

Creating a "Vocabulary of Rupture" Following WWII Sexual Violence in Hungarian Women Writers' Narratives*

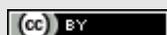
Agatha Schwartz

Abstract: In this paper, Schwartz analyses three narratives by Hungarian women writers—Alaine Polcz's *Asszony a fronton* (A Wartime Memoir), Judit Kováts's *Megtagadva* ['Denied'] and Fanni Gyarmati Miklósné Radnóti's *Napló* ['Diary']—with regard to their representation of the rapes of Hungarian women by Red Army soldiers during WWII. Schwartz examines to what degree the rapes are positioned as a "rupture" in the first person narrators' lives, and how the three narratives offer elements of a "vocabulary of rupture" (Butalia 2000) so as to work through traumatic memory and thus come to terms with both the short-term and long-term effects of trauma and social stigmatization. Even though the narratives eschew a black-and-white portrayal of the rapists, an orientalist stereotyping is nonetheless present. Schwartz concludes with Avery Gordon that these and other rape narratives can be read as part of the process of settling the ghosts of a still unresolved past violence yet beyond simple ideological binaries along the victim-perpetrator line.

Keywords: *wartime rape, WWII, "vocabulary of rupture," representations of trauma, haunting*

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Introduction

Rape and sexual violence in armed conflicts have been documented throughout the long twentieth century. However, it was not until the explosion into public knowledge of the mass rapes during the war in former Yugoslavia, particularly on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the war in Rwanda in the 1990s that sexual violence in war was finally given both "intellectual legitimacy and ethical urgency" (Herzog 2009: 3). The media attention the rapes in Bosnia and Rwanda elicited and the subsequent, long-overdue changes in international law helped bring renewed attention to other episodes of mass rapes that had occurred in WWII in Germany and in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Poland, Hungary, and the former Soviet Union. This attention paid to the "female face of war" (to paraphrase 2015 literature Nobel Prize winner Svetlana Alexievich) has prompted scholars to challenge the still predominantly male gendering of war and the omission of women's experiences and narratives from official accounts of war which, in the words of Penny Summerfield, are "reproduced as (inevitably) predominantly masculine" (Summerfield 1998: 28). More recently, Caroline Schaumann confirmed that "knowledge of women's wartime experiences remains scant" (Schaumann 2009: 102) and German historian Miriam Gebhardt pointed out that even the latest historical accounts of WWII make almost no mention whatsoever of the mass rapes that occurred all over Europe (Gebhardt 2015: 22-23).

When talking about the rapes of Hungarian women in WWII, the exact numbers are difficult if not impossible to establish. Andrea Pető uses the term *számháború*, i.e. waging a war with numbers that are based partly on estimates and depend on the sources used (Pető 2015b). Birgit Beck-Heppner considers that the numbers of women raped in WWII are not the most important factor when discussing this difficult and important topic (Beck-Heppner 2012). The rape of Hungarian women at the hands of the Soviet army had become largely a societal taboo after WWII, only to resurface as a topic after the 1990s, i.e. for decades it "was officially suppressed, though still present due to rumors and some reports" (Lóránd 2015: 332). The rapes have since been interpreted in the context of various dominant discourses about Hungary's recent history. As James Mark has argued, "contradictory stories that continue to be told about rape are a direct consequence of Hungary's unmastered past—and there is still very little sign that consensual accounts of the Red Army's behaviour and of the country's experience of the war, Fascism and Communism can be acceptably constructed within present-day Hungarian society" (Mark 2005: 161). According to Pető, from a historian's perspective, "the history of the sexual violence committed in Hungary by Soviet soldiers has been written, although without an examination of Russian archival sources" [*a szovjet katonák által elkövetett nemi erőszak Magyarországon meg van írva—igaz, az orosz levéltári források vizsgálata nélkül*] (Pető 2015a). What is still missing, however, is a more thorough analysis of Hungarian women writers' narratives about and their representations of wartime rape.

In my paper, I am not interested in a reiteration of findings regarding the instrumentalization of wartime rape for the purposes of constructing a national historical memory based on collective victimization on the one hand, and the demonization of one single (here Soviet) enemy, on the other (see Mark 2005, Pető 2003, Sziller 2013, Lóránd 2015). I am rather interested in what narratives about the rapes of Hungarian women in WWII can reveal regarding representation of the rapes and of the rapists, as written and told by three Hungarian women

writers,¹ the most well-known being Alaine Polcz's *Asszony a fronton* (*A Wartime Memoir: Hungary 1944-1945*), published in 1991 and translated into several languages, in which the author gives a detailed account of the rapes she experienced. The other two narratives are more recent. Judit Kováts published the novel *Megtagadva* ['Denied'] in 2012. It is based on her interviews with survivors and told from the perspective of a teenage Hungarian girl. The most recent one is Fanni Gyarmati Miklósné Radnóti's diary, *Napló 1935-1946* published in 2014, in which the author reminisces, among many other events from her and her famous husband's life, also of the rapes by Soviet soldiers she and other women around her suffered. Two of the narratives (Polcz and Gyarmati) are autobiographical, whereas Kováts re-writes the oral accounts she collected in the form of a first-person fictional narrative. Regarding their reception, two of the narratives (Polcz and Kováts) have been read in the context of constructing a discourse of post-communist Hungarian national victimhood (see Mark 2005, Lóránd 2015, Sziller 2013). Such claim would be difficult to make regarding Gyarmati's *Napló* given that the author was Jewish-Hungarian and a Holocaust survivor. In my analysis, I focus on what is said or left unsaid in these narratives, i.e. how the rapes and the Soviets are represented and how the female characters are said to cope with the traumatizing physical and psychological consequences. As Urvashi Butalia reminds us:

To me, the way people choose to remember an event, a history, is at least as important as what one might call the 'facts' of that history, for after all, these latter are not self-evident givens; instead, they too are interpretations, as remembered and recorded by one individual or another (Butalia 2000: 8).

The questions leading my analysis will therefore be the following: to what degree are the rapes formulated as a "rupture" (Butalia) in the first person narrators' lives; and whether and how the narratives succeed in formulating a "vocabulary of rupture" (Butalia 2000: 200) so as to come to terms with their traumatizing effects. I will conclude with some reflections on what Avery Gordon calls haunting as the consequence of an unresolved violent and traumatic experience (Gordon 1997).

Alaine Polcz (1922-2007): *Asszony a fronton*²

Polcz published her autobiographical narrative *Asszony a fronton* in 1991. As pointed out by translator Albert Tezla in his introduction, Polcz was already a well-established author of several books, but her publications were in her professional field of child psychology (Tezla 1998: 9). The importance of *Asszony a fronton* in Hungarian literature has been recognized by Louise O. Vasvári:

¹ The topic was also thematized by some male writers, such as Sándor Márai, and featured in a much debated 2013 documentary by Fruzsina Skrabski, *Elhallgatott gyalázat* ['Silenced Shame'].

² Given the two existing English translations of this title, I will be using the Hungarian original. However, all citations will be from the 1998 translation by Albert Tezla, *A Wartime Memoir: Hungary 1944-1945*.

Here she introduces for the first time a new discourse of the body in the depiction of rape by Soviet soldiers and other physical suffering in wartime, leading readers into such forbidden sexual and moral spaces which hitherto literally could not be uttered in Hungarian (Vasvári 2011: 73).

As a matter of fact, the 1990s saw a real upsurge in Hungarian women's narratives that thematized the body in a much more open and bold way unseen in Hungarian women's literature since the 1920s.³ *Asszony a fronton* received the "Book of the Year" award in 1991 and the prestigious Déry Prize in 1992 (Lóránd 2015: 331).

As rightly pointed out by Vasvári, Polcz uses the term "*asszony*" rather than "*nő*" in her title, thus informing the reader from the very beginning of her narrative of the fact that she lived through her plights (including her marriage) as a married woman. As a matter of fact, the narrative sets in with Polcz's wedding and so-called honeymoon, during which she contracts gonorrhea from her cheating, drinking, and abusive husband who gives her no marital pleasure, sexual or otherwise. Her marriage, as has been argued (see Lukic 2010, Vasvári 2011), can be interpreted as her first experience with sexual abuse and violence, thus the first "rupture" she experiences although at this point, she is still too naive and too infatuated with her husband to be able to recognize it as such. The later multiple rapes at the hand of the Soviet soldiers will only further exacerbate this rupture, although, as Vasvári argues, they will paradoxically also lead to her becoming more aware of her body (Vasvári 2011: 74).

The chapter entitled "The Front" is the central one and it is also the longest. It is here that Polcz offers an account of the rapes she and other women from her family and circle of acquaintances experienced. Polcz uses a simple language to name acts of terrible violence. Although Tezla notes the absence of any "psychologizing" (Tezla 1998: 20) in the narrative, it is precisely Polcz's blunt and unsentimental writing style that likely helps her in the process of coming to terms with the traumatic memory she is trying to work through with her writing: "I didn't move. I thought I would die from it. Of course, you don't die from it. Unless they break your back, but even then, not immediately" (Polcz 1998: 107) [*Nem mozdultam. Azt hittem, hogy ebbe belehalok. Persze, nem hal bele az ember. Kivéve, ha eltörik a gerincét, de akkor sem azonnal*] (Polcz 1991: 111). According to Dominick LaCapra, traumatic memory changes over time:

So-called traumatic memory carries the experience into the present and future. [...] In traumatic memory the past is not simply history as over and done with. It lives on experientially and haunts or possesses the self or the community (in the case of shared traumatic events) and must be worked through in order for it to be remembered with some degree of conscious control and critical perspective that

³ I am thinking here first and foremost of Renée Erdős' novels published in the 1920s that openly thematized women's sexuality, such as *A nagy sikoly* ('The Big Scream', 1923) and *Végzetes vonzalom* ('Fatal Attraction', 1926). From the 1990s, particularly worth mentioning are *Talált nő* ('The Found Woman', 1996) by Zsuzsa Forgács; *Két tojás* ('Two Peas in a Pod', 1996) by Dóra Esze; and *Kecskerúzs* ('Goat Lipstick', 1997) by Agáta Gordon.

enables survival and, in the best of circumstances, ethical and political agency in the present (LaCapra 2004: 55-56).

This "working through" of traumatic memory via narrative acts is what Suzette A. Henke has termed "scriptotherapy" (Henke 1998: xv), i.e. writing that enables the "ruptured" self to reinvent itself through a particular "vocabulary of rupture" (Butalia). For Polcz, this "vocabulary of rupture" includes the naming of rough details, of the rapes or of other horrible sufferings her own body and the bodies of those around her had to endure:

As for how much time passed and how many of them there were, I do not know. Toward dawn I understood why the back broke. They did the following: they pushed the legs toward the shoulders and threw themselves between them on their knees. If one of them did this too hard, the woman's spine would snap, not because they wanted it to, but because of the unrestrained force. They shoved the woman into a curl on a point on her spine backward and forward, and they didn't even notice if it broke (Polcz 1998: 107).

[*Hogy mennyi idő telhetett el és hányan voltak, nem tudom. Hajnal felé értettem meg a gerinctörést. A következőt csinálják: az ember két lábát a válla fölé hajtják, és térdelésből feküsznek bele. Ha valaki ezt túl erősen teszi, elroppan a nő gerince. Nem, mert akarják, hanem a fékevesztett erőszak miatt. A csigába tekert nőt a gerince egy pontján lökik előre-hátra, s észre sem veszik, hogyha elroppan* (Polcz 1991: 111)].

Like the internationally famous and widely translated German narrative by Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin (Eine Frau in Berlin, 1954)* published for the first time about half a century before *Asszony a fronton*,⁴ Polcz names rape for what it is, namely brutal expression of physical violence: "erő-szak," which Albert Tezla's English translation as "aggression" does not quite convey. All "rape mythology" (DuMont and Parniss 1999), that embellishes rape ultimately tolerating it as a "necessary" social evil and as a consequence of an allegedly uncontrollable male sexual drive that women bring upon themselves is dispelled here: "This had nothing to do with embraces or sex. It had nothing to do with anything" (Polcz 1998: 106) [*Ennek semmi köze nem volt az öleléshez, sem a szexushoz. Semmihez nem volt köze*] (Polcz 1991: 109).

Like the German anonymous author, Polcz depicts a situation of utter lawlessness in which the weakest and least protected between the front lines, women of all age groups— but she also gives examples of animals—become reduced, as per Giorgio Agamben, to *bare life*, i.e., "their bodies become disposable objects that can be mistreated or killed without legal consequences for the perpetrator" (Pötzsch 2012: 20). Indeed in the narrative, the rapes have no legal consequences for the perpetrators until the very end of the war, and even then, there are

⁴⁴ Vasvári does not exclude a possible influence of this narrative on Polcz citing the similarity in the way she formulates her title.

only random cases of rapists being caught and shot. Women's agency in this situation of utter chaos is severely limited and essentially reduced to sexual bartering. Polcz makes no secret of the fact that she, like other women, had to occasionally prostitute herself in order to survive—for food, a place to sleep or to be temporarily sheltered by one higher-ranking rapist so as to be left in peace by numerous others (a survival strategy also depicted by the author of *A Woman in Berlin* and in other rape narratives; see Drakulić 1999). Polcz does not shun the word "whore" ("kurva") to describe this experience.

It is admirable that, despite her ordeals, Polcz does not demonize the Russians/Soviets. Quite the opposite, she admires them for their bravery and fearlessness and praises their unpredictable acts of kindness. Perhaps even more importantly, she reflects on the other side of the war coin—namely, what Hungarian soldiers may have done in Russia: "Hungarian soldiers could not have behaved any more honorably in the Russian villages" (Polcz 1998: 103) [*A magyar katonák sem viselkedhettek sokkal tisztességesebben az orosz falvakban*] (Polcz 1991: 105). Polcz's surmise has since been proven accurate by historians who have done research in the field, such as Andrea Pető: "Hungarian troops committed similar atrocities on the territory of the Soviet Union as did the Soviets" [*magyar csapatok a volt Szovjetunió területén is hasonló bűntényeket követtek el, mint a szovjet csapatok*] (Pető 2015.1). But Polcz adds another significant nuance to her speculation, one that reveals a deep-seated orientalist stereotyping: "Only, they [the Hungarians] were not this barbaric. Here the East had invaded the West" (Polcz 1998: 103) [*Csak nem voltak ennyire vadak. Itt Kelet tört be Nyugatra*] (Polcz 1991: 105). Although she later admits that she feared the German soldiers, who also drank and vandalized, much more than the Russians because the Germans' brutality was more organized and predictable, the reader can see at work an orientalist discourse embedded in the Western European imaginary going back as far as the Enlightenment (see Wolff 1994). Although Hungary itself was often imagined as part of the less civilized (but also more exotic) "East" (see Switzer 2003, Reber 2001), Polcz implicitly defines Hungary as a part of the West invaded by two forces: the Germans, who although barbaric were still Westerners, and the Russians, who were the more barbaric (i.e. chaotic, impulsive, disorganized, oversexed) Orientals (see Zarkov 1995).

The "female face of war" Polcz presents includes the depiction of other traumatizing experiences, such as the witnessing of terrible human suffering from wounding, lice, dirt, blood sticking to raped bodies, hunger—the list could go on. The trauma gets exacerbated by the lack of human solidarity she repeatedly faces from fellow Hungarians such as being refused shelter overnight. She becomes utterly exhausted from all the horrors, to the point of contemplating suicide on multiple occasions. The "ruptures" her traumatic experiences create include various fears and, as a major element in the compulsive acting out of traumatic memory, nightmares she suffers for years to come (Polcz 1998: 137-8). There is one loyal companion that helps her live through many of these traumatic events more than any other human being (including her mother-in-law who is one of the rare people around her to express compassion toward her ordeals), one that goes with her through thick and thin never abandoning her (until Polcz has to give her up): her little dachshund, Filike. Filike's story, her loyalty, empathy when witnessing her owner's suffering (i.e. she whines while Polcz is being raped whereas humans do not intervene) and the fact that she basically saves Polcz's life on multiple occasions, is one of the most heart-rending parts of the book. The separation from Filike is, as a matter of fact, one of the lasting traumas Polcz experiences, to the point that it interferes with her ability to cry: "I parted company with

Filike. She was safe, but I felt completely lonely. I never cried again during the war. After this, I was unable to cry for years" (Polcz 1998: 126).

Like so many victims of rape (whether in war or peace time), Polcz is faced by a refusal to grant her story credibility, first and foremost by her own mother, as this much quoted passage from the book demonstrates:

My mother called me aside after dinner and said, "My dear girl, don't tell such nasty stories, people might believe them!"
I looked at her: "Mother, it is the truth." She began crying and put her arms around me. Then I said, "Mother, I said they took everyone away, they raped every woman! You said they took away women here, too."
"Yes, but only those who were whores. You are not one," my mother said. Then she threw herself on me and begged, "My dear, tell me it is not true!" "All right," I said, "it is not true. They took me away just to nurse the sick." (Polcz 1998: 141-2)

[Anyám vacsora után félrehívott, és azt mondta: kislányom, ilyen csúnya vicceket ne csinálj, mert elhiszik!]

Ránéztem: "Anyukám, ez igaz!"—Anyám sírni kezdett és megölelt. Akkor azt mondtam: "Anyukám, mondtam, hogy mindenkit elvittek, hogy minden nőt megerőszakoltak! Azt mondtátok, itt is elvitték a nőket."

"Igen, de csak azokat, akik kurvák. És te nem vagy olyan"—mondta anyám.

Aztán rám borult és könnyögött: "Kislányom, mondd, hogy nem igaz!"—"Jó—mondtam—, nem igaz; csak úgy vittek el, betegeket ápolni" (Polcz 1991: 155).]

After that, a veil of silence falls over Polcz's story for many years to come: "As for what happened to me, I hardly spoke about it to anyone" (Polcz 1998: 155) [*Hogy mi történt velem, arról nemigen beszéltem senkinek*] (Polcz 1991: 171).

Judit Kováts (b. 1961): *Megtagadva* ('Denied', 2012)

This well-known mechanism of silencing rape victims and thus impeding with their attempt to formulate a "vocabulary of rupture," described by Polcz, is also expressed in Judit Kováts's narrative *Megtagadva*. Dalma Sziller offers an analysis of the reception of this book, concluding that it follows the line of a Hungarian discourse of national victimhood—i.e. rather than paying any attention to the narrative framing, critics uncritically take the events represented at face value (Sziller 2013). On the whole, Kováts's novel was interpreted in the Hungarian media as a symbol of the Hungarian nation and its collective suffering (along the lines of the "raped motherland") rather than a story about gendered violence of which individual women (represented through one fictional female protagonist in the novel) were victims. Sziller considers Kováts's novel essentially a bad copy of Polcz's, which I find overstated. While there are traces of what may be considered an influence of Polcz's narrative, there are also substantial differences. Moreover, what may appear as an influence from Polcz can just as much be interpreted as a reoccurring feature of women's narratives about wartime rape.

Kováts, with a background in history and working in archives (Sziller 2013: 39) composed her novel based on interviews she had conducted with survivors. By using this oral

history method, Kováts's intention was to create a different account of historical events ignored by mainstream history. This intention on the author's part to create an account of real events does not take away from the fact that what she produced is a novel the genre of which could best be defined as a "*leányregény*"—a novel about a young girl, traditionally intended for an audience of the same age group. The narrative is largely focalized through the young protagonist, seventeen-year old Anna Somlyói who is also the narrator. Like Polcz's memoir, Anna's story is also told as a memoir (albeit a fictional one) that begins during the war, in 1942, when she is still a happy-go-lucky grade six grammar school pupil living in a small Hungarian town, who enjoys American movies and experiences her first love with a fellow pupil, which the narrator refers to as "a dream" [*álom*] (Kováts 2012: 33).⁵ Chapter one ends on a foreboding note announcing some bad events that Anna will soon be facing: "two months later [...] I became an old woman" [*két hónapra rá [...] öregasszony lett belőlem*] (Kováts 2012: 33), thus emphasizing the "rupture" the war will bring about in Anna's life. She witnesses the effects of the war first through the plight of her town's Jewish population, which ends in their deportation. The second chapter of the book describes this dark episode in detail, including the looting of Jewish property by the gentile population and their moving into the emptied Jewish houses. Anna becomes complicit in the collective guilt of her town by not helping her Jewish friends who are about to be deported and by not even raising her hand to wave them farewell before they are herded into the wagons. Following the Allied bombings in chapter three, the Russians enter the narrative in chapter four. The narrator ends chapter three with the following sentence: "the person who lived through what was to follow, was not me. It was another Anna Somlyói" [*ami következett, az nem én voltam. Az egy másik Somlyói Anna volt*] (Kováts 2012: 90). This splitting of the personality often found in rape narratives has been interpreted as a way of protecting the self, as minimizing the impact of trauma (see Schwartz 2015). We can also see it as part of creating a "vocabulary of rupture," of a rupture whose effects on both body and mind of the raped woman are profound.

The arrival of the Russians is preceded by anti-Soviet propaganda (similar to what happened in Germany, as described by Anonymous and other German rape narratives; see Grossmann 2011). This demonizing and highly orientalized image of a raping and murderous Asian horde creates a fearful expectation in Anna, although at the time she cannot yet understand what it really meant to "defile women" [*a nők gyalázása*] (Kováts 2012: 98). Anna's age and her virginity are the one important factor when determining her experience of the rapes as compared to Polcz and Gyarmati. When Sziller criticizes Kováts's novel for featuring a rape victim who, unlike Polcz's, is unable to transform her victimhood into agency (i.e. she is not able to work through her traumatic memory), one has to think of the fact that rape in war had different consequences for women with previous sexual experience and those young girls who had none (see Anonymous, Köpp, Polcz). When referring to rape, the narrator, similar to Polcz, uses the word "*erőszak*" but also various euphemisms, such as "going through" [*mentek végig*] or "defiling" [*meggyalázták*] a woman (Kováts 2012: 117), something also quite common in rape narratives in other languages (see von Münch 2009). Although the young girls are hidden by their families in bunkers, they are discovered by the soldiers as narrated in chapter seven. Anna's

⁵ All translations from *Megtagadva* are mine.

first rape is, similar to Polcz's, a gang rape, but its brutality is described in even more gruesome detail, offering one of the most compelling examples of a "vocabulary of rupture" regarding the full impact and the deep damage rape leaves behind:

It all happened suddenly; I do not know how many hands fell over me. Both my arms were tied down, they were holding my head and spread my legs with such a force that I thought my body would burst into two pieces. And then, when between my legs it felt like a knife cutting into my living flesh, I understood that there was no escape.

I screamed and the palm of a huge hand closed my mouth. A large flat palm, big enough to cover my nose as well so that I could not breathe. I started to choke. The choking drew my attention away from the pain felt between my legs, but when my head became free again and I could gasp for some air, it cut into me with such intensity that I shrieked. They slapped me pushing my legs even higher up, way into the sky. With every push of the Russian kneeling above me I rolled up and down on my vertebrae. The pain my own bones caused me was so horrid that I thought I would die. But I didn't die from this one nor from the next Russian who while panting into my face seemed to be hammering a wedge into me. The wedge pulled and tore my flesh penetrating me farther and farther, it felt like it was reaching my brain and splitting my skull. (Kováts 2012: 150-1)

[Hirtelen és egyszerre történt minden; nem tudom, hány kéz esett nekem. Két karomat a földhöz szegezték, a fejemet lefogták, a lábamat akkora erővel feszítették szét, hogy azt hittem, kettészakadok. És akkor, amikor mintha kést vágtak volna a lábam között az eleven húsumba, megértettem, hogy nincs menekvés.

Sikítottam, mire egy hatalmas tenyér a számra tapadt. Egy nagy lapáttenyér, amely akkora volt, hogy még az orromat is befedte, és amelytől nem kaptam levegőt. Fulladozni kezdtem. A fulladozás pár pillanatra elvonta a figyelmemet a lábam között érzett fájdalomról, de amikor kiszabadult a fejem és levegőhöz jutottam, olyan erővel hasított ismét belém, hogy visítottam. Felpofoztak, a lábamat még feljebb, egészen az égig emelték, a fölöttem térdeplő orosz minden lökésére le-fel gördültem a csigolyáimon. A kín, amelyet a saját csontom okozott, olyan iszonyú volt, hogy azt hittem, belehalok. De nem haltam bele, sem az újabb oroszba, aki az arcomba lihegve mintha kalapáccsal éket vert volna belém. Az ék tépte, szaggatta a húsumat, egyre beljebb és feljebb hatolt bennem, már egészen az agyamig ért, úgy éreztem, a koponyámat repeszti szét.]

It is only the splitting of her self that allows Anna to survive this brutal experience and other rapes that will follow, but the consequences will be lasting. She will be plagued by a late and extremely painful period and for a long time, by a nauseating fear and stomach cramps when she sees Soviet soldiers, in addition to carrying a deep disgust toward men and sexuality in general. Like Polcz, Anna also contracts an STD that will lead to infertility. An additional rupture for Anna's life will happen following the end of the war when she is pushed into entering a marriage

of convenience with a much older man so as to quiet down the social stigma she faces in her small community.

Anna the narrator offers no racialized bias when referring to her rapists. She emphasizes that despite their different hair or eyes there was no difference between them, they were simply all smelly, reduced to a big pupil staring into her eyes and panting into her ears (Kováts 2012: 151). Yet not all Russians are represented in a bad light, and they are not the only bad guys either. Like in Polcz, the Germans do not fare much better in their representation. Kováts describes them as not all that different from the Russians—they are just as filthy and covered with lice—, only the women “didn’t have to fear them *as much*” [*a nőknek nem kellett annyira rettegni tőlük*] (Kováts 2012: 144, emphasis added). The way this sentence is formulated indicates an implied possibility that the Germans—the civilized Westerners as per Polcz— also may have attacked Hungarian women only not “as much.” The Germans further commit acts of vandalism, destroy houses and properties. In addition to the bad Germans, Hungarian collaborators and their despicable acts toward their fellow Hungarians—looting, reporting on neighbors etc.—are also thematized.

The trauma of the rape Anna endured is exacerbated by other plights such as lice, hunger and forced labour. Like Polcz, Anna also faces social stigma and has to keep quiet about her story although she is aware of the fact that the community of her small town knows what happened to her. Yet she does not have the tools to intellectually frame her trauma and find an outlet for it, as did Polcz through her work as a psychologist and finally, through writing down her story.

Fanni Gyarmati Miklósné Radnóti (1912-2014): *Napló* ('Diary,' 2014)

The third narrative to examine is Fanni Gyarmati's (Miklósné Radnóti's) diary, *Napló 1935-1946*, published to much acclaim in 2014 shortly after the author's passing at age 101 (<https://www.facebook.com/events/1060277174044184/>). Although its documentary and literary value has multiple faces (see Ferencz 2014), there is one part of the diary covering the period between January and April 1945 (see Ferencz 663) in which Gyarmati talks about the arrival of the Soviets in Budapest. The ruptures the war brings about for Fanni and her family are multiple; separated from her beloved husband, she is hiding under a false name, which is how she escapes deportation. But she will not be able to escape the rapes. Despite her personal experience with racial discrimination, it is noteworthy that in her description of the Soviets, she is not immune to the deep seated orientalist racialization that dominated their perception: “a huge Eskimo-type guy with a wild face” [*egy óriási, vad képű eszkimós alak*] (Gyarmati 2014: 370); “a little Mongolian, a real chunk from the East” [*egy kis mongol, egy igazi darab kelet*] (Gyarmati 2014: 371); “after all, Asia has come over us” [*Ázsia van mégis a nyakunkon*] (Gyarmati 2014: 421). The inferiority of this orientalized Other is also expressed through Gyarmati using a technique of infantilization reminiscent of the old topos in Western literature, going back as far as the Renaissance, of the noble savage: “They are gigantic children with bad manners, all open and pure” [*Óriási vásott gyerekek ezek, mind nyíltak és tiszták*] (Gyarmati 2014: 452). This infantilization of the rapist as the orientalized Other is a significant aspect of the “vocabulary of rupture” found in rape narratives. As argued by Atina Grossmann, casting the rapist as a primitive, animalistic creature “curiously absolved him of guilt” as it turned him into an “elemental force” that women were not able to fend off, thus saving their “honor” in the face of

their society (Grossmann 2011: 142). I would add that this is also a strategy of coming to terms with trauma as it helps create distance to the traumatic event so as to bring about healing.

The rape of women is at first hinted at (Gyarmati 2014: 371) before incredulous Fanni experiences it herself. Her explanation that she is a Jewish refugee from the ghetto does not deter the rapist. This first rape by the "little Mongolian" is not described as a violent experience: "he falls over me fondling me and gently watching me, I feel that he wants to embrace me but not violently" [*fölém borul becézve és gyöngéden vigyázva, érzem, hogy ölelni akar, de nem erőszakoskodik*] (Gyarmati 2014: 372). She thinks of the rape as a sacrifice for her husband's suffering and she holds on to her rosary throughout.⁶ Following this first rape, Fanni consoles her raped cousin that she should take it more lightly and that it is not much worse than pulling teeth (Gyarmati 2014: 374). For the time being, hunger and the fear of STDs are a worse experience, the latter of which the women are trying to prevent by taking medication. The second rape Fanni suffers, however, is very violent and described much more in terms of a "rupture":

He demanded that I embrace him fully, squeezed and rumbled me all over striking big blows on my face, head, side, arm. I didn't utter a sound, but I learned that it is true you see stars if someone hits you on the temple with their fist. I had to cover my eyes with my hand so that he didn't knock them out. He was moving ever closer and if I didn't want him to strike me dead, I had to give in following a long struggle which was accompanied by kissing on the one hand and swearing through the teeth on the other. [...] It was the horror of horrors. [...] I stayed there completely crushed. (Gyarmati 2014: 384-385)

[*Azt kívánta, hogy teljesen öleljem meg, és összevissza gyúrt, gyömöszölt, közben jókora ütéseket mérve az arcomra, fejemre, oldalamra, karomra. Nem nyikkantam ezekre, de megtanultam, hogy igaz a szikrákat látás, ha az embert halántékon ütök ököllel. A szemeimet kellett a kezeimmel eltakarnom, hogy ki ne üsse, így egyre jobban közeledett, és ha nem akartam, hogy anyonüssön, engednem kellett végül hosszú-hosszú birkózás után, amiket részint csókdosások, részint fogak közti szitkozódás kísért. [...] A borzalmak borzalma volt ez. [...] Rettenetesen összetörten maradtam ott.]*

As an immediate consequence, Fanni has a bad headache and cannot sleep the whole night, and by this point her faith that her suffering could redeem Miklós's dwindles. Following this particularly violent rape, Fanni only reports one more unsuccessful attempt by another "ruszki" as she refers to the Soviets, but there are several mentions of brutal rapes of young girls, even girls from the orphanage, and of women being shot for resisting the rapes or for no good reason at all.

One element in constructing a "vocabulary of rupture" missing in Polcz and Kováts is when Gyarmati talks about one particular consequence, namely pregnancies and abortions

⁶ Both Miklós and Fanni Radnóti had converted to Catholicism in 1943 (Ferencz 2014: 658).

following the rapes. Fanni shuns both words and circumscribes them as "who will help me" [*ki fog segíteni rajtam*] (Gyarmati 2014: 394) or "I don't think there is any trouble" [*nem hiszem, hogy baj volna*] (Gyarmati 2014: 398), but in the end there *is* trouble and she decides to have an abortion. First she tries an injection that fails to provoke a miscarriage. Although she gives the date on which she has the abortion scheduled, there is no further mention of it. Instead, the reader is presented the abortion of a friend, which takes place in Fanni's apartment. This silence over Fanni's own abortion can be read as a further element in the formulation of a "vocabulary of rupture," i.e. silence as a strategy often found in rape narratives: women either leave out details or revert to the third person when talking about the rapes or pregnancies resulting from them as if all this had happened to other women (see Anonymous 246; Köpp 54; Mertus 233).

Conclusion

In the three narratives analyzed, the causes behind the rapes are reflected on differently yet all three introduce elements toward the construction of a "vocabulary of rupture" so as to come to terms with traumatic memory. While Polcz regards the rapes and all other war atrocities as a general consequence of the war that brutalizes humans and, more particularly, a possible retribution for what Hungarians may have done in the Soviet Union, Kováts attributes the rapes to a lack of God's grace that left Hungarian women victimized (Kováts 2012: 174-5) without any consideration of Hungarian atrocities done to the other side. Gyarmati's argument is close to Polcz's when she sees the Soviet destruction, on the one hand, as closely tied to soldiers' behaviour in general and, on the other, as an expression of revenge provoked by German and Hungarian war crimes (Gyarmati 2014: 381 and 446). One common aspect regarding the representation of the Soviets and their behaviour (with notable exceptions) mentioned in all three narratives is their brutality, the looting and destruction they leave behind, the impact of alcohol and the lack of discipline and organization in the Red Army. The latter have been confirmed by historians as major factors that had contributed to the mass rapes in Eastern Europe (see Beevor 2002). However, the three narratives note similar behavioural patterns also among the allegedly more "civilized" German soldiers.

Regarding the representation of the rapes, in all three narratives the violence that accompanied them is emphasized, albeit in different terms. The most detailed account of the violence and its rupturing impact is given by Kováts, a rupture that can at least partially be attributed to the protagonist's age. In all three narratives, the rupture resulting from the rapes is expressed through consequences that all female protagonists carry either short or long term or both: STDs, infertility, physical and mental trauma and social stigmatization in the case of Polcz's and Kováts' heroines, including marriage of convenience for the latter, as well as unwanted pregnancy and abortion as represented by Gyarmati. In Gyarmati's case, her love for Miklós and her stronger empathy for the Red Army's behaviour, which she justifies by their orientalized and infantile inferiority, on the one hand, and as an understandable retribution, on the other, contributes to her somewhat downplaying the severity of the rapes' impact. The three narratives thus all provide various parts toward formulating a "vocabulary of rupture" to help us better understand what rape victims and survivors particularly in armed conflict experience.

Given the millions of victims of sexual violence in WWII and in many other conflicts worldwide, not to mention those in so-called peace times, these and other narratives published in various languages not only prompt us to examine and question the multiple and ever-reoccurring causes behind rape but they also are a powerful reminder of the lasting effects of sexual violence

over several generations. Recently, the interest in the children born of the rapes and in children born during the war in general has also reached Hungary. In October 2017, Márta Mészáros' film on this topic, *Aurora borealis-Északi fény* is opening in Hungarian movie theatres. Avery Gordon calls the lingering effects of such episodes of past violence haunting. Haunting can affect individuals and entire communities in that the unsettled "ghosts" of such past events keep tying the present to the past (Gordon 1997: viii). The haunting of this particular ghost from Hungary's and Europe's past is obviously not over yet. It yet has to be offered what Jacques Derrida has called a "hospitable memory" (qtd. in Gordon 1997: 58), a memory outside of instrumentalization for various political purposes. According to Gordon, the ghosts of a past violence need to be reckoned with in the present so as "to overcome their pulsating and lingering effects" (Gordon 1997: 134) and their repression in a process in which we encounter "the ambiguities, the complexities of power and personhood, the violence and the hope, the looming and receding actualities, the shadows of our selves and our society" (Gordon 1997: 134). This process of coming to terms with the ghosts of the past moves us beyond simple binaries along the victim-perpetrator line and prompts us to look toward rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation, as difficult, painful, and complex as they may be.

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