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Editor's Note

The current *Annual of the Oral History Institute* (further *AOHI*) issue emerges out of two salient issues of contemporary European societies, both equally relevant for its future: the memory of the past and the problem of minorities, in this case the Roma. Societies with troubled pasts, amnesic for long time, have realized that, in order to live a present and envisage a future, need to come to term with the past. Thus, the world we live became (over)saturated with a very fashionable and seldom misunderstood concept: memory. It all started with Maurice Halbwachs's *Collective Memory* published posthumously in 1950[1] and it refined into complex notions such as public memory, cultural memory, communicative memory, popular memory, historical memory etc. In the 1980s, Jan and Aleida Assmann have launched with much success the concept of "cultural memory."[2] Since then, an explosion of memory studies has aroused which culminated in the creation of a new discipline "cultural studies." For Jan Assmann, cultural memory is "a kind of institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the

[1] Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950

[2] Almost simultaneously, Pierre Nora has published in 1984 the first volume of his *Lieux de Memoire*, with a focus on France.

sight of gesture, are stable and situation-transcendent."[3] On the other hand, "communicative memory is non-institutional; it is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission and interpretation; it is not cultivated by specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasion; it is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization; it lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations."[4] And there is direct connection Jan Assmann introduces between oral history and communicative memory which "includes those varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications. These varieties, which M. Halbwachs gathered and analyzed under the concept of collective memory, constitute the field of oral history. Everyday communication is characterized by a high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability and disorganization."[5] Therefore, the Assmanns have explicitly connected the written with cultural memory and the oral with communicative memory, the former being atemporal, the latter being limited in the span time of three to four interacting generations. This differentiation is supported by Jan Assmann's reading of Jan Vasina, one of the founders

[3] Jan Assmann, "Cultural and Communicative Memory," in Astrid Erll, Asgar Nunning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Study. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin, New York, 2008, p. 110.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 111.
[5] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, Collective Memory and Cultural Identity New German Critique, No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies (Spring - Summer, 1995), p. 126.

of oral history, who speaks about the fact that even in oral societies, the communicative memory is limited in time, while there are memory "specialists" who are in charge with creating, preserving and transmitting the memory, in what Jan Assmann considers to be cultural memory.[6]

However, Assmanns' concepts have been severely criticized among others by Peter Carrier and Kobi Kabalek in the collective work coordinated by Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson, who considered their approach inconsistent and proposed another concept, that of "transcultural memory," which is meant to replace the nation-centered concepts of cultural and communicative memory. Transcultural memory emphasizes "the subjectivity and transformation rather than memory as a tool of state politics."[7] Moreover, the work by Berthold Molden who has conducted oral history interviews in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in South America emphasized the hegemony of a dominant group in imposing its interpretation of reality. In the cases of Central and Eastern Europe there are "large communities of experience whose memory remain unarticulated and [...] ignored by the grand narrations of European history."[8]

This is the place where oral history can genuinely make a difference. Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes, in a

[6] Jan Vansina apud. Jan Assmann, *op. cit.*, p.112.

[7] Peter Carrier and Kobi Kabalek, "Cultural Memory and Transcultural Memory," in Lucy Bond, Jessica Rapson, *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory between and behind Borders*, De Gruyter, 2014, p. 39.

[8] Molden, Berthold, "Resistant Pasts versus Mnemonic Hegemony: On the Power Relations of Collective Memory," in Memory Studies, vol. 9 (2), 2016, p. 126.

collective volume edited in 2008, claim that "while there has been an extensive scholarship on oral history as a method and practice, too few people take it "out the house" and past the front door. [...] Recent scholarship on historical memory in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies has rarely engaged with oral history as a central practice in many societies where memory and history are inextricably entangled. [...] Very little published work examines how oral history, as an established form for actively making memories, both reflects and shapes collective or public memory."[9] However, since the beginnings of oral history, especially in European context, memory has been one of the most constant concerns for scholars. For example, Alessandro Portelli's works on the Italian working class touches systematically elements of collective memory, remembrance, and orality and group identities. One famous example is the story of Luigi Trastulli, a young steel worker in Terni, a small town in Italy, whose death was erroneously place by most of the interviewees in 1953 when a workers' strike took place instead of 1949 when it happened in the context of an anti-Nato meeting. Portelli's understanding of this misplacement is that for that specific community, 1953 was more meaningful than 1949, and it was needed to strengthen the identity of the working class fighting for their jobs.[10]

[9] Paula Hamilton, Linda Shopes (eds.), *Oral History and Public Memory*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2008, p. viii.

[10] Alessandro Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History, Sunny Press, 1991.

Moving to the second component of this AOHI issue, the minorities, the focus is on the Roma. Exoticized by the majority, Roma became, especially after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, a major problem to be solved. Most works dealing with Roma issues, in spite of their diversity, identify a problem and try to provide a solution or, at least, an explanation. However, many works deal with Roma in other countries than Romania, in spite of the fact that this county has the largest Roma population in Europe. Moreover, what lacks from almost all accounts about the Roma is the "Romani voices and Romani perspectives" as one of the well-known scholars - Roma himself - Ian Hancock claims.

The (in)visibility of the Roma in contemporary research makes possibly not only to connect these issues, i.e. memory and minorities, but to create a coherent research framework seminal for nurturing democratic societies. Such effort has been made by UnToRo[11] project as the articles in this AOHI issue, building on two previous journal issues, are contributions to the improving knowledge on the Roma people's ways of remembering the past which, in spite of the social marginalization, are not much different than their non-Roma majority in Romania. To give just one example, it is worth mentioning the nostalgia for the communist regime, wide spread in

[11] Between 2014 and 2017 the Oral History Institute in Cluj-Napoca implemented, in partnership with the University of Iceland, Reykjavik the project "Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma people in Romania" (UnToRo). It has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014,

nowadays Romania is a common *lieu de mémoire* not only for the Roma and non-Roma living in the country, but for Bosnian Roma as shown by the research done by the UnToRo team.

Thus papers in current AOHI issue build on a double significance of memory as personal recollection of the past and its public extension as oral history narrative shared by informants which turn in or contribute to local, national, European policies of memory. The first article is by Diana-Alexandra Nistor, *An Oral History of the Roma Communities between Rural and Urban Areas in Post Second World War Transylvania. Historiographical Landmarks*. The author analyses the master narrative about the Roma in Romania in general and particularly in Transylvania, published during the communist period until nowadays. She uses concepts such marginality and mobility to analyses the historiographical landmarks on the Roma communities' everyday life during the communist regime in terms of the space/ place they inhabited, their mobility and migration, their relationship with the local authorities/ the communist state. Nevertheless, Diana-Alexandra Nistor give also, place for the voice of Roma to speak for them about how they lived and remembered they lived in communist Romania.

Ionela Bogdan*'s* study "*Back then, everybody used to work! Empowering Roma women in Romania through work environment. An oral history research* offers a gendered perspective on work during communism in Romania. Her analysis is even more relevant given the marginal status Roma women have in society. Using an impressive amount of oral life-stories of women in different Roma communities, the author brings to the fore how they remember their lives

during the Communist era. In a political context in which work was one of the cornerstones for the building of the new communist society, and the criminalization of non-working in the state-owned companies, many Roma women had their first stable jobs.[12] In order to understand their perspective, the author underlines that one must take into consideration their experiences prior to the Communist period as well as the life quality they have in the present. Their interpretation also relies on comparisons with the male members of their community or with men and women outside of it. The fact that many Roma women used to be employed and nowadays benefit from a state pension has a vital importance to them, ensuring a decent livelihood and this is one of the main reasons why they still perceive the Communist period as "a golden era."

The article by Călin-Andrei Olariu, *Roma communities and gold requisitions in Socialist Romania. An Oral History Research* focuses on Roma narratives on state repression during the communist regime. The author considers that their accounts, largely neglected by the mainstream, represent invaluable sources for better understanding the Romanian communist past. During the communist period, different forms of state repression were constant in the everyday experiences of almost all Romanians.

The last chapter of the journal departs from the topic of minorities, but is extends the methodological and theoretical discussion on the place of oral history within the general academic disciplines. Oana Ometa brings on the

[12] The article focuses on these women, specifying however that many other Roma women continued to live in the traditional communities, with daily cores of housewives.

convergence between journalism and oral history which outlines the similarities between the two. The reason for this subject choice comes from the need to analyze why and how recently the press seems to resuscitate issues that exploit the field of history (portraits of witnesses from certain periods of time, who are attracting attention due to their stories, interviews with personalities on certain historical subjects etc.). Oana Ometa claims that many successful online publications from Romania address this kind of topics that often go viral indicating that they are well received by the readership. Moreover, she argues that oral history and specialized journalism (particularly public journalism) use the same research methods and techniques and, generally, present the same characteristics with respect to topic approach.

Concluding, one can say that this AOHI issue is an example on how grass-root research on memory, in its public extension through oral history interviews, and minorities – the Roma in this case – can offer much insight on the Romania's past. In fact, Roma's recollections of the communist experience are a fundamental contribution to a more complex history of this period in Romania.

Diana-Alexandra Nistor

An Oral History of the Roma Communities between Rural and Urban Areas in Post Second World War Transylvania. Historiographical Landmarks[1]

Abstract: A particular concept regarding the image of the Roma communities in communist Romania is that of marginality. Post-Second World War years are characterized by many changes the nomadic, seminomadic and sedentary Roma communities have encountered regarding mobility, dwelling conditions and lifestyle. The present essay aims at emphasizing the historiographical landmarks on the Roma communities' everyday life during the communist regime in terms of the space/ place they inhabited, their mobility and migration, their relationship with the local authorities/ the communist state, highlighting the most representative works in the master narrative regarding Roma in Romania (and specifically in Transylvania) published

[1] The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014, "Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma people in Romania"

during the communist period and after 1989 until nowadays.

Key words: historiography, Roma in Transylvania, oral history, center and periphery, acculturation, mobility and migration, Roma place or/ and space, marginality, otherness, segregation.

> Let me tell you a well-known joke in my village back then [during the 1930s-1940s]: 'A Gypsy: a musician', for Gypsies were only into singing and entertaining. So: 'A Gypsy: a musician, a Romanian: a thief, two Romanians: a gang of thieves. A Saxon: a workshop, two Saxons: a factory.' But believe me, regarding the Gypsy population, it was exactly like it said! Believe me, exactly like that.[2]

Valeria Ciurar, a Roma interviewee from Brădeni (Sibiu County) recalled her childhood in a former Saxon village in Transylvania. She had been talking for about three hours about her family histories and also about the Roma who were brought back and forth between "the inside" and "the outside" areas of the village. She understood and linked the "historical" facts with some noteworthy changes regarding the Roma community settled in the village at the time, such as: their dwelling

[2] Valeria Ciurar, interview by the author, audio file no. 1185, Oral History Institute Archives, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, further OHIA, Brădeni, Sibiu County, July 25, 2015.

conditions, occupations and customs, their relationships with their neighbors and authorities as well as some identity issues.

The oral history approach brings up some interesting accounts of Roma living conditions in Transylvania in *longue durée*: throughout the interwar period, the years of World War Two, the communist decades and the post-1989 years. Ordinary life stories enrich the history of *periphery-center-periphery* movements of Roma in terms of geographical approach, as much as in terms of cultural and intercultural approaches as long as "telling a story of a life may be one of the cores of culture, those fine webs of meaning that help organize our ways of life. These stories or personal narratives connect the inner world to the outer world."[3] The semi-structured interviews revealed unprocessed memories which, most often, emphasize feelings and thoughts about the mobility interviewees experienced at different times. Once in a Roma community, the oral historian reaches the heart of a collective memory and then different individual memories – here, memory is considered to be "an irrepressible reproduction of itself, of something or someone. Beyond its natural and functional selectivity, collective memory is an act of retention of memorable sequences from the past on the one hand, and on the other hand, an exercise or a way

[3] K. Plummer, "Documents of life," London: Sage, 2001 quoted in Anne Foley, *Trailers and tribulations: crime deviance and justice in Gypsy and traveller communities*, University of Cardiff, UMI Dissertation Publishing, 2010, p. 76.

of identity acknowledgement (ethnic, cultural and geographic identity)"[4].

Post-World War II years are characterized by many changes the nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary Roma communities have encountered regarding mobility, dwelling conditions and lifestyle. All these bring into question the post-war rural and urban areas, the center and the periphery in terms of the rise and sometimes decline of Roma mobility, but also the manner in which it was regulated and distributed in different areas by the existing political, social and economic structures of power during the communist regime. A particular concept regarding the image of the Roma communities in Romania and particularly in Transylvania is that of marginality – small Roma communities settled nearby villages and towns are frequently perceived as a given or as an *inheritance from the past*. Romanian master historical narrative makes few references to Roma population before 1989, most of them briefly referring to Roma once the historical discourse reached particular subjects such as: Gypsies as slaves in the Middle Ages, social and economic changes, demographic evolutions, the 1848 Revolution in the principalities, the abolition of slavery, the Second World War, the Holocaust, Antonescu's regime and the communist period. For the years preceding the communist era, there are two noteworthy studies which referred to the space/place the Roma communities inhabited in Transylvania. One of them belongs to historian George Potra and is entitled "Contribuțiuni la istoricul țiganilor din Romania" (first

[4] Doru Radosav, "De la locurile memoriei la memoria locurilor" in *Anuarul Insitutului de Istorie Orală*, No. XI, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, p. 14.

published in 1939) and the other one to the ethnographer and sociologist Ion Chelcea who published in 1944 "*Țiganii din România. Monografie etnografică*." The later one described the Roma settlements in Romania during the interwar period, pointing out the fact that Roma communities lived in a variety of settlements, and highlighting the way Roma related to other Roma communities and/ or to the majority among whom they lived (be it Romanians, Hungarians or Saxons):

> Gypsies are settled in this way: those from the villages, on the outskirts of the villages (or cities/ towns); the woodworkers [the Rudari] at the edge of the forest – but not very far from the village; the tent dwellers [the Cortorari] between villages and water meadows.[5]

Half a century later, sociologist Vasile Burtea agreed with Chelcea's statement considering that, in most situations, it corresponded to the reality he found on the field. Regarding the space/place the Roma communities inhabited in Romania during the interwar period and immediately after the end of the Second World War, sociologist Vasile Burtea added it was not just about "a general order" but about the few opportunities the Roma had to settle, the possibilities to exercise their professions and overall it was about the position of specific Roma

[5] Ion Chelcea quoted in Vasile Burtea, "Marginalizare istorică şi cooperare socială în cazul populaţiei de Rromi" in *Revista de cercetări sociale*, No. 3, 1996, p. 110.

communities within the social-economic fabric of the interwar Romanian society.[6]

Among the publications on Roma in Romania issued during the communist period, the second volume of the "*Romanian History Compendium"* published by the Academy of the Popular Republic of Romania in 1962 dedicated one and a half pages to the history of the Gypsies (the publication used the term "țigani") writing about their origin, their first documentary mention as Gypsy slaves ("țigani robi") in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, their number, habitation, rights and obligations during those times. Few years later, in 1969, the "*Romanian History. Compendium"* was published and mentioned Roma in the context of social classes and social categories, bringing into question Roma slaves in the Romanian principalities and their struggle for liberation in 1848. Another compendium entitled "*Romanian history in data"* (published in 1971) referred to Roma population when tackling the subject of 1848 Revolutionary Programs within the Romanian principalities (one of the requests being the emancipation of Gypsy slaves). Among its demonstration, the publication described the Antonescu's regime and the Holocaust in Romania, but made no mention of Roma Holocaust:

> Antonescu's dictatorship established a regime of harsh terror against democratic forces, especially against the communists. […] To the series of crimes committed

[6] Vasile Burtea, "Marginalizare istorică şi cooperare socială în cazul populaţiei de Rromi" in *Revista de cercetări sociale*, No. 3, 1996, p. 110.

> during the dictatorship, is added the organized pogrom from Iaşi, where over 2.000 people, mostly Jews have been murdered. Many other citizens, regardless of nationality, but especially Jews, were sent in labor camps, where they were subjected to physical extermination.[7]

Post-communist years imply a *historiographical boom* concerning the Roma population living in Romania. The democratization allowed the minorities in Romania to express and organize themselves in terms of culture, education and politics. Regarding Roma history research in post-communism, there are multiple studies covering Roma's past from the first documented record of their presence on the Romanian territory, up close to today's facts. However, despite the fact that historians, anthropologists and sociologists published a large number of works about Roma communities in Romania, most such communities do not have a "history of their own," documented by themselves. Roma's history in Romania consists of a limited number of publications which tackle their history during the twentieth century – studies very often stop with the end of World War II, namely with the Roma deportation to Transnistria, and do not address (or poorly address) the history of the Roma mobility and everyday life during communism. This absence from the Romanian historical narrative could have been determined by the fact that Roma communities are characterized by an

[7] ***, *Romanian History. Compendium*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucharest, 1969.

oral tradition, which did not generate written records about the past. Thus, in terms of historiography, there are few works written by Roma about the Roma, emphasizing the everyday life within Roma communities in Romania or specifically in Transylvania. Yet, over the past decade, an increasing interest is noticed within Roma researchers (most of them sociologists) who published numerous texts about the Roma communities' past. These works are usually addressing the manner in which the Roma remember their deportation to Transnistria[8], but also some other different subjects such as the history of the Rudari community which is the topic of the documentary film released in 2012, "A spoon's tale."[9] Recently, Romanian historiography was enriched by a significant number of works addressing Roma communities and their history such as compendiums and articles questioning aspects of material, cultural and spiritual needs of these communities. It also encompasses some analytical essays and articles of which some address the issue of space/ housing and the changes that occurred within the nomadic, semi-sedentary and sedentary Roma communities in post-war Romania.

[8] See for instance the following works of Adrian Nicolae Furtună, Romanian Roma sociologist: "Roma culture between 'cardboard boats' and reality," Dykhtal Publishing House, Popeşti-Leordeni, 2016 (it brings forward a social representation of the Roma Holocaust, analyzing the experience of deportation using recorded interviews with survivors, and also bringing to question the "cardboard boat" myth) and "Why Don't They Cry? The Roma Holocaust and Their True Story," Centrul de Cercetări Culturale și Sociale "Romane Rodimata," Bucuresti, 2012.

[9] A documentary film released in 2012 by the Cultural and Social Research Center "Romane Rodimata," producer: Adrian Nicolae Furtună.

Out of these works, one of the most documented and representative is "*The Roma in Romanian history*" written by the Romanian historian Viorel Achim, who dedicates a chapter to the communist period. Regarding this period, the author stated that:

> Roma lifestyle was strongly influenced by the economic and social changes which occurred in Romania under communism: the stabilization of the economy, the processes of industrialization and urbanization, the collectivization of agriculture and its influence on villages, the social homogeneity, the changes within the rural and urban areas (especially the transformations concerning the occupations).[10]

Regarding the ideological program of the Communist Party beginning with 1946 in Romania, Emmanuelle Pons's book *"Ţiganii din România. O minoritate în tranziţie"* describes the policies meant to systematize the territory, to homogenize the Romanian society and include the Roma in "the structure of communist production."[11] Another chronological overview on the Roma communities' history in Romania is tackled by Angus Fraser in his work entitled *"Gypsies"* which

[10] Viorel Achim, *Ţiganii în istoria României*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1998, p. 155.

[11] Emmanuelle Pons, *Ţiganii din România. O minoritate în tranziţie*, Editura Compania, Bucureşti, 1999.

offers several considerations on the Communist Party's decisions related to Roma population:

> "Romania proved resistance against the status of the Roma as an ethnic group and a national minority. The Communist government continued the policy of forced sedentarisation and dispersal of nomadic Roma, and by the early 1970s refused to acknowledge their existence."[12]

Phenomena of acculturation, integration and assimilation are considered to have been results of the multiple changes imposed to Roma communities by the communist regime. In the context of the sedentarisation of Roma in settlements, different cultural identities (encompassing values, social practices and traditions) met, clashed and influenced one another. Above-mentioned historian Viorel Achim addressed the so-called *cultural and ethnic assimilation policies* applied to Roma during the communist years in Romania, stating that the communist authorities wanted the Roma "civilized" by giving up their cultural heritage, by "becoming Romanians or Hungarians." It is interesting to observe this cultural and ethnic assimilation among the Roma communities living in Saxon, Hungarian or Romanian villages in Transylvania in the aftermath of the Second World War.

In terms of terminology, both "mobility" and "migration" can be used in order to define the movements Roma communities, families or individuals underwent in

[12] Angus Fraser, *Ţiganii*, Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1998, pp. 298-299.

this region (their seasonal or permanent movement). "The simplest definition of mobility is a movement in space over time. Thus, mobility is intrinsically linked to these two dimensions and that, even more, the mutations that affect the space-time relation would result in corresponding changes in the relation to mobility, and vice versa. Mobility, space and time are thus interdependent notions."[13] Despite the blurry distinction between the terms "migration" and "mobility," research regarding Roma in Transylvania could and should employ both in the following contexts: "mobility" when referring to Roma movements without a specific aim of settling in a certain place, while, on the other hand, the history of Roma movements during the communist regime in Romania includes as well their "migration" towards a certain place where they have planned to settle and carry on their lives.[14] During the late 1970s and early 1980s most Roma were fixed (sedentarised) in settlements and houses. Cătălin Zamfir and Marian Preda emphasized in their work[15] that even if Roma had given up their nomadic lifestyle, they did not necessarily remove all forms of mobility and continued to practice the so-called *semi-nomadism*. Together with the

[13] Christophe Mincke, "From mobility to its ideology. When mobility becomes an imperative" in Marcel Endres, Katharina Manderscheid and Christophe Mincke, *The Mobilities Paradigm. Discourses and ideologies*, Routledge, London, 2016, p. 13.

[14] According to the interviews recorded with Roma in Transylvania, the reasons for the planned migration could have been either economic (such as many Gabori families did) or related to different opportunities (such as the Roma families who received former Saxon houses in the centers of Transylvanian villages or cities).

[15] Cătălin Zamfir, Marian Preda, *Romii în România*, Editura Expert, Bucureşti, 2002.

sedentarisation of large nomadic Roma communities, territorial mobility had assumed new forms. Thus, according to the authors, during the communist regime, Roma territorial mobility took three forms: *the seasonal migration* (when Roma were employed as seasonal workers in agriculture – in State Agricultural Enterprises, the IAS state farms); *the permanent migration* (large numbers of jobs were created in urban areas fact which led to a high level of rural-urban migration, and at the same time caused a rural-rural migration); and *the nomadism* which persisted among the semi-nomadic communities. In this vein, the oral history interviews reveal multiple testimonies emphasizing ways in which a new type of Roma community, a semi-nomadic one, emerged under the communist rule. Moreover, respondents were able to express their feelings regarding the sedentarisation policy – in this case, one could easily notice the link between the *space Roma dwelled* and the *community itself.*

In analyzing the changes Roma communities have encountered under the communist regime in Transylvania in terms of space/ habitation, a series of factors need to be observed: dwelling conditions, relations inside the community (relations with the authorities, other ethnicities or Roma communities), economic dynamics, traditions and customs, occupations, lifestyle, mobility and migration etc. Regarding Roma habitation, research should take into account *the place* inhabited by Roma communities (as a static location, analyzed from a geographical point of view) as well as *the space* in which Roma live (as a dynamic socially constructed location). In order to describe these two notions, Casey E. S. states in "Body, Self and Landscape: A Geophilosophical Inquiry into the Place-

World" that space and place are "two different orders of reality" between which no simple or direct comparisons are possible. In Hazel Easthope's interpretation, space "is the name for that most encompassing reality that allows for things to be located within it; and it serves in this locational capacity whether it is conceived as absolute or relative in its own nature"[16]. On the other hand, Christophe Mincke noted in his work that space is a dimension that structures reality and:

> Spatiality is the result of a spatializing process. Regardless of the reality to which this spatialization applies, it leads to spaces being created. This is why we see as spaces all the results of social spatialization processes, whether they apply to material reality or not. Space is not considered to be a dimension solely of the physical world. Social, conceptual, religious, family and relational spaces are just as much spaces as their geographical counterpart.[17]

In this connection, there are multiple spaces: a Roma space (be it peripheral or central) which clashes with other existing nearby spaces, as far as "social spaces interpenetrate one another and/ or superimpose themselves upon one another"[18]. This is in fact a natural way of exchanging knowledge, customs, language, values etc. – it

[16] Hazel Easthope, "A Place Called Home" in *Housing, Theory and Society*, vol. 21, No. 3, Routledge, 2004, p. 129.
[17] Christophe Mincke, "From mobility to its ideology…, p. 13.
[18] Christophe Mincke, "From mobility to its ideology…, p. 86.

could be seen as a mutual understanding on territoriality, an impersonal negotiated cohabitation of the living space of a larger territory such as a village or a city. Several examples could be given in regard to the territory of Transylvania where multiculturalism was and still is one of its defining attributes. Regarding the communist era, despite all efforts the communist leadership and the local communist authorities have made in order to homogenize the Romanian society, Roma communities managed to survive and sometimes to preserve their *spaces*. However, a valid question remains whether the Romanian communist state managed to create "*a space of its own"*[19] – Henri Lefebvre stated that the creation of space is in fact "a social transformation with a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language. […] 'Change life! Change society!' These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space."*[20]* Indeed, the Communist Party pursued the creation of *a new man* who, in this understanding, must have lived in *a newly created space.* The following chapters will approach the spaces assigned to Roma by the communist regime in Romania, emphasizing the changes these communities have had to encounter in terms of space due to *the creation of space policies* implemented locally. It is interesting to observe the mechanisms through which the communist state, by means of diverse policies applied at the local level by the local authorities, related to different Roma communities with the aim of *reducing contradictions*[21] and "Romanianize" Roma at a large scale

[19] Henri Lefebvre, *The production…,* p. 54.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 54, 59.

[21] "The state and political power seek to become, and indeed succeed in becoming reducers of contradictions. In this sense, reduction and

in order to create the *communist new man*. According to Peter Vermeersch, Roma in communist Romania (regardless of their dwelling space) represented an ethnic minority which "was not simply a group of people differing from the rest of society in terms of language and tradition, but rather the result of a process in which such differences were perceived as socially and politically meaningful."[22]

In terms of living space and mobility of the Roma, the communist regime implemented on the one hand several policies which targeting precisely Roma communities, or, on the other hand, applied policies which have indirectly targeted the Roma communities alongside other citizens. The sedentarisation policy addressed Roma nomadic communities who were to be settled in well-defined (by the state) space of living – it was an abrupt change that shook the "stability" and the living tradition of these communities. Regarding this policy, one could perceive its implications as "forms without root/ content."[23]

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reductionism appear as tools in the service of the state and of power: not as ideologists but as established knowledge," Henri Lefebvre, *The production …,* p. 106.

[22] Peter Vermeersch, *Roma Identity and Ethnic Mobilization in Central European Politics*, Paper prepared for the workshop on identity politics, ECPR joint sessions, Grenoble, 6-11 April 2001, available at: https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/bc37f19f-a31e-4c91-b155-d382d1bd2043.pdf, accessed in November 2015.

[23] The theory of the "forms without a content" was introduced by the Romanian literary critic and politician Titu Maiorescu in the 19th century: he published the essay "Against nowadays direction in Romanian culture" in which he criticized the implementation of some institutions similar with the Western ones, which, he demonstrated, did not correspond to the Romanian context at the time.

In this case, the communist state was applying them, acknowledging the devastating impact[24] the communities would have had to undergo, aiming at assimilation, uniformization but mostly at the establishment of the state control on mobility and migration.

As previously mentioned, a particular concept regarding the image of Roma communities in Romania is that of marginality. Although strengthened by many exceptions, the rule of being located on the outskirts of settlements is a well-known fact. During the communist period, most Roma were settled outside the villages and towns, in small communities, characterized by poverty. M.P. Levinson and A.C. Sparkes in "Gypsy identity and orientations to space" show that the "*creation of a 'home-space'* within such marginal areas is perceived as 'a method of cultural survival and resistance for the marginal group and a space of direct cultural subversion by the dominant group.'"[25] This statement could be analyzed from two angles: this *created home-space* could have indeed represented a way of keeping the identity of the community untouched, therefore a form of cultural resistance. But one must consider as well the broader context, namely the existence of *other social spaces* very distinct from the Roma ones, between which *formal boundaries* were imposed. In this sense, Peggy Levitt and Nadya B. Jaworsky stated that "humans continually create and recreate *boundaries*, moving, trading, and communicating

[24] The oral history interviews and the archival documents show different reactions Roma nomadic communities had towards the sedentarisation policy.

[25] Martin P. Levinson, Andrew C. Sparkes, "Gypsy Identity and Orientations to Space," Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 2004.

across them, thereby making fluidity and change a part of all human social formations and processes."[26] *The creation of home-spaces* within Roma communities in Transylvania can be understood in different ways as Hazel Easthope describes the concept of home: "homes are 'places' that hold considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and for groups."[27] For example, Roma nomadic communities considered their tents as being home-spaces no matter their actual location, but always in places with "kind people who agreed their presence."[28]

Sociologist Vasile Burtea in "Rromii în sincronia şi diacronia populaţiilor de contact" considered that during the communist period, the enlargement and modernization of the cities in Romania drew Roma settlements towards the center. This phenomenon usually happened among *Vătraşi Roma* (settled Roma), who moved towards the center, while the settlements at the periphery were frequently occupied by other Roma communities, frequently by former nomadic communities. Regarding

[26] Peggy Levitt, B. Nadya Jaworsky, "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2007, p. 146.

[27] Hazel Easthope, "A Place Called Home" in *Housing, Theory and Society*, vol. 21, No. 3, Routledge, 2004.

[28] This is why, according to the oral history interviews within Roma former nomadic communities, a nomadic group (Șatra) from Transylvania would not travel and camp in Southern or Eastern Romania – however, they remembered Southern nomadic communities coming to Transylvania, as in the case of Cioabă family who came from Gorj County (placed in Oltenia – the southern part of Romania) and to whom most Cortorari Roma referred as: "they are from the South, they are not from our neamo."

Roma communities living in Transylvania after World War II, most of them were indeed located at the periphery of villages and cities, but for instance, for former nomadic Roma who were settled there by the communist authorities, the assigned place was their sole option. Recently sedentarised Cortorari Roma communities in Transylvania managed to preserve and transfer their tradition to the following generations as "a method of cultural survival and resistance"[29] against other Roma communities and, implicitly, against other ethnicities. Many of the Cortorari interviewees mentioned they felt offended when mingled with other Roma/Gypsy, as a unique, internationally recognized identity. This is why they have developed a strong self-identity discourse meant to set them apart from other Roma communities. They had never felt insulted when called Gypsies, but they considered the above-mentioned distinction very important. If the traditional costume clearly sets them apart from *the others* (the traditional costume is visible and easily perceived by the non-Roma and other Roma communities), their profession or everyday life are reasons for which Cortorari consider themselves Gypsies, but "different from the others."[30] Otherness is essential in terms of values transfer from one generation to another one and it is incorporated in the clotting of identity, always relating to "tradition" and the "laws" performed in everyday practices.[31]

[29] Peggy Levitt, B. Nadya Jaworsky, *Cit.*

[30] Maria Căldărar, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1084, OHIA, Cincu, Braşov County, June 3, 2015.

[31] Diana-Alexandra Nistor, "Postponed identities. Generations of Cortorari Gypsies in post-war Transylvania – wrinkled traditions and attempts towards 'modernization'," in *Anuarul de Istorie Orală*, No.

> "Hungarian Gypsies, silk Gypsies, Gypsies with houses[32], they are, how to say, they dress like Romanians yes, but they are Gypsies [...] who didn't have and have no roots… That's why, as I said before, we do not marry off our girls to no one else than our nation, a noble good nation ... Anybody who comes from a poor lineage, they definitely cannot take care of a household! The one who has no blood to do it, cannot do it!"[33]

A different example would bring us to the Gabori community living in Transylvania, an already settled community at the moment of the establishment of the communist regime in Romania. In their situation, living in a compact community was and still is a very important issue which, as they testify, makes it easier to maintain and forward values and traditions to young Gabori generations. Most of the Gabori interviewees claimed a sense of belonging to a certain space inhabited mainly or entirely by Gabori – villages such as Crăciuneşti or Budiu Mic in

XVI, Editura Argonaut, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, p. 61-62.

[32] The collocations used to define other "nations" ("naţii") of Gypsies are well-known among Cortorari. They use them to refer to Gypsies who live in Transylvania and speak Hungarian (Hungarian Gypsies – ţigani ungureşti) and Sedentary Gypsies (Gypsies with houses - ţigani de casă) – they are "other kind of Gypsies," very different from the Cortorari in many ways, being underestimated and considered of "bad/ weak kin? (neamo)."

[33] Victor Căldărar, interview by the author, audio file, no. 1075, OHIA, Merghindeal, Sibiu County, May 20, 2015.

Mureş county are vivid examples in this case. The interviewees narrated the way in which Gabori families have moved over the years in Crăciuneşti, bought former Hungarian houses in order to create a so-called "Gabori capital village,"[34] as a compact center where Gabori families belonging to the same "nation" would live together, i.e. the above-mentioned "home-space" M.P. Levinson and A.C. Sparkes discussed about in their research.

> My parents and grandparents were born here, they lived here. Many Gypsies [Gabori] lived here, but my father moved his business in Braşov, where he managed to earn more money. And we lived there for about 20 to 25 years. Then my father said: 'That's it! My children have grown, it's time to go home!' When I came here, in Crăciuneşti, 35 years ago, I didn't know Hungarian at all. Now I'm fluent without learning it at school. I can't write or read, but I speak it fluently! [...] My wife is also from Crăciuneşti, and they also moved at some point, but in Timişoara. After about 30 years, they have as well returned home, for her parents had a house here. Almost everyone has returned *home* so far. Most Gypsies [Gabori] live now in Crăciuneşti. […] The biggest houses in Crăciuneşti are

[34] Stefan Burcea, interview by the author and Ionela Bogdan, video file no. 1138, OHIA, Crăciuneşti, Mureş County, July 2, 2015.

> now Gabori houses. If a house would have worth 50.000 lei at that time, we would give the owner 100.000 lei! So, the Hungarians thought: 'With this amount of money I can afford two houses in the city!' So, they sold their properties and went in Tg. Mureş [...] I wanted to buy a house here because our nation [Gabori] was living in Crăciuneşti! I could have bought two houses in the city with the money I paid for this one. Yes, but I wouldn't have had relatives nearby. We are used to go to one another, to meet and talk, we visit one another every Saturday after church[35] and every afternoon.[36]

Other Roma communities continued to live in marginal areas because they did not have the opportunity to overcome their social status and, as they testified during the interviews, because they were many times segregated by the "dominant group," be it Romanian or Hungarian inhabitants of the village/ city. Gypsy neighborhoods[37] were and in some situations still are situated at the outskirts of villages and cities – they are called "țigănii" and they were/ are inhabited almost entirely by Roma. The Roma communities interviewed in Transylvania remembered the communist years and recalled the "țigănii" as being placed at the peripheries, but in permanent contact with the center

[35] Most Gabori in Crăciuneşti are Adventists.

[36] Stefan Burcea, *interview*…

[37] I chose to use the collocation *Gypsy neighborhood* as far as the Romanian term *țigănie* is derived from Gypsy (țigan) and in Romanian has a pejorative meaning.

(most Roma were working for the Romanians and Hungarians in the village). Sometimes, these Roma neighborhoods were separated from the Romanian settlement by natural borders: rivers, hills or ravines. For instance, Roma neighborhood in Șoard, Mureș County, is bordered by a small river:

> This is *țigănia* [Roma neighborhood]. It's inhabited only by Roma. Only Roma people. Ever since I was born, this region was inhabited by the Roma community ["țigani de casă," Vătrași – Roma with houses, settled Roma], Romanians are living beyond this bridge over this river. From there onwards, Romanians, only Romanians! I mean, Romanians and Hungarians as well, but no Roma.[38]

An issue raised within the Romanian post-1989 historiography is the segregation of Roma communities, both geographically and socially. In this respect, Viorel Mionel analyses, in the research entitled "Romania's urban ghettos. Marginalization, poverty and stigma" the space and place occupied by Roma communities in post-1989 Romania. Reflecting on the concepts of ghetto and segregation, he states that ethnicity, race and religion together with education, income level and sexual minorities are actually part of "a general process of social segregation," as these categories define the Roma

[38] Dilo Rupi, interview by the author, audio file no. 1071, (OHIA), Șoard, Mureș County, April 25, 2015.

communities as different. In this understanding, an example of a geographical, spatial and social segregation is given by sociologist Călin Goina who emphasizes in his research the everyday life in Sântana, a Transylvanian village in Arad County, during the communist years:

> I remember my childhood in Sântana, during 1970s-1980s: I would have never stepped in the Roma neighborhood. It simply did not exist for the majority of non-Roma in the village. Also, although most of the villagers worked in the city of Arad and commuted everyday by train, they journeyed into relatively homogeneous groups: 'Gypsies' had their own wagons, Romanians theirs and the Saxons were travelling in compact groups. Thus, even though all commuted to Arad, and all played cards on the journey, they did it separately, in different languages.[39]

Sociologist Viorel Mionel highlights the difference between two different urban realities: the ethnic enclave and the ghetto. The first one serves as a cultural assimilation bridge, while the second one acts as a material and spatial separation oriented in the sense of isolation. The

[39] Călin Goina, "O încercare de istorie socială: romii din Sântana, județul Arad" in Kiss Tamas, Foszto Laszlo, Fleck Gabor (eds.), *Incluziune și excluziune: studii de caz asupra comunităților de romi din România*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Institutului Pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale și Editura Kriterion, 2009, pp. 145-170.

author makes a description of the slums and the ghettos, defying some very different Roma communities living in Romania after 1989 such as the ones in Baia Mare, Pata Rât (Cluj-Napoca) or Miercurea Ciuc, all in Transylvania:

> Slum sites are informal settlements which involve lack of ownership, makeshift housing, lack of basic utilities, garbage abundance, lack of roads, major health and social risks. In short, slums are the fruits of the most bitter poverty. On the other side, besides the appearance of makeshift settlements, poverty and slum-sized specific violence, ghettos imply an ethnic homogeneity and an internal cohesion of the community.[40]

According to the same author, the policies of Roma relocation practiced in post-1989 Romania were actually policies of marginalization, with immediate consequences as they were strengthening an ethnic segregation, a social and spatial marginalization, finally leading to ghettoization. Regarding the communist era and the policies implemented by the communist state towards Roma population, the author observed that besides the sedentarisation policy which brought Roma nearby or even in the center of the Romanian/ Hungarian settlements, a policy of relocation of Roma from certain spaces was enforced during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s under the regulations of the policy of

[40] Viorel Mionel, *România ghetourilor urbane. Spaţiul vicios al marginalizării, sărăciei şi stigmatului*, Editura ProUniversitaria, Bucureşti, 2013, pp. 101-102.

systematization. The results of this policy were immediate and destructive regarding targeted Roma population living in different areas. Viorel Mionel's publication "Segregarea urbană: separaţi dar împreună" classifies urban segregation into two types: the social one, with emphasis on the social aspects of the population and, on the other hand, the geographical and residential segregation. The author emphasizes the differences between the social segregation and the social marginalization, the latter referring rather to an active form of socio-economic segregation.[41] Similar approaches on this subject are articles such as: "Neighborhood identity. People, time and place" (Douglas Robertson, James Smyth, Ian McIntosh), "Urban segregation and public space: young people in enclaves of structural poverty" (Gonzalo A. Saravia) and "The challenge of slums. Global report on human settlements." In the same vein, in order to define the social and cultural formation of Roma ghettos, Enikő Vincze and Cristina Raţ make a distinction between cases of separation, segregation and racialized ghettoization. Thus, the authors state that:

> *Separation* is a voluntarily and proudly assumed process of differentiation of a group, manifested in the creation of its 'own' spaces, which are socially and/or ethnically homogeneous, while *segregation* is a form of separation, an imposed spatial confinement, or the

[41] Viorel Mionel, *Segregarea urbană*, article available at: http://segregareurbana.blogspot.ro/2010/07/tipologia-segregarii-sociale-in-mediul.html, accessed on December 2014.

> enforced geographical, material and symbolic isolation of impoverished and precarious social categories. On the other hand, the cases of Roma ghettoization are forms of ethnic segregation that subject poor Roma to imposed spatial confinement, lead to the creation of spaces that are inhabited mostly by poor Roma and are perceived by the public imaginary as (dangerous) 'Gypsy neighborhoods'.[42]

While Romanian historical research encompasses several articles published on the topic of Roma in Romania, those referring to the living space, periphery-center relations or forms of Roma habitation, (dis)placement in different spaces, are scarce. A common feature of these recent approaches is that the authors did not write about Roma traditions and everyday lives, but are oriented towards the analysis of the Roma - non-Roma relationship and the social and cultural dynamics generated by it.

An issue addressed within the historiography which is closely linked to the space in which Roma lived is the *center-periphery binominal*, defined as a complex relationship involving space, time, power and hierarchy. One of the theories defining this center-periphery dichotomy is "the world system" theory by Immanuel Wallerstein "which divided the world into four basic

[42] Enikő Vincze (Ed.), "Spatialization and racialization of social exclusion. The social and cultural formation of 'gypsy ghettos' in Romania in a European context," in *Studia Universitas Babes-Bolyai*, Vol. LVIII, December, Issue no. 2, 2013, p. 9-10.

categories: core, semi-peripheries, peripheries and external areas not included in the world system. In his theory, Wallerstein emphasized the economic dominance of the centers over the peripheries as well as the weakness, non-stability and dependence of the latter on the centers"[43] – "in short, peripheries exist and have always existed to service the economy of the centers."[44] Moreover, according to American anthropologist James C. Scott, periphery and center are in a permanent state of conflict: using the civilizing project as a pretext, the state wants to bring the nonstate space under its control, which, in turn, through the actions of its members, tries to elude and rejects the expansion of the authority of the state[45], opposing to its civilizing and standardizing prescriptions.

Regarding the notion of periphery, often the historiography places it in opposition to the center, having a meaning and significance only in relation to that center. This paradigm is based on power, economic and social

[43] Tomasz Zarycki, "An Interdisciplinary Model of Centre-Periphery Relations: A Theoretical Proposition," in *Regional and Local Studies*, special issue 2007, p. 111.

[44] Wilson O. Simon, "Centre-Periphery Relationship in The Understanding of Development of Internal Colonies," in *International Journal of Economic Development Research and Investment*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011, p. 148-149.

[45] [45] James C. Scott, *The art of not being governed. An Anarchist History of Southeast Asia*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009, quoted in Manuela Marin, "Resisting the State at the Periphery: Roma People in Communist Romania" in Stan L., Halfdanarsson G. (Eds.), Untold Stories. Oral histories of the Roma People in Romania, in print.

behavior[46], emerging in various forms of dependencies that are shaped by the political, cultural and historical contexts. As Henri Lefebvre noted in "The production of space," the dominant form of space, that of the centers of wealth and power, endeavors to mold the spaces it dominates, i.e. peripheral spaces, and it seeks to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there.[47] Hence, this center-periphery binominal creates structural disadvantages that people in peripheries face – the lack of equal access to occupational, educational and financial opportunities, the exclusion from the social networks with most power, and the slim chances of influencing the decisions that affect their daily lives – such that peripheries become strongly associated with poverty, marginalization and social inequality.[48]

Finally, the historiographical landmarks on the subject of everyday lives of Roma in Romania (and specifically in Transylvania) are being enriched by the oral history methodology which has brought a valuable contribution to the master historical narrative and it aims to transform anonymous, peripheral voices into historical consciousness. The recovery of the voices which narrate stories using the oral history inquiry is an original method of recomposing history, an autogenous history, a history 'from within', a history which shapes an identity

[46] Solange Montagne Villette, Irene Hardill, "Spatial peripheries, social peripheries: reflections on the 'suburbs' of Paris," in *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, Vol. 27 No. 1/2, 2007, p. 53.
[47] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production…*, p. 49.
[48] Aura Moldovan, "Peripheralization as a result and driving force of territorial mobility in post-socialist Romania," in European Spatial Research and Policy, vol 24, No. 2, 2017. P. 46.

consciousness alternative to the ways of traditional history which placed the Roma communities in the category of alterity, at the periphery of society.[49]

[49] Ionuț Costea, "The Roma community: between proscription and assertion of historic consciousness," in *Anuarul de Istorie Orală*, No. XVI, Editura Argonaut, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, p.14-15.

Ionela Bogdan

Back then, everybody used to work: Empowering Roma women in Romania through work environment. An oral history research[1]

Abstract: Throughout this study I will analyse the manner in which Roma women in different communities in Romania remember their lives during the Communist era, using the methodology of oral history and focusing on their memories in regards to work environment, when participation in the labour market was mandatory and according to the law everyone who was able to work, was required to do so. Most Roma women who used to have stable jobs define themselves as winners of the Communist regime when addressing the work environment topic. In order to understand their perspective, one must take into consideration their experiences prior to the Communist period as well as the life quality they have in the present. Their interpretation also relies on the comparison they make with male members of their

[1] The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014, "Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma people in Romania"

community or with men and women outside of it. The fact that many Roma women used to be employed and nowadays benefit from a state pension has a vital importance to them, ensuring a decent livelihood and this is one of the main reasons why they still perceive the Communist period as "a golden era."
Key words: Roma women in Romania, Communist regime, work environment, oral history

Following the Communists rise to power, the government began a complex process of industrializing and modernizing the country. Since at that time women represented more than half of the country's population, they had a major role "in the drive to modernize and were well represented in the labour force."[2] In Romania, women's transition into the labour force progressed rapidly and it was followed by policies that legislated women's equal rights in public and private spheres.[3] The roles of women as "proud socialist mothers" and "productive workers" were central to the ideology of the Communist regime in Romania. The dual role or "double burden" as Barbara Einhorn described it, was heavily promoted by the

[2]Jill Massino, "Something Old, Something New: Marital Roles and Relations in State Socialist Romania," in *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 22, no. 1, (2010), p. 37.
[3] *Ibidem*.

official channels and propaganda.[4] One of the main characteristics of all Communist regimes is the policies implemented in order to promote equity between workers, and to provide all of its citizens with a job,[5] this being also the case in Romania. The so-called equity was also reflected in gender relations, as women became an important element in building the new socialist state. According to the specialised literature on the subject, many Roma people managed to benefit from the positive changes that occurred during the Communist regime, one of them being the economic transformations that took place in Romania.[6]

The Communist regime managed to reshape the image of women using tools such as propaganda, public policies and legislative measures which offered a view of women as independent, carrier orientated, and active participants in the building of socialism.[7] Concomitant with these virtuous responsibilities, women were asked to maintain their day to day tasks as wives and mothers. Participation in the labour market represented a way through which many women achieved economic

[4] Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella goes to Market: citizenship, gender and women's movements in East Central Europe,* Verso, London, 1993, p. 40.

[5] Robert S. Chase, *Women's labour force participation during and after communism: a study on the Czech Republic and Slovakia*, Economic Growth Center, Yale University, 1995, p. 1.

[6] Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian history*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998, p. 193.

[7] See Călin Morar-Vulcu, *Republica îşi făureşte oamenii. Construcţia identităţilor politice în discursul oficial în România 1948-1965*, Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2007.

independence from their spouses.[8] Moreover, through employment "socialism offered women opportunities of constructing their identities outside of the home and family."[9] The fact that women gained access to the labour market did not represent a total "liberation" from the oppression within the home and family since the "natural" inequalities were not eliminated.[10] Women remained in charge of the domestic area due to traditional gender division within families. Leaving aside these shortcomings, in the case of many Roma women having a place to work represented a source of independence. At the same time, it represented a factor that raised their self-esteem: on the one hand they earned money and on the other they realised there is life outside their household and community, being able to socialize and broaden their social connections.

The current study constitutes a small part of my doctoral thesis within the project "The Untold Story. An Oral History of Roma People in Romania," with the aim of reconstructing parts of the history of Roma people in Romania, using the methodology of oral history. The work in the field began in 2015 and mainly involved collecting life stories of Roma people from different communities across the country. I mostly recorded oral history interviews with Roma women in both rural and urban Romania, with the aim of coming closer to understanding the role(s) of the Communist regime in the lives of Roma

[8] Diane Pierce, "The Feminization of Poverty: Women, Work and Welfare," in *The Urban & Social Change Review*, no. 11 (1978), p. 28.
[9] Shana Penn, Jill Massino, *Gender Politics and everyday life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 13.
[10] Barbara Einhorn, o*p. cit.*, p. 44.

women and the transformations that took place during the time under scrutiny. The oral history interviews recorded are used to emphasize the individuality of each narrator, which means "diversity in interpretation is expected and enriching."[11]

When I asked an interviewee about her place of work during the Communist regime, she described it as being "the reason for which her refrigerator was always full,"[12] further accentuating that her job at the local factory had allowed her to raise her children since her husband did not sustain the family with his work. The same woman admitted that nowadays such independence would be impossible. An interviewee recalled her work experience as well as her desire to improve her condition, while at the same time emphasizing the pride she felt when those around her acknowledged her as a good worker:

> During the Communist regime I worked for two years as a cleaning lady at the City Hall. But I thought to myself: 'It's too claustrophobic in here. I need to be outside, I need to see people and breathe fresh air.' I didn't like that job very much; I didn't like cleaning after other people. I really wanted to get out of there. After I quit, they found a replacement – a Romanian woman. Can you imagine, they asked me to stay two more weeks on the job to explain to the new

[11] Valerie Raleigh Yow, "Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences," Oxford: Altamira Press, 2005, p. 260.
[12] B.W., interview by author, audio file, no. 1133 (OHIA), Tirimia, Mureş County, 01.07.2015.

> woman how proper cleaning was done? Everyone at the City Hall liked how I did my job and very often they would ask me how I managed to finish so quickly. As I would tell them: 'Well, if you're industrious, if you're hard-working, of course you will finish quickly; if you don't care about your job you can spend a whole day working without getting anything done.'[13]

The "double burden" women had to face is visible in many recorded interviews. Very often women express the struggles faced in trying to combine having a full time job with being mothers and wives:

> I was 17 when I got the job at the factory; 17 years old and I already had 2 children. Can you imagine that? We had a place to live, it was the house of our in-laws, but it needed remodelling. So, I left them [her children] at home and went to work. I would work at the factory and my husband worked at the post office. In order to be able to take care of the children I would work the morning shift and my husband would take the night shift; then we would switch.

[13] E.M., interview by author, audio file, no. 1597 (OHIA), Măcin, Tulcea County, 09.08.2016.

> In this way, one of us could look after the children.[14]

This testimony shows the existence of a partnership within the interviewee's home: she and her husband were able to arrange their work schedules so that one of them could always be at home to take care of the children. On the down side, by splitting their working hours the occasions in which they saw each other were rare. Even though the interviewee used to live with her in-laws, they did not receive support from them in raising their children since the interviewee's mother-in-law had health problems whereas the father-in-law used to work at the same factory as the interviewee. Another interviewee emphasized her struggle as well: "I had four children: two girls and two boys, I raised them all and I also went to work. I also had a job in the factory you know..."[15] When asked about their work environment, women would also bring into discussion the work they had to do at home, in the domestic sphere and the upbringing of their children. Men, on the other hand, when facing the same question would direct their answer to the job they did outside the home adding at times the financial responsibilities they had for their families. Thus, one may assume that there was an unbalanced ratio between the work men and women performed. According to the meaning they assign to their work, many women felt it was still their job to be solely

[14] D.P., interview by author, audio file, no. 1281 (OHIA), Măguri, Timiş County, 21.08.2015.

[15] D.U., interview by author, audio file, no. 1391 (OHIA), Eşelniţa, Mehedinţi County, 17.08.2015.

responsible of the household, while they were expected also to excel at their job outside the home.

Voices in the academia claim that, as was common in most Eastern European countries during the Communist regime, women's jobs in Romania were clustered in specific sectors considered easy, such as in the textile and food industry, education, healthcare or tourism.[16] This proves to be accurate, if many of my interviews are to be believed, but does not constitute a general rule among the Roma women. Many of them used to work in heavy industry, at Collective Farms, as brick makers within Craftsmanship's Cooperatives and the list can easily go on. Moreover, they claimed that their salaries could easily compete with their spouses' or other male colleagues. Relevant in this case is the interview of a Roma woman who claimed to be among the first women who used to work in ironwork at the factory where she was employed in her desire to prove herself and to earn more money.[17] Moreover, there were cases when factory workers would take leave of absence during autumn in order to work at Collective Farms. One of my interviewees recalled:

> In my family everyone worked during Ceauşescu's regime but during autumn time we all used to ask for a week of vacation in order to work at the Collective Farms; we used to harvest potatoes, corn, and sugar cane, whatever they had for us. We did this

[16] Anca Gheaus, "Gender justice and the welfare state in post-communism'' in *Feminist Theory*, 2008, vol. 9(2), p. 190.

[17] E.E., interview by author, audio file, no. 1447 (OHIA), Reghin, Mureş County, 07.09.2015.

> to receive a small portion of what we had harvested.[18]

Once more, the industriousness of Roma during the Communist regime is brought to attention, the above testimony suggesting a desire for finding ways of earning more.

The Communist regime offered women a wide range of educational opportunities, which very often facilitated their entry into a professional field. At the same time, women became aware of the fact that education could present a means for self-improvement which was often synonymous to a place to work at the factory. For this reason, an interviewee detailed her frustration because her father barred her from going to school because she was a woman. Thus, her chances of employment were almost non-existent, and she was forced to work at the Collective Farms. At the same time, the interviewee described how she managed to learn the alphabet:

> My father didn't want me to go to school because I'm a woman. He did send my brothers to school, but he decided I shouldn't go because for a woman, school is useless. I wish he would have sent me... But I did learn to read and write even though I never saw the interior of a classroom. [...] God helped me in finding a way. I had some cousins who went to school, so every day I would wait for them

[18] Mariana D. Toma, interview by author, no. 1639 (OHIA), Crăcăoani, Neamț County, 02.09.2016.

> to come home and stay with them while they did their homework. I loved watching them. I remember going home and pretending I was on my way to school or I just arrived home. On one occasion my dad got so mad at me because of my game and started to yell at me. Nonetheless, he decided to write down the alphabet for me on a piece of paper. That's how I slowly learned to read and write. I found a way. […] I used to work at the Collective Farms. I worked on the tobacco fields. You had to be extremely careful while planting the seedlings. We would usually plant the seedlings in March. Then, in the summer time we used to harvest it and dry the plants. When autumn came we would deliver it to Isaccea.[19]

At the opposite end, some claim, however, that education was not necessary precondition for succeeding in society. One of my interviews recalled that, even though her formal education was extremely limited as she was only able to attend school two years, she was hired at a textile factory in her town where she worked alongside other women who had more studies than she had managed to complete. The fact that she lacked formal education did not stop her to effectively perform the tasks assigned to her.[20] In such cases, many Roma women confessed that

[19] Ioana Coţea, interview by author, audio file, no. 1596 (OHIA), Valea Teilor, Tulcea County, 08.08.2016.

[20] Maria Dănuţ, interview by author, audio file, no. 1055 (OHIA), Sebeş, Alba County, 06.02.2015.

they used to work long hours, very often taking double shifts in order to earn more.

Working in a factory was, according to most of the recollections recorded a custom and occasionally all members of the same family were employed in the same place, as an interviewee described: "Yes, I worked here in Tecuci [a small town in Eastern Romania] at the factory. My husband worked there too, as well as many Roma in our community. We were all organized in a Craftsmanship Cooperative."[21] Once a member of the family worked in a certain place, it was easier for others to find work there, as was shown in a family interview. The wife told us that her "husband got me a job as a cook at the factory he used to work,"[22] while he added: "Let me explain to you how it worked: Everyone was employed at this factory: my parents, my sister, my uncle and then I got a job for my wife."[23] The husband felt the need to emphasize the he was the one who got the job for his wife, thus, his effort had to accounted for; in this case the wife and her work experience became background stories while the husband kept his role as main actor within the story.

The fact that the interviewee managed to secure a job for his wife represented an important achievement for him and for his wife who throughout the interview kept emphasizing this aspect of her life-story. Nonetheless, the interviewee claimed it took a lot of effort to obtain that job for his wife and that he had to bribe the director of the

[21] D.V., interview by author, audio file, no. 1529 (OHIA), Toflea, Galați County 18.07.2016.
[22] Alexandru Orbulescu, interview by author, audio file, no. 1405 (OHIA), Mehedinți County, 18.08.2015.
[23] *Ibidem.*

factory with two kilograms of plum brandy and two packs of *Carpaţi* cigarettes. Once again, these fragments hint of a sense of pride in a Roma family for having a stable and honourable working place during the Communist regime. The same interviewee confessed that even though, in theory, they used to have a heavy workload, in practice the nature of the job was not as difficult as one may think. When addressing work environment during the Communist regime, many Roma women fail at clearly discussing the connection between a good job and being member of the Communist Party or the level of efficiency found in most factories during that time. In this sense the description offered by a male interviewee is complementary:

> If you wanted to have a decent position, you had to become a Party member. So, the secretary would call you and ask you if you wanted to become a member. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't mandatory, but if you wanted to have a good job, you joined the Party. Moreover, if you were a good worker and went to school, the other ones from the factory would look at you with suspicion if you didn't want to become a Party member. So, I became a member as well. They sent me to some courses for about three months… I went even if I wasn't very keen on the whole thing. But what can you do? So… we would have these meetings where everyone bragged about how much they would work at their factories and how well everything was going. There was this one

> guy who every time said that at their factory they had exceeded the production plan. One time I asked him how did they do it; he laughed and said: 'How can you not know how these things work? Of course we say we exceeded the production plan, you're supposed to say that. But in reality, we are lucky if we did three quarters.' That was the situation back then. Today you couldn't pull of something like that.[24]

In his testimony, Alexandru Orbulescu also described how high rank employees used to bend the truth regarding their productivity in order to get favourable reviews from their supervisors. Moreover, he offers a glimpse of a bitter truth: in order to get promoted, one had to be willing to become part of the system. Throughout the period under scrutiny, many individuals decided to compromise their beliefs and become Communist members. The situations described above were very common during the Communist regime, but few Roma interviewees drew much attention to it. Conversely, said reflections are rarely encountered among Roma women to whom the sole fact of having a job was enough, thus many of them tend to focus on describing the changes brought to them by the industrialization/work environment, leaving aside introspections referring to the paradoxes of the regime. At the same time, few Roma women had direct access to meetings as the one described above. Nonetheless, it was not an impossible task, as proved by an

[24] *Ibidem.*

interviewee who joined the Communist Party out of her own initiative and actually had an idealistic opinion of the Communist doctrine. Nonetheless, she did not hesitate to describe Party meetings she attended as "a bit boring and never-ending, where all sorts of issues were raised but very few of them got to be resolved."[25]

Personal recollections regarding work environment reflect the pride of Roma women have in having a stable work place as well as they emphasize that Roma in general used to be employed during the Communist regime. An interviewee remembered her work experience as following:

> I used to work at a textile factory in three shifts. I had different positions throughout the years; I liked working and I liked earning my own money. Here, all Gypsies used to work: every morning three buses filled with people would leave this village. My whole family was employed, no one stayed home.[26]

The interviewee emphasizes the fact that she comes from a hard-working community as well as her positive attitudes towards work regardless the hardships encountered along the way. Her need of independence is also brought to the fore and proves to be emblematic among the Roma women I interviewed. A similar recollection has a male interviewee who used to work as a

[25] E.E., interview by author, audio file, no. 1447 (OHIA), Reghin, Mureş County, 07.09.2015.

[26] D.P., interview by author, audio file, no. 1281 (OHIA), Măguri, Timiş County, 21.08.2015.

foreman during the Communist regime at another textile factory in the south-western part of the country. His testimony stands out because when talking about work he connects it with the need to provide for his children and includes his wife when describing the hardships encountered during the time in question:

> I think the majority living in this village used to work there. We would work in shifts and go by bus to the factory [in the city nearby]. At times, especially during winter, the buses did not work so we would go by foot, through snow, because we didn't want to be late or to lose our shift. You had to go to work regardless the means used because, in our case, we had children at home, we had to provide for them. We couldn't tell our kids that we couldn't put food on their table because the bus didn't work that day. They don't understand that. So, at times we used to commute six kilometres by foot, in the cold, in the snow, until we arrived to Orşova where the factory was.[27]

In the end, one may conclude that socialism as a way of life, profoundly shaped how individuals related to

[27] Alexandru Orbulescu, interview by author, audio file, no. 1405 (OHIA), Mehedinţi County, 18.08.2015.

the government, to society, and to themselves.[28] At the same time, participation in the labour market had an impact regarding the roles of women, self-identities and the relations with men.[29] The generation of women in question can be defined by the fact that they had a unique value of work, they were glad they had a place to go every day and that they were trained at the job. In their stories, there are not significant differences between Roma women and Romanian women; both categories have more or less the same struggles: how to make ends meet, raising and educating children, doing house chores, making a decent livelihood.

[28] Shana Penn, Jill Massino, *Gender Politics and everyday life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 14.
[29] *Ibidem.*

Călin Andrei Olariu

Roma communities and gold requisitions in Socialist Romania. An Oral History Research[1]

Abstract: During the communist period, different forms of state repression were constant in the everyday experiences of almost all Romanians. Immediately after the Revolution of 1989 an extensive literature (journals, autobiographies, historical works, oral history, etc.) which document the state's abuses against its own citizens was published. Eyewitnesses' accounts in particular represent the indelible proof of the human rights abuses committed during this time period. However, an official recognition of and condemnation of the communist regime was done only in 2006, based on a report produced by a Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania[2], which in itself produced no small amount of controversy. The present article addresses a historiographical void in

[1] The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014, "Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma people in Romania".

[2] ***, *Raport final*, Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, București, 2006, passim.

relation to this larger topic by investigating Roma narratives on state repression during the communist regime. Their accounts, largely neglected by the mainstream, represent invaluable sources for better understanding the Romanian communist past.

Keywords: oral history, Roma, state violence, communism, gold requisitions, Romania

After the ascension of the Communist regime to power in the post-war period, the newly created repressive institutions of the state had gained an ever-growing influence within the society. The state's efforts to (physically) eliminate the old intellectual and political elite as well as all those who opposed the new regime led to the creation of a "concentrationary universe" without precedent in Romanian history. After the creation, in 1948, of the Secret Police the "Securitate" a campaign was carried out in order to arrest members of the most influential political forces of the interwar period like the Legionary Movement, the National Peasant Party, the National Liberal Party, etc. At the same time, a sustained effort was made to eradicate the armed resistance movements against the regime which appeared throughout the country as well as all those who helped the members of the resistance in any way.[3] The process of the

[3] There is as extensive literature on this subject. For an oral history approach see the work done at the Oral History Institute in Cluj Napoca.

collectivization of the agriculture in Romania was particularly violent, the rural elite was condemned as "chiaburi," exploiters of the rest of the peasant communities, forced to pay "quotas" to the state and eventually imprisoned on different grounds.[4] The deportation of tens of thousands of Romanian German ethnics to the Soviet Union[5] after the war was followed by the deportation of more than 44000 people living along the border with Yugoslavia to the Bărăgan region.[6] A significant number of those who were targeted by the repressive institutions of the state did not have a fair trial, were savagely tortured during investigations, often leading to their death. The penitentiaries where political prisoners were held had a draconic regime meant to exterminate those imprisoned through guard's violence, lack of medical assistance, exposure to cold and hunger.

After 1964, when a considerable number of political prisoners were pardoned through an official decree (310/1964) and the ascension to power of Nicolae Ceaușescu one year later, state repression did not disappear but merely changed its forms of manifestation. While it is true that the number of political prisoners was significantly lower in the latter half of the communist regime, new policies were adopted which had a significant negative impact on the lives of all Romanian citizens. The perceived

[4] Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege. The Collectivization of the Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, passim.

[5] Doru Radosav*, Donbas, o istorie deportată*, Landsmannschaft der Sathmarer Schwaben in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1994.

[6] Smaranda Vultur, *Din radiografia represiunii: deportarea în Bărăgan: 1951-1956*, Mirton, Timișoara, 2011.

de-Stalinization of the regime at the end of the 1960s and the first years of the 1970s was merely a strategic move for gaining popular support. In reality, repressive institutions such as the Miliție or the Securitate only continued to strengthen their grip over the society. The political police in particular developed an impressive cadre apparatus as well as an extensive network of collaborators with the aim of identifying any possible opponents. This regime of permanent surveillance led to a partial process of atomization of individuals by eroding mutual trust.

Nicolae Ceaușescu gradually imposed his personal rule over Romania. His plans of creating the "multilaterally developed society" through economic (the continuation of the development of the heavy industry following the Stalinist model) social (enlistment of children, adolescent and adults in mass political organizations) and cultural (national communism) proved disastrous for Romanians. In the 1980s, the country went through a severe economic crisis, the cultural productions were tightly controlled by the authorities and any forms of even the slightest resistance [especially what the authorities perceived to be collective forms of resistance] were quickly investigated by the Miliție and the Securitate. At the same time, starting with 1966, the communist authorities implemented a pronatalist policy which encompassed among other both "positive" and "negative" incentives, the interdiction of abortions. One of the most tragic consequences of this policy was the death of a significant number of Romania women who underwent clandestine abortions.[7]

[7] This is only a selective description of the communist repression in Romania. For a more complete presentation see: ***, *Raport final...*, pp. 157-395.

The Roma community was affected by all these policies. Roma oral history interviews represent a complementary historical source to non-Roma eye witnessing accounts. Their testimonies resemble those of the non-Roma when talking about the unwanted interference of the authorities in their personal and private life. For example, Ionela Bogdan argued that, despite the preconception that the Roma were the main beneficiaries and were not opposed to the pronatalist policies of the Ceauşescu era, most Roma women throughout Romania perceived these policies as an imposition just like the non-Roma.[8]

Roma oral history interviews represent a complementary source also because one can identify certain themes/ events which are much more prominent in these accounts that in similar interviews conducted with the non-Roma.[9] As such, Roma interviewees vividly describe the negative impact on a personal and community level of abuses done by the states repressive institutions in different contexts. They mention in particular the application of decree 153/1970 regarding social parasitism as well as several successive laws which regulated the ownership and commercialization of precious metals and foreign currency. These accounts shed light on a less-studied aspect of the abusive behavior of state authorities against its own

[8] Ionela Bogdan, "Talk is not cheap: Addressing pronatalist politicizes among Romanian Roma women during the communist regime", in AIO, nr. XVII, 2016, pp. 25-41.

[9] I refer to other research projects conducted at the Oral History Institute in Cluj-Napoca, such as: Rezistența anticomunistă în România 1945-1989 [1997-2003]; Istoria Minerităului Aurifer din Munții Apuseni (2017-).

citizens and allow us to better understand the full dimension of the communist repression in Romania.

> And it was like this. My younger sister, she was outside, outside [of the police station], waiting outside and my father took her coin necklace [salbă], it was made out of three small [gold] coins. […] He took her gold necklace with Miliția men Y present said said: 'Yes commander X, here I am, look.' 'Did you solve things with Y?' [a different lower ranking Miliția men]. 'Yes, mister X, I did, look. Since you started to investigate me, I can't do anything [to defend myself] I will give you three small gold coins.' And he threw towards him that gold necklace. As he threw the necklace on his table, the Miliția commander immediately picked it from the table and rushed out of his office saying: [interviewee is shouting] 'No, no, no! Take it, take it, take it from the table, take it from the table! Take it from the table! Go, go wherever you want, go in the toilet, in the hallway, take a knife and cut the coins from the necklace, and then you bring me the money as they are, not on a necklace.' And that is what he did, he took a knife, he cut the coins off the necklace and: 'Take them sir, these are [the coins]'. And then they [the Miliția men] drafted a minute. And in that minute they wrote that

> they had found those coins near our yard gate.[10]

This excerpt from an interview conducted with Mr. Nani Cianghir in Simian, Mehedinți county is an example of a prevalent topic described by Roma interviewees when talking about state abuses on Roma communities during the communist period, that of successive attempts to confiscate gold coins as well as the effort to curb the illegal commercialization of gold. The process of the confiscation of gold coins is often compared with the collectivization of the agriculture or the nationalization of the industry. Thus, for the Roma who used to keep their wealth in gold, especially tent-dwelling Roma, this measure led to the loss of their wealth and implicitly created an increased dependency on the state, similarly to how the collectivization of agriculture and the nationalization law impacted the rest of the population.

In the following, I will argue that although this measure had a profoundly negative impact on these communities, such a comparison does not hold true. The collectivization of the agriculture represented both an economic program to modernize the Romanian agriculture as well as a social process through which the majority of the Romanian society was to be refashioned following new ideological guidelines. This effort of the state on collecting "illegally owned gold by private individuals" affected both Roma and non-Roma population, and, in my view, in the case of the Roma, did not have an explicit social

[10] Nani Cianghir, interview by Lavinia Costea, audio file no.1418 OHIA, Șimian, Mehedinți County, August 19, 2015.

dimension. Gold requisitions, more prevalent after the publication of decree 210/1960 had a distinctly economic purpose, thought to be reached through better enforcing an already existing legislation [since 1946] in communities throughout Romania which did not represent, from this perspective, a source of major concern for the authorities until that point in time.

What this effort on the part of the authorities produced was a convoluted process whose main actors were state officials who sought to confiscate gold through any means as a form of personal career advancement [or personal enrichment], an extensive network of police informants, most important of whom were often times traditional Roma leaders [bulibași], and Roma throughout Romania trying to preserve what they defined as traditions revolving around gold ownership. Nevertheless, the actions of the state repressive institutions had a profoundly negative impact on Roma communities. They not only lost material possessions but were also subjected to abusive investigations, in which the use of physical force was often the norm. Furthermore, the impact at the level of the communities, as individuals were forced to cooperate with the authorities, was significant and often lingers to the present.

Legislation

Underlying gold requisitions, were a set of successive legislative measures, issued between 1946 and 1978, which regulated the ownership and commercialization of precious metals and foreign

currency.[11] In the post-war period, a first legislative act regarding gold ownership was adopted in 1946, law no. 638 "Regarding the control of precious metal production, processing and trading." This law reinforced previous inter-war measures regarding the production and commercialization of gold and other precious metals, one of the most important being the provision according to which the exploitation and commercialization of gold was a state monopoly enforced and supervised by the National Bank of Romania. Furthermore, articles 5 and 7 of the law instituted the obligation of private individuals to declare in a period of 60 days, following the guidelines provided by the National Bank of Romania, in special registers, all the gold they owned which came under the incidence of the law, which included gold in the form of Austrian gold coins [ducats], damaged gold coins, gold coins which were part of jewelry, including necklaces [salbe]. Furthermore, only the owners and their family members had the legal right to wear gold necklaces. At the same time, at article 13 it was stated that the commercialization of the gold objects which came under the incidence of the law was forbidden as well as melting them with the intentions of using their gold content in other ways. Only the jewelers authorized by the National Bank of Romania were allowed to manufacture and trade precious metal objects and jewelry.

Further measures were adopted after the publication of law no. 284/1947 "Regarding the

[11] Restrictions regarding the exploitation and commercialization of gold were established in Romania as early as the 1930s (given the fact that Romania was one of the few gold producing countries in Europe) and these provisions were successively expanded after the communist authorities came to power.

compulsory transfer of gold, foreign currencies and other foreign paying means to the Romanian National Bank." According to article 1: "Residents of Romania owning any forms of gold [with some exceptions] must proceed to transferring such possession to the Romanian National Bank in exchange for a payment made in lei, at the official exchange rate, within 15 days from publication."[12] Among the gold objects exempted from the provisions of the law were gold necklaces made out of "big and small Austrian ducats [galbeni mici și mari]" which were worn as jewelry.[13] Thus, according to the law, one could legally keep gold necklaces, which should have previously been declared as such in 1946, but had to transfer all the gold coins not used as jewelry to the National Bank in exchange for a fixed payment. Those failing to comply with the provisions of the law could face a prison sentence between 5 and 25 years as well as a substantial fine.

New changes in regards to the commercialization of gold were adopted after the publication of decree 210/1960 on "foreign payment means, precious metals and precious gems regulations." The decree was the first comprehensive law governing these financial/ commercial operations reuniting numerous other legislative measures adopted after the proclamation of the People's Republic of Romania in 1948. During the first decades of communist rule, many of the previous post-war regulation were kept, most notably the fact that the exploitation and commercialization of gold and other precious metals were state monopoly. After the promulgation of the

[12] *The Official Journal of Romania*, no. 186/1947.

[13] Jewelry made out of gold coins issued after 1800 were not exempted from the law.

nationalization law and the institutionalization of the centralized economy, no private individual was allowed to perform these economic activities, all gold mining operations were performed by a few state companies. The commercialization of gold as well as jewelry was allowed only in the official "socialist sector" and was tightly controlled by the authorities [art.15]. At the same time, all provisions regarding the obligation of private individuals to transfer gold to the National Bank of Romania were kept along with few exemptions which included the right of private individuals to own gold coin necklaces and gold coins which were meant to be used as jewelry.

More comprehensive regulations were issued in regards to the punishments applicable to individuals who would breach the provisions of the new decree. Thus, those who did not transfer or declare foreign currency/ other payment means or precious metals faced a prison sentence between 6 months and 5 years.[14] Private individuals who performed illegal commercial transactions with such goods with the purpose of reselling them in order to make a profit or smuggling them abroad faced prison sentences from 2 to 7 years as well as partial confiscation of their other financial assets.

At the same time, the decree contained several provisions, under article 37, which absolved one of legal responsibility in certain situations. Thus, individuals who, after the start of a legal investigation, decided to cooperate

[14] This was a significant reduction compared to the provisions of the 1948 law. At article 37 it was also stated the provision according to which the prison sentenced would increase by one year if the goods in question could not be recovered by state authorities or were rendered unusable.

with the authorities and agreed to fulfill their legal obligation to transfer the precious metals they possessed to the National Bank would not be convicted. Moreover, this was also applicable to those who, while under investigation, provided information on other persons who were breaching the provisions of the decree. At the same time, those denounced could also be absolved of their legal responsibility if they cooperated with the authorities. These provisions with the explicit purpose of facilitating the recovery of financial assets [even to the point of absolving one of legal responsibility] led to the development of a practice of denunciations and, subsequently, numerous abuses in the implementation of the decree.

Finally, in 1978, the authorities adopted a new decree, 244, regarding precious metals and precious stones whose main purpose was to improve centralized state control over the ownership, commercialization and the use [including industrial use] of these goods. For the first time the legislation also contained specific provisions regarding precious metals recycling. Many of the older provision regarding the precious metals objects/jewelry allowed to be owned by private individuals were kept, including previous provisions regarding gold coin necklaces and other gold coin jewelry while the commercialization of gold jewelry was permitted only within the state-owned network of jewelry shops. Also, Romanian citizens continued to be required to transfer to the National Bank, in exchange for a payment [within 30 days] the precious metals they previously acquired through legal means, but which were not allowed to be owned by private individuals [for example, gold bars or coins]. Jail sentences for breaching the provisions of the decree were the same as those under

article 37 of the decree 210/1960. In contrast to the provisions of the previously decree, only those who chose to transfer illegally owned precious metals before the start of an official investigation were absolved of legal responsibility.

Documenting the ways these laws have been put into practice in socialist Romania through archival research proves to be extremely challenging. First, more general documents related to the ways this legislation was put into practice at different points in time during the communist regime are difficult to find. This is a particular problem especially when one tries to research the interaction between state authorities and Roma communities since such documents are spread in numerous archival funds through the country, which are organized according to different general themes. Second, the judicial files of particular investigations are not available for research since, according to the Romania archival law, they can be accessed by researchers only 90 years after their elaboration. Third, the available documents provide an official description of the events, and, as I will show further on, these depictions are complementary to but often contradicted by oral testimonies gathered in Roma communities across Romania.

The most affected Roma were the so-called traditional communities of Căldărari/Cortorari Roma where it was customary to accumulate wealth in gold coins, most of which were 18th century Austrian gold coins called ducats. According to our interviewees, this practice arose because of practical reasons since, being nomadic

communities, accumulating gold coins [and chalices][15] represented a convenient way of storing wealth. Even today, when most Cortorari Roma are sedentary, this practice is seen as an important traditional way of storing wealth. Consequently, gold coin necklaces or other jewelry are usually being used as dowries and as a way to display one's wealth and social standing.

The fact that these practices survived the communist period is proof of the Roma people's refusal to give up their cultural practices regarding gold coins and gold coin necklaces in spite of the new restrictions imposed by the communist authorities. This was not the first time that the Roma gold coins have been confiscated. During the Second World War, under the regime of Marshall Ion Antonescu, Cortorari communities were deported to Transnistria. In their recollections, the survivors of the deportation give detailed accounts of how they were stripped of all their possessions, including chalices and gold coins, and of the difficulties one faced in trying to preserve some of his or her wealth. Thus, after their return from Transnistria some of the Roma had lost part or all of their possessions in gold. However, many families made a goal of and managed to buy new gold coin necklaces and coins even though such commercial activities were forbidden by law.

According to the legislation adopted during the late 1940s Romanian citizens were required to transfer the precious metal objects they possessed to the National Bank

[15] Cătălina-Constantina Tesăr, *"Women Married off to Chalices": Gender, Kinship and Wealth among Romanian Cortorari Gypsies,* University College London, Department of Anthropology, Ph.D. Dissertation 2012, passim.

of Romania. This had a significant negative impact as many people thought to possess gold not used as jewelry [gold bars, gold coins, ore, etc.] came under the attention of the authorities. For example, interviews conducted in the gold mining communities in the Apuseni Mountains vividly describe the brutal investigations carried out by the Miliție and the Securitate with the purpose of confiscating ore or processed gold from the former private gold miners.[16] According to Roma interviewees, the authorities began to systematically confiscate the gold they owned only starting with the beginning of the 1960s. This was most probably a consequence of an increased interest on the part of the communist authorities in enforcing previous legislation, which was also translated into the publication of decree 210/1960. Oral narratives can also be collaborated with several letters sent to central authorities by Ion Cioabă,[17] an informal leader of several Cortorari communities, who, complaining about the abuses made by the Miliție in regards to the confiscation of gold during the 1980s, described how the Cortorari communities were forced to declare and transfer to the National Bank the gold they possessed beginning with the 1960s.[18]

[16] The interviews, conducted within the research project "The History of Gold Mining in the Apuseni Mountains," are available in the archive of the Oral History Institute in Cluj-Napoca.

[17] Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (further: ACNSAS), *Documentary fund*, file 8685, ff.203-204 f-v, 205; ACNSAS, *Documentary fund*, file 8685, ff.128-130.

[18] According to Ion Cioabă although there were cases when gold coins meant to be uses as jewelry (mainly gold coin necklaces) were confiscated these goods have been returned to their owners in the 1960s. ACNSAS, *Documentary fund*, file 8685, ff. 203-204 f-v, 205.

All interviewees describe the violent nature of the work done by the Miliție in trying to identify those who possessed illegally owned gold.[19] They describe how the Miliție men periodically raided their communities and forced the Roma to surrender their gold. Almost all interviewees mentioned that the investigation concerning their immediate family or other members of the community were a result of depositions made by other Roma informants. These persons were either regular collaborators of the Miliție, or other Roma who, faced with physical punishments and the prospect of serving long prison sentences, were forced to provide information on other people in the community. This was a result of the provisions of decree 210/1960 which stipulated that one could be absolved of legal responsibility if he or she would collaborate with the authorities in order to find other persons who did not to declare or transfer their gold possessions.

Mihai Mărioara from Strehaia remembers how the authorities came to their community in order to confiscate illegally owned gold coins. According to her account, the investigations began in the early 1960s and most persons in the community were affected as people under investigation were forced to provide information on others, given that the investigation often involved physical violence.

[19] The violent nature of these confiscations is mentioned by several other researchers. See: Cerasela Radu, *From socialist governmentality to local governance: explaining differences in socio-economic practice among Roma in Romania*, CEU eTD Collection, Budapest, Hungary, 2007, p.36.

> How did they find it? Now [hypothetically speaking] I told them that … I have this much. And I would give them [the gold]. Then, one would say that someone else also has [gold] [strikes the table with her palm] someone else has [gold] [strikes the table with her palm] and someone else has [gold] too [strikes the table with her palm]. [Unknown interviewee: The hard part (for the Miliție men) was to catch one person with the gold.] And in the end everybody went [and gave their gold].[20]

Her family was also targeted by the investigations but they were not in Strehaia at the time the investigation but in the town of Curtea de Argeș where they were selling handmade copper goods. It was only due to this that they managed not to be caught by the authorities, at that particular time, and were able to eventually sell the coins she and her husband had. Her parents in law however did not sell the gold. After her mother in law was arrested for several days, she reluctantly accepted to transfer to the state the gold she owned. Because all the paper work had been properly done at that time, the family managed to regain their possession after the fall of communism. However, not all the people in Strehaia managed to do so in the 1990s and are still trying to get back their confiscated gold coins.

> And in the end what did we decide? 'Let's go home, let's sell these gold coins, get the

[20] Mărioara Mihai, interview by Lavinia Costea, audio file no. 1326, OHIA, Strehaia, Mehedinți County, August 9th, 2015.

> money,' since the Police now do these investigations. We sold [the gold] and went and bought a car. We bought ourselves a Dacia. In the end, they took my mother in law. She was arrested … I don't know … for three days or something like that. And my mother in law gave them around 50 gold coins. 50 gold coins! […] They [the Miliția] men took [the gold] and stored it in an envelope, did the paperwork and sealed that envelope which was taken to the bank [the National Bank of Romania].[21]

Similar stories were told by interviewees from Adrășești, Ialomița County. One interviewee, Bratu Ion still remembered about what he describes a change in legislation which led to the confiscation of the gold owned by (travelling) Roma.

> Yes, there was a law in the 1960s. In the 1960s it was, I was grown up, I was about 14 years old, if not 13. I still remember. They took their gold at first. A law was issued in Bucharest … they gather together all the people with tents. They took them at the raioane, there were raioane at that time. And […] yes! They took them all. Some of them were beaten … because they would not tell [where their gold was]. Could you give everything you owned for nothing, just

[21] Mărioara Mihai, interview…

> like that based on one's word? They tormented them for four or five days, beatings, crushing [their fingers] with doors and took their gold like that in 1960. They had half a kilogram, some had a kilogram of gold. Franc Joseph coins of 24 karats.[22]

Mihaiu Bimbai from Bistreț village, Dolj county, also remembered the events in the 1960. He himself was a victim of police brutality during investigations. He remembers how people initially tried to resist and not allow their possessions to be confiscated, but under physical punishments they eventually had to accept and cooperate with state officials.

> They beat us, they tormented us, they took it [the gold]. Through abuse! Pff, I was arrested! I [was put] to stay on one foot like a stork! Yes, they took it [the gold]. They did not take it peacefully or through a deal, so I would give them part of it so that the rest would remain [in my possession]. Nothing! Everything, up to … everything I had. [Unknown interviewee: Beaten, killed!] M.B.: Beaten, killed. Now, my father had 211 pieces [gold coins]. About two kilograms. It was in 1960. In 1960. I had about 1 kilogram and three [unclear: litre], owned by me. They abusively took it.

[22] Bratu Ion, interview by Diana Nistor and Adrian Boda, audio file no. 1557, OHIA, Andrășești, Dolj County, August 2nd, 2015.

Dead! 'Jump like a frog!' 'What should I do?' 'Look, this is how…' They were making you jump like a frog! 'Stay on one leg like a stork!' [Unknown interviewee: They would crush your hand with the door. They would hold one and yell: 'Say what you know!'] He [the Miliția man] would lean on the door and crush [one's hand]. They would put [one's hand] at the door and crush it. What was one to do? What…? [Unknown interviewee: 'Say how much you have!' 'Ten [gold coins] that's all I have.' 'No! More!' 'Fifteen.' 'No, say more!'"] Seventeen iron tubes filled with coins. It was [hidden] in the vineyard in Măcieșu de Sus. It was buried at the entrance to the vineyard. People would go there to work and took lunch breaks there [not knowing it was buried beneath them]. In a hole, half a meter deep… They did not know. [laughs]. People would go there to take a break under the shadow after they finished working. And we went there ourselves. 'Here, sir, take it out from here!' There was this X, a Police captain X from Segarcea, a colonel. Sir, they took it out, sir, and took them all. A pile just like this, owned by our Gypsies. From Valea Stanciului, from Gânjova. All, all the gold. They mixed it all in a pile when they opened [the iron containers]. This is mine, this is mine, this belongs to X, this belongs

> to Y… Yes. They gave us official documents. This is owned by X, this is owned by Y. Those who kept the minutes drafted at that time were able to take back their gold. Those who did not keep them [strikes his hands together] remained just like that [without the gold].[23]

Investigations regarding the gold possession continued to be carried out for the entire communist period. The authorities operated in a similar manner, relying on an extensive network of informants as well as on physical violence. At the same time, according to Ion Cioabă[24], it was customary for Miliție men to conduct investigations and to promised Roma a lenient sentence if they agreed to "pay" a certain amount of gold coins, without any regard for their provenance.

Mr. Nani Chiaghir testimony cited above is a relevant example of how the Miliție conducted investigations, and of how oral testimonies often contradict official narratives. Together with his father [who was also present when the interview was conducted] and an older brother were arrested for one night in a police station in Turnu Severin in order to admit owning gold coins. They were arrested based on a deposition made by a known Roma collaborator.

> And we stood there, we stood in the, we stood in the police station until the next

[23] Mihaiu Bimbai, interview by Petre Petcuț, audio file no.1320, OHIA, Bistreț, Dolj County, August 8, 2015.
[24] ACNSAS, *Documentary fund*, file 8685, ff.203-204 f-v, 205.

> morning. And in the next morning a Miliție Lieutenant Y came to us and said: 'Mister, nea Chiaghire, I know that you are a serious man, I know you did not make any trouble, but there is nothing I can do, look, I took this case, but please listen to me before Z comes here.' There was this Gypsy, Z was a Gypsy snitch, a loathsome Gypsy. And [Lieutenant Y] said: 'Look at me, hear me out what I have to say. I only want what is good for you, I do not want to cause you harm, because I know what will, I know what will happen.' 'But what will happen?' 'Well look what will happen, If you do not do as I tell you, tomorrow Z will come here and things will get worse. He will insist that you give more gold.' 'Then what shall I do?' 'Well, there are three of you, give us three small gold coins [galbeni]. Do as I say, it is better this way.'[25]

After this conversation, as stated in the previous excerpt from the interview, his father took his daughter's gold coin necklace, which, according to the law, was legally owned, in order to procure the three gold coins. Finally, in the official documents of the investigation it was stated that the tree gold coins were not used as jewelry and thus were illegal to be owned by private individuals and that they were found hidden near Mr. Chianghir's family property. Mr. Chianghir's story is consistent with those of

[25] Nani Cianghir, interview…

other interviewees who mentioned that state officials often neglected official laws and regulations in order to confiscate larger amounts of gold, and that they were often forced to transfer to the National Bank the gold coins they used as jewelry in order for the Miliție to drop further investigations. In order to do so, the official papers were tampered with, so that the provenance of the gold coins could be hidden.

Irrespective of all these administrative and legislative measures taken at the central level, individuals could still negotiate with the authorities at times. For example Mihai Ileana from Strehaia described how at one point they could reach an agreement with the Miliție men.

> My parents, my family [their gold was confiscated]. I was small that time. I was born then, I was born in 1961. We only once had problems with the Miliția during Ceauşescu's time, my husband and me. The Miliția came to our home and took my husband. They had taken him so we would give five large gold coins. Where could we find them? And we told them: 'How are we supposed to provide five of those Ducats, Franz Iosif? We do not have them!' And he said: 'No, someone made a deposition that you have the gold.' […] And my husband said: 'I will give one large gold coin and that's it.' And we gave one gold coin and he was set free… He was arrested for one night.

> [Interviewer: But what was the reason for his arrest?]
> Well, they said that someone informed them that he illegally owned five large gold coins. And that is how they used to keep them, keep them arrested. If one refused to give some gold, he would be arrested for longer, if one would give some gold, they would have been set free.[26]

However, some Roma were involved in illegal trade of gold jewelry during the communist period. This also included transaction made with gold coins both before and after the decree 210/1960. In contrast to jewelry, gold coins transactions were mostly done within the community. As Măriorara Mihai recounted, even in the early 1960s when there was a high pressure put on the Căldărari Roma, they could still sell the gold they owned.

> There were these black marketeers. People, in Caransebeș there was a Gypsy woman [unclear]. And we would buy or sell. If we managed to earn one hundred millions [lei], fifty millions [lei] we [strikes the table with her hand] would buy gold! We would buy one or two coins [strikes the table with her hand] gave the money, and put the gold somewhere safe… For hard times. When you would need… […] Everything was

[26] Ileana Mihai, interview by Ionela Bogdan, Diana Nistor, audio file no.1325, OHIA, Strehaia, Mehedinți County, August 9, 2015.

> done in secret! But we had people. We had our people, we would call and they came here, with however much gold you wanted. They could even bring us one hundred pieces [gold coins].
> [Interviewer: But where was the gold brought from?]
> From across [the border]. They would not tell us where … They brought the gold from Timișoara. There was this woman X. She used to bring … X that was her name. And Y a gypsy men uses to bring as well. They used to bring us gold coins. […] From Austria, that's where it was from. […] But everything was done in secret, not with documents or something. It was not like everyone knew what we were doing, what we were buying. […] It was done only amongst ourselves [the Roma] and in secret. [It was best] done so that not even our relatives would know.[27]

Nani Chiaghir from Simian also remembered how the Roma still used to make small transactions with gold coins within their community:

> No, no, no. During Ceauşescu's time we did transactions amongst ourselves. Amongst ourselves, amongst the Căldărari Roma. For example, if someone had, if

[27] Mărioara Mihai, interview…

> someone ran out of money he would exchange one large gold coin, or two. We could not exchange, we could not [simply] go to the town and exchange it. They [the authorities] would confiscate it if you were caught. But you would secretly go to a relative and said: 'Sir, I need some money.'[…] So I, I needed money for a wedding or something. I would tell him: '[unclear] I need them [the coins].' 'Do you have money?' 'Yes, I have.' 'How much money do you have, do you have enough for two?' And I would exchange two with him. Then I would go to someone else.[28]

Conclusions – silences and oral history

Măriora Mihai's and Nani Chiaghir's accounts point to the fact that, in spite of legislative and administrative measures and the many abuses committed in their implementation (most prevalent being police brutality) Roma communities continued to preserve some of their particular cultural characteristics, including what their perceived as "the traditional" use of gold coins. None of the interviewees described these transactions with gold as a criminal activity and were generally opened to talk about it, even though they knew that according with the legislation at that time their behavior was punishable by the criminal law. As such, buying, selling or not declaring the gold they owned did not affect people's reputation in the

[28] Nani Cianghir, interview…

community at the time and it is not a presently problematic subject. Gold confiscation is seen as an abuse done onto the community by the authorities. This was only partially recognized as abuse by the Romanian state after the fall of communism in 1989, when Roma – as well as other victims of this abusive legislation – were able to reclaim their possession.

This does not mean that there are no silences regarding this subject, on the contrary. One particular relevant subject avoided by interviewees is the collaboration with the Miliție. As showed before, the authorities relied significantly on informants in order to conduct their investigations, especially since the Cortorari and Căldărari communities were still highly mobile in the 1960s and 1970s. No interviewee has admitted to ever being forced to provide information on others, though this was presented in their accounts as a common occurrence, especially during the 1960, since it was the only way to avoid prison sentences if one was caught with undeclared gold. Furthermore, this practice continued even after the legislative changes made in 1977 as there is evidence which suggests that individuals with other legal problems at the time were promised preferential treatment in exchange for information regarding gold. Moreover, the scarce archival documents found at CNSAS suggest that denunciations (false or not) were also used as a way of resolving personal conflicts within some communities.[29] At the same time, informal leaders, the bulibasi, had to balance their position between collaborating with the authorities, including in matters related to gold, and

[29] ACNSAS, *Documentary fund*, file 144, vol. 15, f. 339.

maintaining their status in the community by helping its members in their interactions with the state. This situation which spawned over several decades inevitably led to the erosion of trust between members of the community. Collaboration with the authorities is still a delicate subject in the community and is not easily shared, at least not in the context of an interview with non-Roma researchers where information is meant to eventually be made public.

Varia – Oral History Methodology

Oana Ometa

Convergence between Journalism and Oral History

Abstract: The present work aims to outline the similarities or better yet the convergence points of oral history and journalism. I attempted to highlight the fact that both oral history and specialized journalism (particularly public journalism) use the same research methods and techniques and, generally, present the same characteristics with respect to topic approach. This attempt does not claim to be an exhaustive research, but a review of several similarities, especially at this point in time, when the press seems to resuscitate issues that exploit the field of history (portraits of witnesses from certain periods of time, who are attracting attention due to their stories, interviews with personalities on certain historical subjects etc.). In fact, many of the successful online publications from Romania address this kind of topics that often go viral indicating that they are well received by the readership.

Keywords: journalism, oral history, interviewing, Romania

In an interview, Alessandro Portelli makes a clear distinction between oral history and journalism, although he admits that the resources used for history research may become press subjects:

> Oral history speaks of the past, while journalism should be about the facts of the present. Oral history speaks of subjectivity and long-term meanings. That's why a journalistic interview is usually much shorter and much more concentrated than an oral history interview. In oral history the question one has to ask is: Let's see what this person has to say, while in journalism, the wording would be: let's see what this person has to say about this topic.[1]

However, I have to contradict this statement by arguing that in many of the publications that practice/publish literary journalism, narrative journalism and so on, the interviews, portraits or reports are lengthy and address topics that are in fact related to the past. Moreover, the term "cultural journalism" was used for the first time to describe an oral history project in the United

[1] Oana Popițiu, "Istoria orală este un antidot pentru orice narațiune care domină," in Dilema Veche, no. 312, 4-10 februarie 2010. Original romanian passage: "Istoria orală vorbeşte despre trecut, în timp ce jurnalismul ar trebui să fie despre faptele din prezent. Istoria orală vorbeşte despre subiectivitate şi despre înţelesuri pe termen lung. De aceea, un interviu jurnalistic este de obicei mult mai scurt şi mult mai concentrat decît un interviu de istorie orală. În istoria orală întrebarea se pune în felul următor: 'să vedem ce are de spus persoana asta', în timp ce, în jurnalism, formularea ar fi 'să vedem ce are de spus persoana aceasta în legătură cu acest subiect'."

States of America. Therefore, the similarities between oral history and journalism are especially perceptible when talking about journalistic genres like feature, portrait or interview. The idea for this work was inspired by several studied of the historian Gilberto Freyre, who is among the first historians who discussed topics like language, food, body, childhood, domestic life history.[2] Thus, he became a pioneer of using the newspaper as a resource for writing social theory. The perspective was also induced to me by theories related to oral history and microhistory, which support the hypothesis that the interference of social sciences (sociology, anthropology, history) is beneficial to full knowledge.

Mark Feldstein in "Kissing Cousins: Journalism and Oral History"[3] compares the print and audio-visual media with oral history and argues that they lend documentary techniques to each other. Philip Graham states that "journalism is the first draft of history." Alessandro Portelli also addresses the topic regarding the techniques or rules that can be borrowed from oral history and vice versa:

> (...) of course, there are very different approaches. In journalism, there is no such great interest in the life story. In oral history the life story can become a book, while in journalism you can only write a feature article. I have turned a lot of oral history

[2] Gilberto Freyre, *Big House & Senzala*, Editura Record, Rio de Janeiro, 1998.

[3] Mark Feldstein, *Kissing Cousins: Journalism and Oral History* in The Oral History Review, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 1–22.

> interviews into press articles, but they were very long. The approach and structure are different. An oral history interview is also related to other research. You have more time to work on it, because you don't expect to publish it the next day. If I write an interview for a newspaper, I know I am writing it today, and tomorrow I have to turn it in. Another important difference is the lack of space. In journalism, you cannot publish an exact transcription. In oral history, we tend to be careful and demanding with the exact transcription of words because we actually produce a document. There is a line that marks the border between journalism and oral history, where journalism ends and where oral history begins as a continuation. But, of course, the relationship with time is different, the relationship with the language is different, the perspective in which you place the conversation is different, which makes them belong to distinct genres.[4]

[4] Oana Popițiu, "Istoria orală este un antidot pentru orice narațiune care domină" in Dilema veche, no. 312, 4-10 februarie 2010. Original romanian passage: "(...) desigur, sunt abordări foarte diferite. În jurnalism nu există un interes atât de mare pentru povestea vieții. În istoria orală *the life story* poate deveni o carte, în timp ce, în jurnalism, poți scrie doar un articol de tip feature. Am transformat foarte multe interviuri de istorie orală în articole de presă, dar erau foarte lungi. Abordarea şi structura sînt diferite. Un interviu de istorie orală este legat şi de alte cercetări. Ai mai mult timp să lucrezi la el, pentru că nu te aştepți să-l publici a doua zi. Dacă scriu un interviu pentru un ziar, ştiu

Mark Feldstein also identifies several common features:[5]

- the concern for recording information;
- the accuracy of information;
- the fact that both are based on the interview.

In his opinion, the journalist relates to current events, while the historian is concerned about the past. It is the same opinion supported by the historian Alesandro Portelli, who speaks from his own experience:

> When I write for the papers, I write more editorial. I don't really write stories. However, I like to write for the newspapers and I know it is very different. As I mentioned, when I take an oral history interview and turn it into a newspaper article, I get more freedom in terms of language, because I have to synthesize. When I have to write rigorously, as for a book or for a scientific publication, I tend to be more careful in terms of choice of words. I do not expect the texts I write for the newspapers to be evaluated according to scientific criteria, as when I write an oral

că îl scriu azi şi mîine trebuie să-l predau. O altă diferenţă importantă este lipsa spaţiului. În jurnalism nu poţi publica o transcriere exactă. În istoria orală tindem să fim atenţi şi exigenţi cu transcrierea exactă a cuvintelor pentru că, de fapt, producem un document. Există o linie care delimitează graniţa dintre jurnalism şi istoria orală, unde se termină jurnalismul şi unde începe istoria orală, ca o continuare. Dar, desigur, relaţia diferită cu timpul, relaţia diferită cu limba, perspectiva diferită în care plasezi conversaţia le fac să aparţină altor genuri."

[5] Mark Feldstein, *Kissing Cousins: Journalism and Oral History* in The Oral History Review, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 1–22.

> history interview, which must rise at academic level. For example, when you write an oral history material, you have footnotes, while for a newspaper article you don't need such a device. Neither magazines in Italy use footnotes. The reader doesn't want to read a study. Oral history is aimed to be studied. But in journalism, and in oral history, you are practically doing the same thing. You are going to interview someone, and then you write about it. The materials serve other purposes. Only the manner in which you write differs. None is better than the other, but they have different functions. It would be meaningless for newspapers to use technical or academic terminology.[6]

[6] Oana Popițiu, "Istoria orală este un antidot pentru orice narațiune care domină" in Dilema veche, no. 312, 4-10 februarie 2010. Original romanian passage: "Cînd scriu pentru ziare, scriu mai mult editoriale. Nu prea scriu reportaje. Cu toate acestea, îmi place să scriu pentru ziare şi ştiu că este foarte diferit. Aşa cum am menţionat, cînd iau un interviu de istorie orală şi îl transform într-un articol de ziar îmi iau mai multă libertate în ceea ce priveşte limba, pentru că trebuie să sintetizez. Cînd trebuie să scriu riguros, ca pentru o carte sau pentru o publicaţie cu caracter ştiinţific, am tendinţa să fiu mai atent în ceea ce priveşte alegerea cuvintelor. Nu mă aştept ca textele pe care le scriu pentru ziare să fie evaluate după criterii ştiinţifice, ca atunci cînd scriu un interviu de istorie orală, care trebuie să se ridice la nivel academic. De exemplu, cînd redactezi un material de istorie orală, ai note de subsol, în timp ce pentru un articol de ziar nu ai nevoie de un asemenea aparat. Nici revistele, în Italia, nu utilizează note de subsol. Pentru că, firește, cititorul nu dorește studiu. Istoria orală are ca scop studiul. Însă şi în jurnalism, şi în istoria orală, practic, faci acelaşi lucru. Te duci să intervievezi pe cineva, după care scrii despre acest lucru. Materialele

On the other hand, Feldstein says that the two are related, but separate. What differentiates them is the ultimate goal, although both are interested in recording the truth.[7] In his opinion, journalists want to educate while historians are interested in recording the facts and placing them in context. The issue he raises is assigning whose truth they each tell. As an observation, we must acknowledge that some journalistic productions (journalistic pieces which could be assimilated by oral history) cannot constitute sometimes historical sources because their sources cannot be disclosed. And American historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, said that all spheres of human activity should be taken into account because no sector of social life can be understood in isolation.[8]

Oral History – introductory notions

During the American Civil War (1861-1865), journalists relied heavily on interviews, when ironically, overlooked them. When the United States of America entered World War II (1942-1945), President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered all the Government's military and civil agencies to record their experience during the war – i.e. oral history interviews. It was at that time that the term *oral history* gained some legitimacy.

servesc altor scopuri. Diferă doar maniera în care scrii. Nici unul nu este mai bun decît celălalt, dar au funcţii diferite. Ar fi lipsit de sens ca ziarele să utilizeze terminologia tehnică sau academică."

[7] Mark Feldstein, *Kissing Cousins: Journalism and Oral History* in The Oral History Review, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 1–22.

[8] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The frontier in American history*, New York: H. Holt and company, 1920.

The value of oral history was first recognized by Professor Allan Nevins of Columbia University who, as a young journalist in New York City, had been dismayed to learn that for many famous personages the only available summary of their contributions to society was in their obituaries. Nevins considered a great loss to the historical record that none of their recollections of the past remained after death.[9] In 1948 he founded the first Oral History Research Office at Columbia University. But the discipline registered a true growth in the 60's and the early 70's, when cassette recorders became accessible and could be used to tape testimonies that described social movements: civil rights, feminism, anti-war phenomenon, protests in Vietnam. Paul Thompson gives a possible definition of what oral history means, defining it as history built around people.[10] Linda Shopes however believes that the term *oral history* itself is inaccurate and is only used to designate formal aspects repeated in the past presented from a cultural point of view and sanctioned by the keepers of tradition, or the informal conversations among the members of a family, between neighbors, colleagues or about what happened in the old days.[11] In its sense, oral history is the subject of a printed compilation of stories about past and present experiences, as well as interviews

[9] Richard Lochead, "Three approaches to oral history: the journalistic, the academic, and the archival" in Oral History Forum d'histoire orale, Vol. 1. 1976.

[10] Paul Thompson, *Oral History, The voice of the past,* Oxford University Press., 2000.

[11] Linda Shopes, *What is Oral History* (from the Making Sense of Evidence series on History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web retrieved from http://historymatters.gmu.edu.

with individuals. Each of these uses of the term has a certain value. Undoubtedly, throughout history, most people have learned about the past through the spoken word. It is the principle of unique, unrepeatable, and private[12] valid in the two types of writing? Where does the subjectivity begin and what falls into the category of faultless objectiveness? Who sets the topics of primary interest? Paul Thompson believes that history ultimately depends on the social purpose. His perspective on history is, conceptually speaking, similar to what press is and could be assimilated to mass-media functions. He supports the social role and political cause at the expense of a simple methodology, transforming with this approach historians and history, empowering and conserving the world of forgotten masses, which is also what public journalism does. Thompson justifies his theory by explaining that so far the nature of the existing recordings was to reflect the attitude, the views of the authorities, while oral history makes an equitable attempt as possible: witnesses may be appointed from lower social classes, non-privileged or even losers.[13] The theory of oral history, just like any other theory of history, has changed over the years and continues to do so, as the new thoughts and concepts of historians emerge. The method of interviewing differs from interview to interview. Some interviewers prefer field documenting, armed with a complete set of questions, without the intention of formulating other questions – and just that set of questions – no matter where the answers of the

[12] Peter Burke, *Istorie şi teorie socială*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1999.

[13] Paul Thompson, *Oral History, The voice of the past*, Oxford University Press., 2000, p.7.

interviewed can lead. Other interview operators do very little research to allow the interviewer to choose the direction of the interview. The majority of them choose the middle road – preparation, but not so rigorous as to miss the interesting and valuable advice that the interviewed can offer. Oral history is not an exact science and probably will never be, simply because it involves the decision processes, which varies according to the interviewer and to a certain extent, to interviewee.

Objectivity and Subjectivity

As far as the approach is concerned, Ricoeur makes some remarks about the objectivity of history and the subjective history.[14] He argues that the very notion of historical choice is judged by importance, and the quality of the person asking the questions is reflected in the selection of the documents that are being questioned. For Ricoeur, the historian is the one who practices ways of explanation that exceed his reflection, and the explanation is provided before being possessed in the reflexive plan. I believe that the same barriers are imposed on the journalist, who, despite the rigors, the alleged concision, the clarity, accuracy and noninvolvement, is struck by the subjective subject-matter choice itself. Incidentally, when we talk about being or not being biased, we must mention that, while journalists are being asked for objectivity, they cannot be a hundred percent objective, but only take into account that they should try. Moreover, Kovach & Rosenstiel suggest that objectivity does not fall into the fact

[14] Paul Ricoeur, *History and truth*, Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996.

that journalists are biased or not (free of bias);[15] on the contrary, they may be unconsciously biased. The authors argue that the aim of achieving objectivity should rather be regarded as an incentive given to journalists who, in turn, should develop consistent methods of verifying information in such a way that cultural or personal sympathies do not undermine the accuracy of their work. For example, Kovach&Rosenstiel define journalism as the discipline of verification ("the essence of journalism as a discipline of verification"[16]). Vetting information is what makes the difference and separates journalism from propaganda, entertainment, fiction or art. The historian is also confronted with the vulgar conceptions of causality[17] namely that the latest phenomenon is the least permanent, the most exceptional in the general order of the world.[18] As for the historical distance phenomenon, Ricouer also explains that rationally understanding means knowing, identifying the language.[19] Tisdale argues that both oral history and journalism are concerned with recording information, and both rely on accuracy and focus on the interview, as a source of information and credibility.[20] While discussing the similarities between oral history and

[15] Kovach, B & Rosenstiel, T. 2001. The Elements of Journalism: what newspeople should know and the public should expect. New York: Three Rivers Press, p.72.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 70-93.
[17] Peter Burke, *Istorie şi teorie socială*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 37.
[18] *Ibidem.*
[19] *Idem.*, p. 39.
[20] John R. Tisdale, *Observational Reporting as Oral History: How Journalists Interpreted the Death and Destruction of Hurricane Audrey*, The Oral History Review, 22 June 2000.

journalism, Alesandro Portelli reasons that what differs is the prospect in which you expose the subject:

> There's something the French call *the history of the present moment*, which is closely related to journalism, of course, because journalism is about the present moment. But what differs is the prospect in which you expose the subject. You need to talk about the history of the present moment, on the present moment from the perspective of a long period of time. And the present moment is always another.[21]

From Journalism to Oral History

Further evidence of the convergence of the two areas is that the term "cultural journalism" was first used to describe the publications inspired by Foxfire, a quarterly magazine produced by high school students in Georgia, United States of America.[22] Developed in 1966 by Professor Eliot Wigginton, Foxfire magazine published interviews with seniors from the community – i.e. an oral

[21] Oana Popițiu, "Istoria orală este un antidot pentru orice narațiune care domină" in Dilema veche, nr. 312, 4-10 februarie 2010. Original Romanian passage: "Există ceva pe care francezii îl numesc l'histoire du moment present, care este în strînsă legătură, desigur, cu jurnalismul, căci jurnalismul este despre momentul prezent. Dar ceea ce diferă este perspectiva în care expui subiectul. Trebuie să vorbești de istoria momentului prezent, privind momentul prezent din perspectiva unei lungi perioade de timp. Iar momentul prezent este întotdeauna altul."

[22] Pamela Wood, "You and Aunt Arie: A Guide to Cultural Journalism Based on "Foxfire" and Its Descendants." (1975) available online at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED120090.pdf

history project. This magazine began to publish materials about traditional music, food, medicine, traditions, religion and even folklore. Foxfire entered the national circuit only in the year 1960 and teachers from across the country and even from abroad adapted the concept that this magazine represented to their own students and communities. Thus, over 150 publications emerged by 1979.[23] These student publications shed light over what means to be Puerto Rican in New York City, black in Texas, French in Louisiana; they described what it is like living in a village or in a city, in a fishing community or a mining one, on the Great Plains or on the coast of the ocean. This type of student publications continued to sprout in at least 109 schools and similar projects were carried out outside schools.[24] Therefore, a significant number of publications ended up paying attention to the cultural heritage. The Foxfire-inspired publications combined techniques of oral history and journalism, with the intent of portraying unique cultures and universal values. On the other hand, there are the similarities to public journalism. As I stated from the outset, in Romania, interest in the social field has increased in the online space, where people's stories – their life story – receive immediate feedback. Whether it is an issue of poverty, subcultures, discrimination, social integration and so on (matters that can also be mined in oral history research), or we are talking about the problems ethnic, minority etc. communities are facing, we can safely say that these have become among the most successful

[23] Kathryn Olmstead, Touching the Past, Enroute to the Future: Cultural Journalism in the Curriculum of Rural Schools. ERIC Digest. 1989 available online at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED308057.pdf.
[24] *Idem.*

journalistic projects. Examples in this regard are journalistic materials published by the Recorder.ro, Scena9, DOR etc. – online publications that put the people in the foreground, outbidding the social subject in various journalistic forms (reportage, feature, and inquiry). On the other hand, the news sites (Realitatea.net, Antena3, Digi24 etc.), the quality publications that still appear on the print (e.g. *Adevărul*), but also the tabloids (e.g. *Libertatea*) also exploit the social field, which seems to have reinvented itself in recent years. We are witnessing return to the "daily miracle," a resurrection of this area considered a few years ago "the Cinderella of newsroom." Nowadays, the journalist better understands the occurrences in the society and are able to explain them to their readers. The social field has developed with the development of the society it presents, which is naturally the source of the subjects it addresses every day. According to Val Vâlcu, nowadays, the area covered by the social field has increased precisely because of the emergence of cultural currents inspired by street life in the suburban areas of the big cities. As a consequence, an important place in the Social page is occupied by these topics of culture or urban culture. In English, the concept of social journalism is rather found under the notion of public journalism. Moreover, the terms of civic journalism (civic journalism) and citizen journalism are also used. Some studies equate the two terms, but we must make a clear distinction between them. Edmund B. Lambeth of the University of Missouri gave a definition of public journalism in 1998 – Public journalism is a form of journalism that aims to:

- Listen to the stories and ideas of the citizens, even if they choose their own angle of approaching them;

- To find the most appropriate angle of approach to community problems;
- To stimulate public debate, but also help understand certain problems;
- To take initiative and disseminate information related to major public issues in a way that could contribute to generating solutions;
- To place importance on the communication with the readership.[25]

It should be noted from the outset that public journalism may refer to:

- Citizenship Journalism – This is a form of journalism practiced by non-professionals (readers who capture images, etc.)
- Civic Journalism – a type of journalism practiced by professionals, which centers on the community and solving their problems.

Civic Journalism is the focus of present study and that which involves the democratization process. In this respect, we must bear in mind that civic journalism not only informs but attempts to engage citizens in public debates. In this case, the reader is no longer a mere spectator, but he becomes part of the social and cultural processes that take place on the public stage. Though in our country the term *Social journalism* is used to delimit the area covered, i.e. a type of specialized journalism, the significance of civic journalism is entirely different. Civic

[25] Paul Voakes, "A brief history of public journalism," in *National civic review*, 2004, p. 25.

Journalism has its origins in the United States, and its emergence is closely linked to the anemic participation of the public (reader) in the public debate. In the 90s, the gap between those holding the power and citizens, but also between citizens and the press institutions had become very deep. Haas & Steiner promoted the idea of civic journalism, stating that journalists are also citizens, which means they are actively involved in the process of socio-political change.[26] As such, the journalist is primarily a citizen of a community and only after that a journalist. According to Charity, these journalists are encouraged to:

- Raise Awareness – citizens are looking for an agenda that corresponds to the problems they have and expect the media to highlight issues that have greater resonance in the public;
- Facilitate change;
- Allow decisions.[27]

In this respect, we must reiterate the social role that is also assumed by oral history, namely, to allow those who have not had a chance to be heard. This is in reality the desired aim: to give a voice to those who have not had one. They can contribute this way to "the great history," whether we are talking about journalism or oral history.

Microhistory, Oral History, Journalism

Perhaps the most appropriate parallel should be between journalistic productions and microhistory. The first similarity resides in the very definition of

[26] Haas, T & Steiner, L, "Public Journalism: a Reply to Critics," in *Journalism*, 7(2): 238-254), 2006.

[27] A. Charity, *Doing Public Journalism*, New York & London: The Guilford Press, 1995.

microhistory, which is essentially based on the reduction to a lower scale of observation, to a microscopic analysis and to an intensive study of documentary materials.[28] I would only add, for journalism – field experience. Bronislaw Malinowski claimed that the anthropologist must abandon his comfortable seat on the porch of his missionary shed,[29] because only by going to the villages, the field will he be able to understand the native's point of view. I consider the general theory valid for those who have concerns in the field of social sciences, and as such historians, too. Giovanni Levi argues that microhistorians are looking for a realistic depiction of the human behavior, committing themselves to deciphering the type of person one is, based one's action sand conflicting relationships in which one is found.[30] The notable distinction here is that social reporting, contained under the umbrella of the term public journalism, calls on the press to help revive civic life and improve public dialogue, as opposed to history which:

"is a method that does not correspond to any particular study object... history is not about people or any particular object. It consists entirely of its method. As we say about some careers, history can lead to anything, provided you manage to get out of it."[31]

However, history does not have the ambition to relive events, but to re-compose, re-construct that is to compose and constitute a retrospective chain of facts. The

[28] Giovanni Levi, *On Microhistory apud.* Peter Burke, *New perspectives on historical writing*, University Park, 1991.
[29] *Ibidem.*
[30] *Ibidem*, p. 8.
[31] M.I. Finley, *Uz şi abuz de istorie*, Editura Rao, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 142.

objectivity of history lies precisely in this waiver to coincide, to relive, in this ambition to develop a chain of facts and level of understanding of a historian.[32] However, my debate does not deal with the theories of traditional history but, as I have previously stated, more those of microhistory, which Burke says that it "trivializes history, studying the biographies of important people or the common difficulties of small communities."[33]

On the other hand, Ricoeur claims that the past we've alienated from is people. "However, this thing entirely of the people from the past, I said it was an idea, limited to intellectual approximation."[34] Even the historian Gilberto Freyre, in his process of writing the volume The History of Brazil from the 19th-20th century, sent questionnaires to 1,000 people born in 1850-1900, who represented the main social groups. The journalistic investigation, in terms of social reporting, is merely concerned with the contemporary problems of society, which is, in fact, history.

As for the writing, here's what Burke says: "Literary theory is now manifesting its effect on historians and social anthropologists who are all increasingly aware of the existence of literary conventions in their own texts, rules that all have followed so far without realizing it."[35] The models and methods practiced by history are

[32] Paul Ricoeur*, Istorie şi adevăr,* Editura Anastasia, București, 1996, p. 34.
[33] Peter Burke, *Istorie şi teorie socială*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 53.
[34] Paul Ricoeur, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[35] Peter Burke, *Istorie şi teorie socială*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 31.

comparing structurally fundamentally similar societies, comparing fundamentally different societies. To support the link between the two fields, I would also mention that American historian Jack Hexter separated intellectuals in two categories: those who see things as a whole (lumpers) and those who cut a feather (splitters), arguing that the splitters are superior to those that look at the various events as a whole. "Generalizations... are usually an integration made by the historian of those views on the historical explanation and causality, which he least obviously exhibited in the selection and organization of the facts. Unlike the factual assertions, 'generalizations' seem to be dangerously flexible, easily folding to the subjective mind that has proposed them."[36] Levi Strauss used to say that in order to understand a phenomenon we need to know not only what it is, but also how it occurred, as does the journalistical and historical investigation. He also mentioned that anthropology discovers structures or synchronic patterns, and history discovers diachronic structures or models.

Journalistic Portrait – The Life Story

In hindsight, we note that modern oral history itself began with the project coordinated by Professor Allan Nevins of the University of Columbia, as already mentioned. He aimed to collect the portraits of the great figures in the contemporary public life in America. In 1948, he began to record the memories of important people in America's life. In contrast to this approach, a pioneer of

[36] M.I. Finley, *Uz şi abuz de istorie*, Editura Rao, Bucureşti, 2000, p.77.

oral history in England, George Ewart Evans, collected the memories of the inhabitants of Suffolk villages, to address issues related to work and living. The survivors were considered "walking books." These interviews were published for the first time in the *"Ask the Fellow who cut the hay"* in 1956. Roughly in the same period, in Scotland, oral history saw a development, focusing predominantly on Scottish culture and history. Regardless of the way it manifests, oral history reflects political and social change. Alessandro Portelli said that talking means keeping the storyteller away from oblivion. Telling one's story is a natural part of human experience. Human beings communicate content, meaning through speech. Those who deal with oral history have capitalized on this tradition of verbal knowledge transmission and have created an important research technique that allows voice expression. Slater used oral history to understand how four black women from South Africa experienced urbanization.[37] Women, as it would have perhaps been expected, had both individual and common experiences, revealed by the process of history. The data showed how structural constraints have shaped the economic realities of these women, in a profound way.[38] The life stories, evolution stories, allow researchers to understand how the impact of social or economic change varies depending on the individual qualities of men and women. In journalism, the portrait is "an article that shapes someone's (known or not) personality, by registering one's characteristics: biography,

[37] Rachel Slater, "Using life histories to explore change: Women's urban struggles in Cape Town, South Africa," in *Gender & Development*, 2000, 8.2: 38-46.
[38] *Ibidem*, p. 38.

activity, lifestyle, opinions, way of being, physical details," as Jean Luc Martin Lagardette defines it. It can be a reportage-portrait or interview–portrait. The latter is, in my opinion, practiced in oral history, which uses the interviews a research method. The difference – which we must specify – is that these oral history interviews are drafted rigorously, unlike those in journalism, where it is allowed to edit the text for highlighting certain aspects. The historian will not describe the character-induced state. However, in journalism there are several types of portraits that can be listed: the one dominated by recounting (CV, short biographies, presentations of the topic), narrative portrait, as part of some reportage species, investigative, monograph, storytelling, the portrait created based on the dialogue in an interview, descriptive portrait as a frequent compositional type in most literary or journalistic species. The stages of documentation seem to coincide in both oral history and journalism, dealing with: documents, resumes, agency cards, folders, movies, photographs, photo reportages, tapes, photo albums, statements, interviews, articles, witness investigation, family members, neighbors and I would add archives, libraries etc.

Conclusions

Oral history and journalism, especially specialized journalism – public and cultural – often use the same research techniques and discuss similar topics. More to the point, the term of cultural journalism was used in the United States to describe an oral history project. The purpose of the final material is, however, that which makes the distinction between the two disciplines. If in the first

case – oral history – we are talking about a re-constitution of the past with document value, in the case of journalism, the objective is to inform. Journalism can therefore present a "draft" of history.

Differences are also present in terms of archiving of materials: oral history interviews are rigorously archived, while journalistic interviews can even be edited – especially in order to underline certain information. On the other hand, as far as journalistic production is concerned, it should be mentioned that there are certain constraints that are given by deadlines, which do not apply to oral history. The readership is also different. However, I strongly believe that specialists from these two different but very similar fields can learn from each other to improve their skills.

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