DOCTORAL (PHD) DISSERTATION

by

ANNA LUJZA SZÁSZ

2015
EMANCIPÁLT EMLÉKEZET
KÉPES TÖRTÉNETEK A MAGYARORSZÁGI ROMA HOLOKAUSZT EMLÉKEZETRŐL

írta

SZÁSZ ANNA LUJZA

KONZULENS:

habil Dr. KOVÁCS ÉVA CSc

EÖTVÖS LÓRÁND TUDOMÁNY EGYETEM, BUDAPEST
TÁRSADALOMTUDOMÁNYI KAR
SZOCIOLÓGIA TANSZÉK
INTERDISZCIPLINÁRIS TÁRSADALOMKUTATÁSOK DOKTORI PROGRAM

2015
MEMORY EMANCIPATED
EXPLORING THE MEMORY OF THE NAZI GENOCIDE OF ROMA IN HUNGARY

by

ANNA LUJZA SZÁSZ

TUTOR:
habil Dr. ÉVA KOVÁCS CSc

EÖTVÖS LÓRÁND UNIVERSITY BUDAPEST
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
INTERDISCIPLINARY SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAM

2015
Acknowledgements

As the submission of my dissertation was approaching I started getting emotional about it. It was the realization that this text is not only about the exploration of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma but it is also a context which made me possible to meet great people, to gain incredibly meaningful experience and knowledge academically, socially and personally, and to learn to be aware of the position from where I am speaking. It was a little bit more than four years of my life, and this project was developed, nurtured and completed together with many people whom I am thankful to and whom I shall keep in my memories.

This research would have never begun if I had not met Júlia Szalai at a course titled “Sociological Approaches to Race and Ethnicity: The Roma in Post-communist Central Europe” at the Central European University in 2008. A year later I had the chance to be her research assistant in an FP7 research project on ethnic differences in education. I was in that privileged position that Júlia paved my way for many years and I immersed myself in the realm of her knowledge and enjoyed every bits and pieces of the work we did together. I learned an exemplary discipline and that no matter how tired I am only high-quality work should be produced.

Thank you for being my tutor, Éva Kovács. I had butterflies in my stomach every time I received your comments on my chapters. You constantly challenged my ideas and provided new insights throughout the discussions; your questions and suggestions were invaluable. I have learned from you an elemental and fundamental sensitivity to the interviewee and to the text: an approach which brings along a certain theoretical and methodological rigor as well as an ambition to read across the lines and understand the depths. You have taught me to always look for and see the human behind the subject of analysis as well as have emphasised the importance of belonging and preserving an intellectual community in which knowledge can be shared. I am grateful that I can be your colleague at the Voices of the 20th Century Archive.

The backbone of my research is contemporary art. Art has become a fundamental pillar of my life, a kind of lens through which I wish to understand processes and problems. Being a colleague of Timea Junghaus meant to experience her creativity and endless ideas. Timea introduced me to Roma contemporary art. I have been working with her in the European
Roma Cultural Foundation (ERCF) and had the chance to be involved in projects such as the 7th Berlin Biennale or in exhibitions at the Gallery 8 – Roma Contemporary Art Space.

I was fortunate to write this text in a number of stimulating institutions. I owe a great thank you to the wonderful people at the Wiener Wiesenthal Institute für Holocaust-Studien for having me as a junior fellow at their base for ten months. Béla Rásky, Éva Kovács, Greta Anderl, Barbara Grzelaková, Jana Starek, Sandro Fashing and Philipp Rohrbach thank you for your hospitality and the academic, technical and financial support you provided. My colleagues, Zoe Roth, Katharina Friedla, Elisabeth Gallas, Eva Waibel, Patrice G. Poutrus, Raul Carstocea, Robby van Eetvelde and Gerhard Baumgartner, I enjoyed every moment there with you: the glasses of wine at Giorgina, Saltzamt or Philosoph, the flatparties and lunchbreaks, or the sad and sweet farewell picnic at Augarten. I would also like to thank the support of Henriette Asséo, Dominique Trimbur and of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah which institute generously financed my research with a one-year long doctoral scholarship in 2013/2014.

I had the opportunity to travel around the world and challenge my ideas, thus the summer schools in both Ohrid titled “The Diverse Survival Strategies of Jewish and Roma Communities in Macedonia: From Resistance to Memorialization” and Brno titled “Memory, Culture and Identity” as well as the workshop of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum titled “New Research on Roma and the Holocaust” contributed to the betterment of my thesis.

I am utterly grateful for the comments, guidance, editing and unconditional help of the following people in various phases of the project: Ágnes Daróczki, Andrea Pócsik, Antal Örkény, Borbála Varga, Enikő Bódis, Erna Sághy, Ethel Brooks, Gábor Bernáth, Gábor Sárközi, György Csepeli, Henrik Kállai, János Bársny, Máté Zombory, Nadine Blumer, Péter Szuhay, Slawomir Kapralski, Tibor Balogh, Titanilla Fiáth and Zoltán Kékesi. Furthermore, I am grateful for the artists who talked about their work to me.

Dear Vera Vaspál, thank you for generously reading through every chapter I sent you. I am deeply grateful for the challenging arguments and comments you gave me in both study and life and for your enthusiasm towards this project which breathed life into it in times when I was frustrated or lacking self-confidence. My dearest friends, Klári, Juli, Andi, Mariann,
Bukky, Eszter, Szonja and Nóra, thank you for your encouragement. Dear Doris, Márk and Masha, you taught me what it means to nurture a friendship across the borders. I thank for my parents and my brothers, Gergely, Jakab and Vince.

One of the greatest highlights of each day is the moment when I take on my running shoes and set off to run. Running is exact, meditative and mentally as well as physically challenging however it would be empty and boring without the people at BEAC. I am pleased that I have the opportunity to run with all of you every day.

Ádám Richárd Hőrich, my friend and love. I started this challenge with you and I am glad that we can finish it together. You helped me evolve this project and I would not have been able to accomplish it without your sense of humour, patience and calmness.
Abbreviations and translations

Association of Sociology and Ethnography of the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge – Tudományos Ismeretterjesztő Társaság Szociológiai és Néprajzi Csoportja

Bank Centre – Pénzintézeti Központ

Committee of Roma Professionals – Roma Szakértői Tanács vagy Roma Integrációs Tanács

European Roma Cultural Foundation (ERCF) – Európai Roma Kulturális Alapítvány

General Bank and Trust Co. Ltd – Általános Értéktőkönfiguralm Bank

Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association (HGCA) – Magyarországi Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége

Music Workers Trade Union – Zenei Dolgozók Szakszervezete

National Association of Persecuted by Nazism – Nácizmus Magyarországi Üldözötteinek Országos Érdekvédelmi Szervezete

Roma Educational and Cultural Centre of Budapest – Fővárosi Roma Oktatási és Kulturális Központ

Social Review – Társadalmi Szemle
# Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS .............................................. 1
  - Contextualization and theoretical remarks ................................................................. 3
  - Concise History of the Nazi genocide of Roma, with a focus on Hungary .................... 9
  - Debates on the genocide .............................................................................................. 12
    - Whom does the Holocaust belong to? The difficult case of naming the event ........... 12
    - What kind of memory is this? .................................................................................... 18
  - Role of the researcher, Methodology and data .............................................................. 24
  - Structure of my thesis .................................................................................................. 27

II. UNFOLDING THE DISCOURSE ON THE ROMA GENOCIDE .................................... 30
  - The immediate post-war period .................................................................................. 31
  - The operation of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association ....................................... 34
  - Decree of the Political Committee (June 20, 1961) ....................................................... 41
  - The role of Sociology in unfolding the history of the Nazi genocide ......................... 41
    - The biography of Györgyné Kolompár ...................................................................... 44
    - The biography of János Nyári .................................................................................. 45
    - The narratives ............................................................................................................ 47
  - The role of the Roma Movement .................................................................................. 49
    - Menyhért Lakatos – The Colour of Smoke ................................................................. 50
    - Tamás Pélli’s Birth ..................................................................................................... 54
  - London Summit .............................................................................................................. 57
  - The regime change and afterwards .............................................................................. 60

III. A THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS REPRESENTATION ................................................................. 62
  - Trauma and representation ........................................................................................... 67
  - Representation and the experience of the Holocaust .................................................... 75
  - Generations of post-Holocaust ...................................................................................... 83

IV. THE AESTHETICS OF VIOLENCE
  - Photographic representation of the Nazi genocide of Roma ....................................... 87
    - Methodology and questions ....................................................................................... 90
    - Representations of Roma by the Nazi regime ............................................................ 91
    - The photograph of Erzsébet Horváth ........................................................................... 94
    - The portrait ................................................................................................................ 96
    - The portrait of Erzsébet Horváth ............................................................................... 99
    - The effect of the Holocaust on contemporary representations of Roma .................. 100
The eternal image of the “Other” .................................................................................................... 101
Marcell Esterházy: On the same day ............................................................................................... 105
Péter Korniss and Pál Závada: “One Row of Gypsies. Twenty four contemporary Hungarian” .... 107

V. DISILLUSIONED IMAGES
The representation of the genocide in films ..................................................................................... 110
Prelude ............................................................................................................................................. 111
“Here There is No Why” – the gaze of the images .......................................................................... 113
Contemporary Approaches .............................................................................................................. 116
The three films ................................................................................................................................ 117
1. József Lojkó Lakatos’ Forgotten Dead .................................................................................... 119
   “... believe me, this is a true story...” .......................................................................................... 119
   “Is it possible to shoot at a cross?” .............................................................................................. 124
2. Miklós Jancsó and Ágnes Daróczi: You Killed My Innocent Family ..................................... 127
   “We already knew it from hearsay” ............................................................................................ 128
   “Let them live! Right? I think so.” .............................................................................................. 131
3. Ágota Varga: Pharrajimos ....................................................................................................... 134
   “Certainly they are not alive” ...................................................................................................... 136
   “I was taken to Komárom/Oh my God I will die” ...................................................................... 138
   It has to be staged ....................................................................................................................... 141

VI. CHALLENGING PASTS AND PRESENTS
The works of art of Omara and Tibor Balogh ................................................................................ 144
Omara – Visit to Auschwitz (2004) ................................................................................................. 148
About Omara .................................................................................................................................. 149
Portraits ........................................................................................................................................... 151
Inscriptions ...................................................................................................................................... 154
Balogh Tibor – Rain of Tears (2004, 2007) ..................................................................................... 157
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 163

VII. REMEMBERING AND PROTESTING
Memorialization and commemoration of the Nazi genocide of Roma ...................................... 167
Space, memory and the site of memory ........................................................................................... 169
Biography of the monument ............................................................................................................ 174
At the Nehru Park ............................................................................................................................ 175
Time and place: chronology and topography ................................................................................ 175
Aesthetics ....................................................................................................................................... 180
Place in national memory and in the community ........................................................................... 187

VIII. CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................................... 196
BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................. 203
Books and articles .................................................................................................................. 203
Links ........................................................................................................................................ 218
Films .......................................................................................................................................... 219
Manuscripts, other ................................................................................................................... 220
APPENDIX I. THE AESTHETICS OF SILENCE ............................................................... 221
APPENDIX II. FILMS .......................................................................................................... 224
APPENDIX III. FINE ART WORKS ................................................................................... 226
APPENDIX IV. MONUMENTS .......................................................................................... 230
I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

“It cannot be peace where one is putting down the others. ... If we ignore the past it can happen again and that’s a shame and this shame I never want to face with, not as a member of the majority and not as a member of the minority. I want peace for everybody.”
(Ágnes Daróczi; at the 7th Berlin Biennale, Collegium Hungaricum, June 1, 2012.)

One of the art works at the exhibition Multiple Exposures: Memory of the Roma Holocaust-contemporary reflections, held at the Gallery 8 – Roma Contemporary Art Space in Budapest in summer 2013 was a voice installation by Klára Rudas. The work was titled Almost Now.¹

The artists fixed three small microphones on the bottom of the walls in equal distance from each other, and placed two loudspeakers into the corners, on the floor. They were connected and operated by an audio-mixer which was unnoticeable for the audience, hidden in the storage room of the gallery. The microphones, sensitive to tone and pitch, recognized the voices of people in their proximities and transmitted them to the loudspeakers with a short delay however the audio-mixer made it possible to generate an echo out of them. Thus even in the case of a smaller number of visitors the room appeared to be crowded with people and produced speech with adequate loudness. Rudas’ work was supposed to be a response to the silence that surrounds the Nazi genocide of Roma – as the caption explained. “Silenced,” “forgotten,” “hidden” are all adjectives which suggest in relation to Roma that knowledge is still fragmented and that this past event has not yet been acquired an outer dimension and been transmuted into tradition or into symbolic forms of cultural memory. The sound of the artificial echo filled the space of the gallery suggesting that the experiences of Roma under the Holocaust shall be communicated, discussed, narrated or considered as object of historiography. The installation was not only a playful invitation to speaking – since most of us take pleasure in the phenomenon of the echo or enjoy producing it – but also a creative attempt to start a real-time discourse on the theme. The separate comments, remarks and

judgements on the representation of the Nazi genocide of Roma got connected in the echo and sounded as if they were in a conversation with each other.

As Susanne Rohr and Sophia Komor argue “The main artistic aim is now to reflect Holocaust rhetoric, to reflect, in other words, how the Holocaust has hitherto been depicted.” Rudas’ art work is a double-edged sword. While on the one hand it is a real time, ever-changing reflection on Holocaust representations: since the visitors make comments on the exhibited art works which aim to approach the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma. On the other hand it is part of the rhetoric, literally, since it uses language effectively and persuasively to redefine our position in relation to the historical event. Art and imagination might play a central role in both the unfolding of the Nazi genocide of Roma rhetoric and the redefinition, reorientation of our understanding of the past. We might ask from ourselves: How could the Nazi genocide of Roma be remembered? How could we deal with this experience? What forms of representation shall be adequate for a better understanding? How shall we approach and judge this kind of art? How is it possible to avoid trivialization or generalization? What kind of values and ethical imperatives could be stemming from the Holocaust? To answer these questions art, which “can use its potential as an action-free realm of exploration to negotiate and try out possible varieties of representation and differing points of view,” can be at our disposal.

The following text focuses on the Nazi genocide of Roma and explores it through the working of art in the fields of photography, architecture, film and visual arts. It invokes various fields of discipline such as historiography, cultural and visual studies, cultural philosophy, sociology or anthropology. I argue for the power of art that is not only a product of history but also its agent to transform as well as shape the ways cultural, historical issues are being conceived. The Nazi genocide of Roma was labelled as forgotten suggesting that neither institutions nor individuals could be regarded as agents of its memory. The research criticizes the knowledge production in relation to the Nazi genocide of Roma and intends to show that cultural objects and cultural phenomena as historical articulations of problems are capable of actively participating in dealing with the past and contributing to the construction of identity.

3 Ibid. 11.
**Contextualization and theoretical remarks**

There has been an obsession with memory. This means not only the collection of traces of memory, such as photographs, memoires etc., but also suggests anxiety about the ways in which the past shall be (properly and most effectively) remembered in order to imagine alternative futures. Considering the “development of whole museum villages and landscapes; various national heritage and patrimony enterprises; a new wave of museum architecture that shows no signs of receding; a boom in retro fashions and repro furniture; mass marketing of nostalgia; a popular obsession with “self-musealization” by video recorder, memoire writing, and confessional literature; the rise of auto-biography (...)” – these are all integral parts of the culture of memory which has become transnational. The cultural anxieties about remembering can be attributed to the end of the grand narratives as well as to processes of modernization which forever changed temporality, such as the constant and rapid flow of information. These massive changes which on the one hand challenge the past as the idea of a shelter and the source of identity, and on the other, transform the present into pasts question our understanding of “who we are” and “how our future is going to look like” and make us turn to memory and the past.

This transnational scale of memory culture or the trans-nationalization of memory does not replace local memory with a global, standardized, common ideal but rather establishes a relationship between the local and the global with “border-crossing memory discourses.” The collective memory of the Holocaust is one of these discourses and besides that, the master signifier of the Western culture and politics of memory. Through socio-historical processes it became detached from a particular historical event and became a central and universal tragedy of humanity in modern times. Hence this memory goes beyond national and ethnic boundaries and lays down the moral and political foundations for the post-war era, across the globe, but besides that produces local sensibilities as well.

The latter implies that the nation-state loses its dominant position in defining “what and how shall be remembered” and smaller actors manage to give voice to their “own history” and demand its recognition and legitimation. As a matter of fact, on the political level, Roma

---

5 Huyssen, *Twilight*, 12.
agents have been mobilizing the memories of the Roma genocide and engage in the discourse on the Holocaust speaking from the victim’s point of view, thus through the recognition of their suffering in European history’s most shameful event they would gain a legitimate place in Europe as such.\(^7\) As opposed to the historian László Karsai’s argument which questions the legitimacy of an independent Nazi genocide of Roma narrative,\(^8\) János Bársny and Ágnes Daróczi, among other Roma (and non-Roma) intellectuals, consider the Holocaust as a common historical experience of Roma, as the culmination of discrimination and suffer which plays a crucial role in the construction of collective identity for various Roma groups and in locating Roma as a people with history in Europe.

It took a while to break the silence around the Nazi genocide of Roma. Following Slawomir Kapralski’s argument not only the nature of the Roma genocide (which will be discussed later) but also the “scholarship on Roma and the Holocaust as well as the broader cultural context in which such scholarship has been carried out, and some features of the situation of Roma groups in the post-Holocaust Europe”\(^9\) all contributed to the evolving silence. Although after the Second World War there were a few testimonies published on the experience of Roma, they failed to raise the attention of scholars or of the public. Then various but interrelated factors – such as the discourse of the Holocaust that was based on a unique and exclusively Jewish experience; the post-war Western German conception of the Roma genocide that was allegedly managed on “non-racial” grounds; the erasure of Roma as an ethnicity under Communism and the status of Roma within the society and their presentation as people who forget their trauma and live constantly in the present – hampered to approach the history of Roma in the Holocaust.

As a matter of fact, its “excavation” started in the 1970s, in Hungary. The first formative stage was evolved from the national representative survey of the Roma population conducted in 1971 by István Kemény and his team. Besides filling out the standardized family questionnaire the surveyors were asked to conduct life-story interviews at every tenth family.\(^10\) Hence, although the motivation of the survey was different, some of the interviewees mentioned their experiences under the 1940s which provided the raw material

---

\(^7\) Huub van Baar, “From »Time-Banditry« to the Challenges of Established Historiographies. Romani Contributions to Old and New Images of the Holocaust,” in *Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Romani Studies*, Michael Stewart and Róvid Marton eds. (Budapest: CEU Press, 2010)

\(^8\) Karsai László, *Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1944. Út a cigány Holocausthoz*. (Budapest, Cserépfalvi Kiadó, 1992)

\(^9\) Slawomir Kapralski, “The Social Construction of Roma as Victims of the Holocaust/Genocide” (paper presented at the In Search of Transcultural Memory of Europe, Karkow, Poland, September 16-17, 2013.)

\(^10\) Sociologist, Gabriella Lengyel told me in the narrative life-story interview series I conducted with her for the Voices of the 20th Century Archive. See with permission: [http://voices.osaarchivum.org](http://voices.osaarchivum.org)
for latter articles and literary works. From the 1980s other forms of artistic representations of the Roma persecution appear, such as films or paintings. This second stage represents the process of “acquiring the narrative” when Roma intellectuals learn and consciously go public with the Holocaust and/or make it the subject of art. Among others there is József Lojkó Lakatos’ film titled Forgotten Dead (1981) that is the first cinematic contribution to the Nazi genocide of Roma, or Tamás Péli’s 42 square metre painting titled Birth on the wall of an orphanage at Tiszadob (1983). These art works raise questions of crucial importance such as the content and boundaries of the identity of being Roma, possibilities of coexistence between Roma and non-Roma, majority and minority, or a plan to construe a collective memory-world. Birth represents the history of Roma from the beginning. Péli considered fine art as a medium which enables generations to connect with each other and which has a unique power in forging communities: he believed that it is possible to relate the majority and the minority by producing (visually representing) a shared understanding of the past.

Following the regime change there was a boom of remembering meaning that all kinds of victims became visible and went public with their own stories. Nevertheless there was a moderate “coming-out” of Roma communities. By “coming out” I mean a collective answer to that basic question – “What shall be remembered?” – which answer incorporates various traces of the past from individual, autobiographical accounts to distant, trained social conventions and provides the basis of collective consciousness, in other words, the source of identity for a social formation, say, a group. I would argue that both the “de-centred” and “de-synchronized” nature of the genocide and the peripheral position of Roma within the majority challenged the framing of the narrative. Additionally, it seems that the emphasis in

---

14 Maurice Halbwachs, On Collective Memory (Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1992)
15 Two terms used by Kapralski to describe the nature of the Nazi genocide on Roma and on the basis of which I will explore in this chapter the concise history of the persecutions. In Kapralski, “The Social Construction of Roma.”
the discourse shifted from collective identification to collective recognition and started to communicate rather towards the majority. What happened is that first as a consequence of the fight for compensation more and more political and advocacy groups as well as other movements fighting for the recognition of Roma began to realize the importance of the institutionalization of the experience of the Nazi genocide of Roma. In Chapter 2, I wish to elaborate more on the development of the discourse on the Nazi persecutions and explore the relation between its memories and struggles of recognition, processes of identification and the recollection of the past.

I shall add here that the status of its research – that qualifies as “private obsession” hence materials are either not (or hardly) accessible or conceived as irrelevant – contributes to its marginal position in the collective memory. As a matter of fact, Michael Stewart, anthropologist, Ágota Varga, film director, or Katalin Katz, sociologist, conducted relevant fieldwork and research on the Nazi genocide of Roma however besides establishing a collection neither of them put an effort in assuring their appropriate storage and accessibility. The exact number of interviews is unknown in the case of Stewart however in some of his texts on remembering and commemoration there are references that he builds his empirical research on his collection.

Katalin Katz’s book Restrained Memory (2005) discusses the sources in the introduction part. Her collection consists of 57 interviews out of which 40 was conducted with the narrative life history method (34 survivors, 6 secondary generation) while the rest (13 survivors, 4 secondary generation) was oral history interview recorded by Danica Vincze and Ágnes Daróczi. While Varga, director of the award winning films: Pharrajimos – Gypsy Holocaust (2000) and Black List – Gypsy Forced Labourers in 1944 (2002), preserved over 70 hours of video and close to 50 hours of audio interviews with Roma victims of the Holocaust.

The collection of Ágnes Daróczi journalist and János Bársny minority researcher is “semi-exclusive.” It was published in a book, titled Pharrajimos: the fate of the Roma during the Holocaust (2004), and was later used for the exhibition entitled The Memory of the Pharrajimos (2004) at the Holocaust Memorial Centre, Budapest. Although it is not open for secondary research, the authors are willing to discuss their findings, to participate in

---

16 Note: for the wider public the term “Nazi genocide of Roma” easily gains negative connotation and signifies nothing more than the struggles for compensation or disputes among Roma communities or between Roma and non-Roma victims of the Holocaust over commemoration.

workshops and discussions as to give interviews in this subject-matter. As a rather good example it is worth mentioning the collection of the Roma Press Centre. The Centre explored the history of commemorations as well as managed to conduct interviews with survivors. It published its collection in Romani, Hungarian and English languages, first under the title *Porrajmos* and then they changed it to *Roma Holocaust*. The majority of the approx. 30 interviews – *The Voice of the Survivors collection* – are published in the book and their transcriptions as well as the audio-material are stored in the internal server of the organization which can be accessed through personal agreement. Another good example is the research conducted under the leadership of Péter Szuhay, ethnographer, in 2004 – 2005. The team was commissioned to provide a story of a Roma family for the permanent exhibition of the Holocaust Memorial Centre. On the basis of their pervious researches each participating researcher sought out at least two communities and conducted in each settlement 3 unstructured interviews on average exploring not only the experience of the Nazi genocide on Roma but also the history of the family and of the wider community. This collection is accessible via the Voices of the 20th Century Archive and Research Group.  

Turning back to the argument that the experience of the Holocaust has become universal, that is to say that it can be a vehicle through which other histories can be articulated or even recognized, I wish to refine my approach to the production of memory as well as to the forms of memory discourse and propose Michael Rothberg’s understanding. In his seminal study Rothberg *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*  

stresses the interaction between memories, thus instead of a conflict-driven a communication-based form of remembering emerges. He highlights how the memory of the Holocaust pays greater attention to other experiences of victimization as well as articulates them. According to Rothberg, instead of thinking about competitive memories or “memory wars” it is better to focus on forms of multidirectional memory that “emerge out of transnational encounters” as well as “interfere, overlap and mutually constitute seemingly distant memories that define the post-war era.” Indeed, the experience of the Holocaust informs other histories of sufferings in forms of reciprocities, analogies and references which

---

18 Website of the Archive: [http://www.20szazadhangja.hu](http://www.20szazadhangja.hu)


21 Ibid.
function not as “acts of remembrance” but as “unavoidable building blocks” – small but necessary, meaningful and formative components – of public memory.\textsuperscript{22}

As I have mentioned earlier the memory of the Holocaust has become transnational but also dominates the West. What I consider important in the concept of \textit{multidirectional memory} to my own research – especially in an Eastern European context – is that it suggests approaching the experiences of genocide and their representations in comparative terms. It goes beyond the concept of “dominant memory,” in other words, criticizes the idea that the memory of the Holocaust is the frame of reference and all the other memories shall conform and are weighed accordingly. Rather it highlights the dialogue between memories and the power of “other” memories and, most significantly, makes also possible to discuss, interpret and conceptualize the Holocaust through particular events of the present.\textsuperscript{23}

Let us think of the work of the contemporary fine artist, Csaba Nemes.\textsuperscript{24} He made three wooden banners. They are at the same height however the size of their heads is different. The work is untitled which suggests that no comment is necessary; the work shall speak for itself. The first painted image portrays Erzsébet Horváth, a Roma woman. The painting is based on a photograph – in Chapter 4. there will be more on it – that is an ID picture issued by the police and is supposed to be one of the surviving images of the Nazi genocide of Roma. The second is chosen from the author’s family photo archive. As a result of the housing programme initiated in the 1950s Roma became eligible for loans with low interest in order to buy “reduced-value” buildings in the outskirts of cities, settlements. Besides providing better dwellings for Roma the programme conveyed in itself the idea that Roma and non-Roma might come closer to each other, not only in a territorial sense. This image represents a house of this kind. The family forms a triangle in front of the entrance – maybe the photographer asked them to, maybe they want to protect their home from the intruder. The third banner was painted on the basis of a photo circulating in the media. It shows the ruins of the “yellow house” in Tatárszentgyörgy. It was once the home of Róbert and Robika before they got killed in 2008.\textsuperscript{25} The house which once represented the possibility

\textsuperscript{23} Another approach to this thesis arrives from the field of trauma studies. As Cathy Caruth argues in case the trauma of the persecutions is not yet worked through – hence not its representation but itself as a wound gets imprinted into the individual’s or the community’s body – another traumatic event later might open up the wound violently and invoke the memory of the traumatic past which then haunts via flashbacks. Cathy Caruth, \textit{Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative and History} (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996)
\textsuperscript{25} In Hungary there were a series of violent attacks between 2008 and 2009 which specifically targeted Roma people. Six Roma were killed (including Róbert and Robika in Tatárszentgyörgy) and several injured in the attacks committed by four men. A court in Hungary found them guilty of murdering people motivated by racist
and hope for a peaceful coexistence between majority and minority has turned to be the symbol of terror and fear.

The paintings placed on the top of banners are revolting against present and past discriminations. They do not intend to draw a line of continuity between the experience of the Nazi genocide of Roma and contemporary attacks on Roma, rather they wish to confront with the memory of the past as well as express the chance which was given to change the track of history but failed to be fulfilled. The work points out to this missed chance and draws attention to contemporary patterns of treatment of the minority which resemble the past, and make the past haunt or everyday reality. In fact, instead of the articulation of identity politics, the representation of the Nazi genocide of Roma touches upon claims for recognition and justice. It also raises the question to what extent it is possible to compare the present and the past; what ethics of comparison shall be applied in order to avoid trivialization.

In the case of unprecedented, traumatic historical events there is a rupture between what happened and its representation, as a matter of their extremity. This gap between the real and the imaginative can be discussed, filled, theorized, interpreted or understood by aesthetics. In Chapter 3, I will make these introductory theoretical remarks more concrete by situating art in relation to the historical – let this relationship be passive, agreeable or confrontational. I will attempt to understand and provide analyses of representations of the Nazi genocide of Roma. I am interested in whether they contribute to structure past experiences along the line of historically sanctioned practices of conceiving individuality and community or the world in which the individual or the community is situated or whether they reinterpret, rewrite or transform the past and transmit it in a way that can be worked through.

What is at stake is to transform, ease the pain until it is worked through, as LaCapra argues, or, as Marianne Hirsch claims, until it can be integrated into one’s or a collectivity’s life narrative and become a fountain for new cultural, social and political meanings.

Concise History of the Nazi genocide of Roma, with a focus on Hungary
The Nazi persecutions on Roma went on “de-centred” and “de-synchronized”. This means that although there was a general agreement on considering Roma as enemies of the regime and thus anti-Roma regulations were coupled with racist conceptions, there was no central intent. The final judgement was made on August 6, 2013. There is a film on it: *Judgement in Hungary* (Eszter Hajdú, 108 min, 2013)

26 Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (New York: Cornell University, 1994)

order neither any synchronized implementation for the persecution. According to Kapralski, “Nazi persecution of Roma can be fully understood as neither a consistent implementation of the centrally conceived murderous intention nor as a contingent side-effect of the relations between different sectors of the Nazi apparatus of power but rather as a multi-layered phenomenon that has not been governed by a single mechanism.”

The lack of consistent implementation suggested that various levels of the authorities were able to shape and put into action the measures against Roma. The Eastern Allies seemed more assiduous in the processes of liquidation and annihilation as well as had more freedom to choose their tools, however, generally speaking, the ways in which the crimes were committed and their intensity were the result of the intersection of local relations, ideologies, networks, interests. The lack of synchronicity or regularity suggested not only different forms of persecution but also constantly changing anti-Roma policies which also meant that the target groups were different through time. Another difficulty in the case of identifying Roma victims occurred due to the euphemistic usage of language by the Nazis in order to obscure coercion. In spring 1936 the Race Hygiene and Population Biology Research Centre in Germany was established under the directorship of Robert Ritter in order to “reveal with exact methods the root causes of social developments in the biological, i.e. ultimately in the laws of heredity in order to legitimize the eradication of the unintegrated and the unproductive.”

Although the racist motive was clear in the persecutions, the choices of words such as “work shy”, “Gypsy menace”, “Gypsy question” or “asocial” represented a concealment or masking of the real meaning of the system.

The implementation of crimes against Roma in Hungary fits well into the above described duality. The transformation of the cigánykérdés (Gypsy-question) into a cigányprobléma (Gypsy-problem) occurred smoothly from marginalization and exploitation into persecution through institutionalization and forced categorization, parallel with the events in Germany. Categories which once had been abandoned developed more and more interfaces with the political sphere due to legislative measures and judgments. In Hungary, Article No. XXI/1913 on “vagrants who are public menace” mentioned that traveller Roma and individuals responsible for indictable offence were sueable and could be obliged to do communal work. However Roma always meant an administrative problem for the state,

29 Karola Fings, Herbert Heuss and Frank Sparing, From “Race Science” to the Camps (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), 58.
30 Ibid. 54.
this article was the first which provided a legal frame to send “traveller Roma and other individuals” into the penal institution of workhouses unless they settle down and follow the majority’s regulations in hygiene and pureness. In 1916 the first large-scale round-up took place country-wide against Roma. Several years later, parallel with the German legislation, in 1928 police round-ups were legalized; hence local administrations and municipalities were authorized to embitter the life of Roma.

The institution of the round-up was presented as an inevitable step on imposing preventive security measures on a group who were indiscriminately considered as socially dangerous. It brought a new definition to traveller Roma who became not just those who were not able to present an official certificate of their homes but also those who were said to be vagabonds, workshy, unemployed or seasonal workers as well as those who were travelling by job (i.e. itinerant artisans). Round-ups – organized twice a year since the beginning of 1929 – intended to close in on every single traveller Roma, closed the borders for Roma newcomers and carried into effect hygienic and penal measures. Furthermore, complying with the broader social environment and its generally hostile attitude towards Roma each county introduced its local regulations against them. Esztergom was one of the earliest which imposed restrictions and in the year 1942 a draft provision “On the Regularization of Gypsy Life Domiciled at Esztergom” proposed to discipline Roma and transform them into moderate, decent, civilized and hard-working citizens. By Roma it meant every individual with Roma origin (i.e. there is no distinction between travelling and settled Roma) as well as those who live with them. This did not only mean regular round-ups but Roma were subjected to medical examinations and were forced to work. The proposed provision came into force in the year 1944 and led to the setting up Roma internment camps and to their deportation in spring 1944.

Before the Szálasi regime took power in October 1944, Roma were taken as dangerous elements of the society from the points of view of public security, hygiene and public morals. This was an important precondition for round-ups, which were organized to settle them down or eliminate them. The Nazi political transition in Hungary transformed the question into a problem which was answered on the basis of the biological paradigm. The Roma persecutions and deportations were proposed and controlled by the local municipalities, police and local

31 Especially since 1902 when a scientific conference was organized by Széll Kálmán resulting that a) the question of traveller and Vlax Roma groups is administrative; b) it could only be solved by restraining certain rights of their freedom (for instance the freedom of movement). In Bársny and Daróczi, Pharrajimos. 35.
32 In Prussia in the year 1926 a provision legalized both the regulation and the expulsion of traveller Roma from the country.
authorities. Although it was not as well-organized and prepared as the treatment of the Jews which was systematic, well-documented, deeply rooted in the public discourse: Roma were deported first to work-camps (for example: Szekszárd, Nagykáta, Pécsvárad, Marcali, Komárom, Kisvárda, Szentkirályszabadja) and then – especially from Komárom/Csillagerőd – it was followed by their internalization into concentration camps (for example: Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, Dachau and to Auschwitz-Birkenau II/e).

**Debates on the genocide**

**Whom does the Holocaust belong to? The difficult case of naming the event**

“The various deportations of Gypsies to the East and their deadly consequences do not constitute acts of genocide” – writes Guenter Lewy in his book, The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies.\(^{33}\) The concept of genocide was developed under the shadow of Auschwitz and then was defined in the United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948. As a reaction to the mass murder of enemies of the Nazi regime the Polish jurist Raphael Lemkin formulated the concept in a small book published under the Second World War. Lemkin wanted to prosecute “the criminal intent to destroy or to cripple permanently a human group. The acts are directed against groups, as such, and individuals are selected for destruction only because they belong to these groups.”\(^{34}\) The Convention followed Lemkin’s guidance and accepted his help and defined genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.”\(^{35}\) Following the introduction of the concept, in the 1950s and 1960s, it was never put into practice only remained a well-sounding phrase. The wind of change arrived with the Eichmann trial, when the experience of the Holocaust started gaining more and more attention, and as a result, genocide as a framework of interpretation came to the limelight again. The persecution of the Jews intended their biological destruction, reached genocidal proportions and these traumas were narrated by survivors of the Holocaust. The trial evoked “the trauma of such enormity and horror that it had to be radically set apart from the world and all of its other traumatizing events, and which became inexplicable in ordinary, rational terms.”\(^{36}\) Its so-called “inexplicability” makes it as the “”primus inter pares:” hence the Holocaust has become the archetype of genocide, a unique event, however, due to its universal (or rather American-specific) quality it could serve as a “bridge” and get other


genocides, murderous killings recognized. As a result of its “bridge”-ness, there can be unambiguously compelling analogies made between the massacre of Tutsis and Jews or Armenians and Jews, or it can be stated that the series of killings in Cambodia was like the Holocaust. Hence the Holocaust is considered as a genocidal act and has a significant and unique influence on how violence is considered as well as analysed social-scientifically or historically.

The reason why Lewy’s argument generated a storm of indignation which labelled the book as “dangerous” is his denial that Roma experienced genocide, since it postulates that there was no Roma Holocaust. He states that his analysis avoids general pitfalls including the romanticization of Roma and their culture and first and foremost claims that there was no deliberate plan, “final solution,” to deport and annihilate Roma, “even the murder of Gypsies in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and Chelmno does not constitute genocide within the meaning of the genocide convention.” Furthermore Roma were not considered as a major threat: the Race-Hygiene and Biological Population Research Institute under the leadership of Robert Ritter divided Roma into two groups on the basis of 23,822 case studies conducted between 1936 and 1944. There were the pure Roma who were Aryans but the rest was “persons of mixed ancestry” which were doomed to be killed or deported. Hence not all Roma were targeted by the Nazis, that is to say that their maltreatment could not constitute a genocide, and even if they were considered as the enemy, the motivation was less strictly racist. Consequently their experience falls outside of that of Jews’ but emerges as a possibility only as a result of the lobby activity of institutes such as the Heidelberg Documentation Centre. The tone of Lewy’s argument sounds cynical and irritating sometimes which leads me to understand Ian Hancock’s outcry against it as well as Sybil Milton’s suggestion to conduct an organized analysis on the Nazi usage of language toward Roma to get a better understanding of how power constructs reality via language. I would also add that it is equally important to critically examine not only the Nazis’ but also, as a matter of fact, Lewy’s usage of language to point out the ways and underlying mechanisms through which racism, racist

---

40 Ibid. 225.
41 Hancock, *Downplaying*
prejudices are reproduced, even today. The role of the institutes in the construction of the Holocaust as a traumatic event is an important point raised by the author however I would not consider it as a factor which delegitimizes everything Roma went through in the 1940s. Much in line with Huub van Baar I believe it is important to notice the role of various offline and online Roma networks which contributed in placing the memory of Roma in national or transnational histories. The mobilization of the memory of the Roma Holocaust serves to point out the holes in history writing: how much minorities, Roma are excluded from collective memory, hence from the shared knowledge of the past.

Ian Hancock in his text, *Downplaying the Porrajmos: The Trend to Minimize the Romani Holocaust*, goes through Lewy’s argumentation one by one and provides a thorough criticism. Regarding the argument that there was no all-encompassing plan to annihilate Roma Hancock’s response involves the lack of documentation and central decision making in the case of Roma as well as highlights that “incarcerations, deportations and gassings took place nevertheless”. Peter Black also writes that for instance the deportations to Birkenau II/e even though it was a so-called family camp, another instance of Nazi euphemism, and the documentation was lousy, meant killing in the case of Roma as well. As opposed to the argument that the persecution of Roma was based rather on social than on racist grounds Hancock claims that the definition of who counts to be a pure or a mixed Roma was strict, furthermore the belief that Roma are born to be criminals (and the regime persecuted criminals) is inherently racist. While “the fact that some categories of Romanies were exempted from deportation is true; but the same is also true for some categories of Jews. The six thousand Karaim who successfully pleaded to be spared, for example, or the Jews married to non-Jews in the Netherlands. Eichmann himself was prepared to spare the lives of one million Jews in return for ten thousand trucks. This position on Eichmann’s part may be compared with Himmler’s desire to save some »pure« Roma as anthropological specimens; neither was acted upon.”

---

44 van Baar, “From »Time-Banditry«”
45 Hancock, *Downplaying*... Furthermore Michael Stewart argues that genocide can happen even if its features are unconventional. See: Michael Stewart, “How Does Genocide Happen?” in Questions of Anthropology, eds. R. Astuti, J. Parry and C. Stafford (Oxford: Berg, 2007)
47 Hancock, *Downplaying*
From similar arguments Yehuda Bauer, Professor of Holocaust Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, draws different conclusion: “the case of the Gypsies was clearly one of genocide and mass murder”⁴⁸ however since they were less important and were treated differently, the term “Holocaust” shall not be used in their case. Bauer says that the killings against Jews went on differently than other violent acts against other groups. The Jews represented a “satanic force” in the eyes of the Nazis while the Roma were only a “minor irritant” in the system: they were killed where they were regarded as “nuisance” – in Germany and Austria 75% of the Roma and Sinti population were killed – however in other countries or the so-called pure Gypsies were kept alive. As he concludes in his text: “All Jews were to be killed; »pure« Gypsies in Germany were to be kept alive, at least according to one Nazi view; in the other part of Nazi Europe, wandering Gypsies were sought out and brutally murdered, whereas sedentary Gypsies – apparently the overwhelming majority – were left alone. And mainly, the Jews were, in Nazi eyes, the enemy, whereas the Gypsies were a marginal irritant. (...) It happened at the same time, as the Holocaust, and there are of course many similarities. Yet it appears that the Holocaust is very much a unique case. If someone prefers to call it Judeocide, that is his/her privilege. It is exactly the same thing: it is the mass murder of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis.”⁴⁹ This is the main target of criticism which Sybil Milton, senior historian at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum formulates in both her correspondences with Bauer and her articles.⁵⁰ Milton takes on the argument of the Nuremberg trial and considers the Holocaust as a crime against humanity, and not exclusively against Jews. It is a crime based on heredity, hence although a variety of people were killed, Jews, Roma and handicapped were targeted on the basis of genetics. Milton accepts differences in the treatment of Jews and Roma however points out that disregarding social status the policy objectives remained the same and the Nazis attacked Roma in order to achieve racial purity. She urges the implementation of further researches on the language the Nazis applied – then it might provide a better understanding for what it means that Gypsies were called “spies” or Jews “bandits” – also on the fate of Jews and Roma in the camps in order to see the “connection between Nazi ideology, German social policy and the genocide of German and European Gypsies.” These (either new or already existing but invisible, marginalized) researches would also contribute to empathise with Roma, and would draw

attention the ways in which discrimination against Roma survived 1945 and has been living on in a more sophisticated and implicit way in bureaucratic humiliation, in language or in the memorial culture.

The question of genocide is the question of who suffered more. The Western Jewish narrative of the Holocaust becomes the model for remembering and renders exclusive significance to the victims and to their testimonies. In other words the legitimate speaker who can give an authentic and therefore true account of the past is the traumatized victim.\textsuperscript{51} Thus the recognition of the act of genocide in the case of Roma means that their sufferings are “labelled,” recognized as legitimate. It is an invitation to speak up and share their experiences. While being part of the Holocaust is an entrance-ticket to Europe: it means that Roma share the memory of one of the most formative events of Europe, thus, generally speaking, Roma are part of European history. The dilemma how to name the event reveals the significance of the above debate (in Chapter 7. I will discuss it in details). To call it as the Roma Holocaust, with capital ‘H’, could be easily taken as an insult by the Jewish victims who regard it as their own, historically unique experience however as some – for instance Slawomir Kapralski\textsuperscript{52} or Huub van Baar\textsuperscript{53} – argue the discourse of the Holocaust provides a narrative framework or a language for Roma (and for other victims not only “of” but also “after” the holocaust) to tell their stories, to narrate and make their own histories. The Holocaust discourse created situations, concepts and ideas, as well as established positions through which the past became possible to be shared and be endowed with meanings. These meanings were important for both the Roma communities to understand and expose their fate and to the non-Roma (especially intellectuals) to include Roma in the established narrative about the past.

In the beginning of the 1990s the role of the intellectuals was crucial in “taking possession of the past,”\textsuperscript{54} establishing and making the past public, hence the term Roma Holocaust was often coined by Roma intellectuals and politicians. However, later when the memory of the Roma Holocaust started being “ritualized”\textsuperscript{55} it was intended to rather represent it as part of the “holocaust,” a genocide which targeted various people but in each case has a different character and in general distinct from the “Holocaust.” “Roma holocaust” or other


\textsuperscript{53} van Baar, “From »Time-Banditry«”

\textsuperscript{54} Szuhay, “A holokauszttól a pharrajimosig”

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
names such as “Pharrajimos,” “Porrajmos” or “Samudaripen” (Killing All) suggest that historical experience’s Roma identity (I will elaborate on this in Chapter 7).

It is important to note that unlike the Holocaust historiography, in the international discourse of the Nazi genocide of Roma Hungarian Roma intellectuals, especially Ágnes Daróczi, took a considerable and active part. The foreword of her book *Pharrajimos: the fate of the Roma during the Holocaust* starts with the following sentence: “In the hands of the Reader there is a long-awaited document as well as a collection of studies about the sufferings of Roma under the Pharrajimos – II. World War.” Unfortunately the authors did not devote another few sentences to explain how they had come to this word however they managed to canonize the phrase not only through the book – which was later translated to English – but also through the exhibition *The Memory of the Pharrajimos* at the Holocaust Memorial Centre and through Ágota Varga’s film *Pharrajimos.*

I would not say that there is a convention on how to call the event but instead the context and an individual’s or group’s approach to the past provides the basis for the choice. As a matter of fact a recently submitted draft for a resolution of the European Parliament for the recognition of the Roma holocaust applies both terms “Roma Holocaust” and “Samudaripen,” separate them with a slash. The draft was initiated and composed by The Romani Elders, in consultancy with Herbert Heuss, historian in Berlin on June 2, 2012 at the *Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime.* It recommends that on 27 January 2013 the Genocide of Roma to be commemorated across the EU member states as part of the United Nations Day of Commemoration of the Holocaust. Further, it urges the incorporation of the “Roma Holocaust”/”Samudaripen” into national legislation, public education as well as the protection of places of memory and wishes to establish the 2nd of August as a national day of remembrance.

Considering the above debate in my thesis I choose to use the term “Nazi genocide of Roma.” With this decision I vote for a less politically charged approach – that is still not entirely neutral – as well as wish to establish a point of view that is rather an outsider’s in a semantically loaded and highly politicized field of memory.

56 Similarly to Roma representation which lacks national institutions, infrastructure and consequently it turns to international channels, i.e. exhibition spaces, art institutions, in order to be visible, the discourse on the Nazi genocide of Roma capitalizes on “cosmopolitanized memory” (Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 12.) which promises that collective memory, thus identity is not exclusively defined and dominated by the nation-state.

What kind of memory is this?
How can, if at all, the reason/unreason or Us/Them dichotomies be grasped within a collectivity and how are they represented in everyday cultural pedagogy and performance? If the “self” is broken and unable to forget or deny how it is possible to abandon experience and re-imagine a “way of being” through a “non-discursive, inarticulable knowing of social relationality and history?”

These are the main questions which led the social anthropologist Mattijs Van de Port to Novi Sad in 1991 to develop his thesis more on the self-identities of his subjects, the Serbs. The author focuses on the utilization of Roma as the “other” in the Serbian society claiming that due to an incoherent, broken Serbian self-conception Roma are the socially constructed representations of all those characteristics which the Serbs are but not allowed to be it. According to Van de Port, when public discourse dominates everyday life – which is even more possible during wartime – and allows no scope for individual agency to forget or (re)interpret history as well as tries to pulverize implicit knowledge, imagination takes over. In arts and in other expressive genres, such as films, stories or works of ethnographers Roma offer an example, articulate a life project in a way that both remains implicit but lets the Serbs an indirect view into their self-identity. Roma represent the “otherness of our ourness,” the image of an internalized one which can be addressed in every Serb. This association of Roma with the inner human instincts, with wildness, with individualism, with the lack of control, with waste and with barbarism is a crucial factor to understand the figure of the Roma in thought as well as the hidden impulses of the Serbian “self.”

The above cultural anthropologist approach to Roma, which considers – till the 1970s the research on Roma as a peripheral research interest – Roma people as necessary outsiders of Western civilization is not alone with its conception: texts, films, exhibitions all tend to look at Roma as a group of people which are different by nature and stand outside of society. They are interesting, exciting, pre-modern and natural. I would note here that it is not accidental that the beginning of the 1990s, in the region, commonly referred to it as the “cultural turn” brought a paradigm shift in the course of visual arts pinpointing the constitutive role of culture as a system of signification, revealing the various mechanisms

---

59 Ibid. 154.
through which Roma art was always classified as natural, primitive, naive and exotic and as a result, giving birth to Roma contemporary art. Roma contemporary art as a cultural practice was first organized around representation and self-expression and later, from the mid 2000s it went beyond the themes of visibility and subjectivity but has become concerned with the politics and realities of Roma people. Thus it has intended to deconstruct the existing visual regime and the colonial relations inscribed in it and restitute the place of Roma in history, further to highlight the deficiencies of an essentialized understanding of “the Gypsy” and articulate a rather contextual understanding of what it means to be Roma.

However, what is important for us in the above-mentioned conceptualization of Roma as pre-modern creatures living outside of both the temporality and modernity of (Western) civilization is that Roma are also considered as timeless. Huub van Baar mentions a document of the European Parliament from 1984 on education of children with parents who have no fixed residency. This document describes these “contemporary nomads” as “they live in the present and give little or no thought to the future. They do not live according to a fixed scheme of hours, days and weeks etc. Work is integrated into their normal rhythm of the days so that there is no difference between work and leisure as such.” In the eyes of the West they appear to be a people who constantly live in the present, and “begin to hold up ordinary life, including local amnesias or retrievals of cultural memory, and causing blackouts or flashbacks in textual, historical and genre memory as well.” Following the analysis of a number of sources on Roma and the way they nurture the past, Katie Trumpener concludes that the Western civilization produces, constructs and maintains the idea of the Roma that is primitive, barbaric, exotic, timeless, wild or beautiful – it is not only its desired but oppressed self but also its negative ideal against which attempts of self-definition take place: “the Gypsies become bearers, par excellence, of the European memory problem in its many manifestations, they simultaneously become a major epistemological testing ground for the European imaginary, black box, or limit case for successive literary styles, genres, and intellectual movements.”

One of the critiques van Baar formulates on Trumpener’s analysis is her exclusive focus on “presentism” and the ignorance of another approach to the memory of Roma that is based on “forgetting” or on its nature of implicitness. Similarly Paloma Gay y

---

63 van Baar, “From »Time-Banditry«”
64 Ibid. 155.
66 Ibid, 156. as well as Andreas Huyssen’s work on the concept of “presentism.”
Blasco expresses the need for research on the attitude of Roma towards their past and urges for a historiography which incorporates accounts of Roma besides non-Roma accounts and written records.\(^{67}\)

Gay y Blasco focuses on the dynamics of conscious forgetting and commemoration which take place in a Spanish Gitano neighbourhood called Jarana in order to work through the past and organize their “way of being” as “Gitano people.” Their life “before” – as the Gitano’s shared representation of the past is commonly structured by the life “before” and the life “now” – “tells us in very powerful ways, not only about the experiences of displacement and persecution of the Gitanos, but also about the mutually sustaining relationship between the imagined community and the community as it is brought about in daily life: it points to dispersal, fragmentation and moral homogeneity as essential to the realization of Gypsiness.” While their life “now” is also defined by social fragmentation and dispersal, however, despite all of that, the sense of community, or rather, “commonality” strongly manifests among them. The experience of the past is not directly transmitted (in a narrative, for instance) but instead, contained in (performative) practices – such as the mourning of the dead which is privately remembered but communally forgotten – which attempt to secure the permanence and continuity of Gitano people. Gay y Blasco claims that this kind of approach to the past is understandable and appropriate for “dispersed, illiterate, marginalized group with fluctuating membership which lacks claims to a territory and which suffers strong pressures to dissolve into the majority.”

Isabel Fonseca argues that Roma are aware of the Nazi persecutions however they do not commemorate or discuss the past. They live in a state of forgetting or as the author writes, they “have made an art of forgetting”\(^{68}\) not out of satisfaction but as a reaction to the hostile environment they live in. Further, their innermost characteristics such as fatalism or craftiness contribute also to a kind of historical awareness which however lacks the sense of collective memory. Michael Stewart warns to the dangers of Fonseca’s approach by claiming that it actually reifies the Nazis’ argument: if there is no “remembered self” than there is no collective identity, hence culture and Roma could easily be regarded as cultural deviants, the

---


\(^{68}\) Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and their journey* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 276. Inga Clendinnen similar: “If, in the face of persecution, Gypsies choose to let their past blur, to seek no meanings beyond those relevant to immediate survival, pious Jews have always sought the deeper significance concealed in what only appear to be this-worldly events.” In *Reading the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8.
primitives of society.

Although I do see the flipside of the concept of “art of forgetting” there is one instance of Fonseca’s argument which I find empowering that is that the process of forgetting is considered as an art of resistance. It is a soft understanding of resistance in order to question domination as well as distance themselves from control. By control I mean the conscious reflection on the past and thus the constant urge for self-definition.

Turning to Michael Stewart he introduces the term “implicit memory” in relation to Roma and their approach to the past. Similarly to the “Ring-a-Ring-of Roses... We all fall down” chanting in which the memory of the seventeenth century’s plague manifest implicitly, the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma lives one in the present in non-discursive communal and individual practices, “embedded” in the relations between Roma and non-Roma. His empirical material stems from his field work in Harangos back in 1984 where in conversations he discovered bits and pieces of the memory of the past however it still remained fragmented, encapsulated only in few images. However, years later, in the summer of 1988 when in Hungary the so-called “skinhead-hysteria” swept through it was recounted how Roma talked of “their fear of the return of the Arrow Cross (Nyilas), the wartime fascist party”. Thus the formerly seemingly no form of historical memory was replaced with a strong sense of history. Stewart’s argument is based on his concept of identity that is relational: he claims that nature of the relations with the non-Roma world defines Roma identity, hence Roma “are able to live without much of what we think of as »history« because they have their relations with us, the gaze, the non-Gypsies, to remind themselves »who they are« and who they have been, and thus to help them recognize the nature of the durational world in which, despite their best efforts, they are condemned to live.” That is to say that the violence of the majority, the stereotypes and discrimination which constantly target Roma and push/keep them on the margins fuel historical awareness, “sustain certain forms of remembering.”

However the root of the problem is not forgetting since remembering and forgetting are not mutually exclusive practices. “The opposing concepts are preservation and erasure.” That is to say that forgetting is part of remembering and a capacity rather than a deficiency. It is an “active faculty” to “make place for the new,” or a kind of “re-beginning” to find our future: “memories are crafted by oblivion as the outlines of the shore are created by the sea.”

---

70 Ibid.
71 Tzvetan Todorov, *Az emlékezet hasznáról és káráról* (Budapest: Napvilág, 1998), 13. [The original version of this text is titled Les abus de la mémoire and was given as a presentation at a conference organized by the Auschwitz Foundation in Brussels in 1992.]
Still, let it be called “forgetting” or “implicit memories” instead of “presentism” they all somehow fit in what Trumpener said about the superiority of the Western civilization while Roma remain in the margins – not only spatially but historically and temporarily too – and are considered as different, oppressed, highly dependent on non-Roma. Slawomir Kapralski, in his text *The Aftermath of the Roma Holocaust: From Implicit Memories to Commemoration* criticizes Stewart’s so-called “Harangos-based picture of Roma” through which a generalized, simplified approach to Roma is formulated, furthermore, he highlights the complexity of the non-Roma and Roma interactions which results not only one but various memories, born or shaped not exclusively by oppressive relations. As he argues there is no “single Romani memory,” for the Roma are heterogeneous as a people. There are groups who prefer to stay away from the limelight, undisturbed by the non-Roma world, and there are Romani activists and intellectuals who strive to bring the Roma case to the attention of the general public. (…) There are other forms of Romani memory that are discursive, owing to the positive transformations within the non-Roma world. Finally, there are Romani memories that emerge out of Romani commemorative practices.”

Yet Kapralski consciously applies the term Roma to various groups of people and turns the whole discourse upside-down and places in the core of his argument the foucauldian dilemma of speech.

I also need to acknowledge my reservation and uncertainty towards the above attitude of “unsatisfaction” or “blame of wordlessness”. I would argue that the demand for greater openness and dialogue to make Roma speak on the one hand overlooks past researches, on the other, is contra-productive and provides an unfortunate dynamic. By the latter I mean that instead of giving voice to the person, the pressure coming from the majority to obey to the imperative of remembering silences them: “the mouth is a very special organ, it symbolizes speech and enunciation. Within racism, it becomes an organ of oppression par excellence; it represents the organ whites want – and need – to control.” Modernity bizarrely replaces the mask which was an integral tool in the hand of European colonizers to make the subaltern speechlessness with the microphone which precludes the narration to develop into a discursive act. Thus even if the narrator – in our case the one who is giving an autobiographical account on a past experience – gets freedom in the framing the sentences or in the “communicative act”\(^1\), one has to subordinate the narration’s “structure”\(^2\) to that of the

---

\(^1\) Kapralski, “The Aftermath”


majority’s. Thus, as Kapralski says, “In general, the perception of Roma as “people without memory” has come about as a consequence of the following factors: the dominant stereotype of Roma in modern culture; the process of “differential deprivation of history” of those marginalized; the process of “othering” certain categories by denying them the right to participate in “our” temporal order; and eventually the process of the “erasing of interconnections” between the dominant majority and marginalized and exploited minorities.”

Additionally Kapralski argues (and my dissertation is also dedicated to this argument) that Roma groups nurture the memory of the past and commemorate. This goes in line with Huub van Bar’s argument which claims that Roma memorial practices and discourses are present. Holocaust as a universal tragedy of humanity appears to be a political site through which various communities, including Roma, could claim their place in European history, thus in Europe. That is to say that they wish to succeed in gaining recognition for their sufferings in important sites of Holocaust memory and these Roma representations, or rather the discourse around them, would structure Roma identities and contribute to a better understanding of Roma, non-Roma relations by providing a historical depth to them. However, Roma organizations and agents have still much to worry about in the struggle for gaining recognition for Roma’s Holocaust experiences, such as the inadequacy of restitution payments or the hierarchy of victims or exclusion from institutions.

I titled my thesis Memory Emancipated in line with the above. It denotes that the memory of the genocide was considered as an organic part of the Roma emancipatory movement which started in the 1970s. It was among its flagship themes and its symbolic inscription into the European collective memory (for example its representation in the permanent Auschwitz exhibition) could not have happened without the effort, cultural and political pressure of the Roma civil rights activism. Thus the title expresses this tight bond between the Roma movement and the memories of the persecutions. It also suggests that the memory of the past was (or rather has been) going through a process of freeing, was (or has been) involved in the struggle to be freed from the majority’s understanding and canonized version of “what happened.” That is to say that it does not only realize its own place in history, without diminishing the influence of other memories, but also demands its own recognition. However emancipation is not only interesting from a purely historical point of view that the memory of the Nazi genocide can become an acknowledged part of “official –

---

76 Reconstruction of a lived experience in a discourse. Ibid.
77 Kapralski, “The Aftermath”
Emancipation conveys in itself the freeing of both the self and the collective: it is a dynamic process through which one gains self-acceptance, pride, self-determination, self-consciousness which are the preconditions of political emancipation.

**Role of the researcher, Methodology and data**
I came to the topic of the Nazi genocide of Roma when I was a MA student at the Central European University, in 2007-2008. Although there were some fixed cornerstones that I wished to deal with, such as a focus on minorities and on women, in general I struggled to come up with a thesis idea which is not only doable in a few months but is also interesting, relevant and has an additional value to my further studies, work. In the winter of 2007-2008 I took part on a lecture given by Lenore J. Weitzman on Jewish women’s resistance in Poland’s Grodno and Bialystok ghettos during World War II and got inspired to think it further and to investigate the concept of resistance among Roma in Hungary under the Holocaust. For the thesis (Spring, 2008) I did my fieldwork as well as conducted interviews with women in two Hungarian cities: Esztergom and Székesfehérvár. I have chosen Esztergom for the reason that it is located close to Hungary’s biggest Holocaust internment camp: the so-called Csillagerőd, which functioned between 1944 and 1945. In the end an interview led me to Székesfehérvár to meet a survivor, relative of a woman in Esztergom. My point of departure was Foucault’s concept that relations of domination are in a dialectical relationship with relations of resistance. Hence I approached the Nazi genocide of Roma through forms of resistance which might have been formed and aimed at challenging every abuse of power. I was especially interested in women since they were invisible and were able to demonstrate a different notion of resistance without agendas and daily struggle but with a silent and offstage discourse. I found that fantasy, courage, oral culture, language and memory are basic elements of it.

I also feel the need to mention the regarding art and the discourse on representation I am one of the curators of the European Roma Cultural Foundation (ERCF) that is a non-profit, Budapest-based foundation and believes that negative stereotypes and discrimination towards Roma can be counter-balanced by the strength and promotion of Roma art. ERCF promotes and realizes interesting and creative ideas, projects such as the establishment of the Roma Hip-hop Archive or the organization of a protest at the 7th Berlin Biennale in front of the (then) unfinished Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime, Berlin (which I will discuss in Chapter 7. more details). Being involved in the work of the Foundation gives me an insight into contemporary art as well as makes me possible to
be in contact with artists or to witness and in some senses be involved in the operation and transformation of the art scene.

This research looks at the Roma genocide through the lens of various sources, consequently my methodology is defined as well as bounded by the sources I use. Each following chapter is structured alike and begins with a theoretical contextualization. I apply critical discourse analysis in order to research interviews and documents. Furthermore, since the thesis is largely based on the research of representation I use the tools provided by the methodological approach of visual studies. Visual studies is a field for the study of the cultural construction of the visual in arts in everyday life. It deals with a variety of cultural phenomena from photography to video, from traditional works of art to performance and regards the image as its focal point which conveys meaning. Traditional art historic methods of analysis are useful in understanding some of those phenomena however visual studies offers new analytic tools to conduct research. It combines theory and practice and applies a critical, semiotic and hermeneutic approach and elaborate on art.  

Similarly to Rothberg I am interested in discursive spaces (fine art, film, literary texts etc.) where the narrative of the memory can evolve and also demonstrate ways in which memory can be articulated. Hence my methodological approach takes the monument, exhibition, fine art, film and photography as texts, a “biography” which has its past, present and future forming a narrative matrix. Throughout my research I will focus on both the physical and metaphysical aspects of the text and read as well as unfold the various meaning inscribed in them. The other concept which frames my methodological approach and becomes a pillar of analysis is the concept of “Holocaust effect,” taken (and critically applied) from Ernst van Alphen. It contrasts the concept of representation with only a “reference” to the past event. That is to say that the Nazi genocide cannot directly be experienced but re-enacted and only certain aspects of it in uncanny and unexpected ways, hence the past is not mediated or re-presented but performed by the “effect.”

By exploring the memory of it I prefer to use the term “collected memory” suggesting that instead of a coherently structured collective memory memories are scattered and each (re)collection suggests its own definition and interpretation to the event. Thus a

---


81 Young, *The Texture of Memory*. 
given society’s collective memory is the compilation of various, sometimes competing memories and in order to make a functioning society institutions have to organize, shape or arrange memories. My sources will differ in each chapter regarding the case I am dealing with.

I researched texts: Amaro Drom, Kethano Drom, Cigányfúró, Phralipe, Lungo Drom since they are important, opinion-shaper journals for Roma communities. I also look at Jewish journals as stakeholders in the memory of the Nazi regimes (Múlt és Jövő), as well as look at public, daily newspapers such as Magyar Nemzet, Népszava, Népszabadság or Magyar Hírlap, and other papers such as Világunk or Beszélő. As for the timeframe: I look the Roma and Jewish journals through since they were established in order to find articles, texts etc. on my subject matter or related to it. I will also use the interviews of the 1971 survey on the Roma population which collection has recently been donated to the Open Society Archives by the Roma Press Centre and has become researchable.

I conducted interviews with Roma intellectuals: Ágnes Daróczi (and János Bársny, her non-Roma husband), Aladár Horváth, Jenő Zsigó, József Lojkó Lakatos, and interviews with non-Roma intellectuals who influenced the discourse such as Gábor Bernáth, Gábor Sárközi, András Kovács, László Kojanicz, András Porogi (the latter two had a prominent role in establishing the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day), as well as with contemporary artists, including those who participated in the art camp at Kőszeg in 2004, organized by the Roma Educational and Cultural Centre of Budapest.

I was going on fieldtrips to visit memorials inside and outside of Hungary: Monument at the Nehru part; Monument at Nagykanizsa, Hungary; memory plaques Hungary-wide; Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime in Berlin; the Memorial to the Roma and Sinti at Lackenbach; Roma cemetery in Ustica in the Jasenovac Memorial Area, Croatia; Cata and Dunajska Strade in Slovakia; or the Lety and Hodonin memorials in the Czech Republic.


Structure of my thesis
In the following chapter, that is Chapter Two, I aim at drawing the socio-historical context of the discourse of the Roma genocide analysing various sources based on the methodology of critical discourse analysis. Hereby I shall briefly mention those materials, documents which we already know as giving an account on the genocide starting with the first representative survey on the Roma population conducted in 1971 by István Kemény in which in-depth interviews were also done and even though the motivation of the survey was else, some of the interviewees mention their experiences under the 1940’s, until journals and papers edited by Roma intellectuals targeting mainly Roma communities as their audience. In this chapter I aim at unfolding the discourse of the genocide collecting all the traces went public on the event as a first-hand experience or as the memory of second or third generations.

Chapter Three explores the relationship between trauma and representation in order to provide a theoretical framework for my further analysis. First I attempt to understand the concept of trauma starting from a rather psychoanalytic perspective and then shifting towards historiography. Then I aim to conceptualize the Holocaust as a traumatic event within the context of representation and think about the ways in which the experience of the Holocaust was understood, thought, reflected or visualized in art. I argue that art, or representation in
general, is an “outer dimension of memory”; a tool for the working-through of a trauma; a possibility for a new rhetoric that provides a better understanding of our past, present and our future.

Chapter Four is on photography which aims to develop a critical way of thinking while looking at photographs done in various historical periods, and by various figures of history, on Roma. I have noticed motifs which as cues and semiotic codes effortlessly run through the photographic representation of Roma. Thus I look at images done under the persecution of Roma and explore the aesthetics of violence, their content, the intention of creating, framing and composing the image, the ways in which the subjects are depicted, and other particular details. What alerts me to what I would like to argue about is that when it comes to the representation of Roma in contemporary photography – with a special focus on contemporary photo contests and their exhibitions – there is a conceptual repetitive recycling of certain themes originated from “Holocaust images.” The application of these themes invoke the potential of dehumanization of Nazism and “activate a set of cultural codes that projects false meanings and lies onto the portrayed subjects” which was once used by the National Socialist regime.

Chapter Five is on films. I will primarily focus on three films made in varying socio-historical environment, in different aesthetic regimes, with different ethical-political concerns and with diverging motivation. How are archival materials used in the films? What kind of logic of archivation can be detected? How does the survivor narrative change throughout the films? What roles does the narrator occupy? Is there any specific aesthetics of the Roma genocide?

In Chapter Six I have selected contemporary fine art works of Roma artists who exhibited at The Hidden Holocaust exhibition (2004, Műcsarnok, Budapest). The exhibition was organized for the 60-year anniversary for the Holocaust and was sensational and unique in the sense it takes the responsibility for all the victims and further a new and young generation of Roma has become visible. I analyse the work of two secondary generation, contemporary Roma painters: Omara and Tibor Balogh. What is common in them is that both of them avoid the attempt to console or to educate the viewer but they intervene in people’s lives and encourage them to participate either by deeds or by activating their imagination. Their leading theme is “abandonedness” and emphasize solidarity as a possible foundation.

upon which communities can and shall be constructed no matter what age, sex, nationality or ethnicity one has.

Chapter Seven will discover monuments – with a special focus on the monument at the Nehru Park, Budapest – erected as commemorative spaces for official use, as part of a socializing system whereby fellow citizens gain common historical experience and knowledge in order to remember the Roma genocide. From the 1990s intellectuals of Roma origin endeavour to forge the creation of the narrative of the Roma persecutions under the Second World War by building memorial sites, organizing commemorations, exhibitions, promoting the ritualization of their programs and naming the event. What kind of ideals and values, sense of national destiny, shared stories of the past and a future envisioned are imprinted in the monuments? How do these memorial spaces become points of references that would orient the rememberer and create meaning in both the land and the community’s recollections? How do the memorial designer’s own time and place effect spaces of memory and remembrance? How is the official, state narrative on the Holocaust reflecting upon the Roma experiences? How do we respond to the monument’s performance?

This text is an attempt to talk about the problem of remembering. It contributes, in a sense, to the processes of remembering, repeating and working through. It wishes to negotiate, explore and understand the gap between the “real” event of the past and its (individual or collective) imagination by invoking the above mentioned forms of representations. This text is not only an exclamation mark to those who still believe that “there is nothing to know about the Roma Holocaust” but also an effort to structure my scientific curiosity with regard to the ways in which past events have been carried forth with ourselves into the time we are now living.
II. UNFOLDING THE DISCOURSE ON THE ROMA GENOCIDE

“Memorials can be blown up. They could be rebuilt. But a single human life cannot be reconstructed, recreated anymore. It happens.”
(Péli Tamás)

The documentary titled *Gypsies* was directed by the cinematographer and film director Sándor Sára under the framework of the Balázs Béla Studió in 1961. The idea of a film on the life of the “Gypsies” in Hungary occurred to Sára while he was commissioned by the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association (HGCA) as a photographer. However since his workplace was the Hungarian Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio, he could not realize it - not until the Balázs Béla Studio was established and offered a liminal space for film production on the threshold between inside and outside of the socialist structure of film industry. The opening sequence of *Gypsies* presents articles of newspapers with headlines such as “The Gypsies are part of the society too” or “Social Collaboration Could Solve the Problems of the Gypsy Population.” These titles not only catch the attention of the viewer but also harmonize with the slogans of the official discourse; then the social documentary photographs come to suggest a more complete understanding of the situation of Roma in the Socialist Hungary. So wishes the film to find a balance between fitting in the contemporary political discourse of possible integration and progress and raising attention to poverty and the situation of minorities. However in the end falls in the trap of generalization. The closing scene shows a woman peeling potatoes and a young boy drawing on the wall of the house with a chalk which represents “the liveability of poverty and social distance at the same time.” However the neat, white, unused clothes of the little boy break the authenticity of this scene and invoke the presence of the official socialist propaganda. “The film illustrates the thwarting intensions and processes of politics through the lens of a then already stratified social group. In the meanwhile it manages to disguise the differences and position Roma as passive victims.”

---

83 Hungarian translation: „Az emlékműveket fel szabad robbantani, újra lehet építeni, de az egyszer megélhető emberi életet nem lehet már rekonstruálni, újrateremteni. Az megtörténik.”
84 Besides the Socialist propaganda it offered space for reflecting on “reality”.
86 Ibid.
In the beginning of the film, following the sequence of social documentary photos, a Roma settlement slowly appears in the eye of the camera. And then there is a song in both Romani and Hungarian languages: “The German took the father of the children/ Oh, he took him and never give him back/ I will be shot to death my baby, I will be killed/ Oh the great journeys I cannot come back/ I will be shot to death my baby, I will be killed/ Oh, I did not steal, my soul is sinless/ My God and my country, where shall I die/ In the forest or in the field...” This song, as the director recalled his memories, had been chosen from the collection of the ethnographer Kamill Erdős, however he did not remember why this specific song was selected to be included in the film. According to Sára the decision to incorporate a topic, the suffering of Roma under the Nazi regime, which was considered as a taboo, was not conscious: not the lyrics but rather the atmosphere what mattered. In other words, “the film was primarily made against prejudices, racial discrimination – without being exhaustive but being biased, in the spirit of their weepers I wished to complain together with them.”

However it happened, due to the composedness of the *Gypsies*, the song plays an organic part in both the opening sequence and the whole film. Thus questions arise such as how it informs us about the Nazi genocide of Roma as well as about its memory? How does the lyric text contain the traces of the trauma and how can it be interpreted in the context of the film; how does it reflect on reality, the given social context? From a broader perspective, how did the history of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma take shape? Who, when and why shared their stories first or what kind of outer manifestations these memories have? Who are the agents of this memory and how was it narrated and constructed in post-war Hungary, in socialism and after the regime change? How do Jews and Roma share the discursive space of commemoration? What kind of role does it play in the Roma civil rights movement? In this chapter, led by the above questions, I wish to excavate the history of the discourse of the Roma genocide. I attempt to define the milestones and agents, the key historical and socio-political dynamics in shaping and forming the current layout of the memory of the genocide.

**The immediate post-war period**

Although the end of the Second World War brought the hope for democracy in Hungary, including expectations of emancipation, progress and equality for Roma, the policies targeting

---

87 Once I had the opportunity to talk to the director via phone on this subject-matter.
88 Among Kamill Erdős collection there are some containing the memory of the Roma genocide, such as from 1959 the *Hitler Ballad*. Link: [http://ezredveg.vasaros.com/html/2009_10/09103.html](http://ezredveg.vasaros.com/html/2009_10/09103.html)
and the general attitude towards them re-established inequality and racial discrimination yet without the direct danger of physical extermination. The early discourse on Roma bears cynical, criminal and civilising tone – characteristics which pre-set the “late birth” of Holocaust testimonies.\textsuperscript{90}

It was cynical in a sense that Roma constituted a large proportion of the Hungarian Communist Party’s voting basis however in the case of politically significant measures they were often left out from the target population and “it had failed to establish opportunities for making a living”\textsuperscript{91}. As the Communists were perceived as saviours and as those who “stand up most consistently to overcome social injustices and for the rights of the oppressed”\textsuperscript{92} they managed to gain the support of a considerable amount of people including Roma. However the process of the land reform in 1945 was marked by their absence. As István Kemény writes: “Both poorer peasant farmers and the rural landless received land. Roma, however, were left out from the process of land distribution. Most Roma did not even request land. Apart from a few rare instances, even Roma who claimed land, were not given any. Land was scarce and the process of land distribution achieved no more than created out of a land of »three million beggars« a land of »two million beggars«. It was quite easy to leave Roma out of the process – and they were indeed left out, in spite of the fact that many Roma, more than a third of them, made livelihoods from seasonal work in agriculture.”\textsuperscript{93} Furthermore, the restrictions on commercial activities were slowly lifted between 1945 and 1947, however following the Communist takeover these activities failed to comply with the regime. The promise of having a place in the society was unrealized: slowly and surely Roma were deprived from their “original” job opportunities and became the targets of collective hatred. The latter can be best pictured by Gábor Havas’ description: “In Ocsárd, the Party’s propaganda had had such an effect that many Gypsies had joined the Party and as Party members agitated amongst the peasants for them to join the collective farm. They attempted with words that had been put in their mouths to raise the sense of responsibility to collective property among those [peasants] who were formal Co-operative members but who worked exclusively among their own vines and around their own homes. One can imagine the kind of hatred towards the Gypsies thus awakened among the peasants. When later the economic position of the Co-operative improved the peasants joined or became active within it, they

\textsuperscript{90}István Kemény ed., \textit{Roma in Hungary} (Boulder, Colo: Social Science Monographs, 2005), 48-49.

\textsuperscript{91}Zsolt Csalog cited in Ibid., 48.


\textsuperscript{93}Kemény, \textit{Roma in Hungary}, 49.
drove the Gypsies out straight away.”94 Thus Roma were means in the hand of the Communist propaganda machine to promote collectivisation but as a result it increased the gap between the peasants and the Roma, between majority and minority.

The new constitution in 1949 provided the legal basis for the national and ethnic minorities living in Hungary. They were considered as equal before the law as well as granted with the rights to education in their native languages, to the preservation of their culture and to the use of their mother tongue. However reality was not always in harmony with the written words. While the Hungarian minority abroad found itself in a privileged position and enjoyed the most attention, other nationalities, including the Roma, were expected to dissolve in a classless society in the future. Until then they were provided with the system of Nationality Associations which could have maintained their acultural autonomy but rather “served as a means of political control and ideological mobilisation for the regime – and not as bottom-up institutions of self-organisation.”95

At the same time the civilising and criminal discourses – which were either in contradiction or to counterbalance the above – envisaged and worked hand-in-hand towards the total assimilation of Roma. The former had a socialist twist: enlightenment should be realized for the sake of building socialism.96 The Social Review, journal of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, issued an analysis in 1946 which considered Roma capable of assimilation through the involvement in work as well as identified itinerant Roma, “an independent group economically, socially, and in part linguistically,” as a “national minority” and thus, the problem.97 The question of national minority, raised by the article, remained untouched until the end of the 1950s, and Roma were only considered in criminal or hygienic dimensions. As a matter of fact Hungarian Ministry of Health’s proposal in 1955 stated that the living conditions of Roma contributed to their bad health conditions and could be considered as triggers of epidemics such as typhus and fever. Hence, “hundreds of activists do this job and care for Gypsy families with love and understanding. (...) They give lectures on hygiene and health (...)”.98 Improvement in their living conditions was wished to be achieved with love (sic!), understanding and education. In the same year – a year after the identity books were distributed in the population – so-called “black identity books” were issued to

94 Stewart, “Communist Roma Policy,” 75.
96 Csaba Dupcsik, A magyarországi cigányzság története: történelem a cigánykutatások tükövében, 1890-2008 (Budapest: Osiris, 2009), 139.
98 Ibid., 275.
those Roma “who could not prove their residence neither that they have a job and possible make ends meet by committing crimes.”

In this climate, that addressed the “question” of Roma with such bitterness and hostility, started, two fellow-workers of the Ministry of Labour, Pogány György and Géza Bán working on the situation of Roma in Hungary. Their research focused on areas such as housing conditions, education, health condition or employment but also touched upon the issue of identity as well as self-identification through questions of language, culture and origin. Furthermore, they contemplated on providing a proper definition of the “Gypsy.” As a matter of lack of clarity what “national minority” shall mean and that the “Gypsies” failed to form a homogenous group with a common language, common land or common economy hence the nationality status could not have been applied to them, the authors ended up arguing that the “Gypsies” are in-between barbarism and civilisation. The report was completed and circulated within the Ministry of Labour for discussion. It was concluded that that “Gypsy-question” shall be solved and for that matter a peak committee has to be established and a top-level Party decision shall be made. Soon after, and without any Party decision, the Ministry of Culture announced the establishment of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association, the first country-wide organization for Roma which was part of the afore-mentioned institutional framework of Nationality Associations.

The operation of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association
One can only guess the reasons for this immediate entrance of HGCA to the political and cultural sphere. Historian Csaba Dupcsik excludes the possibility to consider it as a positive reaction of politics to the involvement of Roma in the 1956 Revolution. While Michael Stewart assumes that Pogány and Bán were out of favour by that time hence their recommendations were not taken seriously or that the supporters of the Association might have perceived that the Ministry of Labour would not support their existence. I would add that the founders of HGCA might have foreseen the report’s negative, repressive findings and wished to preclude, counter-balance it by taking a detour and initiating the organization by a deputy at the Ministry of Culture at a press conference instead of waiting or a high-level Party decision.

---
99 Ibid., 274. By 1962 an internal report of the Criminal Department of the Interior Ministry stated that the country-wide coverage was realized. This practice stopped in 1963. Stewart, “Communist Roma Policy,” 75.
100 Sághy, “Cigánpolitika Magyarországon,” 275.
decision. As Stewart argues however, the circumstances of its establishment as well as the agents involved suggest that “a profound change in Gypsy fortunes was still only a possibility.”

What is clear is that it had been initiated by intellectuals as early as the year 1954. Mária László, who became the first leader of the Association, requested from the Budapest Area Committee of the Hungarian Communist Party the establishment of such an institution which would grant the rights for social and cultural autonomy as well as would protect Roma from atrocities, discrimination. The request had two attachments: the first was written by well-known Roma musicians (Vince Lakatos, Sándor Járóka, Kálmán Oláh, József Pécsi, Gyula Toki Horváth) asking for cultural rights while the second was written in the name of the people of Pánd settlement with the purpose of demanding equality, rights to culture and education. Both attachments were written by Mária László with the aim to let the voice of two different social strata of Roma to be heard by the majority population. In 1957 under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture the Department of National Minorities was created which was responsible for the supervision of all the nationalities’ organizations. As Sághy argues, the efforts of Mária László and the need to institutionalize the “Gypsy-question” found a coalition and resulted the birth of HGCA subordinated to the Department of National Minorities, at a time when the Party did not wish to recognize the “Gypsy” as a nationality.

Mária László (1909 – 1989) was born in Nagykáta in a family of thirteen children. She was working as a journalist in the 1930s and later was involved in the operation of the Red Cross as well as of the Social Democratic Party. She started working as the head of the HGCA in the beginning of 1958 and was dismissed in the end of the year as the Association became stronger than it was expected to be by the Party. She wished to continue her field of interest outside of the Association, unsuccessfully.

The Association was a state institution but also a Roma organization. Its primary goals were to contribute and promote the betterment of Roma; to provide cultural rights; to cooperate with the state in order to improve health, education, housing or employment conditions; as well as to educate the people. Its most important mission was to protect and cultivate Roma culture with the belief that culture is not only the essence of a community but also a weapon, a tool to fight against marginalization. The Association was also a legal forum and offered assistance in legal procedures, cases.

---

104 Ibid., 79.
On the day its establishment László addressed a letter to the National Association of Persecuted by Nazism to raise attention to the experience of Roma under the Nazi persecutions as well as to announce the claim of the restitution of Roma. She was asked to consult with the General Bank and Trust Co. Ltd and as a result with a deadline of two months László was requested to compile a list with the names of the survivors. Due to the lack of assistance and the shortness of time the Association took its hands off from this subject-matter. As historian Karsai László argues it is possible that Roma were informed about the compensations since among the 80,000 folders stored in the General Bank and Trust Co. Ltd’s archive one can find documents from all over the country: out of which 298 was submitted by Roma while 263 folders contain data about the persecutions.

In the proposition of improving the economic, political and cultural living standard of Roma addressed to the government of Hungary Mária László provides an insight into the history of Roma in Europe. She describes the beginning of the 20th century in the following way: “In the time of the Second World War there was an upheaval in the oppression of the nationalities and turned into racist hatred. From the 1940s onwards, but especially in 1941, the South Slavic population was the target of violent attacks, then Jewish and Gypsy ghettos were set up and thousands of them were deported under cruel circumstances – children, women, men, old people and ill people – to the gas chambers. While millions of freedom-loving, working people raised their voice for the Jewish population, no one raised their voice for the Gypsy who makes the music of all sorrows and joys of the world, works trustworthily, stands outside of law and is neither exploitative nor a political factor. I have to mention one example out of the many. As a last gesture from the departing German army all the Gypsies were collected and were forced to lie down in the road and tanks were crossing their bodies. Little living children were burn to death over the flames. These horrors were ended by the fact of the liberation and by the appearance of the Soviet army.”

This section fits well into the narrative of the whole policy paper which proposes as well as prepares for the establishment of an organization which would represent the interests and needs of the Roma population in Hungary. In other words to make Roma a political factor. I would assume that the experience of the persecutions was crucial in László’s family

106 Ibid., 287.
and/or László’s life. My assumption is based not only on the fact that one of her first provisions was granting the opportunity for restitution, but also her knowledge and openness to these experiences. The invocation of the Jewish victims suggests a reference to the Jewish experience, however instead of justifying the experience of suffering or triggering a competition in the level of suffering László calls upon the Jews to demand the visibility of the excluded, the Roma. In this reading this approach helps to promote the inclusion of Roma into the “visible” sphere that is the sphere of politics and power. The exposure of visibility through the Jews does not necessarily become a political act, that is to say that it does not wish to change the existing structure of remembrance – it cannot be translated into a “civic” language which asks for “rights” and “obligations” – but rather to acquire historical visibility through the emphasis of a common history with the Jews which asserts their capacity of “agency” (i.e. of representing themselves culturally).

The German Restitution Laws (*Bundesentschädigungsgesetz*) were passed in 29 June, 1956 in order to regulate the restitution of lost property and the payment. The Bank Centre came to exist to enhance the stability of the bank system while the General Bank and Trust Co. Ltd – a legally autonomous operating body of the Bank Center – was to deal with financial and civil law matters. National Association of Persecuted by Nazism’s call received in the first round 62,000 and in the second round another 12,000 claim for damages. The German authorities disregarded the Hungarian claims and asked for specification. For this matter the Bank Centre established a separate department in 1962 within the General Bank and Trust Co. Ltd and the payments started in 1971, lasted till 1975.\(^\text{109}\)

Browsing through the files one can find some claims belonging to people identified as Roma.\(^\text{110}\) Each claim consists of a questionnaire which was not filled by the illiterate, and while the majority of Roma could not write and commissioned a representative in these cases the questionnaire remained unfilled. Still there were questions raised such as: For what reason and where were you taken during “Hitler’s persecutions”?\(^\text{111}\) [hitleri üldözések alatt]? Which KZ lager was your destination? How long were you encamped? What kind of damages and losses do you have? Besides the questionnaire there were a protocol in German, and a receipt about the payment. Although the amount of money was asserted on the basis of the degree of

\(^\text{109}\) Department of Compensations was established in 1962 with 41 people. It dealt with the cases of BRüg. From 1972 a separate department came to exist which coordinated the payments which ended in 1975. In 1971 the agreement between the Ministry of Finances and the National Association of Persecuted by Nazism made possible the payments in DM.

\(^\text{110}\) MOL XIX-L-20-O Pénzintézeti Központ, Kártalanítási osztály, 158. box, 11135. file for example

\(^\text{111}\) At the same time the experience of the Roma persecutions was titled as “Gypsy War dead” in the World Romani Congress documents.
damages and losses as well as was lowered if there were any relatives abroad, there is an apparent difference between Roma and non-Roma payments (e.g. Roma received significantly less money).

One of the main pillars of the Association was its lobby activity which aimed at maintaining and improving the situation of Roma in Hungary. Thousands of personal requests arrived to László’s table which were to be solved or answered by the organization. Some of these hand-written letters let the reader have an insight into one’s life-story and through the lines a whole person was drawn. Some of the life-stories mention, as an integral part of the narrative, the experience of the persecutions. Géza Gyöngyösi Rácz turned with a plea for help to the organization in the end of autumn in 1957. He wished to be employed as a musician and in his letter he supported his request with his talent in music which was embedded in a life-story narrative. Gyöngyösi Rácz was born in 1918 in Gyöngyös in a musician family. He had been a lucky, rewarding and favourable violin player until 1943 when he was conscripted. The officers became aware of his sense for music and founded a music band for him and he was taken to the Soviet front where he was obliged to play music to the high-ranked officers. He became appointed as the army musician. First he played for the Germans and later for the Russians. In August 1946 he played his last concert in front of the Soviet audience and promised them that he would visit them with his Gypsy band from Hungary. He managed to travel back to “Júdapest” (!) in the autumn of 1946, and to Gyöngyös in 1947. He founded the town’s folk music band and in close partnership with the Party they became regular guests in the Radio. During the “counter-revolution of 1956” he was the subject of hatred thus he welcomed the Soviet armies in the beginning of November. In 1957 he moved to Budapest and since then he could not find a proper job.

As he explains, in the German army they were extremely hungry and instead of money they asked for food cans. Once the engine broke down and forced labourers repaired it which encounter was the point of departure of his long-lasting care for forced labourers. In order to avoid being noticed by the Germans Gyöngyösi Rácz “waited for the evening to come and dropped the cans of food out of the truck at an approved location. Then the Germans realized what was going on behind the curtain and before they could have caught me I managed with the help of the Soviet people to sneak out of their hands to the Soviet army. I was taken to the Ural mountains, Chelyabinsk city, into a big lager where with the help of a Soviet musician I

---

112 Deposited in the Museum of Ethnography, Mária László inheritance, 1.box
113 The conclusion of the case was that it was outside of the scope of the Association to solve the employment situation of Roma musicians. This case was discusses with the Music Workers Trade Union and it assured the support of Rácz.
was appointed as the leader of the lager’s music band. The lager’s theatre was popular among civilians too and in-between two acts I played on my violin Soviet folk songs and was accompanied on piano. After a while the audience demanded specifically me on stage. I became sick in the winter of 1944/45 and I have to tell you that I owe my life to the Soviet army officers because they brought me the best medicines.”

József Kakuczi’s case is more developed. It takes one folder and seems that he was employed by the Association as a lecturer. He visits settlements, talks to people, provides a presentation and writes a report on the circumstances, on the health situation of the people, on the arbitrariness of both the gendarmerie and the local leader of the Roma (vajda). Among the documents I found scraps of paper on which he writes his life-story. He served in the army however due to his illness he was dismissed. During the 1940s he was in a state of constant escape. “I was drafted in 1937 and was taken to the Count Ortutay military base. (...) Military service was extremely hard. As a matter of my discretionary leave the defence law condemned me to six weeks of imprisonment. They came round because I could not take that much of slaps. Among my other fellows I am alive, we attempted to escape. Three of us. In the great despair in 1937. In 1938 I became sick and was suffering for two years and it is still visible signs are on my left neck and right face. In 1939 I disarmed (...) and as a sick person I was carried home, upon request, to let me die at home. (...) In 1940 I was asked to participate in a 30-day long fight practice. I left the army in 1940 as a disarmed service-man. (...) In 1942 I received a draft call to which I did not apply because then my type [fajta] of people was deported too. Then they came to power (...) ended the Arrow Cross members. Thus I couldn’t be a patriot only a military fugitive. I lived in escape till 1943. In 1943 I lived in the same household with Rozália Sárközi who lives now in Esztergom, then with Zsófia Horváth. With Rozália Sárközi they supported me financially. (...) In September 1944 I stayed near Pesthidegkút and in the early hours of the morning a gendarme woke me up from my deep and tired dreams. There was Zsófia Horváth with me of course. My hands were shackled and I was led away and taken to Pestszentlőrinc. In Pestszentlőrinc there were already many Gypsies collected. From Lőrinc I was taken to Lajosmizse, it could have been the middle of October, then the Glorious Red Army was approaching and we had to run away. During the runaway I escaped. I took my way to Esztergom. In Esztergom I was arrested by the Arrow Cross and was about to be taken to Komárom where the others were. There were other Hungarians, Gypsies with us, we were mixed, but on the way I escaped. I wanted to go back to Esztergom but they caught me again and put me on their truck with difficulty (...) and there the Glorious Red Army caught us. It could have been the beginning of the fourth month,
1945. The glorious army set everyone free. The people were so many that it (...) could not fit in. I went to Pesthidegkút but I was so shattered that I could not stand on my feet.”

Kakuczi’s story highlights the nature of the Roma genocide what Kapralski calls a decentralized and de-synchronized implementation of the persecutions. As a matter of the lack of consistent implementation Kakuczi was not only in the army until the beginning of the 1940s but also following his recovery from his illness he was requested to join the army again. He refused to join the army because already in 1940s Roma were targeted by anti-Roma measurements, such as forced labour or internment camps. For a long time historians failed to focus on the specific history of those communal camps which were initiated by the local authorities (local police, municipality etc.). However as Karola Fings argues almost half of the population persecuted as “Gypsy” in the Third Reich was forced to live in such internments camps, even just for a while. She also adds that that complex system of the Nazis could not be adequately explained without paying attention what fell outside of the “Orte des Terrors”, that is the system of Zigeunerlager. Similarly to the Third Reich, internment camps were scattered all around Hungary, while there was a relocation camp in Pestszenlőrinc from where Roma were taken to the Nehru part and then to the fortress of Komárom which was for many the last station before being deported to Germany. However, as his many successful attempts of escape denotes the lack of synchronicity, structural or institutional chaos in the 1940s, and last but not least Kakuczi’s willingness to live, his constant fight for life. Furthermore, in Kakuczi’s testimony women appear as agents, as in their invisibility and position at the lower end of the hierarchical strata, women are to a certain extent not bound by social conventions and they are capable of an original attitude towards accommodation, opposition and self-definition. Their resistance was not exclusively a fight for life but also small sets of activities motivated by love or by conscious attempts to defy the Nazis.

It has been much argued that László’s legal and advocacy activities proved to be the most troubling for power. The stormy and stressful life of the Association ended shortly after its establishment. László was dismissed in the end of 1958 and replaced by Sándor Ferkovics, a young member of the Association, a law student and favoured by the Party. Under his leadership the Association distanced itself from László’s principles; lost its main

114 Deposited in the Museum of Ethnography, Mária László inheritance, 5.box
115 Karola Fings, “Nationalsozialistische Zwangslager für Sinti und Roma,” in Der Ort des Terrors, eds. Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (München, 2009), 192.
117 Finally she raised her voice against the internment of Roma people in 1958. As it turned out the authorities conducted these actions in order to threaten those who „conduct and inappropriate life.” Sághy, „Cigánypolitika Magyarországon.”
profile that is the representation of Roma and transformed into a formal, “puppet” institution of the authorities and then slowly, within two years it liquidated itself with the assistance of the Department of National Minorities.

**Decree of the Political Committee (June 20, 1961)**
The Association ceased to exist simultaneously with the formation of the assimilationist policy targeting Roma until the late 1980s. Already in 1960 the Department of National Minorities and the HGCA submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Culture in which “Gypsy” was ceased to be a category of nationality but was rather defined as a social category. Consequently, anything which could have been regarded as a “Gypsy way of living”, including any manifestations of culture, was to be eliminated. The “Gypsy-question” was considered as a social problem, hence the trigger for change in the situation of Roma within the society was expected to arrive from the side of social policy. There was much emphasis given on education: “The »Gypsy-question« is first and foremost an educational question, whose success depends on its immediate environment, on the society. We shall not disregard the political education of the Gypsies. Unbiasedly, the basis of this is that following the racial persecutions the majority of the Gypsies turned to the Party with confidence. We have to take into consideration that the Gypsy, even if he/she is from the countryside, is not a poor peasant neither a proletarian – especially not when he/she is conscious.”

Still, the notion of the “Gypsy” turned into the synonym of devalued, uncivilized, barbaric and marginal people.

The decree in the summer of 1961 brought nothing new under the sun only emphasised and provided the legal guarantees for the above-mentioned proposal. The decree stated that despite some ethnographic attributes of the “Gypsies” they do not constitute a national minority and their upheaval in the society could be fostered through the betterment of their social situation, i.e. by providing work opportunities and better housing (led to the liquidation of so-called Roma settlements from the mid-1960s through which process Roma were offered to move into “reduced value dwelling” houses). What was envisioned by those who were drafting and then implementing the decree was a society in which there are only people of “Gypsy” origin but the category of “Gypsy” would have ceased to exist.

**The role of Sociology in unfolding the history of the Nazi genocide**
The success and the legitimacy of the policy of Roma assimilation was questioned already in the end of the 1960s by intellectuals. The Association of Sociology and Ethnography of the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge organized a conference in 1969 around

---

118 Sághy, “Cigánypolitika Magyarországon,” 300.
the question: “What did we do and what are we doing for the Gypsies?” There were several speeches given in this conference which raised doubts about the scientific basis of the decree in 1961. As a matter of fact, Péter Rádi claimed that there was no unambiguous answer whether the “Gypsy-question” was utterly a national or a sociological problem considering its heterogeneous nature. He emphasizes in his speech the national character of the Roma: “In this subject-matter a viable path seems to be the establishment of a sociological kind of national consciousness [szociológiai jellegű nemzetségi öntudat]. (...) The Gypsies need to have their own intelligentsia who regard themselves as Gypsy and guide the Gypsies either towards assimilation or integration, as they wish.”119 Gyuláné Sipos points to the false representation of Roma in the media and to the lack of scientific research on them. Similarly to Rádi, Sipos expresses the need for a Roma intelligentsia and suggests continuing the debate in the “presence of the authentic Gypsy intelligentsia.”120

A few years later the Institute of Sociological Research under the leadership of István Kemény launched a research to map the situation of Hungarian Roma. The research was state-initiated in order to gain deep, accurate and solid knowledge for the preparation of their successful assimilation. There were approximately 320,000 Roma living in Hungary which made it necessary to unfold basic questions such as their living conditions, demography, employment situation etc. for policy making. In the phase of the research design the researchers faced with two salient challenges. Roma communities belong to the lowest social strata however social distance can not only be discovered between Roma and non-Roma but also among Roma considering the differences stemming from language, geography, employment, education, living conditions etc. Hence the Roma population necessitated the introduction of different approaches to the various Roma communities as well as raised awareness not to generalize from the results. On the other hand there were no data available about the number of Roma in Hungary and their geographical distribution. Additionally the census of 1970 was based on the concept of self-identification which method lowers the number of Roma. Kemény and his team, using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, approached the “who is Roma?” question from the state-institutions’ and interviewers’ point of view. The sampling frame was provided by the local district offices and then the sample size was determined by the head of research (two percent of the Roma population was involved in the research). Among the interviewers there were Gábor Havas, Gabriella

120 Ibid., 95-96.
Lengyel, Gyula Molnár, Zsolt Csalog, Erika Törzsök, Judit Vásárhelyi, Kálmán Rupp, Magda Matolay, László Szegő, György Göndör and Menyhért Lakatos.

The family questionnaires were extremely detailed and then in every tenth cases we could conduct a semi structured interview. “There were some who welcomed us with pleasure and there were people who were reluctant to talk to us and said that, »Why are we so boastful and walk up and down like doctors?« I clearly remember that. You know, the questionnaires were in one folder and we were holding it. They felt we wanted to show up or be more than what we actually are. And it obviously hurt me because I did not act like that. However there is truth in these viewpoints. But still, we carried on the interviews well, and we did what we had to do.” – recalls Gabriella Lengyel one of her first encounters which she experienced together with Gyula Molnár in Devecser. 121 About the challenges of conducting an interview she says that she only had one or two cassettes, so “in the evening I wrote down what I recorded in order to have an empty cassette again for the next day.” Kemény requested to do each district in the same speed, thus they had a meeting at Institute every Tuesday where they brought the filled questionnaires and transcripted interviews. “Transcription was the hardest. It was never on the agenda to give them to an outsider. Kemény did not support that. So he was very, very smart. He taught me the importance of writing the interview down by myself, because it is richer in this way. These meeting in the Buda castle, on Tuesdays turned to become seminars. It started there. He gave us some readings for every occasion. In the beginning we had to read the “sociographers” (népi írók).122 He never lectured on the techniques of transcription rather he taught us a kind of attitude, an approach to these kinds of materials. To listen to what the other person wants to say and not to focus on what I want. This was the basis. And to write down every word, even the stupid parts. This makes something understandable.”123

In the following I wish to draw on accounts of two interviews with people identified as Roma by the interviewers.124 My thesis is primarily based on representations hence that well-

121 Interview with Gabriella Lengyel. Conducted by and researchable at Voices of the 20th Century Archive and Research Group: [http://www.20szazadhanga.hu/szakmatoritenet](http://www.20szazadhanga.hu/szakmatoritenet) (http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/1190)

122 “Sociographers” were a loosely organized group of writers and ethnographers in the 1930s and 40s in Hungary. They focused on closed rural communities and formulated a critique on the urban elite, urban lifestyle. At the same time, almost parallel to the birth of this group appeared another, the so called “urban writers” who were interested in social stratification.

123 Ibid.

124 Years ago, when I started working on my research I visited the office of the Roma Press Centre and was granted with the right to analyse these interviews. As a result of the lousiness of the regulations of archival research I was allowed to make copies of the interviews. The selection was made out of these copies and was primarily based on the length and depth of the section about the persecutions. As it later turned out the gendered differences were also useful and provided me with a richer and more finely nuanced understanding of totalitarian
founded question could be raised by the reader how interviews would fit in the structure. The life-stories are long and involved accounts about one’s life: the past, the present and the future. The beginnings have all the excitement of a well-crafted story, beginning with one’s birth and belonging to a specific location: “I was born in Pötréte fifty years ago,” or “Well, I am a “császár-ian,” I was born in Császár.” Despite the often ill-timed and interruptory questions of the interviewers, the interviewees still draw us into the story of their lives and we become one of those people that surround them as listeners. They share their first-hand experiences of the first half of the 20th century including the persecutions under the Nazi genocide.

The biography of Györgyné Kolompár
Györgyné Kolompár was born in Pötréte, Zala county. Her parents died early and she was raised by her grandmother when she was seven months old. Her grandfather died in 1924. He was working with iron and was the leader of the local Roma community. “He had silver buttons. There was a beautiful, silver colt on his mantle, and even turkey oak leaves, of silver.” She attended school until she was 12 and then as a seasonal worker started working on the fields. Even though the work was demanding she always made time for reading. “When I took my hands on a good book then I was unable to put it down. I was reading even when I was cooking.” She was very popular among boy but did not take an interest in them. She was married when she was 22 with a man who had a wife and five children already. “We moved together and started wandering in the neighbourhood of Zalaegerszeg. As the older people, with horses. We had to do this because there was his ex-wife in this city, while in that city he was not welcomed by the gendarmerie because he dealt with horses. We went from one settlement to another and were allowed to stay there for 24 hours, but the gendarmerie there, where the residence was, the settlement, they did not tolerate the presence of any strangers. Thus my husband could not have stayed there. (...) We went from one village to another, from one Gypsy to another. There were Gypsies in Bocföld, Zalaegerszeg and Pölöske too. Most of the time we stayed at home because the black gendarmerie did not come always. How many times was he beaten! Because this was his punishment.” A few years after their marriage their private life was settled and she gave birth to their first common children. “In the meanwhile state violence. While János Nyári recalls the experience of the hard conditions in the internment camp, forced labour, hunger, escapes and the concentration camp, women seem to be invisible in Györgyné Kolompár’s account. Further her memories demonstrate a different notion of resistance without agendas and daily struggle but with a silent and offstage discourse. She, - as the women in Kakuczi’s story – meant the support for the men but also were exposed to men’s violence, such as rape. More: Anna Szász, Is Survival Resistance? Experiences of Roma Women under the Holocaust (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012)
my husband was taken and was conscripted. Then I stayed at home with eleven children, because I received children in those wartimes from my husband’s siblings. He was taken to somewhere far away, I did not know where to. To Kassa, Esztergom, Balassagyarmat. They were taken by foot, poor people. They were forced to work. They had to dig. In the meanwhile we were taken to the Komárom internment camp. To a kind of ghetto. The Arrow Cross people. They took all the Gypsies, Jews, Gypsies were all collected. There were so many of them in that room where we were ended in Révkomáróm that we were piled on one atop to the other. There were so many dead people, the lice were eating us and dead people in piles. None really cared about them. We spent there a month. Many was taken to Germany, none came back, just a few.” Then they got back home and the whole family became sick. Once his husband showed up and she was hiding him for w while. In order to avoid being caught by the policy she stole from the municipality a steal to authorize his dispensation from military service which she wrote. Her husband sneaked into their house every night to spend some time with the children and the family. “When the other Gypsies betrayed us and told that they saw him around sometimes during the night, many of them came and invaded the settlement and asked for my husband. I said that he had gone to Nagykaniza to join the army. They said he was home yesterday. I said “Not true!” They had a cane [bikacsöök] with them (...) and they hit me with that, they hit my head, I collapsed, totally fainted. It was an ugly world. In that system there was the Arrow Cross party, they did those things.” Following the war, her husband was away chasing other women: “Imagine that! With the other women we were hiding because we were afraid from the Russians, you know, the Soviet came in. The other women had their husbands around, only mine was missing and was alone with the children.” Györgyné Kolompár managed to forgive her husband and they had another two children following the reconciliation. Since then they try to make ends meet. They moved from one place to another, currently, at the time of the interview they were in Badacsonytomaj. Her dream is to move away and start gardening.

The biography of János Nyári
The second interview was done with János Nyári in Oroszlány.125 He was born in 1928 in a family of six children, and the father was a seasonal worker as well as musician. After a short section on work and on the size of his childhood home he says the following: “We were 15 years old when the Germans took us. Nobody talks about it. The Soviets blew the manure from the feet of the peasants. And I was out there, almost burnt, and it is good that I could live

125 Conducted by Erika Törzsök.
here. We were collected as privates and taken to Komárom. They kept us there for three days in the Monostor fortress. Then we were entrained and went to Győr, Mosonmagyaróvár but the Germans did not want to let us cross. The Arrow Cross people convinced them that we were only going to receive a training for 6 weeks. There were approx. 800 of us. Then they let us cross. On the third night they threw us a little black coffee – at least 40 of us were huddled together. The, they took us to Hannover, 25 km from the coast. There was an airport and we were sleeping in barracks. They wanted to dress us up in German uniforms and they asked who they Gypsies were. 16 of us raised their hands, we were happy and could not think anything bad. They took us to Augsburg where we were given to peasants to fill bomb-craters. For 16 people we received 1 bucket of potatoes and 1,5 kg bread per a day. Well man, we won’t survive, let’s escape! There was among us a boy like my son. We took care for him. For three nights we were walking. Of course we were tired, we were hungry, so we were shouting towards the floors: »Mama Bitte schön Brot«.” In a city they were caught by the police and taken to Dachau. “There was carrot, potato or the mixture of these two (...) this was the menu. Six people were sleeping in one bed. Lice were everywhere. (...) I was shortlisted to the gas chamber. In every 2 or 3 hours 1 group was taken. As I was standing in one group which was about to be taken I just stepped into the other one. I stayed there. Then the alarm went on. This is how I remained alive. One night the Americans were frequently shooting. One Jew knew from hearsay what they wanted to do with us and he escaped. Line up! – and back. In every ten minutes. But then once the Negros came because there was the SS headquarters, they demolished that and threw papers to us from the airplanes to let us know not to be scared. And in the morning we saw that the white flag was waiving on the crematorium.” He started eating and got typhus and after his recovery he travelled back to Hungary where the Red Cross received him and took care for him. “At home I went to the police. There was an Arrow Cross notary Béla Kóczán. Upon his order we were taken away. There was another one, the János Nyári who was also an Arrow Cross member. He made us crawl for one cigarette through the city hall despite the fact that he was a Gypsy too. He is still a member of the city council but if I am at home and drunk I still slap his face. I was taken in January 1945 and in October 1945, when the new wine comes, came back.” Following the war he was serving in the army for three years and got married and had children. Since then he has been working in the mines.
The narratives

Similarly to the afore-mentioned autobiographical notes of Rácz and Kakuczi, these life-stories unfold the chaotic, decentralized and de-synchronized operation of the racist regime to which one of the target groups were the Roma. Accounts on logistics or on the varying level of violence arbitrarily defined and applied by the gendarmerie are basic characteristics of the Roma experience since the beginning of the 20th century. Furthermore the fortress in Komárom is a topos in many of the stories representing the last, final station before the deportations or the inhuman circumstances and treatment. However the Jews and other persecuted groups appear also in the narratives, thus not only the differences but also a shared understanding of what happened can be recognized. That although the methods of persecutions were implemented differently the lives of people of different racial categories were crossing each other and their experiences are not only similar but the same: the notion of hunger or the over-presence of lice, the danger of typhus or the emotional and bizarre moment of liberation with the Negros and with the massive amount of food, the help of the local population or the long journey to return home, or the fragility of women and their exposedness to the soldiers.

The purpose of the interviews was not to recall the memories of the persecutions however some of the interviewees narrate these experiences as integral part of their life story. It seems that these memories are not only components of the individual’s but also the collective’s shared knowledge (as it is shown by János Nyári’s interview). That as a matter of the living and employment circumstances, thus that instead of nuclear families, generations live under the same roof as well as neighbours, relatives, friends gather on a daily basis to spend some quality time together these stories are shared, well-known among themselves and are not sources of outcry, indignation. These memories have been carefully worked into the communicative memory of Roma, and are constitutive elements in their narrations which – I would argue – offer a fascinating window into Roma subject positions in Europe today. The role of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association and later of the General Bank and Trust Co. Ltd which initiated the payment of Holocaust compensations could have been significant in putting the memory of the genocide to the forefront or adding importance to it. Nevertheless they had access to these experiences and place them in their life story without giving special importance to their sufferings. Although Kolompár at one point said that “It was an ugly world. In that system there was the Arrow Cross party, they did those things.”

126 See: Szita, Ibid. or Ágota Varga, Pharrajimos (1999-2009, 54 min.).
volt. Abban a rendszerben a nyilasok voltak, azok csinálták.] which could imply that in this system someone else does similarly ugly things, still I would argue that these memories are shared without the intention to formulate an argument. Furthermore, they are aware of the fact that Komárom was an internment camp which suggests that the 1940s can be placed into a bigger context and is understood within the framework of the Holocaust.

The role and position of the interviewer is ambiguous. Although these stories are told first time in the history of the Nazi genocide of Roma, the interviewers were lacking an ear to hear them. They shift easily the storyline and raise questions utterly out of scope. As Gabriella Lengyel explained in a very honest and open way, “Then somewhere in Zala County a woman was telling me more details about it. About the ways in which they were collected in Zalakomárom. We did not ask about it. And I was pretty surprised when the woman started talking about it in details. She must have been a teenager, 16 or 17 years old, as I recall it. I cannot remember what she was saying exactly. I thought about our ignorance after. We could have met a lot of survivors. My impression was that we did not take this thing seriously. The thing that the Gypsies were part of the Holocaust. That they were persecuted, and many of them were victims. My impression was that we thought that this was a kind of balloon of the Gypsy intelligentsia. That this is one of the stories of the eternal Gypsy persecution. You know, as in the Gypsy anthem, we did not steal anything but a nail. This could have been behind it. And it was not at all a false impression. The Gypsy intelligentsia severely exaggerated things, the fate of the Gypsies. There were some romantic imaginations coupled with Roma which irritated us a lot. We wished to unveil this romantic approach with our research and face with reality behind the curtains.”

Ignorance overcame the element of surprise, or rather the experience of fear and a stereotypical approach to Roma. By fear I mean that when the interviewee formulates either an implicit or explicit critique on the Russians, hence breaks one of the taboos then questions to change the topic arrive as an immediate response. As a matter of fact the interviewer of Nyári understands the depth of Nyári’s story. It is clear that she tries to make an effort and aims to draw the reader into the bigger picture, to show the context or the ways in which the interview took place by using brackets in which she comments the meta-communication of both the storyteller and his growing audience. Eventhough Törzsök payed special importance to the details and to the processes of how a two-people interview situation became a collective

---

128 Interview with Gabriella Lengyel. Conducted by and researchable at Voices of the 20th Century Archive and Research Group.
event, Nyári’s narrative about the persecutions was ignored and unheard. As a matter of fact Törzsök asks about the interviewee’s educational background.\textsuperscript{129}

Regarding the afterlife\textsuperscript{130} of the interviews three of them were later developed into short stories and got published. Zsolt Csalog wrote the story of a woman in \textit{Nine Gypsies}\textsuperscript{131} with the title: \textit{In search for my brother}. The story is about a girl in Czechoslovakia who is the only member of the family who survives the persecutions. She is aware of the fact that her brother could be alive hence through her hard life which is full of struggles and saturated with the loss of her loved ones she wishes to finally meet her brother. Then there is Ilona Dobos’ story titled \textit{Memories of an old musician}.\textsuperscript{132} The musician gives the reader an insight to the life of Roma and as the story gets more personal we learn about his internment in Komárom and his deportation to Auschwitz where, with the number of 35648 on his arm, he was working next to the ovens. Finally there is László Szegő’s article titled \textit{None were shot dead in Győr},\textsuperscript{133} which is the story of a girl who survived the massacre in Székesfehérvár and was saved from deportations.

\textbf{The role of the Roma Movement}

“In 1971, ten years after the party resolution, the Romani appeared in various branches of art. Károly Bari was seventeen when he burst into Hungarian poetry, his volume \textit{Over the Face of the Dead (Holtak arca fölé)} shook up and woke up the country to the fact that Romani people did exist, and they were and their culture was special.”\textsuperscript{134} This is how Ágnes Daróczi summarises or gives a hint at what was emerging in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century’s Hungary which was later called the Roma Movement.

In this thesis I do not wish to go into details and investigate, explore the Roma Movement. I only wish to highlight those aspects which were in some way or another related to and based on the experience of the Roma genocide. However, in order to understand its relevance, its power in liberating ideas, creative energies, its role in knowledge production

\textsuperscript{129} When it seems that Nyári finishes recalling his memories about the Nazi genocide and says that following the war he was drafted for three years and then “I discharged as a corporal although I was qualified to be an officer, or rather a deputy officer. I loved women and I escaped from time to time, so I remained as a corporal.” Then the interviewer asks, “In which year were you at school?”

\textsuperscript{130} The interview collection as part of the Kemény-inheritance belongs to Gábor Havas. Interviews containing memories of the Nazi persecutions can be found at the Roma Press Center (more on it: Éva Kovács, András Lénárt and Anna Lujza Szász, “A magyar holokauszt személyes történetének digitális gyűjteményei,” \textit{BUKSZ} 4 (2011)). Interviews of Gabriella Lengyel are now donated to the Voices of the 20th Century Archive and Research Group.

\textsuperscript{131} Zsolt Csalog, \textit{Kilenc cigány} (Budapest: Kozmosz Könyvek, 1976), 72-81.

\textsuperscript{132} Ilona Dobos, \textit{Aldozatok} (Budapest: Kozmosz Könyvek, 1981), 171-182.


\textsuperscript{134} Köszegi Edit and Szuhay Péter, \textit{Kései Születés} (67 min, 2002), 05:26 – 06:00
and in establishing a sense of community I would like to recall the sociologist, “second
generation” of civil rights activist Jenő Zsigó’s memories:135 “We [children] were specifically
keen on what was going on in Gypsy-matters. So, from the beginning of the 1970s – I passed
my final exams in high school in 1970 – so from the age of 15-16 we were discussing these
issues regularly. When we had access to literature, publications about the Gypsies – then
came in sight of the painter János Balázs and later the writer Menyhért Lakatos – they had a
surprisingly great effect on us. I have to tell you that they played a formative role in many
things. For instance, when Károly Bari, who emerged as a Gypsy, recognized and accepted as
a genius poet, out of nothing. Later, in the 1970s, when we consciously looking for the
literature we faced with the political decision of the state made in 1961 that the Gypsy people
in Hungary has no language, no culture, no rights as a nationality, a whole new world opened
up for us: how is it possible?! (...) When Ágnes Daróczi appeared in the talent show136 with
reciting a Gypsy poem she became extremely famous. She directed the country’s attention to
Gypsy language, next to her performance. These all were revelations for all of us. (...) [In the
1980s] we established the Ando Drom music band and a theatre. (...) We all stood up very
firmly for the national rights of the Gypsies, or rather we regarded it as a natural, basic, right.
We openly claimed that the state deprived the Gypsies in Hungary from the opportunity to
practice these rights – on the basis of a political rational. This is what was considered by us
the most severe manifestation of oppression. We stood up for the assurance of minority rights,
and as a reaction to this the state made very effective arrangements to divide the unity of the
Gypsies in Hungary.”

Menyhért Lakatos – The Colour of Smoke
Hungarian Roma literature starts “really” with Károly Bari – as Menyhért Lakatos said
once.137 His first volume of poetry, Over the Face of the Dead came out in 1970 when Bari
was only 17 years old. As the older generation of Roma intellectuals recall the moment of
surprise, “Suddenly the news came like lightning that Károly Bari’s first volume of poems
had been published. The title was Over the Face of the Dead. And what did we do? Szegő,

Financed by HSA Institute for Sociology, “The Institutionalization of Roma Politics,” 105089-OTKA Research,
led by Angéla Kócze.
136 In the Ki mit tud? in 1972 Daróczi got the fourth place with reciting Károly Bari’s A hegedűk vijjogásából
poem. As Mária Sulyok, one of the members of the jury commented on her performance: “She did not recite a
poem. But presented the tragedy of a social strata to us with the help of a very talented Gypsy poet, Károly Bari.
We know it is a great problem, and I think it is wonderful that they want to solve it themselves.” From: Késeiszületés 7:35-7:56.
137 “Lakatos Menyhért.” Last modified: November 28, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZwiO12hSk8,
3:07
Menyhért, the whole group went to Bükkaranyos. We met him there. He was a small child like this, in third or fourth year at the grammar school. And there we met Bari and for a long time we did not (...). He was eccentric, he did not come to our company. Sometimes we saw him at a more special lecture or performance, but it was not typical that he was together with us.”

Bari’s first and then second (1973) edited volume of poetry was of great success among Roma communities. As Daróczi recalls her memories, she highlights the significance of not only those years but also Bari and his poetry: “Bari wrote poems, Bari wrote the truth, his lines have the sharpness of a diamond. It was much unpleasant for the politics, but the masses. Can you imagine that within a few seconds all the 10,000 copies were gone? And I am afraid that the majority of the buyers were not Roma. Do not forget, we are in 1971 and 1968 is not far from us. The whole country had a different way of thinking. In 1971 Kemény’s researches are hard-line, in 1970 Bari publishes his first volume and in 1971 comes the second edition, in 1971 Menyért Lakatos’ short stories get published and in Nagy Világ József Choli Daróczi publishes his literary translation. Thus, a kind of voice of that incredibly deep poverty and marginalization, from which Roma received a lot, talked and was heard. This voice believed in equality.”

Bari’s successful reception and his critical tone resulted repugnance on behalf of the Party and pushed him to the edge of the cultural life. Menyhért Lakatos’ carrier took a different direction: his novel which was first published in 1975, The Colour of Smoke (re-titled as Smokey Pictures), was translated and published in the Eastern bloc, in France and in the GDR as well.

Lakatos was born and raised in deep poverty in a Roma settlement in Vésztő that is in the South-Eastern part of Hungary. Since the beginning of the 1940s Roma were taken from this region to hard labour and later in 1944 interned in camps established in the surrounding bigger cities. As the legend says, the head of the school shot him in an apparent hunting accident and in order to avoid being reported Lakatos was granted a scholarship to schooling. This is how his carrier got the solid foundation. He graduated and worked as an engineer. In the mid-1960s he drew attention to himself by founding a brick factory with and for Roma workers. This factory was later closed down by the authorities. However not only the authorities but the intelligentsia – for example: György Konrád, István Eörsi – noticed him and invited him to participate in István Kemény’s research team on the situation of Hungarian

---

138 Késeí születés, 14:34-15:24
139 Interview with Ágnes Daróczi, “The Institutionalization of Roma Politics,” 105089-OTKA Research. (December 13, 2012)
140 This story is woven into Smokey Pictures: this is the way how a young boy from the settlement “Gypsy Paris” becomes the first intellectual.
141 He wrote a book on the basis of this experience: Akik élni akartak (Budapest: Megvető Kiadó, 1982)
Roma. From the early 1970s he started publishing short stories in magazines which led him to give up his job and become a freelance writer as well as joined. “I lived there [in Buda] when my first short story was published by Új Írás.”

Lakatos claims that “I made the Roma intelligentsia” suggesting that he recognized and “lifted up” those educated people who were aware and proud of their Roma origin, such as József Choli Daróczi. He was not only internationally but a nationally acclaimed writer and leader of the Roma who also managed to conform to the actual political power by being always conscious enough of the boundaries of provocation. That is to say that instead of questioning the content of the decree of 1961 Lakatos demanded “only” cultural autonomy. As he claims in his article which discusses the “Gypsy-question”, “(...) there was no such wish formulated on behalf of the Gypsy people, not even in a short article, which would have indicated any kind of national or nation-building aspirations.” Furthermore, he argues that Roma aspire to become an integral part of the society with similar rights and duties. However, “that handful of Roma intellectuals which managed to find the light with the help of the majority society from the darkness, in which they lived and still many people live, would never refuse the “Gypsyzation of cultural tools” [kulturális eszközök cigányosítása] that would serve the case of Gypsy integration. Please refrain from identifying us with nationalist thoughts!” Besides his character and his literary works one of the reasons which made Lakatos maintain this liminal position between being a political beneficiary and a group leader was his role as an informant. As Szűcs, based on Tamás Szőnyei’s comprehensive work on the Hungarian Secret Service, quotes, “Menyhért Lakatos was a forty-seven-year-old freelance-writer when Major Gyula Hanusz and Lieutenant Zoltán Kazai recruited him under the alias “Baron” in December 1973. According to personal file nr. 6, it happened “on patriotic grounds,” and they wanted to activate him as a secret agent in the field of cultural prevention.”

*The Colour of Smoke* is a “mythical, historical Bildungsroman,” as Terézia Szűcs, literary critic calls it, which blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy, between fiction and autobiography, between a sociological work and a folkloristic study, between the writer’s own experiences and the world he, as well as his compatriot forerunners created from myths in order to lay the foundations for the birth of the Roma nation. “Some critics claimed that the

---

142 Késesi születés, 11:28
145 Szűcs, “Remembrance and Representation”
representation in *The Colour of Smoke* is not realistic because Lakatos’ description of the deportation of the whole community at the end of the novel did not resemble the real events that happened in Békés County in 1944-45. Apart from this, none of the critics (...) mentioned in their accounts of the novel that its closure depicts the Holocaust.”

The story is about the every-day life of a Roma community that is outside of the society. The reader gets a hint of the life before settling down through the stories of the Grandmother. Then it introduces the struggles to survive in deep poverty, the fights with the authorities, every-day experiences of humiliation. In the last part of the book the boy comes back to his community and witnesses that his people are subject to discrimination and humiliation which becomes harsher and more severe. We learn that there is a prevailing anti-Gypsy and anti-Jewish attitude in the school, then the father brings the news about the German invasion, medical and military inspections become more frequent. In the last scene the gendarmerie invades the settlement and selects the fit ones to take them to work.

“The chief clerk, who had so far modestly kept out of the limelight, had himself driven in front of the groups and made his speech from the carriage. »Listen to me please! We have divided you into two groups. We know that it is not easy to be separated from your families, but we have to admit that there is a war on, and the country is badly in need for workers. You will be going to two different places to work, but the time will come when you will meet up again.« The last words did not reach out our consciousness. »To work« coming from the mouth of the chief clerk seemed like some fairy-tale! (...) »Tomorrow you will get on a train and you will be taken to your workplace. You have to realize like everyone else that in a case of a war military law applies to everyone, so be aware that it refers to you too. « (...) The rattle of the train brought everybody back to the world of happy, hopeful daydreams. Unknown landscapes swept past the barbed-wire braided wagon windows, and our smiling gazes got stuck into the raining sparks of the chugging engine; now and then we emptied the buckets full of urine, lest their fermenting stench interfere with our lofty imaginations.”

This scene (the last sentences of the book) invoke the “train” to depict the deportations, to picture its horror and to foresee what they are doomed to experience. This description of the deportations seems familiar to the reader as it aligns with witnesses’ testimonies and is therefore embedded in the collective memory of Holocaust. The usage of the train as a well-known metaphor or rather topos of the Holocaust not only helps the reader imagine the scene but also automatically let them place it in the narrative of the Nazi

---

146 Ibid.
147 Ibid. Texts were received from the publisher. In Terézia Szűcs, “Remembrance and Representation.”
persecutions. In its primer understanding the “train” would never carry any extra meaning. However in the last scene, when the tension is already unbearable due to the community’s state of being unprotected and exposed as well as subjected to the local authorities’ violence, power and arbitrariness, “train” moves into a different semantic field and is loaded with extra meaning: it provides the explanation what happened with the Roma community.

**Tamás Péli’s Birth**

Following his graduation at the Royal Academy of Visual Arts in Amsterdam, Tamás Péli visited the Roma community house and orphanage in Tiszadob and painted on its wall a 42 square metre painting titled *Birth*.\(^{148}\) In the heart of the painting (panneau) there is Goddess Káli who is lifting her new-born child, Manus, showing and offering him to a man sitting on his horse naked.\(^{149}\) The eye rests on the baby-woman-man triangle while the creatures around them are in a constant move: “there comes the scenes of wandering, the participation in the Hungarian Revolution in 1848, thus the protection of our shared home, Thököly, the Rákóczi uprising, soldier musicians, Gypsy soldier musicians, crafts and trades, then the world wars, the tragedy in Auschwitz, and faces of his writer, painter, poet friends. So is Choli Daróczi as a nomad monarch represented on the painting.”\(^{150}\)

Before he travelled to Amsterdam he had said that “yes, I leave now to learn but I will come back and there will be Gypsy fine art,” and years after as he became a member of the circle of Roma intellectuals awakening from their enervated status, Péli decided to take an active part in establishing the Roma identity and painted the history of Roma of the wandering and settling down in Hungary: “In Holland I made one or two serious large size paintings with quite some faith and strength, I had always cherished a great story inside me. How Gypsies would live in Hungary. I should paint that somehow.”\(^{151}\) - explained Péli how the idea was born in him. The panneau was preceded with a painting which was painted on the ceiling of the Dagály street building of the Szabó Ervin Library. It showed historical figures namely Frater Julianus and Sándor Kőrösi Csoma (both of them were seeking to find the place of

---

\(^{148}\) His original idea was to title it *The Entrance of the Gypsies*, then he changed it into *Arrival* (suggesting the shared experiences through which Roma have become integral parts of the majority society) and finally titled it *Birth*.

\(^{149}\) (*Kései*, 55:40 – 57:00) „Because every will was God’s will, breathed goodness, gratitude and immortal life in his creations so that time could not wipe them away. So he creates Kali, his daughter, and says let this garden be yours, live here. And Kali, she was a woman after all, the only, the first woman with emotions who ran around among the plants of sweet Paradise with her playful angels, naked of course, there were no clothes back then, and her blood rose at her breasts and all her senses. She did not know what to do so she called her angels. Kiss me, embrace me, my blood is blowing. And to appease the flame in her body, she sprinkled dust into her lap, where, like in the earth, life sprouted. And from that sprout Kali’s only child, Manus was born.”

\(^{150}\) István Gábor Molnár, Interjú Kerékgyártó Istvánnal. (2004) [http://www.eotvostarsasag.hu/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.17](http://www.eotvostarsasag.hu/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.17) (letöltés: 2011.01.05)

\(^{151}\) *Kései*, 54:26-54:50
origin of the Magyars and Székelys) as well as János Apáczai Csere (writer of the first Hungarian textbook). “When I am not painting the factory worker who is going to have a heart attack in the age of 38, but instead I paint Frater Julianus who also dies in his discovery, then it is a requiem for that factory-worker, for whom once Frater Julianus lived.”

“The painting was a statement that undertakes not only my Roma but also my Hungarian identity. Without this I could not have been able to paint Birth as I did.” – explained the artist later.

Then by September 1983 he created the work of art in Tiszadob. “I travelled to Tiszadob following the opening ceremony and a class came to visit the painting. The children were shouting, screaming, playing with each other but the moment they entered and looked at the painting, they found peace and became silent.”

The choice of location is a conscious decision. The orphanage in Tiszadob was crowded with lonely, abandoned children for whom the notion of birth might be regarded as cursed, “have not got it in their identity that they were born”, and who cannot or will not remember the experience of belonging.

Birth is a work of art with multiple layers of meaning. First, Péli attributed to culture, and more specifically, to fine art a “mortar-like” role, hence he considered it as medium which connects generations and forms a community based on shared ideas of the future. This idea holds not only the key dilemmas, questions of the content and boundaries of Roma identity but also the assurance of a peaceful coexistence of Roma and on-Roma as well as the formation of a world based on shared memories. Second, the painter was determined to establish he grounds for a so-called Roma fine art to provide a tool for the coming generations to nurture and find pleasure in their culture. Birth is the starting-point of this creation. Third, Péli wished to embed Roma fine art in the international art scene: “as long as the writers, painters, artists, historians fail to write the story of their people, to paint and phrase it in poems, novels, epochs, those people cannot be part of the communities of Europe and the world.”

Regarding the latter, Péli’s mythical style – “I am aware of the fact that I represent basic human situations, problems in myths.” – consciously drew on the Renaissance. Why is this choice? In his understanding the Renaissance is the art of the emerging bourgeoisie, the declaration of civilization and the affirmation of European modernity and humanity. “This

---

152 Stációk, 22:26-22:52
153 Molnár, Interjú...
154 Ibid. He was financially supported by the actual cultural government, by Imre Pozsgay.
155 Ibid.
156 Kései, 55:32-55:34
157 Molnár, Interjú...
158 Stációk, 22:16-22:23
painting started something, which even though it is nor our duty we should continue. This is a basis the whole future of Roma spirit and society could be built upon.”

As a consequence of his “trip” to Tiszadob: Péli managed to establish a school which was followed by István Szentandrássy’s second generation and Zoltán Túró’s third generation approaches, similarly based on Renaissance and Baroque motifs. Additionally Tiszadob became a symbolic location: the cradle of Roma fine art were amongst others Tibor Balogh, Kálmán Káli-Horváth, Zsolt Vári and Sándor Kiss, contemporary fine artists of Roma origin were raised and mastered the foundations of painting. What is the core question of the painting? How does it contribute to the establishment of collective identity; to the betterment of the coexistence of Roma and non-Roma; to the creation of a “new ethnicity”? How can it be used not as a failure but as a resource, as a source of power and pride?

The framework for understanding following the “pictorial turn” raises a set of questions and parallel to this the international literature of “ethnicity studies” goes through a paradigm shift too. Ethnicity is not anymore a “historically static, culturally defined substance, neither the mask nor the gown of structural relations,” but it is a set of relations, which is “realized in the social praxis of boundary-making and differentiation.” That is to say that in a social context ethnicity operates through the designation of ethnic categories – which are mostly institutional, hence legitimate – and questions, disrupts the community perceived as homogenous establishing mostly unequal, hierarchical relations which manifest themselves in the unequal access to economic, political and symbolic goods. In this framework the approach to culture shifts too: instead of a historically determined aptness a political construction, in other words, the field of cultural and political practices that is embedded in the social structure. This approach marks out a new path for ethnicity studies, namely to give voice to the oppressed through which hegemonic discourses shall face with the political character of the subaltern. In the social manifestations of difference between the signified “Roma” or “Gypsy” and the majority as the signifier the latter draws the boundaries and generates inequality. However, using the ethnic culture of the Roma art scene as resource

159 Kései, 19:38-19:52
161 Ibíd.
in order to negate exclusion and promote recognition, inclusion, suggests that the categories of “Roma” or “Gypsy” are conscious and integral part of one’s self-identity. They become saturated with politics: might strengthen the identity of both the individual and the community as well as by the act of self-categorization they might advocate and activist position.

Having a close look at the painting, the history of the persecutions represented in the symbol of the eagle fits very well into the flow of events. These events on the basis of which the history of Roma founded as well as the shared history of Roma and non-Roma grounded, weight the same on Péli’s panneau. The Nazi persecution of the Roma is not a unique experience. Péli’s art work refrains from articulating special importance to it. What it does however is that it provides a very clear statement on shared history. It places the Roma in a long durée, outlines the continuity of the community in which one of the formative milestones was the history of Nazi persecutions.

**London Summit**

The topic of the Nazi genocide of Roma, its development into a “theme” in the public and professional discourses, is closely related to the formation of the international Roma movement. This movement which wished to create a platform for mutual actions (for instance to fight against stereotypes) and for sources of shared identity selected as one its primary goals the recognition of the Nazi genocide of Roma. The topic of the Nazi genocide came up in two dimensions: on the one hand as the question of compensations, while on the other hand, as the question of community-building.

The Comité International Tzignae (Paris-based organization founded in 1965, CIT) planed on holding a small conference in Kent. This gathering established the *First World Roma Congress*, which is known from highlighting the similarities of the diverse Roma communities and laying the foundation for a shared Roma identity by creating a flag, an anthem, by choosing April 8 as the International Roma Day or defining the name “Roma” as politically correct and “Gadje” as brothers and sisters by devoting their lives for the betterment of Roma. However, from the point of view of the Nazi genocide, this Congress made the first and important steps in the development of its narrative.

The Congress was organized in a boarding school, everyone was sleeping under the same roof, and the idea behind it was to encourage and support discussions as well as the exchange of ideas. The Congress started in April 5, 1971 with an exhibition opened at the National Book League in London. This contained books on Roma and by Roma in various languages; a display of pictures illustrating Roma life and a section on Nazi war crimes. A few days later
in April 9 the delegates split into commissions to study particular problems, such as education, social affairs, culture, language (for instance it was argued that language has an important role both as one of the distinctive features of the Roma people and as a link between different groups, hence it shall be restored) or war crimes.

The Commission on War Crimes came to the following decisions. It fostered research and realized the importance of texts, thus it “welcomed the initiative of the Comité International Tzignae in encouraging the writing by Dr. Donald Kenrick and Dr. Grattan Puxon of the first detailed study of Nazi crimes against the Gypsy people. The publication of this book was expected in 1971.” It was also stated that the materials of the book would be collected by the participants. Another important theme about the Nazi crimes against Roma was the question of the commemoration: the night of the final murder of Auschwitz was suggested as a memorial day, furthermore a memorial should be erected and “when the place and nature of this memorial had been decided, an appeal for money to build it would be made.” Other issues such as the compensation and a formation of ROM for the ex-members of the fighting forces came up. Additionally under the framework of an artistic program at Hampstead there was a two-minute silence for the memory of the Roma who died in the Nazi period. The Congress agreed that the next meeting for crimes should be in April 1972, in West-Germany.

In April 25-29, 1972 the second meeting of the Social and War Crimes Commissions of the World Roma Congress was organized. The organizer was Grenot Deutsch from West-Germany, and the participants were Vanko Rouda (President of CIT), Grattan Puxon (Skopje), Leulea Rouda (Paris) as well as representatives from London, Greece and Yugoslavia. Menyhért Lakatos from Hungary could not attend: “A long letter from Menyhért Lakatos giving a general and historical account of the situation in Hungary. This concluded that although things had improved under the present Government, there was still a great deal of unofficial racial discrimination against Roms, and the Communist Government still had to beware of falling into the same error as the Empress Maria Theresa of trying to enforce assimilation.” The Commission visited the site of the extermination camp at Struthof-Natzweiler that is across the border of Alsace and was appointed as one of the possible locations for a memorial. They were guided through the exhibition and sang the Roma

165 Ibid.
166 An odd, and rather comical situation happened during the festival: the participants visited a settlement where forced liquidations took place and a few caravans burnt down. They became excited and marched to the city hall with a lot of anger and emotion where they finally had a tea instead of started an argument.
168 Ibid., 97.
anthem. The next day the Commission was introduced to the research by Kenrick and Puxon as well as was discussing the possibility of reopening the questions of reparations, to be handled by UNESCO as a trustee for Roma. The meeting ended with speeches from Jarko Jovanovic and Mateo Maximoff detailing the camp experience and the partisan work. There was a short but intense speech by the 15 years old Rosemary Penfold, giving her own feelings on her visit to the concentration camps and the “delegates were moved to tears at her conclusion that these terrible things should never be allowed to happen again.”

As Penfold said “For all of you here, yesterday was a very sad day. We all went, as Rome, to put a wreath at the foot of the graves. I know how you felt because I felt the same. The camps were the most terrible place I myself had ever been inside. Inside one of the buildings there were pictures which showed Roma and Gadjos who were going to be killed. Some had no clothes on. Some were put in piles, their dead bodies were thrown into cellars, and they were burnt in another building. There were gas cells and there was a place where their ashes were kept. This camp was high on the hills and no one could get out. In my heart I had a weak point. I just had to cry. It was as if lots of eyes were looking at me. When we went inside I could sort of hear the cries of those 12000 Roma who died in France. Just think of it, 12,000!!! The men who killed them could not have been men. I ask you, could you kill 12,000 people? No, of course not, because you would feel guilty. So we must not let this happen ever again, because it could happen to us.”

As Penfold said “For all of you here, yesterday was a very sad day. We all went, as Rome, to put a wreath at the foot of the graves. I know how you felt because I felt the same. The camps were the most terrible place I myself had ever been inside. Inside one of the buildings there were pictures which showed Roma and Gadjos who were going to be killed. Some had no clothes on. Some were put in piles, their dead bodies were thrown into cellars, and they were burnt in another building. There were gas cells and there was a place where their ashes were kept. This camp was high on the hills and no one could get out. In my heart I had a weak point. I just had to cry. It was as if lots of eyes were looking at me. When we went inside I could sort of hear the cries of those 12000 Roma who died in France. Just think of it, 12,000!!! The men who killed them could not have been men. I ask you, could you kill 12,000 people? No, of course not, because you would feel guilty. So we must not let this happen ever again, because it could happen to us.”

As a consequence of internal problems in the International Roma Union, such as accusations of being impotent in establishing and maintaining international relations, the refusal of prominent intellectuals to join the organization, differences between Eastern and Western Roma, its split from Ian Hancock, the organization almost lost its relevance by the beginning of the 90s. However a new mission was outlined and new responsibilities came out when funds were discovered in Swiss banks deposited there before 1945 either by victims or by persecutors. The demand for compensation had already been in the agenda of the IRU and it seemed like to be the only international body which was competent enough to handle

---

169 Ibid. 120.
170 Ibid.
the issue as well as the money. It saved the life of IRU but did not manage to overcome internal tensions. Still, the topic of compensations for the Nazi persecutions was always on the agenda in the history of the IRU and generated debates of accusations of corruption, inadequate administration or documentation.172

Additionally the theme Holocaust appears to become the shared foundation of a range of heterogeneous, fragmented Roma communities upon which a Roma nation can be formed. It provides a common denominator for a shared history: “We, a Nation of which over half million persons were exterminated in a forgotten Holocaust, a Nation of individuals too often discriminated, marginalized, victims of intolerance and persecutions, we have a dream and we are engaged in fulfilling it,” says the Appendix Three – IRU Declaration of a Nation.173 Not only became the basis of collective identity, but also one of the most powerful tools for Roma political lobby activities which (coupled with the term Anti-Tsiganism174) wishes raise attention to the contemporary situation of Roma as well as to their treatment within the majority society. As a matter of fact, Roma activist, Rajco Djuric stated that Roma experienced three holocausts: the Nazi, the Communist and “now they are suffering once more, especially in Kosovo.”175 Thus Roma are the eternal victims of history no matter which country the live in and in which period of world history. This transformation is also shown by the different terminology: within four decades the term “war crimes” was replaced by the term “Holocaust” bringing with itself not only the narrative of victimhood but also a very specific, well-defined memory-culture.

The regime change and afterwards
Experiences of the Roma persecution were unheard before the regime change by the non-Roma majority. The telling these stories served rather to the Roma to establish a basic theme for joint action and for sensing the community. There were values, norms and lessons learned from the Nazi genocide which also conveyed in it the idea of historical continuity. Narratives of the past were not argumentative neither attempted to be formulated in the context of victimhood or trauma.

However as a result of the political transition of 1989/1990 Hungary needed to redefine collective identities through reinterpreting its past. Instead of recycling already existing conceptions the space was opened for previously excluded groups to share their experiences.

172 Ibid., 176.
173 Ibid., 216.
175 Acton - Klimova, “The International Romani Union,” 170.
memories, e.g. besides victims of the 1956 revolution Roma slowly entered into that space of memory. In this kind of memory flux first and second generations of survivors of the persecution stepped onto the historical stage and cultural memories were started to be constructed. Memories of the Roma gained other dimensions as József Choli Daróczi’s speech at the inauguration of the memorial in Nyíregyháza demonstrated: “We came here to remember and to protest.” Confrontation with the past and commemoration (keeping its injustices alive) are the two basic pillars on which the memory politics of the Nazi genocide of Roma stands. In the following chapters of the thesis I attempt to expose (and illustrate) these dynamics of memory after the regime change. I will approach the theme through works of art let them be photographs, films, fine art works or monuments and will also reveal the relations of power in which memory was evolving.

III. A THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS REPRESENTATION

“No one has seen it twice.”
(László Krasznahorkai: Mountain from North, Lake from South, Roads from West, River from East)

“They also killed the Jews everywhere,” says Rudolf Krasznai of Roma origin, born in Pécs, Hungary in 1927. Krasznai, together with the other Roma in the area, were collected in the beginning of the 1940s by the gendarmerie and transported by train to a ghetto at Pélportpuszta. Following a few month of forced labour, they were taken on freight trains to a lager close to Linz. “They had taken fifteen or twenty people to dig the pit, the others encircled them,” Krasznai continues. “And then they were shot in the head with machine-guns, they fell in the pit. I only saw dead bodies, they poured lime on them, the cart went, they put soil on it, and good bye! I saw it in Dachau in forty-five. By then the camp was closed down, we were taken there to work. We buried people. Shovel and spade in our hands and we buried them. We were there for three or four days, we covered the bodies, that’s it. With shovel and spade. We pushed soil on them. That was it. Hey, my God, it is no use speaking about it. It was miserable. Miserable.”

“I [only] saw (...)” and in Krasznai’s testimony seeing seems to be a self-evident and banal act of communication in the silence that was imposed by isolation. Also, in order to remember he has to ‘animate’ the past and compress it into images such as the “dead bodies,” the “lime,” the “cart” or the “entombment.” The art of seeing, argue Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in their book Testimony, is strongly related to the experience of witnessing in the

177 This chapter was written while I received a Junior Fellow Scholarship from Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (2012-2013). It was published as a working paper and is available online: http://simon.vwi.ac.at/index.php/working-papers/szasz-anna
Western world. In order to gain an objective knowledge in historiography on a certain event one shall occupy the cognitive position of seeing which then becomes the source of historical realism. Seeing since the Enlightenment, as a precondition of knowledge evokes truth and authenticity on the one hand, on the other implies the agency of the “I.” It suggests the possibility and necessity of seeing and the framing and transmission of the visual elements into understanding. However in the case of the Holocaust, as Felman and Laub write, the tension lies between witnessing that is “central to the Holocaust experience” and that the Holocaust is “an event without a witness” since there was “historically no witness to the Holocaust, either from outside or from inside the event.” They argue that the Holocaust was a historical assault of seeing: the main actors of the events – the victims, the bystanders and the perpetrators – either did not see or failed to witness, understand. The Jews saw but did not understand what they saw, the bystanders saw but did not look directly, while the perpetrators saw everything and made everything essentially invisible in order not to be seen.

As Laub and Felman explains: “To make the Jews invisible not merely by killing them, not merely by confining them to »camouflaged«, invisible death camps, but by reducing even the materiality of the dead bodies to smoke and ashes, and by reducing, furthermore, the radical opacity of the sight of the dead bodies, as well as the linguistic referentiality and literality of the word »corpse« to the transparency of a pure form and to the pure rhetorical metaphoricity of a mere figure: a disembodied verbal substitute which signifies abstractly the linguistic law of infinite exchangeability and substitutability. The dead bodies are thus verbally rendered invisible, and voided both of substance and specificity, by being treated, in the Nazi jargon, as Figuren: that which, all at once, cannot be seen and can be seen through.” Without the possibility of seeing, or as a result of that “seeing” and “understanding” were drifted apart, Laub claims the impossibility of bearing witness “from inside” due to the absolute dehumanizing and destructive power of the Nazi regime which did not offer any frame of reference to step outside and understand what is happening on the “planet of Auschwitz.” Thus, for the dehumanized creature the result of both the impossibility of escaping from the “inside” and the lack of attention, recognition on behalf of


\[181\] van Alphen, Art in Mind, 164.

\[182\] Ibid. 80–81.

\[183\] Felman and Laub, Testimony, 209.

\[184\] Ibid. 208.

\[185\] Ibid. 201.

\[186\] van Alphen, Art in Mind, 165.

the outside (bystanders or the outside world who overlooked or failed to see) “extinguished [philosophically] the very possibility of address, the possibility of appealing, or of turning to, another,”\textsuperscript{188} hence to bear witness. This creates for the Holocaust a paradoxical situation in history claiming that it is an absolute historical event “whose literally overwhelming evidence makes it into an utterly proofless event.”\textsuperscript{189}

In his book, \textit{Remnants of Auschwitz}\textsuperscript{190} Giorgio Agamben develops a very similar argument on the “authentic” or “real” witness. He points out the paradox in witnessing emphasizing that those who saw the “fatal secret,”\textsuperscript{191} in other words, witnessed the crematorium “from inside” are dead, however they are the real witnesses of Auschwitz.\textsuperscript{192} The survivor’s testimony is neither authentic, nor complete but only mediated since “testimony contains a lacuna (…) and the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its centre it contains something that cannot be borne witness to and that discharges the survivors with authority.”\textsuperscript{193} Agamben then however claims that on the basis of the “impossibility of speaking” there is a “possibility of testimony to bear witness.” In the case of the Muselmann, the figure on the threshold between life and dead, “there can be testimony because there is an inseparable division and non-coincidence between inhuman and human, the living being and the speaking being, the Muselmann and the survivor.”\textsuperscript{194} The Muselmanner, according to Agamben’s interpretation which is primarily based on Primo Levi’s understanding, are the remnants of Auschwitz, hence the true witnesses of the camp which cannot speak and whose testimonies are mediated by the “incomplete” survivors.

In Agamben’s work there is not much about seeing but instead, he shifts the emphasis from the art of seeing to the act of speaking that appears as a “test” of being or remaining human. Speaking is a triumph in a sense that the human overcomes the inhuman by appropriating language with the usage of linguistic signs, such as “I” and “you.” Laub introduces the very same idea by filling the gap of “you” with the role of the “responsive,”

\textsuperscript{188} Felman and Laub, \textit{Testimony}, 82.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid. 211.
\textsuperscript{191} Felman and Laub, \textit{Testimony}, 228.
\textsuperscript{192} Similarly Ágnes Heller, Hungarian philosopher, says the same in a video used for the RESCAPE project (2010-1011, initiated by Voices of the 20th Century Archive at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociology; financed by EACEA ‘Europe for Citizens Program’). The project focuses on the period 1938-1956 and has two equally important parts: Return project is about homecoming whereas Escape documents the stories of survivors who escaped from regimes of oppression in Hungary. Ágnes Heller’s testimony belongs to the second project. \url{http://www.20szazadhangja.hu/heller_agnes} (00:01 - 01:14)
\textsuperscript{193} Agamben, \textit{Remnants of Auschwitz}, 33-34.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid. 33.
“attentive” and “unobtrusively present”\textsuperscript{195} of the listener that is the psychoanalyst. The necessity of a “you” to enable the victim to overcome the traumatic muteness, to speak as well as to restore the victim’s humanity is, as Laub argues, “another mode of struggle against the victim’s entrapment in trauma repetition, against their enslavement to the fate of their victimization.”\textsuperscript{196} Since victims of traumatic events fail to integrate past experiences into their memories which, consequently, continue to “haunt” them in the present, the present becomes for the victims nothing else but the persistent re-living of the past. Laub claims that the therapeutic conditions – identifying the analyst as a listener who carefully, and with empathy, follows the victim’s narration and might as well become a partner in this “journey” – have a healing effect and might bring about the possibility of rescuing traumatic past experiences being entrapped in the present. The act of speaking in therapy, hence the narration of one’s life history under “sterile” circumstances, whose life bore witness to a trauma, might help reconstruct history and “re-externalize” the event, in other words, “emplot” one’s own narrative into a coherent story in which traumatic disruptions become integral, nonetheless formative experiences of the past.\textsuperscript{197}

Regarding the historical validity of the testimony Laub confronts with the historians and suggests that despite historical inaccuracies one’s personal account on the past provides a more nuanced, additional knowledge. To support his argument, his well-known example is taken from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies which he launched in 1979 at Yale University’s Department of Manuscripts and Archives, and which has now over 4,400 videotaped interviews with witnesses and survivors of the Holocaust. Laub cites a woman’s testimony in which she talks about being witnessed to a failed attempt to resists the Nazis in Auschwitz in October, 1944: “All of a sudden, we saw four chimneys going up in flames, exploding. The flames shot into the sky, people were running. It was unbelievable.”\textsuperscript{198} While historians discredited her testimony due to her limited knowledge on the fact that only one chimney blew up in Auschwitz during the uprising of the “Canada Commando” in the end of 1944, Laub unfolded a different kind of truth\textsuperscript{199} in her narration saying that “[T]he woman was testifying, not to theumber of the chimney blown up, but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence. One chimney blown up in Auschwitz

\textsuperscript{195} Felman and Laub, \textit{Testimony}, 71.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid. 70.
\textsuperscript{197} Tihamér Bakó, \textit{Sorstörés. A trauma lélektana egy pszichoterapeuta szemszögéből} (Budapest: Psycho Art, 2009)
\textsuperscript{198} Felman and Laub, \textit{Testimony}, 59.
\textsuperscript{199} Laub’s approach is similar to what the psychoanalyst Donald Spencer calls narrative truth as opposed to historical truth. Discusses for example in Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, “The Witness in the Archive: Holocaust Studies/ Memory Studies,” \textit{Memory Studies} 2 (2009), 151 – 170.
was as incredible as four. The number mattered less than the fact of the occurrence. The event itself was almost inconceivable. The woman testified to an event that broke the all compelling frame of Auschwitz, where Jewish armed revolts just did not happen, and had no place. She testified to the breakage of a framework. That was historical truth.

Laub’s approach to survivor testimonies was not paradigmatic but instead was a representative example of “the era of the witness,” as Wieviorka names the time period from the end of the 1970s. Then a “frenzy” started for life stories which on the one hand were standardized along the line of moral and political responsibility, on the other, rendered exclusive significance to the victims and their testimonies. Hence the legitimate speaker of a true and authentic account on the past, which was once the eyewitness, now became the traumatized victim. By the same token the status of witnessing was “delegated” to the listener, let it be the psychoanalyst, the interviewer or the historian who “from outside” interpreted what was told and “testified” for the past.

Without diminishing the benefits of psychoanalytic reconstruction of traumatic past experiences I would argue that the shifting emphasis from the role of the eyewitness to the position of the victim has an effect not only on the witness but also on the “eye,” more precisely and literally, it takes the credit from it. And here I do not mean to play an arbitrary game with the words. The Holocaust, as Laub argues was an “unimaginable occurrence,” that is to say that it was a set of events which cannot be framed in images, which cannot be visualized in a true and authentic way, hence it cannot be known and remembered properly.

---

200 Felman and Laub, Testimony, 60.
201 Annette Wieviorka, The Era of the Witness.
203 In an essay by Didier Fassin he aims to provide a typology, based on etymology, of the witness. His case study focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The word ‘witness’ evolved from the words testis (“third party”); superstes (“lives on beyond”); arbiter (who sees without been seen); martyr (“the sacrifice of his life bears witness”). This semantic richness of the world ‘witness’ allows instances of power to either produce the ‘sufferer’ or the ‘victim’. In the case of the sufferer the only possibility to get recognition of past experiences works through the testimony of trauma, in other words through giving voice to his/her sufferings. In the case of the victim, power produces subjectivities which lack autonomy, which are exposed to the judgement of power (and then, for example, humanitarian organizations speak testify in the name of the so-called victims). As a matter of fact the witness is not only a rhetorical figure but a political subject whose subjectivity shows that testimony is defined by structural ambiguities stemming from the variety of its meanings. We are living in a regime of witnessing and in order to become a witness one shall prescribe herself/himself in a codified tradition that lays down the rules of what and how to say as well as the aftermath of the testimony, such as in the ways in it becomes archived, interpreted, published. (Didier Fassin, “The Humanitarian Politics of Testimony: Subjectification through Trauma in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” Cultural Anthropology 23 (2008), 531-558.)
204 Georges Didi-Huberman’s book on the four surviving photographs of Auschwitz begins with the sentence:“In order to know, we must imagine for ourselves.” In Images in Spite of All. Four Photographs from Auschwitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3.
Thus positioning the victim’s, instead of the eyewitness’, testimony, as a privileged form of memory, denotes a shift from imagination, or imaginative representation to the historical. It deprives “seeing” from “truth,” “authenticity” or “agency” and considers “the eye” only as a vehicle of language and gestures to formulate historical knowledge.

What is happening is that the eye is distinguished from vision, since under the pressure of traumatic experiences, as we have seen the case of the woman and the four chimneys, it often leads to “false”, “inauthentic” witnessing.\(^{205}\) Thus testimony becomes the representation of the traumas of the Holocaust, the nonfictional genre which is considered as “historical truth,” and furthermore, as Dominick LaCapra argues, in cases it is equated with history. LaCapra does not diminish the importance of testimony which is “crucial as a way in which an intimidated or otherwise withdrawn victim of trauma may overcome being overwhelmed by numbness and passivity, reengage in social practice, and acquire a voice”\(^{206}\) but warns us not to equate testimony with history, neither agency with witnessing.

In this chapter I follow LaCapra’s admonition and explore the relationship between trauma and representation in order to provide a theoretical framework for my further analysis. First I attempt to understand the concept of trauma starting from a rather psychoanalytic perspective and then shifting towards historiography. Then I aim to conceptualize the Holocaust as a traumatic event within the context of representation and think about the ways in which the experience of the Holocaust was understood, thought, reflected or visualized in art. I argue that art, or representation in general, is an “outer dimension of memory”; a tool for the working-through of a trauma; a possibility for a new rhetoric that provides a better understanding of our past, present and our future.

**Trauma and representation**

Cathy Caruth begins with the story of Clorinda and Tancred in her book on trauma theory.\(^{207}\) The Italian romantic poet, Torquato Tasso published in 1581 his epic titled Jerusalem Delivered, which is a story about the First Crusade and how the Christian knights battle against the Muslims and try to win back Jerusalem from them. Tancred, a Christian knight falls in love with Clorinda a warrior-maiden who is on the side of the Muslims. After

---

\(^{205}\) Ernst van Alphen discusses this separation. Contemporary visual artists, let them be second or third generation survivors or of no background like this do come up with alternative ways of representation however ‘authenticity’ does not apply to them at all. Still in order not to surrender the visual domain van Alphen suggests to distinguish vision from its vehicle, the eye in other words, to privilege the visual medium and analyze what vision does, achieves in the context of the Holocaust. See: van Alphen, *Art in Mind*.


\(^{207}\) Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)
Clorinda set the Christian siege tower into fire they come across each other behind the veil of night. Since both of them are in armour they fail to recognize (do not see) each other and start a fight in which Tancred kills Clorinda by mistake. In her last will the dying woman asks the knight to baptize her. Tancred removes the helmet and identifies under it his love. Following the burial Tancred rushes into a forest, grabs his sword and slashes it at a tree; “but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again.”\(^{208}\) – writes Tasso, quoted by Cathy Caruth, literary theorist, in her book *Unclaimed Experience*. Caruth opens her book and begins to think about trauma with Tancred’s story and follows Freud’s interpretation which places repetition – that is the repeated infliction of pain on Clorinda – in the heart of trauma. However Caruth’s analysis draws attention not only to the traumatic experience and its unwished-for repetition but also to the phenomenon of the voice. Caruth argues that the traumatic event, when he killed his love by chance, happened too unexpectedly and too painfully for him that he could not integrate it into his past, hence Tancred becomes aware of his deed only the second wounding, in the forest.

As a matter of the delayed understanding of “what happened” Caruth’s key concepts are “belatedness” and “inaccessibility” suggesting that traumatic events resist immediate comprehension,\(^{209}\) are always followed by *latency* and then the “voice cried out of the wound.” The latter means that the victim of trauma cannot process, represent the event but “performs,” re-experience it in the flashback that repeats the trauma in its literalness and immediacy. She supports her argument on unrepresentability with ideas taken from neuroscience, drawing on the American physician Bessel van der Kolk’s theory.\(^{210}\) Van der Kolk argues that the traumatic event is registered in the brain at its occurrence and then it later becomes and image on the right side of the brain which resists to symbolization, representation. It cannot be read only belatedly not because of repression but because it is dissociated from the language centres on the left. Hence due to the temporary malfunctioning of consciousness and memory, instead of representation, the literal coding of the event takes place – the image gets imprinted into one’s mind literally, which is by neuroscientific definition, unrepresentable but which comes back and “haunts” the victim via “flashbacks.” Flashbacks ”suggest that [trauma] cannot be thought simply as a representation”, it is

\(^{208}\) Ibid, 2.

\(^{209}\) Since full assimilation and comprehension is impossible trauma reveals not so much an empirical but an ethical relation to the real. Trauma, in Caruth’s understanding, is non-referential, as a matter of fact, non-historical. Ethical relation imply the way to listen to the other, however she does not dwell into this argument.

perceived by Caruth as “a »walking« rather than a »seeing«.” Traumatic experience stands outside of representation and since its transmission happens mimetically to the next generation the best it can be approached as a performative act of language, of voice.

Historian and trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra however discounts the deconstructive reading of Caruth’s trauma theory which says that trauma, as LaCapra argues “can only be represented or addressed indirectly in figurative or allegorical terms that necessarily distort or betray it.” In the meanwhile LaCapra works on a set of criteria in order to conceptualize and evaluate the relationship between history and psychoanalysis avoiding the concepts such as deconstruction, pathologization or redemption but linking the inquiry to ethical-political concerns. He makes a distinction between historical and structural trauma – which is considered by both Laub and Caruth as reciprocal – and means by structural general “anxiety-producing” conditions of humanity like mortality, while historical trauma is a historically and morally specific punctual events, such as the Holocaust. Historical trauma causes a rupture in memory, LaCapra calls it primary memory, thus the traumatic experience fails to integrate into the past and be directly remembered. Due to the lack of understanding on what happened the only tool the victim has is to relive, re-experience the event, and later as a result of a critical work on primary memory, with the help of secondary memory, the event can be worked-through and inserted into one’s life story.

As a matter of fact there could be three possible reaction given to trauma. There is the strategy of denial, mostly applied in the case of redemptive narrative, in which the victim excludes trauma and aims to avoid an “explicit encounter with normative problems and to restrict historical discourse to seemingly empirical and analytical uses of language.” The other two strategies focus on understanding the ways in which one remembers the traumatic event: LaCapra borrows the concepts of “working-through” and “acting-out” from psychoanalysis and makes them readable for historical studies. In the aftermath of the traumatic event there is melancholia that is an isolating experience in which the traumatized self is locked in and remains “narcissistically identified with the lost object.”

More precisely, LaCapra differentiates between loss and absence and relates absence – “a mimetic relation to the past which is relived as if it was fully present” which means to consider the past as if it was fully present – to the state of acting-out. Acting-out is a

211 Caruth, Unclaimed Experience, 115.
212 Dominick LaCapra, Writing History, Writing Trauma (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 107.
213 LaCapra, Representing the Holocaust
214 Ibid. 193
necessary precondition of processing and dealing with the past for those who underwent trauma. It is related to repetition or to repetitive-compulsion which means the repetitive reliving or re-experiencing past occurrences which might appear in “flashback,” as Caruth discussed it earlier. Acting-out might be counterbalanced by the force of working-through, however, as all binary oppositions are discouraged so is the relation between the two defined as in close proximity with each other. Melancholia can be followed by mourning, “where grief is repeated in reduced, normatively controlled and socially supported form.” Working through conveys the possibility to engage in trauma, hence the victim aims to take a critically distance on the problems; to recognize the difference between past and present and to deprive past experiences from the dominating the present. Achieving a distance and setting oneself free from the tendency to be fixated on the past as well as to be drawn back by flashbacks and nightmares implies the process of renewing one’s life in the present and find harmony, hence the ability to reconstitute agency.

However, as Gábor Gyáni, historian, notes LaCapra does not imply that working-through can be fully accomplished and it might not be a desired achievement for neither the survivors, nor their descendants. Otherwise such a detachment from a past experience would distort the meaning of the past, regard it as complete, total, banal or harmonic. Additionally, not only the individual but also the community has responsibility and work to do via social practices and rituals which generate normative limits in order to, as Eric Santner writes not to “expunge the traces of trauma,” but to integrate into one’s life story. Following Gyáni’s line of thinking what is interesting here is that it seems like even though LaCapra and the others are engaged in challenging the concept of trauma, memory-compulsion still celebrates its victory over working-through. Hence trauma is inflicted upon the concept of working-through as if it was worth preserving at all costs. What strikes me in this is the question whether there is any kind of meaning of trauma which could be distorted in the process of working through? What happens with the trauma when it enters the sphere of memory-work? How can this transformation be grasped? What is gained and what is lost in this translation? I argue that one among the dynamic social spaces in which grief- and memory-work can be effectively practiced is: art. Further, the history of the Holocaust

---

215 Ibid.199.
representations provides a perspective which might tell us more about the trauma, about its changing significance and its traces in memory, if at all.

In order to understand the role of art in relation to trauma I would suggest to go back to LaCapra. He argues back in 1994 that the Holocaust itself is an already canonized historical event that is to say that there exists an already established knowledge which fuels as well as creates a frame of reference for historical and imaginative discourses.\textsuperscript{218} Canonization, in this respect especially, covers all the wounds and pains the event might have been caused and creates an impression that nothing subversive or disturbing happened. However LaCapra proposes to the historians to re-think some of the texts that are chosen to be canonized as well as those which were marginalized in order to challenge the well-established knowledge on the past as well as engage in a critical dialogue with the present. A text is only considered as historical if it has a “never-to-be-fixated limit of contextualization.”\textsuperscript{219} Re-contextualization shall not be considered as the production of simple replicas or derivative items but as the creation of necessary, valuable reflections. Reflections fuel a critical work on the past in order to re-enact and not to repeat it as well as to open towards the future and engage in new imaginative and historical possibilities. Amy Hungerford in her book entitled the \textit{The Holocaust of Texts} however vehemently opposes the possibility to rethink texts and channel or transmission their ‘new’ understandings into imaginative and historical representations. She is especially against the personification of the Holocaust and regards it as an arbitrary game of the “fantasy that we can really have another’s experience that we can become someone else.”\textsuperscript{220} Similarly, Gary Weissman identifies the institutionalization of the Holocaust in the “fantasy of witnessing.”\textsuperscript{221} Both of them claim that one shall establish an objective and nonsentimental relationship towards the Holocaust which sets aside transfiguration or any kind of artistic and literary representation. Gabriele Schwab on the other hand dwells into linguistics and argues that symbolism or anthropomorphism is a basic operation of language, all the more transfiguration – personalization or anthropomorphic representation – is necessary in order to empathize as well as emotionally relate to the other person, hence to get engaged in the working-through process. As a matter of fact, art, as LaCapra argues, is considered – similarly to the historians’ work of re-thinking canons – as a possible tool to establish a stimulating relation to the past.

\textsuperscript{218}LaCapra, \textit{Representing the Holocaust}, 19-43.
\textsuperscript{219}Ibid. 35
\textsuperscript{220}Quoted by Gabriele Schwab, \textit{Haunting Legacies. Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 16.
\textsuperscript{221}Ibid, 19.
Similar consequence is drawn by the historian Saul Friedlander. His starting point is a differentiation between “deep memory” and “common memory,” two terms taken from Charlette Delbo.\textsuperscript{222} Deep memory is meant to be an event which remains an unsettled trauma and can hardly be integrated into one’s past, while common memory takes its place in the chronology of events. Friedlander’s challenge is to establish a historiography which permits the integration of both types of memories in the historical narrative. He requires the self-awareness of the historian, in the form of the commentary, which “should disrupt the facile linear progression of the narration, introduce alternative interpretations, question any partial conclusion, withstand the need for closure.”\textsuperscript{223} He calls it as the working-through process of the historians who deal with the traumatic past. The process is primarily an imperative to work not only with documents, facts and figure but also with testimonies and personal accounts and secondarily working-through means an awareness to find a fragile balance between silence and “disruptive emotions,” that is to say to avoid on the one hand full objectivity and neutrality and on the other hand a full identification with the victims which might transform the researcher into a “surrogate victim.”\textsuperscript{224}

This problematic balance brings up the question of transference that is in the psychoanalytic sense repetition, however when it comes to the role of the listener, researcher or of the historian it refers to a respectful and emphatic subject-position in relation to the victim. Hence the challenge for the historian is not to avoid engaging in a (possibly emotional) dialog with the victims nonetheless – this would deny the possibility of positivism – and to articulate or reconstruct, without the hint of closure, a valid understanding of the past.

I would argue that the integration of deep memory into historiography invokes in Friedlander’s work the need to think about the relation between memory, history and representation in the context of the Holocaust. He questions the literary representation which was born following the First World War, lived on after the Second World War – this also suggests that there was no adequate artistic or literary response to the Second World War – and has an ironic aesthetics, since the emerging literature (for example Aharon Appelfeld, Primo Levi, Tadeusz Borowksi) could not speak with the same voice but aspired to tell their experiences in a “profoundly didactic way.” He believes that the ironic mode undermine all the meanings and “creates a major obstacle to the representation of the Shoah” as well as “accentuate the dilemmas.” Friedlander cries for a new aesthetics which respects

\textsuperscript{222} The term appears in Charlotte Delbo’s \textit{Auschwitz and After}, quoted by Saul Friedlander, \textit{Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe} (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993)

\textsuperscript{223} Ibid, 132.

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid. 130-133.
remembering-compulsion and avoids the transgression of meanings. He might also suggest that the representation of the Holocaust on the basis of “the new aesthetics” would powerfully and effectively contribute to collectively deal with the trauma. Hence it would provide a solid frame of reference for the “collective self-perception of the groups directly involved” as well as play a primary role in the elaboration of historical consciousness.\(^{225}\)

Friedlander’s argumentation brings up the question of how it is possible to experience an event collectively, or create a sense of collectivity? How can a traumatic event experienced if it was never experienced directly? As it was discussed above, from the 1970s the personal trauma went into public en masse and testimonies, more precisely the voice of the traumatized victim started dominating the discourse on the Holocaust contributing to the creation of a globalized space of Holocaust memory. That is to say that the Holocaust becomes a “definitive catastrophe” which bridges over national or ethnic lines and represents the universal Evil, a reference point to all other traumatic historical occurrences.\(^{226}\)

Jeffrey C. Alexander argues likewise and explores those socio-historical processes through which the Holocaust became detached from a particular historical event and became a central and universal tragedy of humanity in modern times.\(^{227}\) However Alexander explains the shift from regarding the Holocaust as one of the atrocities of the Second World War to a full identification with the traumatic event by introducing two forms of thinking. The first is, as he calls is, the *Lay Trauma Theory* which claims that trauma is naturally part of humans’ lives and traumatisation is an automatic reaction to it. In the second theory, called *Cultural Trauma*, trauma is conceived as a socially constructed phenomenon that is epistemological, hence is not an ontologically given but something that has to *become* traumatic. It becomes traumatic when there is a gap between the events and its representation, but it only gains social significance and becomes a collective state of affairs belatedly and requires agents, mediations and a community of carriers and caretakers. The gap is not always open to interpretation and agency, sometimes it demands decades to achieve appropriation, furthermore, as Ferenc Erős, psychologist, notes, it might trigger a great outburst of hostility from the outside and puts a burden not only on the relatives and on those who are directly affected but also on the following generations.\(^{228}\) As it was in the case of the Holocaust which was in the beginning a “war drama,” then already at the Nurnberg trial its generalization...

\(^{225}\) Ibid. 47-55.  
\(^{226}\) Levy and Sznaider, *Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*.  
\(^{227}\) Alexander, “Toward a Theory?”  
started, followed by the establishment of a legal framework as to never let it happen again, then came the 1960s and the Eichmann trial when victims came into the limelight an later from the 1980s it “established the basis for metonymic quilt,” became an analogy for discrimination and provided a vocabulary for the framework of universal human rights.

In sum Alexander argues that the collective and universal trauma of the Holocaust is a result of two parallel procedures: one the one hand of the construction of the community of victims as well as by the emotional identification of either with them or with the perpetrators, on the other hand of the symbolic extension of the event which stimulated an unprecedented universalization of moral and political responsibility (as the “never again!” moral imperative suggests). This trauma is mediated through representation which generates the aforementioned knowledge as well as identification towards the event. However the mediated power of representation does not only function in the first stages of cultural trauma but also when the trauma-situation stands still and when the meanings get materialized in museums, monuments. In this part of the chapter I attempted to explore trauma as an object of memory studies as well as to understand the ways in which trauma theories approach the question of representation.

Considering the pervious theories on trauma, through the lens of Alexander they all belong to the so-called lay trauma theory. Indeed, both by Caruth and LaCapra trauma, as the mental consequence of an act of violence, was theorized as a self-evident and automatic reaction of a human being. Alexander argues on the other hand that it cannot be read as a fixed and positivist affirmation of a violent situation but it is produced, belatedly through the course of time. Trauma can be understood as a “moral problematization” which “propose now frameworks to interpret (...) conflicts (...) [and] is not only a clinical description of a psychological status but also a political expression of a state of the world.” Trauma is political because it has both individual and collective importance in positioning ourselves and let ourselves be positioned in the narrative of the past. However I find important LaCapra’s concept of working-through since it offers a practical approach to come to term with the past as well as suggests to close the gap which, in Alexander’s interpretation, is between the event and its immediate representation. In the following I will introduce the dilemma of representation in the context of the Holocaust.

---

229 Michel Foucault quoted by Fassin, “The Humanitarian Politics of Testimony,” 532.
230 Ibid. 532-533.
Representation and the experience of the Holocaust

Literature dealing with the problematic relation between the Holocaust and its representation tend to start with the (in)famous statement of Theodor Adorno saying that “after Auschwitz it is barbaric to continue writing poetry.”231 Questions regarding aesthetics or ethics have been raised and up until recently we could witness one of the biggest polemical debate of our times. His antipathy towards art provided the dominant theoretical framework to understand the aesthetic regime in the post-holocaust era. As Dora Apel explained art existed after 1945 indeed however it was ‘dark’ that is realistic without the sense for redemption imagination.232 There is the Stojka family, with a special emphasis on Karl Stojka who throughout his life, starting immediately after the liberation of Dachau, attempted to depict the fate of Roma reflecting on, remembering, re-enacting his experiences under the Holocaust.233 Zoran Music a Slovenian Jewish survivor of Dachau returned home in Gorizia and carried with himself a package of drawings on corpses. He refined and clarified the pictures, then took them away and only in 1970 returned to the subject under the title We are not last. Osias Hofstatter’s work resembles the chaos and void after Auschwitz while Yehuda Bacon, who was thirteen at the time he was interned to Theresienstadt, then to Auschwitz, Mauthausen and finally to Günskirchen and gave his testimony in the Eichmann trial, started his workbook series in 1973 at the time he returned from a sabbatical year in the US to Jerusalem. These workbooks contain his memories about the Holocaust.234 However, the art of the non-survivors, let them be of Jewish or non-Jewish origin, was also based upon the refusal of aesthetics: Pablo Picasso or Leonard Baskin regarded the Holocaust as a universal tragedy and avoided any Jewish reference,235 while Chagall applied Christian symbols.

As a matter of fact, as Lawrence Langer236 or Ernst van Alphen237 argues, “Adorno never intended his statement to be taken literally, as his own elaborations of the principle demonstrate,”238 hence instead of closing down the discussions on artistic representation we shall deprive this statement from its assumed authority and reflect upon the issue critically.

231 Ernst van Alphen, Caught by History, 17.
235 Ágnes Heller discusses the same phenomenon in the field of Hungarian literature: http://boldogsag.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12763:zsidotlanitas-a-magyar-zsidoirodalomban-&catid=650:zsidokerdesek-magyarorszagon&Itemid=493
237 van Alphen, Caught by History.
238 Langer, The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination. 1.
Indeed, Adorno repeated his statement in 1962 saying: “I do not want to soften my statement that it is barbaric to continue to write poetry after Auschwitz (...) It is the situation of literature itself and not simply one’s relation to it that is paradoxical. The abundance of real suffering permits no forgetting (...) But that suffering (...) also demands the continued existence of the very art it forbids.”²³⁹ He refused those kinds of works of art which aimed at the forgetting of the Holocaust and redeeming the ‘audience’ from the pain, trauma or victimhood. Adorno was hostile towards transfiguration, especially towards what Langer calls “literature of atrocity” which is about “the suffering of the victims into works of art, tossed out to be gobbled up by the world that did them in.”²⁴⁰ Langer continues with Adorno’s words, that “The so-called artistic representation of naked physical pain of victims felled by rifle butts, contains, however remote, the potentiality of wringing pleasure from it.”²⁴¹ The moral consideration behind Adorno’s hostility was the “impropriety of »aesthetic pleasure«”²⁴² in the sense of amusement and banality as well as the promise of relief, or redemption. Instead, he suggests making art which remembers the Holocaust and which works not toward repression or denial but which engages with the past and is willing to deal with it.

Ernst van Alphen argues in Caught by History that it is primarily due to Adorno’s dictum that Holocaust representation is morally inadmissible, because it is assumed to cause aesthetic pleasure. The statement evokes a complex range of discourses around the Holocaust such as its taboo-status – considering it as sacred which would be ethically unacceptable to represent. Jean-Francois Lyotard philosopher proclaims, on the basis of the uniqueness and un-representability of Auschwitz, the end of the era of the meta-narratives. He compares Auschwitz to an earthquake which destroys everything including the very reference points by which one is able to formulate judgements: “Suppose that an earthquake destroys not only lives, buildings, and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes directly and indirectly. The impossibility of quantitatively measuring it does not prohibit, but rather inspires in the minds of the survivors the idea of a very great seismic force.”²⁴³ Lyotard, similarly to Adorno, considers Auschwitz as an event which cannot be fully known however unlike Adorno he destroys all kinds of possibility and knowledge, as the total destruction of

²⁴⁰ Theodor Adorno, quoted by Ibid, 18.
²⁴¹ Langer, The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination, 1.
²⁴² van Alphen, Caught by History, 19.
the measuring devices by the earthquake suggests. Although scholars would claim that nothing is knowable to them about the event, the average people would rather have the feeling of indeterminacy and insecurity and they would remain in silence. With this metaphor Lyotard suggests that due to the extremity of the event our traditional categories of representation and explanation are questioned and language itself becomes insufficient. However as the average men in the aftermath of the earthquake are waiting for the historians and scholars to define and explain what happened so do we need a solid narration about Auschwitz. Terrence Des Pres is also guided by Adorno’s dictum and suggests that experiences shall automatically be channelled into language without the need to mediate them through imagination or culture. And, unavoidably, when it comes to representation, then Des Pres sets out the principles for an ethically acceptable form, that is to say that the Holocaust shall be represented as a unique event; representation shall be faithful, accurate; and the Holocaust shall always be preserved as sacred.244

Van Alphen however claims that the reason why the historical representation of the Holocaust, that is modelled on documentary realist genres such as the testimony or the eyewitness account, is regarded as the “proper” mode of representation because it is mimetic (as opposed to the imaginative representation’s interpretive approach), true and not trapped in vision’s mirage as well as re-create the past as its mirrored image, hence untouched, unrepresented. As a matter of fact Erős explains that is morally impossible to represent the Holocaust, only its re-presentation, its reassertion into the present is allowed.245 Hence one could re-live the past by “the mystery play of re-enactment”, that is by retelling the past from the position of the victim. On the other hand, he continues, there is the imaginative representation of the event, which is, as they are binary oppositions with the historical, also less valuable. It is considered as morally intolerable, inauthentic and subjective. Van Alphen suggests replacing the historical and imaginative oppositions into literal and figurative. The latter means that the imaginative discourse is personalized, hence “only figurative discourse allows expression of that which is un-representable in so-called literal, factual, historical language.”246 Not only believes van Alphen that the figurative/imaginative discourse has an added value to our knowledge about the Holocaust as well as it completes what cannot be expressed otherwise, but also he argues from a moral point of view saying that the Nazi regime aimed at the total destruction of the individual and one’s personality thus art shall

245 Erős, “Trauma és történelem,” 25.
246 van Alphen, Caught by History, 29.
recreate subjectivity’s well-deserved place in history. Later in his book instead of imaginative representation he introduces the term ‘Holocaust effect’ as a matter of re-enactment (direct experience via artistic works) and not representation.

The other problem of Holocaust representation, which van Alphen mentions, is semiotic: the Holocaust is unsayable and in case of its articulation and have to face with the limits of representation. For instance Éva Kovács, sociologist, and Júlia Vajda, psychologist, discussed in their book titled Appearance. Jewish Identity Stories the case when a disruption of continuity in one’s life story, hence the experience of a traumatic event, challenges one’s identity as well as deprives from both the ability to share it with the others and the possibility of healing. However, van Alphen changes the discourse on “un-sayability” with his argument in which he claims that the problem is rather with the available frames of representation or following Alexander’s argument, there is a gap between the event and its existing representations. We first have to experience the event in order to formulate, shape our experience through representation however experience is already a representation, it is already the transformation of the pure “naked” event into knowledge.

As the true witness of the Holocaust is the Muselmann who cannot speak, according to Agamben, it also suggests that there was no form of representation available for the prisoner, such as language, in order to help them articulate into experience what they went through: “this un-representability defines those events as traumatic. The Holocaust has had a traumatic impact for many because it could not be experienced, because a distance form it in language or representation was not possible. (...) I would argue, in fact, that the problems of the un-representability of the Holocaust arose during the Holocaust itself and not afterward when survivors tried to provide testimonies of it, whether literary/artistic or otherwise. To put it differently, the later representational problems are a continuation of the impossibility during the event itself to experience the Holocaust in the terms of the symbolic order then available.” Similarly to Hannah Arendt who said that if Auschwitz is unthinkable in juridical or political terms then we must rethink and redefine our concept of law and politics. Hence the historians “must not accept that the problem posed by the genocide of the Jews be neglected by relegating it to the unthinkable. The genocide was thought, it was

248 van Alphen, Caught by History, 45.
249 Georges Didi-Huberman, Images in spite of All, 25.
therefore thinkable.” The genocide was presented, it is therefore representable. Only the forms of representation shall be figured out.

“The representation of the Holocaust is conditioned by the historical moment in which it is produced.” That is to say that there is no strict, solid and ever existing mode of representation in relation to the Holocaust but the ways in which the Holocaust appears in the historical or imaginative discourse is the matter of the ideological, political and cultural circumstances under which representation appears. That repetition in this subject matter offers paths to deal with the past experience and does not necessarily maintains the very same discourse but challenges the individual and collective narrations of the traumatic event. Apel claims that from the mid 1970s a new generation of artists appeared on stage to change the agenda.

The first representatives were Anselm Kiefer or Christian Boltanski. The former was born in Germany a few months before the war ended in March 8, 1945. He studies languages first and he turned to art, to photography. His first exhibition, called Occupations [Bezetzung] in 1969, for his degree was a collection of photographs taken in Switzerland, France and Italy, and on each of those Kiefer was standing in front of a famous building and saluting to Hitler. As opposed to the American and German critics which idealize Kiefer’s work and praise its “Germanness” Andreas Huyssen claims that his work is not about forgetting the German past but rather bringing it into the fore and criticize it. He refuses to hide behind ideas such as “transcendental art” and “universal humanness,” neither considers his mythical motifs exclusively as a pathway to resurrect the German nation, but considers myth and history, in van Alphen’s words, the imaginative and the historical, as equally important and mutually explanatory in the context of the past. He evokes the terror the Germans committed under the Second World War but also creates spaces of renewal, rebirth. Christian Boltanski was born a year earlier than Kiefer, in Paris, France with a mixed Jewish Catholic background. He is a self-taught artist who began his career in 1958 and became famous by the end of the 1960s. One of his first work which focuses on ideas such as life and death, mourning our memory was the Attempt at Reconstitution of Objects that Belonged to Christian Boltanski between 1948 and 1954 (1970–1971). As van Alphen notes in his analysis on Boltanski, “his consistent use of historical resources such as the archive reveals the Janus face of the

---

historical approach to the Holocaust. The strategy of mimicking archival research is confusing because it does not provide objective information about the Holocaust. Instead we are lured into the event itself, experiencing directly a certain aspect of Nazism or of the Holocaust as we view an image. We are no longer listening to the factual account of the witness, to the story of an objectified past. Rather we are placed in the position of being the subject of that history. We are subjectively living it.”253

The historical moment which rendered representation possible was largely shaped by the German Historikerstreit (historians’ debate) and the historians’, who dominated and controlled knowledge on the Holocaust, approach to “seeing.” The Historikerstreit was a debate over Germany’s responsibility in the Second World War and in the Holocaust as well as the need to historicize the Nazi past. The debate was formative in German national identity which issue emerged first time since the war in 1986 by Ernst Nolte who published an article in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung with the title “The past won’t go away.”

A few years later in 1989 a debate took place titled History, Event and Discourse between Hayden White and Carlo Ginsburg on the nature of historical truth. White, with extreme relativism, aims to lay new foundation to historical understanding by analysing the relation between historical storytelling and historical reality. He argues that the choices we make to understand history – i.e. the choice of the mode of emplotment or the choice of language – are already interpretations. In that sense White denies the possibility of any kind of “truth” or “real” or “meta-narrative” in the context of the Holocaust: “This is not to suggest that we will give up the effort to represent the Holocaust realistically, but rather that our notion of what constitutes realistic representation must be revised to take account of the experience that are unique to our history and for which older modes of representation have proven inadequate.”254 Hence he favours the “modernist approach” and names Primo Levi as one of its representatives. As opposed to White Ginsburg underlines the importance of microhistory. He tells the story about a Jewish community in La Baume which was exterminated in the mid-1340s with only two survivors left. On the basis of the story he claims that “just one witness” is enough to get an insight in historical reality, hence to get the hint of historical truth.255 His insistence on objectivity and historical truth, as Friedlander explains in the Introduction, is very much informed by ethical and analytical categories. That is to say that if we deny the voice of the survivor as well as consider the Final Solution in

253 van Alpen, Caught by History, 10.
White’s relativism than we provide the opportunity to the counter-history to rise, which might lead to the justification of the Nazi regime. Friedlander formulates the need for a “new rhetorical” mode which on the one hand respects the radicalism and uniqueness of the event and on the other hand offers the possibility for a hypersensitive transgression of the limits of representation.256

In this historical situation I would identify three main “shifts” which changed the discourse on Holocaust representation which overwrote the demonization of aesthetics and legitimized the role of artistic genres.257 The first one is what James E. Young calls mediation that is a shift from representation to the portrayal of the artist’s hyper-mediated experiences. The second one, very close in meaning to the first one, introduces the Holocaust as not a singular event but as an event which is already filtered through various channels of representation such as media, hence can be endowed with a variety of cultural, historical and political meanings. The third one is the shift from the need of documentation to the need of identification which visibly manifests itself in the field of education as Shoshana Felman discusses it.

To the dilemma of how it is possible to remember an event which one never experienced directly, James E. Young provides the answer with the term “vicarious memory.” One shall witness the emergence of a new post-war generation which has not directly experienced the events under the Second World War but only know them from hearsay, listening to the older generation’s stories as well as shaped by them. This generation of artist, as Young argues, does not depict or represent the event as it was passed on them but portray the Holocaust from a “vicarious past,”258 that is a distance taken from the first generation’s experience, furthermore, Young claims that their work is a valuable contribution to the understanding of what happened in the past. The common denominator of the secondary witnesses is that they deal with and reflect upon the memory that was transmitted to them however they also add to it their own researches. In Young’s words, this generation “rarely presumes to represent events outside of the ways they have vicariously known and experienced them. Instead of attempting to portray the events of the Holocaust, they write and draw and talk about the

257 Hereby I have to note that Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah shall be regarded as the fourth factor which triggered the shifting of the discourse however I will discuss it in another chapter devoted exclusively to films.
event of its transmission to them – in books, films, photographs and parents’ stories. Instead of trying to remember events, they recall their relationship to the memory of events.”

Such as Art Spiegelman, David Levinthal, Tibor Balogh, Zsolt Vári or Teréz Orsós, these artists childhood is overloaded with stories of the Holocaust and they seek to find these memories a proper form of representation which does not fall into the trap of melancholy neither repeats the traumas of the proceeding generation nor cause disintegration in their life stories. Following the same line of thinking Dora Apel highlights that these artists instead of rendering the memory of the Holocaust exclusively to the survivors and ascribing one meaning to it, they question conventional aesthetics and aim to look at the event as a culturally, socially and politically significant occurrence in the past and then attempt to reformulate the meanings attached to it. The question is not whether these representations are violations of a single fixed meaning – they are since all representations, as Apel argues, are partial, and Auschwitz can never be fully represented – but how they engage in new effect of the Holocaust.

Indeed, they introduce a new ethic in representation that is their explicit aim to replace sacralised pedagogy of the Holocaust with the interplay of various meanings which makes visible as well as raise attention to for instance the relationship between race and nation, the presence of everyday racism, the underlying mechanisms of capitalism which intensify discrimination. Sacralised pedagogy is meant to transmit a “complete and totally appropriated knowledge” which “will become in all sense of the word, a mastery.” In this sense of the world pedagogy is and “academic discourse,” as Lacan names it, is linear, frontal, hierarchical and all the more tends to control, forbid and suppress. On the basis of Adorno’s dictum and Terrence Des Pres’ premises, the Holocaust is meant to be taught, learned and memorialized in a disciplined manner and was believed that it can be mastered and never forgotten. However – and this is the third point –, as Shoshana Felman argues, from the 1980s psychoanalysis opened up new teaching possibilities, renewing both its core questions and practices and suggests that pedagogy, similarly to psychoanalysis, shall proceed through “break-throughs, leaps, discontinuities, regressions and deferred action.” As it follows, instead of considering teaching as a hierarchical setup between students and teachers we shall take

261 Ibid. 22.
knowledge as essentially dialogic, as an exchange of thoughts. “Dialogue,” writes Felman, “is thus the radical condition of learning and knowledge, the analytically constitutive condition.” By the same token the new generation of artists challenge the traditional pedagogical approach to the Holocaust. Their artworks shift the discourse from the historical that is from documentation, from the desire for mastery and from testimony, to the imaginative.

Generations of post-Holocaust
From the beginning of the 1980s, as the survivor’s generation is passing away, there is more and more focus on secondary witnesses, hence on the second or third generations and on the ways in which they attempt to approach the Holocaust. On the basis of the above I argue that in the beginning of the 1980s one could have witnessed a paradigmatic change in the field of the representation of the Holocaust. Hence, the core questions of representation before the 1980s were how to transmit the knowledge of the traumatic experience in a way that is preserves its historical truth and authenticity? Also, what kind of form of representation would represent the trauma of the others in an ethically and aesthetically adequate way? Following the 1980s in the heart of the debate there was the question of how to use trauma of the survivors and of the later generation as a means to communicate or mediate the memory of the Holocaust to the later or secondary generations. New concepts came to the fore in order to deal with the traumatic experience as well as to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

One of the most well-known concepts is postmemory introduced by Marianne Hirsch. Initially the concept was understood as a response of the second generation to the trauma of the first, hence as the second generation channels their parents memories into art. Memory is considered dynamic which is affected by and effects the present and the future. Later, the term has shifted focus from family structures but then broadens it up to the affiliative structures: “no more than an extension of the loosened familial structured occasioned by war and persecution. It is the result of the contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation, combined with a set of structures of mediation that would be broadly available, appropriable, and indeed, compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission.”

---

262 Ibid. 33.
263 Ibid.
264 Hirsch, *The Generations of Postmemory*
265 Ibid, 36.
According to the additional understanding of postmemory, the concept is broadened and becomes the reservoir of secondary witnessing. Postmemory denotes the identification with the traumatized victim as well as a latency, a belated and not first-hand experience of the traumatic event. Hirsch is concerned about the better understanding of the past, thus postmemory – “retrospective witnessing” – is explored by photography: encounter with the photography and re-living the traumatic event in the visual domain has a traumatic effect,\textsuperscript{266} however it is different from the survivor’s since instead of re-experiencing it the secondary witness repeats the event. Repetition is in the Centre of Hirsch’s arguments, since she claims that it transforms aesthetics into ethics. As opposed to Andrea Liss, who claims that the creative use of photography by artist cause “pitfalls that trespass too heavily through postmemories”\textsuperscript{267} or Geoffrey Hartman,\textsuperscript{268} who discuss the desensitizing effect of the repetition of images, Hirsch argues that “repetition connects the second generation to the first, in its capacity to produce rather than screen the effect of trauma that was lived so much more directly as compulsive repetition by survivors and contemporary witnesses.”\textsuperscript{269}

In the case of secondary witnesses repetition is not the means of re-traumatization but a helpful vehicle of “transmitting an inherited traumatic past in such a way that it can be worked through.”\textsuperscript{270} Also it raises the question how these images avoid re-traumatization and translate the “shock of seeing” into working through. The repetition of images has no restorative attempts, “it is only when they are deployed, in new texts and new contexts, that they regain a capacity to enable a postmemorial working through.”\textsuperscript{271} Hence, postmemory is not an identificatory model, “it is »post«,” but at the same time “it approximates memory in its affective and psychic effects.”\textsuperscript{272}

In Hirsch’s understanding postmemory is a personalized conception of trauma which evokes empathy in the secondary witnesses towards the victims without the appropriation of their identity. Architect Daniel Libeskind however considers trauma abstract which is linked to concepts such as exile or annihilation.\textsuperscript{273} His concept “spaces of memory” reflects upon the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{267} Andrea Liss, \textit{Trespassing Through Shadows: Memory, Photography and the Holocaust} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998)
\item\textsuperscript{268} Geoffrey Hartman, \textit{The Longest Shadow: in the Aftermath of the Holocaust} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996)
\item\textsuperscript{269} Hirsch, \textit{The Generations of Postmemory}, 108.
\item\textsuperscript{270} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{271} Ibid. 122.
\item\textsuperscript{272} Ibid. 36.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
experience of the material dimension of trauma. Trauma is an architectural challenge that is
built into architecture in the forms of void or cuts or sharp lines, while the secondary
witnesses become subjected to the materiality of the trauma, to its physical, bodily and spatial
sensation, by visiting the site and being exposed to it. The void, as Libeskind explains,
suggests the very limit of representation: “The need in architecture to respond to the questions
of culture, of public space, of the void is very palpable, since in architecture the void is a
space. It is a place of being and nonbeing. It is a place where one can hardly find traces of a
relationship. And yet, it is something which has been recorded and presented in light, matter,
and documents. One can attempt to have access to it through names, addresses, through a kind
of haunting quality of spaces which the passage of absence took place.”\textsuperscript{274} Libeskind
establishes site-specific buildings – let us think about the Garden of Exile in Berlin at the
Jewish Museum – whose authenticity might be questioned by the survivors, although, as
Libeskind suggests forgetting authenticity and instead practicing the creative re-imagination
of the authentic spaces.

Besides Adorno’s dictum the fact that certain kind of aesthetics was exploited by the
Nazis, hence aesthetics was an inherent component of the Fascist regime, and that the
Holocaust was supposed to be unique, hence needed an equally unique aesthetic regime led to
the demonization of aesthetics and beauty in the context of the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{275} Artists during the
Holocaust produced works of art as an affirmation of life, as an act of witnessing, as a
spiritual resistance through the assertion of individuality or just to meet the client’s needs that
is to paint to the order of the commanders.\textsuperscript{276} In the aftermath of the events they felt the
innermost urgency to reflect upon what happened and deployed a “dark style” that was
antirealist (i.e. the Holocaust is not knowable and not representable), iconic and figurative
based on the concepts of heroism (i.e. anti-fascism) and redemption. However from the 1970s
the face of Nazism begun to change in the West and despite their varying tone, register and
genre those artworks aimed to introduce a more authentic perception of the past that was also
a critique to pervious representations.\textsuperscript{277}

It became clear that the operation of Nazism could not have been analysed only from
political, social or economic point of view but there was a need for a synthesis of divert

\textsuperscript{274} quoted by Heckner, “Whose Trauma Is It?,” 75.
\textsuperscript{275} Brett Kaplan, \textit{Unwanted Beauty. Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation} (Urbana: University Of
Illinois Press, 2007)
\textsuperscript{276} Ziva Amishai-Maisels, “The Complexities of Witnessing,” in. \textit{After Auschwitz. Responses to the Holocaust in
interpretations as well as for the inclusion of images and emotions. Aesthetics presents and interprets the past as well as helps to better understand the present.²⁷⁸

By the 1980s a new generation of artists came to the limelight “those who confront the horror of the Nazi genocide and the suffering of its victims, and who continues to bear witness through reconfigured forms of contemporary testimony to events they have never experienced”.²⁷⁹ They rejected previous modes of representation and aimed to combine their relation to the past to its memory and in the meanwhile integrate the event in their life narrative. It is not about mourning or talking from the position of the traumatized victim but instead it is a political act, an identity struggle and an attempt to overcome the non-autonomous subjectivity of the victim and to gain control over the future.

In the following part of this chapter I focus on two contemporary Roma artists²⁸⁰ and explore their artworks done in the context of the Roma Holocaust. These artists as secondary witnesses aim to integrate the Holocaust into their lives through aesthetics. They learned about the Holocaust through research and discussions and also through contemporary media representations. However, on a wider scale on the collective level, the experience of the Holocaust is attributed to an explanatory power to the never-ending historical sequence of Roma catastrophes and is constantly actualised and given significance to it in public discourse.²⁸¹ As a consequence the majority of the artworks are not about ‘rescuing the past being trapped in the present’ but instead focus on the present and reflect upon it by illuminating past occurrences.²⁸² This generation of Roma artists approach the theme of the Holocaust as the fountain for new cultural, social and political meanings which are not only signifiers in their own, private lives but also for the collectivity.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.
²⁷⁹ Dora Appel, Memory Effects, 21.
²⁸⁰ I understand Roma art as a product of the European Roma Summit in 1971, London when artists of Roma origin claimed their recognition as a group. Till that time artworks of Roma were not regarded as individual, intellectual pieces of art but rather as a collective product of a group which only became cultural representation by the recognition of folklorists or ethnographers. The term ”contemporary” was first introduced by Timea Junghaus at the First Roma Pavilion in the Venice Biennale in 2007.
²⁸¹ van Baar, “From »Time-Banditry«”
²⁸² Few examples: The project of the European Roma Cultural Foundation at the 7th Berlin Biennale in 2012 (www.romacult.org); Katalin Bársny’s film, The Uprooted (2012); The Hidden Holocaust exhibition (2004)
IV. THE AESTHETICS OF VIOLENCE
Photographic representation of the Nazi genocide of Roma

“Again: we know a different experience. It can be hostile to spirit and destructive to many blossoming dreams. Nevertheless, it is the most beautiful, most untouchable, most immediate because it can never be without spirit while we remain young. ... The youth will experience spirit, and the less effortlessly he attains greatness, the more he will encounter spirit everywhere in his wanderings and in every person.” (Walter Bejamin, Experience)

The drama of the representation of the Nazi genocide on Roma is enclosed in the image of Anna Maria Steinbach, better known as Settela Steinbach. It is a still photographic image and part of that immense recorded material which was commissioned for PR purposes by Albert Gemmecker, the last Commandant of the Westerbork transit camp. It was filmed by Rudolf Breslauer, a Jewish deportee, and was supposed to be sent to the Referat IV-B4 of the Reich Main Security Office led Adolf Eichmann. The film was never completed and Breslauer was deported four months after the shootings to Auschwitz. However when the Comité d’histoire de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale assigned Alain Resnais in 1955 to direct a film for the commemoration of the camps, he used the raw material of Breslauer/Gemmecker. His film, titled Night and Fog, not only outlined the chronology of the destruction of the European Jewry but also publicly challenged what can be said about the Nazi persecutions as well as the ways in which culture (re-)writes history. The film has slowly become a document, a repository of iconographic images or a portfolio of the Holocaust. While producing a montage of black and white archival images under the narration of an ex-deportee, it provided materials for other artistic products as well as burnt some of the images into people’s mind such as the British Army bulldozer pushing naked corpses into a mass grave at Bergen-Belsen or the fearful look of the young Settela Steinbach before the door gets locked and the train departs from Westerbork on March 19, 1944. [IMAGE1]

Settela was gassed and vanished but her image, the “girl with the headdress”, has proved to be indestructible. For decades it was endowed with iconic significance for

285 For example Resnais includes the four photographs taken by the Polish resistance inside the camp Auschwitz, ignoring the hesitation around how much weight shall be given to the extermination.
representing and speaking about the Jewish fate. Besides the power of photographic images that “have the capacity to address the spectator’s own bodily memory; to touch the viewer who feels rather than simply sees the event,” its iconic resonance was also stemming from the fact that it was an image of a child: it pointed to the brutality, in its totality, of the Holocaust destruction. As Marianne Hirsch argues, “(...) the figure of the “child” is an adult construction, the site of an adult fantasy, fear and desire. (...) Less individualized, less marked by the particularities of identity, moreover, children invite multiple projections, and lend them to universalization.” The image became an inherent part of the photographic canon of the Holocaust and its repetitive use made it context-free while the encounter with the child victim invited the spectator to witness, hence to embody the memory of the child and “become witness[es], child witness[es], on our own right.” Clearly, Settela gave her testimony in the name of the six million, or rather, compelled each spectator to identify with the victim’s position and bear witness of the past. Not only did she become the symbol of the fate of the European Jewry but also, as a matter of her transport, the meanings of Auschwitz – that is the symbol of terror, genocide, the tragedy of humanity – were imposed upon her.

However, Resnais aimed at opening up the public discourse on the Holocaust he also managed to frame it. As a result of the then insufficient knowledge on the recent past, the film profoundly rejected the possibility to read the images else than under the frame of the iconography of the history of the Jewish extermination. Hence, only decades later, in 1992 was revealed by Aad Wagenaar, Dutch journalist, that Settela Steinbach was not of Jewish origin but belonged to a Sinti community and was not transported to Auschwitz but to Bergen-Belsen.

Instead of focusing on how much “the discovery of Settela's identity [at first] upset the sensibilities of Dutch Jewry” let us have a look at the image again and undertake a visual criticism, since this “should make us not only sensitive to genocide elsewhere and in our own time, but also to the power of the still image taken from a film, once reinserted into the flow of history, of sequence and consequence, to preserve a truth not available to the single image, or even the single voice.” At first “[i]t would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the “ordinary”; it cannot in any way constitute the visible

---

288 Ibid. 162.
290 Ibid.
object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your *studium*: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound.\textsuperscript{291} We shall “tighten our point of view”\textsuperscript{292} and see nothing on the still image but the imposition of reality of the past. A young girl who is wearing a headdress is looking out of the carriage. It is the certificate of that-has-been, the witness of what-has-been and the fine moment of the recording when she was transformed from subject to object, from a living being to dead.\textsuperscript{293} However, at the same time, we shall “widen our point of view to restore to the [image] the anthropological element that makes [it] work.”\textsuperscript{294} Since the Westerbork transit camp was ordered to be closed down guards are loading the trains with people to be transported to Bergen Belsen or to Auschwitz. And there is this young girl wearing a headdress, looking out of the carriage until the door gets locked. She seems like grasping the last moments of light and life while her look says good-bye to those who remained. She seems scared. She seems that she already knows her destiny. Maybe she just senses it. Breslauer was certain about it.

The drama at the heart of the anthropological element of the image has two dimensions. First, it is its humanity. The system was designed to kill not only life but also the human – to make them Muselmann, that is the indistinction between human and inhuman\textsuperscript{295} – and its image.\textsuperscript{296} To act against the destruction of the human image shall be maintained, preserved, remembered or incorporated in the collective knowledge of the past. The second drama is the representation of Roma under the persecutions. Although there are approximately two million photographs of the Holocaust scattered all around the world hidden in libraries or archives only a small number of images are incorporated in our collective knowledge. Nevertheless, in the case of the Roma genocide those few photographs which exist fail to constitute an inherent part of the visual canon of the Holocaust. Considering that the Nazi administration “was so anchored in its habit of recording – with its pride, its bureaucratic narcissism – that it tended to register and photograph everything,”\textsuperscript{297} the lack of documentation suggests that Roma were deprived from all human quality and were not worth of being represented.

“Recovering the truth” of Settela Steinbach’s Roma identity communicates that Roma were part of the Holocaust, they were persecuted and exterminated. However its iconic status

\textsuperscript{292} Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 41.
\textsuperscript{293} Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 92.
\textsuperscript{294} Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 41.
\textsuperscript{295} Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*.
\textsuperscript{296} Ibid, 43.
in the visualization of the genocide as well as its density of information and experience challenge the widespread notion of victimhood by reclaiming the representation of Roma under the Nazi persecutions. To reclaim means to have a place in history. We have to know that Roma were killed under the Holocaust otherwise we will not be able to understand present day sufferings and formations as well as forms of discrimination. The reclamation of representation means to overturn dominant practices of visualization and optically challenge our perceptions of the world.

Nevertheless, the history as well as the dizzy drama enclosed in the image makes it as a common symbol of the Holocaust: it provides a new layer of understanding which places both the Jews and the Roma onto the same platform of historical experience as well as attributes equally significant role to Roma histories in European cultures and societies.

**Methodology and questions**

In this text I would like to develop a critical way of thinking while looking at photographs done on Roma. I choose the genre of the portrait in order to narrow my analysis, which genre by definition was applied to the depiction of human subjects. I start with the exploration of the representation of Roma by the Nazi regime and in the second half of the text I turn to the representation of the Nazi genocide of Roma in contemporary art.

What alerts me to that I would like to argue about is a significant difference in the contemporary image repertoire of the persecutions, violence or discrimination. I argue that the imaginary of the Holocaust has strongly defined the visualization of the Nazi genocide of Roma. As a matter of fact due to the belated appearance of the Roma genocide its representation was barely conditioned on realism or “mourning” – in LaCapra’s sense – which are necessary steps towards “working through” the event and developing an understanding of it, but rather on contemporary concepts such as imagination, re-enactment, postmemory or the re-appropriation of photographs. However – and as a consequence of the above – when it comes to contemporary representations of discrimination and violence (such as the so-called series of Roma killings in 2008-2009 in Hungary) there is a conceptual repetitive recycling of certain themes originated from “Holocaust images”. The application of these themes invokes the potential of dehumanization of the Nazi regime and “activate a set of cultural codes that projects false meanings and lies onto the portrayed subjects,” which was once used by the Nazis.

---


299 Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History*, 112.
Ranciere claims that as a consequence of the characteristics of the Holocaust photography as being obscene and less artistic one shall give an ethical and political response to them instead of looking at them from an aesthetic point of view “with eyes that have already contemplated Rembrandt’s skinned ox and all the forms of representation which have equated the power of art with obliteration of the boundaries between the human and the inhuman, the living and the dead (...).” However in this text I follow the road which Ranciere declines to take and argue that only the unfolding of the aesthetic structure of images could make one respond in an ethical and political way. Thus an aesthetic analysis is required, not form an ontological but from a rhetorical point of view, to discover the role of aesthetics it plays to present knowledge, meanings, structures or relations by photographic means. I believe that this analysis will bring us closer to questions such as: How do we see the symbols of racial difference? Does the discourse on the representation of race reify racial difference? These questions would be the starting point for the investigation of a deeper political and ethical dilemma about race in our present environment. In particular I am interested in the ways in which we see race, how the signs and symbols become apparent in our senses, thus how race is conceptualized in our visual domain.

Representations of Roma by the Nazi regime

Photography was used as a tool to convey messages to the German public, to communicate the recognition of Jews and other groups as enemies of the Reich as well as to document the humiliation and extermination of those groups of people. Its abundance was a sign of self-confidence, pride and bureaucratic narcissism. Professional photographers were employed by the Reich Press Chamber, a subdivision of Goebbels’s Propaganda Ministry between 1933 and 1939, and were commissioned to preserve for the future the first steps of the building of the Reich including all sorts of events such as the parades, atrocities towards Jews, sports events or the portraits of the leaders. Following the break-out of the World War most of the photographers and journalists were placed under the auspices of the Propaganda Kompanien, a military propaganda division of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Their task was two-folded: to record Nazi victories and to chronicle the extermination of the Jewish population. Besides the official documentation of massacres, forced marches and cold-blooded killings, there is

300 Idem. 27.
302 In Milton; I would add Hitler’s obsession of his image and the importance he attributed to it. For example in the Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich, a Nazi art magazine often published his portrait in various styles.
another pile of images taken by amateur photographers – soldiers, officers, bystanders, partisans and resistance fighters – which consist of still from everyday life, photos of landscape, of daily routines or occasionally of their free time. More than one hundred thousand photographs were taken to the Eastern Front in order to make use of this novelty of technology and to expose the view to light and then make it visible on paper. It was possible to purchase albums titled *Zur Erinnerung an Meine Dienstzeit* produced for this special occasion of serving at the Front and the soldiers created a visual narrative of their experiences in them. These images offer a new perspective to look at past events, through the eyes of amateur photographers whose intentions were not exclusively and unambiguously motivated by purposes of propaganda. Finally, the third valuable component of the archive of Holocaust images is the collection of photos taken by prisoners. Although the Nazis believed that the exterminations went invisibly, photography was used as a tool of resistance in the hand of the Jews who managed to break the prohibition of photographing several times and hid or smuggled out images in order to make known what was rendered under the veil of forgetting and of invisibility. Despite “notices put up on the walls and fences around the camps: »Fotografieren verboten! No entry! You will be shot without prior warning!«” or “the circular sent around by Rudolf Höss, the commander at Auschwitz, dated February 2, 1943: »I would like to point out once again that taking photographs within the camp limits is forbidden. I will be very strict in treating those who refuse to obey this order,«” members of the Sonderkommando in the summer of 1944 succeeded in snatching four photographs from Auschwitz to the Polish Resistance in Krakow. Or Mendel Grossman created an archive of 10.000 images of the Lodz ghetto. As he worked for the photographic laboratory of the Statistics Department of the ghetto the equipment was accessible which he disguised under his coat and while he was strolling through the ghetto he documented the life of it, secretly. The negatives were folded into a tin can and buried in his apartment.

This chapter focuses on ID photos which were produced for the purpose of complicity by professional, although anonymous, photographers of the Nazi regime. As a type of portraiture, the ID photograph was less the honorifical presentation of the self but rather the evidence of deviance and social pathology and was introduced as part of the set of measures

304 Ibid, 40
306 Ibid. 23
307 Ibid
308 Ibid
taken against, in our case, the Roma population. The registration of Roma and Sinti in the German lands started in the end of the eighteenth century. An anti-Roma agency was established in spring 1899 called the Central Office for Fighting the Gypsy Nuisance [Nachrichtendienst in Bezug auf die Zigeuner] in Munich commanded by Alfred Dillmann, lawyer and the chief of police in Bavaria, to start cataloguing and registering Roma over the age of six. This not only meant getting more information on Roma but also obtaining their fingerprints, genealogical data and photographs. The activity of Dillmann and his organization had two major consequences. First, these date made the backbone of Dillmann’s Zigeuner-Buch, published in 1905, which stated that Roma people are a “pest” with which the society must collectively combat as well as legalized the use of police forces against the “Gypsy menace.” The first part of the book justified the control over Roma by the majority society, the second part introduced the register of approximately 5,000 Roma and Sinti identified by Dillmann, and the last section of the book was a collection of photographs of Roma and Sinti. Second, there was a conference organized in December 1911. The conference considered the Zigeuner-Buch as a frame of reference and initiated to expand the scope of it incorporate six other German states to identify their Roma and Sinti population. The anti-Roma unit was in operation until 1970.  

The Munich register meant a source of inspiration for many of the surrounding countries of Germany, such as France (1912) which introduced the compulsory registration of Roma, including fingerprints and photographs, or Switzerland which petitioned (1909) for the establishment of a network among countries for the exchange of Roma records. In 1922 all German Roma and Sinti over fourteen had to carry identity cards with their photographs.

Hungarian authorities were not exceptional in this subject-matter either. Although the census in 1893 sub-categorized Roma according to their lifestyle as traveller, settled or semi-settled, it was not followed by any legislative consequences. Still, the situation of Roma within the Hungarian society was gradually deteriorating from the turning point of the twentieth century due to various reasons such as economic disintegration, the ever more presence of authorities in private life and their segregationist and discriminatory activities or the emergence of new extreme ideologies. Small conflicts brought into the limelight bigger and deeper social tensions, most of the time under the cover of ethnic hatred. This happened in the case of the Dános-killings in 1907 when the owner of a pub, his family and a truck

---

310 Csaba Dupcsik, *A magyarországi cigányság története.*
311 Ibid. 85.
driver were killed at Dános and a group of Roma people were accused of committing the crime. Considering the case there were just a few public voices which critically approached the sentence however it was cumulating into an increase in labelling and imprisoning Roma as criminals. In 1909 the animals and wagons of Roma were confiscated and received a permanent branding for identification.\textsuperscript{312} Article No. XXI/1913 on “vagrants who are public menace” mentioned that traveller Roma and criminals were chargeable and could be obliged to do communal work.\textsuperscript{313} Then No. 15000/1916 ordered a census for traveller Gypsies and a few years later police round-ups were legalized.\textsuperscript{314} Since their life-style was recognized as different from that of the majority’s, labelled as deviant or criminal, Roma were forced to settle down which granted the illusion of normalization. However, parallel to the efforts to outlaw nomadism, in the 1920s and 30s more and more European local and regional authorities introduced the registration of their Roma and Sinti population, and the Hungarian authorities acted accordingly. The issued a special “Gypsy pass” which contained a data-page about the pass holder: name, date of birth, address, religion, marital status, issuing authority and date of issue, while on the other page there was the photograph of the person and a list of his/her outer attributes: height, shape of face and nose, colour of hair and eyes, moustache, beard, missing teeth and any special characteristics. Finally there comes the pass holder’s signature which was most of the cases his/her fingerprint.

The photograph of Erzsébet Horváth
Despite of its prevalence as an established tool to control the population countrywide only a few\textsuperscript{315} of the ID photographs survived the storms of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and found shelter in the archives. There is a black and white portrait at the Vas County Archive, Szombathely (Hungary) which represents a woman, called Erzsébet Horváth. She rests her left arm on her hip and wears traditional Roma clothes. The photo belongs to the Roma ID no. 59 which was registered in May 12, 1937 in Szentgotthárd. We know that he was born in Rábakethely in 1920 and lives in Kercaszomor. Her parents are Károly Horváth and Rozália Horváth. She is of medium height. She has oval face and her hair is copper red. Her eyes are blue and she has no missing tooth. She is Catholic and works as a day-labourer. Furthermore, we also know from researches done in the archive\textsuperscript{316} that the Roma used to live at the north-eastern part of

\textsuperscript{312} Hancock, \textit{The Pariah}.
\textsuperscript{313} László Karsai, \textit{Cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1919-1945.}, 54.
\textsuperscript{314} Barna Purcsi, \textit{A cigánykérdés “gyökeres és végleges megoldása”} (Budapest: Csokonai Kiadó, 2004)
\textsuperscript{315} For the time being without the intention to aestheticism or fetishism, Erzsébet Horváth’s photograph is the only surviving image of the Roma genocide in Hungary.
the settlement that was called “Böröce” and was surrounded with lands of low yield potential. In September 1944 one of the Roma was taken to forced labour while in November the majority of the Roma population in the county was collected and transported to Szombathely. In the 1950s approx. ten families were living there while a decade later due to better living standard they moved to bigger cities, such as to Kőrmend, Zalaegerszeg, Szombathely or to Várpalota. [IMAGE2]

Indeed, the portrait of Erzsébet Horváth did not come to existence to the worship of the human form but is derived from “the imperatives of medical and anatomical illustration and (…) the photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the other, to define both the generalized look – the typology – and the contingent instance of deviance and social pathology.”317 – argues Allan Sekula in his text, *The Body and the Archive* in which he discusses the “paradoxical status of photography within bourgeois culture.”318 The author argues that from the mid-eighteenth century the organization of the collection of individual portraits went along a paradigm based upon two different but interconnected disciplines: physiognomy and phrenology. As photography met these two disciplines, and was used as agent for the social categorization of subjects resulting a “unified system of representation and interpretation of the body,”319 it became more and more probable that it was just the matter of time when the criminal archive would come into existence. The development of photography archives for the police rendered bodies as traces (strong connection between the image and the referent – added by me) not just epistemologically but also politically, it was both an “abstract paradigmatic entity and a concrete institution.”320 The archival rationalization of photographs, which was fully developed by the beginning of the twentieth century has still been inscribed in the organization and interpretation of photographic meaning: narrative logic

317 Ibid.7
318 Ibid.1
319 Ibid.16
320 Ibid. 17. There were two leading figures of early optical empiricism, Alphonse Bertillon and Francis Galton, who as pioneers in the intersecting fields of photography and statistics set the grounds for defining and identifying the ‘criminal type’. Bertillon was not interested in the anthropology of the body but took it as a surface and with a technocrat’s devotion he aspired to ground the police’s work in the classification and categorization of criminals. Instead of creating a taxonomic categorization of individuals Bertillon worked out a system based on anthropometrics, physiognomy, statistics and optics in order to transform the body which had already been identified as a criminal body into numerical series and texts to overcome the disorder stemming from the un-systemathized flood of images. While Galton, the founder of eugenics, was interested in the search of criminal body, thus the identification and typologization of the body which “fits” or “unfits” into the imagined social order. Galton had faith in physiology, psychology and phrenology and created composites by a process of underexposing the images - “regulating the semantic traffic in photography” (Ibid, 55) –thus they would lose their unique characteristics and present only common features (although he did not have a faith in eugenically successful individuals stating that their bred stock doomed to mediocrity). As a matter of fact, due to this loss, generalization could be made and conclusions could be drawn from the composite of images.
can easily be overwitten by “optical encyclopaedism”\textsuperscript{321} and the direct or indirect “transformation or manipulation of their referent.”\textsuperscript{322}

The portrait
To portray the human form has been an inherent part of the history of humanity and of art. By definition, “unlike any other genre, the portrait demands the meeting of two subjectivities: if the artist watches, judges the sitter, the sitter is privileged, by the portrait relation, to watch and judge back. In no other case does what the artist is painting exist on the same plane of freedom and ontological equality as the artist as mediator rather than dictator or inventor so literally accentuated by the actual situation in which the art work comes into being.”\textsuperscript{323} The desire to represent the human subject appears as early as the Palaeolithic – Neolithic age: paintings, including human figures, animals and abstract signs, in the Lascaux cave are considered as the first manifestation of portrait artistry, hence the first visual records of human life. In the Ancient world the pharaohs of Egypt introduced the historic portraiture as a genre: Egyptian painters assigned central importance to the character of the Pharaoh that had a God-like power and status in the Empire. As frontalism “squeezes” the human and makes the body face forward while the head is turned to the side with the eye looking at the viewer, portraiture emphasised instead of the style the importance of the subject which was never realistically recorded but rather idealized and immortalized. In medieval Europe until the 1800s due to the costs as well as the sharp division of the society into the rich who shall be worshiped and remembered and the poor who shall be ignored, portraits were commissioned by the church, politics and merchants. In feudal Europe the wealthiest patron was the church and, consequently, while the artists were mostly “employed” by the church their subject-matters were shifting from human to Biblical references.

New winds were blowing under the Renaissance: instead of the egg tempera the usage of the oil-based technique provided a wider range of medium and a more nuanced palette of colours as well as light and depth; individuality and the human form became the central motifs of art; and the development of form and perspective was born out of the studies of the classical Greeks and Romans. Even though there were slight differences in the manifestation of Renaissance characteristics between the Northern and Southern part of Europe portraiture remained in the hands of the aristocracy until the beginning of the 1800s. As a result of the great discoveries and the development of a “Republican-sense” of portrait painting in colonial

\textsuperscript{321} Ibid. 58
\textsuperscript{322} Ibid.
America the superiority of the nobility was shaken however Europe managed to keep its leading position in defining the underlying principles of portraiture due to the fame of the Art Academies and to the well-functioning commission system.

The spirit of democracy that is the more egalitarian conception of the world gave voice to the burgeoning middle class to demand rights and also to find pleasure in all sorts of things which originally belonged to the aristocracy, and portraits were no exception. The new class with the sense of self-esteem and self-worth started purchasing portraits, however due to the narrower budget they could devote to this luxury, less expensive methods were developed in order to meet their requirements: the miniature, the silhouette, the physionotrace and the camera lucida. One important difference was that in the case of the wealthy, “a tension existed between the conventions within which sitters articulated their needs – those formulas deriving from classical antiquity – and actual practice. The sitters’ exaltation of naturalism implied that all the artist had to do to achieve success was to hold up a mirror to created nature, natura naturata, and produce a one-to-one pictorial offset of the person before him. But in practice the sitters’ lack of confidence in what natura naturatas, creating nature, had actually produced obliged them to exercise control over the image being affected of their features.”324

While in the case of the poor, they wanted the exact copy of their selves: by the 1840’s portrait studios opened in almost every city and most of them “catered to the public demand for relatively quick and relatively inexpensive likeness. These were often taken in assembly-line fashion, with no regard for aesthetics. Lighting was used simply to speed the exposure time and was not considered for any potential artistic effect.”325 Besides personal portraits based on the idea of likeness it was often requested from photographers to take a posthumous picture of children died in epidemics before their first portrait could have been taken, furthermore, natural sciences appropriated the camera to document the body or the image of female inmates in Surrey County Asylum in England.326 Through the course of time more emphasis was given to aesthetics and instead of relying on the system of personal commissions photographers “through portraiture, captured the life-styles of distant cultures. One common thread that binds these myriads photographers and projects is the manner of subject treatment. In photographing their subjects, these artists are not as interested in the individual, as in the person’s representation of an occupation, an ideological subtext, or a

326 Ibid. 79.
culture. Rarely do the photographs’ titles correspond with the name given of the sitters. Thus, these portraits must be seen in an allegorical or symbolic context. These portraits are visual symbols of a larger society.”

These artistic portraits do more than just the documentation of professions and status within a society. They represent the individuality of the depicted person. They make exterior what is essentially in the portrayed’s self. They make visible the values, richness and uniqueness of the subject by creating an exterior form for it. The portrait is at the intersection of four image repertoires. First there is the “self” which is to be portrayed and in which there is automatically authority placed. Second there is the photographer who on the one hand expresses his artistic talent with the colours, the choices of light and depth, the pose of the figure and provides the viewer with a perspective to explore the subject-matter. Third there is the “self” which appears as it wishes to be represented and fourth there is the photographer’s perception of the subject. As Hans Georg Gadamer argues, “For this means that the man represented represents himself in his portrait and is represented by his portrait. The portrait is not only a picture and certainly not only a copy, it belongs to the present or to the present memory of the man represented.” The desire to make someone’s portrait is more than just finding pure sensation in someone’s body or outer appearance. The portrait is at the intersection of material and divine: of the body and of the essential quality of the human. The task of the photographer is to create another reading of the image, a kind of semantic field which makes readable what the sitter is unique about. Gestures of animating the subjects, of hinting at their professions or of representing their inner essence are made to avoid materialization and to counterbalance “the micro-version of death.” In other words, the details of the portraits are consciously inserted in the image in order to save the human subjects from an absolute transformation from subjects to objects, from “myself” to the image as the other. The moment when the portrayer self is neither a subject nor an object but at the threshold of becoming an object that is when the “increase of being” comes about. As Gadamer argues, the portrait is equivalent with its referent: “A portrait really is a portrait and

327 Ibid, 83
328 Barthes, Camera Lucida
330 “The portrait is the very form of depiction based on the equality of the subjects and object: sitters and photographer have to make a commitment to the situation as human beings. If they do not, the picture becomes an illustration of an imagined relationship of power. To my mind compelling portrait depends on mutual readiness to acknowledge personal vulnerability and weakness.” Wolfgang Tillmans, quoted by Karol Radziszewszki at the “A császár új ruhája” (The Emperor’s New Apparel) exhibition at Trafó, Budapest, September 5, 2013 – October 20, 2013.
331 Barthes, Camera Lucida
332 Gadamer, Truth and Method
does not become one just through and for those who recognize the person portrayed. Although the relation to the original resides in the work itself, it is still right to call it occasional. For the portrait does not say who the person portrayed is, but only that it is a particular individual (and not a type). We can recognize who it is only when the person portrayed is known to us, and be sure only when there is a title or some other information to go on. At any rate there resides in the picture an undetermined but still fundamentally determinable reference to something, which constitutes its significance.”

The portrait of Erzsébet Horváth

The portrait of Erzsébet Horváth was made less for the praise of her values and uniqueness but rather for the sake of social categorization. Although it was the product of Nazi ideology, was taken by an anonymous Nazi, was issued by the local police as a means to identify Roma and control their free movement we shall not simplify the image – hence making an ethical judgement on it and consequently destroying all potential for exploring how it was appropriated in contemporary discourses – but understand the meanings and knowledge it conveys in a given cultural and historical context. The portrayed is standing and her hand is placed on her hip. She is wearing traditional clothes and has a headdress on. Her lips are tight and her eyes are daring, but a little bit disappointed looking into the photographer’s camera.

The extraordinary on this photograph is her bodily gestures. Although it is a document of destruction and was intended for public use it is a great portrait. It does show much more than her physical presence but also Erzsébet Horváth’s subjectivity. There is a semiotic unity between the signifier and the signified, that is, between the portrayed subject’s expression and inner qualities. There is much more than the total exposure of the body and than its defencelessness. It seems like the camera takes responsibility for the subject: at the peak of the degradation of a human subject into an unwanted creature, or in Barthes’s understanding while the subject is transformed into an object the photographer gives authority to the sitter to let her “increase in being.” However exploring the broader intertextual and cultural contexts of the photograph and considering the fact that this, alongside thousands of others, was produced for the criminal archive under a common system of representation and interpretation of the body, deprives the subject from its authenticity and stands only for accurate mimetic representation. The portrait of Erzsébet Horváth fits into as well as is defined by the series of ID pictures in which it was taken. Within that context the portrayed subject’s subjectivity is nothing but ethnic: besides the bodily presence of the sitter the portrait fails to grasp her

333 Ibid. 146.
essence but she becomes the manifestation of ethnicity. Her quality is a double-edged sword: it is primarily and only ethnic but this is what makes her disqualified as well.

A similar transformation goes on in the well-known German photographer, August Sander’s portrait series.\textsuperscript{334} The idea that the larger society can be mapped onto images is strongly connected to August Sander (1876-1964), German photographer, who after years of working in different studies established his own in Lindenthal in 1910 and started his major project titled \textit{Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts}. The idea to compose the true portrait of Germany based on portraits of people from all social strata came after finding the archetypal common man among Westerwald farmers. His first series contains 12 peasant portraits. Then come the groups of skilled workers and of intellectuals and the project is closed with portraits of the so-called \textit{Letzte Menschen} such as Roma, beggars or the insane.\textsuperscript{335} However due to his conflicts with the Nazi regime he had to stop working between 1933 and 1939, moreover his publication titled \textit{Antlitz der Zeit} was banned. He was unable to continue his project and turned to landscapes.\textsuperscript{336}

Sander’s portraits are soft, less ostentatious and the artist pays attention to the details while hinting at the profession of the sitter with the background, with the dress or the gestures or the objects placed around the person.\textsuperscript{337} However his conceptual approach leads to that “the significance of Sander’s portrayed subjects is determined by the series in which they are included and by the social context that surrounds them. Browsing through Sander’s portfolios we see repetitions of subjectivity rather than unique selves. In short, these subjects are not represented as self-determining subjectivities. The notion of subjectivity that is hesitantly emerging in Sander’s portraits is social.”\textsuperscript{338}

The effect of the Holocaust on contemporary representations of Roma
Images bridge across time and space, function as links in trans- and intergenerational communication as well as enable the later generations to touch the past, to identify with the

\textsuperscript{334} Ernst van Alphen, \textit{Art in Mind}, 27.
\textsuperscript{336} Ibid
\textsuperscript{337} On ‘The Persecuted’ portfolio: “The number of contact images that Sander printed for each sitter may not have been unusual for the taking of passport photographs at that time, but the variety of poses and the care with which he selected the most solemn, dignified image to print indicates Sander’s concern for those who commissioned the images. The numerous contact prints of the Oppenheim family reveal the number of shots and changes of position, even clothing, behind the final print.” by Rose-Carol Washton Long, “August Sander’s Portraits of Persecuted Jews” (April 4, 2013, TATE Papers, no. 19), \url{http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/august-sanders-portraits-persecuted-jews}. (Last accessed: November 28, 2014)
\textsuperscript{338} van Alphen, \textit{Art in Mind}, 27.
lost past world and to remember it. The memory of the secondary generation is entrenched in a collective imaginary, shaped not by the events as such but by the representations of them. Instead of de-sensitizing us to horror or protecting us from shock, the excessive repetition of images and the compulsive encounter with the photographic inventory of devastation establishes a generational structure of remembering. It invites the secondary generation to remember the past event but also to load it with personal meanings, understandings or aesthetic expressions. Their connection to the past is “mediated not through recollection, but through representation, projection and creation.”

In the eyes of the secondary generation as well as in the trans-generational transmission of knowledge and experience Holocaust-images become survivors and occupy the status similar to survivors’ testimonies or other documents. The “(re)usage” of an image, its (re)emergence from the archives, its enclosure in emails or insertion into a white wall gallery threaten with fetishization. Our aim, however, is to consider the image as a means which shapes the transfer of individual and collective knowledge and remembrance. The focus is shifted from the gaze of the persecutors to the gaze of the successors, from voices to echoes. However I argue that Holocaust images do not only fulfil a mediating role in the process of dealing with the past but also violently re-appear in contemporary representations. When it comes to the Roma killings or to the contemporary questions regarding racism or discrimination the visuality of these issues resemble the Holocaust and block our understanding. Instead of making a dialogue between text and image in order to understand “what is going on,” the context is already saturated with the Nazi ideology from which neither the text nor the image is able to escape hence they become predetermined by the Holocaust. There was much argued about the state of forgetting in the case of the Nazi genocide of Roma to which the above mentioned phenomenon, that is the inter-textuality between the Holocaust and contemporary discriminations, contradicts. I would add that the current state of affairs does nothing but time after time, repetitively and visually executes the Roma, furthermore, deprives them from subjectivity and individuality.

The eternal image of the “Other”

It was argued above in relation to Erzsébet Horváth’s portrait that her image as one in the series of identification photos represents nothing but her ethnicity which meant according to

339 Hirsch, Surviving Images
the regime’s understanding social deviance and a stigma of “otherness.” Wildness, criminal behaviour, dirt, deviance functioned as primary markers of Roma and still, these images continue to inform the way Roma in relation to non-Roma are perceived and represented in contemporary Hungary.\footnote{Based on discussion with my tutor Éva Kovács. See her analysis: Éva Kovács, “Fekete testek, fehér testek. A “cigány képe az 1850-es évektől a 20. század első feléig,” http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/fekete-testek-feher-testek (Last accessed: November 28, 2014).


\footnote{Saartjie “Sarah” Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus.” was born in South Africa as a slave and then due to her large buttock she was regarded exotic and was taken to Europe and exhibited on human shows. More on it: T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999)

\footnote{A high degree of fat accumulation in and around the buttocks.}} Sander L. Gilman interrogates the representation of “blackness” in the iconography of female sexuality in late 19th century art, medicine and literature. He regards icons as manifestations of realities, as widely believed and known codes of the our world, as well as considers art, medicine and literature as pedagogical, performative and discoursive sites which contribute in the social construction of the “black” and the “white” bodies. Gilman does that by analyzing works of art such as Edouard Monet’s \textit{Olympia} (1867), Edouard Monet’s \textit{Nana} (1877) or William Hogarth’s \textit{A Harlot’s Progress} (1731). There is a special emphasis put on art as a system of representations which produces meanings and maps our understandings of the world. The author argues that in the history of art the black female body has become not only the sexualized other in the culture they live but also the signs of illicit sexuality. As he writes, “Black females do not merely represent the sexualized female, they also represent the female as the source of corruption and disease.”\footnote{Based on discussion with my tutor Éva Kovács. See her analysis: Éva Kovács, “Fekete testek, fehér testek. A “cigány képe az 1850-es évektől a 20. század első feléig,” http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/fekete-testek-feher-testek (Last accessed: November 28, 2014).}

The public discourse around and the pathologization of the prostitution added to the conception of the black female body and the latter was slowly bestowed with the inner and outer characteristics of the prostitute: the prostitute became the essence of the black female. Later the author goes into medical investigations and explores the ways in which the body of the prostitute became synonymous with the body of the black female. The figure of the Hottentots\footnote{Sander L. Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine and Literature,” Critical Inquiry 12 (1985): 231.} became the ultimate marker of black inferiority: “The primitive is the black, and the qualities of blackness, or at least of the black female, are those of the prostitute. The work of a student of Lombroso’s, Abele de Blasio, makes this grotesquely evident: he published a series of case studies on steatopygia\footnote{Saartjie ‘Sarah’ Baartman, the “Hottentot Venus.” was born in South Africa as a slave and then due to her large buttock she was regarded exotic and was taken to Europe and exhibited on human shows. More on it: T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and Primitive Narratives in French (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999)

\footnote{A high degree of fat accumulation in and around the buttocks.}} in prostitutes in which he perceives the prostitute as being, quite literally the Hottentot – an icon which embodies the difference between the European and the black. The perception of the prostitute in the late nineteenth century thus merged with the perception of the black. Both categories are those of outsiders, but what does this
amalgamation imply in terms of the perception of both groups? It is commonplace that the primitive was associated with unbridled sexuality." Finally, Gilman gets to the point that as a matter of the pathologies of the black female body, such as the genitalia or the buttocks, black bodies became not only sexualized but also diseased, deviant.

Exploring the genealogy of racialized knowledge and the ways in which it structures identities emphasises the need which each society acquires since its existence: that is the production of a group of people “as a fixed reality which is at once an “other” yet entirely knowable and visible.” Instead of the “Black” among the Eastern European societies the “Gypsy” has become the stereotypically racialized and eroticized “Other:” the “dirty,” the “uncivilized,” the “criminal,” the “poor,” the “outlaw” etc., hence everything that the majority is not or wishes not to be. As the Hungarian composer, Ferenc Liszt writes, “To our eyes this people seems to lead what is practically an animal existence (...) A race having neither any religion nor any law, any definite belief or any rule of conduct; holding together only by gross superstition, vague custom, constant misery and profound abasement; yet obstinately persisting, in spite of all degradations and deprivations, in keeping its tents and rags, its hunger and its liberty. It is a people which exercises on civilized nations a fascination as hard to describe as to destroy; passing, as it does, like some mysterious legacy, from age to age; and one which, though of ill-repute, appeals to our greatest poets by the energy and charm of its types.” Liszt suggests that Roma live outside of the European law and order and conduct their lives on the basis of a meaning-system created by them but recognized as primitive by the civilized nations.

In the age of Liszt the typical figure in the iconography of Roma was the musician. They were worshipped while they were playing and were depicted with dignity and as non-

345 Gilman, Black Bodies, White Bodies, 229.
346 Frantz Fanon, Black Skins, White Masks (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967)
Roma which was the pledge of their talent.\textsuperscript{351} The antonym of this image – the other side of the same coin – is the wild, uncontrollable, freedom-lover nomad. Photographers were rather interested in the latter since they regarded Roma as carriers of an archaic culture.\textsuperscript{352} Another reading of these images is that Roma represented the “otherness of our ownness,”\textsuperscript{353} the image of an internalized one which can be addressed in every Hungarian. This association of Roma with the inner human instincts, with wildness, with individualism, with the lack of control, with waste and with barbarism is a crucial factor to understand the figure of the Roma in thought as well as the hidden impulses of the Hungarian “self.”\textsuperscript{354} Although at the turning point of the century Roma were represented as exotic strangers,\textsuperscript{355} the gaze of the majority changed a decade after and looked at them as sexualized, illicit bodies.\textsuperscript{356} Similarly to the case of the “black bodies”, all the desires and fears of the “white” were projected on the “body of the Gypsy.”

The notion of subjectivity that develops in the portraits, including Erzsébet Horváth’s image, made by the criminal police, is ethnic. This does not convey however the essential understanding of the concept which would highlight “myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories and one or more common elements of culture, including an association with a homeland and some degree of solidarity, at least among the élites.”\textsuperscript{357} In this understanding ethnicity is a source of pride, of self-worth and is endowed with the power to demand recognition and control representation. However “ethnic” in the context of the series of portraits brings along meanings overlaid with the tradition of prejudice, suspicion, discrimination, supervision or inferiority. The notion of ethnicity re-emphasises their deviance as well as uprootedness and suggests, indeed following the totalitarian ideology, that they have no place in the world that is recognized or guaranteed by the rest. It goes against the aspiration of contemporary Roma intellectuals to translate Roma origin into a source of pride and a signifier of prestige, and reifies, imprisons Roma in their otherness. Instead of being the “uncountable” – which term implies that it is only the matter of time to be counted – Roma

\textsuperscript{351} Kovács, Fekete testek  
\textsuperscript{352} Szuhay, Az egzotikus vadembertől  
\textsuperscript{353} Mattijs Van de Port, Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild. Civilization and Its Discontents in a Serbian Town (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 154.  
\textsuperscript{354} Van de Port, Gypsies  
\textsuperscript{355} Kovács, Fekete testek. Painters such as: August von Pettenkofen, Johann Gualbert Raffal, Lajos Deák-Ébner or Lajos Kunfly. “The Gypsy attracted him because of their racial characteristics, their picturesque cloths, their habits and their original life style. The Gypsy is the Great Plain’s Bedouin. Although they own nothing – they are poor, like a dervish in the desert, they still have a worn tent, a hut similar to a gopher’s hole, a few animal, lots of children and they welcome and enjoy life.” Rózsaffy Dezső (1905). Quoted in Kovács.  
\textsuperscript{356} Painter such as: Béni Ferenczy, János Göröncsér Gundel and the majority of the plen air movement.  
\textsuperscript{357} Anthony D. Smith, Myths and Memories of the Nation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13.
become who do not count, the superfluous who can be exposed to all kinds of unequal treatments and who can “make live and let die.”

Marcell Esterházy: On the same day
The concept of postmemory embedded in the context of contemporary representations of the cultural memory of the Holocaust contributes to the re-imagining of the event, hence fosters the reconsideration of the portrait’s notion of subjectivity either. However the optics of contemporary phenomena of discrimination or racism re-opens the Pandora’s box of “Holocaust images.” Regarding the after-life of the images Barbie Zelizer follows images which were taken at the liberation of the camps by soldiers, army officers or journalists and which flooded both the US and European press in the spring, 1945. She argues that their truth-value, the need to bear witness – to take responsibility for history – and give testimony against atrocity quickly outruled their function of answering the unpleasant and probably obscene question of “what happened?”. While Jeffrey C. Alexander explores the process of how the Holocaust evolved from Nazi atrocities into a universal tragedy of humanity, Zelizer attempts to do a similar exploration in the field of the visualization of the Holocaust. She demonstrates that following the reserved attitude of the Western press towards photographic images in the beginning as well as the insecurity of how to present them, due to both the clumsiness of words and the lack of broader scheme of comprehending what was happening, images started replacing words and seeing became the opening of knowledge.

Images were first regarded as documents conveying information of the events and securing public belief then as testimonies, as “memory cues,” as Zelizer calls them, disconnected from all evidence, containers of already existing coded memory and not the vehicles of memory and has become “outer dimensions” of collective memory.

As it was discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of postmemory experienced a series of meanings and evolved from the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first to the reservoir of secondary witnessing. Hirsch is concerned about the better understanding of the past, thus postmemory – “retrospective witnessing” – is explored by photography: encounter with the photography and re-living the traumatic event in the visual

---

358 Foucault, ‘Society Must Be Defended’
360 Zelizer critiques and mourns about the loss of the variety of representation. It resulted the reduction of the repertoire of images into a couple of hundred-thousands, a canonical iconography, which we (and by “we” I mean contemporary museum-goers) might have experienced while visiting exhibition on the theme of the Holocaust.
domain has a traumatic effect, however it is different from the survivor’s since instead of re-experiencing it the secondary witness repeats the event. In this context repetition does not mean an entrapment in trauma but rather invokes a kind of transformation of aesthetics into ethics. It means that the repetitive emergence of an image offers new meanings to attach to it: the concept of postmemory liberates the image from both its original context and the viewer’s blindness to see it only through the discursive lens of the Nazi gaze.

Contemporary photographer, Marcell Esterházy works with the portrait of Erzsébet Horváth and merges it with another portrait of a young girl of Jewish origin in a two-minute long video. The author comments on his work in a short text in the following way: “On the very same day in May, 1937 there were two photographs taken of two girls. One is called Erzsébet Horváth, a 17-year old Roma girl from Szentgotthárd, the other is the 9-year old Mónika Esterházy at the courtyard of the Esterházy castle in Majk. On the same day, they were approximately 160 km away from each other. They were not, they could not have been, connected. One is a day-labourer who belongs to the lowest strata of the society, the other just had her first communion and is the fourth child and the only daughter of Count Móric Esterházy. In 1944 the 24-year old Erzsébet Horváth was deported to Germany due to her Roma origin. In 1950 the 22-year old Mónika Esterházy was interned in Kistarcsa without trial and was the prisoner of the forced labour camp for three years. Erzsébet Horváth never returns from the German concentration camp. Mónika Esterházy lives in Vienna. She is 85 years old. They were not, they could not have been, connected. We are, we must be, connected.” [IMAGE3]

Esterházy suggests that the Roma genocide is a social trauma that shall be the matter not only of a group of people but of everyone. By the gestures of depriving the photograph from its exclusively Roma context and connotations as well as connecting it with a family portrait from his personal archive the artist succeeds in revealing other layers of subjectivity than that of ethnicity. Since time and again the body of Erzsébet Horváth appears and then disappears in front of the viewer the attention is drawn not so much to her material surface but rather to inner qualities. As if the body which was central to the Nazi ideology needs to be distorted, or transformed into a ghostly softness in order to represent the subject as she “really” is.

---

362 The work of Marcell Esterházy was part of the exhibition titled: *Multiple Exposures. The Memory of the Roma Holocaust – contemporary reflections.* (Gallery8 – Roma Contemporary Art Space (www.gallery8.org) in Hungary, between August 2, 2013 – October 2, 2013) Esterházy’s work is available: http://vimeo.com/69806790
Péter Korniss and Pál Závada: “One Row of Gypsies. Twenty four contemporary Hungarian”
However when it comes to the representation of contemporary traumas the process of working through easily falls back into or invokes the Nazi imaginary. There was a book published at the end of 2011 in Hungary as the fruit of a cooperation between Pál Závada writer and Péter Korniss photographer. It is titled One Row of Gypsies. Twenty four contemporary Hungarian and introduces 24 people living in Hungary of Roma origin. The title hints at on the one hand the spatial segregation of Roma in settlements, and on the other, the operation of the Roma killers who were always targeting the Roma living in the last row of houses. The subjects of the book have come from different background, their age, their residence and occupation differs however the common denominator in their life stories is that they all are popular, famous and successful Roma people. The book aspires to be a referent to the American project called The Black List by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders and Elvis Mitchell. The two aimed at redefining the originally derogatory term “blacklist” which denoted marginalized African-American people thus chose a list of inspiring African-American people from various fields of life and both created large-format fine photographs as well as conducted interviews with them in order to provide an insight into their lives, their struggles and happiness. The One Row of Gypsies took this idea as a frame of reference and even in “style” aimed to accomplish it. The portraits on the cover, similar to the The Black List photographs, are simple, even puritan: all the profiles are from the neck up, the subjects are looking straight into the camera’s eye, a little bit smiling and apart from their facial differences there is no personal characteristics inscribed in them. Although in the case of this book one could see an immediate reference to the American project one also has to be cautious about the operation of the “optical unconscious” thus the making sense out of the images. [IMAGE4]

In the context of Roma in Eastern Europe this group of portraits invokes the Holocaust or as Van Alphen says, “produces Holocaust-effect.” “The Holocaust effect undercuts two elements of the standard view of the portrait. By representing these people as (almost) dead, [Boltanski] foregrounds the idea that these photographs have no referent. And by representing these human beings without any individual features, [he] undermines the idea of the presence in the portrait of an individual. All the portraits are exchangeable: the portrayed have become anonymous, absent figures. There is an absence of a referent outside the image, as well as

absence of presence in the image.” Hence, even though the portraits are live referents to the group of portrayed, due to their composition, thus the invocation of the “Holocaust effect” they do not signify presence but absence. This tension, the manifestation of the mediated and visually coded experience presents the “punctum” in these images. However what stems from the phenomenon of the “Holocaust effect” has further is the transformation of the portraits, which by definition celebrates a person’s inner or outer qualities, into indexes: they lose referring to essential features of subjectivity and become indexical works of “Romaniness.” The series of portraits – the composition of the photographs and the way they relate to each other creates that illusion as if the “row of Gypsies” could be continued ad infinitum – fail to expose their individuality and neither are powerful enough to articulate every singular life story, instead they deprive Roma from their singular existence and emphasize their likeness to each other, their exchangeability as well as their “row-ness.”

How does it affect our perception on the society? Sekula argues that each portrait in its own individuality is equal with the others, however in the public gaze they are immediately placed in an imagined social and moral hierarchy by either considered as “superior” or “inferior.” Due to the “Holocaust effect” these photographs immediately go through degradation and as opposed to the original aim, reify the inferior position of Roma. Since photography has a protagonist role in the process of recording and representing events, experiences or subjects, images as a parallel universe to words, structure our conception of the world. The hierarchy in the visual domain re-establishes or re-affirms an ethnicized social hierarchy and offers a perspective by which Roma become perennially inferior and marginal. Furthermore, through this status-degradation Roma can easily be conceptualized as both a problem and a victim. What strikes me when I look at contemporary photographs of Roma is that the surface of the body as a significant, if not the most significant interface in affecting the social optics of race is represented as the product of unchanging cultural and racial essences. Being Roma means to be in a cultural environment that is not lived but owned, which is an eternal and never changing, static environment. However, that environment is full of absences, it appears to be a “life-word” with no order, with a meaning system that is different from the majority’s, with a constant need for material goods. In this environment people are either childish, naïve or mediate pain, past or present sufferings. Either way Roma are represented as victims, as innocent preys of their social situation who could be pitied and towards whom the virtue of

364 Van Alphen, *Art in Mind*, 38.
empathy can be transmitted. This is an emotional state of affairs which arouses compassion and relieves the majority of their responsibility for the situation of Roma communities.
V. DISILLUSIONED IMAGES

The representation of the genocide in films

“I listen without looking and so see.”
(Ferdinando Pessoa)

“(…) Here [Gerasdorf, Austria] an American plane was shot. It came from London, we could have known that. It took off from England. Why? Because the two pilots died immediately. The plane crashed into the ground and the two pilots sat there fully equipped. Jews found them first and cut their clothes and parachutes. We might have got a piece from the parachute, but I am not sure. However we had a piece from the guys’ clothes... My mother sewed a bag out of it for the bread. We even brought one bag home from Germany and had it for a long time. It was a yellow, canvas-like something, their cloth. And in one of the pilots’ pocket there was a ticket, to a movie in London (...).”366 – explains István Gábor Benedek who was six and a half years old when he was deported from the Great Plain, Hungary, to Austria in 1944, and then to Bergen-Belsen. As a forced labourer he was first taken to Gerasdorf that was the outskirts of Vienna where he worked in a gas factory. The factory was one of the main targets of the Allies and was constantly under bomb attacks. Thus it offered plenty of sensation and play for the children. One of these entertainments was to observe the fall of planes, or to find and search through the shot pilots, to find their personal objects and memories. A piece of paper could have not meant anything for a six and a half year old child. He might have just sensed the importance of it, that up there only real treasures should have been brought. He might have just read and understood that piece of paper as a ticket later when he recalled his memories. And for the pilot? The movie could have been a key moment of a romantic night: an experience which was worth being preserved. The ticket could not have been for a newsreel but for a film which distanced them from the rigid, cold and violent reality of the war. He might have known that where he was heading to was recorded to a film.


and the recording of the events was not meant to inform but was a carrier of memory and evidence for the latter generations.

**Prelude**

Soviet wartime films were the first attempts to represent the persecutions. Soviets were recording Nazi atrocities since 1941 however on the one hand they avoided “an error common in Western films, that of treating concentration camps as the epicentre of the Nazi killing machine. Instead while they do not explain the factors, especially ethnicity, determining the different fates of those who entered the camps, they suggest that the death camps’ extermination function was primarily in all camps.”367 On the other, Soviet images documented death camps such as Majdanek, hence they (first) faced with the crucial dilemma in Holocaust representation: how to show the destruction which left no traces behind at all?

Of the mass murdering of the Jews, Roma, political prisoners etc. there is a two-minute long motion picture footage known.368 It was done by Reinhard Weiner, a German naval sergeant, stationed in Latvia in 1941. With the permission in his pocket to film he took a stroll in Liepaja in August. He was told by a soldier that Jews were being executed at the end of the park, thus, led by curiosity, Weiner decided to see what was going on. His recording – which he sent to his family but was confiscated by the Germans and then he managed to get it back four months later, developed it by Agfa, showed it secretly to a few of his comrades and finally sent it successfully to his mother’s farm where she buried it in a pigsty that was later dug up by Weiner who sent the film to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in 1974 – showed people standing around a pit while a truck arrives and people wearing a yellow star on their coats are running towards the pit and are shot by a firing squad.369

The first images of the Holocaust that reached the European and North-American public arrived at the end of the war, were taken by either the perpetrators or the liberators and were compiled into short documentaries or newsreels. They introduced the spectator to the world of the concentration camps; they showed the naked, under-nourished and starving bodies as well as the living circumstances or the clearing of the territory following the arrival of the Allied forces. They captured the sheer efficiency and industrial scale of the Nazi murder. As a matter of fact Bergen-Belsen was represented through the voyeuristic gaze of

---

368 Youtube, “Massenerschiessungen in Liepaja, Lettland,” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTg6wEVrWVE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTg6wEVrWVE). Last accessed: November 28, 2014.
the camera that was scanning piles of naked bodies while Buchenwald was represented in the context of Holocaust artifacts. Furthermore, commissioned by the US War Department, military photographers shot 2000 meter of film on the theme called *Nazi Concentration Camp*, later used for the Nurnberg trial, or it is worth mentioning Alfred Hitchcock’s contribution who edited a documentary, titled the *Memory of the Camps* (1945), on the Holocaust for the British Army. Billy Wilder’s *Death Mills* (1945) was born under similar circumstances. These first films of the Holocaust represented Jewish suffering and served as evidence to the Nazi crimes as well as to defeat scepticism or denial. They were considered as a frame of reference in terms of designating the Holocaust as a systematic, absolute, total and industrialized destruction. As Terri Ginsberg argues, these are the images which designate the Holocaust as the unspeakable genocide of all times.

The so-called Holocaust film industry began with the seminal work of Alain Resnais’ *Night and Fog* (1955) and more recently several popular films such as the miniseries titled *Holocaust*, directed by Marvin Chomsky (1978) or Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) or Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* (1993) or Roman Polanski’s *The Pianist* (2002) articulated public awareness as well as provoked historical consciousness. By “Holocaust film industry” I understand a shift in the making and editing of films in which not the Holocaust but its representation has become the subject. Instead of the true and authentic representation of Jewish suffering, the emphasis is placed on (all kinds of) victims and perpetrators: poetic documentaries were followed by “Hollywood melodramas which aped formally and ideologically some of the very earliest, pre- and immediate post-liberation films on the subject and which soon after were accompanied by U.S. network television interviews with survivors and traditional, explicative documentaries about the concentration camp structure and experience. It then passed into the post-realist, »retro-style« and high art films of the European auteurs, which eventually also were appropriated into a »New Hollywoodian« aesthetic format.” The production of these films is less governed by the idea of evidence but rather is considered as a vehicle of memory, in other words, as a tool to challenge memory, history and its representation.

---

372 Wood, “Film and atrocity. The Holocaust as Spectacle”
375 Ginsberg, *Holocaust Film*, 2.
The above mentioned cinematic cultural expansion was accompanied by a conservative shift in cultural theory which claimed the Holocaust cannot and shall not be represented at all – based on the imperative of Theodore Adorno, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.”376 The strictly disciplinary debate was opened up into a public discourse by the screening of the American television mini-series Holocaust.377 As a matter of fact it introduced the term “classical realism” in the discourse of representation denoting authenticity as well as triggered the historical debate between Ellie Wiesel and Andreas Huyssen on forms and limits of representation.378 Wiesel’s argument is inherently based on the unrepresentable quality of the Holocaust and criticizes the realistic, melodramatic or cheap emotional constructions of the experience. As opposed to Wiesel’s arguments Huyssen emphasises the need for all those conventions as bridges for the audience to engage with the memory of the Holocaust.

“Here There is No Why” – the gaze of the images
It seems necessary to dwell on the film Shoah, especially in this case, since this chapter is devoted to the analysis of documentaries done on the Holocaust. Omar Bartov said that it can only be made once, hence all the films made on the Holocaust after Shoah are necessarily different.379 However it is also paradigmatic, as Shoshana Felman argues, it is one of the two most important “conceptual breakthroughs in our apprehension of the Holocaust.”380 As Lanzmann said once, he believed he invented a new genre which slips through each and every category of filmic representation: it is neither a historical documentary, although the viewer would expect it on the basis of the first few minutes of the film with Raul Hilberg’s commentary, nor a fiction, although there are scenes staged and performed.381 The distinction is also blurred between the archive and representation since he refuses to use archival images and also focuses on re-experiencing than representing the event. It is a work of art dedicated to bear witness the extermination of the Jews prepared by the Nazi regime. Lanzmann’s enterprise was to collect survivor’s testimonies, especially of the members of the Sonderkommando, who were Jewish prisoners and were directly involved in the process of killing by cleaning the gas chambers, dressing off the dead bodies or feeding the ovens. He

376 More on this see Chapter 3.
377 Hirsch, Afterimage, 4.
378 Ibid. 4-5.
aimed at breaking their silence, their muted trauma and learning their secrets of “when,” “what” and “how” the most traumatic event took place in the past. Although Lanzmann conducted the interviews in a particularly radical mode, similar to interrogation, his collection of testimonies are priceless and by giving an absolute status to speech the film also played a significant role in both establishing the Holocaust as a singular event out of the annihilation of the Jews and making the notion of trauma central to Holocaust-memory in the “era of the witness.”

In his short, less than one-page long manifesto the director sets out the guidelines for approaching the Shoah in an appropriate and respectful way. The title of the manifesto is Here There is No Why [Hier ist kein Warum] which refers to one of Primo Levi’s recollections in Survival in Auschwitz when he describes his excessive thirst and that in the end he found and broke off an icicle outside a window “but at once a large, heavy guard prowling outside brutally snatched it away from me. »Warum?« I asked him in my poor German. »Hier ist kein Warum«, he replied, pushing me inside with a shove.” Lanzmann’s text is a radical statement on both the representation and understanding of the event. He argues that the “why” questions suggest “an absolute obscenity in the project of understanding,” since it becomes clear in a later text titled From the Holocaust to the “Holocaust,” he believes in the absolute uniqueness of the Holocaust which does not necessitate any historical understanding. Its uniqueness means that “it created a circle of flame around itself, a boundary not to be crossed, since horror in the absolute degree cannot be communicated.” Thus in the context of the singularity of the event understanding becomes the most trivial, disturbing and ecstatic manifestation of curiosity, hence obscene. The Holocaust is a muted trauma, an assault on communication, and “one must speak out and yet keep silent at the same time, knowing that in this case silence is the most authentic form of speech (...).” Hence it is historical perversity to ask “why” – only the negationist’s logic needed proof – and reduce experience into pure evidence which satisfies our thirst for information, abhorrence and sensation. Instead, he offers blindness as the synonym for clear-sightedness which blocks out all kinds of “endless academic frivolities and low tricks” as well as the “most falsely central question,

382 Wieviorka, The Era of the Witness.
385 Claude Lanzmann, “From the Holocaust to the ’Holocaust,” in Liebman et all.
386 Ibid. 30.
387 Ibid.
that of why” and gives space for creation, empathy with the survivors and identification. Thus a double prohibition is formulated in Lanzmann’s understanding of the Shoah: he proposes an absolute rejection of the image as well as disqualifies the question of “why.”

He declared the absence of the images of the Shoah and that the lack of images in the film stems for the unrepresentable nature of the historical event. Instead he recorded 350 hours of testimony and made the nine and a half hour long Shoah premiered in April 1985. The film refuses to use any archival images and considers the witness’ status as the only legitimate position in remembering as well as representing the event. Hence the film is solely based on the victims’ testimonies; also Lanzmann resides from asking any questions of “why.” Lanzmann began “with the disappearance of traces (...) and [with] the impossibility of telling this story” hand in hand with his refusal to understand which resulted a creative space for listening over 3500 hours of footage. “Not-understanding,” a kind of naive approach – that is much criticized by Tzvetan Todorov in his Facing the Extreme claiming that in order to have an impact on the future, to avoid the return of the same horror one has to develop a sense of understanding – to each one of his interviewees, became a core of his work.

In my analysis Shoah serves a point of reference. It has been influencing the filmic imaginary of the Holocaust and has become referential with respect to survivors’ testimonies on the one hand – discussing for example their narrative, their weight and role in the film or the narrators’ narrative and bodily re-enactment as well as the position from which they speak. On the other hand, the film is referential due to its usage of archival images (if at all), thus I will be looking at their place in the architecture of the film, their content, the relationship between speech, sound and image, as well as their intentionality, hence the type of gaze, let it be the perpetrators’, liberators’, survivors’, bystanders’ or victims’, they are marked with. The gaze of the images and the relation between sound and text gain special importance especially from the perspective of the secondary generation whose memory has been built not on events but on their representations, primarily on images. Thus pictoral

---

389 Ibid.
390 Except once: 1:33:52, Shoah II. “Why do you think all this happened to the Jews?” – in front of the church in Chelmno, with Srebnik and the religious crowd.
393 Kékesi, Haladék.
representation takes more powerfully the role of primer involvement and becomes less as an illustration rather as a form of representation equal with text.

**Contemporary Approaches**

Lately art, including film, engages less with the question of taboos and whether it can be represented but reflects upon how it is represented. As Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas argues images, let them be moving or still, do not provide an authentic representation of the world neither form they claims to truth and value but there has been a shift “from a narrow focus on questions of truth and referentiality in documentary film to a theoretical and historical concern with its complex discoursive construction.”

Similarly to Guerin and Hallas or to Marianne Hirsch’s concept of postmemory, Joshua Hirsch proposes a Holocaust film practice that goes against the realist that is moralistic, authoritarian, and allegorical representation of “holocaustal” experience. Hirsch argues that “there exists a period of time in the life of a society that has suffered a massive blow – after the initial encounter with a traumatizing historical event but before its ultimate assimilation – in which there arises a discourse of trauma.”

The discourse of trauma, in other words, the appearance of it in texts, films or images “gives one a language with which to begin to represent the failure of representation that one has experienced.” It is a shared language or a platform of mutual understanding where individual fears and concerns might encounter with a collective response.

Similarly to Marianne Hirsch’s understanding of the memory of the secondary generation, or to Cathy Caruth’s concept of trauma that manifests in narrative formations, Joshua Hirsch argues that when the first images, texts of the genocide appear they needs less narrative support to trigger trauma. However after a short amount of time “documentary images must be submitted to a narrative form whose purpose is, if not literally traumatize the spectator, then to invoke a posttraumatic historical consciousness (...)” Posttraumatic historical consciousness is the “experience of suddenly seeing the unthinkable,” hence in this phase content and form separate from each other and there begins a search for an adequate form to represent the content, but also it brings along the act of “upsetting” the spectator or disturbing the present.

---

395 It is Joshua Hirsch’s expression and means Holocaust-rooted or traumatic.
397 Ibid.
398 Ibid. 19.
399 Ibid.
Ginsberg praises Hirsch’s contribution to Holocaust film criticism, even notes that his monograph is the first text every published on Holocaust films by a doctor of Film Studies. As an explanation he argues that most interpretive paradigms in the context of Holocaust films arrive outside of the field of cinema studies mainly from Sociology or Anthropology. As he writes, “Holocaust narrative and experimental films are marginalized or ignored, as are critical analyses concerned with the specifically cinematic aspects of holocaust representation, including especially their rhetorical implication in the ideologies of holocaust reproducibility itself. The result is a series of conventional thematic and stylistic readings or, in an opposite – yet at times complementary – sense a congeries of mystical and theosophical speculation for which the holocaust emblematizes a category of belief rather than marks a node for its critical theorization.”

Another “deficiency” to which one encounters while learning more and more about the theme of Holocaust films is the lack of representation of the Holocaust experience of victims different from that of the Jews. The access to media and thus to global consciousness as well as conscience is certainly not equally distributed among victims. The reasons for the ignorance of the Nazi genocide of Roma as a central theme of films are manifold. It reflects upon the state of affairs, i.e. power relations, between majority and minority in a given social context, hence the marginal, invisible position of Roma and the majority’s ignorance conceals the Nazi genocide of Roma as a topic that is worth dealing with. Then, not only the low representation of film directors of Roma identity in the film industry but also the weakness of Roma politics in terms of lobbying for the recognition of the suffering of Roma under the Holocaust are responsible for the present situation.

The three films
In the following I will discuss three documentary films: Temetetlen holtak/Unburied Dead (József Lojkó Lakatos, 1981); Megöltétek ártatlan családom../You Killed My Innocent Family (Miklós Jancsó, 1994); and Pharrajimos (Ágota Varga, 2000).

All three films, which are subjects to my analysis, belong to the genre of documentary and made significant contributions to the representation of the Nazi genocide of Roma. Each was born under specific historical circumstances: Forgotten Dead was produced before the regime change, even before Lanzmann’s paradigmatic film was issued, You Killed My Innocent Family was commissioned for the first official and public commemoration of the

---

400 Terri Ginsberg, Holocaust Film... 3.
Nazi genocide of Roma, while after almost two decades of silence, in cooperation with the Holocaust Memorial Centre, Budapest, the film *Pharrajimos* was produced.

Placing the works into the narrative framework of the Holocaust it becomes apparent that they were born in three different periods of the discourse. While the 1970s and 1980s wished to overwrite the representational prohibition set by Adorno’s imperative and in respect to the survivors’ memories, the years of the 1990s put more and more emphasis on the experience of the second generation. The key question ceases to be whether the Holocaust can be represented and becomes the question of how it can be represented and mediated through art to make it graspable for the younger generations. Finally in the 2000s one could witness the development of a transnational space of memory in which its memory serves as a moral and political basis for action.

What interests me is the relationship between historical trauma and the form of documentary used to represent it. How are archival materials used in the films and would their repetitive presence desensitize the viewer? What kind of logic of archivization can be detected? How does the survivors’ narrative change throughout the films? What roles does the narrator occupy? Is there any specific aesthetics of the Roma genocide? What kind of political and social processes are behind the films which define their production? How can the memory of the Nazi genocide “integrated”, if at all, into the transnational space of memory politics of the Holocaust?

In the following I will explore each film in accordance with Joshua Hirsch’s contribution to the analysis of posttraumatic cinema. Tense (relationship between past, present and future), mood (point of view) and voice (“as the self-conscious unfolding of language”) are the three pillars on which I built the inquiries. I argue that the narrative structure in each film is strongly related to the given political situation and especially around the regime change it is meant to be central. The articulation of the testimonies does not only mean that the once invisible and forgotten history is reclaimed in the process of giving voice to the survivors, but also testimonies are endowed with a symbolic value. They generate an uncomfortable situation and make things heard what the public is not willing to hear or speak about. The “coming-out” of survivors of the Nazi genocide of Roma is, on the one hand, about the “what happened,” on the other, “what is happening.”

---

403 Ibid. 58.
1. József Lojkó Lakatos’ Forgotten Dead

In an interview József Lojkó Lakatos said that following his graduation from the University of Theatre and Film Arts he visited the Documentary Studio with a synopsis in his hands which summarized his idea of making a documentary film about the Nazi genocide of Roma. The Studio assured Lakatos of its support and the production was approved. Although in the billing section 1976 is indicated as the year of production for the 30-year anniversary of the Nuremberg trial, its movie licence number reveals that in fact it was released a few years later in 1981, which is by chance the 20-year anniversary of the Eichmann trial. This small delay might have happened due to the censorship which, as Lakatos recalls, intervened into the shooting as well as into the storyboard several times. Nevertheless, considering the slow process of how the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma develops within the cultural and collective spaces of memory of the Holocaust – it is worth mentioning that the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt recognized the fact of the Nazi genocide of Roma in 1982 or that the event was named in the early 1990s by Ian Hancock who introduced the term Porrajmos – the film Forgotten Dead seems to be an early attempt to represent the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma. As a matter of fact this “early bird” status explains the strategies of using archival materials as well as the politics of images and testimonies.

“...believe me, this is a true story...”

The ways in which the director plays with the dimensions of past, present and future in Forgotten Dead is not only astonishing but also significant. Similarly to Resnais in Night and Fog, Lakatos breaks with the classical tradition of the chronological time management of history and shifts easily between past and present, disturbs the present with flashes of memory and interrupts the narrative structure with compositions of images that as carriers of hyper-subjectivity shock the viewers and bring them back to the present.

Forgotten Dead focuses on the past but starts in the present. The opening sequence of the films begins with a montage of photographs of Roma among which there are portraits, photos of the poor living circumstances, of everyday routines or of family life. Following the first three decades in the genre of social documentary photography history photographers turned to their subjects purely by ethnographic or artistic interests. It pursued to “evoke sometimes just compassion, sometimes solidarity in the society. The artists did not always consider that important to indicate if the subjects of the photograph were eventually of Roma

404 Conducted by me on July 11, 2012.

origin. To them poverty was not yet ethnicized, hence they highlighted not its ethnic but its class characteristics. Instead of creating categories on the basis of ethnic or racial differences, it has been meant to record the human condition, also aesthetics and human dignity dominated the photos. In Hungary on June 20, 1961, the Political Committee defined Roma not in ethnic or national but in social terms, stripping them from the possibility to be recognized as a community as such but a social problem. “PR photos following the issue of the political decree (mainly by favour of and with the help of the party) demonstrate that the life of Roma changed significantly, Roma children go to school with joy, as a result of employment, adults managed to build their own homes and establish a consolidate family life while the local Councils liquidate ghetto-like settlements and provided new houses for the Roma.

Ten years after the decree István Kemény, sociologist, and his team conducted the first representative survey of the Roma population which managed to critically approach, in other words, criticize the optimism suggested by the photographs. Hence from the 1970s, social documentary photography has appealed to social sensitivity and has aimed to raise attention to social inequalities, poverty and injustice. It was a political reaction to the optimism of the Political Committee. The director’s choice of opening the film with a series of photographs taken in the second half of the twentieth century is a political act too. It raises the attention to the yet unsolved situation of Roma, to their housing and living conditions, to their marginalized situation being, not only topographically but ontologically, at the periphery of the society.

When one starts watching the film the moment of encountering with the montage might be shocking and unexpected. All the more, while the images are rolling there is a rhythmic, instrumental music played which instead of evoking empathy or inviting the viewer to find emotional fulfilment and give a positive response by just looking at and enjoying the images the music distracts attention and provides the viewer with a feeling that can easily become a source of discomfort and distress. Let us just consider the context that is the Nazi genocide of Roma, as well as the title, Forgotten Dead. One might rather expect shots of the Holocaust than contemporary images of Roma people. What purpose do these photos serve? What meanings does the montage convey? What is the relation between historical trauma and this form of documentary to represent the Nazi genocide of Roma? Does the state of being forgotten refer not only to the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma but also to the situation

---

407 Ibid.
and status of Roma in contemporary Hungarian society? Could the meaning of “dead” be extended and not only a biological condition but also to a state of affairs in which people are deprived from their human dignity?

Then, with a quick switch, the camera focuses and rests for a few seconds at a barbed wire fence. In Resnais’ *Night and Fog* a similar gesture takes place. Following an empty field the camera proceeds to show a barbed wire fence in the foreground. While the spectator listens to the commentary – “Even a peaceful landscape; even a meadow in harvest, with crows circling overhead and grass fires; even a road where cars, peasants and couples pass; even a resort village with a steeple and country fair can lead the way to a concentration camp.” – the union of image and text leaves no doubt that it is not an empty field and it is not a barbed wire fence. Neither the former nor the latter are ordinary but represent parts of a concentration camp. The fence is the threshold: the border between the inside and the outside, or on the basis of Giorgio Agamben, that separates life and death. It “guarantees the articulation between an inside and an outside, or between anomie and the juridical context, by virtue of a law that is in force in its suspension; it is, rather, a zone of absolute indeterminacy between anomie and law, in which [life and law] are caught up in a single catastrophe.” As the threshold between life and death, however, the fence does not simply mark the limit of living. Instead, it indicates a more fundamental indifference between past and present, in which it becomes impossible to distinguish them from each other. The fence is a “zone of indifference” in which the distinction between the history and the present is brought into crisis, hence it calls into question the meanings and attributes of the distinction, in other words, the relationship between past and present. Thus, the (since *Night and Fog*) iconic image of the past is framed by the present, and if one looks at the barbed wire it is inevitable to be drawn back to the past and to recall the memories, let them be transmitted, of the Holocaust. The fence represents memory, more precisely, the memory of the Holocaust.

This memory shall be nurtured and be cared for. The gesture of stroking the barbed wire suggests that it shall be guarded, reclaimed and tamed. Instead of approaching memories from a distance or cowardly masking it with the false concept of objectivity, the past needs to be personified. The wounds shall be internalized and worked through in order to be healed.

The film is jumping back and forth between the tenses by using alternately testimonies and archive materials. It gives voice to three survivors. The first autobiographical account on

---

408 0:01:40 – 0:02:10
the experience of the Holocaust is given by a man. He was 15 years old when members of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party collected Roma, including him, and were transported to Germany. They were supposed to fight on the side of the Germans, however, after a while winds changed direction and Roma were considered as untrustworthy and were deported to Dachau. “I will never forget what happened with us there. When we entered we had to take a shower, got striped cloths and a number” — recalls the survivor. The day after the arrival they were selected into two groups: those who are able and those who are unable to work.

“People were lying like the firewood placed under the gutter. Then during the daylight a small truck came, pushed by people. They packed three of four bodies or five, they covered it with a cardboard paper and carried them to the ovens, to the crematorium, yes.”

His story continues after the liberation of the camp. He slows down, stresses each word and says “The wild dogs, believe me this is a true story, it was true, that these people were pushed to dogs or the dogs were freed and then they tear into parts the humans. In the case of the crematorium, two or three bodies were possible to be burnt.”

The second testimony begins in January 12, 1945, “an unforgettable day of my life” when the survivor was taken by the Arrow Cross party to Komárom, and after three days was deported to Hannover and then to Dachau. As the man explains, the guards were becoming more and more nervous and started shouting “Los! Los! Marsch! Marsch!”. People were ordered to leave the train and marched to the entrance gate of the lager. As he recalls, they were not aware where they were heading to and could not take the meaning of the command shouting into their ears: “Mütze ab! Mütze ab!” Finally they obeyed and took their hats off. “There was an iron gate with an arch on the top in the middle of which there was the coat of arms of Germany.”

He explains the stages through which he was deprived of all his belongings and was transformed into a common prisoner of the lager. A “spectacle” he highlights was in the shower room where “were approximately 40 or 50 people holding each other tightly because the waterspout was intense enough to lose balance easily,” and he adds, that “not so far from them there was a dead body lying thus it was emotionally so concussive that we could not come to turn with the things happening around us.”

The third survivor is a woman who tells the story of her miraculous escape from death however she was shot several times. She, among others, was transported to
Várpalota and was put into an empty stable. The men were forced to dig a pit in the forest and later during the night the whole group of people was executed and shot into the pit. She tells that she was in the last transport witnessing the murder of his mother and father. Before the soldiers pulled the trigger she jumped into the pit, and although some bullets hit her and lost her child she managed to survive. While she talks she shows the scars of the bullets.

As it was argued before, Holocaust produced standardized relations based upon and defined by the Western Jewish Holocaust narrative and becomes the model for remembering and renders exclusive significance to the victims and their testimonies, in other words the legitimate speaker who can give an authentic and therefore true account of the past is the traumatized victim. What is striking in these above mentioned three testimonies is the status of the narrator that is different from the latter canonized memory of the Holocaust. That is to say that instead of reiterating their own individual sufferings and trauma, they speak as eyewitnesses of the past and focus on the circumstances as well as the sequence of events. As a matter of fact they share with the viewer the procedure of entering the camp, or highlight the spectacularity of the shower room or, as the reporters of the past, assert the truth value of the narrative. The stories are told in order to prove the legitimacy of the term Nazi genocide of Roma; in order not to be forgotten any more. Similarly to the early narratives of Jewish witnesses which served as evidence for the judicial power to the brutality and destruction targeted Jews, Roma witnesses give a precise account of the past to establish and validate the facts of the persecution of Roma under the Holocaust. These testimonies do not represent individual or collective sufferings or even if personal trauma comes up in the story it becomes speechless, as the most emblematic scene, the woman survivor’s mute narration of her wounds shows.

In-between the narrations there are short montages of images. For a few second pictures of the ovens, the latrines and the beds show up, then the viewer sees the barbed wire fence again and the landscape, later there are images of trains and bodies. Furthermore, there is one moment when the second narrator talks about arriving to Dachau the viewer sees for the flash of a moment the gate of Auschwitz. Images are used as visual tools for the illustration of the events. Instead of regarding them as documentary sources of the past, the handling of visual materials suggests that on the one hand they serve to visually explain, demonstrate and interpret past events, on the other hand, their acquisition signifies and

---

419 The film was entirely shot in Hungary and the concentration camp-like background was borrowed from the film Victory (1981), directed by John Huston. The film was also made in Hungary and its story is based on a soccer game between the Nazis and the allied POWs.
advocates the inclusion of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma in the canonized Holocaust memory. The latter point indicates that by the time the *Forgotten Dead* was produced the Holocaust as a form of cultural memory had already developed itself into a remembering praxis. Its semiotic, textual and visual universes were gradually taking shape after the war and gained extra speed in the 1960s when Eichmann was put on trial in Israel in 1961 when the transformation of private into cultural or collective trauma began. Lakatos explores and draws on Resnais’ *Night and Fog*: the selection of images that are already canonized and iconic represent a conscious effort on behalf of the director not only to introduce that part of history to the public but also to canonize it, in other words, to make it equally a part of the Holocaust. Regarding the composition of images not only does the film visualize the past but also generates a mixture of the past and the present. The editing presents a modernist montage in which past and present are compiled not after but next to each other which technique delivers the meaning that the traumatic experiences of the past shall not and cannot be forgotten but they are haunting our present. Hence, it is crucial to nurture the past – as the stroking of the barbed wire fence suggested too – that is to deal with and work through the trauma as the only way to live in a better future.

“*Is it possible to shoot at a cross?*”

There are two types of self-consciousness in the film: formal and historical. By formal I mean, following the path of Joshua Hirsch, the very form of the film. “There is a degree of self-consciousness implicit in the film’s rigorous experiments with documentary form. (...) The film thus presents itself as something to simply to be looked through, but also to be looked at.” The use of the modernist montage or the application of the documentary form by giving voice to survivors as well as the dialogue between text, voice and image emphasise the exceptionality of the film, its novelty not only in its content but also in its form.

By historical self-consciousness I mean the conscious and committed representation of history, not only through the eyes of the survivors but also through the lens of the historian. It provides evidence of the Nazi genocide of Roma by introducing three survivors and letting them speak, however the authority of the historian is required to “approve,” in other words, to legitimize and support the narratives by facts and figures.

*Forgotten Dead*’s point of view is characterized by an oscillation between the classical form of narration that is the historian’s and the narration from the historical subject’s position, which is the witness’. This latter is position is two-folded: the position of the survivor/witness

---

420 On the basis of Hirsch: *Afterimage*....
who testifies and explains what happened in the past and the position of the secondhand witness, like the film director, whose memories are transmitted and whose understandings of the past are both fuelled and mediated by the testimonies, the landscape, the images, as well as by his/her own investigations and researches.

The film includes autobiographical accounts of Lakatos. The camera is inside the house looking out of the window to which a violin is leaned. There is a woman outside who is wearing a white wedding dress and looking herself in a small mirror. Then she looks into the room and stares at someone. Then the camera moves a little and focuses on the mirror next to the window: a man is approaching. He is wearing a white shirt. He comes to an abrupt halt, a gun is fired and the mirror breaks into pieces.421 Later, another scene starts with the same composition however instead of the figure of the man in the mirror the woman appears holding a candle in her hand. The mirror is hit by some bullets but breaks into pieces more slowly and the viewer can still see the portrait of the woman. Then comes a sharp cut and in the next scene there is a cross hanging on the wall surrounded with two framed photographs. One of the photos shows a laughing young woman while on the other there are two young girls smiling and sitting in a haycock. Suddenly a machine gun fires to the wall: the bullets hit first the photo of haycock, then the cross and then the laughing woman’s image. While the viewer is still hearing the gunfire the films shows pieces of the wedding dress hanging on the barbed wire fence and gently moving by the wind as well as archived photos of people hanging from the fence as they attempted but failed to escape from the camp. Then almost in the closing scene the woman, who turns out to be Margit Bangó singer, is wearing a black dress and sings a Roma song while she is walking among the barracks of the concentration camp: “Wandering, ey hey the Gypsies/They have no mother country/The great caravan stops by the roadside/The Gypsies are singin at the bonefire/Haay, romaaa hey, haay roma heey hey.”422 The film ends with the scene in which gunfire hits the table on which there is the violin, a candle-holder with a candle in it, a branch, a standing mirror, a burnt candle and the head of a doll. The gunfire breaks the mirror. 423

These dream-like scenes are saturated with references, metaphors and symbols either in relation to the autobiographical experiences of the director or to the memory of the Holocaust in general. The mirror appears in each scene and breaks into pieces. According to the popular conviction the broken mirror represents misfortune and disaster. Thus, if it breaks

421 03:44 – 03:55
422 In Hungarian: “Vándorolnak, sej haj a cigányok/Mert nincs nékik sehol sem hazájuk/Útszélén a nagy karaván megáll/Tábortűznél énekel sok cigány/Haaj, romaaa hej, haaj roma heej hej.”
423 14:26 – 16:37
it brings bad luck to the house for seven years, furthermore, it is forbidden to light a candle in
front of it because it provides free path to the dark shadows and demons of the past. Seven
years of bad luck stems from the belief that life renews itself in every seventh year which in
general would suggest that it needs at least a generation to work through the trauma of the
destruotions. The woman in the wedding dress with a candle in front of the mirror invites all
the deceased to take part in this project. Her look and her facial expressions seem inviting and
optimistic. However the mirror breaks again and the “gate is closed” to participate. Those
who were taken and killed or attempted to escape but died will never come back. The scene
with the shot cross might suggest a similar understanding. As Lakatos explained that “one
of my aunts told me that when the Nazis soldiers intruded into the shack, the children were
lying around they shot the machine gun at the wall. And she preserved it in her memory,
which the cross, which I still have at home, falls down from the wall. It was like the end of the
world. Is it possible to shoot at a cross? The bullet is supposed to spring back from the cross,
isn’t it? It meant that they were in such a defenceless situation if the cross, which she
inherited from the grandmother’s grandmother’s grandmother falls down. Practically
speaking, there is no protection in our life anymore, only despair.”

Similarly to the first narrator, in the closing scene Margit Bangó is walking across the
barracks next to the fence and is singing a song that laments on the destiny of Roma. They are
doomed to be on the road by reason of not having or being deprived from a home. The
opening scene of the film with the series of social documentary photos and the song in an
elegiac, sorrowful tone in the end appear to frame Forgotten Dead. This frame formulates a
strong criticism of society. It conveys the author’s concern with social injustice and the
maltreatment of Roma which culminated during the Holocaust but has not disappeared since
then and has been haunting Roma communities. The gesture of walking inside the
concentration camp suggests that Roma still experience the same kind of hatred and
marginalization. They are imprisoned in the past in both senses: the conditions between
majority and minority have not changed significantly as well as their memories and
experiences could not have been told. The political motivations behind the montage of images
and the song are to provoke an audio – visual encounter with the past that is still present, not
in the form of memory but as the manifestation of everyday experiences.

424 Extract from the interview.
Ágnes Daróczi was commissioned to be the head of the Roma minority programme editorial board of the Hungarian Television (between 1992 – 1998) which broadcasted on a weekly basis the 26-minute long Roma cultural magazine. Not long after she got into the position Adrzej Mirga, co-founder and chair of the first Polish Roma association whom Daróczi had known personally since the beginning of the 1980s, visited the Hungarian Television. The fact that the Hungarian Television had a Roma programme, all the more it was led by Roma captured great international attention and became well-known throughout Europe and we welcomed a number of television studios. Adrzej Mirga who started to organize the commemorations of the 50-year anniversary in 1992 approached us and me as a TV programme editor to initiate a broad international project (...). The project to commemorate on the 50th anniversary of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma was due August 2, 1994. Daróczi arranged some meetings with the management of the Hungarian Television but as she recalls they “did not get the green light to move forward with the project.” Even though the permission was not granted yet Daróczi and her team began to research this field of history and started to record interviews with survivors. “Necessarily we aimed to include in the process civil organizations. In May 1994 there were the elections in Hungary. The elections had an effect on the internal structure of the Television.” The initiative was finally supported and it was to edit a 7-hour-long Roma programme on August 2, 1994. It consisted of that programmes which focused on various aspects of the life of the Roma minority characterized the broadcasting on that day. “As a consequence it turned out that our archival work did not happen in vain. Jancsó Miklós undertook the role of the director of the film which was considered as a tribute to the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma. The Roma Folklore Band and Association for the Protection of Traditions from Kalocsa had a performance which based on the re-enactment of the ritual of cease mourning and which they had staged years before. We basically put together a survivor, Zsuzsa Horváth’s testimony and this re-enactment performance for the 50th anniversary.” Then Daróczi adds as an explanation for the birth and structure of the film that “50 years after the event it is time to tell what happened and the most authentic is the survivor’s testimony and since 50 years passed and we may cease mourning as well as publicly express sorrow for our dead. Finally we wanted this experience to be part of the public discourse and public policy making. Although we failed to

425 On the basis of the interview I conducted with her in 20/June/2012.
426 As Ágnes Daróczi mentioned in a personal conversation with her, the programme broke 52 years of silence: they received a phone call from Lajoskomárom from a person who started talking about past events which resulted a film directed together with Miklós Jancsó titled Temetetlen holtak.
achieve that the government or the Prime Minister or the President of the Republic offers official apology for Hungary’s role in the Holocaust on the screen of the Television”, the then Prime Minister Gyula Horn wrote a letter in which he expressed remorse for the deeds of the Hungarian nation.

The film was born in a social context which recognized the necessity of the ritualization[427] of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma. This generation of relatively young, politically independent Roma intellectuals intended to institutionalize memory, as a matter of fact through the erection of public memorials or through public commemorations. The safeguarding of the memory of the Nazi persecutions was meant first to forge relations among Roma, to give voice to “their own history,” and second to demand recognition and legitimation on behalf of the majority. Regarding the latter Roma agents mobilized Nazi genocide of Roma memories and engaged in the discourse on the Holocaust speaking from the victim’s point of view, thus through the recognition of their sufferings in Hungarian history’s shameful event they would gain a legitimate place in Hungary as such. The film as a media that is widely accessible and is able to approach masses played a significant role in both processes.

“*We already knew it from hearsay*”
The film begins, similarly to Lojkó Lakatos’, with a slide-show of images and scenes. The first half of the series let the viewer associate immediately with the Holocaust: barbed-wire fence; railways; a landscape decorated with chimneys; mourning people wearing traditional dresses; a portrait of a supposedly Roma woman; candles; barracks and the barbed-wire fence closes the first half of the series. Then the following images give a hint of the life of Roma in contemporary Hungary. From a bird’s eye view the spectator sees the row of Roma houses of a settlement, then Roma people in traditional clothes, then a little boy performs a jump in front of the camera, trips over a piece of wood, smiles into the camera and turns away. Following a Roma woman in a colourful dress who leaves a group of men and walks toward the camera the series ends with the camera takes pleasure in observing a horse as it is running free and wild.

Instead of using archival images the film navigates the viewer in the present that is much defined by the memory of the Holocaust, as the sequence of images as well as the weight of the Holocaust images – that is the amount of time they take up – suggest. At first sight they might be considered as Jewish visual icons and hence could be easily channelled

---

427 Péter Szuhay, “A holokausztól a pharájmosig”

128
into the discourse of Holocaust representations developed under the Jewish understandings of the event. The articulation of memories in the shadow of the Jewish Holocaust aims to help the viewer understand, position as well as recognize the history of Roma by providing a well-known frame of comprehension and reference. Images as not only sings but actors on the stage of history tell the story of the Nazi genocide of Roma in a way that it has no uniquely or essentially Roma presence. However I would add that as a matter of the lack of Holocaust images with a specifically Roma content or aesthetics, footages of the mourning crowd of Roma people help place the images in the context of the persecutions of Roma. The series also suggests that despite the absence of traces the memory of the Holocaust constitute an inherent and essential part of collective identity. The memory manifests itself as well as is kept alive and protected in public commemorations. The first Nazi genocide of Roma memorial was erected in 1991 in Nagykanizsa and the second one in 1993 in Nyíregyháza. Since then commemoration ceremonies have been held and “intellectuals (including Ágnes Daróczi – added by me) who are devoted to as well as acting along civic values and civil rights have started remembering, celebrating the past. Their programmes have become ritualized and the cultural institution of mourning has been developed. At an early stage politics was missing however later its participation was gradually increasing and becoming more and more intensive.”429 In the beginning of the 1990s commemorations represented a source of pride and the reclaim of history.

Having another look at the opening sequence of the film what strikes the viewer is that every image and scene carries in itself the idea of self-esteem and self-consciousness, all the more, the hope that despite the tragic past events continuity, the traditions of Roma communities can and shall be maintained. In other words, the existence of Roma testifies for the Holocaust which is internalized and became a constitutive element in the definition of “who we are.” The visual representation of self-esteem finds its sources in traditions and in the strength of the woman and man and family and of familial relations as well as in the signification of existing historical modes of seeing the world such as through the icon of the horse.

Following the slide-show Zsuzsa Horváth gives an account of her memories. The attention is directed to what the testimony says, thus there are no more images included in the film neither as illustrations nor as historical actors. The camera rests on the witness, eagerly

429 Szuhay, “A holokausztól a pharrajimosig”
and curiously explores her figure, never misses any of her gestures and entrusts the viewer to imagine the rest such as the character of the interviewer or the material world around the two of them. The narration begins with the description of some of the circumstances before Zsuzsa Horváth was deported. “We already knew it from hearsay that the men had been deported but we never thought that the women or the children would be taken away as well.” Her family was sleeping when the door was knocked by the police and they did not have enough time to hide. It was said that they would be taken to Sárvár to the sugar factory to work and so they chose the 14-year old Zsuzsa Horváth and his father. Approximately one hundred-twenty Roma were listed to leave the settlement, Torony. As a result of the effort of an influential local man in the end only Zsuzsa had to leave from the family, and her father as the only remaining breadwinner stayed. Roma were gathered in Szombathely and were entrained under the veil of the night and carried first to the fortress of Komárom and then to Germany. “We were suffering there so much that maybe our Christ suffered even less than we children. They did not give us anything to eat and we had lice so it was terrible.” She mentions the early wake-ups, two-hour long standings at the Appelplatz, hard work and hunger: “We were crying a lot and were sick many times. We got bladder inflammation because we did not have proper shoes. They made us bold.” Although some of them were released free the majority were still kept under harsh circumstances and later deported first to Dachau and then to Ravensbrück. They did not have any place to sleep on the first night so they went down to the cellar to protect themselves from the old. There they found dead naked bodies piled one atop to another, “I will never forget it in my life, it was terrible!” Next day they were commissioned to transport the bodies from the cellar to the crematorium. Then Horváth explains that it took them a week to get a tent above their heads which they filled with straw in order to isolate their shelter as well as to form their beds. In the spring of 1945 the camp was hit by a bomb and Zsuzsa Horváth with her fellows from Torony – approx. 16-17 people – managed to escape. The Americans captured them and through the former Czechoslovakia the 10 of them got to Szombathely by train and walked from there to home.

“How did it [the deportations] happen?” – asks the interviewer the opening question following the hesitation of the interviewee: “What could I say about that?” The researcher

---

430 00:03:00-00:03:09
431 The Roma Holocaust in Torony was well-researched by Vera Schermann and Gábor Sárközi.
432 00:05:44-00:05:56
433 00:11:27-00:11:38
434 00:13:02
435 00:02:52
436 00:02:45
forms an interview situation and begins the interview with a question which already frames it however the interview subject may structure his/her narrative of the past. It is the subject’s freedom to choose the chronology, characters or the events as a means of self-representation and self-experience. Ágnes Daróczi, the interviewer, is interested in the Roma persecutions under the Nazi era and the reason why the interview situation is formed is to recount the experience of the Holocaust and to provide an empirical material for the researcher, hence her narration becomes a source for historiography. However it is always more than that: accounts of life story serve as practices of self-interpretation. It is the task of Zsuzsa Horváth to present herself as an autonomous, responsible person who not only can be called into account but also is aware of where she comes from and where she belongs to.

While the narrative of the Forgotten Dead was partly based on the discourse of historiography it was lacking the territorial and temporal contextualization of the persecutions, in other words, neither the broader historical context nor the role of Hungary was mentioned. The historian in Lojkó Lakatos’ film drew a strict narrative frame which put the emphasis on the Nazi Germany as the infectious epicentre of persecutions and only shifted to discuss the event in Hungary when it was occupied by the Nazis in March, 1944. While the You Killed My Innocent Family refers to Hungary as the country where the deportation of Zsuzsa Horváth took place, it also mentions – “We already knew it from hearsay (...).” – that the persecutions started before the invasion, hence not the German Nazi soldiers but the Hungarian gendarmerie actively participated in the violence.

“Let them live! Right? I think so.”
Continuing the above train of thought the narrative does not only interrogate traumatic past events but also articulates the possibility of healing. The narrator ends her story with a sense of reconciliation: “What else could have we done? The gendarmerie had already left, they left so what could have we done? It was not a clear-cut situation in the village who sided with them and registered us, no one was sure about it. You did not even search for those criminals, did you? No, no we did not. Anyways, on whom shall we take revenge? It did not make any difference for us then. We survived it, so what should we have done? Let them live! Right? I think so.”437

In Paul Ricoeur’s discussion in The Just, he claims that reconciliation “stems from an economy of the gift, in virtue of the superabundance that articulates it and that has to be

437 00:22:11-00:22:56
opposed to the logic of equivalence presiding over justice.”438 According to Ricoeur’s “pedagogy of pardon”439 only the victim can forgive and the act of forgiveness performs a corrective mechanism on the pathologies of memory. Forgiveness does not forget the act itself but the guilt attached to it. It is based on the notion of generosity that helps the perpetrator release from the burden of the offence as well as the forgiver to leave “bad memories” behind. However Ricoeur draws on the concept of the economy of the gift in his discussion of forgiving. For him it implies the intersection of passivity and activity.440 In his understanding the gift means an obligation to give which at the same time effects the quality of the relationship between the giver and the receiver and offers a form of reconciliation which opens up the possibility of a new moral order.441 While in the phrase the “economy of the gift” the latter suggests a creative re-interpretation of the world, the former denotes the broader social context in which one experiences the other and becomes responsible for them. This suggests that “the economy of the gift is one that can refigure experience and can reorient action toward upholding and respecting the integrity and the alterity of the other. It demands that the generosity be directed toward the other and toward the prospects of reconciling the disparity of social goods in more inclusive ways.”442 Hence the act of forgiving on the part of Zsuzsa Horváth, or rather, through her persona addresses the whole society and is an invitation for re-orienting already existing ways of being and seeing. It aims at establishing a new order based on equality, inclusion and mutual recognition. You Killed My Innocent Family is not only a poetically but also politically remarkable work of art. It carries is itself the opportunity as well as the demand that following the regime change and at the threshold of establishing a new structure inclusion shall be based on the forgiveness of past experiences. It acknowledges the responsibility of the older generations and that a better future is constituted by being accountable for one’s past actions and responsible for the other. The politics of the film becomes apparent in the second half when the Association for the Protection of Traditions from Kalocsa stages a performance which based on the re-enactment of the ritual of cease mourning. Through the performance Zsuzsa and all Roma – the individual and the community – deal with the memory of the traumatic past. They go beyond hatred and pain and unbind the agents, the perpetrators, from their acts. As Hannah Arendt

440 Ricoeur, The Just...
441 Ibid.
writes443 “forgiving and the relationship it establishes is always an eminently personal (though not necessarily individual or private) affair in which what was done is forgiven for the sake of who did it.” Especially in the shadow of the first decade of the twenty-first century I would consider the film as an optimistic piece of art. It was born in a social-political situation which yet carried in itself the hope that the peaceful coexistence of Roma and non-Roma is achievable and attainable. It envisioned a society which is not divided along ethnic lines but unified in the idea of democracy.

Besides social, formal self-consciousness can be identified. Instead of seeing there is a great emphasis placed on listening. Ears gain exclusive significance through the textual and musical representation of the Nazi genocide of Roma. To listen means to become involved in the production of knowledge: the listener becomes “the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time.”444 The listener does not remain passive in listening but participates in the narration of the traumatic event, that is to say that there is an immense role attributed to imagination based on what was told and nevertheless the relation between the narrator and the event is much influenced by the relation between the narrator and the listener. Participation manifests itself not only in empathizing with the victim but also in silence. “He or she must listen to and hear the silence, speaking mutely both in silence and in speech, both from behind and from within the speech. He or she must recognize, acknowledge and address the silence, even if this simply means respect – and knowing how to wait.”445

Thus the task of us during the narration is to practice solidarity with Zsuzsa Horváth and accompany her in the journey of reliving the past. Through the process of the testimony on the one hand we learn the subjective and historical understandings of the event on the other hand Horváth discovers what happened and comes “to know of the event.”446

The interviewer employs the voice of empathy.447 She occupies the position of the “responsive” and “unobtrusively present”448 listener which becomes apparent in her questions and remarks or in her tone. Her questions and comments are well-inserted and are always intended to comfort the narrator or to support her while working through the past and carrying out her function as a witness. The pleasant, attentive and assisting presence of the interviewer encourages Zsuzsa Horváth to share her story and also indicates that her story is worth telling.

444 Felman and Laub, Testimony, 57.
445 Ibid. 58.
446 Ibid.
447 She even calls the interview subject “Zsuzsi néni” which is a diminutive form of Zsuzsa as well as implies an intimate situation and closeness between the two.
448 Ibid. 71.
Although it seems that first and foremost the narration of the traumatized witness dominates the documentary, the aura of the interviewer or her presence on the threshold between visibility and invisibility, muteness and sound which construct the prevailing point of view. Similarly to what Foucault calls the “speech act”, Zsuzsa Horváth’s autobiographical account is an act of testifying of the persecutions targeted Roma. The testimony however only through the listener becomes discursively meaningful and gains an existence function. The question of whether the witness’ account is significant depends on the conditions among which it emerges. The conditions those are the network of rules are already set out and legitimized by the listener.

3. Ágota Varga: Pharrajimos

The art of naming has an ontological priority. In the act of naming humanity experiences again and again its “linguistic being” that is the communication, the creative expression of its own mental life. Furthermore to name what we shall remember is one of the first steps in the process of the formalization and institutionalization of communicative memory. “Silenced,” “forgotten” or “hidden” adjectives suggest in relation to the Nazi genocide of Roma that knowledge has been fragmented and that this past event has not yet been acquired an outer dimension and been transmuted into tradition or into symbolic forms of cultural memory.

Since Holocaust scholarship developed late to the Roma the time to name the persecutions came in the beginning of the 1990s. Ian Hancock, a linguist of Roma origin from England, came up with the word Porrajmos (devouring), as he recalls, “at an informal lunchtime gathering in the conference centre bar in Snagov in Romania in 1993.” He considered the word adequate however slightly modified it into Baro Porrajmos [Great Devouring] in order to make it more exclusive. Although there were other suggestions circulating the name Porrajmos was the most widely used and accepted, until Roma speaking various Vlax dialects expressed their concern about the word and objected its usage. According to their interpretations it meant among other things: “open up, rip up, gape, devour, show the teeth, yawn, glare, stare, scream, cheat, pitch a tent;” “a widening or opening up,

450 Katalin Katz, Visszafojtott emlékezet
451 Bárosny and Daróczi Pharrajimos
452 The title of the exhibition in 2004 at the Műcsarnok in Budapest: The Hidden Holocaust.
454 Ibid.
455 Ibid. Hancock quotes.
and by extension freedom or access”

or as Roma intellectuals including József Choli Daróczy, Imre Vajda, József Raduly and György Rostás-Farkas argued – a decade later in 2000 – the word had a sexual connotation. The book of the Roma Press Centre, a non-profit news agency which shared and delivered news stories related to Roma communities in Hungary and in the Central-Eastern European region between 1995 and 2012, fell prey to the debate. It published in English, Lovari and Hungarian languages, under the title Porrajmos and edited volume of interviews conducted with Nazi genocide of Roma survivors. As a matter of the debate around the name the editorial board decided to use the term Nazi genocide of Roma until the spirits calm down. Similarly, the film Porrajmos whose primary objectives were to teach about the persecution of Roma communities as well as to pay respect to the victims had the same fate and its name was changed from Porrajmos into Pharrajimos. The latter term was propagated by Ágnes Darócz and János Bársy as a Roma terms that stems from the meaning “spread apart.” Although Ian Hancock argued that Pharrajimos is the “source for the Romani words for achieve orgasm, vagina and prostitute,” the Bársy-Darócz couple made significant steps to canonize the term (and also argued that Hancock’s version is the result of mispronunciation). They, hand-in-hand with the staff at the Roma Press Centre were lobbying assiduously to achieve the inclusion of the memory of Nazi genocide of Roma and to have a Roma section of the temporary Holocaust exhibition at the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Centre, in Budapest, in 2004. The Memory of the Pharrajimos was located at the balcony of the synagogue and curated by the Museum of Ethnography commissioned by Gábor Székely and Éva Orsós. The institute appointed Péter Szuhay as curator who in close cooperation with Gábor Bernáth, the director at that time of the Roma Press Centre, as well as with Andrea Tóth, János Bársy, his colleagues and with the scenographist Márton Szuhay. The display introduced 12 testimonies – recorded by János Bársy, Ágnes Darócz, József Lakó Lakatos and Ágota Varga film director, hence all the directors whose films are under scrutiny in this chapter – and related photos until November 2005. The exhibition was accompanied by a book titled, Pharrajimos. The Fate of Roma during the Holocaust edited by János Bársy and Ágnes Darócz.

456 Ibid.
457 Correspondence can be followed: “»Porrajmos. Levélváltás«
458 Szabolcs Szita, Facts and Data about the Wartime Persecution of Gypsies, for School Curricula (Hungarian Auschwitz Foundation - Holocaust Memorial Center – University of West Hungary Faculty of Pedagogy, Faculty of Arts: Budapest, 2000). It provides guidance for teaching about the persecution of Roma communities by analysing historical documents and testimonies recorded and transcribed form Ágota Varga’s Porrajmos.
459 Hancock, “On the Interpretation”
460 Kovács, Lénárt and Szász, “A magyar Holokauszt személyes”
The production of *Pharrajimos* was fostered by the action of the Swiss government in 1998 when it was initiated to search and provide financial relief for Nazi genocide of Roma survivors. The local Red Cross organizations helped search and they were joined by Ágota Varga.

**“Certainly they are not alive”**

The film draws on the usage of both archival footage and images of the present. The former are primarily images of families (before the persecutions started), images of relatives, or archive footage taken mostly from Allain Resnais’ *Night and Fog*, such as the crematorium or the passing trains. Images of the past are employed on the one hand as illustrations of the narrative – especially in the case of the insertion of Resnais’ footages – or as historical proofs in order to visually support the narrative of the survivors which can be witness in the beginning of the film.

On the other hand in the case of the surviving images of personal archives they can be considered as outer dimensions of human memory, as the externalized versions with storage capacities of individual and collective memory. On the basis of Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes, both of whom highlight the link between the photograph and dead people, or between life and death, Marianne Hirsch says that the photo captures “only that which no longer exists, suggests both the desire and the necessity and, at the same time, the difficulty, the impossibility, of mourning.” Mourning is difficult primarily due to the lack of knowledge of the living relatives have on what happened in the past. As one of the narrators, János Bogdán says, “my father and my 17-year old brother were left there. They were taken, they were deported from Komárom right away. They were taken for good and never came back. Certainly they are not alive, because otherwise they would have sent some news from themselves. No one, nowhere, nothing.” Furthermore Hirsch argues that the image of the lived reality of the family is also the subject to the given social, historical and economic situation. Hence, in the film family photographs are placed in a narrative context by describing them and while they are discussed and looked at as remnants of the family they also reveal the socially and historically constructed ideal image of the family and its determining influence. By the ideal image I mean the ideal of the middle class that is the frame of reference for comfort, togetherness, historical rootedness, stability. Following the initial unwillingness, János Bogdán and his wife’s narrative is based and framed by a

---

461 Sontag, *On Photography*; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*
463 00:37:37-00:37:54
464 Hirsch, *Family Frames*...
photograph that was taken under the persecutions and which represents the family. However one part is missing as if someone tore it into two parts in order to cover one’s tracks or to destroy, hence to forget, or even delete, a part of the past. It might also suggest the aspiration or desire on behalf of the individual to live in a different social group. The violent removal of the gendarme from the photo leads to the re-contextualization of it. With this performative act the status is changed and instead of one among the many criminal records it has become an evidence of the historical rootedness of the family, a display of their genealogy.

The gesture of obtaining or winning back the photo from the Hungarian gendarme represents a significant moment in the life of the couple. As the man, János Balogh explains, “This photo was made in 1944. Deputy Officer Sárközi had an album, they collected and photographed us. I am not saying that he was taking the photo or the other because there were many of them, Hungarian gendarme. They did it. And I took it from him 15-16 years before.” Not only the photograph but also the power to frame the photo, thus the construction of “our own image” was taken back. On the basis of the image the understanding of the past can be repetitively – that is, through every story – constructed, however in this case repetition, based on a photograph, is “not an instrument of fixity or paralysis, or simple retraumatization, as it often is for survivors of trauma, but a mostly helpful vehicle of working through a traumatic past.” The surviving photograph – “I have nothing else, just this remained!” – locate the couple, especially the man, in the present as well as help explore aspects of family relations and contributes to the construction of both the individual subject and the family.

There are other material manifestations of the experience of the Holocaust. Memories are inscribed in the landscape. “My brother managed to hide behind the flour sack” – explains one of the survivors. He was hiding in the larder till the soldiers left. “Until we had the house, my uncle did not whitewash the larder. There was the trace of his palm, bloody. For at least 15 or 20 years there was the red trace of his palm on the wall. He did not whitewash it, it was like that for a long time. And why did not he whitewash it? Well, he left it as a relic to remember.” Furthermore the film invites us to explore present landscape shots of the sites of atrocities and memories in which there is hardly any trace left but which suggests that that the memory still lives and has been transmitted from generation to generation.

465 00:33:43-00:34:09
467 00:28:41-00:29:20
generation. In the film of long takes and no montage the camera takes pleasure in the scenes of the Komárom Fortress and slowly explores its bits and parts.

“I was taken to Komárom/Oh my God I will die”
Another repository of the cultural memory of the Holocaust is language which manifests itself primarily in songs. Three songs can be heard in the film. Two of them are performed by women, one is sung by János Bogdán. The first song is chanted by János Bogdán’s wife. There seems to be a tension between the couple and Ágota Varga, the filmmaker, throughout the interview, especially in the beginning. The man is nervous while his bodily gestures suggest the feeling of uncomfortableness and reluctance to share his story with the “intruder.” This delicate atmosphere is broken – although temporarily since later the man switches into Romani when he recalls the past as well as there are moments when he questions the interviewer’s intentions or reprimands her for her style – by the following song: “Oh my God I will soon die/I cannot do anything against it/I was taken to Komárom/Oh my God I will die, I will die/I cannot do anything against it/I have no father no mother/The black dressed gendarme took me/I will never come back/I have to die there.”468 It tells the story of her deportation that she was taken by the gendarmerie to Komárom as well as the constant and mortal fear she experienced while being separated from her parents. This is her testimony conveyed in the form of a song. Then she asks her husband to join the conversation with his story. Following their visit to Komárom, in the last third of the film, the same couple stands in the fields and talks about their life after the persecutions, thus the hostile attitude of the village-dwellers towards the Roma: “They did not let us in!”469 Both of them talk excitedly about the times when they were chased away from the settlement and had to find shelter in the forest from the antagonistic, bitter environment surrounding them. Then the woman mentions that her parents used to sing a song to their children that was about the persecutions. Despite the man’s disagreement the interviewer insists on listening to the song and following an abrupt second of hesitation and insecurity the woman starts singing: “Oh my God, they took me to Komárom/Noone came back but the old people/Vége nekem anyám meg kell halni/The Germans ate all of us up (...).”470 In the meanwhile the man is walking up and down in the fields and when it chokes up the woman he continues: “They put us into a wagon/I did

468 Jaj már meghalok Istenem/Nem tudok mit tenni/Elvittek Istenem Komáromba/Jaj meghalok Istenem, meghalok/Nem tudok mit csinálni/Nincs már nekem se apám se anyám/Elvittek Istenem a fekete ruhás csendőrök/Nem jövök már vissza soha/Ott kell hogy meghalják. (00:31:15-00:32:04)
469 1:07:31
470 Elvittek Istenem Komáromba/Onnan nem tért vissza senki csak az öregek/Vége nekem anyám meg kell halni/Megettek minket a németek. (1:08:50-1:09:13)
not even get water/I will die here, oh my God/And I cannot do anything against it.”

The third song is carried out by an older woman who is sitting on a train: “Oh poor me, I will go home/ But I will not die/I will go home/ I will not stay here/You go, Mother you go/ I wish you a pleasant journey (..../.... hardly understandable)

Verbal arts, including songs, are important carriers of past memories. As a matter of the lack of written discourse, or its belatedness, as well as due to the low literacy rates among Roma, oral traditions, such as songs have become one of the primary medium of personal expression, political contestation and of collective memory. Considering the traditional conception of gender roles in a community, the woman is responsible for bringing up and educating the children. The transmission of knowledge, especially in early childhood and in the case of illiteracy among women, takes shape in verbal arts. However I would also add that these above-mentioned songs appear to formulate a critic on “our” established knowledge of the past. Their content confronts in many aspects of the majority’s understanding of the persecutions as well as dare to challenge the prevailing history of Europe by subverting the local knowledge of the past. These songs can be considered as attempts to challenge the hegemony of the written world and to promote an expanded historiography that incorporates various manifestations of oral tradition.

It is interesting to compare the songs in all the films analysed in this chapter. Hence, in Forgotten Dead the last scene shows Margit Bangó who sings the Roma anthem. Considering that Péter Szuhay calls the period of the 1980s as the “taking possession of the past” in which the role of the intellectuals is crucial in establishing and making the past public, the singing of the anthem is an expression of socio-political empowerment. As both a performative act and an oral expression it functions as a connective tissue for collective identity and as a voice of the community itself. By voice I mean the cultural critique and the constitution of historical narratives, including the narrative of the persecutions in the 1940s. In You Killed My Innocent Family there is no particular song but the music of the ceremony indicates an optimistic atmosphere in which the recognition and the inclusion of the sufferings of Roma is not only necessary but possible in contemporary Hungary. However the social context of the film Pharrajimos engages a different vision through song. Considering their content they still charge and reinterpret social structures for their own recognition however the narrative position of the subject is less (self-)assured and promising, rather vulnerable and

---

471 Betettek engem ja a vagonba/Vizet se kaptam/Itt halok meg Istenem/És nem tudok mit tenni. (1:09:26-1:09:42)
472 Jaj haza fogok menni/De nem fogok meghalni/Haza fogok menni/Nem fogok itt maradni/Elmész, anyám elmész/Jó utat kívánok (1:14:24-1:15:11)
disempowered. On the basis of the one-sided exposure of Roma to the gendarmerie and the repetitive mentioning of “I cannot do anything else” or “I will die” as well as the aggregation of the passive use of words such as “we were taken” implies that the society which was dreamed in the beginning of the 1900s based on the peaceful coexistence of majority and minority is proved to be utopian.

Although much is said about the past Ágota Varga’s film is based and acted-out in the present tense. Her approach is similar to Lanzmann who does not exclusively rely on the retelling of the past, but “[the interviewees] had to give themselves over to it. That’s what defines imagination: it de-realizes. That’s what the entire paradox of the actor is about. They have to be put into a certain state of mind but also into a certain physical disposition. Not in order to make them speak, but so that their speech can suddenly communicate, become charged with an extra dimension.”473 These people, the “main characters” of Lanzmann, as well as Varga, are transformed “into actors.”474 This is the absolute transmission of knowledge: not only testimony but the reliving of the past, acting it out. “They recount their own history. But just retelling is not enough. They had to act it out, that is, they had to give themselves over to it. That is what defines imagination: it de-realizes. That’s what the entire paradox of the actor is about. They have to be put into a certain state of mind but also into a certain physical disposition. Not in order to make them speak, but also that their speech can suddenly communicate, become charged with dimension.”475 For example in the Shoah the conductor of the locomotive which transported the Jews was on the train again arriving to the station of Treblinka. While he was leaning out of the conductor’s window and he made the throat-cutting gesture and as Lanzmann commented later: “compared to this image, archival photographs become unbearable. This image has become what is true.”476 Or the (in)famous scene with Abraham Bomba, the barber in Auschwitz, who cut the hair of the women before entering the gas chamber. “– I knew them. I lived with them in my town, in my street, and some of them were my close friends. And when they saw me all of them started hugging me, Abe, this and that, what are you doing here, what’s gonna happen with us? What could you tell them? What could you tell? A friend of mine, he worked as a barber, he was a good barber in my hometown, when his wife and his sister... came into the gas chamber... I can’t. – Go on Abe, you must go.... You have to. – Cannot. It’s too hard. – Please... We have to do it. You

473 Chevrie and Roux, “Site and Speech” 45.
474 Ibid. 44.
475 Ibid. 45.
476 Ibid. 44.
know it. – Won’t be able to do it. – You are able to do it. I know it’s very hard. I know and I apologize. – Don’t keep me along with that. – Please we must go on."477

There is a trip to Komárom in *Pharrajimos*. Varga takes them back to the fortress where they were held for days and weeks and which as a common reference point plays a significant role in each testimony. The interview strategy she adopts in many cases that is based on the organized encounter of the victim with the perpetrator compels the interview subjects to relive the past. The most remarkable confrontation takes place in the beginning of the film when the son of an already deceased gendarme “interrogates” his neighbour who is of Roma origin and was maltreated by the local gendarmerie. The son wishes to know about his father’s wrongdoings. This compulsive reliving of the past is supposed to help the victim work through the traumatic past and facilitate his re-engagement with the present that is freed from the haunting, deadly memories. However the emphasis is less on the interviewees’ psychic transfiguration but on Varga’s intention to let herself be whirled by the stories, to practice the pedagogy of pardon and to suffer as much as the interviewees suffer while they recollect and relive their memories.

On the basis of LaCapra I am concerned with the human side of Varga’s project and with the ways in which the witnesses were interviewed or some of them were asked to perform their past experiences in a staged situation. LaCapra argues that performativity requires the balance between acting out the trauma and having the chance to working through it. Since Varga aims to suffer with his interviewees he manages to create a re-traumatizing situation to such an extent which then shatters the self and makes it trapped in the past. There is something violent, irresponsible and selfish in re-enacting the past. Violent and irresponsible since if the balance is missing between re-living and working through the trauma the subjects could become re-traumatized to such an extent that their “self” can be trapped in the past. And selfish since the interviewer wishes to make the survivor’s narrative perfect and focuses on less the interviewee more on the shocking effect of the stories.

**It has to be staged**

In the regulation of point of view there is the obvious presence of Ágota Varga. Neither *Forgotten Dead* nor *You Killed My Innocent Family* presents such a strong voice of the interviewer as *Pharrajimos*. What does it mean when it comes to the question of the representation of the trauma? It offers no position as the subjects’ to view past events, that is to say that there is no other position to understand what happened than that of the victim’s or

---

477 0:29:23 - 0:32:24 Shoah III.
the perpetrator’s. The film juxtaposes accounts of the past which sometimes even confront with each other.

However the point of view of Varga can also easily be detected. It runs through the film. For example the opening scene in which she confronts the descendant of a former gendarme with a former Roma deportee (Ferkó). Here Varga makes a statement by drawing upon others’ point of views. The situation is framed on the basis of good neighbourhood relations. This has been established at the very beginning of the scene that the non-Roma family cultivated and kept good employment relationship with the Roma family. The head of the non-Roma family was a gendarme and was commissioned to collect the Roma from the village. Later he was convicted as a war criminal and sentenced to 17 years of prison. His wife and the two children could hardly make ends meet thus Ferkó, being by profession a straw driver, started employing her as a quayside worker. Then Ferkó arrives and cheerfully welcomes the old lady, even flirts with her, and as a response to the request of the son he begins to tell the story of how the persecutions took place in the village. In the beginning Ferkó is soft and pays attention to every word he mentions in relation to the father. However sometimes he falls out of this conscious state of mind and frames a harsh critic on how they were treated: “They were hitting us as if we were made of mud!”

Ferkó is smiling and seems to be in comfort in the beginning of the interview which unfolds itself through the questions and comments of the perpetrator’s son. As the interview continues the testimony changes, Ferkó is not smiling anymore and his facial expressions turn to be more serious, once he even says “(...) the gendarme, let me call him like that (...”). While the son apologizes in the name of his deceased father for his past wrongdoings Ferkó emphasises that this story is transmitted from generation to generation as well as is a living memory in his family. Although he never brought up any charge against the perpetrators he mentions his son’s (or grandson’s) reaction to it: “Father, you are a calm person. If I were you I would kill all of them.” Varga’s identification with the victim becomes apparent in the movement and the focus of the camera. The viewer is emotionally and morally charged with the past and forced to choose a position that is either the calmness of the father, Ferkó, or the reactionary attitude of his son.

There is a generational difference between survivor’s generation and the second generation. While the former has built their lives on acceptance and tolerance, the latter, like

478 0:10:53
479 0:16:03 – 0:16:08
Ferkó is displeased, saturated with frustration and more distanced from the majority society. The world has not become better as the *You Killed My Innocent Family* hoped. Its optimism has turned to be a mere illusion in the 2000s. It becomes especially apparent in the case of Zsuzsa Horváth who appeared in both films – *You Killed My Innocent Family* and *Pharrajimos* – however emphasises have changed in her testimony. In the first film her testimony can be considered as an eyewitness account and she was the bearer of the knowledge which the interviewer and the wider society was aspiring for. However in *Pharrajimos* instead of being the “messenger” she is nothing but a victim of her trauma stemming from her past experiences and instead of transmitting “what happened” her testimony refers to the transmission of the trauma.
VI. CHALLENGING PASTS AND PRESENTS
The works of art of Omara and Tibor Balogh

“Sometimes, I mistake you for your memory.
To touch you now,
I must reach across the mirror of remembering.

You were, back then,
the one I should be telling now.”
(Péter Závada, The One I Should Be Telling, trans. Márk Baczoni)

There was a coloured wood object “left” in front of the Műcsarnok, in Budapest, in 2004. It was done by Zsolt Vári, one of the members of the younger generation of contemporary Roma artists, for the occasion of the The Hidden Holocaust exhibition which was organized for the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust. The object is a Roma wagon painted in blue and yellow, the colours of night and day representing the “endless wandering” of Roma. However this wagon in front of the Műcsarnok’s main entrance is not moving but stands still. In this state instead of motion it represents tranquillity, as if it was saying “We are here. We have finally arrived. We do not need the wagon anymore.”

It was a long way to up to the Műcsarnok. “Roma art” as such was the product of the European Roma Summit in 1971, London when artists of Roma origin claimed their recognition as a group. Till that time artworks of Roma were not regarded as individual, intellectual pieces of art but rather as a collective product of a group which only became cultural representation by the influence and recognition of folklorists or ethnographers. Hence until the second half of the twentieth century the representation of Roma was the exclusive monopoly of non-Roma artists, and as a consequence, Roma music was labelled as “folk music,” Roma verbal accounts were folklore and Roma-made images were regarded as “folk art,” such as the works of the Roma painter János Balázs. In other words, Roma artifacts – or using Walter Benjamin’s bitter-sweet term: “cultural treasures” – were interpreted as being not works of individual authors, but rather as collective facts of nature which only gain

significance by the work of the collector or the folklorist. And it has become more and more
evident following the past few years happenings that the failure of inserting them into the
majority’s “way of living” and the threat originated from it have legitimized attacks on their
very essence, on their humanity and on their cultural existence via sophisticated directions to
“let them abandon.” 482 Although there was the First National Exhibition of Self-Taught Artists
in Hungary organized by Ágnes Daróczi in 1979, in order to bring into the limelight talented
Roma individual artists, 483 the third such display, in 2000, was still held in the Museum of
Ethnography (Budapest), rather than an institute of contemporary art, as if the exhibits were
manifestations of an exotic and alien civilization. “Between 1979 and 2005, more than four
thousand artworks of this community were bought by seven collections in the country
(Museum of Ethnography, Kecskemét Naïve Museum, Metropolitan Government Roma
House – Romano Kher, Hungarian Roma Parliament, Hungarian Cultural Institute, Nógrád
County Museum of History), yet to date there is not a single permanent exhibition where
Roma art could be studied.” 484 Indeed, one of the most important milestones of the Roma
Cultural Movement in Europe was the National Fine Arts Exhibition of Self-Taught Roma
Artists 485 in 1979 in Hungary (followed by two other exhibitions of the same: in 1989 and
2000) curated by Ágnes Daróczi. 486 The exhibition was preceded by an immense and
thorough research which beyond recognizing Roma art as individual performance of cultural
representation, managed to built an international community of Roma artists. As another
consequence, Sandra Jayat 487 inspired by the exhibition organized the First World Exhibition
of Roma Art in the Conciergerie of Paris in 1985 as well as the Museum of Roma Culture in
Brno in the Czech Republic was established in 1991 by Karel Holomek.

The beginning of the 1990s, commonly referred to it as the “cultural turn” brought a
paradigm shift in the course of visual arts pinpointing the constitutive role of culture as a
system of signification, revealing the various mechanisms through which Roma art was

482 The term is taken from: Michel Foucault, “Society Must Be Defended,” in Lectures at the College de France
483 Ágnes Daróczi, The First National Exhibition of Autodidact Gipsy Artists. (Budapest: National Centre of
Adult Education, 1979)
484 Junghaus and Székely, Paradise Lost.
485 Ágnes Daróczi and Karsai Zsigmond, eds., National Fine Arts Exhibition of Self-Taught Roma Artists
/Autodidakta Cigány Képzőművészek Országos Kiállítása (Budapest, 1979)
The second exhibition took place in 1989: Ágnes, Daróczi and Kerekgyártó István, eds., II. National Fine Arts
Exhibition of Self-Taught Roma Artists / Autodidakta Cigány Képzőművészek II. Országos Kiállítása (Budapest, 1989);
and the third exhibition in 2000: Agnes, Daroczi, Kalla Eva and Kerekgyarto Istvan, eds., III. National Fine Arts
Exhibition of Roma Artists / Roma képzőművészek III. Országos Kiállítása (Budapest, 2000).
2014)
487 Ibid.
always classified as natural, primitive, naive and exotic. This sensitive and critical approach
gave birth to Roma contemporary art. The term contemporary Roma art was first introduced
and then disseminated by Timea Junghaus, curator and art historian. It denotes a cultural
practice which was first organized around representation and self-expression and later, from
the mid 2000s it went beyond the themes of visibility and subjectivity and has become
concerned with the politics and realities of Roma people. Junghaus claims that one has to
conform to the institutionalized discourse of aesthetics, canon or quality, one has to acquire
the necessary qualifications to be recognized as an artist equal to the others. However, most of
the artists who are seen as Roma by the majority due to their social deprivation, the inbuilt
structural inequalities of the educational system etc. cannot conform to the standardized
requirements of being considered as an artist. Consequently, it is valid to re-conceptualize
“Roma art.” An artist with a Roma ethnicity is primarily an artist however the communication
of his or her ethnicity as Roma is a political choice. It is about “naming, positioning and
recognition, an ongoing process marked by the power hierarchies of the context where it is
happening. Assumed and ascribed identities are social constructions however they are as real
as there are all the other aspects of our societal realities” – argues a recently published
statement on “why and how ethnicity matters in academics.” What also matters is that there
are artists whom the Roma community recognizes as one of their own. Their existence can
serve as a source of pride for the community.

In this framework Roma artist need to fight on two fronts – as Timea Junghaus argues
in the foreword of the catalogue of Meet My Neighbours. On the one hand they are compelled
to reverse the underlying mechanisms of representation, produce an alternative image of
Roma that counteracts the existing, stereotypical depictions, and on the other, Roma artists
need to gain access to the mainstream media in order to “battle for people’s minds.” Hence
Roma artists has actively intended to deconstruct the existing visual regime and the colonial
relations inscribed in it and restitute the place of Roma in history, further to highlight the
deficiencies of an essentialized understanding of “the Gypsy” and articulate a rather
contextual understanding of what it means to be Roma. It was expected on behalf of Roma
intellectuals, artists that in the beginning they had to face with the scarcity of platforms,

488 Timea Junghaus, “Roma - The »Unpredictable« European Outcast.”
489 More on it: Griselda Pollock, Differencing the Canon: feminist desire and the writing of art’s histories
(London: Routledge, 1999)
490 Ethel Brooks, Sarah Carmona, Angéla Kóczé and Enikő Vincze published the “Statement on Why and How
Ethnicity Matters in Academics. The case of Romani women with regard to intersectionality.” (February 10,
2013)
491 A video in which Omara explains the recognition by the community: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVgygVkJScs (06:44 – 07:40)

146
opportunities and resources, however it was barely anticipated that the primary platforms of agency for this new generation of Roma artists would have always been the sites of international contemporary art exhibitions. Due to the sensitive and self-critical contemporary art scene Roma artists had the opportunity to exhibit in the international arena. “We are what we are” Aspects of Roma Life in Contemporary Art (2004, Graz); The Hidden Holocaust (2004, Budapest); Strategies of (In)visibility (2005, London); Paradise Lost (2007, Venice); Reconsidering Roma (2011, Berlin); Safe European Home (2011, Vienna); New Media in Our Hands (2011, Budapest); Calling the Witnesses (2012, Venice). The first professional young artist graduating at the Academy of Fine Arts was Tibor Balogh, however there are others too such as: Rozi Csámpai; Henik Kállai; Zsolt Vári; Márton Gaudi; Gábor Váradi; Jolán Oláh; Márta Bada; Gyöngyi Ráczné Kalányos; András Kállai; or Mara Oláh (Omara).

As it can be seen, The Hidden Holocaust exhibition was the first Hungarian platform for the introduction of contemporary Roma visual artists. The exhibition provided the space for this new generation to show their skills, creativity and artistic approaches free from both stereotypes and a stigmatized environment in one of the most prestigious institution of the art world. It might have been a coincidence that their art works were framed by the theme of the Holocaust. However what the Holocaust guaranteed for these artists is the possibility to engage with present political and social configurations, to express what they think about the situation of Roma in the Hungarian society and in the meanwhile they managed to rework their relation to history. They consciously challenged the already canonized historical knowledge on the Holocaust and produced a historicism which inserted Roma history into the Hungarian nation’s history. The fact that Roma and non-Roma, Jewish and non-Jewish artists exhibited at the Műcsarnok, that is one of the main institutions responsible for the aesthetics canon and the production of canonical knowledge, allowed Roma to question divisions. In other words, to question the conceptual ghetto which considers Roma as naive, natural and exotic, or to question belonging, thus whose story matters as part of the national narrative. Furthermore, The Hidden Holocaust provided the possibility to commemorate the victims of the Roma Holocaust, to create sacred spaces out of the profane with various works as well as offers the Holocaust as a “legible” experience which can be unfolded, re-imagined without being appropriated.

Junghaus and Székely, Paradise Lost.
Omara – Visit to Auschwitz (2004)

In 2004, that is the 50-year anniversary of the Holocaust, Omara painted the picture, *Visit to Auschwitz*. [IMAGE1] It is an oil painting and the artist used only black and white colours as well as their shades. On the picture we can see two people, possibly a man and a woman, holding each other hands and entering somewhere, possibly to the camp of Auschwitz, as the title suggests. In front of them there is nothing but darkness and they seem hesitant where they are heading towards. Do they enter to the camp as visitors or the darkness remains and swallows them forever? In the foreground there is a fence, might have been the barbed wire in the past but now we can only see its remnants, the timbers. In the background there are some shapes, similar to the timbers, looming darkly out of the black. The accompanying text at the exhibition, serving as both an explanation and description, says, “In 1994 the Hungarian state organized a “pilgrimage” for the Hungarian Roma to provide the opportunity for the Roma intellectuals to travel to Auschwitz and Birkenau and garland the Holocaust memorial in order to salute to the memory of the thousands of Roma died in concentration camps. After a 12-hour long bus ride the buses arrived 7:45 in the evening to the camp. We could hardly look out of the windows due to the dense fog. We could only saw three high chimneys among the clouds. The participants started trembling with fear all of a sudden. They thought they were trapped, and although noone gave voice to their fears no one had enough courage to get off the bus. The memorial stood inside, 50 meters from the iron gate. The Hungarian Television and Gábor Detre shot the film while the Hungarians were trying to persuade the Roma to get off. Finally Kálmán Hollai actor and Mara Oláh made a move arm-in-arm.”

Beyond the above text, the painting itself has inscriptions as if the creator, the painter proved to be distrustful towards its audience and took every opportunity to explain and specify the content. The fragile, thin bodies of the actor and Omara denote their tiredness following a 12-hour bus ride and their fear as well as sense of insecurity. What are they afraid of? Is the journey, as the text says, a “pilgrimage” for them in a sense that they visit Auschwitz not only to witness the scenes of past horrors but also to pay respect for all the victims, including deceased relatives? Or does Auschwitz become rather the metaphor of all kinds of brutality and through that spatial move – through the pilgrimage – they sense the emergence of pure antagonism between majority and minority? Furthermore, as Auschwitz has an autonomous and also well known topography the painting raises the problem of historical accuracy. Even the text says “three high chimneys,” thus why is a forest of chimneys painted? Can aesthetics overwrite historical accuracy? In what sense does aesthetics

493 The painting was exhibited at the “The Hidden Holocaust” exhibition in Műcsarnok, Hungary.
participate in the process of dealing with past experiences? How does the painting work as a vehicle of collective memory? Finally one should not forget that it was painted in 2004: the year when the *The Hidden Holocaust* exhibition was organized in Budapest, in the Műcsarnok, and was considered as a milestone in the history of art done by visual artists who identify themselves as Roma. A new and fresh wave of Roma artists became visible and appeared in public for the first time. The exhibition was described as a step towards a “consensus of post-traumatic solidarity,” as a result of which the victims of the Holocaust may return to the life of that imagined community which they once lived to be their home. Would the painting be political and provide a critique to the above presumed solidarity? Does the background story of the painting suggest that the relationship between the threatened minority and the self-confident majority in front of Auschwitz is exemplary in contemporary Hungary?

The gesture that Omara is among the firsts who leaves the bus carries a message: she is more than just a painter but a leader. With this move she claims back her autonomy and subjectivity, silences the pitying, ridiculous voices and does not let herself be inserted into a power structure based on threat. I consider this painting important from two aspects which I would like to discuss in the following of the presentation. On the one hand she makes herself visible in many of her works. Hence I am interested in as well as attempt to understand the ways in which she plays with her portraits. Then I would like to focus on the inscriptions. I consider them as a tool to reconceptualise dominant historical narratives. I will explore the above two aspect separately and then see their intersection in the context of the Roma Holocaust “within the frames of” the *Visit to Auschwitz*.

**About Omara**

Mara Oláh was born in the year 1945 at the edge of the village Monor in a shack, in Hungary. “My mother was a Boyash Gypsy coming from a pot mender family. There were thirteen children in the family and lived in Mogyoród. My father’s side is a musician family and they were of six children. They lived in Monor” – writes Omara in her autobiography. Due to the fact that her parents belonged to different Roma communities their marriage was never approved by the father’s family and after a while her mother was chased away. Mara spent her time here and there, commuting between her parents, however later her father’s place, that is the Roma ghetto (so-called *cigánytabán*) of Monor, became her home. “The cigánytabán

---

494 Péter György, “Perhaps it is not too late,” in *The Hidden Holocaust catalogue* (Budapest: Műcsarnok, 2004), 14.
meant a sanctuary to me. It meant love, badness, guilt, or quarrels, beatings, shame, hunger, joy, dirt, policemen, threat, but mostly that miracle which I have never found anywhere else, that solidarity which offers help when it is needed at once. It was the community of our divine folly. And it meant that infinite liberty that you could do anything and no one ever surprised at it. Everything was natural. Only whores and lie were intolerable. The whore was ejected, the liar was beaten to death. When she became a teenager she moved to her mother, and by the same token, as Mara writes, her seductive aura and sexual magnetism prevented her to finish school since all the young teachers fell in love with her. As a consequence she started doing gardening and then worked in various factories. In the meantime she got married to a non-Roma man and gave birth to a daughter. They bought their own house and she started her own business that was the running of a clothing boutique. However in the course of time, Mara writes, that “only my name suggested that I was married. Everything that needed to be solved in a marriage was my duty. (...) Our relationship went wrong, so I just simply left him, I took my daughter and a suitcase to my aunt.” She goes into details how her calvary began with her husband, with finding a proper place to live and with her health: they got divorced, she went through several operations and as a result of a tumour she lost one of her eyes. All these tragedies however led her to turn to art, as she says the loss of both her eye and her husband freed her from reality, “opened up her eyes” and made her engage in painting. In the age of 43 she started painting: “due to menopause I had a terrible headache in the summer 1988. My pain was so unbearable that I could not even speak. I was waiting for my daughter to come home to send with her my last gold, a bracelet, to my friend who would have paid for it seven thousand forints. This was necessary because I only had three forints at home and I needed a doctor. I told everything to my daughter in a script. I also asked her to give me a piece of paper, a pencil, eraser, because while she was away I wanted to draw something, because I was occupied with this idea to draw. My daughter collected photos of actors and she asked me to draw Alain Delon. I said I was not sure I could ever make a beautiful copy of a man. She was gone and I started drawing Sophia Loren, without using the eraser. After approx. fifteen minutes it was done and a miracle happened at that moment when I noticed that my headache went away as if it had not been there ever.”

496 Ibid., 5.
497 Ibid., 9.
499 Oláh, O.Mara... 39.
In 1990, with three of her paintings she went to the Hungarian National Gallery to question her talent. The chief curator assured Mara that she has artistic qualities and she shall continue work. This artistic action shows that Omara is completely clear, from the very beginning, about the operation and legitimization processes of the system and she is completely conscious in her proceedings as a contemporary artist. From that point on Omara’s career progressed like the graph of plateaus: having 36 exhibitions in one and a half year as well as opening her own gallery in her house with periods of instability in her private life. “All my failures in marriage have become compensated in painting. Those who said I was stupid and predicted the Fool’s House at Hárshegy felt ashamed.” Participating at the First Roma Pavilion of the 52nd Venice Contemporary art Biennale (2007), and at the Gender Check exhibition (Vienna November, 2009 – February, 2010), just to mention two out of the numerous international exhibitions, Omara has become a world famous, well known contemporary painter of Roma origin.

**Portraits**

As her first painting was on Sophia Loren, Omara’s oeuvre contains consistent reflections about portraying human subjects. Within the traditional notion of the portrait it first and foremost was practiced to cherish the bourgeois Western culture. It implied the uniqueness of both the portrayed individual as well as the portrayer. The portrait was judged not only by the material form it was given to but also by that essential inner dimension the person was supposed to bear. There is this kind of traditional understanding of the portrait in Omara’s painting of her daughter. [IMAGE2] The woman’s true quality is framed on each portrait: her mildness and innocence is reflected in her eyes; her clothes show her purity and her figure suggests her beauty and fragility. [IMAGE3] However what is occurring to me when I am looking at these images is that even though Omara tends to appear at exhibition openings or public events holding the portrait of the daughter in her hand and due to her explicit personality one knows bits and parts of their relationship but no one has ever seen her daughter. We might have seen women holding images of their lost sons or victims of the “stolen children” march and protest against the slowness of the jurisdiction with pictures in their hands. The images in the case of the marching women and of Omara express similarities in their composition and meaning: they are evidences of their children’s existence and relics for those who miss them. This gesture of holding images denotes the cult for mourning.

---


501 Oláh, O.Mara... 43.

502 van Alphen, *Art in Mind...* 21-47.
through the mediation of the image. In the light of this knowledge I would like to suggest another reading of the portrait different from that of the bourgeois understanding of the subject. I argue that in this case the representation of Omara’s daughter is less authentic and original but instead the subject’s identity is a product of images, at least for the spectator, for us. In other words, the subject – the daughter’s subjectivity – is reflected and constructed through images. Instead of looking at the portraits of Omara’s daughter as references to someone outside of the portrait I would suggest to read them as surfaces which explore femininity but at the same time reveal and mirror what it means to be an object of desire or loss. Another portrait [IMAGE4] on being an object of desire is one of her early, undated self-portraits. We see her but she cannot see us because her eyes are covered with her hair. Or is it a conscious move and she attempts to hide behind her hair? What is the point of a self-portrait if the self would like to disappear? Instead of focusing on the eyes, the viewer looks at her lips. The eyes are drawn automatically to what cannot be seen. It moves to “the representation of that which is inherently unrepresentable,” that is touch. The eye is focusing on the lips and the viewer wants to be kissed.

At the Venice Biennale [IMAGE5] was painted following the first Roma Pavilion opened under the framework of the 52nd Venice Biennale. As Timea Junghaus, the curator of the exhibition stated: “in an ideal world Roma artists would be able to exhibit in any of the European pavilions, but it is a fact that no artist of Roma origin has been presented at the Venice Biennale throughout its 112-year.” Thus the reason of establishing a separate pavilion is not to follow segregationist ideas, but to raise attention to the fact that the majority’s infrastructure is not available to the Roma and also to create a space (Palazzo Pisani) for Roma artists for cultural representation. Omara was one of the chosen artists to exhibit. In the background there is the Venice Lido and down the stairs the stylish, triumphant, queen-like Omara is approaching the viewer. In this painting she inserts herself into the history of modern painting as well as into the history of the Biennales with the wholeness of her body. In his book on photography the French critic Roland Barthes has written about the nature of the relation between portrait and portrayed. In his view the image has a strong hold over the subject through the ability to represent the body and the subject as a whole, an ability that the subject itself lacks. But at the same time one has to pay for the illusion of the wholeness with a loss of self. This wholeness, Barthes argues, is unusual

503 Ibid., 36.
504 Junghaus and Székely, Paradise Lost.
and unnatural and causes the alienation of the image from itself. I recognize on At the Venice Biennale this discursive conflict: Omara’s portrait finds confidence, fame and recognition in Venice on the one hand, and on the other her portrayed self loses herself and becomes an image of “the first Roma woman in Venice” or “of the successful Roma woman.”

*Moving houses* [IMAGE6] offers another reading of the portrait. The story behind the painting is that Omara moved houses three times, always alone and in sickness, however finally in Szarvasgede she has found a home, the so-called luxury shack [*luxusputri*], for which she has been grateful and in which she managed to open her gallery again. “The reason for leaving? I inhaled to much smoke my darling. I had a private gallery in Pest, here I can sit in the garden and watch the sun goes down. I need peace.”

As the text on the painting says, “I love living here in my luxury shack!” Omara placed herself in the middle of the picture. She sits on a white sofa wearing a long red dress. The room seems to be the living room furnished with white furniture, and has two windows each of which has a flower in the front. In the left corner of the painting there is a small swimming pool, possibly with Omara in the water (she has a separate picture only on this scene). On the walls there are portraits showing the same profiles that often look like masks. The faces are very light: only the hair gives contour to their paleness and make them emerge out of the screen. The faces are laughing in a very ambiguous, anxious way. This masklike quality of the faces produces a very interesting effect.

Following Hobbes’ Leviathan Giorgio Agamben examines the figure of the human that is structured by the image, the mask. The mask is the political imago of the human subject – the image, the political, public form of the body – through which the individual acquires a social identity. Thus, the original understanding of the image of the self which implied that one’s subjectivity is defined in its uniqueness is here (as well) overwritten by Agamben’s notion of social connections. What does it mean in other words? Agamben suggests that the human subject lives an internal, natural and bare life, but through the mask (the image: the public) obtains an external, visible and political self which is more than just technical and legal, it carries in it moral and social responsibility.

How does it come to term with Omara? The portraits, since it is supposed to be her home gallery, might represent a part of her oeuvre however still she painted herself on each canvas. I would suggest that these masks produced throughout her three moves and career the

---

political body of Omara: these are the images which mediated her social identity and help her connect to the outer world. Her paintings empowered her, gave her authority, made her unique and let her “enter” into the political order where “the really important thing was not to live but to live well.”508 This is what the gallery is really about: the exhibition of her political self.

Turning back to where we started, to the Visit to Auschwitz, let us have a closer look at the human figures again. This is the only painting in Omara’s oeuvre in which her figure is drawn vague, impersonal and fragile-looking. It is not an image, neither a mask, nor a product, nor a reference to a bourgeois subject. She even draws an arrow behind the text pointing towards them to make sure the viewer recognizes them. Subjectivity is neither present nor absent, it is interchangeable: each viewer can identify with the two shadows entering through the gates of Auschwitz. Each viewer inserts his/her personal subjectivity within the material structure of history and politics. With this substitution she expresses an ethical and political act of solidarity. Omara establishes a collectivity suggesting that the distance between the event and the subject is ethically impossible and unacceptable and one has to have the courage to enter the gate and explore the meanings of the event.

**Inscriptions**
The Visit to Auschwitz painting itself has inscriptions on it as if the creator, the painter proved to be distrustful towards its audience and grasped every opportunity to explain and specify the content. However, being aware of Omara’s art it shall be noted that, “since 1992, all her pictures have been completed with inscriptions. She made the decision when at a 1992 exhibition in Szeged, her picture of a woman on all fours in the grass was presented as Mara Resting, when it in fact represented Mara looking for her glass eye in the grass, a real occurrence. At the same exhibition, the double portrait of Omara and her sister was put on display as Lesbians. Mara had to ask the curator what the word meant. Outraged by the misunderstanding, she has been writing on the canvas since then.

It is here that I come to a simple but important point. The viewer oscillates between reading and looking in the case of Omara’s art. Picture writing, literally and conceptually, experiences writing on the basis of the pictorial and linguistic transformation of world. Through this merge of pictorial and non pictorial scripts Omara’s art invokes the association of her work with hieroglyphs. Hieroglyphic scripts referring directly to the real world, connecting themselves to both the semantic and phonetic levels of language.509 Thus, as Ralph

---

Cudworth writes, “The Egyptian hieroglyphics were figures not answering to sounds or words, but immediately representing the objects and conceptions of the mind.” Omara’s painting with the inscriptions on it suggests an immediate signification: that it conveys meaning without mediation of language. Beyond the well-known forms and manifestations of writing and thus textual carriers of collective memory, Omara’s art transposes artistic, aesthetic experience to educational plane. Even if she misses the necessary materials to work she finds the ways in which she can create. As in the exhibition, titled Only with a magnifying glass can one look at the one-eye Omara’s jewels (November, 2011 – December, 2011) there were more than four-hundred pieces of drawings on various sizes and substances of papers with different techniques. The textual and figurative composition of each piece added up into a narrative, each told a short story or explained a dilemma in Omara’s life, hence it all appeared like a series of blog entries in the non-virtual reality.

Taking the inscriptions as artistic strategy reminds me the works of various American artists of African origin: Lubaina Himid, Njideka Akunyili, Meleko Mokgosi or Xaviera Simmons. “These artists use appropriated source material and imagery, mediating and reinterpretating their initial contexts through painting and photography. A primary source is original documentation of a specific historical moment, often used to inform later interpretations or analyses of that time period.” Their work suggests that divisions between traditional and modern, majority and minority are either false or can be defied, and that their work is supposed to be political invoking inequalities, discrimination or racism embedded in the operation of the given society. In one way or another these artists formulate a critique in their work by applying various techniques let it be montage, inscriptions etc against those historical forces which create discrimination and oppression. So does Omara. This approach, as Griselda Pollock defines, is the tableau: history writing. History writing is channelling the experience of history into painting, in other words, the historically informed practice of painting. It is the “integration of intellectual ambition and highly educated conceptualization of the subject matter with the fullest command of art. (...) Differencing the canon needs to be opened out to the historical plane in which relations between peoples and arts can become sites of destruction in the name of the desire for a different reading of history.”

---

512 Pollock, Differencing… 170.
It seems to be irrelevant that the name Auschwitz is misspelt: memory is mediated and from the chimneys or shades the audience could guess the context. Also, no matter how one labels it the style of violence has remained the same even though Auschwitz was closed down fifty years ago.\textsuperscript{513}

By looking at the universal symbols of the Holocaust one could easily categorize the painting as “mainstream Holocaust art.” However I would argue, on the basis of the above, that this painting challenges the dichotomy between symbolic and metaphysical and becomes a dual project of providing a moral message while letting the audience choose to identify themselves with those who stayed in the bus or those who made the first move; with those who knew what is behind the gate or those who are fear from the repetition of history.\textsuperscript{514} Visit to Auschwitz suggests that distance between the event and the subject is ethically unacceptable. The face of violence never changes, it looks the same eve after fifty years, writes Omara, and everyone, not alone but collectively has to face with that, but not engage with it. What I have wished to suggest here is to consider art instead of pure representation or mimicry of nature. Art is a historical agent and one shall pay equal attention to it as to textuality while dealing with the exploration of the memory of a collectivity. Memory communicates through aesthetic experience and draws the viewer “to experience deeper moral and emotional depths.”

Let me finish this section with the thoughts of Omara who in her autobiographical writing dedicated a chapter on ‘What is my opinion about the world?’ and approached the memory of the Holocaust on a broader level: “If this self-written biography is published, I want you to know that it is because I am sick of the dirt that surrounds me. I am sick of the world which has turned a rubbish-heap because of some people. These could not even be called as people but twisted monsters. (...) Can’t you see that this miracle was created for you? And you express your gratitude with doing the opposite and figuring out various stupid methods to destroy life-giving nature! Weren’t you satisfied with the atomic bomb which was thrown 50 years ago or with Hitler’s work, weren’t you satisfied with Csernobil, or with Yugoslavia, the Iraq war, the Vietnam war, Izrael and Afganistan – I could build my list further. Then don’t stop! Destroy yourselves! If you don’t realize that the Ten Commandments is the key to everything, if you don’t see that if all your efforts were directed to follow the ten commandments then you wouldn’t be able to commit those self-destructive

\textsuperscript{513} The text says: The view was the same even 50 years after the events. We believed that they entrap us again.
crimes. How come that I can see this? Me, the uneducated, primitive Gypsy? And then, how come that the rest of the humankind fails to recognize what a fool they make out of themselves! I am angry that I am powerless and cannot make you understand with all of this.”

**Balogh Tibor – Rain of Tears (2004, 2007)**

Tibor Balogh was born in 1975 in Fehérgyarmat, in the North-Eastern part of Hungary, close to the Romanian border. As a one and a half months old baby he was given to an orphanage, changed elementary schools three times and finally arrived to the Tiszadob orphans’ home to finish school and to attain a vocational qualification. Balogh became a qualified painter and decorator. Tiszadob was famous from its painting by Tamás Péli. In this environment Balogh, and his fellows Zsolt Vári, Horváth Kálmán and Sándor Kiss started their own workshop in the attic. They were drawing and painting, experimenting with new techniques and materials and were spending a great amount of time in the library copying fine art works. In the meanwhile he attained his second vocation as a welder and in the age of twenty got accepted to a high-school and managed to pass his last exams a few years later. Balogh got to know an art teacher who organized a summer fine art camp at Tiszadob and since he was attracted to drawing he was allowed to accompany them to their walks in the forest. His talent became visible immediately and the art teacher offered her help to prepare him to university.

He got accepted to the University of Fine Art, Budapest, in 1998 as the first so-called Roma artist. Five years later his diploma work was a series of copperplates representing his childhood memories as well as fragments of the 8th district of Budapest that has a highest percentage of Roma population. After graduation his first important exhibition was the *The Hidden Holocaust*. In his works he often uses Biblical associations, motifs or stories. One of his most famous paintings is the *The Gypsy woman’s dance with an angel* is an oil painting. It shows a gentle and equal moment between man and woman, Roma and non-Roma, saint and profane. Both are humbly embraced in a very much wordly and human moment and it seems like Balogh grasped an absolute and ahistorical moment in time which is liberating. Throughout his works he aims to deconstruct the artistic, aesthetic canon in a way that he produces the counterparts, or the “significant others” of various, recognized and hence canonized works of fine art. For example his *Gypsy boy with construction* is the mirrored

---

515 Oláh, O.Mara, 62.
image of Béla Kondor’s *Boy with construction* or the *The Gypsy woman’s dance with an angel* is a reflection on Lajos Szalay’s *Jacob’s battle with the angel*.

One of his installations at the *The Hidden Holocaust* exhibition titled the *Rain of Tears* [IMAGE7] is a work of art which also exercises critique and calls attention to a kind of “void” and in the meanwhile deconstructing not an image but an idea. His work could be seen as a reflection upon the (then) non-existent official memorial for the Roma victims of the Holocaust in Budapest.517 I would also suggest that Balogh in an unusually sophisticated way shows the relevance as well as the profanity of remembrance and that the two do not battle with but challenge each other. The project is described in the catalogue in the following way: “A booth will be built, with a 100x100 cm floor and a 230 cm ceiling. (Ergonomics tells us that the smallest room a human feels comfortable in is 110x110 cm in size.) Inside, the booth is lit by a bare bulb. The walls will be papered with (photocopies and prints of) shocking and disturbing documents and photos related to the Roma Holocaust and the continuous discrimination that has been the lot of the Roma ever since. Once inside, you cannot ignore the documents, wherever you look you see these. Outside the booth you find small test tubes (like the ones used for urinalysis in hospitals), while the instructions are to be found inside. Once you read the instruction the action begins.”518

Thus, there is a white booth standing in the white, sterile and homogenous space of the museum with the door open. The visitor takes a tube and steps in the booth that is uncomfortable by its size and depressing due to the various documents on the Holocaust and contemporary atrocities against Roma one is forced to read. However the light on the top might create the atmosphere of the archive that is a rather intimate place where one can be overwhelmed by the analysis of documents. On the other hand the visitor cannot sit down, cannot choose what to read and all the more has to conform to the instructions he/she volunteered to execute. The small cabin, closed doors, dim light all seem like to function as if the artist would like to forge a relation between the visitor and the past event. It places the visitor out of the museum’s homogenous space into a place

517 The artist came up with two installations for the occasion of the exhibition. It is worth mentioning the second one that was left unitled, since it might provide a more complete picture on Tibor Balogh. It is “the cold piles of bricks and the Romani songs about the Holocaust, which hover like a prayer over the installation, provoke a great number of associations, and Balogh did not want to check or channel the flow of ideas that the vision will initiate. Two bed-sized piles of bricks form the core of the installation. The distance between them is the same as that between the beds of the Tiszadob children’s home, where the artist lived as a child. The two piles suggest beds in a deserted nursery, ones that will never be warm again, what with their material and the everlasting absence of the sleepers. Bricks, which were once used to build chimneys, and which thus symbolize the death of thousands of Roma, now form mounds, graves. Installed in the apse, the work is made complete with the Holocaust songs painted on the wall, whose pain and bitterness add to the ideas communicated.” In Tibor Balogh, “Untitled,” in *The Hidden Holocaust catalogue* (Budapest: Műcsarnok, 2004)

518 Tibor Balogh, “Rain of Tears,” in Ibid.
where time is absolute: it intersects present, past and future, condense them in a few minutes while the visitor is inside producing a place that is absolute and ahistorical. It cuts the profane homogeneity of the museum’s space and creates a 100x100 cm, uncomfortably small, place of the sacred. It marks out the place of memory of the Roma Holocaust for even those who were historically, culturally or geographically away from the events, and the memories of the events which one knows from hearsay or is familiar with due to its metaphorical status have become immediately site-specific and localized.

“You take a phial, step inside the booth and spend there as much time as you like. You collect your tears in the phial, then cap it when you are finished and can mark it with your name using the pen in the booth. You place the phial on a small shelf from the inside; the artists will take it and hang it outside the booth and turn it into a drop of rain.” The instructions define the expected and proper act of behaviour of the visitor. Approaching the white box as an outsider who only wants to go around it or have a look at the inside is neither possible nor allowed. Once the visitor is there, he/she is expected, if not required, to take the phial and step inside and once the visitor is inside and the door is closed the instructions are not suspended but continue to regulate the events and what shall be going on. The thoroughness and the extension of the instructions, that are an inherent part of the installation, which hints at the lack of an officially erected Roma genocide memorial, suggests that the essence of the memorial is not in its fixation and permanency but in its “livingness.” Hence the fact that the visitor’s position as a passive observer is not maintainable but instead, its participation is the desired approach emphasizes on the one hand the status of the artist who favours memory-work and believes that artistic agency can make a difference in the community. On the other hand the visitor is recognized as an “instantaneous witness”519 who as an active participant of the events let her/himself be exposed to the agency of art and is willing to put some effort in remembrance.

Similarly to Balogh Sanja Ivekovič’s,520 Croatian artist, project questions the traditional understanding of the monument as the everlasting material manifestation of public memory which has either a “heroic, self-aggrandizing iconography celebrating national ideals,”521 says the American art critic James E. Young, or is destined to heal or console or provide a solution. Instead of following memorial conventions and materiality the artist shifts

---

521 Young, At Memory’s Edge, 93.
the emphasis to participation and demands from each participant to establish some kind of relation with the past event. In her project, Iveković distributed a public invitation to the residents of Rohrbach, in the northern part of Austria by during the Festival of the Regions in 2005 with the following opening lines: “I invite you to come to Rohrbach and take part in the street performance, The Rohrbach Living Memorial, which is dedicated to the hundreds of thousands of Roma, victims of Nazi persecution genocide. This invitation is open to men, women, and children of non-Roma and Roma origin.” Then it goes on with saying that due to the lack of national memorial to the Roma victims of the Holocaust this artistic performance will “demonstrate that we are not willing to forget the crime, so that it may not be repeated in the future. By participating in this action we will also show that we are able to challenge not only the “invisibility“ of the Roma people in the troubled past, but also the widespread public prejudice and official discrimination which they are facing at present.”

In the end the artist explains the hidden aesthetics of her idea, hence with the temporality of the memorial Iveković suggests that instead of unshouldering the memory burden on a permanent memorial we shall be “active witnesses” while its fragility is a metaphor which stands for the long process of “the recognition of the Roma and their culture within today’s Europe.”

Following the public invitation those who replied yes and were willing to participate received a badge with the black triangle on it, a sign that was used by the Nazis to differentiate Roma, and were asked to sit or stand under the arcades from 8:00 till noon and think about the murdered Roma. The origin of the project was an archive photograph which shows, as the caption says, “A group of Gypsy prisoners, awaiting instructions from their German captors sit in an open area near the fence in the Belzec concentration camp” Iveković invited local residents of Rohrbach to re-enact the scene under the Arkaden am Stadtplatz. In this case “re-enactment” implies not the exact copying (and affirmation) of a past event but rather this artistic practice serves to raise questions relevant to our present day with the help of a well-known past event. In other words, it investigates the possibilities of (re-)acquiring knowledge on the Roma genocide by re-staging the photograph, which we are all familiar with but probably have disconnected from the specific information it conveys, under contemporary circumstances.

522 Reconsidering Roma, 122.
523 Ibid.
524 Ibid.
Neither Ivekovič’s nor Balogh’s project is site-specific. Hence the artists’ aim is instead of dealing with local stories to make people aware of the Roma and Sinti genocide in general. Rohrbach was chosen as one of the participating settlements of the Festival of the Regions. The deportations of Austrian Roma were primarily concentrated on Burgenland. However her work is more than just about formulating the need to raise public attention to the fact that in Austria no state-supported memorial was erected for the memory of Roma victims – in 1984 in Lackenbach a memorial was erected by the state of Burgenland, initiated by the Cultural Association of Austrian Roma. While in Hungary local communities initiated the foundation of memorials (see more on it: Chapter 7.), a united political and civil effort on behalf of both Roma and non-Roma only came in the beginning of the 2000s and resulted in 2006 the establishment of the Roma Holocaust Memorial in the Nehru Park, Budapest. Hence, the installation of Balogh in the Műcsarnok, one of the most important institutions of the art world in Hungary is a site that is irrelevant from the perspective of the Roma holocaust however the publicity it offers might help succeed in breaking out of the context of the art-world and becoming a potential political reality

Both artists imagine their projects on the basis of instructions. Ivekovič initiates, contextualizes and directs the event with a few instruction set in the invitation, such as the time and place or the distribution of badges, and then leaves the participants on their own with the hope that each participant finds significance in the memory of the murdered and discriminated Roma in Europe. What is the source of hope for Ivekovič? How could an art performance evolve itself into a memorial and turn the site of history into a site of memory? First let’s imagine the process of re-staging the photograph, in other words the re-staging of the past event “as it was.” It possibly evokes the Holocaust not as an event represented but as an event “experienced directly.” The instructions of Ivekovič or the limitation on the participants’ free movement or the experience of being displayed to the gaze of the other, non-participating residents all lead to an effect which unmistakably re-enacts the principles that define the Holocaust. In this sense the participants are not “left alone” by the artist in order to find a way to anchor memory (as it happens in most of the cases) but are “submitted” to a performance which provides an “explicit reference” to the Holocaust. Second we shall not forget that the origin of Ivekovič’s project is a photograph and in her invitation she writes “I invite you to join us and become that image.” This suggests that visual memory helps forge an affective and effective relationship to the past. Similarly to Shimon Attie’s Sites Unseen\footnote{Ibid.} This suggests that visual memory helps forge an affective and effective relationship to the past. Similarly to Shimon Attie’s Sites Unseen\footnote{Young, At Memory’s Edge, 62-90.}
(started in 1991) work in which the artist projects photographs of a now invisible Jewish past to sites where they used to present (started to work in Berlin and then initiated similar installation at the Dresden and Hamburg train stations) Iveković, by visualizing the photograph, makes it part of the collective visual memory of the wider public, of the passerbyes. It is hoped that once the image becomes visible it is then internalized by those who see it, it burns into the optics and its “after-image” continues to generate memory, even if the installation is no longer there. That is to say that not only the participants become the inherent part of the image but the image itself becomes meaningful for the non-participants.

What is happening in the case of Rain of Tears? At the moment of entering the box there is the phial in the visitor’s hand which most of the cases either used for blood or urine tests. Collecting tears instead of other body-fluids in the ampule wipes out the distinctions among fluids such as one is finer or cleaner and establishes a “melting pot” for all types. As there was no distinction really made in choosing people to kill but young and elderly people, women and men, rich and poor, homosexuals, political, Roma or Jews were all became victims of the mechanism of mental and physical annihilation. It might also suggest that the tradition of the Nazi genocide shall educate us not to find any reason in essentialism, hence there are no clear-cut categories such as the ingroup of victims and the outgroup of perpetrators or “collective guilt” and “collective trauma.” Instead there is a process which selects and creates the distinctions as well as hierarchies, and consequently establishes normative categories with fixed meanings such as “those who shall live” and “those who shall let be died.” All the more, the instructed collection of tears transforms crying into a banal, if not obscene, act of mourning. The artist reflects upon the European cultural pattern of mourning which on the basis of various social norms allows, as well as requires, the act of crying. Hence crying is more than just an emotional release but also a learned reaction to loss, trauma and pain, while focusing on its learned aspect deprives it from its natural and moving essence. What is the aim of the artist with putting the visitor under pressure and making one cry? On the individual level Balogh offers intimacy: he builds his art-work on the repetition of the images, which is a tool in the hands of the secondary generation to respond to the memory of the events. Instead of being anaesthetized or shocked the artist offers the “shock of déjà vu.” Balogh creates an environment that guarantees privacy and in which the images and texts are randomly glued to the walls, however the more time the visitor spends in the box the more clear the link becomes between the Nazi genocide and present-day racism emphasizing not only how thin actually the border between the two is but also the necessity to learn about and remember the past in order to prevent racism. The “shock of déjà vu” occurs when the link
becomes explicit, hence when the visitor lives through or experiences not what was forgotten but what was not remembered. On the collective level I would argue that the artist enters into the so-called “trauma process” \textsuperscript{527} with the claim that there is a need for an officially recognized Roma genocide memorial. This claim is represented and manifested in the box installed at the Műcsarnok, and being an artistic agent, Balogh aims “to project the trauma claim to the audience, making use of the particularities of the situation, the symbolic resources at hand.” \textsuperscript{528} That is to say that the artistic work, as a symbolic resource, constructs a group out of the visitors (the audience), in other words produces a community on the common experience of crying. The community, as the description of the art work says, is however broader than the circle of the visitors: “We will invite at least a hundred Roma people to the action preceding the exhibition. The small test tubes will be hung around the booth, and further ones will be added during the exhibition itself.” \textsuperscript{529} Including Roma and non-Roma people in the community a community based on solidarity is created that is a political act by the artist. It suggests that the future of the nation and the matter of national identity depend on whether contemporary Hungarian society is willing to practice solidarity with the survivors of the persecutions let them be of Roma or Jewish origin. That the Nazi genocide shall be recognized not only as a set of atrocities on Roma communities but also as a past experience which is traumatic and definitive for both Roma and non-Roma. The “artificial,” not site-specific, situation that is created by Balogh does not generate an ethical and political pressure to make its audience accountable for the deeds of the past, however it offers this possibility with the closed doors and the intimate but uncomfortable space. Rather it aims to provoke mourning instead of being trapped either in a traumatized situation or in an ignorant state of mind.

Conclusion

The Greeks had two words for “life:” “zoe” and “bios.” “Zoe” is a common denominator for all humans and living things since it denotes the “simple fact of living.” “Bios” on the other hand is an aspect of “zoe” meaning a “qualified way of life” often described as social or political. Giorgio Agamben has suggested that this traditional distinction between “zoe” and “bios” provided the foundation for political power. Being reduced to “zoe,” that is in Agamben’s interpretation “bare life” means the loss of importance how one’s life is lived, it is

\textsuperscript{527} Alexander, “Toward a Theory,” 16.
\textsuperscript{528} Ibid. 18-19
\textsuperscript{529} The project was continued at the 52nd Venice Biennale in the First Roma Pavilion where Tibor Balogh hang down the phials from the ceiling as a rain of tears.
the state of utter irrelevance what is good and what is bad. However, as Agamben continues, the above distinction has lost its foundation in relation to modern Western political power and the “bios,” that is the “good life,” has become nothing else but the political management of ‘bare life’. Power introduced an absolute transformation of humans into inhabitants of bare life which exclusively sustains political spheres of power. It was done through stripping these people of their civil rights, social positions and political as well as human status. There was no room for political self-expression but only for exercising obedience and command. It was a complete transformation of humans into animals whose lives were “at issue”\(^{530}\) without taking into consideration types or categories of lives but simply the fact that of being a human. In this sphere it is permitted that killing is not homicide,\(^{531}\) also assimilation, marginalization, and persecution for the achievement and preservation of dominance are accepted tools of the management of people.

“Bare life” is manifested in the leading figure symbolizing the transformation of a human being under the conditions of the concentration camp: the Muselmann (“walking dead”). The Muselmann is on the threshold between life and death, human and inhuman and is no longer capable of anything but mechanical relations. It is in the state of social abandonment: other inmates despised, bullied and left these figures in a total apathy. However, in Agamben’s thinking, the Muselmann lays the foundation for a new ethics which is based on the dilemma what considers to be human: the question is what it means to be human over and beyond biological belonging. In my MA thesis\(^{532}\) I argued that in present European political structures Roma people represent “bare life,” hence they are in a state where they do not have the power of their own lives and they cannot enslave themselves to anyone. Roma are often called as the “forgotten people of Europe,” their history is “forgotten” from the “grand-narrative” of European history, they are deprived from equal rights and lack equal treatment with other citizens of the given country. As a matter of fact they are exposed to abandonedness but on the other hand Roma make visible the underlying mechanisms of present-day state racism.

Although the description next to the painting of Visit to Auschwitz emphasizes both the role and the agency of Kálmán Hollai and Mara Oláh as they overcome their fear and leave the bus to visit Auschwitz, the painting itself represents two – a man and a woman, judged by the clothes they are wearing – insignificant and negligible figures showing their backs at the

\(^{530}\) Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 188.

\(^{531}\) Ibid. 71.

gate of Auschwitz. The line between human and inhuman, since they remind me of the logs enclosing the territory, is already a fuzzy one. Omara’s work leaves this line ambiguous: her style is human- and face-centred even in her miniature series she puts an effort to organize the picture around a human being or gesture. Yet by producing a painting in the theme of the Holocaust and leaving her conventional style of figurative representation behind or at least creating a spectacle which makes her main characters as limit-figures between human and inhuman, between subject and object, the artist connects the past experience of the concentration camp with the present. Not necessarily. But when I am looking at the painting I am anticipating a referential understanding of the Muselmann to the visitors of Auschwitz, the Roma.

Abandonedness is a leading motive in Tibor Balogh’s work. As Jan Assmann argues, “Forty years is the limit of a generation; the passing of the generation of contemporary witnesses and the transition from the lived, embodied memory to a tradition that is to be handed down from generation to generation. (...) To make sure that this memory does not die with them, it has to be transmuted into tradition, into the symbolic forms of cultural memory.”533 Indeed, following the regime change in Hungary in 1989 the space was opened for all kinds of victims of the 20th century to go public with their stories and traumas, however the memory of the past among Roma communities was barely told and was sporadically researched. Assman’s suggests that the question of “What shall be remembered?” has to be asked within one generation since its answer incorporates various traces of the past from individual, autobiographical accounts to distant, trained social conventions and provides the basis of collective consciousness, in other words, the source of identity for a social formation, say, a group. The answers for the question will constitute the basis for the communicative and forty years later for the cultural memory, that is the institutionalized, canonized, externalized version with functional and storage capacities of collective memory. It is the guarantee for a society’s cultural continuity by transmitting collective knowledge from generation to generation via texts, books, rituals, traditions etc., as well as creating the sense of unity and community by shared past.534 Balogh responds to the absence of the lack of officially recognized Roma genocide remembrance and reacts upon the state of being forgotten with the gesture of installing a memorial at Műcsarnok. His work is neither pedagogical, nor is

533 Jan Assmann, Religion and Cultural Memory: ten studies (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2006), 17.
534 Jan Assmann, A kulturális emlékezet. Írás, emlékezés és politikai identitás a korai magaskultúrákban (Budapest: Atlantisz Könyvkiadó, 2004)
obsessed with the past, nor is based on the moral instrumentalization of the past but conceived to challenge present-day silence on the history of Roma.

Both artists avoid the attempt to console or to educate the viewer but they intervene in people’s lives and encourage them to participate either by deeds or by activating their imagination. They emphasize solidarity as a possible foundation upon which communities can and shall be constructed no matter what age, sex, nationality or ethnicity one has.
VII. REMEMBERING AND PROTESTING
Memorialization and commemoration of the Nazi genocide of Roma

“As people get used to this intense light lighting them, they start seeing themselves reflected in the mirrors, and at the same time they realize that the reflection is infinite.” (Alfredo Jaar on The Geometry of Conscience memorial)

One of the projects of the Budapest-based ERCF was dedicated to the so-called territorialization of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma, in other words, to the relationship between memory and space. The project, starting in the end of 2011, focused on the (then) unfinished Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime in Berlin and urged its completion by creating an international network of supporters and by organizing a demonstration next to the site, at Tiergarten, Berlin. Such success for generating a network in a few weeks was mainly due to Germany’s distinguished position in memory, more precisely, its symbolic and central role in remembering the Holocaust. As the project’s description profoundly said: “It is the main objective of the Initiative to carve the memory of the Sinti and Roma victims into the European collective memory,” and “it is essential to commemorate the Sinti and Roma victims of the Holocaust and place them in history in order to acknowledge the continuing attacks towards the Roma throughout Europe today.”

In fact, not so long after Germany’s reunification an international competition was called forth in order to solve the German nation’s “memorial problem,” hence to provide a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe. In the same year, in 1992, due to the pressure coming from the Documentation and Cultural Centre of the German Sinti and Roma, a

535 ERCF is an independent non-profit foundation registered on the 2nd of August, 2010, in Budapest, Hungary. It exists to strengthen and widely promote the role of Roma arts and culture in the enlarging Europe (and beyond) as a way to fight against negative stereotypes and hostile attitudes towards Roma communities. For a future world of artistic and cultural diversity where Roma arts, culture, history and language are equally valued and respected, and the power of artistic creation and education, especially that of young people, is essential for changing negative stereotypes towards people of Roma origin in the enlarging Europe and beyond. See more on it: www.romacult.org
powerful cultural organization and Holocaust archive in Heidelberg led by Romani Rose, a politician and activist of Roma origin, the Berlin Senate, the Federal Government and the then Federal President made the decision to erect a monument for the Roma and Sinti victims of the National Socialist Regime. According to the original plan the construction of the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime would have been completed in the same year as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe’s that is 2005. However in the year 2000 disputes started over naming among Roma organizations: Sinti Alliance challenged the lobby work of the Documentation and Cultural Centre of the German Sinti and Roma and insisted on using the term “Zigeuner” which was resented by Rose thus the construction of the site went on slowly and in 2010 was stopped due to some unexpected conflicts between Dani Karavan, the designer, and the Berlin authorities.538

This was the state of affairs, an unfinished construction site in the one of the corners of the Tiergarten and hesitation on both the designer’s and the authority’s sides to cooperate and start working again, when the ERCF initiated its project in the end of 2011. Under the framework of the 7th Berlin Biennale of Contemporary Art the ERCF advocated the completion of the Memorial by dissemination a Call for Unity, collecting the signatures of supporters on a web-based platform and then creating an international network of Roma and non-Roma organizations and individuals in order to impose pressure on the stakeholders to finish the building of the memorial. The pressure was two-folded: first by using channels of direct political lobbying in order to present the folder of signatures, second by calling the network into alive and organizing a demonstration on June 2, 2012 at Tiergarten.

The project aimed at creating solidarity across communities – across not only Roma but also non-Roma communities, including establishing relationship with the Jews539 – and developing the scope of civic responsibility towards the recognition of each others’ pasts. It was implied that knowing more about the others is a means to achieve equality and tolerance among communities. It also aimed to draw attention to the importance of the relationship between territory and remembrance hence it claimed that remembering needs to be practiced somewhere. An active and concerted effort is necessary, i.e. the finishing and the erection of a monument, to make people be able to inhabit the space, to relate to that site and to gather and commemorate. The inauguration of a memorial to the victims of the persecutions – the

539 See more on these relations in the context of the Holocaust Memorial to Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism in Berlin: Nadine Blumer, From Victim Hierarchies to Memorial Networks. Berlin’s Holocaust Memorial to Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2011)
carving of the memory into European soil – would acknowledge and recognize their sufferings as well as would allow the development of communal commemorative practices which would contribute to the community’s cultural continuity from generation to generation.

This project raises the question of what kind of role politics plays in “remembrance projects” as well as critically examines the relationship between aesthetic and ethical-political concerns. Further: What memory shall be formulated on the basis of a monument? What does the gesture of carving the memory into European soil signify? How does the monument succeed in sharing the experience of the Nazi genocide of Roma with the younger generations? How does it become a point of reference, if at all, for present-day activism or political communication in the combat against racism? How is it possible to become visible, i.e. the basis for political and communal action, in a landscape that is saturated with monuments?

**Space, memory and the site of memory**

Memory is structured in Cicero’s understanding. If one needs to remember a speech then one shall imagine a building, divide the text into parts and allocate them into various rooms of the building. While the speech is given the speaker walks through the imagined building and recognizes the parts (the words, the phrases etc.) and hence remembers the whole text. He even recalls the story of Simonides of Ceos, poet, who attended a dinner at Thessalia and while he was talking to a courier outside of the house the ceiling crumbled and killed everyone but him. By applying the technique of *memory palace* which means to visually remember and recall who sat where, Simonides managed to identify the corpses. That is to say that memory has an order that is maintained by a well-structured space.540

As opposed to the antique conception of the art of memory in the modern era, as Edward Said argues,541 memory is less solid, rigorous but rather fuelled by imagination and invention. However, the function of space remains formative and its role continues to be seminal in relationships, in social and human affairs. As he writes: “Consider, as an easy instance, the word globalization, which is an indispensable concept for modern economics. It is a spatial, geographical designation signifying the global reach of a powerful economic system. Think of geographical designations like Auschwitz, think of what power and resonance they have, over and above a particularly specifiable moment in history or a


geographical locale like Poland or France.” Or think of Jerusalem which from the perspective of the believers is conceived and pictured as the place where Christ spend his last days and where the story of his arrest, trial, suffering and execution took place. Pilgrims use the Bible as their guide-book while they stroll through the city of Jerusalem, that is to say that they time-travel and image themselves in the age of Christ while use the spatial arrangement or topography of sacred places to evoke and re-enact his story. Halbwachs argues that “it is of course individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in specific group context, draw on the context to remember or recreate the past (...) what makes recent memories hang together is not that they are continuous in time; it is rather that they are part of a totality of though common to a group.” Consequently, on the one hand, individuals acquire past experiences collectively, through the interaction with one another, on the other hand, memory is developed under the frame of social practices, and the establishment of territorial belonging is one of those. The monument is a visual tool, an outer dimension (manifestation) of memory – a territorial practice of the formation of identity – in order to address and constitute the group, i.e. the public. It marks the landscape, in other words it transforms a land into a specific landscape and creates an attachment to it. In the middle of the chaos of past experiences it becomes a frame of reference and establishes a spatial framework to which one can link. However this particular attachment is not only the matter of an individual choice but also fostered by aesthetic performance and the public and historical discourses about the monument.

One of the most enigmatic and most cited statements on its uselessness is what Robert Musil wrote in his chapter saying that, “The remarkable thing about monuments is that one does not notice them. There is nothing in the world as invisible as a monument.” His doubts are stemming from three arguments. Firstly he claims that an object or a material environment that is designed for the eternity is prone to desensitize its audience after a while, secondly it is hard to become visible in a world that is saturated by images of the media and thirdly as a matter of the human perception and the ways and channels of communication changed greatly in the modern era the settings of monuments become bizarre, absurd. Much in line with Musil’s scepticism, as an introduction to the Public Art issue of the journal Critical Inquiry John Hallmark Neff writes that “In the absence of shared beliefs and even common interests,
it should not be surprising that so much of the well-intentioned art acquired for public spaces has failed – failed as art and as art for the civic site.”  

However in his book titled *The Textures of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* James E. Young believes in monuments and in their power to create a basis for common action and thinking despite the heterogeneity of experiences and values. Hence Young places the emphasis less on the monument itself but rather on the community and on its needs. The monument is considered as a program in order to gain mutual respect and secure the existence of a group, and it is especially true in the case of the Holocaust.

Many of the scholars, including Aleida Assmann, Peter Reichelt, Jay Winter or Reinhard Koselleck argued that the post-war period brought a change in the history of monuments: post-war monuments testified for a new language of representation.  

Due to the scale of the killings traditional commemorative practices could not take place and figurative monuments were renounced (to avoid identification, to pay respect to the complexity and the heterogeneity of the victims, to avoid political performances), furthermore, victimhood and heroism as the two main pillars of a monument to be erected were not yet defined as well as were challenged by countries such as Germany or France.  

Reichel warns to the difficulty of achieving social consent in communities in the post-war era due to their traumas, while Aleida Assmann says that “the logic of forgetting as a basis of forgiving and remembering as a basis for honour and revenge are now challenged by the paradigm of collective remembering ensuring that memory cultures are founded on intercultural and universal ethical standards and critical self-reflection.”  

Hereby I shall briefly mention, since it has already been extensively discussed in Chapter 3, that the post-war dilemma around monuments was accompanied, framed and based on the discourse on the relationship between representation and the Holocaust which started with Adorno, Lyotard and Des Pres then theorized and interpreted by Langer, van Alphen, Young hand-in-hand with the historians such as Freidlander or Ginzburg.

The first monument of the Nazi genocide of Roma was erected in May 8, 1956 in Poland for the memory of the Roma victims who died in the Szczurowa massacre.  

---

548 Ibid.  
549 Ibid. 20.  
550 Harold Marcuse explores the emergence of the genre ‘Holocaust monuments’ in his book. The first stage of Holocaust memorialisation contains three monuments: the one in Majdanek built in 1943; the second conceived in the Warsaw ghetto in 1943 but realized only in 1948; and the third was initiated in 1944 in New York but erected in 1990. The first two are mementos for the resistance while the third is erected for the memory of the
Szczurowa, located in the Tarnow region, had a heterogeneous population of Roma and non-Roma living peacefully next to each other. On August 3, 1943 Nazi Germans collected all the Roma families, transported them to the settlement’s cemetery and shot them to death.\footnote{A recent film directed by János Bársony investigates the events, including the massacre in Doboz. On the basis of the film there were 20 people killed brutally in the cemetery by ordering them to lie down on the ground (making them believe that they will overnight there) and shooting them to death. See: János Bársony and Ágnes Darócz, Védtelen áldozatok - egy tömeggyilkosság sorozat következmények nélkül (Budapest: Romano Instituto Alapítvány, 2015)} The mass grave was marked in 1956 with a memorial stone with inscriptions on it. In Hungary in 1945 a local stonemason sculpted a gravestone for the memory of the massacre of Roma in Doboz\footnote{Marianna Atyimov, Sötét napja a gyásznak (Budapest: Fekete Doboz Alapítvány, 2004), Last accessed: December 3, 2014. \url{http://w3.osaarchivum.org/index.php?option=com_hwdvideoshare&task=viewvideo&Itemid=66&video_id=350&lang=hu}} in October 5, 1944. Later in October 2002 the local municipality initiated the erection of a \textit{kopjafa} – a wooden obelisk – on which the script said: “Roma Holocaust Genocide. In memoriam the 20 Gypsy people who were shot to death in October 5, 1944.” The first settlement in Hungary which commemorated the Roma victims of the Holocaust with a memory plaque was Ondód (Torony), while the first monument was inaugurated in Nagykanizsa, south of Hungary, in August 3, 1991.

These monuments or first attempts to commemorate the victims of the Nazi genocide of Roma encourage remembering through mourning. They evoke public visions such as loss or victimhood which can be collectively sympathized with. The aesthetics – let them be figurative solutions which suggest the resemblance between people or non-figurative solutions which apply the traditional or classical representations of mourning and death – concerns with those senses and responses of the viewer to the object which forge a common understanding of the event. Furthermore, and as a result of it, these monuments might also become the basis for political performances. For example Kálmán Farkas said while closing his speech at the inauguration of the monument Nyíregyháza in 1993 that “Before God and before another fellow-being, before history and before the rule of law each of us shall account for what needs to be done for the individual and collective rehabilitation of the victims. It belongs to the Parliament’s competencies to manifest democracy not only in words but also in acts and to collectively apologize from the victims and their descendants.”\footnote{Farkas Kálmán, “A cigány áldozatok emlékművének avatása,” \textit{Cigány Kritika} 7 (1993): 1}

Since from the mid 1970s a new generation of visual artists, led by Christian Boltanski, appeared on stage and started questioning the strict, solid and ever existing modes
of representation in relation to the Holocaust so did in the mid 1980s formal conceptions of commemorative rituals and of monuments go beyond abstraction, raise questions about historical understanding or about the position and the task of the viewer. These monument-projects, let them be called: counter-monuments, focus on the forgotten sides of the Nazi genocide of Roma, calling attention to the arbitrariness of political decisions on what shall be remembered, challenge conventional aesthetics and ethical-political concerns. In each work there is an explicit or implicit link between the Holocaust and present-day racism which emphasizes not only how thin actually the border between the two is but also the necessity to learn about and remember the Holocaust in order to prevent racism. These artists/designers believe that their artistic response to events may inform the broader environment about the injustices and may call for action which strengthen and promote solidarity among people.

As a result of the belatedness of the discourse of the Nazi genocide of Roma in public memory the application of counter-monuments can be recognized later from the end of the 1990s. A good example for this is the above-mentioned intervention of the Hungarian activists of ERCF or Alfred Ullrich’s, German artist of Roma origin, project titled Pearls before Swine. Regarding the latter, on the site of a former internment camp and Roma concentration camp in Lety – led by Czechs under the Second World War – there has been a swine farm since the 1970s. The project was launched in 2000 and called for the implementation of appropriate procedures to relocate or demolish the farm as well as for an official recognition of the former camp site by the government and the local authorities. At the site Ullrich tears a pearl necklace belonging to his deceased sister and threw the pearls before the swine through the farm’s gate. The performance is photo-documented and since then the photographs have been exhibited in various places in order to loudly denounce the injustice, that is the disrespectful treatment of the former camp site as being a graveyard of thousands and a place for remembrance for those who survived as well as for those who lost someone. The artist’s Roma background is not an unexpected coincidence. His project is greatly motivated by the fact that his whole family was deported to various Eastern European concentration camps in 1939 (his mother lost her parents, twelve out of fifteen siblings and her first son) and the existence of the swine farm upon the former concentration camp deprives him from the opportunity to properly commemorate on his dead relatives. Ullrich’s project calls for a very simple cause: remove the farm and create a place for remembrance for the memory of the mostly Roma victims of Lety. But how shall we interpret this aesthetic

554 James E. Young coined the term and suggests a departure from the traditional iconography of the monument as well as from the classical understanding of remembering, history and the role of memory.
gesture of tearing a necklace into pieces? Since pearls were and are still used in burials the pearl necklace represents the cycle of life. As the artist tears his dead sister’s necklace and throws them to the swine which would then step on the pieces suggests her reburial but at the same time suggests her unusual, unnatural death thus her exclusion from a proper burial ceremony. In addition not only her unnatural death is commemorated but also all the victims’ who were “thrown before” the brutality of the National Socialist regime. Also while throughout history pearls were appreciated as valuable items of nature, and symbolized wealth, status and beauty pearl necklaces meant to be the symbol of order and harmony. Tearing the thread shows discontinuity, some kind of disorder in the artist’s life due to which it lost its foundation and integrity. For Ullrich the source of disintegration is stemming from the fact that due to the lack of memorial to recreate the past and achieve individual and then collective consciousness is a project destined to failure.

**Biography of the monument**

I will provide my investigations in this chapter along three main questions: How does the designer’s era shape memory? How does the monument reflect past history? What role does the monument play in current history?\(^{555}\)

The case of the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime in Berlin represents the latest, formative actions around a public art in the context of the Nazi genocide of Roma: raised public awareness as well as the interest of various Roma and non-Roma groups, foundations, communities, political lobby groups, civil organizations etc.; succeeded in achieving its goal and the monument was erected in October 2013.\(^{556}\) However in this chapter I will focus on the monument of the Nazi genocide of Roma\(^{557}\) at Nehru Park in Budapest which is in its scope narrower but was a source of inspiration as well as provided knowledge and experience for the Hungarian activists in order to initiate the completion of the monument in Berlin. Furthermore the geographic location of the monument at Nehru Park, the political, historical and social contexts in which it was conceived or its aesthetics formulate relevant statements which shall be read. I follow the path of James E. Young and unfold the biography of the monument.\(^{558}\) Hence the dimensions of investigation

---

\(^{555}\) James E. Young, *The Textures of Memory*.

\(^{556}\) Press on it: [http://www.theromanielders.org/content/menu_149/press-folder](http://www.theromanielders.org/content/menu_149/press-folder)

\(^{557}\) I will use the term monument on the basis of James E. Young: „Monuments, on the other hand, will refer to a subset of memorials: the material objects, sculptures, and installations used to memorialize a person or thing. For the purpose of this books, I treat all memory-sites as memorials, the plastic objects within these sites as monuments. A memorial may be a day, a conference, or a space, but it need not to be a monument. A monument, on the other hand is always a kind of memorial.” Young, *The Textures*, 4.

\(^{558}\) Ibid.
will be organized around the following themes: times and places in which it was conceived; literal construction; political and historical realities; finished form; its place in the constellation of national memory; its life in the minds of communities.

At the Nehru Park

Time and place: chronology and topography

“Since 2002, if I remember correctly, we have started to commemorate at Nehru park. At that time we already knew the location of the monument. We put there a wood cross and we were standing around it and protested and commemorated there” – recalls the event Aladár Horváth, a former member of the Parliament and the Chairman of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation. Between 1997 and 2002 the public commemoration of the Nazi genocide of Roma was held in front of the Parliament at the statue of Francis II. Rákóczi on August 2. There was no importance attached to Francis Rákóczi, who was the leader of the uprising against the Habsburgs between 1703-1711, rather the square in front of the Parliament was weighted politically. It represents the power of the state hence is one the most significant places for the public manifestation of dissent. The term “dissent” can also be applied to the context of the Nazi genocide of Roma, since as a matter of the (yet) contested pasts, the lack of solidarity as well as the lack of visibility each public remembering of the Nazi genocide of Roma qualified as an act of protesting against the exclusivity of collective memory. “At least 9 years long we held the public commemorations under the blue sky in front of the Parliament and after a while almost ritually all speeches included the need for a monument. It happened around 2003 [2002] when we had to recognize that our cry for a monument remained unheard.”

Although public commemorations were organized in three locations in Hungary, none of the sites was bound by the memory of the Holocaust, neither were they prestigious enough nor did they manage to enlist the contribution of the state – which would have been a sign of recognition the suffering of Roma. As the voice of Roma civil organizations to create an appropriate memory site remained unheard, or as Daróczi says “No steps were made for a change so we made some changes”, they “placed the location of the public commemoration to

559 All data I mention below is the result of my research in the archive of Budapest Gallery.
560 Interview conducted with Aladár Horváth
561 Hereby I should also note that from the beginning there was a consensus on the date of the Roma Holocaust day, when during the night “at Auschwitz-Birkenau II/B, in the so-called Gypsy-lager the Nazis killed the rest of the camp: 2987 people. Most of them were women, children, old or sick.” /Quote from Ágnes Daróczi’s speech, 2006./ Peter Szuhay explains the consent as the expression of transnational solidarity and brotherhood among Roma. See Péter Szuhay, „A holokausztól a pharrajimosig.”
562 Interview conducted with Ágnes Daróczi
the Nehru park which was a transition point for Roma taken from [Pest]Erzsébet, [Pestszent]Lőrinc, Csepel. They were forced to march there, along the Danube to the brickyard which functioned as a relocation centre.”

Let us stop here and think about the notion of location. There are monuments which are built in physical dislocation from the actual site of the event. These monuments which are not in a dialogical relationship with their geographical location might provide an access to the past by being pedagogical, in other words, their pure presence, the “being there,” warns us to remember the event and never let it happen again. However the context of the site does play a crucial role in the material and ideological construction of a monument. Each monument in a certain degree site-specific: its placement charges the monument with meanings just as the monument contributes to the significance of the site. The design, the chosen geographical location or the historical and social environment all endow with meanings – which are often contested and never stable – the monument just as the monument shapes the understanding of the site where it is placed. As Miwon Kwon argues site-specificity in public art evolved over time. While in the beginning, in the mid 1960s, it only meant to bring beauty to a public place, then public art had to engage with and integrate into its environment and from the mid 1980s it was about engaging with the public and seeking for the community’s approval and value. Although some argue that the notion of art is self-referential or as a matter of fact Rosalinda Krauss states that the (negative) logic of the monument demands its sitelessness and homelessness artists and architects have started taking into consideration that the chosen location might have a meaning producing potential.

Why was it of special importance to build a monument in Budapest? Besides the monument’s material and geographical characteristics, as Foucault argues, the notion of site is socially constructed and there is some kind of political relevance attached to it. The monument which was imagined in Budapest was not the first monument erected for the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma. As a matter of fact the site of the massacre of Roma in Doboz was signed with a gravestone in 1945, or in August 11, 1984 a memory plaque was placed on a wall with a text saying: “From here deported the Fascists in 1944 the residents

563 Ibid.
565 Modernism, as a matter of fact was charged with self-referentiality by Clement Greenberg in his text “Modernist Painting.”
568 Another was placed there in 2004: „For the memory of the innocent victims of the death camps.”
of Ondód of Roma origin. Thirteen of them did not return home.” The first monument was erected in Nagykanizsa (August 3, 1991) as a result of the initiation of the Amalipe Association for Protection of Culture and Tradition and with the financial support of George Soros. Although the location within the city was a public space criticism highlighted its peripheral status as well as the wooden material of the monument which makes it invisible. Later Nyíregyháza (April 27, 1993) and Babócsa (September 20, 1996) built their monuments too. As it was already discussed in the first chapter the Roma Press Centre understood the significance of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma and managed to frame it as a series of projects. As the 60th anniversary of the event was approaching the organization spread memory plaques to mark the sites which were physically the sites of death, however in the same year, in 2004, cities and settlements country-wide followed the footsteps of the Roma Press Centre and initiated their own monument. Nevertheless, by saying that the notion of site is charged with ideological and political meanings also suggests that the site influences the perception, presentation and access of the monument. In other words, placing a monument in the capital represents an official recognition of the event, of its significance. The site of the capital is saturated with prestige and sanctity. The act by which the piece of land and its features is offered to the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma transforms a land into a specific site and creates an attachment to it. Not only does that piece of land become sacred out of the profane from the perspective of the community but also the act inscribes into the public, collective consciousness the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma.

However from the point of visibility the choice of the location is highly questionable. The park is a relatively isolated place in an area of Budapest which is yet to be rehabilitated. It is surrounded by the Danube from the West, North by the Bálna, which is a state-of-the-art cultural, entertainment and shopping Centre however almost completely abandoned, East by tram lines and a road with heavy traffic and South by a traffic junction. Although the University of Economics is in the neighbourhood and the campus lacks any open field or park as a matter of its decayed state and gradual destruction the students choose to hang out somewhere else. Furthermore, the atmosphere of the park resembles some kind of disorder which precludes one to distinguish or determine any singular meaning in the chaos, such as the monument dedicated to Roma.

569 This is among the reasons why out of the three sites of public commemoration – Nagykanizsa, Budapest-the National Roma Self-Government’s house, Budapest-Nehru Park – the first two through the course of time started loosing significance and weight.
Turning back to Daróczi’s narration she continues with the steadiness of the civil sphere to realize the Nazi genocide of Roma monument: “[Secondly] If they failed to hear our voices and do anything let us try to write down what we think and see if they respond. Then the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust was coming and the National Cultural Fund had an open call specifically to support the erection of public monuments. We approached those who were competent in this subject matter. If this is going to be a public monument in Budapest then it involves three parties: Budapest city, culture, because it is a public monument the state institutions responsible for the cultural affairs shall be included and the civil sphere because they are the initiators, so we are the third party. We drafted a plan.” In February 17, 2004 Ágnes Daróczi informs András Szilágyi, the head of the Budapest Galéria, that “we held a press conference together with János Schiffer Deputy Mayor of Capital City of Budapest about the launching of the social donation.” Two days later Daróczi updates Szilágyi and writes that “Tamás Szabó statuary from Budapest, Zoltán Szentirmai, Szentendre, and Gyula Pauer, Budapest, statuaries gave a positive answer to our informal proposition, while Antal Sándor statuary from Zsámbék is unable to participate in the call due to his other duties.” In March 8, 2004 both of them participated at the sitting of the Cultural Commission of the 9th district. Then was 2 million forints granted for the project as a contribution of the Government of the 9th district furthermore, Szabolcs Péter statuary from Zalacséb was suggested as the artist to create the world standard piece of public art.

It was decided that the nature of the competition would be “non-open” which means that participation shall be based on direct invitations. The competition’s call invited architects to submit a design proposal “For the construction of the Roma Holocaust monument at the Nehru Park, south to the centreline of the east-west oriented Bakáts street. The initiators, which are the Municipality of Budapest, the government of the 9th district, the Budapest Roma Self-government and the Romaversitas, request that the piece of public art shall remind us to the victims and serve as a monument for commemorations and wreathing ceremonies. It shall stand as a memento of the innocent victims.” The selected architects were: György Jovanovics, Gyula Pauer, Antal Sándor, Tamás Szabó and Zoltán Szentirmai, and the deadline for the submission – a 1:5 architectural scale plan, the draft of the construction and its environmental impact, description of the design and a budget plan – was set to be May 9, 2005.

Regarding the costs of the monument it was limited to 17,5 million HUF. Since the beginning of the project the civil Roma organizations suggested to divide the costs among the three initiating parties. The Budapest Gallery was appointed to be responsible, among the
framing of the call, establishing the jury and managing the construction, for the financial management of the statue, that is to say that the Gallery was handling the money. The Municipality of Budapest provided its 7 million HUF contribution and as a matter of the unwillingness of the state-level cultural institutions the Municipality contributed with another 7 million HUF. In the meanwhile the civil organizations started applying for money from various funds as well as launched a fundraising campaign. In the end the contribution of the civil organizations consisted of 2 million HUF awarded from National Cultural Fund and 0.5 million HUF from donations. Unfortunately as a result of the unsuccessful first round and hence, the completion of the monument was failed to meet the August 2, 2005 deadline, the National Cultural Fund demanded to amount back leaving the civil organizations with their own contribution as well as with the donations.

The first round ended with no final decision. As Daróczi explains, “None of them succeeded in representing so powerfully the idea (...) and the usual associations such as a shattered figure standing under an arch (...) did not say anything about us. Neither a broken fiddle.” Following a few weeks of hesitation\footnote{August 24, 2005 was the deadline for the second round based on invitation. The invited artists were László Szatmári Juhos, Bernadett Szilágyi, Enikő Szőllössy, Tamás Varga. The available amount was 17 Million HUF. In July 7, 2005 Attila Zsigmond, the Head of the Gallery suggested an open call.}, instead of another “non-open” call the head of the Budapest Gallery, Attila Zsigmond’s suggestion to open the competition was approved in August 1, 2005. The deadline for the design proposals was October 3, 2005.

The proposals were awaited at the National Institute for Community Culture and Public Collection, at Ágnes Daróczi’s office. “Me and a colleague from the Budapest Gallery were standing at the Ervin Szabó room and waiting for the proposals to arrive. As far as I remember they should have arrived until 1 pm. I had a meeting at 2 pm with the civil members of the Committee of Roma Professionals who came from all parts of Hungary. It was a not a coincidence since our intention was to have a kind of social jury which approves the decision of the professional jury or at least argues with it.” As they were waiting Daróczi noticed one submission which imagined a U-shaped wall and on the surface of the wall there were brown triangles scattered. “I knew that the designer of this work understood something very important.” Although there was a properly used system of symbols the problem of the work was also striking: the U-shape monument detaches an area from the park which could easily function as a urinal. Then one of the last proposals was the work of Ákos Maurer-Klimes and Tamás Szabó, who also participated in the non-open call. “It had an idea”, explains Daróczi the moment when she and her colleague briefly looked through the
submissions, “there was a three-dimensional black triangle which is cut with tongues of fire. They let us have a look at the human torso which is shining gold and whose pain is acute.”

The jury’s decision\(^{571}\) was made in October 5, 2005 and chose Maurer-Klimes and Szabó’s design proposal, while a few days after in November 24 the General Assembly of the Municipality of Budapest approved the location of the monument.\(^{572}\) In May 18, 2006 the jury gathers in Szabó’s atelier to discuss the 1:1 architectural scale design as well as the licensing\(^{573}\) plan for the construction. The budget was lowered and there was only 14,5 million HUF at the projects disposal. The budget estimates of the Municipality of Budapest approved 12 million HUF which amount as a result of the delivery acceptance agreement was changed to 14,5 million HUF. Romaversitas contributed to the construction with 5 million HUF. The completion of the monument fell behind the deadline instead of July 31, the construction ended in September 5.\(^{574}\)

The monument was officially unveiled in September 15, 2006. At the inauguration ceremony Péter Kiss, Minister of Social and Labour Affairs, Gábor Demszky, Mayor of Budapest, János Schiffer Deputy Mayor of Budapest, Ágnes Daróczzi, Curator of the Romedia Foundation, Aladár Horváth, chairman of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation and Viktória Mohácsi, EP Representative, delivered their speeches.

**Aesthetics**

The Austrian art historian Alois Riegl writes, “A monument in its oldest and most original sense is a human creation, erected for the specific purpose of keeping single human deeds or events (...) alive in the mind of future generations.” Thus besides aesthetic concerns the task of the monument is to direct and keep the attention to the subject-matter it was built for. However the monument is a “technical hybrid:\(^{575}\) it testifies to past events, it initiates and engages in a dialogue with the community, it testifies to the intervention of individual artists and spectators and to their attempts to draw moral lessons from events of the past. It fulfils both documentary and artistic functions, furthermore it has a deeply ethical character. The challenge is to find a balance or the right proportion of the two former when initiating,

---

\(^{571}\) György Szabó (sculptor), Szanyi Péter (sculptor), János Schiffer (Deputy Mayor of Capital City of Budapest), Mária Matók (counsellor at the Mayor of Capital City of Budapest), Kálmán Páll (Vice Mayor), Katalin Sersliné Köcsi (Chief Architect at IX district), Ágnes Daróczzi, István Balogh, Jenő Zsigó, Attila Zsigmond (Budapest Gallery), András Szilágyi (Budapest Gallery)

\(^{572}\) 2675/2005 decree

\(^{573}\) It was granted in April 7, 2006.

\(^{574}\) I was left wondering what the reception of the monument’ design was among the Roma communities however unfortunately I could not find any traces of their agreement of disagreement. I search journals – see: Chapter 1 – and conducted interviews.

\(^{575}\) Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments*. 

---

180
producing a monument. That is to say that artists and architects face dilemmas that are not merely architectural or aesthetical but are also concerned with ethics and politics. How shall the architect relate to the memory of the event? What is the role of design in establishing a memorial site? How is it possible to erect a monument without trying to compensate for the traumas or without attempting to speak in the name of the victims? The call requested that “the piece of public art shall remind us to the victims and serve as a monument for commemorations and wreathing ceremonies. It shall stand as a memento of the innocent victims.” In the following I will have a closer look at the submitted designs of the second round and analyse them from two perspectives.

First I am interested in the meanings and significance that each idea of the monument conveys. I wish to understand whether (and if yes, how) it manages to become a representational space as Lefebvre calls it, or lived, monumental space – that is experienced “through its associated images and symbols” and in what sense the design attempts to produce a dialectical relation between the monument and its users. How does the monument deploy aesthetics or the notion of beauty? Would it remain a passive statement of the event, fuel pain and loss and at the same time pathetically offer redemption? Or would it represent the Holocaust in such a manner that it would evoke the horror but also initiate a public discourse? Second I wish to know more about the monument’s position in memorialisation. How does it relate to the notion of trauma? Is it a solid, melancholic carrier of loss, or does it inspire the visitors to make an effort to understand the past?

Looking through the twelve design proposals I would identify two streams in representation. Several of the works are founded on the notion of realism. Realistic representation – or as Ernst van Alphen calls it: literal representation – is supposed to invoke authenticity, truth and the mimetic articulation of the past. It basically re-produces the past as it was leaving it utterly untouched from any kind of interpretations or visible attempts to understand what happened. Realism regards the experience of the Holocaust as unique and whose depiction shall be accurate and sacred. It encodes trauma and offers – for the visitor, viewer – an explicit encounter with it, from time to time without any hope for redemption, in other words, for being freed from the haunting past. The notion of realism can be detected not only in the symbol system the monument chooses to deploy but also in the language the proposal uses, in the chosen material, in the role of the visitor or the surrounding environment.

577 Ibid. 39.
The foundation of the design No.1 symbolizes a whirlpool which is about to swallow the bird fighting against it with twisted wings. Birds usually represent freedom; they almost belong to divinity being a link between heaven and earth. Birds are free souls carrying in themselves the possibility for change, unlimited imagination, or a renewed life. However this bird seems to lose the fight against the wrecking power of history thus Roma people perish or become deprived from their main characteristics and are forced to perpetual adaptation to the majority. The association of freedom with Roma and its painful loss appear in the majority of the design plans. Work No. 2 reminds the viewer to a stack-like pile of branches pointing to the air. They are made of iron, and the length of each differs from the others creating a woody, bushy territory. The longest is 7.5 meters long while the smallest is 10 centimetres. In-between the pieces there are 5 drop-shaped glass or plastic forms with various colours. As the proposal explains, “The branches refer to the lifestyle of Roma which became wrecked by the Holocaust. The branches could represent walking sticks. There are 14 of them which is twice as much as the mythical number seven. Roma dresses are characterized by deep colours (...)” Furthermore, the drop-shaped forms invoke the notion of tear-drops. Similarly, Work No. 4. is a 4 meters tall figure of a bird (made of bronze and iron) which is surrounded with a bed of colourful roses. The explanation says that the closed wings of the bird represent the attempt to deprive Roma from their liberty as well as the total exposure of a human being, while “the lightsome shape of the bird, the purity of the stand, the roses and rose petals surrounding the bird are the messengers of beauty in order to evoke love to life”. In this case beauty is deployed through “aesthetics pleasure” to communicate traumatic memory, to confront with the horrors of the past and promote a better understanding of it. Among other meanings rose is the symbol of immortal love, beauty, wisdom, balance as well as sacrifice or healing. With the help of the beauty of the rose the designer wishes to aestheticize mourning; to lead the viewer out of the darkness by the elegance, delicacy and frailty of nature.

However I shall add to the interpretation of the notion of freedom that many of the designs fall into the trap of approaching the Nazi genocide of Roma by applying stereotypes, bizarrely even those ones which were used under the Holocaust for the purpose to persecute Roma. Besides the association of Roma as freedom-lovers, motifs such as the importance of family or symbols such as the horse or the wheel are incorporated in the designs. The design of Work No.5. considered the “attributes of the Roma cross” as its foundation. On a little rise a veiled man and a veiled woman are standing close to each other as a family. The man is the pillar of a family, the woman refers to the protective mother and the veil shields from nakedness and defencelessness. The idea of the family is a main characteristic of Roma, as the
note explains. “I attempted not to represent the suffering, trodden human ... In the focus point of the design is life overcoming everything and the will to say »yes« to freedom accounting for the rebellious, freedom-lover nature of Roma. Holocaust appears in the barbed wire (similar to Christ’s thorn wreath). It twists around the legs of the figures as a snake and shackles them, thus prevents them from doing their innermost need: wandering (...).” In addition to that, probably the most disturbing work of all is Work No.11. that is based on either motifs considered as inherently the part of Roma culture or their associations. The central motifs are the wheel, the horse and the head of the horse. “To depict the head of the horse as a skull is a reference to death, to the constant threat which Roma experienced through their wanderings and to the presence of demons and ghosts which characterize Roma mythologies.” – as the concept explains. The design No.9. invokes “the Indian death culture’s relation to water which refers to a central component of Roma identity that is the Indian roots.” On the top of a small rise two, black, granite, large standing stones are placed next to each other. Their height is 4 meters and the distance between them is less than a meter. They are holding another, third granite stone aloft. The surface of the standing stones is rough while the third’s is soft and glowing. The motif is a stylized gate while the two pillars leaning a little bit forward and taking different positions suggest insecurity, instability. The third element invokes the images of a coffin or a boat both of which are considered as symbols of death.

In a former chapter (Chapter 5.) discussed József Lojkó Lakatos film director’s choice of starting his film with a montage of photographs of Roma among which there are portraits, photos of the poor living circumstances, of everyday routines or of family life. Instead of relying on an anthropological or ethnographical understanding of those photographs I argued that the director’s choice was a political act in order to raise attention to the topographical and ontological discrimination of Roma. However in this case the application of so-called symbols of the so-called Roma culture could be a disservice to the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma. Furthermore carving stereotypes into stone would not only legitimize their validity and their usage in the past but also prevent public consciousness from incorporating the history of Roma equal to the majority’s.

The belatedness of the appearance of the Nazi genocide of Roma guarantees not only the freedom in representation but also by consciously using Jewish iconography includes Roma people related to history and/or memory. As a matter of fact work No.6. is a composition of eyes wide open behind barbed wire asking the following questions: Why did we have to die? What was our sin? Against whom did we trespass? Why us? These questions are also exclamations not to let it happen again. “In my composition I would like to build a
memento not only to the dramatic atmosphere but also to the will to live, to live further. The positive-negative vibration of the playful bronze surface dissolves the tension, aesthetically decorates our environment and provides a site for memorialisation.” In Work No.10, the design is a multi-figure composition. “The chased, hunted crowed is my basic idea; the defencelessness of people who are about to escape or who cannot escape, their move is shaped by each individual tragedy linked in the common fate. They are heading to somewhere. Many of them look into our eyes but then are drifted away forever.” Or in the case of Work No.12, a railway line runs towards a wall made of glass fiber reinforced concrete. “The death-wall blocks the view as the experience of Roma under the Holocaust shatters one’s identity.” On the glass-wall there is a script, one of Nostradamus’ prophecy, written with Gothic style.

In terms of the usage of language, thus the ways in which the design is explained by the architect give plenty of opportunities to delve in realism and the mimesis of trauma. In Work No.1, the architect wishes to “represent the dramatic event with the dynamic, spiral move,” or in No.2, the glass drops represent fragility, vulnerability but they can be also seen as teardrops which cry for the victims, as well as the experience of being threatened, trapped and the failure to break out. Correspondingly to the above, the materials are heavy, dark, long-lasting and are able to carry the weight of history with no hope for unloading the burden, the traumatic past experiences. Additionally, according to the above plans, the visitor will never take the weight of remembering from the monument, but will only remain a viewer whose task is only contemplation and never to interact with the public art.

The remaining few design plans replace the realistic/literal approaches to the past with the imaginative – or as Ernst van Alphen calls: figurative – discourse. The Holocaust can and shall not be fully represented however this discourse introduces a new ethics which on the one hand replaces principles of authenticity or uniqueness with dilemmas such as the relationship between power and individual or the presence of racism in everyday life. On the other hand it avoids telling what happened in the past as well as ignores to consider categories such as victim or perpetrator in a black-and-white way but provides the possibility for viewers to think and use their imaginations in order to understand and interpret past experiences. That is to say that in this sense the Holocaust is not a singular event but as an event which is already filtered through various channels of representation such as media, and is charged ethically and politically.
The concept of the work No.3. might remind the viewer to Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum. The building is open from the top, has a ground-space which forms an almost regular square (3x3,18 meter) and its walls are 3 meters high. The entrance door is smaller than usual: 180 cm high, 45 cm wide. In the axis of the entrance door, inside of the building, almost a meter away from the opposite wall there is a post. The top of the post frames a small pool. The stand of the monument forms a rectangular on which there is a plaque with the inscription: “Pharrajimos, 1944, Roma Holocaust Memorial, 2005”. The following names relevant in relation to the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma are carved in the stand: Komarom, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau, Ravesbrück and Buchenwald. The author highlights several dilemmas which emerged in the designing process, for example the power of authentic documents vis-a-vis the monument; the danger of pathos and kitsch; to meet the audience’s expectations or to fit in the current interpretations of Holocaust monuments. The author builds on the void, in other words, the absence, the experience of empty spaces. Although the building is massive and robust the emphasis is rather on an inner journey: it invites the viewer to an inner experience. The door is narrow on purpose. In a note following the description of the design the author explains that the door makes impossible for two people to enter at the same time suggesting loneliness, autonomy, or responsibility in understanding the experience of the Nazi genocide of Roma. By entering into the slightly asymmetric inner space the viewer finds nothing but three similar walls and the sky. The empty space is not willing to take over the burden of remembering, but only provides the context without telling how and what to remember, while the open air represents incompletion and closeness to nature. Regarding the latter the building fails to protect the visitors from the weather but exposes them to the even harsh circumstances. The stand is at ground level “highlighting the status of the monument as a memorial: instead of being an unusual, unconventional site it wishes to become a communal-social place. It suggests that remembering the Nazi genocide of Roma should not only be the task of extraordinary moments. The post slices as well as structures a space out of emptiness although it does not provide the reassuring balance of symmetry.” No.7.’s design builds on two symbols: first there is the brown inverted triangle used to identify Roma in Nazi concentration camps, and second there is a space confined with black walls (covered with brown triangles). “The reason to confine a space and isolate it from nature is to create usable and safe places, homes. Human identity is inseparable from the identity of places (...).” The confined space represents a room

spanned 180 degrees however as a matter of the missing two walls it denotes an unnatural existential space referring to the insanity of the Holocaust. The missing walls also suggest openness and inclusion since “places are always shared, in this case through the act of remembering, pain, shame and the sense of togetherness.”

In terms of material there is no difference from the realistic monumental designs however the choices of language – such as “act of remembering” or “task of remembering” or the monument is “not willing to take over the burden of remembering” – suggest that memory is considered as plastic and open to re-interpretation and an active role is attributed to the viewer in reflecting upon the memory that was transmitted or brought to them.

Regarding the winner concept, which is listed in this text as the work No.8., I identify it with the first category. The monument represents a stylized figure placed in a triangle shaped prism. The triangle refers to the badge Roma received in concentration camps. On the solid structure of the black prism there are breaches, and inside the prism there is a figure made of bronze. The idea of the architects seems to understand the dilemma of Holocaust representation and offers a challenging design as an answer. On the basis of a symbol of the Nazi genocide of Roma the monument resists certainty and an unassimilable concept of memory. Rather than closing the wounds of the painful experiences of the past, rather than enhancing forgetting or completing memory-work, the monument invites the visitor to participate in the act of remembering. The breaches represent the perpetual task to search for meanings; a narrative which shall never be closed. They also manifest the scars and the feeling of discomfort, thus the need for healing, the demand of both the body and the soul to be consoled. The smooth surface of the structure stands as a mirror in front of the visitor through which the viewer is meant to experience a certain aspect of the Holocaust. That is to say that the process of healing depends very much on the individual’s effort. Paradoxically the surface protects the individual from the trauma but on the other hand provides the possibility for knowing and understanding. The breaches or the fractures give an insight to the Holocaust, as the architects explain: “What is inside is scaring and beautiful at the same time, terrifying and great, fire, light, glowing and eternal value.” Inside of the monument there is not only the individual’s but the whole humanity’s catastrophe embodied. “A memento for the Holocaust is a memento for a multitude of people. Still each person’s suffering is incommensurable and can only be understood in its own context. Thus each and every site of memory, let it be built by any kind of group, shall speak to humankind.”

Although the design manages to realize the dilemma it also immediately recuperates it. The aesthetics which holds in itself the promise for an ethically and politically charged
memory-work eventually becomes meaningless. It becomes a piece of art which attempts to
redeem mass murder with beauty and redeem the past with the instrumentalization of its
memory. The breaches fail to set the visitor off the path of making connections with the
Holocaust: the closer one gets to the monument the more one transforms from a visitor to a
spectator and the more the monument becomes from an aesthetics strategy (of “doing” the
Holocaust) to a spectacle, to the aesthetics of the sublime.579 What is disturbing is exactly the
act of “having an insight” through the breaches. It recalls that controversial scene of
Schindler’s List that takes place two and a half hours in the film. A train carrying women ends
in Auschwitz and after they are shaved guided to a shower room where they await the gas, but
instead suddenly streams of water are coming out from the shower heads. This scene was very
much criticized by violating the Bildverbot, the taboo on representation which prohibits
imagining the unimaginable. By providing an insight to the gas chambers, which was
impossible to bear witness, it becomes too realistic and suggests as if a direct access to the
past would be possible. Furthermore, it does with obscenity. Similarly, the breaches guide us
to a figure glowing or burning in the light or in the fire. It reminds the visitor to the
crematorium and the fatelessness, the meaningless death of millions. By offering an authentic
look into the past the gesture of the visitor to approach the monument and to expose
themselves to its effects is rendered unneeded, senseless. It might even be considered as pure
curiosity. Hence capturing the unprecedented and endowing the visitor with the possibility of
becoming – so simply and directly – eye-witness of the mass-extermination put into question
the status of the monument as a visual statement.

Place in national memory and in the community
In August 3, 1991 Béla Osztojkán, writer and the founder of the Phralipe Independent Roma
Association, said the following at the inauguration of the monument of the Nazi genocide of
Roma in Nagykanizsa: “Special say, a special event, in a special time with special
participants. There is barely any corner in the world where the Roma figure would so surely
and irrevocably become fixed. The weight of the horror which bursts prison bars, the sober
brightness, the wish and the pain to develop, the deep shame of misfortunes might commands
stop to all monument-remover era. Because one has to remember. Everyone has to.”580 This I
consider the trigger which then a few years later becomes more explicit and lays the

579 Brett Kaplan, Unwanted Beauty. Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation (Urbana: University Of
Illinois Press, 2007), 9. – “aesthetics of the sublime align politically with the idea that the Holocaust is too
terrible to be represented”
ideological foundation for all public commemorations of the Nazi genocide of Roma. Besides enforcing public mourning and remembering to the victims, commemorative practices are also used as symbolic resources to protest, to mobilize or to call for collective actions. Thus public commemorations of the Nazi genocide of Roma offer a remarkable combination of the possible ways one could deal with the past and process the traumatic event. By an annual repetition of the same ritual it fosters the “action-out” which means the repetitive re-experiencing of past occurrences. The “residue” of reliving the trauma as it was is melancholia, grief and mourning. However by politically and ethically charging the event conveys the possibility to achieve a distance from the past, to actualize the traumatic experiences and thus to reconstitute the once melancholic agency. Nazi genocide of Roma commemorations, in a Durkheimian sense, become distinctively political and public rituals which as social practices or collective expressions wish to produce and reproduce collective sentiments for a given social order. Furthermore to call for collective action, to articulate political and civic resistance – as Ágnes Daróczy put it, “August 2 is a memorial day in the history of the Roma emancipation movement”\(^{581}\).

Two years later at the inauguration of the monument in Nyíregyháza József Choli Daróczy set the above agenda in his speech: “(...) When I was a child, in a lovingly beautiful spring morning the local notary and the town crier accompanied by a dozen of men in black uniform armed with weapons approached us, Roma in the settlement at the outskirts and nailed on each door a black-framed board. On each board the names of the inhabitants were written. While the town crier was working the men in black uniforms rounded us up in Aunt Lulu’s courtyard and the notary explained that these men are our BROTHERS and came to US to protect us. As a result of this – said the notary – only those people can stay in each hut whose names are written on the boards. I got to know it many-many years later that the brothers in black uniforms were servants of Hitler’s fascist regime. They were Arrow Cross soldiers and their brotherly protection turned my home into a ghetto. In those years (under the regime of the Nazis and the Arrow Cross, between 1943-44) approx. 70.000\(^{582}\) Roma: women, men, girls and boys, children and babies were deported to concentration camps from Hungary. We came to Nyíregyháza to CELEBRATE the memory of the 70.000 people. Celebrate? No. We do not celebrate but mournfully remember. We came here to remember and to protest. To remember: our tragedies, losses, our tragic turns of fate. Let us remember a sequence of

\(^{581}\) Interview with Ágnes Daróczy

\(^{582}\) As a matter of its undocumented and decentred, desynchronized nature it is hard to estimate the number of the deportees as well as the total number of Roma killed during the events. However as a matter of its struggle to get recognized as “holocaust” as well as to be included in the genocide framework number matters.
events which was the most shameful and most despicable period of history. Let us remember and murmur a pray for the souls of those who were innocently killed, for those souls who had to die only because they were Roma. (...) This monument shall not only become a memento of the Roma victims of Nazism but also a warning sign. It shall warn us that the fascist ideology and racist prejudices might emerge and dominate anytime and in any kind of social structure. (…)"583

“Remembering” the victims and “protesting” are the two inextricably linked pillars, although it varies how much emphasis they are given. This duality is transmitted to the commemorations held in Budapest, as a matter of fact Aladár Horváth’s invitation in 1997 for a public vigil resembles very much what Choli Daróczy outlined: “Dear Friend, The Roma Civil Rights Foundation organizes a public vigil on the night August 2, 1997 for the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma, in front of the Parliament, at the Kossuth square. We kindly invite you to take part in it. Beyond commemorating and mourning our goal is to give more publicity and repute to that sad fact that hundred thousands of Roma were killed by the Nazi terror under the Second World War. However the vigil is a call too. It is a call with which we wish to emphasize the tragic situation of Roma. We wish that this event will be the beginning of an excavation work which would shed light on the facts of the Roma Holocaust and then integrate them into the collective consciousness, thus the responsibility of the then political leadership of the country would be accurately revealed.”584 The third site of public commemoration came to existence in 1997 with the invitation of Horváth. First, second or third generations of survivors, Roma and non-Roma gathered to hold a public vigil at the foot of the statue of Francis II. Rákóczi until the monument at Nehru Park was finished. In the following I will explore the content of commemorations: the articulation of both “remembering” and “protesting.”

“Remembering” is the above-mentioned “excavation work.” It shall keep the memory of the victims but also unfold the facts of the past and contribute to the formulation of a historical narrative of the Nazi genocide of Roma. Because: the genocide of Roma “is forgotten. In the collective consciousness of Roma their history of persecution was considered as a never-ending history of suffering. Without the existence of the elite, of the church or other institutions Roma failed to represent their history, and in addition to that, almost two years after the war new anti-Roma legislations were introduced. And the Holocaust is

disclaimed because no one was talking about it for decades, they could not talk about it and it
still lacks any systematic, methodical research as well as the »excavation« of facts.”

Each speech, given at the commemoration ceremonies, provides an insight to the past.
Historical researches conducted on the theme get articulated and at the same time a historical
narrative is taking shape by introducing the most significant milestones of the genocide.
However the act of recalling the past along facts and details suggest something more than just
knowledge transmission. As Ethel Brook argues that Roma shall reclaim their place in history
and in the future of politics: “This place making comes out of a millennium of being outside
to the nation, the nation-state, gaje: institutionalized historically through the sixteenth-century
anti-Egyptian laws responsible for mass executions and deportations of »Egyptians and those
known to consort with them«, as well as for Roma going into hiding; manifest in slavery, both
in Romania and in the Atlantic Slave Trade; and, in the twentieth century, in the concentration
camps run by the Nazis and their allies, where 500,000 of Europe’s Roma population were
murdered.” The mantra-like history telling is an act for reclaiming the past. It battles for the
recognition of the sufferings and for the inclusion of the history of Roma into the discourse of
the Holocaust or national historiography. It attempts to question dominant knowledge
production and repeat, at least year by year, the history of Roma under the Holocaust.
However Ágnes Daróczi delegates the task to reclaim the past to the intelligentsia. The grief
stemming from the experience of the Holocaust shall be shared by everyone, since “we have
to be aware of our loss. But how can you expect from the miserable masses or from minority
self-governments – which very often undertake state-tasks, have financial difficulties and are
depended on project money – to support such a serious common goal?”

“Protesting”, on the other hand, is the “call”. It is more than a spontaneous emotional
display or a reaction to the actual opportunities or living circumstances. It is an invitation to
demonstrate the “tragic situation of Roma”. Public commemoration happens to be a
performative and symbolic resource in collective action: it stages the protest. The protest is
the expression of resentment and discontent against the current status and situation of Roma
in the society. However as the (political) narrative of the Nazi genocide of Roma – which
drew on historical researches and was developed discussed in Roma and non-Roma cultural
papers, journals and was introduced and expanded year by year in commemorative speeches –
the relationship between the majority and the minority, between Roma and non-Roma has a

585 Ágnes Daróczi’s speech in 2008. (received it from her)
587 Ágnes Daróczi’s speech in 2005. (received the text from her)
historical legacy. As Aladár Horváth argues, “(...) the reason for the extermination of Roma lies in their centuries-long discrimination,”\(^{588}\) and now “there is another model but essentially it is the same.”\(^{589}\) That is to say that the history of Roma is the history of persecutions, including the Holocaust, as a zenith of the violence, however it continued and implicitly, under the veil of democracy it still defines the fate of the Roma population: “Roma in Hungary has been living under colonial rule now as they did in the past. Separated from society they kill themselves and their brothers as well as fight to survive, to have a piece of bread to have that something which the majority society threw for them. Our communities, problems, fates are framed by indifference, the total ignorance of the society. We live in »zones of ignorance«, as we lived in the past when soldiers came for us and rounded us up in cattle wagons, or they led us out of the city and shot us, our children and women to death into mass graves which we dig for ourselves.”\(^{590}\) In this context “protesting” means to articulate and give voice to the fears, anger and mourning; to draw the majority’s attention to the problems and to warn them about the dangerous consequences if the treatment of the Roma minority remains unaltered.

Thus in 1997, at the first commemoration ceremony at the Parliament Aladár Horváth started his speech with the following question: “I wonder how many people know how we were put into gas chambers and why Hitler’s terror persecuted us too?” Then, as if being a history teacher in front of his class, he continues: “My answer is the following: One of the basic components of the Nazi Empire was the racial ideology which propagated the superiority of the Arian race beyond all the other human races and groups. This ideology was used to legitimize their politics to persecute racial-ethnic minorities. However Hitler and his supporters knew that Roma came from India: a place where they believed that the Arian race originated too. First Hitler »only« wanted to deport all Roma to Polynesia however the idea failed to win the support of the League of Nations, predecessor of the United Nations, thus Roma were doomed to be killed, annihilated and the Roma issue would have been finally solved. Before that since we came from India the Nazis wanted to thoroughly examine us. There was a Racial Research Institute which explored our characteristics, culture and traditions. This is the reason why within the concentration camps Roma were separated and so-called »doctors«, »anthropologists« and other »scientists« conducted experiments on women or children. The size of their skull or the distance between their eyes were measured,  

\(^{588}\) Aladár Horváth’s speech in 1997. (received the text from him)  
\(^{589}\) Ibid.  
\(^{590}\) Ibid.
our language, words, everything was examined which could have been in relation with our origin of being Roma. Another historical reason for the extermination of Roma lies in their centuries-long discrimination. The Holocaust is the top of the iceberg. Roma were never allowed to settle down, thus they were forced to wander. To legitimate discrimination European cultures registered us as »vagabonds«, »deviants«, »criminals« and attempted to exclude us from social circulation since we had appeared in the continent. The Nazi regime was different from the others in one aspect: its ambition to exterminate our people was aligned and final. Researchers and social scientists specialized on the Holocaust more or less agree that the number of Roma victims reaches 500,000, however a leading Professor in History of the American Holocaust Research Institute claims that realistic number of Roma victims could be 1.5 million. Either number is correct the loss is immense.”

In his speech in 2000 he talked about early 20th century discriminative processes: “On August 2, 1944 more than two-thousand Roma were killed in the death camp of Auschwitz. (...) Since 1916 the authorities legalized the relocation, registration, marking of Roma and later they threatened with round-ups those Roma who were considered as dangerous. (...) From the spring 1944 in various counties the authorities placed the Roma into ghettos or relocation camps. (...) Arrow Cross soldiers and the police were commissioned to collect Roma which they managed within four big round-ups. Roma were deported to Auschwitz and Dachau and Gábor Vajna, Minister of Interior and member of the Arrow Cross Party, announced that the final solution for the Jewish and the Gypsy questions had begun.”

Daróczí emphasised the broader European context and said that “The Vichy-Regime put Roma into lagers from 1942 onwards – those too who previously served in the French Army. More than 25,000 Romanian Roma were deported to Transnistria. Jasenovac became the biggest graveyard for Roma in Croatia. Whole Roma tribes were exterminated in Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia and Russia: this is why Laller Roma are extinct. One of the Czech camps was in Lety u Pisku which still lacks any monument, instead there is a swine farm and a holiday resort on its site. 90% of the Roma population in Austria was killed.”

Later, around 2007-2008, the historical narrative loses its significance, or rather it becomes simplified to make easier the transmission of the main message. There are fewer details mentioned, only the facts which are conceived as of primary importance are included in the speeches. Importance is measured along the success to connect past and present; to
deduce from the past present-day experiences of racism; to let the past explain what is going on in the present; to let the present verify the crimes of the past. Additionally, the style of the narration changes and becomes more emotional. Politicians always ignored the historical narrative and stayed out of its formation. Their participation at public commemorations expressed solidarity and legitimated the necessity of the ceremony, at least in the beginning. Since the year 2000 one can witness the emergence of its expropriation for the sake of disseminating political messages. Then in the end of the first decade of the 21st century it seems like that politicians become indifferent and leave the stage of the Nazi genocide of Roma. What is left is an official statement from each party issued on the Memorial Day and eventually public commemorations turn to be events only for the Roma minority. Slowly but surely the day of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma will face with the total ignorance of the majority and will become an ethnic feast, an ethnic memory-ghetto.

As I said there is barely any reflection from politicians on the historical narrative however the so-called “protest” part was legitimated, even self-critically interpreted by the speakers from the beginning. Árpád Göncz, former President of Hungary said the following in 1996: “We shall mourn the craze of Hitler, the Roma victims of the Holocaust, and shall remember their history before and after the Holocaust. Roma, because we live in the same country for centuries long, share the fate of Hungarian people. Our concerns are their concerns and their concerns are our concerns – even if this fact fails to be realized. If not with the same weight: Roma have come off badly for centuries. They live at the bottom of the society exposed to poverty and its consequences: excluded from the privileges of education, deprived from the protective shield of fortune and knowledge and being always the victim of negative discrimination.” Similarly to Göncz, János Fónagy, Secretary at the Prime Minister’s Office, emphasized how much Roma groups experience disadvantages in all field of life as well as face with intensive forms of social exclusion, separation, discrimination. Fónagy calls for a proper social policy and good practices which could effectively change the situation of Roma: “(...) Our only chance is to grow up to the sacrifice of the unburied dead if we attempt to prevent similar tragedies from happening. We can only do it together. Poverty,

unemployment, unequal chances in education, underqualification, worse than average state of health, bad living and housing circumstances contribute to reproduce the disadvantaged situation. (...) It is the government’s responsibility and task to provide equal chances. Local communities shall overcome stereotypes, while Roma people shall take on the advantages of schooling and gain knowledge as well as strengthen its own intelligentsia.”

Or Gábor Demszky emphasized in 2006 the need to fight against segregated education, to promote the integration of Roma and equal opportunities.

Policies, practices and the failures of the past two decades of social policy were started being replaced with references to the threatening presence of the extreme-right wing from the years 2007-2008. Instead of protesting against living circumstances and better opportunities the speeches warned the public of the spread of fascist ideology and demanded protection. Roma or non-Roma politicians or civilians helplessly observed those processes which somehow led to the repetition of the past, and resulted the killing of Roma people. “I wonder whether we are brave enough to resist the newly increasing pressure of racism and hatred. Are we going to cooperate, since we know, because we learned the lesson where scapegoat making leads? If we allow that ethnic groups can be blamed and made responsible for all the problems, economic slowdowns, moral decay then we cannot be sure that today Roma, tomorrow the Jews, the day after tomorrow the gays, then the spectacled will be taken (...)” – warned Ágnes Daróczzi in 2007. Orbán Kolompár criticized the social structure of Hungary which could make possible the appearance of extreme ideologies: “(...) 63 years after (...) I see a sick democracy in Hungary. The Hungarian democracy is sick because it has a gang which believes in the extreme (...) Nazi ideology and which make a game of the dignity of Roma people.”

István Makai, Head of the Budapest Roma Self-government, said the following: “Notions of Nazism turned up again in Hungary and Roma cannot feel themselves safe. The political elite needs to protect the minority (...) We draw the world’s attention that the Holocaust was not only Jewish but also Roma and in this shameful historical event Roma society was equally involved. Thus to remember the victims one shall be warned to the »Never again!« since Hungary has turned to develop this direction.” Aladár Horváth called for national solidarity and unity in order to prevent the blossoming of murderous regimes: “If we experience that people who live with us die decades earlier (...) if we realize that without a home one cannot feel themselves home, without food one cannot live a life and if we

595 Blaha and Szalabán eds., “Gyászunk, 18.
experience collective powerlessness to change all the above then we shall remember that murderous regimes were born on the foundation of collective irresponsibility and collective powerlessness.” A year later Horváth made explicit what he means by murderous regime: "In 2008, in today’s Hungary, in one of the member states of the European Union and the NATO primarily the Roma living in the countryside are the targets of racist violence. Roma in Budapest are safer, as they were 64 years ago. Our commemoration is a warning. It is a call: help us prevent from the strengthening of neo-fascism in both Hungary and Europe!”

The serial killings against Roma people between 2008 and 2009 triggered the memorialisation of the genocide, however instead of accelerating the working-through – that is healing through grief and mourning – it inflicted pain, opened up the wound of the past that was not yet in the proliferative phase and repeated the trauma in its literalness and immediacy. As Daróczi says, “Those fathers and mothers, grandmothers and grandfathers felt personally responsible for themselves, for their children and for their fellow prisoners. And given the choice, they decided they would rather die fighting, resisting. They stood up, rebelled, protested, and it worked. The fascists gave up. (…) And yes, it was personal responsibility towards Roma prisoners which drove the neighbours of the Újfehértó camp to bring them bread and cook for them. And yes, we have to talk about personal responsibility in relation to the current situation as well. I have to talk about the victims of irrational hate, about those close to sixty attacks motivated by blind hate which killed six persons in Hungary throughout 2008 and 2009. (…) Yes, we all have a personal responsibility towards the future of this country. It is up to us. This is why it is important to remember, and to remind. To force the hate instigators of the past and the present into retreating and, joining hands, build a communicative, peaceful and strong Hungary.”

I wish to follow this line of thought in the next and last chapter of the text. What does it mean to remember and be reminded at the same time? How could a community build its existence on real danger and still nurture the memories of the tragic past? What is the borderline between being the subject and the agents of memory? How can this “bleeding wound” be closed and healed?

597 Aladár Horváth’s speech in 2007.
598 Aladár Horváth’s speech in 2008.
599 Ágnes Daróczi’s speech in 2010.
VIII. CONCLUSION

“Every order is therefore political and based on some form of exclusion. There are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated. The articulatory practices through which a certain order is established and the meaning of social institutions is fixed are ‘hegemonic practices’. Every hegemonic order is susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices, i.e. practices which will attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony.”

(Chantal Mouffe: Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces)

The previous chapters only touched upon the subject of the so-called Roma killings, none of them dared to get closer and lift that thin fabric separating past and present atrocities. It might have been fearful timidity from my side or hesitation how to approach, explore and find my own voice in terms of understanding the event. Indeed, as Caruth argues, there is belatedness in the comprehension of traumatic events. It was latent throughout these pages, sometimes repressed, sometimes consciously ignored, sometimes mentioned but was never more than a repetitive series of “flashbacks.”

This literal articulation of “what happened” has been supported by the figurative discourse, by the mediation of the past through the means of imagination. In the past few years I have had the chance to get to know several art projects which aimed at easing the process of “mourning” and fostered the process of not being fixated on the past but renewing one’s life in the present. However I only wish to mention my latest encounter with art that explores the memory of the Roma killings. It took place at the latest exhibition of contemporary artist Csaba Nemes who shortly after the events realized the importance and significance of art in challenging and dealing with trauma as well as provided an immediate artistic response to it. In this exhibition there was a picture which was titled Judgement (2015)

600 Caruth, Unclaimed Experience.
602 Csaba Nemes: Nem művészeti közeg (Knoll Gallery, Budapest, February 12 – April 16, 2015)
and represented the moment when the final verdict was announced on the perpetrators who killed six people on an ethnic basis. Three of the four murderers were given life sentences, while the fourth received thirteen years imprisonment. As the verdict is delivered one can see the *house* which is an overarching symbol in Nemes’ oeuvre representing “home,” “safety,” “integration,” “coexistence,” or “responsibility for each other” is not only demolished but consciously eradicated by an excavator. The picture’s perspective is the audience’s among which the majority were of Roma origin or sympathizers. It suggests that although the final judgment did not set the killers free, thus complied with the “minimum requirement,” still the faith of Roma in the majority society has been damaged to an extent which has been precluding them to see any institutional guarantees of their safety neither any collective commitment towards their acceptance and a peaceful coexistence.

The state of potential danger reflects upon something which has not happened but yet to be happened. It is a constant alertness of the actualization of the danger or of its potentiality. It is a state of being when the moment of danger is expected and yet to be conveyed by the present moment. It is a series of moments of stillness conditioned by the potentiality of something “bad” to happen. Roma could easily be considered as living in a constant state of potential danger. By danger I do not wish to mean exclusively a threat to physical destruction but all sorts of threats which by the time of their actualisation take shape as the public discourse of criminalization or as public policy measures based on theories of racial hygiene, as the issue of “black identity books” or as the abolishment of their status as a national minority. However in the state of permanent potentiality of danger one perceives “real danger” – the moment when danger reveals itself – not as something which would cause a rupture in one’s life narrative [*sorsesemény*] but as something which could and is worth being narrated, maybe in a subtle, less recognizable way.

The memory of the Nazi genocide serves as an analogy and as a formative component to understand and articulate what happened in the not so distant past, during the Roma killings (see the end of Chapter 7). At the same time, this “other memory” has contributed to the conceptualization of the Roma genocide. It has become an exclamation mark by saying that murderous regimes are “born on the foundation of collective irresponsibility and collective powerlessness,” and the latter stems from the destruction of homes, the lack of food and from letting people die. As the Nazi genocide aimed at the total destruction of the human subject but was initially built up from those components so could the Roma killings in present day

---

604 Aladár Horváth’s speech, August 2, 2007.
Hungary lead to something similar. By mastering past traumas there is the chance not to fall into the same traps and repeat history. Furthermore, the Roma killings have started playing a formative role in shaping my understanding to the state of potential danger. I believe that it forged a kind of sensitivity or empathy towards Roma and channelled not only Roma but also non-Roma artists, cultural workers etc. in the work of processing the traumatic events. Roma and non-Roma were offered with the possibility to get connected and to turn jointly towards the past and explore it in order to grasp present-day racist attacks. As a matter of fact, Marcell Esterházy’s or Csaba Nemes’ art pieces are the result of this solidarity.

Nevertheless, observing it from the majority society’s point of view the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma appears to belong to the internal affairs of the Roma (see Chapter 7). It seems that it only depends on them whether they manage to build this past into their identity and collective memory. Slowly but surely the memory of the genocide has become an ethnic memory-ghetto: an ethicized dimension of history that falls out of the majority’s interest and has little or no weight in the political spectrum. I have started wondering about the role of social sciences and the ways in which it could challenge the perception of the memory of the persecutions as “internal affairs” and translate it into a socially relevant issue which would then touch upon the depth of Roma and non-Roma relations.

This thesis is dedicated to this challenge. On the one hand I attempted to constantly question and become reflexive on my role as a researcher by constantly asking and answering questions without ascribing special importance to them as well as by applying a language which is less scientific, rather associative and hopefully easily consumable. While on the other hand I wished to understand the genealogy of the memory of the Nazi genocide, thus in other words, the process of becoming from a traumatic event to one of the pillars of the community’s self-definition, self-consciousness and political struggle for recognition. The subject of my research was never the Roma community as such but that power structure in which the memory of the genocide has been unfolding and which produces normalizing discourses on the basis of exclusionary practices such as judging narratives by labelling them as “worthy of life” or “unworthy.” Roma in the narratives of the West are considered as “unworthy,” since it “is fallen out of its own history and becomes timeless. Precisely because their narrative – if it really narrates them – is not perceived as a legitimate narrative in the mirror of the narrative of national histories.”

---

605 Zoltán Beck, “A romológia és annak valódi tárgya,” Romológia: romológia folyóirat 2-3 (2013): 15; Hereby I shall note that my scientific approach was largely shaped and influenced by Andrea Pócsik with whom I was lucky to work for a couple of years. See: “Láthatóvá tenni. A romaképelemzés elmélet és gyakorlata,” Apertúra
The fundamental argument of my dissertation which pervades each chapter is that our knowledge of the memory of the Nazi genocide of Roma is especially defined and limited by the fact that social privilege and the production of knowledge are linked and in order to maintain the former the latter should be accessed and distributed unequally. Thus knowledge is located in social relations. It reflects the interests of the ruling class and provides stability to power, and as it seems at first sight, information about the Roma persecutions (or about Roma in general) does not constitute an integral part of the official domains of knowledge. However the acknowledgment of the Nazi persecutions shall not be “purely” discussed in relation to the production of knowledge but also in the context of the construction of subject positions. Since Halbwachs we have been aware of the creative power of memory in terms of its contribution to the formation of communities.\textsuperscript{606} In this sense memory could bring along the moment of emancipation and the aspiration of Roma to become an unavoidable building bloc of the society as well as a significant political factor. Through the unfolding of the memory of past events the subject ceases to go through practices of subjection and finds their own self, constitutes themselves as a subject in their own actions. Additionally, this moment of emancipation might also challenge the existing consent of power relations and demands the reformulation by the acceptance of new social actors that is the Roma.

In order to effectively explore the power structure and its relation to the memory of the Nazi genocide I focus on representation as it provides the political and epistemological basis of the above. By political I mean the crucial question of “who stands on which side of the camera?”, in other words, the ways in which social positions are defined by race, ethnicity, gender, age etc. in a given context at as well as the meanings attributed to them; while epistemology conveys in itself the rules, methods and possibilities of producing contexts and knowledge. In this dissertation I explored the memory of the Roma persecutions through the analysis of its various representations in the fields of films, photographs, fine art or memorials. I considered each form of representation as an imaginary narrative which was a product of an individual but in a given social and historical context hence both the individual, their private experience and the collective domain, the cultural memory were at the focus of my interest, and the ways in which they intersected with each other as well as were conditioned by time. Additionally I believe that it is important to pay attention and bring to the limelight forms and carriers of memory which put the image into their focal point. I am

\textsuperscript{606} Halbwachs, \textit{On Collective Memory}. 

doing this not only to emphasise the importance of images as a phenomenon worth being analysed and including them into the realm of human sciences, but also to direct the attention of “Holocaust-studies” from textuality to other, less mainstream forms of memory. Especially when it comes to the case of memory of the Roma (or other minorities) who struggle with gaining access to knowledge, contributing to its production, being regarded as legitimate speakers (and writers) and then being incorporated into the (primarily textual) canon.

Nevertheless I have started my investigation in the archives and was interested in the ways in which the discourse of the Nazi genocide was unfolding before the regime change. I have come to realize that shortly after the end of the war the general attitude towards Roma was racially discriminatory without the direct (but the potential!) danger to physically exterminate them. Traces of the memory of the persecutions can definitely be detected in music however later, under the framework of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association and as a result of the first representative Roma survey in 1971, it appears as integral parts of life narratives. The narrator informs the listener of what happened during those events thus their stories convey neither a traumatic, nor a political message. It rather seems that the memory of the genocide was carefully worked into the communicative memory of Roma – the superb and vivid transcriptions of the interviews helped me make this discovery – and these stories are shared and well-known within the family or the smaller community. The Jews and the Jewish experience of the Holocaust are mentioned in the policy paper of the Association however only to acquire visibility of the Roma through the common history of the Jews. Later from the 1970s onwards became the memory of the genocide a political site on the basis of which political wills, demands and aspirations were formulated by the forming national and international Roma movement. The role of the majority in this slow self-revelation was ambiguous: ignorant, “deaf” and stereotypical.

I have started my first analytical chapter with photographs – primarily because I wished to establish a chronology of the forms of representation – and point out dominant practices of visualization. In other words I argued that the imaginary of the Holocaust has strongly defined the visualization of the Nazi genocide of Roma, furthermore, when it comes to the representation of contemporary violence there is a conceptual repetitive recycling of images, themes, adjustments, colours originated from the “Holocaust images.” Nevertheless, for the secondary generation repetition is considered to be a tool to condition remembering. It offers new meanings and contexts to attach and shifts the emphasis of “what we see” to “how we see it,” thus in other words the importance of aesthetics is replaced by ethics.
I deal with the phenomenon of repetition in the following chapter manifesting in survivor narratives. I discuss the process whereby the invisible or forgotten history of the Roma genocide as transformed into a knowable historical event, particular via film narrative and the use of survivor testimony. My analysis focuses on three documentary films: *Forgotten Dead (1981); You Killed My Innocent Family (1994); Pharrajimos (2000)*. Although each of these films was produced under specific historical circumstances, according to diverse aesthetic styles, and with different ethical-political concerns one thing is common amongst these films: they all are significant milestones in the history of the Hungarian Roma movement and the role of Holocaust memory therein. *Forgotten Dead*, was the first film to give voice to Roma survivors. The second film was produced for the occasion of the first public commemoration of the Roma genocide. Third, after almost two decades of silence and as the restitution process was slowly starting to emerge was done in cooperation with the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Budapest. In analysing these three films, I argue that the narrative structure in each one is strongly related to the given political context in which it was produced. Moreover, the articulation of survivor testimonies does not only mean that survivors who were once rendered invisible are now given voice, but also that testimonies are of a high symbolic value. They create an uncomfortable situation in vocalizing and making visible what the public is not willing to hear or speak about. Still the narrative of the persecutions not only strengthens collective identity of the Roma but also aspires to be an integral part of a larger collectivity that is of Europe.

As Tamás Péli laid the ideological and technical foundations of Roma fine art in the 1980s and at the same time wished to embed it in the international art scene so did contemporary fine artists Omara and Tibor Balogh in the 2000s realize the importance of the past in one’s or the community’s life and survival and attempted to bring it closer to the people by activating their imagination. This chapter argues for the formative role of art that dares to talk back to the consented knowledge on the genocide in institutions which establish and maintain the very same understanding of the past. Omara’s painting which successfully merges textual and figurative elements expresses solidarity with all victims and at the same time warns not to maintain any distance between the events. Tibor Balogh’s work reflects on the abandonedness and emptiness of memorial sites of the genocide. His response brings into life an installation of a memorial that is neither pedagogical, nor is obsessed with the past, nor is based on the moral instrumentalization of the past but conceived to challenge present-day silence on the history of Roma.
Balogh’s work was first installed in 2004, then a few years later in 2006 the official monument of the Nazi genocide of Roma was erected at the Nehru Park in Budapest. In the last chapter of my thesis I outlined the biography of the monument and found that the process of establishing a monument was collaborative and compelled various forces and organizations to work together, the location is invisible but is of significance in relation to the history of persecutions, however the winner concept understood the dilemma of representation but also immediately fell into its trap. Furthermore, by analysing commemorative speeches as symbolic resources to protest, remember, mobilize or call for collective action I argued that the majority – especially the politicians – slowly but surely lost interest in participating and forming the narrative of the Nazi genocide, thus slowly but surely its memory faced with the total ignorance if not denial and became an ethnic feast, an ethnic memory-ghetto.

What I was missing to grasp throughout this research is the context of the hegemonic narrative of the Jewish Holocaust. Although Rothberg’s multidirectional memory concept (which excludes the paradigm of uniqueness of the Jewish Holocaust and its incomparability to other narratives) serves as the basis of my theoretical framework, and indeed in some cases I attempt to put the Jewish and the Roma experiences in a dialogue with each other I fail to run this perspective through the thesis. It might have required another dissertation to outline these mirrored activities. Furthermore, I should have taken a closer look at the institutional framework in which the memory was evolving and the ways in which the different majority and minority actors engaged in the articulation of the narrative. It could have shown how the construction of the past runs parallel to the construction of one’s ethnicity, ethnic identity and thus its mobilization. Mapping the voice of the various actors who have been involved in the formation of the Roma memory project would draw a more nuanced, sophisticated and heterogeneous picture of Roma memory politics as well as would give an insight into intergroup struggles and hierarchies.

Narratives of the Nazi genocide of Roma shall be carefully listed to or looked at – there is a need for a community which is open, attentive and democratic. The establishment of collective institutions of recognition would challenge the hegemonic interpretation of the past and would work towards reconciling projects which at first seem to be in antagonistic conflict with each other and thus one is rendered or labelled as a personal affair the community. This thesis is an explicit gesture toward recognition.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and articles


French, Lorely. “An Austrian Roma Family Remembers: Trauma and Gender in Autobiographies of


László, Mária. *Felirat a Magyar Népköztársaság Minisztertanácsához a Magyarországon élő cigány néptöredék gazdasági, politikai és kulturális életszínvonalának emelése tárgyában.* January 9, 1956.


216


Wood, Sophia. “Film and atrocity. The Holocaust as Spectacle.” In Film and Genocide, eds. Kristi M.


**Links**


“Lakatos Menyhért.”
Last accessed: November 28, 2014. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZwiO12hSk8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZwiO12hSk8)

“United Nations Genocide Convention.”

Youtube. “Massenerschiessungen in Liepaja, Lettland.” Last accessed: November 28, 2014. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTg6wEVrWVE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTg6wEVrWVE)


Voices of the 20th Century Archive and Research Group http://www.20szazadhangja.hu/szakmatortenet


Films


Megöltétek ártatlan családom... Miklós Jancsó and Ágnes Daróczí, 1994.

Manuscripts, other


APPENDIX I. THE AESTHETICS OF SILENCE

IMAGE 1: Footage of Anna Maria Steinbach (Settela) from Rudolf Breslauer’s film

IMAGE 2: Erzsébet Horváth ID no. 59. (Vas County Archive)
APPENDIX II. FILMS

List of Hungarian films on the Nazi genocide of Roma

Elfelejtett holtak (József Lojkó Lakatos, 1981)

Megöltétek ártatlan családom... (Miklós Jancsó and Ágnes Daróczi, 1994)

Nem szűnő fájdalommal I.-II. (László Kovács, 1994-1995)

Temetetlen holtak (Miklós Jancsó and Ágnes Daróczi, 1996)

Pharrajimos (Ágota Varga, 2000)

“Hej, Gettò, megetted a fejemet” (Ágnes Daróczi, János Bársony, János Kovács, Romédia Alapítvány, 2000)

Feketelista: cigány munkaszolgálatosok 1944-ben (Ágota Varga, 2002)

Sötét napja a gyásznak (Marianna Atyimov, 2004)

Historia Romani (Péter Gábor, János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczi, 2005)

Mundi Romani - Franciaország 2 (Katalin Bársony, Romédia Alapítvány, 2008)

A falak sóhajtása (János Kovács, János Daróczi, 2013)

Védtelen áldozatok - egy tömeggyilkosság sorozat következmények nélkül (Asbóth Kristóf, János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczi, 2015)

Auschwitz Rekviem (Kristóf Asbóth, Ágnes Daróczi, János Bársony, 2014)

List of non-Hungarian films on the Nazi genocide of Roma

“Es ist schön ein Zigeuner zu sein: ” Geschichte und Gegenwart einer Verfolgung (Leonore Paurat, 1981) [DE]

Das Falsche Wort (Melanie Spitta, 1987) [DE]

Die Zeit Heilt keine Wunden. Eine begegnung mit Zigeunern in Österreich (Erika Thurner, Hermann Peseckas, Norbert Huber 1987) [DE]

“Die Angst bleibt immer…” Zeitzeugen des Nationalsozialismus; Sinti in Düsseldorf (Sibyll Rautenberg, 1990) [DE]

Latcho Drom (Toni Gatlif, 1993) [FR]
Settela: gezicht van het verleden (Cherry Duyns, 1994) [NL]

Ein einzerner Mord (Karl Fruchtmann, 1999) [DE]

Ceija Stojka (Karin Berger, 1999) [AT]

The Man Who Cried (Sally Potter, 2000) [UK, FR]

Die Ballade von Schnuckenack Reinhardt (Andreas Öhler, 2000) [DE]

Eine lästige Gesellschaft: Schicksal einer österreichischen Zigeunerfamilie (Claudia Fischer, 2001) [DE]

They’re painful memories (Monika Rychliková, 2002) [CZ]

“Auf Wiedersehen im Himmel!” Die Sinti-Kinder von der St. Josefspflege (Romani Rose, 2003) [DE]

“Es war ein Regentag:” Sinti und Roma in Buchenwald (Esther Loesche, 2003) [DE]

Un viaggio nella memoria (Fabio Calvi, 2004) [CH]

Hidden sorrows (Michelle Kelso, 2005) [RO, USA]

“Wir haben doch nichts getan...” Der Völkermord an Sinti und Roma (Gabriele Trost, 2006) [DE]

Lacrimi Romane (Luminita Cioaba, 2006) [RO]

A blue hole in the sky (Bob Entrop, 2007) [NL]

Live! Ceija Stojka (Anna Juránková, 2009) [CZ]

Nicht wiedergekommen: über das Schicksal der Sinti-Familie Franz in der NS-Zeit (Jana Müller, 2010) [DE]

Dui Roma: zwei Lebenskünstler (Ivana Gaspar, 2010) [AT]

Die Marianne Rosenberg-Story (Claus Räfle, 2010) [DE]

The forgotten genocide: Europe’s Gypsies in World War II. (Juliette Jourdan, 2011) [FR]

A People Uncounted (Aaron Yeger, 2011) [CAN]

Gibsy – Die Geschichte des Boxers Johann Rukeli Trollmann (Eike Besuden, 2013) [DE]
APPENDIX III. FINE ART WORKS

IMAGE1: Visit to Auschwitz (2004)

IMAGE2: Portraits of Omara’s daughter
IMAGE3: Omara at the opening of her exhibition (*Csak nagyítóval lehet megnézni az egyszemlátó Omara ékszereit*) in the Liget Gallery in 2011.

IMAGE4: Self-portrait
IMAGE5: At the Venice Biennale (2007)

IMAGE6: Moving Houses (2009)
IMAGE7: Rain of Tears (2004)
APPENDIX IV. MONUMENTS
Monuments in Hungary on the Nazi genocide on Roma

1984: memory plaque in Torony/Ondód

1991: Nagykanizsa

1993: Nyíregyháza

1996: Babócsa

1996: Lengyel

1996: Szedres

1998: Várpalota

2002: Doboz

2004: Roma Press Centre’s lobby activity resulted the inauguration of six memory plaques in Siklósnagyfalu, Újfehértó, Eger, Esztergom, Hódmezővásárhely and Polgár.

2004: John Wesley Theological College and the Evangelical Fellowship inaugurated 32 memory plaques at railway stations country-wide.

2006: Budapest
Abstract

The proposed research analyses the memory of the Nazi persecution of Roma. It focuses on Hungary without diminishing the influence and the formative role of forms of memory from abroad. The research investigates the period starting from the 1950s – when the first traces of the memory of the Nazi persecution of Roma appeared under the auspices of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association – to present times. Through the chapters I focus on various works of art that belong to the realm of culture, although it is not their cultural status I would like to deal with. I will devote each chapter to the central issue of what and how the genocide of Roma is remembered and my cases will be based on the critical understanding of these art works such as monuments, fine art, photographs and films. I attempt to understand and write about them to express their agency in a community’s life. The thesis invokes various fields of discipline such as historiography, cultural and visual studies, cultural philosophy, sociology and anthropology. I argue for the power of art that is not only a product of history but also its agent to transform as well as shape the ways cultural, historical issues are being conceived. The Roma genocide was labelled as forgotten suggesting that neither institutions nor individuals could be regarded as agents of its memory. The research criticizes the knowledge production in relation to the Roma genocide and on the one hand argues that its lack of recognition is strongly related to the marginalized status of Roma within the society, on the other hand shows that cultural objects and cultural phenomena as historical articulations of problems are capable of actively participating in dealing with the past and contribute to the construction of identity.
Absztrakt

Disszertációmban a roma holokauszt emlékezetérténetét vizsgálok. A kutatás Magyarországra fókuszál, ugyanakkor, figyelembe veszem az államhatárokon kívül eső, különböző emlékezeti formák alakító erejét és hatását. Kutatásom az 1950-es évektől indul – mikor a Magyar Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége égisze alatt az első írásos feljegyzések megszületnek a “hitleri üldözésekről” – és napjainkig tart. A tézis egyes fejezetekben áttekintem a roma holokauszt emlékezetének a magyar képző- és filmművészeti hagyományban és azok kortárs formáiban megjelenő módozatait, képi és narratív megoldásait. Az emlékműveket, filmeket, fotókat és képzőművészeti alkotásokat nem kultúrateremtő státusuk miatt elemzem, hanem azt próbálom megfejteni, hogy az emlékezet ezen hordozói mit és hogyan mesélnek a roma holokausztról, milyen tapasztalatokat kívánnak átadni, s mindez hogyan alakítja az egyén, a közösség és a múltbeli esemény közötti viszonyt, illetve az egyén és a közösség identitását, jövőképét. Különböző tudományterületek elméleti és módszertani ismeretanyagát hívom segítségül munkám során. Amellett érvelek, hogy a művészetnek ereje van; nem pusztán produktuma egy adott történelmi periódusnak, de alakítója és elbeszélője is. A roma holokauszt „elfelejtettsége” azt sugallja, hogy sem az intézmények, sem az egyének és közösségek nem hordozzák annak emlékezetét. Kutatásom e képzetet kritizálja és egyrészt arra mutat rá, hogy a roma holokauszt emlékezetével kapcsolatos tudástermelés szorosan összefügg a romák státuszával és a magyar társadalomban betöltött mindenkori marginalizált pozíciójával, másrészt felhívja a figyelmet olyan kulturális objektumokra és jelenségekre, amik a roma holokauszt emlékezetének érzékeny hordozói, illetve az egyéni és kollektív identitás formálói.