

THE GYPSY DILEMMA: SOCIAL INCLUSION OR PRESERVATION OF THE CULTURAL IDENTITY?

Veronica Gaspar

Assoc. Prof., PhD, National University of Music, Bucharest

Abstract: We think that a cultural approach is an urgent need when analysing the severe discrepancy between Gypsies and the average Europeans. It can bring to light the hidden mechanisms of their so-called deviant social behaviour, to discover more than one profound contradiction in within the Gypsy culture itself and, last but not least, to better be acquainted with, and to understand a people who happen to be our neighbour. Music is playing a noticeable role in the understanding not just the Gypsies' cultural features but also the relationship between this lackland population and the people they interfere with. Indeed the perception on the Gypsies was and is still providing a lot of judgement errors and prejudices from the real society, and the official counterweight promoting a blind eye to the asocial and frequent illegal behaviour of the Gypsies, together with a naïve positive discrimination for the "political correctness" sake has no other effect than the deepening of the gap separating this people from the majority inhabitants.

Keywords: Diversity, prejudices, cultural peculiarities, history, music

Introduction The enlarged European Union is building its multi-cultural identity on a discourse preaching tolerance and respect for each culture. Nevertheless, we are recently perceiving a more and more evident contradiction between the level of declarations, recommendations etc. from the leaders of the European Union and the reality. The official discourses can no more replace the increasing need for a behavioural code meant for a normal life for the average European citizen. The harmonious chorus singing about "the celebration of diversity" is risking to be compromised by a "dissonance": a relative numerous people whose "traditions", "specific" etc. imply a behaviour, defined, at least, as intolerable for most of the Europeans: **the Gypsies**.

The first EU reaction (in the '90s) was to elude the problem and to throw out from dictionary the word "gypsy". For any infraction committed by Gypsies the blame was thrown on the country where they were coming from. As an example: when in 1990 a group of Romanian Gypsies ate the swans of a lake in Vienna, all the official statements, reports, media comments, discourses etc. expressing indignation targeted the Romanians. In vain the Romanians tried to get rid of this charge, at least because "in the Romanian food culture, swans are **not** eatable birds!" The Romanian protest was not heard, the reality was not seen and those that knew the truth did not speak about! When the Romanians pointed the finger on the Gypsies, the most current reproach accused them to be racists...

But in the new millennium, the increased conflict between Gypsies and the Western Europeans ends by raising violence, fascist discourses (sometimes even with the official support of some governmental leaders) etc. The hidden incompatibility turns to a major crisis

no more being easy to hide or avoid. Now, the self-declared tolerant Europe has to face seriously a ticklish problem and to find a solution for a tolerable cohabitation, other than ecstatic discourses. For a long-term delay, these politics of elusion or positive discrimination led with certainty to a compensatory reaction of rejection when not even worse against Gypsies.

I Identification of the problem and the problem of identification I. 1. Between fake and real persecution The recent collapse of the communist governments of Eastern Europe discloses a centennial conflict opposing Rroma to the indigenous population. The Gypsies, but not only them, are pretending that they are the target of ceaseless violent discrimination and that almost everywhere their fundamental civil rights are threatened. Some of these accusations are real, other, not entirely true and other, even false as for Rroma discrimination in education. In reality, everywhere the authorities were and are doing efforts to encourage the Rroma children' access to school, going until positive discrimination, *numerus clausus*, even forcing measures.

Everyone would prefer to deal with more educated Gypsies. Maybe the chosen measures were not the most appropriate, but the intention cannot be truthfully denied. In fact, in spite of the official encouragements the reluctance to let the Rroma children go to school comes from the Gypsies themselves. Such particular attitude relies upon a strong cultural custom which is worth to be known. The rejection of "the other" and the communicational distortions are reciprocal. A standpoint which obstinately distorts the truth, denies obvious facts instead to analyse the real reasons of the bad insertion of the Rroma in the society brings no gain neither for the average citizen nor for the Rroma community itself.

The authorities are responsible for this deficient social insertion because of their poor, when not inexistent, reaction against violence and expressions of hate either coming from or against the Rroma people. Therefore we think that a cultural approach might be helpful for a better social tuning. A cultural approach on behaviour and social interaction offers, at least, a superior understanding of the respective phenomena. It is great time to let the intellectuals try to solve this social distortion, because we have all seen the results of the "solutions" given by politicians ...

We must no more underestimate the importance of a thoroughgoing knowledge, which has to cover the gap between the two extremes: "*The Gypsies are all (at least, potentially) criminals*" and "*The Gypsies are not criminals but they are all unjustly discriminated*". The intellectual approach may go beyond the potential conflicts held by such delicate topics. Even if the superposition of opposite cultural voices seems disharmonic, there are always hidden layers wherefrom it might be possible to start a dialogue.

In the same time, the Gypsy problem points out a more general contradiction regarding the re-definition of culture in the contemporary open context. I agree with the opinion of Giovanni Sartori¹ (2000) that the multicultural parallelism is equally harmful for the inter-cultural dialogue as the extreme it tries to replace – the forced assimilation. The actual cultural definition is exclusively based on ethnical differences, deliberately ignoring the self-

¹Giovanni Sartori (2000): *Pluralismo, Multiculturalismo e Stranieri* (Rom. Tr. Geo Vasile), Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest 2007 p. 10 and following

improving aspect of the concept of “culture”. In the past, the emphasis was on aspiration, today – on diversity only. Culture is metonymically reduced just to its territorial reference. Besides an offending even out, such reductionism engenders incompatible cultural parallelisms and makes difficult any tentative to find a frame for commonly accepted rules. One of the ways to understand Gypsies seems to be music. In any case, the understanding of a people implies also to understand his forms of non-verbal spirituality. An investigation on the musical culture could be relevant for the concealed layer behind the visible cultural symbols. It reveals the gesture behind the image, the ritual behind the tradition.

We could consider the Gypsy minority as an embarrassing presence between myth and reality. They exerted a real influence on the Europeans, being in a same time despised and feared. In the European imaginary the Gypsy has a dual representation. On one hand, he is devilish, having all the attributes of the “other”: he is wicked, potentially criminal, thief and rapist. He steals children and mutilate them for becoming proficient beggars. He throws witchcrafts on crops, fountains and cattle. “If you are not obedient, the Gypsies will come to take you away” is told to many children. On the other, we find a Romantic image, presenting the Gypsy as the foremost symbol of the free man. He is proud, explosive and haughty. He loves horses, nature, life and love. He is mastering the Art of love and the Art of magic. He has a supernatural gift, that’s why he can predict the future and men’s destiny. He has a cruel end, because his magnificence is not understood by the menial regular world.

The Roma are a distinct minority, distinguished at least by Rrom blood and the Rromani, or Rromanes, language. In spite of a widespread tendency to reject the “*gadjo*” (non-Gypsy) influence, very few of them consent to declare their true ethnic origin and name, mostly because their denotation raised connotations of persecutions and derision. The real name of the ethnical group we are analyzing – *Tzigane (Zingara, Zigeuner, Țigani etc.)* – is generally avoided. They and are registered in the European Union as “Roma” people, by the extension of the name of a particular tribe (see below). In fact, the word “rom” in their language means “human being”.

This name stirred some grievances from the Romanians, because the phonetic similitude creates a false appearance of kinship between two nations with different ethnical and linguistic origins. However, the name remained established as “*Roma*”, yet admitting as a concession a slight written modification – the double *r*, though not always used. I shall use both forms – Gypsy and Rroma (for more general situations). Regarding the use of name from a Gypsy standpoint, it is normal that this ethnic group grasped the opportunity to change a disreputable name, linked to poverty, human misery and offenses. Still, the Romanian standpoint aiming to avoid the factitious association with another ethnic group, especially with a controversial one, was never taken into consideration.

I.2. Brief history The origin of the several million Rroma people, widespread all around the world, is quite controversial. For a long time they were supposed to come from Egypt. In Romania, one of the most met euphemistic appellative for “gypsy” was “*faraon*” = pharaoh. Even a village near the town Bacău is named “*Fărăoani*”. Their real origins began on the Indian subcontinent. No one knows for certain why, one thousand years ago², the original

² According to <http://www.galbeno.co.yu/musicschool/m-index.html> accessed in february 2008

Rroma began their great wandering from India to Europe, either the reason for leaving India, or the choice of Europe, which could hardly be considered as a hospitable realm. There have been several great migrations, or Diasporas, in the Rroma history in the last millennium raised from unknown reasons and carried on despite persecution and oppression met through the centuries. The most important great migration, known as the *Aresajipe*, occurred from southwest Asia into Europe in the 14th century.

The Rromani language of Indo-Aryan family is originating in the ancient Hindi. Yet it has no properly established writing³. Rromani is a rather unitary language though it has several spoken dialects. It seems to be divided in three sublanguages following the three important ethnical groups: the *Domari* of the Middle East and Eastern Europe (the *Dom*), the *Lomarvren* of Central Europe (the *Lom*), and the *Rromani* of Western Europe (the Rrom). These groups are subdivided in several tribes or nations (*natsiya*) defined by their occupations: *Kalderash*, *Machavaya*, *Lovari*, *Churari*, *Romanichal*, *Gitanoes (Calé)*, *Sinti*, *Rudari*, *Manush*, *Boyash*, *Ungaritzá*, *Luri*, *Bashaldé*, *Romungro*, *Xoraxai* ... Each tribe pretend to represent the “true Rroma”. Besides, not all tribes have the same definition about what “Rroma” exactly is. What may be considered by one group as “true-Rroma” may seem *gadjo* to another. Despite what these groups may believe, there are no proofs that one or other tribe is more qualified to call itself as being the “true” Rroma. This inter-tribal competition itself is eloquent for a nation not only without any settled data about its history, but also without a coherent common mythology of foundation.

During the centuries, the rejection modalities of Rroma were variable: Western Europe “chose” expulsion, Central Europe – the forced assimilation and Eastern Europe – the slavery. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire the Imperial Edicts of Maria Teresa (1768) and Joseph II (1782) banned nomadism and forced the Rroma to settle in villages under the name of „*Uj Magyar*” = „new Hungarians”, to attend school and church, to be enrolled in the army and to use Hungarian names and languages. The Gypsies had no permission to use their language, costumes, to sing their music or to practice their traditional callings.

In more recent time, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Gypsies, together with other nations were migrating toward America. Nowadays, since the fall of the Iron Curtain, we assist to another massive westward migration wave from the former communist countries. This time their effort to adapt to the new nation is less seen than 200 years ago.

During the Rroma European adventure, there have been many large-scale, state-sponsored persecutions, or pogroms throughout the European history. Their scouring through a settled Europe and their nomadic manners stirred up a violent, quasi-unanimous rejection, shared with the other landless nation: the Jews. The Nazi terror of World War II is responsible for the deaths of up to 1.5 million Rroma in the *Porrajmos* (Holocaust).

After the falling of the Iron Curtain, the Gypsies evolved in a contradictory manner: even if they began to circulate more, even if they began to use currently the modern technology, they became more conservative and the demarcation line between Rroma and *gadgilané* (the non-Rroma communities) grows to be more evident. The Europeans are blamed

³However, the codification of a constructed, standardized dialect is currently in progress through the work of the Linguistic Commission of the International Rromani Union.

for their tendency to reject *the other*. But it must be said that a similar attitude starts from the Roma people too. I insist on this, because we, the Europeans, are tempted to believe that rejection of otherness and racism are exclusively our sins.

II Social interferences II.1. Roma and Communism The Roma people seemed to be the “chosen people” for communists. First, they were almost all poor, but especially, they were untied to the vernacular tradition, which was deeply hostile to the communist doctrine. Besides, the Gypsies had been persecuted by the Nazi, thus corresponding to the profile of the “New Man”. Last but not least, the Roma could provide the ideal intermediary staff: being obedient to the chiefs that put Gypsies in a leading position and enough isolated from the rest of the citizens. In the first stage of the communist transformation the minorities and particularly the Roma were the preferred category for replacing the former leaders of the Romanian communities. Thus Gypsies got important leading roles in Army, Police, Political police, local or central Authority even if some of them were illiterate. They got permission to dwell free of charge, as well in emptied villages (replacing the deported Germans in the late ‘40s) as in the centre of the big cities (replacing the arrested or emigrated people). A positive discrimination, intensely observed, permitted to the Gypsies to attend schools and to get good jobs. In some regions there were built villages especially for them, in order to obtain both sedentarism and gratitude toward the new system. But the Roma quickly squandered the gifts. Very few of them resisted in leading positions, and in spite of advantages and promises, they continued to avoid school. Although a lot of Gypsies consented to dwell in cities, they never accepted the villages, no matter the comfort. Almost all the houses in the country side were devastated and abandoned. They were dwelling all together, jam-packed in a single house, while the other houses were ripped and sold by pieces. The impossibility to constraint most of them to settle down and to get a regular work has remained unchanged until the present time⁴.

In the late '80, The Romanians underwent a period of profound lack of basic goods. The Gypsies were the only stratum having access to almost everything – starting with meat and ending with medicines, not to mention cigarettes, coffee, perfumes – through a tolerate smuggling. Besides, during the late Communism, they were the only persons having a tacit permission to travel abroad and to procure the ware inexistent on the regular market. The only disagreement made by the communists to this ethnic group was the confiscation of the gold. It seems that it was here a huge mistake. No matter how many times the Gypsies have recuperated its pecuniary equivalent; the symbolic value of the gold was never compensated. Indeed, the necklace of golden coins plays in tribal hierarchies a capital role, which no money could buy.

During the communism the Romanian society retrieved its structural separation and underwent the avatars of the novel order with a double discourse: one, official and another for

⁴For instance, the new houses, with all modern facilities in Gura Văii, (Bacău county) especially built with European funds for the Gypsies victims of the flood in 2005, were devastated, demolished (wood and bricks sold) and, after a while, abandoned. Now the Gypsies from Gura Văii are living in tents, tilted-wagons or in Stone Age-like earth huts. The European Union financial managers have to deal with an important waste of money – expected consequence of the EU staff’s obstinacy to ignore the long local experience.

a separated personal life. The cultural consequence was the lack of a common value system and the social consequence – a disordered society without any real-admitted authority. In addition to that environment, we have to take into account also the equivoque status of the Gypsies, beneficiary of a semi-official encouragement to infraction and imposture. For instance, The Gypsies moved throughout Europe when and where they wanted even if no Romanian could be free to travel and the acquirement of an exit visa was quite a reward difficult to get. They did not need a passport of another identity document for. Another exception was the traffic with trade, otherwise impossible, or hard to procure, as (western brand) cigarettes, natural coffee and even medication. In Bucharest were some known centres where one could procure any lacking merchandise, with the benevolence when not complicity of the institutions of force. Anyone that lived during these times is aware how rigorous was the authorities' control on the society and how severely were punished any tentative to procure another goods than those intended for the population. Yet, thereat, the Gypsies benefitted from a unique tolerance.

After 1989, the “foreign” goods became generally accessible and one of the first right the Romanian got was the freedom of movement. Under these new circumstances, those privileges of the Gypsies began to shake. They began to direct their abilities to purchase any illegal merchandise or to procure a cheaper one. One cannot anymore to blame some hypothetical complicity with the new authorities, but during the 90s, the social control was poor and the power of any force establishments in the country was jeopardized. The major occupations of the Gypsies became the scrap metal trade, the flower shops and the smuggling with any merchandise cheaper than the official market price they could get. However, the Gypsies were no more single depositaries of needed goods, so, their ascendant on the population decreased. No surprise that any moral authority and potency to establish a civilized co-habitation has been lost. The evolution of the cultural dialogue between Gypsies and natives on the Romanian territories add a living argument to Sartori's theory concerning the failure of the dialogue in a multicultural society.

II.2. Rroma and Romania A pertinent analyse concerning the Gypsies' identity might start from their singular tendency of self-denial. According to the official data from the 2002 census count, the Rroma people in Romania counted 535.250. In reality, they are a least three times more numerous. But a large part of the Rroma denies their ethnical identity, pretending to be Romanians or Hungarians. This is one of the noteworthy features of the Gypsies' self-perception: the antagonistic contradiction (which can often be found even inside a same community) between the dreadfulness to be assimilated and clumsy attempts to hide the own ethnicity.

In the Romanian Principalities the Gypsies arrived at the end of the 14 century (Walachia – 1385, Moldova – 1400). We must here strongly precise that, in Romania, the Gypsies were never forced to become slaves as it was the case of the Africans in the USA. Some of them willingly accepted to be enslaved in order to get permission to settle down on the boyars' domains. Other became slaves because of the debts. They were supposed to give a part of the crop as rent or tribute for the land they settled in and we might also presume that only few of them succeeded to do this. The result was that numerous Gypsies became rather

soon slaves. They were “bound to land” sold or bought together with the land and not separately, like cattle, as in the USA. Nevertheless, in the Romanian Principalities there were tolerated communities of free Gypsies too. It is less probable to presume a generous gesture from the land-owners. More plausibly, the Gypsies paid the dwelling permission by their aptitudes for music or for animals’ healing. If they started by being used for the hardest farm works, they finally became in most of cases handicraftsmen or fiddlers. As fiddlers, they played an important role in the history of music, extended in almost all the Eastern Europe. Their role in the Romanian society is worth to be particularly discussed.

Around the middle of the 19th Century, Roma slavery was abolished everywhere in Europe. But even before, the Gypsies in the Romanian society had got an improved status, especially through the fiddlers. The big cultural reforms of the society of the time came together with the penetration of Western music style. Due to their versatility and mimetic gifts the Gypsies got a crucial role in the renewal of the social practice of the music. The “silk-gypsies” made rapidly the steps toward harmonization with the rest of society. At that time it could be seen the Gypsies’ most important social adaptation. Some documents of the police in Iasi, referring to 1812-1830 years are recording only a very small number of law-offences committed by Gypsies. In the 19th century the image of the Gypsy was reflected with sympathy in many literary or historical writings. In the big families of *lăutari* gradually began to appear professional musicians, acknowledged on national and European level, among which some eventually acceded to important social positions, like university presidents etc⁵.

II. 3. Are the Roma from Romania worse than the other? If so, why? I think that a correct explanation relies upon the multicultural structure of the traditional society in the Romanian territories. The musical layers are an eloquent illustration of a split society living in parallel, unmingled cultural world – peasants, Church and dominant class. A main important exception occurred in the 19th century, when the Western-style culture, including music, gathered most of the society. Just some remote villages and some remote Churches were keeping the ancestral tradition. But this relative defined structure was interrupted in the 20th Century by the two wars followed by the communist occupation, we described above. However, the splitter structure of the Romanian society is still persisting and hence the lack of unitary reaction and the subsequent lack of authority.

It is true that the Gypsies have fast taken advantage of this already mentioned lack of authority and of the legislative ambiguity that increased in the Romanian society after the Revolution. Heaving no fear from the Romanian authorities and being assimilated to Romanians by the official position in the Western countries, they developed a social behaviour free from any constraints. Whatever were the timid attempts to call them to order they are resorting to the claim for discrimination; and such reaction seems to be very efficient to bloke the personal responsibility for an offense. It is hard to appreciate what is worse: the lack of social discipline in Romania or the naivety of the Westerns, always intimidated by any possible accusation of discrimination.

⁵One of the most significant examples is the cellist Dimitrie Dinicu (1898-1964) professor and rector (1955-1959) of the highest Music University in Romania (Bucharest).

III Cultural identity and social behaviour Rroma culture is diverse, with many traditions and customs, almost all implying practical life. All tribes around the world have their own individual beliefs and tenets. In the absence of a universal culture, we can detect some common attributes: loyalty to family (extended to the clan); belief in *Del* (God) and *Beng* (the Devil), or belief in predestination. A rather adaptable code, *Rromaniya*, is establishing standards and norms, in varied degree from tribe to tribe. Most explanations for the salient loss of cultural memory incriminate the integration of many Rroma into “*gajikané*” (non-Rroma, or foreign cultures). This theory is embraced as well by Gypsies as by non-Gypsies. Nevertheless, the dilution of many Rromani cultural values and beliefs can also be explained by their own cultural behaviour.

The traditional activities performed by nomads, together with sedentary professions, facilitated the trade and its communicational, economic and cultural consequences. Along decades, some jobs disappeared (gold or silver-processing); other underwent modifications or substitutions (brushes making). Among the nomads' profession, the fiddlers, the wood-cutting, wood-processing and the bricks-making were the first to stimulate a sedentary life-style, while other, as bucket- and copper-making or second-hand clothes trade, were the most long-lasting jobs of the nomads. These mutations differed from country to country according to their structure and evolution.

The major criterion for classification is given by the traditional occupations that divide Gypsies in several rival tribes, each of them pretending to represent the true nation. Names of Rroma clans in Romania are usually Romanian occupational names: *Căldărari* (bucket-makers), *Lingurari* (spoon-makers), *Ursari* (Bear trainers), *Florari* (flower sellers), *Zlătari* (gold and silver handicraftsmen) etc. Their ability to train animals (bears and monkeys) and their special reputation to be gifted fortune-tellers fit them for a nomadic life in ambulant circuses, especially in Central and Western Europe. In some epochs, this was the only way to accept Gypsies in these countries. The above-mentioned, very undersized list aims at emphasising a dimension - more than practical - of the traditional calling in the Gypsies' culture. We can also remark that the Gypsies' reputation underwent some important mutation in time. In former times, the Gypsies were perceived mostly as a strange, pagan population exerting first and last fascination and fear. Today they are indiscriminately associated with offenses and bypassing of the law.

Nevertheless, Gypsies remain basically symbolised by their music beside any other associated label, be it witchcraft or delinquency. The Gypsy fiddlers played an important role in the dissemination of several musical cultures, penetrating and favouring the melting of the traditionally independent layers of the Romanian music⁶. Their innate musical adaptability made them representatives, leaders and spreaders for very different music styles: Turkish,

⁶ A more thorough account about Gypsies' role in the Romanian music can be found in: „National Minorities – Musical Minorities in the Past and Present Romanian Culture” in: *Communication, Context, Interdisciplinarity* – 3rd Edition, The Alpha Institute for Multicultural Studies ”Petru Maior” University Press, Târgu Mureș, 2014, pp. 127-131 and „Musical Culture of Minorities in the Romanian Music: Dynamics, Evolution, Role and Interaction in the Surrounding Areas” in: *Musical Romania and the Neighbouring Cultures; Eastern European Studies in Musicology* vol. II, Ed. Maciej Gołąb, PL Academic Research, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt, 2014, pp. 171-181

Greek and, starting from the 19th century, the Western European's. Gypsies provided musical services to all categories of listeners: Turkish music at the Court in official occasions, music in fashion for towns-people, traditional music for peasants in specific occasions etc. in pubs, inns, markets, boyars' manors etc. and they were indeed active promoters of the Western Music in the Romanian Principalities. On the other side, one cannot assume that such a musical ethnic group did not exert any influence on other. It is interesting to note that the countries where Gypsies were allowed to move freely have definite oriental influences in their folklore. An extended area, not strictly confined in geographical boundaries is characterized by chromatism and monody, unlike the average European musical style.

We must notice that, no matter how the Gypsies were unpopular (because their unpunished offenses against the law, their rowdy behaviour, or their peculiar appearance) their music was and still remains very well received, at least by the majority of the Romanians. Moreover, the musical style(s) invented or just spread by the Gypsies succeeded to deeply influence the musical style appreciated and required by the Romanians, as it can be seen in numerous private circumstances as weddings, feasts or street events. The price paid for the most striking Rroma musical feature, namely their amazing adaptability, was the loss of the own musical folklore. If the Eastern European (Romanian, Bulgarian etc.) folklore, even that that is no more used, is thoroughly kept in archives, the Gypsies' musical tradition is now destroyed and replaced with some occasional hybrid, surreptitiously slunk through its musical similarities. In the last decade, the low gentry in the Eastern Europe enjoyed a peculiar genre drained from the Arabian musical offals: the "*manele*". This music penetrates also because its melodic inflections have in some extent similarities with the Eastern musical folklore. The Gypsies are accused to create this genre, yet in fact, they are the principal victim. However, they are the principal propagation medium. Why? Because "the boyar is asking for", thereupon: "Play, fiddler"...

III.2. Specific customs The substratum of the refusal to let the children to be influenced by "the other" relies on a more complex tradition. I am not proposing to itemize the traditional customs that might influence the Rroma behaviour. I aim only at emphasising that underneath their apparent plainness these people are hiding a very rich imaginary, full of taboos and strictly observed rules. Their perception on the world is radically different. For instance, the edge between "mine" and "others" is different and much more marked than in the European thinking. They dwell together with their animals and also avoid eating them because one's animal is part of the family and the family has an identity, made by all its members that ought not to be diminished. They disapprove and punish the robbery (!). Of course, "to steal" means to steal from theirs. The *other* doesn't count. To take from the other is not only permitted, but also justified by the imperative to keep intact the goods of the family. From a huge patrimony of socio-cultural habits, I choose only the two dual concepts defining the relationship with the *Gadji*: outsiders– insiders and sedentary – nomad.

In Rroma community there is a strict demarcation between outsiders or insiders. The anti-Gypsies prejudices of the majority have also a counterweight: the Gypsies' prejudices against that they are calling "the Gadji". Each status presupposes rigorous ritual codes, alike to the separation between living people and deaths. One cannot be both: to be situated "in the

middle” is seen as peculiar and dangerous. The separation line between dead and living, sky and earth creatures is very precisely established.

The most conservative Gypsies avoid eating fowls, because the hens are neither sky-birds nor telluric creatures. The dead man is taken out from the house through the rear door or through the window, in order to establish a frontier between two different entities. “If one of ours takes *gadji*’s habits, he opens a door through which any of us might be harmed”. Therefore there are still communities wherein the Gypsies attending schools or having regular jobs are banished. As stated before, even if numerous Gypsies are hiding their ethnicity and feel ashamed by their own appellatives, as “Gypsy” or “Tzigan”, they still disapprove the attempts for a regular living style in more than one community.

III.3. The Granca Szomna case On 1st June 2007, a 17 years student Granca Szomna, Roma ethnic, from the village Frumoasa, Harghita County, Transylvania, hanged herself, because her parents forbade her to attend the school anymore. The young girl was a brilliant student of the Lyceum "Szekely Károl" in Miercurea Ciuc, thanks to the support of the priest and of the mayor of the village. One year before, she ran away from home and dwelled in a student hostel, because the parents’ opposition to her study. But in 2007 the parents grabbed the young girl and locked her in her room, in order to definitely hinder another attempt to go to school. Szomna’s mother declared firmly: “for us it is a big shame to let our grown daughter to go to school”. So, the young girl, powerless, hopeless or, who can tell, maybe broke between an ancestral custom and her aspiration for learning, committed suicide, leaving on the wall an ultimate message: “School is me”⁷. The case of Szomna is outstanding by its dramatic end. Such dramas are not frequent. But there were and still are several similar situations. We can find a lot of stories telling about the avatars underwent by those Gypsies wanting to learn from their family.

III.4. Contradictions and inconsequence

Starting from the 19th Century – short epoch of a maximal inter-relationship between Roma and natives, at least in the Romanian Countries – the galloping changes in geo-politics, legislation, customs and technology raised specific problems of adaptation, to which the Roma could no more respond. The Roma are actually living in a disconcerting psychological ambiguity. The narrow door reserved to the relation with the “other” did not prevent the loss of their traditions and values; on the contrary, it distorted the social interrelations and rose up a behavioural incompatibility the end of which is difficult to foresee. The “middle place between worlds”, strongly banished in the core of their culture seems to be a unshakable curse. Even in their defining calling – the music – they are situated “in the middle”, as turning-point between several musical genres and styles.

The basic elements their life was turning around, like some traditional gipsy professions, became out of fashion. In spite of an apparent practical adaptation, it seems that their psycho-social equilibrium couldn’t evolve as fast. Their fake privileges under Communism, followed by the post-Communism general disorder leaved deep marks in their

⁷The message of Szomna’s brought to attention the tragedy of the Roma children who would like to learn, but have hindrances to fulfil such dream. It led to a legislative initiative of the Romanian Government to create the “Granca Szomna” study grant, in order to help these children. Actually the “Granca Szomna” study grant was indeed created, but it was no more followed under the next governmental administration.

life-style, leading to the destruction of some of their most important ethical references. Traditional respected values as chastity, care for the own children, love for animals etc. underwent serious distortions.

In the real life situations, their particular perception of otherness was challenged by fast changing occurring in a environment lacking authority. In such conjuncture, the emotional instability and the afferent behavioural deviations of this people seem no more surprising. But we have to point out again, that the Gypsies get no gain from a policy preaching an excessive tolerance and insisting on invented racisms, actually a policy proved incapable to prevent a real intolerant menace. The only one unaffected Gypsy-feature remains nomadism, which only the traditional occupations and their subsequent prestige could reduce. The inappropriate privileges, concessions, positive discrimination etc., given by both the former communist authorities and the European Union, don't offer fitting compensations for.

One of the creation myths, found in Hungary, tells that Gypsies were primarily birds: hence the origin their longing for nomad life. It is a highly significant legend; on one hand, because it reflects a kinship with the Indian totemic bird, always present in the passing rituals and, on the other, because it offers a mythical vision on the nomadic life, considered as ideal, opposed to the sedentarism, viewed as a temporary punishment.

The Gypsies are a more complex ethnicity that they appear to be. It is hard to select just one defining cultural feature, especially keeping into account so many contradictions, to mention just, for instance, the big musical adaptability of a rather conservative population. The serious issue of a proper comprehension of the Gypsies is a must, equally for Gypsies and non-Gypsies. The gateway toward dialogue might seemingly be the music; the only domain accepted by both Gypsies and non-Gypsies. Recently, the music schools' curricula are permitting to young gifted Roma children to attend them, without those useless politics of positive discrimination that already proved to be detrimental, at least by the compensatory reaction of the society. Whatsoever ways toward a social conciliation must start at exposing (and not hiding under EU senseless formula) the real conflicts (if not downright a centennial abhorrence), in order to analyse and comprehend them.

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