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The Holocaust in Hungary in Contexts. New Perspectives and Research Results

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Special Editor of the Thematic Issue

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Gábor Szegedi

Stand by Your Man

Honor and “Race Defilement” in Hungary, 1941–44¹

The practice of race defilement in Hungary began following the passage of the 1941 Marriage Law, a comprehensive law on marriage that introduced mandatory premarital health checks, marriage loans and the prohibition of marriage between Jews and non-Jews. In contrast with Nazi Germany, in Hungary non-Jewish men were exempted from the provisions of the law, so only Jewish men could be convicted and only if they had a liaison with “honorable” women. The vague non-legal term “honorable” provided the authorities with the opportunity to limit sexual and other contact between “Jews” and “non-Jews” and also to exert control over female bodies through policing and surveillance, as female “honor” was in most cases crucial in order to determine the course of the proceedings. This paper uses the theoretical framework of the history of emotions to reconstruct the types of “honor” that come to light from an analysis of the papers of these court cases and their importance for sexual politics in Horthy-era Hungary.

Keywords: Racial defilement, honor, anti-Semitism, prostitution, love

Introduction

In *Emotions in History: Lost and Found* Ute Frevert gives a panoramic history of the concept “honor,” her main claim being that this “lost emotion” was intrinsic to upholding social stratification and gender difference in pre-1945 Western cultures. The custom of duels enabled men of the middle and upper classes to save or redeem their honor in case it was under threat, whereas lower class men were not given access to this organized way of taking revenge on people who had allegedly violated their honor. While working class men could still protect their honor, violently, with their bare fists, women’s honor tended to be deeply sexualized. It was closely linked to their sexual “purity” and put them in positions of passivity, as they did not possess any means of retaining or recovering their honor themselves, but needed male family members as protectors to do that for them. Moreover, lost premarital virginity was the kind of loss of honor that

1 I would like to thank the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) for the research fellowship that generously supported my research on race defilement in interwar Hungary. Many thanks to Zuzanna Dziuban and to the editor of this issue, Ferenc Laczó, for their insightful comments.

could not be redeemed. Once lost, this dishonor marked a woman forever.² This resonates with what Luisa Passerini writes in *New Dangerous Liaisons: Discourses on Europe and Love in the Twentieth Century*, namely that transgressions in love can be “dangerous for the oppressive aspects of the existing social and cultural order.”³ In Europe transgressions in love have been historically varied, but Passerini can point to an important aspect of the idea of romantic love: that transgressions are especially dangerous if they involve non-Europeans. Moreover, “love in inter-racial relationships was considered particularly impossible and therefore doomed to a disastrous end.”⁴ Both Frevert and Passerini aim to historicize emotions, an aspect of history that, due to its seemingly volatile nature, has long been neglected.

In this paper on honor and race defilement in Hungary of the Horthy era, I am going to use a similar theoretical framework. I will draw on Barbara Rosenwein’s definition in particular, according to which emotional communities were “by and large the same as social communities—families, neighborhoods, syndicates, academic institutions, monasteries, factories, platoons, princely courts.” Rosenwein suggests that research on these communities should seek for “systems of feeling” to see “the modes of expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate and deplore.”⁵ Rosenwein’s conception of her research subject closely resembles William Reddy’s idea of *emotional regimes*, that is “the set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime.”⁶ Reddy claims that as emotions are “associated with the dense network of goals that give coherence to the self,” it is essential for a community to provide a “coherent set of prescriptions about emotions.”⁷ Reddy has also introduced further concepts for the study of emotions, such as “emotional refuge” and “emotional liberty,” the former referring to the emotional safe spaces or outlets where those who feel oppressed by the dominant emotional regime can properly express their emotions. Reddy

2 Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History: Lost and Found* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2011), 87–149.

3 Luisa Passerini, Liliana Ellena, and Alexander C.T. Geppert, eds., *New Dangerous Liaisons: Discourses on Europe and Love in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 3.

4 Ibid., 1.

5 Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions,” *Passions in Context: Journal of the History and Philosophy of the Emotions* 1, no. 1 (2010): 11, accessed June 3, 2015, http://www.passionsincontext.de/uploads/media/01_Rosenwein.pdf.

6 William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 129.

7 Ibid., 61.

believes that the scrutiny of emotional regimes can be politicized by bringing in the concept of “emotional liberty.” In other words, tyranny can be detected (and critiqued) by examining the pressures that are put on individuals living in a certain emotional regime. If there is strict emotional discipline, then the individuals whose emotional build-up differs from the norm can potentially become subject to physical violence, forced exile, excommunication, etc. or, alternatively, their protests against the norms can take extreme forms.

The author of the most comprehensive monograph on the history of race defilement in Nazi Germany,⁸ Alexandra Przyrembel, has recently called for the use of the analytic categories of emotional history in analyses of anti-Semitism and, more specifically, race defilement (*Rassenschande*):

(...) with racist anti-Semitism, hostile emotions were created towards the Jews, which, even if with the opposite sign, could be pursued in the rulings of the courts of the National Socialist justice system on a discursive level. It is through this emotional coding that racial anti-Semitism gets its real strength, and not the contemporary biological concepts of purity.⁹

Przyrembel mentions three tenets of German history-writing that dealt with the National Socialist persecution of Jews from the perspective of collective emotions. One of these, introduced by Michael Wildt,¹⁰ dealt with the concept of “honor,” which was given particular significance under National Socialism and which excluded the Jews from “German honor.” The second one focused on a regime of “moral emotions” or “anti-Semitic passions” that Germans were supposed to feel, a mixture of “guilt, shame, resentment and indignation,” these being enforceable and enforced by the regime. Thirdly, Patricia Szobar presented so-called “sexual stories” and their performative effect in race defilement. While studies on Nazi Germany have already produced a range of inquiries in emotional history, Hungarian historiography has dealt only marginally with race defilement and as of yet no analysis has focused on its emotional aspects.¹¹

8 Alexandra Przyrembel, *Rassenschande. Reinheitsmythos und Vernichtungslegitimation im Nationalsozialismus*, Schriftenreihe des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 190 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

9 Alexandra Przyrembel, “Ambivalente Gefühle: Sexualität und Anti-Semitismus während des Nationalsozialismus,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Zeitschrift für Historische Sozialwissenschaft* 39, no. 4 (2013): 533. (My translation, as are all others.)

10 Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung: Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2007).

11 András Lugosi published an article on a Budapest race defilement case in 2010, and I wrote one for

In this paper, I will discuss, similarly to Szobar, “sexual stories” and their performative effects in Hungarian race defilement court practice. The main questions relate to the concept of honor and how, through the usage of this term, emotional norms were created, reinforced, or challenged by the various actors involved. If we follow Przyrembel’s call, what do we learn about the various emotions and the politics revolving around these emotions when looking at the documents of the various Hungarian courts? I will first briefly discuss the background, i.e. sexual politics in interwar Hungary, and then analyze the various connotations of “honor” for various groups (women, Jews) and for the nation in the last years of Horthy-era Hungary.

Sexual Politics, Sex Education: a Background

In order to improve moral standards on the street and in public spaces in general it is forbidden: (...) to use loud, coarse language or filthy expressions or to make a lewd move or gesture, which may violate the good taste and ethical standards of others. (...) to address an honorable woman (girl or married woman) in a public space with the aim of becoming acquainted against her will or in an inopportune manner. (...) the police are obliged to (...) provide the most comprehensive protection for the public and the woman or adolescent who is in need of protection.

Decree No. 151.000/1927 of the Interior Minister: The protection of public morals¹²

There was a striking “proliferation of discourse” with regards to sexuality in Hungary after World War I. The number of publications on sex education for young people was in the hundreds, most of the authors being Christian (often linked directly to the Catholic or Calvinist Churches) and representing the dominant sexual ethos, an excellent example of which we find in various “decency regulations,” one of which is quoted above. The sexual normalcy advocated in these texts is not very different from Catholic sex education elsewhere in Europe: Austrian, Polish or German Catholics had similar conceptions of sexual norms, what could be considered deviant, and what was expected from youths.¹³

socio.hu earlier this year. Both articles are in Hungarian. See: András Lugosi, “‘Sztalin főhercege.’ Kohn báró vacsorái a Falk Miksa utcában a fajgyalázási törvény idején,” *FONJS* 17, no. 4 (2010): 527–76 and Gábor Szegedi, “Tisztaság, tisztesség, fajgyalázás: Szexuális és faji normalizáció a Horthy-korban,” *Socio.hu* 5, no. 1 (2015), accessed October 2, 2015, http://www.socio.hu/uploads/files/2015_1/szegedi.pdf.

12 “A m. kir. belügyminiszternek 151.000/1927 B.M. számú körrendelete: a közerkölcsiség védelme,” *Belügyi Közlöny* 32 (1927): 327–28.

13 For a comparison see: Lutz D.H. Sauerteig and Roger Davidson, eds., *Shaping Sexual Knowledge: A*

The works of Hungarian authors Tihamér Tóth, Ferenc Kiss, Péter Olasz and József Koszterszitz all employ a rhetoric of guilt and are all oriented around “purity,” which is contrasted with “sin.”¹⁴ The practices that were to be avoided were numerous: masturbation, homosexuality, any form of premarital or extramarital sex, and consumption of pornography (which was fairly broadly defined). Béla Bangha¹⁵ and Ottokár Prohászka,¹⁶ two of the most influential Catholic ideologues of the 1920s, had a great deal to say about sexuality, including something they saw as specifically “Jewish sexuality.” These two “dedicated warriors, moreover, program setters for the politics labeled as ‘Christian national’”¹⁷ became role models for a middle class that “got drunk”¹⁸ on anti-Semitism and also a far right that lauded their racial arguments. Due to their standing within the Catholic Church of Hungary and the respect they enjoyed in Christian national public discourse, their texts importing age-old sexual stereotypes on the lewdness of Jews played a crucial role in setting the scene for Catholic sex education as well.

In addition to emphasizing, often in very abstract and vague terms, that Christian youths needed to remain “pure” (purity being the keyword of Christian sex education) until marriage, it was important to provide them with guidance on how this could be achieved, mostly by listing what and who were to be avoided. Women and adolescent youths (both male and female) were the two groups

Cultural History of Sex Education in 20th Century Europe (London–New York: Routledge, 2009).

14 See for example: Tihamér Tóth, *A tiszta férfiúság* (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1920); Péter Olasz, *A mai férfi életútja* (Satu-Mare: Corvin Nyomda, 1926); József Koszterszitz, “Sátán törvetése,” in *Tiszta férfiúság az egyetemeken*, ed. József Koszterszitz (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1944).

15 Béla Bangha (1880–1940), Jesuit monk and editor of the most important quality periodical run by Catholics, *Magyar Kultúra* (which was founded in 1912), worked to establish a strong Catholic-Christian press (e.g. by establishing the Central Press Agency, a Catholic publishing house for press and other publications) in order to counterbalance the “liberal-Jewish” press, which in his view was contributing to the “judaization” of the Hungarian middle class.

16 Ottokár Prohászka (1858–1927), bishop of Székesfehérvár and member of the pro-Horthy government party after 1919, was one of the key politicians responsible for the *Numerus Clausus* Law in 1920, which capped the number of Hungarian “Jews” (defined partly racially) to be accepted at universities at 6 percent of the total number of students accepted. It was Prohászka who suggested that the original motion, which concerned limiting the number of women at universities, be amended. For an excellent overview of the Numerus Clausus Law and its adoption see: Mária M. Kovács, *Törvénytől sújtva. A numerus clausus Magyarországon, 1920–1945* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2012).

17 Máté Gárdonyi, “Az antiszemitizmus funkciója Prohászka Ottokár és Bangha Béla társadalomképében,” in *A bolokausztl Magyarországon európai perspektívában*, ed. Judit Molnár (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2005), 193.

18 To cite Sándor Márai’s diary, “the Hungarian middle class became insane and got drunk on the Jewish question.” See: Sándor Márai, *Napló, 1943–44* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 156.

that were to be protected primarily from the degenerative effects of “excessive” sexuality. These two groups appeared in the sex education material as potential victims, who had to have personal willpower, but also needed special, external protection in the form of well-enforced laws and regulations fending off threats. The sexual dangers allegedly lurking around every corner were embodied in many different forms, including those coming from the inside. However, I would argue that the majority of the authors in this Christian-national setting primarily emphasized *external* threats that posed a danger for the in-group and argued in support of *containing* these external threats. Keeping the threat groups on the periphery by segregating them from the majority was recurrently recommended as the primary aim of sexual politics. *Prostitutes* were the first group, while Jews and, more specifically, *Jewish men* were the second. Prostitutes were primarily considered a direct health threat, whose scope of activities had to be limited in order to keep the young men of the nation (and their future wives and children) healthy and free of sexually transmitted diseases. The case with Jews is more complicated. They appeared in much of the sex education either overtly or covertly as the possessors of a specific “Jewish spirit,” the representatives of capitalism who also made profit off of sex and thus constituted a more abstract danger. However, Jewish men also represented sexual excess in their bodies; they appeared as bad examples of sexual perversions, as well as bodies that were to be avoided by “honorable” Christian women.

In Christian-national sex education the link between Jews and the exploitative nature of capitalism appears with the concept of *sexual capitalism*. The authors who spoke up firmly in support of “full sexual purity” until marriage for youth were willing to see adolescents as helpless victims endangered by those who profited from the illicit sexual activities in which these youngsters would engage. In most parables Christian boys were too young to know and too alone to resist. They had to be warned not to become easy prey for sex profiteers. In these texts Jews often appear as seducers; their mere presence on the street, in the city, and in intellectual life was cast as a threat to the innocence and purity of young Christian men and women. Jews were linked directly and indirectly to the production of pornography, pro-sex science (sexology and Freudian psychoanalysis being “Jewish sciences”), and excessive and perverse sexuality (including masturbation and homosexuality). They were also characterized as pimps who attracted girls with money.¹⁹

19 For a detailed analysis of sex education and sexual politics in interwar Hungary, see Szegedi, “Tiszta-ság, tisztesség, fajgyalázás”.

Honor: Three Incarnations

Honor was a constitutive part of the 1935 Nuremberg Law that dealt with marriage and sexuality. It was in fact called the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor*.²⁰ Sections 1 to 3 prohibited intermarriage, sexual relations outside marriage and Jews employing non-Jewish female domestic help. Section 4 forbade Jews to display “national colors.” Instead they were limited to “Jewish colors.”²¹ Thus, on the one hand there is a biological concept based in a racist anthropology according to which contamination would occur if “pure” Germans were to have children with Jews, and this would lead to the degeneration of the next generation of Germans.²² On the other, we see the idea of a community of German honor, equally powerful, that is meant to exclude Jews symbolically and which requires a more substantial exclusion that goes beyond the formal requirements of anti-miscegenation. Honor was what non-Jewish Germans stood to lose if they were to sleep with Jews, not or not only their biological “purity.”

It thus should come as no surprise that Przyrembel found a court that in a 1936 race defilement case extended the understanding of the race defilement clause well beyond closing down avenues for the conception of mixed-blood children. The court referred to the unity of the 1935 Law, which, in addition to putting up an obstacle to insemination (protecting German blood that is), also aimed to protect German honor. For this reason the court’s interpretation of the prohibition included any type of intimate physical contact, in addition to intercourse.²³ Przyrembel documented the fact that in Nazi Germany race defilement went way beyond the legal punishment of sexual affairs: it aimed at a segregation of the Jewish population from regular contact with the rest of the German population, and this included friendships, good neighborly relations, or simple gestures of compassion. This became most evident in the denunciations of the population where those who had “previously made purchases in the Jewish

20 The opposite of honor (*Ehre*) was dishonor or disgrace (*Schande*). The Hungarian term “fajgyalázás” referred to “gyalázás”, which bears a meaning very similar to *Schande*.

21 Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre. Accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.documentarchiv.de/ns/nbgesetze01.html>.

22 One prominent example is Arthur Dinter’s bestselling 1920 novel, *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (The Sin against the Blood), which did a great deal to spread the misinterpretations of biological principles that were used to underpin anti-miscegenation.

23 Przyrembel, *Rassenschande*, 169.

shops, lived together with Jews or were in other business contact with Jews”²⁴ were especially suspicious, and putting these “friendly Germans” under threat served to isolate Jews sexually and socially. People were expected to feel hatred and disgust toward Jews, so individuals who maintained any type of positive contact with them were by default suspicious of race defilement. The Hungarian law of 1941, like its German counterpart from 1935 or for that matter the 1941 Jewish Codex of Slovakia, foreshadowed a mass of denunciations, the isolation of Jews from non-Jewish society and the public humiliation and persecution of mixed couples. There is a substantial difference, however, between the wording of the German and the Hungarian race defilement clause. In Germany, “German honor” had to be protected, in addition to blood, so all extramarital sex was banned. In contrast, in Hungary it was “honorable women” who were made off limits for Jewish men. In practical terms this meant that Jewish women could have sex with non-Jewish men and only Jewish men were threatened with a criminal indictment. Furthermore, in terms of the politics of honor, it allowed for scrutiny of the sex lives of Jewish men and Christian women. It led to a constant defining and redefining of what “female honor” meant, while Christian male honor remained unscrutinized. The anti-Semitic sex education texts by notable intellectuals from interwar Hungary show that sexual anti-Semitism got strong backing from the Hungarian Christian national State and its supporters. It should thus come as no great surprise that by the time Hungary entered World War II on Nazi Germany’s side, anti-Semitic legislation was ready to give formal expression to these well-publicized views. Subsequent to the passage of two major laws (the First Anti-Semitic Law and the Second Anti-Semitic Law) that aimed to contain “Jews” in Hungary in an economic-social sense, in 1941 a new marriage law was adopted that introduced sexual bans. It was also known as the “Third Anti-Semitic Law,” a law on marriage that replaced the 1894 law, introducing, in addition to the anti-Semitic passages, mandatory premarital health checks and marriage loans for eugenically “fit” couples. It is worth examining the wording of the anti-Semitic clauses in Law No XV of 1941, which introduced the concept of race defilement into Hungarian law:

9. § Non-Jews are not allowed to marry Jews (...)

15. § A Jew, who has sexual intercourse with a honorable, non-Jewish woman of Hungarian origin or gets or tries to get an honorable, non-

24 Ibid., 210.

Jewish woman of Hungarian origin to engage in intercourse with him or with another Jew.²⁵

The same category of the “honorable woman” appears in Decree No. 151.000/1927 of the Interior Minister (The Protection of Public Morals). It was the honor of the sexually pure woman that needed to be protected, and with Jews constructed as a threatening group, it was not enough to educate teenagers to keep away from Jews and to prohibit Jews from approaching “honorable” women on the streets, Jews also had to be kept away with more punitive measures.

What exactly did the term “honorable” mean in the context of Hungary? How did the courts deal with such a vague, non-legalistic term, and how was this honor constructed and reconstructed by various actors in the race defilement cases? Can we limit the discussion of honor to women, or did the honor discourses apply to other members of society?

Female Honor

“The woman becomes visible in society primarily through her body, and if she does not fit the norms, she is put under strict regulations,” wrote Zsuzsa Bokor in her discussion of the Hungarian pre-World-War I and interwar discourse on prostitution and eugenics.²⁶ This statement, however, is just as true of post-1941 Hungary and the prevailing concept of race defilement during the war. Female bodies were on display, as they had to undergo the test of honor. The “examination” in many cases involved a range of male expert or non-expert opinion: physicians were asked to ascertain virginity or determined whether or not a woman had any sexually transmitted diseases; the defense often tried to prove that a female witness was not a woman of honor in order to get the defendant acquitted and thus alleged that the body of the woman involved was “unruly”; other men (neighbors, family members, other sexual partners, real or potential) were asked to indicate whether they had information concerning the woman’s honor. One might conclude, as László Josefovits did, the author of the 1944 legal booklet *Fajgyalázás* [Race Defilement], that the legislator made an

25 1000 év törvényei. 1941. évi XV. tc. a házassági jogról szóló 1894:XXXI. törvénycikk kiegészítéséről és módosításáról, valamint az ezzel kapcsolatban szükséges fajvédelmi rendelkezésekről. Accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3¶m=8168>.

26 Zsuzsa Bokor, “Nők a nemzetben, nemzet a nőkben: a Magyar Egyesület a Leánykereskedelem Ellen eugenikai olvasata,” *Socio.hu*, 4, no. 2 (2015): 96, Accessed July 21, 2015, http://www.socio.hu/uploads/files/2015_2/bokor.pdf.

omission by not properly defining “honorable woman” when passing the 1941 Marriage Law. This could have been due to the fact that in Hungary prostitution was legal and those who wanted to become prostitutes legally had to register with the authorities. This move, however, had a no-point-of-return moment, as once a woman had registered herself as a prostitute, it was extremely hard for her to return to “honorable” professions or to a marriage partner who would have been able to provide financial security. Most women did not want to risk these, and so the number of registered prostitutes was fairly low. While there were a few thousand registered prostitutes, the authorities believed that many more worked as “clandestine prostitutes.”²⁷ The term “clandestine prostitute” was used by police authorities and was, like the term honor, a very flexible notion used to discipline and assert control over the bodies of females who did not fit the expected norm (e.g. walked alone late at night, had several sexual partners, etc.).²⁸ This may have been because the moral police had already been struggling with the problem of boundaries when defining “prostitute” that the government could not simply put “registered prostitute” in the race defilement clause, as it would have created injustice (within a system of injustice) and also practical complications. If all Jewish men paying for sex had been forced by the heavy hand of the law to turn to registered prostitutes, these prostitutes would have been too busy to provide for other clients, hence non-Jewish men would have been forced to turn to “clandestine prostitutes” en masse. On the other hand, this would have been an easy solution that would have drastically limited Jewish men’s contact with non-Jewish women. However, it was probably too narrow a category for “dishonorable woman,” and this would not have left room for the policing and surveillance of women “on the margins.” It seems, therefore, that the legislator left the definition of honor open and free-floating. Because they did not have a clear legal concept, the police, the attorneys, the defendants, and, most importantly, the judges were encouraged to ask for additional information on the past emotional and sexual history of the woman involved. This additional knowledge made it possible to exert greater control over these unruly female

27 In a 1917 book the police prostitution expert Emil Schreiber reported 2,600 registered prostitutes in Budapest in 1916. He cited some experts who believed that in Berlin clandestine prostitution was tenfold compared to the number of the women registered. He refused, however, to make any such estimate with regards to the situation in Hungary. Emil Schreiber, *A prostitúció* (Budapest: Pátria, 1917), 151.

28 For more on this practice see: Susan Zimmermann, “Nemiség, tisztesség és szegénység. A nőkkel és a prostitúcióval kapcsolatos vita és politika Bécsben és Budapesten a századfordulón,” *Rubicon* 6, no. 8 (1998), accessed October 5, 2015, http://www.rubicon.hu/magyar/oldalak/nemiseg_tisztesség_es_szegenyseg_a_nokkal_es_a_prostitucioval_kapcsolatos_vita_es_politika_becsben_e/.

bodies and emotions. In his aforementioned booklet, Josefovits dealt separately with the issue of female honor and quoted a number of court cases in which such dishonor was underlined by the fact that the women in question had acquired sexually transmitted diseases in one of their many encounters. Having extramarital sex and being infected with a sexually transmitted disease certainly constituted transgressions of sexual normality. As Sander Gilman has repeatedly shown, for a long time sexually transmitted diseases were the “glue” that connected Jews and prostitutes in the public imagination. In some cases mention is made of the detail that the encounters took place “on the highway” or “at the counter of the cinema,” which, based on the 1927 law on public morals, were public spaces and thus not sites where decent women could be addressed.²⁹ Josefovits quoted a ruling of the Supreme Court (Kúria), which established a definition of dishonor that in various court cases was later used as a standard: “A woman who, without the slightest hesitation or resistance that would indicate female shame and good morals, upon mere prompting is ready to have an intimate encounter, cannot be considered honorable from a race protection point of view.”³⁰

Since only honorable women could be accused of the crime, the vagueness of the concept of female dishonor also enabled acts of resistance; there were certain cases in which women were able to use their dishonor to their or their lover’s advantage. The opposite was possible as well. If a woman had a reason to hold a grudge against a Jewish man, she could try to fight for her honor; going for self-declared dishonor was, however, a much more common strategy. The law, like the Nazi German one, stipulated that only the man could be convicted of an act of “defilement,” a detail that exemplifies contemporary ideas about the active and passive roles of men and women, respectively, in sexual contact. Since the forced registration of women as prostitutes was also forbidden, the stakes for a self-claimed dishonor were rather moderate. I found only a single instance in which, subsequent to the affirmation of dishonor, a woman was sent to the moral police (*erkölcsrendészet*) for “administrative measures.” It was a case in which the woman and three witnesses, including her own mother and the defendant, all claimed that she had had sexual intercourse with several men for money.³¹ Such “administrative measures” amounted to a day or a couple of days

29 “A m. kir. belügyminiszternek 151.000/1927 B.M. számú körrendelete: a közerkölcsiség védelme,” *Belügyi Közöny* 32 (1927): 327–28.

30 László Josefovits, *Fajgyalázás: az 1941: 15.t.c. 15.§-ának büntetőbírószági joggyakorlata* (Budapest: Bethlen, 1944).

31 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék, Box No. 3174, Case 11471/1942.

of detention and possibly a medical check-up, a humiliating procedure all in all, even if not comparable to months or years of imprisonment (the maximum one could get for race defilement was 3 years, or 5 years in certain cases).

Thus, one must take into consideration that in many cases women would be motivated to define themselves as dishonorable, for instance a woman who claimed, “it seems I am someone who just goes off with anyone at a whistle,”³² or another who said “when I am on the street and a man asks me to have intercourse, I go with him to have intercourse for money.”³³ In one case the defense attorney in the same case tried to argue that she had already been penalized for abortion. He probably hoped that given the strict moral denouncement of abortion, this would establish dishonor, but it did not. In the same case the woman admitted to having had sex occasionally with men who paid her, but added that she liked them as well, and so the court qualified her conduct as honorable.

Stories of love and despair were the types of narratives that could convince the court of one’s high morality if a woman’s honor was at stake. In the numerous cases in which it was clear that the woman did not have many lovers or had not accepted money in exchange for sex, the question of honor was cleared up easily. But for women who came from poor families and were likely to have accepted financial compensation for sexual favors, honor could still be saved if they were shown to have been what I have labeled as “in despair” or “in love.”

Despair was very often constructed using the stereotypes mentioned in anti-Semitic texts by Bangha, Prohászka and others: the village girl versus the Jewish seducer. According to this narrative, poor girls from rural areas who came to big towns to find work were especially susceptible to the temptation/danger posed by Jewish men. As this danger was external to them, their honor could and had to be saved. Despair was not necessarily measured on the basis of what one did, but focused rather on “character,” which was in turn based on assumptions rooted in Christian national popular culture. In fact, when the courts discussed the *character* of the “village girl” and the “seductive Jews,” trying to look for a story of personality leading up to the deed, their work resembled what Michel Foucault refers to as the “psychological-ethical double of the offense.”³⁴ This, Foucault claims, went hand in hand with the appearance of the psychological expert opinion, which analyzed the psychological profile of the accused, and from the eighteenth century on, the judiciary gradually started to rely heavily on these

32 Josefovits, *Fajgyalázás*, 15–17.

33 Ibid.

34 Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–75* (London: Verso, 2003), 16.

expert opinions. The “double” is a delegalized version of the deed. It likens the person to his crime. In other words, the commission of a crime is characterized as the natural outcome of the alleged criminal’s irregular personality, which also found manifestation in extravagant, noncriminal behavior.³⁵ In the race defilement cases, this double seems to appear without the need for psychological expert opinion. The judiciary often seemed ready to indulge in the construction of psychological profiles of both criminal and victim, and the “psychological expert knowledge” was found in the works of anti-Semites.

Despair was especially credible if the woman showed signs of hesitation (as opposed to “without slightest hesitation”), since that proved that she was not well-versed in the prostitution business and was possibly simply defenseless.³⁶ One such case was that of a 24-year-old factory worker girl who initially refused to go with a Jewish man for 5 pengő. When he raised the price to 10 pengő, she agreed. In the appeals court’s explanation of their verdict (1 month and 28 days prison) they made the following claim:

it can be established that accused knew very well that T.J. was not a prostitute, because one does not need to do advance courting of a prostitute. The moral police found nothing on T.J. in its investigation, and as a factory worker she has a normal profession, but the 18–20 pengő she earns is so little that—already excited by the hugs and kisses of the accused—she did not have the fortitude to reject the sum, which was so big compared to her earnings (...) T.J. is a girl who came to Budapest from a village not much before this incident, and these are the people whom, due to their lack of experience, the law primarily wants to protect for the sake of racial purity.³⁷

Both the concept of hesitation and the narrative of the village girl have an important place in the Budapest Appeals Court’s argumentation. Members of this court, namely Dezső Ottrubay, Ernő Lengyel, and Elek Pálffy, otherwise did not appear markedly anti-Semitic in their decision-making. In dozens of other cases

35 See *Ibid.*, 19.

36 In all likelihood, many of these women had few choices. In my analysis of race defilement court cases I do not wish to express any kind of justification for or approval of the kind of economic coercion that compelled young working class girls to provide sexual services for a couple of pengős. Rather, I wish to emphasize how the metaphor of the defenseless girl was used by men of power to help construct a specifically negative image of “Jewish sexuality.”

37 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék, Box No. 3234, Case 3859/1943.

they mitigated the sentences of the Budapest District Court, acquitting a large number of men who had been convicted based on insubstantial evidence. There is another case worth mentioning in this context, when the Budapest District Court's ruling, which was quite severe (one year of imprisonment), began with a passage that resembled an excerpt from a sentimental novel: "F.G. factory worker was employed in the Kárpátia sewing factory as a seamstress until September 26, 1941. She then lost her job, and on October 8, 1942, without any income, she bought ¼ kilos of cheap black grapes with the last of her money and was eating this for lunch on a bench in Mária Terézia square, reading a book."³⁸

The ruling continued with the story, according to which a 68-year-old man approached her and sat down beside her. Allegedly, they had chatted for one and a half hours, and in the course of their talk the 21-year-old girl had told him about her financial distress. He had offered her 6 pengős to have intercourse with him and, "after lengthy persuasion," she had accepted the offer. In the court hearing the man claimed that the girl had approached him and offered her services, while the girl presented the version that was accepted as the truth by the court. This case shows that "personality" did in fact matter, and in this case of an allegedly sex-hungry old Jewish man versus an innocent, young village girl, the representatives of power sided with her in terms of credibility and honor.

It was, however, not just the courts and the police who determined female honor. Women themselves could also get actively involved in the process. A successful and highly intelligent attempt to manipulate the system was made by Mrs. V., a 25-year-old waitress, who was married but was found during a night police raid in bed with a Jewish colleague of hers. Initially, it looked like relationship based on mutual love. The man and the woman were of the same social class, and they both confessed to the police that they had had a continuing relationship. The man (Mr. M.), even though it would certainly have meant having to spend months in prison if not years, maintained this version of their relationship, but the women retracted on the day of the court hearing:

Mr. M.: I understand the charge and I plead guilty. I had a relationship with Mrs. V. for 4 years, and on December 12, 1941 in the morning, when the detectives, who were investigating another case, appeared in the rented room in which I live, they found me in bed with Mrs. V. By

38 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék, Box No. 3176, Case 11624/1942.

that time I had been living together with her for two months, and we had a relationship based on love (...)

Mrs. V.: As far as I know, the defendant was cognizant of the fact that I am not an honorable woman. I had been taken into custody several times after police raids and I had been in a youth detention center as well. This happened because on some occasions I was caught red handed when I received male guests. I am not registered as a prostitute. I only received male guests on occasion, from whom I accepted money. (...)

Defendant (Mr. M.) in response to the Prosecutor’s question: I knew that Mrs. V. was not to be considered a decent woman. If I remember well, I gave her money in exchange for intercourse as well, but I don’t remember how much.³⁹

Thus, Mr. M. quickly understood Mrs. V.’s intentions and helped her establish her own legal status as a woman of dishonor. However, at the same time she positioned herself quite well in this “system of female dishonor,” as she painstakingly explained that she had only had “temporary male guests” (*átmenő férfivendégek*). She limited their number to two and added that for months she had not had sex with them. That is, she presented an image of herself according to which she was not a health or a “public morals” threat, and thus she had a chance of avoiding any kind of administrative measures for clandestine prostitution. Her intervention was successful partly because records on her were found by the moral police and Mr. M. was acquitted a couple of months later.⁴⁰ What I call “love”—in court cases one finds phrases like “I love him” (*szeretem*) and “I liked them” (*kedveltem*)—could take several forms. In most cases, however, it referred to the fact that the woman might have had motivations that were not purely materialistic or carnal. Giddens contends that in romantic love relationships, which over the course of the twentieth century rose to a place of unprecedented social prominence, “an element of sublime love tends to predominate over that of sexual ardor,” adding that “love breaks with sexuality while embracing it.”⁴¹ That is, if the usual dishonorable conduct the goal of which was money or sexual satisfaction was to a certain extent elevated to this “sublime” level, this may well have changed the whole story, including the perception of female honor. It is true that if a woman’s honor was

39 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék, Box No. 3004, Case 12444/1941.

40 Ibid.

41 Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 40.

satisfactorily established in the eyes of the court, this was usually bad news for a Jewish defendant. In certain cases, women very clearly tried to save their lovers by making up fictional clients (usually in vain). However, taking into account the importance of retaining honor, especially for women in middle-class couples, declarations of love (especially if they were mutual) can be seen not as a way of creating greater problems for the defendant, but as expressions of defiance to the law, which tried to serve by force relationships that were founded upon intimate feelings. Below are some cases from court decisions that touched upon this rather vague issue. In one case, the defense underlined that the Christian woman was in an adulterous, extramarital relationship, but the court dismissed their claim, contending that, “an extramarital liaison conducted with a single man and with no financial implications, purely based on attraction, cannot be termed dishonorable from an implementation point of view, even though it is in conflict with good morals.”⁴²

This was a ruling the court had some trouble justifying, as in light of contemporary sexual mores an adulterous relationship with a Jewish man was certainly not an honorable deed. In a “Solomon’s decision,” they scolded her for this relationship, but found a way to distinguish her from the prostitutes whom they believed the makers of the law had sought to target with allegations of “dishonor.” Another case was somewhat similar: a woman was categorized as an “ex-clandestine prostitute,” and she had had issues with the police for some time for having worked as a clandestine prostitute. However, when she met the Jewish man, she decided to give up her previous life as a prostitute and remain faithful to him. The court, probably motivated by anti-Semitic convictions, acknowledged that he “converted” her into an honorable woman and at the same time gave him a 4-month prison sentence for sleeping with a Christian woman of honor.⁴³ In another case a woman admitted to having had sexual relations with several men, but she contended that she was honorable, since according to her, “I have not had intercourse for income with anyone ever and I would not be prepared to do this. I only had sex out of love, when I liked the man.”⁴⁴ The court of first instance accepted her claim and decided that she was indeed honorable.

42 Hungarian National Archives (MNL OL) Papers of the Kúria (Supreme Court), Item 69, batch 183, K583.

43 Ibid., batch 112, K583.

44 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék, Box No. 3151, 9246/1942.

Jewish Honor

Unsurprisingly, there was considerable variety in the forms of sexual conduct and sexual proclivity revealed by the race defilement proceedings, and these forms of conduct and desire were not always in line with contemporary stereotypes of Jewish sexuality. The types of relationships, the sexual habits and practices, the confessions and acts of various actors in some cases rather seem to have worked against the schematic stereotypes of the authorities. Like "female honor," Jewish sexuality was a construct molded by various expectations and norms, and it worked more or less as a superimposition of a "Christian national" morality on Jewish men. In other words, the more Jewish men conformed to the ideal of "Christian purity" or "true love," showing devotion to their (honorable) partner, the less likely they were to be subject to harsh treatment. Calling it "Jewish honor" might seem misleading at first glance, but I would argue for retaining the expression with the above meaning, i.e. as an honor "awarded" to some Jews and refused to others.

I will start with a case that could have been written personally by Prohászka or Bangha, as it was so much in line with anti-Semitic stereotypes. Gy. N., a conductor from Budapest, was, like many other people of Jewish origin after 1939, fired from his job. He found refuge in the orchestra of the mining town, Mátranovák, where he pretended to be Roman Catholic (although his religion was "Israelite" according to official documents). He soon met a 17-year-old girl, the daughter of a miner. A court ruling describes the meeting, in which "he started leading the girl on by standing in front of her when she approached with her bicycle." Even though the ruling acknowledges that the meeting "was not against the will of the girl, because she did not go elsewhere to ride her bike," there is a suggestion of force in the phrasing: "in the end, the accused grabbed the girl's bike and made her stop and get off, and then he introduced himself."⁴⁵ Gy. N. was a married man, and he spoke about this to the girl, but he did not inform her that he was Jewish. As the ruling notes, "he even went to the church with her and made the sign of the cross there. Moreover, when there was talk about Jews, he too scolded them. Also, even though he did not make a formal promise that he would marry her, he talked about divorcing and making her 'a very happy girl.'"⁴⁶ It was in light of this information that, the court notes, the

45 Hungarian National Archives (MNL OL) Papers of the Kúria (Supreme Court), Item 69, batch 112, K583.

46 Ibid.

girl repeatedly agreed to have intercourse with him. There is mention of a trip to Budapest, where he was supposed to introduce her to his (Catholic) parents, but instead he took her to a hotel where he “got the young girl to do perverse things (*fajtalanság*, which literally translates as “contrary to the race”),” which probably referred to oral sex, on the basis of the use of the expression in other cases. The liaison turned into a scandal once it became public, and some local men wanted to beat up the conductor. He ended the affair, but then started a new one, again with a Christian woman, once more “hiding his identity.” In retrospect, at court he claimed that he wanted to emigrate and marry the woman in question in America. The court’s ruling becomes most indignant in its tone when it discusses female honor and how this honor was affected as a result of his conduct:

If the accused had had honorable intentions with R.Zs., if he had loved her seriously and honestly, he would not have approached her in such a deceitful and conscienceless way, as being a learned and well-read person he must have known that on the one hand his Jewish origins could be revealed very easily, and on the other, if his Jewish identity were revealed, this would bring shame on R.Zs. and dramatically reduce her chances of finding a husband, thus it could completely ruin her future.⁴⁷

As for the 17-year-old girl’s honor, they arrived at the following conclusion:

with this, she started her ride down the slope, and afterward it was easier just to follow the accused than to stop and turn back, and this is how he took the girl with him down the slope to the state of moral debauchery that obviously felt like home for him (perversity (*fajtalanság*) in the Budapest hotel, etc.).⁴⁸

Lastly, the ruling included a general legal consideration on female honor:

It is a constitutive part of the crime one is charged with that the woman, with whom the accused had sexual intercourse, is honorable, but in addition to this, from the point of view of the gravity of the crime, it is important to determine the moral value that the woman had

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

before the act of intercourse and the extent of the moral devastation cause by the accused's deed.⁴⁹

Without much effort, one can spot all the negative stereotypes regarding Jewish sexuality and how they were subsequently connected to seduction and to pushing innocent village girls down the slippery slope from which there was no return. No wonder then that the conductor received the most severe of all the sentences that I found in the material of the Supreme Court, 18 months in prison, upheld by both appeals courts. The fact that having had intercourse with a Jewish man would "decrease any woman's value" is notable. Thus, a Jewish man's honor would have entailed stepping away from Christian girls in order to maintain their "market value." There are numerous cases in which having obstructed a girl's access to "normal life" was cited as an aggravating circumstance: "for the sake of a friendship with an honorable Hungarian girl, that is for egoistic reasons, he tried to stop the impending marriage of a young Hungarian couple with all his means, and as part of this he tried to stop a wayward girl from finding the right path again."⁵⁰

Two other rulings scolded Jewish men for having remained intimately associated with a girl for a longer time: "the defendant (...) committed the crime over an extended period of time, and with this deed he seriously impeded the fulfillment of the natural female role of R.T. and her search for a place in non-Jewish society via marriage."⁵¹ And "aggravating circumstances are the extended time period and that the defendant committed the crime with a married woman, inhibiting her from fulfilling her female role based on her origins, either by making up with or legally divorcing her husband."⁵² That is, if the woman was unmarried, being with a Jewish man would mean both shame and a cul-de-sac, and if she were to marry him, similarly this would have been a deviation from her "natural role." However, in the above cases the relationships were relatively fresh and the girls clearly had other options (a Christian suitor or husband). Other rulings show that consistency and exclusiveness were mitigating circumstances, as in the case of a couple who had been together since 1930. They could not get married, as the woman already had a husband who had, however, disappeared abroad, thus depriving her of the chance to obtain a divorce. The Budapest District court sentenced him to four

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék, Box No. 3161, Case 10226/1942.

52 Ibid., Box No. 3172, Case 11196/1942.

months imprisonment, which was upheld by the appeals court, but the Supreme Court reduced it to one month. The fact that they had sex even after the Marriage Law took effect was evidenced by a witness considered credible by the court, and the medical expert refuted their main argument that she had been ill and unable to have sex. The court of second instance did not accept the contention that “the sexual relationship, with regular intercourse, that was upheld up to now would have transformed into an ideal, spiritual bond,” but it did regard the “spiritual connection (*lelki kapcsolat*) that was rooted in long years of a love relationship” as a mitigating circumstance. The Supreme Court added in its ruling that this mitigating circumstance mentioned by the appeals court “carries such great weight in favor of the accused that the original sentence seems disproportionately severe.”⁵³ The appeals court reduced the sentence to two months.

The various ideas concerning Jewish sexuality, female honor and Christian national sexual morality could emerge as factors in one and the same case as well. A Jewish man met a non-Jewish woman in the early 1920s, and they moved in together in the mid-1930s. They planned to marry, but were unable to arrange it; first the man’s father opposed it and, after his death, the woman’s birth certificate could not be found. After 1941, there were obvious legal obstacles. They both claimed to be in love with each other, but the Budapest District Court refused to take this into account:

(...) if the accused loved and loves the aggrieved party (the girl – G.Sz.) as much as he says, the objection of accused’s father should not have been a serious obstacle to marriage, and if this was the real reason why the wedding did not take place, then the accused’s deed confirms the racial overconfidence, according to which a non-Jewish woman is only good for an extramarital relationship, for the satisfaction of sexual instincts, and not for the establishment of a legal, family relationship.⁵⁴

This explanation and the ruling that sentenced the man to one year in prison shows that the judges of this district court did not take into account what in the previous case had been a significant mitigating circumstance. The overt anti-Semitism present in the ruling was topped by the claim that the accused had “irreparably distracted her from fulfilling her female role according to her

53 Hungarian National Archives (MNL OL) Papers of the Kúria (Supreme Court), Item 69, batch 183, K583.

54 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék, Box No. 3170, Case 10992/1942.

origin.”⁵⁵ She was at the time 44 years old, so this referred to the fact that she was already beyond the age at which women are or were commonly held to be capable of bearing children. The man was also scolded for his “decided criminal will, with which he not only repeatedly committed the crime during the proceedings, but explicitly decided to repeat it in the future.”⁵⁶ The court of second instance dismissed all aggravating circumstances in its ruling (one month in prison), as they believed that the woman had not been prevented from fulfilling her female role, a future violation of the law could only be the basis of another criminal investigation and not the one in question, and as regards the “explicit decision to repeat the deed,” they believed that this was “rather a result of internal despair than evil passion (*indulat*).” Furthermore, according to their ruling, the fact that “discontinuing their life together [had] created serious difficulties for the accused” was a mitigating circumstance.⁵⁷ This was in fact one of the cases in which both the woman and the man openly confessed their relationship and also their love and did not change their confessions, even though this would unquestionably put him at risk. He said that he “had been and was cognizant of the legal ramifications, but after having known each other for almost a lifetime they have become so used to each other and they loved each other so much that they could not and did not want to live without each other.”⁵⁸

She also mentioned the duration of the liaison. According to the police report, she said

for me he is not a lover but a husband. I am not responsible for the fact that his parents did not give their consent for us to marry as we had planned. I cannot give him up, because I love him and no other man will be born who would respect me as much as he does.⁵⁹

National Honor

One of Father Koszter’s post-1941 writings, *Sátán története* (The Intrigue of Satan), perfectly encapsulates the stereotypes connecting money, Jewish sexuality and female dishonor:

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

The kept women, maitresses who live off the pockets of their wealthy accomplices, are the victims of wretched voluptuaries; while their lives seem carefree from the outside, actually they are bleak, joyless and hopeless. These women will never become a “wife” and “mother,” the holy dream of a real woman. *These are the ones* who, since the passing of the 1941 Marriage Law, have converted to Judaism by the hundreds in order to continue to secure for themselves the money of their “friends.”⁶⁰

It logically followed that women who had consciously remained or engaged in sexual or matrimonial relations with Jews were doing it for money: they could only be prostitutes. If they were honorable women, then they did not belong to the Jews. Either they had been deceived or they were not yet fully cognizant of the dangers Jewish men posed and had to be shown a way back to “normality.”

But what kind of code of honor needed to be protected here? What was the normality, the “national honor” that was to be saved by these race defilement regulations? Again, the various actors had different ideas of what was at stake, but it is possible to delineate certain recurring patterns. Firstly, there is the idea of winning, of gaining the upper hand. If national honor is maintained and promoted by Christian national men, then public life, including the most respected professions, the media, public administration (all that makes a man proud of himself) must be in the hands of non-Jews. In this respect the 1941 Marriage Law is very much in line with the so-called First and Second Anti-Semitic Laws from 1938 and 1939, which limited the employment of Jews in certain professions and aimed at an “economic changing of the guards.” However, by 1941 changing of the guard meant that Jewish men had to give back “their” women (the women who were the prerogative of “Christian” men) as well. One case in which these various anti-Semitic laws for a “changing of the guard” worked together was that of a 53-year-old, rather well-off Budapest lawyer, who was convicted and given the maximum penalty of three years in prison by the court of first instance. The aggravating circumstances of the ruling have a particularly loaded language, even for this kind of court:

(...) the fact that the accused is married, that it happened repeatedly, that he committed the deed as a lawyer, and that partly in order to

60 József Koszterszitz, “Sátán törvetése,” in *Tiszta férfiság az egyetemeken* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1944), 37.

satisfy his lust, party for his own protection he contaminated spiritually a whole family and D.E., who is nearly still a child whose moral value depreciated to such an extent that she claimed that she was a prostitute without thinking, almost as if she were boasting.⁶¹

The lawyer was then acquitted by the appeals court, as they regarded the woman as dishonorable, and he was allowed to return home. However, as becomes clear on the basis of his petition for compensation, he lost his job as a lawyer because, subsequent to the first ruling, his name was automatically deleted from the list of chamber-approved lawyers. As a previous anti-Semitic Law had introduced a quota for the admittance of new Jewish lawyers to the Chamber, he did not stand a chance of being readmitted. Thus, in a case of sexual conduct in which he was finally acquitted, he still lost his profession and an accusation of race defilement *de facto* helped further the economic changing of guard. As for the disappointed Christian lover, race defilement cases provide some similar stories. One was that of a sailor, who traveled a great deal and whose wife had a Jewish lover. As the rulings states, “the married couple had constant fights because of the accused.”⁶² It was the husband who reported the affair in 1942 to the police in person, saying “I was informed that he has been having an affair with my wife since 1940. My wife has repeatedly said this winter that she would not leave him, she would rather break up with me and moreover, she wanted to convert to Judaism.”⁶³ At the court hearing he said he was on bad terms with the Jewish man because he “nosed himself up (*feltolakodott*)” to his wife, but that he was nevertheless able to give an unbiased statement as a witness.⁶⁴ The sentence was then reduced with each appeal, the initial ruling of 18 months first became one year and finally the Supreme Court reduced it to six months, indicating that it was not the Jewish man who initiated the liaison but the woman. He himself claimed that after 1941 he had “begged the woman to go back to her husband,” that is, in this case race defilement provided an opportunity for the disappointed husband to “reclaim” his lost wife from a Jewish man who, clearly under the pressure of the law, was willing to give up the

61 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék, Box No. 3151, 9246/1942. This is in fact the same case in which the woman was deemed honorable by the first court on the basis of her claim that she had only had sex with men she loved. See 22.

62 Hungarian National Archives (MNL OL) Papers of the Kúria (Supreme Court), Item 69, batch 183, K583.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

affair.⁶⁵ We can observe many of the same themes when looking at the ways in which some people reported Jews to the police. One such case was that of M.E., a house-painter, who was reported by another handyman, probably a rival, for living together with a Christian woman:

The foreign national M.E. defiles the Hungarian race and laughs merrily when there is talk about want of material, as his bottles are full of paint and varnish. If someone goes to him, he is ready to take any job, painting, coating, for less money, because he wants to oust the Christian workers by providing services without paying taxes.⁶⁶

This letter indicates quite clearly that the man in question was much less concerned with sexual-biological purity than he was with getting rid of economic competition. In terms of national honor, I have cited these three examples as illustrations of the connection between the post-1938 anti-Semitic regulations in Hungary and the ways in which they contributed to a system that enabled a “changing of the guard.” National honor at the time was to be preserved by replacing the Jewish intelligentsia with non-Jews in all possible spheres of society. This happened with various degrees of success in different walks of life, and there are no numbers to prove that Christian men were able to “get” the women they loved or the women who had had sexual contact with Jews. However, this was certainly part of the game: Hungarian national honor after 1941 implied not only the silencing of Jews in the public arena and the pressuring and expulsion of Jews from their professions and businesses. It also meant that they were to lose contact with the women they loved if these women were regarded as belonging rightfully to the nation.

Conclusion

What do the racist sexual politics of the Horthy-era teach us about the uses of concepts of sexual purity and honor? Firstly, they exemplify the legal codification of what Ute Frevert framed in terms of the gendered nature of emotions. As the race defilement cases exhibit, female honor was irrevocably tied to sexuality, and it was defined by a patriarchal middle class. The suspicion of dishonor arose if

65 Budapest Metropolitan Archives (BFL) VII-5-c-, Budapesti Királyi Törvényszék.

66 Ibid., Box No. 3172, Case 11195/1942.

women had more than one sexual partner, if they were believed to have engaged in sex in exchange for material gain or if they were ready to have sex with men they did not know without showing "proper female shame." Female honor was decided upon by male authorities. In the race defilement cases courts composed of men were entrusted with the authority to determine whether a woman was honorable or not. These decision-makers were ready to grant female honor if the women in question fit a certain profile that made them look vulnerable and in need of protection. This has been demonstrated by some police reports and court rulings and their reliance on certain stereotypes which found confirmation, as it were, in contemporary sex education texts. A stereotype that reappeared consistently was that of the naïve, uneducated and inexperienced poor village girl, who encountered an older, Jewish seducer and was helpless against his tricks. I used the terms *love* and *despair* above to capture other common ideas that could be used to persuade officials that a woman was honorable. Despair was often linked to the village girl stereotype, and it referred mostly to the coercion that supposedly resulted from her dire economic situation. Love, on the other hand, gave a spiritual meaning to an otherwise materialistically motivated sexual encounter, so if a woman made a plausible demonstration of affection, her honor could be saved. I have not discussed Jewish female sexuality in this paper as, in contrast to German race defilement, the Hungarian law did not penalize sexual contact with Jewish women and therefore the archival sources I have consulted did not address Jewish female sexuality. The sex education materials focused more on Jewish male seducers but occasionally the sexuality of Jewish women was mentioned too. A study of how the personal life of female "Jews" changed in the early 1940s is, however, a challenge that will have to be taken up in the future.

Secondly, I tried to see what codes of honor were applied to the Jewish men who were the primary targets of this legal provision. Even though their honor was not as specifically spelled out in the law as that of their female partners, circumstances did matter. If, according to the agents of power, they showed signs of love and were deeply attached to their partner, it was possible for them to receive a relatively mild sentence. There was much more understanding on behalf of the courts for couples who had been living together for years and possibly even had children than for those men who could be made to resemble the stereotype of the "Jewish seducer." I offered an example of one such "seducer," who, to use Foucault's concept of the *psychological-ethical double*, was already living in sin, coming from an urban-bohemian milieu and supposedly having caused his counterpart, the "village girl," to begin to slide down a moral

slope of no return. This “character,” so it was believed, was about to commit sexual violations as predetermined by his lifestyle. Jewish honor also included being humble and not standing in the way of a woman’s honor and her fulfillment of her alleged role, which implied eventually marrying a Christian man. If a Jewish man were to keep a woman “out of circulation” for too long by being her lover or by threatening her partnership with a Christian man, he would fall into a less honorable category. Naturally, the honor of Jews was not under scrutiny in this manner if they kept away from Christian women.

Thirdly, I linked the race defilement provision with other anti-Semitic legislation in Hungary and argued that the notion that Christian men had the property-rights over the nation was part of an abstract notion of “national honor.” National honor implied that they alone should have access to good jobs, to the ownership of capital, to public spaces, and the friendship and love of honorable women. As part of the changing of the guard, their rivals were to be restrained and remain humbled.

If other regulations served to deprive Jewish men of their economic rights, the anti-Semitic sexual provision stripped them of full sexual citizenship. The requirements connected to female honor put a wall around the sexual choices of certain groups in the emotional regime(s) of the Horthy era. One’s emotional liberty was seriously limited by the race defilement regulation, which forbade hundreds of thousands of Jewish men from approaching or continuing relationships with non-Jewish women, and in turn all non-Jewish women were closely monitored in order to ensure that they would not to engage in such illicit liaisons.

As with other anti-Semitic laws, what mattered was not just the number of the convicted and acquitted or the severity of their penalties. Stripping them of their honor as men (as part of the social construct of manhood), limiting their range of options, and policing and controlling female honor (i.e. sexuality) were all part and parcel of this regulation. Honorable Hungarian non-Jewish men wanted all honorable women to be their own virgin brides and loyal wives, whereas the love of a Hungarian woman for a “Jew” or any kind of rebellion against the legally buttressed order of things was to be punished with the full force of the law.

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