

DIGITI

Domenica di Pasqua noua di Aquile i 16 2
Intervenni alla Solenne Benedictione, che
diede N. S. dalla Loggia della Basilica Va-
ricana, dopo haueu celebrato Messa in detta
Chiesa. Et allo sparo de' Mortaletti essendo-
si spaventati, e posti in fuga per la piazza
di Cavalieri d'una Carrozza viuena di Donne,
uccisero un'huomo, e fecero altri danni.

Lunedì dieci detto intervenni nella Basilica di
S. Pietro, doue dalli Canonici si mostrauono a
numeroso popolo iui concorso, le Reliquie,
che si conseruano in detta Basilica in Re-
liquiarij sessanta dui, e si manifestarono in
tale occasione diuerso persone trouagliare
da spiriti immondi, particolarmente nell'osten-
sione delle tre Reliquie principali, cioè Sancia,
Croce, e Vostro Santo, et anco quando si mos-
tro' il Quadretto, nel quale sono dipinte le
Imagini dell' gloriosi Apostoli Pietro, e
Paolo, mostrato da S. Siluestro Papa all'
Imperator Costantino.

Lunedì dicessette detto ad un' hora di notte uiddi



DiGiTi - Rivista manoscritta
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In copertina:

Anton Stefano Cartari, Pasqua 1662 (Roma, ASR, Fondo Cartari-Feber, b. 105)

In IV:

Paolo Barberi, Pasqua 2026 (Alcamo, Scuola media "Nino Navarra")

(Um) exceptional stories

AGNES EROSS, FREE UNIVERSITY OF BOZEN-BOLZANO

They say that an interview-based research, the moment you begin to hear the same turns of phrase, the same familiar building blocks, the same well-worn plots, you have come full-circle - you may stop; further conversations will no longer carry the research forward. And yet there are places where, even when the patterns surface early, I feel an irresistible pull to listen for more. One more childhood story. One more love story. One more career achievement. The chronicle of calloused hands. The habitual apology - "but there's nothing exceptional in my story."

For what, after all, "exceptional" mean?

Something strikingly bright; a gift, a talent
run to an extreme, a singular capacity.

Or else, the one who does not quite belong —
who jars against the grain, who stands
out from whatever we happen to call
ordinary. But "ordinary" is a matter of
distance and comparison. And so, too, the
"exceptional" shifts with where you stand,
and when.

This writing offers a handful of
leaptions — shards of memory — bestowed on
me by interlocutors over nearly two decades.

On a gray November evening, in damp cold,
we arrive in front of a family house with a
garden in the southern part of the Great Plain
in Hungary. The Hungarian-Serbian border
is about forty-minutes ride. The outlines
of the house are barely visible; the street

lamps do not provide enough light. With our neck hunched, we scurry inside to the heated dining room. On the second day of fieldwork, this is our last interview. We are tired, but the hosts - a couple in their late forties - quickly draw us in with their wide smiles and radiant cheerfulness. As part of an international project⁽⁶⁾, we visit Hungarian families who moved from their homeland to Hungary during Yugoslav wars. In 1991, in Vojvodina, the autonomous province of former Yugoslavia, 400,000 people identified as Hungarian. Today, that number does not even reach 200,000. The goal of the research was to map out how these migrants live in Hungary, what their relationship is to their homeland (Vojvodina, Serbia) and to their motherland

(Hungary). This is how we ended up with Endre and Ilona (pseudonyms), who moved from a previously predominantly Hungarian small town in Vojvodina to this small town in Hungary.

When I met them I was a beginner in interviewing. I was enchanted by the opportunity to peek into strangers' lives for a few hours.

But also paralyzed by the responsibility: I had to collect "good enough" answers to provide sufficient information to the project, while I felt the weight of those stories and trust.

This research, carried out by people mostly my parents' age, taught me that information hides in the bitten-off word endings and the unspoken words.⁽²⁾ In tearful eyes and in the conspiratorial winks exchanged. That my positionality is built from many

layers interacting during the interview. In certain aspects, I am ingroup, since Endre, Iona, and I all have Hungarian as our mother tongue and recited the same poem in school⁽³⁾. But I am not a Hungarian from Vojvodina, so I was not socialized in their lifeworld. For me, Yugoslavia will always remain distant, and I will never feel the emotional registers of nostalgia for the everyday life of the now non-existent state as many do⁽⁴⁾.

Endre and Iona's story blended into the interviews we conducted in 2010-2011.

Although Endre, thanks to an interstate scholarship, had already gotten to know Hungary before 1990, the regime change, while he was studying at university to become a VET, they had not planned to move to Hungary. When Endre received the draft notice, he went on sick

leave, packed a small suitcase, and crossed the border that day. They hoped that the "whole thing", the war, would end quickly.

The family was temporarily separated: Ilona stayed in Vojvodina and travelled with their small child regularly to Hungary to meet ~~her~~ husband. Later they decided that Ilona follows Endre, and the family reunites in Hungary. They always wanted to return to their homeland, and they tried three times.

But the war in Balkans lasted too long.

And they did not get younger with the years passing by. Ultimately, they ended up staying in Hungary. Although, they often feel like strangers in Hungary and, in part, disappointed in Hungary. They, or tens of thousands of other Hungarians, came to the country thinking they were "coming home to the motherland";

yet they experienced many humiliating situations: cumbersome official administration, citizenship procedures dragging on for 14 years. The shock of war, the flight of men, the tearing apart of families, the unforeseen hardships of starting over, and the feeling of being strangers, (or treated as a stranger) all emerged in almost all these interviews. Endre and Ilona's story is not unique. It is not an exception.

And yet, after all these years, theirs is the only face I can still summon. Exceptional.

For me, they remain exceptional - because they are exceptional. Endre's humor flowed with such ease, with such elemental force, that it drew laughter from all of us.

Ilona's quiet presence - listening attentively - gently and precisely wove her own

experiences into their shared story. The love and harmony between them were both disarming and deeply reassuring. It felt good simply to be near them. Those two hours we spent together - those, were exceptional.

In what follows, let me share some interview excerpts that might transmit that atmosphere.

Enche, upon returning to Vojvodina with his fresh diploma as a VET assistant, got a job, as he remembered:

"Well, for a couple of months I also worked as an artificial inseminator with pigs. A boar in a tie. [everybody laughs]. But I am dead serious!"

Later they told us how complicated it was to arrange the residence permit in Hungary. Thus, they were happy when at last they could pick up the documents. However, on the spot,

it turned out that the office made a mistake: they misspelled a consonant in Ilona's name, so their newborn baby had been registered incorrectly in the civil register. Endre and

Ilona recalled this episode like this and now - in the end - they solved the issue.

Endre: "So then whose is this now, whose child is this? Because there is no person with a name like that in the family." [the interviewers chuckle.]

Ilona: "They said either bring a Hungarian original version, or we can't help.

Endre: "Or that I should bring a birth certificate that has the name written in Hungarian too, and in Serbian too. So then I went and told Kati - she was my classmate, the registrar - what was going on. She said they were not allowed to issue such a thing."

Ilona: " At that time there was that regulation [in Serbia] that official documents could only be issued in Serbian. "

Endre: " I said, listen to me, are these forms numbered? — No. — And then I said: what happens if you write one wrong? — Well, I tear it up, and throw it away. — Very good! [laughter] And then I said, if by accident you were to write one wrong, and in Hungarian, and throw it into the rubbish bin, then what would happen? — Well, nothing. — ok, I would take it out! And then she got 50 marks and she wrote it in Hungarian, "throw it," and then I brought it here [Hungary] and handed in. There, you see, that's how it should be done! "

Drawing on recollections from interviews conducted with Hungarian families who moved from Yugoslavia to Hungary during and after the Yugoslav wars, this article aimed to show how experiences that were shared by tens of thousands, displacement, bureaucracy, and resilience — can also become deeply personal, intimate, enduring receptions, lodged in memory.

Notes:

(1) The project, called TRANSMIG, was financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation, co-ordinated by the University of Bern.

(2) T. Bengtsson & H. Fyrbas, Analysing the significance in qualitative interviewing: questioning and shifting power relations, *Qualitative Research*, 18(1), 2018, pp. 19-35.

(3) L. Ryan, "inside" and "outside" of what or where? Researching migration through multipositionalities, *Forum Qualitative*

Sozialforschung / Forum for Qualitative
Social Research, 16(2), 2015, pp.

- (4) S. Boym, The future of nostalgia, Basic
Books, 2001.

I manoscritti non bruciano

(Michail Bulgàkov, Il Maestro e Margherita)

Domenica 5 aprile, Pasqua. Per tutti è un giorno di
pace e serenità, un'occasione per stare insieme alla
famiglia, ma per me no, per la mia famiglia no.
È stato un giorno di "caos". Ci siamo alzati molto
presto, presso le valigie preparate il giorno prima, e
saliti immediatamente in macchina. Come sempre prima
abbiamo fatto un pit-stop al bar. Uscendo l'autostrada
con musica a palla, cantando, stonando, sapendo cosa
ci tiene aspettando alla destinazione. Arrivati dopo circa
due ore, superando il cancello dei miei nonni, tiriamo
un respiro profondo, come se dovessimo andare in battaglia.
Circondati da amici, parenti, tempestati di domande senza
una fine. Nel mezzo del caos si accende la brace.
Un momento profondo, delicato. Non si può sbagliare. Chi
è davanti la brace, comanda. Segue lui.