

## **Éva Heyman, the Hungarian Anne Frank: Writing Against Persecution and Trauma**

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**2015 marks an important anniversary:** 70 years since the end of World War II and its darkest chapter, the Holocaust. Numerous memoirs and other testimonies about the Holocaust have been published to date and continue to be published. However, as Louise Vasvári has pointed out, there is a “relative lack of Holocaust texts published in Central and Eastern Europe proper, including scholarship.” Vasvári sees one major reason for this in the fact that “in postwar communist countries, anti-Semitism continues today.”<sup>1</sup> Vasvári considers women’s Holocaust writing a category in itself; and yet another category are adolescents some of whom survived the Holocaust and published their diaries or memoirs either immediately after World War II or much later.<sup>2</sup> Anne Frank and Éva Heyman belong to those adolescents whose diaries did survive but who themselves were victims of the Holocaust.<sup>3</sup> Their names became known posthumously for their testimonies that were published by a surviving parent — in Anne’s case her father, in Éva’s case her mother. The name of Anne Frank is familiar to most people; her diary has become a signature piece of Holocaust literature and translated into numerous languages. It is not only a testimony about life for persecuted Jews under the Nazi regime but also a symbol of a bright adolescent girl’s refusal to succumb to despair and darkness. Fewer readers will be familiar with the diary of another teenage Holocaust victim who, like Anne Frank, began her diary on her thirteenth birthday and who also wrote about her observations, feelings and thoughts before being brutally pushed into a cattle wagon and transported to Auschwitz where she would be murdered a few months later. The Hungarian Éva Heyman has rightly been called the “Anne Frank from Northern Transylvania.”<sup>4</sup> Yet unlike Anne Frank, whose diary encompasses the period between the summer of 1942 and 1944, Éva Heyman barely had a few months to fill the pages of her little notebook.

To date, Éva Heyman’s diary has been published under different titles in several languages; first in 1948 in the Hungarian original under her

mother's, Ágnes Zsolt's name as *Éva lányom* (My daughter Éva) and re-published under the same title only recently, in 2011. The form of the published diary is that of an embedded narrative, introduced by Ágnes Zsolt's preface and followed by two letters addressed to the mother after the war, one by Mariska, the family's former cook, the other one by Juszti, the former nanny. These frame narratives explain the context in which Éva wrote her diary and also provide information about her, her family's and her diary's destiny following the deportation. The English translation bears the title *The Diary of Éva Heyman*, published initially in 1974 and based on the 1964 Hebrew translation *Yomanah shel Evah Hayman*. In Romanian, the title is *Jurnalul lui Éva Heyman* (1991), with the subtitle "*Am trăit atît de puţin*" (I have lived so little), which is a quote from the diary. The German version relied on one of the important episodes described in the diary by opting for the title *Das rote Fahrrad* (The red bicycle, 2012). Finally, in French it was rendered, using the same quote as the Romanian translation's subtitle, as *J'ai vécu si peu: Journal du ghetto d'Oradea* (I have lived so little: Diary from the Nagyvárad ghetto, 2013).

Éva's diary, written in Nagyvárad/Oradea/Großwardein<sup>5</sup> encompasses the period from February 13 (her thirteenth birthday) to May 30, 1944, thus about three and a half months. The last part of the diary was written in the Nagyvárad ghetto where Éva and her family were forced to move shortly before they were deported. According to the preface written by Ágnes Zsolt, it was the family's loyal former cook Mariska Szabó who had kept Éva's diary handed to her by Éva herself the night before the family's deportation. Mariska kept it only to give it to Éva's mother who, along with her husband Béla Zsolt, survived the war. Unlike Anne Frank, who had to live in hiding for two years and could thus experience the immediate effects of the war and the persecution of the Jewish people mostly indirectly before their hiding place would be betrayed, Éva Heyman reports on the day-to-day changes that affect her, her family's and their friends' lives at a dramatic pace. Thus she describes several traumatizing events, most notably her best friend Márta's sudden deportation, back in 1941, in the middle of an afternoon tea party. This event marks Éva profoundly to the point that she mentions it twice already in her first diary entry. I will argue that writing becomes a coping strategy and a form of healing for Éva for the brief yet extremely daunting period that her diary encompasses, her way of dealing with the trauma and with the constant danger and fear around her. I agree with Cornelius Hell that "dealing with what is happening to her and the people around her becomes the motor of a fast-track path to adulthood which only allows for occasi-

onal remnants of a child's fantasy world."<sup>6</sup> Thus Éva, despite her young age, seems to be the one who handles the increasingly difficult situation, the ever-increasing narrowing down of her and her family's living space and the moving to the ghetto the best. Along with her unabated desire to live, writing the diary gives her the much needed support and hope. It offers the reader insights into an adolescent girl's "feelings, desires and experiences."<sup>7</sup> But most importantly, the diary gives the reader a sense of how this adolescent girl managed to create for herself the narrative tools to analyze what is happening around her and to take a critical stance not only toward the perpetrators who destroy her, her family's and other Jewish people's lives, but also toward members of her family.

### **The authenticity debate**

It is important to address the authenticity debate surrounding this diary. The authenticity of Éva Heyman's diary has been contested to the point that Gergely Kunt proposes to read it as a text that was not only edited (a point on which most critics agree), but even authored by Éva's mother. According to Kunt, Ágnes Zsolt, unable not only to save her only child but even to offer her a proper funeral, "wrote this book as part of the mourning-process" by taking a "child's point of view in the narrative."<sup>8</sup> One major problem is that the original of the diary is missing.<sup>9</sup> It is not unlikely that Ágnes, who had a literary inclination, or even her writer husband Béla Zsolt himself may have altered or even omitted parts in the published version of Éva's diary.<sup>10</sup> It remains an open question to what degree Éva's mother may have "censored" her daughter's notes and thus given the reader only a shorter version of the original text. But, these possible editorial interventions notwithstanding, Judah Marton, author of the introduction to the English translation, has no doubts regarding the diary's authenticity. He bases this judgment, on the one hand, on the fact that "in 1940 Jewish children in Europe were mature beyond their years"; on the other hand, he met and spoke to some surviving members of the Rácz (Ágnes Zsolt's) family in Israel as well as to a former classmate of Éva's: "all of them said that Éva was an extraordinarily intelligent girl. All agreed that the image of Éva that emerges from the diary precisely reflects the Éva they had known and that they had no reason to question the authenticity of any part of the diary."<sup>11</sup> This image of Éva is further confirmed by her stepfather, Béla Zsolt who in his Holocaust memoir *Kilenc koffer (Nine Suitcases)* describes her as a "child, with her small fairy apple face, her eager curiosity, her ambition, her vanity, her starry

eyes full of energy.”<sup>12</sup> More recently, following the publication of the German translation, Cornelius Hell also argued in support of the diary’s authenticity: “the micro-scenes written from the perspective of an adolescent girl exude an authenticity making it improbable that the mother would have tried to overcome her feelings of guilt by producing a fake. Moreover, it is unlikely that the critical representation of the mother would have come from the mother herself.”<sup>13</sup> Based on these strong points in support of the authenticity of Éva Heyman’s diary, in the following I will approach it as a text authored first and foremost by Éva herself.

However, I would like to add a general comment regarding the so-called veracity of any diary, autobiography or any other form of life writing.<sup>14</sup> As Roger Woods argues quoting Dagmar Günther, life writing has to be analyzed beyond the simple binary of fact and fiction and seen, rather, within the larger frame of “biographical constructions of meaning.”<sup>15</sup> I will therefore read Éva Heyman’s diary along the same lines as neither fact nor fiction but as a testimony about an extreme existential situation that was the Holocaust and for the effects that this extreme situation left on the factual and fictional Éva Heyman.

### **Éva Heyman’s family**

Éva Heyman was born in Oradea/Nagyvárad on February 13 (a Friday, as per the first page of the diary), 1931. Her mother, Ágnes (Ági) Rácz, was the only child of a prominent Jewish-Hungarian family. Ágnes’s father, Dr. Rezső Rácz, was a reputable pharmacist (the Rácz pharmacy was on Várad’s main street), whose father Dr. Sándor Rosenberg was the first neolog rabbi of Nagyvárad between 1868-1876.<sup>16</sup> While a student of pharmacy, Rezső Rosenberg changed the family name to Rácz. He was connected to progressive Hungarian intellectual circles and writers in Nagyvárad. Ágnes herself was also very educated and studied pharmacology in Kolozsvár. Ágnes’s mother, née Kaufmann, was the daughter of a prosperous Arad family who owned vineyards. Éva’s father, Béla Heyman, an architect, came from the well-known Heyman-Weiszlovits family. Ági and Béla Heyman divorced in 1935 (when Éva was only 4 years old), leaving their only child in the care of her maternal grandparents and the family’s Austrian governess, Juszti (whom Éva often mentions in her diary with great affection). Ágnes later married the well-known and prolific Hungarian writer and left-wing journalist Béla Zsolt, took on her new husband’s name and followed him to Budapest. It is important to mention that Béla Zsolt is the author of “one of the very first — and most important

— memoirs of the Holocaust ever written,<sup>17</sup> *Nine Suitcases* (2004; *Kilenc koffer*).<sup>18</sup> In fact, Éva Heyman's and Béla Zsolt's respective narratives can be read as complementary accounts of the Hungarian Holocaust, told from two different perspectives,<sup>19</sup> but each offering another angle of the same episode: the deportation of the Nagyvárad Jews. Whereas Béla Zsolt's memoir mainly encompasses his and his wife's as well as his wife's family's (including Éva's) days in the Nagyvárad ghetto,<sup>20</sup> Éva's diary tells mostly about her and her family's pre-ghetto life and its rapid disintegration following the German occupation of Hungary in March 1944. In this paper, I will make only occasional references to Béla Zsolt's text so as to offer additional information about some important moments from Éva's diary.

While Béla and Ágnes Zsolt were smuggled out of the ghetto with false papers and with the help of friends, Éva, her father and her grandparents were deported to Auschwitz and murdered there. According to Ágnes Zsolt's preface, and based on information she had obtained from survivors, it was Mengele himself who, on October 17, 1944, pushed Éva (who had by then contracted scabies and had feet covered in wounds) onto the truck that carried his victims to the gas chamber. Éva was not to live to celebrate her fourteenth birthday. Her mother and stepfather left Hungary on Rezső Kasztner's train and survived.<sup>21</sup> Béla Zsolt died in 1949 following an illness and Ágnes Zsolt committed suicide in 1951 by slashing her wrists in front of a picture of her daughter.<sup>22</sup> However, before her death she made sure that her daughter's diary that had survived the horrors of the Holocaust, saw the light of the day in 1948. Éva's diary can thus be considered, along with her stepfather's memoir, one of the earliest published accounts of the Hungarian Holocaust.

### **The diary**

Éva's journal<sup>23</sup> contains 38 entries in total, written over a period of three and a half months. The entries up to March 19, when she mentions the German occupation of Hungary, are usually several pages long. The entries between March 19 and the family's moving to the Nagyvárad ghetto on May 5 become shorter, which may partly be explained by the air raids that at times made it difficult for Éva to write. The entries written in the ghetto are initially quite long, but become shorter between May 17 and 30, the day before the deportation. The first entry, written on Éva's thirteenth birthday, introduces all the important people around her: her mother, her stepfather, her father, her maternal grandparents, her paternal

grandmother, as well as the nanny Juszti and the cook Mariska. From the first page, Éva's main preoccupations become apparent: her mother's prolonged absences because of Uncle Béla (as she calls her stepfather) and his imprisonment in Budapest. The fact that she only refers to her mother as *Ági*, never as mom, in itself reflects her problematic relationship with her mother, one that is full of doubt regarding her mother's love and commitment toward her, a feeling that in later entries becomes mixed with jealousy. The reader is introduced to the world of a young upper-middle class girl full of hope for the future and her ambition to become a photo journalist. Yet despite the surface of a certain normalcy that she conveys from a teenager's perspective (e.g. describing an abundance of birthday presents, among them a little golden chain that she puts around her neck with the key to her diary, her studying French, doing lots of sports and having plans for the future), it is clear that abnormal things have been happening. Already her desire to be an Aryan and to marry an Aryan Englishman speaks to the persecution of the Jewish people as does her mentioning of Uncle Béla's earlier internment in the Ukraine. It also becomes evident that Éva had had her diary for a while, but that she did not write in it either because she was still too young or because some events were too difficult for her to write about, as it will transpire later. She treats her diary like her best friend, promising it to write more about certain difficult topics and personifying it to the degree of concluding her first entry with the words: "You're probably tired, too, dear diary."<sup>24</sup>

### Writing about and against trauma

The most difficult things that become almost unsayable for Éva can be considered as traumatizing events.<sup>25</sup> Tim Cole sees two such events in the diary: one is the deportation of Éva's friend Márta to "Poland," in Éva's words, the other a certain *vitéz* Szepesváry's repeated attempts to confiscate her grandfather's pharmacy.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Cole, I would not regard the latter as traumatizing; although Éva does keep mentioning it — which reflects her deep annoyance, her feeling of injustice and a certain fear and loss of security — it does not lead to such a deep, obsessive and painful "acting out" as does Márta's deportation.

In its original meaning, as Cathy Caruth reminds us, trauma signified "wound," i.e. a bodily injury. With the development of medical and psychiatric literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and particularly following Freud, trauma begins to signify a wound inflicted on a person's mind, one that becomes latent and acts itself out through the unconscious, in night-

mares or repetitive actions.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, repetition is one of the most prevalent signs of trauma, although not the only one. Dominick LaCapra calls this compulsive going back to and re-enacting of the repressed traumatizing event in the Freudian sense “acting out.” It can result in repetition of traumatic scenes and situations that often appear in dreams. In order to heal trauma, the compulsive “acting out” ideally has to yield to “working through.” In “working through” there is an attempt to gain critical distance to an event and to distinguish between past, present and future,<sup>28</sup> something trauma victims often lose.<sup>29</sup> For Éva, writing her diary becomes, at least temporarily, such an act of healing, of “working through” as it gives her a sense of agency, something her community is gradually being stripped of, and it allows her to keep a sense of the present and her hope in the future. However, there are also moments of what can be called “acting out.”<sup>30</sup>

As per the above definition, Márta’s sudden disappearance definitely constitutes a traumatizing event for Éva. She manages to write about it in detail in her second diary entry from February 14. This episode continues to haunt her, which is confirmed in her mother’s foreword: “Ever since her friend, Márta Münzer, was taken away in 1941 [...], Éva had changed in a rather peculiar manner [...] the grief she felt at Márta’s destiny left deep, indelible traces upon her.”<sup>31</sup> The way in which Éva describes this episode from three years back reflects the intertwining of the child’s and the adults’ perspective that she re-formulates in her own words, something we can see throughout the entire diary. She refers to Márta as a friend who was two years her senior and whom she admired for her talent as a dancer. She even compares her with Josephine Baker. In the middle of a happy afternoon, following a bicycle ride (on Éva’s new red bicycle that will become an important player in a later episode) and the savouring of a delicious afternoon snack at Éva’s place (chocolate and strawberries with whipped cream), Márta suddenly has to leave as the police had come to their house to pick up her parents. The child’s naive explanation from her point of view that it must be because of Márta’s speeding on her bicycle quickly dissipates as Éva overhears a conversation between Ági and Grandma, a conversation that brutally brings in the reality of the adult world: “the government was preparing to do something terrible, and Jews who weren’t born in Hungary would be taken to Poland where a horrible fate was in store for them.”<sup>32</sup> As it turns out, it was only Márta’s father who had not been born in Hungary, but both she and her mother followed him on his last journey. What Éva did not know at the time but would

gradually find out, was that Márta's family's fate was shared by many other Jews living in Hungary. Jacob Boas notes:

The so-called alien Jews, of which there were some thirty to thirty-five thousand, were told that they would be sent to "Poland," where they would live in the homes of Jews who had fled east. They were taken instead to newly-occupied Ukraine, to a place called Kamenets-Podolsk. But there were no homes waiting — only machine guns — and some twenty-three thousand (including local Jews) were shot: the first five-figure massacre in the Nazi's Final Solution program.<sup>33</sup>

However, Éva admits that she wouldn't have done what Márta did, i.e. follow her father. She will mention later (entry from April 19) that she would go "to any place in the world," even if that meant not seeing her family, only not to be "taken to Poland like Márta was."<sup>34</sup> And in her entry from April 20, she admits that, if given the same choice as Márta, "I would stay even without Papa and without Ági and without anybody at all, because I want to stay alive!"<sup>35</sup> Thus the trauma Márta's deportation has caused her seems to be abating somewhat, due to the "working through" writing brings for Éva; her desire to live and her hope for a future prevails.

However, in one of the last entries, from May 14, written already in the ghetto, Éva's way of dealing with this trauma changes in that she no longer thinks about Márta as she did particularly since the German occupation. Instead, she begins to have dreams, nightmares about her lost friend. Thus she falls back into the "acting out" of the initial trauma as it seems to become cemented in her unconscious:

For instance, yesterday I dreamt that I was Márta and I stood in a big field, bigger than any I had ever seen, and then I realized that that field was Poland. There wasn't a sign of a human being anywhere, or of a bird, or of any other creature, and it was still, like that time we were waiting to be taken to the Ghetto. In my dream I was very frightened by the silence and I started running. Suddenly, that cross-eyed gendarme, who returned the cigarettes to Ági, grabbed me from behind by the neck, and put his pistol against my nape. The pistol felt very cold. I wanted to scream, but not a sound came out of my throat. I woke up and woke up Marica and told her what an awful dream I had had. Suddenly it occurred to me that that is the way poor Márta must have felt at the moment the Germans shot her to death! Marica asked me not to tell her about any more dreams like that; she had not told me what the adults were discussing one



night when they thought the children were asleep. I was really asleep, but Marica had been awake.<sup>36</sup>

The return of the “acting out” of the trauma that had begun to heal can be explained by further traumatization that the increasing pace of persecution, the stripping away of her family’s, their friends’ and her own (as few as they may be) possessions and basic human rights entails. Following the Germans’ arrival in Nagyvárád on March 25, Éva notes the day-to-day worsening of the Jews’ situation: “Every day they keep issuing new laws against the Jews.”<sup>37</sup> She writes about, among other things, having to wear the yellow star, send away their “Aryan” personnel (Mariska and Juszti), their belongings being taken away — including her camera — as well as the panic that befalls her family, in particular her mother and grandmother, and the wall that becomes erected between Jews and “Aryans” who won’t even greet the Jews on the street anymore. But she also notes the decency of some rare “Aryans,” mostly from the lower classes, such as Mariska who keeps coming back to their house secretly, feels ashamed about what is happening and continues to help the Rác family.

The event that has the deepest impact on Éva in this period of re-traumatization leading up to their moving to the ghetto, is the loss of her red bicycle. This bicycle was not only the sole remaining connection to her lost friend Márta (with whom they rode their red bicycles on their last afternoon together), but a friend whom she named Friday (after Robinson Crusoe). Éva liked riding around on Friday, thus it was both a symbol of freedom, adventure and loyalty for her. And this symbol will be taken away on April 7 when the police confiscate her bicycle. Éva is so outraged at this blatant injustice of being stripped of her lawful property that she throws herself on the ground, holding the back wheel of her bicycle and shouting: “Shame on you for taking away a bicycle from a girl! That’s robbery!”<sup>38</sup> Éva thus positions herself in opposition not only to the authorities but to the adult world in general in displaying agency and courage to rebel against injustice, which the adults of her family seem to lack. Her rebellious act provokes a twofold reaction: while one of the policemen shouts all sorts of nasty anti-Semitic insults back at her, much to Éva’s shock who had never been told such things to the face before, the other policeman speaks up in her defence: “You should be ashamed of yourself, colleague, he said, is your heart made of stone? How can you speak that way to such a beautiful girl? Then he stroked my hair and promised to take good care of my bicycle. He gave me a receipt and told

me not to cry, because when the war was over I would get my bicycle back.”<sup>39</sup>

The loss of her bicycle carries the elements of re-traumatization for Éva. It will be soon followed by other “terrible things” that Éva refers to only fleetingly making her at times lose her motivation for writing. Nevertheless, her notes continue and her diary becomes the main support she can rely on. Thus the “writing through” of her by now permanent traumatization remains her main tool to cope with the situation and it helps her, despite moments of despair, keep her desire to live and her faith in the future.

### **The desire to live and failed attempts to save Éva’s life**

What runs through the diary like a leitmotif is Éva’s continued affirmation of her desire to live, against all trauma, loss and persecution. Éva repeatedly mentions this strong desire to live, particularly in the days following the German occupation. On March 25, day of the German troops’ arrival in Várád, she writes that she wants to see the end of the war and that she will hide.<sup>40</sup> On March 26, she cries out: “But I don’t want them to kill me! I want to be a newspaper photographer, and when I’m twenty-four<sup>41</sup> I’ll marry an Aryan Englishman, or maybe even Pista Vadas.”<sup>42</sup> Pista Vadas is a Jewish boy who is her first love and a few years her senior. The fact that Éva comes to the point of considering marrying a Jewish man may be interpreted as an acceptance of her Jewishness and of the collective fate of her people. The most heartrending entry is from March 28, when Éva writes: “I always cry when I read about someone dying.<sup>43</sup> I don’t want to die, because I’ve hardly lived!”<sup>44</sup> And on March 29, a rather unusual cry to God as Éva doesn’t otherwise mention God: “God, sweet God, don’t let us die [...]. I so much want to live!”<sup>45</sup>

What makes Éva’s story particularly tragic is that there were several possibilities for her to be saved. Although as mentioned above, the factual information provided in any diary cannot be taken at face value, most details of this part of Éva’s story are also rendered and corroborated by Béla Zsolt in *Nine Suitcases*. One option was that Juszti take Éva to a farm owned by the Poroszlay family. While Mrs. Poroszlay was very much in favour of this solution, and Éva writes that she would have been happy to live in a stable and keep the sheep, “just so the Germans should not kill me with a gun as they killed Márta,”<sup>46</sup> Mr. Poroszlay, an anti-Semite, rejects this proposal. The second possibility to save her was taking her to Budapest, along with Ági and Uncle Béla, with false papers that a

cousin of Ági's brings along. However, Grandma's psychological condition is so bad by that point that the cousin returns to Budapest leaving everybody, including Éva, to their fate in Várad. The third and last possibility to save Éva was the family seamstress's, Mrs. Jakobi's offer (entry from April 19) to take Éva with her. Here Éva describes Grandma's reaction in detail as follows: "But Grandma said that she wouldn't allow it, because Mrs. Jakobi was an evil woman and she would sell me to men and then I would also be an evil woman."<sup>47</sup> Ági apologizes to Mrs. Jakobi explaining that her mother's mental state is very bad, on which Éva comments: "It looks like Ági is ashamed that Grandma is out of her mind, even though nobody can be blamed for it except that damned Hitler."<sup>48</sup> Through such comments, Éva describes the toll the persecution of the Jews took not only on people's physical but also mental and emotional well-being. Ultimately, however, she becomes the sacrificial lamb for the sake of keeping the family together, come what may. The diary offers no lament on Éva's part regarding this tragic development; but it could well be that her mother may have edited some parts out. Béla Zsolt gives a much more critical view about these failed attempts to save Éva's life, and he blames it very much on his mother-in-law and her obsessive insistence that the child may be harmed, sold, or ending up on the street if she let her go with the people who offered to help. Zsolt describes his mother-in-law's rejection of letting Éva go, even against Ági's heated argument with her, as a blackmailing strategy: "if the child had gone, the old people would have taken cyanide."<sup>49</sup> Faced with this situation, Ági is unable to choose between her daughter and her parents' well-being. Zsolt concludes with a bitter comment: "My mother-in-law had won: the child stayed."<sup>50</sup>

### **Life in the ghetto and deportation**

Éva refers to what follows soon after "as if it really is a dream," which one can interpret as a manifestation of trauma, and she admits that she has "never been so afraid."<sup>51</sup> The family is forced to leave their home and move to the Nagyvárad ghetto on May 5. The policemen who come for them take away all jewellery, including Éva's little golden chain on which the key to her diary hangs. She replaces the golden chain with a velvet ribbon, politely asking the policeman: "Mr. Inspector, may I take a velvet ribbon along to the Ghetto?"<sup>52</sup> She thus demonstrates a certain presence of mind and acceptance of the situation, much unlike the adults around her. Éva describes in great detail their moving to the ghetto and their new quarters at the Rabbinical Residence that used to belong to her late uncle.

From there, Éva reports on their new living conditions that worsen with every day: the terrible crowdedness (over ten people per room) and further and further harassment “by the gendarmes who took everything away from us”<sup>53</sup> including their provisions. Éva’s optimism is faltering at this point: “Every time I think: This is the end, things couldn’t possibly be worse, and then I find out that it’s always possible for everything to get worse, and even much much worse.”<sup>54</sup> The beating and torture of people at the Dreher brewery to give away alleged hiding places of whatever valuables they may have left is one of such episodes.<sup>55</sup> Éva briefly reports what she hears the adults say, especially regarding what women are exposed to, and this time around, words fail her: “Things that I am incapable of putting into words, even though you know, dear diary, that I haven’t kept any secrets from you till now.”<sup>56</sup> Here the usually verbose Éva is faced with the limits of language when it comes to expressing liminal experiences in the world of an adolescent girl.

This narrowing down of what language can (or is supposed to) convey goes parallel to the spatial narrowing down of Éva’s universe, similar to how Elie Wiesel, another Jewish adolescent from Transylvania who was only a few years older than Éva at the time of his deportation, later described his experience of the Holocaust: “The universe began shrinking, [...] [F]irst we were supposed to leave our towns and concentrate in the larger cities. Then the towns shrank to the ghetto, and the ghetto to a house, the house to a room, the room to a cattle car...”<sup>57</sup> When the Nagyvárád ghetto is divided into sectors to be deported one after the other, Éva writes a short note into her diary on May 29: “And so, dear diary, now the end of everything has really come.”<sup>58</sup> But she refuses to give in to despair, and her last entry, from May 30, ends with the words:

[D]ear diary, I don’t want to die, I want to live even if it means that I’ll be the only person here allowed to stay. I would wait for the end of the war in some cellar, or on the roof,<sup>59</sup> or in some secret cranny. I would even let the cross-eyed gendarme the one who took our flour away from us, kiss me, just as long as they didn’t kill me, only that they should let me live.

Now I see that friendly gendarme has let Mariska come in. I can’t write anymore, dear diary, the tears run from my eyes, I’m hurrying over to Mariska...<sup>60</sup>

Here Éva Heyman’s diary ends. The following day, Éva, her father and her grandparents were herded into a crowded cattle wagon that carried them away to Auschwitz. When Anne Frank and her family arrived in

Auschwitz on September 6, Éva was still alive. When Mengele sent Éva to the gas chamber on October 17, 1944 Anne was still alive in Auschwitz from where she and her sister would be deported at the end of October to Bergen-Belsen. Both Éva and Anne died while Germany and its allies were already losing the war. Their diaries live on as testimonies and as a warning for the present and the future, particularly as we commemorate 70 years of the Holocaust in a climate of rising anti-Semitism in many countries, including Hungary.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Louise O. Vasvári, "Introduction to and Bibliography of Central European Women's Holocaust Life Writing in English," in *Comparative Central European Holocaust Studies*, edited by Louise O. Vasvári and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2009), 175.

<sup>2</sup> See Vasvári's list in "Bibliography," 175.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Boas in *We Were Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust* (New York: Square Fish, 1995), includes, in addition to Éva Heyman and Anne Frank, David Rubinowicz, Yitzak Rudashevski, and Moshe Flinker.

<sup>4</sup> Carol Iancu, "Préface," in Éva Heyman, *J'ai vécu si peu: Journal du ghetto d'Oradea*, (Geneva: Éditions des Syrtes, 2013), 8.

<sup>5</sup> On Northern Transylvania and in particular Nagyvárad, its history and significance for Jewish-Hungarian culture see Dr. Judah Marton, "Introduction," in *The Diary of Éva Heyman* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), 7-18; Randolph L. Braham, *The Holocaust in Hungary, Vol. I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 163-177; Carol Iancu, "Préface," in Heyman, *J'ai vécu si peu*, pp. 7-30. Northern Transylvania, which was one of the territories Hungary had lost with the Treaty of Trianon, was returned to Hungary with the Second Vienna Award in 1940. Thus Nagyvárad fell under Hungarian jurisdiction again after having been part of Romania for two decades. The events described in Éva Heyman's diary can thus be understood within the context of Hungary's role in World War II and the Hungarian Holocaust. As described by Balázs Ablonczy, in the years following the Second Vienna Award, a highly nationalistic image of Transylvania was promoted "in which Romanians, Jews and Saxons (Germans) did not exist" (Balázs Ablonczy, "Promoting Tourism: Hungarian Nation-Building Policies in Northern Transylvania, 1940-1944," in *Hungarian Studies Review* 36, 1-2 [2009], 56). According to Randolph L. Braham, following the re-acquisition of Northern Transylvania by Hungary, Nagyvárad became the town with the numerically largest Jewish population in the region. Braham quotes the number of 21,333 in 1941. This represented about 23% of the total population of the town (Braham, *The Holocaust*, 168).

<sup>6</sup> Cornelius Hell, "Das Tagebuch als Freundin," *Die Presse Online*, April 1 2013, accessed May 15 May 2014, <http://DiePresse.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Susanne zur Nieden, *Alltag im Ausnahmezustand: Frauentagebücher im zerstörten Deutschland 1943 bis 1945* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1993), 27.

<sup>8</sup> Gergely Kunt, "Egy kamasznapló két olvasata" [Two readings of a teenager's diary] *Korall* 41 (2010), <http://www.cceol.com/aspx/issuedetails.aspx?issueid=db7d5801-a3fe-47d2-a8bd-4c58af93b85b&articleId=421b23d7-76bf-42e2-ac7b-8b6d5a8a34a1>. Accessed 14 May 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Tim Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust: Journeying in and out of the Ghettos* (London: Continuum, 2011), 119.

<sup>10</sup> On this point, see Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust*, 127; Marton, "Introduction," 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> Marton, "Introduction," 17.

<sup>12</sup> Béla Zsolt, *Nine Suitcases*, transl. by Ladislaus Löb (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), 232.

<sup>13</sup> Hell, "Das Tagebuch," <http://DiePresse.com>.

<sup>14</sup> On life writing, see Louise O. Vasvári "The Fragmented (Cultural) Body in Polcz's *Asszony a fronton* (A Woman on the Front), in *Comparative Hungarian Cultural Studies*, edited by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise O. Vasvári (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), 72-85; Suzette A. Henke, "Introduction," in *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), xi-xxii; Marlene Kadar, "Coming to Terms: Life Writing - from Genre to Critical Practice," in *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, edited by Marlene Kadar (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3-16.

<sup>15</sup> See Dagmar Günther, "'And now for something completely different': Prolegomena zur Autobiographie als Quelle der Geschichtswissenschaft," in *Historische Zeitschrift* 272.1 (2001), 59, quoted in Roger Woods, "Introduction: The Purposes and Problems of German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century," in *German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Birgit Dahlke, Dennis Tate, and Roger Woods (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Marton, "Introduction," 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> Ladislaus Löb, "Translator's Introduction," in Béla Zsolt, *Nine Suitcases*, translated by Ladislaus Löb (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), ix.

<sup>18</sup> *Kilenc koffer* was published as a book only in 1980, but as a series in the weekly *Haladás* already in 1946-1947. Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust*, 119.

<sup>19</sup> See Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust*, 118-31.

<sup>20</sup> Zsolt writes his memoir as a masterful, philosophical yet gripping tale about torture, greed and sadism on the part of the Hungarian gendarmerie while offering flashbacks about his earlier experiences as a forced labourer in the Ukraine and the occasional memory of "normal" life before the Holocaust.

<sup>21</sup> On Rezső Kasztner and his controversial place in the rescue of about 1,600 Hungarian Jews see Eli Reichenhal, "The Kasztner Affair: A Reappraisal,"

in *The Auschwitz Reports and the Holocaust in Hungary*, edited by Randolph L. Braham and William J. vanden Heuvel (New York: Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, distributed by Columbia University Press, 2011), 211-253; Anna Porter offers a much more positive portrayal of Kasztner in *Kasztner's Train: The True Story of Rezső Kasztner, Unknown Hero of the Holocaust* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Kunt, "Egy kamasznapló két olvasata." In 1989, director Krisztina Deák made a film based on Ágnes Zsolt's and Éva's story entitled *Eszterkönyv*.

<sup>23</sup> For my analysis I will be relying mainly on the English translation of Éva's diary while inserting occasional comparisons with the French translation.

<sup>24</sup> *The Diary of Éva Heyman*. Introduction and notes by Judah Marton, translated from Hebrew by Moshe M. Kohn (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974).

<sup>25</sup> See also Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust*, 123.

<sup>26</sup> In interwar Hungary, *vitéz* was a title offered by the Horthy regime to people for special merit and their loyalty to his right-wing politics. The fact that *vitéz* appears in italics in the diary can be interpreted as irony. In Hungarian, the traditional meaning of *vitéz* is that of a hero, a valiant and chivalrous fighter. The *vitéz* in Éva's diary is all but that: he is a cowardly thief who is only interested in stealing another man's lawfully acquired property.

<sup>27</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3 and 17.

<sup>28</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 141-143.

<sup>29</sup> Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>30</sup> LaCapra also recognizes that for severely traumatized people, the "acting out" may be unavoidable.

<sup>31</sup> *The Diary*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> *The Diary*, 31.

<sup>33</sup> Jacob Boas, *We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 126-127. Braham offers a detailed account of the September 1941 massacres in Kamenets-Podolsk, which he locates in Eastern Galicia. He contends that the exact number of the victims cannot be established, and quotes the number of 23,600, of which an estimated 14,000 to 18,000 were from Hungary. Braham considers these massacres along with the massacres in the winter of 1942 in what was then Délvidék (where 3,309 Serbs, Jews, Russians [refugees of the Civil War in Russia] and even Hungarians were massacred), as a "prelude to the Holocaust in Hungary." Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary, Volume 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 199; 199-207; 211.

<sup>34</sup> *The Diary*, 80.

<sup>35</sup> *The Diary*, 82.

<sup>36</sup> *The Diary*, 96.

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- <sup>37</sup> *The Diary*, 80.
- <sup>38</sup> *The Diary*, 72.
- <sup>39</sup> *The Diary*, 73.
- <sup>40</sup> *The Diary*, 62.
- <sup>41</sup> In the French translation, it is twenty-one.
- <sup>42</sup> *The Diary*, 63.
- <sup>43</sup> This is in reaction to her reading the famous novel for the young by Ferenc Molnár, *The Boys from Pál Street (A Pál utcai fiúk)*, in which little Nemesek dies at the end.
- <sup>44</sup> *The Diary*, 65.
- <sup>45</sup> *The Diary*, 66.
- <sup>46</sup> *The Diary*, 64.
- <sup>47</sup> *The Diary*, 79.
- <sup>48</sup> *The Diary*, 80.
- <sup>49</sup> Zsolt, *Nine Suitcases*, 232.
- <sup>50</sup> Zsolt, *Nine Suitcases*, 233.
- <sup>51</sup> *The Diary*, 83.
- <sup>52</sup> *The Diary*, 85.
- <sup>53</sup> *The Diary*, 91.
- <sup>54</sup> *The Diary*, 91.
- <sup>55</sup> Béla Zsolt describes at length the incredible torture methods used by the gendarmes and the horrid suffering people, both men and women, were subjected to, even if they didn't have anything to hide.
- <sup>56</sup> *The Diary*, 97.
- <sup>57</sup> Elie Wiesel, "Introduction," in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Forty Years Later*, edited by Randolph L. Braham and Béla Vágó (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), xv, quoted in Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust*, 3.
- <sup>58</sup> *The Diary*, 103.
- <sup>59</sup> In the French translation, it is "attic."
- <sup>60</sup> *The Diary*, 104.

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