

Who is hiding behind the veil or the man, or behind the roles and norms, or behind other women having the power to talk?

**NEVI SARA KALI**, the journal of Romani women, as a space of disrupting anonymity, encourages us to discover ourselves through a joint effort expressed by different languages and from different perspectives.

Cine se ascunde în spatele vălului sau al bărbatului, sau al rolurilor și normelor, sau al altor femei care au puterea să vorbească?

**NEVI SARA KALI**, revista femeilor rome, ca și spațiu al ieșirii din anonim, ne încurajează să ne auto-descoperim printr-un efort comun exprimat prin limbaje și din perspective diferite.

Kon angaravelpe pala o dikhlo vaj pala o murś, vaj pala le rolurea thaj le romane zakonurea, vaj pala le zuvlea save si len zor te den duma?

**NEVI SARA KALI**, e Romane zuvleanqe zurnalo, sar jekh than inklistmasko andar o anonimato, del amen zor te prinjearas amen, anda maj but čhiba thaj mai but šanse.



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# NEVI SARA KALI



2010 • 02

Roma Women's Journal  
Revista Femeilor Rome  
Romane zuvleanqe zurnalo



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**NEVI SARA KALI**

**Roma Women's Journal  
Revista Femeilor Rome  
Romane 3uvleange 3urnalo**

**2010 • 02**

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Kado numero e lioresko sas dino te sikavalpe e jutimosa e projektoske „Jiekhipe andar` i diferencia. O akceso le romane 3uvleanqe p`o foro la butiake”, lovença “Investo anda-l manus!” Evropako Soçialo Fondo, O Sektorialo Operaçionalo Programo andar o Sikavimos le Manuşenqe Resursea 2007–2013.

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**The content of this material does not represent the official position of European Union or of the Romanian Government.**

The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken. (Audre Lorde: *The transformation of silence into language and action*, paper delivered in 1977)

Faptul că suntem aici și că eu pot să rostesc aceste cuvinte este o încercare de a rupe tăcerea și de a transcende unele dintre diferențele dintre noi, pentru că nu diferențele ne imobilizează, ci tăcerea. Și sunt atâtea tăceri de rupt. (Audre Lorde: *Transformarea tăcerii în vorbă și acțiune*, cuvântare din 1977)

O fapto ke sam khate thaj me shaj phenav kala vorbi si anda kodo ke zumavau te phagav o ashiamos thaj te nakhas pherdal vare-save diference so si mashkar amende, anda kodo ken a e diferencie inkerenamen thaneste, ma kodo ke ashias adar o mui. Thaj si kade both ashiamata te phagas. (Audre Lorde: *E transformacia e ashiamoski ande vorba thaj kerdimos*, sikavimos de andar 1977)






# jiekhipen i diferinca

andaru

O AKCESO LE ROMANE 3UVLEANOE  
P' O FORO LA BUTIAKE



**ortaimos  
stimă de sine  
sukar butyl!**  
stimă de sine  
**MUNCA DECENTĂ**  
LUMIAKO CIACIPE  
dreptate socială  
pakhalimos ande peste  
**demnitate**

**egalitate  
prin  
diferență**  
ACCESUL FEMEILOR ROME  
PE PIATA MUNCII

**sukar butyl!**  
**DEMNITATE**  
stimă de sine  
LUMIAKO CIACIPE  
**ORTAIMOS**  
dreptate socială  
pakhalimos ande peste  
**MUNCA DECENTĂ**



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Revista Femeilor Rome

Romane 3uvleange 3urnalo

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# CONTENTS / CUPRINS / KOTOR

## ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

### **Enikő Vincze**

Culture, Rights and Moral Entitlement ■ 9

*[Cultură, drepturi și îndreptățire morală]*

*[Kultura, zakonura/ciacimos thaj moralno vazdimis]*

### **J. Maki Motapanyane**

Notes on Agency, Empowerment and Feminist Consciousness ■ 29

*[Note despre agenție, putere și conștiință feministă]*

*[Righe pala e Agencia, Zuralimos thaj Juivlicano ghi]*

### **Teodora Krumova**

Breaking the Barriers: The Status of Romani Women in Bulgaria ■ 41

*[Rupând barierele: statutul femeilor rome din Bulgaria]*

*[O pharadimos e barengo: o than e Romneane Jiuivleango ande Bulgaria]*

## ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

### **Letiția Mark & h.arta**

About Caring and Responsibility in Relation to Those You Address ■ 59

Despre grija și responsabilitatea pe care o ai față de cei/cele cărora te adresezi ■ 64

Andar i griza aj o godorvalipen kaj si tut anglal e manuša kaj kames te ašunen tut ■ 69

### **Ilona Lăcătuș & Csilla Könczei**

From Youth to Aging ■ 73

De la tinerețe până la bătrânețe ■ 81

Dj'ande munfo tîrnipo zhin ande munfo phuripo ■ 89

■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

**Letiția Mark**

Why I Became a Feminist ■ 97

De ce am devenit feminista ■ 101

*[Sostar kerdilem feminista]*

**Kinga Kali**

Gypsy Reality ■ 105

*[Realitatea țigănească]*

*[Trajo Romano]*

**Mihaela Gheorghe**

Roma Girls / Women in European Provinces ■ 109

Fetele/ femeile rome din provincie în Europa ■ 113

*[Chevor/jiuvlea romane andar e forura/gava ande Europa]*

**Emma Roper Evans**

Halting Air ■ 117

*[Stoparea aerului]*

*[Ashadimos e luftosko]*

**Mariana Dobre**

Summon to Courage ■ 121

Îndemn la curaj ■ 124

*[Zurialimos po bi darajmos]*

**Simona Gamonte**

How the Crazy Woman's Earrings Have Appeared? ■ 127

Cum au apărut cerceii nebunei ■ 129

*[Sar aresle e dile zlaga]*

**Maria Serban-Temisan**

In Search of the Romani Woman from the "Regina" Soap Opera to the Real Life ■ 132

*[În căutarea femeii rome – de la serialul „Regina” la viața reală]*

*[Rodimos e romne jiuveako- katar o serial „Regina” ka o ciacio trajo]*

## ■ ACTIVISMS / ACTIVISME / AKTIVISMURA

Romani Women Manifesto with the Occasion of the International Women's Day, 08.03.2010 ■ 137  
Manifestul femeilor rome cu ocazia Zilei Internaționale a Femeii, 8 martie 2010 ■ 140  
*[O manifesto e romane jiuvlengo- kana sas o Buthemutno Ges e Juvlengo, 8 martie 2010]*

On a Road to Equality: FRA Roundtable Discussion with Romani and Traveller Women ■ 142  
Cordoba, Spain, 06-07.04.2010  
*[În drum spre egalitate. Masă rotundă cu femei rome și nomade, Cordoba, Aprilie 2010]*  
*[Po drom vash e egaliteta/ jekh fialo droma. Kidimos ka e rotudo mesaja/sinja e romane jiuveanca thaj cerhara, Cordoba, Aprilie 2010]*

The *I'm a Roma Woman* Regional Campaign Video ■ 144  
Romedia Foundation  
*[Video – Campania regională “Sunt femeie romă” Fundația Romedia]*  
*[Videovo - regionalno Campania,, Sim romani jiuvl” e Fundacia Romedia]*

“I Have Always Been Interested in the Use of Power  
but to Me that Means Helping to Empower Others –  
Especially Young Women – to Help Them Have an Easier Life than My Mother and I Have Had” ■ 146  
Interview with Michaela Walsh by Alina Poșircă.  
*[Interviu cu Michaela Walsh de Alina Poșircă]*  
*[Intervivo e Michaela Walsh-asa katar e Alina Poșircă]*

### **Ana Contreras**

Drom Kotar Mestipen: How Romani Women Dreams Come True ■ 150  
*[Cum devin realitate visurile femeilor rome – Asociația Romă a Femeilor Drom Kotar Mestipen, Barcelona]*  
*[Sar aresen ciacimos ando trajo e sune e romane jiuvleange- e Asociacia Romani e Jiuvleange Drom Kotar Mestipen, Barcelona]*

### **Carmen Gheorghe / h.arta**

See Me as I Am. Words and Images of Roma Women ■ 153  
Privește-mă așa cum sunt. Cuvinte și imagini ale femeilor rome ■ 155  
Dikh man kadă sar sem. Lava aj dikimata le rromnenqe ■ 157

■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

**Noémi Magyari**

A Project for Social Justice ■ 159

Un proiect pentru dreptate socială ■ 164

[Jiekh projekto vash o socialno ciacimos]

**Andra-Mirona Dragotesc**

How We Navigate Toward Human Rights on the Sea of Tradition and Culture? ■ 169

Cum navigăm înspre drepturile omului în marea tradiției și culturii? ■ 176

■ POETRIES / POEZII / POEZIE

**Gypsyliia**

Demență subtilă ■ 183

[Subtle dementia]

[Hamo Dilipen]

Ultima "scriere", de ieri ■ 184

[The last "writing", from yesterday]

[O paluno "ramosarimos" de araki]

**Marconi Rupa**

căutând ■ 186

rodas ■ 186

[Searching]

si so si ■ 187

e ce e ■ 187

[It is what it is]

Soske bistras? ■ 188

De ce uităm? ■ 188

[Why do we forget?]

**Elena Mihalache**

Loc de joacă ■ 189

[Hide and seek]

[O khelipe sar garadivmos]

■ AUTHORS / AUTORI / E AUTORURA ■ 191

ENIKŐ VINCZE

## ■ CULTURE, RIGHTS AND MORAL ENTITLEMENT<sup>1</sup>

- *On the base of my empirical research about Roma women's access to reproductive health and with the aim of transcending the binary between "culture" and "rights" (as discussed for example by Cowan et al. 1991), this article situates these discussions in the broader conceptual framework of an engaged feminist anthropology of human rights, envisioned in a post-socialist environment. This approach is interested in the social life of culture, rights and moral entitlement, analyzing it in the context of power regimes that subject Roma women to multiple processes of exclusion and injustice at the intersection of ethnicity, gender and class.*
- *Pe baza cercetărilor mele empirice cu privire la accesul femeilor rome la sănătatea reproducerii și cu scopul de a transcende opoziția binară dintre "cultură" și "drepturi" (așa cum este tratată, de exemplu, de Cowan et al 1991), articolul situează dezbateră în cadrul conceptual mai larg al antropologiei feministe angajate în drepturile omului, văzută într-un context post-socialist. Această abordare este interesată de viața socială a culturii, a drepturilor și îndreptăririi morale, analizându-le în contextul regimurilor de putere care supun femeile rome la mai multe procese de excludere și nedreptate la intersecția dintre etnie, gen și clasă.*
- *Pe baza mure empirikane rodimange pala o akceso e romniange po reproduktivno sastimos thaj e gindosa te jjav maj dur pe "cultura" thaj "ciacims"(sar phenelas o Crow ande 1991), kado artikolo shjol kadala sfatura po konceptosko than sar phanglo katar e feminist antripologia pala e manusho ciacimos, dikhliino ande jekh pala-socialismo vrama. Kado fialo dikhimos si interesanto o socialno jivipe e kulturako, ciacimos thaj moralo vazdimos, te keresa analiza ande o zuralo regimosko(vrama) konteksto pala e Romnea thaj e buth procesura pala e eksklusia(dinimos rigate) thaj bi-ciacimos so sas lenge sikado ando mashkar e etniaki, fialo thaj kasta.*

Chapter first of this study outlines my research on Roma women's access to reproductive health and explores this phenomenon in a post-socialist context. I then analyze how Romni are negotiating culture

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this paper were presented at the Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University, "The Culture of Rights/The Rights of Culture" Seminar on April 16, 2009.

and rights (through controlling their bodily functions of reproduction) under constraining economic conditions and obliging emotional ties. In two further chapters I observe how the “right to culture” and the “culture of reproductive rights” are affecting them. In the conclusion, I consider how such an analysis of Roma women’s access to reproductive health informs both with the broader issue of social inequalities and the need for an engaged feminist anthropology of human rights in a post-socialist context.

## RESEARCH OVERVIEW

My empirical research about Roma women’s access to reproductive health was conducted between 2004 and 2006 in Romania, and since then it formed the core of several analyses of social exclusion and multiple discrimination (Magyari-Vincze 2007, 2009a), policy analysis and recommendations (Magyari-Vincze 2006, 2009b), and more recently of the relationship between rights and culture. Throughout these studies, my central question was how, in what sense and to what extent were Romani women acting as individual agents in their reproductive decision-making if this was shaped by various social, economic, and political factors that they could not control, and if they themselves were constructed as subjects by cultural, ethnic, and gendering discourses.

The research included ethnographic fieldwork in a ghetto-like district of a small town in Romania, the analysis of reproductive politics and policies for Roma in Romania and Europe, and an investigation of Roma women’s organizing at national and international level.<sup>2</sup> I conducted in-depth interviews and participant observation in the Romani community, as well as among local health care providers and at different organizational events. This multi-sited research enabled me to place the reproductive experiences of Romni in their larger context and address reproduction as a social, economic, cultural and political phenomenon affected by inequalities and processes of exclusion and discrimination. Considering the phenomenon of reproductive control and access to reproductive health as a “small problem” allows us to investigate one of the “large issues”<sup>3</sup> of post-socialist transformations: how different resources were unequally distributed by the interlinked systems of classification (like ethnicity, gender and class), as a result of which some social categories were excluded from access to employment, proper housing, education and health. In the case of

<sup>2</sup> As a policy research this investigation was conducted with the support of the International Policy Fellowship Program of the Open Society Institute between April 2005 and March 2006. It was preceded in 2004 by an investigation about the use of contraceptives among women from that city requested by a non-governmental organization working on sexual education. Between April and June 2006 due to the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship of the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen from Vienna I could proceed the first writing ups of my results.

<sup>3</sup> In defining this approach I am relying on the conception of Gullestad (1991) about the anthropological research of complex societies.

Roma communities, health was shaped by structural discrimination, cultural prejudices, school segregation and school abandonment, poverty, disparities in income distribution and unemployment, inadequate housing and food, lack of clean water and sanitation, and lack of official documents and medical insurance in many cases. My aim was to describe the socio-economic conditions, institutional arrangements, policies and cultural conceptions that shaped Romani women's (lack of) access to reproductive health, but also their personal ways of dealing with the related problems and of being "between two fires". Most importantly I highlighted how women felt, thought and acted under the conditions of being situated at the crossroads of several contradictory subject positions, which were prescribed for them by different discourses and institutions (like state policies, policies for Roma, their own communities, health care providers, etc.) wanting them to have more, or – on the contrary – less children than they could desire on the basis of their material conditions, social relations and emotional ties.

Through their reproductive practices and choices informed by the claim that they were morally entitled to decide according to their situation, Romni were playing out their social personhood and agency via negotiating on both "culture" and "rights". Consequently, they did not act independently from the social relations and cultural norms that transformed them into members of communities and gave them their sense of belonging or, for some, constituted a point of departure. But – in the context of a minority community that valued men and women according to the size of their family, and of a majority society that expressed its worries about "Roma over-population" – they claimed the entitlement to negotiate how many children they desired, wanted and decided to have.

Roma women felt entitled to make reproductive decisions according to their economic, social and emotional circumstances, despite the many cultural prescriptions inscribed into their life and bodies, and legislative regulations regarding reproduction. For example, women's bodies and motherhood gained a huge significance in the culturalist master narratives or recognition politics of the mainstream Roma elite: as core elements and symbols of the group's ethnic identity they were constructed as markers of its cultural distinctiveness; conceived as a boundary that needed to be protected against the "threat" of assimilation, humiliation, or even disappearance; and most of all as the guarantee of the group's biological and cultural reproduction and morality. At the same time, (minority) women's bodies and reproduction functioned as terrains of the universalist human rights discourse. Roma women activists used this instrument developed by international (including feminist) organizations to disrupt their "own" patriarchies, to claim the recognition of women's rights within minority politics, but also to signal the interconnectedness of racism and sexism in our society. This demonstrates that "culture" and "rights" are intertwined in the contemporary "cultures of rights," which refer both to the collective and individual rights of ethno-national groups and women, and most recently even to subjects (like Roma women) defined at the intersection of a multitude of identities. These issues are clearly evident in the discussion on the "right to culture" and "culture of reproductive rights" from the point of view of their impact on Romni as outlined in the respective subchapters of this paper.

## ROMA WOMEN PRACTICING THE ENTITLEMENT<sup>4</sup> TO NEGOTIATE ON CULTURES AND RIGHTS

### *Constraining material conditions: housing and work*

The urban Roma community, whose ancestors were brick-makers (*cărămidari*), is living on the margins of the city near the river, called *cartierul Digului*, a district named after the dig constructed on the water. The river plays not only the role of a border between this non-traditional (Boyash, *băieși*) group and nature, but it is also used as a source of water. On the touch-line of the river lies one of the lateral entrances into the district. The central access into this ghetto-like neighborhood opens up from a main street called *Plantelor* (the Plants street), which passes nearby one of the still functioning factories of the town, where different products of herbs are made. The latter provides a source of living for the community, offering a chance for casual work during summer that consists of herb gathering on the neighboring meadows, out of which at the most, one may earn 80 eurocents after 8-10 hours of work. Otherwise, before 1990 three major factories functioned in the town (metallurgical, chemical and coat-manufacturing), where Roma were employed in large numbers. Due to post-socialist restructuring they totally or partially collapsed leaving people in long-term unemployment, or without pensions, and with many illnesses resulted from the unhealthy work environments. Before the 1970s, when the traditional Roma occupations were declared illegal in Romania, these people were engaged in manufacturing bricks, which implied long journeys between spring and fall in the neighboring rural areas.

The left side of the district is marked by another street named *Muzicanților* in Romanian, the Musicians road, on which houses are in a better shape. During the 1970s and '80s Romanians were still living here, but as time passed on they moved out from the area called *țigănime* (Gypsy vicinity). Starting with the end of the 1990s wealthier traditional Roma, who managed to make money out of their work abroad (mostly in Spain and Italy) bought some of these houses. This street is also unpaved, but it has a paved sidewalk. From this road a very narrow lane takes the pedestrian to the heart of the *Digului* neighborhood. This is a path that harshly separates the Gypsy and the *Gažo* world: a residents-only beaten track, being frequented once in a while by police or by the community medical nurse and the social assistant.

In 2006, 800 people (180 families) live here in the total of 125 houses. Fifty percent of the total population is composed of children below the age of fourteen, and 85 percent of the school-aged children are enrolled in schools. 135 families live on welfare allowance (*socialul*) performing community work for the city (yet they are rarely assigned to work in their own district). Fifteen percent do not possess identity cards,

<sup>4</sup> In the analysis of Unnithan-Kumar (2003), which I am using here as a starting point, the concept of reproductive entitlement is focusing attention to women's moral claims in the area of reproduction, which are articulated in relation to social expectations referring to fertility, sexuality and motherhood.



## ■ ■ ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

and two percent do not have birth certificates. Ten men are employed as street sweepers and two have jobs at a private brick-factory, where work availability fluctuates. Sixty percent of the population receives welfare allowance, whose payment is often problematic. Between April and October 1999, for example, the mayor declared that the city hall did not have enough funds, and also let people know that authorities do not want to continue paying “*those who do not do anything*” (out of the 380 families who were supposed getting the allowance more than 300 were Roma). In November-December 2005, the mayor decided to pay low-income families the so-called “heating benefit” (*bani de încălzire*) but he subtracted the welfare allowance from the sum (for which recipients were doing community work). Twenty percent people from this community declare that they are collecting scrap-iron, almost five percent are collecting herbs and seven percent receive sick pensions.

The whole community has only one source of clean water – otherwise illegally placed. Eighty percent of the houses do not have toilets of any kind, and the slop water is thrown out in the mound from the middle of the street or into the river together with the garbage (being a permanent source of infections and a cause of several illnesses). Ninety percent of the houses have electricity, and the majority of the families (even the poorest ones) invest in buying television. Some also have CD-, video- and DVD-players. Besides their practical utility, these objects express people’s symbolic status and prestige within the community. Obviously those who are working abroad are doing better in these terms. While watching television, Roma women as spectators recognize the unbridgeable economic gap between their own living conditions and those depicted on the preferred soap operas, but still they draw parallels between the universal human problems they share in common with those characters. The tension between the messages transmitted by the cultural apparatus (which objectifies a certain standard of living and equalizes it with “normality”), and the life-styles and behavioral models that they are actually living out may translate into frustration or self-blame, but also into anger and rebellion usually expressed verbally towards some persons (like the mayor) embodying the Romanian majority and the causes of Romani poverty.

During the socialist regime the majority of Roma from this community (both men and women) were employed in one of the main factories of the city, all of which collapsed after the 1990, leaving workers unemployed for long periods of time with few chances for reemployment and without state pensions. Many current illnesses are also due to the pollution to which workers were exposed in the chemical industry (*Întreprinderea Chimica*), metal works (*Uzina Mecanica*) and the leather and fur-coat factory (*Vidra*). Due to the pesticides used in the nearby plant factory (*Întreprinderea Fares*), which is still functioning, the water from the few existing fountains is also polluted.

Work and paid labor is a central concern for the *băieși* whom I have met. Their memories about the socialist past – when they all were employed and had a secure income – is a reference point in their current self-perception. Long-term unemployment has forced them to find short-term strategies of “*making it*” from one day to the next. During socialism they could not practice their traditional jobs, such as brick-making, and in the new market economy it would be impossible for them to make a living from these trades. They expressed their desire

to integrate into the broader society – “to become like Romanians” –, but they also felt rejected and excluded by the majority society. Nevertheless, usually they do not treat unemployment and poverty as something that is their individual failure, but they have the power to criticize the system for what is happening (embodied by the mayor or by the new employers or others). However, today their attitudes and practices towards state institutions and authorities are ambivalent, which is, of course, a reaction to the fact that they are dependent on the welfare provisions, and do wait for some help from above but, at the same time, they live through their own daily strategies of survival. They treat the apparent conflict between dependence and independence through the following argument: they receive welfare benefits in exchange for the work they do on the behalf of the community (meaning by this not their immediate community, but the whole city). Because they work for the “others”, for the Romanians, they wipe “their” streets, they clean “their” dirtiness, the welfare benefit they get is not experienced by them as a “gift”, but as payment for their work. They also feel that it is unfair to be punished if they are looking for other jobs on the black market or other-where around. Almost at the same time they stress repeatedly that “*we should be helped out, but no one helps us*”, expressing that they are neglected (*necăjiți*), while they also proudly tell stories about how they manage to sustain themselves even when this refers to begging. One may interpret this as a reaction to the fact that they are living in an encapsulated social space and are looking for strategies of survival on the margins of the society, where, nevertheless, they have to build up their self-confidence and sense of living properly, inverting in a way necessity into virtue.

The factors limiting access to employment and decent work are not simply related to the cultural values of Romani communities, but are determined by the exclusionary practices of the broader society. It is exactly the phenomenon of social exclusion underlined by racial discrimination that produces and maintains the boundaries between non-Gypsies and Gypsies, and by this “the Gypsy culture”. The Gypsy way of life always and everywhere exists in an oppositional and mutually constitutive relation with the non-Gypsy world (and that is why is so diverse), being developed as a creative response to marginality, but also fulfilling social functions as part of the whole society.<sup>5</sup> Besides, one may and should also observe how the strategy of living in the present (that characterizes many communities around the world living in enclaves at the margins of society) is an active response to social exclusion and at times “it constitutes an effective cultural and political critique” (Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart 1999).

### ***Obliging emotional ties: husbands and children***

Under the regime which favors the occupants of masculine roles that characterizes this community, women’s status is paradoxical, because they have power in many areas, but this power has no authority. I met very many strong women in this community who, besides housework, and child- and elderly nurturing, also performed

<sup>5</sup> In this case, too the affirmation of the anthropologist is relevant: “much of what should concern us about ghetto life has its ultimate determinants in much larger structures, beyond the reach of the ghetto dwellers” (Hannerz 1999: 7).

## ■ ■ ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

remunerated labor: mainly herb collection during the summer and/or domestic work during the whole year (having their “*ladies*”, *femeia mea*, as they said, where they mostly did the cleaning), and – as it happened these days when they were not employed any more – they did community work for the welfare allowance they received. At the same time they were the experts of the family’s external relations, taking children to school or to the physicians, and making claims at the city hall and so on and so forth.

Despite of this, as Mihaela, a woman at the middle of her forties told me, the idea of male dominance was maintained in this community through the moral rule according to which *a woman should respect her man*, moreover, *should serve him also by providing him with money for drinks or cigarettes*. Usually people with whom I talked traced this idea from the remote past, saying that *this is how it was and still it is* (adding: fortunately or unfortunately depending on the speaker’s age). Mihaela said: *I am not a feminist and I am not claiming that women are better than men. They have a big mouse, indeed, and sometimes they curse and swear. But that is all they do. On the contrary, men are physically violent*. She pointed out that a woman’s value symbolically was strictly linked to *her man* and was even greater if *she was dedicated during her whole life to only one man*. One may rarely find single women or single mothers in the community. However, I have met single mothers, like the widows considered by their children with whom they lived too old (in their forties!) to “marry” again, or like the girls whose partners did not recognize the newborns as being their children, or the ones whose men were imprisoned, or the ones who were abandoned by their men, and decided to live on their own with their children in the house of their parents asserting that they *do not need any man from now on*, like it happened in the case of one of Pamela’s daughter.

*Pamela was a single mother in her late forties, as she remained a widow since ten years. She gave birth to eleven children during her lifetime, out of which three died. She never had abortion, always being afraid of that, and now that she went by time to time to Pentecostals, they told her that this was a sin. So, as she confessed, if she would remain pregnant, she would better give birth to the child even now, at this late age. She always was loyal to her husband, considered that a woman should bear all the difficulties near her man, and even if he was beaten her, she had to accept this as he probably was hitting her only under the influence of alcohol. Pamela told me that in this community girls usually entered into early marriages, abandoning school at the age of thirteen-fifteen: there is no girl in our district, who would have graduated high school, and at the best they had ten grades during Ceausescu, but after revolution is good if they graduate eight grades, usually dropping out after the fourth or even never enroll. Paula, her thirteen year old daughter abandoned school for another reason. After she had a car accident, she was advised by her teachers to abandon school. She did not really mind that, already repeated grades, she accepted ending school after the fourth grade. But she did not want to marry. Paula told me: I do not want to marry until my mother dies, because I do not want her to worry about me having a bad marriage or a husband that bits me. By making this desire she probably referred to her older sisters, who returned to their mother’s home*

*with children of their own after their marriage failed, or sent their children to Pamela and they run out somewhere else. Pamela's two rooms (in one of which her former husband's brother was hosted who, in exchange, helped the family with some work) was populated by her, by two of her daughters, by her biggest son and his wife, by five grandchildren, and by two of her smaller sons.*

The women whom I talked to were proud of their freedom of choosing their men. Grațîela told me: *we are not like the traditional Gypsies are, because we enter freely into relations of love.* However there are more rules in this Roma community, too regarding a woman's sexual behavior than a man's, so the body-related shames are mostly projected on women, together with the burden of protecting the honor of their family. Women in their forties repeated to me the old cultural norms, but I was not sure if they still believed in their significance:

*The woman who marries needs to be a virgin (Magdalena).*

*It is a shame to leave your husband and to look for another and having children of two kinds (Pamela).*

*Women who change their husbands are blamed by their community together with their whole family (Mariana).*

It happens more often that a man leaves her woman for another one, and in this case the first "wife" moves back to her parent's home. But it also happens that a woman *tries to run away* (usually due to frequent acts of domestic violence), but her attempt is much more difficult to fulfill: she might be accepted back by her mother but risking to be labeled negatively by the community; or might try to leave from the district and even from the town, but each time being afraid of being followed, founded and returned back by the angry man who cannot accept to be abandoned.

*Grațîela was a woman in her twenties, and she was spending her life since she graduated the eighth grade in a marriage with a man in his late forties. She had three children with him, out of whom one died drowned in the nearby river. Excepting this tragic accident, she remembered proudly her teenager times because she followed her own choice of running away from home with the man whom she loved. These days they shared their room with Paul's bigger daughter from his previous marriage. The room was one of the spaces carved out within an abandoned stable, shared among five families. Grațîela was a good-looking and powerful woman, who helped everyone from this settlement in arranging their problems at doctors or at the city hall. When I met her last time, she was pregnant again. People whispered that the baby would be of the men's from the house where she served. Anyway, she approached me once by asking my help in supporting her runaway. She was looking for someone with a car to take her to another town. Grațîela told me that this would not be*

## ■ ■ ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

*for the first time, but she never managed to leave this town, so her man always found her and took her home very violently. Paul has no job, by time to time he finds something to do at people's homes and he drinks a lot. If we would have married legally, explained Grațîela, he had to be registered in my social files at the city hall, so it would have been more risky than it is now to find daily jobs on the black market. Anyway she refers to Paul as "my husband", or as "my man".*

Not entering into legal marriages (nevertheless I was told that this was a recent development in this community) was having many different reasons that younger women shared with me:

*I do not like to change my name (Beata).*

*We do not have our own home, he stays with his parents and I am staying together with my children at my mother's house (Alis).*

*This is how it is happening here, and anyway, if he wants to abandon me, he would do it in any case (Adriana).*

According to Mihaela, as a rule, the family and the community consider a couple married (due to what they name *credință*) after having slept with each other in one of the parent's home. Usually in a year after marriage – even if at an early age – women give birth to their first child. And after that moment, children continue "to come" yearly: *the year and the child*, they say. Breastfeeding creates a huge dependency between the mother and her child. It goes on for many years, even up to three or four. Even if this means that the mother always have to carry her child after herself, this is part of her proudly assumed identity. Alis, a woman in her twenties with two children states: *I am giving breast to my little boy wherever I am going, whenever it is needed, when my child is hungry, or nervous, or cannot fall asleep, on the street, on the bus or in the shop, it's no shame about this.* According to her, this is also because she is having no help, and she always carries her children everywhere she goes.

Motherhood, altogether, is a prestigious role in the community, and it is actually the way by which a girl starts to be recognized as an adult person. Up to this, if she gets her own home or at least her own bad that has not to be shared with her little brothers or sisters but with her man she may experience the increase of her status. Having many children is considered a sign of the strength of the family and the masculinity of a Rom is judged according to the number of children he makes during a lifetime.

Women who have to take care of their family and household, but also of the relationship between family and public institutions might have other opinions about the "proper" number of children. But in a community where the tradition of having many children is shaping people's life and choices, their voice is hardly heard. They might have power to decide (and they do it secretly), but this power lacks authority and is considered an illegitimate one. The responsibility of having children is assumed actually for the whole life. Regardless of their age, women affirmed:

*Anything would happen to me I need to take care of my children (Alis).*

*I just feel wonderful when I am together with all of mine six children in the bed (Paula).*

*I need to give him first to eat and see him well (Grațîela).*

*I take them to the physician whenever they are sick, but I am not really going there for myself (Beata).*

*If my daughter wants to come back in my house, she is always welcomed, but I told her that it is wrong to leave her husband till the children are small (Paula).*

*You have to stay near your man and suffer if you need to for the sake of your children (Magdalena).*

*Children gave me the strength of going further on and survive (Mihaela).*

Responsibility is expressed also in the terms of not desiring to have more children than already one has, as I was told by Otilia: *I wanted to have these four kids, especially during Ceausescu when we had where to work and we had a secure income, but now I cannot afford to make more, I cannot support to watch them being hungry.* For this reason Romani women are using different means of fertility control, such as contraceptives or abortion.

### ***Controlling the body of her own?: contraceptives and abortion***

Almost every woman whom I met from this community was having information about the modern contraceptive methods, but – due to many reasons – they had many abortions during their life-time. The sources of information were their family physicians, the gynecologists from the public hospital, or female friends, or the local rumors. Since a few years, public health care providers started to distribute contraceptives for free and Romani women might also apply for them. But in the case of using this service, they faced further problems, as they were taking what was free of charge and not exactly the contraceptive that suited their health condition. In the last year the injectable contraceptive became widespread among them, and they started using it even if they were complaining about its side-effects.

In the community there was no open talk about contraceptives or abortion or, generally, about reproduction and sexuality. Embarrassment felt around these issues marked their sense of difference in front of the majority population, but it also shaped internal community relations. Young women, in their twenties, or even younger, who abandoned school at early ages and were already having at least one child, expressed a confused anxiety about the use of contraceptives. Among their arguments of why they did not use them I could hear the followings:

*I'm ashamed to discuss about this. How would I go then to the doctor, a stranger? (Carmen).*

*If I suddenly get fat or to the contrary become thinner, the community starts to whisper that this was due to the pills and this is very embarrassing (Adriana).*

## ■ ■ ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

*If they would find out that I was using condoms would blame me of being a prostitute. You know, usually they are the ones who use condoms (Otilia).*

*They say that I think big of myself if they hear that I am doing this (Claudia).*

The “public opinion” which was mostly whispered and not openly expressed, but still, as such, was having the function of a community control, shaped the judgment about the “proper” contraceptive method. The same women spread the word:

*My friend got fat from using the pills (Adriana).*

*When my neighbor took those pills she lost weight (Claudia).*

*There was someone who died after the injection (Otilia).*

*It is said that someone made cancer after she used the intrauterine device (Carmen).*

The mixture of all of these knowledge – under the conditions of which women do not dare to talk about these problems openly and physicians do not listen to them or do not answer to their doubts – turns the whole issue of contraceptives into a mystical topic. Into a problem that one needs to face if she wishes to avoid having more children or abortions, but also one which – due to the related embarrassment – she wants to forget altogether.

*A woman in her forties, Mihaela, was very aware about the contradictory messages that women received from different authorities regarding childbirth and the related confusions they experienced. Mihaela was raising her sons alone since her husband was imprisoned in the eighties. As she said, this did not happen because he was stolen food for his family, but because he was drunk and killed someone in a bar. And he was a Romanian, not a Gypsy. Mihaela was tried by a strange feeling of ease: her husband was beating her for several times and was a troublemaker at home – in this way she escaped from him and from this unbearable marriage. Beforehand she knew very well that she could not go to the police as a victim of domestic violence, because all that could happen was that her husband would had paying a fine, which could only negatively affect even more the whole family. However, after she divorced from his imprisoned husband, her life was not turned into much better. She went through several illnesses and treatments, and, as she said, probably her children gave her the strength to survive over all these problems. Children were helping her in the work she did at the beginning of the nineties, when she lost her former factory job. Sometimes they even had to miss the school, as the time to herb collection arrived. Mihaela was born into this community and she felt that the community expected her, and generally women, to give birth to as many children as they could. She stressed that it was mostly sustained that males were more powerful if they had more children, so in a way by having many children, a woman could show her servitude to her men. As Mihaela*

*was a kind of informal leader in the community, many women went to her house. She listened to them and advised them. That was how she knew very well what these women felt: their sense was that, as a sign of respect, they had to have as many children as their husband demanded. But they also were aware that giving birth to another child while living in a cottage like theirs, and watching that they were frozen or hungry, would be a sin. Even a bigger sin than abortion. Mihaela knew that recently some of these young women converted to neo-protestant churches, but, as she said, even the Orthodox priests were sustaining that abortion was a murder.*

Due to the awkwardness that surrounded contraceptives, abortion remained for very many Romni “the best”, or at least the “most practical” solution for unwanted pregnancy. However, practicality was always surrounded by morally burdened dilemmas.

*In her late thirties, Mariana was another key person for women from the community. She acted as a school mediator, but she played out this formal role through her informal relations of trust. She knew the stories of many young women. She understood that the resort to abortion was a practical decision: they make an abortion if they cannot afford raising more children. She agreed about women’s arguments that if they did not want the child, because they could not ensure the necessary material conditions for having (another) one, it was better not to give birth, it was more acceptable to make an abortion, because it would be far worse to torture the child afterwards. Mariana told me: this is like a war inside your body, it is difficult to decide, but finally you opt for abortion if there is no other way out, while you know that you kill a soul, and this will affect you all along. And she stressed that there are many around you, as your husband might be, who he does not understand you, and who are ready to make you feel as a murderer. Mariana was happy in her marriage and was very proud of her daughter and son. She wanted them be more open about sexual matters. However, she confessed that, even them, who were using condoms, did not talk about this openly. This is how it happens in our community – people do not talk about this, one may only hear whispering around. Here it is a shame to wear a short shirt or pant, children are not supposed to see you even partly naked. Mariana told me to try imagine how hard it was to sustain these moral bodily values under those hard material conditions, under which five, six or even more persons are living in one and only room. Even for me it was a mystery, she said, how do they manage to make sex – I asked them and they told me that we waited children went to school, or we pretended washing and sent them out from the room. In her conclusion, Mariana stressed that if this would be up to her, she would interdict abortions, nevertheless she would invent a contraceptive method that was safe and woman-friendly. She also foresaw a world where people could talk about their sexuality openly and freely, and doctors would listen to Roma women and would inform and advise them accordingly and correctly.*

## ■ ■ ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

By the time being, abortion was requested by women as a last resort. Otherwise, the “option” for this intervention harmonizes with the dominant strategy of frequenting physicians. Going to the hospital (and especially for reasons related to reproductive organs) is an unpleasant event linked to several taboos regarding body and sexuality. Furthermore, thinking and acting preventively is not really part of the dominant health culture in the Romanian society. Under these conditions abortion (as a concrete intervention in the case of an emergency) remains more “favored” than the use of contraceptives (which imposes, among others, a regular control and supervision, and involve more costs). But again, taking the decision is not that easy. It is not only the matter of having access to legal abortion. Most importantly, it is an undergoing negotiation marked by emotional ties, social relations that matter, fears, religious beliefs, and practical concerns.

*Magdalena was a woman in her early thirties. She was a newcomer in this community, moved here from another town by marrying Ioan. By the time I met her she was having four children and ten abortions. I committed so many sins, she said, however, when I remained pregnant with this last boy, I did not want him, was planning for looking for a job as far as my daughters became big enough. My husband wanted me to keep the child, saying that he had the feeling that this one was supposed to be a boy, and he wanted a boy. But I prepared going to abortion. Washed up, prepared my staff for the next day, and went to bed. In that night I dreamed that Ioan was kicking me out from our home together with my children, and I wondered around in the middle of nowhere, when someone whom I knew came saying, I can help you making you a house. And we started digging, and excavated and excavated till I realized I was alone and could not go out any more from the deep abyss. And then I heard a voice from above: woman, you made this cave for yourself for ever. And then, scared as I was, woke up and changed my mind. That was how Sebi, my son, remained in life. Magdalena was aware of her dilemma and health issue: I would not want having more children, but I cannot use any of the contraceptives, as far as I am having several medical problems.*

The act of abortion sometimes is considered to be the manifestation of women’s power, a moment that is controlled by her, and something that might be done secretly. I was told by Adriana, a woman in her twenties, who abandoned school after the sixth grade: *I do not tell him about this, this is my problem, and I have to deal with it.* Paradoxically, this kind of power is “achieved” by a woman due to the fact that, as she said, *my man failed to take care of me as he was supposed to do, or maybe he wanted to let me pregnant without my will.*

At my turn I could conclude, that under the conditions of a shortage micro-economy within which these women lived, or of a bad social relation that threatened even their bodily safety the resort to abortion was about escaping from further troubles. If this was the case, its side effects were less or not at all considered, they lied far away from the necessities of the elementary survival. The prevalence of abortion over the use of contraceptives sometimes looked to fit well into the culture of “living in the present”, as a reaction to conditions

characterized by hopelessness. The use of contraceptives supposed a long-time planning and, as such, was unimaginable within a life marked by the stringent need of surviving from a day to another.

On the other hand, Roma cultural values put on women the burden of having as many children as they could, so becoming pregnant seemed to be – on the side of the woman – a “strategy” for corresponding to social expectancies. Furthermore, abortion remained her ultimate freedom for escaping from other’s control, or an alternative by which she expressed her choice of not keeping the pregnancy under the circumstances of her immediate material conditions, social relations and emotional attachments. I might conclude that abortions and the use of modern contraceptives may be a subversive or at least alternative practice of Romni developed under conditions of poverty, by which they were trying to resist to the burdens imposed on them by their own community, but also by the broader society.

But were they controlling through this the bodies of their own? Roma women’s narratives did not shape the arguments for their reproductive decisions in terms of bodies or of the right to control their own bodies. They mostly emphasized their material conditions and emotional ties. But as far as human bodies were materially and socially embedded into their context, and the latter was inscribed into them, one might affirm that by deciding on the mentioned factors they were actually deciding on their own bodies. And eventually, by their reproductive practices it was exactly their bodies through which they controlled the elements of their life that they recognized of having a power on them. Accordingly, they might not have had the power of changing these structural factors, but definitely they possessed the authority to deal with them in their own way. Moreover, if one has a look on their broader discursive environment, he/she might conclude that the sense of having the right to control their own bodies might not be easily developed in a regime dominated by the frame of the “right to culture” and by a particular “culture of reproductive rights”.

## THE “RIGHT TO CULTURE” AND ROMA WOMEN

In 1993 a Resolution of the Council of Europe declared Roma/Gypsies/Travelers to be “a true European minority,” insofar as they were identified in almost every European country, totaling a population of 7 to 9 million, or even 12 million according to other estimates.<sup>6</sup> During their accession process, countries of Central and Eastern Europe were closely monitored by different European and other international human rights bodies. For Romania, “the Roma issue” became a focus for their international reputation. In this country, Roma were recognized as national minorities (therefore as the subjects of minority rights) only after the collapse of socialism, but – due to the historical legacies of their position in society – they were hardly

<sup>6</sup> As far as Romania is considered, in the 2002 census 2.5 percent of a total population of approximately 21,6 million identified themselves as Roma, but unofficial estimates of their actual figure range between 1,8 – 2,5 million.

perceived as a nationalized category of people. The perception of Roma as “non-national” (but also as a European minority) might be explained by the fact that their “national toolkit” is less developed, and they do not have an equivalent for the “mother country” that all the classical national minorities from the region are possessing, or – differently put – they are state-less in this sense. Roma who were not assimilated were racialized and classified according to differences attributed to their “blood” or utterly different “culture” (which was considered pre-modern).

In response, Roma leaders often perceived and presented their claims in cultural or social terms, strongly debating among themselves about what was the “authentic” way of representing “the Roma issue”. Stressing the social dimension of “the Roma problem” equated the Roma population with people living in poverty, which contributed to the “Romanisation” of poverty and *vice versa*, thereby reinforcing the negative contents attached to the attributes, activities, and roles associated with “Roma” or to “people living in poverty”. And at the same time he/she may reproduce the idea according to which the majority is tolerant and has no cultural prejudices that are having impact on the life opportunities of the Roma minority. On the other hand, if one conceptualizes Roma as an ethno-cultural group he/she may not be able to discover the socio-economic mechanisms that exclude people perceived as Roma from access to quality services, may contribute to the ghettoisation of this minority group and also may enforce the belief in the “cultural essence” that prescribes destinies and opportunities regardless of the social relations and economic conditions within which these cultural traits happen to develop.

To the extent to which the “right to culture” element and the recognition demands are prevailing over the claims for social redistribution for any reasons, patriarchal discourses are strengthened within Roma politics. But even more, as many scholars observe in different parts of the world,<sup>7</sup> the reference to the gendered, and especially to the significance of female bodies there is always present in Roma self-identification, and not only at the level of high politics but also of everyday life. In the process of dealing with the outside world, of positively valuing themselves in a marginal position, of constructing and maintaining the ethnic boundaries between themselves and outsiders, and in order to maintain the sense of being different, and also proud about being better than the *Gažo*, Roma communities make use of gender differentiations, including notions of pollution and cleanness strongly linked to women, women’s bodies and sexual desire. The ideology of bodily shame has a role in sustaining the boundaries between Roma and non-Roma, but also the internal gender hierarchies. It is not only a cultural representation and system of classification, but also a form of social control and coercion.

No wonder that, under the conditions of the predominance of a culturalist discourse and movement that happens to be patriarchal, Roma women’s organizing lacks recognition and financial resources, and obviously their themes are not considered as priorities, or are even treated as taboo, while the effort itself of handling them is labeled as an anti-Gypsy practice “invented artificially” under the negative influence of

<sup>7</sup> See Sutherland 1975 (1986), Okely 1983, Stewart 1997, Gay y Blasco 1999.

*Gazo* feminism. However, since 2000 some Roma women activists were broadening the agenda of Roma politics, more or less after, or at the same time with the openings of international organizations towards these issues.<sup>8</sup> The Report from 1999 prepared for the Council of Europe (Bițu 1999) pointed also out how at the hearings Roma women mostly emphasized their ethnic and racial discrimination, but were also trying to make a balance among the ethnic demands and women's concerns, like in the following affirmation: "the development of Roma/Gypsy women should be in harmony with their more positive traditional cultural values and in accordance with their vision of life and of the world." This shows the particular way in which Roma women activists understand to locate themselves between two cultures, "the traditional" and "the modern", but also reflects how the "right to culture" shapes the thinking about and acting around the universal human rights of women.

## THE "CULTURE OF REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS" AND ROMA WOMEN

At the beginning of the 1990s, international organizations have begun to recognize reproductive health and control as issues of human rights, central to women's well-being and crucial for achieving gender equity and social justice. In Romania, the abolition of the Ceaușist anti-abortion law (a law that conferred, among others, the specificity of Romania among the by-then socialist states) was amid the very first issues on which, in December 1989, the first post-socialist political body was focusing its attention. Abortion became legal if performed by a medical doctor upon a woman's request up to 14 weeks from the date of conception, no spousal consent, no mandatory counseling, no waiting period was required. In 1990 the number of registered abortions increased to 992.300 (from 193.100 in 1989), but the number of maternal death resulted from abortion decreased to 181 (from the registered 545 in 1989). Eventually the international pressure (like the financial support coming from the United Nation's Population Fund in 1997 and the need to harmonize the national legislation with the European one) and the local civic initiatives forced the Romanian government to introduce on their agenda the issue of reproductive health. As a result, some formal structures were constituted across the health care system and (but only in 1999!) family planning was integrated into the basic package of services provided to the population. The Strategy of the Ministry of Health on the domain of reproduction and sexuality was launched in 2003, as a result of which courses on family planning for physicians and the distribution of

<sup>8</sup> One should mention here the programs of the Soros Foundation/ Open Society Institute, like the launching of the Roma Women's Initiative in 1999, and the publication of the report 'Broadening the Agenda' in 2006. But also the creation of the International Roma Women's Network in 2003 as a network bringing Roma women from 18 Eastern and Western European countries together 'to lobby governments for the rights of Roma women and increase the visibility of Roma culture'. And last but not least to the initiatives of the Council of Europe from 1995 and 1999 that aimed to give voice to Roma women.

free contraceptives started. The quite late and small attention paid to women's reproductive health talks about the broader phenomenon of structural gender discrimination observable in today's Romania.

The regulations from above were conceived to universally serve each and any woman, and seemingly were ethnic-neutral. But one needs to observe that they actually were ethnic-blind because did not pay attention at all to differences among women in terms of how these directives will be applied on them at the local levels also depending on their ethnicity, class and age. The reproductive rights conceived as universal human rights for women, once entering into a system of social relations underlyed by cultural conceptions (like anti-gypsy racism), may be used against women perceived through ethno-cultural and so-called racial characteristics as a "threat", and, as a result Roma women might become subjects to racialized gender discrimination and gendered racial discrimination.

The pro-natalist concerns expressed by some Roma leaders, at their turn, reproduce the subordinated position of Romni from which it is very difficult to act as autonomous subjects entitled to the *de facto* use of their reproductive rights (even if they are assured by the country's laws). One may understand that the concerns of the former may have their function in the case of a vulnerable community aiming to defend its threatened identity on the base of culturally valued traditions. But he/she also should observe how – in such context – women may be turned into instruments of defense in front of the racist practices directed against the community. And eventually may realize why the issue of reproductive control is so sensitive in the case of Roma (but in fact it is sensitive in the case of any social group during times when it wants to prove its strength through demographic indicators). Rights conceived as women's universal human rights are not applied as abstract rights as far as the subjects, on which they should be applied are not abstract individuals and all this is not happening in neutral socio-political spaces. They are always understood and used through "culture" that is through what people consider as being "normal" and "natural" to do as people of a certain kind. Due to the prevalence of the ethnic identification above the gender one, "universal rights" are not affecting Roma women directly as women, but through the "right to culture" or through their belonging to a "culture", and cannot function otherwise but through the local means and meanings of reproductive culture.

## **ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

By analyzing reproduction as a social, economic, cultural and political phenomenon affected by inequalities and processes of exclusion and discrimination (after Ginsburg and Rayna 1995), my research could address Roma women's access to reproductive health as a "small problem" through which I was able to question one of the "large issues" of the post-socialist transformations, i.e. the restructuring of the social order after the collapse of the socialist regime. This included the emergence of new inequalities and/or the reshaping of the

older ones that existed also in the previous regime and even before. Under the circumstances of evolving market economy and privatization, different resources and access to services became unequally distributed among people of different ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status. As a result, some social categories became more and more excluded from access to decent employment, proper housing, education and health, or services of a good quality, one of the mostly affected social categories being the Roma women exposed to racism, sexism and classism.

My research proved how Roma women living in poverty were affected by the transforming socio-political regime that included the changes of reproductive policies and of the public health care system (and altogether the neglect of women's reproductive health), but also by the racist prejudices and attitudes inscribed into the practices of the health care providers, and by the norms of their immediate communities and families. By revealing how all these mechanisms shaped Roma women's access to reproductive health (which was strongly linked to the exclusions happening on other domains, too, like housing, education and employment) I was also offering a view on the mechanisms themselves and could as well as theorize on the relationship between system and agency, on how the macro processes of the political economy are (re)produced at numerous micro levels, and on how several local, national and international factors are interlinked in the production of the unequal access to, among others, reproductive health.

By considering the issue of reproductive health in the framework of the human rights discourse (and in particular by analyzing the social life of rights in the context of power regimes), one may be able to investigate through Roma women's reproductive rights the whole state of the arts on the domain of human rights in a post-socialist context, but also might have a contribution to a critical anthropology of human rights (Goodale 2006). And up to this, he/she could also envision a form of an engaged feminist anthropology that links the critical approach towards the post-socialist legalistic/formalistic human rights regime (which mostly focuses on cultural rights and on the political-civic rights of the individual, while neglecting the enforcement of laws and the whole range of socio-economic rights), with practicing human rights as a social critique. The latter might be a tool for creating solidarity around the ideal of universal human dignity, for claiming social justice, and for empowering people's everyday sense of justice, fairness and criticism directed against the oppressive structures of political economies and cultural representations. An engaged feminist anthropology of human rights – using as a starting point its aim to improve women's social status by different means of action research – would be one that could promote (in theory and in practice), under the condition of a post-socialist context, the ideal of a society as a just collectivity within which each individual participates on an equal foot on the creation of an order that equally benefits all regardless and despite of their differences.

In the specific socio-cultural context and political framework of post-socialism I am arguing for the possibility of using human rights practice as a socio-political critique and as a tool for empowering people's sense of entitlement to a decent life, and also for the chance of making appeal to the legitimacy of human rights discourse in order to formulate demands for both redistributive justice and cultural recognition. I would call this form of engagement a strategic human rights activism that is aware of the limits of the human rights discourse, is

critical about the current functioning of the global human rights regimes, but – while reframing and re-envisioning it – it uses this talk for addressing particular and pragmatic problems, because it has political legitimacy and social resonance that may connect people following common aims. Furthermore, I am subscribing to the opinion, according to which – without idealizing and reifying them – human rights discourses and practices might be used in many instances not as tools of radically transforming the unjust political economies, but at least as instruments for raising awareness about the need of achieving for all social and political goods, like justice, freedom, access to decent work, and emancipation from discriminatory power regimes.

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J. MAKI MOTAPANYANE

## ■ NOTES ON AGENCY, EMPOWERMENT AND FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

- *The study centres around the conceptual framework of a research project conducted in South Africa in 2008. Highlighted are several points of connection to current feminist research on Romani women and communities. These include the prominent place of intersectionality in attempts to make visible the particular struggles and agency of women inhabiting spaces of profound marginalization, and the use of this concept as a vehicle towards expanded definitions of feminism and feminist consciousness. At issue is also the politics of representation at the level of formal political organizations and international institutions, where policy is constructed in the name of women who are given little opportunity to interject in the set terms of representation or overall agendas.*
- *Studiul pivotează în jurul unui cadru conceptual elaborat pentru un proiect de cercetare derulat în Africa de Sud în anul 2008. Articolul subliniază mai multe puncte de legătură pe care le are cu cercetarea feministă actuală privind femeile și comunitățile rome. Acestea includ locul central ocupat de intersecționalitate în încercarea de a face vizibile luptele specifice și acțiunile femeilor care populează spațiile de marginalizare extremă, și utilizarea acestui concept ca vehicul în definirea mai largă, mai cuprinzătoare a feminismului și conștiinței feministe. Se discută, de asemenea, politica de reprezentare la nivelul organizațiilor formale politice și al instituțiilor internaționale, în cazul în care politica este elaborată în numele femeilor cărora le sunt date puține ocazii de a se implica în definirea termenelor reprezentării sau ale agendei generale.*
- *O dumajpen si pala jekh koncepto (gindo), kerdo vash jiekh proieкто so kerdeaspe ande Sund-Africa ande 2008. O articolo vazdel maj buth butya so maladion kodola butyanca spala save voj rodel akana pala o fenismo, e romnea thaj e romane komunitetura. Kadala si pala o mashkarudno zumajpen te sikavelpe o specifiko marimos thaj so keren pe kado e jiuvea so jivin ando baro cioripen, thaj te len kado koncepto te hatyaren maj mishto the den jekh maj bari definicia pala o feminismo thaj pala o feministo gindimos. Kerelpe sfato/duma pala e politika sar te reprezentinpen e jiuvea ande politika thaj ande e buth-themutne institucie, kana e politike si kerdine ando anav e jiuveage saven si len cera shansa/droma te inkeren pengi rig, te reprezentin pengo interesu*

My paper relies on observations gleaned from archival research conducted in South Africa in the summer of 2008. During this time I visited archives in three regions of South Africa: Gauteng province, the Eastern Cape and Western Cape. The aim was to explore epistemological questions regarding the knowledge produced about African women's relationship to feminism in South Africa during a large part of the twentieth century. I was particularly interested in thinking about feminism and feminist consciousness in the context of what Gayatri Spivak terms *subalternity*, women cut off from all access to social mobility.<sup>2</sup> My guiding questions included: How do we come to recognize and know feminism in any given context? What is feminist consciousness? From where do we glean our feminist lessons, and what political motivations do our answers to these questions reveal?

The terms oppression<sup>3</sup>, agency, empowerment, and collective action appear here as part of a diverse feminist context of intellectual debate and writing. In my research, I examined agency as the power to act in the preservation of one's individual or group interests based on a politicized awareness of oneself in the world. This definition works against the notion of a stifled intelligence and political immaturity among impoverished African women. Thus, empowerment is discussed as a sense of taking some manner of control over one's life, acting decisively to articulate one's humanity and struggling for related rights and entitlements. The forms of collective action I analyzed in the archives involved diverse groups of women (predominantly African) organizing as 'women' at a local level, and for the purpose of improving some aspect of their socio-economic or political condition. In my analysis, I centred three concepts, and did so as a means of critically engaging an existing historical reading that has often written feminist consciousness out of the history of African women's activism in South Africa, or, limited feminist inclinations to the sphere of formal political organizations. These three concepts are *gender consciousness*, the distinction between *feminism* and *feminist*, and *intersectionality*, all of which I elaborate on below.

Although this piece is focused on analysis coming out of research in the South African context, its inquiry has relevance for several features of more current feminist writing on Romani women<sup>4</sup>. Alexandra Oprea, for example, criticizes scholars of Romani culture and gender dynamics for making "blanket statements about Romani women that deny the existence of resistance on their part", challenging their agency and assuming

<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'African' to refer to descendants of the indigenous populations of Southern and South Africa: Khoisan, Sotho, Tswana, Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Bapedi, Tsonga, Swazi and Ndebele peoples. My use of the term retains the context of its widespread use in South Africa during the twentieth century. The identifier 'black' is also in more common use among descendants of Southern African indigenous groups, as a greater number of white South Africans adopt the continental identity 'African'.

<sup>2</sup> See Gayatri Spivak, "The Trajectory of the Subaltern in my Work."

<sup>3</sup> To devalue subjective experience based on gender; prevent equal access to public resources; coerce rigid physical, social and professional performances of subservience; the unjust exercise of authority, to engage in dominance and tyranny.

<sup>4</sup> See Nicoleta Bițu, "The Challenges of and for Romani Women."; Jennifer Erickson, "Reflections on Fieldwork with Romani Women: Race, Class, and Feminism in Bosnia-Herzegovina."; Alexandra Oprea, "The Erasure of Romani Women in Statistical Data: Limits of the Race versus Gender Approach." and "The Arranged Marriage of Ana Maria Cioaba, Intra-Community Oppression and Romani Feminist Ideals: Transcending the 'Primitive Culture' Argument."

the absence of feminist aspirations among Romani women as a whole.<sup>5</sup> Significantly, Oprea charges these scholarly approaches with reinforcing a perceived white Euro-American monopoly over feminist ideals.<sup>6</sup> Intersectionality, as developed by African-American feminists, a feature that I place as central to the feminist actions of African women in South Africa during the twentieth century, has interestingly also been referred to by Oprea as a useful conceptual guide in identifying current gaps in data collection and knowledge production on Romani women. She highlights a “limited feminist ideology and antiracist politics” as key features of the ways that the conventions of data collection and analysis among international organizations, NGOs and some scholars continue to marginalize Romani women in policy recommendations.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Oprea relies on African-American legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work on intersectionality as exemplary of a more effective conceptual approach to thinking about ‘empowerment’ in the context of Romani women.

Other points of connection between feminist work on Romani women’s agency and activism and the South Africa-based discussion presented here include the identified tension between Romani women’s rights activism and the largely male dominated Roma rights movement more generally.<sup>8</sup> Members of the European Romani Rights Center suggest that patriarchal ‘tradition’ has occupied a considerable position in the efforts of male leaders to defend Romani identity and culture<sup>9</sup>; and Oprea describes the dilemma that such dynamics present for Romani women, who find themselves in the position of having “to choose between [their] gender and [their] race in an environment where [these] are constructed as mutually exclusive.” As Oprea convincingly surmises, “Essentializing Romani culture and Romani women’s reactions to subordination leads to asserting that resistance/feminist ideals come from the outside.”<sup>10</sup> I argue in the context of South Africa, that part of the effort in troubling such conclusions necessarily involves de-centering formal organizations and large scale institutions, politicians and professionals, and established political discourse as the primary locales for gauging feminist consciousness. While Oprea and others may opine the challenges of mainstreaming Roma women’s rights at the level of international institutions and formal political organization, and particularly in terms of an intersectional approach, there remains the opportunity of articulating and supporting the myriad interjections and resistance made at the grassroots by feminist-inclined women both individually and collectively. This presents the challenge of unpacking the epistemological frameworks we use to construct notions of empowerment, by opening the field of knowledge production to multiple forms of meaning construction, particularly as these are formed among women in localized and more informal contexts.

<sup>5</sup> Oprea, “The Arranged Marriage of Ana Maria Cioaba”, 138.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>7</sup> In the sense that data on gender and ethnic minorities is collected separately, leaving Romani women and their experiences invisible in both instances. See Oprea, “The Erasure of Romani Women in Statistical Data.”

<sup>8</sup> Editorial Team European Roma Rights Center, “Romani Women’s Rights.”

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Oprea, “The Arranged Marriage of Ana Maria Cioaba”, 140, brackets mine.

## SOUTH AFRICA IN FOCUS

In the case of South Africa, the paucity of multi-disciplinary research into manifestations of gender consciousness and associated agency in the daily lives of African women has unintentionally sustained the perceived historical monopoly of formal organizational structures and their most active agents over political thought and strategic action. An identifiable example of this is reflected in scholarship that has limited the wider population of women to 'subjects' of the official campaigns of formal women's organizations.<sup>11</sup> This version tells us that African women during much of the twentieth century were to be mobilized and drawn into the mandates of existing organizations through formal affiliation, membership and attendance. The internal tensions and debates around gender are presented in terms of a radical, gender-aware leadership and a traditionally-inclined membership. The leadership concedes in the interest of maintaining membership numbers and is resolved to politicizing around everyday needs - an assumed loss of radicality in mobilizing against gender oppression. By implication, the supposed failure, historically speaking, of African women to develop feminist consciousness in South Africa is presented as both a consequence of male political resistance, and of widespread rejection and/or complacency on the part of a large portion of the female population.<sup>12</sup> Taken to its logical conclusion, this interpretation reinforces biologically inclined constructions of the anti-feminist 'nature' of African women. Examining the dynamic between gender consciousness and the ideology of feminism in this context is a step towards troubling the conceptual basis of such conclusions. Relatedly, Belinda Bozzoli, in Gramscian fashion, suggests that

the raw material of 'common sense' comes to be shaped and molded only at particular times into the finished product of social ideology.

We need to ask: what have the forces been that have shaped experience, how have they been expressed as consciousness, and at what points has that consciousness coalesced into ideology?<sup>13</sup>

In attempting to widen the theoretical framework within which the history of 'women's empowerment' and activism in South Africa has been represented, I have relied on the aforementioned three concepts: gender consciousness, feminist/feminism and intersectionality. I employ the term 'gender consciousness' as the relationship of women's stated beliefs, assessments and judgments (in life-history interviews for instance), to an awareness of the dominant forces and ideologies shaping their experiences; articulations that reveal women's sense of themselves in relation to larger political processes. This understanding of consciousness can be used to contemplate women's awareness of themselves as gendered beings, and the forms this takes

<sup>11</sup> See Cheryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* and Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Hassim's *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*.

<sup>13</sup> Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, 2.

on in day-to-day activities and decision-making. Teresa De Laurentis describes this as ‘self-consciousness’, an “apprehension of self in reality”, also a practice Catherine Mackinnon has termed “the critical method of feminism.”<sup>14</sup> While De Laurentis relates self-consciousness to “reading, speaking, and listening to one another”<sup>15</sup>, the conceptual role and utility of the term should not depend on women’s literacy or collective gathering. The feminist elements in the ability of African women in South Africa to think through the ways they were perceived ‘as women’, to identify injustices they experienced in connection to these constructions of their womanhood, and to act in struggle against associated hardships, are recognizable within a theoretical position that acknowledges the immense structural constraints within which such forms of agency manifested. Therefore, the suggested approach towards the concepts *gender consciousness* and *feminist* is not predicated on women’s somewhat formal instruction (through literature) in gender oppression nor on whether or not meetings were held to discuss the subject. Doing so would only reinforce the practice of studying women’s thought and practices based on terms developed for Euro-American socio-political contexts.

My use of the terms feminist and feminism in conducting research in South Africa on African women’s political agency involved differentiating political awareness of oneself as being constructed as a gendered being (which can also be thought of as *feminist* consciousness), from feminist consciousness that is explicitly articulated at a wider ideological level (*feminism*) in the political agendas and mobilizational tactics of formal political groupings. Feminist consciousness can consist of a political awareness of the inequities associated with the social construction of womanhood, an awareness that does not necessarily seek resolution in conventional political practices or forms of organization. Feminism here refers to the consolidation of feminist consciousness within political spheres of formal organization and theory making. The distinction made between feminist and feminism aims at teasing out the specificity of the socio-political context. It responds to Shireen Hassim’s assertion that “feminism and the ideological content of feminist consciousness should not be specified a priori according to the abstract definitions of universalist theory but should be defined in the context of particular social formations and should have resonance in the historical experience and political culture of specific societies.”<sup>16</sup> In this statement, Hassim draws on the work of Chandra Mohanty<sup>17</sup> and touches on the problem of universalist applications of theoretical models that are operationalized internationally as a means of distinguishing ‘genuine’ feminist movements from women’s movements that ‘just’ politicize around practical needs.<sup>18</sup>

Splitting feminism in this way has had two problematic results in relation to the South African context. First, asserting the historical failure of the South African women’s movement in always explicitly mobilizing for and achieving a complete transformation of gender relations in the country, an outcome that most First World

<sup>14</sup> Teresa De Laurentis, *Feminist studies, critical studies*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Hassim, *Women’s Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> In Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, *Third world women and the politics of feminism*.

<sup>18</sup> See Maxine Molyneux, *Women’s movements in international perspective* and Hassim’s *Women’s Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*.

women's movements have also failed to secure, has had the effect of reinforcing the notion of 'Third World limitations' without critically interrogating the evaluative terms deployed. If the political structures of larger women's organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) in the U.S. and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) in Canada are used as the complete measure of women's progressive political participation, and of the presence, successes and failures of feminist consciousness based on the ability of these organizations to fundamentally transform gender relations within their societies (the measure that has been applied to the Federation of South African Women)<sup>19</sup>, then we will have to conclude again and again that a 'genuine' feminist politics has ultimately failed to implement itself in most nation-states.

In the South African context, a second problem arising from the 'strategic interest' versus 'politicized need' division is that this model negates feminist approaches in which "an incremental, hidden form of subversion [is] enacted to protect families and communities rather than to undermine them."<sup>20</sup> The nature of African women's collectivist struggles for the right to familial well-being and security in South Africa is not without its own divisions and tensions, for example, the ways in which factors prioritized in the struggle for 'the right to family' and the very definition of 'family' have differed among generations of women. Nonetheless, the above quote by feminist scholar Amrita Basu hints at a perceptive argument made elsewhere by South African gender scholars who view efforts like the 1912/1913 anti-pass demonstrations as reflective of "African and coloured women...assert[ing] themselves not only against the British colonial government but also against patriarchal assumptions and structures within their own communities."<sup>21</sup> This is an unusual and useful reading of the 1912/1913 resistances, which have often been represented as highly conservative maternal undertakings having no connection, intentional or otherwise, to the disruption of patriarchal norms.<sup>22</sup>

The third concept that I believe aides in the exercise of widening readings of the history of feminist consciousness among African women in South Africa is intersectionality. I use the term according to three principal features outlined by Amanda Kemp, Nozizwe Madlala, Asha Moodley and Elaine Salo as characteristic of South African feminist organizing. These include an understanding of gender as inter-constituted with race and class; a commitment to feminist collective action as necessarily also anti-colonial in scope; and challenges to black patriarchies that engage black women and men's<sup>23</sup> history as allies in the struggle against apartheid.<sup>24</sup> I deploy intersectionality to underscore the multifaceted understanding many South African women have of gender oppression. Indeed, it is also a primary reason so much of South Africa's history of gender activism has been written as non- or anti-feminist. Although intersectionality in North American feminisms has long

<sup>19</sup> The Federation of South African Women was formed in 1954 as a national non-racial anti-apartheid women's organization.

<sup>20</sup> Amrita Basu, *The challenge of local feminisms*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Amanda Kemp, Nozizwe Madlala, Asha Moodley, and Elaine Salo, "The Dawn of a New Day", 142, brackets mine.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Sheila Meintjes, "Gender, nationalism and transformation".

<sup>23</sup> Here the term black engages the understanding

<sup>24</sup> Kemp, Madlala, Moodley & Salo, "The Dawn of a New Day", 133.

been accepted as an insightful form of feminist analysis, a point argued convincingly by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks<sup>25</sup>, its practice among African-American women in the mid-twentieth century was also one of the main bases upon which the idea of their collective anti-feminism was sustained within the mainstream of America's second-wave women's movement. For instance, the following quote from a 1989 study by Alice Echols on the history of radical feminism appears in a piece by Rosalyn Baxandall on the myth of African-American women's anti-feminism (both scholars having been active during the second wave in the U.S. and committed to recording its history). Echols is quoted thus:

Of course, from the early days of the movement there were black women like Florynce Kennedy, Frances Beale, Cel(l)estine Ware, and Patricia Robinson who tried to show the connections between racism and male dominance. But most politically active black women, even if they criticized the black movement for sexism, chose not to become involved in the feminist struggle.<sup>26</sup>

Baxandall's response to what she reads as an erroneous assumption on the part of Echols regarding black women's disinterest in feminist politics leaves me with interesting questions for the assessments that have been made of the capacity for feminist thought and politics in the South African context. Baxandall responds, "perhaps if scholars expanded their definitions of feminism to include women engaged in self-help and neighbourhood action, MAW<sup>27</sup> and the Mount Vernon/New Rochelle<sup>28</sup> women would be considered among the pantheon of feminist foremothers."<sup>29</sup> Benita Roth, also referring to the mid-late twentieth century history of feminist politics in the U.S. argues that "when feminists aim to change 'gender relations', they are not precluded from also asking for the rights due them as members of racial/ethnic groups or classes", adding that "feminists of colour saw themselves as belonging to a different movement than white feminists did, a self-perception that should be taken seriously; understanding why they saw themselves as different requires taking a feminist intersectional approach to the matter of oppressions."<sup>30</sup>

For both Baxandall and Roth, the historical reading of African-American women as inherently anti-feminist is the product of intellectual failure to critically grapple with difference. South Africa's mid-twentieth

<sup>25</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex", Patricia Hill Collins, *Black feminist thought*, and bell hooks, *Feminist theory: From margin to center*.

<sup>26</sup> Rosalyn Baxandall, "Re-visioning the women's liberation movement's narrative", 241.

<sup>27</sup> MAW- Self-help group Mother Alone Working (MAW), with a membership of black and white working-class women. Founded in 1965, this San Francisco group organized summer camps for children, provided and advocated for daycare, held workshops for women on financial management and provided job training and food stamps.

<sup>28</sup> Mount Vernon/New Rochelle group -also known as The Damned. Founded in 1960 by Patricia Robinson as a self-help group focused on black children's development and well being, and black women's empowerment by supporting them in their struggles with poverty, under-education and single motherhood. For more information on both groups and a view of the discussion within context, see Baxandall, "Re-visioning the women's liberation movement's narrative".

<sup>29</sup> Baxandall, "Re-visioning the women's liberation movement's narrative", 241.

<sup>30</sup> Benita Roth, *Separate roads to feminism*, 9, 11.

century discursive version of intersectionality, termed “triple oppression”, has been shown by Gertrude Fester to have come under heavy criticism. Widely cited researchers of the South African women’s movement, Julia Wells and Cheryl Walker have both suggested that at the height of its use during the twentieth century, this term was “theoretically vacuous” and “rhetorical[ly] commonplace.”<sup>31</sup> This is a weighty charge indeed, given the long history of measures taken on the part of women’s organizations and their memberships to mobilize based on an acute understanding of how the triple oppressions of racism, capitalist exploitation and sexism intersected to frame women’s experiences and interests, and how resulting differences could be strategically used to argue the benefits of political coalition. If however, men’s political interests are accepted as having had consummate power over the political consciousness of African women in South Africa, then it would indeed seem that thought and action framed by the concept ‘triple oppression’ during the twentieth century led to no significant demystification of the powers of oppression operating within that national context.

The period of democratic transition, most often credited with the awakening of feminist consciousness in South Africa, has been criticized for the neo-liberal and free-market leanings it reveals (best exemplified by the shift in governing economic policy from the redistributive RDP to the privatization inclined GEAR)<sup>32</sup>. These criticisms lament the loss of “bold revolutionary visions”<sup>33</sup>, pointing to the marginalization of past political ideals and agendas understood to have had the best potential of delivering substantive equality in the present. Seldom do such justifiably nostalgic references invoke the particular theoretical and mobilizational influences of the women’s movement on democratic visions of the future. By implication, the most politically inspired ideas of the national liberation struggle continue to be historicized as entirely male contributions. Within this context of male history, contemporary challenges and disappointments are discursively examined in contrast to a past in which African women are implicitly assumed to have offered no significant ideological contribution. In the same vein, current feminist dilemmas, significantly implicated in this oft-criticized shift towards neo-liberalism, are not considered in relation to a longer political history of gender consciousness, activism and theory production in South Africa – a history that precedes the transitional period. My archival and other research revealed a wealth of examples featuring African women’s informal and often short-term collective resistance that engaged the issue of gender oppression through slogans and boycotts, uses of the body (exposing breasts, deploying bareness), force (wielding sticks, destroying property) and active

<sup>31</sup> Gertrude Fester, “Merely Mothers Perpetuating Patriarchy?”, 210-211.

<sup>32</sup> The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was implemented by the ANC with Mandela as President in 1994. The economic policy was to work to redress the socio-economic legacy of apartheid. It was designed to combine liberal economic policies for growth with measures to support social services and ameliorate poverty. In 1996, South Africa’s Minister of Finance Trevor Manuel introduced the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR). This economic program encourages privatization in South Africa and promotes trade liberalization to attract foreign investment. It has been widely criticized for reinforcing the existing disparities in wealth along old racial lines, despite benefits accrued to a small group of middle-class black South Africans. See for example Patrick Bond, *Elite transition*; Ashwin Desai, *We are the poor*; Nigel Gibson, *Challenging hegemony*; and Shamim Meer, “Experiences of Democracy in South Africa from a Feminist Perspective”.

<sup>33</sup> Meer, “Experiences of Democracy in South Africa from a Feminist Perspective”, 97.

social networks (savings/money lending groups, burial societies, church and social groups). Oral history texts and life-history narratives also revealed political awareness and agency in women's life-strategies and daily decision-making.

While it is clear that some African women explicitly rejected feminism<sup>34</sup>, and one does not want to impose a loaded label on historical, political and cultural contexts in which this language may not in fact have been in use, I maintain that the project of reading resistance to gender oppression in the context of subalternity remains an important one, particularly when this is done against the grain of ideological convention that reinforces the monopoly of white America and Europe over political intellect.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The discussion presented here highlights several points of connection between my research in South Africa and current interjections being made by feminist scholars of gender in Romani communities. The politics of representation ranks high as a point of concern in both instances. Large-scale organizations and institutions have been shown to discursively dominate the landscape of representation. The objects of representation, in this case Romani women and impoverished African women, are often perceived to be politically immature and lacking in agency to the extent that these terms are identified according to certain norms of political behaviour - such as the use of established and recognizable political labels and identities, and the vocal support of familiar political positions. Where the political agency of the women in question falls out of the purview of these established models of political expression and participation, the women are not viewed as an obvious source of useful information on policy and research aims. Oprea argues that scholarship like Isabel Fonseca's, *Bury Me Standing*, and Jeff Timmerman's "When Her Feet Touch the Ground: Conflict between the Roma Familistic Custom of Arranged Juvenile Marriage and Enforcement of International Human Rights Treaties", illustrates this politics of representation, particularly, through simplistic and essentializing conclusions - for example, "*the Roma community itself openly embraces juvenile arranged marriage.*"<sup>35</sup> The multiple sites of resistance to and discord with this assessment in Romani communities, are supplanted

<sup>34</sup> Leading anti-apartheid figure Frene Ginwala, who began identifying explicitly as a feminist in the late 1980s and into the period of democratic transition in South Africa, was in the late 1970s and early 1980s vocally suspicious of 'feminism'. Viewing feminism as a Eurocentric movement focused on gender inequalities between the sexes above all else, Ginwala found such an approach ill fitting to the interests of black South African women engaged in an anti-colonial struggle. Feminism, as she understood it in the early 1980s, would amount to black women fighting to be equal to black men under a racist regime. However, she, like others, was not opposed to basic feminist principles. And indeed, later on and in the context of an intersectional feminist approach, Ginwala became a vocal proponent of feminist goals. See Frene Ginwala, "Women in South Africa Shape Democratic Change."

<sup>35</sup> Jeff Timmerman quoted in Oprea, "The Arranged Marriage of Ana Maria Cioaba," 138, italics mine.

by academic authority and established 'ways of knowing'. In South Africa, the call for revisionist history is growing, particularly among feminist scholars discontent with the one-dimensional frame within which the history of feminism in the country has often been presented.<sup>36</sup>

Intersectionality has figured prominently in both my research and that of gender scholars who are concerned with the ways that Romani women fall through the cracks of international policy and data collection methods. In the context of my research in South Africa, using intersectionality as a guiding conceptual framework illuminated numerous articulations and acts in accordance with feminist principles that would have outside of this conceptual framework, likely been neglected as examples of agency. This is because feminist inclinations and consciousness have in the South African context, largely been evaluated on the basis of the prominent discursive and activist modes that feminism has displayed in Western Europe and North America. For Oprea, it appears that intersectionality is an important element among a number of other approaches aiming at more effective and inclusive analyses of marginality. The connections featured here raise interesting collaborative prospects for a diversity of scholars and activists committed to guiding knowledge production, political campaigning and policy construction along paths more attune to and inclusive of multiple meaning-construction.

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<sup>36</sup> Nomboniso Gaza, "Introduction: Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo, New Freedoms and New Challenges, a Continuing Dialogue"; and Fester, "Merely Mothers Perpetuating Patriarchy?", among others.

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TEODORA KRUMOVA

## ■ **BREAKING THE BARRIERS: THE STATUS OF ROMANI WOMEN IN BULGARIA**

- *This article is part of a bigger research initiated and carried out in 2008 by Center Amalipe with the support and cooperation of partnering local Roma organizations all over the country: World without Borders Association (Stara Zagora), Future Foundation (Rakitovo), District Romani Union (Burgas), Alternative (Byala Slatina), Youth network for development (Simitli), Neve Droma (Shumen) and a number of Roma experts. The research has been financed by the Roma Participation Program and the Public Health Program of Open Society Institute – Budapest. The research aimed at revealing the status, problems and needs of Romani women in Bulgaria with respect to factors such as type of settlement, Romani subgroup they belong to, age and marital status, which would create a clearer picture. A tailored approach has been extremely important because the specifics of the different sub-groups within the Roma community, for example, how they define different problems. Education, for example, is one of the harshest problems for Romani girls from the Burgudzii and Kaldarashi group while it is not such a severe problem for the Rudari and some of the Yerlii sub-groups who have many women university students. Moreover, the different Roma groups due to the difference in the intensity of their contacts with the macro-society are at a different level of modernization, which also influences their attitudes towards various issues. At the same time, a number of factors have an impact on forming the perceptions and concepts of the members of a community: religion, type of settlement, type of family, educational level, socio-economic status, and so on. This could result in diversity even within a single Roma community and in contrary situation in two neighboring settlements.*
- *Articolul face parte dintr-o cercetare mai amplă inițiată și realizată în 2008 de către Centrul Amalipe cu sprijinul și cooperarea organizațiilor partenere, organizații locale de romi din toată țara: Asociația Lumea Fără Granițe (Stara Zagora), Fundația Viitorul (Rakitovo), Uniunea Districtul Rom (Burgas), Alternative (Byala Slatina), Rețeaua de Tineret pentru Dezvoltare (Simitli), Neve Droma (Shumen) și un număr de experți romi. Cercetarea a fost finanțată prin Programul pentru participarea romilor și a programului de sănătate publică al Fundației pentru o Societate Deschisă - Budapesta. Scopul cercetării a fost reliefaea statutului, problemelor și nevoilor femeilor rome din Bulgaria în funcție*

*de anumiți factori cum ar fi rezidența, sub-grupul de Romi din care fac parte, vârsta și starea civilă. A fost extrem de important să adaptăm abordarea generală la specificul diferitelor sub-grupuri din cadrul comunității de romi, de exemplu, pentru a vedea cum definesc ele problemele. Educația, de exemplu, este unul dintre cele mai dificile probleme pentru fetele rome din grupurile Burgudzii și Kaldarashi, dar nu este o problemă atât de gravă pentru rudari și unele sub-grupuri de Yerlii din rândul cărora sunt multe femei studente. În plus, diferitele grupuri de romi sunt la un nivel diferit de modernizare, datorită intensității contactelor lor cu societatea în ansamblul ei, fapt ce influențează, de asemenea, atitudinea acestora față de diversele probleme. În același timp, o serie de factori au impact asupra formării percepțiilor și conceptelor în rândul membrilor unei comunități: religia, rezidența, structura familiei, nivelul de educație, statutul socio-economic și așa mai departe. Acest lucru duce la diversitate chiar într-o singură comunitate de romi nemaivorbind despre două localități învecinate.*

- *Kado artikolo si kotor andar jekh maj baro lil pala rodimata anglunisardo thaj kerdo de andar 2008 katar o Centro Amalipe, khetanes e romane organizacienta andar sa o them: Asociaci Luma bi Granicenta (Stara Zagora), So Avla Fundacia (Rakitovo), Unia Distrikto Romano (Burgas), Alternativa/ Avervaresar (Byala Slatina), Ternego linko vash o vazdimos(Simitli), Neve Droma(Shumen) thaj maj tibuth Romane ekspertura. Pe rodimata dinepe love katar o Roma Participacia Programo thaj o Publiko Sastipo katar Puterdi Soceteta Instituto/Open Society Institute – Budapesta. O rodimos mangel te sikavel o than/statuto, /bi-lashimata/problemura thaj manghimata e Romniange ande Bulgaria pakivasa Karing e butyia sar thana kaj beshen, grupa romani andar savi shindion, bersha thaj te sikavelpe savo si o statuto e romane juvleango kaj silen rom. Jikh specialno dikhimos sas karing sfako grupa romengi, ke vi e problemura mashkar e grupe si mai bute fialonge. E edukacia si jek mashkar e maj bare problemura mashkar e romane sheja andar e grupi Burgudzii thaj khelderasha, de naj kade bari problema mashkar e Rudara thaj Yerlii, mashkar lende si but romnea kaj si len bare shkole/universiteta. E diferencia mashkar e romane grupura vash o kontakto e bari-societetas/gajenta kerel e diferencia mashkar e modernizacia e grupone savi zuriarel o koliarel lengo intereso vash maj buth problemura. Sa ande kadi vrama maj buth faktorura/butyia zuriaren, si len impakto pe sar gindin thaj sar dikhen e manush andar e grupura: religia, sar/kaj beshen, savi si e familia, sode shkola kerdea, sode barvalo si, thaj kadea maj dur. Kado shaj del sar rezultato diversiteta/buthfialo vi jekhe romane kompaniasa thaj ande jekh boldini situacia, ande duj thana so si jekh pasha avereste.*

## GENDER PERCEPTIONS IN THE ROMA COMMUNITY

One of the most serious factors that have an effect on the change of gender perceptions is the level of modernization and frequency of contacts with macro-society. In that sense, conceptions in different Roma groups are different because the integration level is also different. For example in the *Rudari* group the woman emancipation is stronger than in the other groups. In the group of more traditional and closed communities, the emancipation is very low as in the group of *Kaldarashi* and *Burgudzhii*.

Gender perceptions in the Roma family are subordinated to the patriarchal understanding for the leadership of man. No matter from which group it is, the family still accepts the boy as the person who carries the family potential. It is not by accident that having a boy is very important in a *Kaldarashi* family. There are many cases of boy's adoptions by families that have only girls, because of the steady tradition that "*the boy is taking care of the parents*". In the *Kaldarashi* tradition the youngest boy who will take care of the parents remains in the parent's house. As pointed above this is not a conception restricted only to the *Kaldarashi* community. A similar belief was shared in a focus group with *Rudari* women who are much more modernized; they have characteristics closer to the macro-society and have more developed processes of women's emancipation. "*It is better for you to have a boy, because the boy always thinks about his mother – may be he will bring less money, but he will, while the daughter will bring it to her husband.*" (a women from the *Rudari* group, focus group, town, Central Bulgaria).

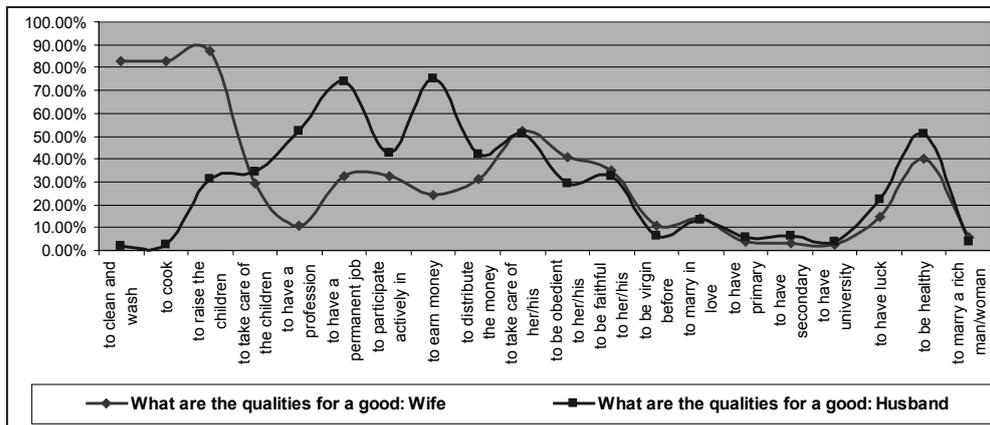
The existing perceptions for the position and the role of the woman in different Roma groups in a large extent define the difference in socialization between boys and girls, respectively between men and women in the family. While men have more and intensive contacts with the institutions and in general with the macro-society, they are more adaptive and open for changes even if they do not realize it. At the expense of that, women who have less contacts out of the family and community, very often want a change, but do not know what kind of a change and how to achieve it.

At the same time according to a recent research by Gender project for Bulgaria, women are much more disposed to work in institutions, which could be a proper way for their faster socialization and integration. The current research also proves these conclusions.

## FAMILY LIFE

Actually, the traditional role of the woman in Roma family still is to be a housewife, to take care of children and her husband, although the research shows that the modernity influences upon breaking this model. 82.50 % of the respondents in this study define cleaning and washing skills as the most the important quality of a good wife, and 83 % put among the most important

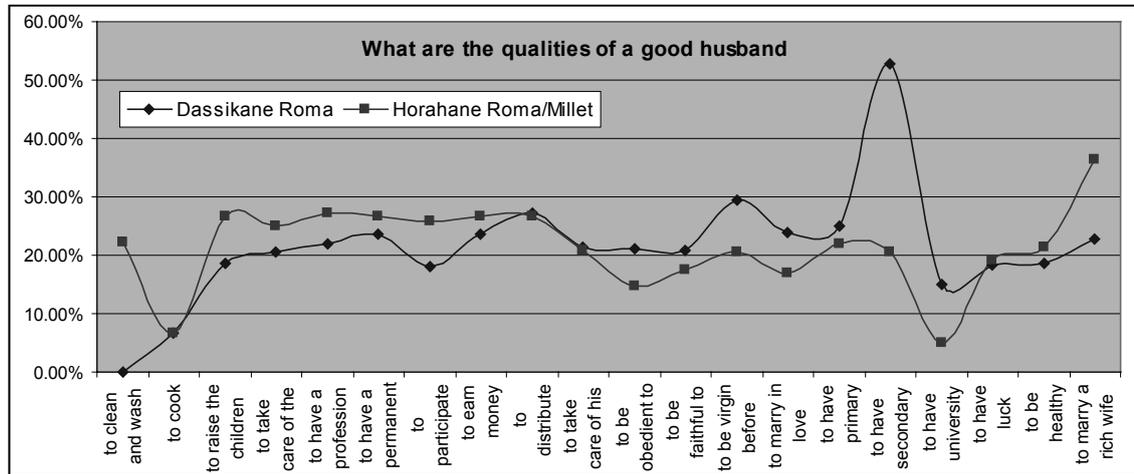
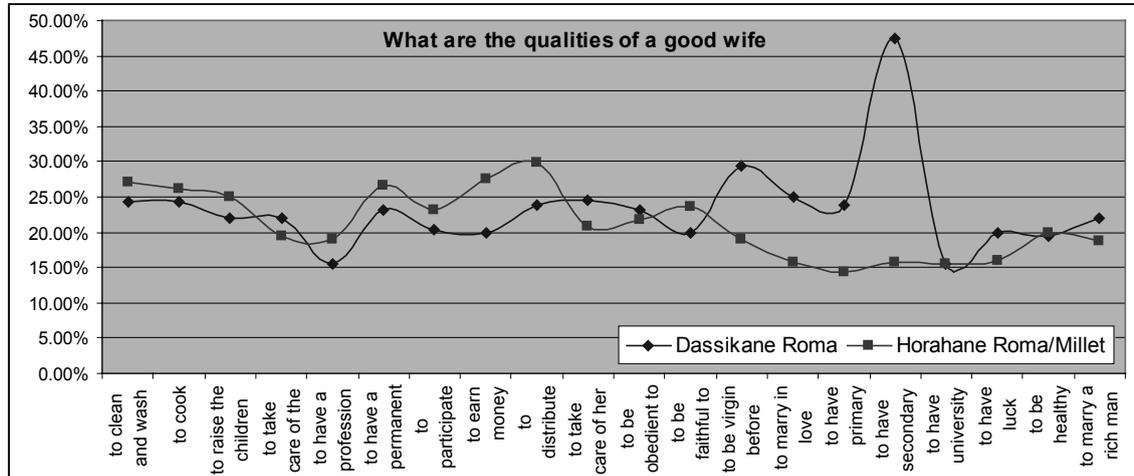
qualities the cooking skills. Moreover, the woman is the one who is expected to be in charge of the children and to take care about their growing up, but at the same time it is perceived a little bit more as the husband's responsibility to take care about the education of the children (34.1% attribute this quality to the husband while 29.3% attribute it to the wife) This might be connected with the different distribution of the space: the woman is responsible about the internal space in the house, consequently about the raising of the children in the house while the husband is responsible about what's going on "in the outside world," including the educating of the children.



The research shows that the level of modernization and the change of roles are different in the different Roma groups. *Dassikane Roma* point "graduating secondary school" as the most important qualities for a good wife/good husband – both for the husband and for the wife (52.90 % and 47.40 % respectively). At the same time, the *Horahane Roma/Millet* put education (secondary school, 8-th grade or high school) on the last three places of the value line. According to them, the skills for housing have to be on the first position: skills for distributing the money in the family, cooking, cleaning and washing. According to *Dassikane Roma*, these characteristics are also among the first ten – but they definitely follow receiving a good education (47.40 % point

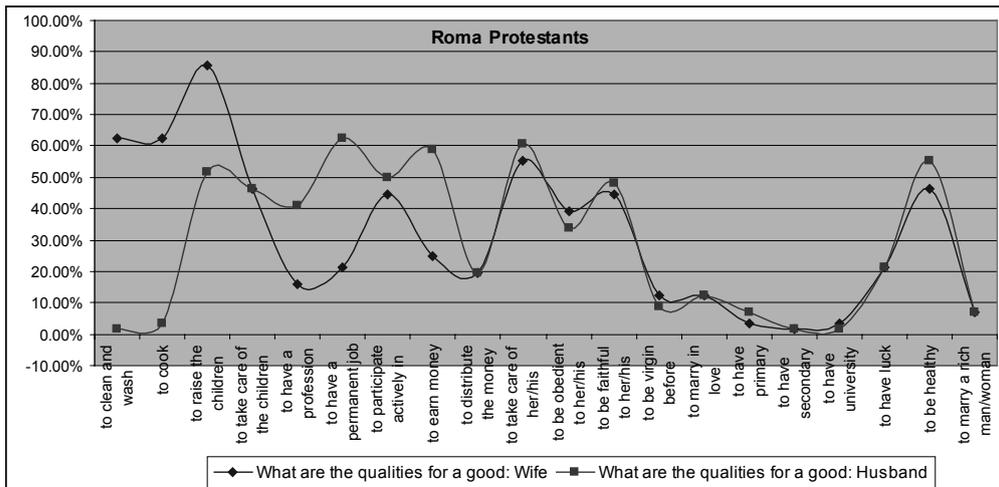
■ ■ ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

the education as one of the most important characteristics and only 24 % think that the good housewife should mainly cook, clean and wash). In both communities however education is still accepted more as a man's characteristic rather than the woman's.

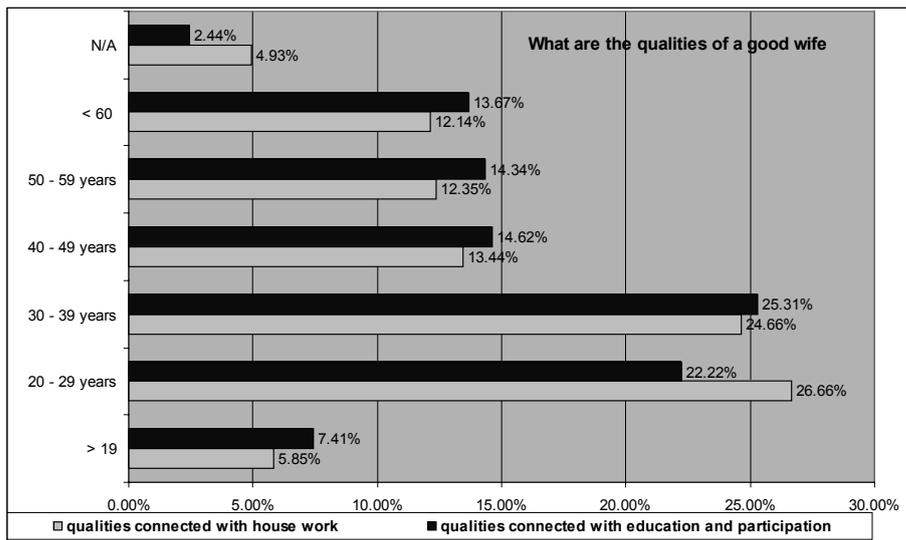


Although they are not a separate group of the Roma community with regard to the difference in attitudes Roma Protestants will be discussed separately for the purposes of this report (as explained in the methodology section), no matter whether they are *Horahane Roma* or *Dassikane Roma* (Protestants respectively will not be counted in the latter two groups). In the group of the Roma Protestants the religious norms and attitudes definitely have influence on creating and changing the general attitudes. The Protestants give more importance to the cooking, washing and cleaning skills of a good wife while the husband is supposed to bring the money in the family. They define as the most important quality of the woman bringing up the children (that is pointed by 85.7 % of the respondents from that group).

In the same time it does not mean that the woman must be in a dependent position; it is equally important that both the man and the woman are faithful to their spouses; both the husband and wife participate in the decision making process about housing, distribution of family budget. It is hard to believe that the Protestantism has managed to get so deeply into community value system so that its initial norms has managed to form the basis of this value system as a universal truth but it probably leads to much deeper and realized religiousness which reflects the family character. Probably the level of religiousness of Protestants is higher than the rest of the declared religions which has an impact on the attitude towards family and results in the fact that in the Protestant Roma community there are less anomated families.

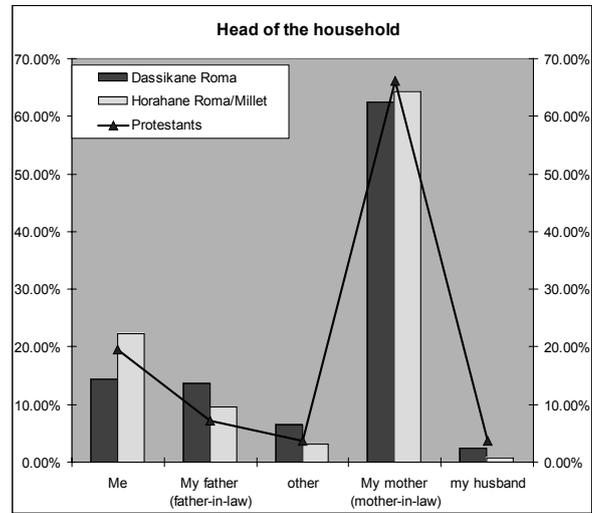
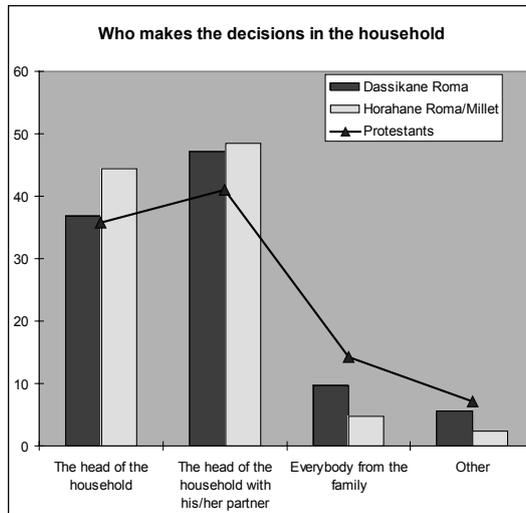


At the same time, the women from the middle generation (from the age of 20 – 40, especially women between 20-29 years) are most conservative for sharing out the roles in the family. They give more credits to the roles connected with housework than to those related to education and participation. That is a stable tendency for the women between 20 and 29 years old. In fact, that is the generation that was first affected by the changes after 1989 including the ones in the education field; the generation that was left without a perspective for providing or finding a job. The only opportunity for the woman from this generation is to stay at home and to be a good housewife, wife and mother.



It is logical that the education influences the way of self-perception of a woman. Higher educated women that were inquired during this research, put in one of the first places the education and in one of the last the housing skills for being a good wife. An illustration of this tendency is the fact that no one from the women with secondary school education has pointed virginity as a definition of her good-housewife qualities.

A clear differentiation is observed in the attitudes according to the place of living. In the big city ghettos where the marginalization is much deeper the development of the woman out of the traditionally set role is very hard. Women have several children and they count on their man about the living. They do not have significant ambition to participate actively in the decision making process in the family. This role is further confirmed by the attitude of men. *“A woman is a woman, she is a housewife. A man is a man: he is the head of the family.”* (man, district city). In spite of that, in the big cities, where the contacts with the macro-society are more intensive, especially for men, we begin to observe a change in the attitudes. *“If we look the reality, we can’t separate ourselves from the world. The world has given an opportunity for women to express themselves: there are space-women, women who are presidents in the world. I suppose that in 50 years the woman will have a leading role in the world, because there are men, who lose their masculinity. A woman remains a woman, and a strong one.”* (a man, focus group, district city). This tendency is increasing in the recent years with opening more opportunities for work. Peculiarly enough messengers of this change are the men, especially those returning back home from abroad.



All of the Roma groups definitely point the husband as the head of the family, although in the group of *Horahane Roma/Millet*, the participation of the older parents in decision-making process is higher than in the *Dassikane Roma* group. In both of the groups, very rarely one person makes the decisions: usually the decisions are taken by the married couple. This process is more democratic in the group of Roma

## ■ ■ ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

Protestants, where 14.3 % of the respondents answer that all members of the family participate in the decision-making process (compared to 9.6 % from *Dassikane Roma* group and 4.8% from *Horahane/Millet Roma*). In that case, probably, the traditional place, that woman occupies in each of the groups, influences the attitudes.

Completely different is the model of the role and place of the woman in the group of *Kaldarashi Roma*. The mere fact that they accept the man's blood as stronger than the woman's is significant; this is the one which "carries the gene" (*woman, Kaldarashi Roma, 55 years old*). According to them the woman's blood is weaker; for example, marriages between relatives are appropriate (even for first cousins) if they are from female line: "*If they are children of two sisters – it is not a big problem – the woman's blood is weaker, the woman is weaker. But to marry children of a brother and a sister – that is very bad*" (*woman, Kaldarashi Roma, 55 years old, married*).

In most of the cases, attitudes in the group and the opinion of the man and the mother-in-law/father-in-law, respectively, define the woman's role and her behavior. In fact, the woman space in the *Kaldarashi* household is clearly distinguished. The duties are strictly allocated: the duties concerning the house work are distributed among the women in the household: "*The work in the house is assigned between the women: one is washing, another is cooking, the third one is cleaning and so on.*" (*woman, 19 years old, married*). And if the *Yerlii* perceive it as appropriate to some extent that the man could also do a housework (22 % from the *Millet* point that a good husband should also clean and wash, and 6.7 % from *Dassikane Roma* point that he should also cook), that is an exception in the group of *Kaldarashi* – "*Here the man does not do housework*". (*woman, 30years old, married*). Women take decisions for less important matters and the grandfather or other old people in the household take the serious ones. When the household is smaller, the problems and questions are solved by the married couple, but despite all "*[the woman] should not be above him [the man], she is always dependent on him.*" (*woman, married*). Nevertheless, realizing the need of a change is a fact, although yet not strong enough to make women change the inertia of attitudes: "*Nowadays, the girls want to be educated, because it is much easier to progress by learning, but most of all to know what you want from life*". At the same time the same woman shares: "*The woman's job is to raise the children, to cook, wash... to be faithful to her husband. Once she is married, it is forever*" (*woman, 22 years old, Kaldarashi Roma, engaged*). Another interviewed woman thinks "*A woman should work because of not being dependent on her husband for 2 or 3 lv.*", but she admits that if the husband forbids her to work, she would obey because she did not want any problems in her family. Most of the young girls want to develop, to find realization and somehow to express themselves, but they do not know how and in what direction. To a great extent this is because of the closed life within the community, lack of contacts with institutions and people outside of the community. That is the reason for men, being more open and disposed for a change.

The man also support this distribution of roles, although the change of their attitudes is fostered by the frequency of their contacts in the macro-society (in business, institutions etc.) rather than by education.

Nevertheless, the support they declare for changing the traditional woman's role is still too declarative<sup>1</sup>. The way the male respondents expressed during the interviews and focus groups also showed that to a great extent this change was influenced by the environment and the intensive talking about it: *"Nowadays, we seek to give priority of emancipation"*. This means that stimulating discussions about these questions in the Roma community would lead to faster attitudes changes. In those discussions however the major "courted" actors should be the men themselves, to accept the woman's emancipation as a potential, not as a threat. At the same time, the change would not happen at once; it is important that it happens not rejecting and opposing the traditions but through them. It is clear from the opinion of one of the informal leaders in the *Kaldarashi* focus group in Krivodol: *"All the rest of women have changed and made their life better, why we and our wives to step back and be left behind. They can do it, if only they prove that and we will support them."* Another factor that could play the role of accelerator for that change is the internal will which can be ascribed to the *Kaldarashi* group: to strive to be better than the others, to be among the best and not worst than the others. *"We have our traditions - spiritual, which are typical and valued for us and our families about the role of the woman - to take care of household, to educate the children. For all that, nowadays we are striving not to discriminate our girls. We respect traditions and our crafts, but we also have boys, very well developed in business and the construction field; their wives help them. They [the women] may be better in the trade, they are very good economists and it is better if they have an education it is important for her to be educated, to have self-confidence and feels equal to all the rest - if Bulgarians can do it, we can do it to."*

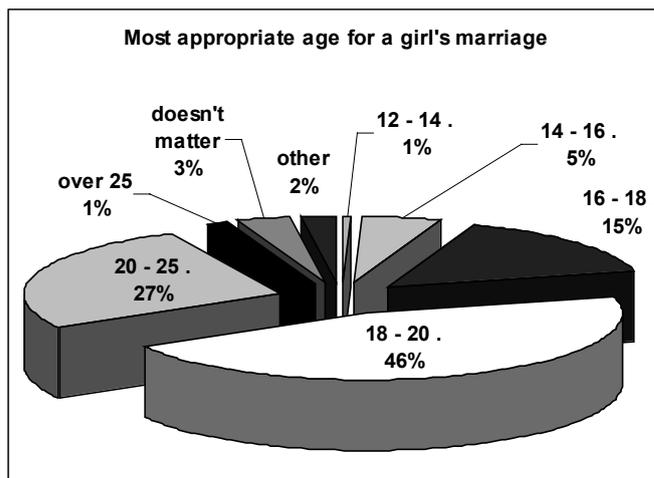
Completely different are the role models in the family and the behavior of man and woman in the group of *Rudari* Roma. The woman is more emancipated compared to the other Roma groups which is due to the higher level of integration of some of the *Rudari*. The division in the housework between man and woman is almost lacking: *"Here the man cooks too. Our men know how to cook (not everyone, but...) - in fact this is a woman's job but if you say to him to put the beans - he puts it, and whenever I come, I will fix it."* (woman, 62 years old, *Rudari*, married, town). Moreover, the woman perceives herself as the one who organizes the family and the one who is more active. *"The housework - no matter whether it is man's or woman's - the woman can do it. The woman can be a man, too. And what does the man do? A normal woman will chop the woods too and everything else."* (woman, 48 years old, village). Most of the women do not see any conflict in getting along with both, house and public work. *"I work in the post office and what about it - I chop woods - it is not an obstacle. Is it harder for me? No, why should it be - during the day, I work; in the evening I am at home"* (woman, 48 years old, village). In that group it is not just a practice from recently; it's inherited from the years before the transition when most of the women used to be employed in the industry and in the factories. *"Once, when we worked in the factories, we were used to both, going at work and raising the children"*.

<sup>1</sup> One of the respondents in a focus group said: *"In our community, the children have to prove themselves in front of their families until they reach the age of 14: the girls - to cook, to receive guests, and the boy - to learn a craft"* (man, *Kaldarashi*, married, municipal councillor)

One of the indexes for equality of woman in the family of *Rudari* is organizing the family budget. While in the family of *Kaldarashi* Roma the man is the one who does the budgeting and distribution of money, in the group of *Rudari* the woman is the one, who is responsible for that. The woman is the one, who is holding the money, no matter if she lives with her husband or her sons. No matter that formally the man is the head of the family and makes decisions, that role is not an assumption and it is a subject to change, if the man can't hold it. *"Usually the man says what and how to happen. If he can not make his word heard, then the woman starts to command. If he is not capable for that, I will do it myself."* *"If he starts with the glass of alcohol, I take the money."* (a focus group, women from the *Rudari*, town, 60 – 62years old). Alexey Pamporov comes to the same conclusion in his research on "The Roma family: aspects of everyday life".<sup>2</sup>

## PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

Here we can see group specifics again, but as a whole, for most of Roma, the change of the civic status is not by performing an official (administrative) marriage but by performing a specific custom which legitimizes the change of status and the marriage before the community. A practice for official marriages is observed in the



<sup>2</sup> Pamporov, Al., The Roma family: daily life aspects (Sofia: Effect, 2004), 16.

Roma communities where the integration is higher and the contacts with the macro-society are more. The factor for that was their employment in mixed environment during the socialist regime before 1989. We can see this in the group of *Kalaidzhii* in the areas of Montana and Vrasa, in Sliven, for example, and almost without exception in the group of *Rudari*. It does not mean that the rest of Roma do not have any mechanism for social statute changing but it is not connected with the national institutions. Such a mechanism is the wedding: it does not legitimize the new family before the state, but it does it before the community which is more important for its members. The young couple is considered as married as the couples conducting civic marriages. It however does not refer, or at least does not refer to that extent, for communities, which are marginalized (especially in big city ghettos), where the beginning of a new family is often not marked or celebrated. Moreover, often in the birth certificate of the child the father is pointed as “unknown” even if he is the man with whom the mother lives. The explanation people give to that fact is that this is the way to receive social benefits as single mothers, even though it does not reflect the real situation.

## MARRIAGE AGE

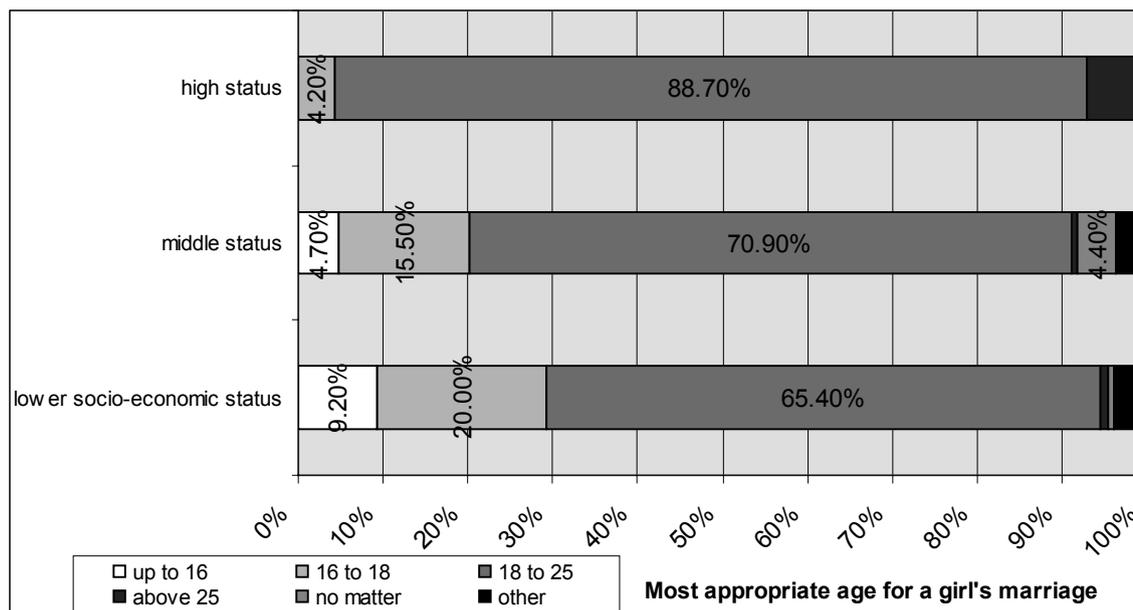
The current research and many others show that the marriage age in the Roma community is increasing. 46 % from the respondents in this research point that the proper age for girls to marry is between 18 and 20 years; 27 % of the women think that it is between 20 and 25 years. Only 6% point an age under 16 years as appropriate for marriage. As a whole in the group of Protestant Roma, the girl's marriage age is the highest. 83.9 % consider that the girls should marry at the age between 18 and 25 years and only 3.6 % think, that marriage should happen until the age of 16 years. This contrasts with the group of *Horahane* Roma who have the highest share of respondents considering up to 16 years an appropriate age for marriage (5.6%). Here an influence of the more traditional religious confessions can be observed. Similar tendencies are registered also in Orthodox Christianity while the more modern religious confessions are more democratic.

At the same time the answers of *Kaldarashi* women (which are very traditional) about this change are indicative. A significant part of them point that the proper age to marry in their community is already at about 18 years. In general, the women share, that if the girl is not married until the age of 16, it is highly possible for her to marry just at the age of 20 or later. Increasing the marriage age is accepted even by the older women in the community: “*We have girls at the age of 20 – 25 years, we have one at the age of 32, ours got married at the age of 26. They are not in a hurry to be married.*” (*Kaldarashi* woman, 76 years old, village). In the group of *Rudari*, this indicator has already reached the age of 20 long time ago although one can still sometimes come across marriages at the age of 14 – 15 years. Usually these are girls who have left school for one or another reason. However, if in the group of *Kaldarashi* the girls leave school, because they have to marry, that process is opposite in the group of *Rudari*: the marriage is an alternative. “*Now, the girls are more clever. The time*

■ ■ ■ STUDIES / STUDII / SIKIMATA

*when we got married at the age of 15 or 17 years old has past away. Now, our son is 20, he has passed the military service but still he does not want to marry. I don't have a job, you don't have a job – he says – what will we do with another person in this house.” (a focus group, women, Rudari, town).*

Undoubtedly the education and socio-economic status have an impact on the concept of marriage age and creating a family, although it should not be overestimated (one of the groups with the highest socio-economic status is the *Kaldarashi* group, but exactly in that group the age of marriage is the lowest).



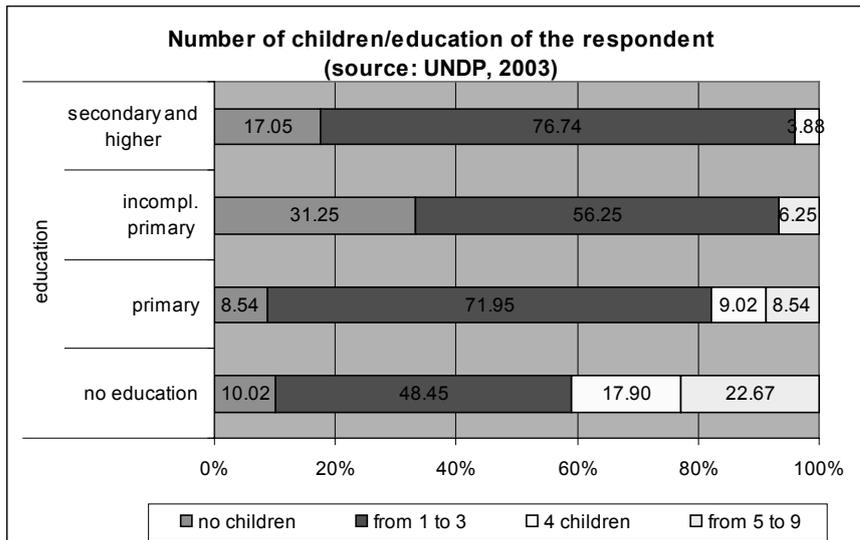
Respectively 89.80% and 88.70 % of the women with the highest level of education (secondary school) and those with high socio-economic status point the age between 18 and 25 years as the most appropriate age for a girl to be married.

## CREATING A FAMILY. CHOOSING A HUSBAND AND A WIFE STANDARDS

The practice of parents choosing the spouses of their children has survived only in some Roma groups like, for example, the *Kaldarashi* and *Burgudzhii*, many *Millet* Roma, and so on. Even there, that practice is gradually changing. The opinion of the girl about the choice of her husband is already valued: *“In the past, girls did not have opinion; the parents decided. Today, this [the engagement] happens with the parent’s agreement, but the opinion of the girl is very important; otherwise they might separate in some time.”* (*Kaldarashi* woman, 22 years old, single). Within the other groups this choice is done usually by the bride and the groom themselves: *“In the past the old people used to decide to whom one would be married. The parents used to say: ‘Here is your place...’ but now the children make that decision; it is democratic.”* (woman, *Rudari*, 50 years old, village).

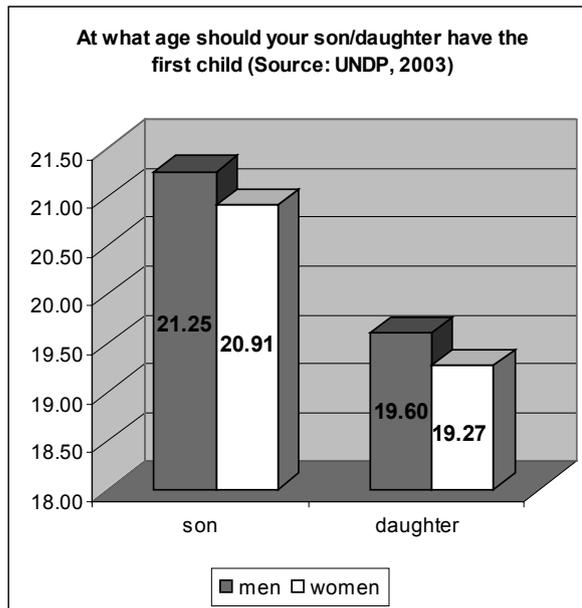
## CHILDREN

A research of UNDP<sup>3</sup> from 2003 shows that gradually the number of children in Roma



<sup>3</sup> UNDP

families is decreasing. It is valid for all the Roma groups including the *Kaldarashi*. Today the average number of children in their group is at about three. *“Before, the women gave birth more, but now there are not enough conditions of living”* (*Kaldarashi* woman, 30 years old, married, village). To high extent it depends on the level of education. Almost 77 % from the respondents in the UNDP research who have secondary or higher education, have from one to three children.



The current research confirms that data. With decreasing the average number of children in families, the age of giving a birth to first child is increasing. According to data from UNDP the men are more open for change and think that the age of giving a birth of the first child must be higher compared to what the women think. This is also influenced by the level of education. Those who have secondary school education or higher, think that the level of age for having a first child should be 21 years for the women and 23 years for the men; the respondents without education think that the age should be 19 and 21 years, respectively.

## VIRGINITY

Regarding the virginity norms, the Roma community travels a way other patriarchal communities have already passed. The concepts are gradually changing with the level of modernization of a community. As more intensive the contacts with the macro society and with other groups are, as faster the changes will be. Media and the modern communication devices play major importance for that and a role of an accelerator. The virginity of a girl before the marriage is a characteristic which depends on several factors: the extent to which a community exists as a consolidated group different from the others, the frequency of contacts with macro-society, the level of education and so on. It depends not so much on the group division but rather on the specifics of each of the groups defined by the factors mentioned above.

Despite that, virginity is still a steady standard contributing to the qualities of a girl. Significant are the results from the current research. 29.4 % from *Dassikane* Roma surveyed point virginity as the most important quality of a good wife. In the group of *Millet/Horahane* Roma this share is 20.6%; this quality occupies 13-th place in their value scale of a good wife (in the group of *Dassikane* Roma this quality is placed on the second position). At the same time, in the group of Protestant Roma where religion is bringing new value system and leads to stronger religiousness, a change in the priorities can be observed and only 12.5% from the respondents point virginity as a condition for the good performance of a woman as a wife. It does not mean however that the protestant community has changed the “morality” definition of the woman. Furthermore, “purity” of sexual relations and their existing only in the frame of marriage are accepted as a fact, as an unquestionable characteristic, as something that is implied. Therefore, the respondents put on the first places the qualities that have to be “achieved” not those that are ascribed by assumption.

In the group of *Kaldarashi*, the virginity still continues to be a factor when choosing a wife (“*We still care about the virginity, there is no other opinion; she [the girl] should also take care herself.*”) but the understanding that it depends on the girl itself becomes more and more spread. “*Now, if she has no brain in her head – she has her own character – even if you try to protect her, she will do it; the one, who has brain – wherever she goes – she knows how to protect herself.*” (*Kaldarashi* woman, 76 years old).

Roma who live among Bulgarians, work with them and have higher education and higher social status, think that virginity is a remnant and one of negative traditions from the past: “*I won’t pick out a virginity cloth<sup>4</sup> for my daughter. I won’t put a shame on her like that*” (man, 36 years old, *Kaldarashi*). “*There are not sheets anymore, the tradition is gone*” (focus group, women, town)

<sup>4</sup> According to the tradition after the first wedding the groom should show the “virginity cloth”: a bed clothing used during the first sexual act. It should show that the girl was a virgin before that. We should note however that this is not a strictly Roma tradition. This custom was practiced by all traditional societies, including Bulgarians. The tradition disappears with the approaching of modernity.

## GENDER SPEAKING IN THE FAMILY

The tendencies pointed above can be applied also to the level of gender speaking in the family. The research shows that Protestant Roma are the most open to talk about the different roles and positions in the family and to share about problems between women and men (37.5% compared to 13.6 % in the group of *Dassikane* Roma and 10.4% in the group of *Millet/Horahane* Roma).<sup>5</sup> In that attitude, the religion and the way it treats the woman appears as an important factor: Muslims and Orthodox Christians give the lowest percentage of positive answers about the issue mentioned above; at the expense of that, Protestantism pays more attention to the woman and her active position. One of the topics in the agenda of the Protestant lectures in Bulgaria is exactly about the role of the woman as a leading function in the family and in public life. In the Adventist's church of the seventh day (ACSD), for example, a special Section "Women's participation in society and in the church" exists. Furthermore, they have developed special educational programs devoted to the struggle with illiteracy (work with the Roma community is one of the accents); programs against violence with an accent against domestic violence, leaded mostly by women for women and children; programs for women leadership<sup>6</sup>; implementing of educational seminars and trainings: time planning; how to manage with the blame, stress and overstrain; how to make more simple their domestic duties; how to balance between personal needs and professional duties.<sup>7</sup>

Modernization, however, is the most powerful factor for breaking the taboos. Undoubtedly the most active channel for that are media. Representatives of each of the bigger groups share that with the entering of TV, taboos have almost disappeared.

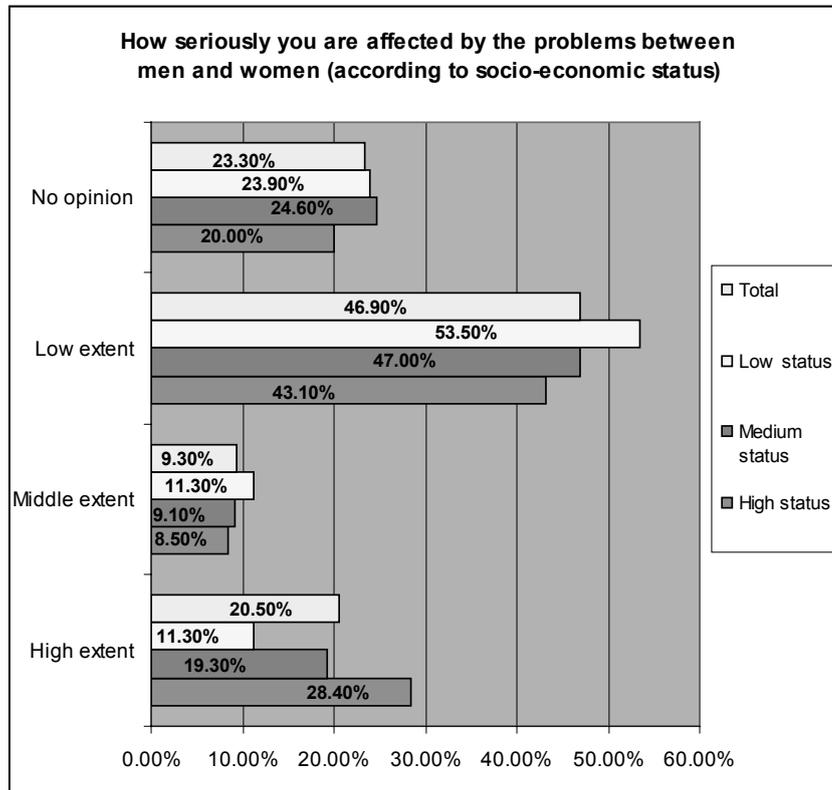
- *"The girls are not ashamed anymore to speak with their husbands about women's things; it was in the past, not now. In the past, we have never sat together on the table – men and women. He will sit here, I will sit in the other room. We were ashamed, it was a stupidity. We were very stupid people in the past. Now they are not ashamed anymore. Now the TV shows everyone – there are no stupid ones."* (woman, *Kaldarashi*, 65 years old);
- *"Young people know everything now; these rubbish they show on TV, the children know everything... They learn everything from TV, not from school* (focus group, *Rudari* women);
- *"It is normal now to speak about women stuff with our husbands... or my husband to go to buy me some sanitary pads. That is also normal.*(woman, *Rudari*, 34 years old, village)

<sup>5</sup> The question asked is "How much the problems between the man and his wife affect you". Accepting that presence or absence of these problems does not depend on the ethnic belonging or religion, we interpret the answers of that question as a readiness or lack of readiness to speak about these problems

<sup>6</sup> Special educational program for woman's leadership was created. It was divided into 4 main moduls, including the following themes: self assessment, development and skills for leading, how could the women speak in front of audience, how to implement seminars and trainings, budget managing etc.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Slavka Stefanova, Adventist's church of the seventh day (ACSD), February 2008.

According to the data from the study the socio-economic status also reflects on the intensity of problems (or at least sharing about this) between the men and the woman in the family. Generally, almost half of the people interviewed (46.90%) share that they do not have problems or have problems to a very low extent between men and women. The tendency however shows that women with higher socio-economic status are more likely to report such problems (28.40% compared to 11.30% women of low socio-economic status). This comes to show that among this layer of people problems among men and women are already recognized as such and moreover, these women are ready to share the existence of these problems so they have overcome the barrier not to speak about such issues.



## ■ ABOUT CARING AND RESPONSIBILITY IN RELATION TO THOSE YOU ADDRESS<sup>1</sup>

### A conversation with Letiția Mark<sup>2</sup>

■ **h.arta:** Could you please talk about yourself and your work?

■ **Letiția Mark:** I am the president of Gypsy Women's Association "For Our Children," which I set up in 1997, when I began to run educational programs in my own home. I did this because I am a teacher and of Roma ethnicity, and so I considered it my duty to Roma kids. The association has developed since then but at the beginning it was very difficult. Every year we have had around 40 kids attending the activities of our Educational and Cultural Centre for Roma Children (which was also the first project of the Association.) Our mission is to integrate kids in school, to help them register and sign up with different schools, to help with their daily problems related to the lack of identification documents or returning from abroad back into the country, all the things you know as problems for Roma communities. We called the association the Gypsy Women's Association "For Our Children" because we wanted to include women, who are – traditionally or not – concerned with raising and educating the kids and also because I found it easier to talk to women than men about issues related to their children. I found them more interested and trusting. However, in time we began to have also Roma men in our projects. Many people know me here as my family has lived in this neighbourhood for over 50 years. We are mostly Rudara here, but we also have some Kalderash and Lovara, so in time our community has become kind of mixed. Even if at first inter-marriage was frowned upon, in time things and lifestyles have changed and people adapted. Roma people are generally very adaptable to modern life, despite their low levels of education. This is another topic that I am very interested in: the way Roma children are seen and how difficult it is for them to enter other groups. I experienced the difficulties of integration myself, I wanted to be part of a different world the moment I realised that Roma people are always kept at a distance by the others. My life's journey took me to different environments. After I finished school I came back to my community and decided that it was time to do something, much more than before. I was

<sup>1</sup> English translation by Roxana Marin

<sup>2</sup> This discussion took place on the 5th of March 2010, at the offices of the Gypsy Women's Association "For Our Children," as part of a publication edited in the frame of the project "See me as I am. Words and images of Roma women". This project, in which h.arta group is involved, wishes by the means of a series of antiracist education workshops in schools and by the means of a publication about the image of Roma women in the public sphere, to contribute to the debating of issues of racism, sexism, marginalization and solutions to effectively address them.

very disappointed in the first years by how Roma continued to be seen, as I had began work with a lot of enthusiasm and hoping to achieve a radical change. As soon as I joined the Roma cause, my social circle, the new world that I had become part of, began to look at me differently. Even my lifelong friendships – I have always believed in friendship – were affected. My closest friends did not understand why I had changed, why I was identifying myself with Roma women's issues and was talking about discrimination and other grave matters which were happening. They told me: "But you have never been discriminated against, we've always considered you our equal and we have loved you. We've always had the most humane relationship. If all Roma or Gypsy women were like you, there would be no problem." Later I realised that that was exactly the issue: if I wanted to strive to be like the others then I was more easily accepted; but if my voice was different, maybe a little aggressive because I was talking about discrimination and racism, then it was more difficult to be accepted."

■ **h.arta:** This seems to us a highly problematic issue. Often, when a Roma woman manages to achieve visibility in the public sphere, when she manages to build a space of her own and to voice her issues, she is either presented as an example of what democracy can achieve (if she has made it, it means success is possible and therefore those who fail are solely responsible for their own failure, society being thus absolved) or she is presented as "atypical," an exception in a mass of people without any qualities.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Indeed, this is an important issue, which should be explained in more detail. At some point in the future, it is my goal to write a book about all these experiences. I would like to analyse in more depth what this transition meant from one lifestyle to another and then the return to my community and assuming a commitment which is very much like an ideological and political one, though I have always considered myself not that interested in politics or ideology. But it seems that, whether I want it or not, my work intersects with them.

I have tried very much to develop the association, but always looking to demonstrate an idea that yes, it's possible. I entered the Roma movement under a very strong emotional and sentimental impulse. I had been invited by the West University when the Intercultural Institute was set up. Those were very pumped up times, we had lots of extraordinary experiences then. I was invited there as a high school teacher and I found myself in an environment where the main topic was minorities, and there were lots of guests from abroad in our Timișoara with a revolutionary aura. When they began to talk about Roma people, a very well-known journalist from Timișoara went to the podium and presented things in a derogatory manner. He said: "we would like to work with Roma people but there is none in activism, they only do music and dance and weddings and putting money on the freedom of musicians." He claimed to be open-minded and tolerant, as intellectuals usually do when they say things like "I have Roma friends and I am an intellectual and it's not like me to discriminate etc." To me his speech was so offensive that I got up and said, under the heat of the moment: "Still, there are so many people from abroad here and all ethnic groups have been presented coherently. If you had invited some Roma people to speak for themselves, I'm sure they would have come. I, as a Roma person, am offended. I have never hidden my Roma background and I will not tolerate for things to be presented in this way. There are responsible Roma, Roma intellectuals, Roma of all kinds – but nobody

## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

has invited us any dialogue.” I caused much agitation with my intervention, but afterwards many people were interested to talk to me. I told them that, if they had invited me to talk about education I could easily have done that as a teacher, but nobody had asked me to. After that, Roma leaders who already had a name invited me to talk about the situation of the Roma people. For example I was invited to speak at Strasbourg. In those times it was difficult to make yourself a passport, you had to wait in line for days. Everybody kept telling me “wow, it’s so cool that you are a teacher” but they also said, including Roma leaders: “you are too educated for us, what do you want in fact?” I was perceived as an opportunist, it was natural that I wanted to get a passport so that I could travel abroad and enjoy myself and so on. That is why I retired from that, I had my own profession that I had passed exams for, nobody had done me any favours. I realised I was looked at with suspicion, so I retired for a few years.

Until Roma leaders came back looking for me. They had a lot of projects, but they were also looking for me for representation: “look, we have a teacher, who is even light-skinned, and who tells everyone that is Roma.” I played their game a few times and went to some meetings, but at one point I told them I was not a doll to put on show when somebody wanted proof that Roma intellectuals exist. I was dissatisfied with not being involved actively and was used only for representation. I felt used. In those times they used to raise the issues of authenticity, in other words you had to demonstrate that you were an authentic Roma. I didn’t know how to demonstrate that other than to tell them I had come with an open heart and I was offering myself to work on educational programs for Roma kids, which would have been more efficient than the work of foreign volunteers. The presence of these foreign volunteers involved politics that I was not aware of, at that time.

■ **h.arta:** But why was authenticity questioned, more exactly? Did you not correspond to the stereotypical portrait of the Roma woman?

■ **Letiția Mark:** I come from a Rudara family, and Rudara people do not speak Romanes, they speak an archaic Romanian. The other issue was how I looked. I have never tried to disguise myself, I’m a modern woman and I wear pants – but if don’t wear skirts, this should not mean that I am not Roma. In college, all my teachers and colleagues believed me when I told them I was Gypsy, all my life I had known myself as Gypsy and suddenly I am not authentic and credible to Roma leaders?! Those were times in which identities were fabricated or re-constructed, intellectuals learned or re-learned Romanes. It was a time of great adventure and enthusiasm – there were also many naive people – a time of great effervesce.

Then I retired again. I went on with my career, took my teaching degrees, until I found myself in a situation where I had to make a decision, without wanting. Some ex-students of mine introduced me to the Soros Foundation, who at the time had some program lines specifically for Roma people. The Foundation people were very interested in working with me. They told me they needed me on a board for Roma programs. It was an international board. The problem was that this position would have been in conflict of interests with my project to set up an educational centre for Roma kids (especially for those confronting difficulties in the system of education, kids coming from abroad and having a hard time getting their studies accredited – and thus, even if their parents have some education, the kids are left outside school).

I did, however, accept to be a member on the board and, at the first meeting, I proposed the setting up of some cultural and educational centres in Cluj, Iași, Bucharest and Timișoara. My proposal passed, but without entitlement to funding. There were 3 Roma and 5 non-Roma on the board, too few Roma to have real power. For an entire year my proposal was bystood because, indeed, there was a conflict of interests, not a very comfortable position for me, even if the budget of my proposed project was only 5500 dollars, very little in comparison with the much higher budget of projects which go approved by the board. I slowly began to understand how things really were, that opportunities for Roma people were not really that big. Even if the projects were declaratively for Roma people, too many filters made too little actually get to Roma people. Then, in 1997, I set up the association and thus began a time in which I always had to demonstrate something. I demonstrated that indeed the program works, then I demonstrated that we could do project after project, then I obtained some classrooms for our activities at the Energetical High School, then I got four walls without a roof from City Hall which we proceeded to build on with PHARE money and then after four years we finished the Centre, in 2006. We have a boarding facility for University Roma student girls, we have volunteers, we have European volunteering programs and right now we have a project funded from structural funds called „Equality through difference. Access of Roma women to the labour market.” As part of this project we have also launched the first international Roma women’s magazine *Nevi Sara Kali*, which includes many feminist articles. I have come to be a feminist. For the longest time I denied vehemently being a feminist, because of my prejudices about feminism. Then I did a master’s in gender studies in Cluj and I realised that being a feminist does not mean being against men and that I had in fact been a feminist for many years without being aware of it. I was a feminist because I had been trying to propose an image of Roma women that was different from the stereotypical one of the perpetual victim and so on.

I do my best to keep up with the young ones, not because I want to compete with my younger colleagues, but because I want to keep growing the association. I have sent many young people further, I have recommended them for courses, programs, scholarships etc. but many have detached themselves, probably because they needed independence. I admire and respect that, but I am still sorry that I have not managed to raise more people who can grow the association. Now I would like to retire from the association, but they have developed individually and have a different route. I dreamed much more for the association, I dreamed to form here a nucleus of professionals, but the professionals have left and then we have had to hire people from outside the association who are not affectively tied to the association and its mission. The young Roma people we have worked with develop here, then they catch a program or course and leave somewhere else. And at job interviews with those from outside the association I cannot tell if they want to get involved with their heart too in our programs. They have a declared interest in Roma issues but when the television or other people come there is restraint to be in the foreground because they do not really wish to be identified with Roma issues. So the question arises: what have we grown after all, what have all efforts led to? Yes, annual statistics show that we have kids with a roof over their head and who go to school and who are happy with what we can offer them, and there are also a lot of young people who have found here a platform for their



## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

career. But I have not managed sufficiently to make these young people understand the role and mission they have, beyond the special places, jobs, opportunities and social visibility they have access to.

**h.arta:** But this is true in general, it does not apply only to the Roma movement. It is a general context in which neoliberal ideology implies the pursuit of personal success. This individual success which is celebrated as the most important proof of “democracy” and “equal opportunities” masks in fact society’s lack of interest for the ways in which communities can develop and people on the margins can be helped.

■ **Letiția Mark:** You are right, this is indeed the general situation. But I have always thought that, to accomplish change, one must go in small steps and make small but visible and concrete changes: helping kids, finding jobs for 2 people, getting someone an id. I have tried to inspire in the young people I have worked with the same enthusiasm and that drop of idealism that nourished me. I cannot work without enthusiasm. If I am not charged with it (kids charge me, little things that I manage to accomplish), I cannot go to an international conference and speak about something which I strongly believe to be right. I have hoped that the graduates of Roma education, from high schools and universities with places only for them, will be driven by the same idealism and desire to work in communities – because that is why those places in high schools and universities were created. It’s true that none of us knows what they had to suffer for four years... there are teachers and teachers, some of them are against Roma people.

■ **h.arta:** Here we would like to go back to what you said earlier about your circle of friends who reproached you for explicitly identifying yourself with Roma women’s issues and also to the fact that it is difficult to adopt a clear position in a racist society.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Yes, I wanted to run away too, I didn’t absolutely always want to be seen as Roma. When I was a kid, and I was trying to be different and not drop out of school, I kept being told by my teachers that I was an exception – which was perverse, because one should not be seen as an exception if his/her rights are respected. Why should you have to always be trying to demonstrate that you want to do the right thing to the very end? Why should you always be afraid to hear the line “What did you expect from a Gypsy?!”

In the end it comes down to who you are talking to. I remember an event I organized a few years ago, a traditional culture day with theatre and music. I invited a few older women to sing very old carols and songs. We recorded them so they would not be lost – some of the women have even died in the meantime. In the front row there was a simple woman, a poor lady with three kids and who was also very ill. I remember her sitting in the front row as I was talking about the fact that we are all human and we have rights and I could tell it had a big impact on her. For me to be able to say what I was saying and what I believed, all I had to do was to look at her. And the fact that she understood me and a tear was running from her eye, gave me great joy. At least one other human being in that room believed in me and felt the same way I did about what I was saying.

## ■ DESPRE GRIJA ȘI RESPONSABILITATEA PE CARE O AI FAȚĂ DE CEI/CELE CĂRORA TE ADRESEZI

### O discuție cu Letiția Mark<sup>1</sup>

■ **h.arta:** Am vrea să vă rugăm să ne vorbiți despre dumneavoastră și despre activitatea dumneavoastră.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Sunt președinta Asociației Femeilor Țigănci „Pentru Copiii Noștri”. Am înființat această asociație în 1997 când am început să lucrez în propria mea casă cu programe educaționale, pentru că sunt profesoară, sunt de etnie romă și am considerat că trebuie să-mi fac datoria față de copiii romi. De-atunci asociația s-a dezvoltat, chiar dacă a fost foarte greu la început, dar am avut anual în jur de 40 de copii care au frecventat Centrul Cultural Educativ pentru Copiii Romi (acesta a fost primul proiect al asociației). Am dorit să integram copiii în școli, i-am înscris la școlile limitrofe, am încercat să rezolvăm problemele curente, cele legate de acte, de venirea din străinătate, tot ceea ce știți deja că sunt problemele pe care le întâmpină comunitățile de romi. Am numit asociația ca fiind a Femeilor Țigănci „Pentru Copiii Noștri” pentru că am dorit să cuprindem femeile care sunt tradițional și nu numai tradițional preocupate de creșterea copiilor și de educația lor și pentru că mi-era mai ușor să vorbesc cu femeile decât cu bărbații romi atunci când era vorba despre copii, erau mult mai sensibile la acest subiect și aveau mai multă încredere. Dar, cu timpul, au venit și tineri și bărbați romi la proiectele noastre, foarte mulți mă cunosc pentru că familia mea locuiește aici, în cartier, de peste 50 de ani. Suntem familii de rudari, aici, în cartierul acesta, ne-am întâlnit cu căldărari și cu geambași și, de-a lungul timpului, s-a format o comunitate care a devenit cumva și mixtă. Chiar dacă, la început, căsătoriile între diferite grupuri nu erau agreeate, cu timpul au trecut la alt mod de viață și s-au adaptat. Romii, în general, sunt foarte adaptabili la condițiile moderne, în ciuda faptului că educația școlară e deficitară. Acesta este un alt subiect de care sunt foarte interesată: felul în care sunt priviți copiii romi și cât de greu le este să pătrundă în alte grupuri. Eu am experimentat pe propria mea piele această integrare, mi-am dorit să fac parte dintr-o altă lume din momentul în care am văzut că romii sunt ținuți mereu la distanță. Acesta a fost parcursul vieții mele, am pătruns în alte cercuri, am mers la școală, după care m-am întors în comunitate și am zis că e timpul să fac ceva, mult mai mult. Am renunțat la foarte multe lucruri, entuziasmată fiind, în primii ani, la gândul că

<sup>1</sup> Această discuție a avut loc pe data de 5 martie 2010, la sediul Asociației Femeilor Țigănci „Pentru Copiii noștri”, cu scopul de a fi parte dintr-o broșură editată în cadrul proiectului „Privește-mă așa cum sunt. Cuvinte și imagini ale femeilor rome”. Acest proiect, în care grupul h.arta este implicat, își propune ca prin intermediul unor ateliere de educație antirasistă în școli și prin intermediul unei broșuri despre imaginea femeilor rome în sfera publică, să contribuie la ridicarea unor întrebări și la provocarea unor dezbateri despre rasism, sexism, marginalizare și strategii de combatere ale acestora.



## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

o să se întâmple ceva, o schimbare radicală în felul în care sunt priviți romii. De îndată ce m-am identificat cu problema romilor, în cercul meu, în lumea nouă în care intrasem, am început să fiu privită cu alți ochi. Chiar și prietenii mele de-o viață, pentru că eu am crezut foarte mult în prietenie, au fost atinse. Prietenele mele cele mai apropiate nu prea înțelegeau schimbarea asta a mea, faptul că începusem să mă identific total cu problemele femeilor rome și că vorbeam despre discriminare și despre lucrurile grave care se întâmplă. Mi-au spus, la un moment dat: „Bine, dar tu nu ai fost niciodată discriminată, întotdeauna te-am privit ca pe egala noastră și te-am iubit, am avut relații absolut umane. Dacă toate femeile rome sau țigăncile ar fi ca tine n-ar fi nicio problemă”. Mai târziu, mi-am dat seama că asta este problema, că eu dacă vreau să fiu și mă lupt să fiu ca ceilalți, sunt acceptată mai ușor, dar dacă vorbesc cu o voce mai deosebită, poate ușor mai agresivă, pentru că era vorba despre discriminare și rasism, atunci e mai greu să fiu acceptată.

■ **h.arta:** Acest lucru ni se pare foarte problematic. Adesea, atunci când o femeie romă reușește să devină vizibilă în sfera publică, reușește să-și construiască un loc al ei și să dea voce problemelor ei, ea este fie prezentată ca un exemplu pentru caracterul democratic al societății în care trăim (dacă ea a reușit, înseamnă că reușita este posibilă și vina celor care eșuează este exclusiv individuală, societatea în ansamblu fiind absolută), fie este prezentată ca „atipică”, ca o excepție într-o masă de oameni fără calitate.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Da, aceasta este o problemă importantă, care ar trebui explicată mai pe larg. La un moment dat, mi-am propus să scriu o carte despre toate aceste trăiri. Aș vrea să analizez mai în adâncime ce a însemnat pentru mine această trecere de la un stil de viață la alt stil de viață și, apoi, revenirea mea în comunitate și luarea acestui angajament care seamănă mult cu un angajament ideologic și politic, deși eu mi-am zis mereu că nu intru în politică și nu mă interesează prea mult ideologia. Dar vrând-nevrând, ating și aceste laturi.

Legat de asociație, eu m-am străduit foarte mult să cresc această asociație, dar am lucrat mereu cu această idee că trebuie să demonstrez ceva, să demonstrez că se poate. Am ajuns în mișcarea romilor la un impuls emoțional și sentimental foarte puternic. Fusesem invitată la Universitatea de Vest, când luase ființă Institutul Intercultural, la începutul anilor '90, care erau ani de efervescentă, erau niște ani grozavi, așa, ca trăiri. Fusesem invitată acolo ca profesoară dintr-un liceu și m-am trezit că se vorbește despre minorități și erau foarte mulți invitați din străinătate, în Timișoara cu renumele ei de oraș revoluționar. Când a venit vorba despre romi, un domn jurnalist foarte cunoscut din Timișoara, s-a dus la tribună și a prezentat lucrurile într-un mod hilar. A spus: „am vrea să lucrăm cu romi, dar nu există nicunul activ, cu romii este foarte greu să iei legătura, ei nu fac altceva în afară de muzică și dans și nunți și pus banii pe fruntea muzicanților”. Mai spunea și că el are deschidere și e tolerant, acesta e discursul obișnuit al intelectualului care invocă argumentul cu „eu am prieteni romi și nici nu intră în vederile mele de intelectual să discriminez, etc”. Mie discursul acela mi s-a părut o zeflemea și m-am simțit foarte jignită. A fost absolut un impuls că m-am ridicat și am spus: „Totuși, sunt atâția oameni veniți din străinătate și toate etniile s-au prezentat într-un mod coerent. Dacă erau niște romi invitați să vorbească în numele lor eu cred că ar fi venit. Eu una sunt ofensată, sunt de etnie romă, nu mi-am negat apartenența la etnia romă și lucrurile nu pot fi prezentate veșnic în această manieră. Suntem

și noi oameni responsabili, sunt și intelectuali romi, sunt romi de toate felurile, dar nu ne-a chemat nimeni la niciun dialog.” Am provocat o dezordine în acea conferință cu intervenția mea, după care foarte multă lume era interesată să discute cu mine. Le-am spus că, dacă m-ar fi chemat, eu aș fi putut să vorbesc despre educație pentru că sunt profesoară, dar nu m-a chemat nimeni. După aceea, liderii romi deja afirmați au venit să mă cheme și să mă invite să vorbesc despre situația romilor, de exemplu la Strasbourg. Pe vremea aceea era dificil să-ți faci pașaport, stătea la rând cu zilele. Toată lumea spunea în continuare „aaa, ce grozavă ești profesoară”, dar, de asemenea, inclusiv liderii romi, spuneau „ești prea educată pentru noi, ce dorești de fapt?”. Eram privită ca o oportunistă, era de la sine înțeles că ar trebui să umblu și eu după plecări în străinătate, un pașaport și așa mai departe. Și atunci m-am retras, aveam profesiunea mea pentru care am trecut prin examene, pentru care nu mi se făcuse nicio favoare. Am renunțat timp de câțiva ani, am văzut că sunt privita ciudat, că sunt privita ca o ciudățenie, și m-am retras.

După care ei m-au căutat, liderii romi. Aveau foarte multe proiecte, dar mă căutau mai mult pentru reprezentare: „uitați avem o profesoară, care are și pielea albă, care și spune în gura mare că e de etnie romă”. De câteva ori le-am făcut jocul, m-am prezentat la întâlniri, dar la un moment dat le-am spus că eu nu sunt o păpușă pe care s-o arăți din când în când ca dovadă că există intelectuali romi. Eram foarte nemulțumită că nu eram implicată activ și nu-mi plăcea rolul de reprezentare. Mă simțeam folosită. Pe vremea aceea, se punea problema autenticității, în ce fel poți demonstra că ești o romă autentică. Nu știam cum să demonstrez altfel decât că venisem cu inima deschisă și mă oferisem să lucrez în programe de educație pentru copiii romi. Felul în care puteam lucra eu ar fi fost mai eficient decât cel al voluntarilor din străinătate veniți să educe copiii romi. Bineînțeles că în acest fapt, în prezența celor din străinătate, erau incluse politici care pe vremea aceea îmi scăpau.

■ **h.arta:** Dar de ce anume vă chestionau autenticitatea? Nu corespundeți stereotipurilor despre cum ar trebui să fie o femeie romă?

■ **Letiția Mark:** Eu sunt dintr-o familie de rudari și rudarii nu vorbesc limba romani, dar acesta este un fapt istoric, ei vorbesc o limba românească străveche. Apoi era vorba și de aspectul meu. Dar eu nu încerc să mă deghizez, sunt o femeie modernă, umblu în pantaloni, dar dacă nu port fuste asta nu ar trebui să însemne că nu sunt romă. Adică, la facultate, toți profesorii și colegii m-au crezut că sunt țigancă, toată viața mea am știut că sunt țigancă și, dintr-o dată, eu nu reprezint autenticitate sau credibilitate în rândul liderilor romi. Era o vreme în care se fabricau identitățile, era un fel de re-construcție a identității, intelectualii învățau sau re-învățau limba romani, era o perioadă aventuroasă, entuziastă, erau și foarte mulți naivi, era o perioadă efervescentă.

După aceea, iarăși m-am retras. Mi-am văzut de carieră, mi-am dat gradele didactice. Apoi iarăși, vrând-nevrând, am ajuns într-un context în care trebuia să iau o hotărâre. M-am întâlnit cu foști elevi de-ai mei care m-au pus în legătură cu Fundația Soros, care impunea la acel moment niște linii specifice pentru programele pentru romi și astfel, cei de la Fundație au fost foarte interesați să lucreze cu mine. Mi-au spus că au nevoie de mine într-un *board* pe programele de romi, era un *board* internațional. Problema era că proiectul



## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

meu pentru un centru educațional pentru copiii romi (care adesea se confruntă cu probleme în sistemul de educație, mai ales cei care vin din străinătate și ale căror studii nu sunt acreditate, astfel încât, chiar dacă părinții lor au ceva școală, ei rămân în afara școlii, etc.) intra oarecum în contradicție cu poziția mea de membră în *board*, de vreme ce se crea un conflict de interese. Am acceptat totuși să fac parte din *board* și la prima întâlnire am propus înființarea unor centre cultural-educative în Cluj, Iași, București și Timișoara. Proiectul propus de mine a fost votat ca program, dar nu primea finanțare. În *board* eram trei romi și cinci neromi, eram prea puțini romi ca să votăm introducerea proiectelor. Un an de zile nu a intrat proiectul, pentru că eram, într-adevăr în conflict de interese, nu era o situație confortabilă, chiar dacă micul meu proiect era doar de 5500 de dolari și chiar dacă se votau acolo sume mult mai mari pentru alte proiecte. Încet-încet mi-am dat seama cum stau lucrurile, că nu sunt niște oportunități chiar așa de mari pentru romi. Chiar dacă proiectele erau declarate pentru romi, până să se ajungă la romi și la copiii romi se trecea prin foarte multe filtre.

Apoi, în 1997 am înființat asociația și a venit o perioadă în care trebuia mereu să demonstrez ceva. Am demonstrat că într-adevăr merge programul, am demonstrat, după aceea, că intram în alte proiecte și-n alte proiecte, am obținut niște săli de clasă la Liceul Energetic, după aceea am obținut aici patru pereți fără acoperiș de la Primărie, am început construcția printr-un program FARE de vreo 4 ani și am terminat Centrul în 2006. Am făcut aici un mic internat pentru studentele rome, avem voluntari, am intrat în proiectele europene de voluntariat și, în momentul acesta avem un proiect structural numit „Egalitate prin diferență. Accesul femeilor rome pe piața muncii”. Prin acest proiect am publicat și prima revistă internațională a femeilor rome *Nevi Sara Kali*, care adună foarte multe articole ale feministelor. Am ajuns să fiu feministă. Foarte mult timp negam cu mare convingere că eu aș fi feministă, pentru că aveam o prejudecată în privința a ceea ce înseamnă să fii feministă. Apoi, am făcut un masterat de studii de gen la Cluj și mi-am dat seama că feminismul nu înseamnă să fii împotriva bărbaților și că eu, de fapt, eram feministă fără să știu, de foarte mulți ani, pentru că încercam să propun o altă imagine a femeii rome decât cea stereotipică, a victimei perpetue și așa mai departe.

Fac eforturi ca să țin pasul cu cei tineri, nu pentru că vreau să concurez cu tinerii, dar aș vrea să cresc asociația. Am trimis foarte mulți tineri mai departe, i-am recomandat la cursuri, la programe, burse, etc., dar foarte repede s-au desprins, probabil că aveau nevoie de independență. Ceea ce e de admirat și eu am înțeles asta, deși îmi pare rău că nu am reușit să cresc foarte multe persoane care să ducă asociația mai departe. Acum aș vrea să mă retrag din asociație, dar constat că ei s-au dezvoltat individual și au un alt traseu. Eu am visat mult mai mult pentru asociație, am visat să se formeze aici un nucleu de profesioniști, dar profesioniștii au plecat și atunci a trebuit să angajăm mai mult persoane exterioare care nu sunt afectiv legate de asociație și de scopurile ei. Tinerii romi cu care am lucrat aici se dezvoltă, prind programe, se duc la cursuri, se formează și apoi pleacă în alte locuri. Iar cei pe care-i angajez din afară vin pentru *job*, la interviurile de angajare nu-mi dau seama dintr-o dată dacă ar vrea să fie și sufletește legați de cei cărora programele noastre se adresează, pentru că, la un nivel declarativ, par a fi interesați de problemele romilor, dar apoi, dacă vine televiziunea sau alte persoane, e un recul, nu vor să apară în prim plan, nu vor să fie asociați cu problemele romilor. Și atunci problema care se pune este ce-am cultivat până la urmă, toate

eforturile acestea la ce-au dus? Da, statistic, anual, există copiii care au un acoperiș, care învață aici, care sunt fericiți aici prin ceea ce putem noi să le oferim și există tinerii care au găsit o platformă de lansare pentru alte lucruri. Dar nu am reușit suficient de mult să îi fac să înțeleagă pe acești tineri rolul și misiunea pe care o au, dincolo de locurile speciale, de oportunitățile de *job*-uri, dincolo de vizibilitatea în plan social.

■ **h.arta:** Dar cam acesta este contextul general, nu doar în ceea ce privește mișcarea romilor, e un context general în care ideologia neoliberală presupune urmărirea unui succes individual. Acest succes individual care e celebrat ca cea mai importantă dovadă a „democrației” și „șanselor egale” maschează, de fapt, lipsa interesului pe care îl are societatea în general pentru felul în care se pot dezvolta comunitățile și în care pot fi ajutați cei aflați la marginile ei.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Da, ați punctat bine, acesta este contextul general. Dar eu întotdeauna am crezut că pentru a ajunge la o schimbare, trebuie să mergi cu pași mărunți, să faci schimbări mărunte, dar vizibile și concrete. Că ajuți copiii, că angajezi doi oameni, că rezolvi problemele cu un buletin. În tineretul cu care am lucrat, am încercat să inoculez acest entuziasm și acest strop de idealism care mie mi-a dat energie. Eu nu pot să lucrez fără entuziasm, dacă nu mă încarc de entuziasm (și copiii mă încarcă de entuziasm, lucrurile mărunte pe care reușesc să le schimb mă încarcă), dacă nu mă încarc eu nu pot să mă duc la o conferință internațională ca să vorbesc despre ceea ce cred cu putere că e bine. Eu am sperat că generațiile care au ieșit de pe locurile speciale pentru romi, din licee și din facultăți, vor fi umplute de același idealism și vor lucra în comunități, pentru că de aceea s-au creat acele locuri speciale, chiar dacă nu știm ce au suferit ei timp de patru ani pe acele locuri speciale, pentru că sunt profesori și profesori, unii dintre ei sunt împotriva romilor.

■ **h.arta:** Dar aici revenim la ceea ce ați spus la început despre cercul dumneavoastră de prieteni care v-a reproșat faptul că vă identificați foarte explicit cu problemele femeilor rome și la faptul că este dificil să adopti o poziție clară în contextul unei societăți rasiste.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Da, și eu am vrut să fug, nici eu nu am vrut în totalitate să fiu mereu privită ca romă. Încă de când am fost copil, când mă străduiam să fiu altfel și să nu abandonez școala, mi s-a tot spus și de către profesori că sunt o excepție. Și asta este o perversitate, în fond nu trebuia să fiu o excepție, nu trebuie să fie o excepție faptul că ți se recunosc drepturile, nu ar trebui să fii în situația de a demonstra mereu și mereu că vrei să fii corectă până la capăt, pentru că ești mereu în pericolul ca ceilalți să spună: „păi ce te așteptai de la o țigancă?!”

Până la urmă, este vorba de cei cărora te adresezi. Îmi amintesc de un eveniment pe care l-am organizat acum câțiva ani, o zi tradițională cu un program de teatru și de muzică, când am rugat femeii în vârstă din comunitate să cânte vechi colinde, vechi cântece pe care le-am înregistrat pentru că se pierd (acele femei au și murit între timp). În primul rând era o femeie simplă, sărmană, cu trei copii care era și foarte bolnavă. Mi-aduc aminte de prezența ei în primul rând în timp ce eu vorbeam despre faptul că suntem și noi oameni și avem și noi drepturi și eram foarte pătrunsă de ceea ce spuneam. Ca să pot să spun ceea ce spuneam și ceea ce credeam mă uitam la ea. Și faptul că ea mă înțelegea și începuse și să lăcrimeze a fost o mare bucurie pentru mine. Cel puțin un om din sala aceea credea în ceea ce spuneam și simțea la fel ca și mine.

## ■ ANDAR I GRÌZA AJ O GODORVALIPEN KAJ SI TUT ANGLAL E MANUŞA KAJ KAMES TE AŞUNEN TUT<sup>1</sup>

### Jekh vakãripen le Leticiaça Mark<sup>2</sup>

■ **h.arta:** Kamas te phenes amenqe tuθar aj andar ti aktiviteta.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Sem e šerutni le Rromnenqi Asociacia "Andar Amare Çhave". Kerdom kadava Asociacia and-berš 1997 kana aštardem man te kerav buti and-o mo kher edukacionala progrãmurã, kodološqe k-e me sem siklãmi, sem rromni, si phendem ke trebul te kerav mi duti anglal e çhave. Kana aštardem te kerav sas pharo, ama akana i Asociacia zamavas pes aj akana and-e fiesavo berš si amen 40 çhavendar kaj aven o Edukativo Centro Kulturalo andar e Çhave (kadava sas o jekhto projekto le asocioqo) Kamlem te gelas le çhaven k-e škola, çhutem len k-i škola, kamlem te rezolvisaras le identiteta lila, sa so le rromen si len. Çhutem o anav le asocioqo kada, k-e kamlem te dav дума le rromnença kaj si tradicionale vi bitradicionale kaj si len griza kaθar e çhave, kaθar lenqi edukacia, aj vi k-e von sas zuvlã aj na sas manqe pharo te dav dum lença sar le rromença. Von sas maj pativale aj xarcarne kana avel i дума andar lenge çhave. Tha', la vramaça avile vi terne vi rroma k-e amare projektura, but andar lende prizaren mi familia, ame sam kathe 50-tqr berša. Sem rudara, kathe , and-o kadava pero, maladilem vi kakavença, geambasa, aj palal jekh vaxt kerdilas pes kate jekh komuniteta mixta. Vi kana e prandizimata maškar varesave grùpura na sa dikhli mišto, le vaxteca von sas akceptisarde. E rroma, generalošte, si but adaptisarde k-e modernikane kondiicie vi kana lenqi edukacia naj bari. Kadava si aver subiekto kaθar me som but interesato: sar amare çhave si dikhle kaθar aver grùpura, aj sar dašti te aven akceptisarde lende. Me zanav sar si kadaja integracie apre mirri mortĩ, kamlom te avav andar aver luma kana doklom k-e rroma si inkerde rigate. Kadaja sas mo zivepen, gelem k-i škola, aj palal avilem pale and-i komuniteta aj phendom manqe k-e si o vaxt te kerav vareso, maj but. Muklem but, lošali isindoj, k-o aštaripen, kana patavas k-e va te keres pes mišto vi amende, aj k-e rroma te aven dikhle maj sukar. Kana kerdom kadaja buti, trujal mande e lumea nevi kaj me somas, aštardas pes te dikhel man aver jakhença. Vi mirre amalina, me pativav but and-e amalimata, sas azbale. Me amalina kaj sas maj but pašal

<sup>1</sup> Amboldipen andar i çhib rumunikani and-e rromani: Cãtãlina Olteanu

<sup>2</sup> Kadava vakãripen sas kerd i trintonaj, o dies panz 2010, k-e than le Asocioqo le Rromnenqe "Andar amare Çhave" le reseça te avel jekh rig and-o lil inkaldo and-o projekto " Dikh man kadã sar sem. Lava aj dikimata le rromnenqe". Kadava projekto, kaj o grùpo h.arta si implikime, kamel maškar e edukacione antirasistikane ateliere and-e škole aj maškar o lil andar o dikipen le rromnenqe and-e publikani sfera, kamen te vazden nište puçimata aj dezbatãra andar o rasismo, sexismo, marginaliteta, aj sar te kerel k-a kadale situacia te na maj aven.

mande, na xatarenas mirro paruvipen, k-e me aštardom man te identifkisarav le pucimata le rromnenqe aj k-e sa vrema davas дума toko andar i diskriminàcia aj vi andar e nasulimata kaj si. Von phende manqe: "mišto, ama tu nijekh data na sanas diskriminime, savaxt ame dikhlem tut sar amari, aj inkerdam tuše." Butpalal, dem godi k-e kadazi si e problema, me kana kamav te marav man andar aver manuša aj te avav sar lende som dikhli mišto, ama kana si man aver vak, maj zurali, si maj phares te avav akceptisardi.

■ **h.arta:** Kadava buti fal amenqe but problematiko. Butvar, atunci kana jekh rromni aresel te avel dikhli and-e publikani sfëra, daste te kerdas pen laqo than aj dašti te phenel so dukhal lan, voj si sikavdi sar jekh misal andar i demokratikani societëta kaj ame sivas (si na dašti te kerel vareso i doš si laqi, na le societaqi) tha' voj si sikavdi sar jekh excepacia.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Va, kadaja buti si but importante, kaj kamav te dav дума laθar maj but. Jekh var kamlem te xramosarav jekh lil andar kadale butã. Kamav te phenav tumenqe maj but andar sar sas kana avilem pale and-e komunitëta, falmanqe sar jekh politikano angazamento, ama me nijekh var na kamav te kerav politika. Me kamlem te kerav sa so dašti ka te bararav kadaja Asociàcia, ama me kamlem te sikavav savorenqe k-e dašti te keres kana kames. Semas akardi k-e Universitatea Ratoripnasqo, kana sas kerdo o Interkulturalo Instituto, and-e berša 90, kaj sas lošale berša. Semas akardi kothe sar siklãrni andar jekh liceo, aj ašundem k-e del pes дума andar e minoritëtura, aj sas mut akarde andar avrutnipen, and-e Timisoara. Kana avilo o than te den дума kaθar e roma, jekh raj jurnalisto sas but prinzardo and-e Timisoara, gelo aj sikavdas e butã but nasul. Phendas: "kamas te keras buti le rromenqa, ama na arakhas ni jekh aktivo, la rromenqa si phares te les o phandipen, von zanen ntoko te dilaben aj te khelen, vaj te çhon love apre lavutara?"

Vov maj phenelas k-e vov si tolerantom kadava si o diskurso savorenqo, kaj phenen: "man si man roma amala aj me na kerav dikriminàcia". Manqe kadava diskurso falas sar semas lile asamaštãr. Sas sar jekh imboldo aj uštinom pirende aj phendom: "Si but manuša avile andar avrutnipen aj savorre etnie si kathe. Te sas vi e roma akarde te den дума lendar, me patav k-e avenas. Me semas xolariko, sem rromni, aj phendem sa vaxt k-e sem aj e butã na dašti te zan sar gele si akana. Si vi maškar ame manuša resposabila, si vi godaver rroma, si but rroma, ama ni jekh na semas akarde te das дума."

Kerdom but xamipen and-e konferinça kana phendem so phendem, palal but manuša kamle te den дума manqa. Phendem lenqe ke te semas akardi te dav дума andar i edukàcia, avavas, tha' konik na akardas man. Palal kadaja, e rromane lidërura akharden man te dav дума k-o Strasbourg. Apre kadaja vrema sas pharo te les o pašaporto, bešesas le diesenqa. E lumea savorri phenelas "aaa, so mišto k-e tu san siklãrni", ama e rromane lidërura, phenenas: "san but godaver andar amen, so kames tu?"

Semas dikhli sar jekh rromni kaj phirel palal pašaporto, aj zalipen and-e avrutnipen. Atunci inklistem avri, sas man mi butã, kaj trebul te dav examena ka te aresav kaj areslom. Mukhlem man but berša, diklem k-e sem dikhli nasul, aj gelem. Palal, e lidërura rodinen man. Sas len but projektura, ama rodenas man maj but adndar i reprezentàcia: "dikhen si amen jekh siklãrni, kaj laqi mortì si parni, kaj vi phenel zuralas k-e si rromni". Butvar, gelem k-e malovimata, ama jekh var phendom lenqe k-e na som jekh papusa kaj dašti te sikaves lan kana tu kames te sikaves k-e si vi roma godaver. Semas but xolariko k-e na keravas butã aj na

## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

kamavas o ròlo te reprezentiv. Semas labarni. Apre kadaja vreme, trebul te sikaves ke san rromni čáci. Na zanavas sar te sikavav k-e sem rromni čáci na maj k-e avilem le ileca puterdo aj kamlem te kerav butĩ andar e čhave. Sar keravas me butĩ sas but maj lačo sar le manušenqe kaj avilenas andar aver thema te ingrizin le čhaven.

■ **h.arta:** Tha' sosθar von kamenas te sikaves k-e senas rromni čáci? Na senas sar trebul te avel jekh rromni?

■ **Letiția Mark:** Me sem andar jekh jekh famillia rudarenqe aj e rudara na den дума i čhib rromano, ama kadava buti si jekh istorikano butĩ, von den дума jekh čhib rumunikano but purani. Aj sas vi andar mo dikhipen. Ama me sem jekh zuvli moderno, phirav pantalunenča, ama te na phirav fasta na si k-e me sem rromni. K-e faculteta, savorre me siklárne zanenas k-e som rromni aj savorre patine man. Aj sa mo zivipen zanglem k-e som rromni, aj akana me na maj sikavav čácipen and-o maškar le rromnenqo. Sas jekh vreme kana e godaver sikavenas rromani.

Palal inklistem avri kaθar o miskipen le rromenqo. Gelem angle le siklarimata zi kana areslom te lav jekh alošaripen. Maladilem niste sas siklovne kaj phende manqe andar i Soros Fundacia, aj von sas len niste programe andar e roma. Phende manqe te avav and-o bordo internacionalo. I problema sas k-e mo proiekto sas jekh edukationalo centro andar e čhave (kaj si len problèmura le školača, kaj aven andar avrutnipen aj na agordile) sas and-e kontradikia mirre thaneca andar o board-o. Akceptisardem te avav and-o board-o aj k-o jekto malavipen phendem te keras niste centre kultural-edukative and-o Cluj, Iasi, Bucuresti aj Timisoara. O projekto sas alošardo ama bilovenqo. And-o board-o semas 3 rroma aj panj gaze, semas zalaga rroma. O projekto na dašti te lel love ka te avel kerdo. Le vremeča, dinem godĩ sar besen e bută le rromenča. Vi kana sas projekte andar e roma, zi kana te aresen k-e rroma aj čhave trebul te nakhenas andar but filtre.

And-o berša 1997 kerdom e asociacia aj avili e vreme ka te sikavav vareso. sikavdem k-o projekto zal, aj palal kadava sas amen aver projektura, linem niste klase ko Energetiko Liceo, pale lilem kadave štar barranga aj ame kerdam len. Kerdem jekh internăto andar e rromane studentura, si amen voluntara; akana si amen jekh projekto strukturalo anavdo". Barbaripen maškar e difereca. O akses le rromnenqo p-i diz le butăqo". Andar kadava projekto kerdam i internacionalo revista andar e rromnă " Nevi Sara Kali" kaj kidel but artikole le rromnenqe aktiviste. Areslem te avav vi me aktivista.

Butvaxt na kamavas te avav and-o miskipen le zuvlenqe. Kerdom jekh mastero k-o Cluj kaj sas zuvlenqe siklavimata aj dinom seama ke vi semas feminista bi te zanav, aj akana zanav ke te aves feminista na trebul te aves mamuj e murša.

Kamavav te avav sar e terne, kamav te barav o gin le asocioqo. Bičaldem but terne avri te siklon, tha' von na kamle te ačhon. Akana kamav te telarav andar i Asociácia, ma le ternen si len aver drom; šunem but maj but andar kadava Asociácia, šunem kathe te bararas profesionistura, ama e profesionistura telarde aj atũnci trebul te las aver manuša kaj na zanen kanci andar i Asociácia. E terne aven kathe, siklaven, aj pala telaren and-e aver thana. Ama kas angaziv akana na kamen te avel chute and-e jekh than le rromenča kana avel e televiziunea. Aj akana e problema si so barilom zi akana? Va, statistikano, beršutno, si čhave kaj si les

jekh kher, kaj siklaven kathe, kaj si baxtale sosθar ame das len aj si terne kaj arakhle kathe jekh platforma te baron aj pale te telaren. Ama na dašti te kerav len te xataren o ròlo aj e misiunea kaj si len, intal e speciale thana, e butã.

■ **h.arta:** Tha kadava si o generalo kontèxto, na namaj and-o miskipen le romengo, si jekh generalo kontèxto kaj e ideologia neoliberala sikavel o rodipen le suksesosqo korkoro. Kadava korkoro sukceso kaj si dikhlo sar i ačhara le demokraciaqi, phenel mai mišto o intereso kaj si le societaqi te kerel ka e komunitètura te aven vi von azutime.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Va, phenen mišto, kadava si o generalo kontèxto. Tha me savaxt patem k-e te areses te keres jekh paruvipen, trebul te zas lokhes, te keres tikne paruvimata, ama te dašti te aven dikhle; k-e azutisares jekhe čhaves, k-e angazisares duj manuša, k-e keres e identitaqo lil. Me na dašti te kerav buti bi te avav lošali k-e kerav les, aj kada kamlem te sikavav vi le ternen kaj sas pašal mande. Me patom k-e generacie kaj gele and-e bisaravne škole apre speciala thana, zana pale and-e komunitèta aj kerena buti andar lende.

■ **h.arta:** Ama kathe avas pale, kana tu phendan andat te amala kaj phende tuqe sosθar les e problèmura le romenqe sar tirre.

■ **Letiția Mark:** Va, vi me kamlem te nasav, te na avav savaxt dikhli romni. Kana semas čhaj aj kamavas te zav k-i škola savorre phenas manqe k-e sem jekh ekcepacia. Anav manqe godi kaθar jekh evenimento kaj kerdom les but berša pale, jekh tradicionàlo dies, teatroca, dilabipen, kana čhutem pure romnã te dilaben purane gila kaj inregištardem len ka te na bistras len (kadale romnã si mule akana). And-o jekhtho than sas jekh romni čorri trine xurdença aj sas vi nasfali. Anav manqe godi k-e me phenavas le romenqe k-e vi ame sam manuša aj si amen xakaza. Ka te dašti te phenav so phenavas dikhavas late. Aj voj xatarelas man aj vi rovelas andar mande sas jekh baro lošalipen. Jekh manuș andar kadaja sala patalas and-o so me phenavas aj xatarelas sar mande.

## ILONA LĂCĂTUȘ & CSILLA KÖNCZEI

### ■ FROM YOUTH TO AGING<sup>1</sup>

In the winter of 1996, an elderly woman knocked on my window. She was short and thin, she was wearing a headscarf. Instead of knocking at the door, she went all the way round the house and stopped in front of the window. Probably she did not know her way; she did not want to enter at all costs. She waited for me to come out and this was weird. Do you have paper, she asked. Yes, we have paper we have plenty. I will never forget her look when much later, she came in the house and saw the huge amount of paper lying in the room. Her eyes flared while for me was heart smothering to see that for her, and certainly not only for her, printed-paper had value in a different way, by kilogram. I offered her an old and worn carpet; she looked at it, and then politely refused it. I was ashamed.

Then she came by my house regularly. I began to sort all sorts of paper: newspapers, wrapping paper, drafts. I watched as she carefully packed them, pushed them in huge boxes, took them on her back, and went away. She then asked whether she could leave the packed paper near the fence, because the dac had no money. Of course, but will get wet, a replied naively. So then it will weight heavier, she smiled. I was on the beam for the second time: with paper, weight was what counted. How much the dac gives per kilogram? 200 lei. After several months, she complained: paper became cheaper.

At first, she spoke to me in Romanian, and when she heard we spoke Hungarian in the family, she switched to a perfect Hungarian. Ilonka néni from Mera. Well, I also have many acquaintances there. I had been hesitating for a long time whether to ask her if she spoke Romani. I was nervous. Of course, how she could not speak it? Would she teach me? This was an older project of mine, which I started several times: with Kati Kovalcsik in Budapest, with musicians from Calata, when they took a break during weddings. I tried even language books. She agreed from the start. Yes, she would teach me. Yes, I was thinking that this relationship might become a marriage of convenience. If I recall it correctly, we were still standing out in the courtyard.

We began language classes. At first, she hardly understood that questions were not real and words were objects we played with. It was equally difficult for me to select words I understood in the verbal flood coming at me. I often put the same question five times in a row. We were having fun listening to records

<sup>1</sup> Könczei Csilla – Ileana Lăcătuș: Ilonka néni, Cluj: EFES, 2002. The text of the whole book is available at. Textul cărții este accesibil la adresa: <http://www.npage.org/IMG/pdf/IlonkaNeni.pdf>

from this first period. Soon she became highly professional. I watched her friendly scolding her newer pupils: teaching assistant Viorel Anăstăsoaie, or Lori Boros, ethnology student. After a discussion with Verseck Keno, a journalist friend in Hamburg, she whispered not without critical overtones “Hey, he speaks like the travelers. Of course, he learned Romani in Bucharest. I laughed heartily. Michael Stewart, he is okay. He speaks well, admitted Ilonka néni on a party night, several years later.

My pregnancy began to evolve. I needed more rest, I could not get out of my bed and she came in my room for the first time. What is going on, Csillag? She always called my like that. For November 1, I have prepared some candles and a bouquet of flowers for her. At dawn, labor started. Before we left for the hospital, I put the flowers and candles in front of the door and left her a message. Later she told me that she went out holding the written message and stopped people until she found someone who knew Hungarian and read the message, “I went to give birth.” Since then, she often recalls this story.

She entered the yard carrying large boxes on her back. Sometimes she came with her daughters, but mostly alone. On very rare occasions, a friend wandering in the house helped her. I often lamented, “Ilonka néni, rest, do not carry such heavy things”. Well dear, what will be with us then? She lives in “Bairon” with three daughters, their partners and five grandchildren. Three of the grandchildren are enrolled in a special school for pupils with mental disabilities in Huedin. Well, not because .... But because they get full maintenance. Girls, son in laws, they are all unemployed, and one of them is lame. Ilonka néni’s pension is the only source of income money provided by authorities.

It is hard for Gypsies. Even their month is shorter than other’s are. “February is the month of Gypsies. Why? Well as they say about February, that is the month of Gypsies. It is shorter since it has twenty-eight. That month has only twenty-eight. Month of the Gypsies.” What is like to be born a Gypsy? It seems that it is not always sure who or what it is born. In fact, Ilonka néni realized quite late and in a strange situation, what her ethnic affiliation was.

“We were four children. Two girls and two boys. Our mother died. And we remained four. Two at Drag, me and a boy, and a girl and a boy at Mera. And my mother died because my mother, when she got very sick, she arranged to go home to her mother at Drag. To die near her mother. And my mother died there. She was buried there. And then my father took me home. There, to Mera. Stella, I was so fat that I could barely walk. My brother, who was already home, came to me and said to me. Dad, this is my sister? My dad answered. Yes, she is your sister. I did not know no Romani, not a word. I spoke only Romanian. I said to my father, “Dad, what’s up with this Gypsy? That speaks to me, and I do not know what he says. Dad told me, “he has to be nice to you because you are his sister. I told him that you are his sister.”

After I befriended Ilonka néni, I thought about how can I use this relationship for the benefit of my ethnographic work. I wondered how to accompany her in different environments, how can I get to know her system of social relationships, and so on. Initially, I could not do so on objective grounds, with two young children I could not undertake this work. Then I realized that even the given situation - as far as I could use it in that direction



## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

– already gives me the opportunity of ethnographic research. That is so if we agree on the minimal definition of ethnography, which is the discipline that seeks to know a foreign living environment through a different me.

The other me, Ilonka néni was there. Just that it was not I who went to her, but she came to me, assuming all hardships of entering an alien space. And this thing started to work, just that we had only to desacralize the most sacred principle of ethnography, field work. For classics of cultural anthropology “true field” was a distant, exotic, preferably isolated island. In European ethnology, the village has been the field for a long time. But since research in one’s own society, “anthropology at home”, become fashionable “field” started to get closer to the factual home of the researcher. Setting aside theoretical conundrums we must admit, that knocking on a social researcher’s door or window is just as natural as when they knock on the doors of other.

One of her daughters came to our place once. Scared, Ilonka néni had not been there for days, which was rather suspicious. I found out that she was sick, had a severe hemorrhage, they had to call the ambulance. I got scared, and ran to her. It was the first time I went to her place. Although she never invited me to her place, obviously, she was glad I visited her.

When I started to speak Romani language quite well, we agreed that we would write and edit the biography of Ilonka néni, in three languages: Romani, Hungarian and Romanian. (I wonder what bonuses get paper collectors for speaking foreign languages?) Since then she is the one who asks all the time well, when we are working Csilla? Recording and transcribing is slow. Moreover, there are other things to do meanwhile. I was just talking to my friend Radu Afrim about our movie-theater work when Ilonka néni began to comb her hair. She has a long, gray, beautiful hair. I have never seen it loose. “Ilonka néni, would you like to play theater?” asked Radu. Why not, she replied as naturally, as when I asked her to be my private language teacher.

I loan some vintage costumes from the Department of Spanish; she tried it on in the mirror for a long time. During filming, when she first passed on the very narrow crest of the hill she rushed so that Tibor Schneider, the cameraman, could not follow and take a picture of her. Ilonka expected that everything would happen fast. Rehearsal, filming. When she walked on the hill for the tenth time, she began to move smoothly. In front of the camera. After a while, she told us how she dreamed about falling down the hill.

We translated together into Romani the text of Laurie Anderson. It began with “me muljom”, meaning I died. A death in a dream. She was not entirely convinced that it was best to use Romani language in the show. She was not indifferent but afraid that viewers would not understand Romani. Without asking, she played the first performances speaking Romanian. To be understood at all costs. As time passed, the only word left in Romanian in the show was “devil’s wheel”. The carousel half submerged in the ocean with all her friends and former lovers. “Devil’s wheel” became slang among students theater department who played with her in the play. Ilonka had great success. She got the most applause at the open stage. At a festival in Bistrita, after the show, few children waited in the front of the theater and asked her in Romani, “Are you an artist?” In fact, in Bistrita was the first time when we shared a hotel room.

## When I met Csillag

When I retired, I sold seeds for a while, and after that, I did not wanted to sell seeds anymore, and I went after waste paper, I gathered paper.

Well, I saw a bunch of newspapers at Mrs. Csilla's. And I knocked on the window, and asked Mrs. Csillag: "Madam" - I did not know her ... I asked, "Madam, what you do with that paper, would you give it to me that newspaper?"

"Yes, yes but you cannot take the whole at once ..."

I say

"I will take it several times ..."

We took a round, took a second one, and she said just like that to go in after I finished, to enter Mrs. Csillag's house. I entered the house ... When I entered the house she said she makes me coffee ... I said

"Thank you, I do not drink ..."

"Have something to eat..."

"Thank you, I do not eat ..."

"Listen, do you know Romani?"

"Yes ..."

"But would you want to teach me Romani?"

"Sure ... how not to teach you ... well, that is not hard ..."

"And when you can come?"

I say

"When you want me to..." She was pregnant with her daughter ... Mrs. Csillag ...

Say

"When you want ..."

She says

"You will come twice a week ... twice a week ..."

And I say

"What day?"

And she says:

"On Friday and Tuesday ..."

I say

"All right, I will come ..."

And ... I came ... I went to Mrs. Csillag ... once ... and I taught Mrs. Csillag Romani ... and one time mister Peter asked me ...:

"Does Mrs. Csillag learn?"

I said

“Yes, she’s going, she learns ... if not - I told him -, there are sticks ... well, you were a teacher and taught children and you too had stick for children ...”

## When Csillag gave birth

And once was illumination ... it is illumination ... and I go there ... And when I go there, there are some flowers on the table and a letter, a paper ... There is a note ...

Well, since I do not read, I went out on the street, to give it to someone who knows how to read ... so, everyone I asked said that they did not know Hungarian, because it was written in Hungarian ... Then I thought different ... and, well I will ask in Hungarian ... a boy came and I asked him in Hungarian.

I said:

“Please do tell me what is written here?”

And then the boy says that:

“Szülést várunk ...”

“How can be szülés, when she had no nine months, only eight months”, I say ... We expecting the birth  
Birth

Well now, I expected her to come home, when I went there and I did not enter the house ... her mother was there, Csillag’s mother, and showed me through the window what girl she had... well, she was nice, just that I did not go in the house until she had three weeks, then I went in and continued to teach Csillag Romani, ... but now she speaks well and we talk more in Romani than in Hungarian ... and she speaks well, ans so on  
And after that two boys came there and they asked me if I wanted to teach them too Romani? And I said yes one is Viorel and the other was called Lóránd ... yes, I met them there at Mrs. Csillag’s ... and I further teach them ... let them learn yes, we because we do not have time, they work a lot

## We make a theater

I came here and once Mrs. Csillag said to me to go to a shooting ... let us go, go to a shooting ... what did I know where we went or what would come out of it? Let’s go shooting.

When I went to shooting Mrs. Csillag gave me a long dress, one more on the top of that, I dragged it after me ... and we went on a hill, we went very far ... on a high, high, high mountain .... And I hardly climbed up on that hill

What was I thinking? That I would go up once and return

But it was not like that ... I walked on that hill many times until he take shots of me, my hair disheveled until he take the pictures

Well, we came home after a while ... Mrs. Csillag said to me:

“We do a theater, Ilonka néni? ...”

“We do, we do ...” I did not no what would come out of that “We do ...”

Well, we went on, first time we did it here in Cluj, at the synagogue, we did once or twice, I forgot ... we did it here ... I had my lines I told in Romani, I spoke Romani ... and when I said there “I dreamed a dream”

“I had a dream ...”

What did I dream?

I dreamed I was walking on a prom

What I saw there? At that end?

Eci, my grandmother, sold cakes at a stand ...

Well, I was walking on a thin, thin rope

But I was already afraid that I would fell ...

But why was I afraid?

Because all my friends I had where there, they were dead and they were down there

I was afraid that I would fell on them

And at corner, I see a big, big, big river

So what was there?

A wheel ...

Half of it was under the water, half on the water

And the wheel spin ...

Who was in that wheel?

All my relatives who died ... all my relatives were there in the wheel

What kind of wheel was that?

Devil's wheel!

It was that wheel, all my relatives were in it

We went to Bistrita ... we went with Csillag, we went there with Csillag, Radu, with the theater ... it was very good, it was nice

We slept at the hotel, there was many people, we won, we were the first ... Our team, we ...

When I went out ... all those Gypsies, they were all after me ...

“Old women, it was you there, you did that movie?”

“I ...”

We went into town, in the park, we were walking around, people hanged on me

“Old women, it was you there?”

“Yes...”

■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

“It was very well ... how nice you replied, you replied in Romani ... “

“Yes, in Romani, of course, we had a Gypsy play ...”

“Wow, that is good, that one was cool, what a cool reply you had...”

Well, we remained there for two days ...

... when I went there with the theater we got into the hotel, first we got into the hotel, we put all our things there, I shared a room with Mrs. Csillag, we had a had room ... I slept in the same room with her ...

And we did the play Saturday night, we did it in the small theater hall ... I spoke Romani

Well, there were some Gypsy kids ... they came in to listen in the theater ... they heard that I spoke Romani ... when I got out, all the children were following me

“Old women, you were there?”

“It was you there?”

“I”

“It was you there?”

“I”

“Wow, you talked nice ... and you were dressed nice ... “

Well, we went back to the hotel, there we ate at the restaurant, we ate, we went in the city in the morning. We went in the city and walked all around the town with Mrs. Csillag, we walked all around the town we went to pizza's ... we went to a market ... in the middle of the market there were some Gypsies ... those Gypsies followed me ...

“Old women, are you an artists?”

“Yes ...”

“It was you who spoke Romani so beautifully?”

“I said yes, of course ...”

“But where did you learn it?”

I said

“Mrs. Csillag .... I learned with Mrs. Csillag I learned ...”

“Oh, that is cool, oh that is good, how we all enjoyed it ...”

We were at the hotel, I went and I walked through town ... with Mrs. Csillag, pizza in town, father ... we went to the park ... When we went to the park, there were four of our boys, whit whom we went there... they shoot us there ... we were shooting there ... and there was a boy ... and I told him – but he had no hair on his head – and told him:

“Hey, take your hair out of your eyes”, and Mrs. Csillag and the boys laughed a lot about what I said to him ... and we were filmed like that, saying what I said, and I was filmed like that “take out your hair from your eyes” and I liked that very much.

We came home from there, and then we went to Tirgu Mures ... we went there ... Now, there also was a very nice, everyone liked it ...

One evening we made it in the Small Hall, the second evening we did it in the Great Hall. There were so many people, and we won, we won, our team ... won, because I was the main character ... here in Tirgu Mures ... We went to Tirgu Mures by car ... well, there, when we arrived at Tirgu Mures, Mrs. Csillag was already inside, by the time I got to the door ... they did not want to let me in, what I was doing there, they saw that I was a Gypsy women ... so what was I doing there

I said

“Let me in lady because I am an artist ... here” I said “because I came here because I play here”

“It is not true ...”

I said

“Madam, come out, look at the door ... Who is on the poster there, who is there, it is me is not it?”

“No, no ...”

I said

“Listen, let me be, and do not innervate me, and let me go in...”

“It is not possible ...”

Mrs. Csillag came, took me inside ... When she led me inside ... well did it there, they liked it, a lot, I spoke in Romani, I talked in Romany, everyone liked it. ... Someone did a thing before us but they did not like it as they liked ours.... they did not like it because there was a women who made things and they did not like her ... but ours, we won, we were first, we won the first prize and there ... And they liked it ...

We were at the hotel, there was mister Peter, Mrs. Csillag husband, and we were there, they got two rooms, I got a room right next to theirs, I was alone in that room, alone in the room. ... I remained there, Mrs. Csillag went home, went home, yes I remained there together with the youngsters, with all my people.

And at the hotel, now they slept where I played the theater, in that hall ... Only I slept there ... at the hotel ... I spoke Hungarian, at the table when we went down to the restaurant to eat, I spoke to women in Hungarian ... of course they loved it ... they loved that I spoke Hungarian, and I was served very well, they served me very well because I spoke Hungarian and they loved us ... it was cool and good for all ...

## ILONA LĂCĂTUȘ & CSILLA KÖNCZEI

### ■ DE LA TINEREȚE PÂNĂ LA BĂTRÂNEȚE

În iarna anului 1996 a bătut la geam o femeie în vîrstă, scundă, slabă, cu batic pe cap. În loc să bată la ușă a ocolit casa și s-a oprit la fereastră. Probabil nu cunoștea drumul, nu a vrut să intre cu orice preț. M-a așteptat pînă ce am ieșit la ea, și asta a fost ciudat. Aveți hîrtie, a întreat. Hîrtie avem, asta avem. N-o să uit niciodată expresia feței ei atunci cînd, mult mai tîrziu, a intrat în casă și a văzut cantitatea de hîrtie depozitată. I-au sclipit ochii, iar mie mi s-a strîns un pic inima văzînd că pentru ea și, cu siguranță nu numai, hîrtia tipărită are valoare altfel: la kilogram. I-am oferit un covor bătrîn, uzat, s-a uitat la el, după care m-a refuzat politicos. Mi s-a făcut rușine.

Apoi m-a căutat regulat. Eu am început să sortez maculatura: ziare, hîrtie de împachetat, ciorne. M-am uitat, cum le-mpachetează cu grijă, le vîră în cutii uriașe și, luîndu-le pe spate, pleacă cu ele. Apoi m-a întreat dacă poate să lase hîrtia adunată lîngă gard, pentru că dacul nu are bani. Desigur, însă se va uda, am răspuns naivă. Măcar așa o să cîntărească mai mult, mi-a zîmbit. Era un semn al încrederii. Da, mi-a picat fisa, a doua oară: la hîrtie greutatea e importantă. Cît dă dacul pe kilogram? 200 de lei. După cîteva luni mi s-a plîns: s-a redus prețul hîrtiei.

Prima dată mi s-a adresat în românește, apoi cînd a auzit că în familie vorbim ungurește, a întors-o pe o maghiară impecabilă. Ilonka neni din Mera. Cum să nu, am și eu multe cunoștințe acolo. Am ezitat mult să-ntreb, dacă știe țigănește. Am avut emoții. Cum să nu știe? M-ar învăța și pe mine? Acesta a fost un proiect mai vechi, început de mai multe ori: cu Kovalcsik Kati la Budapesta, cu muzicienii din Călata, cînd făceau pauze în timpul nunțiilor. Chiar și din manuale. A consimțit din prima. Da, m-am gîndit eu, din aceasta relație poate să iasă o căsătorie de complezență. Dacă mi-amintesc bine, eram încă în curte, stînd tot în picioare.

Am început cursurile de limbă. La început i-a fost greu să înțeleagă că la învățarea unei limbi întrebările sunt de formă, iar cuvintele obiecte de joacă. Și pentru mine a fost greu, ca să selectez cuvinte inteligibile din potopul verbal care s-a abătut asupra mea. De multe ori am repetat întrebarea chiar de cinci ori. Ascultînd înregistrările din prima perioadă ne distram copios pe această temă. A devenit o profesionistă desăvîșită. Mă uit cum îi ceartă prietenește pe elevii mai noi, pe asistentul Viorel Anăstăsoaie, sau pe Lóri Boros, student la etnologie. După ce a discutat odată cu Keno Verseck, un prieten ziarist din Hamburg, mi-a șoptit nu fără accente critice: măi, asta vorbește ca și corturarii. Sigur, el a învățat țigănește în București. Am rîs cu poftă. Michael Stewart, el e în ordine. El vorbește bine, mi s-a confesat Ilonka neni după mai mulți ani, după o noapte de petrecere.

Sarcina mea a început să evolueze. Trebuia să mă odihnesc mult, nu am putut să mă scol din pat, și a venit pentru prima dată la mine în cameră. Ce s-a-nîmplat, Steluța? Întotdeauna mi-a zis așa. De întii noiembrie i-am pregătit câteva lumînări și un buchet de flori. În zori am început să nasc. Înainte să plecăm la spital am pus lumînările și florile în fața ușii cu un mesaj. Ulterior mi-a povestit: a ieșit cu mesajul scris în stradă și a oprit oameni, pînă cînd a găsit pe cineva care știa ungurește și care i-a citit mesajul: „am mers să nasc”. De atunci evoca de multe ori această întîmplare.

A intrat în curte avînd cutii mari în spate. Cîteodată cu fiicele ei, dar de cele mai multe ori singură. Rar de tot, a fost ajutată de un prieten rătăcit prin casă. De multe ori m-am văitat: Ilonka neni, nu mai cărați atîta, odihniți-vă. Păi, atunci ce-o să fie cu noi, dragă. Trăiește singură pe „Bairon” cu cele trei fete ale ei, cu partenerii acestora de viață și cu cinci nepoți, din care trei sunt elevi la școala ajutoare din Huedin. Na, nu de aia.... Ci datorită faptului că acolo primesc întreținere completă. Fetele, ginerii, sunt cu toții șomeri, unul dintre ei șchiop. Pensia lui Ilonka neni este singura sursă de bani provenită de la autorități.

Țiganilor le e greu. Țiganilor pînă și luna le e mai scurtă decît celorlalți. „Februarie este luna țiganilor. De ce? Păi așa se zice despre februarie, că e luna țiganilor. Că-i mai scurtă, are douăș’opt. Luna aia are numai douăș’opt. Luna de țigani.” Oare cum e cînd cineva se naște țigan? Se pare că nu e întotdeauna sigur nici cine, nici ce se naște. Ilonka neni dealtfel și-a dat seama destul de tîrziu și într-o situație destul de ciudată de apartenența ei etnică.

“Am fost patru copii. Două fete și doi băieți. Și mama noastră a murit. Și am rămas patru. Doi la Drag, eu și un băiat, și o fată și un băiat la Mera. Și după ce a murit mama, pentru că mama, cînd a devenit tare bolnavă, a făcut să fie dus acasă la mama ei în Drag. Ca să moară la mama ei. Și acolo mi-a murit mama. Acolo e înmormîntată. Și atunci tata m-a dus acasă. Acolo la Mera. Stela, eu am fost așa de grasă, că abia am putut să umblu. Frati-mi-o, care a fost deja acasă, a venit la mine, și mi-a zis. Tata, asta e sora mea? Tata a răspuns. Da, și asta e soră-ta. Eu n-am știut țigănește deloc deloc deloc. Numai românește. I-am zis la tata: “Tată, ce-i cu țiganu’ ăsta? Că tot vorbește cu mine, eu nu știu ce zice!” Tata mi-a spus: să fie drăguț cu tine, pentru că tu ești sora lui. I-am spus, că tu ești sora lui.”

După ce m-am împrietenit cu Ilonka neni, m-am tot gîndit, cum aș putea să utilizez această relație în folosul muncii mele etnografice. M-am tot gîndit, cum să o însoțesc prin diferite medii, cum aș putea să cunosc sistemul ei de relații sociale, și așa mai departe. La început n-am putut să fac acest lucru din motive obiective, cu doi copii mici nu puteam să-mi asum acest tip de muncă. Apoi mi-am dat seama că situația dată – în măsura în care vreau să o folosesc și în această direcție – deja îmi dă posibilitatea unei cercetări etnografice. Asta în cazul în care suntem de acord cu definiția minimală a etnografiei, potrivit căreia această disciplină încearcă să cunoască un mediu de viață străin printr-un alt eu.

Acest alt eu, Ilonka neni, era acolo. Numai că nu eu m-am dus la ea, ci ea a venit la mine, asumîndu-și toate greutățile intrării într-un spațiu străin. Și acest lucru a început să funcționeze, atîta doar că a trebuit desacralizat principiul cel mai sfînt al etnografiei, cercetarea de teren. Pentru clasicii antropologiei culturale “terenul adevărat” însemna o insulă exotica, îndepărtată, de preferință izolată. În etnologia europeană mult timp

terenul a fost identic cu satul. Dar de cînd e la modă cercetarea propriei societăți, acel “at home anthropology”, “terenul” a început să se apropie tot mai mult de căminul faptic al cercetătorului. Dacă facem abstracție de sofismele teoretice, trebuie să recunoaștem, că este tot atît de natural să se bată în poarta sau fereastra unei persoane care se ocupă de cercetare socială, ca și cînd cercetătorii etnografi bocănesc în poarta altora.

Odată a venit la noi una dintre fiicele ei. Speriată. Ilonka neni nu mai venise de zile întregi, ceea ce era suspect. Am aflat că e bolnavă, a avut o hemoragie puternică, a trebuit chemată salvarea. M-am speriat, și am fugit la ea. Atunci am fost prima dată la ea în casă. Deși nu m-a chemat niciodată la ea acasă, i-a părut bine, evident, că am vizitat-o.

Cînd am început să vorbesc destul de bine limba romani, ne-am înțeles că vom scrie și vom edita biografia lui Ilonka neni. În trei limbi: în țigănește, ungurește și românește. (Oare ce sporuri de limbă străină se dau colecțiilor de hîrtie?) De atunci ea e cea care întrebă, na, cînd lucrăm, Steluța. Notarea merge încet. Și omul face deodată mai multe lucruri. Tocmai discutăm cu prietenul meu Radu Afrim despre producția noastră de teatru-film, cînd Ilonka neni a început să-și pieptene părul. Avea un păr cărunt, frumos, lung. Niciodată nu l-am văzut despletit. “Ilonka neni, n-ai vrea să joci în teatru?” a întrebat Radu. De ce nu, ne-a răspuns tot atît de natural, ca și atunci cînd s-a angajat profesoară privată.

Am cerut împrumut de la cineva din catedra de limba spaniolă costume de epocă, le-a probat îndelung în fața oglinzii. Cînd a trecut prima dată cu ocazia filmărilor pe coama colinei foarte înguste s-a grăbit astfel încît Schneider Tibor, operatorul n-a putut s-o urmărească. Ilonka se aștepta ca totul să treacă repede. Repetiția, filmarea. Pe la a zecea traversare a colinei a început să se miște lejer. În fața camerei video. La ceva vreme după aceasta a povestit cum avea să se viseze căzînd jos de pe colină.

Am tradus împreună textul lui Laurie Anderson în limba romani. Începea cu „me muljom”, adică „am murit”. O moarte în vis. Nu era foarte convinsă că e bine să folosim limba romani în spectacol. Nu-i era indiferent faptul că nu va fi înțeleasă de spectatori. Fără să întrebe pe nimeni, la primele spectacole își începea textul în românește. Pentru a fi înțeleasă cu orice preț. Cu timpul singurul cuvînt rămas în românește din spectacol a fost „roata dracului”. Caruselul scufundat pe jumătate în ocean cu toți prietenii și foștii ei amanți. „Roata dracului” a devenit slang printre studenții de la actorie care au jucat alături de ea. Ilonka a avut mare succes. A primit cele mai multe aplauze la scenă deschisă. La un festival la Bistrița, după spectacol cîțiva copii au așteptat-o la ieșire și au întrebat-o în țigănește „tu ești artistă?”. De fapt, tot la Bistrița am stat pentru prima dată împreună într-o cameră de hotel.

## Cînd am cunoscut-o pe Csillag

Cînd m-am pensionat, am umblat cu sămînță un timp, ș-apăi dup-aceea n-am mai vrut să vînd sămînță, și m-am dus după hîrtii, am adunat hîrtii.

No', am văzut o grămadă de ziare la doamna Csillag. Și am bătut în geam, și am întrebat-o pe doamna Csillag:

„Doamnă” – io n-am cunoscut-o... Am întrebat, „doamnă, ce faceți cu hîrtia aia, nu mi-o dați mie, ziarele alea?”

„Ba da, da’ nu le poți duce o dată...”

Zîc:

„Le duc de mai multe ori...”

Am dus o tură, am dus a doua, și o zîs așe, că să viu înuntru după ce găt, să viu la doamna Csillag în casă. Am intrat în casă... Cînd am intrat în casă o zîs că-mi face cafea... Am zîs:

„Mulțumesc, nu beau...”

„Să mănînci ceva...”

„Mulțumesc, nu mănînc...”

„Auzi, dumneata știi țigănește?”

„Da...”

„Da’ ai vrea să mă-nveți țigănește?”

„Sigur că da... cum să nu te-nvăț... da’ aia nu-i greu...”

„Și cînd poți să vii?”

Zîc:

„Cînd vrei dumneata...” lera gravidă cu fetița... doamna Csillag...

Zîc:

„Cînd vrei...”

Zice:

„Vii de douao ori pe săptămîină... de două ori pe săptămîină...”

Și zic:

„Da’ ce zi?”

O zîs așe:

„Vii vinerea și marțea...”

Zîc:

„Bine, viu...”

Ș-am vinit... Am vinit la doamna Csillag... o dată... ș-am învățat-o pă doamna Csillag țigănește... O dată mă-ntreabă domnu’ Peter... că:

„Învață doamna Csillag?”

Am zîs:

„Da, merge, învață... dacă nu” zic, am zîs io, „ieste băț... că și dumneaei o fo’ profesoră ș-o-nvățat copiii, și dumneaei o avut băț pentru copiii...”

## Cînd a născut Csillag

Și odată, la luminație... e luminație... și mă duc acolo... Și cînd mă duc acolo, iera niște flori pã masã și o scrisoare, o hîrtie... Acolo un bilețel...

Amu' dacã io nu știu ceti, io am ieșit afarã-n drum, sã dau sã vadã cã ce scrie acolo... Deci pã cine-am întreat, tãți o zîs cã nu știe ungurește, cã-i ungurește scris... Atuncea m-am gîndit altfel... și, no' lasã cã întreb ungurește... și o vinit un bãiat ș-am întreat ungurește.

Zic:

„Te rog frumos sã-mi spui, ce scrie aicea?”

Ș-atuncea zice bãiatu' ăla:

„Szülést várunk...”<sup>1</sup>

„Cum poate sã fie szülés<sup>2</sup>, cînd dumneai încă n-o avut nouã luni, numa opt luni”, zic...

No' amu am așteptat sã vie acasã, cînd m-am dus acolo n-am intrat în casã... Iera maicã-sa acolo, a lui Csillag, și-mi arãta pã geam cã ce fetiță are... no', o fo' fainã, numa' n-am intrat în casã pînã n-o avut cam tri sãptãmîni doamna Csillag, cînd am intrat în casã la dînsa... și am învățat-o, am învățat-o mai departe... țigãnește... dar acuma știe, cã mai mult vorbim țigãnește decît ungurește... și știe bine, no'... ș-apãi, așe, mai departe...

Ș-apãi o vinit doi bãieți acolo... și m-o-ntreat bãieții cã vreau sã-i învăț și pã iei țigãnește? Și am zîs cã da... unu' îi Viorel, și unu' Lóránd îl cheamã... da' acolo m-am întîlnit cu iei la doamna Csillag... Ș-apãi i-am învățat și pã iei țigãnește, și-i învăț, mai departe... sã-nvețe și iei, da' acuma de un timp nu prea-nvãțãm, cã n-avem timp, cã lucrã mult...

## Facem un tiatru

Am venit aicea ș-o zîs odatã cãtrã mine doamna Csillag cã sã mergem la o filmare... Mergem, mergem la filmare... ce-am știut io cã unde-i, sau ce-am știut io cã ce va ieși de-aici? Mergem la filmare.

Cînd mă duc la filmare îmi dã doamna Csillag o rochie lungã, încã una pãstã ie, o trãjeam dupã mine... și merem p-un deal, da' departe ne-am dus... merem p-un deal 'nalt, 'nalt, 'nalt, cã numa așe, de-abia m-am suit acolo sus pã dealu' ăla...

Cã io ce-am gîndit? Cã mă duc o datã, și trec și viu înapoi...

Da' nu o fost așe... cã ne-am dus de mai multe ori pînã ce m-o filmat, m-am despletit de pãr pînã ce m-o filmat...

<sup>1</sup> M: Așteptãm nașterea.

<sup>2</sup> M.: naștere

No', am venit acasă, după o perioadă..., zîce către mine doamna Csillag:

„Facem un tiatru, Ilonka neni?...”

„Facem, facem...” Nici atuncia nu știam io că ce va ieși d-acolo... “Facem...”

No' merem, prima dată am făcut aicea-n Cluj, am făcut în sinagoga, am făcut, o dată sau de două ori, nu, nu, am uitat... am făcut aicea... Deci aveam io verșul meu ce-l zicem, țigănește, io țigănește vorbeam... și cînd zîc acolo... “Io am visat un vis”...

“Io am visat un vis...”

Ce am visat io?

Am visat io că io mă plimbam p-un Corzo

Ce-am văzut io acolo? În capătu' acolo?

Eci, bunica me, vindea prăjituri, într-un chioșc...

No', mă plimbam p-o sfoară subțire, subțire,

Da' mi-era frică deja că io cad...

Da' di ce mi-era frică?

Că tăți prietinii miei, care i-am avut, ierau acolo, aceia care-o murit, ierau jos...

Și mi-era frică că cad pă iei...

Și văd într-un colț, văd un rîu mare, mare, mare, mare,

Deci ce era acolo?

O rotă...

Și jumătate iera-n apă, jumătate iera-n afară...

Să-nvrîte rota aia...

Cine iera în roata aia?

Tăt niamu' meu ce o murit... Tăt neamu' meu iera-n rota ceea...

Da' ce rotă o fost aia?

Iera roata dracului!

O fost roata aia, într-aceea iera niamu' meu... “

Ni-am dus în Bistrița... ne-am dus cu Csillag, ne-am dus acolo cu Csillag, cu Radu, cu tiatru... O fost foarte bine, o fost frumos... Ne-am culcat la hotel, ni-o primit atîta lume-o fost, noi am cîștigat, noi am fost primii... echipa noastră, noi...

Cînd am ieșit afară... tăți țiganii, tăți după mine...

„Bătrînă, tu ai fost acolo, tu ai făcut filmu' ăsta?”

„Io...”

Noi ne-am dus în oraș, pîn' parc, am umblat peste tăt, mă trăjea jos omii...

„Bătrînă, tu ai fost?”

„Io...”

„Foarte bine-o fost... ioi ce frumos ai răspuns, țigănește ai răspuns...”

## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

„Da, țigănește, doară am avut pesa țigănească, sigur că da...”

„Ioi, ce bine, ce fain o fost, ce fain ai răspuns...”

No’, am stat acolo două zile...

... cînd m-am dus cu tiatru’ acolo noi ni-am băgat prima dată la hotel ne-am băgat, ni-am pus lucrurile noastre tâte acolo, io aveam camera cu doamna Csillag, am avut camera... cu ia mă culcam într-o cameră...

Și am făcut sîmbătă seara, am făcut în sala mică tiatru’... deci io țigănește, io țigănește am vorbit...

No’ ierau niște copii de țigani... aceia au vinit înuntru... acolo, să asculte acolo-n tiatru... ei au auzit că io țigănește vorbesc... Cînd am ieșit afară, tăți copiii după mine:

„Bătrîna, dumneata ai fost?”

„Dumneata ai fost?”

„Io...”

„Dumneata ai fost?”

„Io...”

„Tulai, ce fain ai vorbit... și ce fain ai fost îmbrăcată...”

No’, ne-am dus înapoi la hotel, acolo am mîncat la restaurant, am mîncat, ne-am dus demineată în oraș...

Ne-am dus în oraș, ș-am umblat prin tăt orașu’ am umblat cu doamna Csillag am umblat pîn’ tăt orașu’ ne-am dus la pizza... ne-am plimbat în piață... în mijlocu’ de piață ierau niște țigani... tăt după mine-o vinit țiganii...

„Bătrîna, ești artistă?”

„Da...”

„Tu ai vorbit așa frumos țigănește?”

„Zic io, io dară...”

„Da’ de unde-ai învățat?”

Zic:

„Doamna Csillag.... cu doamna Csillag am învățat...”

„Vai, ce fain, vai ce bine, ce ne-o plăcut la fiecare...”

Ieream la hotel, m-am dus și-am umblat prin oraș... cu doamna Csillag, pizza prin oraș, tăt... ne-am dus în parc... Cînd ne-am dus în parc, ierau tăți băieții aieștea ai noștri, cu cine ne-am dus... acolo ne-o filmat... ne-o filmat acolo... iera un băiat... și io am zis cătră iel –

da’ iel n-are păr pă cap... – și zîc cătră iel:

„Mă, fă-ți păru’ din ochi...”, atîta o rîs doamna Csillag și toți băieții, că io ce am zis cătră iel... c-am zîs... Și așa ne-o filmat, așa am zîs cătră iel, și așa am fost filmată, „fă-ți păru’ din ochi...” și mi-o plăcut tare mult...

De-acolo, am vinit acasă, după aceea ne-am dus în Tîrgu-Mureș... ne-am dus acolo... No’ ș-acolo o fost tare fain, le-o plăcut la tăți...

Am făcut într-o sară am făcut la Sala Mică, a doua sară iară am făcut în Sala Mare. D-apăi atîta lume o fost, și noi am cîștigat, noi am cîștigat, echipa noastră... o cîștigat, că io am fost rolu’ principal... eci în Tîrgu-Mureș...

Ne-am dus cu mașina la Tîrgu-Mureș... no, acolo, cînd am ajuns la Tîrgu-Mureș, doamna Csillag iera înuntru, pă cînd am ajuns io la ușe... n-o vrut să mă lase înuntru, că ce caut io acolo... că m-o văzut țigancă... ce caut io acolo...

Zic:

„Lasă-mă doamnă că-s artistă... aicea”, zic “doară io aicea vin că aicea jucăm...”

„Nu-i adevărat...”

Zic:

„Doamnă, ieși afară, uită-te la ușe... Cine-i afișat acolo, cine-i acolo, nu io?”

„Nu, nu...”

Zic:

„Auzi, lasă-mă-n pace, nu mă inerva, și lasă-mă să intru...”

„Nu se poate...”

O vinit doamna Csillag, m-o luat și m-o dus înuntru... Cînd m-o dus înuntru... no' am făcut acolo, le-o plăcut, tare, io am vorbit țigănește, io am vorbit țigănește, no' la tăta lumea le-o plăcut... Înaintea noastră o mai făcut cineva și nu le-o plăcut așa ca cum le-o plăcut de noi... Nu le-o plăcut că iera o femeie care făce și nu le-o plăcut... da' de noi, noi am cîștigat, noi am fost primii, noi am cîștigat primu' ntîi și acolo... Și le-o plăcut...

Ieram la hotel, acolo o fost domnu' Péter, bărbatu' lu' doamna Csillag, și acolo ieram, iei iera în două camere, ieu ieram imediat după iei în alta cameră sîngură, sîngură am fost... Io acolo am rămas, pă doamna Csillag o vinit acasă, o vinit acasă, da' io am rămas acolo cu tineretu' cu tăți aieștea a miei.

Și, la hotel, amu' aștia s-o culcat acolo unde-am jucat tiatru' la sala ceie... Numai io sîngură am durmit acolo... în hotel... io am vorbit ungurește, la masă cînd ne-am dus jos la restaorant de-am mîncat, și-am vorbit cu femeile ungurește... dară că le-o plăcut... dară că le-o plăcut că io am vorbit ungurește, da' și am fost servită așa ca lumea... pă mine m-o servit așa ca lumea c-am vorbit ungurește ș-acolo ne-o plăcut... pentru tăți o fo' fain ș-o fo' bine...

## ILONA LĂCĂTUȘ & CSILLA KÖNCZEI

# ■ DJ'ANDE MUNŔO TÎRNIPO ZHIN ANDE MUNŔO PHURIPO

Ando 1996 jevendal mardjas ke ablaka ekh phuri fómnji. Ekh cinonji, slabon, khosnehe po shero. Na mardjas ko udar, giljas pash o kher pash ekh perata, haj ačhljas k'ekh ablaka. Shaj ke na prinzhandjas o drom: na kamljas te zhal andre. Uzhardjas man zhikaj unkliljom avri. Me merindjom man. „Hin tumen papiroshi?” – pučhljas. „Hin man, hin man.” Na bristav shohan che kippo kárdjas, kana dikhljas kolla but papiroshi ke munfo kher. Kálde lakre jakha, haj mange kikindjaspes munfo vodji, ke biztosh voj nashtik ingindjas kolla but papiroshe. O papirosha has lache numa kilovoha lake. Me kamljom te dav la ekh colo chingerdo. Dj'ande pesro sasto vodji pale dinja les, na kampiljas lake. Mange has lazhavo, ke me kamljom te dav la les.

Pale kode maj aviljas maj butivarig kode phuri fómnji mande. Me se čunjom len rigate o ujshagi haj o parne papiroshe. Me dikhos ke sar phangel len shukar ande bare kutije, haj lelas len po dumo, haj zhalas lencan e chofi phuri. Pale kode pučhljas man, ke mikhav la te čol kode papirosha ke munfi udvara pash ekh bar, ke kon cinelas o papiroshi, nanji love te pocinel le lake. Perse ke mikhljom late te mikhel la kode, ke has mange mila latar. „Da cindjola” – phendjom me. – „Mikh, ke nanji bajo, ke avela maj phari” – asalas e phuri. Patjalas ande mande. Peljas mange ekh fisha<sup>1</sup> po dujtovarig: la papiroshake o pharipo kontindjas. „Sode del o dako<sup>1</sup> p'ekh kilovo?” „Duj shála lej.” Pal varesode čhona rovardjaspes: tele giljas e papirosha.

Sigeder dumazindjas mange laxitjika. Kana shundjas ke amen ande famelija dumazinas ungrika, dumazindjas te voj amencan ungrika. Zoran mishto dumazindjas ungrika. E llonka neni kathe Mira<sup>2</sup>. Me prinzhanav bute zhenen kode – phendjom me. Me gindindjomman but te pučhav la dake zhanel te del duma fomanes. Has mange lazhavo. Sar te na zhanel? Kamlas te sikavel te man? Me kamljom te sitjuvaw fomanes maj anglal la Katijaha katho Budapeshto, le hegedüşhonencan kathe Mira ko bljava, kana ačhiljam. Perse ke sikavel man – phendjas. No, akana gindindjom: te lake Dj'ande laxitjikon duma: “Mi-a picat fisa.”

Mishto xudela, te mange mishto xudela. Amen dujzhene se ando pînfe ačhiljam pe mînfi udvara, haj kide dinjam duma.

Aviljas te nijikerel mange ora fomanji. Maj anglal has maj phari e fomanji čhib. „Tu Chillag<sup>3</sup>, dj'ande pheras pučhes man? Vadj tu ippeg kames te sitjos kede fomanji duma?” „Phurije, me perse te kamav te

<sup>1</sup> O manush kon cinel o papiroshe.

<sup>2</sup> Ekh gav pashe pasho Kushvari (“Cluj”, “Kolozsvar”), laxitjika “Mera”, ungrika “Méra”.

<sup>3</sup> Ungrika: “Csilla”.

sitjuvaw.” Vash mange has pharo te sitjuvaw sekkon дума so phenelas mange e phuri. Butivarig pučhos e дума латар, ke kíte panchvar pučhos. Maj palal kana shundjam e kaseta, asanjam. Kárdjiljas dj’ande late ekh profesora řomanji. Dikhav, sar delpes le shtudenconencan maj neve, le Vioreloha, thaj le Lorihe. Jekhar dumazindjas e phuri mĩnře baratoha, le Kenoha dj’ande Zhermanija. Phendjas mange numa ko kan, ke vo del дума mĩntjenjítika. Asanjam ando baro muj o lji dujzhene. „Averchandesh o Majkel del дума mishto, del sar amen” – phendjas e phuri, kana mulatindjam kethane.

Me homas phari. Kampelas te sovav but. Nashtik ushtjos kide dj’ando pato. Aviljas mande ande kamera sigeder. „So řintimplondjaspes, Chillag?” Sekkon varig phendjas mange: Chillag. Ko vilagitashi phendjom me la phurijake, te na cinel momelja thaj nich luludja, ke cinav lake me, te zhal ande temetöve. Me tosara has man dukh, kampiljas te zhav mange ando korhazo, te kerav la cina čha. Angle te zhav mange, čhunjom o momelja thaj o luludja angle munřo udar ekha papirosha irimen. Pale kode phendjas mange e phuri, ke unkliljas ando drom, ačhadjas le manushen, losardjas e phuri varekas, kon zhangljas ungrika te inginel kode papirosha. “Giljom te neseljuvaw.” D’akkor sekkon varig anas amenge ande godji, ke sar has.

Aviljas andre pe udvara bare pharimaha po dumo. Kíte ekhar le čhajancan, dar maj butivarig korkofi. Ekhar-duvar vazdindjas la ekh terno kadethar mandar dj’ando kher. Me phenos lake, te na se phiravel kiccom pe pesro dumo, maj hodininples. „Akkor so avela amencan, mĩnři čhaj?” Beshel korkofi po Bajeron<sup>4</sup>, pesre trine čhajancan, lengre řomencan, haj lengre bąjetonencan and’ekh kher. O duj čhaja zhan ke shkoala ko Hujedino<sup>5</sup>, ke řcoala ajutątoare<sup>6</sup>. Na ke hine prostin, de kode hin len sekkon, hajnje, xaben, so kampilenge. O čhaja, o čhave, o zhamutre, nich jekh na kerel butji, jekh de mashke lakre zhamutre hin čhindo telel lesro punřo. Numa kode cinji njugdiva, so hin la phurija llonka nenija ando kher.

Le řomenge hin pharo. Le řomenge te lengro čhon hin maj cinono, ke shajnalinel len o del: „Februari hin. Hin februari. Kada čhon, řomano čhon hin, čhe. Sostar? Pąj, kide phenen le februariske, ke hin le řomengro čhon. Ke hin maj cinono. Bishtoxto hin. Kada čhon dj’ando bishtoxto hin, řomano čhon.” Varesar hin kana varekon řomeske kerdjol? Nanji nich jekhar biztoson, ke soske kerdjol. E llonka neni maj palal čhunjas sama, ke hin řomnji:

“Amen hamas shtar bąjeti. Hamas duj čhaja, haj duj čhave. Thaj amari daj muljas, Chillag, amari daj muljas... Thaj, amen ačhiljam shtar bąjeti. Duj hamas ko Drago<sup>7</sup>8 – me, haj jekh čhavo – haj jekh čhaj, haj jekh čhavo has ke Mera. Na, pale soste muljas e mama... Ke mama, kana nasvalji has zoran, mangljaspes ko Drago, ke pesri daj. Te merel ke pesri daj. Haj kode muljas e mama. Kode te temetinde la. T’akkor, akkor amen, andjas amen o tata khere. Kode ke Mera. Chilla, kisi homas de thulji, ke dj’abije phiros. Kada mĩřo phral, savo has khere, avelas mande, thaj phenelas: “Tata, kede hin mĩři phen?”

<sup>4</sup> Ekh kartiero ande Kuzhvari, kide hin avri irimen e ulica “Byron”.

<sup>5</sup> Ekh foro pasho Kuzhvari, laxitjika “Huedin”, ungrika “Bánffyhungyad”.

<sup>6</sup> Ke vazdimasři shkula.

<sup>7</sup> Ekh gav pasho Kuzhvari, kaj laxitjika bičhol“Drag”.



■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

Phenelas o tata:

“Igen, te kede hin tuke phen.”

Me na zhanos romeanes te dav дума, kajch, kajch, kajch, numa laxitjika. Phenos le tataske:

“Tată, ce-i cu țiganu’ ăsta? Că tot vorbește cu mine, eu nu știu ce zice?”

Phenelas o tata:

“Han leske dragon, ke hal lesri phen! Me phendjom, ke han lesri phen.”

Pale soste hamas mishto la llonka nenijaha, se gîndindjomman, sar zhanos me te kerav butji laha ande mîfri butji ke fakultatja. Se gîndindjomman, ke sar shaj zhos mange laha ande maj but riga, kaj te prînzhanos maj bute manushen. De sigeder nashtik kârdjom kede butji laha, ke has man băjeti cinone. Pale kode dinjom mîfri sama, ke amen abe kerahas butji kethane. Me prînzhandjom la phurija dj’ande lakri viaca kaj phenlas mange voj. Te kode hin etnografija. Na me giljom late, ke voj aviljas mande. Maj pharo has vash lake, ke kampelas te zhal andre ande varekasro kher. Haj kide shaj prînzhandjom la, na kampiljas mange te zhav mange dur and’ekh gav, sar and’aver than, kaj zhan kide dikh te puçhen te kakales, te kokoles, kaj sar te keren. Perse, na kampel te zhaw kajzhineste te maraw kajzhinesro udar kaj te puçhaw kajch, ke voj aviljas mande.

Jekhar aviljas mande ekh dj’ande lakre çhaja. Varesode djesa e phuri na maj aviljas mande. Me zoran nekâzhindjom man ke varesostar arakhljom ke hin nasvalji. Pornindjas la o rat po nak, kerdjas ekh hemorazhija po nak. Kampiljas te akharen la phurijake e mentöve. Me zoran daranjom, haj nashljom khere ke phuri. Akkor homas sigeder late ando kher. Nich jekhar na akhardjas man khere peste, da zoran mishto fanindjas lake, ke me giljom late khere.

Kana sitjiljom te dav дума romeanes, kide xakârdjam amen kaj te keras ekh könjve ande trin çhiba: romeanes, ungrika thaj laxitjika. Varesar gîndinel varekon kede butji, kaj ekh romnji te xudel ekh papirosha, sar dumazinel ande trin çhiba. Dj’akkor voj puçhel man: kana keras amen butji dujzhene. Kampel but butja te keres p’ekh kisi könjve. Kode 9 “So hin kalle romehe? Ke del mancan дума, ke me na zhanav so phenel.”

Nanji numa kide, kampel te gîndinestut, so irines. Haj ekh manush kerel maj but butja jekhara. Hin les maj but butja. Povestindjom mîfne kollegaha kaha me kerav butji, te keras ekh tjatro, kana e llonka neni oxandjas pesre bala. Has la parne bala, shukar lungi. Nich ekhar na dikljom lakre bala avri putîrde. “Na kamehes, llonka neni te keras kethane tjatro?” – puçhljas la o Radu. “Sostar na?” Mange kide jutjon phendjas ke ingen, se kide kana phendjas, ke sikavela man e çhib romani.

Mangljom kathe universitatja nishte rokije lungi kise de multune, probalindjas e phuri te dikhelpe ando tikero. Kana filmindjom la sigeder, nakljas e phuri p’ekh baro, baro dumbo, da jutjon. O Tibi, kaj filmindjas la, nich nashtik filminelas la, kide sidjarlas e phuri. Voj gîndindjas kide ke jutjon-jutjon gâtonel. De na has chaches, ke maj butivarig kampiljas te zhal angle-pale, kaj te shaj filminel la phurija. Maj palal povestindjas mange, ke dinjas pe suno ke peljas tele. Pal koda dumbo. Daranjas ke perel tele. Isardjam ekh pojezija ande romani çhib kethane. “Me muljom...” Ande lakro suno. Ke voj muljas. Na chaljljas la kide but, ke voj kampiljas te del дума ando tjatro romeanes. Ke kamljas e phuri te xakeren o manusha ke voj so phenel. Maj palal phendjas e pojezija romani, numa kiccom phendjas “roata

drakului”<sup>8</sup> laxtjika. Kede roata has roata drakului, so ekh pash has ando panji, t’ekh pash avri. Ande kode roata has se lakre de multune pirane. Dj’akkor o saste shtudente kaj kårde laha o tjatro, phenen “roata drakului”. E phuri zoran has diklji, orkaj kerdjas ekh tjatro. La vash lake marde maj but manusha ando palme. And’ekh festivalo giljam amenge ke Bistrica<sup>9</sup>, pal o spektakolo but bājeti fomane uzharde la avri te pučhen la: “tu phurije, tu kerdjan kede, dinjan duma kide shukar fomanes?” Ke Bistrica ačhiljam sigeder kethane and’ekh kamera k’ekh hotelo.

## Kana giljom ande njugdiva

Akana so te keraw khere, Chillag kolla cina njugdivaha? Phĩrdjom magonencan, bikindjom mogi. Bikindjom mogi ko djaro, ko Karbokino. Pale soste aviljas kada dekretto, buder na maj bikindjom, shohan. Kana has kede revolucija, pale revolucija me buder na maj bikindjom shohan. Na maj bikindjom. Ke na čhaljiljas man, ke pe sekkon sharka has abe mogi. N’apāj ko privatizati bikinenas mogi, te kakaj, te kokoj, apoj buder na maj bikindjom.

Palode phĩrdjom pal papiroshi, Chillag. Bikindjom papiroshi. Ke na has so te keraw. Frimi has, ke numaj ekh shel lej has ekh kilovo papiroscha. Ekh kilovo papiroscha. Inke akkor maj has ertelmo te bikines, inke has ara le loven. Na has kide kuchipo. Haj bikinos, zhos mange pal papiroshe, haj kidos, haj bikinos papiroshe...

Aviljom kadije karig e Chillag. Ke Chillag kana resljom, kode has jekh grāmada ujshagi. Ke Chillag. Me mardjom e ablaka. Haj pučhljom la. Phendjom lake:

“Doamna, so keres kalle ujshagonencan? Des len mange?”

“Daw len. Da hin but. Sar shaj ligerehe len? Ke nich duvar na ligeres len!”

“Apāj sar vazdela mang’o del, dar ligeraw len!”

“Tri baj. Sar shaj.”

“Ligeraw len.”

“Mishto.”

Ligårdjom jekh tura, ligårdjom duj, kana kampiljas utoljara, phendjas mange kide e Chillag, t’avaw andre. Te avaw andre late. Andre aviljom. Giljom mange andre kode, andre giljom, voj kinalindjas man kavejaha. Te paw kaveja. Me na kamljom. Čhunjas mange te xaw. Na kamljom. Na kampiljas mange.

“Le, thaj xa!”

“Na kempel mange!”

“Pi kaveja!”

“Na kempel mange!”

Has mange lazhavo te law!

<sup>8</sup> Laxtjika: „Le bengesri roata.”

<sup>9</sup> Ekh foro ande Transilvanija, laxtjika “Bistrița”, ungrika “Beszterce”.



## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

T'akkor pučhljas man:

“Sar bičhos?”

Phenaw:

“Me llonka bičhuvaw”.

Phendjas:

“Shun kade! Zhanes řomanes?”

“Zhanaw tami, sartena zhanaw?”

“Shun kade! Me kamos te sitjuvaw řomanes. Shaj te sikaves man?”

“Shaj tami!” ranje

Phenaw, so hin kade, kede hin kőnjüvon trjaba, te sikavaw tut. Akkor phenel mange kide:

“Sode varig shaj aves mande?”

Phenaw:

“Kana kames, me akkor shaj avaw, ke me hom ande njugdiva.”

Na. Phenel mange:

“Duvar p'ekh kurko shaj aves?”

“Shaj!”

Phenel mange:

“Marcinal, thaj parastjovinal. Mishto, llonka neni?”

“Mishto!”

T'akkor aviljom. Voj has phari la cina čhaha. E Chillag has phari la cina čhaha. Na, aviljom duvar p'ekh kurko. Akkor has desh milji, delas man desh milji pe kana njikeros laha ore. Kana kuchondjiljas o manfo, dinjas man deshupanch. Pale kode dinjas man bishthajpanch. Bishthajpanch milji. Zoran but vazdjas man. Sekkone kolencan vazdelas man. Orso has, avos late. Sekkon kola so mangos, delas man. Sekkon kola dinjas man. Thaj mishto xakărdjom man laha, zoran lači has mancan, thaj lači hin mancan te adjes. Inken. Thaj sasto chalado la Chillagakro. Pučhelas man o Peter<sup>10</sup>:

“l lonka neni, sitjol e Chillag?”

“Ingen. Te na sitjol, dikh e paca, dav la pe lakri bul, la pacaha!”

## E Chillag kerdjas ekha cina čhaha

Jekhar aviljom ippeg ko vilagitashi. Haj irinel mange kode avri kode pe meselji late, ke „szülést várunk”. „Uzharel ekh băjeto.”

<sup>10</sup> La Chillagakro řom.

Me na zhanaw te inginaw kajch. Haj iljom kode papirosha, th'avri giljom ando drom. Haj se pučhljom ungrika, laxtjika pučhljom. So irinel kade? Kaste dinjom la, phende ke na zhanen, ke hin ungrika. Na, phenaw kide, na ačh, te pučhaw ungrika. Thaj pučhljom ungrika. Thaj akkor phenel mange:

„Szülést várunk.” „Uzharas ekh bájeto.”

Phenaw kide: sar t'avel „szülést”<sup>11</sup>, ke inke voj na has inken enja čhonengri. Haj kárdjas ekha cina čha.

Haj kana aviljom kode, na giljom andre, ke has mange lazhavo, sikadjas mange lakri daj la cina čha. Na dikh, so andjas amenge e barza<sup>12</sup>, shukar. Ekh shukar cinji čhaj. Na, akkor n'aviljom ekh kotor vreme, dake voj kárdjas la cina čha, has mange lazhavo t'avaw. Pale kode jare aviljom thaj maj sitjiljam. Te in ziua de astăzi<sup>13</sup>, se sitjuvas. Se fomanes.

T'apāj maj has inken duj. Kas maj sikadjom. Has duj rakhle. Maj sikavaw inken done rakhlen, inke maj sikavaw done rakhlen. Romanes. Na, kade rakhljom man lencan, kade ke Chillag. Phende te kamaw te sikavaw te len. Te len sikavaw len. Sostar te na sikavaw len, ke te kolla cine love xuden mishto, kana hin len. Ekh bičhol Viorel, haj ekh bičhol Lorand. Kon hin? Von hin nishte profesorja, kaj keren butji ke Chillag. Keren butji la Chillagaha. Kolla rakhle. Kode rakhljom man lencan ke Chillag. Thaj kode pučhle man, le kamaw te sikavaw te len. Sikavaw len tami...

## Kana giljam ko tjatro

Na. Aviljom kode ke Chillag. Phenel mange kide jākhar e Chillag.

„Ilonka neni!”

“So hin, Chillag?”

“Zhas amenge filmezni?”

“Te filmezinas? Zhas amenge.”

Me na zhangljom, ke so hin... Nich na zhangljom, ke kaj zhas amenge. Dinjas man ekh shukar lungon roklje, thaj inken jekh. Haj giljam amenge, giljam la motoraha. Avri p'ekh baro, baro, baro dumba... Me so gīndindjom? Ke me nakhav jākhar thaj hin dosta.

Na. Ke vro trivar, shtarvar giljom pe koda, zhikaj filmezinde man. Putridjom mīnře bala. Haj kide filmezinde man. Na, aviljom khere. Pal varesode vreme, phenel mange kide:

“Ilonka neni.”

“So hin?”

“Keras ekh tjatro!”

<sup>11</sup> U.: neseljipo

<sup>12</sup> L.: (lungone pīnřengi chiriklji)

<sup>13</sup> L.: zhin akana

## ■ ■ ■ INTERVIEWS / INTERVIURI / INTERVIURA

“Chillag, keras!”

So phenel mange o Radu? Phenel mange kide o Radu:

“Tu t’avela tut ekh verso fomanu.”

„Mishto.”

So te phenaw?! Thaj me gîndindjom man k’ekh verso, haj phendjom pe fomanes. Me fomanes dinjom duma.

So phendjom? Ke me so dinjom man suno:

“Me dinjom man suno, ke giljom mange, thaj me shetalindjom...”

Thaj kas dikhljom ando suno? Mînfê da desra da.

Kaj dikhljom mînfê da desra da, kaj muljas? So phenes?

K’ekh cukrasda. Bikinlas testi.

Na, inke maj shetalinos p’ekh sanji, sanji, sanji dori.

Haj me daros ke peraw tele. Pal kode dori...

Kon has kode tele?

Mînfê saste barati, kana homas târnji, kolla se mule.

Kolla shetalinenas telal mandar.

Me daros ke perav pe lende.

Me daros ke pe lende peraw.

Akor me dikhljom ekh bari-bari-bari roata...

And’ekh baro-baro-baro tovo.

Se iseljolas kode roata. Ekh pash ando panji, t’ekh pash avri. Avri dj’ando panji.

Haj kon has ande kode roata?

Mînfê saste njami...

So mule has ande kode roata. Mînfê saste njami so mule...

Haj che roata has kode?

Roata drakuluj has!!!

Le bengesri roata!”

Kana giljam amenge and’aver foro... Kaj giljam sigeder? Ke Bistrica giljam. Sigeder giljam amenge ke Bistrica.

Kode kârdjam tjatro. Zoran shukar has, sekkon kas çaljiilas sar kârdjam, amen kîshtigindjam premiul întii<sup>14</sup>.

Kode ko Bistrica. Palode giljam amenge ke Tîrgu Mureş<sup>15</sup>. Te kode amen hamas. Te koda amen hamas maj laçe. Maj has anglal amende kon kerdjaspes, de has numa amen kîshtigindjam.

Kana andre giljam kode te keras o sindarabo, avile o fomanes băjeti. Te dikhen, ke hin ekh fomnji, haj phenel fomanes. Perse kana avri giljom, kana gâtindjam o sindarabo, puçhle man o foma:

“Phurije, tu hanas kode kaj phendjan fomanes?”

<sup>14</sup> L.: o maj laçe ko premiomo

<sup>15</sup> Ekh foro ande Transilvanija.

“Me homas. Me phendjom!”

“Zoran çhaljiljas amen sar phendjan! Haj sar kârdjan kode, kaj phendjan pe schena! Tulaj devla, che shukar has!”

Thaj giljam amenge ando foro la Chillagaha. Apoj o foma se pal mande! Ačhavenas man o foma, haj pučenas man:

“Tu hanas, phurije, tu hanas?”

“Me homas, me homas!”

“Tulaj devla, phurije, se shundjam che shukar has! Sevořen çhaljiljas amen, phendjan fomanes.”

“Kathar hal?”

“Katho foro.”

“Tu kheles sindarabo?”

“Me.”

“Tu, phuri zhulji?”

“Me!”

Kode sovahas ko hotelo. Thaj ando parko giljam, thaj kode filmezindjam. Le saste rakhljancan, savencan kârdjam o sindarabo! Haj o Radu has amencan. Zoran çhaljiljas man.

Akor giljam amenge te ko Tîrgu Mureş. Kana giljam kode, giljom te zhaw mange andre kode andre ande sala. Kaj kerahas o sindarabo. Na kamle te mikhen man andre, ke phende, ke me hom fómnji! Me so phendjom akkor?

“Zha ko udar! Thaj dikh, nanji munfo kippo koda, kode avri?”

“Na, na!”

Akor aviljas e Chillag, haj phendjas:

“Sostar na mikhel la andre te avel, ke hin amari artista!”

“Voj!?!”

“Ingen!!”

Akor giljom andre. Pale soste kârdjam o tjatro, gätindjam. Duvar kârdjam kode, ko Tîrgu Mureş. Kârdjam savatone ratji, thaj kârdjam te kurke ratji. Sigeder kârdjam ande cini sala, o dujto kurke kârdjam and'ekh bari sala. Na, kurke giljam amen ando foro, me, e Chillag, o Peter thaj o Balazh. Ligârdjam les amencan. Phîrdjam ando foro. Giljam amenge le Peteroha k'ekh pizza. Kana andre giljam, na cindjam kajch... Phendjas kide o kelnero ekha rakhljake:

“Çhe! Tu zhanes kon hin kada?”

“Na!”

“O ministeri hin, çhe, katho Bukureshti!”

Kana dinjam te unkljas avri, ačhadjas man o kelnero, haj pučlas man:

“Han le ministerisri daj?”

“Na. Keraw butji lencan.”

LEȚIȚIA MARK

## ■ WHY I BECAME A FEMINIST

After many years of activism in the Roma movement – I do not comment on whether we can call “movement” the naive enthusiasm of Roma intellectuals and their public affirmation in the post-Ceausescu period – I refused to identify myself with feminism simply because of my prejudices.

While exiting the period of gray anonymity of stagnation and apathy, frustration and restrictions, suspicion, fear, exasperation and despair, I put my hope in a radical, moral, civic reform, re-construction, re-defining, re-form, which can emerge only in a different, truly democratic socio-political climate. As we were ashamed to stay away from the revolted crowd in Timișoara, ashamed to stay in the houses while others were on the street; we Roma, the Colony, ghettos, people on the margins, formed ad hoc groups of demonstrators; we felt solidarity with those who waited feverishly for a change, the wind of freedom that blows from west, the mirage of freedom suffocated by barbed wire that has torn apart so many lives. Standing on this side of the barricade has a lot in common with the wave that unchained women in the 60s. Long oppressed forces burst more violently when they have been constrained into blind obedience.

There followed years of feverish action, participation, dissipation; we naively entered the public sphere, launched initiatives that we not analyzed throughout since we learned by doing and never had time for reflection, worked 10 hours a day, we who had been educated to resist by culture, to isolate ourselves in theoretical contemplation, “difficiles nougae”, sophisticated paraphernalia, to measure the time that elapses so slow in the hourglass of “dolce far niente” in multilaterally developed society. “Time passes, pay goes” the golden era slogan turned us into “new people”, passive, amorphous, sad dummies in the comedy we had to play in, to dedouble ourselves, to simulate. Transition was sudden, unexpected, tough we had been listening to Radio Free Europe and when meat or milk “was given” in the store instead bones, we took it as a sign that something will happen in Romania too. I do not take my inspiration from Herta Muller, the dull monotony of those times, existential angst peaked, increasing from year to year, feeding it until reaching climax and social psychosis. Common context, common destiny, crushed revolts, mass escape, first of Jews, then German, and finally, as usual, of Gypsies; escape of those who had money to pay for freedom, because it needed hard money, especially in the case of Germans.

Those days have passed “fugit irreparable tempus”, they left many scars, including fear of any woman in leadership positions. “Elena Ceausescu syndrome” as defined by Mihaela Miroiu, kept away many women from feminism and political involvement. A civic space, second place, remained for women; it was

accessible for women with civic vocation, it was large enough and did not inspire fear or competition being away from the confrontations between men in the political arena.

We have established the Association of Gypsy Women and named it “For Our Children” because we desired emancipation, and desired to include in one place, women and children in an effort to fulfill my duty to “my people”. As a teacher, I thought and still believe in the values of education as the only solution for the affirmation “with pride and without prejudice” of a nation which has experienced humiliation in its most degrading forms. Thus, the need for compensation and outburst gave way to many exaggerations as presented in an artistic-literary way by Marguerite Yourcenar in one of her Balkan stories in which she sketches a short but essential portrait of a gypsy beggar. In the Oriental Stories, the sequence with the gypsy beggar dressed in brightly colored skirts and a particular flavor makes a brief reference to the mixture of pride and defiance – worthy of oriental princesses – of the beggar in tatters as if her social condition was only a passing moment compared to the millenary history and uncertain future, decided by Fate, Luck, BAXT supreme god.

Returning to the topic, before becoming aware of and reading about feminism, I declared aloud that I am not “feminist” because I was a mother of “boys” and I wanted to avoid being accused of, confused for or suspected of having other “identity”, euphemistically speaking. My mind was imbued with widespread prejudices: to be “feminist” meant to be seen as “masculine”, “manly”, combative, stiff, anti-female, etc. lacking sensitivity; all are defects at the opposite pole of the idolatrous image cultivated in literature and social life: the kind and sweet, caring, affectionate, and compassionate mother - wife - daughter, always ready to sacrifice herself on the altar of family.

When I met “normal” women, beautiful, intelligent, who were also wives - sisters - mothers - daughters, young and old who declared simply, without flatulence that they were feminist, I began to ask myself, and I found my aspirations, motivations and acts formulated in different currents of feminist ideologies and theories.

I find myself in the liberal feminism of forty-eighters Caesar Bolliac; as dithyrambic as it was, his discourse belonged to the avant-garde and he was contemporary with the first wave of affirmation of women’s rights. I saw similarities between the efforts for emancipation and modern enthusiastic affirmation in the program of forty-eighters, which was generous, motivated by daring ideals and never fulfilled dreams of equality, freedom and fraternity and the impetus of Roma leaders for existing the gray anonymity of communism.

The militant, active, critical feminist ideology born as a chain reaction to oppression, ignorance, and minimization fit with frantic and giddy years that came after 89. I thought if we can shout aloud anti-communist slogans in Victory Square in Timisoara, in the square of “hooligans”, we would enjoy first the freedom to movement after decades of “encampment, borders, and barriers”, we would have the right to express our identity without being ashamed, without being lost in the anonymity of the multilaterally developed socialist citizenship. Later I learned that I have been in fact feminist since when I know myself, I have always took side with the losers, women in my family or neighbors, expelled, beaten or abused by men, in-laws, brothers or



## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

mother-in-law who observing the good tradition kept the order and transmitted it from generation to generation. I heard many times the supreme argument from educated women too, not only from the environment in which we grew up: "You are a woman and must suffer". Thus, we are muted. A number of taboos, prohibitions, rules doomed and condemned us, silencing our voices. We had to contribute to keeping conventional, conformist rules, following a long list written in two columns, as in a dictionary with rules like: "dos and donts", regarding how to walk, talk, eat, dress, to wash women' clothes apart from men', to not walk before the man and so on.

When I first revolted? Perhaps when I cried when I was afraid in childhood, whenever a grandfather beat grandmother, father beat mother, the neighbor her wife or both parents beat their kids, girls more often, if they did not respect the unwritten laws of obedience.

While not all childhood was marked by these events considered normal or usual that were reinforced by dictum and phrases favoring the absolute power of "head of family", they nevertheless were imprinted forcefully into our memory, depositing and leading to other events hostile to "taken for granted" or "common sense" customs. Why stand it, why stay silent, why not change, know, and compare it? Only when you have terms of comparison, when you read, and see that it can be different, only then you want to break the established patter. I entered another world through books; they have opened up further my horizons. The first shock was in elementary school, when the top pupil in my class, daughter of doctors invited me to her home to prepare a sketch based on "The third letter". I, as a poor Gypsy girl was cast in a secondary role, naturally, playing the son of Mircea the Elder who wrote "a book" to his lover: "In the Valley of Rovine / We speak to you Madam/ not from our mouth but from books / Because you are so far"... The shock came not from the fact that I was invited in the doctors' house, but the fact that I witnessed a scene between the parents of my colleague. Once they greeted each other, they kissed in front of us, kids. I have never seen my parents doing that. In fact, even we children had no part of tenderness too often, unless we were sick in hospital. Only then, they kissed or kissed us embarrassed and shy as if they were ashamed of their gesture.

Why evoke these memories? Not to blame my parents and austere education, similar to peasant type, archaic, patriarchal wisdom which in fact represents a common base we can read about in all our novels written by Rebreanu, Zaharia Stancu, Marin Preda, and so on. I just want to look for explanations, similarities and contrast between what builds our personality prompting us to search for identity, to return to us every now and then, reflecting on our becoming, according to the best of our knowledge and will, to map the road we walked on and to see what path to follow from now on.

I have realized only later (when I attended at "old age" the courses of the Masters "Gender and equal opportunities" at Babes-Bolyai University coordinated by Eniko Vincze) that feminist ideology is born in rebellion. Or what else than rebel could be a little Gypsy girl who runs away from home to enroll at the university in Bucharest, away from home could not be more than a rebel; I started to become atypical. I met many Roma women with similar history, the first generation of excommunicated. These stories do not impress or strike any of the current generation for whom there are subsidized places specifically for Roma, equal opportunities and other positive actions, to use terms of the current newspeak. Perhaps only Roma women

of my generation or those who lived also in those times identify with this confession. The conflict was rather internal, assimilation was encouraged, and no one spoke openly of ethnic belonging; no matter how black you were the world around you made you feel white. We were “exceptions”, we were inoculated the disease of superiority; an easy way, in fact, a trap, which made many of us copy others without thinking, encouraged us to imitate those around us who tolerated us or to be like them, and failing “our people” many times to, especially those, who remained what they were, “certain Gypsies”. Only we, their offspring have become “gentlemen” more real, cleaner and tawdrier than “real gentlemen”, “parvenu” being exaggerated and having all the ills of the first generation “wearing shoes”.

What all these introspection, pieces of memories and personal experiences have to do with feminism? I learned later on that questions, queries and returns, are not mere exercises in rhetoric or therapy. They constitute personal development and we have the right to ask ourselves questions, to reflect, to be ourselves and not be of ashamed what we are, to accept our identity, to assume it. We should not give up our dignity as humans, regardless of our social status of ethnic belonging.

Making us inferior – “poor women”, “stinking Gypsy women” – idealizing us – “saints, holy” – marketing us are equally harmful, are induced ideas, they are not innocent. They have a purpose, to demonize us, or to transform us into statues, without will, objects to worship or throw away.

De-constructing and de-corseting literally, and figuratively women in the nineteenth century, was followed by the throw away of masks of hypocrisy, highlighting human faces and bodies of people who refuse to live forever in idealism and lyricism built on ancient fears. Modern women, in a symbolic gesture be it exhibitionist, clearly assert their personality, no false airs and hypocritical bashfulness. I am sorry that I did not live in America in the 60, when by symbolic gesture women liberated themselves from the last constraining accessory “throwing bras”. It was a demonstrative gesture, but liberated women from the New World. I admire their gesture, although we are still marked by Europocentrism and importing forms without substance. We are rather reserved in the European space; we do not dare to emancipate demolishing knowingly “walls” in which we were “built-in”.

Where do we, Roma women, stand in this rapidly changing, confusing context, which is not without danger?

We have the courage to express ourselves, to move from passivity to the assertion and recognition of ourselves as worthy and self-confident human beings. If we have an affirmative answer in words and deeds, we are feminists.

LEȚIȚIA MARK

## ■ DE CE AM DEVENIT FEMINISTĂ

După mulți ani de activism în mișcarea romilor – nu comentez dacă putem denumi “mișcare” entuziasmul naiv al intelectualilor romi și afirmarea lor publică în perioada post-ceaușistă - refuzam din simplă prejudecată să mă identific cu feminismul.

Ieșind din anonimatul cenușiu al perioadei de stagnare și lăncezeală, de frustrări și îngrădiri, suspiciune, teamă, exasperare și disperare, speram într-o reformă radicală, morală, civică de re-construcție, re-definire, re-formă, posibile doar în alt climat social-politic, democratic în adevăratul sens al cuvântului. Așa cum ne era rușine să stăm deoparte de șuvoiul timișorenilor revoltați, să nu ieșim în stradă și noi, romii, Colonia, ghetourile, oamenii de la margine, constituiți ad-hoc în grupuri de manifestați, ne simțeam solidari cu toți cei care așteptau cu înfrigurare schimbarea, vântul de libertate care bătea dinspre vest, mirajul libertății sufocate de sârma ghimpată care a sfâșiat atâtea vieți. Situația de această parte a baricadei are foarte multe lucruri comune cu descătușarea femeilor din anul ’60. Forțele îndelung oprite răbufnesc cu atât mai violent cu cât au fost mai constrânse la supunere oarbă.

Au urmat ani febrili de acțiune, participare, risipire, naivitate dar și de afirmare, de ieșire în spațiu public, de inițiativă, ne-analizate suficient, ne-înșușite fundamental, învățate din mers; nu aveam timp de reflecție, lucram câte 10 ore pe zi, noi cei educați să rezistăm prin cultură, să ne izolăm în contemplare teoretică, “difficiles nugae”, nimicuri sofisticate, să măsurăm timpul care se scurgea atât de lent în clepsidra orelor de “dolce far niente” ale societății multilateral dezvoltate. “Timpul trece plata merge”, deviza epocii de aur care ne-a transformat în “oamenii noi”, pasivi, amorfi, figurați triști la comedia la care trebuia să asistăm, să ne dedublăm, să simulăm. Trecerea a fost bruscă, nesperată, deși ascultam Europa Liberă și dacă la Alimentara “se dădea” lapte sau carne în loc de oase, era semn că în curând se va întâmpla ceva și la noi. Nu mă inspir din paginile Hertei Muller, monotonia cenușie a acelor vremi, angoasa existențială a atins punctul culminant, sporind de la an la an, întreținându-l până la paroxism și psihoză socială. Contextul comun, destine comune, revolte înăbușite, fuga salvatoare în masă, mai întâi pentru evrei, apoi pentru germani și la urmă, ca de obicei pentru țigani, pentru cei care aveau bani grei să-și plătească libertatea, fiindcă se plătea din greu, mai ales pentru repatrierea germanilor.

Dar au trecut acele vremuri “fugit irreparabile tempus”, au rămas multe sechele, printre care și teama de orice femeie aflată în posturi de conducere. “Sindromul Elena Ceaușescu” definit astfel de Mihaela Miroiu, a îndepărtat multe femei de feminism și de implicare politică. A rămas spațiul civic, second place, accesibil

femeilor cu vocație civică, era loc destul, nu inspiră nici teamă, nici competiție, departe de arena politică a înfruntărilor dintre bărbați.

Am înființat Asociația Femeilor Țigănci denumind-o “PENTRU COPIII NOȘTRI” din dorința de emancipare, din dorința de a cuprinde la un loc, femei și copii în efortul de a-mi împlini o datorie față de “ai mei”. Fiind profesoară, credeam și mai cred încă în valorile educației ca unica soluție de afirmare “cu mândrie și fără prejudecăți” a unui neam care a cunoscut umilința în formele ei cele mai degradante. De aici, ca o compensație și defulare, s-au născut și multe exagerări, surprinse artistic – literar de Marguerite Yourcenar într-una din nuvelele sale balcanice, în portretul unei țigănci cerșetoare schițate fugitiv, dar în linii esențiale. În Povestiri Orientale, secvența cu țiganca cerșetoare îmbrăcată în fuste viu colorate și cu iz “specific” se face o succintă trimitere la amestecul de mândrie și sfidare demnă de prințesele orientale ale cerșetoarei în zdrențe ca și cum această condiție socială era doar un moment trecător, comparativ cu trecutul milenar sau viitorul incert, hotărât de Soartă, Noroc, zeul suprem BAXT.

Revenind la subiect, înainte de a conștientiza și de a citi despre feminism, declarăm sus și tare că eu nu sunt “feministă”, fiindcă sunt mamă de “băieți” și nu cumva să fiu acuzată, confundată sau suspectată, vai, de alte “identități”, eufemistic vorbind. Mintea mea era îmbibată de prejudecățile curente: a fi “feministă” însemna să fiu “masculinizată”, bărbătoasă, bătăioasă, rigidă, anti-feminină, fără sensibilitate etc.; numai defecte, aflate la antipodul imaginii idolatre cultivate în literatură și viața socială: figura mamei – soției – fiicei duioase, grijulie, afectuoase și înțeleghătoare, gata mereu de sacrificiu pe altarul familiei.

Când am întâlnit femei “normale”, frumoase, inteligente, și ele soții – surori – mame – fiice, tinere sau în vârstă care se declarau feministe, simplu, fără emfază, am început să-mi pun întrebări, regăsindu-mi multe din aspirațiile și motivațiile sub impulsul cărora acționam în ideologiile și teoriile formulate în diferite curente feministe.

Mă regăseam în feminismul liberal pașoptist proferat de Cezar Bolliac, așa ditirambic cum era, discursul lui aparținea avangardei și era contemporan cu primul val de afirmare a drepturilor femeilor. Vedeam similitudini între eforturile de emancipare și afirmare modernă, entuziastă din Programul generației pașoptiștilor, generos, animat de idealuri îndrăznețe și visurile neîmplinite nicicând de egalitate, libertate și fraternitate și elanul liderilor romi, hei-rupist, de a ieși din anonimatul cenușiu al comunismului.

Ideologia militantă, activă, critică a feministelor născută din reacția în lanț față de oprimare, minimalizare și ignorare se potrivea cu anii frenetici și bezmetici de după '89. Credeam că dacă avem voie să strigăm cu voce tare în Piața Victoriei din Timișoara, în piețele “golanilor” slogane anti-comuniste, ne vom bucura de libertatea de a circula în primul rând, după zeci de ani de “lagăre, frontiere, bariere”, vom avea dreptul afirmării identității noastre fără să ne fie rușine, fără să ne pierdem în anonimatul cetățeniei socialiste multilateral dezvoltate. Mai târziu am aflat că de fapt sunt și am fost feministă de când mă știu, fiind mereu de partea învinșilor, femeilor din familia mea, sau din vecini, alungate, bătute sau batjocorite de bărbați, socrii, frați sau soacre care în bună tradiție păstrau rânduiala transmisă din generație în generație. Am auzit de nenumărate ori implacabilul suprem argument venit și din partea femeilor școlite, nu numai din partea



## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

mediului în care am crescut: “Ești femeie și trebuie să suferi”. Cu asta ni se închidea gura. O seamă de taburi, interdicții, norme ne îndemneau și condamnau, ne anihilau și ne reduceau la tăcere. Trebuia să contribuim la păstrarea regulilor convenționale, conformiste, după o listă lungă pe două coloane, ca-ntr-un dicționar cu norme de genul: “așa se cade” și “așa nu se cade” să faci, să umbli, să vorbești, să mănânci, să te-mbraci, să speli rufele bărbatului separate de ale femeilor, să nu treci în fața bărbatului etc. etc.

Când m-am revoltat prima oară? Probabil când plângeam de frică, de spaimă, în copilărie, ori de câte ori bunicul o bătea pe bunica, tata pe mama, vecinul pe vecina sau ambii părinți își băteau copiii, fetele mai des, dacă nu respectau legile nescrise ale supunerii.

Chiar dacă nu toată copilăria a fost marcată de aceste evenimente considerate lucruri normale, obișnuite, întărite de fel și fel de dictoane și sintagme favorabile puterii absolute ale “capilor de familie”, ele s-au impregnat cu mai multă forță în memorie, sedimentându-se și ducând la alte manifestări potrivnice față de această ordine consacrată de cutume, “de la sine înțeleasă”, “de bun simț”. De ce să suporti, de ce să taci, de ce să nu schimbi, să cunoști, să compari? Abia când ai termeni de comparație, când citești, și vezi că se poate și altfel, vrei să spargi tiparele. Am intrat în altă lume prin cărți, ele mi-au deschis alte orizonturi. Primul șoc, a fost în școala primară, când premianta clasei, fiică de doctori, m-a invitat la ei în casă să pregătim o scenetă după “Scrisoarea a III-a”. Eu o biată țigăncușă, am primit un rol secundar, normal, eram fiul lui Mircea cel Bătrân care-i scria ”o carte” iubitei: De din Vale de Rovine/ Grăim Doamnă către tine/ Nu din gură ci din carte/ Că ne ești așa departe”... Șocul nu venea din faptul că am fost primită în casa doctorilor, ci din faptul că am asistat la o scenă dintre părinții colegei mele, care după ce s-au salutat, s-au sărutat decent, dar în fața noastră a copiilor. Eu nu am văzut asemenea scene între părinții mei, de fapt, nici noi copiii nu aveam parte de tandrețe; rar, de tot, dacă eram la spital, bolnavi, se sărutau, sau ne sărutau, cu stinghereală și sfială, rușinându-se, parcă, de gestul lor.

De ce evoc aceste amintiri? Nu pentru a-mi blama părinții și educația austeră, asemănătoare cu cea de tip țărănesc, arhaic, patriarhal, în fond comună și prezentă în toate romanele noastre de la Rebreanu, Zaharia Stancu, la Marin Preda. Vreau doar să caut explicații, asemănări și contraste între ceea ce ne construiește personalitatea determinându-ne să ne căutăm identitatea, să revenim asupra noastră din când în când, reflectând atât cât știm și putem asupra devenirii noastre, drumului parcurs și calea de urmat.

Ideologia feministă, fără să știu decât târziu acest lucru (când am urmat la “bătrânețe” cursurile masteratului „Gen si oportunitati egale” de la Universitatea Babes-Bolyai coordonată de Enikő Vincze), se naște din revoltă, ori, o țigăncușă care fuge de acasă ca să se înscrie la facultate în București, departe de casă, nu putea să fie decât o rebelă, începusem să devin atipică. Am întâlnit multe femei rome cu o istorie similară, prima generație de excomunicate. Pentru generația actuală, cu locuri convenționate, speciale pentru rome, oportunități egale și alte acțiuni afirmative, ca să uzez de noul limbaj de lemn, toate aceste povești, nici nu emoționează, nici nu impresionează pe nimeni. Poate că în această mărturisire se vor regăsi doar femeile rome din generația mea sau cele care au trăit, au mai “prins” acele timpuri. Conflictul era mai degrabă în interior, asimilarea era încurajată, nimeni nu vorbea deschis despre apartenență, oricât de negru erai, lumea

din jur te făcea să te simți alb. Noi eram “excepțiile”, ni s-a inoculat acest morb al superiorității, cale facilă, în fapt, o capcană, care ne-a făcut pe mulți dintre noi să copiem fără discernământ, încurajați să-i imităm pe cei care ne tolerau în preajma lor, să fim asemenea lor, renunțând la noi și de multe ori la “ai noștri”, mai ales la ai noștri, care rămăneau vizibil și de departe ceea ce erau, “niște țigani” obișnuiți. Numai noi odrasele lor am devenit “niște domni” mai adevărați, mai spălați și mai spilcuiți decât “domnii adevărați”, “niște parveniți” cu exagerările și metehnele primei generații “încălțate”.

Ce au de-a face cu feminismul, toate aceste introspecții și frânturi de amintiri, trăiri personale? Am aflat și eu mult mai târziu, că întrebările, căutările și revenirile, nu sunt simple exerciții terapeutice sau retorice, sunt inerente dezvoltării personale și că avem și acest drept, să ne punem întrebări, să reflectăm, fim noi înșine, să nu ne rușinăm de ceea ce suntem, să ne acceptăm identitatea, să ne-o asumăm și să nu renunțăm la demnitatea de om, indiferent de treapta socială pe care ne aflăm sau apartenența etnică.

Inferiorizarea noastră, “femei slabe”, “țigănci împruțite”, ca și idealizarea noastră, “sfinte, madone”, comercializarea noastră, sunt la fel de nocive, sunt idei induse, nu sunt inocente, au un scop, fie de a ne demoniza, fie de a ne transforma în statui, fără voință, supuse, obiecte de adulat sau de aruncat.

De-construcției, de-corsetării la propriu și la figurat a femeilor din secolului al XIX-lea, i-a urmat aruncarea măștilor ipocriziei, lăsând la iveală chipuri și trupuri de oameni care refuză să trăiască veșnic din idealisme și lirisme, clădite pe spaima ancestrale. Femeile moderne într-un gest simbolic fie el și exhibiționist înțeleg să-și afirme personalitatea în mod lucid, fără false ifose și sfiieli ipocrite. Îmi pare rău că nu am trăit în America anilor '60, când printr-un gest simbolic femeia s-a eliberat de ultimul obiect vestimentar de constrângere, “aruncarea sutienelor”. A fost un gest demonstrativ, dyoniscic extravagant, dar eliberator al femeilor din Lumea Nouă. Admir gestul lor, deși noi suntem în continuare marcate de Eurocentrism și importarea formelor fără fond. Ne afirmăm timid în spațiul European, încă nu îndrăznim să ne emancipăm, demolând cu bună știință “zidirile” în care am fost “încrîptate”.

Unde ne situăm noi, femeile rome, în acest context al schimbărilor rapide, confuz și nu lipsit de primejdii?

Avem curajul să ne exprimăm, să trecem de la pasivitate la afirmarea și recunoașterea noastră ca ființe umane demne și încrezătoare în forțele noastre? Dacă avem un răspuns afirmativ în vorbă și în faptă, suntem feministe.

## KINGA KALI

## ■ GYPSY REALITY

*Vigil*, Kriszta Bódis's new film portrays a tragedy in a God-forsaken Gypsy settlement, a story that spookily recalls recent racially motivated killings perpetrated against Hungarian Gypsies. The director repeatedly emphasizes – in interviews and at the beginning of the film – that the story, the characters of this short film are fictional and regarding its relation to reality, “*the resemblance is not intentional, not accidental, but inevitable*”.

It is an experimental short film. At first sight, it would be best described as *pseudo-documentary* – as it turns out, it could not be included in the 41<sup>st</sup> Hungarian Film Festival's official program because of its entirely new visual language: according to Bódis the professional milieu did not know what to do with it. There is no rating, which could fit into, they said, and they left it to the label of outcast. However, it is by no means experimental in the sense of not crystallized. The director has already been singled out for her particular selection of peripheral, almost untouchable themes. For example, in a recent documentary, the *Báriséj – Big Girl*, she dissects the fate of Roma women in the 21st century Hungary, a fate hidden from or relatively unknown by the majority society. In her former film, *Rural Romance (Gay Love)*, she serves us an equally taboo topic, a love between two women woven in a tight, dead-end village with limited or closed value systems and one the top of that one character is a Roma woman who has a family.

In her new film, the director has the guts to introduce an astounding, new (and hopefully trendsetter) visual language, namely the visual language of the *reality (in the sense of cinéma vérité)* - at least I will identify the form of the film as such in this text. It is far from being about that kind of Gypsy reality that entertains refined audience; it is not about the neat flash and loud hoo-ha of TV entertainment show, which a certain group (probably large according to audience rating index) of majority society likes to watch from the comfortable couch in their home<sup>1</sup>. The reality in the film is given it is not commissioned. It is about that kind of Gypsy reality in Hungary what the majority of society does not want to see, and given the opportunity even get a glance away, if possible.

And it is possible. For the actual “outcasts” is the subject of the film. Using a modern and barren term found useless even in sociology, a term that has become a dying euphemism a long time ago, we may say that the film speaks about a multiple disadvantaged Roma community, a community subjected to the overtly

<sup>1</sup> We refer to the reality show broadcasted in Hungary, the Győzike show. The viewers can exercise their voyeurism watching a Gypsy family day by day.

exaggerated gaze of the authorities. However, it is not only about Gypsies who scrape a living in their old time place beyond the Gypsy shanty, beyond ruined houses, even beyond the dumping ground in a God forgotten place. This is how the social story begins. Bódis's film goes beyond flashing up (artistically) the way of life and tragedy of this ethnic group, it is a social mirror: it is about conflict between very different cultures living next to each other where conflict stretches on the us/them boundary. If we do not know the differences, we cannot acknowledge it.

They just live. They walk in groups, they do everything in groups: this is the first thing the viewer notices. Children go home from schools in groups; they go to buy candies after school also in groups. Adults watch TV in groups, sit for dinner in groups, and play cards, old and young together. They just live. Love and fear bind them together; inward looking love, toward the community, outward looking fear, toward the outer world. Kriszta Bódis has done careful research, detailed anthropological and sociological fieldwork. She naturally integrates the observed self-defensive gestures of the group – almost all scenes can be traced back to fear. No matter how amorphous fear is at the beginning, it becomes more concrete during the troubled moments of the film and a news-footage explains it in a moments notice. The camera takes its time filming faces watching TV, capturing the horror and despair reflected in their eyes. This part builds entirely on emotions: there are no comments, words; people sit muted and blinking frightened as they look at the other group, which is different from theirs, which seems more like armed forces ordained in regular rows. Thus, they understand: the other is organizing against them. One may rightly think that Hungary in the film belongs to Hungarians and to the same type of imperturbable truth that was valid also for the case of Turkey in 1915 when just before the Armenian genocide Turkey was declared to belong to Turks.

They just live. However, the in-built tension of the film intends to disturb viewers. The main character of the film is a Roma boy (played by Kristóf Dömötör) who lives his life as his other peers in the Roma group do. The dynamic succession of images allows us to get a glimpse on the socialization of Roma children in the Gypsy shanty; we may take a sample of what other members of the majority society do not see in general. It presents the life of a boy who goes to school, plays football, takes part in meetings where adolescents boast with their dancing talent, as it is usual for his age-group, with his cellular phone he takes some pictures of dancers whirling on their shoulders and hips and than shares them with his friends at school; it is the life of a boy who after school plays resurrection with superhero toys with the neighbor little girl, peeps on another neighbor girl when she is dressing up, plays cards with his father and other adult neighbors. The life of a boy who has not reached yet adolescence and in the middle of the film, when the audience already love him enough to miss him, the boy cease to live his life. Because on one evening, in mysterious circumstances, unknown perpetrators put their house on fire, and shoot him together with his father who rescues him first. The police arrive late; it messes up traces, and makes so many other mistakes, which can happen in reality too. The paramedics also come late and the father and son die because of the injuries.

Does Kriszta Bódis, a psychology graduate, manipulate the audience, turning their own emotions against themselves by pronouncing the death of the little hero, right when he probably has already become

## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

the favorite of the viewer? Obviously not, using the means of art she just makes us realize that we are all accomplices, we who sit in an armchair watching similar real life stories. The style of reality is extremely fortunate in this case when we deal with genres on the border of other genres as is the case with this pseudo-documentary: we are on the verge of what is possible, as if the whole thing is half true and half play. The film confuses the viewer, whether s/he reads the papers or not. It confuses and does not absolve, it does not take the burden off his shoulders, because perhaps everyone goes home after screening with the thought that after all, it is the truth, and he is an accomplice in this. In fact, the reality genre's most important feature is that it turns the viewer in a passive voyeur. He is an accomplice and the tragedy happens before his eyes. The solutions of hand-held camera generates some sort of nervousness, fascinates, and we cannot disregard the fact that we are accomplices to a double murder, which develops during the film – we have deep feelings of anger and helplessness. It is not an easy, shallow film – the audience is nearly part of an experiment – beautiful pictures are not included, the style of reality does neither give a chance for this nor time. The cameraman, Robert Maly, smuggles in several beautiful portraits – in this film that may be the top, all this works like tiny relief-islands: while the camera scans sensitive faces worthy of better fate, the tension is paused. All is well positioned, not made over aesthetic because they cannot dwell upon beauty – the film belongs to a domain where aesthetics is bracketed, and instead attention focuses on ethics.

Like in so many of her films, in her current work too, Bódis carefully incorporates her problem-sensitive observations and experiences: she works with amateurs and – according to her own admittance – exploits their spontaneity, and in my opinion, also the tensions stemming from their uncertainty when faced with the camera. It seems that her expectations are met, and of course, this praises the editor too. The work as a whole also reflects the skill with which the director touches the human substance of the characters. They probably know each other for many years, since the actors play with naturalness, and they are able to immerse themselves in playing their own lives. They just live.

It seems that Bódis works with a rough, approximate scenario. Probable she does not work with pre-written dialogues and prior developed scenes – actors are put to improvise, and this generally works well, but even when the performance is shaky, we can attribute it to the tired or stunned actors. Anyway, everything is pretty much in its place. In spite of the documentary-style there is structure and intended editing; although the language is “news report like”, contingency and deliberately unedited frames abound. In fact, all this is calculated in detail. For example, the evening before the tragedy, the little boy asks his grandmother, the old Gypsy woman, to foretell his future. The old woman looks at his palm, then suddenly turns away and says it is forbidden to tell fortunes, it is not good. We do not know what she has seen there, but in the structure of the film, it works as a kataphora: it anticipates the following events. Another example: the two main actions of the film come into play by the way of TV news. This indicates two things in my interpretation: first of all is an allusion because it connects somehow two events, the fearful images seen on television, images of voluntary militaristic organization (images that show one of the meetings of the Hungarian Guard) on the one hand, and the tragic news showing the pictures of father and son executed during the night in the midst of arson in the

Gypsy settlement on the other hand. Metaphorically speaking, it encloses the two in *box-world*, and suggests that there is a cause/effect relation between the two. In the meantime it points out the responsibility of the media. (It should be noted here that the structure of the picture of father and son standing in front of an arras of the Last Supper has a specific message, and this praises not only the director, but also the cameraman.) A further nuance of the interpretation introduces some kind of passivity on the part of the community. They just watch the news reports: do not know what to do about it, they belong to another world, they intervening in all this is beyond their reach. They are not organized, they are held together by love - and fear as well.

The Vigil as title underscores this duality, which determines the organization of the Gypsy group. First of all it designates the vigil over the dead person by which members of the community accompany in spirit the tragically departed loved ones in the afterlife, according to tradition – women mourn singing vigil songs, pray for spiritual redemption; however, women return to their own fears, they give voice to their horror. On the other hand, it is about the vigil of men guarding and being alert, trying to protect their loved ones from danger (whether real or imagined), armed with hoes and sticks; it is about a rough, hasty and obligate organization. Bódis's steady hand smuggles pieces of love and tenderness in this robust image by putting a phrase into the mouth of a character, as he tells to his associate "Well, a bit more relaxed, okay?" In general, the director gives double titles to her films. This time she manages to bind this duality into a single concept, which is disclosed during the film.

The confidence with which the director dares (and is able to) build her story is much more transparent in the fabric of the visual language in this film than in other ones. The visual references are in place, they do not rely on the crutch of excessive repetitions. Although the film contains more observation-motifs than needed for understanding allusions – the mirror of the candy store, used to follow Gypsy children, preventing stealing, or the regular, and quite often appearance of police: they all confirm society's stereotypes regarding Gypsies. (I wonder how Bódis convinced authorities to be part of casting?) I think that showing fewer police officers would have the same effect because the story is built as such that it is immediately apparent that the group monitored is a wrong one. There is another contrast that is excessively sharp for me: a teacher of the gypsy kids is a tall Nordic type, transparently-skinned women – this casting represents an unnecessary insurance of things. Of course, it is beautiful in the same time. As the film's soundtrack, featuring the Balanescu Quartet and Bea Palya is too.

The film, according to its declared aim, "commemorates the victims of the racist anti-Roma killings, hoping for a peaceful world". Perhaps it is not by chance that the film was presented at the Toldi<sup>2</sup> on a special day. The day marked the passing of exactly one year since the vigil for the victims of killings in Tatárszentgyörgy<sup>3</sup>. What it can actually initiate, cannot be clearly foreseen. However, one thing is certain: is will sharply divide not just the film industry, but also social opinion.

<sup>2</sup> A movie theater in Budapest.

<sup>3</sup> In the Gypsy settlement in Tatárszentgyörgy (Pest County), on the dawn of February 23, 2009, unidentified perpetrators shoot to death a 27 years old father and his 4 years old son, after putting their house on fire.

MIHAELA GHEORGHE

## ■ ROMA GIRLS / WOMEN IN EUROPEAN PROVINCES

The article *Roma Girls / Women in European provinces* presents my personal perception of Roma girls and women in Romania and abroad. I have decided to respond in the most natural and simplistic manner the questions about why we are different, those Roma women and girls who have a high educational level; they dress and have customs that are different from how they are perceived in the minds of the majority population. I briefly analyze the transition of Roma girls from adolescence to womanhood and the transition of Roma girls and women who begin their careers by stepping on the road from provinces of European countries. I speak about Roma women' identity, how we find a sense of ourselves in the majority women, how we are like them, are among them, having the same dreams, aspirations and how we are visible only when wearing colorful skirts or begging. This article wants to show that we are often as others but society does not want to see us but in customary way. The article encourages active Romani girls and women in any field of activity to become models for the younger generation, ambitious girls who want to pursue professional careers to overcome the barriers of discrimination and stereotypes about Roma woman.

In recent years, Roma women started to gain popularity regarding their daily lives, problems, dreams and aspirations. I often hear nice things about how smart we Roma women are. I see how non-Roma women wonder about us Roma women: that we can be so open-minded, sometimes in an unusual way, we can easily talk about things related to life, career, family. My joy is, however, shadowed when I hear clichés like “you are different, you are educated, intelligent, you dress differently, speak differently while others are not. What does other mean? In what way we are different? When someone, a he or a she state such things you do not really know what to answer. You smile embarrassed and the only thing that comes out from your mouth is “what can I say, my parents raised me differently”.

I made this mistake in the beginning. Afraid of stigmatization I tried to justify somehow why I am different and not like others, for fear of stigma. In fact, my subconscious was signaling to me my own fear of being labeled as Roma, while Roma being anyway. But somehow I felt the need to enlighten the person regarding the source of my intellectual potential. After answering the question, I have always blamed me for my reply, which was indeed still a cliché and I promised that I will a suitable response in the future, which would not reinforce stereotypes about Roma women such as “you all marry early, raise your children, and educated women who want a career, freedom and financial independence are few”.

So I have started wondering what is the general concept of Roma women, how they define or better how we define ourselves. In this article, I do not want to propose feminist concepts but instead I want present my own perception of Roma girls and women. How can I reply to those clichés I mentioned above, which should not hurt in any way non-Roma or Roma women and girls? What is that it makes us different from non-Roma women? Just because we have belong to another ethnic, because we have that label? Like most women, young Roma women pass normal, crucial, and complex moments from adolescence to femininity. I like to think of myself as an educated, intelligent woman and I have not necessarily associated the words girl and Roma in adolescence. The Female - Roma association appeared to me later at maturity and now I am proud of it. Discussing with other women, Roma women, non-Roma, international I recently realized that every mother and father wants the best for their child, whether s/he is Roma or non-Roma. These are natural aspirations of modest parents who lacked opportunities in their life and who want their children to desire to go to college; “to become somebody in this life” as they say, you should make a career, be smart, and “maybe marry later.” These are the dreams of every girl in the province from a modest family and social milieu. These girls want a job that allows her to support herself, a house, and new friends. When you are 18, you want to leave the nest, to exit the milieu in which you grew up, the small town, village you were born in. You want to get far, to become a lawyer, doctor, and journalist, to speak foreign languages. When we talk about Roma women we think too much of traditional girls with long colorful skirt, coming from traditional communities, who have many children and live in poverty, of dominated women roles, house, etc. This is what Roma women means in the public sphere. In this article, however, I want to show that Roma women and girls are not different from the majority women by their nature, education, and aspirations.

Recently, I visited a small town of Calarași County where I volunteered to visit Roma pupils in their final grade in high school. The training program helped them prepare for the baccalaureate exam. The aim was to convince families how important was college education for the future of their children. We noted with surprise but with great satisfaction the enthusiasm of parents and their hidden aspirations for their children to become what they have never been able; “to learn to make a bright future, to have a life different from ours.” Compared to Roma boys, Roma girls are more ambitious and more enthusiastic to leave their underdeveloped, small town, which lacks economic opportunities, than to flee from there to college looking for comfort and a decent way of living. Meeting the girls, I have seen their age specific exuberance: their way of communicating, slightly superior attitude, and the enviable self-esteem that characterized them. Those girls reminded me of my adolescence and I am convinced that many women today share the same thoughts. These girls impressed me enormously, I liked them and I was convinced that there are many such girls. They energetically show how and motivated and eager they are to leave shallow and lifeless places. It is absolutely uplifting to see that there are girls who make you hope they make a fresh start because they want to show, to say something, but they need to be helped somehow get through. Otherwise, they get lost in the crowd of cities, villages, small villages short of

## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

income, deprived of opportunities and resources. These girls should be involved, valued because they may become positive models for Roma girls seen less well. They should be messengers for those who cannot exit or escape from poor, conservative, traditional or simply ignorant families.

These girls are becoming Roma women who can dismantle perceptions and negative stereotypes about us.

There are, however, better-off urban Roma girls who study, attend school, go to popular clubs and discos, they wear fashionable dress, talk with friends on mobile phones, surf the internet, have boy friend. They are girls like any other non-Roma girl; they know their origin, but not necessarily show their Roma identity.

There are emancipated Roma women who work in local communities, villages, small towns. They are, however, more reserved and do not socialize because they have no time for that. They have freedom of movement in the sense that they work, they have a role, a chance to make themselves useful and be valued for their work and experience, valued in a different way than in domestic life. These women are health mediators, school mediators, community workers, who do an enormous amount of work when they have to confront local social, health, education problems; they are multifunctional, they are less aware of feminism, but have succeeded in what they have intended to do and the community and majority respect them.

There are also Roma women who have interrupted active life for a long time, for raising children. They returned to work stronger, wiser, more patient, and calmer, having clearly defined priorities. Motherhood gives them a strong self-esteem they pass on to their children. Work makes them more gracious and their rewards are huge when they see children having good results at school. They are as great women and mothers as any other, eager to do something. They are not very different from non-Roma, European women, except they have their ethnicity.

They very much resemble modern Roma women who already have a career, our women who work in our NGO, institutional, etc. environment. Women, who think less in terms of feminism, but have clear aims pointing towards eliminating discrimination against Roma. Roma women, who work in offices, go to community and organize training sessions, support debates, statements, coordinate projects, or lead associations and organizations.

There are also Roma women whom I call international women. Roma women, who have left the country for a better future, daring to begin a new life. They walk in beautiful offices, speak English to perfection, some of them speak Romani or other languages, they are lucky being native speakers. They are there, work for Roma, and human rights. Live an active social life, participate in negotiations, contracts, conferences, also go to concerts, terraces, clubs, formal meetings, informal gatherings. They are our women and we are proud of them. They made it, are successful and Roma.

We are like all others, with good and bad, have deep emotions and feelings, similar problems of life, the couple, career, family. We are modern women, cosmopolitan, metropolitan, European.

Currently there is a regional campaign promoted in the Western Balkans “I am Roma women, I am European” that shows four average Roma women with modest jobs in different fields, proud of their identity, who have gained respect in their world. This campaign led me to the idea that the Roma women who are active in so many areas should leave something behind them.

It is wonderful to think that we are there, able to shape our life and have power over our own life. It is important how we pass on to the next younger generation the lessons we learnt and our experience contributing to the perpetuation of a system of values, goals and aspirations without comparison for European majority women.

Simona Gamonte



MIHAELA GHEORGHE

## ■ FETELE/ FEMEILE ROME DIN PROVINCIE ÎN EUROPA

Articolul Fetele/ femeile rome din provincie în Europa prezintă percepția personală asupra fetelor și femeilor rome din România și din afara țării. Mi-am propus să răspund într-un mod cât mai natural și simplist faimoasei întrebări legate de ce suntem noi altfel, acele fete și femei rome care au un nivel de educație ridicat, cu îmbrăcămintea și obiceiuri diferite față de cum sunt percepute în mintea majoritarilor. Analizez pe scurt tranziția fetelor rome de la adolescență la feminitate și de asemenea tranziția fetelor și femeilor rome care pornesc pe drumul carierei din mediul provincial în țările Europei. Vorbesc despre identități ale femeilor rome, cum ne regăsim printre femeile majoritare, suntem ca ele, suntem printre ele, cu aceleași vise, aspirații însă nu suntem vizibile decât atunci când purtăm fuste colorate sau cerșim. Articolul de față vrea să arate că suntem de multe ori la fel ca ceilalți însă societatea nu vrea să ne vadă altfel decât se obișnuiește. Articolul încurajează fetele și femeile rome active în orice domeniu de activitate să devină modele pentru generația tânără ambițioasă de fete care își dorește să urmeze o carieră profesională pentru a depăși barierele discriminării și stereotipurilor despre femeia romă.

În ultimii ani, femeile rome au început să capete popularitate în ce privește viața lor cotidiană, cu problemele, visurile și aspirațiile lor. Și deseori aud în jurul meu lucruri frumoase despre cât de inteligente suntem noi femeile rome. Observ cât sunt de uimite femeile ne-rome despre noi, femeile rome: că putem fi atât de deschise la minte, uneori poate într-un mod neobișnuit, că putem cu ușurință să vorbim despre lucruri legate de viață, carieră, familie. Însă, bucuria mi-e umbrită atunci când aud clișee precum „voi sunteți altfel, educate, inteligente, vă îmbrăcați diferit, vorbiți diferit nu sunteți ca celelalte.” Dar ce înseamnă celelalte? Ce înseamnă “noi suntem altfel”? Când cineva, un el sau o ea constată lucrurile astea, nu prea știi ce să răspunzi. Zâmbești fâstăcită și nu-ți iese decât un „ce pot spune, eu am fost crescută altfel de părinți”.

La început făceam greșeala asta să justific cumva de ce sunt altfel și nu ca celelalte, de teama stigmatizării. De fapt, subconștientul meu îmi semnala teama de a nu fi etichetată ca romă, deși eram oricum romă. Însă simțeam cumva nevoia să luminez persoana respectivă cu proveniența potențialului meu intelectual. După răspuns, îmi reproșam reacția avută la întrebare, care era de altfel tot un clișeu și îmi propuneam ca pe viitor să găsesc un răspuns potrivit care totuși să nu întărească stereotipurile despre femeile rome, cum că „vă măritați devreme toate și sunteți puține educate, care vor o carieră, libertate sau independență financiară”.

Am început așadar să mă întreb ce înseamnă în concepția generală femeile rome, prin ce se definesc ele sau mai bine spus: prin ce ne definim noi. Nu îmi propun concepte feministe, ci vreau să mă refer în acest articol la propria-mi percepție asupra fetei și femeii rome. Cum aș putea să răspund acelor clișee de care vorbeam mai sus care să nu deranjeze în vreun fel femeile/fetele rome sau nerome? Cu se suntem noi mai diferite decât femeile ne-rome? Doar pentru că avem altă etnie, că avem acea etichetă? Ca și majoritatea femeilor, tinerele femei rome tranzitează momente cruciale normale complexe de la tinerețe (adolescență) la feminitate. Îmi place să mă consider o femeie educată, inteligentă, dar în adolescență nu făceam neapărat asocierea dintre fată și romă. Asocierea femeie – romă a apărut mai târziu, la maturitate și sunt mândră de asta. Mi-am dat seama, în ultimii ani din discuțiile cu alte fete, femei rome, nerome, internaționale că fiecare mamă și tată își dorește cei mai bun pentru copilul lui, indiferent că e rom sau nerom. Sunt aspirații firești ale unor părinți modești care în viața lor nu au avut oportunități, și care insuflă copiilor lor dorința de a merge la o facultate, „de a ajunge ceva mare în viață”, cum spun ei, să îți faci o carieră, să fii deșteaptă, și „poate mai târziu să te măriți”. Acestea sunt visuri ale fiecărei fete din provincie dintr-un mediu și o familie modestă care își dorește să aibă o slujbă din care să se întrețină singură, să aibă o casă, să își facă noi prieteni. La 18 ani îți dorești să părăsești cuibul, să ieși din mediul în care ai crescut, din orașelul, comuna, sătucul în care te-ai născut. Îți dorești să ajungi departe, să devii avocată, doctoriță, jurnalistă, vorbitoare de limbi străine. Când vorbim despre femeile rome ne gândim prea mult la fetele cu fustă lungă colorată, tradițională, provenită din mediu tradițional, cu mulți copii, la sărăcie, la rolul de femeie supusă, de casă, menajeră, etc. În spațiul public, la asta se limitează cuvântul femeie romă. Dar, în acest articol aș vrea să arăt că există fete și femei rome care nu sunt diferite de femeile majoritare prin însăși natura, educația, aspirațiile lor.

Recent, am vizitat un orașel mic din județul Călărași unde m-am oferit voluntară pentru a vizita elevii romi din anii terminali ai liceelor, ajutați printr-un program de pregătire pentru examenul de bacalaureat. Scopul era să convingem familiile de cât de important este pentru viitorul copiilor lor să meargă la facultate. Am constatat cu surpriză dar și cu o mare satisfacție entuziasmul părinților și aspirațiile ascunse pentru ca odraslele lor să devină ceea ce ei n-au reușit: „să învețe să își facă un viitor frumos, să aibă un trai diferit de al nostru”. Fetele rome în comparație cu băieții romi sunt mai ambițioase și mult mai entuziasmate în a pleca din orașelul lor mic, subdezvoltat, fără prea mari oportunități economice decât acelea de a fugi de acolo la facultate în căutarea unui confort și un mod de viață decent. Întâlnirea cu acele fete mi-a arătat o exuberanță specifică vârstei: modul lor de a comunica, atitudinea ușor superioară, și chiar o stimă de sine de invidiat le caracteriza. Acele fete mi-au amintit de mine în adolescență și sunt convinsă că multe dintre femeile de azi împărtășesc aceleași gânduri. Fetele acestea m-au impresionat enorm, mi-au plăcut și m-au convins de faptul că sunt multe ca ele. Cu o energie debordantă și molipsitoare arată cât sunt de motivate și dornice să plece din locuri searbe și fără viață. E absolut înălțător să vezi că există fete ca acestea care îți dau speranța unui nou început, pentru că vor să arate ceva, să spună fiecare ceva, dar care au nevoie să fie ajutate cumva să răzbească. Altfel, se pierd în mulțimea orașelor, comunelor, satelor mici



## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

lipsite de venituri, private de oportunități și resurse. Iată fete care trebuie implicate, valorificate pentru că pot deveni modele înălțătoare, pozitive pentru fetele rome văzute mai puțin bine. Pentru că ele trebuie să fie mesagere pentru cele care nu au ieșire sau scăpare din familiile sărace sau conservatoare, tradiționale sau pur și simplu ignorante.

Aceste fete sunt femeile rome în devenire care pot dărâma zidurile percepțiilor și stereotipurilor negative despre noi.

Există de altfel și fete rome mai înstărite, de la oraș, care învață, merg la școală, frecventează cluburi, discoteci faimoase, se îmbracă la modă, au telefoane mobile, vorbesc cu prietene, stau pe internet, au iubiți. Sunt fete ca oricare alte fete ne-rome, dar care nu se auto-intitulează neapărat fete rome, femeile rome, însă își cunosc originea.

Există femeile rome emancipate ce lucrează în interiorul comunităților locale, sate, orașe mici, dar care au o conduită oarecum mai rezervată și socializează mai puțin din lipsa timpului. Și ele au o libertate de mișcare în sensul în care pot munci, au un rol, o șansă să fie utile și valorificate pentru munca și experiența lor altfel decât în viața casnică. Aceste femei sunt mediatoarele sanitare, școlare, asistentele comunitare, care realizează o muncă titanică când trebuie să facă față problemelor locale, sociale, de sănătate, educație. Sunt femei multifuncționale, care conștientizează mai puțin latura feminismului, dar care au reușit în ceea ce și-au propus și sunt respectate de către comunitate și majoritari.

Sunt și la noi femeile rome care și-au întrerupt activitatea pentru un timp mai lung, pentru creșterea copiilor și care s-au întors la muncă mai puternice, mai înțelepte, mai răbdătoare, mai liniștite, cu priorități bine definite. Maternitatea le dăruiește un respect de sine intens pe care îl transmit copiilor lor. Iar munca le înobilează și satisfacțiile lor sunt imense atunci când aceștia au rezultate bune la școală. Și ele sunt femeile și mame excelente ca oricare altele, dornice de activitate, nu foarte diferite de femeile ne-rome, europene, decât că au în plus etnia.

Amintesc de asemenea în mare măsură de femeile rome moderne care au deja o carieră, femeile noastre care lucrează în mediul nostru ong-ist, instituțional, etc. Femeile care gândesc mai puțin prin prisma feminismului, dar care au scopuri îndreptate către eliminarea discriminării generale față de romi. Sunt femeile rome emancipate care lucrează în birouri, altele merg în comunități, susțin sesiuni de formare, altele susțin dezbateri, declarații, altele coordonează proiecte, conduc asociații și organizații neguvernamentale.

De asemenea, sunt femeile rome pe care le numesc femeile internaționale. Femeile rome care au plecat din țară pentru un viitor mai bun, curajoase să își ia viața de la capăt. Pășesc în birouri frumoase, vorbesc engleza la perfecție, unele vorbesc romani sau alte limbi, mai norocoase de altfel că sunt "native speakers". Ele sunt acolo, lucrează pentru romi, rome și drepturile omului. Duc o viață socială activă, iau parte la negocieri, contractări, conferințe, dar merg la concerte, terase, cluburi, întâlniri oficiale, neoficiale, petreceri. Sunt femeile noastre și suntem mândre de ele. Au reușit, au succes și sunt rome.

Suntem ca toate celelalte, cu bune și rele, cu trăiri și simțiri profunde, cu probleme asemănătoare de viață, de cuplu, de carieră, de familie. Suntem femeile moderne, cosmopolitane, metropolitane, europene.

În prezent se promovează o campanie regională promovată în Balcanii de vest „*Sunt o femeie romă, sunt Europeană*” care arată patru femei rome obișnuite cu slujbe modeste în diferite domenii, mândre de identitatea lor și că au căpătat respect în lumea în care trăiesc. Această campanie m-a dus cu gândul la acele femei rome active în multiple domenii care ar trebui să lase ceva în urma lor.

Este minunat să te gândești că suntem acolo, capabile să ne modelăm existența și să exercităm putere asupra propriei existențe. Important este cum transmitem generației viitoare tinere învățămintele și experiențele noastre, contribuind astfel la perpetuarea unui sistem firesc de valori, țeluri și aspirații fără comparație pentru femeile majoritare ale Europei.



Simona Gamonte

## EMMA ROPER EVANS

### ■ HALTING AIR

They came out of the trees at night, hoods and thick coats sheathed by shadow. From their hands hung canisters in which slopped thick liquid. They moved quietly across the wet ground moving towards a house, sitting silent and dark on the site. Four of them spread out and started to soak the house, each pouring a can over the structure. Tiles dripped, eaves splashed. Petrol and rain, washed over the walls. It was hard lighting a match under such a sky, several hissed in the drizzle, went out. One hood started swearing but the others soon shushed him. Folding their hands together, cupping their palms, they managed to light a single flame – that was all they needed. The house went up, a torch in the wet wood. Cracking and splintering, the plaster started to bubble on the walls. Inside billows of black smoke filled the rooms. The family awoke spluttering. The mother rushed to get the two girls, shouted at the father to take the little boy outside as quick as he could. He gently lifted the little fellow and rushed for the door. Meanwhile the mother gathered the two girls from the next room. Over their heads the roof started to crack, flames shattered roof tiles, piercing the shell of the house.

As the man and his son rushed out into the blissful night air, blowing the foul smoke out of their lungs, a pistol was raised. The little boy clutched his father's hand tight as the bullet sank into his brain. The man had no time to react before his head also exploded in the damp night air. Further away shouts and screams could be heard, as neighbours caught sight of the fire, smelt its smoke, heard the dead crackle of the ruined building. The four hoods cursed and ran. They did not wait to finish the job off but legged it into the woods from whence they came.

Mother and daughters did not hear the shots, the noise of the inferno was too great. All around them the house groaned and grinded, the smell of wet petrol rubbed along their top lips searing their teeth. At first the mother's instinct had been to grab a few things: Clothes, pots, shoes but the heat and smoke defeated her. Pushing the two girls through the front door she stumbled blindly into the open air. Weeping soot and claspings the ends of her singed hair she teetered out into the yard calling for her husband and son. Great rifts of orange lit the yard. One of the girls passed out, she fell onto wet concrete, collapsing in on herself. The mother sank down with her, cradling her head, bidding the older girl to go and get help. The girl did not need to run far, the yard was filling with locals who had heard the roaring blaze, felt its heat skim their walls. Neighbours gathered the woman and her daughters up, took them next door, lay them down and called police, ambulances and fire engines as quickly as they could. No one had seen the little boy and the man; they

presumed they had been taken in by someone else. A great crash told them that the roof had finally caved in. Everyone waited and watched for the sirens, praying the wind did not blow it their way. It took half the night for the emergency services to arrive. There were no proper roads up to the 'czigány település', the Gypsy settlement, only a rutted track thick with mud, overhung by low, thick branches. Electricity had only found its way up this twisted track very recently.

- *Typical! I bet they were stealing electricity from next door. A beer, that's what started it!*
- *Bound to be mate! You know what these gyppos are like!*

The firemen began unhitching ancient old hoses from the back of the truck and pointing them half-heartedly at the blaze. The police, believing that the fire was a deserved accident, did not search very thoroughly around the yard. When they found the bodies of the father and son lying by an outhouse, they merely assumed they had suffocated in the fire, despite the fact they were outside, and wrote 'Accidental death' in their report books. The smell of petrol filled the yard, lacing the mud with the stink of an airport where huge tankers fill enormous planes as they wait to take off, across the oceans. But no one noticed. Not a single ambulance man, fireman, policeman or medic even mentioned the smell. Silent; deadly. A fat doctor climbed out of an old Lada. He cursorily examined the bodies, declared death by misadventure and went home. The holes in the heads of the dead went unrecorded.

The hospital was far away and the ambulances bumped down the rutted track, slipping and sliding like toboggans as they went. Neighbours had insisted they take the girls and their mother. They had all fainted from the fumes and were still groggy with smoke. The mother moaned terribly about her boy and man, the medics gave her a shot to shut her up. The vehicle slid round a corner as they punched knock-out into three different forearms. The prone bodies jiggled in the back as the van trundled along.

Killers disappear into the woods like wind; knew the local police would do nothing, write it off as a tragic accident. Two of them had served in Bosnia, one was an ex-police sergeant, the fourth a gifted marksman from the Legion. They could spread like smoke, never be caught. Time to take the law into their own hands, force them out. Up in the Slovak and Czech lands no one had wanted the Gypsies either. Both new states had disowned them, said they belonged to the other, as villagers threw firebombs. Kill the men, and the women and children would go elsewhere. Back to where they came from - wherever that was. The four planned strategic hits: Watching and planning, they determined on a grandpa there, a boy here, fathers, sons, brothers, nephews, uncles, son-in-laws, cousins. A hit in as many villages would soon cause mass hysteria and the scum would start to leave. That was the overall idea! In the 39 war they had simply been rounded up; made to dig a mass grave and shot into it. Didn't count the bodies, whether they were still moving; left them still shivering under the freshly dug earth; rats in the plague pit. Black shirts became red shirts, swastikas morphed into hammer and sickles, letters were swapped: SS mania transfigured = KGB delirium. After that nationalism kicked in, autonomy was the word on everyone's lips for another half century, or so, of

## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

the wars that harrowed the region: Berlin 53, Budapest 56, Prague 68, Bucharest 89, Belgrade 91, Sarajevo 92, Pristina 98. The Roma knew this would not empower them, better to stay quiet, keep to themselves; playing right into the killers' hands. Making use of the urban-rural divide that ruptured the region, the killers honed in on the small communities well beyond the towns. The apartheid of Eastern European villages, where Jews, Roma and whites had all lived next to each other, but separate, until the Holocaust had got rid entirely of the first component.

In the mortuary the young pathologist laid out the two corpses, read the doctor's notes with disbelief: Asphyxiation! When the holes had bled blue on the necks of the dead! No bullet had lodged in the little boy; it had gone straight through. The man had cradled one in his skull tho' – army issue! A phone call later; and it was journalists, not policemen, who gathered round the victims' beds. Photographing with glee the face of the stricken mother, as she sat bolt upright in her hospital bed determined not to be put to sleep again by supercilious medics. Only when better-educated, more paternalistic police turned up from the capital did they disperse. These police in turn shook their heads at the amateur methods of their country colleagues, rolled their eyes and sighed. The urban snobbery of the town looked down, from a great height, on the vagaries of the village. The police circled her assiduously, while hacks scribbled articles about the emergence of a Magyar Ku Klux Klan. In their beds the two sisters turned to the wall and wept. Little Miki had climbed into to them in the morning, usually. His fat little legs had swung down the side while he had sung them songs he made up as he went along.

*I saw a bird do a poo,  
He looked very like you'*

Rude, childish, wonderful, nonsense. No one had told them... they had just heard the police telling their mother through the curtain that separated them off from each other. They trembled under the sheets:

*'Who would shoot a four-year-old boy?'*  
*'Will I be next?'*

The beds were too far apart for them to clasp each other, their mother was curtained off. They heard her say in clear ringing tones:

- *I want to see my husband and son. I must say goodbye to them. I want to see them now!*
- *Me too! Me too* – called the girls in chorus.

For a moment they had forgotten Apa. He, who had flung them high in the air as babies, told endless stories and jokes, could make a tune with a click of his fingers and a stamp of his foot. They had always worried that he had liked Miki best. Now they would never know.

After much consultation the city police agreed that the women could see their dead ones. They were marched solemnly off. An officer wearing shiny, shiny boots led them down corridors on which they slapped, in ill-fitting hospital issue slippers. A dirty white room revealed two ancient metal cribs, on which they lay. Holding their mother's hands they gazed down at the frozen faces. Miki's eyes had been closed, yet his top lip curved as if in anticipation of a kiss or a treat, as it always had. But Apa had no peace on his face, not a shred. His jaw twisted, his cheeks sunken in his long face, his mouth set in a line of such anguish, that he was hard to see. Even the police withdrew as the family keened around the bodies:

*Zöld az erdő, zöld a hegy is.  
A szerencse jön is, megy is.  
Gondok kése husunkba vág, ...*

The girls sang with their mother in voices that grew stronger as their mother gripped them tighter and sang out loud:

*Green is the forest, green is the hill.  
Luck comes towards us, so does ill.  
Adversity's blade slits our flesh...*

The Roma anthem welled over the bodies pushing the guards to the corners. But it would not bring them back.

Not ever.

MARIANA DOBRE

## ■ SUMMON TO COURAGE

MOTTO:

*I pledge to renounce feminism when others will give up  
misogyny, sexism and patriarchy*  
(Mihaela Miroiu)

Join hands in a sustained effort to improve self-confidence, women's image and community and social status!

I dare to make myself be heard because I think it is time for me to dare more, trying to make life better for our children and ourselves. We will have to be united for this, to trust our own ability to find viable solutions to problems we face, to show that we are able and willing to confirm that Roma women are not weak and sensitive woman. Quite the contrary, Roma woman is a strong, courageous woman, who wants to change something in her community, who cares about future generations and who wants to change her status and, why not, aspire higher.

Someone said something like, "You have to behave in a way that if the universe would follow us it will not ends in chaos". Of course, in our struggle for gender equality, we face countless problems, that the Roma themselves consider cumbersome and insufficiently prepared for turning into practice our common interests, improving the situation of Roma in our communities.

In our struggle to change attitudes and recognition of identity, we have a problem if Roma men and our families do not see us as social partner. We need to change the mentality that makes them see us only as daughter, wife or mother. Therefore, please voice your accumulated experiences to be known by other women, to promote our own common interests.

So, I begin with myself:

My story sounds something like this: at 17 and half I was a child carrying a baby in my arms; we were both crying the baby and me; although I was a mother, I was still a child and my mother raised us both. What I had done was a great shame in my community, I was a student in twelfth grade in high school – I got pregnant and had a friend who was not ethnic Roma and whose parents could not stand me because I was a Gypsy.

Then, a difficult period of my life followed; first it was the community that looked at me in a certain way; second the one I loved and had the baby with was undecided on whether he wanted me in his life or not, because his parents influenced him. After 2 years in which we kept in touch, we got married.

This was probably another wrong step in my life because I met people who felt that I did not belong in their house; but I was patient with each one and I showed them that I could be even better than some admired (gadje) girls. I was always in a competition, I had to be sometimes the best ... However, I have never said no! If I did not know something, I learned.

Of course, I was not concerned with education, it remained somewhere dusty; I became the limited woman who worked only for her children and household. At the age of 40, however, a miracle happened.

I was asked to work in a program that addressed Roma. I knew about these programs, but not that much. It was probably the work of destiny, because I wanted the available job for myself.

And here I am, a school mediator who went to school in Piatra Neamt.

After the first course, I began to ask myself questions and tried to draw a line assessing the 40 years that passed. What was there, in the past? What I have achieved? Not much ... then, as I woke up in the middle of dream and I said to myself "I work for my children, work for my family, but what I do for myself?"

And the next question was, what I would leave behind? ...

Since then the limited woman has changed. I became a woman who tried to cope with all the circumstances and requirements of a changing society on the one hand, and with traditional mentalities and covert chaos throughout the country on the other hand.

I was building family life according to the requirements of social life and education; at work I went beyond myself, I often wondered how much I can do, and that because of people who believed in me and valued me; due to a course I attended, and due to a chance I was given.

The training course as school mediator changed my life and thinking at the age of 40. If by then I was only an "ethnic" who turned her head down (because of their stereotypes and the stereotypes I took from them!), now I say with pride and will take action whenever you need! Yes! I am Roma and I am proud of it!

I tell you that I finished a health school and I attended the school being supported only by the child allowances of my two boys. I finished high school and now I am a student in terminal year at the renowned National School of Political Science and Public Administration in Bucharest; however, my educational and vocational training will not stop here!

I want to confess (publicly) that the most important thing I learned is that we humans are the essence of all things and we can change the world if we really want to. Change is possible but only when you really want to succeed.

My road was not smooth and is not natural ... I have had and will continue to have problems and trials. I do not have income, but do my best to fulfill my obligations to my family, my Roma community; officially, they belong to my job description as school mediator and referent at the City Hall.

## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

Today, as a nurse, I treat people in the village. Each day, I meet and serve women holding their child in their arms and they say to me, “we have no money even for bread” ... How can I claim money from them? I have to understand them, they are mine.

Beyond money, there is spiritual contentment, leaving behind people with a smile on their face.

I can hardly say that it is not difficult to speak about myself. There were also family problems, because I came on one road and went on another. However, I talked to my husband, I said that I will not give up my way, and we will be fine; he did not understand me then, but since then he gives me credit and now is supporting me.

Do not give up means everything; to be convinced that your dream turns real. Therefore, I call to courage!

I ran for the mayor’s office in my village elections in 2008 with the same determination to do something more. I did not enter the second round, although I was convinced (naïve ...) that I would win. I knew them all, Roma or not; we went together through both pain and joy ... It was not like that; exactly those who ought to be on my side “charged” me saying openly “who has ever heard of a Roma woman mayor?”

Yes, they felt that I was not able to represent them properly. However, they now come to me with their problems. And I help them. I was disappointed, upset, but they remained *mine*.

Of course, maybe you think the problems have disappeared, but they did not. Now I live with the feeling that they do not really know who I am. My family thinks that I gave in to Romanians and I am no longer with them ... My colleagues do not consider me their equal ...

I will not surrender, no, because I do not want to. I think I have enough power and ambition left to show my family and my colleagues that I am a person you can count on; that I am able to work in programs and projects that will benefit my community; that I am the person next to them who fights more courageously for a better life and respect.

The message I would send you readers, especially women activists in Roma communities, is to have confidence in your aspirations, duties to family, community and society; do not give up when it is difficult, most difficult; change is possible only if you really want to succeed. Really, we have a certain moral duty received when born, to support our communities, to engage women in building a society based on respect and partnership. A society in which we can raise our children not in poverty and humiliation, but in which we can prepare them to take in their hands the future.

MARIANA DOBRE

## ■ ÎNDEMN LA CURAJ

MOTTO:

*Mă leg să renunț la feminism atunci când ceilalți vor renunța la misogism, sexism și patriarhat*  
(Mihaela Miroiu)

Dați-vă mâinile într-un efort susținut în vederea îmbunătățirii încrederii de sine, a imaginii femeii, în schimbarea statutului comunitar și social!

Cutez să mă fac auzită deoarece consider că a venit timpul să îndrăznesc mai mult, să încercăm să ne facem viața nouă și copiilor noștri, mai bună. Dar pentru asta va trebui să fim unite, să avem încredere în propria noastră capacitate de a găsi soluții viabile la problemele cu care ne confruntăm, că putem și dorim să arătăm că femeia romă nu este femeia slabă și sensibilă. Dimpotrivă, femeia romă este femeia puternică care dă dovadă de curaj, care dorește să schimbe ceva în comunitatea ei, cea căreia îi pasă de viitorul generației de mâine și cea care dorește să-și schimbe statutul și de ce nu, cu aspirații înalte.

Cineva spunea cam așa: „*Poartă-te în așa fel încât dacă Universul ar trebui să se ia după tine, să nu ajungă la haos*”. Desigur, în lupta noastră pentru egalitatea de gen, înfruntăm numeroase probleme, fiind considerate de romii înșiși incomode și insuficient de pregătite pentru a pune în practică interesele noastre comune, îmbunătățirea situației romilor din comunitățile noastre.

În lupta noastră pentru schimbarea mentalităților, cât și pentru recunoașterea identității, constituie o problemă dacă bărbații romi și familiile noastre nu vor vedea în noi un partener social. Trebuie să schimbăm această mentalitate în care ei nu văd în noi decât fiica, soția sau mama. De aceea vă rog să faceți cunoscute experiențele acumulate pentru a fi cunoscute și de alte femei pentru promovarea propriilor noastre interese.

Iată încep chiar cu mine:

Povestea mea sună cam așa: la 17 și jumătate eram un copil cu un copil în brațe, plângeam și eu și copilul; deși eram mamă, eu eram tot copil, iar mama mea ne creștea pe amândoi. Ceea ce făcusem era o mare rușine pentru comunitatea mea, eram elevă în clasa a XII-a la liceu - rămăsesem însărcinată cu prietenul meu care nu era de etnie și a cărui părinți nu mă suportau pentru că eram țigancă.



## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

A urmat o perioadă grea din viața mea, pe de o parte era comunitatea care mă privea într-un anume fel, pe de altă parte era faptul că cel pe care îl iubeam și cu care aveam copilul nu era hotărât că m-ar fi vrut în viața lui, deoarece părinții îl influențau. După doi ani de zile în care am ținut legătura, ne-am căsătorit.

Acest lucru probabil a fost încă un pas greșit în viața mea, căci aveam să găsesc persoane care considerau că nu am ce căuta în casa lor, însă am avut răbdare cu fiecare în parte și le-am arătat că pot fi mai bună chiar decât unele fete (de gagii), care erau admirate. Eram tot timpul într-o competiție, trebuia uneori să fiu cea mai bună... Cu toate astea, nu am zis niciodată nu! Chiar dacă nu am știut, am învățat.

Educația, bineînțeles rămăsese undeva prăfuită, devenisem femeia care muncea pentru copii și casă, limitată și plafonată. La vârsta de 40 de ani însă, s-a întâmplat o minune.

Mi s-a cerut să lucrez într-un program adresat romilor. Știam despre aceste programe, însă nu prea multe. Aici probabil că a fost mâna destinului, căci am vrut ca acel post disponibil să fie al meu.

Și iată-mă o mediatoare școlară plecată la cursuri la Piatra Neamț.

După primul curs, am început să-mi pun întrebări și să încerc să trag o linie dreaptă în urma celor 40 ani.

Ce aveam în urmă? Ce realizasem? Nu prea multe... Atunci parcă m-am trezit dintr-un vis și mi-am zis: muncesc pentru copiii mei, muncesc pentru familia mea, însă pentru mine?...

Iar următoarea întrebare era, ce va rămâne după mine?...

De atunci femeia plafonată s-a schimbat. Eram o femeia care încerca să facă față tuturor împrejurărilor și cerințelor unei societăți în continuă schimbare pe de o parte, iar pe de altă parte mentalităților tradiționale și haosului acoperit care mocnește în toată țara.

Construiam viața de familie în funcție de cerințele educaționale și vieții sociale, la serviciu mă depășeam pe mine însumi, de multe ori mă minunam cât de multe pot să realizez, și asta datorită unor oameni care au crezut în mine și care m-au valorizat. Datorită unui curs urmat, datorită unei șanse acordate.

Proiectul de formare ca mediator școlar mi-a schimbat viața și gândirea la 40 de ani. Dacă până atunci eram doar cea "de etnie" și cea care pune capul în jos (din cauza stereotipurilor lor și a celor preluate de mine de la ei!), acum o spun cu mândrie și voi lua atitudine de fiecare dată când va fi nevoie!

Da! Sunt de etnie romă și mă mândresc cu acest lucru!

Am să vă spun că am făcut și o școală sanitară și că la această școală am mers susținută doar de alocațiile celor doi băieți ai mei. Am terminat liceul și în prezent sunt studentă în ultimul an la o facultate cu renume, Școala Națională de Științe Politice și Administrative București, însă drumul meu pentru formare educațională și profesională nu se va opri aici!

Vreau să vă mărturisesc (public) că cel mai important lucru pe care l-am învățat este că noi, oamenii, suntem esența tuturor lucrurilor și dacă dorim cu adevărat putem schimba lumea. Schimbarea este posibilă însă doar atunci când vrei cu adevărat să reușești.

Drumul meu nu a fost neted și nu este firesc... Probleme și încercări au fost și vor mai fi. Nu am venituri materiale, însă fac tot ce pot să-mi îndeplinesc obligațiile față de ai mei, față de comunitatea mea de romi; oficial, obligații de serviciu ca mediator școlar și ca referent social la Primărie.

În prezent, în calitate de asistent medical, ofer și tratament în sat. Întâlnesc și servesc zilnic femei cu copiii în brațe și îmi spun "nu am bani nici de o pâine"... Cum aș putea să pretind bani? Trebuie să îi înțeleg, ei sunt ai mei.

Dincolo de bani, există mulțumirea sufletească, de a lăsa în urmă oamenii cu zâmbetul pe buze.

Nu pot spune că nu-mi este greu să vorbesc despre mine. Probleme au fost și în familie, pentru că pe un drum veneam și pe altul plecam, însă am discutat cu soțul meu, i-am spus că nu mă voi întoarce din drumul meu, și că ne va fi bine; nu a înțeles atunci, dar pe parcurs mi-a dat dreptate, iar acum mă sprijină.

Totul e să nu renunți la ceea ce îți dorești, să fii convinsă că visul tău poate deveni realitate. De aceea îndemn la curaj!

Cu aceeași hotărâre de a face ceva mai mult, am candidat pentru postul de primar în satul meu la alegerile din 2008. Nu am trecut de primul tur, deși eram convinsă (naivă...) că voi câștiga. Îi cunoșteam pe toți, romi sau nu, trăisem cu ei atât durere și bucurie... Nu a fost așa, tocmai aceia care ar fi trebuit să fie de partea mea, m-au "taxat" spunând liber „cine a mai pomenit o femeie romă primar?”.

Da, considerau că nu aș fi fost în stare să-i reprezint cum se cuvine, însă și în prezent vin la mine cu problemele lor. Și eu îi ajut. Am fost dezamăgită, supărată pe ei, doar că ei au rămas ai mei.

Desigur, poate credeți că au dispărut problemele, dar nu. Acum trăiesc cu sentimentul că de fapt nu știu cine sunt. Ai mei mă cred că m-am dat cu *români* și că nu aș mai fi de a lor... Colegii mei nu mă consideră egalul lor...

Nu voi ceda, nu, pentru că nu vreau. Vreau să cred că am în mine destulă putere și ambiție să le arăt, să le arăt atât a lor mei, cât și colegilor mei, că sunt om de bază, că sunt în stare să lucrez în programe și proiecte care vor aduce beneficii comunității mele, că sunt omul care alături de voi va milita pentru o viață mai bună, cu mai mult curaj și respect.

Mesajul pe care aș dori să vi-l transmit, vouă cititoarelor și cititorilor, mai ales femeilor activiste din comunitățile de romi, este acela de a avea încredere în propriile aspirații, îndatoriri față de familie, comunitate și societate; a nu ceda atunci când va fi greu, cel mai greu; schimbarea este posibilă doar dacă vrei cu adevărat să reușești. Real, avem un fel de datorie morală preluată încă de la naștere, aceea de a sprijini comunitățile noastre, de a antrena femeile în construcția unei societăți bazată pe respect și parteneriat. O societate în care să ne creștem copiii, nu în sărăcie și umilință, ci pregătiți în a prelua ștafeta viitorului.

SIMONA GAMONTE

## ■ HOW THE CRAZY WOMAN'S EARRINGS HAVE APPEARED?

Before starting to talk about my passion of making hand made earrings, I thought it would be nice to talk a little about myself to show you how people can discover themselves at a more mature age and may find that they have talent worth developing.

I am a 23-year-old young woman of modern Roma family. I graduated from the Faculty of Political Science of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration. Currently, I am second year student in the, Gender and Minority Polices master program at SNSPA.

I can say that in my spare time I work, I am making hand made accessories from Fimo. Why I say I work? Because, first, from my point of view the products I make require much time and are quite difficult, most models are complex. Secondly, my aim in making these products is to sell them. However, without passion, respect and appreciation for this art you cannot have very good results, because each model is special and unique in its own way. Even when I make the same model several times, each is unique precisely because of small differences between them that I make on purpose.

The idea of “crazy woman’s earrings” appeared because of the attraction accessories have on me; not any kind of accessories, but those that try to convey something, those that stand out. Why are “crazy woman’s”? Because the models I make are slightly different from what you can find on the market, models that you do not see everywhere and that are less commercial.

I must admit that my sister had the idea of making earrings of Fimo. She has more connected to arts, especially painting. So, not long ago, in the fall of 2009 I started to play with plasticine, and playing we evolved, ideas and pieces began to emerge, and we made models we have not imagined before (saw, wrench, snails, motorcycles, gingerbread, etc..:). I have never thought I have talented in this domain, that is why at first I could not make a thing, my hands were foreign to me and I had no great expectations from me, although I was connoisseur and client of what accessories are and mean.

Only one reason comes to my mind when trying to figure out why I started to make hand made earrings: passion, contentment, satisfaction and a bit of talent.

Passion in the work itself to make the “perfect” pair of earrings. When I say work I do not believe I exaggerate since we make special accessories, everything is “stirred” by our hands; we do not use molds or

other tools; every floweret come alive petal by petal and every beetle splat by splat. We are contend when we finish the piece and we love so much that we have a tough time to give it away. Satisfaction occurs when we receive appreciation, feedback from friends, strangers, friends of friends and thus we come to be known and appreciated for what we do and people are confident that we can make even the most difficult models of earrings. I said a bit of talent because I thought I could not make earrings that I made until now; I like to think that it takes willpower, and when you really like what you do and are contend with the results, "talent" appears meanwhile.

Therefore, I became more courageous and ideas came with the work I did to make earrings. That is how our earrings, bracelet, rings brooch models appeared. You can "admire" all the ideas and models we talked about at <[www.cerceinebunei.blogspot.com](http://www.cerceinebunei.blogspot.com)>.



Simona Garmonte

The earrings presented here were especially made for this journal, launching the brand NEVI SARA KALI.

SIMONA GAMONTE

## ■ CUM AU APĂRUT CERCEII NEBUNEI

Înainte de a începe să vorbesc despre pasiunea mea de a face cercei *hand made*, m-am gândit că ar fi frumos să vorbesc puțin despre persona mea pentru a se observa cum oamenii se pot descoperi și la vârste mai înaintate și pot descoperi că au un talent ce poate fi dezvoltat.

Sunt o tânără de 23 de ani ce provine dintr-o familie de romi modernă. Am absolvit Facultatea de Științe Politice din cadrul Școlii Naționale de Studii Politice și Administrative și în prezent sunt studentă în anul II la Masterul "Politici, Gen și Minorități" din cadrul SNSPA.

În timpul liber pot spune că lucrez la obținerea unor accesorii hand made realizate din Fimo. De ce spun că lucrez? Pentru că, în primul rând din punctul meu de vedere produsele pe care le realizez necesită foarte mult timp și sunt destul de greu de realizat, majoritatea modelelor fiind unele complexe. În al doilea rând, scopul realizării acestor produse este de a le vinde. Cu toate acestea, fără pasiunea, respectul și aprecierea față de această artă nu poți avea rezultate foarte bune, pentru că fiecare model este special și aparține în felul său. Chiar dacă realizez același model de mai multe ori, fiecare este unicat tocmai datorită micilor diferențe intenționat realizate între ele.

Ideea de „cerceii *nebune*” a apărut datorită atracției pe care o am pentru accesorii și nu orice fel de accesorii, ci acelea care încearcă să transmită ceva, care ies în evidență. De ce „*nebune*”? Pentru că modelele pe care le realizez sunt puțin mai diferite față de ceea ce se găsește pe piață, modele pe care nu le vezi la oricine și care sunt mai puțin comerciale.

Trebuie să recunosc că ideea de a face cercei din Fimo a fost a surorii mele, ea având o mai mare legătură cu partea artistică, cu pictura în special. Așa că, nu de mult, în toamna lui 2009 am început să ne jucăm cu plastilina, iar din joaca noastră am evoluat, au început să apară ideile, creațiile și am reușit să realizăm modele pe care nu ni le-am fi imaginat posibile ( fierăstrău, cheia franceză, melci, motociclete, turtă dulce etc.). Nu m-am considerat niciodată talentată din acest punct de vedere, tocmai de aceea la început nu puteam să realizez nimic, mâinile îmi erau străine și nu aveam mari așteptări din partea mea, cu toate că eram o fină cunoscătoare și clientă a ceea ce înseamnă accesorii.

Încercând acum să explic de ce m-am apucat de cercei *hand made* nu-mi vine în minte decât o singură explicație: pasiune, mulțumire, satisfacție și un pic de talent.

Pasiune în munca în sine de a realiza perechea de cercei "perfectă" și când spun muncă nu consider că este o exagerare pentru că accesorii pe care noi le facem sunt speciale, absolut totul este „frământat”,

modelat de mâinile noastre, nu folosim matrițe sau alte ustensile; orice florică prinde viață petală cu petală și orice buburuză bulină cu bulină. Mulțumire în momentul în care obținem produsul finit și ne place așa de mult încât ne este destul de greu să ne despărțim de el. Satisfacția apare odată cu aprecierile pe care le primim, printre prieteni, străini, prietenii prietenilor și așa ajungem să fim cunoscute și apreciate pentru ceea ce facem și oamenii se încred că putem realiza cele mai dificile modele de cercei. Am spus un pic de talent pentru că nu credeam că voi putea realiza cerceii pe care i-am realizat până în momentul de față și îmi place să cred că ține foarte mult de voința proprie, iar în momentul în care îți place foarte mult ceea ce faci și devii mulțumit de rezultatele proprii, "talentul" apare pe parcurs.

De aceea am prins curaj și ideile au venit odată cu activitatea pe care am depus-o pentru a face cercei și așa au apărut și modelele noastre de brățări, inele și broșe. Toate aceste idei și modele despre care am vorbit le puteți "admira" pe <[www.cerceinebunei.blogspot.com](http://www.cerceinebunei.blogspot.com)>.

Simona Gamonte



Cerceii prezentați aici au fost făcuți în mod special pentru această revistă, ele fiind brandul NEVI SARA KALI.

Simona Gamonte



Simona Gamonte



MARIA SERBAN-TEMISAN

## ■ IN SEARCH OF THE ROMANI WOMAN FROM THE “REGINA” SOAP OPERA TO THE REAL LIFE

I have always been fascinated by images of Romani women, like that of Sabina, performed by Rona Hartner, running topless in the leafless forest, in Tony Gatlif’s “Gadjo Dilo.” And that of Ida, performed by Branka Katic, riding her scooter and placing her lover’s hands on her breasts, in Emir Kusturica’s “Black Cat, White Cat.” The image of my grandmother’s friend and maid, Cateluta, working all the time and joking all the time, having perfect skin and looking ageless. And the image of my grandmother, actually, who was not of Romani descent, but spoke fluent Romani, wore colorful clothes and flower head scarves.

With the emergence of Romanian soap operas about the Roma, the images of Romani women became multiplied, while based on widespread stereotypes of the non-Roma about the Roma. The “Regina” soap opera was declared the most watched soap in Romania, eight months after its launch<sup>1</sup>. Looking at “Regina”, I had difficulties finding my favorite character and finding the Romani woman who most looked and behaved like the Romani women I knew. The Romani characters spoke incorrect Romanian, no Romani and were often loud and overly emotional.

In the soap opera, I could see the image of Regina, a princess stolen by her royal family when she was a little girl and raised up by Don Antonucci, the mobster. Don promised her to his son, Armando, who had no interest in her, but did force her to have sex with him before marriage and offered her to other men. Regina and Cosmin, Don’s man of trust and under cover policeman, fall in love. They start having an affair, and eventually run away together. Although raised as a Romani woman, Regina never fits in entirely, raising the question if one can become Roma by being educated as such and by living in a Roma community.

I could also see the image of the soap character Roza, the Roma woman who had not respected her father’s wishes and ran away with the man she loved, although she had been promised to Don Antonucci. Her disrespect is punished, as her father’s men find her, kill her husband and abandon her baby, to return her to her promised husband.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.acasatv.ro/telenovele-romanesti/regina-de-acasa-timp-de-opt-luni-lider-incontestabil-de-audienta.html>



## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

The image of Flacara was one of the most original and entertaining, as she was the non-conformist wife of the community's leader. Flacara has an affair with her son in law and, when her husband goes blind, she tries to take over his business and become a pimp herself. Due to her gender, she is greeted with disrespect by her husband's business partners, who advise her to go back to the kitchen and who tell her that „This is a dog world. Bitches are only allowed here if they are in heat and their tale is up,” in episode 27.

The main themes of the soap opera, which reveal the social status of the woman, are the virginity taboo, the woman's agency, translated in the tension between marrying a man chosen by the family and one chosen by the woman, the gender-determined roles in terms of work (and the challenging of the roles by Flacara, who decides to take up her husband's business), the patriarch system, the Roma identity between being born Roma and being socialized as Roma and the taboo of marrying someone who is not Roma. The other themes, unrelated to gender, were the illegal professions of the Roma, such as pimping, and the inability of Roma and non-Roma to live together.

As entertaining as the Roma women in “Regina” may have been, I wanted to look for the real Romani women and see if they recognize themselves in these images and these characters of the soap opera. My research could only end up two ways: by validating or by infirming the popular images. During my research, I interviewed Romani women with different social, economic, educational and cultural backgrounds. I ensured them their anonymity, which I will keep by using made-up names for my subjects and by not mentioning the exact names of the places I have been to.

I started my search for the Romanian Roma woman in Bucharest, in a neighborhood whose ill-fame made my friends worry about me going there. I luckily had a dear friend by my side, a highly educated Roma activist who has been a mentor and a great help during my interviews and search. The neighborhood's ill-fame was actually caused by its ghetto area while the rest was quite pleasant, with trees, a playground, a few peaceful stray dogs and friendly people.

In this neighborhood I could find the Romani woman resisting patriarchy, whose agency is not undermined by tradition. Cosmina, 41, was the first of the many Romani women I talked to - a very intelligent woman who had had the chance and courage to change her life around a few times. Cosmina could identify the patriarchic model presented in the soap opera as part of one of her marriages. Being in a relationship in which she was required to do housework, Cosmina started feeling exploited and, like Regina in the soap opera, left her relationship, to go back to school and later pursue a career in a medical and social assistance center for the Roma. Like Roza, Cosmina married and divorced the men that she chose, which created tensions between her and her family.

In the same neighborhood, another Romani woman had found the middle way between tradition and agency. Alina, 47, was brought up to respect the Romani traditions but, most of all, to respect individuals. “Since we were kids, we were taught to respect each other and help each other, no matter if we are men or women,” said Alina. However, when faced with gender-determined occupations and with Flacara's challenge

of the patriarch system in the sopa opera, Alina said that “Flacara may be like this because she spent time in France, in Western Europe. Maybe that’s how Western women are and she learnt from them – because Roma women sure aren’t like that.”

I continued my search for the Romani woman in a small town close to Bucharest, where I could find a traditional Roma community of “spoitori.” There, as well as in my future interviewees, I found a woman struggling with the tension between tradition and agency. Florica, a fifty-year-old proud grandmother who “had great respect for the Roma tradition” had been married and had married her daughter off in the “spoitorilor” tradition. According to Florica, the steps of getting married were for the parents to find a good match and discuss it. The boy’s parents were supposed to pay the girl’s parents an amount of money, to close the deal. Then the couple could get engaged and, one year later, get married.

Florica had great respect for the marriage tradition but hoped her granddaughter could escape it. The tension between pride and respect for tradition and the hope for a different future for the next generations give room for change. Florica had bought a house for her granddaughter, so that, in case she falls in love with a poor man, she can still marry him, despite the widespread practice for girls to marry boys of the same socio-economic status.

In the same “spoitori” community (whose name comes from their occupation, of tinkering cauldrons), I had the chance to see a fresh example of arranged marriages. A recently married couple – a 13 year old girl and a 15 year old boy – had been married after their parents had discussed it. They didn’t know each other before their engagement and the boy’s parents had paid 5000 euros for the girl. In this rare situation of under aged marriage, I could discover the patriarch system, the prevalence of tradition over personal choice and the gender-determined occupations, as the girl was doing housework and the boy was waiting to turn 18, to get a driving license and get a job. But I could also find the proud Roma woman, who makes room for agency in a restrictive system, who proudly shows her wedding pictures and talks about her match, who proudly does housework and considers it her contribution to her new family.

The next stop of my journey was in a small village close to Bucharest, where the majority of the inhabitants are Roma. There I encountered three generations of Roma women belonging to the “zavragii” community (whose name literally means “vociferator,” but whose specific occupation was to make bricks and work in construction) who challenged the taboo of marrying a non-Roma and declared their community is over this. Although the three women were housewives and believed the man should be the one earning a living for his family, they kept little of their great-grandparents’ traditions, like the arranged marriages and the divorce taboo. One of the women I interviewed, Caterina, was a non-Roma who married with a Roma man and lived in a Roma community for over 15 years, declaring she is now a Romani woman as well. “I live with them, I sleep with them, I’m one of them!” she said. Caterina defied the belief that one is born Roma, believing that you can also become Roma through socialization and education.

## ■ ■ ■ ESSAYS / ESEURI / ESEURA

The issues of respect and agency were most debated in the “ursari” community (whose name comes from a now extinct occupation, of training bears and teaching them tips), the last traditional community I visited, in another village close to Bucharest. I could then see the patriarchy system in action, as I sat at the table with Ana and I could see her husband and four step-sons joining us. During our long talk, my questions addressed to Ana were answered by her husband or by her sons, leaving her silent. My questions about tradition, personal agency, norm negotiation and norm-breaking punishment were answered by the men, who talked about respect and tradition, leaving the agency-related questions aside. “Of course we always ask our girls whom they want to marry. But it’s in a girl’s nature to be shy and not say what she wants. So we have to decide for her,” explained Ana’s husband.

It was in this “ursari” community that I finally found the unfaithful Roma woman. Unfortunately, I could not speak to her personally, but her former husband told me her story. Ana’s husband had been married before, but his previous wife had been unfaithful. Her infidelity was discussed by a jury made up of community members and the verdict was for her to separate from her husband and give up all her children. “We had four sons and two daughters. After the trial, I told her she can keep the girls – what was I supposed to do with them?” Ana’s husband asked. Like Roza, the soap opera character, the cheating woman is punished by having everything taken away from her.

Throughout my journey, I kept meeting the same themes over and over again. The virginity taboo was present in all the conversations I had with the Romani women. Alina told me that, “As a girl, I didn’t have money or social status, But I did have my purity – I was a miss – and it was my duty to keep this precious gift safe.” Florica, the woman who hoped tradition would change for her granddaughter’s generation said that her granddaughter may no longer wear long large dresses, like she does, and she may be able to choose her own husband, but she still has to “respect herself and stay pure till marriage.”

Virginity and fidelity were two sides of the same coin: chastity. And looking back at Regina’s open-shoulder blouses which were often not covering her waist and abdomen, looking at her secret meetings with the man she loved and her sexual encounters in grass or in hay, I could not find any resemblance between Regina and the Romani women I had met. Throughout my search for the Romani woman, I could barely find pieces of the Regina characters.

While looking for the Romani woman, I could find some intersections between the media-promoted characters and the real Romani women. But in most cases, the differences were so many, that the few resemblances made little difference. I could not find the loud emotional uneducated Roma woman. Although more than half of my subjects had not reached high school, home schooling had made them articulate and respectful.

I could not find the female victim who is sexually objectified. The traditional women I met even covered their lower body part with long large skirts to prevent sexual objectification, while one of the modern subjects tried to make sex less of a taboo in her neighborhood, to prevent sex from becoming a weapon. I also found women who valued the virginity taboo as a sign of self-respect.

In my journey, I did, indeed, find the patriarch system. But I also found strong women who created ways of negotiating with tradition and of finding their personal agency. I did find child marriages and a thirteen year old girl who dropped out of school to become a housewife. But I also found highly educated Roma women, who changed their lives and asserted their rights. I found women whose sense of worth and respect for their cultural and ethnical identity made them remarkable.

Simona Gamonte



## ■ ROMANI WOMEN MANIFESTO WITH THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 08.03.2010

**To our colleagues,  
local, national and European activists**

The International Women's Day – 8<sup>th</sup> of March, was initiated by women activist – 100 years ago, at Copenhagen, 1910, and it is our moral duty to remind ourselves about their sacrifices and the true meaning of this day – defending social and political rights of women from all social classes and nationalities.

The current Manifesto is about respecting Romani women, as women and daily co-workers in the Roma civil society and movement.

As active women in the Roma movement, we are aware of the changes in the attitudes and actions of the men-dominated organizations and of our men-colleagues when it comes to gender equality and respect towards women. For the time being, March 2010, here and now, in Romania, we express our concern with regard to the blatant NON-representation of women in the Delegation of Roma of Romania to the *European Roma and Travels Forum (ERTF)*.

Keeping in mind the ERTF statute and the large number of Romani women who were actively involved in the Roma movement from Romania since its beginning, we consider that NOW it is the time to acknowledge their merits through the election of at least one woman representative in the Romanian delegation to the ERTF. The substantial unbalance between Romani women and men in terms of public participation, makes important that these specific problems are acknowledged and that the rights of the Roma women are discussed, promoted, protected and restored, as it is the case with the new Delegation of the Roma of Romania to the ERTF. The recently voted by the same ERTF, Roma Rights Charter underlines very clearly this issue:

*The Roma women are exposed to multiple discrimination: as women in society; as Roma women in the movement for women rights; and frequently as scapegoats in our community, young women and girls are in particular more vulnerable to violence and have fewer opportunities in life.*

The exclusively male composition of the current, 2010 Romanian ERTF Delegation - is in sharp contradiction with the ERTF Statute Provisions, as it is a denial of the existing realities, of the rich and diverse civil society and of the social movement of the Roma in Romania (the self- organized, voluntary civic associations, governmental and nongovernmental structures, religious Assemblies, etc) created by the Roma from Romania between 1990-2010. Up until today, in Romania there is a relatively large number of active women in the Roma structures (relevant for the ERTF process), in Romania, as:

Experts in institutions at local level, regional authorities (for example the National Center for Roma Culture – CNCR), presidents and directors of NGOs, etc.;

Increased number of Romani women in the existing staff of the Roma-related Governmental and Nongovernmental organizations;

400 Romani women hired as health mediators, as part of a “good-practice” initiated in Romania remain unique in the European context.

We ask that the principle of women representation in the ERTF to be respected also by the members of the current Romanian Roma ERTF delegation, through appointing of at least one woman in the delegation. The solution we propose for the composition of the ERTF Romanian Delegation in application of the provisions of the ERTF and of the recommendations of the Council of Europe) is: at least one woman as a full member and 40% women of the total number of deputy members; or 40% women as voting members and at least one woman as deputy/substitute member.

WE remind that there are 16 years since the first policy document published referring to Romani women - *The Manifesto of the Roma/Gypsy women from the European Union space*[4] - a document which, unfortunately has never been put into practice. At all levels the Romani women still have to confront or “fight” with the Roma male leaders. No matter how educated or activists they are, many of the current Roma leaders still remain connected/ to the traditional, patriarchal roles, in the daily life as well as in the management of organizations or self-governing structures of Roma.

Despite these issues, we do strongly believe that beyond the prejudices against us, there MUST be the will and conscience to recognize Romani women’s efforts and implications in the policies created for Roma population and to act towards including Romani women in all representative forums at national and international level.

We consider that NOW is the time to ACT , proceed to clear and firm changes of the current “state of the art” of the Roma-related affairs, among others, by systematic inclusion of the representatives of the Romani women in all political arrangements and in all policies for the Roma and with the Roma.

We are here to defend, preserve and promote the rights of the Romani women to equally participate to the consultative mechanisms or any other kind of mechanisms, meant to increase access of Roma people in all the spheres of public and political life.



## ■ ■ ■ ACTIVISMS / ACTIVISME / AKTIVISMURA

Only if our brothers, Roma men join FIRST to our efforts in defending and promoting our rights, of Romani women, we may continue to make progresses in eliminating the general prejudices and stereotypes against us, Romani women.

### *Semneazăl Signatures*

Carmen Gheorghe  
Crina Marina Morteau  
Crina Elena Morteau  
Delia Baicu  
Mihaela Gheorghe  
Mirela Făiș  
Nicoleta Bișu  
Raluca Petcuș

### *Susținători/ Supporters*

Camelia Moraru  
Csilla Könczei  
Enikő Vincze  
Gelu Duminiță  
Markocsan Andrei  
Nicolae Gheorghe  
Oana Băluța  
Paula Boartă  
Ruxandra Costescu  
Vaszi Robert János

## ■ MANIFESTUL FEMEILOR ROME CU OCAZIA ZILEI INTERNAȚIONALE A FEMEII, 8 MARTIE 2010

### Către colegi și colege, activiști locali, naționali sau europeni

Pentru că *Ziua Internațională a Femeii* – 8 martie a fost pornită de activiste, datorită noastră morală este să ne amintim de lupta acestora și să nu uităm adevărata semnificație a zilei de 8 martie, și anume aceea de apărare a drepturilor sociale și politice ale femeilor din toate clasele și popoarele.

Prezentul manifest este pentru respectarea femeilor rome din România, nu doar într-o zi de celebrare a existenței femeii, ci în fiecare zi, oferindu-i în mod egal accesul la viața publică.

Există un decalaj substanțial între femeile rome și bărbații romi în ceea ce privește participarea publică, și de aceea e important ca aceste probleme specifice să fie cunoscute, iar drepturile femeilor rome să fie aduse în discuție, promovate și protejate. *Femeile rome sunt expuse discriminării multiple: ca femei în societate; ca femei rome în mișcarea pentru drepturile femeilor; și frecvent ca țapi ispășitori în comunitatea noastră, femeile tinere și fete sunt în mod particular mai vulnerabile la violență și au oportunități mai reduse în viață.*<sup>1</sup>

Ca femei active sau mai puțin active în mișcarea romilor, suntem conștiente de schimbările în atitudine și acțiune a organizațiilor și colegilor și colegelor când vine vorba despre egalitatea de gen și respectul față de femei, înșă ne exprimăm îngrijorarea față de (ne)reprezentarea femeilor în forurile reprezentative ale romilor pe plan național și internațional. Un exemplu în acest sens este *delegația României la Forumul European al Romilor și Călătorilor*. (*European Roma and Travels Forum, ERTF*).

Având în vedere numărul mare al femeilor rome care s-au implicat activ în mișcarea romilor din România în ultimii ani, considerăm că acum este momentul să devenim model pozitiv, în materie de egalitate

<sup>1</sup> Extras din *ERTF Charter on the Rights of the Roma* (adoptată în sesiunea a-V-a a Adunării Plenare, 24-26 februarie 2010 [http://www.ertf.org/download/ERTF\\_Charter\\_Final\\_071009.pdf](http://www.ertf.org/download/ERTF_Charter_Final_071009.pdf);

## ■ ■ ■ ACTIVISMS / ACTIVISME / AKTIVISMURA

și nediscriminare de gen, pentru co-naționali noștri majoritari. Astfel, meritul femeilor să fie recunoscut și prin alegerea cel puțin a unei reprezentante în delegația României la ERTF.

Prin urmare, nu vom aduce justificări, enunțuri și rezultate ale diferitelor rapoarte și studii naționale sau europene existente despre situația femeilor rome și discriminarea multiplă experimentată de acestea<sup>2</sup>.

Se împlinesc 16 ani de la primul document reprezentativ publicat referitor la femeile rome – *Manifestul femeilor rome/țiganci din spațiul Uniunii Europene*<sup>3</sup>, un document care din păcate, nu a fost niciodată pus în practică. Femeile rome încă trebuie să „lupte” cu liderii bărbații romi, pentru care nu contează cât sunt de educați sau activiști, și care sunt în continuare dornici să rămână la roluri tradiționale, patriarhale, atât în viața de zi cu zi, cât și în asociații și structuri de auto-organizare ale romilor.

Si totusi, credem ca, dincolo de toate prejudecațiile în privința noastră, există voința și conștiința de a recunoaște eforturile și implicarea femeilor rome în politicile create pentru populația de romi și să acționăm în includerea sistematică a acestora în forurile reprezentative ale romilor atât pe plan național cât și pe plan internațional.

Cerem ca principiul reprezentării femeilor să fie respectat și de Delegația Romilor din România la ERTF, prin existența a cel puțin unei femeie rome cu drept plin de vot și 40% număr de femei din numărul total al membrilor supleanți; sau 40% număr de femei din numărul membrilor cu drept de vot și cel puțin o femeie printre membrii supleanți ai Delegației.

În eforturile noastre de a apăra și promova drepturile femeilor rome de a participa în viața publică și politică, de a elimina prejudecațiile și stereotipurile împotriva noastră, a femeilor rome, primul pas este ca femeile rome să fie sprijinite de confracții noștri bărbați, de a lua parte în proporții egale la acțiunile consultative și reprezentative.

Gândurile noastre se îndreaptă către toate acele femei a căror existență este invizibilă, dar care merită în egală măsură să fie respectate.

La Mulți Ani Tuturor Femeilor!

<sup>2</sup> Conceptul „discriminare multiplă” a fost introdus în România în anul 2006, prin inițiativa de lobby a unui grup de femei rome, odată cu desfășurarea procesului de modificare și completare a Legii 202/2002 cu privire la egalitatea de șanse între femei și bărbați;

<sup>3</sup> Congresul romilor din Sevilla/Spania din 1994 (*primul Congres al romilor/țiganilor*).

## ■ **ON A ROAD TO EQUALITY: FRA ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH ROMANI AND TRAVELLER WOMEN**

**Cordoba, Spain, 06-07.04.2010**

In the run up to International Roma Day (8 April), the Fundamental Rights Agency held talks with Romani and Traveler women networks in Córdoba (Spain) about how to ensure that European Union policies impact positively on their lives. On the eve of the Second European Roma Summit hosted by the Spanish Presidency of the European Union, the Fundamental Rights Agency gathered Romani and Traveler women in Córdoba, Spain to a roundtable entitled “On a Road to Equality”. The roundtable brought together representatives from the European Commission, the Fundamental Rights Agency and Romani women activist networks. Discussions focused on European Union policies on Roma and Romani and Traveler women, facilitating the application of these policies at local level and anti-Gypsyism, hate crime and other forms of intolerance. The position paper from below resulted from this roundtable.

### **Romani and Travellers Women Position Paper Resulting from the Fra Roundtable with Romani and Travelers Women Activists**

We, Romani and Travelers women present at the FRA Roundtable with Romani and Travelers Women Activists “On a road to Equality”, wish to address the European Union, Member States on the occasion of the Second EU Roma Summit on the situation of Romani and Travelers women and their families.

We endorse and reinforce statements, which were made at the FRA Roundtable with Romani women in Bucharest in 2006, Declaration of Romani women networks at the Romani women’s right conference Amare Glasura Ashunde in Stockholm in December 2007 and Declaration of Romani women networks “I am a European Roma Woman” conference in Athens in January 2010.

Romani women in the EU face multiple discrimination based on their ethnicity, social status and their gender. This negatively impacts on all areas of their daily life, including housing, health care, employment, education, political and civic participation and family relationship.



## ■ ■ ■ ACTIVISMS / ACTIVISME / AKTIVISMURA

We are particularly concerned about the situation of Romani women in EU accession countries, about their situation in access to public health care, ethnic profiling, allegations of rape by officials and lack of identity documents. We believe it is essential that the situation of Romani women is monitored in the process of accession to the EU. There is a need to address human rights violations within Romani communities by respective authorities and cover up reference to Roma culture should not serve as a pretext for lack of intervention in cases where rights of the child, women are violated.

We note that since the First European Roma Summit, Roma have been killed and there has been an increase of activity of extremist neo-Nazi groups. We reject all forms of racist violence, as we witnessed in recent months in the Czech Republic in Vitkov and Opava, Hungary and Italy in Ponticelli, and call upon Member States to stop killings of the Roma and address all forms of gender based violence against Roma and Travelers women.

More specifically, the Romani and Travelers women underline the following:

1. There is a need for both mainstreaming and targeted approaches in addressing the situation of Romani and Travelers women in all EU and Member States policies. Gender needs to be included in all Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion.
2. There is a need to draw attention to the increasing poverty of Romani communities and to the increasing polarization in the society, which results from anti-Gypsyism. Especially in the time of crises, Romani women and children are even more affected.
3. The European Commission should develop EU Roma Strategy. In order to ensure Romani and Travelers women access to human rights, we should be consulted on a regular basis in all stages of strategy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process.
4. European Commission in the next programming period 2014-2020 should make the Structural Funds more accessible, flexible and develop micro credit programs, which would support the grassroots Romani women and interlink small programs, which already exist. EU should ensure that structural funds are not provided to institutions, which participate on human rights violation of Roma, such as segregated schools, hospitals, which perform forced sterilization of Romani women etc.
5. There is a need to raise awareness of fundamental rights with the Romani communities as well as with the service providers, who need to be more aware of and responsive to community needs and of their obligations in this regard.
6. There is a need to be a critical reflection on what the First Roma Summit has brought to Romani communities. Concrete commitment of Member States needs to be in place for the outcomes of the II EU Roma Summit.

## ■ THE *I'M A ROMA WOMAN* REGIONAL CAMPAIGN VIDEO

### Romedia Foundation

The Romedia Foundation is a media-centered NGO which produces quality audiovisual material shot in a great number of European countries, at the rate of one news documentary per month. Our films deal with subjects as varied as the explosion of violence against Roma in Italy since 2007, the ongoing refugee crisis across the former Yugoslavia as well as amazingly effective NGO initiatives in Turkey, Israel, the Czech Republic or Albania. We are in the possession of several thousands of hours of digitalized archives on Romani communities and Romani activists. Our clearly defined focus is visual and narrative influencing, with the objective of bringing an alternative, positive story about who the Roma are. We salute Care International's efforts to change the stereotypical image Romani women have in the media across Europe and consider these efforts an example to be followed among international organizations as well as local, national and regional bodies dealing with minority issues.

The 2009 I'm a European Roma Woman campaign, which preceded the one presented to you today, serves as a framework concept into which both Care International and Romedia wished to include the new campaign: the structure, the testimonies, the presentation of real, flesh and blood Romani women and the final message.

The idea for this campaign video was born about six months ago. During this period, the partnership between the activists of the partner Roma Women NGOs of the four represented countries, Care International North West Balkans and our team was close and ultimately very successful and fulfilling for all involved. The decisions as to what the key messages should be were made together with the activists of the region, from whom four ambassadors were chosen to carry our common message through their own, personal stories and outlook on the past, the present and the future.

We made this campaign together, each partner bringing essential elements to the final product in an exemplary type of collaboration process and in spite of some unforeseen difficulties. The video was shot in four different countries with a team of the most professional camera, lighting and sound technicians in Hungary, who are more used to working on Hollywood movies than on independent NGO initiatives, with state of the art film making technology to provide a quality rarely to be seen in social video production. Such quality is necessary to bring not only credibility and strength to the narrative and purpose of the video but

## ■ ■ ■ ACTIVISMS / ACTIVISME / AKTIVISMURA

also to reach the widest public possible by making the experience of watching the video a cathartic one. We often worked in freezing cold conditions during hours and hours for each and every shot to perfectly carry our message through: in a sewing factory near Podgorica; in a remote school some 30 kilometers from Valjevo in south-western Serbia; outside Nada's childhood home, in the snow, in Jagodnjak, Croatia; in a hospital ward next to dozens of patients in Budapest. All this to create the background for the emotional impact we wished our video to have on the public.

Because the use of a video as part of an empowerment project and as a vehicle for igniting social change is primarily based on the exceptional emotional impact of a compelling, high quality audiovisual narrative.

It has to be said first that drawing emotions from a public is not enough. A popular video certainly can lead to an increase in public awareness about a subject. However, awareness has to lead to an increase in public engagement, which in turn has to strengthen Romani women's social movement towards self-empowerment and, ultimately, towards significant social change.

### **Campaign video available at:**

[http://mundiromani.com/%20/%20\\_blank](http://mundiromani.com/%20/%20_blank) – with English subtitles

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgWMj5ULImw%20%20http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgWMj5ULImw%20%20\\_blank](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgWMj5ULImw%20%20http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgWMj5ULImw%20%20_blank) – with English subtitles.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hYMhHxNoyU&feature=related%20%20\\_blank](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hYMhHxNoyU&feature=related%20%20_blank) – with Spanish subtitles.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqIO2tIJ17Y&feature=related%20%20\\_blank](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqIO2tIJ17Y&feature=related%20%20_blank) – original language, no subtitles.

- **“I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN THE USE OF POWER BUT TO ME THAT MEANS HELPING TO EMPOWER OTHERS – ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN – TO HELP THEM HAVE AN EASIER LIFE THAN MY MOTHER AND I HAVE HAD”<sup>1</sup>**

## **Interview with Michaela Walsh by Alina Poșircă**

I don't really know how I got to be friend with this woman. I was 19 years old and I got accepted to participate in the program she was coordinating<sup>2</sup>. I remember doing some crazy things around that summer and I knew that I messed it up when she knocked at my door one morning: “what do you want to do with your life?” And there we sat, as I was crying myself out, she generously offered me the warmest hug ever and a plan for my future. I am not the only one that Michaela Walsh has embraced over the years. She changed lives. Not only as a mentor, but as activist, scholar, educator and author. She was a road opener for many women in a time when women's place was strictly in the kitchen. Michaela Walsh can be considered model, since she confronted few decades ago the situation that Roma women are struggling now with. This interview is mainly my desire to make public her efforts, since time is slowly becoming an enemy. These questions came to my mind as I realized that women need inspiration. We need to see how other women went by themselves on the road to success, the sacrifices they made and how the power of believing in our dreams gives us strength to achieve them.

<sup>1</sup> “Am fost întotdeauna interesată de putere, dar pentru mine asta înseamnă ajutarea celorlalți să devină mai puternici - în special femeile tinere – ajutarea lor pentru a avea o viață mai ușoară decât a mea sau a mamei mele.” “Sfakdar sas man intereso pe kodo sar te avel man xasna/te avel man zor/barvalipen, de anda mande kado gindo jail pe kodo sar te kherav te zurjaravle vi averen-specialno/maj anglal e terne jiuvelean te jutivle te avel-le jek trajo/jivoto maj lashjo sar mure dajako thaj muro.”

<sup>2</sup> [www.gslnet.org](http://www.gslnet.org)

## Who is Michaela Walsh?

Michaela Walsh was the first woman partner of a brokerage firm, the first female manager of Merrill Lynch International, and the founder and past president of Women's World Banking. Women's World Banking was established in 1979 to be a voice and change agent for poor women entrepreneurs and its vision was to improve the economic status of poor families in developing countries by unleashing the power inherent in women, by micro crediting system and by helping them access financial services, knowledge and markets. She was a Project Director for the U.S. Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, and a Program Associate with the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. She is the founder and former director of the Global Student Leadership Program, and Women and Community Leadership at Manhattanville College. A well known and respected professional throughout many fields of finance, academia, and international relations.

■ A.P.: *What kind of life you have, Mrs. Walsh?*

■ M.W.: I feel I have lived a gifted life. I have always been interested in the use of power but to me that means helping to empower others - especially young women - to help them have an easier life than my mother and I have had. Saying that I also feel my life has been truly gifted with the people I have known, the advantages to learn that I have had and my health and sense of opportunity I have been given, I have few regrets and still love living.

■ A.P.: *You decided to start on a difficult road ahead. What made you choose a lifestyle dedicated to working with people?*

■ M.W.: Life is difficult - it's how you choose to face it - I could be positive or negative about what I see, what I do and what "deck of cards" I am dealt. To me life is Change - the only thing that is constant is change, so tomorrow will be different than today and I have always believed that life will be better. Thanks to the younger generation it usually is, if women have a chance to see changes as opportunities, not problems.

■ A.P.: *Ex-Soviet countries, the African continent, Latin America... a cocktail of destinations, an amount of reasons to make you develop those programs for women. What have in common the women that you worked with?*

■ M.W.: All women everywhere want their lives, their children's lives to be better than theirs have been - no matter how rich or how poor, what nationality and what language, basically all women share the same dream.

■ A.P.: *You are familiar now with Roma situation. What is your experience related to this issue, and what advice can you give in order to improve it, having in mind your experience with difficult situations and impoverished women so far?*

■ M.W.: Four Roma women have attended the program and from the outset they demonstrated sincere assertiveness, determination to improve their lives and their communities, to focus on elements of leadership

and influence. They never hesitate to participate actively and to take open advice. <sup>3</sup>There are many people who have helped Roma people. It's up to the young women who have benefited from changing times to now take responsibilities for helping other Roma to take your seat at the design tables for making life easier for all. This will make your countries and the world a safer place for all of us.

■ A.P.: *Why Global Student Leadership?*

■ M.W.: GLOBAL STUDENT LEADERSHIP<sup>4</sup> was the next step after Women's World Banking to help younger women know and do the things that we learned from helping women before they got married and had responsibilities for others rather than themselves. Younger women can help to change the world if they have the confidence to forget problems of the past and think about creating for the future. I teach my students that they are not going to learn unless they are going to understand that learning is the relationship between "me" and "them." They must be confident knowing who they are as leaders. What's the use of saying, "What can I do?" I say, "Go plant a tree." Just get involved in something you are comfortable with, because from that you will learn other things, and from that, you will build on other things<sup>5</sup>.

■ A.P.: *Why the initiative of an American to propose solutions for street children, victims of domestic abuse, for youngsters with disabilities has been accepted?*

■ M.W.: The American life at this time has had great opportunities in its economy and its education and its diversity. We have had much flexibility because of the diversity of our culture, so we have been able to help create and offer new opportunities and ideas for shaping the women movement worldwide. The 1960's created a major change worldwide. First time in history, women, gays, animals and plants all were given their Equal Rights - never before in history had that been the case.

■ A.P.: *Have you encountered difficulties from the authorities?*

M.W.: Most of my difficulties came in my jobs when men authorities would not let me take advantages that men were being given.

■ A.P.: *You have worked by yourself? Who are the people around you?*

■ M.W.: My family, friends, and the love of my life (who is now deceased) have been very supportive and loving about my crazy view of the world and determination to BE ME.

■ A.P.: *What you touched you? What memories have remained in your memory that made you continue?*

■ M.W.: Major memories is my father saying "go change your dress and change your attitude" and loving a small garden I had as a child and taking a flying trip when I was seven years old. I have always loved to travel and to learn new things about the world.

<sup>3</sup> GSL 2007 Annual Report

<sup>4</sup> [www.gslnet.org](http://www.gslnet.org)

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Dr. Judy KURIANSKY, before UN/DPI-NGO Annual 59th Conference.

## ■ ■ ■ ACTIVISMS / ACTIVISME / AKTIVISMURA

### **Quick questions**

#### ■ *Results you are proud?*

■ M.W.: Very proud of all the people who have benefited from Women World Banking (21 million borrowers in 46 countries worldwide) and the accomplishments of the young women who were part of Global Students Leadership when I was part of that. I hope one day to recreate that special program with some of the alums.

#### ■ *Long-term plans?*

■ M.W.: Just want to enjoy life, travel to visit with all the people I have known in my past years and leave a social history about WWB and GSL before I am too old to tell the stories.

#### ■ *Things you have been done differently?*

■ M.W.: Every day there are things I could have done differently – the major one question is what would my life have been if I had married and had children? But all major choices throughout life leave us with questions about “what if...”.

#### ■ *Things you regret?*

■ M.W.: I regret the people I have offended or hurt in life and I have not been able to say I am sorry.

#### ■ *The most difficult time?*

■ M.W.: The most difficult times in my life was the year I was 33 years old, when the child I was adopting died, when I got fired from Manhattanville College and when I cared for the man I love as he was dieing.

#### ■ *The happiest moment?*

■ M.W.: There is not just one “happiest” moment. Happiest Moments were when I was in love and visiting “him” and when my students got in touch with loving themselves.

#### ■ *What is an American?*

■ M.W.: There is no one answer about what is an American – we are all so different and yet all so alike in that we are trying to make our unique democracy work for all. I pray we succeed. “We have to re-image the way we see the world. I think there is a huge need for us to step back and say, “What am I a leader of?” “How can I be a leader of myself?” “What can I do, and not ask tell someone else what to do”; they have to decide for themselves.”

ANA CONTRERAS

## DROM KOTAR MESTIPEN: HOW ROMANI WOMEN DREAMS COME TRUE

The Roma Association of Women *Drom Kotar Mestipen* is a non-profit organization set up in 1999 due to the dialog between Romani and non-Romani women who had a common objective: to fight towards the non-discrimination of the Roma population in general and of the Roma women, in particular. When we first started, we could not even imagine what we would be able to achieve, and now more than ten years after, we are still here with the same principles and dreams than the first day we met.

We focus our efforts to overcome the triple exclusion suffered by Roma women: for being a woman, for being Roma and for having a low academic background, as we strongly believe that education is the key to overcome existent inequalities and to empower women. At the same time, it is also very important for us to promote the image of the Romani women as an agent of social transformation and as a key element for cultural identity transmission, collecting the voices of all Romani women.

Our projects and activities contribute to generate spaces for dialog around the issue of education and they enhance the participation of Romani women so that we can become a transformation agent in the community. One of our most consolidated activities is the gatherings of Romani Students, held in fourteen different cities around Catalonia for the last 12 years. These gatherings are a space for dialog in which around 200 hundred Romani women from all ages and educational levels discuss about the issue of education with the ultimate aim to find solutions to high school drop-out rates and absenteeism. These gatherings are always organized by a committee of local Romani women., which decide all the details from the place where it will take place to the agenda and the speakers. All the gatherings open up with a roundtable where Romani women who have achieved certain levels of education share their experiences and encourage all the attendants to do the same. The roundtable is followed by small working groups at which Romani women have the priority to talk over non-Roma women. It is also important to mention that men are not allowed to attend these working groups. The gatherings always finish with a Roma celebration.. They are a crucial source of inspiration for everybody as many women have initiated or continued their academic paths after attending these meetings.



We also highlight the training addressed to Romani women to become supervisors of school canteens which has a dual outcome. On the one hand, women obtain the required official qualification to start working in schools and, on the other hand, they can conciliate their jobs with their family duties, addressing one of the needs of most schools: to have Roma staff at their centres, and becoming role models for their Romani students. We also carry out exchanges of native Romani women from Catalonia with migrant Romani women from other countries with the idea of working towards a mutual knowledge and understanding, by reinforcing the existing solidarity bounds within women.

Last year was an important one for Drom Kotar Mestipen. We were awarded with the 2009 Golden Award for all these activities and for having served as the coordinators of the best European Commission's Grundtvig project. One day, in one of our assemblies we dared to dream of organizing an International Congress of Romani Women. Now, this dream is also coming true. We are now working on the organization of this Congress to be held in Barcelona, 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> October 2010, with the main objective to hear the voices of grassroots Romani women so that we can all together find solutions and best practices to the inequalities and discrimination we are suffering as Roma and as women. We do not want to focus on the barriers, challenges and difficulties Romani women are facing but to talk about how we are already overcoming them. We want to move from the culture of complaint to the culture of transformation.

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CARMEN GHEORGHE / h.arta

## ■ SEE ME AS I AM. WORDS AND IMAGES OF ROMA WOMEN<sup>1</sup>

Roma live under the threshold of poverty all over Europe. They have limited access to education and labour, which causes their life expectancy to be much lower than that of people in the majority and annihilates their self-esteem, thus determining them to repress their own identity.

As members of an ethnic group which has been oppressed for centuries and continues to this day to be marginalized, Roma women have an even more complicated situation, as they are targets of multiple forms of discrimination: ethnic, gender and social. Most Roma women live their life inside this coordinates, trapped between the discrimination of the majority who see them as part of an “undignified,” “dangerous,” “primitive” ethnic group, as well as the discrimination of a patriarchal society (which maintains women in marginalization and silence, putting on their shoulders the burden of labour considered exclusively “feminine” as well as the burden of prescriptions inherent to “femininity”) and the discrimination of a society revolving around individualism, property and consumption (a society which needs the multiplication of capital, which is based on the continuing status of isolation and poverty of certain categories of people). Roma women of poor economic means live in a world in which discrimination, exclusion and marginalization seem to be an inevitable destiny, perpetuated for generations.

They exclusively assume household and caring labour, they have precarious access to the health and education systems, they suffer physical and verbal violence because of their gender and ethnicity, they frequently live in improvised shelter, in perennial fear of being evacuated by the authorities or being put to fire by extremist groups. Most labour that Roma women have access to is rejected by the majority population as it is difficult and considered degrading. Their reproduction is deemed “dangerous” to the “purity of the nation.” They witness their children suffering the same discrimination as themselves, despite neoliberal discourse promising an apparent evolution towards a more democratic society.

In recent years, a wave of negative reactions against Roma population in general and Roma women in particular can be noticed in Romanian and European mass media, thus confirming yet again that public opinion is still dominated by stereotypes and prejudice about Roma people. At the same time, recent studies show an increase in the level of intolerance of Romanian society towards Roma people. In this context, the

<sup>1</sup> This publication is part of the project “See me as I am. Words and images of Roma women,” a project funded by the Public Diplomacy Center of the US Mission in Romania.

presence of Roma women in the public European sphere continues to be a controversial topic. Relevant aspects of their lives are overlooked while traditional or antisocial elements are highlighted. Roma women are listed under “causes” of social issues and are not considered as persons whose life/condition reflects unjust public policies and cultural constructs. This leads to the construction of a false image which does not reflect the identities of Roma women.

This phenomenon (of blaming) is not typical only to current Romanian society, but is deeply rooted in history, both Romanian and European. Roma women have been consistently presented, through the different media, in stereotypical and denigrating positions. These false images which do not reflect the identities of Roma women (but only the marginal situations in which they are placed by majority-led societies) have become a vicious circle which impacts not only the collective mentality, and thus lead to increased racism in society, but it also negatively impacts social mechanisms which shape the livelihood and horizons of Roma children.

This brochure is the result of cooperation between a mixed group of Roma and non-Roma women and it proposes an analysis of Roma women in the Romanian and European culture and public space, looking at how this image and the processes by which it is constructed are connected to the appearance of stereotypes and the practices of marginalization and exclusion, and looking also at the ways in which Roma women may come to build a space of their own, free from racism and prejudice, where they can have their voice heard. The intersectional analysis of the situation of Roma women that this brochure presents is based on the awareness that us, those who have put it together, have the privilege of speaking from a favoured position, because we had access to education, because some of us are considered as “white” women, because we can freely express our opinions and desire to change the status quo. The voices of those who are marginalized, ignored, exploited, living in precarity, remain yet to make themselves heard. Bearing this in mind, this brochure – whose practical purpose is to be used in high schools for debating the issues of racism, sexism, marginalization and solutions to effectively address them – is addressed both to those marginalized, in hope that it will become an instrument of analysis and change, as well as to those in the majority, in the hope that it will determine them to become aware of their own privileged situation. Whether we talk about the privilege of being “white,” male, of higher class etc., acknowledging these privileges will open the perspective of truly challenging social hierarchies, which have been maintaining certain categories of people in marginalization for a very long time.

CARMEN GHEORGHE / h.arta

## ■ PRIVEȘTE-MĂ AȘA CUM SUNT. CUVINTE ȘI IMAGINI ALE FEMEILOR ROME<sup>1</sup>

Peste tot în Europa, majoritatea romilor trăiesc sub limita sărăciei, cu un acces scăzut la educație și la piața muncii, în condiții care determină ca speranța lor de viață să fie mult scăzută față de cea a majoritarilor, în condiții care anihilează stima lor de sine și care îi determină să-și reprime sentimentul propriei lor identități.

Ca membre ale unei etnii care a fost oprimată timp de secole și care continuă să fie marginalizată, situația femeilor rome este cu atât mai dificilă, acestea aflându-se la intersecția a multiple discriminări: de etnie, de gen, de clasă socială. Majoritatea femeilor rome își trăiesc viața între aceste coordonate, prinse între discriminările societății majoritare (care le privește ca fiind parte dintr-o etnie „nedemnă”, „periculoasă”, „primitivă”, etc.), între discriminările unei societăți organizate patriarhal (care menține femeile într-o stare de marginalitate și tăcere, punând asupra lor povara muncilor socotite exclusiv „feminine” și povara unor norme și prescripții inerente „feminității”) și între discriminările unei societăți axate pe individualism, proprietate și consum (care are nevoie pentru reproducerea capitalului ca anumite categorii de persoane să fie menținute într-o stare de continuă izolare și sărăcie). Femeile rome sărace trăiesc într-o lume în care discriminarea, excluderea și marginalizarea par a fi un destin de neevitat, perpetuat de generații, în condițiile în care ele își asumă în exclusivitate responsabilitățile pentru muncile casnice și de îngrijire, au un acces precar la sistemul de sănătate și de educație, suferă violențe fizice și verbale din cauza genului și etniei lor, trăiesc adeseori în adăposturi improvizate, cu veșnica teamă a evacuării de către autorități sau a incendiilor de către grupuri extremiste, în condițiile în care majoritatea muncilor la care femeile rome au acces sunt cele refuzate de populația majoritară – muncile dificile și socotite degradante -, în care reproducerea lor este considerată „periculoasă” pentru „puritatea” națiunii, în condițiile în care ele asistă la felul în care copiii lor trăiesc aceleași discriminări ca și ele, în ciuda discursurilor neolibérale care promit o aparentă evoluție spre o societate mai democratică.

În ultimii ani, un val de reacții negative împotriva populației rome în general și a femeilor rome în special se poate observa în mass media românească și europeană, confirmând încă o dată că opinia publică

<sup>1</sup> Publicația este parte din proiectul „Privește-mă așa cum sunt. Cuvinte și imagini ale femeilor rome”, proiect realizat cu sprijinul Ambasadei SUA – Centrul Cultural American. <http://seemeasiam.wordpress.com/>. Timișoara - București, 2010.

e încă dominată de stereotipuri și prejudecăți în privința etniei rome. În același timp, studii recente arată o creștere a nivelului de intoleranță al societății românești față de populația de etnie romă. În acest context, prezența femeilor rome în sfera publică europeană a fost și continuă să fie un subiect controversat, aspecte relevante ale vieților lor fiind neglijate, în timp ce sunt scoase în evidență elemente tradiționale sau acte antisociale, aceste femei fiind trecute la categoria „cauze” ale unor probleme sociale ele nefiind considerate, așa cum ar fi corect, persoane ale căror vieți/condiții reflectă politici publice și construcții culturale nedrepte. Acest fapt conduce la construcția unei imagini false care nu reflectă identitățile femeilor rome.

Acest fenomen (de învinovățire/blamare) nu este caracteristic doar societății românești actuale, ci are adânci rădăcini în istorie, atât în cea românească cât și în cea europeană, femeile rome fiind în mod continuu prezentate, prin intermediul diferitelor medii, în posturi stereotipice și denigratoare. Construcțiile acestor imagini false ce nu reflectă identitățile femeilor rome (ci reflectă doar situațiile de marginalitate în care le plasează societățile majoritare) se constituie în adevărate cercuri vicioase, care acționează atât la nivelul mentalului colectiv, accentuând rasismul din societate, cât și asupra altor mecanisme sociale, și care predetermină/prefigurează în mod negativ modul de viață și perspectivele copiilor de etnie romă.

Această broșură este rezultatul colaborării unui grup mixt de femei rome și non-rome și se dorește a fi o analiză a imaginii femeilor rome în cultura și spațiul public românesc și european, atât a felului în care această imagine și procesele construirii ei participă la crearea stereotipurilor și a practicilor de excludere și marginalizare, cât și a felului în care posibilitățile femeilor rome de a-și construi un spațiu al lor – eliberat de rasism și prejudecăți – și de a vorbi prin propria voce, se pot contura. Analiza intersecțională a situației femeilor rome pe care prezenta broșura și-o propune rămâne profund conștientă de faptul că noi, cele care am contribuit la alcătuirea ei, avem privilegiul de a vorbi dintr-o poziție favorizată, prin faptul că noi toate am avut acces la educație, prin faptul că o parte dintre noi suntem femei „albe”, prin faptul că avem posibilitatea să dăm voce opiniilor și dorințelor noastre de schimbare. Vocile acelor femei care sunt cele mai marginalizate, cele mai exploatare, cele mai precare, cele mai ignorate rămân încă să se facă auzite. Păstrând în minte acest fapt, această broșură – al cărei scop practic este să fie folosită în licee pentru a provoca dezbateri despre rasism, sexism, marginalizare și strategii de combatere ale acestora – își dorește să se adreseze atât celor marginalizați/marginalizate, în speranța că ar putea servi ca un instrument care să provoace o analiză a situației lor în perspectiva unei schimbări, cât și majoritarilor, ca un instrument care să-i determine să conștientizeze și să-și recunoască propria situație privilegiată, indiferent că e vorba de privilegiul de a fi „alb”, privilegiul masculin, de clasă socială, etc., recunoașterea acestor privilegii deschizând posibilitatea unei contestări eficiente a relațiilor ierarhice din societate, relații care mențin anumite categorii într-o stare continuă de marginalitate.

CARMEN GHEORGHE / h.arta

## ■ DIKH MAN KADĀ SAR SEM. LAVA AJ DIKIMATA LE RROMNENQE<sup>1</sup>

And-e savorri Euròpa, e rroma siven and-o baro òrripin, biedukačiaqo aj bibutāqo, kaj keren ka von te na siven but, aj lenqo patisarel te avel peravdo. Sar membrūra le etniaqe kaj sas but uštāvdi bute sekolenθar vi adies si kadā, e situācie le rromnenqe si phari, kadale si k-e intersèkcia bute diskriminācia: etniaqo, gender aj klāsa soçiālo. Jekh baro gin le rromnenqo siven palal kadave koordonatura, astarde maškar e diskriminācia le societaqi (kaj dikhel len isindoj jekh etnia "lazani", "trašarni", "purane", etc) aj maškar e dikriminacie jekhe societaqi patriarxàlo( kaj inkerel le zuvlen and-o peravipen aj ačhipen, aj čhon len te kerel butā kaj von phenen k-e si nùmaj andar e zuvlā) aj maškar e societaqi kaj si na maj andar o individualismo, konsumo( kaj kamel vaš e reprodukcija le kapitalismosqe ka aver kategorie manušenθar te aven inkerde and-o baro òrripin).

E òorre rromnā siven and-e jekh lùmā kaj i diskriminācia, e ekskluderea aj o dinipen avri fal amenqe sar jekh baxtipen nasul kaj na dašti te na dikhas les, kaj e rromnā asumin lenqe peravde butā, si len jekh akceso tikno k-e edukačia, k-o sastipen, inkeren but dukha aj butvar siven le trašaça ke dašti aven dine avri kaθar lenqe khera; but rromnā keren butī aj si dine rigaθe.

And-e palutne berša, generalosθe, sas but nasul reàkcie and-e rumunikani mass-mèdia vi europeanikani andar e rromani populācia aj speciālo andar e rromnā sikavindoj inke jekh var k-e soçietèta rumunikani si pherdi diskriminācia, xatārimata andar e rroma. And-o sa kadā vaxt, e palutne studiòvura sikaven jekh bari intoleranća la societaqi rumunikani anglal e rromani etnia. And-o kadava kontèxto, o dikipen le rromnenqo and-e publikani europaqi sfèra sas aj si vi akana jekh subièkto kaj kerel nasulimata, aj von na si sikavde sar von, si bipinzarde, aj si sikavde e elemènturā tradiçionale vaj antisociāle butā, kadave rromnā si nakhle k-e kategoria "kaùze" le socialenqe problèmurā aj na si sikavde sar manuša kaj o lenqo zivipen sikavel e publikane politika aj kultùrane kerdimata bilāche/biçaçe.

Kadava butī geel k-e jekh xoxavdi imàgina, kaj na sikavel e identitèturā le rromenqe. Kadava fenomèno (došalipen) naj karakteristilo nùmaj andar e rumunikani societaqi andar kadava vaxt, ci si len bare darina and-e istoria, rumunikani vi europalikani, e rromnā si sikavde palal bisarane mèdiura, stereotipurā.

<sup>1</sup> I publikācia si andar o projekto "Dikh man kadā sar sem. Lava vi dikimata le rromnenqe", projekto kerdo le Ambasadaca SUA – O kulturālo Amerikano Cèntro.

Kadava xoxavde imàgina kaj na sikaven e identitètură le rromnenqe( sikaven e situàcie kaj e rromnă si diskrimine) keren pen and-e niște truja nasul, kaj butăren o godipen le manušenqo, barindoj o rasismo aj kaj influencil negativo o zivipen le čhavenqo aj o lengo avutnipen.

Kadava liloro si o rezultato andar o sombutipen jekhe mixto grpo rromnenθar vi gajenθar aj kamel te avel jekh analiza le rromnenqi imàgina and-e kultūra, vi publiko rumunikano spàcio vi europeanikano; aj sar kadale imàgina aj lenqe procèsura dašti te keren stereotipură, diskriminàcia aj sar dašti e rromnă te keren jekh than kaj te avel na maj lenqo aj kothe te dašti te phenen so kamen. E analiza intersektionàla le situàcienqe la rromnenqe kaj o amaro liloro kamel te sikavel lan, zanas k-e ame, kaj kerdem lan, si amen o lošalipen te das duma andar jekh than lačo, andar o fakto ke amen si amen akceso k-i edukačia, ke jekh rig amenθar si "parne" zuvlă, ke dašti te phenas so ame kamas te paruvas. E vaka le zuvlenqe kaj si but peravde, diskrimine, ignorisarde ačhon te keren pen ašunde. Inkerindoj godi kadava buti, kadaja liloro-si lan i res te avel labardi and-e liceura kaj te keren vakărimata andar o rasismo,sexo, marginalizacia, aj sar te keras te na maj aven- kamel te avel andar e manuša marginalizime, kamas te avaa jekh instrumèto kaj te kerel jekh analiza lenqe situàcienqe ka te paruvlen pen, vi le gazen sar jekh instrumèto kaj dašti te keren len te den pe godi ke von si baxtale, ke phenas andar o baxtalipen ke san "parno", ke san murš, ke aves andar jekh soçiàlo kategoria ,etc; o prinzaripen kadave baxtalimata dašti te putres o sajipen te phenes andar e relàcie kaj mukhen nesave kategorie and-e jekh marginalitèta kaj tavdel maj dur.



NOÉMI MAGYARI

## ■ A PROJECT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The FlashAct “Freeze Against Violence” organized by Foundation Desire on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2010 consisted in the street manifestation against all forms of violence (from corporal, through psychological and verbal, to the violation of human rights) and continued with a program hosted by Tranzit House of Cluj. The latter outlined that the general framework of the day was marked by the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of promoting an international day for women, but also by the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

In this way we suggested to participants to recall the original meanings of International Women’s Day: to highlight women’s accomplishments during the past one hundred years in terms of accessing fundamental human rights and improving their socio-economic condition, but also to outline the social injustices that women of different ethnicity, age and sexual orientation are still face. Talks were offered by Enikő Vincze, Mihaela Frunză (lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, Babes-Bolyai University), Alis Costescu, the PhD students Dana Stoica and Andra Dragotesc, Camelia Moraru (lecturer at the Faculty of European Studies), Letiția Mark<sup>1</sup> and Hajnalka Harbula<sup>2</sup>. The latter two presented the first issue of “Nevi Sara Kali. Revista Femeilor Rome. Roma Women’s Journal. Romane 3uvleanqe 3urnalo,” which was followed by the projection of the film resulted from their joint project “Equality through difference. The access of Romani women to the labor market.”<sup>3</sup>

The film of the first project year is entitled “A project for social justice” and aims to highlight, through the perspective of the involved team members, the socio-economic issues on which it is focused, among them poverty, social exclusion and discrimination on the labor market, but also the possibilities and limits of non-governmental organizations to handle them. During its second year, the project will produce a film about instances of social injustice as experienced by Romani women and men.

The first sequences of the film clarify that the term FEMROM stands for “femei rome” și “munca”, highlighting that the project focuses on the relationship between Roma women and work. It acknowledges the active involvement of Roma women in productive roles and the social mechanisms (among them exclusion

<sup>1</sup> President of the Roma Women’s Association for Our Children from Timisoara

<sup>2</sup> Project coordinator at Foundation Desire from Cluj

<sup>3</sup> The project is co-financed by the European Union, the Romanian Government, Structural Funds 2008-2013, and the European Social Fund “Invest in People!”, and is implemented in the partnership between Roma Women’s Association for Our Children, Foundation Desire, Association Parudimos and the Mayor’s Office from Timisoara, the National Agency for Roma from Romania, and Foundation Autonomia from Hungary. <http://www.femrom.ro>

and discrimination) and cultural perceptions (among them racial and gender prejudices) that prescribe certain positions for Roma women (among which accessible jobs) and limit their opportunities in self-realization in private and public life (but also on the labor market).

The film shows us that teams of Roma Women's Association "For Our Children" and Parudimos Association have a rich history of work with the Roma. Through the project "Equality through Difference: Roma Women's Access on the Labor Market" they get involved in many aspects of life considered to be responsible for disadvantaging Roma women and young people. These organizations from Timisoara provide information on employment and training courses, they organize programs for pre-school children pupils, and they have a program of psychological counseling. They also organize job fairs, and run their own training courses, such as computer class. Job counselors and social workers from the two organizations are well aware of the difficulties many Roma people face.

Introducing us into these activities, the film also shows the problems arising from the limited legislative measures that disadvantaged Roma people may make appeal to while looking for jobs, and also the deficiencies in the implementation of the existing norms regarding equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

Being a visual history of the project, this film is a documentary about the project and the project actors in action. It was made with the purpose to capture and disseminate images of significant activities performed throughout the project, and to answer the questions that were raised by many of the members of the partner organizations, like: What may civic organizations do to help solving major problems such as poverty, insecurity of daily life, inequality and material disadvantages especially if they overlap with negative prejudices that some Roma are facing because of their skin color? What should these organizations provide to Roma women next to us who in their daily life face injustice both outside and within their immediate communities? Where and how could and should local organizations act to generate sustainable change? Can they intervene in the social system that denies certain social categories the opportunity to live a dignified life or at least to offer services to help them overcome the obstacles created by the regime they live in? Do these organizations have enough power to persuade us to wish for a life in a world of social justice where everyone has real access to decent work and no one is stigmatized by negative stereotypes, a world in which each person has the self-respect required by the affirmation with dignity of his/her potential?

One of the project's coordinators stresses that their target groups include not only women but Roma young men, too. Enikő Vincze, president of Foundation Desire speaks about the project's design, which started with acknowledging the need to know and assume the special problems of Roma women and young people in the domain of labor. It is also mentioned that the organizations considered the need for developing special programs to change something in the current situation of Roma women, the latter being influenced by their living conditions, material circumstances, social status, family status, but also by discrimination and the anti-Gypsy attitudes of the majority population.

The project has two main components: research and social intervention. Research includes sociological survey, qualitative case studies, and focus group interviews. At their turn, the social intervention part includes activities that were designed for social inclusion of Roma women and youth. Letiția Mark, the



## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

president of the Roma Women's Association "For Our Children" from Timisoara, explains that NGOs always tried to convince the authorities that this job, what NGOs actually do, would be the duty of public institutions responsible to handle the everyday problems of the local, including Roma communities. NGOs should not be held responsible neither to change the educational system, or the whole economic regime, but sometimes they are pushed into this direction as their abilities would be enough for accomplishing such huge missions.

As the film reflects, the survey and the focus group interviews, which were conducted as part of the project by the research teams of Foundation Desire proposed to reveal the socio-economic, demographic and familial situation of Roma women and men, but as well as ideas, experiences, and feelings about employment and labor discrimination experienced by them.<sup>4</sup> The participants of the focus group interviews identified a number of problems faced not only by Roma, not just by women or Roma women but also by our society as a whole, such as: the disintegration of the socialist economy, unemployment, competition in the market economy and the long quest for money, the economic crisis, poverty and lack of jobs. They also admitted that there are employers who exploit the work conducted in the informal economy and recognized that policies for the promotion of vulnerable groups are inconsistent and have many shortcomings, but also that there is a lack of solidarity and mutual respect between people.

The film presents a few images from the training sessions organized in Cluj, Timisoara, Iasi and Bucharest for around 160 participants. These sessions were used as effective means for promoting the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and raised awareness regarding multiple disadvantages faced by many Roma in Romania. They brought face-to-face Roma and non-Roma people, men and women, young and older people, most of them employed in institutions of local authorities, media or NGOs. Participants have received information from trainers on topics related to Roma communities and cultures, the situation of Roma regarding employment, equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the domain of work, and cultural communication. Training sessions were also opportunities for all participants and trainers to share their thoughts on Roma, about prejudices and discrimination, about equal opportunities and inequality, and about shared responsibilities all have to assume in the relationship between minority and majority. Very different topics surfaced during discussions: the impact of slavery on Roma, the recognition of Roma as victims of the Holocaust, similarities and differences between Roma and non-Roma poor.

Through its last sequences, the film presents the first issue of the Journal of Roma Women entitled *Nevi Sara Kali*, which builds on a collaboration between Roma and non-Roma women from Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Switzerland, England and United States. One of its founding editors, Letiția Mark, who has long dreamed of such a journal, stated in her editorial: "Beyond the magic of the title, the exoticism and orientalism evoked by the name *Nevi Sara Kali*, the topics by themselves will capture our attention. Our journal is a colorful mosaic of issues and a polyphonic choir of voices, many of them singing for the first time a song from scores."

<sup>4</sup> See the Report on the research conducted during the first project year, including recommendations for the project activities for social inclusion and public policies for Roma (<http://www.femrom.ro/rapoartecercetare-recom.html>).

The other editor-in-chief Enikő Vincze, who established the editorial board and coordinated the publication noted in her editorial: “Nevi Sara Kali discloses all the mechanism what turns someone, a person, an individual into ‘Roma women’. Making together this journal, Roma and non-Roma women, maybe we realize what the things that separate and conversely unite us are. Or even the way we create barriers, hierarchies, and prejudices.”

During the event from the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2010, the organizers launched a manifesto for social justice that was signed by many participants and might be continuously supported by signatures given on-line.

## **Manifesto for social justice in the month of women<sup>5</sup>**

During women’s month in March, the signatories of this Manifesto commemorate - along with women around the world - the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the proposal in 1910, launched in Copenhagen, to mark a day of the year as International Women’s Day.

In the spirit of worldwide events, we stand against violence of all kinds – from the physical violence, through the mental and verbal one, to the structural violence –, which maintains social inequality, inferiority and multiple discrimination of women of different ethnicity, age and sexual orientation.

In 2010, the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, we note the discrepancy between the rhetoric of equality promoted by the Romanian authorities and injustices that still characterize the various areas of life in contemporary Romania. We observe that they are supported by the perpetuation of violence of all kinds (including violation of fundamental human rights, among them economic and social rights), but also by the ineffective legal formalism which deals with these issues.

We express our conviction that ensuring equality before the law, the right to non-discrimination and equal opportunity in the absence of economic and political measures to ensure effective social justice and human dignity, is not sufficient to translate these goals into our daily lives.

The action organized by the Desire Foundation from Cluj on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010, as we took a stand against violence, calls on the Romanian government and other decision makers to take responsibility to combat poverty and social exclusion through concrete actions designed to transform our society into one of social justice.

<sup>5</sup> The text of the petition is available and might be signed at: <<http://www.petitiononline.ro/petitie-p32775052.html>>



NOÉMI MAGYARI

## ■ UN PROIECT PENTRU DREPTATE SOCIALĂ

FlashAct „Freeze împotriva violenței”, eveniment organizat de Fundația Desire din Cluj pe 13 mai 2010 a constat dintr-o manifestare stradală împotriva violenței de toate felurile (de la violența fizică, prin cea psihică și verbală, până la violarea drepturilor omului), precum și dintr-un program găzduit de Casa Tranzit. Cel din urmă a subliniat: contextul general al evenimentului este marcat de cea de a suta aniversare a promovării zilei internaționale a femeilor, dar și de anul European pentru Combaterea Sărăciei și Excluziunii Sociale.

Cu această ocazie organizatorii au sugerat participanților să-și amintească semnificația inițială a Zilei Internaționale a Femeilor: au evidențiat realizările femeilor din ultimii 100 de ani în termenii accesului la drepturile fundamentale ale omului și îmbunătățirea condițiilor lor sociale și economice, însă s-au referit și la nedreptatea socială cu care femeile de diferite etnii, vârstă și orientare sexuală se confruntă chiar și în prezent. Au luat cuvântul Enikő Vincze, Mihaela Frunză (lector la Facultatea de Filozofie, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai University), Alis Costescu, și doctoranzii Dana Stoica și Andra Dragotesc, Camelia Moraru (asistent la Facultatea de Studii Europene), Letiția Mark<sup>1</sup> și Hajnalka Harbula<sup>2</sup>. Cele două din urmă au prezentat primul număr al Revistei „Nevi Sara Kali. Revista Femeilor Rome. Roma Women’s Journal. Romane 3uvleance 3urnalo”. După prezentare a urmat proiecția filmului realizat în cadrul proiectului „Egalitate prin diferență. Accesul femeilor rome pe piața muncii.”<sup>3</sup>

Filmul primului an de proiect poartă titlul „Un proiect pentru dreptate socială” și dorește să reliefeze, din perspectiva membrilor echipelor implicate în proiect, problemele socio-economice asupra cărora focusează. Printre aceste probleme se găsește sărăcia, excluderea socială și discriminarea pe piața muncii. În același timp, filmul dorește să prezinte posibilitățile și limitele organizațiilor neguvernamentale în gestionarea acestor probleme. În cel de al doilea an, în cadrul proiectului se va produce un film despre formele nedreptății sociale pornind de la experiențele trăite de femei și bărbați romi.

<sup>1</sup> Președintele Asociației Femeilor Țigănci pentru Copiii Noștri din Timișoara

<sup>2</sup> Coordonator de proiect la Fundația Desire din Cluj

<sup>3</sup> Proiectul este cofinanțat de Uniunea Europeană, Guvernul României, Fonduri structurale 2008-2013 și Fondul Social European „Investește În Oamenii!” Proiectul este implementat în parteneriat de către Asociația Femeilor Țigănci pentru Copiii Noștri din Timișoara, Fundația Desire, Asociația Parudimos, Primăria Municipiului Timișoara, Agenția Națională pentru Romi și Fundația Autonomia din Ungaria (<http://www.femrom.ro>).



## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

Primele secvențe ale filmului clarifică înțelesul acronimului FEMROM compus din primele litere ale termenilor cheie ai proiectului „femei rome” și „muncă”, subliniind relația dintre femeile rome și muncă, relație ce reprezintă tema principală a proiectului. Pornește de la necesitatea de a recunoaște participarea activă a femeilor rome în roluri productive și reproductive, mecanismele sociale (printre care excluderea și discriminarea) care prescriu anumite poziții pentru ele (printre altele locuri de muncă accesibile) și restrânge oportunitățile lor în ceea ce privește realizarea de sine în viața privată și publică (inclusiv pe piața muncii).

Filmul ne arată că echipele de la Asociația Femeilor Țigănci „Pentru Copiii Noștri” și Asociația Parudimos au o experiență bogată în lucrul cu comunitățile de romi. Prin proiectul „Egalitate prin diferență. Accesul femeilor rome pe piața muncii” ele s-au implicat în multe aspecte ale vieții considerate a fi răspunzătoare pentru dezavantajarea femeilor și tinerilor de etnie romă. Aceste organizații din Timișoara oferă o serie de servicii populației vizate: informații despre locuri de muncă disponibile și cursuri de calificare, programe pentru elevi și preșcolari, programe de consiliere psihologică. Consilierii în domeniul ocupării și asistenții sociali care lucrează în proiect sunt conștienți de dificultățile cu care se confruntă romii.

Pe lângă prezentarea acestor activități, filmul aduce în discuție și lacunele măsurilor legislative care nu promovează romii dezavantajați pe piața muncii, precum și deficiențele de implementare a normelor existente privind egalitatea de șanse și nediscriminarea.

Constituindu-se într-o istorie vizuală a proiectului, filmul este un documentar despre proiect și despre acțiunile și activitățile actorilor cuprinși în proiect. A fost produs pentru a captura și a disemina imagini despre activitățile relevante ale proiectului, și pentru a răspunde unor întrebări puse de mai mulți membri ai organizațiilor partenere, ca de exemplu: ce pot face organizațiile neguvernamentale pentru a sprijini rezolvarea problemelor ca sărăcia, insecuritatea vieții cotidiene, inegalitatea și dezavantajele materiale mai ales în cazul în care acestea se suprapun cu prejudecățile negative cu care se confruntă anumite persoane de etnie romă din cauza culorii pielii lor? Ce ar trebui să ofere aceste organizații femeilor de lângă noi care în viața lor cotidiană se confruntă cu nedreptatea din interiorul comunității lor și din afara acesteia? Pot ele interveni în sistemul social care face imposibilă, pentru anumite categorii sociale, șansa de a trăi o viață demnă sau pot cel puțin oferi servicii care vin în sprijinul celor dezavantajați și îi ajută să depășească obstacolele create de regimul în care trăiesc? Sunt aceste organizații destul de puternice pentru a ne putea convinge să ne dorim o lume a dreptății sociale în care fiecare dispune de acces real la muncă decentă, în care nimeni nu este stigmatizat de stereotipuri negative, o lume în care fiecare dispune de stimă de sine necesară pentru afirmarea cu demnitate a potențialului său?

Una dintre coordonatoarele proiectului, Enikő Vincze, președinta Fundației Desire, subliniază faptul că grupurile țintă ale proiectului includ pe lângă femeile rome și tineri de etnie romă. Ea vorbește despre concepția proiectului care a pornit de la recunoașterea nevoii de a cunoaște problemele femeilor și tinerilor romi în domeniul muncii. Menționează și faptul că organizațiile au luat în considerare nevoia de a dezvolta programe speciale pentru a schimba ceva în situația actuală a femeilor rome, situație care este influențată de condițiile de locuire și cele materiale, statutul social și de familie, dar și de discriminare și atitudinile anti-țigănești ale populației majoritare.

Proiectul are două componente majore: cercetarea și intervenția socială. Cercetarea include o anchetă sociologică, studii de caz calitative și interviuri de tip focus grup. Intervenția socială include activități proiectate pentru incluziunea socială a femeilor și tinerilor de etnie romă. Letiția Mark, președintele Asociației Femeilor Țigănci „Pentru Copiii Noștri” din Timișoara explică faptul că organizațiile neguvernamentale au încercat să convingă autoritățile că munca lor ar cădea de fapt în sarcina instituțiilor publice responsabile pentru gestionarea problemelor cotidiene la nivel local, incluzând aici și comunitățile de romi. Nu este responsabilitatea organizațiilor neguvernamentale să schimbe sistemul educațional sau regimul economic. Totuși, câteodată ele sunt împinse spre aceste lucruri ca și cum abilitățile de care dispun ar fi de ajuns pentru îndeplinirea acestor misiuni gigantice.

După cum arată filmul, intenția anchetei sociologie și a interviurilor în grup derulate de echipele de cercetare ale Fundației Desire, a fost reliefaarea situației socio-economice, demografice și familiale ale bărbaților și femeilor romi, precum și a ideilor, experiențelor și sentimentelor față de muncă și discriminare în domeniul muncii.<sup>4</sup> Participanții la focus grup au identificat o serie de probleme cu care se confruntă nu doar romii și nu doar femeile, ci societatea în ansamblul ei. Acestea sunt următoarele: dezintegrarea economiei socialiste, șomajul, competiția aferentă economiei de piață și goana după bani, criza economică, sărăcia și lipsa locurilor de muncă. Au recunoscut că există angajatori care exploatează munca din economia informală și că politicile care promovează grupurile vulnerabile sunt inconsistente și au multe lipsuri. Au mai menționat și faptul că există o lipsă de solidaritate și de respect reciproc între oameni.

Filmul prezintă imagini de la sesiunile de formare organizate la Cluj, Timișoara, Iași și București. La acestea au participat circa 160 de persoane. Aceste sesiuni de formare constituie mijloace reale pentru promovarea principiului egalității de șanse și nediscriminării, și sensibilizează publicul față de dezavantajele multiple cu care se confruntă romii din România. Sesiunile de formare au adus față-n față persoane de etnie romă și ne-romă, femei și bărbați, tineri și persoane mai în vârstă, majoritatea lor angajată în instituțiile autorităților locale, media sau sectorul neguvernamental. Participanții au aflat informații despre teme legate de comunități și culturi rome, situația romilor în privința ocupării, egalitatea de șanse și nediscriminare în domeniul muncii și comunicare culturală. Sesiunile de formare s-au constituit în tot atâtea ocazii ale împărtășirii modalităților de gândire despre romi, despre prejudecăți și discriminare, egalitatea de șanse și inegalitate, despre responsabilitățile comune ce trebuie asumate în relația dintre minoritate și majoritate. În cadrul discuțiilor au apărut o serie de teme variate: impactul sclavagismului asupra romilor, recunoașterea romilor ca victime ale holocaustului, asemănări și diferențe între romii și neromii aflați în sărăcie.

În secvențele de final filmul prezintă primul număr al revistei „Nevi Sara Kali” Revista Femeilor Rome. Publicația rezultă din colaborarea dintre femei rome și nerome din România, Ungaria, Slovacia, Elveția, Anglia și Statele Unite. Letiția Mark, una dintre editoarele fondatoare ai revistei, care și-a dorit de

<sup>4</sup> Vezi Raportul de cercetare din primul an de proiect. Raportul include recomandări pentru activitățile de proiect în domeniul incluziunii sociale și a politicilor publice pentru romi (<http://www.femrom.ro/rapoartecercetare-recom.html>).

## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

mult o asemenea revistă, spune în editorialul ei: „Dincolo de vraja numelui, de exotism și orientalismul pe care numele Nevi Sara Kali îl evocă, ne vor capta, credem, noutatea subiectelor. Revista noastră va fi un mozaic multicolor de «subiecte» și un cor polifonic de voci, multe dintre ele îngânând pentru prima dată o melodie transpusă pe note”. Enikő Vincze, cealaltă editoare, care a înființat bordul de editori și a coordonat apariția revistei notează în editorialul ei: „Nevi Sara Kali dezvăluie toate aceste mecanisme prin care cineva, o persoană, o individualitate, devine Ceva („femeia romă”). Creând împreună această revistă, femeii rome și nerome, poate reușim să ne dăm seama mai bine cum funcționează lucrurile care ne despart, dar și cele care ne aproprie.”

La sfârșitul evenimentului din 13 martie 2010, organizatorii au lansat un manifest pentru dreptate socială. Manifestul a fost semnat de mulți participanți și poate fi semnat în continuare on-line.

### **Manifest pentru dreptate socială în luna femeilor<sup>5</sup>**

Cu ocazia lunii martie a femeilor, semnatarea acestui Manifest comemorează – alături de femeile din întreaga lume – a 100-a Aniversare a propunerii din 1910, lansate în Copenhaga, de a marca o zi a anului drept Ziua Internațională a Femeilor.

În spiritul manifestărilor de pretutindeni, luăm atitudine împotriva violenței de toate felurile – de la violența fizică, prin cea psihică și verbală, la violența structurală – care mențin inegalitățile sociale, inferiorizarea și discriminarea multiplă a femeilor de diferite etnii, vârstă și orientare sexuală.

În anul 2010, Anul European pentru Combaterea Sărăciei și Excluziunii Sociale, atragem atenția asupra discrepanței dintre retorica egalității de șanse promovată de autoritățile românești și nedreptățile care încă caracterizează diversele domenii ale vieții în România contemporană. Atragem atenția asupra faptului că acestea sunt susținute de perpetuarea violenței de toate tipurile (inclusiv violarea drepturilor fundamentale ale omului, printre ele și drepturile economice și sociale), dar și de formalismul legalist ineficient prin care se tratează aceste probleme.

Ne exprimăm convingerea, că asigurarea egalității în fața legii, a dreptului la nediscriminare și șanse egale, în lipsa măsurilor economico-politice pentru garantarea efectivă a dreptății sociale și demnității umane, nu este suficientă pentru transpunerea acestor deziderate în viața cotidiană.

Acțiunea organizată pe 13 martie 2010 în Cluj de către Fundația Desire, prin care am luat atitudine împotriva violenței, face apel la guvernul României și la alți factori decizionali pentru a-și asuma responsabilitatea față de combaterea sărăciei și excluziunii sociale prin acțiuni concrete menite să transforme societatea noastră într-una a dreptății sociale.

<sup>5</sup> Textul petiției este accesibil și poate fi semnat la adresa: <<http://www.petitiononline.ro/petitie-p32775052.html>>



ANDRA-MIRONA DRAGOTESC

## ■ HOW WE NAVIGATE TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE SEA OF TRADITION AND CULTURE?<sup>1</sup>

The question in the title is in fact my first thought that has come to my mind after reading the report „Are Children’s Rights Negotiable? Early Marriages in Roma Communities in Romania” by Nicoleta Bitu and Crina Morteau. Thus, to the question proposed for reflection by the authors in the very title of their report I replied with another, more general question, that discusses once more the problem of cultural critique of human rights. The general argument is that since identities are culturally constructed and are different from culture to culture, human rights are wrongly applied in local contexts, especially in those that put value on community and duties, and not on individual rights. However, the report mentioned above – made from the perspective of activists, therefore, in my opinion, with a high degree of pragmatism so necessary for writings seeking real social change – questions the reification of culture in relation to human rights by looking at the issue of early marriages in Romanian Roma communities from the perspective of children’s rights.

The debate between human rights perspective and the cultural perspective is complex; it permanently evolves and shifts direction, especially as we can talk about a shift from binary to consensus between the two perspectives both in theory and in practice. In the context of reflection occasioned by the report we analyzed, it is important to note that in Romania this debate is very little known and even less discussed in conjunction with local events and experiences. Thus, the expose of Crina Morteau and Nicoleta Bitu, albeit indirectly, puts the topic on the agenda of Romanian activists and maybe even theorists in Romani who are concerned with the issue of the intersection of what we generically call “culture” and what we call equally generically “globalization” or “human rights”.

<sup>1</sup> Published under the auspices of Romani Criss and UNICEF. Unite for Children, București, 2009.

The explicit goal of this report is to be constituted as a “first step in trying to discuss dilemmas related to early marriage” and “to contribute to the creation of a properly informed and framed discussion between Roma civil society actors, which would lead to an objective public positioning, regardless of what this position would be.” The report provides information relating to its objectives and the methodology used, and about the practice of early marriages in general and in Roma communities in particular, and the legislation that potentially may address this problem. Thus, the authors try to create a properly documented frame for the so much necessary discussion of this issue. The authors also promote a well-reasoned argument in that debate. An example of information provided in the first part of the report refers to the fact that this practice is not unique to Roma communities, but, until recently, it was characteristic also of Romanians and other ethnic groups in Romania. This is an information that, although seemingly obvious, might be overlooked. Avoiding this is, in my opinion, essential for a report that seeks practical application in understanding early marriages. Moreover, such information can be read as a starting point to eliminate ethnic divisions where early marriages act as criterion for ethnic differentiation. The same information may also lead to a critique of Romanian modernization by giving up traditions and may raise the question of competition between cultural continuity and cultural otherness. It would be interesting to address this problem since in my opinion very often women pay the “price” for each of them. Putting this practice in historical perspective can also reproduce the idea of pre-modernity of Roma communities compared to the so-called Romanian modernity. The authors address this (re) presentation in Romanian and international public space later in the report. By this example, I want to emphasize, however, the implicit potential for reflection provided by the information in the report.

In the second part of the report, the authors address the human rights perspective in a very clear vein. They provide a broad review of international and national legislation, which may have some import in such cases. Presenting legislation is very important to inform readers since the report could serve as manual in teaching the subject of early marriages in Roma communities in general and the means of human rights that aids approaching this subject. However, surprisingly, European regulations are missing from the legal means that can better analysis and understanding of events that presuppose a European dimension (with reference to the European Union). An example is the case of Ana Maria Cioaba media coverage that really brought the topic to the forefront of public opinion, coverage that stemmed from the reaction of Baroness Emma Nicholson.

On the other hand, the reification of culture is addressed critically by the analysis of case studies that reveals the motivations and consequences of this practice. However, critical perspective, which is only informative and different from the previous one, may suggest discrepancy in approach between the two positions on the subject. This could indicate that authors position themselves as supporters of human rights at the expense of preserving tradition. Even the title of the report refers to negotiating children’s rights and not to negotiating tradition, which might be an argument to support the earlier claim. However, the authors counterbalance their probable positioning by a critical analysis of media representations of early marriages. These representations are problematic in terms of ethnicizing the practice to stress ethnic difference and legitimate discriminatory attitudes.



## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

The human rights perspective on issues such as early marriages bring to the foreground the concept of individual rights, children rights and women's rights, rights of indigenous peoples, etc. This can materialize in addressing issues like acts of discrimination or violence (physical, psychological, structural or cultural), by applying a conceptual and legal framework assumed to be universally applicable given that most countries of the world have ratified conventions and declarations based on the concept of human rights. Universality of human rights is rather a making them universal, which is achieved either through the recognition and ratification of instruments of international human rights, or by altering national legislation so as to accommodate human rights principles and values. Building on arguments of cultural particularity, the cultural critique emerges as an alternative to the perspective just presented above. Since personal identity is constituted in a certain cultural context, specificity has to be recognized, respected and understood as such. No one can deny the reality of cultural differences, and their implications include various concepts related to the meaning and significance of certain events and processes. An example may be the status of women in a given society. The reaction is to problematize the idea of universally applicable human rights as mechanisms for resolving certain forms of violence or discrimination in particular situations, at local level. Cultural critique upholds cultural relativism and supports the idea of collective rights, the traditional principles of social organization based mainly on the individual's status in a community, and the duties (and rights?) related to that status. Promoters of this view argue for developing policies of recognition concerning cultural differences and a bundle of indigenous rights, which they conceive as barriers in front of cultural uniformity produced by globalization. Cultural anthropology and feminism have had an important contribution to theorizing this view because they sketched the unequal power relations between races and cultures in a global context. Thus, the work of Chandra Talpade Mohanty or Mark Goodale is representative for understanding the criticism of the concept of universal human rights and their applicability in local contexts. On the other hand, an introduction to arguments for the potential of the human rights perspective can be given by the writings of Jack Donnelly.

From my point of view, the authors make clearly formulated and thought provoking critical analysis of different events, dimensions and representations of early marriages in Romanian Roma communities when they illustrate gaps between children's right perspective (human rights approach) and children's duties (cultural approach). These studies – although brief, probably due to limited space available, but might well be by themselves independent topics of other reports – emphasize the incompatibility between human rights protection and tradition. The analysis of media representation of early marriages in Roma communities comprises a series of succinct and well-scored observations that – as I “read” them – constitute a starting point for a reflection with great potential for understanding the subject.

In a globalized world, particular cases have shown that illustrating certain problems in the language and frame of human rights led towards a high awareness of those issues and eventually to reaching a solution due to channeling resources to this end. However, the most important criticism to using this tool in solving various problems is that in general the use of human rights perspective assumes a priori its applicability and effectiveness without any evaluation of its potential at the particular level. Moreover, cultural approaches illustrate human rights as a construction that is western, Eurocentric and even gender biased favoring males if we add the feminist perspective to the equation. On the other hand, the critique of human rights introduced the issue of reification of culture in the debate. Reification of culture means materializing culture in a static and traditional set of rules, representations and principles. The critique of human rights tries to show that addressing problems in terms of contextual cultural tradition is wrong because it ignores the fluid and changeable nature of the cultures, which are never pure, but in a constant responsiveness to contemporary accelerated globalization. Reification of culture in the approaching violence or discrimination turns, according to human rights defenders, cultural characteristics in instances that make violence and discrimination legitimate. The answer of cultural perspective reaffirms conceptual differences on certain events and processes between cultures, which, ultimately merely avoids again tackling the hybrid nature of cultures.

Thus, starting from the media (re) presentations of the phenomenon of early marriages in Romanian Roma communities, be it individual cases or the phenomenon on a more general level, the reader can enter or reflect on various topics. Among others, the topics include: the role of media in educating the public in contemporary and ethical issues to be considered in addressing sensitive issues, the consequences (re) presentations of marriages have on the construction of the image of Roma in general and of Roma women in particular, on the ethnicization of crime and of legislative initiatives through the production and reproduction of negative stereotypes about Roma. Other topics covered in the report are: the importance of socio-economic problems in early marriages, the romantic perspective on marriages in Roma communities, incongruity between the meanings of words in Romanian and Romani which may give rise to disagreement or misunderstanding regarding traditional attitudes. The authors also observe: the description of Roma culture (minority) and the Romanian one (the majority) through the contraries of primitive-modern regarding the raising and education of children, defamation of Roma behavior and attitudes in general and of Roma women in particular. Regarding the gender perspective on the phenomenon of early marriages, the authors approach is explicitly or implicitly present by the following topics: the symbolism of women-community, stereotyping Roma women, women's role in the Roma community and family, the prevalence of socio-economic duties compared to the civil and

## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

political rights of women and children in cultures that are organized according to the ideas of status and the common good. Finally, the authors analyze the ambiguous response of state institutions to Roma traditions that violate human rights. This response tends to vary, in terms of real life, according to the degree of public attention to issues related to Roma culture. All these issues converge directly towards the problem of reifying Roma culture and of legitimating early marriages resorting to cultural arguments. Moreover, these issues converge in a subtle and indirect way towards the issue of multiple discrimination, a topic mentioned in the report, but not addressed more fully. However, an approach to early marriages in Roma communities in terms of multiple discrimination could have a high potential for addressing in theoretical and practical terms the issue of early marriages in a context in which brides are children (age discrimination?) female (discrimination on grounds of gender?) and they belong to an ethnic minority (ethnic discrimination?).

Taking advantage of past experimentation and experiences, today we may simultaneously describe the debate between universalism and particularism as counterproductive in terms of solving real problems and having a tendency to theorize in sharp contrasts experiences of identity that are less polarized and more intricate. Therefore, due to criticisms and comments made by actors – activists in most of the cases – who in their endeavor have prevented these sterile, unpredictable debates, today the practice and theory concerned with issues of discrimination or violence have been directed towards finding a consensus among “human rights” and “culture” by going beyond the dichotomy of the universality of human rights and cultural particularity. Trends in policy and theories regarding the solutions to such issues are currently directed toward a rethinking and reconciliation of this dichotomy in order to make more efficient processes and debates in combating violence and discrimination. Anthropology and feminism, often together, provide two theoretical frameworks for authors who are trying today to theorize the reconciliation of the two opposing positions. Akhil Gupta, James Ferguson, Richard Falk, Martha Nussbaum and Mark Goodale, Shannon Speed, Sally Engle Merry are just few theorists working in this line.

Given the above, are children’s rights negotiable? On the one hand, my answer to the question Nicoleta Bitu and Crina Morteau pose is definitely “no”. However, is human rights language the only language we speak in debating on early marriages in Roma communities? If the question that guided the research is: “does the perpetuation of <problem> (controversial) cultural practices prevail in a traditional community compared to universal human rights, in our case the rights of children?” then I would make a critical remark

on the approach the authors chose, although my contact with the subject is purely theoretical and indirect. Is the formulation one that continues to reproduce a division that has no potential to solve the problem? Clearly more difficult in practice, but perhaps with a greater potential for efficiency might be a perspective that does not look on the subject in terms of opposition, but composition of new instruments in approaching the problem, which inserts language, concepts, practices and human rights concerns in the local traditional culture. So, depending on the context that shape subjectivity and identity of involved actors, the approach may be different and might reconcile human rights with local culture to maximize the benefit of the children involved. Finally, beyond tradition and human rights, we may appeal to the concern of any parent for the children. On this concern we may build, through education and certain alternatives, a local culture of children's rights.

The opposition between culture and rights is today more often framed as an issue of social justice and economic and social rights without which civil and political rights, which we generally perceive as human rights, would be only a form (of international law) without (local) content promoted as a solution to cultural and structural discrimination and violence. Simultaneously and reciprocally, the perspective deconstructs the Western monopoly in conceptualizing human rights, and recognizes the discourse on rights in non-Western cultural areas through harmonization of abstract individual rights with concrete local social identity. A global culture of rights would represent a new paradigm; it would not be a Western invention, but a construction that results from the adoption and adaptation to local standards and particular contexts of those contents of human rights and social justice that bring emancipation and empowerment. It is a paradigm that is constantly and continuously constituted by negotiating identity position and social order at the crossroads of particularity and universalism, "culture" and "rights", right to culture and culture of rights.

On the other hand, I take the question posed by the authors as an invitation to reflection, rather than an invitation to a clear answer. Given this context, I consider that the report has met its goal, especially since the argument of protecting children's rights counterbalances the critical approach of public (re)presentations of early marriages in Romanian Roma communities and elaborates on its consequences. I understand this balance as an invitation to a more careful look on unequal power relations that both perspectives imply and the consequences of these inequalities. Unequal power relations assumed in early marriages in Romanian Roma communities did not make their way directly in the report, but one can easily detect them between lines:



## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

in Roma families, in Roma communities, between Romanian majority and Roma minority, among those who (re-)present on (inter) national public space and the actors directly involved, between the rule of law and the traditional order in Romania and the European Union ... who (?) articulates what (?) for whom (?) inside and outside these marriages?

From a methodological point of view, the authors attempt to provide and interpret data, to include case studies and to analyze them, to approach the topic through various means is laudable. However, given that the human rights perspective on the theme is rather an approach that provides the necessary basis, while the cultural perspective is presented through the critical analysis of the practice of early marriages reveals a discrepancy that may become problematic in terms of equidistance within which these various aspects are described. Given this, I think that the authors self-positioning in the debate on early marriages in Roma communities in Romania would have been useful since their position can only be inferred for it is not declared.

In conclusion, I would mention the need for means of information on the issue of early marriages in Roma communities, but also the need for discussions that reconcile different perspectives used to address these marriages taking into account the ultimate goal of protecting children from both social duties and individual rights. In this context the report "Are children's rights negotiable? Early marriages in Romanian Roma communities" serves as a base for starting the debate of early marriages and in seeking less radical and more effective and pragmatic, less general and more contextual solutions to resolve any problems young people involved in these marriages could face. Finally, once the first step was made, the problem is half solved, and, in my opinion, this first step, to which Crina Morteanu and Nicoleta Bitu aspire in the Introduction, has been made.

ANDRA-MIRONA DRAGOTESC

## ■ CUM NAVIGĂM ÎNSPRE DREPTURILE OMULUI ÎN MAREA TRADIȚIEI ȘI CULTURII?

Întrebarea din titlu este de fapt primul meu gând după citirea raportului realizat de Nicoleta Bițu și Crina Morteau, *Drepturile copilului sunt negociabile? Cazul mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi din România*.<sup>1</sup> Astfel, la întrebarea propusă spre reflecție de către autoare în chiar titlul raportului eu am răspuns cu o altă întrebare, mai generală, care nu face decât să problematizeze încă odată chestiunea criticii culturaliste a drepturilor omului. Aceasta afirmă că, din moment ce identitatea umană este construită cultural și diferă de la cultură la cultură, drepturile omului sunt aplicate în contexte locale în mod greșit, îndeosebi în cele care pun preț pe comunitate și îndatoriri, și nu pe drepturi individuale. Totuși, raportul anterior menționat, realizat din perspectiva activiștilor, deci, în opinia mea, cu un grad de pragmatism ridicat atât de necesar scrierilor care urmăresc schimbări sociale reale, pune sub semnul întrebării reificarea culturii în raport cu drepturile omului prin problematizarea mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi din România din punctul de vedere al drepturilor copilului.

Dezbaterea dintre perspectiva drepturilor omului și perspectiva culturalistă este una complexă și în continuă dezvoltare și reorientare, mai ales că putem vorbi despre o trecere de la binarism la consens între cele două perspective atât în teorie cât și în practică. Important de menționat, în contextul reflecției pe marginea raportului analizat, este faptul că în România această dezbatere este foarte puțin cunoscută și chiar mai puțin dezbătută în conexiune cu evenimente și experiențe locale. Astfel, expunerea Nicoletei Bițu și Crinei Morteau, deși indirect, introduce acest subiect pe agenda activiștilor români și poate chiar a teoreticienilor Români(ei) preocupați de problematica intersecției dintre ceea ce denumim generic „cultură” și ceea ce poate denumim la fel de generic „globalizare” sau „drepturi ale omului”.

<sup>1</sup> Publicație apărută sub egida Romani Criss și UNICEF. Unite for Children, București, 2009.

## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

Scopul declarat al acestui raport este de a se constitui într-un „prim pas în încercarea de a pune în discuție dilemele legate de mariajul timpuriu” și „să contribuie la crearea unui cadru de discuție corect informată între actorii din societatea civilă romă, care să conducă la o poziționare publică obiectivă, indiferent care este aceea”. Sunt oferite informații referitoare la scopul raportului și metodologia utilizată pentru realizarea sa, practica mariajelor timpurii în general și în comunitățile de romi în mod special, și legislația care are potențialul de a aborda această problemă. Astfel se încearcă crearea unui cadru corect documentat

Perspectiva drepturilor omului asupra unei chestiuni precum mariajele timpurii aduce în prim-plan conceptul de drepturi individuale, drepturi ale copilului și drepturi ale femeilor, drepturi ale populațiilor indigene, etc. Aceasta se poate materializa în abordarea unor probleme, de exemplu acte de discriminare ori violență (fizică, psihică, structurală sau culturală), prin aplicarea unui cadru conceptual și legal presupus a fi universal aplicabil în măsura în care cele mai multe țări ale lumii au ratificat declarații și convenții bazate pe concepția de drepturi ale omului. Universalitatea drepturilor omului este mai degrabă o universalizare a acestora care se realizează fie prin recunoașterea și ratificarea unor instrumente ale drepturilor omului la nivel internațional, fie prin alterarea legislațiilor naționale astfel încât acestea să acomodeze principiile și valorile drepturilor omului. Critica de tip culturalist se constituie ca o perspectivă alternativă la punctul de vedere anterior pornind de la considerentele particularismului cultural. Dacă identitatea personală este constituită într-un anumit context cultural, atunci specificitatea sa trebuie să fie recunoscută, respectată și înțeleasă ca atare. Diferențele culturale sunt o realitate care nu poate fi negată, iar implicațiile acestora includ diversitatea concepțiilor referitoare la semnificația unor procese și evenimente. Un astfel de exemplu îl poate constitui statutul femeilor într-o anumită societate. Această reacție are ca scop problematizarea universalizării aplicabilității drepturilor omului ca mecanisme de soluționare a unor forme de violență sau discriminare în situații particulare, la nivel local. Critica de tip culturalist afirmă relativismul cultural și susține ideea drepturilor colective și a principiilor tradiționale de organizare socială bazate îndeosebi pe statutul individului ca parte a unei comunități și a îndatoririlor (și drepturilor?) aferente respectivului statut. Promotorii acestei perspective susțin ideea dezvoltării unor politici de recunoaștere a diferențelor culturale și a unor seturi de drepturi indigene pe care aceștia le concep ca fiind bariere în fața uniformizării culturale implicate de globalizare. Un aport important la teoretizarea acestui punct de vedere l-a avut antropologia culturală și feminismul prin faptul că au ilustrat relațiile inegale de putere dintre rase și culturi într-un context global. Astfel, lucrările lui Mark Goodale sau Chandra Talpade Mohanty sunt reprezentative pentru o înțelegere a criticilor aduse conceptului de drepturi universale ale omului și aplicabilitatea lor la nivel local din aceste două poziții. Pe de altă parte, o introducere în teoria drepturilor omului din punctul de vedere al susținerii potențialului acestora poate fi făcută prin intermediul scrierilor lui Jack Donnelly.

În care să aibă loc dezbateră atât de necesară a acestui subiect și se favorizează o expunere de idei bine argumentate în respectiva dezbateră. Un exemplu de informații oferite în prima parte a raportului se referă la faptul că această practică nu este specifică doar comunităților de romi, ci, până recent, și românilor sau altor etnii din România. Este o informație care, deși pare evidentă, s-ar putea să fie trecută cu vederea, iar evitarea acestui lucru este, în opinia mea, esențial pentru un raport care se dorește a avea aplicabilitate practică în înțelegerea căsătoriilor timpurii. Mai mult decât atât, o astfel de informație poate fi citită și ca un punct de plecare pentru eliminarea diviziunilor etnice realizate având acest fenomen drept criteriu de diferențiere. Adiacent, aceeași informație poate conduce și la o critică a modernizării românești prin renunțarea la tradiție și poate aduce în discuție competiția dintre continuitatea culturală și alteritatea culturală. Ar fi interesant de abordat această problemă în măsura în care „prețul” fiecăreia dintre ele, în opinia mea, îl plătesc foarte adesea femeile. Perspectiva istorică asupra acestei practici poate, de asemenea, să reproducă ideea pre-modernității comunităților rome în comparație cu așa-zisa modernitate românească, autoarele abordând ulterior această (re)prezentare în spațiul public românesc și internațional. Ceea ce vroiam să subliniez, însă, prin acest exemplu este potențialul de reflecție pe care îl ascunde, sau mai degrabă îl oferă informațiile permise prin intermediul raportului.

În contextul globalizării, cazuri particulare au dovedit că ilustrarea unor probleme în limbajul și cadrul drepturilor omului au condus înspre un grad ridicat de conștientizare cu privire la acele probleme și eventual la o soluționare a lor datorată canalizării de resurse în acest scop. Totuși, cea mai importantă critică a utilizării acestui instrument în soluționarea unor probleme variate este faptul că aplicabilitatea și eficiența lui este asumată a priori la nivel general fără a-i fi evaluat potențialul la nivel particular. Mai mult decât atât, drepturile omului sunt ilustrate din perspectiva culturalistă ca fiind o construcție de origine vestică, eurocentrică și chiar părintoară față de genul masculin dacă este adăugat și punctul de vedere feminist în ecuație. Pe de altă parte, critica drepturilor omului a introdus în dezbateră problema reificării culturii. Prin reificarea culturii înțelegem o materializare a culturii într-un set de reguli, reprezentări și principii statice, tradiționale. Ceea ce critica drepturilor omului încearcă să arate este faptul că abordarea unor probleme contextuale din perspectiva tradiției culturale este greșită fiindcă nu ia în considerare caracterul fluid și alterabil al culturilor care nu sunt niciodată pure, ci se află într-o constantă relaționare accelerată în contemporaneitate de fenomenul globalizării. Reificarea culturii în problematizarea unor evenimente de violență sau discriminare transformă, în opinia susținătorilor drepturilor omului, caracteristicile culturale în instanțe ale legitimizării violenței și discriminării. La aceste critici răspusul culturaliștilor reafirmă diferențele de concepție a diferitelor evenimente și procese între culturi, lucru care, în cele din urmă nu face decât să treacă din nou cu vederea caracterul hibrid al culturilor.



## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

În a doua parte autoarele abordează perspectiva drepturilor omului într-un mod foarte clar, realizând o amplă trecere în revistă a legislației internaționale și naționale care poate avea implicații în astfel de cazuri. Dat fiind faptul că este vorba despre un raport care ar putea funcționa ca manual de educare atât cu privire la subiectul mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi în general, cât și cu privire la instrumentele drepturilor omului prin care poate fi abordată acest subiect, prezentarea legislației în vigoare este foarte importantă pentru informarea cititorilor. Ceea ce lipsește în legătură cu instrumentele de drept ce pot fi utilizate sunt, surprinzător, reglementările europene care ar fi fost de folos mai ales pentru o mai bună înțelegere a analizelor și evenimentelor care implică dimensiunea *europeană* (cu referire la Uniunea Europeană). Un exemplu este mediatizarea cazului Anei Maria Cioabă care de fapt a adus subiectul în prim-planul opiniei publice și care s-a datorat reacției baronesei Emma Nicholson.

Dezbaterea între universalism și particularism o putem descrie ca fiind simultan neproductivă în ceea ce privește soluționarea reală a problemelor și ca având tendința să teoretizeze în binarisme experiențe identitare mai puțin polarizate și mai mult intersectate. De aceea, în prezent, datorită criticilor și observațiilor realizate de actori – în general activiști – care s-au împiedicat în demersurile lor de aceste neconcordanțe și dezbateri fără un final posibil de prevăzut, practica și teoria preocupate de probleme de discriminare sau violență au fost orientate înspre găsirea unui consens între „drepturile omului” și „cultură” prin depășirea dihotomiei dintre universalitatea drepturilor omului și particularismul cultural. Tendințele politicilor și a teoriilor referitoare la soluționarea unor astfel de probleme sunt orientate în prezent înspre o reconceptualizare și reconciliere a acestei dihotomii în scopul eficientizării proceselor de combatere și dezbateri a violenței și discriminării. Antropologia și feminismul, adesea împreună, sunt două cadre teoretice ale căror autori și autoare încearcă azi să teoretizeze respectiva reconciliere ale celor două poziții aflate în opoziție până acum. Akhil Gupta, James Ferguson, Richard Falk, Mark Goodale sau Martha Nussbaum, Shannon Speed, Sally Engle Merry sunt doar câțiva dintre teoreticienii acestei intersecții.

Pe de altă parte, reificarea culturii este abordată într-un mod critic prin analiza unor studii de caz din care reies motivațiile și consecințele acestei practici. Totuși, perspectiva critică, diferită de cea anterioară, care e doar informativă, poate sugera o discrepanță de abordare a celor două poziții asupra subiectului. Acest fapt ar putea indica o poziționare a autoarelor ca susținătoare ale drepturilor omului în defavoarea conservării tradiției. Chiar și titlul raportului face referire la negocierea drepturilor copilului și nu a tradiției, ceea ce s-ar putea constitui într-un argument care să susțină afirmația anterioară. Această posibilă poziționare a lor este,

Însă, balansată de o analiză critică a reprezentărilor din mass media ale mariajelor timpurii, reprezentări care sunt problematice în termeni de etnicizare a acestei practici pentru a sublinia diferența etnică și pentru a motiva atitudini discriminatorii.

Din punctul meu de vedere, pentru ilustrarea discrepanțelor dintre drepturile copilului (perspectiva drepturilor omului) și îndatoririle copilului (perspectiva culturalistă) în ceea ce privește abordarea subiectului, analizele critice făcute de autoare diferitelor evenimente, aspecte și (re)prezentări ale mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi din România sunt foarte clar formulate și invită la reflecție. Aceste analize, deși sumare, probabil datorită spațiului limitat disponibil, dar care ar putea să fie ele însele teme de sine stătătoare ale unor rapoarte, sunt cele care scot în evidență incompatibilitatea dintre protecția drepturilor omului și tradiție. Adiacent, analiza redării mariajelor timpurii din comunitățile de romi în mass media face într-un mod succint și bine punctat o serie de observații care sunt oferite, așa cum le-am „citat” eu, ca punct de plecare pentru o reflecție cu foarte mult potențial pentru înțelegerea subiectului.

Astfel, pornind de la (re)prezentări în mass media ale fenomenului mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi din România, fie că este vorba despre cazuri particulare sau despre fenomenul respectiv în general, cititorul are posibilitatea de a intra în contact cu sau de a reflecta pe marginea unor teme variate. Printre acestea se numără: rolul educativ al mass media în contemporaneitate și chestiunile etice care trebuie luate în considerare în abordarea unor subiecte sensibile, consecințele (re)prezentărilor mariajelor asupra construirii imaginii romilor în general și a femeilor rome în special, etnicizarea infraționalității și a unor inițiative legislative prin producerea și reproducerea unor stereotipuri negative despre romi. Alte teme la care se face referire sunt: importanța factorului socio-economic în problematica mariajelor timpurii, romanticizarea căsătoriilor în comunitățile de romi, incongruența dintre semnificațiile unor cuvinte în limba română și limba romani care poate da naștere la neînțelegeri sau înțelegeri greșite ale unor atitudini tradiționale. De asemenea este observată: descrierea culturii rome (minoritare) și a celei române (majoritare) prin antagonismul primitiv-modern din perspectiva creșterii și educării copiilor, defăimarea comportamentului și atitudinilor romilor în general și a femeilor rome în special. Cu privire la o perspectivă de gen asupra fenomenului mariajelor timpurii sunt abordate direct sau indirect următoarele teme: simbolismul femeie-comunitate, stereotipizarea femeii de etnie romă, rolul femeii în comunitatea romă și în familia romă, prevalența îndatoririlor socio-economice în fața drepturilor civile și politice ale femeilor și copiilor în culturile care pun accent în organizarea internă pe statut și binele colectiv. În cele din urmă este analizat răspunsul problematic al instituțiilor statului de drept față de tradițiile rome care încalcă drepturi ale omului. Acest răspuns tinde să depindă, în termeni de existență reală, de gradul de atenție al opiniei publice față de chestiuni conexe culturii rome. Toate aceste teme converg în mod direct înspre problema reificării culturii rome și a motivării mariajelor timpurii prin apelul la argumente culturaliste. Mai mult decât atât, aceste teme converg în mod subtil și indirect înspre problema discriminării multiple care este amintită în raport, dar nu este abordată mai amplu. Totuși, o abordare a mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi din perspectiva discriminării multiple ar putea avea un potențial teoretic și practic ridicat

## ■ ■ ■ REFLECTIONS / REFLECȚII / GINDIMOS

pentru abordarea subiectului în contextul în care miresele sunt copii (discriminare pe criterii de vârstă?) de sex feminin (discriminare pe criterii de gen?) aparținând unei etnii minoritare (discriminare pe criterii etnice?).

Având în vedere cele de mai sus, sunt drepturile copilului negociabile? Pe de o parte, răspunsul meu la întrebarea Nicoletei Bițu și Crinei Morteanu este un categoric „nu!”. Dar, este limbajul drepturilor omului singurul pe care îl vorbim în dezbaterile marajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi? Dacă întrebarea care a ghidat cercetarea este: „are prioritate perpetuarea unei practici culturale <problematică> (controversată) dintr-o comunitate tradițională în defavoarea drepturilor universale ale omului, în cazul nostru ale copilului?”, atunci aș dori să fac o observație critică la adresa modului de abordare pentru care au optat cele două autoare, deși contactul meu cu tema este unul strict teoretic și indirect. Nu cumva formularea aceasta este una care continuă să reproducă o diviziune care nu are potențialul de a soluționa problema? În mod clar mai greu de realizat practic, dar poate cu un potențial mai mare de eficiență ar putea fi o perspectivă care să nu pună problema în termeni de opoziție, ci de compoziție a unor instrumente noi de abordare a problemei, care să însereze limbajul, conceptele, practicile și preocupările drepturilor omului în cultura tradițională locală. Astfel, în funcție de contextul care conturează subiectivitatea și identitatea actorilor implicați, abordarea ar putea fi diferită și ar putea reconcilia cultura drepturilor omului cu cea locală pentru a maximiza folosul copiilor implicați. În cele din urmă, dincolo de tradiție și de drepturile omului, există o preocupare a oricărui părinte pentru copilul său la care s-ar putea face apel și pe care s-ar putea construi, prin educație și oferire de alternative, o cultură locală a drepturilor copilului.

În prezent problema opoziției dintre cultură și drepturi este din ce în ce mai adesea pusă într-un cadru care accentuează ideea de justiție socială și de drepturi sociale și economice fără de care drepturile civile și politice, pe care în general le percepem generic ca fiind drepturile omului, ar fi doar o formă (de drept interațional) fără fond (local) propusă ca soluție la discriminarea și violența culturală și structurală. Adiacent, se realizează în mod simultan și reciproc o deconstrucție a monopolului vestic asupra conceptualizării drepturilor omului și o recunoaștere a discursului drepturilor în spații culturale non-vestice printr-o armonizare a abstractului drepturilor individului cu materialul identității sociale. O paradigmă nouă ar putea fi o cultură globală a drepturilor care nu mai este o invenție vestică, ci o construcție care a rezultat din adoptarea și adaptarea conținutului emancipator și cu potențial de capacitate al ideilor de drepturi ale omului și justiție socială în relație cu standarde locale și contexte particulare. Este vorba despre o paradigmă care se constituie în mod constant și continuu dintr-o negociere a poziției identitare și ordinii sociale la intersecția dintre particularism și universalism, dintre „cultură” și „drepturi”, dintre dreptul la cultură și cultura drepturilor.

Pe de altă parte, eu am perceput întrebarea autoarelor mai degrabă ca o invitație la reflecție, decât ca o invitație la un răspuns clar. Având în vedere acest context, consider că raportul și-a atins țelul, mai ales că a balansat argumentul protejării drepturilor copilului cu o critică a (re)prezentărilor publice ale mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi din România și o expunere a consecințelor acestora. Eu am înțeles acest balans ca o invitație la mai multă atenție în ceea ce privește relațiile inegale de putere pe care le implică ambele perspective și consecințele acestor inegalități. Neabordate direct în raport, dar ușor detectabile printre rânduri sunt relațiile inegale de putere pe care le presupun mariajele timpurii în comunitățile de romi din România: în familiile de romi, în comunitățile de romi, între majoritatea română și minoritatea romă, între cei care (re)prezintă în spațiul public (inter)național acest fenomen și actorii direct implicați, între statul de drept și ordinea tradițională în România și Uniunea Europeană... cine(?) articulează ce(?) pentru cine(?) înăuntrul și înafara acestor mariaje?

Din punct de vedere metodologic, este laudabilă încercarea de a oferi date și de a interpreta date, de a include studii de caz și de a realiza o analiză a lor, deci, de a aborda tema prin mecanisme cât mai variate. Totuși, faptul că perspectiva drepturilor omului asupra temei este mai degrabă una care oferă instrumentele necesare abordării temei, în timp ce perspectiva culturalistă este redată prin analiza critică a practicii mariajelor timpurii denotă o discordanță care poate deveni problematică din punctul de vedere al echidistanței cu care sunt prezentate. Având în vedere acest lucru, consider că ar fi fost de folos o auto-situare a autoarelor în interiorul dezbaterii referitoare la mariajele timpurii în comunitățile de romi din România, fiindcă poziționarea lor poate fi intuită, dar nu este declarată.

În concluzie, aș vrea să observ și eu necesitatea unor instrumente de informare cu privire la subiectul mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi, dar și necesitatea unor dezbateri care să reconcilieze diferitele perspective de abordare a acestor mariaje avându-se în vedere țelul ultim al protejării copiilor atât de îndatorirea socială, cât și de dreptul individual(izator). În acest context raportul *Drepturile copilului sunt negociabile? Cazul mariajelor timpurii în comunitățile de romi din România* poate fi văzut ca o bază de începere a dezbaterii problemei mariajelor timpurii și a căutării unor soluții mai puțin radicale și mai mult eficiente și pragmatice, mai puțin generale și mai mult contextualizate de a soluționa orice probleme cu care tinerii implicați în aceste mariaje s-ar putea confrunta. În cele din urmă, odată primul pas făcut, orice problemă este pe jumătate soluționată, iar, în opinia mea, acest prim pas, la care Nicoleta Bițu și Crina Morteau aspiră în *Introducere*, a fost făcut.

## GYP SYLIA

### ■ DEMENTĂ SUBTILĂ

“Copii eram noi amândoi  
Frate-miu și cu mine  
Din coji de nucă car cu boi, făceam,  
Și înhămam la ei, culbeici bătrâni cu coarne”.  
Cuvinte ideologice pline de fundamente creștine,  
Cu influențe livide, sparte, nesemnificative.  
Un lung șir de idei sunt scoase la lumină de o malițioasă stare de acreală ce umple spațiile goale din  
nimicurile unui simplu 2+2.  
Din cearcănele ochilor care privesc indiferent durerea, se dezmoștește o picătură de înțelepciune  
veche, statută, mucegăită chiar, incapabilă pentru moment să dea o ordine lucrurilor împrăștiate prin  
toată casa.  
Și apoi, de ce-ar face-o?  
Pentru că minunea zilei de mâine nu poate fi confundată în nici un fel de circumstanță cu minunea  
vechilor antici-de-demult, dătătoare de șanse, mâncătoare de molii.

Demență subtilă gura ta naște,  
Femeie senină, senilă, utilă.  
Cutremură-ți aștrii, atinge-ți copiii,  
Formează-ți instincte,  
Copiază emoții,

Mai du-te și dracu’  
Și vezi ce te-așteaptă:  
Dumnezeu nu e unul,  
Și tu, nu ești altul.

## ■ Ultima “scriere”, de ieri.

Le-ai spune chiar tot?

Te paște o secetă nemaivăzută,  
Tu, el și ea, și toți cei de-ai tăi.  
Revino îți spun! revino și spune  
Cum ți-e bătrânețea,  
Cum vezi tinerețea...  
Revino îți spun! Revino și spune:  
Dacă i-ai vedea, ce le-ai spune?  
Le-ai spune chiar tot ce-ai văzut pân'acum?  
De ochii ce-ți rîd, de mâinile-ți vii,  
De sufletu-ti alb, de dragostea lor...  
Le-ai spune tu oare ce vrei pentru ei?  
Le-ai spune, să știi... le-ai spune chiar tot,  
Că-i știi supărați, urâți și murdari,  
Că nu e nimic, c-așa-i fost și tu,  
Că toți sunt frumoși, curați și viteji,  
Că viața-i a lor, s-o facă ce vor.

Mai dă-le un ceas, sau două, sau zece,  
Mai lasă-i să simtă cum e fericirea.  
Și simte cu ei, să nu-i dai deoparte,  
Ei vor să te vadă, să-ți simtă răbdarea.

Mai lasă-i un ceas, mai dă-le iubire  
Și-apoi du-i înapoi,  
Să mai vină și mâine...



Photo: Elena Mihalache

## MARCONI RUPA

■ *căutând*

*vorbesc de unu' singur  
și ascult ecoul singurătății  
liniștea tăcerii  
cade seara  
liniștea disperării  
vine dimineața  
că suntem singuri.....  
tu singur  
eu singur  
el singur  
ei singuri  
voi?  
singuri ne naștem  
murim singuri  
vorbim singuri.  
cine se alătură  
singuratății  
să ascultăm  
liniștea nopții  
singuri  
căutând  
iubirea  
în lume*

■ *rodas*

*korkoro borizau  
ashunau korkoro  
perel potolmo  
e reat.  
o mudaripe  
avel derano  
ke som korokore  
tu, korkoro  
me, korkoro  
ou, korkoro  
on , korkore  
tume?  
korkore avas  
korkore meras  
borizas korkore.  
kon avel  
te taizel mantza  
te ashunas  
o ratiakoro taipe  
korkore  
te rodas  
o kamipe  
sari  
lumiake*

27 noiembrie 2009

## ■ *si so si*

*si so si,  
ke n-ai sar sas  
ke aliam catar na samas,  
kaj te jas, toko te jas  
kaj resleam te na beshas  
hay te jas , toko te jas  
nikhai te asti beshas  
sary lumia te phiras  
te phiras te na beshas*

*si so si,  
devla, so si ,  
tu amentza so keres  
ol droma te n-a maras  
nikhai te na mai nashas  
opre phuu te arakhas  
le chawenghe te kheras  
kherora kaj te traizas  
devla, devla,*

*phen manghe, devla  
kaj te jas?  
kaj te mangas?*

## ■ *e ce e*

*e ce e,  
că nu e cum a fost  
că am venit de unde nu am fost,  
unde să mergem, pentru ce să  
mergem  
unde am ajuns să nu stăm  
și să mergem pentru ce să mergem  
nici unde să nu putem sta  
toată lumea s-o umblăm  
să umblăm să nu stăm*

*e ce e,  
doamne ce e,  
tu cu no ice faci  
drumurile să nu batem  
nici unde sp nu mai fugim  
să găsim pământ  
copiilor să le facem  
case unde să trăim  
doamne, doamne,*

*spune-mi doamne  
unde să mergem?  
Unde să cerem?*

17 februarie 2010

## ■ Soske bistras?

*Bistras e hurdoreskoro angluno roipe  
bistras e ternesco angluni kamipe  
bistras e chavesco angluno hasaipe  
bistras te rowas te na xolias  
bistras te kamas e biamales  
bistras te ashty te traizas  
bistras le amalen te kamas e biamalen  
bistras, te bistras, bistras*

## ■ De ce uităm?

*uităm primul scâncet de copil  
uităm prima iubire din tinerețe  
uităm primul zâmbet de copil  
uităm să plângem ca să nu urăm  
uităm să iubim dușmanul  
uităm pentru a putea trăi  
uităm prietenii, iubim dușmanii  
uităm, să uităm, uităm*

8 decembrie 2009



Photo: Elena Mihalache



ELENA MIHALACHE

## ■ LOC DE JOACĂ

În ultimele decenii, tehnologia a pășit în trombă în viețile noastre și continuă să o facă în același ritm alert, iar astăzi ne definește. În marile orașe domină deja modul în care oamenii muncesc și își petrec timpul liber. Tinerii încep să „interiorizeze” tehnologia, o transformă treptat într-o stare de spirit și normă de comportament.

Pentru copilul de azi e un dat încă de la primele jucării, care-mai-de-care mai sofisticate, mai aproape de perfecțiune. Ca reacție copilul devine un bun tehnicist, un performant al telecomenzii TV, DVD-ului, al PC-ului, pusă pe seama încastrării imaginative. Plastilina și cafelele preparate din pământ cu apă au fost devansate total de roboți multifuncționali sau de cățeluși din pluș care se comportă înfricoșător de bine ca unul viu.

Putem să le mai spunem copiilor povești cu balauri și făt-frumos? O să ne răspundă că acele creaturi erau dinozaurii, care au dispărut acum milioane de ani, iar făt-frumos era un fel Jake Sully, care luptă să o salveze pe Neytiri.

Pozele următoare surprind copiii încă „netehnologizați”, pentru care barele de fier, care îngrădesc balconul reprezintă un adevărat traseu de cățărăt și locuri perfecte de ascunzișuri, iar copacul din parc un hamac pe cinste.

P.S: Cum se joacă copiii din ziua de azi de-a va-ți ascunselea?

Se pun toți pe invisible și unu îi caută în listă.”



Photos: Elena Mihalache



## ■ ■ ■ AUTHORS / AUTORI / E AUTORURA

### MARIANA DOBRE

- A final year student at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, and intends to attend master studies in Politics, gender and minorities. She is a professional nurse, who currently represents and supports her community by her position as school mediator for grades I-VII at the "Zappa Gospel" school in Brosteni / Ialomița County, and by her position as social referent in the City Hall of Brosteni. She is also a founding member of the "Pro-Community - Zappa Gospel" Association, a member of the Committee for Community Support and president of Ialomița County Ion Roată Red Cross sub-branch.
- Studentă în ultimul an la Facultatea de Științe Politice în cadrul Școlii Naționale de Științe Politice și Administrative București, și intenționează să urmeze studiile masterale în domeniul Politici, gen și minorități. De profesie asistent medical, în prezent reprezintă și își sprijină comunitatea deținând atât poziția de mediatoare școlară la școala cu clasele I-VII „Evanghelie Zappa” Brosteni/jud. Ialomița, cât și cea de referent social în cadrul Primăriei Broșteni. Ea este de asemenea, membră fondatoare a Asociației „Pro-Comunitatea – Evanghelie Zappa”, membră a Comitetului de Sprijin al Comunităților jud. Ialomița și președinta sub-filialei Crucii Roșii – Ion Roată.
- Si phirel pe Universiteta, ando paluno bersh kaj Fakulteta pala e Sikimata vash Politika ande Themutni Shkola pala e Sikimata ande Politika thaj Administrativo andar o Bucuresti, thaj mangel te jial maj dur te sikiol po masterato: Politike, fialo thaj minoriteta. Kerel butyi sar asistenta pasha drabari/doktori, voi jutil thaj reprezentol peski komuniteta, si mashkarudni/mediatoarea pala e shkola akj shkola kaj si *clase I-VII „Evanghelie Zappa” Brosteni/jud Ialomit*, sar vi e butyi sar referento socialno ando kher e forosko Brosteni. Mariana Dobre si vi jiekh mashkar e manush kaj vazde e Asociacia „Pro-Comunitatea – Evanghelie Zappa”, si vi andre ando Comiteto pala o jutimos e Comunitengo jud. Ialomitai thaj sherudni pala e sub-filiala Lolo Trushul – Ion Roata.

### ANDRA-MIRONA DRAGOTESC

- She holds a degree in International Relations and European Studies from the West University of Timisoara. She received her Masters degree in Gender Studies at Central European University in Budapest. Currently, she is a PhD student in Sociology at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. Her research interests include issues such as discrimination, (non) European identity construction, gendered violence and its representation in political and media discourse, deconstruction and (Post) colonialism.
- Licențiată în Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene în cadrul Universității de Vest din Timișoara. A obținut diploma de Master în Gender Studies la Central European University din Budapesta. În prezent este doctorandă a Universității Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca în domeniul Sociologie. Domeniile sale de interes cuprind teme precum: discriminare, construcții identitare (non)europene, violența genizată și reprezentările acesteia în discursul politic și mass media, deconstructivism și (post)colonialism.
- Laki diploma si pala Buth Themutne Phanglimata thaj Europake Sikimata kai Universiteta Vest andar e Timișoara. Lea peski diploma pala o Masterato ande „Gender Studies” ka o Central European University ande Budapesta. Akana si ka o doktorato ka e Universiteta Babeș-Bolyai andar o Cluj-Napoca, po domenio e Sociologiako. Lako intereso sip e e domenura: discriminacia, identitarne vazdimata (na) europake, marimos genizato thaj reprezentacia pe kadaja ando politico dumajpen thaj ande mass media, deconstructivismo thaj (pala)colonialismo.

**SIMONA GAMONTE**

- Graduated from the Faculty of Political Science (SNSPA) in Bucharest, now she is a master candidate of Gender and Minority Policies. Her dissertation topic is "Dropouts among Roma girls". She participated in projects initiated by the Pro-Europe Roma Party. The project informs students in secondary schools about the existence of affirmative measures for Roma regarding high schools and vocational schools (Bucharest and Ilfov). In addition to volunteering for the Red Cross (sector 4, Bucharest), she is actively involved in various initiatives that addresses the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in Romania (for example the campaign "You respect me only on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March", Bucharest 2010).
- Absolventă a Facultății de Științe Politice (SNSPA) din București, în prezent masterandă la Politici de Gen și Minorități, având ca temă a lucrării de dizertație "Abandonul școlar al fetelor de etnie romă". A participat la proiectul demarat de Partida Romilor Pro-Europa în ceea ce privește informarea elevilor din școlile generale asupra existenței măsurilor afirmative pentru romi din licee și școlile de meserii (București și Ilfov). Pe lângă activitatea de voluntariat pentru Crucea Roșie (sector 4, București), se implică activ în diferite inițiativă adresate promovării egalității de șanse între femei și bărbați din România (de exemplu campania "Mă respecti doar de 8 martie", București 2010).
- Getosardas e faculteta pala e Sikimata vash Politika (SNSPA), akana si sikiol ka o masterato pala Politike pala o Fialo thaj Minoriteta, thaj si la sar titlo pala e buki pe disertatia "O muklimos e shkolo ka e romane shevora". Sas ando projekto so kerdeas o parto e Romengo Pro-Europa pala o dinomos e sfatosko e shavoreng e andar e cine-shkole pala e lashke butyia so si e romen po liceo thaj shkole pala e profesia (Bucuresti thaj Ilfov). Pasha e butyi sar bi-pokindi vash o Lolo Trushul (sektoro 4, Bucuresti), si ande maj buth butyia pala o vazdimos pe egaliteta vash e droma/shansa mashkar e jiuvea thaj e mursh andar e Romania ( eks: kampania "Des man pakiv numa po 8 martie", Bucuresti 2010 etc).

**CARMEN GHEORGHE**

- Roma women's rights activist. She graduated the Public Administration School from the National School of Administrative and Political Studies (2006). Holds a Master's degree in Gender Studies and Public Policies (2009). At present, she works in the Agency for Community Development ÎMPREUNĂ, where she coordinates programmes aimed at raising access of Roma women to the labour market. Her fields of interest are: gender and access to the labour market, discrimination, continuous professional training and community studies.
- Activistă pentru drepturile femeilor rome. Absolventă a Facultății de Administrație Publică din cadrul Școlii Naționale de Studii Politice și Administrative (2006) și ulterior a Masteratului de *Gen și Politici Publice*, SNSPA (2009). Lucrează în prezent în cadrul Agenției de Dezvoltare Comunitară ÎMPREUNĂ unde coordonează programe destinate creșterii accesului femeilor rome pe piața muncii. Domeniile sale de interes și specializare sunt: gen și ocupare, discriminare, formare profesională continuă, studii comunitare.
- Aktivista andar e xakaja le romneqe. Agordisardäs e Fakulteta le Publikani Administracia andar i e Nacionala Škola andar e Politikane aj Administrative Stüdia (2006) aj palal kerdäs o Mastero Gender aj Publikane Politice, SNSPA (2009). Akana kerel buti k-i Agencia Jamavipnasqe Komunitara Khetanes kaj koordinisarel programura andar o baripen le akesosqe le romneqe p-i diz le butaqi. Laqe umala specializime si: gen aj okupacia, diskriminacia, kerdipen profesionalo savaxt, komunitare stüdia.

## ■ ■ ■ AUTHORS / AUTORI / E AUTORURA

### MIHAELA GHEORGHE

- Graduated social work at the University of Bucharest (2000) and attended a course in Human Rights at Columbia University (New York). She is currently completing an MA in Gender and European Institutions at the National School of Political Studies in Bucharest. Since 2000, she has been involved in various programs on education of Roma children, and actions to integrate Roma communities, covering different tasks, such as project coordinator, assistant, trainer, consultant, and expert. She worked also for major international institutions (such as the OSCE / ODIHR, European Commission, Soros Foundation) providing technical assistance on Roma integration. Thus, she acquired a good expertise at European level in areas such as human rights, discrimination, social inclusion, migration, and equal opportunities.
- Licențiată în asistență socială a Universității din București (2000) și a urmat un curs de drepturile omului la Columbia University (New York); este în curs de finalizare a masteratului în gen și instituții europene la Școala Națională de Științe Politice din București. Din 2000, a fost implicată în diverse programe privind educația copiilor romi, precum și acțiuni de integrare în comunități de romi, acoperind sarcini diferite, de la asistent la coordonator de proiect și de la consultant la trainer și expert. A fost de asemenea angajată de instituții internaționale importante (precum OSCE/ODIHR, Comisia Europeană, Fundația Soros) în furnizarea de asistență tehnică privind integrarea romilor, astfel că a dobândit o bună expertiză la nivel european în domenii precum drepturile omului, discriminare, incluziune socială, migrație, egalitate de șanse.
- Si la dipoloma pala Socialno Jutimos, Universiteta Bucuresti(2000) thaj sas pe jiekh kurso pala e manusheske ciacimata/zakonura kaj Universiteta Columbia (New York). Si po drom te getol o masterato pala fialo/geno thaj europake institutura ka e Themutni Shkola pala Politikane Sikimata andar Bucuresti. De andar 2000, sas kotor ande maj both programura pala e edukacia e romane shavorenge sar vi akcia karing e integracia e romane komunitetura, sas la butyia pe maj both thana katar asistento/ajutori ka coordonatori/sherudno pala projektura thaj katar konsultanto ka trainero thaj experto. Sas lini pe butyi/angajome katar bare but-themutne institutura(sar OSCE/ODIHR, Europaki komisia, Fundacia Soros) pala e tehniko asistenta/jutimos sar te kerelpe integracia pala e roma, kade ke si la lashi ekspertisa ka europako livelope butyia sar manusheske zakonura,diskriminacia socialno inkluzia,migracia, egaliteto vash e drama.

### h.arta

- A group of three women artists, Maria Crista, Anca Gyemant and Rodica Tache. We work together as h.arta group since 2001, when we founded h.arta space, a not-for-profit space in Timișoara. H.arta is sometimes a physical space, but many times its projects are taking different formats, changing contexts and locations. We are interested in topics ranging from knowledge production and (re) writing histories to gender issues in global capitalist times, all these in the context of working in various collaborations with persons and groups with different backgrounds.
- Un grup format din trei artiste, Maria Crista, Anca Gyemant și Rodica Tache. Lucrăm împreună din 2001, când am fondat spațiul h.arta, o galerie non comercială în Timișoara. H.arta este uneori un spațiu fizic, dar de multe ori proiectele h.arta au diferite formate, mutându-se în diferite contexte și locații. Suntem interesate de subiecte cum ar fi producerea cunoașterii, (re)scrierea istoriilor,

probleme de gen în condițiile capitalismului global, etc, toate acestea în contextul diferitelor colaborări cu persoane și grupuri din variate domenii.

- Jekh grūpo kerdo andar trin artiste, I Maria Crista, I Anța Gyemant aj I Rodica Tače. Keras buti khetanes andar o bers 2001, kana kerdem o spacio h.arta jekh galeria non komerciala and-e Timisoara. H.arta si butvar jekh fizikano spacio, tha' butvar e projekte le h.arta-qe si bisarane kerdimata, paruvindoj and-e bisarave kontexta aj thana. Amaro grūpo si kerdo amalimpnaca and-e jekh kontinua kaj negocias mashkar amende amare bisarima. Labaras amari amalipen sar jekh chand te sikavas khetanes sar te prinjaras e but nuance le situacione, sar jekh spacio cačo, sar jekh deklaracia politikani andar i zor le solidaripnaqe. Sem interesime andar e subiektura sar kerdipen le prinjarimata, palexramasoripen le istoriaqo, problemura gender and-o kapitalismo global, etk, savorre kadave and-e bisarane kolaboracia le manusenca aj grūpura andar bisarane umala.

### KINGA KALI

- Writer and anthropologist. Born in 1971, in Transylvania (Romania), in a Hungarian-Armenian family. Finished her literary and anthropological studies at Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj (Romania), and at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest (Hungary). Lives in Budapest since 1996. Publishes prose and anthropological studies since 1989, in various European literary reviews and volumes (mostly of Hungary and Romania). Her anthropological research field is the Transylvanian Armenian identity nowadays. Writes in Hungarian language.
- Scriitoare și antropolog. S-a născut în 1971, în Transilvania (România), într-o familie mixtă maghiaro-armeană. A absolvit studii de literatură și antropologie la Universitatea Babes-Bolyai, Cluj (România), și la Universitatea Eötvös Loránd, Budapesta (Ungaria). Locuiește la Budapesta din 1996. Publică proză și studii antropologice din 1989, în diverse reviste literare europene și volume (mai ales din Ungaria și România). Domeniul ei de cercetare în antropologie este identitatea armeană în Transilvania din zilele noastre. Scrie în limba maghiară.
- Biandili ando Tirgu Mures ando bersh 1971, julius 7 ramol/pisinil, antropologo; sikilias ando Cluj ande Universiteta Babes Bolyai ungriko literatura/shiba thja etnografia, ande Budapesta pe Universiteta Eötvös Loránd Etnologia ande Europa getosardeas po programo PhD. Ande lake antropologikane rodinata pa save ramosardas/pisindeas e mashkarudni buki pa savi ramol si e identiteta armena andre transilvania thaj ungro, pala kado ramosardeas vi peski teza po doctorato. De andar 1989 ramol/pisinil shukar proza, sikimata pala antropologia, intervivura, skurto pisimata/eseura, kritike ade e papirura pala literatura adar ungro thaj transilvania, ande antologia (Látó, Korunk, Magyar Lettre Internationale, Új Forrás, Echinox, Ethnographia, Körkép, stb.). Az ÖrményLátó, ando Tirgu Jiu pe shukar literatura 2008/4-to numeri sas akhardi pe tematika pala e armenura sar sherudni pe e ramomata. De andar 1996 trajil/jivil ande Budapesta, akana pisinil/ramol pe peski angluno nuvele lil.

## ■ ■ ■ AUTHORS / AUTORI / E AUTORURA

### CSILLA KÖNCZEI & ILEANA LĂCĂTUȘ

- Ileana Lăcătuș is author and non-professional artist, retired after working from the age of 12 in construction and sanitation. Csilla Kőnczei is lecturer at the Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, her research areas are dance, visual communication, gender and ethnic minorities, and cultural representation. She is the author of several books and videos, founding president of the Tranzit Foundation. (<http://www.neprajztanszek.ro/romana/cadre-didactice/membri-catedrei/konczei-csilla>). The lives of the two had accidentally crossed in 1997, after Ileana Lăcătuș became Csilla Kőnczei's Romani language professor. After few years, they began to work together on cultural and artistic projects. Between 1999 and 2001 they worked in Tranzit Foundation's projects such as Romanative & Co. (funded by OSI), and Transit Art in Situ (funded Euroart). They produced – Ileana Lăcătuș as actress and Csilla Kőnczei as video director / choreographer – BluEscape (Laurie Anderson's video-theater directed by Radu Afrim), Ilonka: Surprise, Surprise and Black & White (experimental theater and choreography with the participation of non-professional Roma artists). These productions have participated in festivals like Transit Days '99, Cluj, Romania (1999), "Alter-native 7, Tg. Mures, Romania (1999), "Altfest '99", Bistrita, Romania (1999), "University Theatre Festival" Lausanne, Switzerland (2000), "New Life, Alternative Theatre Festival", St. Petersburg, Russia (2000), "Mediawave", Győr, Hungary (2001) ([http://tranzithouse.ro/tranzit\\_dance-archive/home.html](http://tranzithouse.ro/tranzit_dance-archive/home.html)). They co-authored the book *Ilonka néni*, Ileana Lăcătuș's oral biography in three languages (Romani, Romanian, and Hungarian), published in 2002. (<Http://www.npage.org/IMG/pdf/IlonkaNeni.pdf>).
- Ileana Lăcătuș este autor și artist non-profesionist, pensionară după ce a lucrat de la vârsta de 12 ani în construcții și salubritate. Csilla Kőnczei este lector universitar la Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj, având cercetări în domeniul dansului, comunicării vizuale, minorităților etnice și de gen, reprezentare culturală. Autor al câtorva cărți și filme video, președintele fondator al Fundației Tranzit. (<http://www.neprajztanszek.ro/romana/cadre-didactice/membri-catedrei/konczei-csilla>). Viețile celor doi s-au încrucișat în anul 1997 în mod accidental, după ce Ileana Lăcătuș a devenit profesoara de limba romani a lui Csilla Kőnczei, iar după câțiva ani au început să lucreze împreună la proiecte cultural-artistice. Între 1999 și 2001 în cadrul proiectelor Romanative&Co (finanțat de OSI), și Tranz Art in Situ (finanțat de EuroArt) ale Fundației Tranzit au conlucrat la producerea unor piese ca BluEscape (teatru-video de Laurie Anderson regizat de Radu Afrim), Ilonka: surprize, surprize și Black & White (teatru și coreografie experimentală cu participarea unor artiști non-profesioniști romi), Ileana Lăcătuș în calitatea de actriță, iar Csilla Kőnczei ca și regizor video/coreograf. Cu aceste producții au participat la festivalurile "Zilele Tranzit '99", Cluj, România (1999), "Alter-Native 7", Tg. Mureș, România (1999), "Altfest '99", Bistrița, România (1999), "Festivalul de Teatru Universitar Laussane", Elveția (2000), "New Life, Festival de Teatru Alternativ", Sankt-Petersburg, Rusia (2000), "Mediawave", Győr, Ungaria (2001). ([http://tranzithouse.ro/tranzit\\_dance-archive/home.html](http://tranzithouse.ro/tranzit_dance-archive/home.html)). Sunt co-autori ai cărții *Ilonka néni*, biografia orală trilingvă, în limba romani, română și maghiară a lui Ileana Lăcătuș, publicată în 2002. (<http://www.npage.org/IMG/pdf/IlonkaNeni.pdf>).
- Ileana Lăcătuș si autoro/ pisinil lila thaj si vi artisto na profesionisto. Pala so kerdeas butyi katar 12 barsh pe vazdimos e kherango thaj ande salubriteta (grijolas/shilavelas ando foro), akana sar phuri si pokindi pala e buth bersha so kerdeas butyi. Kőnczei si lectoro kai universiteta Babes Bolyai, Cluj, voi kerdeas rodimata pala o khelipe, vizualno komunikacia, etniko minoriteta thaj fiolo, kulturalno reprezentacia. Maj kerdeas filmura, ramosardias vi lila, si sherudni mashkar kon vazdeas e Fundacia Tranzit (<http://www.neprajztanszek.ro/romana/cadre-didactice/membri-catedrei/konczei-csilla>). E duij manushnea maladile bi te kamen ando bersh 1997, kana e Iliana Lăcătuș aresli e sikiarni pe romani shib e Csilla Kőnczei-aki, pala vare

save bersh kerde vi butyi khetanes pe e artistiko-kulturalne projektura. Ando bersh 1999 thaj 2001 ande e projektura e Tranzit Funadaciake, Romananative&Co (pokindo katar o OSI), thaj Tranzit Art ando Situ (pokindo katar EuroArt), khetanes kerde o kotor BluEscape (teatro-video kerdo katar Laurie Anderson pe savo o regizoro sas o Radu Afrim), Ilonka: „surprise, surprise” thaj Black & White (teatro thai koreografia experimetalno ande savi khelde rom artistura na profesionistura). Ileana Lăcătuș sar aktrica, thaj Csilla Kőnczei sar regizoro video/ coreografo. Kadale filmonca so kerde sas akharde pe fesivalura: „ Zilele Tranzit '99”(E Gesa Tranzit 99),Cluj, Romania (1999), „Alter-Native 7”,Tg. Mureș, Romania (1999), „Altfel'99”, Bistrița, Romania (1999), “Festivalo Teatrosko Universitaro Laussane”, Elvecia/Shfajco (2000), “New Life, Festivalo Teatrosko Alternativo”, Sankt-Petersburg, Rusia (2000), “Mediawave”, Győr, Ungaria (2001). ([http://tranzitohouse.ro/tranzit\\_dance-archive/home.html](http://tranzitohouse.ro/tranzit_dance-archive/home.html)) Si duj jene-autorura ka o lil „Ilonka néni”, ashundi paramici pala lako trajojivoto ande trin shiba: rromani, gajjikani romunicko thaj ungrika, o lil sas ankalado ande 2002. (<http://www.npage.org/IMG/pdf/IlonkaNeni.pdf>)

## NOÉMI MAGYARI

- She holds a BA in Communication and Public Relations at the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj. She continued her studies at Masters level in the frame of the Gender and Equal Opportunities program at the same university. Currently, she is working as public relations expert for the Desire Foundation in the project “Equality through Difference. Roma Women’s Access on the Labor Market.”
- Licențiată în Comunicare și Relații Publice la Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj. Și-a continuat studiile la nivel masteral în cadrul programului Gen și oportunități egale al aceleiași universități. În prezent lucrează ca expert relații publice la Fundația Desire în cadrul proiectului “Egalitate prin diferență. Accesul femeilor romo pe piața muncii”.
- Laki diploma si pala komunikacia thaj Publikane Phanglimata kai Universiteta Babeș-Bolyai andar o Cluj. Sikilias maj dur ka o masterato ando program „Gen și oportunități egale”(fialo thaj jekhe fialonge oportunitetura) sa ka kadaja universiteta. Akana kerel butyi sar eksperto pala publikane phanglimata ka e Funfacia Desire ando projekto „ Jekhipen vash e diferencia. O dinimos e romane jiuvlengo po foro e butyiarimasko”.

## LETIȚIA MARK

- Founder of the Roma Women's Association “For Our Children” and also of “Roma Women's House” in Timișoara. She has been involved in several educational programs for Roma children, including in the local project for desegregation, as well as programs aimed at promoting women. She has a Bachelors' degree in classical languages and a Master's in gender studies, and she is currently pursuing her doctorate at Babes-Bolyai University. She is a member of International Roma Women's Network, has participated in the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001.
- Fondatoarea Asociației Femeilor Țigănci „Pentru Copiii Noștri” și a „Casei Femeilor Rome” din Timișoara, implicată în mai multe proiecte educaționale pentru copiii romi, inclusiv în proiectul local care își propune desegregarea școlară, precum și în programe

## ■ ■ ■ AUTHORS / AUTORI / E AUTORURA

dedicate pentru promovarea femeilor. Licențiată în limbi clasice, cu masterat în studii de gen, în prezent își continua studiile doctorale la Universitatea Babes-Bolyai. Membră a organizației International Roma Women's Network, participată la World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban 2001.

- E fondatoara le asociaqi le Rromenenge" Andar Amare Çhave" aj vi e " E Rromnenço kher" andar I Timisoara, kaj kerdas but projektura edukacionale andar e çhave, aj vi progràmurã andar e romnã. Kerdas e çhiba klasice, o mastero gender, aj akana kerel o doktorado k-i Universiteta Babes-Bolyai. Si membra le organiziciaqi International Roma Women's Network, participanta k-o World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban 2001.

### ELENA MIHALACHE

- She entered the Roma movement in 2005, when she began to work in Parudimos Association. She graduated from the West University of Timișoara and now attends a master program on advanced sociological research at the University of Bucharest. Currently, she is working for Romanian Social Development Fund as a consultant in Priority Interventions Program. Passionate about photography, she participated at numerous international competitions and photo exhibitions organized in the frame of various events. Elena Mihalache si po vazdimos e romengo de andar o bersh 2005 kana vazdeaspe sar aktivisto ande Asociacia Parudimos.
- A pășit în mișcarea romă în anul 2005, când a început să activeze în cadrul Asociației Parudimos. A absolvit asistența socială la Universitatea de Vest Timișoara, iar acum urmează cursurile masterului de cercetare sociologică avansată la Universitatea București. În prezent lucrează la Fondul Român de Dezvoltare Socială, ca și consultant pe Programul de Intervenții Prioritare. Pasionată de fotografie, a participat la numeroase concursuri internaționale de fotografie și la expoziții organizate în cadrul a diferite evenimente.
- Laki diploma si po Socialno Jutimos, katar e Universiteta Vest Timosoara, akana kerel o masterato po baro sociologiko rodimos pe Universiteta București. Akana kerel butyi po Romunicko Fondo andar Socialno Vazdimos, sar konsultanto po Programo andar Anglune Intervencie. Çiajiola but te kerel pilci/Kepura/fotovura, sas akhardini pe maj both konkursura thaj ekspozicie but-themutne pala fotovura.

### J. MAKI MOTAPANYANE

- Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at Thorneloe University. She researches in the areas of women's social movements, gender and development, and feminism in Africa. Making links between diverse local efforts and social movements around the world has also been a long time interest, one that prompted her participation in the international conference Viziune/ Misiune/ Actiune hosted by the Romanian Romani Women's Association (Asociatia Femeilor Tiganci 'Pentru Copiii Noștri') in Timisoara, Romania, January 25-28, 2001.
- Asistent universitar în Studii Feministe la Universitatea Thorneloe. Domeniul ei de cercetare este mișcările sociale ale femeilor, gen și dezvoltare, precum și feminismul în Africa. O preocupare continuă a ei este efectuarea unor conexiuni între eforturile locale și

variatele mișcări sociale la nivel mondial. Acest interes a impulsionat-o să participe la conferința internațională Viziune / Misiune / Acțiune găzduită de Asociația Femeilor Țigănci "Pentru Copiii Noștri din Timișoara, România, în data de 25-28 ianuarie 2001.

- Asistentă pe universitatea ando Sikiarimos pala o feminismo ka e universitatea Thorneloe. Laki rodimaski butyi si pala e socialno vazdimos e juvleango, barimos thaj fialo, sar vi o feminismo ande Africa. Lako gindo si te rodel phanglimata mashkar e lokalno butyi thaj socialno vazdimata Ka internationalno livello. Kado intereso lako andeasla pe internationalno conferencia Vizita (dikhipen)/ Akharipe/ Akcia (kerimos), so inkerdeaspe katar e Asociacia e Romane Juvleangji" Anda Amare Shave", Timisoara, Romania, ande 25-28 ianur 2001.

### ALINA POȘIRCĂ

- Has a BA in Communication and Journalism at the University of Bucharest; she worked in various media companies, NGOs and central institutions and has experienced working with intercultural groups and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. She has participated in many trainings and coordinated activities with youth involved in Youth in Action projects, both as project manager and as a participant of the courses on social inclusion, project management and non-formal education methods. Her desire is to become a trainer on personal development and to create impact and visibility, talking proud about her Roma origin and community.
- Licențiată în Comunicare și jurnalism la Universitatea din București; a lucrat in diverse companii mass-media, ONG-uri și instituții centrale și are experiență de lucru cu grupuri interculturale și tineri din medii dezavantajate. A participat la multe cursuri de formare și a coordonat activitățile cu tinerii implicați în proiecte Tineretul în Acțiune, atât ca manager de proiect, cât și ca participant la cursuri privind incluziunea socială, management de proiect și a metode de educație non-formale. Dorește să devină formator personal și să creeze impact și vizibilitate, vorbind cu mândrie despre originea ei și a comunității de romi.
- Laki diplom pal e faculteta si andar e Komunikacia thaj Jurnalismo kai Uninersiteta București; kerdeas butyi ande mai both kompanie pe media, ONG-ura thaj institucie centralne, si la exepriencia pe interkulturalne grupura thaj terne kaj si mai ciore. Sas pe mai but training-ura thaj sas sherudni aktivitetura temenca andar o projekto Youth in Action, vi sar sherudno thaj vi sar participant ka e kursura pala e socialno inkluzia, management/sar ingerelpe e projektura thaj na formalno metodura ande edukacia. Voi mangel te aresele sikiavni/trainer-a po personalno vazdimos thaj te dikhiolpe thaj te akhiarelpe e zor lake butyiake, te avel la vi mai bari losh pala lako romano rajmos thaj pala e romane komunitetura.

### EMMA ROPER EVANS

- Lived in Hungary 1989-2004, wrote several books about Budapest, translated Ágnes Hankiss novel Széphistoria for Readers International, for which she won a Füst Milán Literary Translation Award in 1996, Glimmer Train Open Fiction winner US in 2008. Currently writes stories for iPad. Lives and works in London. Has three magyar-angol children with whom she loves chatting to in Hungarian on the No. 3 bus from Crystal Palace to Oxford Circus.

## ■ ■ ■ AUTHORS / AUTORI / E AUTORURA

- A trăit în Ungaria între 1989-2004. A scris mai multe cărți despre Budapesta, a tradus romanul lui Ágnes Hankiss intitulat Széphistoria pentru Readers International, traducere pentru care a câștigat Premiul Füst Milán pentru traduceri literare în 1996, a câștigat Glimmer Train Open Fiction în SUA în 2008. În prezent scrie povestiri pentru iPad. Trăiește și lucrează la Londra. Are trei copii maghiari-englezi, îi face plăcere să discute cu ei în limba maghiară pe autobuzul nr. 3 în drum de la Crystal Palace la Oxford Circus.
- Trajsardea ando Ungro 1989-2004, pisindea/ramosradea maj buth lila pala Budapesta, tanslacia katar Ágnes Hankiss novele Széphistoria vash e Internationalno ginajtora , anda savo sar baxtyardi o premio Füst Milán, vash Translacia ande Literatura ande 1996, maj sas baxtyardi po Glimmer Train Open Fiction US ande 2008. Akana pisinil/ramol paramecia vash o iPad. Trajl thaj kerel butyi ande Londra. Si al trin chavore magyar- englezura savenca buth fajla te dumavel ando Ungro ando Nr. 3 Buso katar Crystal Palace ka Oxford Circus.

### MARIA SERBAN-TEMISAN

- Studied Journalism and Mass Communication at the American University in Bulgaria, in Blagoevgrad. At the moment she is doing a Sociology Master in Gender and Sexuality at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, which is part of the University of Amsterdam. She is currently doing research on stereotypes about Roma women in Romania and the women's narratives about their identity.
- A studiat Jurnalism și Comunicare la Universitatea Americană din Bulgaria, în Blagoevgrad. Acum, urmează un curs de masterat în Sociologie în tematica Gen și sexualitate la Școala de Științe Umaniste și Sociale, structură instituțională ce aparține de Universitatea din Amsterdam. În prezent cercetează stereotipurile despre femeii rome din România și narațiunile femeilor despre propria lor identitate.
- Sikilias Jurnalismo thaj Mass Komunikacia kai Universiteta Amerikanica, ande Bulgaria, ando Blagoevgrad. Akana sikiol Sociologia po Masterato „ Gender and Sexuality” kai „Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences”, savi si kotor andar e Universiteta Amsterdam. Akana voi kerel rodimata pala e stereotipura vash e Romane jiuvelea ande Romania thaj so phenen pala pengi identiteta.

### ENIKÓ VINCZE

- Professor at Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania and director of the Centre for Gender Studies. Her teaching and research interest is in the domain of socio-cultural anthropology and gender studies, in particular with topics like gender, nation and sexuality in identity politics; reproduction; social inequalities and marginalization; nationalism and feminism; intersectionality, ethnicity and gender; Roma women; rights and culture. She received many research grants, among them: Global Scholar at the Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, within the research topic „Culture of Rights/ Rights of Culture” (January-May 2009); *International Policy Fellowship*, Open Society Institute, grant for the policy research Roma

women's reproductive health (2005-2006); *Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship*, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Vienna, for the research project Social exclusion at the crossroads of ethnicity, gender and class. A view through Roma women's reproductive health (April-June 2006); Post-doctoral *Fulbright fellowship*, University of California, Los Angeles for the research project Understanding multiculturalism at American universities. The case of Chicano(a) Studies (August 1998 – June 1999).

- Profesor la Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj, România și director al Centrului pentru Studii de Gen. Predă și cercetează în domeniul antropologiei socio-culturale și studiilor de gen, în special teme precum genul, națiunea și sexualitatea în politica identitară; reproducere; inegalitățile sociale și marginalizarea; naționalism și feminism; intersecționalitate; etnicitate și gen; femeii rome; drepturile și cultura. Ea a obținut numeroase granturi de cercetare, printre care: Global Scholar la Institutul de Cercetare privind Femeile, Rutgers, Universitatea de Stat din New Jersey, New Brunswick, în cadrul temei de cercetare "Cultura Drepturilor / Drepturile Culturale" (ianuarie-mai 2009); International Policy Fellowship, Open Society Institute, bursă de cercetare a politicilor privind sănătatea reproducerii la femeile rome (2005-2006); Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Viena, pentru proiectul de cercetare Excluderea socială la răscrucea dintre etnicitate, gen și clasă prin prisma sănătății reproducerii la femeile rome (aprilie-iunie 2006); bursa post-doctorală Fulbright la Universitatea din California, Los Angeles, pentru proiectul de cercetare Înțelegerea multiculturalismului la universitățile americane. Cazul Studiilor Chicano(a) (august 1998 - iunie 1999).
- Professor and Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj, Romania and director of the Center for Gender Studies. She teaches and researches in the field of socio-cultural anthropology and gender studies, in particular issues such as gender, nation and sexuality in politics; reproduction; social inequalities and marginalization; nationalism and feminism; intersectionality; ethnicity and gender; Roma women; rights and culture. She has received numerous research grants, including: Global Scholar at the Center for Women's Studies, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, in the framework of the research project "Culture of Rights/ Rights of Culture" (January-May 2009) and International Policy Fellowship, Open Society Institute, research grant on the health of reproduction in Roma women (2005-2006); Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Vienna, for the project of research on social exclusion at the crossroads of ethnicity, gender and class through the prism of the health of reproduction in Roma women (April-June 2006); Post-doctoral Fulbright Fellowship, University of California, Los Angeles, for the project of research on understanding multiculturalism in American universities. The case of Chicano(a) Studies (August 1998 – June 1999).