International Criminal Police Commission [ICPC] was established in Austria in 1923 in response to a perceived proliferation of forms of criminality rooted in deceptive identities, documents, and currency flowing across European borders. At the 1931 ICPC conference in Paris, the organization’s vice president proposed establishing a bespoke office to “deal with the Gypsy plague.” The ICPC evolved into the organization known today as INTERPOL. Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 21–26; Illuzzi, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861–1914*; and Zahra, “‘Condemned to Rootlessness and Unable to Budge.’”

<sup>54</sup> Zahra, *The Great Departure*, 9–12.

<sup>55</sup> John Kosa, “A Century of Hungarian Emigration, 1850–1950,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 16, no. 4 (December 1957): 505.

the 1870s, thousands of laborers lost their sources of livelihood and the numbers of emigrants rose steeply. Between 1876–1880, approximately 2,500 persons left the Kingdom annually, increasing to 22,000 from 1886–1890, and peaking at more than 110,000 per year between 1890 and the onset of the First World War. By 1920, between 2.5 and 3 million citizens of the Kingdom had left, primarily for overseas destinations.<sup>56</sup>

By 1903, the Hungarian government passed sweeping restrictions on mobility in order to “protect people from the fever of emigration,” limiting the rights of Hungarian men to emigrate after their seventeenth birthday, conditional on exemption from military service from the Ministries of Defense and the Interior.<sup>57</sup> Once again, although such regulations may have been among Europe’s most restrictive, they were not new. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, Hungarian authorities often exercised discretionary right over whether emigration permits were granted, which resulted in a disproportionate number of Hungary’s minority groups (namely Jews, Germans, Croats, and Slovaks) making up those leaving the Kingdom (60–67 percent members of minority groups versus 33–40 percent Magyars).<sup>58</sup> This, however, was framed by turn-of-the-century Hungarian politicians not as a problem but a potential virtue, one that would shore up the numerical superiority of the Hungarian nation over its minority peoples.<sup>59</sup>

Shifts in government policy and opinions on the “Gypsy question” in fin-de-siècle Hungary evince both of these dynamics, of the driving out of “undesirable” populations on the one hand and enforced emplacement and sedentarization on the other. When attempts to expel

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<sup>56</sup> Kosa, “A Century of Hungarian Emigration,” 504.

<sup>57</sup> Zahra, *The Great Departure*, 38–39. See also Allison Schmidt, “Emigration Routes from Austria-Hungary: Germany – Part I,” Botstiber Institute for Austrian-American Studies, July 19, 2021, <https://botstiberbiaas.org/emigration-routes/> (accessed January 11, 2022).

<sup>58</sup> Kosa, “A Century of Hungarian Emigration,” 505.

<sup>59</sup> Zahra, *The Great Departure*, 30.

“vagrant Gypsies” over national borders failed, Habsburg officials and policymakers changed course, resolving that internment was the best course of action. In what resembles a striking reprise of the Theresian and Josephinian “Gypsy edicts,” early twentieth century civil servants recommended that “Gypsy” families be separated upon entering the territory of the Dual Monarchy, with children placed in foster families and their parents interned in workhouses. A yet more radical solution, proposed in 1909, called for mass internment of “Gypsies” on “uninhabited islands in the Adriatic Sea,” guarded so that no one could escape.<sup>60</sup> The fact that these proposals did not eventuate in no way diminishes their political force: debates about the possibilities of solving the “Gypsy question” through internment and forced labor continued into the interwar period, became a central state aim during the Holocaust, and would again be raised by state planners and public health officials after 1949.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> “Die Zigeunerplage in Krain,” *Vaterland*, Beiblatt zu no. 222, August 14, 1899, 1 in Zahra, “‘Condemned to Be Rootless and Unable to Budge,’” 721.

<sup>61</sup> Zahra, “‘Condemned to Be Rootless and Unable to Budge,’” 721–23. Internment and forced labor were central components of the Horthy-era “solution” to the “Gypsy question,” and would be radicalized over the course of the Second World War. On August 13, 1944, the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior ordered the creation of sixty “work battalions” and special camps that would intern as many as 12,000 Romani men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. After the seizure of power by the fascist Arrow Cross Party [*Nyilaskeresztes Párt*] on October 15, 1944, the Hungarian state would undertake yet more extreme measures, including mass deportations beginning on February 2, 1945 to Komárom, from where many thousands of Roma were deported onward to Dachau and other camps. Hungarian Roma were also forced to work on large Nazi defensive projects. Gerhard Baumgartner, “Hungary,” in *RomArchive*, <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/voices-of-the-victims/hungary/> (accessed February 21, 2022). On the Holocaust in Hungary, see János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczy, eds., *Pharrajimos: Romák sorsa a náciizmus idején* [Pharrajimos: The fate of Roma in the Nazi era] (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2004); Gábor Bernáth, ed., *Porrajmos: Recollections of Roma Holocaust Survivors* (Budapest: Roma Sajtóközpont, 2000); László Karsai, *A cigánykérdés Magyarországon, 1919–1945: Út a cigány Holocausthoz* [The Gypsy question in Hungary: The road to the Gypsy Holocaust] (Budapest: Scientia Hungariae, 1992); Katalin Katz, *Visszafojtott emlékezet: A magyarországi romák holokausztörténetéhez* [Suppressed memory: On the history of the Hungarian Roma Holocaust] (Budapest: Pont, 2005); Barna Gyula Purcsi, *A cigánykérdés ‘gyökeres és végleges megoldása’* [The “radical and final solution” of the Gypsy question] (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2004); Jutka Róna, *Magyar cigányok: Túlélők vallanak* [Hungarian Gypsies: Survivors’ stories] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2011); and Szabolcs Szita, *A komáromi deportálás 1944 őszén* [The deportation from Komárom in the autumn of 1944] (Budapest: Magyar Auschwitz Alapítvány, 2002). For examinations of the continuities and ruptures between late Imperial German, interwar, and Nazi-era “solutions” to the “Gypsy question” and their relationship to the Holocaust, see Herbert Heuss, “German Policies of Gypsy Persecution, 1870–1945,” in *The Gypsies during the Second World War: From “Race Science” to the Camps*, ed. Karola Fings (Hertfordshire, UK: Hertfordshire Press, 1997), 15–37; and Frank Sparing, “The Gypsy Camps: The Creation, Character and Meaning of an Instrument for the Persecution of Sinti and Romanies under National Socialism,” in Fings, ed., *The Gypsies during the Second World War: From “Race Science” to the Camps*, 39–70. Recent historical examinations of the Romani Holocaust center forms of

The years between 1948 and 1952—during which the Hungarian Working People’s Party (*Magyar Dolgozók Pártja*, MDP) consolidated its control of the state and its economic production—witnessed the state seizure of formerly private enterprises and their amalgamation as large-scale planned concerns. This, coupled with rapid industrialization in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and only truly coming to an end with the economic recession experienced throughout the Warsaw Pact in the mid-1980s, resulted in periods of full employment but also labor shortages in numerous sectors, especially mining, metallurgy, and construction. Although initial state socialist recruitment efforts of Roma focused on these three industries, by the 1960s, they had expanded to nearly all sectors.<sup>62</sup>

Sociologists and historians disagree over the beginnings and overall aims of the mass employment drives that recruited Roma into heavy industry in state socialist Hungary. Sociologists István Kemény and Béla Janky date these drives to “forced industrialization” starting in the late 1940s.<sup>63</sup> Political scientist Zoltán Bárányi observes that such recruitments and labor drives resulted in the overrepresentation of Roma within industrial sectors and that this pattern repeated across the socialist states of east-central Europe. For example, by the 1980s in neighboring Czechoslovakia, more than 80 percent of Roma worked in industry, double the rate of the entire working population.<sup>64</sup> Historian Csaba Dupcsik agrees that the 1960s proved decisive in transforming the social and economic prospects for Roma across Hungary, however he links this process with the explicit adoption of a 1961 resolution on the “Gypsy question” by

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resistance and non-compliance within concentration camps. See Angéla Kóczé and Anna Lujza Szász, eds., *Roma Resistance during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (Budapest: Tom Lantos Institute, 2018); and Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka and Jekatyerina Dunajeva, eds., *Rethinking Roma Resistance throughout History: Recounting Stories of Strength and Bravery* (Budapest: European Roma Initiative for Arts and Culture, 2020).

<sup>62</sup> István Kemény and Béla Janky, “Roma Population of Hungary 1971–2003,” in Kemény, ed., *Roma of Hungary*, 167.

<sup>63</sup> Kemény and Janky, “Roma Population of Hungary 1971–2003,” 167.

<sup>64</sup> Bárányi, *The East European Gypsies*, 138–39.

the Political Committee of the MSZMP KB, which we will turn to later.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, whereas Celia Donert observes that there were active debates over the political and social inclusion of “citizens of Gypsy origin” in Czechoslovakia in the years immediately following the Second World War,<sup>66</sup> historian István Feitl notes a glaring absence of such official positions in the first decade of state socialist Hungary.<sup>67</sup> Notably, Roma were explicitly excluded from Party discussions on land reform in 1945, despite the fact that they formed as much as a quarter of the total agricultural labor force.<sup>68</sup> On this point, a report compiled in October 1957 by employees of the Ministry of Employment, György Pogány and Géza Bán, attested to only a few towns and villages—among them Grábóc in Tolna county—that provided Romani families with land. When these families proved themselves “worthy” [*érdemes*] of one-acre plots by farming them well and paying their taxes “properly,” the plots were expanded to three-acres the following year.<sup>69</sup>

One reason that it may be especially difficult to ascertain the drives and aims behind state socialist policy positions on Romani labor is that the question itself has much deeper origins. The postwar nationalization of heavy industry created a massive labor demand that gave this question

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<sup>65</sup> Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 138–42.

<sup>66</sup> Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 48–83.

<sup>67</sup> István Feitl, “A cigányság ügye a napirendről lekerült: Előterjesztés az MDP Politikai Bizottsága számára 1956 áprilisából,” [The matter of the Gypsies was removed from the agenda: Submission to the Political Committee of the MDP from April 1956] *Múltunk* [Our past] 53, no. 1 (2008): 257–58.

<sup>68</sup> János Bársony, “Romák sorsa az 1940-es évek második felében Magyarországon” [The fate of Roma in the second half of the 1940s in Hungary], *Múltunk* [Our past] 53, no. 1 (2008), 222–256; Zsuzsa Ferge, *Fejezetek a magyar szegénypolitika történetéből* [Notes from the history of Hungarian policies toward the poor] (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1986), 150–51; Angéla Kóczé, “Roma Civil Rights Movement in Hungary,” in *RomArchive*, <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/roma-civil-rights-movement/roma-civil-rights-movement-hungary/> (accessed March 6, 2022); Lampland, *The Object of Labor*, 123; and Stewart, “Gypsies, the Work Ethic, and Hungarian Socialism,” 200, fn. 2.

<sup>69</sup> HU OSZK MD 11 488: Géza Bán and György Pogány, “A magyarországi cigányság helyzetéről” [The situation of the Hungarian Gypsy populace], October 1957 in Hajnáczy, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality*, 85. See also HU SZSZBML XXIII 23 b. Box 2: “A Megyei Tanács Egészségügyi Osztályán készült jelentés fogalmazványa: Szabolcs-Szatmár Megyei Tanács Végrehajtóbizottság Egészségügyi Osztálya” [Draft of the report prepared by the Health Department of the County Council: Health Department of the Executive Committee of Szabolcs-Szatmár County Council], 1954 in Pál Nagy, ed., “*Ugyanolyanok, mint mindenki más ember*”: *Válogatás a Szabolcs-Szatmár megyei cigányság történeték forrásaiból (1951–1961)* [“They are the same as all other people”: A selection from the sources on the history of Gypsies in Szabolcs-Szatmár county (1951–1961)], (Nyíregyháza: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Levéltár, 2010), 36–37.

greater urgency. At the same time, the promise of “resolving” the problem of seemingly “unproductive” Romani subjects through the work of building socialism reprises an educational motif and older categories of historical consciousness (*i.e.*, “vagrancy”). It is by recalling earlier understandings of movement and constraint and even updating the bureaucratic techniques of surveillance and licensing that accompanied them that—paradoxically—state socialist policy aimed to, once and for all, break with the past.

The Recski Mine is undoubtedly the most notorious of the forced labor camps created in the late-1940s by the Hungarian government that imprisoned dissidents and those purged from the Party through Mátyás Rákosi’s consolidation of control. Contemporary accounts of the mine give very little information on Romani internment in Recsk, but the letter quoted at the start of this section, published in the miners’ monthly newspaper, *Bányamunkás*, suggests otherwise. It may be that this letter was written by a Romani man who worked at the mine but was not interned there. However, this seems to some degree unlikely given the geographical and physical separation of the mine, as well as the secrecy that surrounded it until its closure in 1953.

While it is unclear whether the Rom who wrote the letter from Recsk was indeed interned there, what is clear is that forced labor and internment were extensively debated as solutions to the “Gypsy question” in the first decade of the People’s Republic. As early as 1947, an address published within the journal *Népegészségügy* [Public health] by the chief medical officer of Mátészalka, József Galambos, argued that, because the dangers of the “Gypsy question” were more pronounced after liberation—Romani mobility here presented as an excessive exercise of post-liberation “freedom,” elevated to public health threat—a dramatic solution would have to be found, and urgently.<sup>70</sup> Among the physicians contributing to the debate published in

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<sup>70</sup> József Galambos, “A cigánykérdés megoldása” [The solution to the Gypsy question], *Népegészségügy* [Public health] 36 (September 1947), 1446 in Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányságtörténete*, 143–44.

*Népegészségügy*, a number of familiar suggestions arose: removals and fostering for children, forced labor camps and sterilization for their parents.<sup>71</sup> Even after de-Stalinization and the closure of camps like Recsk, Tamás Hajnáczy observes in his exhaustive study of district records in Borsod county that forced labor remained an option at least considered by local officials to ensure the sedentarization of so-called “stray Gypsies” [*kóbor cigány-s*]; such “radical administrative measures” were necessary, some argued, especially in the “upbringing of young vagrants” [*csavargó-s*].<sup>72</sup> “Those Gypsies prone to avoiding work and living a vagrant lifestyle should be mercilessly taken away to do forced labor,” one local council in Szabolcs-Szatmár county opined in the mid-1950s. “This would only need to be done regularly with two to three individuals on a yearly basis for two to three years, then a change in attitude to work would be ensured.”<sup>73</sup> Here, forced labor hovers between a punishment and a pedagogical tool in which the problem of Romani labor is understood in terms of disorderly historical consciousness as a threat to orderly economic activity. Although the state socialist discourse reads scientific and experimental rather than poetic and metaphysical, the language of these local councils reprises the key category of “vagrants” [*csavargó-s*] that Hermann used in 1895.

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<sup>71</sup> Galambos, “A cigánykérdés megoldása,” 1447–49. These proposals find parallels in other socialist states in the late 1940s and 1950s. Donert observes the revival of earlier, coercive strategies to compel Roma to respect “the most vital law of the people’s democracy”—that is, “the right to work”—that motivated internal debates of the Labor Ministry in Czechoslovakia. Among these, one Ministry official proposed a three-tier classification of Roma with the suggestion that those who practiced nomadic trades or who were otherwise perceived as “workshy” be placed under close police surveillance. If necessary, the Ministry proposed forced labor camps for parents and institutionalization of their children. Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 63.

<sup>72</sup> HU BAZML XXIII-12.a. 1455/1958, “Az edelényi járási jelentése” [The district report of Edelény], April 29, 1958 in Tamás Hajnáczy, “A Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megyei cigányság helyzete az 1950-es években a források tükrében” [The situation of the Gypsies in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county in the 1950s as reflected in the sources] *Fons: Forráskutatás és történeti segédtudományok* [Fons: Source research and historical auxiliary sciences] 24, no. 2 (2017): 228.

<sup>73</sup> Pál Nagy, ed., “Nem szabad őket lenézni”: *A cigány népesség felmérési Szabolcs-Szatmár megyében az 1950-es években* [“You should not look down upon them”: The Gypsy population survey in Szabolcs-Szatmár county in the 1950s] (Nyíregyháza: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Levéltár, 2015), 47 as translated in Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 50.

State socialist labor politics evince one final similarity with those of the pre- and interwar: the issuance of specially-marked identification documents to Roma. On August 26, 1953, at a meeting of the Political Committee of the MDP, representatives of the Ministry of the Interior proposed issuing a uniform personal identification card [*személy igazolvány*] to all Hungarian citizens above the age of sixteen in the interest of rooting out “class enemies,” “imperialist agents,” and to better keep “undesirable elements” out of border regions. When the policy was implemented on February 1, 1954, the Ministry required applicants to have a number of supporting documents at hand, including birth and marriage certificates, documentation of temporary or permanent housing, military identification for men between the ages of twenty-two and fifty, student or employer identification, and a tax stamp, whose value depended upon the length of validity of the identification document. In the following year, forty to fifty thousand individuals remained without this document. Among this group, the Ministry of the Interior estimated that twenty to twenty-five thousand were so-called “stray Gypsies” [*kóbor cigány-s*]. The Ministry resolved that anyone who could not provide documentation of two years of continuous residence must be a “vagrant;” those who could not provide six months of continuous employment were “work shy” [*munkakerülő*]. For those labeled as “stray Gypsies,” the Ministry introduced a document known as the “black personal identification card” [*fekete személyi igazolvány*] that subjected its holder to special police review, including fingerprinting, and differed from the standard identification in “form and content.”<sup>74</sup> Despite protests by Romani activists, among them, General Secretary of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association

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<sup>74</sup> Puresi, “Fekete személyi igazolvány és munkatábor.” See also Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 51–52.

[*Magyarországi Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége*] Mária László, the Ministry continued to issue “black personal identification cards” until 1961.<sup>75</sup>

### III. “Now the Countryside is Coming”: Building a Romani Industrial Reserve Army in Postwar Hungary

“What better proof could there be of the Communist method of social transformation than the disappearance of the Gypsies?” anthropologist Michael Stewart asks in the introduction of his ethnographic study of one *Ólah* community, just north of Hungary’s Great Plain, conducted in the 1980s.<sup>76</sup> Though state socialist governments across the Warsaw Pact understood this task as undoing the past injustices of the bourgeois era, the terms of Romani “social inclusion” [*társadalmi beilleszkedés*] were generally not a matter of the Roma’s own choosing. “The discipline, the organization, and the collective spirit of the socialist production line,” especially industrial labor, was not only to make Roma into full members of the People’s Republic, that is to say, New Socialist (Romani) People, but would further diminish, if not entirely eliminate, their “distinct identity and lifestyle.”<sup>77</sup> Put differently, Stewart presents socialist assimilatory politics as a matter of a general formula: “(Gypsy) + (socialist wage labor + housing) = (Hungarian worker [*dolgozó*]) + (Gypsy folklore).”<sup>78</sup> To quote the typical promise as presented in state

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<sup>75</sup> Purcsi, “Fekete személyi igazolvány és munkatábor.”

<sup>76</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 5.

<sup>77</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 6.

<sup>78</sup> “Számára és a Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt számára nem létezik teljesebb asszimiláció, mint amit a következő egyszerű képlet leír: (cigány) + (szocialista bérmunka + lakás) = (magyar *dolgozó*) + (cigány folklór).” Michael Stewart, *Daltestvérek: az oláh cigány identitás és közösség továbbélése a szocialista Magyarországon* [Brothers in song: The continuation of *Ólah* Gypsy identity and community in socialist Hungary] (Budapest: Max Weber Alapítvány–T-Twins Kiadó, 1994), 71.

socialist press, Roma would become, through labor and its beneficent pedagogy, an “orderly, educated, hardworking people. This work is closely linked to the construction of socialism.”<sup>79</sup>

The characterizations of Hungarian Romani life and the role of labor within it could often evince diametrically opposed positions in the state socialist press. Journalist Mihály Kovács, writing for the *Fejér County Newspaper* [*Fejér Megyei Hírlap*] in September 1957, begins by describing the county’s Romani settlements as standing in “century-old motionlessness” but quickly pivots to detail many of the dynamics Stewart captures in his general formula. In Sárkeresztúr, the largest Romani settlement in this central Hungarian county, change appears on the horizon, brought about by the reorganization of Romani labor within heavy industry: “Some of them work, some have carriages and horses . . . Most of the young people work for companies in Székesfehérvár and Sárbogárd. The most learned, best-living layer . . . break out of the community as soon as possible and buy a house, a more cultured [*kulturáltabb*] life.”<sup>80</sup> The Romani encounter with socialist modernity through labor, Kovács contends, will necessarily lead to the dissolution of Romani settlements, their community absorbed into the national whole as more and more “buy” the conditions necessary for their social improvement (“a house, a more cultured life”). From Kovács’s perspective, and so too the state’s, through work and the material and the cultural improvement promised by wage labor, Roma would cease to be a backward [*elmaradt*], primitive [*primitív*] people. The conditions of Romani home buying within state socialist Hungary, and the financial instruments that regulated consumer participation in the project of building socialism are considered further in Chapters 4 and 5. For now, I will observe

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<sup>79</sup> “. . . rendszerető, művelt, dolgozó emberekké válnak. A szocializmus építéséhez ez a tennivaló is szorosan hozzátartozik.” “A felemelkedés útjára akarjuk vezetni őket . . .” [We want to lead them on the path of ascension . . .], *Építőmunkás* [Construction worker], March 4, 1963.

<sup>80</sup> “Egy részük dolgozik . . . A fiatalok javarésze székesfehérvári és sárbogárdi vállalatoknál dolgozik. Legtanultabb, legőbbsen élő rétegé a cigánytelepnek . . . Ők szakadnak ki leghamarabb a közösségből, s házat vesznek, kulturáltabb életet élnek.” Mihály Kovács, “A cigányokról” [About the Gypsies], *Fejér Megyei Hírlap* [Fejér county newspaper], September 2, 1957.

that within these brief lines, temporality appears decisive. It is youth, Kovács argues, as teachable laborers within nearby factories, who have the potential—we might say the labor-power—to lead a process of generalized social transformation and assimilation.

Not until December 29, 1955 did the Political Committee agree on the need to address the “Gypsy question” and its intersection with Romani labor by setting a date to reach a formal resolution: March 15, 1956. This deadline, however, would be postponed again, until April 5, 1956, because of a “lack of time.”<sup>81</sup> Time, it seems, was on no one’s side. The April 1956 proposal was, perhaps, motivated by geopolitical concerns, as part of a larger revisiting of Hungary’s nationality policy by the Political Committee in order to placate Josip Broz Tito’s demands for protections of Hungary’s Serbian and Croatian minorities amidst the Yugoslav-Soviet détente initiated in 1955.<sup>82</sup> Though ultimately withdrawn, the April 1956 proposal, prepared by the Administration Department [*Adminisztratív Osztály*] and the Science and Culture Department [*Tudományos és Kulturális Osztály*], with the advice of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education, informed the 1961 decision of the Political Committee, which scholars point to as the precipitating event behind mass labor recruitment drives.

In ways again evocative of Hermann’s summary of the 1893 Gypsy Census, the 1956 proposal begins with a classification of Hungarian Roma according to sedentarization and mobility, emphasizing the putative “backwardness” of those living a “wandering lifestyle” [*kóborló életmód*]. The proposal counted between 120,000–130,000 Roma across Hungary, estimating that approximately 80,000–100,000 (61–77 percent) lived “in Gypsy settlements/slums” [*cigánytelep-s*] or on the outskirts of villages. 20,000–30,000 (15–25

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<sup>81</sup> HU MNL M-KS 276. F. 53/279. ő. e. in Feitl, “A cigányság ügye a napirendről lekerült,” 258.

<sup>82</sup> Feitl, “A cigányság ügye a napirendről,” 258; and Johanna Granville, “Josip Broz Tito’s Role in the 1956 ‘Nagy Affair,’” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 76, no. 4 (October 1998): 674.

percent), by contrast, were settled within cities, and some 7,000–8,000 (5–7 percent) lived “a wandering lifestyle.” “In terms of lifestyle, there are some differences between the strata of Gypsies,” the proposal states, “but even those with a settled and relatively more advanced standard of living have living conditions that are below the average of the population.”<sup>83</sup> Linked with these deficient living standards, the proposal continues, was an overall “backwardness” [*elmaradottság*] of moral conditions, characterized by informal or polygamous marital ties. On this point, the proposal gives neither evidence nor statistical data on such relationships, though contemporary ethnographic research indicates that legally recognized or state-sanctioned marriages were seen as a secondary process within some Romani communities (and among many *paraszt*-s as well). The exception, in other words, was held up as a norm.

The proposal, however, goes to considerable lengths to identify the causes of Romani social marginalization within the Magyar majority, though not without qualification:

Their integration into the regular work of production is hindered by the fact that their isolation and the discrimination against the Gypsies still prevails strongly, primarily on the part of the population, as well as on the part of certain state and economic bodies . . . There is no doubt that the population’s dislike in some specific cases is justly triggered by the Gypsies’ way of life and the various crimes committed by them . . . Resolving the Gypsy question requires lengthy and hard work, both on the part of the Party and state and social organizations. Their improvement from their centuries of backwardness is a significant task . . .<sup>84</sup>

Though, as historian Tamás Hajnáczy observes, the proposal emphasized the need for greater access to sanitation, healthcare, and utilities within Romani settlements, these efforts were only

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<sup>83</sup> “Az életmód tekintetében vannak bizonyos különbségek a cigánység rétegei között, azonban még a letelepült és viszonylag fejlettebb életszínvonalú cigánység életkörülményei is alatta maradnak a lakosság átlagos életszínvonalának.” HU MNL M-KS 276. F. 91/85. ő. e.: “Javaslat a Politikai Bizottsághoz a magyar cigány-kérdés rendezésére” [Proposal to the Political Committee to settle the Hungarian Gypsy question], April 9, 1956 in Feitl, “A cigánység ügye a napirendről lekerült,” 266.

<sup>84</sup> “Hátráltatja beilleszkedésüket a rendszeres termelőmunkába az a körülmény, hogy a cigányokkal szemben még mindig erősen érvényesül az elzárkózás, a megkülönböztetés, elsősorban a lakosság részéről, emellett egyes állami szervek, gazdasági szervek részéről is... A cigánykérdés megoldása hosszadalmas és szívós munkát igényel, úgy a párt, mint állami és társadalmi szervek részéről. Kiemelésük évszázados elmaradottságukból jelentős feladat...” HU MNL OL M-KS 276. F. 91/85. ő. e.: “Javaslat a Politikai Bizottsághoz a magyar cigány-kérdés rendezésére,” in Feitl, 267.

ever understood within the context of the large-scale reorganization of Romani labor.<sup>85</sup> The task of “ensuring that Gypsies are accustomed to work” was to be put in the hands of the Office of Labor Reserves [*Munkaerő-tartalékok Hivatala*] with the following recommendations: 1.) the creation of small-scale production cooperatives to integrate Romani traditional [*hagyományos*] occupations within the national economy; 2.) the recruitment of Roma into road construction and maintenance, horticulture, and sanitation; and 3.) the promotion of Romani employment within agricultural collectives and state forestry. The matter of “traditional occupations,” however, was left ambiguous in the proposal, insofar as several trades were to come under strict licensing regulations, chief among these, horse trading and carpet sales, which the proposal considered a potential cover-up occupation for theft.<sup>86</sup>

As Zoltán Bárány argues, state efforts at licensing traditional forms of Romani labor were not intended to fully stop Romani manufacturing work. The aim was rather to redirect Roma into organized employment within cooperatives, generally overseen by Magyars. This was especially the case in metallurgy—namely copper and tin smithing—where the unlicensed practice of these trades was made illegal to “weed out nomadism,” that is to say, regulate Romani movement, but then later made legal again. This was on the condition, however, that practitioners worked within government-run collectives that, after 1961, became enfolded into larger state enterprises.<sup>87</sup> For example, in the 1950s, some 1,500–1,800 Roma were employed within hundreds of small nail-making collectives across Hungary. By the final years of the People’s Republic, only one or two such collectives remained, the rest amalgamated with larger state metallurgy concerns.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 52.

<sup>86</sup> HU MNL OL M-KS 276. F. 91/85. ó. e.: “Javaslat a Politikai Bizottsághoz a magyar cigány-kérdés rendezésére,” in Feitl, 270.

<sup>87</sup> Bárány, *The East European Gypsies*, 138–39.

<sup>88</sup> Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 67.

The mounting political crisis of the Rákosi government in mid-1956, however, left the policy proposal without resolution. Neither would one be found in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution. The Political Committee would only reach a decision in June 1961 under the new leadership of the General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party [*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*, MSZMP], János Kádár. The 1961 decision once again begins with a statistical assessment, by quantifying the number of Roma within Hungary, now estimated at 200,000, and grouping them within a three-tiered classificatory system according to "their way of life and their integration into society" [*életmódjuk és a társadalomba való beilleszkedésük*]. In the first category, the decision lists those Roma who had attained an average cultural standard and had "abandoned the Gypsy way of life" [*felhagytak a cigányéletformával*], estimated to be 30 percent. Those who were currently undergoing the process of being integrated, meaning here, living at the edges of villages and cities and performing casual work, made up the second category, similarly estimated at 30 percent. Unsurprisingly, the decision held its sharpest criticism from those Roma in the third category, the so-called "unintegrated Gypsies" [*a be nem illeszkedett cigány-s*], who "avoid decent/clean [*tisztességes*] work, and who live from day to day, or at the expense of society."<sup>89</sup> The decision estimated their number to total 40 percent of all Roma in the country. It should be noted, however, that these statistics refer strictly to employment within mandatory state workbooks, and thus classify many Roma, who worked "off the books" in winter and spring in factories and in summer and fall alongside agricultural collectives, as unemployed. The socialist press refers to this practice disparagingly as the "wintering" of "migratory birds," another romantic metaphorical holdover.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> "...kerüli a tisztességes munkát, máról holnapra él, ill. a társadalom terhére élőködik." "A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról," 240.

<sup>90</sup> As a 1963 article appearing in the weekly newspaper for construction workers put it, "there are also those who just come to us to 'winter.' As soon as the time for adobe brickmaking and chamomile picking arrives, they miss work."

Though lacking the comprehensive strategy for enfolding Romani work into the structure of socialist production detailed in the April 1956 proposal, the Political Committee's 1961 resolution makes several similar observations. It notes the pervasive discrimination Roma experienced in industrial workplaces and collective farms, and that many managers outright refused to hire Roma, even when facing labor shortages. Those companies and collectives that did hire Roma, it further notes, often discriminated against them in other ways, chief among these, in the remuneration of work.<sup>91</sup> Although the decision identifies this form of workplace discrimination as a key obstacle to the social inclusion of Roma within state industry, it nevertheless avoids recommending specific measures to rectify it. It is worth wondering why this hesitation. For indeed, if the unequal remuneration of Romani labor was not a "problem" to be solved by state socialist planners, it nevertheless reveals important dynamics and power asymmetries that may have subtended the functioning of state industries. The "insatiable demand for labor-power" produced by Hungary's postwar industrial economy absorbed first the Magyar male peasantry, then Magyar women, and finally, when these reserves of the industrial labor

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"Olyanok is vannak, akik csak 'telelni' jönnek hozzánk. Amint kita-vaszodik és elérkezik a vályogvetés meg a kamillaszedés ideje, elmaradnak a munkából. Nem tudjuk, mit kezdjünk az ilyenekkel, nevelésüket megnehezíti, hogy sok közöttük az írástudatlan." "A felemelkedés útjára akarjuk vezetni őket . . .," *Építőmunkás*, March 4, 1963. In a contemporary condemnation of "wintering," found within a summary report of an Assembly of Delegates meeting of the Somogy County Construction Company, this metaphorization and naturalization is extended to the animalistic: "The amendment to the Labor Code was discussed as follows: the honest worker is protected, but woe to the malingerers, migratory birds! Mihály Kiss drew attention to the fact that the majority of those leaving were Orsós and Kalányos [two common Romani surnames]. A few years ago, many people wailed: it is not a pity for them, let them go—Gypsies. Rarely did anyone think that they could and should be helped. Now, however, the speaker urged that the Orsós-es, the Kalányos-es be dealt with more than before. Because they are now familiar with work and the lives of organized workers. It doesn't matter what the reception is, how patient and good-natured the others are. They need to be prepared for good and regular labor with the support of workers." "A Munka Törvénykönyve módosítása ily módon került szóba: a becsületes dolgozót védik, viszont jaj a lógósoknak, vándormadaraknak! Kiss Mihály hívta fel a figyelmet arra, hogy a kilépők többsége Orsós meg Kalányos. Néhány esztendeje még sokan legyintettek: nem kár értük, menjenek—cigányok. Ritkán ötlött eszébe valakinek, hogy lehetne is, meg kellene is segíteni rajtuk. Most azonban azt szorgalmazta a felszólaló, hogy az eddigénél jobban kellene foglalkozni az Orsósokkal, a Kalányosokkal. Hisz ők most ismerkednek a munkával, a szervezett dolgozók életével. Nem mindegy, hogy milyen a fogadtatás, mennyire türelmesek, jószándékúak velük szemben a többiek. A dolgozók támogatásával kell felkészíteni őket a jó és rendszeres munkára." "Jegyzetek egy választásról" [Notes on a resolution . . .], *Építő Lapja* [Builders' magazine], March 1965.

<sup>91</sup> "A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról," 241.

army proved insufficient, Romani men and women.<sup>92</sup> This expansion of the industrial workforce was indeed critical to meeting production quotas. “Unskilled” auxiliary workers improved overall efficiency and reduced work disruptions, all potential sources of lateral tensions between workers on production and assembly lines.<sup>93</sup>

As the majority of Romani laborers were “unskilled” [*szakképzetlen*] in these industries, their labor proved advantageous to managers [*Table 4*].<sup>94</sup> Not only prices, but wage rates were centrally planned; as company management had strict allotments for overall pay within industrial concerns and collectives, only a very small margin remained from which managers could award premiums to “skilled” employees (*e.g.*, rewards, subsistence allowances, and payments in kind). Thus, securing the disposable capital required to sustain preferential treatment for some “skilled” (Magyar) workers depended upon accumulating a relative surplus to production quotas from a larger number of overperforming, under-remunerated “unskilled” (Romani) workers, creating a cooperative hierarchy not unlike that which Marx describes within the context of the capitalist mode of production.<sup>95</sup> This could, in effect, square the circle of enfolding Romani labor into state enterprises as a matter of economic productivity without challenging the privileged position of a Magyar male working class as matter of historical consciousness.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> “Ez a csillapíthatatlan munkaerőigény szívta fel a parasztság többséget . . . az iparba, majd a mind nagyobb arányban munkába álló nőket. S amikor ezek a források sem bizonyultak elégnek – képbe kerültek a romák.” Dupesik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 142.

<sup>93</sup> Michael Burawoy and János Lukács, *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary’s Road to Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 72.

<sup>94</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the lines of what constituted “unskilled” and “skilled” work may not conform to typical understandings of these terms. As Stewart details in his ethnography of a parquet flooring factory in the late 1980s, the import of West German-produced wood saws and planers meant that the operating of the machines’ switches—generally considered the easiest and lightest work in the factory and no more than “pushing buttons”—was a responsibility given to “skilled” workers. While Roma could have been trained to operate these control panels, in general they were a “no go area.” Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 101–108.

<sup>95</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 449.

<sup>96</sup> Donert, *Rights of the Roma*, 53. Here, Donert cites Mark Pittaway’s work on Hungarian industrial workplace hierarchies and the function these served in maintaining the legitimacy of the socialist state. Mark Pittaway, *The Workers’ State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944-1958* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

TABLE 4. Division of Romani Labor According to “Skill,” 1984

	<b>Gypsies</b>	<b>Total Population</b>
	<i>by percent</i>	
Unskilled Laborer	51.2	12.2
On-the-Job Trained Laborer	23.8	25.7
Tradesmen	7.7	29.5
<b>Total Physical</b>	<b>82.7</b>	<b>67.4</b>
Non-Physical	17.3	32.6

Source: HU MNL M-KS-288 f. 41/1984/434 ő. e. – Géppel írt tisztázat: “Jelentés a magyarországi cigánylakosság helyzetéről, javaslat az időszzerű feladatokról” [Report on the situation of the Gypsy populace in Hungary, proposals and current tasks], October 2, 1984 in Hajnáczy, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality*, 339.

We might then consider the recruitment of “unskilled” Romani labor under the cover of reeducation as a part of a larger state aim of, on the one hand, shoring up popular support and political legitimacy domestically and, on the other, truing the historical promise of state socialist political economy more broadly. These unequal terms of remuneration, however, did not go unchallenged, as will be explored below.

News items of the immediate postwar period indicate that local councils and industries had already initiated Romani labor recruitments before the period of “forced industrialization” detailed above, and indeed may have begun as early as the interwar. In an article published in 1947 in the newspaper of the National Peasant Party [*Nemzeti Parasztpárt*, NPP], then the major representative of agrarians and smallholders before the MDP’s consolidation in 1948, its author, Lehel Szeberényi, proudly announced that Borsod county had “solved the Gypsy question.”<sup>97</sup> Szeberényi, the former district secretary of the NPP in two of the county’s largest cities—Putnok and Ózd—would have been well acquainted with both the social organization of Romani labor in the county, as well as the demands of the region’s industry. Though its stature as an industrial

<sup>97</sup> Lehel Szeberényi, “Borsodban megoldják a cigánykérdés” [In Borsod the Gypsy question has been solved], *Szabad Szó* [Free word], May 11, 1947.

powerhouse has declined since Hungary's transition to market capitalism in 1989, for nearly a century-and-a-half, Ózd stood as one of the most important lignite extraction and iron production sites in the country.

“For a long time, there was a general belief that the Gypsy issue was unsolvable,” Szeberényi writes.<sup>98</sup> But the district secretary points to reasons for optimism that “the time is not far off when the Gypsy question in Hungary, together with many other issues, will fade as if an unfortunate past.”<sup>99</sup> In particular, he focuses on Roma in the nearby village of Sajónémeti, both youth and adults, who saw new economic opportunities in the region's mines: First, a fourteen-year old who enthusiastically responded that he was preparing to be a miner, although his experiences of mistreatment in a local school dissuaded him from further education. Second, his father—which the report describes as a *cigány-magyar* “half-blood” [*félvér*]—who acts as an intermediary with local authorities and who had worked in the mine since moving to the town in 1938 and had built his family's home with discarded materials gleaned from it (an act likely forbidden but not condemned outright in Szeberényi's article).<sup>100</sup> Third, the father's brother-in-law, who traveled the twenty-five kilometers across the region's hills and plains with him to work in the mine in Sajóvelezd. “It was precisely in Borsod that we saw how the nomadic way of life of the Gypsies is slowly disappearing,” Szeberényi writes, “how permanent residences are being created from the temporary settlements, and how they can finally reach human living conditions if there are natural opportunities opening up.”<sup>101</sup> But what would “natural

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<sup>98</sup> “Sokáig általános volt a hit, hogy a cigánykérdés megoldhatatlan.”

<sup>99</sup> “Az az érzésünk, hogy nincs messze az idő, mikor a magyarországi cigánykérdés sok más kérdéssel együtt a rossz emléké múlté lesz csupán.”

<sup>100</sup> For a discussion of gleaned materials as supplemental pay and as medium of exchange within state socialist Hungary's informal economy, see Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 109.

<sup>101</sup> “De éppen Borsodban láttuk, hogyan szűnik meg lassan a cigányok nomád életformája, az átmeneti telepekből hogyan keletkeznek állandó lakóhelyek, s hogyan jutnak végre emberi életkörülmények közé, ha erre természetes lehetőségek nyílnak.”

opportunities” be in a planned economy, amidst recruitment drives that directed many Roma into heavy industry?

Even in Szeberényi’s optimistic portrayal of Romani life in Borsod county, the daily hardships of labor in the nearby mines cannot be ignored. Though proud to identify with the work of the mine, the father reports that his work there was in fact a result of a transfer from a factory, carried out because of increased demand at the mine. In either case, the labor was hard, the remuneration poor. “I got pneumonia [at a nearby mine] in the winter. I came out of the mine covered in sweat, my clothes froze to me outside . . . at home I broke out in sweat and collapsed. You had to work in that way for so little bread.”<sup>102</sup> Though Hungary’s economy had uneasily stabilized after the immediate hardships of postwar inflation, the conversion of time for consumer goods was still a ruthless one. For the Roma Szeberényi interviewed in Sajónémeti, basic necessities (and even the materials necessary to undertake work in the mine) were not questions of hours, but of days and weeks of full-time work: a kilogram of sugar, one-and-a-half days; goods from the shop, one week; a pair of boots, two.

Alongside these daily hardships, incidences of outright anti-Romani discrimination in workplaces and dormitories were not uncommon, even within those industries that heavily recruited Romani labor.<sup>103</sup> Investigations and reports compiled by regional mining authorities, although often concluding that no discrimination existed within mines and factories, indicate at the very least that these incidences were a matter of concern for Party leadership.<sup>104</sup> As noted above, “unskilled” Romani workers were often excluded from forms of supplemental pay

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<sup>102</sup> “Ott kaptam a télen tüdőgyulladást. Izzadtan jöttem ki a bányából, kint meg rám fagyott a ruha . . . itthon csak kivert a veríték és összeestem. Így meg kellett dolgozni azért a kis kenyérért.”

<sup>103</sup> For a discussion of Romani and non-Romani activism around housing conditions for industrial workers in 1950s Czechoslovakia, see Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 60 and 77.

<sup>104</sup> “Az elnökség hírei” [News from the presidency], *Bányamunkás* [Mine worker], November 1962.

granted to Magyar “skilled” laborers; thus, excess production performed by Roma laborers provided a degree of surplus capital with which managers increased allowances for Magyar coworkers, in effect supplementing the Magyar wage rate.<sup>105</sup> As Dupcsik argues, this was one of the primary motivations for hiring of Roma; given different economic conditions, managers would have otherwise chosen to exclude Roma from employment outright: “It was a warning sign of the future that economic leaders repeatedly confessed to [contemporary sociologists] that if they were given the chance, they would not employ Gypsies and would fire their current Gypsy workers.”<sup>106</sup>

Consider, for example, the case of István Baranyi Jr., a Romani member of the Union of Working Youth [*Dolgozó Ifjúság Szövetsége*, DISZ] and the leader of the “Gypsy brigade” employed at the Kisterenye mine, located near the Slovak border and within the heart of the Nógrád coal basin. Baranyi Jr. approached reporters of the DISZ newspaper in 1956 in Budapest to express grievances against his overseers and coworkers.<sup>107</sup> Many of his complaints were longstanding and structural, including insufficient pay to purchase basic furnishings, substandard provisioning of housing to Roma, and outright refusals by the president of the firm’s executive committee of requests for apartments for families who had relocated to Kisterenye. These complaints, however, would only receive coverage in the socialist press because of a subsequent, extraordinary incident of verbal and physical abuse—even racial discrimination [*faji*

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<sup>105</sup> These asymmetries existed in collective farms, too, wherein specific tasks were awarded a defined number of “work units” according to physical difficulty and technical skill. Lampland, *The Value of Labor*, 236–238. However, as many Roma were excluded from official membership in collectives and rather worked seasonally on the needs of the collective, their labor stood outside of this metric of evaluation and remuneration, and with it, the possibility of supplemental pay for overfulfillment of quotas.

<sup>106</sup> “Figyelmeztető jel volt a jövőre nézve, hogy gazdasági vezetők nem egyszer bevallották a kutatóknak: ha lehetőségük lenne, nem alkalmaznának cigányokat, s a jelenlegi cigány dolgozóiktól is megszabadulnának.” Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 142.

<sup>107</sup> Gyula Némethi, “Csak azért, mert cigányok . . .” [Just because they are Gypsies . . .], *Szabad Ifjúság* [Free youth], June 3, 1956, 3.

*megkülönböztetés*], as the article’s author would imply. On this point, the author of the report, Gyula Németi, made the following ironic comment and critique of official pronouncements on the “Gypsy question”: “What can be said about this? The template would be: ‘The Constitution states that there is no racial discrimination in the Hungarian People’s Republic.’”<sup>108</sup>

The facts of the case would prove otherwise. In the past quarter, Baranyi Jr.’s brigade had overperformed its quota by 23 percent. The honors and praise the brigade deserved as Stakhanovites, however, were withheld by plant managers at its ceremony that May. Instead, the achievements of a Magyar brigade that had produced less were held up for company praise. It was as if, Baranyi Jr. observed, it did not matter if one were a Stakhanovite; what mattered most of all was the fact that he and his brigade were “Gypsies. Period.” After confronting the mine’s management, Baranyi Jr. and his brigade were awarded diplomas for excellent work but were informed that bonuses would be restricted to 15 forints per person (less than a half-day’s earnings) as any additional supplement would be in excess of the company’s plan that quarter. Though the Party secretary of the mine, József Czene, had advocated on their behalf, his was a minority position. Another young miner considered it a lost cause: “Czene bounces in vain. A swallow can’t make it spring!”<sup>109</sup>

The conflict came to a head a few weeks later, dramatized in Németi’s article. From six to ten in the morning, the brigade waited to receive an empty hopper to fill. During the shift, they worked alongside the team of a Magyar brigade leader, Pál Dénes. As Dénes’s brigade was located further away from the hoppers, “old mining law” dictated that Dénes’s team should be credited for three hoppers against Baranyi Jr.’s one. And yet, at the end of the shift, a dispute

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<sup>108</sup> “Mit lehet mondani erre? A sablon ez lenne: ‘Az Alkotmány leszögezi, hogy a Magyar Népköztársaságban nincs faji megkülönböztetés.’”

<sup>109</sup> “Hiába ugrál Czene, egy fecske nem csinál tavaszt!”

broke out between the two brigade leaders over counting up the morning's work. When Dénes claimed that his brigade should receive credit for all four hoppers, Baranyi Jr. protested on behalf of his. Dénes proceeded to attack Baranyi Jr., verbally and physically, who responded by pushing Dénes away. Although two witnesses provided evidence to support Baranyi Jr.'s account, an interrogation conducted at the company office by the chief engineer of the mine provided no resolution. In the interest of smoothing things over, the engineer found fault with both parties, suggesting that Baranyi Jr. had provoked his coworker and had erred in defending himself. "If it is a matter of production, or if it is a Peace Loan quotation," József Szomora, a member of Baranyi Jr.'s brigade remarked, "we are just like other people. But if one of us lives with sixteen people in two rooms and asks for an apartment, or desires a well-deserved reward, even a good word, then we are already a 'stinking Gypsy.'"<sup>110</sup>

The high social status granted to old Magyar "mining families," coupled with difficult working conditions and ever-increasing quotas to satisfy the country's growing energy needs created greater demands for recruitment of Romani laborers, often far afield of worksites. Mark Pittaway, in his exhaustive study of industrial labor politics within state socialist Hungarian industry, notes that these workplaces operated through unequal relations and hierarchies, a legacy of pre-socialist arrangements.<sup>111</sup> As one 1958 report from the western Hungarian mining town of Oroszlány notes, within this "model" industry of state socialist production, established mining families experienced a degree of upward social mobility that threatened the old organization of labor.<sup>112</sup> Magyar parents who had worked in and around the mines did not always

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<sup>110</sup> "Ha termelni kell, vagy ha békekölcsön-jegyzés van, akkor éppen olyan emberek vagyunk, mint a többiek. De ha közülünk valaki tizenhatod magával lakik két szobában és lakást kér, vagy megérdemelt jutalomra, jó szóra kívánczik, akkor az már 'büdös cigány' . . ."

<sup>111</sup> Pittaway, *The Workers' State*.

<sup>112</sup> Gyula Némethi, "Felderítő úton az új bányásznezmedék nyomában: II. Mi az 'úri' munka?" [Following the footsteps of a new generation of miners: II. What is "gentlemanly" work?], *Bányamunkás* [Mine worker], June 1958.

encourage their children to continue the “family trade,” and instead directed their children toward “gentlemanly” [úri] industries and professions, especially in the country’s growing steel manufactures.

The evidence of this proletarian embourgeoisement, the reporter noted, could be observed in the fashions of Oroszlány’s youth: elegant faux leather and nylon raincoats for men, stylish dresses for women, and, to the author’s great surprise, the galoshes featured at the recent Industrial Fair, which, although a rarity even on Budapest’s central Váci Street, could be found on the crosstown bus. When asked as to the career prospects of the local youth, the director of the Oroszlány mine provided the following response: “Last year we hired 172 young men. Of these, only four were local. At the same time, 150 people from Oroszlány applied for 60 positions in the iron and steel industry.”<sup>113</sup> The reporter further inquired why so many of the youth of Oroszlány were seeking employment outside of the mines, to which the director replied that, although receiving higher earnings at the mines, Magyar mining parents state that “gentleman’s work” begins with locksmithing and engine assembly. “The parents,” he concludes, have “a single wish: that their children become ‘gentlemen’ [úriember-s].”<sup>114</sup> “Otherwise,” Simon Vilmos, a Magyar miner with thirty-years’ experience from Dorog, a town northwest of Budapest, succinctly stated, “if they want our craft to be passed down from father to son, they will need to bring more machines to the mine. Were underground work to be less strenuous than it is to today, then we mining parents would prefer to send our children to the mine.”<sup>115</sup> What was of concern, then, to party officials and mine directors, was not Romani

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<sup>113</sup> “Tavaly 172 helyre vettünk fel fiúkat. Ezekből összesen csak négy helybeli volt. Ugyanakkor a vasasszakmába 60 férőhelyre 150-en jelentkeztek Oroszlányból.”

<sup>114</sup> “Nézze, hiába a magasabb kereset, a bányászszülők szerint az ‘úri munka’ a lakatoságnál, a motorszerelésnél kezdődik. A szülők jól keresnek, szépen berendezkednek, hazát építenek, ezután már csak egyetlen kívánságuk van: gyermekük ‘úriember’ legyen.”

<sup>115</sup> “Különben – teszi hozzá –, ha azt akarják, hogy a mi mesterségünk tovább öröklődjék, apáról-fiúra, akkor több gépet hozzanak a bányába. Ha nem lesz olyan megerőltető a föld állati munka, mint még napjainkban is, akkor mi,

mobility, but rather the mobility of Magyar youth from traditional mining families. It was these (predominantly male) young adults, not Roma, who “strayed” from the profession, imperiling the future reproduction of labor.

Thus, if a stated aim of Hungarian state socialist labor policies was the sedentarization of Roma through the building of permanent labor relationships and regulation of traditional forms of trade, the state’s recruitment strategies at the local level frequently complicated these efforts, creating new, albeit officially sanctioned, forms of circular migration as depicted in Pál Schiffer’s documentary, *Fekete Vonat* [Black train], with which this chapter began. The contradictory results of this policy—more stable labor relationships coupled with increased Romani labor mobility—were evident to Hungarian public health officials, who at times criticized the policy in the state press. “Taking Gypsies to work in other counties out of false ideas is an incorrect practice and must be stopped,” writes one physician in 1958. “There are so many jobs everywhere that those who want to work can be employed locally.”<sup>116</sup>

For example, a series of articles, published in 1958 in the industry newspaper, *Bányamunkás* [Mine worker], follows the journey of new recruits from their homes in and around the south-eastern city of Debrecen into their new employment in the mines of Tatabánya and Oroszlány, some three hours to the west. Locating new laborers in Debrecen, the representative of the recruitment office noted, proved difficult because of competition with local industries, which included a ball bearing and wagon factory, as well as numerous construction sites. However, the officer nevertheless found recruits from among the Romani villages in the

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bányász-szülők is szívesebben küldjük gyermekeinket a bányába.” Gyula Németi, “Felderítő úton az új bányásznemzedék nyomában: III. Elsorvad-e a régi bányásznemzedék?” [On an exploratory journey in the wake of the new generation of miners: III. Will the old generation of miners wither away?] *Bányamunkás* [Mine worker], July 1958.

<sup>116</sup> “Helytelen gyakorlat és meg kell szüntetni, hogy hamis meggon-dolásokból cigányokat más megyékbe visznek dolgozni. Van annyi munkaalkalom mindenütt, hogy a dolgozni kívánókat helyben foglalkoztassák.” Bartha, “Végre megmozdultunk,” *Fejér Megyei Hírlap*, May 7, 1958.

surrounding countryside. “Now the countryside is coming. They are one-part peasant [*paraszt*] children, another part is orphaned, or half-orphaned, or cared for by the state. I don’t think it is an exaggeration to think that many of these people had not seen one thousand forints before they came here.”<sup>117</sup>

In 1971, the year of Hungarian sociologist István Kemény’s first representative study of Romani life in Hungary, 85 percent of Romani men were employed, the vast majority (75 percent) permanently, and a small minority (10 percent) in temporary employment or in arrangements of self-employment. This, he notes, mirrors the overall rate of employment for all Hungarian men at the same period. However, various factors, including geographical location and overall family size can be linked with lower rates of employment for Romani women. In that same year, approximately one-third of Romani women were in full-time employment, less than half the rate of the national average. With continued drives in the latter half of the 1970s, rates had reached approximately one-half of all Romani women of employment age, remaining relatively stable through the subsequent decade.<sup>118</sup> Though Kemény attributes differences in employment rates to Romani women’s caregiving responsibilities, we may also speculate that it can be explained, in part, because of the male-focused recruitment of Romani men into heavy industry.

## Conclusion

As this chapter has argued, though state socialist labor policies may have scripted Roma as in need of sedentarization through formalized relationships within industrial firms and collective

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<sup>117</sup> “Most alföldiek jönnek. Egy részük parasztgyerek, más részük árva, félárva, vagy állami gondozott. Azt hiszem, nem túlzok, ha azt mondom, hogy idejövetelünk előtt sokan nemigen láttak egyben ezer forintot.” Némethi, “Felderítő úton az új bányásznezvedék nyomában: II. Mi az ‘úri’ munka?” *Bányamunkás*, June 1958.

<sup>118</sup> Kemény and Janky, “Roma Population of Hungary 1971–2003,” 168–70.

farms, what sedentarization itself meant was less a matter of emplacement in a typical sense and rather a positioning within the labor market. In fact, mass labor recruitments of Romani men (and to a lesser extent, Romani women), beginning as early as the late 1940s and accelerating in subsequent decades, often presumed mobility as a precondition for employment. But bearing the description of commuter [*ingázó*] was hardly liberatory, whatever the social uplift promised by the pedagogy and discipline of industrial labor. Rather, the term continued to bear longstanding associations between, on the one hand, rootedness and order [*rend*], figured in the *paraszt*, and on the other, mobility and disorder [*rendetlen*], figured in the *cigány*, the day worker [*napszámos*], and others. In this way, for Romani commuters, even if they abided by the terms of their inclusion as presented by the socialist state, their labor would nevertheless still fall on the side of something other than meaningful work [*dolog*].

As I have argued, what was at stake in this posing of the “Gypsy question” had as much to do with the organization of Magyar labor as it did Romani. Workplaces, and the hierarchies and division of labor within them, often depended upon excess Romani labor in order to create the surplus value necessary to remunerate “skilled” Magyar workers. These inequalities, however, did not go unchallenged by Romani laborers themselves. Romani laborers also responded to new demands for work in industries that had historically been dominated by Magyars, but whose traditional links with these trades seemed in doubt, as their children sought the social status afforded to “gentlemen” [*úr-s*].

### **Postscript: Romani Labor Revisited**

It is difficult to overstate the profound and ongoing crisis that the transition to market capitalism in 1989 presents to the structure of Romani labor. As Roma were largely concentrated in sectors

experiencing the highest rates of contraction during the economic recession of the late-1980s—one that would only accelerate after 1989—already in the waning years of the People’s Republic thousands of Romani workers were forced or opted to go into retirement, and later, dismissed from their positions.<sup>119</sup> In mere statistical terms, the numbers are staggering: in 1971, 85 percent of Romani men were engaged in full- or part-time employment; in 1993, this number had already plummeted to 28 percent.<sup>120</sup> These rates have only improved marginally since. In a recent investigation of the living conditions of Roma in Hungary, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada found that Roma throughout the country were three- to five-times more likely to experience unemployment than their Magyar counterparts; overall employment rates stood at 39.3 percent in 2015.<sup>121</sup> However, this nominal increase is in many ways misleading. Much of it can be attributed to the increased scope of the Fidesz government’s Public Works Program, especially in rural Hungary, which pays little over half of the minimum wage for labor in maintaining community and national parks, public plazas, and municipal infrastructure.<sup>122</sup> Romani laborers find little choice but to contribute to the upkeep of public spaces from which their families, too often, are excluded.

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<sup>119</sup> Kemény and Janky, “Roma Population of Hungary 1971–2003,” 169–70.

<sup>120</sup> Kemény and Janky, “Roma Population of Hungary 1971 –2003,” 174–75.

<sup>121</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Hungary: Situation of Roma, Including Employment, Housing, Education, Healthcare and Political Participation*, August 18, 2016, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57dfa73e4.html> (accessed November 2, 2021).

<sup>122</sup> Bernard Rorke, “Road to Nowhere for Hungary’s Roma: Public Works Scheme is Futile and Insidious,” *European Roma Rights Centre*, June 14, 2019, <http://www.errc.org/news/road-to-nowhere-for-hungarys-roma-public-works-scheme-is-futile-and-insidious> (accessed May 10, 2022).

### **CHAPTER 3: LOVE IN LETTERS. WRITING ROMANI-MAGYAR INTIMACY IN SOCIALISM**

The small town was scandalized! But for many, even this shocking news was not enough to forget that Jancsi “was just a Gypsy child!” The two innocent children’s fatal love could not drive away the dark, destructive prejudices! It is enormously difficult to purify hearts of the murderous poisons fed by the past. But it must be done, as the deaths of Jancsi and Anna attest.<sup>1</sup>

— Investigative journalist László Szabó, writing for *People’s Freedom* [*Népszabadság*], 1962

With these words, so concludes investigative journalist László Szabó’s report, “Together they perished” [*Ketten haltak meg*], appearing in the Sunday edition of the MSZMP daily, *Népszabadság* [People’s freedom] on July 29, 1962. Drawing together interviews, police records, and medical documents, Szabó reconstructs the story of Jancsi and Anna, two star-crossed lovers from a small, unnamed Transdanubian town. The pair, rejecting the prejudices of their parents, chose suicide over separation. As Szabó tells the reader at the article’s outset, it is a tale of the modern-day Romeo and Juliet. And yet, the tragedy of Jancsi and Anna differs from the Shakespearean model in a decisive way. As Szabó clarifies, theirs were not families divided by “ancient grudge” as the Capulets and Montagues, but “something else more hateful than strife,” that is, “racial hatred” [*faji gyűlölködés*].

Over the course of the 1960s and into the 1970s, the tragedy of Jancsi and Anna and their divided Romani and Magyar households received adaptation and readaptation in state press and media.<sup>2</sup> Considered together, these news items and filmic representations reveal the affective mediatization of state socialist Romani policy and its pedagogical function. As the 1961

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<sup>1</sup> “A kisvároska megdöbönt! De sokakban még ez a döbbenetes hír sem tudta feledtetni, hogy Jancsi —‘csak egy cigánygyerek volt!’ A két ártatlan fiatal halálos szerelme sem úzhette el a sötét, pusztító előítéleteket! Irdatlan nehéz a szíveket megtisztítani a múlt táplálta gyilkos mérgektől. De meg kell tenni — Jancsi és Anna halála is erre int.” László Szabó, “Ketten haltak meg” [Together they perished], *Népszabadság* [People’s freedom], July 29, 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Szabó’s original news item also circulated outside of Hungary, capturing the attention of the Hungarian press monitoring division of Radio Free Europe [RFE] in Munich. RFE analysts reported, with seeming credulity, that “the recent suicide of a Hungarian girl and her Gypsy boy friend was cited by the communist party organ *Népszabadság* as evidence of racial prejudices still prevailing against Gypsies in Hungary.” HU OSA 300-40-1 Box 1: *Cigányok* [Gypsies] (1954-1962): “Suicides Cause Stir in Hungarian Paper,” July 30, 1962.

resolution of the Political Committee stated, combatting the “incorrect views that still exist among the population” would require not only the work of the Patriotic People’s Front [*Hazafias Népfront*], the National Council of Hungarian Women [*Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa*], the Red Cross, and the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge [*Tudományos Ismeretterjesztő Társulat*]. Rather, it would be a project that demanded the engagement of the press, radio, and television.<sup>3</sup> “The press and radio have, and must have a great role,” concluded Sándor Vendégh, director of the Nationalities Department [*Nemzetiségi Osztály*] in 1959, but with the caveat that “they do not explain the solution to the Gypsy question from a romantic perspective.”<sup>4</sup> These romantic perspectives, he defines, encompassed various forms of low-brow kitsch, “doubtful” in its value and conforming to viewer expectations—products of capitalism itself.<sup>5</sup> As this chapter explores, the socialist press, in fact, did produce “romantic” narratives of the “Gypsy.” What stories would newspapers, magazines, and scripted programs tell to combat “incorrect views” on the “Gypsy question” among citizens of the People’s Republic, both Romani and Magyar alike?

This chapter queries everyday and official narratives of love and intimacy in state socialist Hungary. It argues that narratives from the state socialist period centering Romani-Magyar friendship and romance are defined by their ambiguities. To draw this argument out, I begin by explaining the long-standing interest in describing and intervening upon Romani love and sexuality, albeit towards different ends than under state socialism. Questioning Romani dress, parenting, and marriage in the eighteenth century places the eroticism at the heart of

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<sup>3</sup> “Fel kell venni a harcot a lakosság körében még ma is elő helytelen néztek ellen, amelyek megnehezítik a cigányok beilleszkedését, társadalmi, gazdasági és kulturális felemelkedését.” “A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról,” 242.

<sup>4</sup> HU MNL XXVIII-M-8. 1. D. 3 tétel – Géppel írt tisztázat: Vendégh, “A magyarországi cigánylakosság között végzendő munka időszerű feladatai,” 119.

<sup>5</sup> HU MNL XXVIII-M-8. 1. D. 3 tétel – Géppel írt tisztázat: Vendégh, “A magyarországi cigánylakosság között végzendő munka időszerű feladatai,” 118–19.

Theresian and Josephinian “Gypsy edicts” into the terms of Romani and Magyar social reproduction (Section 1). The myth of Romani “hypersexuality,” and with it “hyperfertility,” gained traction in the interwar Christian nationalist era and during the Second World War, stoking a veritable panic over the “Gypsification” of Hungary (Section 2). In turning to the state socialist period, which reproves the explicitly eugenic aspirations of these past eras, I focus on two literary genres that centered familial and romantic ties and, at times, animated conversations among readers: first, fictionalized short stories printed in party dailies and adapted for screen (Section 3), and, second, letters to the editor published and debated in the organ of the Communist Youth League [*Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség*, KISZ], *Ifjúsági Magazin* [Youth magazine, IM] (Section 4). Both, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, featured Romani-Magyar intimacies and provided the basis for morality tales about “integration,” often although not exclusively in the mode of tragedy. Whether in potentially fabulated news reports or wistful letters to the editor, this *mise en scène* created a space of speculation about the possibility of Romani-Magyar intimacy. I close with a no less enigmatic but seemingly historically accomplished case of Romani-Magyar “integration” in an ethnographic exchange about workplace relations (Section 5).

### **I. Love, Marriage, and the “Gypsy Question”**

As discussed in Chapter 1, from the eighteenth century onward, Romani-Magyar love, intimacy, and intermarriage figured centrally in state-directed “solutions” to the so-called “Gypsy question” in the Habsburg monarchy. So too would these be taken up as a matter of state concern after 1920, in the independent Kingdom of Hungary. Bound up with historically familiar concerns of sedentarization and emplacement, labor and employment, and citizenship and its

attendant duties, the familial terms of Romani marriage customs and kinship arrangements emerged as recurrent themes in centuries of ethnographic research and as a site of governmental and expert intervention.<sup>6</sup> The forms of these interventions, however, were not consistent across time. Quite the contrary, the differences between policies intended to manage and regulate Romani families, sexuality, and desire reveal underlying state assumptions about the terms of assimilation within and exclusion from majority societies.

Let us turn to one specific example: the Theresian edict of 1767, which demanded that “Gypsy” children appear dressed in public. Why did children’s dress so occupy Habsburg officials? On first pass, the order appears most immediately an indictment of “Gypsy” parenting, allegedly permissive to the point of inattentiveness and neglect. Indeed, child nakedness would provide, in part, both motivation and justification, however tenuous, for subsequent policies of child removals, enacted in 1773. Anticipating child removals and so-called “residential schools” in settler colonial contexts (including the United States, Australia, and Canada) more than a century later and the rescuer myths that undergirded them, Theresian political actors and academics alike assumed that “Gypsy” life was inseparable from “backwardness, poverty, immorality, and parental neglect.”<sup>7</sup> As German linguist Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Konrad Bercovici, *Singing Winds: Stories of Gypsy Life* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1926), 226–256; Konrad Bercovici, *The Story of the Gypsies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), 107–108; Martin Block, *Gypsies: Their Life and Their Customs*, trans. Barbara Kuczynski and Duncan Taylor (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939), 178–200; George Borrow, *The Zingali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1908), 266–73; and Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gypsies*, 45–50. As Hazel Marsh argues, contemporary media depictions of British Gypsy, Traveller, and Romani weddings, most notably in the much-criticized Channel 4 program, *Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*, evince similar practices of misrepresentation of customs and culture by “self-appointed [non-Romani] ‘experts’” in the tradition of nineteenth-century English travel writer, George Borrow (1803–1881). Hazel Marsh, “George Borrow and the Representation of English Gypsies,” *Journal of the George Borrow Trust* 1 (2014), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret D. Jacobs, “Indian Boarding Schools in Comparative Perspective: The Removal of Indigenous Children in the United States and Australia, 1880–1940,” *Faculty Publications, Department of History* 20 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 206. See also Brenda C. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); and Ann Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 112–

argues in his 1783 work, *Die Zigeuner* [The Gypsies], this backwardness was visible through, on the one hand, the dress of adults (at once extravagant and slovenly), and on the other, the public nakedness of children (“un-European” in its impropriety).<sup>8</sup> As Philippa Levine has argued from the perspective of nineteenth century British imperialism, unlike the *nudity* so common to the classical tradition of the visual arts, the *nakedness* of the body of the colonized subject increasingly became an emblem of “colonial primitiveness, savagery, and inferiority,” through which positivist scientists of the era, armed with new technologies of photography and mass reproduction, “quite literally elided undress and discovery.”<sup>9</sup> Though lacking the anthropometric scientism of nineteenth century colonial ethnographers and ethnographic photographers, ethnologists and other researchers of the eighteenth century similarly looked upon the nakedness of “Gypsy” children with equal parts disgust, curiosity, and prurience. Nakedness seemed to promise the revelation of some essential truth about the “Gypsy”: if clothes made the man, so too could their absence. And perhaps just as readily.

Grellmann, for example, supports his contention of the Indian origins of the “Gypsy” not only through *presences*—*i.e.*, linguistic markers proving the Indic roots of the Romani language—but also through the *absence* of markers he construes as characteristic of “European” peoples—*i.e.*, distinctive national dress, or any clothing at all.<sup>10</sup> “The Indians,” he writes, “suffer

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39. For a brief comparison of these policies and Hungarian nineteenth and early twentieth century practices of child removal, see: Varsa, *Protected Children, Regulated Mothers*, 74–76.

<sup>8</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gypsies*, 18–19 and 225, fn. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Philippa Levine, “Naked Truths: Bodies, Knowledge, and the Erotics of Colonial Power,” *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 1 (January 2013), 9. See also Philippa Levine, “States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination,” *Victorian Studies* 50, no. 2 (Winter 2008), 189. For a discussion of the categorical division between the nude (as the subject of a work of art) versus the naked (as the state of undress), see: Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York: Pantheon, 1956); Melody Davis, *The Male Nude in Contemporary Photography* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); and Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Although Grellmann is today most often remembered for his linguistic research establishing the Indic roots of Romani, the credit more appropriately goes to a wider international network of scholars, including Johann Rüdiger, Christian Büttner, Hartwig Bacmeister, Peter Pallas, Johann Biester, and William Marsden. As Yaron Matras observes, Johann Rüdiger announced this “sensational discovery” in 1777, but himself gives credit to Büttner. Yaron

their children to run about naked, as advanced an age as the Gipsies do.”<sup>11</sup> Grellmann, however, is never one to miss an opportunity for additional exoticization and orientalization when comparison beckons, even when doing so risks undermining the coherency of his argument on the Indian origins of the “Gypsy.” Providing further “evidence” for his hierarchical taxonomy of naked (non-European) and clothed (European) peoples, he later compares the nakedness of “Gypsy” children to the Kalmyks, a Mongolic-speaking nomadic group that had migrated to the steppes between the Ural mountains and the Volga river by the 1630s.<sup>12</sup> Returning to his claims of parental neglect, he writes, “the Gipsies take very little trouble about their childrens dress,” but now with a new twist, “these run about naked in the true Calmuc stile, till ten years of age, when the boys get breeches, and the girls aprons.”<sup>13</sup> Praising the “Gypsy edicts” and the expansive scope of the Habsburg imperial gaze—one that not only studied its subjects, but oversaw their transformation—Grellmann concludes the passage by positing that “this nuisance [in the original German, *Übelstand*, or ‘grievous state’] is probably at an end now, in the

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Matras, *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2. Further, Grellmann himself credits this work of one Captain Szekely von Doba, who, in a conversation with the printer Stephan Pap Szathmar Nemeti on November 6, 1763, discussed the work of Stephan Vali, a Reformed pastor who had studied at the University of Leiden and was familiar with “Malabars” whom he had studied with at the University. “[Vali],” Captain Szekely writes, “having observed [the Malabar’s] native language bore a great affinity to that spoken by the Gipsies; he availed himself of the opportunity, to note down, from themselves, upwards of one thousand words, together with their significations. They assured him, at the same time, that upon their island, was a tract of land, or province, called Czigania (but it is said not laid down on the map). After Vali was returned to the University, he informed himself, among the Raber Gipsies, concerning the meaning of his Malabar words, which they explained without trouble or hesitation.” Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 132.

<sup>11</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 225, fn. 8. Grellmann here draws upon the travelogue of French colonial administrator and naturalist Pierre Sonnenrat (1748–1814). Pierre Sonnenrat, *Reisen nach Ostindien und China* [Travels to East India and China], vol. 1 (Zurich: Drell, Gessner, Füssli und Kompagnie, 1783), 26–27 and 65. However, while Sonnenrat emphasizes that the dress of the Indian is “perfectly suited to the country they inhabit” [paßt vollkommen zu dem Lande, das sie bewohnen], Grellmann draws the opposite conclusion, stressing the impropriety of “Gypsy” dress from the European norm: “This [the European] cloaths himself, the other [the “Gypsy”] goes half naked.” Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, xv.

<sup>12</sup> Arash Bormanshinov, “Kalmyks in Europe in the Nineteenth Century,” *Mongolian Studies* 11 (1988): 5–24.

<sup>13</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 21.

Imperial dominions, both in [Transylvania] and Hungary, an order, to that purpose, being issued out by the great Joseph, whose piercing eye, nothing escapes.”<sup>14</sup>

But this was not all. What so troubled contemporary European writers about the nakedness of “Gypsy” children (and of adult women) was not just its association with primitivity, but its power to scandalize and scandalously arouse desire. To borrow Levine’s description of British colonial photography of the naked body of the colonized subject, though equally apt here, “its sexualized potential added a frisson of danger.”<sup>15</sup> Within the literature, descriptions of this scandal and scandalous desire could range from the coy to the explicit. In language somewhat gentler than Grellmann’s *Übelstand*, the nineteenth century German-Hungarian educator and historian Johann Heinrich Schwicker (1839–1902) emphasized the “nuisance” [*Ärgernis*] occasioned by “Gypsy” children “run[ning] about naked on the streets and alleys.”<sup>16</sup> For Grellmann, and with him earlier ethnographers and researchers whose texts he reproduced, this “nuisance” was assumed to have sexual overtones, nothing less than solicitation itself.

To understand the particular intensity of Grellmann’s projection of the erotic in the domain of childhood nakedness, it warrants comparing his analysis against the sources he cites. His dissertation, as noted earlier, is more a composite sketch of existing ethnography than an original work of research. Here, Grellmann references the work of the French diplomat and travel writer, Charles de Peyssonnel (1727–1790), who, in his monograph on the “barbarian”

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<sup>14</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 21. Raper’s translation incorrectly lists Germany for Transylvania. Cf. Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann, *Die Zigeuner, ein historische Versuch über die Lebensart und Verfassung, Sitten und Schicksale dieses Volks in Europa, nebst ihrem Ursprunge* [The Gypsies, a historical essay on the way of life and constitution, customs and destiny of this people in Europe, together with their origin] (Dessau and Leipzig: Verlags Kasse, 1783), 50.

<sup>15</sup> Levine, “Naked Truths,” 11.

<sup>16</sup> “Ihre Kinder dürfen auf Straßen und Gassen nicht nackt umherlaufen und so Ärgernis geben . . .” Schwicker, *Die Zigeuner in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen*, 56.

peoples of the Danube and Black Sea, describes the economic life of the “Gypsies” living in Rumelia (that is, the European domains of the Ottoman Empire), Wallachia, and Moldavia.

“Their wives and their daughters,” Peyssonnel writes, in a tone relatively reserved in moralizing judgment, though not without its own expression of sexual desire,

usually apply themselves to acquiring and perfecting the talents of the Courtesans of Turkey, vocal and instrumental music, and lascivious dance. They often prostitute themselves to passers-by. There are even public places throughout Rumelia, filled with Bohemian women, among whom we sometimes find attractive ones.<sup>17</sup>

In his far more condemnatory recasting of Peyssonnel’s text, Grellmann reproduces verbatim, though presenting it as his own, the writings of Venetian polymath Francesco Grisellini (1717–1787). Grisellini, in his 1780 monograph on Banat, prepared to support the reformist policies of the Habsburg monarchs, postulates the Egyptian, Troglodyte, and Ethiopian origins of the “Gypsy” in part by referencing their practices of song and dance. (Although Grisellini does not specify whom he means by Troglodyte, he likely draws this ethnographic type from classical Greek writings on “cave dwelling” peoples of northeastern Africa.) Thus, much like with Grellmann later, for Grisellini, dance, and the nakedness in which it purportedly concluded, functioned to reveal the “mysterious” origins of the “Gypsy.” “In general,” Grisellini writes,

the licentiousness and depravity of Gypsy women goes to the extreme. In the bloom of adulthood they are led by a heart given over to every crude desire; and as little girls, schooled by their mothers in all kinds of mischievousness, display themselves with their dances before anyone from whom they hope to grab some gift. These dances always end in the most disgusting grimaces, the most voluptuous of poses, and the most shameful of gesticulations, with exposure of those parts that even the roughest and most uncivilized peoples with a remainder of natural modesty take care to cover. In this way, common women danced at the orgies in Egypt, especially at the festival at Bubastis and in the processions in Canopus.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “Leurs femmes & leurs filles s’appliquent ordinairement à acquérir & perfectionner les talents des Courtisanes de Turquie, la Musique vocale & instrumentale, & la Danse lascive; elles se prostituent souvent aux passants; il y a même dans toute la Romelie des lieux publics, remplis de femmes Bohémiennes, parmi lesquelles on en trouve quelquefois d’extrêmement séduisantes.” Charles de Peyssonnel, *Observations historiques et géographiques sur les Peuples Barbares qui ont habité les bords du Danube & du Pont-Euxin* [Observations on the history and geography of the barbaric peoples who inhabited the banks of the Danube and the Black Sea] (Paris: N. M. Tilliard, 1765), 111.

<sup>18</sup> “Überhaupt geht die Zügellosigkeit und Sittenverderbnis der Zigeunerweiber aufs äusserste. Im blühenden Alter von einem rohen, jeder Begierde überlassenen Herz geführt; und als kleine Mädchen von den Müttern zu allen

Grellmann, for his part, reproduces much of Griselini's description of these dances and their climactic nakedness, but omits Griselini's contention that they reveal the tripartite Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Troglodyte origins of the "Gypsy." Rather, he ends his paragraph with further condemnation of "Gypsy" parenting, alleging, with no more evidence than the citations above, that parents themselves were responsible for the sexual exploitation of their children.<sup>19</sup>

Their dances are the most disgusting that can be conceived, always ending with fulsome grimaces, or the most lascivious attitudes and gestures, uncovering those parts, which the rudest and most uncultivated people carefully conceal; nor is this indecency confined to the married women only, but is rather more practiced by young girls, travelling with their fathers, who are also musicians, and for a trifling acknowledgment, exhibit their dexterity to any body, who is pleased by these unseemly dances. They are trained up to this impudence, from their earliest years, never suffering a passenger to pass their parents hut, without trying to get something, by striking about naked before him.<sup>20</sup>

Habsburg state preoccupations with the sexuality of the "Gypsy" went beyond the uncovered bodies of children in public and into Romani homes. Maria Theresa's 1767 prohibitions on the nudity of children would appear again in the edict, *Opinione de domiciliatione et regulatione Zingarorum*, promulgated by Joseph II in 1782. The *Opinione* forbade "Gypsy" children of both sexes from sleeping in the same beds, especially in such cases where multiple families were occupying one home. What was to be rooted out was the

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Ausgelassenheiten unterrichtet, zeigen sie sich mit ihren Tänzen vor jedermann, von dem sie einiges Geschenk zu erhaschen hoffen, und diese Tänze endigen sich immer in die ekelhaftesten Grimassen, die wollüstigsten Stellungen und schändlichsten Gebärden, mit Entblössung der Theile, die eine, auch den rohesten und ungesittetsten Völkern noch übriggebliebene natürliche Schamhaftigkeit, zu bedecken pflegt. So tanzten in Aegypten die gemeinen Weibspersonen in den Orgien, besonders beim Fest des Bubostes, und bei der Prozession des Kanopus." Griselini, *Versuch einer politischen und natürlichen Geschichte des temeswarer Banats*, 209.

<sup>19</sup> Grellmann provides additional references to Franz Joseph Sulzer's *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens* [History of the Transcarpathian Daciens] (1781) and Henry Swinburne's *Travels through Spain* (1779). A review of these texts reveals only passing references to women's dress and dances without discussion of its allegedly related indecent exposure. Cf. Franz Joseph Sulzer, *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens, das ist: der Walachey, Moldau und Bessarabiens, im Zusammenhange mit der Geschichte des übrigen Daciens als sein Versuch einer allgemeinen dacischen Geschichte* [History of the Transcarpathian Daciens, that is: the Wallachians, Moldavians, and Bessarabians, in connection with the history of the whole of Dacia as an attempt at a general Dacian history], vol. 2 (Vienna: Rudolph Gräffer, 1781), 146; and Henry Swinburne, *Travels through Spain, in the Years 1775 and 1776* (London: P. Elmsly, 1779), 231.

<sup>20</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 34.

“disordered” sexuality of the “Gypsy.” As a matter of “improvement,” ordering the sexuality of the “Gypsy” would attend to another problem it putatively indexed: the premature sexual awakening of Romani youth, and with it, their fertility.

## **II. From the Myth of Romani Hyperfertility to the Threat of “Gypsification” in Interwar Hungary**

The association of Roma with (hyper)fertility is a longstanding one within European everyday and official speech and endures into the present. This characterization is at times taken up by Roma themselves, as the following example from the Hungarian Romani author Menyhért Lakatos (1926–2007) illustrates. It bears noting, however, that in Lakatos’s case this argument is presented to ground a claim on the problems that arise because of the inadequate housing provisioned to Roma:

Where there are eight or ten persons living in a room, often several families together, and it is good if one square metre of free area is left for one member of the family, the sexual life of the adults does not remain hidden from the children for long. At the age of eight or ten these perceptions no longer remain ineffective . . . The sexual stimuli, to which the child is subject all the time, settle on his mind at an early age of puberty, his instincts are permanently kept awake by external impetus, and he looks for opportunities to satisfy them. Since their world is so constrained that they cannot make sexual contacts illegally, they seek legal contacts under the compulsion of their instincts. This is how the so-called elopements occur, which are equivalent with other illegitimate marriages. This marriage has very little to do with love, it is only a legal satisfaction of the desire, but this does not exclude child birth at a very early age. Thus teenage remains an alien concept to the Gypsies. From infancy they are compelled to step directly into adulthood. At an age of 18–20 years the women generally have already several children, and the boys struggle through the period called youth for others burdened with parental obligations and worries.<sup>21</sup>

Magyar fears of Romani hyperfertility and its implications for the health of the national body would find powerful expressions within interwar Hungary. As Susan Gal demonstrates,

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<sup>21</sup> Menyhért Lakatos, “Cigányközösség, cigánytelepek” [Gypsy community, Gypsy settlements], *Valóság* 4 (1971), 91 as translated in HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 132–34.

populist politics and sociographic writing of the era sought to “redefine national consciousness after the losses of Trianon.” The Treaty of Trianon, signed on June 4, 1920, between representatives of the Kingdom of Hungary and the victorious Allied Powers formally concluded the First World War on condition that Hungary cede more than two-thirds of its territory and a little less than two-thirds of its population to the newly created successor nation-states of the Habsburg monarchy. At stake for interwar populists and sociographers was the “size and nature of the Magyar population and the purity of its blood.”<sup>22</sup> In the interwar Christian nationalist Horthy era, historian Gábor Szegedi observes that the regulation of the “purity” of Hungarian blood entailed novel forms of “Christian sex education,” often with direct linkages to Catholic and Calvinist churches. Such education was frequently directed toward women, but also male and female adolescent youth, whom pedagogues, politicians, and nationalist writers considered most at risk of “‘excessive’ sexuality;”<sup>23</sup> this could amount to the loss of these women to the Hungarian nation, and at times, implying their “Gypsification,” as detailed below. While these Horthy-era writers identified practices ranging from “masturbation, homosexuality, any form of premarital or extramarital sex, and consumption of pornography” as threats to Christian “purity,” they directed their most focused attacks on “*external* threats that posed a danger for the in-group and argued in support for *containing* these external threats.”<sup>24</sup>

Interwar journalists, public health officials, and members of local councils and the national parliament called for the creation of legal methods to protect the racial purity of Magyars against the threat of the “Gypsification” that would allegedly result through Romani-

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<sup>22</sup> Susan Gal, “Gender in the Post-Socialist Transition: The Abortion Debate in Hungary,” *East European Politics and Societies* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 269.

<sup>23</sup> Gábor Szegedi, “Stand by Your Man: Honor and ‘Race Defilement’ in Hungary, 1941–44,” *The Hungarian Historical Review* 4, no. 3 (2015): 581–82. See also Gábor Szegedi, “Tisztaság, tisztesség, fajgyalázás: Szexuális és faji normalizáció a Horthy-korban” [Purity, honesty, race defilement: Sexual and racial normalization in the Horthy era], *Társadalomtudományi szemle* [Social science review] 5, no. 1 (April 2015): 57–76.

<sup>24</sup> Szegedi, “Stand by Your Man,” 582.

Magyar “miscegenation” [*fajkeveredés*, literally “race mixing”]. These would take on an increased fervor over the course of the 1930s and the 1940s, and in particular, after the passage of the Third Anti-Semitic Law (Law No. XV of 1941), which, in parallel with Nazi Germany’s Nuremberg Laws (1935), expressly forbade Jews from marrying non-Jews and sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>25</sup> While public health officials, journalists, and politicians understood the threat of “race mixing” between non-Jews and Jews and Magyars and Roma in similar terms, they nevertheless distinguished these threats spatially and along class lines. As historian Csaba Dupcsik observes in his analysis of the journal *Népegészségügy* [Public health]—a publication that came after 1932 under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs—public health officials demanded the adoption of laws that would prohibit Romani-Magyar intermarriages by invoking the “Jewish question.”<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that the “Jewish question” and the “Gypsy question” were the same; indeed, public officials would frequently contrast the two by noting the particular danger *cigány-magyar* sexual relations posed to the *paraszt*. As Dr. Ferenc Orsós, a physician and university professor argued, Jewish–non-Jewish mixed marriages posed a biological threat to the health of the Magyar upper (urban) classes, while Romani-Magyar mixed marriages, by contrast, risked introducing biological contamination into the Magyar working class and (rural) peasantry.<sup>27</sup>

In an interpellation session of the National Parliament preceding a vote on a law that criminalized acts of incitement against the Hungarian nation, held on February 6, 1941, the Minister of Parliament for Veszprém county, György Forster raised the “stray Gypsy question”

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<sup>25</sup> “Kivonat az 1941:XV. törvénycikkből” [Extract from the 1941:XV law], in *Belügyi Közlöny: Kiadja a Magyar Királyi Belügyminisztérium* [Gazette of the Interior Ministry: Issued by the Hungarian Royal Interior Ministry] vol. 46, no. 45 (Budapest: Pátria Nyomda, 1941), 2062. See also: Szegedi, “Stand by Your Man,” 584–85.

<sup>26</sup> Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 93–94; and Barna Szamosi, “Public Health Concerns Regarding Reproduction Structured by Race/Ethnicity and Class during State Socialism in Hungary,” *Pro&Contra* 3, no. 1 (2019): 51.

<sup>27</sup> Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 93.

[*kóbor cigánykérdés*] with the Ministry of Agriculture. Playing historian, Forster stated that though the “Gypsies” had come to Hungary five hundred years prior through King Sigismund’s invitation, they remained a threat to the Magyar national body: “today, the Gypsy question is as important to the village as the Jewish question is to the nation.”<sup>28</sup> A necessary component to any solution, he contended, would be the creation of labor camps. In a response, State Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, János Bárczay confirmed the urgency with which the Hungarian government considered the question, as “in some villages the proliferation of Gypsies threatens not only public order but also public health.”<sup>29</sup>

Writing on behalf of the Society of Public Health [*Egészségpolitikai Társaság*, EPOL], Dr. Elek Mészáros addressed the public health concerns posed by “Gypsies” to the Magyar national body in the society’s gazette in 1942.<sup>30</sup> The work of the EPOL, beginning in 1935, placed at its center the project of the biological restoration of the Hungarian nation through eugenics research and state investment in large Magyar families.<sup>31</sup> By 1940, its mission expanded through the establishment of the Hungarian Nation-Biological Institute [*Magyar Nemzetbiológiai Intézet*] to undertake research on the creation of a “biologically unitary” Hungary, with institute divisions focused on “biology and Hungarian history, national nutrition,

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<sup>28</sup> “Forster György a földművelésügyi miniszterhez a *kóbor cigánykérdés* tárgyában interpellált. A cigányok ötszáz évvel ezelőtt jutottak be hazánkba Zsigmond király szabadságlevele alapján s ma, már a cigánykérdés a falu szempontjából van olyan fontos, mint a zsidókérdés a nemzet szempontjából. Szerinte a munkatábor intézménye is alkalmas volna ennek a kérdésnek részbeni rendezésére.” “Reményi-Schneller Lajos csütörtökön expozét mond: A képviselőház szerdán általánosságban egyhangúlag megszavazta a nemzetiségi érzület védelmét” [Lajos Reményi-Schneller gives his address on Thursday: The House of Representatives voted unanimously on Wednesday to defend national sensibilities], *Új Magyarország* [New Hungary], February 6, 1941, 7. See also Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 94.

<sup>29</sup> “Bárczay János államtitkár válaszában megállapította, hogy ezt a kérdést az egész kormány [*sic*] sürgősen megoldandónak tartja, mert egyes községekben az elszaporodott cigányok nemcsak a közrendet, hanem a közegészséget is veszélyeztetik.” “Reményi-Schneller Lajos csütörtökön expozét mond,” 7.

<sup>30</sup> As summarized in “Lapok szemléje,” *Magyar Nemzet* [Hungarian nation], June 3, 1942, 10. For a discussion of public health debates and the work of EPOL, see Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története*, 119–27.

<sup>31</sup> Marius Turda, “In Pursuit of Greater Hungary: Eugenic Ideas of Social and Biological Improvement, 1940–1941,” *Journal of Modern History* 85, no. 3 (September 2013), 578.

hereditary biology, racial biology, and eugenics.”<sup>32</sup> In Mészáros’s report for EPOL, he argues that “Gypsies” posed a particular danger to Magyars as a consequence of their heightened sexual instincts, which, in his account, resulted in venereal disease, lax morality, promiscuity, and “wild marriages” [*vadházasság*]. The lesson, Mészáros clarified, was that “*the Gypsy race, neither physically nor morally, gives useful individuals of national or racial value.*”<sup>33</sup> Due to an almost mysteriously strong racial attraction, “half-blood” children [*félvér-s*] born of Romani-Magyar parents would choose partners from among the “Gypsies,” meaning that their children would also become “Gypsies,” physically and spiritually, and thus lost to the Hungarian nation.

In that same year, *Népegészségügy* [Public health] published a report by Dr. László Farkas, a public health officer in the district of Vágsellye (present-day: okres Šaľa, Slovakia), that relayed a dire warning to his readers that Magyar families were in danger of being absorbed by the “Gypsies.” While a total of 32,969 “Gypsies” had been registered within the district, or 6.4 percent of the population, 216 “Magyar souls” were found living within the “Gypsy quarter” [*cigánynegyed*]. These Magyars, the article contended, had been had drawn in by way of marriage: fourteen mixed marriages had resulted in ninety-eight “half-bloods,” lost to the Hungarian nation. What was needed, the report demanded, was an “energetic measure, a decree, or law” that would ensure that Magyars remained Magyars, rather than “half-bloods” or “half-Gypsies.”<sup>34</sup> In an article published in *Székely Nép* [Székely people] on December 22, 1943, Dr.

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<sup>32</sup> HU MNL K 148: Egészségpolitikai Társaság–Magyar Nemzetbiológiai Intézet 1940–17, 3689 (1075), 3 in R. Chris Davis, “Restocking the Homeland: Ideological and Strategic Motives behind Hungary’s ‘Hazatelepítés’ Schemes during WWII (and the Unintended Consequences),” *Regio: Minorities, Politics, Society (English edition)* 10, no. 1 (2007), 164.

<sup>33</sup> “A cigányfajta sem testileg, sem lelkileg nem ad nemzeti és faji értékre, hasznos egyedeket.”

<sup>34</sup> László Farkas, “A cigány és elcigányosodás kérdése a vágsellyei járásban” [The Gypsy question and the Gypsification question in the region of Vágsellye], *Népegészségügy* [Public health] 23 (1942): 537–41. On the matter of public health discourses on “Gypsification” (and a discussion of this 1942 article), see Eszter Varsa, “‘The (Final) Solution of the Gypsy-question’: Continuities in Discourses about Roma in Hungary, 1940s–1950s,” *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 1 (2017): 114–30.

János Csiky recommended several measures that would ensure the biological protection of the Magyar nation against the threat of Romani-Magyar “race mixing” and “Gypsification.” The first of these, one that Csiky suggests every author on the topic of public health could agree upon, was the extension of the Third Anti-Semitic Law to “Gypsies” in order to “prevent further miscegenation. For from a racial perspective, the Gypsy-Hungarian marriage produces racially worthless half-breed children who return to their Gypsy origins.”<sup>35</sup>

### III. State Socialist Romani-Magyar Romances

State socialist narratives on Romani-Magyar romances broke decisively with the explicitly racist policy course proposed by public health officials and political figures in the interwar and over the course of the Second World War. But these narratives portended a different kind of tragedy—no longer to national health and the racial purity of Magyarodom, but personal tragedy, the very product and evidence of the endurance of everyday forms of “racial hatred.” Let us return to the story with which this chapter began, László Szabó’s 1962 report, “Together they perished” [*Ketten haltak meg*].

Across six columns over two pages, Szabó introduces the reader to Jancsi, 18, and Anna, 17, childhood playmates, former classmates, and Communist Youth League [KISZ] comrades. Jancsi, the son of a respected Romani stonemason and caretaker of the town’s castle museum, distinguished himself in school at an early age, demonstrating a historical knowledge of the town superior to that of any of his classmates. Following in the family trade, Jancsi undertook training as a mason and worked on the restoration of monuments, manor houses, and castles. No less than

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<sup>35</sup> “Az 1941. XV. t. c. kiterjesztése a cigányságra a további fajkeveredés megakadályozására. A cigány-magyar házasságból ugyanis faji szempontból értéktelen félvér születik, aki visszaüt cigány elődéire.” János Csiky, “Közegészségpolitikánk és a székely nagygyűlés” [Our public health and the Székely assembly], *Székely Nép* [Székely people], December 22, 1943.

Jancsi's, Anna's Magyar family was also well-known and respected in the town. Her father had worked at the same factory for decades and currently served as a section leader. Nevertheless, their pairing was deemed unsuitable, not only to Anna's parents, but to many members of their community as well. After months of threats and pleas from her mother that she end the relationship, Anna continued to stand firm. Her father, Szabó states, put the family's objections to her plainly:

“Do you not know, do you not see the Gypsy blood flowing in him? He is a Gypsy, you hear?”

Anna, who was unmoved by racial prejudice—because she could only judge people whether they were hardworking or lazy, fair or dishonest—replied in amazement:

“And that can't be loved?”

“I will not give you in marriage to a half-Gypsy. My daughter will not be a Gypsy bride!” his answer came.<sup>36</sup>

The article's unambiguous moral pronouncements emphasize how one is to adjudge one's neighbors; Anna, through direct quotation, voices these when fighting against her parents' prejudices. We might say that what was at stake were generational differences between her and her parents' understanding of *rend* and how this moral judgment pertained to Roma. For Anna, Jancsi was a desirable partner because he exhibited qualities of hard work [*dolog*] and fairness; for her parents, such a quality was categorically excluded from the *cigány*.

From here, the report shifts, placing us alongside Szabó to imaginatively reconstruct the couple's final, fateful day. Szabó invites the reader to speculate with him, asking: What did the couple speak about in their last moments? Did they wonder after their lives, their future, their destiny? What might the couple have felt, emotionally and physically, as they headed into a

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<sup>36</sup> — Nem tudod, nem látod, hogy cigányvér folyik benne? Cigány, hallod?

Anna, akit semmilyen faji előítélet nem befolyásolt — hiszen ő már csak úgy tudta megkülönböztetni az embereket, hogy dolgozak-e, vagy pedig lusták, tisztességesek-e, vagy pedig becstelének — csodálkozva válaszolta: — Azt nem lehet szeretni?

— Nem adlak egy félcigányhoz. Az én lányom nem lesz cigányfeleség! — hangzott a válasz.

nearby forested embankment, shielded from the judgmental gaze of their families and community? What did they think about as they walked alongside the railroad tracks, hand in hand, occasionally taking respite from the heat under trees, amongst the bushes? Though spotted several times during the day by railway employees, Szabó writes, their whereabouts remained unknown to their parents, who had set to looking for the pair all over the town, assisted in their search by police officers. Within two hours, however, the terrible news had come, their decision explained to their families in a final farewell letter.

For all its richness of detail, it is difficult to establish with any certainty the veracity of Szabó's account. A survey of regional newspapers provides no further evidence of it. Outside of the most cursory of geographical markers, the story is one that could have occurred most anywhere in the country, in any number of small towns. Whether or not the story is true, its style and content evince typical narrative tropes of state socialist pedagogical writing, especially of literature addressing the so-called "Gypsy question." Its main protagonists, Anna and Jancsi, are described in heroic terms, with emphasis upon their dedication to their studies and work, to the Party's youth wing [KISZ], and to one another. Against official state socialist policies that framed Roma as objects of social and political intervention, often in the name of sedentarization and civilization progress, Jancsi and his family are presented in the article as, in a sense, more Magyar than their Magyar neighbors, safeguarding the town's memory and history through their work as stonemasons.

Three years later, in 1965, screenwriter Iván Mándy and director György Palásthy adapted Anna and Jancsi's story of ill-fated love into a feature-length film, *Together They Perished* [*Ketten haltak meg*]. Although bearing the same name as Szabó's news item, contemporary reviews make no mention of the film's source material, though its plotline follows

the news item in broad thematic strokes. This omission is especially striking as the film itself is something of a documentary of Szabó's own discovery of the story. The film follows the curiously named Cyclone [Ciklon], a designer from Pest, who travels to a rural Hungarian village to plan a new window display for the only shop in town. There, she uncovers the story of her Magyar landlord's daughter and her Romani lover, who died together rather than be separated. Rather than constructing the shop window display as was her reason for coming to the town, she constructed a memorial to their story, a collection of sculptures designed by the Romani young man.<sup>37</sup>

During his time as a political correspondent and investigative journalist, Szabó had acquired a keen eye for gripping tales of extraordinary intrigue, mystery, and betrayal in the everyday. This dramatic sense would carry Szabó into a new career after 1964—as presenter for Hungary's first televised crime program, *Kék Fény* [Blue light].<sup>38</sup> Before the conclusion of the decade, Szabó's regular presence on *Kék Fény* would turn him into a household name. Drawing upon his popularity as presenter, Szabó would launch another weekly column in November 1968 for the illustrated magazine, *Tükör* [Mirror], one of state socialist Hungary's most popular cultural and political weeklies. Szabó would narrate the story of Anna and Jancsi once again in an elaborated form for his recurring column, “In the work of a crime reporter” [*Munkában a bűnügyi riporter*]. The names of the *dramatis personae*, however, had changed: not Jancsi but

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<sup>37</sup> Béla Mátrai-Betegh, “Ketten Haltak Meg: Új magyar film” [Together they perished: New Hungarian film] and “Láttuk – hallottuk” [We saw – we heard], private collection of Klára Palotai, HU MaNDA: [https://mandadb.hu/tetel/586796/Ketten\\_haltak\\_meg](https://mandadb.hu/tetel/586796/Ketten_haltak_meg).

<sup>38</sup> Among Szabó's most noteworthy cases featured on *Kék Fény* was a 1971 interrogation of agriculturalist Béla Demeter, who was alleged to have taken pits from sour cherries to be canned, grew these into seedlings, and then sold them for profit. András Sereg, “A Demeter-per: a meggymagos igaz története” [The Demeter trial: the true story of the cherry pit], *Index*, December 25, 2020, [https://index.hu/belfold/leporolt\\_aktak/2020/12/25/a\\_meggymagos\\_igaz\\_tortenete/](https://index.hu/belfold/leporolt_aktak/2020/12/25/a_meggymagos_igaz_tortenete/) (accessed April 15, 2022).

Pista; not Anna, but Éva. At the article's conclusion he dramatically recounts the language of the pair's final letter to the town, absent from the original telling:

We now say goodbye to everyone who was close to us. We loved our parents, but they didn't understand us. They did what they also learned from their parents, only to show outwardly that they take the world as it is. Not only did they not understand us, they hated us. They were prisoners of that which is said to no longer exist. We have to die for them. We have only one request: that we be buried in a common grave.<sup>39</sup>

Other press items of the 1960s and 1970s, however, deviated from the script set out by Szabó, and may have rather reinforced ideas that *cigány*-s made for unsuitable partners for *magyar*-s, even if they avoided such explicit language. Consider, for example, a 1975 report from *Ifjúsági Magazin* [*Youth magazine*, IM], the monthly organ of KISZ.<sup>40</sup> While IM became an important literary space in which *cigány* and *magyar* adolescents would discuss and debate, in often frank language, their hopes and expectations for relationships, a three-page investigative report reprised familiar tropes of Romani male excess and in so doing, presented a counterimage of respectable and proper Magyar femininity, though through a fallen sixteen-year-old girl. The report follows Mária, a Magyar youth and student at an agricultural vocational school, who wrote a “desperate” letter to the magazine to both criticize her parents’ prejudices and to ask for advice on how she may persuade them to give their assent to her relationship with a Romani boy by the name of Tibor. As with the case of Szabó’s investigative report, it is unclear whether this news item is fact or fiction.

By the reporter’s own account, following up on such a letter was an extraordinary move, as they received dozens of such missives every year. However, piecing together some basic

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<sup>39</sup> “Mi most elköszönünk mindenkitől, aki közel állt hozzánk. Szerettük szüleinket, de nem értettek meg bennünket. Azt tették, amit az ő szüleiktől is tanultak, csak külsőleg mutatták, hogy a világot úgy veszik, ahogy van. Nemcsak nem értettek meg bennünket, hanem gyűlöltek is. Foglyai voltak annak, amiről manapság már azt mondják, nincs. Miattuk kell meghalnunk. Egyetlen kérésünk van, hogy közös sírba temessenek bennünket.” László Szabó, “A megfoghatatlan büntett” [The intangible punished], *Tükör* [Mirror], January 14, 1969, 28–29.

<sup>40</sup> Julianna R. Székely, “Tartozik? Követel!” [Owe? Demand!] *Ifjúsági Magazin* [Youth magazine], October 1975, 51–53.

information from the postmark and references in the letter, the reporter decided to approach Mária directly. In order to be with Tibor, Mária had run away from home twice. The report, siding with Mária's father, noted that his objections to the pairing were warranted because of deficiencies in Tibor's character and his romances with other women, and further observed that her father had not punished her physically for running away. More alarming yet was that Mária had taken up with another man, eighteen-year-old András, since the time that the IM offices had received her letter. After locating Mária in the regional capital of Miskolc, the reporter scolded her for falsely accusing her father of prejudice and leaves the reader with the following moral lesson: "Of course, the story is not over. Mária can now marry without parental permission, she will be a mother and raise children. But by what principles?"<sup>41</sup>

Not all socialist reports on Romani-Magyar love end with tragedy, however. Other journalists and academics hold open the possibility of successful pairings, even as they note their infrequency. Like many other reports on Romani life appearing in the Hungarian national press throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Judit Kovács's article, written for *Magyar Nemzet* [*Hungarian nation*] in August 1961, expresses an equal measure of nostalgic longing and a horizon of expectation in the "disappearance" of the Romani settlement, here, in Szeremle. Szeremle, a small village in Bács-Kiskun county, situated near the Yugoslav border, may not seem like an obvious candidate for such a report. As the chairman of the local council, István Mórath, noted, there were no examples of Romani families building homes within the limits of the village; the conversion of *putri*-s into homes occurred entirely in the historical domain of the so-called "Gypsy hill" [*Cigánydomb*]. In this way, Szeremle did not differ from most other villages across Hungary.

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<sup>41</sup> "És a történet természetesen nem zárult le. Mária férjhez mehet már szülői engedély nélkül is, anya lesz, gyermekeket fog nevelni. *Vajon miféle elvek szerint?*"

And yet, Kovács observes, though the *Cigánydomb* of Szeremle remained, this did not mean that Roma did not live within the village limits: “But it has happened, more than once lately, that [a Rom] has moved there. Through marriage.”<sup>42</sup> It was marriage, Kovács contended, alongside the growing self-confidence of Roma to address racial discrimination, shared Romani-Magyar history, and the improved housing situation, that foretold the ultimate, though still not arrived, “disappearance” of the *Cigánydomb*. In the fifteen years since liberation, Romani and Magyar children have grown up together, she notes, attending school, dances, and the cinema, and working within production cooperatives. It is unsurprising, then, that Romani and Magyar children fall in love with one another, though these romances are not without challenges. When youth begin talking of marriage, Kovács writes, “the parents on the village edge often balk,” leaving it unclear as to whether it was Romani or Magyar parents who objected to these pairings (though the term “village edge” suggests that it was, in this case, likelier the former).

In his prize-winning dissertation and later monograph, *A cigánygyerekek hátrányai és esélyei* [*Disadvantages and opportunities of Gypsy children*], Sándor Gulyás similarly discusses instances of Romani-Magyar pairings. Gulyás’s work, in his own words, follows the “strife-filled development” of approximately 150 Romani students attending three primary schools in villages and towns outside of Budapest from the late 1950s to the early 1970s.<sup>43</sup> Gulyás, a pedagogue, ethnographer, sociologist, and curricular supervisor and subject specialist in Hungarian and history for Pest county schools, drew upon his extensive experience as both a teacher and administrator. The resulting work is a study of contrasts, at once optimistic of a future horizon of

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<sup>42</sup> “Arra még nem volt példa, hogy cigány a faluban építkezzék. De az már előfordult, mostanában nem is egyszer, hogy beköltözött oda. Házasság révén.” Judit Kovács, “Hogyan tűnik el a Cigánydomb Szeremlén” [How the Cigánydomb in Szeremle disappears], *Magyar Nemzet* [Hungarian nation], August 3, 1961.

<sup>43</sup> Sándor Gulyás, *Cigánygyerekek hátrányai és esélyei* [Disadvantages and opportunities of Gypsy children] (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1976).

Romani social equality and pessimistic of present conditions. For the younger generation of this “multiply disadvantaged social stratum” [*többszörösen hátrányos helyzetű réteg*]—Gulyás posits a “tomorrow for the Gypsies” [*cigányok holnapja*] through which the “Gypsies of tomorrow” [*holnap cigányai*] may come to life. It was the school, he argues, that could teach Romani adolescents how to relate to their sexual urges and discipline these in the interest of finding suitable partners. This in turn would address the longstanding Magyar concern with Romani fertility. “It has already been noted,” he writes,

that the positive effect of schooling is further reflected in the fact that the plans and desires of Gypsy children attending school include a different way of life. This is positive, even if it does not eventuate in all cases. They imagine themselves with fewer children, and there are those among them who wait longer for their “real partner,” who may not be of Gypsy origin.<sup>44</sup>

Despite Gulyás’s optimism, Romani-Magyar intermarriages were infrequent. As a research report of October 1957, compiled by employees of the Ministry of Employment noted, “Villages do not want to accept Gypsies, and they often receive threats against their lives if one wants to move from the Gypsy street into the village. Mixed marriages are condemned.”<sup>45</sup> Another report, presented by the Academic, Public Education, and Cultural Department [*Tudományos, Közoktatási és Kulturális Osztály*] to the Political Committee on April 18, 1979, concluded similarly: “Fear and rejection, mostly of [Romani] settling and employment is still common in our society; mixed marriages are sparse and public opinion condemns them.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “Volt már arról szó, hogy az iskola pozitív hatása abban is megmutatkozik, miszerint az iskolába járó cigány gyermekek terveit, vágyait között már más életforma szerepel. Ez akkor is pozitívum, ha még nem is valósul meg minden esetben. Kevesebb gyermeket képzelnek el maguknak, s akad közöttük, aki hosszabb ideig vár az ‘igazi partnerre,’ aki esetleg nem cigány származású is lehet.” Gulyás, *Cigánygyerekek hátrányai és esélyei*, 74.

<sup>45</sup> HU OSZK MD 11 488: Bán and Pogány, “A magyarországi cigányság helyzetéről,” 89.

<sup>46</sup> HU MNL M-KS-288. f. 5/1979/770. ő. e. – Géppel írt tiszta: “Jelentés a Politikai Bizottságnak a magyarországi cigánylakosság helyzetéről,” 284.

#### IV. Writing Intimacy in the Socialist Youth Press

Perhaps in no other literary space were the dynamics and difficulties of Romani-Magyar relationships, whether platonic or romantic, discussed as frankly as across the pages of the youth publication, *Ifjúsági Magazin* [IM].<sup>47</sup> The question of friendship and cooperation stood at the very center of the mission of the magazine. In the opening paragraph of its first issue, released in November 1965, the magazine promised a space for the development of a “friendship of mutual truth,” as much between reader and the magazine’s editorial team as between its readers.

Intended for adolescents between the ages of fourteen and eighteen—although often appealing to younger and older audiences—the editors of IM stated that the goal of the magazine, indeed its “greatest joy and success of its work,” would be for its readers to know themselves—their desires and wishes, their joys and worries. “Our creed,” the editors stated, “is to discuss things in our lives with a sincere word and a friendly intent, and we wish to solve these together, so that we can shape our lives more beautifully and more meaningfully.”<sup>48</sup> Its editors promised a space open and waiting to all, inviting questions, wishes, and problems to be solved.

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<sup>47</sup> Academic studies of IM have largely focused on its role in mediating Kádárist state socialist cultural policy—particularly in the domains of music, fashion, and sex education—and the demands of its youth readers. As Ádám Ignác argues, publications like IM functioned as a supplement to western pop music publications, attempting both to attend to the expectations of its readers as well as the shifting priorities of Hungarian cultural leadership. Prior to 1964, socialist publications generally dismissed rock-and-roll as politically and intellectually suspect. However, over the half-decade spanning 1964–1969, newspaper and magazine editors began siding with new popular music genres, calling for the renewal of Hungarian “light music” (*könnyűzene*, i.e., non-classical music). By 1969, Ignác observes, socialist cultural policy underwent an unexpected and unprecedented conservative cultural realignment that envisioned “phasing out” the “democratic” mood surrounding western pop culture and fashions that had dominated the mid-1960s. Ádám Ignác, “A populáris zene megítélésének változásai a kádári magyarországi ifjúsági sajtójában – az első 15 év (1957–1972),” [Changes in the perception of popular music in the youth press of Kádárist Hungary] *Mediakutató* [Media research] (Winter 2013): 7–17; and Ádám Ignác, “Propagated, Permitted or Prohibited? State Strategies to Control Musical Entertainment in the First Two Decades of Socialist Hungary,” in *Popular Music in Eastern Europe: Breaking the Cold War Paradigm*, ed. Ewa Mazierska (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 31–49. See also Zsófia Réti, “‘The Second Golden Age’: Popular Music Journalism during the Late State Socialist Era of Hungary,” in Mazierska, ed., *Popular Music in Eastern Europe*, 149–69.

<sup>48</sup> “Hitvallásunk, hogy őszintén igaz szóval, baráti segítő szándékkal szóljunk életünk dolgairól, s együtt, közös erővel szeretnénk megoldani, hogy szebbé, értelmesebbé formálhassuk életünket.” “Kedves Barátunk!” [Dear friends!], *Ifjúsági Magazin* [Youth magazine], November 1965, 2.

Until 1968, the magazine ran few articles mentioning Roma, aside from passing references to the popularity of Hungarian “Gypsy music” on Cuban radio. This, however, did not go unnoticed by the magazine’s Romani youth readership. In a letter published in IM’s April 1968 issue, one Romani reader, R. Orsós, made an “unusual request” for more coverage of the situation of Roma, identifying herself as “Gypsy.” Curious whether the living conditions of her town near the Yugoslav border were indeed typical of the situation of Roma throughout the country, she requested that the magazine present more information about the lives of Roma in different parts of the country, “honestly, and without any embellishment.” Especially important, she observed, were the perspectives of Roma themselves, who could speak to examples of those who had already distinguished themselves, and what they had to say about the “still existing backwardness of Gypsies” that prevailed among some communities. Again, invoking the unique nature of her request, Orsós voiced her suspicion as to whether her letter would receive the attention of IM’s editorial board: “I trust that perhaps you will not fulfil my unusual request.”<sup>49</sup> Although IM did indeed publish Orsós’s letter, it was non-comital with the requested content, stating only that, when such a report comes, IM would perhaps be willing to publish it.

In an unsigned letter, published in April 1978, a twenty-two-year-old Romani man, employed as an electrician at an agricultural production cooperative in Újfehértó, a town in Szabolcs-Szatmár county near the Romanian border, addressed the readers of IM for advice on dating and relationships. His prospects, he believed, were limited not only because of his slight frame and short stature, but because, in his words, he appeared “a little different (brown-skinned)” [*egy kicsit másabb vagyok (barnább bőrű)*] than his coworkers. The letter writer at once invoked the official party line on discrimination even as he provided evidence for its

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<sup>49</sup> R. Orsós, letter to the editor, *Ifjúsági Magazin* [Youth magazine], September 1968, 2.

ongoing existence: “I don’t enjoy going to work because the others make comments about me that I have a hard time dealing with: ‘Gypsy.’ In our social system, I think, there is no racial discrimination [*faji megkülönböztetés*].”<sup>50</sup> Despite attempts to fit in amongst his colleagues through fashionable dress and dedication to his work, he found himself without friends, male or female; such opportunities could only be found if he were a “paying guest,” a reality that his meagre monthly wages made impossible. Invoking his age for a third time, he stated that, “I am twenty-two years old, and I have not yet had a sexual relationship with a girl.” Such relational prospects, he believed, could only be found outside of Hungary. Recalling his experiences working in East Germany between 1975 and 1977, he remarked that he did not encounter discriminatory remarks from his colleagues, “perhaps because they held me in higher esteem.”

In a response, the editor of *Kedves IM* [Dear IM] encouraged the young man not to fall back into self-pity, as such feelings could not bring a “true solution” [*igazimegoldás*]. Slightly adjusting the letter writer’s language, the editor agreed with his assessment on the matter of “racial prejudice” [*faji előítélet*]. “You write well, in real life we do not have it, but that is just in the clear, reasonable minds and in our laws.”<sup>51</sup> Whether intentionally invoking state language over the “solution” to the “Gypsy question” or not, the response evinces the tight linkage between employment and social standing that defined the model of the “new socialist Gypsy.” The responsibility, then, fell squarely on the shoulders of the letter writer. Shifting to the first person, the editor recommend that he give no mind to his colleagues’ “prejudice and stupidity,” and rather focus his attentions on his work. The editor writes: “I would be—that is to say, I would want to be—the best, most skillful, most punctual, most diligent professional in that field.

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<sup>50</sup> “Munkahelyemre nem szívesen járok dolgozni, mert olyan megjegyzéseket tesznek rólam, amit nehezen tudok elviselni: ‘cigány.’ A mi társadalmi rendszerünkben – én, azt hiszem – faji megkülönböztetés nincs.” Unsigned letter to the editor, *Iffúsági Magazin* [Youth magazine], April 1978, 61.

<sup>51</sup> “Jól írod, ez valóban nincs nálunk, de csak világos, értelmes fejekben és a tövényekben nincsen.”

I would also get ahold of books, read a lot, and see whether or not there are possibilities for further professional training.”<sup>52</sup>

## V. “Integration?”

State narratives of Romani-Magyar friendship and romance did not hold exclusive claim over state socialist literature, and even less so over the ways that these affective relations were discussed outside of the domain of the press. In ethnographic interviews conducted by István Kemény and his research team in 1971, some Roma described instances of “integration” [*beilleszkedés*] that assumed Magyar acculturation into Romani majority workplaces and social organizations. That is to say, in everyday use, even the terms of “integration” could be deployed by Roma in ways that, while not contradictory to their official meanings, challenged the implied direction of integration itself. In an interview conducted in January 1971, Elemér Botos, a Romani man from a settlement outside of Salgótarján, commented that in his workplace, a nail producing cooperative of approximately 150 employees, the vast majority were of Romani background (Botos estimated the number between eighty and ninety percent).<sup>53</sup> Roles within the cooperative were in many ways defined by Romani-Magyar divisions. While Roma predominantly held positions in the productions of goods, Magyars worked inside offices, functioned as technicians, acted as tool makers, but also held positions on the production line. When asked, however, what kinds of relations defined interactions between Romani and Magyar employees of the cooperative, Botos responded that these were overwhelmingly positive: “They

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<sup>52</sup> “Én lennék – azaz akarnék lenni – abban a körben a legjobb, legügyesebb, legpontosabb, legszorgalmasabb szakember. Könyveket is szereznek, sokat olvasnék és annak is utánajárnék: van-e lehetőség szakmai továbbképzésre.”

<sup>53</sup> HU OSA 368-1-3 Box 1: “Beszélgetés Botos Elemérrel, a nógrádmegyeri szegkovács szövetkezet raktárosával” [Interview with Elemér Botos, storekeeper for the Nógrád county nail production cooperative], ca. 1971, 3.

fit into it [*Beleilleszkedtek ebbe*]. / !!! [*NB: editorial insertion by the interviewer*]. No matter where they work, whether in the factory or in the mine, or on the collective farm, they earn money, they understand this.”<sup>54</sup>

Surprised by Botos’s use of the term *beleilleszkedés* and the ambiguity of the subject of his remark (the “they” being communicated without specified subject, but only through verb conjugation), the interviewer asked Botos for clarification: “Just a moment, I did not understand something here. Who is integrating into what?” [*Ki illeszkedett mibe?*]

“Well, they fit in [*beleilleszkedtek*],” Botos replied, “no matter where they work, there are earnings here, they make their calculation, and thus the connections are very good. So, the opposite is that there is no Gypsy and there is no *paraszt*.”

Once more asking for clarification over the direction of this integration, the interviewer specified his question: “But I still do not understand: is it that the Gypsies are integrating, or the Magyars?”

“It is rather them [the Magyars],” Botos replied. “We hired intelligent people [intellectuals], and they, both in culture and sports, they gave us good things, I could say the football team, well, we didn’t really know what that was, so they took the initiative.”

## Conclusion

Though breaking with the explicitly racist and eugenicist public health discourses of the interwar Christian nationalist Horthy era and through the Second World War, the state socialist approach to the question of Romani-Magyar intimacy nevertheless evinces its own ambiguities. Romantic narratives cast in the tragic form, appearing in state press and film in the 1960s and 1970s,

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<sup>54</sup> HU OSA 368-1-3 Box 1: “Beszélgetés Botos Elemérrel,” 3.

attempted to serve a pedagogical function by dramatizing the persistence of anti-Romani prejudice and racial discrimination. But something remained unclear. What these narratives could not answer was how Roma and Magyars were to live together in *successful* relationships. On this question, Roma and Magyars were left to find answers themselves. Not all were positive, and as Party documents attest, the matter of Romani-Magyar intermarriage remained taboo in some communities. And yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, Roma and Magyars did undertake practical projects of solidarity building in spaces such as the pages of IM, and, at other times, in workplaces.

### **Postscript: Population Panics Revisited**

Demographic panics seized right-wing Hungarian anticommunist politics in the 1980s. As Susan Gal observes, these critics of the socialist state argued that the government's liberalized abortion policy had compounded the losses of Trianon: it was nothing short of a "*moral decline*," a "Biological Trianon."<sup>55</sup> But so too did they identify Romani fertility and birth rates as a further threat. Writing in 1988, the Hungarian sociologist József Vekerdi reprised these familiar tropes, counterposing them to the health of the Hungarian nation. "The development of Gypsy separatism," he writes,

is reminiscent of the Rumanian one of Transylvania before 1919. The decisive factor in both cases is fertility. Official statistics try to calm public opinion by palliating the real situation, but everyone sees that 'Gypsyfication' of Hungary is continuing. In the period from 1871 to 1971 their number grew from ca. 45,000 to 320,000, i.e., it became seven or eight times higher while that of the non-Gypsy population became only twice as high. The Gypsies' number doubles every 30–35 years. At present, there are well over 400,000 Gypsies in Hungary. A similar evolution took place with Rumanians in Transylvania and Serbs in Southern Hungary (since 1919, Vojvodina, Yugoslavia) where the greater fertility of the immigrating Rumanians and Serbs led to ousting of the aboriginal

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<sup>55</sup> Gal, "Gender in the Post-Socialist Transition," 271–72.

Hungarian population and loss of these territories to Rumania and Yugoslavia after World War I.<sup>56</sup>

Such characterizations of the “Gypsification” of Hungary find wide circulation today. In April 2015, the conservative weekly *Heti Válasz* [Weekly response], drawing upon sociological research conducted by the Minority Research Institute of the Social Sciences Research Center of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, pronounced that a “Roma population explosion” [*Roma népességrobbanás*] was rapidly unfolding across Hungary, with the northern and northeastern counties of Nógrád and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén as the epicenters of a “demographic revolution” [*demográfiai forradalom*].<sup>57</sup> In these counties, the article observes, Romani pupils accounted for nearly one in three children in state schools (34.3 percent of students in Nógrád and 32.8 percent in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén). Historical student enrollments, however, were not given as points of comparison; such comparisons were in fact impossible given that, since 1993, privacy laws prohibit the collection of data on children’s ethnicity. Proof of this “demographic revolution” rather required a degree of imaginative projection on the part of the magazine’s readership. “The trends were already visible” from the last census of 2011, the article concluded, as more than 316,000 respondents identified as Roma, an increase of 153 percent from the previous census of 2001.

Nógrád and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén counties stood as sites that seemed to be already moving away from the Hungarian nation because of a “Romani population explosion.” This was not, however, an isolated “moral panic” over two border regions. Rather, to the author of the article, this augured the demographic decline of the Hungarian nation itself: “There is a

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<sup>56</sup> József Vekerdi, “The Gypsies and the Gypsy Problem in Hungary,” *Hungarian Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1988): 22.

<sup>57</sup> “Roma népességrobbanás—A HVG meglepő térképet közöl” [Roma population explosion—HVG provides a surprising map], *Heti Válasz*, April 6, 2015.

population explosion not only in the east, but also in Transdanubia.”<sup>58</sup> The “backward” regions of Nógrád and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, long associated with Roma, thus stood at the vanguard of so-called “demographic revolution” and national decline. Notably, this prognosis was not grounded in explicit references to migration—either through the departure of Magyars to the west for economic opportunities within the European Union, or through the internal migration of Roma—but based on the purported hyperfertility and high birthrates of Romani women vis-à-vis Magyar women.<sup>59</sup> As with the invocation of a “Biological Trianon” by right-wing pundits in the late 1980s, the article biologizes loss in the name of a nationalist sociodemographic counterrevolution.

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<sup>58</sup> “Roma népességrobbanás.”

<sup>59</sup> For a recent study of Romani birthrates in east-central Europe, see Laura Szabó, Igor Kiss, Branislav Sprocha, and Zsolt Spéder, “Fertility of Roma Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Working Papers on Population, Family and Welfare* 34 (2020), Hungarian Demographic Research Institute, Budapest.

## **CHAPTER 4: DWELLING BETWEEN THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF THE LAW.**

### **DEBT, DOUBLE BINDS, AND THE CS-LAKÁS-ES PROGRAM**

Pál Schiffer's internationally acclaimed 1978 situational documentary, *Cséplő Gyuri*, follows the life of a young Romani laborer from Németsfalu, a village 250 kilometers southwest of the capital.<sup>1</sup> He comes to Budapest in order to acquire sufficient funds to cover the down payment to construct a new home—an effort that would, in theory, be supported through an interest-free loan issued by the National Savings Bank [*Országos Takarékpénztár*, OTP]. Over the course of a year, Schiffer follows the young, resourceful, and hopeful Cséplő as he and a group of friends move to Budapest from Németsfalu, experience the excitement of seeing the capital and riding its metro for the first time, apply for employment within a variety of state concerns, witness the difficult living conditions endured by brick makers on the city's outskirts, and meet other Roma from across the country. Though his companions return to Németsfalu for reasons of homesickness and exhaustion, Cséplő labors in the capital until health concerns require that he, too, join them. It is, in Schiffer's own words, a “story written in life,” documenting the “Calvary” of the Romani everyday in state socialism, its expectations and profound disappointments.<sup>2</sup>

Even after the conclusion of filming, Cséplő and his family maintained a close relationship with Schiffer. In the summer of 1976, when Cséplő was blocked by the local council from purchasing a home through an OTP loan within the limits of Németsfalu, Schiffer brokered a

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<sup>1</sup> *Cséplő Gyuri* [Gyuri Cséplő], dir. Pál Schiffer (Balázs Béla Film Studio, 1978). For a discussion of the creation of this film and its commentary on the Romani everyday in state socialist Hungary, see Majtényi, “A Beautiful, Sad Tale about Nonexistent Socialism in Hungary.”

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Pócsik, “Én, Cséplő György. Schiffer Pál dokumentumfilmjei és a *Cséplő Gyuri*” [I, György Cséplő: The documentary films of Pál Schiffer and *Cséplő Gyuri*], *Apertúra* [Aperture] 8, no. 3 (Spring 2013), <https://uj.apertura.hu/2013/tavasz/pocsik-en-cseplo-gyorgy-schiffer-pal-dokumentumfilmjei-es-a-cseplo-gyuri/> (accessed January 19, 2020).

loan in his stead. This home, however, required extensive repairs and Cséplő would not see their completion. Less than two years later, as the documentary was set to premier in cinemas across the country, the twenty-five-year-old Cséplő succumbed to a chronic lung condition. By all accounts, the family continued living in the home he helped purchase and rebuild. In media reports, academic discussions, and Schiffer's own reminiscences, the brokered loan and the home it financed recur as an expression of the bond between documentary filmmaker and documentary subject.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, this bond holds together the ordinary failure of Romani integratory politics through state services and the extraordinary possibility of generosity within the uneven terms of Romani-Magyar exchange.

What role, then, did housing loans play in state socialist Hungary as simultaneous instruments of integratory politics while producing further social differentiation? What opportunities and double binds<sup>4</sup> did these programs introduce into the day-to-day lives of Hungarian Roma?<sup>5</sup> As we shall see, everyday life with loans and in debt was often far from

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<sup>3</sup> Schiffer mentions the assistance he provided Cséplő in buying his home in an interview given shortly after the documentary's release. See Pál Schiffer, interview by Éva Szakály, "Hiszek a példa erejében" [I believe in the power of the example], *Vas Népe* [Vas county people], May 27, 1978. For a reference within a more recent academic article on the film, see: Tóth, "A Fekete Vonat, Cséplő Gyuri, a Pártfogolt – ingázok a dokumentumfilmekben."

<sup>4</sup> By double bind, I refer to a situation in which a person is forced to hold the contradiction of two mutually incompatible and irreconcilable demands, a concept introduced and elaborated in the work of Gregory Bateson. The double bind describes the condition wherein, regardless of what a person does, she or he will necessarily do the wrong thing. More precisely, Bateson describes the double bind emerging from the irreconcilable conflict between a *primary* injunction (e.g., "do not do so and so") and a *secondary* injunction, often contextual or expressed through action (e.g., "do not submit to my prohibitions"). Gregory Bateson, Donald D. Jackson, Jay Haley, and John H. Weakland, "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia," in Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology* (London: Intertext Books, 1972), 201–27. Over the following pages, this chapter elaborates the multiple double binds structured by the interest-free loan program introduced by the Hungarian Political Committee in 1965 to encourage Romani home buying in Magyar-majority communities. As we shall see, heeding the letter of the law more often than not made a would-be Romani loan holder ineligible for a loan or imposed significant obstructions to home building and buying, thus revealing a tension in the law's injunctions. It is unclear whether the letter of the law is the primary injunction and its spirit the secondary, or vice versa.

<sup>5</sup> Or put differently, to paraphrase Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism*, if state socialist Romani policies transformed the everyday into "an impasse shaped by crisis"—that is, a crisis over the meaning of the good life in the midst of the massive upheavals produced by government intervention—how did Roma find ways of "living on?" Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 8.

equitable. Moreover, building socialism in Kádárist Hungary, I argue, cannot be thought, felt, and related-to without debt.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter considers the larger context of debt in state socialist Hungary and then examines programs specific to Roma, as well as Romani responses. This chapter considers debt as it was lived, affectively and materially, as ongoing labor by Roma with the introduction of the interest-free loan program in 1965. Debt, this chapter demonstrates, was a *concrete* reality for Roma as they made homes, built houses, and negotiated with the state and its pedagogic function. The final chapter of this dissertation returns to debt in another sense, as an *abstract* instrument of social and political integration, an aesthetic index on the one hand (*e.g.*, good “taste”) and a public project on the other (*e.g.*, state “accounting”).

Although recent historical interventions have opened new analytic avenues into the role consumption played in producing spaces and times of leisure and pleasure within late state socialist east-central Europe, few studies have considered how this consumer culture was financed. Loans not only provided the necessary capital to buy into an expanding market of goods and services; state socialist planners and ideologues framed consumption and loans discursively through moral language, as participation in a nation-building project and as a measure of one’s current and future worth. “Debt to the state” thus at once signified the quantifiable financial indebtedness of Hungarian citizens to the state bank, OTP, but also the unquantifiable metaphorical indebtedness that each citizen owed to the Party and to the project of building socialism writ large.

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<sup>6</sup> “Kádárist” refers to the 32-year period of social, economic, and political reorganization of the People’s Republic following the 1956 Revolution, during which János Kádár assumed the role of General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party [MSZMP]. These years, and in particular, those following the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism [*Új gazdasági mechanizmus*, NEM] in 1968, are referred to in common parlance as “Goulash Communism” [*Gulyáskommunizmus*]. This period is associated with the prioritization of quality of living and limited liberalizations of the market.

But as this and the following chapter examines, Roma and Magyars did not hold debt on equal terms. Debt took on additional meanings within the context of state socialist “solutions” to the “Gypsy question” and was thus linked with different ideas of citizenship and what duties and responsibilities these conferred to the project of building socialism. If loans encouraged Roma and Magyars alike to participate in mass consumption [*tömeges fogyasztás*], they did so in socially differentiated ways. Hungarian state planners placed Romani-specific conditions on who could apply for loans and how, and in what ways OTP distributed funds.

The present chapter focuses on housing debt specific to Romani consumers, namely interest-free loans for so-called “reduced value” or “reduced comfort-level dwellings” [*csökkentett értékű* or *komfortfokozatú lakás-es*, Cs-lakás-es]. As the next chapter examines, debt instruments also included state bank personal consumer loans [*Országos Takarékpénztar (OTP) személyi kölcsön-s*]. Together, these loan programs elevated consumption as a means of effecting social integration, indexed by the transformation of “cultural standard” [*kulturális színvonal*] and “taste” [*ízlés*]. In reading this chapter, however, it would not be inappropriate to understand Romani-specific housing loans as a (moral, if not technical) precondition for state bank personal consumer loans.

This project envisioned the relocating of Roma—either voluntarily or by force—from forms of dwelling and habitation deemed by state planners as unhealthy and even criminal (Section I). Such relocations would, they believed, set Roma on the path to a “new life” within socialism’s promised modernity (Section II). Debt, in other words, was to play a twofold role in the making of Romani socialist subjects. Proving oneself eligible for a loan entailed a process of rendering one’s labor legible to the state. The homes these loans could finance, socialist planners argued, would in turn further transform Hungarian Roma into full members of the People’s

Republic (Section III). The final section of this chapter (Section IV) examines in detail the multiple paradoxes would-be Romani loan holders encountered at each stage of the application and home construction process. Drawing upon state records, government circulars, ethnographic studies and interviews, and contemporary media reports, I demonstrate how Roma lived in and through debt, and how debt relationships enabled or otherwise complicated expressions of familiarity and kinship.

### I. *Putri*, an Ambiguous Address

On March 24, 1971, Iván Ordas,<sup>7</sup> writing for the *Tolna County People's Paper* [*Tolna Megyei Népiújság*], a regional newspaper in central Hungary, posed the following provocation to his readers: should the Baloghs, a Romani family living in the county capital of Szekszárd, “return to the *putri*?”<sup>8</sup> But what was this *putri*, and why should the Baloghs, who had for seven years lived within what was considered one of Szekszárd's desirable neighborhoods, return to it?

*Putri* is a word of contested origin and multiple meanings. Linguists and historians may disagree over its etymology, but many suggest that it is in one way or another a loanword into

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<sup>7</sup> One fact that Ordas chose not include in his article—though revealing much about his interest in the Balogh family's difficulties in finding and maintaining a home amidst Hungary's multiply transformed postwar social, economic, and political landscape—pertained to his own struggle to assimilate. As he would describe some twenty-five years later, in 1996, Iván too had undergone a personal transformation following the Second World War, “Magyarizing” his familial Serbian name, Michailovits, to Ordas. Iván Ordas, “Egy család asszimilációja” [The assimilation of a family], *Tolna Megyei Levéltári füzetek* [Tolna County Archive booklet] 5 (1996): 249–73.

<sup>8</sup> Iván Ordas, “Vissza a putriba?” [Return to the *putri*?] *Tolna Megyei Népiújság* [Tolna county people's paper], March 24, 1971.

Hungarian.<sup>9</sup> In common usage, the word discursively marks off a space as “non-Magyar.”<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, *putri* can denote the earth-walled, thatched-roof, semi-subterranean homes and storerooms located on the outskirts of villages and towns throughout much of the countryside, especially on the Great Plain to Hungary’s east.<sup>11</sup> When used in this manner, *putri* may be value neutral, but it is often aligned as *cigány* within the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation. Most typically, it refers to Romani dwellings, and may even appear in the form of the compound word *cigányputri*, or “Gypsy-*putri*.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, *putri* differs from the more technical, ethnographic, and archeological terms “earth-house” [*földház*] and “pit-house” [*veremház*]. Though all three refer to structures with similar architectural characteristics, *earth-house* and *pit-house* are related to medieval Magyar peasant architecture.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Some linguists speculate that *putri* is a loanword from Romani. See Anita Schirm, “A magyar nyelv cigány eredetű jövevényszavai” [Foreign words in the Hungarian language of Gypsy origin], *Nyelvtudomány* [Linguistics] 2 (2006): 157. Schirm’s work builds upon that of linguist Mátyás Kakuk, especially his article, “A magyar nyelv cigány jövevényszavaiból” [The Hungarian language from Gypsy foreign words], *Magyar nyelv* [Hungarian language] 89 (1993): 196–204. This, however, is far from the dominant position, and the etymology of the term *putri* remains contested. The *Magyar etimológiai szótár* [Hungarian etymological dictionary] defines the *putri* both in its mode of construction and the quality of life it supposedly signified—“an abject house dug into the ground or plastered with mud”—but leaves the question of the word’s origin unanswered, stating that it is “unknown.” “Putri,” in *Magyar etimológiai szótár*, ed. István Tótfalusi (Budapest: Arcanum Adatbázis, 2004), <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-etimologiai-szotar-F14D3/> (accessed January 12, 2020). See also László Dám, “Földbe mélyített lakóépítmények az Alföld népi építészetében” [Residential buildings set in the ground in the folk architecture of the Great Plain], *A nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum évkönyve* [Yearbook of the András Jósa Museum in Nyíregyháza] 34 (1990): 145.

<sup>10</sup> The report for István Kemény’s 1971 representative study notes that in at least one case, former Magyar inhabitants of the “Gypsy settlement” of Kiskunfélegyháza referred to their homes as *putri*-s, though in so doing, they noted that, “The Gypsies only recently infiltrated the *putri*, earlier [Magyar] brickmakers used to live there only.” HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 79.

<sup>11</sup> The most comprehensive discussion of this term, as well as the related terms *földház* and *veremház*, can be found in Dám, “Földbe mélyített lakóépítmények az Alföld népi építészetében,” 133–53.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the ways Hungarian ethnographers have historically linked Roma to *putri*, see: Krisztina Dóka, “‘Népünnep’ és nemzeti ünneplés (1896): Népszokás- és néptáncbemutatók az Ezredéves Országos Kiállításon” [“Folk holiday” and national celebration (1896): Folk customs and folk dance demonstrations at the Millennium National Exhibition], *Táncstudományi Közlemények* [Dance studies bulletin] 9, no. 2 (2017): 34–51. Some ethnographic texts are more ambiguous in their usage of the terms *putri* and *putriház*. Antal Filep’s entry in the *Magyar néprajzi lexikon* [Hungarian ethnographic dictionary], for example, does not make any particular ethnic association between it and Roma. Antal Filep, “Földház” [Earth house], *Magyar néprajzi lexikon II. (F–Ka)* [Hungarian ethnographic dictionary vol. II (F–Ka)], ed. Gyula Ortutay (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979), 217–18; and Antal Filep, “Putriház,” in *Magyar néprajzi lexikon IV. (Né–Sz)* [Hungarian ethnographic dictionary vol. IV (Né–Sz)], ed. Gyula Ortutay (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981), 282–83.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of *veremház*-es in Hungarian medieval architecture, see Zoltán Bencze, Ferenc Gyulai, Tibor Sabján, and Miklós Takács, *Egy Árpád-kori veremház feltárása és rekonstrukciója* [Excavation and reconstruction

On the other hand, in the language of Hungarian state planners and the press—that is to say, the context in which Ordas writes—the term *putri* most often denoted permanent or semi-permanent Romani dwellings, especially those that deviated from socialist ideals of modernity. Archeologist László Dám, writing two decades after Ordas, marks this slippage in use. He observes that although *putri* once referred specifically to partially underground dwellings and farm structures, its meaning had shifted to encompass “every kind of rudimentary, primitive structure as well.”<sup>14</sup> Such use of *putri* takes a historical term as a generic shorthand for a mode of dwelling beyond “order” [*rend*] and “health” [*egészség*], thereby invoking longstanding axes of differentiation between *cigány/magyar* and *cigány/paraszt*. It suggests building materials and methods of construction other than those “rationally” organized by state and local housing authorities and peripheral locations outside of villages, towns, and cities.

To state socialist planners, the color of home exteriors functioned as indexes of the civilizational progress of their inhabitants, imbuing aesthetic taste with essentializing suppositions. The vibrant, variegated paint and building materials with which some Romani families decorated and built their homes stood, to these planners, as evidence of dubious morality and work ethic bordering on pathological disorder. Consider, for example, a report compiled on October 2, 1967, by the Executive Committee of the Salgótarján City Council that details plans for the “liquidation” or “elimination” [*felszámolás*]<sup>15</sup> of the “Gypsy settlements” in and around

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of an Árpád-era *veremház*] (Budapest: Budapesti Történeti Múzeum, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> “[*Putri*] ugyanis nemcsak a földbe mélyített lakó vagy gazdasági építményt jelöli, hanem mindenfajta kezdetleges, primitív építményt is.” Dám, “Földbe mélyített lakóépítmények az Alföld népi építészetében,” 145.

<sup>15</sup> The word *felszámolás* often appears in party documents in the phrase, “*a cigánytelepek felszámolása*,” that is, the “liquidation of the Gypsy settlements.” For one such example, here, in reference to housing policies of the Budapest city council in the 1970s, see: HU BFL XXIII.102.a.1: “Budapest Főváros Tanácsa Végrehajtó Bizottsága üléseinek jegyzőkönyvei” [Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Budapest City Council], August 2, 1978, 29. Though writing on contemporaneous Czechoslovak policy, Celia Donert and Eagle Glassheim’s analysis of the term “liquidation” (*likvidace* in Czech) finds parallels with *felszámolás* in Hungarian: “the term is rooted in a long history of ‘liquidating’ social enemies in the region, from the Nazi murder of the Jews and the expulsion of Germans to the Communist liquidation of private enterprise. Donert, *Rights of the Roma*, 110; and Eagle Glassheim,

this city near the Slovak border. It notes that the Romani neighborhood on Pécskő road is more “cultured” [*kulturált*] than others nearby because its homes rest upon “white sandstone” foundations. But within the same sentence, its author pivots to a lurid description of the homes as an “orgy” or “riot of color”:

Conditions are more cultured: the foundation of the homes is weathered, white sandstone; the vertical walls are exposed brick or clay; the roofs are pitch barrel lids, tar paper, ceramic tiles, and covered with who knows what else and what kind of orgy/riot of color [*színorgia*]: magenta, citrine, cyclamen. It would be difficult to count what other colors have been daubed on the visible sides of the slums [*nyomortanya-s*].<sup>16</sup>

With this, building materials become questionable, the mere presence of color or texture is enough to condemn, morally and legally, a home, a neighborhood, a community.

In state socialist government reports and the press, the *putri* and other forms of Romani dwelling came variously to symbolize “backwardness” [*elmaradottság*], “crime” [*bűnözés*], and “disordered” [*rendetlen*], “unsanitary” [*egészségtelen*], and “primitive” [*primitív*] conditions, but also the racial and class exploitation of the bourgeois era, as well as the failures of previous socialist leadership to overcome Magyar prejudice toward and discrimination against Roma.<sup>17</sup>

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“Ethnic Cleansing, Communism, and Environmental Devastation in Czechoslovakia’s Borderlands, 1945-1989,” *The Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 1 (2006): 65–92.

<sup>16</sup> “Kulturáltabbak a körülmények: málós fehér homokkő a házak alapja, vertfal, vagy vályog a tákolmány oldala, a teteje bitumenes hordók lemezeivel, kátránypapírral, poltári cseréppel és ki tudja még mivel van fedve és micsoda színorgia: püspöklilára, citromsárgára, ciklámenre és nehéz lenne számba venni még milyen színekre van pingálva a nyomortanyák látható oldala.” József Berkes, “Cigánytelepek Salgótarjánban” [The Gypsy settlements in Salgótarján], *Palócföld: Irodalmi, művészeti és művelődési folyóirat* [Palócföld: Literary, artistic, and cultural journal] 1 (1968), 33. For further analysis of this report, see Tamás Hajnáczy, “CS-lakás program: ‘Szociális követelményeknek meg nem felelő telepek’ felszámolása a Kádár-korszakban” [The Cs-lakás-es program: Liquidation of ‘settlements that do not meet social requirements’ in the Kádár period], *Romológia* [Romology] 14 (2017): 14. It is difficult to translate *pingálva*. Although the term takes on a negative connotation within Berkes’s report, it can also refer to folk art practices of wall decoration in floral styles reminiscent of embroidery. Klára K. Csilléry, “Pingálás” [Daubing], in *Magyar néprajzi lexikon IV. (N–Szé)*, 244–47.

<sup>17</sup> Hajnáczy, “CS-lakás program,” 13; and Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 59. Such descriptions of Roma and Romani housing were common among state planners and press across the Warsaw Pact countries from the 1950s through to the 1980s. As Donert writes on Czechoslovak policy, “By the mid-1950s, the Slovak Board of Commissioners’ policy towards socially isolated Roma had coalesced around one major goal: the ‘liquidation’ of the Gypsy settlements (*osady*).” Celia Donert, *Rights of the Roma*, 110. For an analysis of similar discourses in Czechoslovak newspapers, see Eagle Glassheim, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment, and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 101.

But that the *putri* and other such forms of “inadequate” or “unsatisfactory” [*meg nem felelő*] dwellings themselves endured into the present suggested a deeper problem in the very functioning of the state—simply put, the promised break with this past had not materialized. Thus, on one hand, Ordas’s ambiguous, even ironic provocation “return to the *putri*” suggests a horizon of repatriation within Hungary, an internal displacement, that can be understood antagonistically or sympathetically. In another sense, it hinted that the country itself might be “returning to the *putri*,” that things were not going to plan.<sup>18</sup> This point was not lost on state planners. As the Minister of Construction, Rezső Trautmann would note on the matter of Romani housing in 1963, efforts should focus on “workers living in unhealthy homes,” but also those Roma who “live in homes that are a blot on the cityscape.”<sup>19</sup> Romani homes deemed “inadequate” or “unsatisfactory” near rail lines, major roads, and touristic sites were to be prioritized for demolition in the 1964 vision of the state housing policy.<sup>20</sup> The aim, in short, was a disappearing act, which would prove the transformative power of the Party. Sociologist Tamás Hajnáczy puts the matter bluntly: “The aim . . . was to hide from tourists and ‘foreign’ eyes those families living in special settlements.”<sup>21</sup>

The “elimination” or “liquidation” of Romani *putri*-s and other “inadequate” or “unsatisfactory” housing stock was raised as a state concern by the Political Committee in its

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<sup>18</sup> As Majtényi and Majtényi observe, the visual effect of clearing Romani settlements, ostensibly for Magyar eyes, in part motivated the expeditiousness of this housing policy from the 1960s onward: “The luminaries in power, however,” they write, “wanted a quicker way to present an impressive sight of ‘socialist development.’” Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 72.

<sup>19</sup> HU MNL M-KS-288. f. 5/1963/319 ő. e. – Géppel írt tiszttázat: “Előterjesztés a Politikai Bizottság részére – Tárgy: Tervezet a cigánytelepeken élő lakosság lakáshelyzetének megjavítására” [Proposal for the Political Committee – Subject: A plan for the improvement of the housing situation of the Gypsies living in Gypsy settlements], October 28, 1963 in Hajnáczy, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality*, 135.

<sup>20</sup> Katalin Berey, “A szociális követelményeknek meg nem felelő telepek felszámolása” [The liquidation of settlements inadequate to social requirements], in *Esély nélkül* [Without a chance], eds. Katalin Berey and Ágota Horváth (Budapest: Vita Kiadó, 1990), 54; Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 63; and Majtényi and Májtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 72.

<sup>21</sup> Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 64.

July 1961 resolution, “About particular tasks related to improving the situation of the Gypsy population.” As the resolution states,

There number some 2,100 Gypsy settlements. These settlements are often unhealthy, from autumn to spring they are almost inaccessible (along forests, swamps) and their inhabitants dwell in structures unfit for human habitation, in shacks dug deep into the ground. The communal resources in Gypsy settlements are of an extremely low level and their sanitary conditions are frightening. Their insufficient and poor water connections, absence of outhouses, and neglected environment create a hotbed of infection and disease.<sup>22</sup>

However, progress on this front would be slow going. In a report prepared by the Academic and Cultural Department [*Tudományos és Kulturális Osztály*] of the MSZMP KB on February 25, 1963, the Department noted that due to limited financial resources and employment opportunities, “substantial change has not happened as to the situation of the Gypsy community.” Few Roma had available funds, it noted, to obtain loans outright from OTP and meet repayment conditions.<sup>23</sup> The task ahead would be an extraordinary one. In a further proposal, presented to the Political Committee on October 28, 1963, the Department calculated, drawing upon county level data, that rehousing those Roma living within “inadequate” or “unsatisfactory” dwellings would require the construction of 24,363 new homes (of a total 33,828 located within “settlements,” *i.e.*, 72 percent of all homes so defined). But due to limited state allocation of funds to this end, the Department estimated that only 946 families would receive homes within the next five years.<sup>24</sup> In sum, *putri*-s and the “Gypsy settlements” in which they were found

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<sup>22</sup> “A cigánytelepek száma 2100. Ezek rendszerint egészségtelen, ősztől tavaszig szinte megközelíthetetlen területen [erdők, mocsarak mentén] vannak, s lakóik emberi lakásra alkalmatlan építményekben, helyenként földbe vájt kunyhókban élnek. A cigánytelepek kommunális ellátottsága rendkívül alacsony szintű, egészségügyi viszonyaik ijesztőek. A hiányos és rossz vízellátás, árnyékszékék hiánya s az elhanyagolt környezet különféle fertőző betegségek melegágya.” “A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról,” 241.

<sup>23</sup> HU MNL M-KS-288. F. 5/1963/293 ö. e. – Géppel írt tiszttázat: Iván Darabos, “Jelentés a Politikai Bizottságnak az MSZMP KB 1961. június 20-i, a cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról szóló határozatának végrehajtásáról” [Report on the execution of the June 20, 1961 decision of the MSZMP’s Political Committee on tasks related to improving the situation of the Gypsy population], February 25, 1963 in Hajnáczy, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality*, 130–31.

<sup>24</sup> HU MNL M-KS-288. f. 5/1963/319 ö. e. – Géppel írt tiszttázat: “Előterjesztés a Politikai Bizottság részére – Tárgy: Tervezet a cigánytelepeken élő lakosság lakáshelyzetének megjavítására,” 137.

functioned as a synecdoche for both the historical and contemporary political “problem” of Romani housing in postwar Hungary.

Although writing sympathetically (albeit in a distinctively ironic tone) Ordas’s headline (“return to the *putri?*”) likely appealed to some readers’ anti-Romani sentiments with its violent historical undertones. Only its question mark distinguishes it as an interrogative rather than imperative, not a call for segregation but an invitation to debate. This belies a shift from overt calls for expulsion to a putting into question of Romani presence in Magyar-majority communities. This double voicing would not be lost on many Roma. Consider that, some years before the publication of Ordas’s article, in the village of Gellénháza near the country’s newly drilled oilfields in the southwest, Jakab Orsós, a Romani employee of the Zala County Party Committee, recounted in the pages of the national daily *People's Freedom* [*Népszabadság*] that he encountered this very phrase in his workplace and community from Magyar colleagues and neighbors. It was, Orsós explained, retaliation for raising the discrimination his daughter experienced in her primary school classroom.<sup>25</sup>

As a question, some Magyars used the phrase to call out the shortcomings of socialist Romani policies. To this end, Magyars voiced the question to highlight contradictory claims of government policy, hailing the Party, state planners, and local councils as if to ask, “Is it *you* who wish Roma ‘return to the *putri?*’” To take but one example, in a 1965 letter to the editor of the *Somogy People’s Paper* [*Somogyi Néplap*], one Magyar accused the local housing council of attempting to return Roma to the *putri* after it proved unable to adequately provision housing for a family headed by widowed mother of advanced age and her child with disabilities.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Pál Salamon, “Hamu alatt” [Under ashes], *Népszabadság* [People’s freedom], October 13, 1957.

<sup>26</sup> I.Z., “Vissza a putriba?” [Back to the *putri?*], *Somogyi Néplap* [Somogy people’s paper], September 1, 1965.

Put directly: the article announced a public forum on what was at once one of the most rehearsed and hotly contested components of the Political Committee's proposed "solution" to the "Gypsy question" from the 1960s through the 1980s, that is, the "social integration" [*társadalmi beilleszkedés*] of Magyars and Roma through the transformation and reorganization of housing.<sup>27</sup> In newspapers of the period, journalists framed efforts to demolish *putri*-s as the front line of a humane war in the name of civilizational progress.<sup>28</sup> As Hajnáczy observes, the "desired outcome" of this policy was that the "Gypsy settlements be dispersed throughout the non-Gypsy population" and with it, that "the Gypsy population [be] employed within the official employment framework."<sup>29</sup> As Hajnáczy has argued elsewhere, these housing and labor policies were the most emblematic measure of the socialist's "forced assimilation" of Roma.<sup>30</sup> Whether this "desired" outcome would eventuate will be seen later. The foundation of this project was the allocation of interest-free loans for the construction of Cs-lakás-es, so-called "reduced price" or "reduced comfort-level dwellings" [*csökkentett értékű or komfortfokozatú lakás-es*].

With a sense of what lies behind the headline, we can now attend to the politics of the loan program itself. For Ordas's article does not just investigate housing, but the housing loan program as presented in the law and the status of loan recipients as subjects of the law. What

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<sup>27</sup> For many Magyars, the conditions of the Cs-lakás-es program were perceived as unfair preferential treatment for Roma. Hajnáczy, "The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary," 61.

<sup>28</sup> "...humanista 'hadijelentések' ezek a harc majd' minden helyi frontjáról." Imre Szenes, "Egy bomló életforma fogáskerekei közt" [Between the gears of a decaying way of life], *Népszava* [People's voice], October 7, 1966.

<sup>29</sup> Hajnáczy, "The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary," 58.

<sup>30</sup> Tamás Hajnáczy, "Források a kisiparosok CS-lakás programbeli visszaéléseiről" [Sources on the abuses of small industrialists in the Cs-lakás-es program], *Romológia* [Romology] 13 (2017): 90. The literature on pre-, inter- and postwar Romani sedentarization campaigns across the territory that would become the Warsaw Pact is extensive. See, for example, Irina Băncescu and Daniela Calciu, "On Changes in the Dwelling Conditions of the Romanian Roma under Communism," in *Reading the Architecture of the Underprivileged Classes*, ed. Nnamdi Elleh (New York: Routledge, 2014), 209–26; and Eagle Glassheim, "Most, the Town that Moved: Coal, Communists and the 'Gypsy Question' in Post-War Czechoslovakia," *Environment and History* 13, no. 4 (November 2007): 447–76.

Ordas puts in question is not just one representative Romani family, the Baloghs, but, together, “the law, the spirit of the law, and the Balogh family.”<sup>31</sup> What might the past, present, and future location of the Balogh family home tell us about socialist housing law and its “spirit” in late state socialist Hungary?

## II. “New House, New Home, New Life”

Ordas’s article invites the reader into a dramatic reenactment of legal interpretation. The heading of each section shows the author scaffolding his case: “the facts,” “not side notes,” “additional facts,” “parenthetical notes,” and a concluding set of “truths.” Its first section provides an abbreviated biography of the Baloghs, focusing centrally on the career of the family patriarch, József. If “the facts” given here are somewhat schematic, Ordas nevertheless highlights a few details about József that we can presume he, as well as socialist planners, deemed relevant to the question of where it was the Baloghs should live.

József Balogh, forty-five-years old, was born in Szekszárd and had for the past twelve years been a member of the Szakály Brothers Construction Cooperative. He was well respected by his colleagues, received numerous awards from the cooperative, and held a diploma in construction. The article includes scant details about the family but does note that Balogh was a married father of three with a fourth child on the way. According to Ordas, the Baloghs had lived in a *putri* for years, just as their kin had likely done for generations. The article omits the location of this prior home, possibly because readers of the *Tolna County People’s Paper* would have assumed it stood within the city’s so-called *cigánytelep*, or “Gypsy settlement.” The effect, in

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<sup>31</sup> “A törvény, a törvény szelleme és a Balogh család.”

any case, placed the *putri* outside of place and time—sometime in the past, somewhere on the edges of the city.

Briefly shifting to a heroic register, Ordas states that József Balogh, “with diligence of iron,” his savings, and the assistance of his workplace, constructed a two-room detached home in 1960 amongst the “more cultured houses” [*kulturáltabb otthon-s*] of Szekszárd’s Délkertváros district. We can only assume in what way Ordas considered these houses more cultured. Likely, he was referring to the neighborhood’s newness: by 1967, it boasted a newly constructed elementary school and the city’s largest shopping complex, the ABC department store.<sup>32</sup>

[*Figures 5 and 6*] Through their hard work, frugality, and with the support of the collective, the Baloghs had found a “new house, new home, new life” within communism’s promised modernity. But their stay would not be a long one. Or, rather, this “new life” would come at a profoundly high cost: the burden of debt.



FIGURE 5. ABC Department Store in Délkertváros (Front), Szekszárd, 1987.

István Kistelegdi, photographer, “[Szekszárdi ABC Áruház],” photograph (Pécs: 1987), Dél-dunántúli Regionális Könyvtár és Tudásközpont, Csorba Győző Könyvtár – Pécs (1/2016).

<sup>32</sup> For news items on amenities in Délkertváros, see “Az első szülői értekezlet . . .” [The first parents’ meeting . . .], *Tolna Megyei Népiújság* [Tolna county people’s paper], February 2, 1967; Jenő Pálkovács, “Két hónap alatt: hatvanezer vásárló több mint másfél millió forint forgalom – A vásárlók véleménye az új szekszárdi ABC-áruházról” [Two months later: sixty thousand customers, more than one-and-a-half million forints in turnover – customers’ opinion on the new ABC store in Szekszárd], *Tolna Megyei Népiújság* [Tolna county people’s paper], October 1, 1967; and “Karácsonyi vásár a gyorsmérlegen” [Christmas market on the speed scale], *Tolna Megyei Népiújság* [Tolna county people’s paper], December 24, 1968.



FIGURE 6. ABC Department Store in Délkertváros, Szekszárd, 1987.

István Kistelegdi, photographer, “[Szekszárdi ABC Áruház],” photograph (Pécs: 1987), Dél-dunántúli Regionális Könyvtár és Tudásközpont, Csorba Győző Könyvtár – Pécs (1/2016).

In the article’s second and third sections, Ordas pivots to state socialist Romani housing policy, especially as it pertained to the Balogh’s relocation from the *putri* to Délkertváros. At first glance, it appears as though their move was supported by the Party, government, and local council. The Baloghs were, in short, “positive heroes” [*pozitív hős-es*] of the sort held up by journalists and social planners as models of successful Romani assimilation. Though they were in every way deserving of this recognition, Ordas opines, they received it only in part. Just seven years after their move, the Baloghs’ land and home were expropriated “in the public interest” on request of the state Construction Company [*Építőipari Vállalat*]. Ordas does not elaborate what this claim to the “public interest” entails. It is possible that the Balogh’s home fell within the footprint of one of the district’s housing or other development projects. The family received compensation in the amount of 95,000 forints. Additionally, the local housing authority relocated them to temporary housing on the northern side of the city in the district of Északi Kertváros, a neighborhood quickly becoming Szekszárd’s new “Gypsy settlement.”

In 1968, the building department of Szekszárd’s city council issued the Baloghs the required permit to construct a new, two-room home with electricity, plumbing, and gas

connection in the Északi Kertváros.<sup>33</sup> Construction costs for this home totaled some 120,000 forints, or 25,000 forints more than the Baloghs received as compensation for their previous property in Délikertváros. To put this into perspective, Balogh's salary at the Szakály Brothers Construction Cooperative totaled 1,600 forints monthly, slightly more than 75 percent of the mean Hungarian salary in 1971,<sup>34</sup> and nearly 40 percent lower than the average income of a comparably skilled Magyar laborer, a considerably higher disparity than was typical even in state socialist Hungary's far-from-equitable remuneration of Romani labor vis-à-vis Magyar.<sup>35</sup> In order to pay the difference, Balogh secured a loan through the state bank, OTP, according to the terms then available: 70,000 forints at six percent interest.

Such terms were typical of OTP loans for both state and privately built homes in the 1960s and 1970s. Though earlier Party Congresses of the late 1950s attempted to solve Hungary's chronic postwar housing shortages through the formation of building cooperatives, eleven of which operated by the following decade, it was only in 1960 that the Party launched an ambitious fifteen-year plan to increase the number of homes built year-on-year. This expanded an earlier target of 26,000 new homes per year to 50–80,000, and aimed at an end goal of 800,000 to 1 million by 1975.<sup>36</sup> In 1964/1965, a joint resolution of the Ministries of Construction

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<sup>33</sup> In the article, Ordas only provides the property number listed on the Balogh's construction permit and does not indicate the city district in which it authorizes the family to build their new home. A review of the classified advertisements in the *Tolna County People's Paper* through the 1970s, however, continues to list a József Balogh living in the Északi Kertváros through at least 1975.

<sup>34</sup> Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 70.

<sup>35</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, "The Gypsy Population in Hungary," ca. 1973, 193. When examined overall, Romani semi-skilled and skilled manual laborers made between 14–43 percent less than their Magyar counterparts. Kemény's report gives the following breakdown by labor type and background: "The average total income from work of the Gypsy skilled worker was 2.090 Ft per month in 1971, that of the average Hungarian skilled worker 2.700 Ft, i.e. 29 per cent higher. The average monthly income from work of semi-skilled Gypsy workers was 1.650 Ft, that of non-Gypsies 2.030 Ft, i.e. 23 per cent higher, the average wages of Gypsy unskilled workers 1.600 Ft, that of the non-Gypsies 1.827 Ft, 14 per cent higher, the total income from work of Gypsy agricultural manual workers 1.480 Ft, that of the non-Gypsies 2.114 Ft, i.e. 43 per cent higher." A more extensive discussion of state socialist Romani labor politics can be found in Chapter 1.

<sup>36</sup> Gábor Loeszmádi and John Sillince, "Housing Policy in Hungary," in *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, John Sillince, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 441.

and Finance and approved by General Secretary János Kádár expanded these targets, calling for the elimination of all dwellings “not adequate for social requirements” (estimated by these Departments in an earlier 1964 proposal as requiring the construction of 25,000 homes in order to relocate 140,000 Roma).<sup>37</sup> A subsequent amendment to the 1964/1965 resolution set a target of initiating the construction of 800 new homes by the end of 1965.<sup>38</sup> The language of the decision is explicit in its reference to “Gypsy-dwellings” [*cigány-lakás-es*]. Even in its ideal execution, the plan envisioned displacing thousands of families and pushing them into financial relationships with OTP.

In 1961, the year following the inauguration of the fifteen-year plan, Minister of Construction Trautmann declared housing provision the state’s most pressing task.<sup>39</sup> What he did not state is that this provision entailed a corollary, a parallel increase in the state’s role in the housing loan industry. In theory, not just any kind of dwelling would do. In form, the Hungarian home of the future was “expected to reflect a distinctively socialist program,” historian Virág Molnár observes, an “instrument of social reform” promised to every Hungarian citizen as a

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<sup>37</sup> “Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965 (II. 18.) ÉM-PM számú együttes rendelte a szociális követelményeknek meg nem felelő telepek felszámolásáról” [Joint order by the Minister of Construction and the Minister of Finance no. 2/1965 (II. 18.) ÉM-PM on the liquidation of settlements that do not meet social requirements], *Magyar Közlöny, 1965* [Hungarian Gazette, 1965] 12 (Budapest, 1965), 135. The decision of the Ministries of Building and Finance included in this list “Gypsy-, cave-, and other similar dwellings.” The 1964 proposal which provides the estimated number of Roma living within “Gypsy settlements” and the corresponding housing demand can be found in HU MNL XIX-A-83-b 2014/1964 (367 d.) – Géppel írt tisztázata: “Előterjesztés a Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormányhoz” [Proposal to the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers-Peasant Government], April 22, 1964 in Hajnóczky, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality*, 139. For a comparison of the “liquidation” of Romani homes and Magyar “cave dwellings,” see Tamás Hajnóczky, “The Elimination of the Tibolddaróc Cave Dwellings: Non-Gypsies in the CS Housing Program,” *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 62, no. 2 (December 2017): 407–40.

<sup>38</sup> HU MNL XIX-A-83-b 3162/1964. (351. d.) – Géppel írt tisztázata: “A Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány 3162/1964 sz. határozata a cigány- és más hasonló telepek felszámolásáról szóló 2014/1964 (V.4.) Korm. számú határozat kiegészítéséről” [The Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government Resolution no. 3162/1964 concerning government amendment 1014/19 (V.4.) on the elimination of Gypsy and other similar settlements], April 29, 1964 in Hajnóczky, ed., *It’s Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality*, 146.

<sup>39</sup> Rezső Trautmann, “Otthon és társadalom” [Home and society], *Kortárs* [Contemporary] 8 (1961), 262–68 in Virág Molnár, “In Search of the Ideal Socialist Home in Post-Stalinist Hungary: Prefabricated Mass Housing or Do-It-Yourself Family Home?” *Journal of Design History: Model, Method and Mediation in the History of Housing and Design* 23, no. 1 (March 2010): 62.

basic right.<sup>40</sup> For many architects, its ideal expression was the centrally planned, multistory high-rise apartment block, in line with the aesthetic norms of midcentury International Modernism and designed to inculcate an egalitarian spirit of the collective.<sup>41</sup>

Though apartment blocks like those described and pictured above may have been the model for many Hungarian urban planners, they were not the only form of new housing available. Indeed, the family home(s) built by the Baloghs were not of this type. The rollout of the fifteen-year plan, Molnár highlights, brought with it a concomitant debate amongst Hungarian architects, divided between those who advocated for the construction of prefabricated, multistory mass housing and those who favored single-family detached homes. Though single-family homes were at times denigrated as physical manifestations of the unwelcome persistence of *petit bourgeois* tastes and criticized for their “inefficient” use of materials and labor power, the Construction Minister himself acknowledged that both forms were necessary if the ambitious goals of the fifteen-year plan were to be realized.<sup>42</sup> What aligned these seemingly incompatible architectural designs was a common financial foundation. Namely, the roll-out of a fixed-rate loan program to encourage Hungarians to buy already existing homes, apartments newly built by local and state construction collectives, or to build their own homes.<sup>43</sup> While state-initiated construction, especially of factory-produced high-rise apartment blocks, achieved a decisive

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<sup>40</sup> Molnár, “In Search of the Ideal Socialist Home in Post-Stalinist Hungary,” 61–62.

<sup>41</sup> As discussed in the next chapter, the interiors of the socialist “new home” were no less subject to discursive politics, saturated with the ideology of design, but allowing for unexpected encounters between self-fashioning and state planning. See Krisztina Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Molnár, “In Search of the Ideal Socialist Home in Post-Stalinist Hungary,” 61–81.

<sup>43</sup> Although some Hungarian economists proponent the introduction of variable-rate housing loans in the 1970s, these would not be made available to the public until after the economic transition of 1989. Imre Lengyel, “The Hungarian Banking System in Transition,” *GeoJournal* 32, no. 4 (April 1994): 381–91.

majority of new builds (approximately 70–80 percent) in the 1960s, the proportion of privately-built homes continued to account for 20–30 percent.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, the Baloghs, like many other Roma and Magyars at this time, were taking part in a new experimental frontier within the multifaceted project of building socialism. This frontier is distinctive in being made possible through housing debt. For the Baloghs, the imperfections in this experiment would prove costly. Construction delays meant that the family occupied their new home in a partially completed state, even as the state bank required Balogh to remit half of his salary to meet monthly payments. As Ordas's "parenthetical comment" and concluding set of "truths" detail, Balogh appealed to the Tolna County Building Department to reduce his debt burden. His was an appeal to the law. He cited a newly introduced component to the Cs-lakás-es program, the resolution adopted in 1964/1965 intended to provide housing loans of up to 65,000 forints (later expanded to 90,000) interest-free to Romani families. To support his claim, he provided extensive documentation to the Council of having satisfactorily met the program's conditions. He included proof of at least two-years continuous employment or membership in a small-scale cooperative, a minimum monthly salary of 1,000 forints, and a 10 percent down payment on the total cost of the property.<sup>45</sup> He received oral assurances that his previous loan, issued under the previous conditions, would be drawn up anew according to the terms of the 1964/1965 resolution. And yet, his case was rejected on a technicality. The Council informed him that the address from which he filed his claim, that is, the address of the partially completed home in which the Baloghs were living (and thus the property that the revised loan would finance) was ineligible as it was not designated as a *putri*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Locsmádi and Sillince, "Housing Policy in Hungary," 441.

<sup>45</sup> "Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965," 139.

<sup>46</sup> As Hajnáczy observes, the authority to define what counted as a "Gypsy settlement" was left entirely to the local councils. Hajnáczy, "The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary," 62–63.

Balogh contested this interpretation of the law in a letter to the Council partially reproduced in Ordas's article. "I find it unjust," he writes, "that Gypsies who do not have a permanent job can receive an interest-free Gypsy-loan [*cigánykölcsön*] without further ado, and I am working [*dolgozom*] for twelve years in the same place of employment with honors and am unable to receive it."<sup>47</sup> One central detail is misleading: Roma without state-recognized permanent employment were generally excluded from the loan program, except in special circumstances whereby an applicant could prove regular participation in the work of a cooperative.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, one interpretation of Balogh's statement (and Ordas's decision to select it as the only instance of direct speech in the article) is that it evidences lateral violence, a disparagement by one aspiring Romani householder of other Romani loan holders in the shadow of a dominant power. And yet it is to the Council he writes, and we can interpret his letter as a challenge to the law. Although his appeal undoubtedly engaged in a politics of respectability, it did so because Romani housing policy under late state socialism foregrounded the moral consequences of seemingly technical qualifications. If Balogh regrets his fall from grace as an exemplary Romani subject, what Ordas refers to as a "positive hero," this is as much a shame for the state. We can imagine that Balogh sought acknowledgement as Romani, a socialist worker, a father, and homeowner. This is not simply an indictment of the vagaries of bureaucratic rule, but an expression of conceptual confusion that befalls Romani subjects who struggle to heed the law even as it reveals its ambivalence towards their full participation in building socialism. Hence, as Ordas put it, the Baloghs' claim should be approved because it was within the spirit of the law, the law's "moral content," even if it may be outside the letter of it. For otherwise, as Ordas

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<sup>47</sup> "Méltánytalannak tartom, hogy azok a cigányok, akik állandó munkahellyel nem rendelkeznek, minden további nélkül kaphatnak kamatmentes cigánykölcsönt, én pedig, aki tizenkét év óta ugyanazon a munkahelyen becsülettel dolgozom, nem részesülhetek abban . . ."

<sup>48</sup> "Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965," 139.

sarcastically explained, the Baloghs should construct a *putri* at the end of their plot, move in, and again apply for a loan from there. What is at stake is not only state allegiance or belonging, but also how to live these through *good* indebtedness to socialism itself.

Loans, then, were not simply intended to improve material and housing conditions for Hungarian Roma, though these ends were in line with the larger transformation in the project of building socialism in the latter-half of the 1950s onward—one that Tamás Dombos and Léna Pellandini-Simányi describe as the Cold War’s new front, wherein consumption would “build and consolidate legitimacy at home.”<sup>49</sup> What is this legitimacy at home, and how would debt help structure it? But as we shall see, loans were also put to other work. Why and by what means did debt, and especially the task of making oneself eligible to bear it, acquire the force of moral pedagogy?

### III. How to Raise Interest in Holding Debt

Loans opened a pathway for many Hungarians, both Romani and Magyar, to participate in a national project of building socialism through consumption. Tomorrow’s promised material riches could be had today, at 4–8 percent interest.<sup>50</sup> Late state socialist Hungarian society, from schools, to workplaces, to the pages of newspapers, was permeated by thinking, feeling, and relating through interest and debt. These mediated and defined relationships to the state,

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<sup>49</sup> Tamás Dombos and Léna Pellandini-Simányi, “Kids, Cars, or Cashews? Debating and Remembering Consumption in Socialist Hungary,” in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, eds. Mary Neuberger and Paulina Bren (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 326.

<sup>50</sup> The calculation of interest rates for personal consumer and housing loans generally depended upon the agreed-upon repayment schedule and total sum of credit extended. Those taking out OTP consumer and housing loans at smaller sums with shorter repayment plans were rewarded with lower interest rates. For consumer loans up to 5,000 forints in 1968, the interest rates were as follows: 6 months, 4 percent; 7–9 months, 5 percent, and 10–12 months, 6 percent. For loans above 5,000 forints: 13–15 months, 7 percent; and 16–18 months, 8 percent. Mihály Horváth, “A lakosság ‘pénztárkönyve’” [The population’s “account book”], *Figyelő* [Observer], March 20, 1968.

disciplined and responsabilized citizens and collectives, and affectively oriented publics toward futures.

We may on the one hand consider debt metaphorically, as Hungarian-Romanian poet Zoltán Márki does in his following panegyric to the Party, published in the newspaper *South Hungary* [*Délmagyarország*] in 1961. His poem brings together these three axes of debt relationships in the following lines:

Joyful debt [ <i>Boldog adósság</i> ]	1
I am a debtor; I feel this as	2
the years fly away – migrating birds of the air –,	3
Bringing back with them newness and newly beautifying	4
The light of our labor in the soaring of spring, –	5
I am a debtor; I feel this because of the building [of socialism]	6
(in me, too, it builds a castle of the future)	7
and because the meaning of my struggle I am a debtor,	8
to the Party and simply to life:	9
and a joyful debt is this, blessed a thousand times over,	10
because at once it is holy law, holy duty,	11
that heart and deed burn with the fire of my loyalty	12
night and day, every hour, every minute! <sup>51</sup>	13

Márki’s poem, a reflection on the indebtedness of socialist citizens to the Party and life (9), recasts debt not as a condition of precarity but one of joyful expectation and obligation. Through debt, labor is transformed (5) and returns anew with the promise of building a socialist future and self (6–7). It is at once a reminder of what has been and is yet to be done, a continuous enactment of the socialist citizen’s “holy duty” (11) to the collective yesterday, today, and tomorrow (13).

On the other hand, as instruments of state economic policy, socialist planners believed that interest and debt could perform similar pedagogical work, defining ideas of the socialist good life and how it was to be realized, in spaces as diverse as primary school classrooms, state lotteries, and meetings of collective farms. Beginning in the early 1950s, as a way of tutoring children in practices of good financial management and to encourage future savings bank

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<sup>51</sup> Zoltán Márki, “Boldog adósság” [Joyful debt], *Délmagyarország* [Southern Hungary], October 15, 1961.

deposits, socialist pedagogues introduced “school-savings organizers.” Pupils were encouraged to purchase stamps sold throughout the year in denominations from 1 to 20 forints. After pasting these into specially designed books, they maintained the book over the next nine months and exchanged it on May 31, the day their account matured, for its stamp value and a 1 percent return.<sup>52</sup> Academic growth thus mapped economic, the “school-savings organizer” at once a textbook and financial ledger.

To incentivize savings bank deposits, OTP held lotteries for depositors, with awards ranging from cash prizes to automobiles.<sup>53</sup> The press, meanwhile, cautioned readers against inappropriate uses of loans, but also triumphantly announced their success, with one report from 1972 noting that although OTP had extended over 1.466 billion forints in credit in 1970 alone, only one one-thousandth of customers were behind on payments.<sup>54</sup> When consumer loans were introduced in 1958, the news item states, Hungarians typically used them to buy bedding sets and radios. But now consumers were advised to purchase more expensive goods to reflect their improved living standards. Making the list were household appliances and high-value durable goods, including furniture, camping equipment, and weekend cottages, all of which “made everyday life more convenient and more cultured.”<sup>55</sup> Finally, state organs notified Hungarians about who was eligible for loans and how they were to be repaid—in most cases, through automatic deductions of up to 33 percent from salaries (or for retirees, their pensions).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> T. Bácskai, “The Experience of Savings-Banks in Socialist Economies and Its Applicability to Developing Countries,” *Acta Oeconomica* 10, no. 2 (1973): 212.

<sup>53</sup> Bácskai, “The Experience of Savings-Banks in Socialist Economies and Its Applicability to Developing Countries,” 211.

<sup>54</sup> Ildikó Kovács, “Ki mire kér kölcsönt?” [Who asks for a loan for what?], *Népszava* [People’s voice], July 30, 1972.

<sup>55</sup> “. . . amelyek kényelmesebbé, kulturáltabbá teszik a mindennapi életet.”

<sup>56</sup> “Áruvásárlási hitel, személyi kölcsön, mezőgazdasági és kisipari segítség” [Credit for the purchase of goods, personal loans, and assistance for agriculture and small industry], *Magyar Hírlap* [Hungarian newspaper], January 4, 1974.

On this point, if somewhat sanguinely, the *Monday News* [*Hétfői Hírek*] reported in 1961 that “not everyone is happy about it, but it is relatively well tolerated and usually does not increase their blood pressure.”<sup>57</sup> The “national account ledger,” in short, included near everyone: “there is hardly any adult resident in the country who could not—or would not—have a relationship with the National Savings Bank.”<sup>58</sup> This hedge bears qualification: not all Hungarians had equal access to debt, or held it on equal terms.

If the management and amortizing of loans shaped the everyday of Roma and Magyars alike in state socialist Hungary, so too did it differentiate in a number of significant ways. Who could access debt instruments and how, and in what way loans could be used to purchase homes and consumer goods were coded through difference, at times literally. As József Balogh’s letter to the Szekszárd local council in 1971 attests, the interest-free housing loans available through OTP were commonly referred to as “Gypsy-loans” [*cigánykölcsön-s*], despite the fact that some Magyars were eligible for the program as well. This was not an idiosyncratic usage on Balogh’s part, but one that also found official circulation. Administrative notes in the margins of interest-free loan documents processed by OTP in Baranya county in the 1970s, for example, frequently include the letter “c,” designating the applicant as *cigány*.<sup>59</sup> If loan conditions and indebtedness differed for Hungarian Roma and Magyars, in what ways were these differences experienced? As the following section details, although the Hungarian Political Committee and economic planners envisioned loans as instruments of the physical and social integration of Roma into Magyar-majority communities, these programs could—and many cases did—produce contradictory

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<sup>57</sup> “Ennek már nem örül mindenki, de viszonylag jól tűrik az emberek, általában nem emelkedik tőle a vérnyomásuk.” “Személyi kölcsön és környéke” [The personal loan and its ambit], *Hétfői Hírek* [Monday news], February 6, 1961.

<sup>58</sup> “Aligha van ilyen felnőtt lakos az országban, akinek ne lenne - vagy ne lett volna - kapcsolata az Országos Takarékpénztárral.” Horváth, “A lakosság ‘pénztárkönyve.’”

<sup>59</sup> Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 72.

results. For the Balogh family, they were stuck without access to a loan program to which they, in theory, were the intended recipients. But even for those Roma who did access interest-free loans, their path to a new home was hardly straightforward.

#### IV. Debt and the Structuring of Double Binds

In his pathbreaking 1971 representative study, Hungarian sociologist István Kemény documents the massive upheavals within and transformations of Romani communities following years of government resettlement programs—both forced and voluntary—in its efforts to “liquidate” areas designated as “Gypsy settlements.” Kemény classifies these programs under four broad categories: 1.) relocation of families from *putri*-s into subdivided, already-existing buildings, including farmhouses, former servants’ quarters, and disused industrial buildings; 2.) designation of cleared industrial sites, upon which Roma were to build their own homes; 3.) state-directed construction of purpose-built “hutments,” into which Romani families were forcibly moved, at times under police supervision; and 4.) from 1965 onward, allocation of interest-free loans for the construction of Cs-lakás-es.<sup>60</sup> According to state plans, these homes were to include one or two rooms with flooring (to be used as bedrooms or communal living spaces), a kitchen, a pantry with shelving, and outbuildings.<sup>61</sup> While the Cs-lakás-es were to be electrified, connections to municipal gas supplies were not explicitly included.

Of the various official strategies for Romani resettlement, Kemény argues, it was homes built through the Cs-lakás-es program that generally provided the most favorable conditions. Of the above-listed policies, only the last permitted conditions approaching a voluntary move. His report, however, takes considerable pains to detail the program’s many shortcomings in

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<sup>60</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 53–69.

<sup>61</sup> “Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965,” 137.

achieving its two purported aims of improving the quality of housing stock available to Romani families and encouraging social integration in Magyar-majority communities. While some Romani families acquired their Cs-lakás-es through interest-free OTP loans, as József Balogh had attempted to do in 1971, this was not the case for all. Other families living in Cs-lakás-es did so under rental agreements dictated by the Property Handling Enterprise [*Ingatlankezelő Vállalat*]. As rents were often withheld from wages, it was not always clear to families that they had entered into lease-, rather than deed-holding agreements with the Enterprise. From here, the Enterprise would attempt to sell the property to OTP. Only then was the property made available to the family for purchase, bundled with a loan.<sup>62</sup> It is unclear at what point rent previously paid to the Enterprise would retroactively count towards the down payment due to OTP.

As local councils generally designated single sections of a village, town, or city for development through the various funding lines of the program, neighboring Romani families often held various kinds of rental contracts and loans with the Enterprise and OTP.<sup>63</sup> This resulted in an ambiguous property relationship at two levels, specific to each individual home as families negotiated the particulars of their tenancy arrangement, and among neighboring houses as they navigated different versions of ostensibly standardized rental and loan agreements. Rather than a uniform community of debt, Romani families participating in the Cs-lakás-es program lived with heterogeneity. Where the *putri* of yesterday was condemned for its lack of uniform construction and disorderly appearance, the Cs-lakás-es found “order” in white-washed walls and a complexity of financial instruments.

The program was scarce less confusing or bureaucratically mired for families buying already-existing homes or building anew through interest-free loans. As József Balogh

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<sup>62</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 67–68.

<sup>63</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 68.

discovered the hard way, these were conditional on meeting a number of poorly defined eligibility requirements. Four categories prevailed, each placing the would-be loan recipient in double-binds pertaining to where they are to apply from, how much their home will cost, what employment will cover it, and who will build it. First, one must apply for the loan from an address designated as within a “Gypsy settlement” (though conferring the sense of “slum”) [*cigánytelep*]; it was on these grounds that the Baloghs were deemed ineligible. The resolution, however, provided no clear statement of what could be considered a “Gypsy settlement.” Rather, the responsibility of defining these was turned over to the executive committees of local councils, though with the assumption that the rate of “liquidation,” which we could now qualify as internal displacement driven in part by rental and debt arrangements, be jointly settled by councils and the Ministers of Construction, Culture, and Finance, all in consultation with the National Planning Office. In other words, it would not have been sufficient for the Baloghs to build a *putri* on the end of their property and apply from there, as Ordas had suggested (a solution he had proposed, with biting irony, in order to highlight the contradictions inherent to the policy). Rather, they would have had to appeal to the local council for a redrawing of the borders of the “Gypsy settlement” in such a way as to include their new property.<sup>64</sup>

Second, the total amount of the loan dictated the kind of dwelling a family could buy or build. The loan could not exceed 65,000 forints (raised to 90,000 in a subsequent amendment), to be amortized over thirty years.<sup>65</sup> As Kemény notes, for those families buying *paraszt* homes—that is to say, homes formerly occupied by Magyars—prevailing market conditions proved variable geographically. Among the Romani families interviewed by Kemény and his research team as part of the 1971 representative study, they found that home prices ranged by a full order

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<sup>64</sup> “Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965,” 139.

<sup>65</sup> “Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965,” 139.

of magnitude, from 10,000 to 100,000 forints.<sup>66</sup> This was, of course assuming, that the current *paraszt* owner would sell. “Opportunities for buying dwellings or building plots are restricted by prejudice,” Kemény writes. “There are Hungarian villages where 40–50 houses stand empty, their owners are unable to sell them even under their normal prices, and they are nevertheless unwilling to talk to the Gypsies.”<sup>67</sup> For families building their own homes, the loans could not account for more than ninety percent of total costs. OTP required the remaining ten percent upfront as a down payment, though this could, in theory, take a variety of forms. The 1964/1965 resolution states that the down payment could be covered by cash on hand, an equal value of building materials, or a pledge of individual or family labor.<sup>68</sup> However, the decision provided no clear way of assessing the value of either materials or labor, and interviews with Romani families make clear that this option was rarely available. “We have indeed met with cases where the councils have availed themselves of the possibilities afforded by the statutes,” Kemény summarizes, “but in most places they insist on prior saving. It is characteristic of the ‘official caution’ going beyond the statutes in force.”<sup>69</sup> We could imagine that this would be especially frustrating, as some Romani applicants would have been ideally suited to adjudicate the value of such non-cash proxy payments—a significant proportion of the Romani labor-force was already engaged in production and building construction. Indeed, in light of this, the “official caution” seems an explicit if not motivated rebuke of the pedagogy of labor.

Third, loans gave preference to those families who could prove continuous employment with a collective or state enterprise and who earned a minimum monthly income of 1,000 forints.

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<sup>66</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 71.

<sup>67</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 74–75.

<sup>68</sup> “Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965,” 139.

<sup>69</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 73. Similarly, Majtényi and Majtényi emphasize the degree to which local authorities determined the “worthiness” of who could receive credit. Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 72.

To qualify for the loan in the first place, OTP required families to show at least two years of employment, though the program did allow exceptions for those who could prove regular participation in an agricultural collective. Those holding longer continuous employment were technically eligible for a lump sum reduction on the principal of the loan: 5,000 forints for five years, 8,000 for ten, and 12,000 for fifteen.<sup>70</sup> But again, as Kemény demonstrates, few Roma could satisfy the two-year provision, let alone qualify for reductions. The employment structure described by the program seems designed without any knowledge of the actual organization of Romani work in collective farms and state enterprises in state socialist Hungary. It was, in short, an expression of a desired labor relationship, rather than an existing one. Proof of continuous employment required documentation in the form of entries in state workbooks; all other work was deemed ineligible, variously classified as “informal,” “temporary,” or “casual.” This differentiation, Kemény writes, was an “artificial thing” in the lives of most Roma, a bureaucratic distinction of otherwise little consequence.<sup>71</sup>

As numerous interviews detail, Roma in state socialist Hungary often supplemented poorly remunerated work in state enterprises and collectives with higher paying seasonal agricultural labor. Only the former of these was officially on the books, and yet both were necessary not only for Roma to support families and kinship networks, but also to provide sufficient labor to meet the fluctuating demand in the agricultural sector. In other words, Roma helped fill the ranks of state socialism’s industrial (and agricultural) reserve army and were penalized by policymakers for doing so. What resulted was a self-contradictory policy in which the majority of Romani families could not raise sufficient capital to meet the demand of a ten percent down payment without taking on supplemental seasonal engagements. But this work

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<sup>70</sup> “Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965,” 139–40.

<sup>71</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gipsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 71.

would then make them ineligible for an interest-free loan, as they would no longer be able to prove a formal relationship with an employing body of adequate length. What Romani families did to support their households could only sometimes count toward getting a loan to build their homes. On this point, Kemény makes the following policy recommendation: “If social planning wishes to serve the raising of the material and cultural level of the affected persons, it must endeavor at fitting the seasonal work done by them more organically into the order of the social division of labor and see to it that they receive the rights due to regular work.”<sup>72</sup>

Yet even for families who met these requirements, the bureaucratized distribution of building funds proved a fourth obstacle. In yet another expression of official state “caution,” the 1964/1965 resolution permitted OTP to pay loan funds directly to approved builders.<sup>73</sup> Often, the bank did so with or without the approval of Romani applicants. In some cases, this proved personally and financially disastrous. Though the program required that construction begin within one year of the issuing of the loan and completion within two, many building cooperatives and contractors seem to have interpreted this timeframe as suggestion rather than rule. Not infrequently, they handed over homes in various states of (in)completion.<sup>74</sup>

To take one particularly egregious example, reported in the *Pest County Newspaper* [*Pest Megyei Hírlap*] in 1969, János Medveczki and András Tuka, a duo of “masterminds” [*lángelme-s*] operating in the town of Tura, approximately 50 kilometers northwest of Budapest, defrauded some twenty-five Romani families in the years 1967 and 1968 alone.<sup>75</sup> As István Lojkó, a

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<sup>72</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 72.

<sup>73</sup> “Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965,” 140.

<sup>74</sup> For an extensive study of schemes carried out by builders within the Cs-lakás-es program, see Hajnáczy, “Források a kisiparosok CS-lakás programbeli visszaéléseiről.”

<sup>75</sup> György Berkovits, “Befejezetlen házak Turán” [Unfinished houses in Tura], *Pest Megyei Hírlap* [Pest county newspaper], October 12, 1969. Subsequent items in the *Pest County Newspaper* revealed that an additional seven Magyar-loan holders had been similarly defrauded by these “masterminds.” As a consequence of Berkovits’s reporting and an ensuing investigation, the “builders,” János Medveczki and András Tuka, were required to surrender their state licenses. See György Berkovits, “A turai vezetők levele: Munkatársunk válasza” [The Tura

member of the Tura Municipal Standing Committee on Construction and Transport observed, three families who had engaged another builder, József Molek, received their completed homes within three months. Meanwhile, those families who had engaged the *lángelme*-s in question waited upwards of two years, during which time the builders exhausted the funds of the loan even while claiming that construction delays were due to an insufficient supply of materials. Adding racist insult to racialized injury, Medveczki, without proof, accused Roma themselves of stealing a vast inventory of brick and cement. These families had received oral confirmation from Medveczki and Tuka that the homes would be completed on schedule, but without written confirmation, the Tura Municipal Committee proved unable to enforce the deadline. In light of the clear official rule regarding project completion, if a Romani family was to make a preemptive request for written confirmation from the contracted builder, this then would have given them a bureaucratic role in the policy's implementation.

Much like Baloghs, the families in Tura had little choice but to live in their OTP-financed homes in an unfinished state. The craftsmanship of the completed features belied shoddy techniques and cost-cutting measures: doorframes unglued from entryways; ceramic tiling absent from kitchens, hallways, and pantries; missing window handles; and skirting board used in place of parquet. Some two years later, a government investigation posted architects to Tura to confirm the details of the report. The investigators observed that

the foundations of these Cs-lakás-es could be torn away by hand, their insulation provides an excellent opportunity for the groundwater to seep upwards, instead of building a floor, the earth has simply been tamped down, it is impossible to go up onto the loft because it had collapsed, the insulation was so minimal that it is simply not worth heating.<sup>76</sup>

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leaders' letter: Our colleague's answer], *Pest Megyei Hírlap* [Pest county newspaper], December 27, 1969; and György Berkovits, "Újabb befejezetlen házak Turán" [More unfinished houses in Tura], *Pest Megyei Hírlap* [Pest county newspaper], March 1, 1970.

<sup>76</sup> ". . . a 'cs' házaknak az alapját kézzel is ki lehet bontani, szigetelésük a magas talajvíznek kitűnő felszívódási lehetőséget biztosít, padló helyett csak a földet döngölték simára, a padlásra nem lehet felmenni, mert leszakad, a hőszigetelés olyan minimális, hogy fűteni sem érdemes." György Berkovits, "Befejezetlen házak" [Unfinished houses], *Valóság* [Reality] 10 (1971), 73.

The pair also stood accused of taking homes slated for demolition, making minor cosmetic alterations, and then attempting to pass these off as new builds.

János Kátai, amongst the Roma taken in by Medveczki and Tuka's scheme, had secured an OTP interest-free loan on May 6, 1967, and was still waiting for his home two-and-a-half years later. Beyond the loan sum, Kátai had little choice but to put up additional funds to cover the remaining work: electrical wiring at 1,200 forints, pavements at 2,000, flooring for the rooms at 3,000, as well as the supplies and labor for painting. In his report on this scheme, investigative journalist György Berkovits invokes the spirit of the law with a spirit of sarcastic hyperbole:

It was as if an angel had come down from heaven and vanished the *cigányputri*-s here in Tura. An “angelic spirit”—no, but rather the spirit of government and regulation, which is primarily: human. However, the efficacy of the humanitarian measure from “on high” is degraded here “below” by those who carry it out in a completely different spirit.<sup>77</sup>

For the state, the program's social goals were not met. The Ministries of Construction and Finance had sought to improve the social and spatial integration of Roma and Magyars but left one crucial aspect of the policy mechanism undefined: location. The decision of where to build new homes was left to local councils, on the condition that it be done either on publicly held land or land already in the possession of the family applying for the loan.<sup>78</sup> “Later it became obvious,” Hajnáczy observes, “that the councils themselves obstructed the forced assimilation policy's progress by grouping the ‘CS’-home settlements . . . into blocks.”<sup>79</sup> To return once again to Kemény's summary analysis,

As the combined effect of all these factors, in the past five years, out of the round 1,600 Gypsy dwellings built with the assistance of flood- and inundation loans [one component of the Cs-lakás-es program], not a single one was built within the non-Gypsy settlement,

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<sup>77</sup> “Mintha a mennyből angyal szállt volna le, és tüntette volna el a cigányputrikat itt, Turán. ‘Angyalszellem’—nem, hanem a kormányzat és a rendelet szelleme, amely elsősorban: emberi. Azonban a humánus intézkedés hatékonyságát, amely ‘fentről’ jött, lerontják itt ‘lent,’ azok, akik egészen más szellemben hajtják végre.” Berkovits, “Befejezetlen házak Turán.”

<sup>78</sup> “Az építésügyi miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 2/1965,” 137.

<sup>79</sup> Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 58–59.

and their majority / about 1,100 dwellings / at a considerable distance from the non-Gipsy settlement.<sup>80</sup>

The effect, then, reproduced and even entrenched the already existing social and spatial differentiation, but now with a small, but nevertheless significant number of Romani families living in a long-term debt relationship with OTP. “The Gypsies strive for assimilation,” Kemény writes, “but if barriers are put in the way of these ambitions and the Gypsies wishing to become assimilated are isolated artificially, then the tendency of becoming a coloured minority [ghetto] becomes stronger.”<sup>81</sup>

### Conclusion

Despite the enduring opprobrium of the very idea of the *putri* in state discourse and everyday speech of Magyars, and notwithstanding the cruel ordinariness of the double binds in which state socialism placed Romani families, Kemény remained hopeful that the aims and promises of the Cs-lakás-es program might someday be fulfilled. It was Kemény who, after meeting Gyuri Cséplő in Németfalu in 1974, introduced him to Pál Schiffer, the filmmaker responsible for documenting his journey to Budapest and back again. In the summer of 1976, after filming of the documentary had wrapped, Cséplő first encountered difficulties in purchasing a property within the limits of the village. Around this same time, Kemény, then working as dramaturge for the film, wrote in a private letter to Ottilia Solt, his close research collaborator, what he wished would come of their efforts: “My only hope is that with the film we will enforce the [Cs-lakás-es] action in Németfalu.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 76.

<sup>81</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 69.

<sup>82</sup> “Egyetlen reményem, hogy a filmezéssel kierőszakoljuk Németfalu a cs-ház akciót.” Sándor Révész, “Negyven éve halt meg a németfalui cigánytelep keserű hőse, Cséplő Gyuri” [Forty years ago perished the bitter hero of Németfalu’s Gypsy settlement, Gyuri Cséplő], *HVG*, October 22, 2018.

By the end of the decade, the “liquidation” of Németsfalu’s “Gypsy settlement,” like so many others across Hungary, was well underway. Kemény would not see the outcome. Under professional censorship for his increasingly critical work of the regime’s housing policy and economic inequalities, Kemény departed Budapest for Paris in 1977. But we could assume that neither he nor Cséplő would have been surprised by the results of this “liquidation.” Just as Cséplő had experienced a few years prior, many of Németsfalu’s Romani families found their legal pathway to home ownership within the village’s limits blocked by the local council and their would-be Magyar neighbors. Németsfalu remains a segregated village to this day. In a 2013 interview, the then-mayor of the town, László Galambos, commented that, although he knew the Cséplő family, he was at present unaware of their location as they had since been “scattered” amongst the neighboring villages. His family, he clarified, had arrived after the “liquidation” of the settlement. Lest there be any ambiguity regarding his position on the matter, he remarked, “Thank God there are no more Gypsies living in Németsfalu.”<sup>83</sup>

From the late 1970s onward, Hungarian economic planners, facing the same credit shortages gripping nearly all of the Warsaw Pact countries, revised many of the debt instruments described above. By 1985, despite yearly underutilization, the Ministries of Housing and Finance discontinued the interest-free loan program. This, combined with rapidly rising housing costs over the course of the decade, meant that fewer and fewer Romani families were able to finance home buying in the final years of the People’s Republic. But even during its two decades of existence, the success of the interest-free loan program was far from certain.

Many Hungarian Roma found that their access to debt was officially and bureaucratically circumscribed. Eligibility for interest-free loans was conditional on poorly defined and conceived

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<sup>83</sup> “Németsfalun hál’ Istennek nem laknak cigányok.” Pócsik, “Én, Cséplő György.”

requirements. These requirements were aspirational rather than attentive to the realities of Romani life. Even when Roma could access housing loans, the “official caution” exercised by OTP imposed further restrictions, granting families little control over how the funds of their loan were dispersed. Local councils, too, posed their own impediments, setting the limits of which communities could apply for loans when, and where new homes could be constructed. Though Roma indeed held debt alongside Magyars, this did little to resolve the problem of spatial segregation.

Though the Political Committee, state economic planners, and OTP may have set the terms of loans, many Roma nevertheless used these loans on their own terms, sometimes of necessity and sometimes by choice. As the following chapter will examine, through consumer and agricultural credit Roma expressed gratitude and hospitality to friends and family, supported one another in their labor within and alongside collectives and cooperatives, and sustained kinship networks. These uses of the commodity at times stood outside the acceptable norms and discursive framings espoused by state ideologues, in “excess” to the moral and aesthetic standards of “ascetic intellectual socialism.”

## **CHAPTER 5: THE TEST OF TASTE. CONSUMPTION AS INTEGRATION IN STATE SOCIALISM**

Lace [curtains] in a Gypsy home?

I scan the walls from the mirror: there is no carpet on them . . . memories of kitschy paintings haunt, but then again I find it impossible to believe that he lives here. Let alone him, but his wife and children too? In such a regular [*szabályos*], orderly [*rendes*] home, behind white curtains? That would be too much. True, I lived for half a year beside a Gypsy master violinist [*cigányprímás*] who from two to five, every afternoon, would play from the classics. He especially loved Beethoven and he had a five-room apartment, while we only had two, but . . . I am now reminded, that I also looked down suspiciously on this and I had a hard time believing that he didn't have another life, in a *putri* somewhere, beside a reedy patch, where the Roma [*roma-s*] catch fish in the evenings and the women roast carrion found in a ditch. How much sick prejudice remains even in one who tried to purge it from himself!<sup>1</sup>

— Ákos Koczogh, in the short story “Humanity” [*Emberség*], 1954

In the spring of 1954, Ákos Koczogh, then editor-in-chief of *We Build* [*Építünk*], the literary journal of the Debrecen chapter of the Hungarian Writers' Association [*Magyar Írók Szövetsége*], published his short story, “Humanity” [*Emberség*], written eight years earlier, in 1946. Koczogh begins his narrative in an unnamed town in Hungary's tumultuous and uncertain years following the Second World War, the “penny world” [*garasos világ*] of hyperinflation, material scarcity, and hunger. Our narrator—perhaps intended to be Koczogh himself—sets out with a few million pengős in hand and, deciding that tomorrow might very well render this last bit of currency worthless, resolves to pay for a small luxury to restore some sense of himself: a shave. When neither blades nor shaving cream could be found, he inquires with a colleague on where he might locate a barber to provide this service.

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<sup>1</sup> “Csipke a cigánylakásban? A tükörből a falakat fürkészem . . . giccses festmények emlékei kísértének, de aztán megint lehetetlennek tartom, hogy itt lakjon. Meg ő hagyján, de a felesége és a gyerekek is? Ilyen szabályos, rendes lakásban, fehér függönyök mögött? Ez mar túl sok lenne. Igaz, fél évig laktam úgy, hogy mellettem egy cigányprímás minden délután kettőtől ötig klasszikusoktól hegedült, különösen Beethoven szerette s neki ötszobás lakása volt, nekünk csak kettő, de . . . most jut eszembe, hogy azt is gyanakodva lestem és nehezen hittem el, hogy nem volt egy másik élete, valamilyen putriban, nádas mellett, ahol a romák esténként halat fognak s az asszonyok parázson sütik az árokban lelt döngöt. Mennyi beteg előítélet még abban is, aki igyekezett kivetni magából!” Ákos Koczogh, “Emberség” [Humanity], *Építünk: A Magyar Írók Szövetsége debreceni csoportjának folyóirata* [We build: The magazine of the Debrecen chapter of the Hungarian Writers' Association] 5, no. 1 (1954): 12.

The colleague recommends he visit a nearby man by the name of Béla Kelemen. Attempting to reassure the narrator, the colleague remarks that although Kelemen is a “Gypsy,” this is not a problem as he runs a clean [*tiszta*] business. Unpersuaded, the narrator approaches his intended destination with uncertainty, first attempting to ascertain the reliability of the barber by scrutinizing the façade of the one-story house out of which Kelemen operates, and then, with trepidation, enters. He finds the barbershop as described: orderly [*rendes*] and clean [*tiszta*] if small, furnished in such a way that the narrator speculates that it may double as the family home. Its décor leaves the narrator astonished rather than comforted. Lace curtains seemed a particular implausibility in a “Gypsy” home, he remarks, speculating that they were hung not because the barber Kelemen might enjoy their appearance or the measure of privacy they provided, but rather to put a patron like himself at ease. It was as if to say, the narrator thought: “I am a human, a human just like you, don’t be afraid!”<sup>2</sup> With an equally searching eye, he studies the face, moustache, and hair of Kelemen to ascertain whether, as his colleague had stated, his soon-to-be barber was indeed a “Gypsy.”

His visual inspection complete and deciding in the affirmative, the narrator says a brief greeting and then takes a seat in Kelemen’s chair. Theirs is a mostly wordless, albeit intimate encounter, not just in the proximity between patron and provider that such a service entails, but also, as the narrator reflects, between himself and the Romani children who had likely occupied the chair before him. In brief exchanges, the narrator ascertains that Kelemen resides in the shop with his wife, while his family lives in the nearby Romani settlement. Playing historian and invoking familiar speculations about the origins of the “Gypsy,” the narrator muses, “At some time they fled the Tatars in defense. Now the *cigányputri*-s are their refuge.”<sup>3</sup> The move

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<sup>2</sup> “Ember vagyok, ember, éppen olyan, mint te, ne félj!”

<sup>3</sup> “Valamikor a tarárok elől menekültek a védelmébe. Most a cigányputrik menedéke.”

transports the scene into the “Gypsy settlement,” rather than within the center of town, where Kelemen operated his business. The narrator is impressed with Kelemen’s proficiency, which he determines cannot be a result of skill, but sorcery [*boszorkányság*]. Yet the narrator remains tense, uncertain, and apprehensive as Kelemen turns to shave his neck. His fear is only broken when the barber dips the razor in disinfectant, which the narrator deems a “human gesture” [*emberi gesztus*]. Underlining the lessons he learned through this brief visit to Kelemen, Koczogh (though in the voice of the narrator) makes the following plea to his (Magyar) readers:

They have now become human, yet for us they at best live in lush memories and we avoid them on the roads. . . . Let us travel with them in their tarpaulin chariots, let us lie in their adobe-bricked *putri*-s, and let us speak with their barbers. There we can experience the development of their humanity.<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain the extent of the readership of Koczogh’s short story. Its themes, however, helpfully illustrate one further dimension of the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation that structured the “Gypsy question” in state socialist Hungary: Romani materialities and taste [*ízlés*]. What might appear as innocuous as the presence of curtains, the arrangement of furniture, the decoration of the interiors and exteriors of the home, and the methods families used to prepare and consume meals within them functioned within state socialist Hungary as an important metric of “social integration,” nothing less than an index of Romani humanity itself. And yet, as Koczogh’s short story suggests, the linking of *ízlés* to civilizational progress was not a straightforward process.

What explains the intensity of these moral pronouncements upon Romani materialities and expressions of domestic consumption? How did state socialism rework the *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation to elevate consumer habits as a way of resolving the “Gypsy question?”

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<sup>4</sup> “Ők most lettek emberré s a mi számunkra mégis legfeljebb buja emlékekben élnek és letérünk előlük a kociútra. Utazzunk velük ponyvás szekéren, háljunk a vályogputrijukban s beszéljünk a borbélyukkal. Ott megélhetjük az emberiség fejlődését.”

This chapter argues that state authorities, academics, and media laminated contrasting qualities of moral dis/orderliness onto the appearance, provenance, and financing of consumer goods in order to turn consumption into an index of social integration. Seemingly ordinary expressions of domestic furnishing and consumer taste allowed the state, its functionaries, and media commentators to gaze upon the everyday lives of Roma and speculate about their (own) sentimental education.

As this chapter explores, designating a Romani home as civilized [*művelt*], “cultured” [*kulturált*], or “peasant-like” [*paraszti*] required a double move wherein the exceptional representative of taste was counterposed to longstanding associations of the *cigány* with disorder and unhygienic conditions. Evincing the enduring associations of order [*rend*] with meaningful work [*dolog*], the physical presence of objects like curtains, carpets, and beds, as well as their presentation in a tasteful way proved that their owner had internalized *paraszt* values and the discipline this implied. “If [Roma] were engaged in productive tasks [*dolog*],” Michael Stewart writes in summarizing Hungarian socialist labor politics and the relationship these implied with consumption,

they would learn to relish the pleasure and rewards of labor in their fullest form. Socialist labor would thus raise them out of their childlike attachment to the sudden and spectacular returns of dealing and profligate, careless consumption that went with that lifestyle.<sup>5</sup>

In government reports and policy documents, as well as in academic and journalistic writing, references to the materialities of Romani life reveal an expectation of unruly and deviant consumption. To draw this out, this chapter proceeds in two parts. First, I explain the development of “consumer citizenship” as a matter of ideological and economic reality under state socialism in Hungary. What distinguishes this version of materialism from its non-socialist

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<sup>5</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 101.

counterpart—what makes it historical materialism, as it were—is the production of “normal” [*normális*] and “orderly” [*rendes*] judgments of taste, the truth and meaning of which can be read off changes in the consumer habits of subjects deemed to have historically “abnormal” [*nem normális*] or “disorderly” [*rendetlen*] material lives—Roma (Section 1). Second, I explain how Romani materialities and taste are turned into a measure of social integration (*i.e.*, a way of solving the “Gypsy question”) and thereby vindicating state socialism as a historical and moral project. This occurs both practically via consumer loans and ideologically via the development of “cultural standards” to which Romani subjects were to aspire. In the process, state socialism encouraged Romani and Magyar subjects alike to acquire a taste for taste—a particular way of taking pleasure (or experiencing shame) in passing moral judgment on consumer habits, whether their own or others—thereby introducing an instability in the very “order” they sought to install (Section 2).

### I. Consuming Cultures in State Socialism

Political economic and philosophical studies on consumption within east and east-central European Communist states have classically characterized it through the language of “shortage,” “cultures of the queue,” and the “dictatorship over needs.”<sup>6</sup> However, recent historical, anthropological, and ethnographic studies of state socialist consuming cultures—attentive to the difficulties and disappointments experienced by many citizens of the Warsaw Pact countries in provisioning consumer goods, especially in the 1980s—complicate these histories of “shortage”

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<sup>6</sup> János Kornai, *Economics of Shortage*, vols. A and B (New York: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1980); and Ferenc Fehér, Ágnes Heller, and György Márkus, *Dictatorship over Needs* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983). For discussions of “queue culture,” see Joseph Hraba, “Consumer Shortages in Poland: Looking beyond the Queue in a World of Making Do,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (September 1985): 387–404; and Pavel Pospěch, “The Spectre of the Queue: Resignifying the Past in the Post-Communist Czech Republic,” *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* vol 8, no. 2 (August 2020): 191–213.

and “need.” By examining mass produced and black market luxury goods as well as sanctioned and illicit leisure activities and travel, this scholarship asks whether shortages of goods can necessarily be equated with a paucity of pleasure and enjoyment.<sup>7</sup> Others have emphasized domestic and communal spaces, as well as their décor and interior design, as important spheres of self-fashioning, in part because gendered associations of home interiors, regarded by state ideologists and the press as little more than “women’s concerns” and “women’s issues,” placed them outside of the domain of more explicitly politicized conversations over the form of socialist architecture and housing.<sup>8</sup>

These studies into the relationship between consumption and pleasure provide us with the material and affective basis for renewed inquiry into the everyday life of real existing socialism. And yet, old categories of analysis persist. Many historical studies of consumer cultures in late state socialism work to provide new answers to old debates. For example, the long-lived debate over the “tenacious liberal subject” in state socialism divides the field anew, now framed through questions over whether cigarette preferences or the purchasing of foreign-produced liquors in the second economy can be considered acts of individual or group agency.<sup>9</sup> “To prioritize the

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<sup>7</sup> On mass produced and black market luxury goods, see Natalya Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Mary Neuberger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013); and Narcis Tulbure, “Drink, Leisure, and the Second Economy in Socialist Romania,” in *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc*, eds. David Crowley and Susan Reid (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 259–82. On travel, see Hannes Grandits and Karin Taylor, eds., *Yugoslavia’s Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s-1980s)* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010); Scott Moranda, “Camping in East Germany: Making ‘Rough’ Nature More Comfortable,” in *Pleasures in Socialism*, 197–218; Adam T. Rosenbaum, “Leisure Travel and Real Existing Socialism: New Research on Tourism in the Soviet Union and Communist Eastern Europe,” *Journal of Tourism History* 7, nos. 1–2 (2015): 157–76.

<sup>8</sup> This topic has animated much of Krisztina Fehérváry’s work. See Krisztina Fehérváry, “From Socialist Modern to Super-Natural Organicism: Cosmological Transformations through Home Décor,” *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 4 (November 2012): 615–40; Krisztina Fehérváry, “Goods and States: The Political Logic of State-Socialist Material Culture,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 2 (April 2009): 426–59; and Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*.

<sup>9</sup> Anna V. Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies,” *Kritika* 1, no. 1 (2000): 119–46.

concept of pleasure,” as David Crowley and Susan Reid’s recent volume *Pleasures in Socialism* does, “is to insist on some degree of agency on the part of the subject.”<sup>10</sup>

Consumer cultures furnished by debt shift our focus from the political agency implied by the above interventions—for example, agency exercised through acquiring commodities within the second economy, necessarily political in its challenge to central planning—to the social capital wrapped up in learning to navigate government bureaucracies or how best to appeal to OTP clerks. These processes could be full of frustrations and disappointments, but not only. Interviews with Hungarian Roma in the 1970s just as frequently suggest pride in having accessed OTP loans and joy in the kinds of intimacy and hospitality purchasing on debt made possible. The way these loans were utilized, however—at times outside the discursive and ideological framings of the Hungarian state planners—may again place purchasing through debt within the domain of political agency. If agency remains a useful category of analysis in the study of consumption in Communist east and east-central Europe, it warrants an asterisk—agency, yes, but at times, conditional on debt. The ways in which one could participate in mass consumption, in other words, were bound up with how one presented one’s relationship to the state (bank), that is to say, how one performed citizenship.

Positing the existence of consumer citizenship within state socialism may seem counterintuitive. As far as it pertains to socialism, Michael Stewart argues that we should hold citizenship [*polgárság*] at arm’s length, or at the very least, consider it with the following caveat: “In official rhetoric, Hungary was a ‘working society’ [*dolgozó társadalom*], and the people were a ‘working people’ [*dolgozó nép*] who belong to society less as ‘citizens’ [*polgár-s*] than as productive workers.”<sup>11</sup> But this alignment of social belonging with productive labor [*dolog*]

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<sup>10</sup> David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, “Introduction: Pleasures in Socialism?” in *Pleasures in Socialism*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 99.

found powerful expression in the material cultures of state socialism, anthropologist Krisztina Fehérváry explains. “Consumption of mass-produced goods was never inimical to communist ideology, as a socialist modernity depended on the promise of modern mass production and the industrial division of labor.”<sup>12</sup> Perhaps tellingly, the term *polgár* in Hungarian can denote not only citizenship, but also a sense of bourgeois life and even, bourgeois style, as captured in the phrase *polgári stílus*.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, Fehérváry argues that although capitalism is usually associated with the linking of people with the goods they consume and the qualities these commodities hold, it was under the conditions of state socialism in Hungary that these links took on aesthetic and moral force. This is captured perhaps most powerfully in one phrase that received wide circulation in state socialist journalistic writing: “Show me your home, and I’ll tell you who you are!”<sup>14</sup> Koczogh’s short story, with which this chapter began, recalls and dramatizes this linkage between people and the goods they own, not least of which as the narrator exposes a tension in his own sentimental education about who Roma *are* with a crescendo of metacommunicative asides that presumes a like-minded Magyar reader with whom to gauge the moral significance of expressions of taste. The presence of lace curtains—not only an index of the *paraszt* but also the *polgári stílus* popular during the Stalinist-era in Hungary—and the order [*rend*] of workplaces and homes called out the humanity of their owners. In this way, Koczogh’s story relates to socialist practices of evaluating materialities and the ideas of personhood they constituted.

Detailing the various denotations encompassed by *rend*, Fehérváry notes:

The cultural concept of order [*rend*] has tremendous significance for the relationship between property and propriety, between physical and moral cleanliness, and for hierarchies and gendered divisions of labor. Sense of self and self-respect comes in large

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<sup>12</sup> Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 96–97 and 150–52.

<sup>14</sup> Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 4.

part from how one is evaluated by one's community, and central to this evaluation is the relationship between a person and his or her materialities.<sup>15</sup>

*Rendes* in Hungarian is synonymous with “normal” [*normális*] and encompasses more than the aesthetic and moral judgments of people. It also scales. It extends beyond local systems of evaluation to ideas of the positioning of the Hungarian nation in relation to others. It functions as a moral, national, and material judgment of the state and its promise of livability and respectability in a way perceived of as authentically Hungarian. In state socialism, Fehérváry explains, “normal” materialities were signs of civilizational modernity and markers of one's equal status to citizens of the First World.<sup>16</sup> *Normális* thus suggests sanity, order, dependability, and rationality. It stood in opposition to the “abnormal” or “not normal” [*nem normális*]: the unbelievable, the inhumane, the disordered. It also functioned to index that which was predictable but disappointing. Thus, outside of any officially recognized lexical meaning, countercontextual use of *normális* could express a sense of the extraordinary; *nem normális*, by contrast, to the familiar. Such usages were especially common among Hungarians to frame criticism of the state and its chronic failures to meet the material expectations of its citizens.<sup>17</sup> But also curiously, as Koczogh's short story demonstrates, the idea of *rendes/normális* as it pertained to Romani materialities suggested that there was, to both himself and to his assumed reader, something unbelievable or extraordinary in the *cigány* performance of *rend* itself.

Koczogh, for all his triumphalism in declaring that Kelemen (and other *cigány*-s with him) had achieved the condition of humanity, returned time and again to an imaginative projection of the caravan and the abode-bricked *putri* as the real locus of *cigány* life and Kelemen's place within it. He does so even as he sits in a workplace and home that should, one

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<sup>15</sup> Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 40.

might expect, complicate this monolithic description. Kelemen must “have another life” in a “*putri* somewhere.” Koczogh was hardly alone in relating “taste” to civilizational progress, assimilation, and human belonging. These associations would take on increased importance from the late 1950s onward, with the development of a Hungarian mass consumer culture in the aftermath of the 1956 Revolution. In addition to the interest-free housing loan program detailed in the preceding chapter, Romani materialities and consumption of goods would find a place in the discussion of social inclusion carried out by Hungarian socialist planners. This change was accompanied by the expansion of personal consumer loan programs. As was the case with the housing loan program, underlying these policies were presumptions about what conditions made Roma creditworthy and that they would use the items purchased through loans in an orderly way. In other words, through these policies, state planners attempted to define what made for good Romani consumer citizens.

While the Party did not prioritize an explicit educational project of teaching “disorderly” Roma what it meant to wear, arrange, and display objects in a tasteful way, nevertheless, state documents suggest that this was an important aim. We might speculate, rather, that they expected Roma to have already internalized an idea of *rend* because of their knowledge of *paraszt* life. To quote a 1978 report prepared by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the execution of the Party’s resolutions on the “liquidation” of “Gypsy settlements,” it states that, “a great portion of the Gypsy families that have settled among the population have adopted their environment’s customs, home and clothing culture.”<sup>18</sup> And yet, despite these official discursive and ideological framings of what Romani consumption and materialities could and should mean, many Romani

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<sup>18</sup> HU MNL XIX-A-83-b 3280/1976 (777. d.) – Géppel írt tisztázat: Lajos Papp, “A cigánylakosság helyzetének javításával foglalkozó,” 255.

families found uses for loans in ways unanticipated or otherwise unaccounted for by state planners, maintaining familial and kinship relations in and through debt.

As a final note on Koczogh's short story, it bears noting that his encounter, whether real or fictive, occurred within a barber shop. Such a space was itself hardly unmarked at the time of Koczogh's writing. If the story had been read by Kelemen (or whoever was his inspiration) or another Rom, the reference to the barber shop may very well have drawn up vastly different associations. Between 1940 and 1985, the Ministry of the Interior [*Belügyminisztérium*], and later, the Ministry of People's Welfare [*Népjóléti Minisztérium*] undertook systematic "forced bathing and disinfection" operations in Romani settlements throughout Hungary.<sup>19</sup> The health officials responsible for these often violent measures frequently forced Romani men, women, and children to submit to head shaving and used poisonous and carcinogenic chemicals, including cresol and DDT, in the name of public health and as a purportedly "humane" act in the eradication of lice and louse-borne typhus.<sup>20</sup> While in the early years of the People's Republic this was a nominally "voluntary" procedure, by 1955 it became a mandatory practice, to be carried out in mobile bathing units and overseen by health officials or the police. These specially-designed vehicles were capable of disinfecting between 90 and 140 people per hour, dependent upon season.<sup>21</sup> Just five years following the publication of Koczogh's short story, the

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<sup>19</sup> Boglárka Bakó, "The Bathing of the 'Dirty': A Forgotten Forced Bathing in Hungary," *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 59, no. 1 (2014): 191–210; Gábor Bernáth, *Zor-sila najaripe mashkar e Roma, 1940–1985 / Kényszermosdatások a cigánytelepeken, 1940–1980* [Forced bathings in the Gypsy settlements, 1940–1980] (Budapest: Roma Sajtóközpont, 2002); and Gábor Bernáth and Laura Polyák, "Kényszermosdatások Magyarországon" [Forced bathings in Hungary], *Beszélő* [Commentator] 6, no. 6 (2001), <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/kenyszermosdatasok-magyarorszagon> (accessed November 10, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Epidemiological concerns over the control of louse-borne typhus were long used to justify the internment of "wandering Gypsies" in the Kingdom of Hungary.

<sup>21</sup> György Makara, *Fertőtlenítés, rovar- és rágcsálóirtás. Jegyzet a Köjál-ellenőrök számára* [Disinfection, insect- and rodent control: Note for Public Health–Epidemiology Station inspectors] (Budapest: Egészségügyi Minisztérium, 1973), 298 as cited in Bernáth and Polyák, "Kényszermosdatások Magyarországon;" and Attila Sipos, *Megelőző közegészségügyi és járványügyi feladatok: Amit a polgári védelemről tudni kell* [Preventative public health and epidemiological tasks: What you should know about civil protection] (Budapest: Polgári Védelem Országos Parancsnoksága, 1975), 56–57 in Hajnáczy, "The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary," 51.

Public Health–Epidemiology Station [*Közegészségügyi-Járványügyi Állomás*] would proudly proclaim that 2,339 Roma had been disinfected, and that, while there had been “some opposition to the bathing in the beginning . . . this has ceased, and there are places where they request it. Everywhere, children are very happy about the washing.”<sup>22</sup> That Koczogh found his model, assimilated subject in a Romani barber contrasted with the realities of socialist public health policy, which assumed that Romani settlements, many of which lacked basic infrastructural support and connections to utilities, were unable to maintain their own standards of sanitation.

These policies of “disinfection” drew upon a longstanding Magyar axis of differentiation that scripts the *cigány* and their materialities as “dirty” [*piszkos*] and the *magyar* as “clean” [*tiszta*].<sup>23</sup> In writing on one such “action” in 1983, Michael Stewart notes that the local officials with whom he spoke expressed surprise that he had undertaken his ethnographic work within a Romani settlement, inquiring how he had tolerated the “presumed filth” he encountered there. These moralizing and discriminatory evaluations of Romani homes, however, were made by local officials who had never stepped into one. And yet, the Public Health Department ordered two forced bathing operations each summer in the village where Stewart conducted his research, wherein Roma were rounded up by police, conscripted soldiers, and council officers. The shame Roma experienced because of these operations extended beyond the immediate humiliations of the violation of their bodies. As Stewart writes, “the Magyars in the settlement were excused from the ordeal . . . [and] working [Romani] men told me that the letters they had been given to

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<sup>22</sup> “A fürdetéssel szemben kezdetben ellenkezés nyilvánult meg azonban most már oldódott az ellenállás, sőt vannak helyek, ahol igénylik is azt. A gyermekek mindenütt nagyon örülnek a fürdetésnek.” HU MNL P 2135 3. d.: “Jelentés a megyében élő cigányok kulturális helyzetének és munkavállalási problémáinak kérdéséről: Békés Megye Tanácsának Végrehajtó Bizottsága” [Report on the cultural situation and employment problems of the Gypsies living in the county: Executive Committee of the Békés County Council], November 5, 1959 as cited in Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 48.

<sup>23</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 130.

explain their absence from work would have made them the laughingstock of the Magyars at the workplace.”<sup>24</sup>

## II. Defining Integration through Taste

The aftermath of economic crises within the Warsaw Pact countries in the 1950s attuned state planners to the past shortcomings of centralized production and consumption. Consequently, as Beth Greene has demonstrated, east and east-central Communist states increasingly looked to whether products were “sellable—will it find a buyer, when, who, and at what price?”<sup>25</sup> With increased production and the development of a mass consumer culture came new framings of the commodity, at once sold to the public through nationalist appeals to “buy Hungarian” (even on credit) in what economist Árpád Kadarkay has called “socialist patriotism,”<sup>26</sup> but delimited by new, moralized aesthetic norms of “socialist intellectual asceticism.”<sup>27</sup> From the 1960s onward, and especially after the introduction of limited market reforms through the New Economic Mechanism in 1968, Hungarian economic planners paid new attention to the challenge of meeting consumer demand. In 1971, Hungary became the first member of the Warsaw Pact to enter the Euro-dollar market, through the placing of a \$25 million bond issue in London. This was repeated at a larger scale in 1972 with the issuing of a \$50 million bond. In consequence of these and subsequent bond issuances, Hungary became the “single largest importer of capital and consumer goods in East Europe.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 131.

<sup>25</sup> Istvánné Hoffmann and János Buzási, *A reklám birodalmából* [From the realm of advertising] (Budapest: Bagolyvár Könyvkiadó, 2000), 46 in Beth Greene, “Selling Market Socialism: Hungary in the 1960s,” *Slavic Review* 73, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 132.

<sup>26</sup> Árpád Kadarkay, “Hungary: An Experiment in Communism,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (June 1973): 289.

<sup>27</sup> Léna Pellandini-Simányi, “Everyday Consumption Norms as Discourses of the Good Life in Pre-Socialist and Socialist Hungary,” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 16, no. 3 (2016): 708.

<sup>28</sup> Kadarkay, “Hungary: An Experiment in Communism,” 285–86.

In 1969, the state press launched the first consumer magazine of the People's Republic, *Magnifying Glass* [*Nagyító*]. Its first print run of 40,000 copies, priced at a relatively lofty sum of ten forints, sold out within the day. Amidst the pages of *Magnifying Glass*, its writers advised on the relative merits of Hungarian-made products through detailed, side-by-side comparisons with their Soviet-made counterparts. As Kadarkay summarizes, "Living up to its credo, the first issue gave a 'so-so' rating of the 'out of date' Soviet refrigerator, Saratov, while blatantly advising the public to buy the better Hungarian model, Lehel."<sup>29</sup> The magazine, in short, attempted to persuade citizens to understand consumption in new, national ways by buying "superior" Hungarian manufactured goods. Although socialist public discourse upheld an ideal of a "down-to-earth, rational and self-sufficient person," Léna Pellandini-Simányi argues, it also allowed for private acts of consumption as a benefit of having performed meritorious labor. These superior goods, in other words, were morally justified because they supported Hungarian industry and were "deserved" in socialist terms.<sup>30</sup> State organs explained the expansion of consumer loan programs financing these purchases as rewards for increases in year-on-year deposits into OTP savings accounts. As the amount OTP could issue in credit was closely linked to the total sum of deposits (usually at a rate of 60–70 percent), journalist Ildikó Kovács reported in the national daily *People's Voice* [*Népszava*] in 1972 that the massive growth of housing loans and consumer debt over the 1960s—amounting to thirty billion forints by decade's end—was in fact paradoxically an indication that "people live more economically."<sup>31</sup>

As shown in the previous chapter, employment and down payment restrictions limited many Romani families from accessing OTP interest-free housing loans after the program's

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<sup>29</sup> Kadarkay, "Hungary: An Experiment in Communism," 286.

<sup>30</sup> Pellandini-Simányi, "Everyday Consumption Norms," 709.

<sup>31</sup> Ildikó Kovács, "Ki mire kér kölcsönt?" [Who asks for a loan for what?], *Népszava* [People's voice], July 30, 1972.

rollout in 1965, even as these debt instruments were ostensibly intended to help Roma broker new houses, new homes, and new lives in Magyar-majority communities. Restrictions on personal consumer loans [*személyi kölcsön-s*] through OTP were, however, not so rigid. In theory, Roma held consumer debt on equal terms with their Magyar counterparts. As press items of the period make clear, however, the “official caution” that set overall lending terms for housing loans prevailed in the domain of consumer loans, as well.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, state socialist reports reveal suspicion over Romani materialities and consumer habits, even when these could, in theory, provide proof that Roma had adopted the tastes of their Magyar counterparts. As an October 1957 report prepared by the Ministry of Employment notes,

Owing to the primitive conditions of the Gypsy populace, they are unable to manage their finances, [and] even among those earning more, waste, or at least living from one day to the next, is characteristic. It thus follows that the Gypsy populace uses its earnings primarily to satisfy their most basic need, food.

In the more advanced regions, Gypsies with better earnings, especially the young, spend more on clothing and no longer really differ from the wider environment. It is common that the young boys, especially in the cities, dress in a swaggering style. This has to be accepted by us as a “positive result.” Characteristic though is that while the earning man dresses properly his family remains in the same old ragged clothing.<sup>33</sup>

Note the begrudging acceptance of this new dress—what must be “accepted” as a “positive result” of the transformation of Romani materialities through improved earnings in workplaces, and, it is implied, because of interactions with Magyar colleagues. Rather than explore why Romani young men may have adopted this “swaggering” style of dress—we might speculate, for example, in order to better fit in Magyar-majority workplaces and social spaces—the Ministry report pivots to highlight the supposedly

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<sup>32</sup> The stereotype of the “irresponsible Gypsy borrower” was reproduced in official state information items, intended to educate Romani and Magyar consumers alike on best practices when purchasing goods. For an example of one such credit union informational presentation from 1970 that casts Romani borrowing within the idiom of folkloric morality tale, see Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 90–91.

<sup>33</sup> HU OSZK MD 11 488: Bán and Pogány, “A magyarországi cigánység helyzetéről,” 87.

disordered familial life that it indexed: a lack of sufficient care for their families and children.

State socialist press items reporting on the “Gypsy question” also implied that only those already holding OTP housing loans were appropriate bearers of consumer debt. Thus, one debt relationship, the housing loan, could be considered a precondition for another, the personal loan. “We bought [the television] through an OTP loan a week back,” remarked László Ökrös, a welder living in the “Gypsy settlement” of Hódmezővásárhely, a city in Csongrád county to the country’s southeast. Ökrös, speaking in 1966 with a reporter for *People’s Voice* [*Népszava*], observed that because of the size of his family, they were unable to collect sufficient funds to cover the down payment necessary to qualify for a housing loan through the state bank, although László’s eight years with the same employer meant that he was otherwise eligible (and moreover, eligible for a reduction in the principal of the loan). “For us grown-ups,” referring to himself and his wife, “we no longer have the energy to continue our schooling, so at least we can learn something from the television . . . If we could live in a proper [*rendes*] home,” he adds, as though an apology for the television in the room, “I would be buying theater tickets.”<sup>34</sup>

Whether or not the television was manufactured in Hungary was not reported in the news item. What was significant to the reporter was that the order of how the Ökrös family had obtained loans from the state bank was itself, at base, disordered. A number of points on their purchase of a television however, are worth noting. As István Kemény documents in the report to his representative study of 1971, the presence of a television within the Ökrös home was extraordinary. Little over half of Romani homes at the time of Kemény’s writing were electrified

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<sup>34</sup> “Nekünk, felnőtteknek pedig már nincs erőnk tovább iskolázni, így hát legalább a televízióból okosodhassunk mi is valamit . . . Mert ha rendes otthonban élhetnénk, már színházi bérletet is váltanék . . .” Imre Szenes, “Egy bomló életforma fogáskerekei közt” [Between the gears of a decaying way of life], *Népszava* [People’s voice], October 7, 1966.

(56 percent); of these, less than half (24 percent of the total Romani population of Hungary) owned televisions. This stood in stark contrast with Magyar homes, which Kemény breaks down by profession: for white-collar workers, 81 percent; for blue-collar workers, 75 percent; for peasants [*paraszt-s*], 34 percent.<sup>35</sup> While there is a significant difference between the rates of television ownership between the highest and lowest Magyar income categories, the *paraszt*, too, was more likely to own a television than their Romani counterparts. In general, even when compared against the *paraszt*, Romani ownership of consumer durables lagged, to a degree that “surpass[ed] [Kemény’s research team’s] expectations.”<sup>36</sup>

By Kemény’s assessment, and echoing László Ökrös’s observation of the importance of owning a television for the benefit of his family’s education, he notes:

The low number of radio and television sets [in Romani homes] is of great importance because . . . the schooling of the Gypsies is extremely low, communication and the exchange of information between the Gypsies and non-Gypsies is very scant. In principle therefore the informative role of radio and television should be much greater in the case of Gypsies than of the non-Gypsies.<sup>37</sup>

But the mere existence of more radios and televisions, Kemény observes, would not address a larger issue, namely, programming. Simply put, state programming paid little mind to the kinds of programs that might be of interest to Romani viewers, and those that focused on *cigány* themes had very little to do with the realities of Romani life. “The so-called Gipsy programs of the radio,” he concludes,

generally teach the Gipsy population such a spurious Gipsy culture which has been brought about by non-Gypsies for the entertainment of non-Gypsies, the low quality of the music and text of which is conspicuous, which makes the participants and performers of this culture a circus spectacle and therefore increases their isolation.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gipsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 84–85.

<sup>36</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gipsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 84.

<sup>37</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gipsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 86–87.

<sup>38</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gipsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 87.

Although László Ökrös and his family—like all other employed Hungarians—were officially entitled to receive an OTP consumer loan sufficient to cover the costs of obtaining a television through state stores, his purchase required very specific kinds of rationalization. The television could neither be for enjoyment, nor could it be a well-deserved reward for exceptional labor performed. In other words, to return to Pellandini-Simányi’s analysis of the moral discursive framing of the commodity in state socialist Hungary, the terms by which Magyars justified their consumption practices did not extend in the same way to Roma. Rather, László Ökrös could only explain his purchase by situating it within a familiar discourse of social uplift through education. But this, too, required additional framing, the television an only somewhat acceptable alternative to practices that he associated with those Magyars who owned “proper” homes outright—namely, attending the theater.

The association of theatergoing as the act of a proper, upstanding citizen of the People’s Republic would find a particularly powerful representation in a scene from Schiffer’s 1978 documentary, *Cséplő Gyuri*, described in the previous chapter.<sup>39</sup> Early on in the film, Gyuri and his two companions leave their village of Németfalu and former employment alongside a collective farm to find industrial work in Budapest. In their search across the city, they approach the manager of the Cordatic Hungarian Tire Factory [*Cordatic Magyar Gumiabroncs Gyár*] to inquire about possible employment as auxiliary workers [*segédmunkás-es*]. The manager asks for their work papers and inquires about their level of schooling. Gyuri responds first, having two years of schooling and, by his own account, is able to read “a little.” To test this, the factory manager pulls up a copy of a newspaper, and, scanning the page, decides which article he will use to test Gyuri’s literacy. “Read these few lines, if you can,” he says to Gyuri, pointing to a

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<sup>39</sup> *Cséplő Gyuri*, dir. Pál Schiffer (Balázs Béla Film Studio, 1978).

paragraph. Lifting up the paper, Gyuri states that he will try, and sets to reading the text aloud: “The première of the new series of traditional operas: The orchestra and chorus of the Attila József School will perform *Absalom* by Weber, conducted by József Sas.” We can only speculate why the manager selected this text of all the articles on the page. But what Gyuri’s literacy, and perhaps, his ability to at least read about the theater, suggested to the manager was that Gyuri was *rendes* [orderly]—much as László Ökrös had associated theater with those who live in *rendes* houses—and would thus make for a reliable worker. “Very good, and of course you can write,” the manager concludes, appraisingly.

However, everyday and official discourses on the relationship between Romani housing and consumption—as well as the debt that furnished these—reveals an ambiguity in their underlying logics. If a *rendes* house was the moral, if not technical precondition for the Ökrös family’s ownership of a television, other press items suggested that Roma would first need to be tutored in responsible relationships to furnishings and domestic goods *before* they could be trusted as reliable caretakers of new homes. For example, in 1968, Dezső Kun, the district judge of Ózd, a city in Borsod county, comments that despite the “bleakness” of the *putri-s* in the nearby settlement of Cserdalápa, the existence of eight televisions indicated the community’s “love for culture.” However, those Roma who had relocated from the *putri-s* through OTP interest free loans could not, Kun argued, use these homes properly, because acquiring sufficient funds to purchase furnishings remained out of reach for many. Due to their material “backwardness” [*elmaradottság*], the district judge opined, Roma owning new homes would use them improperly. “Without any transition,” he writes, “those who come up from the *putri* are not only unable to use all the conveniences and overall comfort of the modern apartment as intended,

but they even cause damage to it due to their lack of education.”<sup>40</sup> Implied in this remark were longstanding—and as Tamás Hajnáczy notes, still extant—Magyar stereotypes that Roma in newly constructed housing would “burn the hardwood flooring” for warmth during the winter, or house livestock within the dwelling.<sup>41</sup> Though these allegations were without proof, Michael Stewart observes that, even into the 1980s, local councils availed empty barrack houses as a transitional space of occupancy in which Roma could, they believed, “accustom themselves” to the new mode of living that these apartments would demand. “Only if they proved themselves capable of maintaining ‘civilized’ [*művelt*] standards there,” he writes, “would they be allowed to ascend the next rung up the ladder into a housing estate.”<sup>42</sup>

But to what end did the Political Committee and state planners believe that the transformation of Romani materialities and consumption could work? “Social integration,” yes, but what integration, which standard? As discussed earlier, the 1961 Political Committee resolution, “About particular tasks related to improving the situation of the Gypsy population,” outlined a new classificatory regime for Roma, one that was to serve as the basis for all future political interventions, locally and nationally.<sup>43</sup> Alongside familiar indexes of “integration”—including education and employment—was an important addition: “cultural standard” [*kulturális színvonal*]. Though “cultural standard” in part encompassed education, literacy, and labor, it was not strictly synonymous with these. Rather, it encompassed sanitation, housing conditions, and

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<sup>40</sup> “A putriból felkerülők minden átmenet nélkül nemcsak hogy nem tudják rendeltetésszerűen használni a modern lakás minden kényelmét és összkomfortját, de műveletlenségüknél fogva még kárt is okoznak benne.” Dezső Kun, “Cigányok” [Gypsies], *Borsodi Szemle* [Borsod review] 12, no. 2 (1968), 61.

<sup>41</sup> Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 61; and Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 84.

<sup>42</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 84. Kemény’s summary analysis of the 1971 representative Romani study sites one instance, drawn from a report by Gyula Molnár, in which Roma burned a wooden outhouse for warmth. HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: István Kemény, “The Gypsy Population in Hungary,” ca. 1973, 64. In general, however, Stewart notes that this stereotype persisted despite any concrete evidence that such burnings took place. Stewart, *Daltestvérek*, 78. See also Hajnáczy, “The Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy in Socialist Hungary,” 61–62.

<sup>43</sup> “A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról,” 240–2.

materialities. The improvement of this “cultural standard,” Hungarian Political Committee members argued, was the necessary precondition through which Roma could be “guaranteed the full rights and obligations as citizens.”<sup>44</sup> What this would entail in practice for the Party was not only the elimination of “unsanitary” living conditions that they associated with the “Gypsy settlement,” but with them, a transformation of Romani family lives, at times with demographic and eugenic implications. To quote one government document of the period, “The good news is the fact that the advance of urbanization and the gradual transformation of lifestyle will bring about a gradual decline in [Gypsy] births.”<sup>45</sup>

How then was this “cultural standard” measured? In practice, for academics and journalists, it was a matter of “taste” [*ízlés*]. As one ethnographer and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences observed in summary fieldnotes following interviews with Romani families in Kis Mohora in 1971, conducted as part of Kemény’s representative study, the effects of the expansion of the OTP housing loan program entailed more than a physical transformation of Romani homes in this small village on the Slovak border, some 90 kilometers north of Budapest. Those families who had built their own homes through the Cs-lakás-es program, the ethnographer argued, were “more cultured [*kulturáltabbak*] in their circumstances.” This entailed a change in their consumption habits and presentation of consumer goods, amounting to assimilation by way of décor, the layout and arrangement of furniture, and the division between more and less private spaces. A *rendes* home suggested a *rendes* division of gendered labor, of dwelling habits that divided the family according to age, but also, of an orientation to meaningful work [*dolog*]. “But even in their tastes [*ízlésükben*],” the author of the report summarizes, their

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<sup>44</sup> “biztosítani . . . számukra a teljes állampolgári jogok és kötelességek érvényesülését . . . ” “A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról,” 242.

<sup>45</sup> HU MNL P 2130 as translated in Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*, 95.

homes completely resembled those of *paraszt* families. “If we look at the furnishings in one of the rooms, we see the same furniture in the same place.” From here, the ethnographer lists in close detail the number of beds per room, the relative positioning of nightstands, and the mix of antique and new furniture typically found in *paraszt* homes across the countryside, all of which suggested a typical “peasant living style” [*paraszti életmód*]. Although the Romani homes constructed through the Cs-lakás-es program were still spatially segregated from the Magyar-majority community in Kis Mohora, the ethnographer suggested that state integratory efforts had been efficacious, if only in transforming the “tastes,” and thus “cultural standard,” of the community.<sup>46</sup>

It was not just state socialist academics, however, who interpreted expressions of Romani materialities as evidence of successful integration and, therefore, the historical achievement of state socialism as an integrating force. This same dialectical script occurred in press coverage. By linking examples of Romani materialities to Magyar ideas of taste, order, and progress, journalists posited instances of extraordinary ordinariness as proof of the exceptional ordering powers of Hungarian state socialism. Writing on the exterior decorations of Romani homes in the town of Szín, a village in northern Hungary near the Slovak border, journalist Béla Puruczki makes the following assessments in 1972. While the homes of the town’s Roma may have been built of the same materials as their Magyar counterparts, there could be no mistaking the two. Narrow, colored bands of paint ran along the façades of these homes, variously black, yellow, purple, and even “an angry green injected with some blue.” The visual effect, Puruczki argued, was individually inconsistent and incoherent. But when viewed between homes, it produced a “uniform effect.” This, Puruczki proposed, was evidence of a deep Romani attraction to

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<sup>46</sup> HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: “Beszélgetés Balázs Zoltánnal / Kis Mohora” [Interview with Zoltán Balázs / Kis Mohora], ca. 1971, 4.

variegated colors. Thus, exterior walls stood as a historical artifact of an ancient, but nevertheless, preserved aesthetic. Though their exteriors might index difference, the interiors of these homes and the dress of their inhabitants pointed to a convergence of Romani and Magyar taste. If not especially fashionable, Puruczki comments that a “Gypsy” woman he encountered on the main street of Szín was dressed in such a way as would not draw attention on a main boulevard in Budapest. He lavishes special praise, however, on the décor and furnishings of Romani homes. These are *rendes*, he writes, and are “essentially no different from those of the [Magyar] villagers. New furniture and new carpets are not at all uncommon in Gypsy homes. And, knowing about other regions, [what] is perhaps the most unexpected: [they are] clean and tidy.”<sup>47</sup>

Other interviews, however, suggest a more complicated picture of how Roma related to personal credit and consumption in real existing socialism. Antal Bogdán, a twenty-three-year-old Romani man living in Bágyogszovát, a village near Hungary’s border with Austria and Slovakia, explained in 1971 that although facing difficulties meeting repayment schedules, consumer credit provided the means whereby he could offer gifts to his younger brother. After securing permanent employment in a box factory in the nearby city of Győr, Bogdán became eligible for a consumer loan, but even with his now regular pay, repayment installments proved high, requiring that he sell off the rear wheel of his recently purchased bicycle to meet an upcoming deadline:

Interviewer: How do you feel in the factory?

Bogdán: Now it’s good . . . I am in the box factory in Győr, I have to stack the boxes, I’m an auxiliary worker [*segédmunkás*]. It’s good there, just the salary could be higher . . . Here, I

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<sup>47</sup> “A színi cigányok lakása nemcsak kívülről elfogadható, rendes a bútorzata is, lényegileg nem tér el a falusiakétól. Új bútorok, új szőnyegek egyáltalán nem ritkák a cigányházakban. S ami, más vidékeket ismervé, talán a legváratlanabb: tiszták, rendesek.” Béla Puruczki, “Cigányok – Cigány probléma nélkül” [Gypsies – without the Gypsy problem], *Élet és Irodalom* [Life and literature], August 19, 1972, 10.

earn just 1,500 forints now, but that's not enough, because I borrowed 5,000 forints, one of those OTP personal loans [*személyi OTP*], with which I bought a bicycle and a radio.

Interviewer: A large radio?

Bogdán: Well, take a look, it was 1,748 forints. But it isn't mine anymore, I gave it to my younger brother, I don't need it. I'll buy a smaller one for myself. The problem with the bicycle was that I needed money, so I removed the rear wheel and had to sell it. I still have to pay the installment in May. I'll buy something again in June, maybe some festive clothes. Although I already have an outfit.<sup>48</sup>

Bogdán's gift, financed through a 5,000 forint OTP consumer loan, would likely have struck many economic planners as imprudent and excessive, a consumptive act that although benefitting national industry, nevertheless did so in a way that defied the acceptable norms of "socialist intellectual asceticism." However, Bogdán's precise knowledge of the cost of the radio and its value relative to his monthly salary belie careful personal accounting, an economic risk worth taking to maintain kinship ties with his younger brother. The sociality of gift giving through revolving debt enabled "ordinary scenes of happiness," to follow Lauren Berlant, a "ballast" against pressures faced by Romani families living in the midst of multiple economic and political upheavals, if not exactly an ideal picture of financial health.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, as one final example will indicate, Romani uses of loans were not always to buy into the socialist state's project of integration through improved materialities but to stabilize kinship ties and ostensibly nonrational economic choices deemed historically antagonistic to state socialism yet which, in reality, helped it keep up appearances. Loans not only provided for the buying, building, and furnishing of homes, but also the capital necessary for rural Romani

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<sup>48</sup> "A gyárban hogy érzi magát? / Most jó . . . A dobozgyárban vagyok Győrben, a dobozokat kell raknom, segédmunkás vagyok. Jó ott, csak a fizetés lehetne több . . . Most itt csak 1500-at keresek, de ez kevés, mert van 5000 kölcsönöm, ilyen személyi OTP, vettem egy biciklit és egy rádiót. / Nagy rádiót? / Tessék megnézni, ez az 1748 Ft volt. Már nem az enyém, az öcsémnek adtam, nekem nem kell. Majd veszek magamnak egy kisebbet. A biciklivel az volt, hogy kellett pénz, kiszedtem a hátsó kerekét és el kellett adnom. A részletet még májusban is kell fizetnem. Majd júniusban megint veszek valamit, talán egy ünneplő ruhát. Pedig már van egy nekem." HU OSA 361-1-3 Box 1: "Bogdán Antal, 23 éves, Bányogyszovát" [Antal Bogdán, 23 years, Bányogyszovát], April 21, 1971, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 116.

families to fulfill contract-based labor with state concerns and local agricultural cooperatives, in some cases, the very same collectives from which they were otherwise excluded membership. Without the support of the collective, these loans could prove particularly risky for Romani families, which Michael Stewart illustrates through a case study of pig raising in an agricultural town on the northern edge of the Great Plain. Kannji, a Romani man, acquired an 8,000 forint agricultural loan from OTP in October 1985 in order to purchase six young pigs to be sold later at a fixed price—28,000 forints—to the state slaughter house once they weighed in at over 110 kilograms each. To support this endeavor, Kannji received an additional 4,500 forint loan, again from OTP, with which he bought seven feed bags. After this feed had run out, Kannji and his wife would raise the drift with scraps of bread collected around town. This was difficult work. Stewart notes that the pigs typically available in Hungary at the time were a fast-growing variety, specially bred for the industrialized agricultural production of collective farms and unsuited to the more traditional forms of livestock care common in many Romani communities.<sup>50</sup>

Familial demands, however, intervened and Kannji made a far smaller profit than expected. His son, Urban, already held a contract with the state slaughterhouse that required the delivery of nine pigs by the end of January. Failure to meet this contract would have incurred a penalty. Urban, with only one sow, reached out to his father three weeks before the deadline and, arguing that pig prices had peaked after Christmas, persuaded his father to hand over his drift to fulfill the contract. Overwintering pigs in the village often proved difficult and Kannji was persuaded that delivering the pigs at the earlier date would head off the likelihood of losing one or more before the originally planned sale date.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 154.

<sup>51</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 155.

In the end, the drift was some thirty kilograms underweight in total, but Urban assured his father that “the bigger ones would ‘help the little ones through.’” Urban, it seems, had a good relationship with the man operating the weighing station, who waved the drift through and he and his father received a payment of 22,000 forints. Though 6,000 forints lower than Kannji expected in profit, this was nevertheless a preferable outcome to others possible, including the loss of some or all of the drift. Economic calculus aside, Kannji’s decision to give the drift to his son, Stewart writes, seems to have been primarily motivated out of a desire to assist Urban through what would have otherwise been a personally and financially disastrous alternative, the failure to meet his contract with the state slaughterhouse.<sup>52</sup>

### **Conclusion**

“Show me your home, and I’ll tell you who you are!” Hungarian state socialist planners, academics, and journalists indeed undertook a project of telling Roma who they believed they were through moral and aesthetic judgments on the materialities of their homes and their furnishings within. The purchasing, displaying, and arranging of consumer goods in Romani homes was a matter of public and state interest, proof of its ability to continue the revolution within its own borders by advancing “social integration” through the “tasteful” transformation of Romani consumer habits, long associated with “disorder” in everyday and official Magyar speech. The Romani home, consequently, became a site of both government intervention and examination, to be transformed in part through a consumer culture financed on debt, and to be studied as evidence of an improved “cultural standard,” one allowing for the full exercise of rights and obligations as citizens of the People’s Republic.

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<sup>52</sup> Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies*, 155.

## Postscript: Migration Policy as Taste

Within present-day Hungarian speech, associations between taste and national belonging, and how both pertain to Roma, retain powerful political force. Consider, for example, a 2015 speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, ostensibly on the topic of the “migration crisis.” As he opined:

It is the right of every nation that its indigenous people determine with whom they want to live. Just as we also have our circumstance—regardless of how one thinks about it, whether one likes *túrós csusza* [noodles with cottage cheese] or not—for Hungary this is a historical circumstance, that it lives together with a few hundred thousand Roma. Someone, somewhere, at some point decided this; what we have inherited is our situation. This is our circumstance. No one can object to this either way. We must live with this. But we do not demand that anyone—especially not to the west—that they live together with a Romani minority of large number.<sup>53</sup>

*Someone, somewhere, at some point decided this; what we have inherited is our situation.*

Orbán’s complaint, that historical circumstance forced Magyars to share a country with Roma, is an outright rebuke of the assimilationism of Hungarian leaders from the distant to recent past. But curiously, it is through taste that he describes the present conditions of this assimilation. It does not matter “whether one likes *túrós csusza* [noodles with cottage cheese] or not,” the historical situation cannot be changed.

In August 2021, during a summer visit to Miskolc, I joined friends to share a lunchtime meal they had prepared. Their choice, *túrós csusza*, is the very same dish Orbán warned his audience about in 2015. A dish of “slippery” identity (*csusza* deriving from the verb *csúszik*, to

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<sup>53</sup> “Minden népnek joga, hogy ő határozza meg, az ottani őshonos nép kivel kíván együtt élni. Mint ahogy nekünk is az adottságunk – függetlenül, ki mit gondol róla, szereti-e a túrós csuszát vagy nem –, Magyarországnak az a történelmi adottsága, hogy együtt él néhány százezer romával. Ezt valakik, valahol, valamikor eldöntötték, amit mi megörököltünk, ez a mi helyzetünk. Ez egy adottság. Ezt senki nem kifogásolhatja se így, se úgy. Nekünk kell ezzel együtt élnünk. De mi nem támasztjuk senki felé azt az igényt – nyugati irányba különösen nem –, hogy ők is éljenek együtt egy nagyszámú roma kisebbséggel.” “Orbán Viktor beszéde a külképviselet-vezetők értekezletén” [Speech by Viktor Orbán at the meeting of the heads of foreign representation], *Magyarország Kormánya* [Government of Hungary], September 8, 2015, <https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedekek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-kulkepviselet-vezetok-ertekezleten-2015> (accessed February 11, 2022).

slide), its name varies across the country and across borders. In Slovakia, where it is recognized as a national dish, it is known as *bryndzové halušky* when served with sheep's cheese. In Hungary, in addition to *túrós csusza*, it can go by the name *sztrapacska* or *túrós galuska* ("sztrapacska" a loanword from Slovak, "galuska" from Polish) or simply, *túrós tészta* (noodles with cottage cheese). To the group, who together hailed from three different neighborhoods and villages across eastern Hungary and Slovakia, I inquired after the name of the meal we were about to share. They took this question as an opportunity to provide a brief lesson in the Hungarian language. The dish, they decided, was without question *túrós tészta*, in part because of the kinds of noodles and cheese used, but also because this was the name more familiar to them. And yet, my questions over language were mere curiosities to more important matters of enjoyment: Did I like the dish? Was I familiar with it? And did I want seconds?

After all, the matter of whether, or how, *túrós csusza* indexes belonging to the "indigenous" people of Hungary was not just for Orbán to decide. As to whether *túrós csusza/tészta* is agreeable or not, I have never been asked this question upon entering Hungary by border police, nor during the countless meals I have eaten across the country in ostensibly Magyar homes and restaurants. But such questions are always already implied by the very idea of "Hungarian" national culture itself. As Leora Auslander reminds us, quotidian cultural choices and their contestation are central to the ways that individuals and groups come to understand themselves. "There is no 'neutral' or unmarked cuisine, or sartorial or architectural style. Those everyday customs constitute local, regional, and national belonging," she writes. "All intrude on the eyes (and sometimes noses and ears) of their neighbours whether in their personal appearance or that of the buildings they erect or modify, the food they cook, and the music they produce."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Leora Auslander, "Negotiating Embodied Difference: Veils, Minarets, *Kippas* and *Sukkot* in Contemporary Europe: An Essay," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* [Archive for social history] 51 (2011): 401.

Such choices, and the sense of pleasure and displeasure they bring, obtain even in the midst—  
and not in spite—of social questions, real or fantasized.

## CONCLUSION

The Roma question will be the most forceful social and ethnic tension in central Europe and Hungary in the coming decades. One should not “bypass” the question and let it become only a “research topic” of a narrow, well-intentioned, and enlightened group of intellectuals. . . .

For this reason, it is necessary to appreciate all the measures that have been taken to resolve this tension in the last hundred years and to study the results of each attempt or the reasons for its failure. They were ahead-of-their-time, forward-looking, brave people who dealt with this tension or are dealing with it.<sup>1</sup>

— President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Ferenc Glatz, 1999

On September 18, 2019, after years of litigation, the Debrecen Court of Appeals issued a ruling on the matter of segregation within the Necskei Demeter primary school in Gyöngyöspata, a town in Heves county some eighty kilometers northeast of Budapest. Pro bono lawyers who worked on the case, initiated in 2015 on behalf of sixty-three Romani pupils by the Chance for Children Foundation [*Esélyt a Hátrányos Helyzetű Gyerekeknek Alapítvány*], argued that these students had, between 2004 and 2017, experienced two forms of injustice: not only were they segregated within their classrooms, but the education they received there was of a substandard quality.<sup>2</sup> As they had not been prepared to meet the targets of the National Basic Curriculum, they were overwhelmingly ineligible to attend vocational schools. In instances where pupils had been accepted for further vocational training, the poor instruction they had received in their primary school made it unlikely that they would succeed. The state, in its defense, argued that it was because of the living conditions of these pupils and their families that the Romani children

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<sup>1</sup> “A romakérdés Közép-Európa és Magyarország legerősebb társadalmi és etnikai feszültsége a következő évtizedekben. Nem szabad ‘megkerülni’ a problémát, és hagyni, hogy az csak egy szűk körű, jó szándékú és felvilágosult értelmiségi csoport ‘kutatói témája’ legyen. . . . Ezért is becsülni kell minden intézkedést, amely a feszültség feloldására tett az elmúlt száz esztendőben, és tanulmányozni minden kísérlet eredményét, vagy kudarcának okait. Korukat megelőző, előrelátó, bátor emberek voltak, akik a feszültséggel foglalkoztak vagy foglalkoznak.” Ferenc Glatz, “A romakérdésről (Kérdések, kételyek, javaslatok)” [About the Roma question (questions, doubts, suggestions)], in András Bíró et al, *A cigányok Magyarországon*, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Vivien Brassói, “School Segregation Comes at a Price: Hungarian Appeal Court Confirms Authorities Must Pay Compensation,” *European Roma Rights Center*, September 23, 2019, <http://www.erc.org/news/school-segregation-comes-at-a-price-hungarian-appeal-court-confirms-authorities-must-pay-compensation> (accessed May 7, 2022); and CFCF: Esélyt a Hátrányos Helyzetű Gyerekeknek Alapítvány [Chance for Children Foundation], “Gyöngyöspatai kártérítési per” [Compensation lawsuit in Gyöngyöspata], January 13, 2017, <http://www.cfcf.hu/gyongyospatai-karteresi-per> (accessed May 7, 2022).

from Gyöngyöspata were neither successful in life nor on the labor market. The pupils testified that within the school, they were restricted to the ground floor while their Magyar counterparts studied on the floor above. As such, they rarely encountered their Magyar peers, and they were not included in school-wide events and class trips. Their textbooks were those designated for students two- or three-years younger, and they did not receive scheduled IT classes. Though it could not be proven in court, the students also claimed that they were prohibited by teachers from participating in swimming lessons. In its binding and precedent-setting decision, the Debrecen Court decided on behalf of the students, awarding them joint damages in the amount of 99 million forints (approximately €250,000) to be prorated by the number of semesters each student spent within their segregated classrooms.<sup>3</sup>

In early 2020, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán weighed in on the Gyöngyöspata case, making the ruling of the Debrecen Court of Appeals a national issue. Rather than a compensation for infringements upon the fundamental rights of Roma, Orbán inverted the historical injury (and adding racial injury anew) by arguing that, in fact, the court's decision had "violated the people's sense of justice" by awarding damages to allegedly "workshy" Romani families and their "violent" children.<sup>4</sup> At the Prime Minister's annual international press conference in Budapest, a reporter for the pro-government newscaster Hír TV [News TV] asked Orbán to make his own judgment on the matter of the Gyöngyöspata ruling. Orbán used the opportunity to speculate how he would feel were he (a Magyar) from the town: "But if I lived there, I would still ask, how is it that for some reason members of an ethnically-determined

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Rorke, "Antigypsyism in Hungary: The Gyöngyöspata Case versus 'The People's Sense of Justice,'" in *Romani Communities and Transformative Change: A New Social Europe*, eds. Andrew Ryder, Marius Taba, and Nidhi Trehan (Bristol, UK: University of Bristol Press, 2021): 97; and Szilvia Zsilák, "99 millió kártérítést kaptak a szegregált gyöngyöspatai roma tanulók" [The segregated Romani students of Gyöngyöspata received compensation of 99 million forints], *abcúg* [Down with him], September 18, 2019, <https://abcug.hu/99-millios-karteritest-kaptak-a-szegregalt-gyongyospatai-roma-tanulok/>, (accessed May 7, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Rorke, "Antigypsyism in Hungary," 96–97.

group who live with me in the same community, the same village will receive a significant amount [of money] without doing any work. While I don't know how many hours, days, or years I have to work for this money. . . . And I think that these people are correct [in asking].”<sup>5</sup> Aladár Horváth, a former member of the Hungarian parliament and long-time Romani activist against segregation, argued that the Prime Minister had shifted from playing the “migrant card” to the “Gypsy card;” the speech was a clear attempt to win over far-right voters and place pressure on the courts.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, a final review of the case was underway by the Hungarian Supreme Court [*Kúria*] on request by the Gyöngyöspata municipality, administrators of the school, and the local school district. On May 12, 2020, the *Kúria* upheld the decision of the Debrecen Court in favor of the Romani Gyöngyöspata pupils.<sup>7</sup>

But the matter would be judged differently in the court of public opinion. In a poll run by Hír TV, viewers were asked: “Do you agree with Viktor Orbán, who says it is unjust that some people be paid millions without doing any work, or with the [George] Soros-backed organization which advocates for Roma people in Gyöngyöspata to receive 100 million [forints]?” More than 97 percent of Hír TV viewers agreed with Orbán.<sup>8</sup> In a press briefing with Kossuth Radio on

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<sup>5</sup> “De ha ott élnék, mégiscsak megkérdezném, hogy az hogyan van, hogy egyébként valamilyen okból a velem egy közösségben, egy faluban élő, etnikailag meghatározó népcsoport tagjai egy nagy jelentőségű összeget fognak kapni mindenfajta munkavégzés nélkül. Miközben ezért a pénzért én nem tudom hány órát, hány napot, vagy évet kell dolgozzak. . . . És azt gondolom, hogy ezeknek az embereknek igazuk van.” Marianna Biró, “Orbán szerint a gyöngyöspatai cigány diákok szegregációs kárpótlása mindenféle munka nélkül kapott pénz” [According to Orbán, segregation compensation for Gypsy students of Gyöngyöspata is money received without any work], *Index*, January 9, 2020,

[https://index.hu/belfold/2020/01/09/orbaninfo\\_gyongyospata\\_gyori\\_gyerekgyilkos\\_birosagi\\_iteletek\\_biralat/](https://index.hu/belfold/2020/01/09/orbaninfo_gyongyospata_gyori_gyerekgyilkos_birosagi_iteletek_biralat/) (accessed May 7, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Lili Bayer, “Orbán under Fire over School Segregation Comments,” *Politico*, January 10, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-under-fire-over-school-segregation-comments/> (access May 10, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Balázs Cseke, “Döntött a Kúria: ki kell fizetni a kártérítést a gyöngyöspatai roma diákoknak” [Decision of the Kúria: compensatory damages must be paid to the Roma students of Gyöngyöspata], *Index*, May 12, 2020, [https://index.hu/belfold/2020/05/12/gyongyospata\\_iskolai\\_szegregacio\\_roma\\_diakok\\_karteritesi\\_per\\_itelet\\_kuria/](https://index.hu/belfold/2020/05/12/gyongyospata_iskolai_szegregacio_roma_diakok_karteritesi_per_itelet_kuria/) (accessed May 10, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Rorke, “Antigypsyism in Hungary,” 98; and Bernard Rorke, “Orbán Steps Up the Hate and Seeks a ‘Robust Social Mandate’ for Antigypsyism,” *European Roma Rights Centre*, February 14, 2020, <http://www.errc.org/news/orban-steps-up-the-hate-and-seeks-a-robust-social-mandate-for-antigypsyism> (accessed May 10, 2022).

January 31, 2020, Orbán put the matter to the public as one of “decency” and “work”: “We take the side of the 80 percent who are decent, working Hungarians who demand a suitable education for their child.” Without providing supporting evidence, he opined that Magyars had “reacted by withdrawing their children from such schools” and that they felt they had to “go into retreat even though they were in the majority.”<sup>9</sup> The following month, to a private meeting of Fidesz representatives, Orbán announced a national consultation on the matter.<sup>10</sup> In the weeks that followed, 189 psychologists wrote in protest, arguing that such a national consultation would “fuel hatred and strengthen discrimination and segregation.”<sup>11</sup> Though the national consultation would be postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, in September 2021, the newly-appointed Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs, Attila Sztojka, reiterated its importance: “Court decisions must be implemented. At the same time, if we look at the principal part of the case—which society also obviously cares about—we should not think that we have solved the problem with compensation.”<sup>12</sup>

Orbán’s politicization of the Gyöngyöspata case, its creation of a new “question” in need of “solution,” evinces a number of themes explored in this dissertation. First, his equation of

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<sup>9</sup> “Orbán on Gyöngyöspata Case: Gov’t Sides with Decent, Working Hungarians,” MTI-Hungary Today, January 31, 2020, <https://hungarytoday.hu/orban-on-gyongyospata-case-govt-sides-with-decent-working-hungarians/> (accessed May 17, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> “Újabb nemzeti konzultációt jelentett be Orbán Viktor” [Viktor Orbán announced another national consultation], *Magyar Nemzet* [Hungarian nation], February 12, 2020, <https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2020/02/ujabb-nemzeti-konzultaciott-jelentett-be-orban-viktor> (accessed May 17, 2022). See also Rorke, “Antigypsyism in Hungary,” 98; and Rorke, “Orbán Steps Up the Hate and Seeks a ‘Robust Social Mandate’ for Antigypsyism.”

<sup>11</sup> “189 pszichológus tiltakozik, mert nem akarják, hogy a nemzeti konzultáció Gyöngyöspatával kapcsolatos kérdése tovább szíthassa a gyűlölködést és megerősítse a diszkriminációt és a szegregációt.” Flóra Dóra Csatári, “Gyöngyöspata miatt közel kétszáz pszichológus tiltakozik a tervezett nemzeti konzultáció ellen” [Because of Gyöngyöspata, nearly two hundred psychologists are protesting against the planned national consultation], 444, [https://index.hu/belfold/2020/02/17/nemzeti\\_konzultacio\\_gyongyospata\\_pszichologus\\_tiltakozas/](https://index.hu/belfold/2020/02/17/nemzeti_konzultacio_gyongyospata_pszichologus_tiltakozas/) (accessed May 18, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> “A bírósági döntéseket végre kell hajtani. Ugyanakkor, ha az elvi részét nézzük az ügynek – ami nyilván a társadalmat is megmozgatja –, ne gondoljuk, hogy egy kártérítéssel a problémát megoldottuk.” Dóra Ónody-Molnár, “Sztojka Atilla: Nem dózerban gondolkodunk, a cél a romák teljes foglalkoztatása” [Atilla Sztojka: We don’t think in bulldozers, the goal is to fully employ the Roma], *Jelen* [Present], <https://jelen.media/interju/sztojka-attila-nem-dozerban-gondolkodunk-a-cel-a-romak-teljes-foglalkoztatasa-2221> (accessed May 20, 2022).

compensatory damages awarded to the Romani pupils of Gyöngyöspata invoked the longstanding *cigány/magyar* axis of differentiation that juxtaposes images of purported Romani indolence [*dologtalan*] against meaningful Magyar work [*dolog*]. While this contrast pair preceded Hungarian state socialism, it figured prominently within Party “solutions” to the “Gypsy question” and continues into the present. Second, Orbán’s equation of compensatory damages with “work”—his calculation of the Magyar labor that would be required to pay these damages—suggested something was amiss in the functioning of the Hungarian judicial system. Rather than a righting of a historical injustice, he presented these damages as something akin to an illegitimate wealth transfer—and thus a historical injustice in the making. This drew upon Magyar associations of Hungarian state socialism as a regime that putatively gave preference to Roma. The courts, Orbán implied, had not yet gotten up to speed on the new order. And third, his references to the “retreat” of Magyars in the wake of this policy warned that, should future segregation cases be brought against schools, the result would be their “Gypsification.”

If we are to understand the difficulty and opportunity for some reset of Romani and Magyar relations, it would have to begin by dismantling this way of understanding the past, present, and future of Hungary. The “Gypsy question” is a reductively antagonistic engine of history, one that constantly distracts from more meaningful ways of inhabiting and questioning it. The constant posing and reposing of the “Gypsy question” only serves to build anxiety—over the future course of Magyardom and the place of Roma within it—into Hungarian public life.

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### Press and media

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- abcúg* [Down with him]  
*Bányamunkás* [Mine worker]  
*Beszélő* [Commentator]  
*Borsodi Szemle* [Borsod review]  
*Délmagyarország* [Southern Hungary]  
*Élet és Irodalom* [Life and literature]  
*Építők Lapja* [Builders' magazine]  
*Építőmunkás* [Construction worker]  
*Építünk: A Magyar Írók Szövetsége debreceni csoportjának folyóirata* [We build: The magazine of the Debrecen chapter of the Hungarian Writers' Association]  
*European Roma Rights Centre*  
*Fejér Megyei Hírlap* [Fejér county newspaper]  
*Figyelő* [Observer]  
*Hétfői Hírek* [Monday news]  
*Heti Válasz* [Weekly response]  
*Heti Világgazdaság* [Weekly world economy, HVG]  
*Index*  
*Jelen* [Present]  
*Magyar Hírlap* [Hungarian newspaper]  
*Magyar Nemzet* [Hungarian nation]  
*Minap* [Miskolc today]  
*MTI-Hungary Today*  
*Népegészségügy* [Public health]  
*Népszabadság* [People's freedom]  
*Népszava* [People's voice]  
*Nyugat* [West]

*Pest Megyei Hírlap* [Pest county newspaper]  
*Politico*  
*Somogyi Néplap* [Somogy people's paper]  
*Szabad Ifjúság* [Free youth]  
*Szabad Szó* [Free word]  
*Századok* [Centuries]  
*Székely Nép* [Székely people]  
*Tolna Megyei Népiújság* [Tolna county people's paper]  
*Tükör* [Mirror]  
*Új Magyarország* [New Hungary]  
*Valóság* [Reality]  
*Vas Népe* [Vas county people]

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