

Difficult Displays

Holocaust Representations in
History Museums in Hungary, Austria
and Italy after 1990

by

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Abstract

This study analyses how history museums in Austria, Hungary and Italy, represent the Holocaust. With close reference to debates about European Holocaust commemoration, it addresses how these exhibitions in countries closely related to Germany during the Holocaust construct the past as an object of knowledge/power. It also examines how the conceptualisation of historical agency assigns meaning and creates specific subject positions for the visitor.

My research includes 21 different permanent exhibitions, established after 1989/1990, from which four, deemed representative, form my case studies. In Austria I chose the *Zeitgeschichte Museum* in Ebensee, in Hungary the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* in Budapest, and in Italy the *Museo della Deportazione* in Prato and the *Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, della Deportazione, della Guerra, dei Diritti e della Libertà* in Turin. Within the case studies I analyse how prisoner uniforms, perpetrator photographs, objects from concentration camps, and (video-) testimonies of survivors are displayed. My method is a discourse analysis following Michel Foucault, which has been applied to museum exhibitions by Mieke Bal. Daniel Levy's and Natan Sznaider's view that global, national and regional discourse formations form new, hybrid narratives provides my theoretical framework.

My findings suggest that three worldwide approaches to the Holocaust structure the exhibitions: the division of the Holocaust into four stages; an emphasis on perpetrator history; and an attempted pluralisation of the victim groups. These structuring elements are explained via national narratives, which exemplify, change, adapt or supplement the worldwide components. Regional discourses are less decisive and European discourse formations not yet influential to the museum representations. The mode of representation draws in each case on an aesthetics understood as *the* adequate representation of the Holocaust in that national context. What the exhibitions have in common is an authoritative presentation of *one* historical truth and an illustrative, functional use of primary sources. Historical agency – the forces/actors responsible for historical developments – is assigned to different agents: developments within society; the perpetrators; the victims; or everyone. It is this that distinguishes the different exhibitions from one another: and in result the meaning given to the Holocaust and subject positions offered differ.

Preface

The dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author Birga U. Meyer. All photos used in this thesis were taken by the author herself.

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Photo no. 1: Former prisoner of the concentration camp in Ebensee, photographed by the US Army on May 8th 1945 in the infirmary of the liberated camp.

1 Setting the stage: The Holocaust in European museums

1.1 Same questions – different answers: Holocaust representations in Europe

A very attentive viewer of the *KZ-Gedenkstätte Ebensee* in Ebensee, the *Holocaust Emlékközpont* in Budapest and the *Museo della Deportazione* in Prato would notice that all three museums display the same photograph. The frontal shot shows a naked, gaunt man seated on a wooden chair, which is placed in the middle of a barrack, with other men in the background. His legs are crossed, his head tilted slightly to the right, as he gazes upwards to the left. Soldiers of the US Signal Corps took the photograph after the liberation of the former forced labour camp in Ebensee in Austria, to document the maltreatment of the prisoners there (Photo no. 1). The photograph itself is not as well known as other photographs taken, for example, after the liberation of Buchenwald; but its perspective and framing is familiar. A myriad of photographs from concentration camps show individual prisoners, outside or inside barracks, photographed frontally, which highlights their skeletal bodies and gaunt faces. The military, journalists and private photographers who photographed the liberated prisoners wanted to document the crimes to which the former prisoners had been subjected. This particular photograph and others like it have come to represent the crimes that are today subsumed under the term Holocaust. Museums throughout the world use photographs such as this one to narrate the Holocaust, yet their individual narratives differ. Each of the three museums listed above displays the photograph differently and, in so doing, uses it to tell a different story.

Museums throughout Europe and the world represent the Holocaust. Their exhibitions are as similar to each other as they are different; the photograph of the man in the barrack exemplifies this. The same photograph is found in all three museums settings. It documents a specific moment in time and place: the meeting of individual subjects after the liberation of Ebensee. As a primary historical source the photograph carries its own unique messages. It captures the moment when the former prisoners

became objects in front of the lens, their bodies positioned in place. The photograph thus represents the viewing regime of the photographer, who had come to Austria as a member of the US Signal Corps in the context of the Second World War. Not only does the photograph communicate messages about the historical situation in the camps in 1945, but also about bodies, gender and the ideologically-informed imagination within which survivors were represented.

Within the exhibitions, these messages are transformed according to the context that informs how the photograph is shown and viewed. None of the exhibitions talk explicitly about the photograph itself. Instead, they insert the photograph into very different narratives. In the concentration camp memorial in Ebensee, it illustrates a narrative about the extremely harsh work conditions for Jewish prisoners in the labour camp; the museum in Budapest uses the photograph to depict Hungarian Jews after the liberation; while in Prato it stands for humanity's suffering during the Holocaust. Multiple layers of signification underlie each of these representations: international, European, national and regional understandings. As a customary representation of Holocaust victims worldwide, the photograph is instantly recognisable. National discourses then alter and transform how these victims are evaluated – often in relationship to the nation state within which the museum is located. Ultimately, the institutions reflect on both international and national discourses about the photograph and interpret these according to their own political position. The photograph's specific message in each exhibition emerges from the complex interplay between the photograph and the narrative within which it is presented in the exhibition. The narratives themselves have been created at the juncture of international, national and regional or institutional discourses. Combined, these elements construct various possible meanings that can be decoded in the viewing process. The result is a display in which the photograph is at once familiar and unfamiliar.

I examine this 'unfamiliar familiarity' encountered in museums in Austria, Hungary and Italy. My first question asks how these countries that were allied with Germany in the Second World War exhibit the Holocaust, and how their exhibitions compare with each other. My work analyses *what* the museums represent as the Holocaust, *how* they represent it and *which narratives* they establish through these representations. I thus take inventory of what is displayed as the Holocaust and which discursive formations are referenced by these representations. I then compare the

representations and consider where the exhibitions are congruent and where they differ. This addresses the question of whether Holocaust representations in the three countries are global, European, national or regional in scope – a question that has been frequently raised by scholars, intellectuals and politicians in Europe since the 1990s. This question is of ongoing relevance, since narratives about the Holocaust shape the construction of Europe as a political unit and help to construct its value system.

I will then analyse the represented narratives in detail, asking how the exhibitions conceptualise the Holocaust in the three countries and which understandings of history structures their conceptualisations. Each museum represents the Holocaust as a knowable object and I ask what this knowledge encompasses. The exhibitions' conceptualisations of the Holocaust hinge on the museums' representations of historical agency. Even though recent Holocaust scholarship rarely uses the term historical agency, it is at the heart of Holocaust representations worldwide. To define historical agency means to state who or what was the driving force behind history. It defines what is considered an action, which range of possible actions are recognised and which effects these actions had. The representation of historical agency then qualifies how people are seen to have positioned themselves to the world, how they made sense of their surroundings and what motivated them to act. To present historical agency thus defines who acted and, at the same time, excludes those who supposedly did not act from the sphere of action. This classifies people and structures as relevant or irrelevant to historical developments. The construction of historical agency thus defines subject positions for people in the past and evaluates them. It also assigns subject positions in the present, from whence this past is viewed. It is here that museums participate in the construction of a common value system that they communicate to their visitors. In short, the museums' representations of historical agency first explain the Holocaust, secondly structure how to make sense of it, and finally propose what lessons are to be drawn from it for the present and future.

Having established which conceptualisations of historical agency are communicated by the museum representations of the Holocaust, I examine if these conceptualisations fulfil the demands raised by critical museology and pluralised Holocaust historiography. Critical museology recognises that museum exhibitions wield power by defining the past: people, their identities and cultural practices; usually from a

normative position within a given society at a specific moment in time. The normative evaluation of the past occurs within exhibitions themselves: the objects chosen, the narratives told about them, and the frame established for them. To balance this necessarily normative perspective, critical museology since the late 1980s calls for self-reflective exhibition practices that allow for plural voices and diverse perspectives on the topic in question. Similarly, Holocaust historiography has investigated its own narrative constructions since the 1990s. Most crucially, Holocaust scholars today recognize the plurality of experiences that people had during the Holocaust. Gender, class, ethnic and national belonging are all seen to have influenced the ways people experienced the Holocaust, as well as the range of possible actions that were available to them. According to this perspective, the classic divide into victims, perpetrators and bystanders is no longer viable to classify the numerous subject positions held during the time of the Holocaust. Critically examining Holocaust representations in the museums with respect to the findings of critical museology and pluralised Holocaust historiography, I point to what a self-reflective and critical museum approach to the Holocaust needs to take into account. I do this with the hope that future Holocaust representations may offer inclusive, diverse and political narratives about the past, allowing the same inclusiveness and diversity for the present.

To analyse European representations of the Holocaust comparatively I visited twentyone museums in Austria, Hungary and Italy from which, in a later step, I chose four for close reading. The close readings of exhibitions about the Holocaust focus on one museum in Austria and Hungary respectively and two smaller ones in Italy. For Austria I chose the *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee* (Contemporary History Museum) in Ebensee, in Hungary the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* (Holocaust Memorial Centre) in Budapest, and in Italy the *Museo della Deportazione* (Museum of the Deportation) in Prato and the *Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, della Deportazione, della Guerra, dei Diritti e della Libertà* (Museo Diffuso) (Comprehensive museum of resistance, deportations, war, human rights and freedom) in Turin. I chose these museums because of the ways their exhibitions relate to the respective national discourses on the Holocaust. The *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* takes a stance against Hungarian national discourse by opposing it, while the other exhibitions express variants of their respective national discourses. This enables me to show how international and national discourses merge

within one exhibition. As each exhibition is unique, I also consider regional and institutional impacts on the exhibitions.

Each museum features primary sources and modes of representation commonly found in historical exhibitions. The Zeitgeschichte Museum presents documents, photographs and material objects in equal measure and with a sober design. It claims to provide a neutral and objective representation of the past, reconstructed from the present. The Holokauszt Emlékközpont emphasizes visual elements in its display, particularly large photographs. It aims to provide a highly emotive exhibition that touches the visitor by presenting the tragedy of the Holocaust. The Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso display rather minimalistic exhibits in which a few chosen elements are elevated to central importance in order to evoke the past in the present. The Museo della Deportazione features material objects, the Museo Diffuso features multimedia installations, and both give significant space to testimonies.

In the following chapters, I address each country and respective case study individually. Following my research itinerary, I first visit Austria and the Zeitgeschichte Museum, then Hungary's Holokauszt Emlékközpont and finally the Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso in Italy. This order is coincidental, determined by my travels and not by the content discussed. Italy could have been my first country, Hungary the last addressed, or Austria placed in the middle. Each chapter stands alone, with most of the comparisons between the three countries saved for the conclusion. In the chapters devoted to Austria, Hungary and Italy, I introduce how each country has dealt with the Holocaust after 1945, outline the dominant discourse about the Holocaust and examine the museum landscape devoted to it. In discussing the museum landscapes, I also include the other museums that I visited during my research, but did not choose for my case studies.¹ This will situate the museums that I analysed in detail with respect to other national commemorations, and justify my choice of one museum over the others.

¹ In Hungary I also conducted research at the *Nemzeti Múzeum* (National Museum), the *Hadtörténeti Múzeum* (Military Museum) and the *Terror Háza* (Terror House) in Budapest, as well as the *Holokauszt Múzeum* (Holocaust Museum) in Hódmezővásárhely and the *Nogradi Történeti Múzeum* (Nograd History Museum) in Salgotárján. In Austria I researched the *Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes* (Documentation Centre of the Austrian Resistance), the *Heeresgeschichtliche Museum* (Military Museum) and the *Wien Museum* (Vienna Museum) in Vienna, as well as the *Burgenländische Geschichte(n)haus* (Burgenland (Hist)storyhouse) in Bildein, while I only visited the *KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen* (Concentration Camp Memorial Mauthausen), under reconstruction at that time. In Italy I examined the *Museo della Liberazione* (Museum of the

Turning to my case studies, I go on to describe the narratives constructed by the exhibitions.² I examine the elements chosen to represent the Holocaust and analyse how they interact with each other to form the narrative in question. This will show how the exhibitions narrate historical agency. As all narratives reference perpetrators, victims and the non-persecuted national populations – this is in fact the commonality among the museums – in each chapter I also focus upon these groups and their particular representation in the exhibitions. Each museum constructs historical agency in relation to these groups, assigning subject positions to them and evaluating the people within them. In Hungary and Italy agency is personalised and held by individual groups of people. In Austria agency is depersonalised and the structures of Austrian society emerge as the driving forces behind the history displayed. Since the museum constructions largely depend on primary sources, within my case studies I also examine the primary sources most dominant in each exhibition. In Austria I analyse the display of prisoner uniforms, in Hungary the photographs from the Auschwitz album, and in Italy the use of material objects from the concentration camps.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will situate my work within the scholarship on European Holocaust representations and outline my methodological and theoretical approach. Before proceeding, however, I will first define how I use the term Holocaust and distinguish it from the terms Shoah and Pharrajimos, which I also use. Scholars first used the word Holocaust in the academic journal *Yad Vashem Studies*, published from 1957. Literally translating as a burnt offering, in the 1960s the word came to signify the murder of European Jewry. Popularised by 1965, use of the term increased in the 1970s and 1980s, largely due to the widely-viewed mini-series entitled *Holocaust*.³ In a narrow reading, Holocaust refers to the murder of the European Jews, but the term's reach has been expanded to include the murder of Roma and Sinti and

Liberation), the *Fondazione della Shoah* (Shoah Foundation) and the *Museo Ebraico* (Jewish Museum) in Rome, as well as at the *Fondazione ex-Campo Fossoli* (Foundation of the ex-Camp Fossoli) and the *Museo Monumento al Deportato politico e Razziale nei Campi di Sterminio Nazisti* (Museum Monument for the political and racial deportees into the Nazi Extermination Camps) in Carpi, the *Museo della Resistenza* (Museum of the Resistance) in Bologna, the *Historiale* in Cassino and the *Casa delle Memoria di guerra per la Pace* (House for the Memory of the War for Peace) in Prato.

² On exhibit narratives see: Henrietta Lidchi, "The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures," in *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), 151-208.

³ David B. MacDonald, *Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide. The Holocaust and historical representation* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 9.

other victim groups. The term conceptualises the Holocaust as a singular event, distinct from the Second World War.⁴ I use the word Holocaust as an umbrella term.⁵ A wide use makes sense with respect to my research material. Even though some of the museums deal with the persecution of Jews only, most include Roma and Sinti and a significant number refer to various victim groups, including political opponents. I thus use Holocaust to refer to the violence against Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, the mentally or physically ill, Jehovah's Witnesses and all those that National Socialism discriminated against, persecuted and murdered for their assigned affiliation to designated groups.⁶ For the purpose of this study I include, as the museums do, the persecution of members of the resistance, political opponents and people who protected or helped those persecuted.

Using the term Holocaust whenever I speak of all victims together, I aim to be as specific as possible where the museums only address some victims. This is why I use the term Shoah for the murder of the European Jewry, the word Pharrajimos for the murder of Roma and Sinti, and reference other victims separately where possible. None of these terms is neutral and choice of one always leads to debates about the suitability of terms; their connotations, and the groups that they include or exclude.⁷ Most controversial currently are the discussions about the term Pharrajimos. Due to its vulgar meaning, not all Romani-speaking people think that the term Pharrajimos is

⁴ James E. Young has pointed out how labelling the events with the term Holocaust led to its conceptualisation as a singular and unique event in history. James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 85. Dan Diner and others note that heightened attention to the Holocaust has marginalised the Second World War and that the Holocaust and the War are treated as two distinct topics, leading to missing contextualisation and blindness to their interdependence. Dan Diner, *Gegenläufige Gedächtnisse. Über Geltung und Wirkung des Holocaust* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 9; Francesca Cappelletto, "Introduction," in *Memory and World War II: an ethnographic approach*, ed. by Francesca Cappelletto (New York: Berg, 2005), 1-38, 1.

⁵ I will not use the terms Final Solution or annihilation of European Jews. The first is too close to national socialist terminology and portrays the Jews as a problem to which a solution has to be found, the second is too abstract and detached for such atrocities.

⁶ Simon Wisenthal introduced this usage. Saul Friedländer "Memory of the Shoah in Israel: Symbols, Rituals, and Ideological Polarization," in *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History* ed. by James E. Young (New York: Jewish Museum New York, 1994), 149-158, 155.

⁷ The term Shoah, meaning catastrophe, is a biblical term that also relates to the founding myth of Israel. Nachman Ben-Yahuda, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*, (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 7-9, 18, 23. For a discussion of the Jewish terms Shoah and Churban see: Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, 85-87.

adequate to denote the murder of their people.⁸ I would also like to note that not all communities want to be referenced as Roma or Sinti. Lacking a better term, yet wanting to mark the particularity of the persecution of Roma and Sinti nevertheless, I have decided to use the term Pharrajimos, despite its sexual connotation.

Having expanded the term Holocaust to include all possible victims, my second expansion affects the time span considered as the Holocaust. Instead of defining its duration, I will address the periods represented in the exhibitions. Holocaust representations are not limited to the time from 1941 to 1945 when the genocidal politics were fully in place. The murders themselves cannot be understood without the events before, and they deeply influenced what came after. To address a larger period is therefore common practice in the literature on the Holocaust and the museums I analysed. The shortest period the museums address is the time from 1943 to 1945 in the Museo della Deportazione, the longest from 1918 to 1955 in the Zeitgeschichte Museum.

1.1.1 Does Europe share the same past? Scholarship on European Holocaust representations

Although the scholarship on Holocaust representation is vast, few studies analyse multiple countries and the literature on common Holocaust representation is disjointed at best.⁹ Calls to analyse multiple countries have become more prominent since the end of the Cold War and the question of how unified Holocaust representation has become is part of academic enquiry. Individual scholars have raised broad claims about the globalisation, Americanisation or Europeanisation of the Holocaust, but detailed studies, which put their theses to the test, are lacking.¹⁰ Engaging in the debate

⁸ The term Pharrajimos means rape and/or gaping in shock or horror. Ian F. Hancock, *We are the Romani People* (Hertfordshire: Universtiy of Hertforschung, 2002), 34. I use the spelling favoured by János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczy that is closer to the Romani language than the English term Porrajmos introduced by Hancock. János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczy, *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma during the Holocaust* (Budapest: Idebate Press, 2008), 7.

⁹ A good overview of the scholarship is given by: Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture," in *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, ed. by Klas-Göran Karlsson, Ulf Zander (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003), 9-57.

¹⁰ Studies on Americanisation are largely concerned with the question of how the Holocaust is interpreted in the United States and are not as relevant here. Hilene Flanzbaum, "Introduction," in *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. by Hilene Flanzbaum (Baltimore/Maryland: John Hopkins University, 1999), 1-18, 8; Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 6. Both Novick and Flanzbaum pay particular attention to the positions of Jewish Americans and their perspective on North American society as a whole.

about European memory, other scholars theorise the notion of a collective European memory, but most contributions remain hypothetical.

Most publications on European representation of the Holocaust are anthologies, in which each article remains national in scope. While posing the question of whether European representations exist, these studies lack a comparative approach and as a result, the articles regularly deny commonality between European and national representations without providing evidence. The articles themselves are valid, but to answer the question of whether European representations exist without comparable data is difficult, to say the least.¹¹ The few studies concerned with museums that represent the Holocaust analyse countries with very different pasts, usually comparing Germany to a country that opposed it, such as the United States, Great Britain or Israel. Where the past differs significantly, the representations of it are also likely to differ.¹² Countries such as Germany and Italy, or Germany and Austria, that have some shared history, hold more promise for analyses that look for similarities.¹³

The literature on European Holocaust representations is bound up with anxious debates about Europe's identity and is often situated within a binary perspective. Posing national against European commemoration, debates about a shared Holocaust see European memory as a hypothetical notion only, projected into the future. Scholars evaluate whether a common commemoration might be possible, desirable, positive or negative. To deny Europeanisation of the Holocaust, however, is at best naïve and at

¹¹ Even Fogu and Kansteiner acknowledge this, while arguing that their anthology proves that national memory dominates over European memory. Claudio Fogu and Wulf Kansteiner, "The Politics of Memory and the Poetics of History," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. by Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2006), 284-310.

¹² Katrin Pieper, *Die Musealisierung des Holocaust. Das Jüdische Museum Berlin und das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.* (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau, 2006); Anna Reading, *The Social Inheritance of the Holocaust. Gender, Culture and Memory* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002); Rosmarie Beier-de Haan, *Erinnerte Geschichte – Inszenierte Geschichte* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2005). In these works, the comparative frame makes the differences explicit. A similar approach to mine is from Katja Köhr, *Die vielen Gesichter des Holocaust. Museale Repräsentation zwischen Individualisierung, Universalisierung und Nationalisierung* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2012). Even though examining very different countries, she argues that both commonalities and exist simultaneously.

¹³ Hans Woller, ed., *Parallele Geschichte? Italien und Deutschland 1945-2000* (Berlin: Dunker & Humbold, 2006); Christoph Cornelißen, Lutz Klinkhammer and Wolfgang Schwentker, ed., *Erinnerungskulturen: Deutschland, Italien und Japan seit 1945* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 2003); David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

worst reflective of a nostalgic longing for the nation state in the context of the diminishing importance of nation states since 1990.¹⁴ Underlying this denial is a fear of new, previously unexplored areas of historical research.¹⁵ With respect to the Holocaust, some scholars worry that the Holocaust would be trivialised, minimised in its importance or homogenised – a fear unsupported by the brilliant research on the Holocaust in Europe that shows its plural and diverse forms.¹⁶ Others worry that the “negative identity” of the Holocaust would be detrimental to Europe. Scholars who believe the Holocaust could serve as a warning for the present have countered this.¹⁷ However one positions oneself in these debates, the fact that we do discuss European identity formations, European history and European cultural references with respect to the Holocaust means that these elements are already under construction – in part through our discussions.¹⁸ The Holocaust is part of the European past, frequently debated and referred to. The question is not *whether* we want to include the Holocaust or not, but rather *how* it is included, and which evaluations and interpretations are to be adopted for the present.

Both Claudio Fogu and Stefan Troebst raise further, more substantial arguments against shared European Holocaust commemorations. Fogu acknowledges that European and national elements coexist within Holocaust commemoration, but argues

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- ¹⁴ Levy and Sznajder point to a similar parallel between opposition to the nation state in the 19th century and contemporary opposition to European or even global structures. Both emerged at times when the nation state or the globalised world were already a reality, and were motivated by anxiety caused by the perceived changes. Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 50-51.
- ¹⁵ Mark Bevir criticises the nostalgia for the diminishing nation state: Mark Bevir, “National Histories: Prospects for Critique and Narrative,” in *Narrating the Nation. Representations in History, Media and the Arts*, ed. by Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas, Andrew Mycock (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 56-76. This is also supported by Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 50.
- ¹⁶ Fearing this is, for example: Henry Rousso, “History of Memory, Policies of the Past: What for?,” in *Conflicted Memories. Europeanizing Contemporary History*, ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 24-36. For criticism on these debates see: Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 25.
- ¹⁷ Dan Diner has introduced the term negative identity. Dan Diner, *Gegenläufige Gedächtnisse*; Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*. The Holocaust as a shared past is rejected by Jan-Werner Müller, “On ‘European Memory’: Some Conceptual and Normative Remarks,” in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. by Malgorzata Pakier and Bo Strath (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 25-37, 36; Rousso, “History of Memory”, 24-36; Toni Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 831.
- ¹⁸ European identity is neither new nor tied to the history of the Holocaust. Europe as an idea can be considered to have existed, if only in pre-stages, since the Middle Ages. From the eighteenth century, the idea of a culturally unified region of Europe became more dominant. As a political reality it was established from 1957. Jan Drees Kuhnen, *Die Zukunft der Nationen in Europa. Ist das Zeitalter der Nationen und Nationalstaaten in Europa vorüber?* (Berlin: Dunker & Humbold, 2009), 214-224.

that the national ones dominate over the European ones.¹⁹ Equally significant is Troebst's claim that a unified memory of the Holocaust is not possible due to the differences between East and West. He argues that in Eastern Europe the memory of communism has been the defining factor in identity formations since 1989, whereas in Western Europe it has been the Holocaust.²⁰ Both authors conclude that shared representations do exist, but are not strong enough to bind Europe together. Unlike Fogu, I believe that European and national commemorations can exist simultaneously, with neither cancelling out the other, but rather with each securing and legitimizing the other. Troebst's findings hold true for the twentieth century as a whole, but when Holocaust commemorations alone are focused upon, common forms re-emerge. My research at the *Terror Háza* and the *Nemzeti Múzeum* in Budapest confirms that the communist past overpowers the representation of the Holocaust. Museums in Eastern Europe that deal with a wider historical period devote most of their attention to communism. However, in museums that focus exclusively on the Holocaust, such as the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont*, the communist past does not appear as relevant. Further, Eastern and Western Europe might share a common representation of the Holocaust, even if the attention devoted to it is different.

European Holocaust commemoration exists, and to pose it against national commemoration is misleading. The Holocaust itself was staged across Europe and affected the whole continent. The primary sources that remain from it have relevance through-

¹⁹ Fogu and Kansteiner, "The Politics of Memory", 294. While some scholars, e.g. Judt, Levy or Sznajder are aware that their work also contributes to a new European identity others seem completely oblivious to this. Tony Judt, "The Past is another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe. World War Two and its Aftermath*, ed. by István Deák, Tony Judt, Jan T. Gross (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 293-324, 316; Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*, 2007 (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2007), 216-120.

²⁰ Stefan Troebst, "Postkommunistische Erinnerungskulturen im östlichen Europa. Bestandsaufnahme, Kategorisierung, Periodisierung," in *Kulturstudien Ostmitteleuropas. Aufsätze und Essays*, edited by Stefan Troebst (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2006), 65-108, 66. Klas Göran Karlsson and Tony Judt also support this. Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Uses of History and the Third Wave of Europeanization", in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. by Malgorzata Pakier and Bo Strath (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 38-55, 42; Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 39-40, 826. Charles S. Maier has a slightly different position, arguing that Holocaust memory is stronger and affects people more because it has a stronger moral implication. I feel that his argument is well supported for western Europe but would need more research for Eastern Europe. Charles S. Maier, "Heisses und Kaltes Gedächtnis. Zur politischen Halbwertzeit des faschistischen und kommunistischen Gedächtnisses," *Transit*, 22 (2001/2002): 153-156.

out Europe and across national borders. Scholars worldwide study the Holocaust, making Holocaust historiography international. Representations of the Holocaust draw on this international research to a large extent. Finally, Holocaust commemorations are pursued at a European level. Since the end of the Cold War, European countries have engaged in several initiatives for joint Holocaust commemorations. The wide participation at the Stockholm conference in 2000, and the existence of a common Holocaust commemoration day in nearly all European countries testify to this.²¹ All of these observations indicate that common forms of Holocaust representations cannot be as easily dismissed as the binary counterposition of European versus national representations would suggest.

The approach proposed by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider in their work on global Holocaust memory helps to move beyond a binary position. Instead of posing national against European representations, Levy and Sznaider claim that Holocaust memory merges different memory formations. They argue that Holocaust representations are a mixture of global, national and regional discourses, which combine to form a new, hybrid narrative.²² Globally mediated events such as the trial of Adolf Eichmann, and globally-received media productions such as the mini-series *Holocaust* or the film *Schindler's List* create global reference points, shaping Holocaust constructions and the expectations that are brought to its representations.²³ With regard to museum culture, the *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* exerts such a global influence.²⁴ European events, such as within the debate about a shared European identity and the role of the Holocaust for this identity, establish additional discursive formations. Discourse formations in nation states interpret global and European discourses through a national

²¹ The conference was organised by the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, recently renamed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. See, for example: Harald Schmid, "Europäisierung des Auschwitzgedenkens? Zum Aufstieg des 27. Januar 1945 als 'Holocaustgedenktag' in Europa," in *Universalisierung des Holocaust? Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik in internationaler Perspektive*, ed. by Jan Eckel, Claudia Moisel (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008), 174-202.

²² Levy and Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*, 2007 (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2007); Despite discussing global representations this approach neglects memory cultures outside of the western world.

²³ MacDonald, *Identity Politics*, 16-34.

²⁴ Natan Sznaider, "The Americanization of Memory: The Case of the Holocaust," in *Global America? The Cultural Consequences of Globalization*, ed. by Natan Sznaider, Ulrich Beck and Rainer Winter (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 174-188.

lens. This does not negate the global and European references, but transforms and alters them. The national discussions about Eichmann in Italy differed from those in Austria and Hungary, but in all three countries debates emerged. National particularities, their own past and the national take on the Holocaust, influence and shape the ways that global discourses are interpreted. Furthermore, national events contribute specific references not relevant elsewhere. All these memory formations are once again transformed at the regional level. Each museum takes regional representations into account, and as these become reintegrated into national, European and international discourses the wider memory formations change once more. Every museum, as a specific institution situated in place and time, constructs its individual representation from a combination of all the available components.

1.1.2 What are the common effects of the Holocaust? National narratives through a European lens

In the previous section I introduced the scholarship on European Holocaust representations, in this one I discuss the impact of the Holocaust on Europe since 1945. The Second World War and the Holocaust shaped the post-war order in Europe in similar ways. The war affected the entire European continent while the crimes later to be known as the Holocaust, and the shock and horror associated with them, became a constant point of reference. Each country in Europe has its own variant, but the general structures of how the Holocaust influenced the new post-war order, the overall timelines within which different countries came to terms with the Holocaust, as well as the topics discussed in each period, are similar.

Europe, in ruins from 1945 to 1949, tried to find a new post-war order and to make sense of the immediate past. After 1945 all European countries, with the exception of Germany, tried to associate themselves with the Allies. According to Tony Judt, this situation led to similar founding myths across Europe.²⁵ Presenting themselves as Germany's victims, highlighting national resistance and avoiding too direct discussion of their own war crimes, countries presented themselves in a favourable light. Every European country conducted trials against their own perpetrators, and efforts were made to banish people who had participated in crimes during the Second World War

²⁵ Judt, *Postwar*.

from political and administrative posts. In Hungary, Austria, and Italy, national lay courts conducted trials, while the Allies tried the highest-ranking perpetrators. Despite these attempts, people who had belonged to fascist parties, members of the National Socialists or people who collaborated with German perpetrators were reintegrated into the system early on across Europe. New identity constructions that emerged externalised responsibility to Germany and presented the home nation as favourably as possible.²⁶

With the Cold War, attention shifted to the bloc confrontation. An immediate result of this was the release of many perpetrators in the 1950s. The western bloc became unified under a self-image of a new, productive future, ignoring the specific experiences of the Holocaust.²⁷ Discussions of the Holocaust conflated the victims into one large group and only paid attention to the highest-ranking perpetrators. In Eastern Europe, communism was presented as the true saviour and official narratives conflated individual victim groups with the population at large, who had all suffered under National Socialism, which was identified with capitalism. The censors banned inconvenient stories while, due to the oppressive aspects of official memory constructions, an unofficial, private memory emerged alongside. The unofficial memory often idealised the pre-communist past and in so doing diminished the atrocities committed. Furthermore, it gained legitimacy over the official memory.²⁸

Judt's analysis of the founding myths in Europe captures the situation in Austria, Italy and Hungary. Each nation exemplifies one of the particular variants described by Judt. Austria proclaimed a victim status until the 1980s, presenting itself as the first victim of Nazi Germany. Italy, with its strong national resistance, claimed until the 1990s that Italians had liberated themselves from the German occupation. In Hungary, a dual memory emerged in which the communists' fight against the Nazis was the official narrative. In unofficial narratives opposing the communist story, people idealised the past before 1944. In all three, active participation in the war as a German ally, the war crimes committed during that time and collaboration in the Holocaust was downplayed, and the particular national relationship to the Holocaust ignored.

²⁶ Judt, "The Past is another Country," 296-299.

²⁷ Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem," 29.

²⁸ Judt, "The Past is another Country," 308.

While the Holocaust was addressed on the side, in the 1950s each country foregrounded the commemoration of their national victims, particularly the soldiers lost during the war.

This focus on national suffering shifted when the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust gained renewed attention in the 1960s. The public began to acknowledge the crimes committed against Jews, and individual states even started pursuing perpetrators again.²⁹ The increasing attention to the Holocaust is most visible in the trial against Adolf Eichmann. Covered by media throughout Europe, it showed a prominent perpetrator and the murderous accuracy with which he had pursued his task. The trial in Jerusalem put the prosecution of Holocaust perpetrators back on the agenda. This and the following trials, some held in Austria and Italy, produced new evidence about the crimes committed and brought the topic to the fore. This occurred even where, as in Austria, the courts delayed subsequent trials or the prosecution charged only Germans, as was the case in Italy. The new trials also revealed that the perpetrators had been living undisturbed up until then. Perhaps even more importantly, the prosecution's case against Adolf Eichmann was based on testimonies given by survivors. These testimonies made a wider public aware of what the Holocaust meant to its victims. Other developments, such as the establishment of trauma studies as a subject in the 1960s, also emphasised their traumatic experiences.³⁰ In the following years, literary works by and about Jewish victims found both publishers and an emerging audience. Primo Levi in Italy is the best-known example, but literary production in Hungary and in Austria was also central to the commemoration of Jewish victims during the 1960s. That victim organisations in Austria and Italy gained more influence, partly as a result of the growing awareness of the Holocaust, in turn also contributed to the increased attention paid to survivors at that time.

²⁹ Dan Diner makes the relationship between court trials against the perpetrators and memory of the Holocaust very clear. Dan Diner, "Der Holocaust in den politischen Kulturen Europas: Erinnerung und Eigentum," in *Auschwitz. Sechs Essays zu Geschehen und Vergegenwärtigung*, ed. by Klaus-Dietmar Henke (Dresden: Hannah-Arendt Institut, 2001), 65-73. In English, see: Dan Diner and Gotthart Wunberg, ed. *Restitution and Memory. Material Restoration in Europe* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007).

³⁰ On trauma as a trope in Holocaust representations see: Sabine Sielke, "Troping the Holocaust, Globalizing Trauma?," in *The Holocaust, Art, and Taboo. Transatlantic Exchanges on the Ethics and Aesthetics of Representation*, ed by Sophia Komor and Susanne Rohr (Heidelberg: Winter, 2010), 227-247; Jeffrey C. Alexander, "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002): 5-85.

In the 1970s and 1980s the Holocaust became a topic for best-selling cultural productions, academic research soared, and younger generations confronted the past. The attention to Jewish victims continued and the worldwide success of the NBC mini-series *Holocaust*, first screened in 1978 in the United States, is the most famous example here. Generational changes led to a new ways of looking at the past, often prompted by regional groups interested in history or by young historians, for whom oral history, histories of the working class and of the average population came to be central. This new generation questioned former taboos throughout Europe, though not everywhere as violently as in Italy or Germany. In Austria, for example, the international outrage at the scandal concerning the former SS membership of Austria's Chancellor Kurt Waldheim in 1988 testifies to the heatedness of debates about the Holocaust and their global importance. Social movements fighting against the continuing discrimination of homosexuals but also for more self-determination of medical patients, also paved the way for the pluralisation of victim groups that became fully visible in the 1990s. At around the same time, with the easing of communist censorship in their country, Hungarians also participated in these debates and paid increased attention to the Holocaust in Hungary.

In the 1980s, the confrontation between the Eastern and Western bloc diminished, making possible the political shift that led to the events of 1989-91.³¹ Not paying enough attention to the generational change, Tony Judt attributes changing memory constructions solely to the political changes that took place after 1989.³² The fall of the Berlin Wall certainly affected Europe's memory constructions. As European countries readjusted to the new geopolitical situation after 1989, new founding myths emerged. In part nationalistic, xenophobic or nostalgic in scope, these founding myths have not yet solidified and counter currents as strong as the nationalistic ones call for a European identity based on tolerance, acceptance and solidarity.³³ The European Union, also reinventing itself since 1990, places central importance on Holocaust commemorations, as

³¹ Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem," 18.

³² To give more attention to generational changes would ruin his argument that memory became possible because of 1989. There are many arguments for a less exclusive focus where the structures of government and generational change affected the change in memory culture. For this perspective see: Richard Ned Lebow, "The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. by Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2006), 1-39, 33.

³³ According to Judt, nationalistic founding myths developed mostly in East Central Europe. However, in the West nationalism and racism are also strong even if voiced differently. Judt, "The Past is

shown in the large participation in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance or the signing of the Stockholm Declaration in 2000 to support Holocaust commemoration and research.³⁴ Declarations against racism, antisemitism, discrimination and the exclusion of ethnic groups are prerequisites of the European Union, and taking responsibility for crimes committed in the past is now a moral demand on the nation states united within it.³⁵

Responsibility for the Holocaust is a main theme, and Europe's new founding myths reflect this. Austria now sees itself as a perpetrator country; Italy no longer generalises the resistance and acknowledges the crimes committed by part of its population; while Hungary accepts some of its responsibility, nevertheless continuing to imagine the country as helpless and unable to act otherwise. The national narratives of these countries after 1990 are not identical, but they all address the question of national responsibility for the Holocaust. The Holocaust is considered crucial within the memory culture in Europe and is one of the most commemorated and studied periods of the past.

After 1989, the changed political context enabled new trials, mainly against companies that had employed forced labourers, while the reunification of Germany opened many cases for the restitution of stolen property. The moral responsibility of industries, individual firms and institutions that had profited from the Holocaust emerged as a relevant topic. Lawsuits revealed the significant profits made from the Holocaust, for example by Swiss banks, and brought to light new groups of both perpetrators and victims. The public recognised the so-called forgotten victims and lesser perpetrators, and the complicity of the non-persecuted population came into the spotlight. Perpetrator studies emerged in full force, best exemplified by Daniel J. Goldhagen's controversial study and Christopher R. Browning famous reply to it. In the exhibition world, the *Wehrmachtsausstellung* portrayed the German Army as perpetrators, initiating a wide debate about perpetrators and their representation in exhibitions.

another Country," 312. The European founding myth is highlighted by Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 217-218, mostly ignored by Judt.

³⁴ Schmid, "Europäisierung des Auschwitzgedenkens?"

³⁵ I use the spelling antisemitism and not anti-semitism, as antisemitism is not an antithesis to a thesis and does not imply that Semitism exists. See: Ronit Lentin, *Israel and the Daughters of the Shoah: Reoccupying the Territories of Silence* (Oxford/New York: Berghahn, 2000), 25.

As the shared timeline implies, the topics of Holocaust historiographies are similar across Europe. Trends and fashions in Holocaust representations structure the themes studied by historians, which in turn influence exhibition representations. Contemporary Holocaust historiography deals with the Holocaust in four stages: the events leading up to it, the Holocaust itself, and its aftermath.³⁶ For the first stage anti-semitism, racism, discrimination and in the second social as well as legal exclusion are addressed; for the third ghettoisation, mass shootings, the concentration and extermination camps but also expropriation by the national population are particularly relevant; while the fourth focuses upon the prosecutions after 1945, the post-war order and memory constructions of the Holocaust. Variations on these themes are found in all the museums I visited. National events, such as the incorporation of Austria into Germany in 1938, the occupation of Italy in 1943, or Arrow Cross rule in Hungary in 1944 add specific events to this overall chronology.

The topics addressed within this chronology also resemble each other. As is indicated above, perpetrator history and the recognition of specific victims are currently the most dominant topics. Perpetrator studies look mostly at the common perpetrator and the local population. Scholars discuss the collaboration, complicity, personal gain or indifference of those not persecuted. This is accompanied by intensified attention to different victim groups, an issue of debate since the “forgotten victims” became visible after the 1990s. Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, medical patients, Jehovah’s Witnesses, forced labourers, people declared asocial or persecuted as criminals are all acknowledged today. Museums in Hungary, Austria and Italy represent perpetrators and plural victim groups, at least to a certain extent. Thus, all deal with the agency of their own national, non-Jewish population, and all attempt to address the plurality of the victims.

³⁶ For an overview on Holocaust historiography, see: Tom Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust* (New York/Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

1.2 Searching for theory: how to analyse museum representations

1.2.1 Special features of museum representations

The study of the representation of the Holocaust in Austria, Italy and Hungary could encompass many areas. Textual representation in schoolbooks, newspapers, journals, or historiography, in spoken texts such as speeches, public debates or conferences could be considered; pictorial representations seen in photographs, films or art could be analysed; or material objects, memorabilia or relics from the time in question could constitute a focus. A study of spatial representation, addressing the landscapes of cities and countryside alike by analysing memorials, commemoration places, cemeteries or public space in general would be possible. Lastly, one could research Holocaust representations by turning to social practices and the performances enacted, for example at commemorative events, in schools, or on guided tours. Within museums, all of these aspects are included: textual, pictorial, material, spatial and social representations are found within exhibitions.³⁷ Text is combined with pictorial elements and material objects, ordered in a space that becomes a stage on which history is performed for and by the visitor who encounters it. As such, museum exhibitions are hybrid forms in which different modes of representation and specific forms of their appropriation merge.

The representational modes by which the museums display text, images, objects and sound are determined by the museums and their practices. History museums in Europe share a common tradition that binds their display practices together. European museums in their modern form developed simultaneously with the nation state and participated in its invention.³⁸ While each museum ostensibly exhibited a unique national heritage, they actually modelled themselves on a specific concept of national history that was similar across Europe.³⁹ History museums were founded to store and

³⁷ Jay Winter makes a similar argument for all public sites where history is commemorated. He highlights the history of a memory site, its business character, the aesthetic realm and the ritual performed there. Jay Winter, "Historians and Sites of Memory," in *Memory in Mind and Culture*, ed. by James V. Wertsch and Pascal Boyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 252-268.

³⁸ The classic, accurate and still very relevant work on this is Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum. History, theory, politics* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995).

³⁹ Marlies Raffler, *Museum - Spiegel der Nation? Zugänge zur Historischen Museologie am Beispiel der Genese von Landes- und Nationalmuseen in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Wien: Böhlau, 2007). For art museums see: Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre. Art, Politics, and the Origins of the modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For the

represent objects from the past. Objects such as historic books, works of art or historical documents were collected if they were perceived to relate to national identity, and were thus declared national heritage.⁴⁰ The notion of national heritage reflected discourses within Europe and often meant the transfer of former royal, aristocratic or military collections to emerging bourgeois institutions. The mode of representation also depended on the self-perceived role of the museum as a proponent of national history. Museum founders saw themselves as educators of the nation. The institutions aimed to present national heritage to their visitors in order to show them how to identify with this history and become proper citizens.⁴¹ The museums functioned as disciplinary institutions, which, as leisure institutions, aimed to educate a clearly gendered, white, middle class audience.⁴² This genesis continues to influence the display structures, the educative tone of exhibitions as well as the mission of contemporary museums to teach history to their visitors.⁴³

The museums I analyse share the European tradition, which includes different museum types. Contemporary history museums can be divided into the traditional institutions that emerged around the turn of the 20th century, more recent institutions that exhibit the history of the 20th century, and museums that specialise on one topic. The first two types of museum address the Holocaust within broader narratives. National museums, military museums and Jewish museums all display history in its broadest sense, spanning multiple centuries. Museums exhibiting 20th century history have a shorter trajectory, but still present a large timeframe, within which the exhibition represent the Second World War and the Holocaust. Museums that specialise on one topic might deal with the Holocaust with reference to that, as museums on the Italian resistance do for example, but particularly relevant for my purposes are the museums dedicated to the Holocaust itself.

invented community of European nations I rely on Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised version (New York: Verso, 2006).

⁴⁰ Preziosi, Donald, "Narrativity and the Museological: Myths of Nationality," in *Museum History Journal* 2, no. 1 (2009): 37-50.

⁴¹ Tony Bennett, "Civic Seeing: Museums and the Organization of Vision," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Sharon MacDonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 263-281.

⁴² Roswitha Muttenthaler and Regina Wonisch, *Rollenbilder im Museum. Was erzählen Museen über Frauen und Männer?* (Schwalbach im Taunus: Wochenschau Verlag 2010).

⁴³ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the shaping of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

Just as the museum tradition itself is comparable across Europe, so are the different museum types. The museums that belong to one group are similar to each other especially with respect to role the objects play in the displays. Military museums, for example, look very similar in Hungary, Austria and Italy. At the risk of generalisation, I will categorise the attitude of different museums to objects on display into three groups. The first mode of representation centres on material objects. The museums consider the objects 'authentic', and display them to make visible an essential truth about the past. Textual narrative and written contextualisation are subsidiary to the material objects. This approach is particularly favoured in traditional institutions, such as national and military museums, or Jewish museums. The second approach favours a highly stylised mode of representation and use the primary sources on display as symbols. Objects figure prominently, but rather than their authenticity it is their symbolic marking of historic time that is essential to the exhibition. Written contextualisation is marginal here too; these museums construct their narratives through their specific arrangement of exhibits within space. The design of these exhibitions is often very elaborate and creates a specific atmosphere appropriate to the message communicated. As this approach is less traditional, it is usually favoured by more recent museums founded after 1990. The third mode of representation is academic in tone and style. The texts written by the museum, is plain and direct in tone, informing the visitor about the content. Apparently factual content is favoured and very often the primary sources displayed illustrate the narrative, rather than constituting it. Material objects are not as significant in this display mode and are clearly subsidiary to the text and visual objects.⁴⁴

Although I visited a wide range of museums in order to gain an overview over the museum landscape in each country, the sheer number of institutions representing the Holocaust made it necessary to limit my focus. I decided at the outset of my research not to analyse the representation of concentration camp sites. Located at the original sites, concentration camp sites face different challenges that influence their representations. On-site archaeology and the preservation and reconstruction of the

⁴⁴ Jana Scholz and Valerie Casey analysed different display techniques in one study. Jana Scholze, *Medium Ausstellung. Lektüren musealer Gestaltung in Oxford, Leipzig, Amsterdam und Berlin* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2004); Valerie Casey, "Staging Meaning: Performance in the Modern Museum." *Drama Review* 49, no. 3 (2005): 78/95.

sites set the concentration camp sites apart from museums narrating the Holocaust.⁴⁵ The fact that the former camps are also burial grounds for the dead further complicates their representations.⁴⁶ The 'authentic' geography and the atmosphere it evokes is essential to the narrative of the Holocaust represented at concentration camp sites, so that the representations differ substantially from those of museums in other places. I also did not examine museums that represent a fraction of Holocaust history, which exist in Austria in particular, as these are too specialised. From among the very large number of museums where I conducted research, I chose those that focused exclusively on the Holocaust for my case studies. I excluded all museums that address the Holocaust in one, often small, section alongside a variety of topics largely unrelated to the Holocaust. The only exception to this is the *Museo Diffuso*, which I included because its exhibition interweaves the Holocaust into the whole exhibition and the Holocaust thus forms a significant part of it. All the museums not chosen for close analysis will be discussed at the beginning of each chapter, however. There I will briefly outline how these exhibitions represent the Holocaust and relate their representations to the respective national discourse and the case study that follows.

Some scholars have tried to establish guiding principles on how the Holocaust should be represented, but academic and museological standards are not clear-cut.⁴⁷ According to their mandate to educate the public about the Holocaust, the notion of objectivity is particularly important for these museums –despite the postmodern turn. The museums present themselves as objective, and most seek to certify this objectivity

⁴⁵ Isabelle Engelhardt, *A Topography of Memory. Representations of the Holocaust at Dachau and Buchenwald in Comparison with Auschwitz, Yad Vashem and Washington DC*. (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2002). A very detailed discussion of the specific demands of so-called authentic sites is given by Alexandra Klei, *Der erinnerte Ort. Geschichte durch Architektur. Zur baulichen und gestalterischen Repräsentation der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011).

⁴⁶ On the complexity of memorials that are also burial sites see: Aleida Assmann, "Das Gedächtnis der Orte," in *Orte der Erinnerung*, ed. by Ulrich Borsdorf and Heinrich T. Grütter (Frankfurt/M: Campus, 1999).

⁴⁷ Karl Heinrich Pohl, "Wann ist ein Museum 'historisch korrekt'? Offenes Geschichtsbild, Kontroversität, Multiperspektivität und 'Überwältigungsverbot' als Grundprinzipien musealer Geschichtspräsentationen," in *Museum und Geschichtskultur. Ästhetik - Politik - Wissenschaft*, ed. by Olaf Hartung (Bielefeld, 2006), 273-286; Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (München: C.H. Beck, 2006), 266-279.

by the application of academic standards to their exhibitions. Most exhibitions legitimise their displays with academic research and so-called authentic material.⁴⁸ The implication is that congruence with contemporary scholarship, logical argumentation, and the specification of references for the primary sources on display make an exhibition objective.⁴⁹ Museums present themselves as adhering to the rules of academic and museological scholarship and hence as accurately representing the Holocaust. My aim is not to question whether the exhibitions fulfil these claims, but rather to identify the influence of these claims on exhibition practices.

1.2.2 The museum speaks: narrative theory and museum discourse. The first, second and third person in the museum

When museums represent the Holocaust, the exhibitions can be seen as speech acts that interact with the wider Holocaust discourse by formulating sentences that speak to and about it. In the following section, I define how an exhibition constitutes a speech act. I have chosen to use Mieke Bal's application of discourse analysis within the realm of the museum. Her approach aids my deconstruction of the exhibitions, and my identification of the different messages made by the displays within them. Further, it enables me to locate the power of the museum to speak, to construct knowledge about the Holocaust.

For Mieke Bal the museum exhibition is a semantic performance in which meaning is created.⁵⁰ She reads exhibitions as texts, and analyses them with discourse analysis derived from Foucault.⁵¹ Bal identifies three actors, or grammatical positions, that participate in the museum discourse. The museum, defined as the expository agent, is the 'first person', the 'I' who speaks to the visitor. The visitor is the 'second person' to whom the first person speaks, the audience of the museum. The object, the 'third person', is the exhibition itself, in my case the representation of the Holocaust,

⁴⁸ Mieke Bal calls this 'truth speak' within an exhibit. Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures. The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), 47.

⁴⁹ The application of these standards is lenient. References are provided for some sources and not for others and primary sources, in particular photographs or images, are selected for their visual potential and/or for their logical connection to the narrative.

⁵⁰ Bal, *Double Exposures*, 2.

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, *Archäologie des Wissens* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1981).

about which the expository agent speaks.⁵² Meaning emerges in the dialogue that unfolds between the first and the second person via the third. The expository agent speaks *about* the Holocaust *to* the visitor.

Bal defines the expository agent as the museum as a whole. This means that the agent is not only the curator or the director, but the whole institution and its internal processes; its history and politics, its status and financial situation, the staff on all levels and the museum's collection. The museum lends cultural authority to the exhibition while its own history influences what it shows and how the institution positions itself politically. Usually the tradition within which a museum was founded already decides its general approach to and overall perspective on history. While this museum tradition influences the general direction taken, the director of the museum, its committees, boards, friends and members decide on the programme. Here the financial situation is crucial in addition to tradition and political direction. The financial support a museum receives will influence how extensive the exhibition can be, how often it is updated, and how many resources it can incorporate. Museum staff also contribute to the selection, presentation and interpretation of the objects on display. The curators choose and arrange them, the historic guides interpret them, and other staff supervise visitors' viewing of the objects. Finally, the collection of a museum is the repository from which its staff choose the display. What the museum owns exercises an important influence on what it says. Together all these aspects are the expository agent, the one who speaks in the exhibition.⁵³

In the finished exhibition the complex process of decision-making in the institution, the compromises and concessions, appear unified, as one subject position speaking – regardless of how many different voices and actors have participated in it.⁵⁴ To the visitor, the expository agent speaks with one voice and this speech act, made in the permanent exhibition, is the one I will analyse. My research did not include the curation of the exhibitions or the museums' financial and institutional setups, nor did I

⁵² Bal, *Double Exposures*, 32-33.

⁵³ Bal, *Double Exposures*, 16-17.

⁵⁴ Sometimes how the exhibition came together does show, as do tensions among the different people involved. In most cases these are glossed over in the final exhibition and where this is not the case they are hard to attribute to one actor or another. In all the exhibitions I analysed the clear goal of the expository agent was to present a unified exhibition with one voice.

look at the collections that supplied the material to the exhibition. Accordingly, I cannot answer how the expository agent assembled the speech act, but will focus instead on the finished speech put forward in the exhibitions.

In the speech act, the expository agent is imbued with significant power. The visitors perceive the museum as an authority and the museums usually present their statements as legitimate. The knowledge the exhibition creates and postulates is credible. The power within the discursive field is further heightened by the diverse means to speak that the expository agent possesses. Alongside cultural capital, financial means to elaborate a position, room to display it, media attention to reach an audience and public attention guarantee that the voice of the expository agent is heard.

The expository agent then uses the exhibition to convey what he means to say.⁵⁵ This, the topic of the exhibition itself, is the third person within the speech act.⁵⁶ In my case the third person, the object spoken about, is the Holocaust in whatever form it is represented. This third person is again very broad. It encompasses everything in the exhibition: the material objects, photographs, documents, films and images, sound recordings or interviews presented. As all the museums I examine are history museums, most objects representing the Holocaust are primary sources from the Holocaust itself. The expository agent explains them through written words and the frame. I decided to differentiate the written text exhibited, trying to be as specific as possible when speaking about the texts the expository agents wrote. I use the word copy, as a term for all texts by the expository agent that stands on its own and is longer than two or three sentences. I distinguish the copy from headings, captions and labels. All texts and the objects displayed are the content of the speech act. This content is put into sentences by the framing devices of the exhibition, which structure the narrative about the Holocaust. The display cases, lighting, acoustic devices, colours, spatial design and the building or the architecture itself, are all part of the third person. The way the museum arranges and stages the displayed objects, the sequence, their height and

⁵⁵ As I will show, all exhibitions present a speech act from a dominantly male perspective, due to which I will address the expository agent as a he, irrespective of the sex of its members. The only exception is the Museo Diffuso, where the speech act is plural and includes male and female perspectives.

⁵⁶ Bal, *Double Exposures*, 30.

juxtapositions are the 'semiotics of display', the semantic structure given to the Holocaust.⁵⁷ Together, content and frame build the sentences about the Holocaust. Each object is an utterance with power and meaning attached to it. Linking this meaning to other display objects, the expository agent forms the exhibition narrative – a narrative about the third person, the Holocaust.⁵⁸ The narrative, made up of diverse utterances – and it is important to note that they are plural ones – is directed towards the second person.⁵⁹

The second person is both the ideal and the real visitor. Ideal and imagined by the expository agent, it is the audience the expository agent envisions and who he has in mind when he structures the whole exhibition. Bal uses the term ideal visitor in its singular form, meaning that the museum envisions a unified visitor. One exhibition can address several ideal visitors, but this is rarely the case. Most address a native speaker and a foreigner, visible in the use of English and/or other languages. Usually the expository agent imagines these two subject positions to be identical, which is indicated by the fact that the translations aim to be exactly alike, assuming identical understanding in all languages. The ideal visitors can be identified in the exhibition itself, because they are spoken to, thus represented in the exhibition.⁶⁰ All the museums I analysed address a white, middle class, fully abled visitor. All are adults, who can walk freely through the exhibition, and are between 1.50m and 1.80m tall.⁶¹ Typography is in part very small, sound not adjustable and there are few options to sit down in the exhibitions. The language used and the representation mode presupposes average school education and most demand quite a long attention span from their audience. The narratives presented centre

⁵⁷ Bal, *Double Exposures*, 36.

⁵⁸ Bal, *Double Exposures*, 128. In regard to the meaning of objects themselves see: Sabine Offe, "Schaustück und Gedächtnis: Jüdisches im Museum", in *Museum zum Quadrat Nr. 5: Wie zu sehen ist. Essays zur Theorie des Ausstellens*, ed. Gottfried Fliedl, Roswitha Mutterthaler, Herbert Posch, 27-45.

⁵⁹ Bal, *Double Exposures*, 22.

⁶⁰ Bal, *Double Exposures*, 30-32.

⁶¹ The only exception to this was the Wien Museum, which also addresses people with physical impairments, in particular different visual needs, having Braille copy. The museum also addresses children as a separate group, showing copy placed at the height of one metre. This copy uses language that addresses younger visitors, so that different viewing heights in general are not the aim here.

on a white, often male persona, offering identification to white men and women, with the women having to relate to male agents.⁶²

The real visitor, by contrast, is the person who actually visits the exhibition. The real visitors are diverse people, who, at least in theory, come from all strands of society, viewing the exhibition from their very own, unique perspective. They are diverse with respect to gender, class, race and national belonging. Except in those cases where the ideal and the real visitor are congruent, the unique identity, individual understanding and particular evaluation the real visitor has of the exhibition is not represented. The real visitors are invisible in the exhibition; it does not address them. Hence the real visitors can only be studied through visitor studies. The dialogue between the real visitor and the expository agent is separated by time and space; the expository agent designs his speech act earlier than the visitor who encounters it. The exhibition is already in place when the real visitor enters, so that the real visitor sees the third person, the Holocaust talked about, but not the person who talks about it.⁶³ This is all the more pertinent because the expository agent is not transparent in the exhibition. Presenting the speech act as truth, the expository agent hides that it is just one particular opinion on the Holocaust. The truth speak, the claim that the representation of the Holocaust and its reality are identical, and the cultural authority of the museum underline this. If the real visitor strongly disagrees with the exhibition, she usually recognises that the exhibition only formulates an opinion, but in more ambivalent situations, she will tend to simply believe its representation.⁶⁴ The expository agent has the power to define and pre-structure the dialogue, according to Bal, leading to a dominant speech act in which the museum agents dominate the visitor and the object spoken about.⁶⁵ The real visitor cannot answer to the speech act, except in the guestbook,

⁶² I will discuss the dominantly white narrative with respect to the Holocaust Emlékközpont, which includes Roma and depictions of Roma, but does so without offering identification for them as visitors. The gender bias of all museums will be discussed in each respective case study.

⁶³ If visitors take a guided tour, the tour guide speaks for the exhibition and the expository agent might be partly visible, but the construction of the exhibition – and often of the tour script also – remains invisible.

⁶⁴ The real visitors are plural and fill the whole gender spectrum with which people might identify. To ease the reading flow I will always use the feminine form when I speak about the real visitor, subsuming all other genders within.

⁶⁵ Bal, *Double Exposures*, 74.

or through behaviour commonly considered inappropriate, or by simply leaving the exhibition.

Each display and each exhibition has to form a semantic structure in order to be legible. While there are multiple possible readings, the expository agent and the visitor have to share a certain set of codes in order to communicate and understand meaning.⁶⁶ In my close reading of the exhibitions, I analyse these codes by looking at individual display segments and how they are linked within the exhibition space. The individual displays make specific utterances that link together as sentences, which combine to form the narrative about the Holocaust presented in the exhibitions.

1.2.3 Memory versus representation

So far, I have referred to museum representations of the Holocaust without defining what I mean by this, and I have mostly avoided the term 'memory of the Holocaust'. My study will not draw conclusions about shared memory of the Holocaust in Austria, Hungary and Italy. Instead, I will focus on how the history museums represent the Holocaust as a knowable object in contemporary exhibitions in these three countries. Memory studies are prevalent today and studies on the memory of the Holocaust even more so.⁶⁷ While nearly all scholars draw inspiration from Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, there is no consensus on a common definition of what constitutes memory studies.⁶⁸ This is already evidenced in the many terms used to describe the concept.⁶⁹ Usually distinguishing it from the memory of an individual person, scholars call shared memory social memory,⁷⁰ generational memory,⁷¹ political or cultural

⁶⁶ Scholze, *Medium Ausstellung*, 26; Susan M. Pierce, *Museum, Objects and Collections* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1992). This also corresponds to Bal's notion that no meaning can be completely fixed and controlled, but is altered, changed and transformed in every communication. Bal, *Double Exposures*, 128.

⁶⁷ Harald Welzer sees memory as paradigmatic for the study of the Holocaust. Harald Welzer, "Gedächtnis und Erinnerung," in *Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften, Band 3: Themen und Tendenzen*, ed. by Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2004), 155.

⁶⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, Toronto: Harper & Row 1980 (trans. by Francis J. Ditter and Vida Yazdi Ditter, first written in French in 1925). For a brief overview and a much needed critique on Halbwachs see: Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 18-2.

⁶⁹ For example: Lebow, "The Memory of Politics," 9.

⁷⁰ Harald Welzer, Christian Gudehus and Ariane Eichenberg, ed., *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2010).

⁷¹ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung, und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 1992).

memory,⁷² while studies that emphasise the process of memory prefer terms like historical remembrance⁷³ or commemoration.⁷⁴ Often collective memory is the umbrella term. Due to the lack of a clear concept and the diversity of the terms used, many have criticised a lack of precision in memory studies.⁷⁵ Despite this, the common starting point within memory studies is Maurice Halbwach's finding that the memory of an individual is based on the memory of the group to which the individual belongs. Through common commemoration a group creates narratives about its past, secures them and makes them available to its members. Excluding certain historic events from the narrative, emphasising others and investing the past with meaning are essential processes in the construction of narratives. Group members communicate the narratives in social contact or transmit them via cultural institutions. According to the literature, most members draw some sense of identity from collective memory.⁷⁶ The sum of discourses, their representations and the commemorative practices available to and performed by the group that shares this memory at a given moment in time, constitute collective memory. Often scholars believe it to be bound to a place where the memory is practised.⁷⁷ As such, collective memory exceeds the particular representations that

⁷² Alaida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: Beck, 1999).

⁷³ Winter, "Historians and Sites of Memory," 255.

⁷⁴ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁷⁵ Olick, *The Politics of Regret*, 85. Olick rightly points out that the memory identified in different studies is "indiscriminate" and can be found in whatever the scholar labels to be part of the collective memory. Olick, *The Politics of Regret*, 21.

⁷⁶ I prefer Alaida Assmann's distinction between memories derived from lifetime experiences and a political and cultural memory that extends beyond the experience of the three generations alive at a given point in time. Generational memory is transmitted in everyday discourse concerning political, economic and ecological events and forms the short term memory of a society. Cultural memory is stored and transmitted in mediated form, for example by institutions such as museums, and has a higher durability, is legitimated, codified and accepted by many members. This can be further differentiated into functional memory that is actively referenced, and stored memory that is not currently in use, but is potentially available to a society. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 134. In English see: Alaida Assmann, "Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past," in *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. by Jay Winter, Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 35-66.

⁷⁷ Pierre Nora has been influential here, defining sites, concepts and ideas as "lieu de memoire", real and imaginary spaces to which memory is bound. His study led to an intensified attention to memorial sites and the expression of national memory through them. This strong focus on national memory has had the result that memory is usually regarded to be national and its unity re-emphasised. Nora follows a binary division between memory and history that clings to the notion of objectivity. His work on the memory of France expresses his nostalgia for the nation state. Pierre Nora, ed., *Rethinking France. Les Lieux de Mémoire. Volume 2: Space*, University of Chicago Press 2006 (trans.: David P. Jordan), 12-15. For critique on Nora see: Hue-Tam Ho Tai, "Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001):

it encompasses. According to Klas-Göran Karlsson, memory includes the codification of its content, its storing and retrieval, as well as its articulation in whatever form, i.e. its performance.⁷⁸ It is diverse, plural, multifunctional and performative, and it needs to achieve a certain status within a group to become the legitimate and accepted memory of this group.

I believe that museum exhibitions can and often do express part of a group memory – of which group however, needs to be carefully established. Within the limited scope of my study, examining the Holocaust memories referenced in the museum exhibitions is not possible. From Klas-Göran's perspective, I only address one side of memory's articulation: its representation. Focusing on articulation of the Holocaust leaves other essential aspects of it out of the analysis.⁷⁹ The codification before the exhibition is made, the retrieval of information, large parts of its storage and most of its performance are not exposed. I will look at the performance that is the exhibition, but leave out the performances enacted by visitors, tour guides and experts, as well as ignoring commemorations or other events taking place in the museum. I analyse the representation of the Holocaust, but am obliged to leave the question of how this representation shapes memory to future research. Similarly, I will not be able to answer the question of how these representations influence identity formations.

Aside from the limits imposed by my research material, I also avoid two conceptual shortcomings within memory studies by restricting myself to representation. The conflation of representation and memory and a subsequent generalisation of memory is the first problem; the lack of attention in memory studies towards power is the second. Often scholars claim that representations of the past are identical to memory of it. Here one portion, one fraction of all memories existent is claimed to be *the* memory of the past, failing to take other portions that constitute memory, or other memories into account.⁸⁰ This generalisation is usually based on the claim that memory is not only singular but also encompasses all groups within the cultural frame

906-922. Ho Tai criticises the absence of post-colonial themes, class divisions, gender, and economic history. Also critical: Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 48-50, 6; Christof Dejung, "Dissonant Memories: National Identity, Political Power, and the Commemoration of World War Two in Switzerland." *Oral History* 35(2) (2007), 57-66.

⁷⁸ Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem."

⁷⁹ Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem," 45.

⁸⁰ Olick, *The Politics of Regret*, 10.

analysed. This is most often the case where scholars address so-called national memory. Memory studies are exceptionally blind towards group distinctions. Race, class and gender, as well as local, political and other diversities are often forgotten. The studies, willingly or not, create an image of a unified and homogenous group, usually congruent with the nation state.

The second problem, after the negligence of diversity, is an indifference towards power.⁸¹ Because there is no conceptual understanding of power within memory studies, its proponents fail to critically examine the memories studied. If a museum is believed to present the collective memory of a group, often the nation, then the expository agent ceases to be responsible for that representation. This makes it difficult to critically consider memories that are exclusionary, racist, antisemitic or in other ways problematic. A scholar can only call upon an unspecified group to improve their commemorations. Memory studies have no room for political agendas or advocacy and the indifference towards the power inherent in dominant memory constructions also leads to a lack of self-reflection among scholars about their active participation in those constructions.⁸²

Holocaust exhibitions create knowledge about the Holocaust that assigns subject positions to people in the past and in the present. Memory of the Holocaust is not established in unison with all group members, through a neutral process of codification and storage, accepted retrieval, performance and commemoration. Instead memory is fought over, installed, questioned and rebuilt. It is a process in which, in constant redefinition, discourse positions form. Within this discourse museums, as cultural institutions with authority, have the power to define the past. The memory they

⁸¹ Assmann does not work with any notion of power, even though she highlights that institutions play a crucial role in memory formations. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*. Neither do Young or Winter, the most well known English scholars on memory. Young, *The Texture of Memory*; Jay Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning. The Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁸² It would be possible to integrate the concept of power into memory studies, but as this is not a theoretical thesis and memory studies not my main concern, I use different tools in which these elements are already in place. That memory studies are indifferent to power might be the reason for their popularity. An attempt to integrate the concept of power advanced by Foucault into memory studies is made by Lorraine Ryan, "Memory, power and resistance: The anatomy of a tripartite relationship," *Memory Studies*, no. 4 (2011): 154-169.

articulate is never neutral, but advances a specific interpretation.⁸³ It constructs powerful systems of knowledge about the past.⁸⁴ All power relations have a correlating field of knowledge that structures the power relations. The knowledge is finite, defines who can speak and what can be said within the discursive field, also assigning authority to specific positions uttered within.⁸⁵ The museums display a specific knowledge about the Holocaust, and thus take a position within the power structure of Holocaust representations, proposing how the visitor should relate to that knowledge.

The regimes of truth created in the four museums I analysed advocate a specific perception of history. By according agency to subjects spoken about in the past and to the subject addressed in the present, the museum defines and evaluates the actions. The museum spells out who can and should make history and establishes a normative framework, presenting the past and eliciting from it guidelines on how to govern, and how to conduct oneself in the present.⁸⁶ The people spoken about, just as the visitors spoken to, are treated as objects in this knowledge/power relationship. They become aids to the speech act of the expository agent and lose their own subjective power and agency. The people from the past seldom answer back or contradict their representation.⁸⁷ The real visitor can accept the position offered or be excluded from the meaning-making process. The museum produces a place for the subject, or rather a subject-position, from which the meaning shown makes sense; at the same time excluding alternative subject positions. Thus the exhibition is deeply political.⁸⁸

⁸³ Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), 13-64, 49.

⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction Volume 1.*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 93.

⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 1977), 27.

⁸⁶ Norms are also established through the bodily experience of the visitor, as the exhibition regulates the body of the visitor. Having to follow the indirect and direct museum outline, view history in the order presented, and adjust to the rules how to behave in the exhibition space, the expository agent regulates, trains and educates the visitor to perceive and experience history of the Holocaust in a specific fashion. Tony Bennett, "Civic Seeing," 263-281. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*.

⁸⁷ One situation where this has happened was the reply of veterans to the Enola Gay exhibit. From the many works that focus on it see, for example: Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, ed. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996); Bryan Hubbard and Marouf A. Hasian, "The Generic Roots of the Enola Gay Controversy," *Political Communication* 15 (1998): 497-513.

⁸⁸ Hall, "The Work of Representation", 56.

By addressing Holocaust representations instead of Holocaust memory, I interrogate and reflect upon the claimed congruence of the Holocaust with its representations. In the 1970s and 1980s, the issue of representation was a key debate within cultural studies. Despite this, historical writing leaves the term undefined. Most historians use it carelessly, as though its meaning were self-evident. Representation is the construction of meaning in and through languages, be it in textual, visual or material form. An object, the Holocaust, is represented to a subject, the visitor, by means of signs that describe, depict or display it, the exhibition. These signs are bound to a set of signifying practices and systems of representation that render them intelligible, and that are tied to the specific cultures that employ and decode them. A representation can either call up an object through likeness with it, or stand for it by symbolizing it.⁸⁹ As a result, the term representation is linked with either the imitation or the substitution of an object, and inheres a philosophical debate about representationalism – the discussion of whether and to what extent the idea of an object is distinct from the external object. The representation of the Holocaust either imitates the past or symbolises it. The expository agent in the museum has a mental image of what the Holocaust is, and how it is conceptualised. This mental image is expressed by the exhibition. The object, here the Holocaust, then has three aspects: its existence, its image and its mental image.⁹⁰ The museum aims to express the expository agent's imagination of the Holocaust. Thinking about representation, we can reflect on the question of whether our mental image of the Holocaust and the representation we establish for it are distinct from the Holocaust itself as a reality.

Contrary to this, most museums present their speech acts, their representations, as objective truth. They claim to show the past as it was, implying that their representation re-presents the past as it was. This disables the visitor from thinking for herself and from forming an independent opinion about the past represented. The Holocaust exists in the present only through the primary sources left behind. If the museum were to represent the sources as such, as relics of a reality no longer within

⁸⁹ Hall, "The Work of Representation", 16-17.

⁹⁰ The term representation contains the word present, presupposing the presence of something, i.e. the object, and the presence of someone, i.e. the viewing subject for whom the representation is made, who perceives it. David Summers, "Representation," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3-19, 3. I would add that this present also indicates the place and time in which this representation takes place.

reach, the visitor could appreciate how interpreting those sources can create a mental image about the Holocaust. Representing the sources that have led to the formulation of a 'truth' about the Holocaust would make the gap between the reality and its representation visible. A museum could display Holocaust sources in a transparent way to reveal the subjectivity of their own speech act and so grant the visitor space to construct her own mental image of the Holocaust. The Holocaust included events and dynamics beyond our full understanding, which we should have the courage to acknowledge. Museums, just like any other meaning-making institutions, face the post-modern challenge to include self-reflection, polyvocality, incorporation of hybrid and syncretic objects, and the rights of those represented to have a say in their representation.⁹¹

For the following analysis, I consciously chose to examine museums that I value. I consider their presentations not only to be representative for their respective countries, but successful mediators of an ethically correct understanding of the Holocaust. All of these museums present narratives that are up to date with current scholarship, are empathetic to the victims of the Holocaust, and directly confront responsibility for it. Nevertheless, all these great and dedicated institutions present their narratives as the objective truth.⁹² None of the museums elaborate upon the genealogy of the primary sources displayed. The three museums that show the photograph of the prisoner from Ebensee do not discuss how or why the photograph was taken. The visitor learns very little about the photograph on display and the person it depicts. It is not that the photograph does not show a Hungarian Jew, a Jewish forced labourer, or a representative of humanity for that matter – all of these narratives are justified to some extent – they are closer however, to the mental image of the curator than to the past.

⁹¹ I follow what became known as New Museology in the 1970s in asserting these proposals. Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London: Reaction Books, 1989). The first criticisms of museum exhibitions were made about anthropological museums and their racist treatment of other, non-western cultures. For an overview of new museology and its critique see: Amira J. M. Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange* (New York: Cambridge University, 2005).

⁹² As I will show later, this also applies to the Zeitgeschichte Museum, although it does at least relativise the knowledge it presents as being the version currently accredited.

2 Documenting history: Holocaust representations in Austria

2.1 The self-reflective nation: Austria and its acclaimed successful reconciliation with Holocaust history

Out of the way of most tourist routes, the *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee* (Contemporary History Museum Ebensee) in Ebensee in Upper Austria has a permanent exhibition devoted to the period from 1918 to 1955. The exhibition aims to present the wider developments that led to and resulted from National Socialism in Austria in general, and to represent the forced labour camp that was in Ebensee in particular. For the region, the museum is a principal institution, providing education to numerous school groups, individuals from the region and tourists visiting Upper Austria. The museum also manages the site of the former forced labour camp, where it oversees the memorial, the cemetery and organises commemorative events. Museum employees are in contact with survivors of the camp and their relatives, and aid the organisation of their visits to the concentration camp memorial and to the cemetery. With the memorial sites located at and around the former camp while the museum is in the city, the Holocaust is represented differently at the two sites. For the memorial, the geographic location itself offers a link between the past and its commemoration in the present. By contrast the museum, in the centre of Ebensee, represents the Holocaust at a location distant from the sites where people suffered. Its exhibition, presented in a subdued design and in an educational tone, endeavours to convey academic knowledge to its visitors. The knowledge presented emphasises structural developments, through which the expository agent explains national history. According to the exhibition, the structures of Austrian society led to the Holocaust, and individual agents appear only at regional level, reacting to the larger structures around them.

In this chapter, I analyse the representation of the Holocaust offered by the *Zeitgeschichte Museum*. I show how the museum conceptualises history as a chain of events determined by structural developments, largely uninfluenced by individual people. Although the exhibition presents the regional population as complicit in the

Holocaust, the nature of the population's engagement in the Holocaust remains vague. The victims against whom their actions were directed are completely absent in the exhibition. This is most evident in the display of a prisoner uniform from a concentration camp that I will analyse in detail. A widely available primary source, museums throughout Europe display prisoner uniforms. Many of my findings about the uniforms can be generalised to prisoner uniforms displayed elsewhere. At the end of my case study, I address the museum's representation of men and women in the resistance and the gender constructions inherent in this representation. It is here that the expository agent presents historical agency in its classic form, wherein individual people act according to their opinions, and their actions influence their surroundings.

Before exploring my case study however, I describe how Austria came to terms with its past after the Second World War, and outline the country's museum landscape, in order to contextualise the Zeitgeschichte Museum's exhibition. Addressing the dominant discourse in Austria, I show that the Zeitgeschichte Museum exemplifies the way that Austrian museums' Holocaust representations respond to a moral imperative to commemorate the Holocaust as an integral part of Austrian history, while nonetheless mobilising worldwide discourse formations within these representations.

2.1.1 Coming to terms with the past: the impact of the Holocaust in Austria

Incorporated into Germany in March 1938, Austria's Holocaust history is exceptional in that it closely mirrors the developments in Germany. Before the incorporation, the Austro-fascist regime of 1933-1938 had already begun persecuting the opposition and after March 1938, persecution began immediately of people defined as racially inferior or excluded from the national body for other reasons. The legal discriminations already in place in Germany became binding at once and the expropriation began equally quickly. The Jewish population was registered and forced to move to Vienna, where 92% of all Austrian Jews already lived.⁹³ In the first few years, the state forced Jews to emigrate, dispossessing them at the same time. The concentration camp system was extended across Austria; the concentration camp in Mauthausen was built in August 1938, for example, and the Roma camp in Lackenbach in November 1940.

⁹³ Gudrun Exner and Peter Schimany, "Amtliche Statistik und Judenverfolgung. Die Volkszählung von 1939 in Österreich und die Erfassung der österreichischen Juden," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32, no.1 (2006): 93-118, 97.

Medical patients were also murdered in Austrian institutions just as they were in Germany. The non-persecuted Austrian population not only largely accepted the persecution, but also often actively participated in and benefitted from it. Since Austria was central to war production, forced labour became key after 1939 with many forced labourers soon imprisoned and exploited in a tight net of sub-camps in Austria. Deportations of Jews from Austria to ghettos and concentrations camps in Eastern Europe began already in 1939 and in 1940, but became systematic from February 1941 onwards. Systematic deportations of Roma and Sinti, who had already been encamped and forced to work within Austria, took place between December 1941 and March 1942.⁹⁴ With the exception of those who managed to emigrate, chances of survival were slim for Austrian Jews, and two thirds of all Sinti and Roma living in Austria were murdered.⁹⁵

The timeline of how Austrians came to terms with their past is similar to that of Europe as a whole.⁹⁶ One obvious difference is that Austrians had to distance themselves not only from their political alignment with Germany, but also from their own German culture.⁹⁷ Occupied by the Allies after 1945, a principal interest of politicians in the emerging Austria was to regain sovereign status. To achieve this, politicians used the Moscow Declaration as a reference point.⁹⁸ The declaration – published on November 1st 1943 by the American, British and Soviet foreign ministers – named Austria the first victim of Nazi Germany.⁹⁹ It also held Austrians responsible for aiding

⁹⁴ Erika Thurner, “Nazi and Postwar Policy against Roma and Sinti in Austria,” in *The Roma: A Minority in Europe. Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, ed. by Romi Stauber and Raphael Vago (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 55-67; Barbara Rieger, *Roma und Sinti in Österreich nach 1945* (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2003), 48-49.

⁹⁵ Of the roughly 200,000 people registered as Jews according to the Nuremberg laws in Austria in 1938, 67,000 were deported, at least 65,500 of whom died. By 1942 approx. 128,000 had left the country, often through forced emigration, while 6,500 survived in Vienna and 700 in hiding. Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust. A History* (New York: Norton, 2003), 121. Of the approx. 11,000 Roma and Sinti, at least 9,000 died in the persecutions. Other victims in Austria included medical patients, national minorities such as the Slovenes, Jehovah’s witnesses, homosexuals, forced labourers from Eastern Europe, Prisoners of War and people who resisted.

⁹⁶ Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 61.

⁹⁷ Peter Utgaard, *Remembering and Forgetting Nazism. Education, National Identity, and the Victim Myth in Postwar Austria* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), 12-13.

⁹⁸ Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, “Das Gedenkjahr 2005 und die österreichischen Entschädigungsleistungen,” in *Erinnerungskultur. Jahrbuch 2006, Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*, ed. by Christine Schindler (Vienna: Lit, 2006), 23-36, 23.

⁹⁹ Robert Keyserlingk has successfully shown that the declaration was thought to strengthen a possible uprising in Austria and not intended as a long-term policy for Austria. Robert Keyserlingk, *Austria in World War II. An Anglo-American Dilemma* (Montreal: McGill Queens University, 1988), 190.

and supporting the criminal German regime. Leaving the latter aside, Austrian politicians used this declaration to portray the country as a victim from 1938 to 1945, arguing that Austria as a state could not be held liable.¹⁰⁰ Austrians presented themselves internationally as having been tyrannised by Nazi-Germany, declaring that all Austrians – including former National socialists – had been victim. The claim was, that Austrians had been seduced and deceived by the Germans, to whom the responsibility for the time from 1938-1945 was externalised.¹⁰¹ In the State Treaty of 1955 that re-established Austria as a sovereign state, this victim status became official without any mention of Austria's responsibility. It became Austria's founding myth and the substantiation of Austria's relationship to its own past for the next three decades.¹⁰² The victim status enabled and stabilised a previously nonexistent Austrian national identity.¹⁰³

Since the Austrian state and its citizens did not officially accept responsibility for the time from 1938 to 1945, denazification, compensation and restitution were inadequate from the start. An antifascist consensus did exist between the leading party members, but party politics and competition for voters, the fight for independence, and the emerging Cold War soon became more relevant.¹⁰⁴ The state began denazification, but the officials either made significant exceptions or interpreted the laws against Austrian perpetrators very leniently. City officials exempted many former national socialists from central registration, which meant that they did not even appear in the register used to regulate denazification. Lay courts responsible for the prosecution of

¹⁰⁰ Heidmarie Uhl, "From Victim Myth to Co-Responsibility Thesis. Nazi Rule, World War II, and the Holocaust in Austrian Memory," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. by Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2006), 40-72, 41. The arguments are identical to those presented in her German article. Heidmarie Uhl, "Das 'erste' Opfer - Das österreichische Gedächtnis und seine Transformation in der Zweiten Republik," in *Die Lebendigkeit der Geschichte. (Dis-)Kontinuitäten in Diskursen über den Nationalsozialismus*, ed. by Eleonore Lappin and Bernhard Schneider (St. Ingbert: Röhring Universitätsverlag, 2001), 30-46.

¹⁰¹ Uhl, "From Victim Myth," 44-45, 48, 53.

¹⁰² Erika Weinzierl, "'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' in Österreich," in *Vorurteil und Rassenhaß. Antisemitismus in den faschistischen Bewegungen Europas*, ed. by Hermann Graml, Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzle (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), 391-410, 393. Utgaard argues that the victim myth endured so long because Austrian post-war identity was based on it. Utgaard, *Remembering and Forgetting*, 13.

¹⁰³ Uhl, "From Victim Myth", 43. Some scholars see the national identity as a positive and important outcome of the victim myth. Utgaard, *Remembering and Forgetting*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ At least the leading party members after 1945 had opposed National Socialism. Robert Knight, "Denazification and Integration in the Austrian Province of Carinthia," *The Journal of Modern history* 79, no 3 (2007): 572-612, 587, 593-594.

Austrians not defined as major perpetrators excused significant numbers of people early on.¹⁰⁵ State officials pursued denazification unwillingly and hesitantly, and the Allies often had to exert political pressure on Austrian politicians to push denazification ahead.¹⁰⁶ The state granted compensation as relief, as aid, or on moral grounds.¹⁰⁷ The provisional government passed an early law in July 1945, the *Opferfürsorgegesetz*, which stated that victims who had actively resisted against National Socialism would receive social aid.¹⁰⁸ The law initially excluded victims of racial persecution, but was modified in 1947, to redefine people persecuted on grounds of race as people who had resisted.¹⁰⁹ This exclusion is symptomatic of the law, which persistently denied access to several victim groups, had complicated procedures and required applicants to prove their persecution.¹¹⁰ The most prominent victim groups excluded by the law

¹⁰⁵ Austrian politicians did try to use denazification to prove that the country could deal with its own past adequately. Sabine Loitfellner, "Hitlers erstes und letztes Opfer? Zwischen 'Anschluss' und Auschwitz-Prozess. Zum Umgang Österreichs mit seiner NS-Vergangenheit," in *Kriegserfahrung und nationale Identität in Europa nach 1945. Erinnerung, Säuberungsprozesse und nationales Gedächtnis*, ed. by Kerstin von Lingen (Paderborn/München/Wien: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 155-156. A concise overview of the early denazification is given by Knight, "Denazification and Integration". Knight also provides a very interesting perspective on the impact of the homeland ideology. For an overview on the lay courts see: Elissa Mailänder Koslov, "Die juristische Ahndung von NS-Verbrechen in Österreich. Ein Überblick," in *Abgeschlossene Kapitel? Zur Geschichte der Konzentrationslager und der NS-Prozesse*, ed. by Sabine Moller, Miriam Rürup and Christel Trouvé (Tübingen: Diskord 2002), 200-218, 208; Claudia Kuretsidis-Haider, 'Das Volk sitzt zu Gericht' *Österreichische Justiz und NS-Verbrechen am Beispiel der Engerau-Prozesse 1945-1954* (Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen: Studien Verlag 2006), 40-45. The different lay courts are compared in several articles in the anthology: Claudia Kuretsidis-Haider, Heimo Halbrainer, ed., *Kriegsverbrechen, NS-Gewaltverbrechen und die europäische Strafjustiz von Nürnberg bis Den Haag* (Graz: Clio 2007).

¹⁰⁶ An extensive account on compensation is given by Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, *Wiedergutmachung – kein Thema. Österreich und die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, (Wien: Löcker, 1993); Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, "Die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus und die sogenannte Wiedergutmachung," in *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich. Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Emmerich Tálos, Hernst Hanisch, Wolfgang Neugebauer and Reiner Sieder (Vienna: obv&hpt, 2000), 884-901.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Knight, "Restitution and Legitimacy in Post-War Austria 1945–1953," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 36, no. 1 (1991): 413-441, 416.

¹⁰⁸ The law distinguished between victims who received an attestation of their victim status from the state and were eligible for compensation, and those who received a victim passport granting certain privileges.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Albrich, "'Es gibt keine jüdische Frage'. Zur Aufrechterhaltung des österreichischen Opfermythos," in *Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust. Europa - USA - Israel* ed. by Rolf Steininger (Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau 1994) 147-166, 152. After racial persecutions had been included, individual payments began in 1952. Thurner, "Nazi and Postwar Policy," 62-63.

¹¹⁰ The law had to be amended over 30 times in order to compensate for all its shortcomings. Without space here to discuss the law in detail, I merely note that persecution was understood to mean imprisonment in a concentration camp until 1961 when its exclusionary premises were criticised. In 1961 the definitions were widened to also include people forced into exile and hiding. Weinzierl, "'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'," 397.

were Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, and people persecuted because they had been defined as asocial. After 1945, the state continued to criminalise and discriminate against all three groups. The Austrian government only began recognising the Roma and Sinti as victims after 1961, with full recognition granted as late as 1988.¹¹¹ Restitution, as difficult a topic for the provisional government as compensation, was not pursued actively by the state and, where implemented, the aim was to retrieve state property rather than acknowledge the rights of the individual victims.¹¹²

Like elsewhere, the Cold War changed how both the Allies and Austrian politicians dealt with National Socialism. From 1948, a policy of reintegration and amnesties was introduced.¹¹³ The official parties wooed and integrated former Nazis from 1949 onwards, hoping to win them as voters.¹¹⁴ The great coalitions, which ruled Austria until 1966, and the proportional system forced the parties to cooperate with one another. As a result politicians avoided sensitive issues, and particularly ignored the presence of perpetrators within the parties.¹¹⁵ After Austria signed its state treaty in 1955, the commitment to punish national socialist crimes declined and serious investigations and trials only took place when the Allies or individuals within

¹¹¹ Roma and Sinti continued to be stigmatised and criminalised for supposedly failing to integrate or being aversive to work, which, according to the state, was why they had been imprisoned during National Socialism. The Roma and Sinti camps in Salzburg-Maxglan and Lackenbach were only considered concentration camps after 1961, and even then they were seen as less significant than other concentration camps, and compensation for imprisonment there was lower. Rieger, *Roma und Sinti in Österreich*, 168; Thurner, "Nazi and Postwar Policy." If crimes against Roma and Sinti were brought to court at all, they often ended with acquittals. Susanne Uslu-Pauer, "'Keine Chance auf eine gerechte Behandlung vor Gericht' Analyse von Volksgerichtsverfahren wegen NS-Verbrechen an Roma und Sinti," in *Kriegsverbrecherprozesse in Österreich. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. by Heimo Halbrainer (Graz: Clio 2003), 99-116. 99-116; Rieger, *Roma und Sinti in Österreich*. The demeaning application process for compensation is described by: Thurner, "Nazi and Postwar Policy," 62-63. Homosexuals and people criminalised for being asocial did not receive any compensation until the national compensation fund in 1995. This remains particularly true for prostitution, which until today has not really been given significant attention. Rieger, *Roma und Sinti in Österreich*, 157.

¹¹² The laws were vague and did not specify Jewish property. Knight, "Restitution and Legitimacy," 416, 419. The goal was to return property seized during the Dollfuss and Schuschnigg regime by the Germans. Property stolen from Jews was returned hesitantly and only when there was significant pressure. Maria Sporrer, "Verspätete Erinnerungspolitik in Österreich," in *Erinnerungsmanagement. Systemtransformation und Vergangenheitspolitik im internationalen Vergleich*, ed. by Joachim Landkammer, Thomas Noetzel and Walther Ch. Zimmerli (München: Walter Fink Verlag, 2006), 83-98, 87-89.

¹¹³ Loitfellner, "Hitlers erstes und letztes Opfer?," 155-156.

¹¹⁴ Uhl, "Das 'erste' Opfer," 39; Anton Pelinka, "Österreich 1938-1945: Opfer, Täter, Mitläufer," *Dachauer Hefte* 23 (2007): 73-85, 80.

¹¹⁵ Robert Knight, "Contours of Memory in Post-Nazi Austria," *Patterns of Prejudice* 34, no. 4 (2000): 5-12, 10. Knight points out that the perceived necessity to reintegrate former Nazis was more often assumed than substantiated.

Austria pressured for them.¹¹⁶ When the state abolished the lay courts, the prosecutions of most perpetrators were stalled for the next two decades.¹¹⁷ The state also largely deferred, or where possible denied, claims made by Holocaust victims.¹¹⁸ A general amnesty was passed in 1957, bringing the release of convicted perpetrators, and compensation of some former national socialists.¹¹⁹

While the resistance had been commemorated from 1945 to 1948, former national socialists and soldiers were celebrated and war memorials erected throughout the country after 1948.¹²⁰ The memorials served as patriotic sites, memorialising a national identity built upon a rural and patriotic Austria. The resistance was referenced via what Heidemarie Uhl has termed “double speak”.¹²¹ Internationally, the resistance was claimed to prove Austria’s victim status and hence to legitimise Austria as a state. At the same time, within Austria the resistance was marginalised and devalued by the label communist.¹²² Most people called for the reintegration of the old elite, celebrated the soldiers as war heroes, and claimed the general population had been innocent. The majority of the population did not see the Allies as liberators, but as an unjust occupation, sometimes even equated with National Socialism.¹²³ Antisemitism, which had never ceased to exist in Austria, soon resurfaced in debates about National Socialism in Austria, or ones that discussed Jews living within and outside Austria.¹²⁴

As the memory culture in Europe began to change in the 1960s, Austria was also affected, even if slowly at first. New evidence prompted new trials in Austria but all prosecutions of the perpetrators ended in acquittals, and in 1975 the government

¹¹⁶ Loitfellner, “Hitlers erstes und letztes Opfer?,” 159.

¹¹⁷ Now national socialist crimes were tried by the regular courts in Austria. Mailänder Koslov, “Die juristische Ahndung,” 208-210.

¹¹⁸ Uhl, “Das ‘erste’ Opfer,” 33-36.

¹¹⁹ Albrich, “‘Es gibt keine jüdische Frage,’” 163.

¹²⁰ Some concentration camp cemeteries became war cemeteries. As I will discuss below, the cemetery in Ebensee was demolished and the dead there hastily reburied. Albrich, “‘Es gibt keine jüdische Frage,’” 158.

¹²¹ Uhl, “From Victim Myth,” 50-53.

¹²² Loitfellner, “Hitlers erstes und letztes Opfer?,” 157.

¹²³ Uhl, “From Victim Myth,” 45-46.

¹²⁴ Albrich, “‘Es gibt keine jüdsche Frage,’” 153.

halted them completely. Former national socialists continued to be honoured and anti-semitic positions dominated in both the public and private sphere.¹²⁵ Despite this, from the 1960s onwards survivors, journalists, artists and writers addressed National Socialism and challenged the status quo.¹²⁶ Their struggles laid the groundwork for the turning point that came in the late 1980s, when a new generation began questioning Austrians' stance towards National Socialism.¹²⁷ A slow change ensued: victim organisations gained power, new scholarship focused on history of the 20th century, and grassroots organisations successfully conducted local studies of National Socialism and commemorated the resistance fighters.

The role of the *Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes* (Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance, DÖW) in inciting these changes cannot be overestimated. Founded in 1963, Heidemarie Uhl describes the DÖW as “the institutional crystallization point for the preservation of the memory of the Austrian struggle for freedom.”¹²⁸ The DÖW united the victim organisations that had been split along party lines, collected a substantial number of documents about National Socialism in general and the resistance in particular, and fostered research on National Socialism.¹²⁹ The DÖW was one of the first institutions that readdressed the resisters in Austria and the people forced into exile. Explicit perpetrator studies are a more recent development, but the institution initiated the representation of individual narratives of those oppressed and persecuted, and also showed the perpetrators responsible for

¹²⁵ Bertrand Perz, “Österreich,” in *Verbrechen erinnern. Die Auseinandersetzung mit Holocaust und Völkermord*, ed. by Norbert Frei and Volkhard Knigge (München: Beck, 2002), 150-162, 153-154; Loitfellner, “Hitlers erstes und letztes Opfer?,” 163-164. The institution to investigate war crimes in Austria, founded in 1963, was largely ineffective. Mailänder Koslov, “Die juristische Ahndung,” 209; Loitfellner, “Hitlers erstes und letztes Opfer?,” 160.

¹²⁶ Gerhard Botz, “Nachhall und Modifikationen (1994-2007) Rückblick auf die Waldheim-Kontroversen und deren Folgen,” in *Kontroversen um Österreichs Zeitgeschichte*, ed. By Gerhard Botz (Frankfurt/M./New York: Campus, 2008), 574-635, 567. Cases in point for this struggle are the 1964 scandal surrounding the criticism of the antisemitic writings of Viennese professor Taras Borodajkewycz, or Chancellor Bruno Kreisky's condemnation of Simon Wiesenthal in 1975 when Wiesenthal revealed Friedrich Peter's SS-membership. Anton Pelinka, “Die Wahrnehmung der Shoah in Österreich,” in *Was bleibt von der Shoah?*, ed. by Maria Halmer, Anton Pelinka and Karl Semlitsch (Wien: Braunmüller, 2010), 71-86, 79-80; Sporrer, “Verspätete Erinnerungspolitik,” 91.

¹²⁷ Botz, “Nachhall und Modifikationen,” 600.

¹²⁸ Uhl, “From Victim Myth,” 58.

¹²⁹ Bertrand Perz, “Die Ausstellung in den KZ-Gedenkstätten Mauthausen, Gusen und Melk,” in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich. Museen - Gedenkstätten - Ausstellungen*, ed. by Heidemarie Uhl and Dirk Rupno (Wien: Böhlau, 2010), 87-116, 97.

this.¹³⁰ The centre also addressed neo-Nazi activities in Austria after 1945 and continues to do so. Before the DÖW, research on National Socialism was extremely limited and the Holocaust in particular was largely ignored.¹³¹

Around the same time as the DÖW, the Austrian Society for Contemporary History was founded in 1963 followed by the Institute for Contemporary History at the University of Vienna in 1966. Through the work of scholars at these two institutions contemporary history, previously not even pursued at university level, became accepted at most Austrian universities by the 1970s. National Socialism was not a major focus until the late 1980s, but individual scholars researched it.¹³² The Institute for Contemporary History first turned to the *Anschluss*, the resistance movement, and the re-founding of Austria in the Second Republic.¹³³ In the 1970s, intellectuals debated problems of the First Republic, the Corporative State as well as the suppression of the Revolt of 1934.¹³⁴ Parallel to academic endeavours, regional initiatives to research and commemorate contemporary history emerged throughout Austria. They focused on the history of the working class, daily life and cultural history and were the first groups to commemorate resistance fighters at a regional level.

In the 1970s and 1980s, victim associations, the DÖW and regional initiatives resurrected the Austrian resistance that until then had been marginalised if not denied outright.¹³⁵ The victim myth was not seriously questioned for another twenty years, but a different commemorative practice emerged nonetheless. Commemorating the resistance, Austrians presented their country as a nation with a strong and relevant resistance movement that had been suppressed and persecuted by National Socialism.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Sporrer, "Verspätete Erinnerungspolitik," 86.

¹³¹ Perz, "Die Ausstellung in den KZ-Gedenkstätten," 96.

¹³² Monika Sommer, "Experiment und Leerstelle. Zur Musealisierung der Zeitgeschichte in den österreichischen Landesmuseen," in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich. Museen - Gedenkstätten - Ausstellungen*, ed. by Heidemarie Uhl and Dirk Rupno (Wien: Böhlau, 2010), 313-335, 317.

¹³³ Ernst Hanisch, "Von der Opfererzählung zum schnellen Moralisieren. Interpretationen des Nationalsozialismus in Österreich," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 31 (2005): 255-265, 257.

¹³⁴ Uhl, "From Victim Myth," 59.

¹³⁵ Hanisch, "Von der Opfererzählung," 3. A self-reflective view on historians' own institutionalisation and the Austrian position towards National Socialism is given by Gerhard Botz, "Krisen der Österreichischen Zeitgeschichte," in *Kontroversen um Österreichs Zeitgeschichte*, ed. By Gerhard Botz (Frankfurt/M./New York: Campus 2008), 16-76.

¹³⁶ Uhl, "From Victim Myth," 58.

The resistance was celebrated alongside the cult of soldiers and former national socialists, but alone the existence of alternative narratives challenged the dominant interpretation of the past.¹³⁷ Within accounts of the resistance, perpetrators did appear and this challenged the perception of the broader population that former national socialists had only done their duty, and that Austria was not accountable for what happened. As well as the resistance fighters, Jewish victims increasingly gained attention from the 1960 to the 1980s.

In the late 1980s, common perceptions about Austria under National Socialism changed radically. During the candidacy of Kurt Waldheim for the office of federal president in 1986, journalists publicised extensively about Waldheim's past and the fact that he had hidden his membership in a national socialist student organisation and his engagement as an officer in Yugoslavia from 1942-1944.¹³⁸ After public outcry, he responded that he had only done his duty and not only had not committed any crimes, but had not even known about them. He won the elections, but the affair led to international protest and, especially after the United States and Israel forbade him entry to their countries, Waldheim was largely isolated internationally. Even though a historical commission later concluded that Waldheim had not personally committed war crimes, the affair incited a large debate within Austria, resulting in recognition of Austrian involvement in the crimes under National Socialism.¹³⁹ The position represented by Waldheim and those who had defended him came to be increasingly questioned, leading to a paradigm change by 1988. The unreserved participation of many Austrians in the crimes committed during National Socialism became obvious.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, antisemitic statements and the denigration of the victims by the population and politicians during the Waldheim controversy revealed Austria's post-war

¹³⁷ Heidemarie Uhl points out that until the 1980s only the soldiers killed in combat had been commemorated at the provincial level. Uhl, "From Victim Myth," 56-57.

¹³⁸ The Austrian newspaper *Der Standard* first noted in 1971 that Kurt Waldheim had been a member of a mounted national socialist unit, and Simon Wiesenthal reported in 1979 that he had been a lieutenant in the Balkans. Until his candidacy, Kurt Waldheim had been silent about his past.

¹³⁹ The academic positions are in part collected in the anthology: Gerhard Botz and Gerhard Sprengnagel, ed., *Kontroversen um Österreichs Zeitgeschichte*, second edition (Frankfurt/M./New York: Campus 2008), first published in 1987.

¹⁴⁰ Loitfellner, "Hitlers erstes und letztes Opfer?," 165.

attitudes and was harshly criticised internationally.¹⁴¹ The debate consolidated the changing memory culture in Austria at roughly the same time as the memory culture was changing across Europe.¹⁴²

In the 1990s a new mode to address the Holocaust developed. Chancellor Franz Vranitzky and Waldheim's successor Thomas Klestil both proclaimed that Austria had been partly responsible for crimes committed during National Socialism.¹⁴³ The victim myth thus became modified, and a new official narrative emerged.¹⁴⁴ In the new narrative the state is held to account for the active collaboration and willing participation of Austrians in the crimes against humanity. In the 1990s, the government passed several laws that turned such moral statements into legally binding commitments.¹⁴⁵ The state established the National Fund in 1995 to compensate victims who had been ignored until then. Institutions returned stolen and expropriated goods, especially artwork, and the state together with industry compensated forced labourers.¹⁴⁶ These proceeds led to debates that included the so-called forgotten victims, especially forced labourers.¹⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the persecution of Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, Slovenes or Jehovah's Witnesses remain a marginal topic to this day.¹⁴⁸ The resistance fighters,

¹⁴¹ Israel removed their diplomats, France demanded visas from Austrian citizens and Waldheim was put on the watch-list of the United States, effectively limiting his travel to the USA, Canada, and Israel for life. Weinzierl, "Vergangenheitsbewältigung," 401.

¹⁴² Botz, "Nachhall und Modifikationen," 596-579. Both Botz and Anton Pelinka rightly point out that this paradigm change happened simultaneously worldwide, with Austria simply coming to it a little later than other countries. Anton Pelinka, "Österreich 1938-1945," 78-79. For an English overview of the debate, see: Richard Mitten, *The Politics of Antisemitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria* (Boulder/San Francisco/Oxford: Westview, 1992).

¹⁴³ Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, "Das Gedenkjahr 2005 und die österreichischen Entschädigungsleistungen," in *Erinnerungskultur. Jahrbuch 2006, Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*, ed. by Christine Schindler (Wien: Lit, 2006), 23-36.

¹⁴⁴ Albrich, "'Es gibt keine jüdische Frage,'" 165; Cornelius Lenguth, "Ende der Externalisierung? Die parteipolitische Auseinandersetzung um die NS-Vergangenheit in Österreich seit der Waldheim-Affäre," in *Diktaturüberwindung in Europa. Neue nationale und transnationale Perspektiven*, ed. by Birgit Hofmann, ed. al (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2010), 117-131, 120. Scholars still debate whether the victim myth has been completely abolished or just modified. I believe that this depends on the particular agent talking. However, the victim myth has been so widely criticised that these days it is not socially acceptable in most circles.

¹⁴⁵ Loitfellner, "Hitlers erstes und letztes Opfer?," 166.

¹⁴⁶ For a brief explanation of the developments that enabled changes to the restitution policy see: Robert Knight, "The Road from the Taborstrass: Austrian Restitution Revisited," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 51, no. 1 (2006): 237-263.

¹⁴⁷ Florian Freund, "Zwangsarbeit in Österreich 1939-1945," in *Vergessene Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. by Rolf Steininger (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2000), 99-134. Freund argues that it was only legal and political pressure from the US that led to the payments and official recognition.

¹⁴⁸ Thurner, "Nazi and Postwar Policy," 55.

always present, albeit to different degrees, are still remembered – but their commemoration is partly a remnant of former commemorative practices.

In addition to compensation and restitution, academic research flourished and still does. Becoming common practice worldwide in the 2000s, analyses of the crimes committed during National Socialism were conducted by state commissions.¹⁴⁹ The sophisticated results often failed to supply the exact numbers asked for, but did provide extensive historical analyses.¹⁵⁰ Today all humanities departments at universities in Austria study National Socialism, often supported by significant funding. In keeping with international trends, perpetrator history rules large, but a new approach to the victims – one that empathises with the victims' perspective without turning them into heroes – also exists.¹⁵¹ Last, but not least, scholars also extensively analyse Austrian memory.

2.1.2 Dominant discourse in Austria today

The dominant discourse in Austria today treats National Socialism as an integral part of the Austrian past. Instead of being Germany's victims, Austrians are now seen to have been complicit with Germany. Austrians occupied central positions, actively participated in and even pushed the murders ahead. For this, the dominant discourse believes society needs to take responsibility. Positions differ across the individual regions in Austria and according to people's political positions. National politics and cultural production, however, largely renounce statements that evade responsibility. The population is held accountable, if not for crimes it committed, then for its tolerance of those crimes, indifference to the suffering they produced, and despoilment of

¹⁴⁹ A brief introduction on the commissions in English is given by Bailer-Galanda and Brigitte Eva Blimlinger, "The Austrian Historical Commission: International Background, Motives, Results and Impact," in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria. A Reassessment*, ed. by Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka and Alexander Lassner (New Brunswick/London: Transaction, 2003), 218-228.

¹⁵⁰ Botz, "Nachhall und Modifikationen," 608-611. On the commission for research addressing the restitution process, founded in 1998, see also: Knight, "The Road from the Taborstrasse," 239-241.

¹⁵¹ Botz, "Nachhall und Modifikationen," 613-615. Botz argues that research on Austrian National Socialism partly loses sight of larger theoretical and contextual questions. Similarly, Hanisch criticises that it is not clear what will be done conceptually with the many new findings that have emerged, and which he evaluates in part as sensationalist. Hanisch, "Von der Opfererzählung," 262. Elissa Mailänder Koslov states that while perpetrator history receives a great deal of attention, not enough studies focus on regular populations and their involvement. Mailänder Koslov, "Die juristische Ahndung," 218.

the victims.¹⁵² Before the 1980s, the Austrian population during the Second World War was portrayed as rural, traditional, conservative, patriotic and Catholic, as well as oppressed by National Socialism.¹⁵³ Today that population is no longer conceived of as oppressed, but since the rest of the list remains, so do certain problematic notions. In general, however, Austrians are held responsible for the past and continuity is established between the crimes committed, the Austrian perpetrators who committed them, and the generation born after the war. This recognition of responsibility leads to the acceptance of moral, material and juridical responsibility.¹⁵⁴

With the victim thesis no longer viable, a new “co-responsibility thesis” emerged.¹⁵⁵ According to this thesis, Austria’s history during National Socialism is a “negative memory”: a difficult time that needs to be remembered and commemorated as such.¹⁵⁶ Antisemitism in Austria is, at least on the surface, no longer tolerable. Public opinion understands antisemitism as an ideology that strengthened the close ties to Germany, turned the population into willing persecutors, and prevented them from feeling compassion for the victims. National Socialism in Austria has become part of the official memory and is publicly addressed through symbolic and material measures.¹⁵⁷ Here Austrian memory culture reflects the research on perpetrator history and memory that is currently dominant in Europe.¹⁵⁸ While a large percentage of the population condemns antisemitism and right-wing positions, this only applies with respect to the past. The right-wing Austrian party FPÖ, racist attacks in Austria or subtly antisemitic statements are far from unanimously condemned.

Partly underlying the co-responsibility thesis is a negative evaluation of how Austrians dealt with National Socialism before the late 1980s. Many Austrians see this negative position as corrected, so that a positive identification of Austrians with their past becomes possible. Public opinion now understands the 1950s and the decades after as a time when Austrians were ignorant of their own past and tried to reject all

¹⁵² Uhl, “Das ‘erste’ Opfer,” 43.

¹⁵³ Uhl, “From Victim Myth,” 45

¹⁵⁴ Botz, “Nachhall und Modifikationen,” 604-605.

¹⁵⁵ Uhl, “From Victim Myth,” 63.

¹⁵⁶ Uhl, “From Victim Myth,” 64.

¹⁵⁷ Uhl, “Das ‘erste’ Opfer,” 44-45.

¹⁵⁸ This dominance is closely linked to the role Germany plays within Holocaust research and its representation. It is striking how closely aligned German and Austrian representations are currently, re-emphasising the joint traditions.

confrontation that might have held them accountable for it. There is a consensus that the victim myth was used by Austrian politicians and individuals alike to deny Austrian responsibility and to avoid facing a complicated past. The assumption is that the Austrian population, especially in rural areas, held very conservative or even right-wing positions up until the 1980s. Scholars believe that this changed with the Waldheim affair, and the “paradigm change” it symbolises.¹⁵⁹ Other factors that contributed to this change; earlier debates and conflicts are not given the same attention. This silences the individuals, associations and initiatives that enabled the paradigm change. In part, these groups exist to this day but are not credited, except in their own publications. These groups and individuals paved the way for the paradigm change, but the change is often attributed solely to the Waldheim affair. Kurt Waldheim is seen to personify how Austrians dealt with their own history until the late 1980s; standing for a society that, as a whole, was ignorant about National Socialism. After Waldheim this society, again as a whole, supposedly revised its position, overhauled the victim myth – and was enlightened.¹⁶⁰ Consequently, most Austrians evaluate the way people in Austria dealt with National Socialism in the 1990s as unanimously positive. It is claimed that Austria has come to terms with its past.¹⁶¹ After the negative evaluation of the post-war times a positive identification with the “new” Austria is drawn.

Most scholars today criticise the victim myth with ease, seeing it as a perspective that has been revised for the better. While some, such as Bertrand Perz, remain sceptical as to whether externalisation has ceased and whether Austrians address the crimes today adequately, they nonetheless share the perspective that doing so would

¹⁵⁹ Ernst Hanisch, “Die Präsenz des Dritten Reiches in der Zweiten Republik” in *Inventur 45/55. Österreich im ersten Jahrzehnt der Zweiten Republik*, ed. By Wolfgang Kos and Georg Riegele (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1996), 34-50, 38; Botz, “Nachhall und Modifikationen,” 614. The term paradigm change, used by Hanisch for the turn in memory culture, is used repeatedly throughout the literature.

¹⁶⁰ Erika Weinzierl, for example states that the deficit has been largely addressed; Anton Pelinka argues that many in Austria had been unable to fully grasp the Shoah but that this has now finally happened, albeit late. Weinzierl, “‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’,” 410; Pelinka, “Die Wahrnehmung der Shoah,” 84-85.

¹⁶¹ Heidemarie Uhl, “Vom Opfermythos zur Mitverantwortungsthese: Die Transformation des österreichischen Gedächtnisses,” in *Mythen der Nationen. 1945 – Arena der Erinnerung*, ed. by Monika Flacke (Berlin: Deutsche Historisches Museum, 2004), 481-508.

mean that Austria had truly faced its past.¹⁶² This assumption establishes the admission of guilt and the commemoration of the crimes as the milestones by which a positive national identity can be drawn from the Holocaust.¹⁶³

Within this consensus, scholars agree on most historical topics. All usually accept that Austrians welcomed that Austria became part of Germany, that many Austrians participated in the Holocaust, and that the past was insufficiently addressed until the 1980s.¹⁶⁴ Less unanimous is the perspective on the time before 1938, in particular regarding the regime under Dollfuss and Schuschnigg from 1933 to 1938. Evaluations of this regime differ according to scholars' political positions. The bare facts are agreed upon; that Dollfuss dissolved parliament, suspended the constitution, and established an authoritative reign through the enactment of enabling laws. It is also undisputed that the regime fought and repressed the socialists and communists, while its oppression of the national socialists was less effective. Opinions differ when it comes to the evaluation of the nature of the regime as well the majority population's political ideology before and during it. A consensus agrees that before 1933 three camps fought each other, radicalising society. Nevertheless, historians heatedly debate the role of pan-German sentiment, antisemitism and racism within those three groups.¹⁶⁵ Scholars also disagree as to whether Dollfuss dissolved the parliament with the intention of suspending it permanently.¹⁶⁶ The strongest disagreements emerge in response to the question of whether the design of the regime was fascist or not. The positions can be roughly divided between positive or at least respectful appraisals of Dollfuss and his regime, and those that emphasise its dictatorial design. These positions are evidenced by the respective label chosen for the regime; be it Austrofascism, Austrian dictatorship, authoritative regime or corporate state.¹⁶⁷ While this debate was most heated in

¹⁶² Perz, "Österreich," 159-160.

¹⁶³ Gerhard Botz does acknowledge how current memory culture supports national identification. Botz, "Nachhall und Modifikationen," 634.

¹⁶⁴ On the consensus about the *Anschluss* see: Botz, "Nachhall und Modifikationen," 632.

¹⁶⁵ Thorpe argues that this neat allocation of ideologies to parties was created after 1945 in order to shield the remaining parties from the inconvenient truth that before 1933 nationalism and Pan-German sentiments had been a feature of nearly all Austrian parties. Julie Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist state, 1933-38* (New York: Manchester University, 2011), 6-8.

¹⁶⁶ Tim Kirk, "Fascism and Austrofascism," in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria. A Reassessment*, ed. by Günter Bischof (New Brunswick/London: Transaction Publisher, 2003), 10-31, 20.

¹⁶⁷ On these terms see: Emmerich Tálos, "Das austrofascistische Herrschaftssystem," in *Austrofascismus. Politik - Ökonomie - Kultur 1933-1938*, ed. by Emmerich Tálos, Walter Manoschek (Wien: LIT 2005), 394-420, 413-417. It is agreed that the regime called itself corporate, but did not

the 1980s, it is yet to be resolved.¹⁶⁸ Few scholars today confront it, or, for that matter, the national socialist movement from 1933-1938, Pan-German ideologies or German identity in Austria before 1938.¹⁶⁹

The acknowledgement and evaluation of a persistent extreme right-wing positions in Austria after 1945, and its relationship to National Socialism is an additional difficult issue in Austria. Dominant discourse largely ignores the traditions of the far right, despite their clear affinity with National Socialism, at times to the point of denying the Holocaust, and denigrating its victims. The positive image of Austria with its new memory culture; the seamless integration of the Holocaust into a positive Austrian identity might contribute to the population's reticence to accept that Austria needs to deal with significant antisemitism and racism to this day, as it could tarnish the positive self-image of having overcome the past.

2.1.3 Holocaust commemorations: a neutral and distanced museum presentation

In Austria today the Holocaust is commemorated in manifold ways. Public commemoration began after 1945, ceased by 1948, to proliferate again from the late 1980s onwards. Since the 1990s, local groups have lobbied for monuments, commemorative plaques, and other markers to remember the diverse victims of National Socialism and the resistance fighters. They largely achieved their goals around the year 2000. Today public plaques name individual victims, mark their previous homes and sites of congregation. A few years after the revived commemorations of the victims,

implement the structures of a corporate state. Kirk, "Fascism and Austrofascism," 25; Emmerich Tálos and Walter Manoschek, "Aspekte der politischen Struktur des Austrofascismus: (Verfassungs)Rechtlicher Rahmen - politische Wirklichkeit – Akteure," in *Austrofascismus. Politik - Ökonomie - Kultur 1933-1938*, ed. by Emmerich Tálos and Walter Manoschek (Wien: LIT, 2005), 124-160, 136. I follow Tálos and Kirk in their interpretation that the regime from 1933-38 was a dictatorship that shared crucial features with other fascist regimes, but not all of them. The prefix Austro- designates the specific Austrian components while the term fascism clearly identifies a dictatorial state.

¹⁶⁸ The debates in the 1980s led to the publication of Emmerich Tálos, Walter Manoschek, ed., *Austrofascismus. Politik - Ökonomie - Kultur 1933-1938* (Wien: LIT, 2005). The book was first published in 1984 with a new edition in 2005.

¹⁶⁹ Hans Schafranek, *Sommerfest mit Preisschießen. Die unbekannte Geschichte des NS-Putsches im Juli 1934* (Wien: Czernin Press, 2006); Thorpe, *Pan-Germanism*, 233.

people began to erect markers that pointed to the perpetrators and sites of perpetration. Today markers draw attention to deportation sites, houses from which the authorities deported the victims or property stolen by the population.¹⁷⁰

The most prominent of institutions commemorating the Holocaust, officially recognised and supported by the state, is the former concentration camp in Mauthausen. The DÖW in Vienna and individual regional museums also exhibit the Holocaust from a similar liberal and left-leaning perspective. Following the dominant discourse, most museums contextualise National Socialism within a larger historical timeline beginning with the First Republic. This historical overview tends to be presented in an academic style, often employing neutral colours, a consistent and uniform design, and a narrative with few climaxes.

In response to demands from the Soviet occupational forces, the provisional government established a memorial in Mauthausen in 1949.¹⁷¹ Mainly representing the political resistance, the representation commemorated antifascists but also addressed Catholic resisters. The camp itself was largely demolished and received little official attention until the 1960s.¹⁷² In 1964 the state turned it into a museum, making Mauthausen a central site for the commemoration of National Socialism. The former camp became the prime destination for celebrations, school education on National Socialism and commemorative practices in general, reaching the dominant position within Austrian memory culture that it still holds today.¹⁷³ With the focus on Mauthausen, official politics did not provide significant funding for commemoration at

¹⁷⁰ The memorial dedicated to the Jewish victims on the Judenplatz in Vienna, initiated by Simon Wiesenthal and unveiled in October 2000, is one example of a memorial built during this time. Weinzierl, "‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’." Another memorial, which represents perpetrators and victims, is the former headquarters of the Gestapo in Vienna, first established in 1968 and redesigned in 2011. Wolfgang Neugebauer, "Gedenkstätte für die Opfer der Gestapo Wien," in *Gedenkstätte für die Opfer der Gestapo Wien. Jahrbuch des Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*, ed. by Christine Schindler (Wien: Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, 2012).

¹⁷¹ For an overview of Mauthausen after 1945 see: Betrand Perz, *Die KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen, 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag 2006). It was one of the first official memorials in Europe located at a former concentration camp site. Perz, "Die Ausstellung in den KZ-Gedenkstätten," 89.

¹⁷² Perz, "Österreich," 155.

¹⁷³ Mauthausen also became a prime site for the emerging debates about Holocaust denial in Austria.

other sites, or even pay attention to them, until the Waldheim affair.¹⁷⁴ The first exhibition in Mauthausen opened in May 1970, displaying the renewed victim myth then favoured by both state officials and victim associations. The resistance had a prominent place in the exhibition, with their struggles supporting the victim myth.¹⁷⁵ In 1981, the museum overhauled the exhibition and opened a second one that presented the Austrians deported to Mauthausen.¹⁷⁶ After the paradigm change, the DÖW created an exhibition in Mauthausen, which critically investigated Austrians' acceptance of National Socialism. Today the former camp site has been completely renewed in stages. The renewal began in 2000 when the state built a new visitor centre for the concentration camp memorial, which opened in 2003.¹⁷⁷ The redevelopment of the former camp site began in 2012 and should be completed by 2018.¹⁷⁸

The renewal is particularly interesting because Mauthausen has a position of significant authority within Austrian memory culture. The proposed renewal clearly reflects modern museum techniques used worldwide in Holocaust representations. The removed and hidden structures of the new visitor centre, outside the former camp grounds, stands in contrast to the concentration camp architecture. The architects have chosen a light grey colour palette for the very plain, geometric façade.¹⁷⁹ As well as service and administration areas, the visitor centre presents three exhibits. The first briefly relates how the past was commemorated in Mauthausen from 1945 onwards, the second displays principal objects from perpetrators and victims, and the third presents 20 video interviews with survivors.¹⁸⁰ The centre highlights the need to reflect

¹⁷⁴ They were visited mostly by foreign survivors and their families, and were otherwise disregarded within Austria. Perz, "Die Ausstellung in den KZ-Gedenkstätten," 110.

¹⁷⁵ Perz, "Österreich," 154.

¹⁷⁶ Perz "Die Ausstellung in den KZ-Gedenkstätten," 104-106.

¹⁷⁷ A very similar story to that of Mauthausen can be told about the Austrian exhibition established in Auschwitz I in 1978, which then presented the victim thesis and is now currently being redeveloped to reflect the new position on Austria's history. A concise overview is given by: Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, Bertrand Perz and Heidemarie Uhl, "Die Österreichische Gedenkstätte im Staatlichen Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau. Entstehungsgeschichte und Neukonzeption," in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich. Museen - Gedenkstätten – Ausstellungen*, ed. by Heidemarie Uhl and Dirk Rupno (Wien: Böhlau, 2010), 151-174.

¹⁷⁸ Perz, "Die Ausstellung in den KZ-Gedenkstätten," 87.

¹⁷⁹ It was designed by the architects Herwig Mayer, Christoph Schwarz and Karl Peyrer-Heimstätt. MSPH Architekten.

¹⁸⁰ Bertrand Perz and Mario Wimmer, "Geschichte der Gedenkstätte," in *Das Gedächtnis von Mauthausen*, ed. by KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen (Wien: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2004), 58-73; Florian Freund and Harald Greifeneder, "Objekte erzählen Geschichte," in *Das Gedächtnis von Mauthausen*, ed. by KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen (Wien: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2004), 46-

on the institution and its own history, on authenticity, space and material objects. It foregrounds the survivors and represents their voices and bodies in video interviews. Since it is located at a site where the persecution took place, the camp in Mauthausen did not qualify for my case study – although the visitor centre would have done. However, although it is outside of the former concentration camp, the visitor centre does not represent the Holocaust on its own, but together with the former camp site. The exhibitions in the visitor centre are not standalone exhibitions. Mauthausen has the advantage that the site offers multiple points of entry into its topic, and that the location itself tells part of the story and contributes drama.

At the same time as the museum in Mauthausen was being developed, the DÖW also created an exhibition on National Socialism, displayed in their premises from 1968 onwards. Due to the DÖW's dedication to the resistance, the exhibition focused on the resistance fighters. A larger but similar exhibition then opened in the rooms below the archive in 1978, presenting the period from 1934-1945. As in Mauthausen, this exhibition represented the resistance fighters as people who fought for Austria's freedom. When this perspective became outdated after the Waldheim affair, the DÖW designed a new exhibition. Located in the same rooms beneath the archive, the new exhibition opened in 2005.¹⁸¹ It displays the dominant discourse on the Holocaust in Austria. The contentious time from 1918-1938 is shown only briefly and without revealing conflicting interpretations. The narrative focuses on the inclusion of Austria into Germany, emphasising that many Austrians were in favour of this. The oppression of the opposition is addressed, the persecution in Austria, and the deportations to the concentration camps. The expository agent alludes to the resistance but the racial persecutions are the central topic. Jews receive the most significant attention, but the exhibition also addresses Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, medical victims, and Slovenes.¹⁸²

56; Gerhard Botz, Bernadette Dewald and Alexander Prenninger, "Mauthausen erzählen - Narrating Mauthausen," in *Das Gedächtnis von Mauthausen*, ed. by KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen (Wien: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2004), 76-103; Helga Amesberger, Gerhard Botz and Brigitte Halbmayr, "'Mauthausen' im Gedächtnis der Überlebenden. Das 'Mauthausen Survivor Documentation Project'," in *Das Gedächtnis von Mauthausen*, ed. by KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen (Wien: Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2004), 104-123.

¹⁸¹ Peter Larndorfer, "Das Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes und seine Ausstellungen," in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich. Museen - Gedenkstätten - Ausstellungen*, ed. by Heidemarie Uhl and Dirk Rupno (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 117-149. The location is hidden in a courtyard accessed via a side street in Vienna; not easily found by visitors.

¹⁸² Larndorfer, "Das Dokumentationsarchiv," 144-145.

The end of the exhibition presents themes not discussed elsewhere in Austria, such as emigration, exile and neo-Nazi activities after 1945. The DÖW exhibition sets a clear path, roughly chronological, with thematic units, and the colour palette is white, grey and black.¹⁸³

Its seemingly neutral and detached design consists mainly of texts and photographs. Reading all the information is challenging, due to the large amount of text and its dense and complex structure. Many photos are small and thus hard to see and even harder to identify. The exhibition does not contextualise or discuss the photos themselves, but uses them as illustrations.¹⁸⁴ Deciding whether to analyse the DÖW was difficult, as this museum's permanent exhibition does represent the dominant discourse. In the end however, I chose the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee for my case study in Austria, because its exhibition is the more extensive and diverse of the two. The exhibition at the DÖW is presented with very little or no variation. Even though I want to turn to photographs, the photos in the DÖW exhibition are small and their presentation mode repetitive. A more interesting case to study photographs is the Holocaust Emlékközpont, to which I will turn in my chapter on Hungary.

The Zeitgeschichte Museum stands in a similar tradition to the Memorial in Mauthausen or the DÖW, but other representations exist that differ from this tradition. None of these influence Holocaust memory in Austria as strongly as Mauthausen or the DÖW do. The Jewish museums and the more traditional history museums address the Holocaust among other topics. The Jewish museums in Austria do not have a longstanding tradition, and most opened in the 1980s, when people began showing renewed interest in Jewish culture in Austria.¹⁸⁵ They aim to impart basic information about Jewish culture, religion and history, and include the Holocaust within that remit.¹⁸⁶ They also reference the locality, city or region in which each specific museum is

¹⁸³ The pathway is not clearly visible upon entering as it begins around the corner from the entrance. Staff routinely direct visitors to the exhibition's beginning, remarking that it opens with the time before 1938.

¹⁸⁴ I will discuss this type of usage in detail in my chapter 3.3.3 on Hungary, when I analyse how the Holocaust Emlékközpont displays photographs.

¹⁸⁵ Sabine Offe, *Ausstellungen, Einstellungen, Entstellungen. Jüdische Museen in Deutschland und Österreich* (Berlin: Philo, 2000), 81. The exception to this is the Jewish museum in Eisenstadt. Gerald Lamprecht, "Die österreichisch-jüdischen Museen im zeitgeschichtlichen Kontext," in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich. Museen - Gedenkstätten - Ausstellungen*, ed. by Heidemarie Uhl and Dirk Rupno (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 213-235, 216-219.

¹⁸⁶ Lamprecht, "Die österreichisch-jüdischen Museen," 213-235.

situated. The Jewish Museum in Vienna, Hohenem and Eisenstadt are the most well known of these museums. They all feature material objects, often Judaica from religious ceremonies, as well as books and material objects used in daily life by Jews from the region. All three of these museums present their narratives in a scholarly fashion and make use of very modern lighting and display techniques. Artistic presentations are also found, for example in the Jewish museum in Vienna.

Traditional history museums usually feature a very different presentation mode to the reserved and scholarly one outlined so far. Austria has no designated national museum. This is due to the specific structure of the Habsburg monarchy, which existed until 1918 and made the representation of national history in the Austrian homeland obsolete.¹⁸⁷ Most museums in what is Austria today that do date back to the 18th or 19th century either do not focus on history, or have no permanent exhibitions on the 20th century. In the late 1990s and early 2000s Austrians debated whether the state should establish a national museum, and if so, where it should be located and how it should present contemporary history. The debate ebbed away by 2011, still with no museum dedicated to national history per se.¹⁸⁸

The military museum, the *Heeresgeschichtliche Museum Wien* (Military Museum) is, however, a traditional institution dedicated to Austrian history.¹⁸⁹ The Heeresgeschichtliche Museum dedicates nearly the entire ground floor of its western wing to the time from 1918-1945.¹⁹⁰ Its exhibition opened in 1999 and, like the rest of the museum, mainly displays material objects considered authentic. The exhibition displays artifacts in large glass vitrines: uniforms, military decorations, weapons, art, and everyday items; and provides very little explication. Where extra information is of-

¹⁸⁷ Marlis Raffler describes the museums landscape in the Habsburg monarchy and, while her account is largely descriptive she clearly outlines why no national museum emerged in Austria. Raffler, *Museum - Spiegel der Nation?*, 151.

¹⁸⁸ On the debate see: Dirk Rupnow, "Nation ohne Museum? Diskussion, Konzepte und Projekte," in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich. Museen - Gedenkstätten - Ausstellungen*, ed. by Heidemarie Uhl and Dirk Rupno (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 417-463.

¹⁸⁹ It was built by Theophil Hansen from 1848-1856 to house the collection of the imperial army. The museum was considered by some to be a potential institution for turning into a national museum. Rupnow, "Nation ohne Museum?," 422.

¹⁹⁰ Descriptions of the Military Museum's history and its main display areas are found in Hannes Leidinger and Verena Moritz, "Die Last der Historie. Das Heeresgeschichtliche Museum in Wien und die Darstellung der Geschichte bis 1945," in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich. Museen - Gedenkstätten - Ausstellungen*, ed. by Heidemarie Uhl and Dirk Rupno (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 15-44.

ferred, military specifications dominate. One main difference from the other institutions discussed so far, is that the Heeresgeschichtliche Museum presents Dollfuss and his regime in a positive light.¹⁹¹ The expository agent deals with the Holocaust in a very cursory manner, presenting different victims and different stories muddled together, displaying vaguely connected items that symbolise persecution.¹⁹² Forced labourers and Jews are mentioned in the captions but not in the copy, and the objects displayed gesture to the political prisoners but they are not discussed further. The expository agent alludes to the perpetrators but does not elaborate on them.

Finally, regional history museums also address the Holocaust. Each county in Austria has at least one regional museum. Most of these were established in the 19th century and stand in the German and Catholic tradition to display one's homeland via folkloric exhibitions.¹⁹³ While continuing to focus on folk culture, most of these museums have renovated or redeveloped their exhibitions since the 1990s.¹⁹⁴ The majority do not address contemporary history in their permanent exhibitions.¹⁹⁵ A case in point is Vienna's regional museum, the *Wien Museum* (Vienna Museum), in which the representation of the time after 1900 consists only of art and a few photos from the square

¹⁹¹ The exhibition is officially structured into four sections: the barricade, the street, the emplacement and the ruin. The curator and erstwhile director Manfred Rauchensteiner envisioned these four units as thematic divides, but the structuring elements do not clearly divide the exhibition spatially and are not legible to most visitors.

¹⁹² The exhibition gestures to Jewish emigration with one photo showing the passport agency, presents the extermination camps in a text panel, and presents the time after 1941 in one vitrine. The text panel names Mauthausen and its sub-camps, discusses forced labour and states simply that inmates who could no longer work were killed, leading to "some 100,000 dead". The vitrine holds a painting by Hans Fronius entitled 'Jewish Grave', a sculpture made as a mock-up for an unrealised memorial with the title 'Desk perpetrator', a wooden cross taken from the grave of a Polish forced labourer, pound notes that concentration camp prisoners were forced to forge, a release note from Mauthausen, two letters from Dr. Kurt Schussnigg, and cutlery made by a concentration camp prisoner. It also displays the clothing of a political prisoner, a stone from Mauthausen, barbed wire, and a photo of people wearing the yellow star.

¹⁹³ Herbert Nikitsch, "Bezirksmuseen - Bemerkungen zu einer Musealen Institution," in *Museumsraum Museumszeit. Zur Geschichte des Österreichischen Museums- und Ausstellungswesens*, ed. by Roswitha Muttenthaler and Herbert Posch (Wien: Picus Press, 1992), 91-114, 91-93. A general overview of regional museums in Austria is given by Hermann Steininger, "Geschichte und Entwicklung Niederösterreichischer Museen und Sammlungen. Ein Abriß," in *Museumsraum Museumszeit. Zur Geschichte des Österreichischen Museums- und Ausstellungswesens*, ed. by Roswitha Muttenthaler and Herbert Posch (Wien: Picus Press, 1992), 115-138.

¹⁹⁴ A critical perspective on the *Heimat* concept inherent to this focus on folklore is provided by Reinhard Johler, "Zur Musealisierung eines Kulturkonzeptes: Die Heimatmuseen," in *Politik der Präsentation. Museum und Ausstellung in Österreich 1918-1945*, ed. by Herbert Posch, et. al. (Wien: Turia + Kant, 1996), 276-302.

¹⁹⁵ Sommer, "Experiment und Leerstelle," 314, 323.

where the museum is located. An exception to this is the *Geschichte(n)museum Bildein* ((Hi)story Museum Bildein) in the Burgenland region, which represents only the 20th century. The small museum offers a concise overview of the history of the region from 1922 to the present, including discussion of how National Socialism affected the region. The museum represents National Socialism in line with the dominant discourse. According to the exhibition, many Burgenland residents welcomed the *Anschluss*, and the copy explicitly states that interpretation of Austria as a victim of Hitler is not correct. The museum names regional perpetrators and their actions, and mentions the participation of the population. The display on the Holocaust briefly addresses the resistance, the murder of Roma from the region, and forced labour. In general, the exhibition aims to critically display the crimes, their victims, and the perpetrators in the region at the time of National Socialism.¹⁹⁶

The Austrian museum landscape is diverse and if a museum deals with the twentieth century, it addresses the Holocaust. All museums favour a broad contextualisation that is rather reserved in its design, presenting a factual story to the ideal visitor. The representations can be divided into two strands, mirroring the dominant discourse. A more conservative representation, as in the Heeresgeschichtliche Museum, marginalises the Holocaust and provides a positive evaluation of the time from 1933 to 1938. The liberal or leftward-leaning exhibitions, for example in Mauthausen or the DÖW, often centre on the Holocaust and evaluate the time from 1933 to 1938 negatively. When it comes to museums devoted entirely to the Holocaust the liberal and left-leaning perspective dominates. The Zeitgeschichte Museum is one of these more liberal or left-leaning museums.

¹⁹⁶ At a few, marginal points in the copy the old discourse resurfaces, for example in the emphasis on the high number of victims, marked as Austrians, Panel “Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in Österreich”, or when referring to the *Anschluss* as “forced muation,” panel “Weltkrieg in Europa”; all in the *Geschichte(n)museum Bildein*.



Photo no. 2: The building of the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee.

2.2 The Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee: an academic display and its apparently neutral representation

Commemorations of National Socialism in Ebensee primarily address the fact that a forced labour camp existed just outside the town from 1943 to 1945.¹⁹⁷ The camp for men was one of the 40 outposts of the Mauthausen concentration camp, and its barely realised aim was to establish a subsurface production site for ammunition.¹⁹⁸ The former camp was one of the most important subcamps of Mauthausen, and a significant amount of literature has been written about Ebensee since the 1990s that brought increased attention towards the sub-camps. Historical analysis comes from experts in the field, some of whom are directly involved with the commemorations;

¹⁹⁷ Ebensee's other history museum exhibits the local culture and festivities and stands in the tradition of a folklore museum. It has just been renovated and is also undergoing massive reorganizations.

¹⁹⁸ For the history of the camp itself see: Florian Freund, *Arbeitslager Zement. Das Konzentrationslager Ebensee und die Raketenrüstung* (Wien: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1991).

personal accounts of survivors, who describe their experiences in the camp; and commemorative literature that names the dead or analyses the memory culture in Ebensee.¹⁹⁹

Today only a few of the original camp's architectural structures remain. Until 1948, the camp was used for Prisoners of War and for Displaced Persons, but afterwards the municipality tried to quickly demolish the original site. The city had torn down most buildings by 1949, and in the years following it built a housing development on the site. Only the archway of the entrance was left, preserved due to former inmates' protests against its planned destruction (Photo no. 3).²⁰⁰ In 1952, the city of Ebensee established a burial site near the former crematorium, creating a commemorative cemetery after the discovery of mass graves there. This led to the reburial of former inmates who had died after the liberation and been buried by the city at a more prominent cemetery next to the federal highway.²⁰¹ Although annual celebrations were held at the commemorative cemetery, the site was largely ignored by the local population and politicians alike. International survivors, who came to commemorate their suffering, were the main visitors to the site until the 1980s.

¹⁹⁹ Verein Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, ed., *Retrospektive. 20 Jahre Geschichtsarbeit* (Ebensee: ZGM, 2008); Moshe Ha-Elion, *The Straits of Hell. The chronicle of a Salonikan Jew in the Nazi extermination camps Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Melk, Ebensee* (Mannheim/Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2005); Andreas Schmoller and Judith Moser-Kroiss, ed., *Stimmen aus dem KZ Ebensee* (Ebensee: ZGM, 2005); Mario Carassi, *Sotto il cielo di Ebensee. Dalla Resistenza al lager* (settembre 1943-maggio 1945) (Milan: Mursia, 1995); Florian Freund, *Die Toten von Ebensee. Analyse und Dokumentation der im KZ Ebensee umgekommenen Häftlinge 1943-1945* (Wien: DÖW, 2010). Many works also deal with Ebensee within wider descriptions of Mauthausen. Florian Freund and Bertrand Perz, "Mauthausen," in *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, ed. by Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (München: C.H. Beck, 2006), 293-470, 345-360.

²⁰⁰ Ulrike Felber and Wolfgang Quatember, ed., *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee. Katalog zur Dauerausstellung* (Ebensee: Verein Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, 2005), 22-23, 199.

²⁰¹ Wolfgang Quatember, "Die Geschichte der KZ-Gedenkstätte Ebensee," in *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee. Katalog zur Dauerausstellung*, ed. by Wolfgang Quatember and Ulrike Felber (Ebensee: ZGM, 2005), S. 198-204, 201-203.



Photo no. 3: Arch formerly holding the main gate to the concentration camp in Ebensee.

The commemoration by a wider public in the 1980s and the establishment of the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee reflect the change in memory culture in Austria at that time. The first initiative to commemorate the regional history of the camp began in 1984, supported by the new Social Democratic mayor Rudolf Graf. Locals erected a temporary exhibition in 1985, when the liberation of the camp was celebrated for the 40th time. Florian Freud's doctoral thesis on the forced labour camp, completed in 1987, provided academic backing for the commemoration. Ebensee and Prato, from whence the German forces in Italy deported many men to Ebensee, formed a city partnership in 1987/1988, also pushing history to the fore.²⁰² In 1988, the regional association *Verein Widerstandsmuseum* (Foundation for the Resistance Museum), was founded, with the aims of commemorating the local resistance and preserving the remaining relics from the former concentration camp site.²⁰³ While moral

²⁰² Marie Magdalena Rest, "Das Zeitgeschichte Museum und der Gedenkstätten in Ebensee," in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich. Museen - Gedenkstätten - Ausstellungen*, ed. by Heidemarie Uhl and Dirk Rupno (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 337-367, 345.

²⁰³ The association was renamed *Zeitgeschichte Museum und KZ-Gedenkstätte* (Contemporary History Museum and Concentration Camp Memorial) in 2002.

support came from the mayor and other town officials, securing financial support was a challenge and continues to be so today.²⁰⁴ The museum was in planning for 13 years and, as many such institutions do, it went through several planning phases. In 1993, the focus of the intended exhibition on the resistance changed to incorporate Austrian history from 1918 until 1945, reflecting the paradigm change. The museum opened in 2001, in the renovated building of an old school in the town centre (Photo no. 2).²⁰⁵ Wolfgang Quatember, who had been active in the foundation for years, became the museum's director, and curated its exhibition together with Ulrike Felber. Commemoration is twofold in Ebensee today, taking place at the memorial sites of the former concentration camp as well as at the museum.

The foundation *Zeitgeschichte Museum und KZ-Gedenkstätte's* representations of the Holocaust at the memorial sites and the museum in Ebensee are different. Commemorations at the former camp sites and quarry already took place while the museum was in planning, and today the two sites complement each other. The concentration camp memorial consists of the cemetery, the gallery or tunnel where the inmates were forced to work, the archway of the former camp's entrance, and the commemorative markers set up along the road between these sites. All of these are located at original sites of the former camp or the places where forced labour took place.²⁰⁶ The representation at these locations is specific to each site and provides directly related information. The signs in part also historicise the commemorations that took place at these locations after 1945. At the cemetery, the graves can be visited and commemoration is mostly guided via national monuments with largely Christian iconography (Photo no. 4).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ An overview of the difficulties encountered during the exhibition's establishment is given by Rest, "Das Zeitgeschichte Museum," 349-350.

²⁰⁵ A detailed description of the history of the museum: Quatember, "Die Geschichte der KZ-Gedenkstätte Ebensee," 198-204.

²⁰⁶ Magdalena Rest describes the commemoration at the former camp and the gallery as more emotional, in contrast to a more rational approach provided by the museum. Rest, "Das Zeitgeschichte Museum," 340. Be that as it may, the body of the visitor traverses the same space as the bodies of former victims and their perpetrators did, and this needs to be accounted for.

²⁰⁷ On the national monuments and the largely Christian denotation of them see: Wolfgang Quatember, "Denkmalprojekte am KZ-Opferfriedhof Ebensee," *Betrifft: Widerstand 77* (2006): 13-14.



Photo no. 4: The Lepitit memorial at the concentration camp cemetery in Ebensee.

Three panels at the side of the cemetery offer information about the Ebensee camp, the camp system in general, and the people held there.²⁰⁸ Another panel describes the history of the cemetery and two more indicate the locations of the mass graves and individual graves.²⁰⁹ One of the former tunnels was opened to the public in 1994 with a small exhibition within it, enlarged in 1997 (Photo no. 5). This exhibition is composed of eight main glass panels that provide an in-depth focus on the concentration camp, the inmates' living and working conditions, and the various prisoner groups. The panels also give information on forced labour and the armament production as well as some information on the gallery and the working conditions within it.²¹⁰ Excerpts from the prisoner book recording the names of the inmates supplement these panels, commemorating individual prisoners by name. Because the exhibition is located inside the tunnel, the visitor gains some feeling for the dampness, cold and lack

²⁰⁸ The text is in German, English, French and Italian.

²⁰⁹ Identification of the dead is extremely difficult, or more often impossible, for most graves today. Andreas Schmoller, "Geschichte des KZ-Friedhofes in Ebensee. Bericht einer Recherche," *Betrifft: Widerstand 77* (2006):15-18.

²¹⁰ This exhibition is described by Rest, "Das Zeitgeschichte Museum," 361-363.

of light that the prisoners were subjected to. In addition to the tunnel and the cemetery, several markers have been erected in the area to identify remains visible from the past, for example the archway of the main gate, or the path the prisoners were forced to take to work.²¹¹



Photo no. 5: The exhibition in the gallery in Ebensee.

2.2.1 The “neutral” museum site documenting history

Unlike the sites of the former camp, the museum is set up as a removed site of study and learning. The museum emphasises the transmission of knowledge, which the curators distinguish from ritualised commemoration. According to the curators, a museum presentation in a “perpetrator country” is more adequate when restrained to documentation. They do not define what documentation consists of, but suggest that the Zeitgeschichte Museum simply displays what happened in the past. The curators distinguish their representation from others that ritualise commemoration.²¹² The

²¹¹ The path was cleared and made accessible in 1999.

²¹² The authors establish a binary between commemoration and understanding – the latter being what is furthered by the museum. Ritualised commemoration in a museum is criticised as an artistic rendering or staging of history that tells the visitor what to conclude from an exhibition. The

Zeitgeschichte Museum claims to document the past in congruence with the historical research on National Socialism. Such a position fits very well with the dominant discourse in Austria and its claim for an objective recounting of the past. The expository agent hides that a mode of representation highlighting documentation and academic standards is just as constructed as a mode that favours artistic representations. The exhibition first constructs the facts as neutral and objective and legitimises them by referencing academic standards. This is just another form of “truth speak” employed by museums.²¹³

Conspicuous in the museum’s website, its catalogue, and academic publications, the emphasis on scholarly learning is also visible within the exhibition and its design. The narrative from 1918-1955 is presented as a recounting of facts from the past. After entering and being welcomed at the information desk, the visitor can watch a short video introducing the region, its history, and the museum, before continuing to the main exhibition. The exhibition area on the second and the third floors consists of three rooms. The rooms are numbered and ordered along a predetermined pathway. One enters and leaves the rooms through separate doors, so it is unnecessary to retrace one’s steps. At the front of each room, the main topics it addresses are stated. Room one is concerned with the First Republic, the dissolution of the Parliament in 1933, and the Civil War in 1934. Room two deals with the Corporate State, the *Anschluss*, and the beginnings of the national socialist regime. Room three addresses the Second World War, the concentration camp in Ebensee, the end of the War, the liberation, and how Austrians dealt with National Socialism until 1955. The signs marking the rooms simply state the different periods and provide year dates, but do not evaluate the events. This makes the information appear factual, providing basic information about what is to be encountered.²¹⁴

expository agent declares that an exhibition rich in symbolism or artistic installations is inappropriate in a “perpetrator country.” Quatember and Felber, *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee*, 24-25. The same arguments are made in: Bernhard Denking, Ulrike Felber and Wolfgang Quatember, “Zeitgeschichte Museum und KZ-Gedenkstätte Ebensee. Auseinandersetzung mit Vergangenheit im historischen Museum und am authentischen Ort,” in *Holocaust und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. by Eduard Furchs, Falk Pingel and Verena Radkau (Wien: Studien Verlag, 2002), 106-113, 109-112.

²¹³ Mieke Bal has written extensively on the truth claim where something is documented in an academic presentation mode. Bal, *Double Exposures*.

²¹⁴ A detailed overview of the exhibition is given by Rest, “Das Zeitgeschichte Museum,” 353-361. A computer station is located after the first room, offering the visitor the chance to access video interviews of survivors of the camp in Ebensee, log in to the database of names of former inmates,

In keeping with this approach the exhibition design is understated and uses muted colours. The exhibition does not explicitly refer to its design concept, but it is easy to decode. The architects responsible, Denkinger and Felber, describe their design as reserved and neutral.²¹⁵ The open structure of the design communicates transparency. The panels hang freely between the ceiling and the floor so that the light brown floor is visible throughout. The colour scheme is reserved, dominated by colours that appear weightless. The colour palette is light grey, red, white and light brown. Natural light comes from the windows, mostly through translucent glass. In some spots, the windows are open so that the visitor can look out onto the town, linking the past with the present.²¹⁶ The mood evoked is calm, serious and distanced (Photo no. 6). The main copy is presented on red squares on a light grey background.

The red squares provide the grand narrative, telling national history.²¹⁷ The red panels also bear the captions that briefly describe objects on display and provide their date and provenance.²¹⁸ Hanging in front of the national narrative, glass panels present photos, posters, documents, and other display objects. This superimposed layer features regional events and thus represents how the region reacted to the national history that constitutes the background. In this way the exhibition design reflects on the interdependence of national and regional history. Each room highlights one significant turning point in the narrative, which is also marked by the exhibition design. The first room features the burning of the Reichstag in 1927, the second the Anschluss in 1938, and the third the liberation. In all three rooms, the turning point is marked by moving

to the museum's library and archive, or consult its internet presentations for further information on the museum and the memorial site. In addition to this, visitor can use the archive or the library, and two rooms for groups are available; one on the ground floor and one in the attic. An introductory film on the museum is shown in the basement when the space is not being used by groups.

²¹⁵ Denkinger, Felber and Quatember, "Zeitgeschichte Museum." The architecture of the former school reflects the detached design insofar as it has no particular features that link the building to the content. The museum's name is provided on a simple banner outside, matching the design to be encountered inside.

²¹⁶ This occurs at points where the town is directly addressed in the exhibition, for example where it describes how the population of Ebensee was called upon to clear and bury the dead in the liberated camp.

²¹⁷ Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee. In a few exceptions regional history is also addressed in the main copy – as Magdalena Rest notes, this is usually where the local resistance is presented. Rest, "Das Zeitgeschichte Museum," 366.

²¹⁸ A small drawing indicates the object to which the caption refers. Due to the small typography and their being placed on the main panel rather than next to the object, the link between the objects and their descriptions is not immediate. Museum staff report that some visitors have difficulty finding these captions and identifying which text corresponds with a particular object.

images in a video or slide projection, which clearly stand out from the rest of the presentation. The exhibition space itself is easy to navigate. As the outline of the room suggests, the layout is chronological with thematic units emerging within the timeline. The visitor has to walk through each room to grasp the main narrative because the panels build on each other. The visitor can easily see the red squares that serve to guide her through the exhibition. Most panels look the same, so once she has grasped the basic structure the visitor should have no need for reorientation.



Photo no. 6: Panoramic photo of the exhibition in room two.²¹⁹

Unfortunately, the exhibition is not very accessible to non-German speakers. It seems to be directed mainly towards Austrian visitors. Translations of the main copy are available in English, Italian and Polish in extra leaflets placed at the beginning of the exhibition. While English makes the exhibition accessible to a variety of people, the Italian and Polish translations respond to the many former prisoners who visit from both countries. Despite providing these translations, the expository agent has not translated all the panels and has condensed some of the information from those that have been translated. The sentence structures and the wording in the English translation is often awkward. The captions to the primary sources have been completely omitted and the primary sources themselves, many of which include written words, remain unintelligible to someone not familiar with German. This renders the greater

²¹⁹ Photo taken from the website of the Museum. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Museum & Gedenkstätte, http://www.memorial-ebensee.at/de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2 (accessed January 10th 2014).

part of the glass panels, and hence everything relating to the region, inaccessible to most international visitors. A non-German speaker visiting the exhibition is obliged to carry the leaflet and search for the paragraph that relates to each panel, whilst simultaneously navigating the exhibition space.

2.2.2 Traces on display

Exhibitions' openings often present the general structure of the exhibition, its main features, topics and expository devices. They suggest what the visitor can expect with regard to the content, as well as indicating how to navigate the space and how to decode the exhibition text. The opening of the exhibition in the Zeitgeschichte Museum introduces its interpretive frame. It communicates how the expository agent understands history in general and establishes the scholarly tone. It also presents the main historic developments through which the rest of the exhibition communicates the history of Austria, the region, and the Holocaust. The visitor first encounters this introduction in the video screened at the beginning, and then in the section entitled "Traces". While the film outlines how the expository agent interprets the past from 1918 to the present day, the section entitled "Traces" states how the museum intends to exhibit this past.

The film, made in 2009 by the museum, introduces the museum and the concentration camp memorial in just under seven minutes.²²⁰ Melancholic piano music plays throughout the film, which begins with the terms "History", "Memory" and "Present", shown over images of the façade and banner of the museum. Contemporary images from Ebensee accompany the female voiceover, which states that the meanings attached to Ebensee and the region are manifold.²²¹ People, the speaker elaborates, might associate the region with its salt industry or the folkloric culture, while it is known internationally as a centre for alternative culture. Displaying black-and-white photos of the attempted uprising against the austrofascist regime in 1934, the film

²²⁰ The museum's website provides a link to this film on YouTube: YouTube, Zeitgeschichte Museum und KZ Gedenkstätte Ebensee http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5t_UUJp-kU uploaded December 9th 2009, (accessed January 10th 2014). The link from the Museum website is provided at Zeitgeschichte Museum, Einführungsfilm, http://www.memorial-ebensee.at/de/index.php?view=article&catid=27%3Aprojekte&id=58%3Aeinstiegsfilm&option=com_content&Itemid=48 (accessed January 10th 2014).

²²¹ Andreas Schmoller wrote the script, Evelyn Ritt was the speaker and Philipp Bruckschlögl made and designed the film, produced for the Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee.

then turns to the history of the region. The voiceover characterises Ebensee as a stronghold of the working class, describing the social inequities and the divergent political ideologies of the time as insurmountable. The narrator states that “the events from 1918-1934 reveal the political, economic and cultural situation within which the end of democracy and the rise of National Socialism took place.”²²² The film then addresses the concentration camp in Ebensee and the thousands of victims that came to it from all over Europe. This passage is visualised with photos from the camp, taken after its liberation. The speaker notes that Austrian memory initially neglected the camp, and externalised responsibility for it to the Germans. After criticising this, the film shows the museum, which, as the speaker notes, recounts the story of the camp. Of the camp only “traces” or “scars” remain, which are in need of interpretation. The film closes with the statement:

Ebensee, located between the emptiness of forgetting and the weight of remembering, is a truly Austrian place yet at the same time a place of remembrance across national borders. The Contemporary History Museum pledges to recognise the significance of regional history, and to fulfil the wider aim to promote awareness of the negative inheritance of European history as an inverted guiding principle. The museum tries to compose its narrative from the free-floating document, the photo, the leftover artifact; a narrative in keeping with these commitments that also enables individual perspectives on the past. A museum that does not narrate history in the darkened room of the past, but instead holds open the view upon the present that surrounds us.²²³

²²² My translation. In German: “An den Ereignissen der Jahre 1918-1934 wird sichtbar in welcher politischen, wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Konstellation sich zunächst das Ende der Demokratie und der Aufstieg des Nationalsozialismus vollzogen.” Opening film. The film can only be viewed in German. The photos underlying the quoted voiceover show workers, then youths lining up for group sport, a church procession through town, and finally images of regional national socialist rallies.

²²³ My translation. In German: “Ebensee, ein Ort angesiedelt zwischen der Leere des Vergessens und der Schwere des Erinnerns, ist ein zutiefst österreichischer Ort und zugleich ein Gedenkort über nationale Grenzen hinweg. Das Zeitgeschichte Museum fühlt sich der regionalen Verankerung von Geschichte und dem größeren Bedürfnis verpflichtet, dass negative Erbe der Geschichte Europas gleichsam als umgekehrtes Leitbild ins Bewusstsein zu führen. Das lose Dokument, das Photo, das übriggebliebene Artefakt versucht es in eine Erzählung zu bringen, die diesem Anspruch nahe kommt und dennoch je individuelle Perspektiven auf die Vergangenheit ermöglicht. Ein Museum, das Geschichte nicht im abgedunkelten Raum der Vergangenheit erzählt, sondern den Blick freihalten will auf die uns umgebende Gegenwart.” Opening film.

The expository agent uses the film to reveal what will be shown in the following exhibition and why. According to the film, learning about the First Republic helps to understand the Holocaust, the commemoration of which is a moral imperative. Austria's difficult, weighty heritage needs to be remembered and the museum presents itself as the agent that addresses this difficult, too long ignored past, recounting the history of National Socialism to the visitor.

The first section of the exhibition then outlines how the exhibition will narrate this difficult heritage. Next to the copy, the panel "Traces" presents several contemporary photographs of the area.²²⁴ The photos depict the commemorations of Jews, former concentration camp prisoners, army soldiers and national socialists alike.²²⁵ They are irregularly placed across the panel, not ordered thematically. The copy accompanying these photos reads:

History leaves visible traces, the interpretation of which depends on the distance the viewer has to the historical events. By reconstructing the past in the museum, perceptions and assessments of history shall be presented from the present point of view. Visitors are invited to follow traces of the past and to actively deal with the historical events and experiences.²²⁶

According to the expository agent, the interpretation of the past depends on the present and is susceptible to change. The copy invites visitors to look for traces, to understand the museum's interpretation as an attempt to make sense of the past, and to seek their own perspective on it. The Zeitgeschichte Museum here makes its own construction of history visible and invites the visitor to engage with it.²²⁷

The traces of the past, the primary sources left by the past, are on display in the museum. The exhibition shows documents, posters, photos, and a few material objects

²²⁴ One of these images is a photograph showing a mural from 1938. It accompanies a photo from 1993 in which the wall had been painted over to hide the mural, which continuously resurfaced however.

²²⁵ The photos show inscriptions in and around the tunnel system in Ebensee, the Jewish cemetery of Gmunden that existed until 1938, a memorial site for victims of National Socialism, a memorial for fallen soldiers, and the gravestone of Walter Reder, a former SS member responsible for mass murder in Italy.

²²⁶ Panel "Traces" in room 1. When not noted otherwise, the copy is taken from the English translation provided by the museum, with grammar and spelling unchanged.

²²⁷ This fulfils current demands for self-reflective displays. Bal, *Double Exposures*, 308; Tony Bennet, "Exhibition, Difference and the Logic of Culture" in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures, Global Transformation* ed. by. Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Swaja et. al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 46-69, 66.

from the region, presenting them in front of the copy outlining national history. All the elements displayed on these regional panels are primary sources or reproductions of primary sources. Their captions state which events these primary sources refer to and explain their provenance. In some cases the captions also mention the person who produced the source and some conditions of its production. The primary sources relate to the main copy, but are not congruent with it and are rarely addressed explicitly within the text. Usually the panels simply present their sources alongside the larger national narrative. The sources provide examples of how the region reacted to, and within, national history and thus offer a patchwork impression of the interdependence between regional and national history. Encountering no further contextualisation of the primary sources, the visitor has to interpret them on her own. By not defining how to read the source, the expository agent leaves it to the visitor to come to her own conclusions. The primary sources here conspicuously fulfil the museum's undertaking to display traces from the past and allow the ideal visitor to interpret them herself.

2.3 The course of history: structural history versus regional agency

2.3.1 Writing depersonalised stories

Representing the primary sources on display as traces, the expository agent does not consider this strategy for the copy. Despite stating that each element in the exhibition is a present day interpretation of historic traces, the expository agent presents a large part of these interpretations as facts, proffered in an authoritative tone. The first section, immediately after the panel on traces, states how the republic was founded, the consequences of the peace negotiations, and how the first elections took place. The sentences are declarative, stating what happened, how it happened and what followed as a result. The copy uses matter-of-fact language throughout the exhibition, and seldom indicates that the narrative is the expository agent's interpretation. No space is given to changing or conflicting interpretations, nor does the copy indicate how the expository agent arrived at the interpretation presented.

The copy tells the visitor what happened, how it happened, and why. Within this, the question of how agency is constructed is crucial to understanding how the Zeitgeschichte Museum explains the Holocaust. The copy largely depersonalises history. Magdalena Rest has notes that the focus of the exhibition is on "larger history" in

which political actors are combined into groups – usually along party lines. Due to this, individual actors vanish behind passive constructions in the copy. As Rest remarks, much of the exhibition narrates historic events in the passive voice, focusing on structural developments.²²⁸ In the first half of the exhibition, the political parties have historical agency. In the representation of the time from 1933 to 1938 the central leaders of the regime Dollfuss and Schussnigg have agency, while after 1938 historical agents disappear completely from the national narrative.

The beginning of the exhibition defines the political parties as historical actors. The parties are homogenised and then positioned against each other. This is already evident in the headings that categorise the different parties into the “catholic-conservative camp”, the “socialist-communist camp”, and the “national camp”. The copy names the parties and organisations that constituted a “camp”, defines their voters and outlines their ideologies. Here it is recognised that the specific camps are composed of individuals, but in later panels the expository agent speaks only of the parties so that the different groups and plurality of opinions within camps are rendered invisible.²²⁹ The political posters presented in this part of the exhibition also unify the political groups under the messages displayed in the posters.²³⁰

Over time, the parties presented radicalise and clash with each other. In the exhibition narrative – just as in dominant contemporary Austrian historiography – the

²²⁸ Rest, “Das Zeitgeschichte Museum,” 365-367.

²²⁹ Panel “Katholisch-konservatives Lager”; “Sozialdemokratisch-kommunistisches Lager”; “Nationales Lager” in room 1. Who supported the national camp is unclear, already making the agents within the radical right invisible. Armed groups are shown in the same way. The expository agent states that the armed groups were not homogenous, but the differences between them or individual members are not mentioned. Panel “Politische Radikalisierung;” “Republikanischer Schutzbund;” “Heimwehren”; “Heimweraufmarsch in Bad Ischl und Ebensee” in room 1. The same is done for the time after 1945, when the major political parties once again hold agency. Panel “Entnazifizierung und Formierung des nationalen Lagers” in room 3; section “Denazification and founding of a nationalist camp” in English language guide.

²³⁰ Designed to capture attention, posters work well in displays as visual elements that attract the visitor and are read as historic artefacts at the same time. For a classic but general overview on political posters as historical sources see: Michael Sauer, “‘Hinweg damit!’ Plakate als historische Quellen zur Politik und Mentalitätsgeschichte,” in *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch*, ed. by Gerhard Paul (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 37-56. Most posters on display at the Zeitgeschichte Museum are icons of the time in question and have been the subject of a significant number of discussions, most of which are not mentioned in the exhibit. See, for example, the very broad overview in: Bernhard Denscher, ed. *Tagebuch der Straße. Wiener Plakate* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1981). For information on the iconology of the posters see: Bianca Hawel, *Die Österreichische Plakatkunst der 1920er Jahre* (Wien 2008, Diplomarbeit für Magistra der Philosophie, published online at: Universität Wien, Universitätsbibliothek, E-thesis, <http://othes.univie.ac.at/807/> (accessed January 10th 2014).

combination of the economic crisis, the ensuing conflicts, the lack of identification with the Republic, and the Christian Socialist Party's tendency towards authoritarian solutions led to the dissolution of parliament in 1933 and the establishment of the Austrian dictatorship under Dollfuß.²³¹ Where history is not simply driven by structural developments, the copy presents the dominant political elite as historical agents. Only Dollfuß and Schussnigg really appear as individuals here, however. Once Austrofascism had been established and the left oppressed, the road of history led to the *Anschluss* in 1938. According to the exhibition, Austrians supported the NSDAP or the socialists because they did not identify with the corporate state and were suffering from economic hardship.²³²

The absence of individual historical agents is even more evident in the narrative of the time after 1938. The exhibition narrative states that Austria adapted to the German way of life, aligned all its institutions so that they met the exclusionary laws, anticipated and accepted Hitler's leadership, and supported the NSDAP. Celebrations and rallies successfully fostered identification with Greater Germany. Who it was that adapted, held the rallies, pushed for celebrations or idealised the German Volk in particular is not specified.²³³ Addressing the Holocaust, the depersonalisation of the Zeitgeschichte Museum is particularly extreme:

Idealization of a *Volksgemeinschaft* consisting of Aryans only led to the radical marginalisation and finally the systematic extinction of other population groups, above all Jews, "inferior" groups (e.g. the Slavs), Sinti and Roma, handicapped people and homosexuals.²³⁴

Ideology asserts itself and the idealisation of the Aryans leads to other people being marginalised and persecuted. The expository agent personifies ideology, while the exhibition avoids according responsibility to any person. Discriminatory laws "were adopted", racial hygiene "became generally accepted", with the effect that a "person

²³¹ Panel "Regierungskrise"; "Ständestaat und Antimarxismus"; "Autoritäres Regime und antifaschistische Bewegung"; "Parlamentsauschaltung im März 1933", all in room 1.

²³² Panel "Autoritäres System und Vaterländische Front" in room 2.

²³³ Panel "Volksgemeinschaft" und "Rassenideologie" in room 2.

²³⁴ Panel "Volksgemeinschaft" und "Rassenideologie" in room 2; "Volksgemeinschaft and Race Ideology" English language guide.

not belonging to the master race had to be eliminated”.²³⁵ The term master race actually reifies the non-persecuted population. According to the copy, no human historical agents are responsible for the persecutions of Jews, Roma and Sinti, medical patients, Homosexuals and Slavs presented. Ultimately, the effect of the depersonalisation of agency for the persecutions is to make an unknown entity responsible for the Holocaust. The Holocaust is brought about by the structures of Austrian society, for which again no one seems to hold historical responsibility.

Only a few panels offer an exception to the absence of agency during National Socialism; addressing either Austrian Nazis or the Germans. The Nazis reorganise Austria’s industry for war, and Austrian national socialists profit from Aryanisation, but it is unclear who the Nazis actually were.²³⁶ The narrative rarely references Germany and where it does, it only outlines the impact on Austria.²³⁷ Presumably, the reluctance to provide information on Germany is a deliberate move to contradict the pre-paradigm change practice of externalising responsibility to Germany. To understand National Socialism as a deeply Austrian story, one of the aims stated in the opening film, leads to a complete focus on Austria. Austria is the height of attention throughout.²³⁸

Similarly, the expository agent deals with European developments only marginally. Given that structural developments rule large, it is striking that the expository agent does not relate structures in Austria to European ones.²³⁹ Within the national

²³⁵ Panel “Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden” in room 2, section “Deprivation of Rights and Persecution of Jews” in English language guide; panel “Rassenhygiene” in room 2; section “Racial Hygiene” in English language guide.

²³⁶ Panel “Aufrüstung und Militärisierung” in room 2; section “Armament and militarization” in English language guide; panel “Arisierung” in room 2; section “Aryanisation” in English language guide. Robbery is depersonalised in the copy, even though individual people, businesses and the state profited from it. Members of the illegal NSDAP before 1938 are also represented as a vague group. Their actions are shown, but individual people do not appear. Panel “NS-Putschversuch”; “NS-Anschläge und Aktionen 1934”; “NS-Propaganda”; “NSDAP, Wahlerfolge, Propagandaerfolge” all in room 2.

²³⁷ The copy references the “Nazis” for example when Hitler comes to power in 1933, when preparation for war begins in 1936, or when the terror system of the SS and SA is outlined. Panel “Terrorssystem” in room 2; “Aufrüstung und Militärisierung” in room 2; section “Armament and militarization” in English language guide.

²³⁸ Germany is gestured towards when Germany’s economic plan for Austria is discussed in the panel “Wirtschaftspolitik” in room 2, as well as when introducing specific national socialist organisations that also came to be established in Austria. Panel “Die ‘Heimatfront’” in room 3.

²³⁹ Examples of international structures could have been the depression, the reoccupation of the Rhineland and France’s reaction to it, the role of Italy, and the consequences of these developments for Austria.

discourse however, focusing solely on Austria is quite common. Austrian historiography rarely embraces a European or global perspective. An exception to this in the Zeitgeschichte Museum is the section on the Second World War, which mentions the invasion of Poland, the declaration of war against Scandinavia, the Benelux states, France and Great Britain, as well as the attack on the Soviet Union.²⁴⁰ The “Nazi regime” aimed “to restructure Europe according to the racist Nazi ideology”.²⁴¹ While the English language guide lists the European events consecutively, they are mere side notes in the exhibition. The exhibition only gestures to Europe, but does not represent it in its own right. Once the war is over, the copy again restricts its focus to Austria alone.

2.3.2 Objects countering depersonalisation

In the copy, the expository agent depersonalises historical agency, but the primary sources on display partly counter this. The regional panels make different actors from all parts of society visible. The expository agent clearly attempts to reference a cross-section of society. The exhibition shows mayors, regional officers, members of the police, and members of the church as active participants in local politics; it represents local industry and its participation in the economic development during National Socialism, profiting from the cheap labour from the concentration camp; and it reveals the general population’s widespread participation in discriminatory actions in the region.²⁴² Support for National Socialism is made visible when the exhibition displays

²⁴⁰ Panel “Krieg und Kriegspropaganda” in room 3; section “War and War Propaganda” English language guide; panel “Stalingrad und die Kriegswende” in room 3, section “Stalingrad and the turn of the tide” English language guide.

²⁴¹ Panel “Krieg und Kriegspropaganda” in room 3; section “War and War Propaganda” English language guide.

²⁴² See, for example, the photo of Sepp Witzelsteiner, NS-mayor in Bad Ischl in 1938, making a speech at a Parish council meeting. Panel “Führerprinzip und Pateistruktur der NSDAP” in room 2. The priest Köttl is said to have been active in the destruction of the communist library. Panel “Fall Arbeiterbücherei” in room 2, and the pastorate asks for a typewriter to enable a more efficient handling of requests for Aryan heritage. Letter from the pastorate Ebensee from 25.2.1941, displayed in panel “Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden” in room 2. The Saline and the Solvay-factory in Ebensee are shown as examples of local industry. Smaller businesses are also named in the document celebrating businesses awarded certificates of merit by the regime (Reichsleistungsabzeichen) in the panel “Wirtschaftspolitik” in room 2; panel “KZ-Häftlinge als Arbeitskraftreserve” in room 3.

photos showing, for example, the German troops marching into Austria or the omnipresence of swastika flags.²⁴³ The expository agent also exhibits people's awareness of the crimes, showing that the population knew about the camp and the conditions within it, about forced labour and other persecutions in the region.²⁴⁴

While most primary sources represent men, women do appear as regional agents, shown for example in a photo of the Bad Ischl national socialist women's group collecting and mending clothing. The copy in the panel on the home front states how the necessities of war dominated civil life. The women, active for the winter-relief, contributed to the war economy and supported the regime.²⁴⁵ In the photo the women work, each one looking sincere and earnest, focused on her task. A mountain of clothes lies in the foreground and a portrait of Adolf Hitler gazes down on the women from the wall. The photo focuses on the circle of women, working together, each one contributing her share to the clothing collection (Photo no. 7).²⁴⁶ The women are agents in the region, the photo displaying their lives under the murderous regime and their active participation in it.

That the exhibition represents the women as regional agents results partly from the primary source. Every primary source is specific, made by individual people and representing individual people. A photo, for example, depicts an object or person. In this case, the photo shows ten women members of the national socialist women's association. They appear as individual agents each responsible for the support this association gave to the regime, contributing to the war effort.

²⁴³ Panel "Einmarsch der Deutschen Wehrmacht"; panel "Nationalsozialistischer Heldenmythos" in room 2; panel "Volksabstimmung am 10. April 1938" in room 2. When it was realised that the war might be lost, support waned, which is also shown in the exhibition. Panel "Stalingrad und die Kriegswende" in room 3.

²⁴⁴ This is quite explicit throughout the exhibition; clearly stated, for example, in the panel "Das Konzentrationslager Ebensee" in room 3.

²⁴⁵ The winter-relief groups collected financial and material donations to support people in need during the winter month. During the war many donations were collected for soldiers at the front.

²⁴⁶ Like the photos in the Holocaust Emlékközpont, this one offers much more information about the NS-Frauenschaft than the Zeitgeschichte Museum acknowledges.



Photo no. 7: Photo of the NS-Frauenbund in Bad Ischl. Exhibited in the panel "Die 'Heimatfront'" in room 3.

Individual agents not only appear in the photographs, but also in the documents on display. In a document, the people who wrote the document, those who received it, as well as the people it refers to become visible. The letter from the doctor Albert Meierl from Bad Ischl is a good demonstration of how the expository agent displays regional agency through documents from the Holocaust.²⁴⁷ The document is part of the panel on racial hygiene. Albert Meierl, whose address is at the top of the page, signed and sent the letter to the mayor Josef Holzberger, in whose office it arrived on November 17th 1939, as the stamp on the letter indicates. In the document the doctor, the mayor and the mayor's staff are visible as historical agents. In his letter, the doctor complains about the large number and the behaviour of the Roma and Sinti who come to his office, and asks the mayor to prevent them from coming. His letter reveals racist stereotypes of Roma and Sinti as well as the hatred the doctor feels towards them. The caption to the letter states "Letter of the parish doctor to the mayor about the '...gypsy menace in Bad Ischl...'"²⁴⁸ The copy in this panel does not deal with the measures

²⁴⁷ Letter from Dr. Albert Meierl, 15.11.1939, on display in the panel "Rassenhygiene" in room 2. Similarly, the letter calling for the separation of Jewish forced labourers from the non-Jewish population. Panel "Zwangsarbeit und Arbeitslager" in room 3.

²⁴⁸ Panel "Rassenhygiene" in room 2.

against Roma and Sinti, or the letter itself. The copy simply states that Sinti and Roma were targeted on the grounds of a presumed racial difference.²⁴⁹ As such, the letter from the doctor provides an example of how people within the region perceived Roma and Sinti, and how they acted in accordance with this perception. It displays that Albert Meierl held racist views of the Roma and Sinti and, perceiving them as a menace, turned to state authority. Thus he actively engaged in local politics, calling for discrimination. The document itself, the wording chosen by the doctor, reveals this. Providing the full names of the doctor and the mayor, as well as their addresses, the expository agent does not shield either person from the responsibilities that their actions represent.²⁵⁰

Nearly all the primary sources on display in the Zeitgeschichte Museum come from non-persecuted Austrians. All the individuals represented in the sources appear close to the regime. They supported it through their actions, or were at least complicit with it. The captions sometimes states what an individual has done, which group he or she belonged to, or what their occupation was. The text does not qualify the person as a perpetrator, participant, bystander, or observer however. Evaluation of the participation shown in the primary source is left to the visitor. The primary sources reveal that the women supported the home front, and that the doctor held racist views about Roma and Sinti and expressed his hostility in words. The expository agent does not state this; the primary sources do. Since the copy does not categorise or qualify this engagement, the expository agent leaves the evaluation of these actions to the visitor. The photo as well as the document is a trace from the past and the museum exhibits them as traces, leaving their interpretation open.

This mode of representation chosen for the primary sources from the region fulfils the museum's claim to leave interpretation open. Refraining from labelling individuals as perpetrators or bystanders, the expository agent focuses on their actions instead of on the qualification and evaluation of those actions. The visitor is obliged to engage with the primary source in order to understand how the women supported the regime by mending clothes, or to comprehend the doctor's racism. The stories about the women and the doctor remain open for interpretation. The downside to this is that

²⁴⁹ Panel "Rassenhygiene" in room 2.

²⁵⁰ The expository agent has made a conscious decision not to hide any elements within the document.

the narratives told by the primary sources remain fragmented. The exhibition does not, for example, address what resulted from Albert Meierl's letter. The visitor does not know what response the doctor received, whether his appeal had consequences, and if so, what they were. There is no information about the letter itself, its reception in 1939 or afterwards, and no information is given on the journeys taken by the letter from 1945 until it came into the museum's display. Thus the exhibition shows agency, but not its effect.

Regional agency appears in the Zeitgeschichte Museum, but this agency is only visible to those visitors who can read German. Without translation the photo of the women is hard to access. Without knowing that the women depicted belong to the national socialist women's association, a visitor would not know where to situate them. The half-visible photo of Adolf Hitler might indicate complicity with the regime, but even this is guesswork. This reveals how important the caption is to decode primary sources. The letter of the doctor remains equally inaccessible to a visitor unable to read German. As a result, the agency that the expository agent displays at the regional level is only visible to some visitors.

2.4 The absent victim: hollow victim figures and placeholders for people

2.4.1 The missing representation of the victims

A core question within Holocaust representations is who the victims of the Holocaust were and how they can be represented. Covering a period that extends before and after the Holocaust, the Zeitgeschichte Museum presents the oppression and persecution of diverse people. On one hand, its exhibition addresses the victims of racial persecution and the forced labour system.²⁵¹ On the other, it represents the repression and persecution of the political opposition to both the austrofascist and the national socialist regimes. The main difference between the two is that the narrative gives agency to the political opposition from the left, while agency of the other victim groups

²⁵¹ That heavy industry coupled with forced labour is a main feature of the Alpine region is emphasised throughout the exhibit.

remains invisible. In fact, the victims themselves are largely invisible, so that the question of whether they have agency does not even appear.

The expository agent addresses the victims through the groups to which they supposedly belonged. Throughout the exhibition, the copy names the victim groups, stating that national socialists victimised Jews, Slavs, Roma and Sinti, medical patients and Homosexuals.²⁵² Continuously named are also forced labourers, Prisoners of War and concentration camp victims.²⁵³ The forced labourers either appear through their nationality, as Poles, Soviets or Italians, or simply as forced labourers.²⁵⁴ The copy refers to the concentration camp prisoners as prisoners or inmates, adding their nationality in some cases.²⁵⁵ These labels: the group name and/or nationality, is all the information that the exhibition provides about the victims. The victims are neither contextualised in the copy or captions nor represented in the displays. The visitor does not know who they were, how many were affected, what their stories were, or how these victims are known about today. The representation is strikingly empty of individual victims.²⁵⁶

The absence of individual victims in the representation becomes apparent in the first three panels that address the Holocaust. After the exhibition has presented the inclusion of Austria into Germany in 1938, the first of these panels outlines national socialist ideology, the second addresses the persecution of Jews, and the third the persecution of medical patients and Roma and Sinti (Photo no. 8).²⁵⁷ In the first

²⁵² These groups are also listed in the DÖW exhibit.

²⁵³ In part the forced labourers and the concentration camp prisoners were persecuted due to race. The first forced labourers in the region, for example, were Jewish recipients of social aid. Panel “Zwangsarbeit und Arbeitslager” in room 3.

²⁵⁴ Panel “Zwangsarbeit und Arbeitslager”; panel “Arbeitskräftemangel”; panel “Kriegsgefangene” in room 3.

²⁵⁵ Panel “Das Konzentrationslager Ebensee”; panel “KZ-Häftlinge als Arbeitskraftreserve” in room 3. Differences between the inmates are mentioned in the panel “Das Leben im KZ Ebensee”, where the Kapos are differentiated from the other inmates. This panel also states that the treatment of the inmates depended on both “nationality and ethnic belonging”. Panel “Das Leben im KZ Ebensee” in room 3.

²⁵⁶ The only exception to this is the panel on Ladislaus Zuk at the very end of the exhibition. This panel discusses Zuk, a Polish man who became an inmate in the concentration camp in Ebensee in 1943 and after his liberation stayed in Ebensee and an active participant in the commemoration of the camp. The panel on him briefly outlines his story and shows several photos of him. It is however, presented as an afterthought and not an integral part of the exhibition narrative. Panel “Ladislaus Zuk” in room 3.

²⁵⁷ Slovenes and homosexuals are addressed only nominally in the copy, while forced labourers are the focus of the third room and will be discussed below.

panel the copy lists the groups excluded from the German nation as “Jews, ‘inferior’ groups (e.g. the Slavs), Sinti and Roma, handicapped people and homosexuals.”²⁵⁸ Beyond this list, the expository agent offers no information on the victimised groups. The following panels provide more detail on the exclusionary measures, but do not elaborate on the people targeted or what became of them.

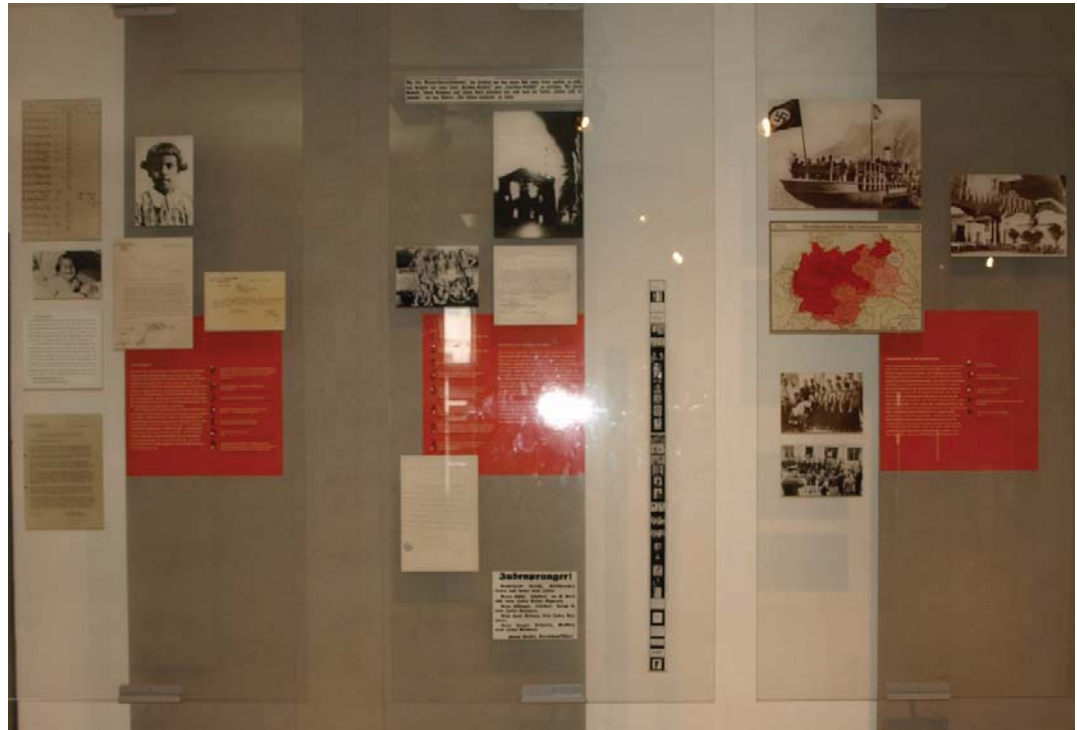


Photo no. 8: Panels on the persecutions displayed in room 2.

In most cases, the primary sources that accompany the copy do however define the victims – through the perspective of the perpetrators. The copy in the middle of the section on the persecutions of Jews before the war states that Jews were targeted directly after 1938, when the German laws became legally binding in Austria. It lists the different regulations, their implementation in the region and discusses the violence that occurred during the pogrom night in 1939. Most of the primary sources in this panel come from the local non-Jewish population. On display is a call for more explicit signs excluding Jews from stores and restaurants, a text by the mayor on the exclusion of Jews, and the letter from a local parish asking for a typewriter to speed up the issue of certificates of Aryan heritage. Images from a school film on racial hygiene,

²⁵⁸ Panel “Volksgemeinschaft und Rassenideologie” in room 2; section “Volksgemeinschaft and race ideology”, English language guide.

and an article denouncing people who shopped at Jewish stores complete the list of perpetrator documents.²⁵⁹ The perpetrator objects represent Jews in passing. The call to exclude Jews from stores, restaurants and even the forest presents Jews as a threat.²⁶⁰ Denouncing citizens who continue to buy at Jewish stores, the newspaper excerpt defines Jewish businessmen as to be excluded, shunned and avoided; the consequences of this remain hidden.²⁶¹ The images from the film represent the stereotypes of non-Aryan faces and bodies upon which Nazi racist ideology was based.²⁶² All these are provided as examples of exclusion and victimisation; representing the people victimised only as the objects of hatred, stereotypes, discrimination and persecution.

In those rare cases where the people victimised do appear, the expository agent ignores their individual stories and instead uses them as examples serving the broader narrative. The last two photos in the panel on the persecution of the Jews show the burning synagogue in Linz and a photo from a sport club in Gmunden in the 1920s. The captions to the photo of the burning synagogue in Linz in 1938 simply state that the pogroms of November 9th 1938 in Upper Austria occurred, mainly in Linz.²⁶³ The expository agent provides no other information on the pogroms and does not refer specifically to the burning of the synagogue, or to the Jewish community in Linz. The second photo, of the sport club in Gmunden represents individuals, but not their stories. The photo shows 11 men in soccer uniforms posing in front of a lake in the alpine region. One of the men has been marked by a little star, drawn onto the photo above his head (Photo no. 9). The caption states: "Gmundner Sport club, towards the end of the twenties. In 1938 the Jewish members were excluded on the basis of the "Arierparagraph" (*Viktor Wlk, player and functionary)."²⁶⁴ The caption clarifies that the star marks Viktor Wlk. In the context of the exclusions, the expository agent identifies Wlk as Jewish and an active participant in the local sports club, from which he was excluded in 1938. The visitor is told nothing about Wlk or his life,

²⁵⁹ Panel "Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden" in room 2.

²⁶⁰ Panel "Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden" in room 2.

²⁶¹ Document "Judenpranger" in Panel "Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden" in room 2.

²⁶² Film stills from an educational film on racial hygiene shown in schools in the panel "Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden" in room 2.

²⁶³ Panel "Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden" in room 2.

²⁶⁴ My translation. In German: "Gmundner Sportklub, Ende der Zwanziger Jahre. 1938 wurden die jüdischen Mitglieder aufgrund des "Arierparagraphen" ausgeschlossen (*Viktor Wlk, Spieler und Funktionär)." Caption to the photo in the panel "Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden" in room 2.

however. In this representation Wlk merely serves as an example of how the society excluded individual Jewish men.²⁶⁵



Photo no. 9: Photo of the sports club in the 1920s, displayed in the panel "Entrechtung und Verfolgung von Juden" in room 2.

While this case shows how the expository agent uses an individual victim as an example for the exclusion of individuals, in other representations individuals are used to represent entire victim groups. This occurs in the next panel of the same section, which presents the persecutions of Roma and Sinti and the victims of the medical system. The copy outlines the persecution of medical patients and states that the system also targeted Roma, Sinti and Slovenes. Most documents on display are perpetrator documents, but two represent individual victims. One photo depicts a child murdered in a medical institution, another shows a Roma child, Sidonie Adlersburg. In the iconic image, well known in Austria, the girl looks directly into the camera (Photo no. 10).²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Aside from Wlk, this panel represents no other Jew. A few other panels depict Jews, for example the Jewish businessman Ludwig Schwarz or the pharmacist Sigmund Berger. Even though the caption provides the names of both these men, their stories are not told beyond the fact that both were forced to emigrate. The photos are shown together with a document requesting the Aryansisation of their businesses. Photo of Ludwig Schwarz's store, and photographic portrait of Sigmund Berger, on display in the panel "Arisierung" in room 2.

²⁶⁶ I will discuss the role of iconic photographs in Holocaust representations in chapter 3.3, when I analyse the Holocaust Emlékközpont. On iconic photos, see: Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung. Öffentlicher Gebrauch von Fotografien aus nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern nach 1945* (Berlin: Akademie, 1998).

The caption states: "Sidonie Adlersburg. Victim of the persecution of gypsy children."²⁶⁷ As it is part of the school curriculum, with a popular book and film made about her as well as literature on the reception of her story in Austria, many Austrians know the narrative about Sidonie Adlersburg – which might be why the expository agent gives no further information.²⁶⁸ The display as it is, however, defines her simply as a victim of the persecution of Roma, making her a representative of "gypsy" children persecuted. Thus, she stands for the persecution of all Roma children.²⁶⁹



Photo no. 10: Photo of Sidonie Adlersburg on display in the panel "Rassenhygiene" in room 2.

This representation of all by one is problematic, as it functions by substituting plurality with a single example that is not elaborated upon. Instead of narrating her story and reflecting on where it exemplifies the persecutions in general, and where it does not, the expository agent simply shows the photo of Sidonie Adlersburg. She is qualified as a victim of the persecution of Roma and Sinti, and apparently no more needs to be said about her. This removes the individual details usually attached to an

²⁶⁷ Panel "Rassenhygiene" in room 2.

²⁶⁸ Erich Hackl and Ursula Baumhauer, ed., *Abschied von Sidonie. Materialien zu einem Buch und seiner Geschichte* (Wien, Diogenes 2000).

²⁶⁹ The same representation technique is used for the medical patients, whereby the one child shown is a representative of all the children who became victims of the so-called Euthanasia program. Panel "Rassenhygiene" in room 2.

example and reduces her story to the mere fact of her death. An example without details is empty. The Roma and Sinti represented by her photo remain unknown; their suffering untold. This reduces the complexities of individual stories of persecution. The exemplary use of the photo also implies that the stories of all such were much the same. Growing up with Austrian foster parents, the national socialist welfare institution in Austria took Sidonie from her family and deported her together with other Roma and Sinti. She died in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Her foster parents tried to prevent the deportation and actively searched for Sidonie after the regional authorities had deported her, which is partly why her story became widely known after 1945. While her story is certainly worth telling, it is nevertheless exceptional. Her persecution, regardless of her upbringing, represents how merciless the persecutions were, but is not representative of the experiences of most Roma and Sinti in Upper Austria. Adults are notably not represented here, but neither are other Sinti and Roma children.

Other victims are equally absent or used as exemplary representations for entire groups. Similar examples to the ones above can be found for the forced labourers and the concentration camp prisoners. A panel on forced labour presents the work done by Jews and Russian Prisoners of War in a forced labour camp in Traunsee.²⁷⁰ The display names some of the inmates, but the labourers themselves are invisible.²⁷¹ The panels on the agrarian sector show individual workers labelled as forced labourers, only identified as Italian workers, Soviet forced labourers, and Prisoners of War.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Panel "Zwangsarbeit und Arbeitslager" in room 3.

²⁷¹ The guards of the camp are shown, lining up in front of the main gate for the camera. Photo displayed in the panel "Zwangsarbeit und Arbeitslager" in room 3.

²⁷² At a celebration, workers defined by the caption as Italian, line up around a construction site and raise their right arms in the Nazi salute. Soviet forced labourers are shown without names or further contextualisation. Photos in the panel "Arbeitskräftemangel" in room 3. In the next panel three photos show of Prisoners of War. The copy states that many died in the Prisoners of War camps, a situation which only changed when they were needed for labour. Panel "Kriegsgefangene" in room 3. One photo, of a march, indicates the large numbers of PoWs, another shows an individual prisoner working in a quarry, and the third shows two black prisoners from the French troops. The caption to the this photo states: "'Gefangene Afrikaner' Farbige französische Kriegsgefangene, Ende 1940." ["'Captured Africans' Coloured French Prisoners of War, end of 1940."] Panel "Kriegsgefangene" in room 3. Especially in the case of the photo of the saluting Italian labourers, as well as that of the two black Prisoners of War, photographed on their own as an exotic souvenir, attention to the stories of the individuals represented in the photos as well as the histories of the photos themselves would have complicated and pluralised the exhibition narrative.

The panels on the concentration camp in Ebensee state that the camp was overcrowded and briefly describe the living conditions of the prisoners, but the inmates themselves are largely invisible.²⁷³

There are a few exceptions to the overriding absence of concentration camp victims. Individual survivors tell their stories in the interviews at the computer station. The survivors are visible and give first person accounts of their own experiences. These interviews are not an integral part of the main exhibition, however, but provided as supplementary information.²⁷⁴ The other exception to the absent concentration camp victims are the people who appear in the film shown at the end of the exhibition. The US Signal Corps shot the footage directly after the liberation of the forced labour camp in Ebensee.²⁷⁵ The camera team filmed the survivors they encountered as evidence of the camp conditions. Responding to US Army directives, they filmed individual survivors, the camp grounds, the surrounding area, and the population of the region. The footage shows a multitude of former prisoners, malnourished, on the brink of starvation, or dead. It visually defines the former prisoners as unworldly and beyond the visitors' understanding.²⁷⁶ In the Zeitgeschichte Museum this representation is an exception and only appears in the film footage. Until this point the exhibition of the Zeitgeschichte Museum has not introduced the victims beyond naming them as groups, so that this sudden appearance of the starved victims on the brink of death is not directly linked to a wider narrative about the victims, but rather to a narrative

²⁷³ Panel "Das Konzentrationslager Ebensee", "Das Leben im KZ Ebensee" in room 3. In the exhibition at the museum concentration camp victims appear in the film shot by the Signal Corps, one photo shows the survivors in the camp, while another shows a pile of dead bodies. Panel "Entnazifizierung durch die Besatzungsmächte" in room 3. By contrast, the exhibition in the tunnel presents concentration camp victims in large numbers. Photos taken after the liberation display the victims as the universal victim, mostly as surviving ghosts from another world.

²⁷⁴ These people are presented as having been liberated or as survivors – no longer as victims. The same applies to a photo of former Polish prisoners marching through Ebensee after the liberation. Photo in the panel "Die Befreiung" in room 3.

²⁷⁵ Film shown after the panel "Die Befreiung" in room 3. On the Signal Corps' films see: Ulrike Weckel, *Beschämende Bilder. Deutsche Reaktionen auf alliierte Dokumentarfilme über befreite Konzentrationslager* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012), 45-110, 50-58. Showing the clapperboard to remind the viewer of the camera operator's presence, and including scenes with the local population, the films contextualise their own production. The Signal Corps were instructed to provide evidence of the crimes, film the local population and situate the camps in their surroundings.

²⁷⁶ In the third chapter, turning to Hungary, I will analyse a representation that centres on victims represented in this way when I examine the Holocaust Emlékközpont, where this representation is the norm.

about the concentration camp and its liberation, within which the footage is shown. The display remains but one exception to the absence of victims.

In summary; the expository agent tells no narratives about the individuals persecuted on the basis of their assigned membership of particular groups. The text merely defines them as victims and the display shows that they were the objects of discrimination and persecution. In the rare cases where individuals do appear in the exhibition, the expository agent uses them as lone representatives of groups that are not further described. The stories and the lives of the people persecuted remain unknown. The effect is that the expository agent represents the victims as vague silhouettes and empty labels, providing not much else than the label “Jew” “Roma” or “Homosexual”, occasionally supplemented by an example photo. The question of whether these people had agency and what this agency might have meant for their persecution is thus redundant, and does not appear.

2.4.2 Sites instead of people

Individual victims and their particular narratives are absent in the exhibition. Nevertheless, the exhibition represents their suffering. The absence of individual narratives from the victims is complemented by an absence of the individual bodies of victims. In place of suffering victims, the exhibition shows the sites of their suffering. Empty sites, clear of individual bodies, represent the working and living conditions of the concentration camp prisoners and the forced labourers. The empty sites allude to the victims via the absence of their bodies. The absent body, just as the absent individual narrative, hides the victims’ historical agency.

The first time the exhibition alludes to the victims without showing their bodies is when it represents forced labour. The exhibition states that forced labour was important before the war, but most significant during it.²⁷⁷ The exhibition narrative first introduces forced labour done by Jews, people from Eastern Europe and Prisoners of War in the agrarian sector and the regional industry. It then turns to the labour of the concentration camp prisoners. The primary sources – in this case photos – that represent forced labour in the region are strikingly empty of people. With the exception of one, showing SS men, all the photos depict different locations in Ebensee: a factory,

²⁷⁷ Panel “Zwangsarbeit und Arbeitslager”; panel “KZ-Häftlinge als Arbeitskraftreserve”, both in room 3.

train tracks leading to, and the entrance of, the underground oil refinery, as well as the path via which the prisoners went on their way to work. The last photo shows inscriptions made by prisoners on the walls of an underground production site. All these sites are deserted and, except in the last photo, the former presence of the forced labourers is not visible. People are also absent in the display on the camp structure and the living conditions within it.²⁷⁸ Including a model of the camp, aerial photos, and several photographs from the camp taken after 1945, the exhibition depicts the camp extensively. The photos show the camp from the outside (Photo no. 11) and, a little later, from the inside; showing the electric fence, the barrack for the sick, the crematoria and a mass grave dug just before the liberation of the camp (Photo no. 12).²⁷⁹



Photo no. 11: Photos of the concentration camp in Ebensee from outside. On display in the panel "Das Konzentrationslager Ebensee" in room 3.

²⁷⁸ Panel "Das Leben im KZ Ebensee" in room 3.

²⁷⁹ These are very different from the photographs in the exhibition in the tunnel, which includes many photos that also depict prisoners.

The photos of the empty sites replace a depiction of the terror that happened at these locations. The concentration camp sites in particular stand for suffering and murder.²⁸⁰ This is not visible within the photos themselves, however. They show the landscape, mountains in the background, the barracks among trees, the fence or a watchtower (Photo no. 11). It is only through collective knowledge combined with the captions that these sites are understood as sites of suffering. Interestingly the copy states that the concentration camp sites were overcrowded, going on to describe the brutal and violent atmosphere in the camp.²⁸¹ Even without this description the concentration camp sites – assuming they are recognised as such – are immediately associated with terror. The work sites, the factory, or the entrance to the tunnel, are less iconic, so that the photos need the copy, which specifies the suffering that the empty sites represent. The main text describes the horrific working conditions, under which many died of exhaustion. Copy and captions outline heavy labour, inadequate nutrition and insufficient clothing, as well as the expected death of the prisoners. This associates the work sites with harsh working conditions, hunger, missing safety measures and death.²⁸²

The emptiness of the photos implies that it is impossible to depict what happened to people there. The empty sites turn the past into an unattainable image, one imagined when seeing the site, but for which, at the same time, no image exists. The victim's body is absent, alluding to suffering, often imagined as fatal. The bodies that once walked at the site are gone. Bodies that were present when the pictures were taken are equally absent, as if not to disturb this imagined suffering with a more recent story.²⁸³ This imagined suffering represented by the empty sites, enlarges the actual, specific suffering, to an all-encompassing one; so that these deaths become an abstract imagination of terror. The photos replace specific narratives with their symbolic

²⁸⁰ Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget. Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 98-100.

²⁸¹ The imagination of the camp as overcrowded contrasts starkly with the empty sites in the photos. Panel "Das Konzentrationslager in Ebensee." Similarly, the title of one panel "Life in the concentration camp Ebensee" appears almost ironic in relation to the photos. Panel "Das Leben im KZ Ebensee" in room 3.

²⁸² Panel "KZ-Häftlinge als Arbeitskraftreserve" in room 3.

²⁸³ The bodies that walked the sites after 1945 are, however, shown in the section that deals with the concentration camp after 1945. Panel "Das Lager nach 1945" in room 3. One photo actually does show people at the site, very small on the left side of the photo, but they would only be identified if a very observant visitor studied the image closely. Photo in the panel "Das Konzentrationslager in Ebensee" in room 3.

representation by the site. Historical agency of the victim, reactions to the working conditions, attempts to survive; none of these can emerge even as a possibility within this imagination, since the victims' narratives are not shown.

Two of the photos in this display, at first glance also absent of people, in fact constitute exceptions to this replacement. The photos show the victims' bodies after death, after their transformation by the treatment in the camp. The first photo shows the crematorium, the second a mass grave; both represent the dead. The photo of the oven shows the ashes inside, effectively synonymous with burned bodies (Photo no. 12). An iconic representation, it should be understood even without the caption stating that the photo shows an oven of the concentration camp in Ebensee.²⁸⁴ Since the photo of the mass grave shows little more than a patch of soil in front of the mountains, the visitor here needs the help of the caption to identify it (Photo no. 13).²⁸⁵ Read with the caption, the photo depicts the dead bodies, this time buried underground. Both photos do not replace the dead bodies, but represent them as they were, burned or buried, in their transformed state. The camp has eradicated the victims through the dehumanising and de-individualising handling of the dead by the perpetrators. By burning the body, or by burying it in a mass grave, the perpetrators destroyed the last sign of individuality. The photos of the mass grave and the burned body represent this destruction of individuality. It is a crucial dilemma in Holocaust representations that most primary sources left behind by the Holocaust testify to the perpetrators' intention to destroy individuals' individuality. To counter this, the presence of individual narratives of the people victimised, the presence of their bodies, as well as a reflection on the lack of individuality is even more important. The photos here represent the destruction of individuality, but the exhibition offers no alternative image to counter it.

²⁸⁴ Panel "Das Leben im KZ Ebensee" in room 3.

²⁸⁵ The caption states "Massengrab im Konzentrationslager Ebensee, das kurz vor der Befreiung angelegt wurde. Sammlung Hilda Lepetit". [Mass grave at the concentration camp Ebensee, dug shortly before the liberation] Panel "Das Leben im KZ Ebensee" in room 3.



Photo no. 12: Photos of the crematoria and the inside of an oven in Ebensee. On display in the panel "Das Leben im KZ Ebensee" in room 3.



Photo no. 13: Photo of the mass grave displayed in the panel "Das Leben im KZ Ebensee" in room 3.

2.4.3 Clothes instead of people

It is not only with the empty sites, but also with the prisoner uniform that the expository agent replaces the individual victim to represent that victim via absence. In place of the victim and his narrative, the exhibition shows the clothing of a concentration camp prisoner. Again, this mode of representation hides agency, even though the victim's engagement with his or her clothing was essential. During imprisonment a person's handling of the clothing strongly influenced their survival chances, while after the liberation the uniforms became a political marker that the survivors used in their fight for recognition. In both situations, individual agency is linked to clothing.

Replacing the individual victim with the clothing, the Zeitgeschichte Museum displays the concentration camp uniform of a former prisoner together with a few other material objects. These serve to represent the concentration camp and its prisoners at the same time.²⁸⁶ The visitor sees a cap above a worn jacket, hung at the body height of the ideal visitor and placed behind glass. On the ground lie a pair of shoes and barbed wire, and a bowl holding a spoon in front of a metal container (Photo no. 14). All the objects appear old and the expository agent presents them as relics from the past encapsulated for viewing in the present. The cap and the jacket are worn out, the colours faded and the shoes dirty, their leather brittle and broken. The plate appears dirty and the spoon is made from cheap material. The metal container is hard to identify but was used to hold water. It is rusty and old, as is the barbed wire and the piece of wood attached to it. The vitrine also shows cards used to keep record of the prisoners. Next to the cards is a legend that explains their use and, at the very bottom of this list, provides information on the other material objects. This states that the clothing belonged to Stanislaw Rudzki, a former Polish prisoner in the sub-camp Gusen.²⁸⁷ The shoes are identified as "shoes, as they were worn in the concentration camp" and the legend further states that the objects today belong to the museum

²⁸⁶ Bärbel Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik der gestreiften KZ-Häftlingskleidung* (Oldenburg: Universität Oldenburg, 2000), 254. Schmidt's well-done, although at times repetitive, overview of the uniforms and their symbolic meanings is one of the few studies that discusses the uniforms and their representations.

²⁸⁷ Even though the clothing was not worn by a prisoner in Ebensee, this will most likely be assumed since the rest of the exhibit deals with the camp in Ebensee. The shoes might be from a prisoner in Ebensee, but the legend claims only that shoes like these were worn here, once again leaving the direct link between the object and the camp open to interpretation.

Ebensee.²⁸⁸ Placing it low down and in fine, small print, the expository agent has not prioritised this information about the uniform. It is not the information about Stanislaw Rudzki that is important, but the uniform itself –or rather its symbolic meaning. The prisoner uniform represents all concentration camp prisoners and their homogeneous suffering. No red panel accompanies this display and the missing copy implies that these objects function without words, speaking for themselves.²⁸⁹

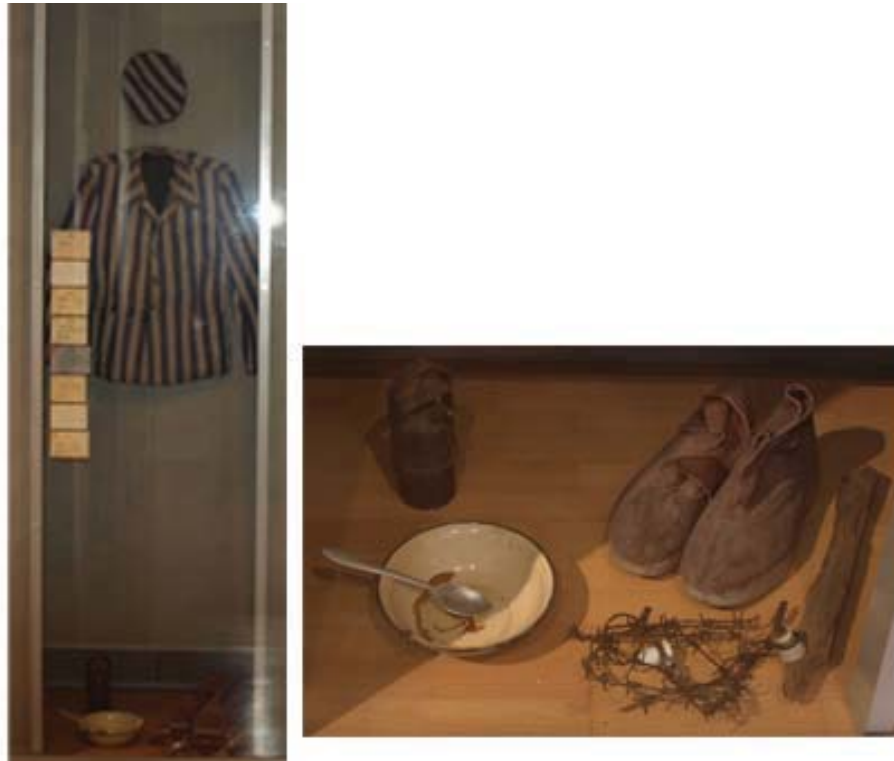


Photo no. 14: Display of the concentration camp uniform and associated objects in room 3.

The objects are iconic items used worldwide to represent the concentration camps in general and their inmates specifically. Commonly the blue and white striped uniform is associated with imprisonment in a concentration camp or a Holocaust victim more generally. Theodore Eicke, head of the SS institution overseeing the concentration camps until 1939, introduced the uniforms in 1938. Prisoners wore them in most camps until 1942, when, due to a shortage of uniforms, prisoners were once

²⁸⁸ My translation. In German: "Schuhe, wie sie im KZ getragen wurden." Legend to the display of the clothing in room 3.

²⁸⁹ Text is displayed here, but the authoritative voice of the expository agent, otherwise presented on the red panels, is absent. Schmidt states that such clothes become more decorative and symbolic objects than historical sources. Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 255.

again clothed in marked civil clothing or uniforms from dead Soviet Prisoners of War.²⁹⁰ The aim behind the uniform was to create a visual marker, easily recognisable and suggestive of legitimate imprisonment.²⁹¹ How an individual prisoner dealt with the uniform, how they managed to wash and mend it, or add insulation to it, could determine life or death, and the uniforms are crucial in most survivor accounts. After 1945, the uniform became one of the strongest symbols for the concentration camp prisoners, drawing on the same visual clues as before 1945, but reversed in meaning.²⁹² Survivors wore them when fighting for their rights and the uniforms featured prominently in many photos and films.²⁹³ Stripes on posters, book covers, in articles and other visual representation associated the pattern itself with the camps and their prisoners.²⁹⁴ The uniform became a visible marker for the survivors and, by extension, for imprisonment in a concentration camp.²⁹⁵ Linked today to the suffering in the concentration camp, the uniform stands for victimisation, unjust imprisonment and extreme suffering.²⁹⁶ The insignia that accompany the uniform, usually sewn onto it, are also symbolically charged. Many museums use the triangles to represent concentration camp prisoners and the camps.²⁹⁷ Of all the triangles, the museums most often own and exhibit the red one of the political prisoners. Due to this, the insignia of the

²⁹⁰ Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 66-74.

²⁹¹ Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 92; Bärbel Schmidt, "'So ein deutsches KZ ist etwas für Männer nichts für kleine Mädchen.' Uniformierung von Frauen und Männern in deutschen Konzentrationslagern," in *Uniformierungen in Bewegung. Vestimentäre Praktiken zwischen Vereinheitlichung, Kostümierung und Maskerade*, ed. by Gabriele Mentges (Münster/New York/München: Waxmann, 2007), 173-188, 177.

²⁹² Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 8; Schmidt, "'So ein deutsches KZ'", 173.

²⁹³ The black-and-white photos and film led to the occasional assumption that the uniforms were black and white. Some uniforms were blue/black/white. Alec S. Tulkoff, *Counterfeiting the Holocaust. A Historical and Archival Examination of Holocaust Artefacts* (Atglen: Schiffer, 2000), 50.

²⁹⁴ Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism. Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 241; Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 243. 261.

²⁹⁵ Holian, *Between National Socialism*, 218; Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 273-276. Some uniforms worn were resewn after 1945. Schmidt, "'So ein deutsches KZ'." Most uniforms were destroyed after the liberation to prevent the spreading of disease. On the production of counterfeit uniforms after 1945 see: Tulkoff, *Counterfeiting the Holocaust*, 60-61.

²⁹⁶ Both Holian and Schmidt argue that it stands for martyrdom in the camps. Schmidt, "'So ein deutsches KZ'," 173; Holian, *Between National Socialism*, 218. While martyrdom is a prominent symbol connected to the uniform from 1945 to the late 1950s, the Zeitgeschichte Museum's display does not feature the clothes in this way. I believe that the notion of the camp prisoner as martyr has changed significantly due to the turn to tragedy and the universal victim. Today the concentration camp prisoner is no longer envisioned as a martyr or a hero, and due to this, the martyrdom is no longer associated with the uniform.

²⁹⁷ Other associated insignia are prisoners number or particular armbands worn over the uniform.

political prisoner comes to represent the concentration camp prisoners.²⁹⁸ Despite this, I assume that many visitors, not necessarily familiar with the political symbolism of the red triangle, associate every concentration camp uniform with Jewish prisoners.

While every uniform has its own narrative, visible partly in the uniform itself, the expository agent at the Zeitgeschichte Museum does not contextualise the prisoner clothing or the objects shown alongside it. The visitor does not know when this uniform was used, how it was produced and distributed, or how it was worn.²⁹⁹ Equally unspecified is the experience of wearing this uniform, the cold, ill-fitting, rough material as well as the possible discrimination felt through it.³⁰⁰ Active engagement with the uniform remains hidden. The history of the object after 1945, for example its donation to the museum by its former owner, is not mentioned and the cultural meaning of the uniform as a symbol is not reflected upon. This is in keeping with how much literature and many other museum representations deal with the uniforms; not commenting on them or their meanings. Bärbel Schmidt has shown how historians and museum professionals alike fail to differentiate between summer and winter uniforms, the different materials used and the different periods that the prisoners wore them.³⁰¹ Instead, literature and exhibition practices suggest that all prisoners wore the same type of uniform at all times.³⁰² Representations rarely mention gender differences, for example, and most uniforms on display are male ones. The uniforms for women have never gained significant visual acknowledgement.³⁰³ This hides women's presence as prisoners in the concentration camps and silences their particular suffering, while at the same time subsuming women within male representations.

²⁹⁸ The dominance of the red triangle relates to the hierarchy among the prisoner groups after 1945, the collection practice of the museums, and the active engagement of political prisoners in their (museum) representations. For more detail on the reasons why the uniforms of the political prisoners are the most frequently displayed in museums see: Schmidt, "So ein deutsches KZ," 182. On the self-perception of the political prisoners as the elite of former concentration camp prisoners see also: Holian, *Between National Socialism*, 211-218. On the triangles in general, and the different meanings and conditions of survival expressed through clothing see: Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 164-170.

²⁹⁹ On the production of the uniforms by female prisoners in Ravensbrück employed by Texled, as well as the distribution of the uniform see: Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 95-132.

³⁰⁰ On wearing the uniform as well as its perception by the population see: Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 133-139, 146-155, 140-143.

³⁰¹ Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 7-13, 242-243.

³⁰² The wide variation among the uniforms is described by Tulkoff, *Counterfeiting the Holocaust*, 50.

³⁰³ On women's uniforms see: Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 174-184; Schmidt, "So ein deutsches KZ," 173-188, 182.

While the individual prisoner is absent in the whole display, the clothing nonetheless alludes to the physical existence of a prisoner. A person wore this jacket and ate from the dish, and it is no coincidence that the expository agent has hung the uniform as if it were being worn. The visitor is provoked by the absence of a body to imagine one. Of the former owner the visitor knows only the name and nationality. The ideal visitor is given space to generalise this prisoner and imagine him to be like all other prisoners. The display evokes a uniform image of these prisoners and their bodies. The uniform and the associated objects symbolise the suffering in the camp endured by an unknown and generalised prisoner population, closely associated with death.

The lack of contextualisation and the emphasis on the symbolic meaning also applies to the other objects in this display at the Zeitgeschichte Museum. While the shoes are less famous than the uniform, they often complement displays of uniforms and draw attention in particular to the ill fit of the clothing, which also failed to protect prisoners from the weather. A spoon and a bowl are equally common and effectively synonymous with meagre provisions, hunger and starvation. Finally, the barbed wire is just as iconic as the uniforms. The wire became famous in a similarly way through the photos of the liberation, which either viewed the camp sites through barbed wire, or showed survivors behind it. Once a symbol of the taming of the Wild West, barbed wire today can also symbolise imprisonment or warfare.³⁰⁴ A largely universal symbol it is flexible in what it references. It can stand for a move to demarcate, to keep people out, and at the same time, to fence people in, but with the inherent associations of force and pain.³⁰⁵ The context then establishes the specific meaning the wire communicates. Representing the camp fences, the wire stands for forceful encampment and the prevention of escape, and marks the suffering within its borders. With the electric transmitter visible in Ebensee, the expository agent emphasises the deadliness of the fence and the camp.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Detlef Hoffmann, "Auschwitz im visuellen Gedächtnis. Das Chaos des Verbrechens und die symbolische Ordnung der Bilder," in *Auschwitz: Geschichte, Rezeption und Wirkung*, ed. by Fritz Bauer Institute (Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 1996), 223-257, 251-252.

³⁰⁵ Alan Krell, *The devil's rope. A cultural history of barbed wire* (Norwich: Reaktion Books, 2002), 48.

³⁰⁶ The electric charge makes the fence deadly as is often noted in literature about the Holocaust. For the electric fence as a symbol of the concentration camps see: Krell, *The devil's rope*, 75-85.

With the exception of the Museo Diffuso, every museum I analysed in depth displays a prisoner uniform. One can easily apply my analysis of the uniforms in the Zeitgeschichte Museum to the other museums. The Heeresgeschichtliche Museum, the DÖW, the Nemzeti Múzeum, the Nogradi Történeti Múzeum, the Museo della Liberazione, the Museo al Deportati and the Museo Ebraico in Rome also all display prisoner uniforms (Photo no. 15 to Photo no. 21).³⁰⁷ They all use glass vitrines and show the uniform either partially or display it at full height, imitating a body or how a person might have worn or folded the clothes. Many exhibitions show other objects that supplement the uniforms, so that a stone, barbed wire, cutlery or shoes are also on display. The DÖW, the Museo della Deportazione and the Nemzeti Múzeum show uniforms of both men and women (f.e. Photo no. 16) and the DÖW and the Museo della Deportazione identify their gender specificity. All the other museums simply display male uniforms. While the DÖW, the Heeresgeschichtliche Museum and the Museo della Liberazione show a uniform of a political prisoner, the DÖW mentions the prisoner category explicitly and it can be inferred at the Museo della Liberazione. Most striking is that only the Zeitgeschichte Museum and the Museo Ebraico in Rome provide the name of the person who the uniform belonged to. The Museo Ebraico also informs about the date the uniform was made and gives a brief biography of the wearer (Photo no. 21), but even in this display, in the end, the identity of the individual is less important than the symbolic meaning of the uniform.³⁰⁸ None of the institutions offer information on the type of uniform shown, the differences between uniforms, their usage in the camps, or their history after 1945. The Museo della Deportazione is the only museum that I encountered in my research that describes some of the experiences connected to wearing a concentration camp uniform.

³⁰⁷ Interestingly the uniforms displayed in the Museo della Liberazione, the DÖW and the Nogradi Történeti Múzeum are not the striped uniforms, but the exhibitions do not draw attention to this deviation from the expected norm. The uniform of the Nogradi Történeti Múzeum has no label at all, and is hard to identify. I assume that it is a concentration camp or collection camp uniform due to the sewn on number, yellow bar and red triangle, but I have no verification of this (Photo no. 20).

³⁰⁸ This is also the conclusion of Schmidt, who states that most museums do not connect the uniforms to specific people, and where a connection is made, the uniform did not necessarily belong to the person who is discussed. Schmidt, *Geschichte und Symbolik*, 163, 259-260.



Photo no. 15: Prisoner uniform in the Holokauszt Emlékközpont.



Photo no. 16: Male and female prisoner uniforms of political prisoners in the DÖW.



Photo no. 17: Prisoner uniform of a political prisoner in the Heeresgeschichtliche Museum.



Photo no. 18: Male prisoner uniforms in the Museo della Deportazione. The one on the left is a reproduction.



Photo no. 19: Male prisoner uniform of a political prisoner in the Museo al Deportati.



Photo no. 20: Prisoner uniform at the Nogradi Történeti Múzeum.



Photo no. 21: Male prisoner uniform of Marcel Bukowiecki in the Museo Ebraico in Rome.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ The label states that the uniform was made ca. 1943. Its former owner is shown in the picture in the right hand corner. The label briefly tells his story; born in Poland he fled to Nice in 1929, where he was arrested. He survived numerous camps and lived in France after the war, where he died in 1989.

The prisoner uniform is a display object that functions very well across national borders. It stands for both the concentration camps and the prisoners. As a general symbol, the uniform represents all camps and all prisoners. The uniform represents a feature common across the camps; emphasis of this commonality suggests, by extension that other conditions in the camps were the same. While the individual owner is not important, the uniform gestures to a body that once wore this uniform. This homogenises the prisoners into a uniform, unified group. The symbolic strength of the uniform hides the individual victim who wore it and engaged with it, just as it hides the conditions under which people produced and distributed the uniform, and the narrative of it as a primary source after 1945. The museums do not tell the unique histories of the uniforms they display; neither the stories of the people who wore them in the past or owned them later, nor of the clothing itself. With the individual victim absent and replaced symbolically, agency connected to the uniforms both during and after the persecutions, vanishes.

2.5 Individual historical agents: men and women from the resistance

2.5.1 Individual historical agents

While the expository agent only gestures to the agency of the perpetrators and leaves the victims invisible, a classic historical agent does appear at the Zeitgeschichte Museum when the exhibition represents the resistance fighters. Telling a distinctive story with a clear beginning, middle and end-point, the expository agent constructs autonomous agents that influence history. Even though the austrofascist and national socialist regime victimised the resistance, the Zeitgeschichte Museum does not represent the resistance fighters as victims, but as heroic agents.

As well as the references to the resistance in the opening film, three areas of the main exhibition deal with resistance fighters. The first discusses the socialist and communist fights against the austrofascist regime, the second displays different people who opposed National Socialism, and the third presents different resistance fighters in detail. All these sections, appearing at different areas in the exhibition, include the word resistance in their titles, linking the areas and establishing a consecutive narrative that evolves gradually. The first section states the existence of a resistance and

names individuals within it. The second section displays the individuals in person and the third tells their stories in detail.

The first section addressing the resistance deals with the reactions of the socialists and communists to their oppression from 1934 onwards. Prohibited by the austrofascist regime, both groups tried to continue their political work and the communists in particular fought actively against the new regime.³¹⁰ The copy on the left of this first panel remains within the structural language already analysed, but on the right it leaves structural history behind and highlights individual agency.³¹¹ It deals with the denunciation of an illegal communist meeting in 1936, which led to the police arresting 14 men who were then sentenced to up to one year in prison. Foreshadowing the narrative on the resistance, the copy states that “some of the men were also active after 1938 in the resistance against the national socialists”.³¹² The police report displayed names all of the 14 men and the photos highlight three who became resistance fighters and are discussed in more detail later. The caption singles out Franz Jarisch in a group picture, and identifies Resi and Ferdinand Pesendorfer, as “Members of the resistance in Bad Ischl”.³¹³ While the copy still refers to the socialists and communists as homogenous units, the caption names individual members, but does not outline their actions fully at this point.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ The austrofascist regime is discussed in detail in the panels of the first room, particularly in the panels “Staatsbewußtsein, Demokratie und Parlament”; “Notverordnungsregime”; “Ständestaat und Antimarxismus”; “Februar 1934”; “Autoritäres Regime und antifaschistische Bewegung”, all in room 1.

³¹¹ Documents accompanying this panel come from the 1934 case against Johann Scheutz, who was prosecuted for High Treason for distributing illegal flyers allegedly attacking the government. Several of the flyers are displayed alongside a photo of him and documents from the trial. Panel “Widerstandsaktionen von SP und KP” in room 2.

³¹² My translation. In German: “Einige der Männer waren nach 1938 auch im Widerstand gegen die Nationalsozialisten aktiv.” Panel “Die Hoiseradalm” in room 2. At the illegal meeting only men were present and thus the copy highlights that men continued to resist after 1938. This hides the continued activity of the women, especially of Resi Pesendorfer, who had also already been represented here.

³¹³ My translation. In German: “Mitglieder des Widerstands Bad Ischl.” Panel “Die Hoiseradalm” in room 2. Franz Jarisch appears as the local leader of the communist groups in this panel. His story is only partially told in the exhibit. He fought in Spain, was arrested and fled together with Joseph Plieseis from the camp in Argeles. In 1941 he was sent to the concentration camp in Dachau where he died in 1942. Franz Jarisch and Ferdinand Pesendorfer appear also in the list about the arrested men as well as in the newspaper article.

³¹⁴ In part, the actions can be deduced from the documents on display. Newspaper article from the Neue Wiener Tagblatt, 23. April 1936. Panel “Die Hoiseradalm” in room 2.

The emphasis on the individual is also visible in the next display dealing with the resistance. The expository agent projects portrait photos of resistance fighters onto a pillar (Photo no. 22). The screening, shown in a loop, begins when the visitor enters this part of the exhibit. The opening copy superimposed over the first image references the earlier panel, explaining that the resistance formed during the austro-fascist regime, and that members of the communist and socialist groups continued to resist after 1938.³¹⁵ The screening cites both religious and political motivations and states that impending defeat and scarce provisions led to increased participation in the resistance towards the end of the war. The copy further defines the group led by Josef Plieseis, to whom Resi and Franz Pesendorfer belonged, as the one most important to the resistance.³¹⁶



Photo no. 22: Screening "Widerstand gegen das NS-Regime" showing Sepp Plieseis in room 2.

³¹⁵ This is one of the rare occasions where the word Austrofascism is used in the exhibit. Screening "Widerstand gegen das NS-Regeime im Salzkammergut" in room 2.

³¹⁶ The name provided differs from the earlier panel. Franz is a variant of Ferdinand and while Austrians would generally know this, a visitor unfamiliar with Austrian names might be confused. Screening "Widerstand gegen das NS-Regeime im Salzkammergut" in room 2.

The screening shows 23 men, nine women, one couple and three locations. The captions below each photo states who is shown and what they did or, for the sites, where it is and why this site was relevant to the resistance.³¹⁷ Men and women, Catholic and political resistance fighters are shown in the same display. The photos capture attention and the large portraits are screened so that the eyes are at roughly the same height with the ideal visitor (Photo no. 22, Photo no. 25). The presentation is the highlight of room two, and marks the transition from Austrofascism to National Socialism. The section following it shows the first persecutions, the reign of terror, and the cult around Adolf Hitler. The loop is rather long and probably often not watched in its entirety, especially once the visitor realises that the format remains the same and that each image shows another individual. Nevertheless, the visitor can glance at the screening while looking at the rest of this section. The individual portraits of resistance members form a counterpoint to the rest of the section. The screening makes individual agency visible and contrasts with the main exhibition narrative, which focuses on the structural developments in Austria.

In the first exhibition area devoted to the resistance the expository agent names individual resisters, in the second it depicts them, and in the third it elaborates on their stories. The third section consists of one panel and two audio stations (Photo no. 23 Photo no. 24). The panel largely repeats the information already encountered. The copy reasserts that both religious and communist people resisted and then focuses on the group led by Josef Plieseis. A photo showing the arrest of Valentin Tarra forms the background of the panel, indicating the looming national socialist state's repression of individuals.³¹⁸ On the glass panel in the foreground the expository agent presents portrait photos of the resistance fighters, briefly describing their actions in the captions. The captions name the person, state his or her actions and outline how the state targeted this individual.³¹⁹ As many of them are identical to those screened in room two, the photos establish continuity in the narrative. The panel also displays two documents from a trial against three communists in 1942, a gendarmerie record of the arrest of Jehovah Witnesses in 1939, and three newspaper cuttings.³²⁰ In contrast to

³¹⁷ In some few cases, the captions provide quotations from or about the people shown.

³¹⁸ Valentin Tarra was a representative of the austrofascist regime. The photo symbolises that the repression was directed against different groups, including the former government representatives.

³¹⁹ Only two women are shown here. Panel "Politisch und religiös motivierter Widerstand" in room 3.

³²⁰ Panel "Politisch und religiös motivierter Widerstand" in room 3.

earlier, pre-paradigm change representations of the resistance in Austria, the commemoration here cuts across party lines, representing communist, socialist, conservative, austrofascist and religious resistance fighters alongside one another. The captions tell individual stories about each person. In addition, the panel expands upon what is commonly understood as resistance to include acts of disobedience, thus valuing everyday resistance alongside more organised or armed resistance. The people who resisted appear as a plural group of individuals. Their motivations differ, with the resistance fighters coming from various religious or political backgrounds, All individuals are mentioned by name and they are sufficiently diverse that each person is seen to stand for their own actions and is not a representative of his or her group as such.



Photo no. 23: Panel on the resistance in room 3.

Some of the individuals represented also speak for themselves in the audio stations, located on both sides of the panel (Photo no. 24). The visitor can sit down and listen to the stories already encountered, hearing them presented in detail and in part

via first person accounts. Based on a radio series by the *Freies Radio Salzkammergut* in 2005, the audio stations present oral history interviews with members of the resistance, framed by historical commentary and literary accounts.³²¹ The visitor can choose between different tracks that are listed at the station and explained in a booklet. While their set-up look similar, the two audio stations differ in content. The first presents an introduction to the resistance in the region, deals with the communist youth, and with the group led by Sepp Plieseis. The second deals with women in the resistance, Hans Grafl and Albrecht Gaiswinkler, discusses the end of the war and gives an epilogue.³²²

The voice of the expository agent is audible in the audio station. The museum's director Wolfgang Quatember speaks, but the station also presents other opinions and perspectives. These other voices are clearly separated from the voice of the expository agent. Historians speak as experts and offer their opinion on a chosen topic. The members of the resistance speak from their own point of view and represent themselves, which differentiates them and their self-representations from the representation of the expository agent. Here the men and women of the resistance are agents telling their own story, talking about their own agency. The exhibition curates these voices and uses them to represent the resistance as a significant number of people of both genders; individuals with names, faces and voices, with different motivations and opinions, and with different stories. Representing a plural narrative, the expository agent clearly marks historical agency and relates it to larger structural developments.

³²¹ Well-known Austrian historians, such as Wolfgang Neugebauer or Gerhard Botz, provide part of the historical commentary. The recording is also available on CD and is sold by the museum. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, ed. *Widerstand im Salzkammergut. Geschichte und Erinnerung, (Eine Sammlung von Zeitzeugeninterviews und Kommentare mit Begleitheft auf 2 CDs)* (Ebensee: ZGM, 2010).

³²² The material was transmitted by radio over eight shows in 2005.



Photo no. 24: Audio stations on the resistance in room 3

2.5.2 The hero Sepp Plieseis

Where agency is visible, the question of how the exhibition characterises this agency arises. In the 1970s and 1980s, accounts of the resistance in Austria often focused on the personal stories of heroic individuals who fought against a cruel and inhumane system. In these accounts, the resistance fighter is a patriotic person who, in accordance with the victim myth, fought for a better, free Austria.³²³ Today's representations seem to echo some of the previous elements, but they no longer support the victim myth. The narrative about the resistance presented at the Zeitgeschichte Museum nonetheless constructs a heroic resister with the figure of Sepp Plieseis. The expository agent gestures towards him and his group repeatedly, and identifies him as the most important resistance fighter in the region.

³²³ See, for example, the analysis of the first permanent exhibition at the DÖW by: Peter Larndorfer, "Das Dokumentationsarchiv," 117-149, 131-144.

The Sepp Plieseis story became well known after the war because he published a literary account of his actions in 1946.³²⁴ A modified version of this book was later published in the GDR, where state television also produced and broadcasted a film about his life.³²⁵ More recently, historians have discussed the material evidence for Plieseis' account, as well as the representation of his life and its meaning as a cultural product.³²⁶ Within the Zeitgeschichte Museum's exhibition significant attention is devoted to Sepp Plieseis. Members of his group appear in the first panel on the resistance, he is represented in the screening (Photo no. 22) and depicted in two photos in the panel in room three (Photo no. 23). The audio station dedicates one whole chapter to him and his group. Each display repeats aspects of his life that qualify him as a resistance fighter. These include his fighting in the international brigades in Spain, his escape from a camp in Argeles, and his subsequent imprisonment in the concentration camp in Dachau. His escape from the auxiliary camp Hallein in 1943, his return to the region, and his engagement with the illegal resistance group there then become the most crucial parts in the narrative on him.

The audio station provides the most detailed information about Sepp Plieseis. Before discussing him, the historical introduction situates the resistance within Austrian history and points out that National Socialism in Austria was a genuinely Austrian development. Wolfgang Neugebauer criticises the victim myth and regrets that for a long time no honest engagement with the resistance took place in Austria. According to Neugebauer, the victim myth prevented recognition of the resistance while at the same time creating the perception that all Austrians had resisted against National Socialism.³²⁷ Gerhard Botz then states that the Upper Austria not only had a strong right supporting National Socialism, but also a strong left that led the resistance

³²⁴ Sepp Plieseis, *Vom Ebro zum Dachstein, Lebenskampf eines österreichischen Arbeiters* (Linz: Verlag Neue Zeit, 1946).

³²⁵ The new edition of the book was issued in 1971 in the GDR with the title, "Partisan der Berge." In 1977 the GDR 1 television channel produced the film entitled "Gefährliche Fahndung." On this creation of a socialist hero in the GDR see: Klaus Kienesberger, "Der exportierte Held. Die Biografie des Sepp Plieseis und ihre Rezeption," *Betrifft: Widerstand 77* (Juni 2006): 23-33.

³²⁶ Some discussion of the historical material relating to Plieseis is found in Christian Topf, *Auf den Spuren der Partisanen, Zeitgeschichtliche Wanderungen im Salzkammergut* (Grünbach bei Freistadt: Edition Geschichte der Heimat, 1996). In 2006 a theatre play titled "Hirschen" ["Stags"] based on Plieseis book and its reception and was shown in Graz in Austria.

³²⁷ Track 1 "Der geschichtliche Rahmen des österreichischen Widerstandes und die Frage der Anerkennung" by Wolfgang Neugebauer. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

against it.³²⁸ This introduction, by criticising the victim myth, sets the representation of the resistance in the audio station apart from older representations of the resistance. Even though the exhibition presents the resistance fighters as heroes, the expository agent does not wish to represent all Austrians as victims of Germany, nor to turn them all into resistance fighters. The opening remarks are intended to prevent the visitor reading the narratives about the resistance fighters as support for the victim myth. Furthermore they provide examples of how the national discourse is explicitly addressed in the exhibition of the Zeitgeschichte Museum.

The audio narrative about Sepp Plieseis tells his story in a biographical fashion, highlighting the crucial points mentioned above. Most detailed is the account of his escape from Hallein, the description of his hiding place in the mountains, and the illegal group that worked with him.³²⁹ This section also addresses the men's fears of detection, the difficulties of becoming too large a group, as well as the group's goals for the region.³³⁰ Since he was no longer alive, the radio could not interview Plieseis, but members of his group speak on eight of the seventeen tracks.³³¹ Nonetheless, historians provide the largest portion of the narrative. They rarely give historical commentary, however, but instead describe his life, rarely indicating what sources this information is based upon. Contextualisation serves only to relate the story to the larger historical situation.³³² The rest of the narrative on Plieseis at the audio station comes from excerpts from Plieseis' book and another radio feature produced by David Guttner.³³³ Both give a literary account and Guttner's is further supplemented with sound effects, such as rain, thunder, the sound of a river or a dog barking.³³⁴ The audio station provides a chronological narrative, combining dramatic elements with first person accounts. The group is secondary to the central figure of Plieseis himself, and his story resembles an adventure story. He fights for his political ideals, is arrested, manages to escape only to be imprisoned again, and then heroically escapes once more. After a dramatic journey home he arrives back in his home region to continue

³²⁸ Track 2 "Die Besonderheiten des Salzkammergutes" by Gerhard Botz. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³²⁹ Track 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³³⁰ Track 31, 35, 36, 37. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³³¹ Track 21, 26, 27, 32, 34, 35, 26, 37. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³³² Track 31. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³³³ Track 25, 28. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³³⁴ Track 29, 30. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

fighting the oppressive regime. The emotions, thoughts and decision-making processes of the story's hero are presented as facts and relate to the organisation of the hiding place, the supply of food and tools, or the fear of detection. No internal thoughts, personal development or emotional difficulties appear, except in the initial speculation as to why Plieseis decided to go to Spain.³³⁵

Like in older representations of this type, Plieseis is the hero of this story, succeeding in his fight. It appears that one event simply led to the next in a logical fashion. The audio station does not discuss complicating elements within his biography or the construction of his narrative itself. The historical evidence, the discussion of it, perceptions of him as a hero after 1945, the production of his biography or the ways his story has been used up until the present – none of these are mentioned.³³⁶ The audio station does not evaluate the role of the group, what they meant to the region or how they contributed to the resistance against National Socialism. Furthermore, the station hides more subtle constructions such as gender roles, which becomes particularly clear when this presentation is compared with that of the women presented.

2.5.3 Resi Pesendorfer and the women resistance fighters

In all the displays on the resistance, the expository agent explicitly represents women, thereby including women within the resistance.³³⁷ While this inclusion might be considered unexceptional for an exhibition that opened in 2005, my analysis of the Holocaust Emlékközpont in Hungary or the Museo della Deportazione in Italy, as well as studies by others on the representations of women in other museums, indicate the

³³⁵ Track 20, "Biografie: Gründe für den Weg nach Spanien 1936" by Silvia Panzl. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³³⁶ On the heroisation see: Martina Guggelberger, "'... und hat mir eine Nachricht zukommen lassen...'" Frauen im Widerstand," in *Lagersystem und Repräsentation. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Geschichte der Konzentrationslager*, ed. by Ralph Gabriel, et. al. (Tübingen: Edition Diskord 2004), 172-182, 176.

³³⁷ A good and concise overview of the research on women during National Socialism in Austria is given by Susanne Lanwerd and Irene Stoehr, "Frauen und Geschlechterforschung zum Nationalsozialismus seit den 1970er Jahren. Forschungsstand, Veränderungen, Perspektiven," in *Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte des Nationalsozialismus. Fragestellungen, Perspektiven, neue Forschungen*, ed. by Johanna Gehmacher and Gabriella Hauch (Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2007), 22-68. Research on women in the resistance is discussed from page 36-39, but is not as informative as the rest of the article. A better overview on the resistance is given by Martina Guggelberger, "'Das hätte ich nicht gekonnt: nichts tun'. Widerstand und Verfolgung von Frauen am Beispiel des Reichsgaues Oberdonau," in *Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte des Nationalsozialismus. Fragestellungen, Perspektiven, neue Forschungen*, ed. by Johanna Gehmacher and Gabriella Hauch (Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2007), 152-168.

opposite. Most museums exclude women as historical agents or relegate them to the margins of larger historical events, presenting history as a male endeavour.³³⁸ A conception of history developed in the 18th and 19th century, that places men in the public sphere and thus accords all historical agent to them, is still the basic explanation underlying this. This perspective views women as largely irrelevant to politics, history and the economy and, where women are included, they are associated only with private life, domesticity and childcare.³³⁹ Museum practices and exhibition patterns that result from this understanding of history are still dominant, despite extensive criticism. Museum collections consist largely of objects that represent men, and the information known about the objects in the collections and provided about the exhibits often hide women and ignore gender constructions.³⁴⁰ Expository agents' lack of sensitivity to gender history prevents museums from questioning or changing the focus on male history that appears to be gender neutral.³⁴¹

As well as representing women as resistance fighters, the Zeitgeschichte Museum's exhibition addresses other women marginally, in small sections of their own; relegated to the sidelines. The expository agent mentions in the main copy that women gained the vote and then offers a separate panel outlining the women's movement in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁴² This panel comes after one dealing with the Youth movement and education; the expository agent places women next to the topics which, according to classic gender constructions, are associated with women. The panel itself indicates that the association of women with the family and social life is a construction, but reinforces it at the same time. The copy states that women engaged themselves politically in the "'typically female' areas of family and social services."³⁴³ The

³³⁸ On the inclusion of women in museums see Regina Wonisch, et. al., *Das inszenierte Geschlecht. Feministische Strategien im Museum* (Wien: Böhlau, 1997). On the ensuing paradigm change that led to the representation of gender constructions see Muttenthaler and Wonisch, *Rollenbilder im Museum*, 14.

³³⁹ Muttenthaler and Wonisch, *Rollenbilder im Museum*, 24; Irit Rogoff, "Von Ruinen zu Trümmern. Die Feminisierung von Faschismus in deutschen historischen Museen," in *Denkräume. Zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft*, Silvia Baumgart, et. al. (Berlin: Reiner, 1993), 258-285, 269.

³⁴⁰ Muttenthaler and Wonisch, *Rollenbilder im Museum*, 20, 35, 44-45.

³⁴¹ Reading has convincingly shown that individuals who are alert to gender issues produce more balanced and gender sensitive representations in museum exhibitions. Reading, *The Social Inheritance*, 141.

³⁴² Panel "Wahlrecht und Verfassung" in room 1.

³⁴³ My translation. In German: "'typisch weiblichen' Aufgabenbereiche Familie und Soziales". Panel "Frauen und Politik: Wahlrecht, Ehereform, § 144" in room 1.

inverted commas around the words typically female indicate that the idea of something being typically female is a construction. However, stating that women were mostly engaged in these areas without stating why, as well as positioning the panel alongside children and social welfare reinforces this construction, validating it.

This is heightened by the fact that women are absent in the other displays, even where the objects displayed invite the discussion of women and their roles. An excerpt from the newspaper *Salzkammergutbote* from February 13th 1927, for example, states that it was “most appreciated that the women of the spinning mill, as always, stood by their men in unanimous protest.”³⁴⁴ The accompanying copy, however, does not mention the women who protested, or their role in the protest, which is presented as a solely male endeavour. The marginal discussion of women here is in keeping with that of most other museum presentations.³⁴⁵ In Vienna, for example, only 6% of all museum representation include all genders and ages, and 7% address women, while men feature in 71% of the display.³⁴⁶ Relegating them to separate panels is the norm where museums discuss women at all.³⁴⁷ Male dominance is also legible in the language used in the *Zeitgeschichte* Museum. The copy uses either the generic masculine or the neutral form and simply subsumes women within it.³⁴⁸ Exceptions to this are the panels that explicitly represent women. In these panels, the expository agent uses the feminine form.

³⁴⁴ My translation. In German: “Begrüßenswert ist, daß die Frauen der Spinnerei, wie immer, an der Seite der Männer beim einmütigen Protest standen.” Panel “15. Juli 1927” in room 1.

³⁴⁵ Monika Hinterberger, Susanne Flecken-Büttner, and Annette Kuhn, ed., *‘Da wir alle Bürgerinnen sind...’: Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte in historischen Museen* (Leverkusen: Barbera Budrich, 2008).

³⁴⁶ 16% are devoted to localities and sites. Herbert Exenberger, Heinz Arnberger, Claudia Kuretsidis-Haider, *Gedenken und Mahnen in Wien 1934-1945. Gedenkstätten zu Widerstand und Verfolgung, Exil, Befreiung. Eine Dokumentation* (Wien: Deuticke, 1998), 16.

³⁴⁷ Reading has shown that exhibitions often mute women, while Muttenthaler and Wonisch note that if they are discussed, women are relegated to separate corners and omitted from the main parts of exhibitions. Reading, *The Social Inheritance*, 117; Muttenthaler and Wonisch, *Rollenbilder im Museum*, 54-55.

³⁴⁸ One exception to this is the use of the suffix -Innen in the panel on the victim myth. Here neutrally gendered language appears suddenly, including women as perpetrators and in the post-war society that was ignorant about its own past. A previous exhibit deals with a woman who applied to be exempted from registration as National Socialists. Panel “Der Österreichische Opfermythos” in room 3. On masculine language in museums see Muttenthaler and Wonisch, *Rollenbilder im Museum*, 119.

The domination of male voices can also be heard at the audio station. It is mostly men who speak and provide the historical commentary except in the parts that explicitly deal with women. Of the first audio station's 39 tracks only seven feature female voices. Three oral history interviews allow women to speak, and in four tracks the historian is a woman. The first female voice to be heard is that of Resi Pesendorfer – in track 19.³⁴⁹ The first time a woman speaks is after 28 minutes.³⁵⁰ The first case of a woman providing historical commentary is in track 20, in which Silvia Panzl discusses the biography of Sepp Plieseis.³⁵¹ As in the rest of the exhibition, women are marginal in the first audio station. This is different in the second audio station where, as already noted, one whole section deals with women who resisted. In the section on women in the resistance not a single male voice is heard. That gender is discussed where women are the focus reinforces the notion that gender is relevant only where women are represented, which I will discuss in detail below. That only women speak in this section further suggests that the representation of women is mostly relevant to women, so that only female historians pursue this topic.³⁵²

Despite their marginal presence in the whole exhibition, as well as in the audio station, women are visible as resistance fighters from the very beginning of the exhibition.³⁵³ The continuous references to Resi Pesendorfer affirm this. The expository

³⁴⁹ Track 19 "Im Untergrund – Angst vor Denunziation" by Resi Pesendorfer. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut*. Agnes Primocic and Marianne Feldhammer are interviewed in tracks 26 and 36 respectively. Track 26 "Kontakte und Vorbereitung der Flucht" part featuring Agnes Primocic. Track 36 "Die Angst vor Verrat" by Marianne Feldhammer. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³⁵⁰ Although I did not research visitors' use of the audio station, it is unlikely that a woman would be heard by chance. Reading has shown that visitors choose topics in interactive displays with which they are already familiar. Anna Reading, "Digital interactivity in public memory institutions: the uses of new technologies in Holocaust museums," in *Media, Culture and Society* 25, no. 1 (2003): 67-85. To seek out a track in which a woman speaks is difficult, as it is hard to identify speakers' genders from the panel or the booklet which do not include first names.

³⁵¹ Track 20 "Biografie: Gründe für den Weg nach Spanien 1936" by Silvia Panzl. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut*. She also speaks in track 22, 29 and 30.

³⁵² An exception to this is Peter Kammerstätter, who speaks about the representation of women in the resistance in the first audio station and is the only male expert to address women as a topic, but this is not within the part focusing on women. Track 4 "Peter Kammerstätter: Pionier der Widerstandsforschung" and track 5 "Die geografische Unterteilung der Widerstandsgruppen im Salzkammergut" by Peter Kammerstätter, *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³⁵³ For a brief overview of women in the resistance see Karin Berger et al., *Der Himmel ist blau. Kann sein. Frauen im Widerstand Österreich 1938-1945* (Wien: Promedia, 1985), 240-262. For a general introduction to the resistance network around Resi Pesendorfer see Guggelberger, "'... und hat mir eine Nachricht zukommen lassen ...'," 172-182.

agent mentions her in the panel on the resistance in 1934, depicts her in the screening on the resistance (Photo no. 25) and makes her the main figure within the audio station section on women in the resistance.

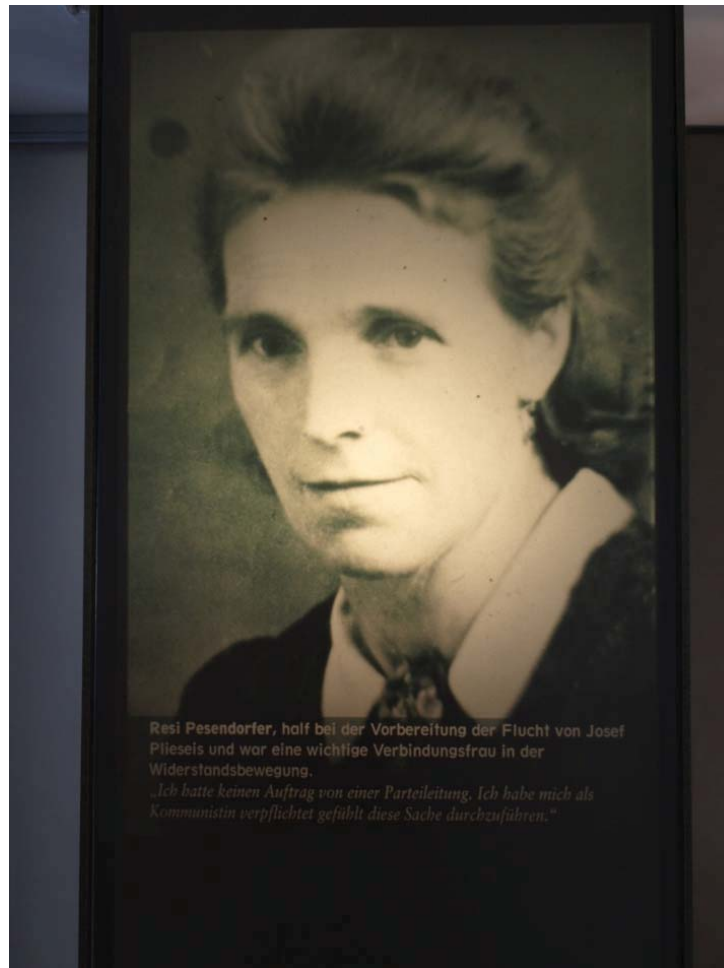


Photo no. 25: Screening "Widerstand gegen das NS-Regime" showing Resi Pesendorfer in room 2.

Already in the first audio station, Peter Kammerstätter reflects on the fact that earlier representations of the resistance ignored women and their role in the resistance.³⁵⁴ The exhibition aims to counter this by devoting a large part of the second audio station to women. The station presents women's resistance in 21 tracks, of

³⁵⁴ Track 4 "Peter Kammerstätter: Pionier der Widerstandsforschung" and track 5 "Die geografische Unterteilung der Widerstandsgruppen im Salzkammergut" by Peter Kammerstätter, *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut*. Martina Guggelberger states that ignorance about women in the resistance changed only when a paradigm change altered what was defined as resistance. The inclusion of less obvious acts of resistance made it possible to recognise what women had done. Guggelberger, "Das hätte ich nicht gekonnt", 152-153.

which five give historical commentary discussing women and their roles within the resistance, focusing particularly on Resi Pesendorfer. Silvia Panzl introduces her and, from the outset, the audio station presents Resi Pesendorfer as a politically active woman. According to Panzl, Resi Pesendorfer joined the illegal communist party in 1934, having been a Social Democrat before. The audio station presents her as a role model to younger women, influential for the resistance of the whole region, and Panzl stresses that her special contribution was the foundation of a women's organisation in 1937.³⁵⁵ This organisation developed into a network of women who carried out courier tasks, found safe sleeping places for escaped prisoners, and organised food. Resi Pesendorfer and the network in general were crucial in helping Sepp Plieseis to escape from the camp, and subsequently aided two others prisoners' escapes.

Even though Resi Pesendorfer's actions were certainly heroic, and identified as such, the audio station does not present her as a hero. This is due to a narration that lacks dramatic literary elements or sound bites. It is also due to the contextualisation, which considers women's roles as resistance fighters and their self-identifications. The women who were involved in the network are audible in the interviews.³⁵⁶ They are agents within their own story and they tell this story themselves where possible. They all speak confidently about "the women", their actions, and the network, as well as their emotions.³⁵⁷ The women describe specific actions; providing food, finding sleeping spaces, and running courier errands, and it becomes clear that they knew the risks involved and chose to act despite them.³⁵⁸ Nevertheless, they do not present their actions as extraordinary. The historian's commentary states that the women, unlike men,

³⁵⁵ Track 1 "Über Resi Pesendorfer" by Christine Bahar and Martha Egger. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*. The booklet accompanying the audio station states that they are the daughters of Leni Egger, one of the women in the network. Booklet accompanying the audio station "Widerstand im Salzkammergut. Geschichte und Erinnerung" in room 3. Track 2 "Biografie und Verdienst von Resi Pesendorfer" by Silvia Panzl. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³⁵⁶ Resi Pesendorfer was already dead when the radio feature was recorded in 2005 and hence could not speak about her experiences, except in older interviews. Here her actions are recounted in interviews with others, or by the historical commentary.

³⁵⁷ Track 12 "Hausdurchsuchungen" by Christine Bahar. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³⁵⁸ The interviews also show that the women worked together across ideological lines, with Leni Egger joining the network due to her Catholic beliefs and Resi Pesendorfer and Marianne Felhammer due to their communist persuasions. Track 5 "Leni Egger" by Leni Egger. Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, *Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

do not represent themselves as members of the resistance, but instead view their actions as necessary or human responses to the crimes.³⁵⁹ An interview following this statement underlines this, with the women laughing as they say that what they did was “fate” and that it simply “was that way”. They resisted “because one had to”, or because there was no stopping once started.³⁶⁰

The audio station reflects on gender constructions and their effect on the women. The historians claim that women acted both within and outside the classic roles assigned to them by society.³⁶¹ The speakers state that the women were the most active force in the resistance, noting that men had a passive role because they were in hiding. Women’s actions were not in the background but also constituted classic actions of resistance – usually defined as male-dominated areas.³⁶² Women knew about and navigated the Gestapo surveillance, police controls, and the clandestine structures of illegal organisations. They decided what to do, protected themselves and their men, and at the same time took care of household and family.³⁶³ The historians discuss the women’s ongoing responsibilities for their homes and children while they were active in the resistance.³⁶⁴ They utilised their gender roles to avoid detection when carrying out actions, for example by taking their children along on courier runs. The daughters of Leni Egger describe how the women brought them to Kindergarten or took them sledge riding in the mountains while meeting or delivering food.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ Track 19 “Das Selbstverständnis der Frauen im Widerstand” by Silvia Panzl and Martina Guggelberger. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut.*

³⁶⁰ My translations. In German: It was “Schicksal,” “so gewesen ist” and “weil man halt müssen.” Track 20 “Leni Egger, Maria Plieseis, Resi Pesendorfer.” *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut.*

³⁶¹ The audio feature also discusses why politically active women returned to their assigned roles as housewives after 1945. Track 18 “Die nicht vollzogene Emanzipation by Christine Bahar and Martha Egger. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut.*

³⁶² Track 21 “Der Stellenwert des Widerstands der Frauen” by Martina Guggelberger. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut.*

³⁶³ Track 11 “Eine Waffe für die Männer” by Christine Bahar; track 12 “Hausdurchsuchungen” by Christine Bahar; track 13 “Das Feldhammer-Haus in St. Leonhard, Bad Aussee” by Martha Egger; track 14 “Karl Feldhammer: Von der Gestapo erschossen” by Marianne Feldhammer; track 21 “Der Stellenwert des Widerstands der Frauen” by Martina Guggelberger. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut.*

³⁶⁴ Track 17 “Die Verantwortung für die Kinder” by Silvia Panzl with excerpts from the show “Der Igel” *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut.*

³⁶⁵ Track 6 “Tricks” by Christine Bahar and Martha Egger; track 11 “Eine Waffe für die Männer” by Martha Egger. Track 16 “Die 12-jährige Tochter” by Martha Egger. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut.*

The audio station presents the general experiences of both men and women of the resistance. Unfortunately, the audio station provides gendered experiences for the women only. The exhibition does not narrate how masculine gender constructions affected the men, how men perceived their gender role, or what impact assumed gender roles might have had on the resistance. This omission of explicitly male experiences presents an image in which gender seems to apply to women only, while men appear as the neutral and general norm.³⁶⁶ Gender constructions are of course audible in the parts dedicated to the men, but attention is not drawn to them explicitly.³⁶⁷

The representation of historical agency differs strikingly between men and women. For women the audio station provides biographical information, self-perceptions and those of others, and reflects on the value system within which society placed women historically and today. For men the audio station mainly describes what happened, how and when, and reflects on whether the story told might be true or not. Deliberation about men's role within and impact on the resistance movement is significantly shorter. The question of whether men's actions affected the region is only debated where the historical evidence of those alleged actions is contested.³⁶⁸ The audio station does not question the role that men played in the resistance, nor does it discuss the value system within which they acted. The gender bias is evident here: the women's presence in the resistance apparently calls for wider contextualisation because the women seem to stray from assigned gender roles. For men such a discussion appears to be unnecessary because men are expected to be politically active and their gender construction as actors is supposedly the norm.

It is striking that most of the information provided in the audio station's section on women in the resistance does not enter into the other parts of the exhibition, although references between the different sections are otherwise frequent. It is only

³⁶⁶ Muttenthaler's and Wonisch's analysis indicates that the dominant presentation, when gender is shown within museums, equates gender with women, and that male gender constructions are rarely presented. Muttenthaler and Wonisch, *Rollenbilder im Museum*, 32, 45, 91.

³⁶⁷ Assumptions about male gender roles appear just as often as deviations from classic gender roles, for example when Alois Straubinger points out how scared and nervous he and Schweiger were during their escape, and how disorganised they were. Track 14 "Flucht aus dem Gefängnis" by Alois Straubinger. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

³⁶⁸ The exception where the men's role in the resistance is discussed is with respect to Gaiswinkler in track 45, but the historical commentary is about the evidence on Gaiswinkler and what his impact on the region was. Track 45 "Der Konflikt um Gaiswinkler" by Christian Topf and Gerhard Botz. *Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee, Widerstand im Salzkammergut*.

within the part on women in the audio station that the words “women’s organisation” and “women’s network” are used. Both the panel placed between the audio stations and the caption to the photo of Resi Pesendorfer in room two merely state that she provided contacts, ran courier errands, and organised food. No mention is made of a network of women. That the women’s network was highly important for the group around Sepp Plieseis is evident in the part on the women, but the audio section dedicated to Plieseis himself does not mention it. In most parts of the exhibition the expository agent omits information crucial to recognising the significance of women’s organisation, reducing them instead to individual women.

Despite all these shortcomings, the presence of women actors is praiseworthy, compared to their complete absence in other museums. Women are visible as resistance fighters in the Zeitgeschichte Museum. Unlike other representations of women, the expository agent does not present them as passive and quiet bystanders of history, or relegate them to the private sphere of the home, children and consumption.³⁶⁹ The Zeitgeschichte Museum presents women resisters as active, valued, influential and self-aware. All the members of the resistance are presented as historical agents and women are no exception.

2.6 Conclusion

The last section a visitor encounters in the exhibition deals with the period from 1945 to 1955. Designed in the same way as the rest of the exhibition, the narrative closes without spectacle. One of the five panels addresses the victim myth in detail. Approaching this panel, a visitor familiar with the victim myth in Austria might recognise the book cover of the “Rot-Weiß-Rot” book at the top of the panel. Published in 1946, it is the most well known publication presenting Austria as a victim of Germany. The copy titled “The Myth of Austria as the First Victim” outlines the victim myth and criticises its denial of Austrians’ responsibility for the crimes committed during National Socialism.³⁷⁰ The first part of the copy personifies Austria as the myth’s creator, stating how the Austrian state referenced the Moscow Declaration

³⁶⁹ Muttenthaler and Wonisch, *Rollenbilder im Museum*, 81-89; Wonisch, et. al., *Das inszenierte Geschlecht*, 28.

³⁷⁰ “The Myth of Austria as the First Victim” in English language guide.

from 1943 which identified Austria as the first victim of Germany. The Austrian government used this to accelerate the signing of the state treaty to gain sovereign status. The copy goes on to say that the part of the Declaration stating Austria's compliance with National Socialism was duly ignored,

a fact that enabled the country to reject restitution claims by victims of the Nazi regime in Austria. At the same time, Austria's corroboration of the Nazi regime and its gruesome actions, as for example the pogroms against the Jewish population in March 1938, were ignored completely. This way the Austrian state did not have to deal with its Nazi past.³⁷¹

The German text differs slightly, mentioning that people upheld the victim myth until the Waldheim affair, but without explaining that affair in detail.³⁷² As well as the book cover already mentioned, the panel displays a photo of the Allied foreign ministers signing the Moscow Declaration, and provides a quote from the Declaration which asserts Germany's victimisation of Austria as well as Austria's responsibility as a participant in the war.³⁷³

This section, closing the exhibition, exemplifies the exhibition's congruence with the dominant discourse on the Holocaust in Austria. It shows the recognition that Austrians were perpetrators and gestures briefly to the Jewish victims. The panel criticises the victim myth and the denial of responsibility for the past, identifying the Waldheim affair as the turning point after which Austrian society dealt with this past in a better way. It claims that Austrian society has accepted its responsibility since then, and the museum presents itself as a proponent of this position, explicating the co-responsibility of many Austrians for the Holocaust. Indeed, the exhibition provides

³⁷¹ "The Myth of Austria as the First Victim" in English language guide.

³⁷² Panel "Der österreichische Opfermythos" in room 3. This is one of the few panels where gender-inclusive language is employed. The -Innen suffix explicitly includes women and men within ÖsterreicherInnen (Austrians), as opposed to the generic masculine form Österreicher. Also, the mention of the Waldheim affair in the German text but not in the English translation demonstrates that non-German speaking visitors encounter a different narrative.

³⁷³ Moskauer Deklaration, 30. Oktober 1943. Die Regierung des Vereinigten Königreiches, der Sowjetunion und der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika sind darin einer Meinung, daß Österreich, das erste freie Land, das der typischen Aggressionspolitik Hitlers zum Opfer fallen sollte, von deutscher Herrschaft befreit werden soll. (...) Österreich wird aber daran erinnert, daß es für die Teilnahme am Kriege an der Seite Hilter-Deutschlands eine Verantwortung trägt, der es nicht entinnen kann, und daß anlässlich der endgültigen Abrechnung Bedachtnahme darauf, wieviel es selbst zu seiner Befreiung beigetragen haben wird unvermeidlich sein wird. Panel "Der österreichische Opfermythos" in room 3. The three other documents displayed refer to Austria's application for denazification and relate to the subsequent panel on denazification.

an extensive contextualisation of National Socialism, embedded in the historical developments from 1918 onwards. It presents a gradual development that leads to the crimes committed under National Socialism. An extreme ideological confrontation opens the narrative, which worsens and leads to the abandonment of democracy within the Austrian dictatorship, which in turn leads to National Socialism and the Holocaust. The Holocaust is part of this story but not the main or only focal point. Instead, National Socialism as a whole is the negative past in need of explanation. The period from 1945 to 1955 then offers an epilogue to this progressive narrative.

The presentation in the Zeitgeschichte Museum focuses predominantly on Austria. It only alludes to German developments and rarely mentions European ones. This holds true even where, as in the panel on the victim myth, the expository agent references international politics. The exclusion of German and European structures is even more striking since the copy in the exhibition focuses on structural developments in Austria, which were of course affected by European developments. The exhibition at the Zeitgeschichte Museum largely excludes European history from its narrative, although its display has been influenced by both international Holocaust scholarship and postmodern museum scholarship. The clear focus on the perpetrators within the national population and the nominal inclusion of several victim groups, however, clearly reflect the international discourse. This is not acknowledged within the exhibition, which apparently presents a very Austrian story to the visitor. This fits with the dominant discourse in Austria that largely ignores European history. It is also in keeping with the European mode of representation; as hiding the European discourse formations in national narratives is common across Europe.

The mode of representation within which the Zeitgeschichte Museum presents its narrative is also congruent with that dominant in Austria. It is common for museums to present a reserved exhibition, drawing on current scholarship, claiming to present an objective truth. The design, copy and object presentations at the Zeitgeschichte Museum communicate this claimed objectivity – one particular aspect of the truth speak favoured in scholarly exhibitions. Nonetheless the exhibition takes a political stance, as is visible in its sympathetic presentation of the social democrats and communists, or its condemnation of the nationalistic parties. I do not criticise the adoption of a political stance, but that the exhibition presents its narrative as objective truth. Hiding differing interpretations and conflicting positions behind scholarly language

serves to simplify the Holocaust. Plural interpretations and the struggle to make sense of the past disappear, despite the ambitious claim made at the beginning of the exhibition. The copy creates an authoritative narrative, presenting a closed story. The primary sources, however, allow for alternative interpretations. They represent the traces of the past that the expository agent introduced in the exhibition's opening. These traces are open to interpretation. Engaging with the primary sources, the visitor can draw her own conclusions. The copy and the primary sources present a collision of two contradicting modes of representation; one closed to interpretation and the other open. The objects can simply illustrate the copy, but can also transcend it.

With respect to historical agency, the exhibition presents four different models. The exhibition explains the Holocaust through structural developments, supplemented by the vaguely defined responsibility of regional perpetrators. The victims are absent and have no agency, while classic individual agency is accorded to the resistance fighters. In the copy, structural history rules large. Structural developments influence the course of time more decisively than people do. People appear where the exhibition personifies the Austrian state or addresses the Austrian government; represents groups, usually political parties; or where the copy names individual politicians. Nevertheless, history marches on despite individual attempts to alter, halt or change its course. One development leads to the next, and eventually to the Holocaust. The result is that the structures appear to be responsible for the Holocaust.

In the local region people react to these structures and, on a small scale, appear as responsible agents. This is the case for the regional population not victimised during National Socialism, who integrated themselves into the regime, profited from it, or supported it. Those not victimised are held responsible for their own actions. The regional historical agents complicit with the crimes are visible in the primary sources they left behind. Displaying their actions as a trace or fragment, however, leaves the impact this agency had on the victims invisible. The expository agent does not specify the pre-history or effect of a primary source, thus leaving its genealogy obscure. With the primary source not contextualised, large parts of the story related to it are left untold. The visitor can draw her own conclusion from the source, but can only imagine the impact of the primary source might have had. The suffering, the persecution and

possibly the death that these actions produced remain abstract. The exhibition gestures towards the agency of regional perpetrators for the Holocaust but ultimately leaves the story of this agency open; its effects undefined.

In the representations of the victims of the Holocaust, historical agency does not even arise as a possibility. The victims are absent and the Zeitgeschichte Museum does not represent them. The expository agent names them and labels them as victims. Beyond this, the exhibition provides no narrative about the people persecuted, either as a group or as individuals. The displays allude to them mostly through perpetrator documents, which display the fragmented agency of the regional population, but not the agency of the victims. Where the exhibition does cite individual victims, they appear as undefined examples representative of the victim groups. The exhibition does not present their narratives. When outlining the conditions under which the victims suffered, empty sites replace individual suffering and empty clothing replaces victims' bodies. Victimisation is a topic; the victims themselves are not. Absent, the victims have no agency and the question of whether they did, where and with what effects, does not even emerge.

The only historical agents fully represented as such in the classic sense are the resistance fighters. Here the expository agent constructs a plural narrative with a consecutive beginning, middle and end. The members of the resistance have names, faces and some even speak for themselves. They engaged in their own stories and attempted to fight against the structures that oppressed and victimised them. They are the heroic actors in the Zeitgeschichte Museum's narrative. The Holocaust, by contrast, is a distant event. The exhibition narrates what happened, and shows primary sources connected to it. It documents the Holocaust to a certain degree, but the perpetrators remain vague and the victims hidden. Historical agency, wherein people influence the course of time in their own lives, is largely invisible, except for the resistance fighters.

3 Recreating tragedy: Holocaust representation in Hungary

3.1 Famously infamous: ignorance about and marginal recognition of the Holocaust in Hungary

The *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* (Holocaust Memorial Centre) is a large institution solely dedicated to commemoration of the Holocaust. It houses a large permanent exhibition on the Holocaust in Hungary complemented by temporary ones in the former synagogue. The centre organises conferences and public events about the Holocaust and conducts and supports academic research on the subject. It educates visitors about the Holocaust and aims to counter antisemitic and racist developments within Hungary. The exhibition presents a very detailed narrative that appears all-encompassing. It captures the visitor's attention with a strong design, striking visuals, a fast-paced narrative and surround-sound features. The design expresses the tragedy of the Holocaust, focusing on the Hungarian victims on the one hand and the perpetrators in Hungary on the other. The exhibition presents both Jews and Roma as homogenous victim groups largely devoid of agency. Presenting these victims as passive and helpless, the exhibition assigns historical agency solely to the perpetrators. According to the exhibition narrative, the Hungarian state and the non-persecuted Hungarian population, presented as fully autonomous men, were responsible for the Holocaust. The representation of perpetrator history here draws on international historiography, aiming to counter the dominant discourse of the Holocaust in Hungary, which generally externalises responsibility to the Germans and a few Arrow Cross leaders.

In the following I examine the representation of the Holocaust in the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont*. I address the representations of the victims' and of the perpetrators' agency, presented in polar opposition to one another. I demonstrate the construction of agency through the analysis of iconic photographs on display in the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont*. I look at the construction of victims in the photographs from the Auschwitz Album, and of perpetrators in portrait photographs. The representational strategy for the Auschwitz Album removes victims' agency, whereas the portraits

serve to personalise male perpetrators' historical agency. Before examining the case study, I outline how Hungarians have dealt with the Holocaust after 1945. This will reveal that the Holocaust is a relevant, but not the most central historical topic in contemporary Hungary. I then describe the dominant discourse on the Holocaust in Hungary, which the Holocaust Emlékközpont aims to refute. Later I will refer to this contextualisation to show how the Holocaust Emlékközpont oscillates between the international discourse and the national discourse of the Holocaust. Situating the Holocaust Emlékközpont within the museum landscape, I show that the Holocaust Emlékközpont occupies a unique position in Hungary, from which it challenges the dominant national discourse about the Holocaust.

3.1.1 Coming to terms with the past: the impact of the Holocaust in Hungary

The Holocaust in Hungary is notorious for the speed with which the German and Hungarian authorities rounded up, deported and murdered the Jews who lived there from 1944 to 1945.³⁷⁴ While they were discriminated against, impoverished economically, and particularly endangered at the front, the lives of Jews within Hungary were relatively safe until spring 1944, at least compared to in other European countries.³⁷⁵ It was not until the German occupation of Hungary in March 19th 1944 that the systematic murder of Jews began.³⁷⁶ Even though the occupation and the replacement of prime minister Miklós Kállay with the pro-German Döme Sztójay was mainly motivated by war interests, it also led to the Jewish persecution being undertaken with full force.³⁷⁷ Murdering the Jews was evidently a prime objective of the occupational regime, one fully supported by the new cabinet of Sztójay and his ministers. Adolf Eichmann came to

³⁷⁴ Randolph L. Braham's extensive work on the persecution in Hungary gives an outstanding overview. Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary*. Vol. 1-2, revised and enlarged edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). A condensed version of both volumes appeared in 2000. Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary*, condensed edition (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

³⁷⁵ This safety is only relative; more than sixty thousand Jews died before the German occupation, falling victim to deportations of Jews declared stateless, massacred or killed in the labour service of the army. For the statistics, see: Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, 1296-1301. In the census of 1941 4.49% of the Hungarian population identified themselves as Jewish. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, condensed edition, 29.

³⁷⁶ Until then, Hungary was a haven to many Jews fleeing from neighbouring countries.

³⁷⁷ The former regent Miklós Horthy remained the head of state after the occupation, hoping to prevent full occupation. His decision to stay legitimised the new occupational regime and assured the cooperation of the state apparatus, also enabling the persecution of Jews and Roma. *Politics of Genocide*, condensed edition, 56-57.

Hungary, and, within weeks, the systematic persecution already in progress elsewhere in Europe was established. Eichmann's men worked closely with the Ministry of Interior, overseeing the police and gendarmerie forces.³⁷⁸ Jews were expropriated, marked, further excluded from society, and rounded up in temporary ghettos.³⁷⁹ In May 1944 the deportations began, county by county, starting with Carpatho-Ruthenia, North-Eastern Hungary and Northern Transylvania. The deportations were quick and most trains went directly to Auschwitz, where the majority of Jews arriving this late were killed immediately.³⁸⁰ By the time Miklós Horthy, who as regent still had command, finally stopped the deportations in July 1944 in response to internal and external pressures, the Jews in the Hungarian countryside and the suburbs of Budapest had already all been deported. Even though Horthy's main interest was not to save the Jews, halting the deportation did protect most of the 200,000 Jews in the capital from their scheduled deportation.³⁸¹ Horthy's subsequent attempt to withdraw from the alliance with Germany led to his removal and the instalment of Arrow Cross rule under Ferenc Szálasi. Immediate but unregulated actions against Jews and Roma began, usually carried out by Arrow Cross members on their own initiative. Most notoriously, Arrow Cross men rounded up Jews in Budapest and shot them on the banks of the Danube. Roma in the countryside were now encamped in an old fortress in Komárom or small ghettos. One in three Roma died during this time, many due to the terrible conditions in the Roma camps and ghettos. Although brutal forced labour and death marches began, the deportations were not resumed.³⁸² The quickly advancing Red Army liberated both Jews and Roma who were still alive.

³⁷⁸ Eichmann's staff consisted of 150 to 200 men, so effective persecution was only possible with the active cooperation of the Hungarian state forces.

³⁷⁹ The ghettos were often established in old industrial buildings, mainly in brickyards, if the rounded up were even granted a roof. The local administration and executive forces were responsible for these decisions and the conditions within the makeshift ghettos. The persecution of Roma also worsened significantly after the occupation, but was secondary to that of the persecution of Jews.

³⁸⁰ Of the roughly 725,000 Jews living in Hungary in 1941 including the annexed areas, 565,507 died. Brahm, *Politics of Genocide*, condensed edition, 25, 253. The labour service within Hungary, which until the occupation was responsible for dire suffering, now saved the lives of the men (and from 1943 also women) enrolled within it, as they were partly exempt from the deportations. Brahm, *Politics of Genocide*, condensed edition, 49. Some Jews were deported to work to Austria. Szita Szabolcs, *Verschleppt, verhungert, vernichtet. Die Deportation von ungarischen Juden auf das Gebiet des annektierten Österreichs* (Wien: EichenbauerVerlag, 1999).

³⁸¹ Brahm, *Politics of Genocide*, condensed edition, 155-170.

³⁸² Brahm, *Politics of Genocide*, condensed edition, 181-197.

The general timeline of how Hungarians have dealt with this past fits into the rough outline I gave in chapter one. Calls for justice began with the advance of the Red Army into Hungary and continued immediately after the war. From April 1945, crimes against humanity were brought to court. Leaders of the Arrow Cross, the Szt-ójay government and Germans who had committed crimes in Hungary were tried, and attempts were made to rid the Army and administration of fascists.³⁸³ In its initial phase the prosecution, carried out by the people's court, differed according to the locality and people in charge. The parties within the National Independence Front nominated the judges, and thus the courts reflected regional power structures and their respective commitment to prosecuting war crimes.³⁸⁴ The central government took control only slowly. When it established a common system, this was with the double intention of removing former fascists and securing communist power. Under the umbrella aim of freeing Hungarian society from fascists, the trials also targeted anti-communists.³⁸⁵ This at least compromised, but often hindered the prosecution of fascists.

The early phase, wherein at least some attention was given to the Holocaust, did not last long. The state depended on former officials, and lesser fascists and members of former elites, especially of the Horthy regime, but low-ranking Arrow Cross members were also reintegrated and their crimes ignored.³⁸⁶ Antisemitism remained strong within post-war Hungary and new stereotypes were added to the old hatred.³⁸⁷ The population resented the returning Jews, who faced large difficulties.

³⁸³ For an overview on the transition from 1944 to 1948 see: Peter Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets. The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary 1944-1948* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁸⁴ László Karsai, "The People's Courts and Revolutionary Justice in Hungary," in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath, 1939-1948*, ed. by István Deák, Jan Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 233-251.

³⁸⁵ A good overview of the trials and the people's courts is Margit Szöllösi-Janze, "Pfeilkreuzler, Landesverräter und andere Volksfeinde Generalabrechnung in Ungarn," in *Politische Säuberung in Europa. Die Abrechnung mit Faschismus und Kollaboration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. by Hans Woller and Klaus-Dietmar Henke (München: DtV, 1991). On the influence of the communist party on the people's courts see: Norbert Spannenberger, "(Selbst-) Reflexion der Kriegsschuld. Rumänien und Ungarn", in *Kriegserfahrung und nationale Identität in Europa nach 1945. Erinnerung, Säuberungsprozesse und nationales Gedächtnis*, ed. by Kerstin von Lingen (Paderborn/München/Wien/Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 332-349, 340.

³⁸⁶ Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis*, 47.

³⁸⁷ The term "Jewish Revenge" was popular, and alluded to Jews within the people's court, the police, or simply those fighting for a return of their property – labelling their search for justice as a quest for revenge. Jews were accused of having risen to power, thought to have special privileges, be

Physical attacks, difficulties to regain stolen property, and ongoing discrimination occurred throughout Hungary.³⁸⁸ 1946 brought pogroms, especially in rural areas and small villages. The populations in Kunmadaras, Miskolc, and Ózd attacked and killed Jews or looted their property. Regional forces did not protect the Jews against this.³⁸⁹ As former perpetrators were reintegrated, with continuing antisemitism and a secured communist rule actually averse to discussing the Holocaust, the memory of the murders faded into the background.

In the 1950s, matters turned worse. With the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 and the Stalinist regime tightly in place, mentioning the Holocaust and Jewish suffering became dangerous. Seeing the Russians as liberators, many surviving Jews in Hungary had placed trust in the communist party, but from the 1950s onwards the state discriminated against Jews, labelling them Bourgeoisie, Zionists or Cosmopolitans.³⁹⁰ With anti-zionism on the rise, many Jews chose to remain silent about their own history as well as a possible Jewish identity in order to live undisturbed in communist Hungary.³⁹¹ Others emigrated to escape the difficulties of living within Hungary as a survivor, the threat of violence and the early communist rule.³⁹² In the public realm both the Holocaust and antisemitism were downplayed and hidden from view. Consequently, the Holocaust became a rare topic in the 1950s, remembered mostly by the dwindling Jewish communities.³⁹³ With the communist oppression of intellectual

overcompensated and it was said they would blame all Hungarians for their suffering. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 1346-1347.

³⁸⁸ Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis*, 150.

³⁸⁹ Those attacked were mainly Jews who reclaimed their own property. Vera Ranki argues that the pogroms happened in rural areas, because it was here that Jews returned and reclaimed property. Vera Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion. Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 194, 195. For a brief English overview on the pogroms and the communist regime see: Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis*, 150-153.

³⁹⁰ Randolph L. Braham, "Hungary and the Holocaust: The Nationalist Drive to Whitewash the Past", in *The Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary and Roma during the Post-Communist Era*, ed. by Randolph L. Braham (New York: Columbia University, 2004), 1-43, 6-7; Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 1349.

³⁹¹ Regina Fritz and Imke Hansen, "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos und europäischen Standards. Der Holocaust im ungarischen Erinnerungsdiskurs," in *Universalisierung des Holocaust? Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik in internationaler Perspektive*, ed. by Jan Eckel and Claudia Moiselj (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008), 59-85, 65; Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 1349; Regina Fritz, "Wandlung der Erinnerung in Ungarn. Von der Tabuisierung zur Thematisierung des Holocaust." *Zeitgeschichte* 6, no. 33 (2006): 303-317, 308; Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion*, 193.

³⁹² From 1945 to 1951, 20,000-25,000 Jews left Hungary. Fritz, "Wandlung der Erinnerung," 309. After 1956 even more Jews emigrated.

³⁹³ Fritz, "Wandlung der Erinnerung," 310.

endeavours, most severe for studies that focused on the interwar period and the Second World War, scholars did not address the Holocaust until this oppression loosened.³⁹⁴ The Shoah, debates about antisemitism and Jewish matters in general remained marginal throughout the 1960s.

The tight control on intellectual endeavours eased in Hungary in the 1970s. Earlier than elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the Hungarian state made room for scholars to address the Holocaust, loosened censorship of literary works and allowed public debates and discussions on it. Due to this, the Holocaust became a topic discussed by a larger public from the 1970s onwards, just as in Western Europe, the United States and Israel. The generational change, the media's growing attention to the Shoah and the spectacular trials of the 1960s, particularly the Eichmann trial, also affected Hungary. Jewish authors published literary accounts of the Shoah, which from the middle of the 1980s received a wider reception.³⁹⁵ Western-style television partly sustained growing interest in discussing the Shoah, and the translation of central works published in the West made these books available in Hungarian.³⁹⁶ By the late 1980s a larger, non-Jewish audience slowly began to follow the discussions on the Holocaust.

Historical research on the Shoah in Hungary took off from the 1970s onwards.³⁹⁷ In the decades before there had been hardly any. A few serious studies that aimed to inform Hungarians about the Shoah had appeared immediately after 1945, but the larger population had ignored them.³⁹⁸ In the late 1950s, scholars published some sources on the Holocaust, but these were rare efforts.³⁹⁹ Most academic work on

³⁹⁴ Balázs, "Fine tuning," 37-39.

³⁹⁵ Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 1350-1351; Fritz and Hansen. "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 66; István Deák, "Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary," in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. by Randolph L. Braham (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 119.

³⁹⁶ Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 1352.

³⁹⁷ Historiography in Hungary was not as curtailed as it was in other communist countries. From the 1970s and 1980 onward, orthodox Marxists, liberal, semi-dissidents or anti-ideological neo-positivists could publish side by side. In the 1980s right-wing historians were also reintegrated. Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor, "Fine-Tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s," in *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, ed. by Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 1-99, 6-8.

³⁹⁸ Most notable here is István Bibó "Zsidókérdésmagyaroságon 1944 után" [The Jewish question in Hungary after 1944] published in 1948, which discusses Hungarian responsibility as well as attempts to deny and ignore it.

³⁹⁹ Ilona Benoschowsky and Elek Karsai, *Vádiratanácizmus Ellen* [Indictment against Nazism], 3 vol., Budapest 1958-67 was the most important of these.

the Holocaust in Hungary was produced outside the country and even when controls eased, the most influential studies came from elsewhere, mainly the United States. Of these, Randolph L. Braham's relentless efforts to bring Hungary's history to the fore were most significant.⁴⁰⁰ With the 40th anniversary of the Holocaust, a breakthrough occurred with respect to research and publishing. A conference on the Holocaust raised the topics that would become essential to all subsequent discussions on the Shoah in Hungary. The main topics were: antisemitism in Hungary; Jewish identity in the country; the role of right-wing groups; the responsibility of the Horthy regime and the Hungarian population in general; and the impact of the Shoah after 1945. The results were published in English, but the conference held for the 50th anniversary of the Holocaust was already half Hungarian, with the material from the one held for the 60th published in English and Hungarian.⁴⁰¹ Influential groups within the communist party began to recognise the Shoah as an area of interest, and a research programme was established when the Centre for Jewish Studies was set up within the Hungarian Academy of Science.⁴⁰² Today scholars do excellent work inside and outside the country.⁴⁰³

In Hungary, the growing awareness faced a backlash after the end of the Soviet Bloc. Antisemitic statements, xenophobic and nationalist opinions – voiced with caution under communism – were expressed openly and vehemently.⁴⁰⁴ While attempts to investigate the Shoah in Hungary continued, a revisionist and right-wing position gained strength.⁴⁰⁵ The right associated Jews with communists, held them responsible

⁴⁰⁰ Aside from collections of sources published since the 1960s, studies in the 1970s in Hungary focused on the involvement of the Christian upper class. In 1976 György Száraz published *Egyelőléletnyomában* [In pursuit of Prejudice], which reached a wide audience beyond the Jewish communities. Judit Kubinszky, *Politikai antiszemitizmus Magyarországon 1875-1890* [Political antisemitism in Hungary 1875-1890], published in 1976, addressed antisemitism in Hungary. Finally, a number of works turned to Hungarian Jewry and their history.

⁴⁰¹ Randolph L. Braham and Bela Vago, ed. *The Holocaust in Hungary. Forty Years Later* (Columbia University Press, New York 1985); Randolph L., Braham and Attila Pók, ed. *The Holocaust in Hungary. Fifty Years Later* (New York: Columbia University, 1997); Judit Molnár, ed. *The Holocaust in Hungary. A European Perspective* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2005).

⁴⁰² Georges Soros co-sponsored the programme from 1985 onwards. Attila Pók, "German, Hungarians and Hungarian Jewry," in *Genocide and Rescue. The Holocaust in Hungary 1944*, ed. by David Cesariani (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1997), 147-158, 153-158.

⁴⁰³ For a brief but good overview of the current historiography on the Holocaust in Hungary see: Pók, "German, Hungarians and Hungarian Jewry."

⁴⁰⁴ András Kovács, "Holocaust, the persecution of Jews and Historical Responsibility: Findings of a Survey in Hungary," *East European Jewish Affairs* 28, no. 1 (1998): 55-68, 55.

⁴⁰⁵ Brigitte Mihok, "Erinnerungsüberlagerungen oder der lange Schatten der Geschichtsverzerrung", in *Ungarn und der Holocaust. Kollaboration, Rettung und Trauma*, ed. by Brigitte Mihok (Berlin: Metropol, 2005), 157-168, 159-160.

for Hungary's socioeconomic struggles, and asked the old, antisemitic question of whether Jews could be considered Hungarians.⁴⁰⁶ Although outright Holocaust denial was rare, members of the political, cultural and military elite distorted and denigrated the Holocaust in order to champion their own agenda.⁴⁰⁷ How politicians referred to the Holocaust depended essentially on the political party to which they belonged.⁴⁰⁸ The conservative-right, already under Viktor Orbán, denigrated the Holocaust and emphasised instead the crimes committed under communism.⁴⁰⁹ The right denied Hungarian responsibility for the Holocaust and saw the commemoration of it as a Jewish matter. The social democrats and left-liberal parties did address the Holocaust and accepted a limited responsibility. The population at large did not care about the Holocaust and its Hungarian dimension – and continues not to.⁴¹⁰ The hostilities after 1990 alarmed survivors and left-wing intellectuals, who believed that the Shoah should have been addressed more. Some individuals, intellectuals and scholars fought actively for its commemoration and – especially when keeping the many adversaries in mind – did have some success. Today the Holocaust Emlékközpont is the most obvious result of these attempts, but further examples are provided by the existence of stones in the sidewalk commemorating where Jews used to live, the memorial at the Danube for the Jewish victims, the Raoul Wallenberg memorial, the renovation of synagogues and the establishment of the Glass House.

The persecution of the Roma has not yet been a real topic in Hungary, despite some growing attention that Roma victims have received lately. Especially when compared to the Shoah, the Pharrajimos is largely pushed to the fringes of public awareness and academic study.⁴¹¹ Directly after 1945, returning Roma found their houses had been ransacked, and the local population met them with suspicion. In addition to

⁴⁰⁶ Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 1354-1355; Braham, "Hungary and the Holocaust," 1.

⁴⁰⁷ Braham, "Hungary and the Holocaust", 2. Michael Shafir gives an overview over different antisemitic positions in Hungary. Michael Shafir, "Varieties of Antisemitism in Post-Communist East Central Europe," *Jewish Studies at the Central European University* III (2002-2003): 175-210.

⁴⁰⁸ Fritz and Hansen, "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos."

⁴⁰⁹ Braham, "Hungary and the Holocaust", Fritz and Hansen, "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos."

⁴¹⁰ Fritz and Hansen, "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 70-72.

⁴¹¹ János Bársony, "20th Century Roma History and the Pharrajimos," in *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma during the Holocaust*, ed. by János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczi (Budapest: Idebate Press, 2008), 23-48, 42. János Bársony, "Hungarian Pharrajimos, the Unexplored Territories of the Roma Holocaust and Its Aftereffect," in *The Holocaust in Hungary. A European Perspective*, ed. by Judit Molnár (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2005), 404-417, 412-417.

attacks by the general population, official persecution continued until the 1960s and, in a milder form, until the 1990s. Roma continuously experienced the racism of the population and institutions.⁴¹² The communist state did not accept the Roma as an ethnic minority with special rights until 1980. Instead, the state declared them a social minority, leaving them unprotected as a group. The state wanted to integrate the Roma into mainstream society with the hope that they, as a group, would disappear. Moves to enable this integration however, were half-hearted, and Roma were left at the lowest level of Hungarian society. They largely remained unskilled workers, marginalised and discriminated against.⁴¹³ In the 1960s, the state granted very small and demeaning compensation for the crimes committed during the Holocaust. A second pension, paid out in 1997, was largely ineffective as it failed to reach many Roma in Hungary.⁴¹⁴ Today, the Hungarian state and the public discriminates Roma, marginalising them. The backlash of the 1990s brought renewed racism and violence, especially against Roma. This remains even if Roma organisations could gain some strength in Hungary, resulting from the status of an ethnic minority finally granted in 1980 and partly enhanced by pressures exerted from the European Union.⁴¹⁵ Roma in Hungary continue to experience racism in its most severe and life-threatening forms.

Not only public attention to the Pharrajimos, but also scholarship on the topic is marginal. Both public and academic knowledge about the suffering of Roma in Hungary from 1920 to 1945 is minimal. Few scholars work on this topic and aside from individuals, especially within the Roma communities, the larger public is at least indifferent to, if not dismissive of the Pharrajimos. With a very different history to the Shoah, simple inclusion within Holocaust historiography does not serve commemoration of Roma victims well.⁴¹⁶ Racism against the Roma differs from other forms of racism due to the paternal system of coexistence between Roma and non-Roma Hungarians. Furthermore, the persecutions have a long tradition, carried out by the local administration, social welfare offices and the medical profession, targeting tribes and families together. Lastly,

⁴¹² Bársony, "20th Century Roma History," 43, 45; David M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 265-267.

⁴¹³ Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies*, 92, 99, 97.

⁴¹⁴ Bársony, "20th Century Roma History," 48.

⁴¹⁵ Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies*, 103-104.

⁴¹⁶ Here the debate between János Bársony and László Kársai is one example. Documented in Bársony and Daróczi, *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma*.

the inconsistency of the persecutions also requires independent research and representation.⁴¹⁷ On-going persecution after 1945 and the continuing discrimination and exclusion from non-Roma society make such research even more complex.⁴¹⁸

3.1.2 Dominant elements within the post-war discourse on the Holocaust

Today the discourse about the Shoah in Hungary interweaves several dominant strands. Each strand has a history of its own, drawing partly on pre-war tropes, adjusted after 1945, then adapted to communist rule and again to the regime change after 1990. Dominant tropes are the externalisation of responsibility, exculpating the general population, which is presented as victims. The Holocaust itself is considered relevant only to the Jewish communities. After 1990 a victim competition emerged, posing the victims of the Holocaust against those of communism, with the crimes of the latter portrayed as the larger and more essential ones.⁴¹⁹ In general, the discourse defines the Holocaust as the murder of the Jews, leaving all other victim groups aside.

The externalisation of the Holocaust is at the core of the dominant discourse in Hungary. Responsibility is laid at the feet of Germans and high-ranking Arrow Cross leaders, who are identified as non-typical Hungarians. The earliest prosecutions already externalised the crimes and ignored the former elite, particularly hiding the role of the Horthy regime. The following reintegration of Arrow Cross members, the old elite, and the administration and executive organs underlined the claim that others, outsiders, had committed the crimes. The general population was soon proclaimed to have suffered under the Germans. According to this narrative, others – non-Hungarians or individual Hungarians gone astray – were responsible for the Holocaust. A few people were demonised, the rest exculpated and the non-persecuted population turned into victims.⁴²⁰ Externalisation remained dominant under communism. Once Matyas Rakozi had installed a Stalinist system, the narrative of the war emphasised an

⁴¹⁷ Bársony, "20th Century Roma History," 23-48.

⁴¹⁸ Michael Stewart, "Remembering without Commemoration: The Mnemonics and Politics of Holocaust Memories among European Roma," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10 (2004): 561-582, 571.

⁴¹⁹ A good overview of the different strands is given by Michael Shafir, "Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization': Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe," in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. by Randolph L. Brahm (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 43-136.

⁴²⁰ Fritz, "Wandlung der Erinnerung", 306-309.

anti-fascist struggle against the Germans and the Arrow Cross leaders. As before, responsibility lay with the German occupiers and their Arrow Cross aides. As interest in the Shoah grew in the 1970s and 1980s, the focus was on the time after March 19th 1944, during which the Germans had controlled the Hungarian government. The dominant view was that before that time, Jews had been relatively safe.⁴²¹ Today externalisation is still popular, but with a different spin. With communism delegitimised, the new founding myth of the Hungarian nation harks back to the authoritative, right-wing Horthy regime, presenting this time as the better past.⁴²² In order to glorify Horthy and his rule, his shared responsibility for the Holocaust is denied, with the blame placed instead on the Germans, on the Stójay regime that ruled after March 1944 and on the Arrow Cross leaders, or by turning all Hungarians into victims.⁴²³

The claimed victim status of the population is the second most important strand within the dominant discourse. According to this strand, all Hungarians were victims, hence disconnected from the crimes. This victim status extends to all areas of the past, serving to hide collaboration and active participation in the Holocaust. Not yet so visible immediately after the war, the victim myth developed fully during the communist era. The limited resistance against National Socialism in Hungary made it impossible to define the population as resistance fighters, as was done in Italy for example. Instead, the discourse presented the population as the victims of the Germans. Jewish victims were simply subsumed into the larger victim group. Jews died in the anti-fascist struggle and not as a result of racial hatred.⁴²⁴ Addressing the silence of the population, the communist regime blamed it on the Catholic Church and the aristocracy – prime targets of the regime.⁴²⁵ After 1990, suffering under communism and the

⁴²¹ This claim is largely a myth as Randolph L. Braham has shown. Randolph L. Braham, "Rettungsaktionen: Mythos und Realität", in *Ungarn und der Holocaust. Kollaboration, Rettung und Trauma*, ed. by Brigitte Mihok (Berlin: Metropol, 2005).

⁴²² Much of the historiography written after 1990 is cast within a neo-national narrative, portraying the Hungarian nation as a success story, merely interrupted by tragic events brought from outside. Trencsényi, "Fine-Tuning", 39, 45. Within the revisionist nostalgia a desire for strength and superiority and a longing for an authoritative rule is embedded. Michael Shafir, "Varieties of Antisemitism," 175-210.

⁴²³ Braham, "Hungary and the Holocaust," 2.

⁴²⁴ Fritz and Hansen. "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 64; Szöllosi-Janze, "Pfeilkreuzler," 311-357.

⁴²⁵ Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, 1347; David Cesariani, "Introduction," in *Genocide and Rescue. The Holocaust in Hungary 1944*, ed. by David Cesariani (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1997), 1-28, 6. Regina Fritz argues that the victimisation of the general population produced a hero-cult as its counterpart. She does not specify who the declared heroes were. Fritz, "Wandlung der Erinnerung", 313. Today the heroes are found in the 19th century. Within the literature on the Holocaust there is a substantial

idealisation of the pre-war past gave the victim myth renewed fuel. Emphasising suffering in general, the victim myth includes the claim that Hungarians have suffered throughout history. This variant of the victim myth includes a trope developed during the interwar period: the proclaimed injustice of the Treaty of Trianon. This peace treaty signed in 1920 between Hungary and the Entente powers, determined how Hungary could exist as an independent state after the First World War. It significantly reduced the national territory of Hungary. The trope referencing the Treaty of Trianon, interprets the Treaty to have weakened Hungary, curtailing its population and leaving a truncated country without strength to defend itself. These proclaimed injustices, usually cited without contextualisation, then became the justification for Hungary's allegiance to Germany and the consequences thereof. Excusing the close connection to Germany, the collaboration with it and the crimes committed during the alliance, the reference to the Treaty externalises responsibility to the Entente powers after the First World War.⁴²⁶ The argument can even be extended to claim that the Treaty led to the Soviet occupation, since Hungary only lost the war because it sided with Germany.

The third strand in the dominant discourse is the separation of Hungarian history from Holocaust history. In most cases, the victim myth simply excludes victims of the Holocaust, addressing only the suffering of non-Jewish Hungarians during the Second World War. This perspective does not consider Jews Hungarian, nor is the Holocaust a Hungarian event. The assumption is that the victims of the Holocaust should address their own fate, while Hungarians deal with their suffering. The Holocaust is declared a matter central to the Jewish communities only. Due to the externalisation and the victim myth, non-Jewish Hungarians are not only not responsible for, but also unaffected by the Holocaust. In this perspective, nothing compels Hungarians to deal with the Holocaust. As a result, Holocaust memory becomes a separate, dislocated and distant matter that does not affect Hungarian society. The fall of the Soviet Bloc has

part devoted to the saviours of Jews. Here Raoul Wallenberg is most famous, but other, such as Carl Lutz, are also given attention. However, they are not Hungarian, but usually foreign diplomats, and hence do not qualify as Hungarian heroes in the strict sense. Tanja Schult, *A Hero's Many Faces. Raoul Wallenberg in Contemporary Monuments* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009); Theo Tschuy, *Carl Lutz und die Juden von Budapest* (Zürich: Verlag Neue Züricher Zeitung, 1995). The museums do not represent heroes who fought against the Arrow Cross for the sake of the Jews, Roma or other victims.

⁴²⁶ Fritz and Hansen. "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 66, 69.

strengthened this, linking Hungarian commemoration almost exclusively to Trianon, and non-national, i.e. Jewish commemoration of the Shoah, to Germany.

The last strand within the dominant discourse is that of victim rivalry: the posing of the victims of communism against the victims of the Holocaust. Soon after the regime change in 1990 a strong competition between communist and Holocaust commemorations emerged. Victim rivalry is evoked when people and institutions commemorating communist crimes make a brief gesture to the suffering of the Holocaust. They equate fascism with communism, presenting them as two dictatorial regimes that functioned on the same level and produced similar suffering.⁴²⁷ This draws on the international recognition of the Holocaust, in order to qualify suffering under communism as at least equally harsh.⁴²⁸ Following this many representations imply that communism – having lasted longer – was worse and more fateful than the Holocaust. To qualify communism as worse downplays the suffering during the Holocaust. By equating the Sztójay cabinet and Arrow Cross rule with early communist rule, the many differences between the regimes disappear and the crimes, all noteworthy in their own right, are not given due respect. Within this discourse, extensive and detailed Holocaust memory threatens the comparative frame, as it would reveal how different the suffering under the two regimes was.⁴²⁹ The victim rivalry also turns all Hungarians into victims of the communist rule, and victimising perpetrators of the Holocaust denies Hungarian society's historical responsibility for the Holocaust.

The sad reality in Hungary is that a large percentage of the population shares the opinions described above. The conservative right-wing government under Victor Orban, right-wing parties such as Jobbik and many extreme right-wing groups active in Hungary support these views, as do many intellectuals, elite figures and influential people. However, European memory culture also affects Hungary. Having become part of the European Union, the Hungarian government officially commemorates the Holocaust. It joined the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education,

⁴²⁷ Fritz and Hansen. "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 69.

⁴²⁸ The Terror Háza references representations used in Washington and Jerusalem for the Holocaust. The wagon in the Gulag room cites the one in the Washington, the room where children's voices call out the names of those executed cites the practice associated with the memorial dedicated to the children at Yad Vashem, and the Wall of Victims recalls the hall of names in Yad Vashem. Fritz and Hansen, "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 78

⁴²⁹ Fritz and Hansen, "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 70-82.

Remembrance, and Research in 2002, and established April 16th as a national day of Holocaust commemoration.⁴³⁰ As in Italy, the same regulation that stipulated Holocaust commemoration also recognised nationalistic commemorations. The decree established October 6th as the day to remember the crushing of the 1848-49 revolution in Arad, and February 25th as the day to remember the victims of communism. The state officially accepted the commemoration of the Holocaust, while simultaneously elevating nationalistic narratives to the same status. Nevertheless, Holocaust memory is part of memory culture in Hungary. Added to the official recognition are the relentless efforts of individuals to commemorate the Holocaust, to conduct further research on it and to address contemporary antisemitism as well as the current right-wing turn in Hungary. Their efforts have led to a growing recognition of Holocaust remembrance since 1990. This recognition includes a careful consideration of Hungarian responsibility, even if this largely fails to reach the larger population.⁴³¹

3.1.3 Holocaust commemorations, museum spectacles

As observed, several initiatives commemorate the Holocaust in Hungary. Most memorialise the Shoah, very few the Pharrajimos, while hardly any mention other victim groups. Before 1989, commemoration was rare and carried out mostly by Jewish communities, for example at Jewish cemeteries.⁴³² Today memorials, art installations or signposts commemorate the Holocaust in a more public realm. They are accessible to the general population and visible within city spaces. They either deal with people who helped or saved the Jews, such as the memorial to Raoul Wallenberg or Carl Lutz, or commemorate the victims, as in the case of stones and plaques indicating where Jews lived or public memorials. A well-known example is the memorial for the Jews shot into the Danube in Budapest. Most memorials are in Budapest, but other cities in Hungary have also established commemorative markers. With the exception of the Terror Háza, neither public references to sites of terror nor representations of perpetrators can be found in Hungary.⁴³³

⁴³⁰ The Task Force is now renamed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

⁴³¹ Fritz and Hansen "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 77-82.

⁴³² Brigitte Mihok names several memorials at Jewish cemeteries in Budapest, Zalaegerszeg, Győr or Némethlövö. Mihok, "Erinnerungsüberlagerungen," 162.

⁴³³ There are no commemorations at the former collection sites or ghettos in Hungary.

It has mainly been the Roma communities that have commemorated the Pharrajimos.⁴³⁴ Ongoing racism denies them allocation of public space for it, and the majority of non-Roma society would prefer not be bothered, hindering the commemoration of Roma victims within non-Roma society.⁴³⁵ Beginning in the 1980s, independent Roma initiatives began to record Roma histories and to communicate them to a larger, non-Roma public. Local authorities strongly opposed the commemorations that accompanied these attempts.⁴³⁶ Despite being met with resistance, Roma associations put up plaques and commemorative markers in rural areas of Hungary. These markers commemorate graves, document the deportations from local railway stations, or identify the locations of former ghettos. The first plaque was dedicated in 1984 in the village of Torony, followed by Nyiregyháza in 1991, and several others.⁴³⁷ A central monument commemorating Roma victims in Budapest was erected by the Danube in 2006, dedicated not only to the Roma of Hungary, but to all Roma victims.

As is common in many European countries, the first museum that devoted space to commemorate the Holocaust was the Jewish Museum.⁴³⁸ First opened in 1916, it reopened in 1947, displaying an anti-fascist exhibition in its second gallery. For a long time it remained the sole institution devoting space and continuous attention to the Shoah.⁴³⁹ Other than the Jewish museum, the Holocaust was not part of permanent museum exhibitions until the 1990s. After 1989, most museums in Hungary either completely renewed or at least updated their exhibitions.⁴⁴⁰ Ongoing changes in museum representation and the cycle by which museums usually update their exhibitions partly explain this, but most significant was the end of communist rule and the resulting need to reinterpret contemporary history. Within these renewals, all museums addressing the 20th century devoted some space, however small, to the Holocaust. All museums now address the Horthy regime, the Second World War and the Arrow

⁴³⁴ Stewart, "Remembering without Commemoration."

⁴³⁵ Katalin Katz, "The Roma of Hungary in the Second World War," in *The Gypsies during the Second World War. The Final Chapter*, ed. by Donald Kenrick (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2006), 71.

⁴³⁶ Katz, "The Roma of Hungary," 47-86, 84.

⁴³⁷ Bársony, "20th Century Roma," 46-47.

⁴³⁸ Offe, *Ausstellungen*.

⁴³⁹ Ilona Benoschofsky and Alexander Scheiber, ed. *The Jewish Museum of Budapest*, trans. by Joseph W. Wiesenberg (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1987).

⁴⁴⁰ This holds true for Budapest, whereas museums in the countryside and smaller cities could only partially renew or remodel their exhibitions due to financial difficulties.

Cross Rule under German occupation. Within this the Shoah is represented; the Pharaïmos and other crimes against humanity are not. The general narratives remain within the dominant discourse, to which only few museum initiatives pose alternative perspectives.

Museum representations in Hungary received significant attention after the year 2000 due to the *Terror Háza* (Terror House) in Budapest. The museum is widely known, both in academia and by the larger public. Envisioned by the conservative right-wing government under Victor Orban in 2000 and opened in February 2002 directly before the elections, the museum itself and its exhibition has been seen as an attempt to influence politics. As a result, political discussions about how to remember the past are always closely linked to the Terror Háza.⁴⁴¹ The press discussed the exhibition and its opening extensively, and today scholars routinely mention the Terror Háza when discussing memory culture in Hungary.⁴⁴² Most academic journal articles harshly criticised the Terror Háza, accusing it of an unbalanced presentation of the Second World War that downplays the crimes committed during it in order to present communism as the greater evil.⁴⁴³ Before representing the communist crimes, the exhibition of the Terror Háza exhibits the Holocaust, but only discusses the Arrow Cross rule after October 15th 1944. This ignores not only the antisemitic discrimination and exclusions before 1944, but also the murderous policy of the Sztójay cabinet. The displays on the Arrow Cross are insignificant compared to the presentation of the crimes committed during the early communist rule in Hungary that take up most of the 5000 m² exhibition space.⁴⁴⁴ The section on the Arrow Cross suggests that only the high-ranking leaders of the Arrow Cross were responsible and the display alludes to their

⁴⁴¹ A similar situation exists for the Austrian debate about a possible national museum.

⁴⁴² In addition to newspaper articles, the journals "Elétésirodalom [Life and Literature] and MúltésJövő [Past and Future] published several articles on the Terror Háza.

⁴⁴³ Regina Fritz has frequently voiced her criticism. See, for example: Regina Fritz, "Der Umgang mit dem Holocaust in Ungarn zwischen internationalen Erwartungen und nationalen Diskursen. Das Holocaust Gedenkzentrum in Budapest," in *Diktaturüberwindung in Europa. Neue nationale und transnationale Perspektiven*, ed. by Birgit Hofmann, Katja Wezel, Katrin Hammerstein, et.al, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010), 167-179. A concise summary criticizing the exhibition is also given by Köhr, *Die vielen Gesichter des Holocaust*, 69-72.

⁴⁴⁴ Mihok, "Erinnerungsüberlagerungen," 166-167; Fritz, "Wandlung der Erinnerung," 312. Braham, "Hungary and the Holocaust," 12. The museum devotes two rooms entirely to the Arrow Cross and other areas address it in passing: the room Changing of Clothes, the entrance hall, part of the prison cells in the basement, and the commemorative room also address the time of the Second World War.

crimes only.⁴⁴⁵ Later, the exhibition presents some perpetrators from the Second World War as victims of communism, while others seem to have simply changed sides, becoming perpetrators once again.⁴⁴⁶ The expository agent externalises responsibility for the Holocaust to the Germans and the Arrow Cross leaders, treating the general population as victims, who are either equated with the victims of the Holocaust, as in the Hall of Tears, or posed in competition with them.⁴⁴⁷ The exhibition establishes the Treaty of Trianon as responsible for both the German occupation and communism. The presentation of the communist period is equally problematic. The exhibition displays a narrative wherein the good Hungarian population opposes an evil communist rule.⁴⁴⁸ Some victims groups, such as the Christian churches, are championed, while others are ignored.⁴⁴⁹ The museum simplifies the complex past, generalises negative evaluations and refrains from the contextualization of complicated historical matters. The exhibition has a nationalistic tone, following a perspective championed by the conservative right.⁴⁵⁰

The Terror Háza features a mode of representation in which the design of the exhibition symbolises moral condemnation of the crimes. Its symbolic condemnation is more important than the explicit information about the past. This is visible, for example, in the first room of the main exhibition, entitled “Double Occupation”. In the middle is a room divider with four TV screens on each side. The right side is painted black, the left side red, representing fascism and communism as two sides of terror. On the side representing fascism the screens show Hitler, troops marching, war battles and footage from the liberation of the concentration camps and other gruesome images. The other side represents communism and shows war images and troops marching, Soviet soldiers who march through Budapest and hoist red flags. Stalin appears,

⁴⁴⁵ Regina Fritz and Katja Wezel, “Konkurrenz der Erinnerungen? Museale Darstellung von diktatorischen Erfahrungen in Ungarn und Lettland,” in *Aufarbeitung der Diktatur – Diktat der Aufarbeitung? Normierungsprozesse beim Umgang mit diktatorischer Vergangenheit*, ed. by Katrin Hammerstein (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), 242.

⁴⁴⁶ Fritz and Wezel, “Konkurrenz der Erinnerungen?,” 240; Joachim von Puttkamer, “Die Museen des Kommunismus. Ein Kommentar aus fachwissenschaftlicher Sicht,” in *Der Kommunismus im Museum. Formen der Auseinandersetzung in Deutschland und Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. by Volkhard Knigge, Ulrich Máhlert (Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau, 2005), 235-254. 245.

⁴⁴⁷ Fritz, “Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos,” 78, 80

⁴⁴⁸ Fritz and Wezel, “Konkurrenz der Erinnerungen?,” 243.

⁴⁴⁹ Puttkamer, “Die Museen des Kommunismus,” 237.

⁴⁵⁰ Braham, “Hungary and the Holocaust,” 13.

and Hungarian soldiers in very bad conditions stare at the visitor. Dramatic music accompanies the display. A photograph at the end of the room shows the destroyed chain bridge, an iconic representation symbolising the destruction of Budapest. The display suggests that terror ruled before and after 1945 in equal measures. Symbolising oppression and suffering, the artistic room design creates an encompassing experience for the visitor in which the expository agent's message is easily decoded without understanding the details shown on the screens. The Terror Háza would have made an excellent case study, but analysis of it needs to include the presentation of the communist period, which lies beyond the realm of this dissertation. The Terror Háza certainly presents the dominant discourse, and does so in a very blatant and provocative manner.

Much less sensationalist, the *Nemzeti Múzeum* (National Museum) and the *Hádtörténeti Múzeum* (Military Museum) also present variants of the dominant discourse. The Nemzeti Múzeum is one of the earliest national museums to have emerged in Central Europe. Its collection was established in 1802 as part of the Szecheny library. Construction of the building that still houses the National Museum today began in 1837, and it opened ten years later.⁴⁵¹ The Hádtörténeti Múzeum is also a traditional institution, envisioned in 1867 as a counterpart to the Austrian Military Museum, but not established until 1918. Its collection moved to its current location in the Nador Baracks in 1929 and the first permanent exhibition there opened in 1937. Today both museums represent the Shoah within their displays on the 20th century. Extensively discussing the Treaty of Trianon as the reason for Hungary's weakness and its consequent need to side with Germany, both exhibitions externalise responsibility, glorify the Horthy regime and establish the victim myth. The expository agents bemoan the German occupation, vilifying German rule and the Arrow Cross leaders; posing them against an innocent, suffering population.⁴⁵² Needless to say, the exhibition does not mention Roma or other victims of the Holocaust. Roma and other minorities

⁴⁵¹ Tibor Kovács, "Episodes in the Two Hundred-Year History of the Museum," in *Two Hundred Years' History of the Hungarian National Museum and Its Collections*, ed. by János Pintér (Budapest: Hungarian National Museum, 2004); See also: Anna Zádor, *A Nemzeti Múzeum* (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Alapkiadása, 1953). On national museums in Hungary see: Raffler, *Museum - Spiegel der Nation?*.

⁴⁵² The initial plans for the redesigned Hungarian exhibition at Auschwitz in 2000 were similar in scope. They were abandoned after public outcry from the Jewish community and an expert on Hungarian history of the Holocaust. See: Braham, "Hungary and the Holocaust," 10-12.

are completely absent in all exhibitions in Hungary – as if they were not part of the Hungarian nation or its fighting forces.⁴⁵³

The Hádtörténeti Múzeum celebrates the military and, allowing little criticism of the army, minimises and trivialises its responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁴⁵⁴ The Shoah appears as a mere side story, presented in a manner both unimaginative and largely uninformative. Two displays address the persecution of the Jews. One panel outlines the forced military labour units, in which Jews and other people had to serve without carrying arms. The copy condemns the murderous tasks these units were forced to carry out, but still declares the men drafted into it as unfit to carry arms.⁴⁵⁵ The other display represents the persecution more generally, showing a few documents, a yellow star and a passport issued for Jews by the Swiss embassy in Budapest. The display gives no explication of the documents or the objects shown.⁴⁵⁶ While the area devoted to the Second World War at the Nemzeti Múzeum is a bit more balanced, it presents the suffering of the soldiers, the Jews, and the general population alongside one another – creating groups of suffering victims. Perpetrators remain marginal. Figures such as Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky or officials serving under Horthy, also involved in the persecution of Jews, are celebrated.⁴⁵⁷

As well as the museums in Budapest, local and smaller institutions can be found in Hungary. Due to Hungary's centralism, museums in smaller cities or rural areas cannot compete with the large institutions in the capital. Historical museums in the countryside are usually smaller folk museums. Hungary is divided into counties, most of which have one history museum that aims to represent the story of the region. They have limited financial means and staff, and often the exhibitions are old. Many do not

⁴⁵³ Roma, for example, were conscripted into the army in large numbers in the First World War. Bársony, "20th Century Roma History," 23-48, 29.

⁴⁵⁴ The museum partly honours those units and groups of the military then involved in the Holocaust. In the garden of the military museum a plaque that commemorates the gendarmes was unveiled in 1999. Shafir, "Between Denial," 71.

⁴⁵⁵ Text panel "Forced Labour Service" in the Hádtörténeti Múzeum in the room on the Battle at the Don within the wing devoted to the period from 1918-1945.

⁴⁵⁶ Display case on the Jewish persecution in the Hádtörténeti Múzeum's room on the German occupation within the wing devoted to the time from 1918-1934.

⁴⁵⁷ Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was an antisemitic member of parliament who protested against massacres of the Hungarian army against Serbs and Jews. Of Horthy's officials, in particular Pal Teleki is honoured. He was prime minister in Hungary from 1920-21 and 1939-1941 and issued several anti-Jewish laws including the forced labour service in the army despite his aim to also protect the Hungarian Jewish communities from harsher measures.

focus on contemporary history. One that does include the 20th century in its representation is the *Nogradi Történeti Múzeum* (Nograd History Museum) in Sálgotarján.⁴⁵⁸ Its exhibition, despite having been redesigned in 2000, is old fashioned, drab and quite sad in appearance. It represents the past in a roughly similar way to the Nemzeti Múzeum, presenting the Treaty of Trianon and the accompanying loss of territory as a tragedy. The Arrow Cross movement is not discussed and the exhibition only gestures towards the Holocaust by displaying what is probably a prisoner uniform from the Holocaust, but without any explication the uniform is hard to make sense of.⁴⁵⁹ The exhibition remains silent about the Holocaust and in so doing implicitly strengthens the view that Holocaust history and Hungarian history are separate matters.

A rare exception to the folkloristic museums is a regional museum specialised on the Holocaust in Hódmezővásárhely, with the simple name *Holokauszt Múzeum* (Holocaust Museum). The small city has another museum, the *Emlékpont* (Point of Remembrance) that addresses the communist rule in the region. The *Institute for the 20th century*, closely associated with the Terror Háza, founded and financed both. The regional Jewish community oversees the Holocaust museum, but the director of the Terror Háza Maria Schmidt curated the exhibition which was designed by Attila F. Kovacs, the designer of the exhibition of the Terror Háza. He also designed the exhibition at the Emlékpont. The Holokauszt Múzeum is housed in a side gallery of a Neologue synagogue renovated in 1986. It is dedicated to the deportation and murder of Jewish children, but also references the fate of the local community in Hódmezővásárhely and the deportation and ghettoisation of rural Jewish communities in Hungary.⁴⁶⁰ Focusing on the children draws attention away from regional history and leaves the representation disjointed.⁴⁶¹ The exhibition shows aspects of the Shoah but not a consistent narrative; giving some information on the camps, ghettos, perpetrators, victims and people who

⁴⁵⁸ First initiatives to establish the museum began in 1927, but the museum was only set up as a proper institution in the 1959, with the goal to present the working class movement in Nograd County. It was housed in a temporary location until a building of its own, that still houses the exhibitions, was built and opened in the 1980s. Zoltán Balogh, *50 évincsei. Válogatás az 50 éves Nógradi Történeti Múzeumgyűjteményeiből* [50 years of Treasures. Selection from the collection of the Nogradi History Museum during its 50 years existence] (Sálgotarján: Nógradi Történeti Múzeum, 2009).

⁴⁵⁹ See: photo Nr. 22 in the chapter on the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee.

⁴⁶⁰ Mária Schmidt and Zsuzanna Körmendy, ed. *Holocaust Museum Hódmezővásárhely. Exhibit catalogue*, trans. by Ann Major (Hódmezővásárhely Mueum: Hódmezővásárhely, 2004).

⁴⁶¹ The children the display deals with are not from the city, but rather all child victims merged into one group. Displaying many photos of young children, the museum appeals to visitors' emotions by presenting young, innocent victims, who were murdered indiscriminately.

saved Jews, but leaving these stories disconnected and unexplained. The focus is on the time after 1944, the Arrow Cross movement and the Germans. The non-Jewish population of Hódmezővásárhely is absent, and even though the museum mentions the deportations from Hódmezővásárhely, local perpetrators are missing. Most of the copy is difficult to read hence its artistic rendering. Sentences stretch over a long wall, words are written just below the ceiling or placed on display objects so that the writing is only partially visible. Like the Terror Háza, the content addressed via text is largely inaccessible and secondary to the exhibition's design.

All museums introduced so far are examples of a revisionist representation of the Shoah. Nevertheless, representations that propose alternative narratives to the dominant discourse do exist in Budapest. The *Nemzeti Zsidó Múzeum* (National Jewish Museum) and the *Üveg Ház* (Glass House) have exhibitions that counter the dominant discourse. I already mentioned the Nemzeti Zsidó Múzeum at the Synagogue of Dohány Street in Budapest. As usual for most Jewish Museums it educates about Jewish religion, customs and culture in Hungary, as well as Jewish history from the first Jewish settlements in Hungary. The gallery on the Shoah is one part of the main exhibition. The one-room exhibition at the *Üveg Ház* also deals with the Shoah, but only details the rescue operation carried out by Carl Lutz, which took place at the site of the museum. The museum displays the story of the house, formerly occupied by a firm for glass products. Under the protection of the Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz, Jews received false passports and shelter at the *Üveg Ház*. Furthermore, Zionist Youth organisations operated secretly from the house.⁴⁶² The exhibition focuses on the time after the occupation but does not marginalise the Shoah or externalise responsibility for it. The involvement of Hungarians in the Holocaust is on the contrary very evident in the exhibition. A large portion of the exhibition focuses then on the active engagement of the victims, their reactions to the Holocaust, initiative and bravery fighting for survival.

As this overview has shown, most history museums in Hungary currently represent the Holocaust, and the museum landscape is diverse and complex. Traditional institutions stand side-by-side with recent ones, and museums that specialise on individual topics supplement those institutions that give a broad overview of history. In

⁴⁶² György Vámos, ed., *Üvegsziget (The Glass Island). A historic anthology* (Makkabi Publisher, Budapest, 2008); Tschuy, *Carl Lutz*.

most exhibitions, the Holocaust is a small part of a broader narrative and the Shoah is usually represented within the tropes of the dominant discourse. The permanent exhibitions do not represent the persecution of Roma or other victims. In fact, these groups simply are not represented – for no historical period. While externalisation and denigration of the Holocaust dominate, alternative perspectives on the Holocaust can be found. The Holokauszt Emlékközpont that I will now turn to is one of these exceptions within the museum landscape. It specialises on the Holocaust and deals with it exclusively, thus already opposing the dominant trend. Presenting an alternative interpretation to the dominant discourse in Hungary, the Holokauszt Emlékközpont values the victims, represents their suffering as an integral part of Hungarian history and addresses the responsibility of the Hungarian state and its population. Finally, it also integrates the Pharrajimos into its narrative, and at least gestures to other victim groups that are invisible elsewhere in Hungary.



Photo no. 26: The Holocaust Emlékközpont from the outside.

3.2 The Holocaust Emlékközpont: a seemingly seamless story

In 1999, the coalition government of the socialists and the liberals under Péter Medgyessy, together with the Jewish community in Hungary, decided to found the *Holocaust Emlékközpont* (*Holocaust Memorial Center*) in Budapest. The centre, dedicated to education about and research on the Holocaust, was established on the grounds of the former Orthodox synagogue at Páva Street.⁴⁶³ Building began in March 2002, and the centre opened on the Holocaust Remembrance Day in Hungary, April 15th 2004. It first opened with a temporary exhibition on the Auschwitz Album and a rarely mentioned small exhibition on the Roma persecution that was put together three weeks before the opening.⁴⁶⁴ The permanent exhibition on view today opened in

⁴⁶³ The state financed the renovation of the synagogue which had stood in ruins until then.

⁴⁶⁴ I will examine the Auschwitz Album in detail in chapter 3.3.3. The Album consists of 185 photographs taken of a transport of Jews arriving from Hungary at Auschwitz in 1944. Serge Klarsfeld, ed. *The Auschwitz album: Lili Jacob's album* (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1980) is still considered the best edition of the album. The exhibition on the persecution of the Roma, displayed in the female wing of the synagogue, was put together by the Roma Foundation, the Roma Press Center and the Roma Ethnographic Collection three weeks before the Holocaust Emlékközpont opened. Bársony and Daróczi, *Pharrajimos*, iv.

April 2006, curated by Judith Molnár.⁴⁶⁵ While public debates about the museum have been less heated than those surrounding the Terror Háza, most academic articles on the memory of the Holocaust in Hungary at least mention the Holokauszt Emlékközpont. Scholars usually applaud the initiative to commemorate the Holocaust, but the location and design of the centre have received criticism, as have inconsistencies within the exhibition and the fact that the museum fails to represent the period after 1945.⁴⁶⁶ Brigitte Mihok and Regina Fritz argue that the ninth district in which the museum is located is not central, Páva street is small and difficult to find, and the building is hard to recognise. Both authors fear that this might prevent the centre from reaching national importance. They also suggest that choosing the site of a former synagogue separates the Holocaust from Hungarian memory and connects it more closely to the Jewish community, so that non-Jewish Hungarians will continue to ignore the story presented there.⁴⁶⁷

Páva street, the location of the Holokauszt Emlékközpont, is in fact in a side street near the Corvin square metro stop. István Mányi and Attila Gáti designed the building, which features sand coloured walls with few, small windows. The words “Holokauszt Dokumentációs Központes Emlékgyűjtemény” (Holocaust Documentation Centre and Memory Collection) are faintly engraved next to the door. Neither the door nor the engraving can be seen directly from the street (Photo no. 26). After security controls at the gate, the visitor encounters a courtyard with a central view of the synagogue. In the courtyard there are six erect pillars with benches between them. To the right is a black wall commemorating individual victims by name, and to the left a glass tower marking the entrance that leads to the exhibition and the centre itself.⁴⁶⁸ The

⁴⁶⁵ Sarolta Biahry, Mariann Derencsér, Csaba Orbán and Zsolt Vasáros did the exhibition design, Judit Gelencsér the graphic design for the exhibition.

⁴⁶⁶ Criticism has been voiced by many; for a good overview see: Mihok, “Erinnerungsüberlagerung,” 164.

⁴⁶⁷ Mihok, “Erinnerungsüberlagerungen,” 163; Fritz, “Wandlung der Erinnerung,” 312. I do not agree that space, location or exhibition content alone can determine whether the Holokauszt Emlékközpont can be a site for national memory, relevant to all members of society. This depends on political will and the official support the centre receives from the government. Admittedly, the current political will to give national importance to Holocaust commemoration is limited to say the least.

⁴⁶⁸ The commemorative wall was designed by László Zsótér and is being inscribed continuously as research proceeds. It should at some point bear the names of 600,000 Hungarian victims of the Holocaust.

glass plates on the tower name the different cities within Hungary from which the Jewish communities were deported, and the tower's modern, slightly tilted design offers a sharp contrast to the light yellow stone (Photo no. 27). The stone façade outside cites the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, the slanted and crooked walls and the entrance are inspired by the architecture of the Jewish Museum in Berlin by Daniel Libeskind.⁴⁶⁹



Photo no. 27: The entrance tower in the courtyard of the Holocaust Memorial Center.

The exhibition – laid out in an irregular pentagon below the centre's main building, takes up the whole basement. The ideal visitor should follow its walkway section by section.⁴⁷⁰ The walkway describes a circle, from the entrance, through the exhibition, reaching the synagogue and then leading the visitor out to the courtyard and the memorial wall.⁴⁷¹ The circle parallels the general narrative of the exhibition. The

⁴⁶⁹ Mihok, "Erinnerungsüberlagerungen," 164; Fritz and Hansen, "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 70, 79.

⁴⁷⁰ Bill Hillier and Tzortzi Kali, "Space Syntax: The Language of Museum Space," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Sharon MacDonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 282-524, 299.

⁴⁷¹ The memorial wall displays the names of the victims using the Jewish tradition to commemorate the names of the dead. Fritz and Hansen. "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 79.

narrative begins with the presentation of a relatively calm, good time before the Holocaust, covers discrimination and expropriation and reaches a climax by displaying the mass murder. It ends with a description of the liberation of the concentration camps and the war-trials in Hungary before coming to a close with the commemoration of the dead. The full circle of the walkway, together with the narrative's trajectory, suggests that the exhibition presents the complete story of the Holocaust in Hungary.

The exhibition itself is divided into eight sections that each highlight one aspect of the Holocaust. The opening panel in section one outlines the overall structure, stating "The Nazis and their accomplices first deprived the Jews of the **rights**, their **property**, their human **dignity** and their **freedom**, and then **massacred** them" [emphasis original].⁴⁷² The exhibition follows the "phases of persecution (deprived of rights, property, freedom, human dignity, life)", so that the actions of the perpetrators define the trajectory, as is the case in most European exhibitions on the Holocaust.⁴⁷³ The sections themselves are thematic, but set up in roughly chronological order. The narrative also parallels accepted Holocaust historiography, which distinguishes the same stages of persecution. The exhibition addresses legal and public discriminations, persecution in the labour units of the army, expropriation, ghettoisation and deportation.⁴⁷⁴ The climax of the narrative is the mass murder in the concentration camps; mainly the camps in Auschwitz. The exhibition closes with the liberation of the camps and the war trials against the main perpetrators. Dedicating the exhibition to Jews and Roma, the expository agent names other victim groups twice in passing, but does not discuss them in detail.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷² Opening panel "What is the Holocaust" in section 1. The words rights, property, dignity, freedom and massacre are printed in bold, orange letters, preparing the ideal visitor for what is to come. The outline is also given in the lobby.

⁴⁷³ Panel "From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide," in the centre's lobby. Holtschneider first analysed this mode of representation for the Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London. K. Hannah Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews. History and Identity in the Museum* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011), 31.

⁴⁷⁴ The labour units were units in the army in which Jews, defined unreliable in the war and hence not allowed to carry arms, were forced to work under horrific conditions, received ill provisions and clothing, and were partly mistreated by their commanding officers.

⁴⁷⁵ The copy at the opening states "One out of ten victims of the Holocaust, one out of three in the death camp of Auschwitz, that is more than a half million Jews and thousands of Roma were either Hungarian citizens or deported from Hungary. This exhibition is dedicated to their memory." Before this it lists the total victims of the Holocaust as "millions of Poles, Russians and other nationalities in Europe besides Jews, in addition to large numbers of Gypsies, homosexuals, mental patients, Jehovah's witnesses as well as the political and religious opponents of Nazism." Opening Panel

3.2.1 Opening and closing the narrative – the tragedy of the Holocaust – exhibit devices in a nutshell

Like the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Austria, the first section at the Holokauszt Emlékközpont presents the general structure of the exhibition, provides the general interpretative frame and introduces the different exhibition elements that communicate the narrative. In the first section the ideal visitor thus encounters the exhibition outline, the different layers of the exhibition, and the devices used to present it. Familiarised with them the visitor can then easily access the exhibition. At the Holokauszt Emlékközpont, the content of the exhibition has three hierarchical layers. The first presents the main narrative, the second personalises it, and the third supplements it with further information.

The main narrative is conveyed via copy in explanatory panels, in captions, or illustrated by primary sources. The copy in the Holokauszt Emlékközpont is the crucial and securing element; without it, the exhibition is not legible. Most of the objects displayed are explained by written texts. Each of the eight sections is introduced by a main text panel that includes one photograph or a material object.⁴⁷⁶ Upon entering each section the visitor faces a large number, black on a grey pillar. It presents the introductory copy to the section in Hungarian and English (Photo no. 28). All copy is in Hungarian and English, making the exhibition accessible to foreigners, but also articulating the political intention to connect Hungary and Hungarians with the world at large.⁴⁷⁷ In the first section, the introductory panel presents the scope and set up of the whole exhibition, while later panels introduce the themes. Longer panels then explicate the theme further, illustrated by several black and white photos. Films, documents and interactive maps supplement the main narrative and in a few instances, material objects are also shown. Overall the text dictates how the ideal visitor is to decode the non-textual elements.

“What is the Holocaust?” in section 1. These groups are listed again in section six: “The Nazis murdered tens of thousands of Polish political prisoners, Roma, Soviet Prisoners of War, resistance fighters, homosexuals and mental patients.” Panel “Auschwitz-Birkenau” in section 6. The mentally ill are also talked about in section 5, but only with respect to the German policies against them. Panel “Deprived of Dignity: Europe”, touchscreen “Deprived of Human Dignity. Deprived of Dignity in Europe. The Reich before the War” and Panel “Éva and Mirjam Mózes” all in section 5.

⁴⁷⁶ The object or photo is indexical to the theme, exemplifying it. The section on the collection, ghettoisation and deportation of the Jews, for example, shows a yellow star, the panel on Auschwitz-Birkenau displays a cyclone B container.

⁴⁷⁷ Exhibitions at other Hungarian museums are often inaccessible for foreigners, since the expository agents do not translate the copy or the translations are very difficult to follow.



Photo no. 28: Opening panel in section 1.

The expository agent personalises the narrative through five family stories and biographical panels less important to the main narrative placed at the side of some rooms.⁴⁷⁸ TV screens narrate the stories of four Jewish and one Roma family (Photo no. 29).⁴⁷⁹ The first section introduces all five families on one screen each, later all families are presented on one screen one family after the other, so that the whole video has to be watched in order to see a specific family story. In the videos, a voiceover tells the family story over moving and still images so that words written by the expository agent, this time spoken, again feature prominently. The family stories parallel the narrative of each section. The expository agent states that the individual stories are a “central element of each theme.”⁴⁸⁰ I found however, that the space devoted to the families is less prominent, with the placement of the screens relegating the family stories to the side, and since the individual stories cannot be viewed independently,

⁴⁷⁸ Some of the people introduced in the panels are famous, such as Anne Frank. These famous figures are shown alongside similar Hungarian stories, in Anne Frank’s case Lilla Escéri, a young Hungarian Jew who also kept a diary. See: Panel on Lilla Escéri in section 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Sections 7 and 5 do not present family stories.

⁴⁸⁰ Panel “From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide” in the lobby.

they are less likely be followed continuously. The personalisation is clearly visible, but secondary to the main narrative.⁴⁸¹



Photo no. 29: Family Histories in section 1.

The visitor can then find supplementary information on the less central panels and via the touchscreens. In part, the touchscreens repeat the copy, photographs and documents shown on the main panels, but they also provide additional photographs or documents. The format of the touchscreens and their interactive panel indicate that they offer information that supplements the main narrative. The visitor can choose which information to access and thus control what she sees. The copy on the touchscreens often repeats the copy from the main panels and a visitor who notices this might be less inclined to engage with the written parts of the touchscreens. One new element is brought to the exhibition by the touchscreens in the form of video interviews in which survivors speak about the topic of the respective section. Additionally the visitor can use an audio guide in the exhibition, with small numbers on selected panels indicating what to listen to at each point. Finally, a catalogue exists in Hungarian and English that provides the basic information presented as well as selected images from the exhibition.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ Katja Köhr states the opposite, identifying the family stories as a central element. She does not discuss it can be central however, when the displays are, as she also notes, not connected to the main narrative. Köhr, *Die vielen Gesichter des Holocaust*, 74, 130, 148-150.

⁴⁸² Judit Molnar, ed., *From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide* (Budapest: Hungarian National Museum, 2006).

The exhibition of the Holokauszt Emlékközpont provides a large amount of information and presents it in written words, images, photographs, film, audio and interactive displays. Featuring a diverse mix of media, the exhibition guides visitors smoothly through the narrative. It succeeds in capturing attention by offering different approaches to the same topic. A visitor can easily grasp the sense of the exhibition within the opening panels, and can choose to walk through the exhibition quickly or to stay longer for an extended visit with attention to details. The text on every panel functions on its own, making the exhibition highly accessible. Sound is presented continuously in the sections: there is no quiet time. The expository agent has created an all-round experience that encapsulates the ideal visitor completely. Despite the many differences between the institutions and their relevance within each country; the exhibition is, at first glance, in line with international museum institutions such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the USHMM in Washington or Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. It displays a sophisticated narrative that conforms to international holocaust historiography, presented via diverse media in a visually pleasing setting, well arranged in the exhibition space.⁴⁸³

2.2.1. Framing tragedy

Aside from exhibit devices and the general narrative, the first section also introduces the frame given to the exhibition. The frame sets the tone of the exhibition. Central framing devices at the Holokauszt Emlékközpont are the first photograph shown, the neon lights running along the exhibition walls, the wedding music and the vertical pillars. Labelling the lights, the music and the pillars as framing devices, a panel in the lobby explains:

By the time we have arrived at the closing room, the lines symbolizing lives have run out, and the personal objects presented in the opening room have disappeared. We still hear the wedding music coming from the first room, reminding us of the era before the destruction. From this point the way leads to a space of remembrance and mourning: the synagogue.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸³ On the aesthetics of Holocaust representations, see: Brett Ashley Kaplan, *Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois, 2007).

⁴⁸⁴ Panel "From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide" in the Lobby of the Centre.

The visitor would also see that the lines, the personal objects and the music are framing devices without reading this copy. They reappear in a similar format throughout the exhibition and symbolically communicate the exhibition's main message on an emotional level.

The pillars exemplify this message best of all. Assembled together in a corner of the first section, the pillars, some slanted, some perpendicular, hold small material objects in their centres (Photo no. 30). Work-tools, objects of everyday use, toys, cultural and religious items are shown, such as a compass, a bottle of medicine, a doll, a lorgnette or a small prayer book (Photo no. 31). The objects rest on a layer of white powder within the glass cases. The expository agent has selected the objects to indicate that Jews participated in the professional, cultural and religious life in Hungary and belonged to the middle and upper classes. Coupled with the dim light, seemingly left over from another time and place, the objects evoke a nostalgic longing for the past.⁴⁸⁵ The pillars then reappear at the end of the exhibition: but this time the glass cases are empty. The glass is milky and not entirely transparent. The only thing remaining inside is the white powder on the ground of the cases (Photo no. 32, Photo no. 33). The objects are gone, and – this is the main message of the exhibition – so are the people who owned them. They are dead, and spectres of dust are all that remains. The feeling evoked is one of sadness and loss.

⁴⁸⁵ On nostalgic longing created by museum objects, see: Susan Stewart, *On Longing. Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, London: Duke University, 2005), 132-169.



Photo no. 30: Pillars containing individual objects shown in Section 1.



Photo no. 31: Detail showing the objects in the pillars.



Photo no. 32: Empty pillars in section 8.



Photo no. 33: Detail of the empty pillars.

The music of the wedding film enhances this loss and sadness. The film shows footage from different Jewish weddings, and the music that accompanies it is a traditional klezmer wedding song, running repeatedly. It is set in a minor scale and includes lively fast parts and slow, low, quiet parts. In a different setting, it could be read as a reflection on the easier and harder times encountered during marriage. In the setting of the Holokauszt Emlékközpont, however, the lamenting heaviness of the music casts a dark shadow on the scenes shown, prefiguring the destruction of the life celebrated at the weddings. In section eight, the visitor hears the music again, together with long minor notes, dramatic drums, bass tones and sad piano tunes. Sadness and lament is the most obvious feature now, and the dramatic crescendos echo the terror that preceded death. The music links with the empty pillars that are also familiar from the first section. All four framing devices evoke sadness and loss.⁴⁸⁶ The main message of the exhibition is that the Holocaust destroyed happier times, and led to certain death, after which only grieving remains.⁴⁸⁷ This is in keeping with international representations, in which tragedy is accepted as the main interpretive frame for the Holocaust. The narrative about the Holocaust is no longer progressive as it was in the 1980s, with a better world and promise of redemption emerging from the suffering; but instead the narrative is tragic, offering no meaning and no protection for the future.⁴⁸⁸

The narrative presented at the exhibition of the Holokauszt Emlékközpont represents this narrative and closes with the most permanent ending – the tragedy of death. The exhibition opens with foreshadowing sadness and then presents the fulfilment of its forecast in order to release the visitor with an opportunity to mourn the

⁴⁸⁶ The neon lines run out by section eight, symbolising the end of the lifelines. A similar style is applied to the photo. It shows an old woman and three children walking. When the photo reappears in section seven, the four people are blacked out indicating their death. The synagogue, no longer used for regular services, suggests that there is no current Jewish religious life in Hungary. A relic from the past, dead members of the segregation are commemorated in it.

⁴⁸⁷ The closure through death is also presented in the textual narrative. See, for example: Opening panel “Liberation and calling into account”; panel “The fate of Hungarian Jews and Roma”; touchscreen “The fate of Hungarian Jews and Roma” in section 8. A slight exception to this closure through death is found in the family stories. The eighth section outlines how the lives of those who survived continued. This information is restricted, however, to the private lives of the families. It does not present Jewish communities, Judaism in Hungary, or the continuities of antisemitism and racism. In the form of an epilogue, the exhibition here closes the four family stories without opening a new chapter about Jews and Roma in Hungary after the war. Family histories in section 8.

⁴⁸⁸ Jeffrey C. Alexander brilliantly analyses how the Holocaust came to be understood as tragedy. Alexander, “On the Social Construction.”

dead.⁴⁸⁹ To represent the horrendous death of the Holocaust is an important mandate, but a difficult one and to choose a narrative structure modelled upon tragedy is problematic. Progressive narratives, emphasising survival, are not a satisfactory solution and scholars have rightly criticised their redemptive closing moments. To present an absolute tragedy, however, does not help either. The tragedy of the Holocaust *Emlékközpont*'s narrative is absolute. Closing the story with death excludes the survivors and disables any reflection on post-war Jewish life in Hungary. The narrative does not address the attitudes that confronted the returning survivors, the re-established Jewish communities, the continuing discrimination of the Roma, or continued antisemitism and racism in post-war Hungary.⁴⁹⁰ In addition to the chance lost to discuss the post-war era and how it was affected by the Holocaust, the closed narrative also leaves no room for questions or alternative interpretations of the events told.

3.3 The universal victim: Hungarian Jews as defenceless and passive victims

3.3.1 Creating a homogenous group

Before they become the – mostly dead – victims, the expository agent first constructs the Jews and Roma as homogenous groups, which are maintained in the subsequent presentations. This assumed homogeneity is important for how the exhibition then constructs agency. The expository agent defines the two victim groups in the first section of the exhibition.⁴⁹¹ The panel titled “Jews in Hungary” introduces the Jews living in Hungary, focusing mainly on the late 19th and early 20th century.⁴⁹² It displays six photographs forming a line, with Hungarian copy above and English copy below. The copy presents the time before the Second World War as a time before discrimination, the so-called golden era for the Jews. It appears as a time of acceptance, tolerance and mutual cohabitation.⁴⁹³ The panel presents the emancipation of the Jewry after

⁴⁸⁹ I am thankful for Dr. Ljiljana Radonić's remark that the ideal visitor is offered the option of commemorating the dead at the memorial wall and is not forced to do so.

⁴⁹⁰ Regina Fritz and Imke Hansen criticise the missing representations of antisemitism after 1945, of the pogroms in 1946 and 1956, and of the question of why commemoration came so late. Fritz and Hansen. “Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos,” 81.

⁴⁹¹ I focus now on the construction of the Jews and deal with the construction of the Roma in chapter 3.4.

⁴⁹² Panel “Jews in Hungary” in section 1.

⁴⁹³ The late 19th and early 20th century is called the “Golden Time” in Hungarian Jewish history, since Jews were emancipated. Vera Ranki however shows that the time of legal emancipation of the Jews

1867, leading to legal equality by 1895. It states that the Jews were socially and culturally diverse, some opting for complete assimilation including conversion to Christianity, others keeping their faith and customs. The copy continues:

The overwhelming majority of the Jews who adhered to their own religion regarded themselves, to varying degrees, as part of the Hungarian nation in language and culture. Many of them proudly declared themselves to be “Hungarians of the Mosaic persuasion.”⁴⁹⁴

Situating the Jews within the Hungarian nation, as this copy does, will be a guiding principle throughout the exhibition. It highlights Jews as Hungarians and emphasises their dedication to the Hungarian nation.⁴⁹⁵ The whole exhibition nationalises the Jews, primarily by adding the word ‘Hungarian’ before the word Jew, but also by labelling them as compatriots or by nationalising names and places. The exhibition clearly proclaims the belonging of the Jews to the Hungarian nation.⁴⁹⁶ Including Jews within the nation, the museum consciously counters the dominant discourse in Hungary, which questions whether Jews were or can be Hungarian. Questioning national belonging was essential to the antisemitic discourse from the early 19th century onwards, and continues to this day.⁴⁹⁷ The text continues that Jews made significant contributions to the economy, culture, science and arts, and contributed to Hungary’s modernisation.⁴⁹⁸ In largely non-Hungarian regions, Jews were at the forefront of

did not mean the suspension of anti-Jewish sentiments. Antisemitic movements grew, continuously questioning Jews’ ability to integrate, while the call for assimilation was deeply linked to the liberal offer of emancipation. Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion*, 82.

⁴⁹⁴ Panel “Jews in Hungary” in section 1.

⁴⁹⁵ Stateless Jews who fled to Hungary to escape their persecution are not included in the group definition, but the exhibition later does address their early deportation in 1941. Panel “Restriction of Freedom before the Occupation” in section 4; Panel “Jewish victims before the German occupation” in section 6.

⁴⁹⁶ Panel “Jews in Hungary”; touchscreen “Our compatriots” in section 1; opening panel “Responses” section 7. Nationalisation even extends to foreign land, in particular to Auschwitz-Birkenau, described as “the largest cemetery in Hungarian history.” Opening panel “Deprived of Life” section 6. This references the speech that Dr. Bálint Magyar, the Minister of Education, made in Auschwitz on April 14th 2004. Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, ed. *The Citizens Betrayed - In Memory of the Victims of the Hungarian Holocaust* (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 2006), 19.

⁴⁹⁷ Fritz and Hansen, “Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos”, 64. Besides proposing an alternative interpretation to the dominant discourse, this implicitly affirms the idea that Jews could pose a problem for the nation if they were not Hungarian. Deák, “Anti-Semitism.” Thus an imaginable threat of Jews who did not opt for complete assimilation is averted here, since they are already less dangerous by virtue of their being Hungarian.

⁴⁹⁸ Emphasising that Jews were beneficial to the nation implies that Hungary suffered a loss of capitalist development as a result of their persecution. Defining this persecution as a tragedy then suggests the problematic notion that the Holocaust was all the more tragic because of the value of its victims.

Magyarisation.⁴⁹⁹ At the end of the panel the copy discusses the relationship between Jews and non-Jews:

(...) racially motivated antisemitism reared its head in Hungary, too, its proponents declaring that the Jewish “race” intended to dominate the world, and to that end exploited and destroyed nations. At the time, most of the Hungarian political elite came out strongly against antisemitism.⁵⁰⁰

Hungary before the 1920s is not opposed to Jews, but rather welcomes them for their economic and social contributions. The construction of the Jews is that Jews were Hungarian, beneficial to the nation and accepted if not embraced by the non-Jewish elite. They were integrated, modern and represented the future, working to transform the old aristocratic system into the capitalist era.

The photographs shown in the same panel affirm this construction and add a visual layer to it. The photographs show children in a street, a young man in a suit sitting on a pillar, a street scene with two youths in the foreground, a bearded man in front of a pharmacy, two men and woman in a street, and a family of four with several geese in front of a house. The captions define them as Jewish schoolchildren in Huszt, a Jewish citizen in Újlipótváros, the “Vártelek” – translated as “Jew-street” – in Poszony, the pharmacy of Alfréd Mautner, Jewish merchants in Pest and a Jewish peasant family from Felvidék. Choosing disconnected scenes from different localities, the expository agent claims to represent Jewish life its diversity. This proclaimed diversity proves an illusion, however. Only one photo shows Orthodox Jews – without mentioning their Orthodoxy – and no photograph features religious life. Showing children and men but only two women, one of whom is seen from behind, masculine representations dominate. One photograph shows the countryside, all the others present street scenes. Of the urban sites, stores and streets are visible while working class environments are not represented. Common in all photographs are suits, hats, better street clothing and some peasant clothing – similar to what non-Jewish Hungarians would have worn. Only the captions define the people as Jewish; whereas their appearance integrates them into the Hungarian nation. The visual image conveyed to the ideal visitor gains is

⁴⁹⁹ The racist concept of Magyarization, where the kingdom attempted to turn citizens of Greater Hungary into Hungarians, is not addressed or signalled towards.

⁵⁰⁰ Panel “Jews in Hungary” in section 1.

of a modern – i.e. largely bourgeois and urban – Jewry.⁵⁰¹ Text and photographs combined, the display constructs the Hungarian Jews as a coherent group of people, whose main shared characteristics are their national belonging, modernity, urbanity and bourgeois culture.⁵⁰²

While nominally denying that Jews were a coherent group, the expository agent has constructed one nonetheless.⁵⁰³ Their homogeneity results from the omission of people who do not share the above characteristics. Not discussed in their own right are religious Jews, especially those of Orthodox faith, Yiddish speaking communities or women. The exhibition gestures towards working class Jews and Jews in rural communities but they are less significant. It is striking how rarely the exhibition addresses Orthodox Jewry explicitly.⁵⁰⁴ Orthodoxy is not touched upon in the main copy and ultra-Orthodox Jews are not even mentioned. Omitted in the main text and unmarked in most images, Orthodox Jewry does appear in the family stories, since the Galpert-Ackermann family followed the Orthodox faith. Alluding to a dichotomy between traditional and modern, the exhibition implicitly devalues Orthodox faith.⁵⁰⁵ In general, the exhibition represents both the Neolog and Orthodox faith as private and individual matters.⁵⁰⁶ Consequently, the narrative does not include the impact that the persecution had on practising Jews, nor the desecration of the synagogues and scriptures or

⁵⁰¹ The bourgeois connection is also visible in the objects in the pillars, and the photos provided on the touchscreen in section one. The objects all allude to higher or middle class owners, while the photos show people with typically bourgeois professions such as doctors, lawyers or journalists.

⁵⁰² This is also emphasised elsewhere in the exhibition, for example, when the text on economic exclusion states that: “Hungarian Jews as a group were among the most successful in Europe. Due to their early participation in capitalist development, they occupied strong positions in industry, commerce and banking. An especially great number of Jewish individuals chose economic, intellectual, scientific and artistic careers.” Touchscreen “Deprived of Property. The Pauperization and Despoilment of Hungarian Jews, 1920-1944” in section 3.

⁵⁰³ The copy states that “The Jewish population of Hungary was diverse both culturally and socially.” Panel “The Jews in Hungary” section one.

⁵⁰⁴ I am grateful to Dr. Katalin Pécsi who directed my attention to the imbalanced representation of Orthodox Jews in the exhibition.

⁵⁰⁵ Words such as ‘old’, ‘traditional’, ‘strict’ or ‘ancient rules’ are presented in binary opposition to a modern, ‘less zealous’ life which is described in more positive terms and characterised as accepted. For example “Galpert-Ackermann family”; “Singer family” section 1.

⁵⁰⁶ In the rare cases where religion is represented it is the private matter of the individual. Where Jewish communities appear, only the Neolog movement is gestured towards and its contribution to integration is the reason for this. This can be seen in the panel dedicated to the Rabbis Lipót Löw and Immanuel Löw. Lipót Löw is shown to have modernised the synagogue service and is highlighted for delivering his speeches in Hungarian. His son Immanuel Löw is said to have been a “symbolic figure for the integrated Jews”. Panel “Lipót Löw and Immanuel Löw” section 2.

discrimination based on religion.⁵⁰⁷ The expository agent does not discuss gender as a social category either. Leaving gender unmarked, the exhibition relegates women to the private or social sphere while men are placed in the public realm, presenting a classic perspective. Men are the active agents of capitalist Hungary while women appear at their side – most evident in the wedding videos shown in section one.⁵⁰⁸ The difference in status between men and women is visible but appears natural, and thus inscribed as ahistorical.⁵⁰⁹ Visible but nonetheless glossed over are notions of class and the differences between urban and rural contexts. Barely representing working class environments, the focus of the exhibition is on middle and upper class Jews. However, all class backgrounds are touched upon in the family stories.⁵¹⁰ While upper and middle classes are emphasised, all sections do indicate how class affiliations affected experiences of the persecution.⁵¹¹ The countryside is part of the main narrative, but the large disparity between rural and urban structures in Hungary remains obscure to a visitor not familiar with it. This hides the impact that rural structures had on the persecution: the large percentage of Jews in some villages and the proximity between perpetrators and their victims in the countryside.⁵¹²

The exclusion of gender and religion and the lack of emphasis on the discussion of class and rural structures merges the Jews into a homogenous group of people. The expository agent represents the male majority of Jews living in the central parts of Hungary. This majority was part of the Neolog congregations, lived in the cities and belonged to the middle class. They also provided the elite dominant within the Jewish

⁵⁰⁷ An exception is the video showing the history of antisemitism in which religious-based hatred against Jews is the main topic. Video “History of Antisemitism” after section 3.

⁵⁰⁸ Wedding video section 1.

⁵⁰⁹ Anna Reading shows that women in museums such as the USHMM are “muted and underdeveloped in relation to the more active voice given to men’s roles and experiences”. Reading, *The Social Inheritance*, 141.

⁵¹⁰ The Hatvany-Deutsch, Chorin and Weiss families belong to the upper class, the Braun-Wechsler and Singer family to the middle class and the Galpert-Ackermann family to the working class. The video mentions their working class background, but as the family story continues, it becomes less central to their fate. Working poor are represented by the Roma family.

⁵¹¹ See, for example, family histories in “Deprived of Property” section 3.

⁵¹² A few examples can be found, e.g. the copy that states that “local policemen were often more tolerant towards Jewish acquaintances than the unfamiliar gendarmes posted to cities for the duration of ghettoisation and deportation.” Touchscreen “Deprived of Freedom. The Collaboration of Hungarian Authorities with the Nazis” in section 4. The Ministry of Interior actually rotated the Gendarmerie forces in order to prevent local gendarmes having to carry out the deportations, fearing that they might help the Jews escape and/or accept bribes.

leadership of the time.⁵¹³ The exhibition forces the characteristics of the majority onto all Jews, marginalising, and – in the case of the women or Orthodox Jews – devaluing those who differ. A significant number of Jews in Hungary were Orthodox, while some were ultra-Orthodox and others, even if only few, were in independent congregations.⁵¹⁴ Especially after the pre-Trianon regions were annexed to Hungary, Yiddish speaking and ultra-Orthodox Jews were a part of Hungary. Since the rural communities, often poorer and hence with less means of escape, were deported first, the marginalisation of these victims in the Holocaust Emlékközpont is particularly critical. Jews were not only urban merchants, lawyers, doctors or property owners, pushing the capitalist enterprise ahead, interested in mostly secular matters. Despite being the minority, Jewish peasants, poorer Jews or Jews identifying themselves primarily as Jews need to be included. Their inclusion however, might have complicated the main message of the Holocaust Emlékközpont: that Jews belonged to the Hungarian nation and therefore were victims with whom the ideal visitor can identify.

The omission of religion, gender and class also supports an implicit assumption that the personal lives of Jews – their origin, gender and class, their faith and values, their social and economic positions – mattered very little when it came to their persecution. This fits into the tragic narrative, in which all roads lead to death. It is true that the perpetrators targeted Jews irrespective of age, gender, class and social status. However, the individual position of each person in society, affected by their gender, class, origin, or faith also affected how people made sense of their persecution, how they reacted to it and which actions were available to them.

3.3.2 Objectifying Jews and limiting agency

As the exhibition develops, the homogenous group members disappear as active subjects. Section one presents Jews as active subjects directing their own lives, but soon after they become the objects in the story of their persecution. From section two onwards, the expository agent turns them into victims who at best react to, but mostly

⁵¹³ The Neolog dominated the central Leadership of Hungary Jewry. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, condensed edition, 30.

⁵¹⁴ The independent congregations were called Status Quo. Braham, *Politics of Genocide*, condensed edition, 30.

silently endure, the measures against them. The narrative now describes 'the persecution of the Jews', losing the Jews within that compound term. It rarely represents their thoughts, actions or feelings. Whether stating that "Hungarian Jews were expelled from society", "their property" was stolen, or that most "Hungarian Jews (...) were doomed to painful death"; Jews are spoken about in a distant tone using passive constructions.⁵¹⁵ This representation, accurate at the level of information, objectifies Jews.⁵¹⁶

The objectification of Jewish victims at the Holocaust Emlékközpont is particularly obvious in the visual material provided. Photographs form an essential part of the exhibition, and the photos, in particular those taken by the perpetrators, deny agency to the victims. The photographs in section one are largely private photographs taken by Jews to represent themselves or photos taken by a professional photographer but dependent on the wish for self-representation.⁵¹⁷ They show economic activities, family portraits or passport images of the individuals. In most museums, private photos claim to personalise and individualise the macro narrative.⁵¹⁸ The Holocaust Emlékközpont however, uses private photographs to define Jews as Jews or to illustrate the measures against them, for example showing people wearing the yellow star; without providing their names or any information about the people in the photos.⁵¹⁹ Individual elements remain visible in these private photos nevertheless. After section two, personal photographs disappear more and more. Instead, the expository agent now shows photographs of discriminatory practices, such as exclusions, humiliations and robbery, and photographs of the extremely violent events of forced labour units, the ghettoisation, deportations and mass murder. The photos no longer portray an individual, a family, or a circle of friends, but anonymous people victimised together. In most cases the perpetrators or spectators of the perpetrations took these photographs.

⁵¹⁵ Opening panel "Deprived of rights" section 2; opening panel "Deprived of property" section 3; opening panel "Deprived of life" section 6.

⁵¹⁶ For a critique of this mode of display see: Bal, *Double Exposures*.

⁵¹⁷ A brief introduction on private images is given in Marita Krauss, "Kleine Welten. Alltagsfotografie - die Anschaulichkeit einer 'privaten Praxis'," in *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch*, ed. by Gerhard Paul (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht 2006), 57-75.

⁵¹⁸ Often however, the photos become mute and no longer inform about the private life when removed from the private context in which they are read otherwise. Holtschneider, *The Holocaust*, 58.

⁵¹⁹ Panel "Disenfranchisement after the German Occupation" in section 2.

Research has shown that museums representing the Holocaust mostly use photographs taken by perpetrators or complicit spectators, closely followed by images taken by the Allies after the liberation.⁵²⁰ This is the case at the Holocaust Em-lékközpont, with only a few exceptions. At first glance, perpetrator images work well in exhibitions because the photographs are direct, clear and centred.⁵²¹ The photographer did not have to hide, and could therefore carefully select the object in front of the lens and compose the image as desired. The photographs generally present a classic perspective, showing a victim who served the photographer's intended message. The victim is in the centre, framed by the perpetrators who in turn are framed by spectators or the landscape.⁵²² Since the photograph is often sharp and of high quality, the museum can edit, enlarge, cut and transfer it to a different medium with relative ease.

Despite the ease of use, photographs taken from a complicit perspective are problematic.⁵²³ Every photograph presents a spatially and temporally specific perspective. The message delivered by the photograph depends on this perspective, as well as the viewing context.⁵²⁴ Taken from the perspective of the perpetrators, the photographs reveal and reproduce that perspective. If not outright antisemitic, the photographs at very least distance the victims, presenting them without empathy or solidarity, as an object. In many cases, the motivation for the photograph was the reproduction of the victimisation, highlighting stereotypical images to present the victim

⁵²⁰ Holtschneider, *The Holocaust*, 29.

⁵²¹ The few photos taken by the victimised and people who considered the perpetration a crime are often blurred, unclear, out of focus and/or with the person photographed not positioned in the centre. Considered 'bad' photos in the traditional sense, these photos tend not to be chosen for museum displays. Georges Didi-Hubermann, *Images in Spite of All. Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁵²² Dieter Reifarth, Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhof, "Die Kamera der Henker. Fotografische Selbstzeugnisse des Naziterrors in Osteuropa," *FOTOGESCHICHTE* 3, no. 7 (1983): 57-71, 68; Klaus Hesse, "Bilder lokaler Judendeportationen. Fotografien als Zugänge zur Alltagsgeschichte des NS-Terrors," in *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch*, ed. by Gerhard Paul, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 149-168, 156.

⁵²³ Images of perpetrations are complicit because the photographer participated in the discrimination against the victims and legitimised the actions by clicking the shutter. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 10-12. According to Cornelia Brink photos taken by spectators or the Allies, are equally representative of the gaze of the perpetrators. Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung*, 218. I believe this needs to be complicated, as spectators and Allies did use different image strategies. For an introduction to this discussion, see: Tim Cole, *Traces of the Holocaust. Journeying in and out of the Ghettos* (London: Continuum, 2011), 92.

⁵²⁴ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

as despicable, thus justifying the persecutions. The photographs only show the moment of the persecution and not what happened before or after, thereby limiting the possibility of agency for the victim. In most cases the perspective, looking at the victim from a superior position, already denies the victim agency. Contrary to this specific perspective common understanding assumes that photographs represent a moment in the past accurately and objectively. Complicit photographs then seem to show the persecution head on, depicting the full reality of it. While the ideological baggage of perpetrator images has been discussed extensively, museum exhibitions seldom address this and alternative display practices remain rare.⁵²⁵ As is the case in the Holocaust Emlékközpont, most museums worldwide use complicit photographs to illustrate their narrative. Captions usually define what the ideal visitor should see on the picture or give additional information not directly related to the photograph, instead of providing information on the photograph itself and the context within which it was produced.⁵²⁶

Parts of the exhibition at the Holocaust Emlékközpont counter the objectification in text and photographs, but their hierarchical spatial arrangement relegates the counter-elements to the side. The most obvious counterpoints are the video interviews of survivors and the responses of Jews in section seven.⁵²⁷ While perhaps intended to counter objectification, the videos tell the family stories in such a way that the individuals presented become objects of the measures taken against them. The narrator speaks about the families and their fates, turning the individuals into examples of a generalised story.⁵²⁸ In the interviews, by contrast, Jews tell their own stories. These remain subjective even when told in a descriptive tone. The voice, speech act, facial expressions and the fact that there is a first person narrator create a subjective

⁵²⁵ Central questions are already asked in the classic article on perpetrator photos by Sybil Milton, "Images of the Holocaust - part I," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 1, no. 1 (1986): 27-61; Sybil Milton, "Images of the Holocaust - part II," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 1, no. 2 (1986): 193-216.

⁵²⁶ Criticism of illustration is given by Janina Struck, *Photographing the Holocaust. Interpretation of the Evidence* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co Ltd., 2004), 51; Thomas Thiemeyer, *Fortsetzung des Krieges mit anderen Mitteln. Die beiden Weltkriege im Museum* (Padaborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010), 303.

⁵²⁷ A few biographies also counter objectification, for example the one of Miklós Nyiszli, who managed to survive serving Mengele's staff. The panel describes that his survival was due to a combination of luck and cleverness. Panel "Miklós Nyiszli" section 6.

⁵²⁸ Where possible, the accompanying visuals are provided by private photographs, however. These are supplemented by other video and photo material from the time.

and active account.⁵²⁹ Shown on the touchscreens as one of many elements alongside photographs, documents and texts, the exhibition presents the interviews as add-ons, extra information. Within the hierarchy of the exhibition, the videos rank low. They are not central to the narrative, which works equally well without them. Furthermore, the videos are edited in such a way that the survivor's account always relates to the theme of the section, so that their subjective experience merely illustrates the exhibition narrative.⁵³⁰

The seventh section counters objectification by addressing Jewish responses to their persecutions. In this section, the expository agent presents the Jewish councils, the Kasztner group and the Zionist Youth groups.⁵³¹ The copy contrasts these three groups to “the overwhelming majority of Jews,” in Europe and in Hungary who “received the increasing persecution passively”.⁵³² Individual agency is limited to a few, particularly brave people. The members of the Jewish Councils are heavily criticised, stating that they “usually made the wrong decisions”.⁵³³ To act, as the exhibition portrays it, was not only difficult, but could make the individual complicit with the persecution. The difficulties of action are also apparent where the exhibition presents the Kasztner group. The Zionist group led by Rezső Kasztner negotiated with the Germans to prevent the deportation of Hungarian Jews to the concentration camps. This saved the lives of approximately 1,600. The Holokauszt Emlékközpont exhibits the story of his group as a dilemma, wherein saving some meant sacrificing others.⁵³⁴ Victims could have historical agency, but taking action seems to move the agent closer to the perpetrators. Individual Jews acted during the persecution, but these men and women were a minority and the expository agent presents their actions as problematic. The copy indicates that the events represented in the section are exceptional and their

⁵²⁹ This can be seen, for example, in the video interview with Mr. Lajos Kovács on forced labour units in section 4. Describing the military labour, he first recounts a situation that happened to him. He pauses when he tells the story, the indirect speech in which he indicates the mocking of the commander as well as his personal dismay that they did not receive ID-tags. A more detailed analysis of oral history interviews in exhibitions will be given in the chapter on the Museo Diffuso.

⁵³⁰ The same can be said about the interviews shown at the Imperial War Museum in London. Holtschneider, *The Holocaust*, 69.

⁵³¹ The seventh section also represents individual non-Jews who helped Jews as well as members of the *Sonderkommando* who resisted their persecution.

⁵³² Touchscreen “The Responses of the Persecuted – What They Knew, Why They did not Resist” in section 7.

⁵³³ Panel “Dilemmas: the Jewish Council” in section 7.

⁵³⁴ Panel “Dilemmas: the Kasztner Group” in section 7.

placement at the very end of the exhibition underlines this, as does the design of the section. The room is white with black text and images, reversing the colour scheme of the rest of the exhibition (Photo no. 34). This section, in terms of content, placement and colour relegates agency to the side.

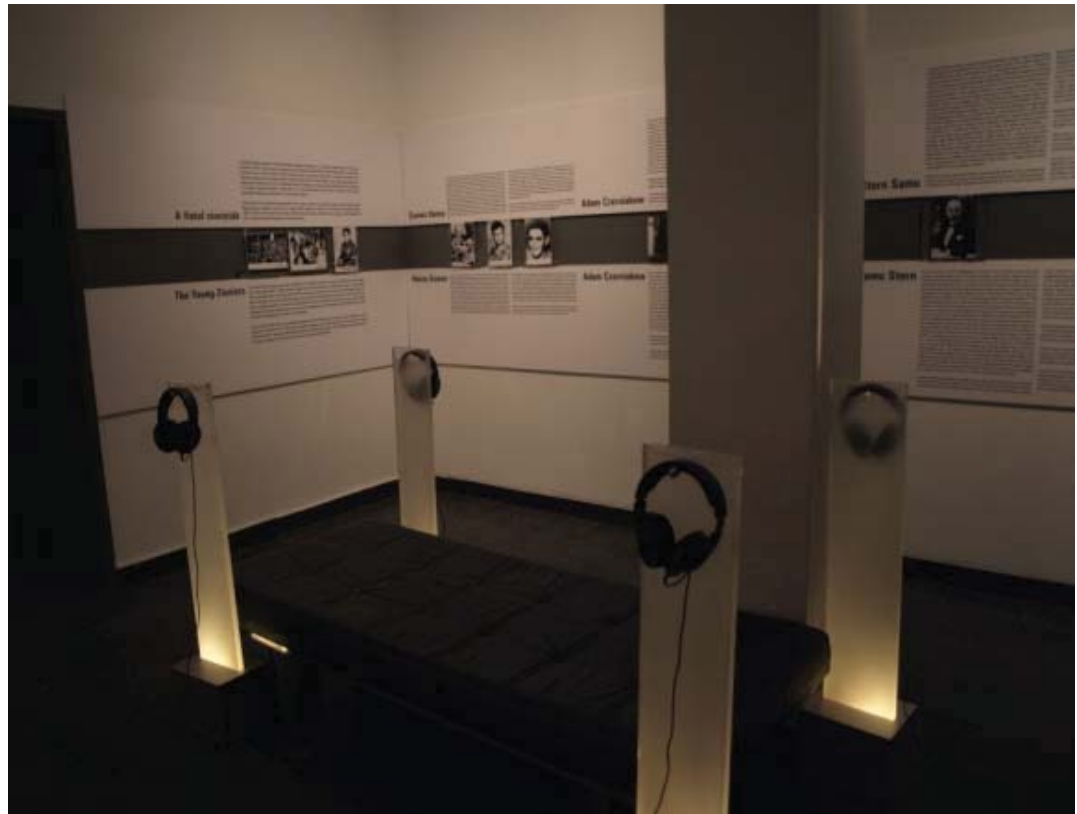


Photo no. 34: Installation of section 7.

3.3.3 The universal victim as the climax of the display

The narrative about the homogenised Hungarian Jews, objects of the will of the perpetrators, reaches a climax in the display of mass murder in section six. Foreshadowed in the previous parts, section six displays the Jews as universal victims. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider define the figure of the universal victim as a victim who does not act but instead, innocent and helpless, passively endures the crimes of which it is the victim. This gives the victim moral superiority. The figure of the universal victim exerts pressure on the perpetrators to admit their guilt and atone for it. Essential to representations of the universal victim is *passive* suffering. This suffering becomes generalised to the suffering of every human being, so that the individual victim and

her or his individual Jewish identity is no longer important.⁵³⁵ Because of this generalisation, everyone can identify with the suffering of the universal victim. Passive, the universal victim's death is certain; survival is only possible by sheer chance.⁵³⁶ In section six the music – sad and mourning, alternating with dramatic drumbeats – heralds the climax of the exhibition narrative. Besides the opening panel and the touchscreen the section consists of two parts. The first is a large photo wall depicting mass murders in Hungary with a video installation on the Hungarian transports to Auschwitz.⁵³⁷ The second, smaller part features prisoners' clothing and an interactive map showing the different sites of terror in Budapest.⁵³⁸ The photo wall and the video are the most captivating displays within this section – and actually within the whole exhibition.

The photo panel on the mass murder in Hungary represents the transformation from individual to universal victim. The wall consists of 32 photographs, separated into two 4 x 4 blocks (Photo no. 35). Two longer text panels on the "Jewish Victims before the German Occupation" and "The Murders in Hungary" are located at the left of each block.⁵³⁹ The captions are presented beneath each column of photographs. The first two columns reference the murders of Serbs and Jews by the Hungarian Gendarmerie and Army in what is today Serbia in 1942.⁵⁴⁰ The army and gendarmerie referred to the massacres as fights against partisans. The first column shows individual people in private photographs. Two children in the first and a woman with her son in the second, both defined in the captions as victims of the so-called partisan raid. Below these come two portrait photographs of the men who commanded the massacres and were thus responsible for the murders.⁵⁴¹ The next column shows one photograph of a

⁵³⁵ Since the figure of the universal victim draws its strength from the enormity of the Holocaust and the attempt to murder all Jews, the Holocaust as an event is not generalised and the victims remain Jewish despite the generalisation of their suffering during the Holocaust.

⁵³⁶ Levy and Sznajder. *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 242, 243, 152, 183. According to Levy and Sznajder, the universal victim is a global figure.

⁵³⁷ Opening Panel "Deprived of Life" in section 6. The room itself deals mainly with the camps in Auschwitz. Other camps are mentioned in passing in the main text. Panel "Hungarian Jews in the German Network of Camps" in section 6. Some of the camps are described in more detail on the touchscreen. Touchscreen "Deprived of Life. Hungarian Jews in the German Network of Camps" in section 6.

⁵³⁸ I deal with prisoners' clothing in more detail in chapter 2.4.3 on Austria, within the case study on the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee.

⁵³⁹ Panel "Jewish Victims before the German Occupation" and "The Murders in Hungary" in section 6.

⁵⁴⁰ This event is described in the text panel next to the photo wall.

⁵⁴¹ This exemplifies the binary opposition of victims against perpetrators, which I will analyse in detail below. The captions below the photos state "Four of the victims of 'partisan raid': Iván Szikla and Erika Szikla and Magda Kertész with her little son Kornél Frank," in contrast with "Two of those

dead forced labourer and three from one massacre of the partisan raids, photographed in Újvidék.⁵⁴² The photographs show dead bodies on snowy streets with soldiers, gendarmes, and people who appear to be civilians, walking between them. The third column shows a special SS unit shooting their victims and the fourth depicts executions of Jews by Germans in today's Ukraine. Forming a horizontal row read from left to right, the photo panel first shows individuals and then the execution of people no longer identified as individuals. The progress from individual to executed victim is rapid since the visitor's first glance looks at the photo wall as a whole. The intact subject of the first photograph is already a corpse handled by the military in the last three.



Photo no. 35: Photo wall on the mass murders committed in Hungary in section 6.

The next 4 x 4 photo arrangement confirms the horrendous deaths. The photographs depict a massacre by the Danube, dead bodies in the ghetto in Pest, and people

responsible: General Ferenc Feketealmly-Czeydner and General József Grassy.” Captions to the photo wall in section 6.

⁵⁴² The Hungarian name for the region of the massacres was Délvidék, and Újvidék was the town known today in English under the name Novi Sad. For non-Hungarian visitors the relationship of the region Délvidék to the town Újvidék might not be clear, rendering the event described in the copy less accessible.

exhumed from a mass grave after the war. All photographs show dead and mutilated bodies. Stacked on top of each other or lying in rows, the flesh already rots. Bodies float on water and haggard faces stare at the onlooker. One photograph shows a dead child, thrown onto a pile of other corpses; another a dead woman with bare breasts and a third a close-up of a half-rotten face, its mouth open as if screaming in pain. Death here is atrocious, shocking and horrific.⁵⁴³ The depictions exert fascination that compels the visitor to look while at the same time repelling her so she wants to turn away from them. The fate of the individuals shown is certain death. The exhibition provides the names and approximate dates of specific events, but individuals can no longer be identified. Even though the two blocks depict different events, the first from the time before, the second during the occupation, together they display the soon to be dead, the acts of murder, and then simply the dead.

The textual narrative that accompanies these photographs does outline and briefly summarise the events. The first panel lists the deportations and mass killings of Jews declared stateless, the so-called partisan raids and the deaths of forced military labourers and Prisoners of War.⁵⁴⁴ The second panel describes the violent killings that happened during the deportations from May to July 1944 under the Sztójay government and then explains how Jews were murdered during the Arrow Cross Rule.⁵⁴⁵ For each of these periods the copy provides several examples of murderous actions. After briefly describing each event the copy moves quickly to the next example. After reading the text, the visitor knows little about the details shown in each particular picture. The text suggests that more examples, more depiction would have been possible, and, by extension, that murder was the norm during this time. The photographs illustrate the general point that mass murder happened everywhere.

The copy does not elaborate upon the scenes in the photographs, who is shown or what they are doing. Nor does it indicate who took the photographs and for what

⁵⁴³ These are neither the first, nor the last gruesome photos encountered. Especially in section five, similar photos from the medical tests conducted on children and adults in the concentration camps are displayed, while section eight shows mutilated bodies in a film screening of footage shot in different concentration camps. The expository agent does not discuss how these photos might be decoded, read, or dealt with emotionally, but instead forces the ideal visitor to simply continue following the exhibition's path with no room or space dedicated to quiet reflection on what has been encountered.

⁵⁴⁴ Panel "Jewish victims before the German occupation" in section 6.

⁵⁴⁵ Panel "The murder in Hungary" in section 6.

purpose, or what happened to them after 1945. Barbie Zelizer has argued that newspaper representations of photographs from the Holocaust in 1945 used the photographs as visual proof for Holocaust atrocities in general. They showed one event, but generalised this event to stand for all atrocities committed.⁵⁴⁶ The photographs within the photo wall in section six are symbols of the murderous actions committed in Hungary and by Hungarians.⁵⁴⁷ They prove that murders happened. The victims in this part of the display matter little. Their main quality in the text and the photos is that they ceased to be individual and awaited certain death – their bodies are evidence of the murders. What is essential is their victimisation and their passivity. That the individuals who cease to exist are often women and children underlines their passivity and their symbolic humanity as they become the universal victims.

The photo wall negates individuality and the video that follows it confirms the universal victims' passivity. The video "A Day in Auschwitz" makes visible the arrival of Hungarian Jews at the ramp in Auschwitz-Birkenau and the subsequent selections for the gas chambers. The video depicts the victims mainly through iconic photographs from the Auschwitz Album.⁵⁴⁸ The Album – found, kept and later donated to Yad Vashem by the concentration camp survivor Lili Meier – contains 185 photographs on 56 pages showing the handling of Hungarian deportees that arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Presented in sequence in the Album, the photographs depict the arrival of the Jews, their selection at the ramp, the path to the gas chambers of those chosen to die and the encampment of those selected for work. Rare pictorial sources, the photographs in the Album were almost certainly taken by two SS members in charge of the identification office, and are among the most reproduced Holocaust photographs worldwide.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶ Barbie Zelizer has criticised this mode of depiction extensively in her illuminating book. Even though she deals with photos taken after the liberation, her criticisms also apply to museum displays. Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*.

⁵⁴⁷ Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, 86-97.

⁵⁴⁸ On iconic images see: Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung*. Iconic images are transnational, easily recognisable across national borders. Other photos in the video beside the iconic ones share the same iconic markers, for example showing a cattle car or railroads.

⁵⁴⁹ Klarsfeld, *The Auschwitz album*; Gideon Greiff, "The 'Auschwitz Album'. The Story of Lili Jacob," in Israel Gutmann and Bella Gutterman, ed. *The Auschwitz Album. The Story of a Transport* (Jerusalem/Oswicim: Newton Ltd, 2002), 71-86. On the album's reception, see: Struck, *Photographing the Holocaust*, 100-119; Yasmin Doosry, "Vom Dokument zur Ikone: Zur Rezeption des Auschwitz-Albums", in *Representations of Auschwitz. 50 Years of Photographs, Paintings, and Graphics*, ed. by Yasmin Doosry (Oswicim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 1995) 95-104. For the use of the photos in the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt see: Cornelia Brink, "Klage und Anklage. Das



Photo no. 36: Installation shot of the video "A Day in Auschwitz" in section 6.

The Holocaust Emlékközpont uses photographs from the Auschwitz Album in several sections, but most conspicuously in the video installation in section six. The video runs in a loop on five middle-sized TV-screens that hang next to each other along a long wall painted with a background of barbed wire (Photo no. 36). The video features a slideshow of photographs punctuated by short telegram-style titles. The titles first inform the visitor that "Auschwitz-Birkenau" on "May 26, 1944 morning" is shown in the video, the day a "Hungarian Jewish transport from Beragszász" arrived.⁵⁵⁰ The video continues to outline the time of the day via a clock in the left hand corner, effectively showing how by three p.m. of the same day the transport had been unloaded, the prisoners selected and those doomed to die had been killed in the gas chambers, their bodies burned (Photo no. 41). The captions inserted specify the moment in time, for example by stating "Before lining up", and the significance of the moment in time, for example "Selection: life is at stake" or "Doomed to die" (Photo no.

'Auschwitz-Album' als Beweismittel im Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess (1963-1965)," *FOTOGESCHICHTE* 25, no. 95 (2005): 15-28.

⁵⁵⁰ The area was annexed to Hungary in 1939 from Czechoslovakia, which is not made clear in the installation at the Holocaust Emlékközpont. Greiff, "The 'Auschwitz Album'," 72.

40). The photographs shown after the titles often have individual captions, which provide extra information such as “crematoria in the background”, “Dr. Mengele smoking” or “Zyklon B in barrel on the truck” (Photo no. 37).⁵⁵¹ Some captions state what the ideal visitor sees, the “Selection” “men”, “women and children”, “Dwarfs” or “Hungarian Jews at Crematorium IV”, others define the people seen as “defenceless and humiliated” (Photo no. 38, Photo no. 39).⁵⁵² While not all photographs in the installation have been taken from the Auschwitz Album, all those showing victims have, except the final image. Showing different photographs on all five screens, the installation depicts individual people who stand and await their selection, go to the gas chambers or sit in front of them waiting. Leaving out the minority selected for work who are also depicted within the Auschwitz Album, the video mostly shows photographs of women, children and old men.⁵⁵³ The last photograph, shown on all five screens simultaneously, is one of the photographs taken secretly by members of the *Sonderkommando* to provide evidence of the mass murder.⁵⁵⁴ Cropped and enlarged, the blurred image shows *Sonderkommando* members burning the bodies of the dead in ditches.⁵⁵⁵ The two and a half minute video culminates with this final image (Photo no. 41).

⁵⁵¹ The specified elements are highlighted in yellow in the photographs.

⁵⁵² Video “A day in Auschwitz”, section 6. While only some of the Album’s captions are referenced in the video, the captions follow the antisemitic perspective of the album highlighting a supposedly unfit character amongst the deportees by singling out physically different people. For a discussion of the antisemitic ideology that led to the inclusion of photos of physically different people in the album, see: Nina Springer-Aharoni, “Photographs As Historical Documents,” in *The Auschwitz Album. The Story of a Transport*, ed. by Israel Gutmann and Bella Gutterman, (Jerusalem/Oswicim: Newton Ltd, 2002), 87-97, 95.

⁵⁵³ The photos from the album are also shown on the touchscreen, this time in their original format, with different captions and including photos of those declared fit for work. Touchscreen “Deprived of Life. The Annihilation of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau” and “Deprived of Life. Operation Höss” in section 6. The captions differ but do not contextualise the photos as primary sources.

⁵⁵⁴ For an extensive discussion of the *Sonderkommando* photos, see: Didi-Hubermann, *Images in Spite of All*. A very brief overview of the forms of resistance available to the members of the *Sonderkommando* is provided by Andreas Kilian, “... so dass mein Gewissen rein ist und ich am Vorabend meines Todes stolz darauf sein kann.” ‘Handlungsräume’ im Sonderkommando Auschwitz”, in *Lagersystem und Repräsentation. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Geschichte der Konzentrationslager*, ed. by Ralph Gabriel (Tübingen: Edition Diskord 2004), 119-139.

⁵⁵⁵ The photo was taken through a window, the frame of which is still visible in the original image, but is usually cropped out when the photo is displayed. Struck, *Photographing the Holocaust*, 112-113. Three of the four photos taken by the resistance in the *Sonderkommando* are shown on the touchscreen. Of these, the only one given some context is the photo of the women. The caption reads: “Photograph taken by the resistance movement in the camp: when the dressing rooms were full, the victims had to undress in front of Crematorium V”. Touchscreen “Deprived of Life. The Annihilation of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau” in section 6.



Photo no. 37: Film still from the video "A Day in Auschwitz" in section 6.



Photo no. 38: Film still from the video "A Day in Auschwitz" in section 6.



Photo no. 39: Film still from the video "A Day in Auschwitz" in section 6.



Photo no. 40: Film still from the video "A Day in Auschwitz" in section 6.



Photo no. 41: Film still from the video "A Day in Auschwitz" in section 6.

The expository agent edited the photographs for the video, which is most evident when a different frame is chosen than the original, or when parts of a photograph are highlighted. The camera zooms in on single elements or pans across the photographs. The video provides movement and its dramatic display mode captures the visitor's attention. Every visitor will see at least part of this video since she has to pass the screens to get to the next section. The expository agent provides additional information on Auschwitz-Birkenau and the concentration camps more generally in this section, but the video, alternating between Hungarian and English, dominates with its spectacular presentation mode and by occupying the most space in the room.

Using the photographs from the Auschwitz Album, the video sums up the narrative on Jewish victims shown at the Holocaust Emlékközpont. It generalises the specific photographs, indicated by the title “A day in Auschwitz”. The day depicted is an example of a typical day in Auschwitz-Birkenau and the victims portrayed represent typical victims arriving. The presentation of different photographs on each screen emphasises their resemblances rather than their individuality. Each of the photographs would merit a closer look, but inserted into a tight and fast-paced narrative the significance of each individual photograph is lost, so that excess of meaning, meaning that goes beyond the narrative of the video, is lost.⁵⁵⁶ The video presents the homogenous victim group of Jews, and the individuals photographed come to represent all victims of the concentration camps and, in fact, of the Holocaust.⁵⁵⁷ Since the video does not reveal who the individual victims depicted are, although this is known in part, the victims appear to have no history; and since they go to their death, they equally well have no future. They arrive from a collection camp not contextualised, are selected at the ramp and then go to their death to be burned in ditches in the final gruesome image.⁵⁵⁸ Here the Holocaust Emlékközpont depicts the victims from the same perspective as that of the SS: as degraded objects of a well ordered, highly organised and efficient persecution.⁵⁵⁹

The video claims that the victims looked like this representation, which sums up the representation of the universal victim. The majority of victims shown are women with children and the elderly, excluding younger women without children and younger and middle-aged men. The women, children and elderly, stand and wait, walk along a given path or pause and gaze at the camera. They appear to do as they were told. The old men stand in groups, also awaiting their fate. The captions label them as Hungarian Jews, defenceless and humiliated; guiding how the photographs are to be decoded. Since photographs are silent, it appears as if the victims were too – even

⁵⁵⁶ On excess of meaning see: Susan Pearce, “Objects as meaning; or narrating the past,” in Susan Pearce, ed., *Objects of Knowledge* (London: Athlone, 1990), 134-135. On agency of a photo: Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2010).

⁵⁵⁷ Many of the people have been identified. Israel Gutman and Bella Gutman, ed. *The Auschwitz Album. The Story of a Transport* (Jerusalem/Oswicim: Newton Ltd, 2002).

⁵⁵⁸ The visitor also learns nothing about the largely Orthodox and Yiddish speaking communities in Carpatho-Ruthenia.

⁵⁵⁹ The SS men who took the photos wanted to portray the victims as having no individuality as Yasmin Doosry convincingly shows. Doosry, “Vom Dokument zur Ikone,” 102.

though the ramp and the waiting areas were full of sound. The victims remain silent despite the fact that some have their mouths open in the photographs, as if in the act of speaking. This unusual silence is hidden and the background music distracts attention away from it. The victims do not speak to the visitor or to each other. Statements such as “Most of the Jews who were declared unfit for work, stripped naked, silently entered the gas chamber they thought was a shower”, reinforce this proclaimed silence.⁵⁶⁰ The silent, passive passage to death is a repeatedly used metaphor that deeply affects how we imagine Holocaust victims and denies them agency. The universal victim is passive and innocent. Most victims shown are women or children, which serves to feminise the universal victim. This feminisation makes the victims of the Holocaust appear more helpless. The victim is uniform in its victimhood, and appeals to the ideal visitor who witnesses its suffering to identify with this passive suffering. The Holocaust Emlékközpont uses this template figure of the universal victim, which can be filled out by further messages. The exhibition fills it mainly with the Hungarian belonging of the victims. The Jews shown are Hungarians, from Hungary, who silently and passively go to their death.

The lack of a contextualisation enables the generalisation that constructs the universal victim, while still allowing for a national twist. Apart from the inserted titles and captions, the expository agent does not explain the photographs in the videos. Their history after 1945 remains unknown, at least in this display. In the display “A Day in Auschwitz” the photographs illustrate the narrative of the video. A later, less prominent panel on Lili Meier does give a brief history of the Auschwitz Album. Lili Meier found the Album after her liberation in Dora-Mittelbau and, recognising photographs of her Rabbi, members of her family and herself, she kept it before donating it to Yad Vashem in 1980. The panel on Lili Meier tells her story and that of the Album. It states that two SS men took the photographs, describes what the images show and identifies them as “the most important pictorial documents of the mechanism of extermination at Birkenau”.⁵⁶¹ Even in this panel, just as elsewhere in the exhibition, the representation of the photographs does not indicate that they derive from the Album.

⁵⁶⁰ Touchscreen “Deprived of Life. The Annihilation of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau” in section 6.

⁵⁶¹ Panel “Lenke Jakab (LiliJakob)” in section 6. Using the maiden name by which Lili Meier was known while she lived in Capartha-Ruthenia, rather than the married name she would acquire later

The exhibition does not address the problems posed by these photographs' presentation of the perpetrator perspective. Such a lack of contextualisation of photographs is the norm in museum displays. Ultimately, not contextualising the photographs actually enables the expository agent to use them to support a narrative different from the photographs and the photograph's history. Furthermore, lack of contextualisation aids the expository agent's removal of the individual features of the victims at least to some degree, enabling him to stylise them as one uniform, passive victim.

The photographs from the Auschwitz Album are famous and can be seen in museums throughout Europe. The message communicated via the primary source differs according to the context within which the respective museum displays them. I encountered photographs from the Auschwitz Album throughout my research. Some museums, for example the Historiale in Cassino, use them to simply gesture to the Holocaust. It pairs the photo with another iconic image, from the Stroop report of the boy in the Warsaw ghetto. Since both are well known, the ideal visitor is expected to recognise at least one of the photographs, associate it with the murder of the Jews and read it as a symbol for the Holocaust (Photo no. 42). Museums also use the photographs from the Auschwitz Album to depict victims of the Holocaust. The Museo al Deportati in Carpi for example displays two photographs from the album as typical examples of Holocaust victims. Here the individuals shown come to represent all concentration camp prisoners (Photo no. 43). Most museums are more specific however, and use photographs from the Auschwitz Album to depict the deportations, selections on arrival at the camps, or the concentration camps, as is done for example in the Dokumentationsarchiv in Vienna (Photo no. 44).⁵⁶² In general, museums use photographs from the Auschwitz Album to illustrate a larger narrative beyond the reach of the primary source. They are not used to depict the specific transport captured on film, but rather serve as generic examples of concentration camp prisoners, the concentration camp in general, the deportations or the selections.

emphasises her Hungarian national belonging, despite the fact that her emigration to the US is mentioned.

⁵⁶² The exhibition shows two photos from the Auschwitz Album in its display on the deportations: the famous image of Dr. Mengele in front of people lined up for selection, and a photo taken during the unloading of a train. The captions state that the photos show the arrival of a deportation train in Auschwitz-Birkenau, so that the photos symbolise deportations in general. The captions roughly define the situation but do not contextualise the photos or their history as a primary source.



Photo no. 42: One photo from the Auschwitz Album at the Historiale in Cassino.



Photo no. 43: Two photos of the Auschwitz Album at the Monumenti al Deportati in Carpi.



Photo no. 44: Photos of the Auschwitz Album in the Dokumentationsarchiv in Vienna.

3.4 Incomplete victim representations: recreating stereotypes and marginalising Roma

3.4.1 The Roma as a vague but combined group

The second victim group represented in the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* is the Roma living in Hungary. Their definition as a group, and in fact their whole representation in the exhibition, is ambivalent. By addressing the Roma as victims, the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* values and commemorates them. At the same time, by marginalising them within the narrative and presenting only vague information about them, the expository agent represents the Roma as a largely unknown group. While the exhibition refutes some racist perceptions, others are reiterated and reinforced. Compared to the blatant racism to which Roma in Hungary are subjected on a daily basis, the museum's inclusion of Roma as a victim group is laudible. Nonetheless their representation within the exhibition is problematic, and throughout the narrative, Roma remain an Other of both the Hungarian nation and of the Jewish victims.

The ambivalent and superficial representation of Roma begins in the very first part of the exhibition that defines them as a victim group. Like the Jews, the Roma are described in section one by a text panel titled "Roma in Hungary". The panel also presents six photographs, but the copy is significantly shorter than the one on the Jews. It states:

Roma have been living in Hungary since the fourteenth century. In Romania, as late as the second half of the 19th century, they lived in near-slavery, with the state, the nobility and the Orthodox Church holding sway over them. It was in the hope of a better life that they moved to Transylvania, an outpost of freedom for them in those days, as well as to other European countries. By the end of the nineteenth century, most of the Gypsies in Hungary had settled down and spoke Hungarian. They lived on the peripheries of cities and villages under extremely poor conditions. From spring to autumn they were occupied in agriculture; thousands worked as travelling artisans, and were welcome in villages and towns. Many Gypsy musicians were famous nationwide, indeed all over Europe. As artists, they were held in high esteem and rewarded handsomely. Those vagrant Gypsies who kept to their traditional way of life were subject to often forced efforts by authorities to be settled and integrated into Hungarian society.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶³ Panel "The Roma in Hungary" in section 1.

The first problem is how the copy names the Roma. As is visible here all text in the museum continuously alternates between the terms Gypsy and Roma, using the term Roma mostly for the headings, and the term Gypsies elsewhere, without explaining them or the usage. The term Gypsies is not deconstructed anywhere in the exhibition, so that its implicit racist connotations are maintained. On occasion the exhibition mentions individual groups of Roma, for example Vlach or Beasch Roma, but does not elaborate on why they are called this.⁵⁶⁴ The name Gypsies has historically been used by non-Roma to refer to Roma with pejorative connotations, and it serves to distance the ideal visitor from the Roma.⁵⁶⁵ I assume that the expository agent hopes to equalise the two terms, introducing the word Roma to wider use, but using the word Gypsies interchangeably with the word Roma instead transfers the stereotypes from the former to the latter, self-referential term.⁵⁶⁶

The second problem with the copy cited above is that it is disjointed, sketchy and leaves out significant information. A lack of clear information is one of the most obvious faults in the representation of the Roma in the Holokauszt Emlékközpont. The copy discusses the presence of Roma in Hungary, their economic position and attitudes towards them. The expository agent does not differentiate between the different groups living in Hungary and fails to clarify whether they have lived in Hungary since the 14th century or moved there from Romania in the 19th century, which the copy jumps to.⁵⁶⁷ Both statements apply, but by merging the different migratory movements the text does not enable the visitor to distinguish the different groups. The copy

⁵⁶⁴ Caption to the last photo in the panel “The Roma in Hungary” in section 1. Caption to photo 10 on the touchscreen “Jews and Gypsies in Hungary. The Roma in Hungary” in section 1. The narration of the Family history “Bogdan-Kolompár Famiy” in section 1 mentions that Vlach Roma speak Romani.

⁵⁶⁵ This criticism is shared by most Roma activists and scholars writing about the terminology. See, for example: Hancock, *We are the Romani*, xvii; Romi Stauber, Raphael Vago, “Introduction,” In *The Roma A Minority in Europe. Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, ed. by Romi Stauber, Raphael Vago (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), xiii-xix, xiii.

⁵⁶⁶ Ian Hancock has suggested alternatives to the term Gypsies and lists several resources from Roma activists on how to handle naming. Hancock, *We are the Romani*, 105-111.

⁵⁶⁷ Less explicitly, an anti-Romanian discourse appears here too, positioning Hungary as better than Rumania. This also appears in a later panel on the murders of Jews and Roma by the *Einsatzgruppen*. There the copy abruptly jumps to a detailed presentation of Romania despite ignoring other localities, and portrays the Romanians as worse even than the Nazis. The copy states: “The Romanian authorities deported and massacred tens of thousands of Jews and thousands of Gypsies in Bessarabia and in Bukovina with a brutality that even exceeded that of the Nazi mass murderers. The Nazis were especially annoyed with the Romanian murderers for not making sure that the dead were buried, thereby creating the danger of an epidemic.” Panel “Deprived of Life: Europe” and touchscreen “Deprived of Life: Europe” in section 6.

then goes on to describe the living conditions of the Roma. Unlike in the introduction of the Jews in the first section, the Roma are not given a voice of their own; nothing is said about how they saw themselves in relation to the Hungarian nation or their own cultural practices. Roma spoke Hungarian and settled in Hungary, but their national belonging is questionable – Roma lived at the margins of Hungarian society, rather than within it. Describing their employment in agriculture, as artisans, or musicians, the copy does not contextualise why Roma occupied particular social and economic positions.⁵⁶⁸ Most evidently in the example of the musicians, the jobs taken by Roma are presented as inherent qualities of the Roma rather than an effect of historical developments.⁵⁶⁹ The paternal system, which meant that Roma were accepted as long as they remained at the lowest rung of the economic ladder is not mentioned.⁵⁷⁰

As the narrative continues, the distinction between settled and vagrant Roma, already gestured towards in the first copy, becomes central. The exhibition constructs a binary between nomadic and settled Roma. The first copy describes Roma who work and then jumps to contrast them with nomadic Roma, stating simply that those “who kept their traditional way of life” were targeted by the authorities. These sentences separate the Roma into two groups, working and accepted Roma and “those” who “kept their traditional way of life”. Later, nomadic Roma are described as people who “clung to their nomadic way of life and permanently lived in tribal, clannish circumstances”.⁵⁷¹ This language implies that nomadic living choices are negative and do not fit to a presumably better settled life.⁵⁷² The representation creates a dichotomy between settled and not settled. “Settled” implies working, integrated and accepted, even

⁵⁶⁸ The same professions are repeated in section two. Here the Roma are described as “extreme variegated in terms of culture, language and professions” but this is not explained. Touchscreen “Deprived of rights. The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2.

⁵⁶⁹ For a contextualisation see, for example: Kállai Ernő, “Gypsy Musicians,” in *Roma Migration*, ed. by Andreás Kováts (Budapest: International Organization for Migration, 2002), 75-98.

⁵⁷⁰ Bársony, Daróczi, *Pharrajimos*; Bársony, “20th Century Roma History,” 30.

⁵⁷¹ Touchscreen “Jews and Gypsies in Hungary. The Roma in Hungary” in section 1. Hancock cautions against the use of the word “old” that devalues the living choices as outdated, the word lifestyle, which suggests unity between the different Roma groups and reduces the tradition to a style comparable to fashion. Here the term “way of life” is used, but despite it, the singular word way instead of ways suggest that there was one traditional way and not more. Hancock, *We are the Romani*, 16-107.

⁵⁷² The word “clung” implies that the Roma maintained this way of living despite it being outdated. “Tribal” and “clannish”, especially with the ‘ish’ ending, are both misleading and derogatory. Hancock, *We are the Romani*, 16-107

if only at the margins of society, while “vagrant” is defined as the opposition to this.⁵⁷³ Initially the copy further distinguishes the nomadic from the travelling Roma, with the latter defined as artisans and musicians who were welcomed in towns and villages. This distinction vanishes soon after, and the rest of the exhibition uses “vagrant” and “travelling” interchangeably, not defining their meanings. The terms vagrant or travelling often appear as adjectives qualifying the noun Gypsies, as if being vagrant or traveling are essential and not cultural characteristics of the Roma.

The exhibition reiterates the same vague definition of Roma also applied to them by their persecutors. A panel in section two states “The attention of the authorities was drawn first of all to a few thousand vagrant Gypsies, who continued to pursue a nomadic lifestyle all year round, or from early spring to late autumn (...).”⁵⁷⁴ During the persecutions the distinction between nomad and settled was vague. The authorities mostly targeted Roma who were considered vagrant or out of work, but local authorities decided at will who fell into these categories and sometimes declared Roma as non-settled if it suited their purposes. The exhibition mentions this, but uses a similarly vague definition nevertheless.⁵⁷⁵ This reasserts the notion that it is unknown how the different Roma groups lived and how they made a living – itself a racist perception. Failing to indicate that the vague definitions result from racist stereotypes linked to misinformation and a lack of attention, leads to a perception of all Roma as a group beyond understanding. Furthermore the exhibition does not elaborate on reasons why Roma might have chosen to live as nomads or to settle. Racist national politics forced Roma to settle by creating conditions that continuously discriminated and marginalised them. At the same time local authorities in the region attempted to prevent Roma from settling, forcing them to keep moving on. The expository agent states this within

⁵⁷³ Within the main content of the exhibition permanent houses of Roma are not represented even though photos of houses do appear on the touchscreen. Touchscreen “Jews and Gypsies in Hungary. The Roma in Hungary” in section 1.

⁵⁷⁴ Panel “The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2.

⁵⁷⁵ A panel states that “the law never defined who was to be regarded as a Gypsy” but continues to refer to them as if they were a clearly defined group. Panel “The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2. Elsewhere the copy reads “The authorities restricted the movement of groups arbitrarily labelled as vagrant Gypsies.” Touchscreen “Deprived of Freedom. The Persecution of Roma” in section 4.

the presentation of the 1920s and 1930s, but obscures the extent of racist attitudes towards Roma and the long tradition of racist politics fuelling them.⁵⁷⁶ Summing up, the Roma are defined as a group in the opening of the exhibition, but as a vague, contradictory and unknown – or unknowable – group.

3.4.2 Othering Roma

The exhibition copy partly describes the unknown Roma in stereotypical terms. At the entrance the expository agent dedicates the exhibition to the Roma. Their inclusion values them as human beings whose suffering is a crime to be condemned. With frequent life-threatening physical attacks on Roma in Hungary today, this inclusion alone is a move to counter prevalent racism. At the same time, however, the Roma are represented within the exhibition as the unknown and dubious Other, positioned as the counterpart to both the non-Roma Hungarians and the Hungarian Jews.

Racist projections onto Roma either criminalise or romanticise them. Both position Roma in opposition to the national group. In the first projection Roma are beggars and petty thieves who avoid real work and are a danger to society. In the second, they live a worry-free life, full of adventures and liberties. The narrative in the *Holokaust Emlékközpont* does not criminalise the Roma and shows them working, countering a common prejudice that perceives Roma as work-shy or criminal. Of the six photographs in the first panel, three show people at work and two others relate to people's work contexts.⁵⁷⁷ The captions state that the photographs show Roma making bricks, an itinerant artisan further defined as a coppersmith, itinerant tub makers, a band

⁵⁷⁶ "Although the authorities wanted to put an end to lifestyle of vagrant Gypsies, in many places they actually prevented them from settling down in permanent homes." Panel "The persecution of Roma" in section 4. Expulsions of Roma are also discussed in the family history. In 1937 the Roma of Nagybicsérd were banned from entering the village by the local magistrate and could only return to their settlement escorted by an official. Family History in section 2. Like other minorities, Roma were targeted during Magyarisation, during which their language was forbidden, their children taken away and placed in non-Roma families, and their people subjected to forced settlement.

⁵⁷⁷ Even though photos of working Roma exist common representations of Roma often ignore them. Anton Holzer, "Faszination und Abscheu. Die fotografische Erfindung der 'Zigeuner'," *FOTOGESCHICHTE* 28, no. 110 (2008): 45-56, 52. A problem for the expository agent must have been the scarcity of visual and written sources about Roma in Hungary, which would explain why so little original material about Roma is provided. However, as with the photos from the *Auschwitz Album*, the sources used to present the Roma are not contextualised with regard to content, producer or genealogy. The racist perspectives inherent to the photos are not addressed.

leader and his son, and a “family of itinerant boilermaker Vlach Gypsies with gendarme ‘protection’ at Zsid”.⁵⁷⁸

While refuting the stereotype of the lazy Roma, the expository agent represents the one of the begging, unsanitary Roma, who wander the country beyond the reach of the nation state. The very first photograph of Roma, shows people walking along a rural road. In the centre of the photograph is a woman smoking a pipe, wearing a black skirt, jacket and headscarf. She looks directly into the camera, proud, self-confident and strong. Behind her, several other people walk along, among them a child not fully dressed. The child wears no skirt or trousers and has bare feet (Photo no. 45).



Photo no. 45: Photo from the panel "The Roma in Hungary" in section 1.

⁵⁷⁸ Panel “Roma in Hungary” in section 1. The inverted commas around the word “protection” hint at the state discrimination.

The fact that the first woman smokes a pipe and walks with power and pride towards the camera, resisting its gaze, gives agency to the Roma woman, but also distances her from the ideal visitor. The exhibition represents most Roma women as strong and self-confident – which alienates them from the ideal white visitor because they do not meet the classic fantasy that women should be coy and restrained. In the photographic imagination of Roma the women, especially smoking ones, play a dominant role. In general women who earn their own living are imagined to threaten the role of the male, although this image is distorted in the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* by the fact that the Roma women supposedly beg. The fact that these women smoke also signifies their autonomy.⁵⁷⁹ This Roma woman is strong, powerful and clearly acts with agency, but she is also threatening to the ideal visitor.

The caption to the photograph specifies the scene as “Gypsy women wandering and begging somewhere in Hungary, 1910s”.⁵⁸⁰ According to this caption, the people shown are all women and the children are included in that category.⁵⁸¹ They “wander” through the country and, as the photograph is taken “somewhere”, they could be anywhere in Hungary. The caption defines the women as begging, even though this is not visible in the photo.⁵⁸² With this photograph as the first visual representation, the exhibition represents Roma women in accordance with the classic stereotype of Roma beggars.⁵⁸³ They are free and strong, but at the same time pose a threat to the settled, non-Roma population. Here and elsewhere, the exhibition shows Roma mostly in groups and outside, often partially naked and on unpaved and dirty ground.⁵⁸⁴ The groups evoke threat due to the suggested large number of Roma, supposedly living in

⁵⁷⁹ Markus End, “Bilder und Sinnstruktur des Antiziganismus,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 22-23 (Mai 2011): 15-21, 20.

⁵⁸⁰ Panel “Roma in Hungary” in section 1. Hancock states that the term ‘wandering’ suggests aimless travel and should be avoided. Hancock, *We are the Romani*, 105.

⁵⁸¹ Here a gendered perception whereby women take care of the children is assumed. The fact that the women go begging with their children devalues them as mothers.

⁵⁸² The family history states that Roma families in the Baranya county made their living by “not infrequently: begging” Family History “Bogdan-Kolompár Family” in section 1.

⁵⁸³ While this photo alone suggests a gender binary with the women plus the children in their care begging while the men work, other photos shown in section 1 pluralise this image. A woman works alongside a man in the panel “Roma in Hungary” in section 1. On the touchscreen several Roma women are represented doing work. Touchscreen “Jews and Gypsies in Hungary. The Roma in Hungary” in section 1.

⁵⁸⁴ Anton Holzer gives a good overview over photos of Roma, in which he also discusses the dominant typology given to them. Holzer, Anton. “Faszination und Abscheu,” 47.

tribes. Being partially naked denotes Roma as uncivilised or, where women are exposed, immoral, marking Roma as outsiders.

The other stereotype reiterated in the exhibition is that of the dirty Roma. The repeated representation of dirty clothes, Roma sitting on the ground, uncombed hair, and dishevelled clothing ingrains this image (Photo no. 46). This is particularly noticeable in the film parts of the family history that tells the story of the Bogdán-Kolompár family.⁵⁸⁵ The videos do not state where the film footage is from, but when film is used it shows Roma living in wagons and tents, sitting and eating on the ground, and scantily dressed children.⁵⁸⁶ The text emphasises the supposedly unsanitary conditions, for example, in section four when the copy states “Under the pretext of disinfecting, delousing Gypsy settlement, the authorities sometimes acted with brutal force”.⁵⁸⁷ This copy is ambivalent, as it could suggest that the disinfecting and delousing, itself a racist and violent act, might have been unproblematic if not used as a pretext.⁵⁸⁸ The word “sometimes” is troubling as it minimises the violence of the act itself and seems to suggest that the treatment of Roma only occasionally went too far. Representing Roma as living outdoors, often showing tents or huts, associates them with a bygone era, suggested once more as not modern.⁵⁸⁹ Regardless of whether this is idealised or devalued, the Roma appear as the antithesis of settled, sanitary non-Roma society.

⁵⁸⁵ This is surprising since the narrator states that the family build a modest house and categorises the family as middle class.

⁵⁸⁶ The typological presentation of Roma discussed by Holzer is very evident. Holzer, “Faszination und Abscheu.” See: “Family History” in section 1 and 2. The lack of available visual material representing Roma is evident, as the same family photos are repeated in nearly all sections and other photos, unrelated to the Bogdán-Kolompár family, are used to make up for the lack of images.

⁵⁸⁷ Panel “The persecution of Roma” in section 4

⁵⁸⁸ Similar: “(...) decree no. 247,700/1939 of the Ministry of the interior regulated the methods of the struggle against lice, emphatically providing for the regular inspection of Gypsy settlements and the delousing of their inhabitants and of vagrant gypsies.” Touchscreen “Deprived of Freedom. The persecution of Roma” in section 4.

⁵⁸⁹ Holzer, “Faszination und Abscheu,” 54.

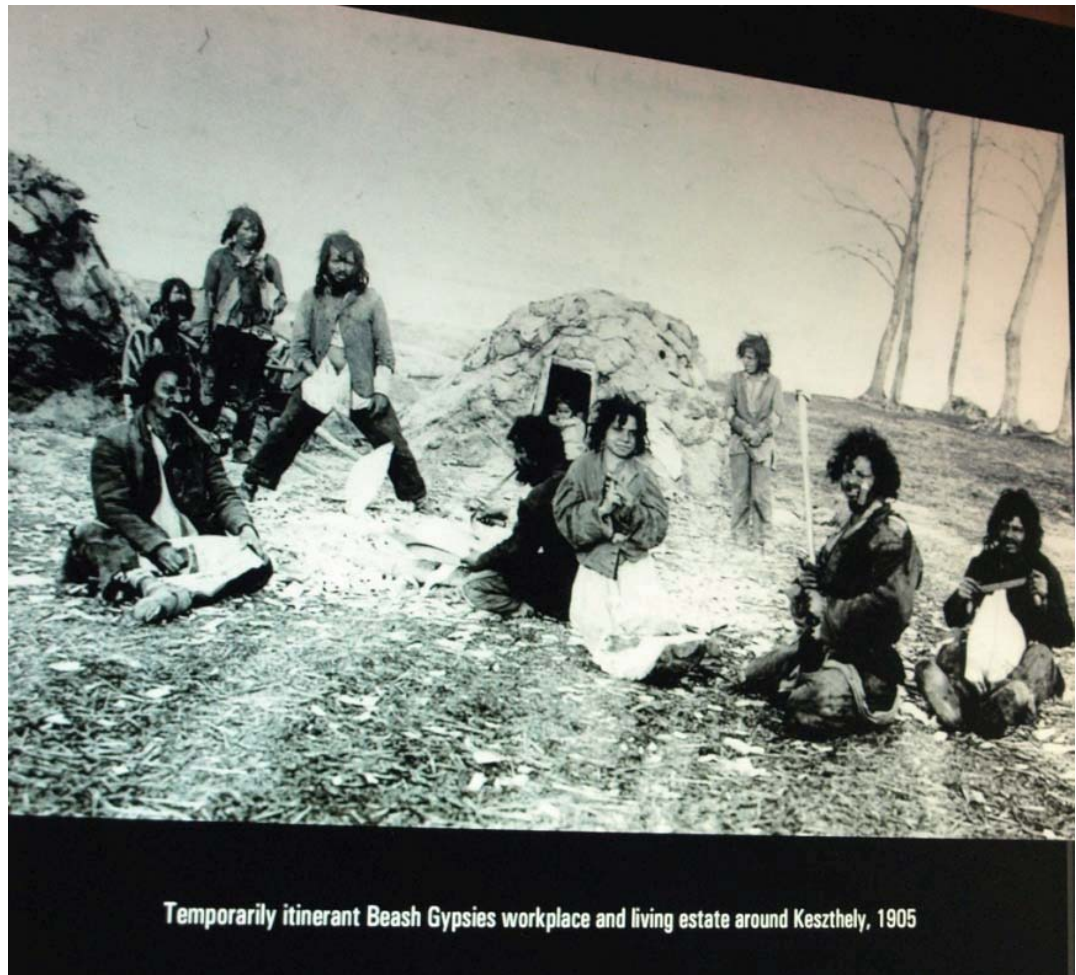


Photo no. 46: Photo shown on the touchscreen presenting “The Roma in Hungary” in section 1.

While the photograph of Beash Roma from 1905, which shows several adults and children sitting and standing around a clay hut (Photo no. 46), reinforces the stereotypes of begging and unsanitary Roma, not all visual representations do. Some show Roma representing themselves in bourgeois settings. For advertising purposes musicians printed cards that showed themselves and their instruments, images of which are shown in the exhibition. Another example of Roma self-representation that is comparable with the self-representations of non-Roma Hungarians from the time is the portrait of a Vlach family photographed in the same style that bourgeoisie families represented their wealth and status (Photo no. 47). None of the photographs shown in the exhibition are contextualised to indicate, who took them, why and in which genre.



Photo no. 47: Photo shown on the touchscreen under “The Roma in Hungary” in section 1.

In the imaginations presented about them in the Holocaust Emlékközpont Roma remain unknown, contradictory, and unclear. The exhibition represents the Roma as a group without unity, leaving its diversity unexplained. They are victims of the Holocaust, but constructed as a vague group with questionable national belonging. Their evaluation is Janus-faced, representing them as poor and marginalised victims, while partly reiterating the stereotypes that enabled their persecution. The expository agent suggests, by showing photographs of communions, of Roma soldiers, and bourgeoisie self-representation, that Roma were on the road to integration. This integration was cut short by the Holocaust, not by Hungarian society. The claim that integration would have been successful were it not for the Holocaust ignores barrier to integration presented

by the racism within Hungarian society. In all the representations Roma remain the Other, the counterpart to non-Roma Hungarians; with their cultures unexplained, their origins vague, their social practices and living conditions marked as essentially different from Hungarian non-Roma.

The expository agent also differentiates Roma from the Jews. The first difference between Jews and Roma is that the Jews are clearly included in the national group but Roma do not belong and are not beneficial to the nation. The second difference is that Roma do not qualify as the ultimate, passive and dead victim, because their representation in the exhibition recognises their agency.⁵⁹⁰ The panel in section four discussing, among other things, the forced military labour units for Roma states:

The organization of the Gypsy military labour companies was rendered difficult also by the fact that unlike Jews, the Gypsies did not enrol obediently, and if they were captured and pressed into service, they escaped if they could.⁵⁹¹

The Roma Other here reacts to its persecution.⁵⁹² Moreover, the narrative speaks about their reaction at the same time as it outlines their persecution. They are active agents within their own narrative; people who attempted to resist their persecution.

The Roma are granted a stronger subject position than the Jews. Paradoxically, the ethnographic tradition of representation which others the Roma emphasises agency. The texts and the photographs at the Holocaust Emlékközpont stand within the tradition of ethnography, a tradition of fixing in text and images cultures imagined as foreign; the people, their work, clothing, and housing situation. Because the Other, the unknown foreigner is exactly that, foreign and thus unknown, he or she can act on their own terms. The proud woman with the pipe, walking towards the camera, strong and with power exemplifies this representation of the active Roma. Because of the Othering, this active position is not necessarily valued or accepted. Even though resisting might have saved their lives, the fact that Roma did not obey orders still defies the

⁵⁹⁰ Levy and Sznajder, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*, 228.

⁵⁹¹ Panel "Persecution of the Roma" section 4; Touchscreen "The Persecution of Roma", part titled "The persecution of the Gypsies in 1944" in section 4. This statement is made even though it contradicts the presentation in the family histories that relates how Vera Wechsler hid with false papers in Budapest.

⁵⁹² In the sixth section a similar statement appears within the description of the planned liquidation of the Roma camp in Auschwitz. The Roma are said to have "resisted with sticks and knives." Panel "The massacre of the Roma" in section 6.

norm. That Roma rebel against authority serves to reaffirm the stereotype that they do not integrate, obey laws, or respect the order imposed on them.

As the embodiment of the Other, the counterpart to the Hungarians and the Jews, the Roma are removed from the ideal visitor, who is unlikely to identify with them. The representation of Roma strays too far from the norm to invite identification from the ideal visitor. The norm in the Holocaust Emlékközpont is white and middle-class and the Roma, represented as the working poor, of colour, and set apart from the Hungarians, do not meet this norm. Where the expository agent denies the Jewish victims agency, the agency of the Roma persists to characterise them as dubious, distant and even dangerous.

3.4.3 Marginalising Roma within the exhibition space

Not only do Roma remain a separate and ambivalent group throughout the exhibition, the exhibition also marginalises them spatially. Despite their being one of the victim groups to whom the exhibition is dedicated, Roma are excluded from large parts of the exhibition. As in most museums on the Holocaust, Jews take centre stage and Roma are relegated to the side. The expository agent achieves this primarily via allocation of space. This is already visible in the first panel where the copy on Roma is significantly shorter than that on Jews. Section three and seven do not even mention the Roma and in the fifth and eighth they are not included in the main narrative. Separate panels on Roma exist in section two, four and six, but their story has less space and the panels are in less prominent parts of the sections.

In many parts of the exhibition the expository agent adds the stories of Roma onto the Jewish ones, almost as an afterthought. The fifth section, for example, details extensively the deprivation of human rights of Jews and then states in a single sentence: “Roma too endured plenty of suffering: even before the German occupation, they had been subject to cruel treatment by the authorities, and in 1944 their human dignity too, was trampled upon.”⁵⁹³ A little later, a panel specifies the everyday humiliations of Jews and then states that Roma were “also frequently humiliated” for example with forced haircuts or forced bathing as well as the perceptions of “some public officials” that they

⁵⁹³ Opening panel of section 5 “Deprived of Human Dignity”. The same happens in the longer text outlining how human dignity was taken away, wherein Roma appear in just one sentence. Panel “Everyday Humiliations” in section 5.

should be sterilised.⁵⁹⁴ Section eight features a similar approach, addressing Jews and Roma as a joint group. The text on the touchscreen, dealing with the liberation of the camp, mentions that: “Jews and Roma who were alive in the spring of 1945 were saved by the victory of the Allied forces and the defeat of Nazi Germany.”⁵⁹⁵ The rest of the text then refers to the two groups together. With this nominal inclusion, the expository agent silences the specific narratives of Roma.⁵⁹⁶ This suggests that Roma suffered under the same or similar conditions to the Jews.

Where Roma are part of the main narrative, their stories still remain marginal, one-dimensional and abbreviated. The visual representation of their persecution is limited and at times does not even represent the situation in Hungary. One display area in the main exhibition in section four deals with the measures against Roma. It describes the treatment in the forced labour units, describes the imprisonment of Roma and the terrible conditions in the fortress at Komárom, and in the last paragraph outlines the measures taken against Roma and Sinti in Germany.⁵⁹⁷ In general, not much information is conveyed here, compared to the space devoted to the deportation and ghettoisation of Jews, but the rough outline of the persecution of the Roma is accommodated. While one photograph shows the fortress at Komárom however, another depicts Settela, a Sinti girl deported from the Netherlands (Photo no. 48).⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁴ Panel “Everyday Humiliation” in section 5.

⁵⁹⁵ Touchscreen “Liberation and calling into account. The fate of Hungarian Jews and Roma” in section 8.

⁵⁹⁶ The opening panel in section eight does the same, including Roma by simply naming them: “Within a few years, another dictatorship and continuing oppression were to be the fate of the population of Hungary, whether they were Jews, Gentiles, Roma or Non-Roma.” Opening panel “Liberation and calling into account” in section 8. Here the Roma are equated with the non-Roma population, even though their suffering under Communism was also highly specific and quite different from the suffering of the gentile population. The same applies to Jews here too.

⁵⁹⁷ Panel “The persecution of Roma” in section 4.

⁵⁹⁸ Janna Eliot, “Settela: het meisje heeft haar naam terug (The girl has got her name back),” *The Holocaust in History and Memory* 3 (2010): 31-40. The name of the girl on the photo is not provided, her origin is.



Photo no. 48: Panel “The persecution of Roma” in section 4.

The expository agent also marginalises Roma by devoting little care to their representations. The lack of visual representation may be due to unavailable primary sources, but the video interviews of Roma women, shown on the touchscreens in section four and section six, provide further examples of the lack of effort put into the representation of Roma. The interviews have the simple caption “Persecution of the Roma” and later one of the same interviews is titled “Roma in Auschwitz.” The touchscreens do not provide the women’s names, nor do they specify who conducted the interviews or where. It is also not clear why the expository agent did not interview Roma specifically for the exhibition. By contrast, the interviews with Jewish survivors were commissioned by the expository agent for the exhibition, and all the interviewees are named.⁵⁹⁹

Marginalisation, ambiguous and unclear information and a disregard for specific stories are constants of the Holokauszt Emlékközpont’s representation of Roma. Superficial stories produce a disjointed, incomplete and in part stereotypical image of

⁵⁹⁹ Touchscreen “Deprived of Freedom. The persecution of Roma” section 4; touchscreen “Deprived of Life. Massacre of the Roma” in section 6.

Roma communities and their persecution in Hungary. Roma, the exhibition suggests, were victims of the Holocaust, but marginal ones. Commemorating the victims at the end of the exhibition, this marginalisation becomes particularly problematic. The memory wall, constructed according to the Jewish tradition, has no separate space dedicated to Roma victims. Thus the Holocaust Emlékközpont offers no space to commemorate the Roma. Here the dedication to them, announced in section one, becomes shallow, if it was not so already.

3.5 Powerful perpetrators: Hungarians as negative historical agents

3.5.1 Removed state actors in acceptable posture and presentation

After the victims, the second strongest focus within the permanent exhibition in the Holocaust Emlékközpont is on the perpetrators. The expository agent states at the outset that “The underlying theme of the exhibition is the relationship between the state and its citizens.”⁶⁰⁰ The exhibition defines the state broadly, addressing the government, the jurisprudence, executive and administrative structures. Citizens are defined equally broadly to encompass all people living on territory that belonged to Hungary at that time. As discussed above, this includes the Jews and, within limits, the Roma. It also includes the non-Jewish and non-Roma population, addressed where they were in contact with the persecution – committing the crimes or being complicit in them. The exhibition represents the non-persecuted citizens as perpetrators or close to them. It is here, with the state and the citizens, that the exhibition constructs historical agency. The perpetrators and the population complicit with the perpetrators have agency, acting either within state structures or independently.

Women are strikingly absent in the representations of perpetrators. Theoretically the term citizens, encompassing all Hungarians, includes women; but women do not appear. The citizens who committed crimes or were complicit in them were, according to the exhibition, all men. The expository agent represents no woman by name or in person. Since the exhibition does not represent women as active agents in general, this is no coincidence. According to the exhibition women belong to the private sphere, and where they are shown it is in association with the victims. The victims are

⁶⁰⁰ Panel “From Deprivation of Rights to Genocide” in the lobby.

feminised to appear passive and helpless, and women appear alongside their husbands or with their children, but rarely as agents in their own lives. The exclusion of female perpetrators, who would otherwise have defied this construction of passivity, makes sense in this respect.

The Germans play little part within the narrative of the exhibition. The expository agent addresses Germans, for example, when section two outlines the growing influence of Germany in the 1930s, or when section four indicates how Jews and Roma were treated in Germany and other countries occupied by it. However, the information about Germany and Europe serves only to contextualise the events in Hungary that remain the clear focus of the exhibition. This is true even for the section dealing with Auschwitz-Birkenau that, despite explaining the German concentration camp system, focuses on the transports from Hungary to Auschwitz. Visual representations of German officials or German occupying forces are rare and the presentation of the Germans overall is limited.⁶⁰¹ Mentioning German perpetrators and clearly stating their responsibilities, the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* does not hold them responsible for the events in Hungary. Thus, the expository agent counters externalisation common in the dominant discourse.

The first perpetrators and first historical agents the exhibition introduces are government officials. After the general introduction in section one, section two explicates the different ministries of Regent Miklós Horthy, introduces the Sztójay cabinet and briefly mentions the Arrow Cross rule. In the presentation of the legislative acts that discriminated the Jews and Roma, the portrayal of the government actors differs significantly from the dominant discourse in Hungary.⁶⁰² The exhibition explicitly shows the right wing position and its dominance, clearly stating that the political parties targeted Jews even before the 1930s.⁶⁰³ The exhibition also states that Hungary

⁶⁰¹ A large photo of Nazis, among them Veesemayer, on the terrace of a confiscated villa is shown after section 3. Portraits of Eichmann, Krumej and Wislincany are shown next to the film about the ghettoization and deportation in section 4. A portrait of Mengele is shown on the touchscreen in section 5 and one of Höss in the video installation "A day in Auschwitz" in section 6. Quite a large number of still and moving images from Germany do appear in the film about antisemitism. One photo from the famous photo series of German soldiers visiting the Buda castle is shown in the panel "Responses of the persecuted" in section 7.

⁶⁰² The acts are shown to have been issued by the government and then followed by the local authorities. The judicative organs; the magistrates and lawyers are only indirectly addressed here.

⁶⁰³ Film screening "Hungary 1918-1944"; panel "Hungary 1920-1942"; film "Hungary 1918-1944" in section 2.

actively allied itself with Germany and joined the war in 1941. While indicating that the hope of regaining some of its former territory partly motivated Hungary's interest in the coalition, the exhibition does not present the treaty of Trianon as an excuse.⁶⁰⁴ Throughout the exhibition, it is clear that the Hungarian state actively participated in the persecutions both before and after 1944.

In line with international scholarship, the expository agent represents the state persecutions of Horthy's regimes, responsible for the murderous actions against Jews.⁶⁰⁵ According to the copy, Miklós Horthy established a "right-wing, antisemitic, nationalist and anticommunist regime" which used the revolutions of 1918-1919 and the Treaty of Trianon to support their propaganda against Jews and communists.⁶⁰⁶ While the copy states that "the lives of the majority of Hungarian Jews were not in direct jeopardy prior to March 19th 1944", it becomes clear that the regime targeted Jews in all other possible ways.⁶⁰⁷ According to the exhibition narrative, state persecution began before the German occupation, gained momentum after 1938 and came

⁶⁰⁴ Film "Hungary 1918-1944" in section 2.

⁶⁰⁵ See, for example: touchscreen "Deprived of rights. The German Occupation of Hungary" in section 2, where Horthy is said to have "sanctioned" the collaboration of the Sztójay government by officially staying head of state and given a false sense of security to the Jews. Thomas Sakmyster sees Horthy as responsible for the discriminatory measures. Thomas Sakmyster, *Miklós Horthy. Ungarn 1918-1944*, trans. by MihaTavcar (Wien: Edition Steinbauer, 2006). Braham argues that Horthy was responsible even if he did protect Hungarian Jews from harsher measures, and that his secret negotiations for an individual peace treaty, aware of the risk of occupation, sacrificed this protection. Randolph L. Braham, "The Holocaust in Hungary: A Retrospective Analysis," in *Genocide and Rescue. The Holocaust in Hungary 1944*, ed. by David Cesariani (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1997) 29-46, 37.

⁶⁰⁶ Panel "Hungary 1920-1942" in section 2. Later in the exhibit a panel states that "The regime had been antisemitic from the beginning, and Regent Horthy himself was proud of being an antisemite." Panel "Responses of Gentiles" section 7.

⁶⁰⁷ Panel "The policy of the Kállay cabinet" in section 2. The dominant discourse in Hungary claims that Jews were safe under Miklós Horthy, who supposedly saved them by preventing them being deported. By contrast, the Holocaust Emlékközpont asserts: "Reacting to domestic and international protests, as well as to the steadily deteriorating military situation, and fearful, too, that the Allies would bomb Budapest after the Jews had been deported, Regent Horthy, on July 6, 1944, ordered the deportations halted". Panel "1944, Ghettoisation, Deportation" in section 4. Cesariani believes the deportations were halted in fear of American bombings. However, the exact reasons why Horthy halted the deportations are not clear. Cesariani, "Introduction." In the Holocaust Emlékközpont, the responsibility of Hungarian cabinets is maintained even if some parts of the exhibition contradict this, as is the case with the film screened in section two. This film states "On moral grounds, the Hungarian government said no to the Nazis, who demanded that the Jews be stigmatised, ghettoised and deported." Here, discrimination is said to initially have been a consequence of the competition with other right-wing parties and later of the closer ties to Germany. Film screening "Hungary 1918-1944" in section 2. Regina Fritz and Imke Hansen have drawn attention to the exhibition's inconsistent presentation of the Horthy regime. Fritz and Hansen. "Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos," 80. Although a few parts contradict this, the representation of Horthy as responsible is the dominant argument overall.

into full force after 1944. The government actively differentiated Hungarian from so-called stateless Jews and deported the latter.⁶⁰⁸ Most critically, the government engaged in the ghettoisation, deportation and mass murder described in detail in section four and six. The copy outlines that after March 19th 1944 the Sztójay government excluded Jews from Hungarian society by the imposition of the Yellow Star, and erected ghettos and camps, especially in the countryside, and so-called Jewish houses in Budapest. The government then immediately began deporting the Jews – most of them to their death in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The copy states that after May 1944 “the Hungarian state, in cooperation with its ally, Germany, had a significant portion of its own citizens murdered.”⁶⁰⁹

While the state is held responsible for the crimes against Jews, the expository agent does not represent the state as responsible for the persecution of Roma. The exhibition downplays and denies racism against Roma. The exhibition describes the restrictions on Roma, listing legal measures that sanctioned biannual raids of their settlements, forced registration, and economic restrictions.⁶¹⁰ Just a few sentences later, however, the copy states that “no ‘anti-Gypsy laws’ were passed in Hungary.”⁶¹¹ Inconsistencies within the exhibition narrative’s descriptions of the discrimination, exclusion and murder of Roma are obvious. The copy says that the “antisemitic right-wing” government and “racist right-wing” forces had been gaining ground since 1919 in Hungary, which the expository agent links to the persecution of the Jews – only gesturing to the Roma.⁶¹² Racism as an ideology is not discussed. The exhibition continuously jumps back and forth between listing racist measures taken by the authorities and reassuring the visitor that these measures were not supported by the elite, higher political officials or the population. Even though “Gypsy hating officials, gendarmes and politicians” wanted to “regulate, settle down or drive out” Roma,⁶¹³ “The occasionally bitterly anti-Gypsy views and suggestions of low-level public officials and local civilians

⁶⁰⁸ Panel “Restrictions of Freedom before the German Occupation” in section 4.

⁶⁰⁹ Opening panel “Deprived of Life” section 6. The Sztójay cabinet that ruled Hungary after May 19th 1944 is said to have been a “willing servant” of the Germans. Panel “The Murders in Hungary” in section 6.

⁶¹⁰ Panel “The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” ; touchscreen “Deprived of Rights. The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2.

⁶¹¹ Touchscreen “Deprived of Rights. The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2.

⁶¹² Panel “Hungary 1920-1942” in section 2.

⁶¹³ Touchscreen “Deprived of Rights. The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2.

were usually not supported by competent authorities in the Ministry of the Interior.”⁶¹⁴ To qualify the Ministry of Interior as “competent”, while revealing that the very same Ministry ordered the disenfranchisement and later the deportation of the Jews, is at least striking.

Agents responsible for antisemitic measures, the high-ranking politicians appear as actors quite distant from their actions. State agency centres on legal measures, except where the exhibition represents the Ministry of Interior in the Sztójay cabinet.⁶¹⁵ The legislative acts provide the basis for the discriminations and persecutions but the exhibition, does not clarify how the legislation relates to the lower levels of state administration.⁶¹⁶ As well as from this disconnect, the distancing of the highest authorities from the Holocaust is increased by the way state actors are represented visually. The expository agent shows Horthy with symbols of power and status, and his cabinets in representative group pictures, or photographs from political events where Hitler and other German officials meet the Hungarian elite.⁶¹⁷ The faces and postures of the individuals are placeholders for the political position they represent and the photographs communicate political power (Photo no. 49). Medals, sashes, hats or clothing denote political or military status, class belonging and gender constructions. The men are legitimate politicians, clearly belonging to the elite, in full command of their authority and power, far removed not only from the everyday life of the ideal visitor, but also from the daily dirty work of the persecutions.

⁶¹⁴ Panel “The persecution of Roma” in section 4. Similar: “The ‘Gypsy question’ in Hungary was not deemed important either by the public or by the political elite until the Arrow Cross terror in 1944”. Touchscreen “Deprived of Rights. The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2. The copy in the main exhibit area differs slightly, stating “Officials and politicians who hated Roma often complained that neither the public nor even the country’s leaders were interested in the Gypsy question.” Panel “The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2.

⁶¹⁵ I will describe this representation in detail in chapter 3.5.2.

⁶¹⁶ Listing the laws, the exhibition fails to connect them to the orders by which they were implemented, or to their local interpretation and enactment by individual officials. A gap is left between the higher command and the executing forces. This creates the impression that the laws were depersonalised, while at the same time local police, gendarmes and administration officers appear to have acted with brutal violence in a political vacuum.

⁶¹⁷ Three photos show Hitler and Horthy together. Panel “Hungary 1920-1942”; panel “The Kallay cabinet” and the enlarged photo above the touchscreens; all in section 2. Aside from providing dates, the portrayed events are not contextualised. Without informing about the political events depicted, the photos are used instead to provide evidence of a political life in which Germany and Hungary worked together according to political protocol. They represent the diplomatic relationship between the two countries and allude to a certain proximity – in the case of the photo showing Hitler and Horthy, for example.



Photo no. 49: Photo “The Kállay cabinet, 1942” in section 2.

3.5.2 Identifying criminals in portrait pictures

This distance ceases when the exhibition narrates what happened after March 1944 when the Sztójay cabinet came into power. Historical agents are now personalised and the exhibition represents them as individual people who, as active individual agents, committed the crimes displayed. As before, the exhibition narrative clearly assigns responsibility to the politicians, once again countering the dominant discourse.⁶¹⁸ The copy states, “the Sztójay government zealously supported the idea of the deportation of Jews” and actively collaborated with the Germans to carry them out.⁶¹⁹ The expository agent names and depicts Andor Jaross, László Baky, László Endre and László Ferenczy, holding them all responsible for the ghettoisations and the following deportations.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ The dominant discourse often does not name the officials, presenting the Sztójay cabinet as a mere puppet government, or even excludes it completely, jumping directly to the Arrow Cross takeover in October 1944.

⁶¹⁹ Touchscreen “Deprived of rights. The German Occupation of Hungary” in section 2.

⁶²⁰ Touchscreen “Deprived of Freedom. Ghettoization and Deportation” in section 4. While the four were indeed central in the murderous policies enacted in Hungary, the actual working order of the

These four perpetrators reappear at different points in the exhibition, most extensively in section four, which shows several portrait photographs. The small half-portraits hang in a vertical row next to a large video that screens scenes showing collections and deportations of Jews (Photo no. 50).⁶²¹ The juxtaposition of the portraits with the deportations indicates that the individuals portrayed were responsible for the scenes. The photograph at the top shows Adolf Eichmann, the two below present the SS men Hermann Crumey and Dieter Wisliceny who worked with him in Hungary; below these hang the portraits of the four Hungarians responsible. Each one is qualified by a brief caption outlining their official position and their role in the deportations. According to the caption Andor Jaross was the Minister of Interior, responsible at the very head of the “collaborationist Hungarian cabinet”.⁶²² László Endre, Secretary of the State for the Ministry, was the “chief organizer” of the deportations and “Eichmann’s good friend”.⁶²³ The caption states that László Baký was the commander of the police and the gendarmerie, while László Ferenczy was the on-site commander for the deportations. The last three are referred to as “the ‘deportation trio’”.⁶²⁴

Ministry of Interior, its relationship to the police and gendarmerie does not become clear in the exhibition. Contrary to the impression created here, many more people held positions of responsibility and took initiative individually to advance the persecutions.

⁶²¹ Touchscreen “Deprived of Freedom. Ghettoization and Deportation” in section 4. There is one larger portrait of László Endre, in official attire, in section 2. It is linked with the actions taken against Roma and the caption states that he “proposed that Gypsies be locked in labour camps and castrated”. Photo in the panel “The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2.

⁶²² Caption to the photo of Andor Jaros in section 4.

⁶²³ Caption to the photo of László Endre in section 4.

⁶²⁴ Photos and captions next to the large video screen in section 4.



Photo no. 50: Display showing deportations in Hungary and the main perpetrators responsible for them in section 4.

Holocaust scholars have largely ignored portrait photographs of perpetrators and, in fact, portrait photographs in general. Considering the repeated use of such photographs in museums, this lack of attention is striking.⁶²⁵ Scholars have paid some attention to photographs that the perpetrators took, as souvenirs during the mass murders or depicting moments of leisure in between, but perpetrator portraits have been ignored.⁶²⁶ As is the case for most photographs from the Holocaust, museums use perpetrator portraits because they are available. Photographs that show the perpetrators at the scene of perpetration are rare, in particular where higher officials are concerned. What exist in great number however, are ID photographs or other official photographs.

Portraits may depict the person in question, but due to the photographic tradition of portraits, they also show an autonomous and responsible individual, identified as such by their photograph. Portraits depict a person of a specific social status, class, and gender. The portrait is intrinsically linked to the idea of the bourgeois subject. The notion of the responsible and identifiable individual presupposes an autonomous sub-

⁶²⁵ In some rare cases, portraits of the victims are investigated. Ute Wrocklage for example has analysed passport photos of the women interned in Ravensbrück. Ute Wrocklage, "Fotografie und Holocaust. Eine Bibliographie," *FOTOGESCHICHTE* 55 (1995): 43-72.

⁶²⁶ Janina Struck, *Private Pictures. Soldiers' Inside View of War* (New York: Tauris & Co, 2011), 73-76.

ject, with a solid and unified identity. This subject necessarily has agency, being responsible for its own actions. This identity supposedly remains stable throughout time, claiming that the person depicted continuously looked like this, even beyond their death.⁶²⁷ Portraits thus communicate coherence of the subject across time and space.⁶²⁸ Portraits in exhibitions implicitly communicate this notion of the stable, autonomous subject to the visitor.

The Holokauszt Emlékközpont uses three categories of portrait photographs: personal portraits, passport photographs and mug shots taken for the prosecution. All three portrait types are expected to resemble the historical person, claiming to identify the person sufficiently to be recognised. The personal portrait relates most closely to traditional portraiture and, in addition to depicting the person, shows character and emotional traits; usually linked to social status.⁶²⁹ Commissioned by the person depicted, the picture commonly portrays this person in a favourable light. Passport photographs aim to identify someone for the purposes of the state or specific institutions. The representation in the photograph is based on a normative appearance of men and women accepted at a given time and place.⁶³⁰ Facial expressions and postures are more rigid to increase comparability, supposedly disregarding character traits. In the interest of the person depicted, the image is often complimentary despite the standardised rules of law and convention. The third group, the mug shots, have their roots in the same tradition as the passport photographs, but constitute their counterpart. Identifying the criminal, the mug shot also creates a standardised appearance, but this time marks it as criminal.⁶³¹ Posture, facial expression, and clothing here brand the individual portrayed as deviant, excluded from society. Usually mug shots present the historical person unfavourably and unsympathetically, mostly due to the stark lighting that creates harsh features. Prisoner clothing and prisoner numbers add to this and the people photographed rarely smile. Often the photographs depict the person with

⁶²⁷ The main perpetrators named and depicted here are later shown to die for their crimes.

⁶²⁸ Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaction Books, 1991), 10.

⁶²⁹ David Bate, *Photography. The Key Concepts* (Oxford: Berg, 2009) 73.

⁶³⁰ Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in *The Contest of Meaning. Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. by Richard Bolton (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1989), 344-389, 345.

⁶³¹ Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 361.

their name and the prison number to facilitate a systematic prosecution. Facing the camera straight on or in full profile is visually associated with prosecution.

The first portrait in section four at the Holokauszt Emlékközpont is the photograph of Eichmann. Itself iconic, the photo shows him in his SS uniform, the skull of the Death Head Legion clearly visible on the cap of his uniform, his head tilted sideways with a slight smile (Photo no. 51). As an iconic perpetrator portrait, it not only identifies an historic person, but also the evil bureaucrat personified by Eichmann. Starting with this image, the expository agent relates the other portraits to that of Eichmann, thus vilifying them by association. The passport photograph of Dieter Wisliceny also shows him in his SS uniform, with blond hair and a side parting, a stern look and tightly pressed lips (Photo no. 51). A fashionable and preferred posture among the German SS, today it signifies the cruel, serious, and merciless German perpetrator. Eichmann and Wisliceny appear as typical national socialists. The mug shot of Hermann Krumej adds to this (Photo no. 51). His name is written on a piece of paper, indicating his prosecution, while his open shirt and partially unshaven face mark him as deviant. This, the three portraits claim, is what the Germans who were active in Hungary looked like. Fixing their identities as perpetrators is what the photographs do. The historic person, their physical features and their expressions at the time they were photographed are less important than the actions they stand for.



Photo no. 51: Portraits of Adolf Eichmann, Hermann Krumei and Dieter Wisliceny in section 4.

At the Holocaust Emlékközpont, the Germans also represent the regime with which Hungarian perpetrators collaborated. The next four photographs represent Hungarian perpetrators. Andor Jaross's photo is taken at least in an official setting, as he is depicted in political attire in front of a rich tapestry. László Endre's and László Baky's portraits have clearly been taken in a professional photographer's studio (Photo no. 52). The last photograph is from an official document, most likely a gendarmerie passport, showing László Ferency in uniform, decorated with medals (Photo no. 53).⁶³² In a different context the four men might be seen as respectable people, not so different from the ideal visitor. They appear to be men, in full command of themselves. They represent the normative image of power and social status, sure of themselves

⁶³² Unlike the first three, this photo is scratched and bears the marks of time, it has apparently travelled from the past to the present.

and their actions. The juxtaposition with the deportation scenes and the alignment with the German perpetrators transforms this message, however. The portraits of respectable men now depict perpetrators of the Holocaust in Hungary. What remains is the impression that they are autonomous, self-assured subjects, capable of reflecting on their own actions. Attributing historical agency to them, the expository agent has decided to present the Hungarian perpetrators with names and faces, thus holding these four people responsible as autonomous individuals.

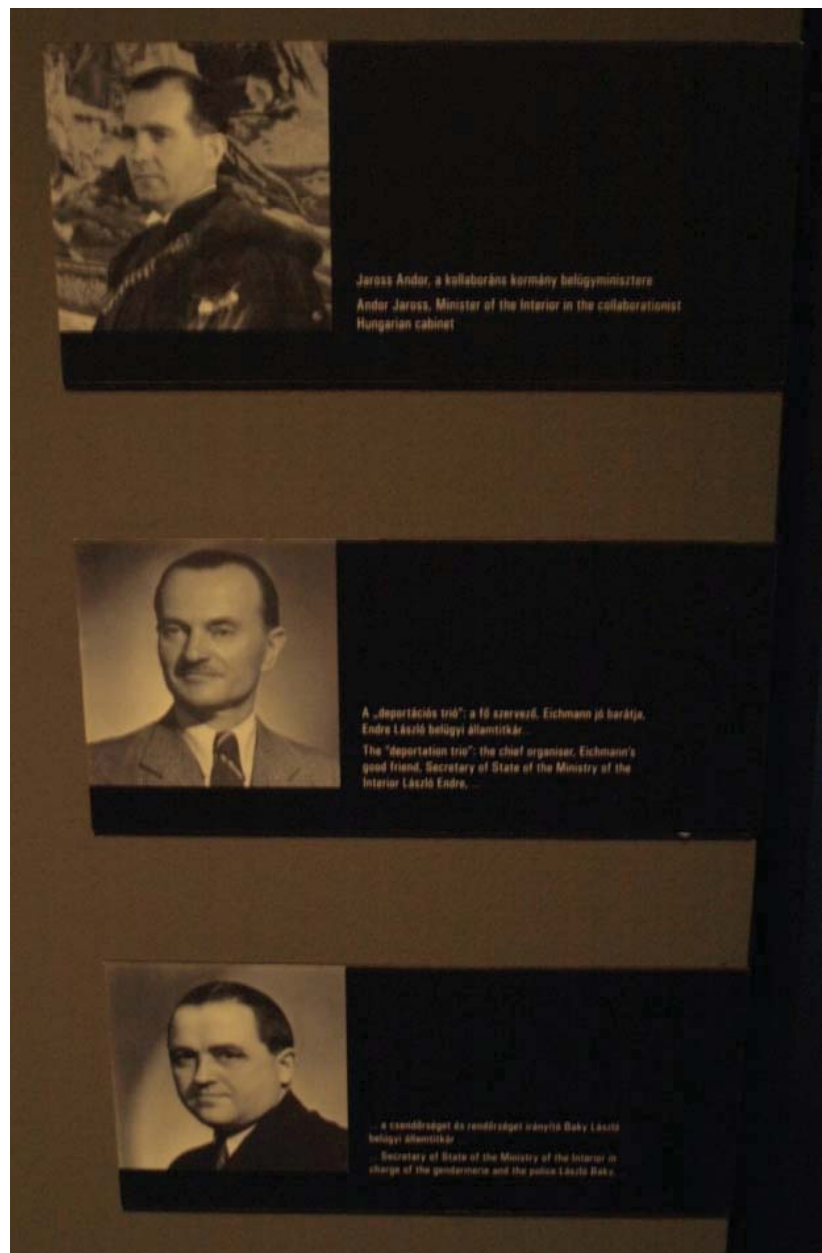


Photo no. 52: Portraits of Andor Jaross, László Endre and László Bakó in section 4.



Photo no. 53: Portrait of László Ferency in section 4.

The exhibition singles out these four individuals as the main Hungarian perpetrators of the Holocaust. They commanded several groups of people, also identified as responsible agents. The expository agent explicitly states that the gendarmerie, the police, the army and the administration participated in the persecutions.⁶³³ Everyone, “from cabinet members down to the lowliest clerk of the smallest village was actively engaged in organizing the despoliation and expulsion of Jews” in a disciplined manner, just as they had been since 1938.⁶³⁴ The cooperation of all these people was essential; the exhibition narrative states that the deportation of 437,000 Jews was only made possible by the “active, initiative-rich assistance and tireless work of the apparatus of the Hungarian police, gendarmerie and public administration numbering close to 200,000 persons.”⁶³⁵ The expository agent describes their violence in detail, emphasizing that many men acted on their own initiative.⁶³⁶ “(...) Many overzealous local police

⁶³³ The army is held responsible for the forced military labour units. The most detailed information on this is found in the panel “Forced military Labour Service, 1939-1942” in section 2. War crimes committed by the army are addressed in section 6, where a massacre in Novi Sad is described in text and images. Panel “Jewish victims before the occupation” in section 6.

⁶³⁴ Panel “The collaboration of Hungarian authorities with the Nazis” in section 4;

⁶³⁵ Panel “The collaboration of Hungarian authorities with the Nazis” in section 4; touchscreen “Deprived of Rights. The Disenfranchisement of the Roma” in section 2; opening Panel “Deprived of Human Dignity” section 5. On the willing participation of local officers see: Pók, “German, Hungarians and Hungarian Jewry.”

⁶³⁶ See, for example, the panel “After the German Occupation”; touchscreen “Deprived of Human Dignity. After the German Occupation”; touchscreen “The Terror in Ghettos and Collecting camps” all in section 5; panel “1944: Ghettoisation, Deportation” in section 4. Different localities and the atrocities committed there are listed, further emphasising regional responsibility. See, for example, the panel “The murders in Hungary” in section 6. With respect to the army, the exhibition states that soldiers had extreme freedom to punish and even execute men in the forced labour units. The guards added to the violence of their own accord. Executions are described on the touchscreen “The losses of forced Military Labourers” in section 6. Death in the military labour units is described in the panel “Jewish victims before the German Occupation” in section 6. The violence of the guards is presented, for example, in the statement that “Many guards hit, beat, kicked and spat at the Jews. In some instances, horses were unharnessed and forced military labourers were compelled to pull the carts, while the guards whipped them.” Touchscreen “Deprived of Human Dignity” in section 5.

or gendarmerie commanders and public officials acted against Jews with unusual rigor and vehemence even before 1944.”⁶³⁷

The representation of these groups of perpetrators differs from that of the individual officers responsible. The copy explicitly states the responsibility of the men carrying out the crimes, but offers few names or recognisable depictions of lower-level perpetrators.⁶³⁸ In the cases where perpetrators of lower rank are depicted, they appear within their units, as a combined agent. This is most visible in the photo installation in the walkway leading from the first to the second section. The installation shows 11 medium-sized photographs, lit consecutively for one to two seconds. The expository agent has ordered the photographs chronologically; presenting different victims and perpetrators. The perpetrator groups shown are the gendarmerie, the police, the military and Arrow Cross units. All of these men march towards the visitor (Photo no. 54). No information is provided about the groups; who they are or where they were photographed.⁶³⁹ Uniformed men march towards the visitor as history progresses towards murder. Here the expository agent symbolises the perpetrator groups as a totality; the single units on display stand for all those that are not.⁶⁴⁰ In this way the exhibition communicates that the commanding officers depicted in the portraits were individually responsible, while lower officials were responsible as members of their respective groups.

⁶³⁷ Panel “The collaboration of Hungarian authorities with the Nazis” in section 4. Similar: panel “The collaboration of Hungarian authorities with the Nazis” in section 4.

⁶³⁸ The exception to this are the two photos of General Ferenc Feketealmay-Czeydner and General Józef Grassy, both responsible for the massacre in Novi Sad. They are shown in half-portraits within the photo panel “Jewish victims before the German occupation” in section 6. A photo from the deportations of Jews in 1941 shows a gendarme, but there is no mention of him in the accompanying text and he is not the main focus in this representation. Large photo in section 4 after the panel “Restrictions of freedom before the German Occupation”. Similarly, another photo shows two military officers guarding a group of Jewish forced labourers. The two officers are visible, but their presence in the photo is not the subject focused upon by the photographer. The captions guide the visitor to look at the forced labourers rather than the guards. Photo within the panel “Forced Military labour service, 1939-1942” in section 2.

⁶³⁹ All these photos also appear elsewhere in the exhibition, mostly on the touchscreens where they are at least provided with captions. It is left to chance whether the visitor encounters the photos on the touchscreens and/or relates them to this installation.

⁶⁴⁰ The threat is directed against the victims, who are symbolised as painted on shadows on the walls of the walkway, the people walk in the same direction as the ideal visitor. This is one of the rare occasions that the ideal visitor is invited to identify with the victims.



Photo no. 54: Gendarmerie, police, army and Arrow Cross units shown in the walkway between sections 1 and 2.

3.5.3 Of thugs, villains and improper behaviour

Not all the agents presented in the Holocaust Emlékközpont are so orderly. When the exhibition comes to present the Arrow Cross movement the agents are vilified and criminalised. The members of the Arrow Cross acted individually and with brutal violence. The expository agent briefly outlines the Arrow Cross as the most important antisemitic movement in Hungary in section two.⁶⁴¹ The exhibition addresses the Arrow Cross mostly in section four, six and eight, the climax of the exhibition where, within the chronology, they also held power.

The self-presentations of the cabinet of Ferencz Szálasi's regime are similar to the representation of the political cabinets earlier in the exhibition. The photographs of Ferencz Szálasi and his cabinet show his move to appear legitimate. Distancing

⁶⁴¹ Film "Hungary 1918-1944" in section 2.

themselves from the old elite, the ministers of his cabinet are not laden with the traditional insignia of power; all but two wear civilian suits and ties, and the backgrounds are not imposing. Nonetheless the members of the cabinet appear as earnest politicians, as men who rightfully see and represent themselves in power.⁶⁴² Similarly, the photographs of the inauguration of Szálasi emphasise the legitimacy and regularity of the government.⁶⁴³ While showing Szálasi's own attempts to legitimise the regime, however, the exhibition presents the Arrow Cross rule as a "coup" or "takeover", distancing Szálasi's rule and marking it as illegitimate.⁶⁴⁴

The copy in the exhibition then clearly criminalises the Arrow Cross members. A panel in section four states "In Budapest, out-of-control Arrow Cross gangs assaulted Jews and shot them into the Danube in large numbers."⁶⁴⁵ The copy describes the same event in section six:

After the Arrow Cross coup, all hell broke loose in Budapest. Armed Arrow Cross thugs, some of them youngsters no more than 15 years old, carried out massacres in the streets of the capital. In the countryside, the situation was not much different.⁶⁴⁶

Words like 'thugs' and 'gang' define the Arrow Cross members as criminals; illegally-formed and dangerous groups, driven by base intentions. This criminalisation distances the members of the Arrow Cross from the general population. The youngest men may be excused as misguided youth, but most of the men involved are defined as brutal perpetrators who repeatedly killed and attacked Jews and Roma. Shooting people into the Danube was a "regular occurrence, as were ghetto raids and mass murders on open streets", Jews were "murdered indiscriminately" and many were "tortured to

⁶⁴² Photo "The Szálasi cabinet" in the panel "The Arrow Cross Rule" in section 4.

⁶⁴³ Photo "Ferenc Szálasi arriving to be inaugurated as 'Leader of the Nation'" and the photo "Army unit making the oath to Szálasi" in panel "The Arrow Cross Rule" in section 4.

⁶⁴⁴ Panel "The murders in Hungary" in section 6.

⁶⁴⁵ Panel "The Arrow Cross Rule" in section 4. Later the Arrow Cross members are regularly described as "thugs." Panel "The murders in Hungary" in section 6.

⁶⁴⁶ Panel "The murders in Hungary" in section 6. Nearly the same text is also on the touchscreen "Deprived of Life. The Murders in Hungary" in section 6. It is also during the Arrow Cross Rule that the "mass persecution of Hungarian Roma began", although here the actions of the Arrow Cross members are presented by the ordeals that Roma went through rather than by naming the perpetrators. Panel "The persecution of Roma" in section 4.

death in Arrow Cross houses”.⁶⁴⁷ The expository agent clearly spells out the brutal violence of the Arrow Cross. According to the exhibition, the members acted on their own initiative and free will. Here the expository agent does not affirm the dominant discourse that the Arrow Cross was a puppet government. Instead, Szálasi and the Arrow Cross members had their own intentions and tried to act independently where possible.⁶⁴⁸ Vilified, they are distanced from the ideal visitor and from regular state order, but they remain Hungarians nonetheless. Defined as criminals, they act accordingly; ignoring the shared humanity that otherwise would have protected their victims. This vilification is emphasised by images that show members smiling as they join the Death Head Legion, or proudly carrying guns even while wearing civilian clothing.⁶⁴⁹

Although it does not criminalise them, the exhibition presents the general population who benefited from the persecutions as dubious actors that behave improperly. The exhibition deals most extensively with the non-persecuted population in section three, but also touches upon it in section five and section seven. In the different sections the exhibition makes contradictory statements about the ways the population participated in the persecutions, and how the expository agent evaluates these. At times the population is seen to have participated in the persecutions, discriminated Jews and profited from their dispossession, at other points the exhibition presents the public as indifferent to events.

Having explained the growing antisemitism in section two, section three on the expropriation shows that the general population benefited from the disenfranchisement of the Jews, actively stealing their property.⁶⁵⁰ The exhibition depicts this eager

⁶⁴⁷ Panel “The murders in Hungary” in section 6.

⁶⁴⁸ Szálasi is shown to have been hesitant to deport the remaining Jews because he wanted to use them for forced labour. Panel “The Arrow Cross Rule” in section 4. After being persuaded to deport the Jews however, the Arrow Cross handed over “tens of thousands of Budapest Jews and forced labourers to the Nazis”. Panel “The Arrow Cross Rule” in section 4. The fact that forced labourers were deported is still little known and the HÉK is one of the few institutions that exposes these deportations. Panel “The Arrow Cross Rule” in section 4.

⁶⁴⁹ Photo wall on the Arrow Cross Rule in section 4.

⁶⁵⁰ Panel “The pauperization and despoilment of Hungarian Jews” in section 3; opening panel “Deprived of property” in section 3. The film about antisemitism discusses antisemitism as an ideology shared by an “increasing number of people” from the end of the 19th century onwards. Film “History of Antisemitism” after section 3. Unfortunately, the film is highly problematic. Aiming to show the history of Anti-Judaism it repeats Christian stereotypes of Jews and antisemitic images and caricatures are reiterated through the depictions. For example, the film implies that Jews voted for the crucifixion of Christ. Despite stating that since the 1960s the Vatican does not hold Jews responsible for this, the narrative since the 1960s it implicitly confirms this perspective when the

participation in the photographs titled “local population looting an evacuated ghetto in the countryside” (Photo no. 55).⁶⁵¹ The photographs show a large group of people going through personal belongings that have been left behind. The people smile as they carry away Jewish property, indicating the enthusiasm with which they participated in this.⁶⁵² The copy states that arable land was also taken over, and that non-Jews took control over firms, businesses and shops or moved into apartments formerly inhabited by Jews.⁶⁵³



Photo no. 55: Detail from the photo wall on the looting of Jewish property in section 3.

As the narrative continues the plundering of wealth is complemented by active participation in the persecutions. The fifth section shows how youth organisations prevented Jews from entering universities, journalists mocked Jews in newspapers and public debates, and attacks against the Jewish community, the Jewish religion and Jewish citizens are said to have happened on a daily basis long before 1938. The copy states that from 1938 onwards, every sector of Hungarian society contributed to the exclusion, discrimination and humiliation of Jews.⁶⁵⁴

narrator asks rhetorically: “On what basis can Jews living today be held responsible for a few dozen co-religionists, who allegedly “voted” for the death of Jesus centuries ago?”

⁶⁵¹ Photo panel in section 3 showing Jewish property in an evacuated ghetto. Photos of the looting are also shown on the touchscreen “Deprived of Property. Despoilment of Hungarian Jews after the German occupation” in section 3.

⁶⁵² A similar story is told for the Singer family, whose house was looted by the local population. Family history in section 3.

⁶⁵³ Most extensively: touchscreen “Deprived of Property. The Pauperization and Despoilment of Hungarian Jews, 1920-1944”; “Deprived of Property. The Despoilment of Hungarian Jews after the German Occupation;” panel “The Despoilment of Hungarian Jews after the German occupation” all in section 3. The panel “Pál Bárdos” in section 3 describes the expropriation of his property carried out largely by his neighbours. In section 3 the exhibition also shows several documents in which the expropriation is visible. These are in Hungarian only.

⁶⁵⁴ Panel “Everyday Humiliations”; touchscreen “Deprived of Human Dignity” both in section 5. Antisemitic posters, shop signs, graffiti and newspaper actions are shown as well as scenes of public humiliations. Touchscreen “Deprived of Human Dignity” in section 5.

Despite this active participation, elsewhere the exhibition characterises the population's behaviour as indifferent. The expository agent states that there were few examples of aid to Jews or Roma, resistance against the Holocaust, or even empathy with the suffering. In fact, "Most of the majority society looked upon the sufferings of their compatriots with indifference (...)." ⁶⁵⁵ According to this presentation, the suffering of the victims was simply not of interest to the majority of Hungarians. ⁶⁵⁶ The panels about responses list only a few people who tried to help, and clearly present them as a minority. ⁶⁵⁷ Describing the position towards Jews and Roma as indifferent is striking to say the least, and contradicts the other statements made in the exhibition about the general population. Indifference as an explanation fails where the exhibition shows the discriminations and humiliations of Jews, the right wing ideology and wide support for antisemitism, or the plundering of wealth. In all of these, the general population participated and can hardly be labelled as indifferent. ⁶⁵⁸ The exhibition narrative on the general population leaves the visitor with a contradictory image that oscillates between enthusiastic participation in the persecution and indifference towards it. ⁶⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the exhibition narrative represents the population, the Arrow Cross members, and the different government politicians as historical agents deeply involved in the persecutions. They act and are responsible for their actions. This agency opposes the lack of agency of the victims. Where the victims are passive and helpless, the perpetrators apparently have absolute power. Since the expository agent

⁶⁵⁵ "Most of the majority society looked upon the sufferings of their compatriots with indifference (...)" Opening panel "Responses" in section 7.

⁶⁵⁶ Generally the non-Jewish population were quick to inform upon Jews, particularly in the countryside, while a little more help was offered to them in Budapest. Braham, "The Holocaust in Hungary," 40.

⁶⁵⁷ Touchscreen "Responses of the Gentiles. The Responses of the Churches" in section 7; panels on rescuers in the synagogue; panel "Responses of Gentiles" in section 7. Braham believes that the better support in Budapest was because the city offered more possibilities to aid persecuted Jews. It was also clear by then that the war was lost and that the Red Army was approaching fast. Braham, "The Holocaust in Hungary," 40.

⁶⁵⁸ This active participation is not explored and one contradiction seems to be that the expository agent only portrays denunciation of Jews as participation in the persecution. The copy in section 7 states: "(...) there were no pogroms in Hungary, and only a relatively small part of Gentile society participated actively in the persecution of Jews by reporting Jewish individuals to the authorities". Panel "Responses of Gentiles" in section 7.

⁶⁵⁹ How the population behaved towards the Roma is even less clear. In general, the copy denies that the general population had racist attitudes towards the Roma. The expository agent downplays racism, declaring it to be non-existent in the general population or states that only some people held "negative feelings" towards Roma. Panel "The persecution of Roma" in section 4.

constructs historical agency only for the perpetrators and not for the victims, action itself is condemned. Agency – be it orderly and legitimate, carried out by the state forces; or vilified and chaotic, enacted by lower ranking members of society – is presented in the Holokauszt Emlékközpont as a problem. The exhibition of the Holokauszt Emlékközpont constructs a model of historical agency in which only those in power have the ability to act; and they use this agency, abusing their power, murdering their victims.

3.5.4 Death sentences close open questions

The exhibition represents the perpetrators as historical agents who are responsible for their own actions. With this responsibility comes the question of how the Hungarian society dealt with it after 1945. The expository agent addresses this in the eighth section, dealing with the trials of the main perpetrators. The small section briefly discusses the liberation of Jews and Roma and then turns to the trials against the Stzójay and Szálasi regimes. In the section “Calling to Account” the legal proceedings against the perpetrators are described in detail. The opening panel declares that “Most of the chief war criminals were brought before peoples’ courts and convicted,”⁶⁶⁰ while another panel summarises:

By the end of 1948, legal proceedings had been initiated against 60,000 persons, who were charged with war crimes or crimes against humanity. 27,000 individuals were convicted by the people’s courts and 146 persons were executed.⁶⁶¹

The first photograph accompanying this copy shows Döme Sztójay and four other men from his cabinet at the people’s court on March 22nd 1946, the second and third evidence Ferenc Szálasi’s and László Endre’s public hanging (Photo no. 56).⁶⁶²

⁶⁶⁰ Opening panel “Liberation and calling into account” in section 8.

⁶⁶¹ Panel “Calling to Account” in section 8.

⁶⁶² The men with Stzójay are Jenő Rátz, Lajos Reményi-Schneller and Lajos Szász. Panel “Calling to Account” in section 8. The touchscreen also presents photos as visual evidence that the main leaders were interned and that the proclaimed death sentences were carried out. Touchscreen “Calling to Account” in section 8.



Photo no. 56: Panel “Calling to Account” and accompanying photos showing the hangings of Ferenc Szálasi and László Endre in section 8.

The touchscreen then gives additional information on the legal proceedings and shows videos from the investigations and trials of the cabinet leaders, as well as one video about the main trial against war criminals in Nuremberg.⁶⁶³ The visitor learns that the government executed most of the ministers of the Sztójay and Szálasi cabinets and emphasises that László Endre, László Baky and László Ferenczy – discussed in detail in section four – were sentenced to death for organising the deportations. The display only focuses on the high-ranking perpetrators within the Sztójay and Szálasi cabinets.⁶⁶⁴ This representation suggests that after 1945 the Hungarian state sentenced all the individuals previously identified by the exhibition as autonomous agents responsible for death crimes. The implication is that every perpetrator

⁶⁶³ Touchscreen “Bárdossy Trial”, “Imrédy Trial”, Szálasi Trial”, “Endre – Baky – Jaross Trial”, Sztójay Trial” in section 8. The video on Nuremberg shows footage from the main trial and lists the people tried and their sentences. Touchscreen “Nuremberg Trials, 1946” in section 8.

⁶⁶⁴ The narrative ignores the Horthy regime, the executive organs and the general population. These groups were largely not called to account after 1945, a fact that the exhibition does not address. Fritz, Hansen. “Zwischen nationalem Opfermythos,” 81. By not contextualising the people’s courts, the expository agent presents the processes as legitimate juristic trials, hiding the problematic proceedings, later revisions, rehabilitations and reintegrations. Together with the missing representations of antisemitism and racism after 1945 in Hungary, the exhibition ultimately fails to offer an adequate representation of the post-war order.

shown later paid with his life for the crimes committed, and that Hungary came to terms with its collective responsibilities from the past.

The exhibition shows the crimes, those that committed them, and identifies Hungarian perpetrators by name. Their responsibility is clearly stated. The narrative of historical agents then ends with death. After 1945, the Hungarian government found them responsible and made the perpetrators pay for their crimes. Thus, the expository agent closes the narrative about the active perpetrators in the same way as that about the passive victims: with deaths. This resolves the story of the Holocaust and closes its narrative seamlessly, enabling Hungary to enter into the post-war era unburdened with baggage from the Holocaust. Death on all sides solves open questions.⁶⁶⁵

3.6 Conclusion

Before leaving the basement and the main exhibition area, the visitor cannot help but see a large video projection, presenting scenes from different concentration camps filmed after their liberation. The film portrays the horror of all camps; this universality is emphasised by a map within the film that is filled up by concentration camp sites. The film shows the former sites: the crematoria, the gas chambers, and the barracks. It shows the dead victims: corpses stacked, moved with machinery, piled up on top of each other on the ground or in mass graves; unburied and naked bodies, deformed and haggard.⁶⁶⁶ The film also depicts the survivors: walking alongside barbed wire, sitting on the ground, kissing the hands of their liberators or staring blankly into the camera. Most of them are clothed, if only minimally. Finally, the film shows the soldiers and liberators and those who came to witness the horrors of the camps.⁶⁶⁷ It is probable that the visitor will recognise some of the camps, especially the main camp in Auschwitz, from the aerial photographs shown at the beginning or the famous gate of

⁶⁶⁵ This positive outcome in 1948 is ruined when "another dictatorship and continuing oppression were to be the fate of the population of Hungary, whether they were Jews, Gentiles, Roma or Non-Roma". The antagonism between the former victims and former perpetrators is dissolved, as they are unified under a new oppression targeting them irrespective of previous categorisations. Opening panel "Liberation and calling into account" in section 8.

⁶⁶⁶ For a concise overview of the films shot in the liberated concentration camps see: Weckel, *Beschämende Bilder*.

⁶⁶⁷ On photographs and film showing the event of witnessing: Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, 100-106.

Auschwitz I. No information, no caption, no explanatory panel accompanies the video. The visitor is not informed about what the film shows specifically, who shot the footage, for whom, or for what reasons. The expository agent does not indicate how or why the footage was edited, or who owns and uses it today.

The video is a final contemplation of the narrative shown before. It summarises the general message of the exhibition at the Holokauszt Emlékközpont. The exhibition presents a closed story of suffering. Constructing the universal victim through the Jews, the exhibition presents the Jewish victims as dead, passive and silent, stripped of agency. Where not (yet) dead, the victims remain unworldly and hard to know. That most representations depict women, children and older people emphasises their lack of agency and feminises victimhood. The individual stories of victims, their reactions to the persecution and their active struggles against it are largely invisible. Neither how the survivors lived after 1945, nor how they reintegrated into post-war Hungary are addressed. According to the exhibition at the Holokauszt Emlékközpont, the Holocaust is a tragedy beyond comparison and, since the victims are dead or absent, the only possible response is to commemorate them.

This final video does not show the perpetrators, even though the exhibition has represented them repeatedly. Instead it shows the effects of the perpetrators' actions: their victims. Up until this point, however, a great deal of information on the perpetrators has been conveyed. The exhibition confronts the perpetrators as men who willingly targeted their victims, who brutally, and in part zealously murdered Jews and Roma. Excluding women, the expository agent assigns agency in the Holocaust to men only. According to the exhibition, the perpetrators are men fully aware of themselves and their actions. They are personally responsible, be it as politicians or commanding officers, as criminals or as the population benefitting from the persecution. Through this representation the exhibition constructs a specific model of historical agency: one in which agency itself is associated with the perpetrators. To act means to be associated with murder; thus agency itself appears to be problematic. For the deployment of their agency the perpetrators were tried and found guilty after 1945. The exhibition implies that the main perpetrators paid for their crimes with their lives. Once dead the perpetrators, just like their victims, disappear – leaving Hungary restored and ready for a new beginning.

Iconic images or scenes that reference iconic images dominate in the video just as they do elsewhere in the exhibition. The Holocaust Emlékközpont uses primary sources, predominantly photographs or film footage, to illustrate the exhibition narrative. In most cases the copy defines how the ideal visitor should interpret the primary sources displayed. The sources, for example the photographs, are used to illustrate a narrative that rarely relates to their qualities as sources. The captions that accompany them might label an event documented, but more often provide information that is not depicted or not visible in the source. The exhibition does not contextualise the primary sources as such. The expository agent hides the historicity of primary sources, their genealogy from the moment of their production until the present day. The content, perspective, and different usages of the primary sources remain equally unspecified. The expository agent conveys neither the limitation of the sources as representations of history, nor the wealth of information that they do offer.

This mode of representation allows a functional, instrumental use of the primary sources, which is an accepted display practice worldwide, but nonetheless a problematic one. The Holocaust Emlékközpont uses the primary sources to help define the universal victim as Jewish, helpless and passive. It also uses the sources to depict Roma victims as dubious Others embodying stereotypical qualities. Finally, the expository agent displays primary sources to represent the perpetrators as autonomous men of power. These are the interpretations of the expository agent, as justified as they may be. The functional representation of the primary sources enables and prove this interpretation. The illustrative representation, in which the source only depicts the narrative, hides the specificity of each primary source and therefore its unique qualities by which the source can inform about the past. The primary sources, for example the visual material, carry abundant messages about the Holocaust; messages about bodies, gender or class constructions; and also about the practises and traditions of using primary sources to depict the Holocaust. These messages however, are largely muted by the display mode. The visitor is too poorly informed about the primary sources she sees to be able to engage with them and the interpretations presented on a deeper level.

Apart from the missing contextualization of the primary sources, the illustrative mode of representation also hides the speech act of the expository agent. The voice of the expository agent is authoritative and presents an all-knowing, ostensibly objective

perspective. The exhibition presents a true story that begins with the Golden Times before the persecutions, reaches a climax with the Holocaust, and closes with the deaths of victims and perpetrators. To present such an authoritative narrative, the exhibition hides the historiography on which it is based. The expository agent clearly favours international research on the Holocaust in Hungary over the dominant discourse usually found in museums in Hungary, but neither of the two discursive formations are explicitly referred to. Instead, the expository agent presents the chosen narrative of the Holocaust as authoritative truth.

There are many positive components within the interpretation of the expository agent of the Holokauszt Emlékközpont, and the attempts to counter the discourse dominant in Hungary. This is done by referencing international Holocaust historiography. The expository agent makes a significant effort to portray the history of the Holocaust, the two large victim groups of Jews and Roma, and the explicit actions of the perpetrators; thus representing themes found in Holocaust representations worldwide. Addressing the discriminations, exclusions, expropriations and the murder consecutively, the expository agent has based the narrative on an internationally accepted chronology, omitting only the time after 1945 and memory constructions. Displaying these topics is a benchmark within Hungary, particularly important at a time when racism and antisemitism are on the rise again. The expository agent at the Holokauszt Emlékközpont also attempts to counter contemporary antisemitic, racist, and exculpatory discourses. The museum presents Jews as Hungarian, and the Holocaust as a topic relevant to non-Jews. It also does not blame the crimes in Hungary on the German occupation and a few Arrow Cross members, but relates them to Hungarian society. For the expository agent Roma are sufficiently significant that their life and suffering is worth mentioning. Their murder is condemned; sadly an exception in Hungary today. In all these respects the exhibition represents alternative narratives to the dominant discourse and does so successfully.

Despite these positive components, the narrative presented has several shortcomings. The racist stereotypes displayed of Roma are the most obvious, but not the only problem. A further shortcoming is the way in which the exhibition constructs subject positions of Jews; creating a homogenous victim group characterised solely by their suffering. This representation subjects Jews to a second victimisation, in which

their personal perspectives and their own agency is rendered invisible. Instead of giving space to their views, the expository agent presents them through the gaze of the perpetrators. This gaze is all the more penetrating for the expository agent's failure to contextualise the primary sources displayed, especially the perpetrator photographs, and structure of the exhibition narrative that follows the perpetrators' actions.

4 Presenting agency: Holocaust representations in Italy

4.1 The past in the present: the Holocaust in Italy between externalisation and integration into national history

In Italy the Holocaust is represented by small institutions only, but several of these can be found across the country. The *Museo della Deportazione* (Museum of Deportation) in Prato is one of them; another is the *Museo Diffuso* (which roughly translates as the Comprehensive Museum) in Turin. Part of the *Centro di Documentazione della Deportazione e Resistenza* (Documentation Centre of Deportation and Resistance), the permanent exhibition at the Museo della Deportazione includes several objects taken from the forced labour camp in Ebensee, Austria. The exhibition, which presents the period from 1943 to 1945, commemorates the Italians deported to different concentration camps in Europe. The centre also supports research, housing a small library on the Holocaust, and organises commemorative programmes. By contrast, since its exhibition is not devoted exclusively to the Holocaust, the *Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, della Deportazione, della Guerra, dei Diritti e della Libertà* (Comprehensive museum of resistance, deportations, war, human rights and freedom), addresses the Holocaust as one topic among others.⁶⁶⁸ Its permanent exhibition narrates the history of Turin between 1938 and 1948 using multimedia presentations; mainly film clips and video interviews. Two to three temporary exhibitions accompany the permanent one every year and often focus on the Second World War, the resistance or the Holocaust. The Museo Diffuso also organises guided tours of Turin that look at sites of memory in the city.⁶⁶⁹

Analysing the presentation of material objects in the permanent exhibitions of the Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso, I will examine how these two museums mediate knowledge about the Holocaust. Looking at the generalisations made by both institutions, I show how the Museo della Deportazione conceptualises

⁶⁶⁸ For easier readability, I will abbreviate the museum's name to Museo Diffuso.

⁶⁶⁹ The city sites are marked by small plaques that were commissioned by the expository agent of the Museo Diffuso. Museo Diffuso, "I luoghi della memoria," <http://www.museodiffusotorino.it/LuoghiDellaMemoria> (accessed January 10th 2014).

the victims as representatives of humanity, while the Museo Diffuso incites its ideal visitor to become politically engaged. I then turn to the use of first person narratives in both museums, analysing how they construct historical agency through the use of testimonies. The Museo della Deportazione's use of quotations from survivors represents the former concentration camp prisoners as historical agents, while the video interviews presented in the Museo Diffuso's attribute agency to every person in both past and present.

Both The Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso are examples of the Italian tradition of representing memory of the resistance. This tradition was modified in the 1990s and now includes the Shoah as a distinctive topic. While the dominant representations of the Holocaust have changed significantly since then, the new mode of representing the Holocaust has not yet become fixed. This is why I chose to analyse two museums instead of one. Each museum exhibition represents a variation of the dominant discourse, and both are currently relevant in Italy. The Museo della Deportazione assigns moral authority to the victims of the Holocaust, largely discussing them together as one group. Its exhibition is close to traditional representations of the resistance. The Museo Diffuso represents the Shoah as an integrated component of Italian history without merging its different victims together. It presents a plural perspective on diverse people within Italian society, one in which victims, perpetrators and spectators are all represented. The two museums also differ in that the Museo della Deportazione is dedicated exclusively to the Holocaust while the Museo Diffuso encompasses a wider narrative within which the Holocaust is integrated. Because both of these permanent exhibitions are relatively small, as are many Holocaust representations in Italy, it is possible for me to analyse two exhibitions without being obliged to disregard substantial parts of the representations.

4.1.1 Coming to terms with the past: the impact of the Holocaust in Italy after 1945

While Jewish lives were not targeted directly in Italy until the German occupation in September 1943, the fascist regime did discriminate against Jews.⁶⁷⁰ After the

⁶⁷⁰ A very detailed analysis of the persecution of Jews in Italy, in English, is provided by Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy. From Equality to Persecution*, trans. by John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006). In Italian: Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2000). Another good English account,

fascist regime established itself in October 1922, Mussolini positioned Catholicism above all other religions, discriminating Jewish religious practices.⁶⁷¹ Religious discrimination gave way to more biologically-based arguments in the 1930s, when discussions about racial differences came to the fore. The racist perspectives of the fascist regime are particularly visible in its policies towards the Italian colonies, the colonial war in Ethiopia from 1935-1936, and propaganda about the colonised.⁶⁷² Colonial racism combined with an increasingly antisemitic position that, together with the tightening ties between Germany and Italy, led to the racial laws in 1938. Constituted of several legislative and administrative acts, the racial laws defined Jews in Italy as a separate race, considered to be hostile and dangerous to Italians, who in turn were defined as Aryan. The state prepared the decrees in the beginning of the year 1938, passed them in the following summer and enacted them subsequently.⁶⁷³ The laws disrupted all elements of Jewish life, discriminating and excluding Italian Jews in the economic, social and cultural sphere. The regime expelled or interned any Jews that it declared foreign.⁶⁷⁴ The goal of the persecutions was the emigration of all Jews from Italy.

Until summer 1943, however, the fascists did not target the lives of Italian Jews.⁶⁷⁵ The systematic murder of Jews in Italy began when Germany occupied northern and central Italy after Marshal Pietro Badoglio announced the armistice between the Kingdom of Italy and the Allies on September 8th 1943. With few Jews living in the

first published in 1987, is: Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust. Persecution, Rescue and Survival* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

- ⁶⁷¹ Benito Mussolini held antisemitic views but did not develop these into actual policy moves in his early years of office. The *Partito Nazionale Fascista* had an antisemitic wing, but was not itself fully antisemitic. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 15, 42-43.
- ⁶⁷² Colonial racism had been deeply embedded in Italy since at least the turn of the 19th century, and was of central importance to the fascist Regime from 1925. The first explicitly racist law enacted for Eritrea and Somalia was introduced in 1933. These legislations and the discussions that accompanied them informed the climate within which, shortly afterwards, Jews were defined as a separate race. Racist laws were issued in Italy in 1936 and 1937. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolin's Italy*, 73, 99, 109-110.
- ⁶⁷³ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolin's Italy*, 125-141. On Italy's fascist colonial politics, see: Gabriele Schneider, *Mussolini in Afrika. Die faschistische Rassenpolitik in den italienischen Kolonien 1936-1941* (Köln: SH, 2000).
- ⁶⁷⁴ Jews were expelled from public positions, education and cultural spheres; were separated from non-Jews by prohibition of mixed marriages; economic livelihood was subsequently curtailed and aryanisation happened; while foreign Jews were expelled from Italy or interned. Forced labour was imposed in some cases but did not form a consistent policy. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolin's Italy*, 144-161.
- ⁶⁷⁵ The fascist regime, entering the war in June 1940, is responsible for war crimes and persecutions that the Italian army committed outside of Italy, especially in Eastern Europe. See, for example: Constantino Di Sante, *Italia senza onore. I crimmi in Jugoslavia e i processi negati (1941-1951)* (Verona: Ombre corte, 2005).

south, most Jews in north-central Italy came under the jurisdiction of the Germans occupying the country, and deadly persecution began immediately. The Jews, who the fascist regime had already identified, registered and impoverished, were now arrested, murdered, interned and deported by German forces.⁶⁷⁶ On September 23rd 1943 Mussolini established a new fascist government, the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (Italian Social Republic), also called the Republic of Salò.⁶⁷⁷ The Republic of Salò pursued its own anti-Jewish policies from November 1943 onwards, arresting Jews and seizing their property parallel to the German persecution.⁶⁷⁸ Italians within north-central took diverse positions. Some supported the Republic of Salò and aided in the persecutions, waited for the war to end, or actively resisted. A significant number of soldiers opposed the occupational regime, many of whom were arrested by the Germans. A large number of Italians joined the resistance or partisan groups fighting against the German occupation and the fascist forces. Furthermore, many Jews in Italy did survive in hiding or were liberated by the approaching Allies and the resistance uprisings before the liberation. The horrendous fate of those interned, massacred or deported however cannot be treated lightly, and the high number of those that survived is partly due to the progress of the war and the shortness of the time that the occupational regime ruled Italy.⁶⁷⁹

When the war ended the fact that there had been a wide resistance deeply affected Italian memory culture of the war and the Holocaust. As a result, Italy is unique

⁶⁷⁶ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 183-187.

⁶⁷⁷ This name results from the fact that the seat of the government, de jure located in Rome, was de facto in Salò.

⁶⁷⁸ While Italian fascist certainly targeted the Jews, a more cautious policy than in Germany was enacted towards Jews considered foreign, elderly, gravely ill, or Jews defined as having mixed blood. Sarfatti argues that the Republic of Salò aided in the German deportations but never formally acknowledged that it did so. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 187-193.

⁶⁷⁹ Overall, approx. 43,000 Jews were in north-central Italy in September 1943. Of these approx. 8,000 were killed on the peninsula or deported. 91% of all deportees were sent to Auschwitz, where only a very small fraction (9% of those that arrived there) survived. 29,000 survived in hiding, of which roughly 1,000 joined the resistance. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 179, 200-201, 207. The statistics come from research by Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)*, 3rd revised ed. (Milan: Mursia, 2002). Some Holocaust historians have cited the high number of survivors to downplay the Holocaust in Italy, and Italian responsibility for it. Michelle Sarfatti and others oppose such a position, arguing that victims should be treated with more respect, and that the comparatively low percentage of victims cannot be credited to Italy or to the fascist regime. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, xi.

in that Holocaust representations have always been dependent on the commemoration of the resistance and the memory of fascism.⁶⁸⁰ For a long time remembrance of Holocaust victims was subsumed within the commemoration of the resistance. In these commemorations the cause of the suffering experienced by the resistance and the victims of racial persecutions was often attributed exclusively to the German forces. Recognition of Italian responsibility for the Holocaust was hindered by reticence to acknowledge that the two fascist regimes had also committed severe crimes.

Despite this the rough timeline of how Italy came to terms with the Holocaust is in keeping with the timeline of Europe in general. Directly after 1945 resistance fighters commemorated their own history – largely from a left-wing perspective. After this initial outburst of commemorations, an anti-communist sentiment became dominant in Italy which effectively marginalised the former resistance fighters and silenced debates about the resistance and the Holocaust. Holocaust commemoration re-emerged as a topic of some importance in the Italian society in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s scholars, intellectuals, individual survivors and regional activists paid increased attention to the Holocaust. In the 1990s, narratives about collaboration and co-operation also emerged. Reaching mass awareness in the 1990s, most of the population now generally commemorates the Holocaust and accepts Italian responsibility for it.

The resistance movement and its interpretation are crucial to understanding post-war developments in Italy. As in Hungary and Austria, Italians after 1945 tried to free the nation from the burden that Italy's former close alliance with Germany posed to the new Republic. The German occupation and the resistance against it enabled people to address the past without confronting the legacy of the fascist regime. From 1943 to 1945, the monarchic regime of Badoglio, the Allies and the various resistance groups had already been propagating the image of an Italian population in full support of the resistance, which would liberate the country. At that time the goal was to use this image to raise support for the resistance against the Germans.⁶⁸¹ After

⁶⁸⁰ Claudio Fogu gives an excellent overview of the different phases of memory in Italy. Claudio Fogu, "Italiana brava gente. The Legacy of fascist Historical Culture on Italian Politics of Memory," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. by Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham/London: Duke University, 2006), 147-176.

⁶⁸¹ Filippo Focadi compellingly shows how the founding myth emerged in Italy. Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale*, Edizione digitale (Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 2013).

1945 Italians were quick to propagate this image further. That the resistance had been supported by the entire Italian population and had liberated the nation from German oppression became the founding myth of the Italian Republic. Politicians and intellectuals used this myth to externalise Italian responsibility for the Holocaust to the Germans, which helped them to reach a favourable peace treaty and to unite the nation under one identity, securing the First Republic and its constitution.

After 1945 members of the resistance, as well as of the political opposition in general, remained politically active and were eager to shape the new Italian nation. The different groups that had been victimised during the occupation mobilised themselves, either directly after the war or in the 1950s. Survivors' organisations aided their members after their return to Italy, represented their interests and very often engaged actively in memory projects of various kinds.⁶⁸² The *Centro di documentazione ebraica contemporanea* (Centre for Contemporary Jewish Research), founded in 1955, played a significant role in initiating commemorations of the Shoah. Camp survivors who had been persecuted for their political beliefs established the *Associazione nazionale degli ex-deportati politici* (ANED), while most partisans and resistance fighters came together in the *Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia* (ANPI) and the *Federazione d'Italiana Associazioni Partigiane* (FIAP). Soldiers who had become Prisoners of War formed the *Associazione Nazionale Reduci dalla Prigionia* (ANRP). All these associations produced their own print communications, established archives and instigated exhibitions and memorials. The commemorations focused on the time after 1943, the time during which most members of the respective groups had been victimised.

Prosecutions after 1945 also focused on the time of the occupation. Attempts to remove former fascists from influential positions, and prosecutions of crimes committed by Italians were hesitant, unconvincing and half-hearted.⁶⁸³ The British forces stationed in Italy prosecuted the highest-ranking perpetrators while Italian courts tried

⁶⁸² A brief overview on the different organisations is given by Robert S. C. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture 1944-2010* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2012), 28-31; Marcello Pezzetti and Sara Berger, "Erinnerungsräume in Italien," *Dachauer Hefte* 25 (2009): 190-205, 199.

⁶⁸³ Hans Woller, "Der Rohstoff des kollektiven Gedächtnisses. Die Abrechnung mit dem Faschismus in Italien und ihre erfahrungsgeschichtliche Dimension," in *Erinnerungskulturen: Deutschland, Italien und Japan seit 1945*, ed. by Christoph Cornelißen, Lutz Klinkhammer, and Wolfgang Schwentker (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 2003), 67-76, 70; Mirco Dondi, "The Fascist Mentality after Fascism," in

the lower level perpetrators. Despite a large number of investigations, the military and the lay courts made few prosecutions and passed even fewer sentences. The prosecutions of the lay courts ended in 1946 and convicts were released from prisons soon after.⁶⁸⁴ Reintegration of the fascists began in 1946 when the government passed a first general amnesty.⁶⁸⁵ With the Cold War, attempts to remove fascists from influential positions in society ceased completely. Most fascists remained in their former positions and the crimes committed before 1943 were downplayed.⁶⁸⁶ Further amnesties led to the discharge of all prisoners by 1953, as well as acts of pardon for those who had evaded prosecution.⁶⁸⁷ Many former fascists joined the new political parties, even the communist party. While the Constitution forbade a fascist party, it tolerated the neo-fascists who formed the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI). Votes for the MSI show that a significant number of people continued to subscribe to fascist values.⁶⁸⁸ With right wing advocates seated in state positions as well as in the military, potential openings for liberal or left wing values were effectively blocked.⁶⁸⁹

With anti-communism at its height and a national focus on consolidation and growth, neither the resistance nor the Holocaust was given significant attention in Italy in the 1950s.⁶⁹⁰ Individual books, films and other cultural productions dealt with it, but the general population remembered the war and Italian soldiers. Commemorations focused upon the defeat of the Italian army in 1942 and the retreat from the Don

Italian Fascism. History, Memory and Representation, ed. by R.J.B. Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani (London: MacMillan, 1999), 141-160, 143.

⁶⁸⁴ An English overview of the trials for war crimes is given by Filippo Focardi and Lutz Klinkhammer, "The question of Fascist Italy's war crimes. The construction of a self-acquitting myth," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9 (2004), 330-348.

⁶⁸⁵ Pierluca Azzaro, "Kampf der Erinnerungen," in *Mythen der Nationen. 1945 – Arena der Erinnerung*, ed. by Monika Flacke (Berlin: Deutsche Historisches Museum, 2004), 343-372, 350.

⁶⁸⁶ Woller, "Der Rohstoff," 72.

⁶⁸⁷ For more detail see: Filippo Focardi, "Das Kalkül des 'Bumerangs'. Politik und Rechtsfragen im Umgang mit deutschen Kriegsverbrechen in Italien," in *Transnationale Vergangenheitspolitik. Der Umgang mit deutschen Kriegsverbrechern in Europa nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. by Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 536-566.

⁶⁸⁸ Dondi, "The Fascist Mentality," 148-154. The MSI was founded in 1946 by former fascists who had been active in both the Republic of Salò and fascism before 1943, and hoped to re-establish fascism in Italy.

⁶⁸⁹ Dondi, "The Fascist Mentality," 155.

⁶⁹⁰ Kerstin von Lingen, "'Giorni di Gloria' Wiedergeburt der italienischen Nation in der Resistenza," in *Kriegserfahrung und nationale Identität in Europa nach 1945. Erinnerung, Säuberungsprozesse und nationales Gedächtnis*, ed. by Kerstin von Lingen (Paderborn/München/Wien/Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 289-408, 402.

in winter 1942/43. Telling the tragic story of soldiers' sufferings, veteran organisations and the families of the fallen bemoaned the loss of the Italian soldiers and turned a blind eye to those men's participation in murderous acts in the colonial wars or on the Eastern front.⁶⁹¹ Towards the end of the 1950s, however, the Holocaust emerged as a topic, especially in literature. This foreshadowed the growing attention to the Holocaust in the 1960s, when it became a recognised topic in Italy.⁶⁹² International debates, such as the trial of Adolf Eichmann or the broadcast of the *Holocaust* mini-series were received in Italy, but did not lead to a discussion about Italian responsibility. The established externalisation of responsibility to the Germans prevented the debates from developing in this direction.⁶⁹³

The image of a nationwide resistance that liberated Italy from the German occupation became increasingly fixed in the 1960s. In the years that followed, this image became a dominant paradigm. Striving to legitimise its own values, the centre-left government asserted the belief that all Italians had shared an anti-fascist consensus before 1945.⁶⁹⁴ It portrayed the resistance as the second Risorgimento, equating the resistance with the national movement that had united Italy as a nation by 1870. It was claimed that the resistance had united the Italian nation under antifascist and democratic ideals. Politicians, intellectuals and former resistance fighters repeatedly told similar narratives about the resistance, affirming the tropes and effectively creating a paradigm of the resistance.⁶⁹⁵ Numerous books published on the resistance celebrated this founding myth of Italy. Such works usually praised a particular resistance group or region, favouring heroic tales that painted a positive picture of the resistance. Scholars ignored the fascist regime as it had existed pre-1943, and attention to the Republic

⁶⁹¹ Thomas Schlemmer, "La 'memoria mutilata' Krieg und Faschismus im Gedächtnis Italiens nach 1945," in *Besatzung, Widerstand und Erinnerung in Italien, 1943-1945*, ed. by Bernd Heidenreich (Wiesbaden: Hessische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2010), 127-142, 134. Public commemoration of the army still does not recognise these topics.

⁶⁹² Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 56-63.

⁶⁹³ Emiliano Perra, "Narratives of Innocence and Victimhood: the Reception of the miniseries *Holocaust* in Italy," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22, no. 3 (2008): 441-440. On the Eichmann trial see: Emiliano Perra, *Conflicts of Memory. The Reception of Holocaust Films and TV Programmes in Italy, 1945 to the Present* (Oxford/Bern/Berlin: Peter Lang, 2010), 15.

⁶⁹⁴ Lutz Klinkhammer, "Der neue 'Antifaschismus' des Gianfranco Fini. Überlegungen zur italienischen Vergangenheitspolitik der letzten beiden Jahrzehnte," in *Italien, Blicke. Neue Perspektiven der italienischen Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Petra Terhoeven (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 257-280, 263.

⁶⁹⁵ Massimo Baioni, "I musei del Risorgimento, santuari laici dell'Italia liberale," *Passato e presente* 29 (1993): 57-86.

of Salò was marginal. The fascists of the Republic of Salò remained in consciousness only as stereotypes: a few brutal individuals, since vilified, who had aided the Germans. Academic research focused almost exclusively on the armed resistance against the fascists and did not study fascist values, their impact on the population or their continuity after 1945.⁶⁹⁶

The imagined antifascist consensus harmonised different political positions but remained political fiction. In the 1970s, attacks on it became severe and succeeded in rupturing the consensus by the 1980s. Terrorism from right and left challenged the narratives that emphasised the unity of the Italian nation.⁶⁹⁷ Parallel to these challenges, the political parties formed new alliances, one main outcome of which was the slow integration of the neo-fascists into political power.⁶⁹⁸ Each political group now told their own narratives about the resistance. The communist party championed the red resistance, challenging the interpretation of the resistance as a second Risorgimento. The student movement emphasised the revolutionary elements within the resistance, and proposed to reclaim the goals of the resistance that had been betrayed after 1945.⁶⁹⁹ The centre-right also portrayed the resistance as revolutionary, but attempted to mark the left wing legacy as corrupt and portrayed the resistance as people enacting terror. The right itself worked to negate the condemnation of the Republic of Salò and its supporters, hoping to normalise fascism.

As a result of the diversity of these narratives, memory of the resistance was fiercely contested in the 1980s and 1990s.⁷⁰⁰ Right-wing and conservative historians, with Renzo De Felice at the forefront, sought to redefine perspectives on the fascist regime. Renzo De Felice called for recognition of the positive elements of fascism. Arguing that significant differences could be distinguished between Italian fascism and

⁶⁹⁶ Lutz Klinkhammer, "Der Resistenza-Mythos und Italiens faschistische Vergangenheit," in *Sieger und Besiegte. materielle und ideelle Neuorientierungen nach 1945*, ed. by Holger Afflerbach and Christoph Cornelißen (Tübingen: Francke, 1997), 119-139, 128-135; Dondi, "The Fascist Mentality," 141.

⁶⁹⁷ Perra, *Conflicts of Memory*, 414-415; Azzaro, "Kampf der Erinnerungen," 355.

⁶⁹⁸ The first political group to working with the neo-fascists were the Christian Democrats in the 1960s; in the 1980s the socialists continued their integration, a course that has been fully embraced by Berlusconi.

⁶⁹⁹ Azzaro, "Kampf der Erinnerungen," 355, 356-357. Recent research has proven the dominance of communist and revolutionary positions in the resistance, but the scholarship was largely simplified and used for political agendas.

⁷⁰⁰ The term "memory wars" is applied to these debates in Italy, unlike in other European countries where the term refers to questions about postmodern positions within the humanities.

National Socialism, he portrayed fascism as the better, and largely innocent, political system.⁷⁰¹ He and other intellectuals presented the Republic of Salò as a harmless regime, reappraised its supporters as Italian patriots and excused them collectively, further externalising the crimes to the Germans. The centre-right claimed that Italy had died as a nation on September 8th 1943, effectively presenting fascism before 1943 as a legitimate and acceptable regime with no negative consequences for the First Republic in Italy succeeding fascism after 1945. The right portrayed the period from 1943 to 1945 as a Civil War, incited by the resistance.⁷⁰² According to this perspective, the resistance had provoked German retaliation and forced the soldiers of the Republic of Salò to fight against their own kind, with the general population left merely trying to survive. Right-wing intellectuals declared that the resistance was marginal, noteworthy only for the corruption it established after 1945. With the dominance of centre and right-wing positions, the left remained largely helpless to contradict this revisionism.⁷⁰³ One of the few left-wing scholars to effectively challenge these narratives was Claudio Pavone, who managed to reapply the term Civil War to the struggle between the left and the right, without blaming the resistance. His work reinterpreted the resistance productively, without degrading it.⁷⁰⁴

Overall, the disputes led to a modification of the coordinates that had previously structured the view of the past. Two events consolidated this modification; one international and one national in scope. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 challenged Italians to reinterpret the past just as it did elsewhere in Europe. From 1991 onwards, many Italians declared the post-war era over, a move exemplified by the success of the term Second Republic which was applied to Italy after 1991. From this perspective of entering a post-communist period, anti-fascism appeared redundant. The former paradigm of the resistance seemed too intrinsically associated with anti-fascism and the

⁷⁰¹ Manuela Consonni, "A War of Memories. De Feleice and his *Intervista sul Fascismo*," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 5, no. 1 (March 2006): 43-56; Klinkhammer, "Der Resistenza-Mythos," 134.

⁷⁰² Klinkhammer, "Der Resistenza-Mythos," 128.

⁷⁰³ Klinkhammer, "Der neue 'Antifaschismus'," 279-280. A third stance, still found today, is that scholars focus almost exclusively on the German occupants. The fascists are ignored or presented as patriots and the Italian nation is the victim of a violent and bloody occupation. Klinkhammer, "Der Resistenza-Mythos," 128.

⁷⁰⁴ Claudio Pavone's approach enabled scholars of all political positions to use the concept. Today it is largely accepted that a Civil War took place, with Civil War being generally understood to denote fighting within the Italian population, but without the understanding that this war had been caused by the resistance. Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile. Saggio sulla moralità nella Resistenza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991).

politics of the First Republic to continue to wield significant power.⁷⁰⁵ On a national level, the Tangentopoli affair unseated the political parties that had been relevant until 1990. What began as a single case, the prosecution for corruption of the Italian Socialist Party politician Mario Chiesa, widened when he gave crucial information about other corrupt politicians. Further juridical investigations after 1992 revealed that corruption was endemic in all political parties. As a result, the existing political parties fell apart and were quickly succeeded by new political groups. Almost all of these new groups promoted modified perspectives on the Second World War and the Holocaust in Italy, hoping to distinguish themselves from previous parties' positions.⁷⁰⁶

After 1990 a bi-polar memory emerged in Italy, in which the resistance as well as the Republic of Salò and fascism came to both be accepted and equally commemorated.⁷⁰⁷ Current national memorial days in Italy exemplify how right- and left-wing commemorations exist side by side. The celebration of the liberation on April 25th continues to be an important national holiday.⁷⁰⁸ Three more memorial days have since been added to this one, all stipulated by the same decree in the year 2000. The Holocaust commemoration day on January 27th, the celebration of the armistice on November 9th, and the commemoration of the Italian fascists murdered in the border region between Yugoslavia and Italy, known as the Foibe killings, on February 10th.⁷⁰⁹ The parliament, by establishing these memorial days, gave national status to right-wing memory and legitimised it at the same time as recognising the need to commemorate the Holocaust.⁷¹⁰ Furthermore, fascist inscriptions and monuments were re-erected, the cult around Mussolini boomed, and several memorials commemorate individual fascists.⁷¹¹ Both left and right in Italy accepted the commemoration of the Holocaust,

⁷⁰⁵ Klinkhammer, "Der neue 'Antifaschismus'."

⁷⁰⁶ An excellent overview is given by Klinkhammer, "Der neue 'Antifaschismus'."

⁷⁰⁷ The normalisation and revisionism of fascism is impressively described by Brunello Mantelli, "Revisionismus durch 'Aussöhnung'. Politischer Wandel und die Krise der historischen Erinnerung in Italien," in *Italien, Blicke. Neue Perspektiven der italienischen Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Petra Terhoeven (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 222-232.

⁷⁰⁸ Ina Brandt analyses effectively the ways that different groups within Italy have referenced the resistance and the anti-fascist paradigm in their April 25th celebrations. Ina Brandt, "Memoria, Politica, Polemica. Der 25. April in der italienischen Erinnerungskultur," in *Italien, Blicke. Neue Perspektiven der italienischen Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Petra Terhoeven (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2010), 235-256; also Azzaro, "Kampf der Erinnerungen," 349.

⁷⁰⁹ On the Foibe see: Raoul Pupo and Roberto Spazzali, *Foibe* (Mailand: Bruno Mondadori, 2003).

⁷¹⁰ On neo-fascists' memory see: Francesco Germinario, *L'altra memoria. L'estrema destra, Salò e la Resistenza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999).

⁷¹¹ Pezzetti and Berger, "Erinnerungsräume in Italien," 194-195.

or rather of the Shoah. In its commemoration, different political positions have been united.⁷¹² Under Gianfranco Fini, even neo-fascists accepted the Holocaust as a central crime worthy of commemoration, despite their attributing it solely to the Germans.⁷¹³ Italy's Holocaust Memorial Day also certifies Italy's link to European Holocaust commemorations.⁷¹⁴ Since the 1990s, Italian scholarship on the Holocaust has adapted to align itself with global Holocaust research and a more explicit commemoration of the Shoah is planned, but has not yet been realised.

4.1.2 Dominant discourse about the Holocaust in Italy

The current dominant discourse on the Holocaust in Italy is not congruent with, but nonetheless dependent on the modified paradigm's view of the resistance as well as the memory of the two fascist regimes. Conceptualisations of the resistance have structured Italy's memory culture for three decades, and continue to do so today. In the modified version, some elements have remained intact, while others have been changed with its transformation. The initial paradigm conflated the resistance with the entire Italian population. It presented the fighters as martyrs of the nation, armed and militant, who opposed the German occupiers that were responsible for all crimes.⁷¹⁵ According to the paradigm, the resistance movement – and, hence, the population – founded the Italian republic by fighting for freedom, democracy and peace. Glossing over political differences, the paradigm excluded the historical experiences of those who did not participate in, or at least support, the resistance. It did not include the experiences of the population who simply waited for the end of the war, of fascist functionaries before and after 1943, or of the soldiers who fell while Italy was allied with Germany. Also silenced were the experiences of people in the south of Italy, which was

⁷¹² Klinkhammer, "Der neue 'Antifaschismus'," 275-276; Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 206. This is a relatively new development, so it remains to be seen whether the Shoah will continue to be accepted as a unifying narrative in Italy.

⁷¹³ Klinkhammer, "Der neue 'Antifaschismus'."

⁷¹⁴ Pezzetti and Berger, "Erinnerungsräume in Italien," 191. Details on its establishment in Italian parliament, the unanimous agreement that such a day should be established are given by Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 197-206.

⁷¹⁵ Cecilia Winterhalter, *Raccontare e Inventare. Storia, memoria e trasmissione storica della Resistenza armata in Italia* (Oxford/Bern/Berlin: Peter Lang, 2010), 56-72; Klinkhammer, "Der Resistenza-Mythos," 127.

not occupied by Germany.⁷¹⁶ Hence, the unity reached via the original paradigm remained fragmented and anti-fascism never became a unanimous identity; different narratives were commemorated side-by-side.⁷¹⁷ After the late 1980s the modified paradigm redresses this gap between the paradigm and political reality. The modified paradigm no longer conflates the population with the resistance and does not proclaim a past or present antifascist consensus of all Italians. Instead, scholars acknowledge that a large part of the population simply waited for the war to end, that active support of the Republic of Salò existed and that many Italians had consented to fascism before 1943. Complicating the resistance, scholars now recognise diverse motivations – political, pragmatic or simply spontaneous reactions to the situation – for joining the resistance, and also address the violence committed by the resistance movement.

In this diversified image, Italians are still genuinely good, Christian people, who live their lives to the best of their capabilities, not wanting to hurt their fellow human beings.⁷¹⁸ The construction of the “good Italian” is bolstered by the image of the Italian population helping other Italians as well as Jews, saving them from persecution. According to this image, the ordinary Italian soldier was ignorant of the war crimes and certainly did not commit them – the Germans or senior officers bore responsibility alone. Wherever possible the soldier tried to treat the civil population well, and to help those oppressed and persecuted.⁷¹⁹ The counterpart of this construction is the evil German; vicious, brutal and merciless.⁷²⁰ This construction of the good Italian versus the bad German helps to present fascism as a normal regime with positive features. Without an externalisation of responsibility for the crimes to Germany and the claim

⁷¹⁶ Fogu, “Italiana brava gente,” 149; Von Lingen, “‘Giorni di Gloria’,” 349. Von Lingen argues that it also excluded returning POWs and forced labourers, but I believe that their narratives did get merged with the narrative about the resistance and thus excluded would not be the right word.

⁷¹⁷ Patrizia Dogliani, “Constructing Memory and Anti-Memory: the Monumental Representation of Fascism and its Denial in Republican Italy,” in *Italian Fascism. History, Memory and Representation*, ed. by R.J.B. Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani (London: MacMillan, 1999), 11-30, 26-27; Schlemmer, “La ‘memoria mutilata’,” 131; Azzaro, “Kampf der Erinnerungen,” 353.

⁷¹⁸ The claim that the image of the “good Italian” survived the paradigm change untarnished, is at first surprising, since many scholars have criticised it. However, the general public – like most museums – still tend to portray the Italian population in a positive light. See: Klinkhammer, “Der Resistenza-Mythos,” 137-138.

⁷¹⁹ Schlemmer, “La ‘memoria mutilata’.”

⁷²⁰ A very good analysis of this bi-polar image is given by Filippo Focardi, “‘Bravo italiano’ e ‘cattivo tedesco’: riflessioni sulla genesi di due immagini incrociate,” *Storia e Memoria* 5, no. 1 (1996): 55-84. In English see: Fogu, “Italiana brava gente.”

of a genuinely good Italian population, the current normalisation of fascism would be harder to perpetuate.

Fascism itself is an ambivalent topic in Italy. Scholars only recently began studying the colonial rule, the racial laws of 1938, the allegiance with Germany and the war crimes committed by Italian soldiers. The participation of the general population in the fascist regime, their attitudes towards fascism and its values are equally recent topics of research.⁷²¹ Despite critical scholarship, the dominant discourse on fascism is in line with the image portrayed by the centre-right. The discourse highlights positive aspects of fascism and downplays the negative ones.⁷²² Mussolini tends to be seen as an endearing, rather funny man and the population is not considered responsible for the crimes the regime committed.⁷²³ The memory culture commemorates fascism and individual fascists.

The modified memory of the resistance and the legitimised memory of fascism both influence the memory of the Holocaust.⁷²⁴ In Italy, the term Holocaust denotes all deportations from Italy to concentration or forced labour camps under the German occupation. This results from the commemoration that, under the former paradigm of the resistance, presented all Italians as victims.⁷²⁵ Jews were subsumed within a commemoration that focused on the resistance fighters and civilian deportees persecuted for political reasons. The dominance of the resistance paradigm and the focus on political persecution marginalised the memory of the racial persecution.⁷²⁶ Hence, Italian Holocaust commemoration differs from other European countries in that Italian Prisoners of War are explicitly included, and that political prisoners are the most visible victims.

⁷²¹ Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 188-196; Azzaro, "Kampf der Erinnerungen." A good overview over the current research is given by Thomas Schlemmer and Hans Woller, "Der italienische Faschismus und die Juden 1922 bis 1945," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 2 (2005): 165-201.

⁷²² Modernisation is the most frequently cited positive effect attributed to fascism. Modernisation, however, would have happened in any case and was not a genuinely fascist endeavour. A very good analysis of the myth of the fascist modernity is given by Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities. Italy 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004).

⁷²³ Robert A. Ventresca, "Mussolini's Ghost. Italy's Duce in History and Memory," *History & Memory* 18, no. 1 (2006): 86-119; Schlemmer, "La 'memoria mutilata'," 131; Consonni, "A War of Memories," 45.

⁷²⁴ Fogu, "Italiana brava gente," 168.

⁷²⁵ Perra, *Conflicts of Memory*, 3-4.

⁷²⁶ Fogu, "Italiana brava gente," 171.

While the Holocaust includes all victims, some commemorations that focus on Jews alone use the term Shoah to refer exclusively to the murder of the Jews. The word Shoah became popular with the modification of the paradigm, and has been prevalent in Italy since the year 2000.⁷²⁷ Jewish victims had been visible as a separate group since the 1960s, and from the 1990s the murder of the Jews became a central element of the memory of the war in Italy.⁷²⁸ The foreign word Shoah works against the blurring of distinctions achieved by the word Holocaust, singling out the Jewish victims. As a foreign word that requires explanation, however, the term simultaneously de-territorialises the murders as non-Italian. In effect, Italy's memory culture recognises the Shoah, but not as a genuinely Italian event.⁷²⁹ Furthermore, the term Shoah excludes the non-Jewish victims of racial persecution. Not only are other victims ignored, but so are other crimes committed by the fascist regime that did not target Jews.⁷³⁰ Roma, homosexuals and people persecuted as criminals are particularly marginalised as a result. These groups continuously suffer discrimination in present day Italy and are excluded from public acceptance.

The binary representation of the good Italian versus the bad German shields Italians from acknowledging Italian responsibility for the Shoah. Discussions about Italian perpetrators and the responsibility of the Italian population are still rare in Italy. As long as the Holocaust was but one element within a wider story of Italian suffering in which all Italians were seen as victims, there was no need to discuss Italian responsibility for it.⁷³¹ This held particularly true when commemoration focused exclusively on the events that happened from 1943 to 1945.⁷³² With the currently shifting focus, Italian perpetrators are slowly coming into view. In commemorations of the Shoah people routinely mention the fascist regime and say that it prepared citizens for

⁷²⁷ Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 18.

⁷²⁸ Pezzetti and Berger, "Erinnerungsräume in Italien," 190.

⁷²⁹ Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 178-206.

⁷³⁰ As Perra points out, the colonial wars, the war crimes in the East, the persecution in former Yugoslavia and Slovenia as well as antisemitic and racist crimes within Italy are not given significant attention. Perra, *Conflicts of Memory*, 219-231.

⁷³¹ Pezzetti and Berger, "Erinnerungsräume in Italien," 191

⁷³² This, and reasons why even many Jewish survivors do not discuss Italians as responsible is analysed by Ruth Nattermann, "Italian Commemoration of the Shoah. A Survivor-Oriented Narrative and Its Impact on Politics and Practices of Remembrance," in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. By Malgorzata Pakier and Bo Strath (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 204-216.

the persecutions that happened under the occupation. Holocaust representations mention the racial laws of 1938, and new research has shown that, contrary to public opinion, the laws were indeed implemented and discriminations did take place in Italy.⁷³³ There is growing public awareness that fascists within the Republic of Salò, members of the police drawn into the National Guard, and soldiers allied with the Germans were complicit in the murders after 1943. These facts are stated but not elaborated upon, and the idea that the general population bore witness to individual enactments of discriminatory measures is not widely accepted. Changes here are slow and an ongoing process, so current Italian memory of the perpetrators continues to be ambivalent. Identifications of individual perpetrators by name, and descriptions of the general population's agreement, support and cooperation with the racial persecutions remain rare, although this may be likely to change.

4.1.3 A changing museum landscape

The museums that exhibit contemporary history in Italy are small museums that show diverse topics. Most political support for history museums is regional, and the financial situation is dire everywhere. In general, the history of the 20th century plays a marginal role within a museum landscape dominated by antiquity and its representation. Traditional history museums narrating the Italian nation focus on the Risorgimento in the nineteenth century. These national museums display the unification of the nation and their narratives usually end after the First World War.⁷³⁴ There are plans for new museums addressing the Shoah with a nationwide focus, but these have yet to be built. The museums that currently exhibit the Holocaust have emerged from previous commemorations of the resistance and have been created by small institutions at a regional level.

A first wave of commemorations began directly after the war and was largely spontaneous and self-organised. People remembered the resistance groups, the men and women killed, as well as individual resisters considered important in their own

⁷³³ Most significant with respect to the racial laws is Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*. A good English overview on the recent scholarship on fascist antisemitism in Italy is given by Nattermann, "Italian Commemoration."

⁷³⁴ See, for example, the Museo Nazionale del Risorgimento Italiano in Turin or the Museo del Risorgimento in Milan.

regions. As these spontaneous commemorations became more formalised, street names, public squares and new public institutions emerged that referenced the resistance, the partisans and individual resisters.⁷³⁵ Temporary exhibitions recounted the fight of the resistance, celebrations honoured its struggle and monuments commemorated massacres and other extremes of violence.⁷³⁶ All commemorations presented the resistance fighters as heroes or martyrs of the Italian nation, sacralising their suffering. Street names, plaques and monuments remain in place today, but the state, regions, and local institutions have redesigned some of the memorials, reflecting how memory culture has been changing since the 1990s.⁷³⁷

Little was done to remember the resistance within the public realm after 1949 until its revival in the 1960s and its flourishing commemoration in the 1970s.⁷³⁸ The consolidated paradigm of the resistance led to increased commemorations in museums. Victims' organisations, founded shortly after 1945 or in the 1950s, were very influential in the commemoration of their suffering. Diverse initiatives led to the foundation of museums and/or the showing of exhibitions in locations such as houses that had been used for meetings, archives or scientific institutions. They displayed the resistance as the second Risorgimento, with its members fighting heroically for the liberation of their country.⁷³⁹ Some of the museums that presented the original Risorgimento – in the region Trentino, for example – integrated exhibitions on the resistance into their main ones, thus underlining the claimed similarity between the two movements.⁷⁴⁰

As a result, there are many small museums dedicated to the resistance in northern and some in central Italy. Funding and organisational structures did not allow all museums to renew their exhibitions when the paradigm modified. The *Museo della Liberazione* (Museum of the Liberation) in Rome is an example of this. Established in

⁷³⁵ Claudio Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza e politiche della memoria. Il caso dell' Emilia-Romagna," *Italia contemporanea*, no. 151 (2008): 275-298.

⁷³⁶ Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 280. Two of the most well known examples are the memorial at the Fosse Ardeatine in Rome and the memorial of the massacre in Marzabotto.

⁷³⁷ For example, the memorial at the Fosse Ardeatine was completely renewed and reopened in 2011.

⁷³⁸ Dogliani, "Constructing Memory," 21-22.

⁷³⁹ A good overview on the commemoration of the resistance on the example of Emilia Romagna is given by Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza."

⁷⁴⁰ Museo Storico di Trentino in Trento. Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 283.

the 1950s, its permanent exhibition opened in 1957 and is still on display. The exhibition deals with the specific situation in Rome from 1943 until the liberation in 1944. A large part of the exhibition presents individual resistance fighters according to the old paradigm. The fascists and the German persecutions do appear, usually in direct relation to the resistance. The modified paradigm and the presence of the Shoah in Italy's memory culture is visible in the temporary exhibitions and in an adjunct to the permanent exhibition added in 1997. The added exhibition takes the racial laws as a starting point to present the persecution of Jews in Rome. In keeping with the modified paradigm, other victim groups do not appear at the Museo della Liberazione. Documents showing different orders for the imprisonment of Jews, their deportation and the gold stolen from the Jewish community explicitly show those who were responsible for all this.⁷⁴¹ As in the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee, the stamps, addresses and signatures on the documents confirm that the Italian police, the Vatican or individual collaborators participated in the crimes. With names and institutions shown so openly, Italian perpetrators are more visible here than in other representations in Italy following the modified paradigm.

While the Museo della Liberazione only added individual segments to its exhibition to meet the modified paradigm, other museums dedicated to the resistance have renewed their whole exhibitions. The *Museo della Resistenza* (Museum of the Resistance) in Bologna, for example, was completely overhauled from 1994 onwards. The museum had first opened in 1954, closed in 1962, and re-opened in 1975. The current exhibition opened in 2006. It presents the resistance, its fight against fascism, and the liberation in 1945. The narrative pays special attention to the situation in Emilia Romagna, but links it to Italian and European history.⁷⁴² The exhibition begins with the Civil War in Spain and its influence on Italian fighters, then discusses the Second World War in Italy and the actions of the resistance in the region. The narrative contextualises the resistance with respect to anti-fascism, but suggests that the hardships of the war were an equal motivation for resistance. The Civil War after 1943 is presented as an individual topic and its violent events are documented explicitly.⁷⁴³ The

⁷⁴¹ The Vatican, for example, is shown to have cooperated with the Germans.

⁷⁴² Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 282-283.

⁷⁴³ Here the term Civil War is explained in the copy, with reference to recent historiography. Panel "Guerra ai Civili" in the room La guerra subita e la Resistenza a Bologna.

general population is visible, and the exhibition differentiates the general population from those who became victims. It states that some people joined the fascists, others awaited the end of the war passively, and yet others fell victim to the Civil War. Noteworthy for its rarity is a panel that addresses sexual violence against women as a separate topic.⁷⁴⁴ The victim groups are plural including Jews, Prisoners of War, members of the resistance and parts of the population. In the panel on the Jewish victims, the racial laws are defined as the starting point for the persecution, which worsened with the occupation. The copy states that Italians carried out the deportation of Jews from Bologna – here, as well as elsewhere in the narrative, perpetrators do appear in direct relation to the particular crimes they committed.⁷⁴⁵ The exhibition also elaborates upon how the resistance fighters represented themselves in the past, and how Italian society commemorates them today.⁷⁴⁶

In Italy it was not only victim organisations of the resistance fighters that established museums. So did veteran organisations. Because the military and the resistance were deeply intertwined, military museums traditionally emphasised the close connection of the Army to the resistance, following the older paradigm of the resistance. Political differences do exist between the veteran organisations and the victim organisations of the resistance, but generally the exhibitions in military museums display a narrative that unites all Italians in the fight against the occupation and in suffering under it, culminating with the suffering in concentration camps. The permanent exhibition at the *Casa delle Memoria di Guerra per la Pace* (House of Memorial of the War for Peace) in Prato is a good example of such a narrative.⁷⁴⁷ The memorial house was inaugurated in 1957, while the permanent exhibition displayed today opened in 2008.

⁷⁴⁴ Panel “Violenza sulle donne” in the room “La guerra subita e la Resistenza a Bologna.” The copy also refers to memory constructions in its account of the silence that surrounded this topic after the war.

⁷⁴⁵ The largest photo shown of the deportation shows striped prisoner clothes tangled in barbed wire. Panel “Le Deportazioni e il Lavoro coatto” in the room “La guerra subita e la Resistenza a Bologna.”

⁷⁴⁶ There is a discussion, for example, of how the resistance groups photographed themselves: “La Resistenza fotografata” in the room La Resistenza agita. Memorial practices are also alluded to in the posters for the celebrations of the 25th of April, which hang in the entry hall.

⁷⁴⁷ The Historiale in Cassino, which opened in 2005, is another example of a military museum. Located at the site of the Gustav line, the exhibition presents both the military struggle and the extreme devastation endured by the region. Fascism, National Socialism and communism are presented as the three evil forces responsible for the destruction, with the Allies entering the scene to restore peace and human rights. At the end of the exhibition the Holocaust is gestured towards with iconic photos from the Strop report and the Auschwitz Album. All the suffering of the war is homogenised.

The exhibition deals with the military that were stationed in and around Prato, as well as soldiers from Prato, from 1900 to 1945. The museum dedicates one whole section to the military's engagement in the resistance. In addition, plaques commemorate soldiers who were imprisoned in German concentration camps.⁷⁴⁸ The exhibition represents the soldiers as heroes fighting or suffering for the Italian nation, struggling for freedom. Unlike most museums I visited in Italy, the museum also addresses the colonial wars, the war in Spain and the collaboration with the German Army before 1943. The exhibition's text presents the soldiers as honourable and brave, but complicating narratives appear within the visual material.⁷⁴⁹ The staircase presents the Holocaust, merging all its victims together, while Jewish persecution is also represented separately in six small panels hidden in a corner.⁷⁵⁰

Alongside museums on the resistance and military museums, Jewish museums also dedicate parts of their exhibitions to the Shoah.⁷⁵¹ In accordance with the regional museum structure in Italy, larger cities often have a Jewish museum, many of which opened in the 1980s. The exhibitions represent the history of the Jewish community in the region, addressing the Shoah within this.⁷⁵² A single text panel in the *Museo Ebraico di Bologna* (Jewish museum of Bologna), for example, mentions the racial laws and then goes on to describe the concentration camp system and the deportation of Italian Jews after 1943. A separate room commemorates those deported from the different communities in the region by listing their names. The *Museo Ebraico di Roma* (Jewish museum of Rome) completely renovated its permanent exhibition in 2005 and now displays the history of the Jewish community in Rome throughout the ages. Room number five, encompassing the time from the emancipation until today, separates the Shoah from the rest of the exhibition by a wooden pedestal, the triangular elevations

⁷⁴⁸ For example the sign stating "Dedicated to the soldiers in the concentration camps," which has hung on the outside of the museum since 2004.

⁷⁴⁹ For example, the images from the colonial era make the racist perceptions of the time visible: they place the soldiers in superior positions to the Ethiopians, whose appearances are exoticised. The close collaboration between the German and the Italian Army before 1943 is depicted in the many photos that show soldiers of both armies together.

⁷⁵⁰ The panels consist of one large poster with several stereotypical images depicting the Jewish persecution, next to which hangs a panel that commemorates two individual victims from Prato who died in Hartheim, and lists the names of several others deported from Prato. This is accompanied by two poems and a further panel that offers a cursory introduction to the city partnership between Ebensee and Prato.

⁷⁵¹ Pezzetti and Berger, "Erinnerungsräume in Italien," 199

⁷⁵² Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 286.

of which resemble a broken Star of David. This part of the exhibition begins by discussing the fascist regime, defining the colonial war in Ethiopia as the turning point when the regime became racist. Since every other museum in Italy defines the year 1938 as the moment of descent into racism, the focus on 1936 here is noteworthy. The exhibition then moves to the racial laws in 1938 before discussing the fate of the Jews in Rome after 1943.⁷⁵³ The documents displayed show antisemitic magazines and deal with the racial laws and the discrimination of Jews before 1943. A later part of the exhibition addresses the dispossession of gold from the Jewish community, the deportations to the concentration camps, and imprisonment and mass murder in Rome.

All the museums discussed so far address the Holocaust as one topic among others. The Holocaust is presented as part of the story of the resistance, the military or the Jewish communities. Since the 1960s, however, museum sites that deal with the Holocaust exclusively have also emerged. The first exhibitions dedicated solely to commemorating the Holocaust were memorials in or near the former transit camps Fossoli and San Sabba, where Italian Jews were interned before being deported to the extermination camps.⁷⁵⁴ In 1965, a memorial in San Sabba was proposed, and the *Museo della Risiera di San Sabba* (Museum of the Rice Mill of San Sabba) was inaugurated in 1975.⁷⁵⁵ Italian police had used the camp in their deportations of Jews as well as for the internment of other prisoners. The exhibition in the memorial opened in 1982 and has not been updated since.⁷⁵⁶

Shortly before San Sabba, in 1961, it was decided to commemorate the Holocaust at Carpi, a small town near Fossoli, the location of the most important Italian

⁷⁵³ Panel "Between the two wars: the Jews under Fascism" and "the Jews in Nazi-occupied Rome" in room 5 "From Emancipation till today" in the Jewish Museum in Rome.

⁷⁵⁴ The deportation of the Jews is also remembered at the central station in Milan, from whence trains departed the region for Auschwitz. Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 287-289.

⁷⁵⁵ Azzaro, "Kampf der Erinnerungen," 352.

⁷⁵⁶ On Risiera di San Sabba see: Marina Rossi, "Il Museo-Monumneto della Risiera di San Sabba: la visita," in *Un percorso della memoria. Guida ai luoghi della violenza nazista e fascista in Italia*, ed. by Tristano Matta (Mailand: Electa, 1996), 133-139.

transit camp.⁷⁵⁷ The *Museo Monumento al Deportato* (Museum Monument of the Deported) was inaugurated in 1973 and can still be viewed in its original form today.⁷⁵⁸ It encompasses the south wing of the Pio Castle in Carpi and is a memorial to both the deportations and the concentration camps in one. In line with the former paradigm on the resistance, it does not distinguish between different camps or groups of prisoners but rather addresses all inmates of all former concentration camps.⁷⁵⁹ The BBPR group of architects, who were also responsible for the Italian memorial at Auschwitz, designed the exhibition.⁷⁶⁰ The castle rooms have been largely left in their original state and resemble a cathedral or church. The exhibition features a few individual objects, symbolically placed in glass cases. Quotes, taken from the book *Letters of European Resistance Fighters Condemned to Death*, run along the walls, which also bear murals by several artists.⁷⁶¹ In the last room, the walls and the ceiling have been covered by the names of the people deported. Finally, vertical pillars in the courtyard outside commemorate the main camps.⁷⁶²

Commemoration in the nearby camp Fossoli has been recently added to the commemoration at the museum in Carpi.⁷⁶³ The former transit camp in Fossoli consisted of two separate parts. The old camp was demolished in 1947, the new one used until 1970 for different purposes. It was abandoned and left to go to ruin in 1970, and is in very bad condition today. In 1984 the municipality of Carpi decided to turn the grounds of the new camp into a memorial dedicated to the deportations, and began

⁷⁵⁷ Dogliani, "Constructing Memory," 26. On Fossoli and Carpi see: Roberta Gibertoni and Annalisa Melodi, "Il campo di Fossoli e il Museo Monumento al deportato di Carpi," in *Un percorso della memoria. Guida ai luoghi della violenza nazista e fascista in Italia*, ed. by Tristano Matta (Mailand: Electa, 1996), 35-49; Anna Maria Ori, *Il campo di Fossoli, 1942-2004* (Carpi: Fondazione ex-Campo Fossoli, 2004).

⁷⁵⁸ Sometimes it is referred to by the name Museo Monumento al deportato politico e razziale nei campi di sterminio nazisti.

⁷⁵⁹ Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 286.

⁷⁶⁰ One of the architects, Belgiojso, had been interned in Fossoli. The Italian exhibition in Auschwitz was opened in 1980. It had been planned since the 1970s and was sponsored by ANED. Elisabetta Ruffini and Sandro Scarrocchia, "Il Blocco 21 di Auschwitz," *Studi e ricerche di storia contemporanea* 69 (2008): 9-32; the entire issue "La vicenda del Memoriale italiano di Auschwitz." of *Studi e ricerche di storia contemporanea* 74 (2011) also deals with the exhibition in Auschwitz; Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 180-187.

⁷⁶¹ Piero Malvezzi and Giovanni Pirelli, ed., *Lettere di condannati a morte della Resistenza Europea* (Turin: Einaudi, 1960). The artworks are by Guttuso, Cagli, Levi and Longoni.

⁷⁶² A brief description of the museum is given in English by Giovanni Leoni, "'The First Blow': Projects for the Camp at Fossoli," in *Holocaust Remembrance. The Shapes of Memory*, ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 204-214.

⁷⁶³ Pezzetti and Berger, "Erinnerungsräume in Italien," 189.

hesitant reconstructions of the site. A foundation for the commemoration of the former camp, which today also runs the museum in Carpi, was established in 1996. Despite its having been the most significant camp in Italy, neither the state nor the region gives much support for the commemoration at its site.⁷⁶⁴ Funding is extremely difficult and there has been very little investment into the preservation of the ruins of the barracks in the camp. Without the significant dedication of the few employees, not even the existing reconstruction and the possibility to visit the camp would exist.

The foundation opened a permanent exhibition in 2004 in one of the former barracks that had been renovated in 2002.⁷⁶⁵ Produced on a limited budget, it is traditional in design and consists mainly of text accompanied by photographs on two-dimensional panels. The content follows the chronology and established tropes of Holocaust representations in Europe. This is most obvious in the two-part structure of the exhibition, already alluded to by the exhibition's title: *The Camp in Fossoli. From a place of internment to a place of memory*.⁷⁶⁶ The exhibition deals with the concentration camps in Europe, the effects of the persecution in Italy, and in Carpi and Fossoli in particular. The exhibition begins with the racial laws, describing the discriminations that led up to the racial persecutions. In explaining the concentration camp system different prisoner groups are represented separately, with individual panels presenting Jews, political prisoners, Prisoners of War and civil inmates respectively. Notable individual inmates are mentioned specifically, and information about massacres that took place in and around Fossoli is provided. Although the copy refers to fascists and to the police forces in the camp, perpetrators are largely missing from the representation. The other half of the exhibition is concerned with the camp after 1945 and the memory of the Holocaust. Separate panels show the different usages of the former concentration camp up until 1970, and the exhibition then moves on to the myth about the resistance, the emerging commemoration of the Holocaust, and the specific commemoration in Fossoli. Thus, the narrative encompasses the prehistory of the persecutions, the persecution itself, and the aftermath.

⁷⁶⁴ The camp can be visited by appointment or on Sundays and other public holidays. Although there was a bus stop close by, there was no public transportation to the camp in 2010, making it inaccessible without a car.

⁷⁶⁵ Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 293-294. On the concentration camp Fossoli and its transformation into a memorial see: Ori, *Il campo di Fossoli*.

⁷⁶⁶ "Il Campo di Fossoli da luogo di internamento a luoghi di memoria."

The Museo della Shoah, currently still in planning, is also intended to focus primarily on the Shoah. Like Holocaust museums in other countries, the planning stages of the Museo della Shoah have been (and continue to be) lengthy and complicated. The state had initially envisioned a national museum in Ferrara, which was to address the Shoah among other topics, but this plan changed in 2006. Ferrara was then to become the site for a national Jewish museum, including the Shoah, but focusing on more general aspects of Jewish history in Italy.⁷⁶⁷ The Shoah should instead become the sole focus of the *Museo della Shoah* (Museum of the Shoah), to be built by the regional administration of the city of Rome.⁷⁶⁸ Rome's City Council, led by the Christian Democrat Walter Veltroni, decided in favour of the museum, and the plans for it have been continued by the former neo-fascist Gianni Alemanno of the People of Liberty Party.⁷⁶⁹ Earlier plans hoped to have the museum open by 2010 or 2011, but construction has not even begun yet; the opening of the Museo della Shoah has been postponed until an indefinite date.

The Museo della Shoah's foundation has finalised the building plans and drawn up tentative plans for its exhibition. The architecture, designed by Luca Zevi, clearly cites features that have been acclaimed internationally, referencing for example the Jewish museum in Berlin, Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial museum.⁷⁷⁰ The building, which includes significant underground structures, features a large, black cube inscribed with the names of the murdered Italian Jews in white, next to a tower that resembles a chimney. An outside area that is reached after visiting the exhibition commemorates people who helped or saved Italian Jews and is called the *memoriale dei giusti*, the memorial to the righteous. Exhibition plans made in 2010 envision a fixed tour pathway; the visitor walks from the top of the building to the basement, encountering a chronological narrative. According to these plans, the narrative will provide a broad contextualisation, beginning after the First World War by introducing the antisemitism and racism of that time. A separate section is to deal with the

⁷⁶⁷ Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 22.

⁷⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the state ignored the locations of the former concentration camps in its decision to centralise commemoration in Ferrara and Rome, thus distracting from the commemorations at the original sites. Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 287.

⁷⁶⁹ Gordon points out that the fact that former fascists support the Museo della Shoah shows that Holocaust memory in Italy is accepted by most strands of society, even if for different purposes. Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 21-22.

⁷⁷⁰ Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 17.

persecution of Roma and Sinti, even though the name and scope of the museum excludes other victim groups than the Jews. The proposed narrative conceptualises the year 1938 as a turning point, after which the main topics are the radicalisation of persecutions during the war and the exterminations in the concentration camps. While the exhibition situates the murder of Italian Jews within the history of the Shoah in Europe, its central focus is the fate of Jews from Italy. Fascism both before 1943 and afterwards under the Republic of Salò are to be addressed. Finally, coming to terms with the Holocaust after 1945, the juridical prosecutions, the restitution, the return of survivors to Italy, and memory constructions bring the exhibition to a close. From the general design, it appears as though the Museo della Shoah will address the common components I already outlined to exist in Austria and Hungary: addressing the story before, during and after the Holocaust, dealing with the victim groups considered most important nationally and at least mentioning national perpetrators. All plans for the exhibition in the museum are tentative at best, however, and in the meantime the foundation Museo della Shoah works on temporary exhibitions, online exhibitions and public events that commemorate the Shoah, in addition to their work for the future museum.⁷⁷¹

While both the museum in Ferrara and the Museo della Shoah wait to be built, the Holocaust-relevant museum landscape in Italy consists of regional museums, largely dedicated to the resistance, to the soldiers, to the Jews or to the 20th century, that represent the Holocaust as a sub-topic within their exhibitions. Most museums have adapted their representations from the 1980s onwards, when the modified paradigm complicated accustomed representation modes to the point that previous constructions of the past could no longer be upheld. As a result, the museums replaced their celebratory representations of resistance heroes fighting for the nation by more diverse motives for and experiences of the resistance. The exhibitions integrate the Civil War as well as the violence committed by both sides. Some also address memory

⁷⁷¹ The presentation on the website promoting the upcoming permanent exhibition of the museum mentions 1938 and then moves directly on to the concentration camps, hardly showing any material specific to Italy. Instead iconic photos, showing the gates of Auschwitz, for example, represent the Shoah. The high-pitched opera singer who accompanies the video turns the virtual tour into a lamenting, overly dramatic and pathetic video, which culminates with a woman crying as she narrates her suffering. Museo della Shoah, "Architettura" <http://www.museodellashoah.it/il-museo/architettura/>, Fondazione della Shoah (accessed January 10th 2014).

constructions.⁷⁷² Most museums represent the Holocaust as the suffering in the concentration camps. The victim groups presented are the resistance fighters, the Italian population as a whole, civil and military prisoners, and the Jews, while other victim groups are usually ignored. Perpetrators are marginal and when they are mentioned, they appear in the context of their crimes rather than as a category in itself.

All museums that address the time of the Second World War in Italy do at very least gesture towards the Shoah. In the case of exhibitions that have not been completely overhauled, their institutions have added extra sections in order to meet the current demand to discuss the fate of the Jews. The Shoah narrative is told with the racial laws as its starting point, after which representations move quickly to the concentration camps, sometimes paying particular attention to the persecutions of local regional communities. The museums do not contextualise the fascist regime beyond the racial laws, nor do they extend further back than 1936. With the exception of the racial laws, the fascist regime appears as a normal and generally acceptable political system. In some of the exhibitions designed after the 1960s, classic historical representation has been replaced by highly artistic representations.⁷⁷³ Artists have been given a free hand to design memorials, produce artwork and choose modes of presentation. In these cases, commemoration of the past has been prioritised over informing about it, as is particularly evident at the Memorial in Carpi or the Italian exhibition presented in Auschwitz.

⁷⁷² Where the museums were previously conceived of as sites *of* memory, they now understand themselves as sites *for* memory. Silingardi, "Musei della Resistenza," 292.

⁷⁷³ Every exhibition space is designed with aesthetic considerations and visual parameters in mind. Nonetheless, the exhibitions in Italy referred to here depart from classic historical exhibitions in their bold application of the design chosen and I thus find it justified to label them as artistic. Exhibitions' spatial designs are foregrounded and used explicitly to shape the messages communicated. Unlike in Austria or Hungary, some exhibitions have been designed entirely or in part by individual artists in collaboration with historians.

4.2 The Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso: evoking the past in the present



Photo no. 57: Sign at the entrance to the Museo della Deportazione.

4.2.1 The Museo della Deportazione

In Italy I chose two museums for close analysis, both of which I consider representative of one variant of Holocaust representations in Italy. The first museum I will present is the *Museo della Deportazione* and its associated *Centro di Documentazione della Deportazione e Resistenza*. The museum is located in Figline, a small village on the outskirts of Prato in Tuscany. In Figline itself, just a few days before the liberation of Prato on September 6th 1944, 29 Partisans that had been arrested near the town were hung by order of a unit of the German Army.⁷⁷⁴ Earlier in 1944, German authorities had arrested workers from Prato who had held a general strike; imprisoning many of the men and deporting them to Mauthausen in Austria. From there most of them were sent to the forced labour camp in Ebensee, which is discussed in detail in my chapter on Austria. While it does not deal with the hanging, the exhibition in Figline takes the deportation of the workers as its starting point to commemorate the deportations and the horrors of the concentration camps in general. The exhibition is one of the few in Italy dedicated exclusively to the Holocaust. The museum evolved within the tradition

⁷⁷⁴ A memorial for the partisans is found at the Piazza dei Partisani in Figline.

of commemorating the resistance fighters. The current exhibition, which opened in 2002, displays a modified version of the former paradigm yet reveals its roots, with the narrative closely mirroring the perspective dominant in the former paradigm.

The museum's own history is consistent with the development of commemoration in Italy. Roberto Castellani and Dorval Vannini, survivors of the concentration camp in Ebensee, brought the topic onto the regional agenda. Both members of the local section of ANED, they pushed for the city partnership with Ebensee and worked continuously for local commemoration in Prato. Supported by individuals from Prato, the museum and the documentation centre opened in April 2002 with its current exhibition. Initially the museum was run by the city of Prato, but in 2007 the foundation currently responsible for it was established by the province of Prato with support from ANED, ANPI, the Jewish community of Florence and the Association for the city partnership between Prato and Ebensee. The museum's director, Camilla Brunolli, curated the exhibition which was designed by the architect Alessandro Pagliai.

The museum is familiar to people in the region and in Ebensee. Situated outside of Prato, which is itself a rather small town near Florence, it is mostly visited by guided tours, especially school groups. Dedicated visitors also seek out the museum independently. Driving to Figline or taking the bus there from Prato, the visitor encounters a plain building which itself has no historical connection to the exhibition. The exhibition is located on the first floor while the documentation centre is on the second, reached by a separate entrance. The exhibition is presented in Italian only, but at the time of my visit the information presented within was available in handouts in German, and English ones were planned. The foundation also printed a catalogue in Italian, German and English in 2010.⁷⁷⁵

The exhibition is divided into two parts, presented in the lobby and a large main room respectively. The lobby gives a brief historical contextualization that deals with the concentration camp system, the concentration camp in Ebensee, the strike and the subsequent deportations from Prato. Stepping through a heavy curtain into

⁷⁷⁵ Fondazione Museo e Centro di Documentazione della Deportazione e Resistenza, ed., *Fondazione Museo e Centro di Documentazione della Deportazione e Resistenza. Luoghi della Memoria Toscana. Exhibition catalogue* (Prato: Fondazione Museo e Centro di Documentazione della Deportazione e Resistenza, 2010).

the main hall, the visitor encounters material objects presented within the room in irregularly shaped display cases. Most of the objects on display were brought from Ebensee to Prato by survivors and individual citizens, while a few are reconstructions that ANED commissioned for an exhibition in 1972.⁷⁷⁶ Each object represents a theme associated with the concentration camp.⁷⁷⁷ Unlike most Holocaust representations that use objects from concentration camps as mere supplements to their narrative, the narrative at the Museo della Deportazione is woven around the objects themselves, presenting them as the most important elements of the exhibition.⁷⁷⁸

Noteworthy as a Holocaust exhibition with an unusual object presentation, the Museo della Deportazione is also remarkable for its transnational scope. Unlike the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee – discussed in detail in chapter two – the Museo della Deportazione is a truly transnational site. The exhibition in Ebensee talks about the workers deported from Prato, but the Museo della Deportazione mediates between Ebensee and Prato. The contact between the two commemorative sites has transformed the narrative represented in Prato. The stories represented, the memory constructions referenced, the objects displayed, and the knowledge explicated are all transnational. The workers of Prato in 1944 were deported across the border to Ebensee, from whence some of the survivors returned to Prato. This journey shaped their memory, which in turn transformed the commemoration in Prato. As residents of Prato, the survivors remembered their time in Ebensee and lobbied for its commemoration. They visited Ebensee and participated in commemorative ceremonies there, with the effect that the link between the two towns has been maintained up until the present. Both cities formed the city partnership in 1987/88, formalising the connection between Prato and Ebensee.⁷⁷⁹ Today groups from Ebensee also travel to Prato to visit the museum and honour the survivors. Not only the people and their memory, but also the material objects that form the main part of the exhibition have crossed the

⁷⁷⁶ Panel at the entrance of the main hall.

⁷⁷⁷ The museum claims that the exhibition presents a symbolic journey through a concentration camp. Fondazione Museo e Centro di Documentazione della Deportazione e Residenza, *Fondazione Museo*, 14.

⁷⁷⁸ This presentation is however similar to the Museo Monumento al Deportato in Carpi, also featuring individual objects and quotations from concentration camp prisoners.

⁷⁷⁹ More information on the city partnership can be found in a book published jointly by the city of Prato and Ebensee. Daniela Jandl, *Venti anni insieme per la pace/Prato und Ebensee. Zwanzig Jahre gemeinsam für den Frieden*, trans. by Camilla Brunelli (Prato: Comune di Prato/Marktgemeinde Ebensee, 2007).

border. Some objects have travelled officially, such as the bell given by the city Ebensee to the Museo della Deportazione, or the individual documents, videos or photographs displayed. Both the exhibition in Ebensee and the one in Prato screen the same video of the liberation of the camp, for example. Most objects, however, have crossed the border between Austria and Italy unofficially. Survivors dug them up and brought them home before official commemoration even existed. Material objects from the former camp now represent Ebensee in Prato, but have also been transformed to represent all concentration camps. The knowledge that has informed this wider representation also results from the exchange between Austria and Italy. Knowledge has crossed the border in both directions. Italian survivors wrote about the camp in Ebensee and described the experiences they made within. Scholars use such sources in their analyses of the former concentration camp and the living conditions within it, codifying the academic knowledge that then informs both museums' representations of the former camp. The two museums work together closely. Wolfgang Quatember, director of the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee, wrote the copy for one of the panels in the lobby of the Museo della Deportazione. People, commemorative practices, objects and knowledge have moved across the border, been transformed and adapted to Prato and now constitute core elements of the display at the Museo della Deportazione.



Photo no. 58: The Palazzo dei Quartieri Militari di San Celso that houses the Museo Diffuso.

4.2.2 The Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, della Deportazione, della Guerra, dei Diritti e della Libertà

Just as exceptional as the Museo della Deportazione, but representing a different variant of the modified paradigm is the *Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, della Deportazione, della Guerra, dei Diritti e della Libertà* (Museo Diffuso). The Museo Diffuso, which I chose to analyse as my second case study, is located at the edge of the city centre in Turin. Its long and slightly complicated name translates approximately to Comprehensive Museum of Resistance, Deportations, War, Human Rights and Freedom. Like the Museo della Deportazione, the institution is linked to the tradition of commemoration of the resistance. Its exhibition, however, is further removed from the former paradigm of the resistance than the one at the Museo della Deportazione. This is apparent, for example, in the different time frames addressed by the museums: the Museo Diffuso presents the period from 1938 and 1948, while the focus of the Museo della Deportazione is on 1943 and 1944.

The Museo Diffuso's permanent exhibition is titled "Turin 1938-1948. From the racial laws to the Constitution," and addresses numerous events within this time frame.⁷⁸⁰ Framing the exhibition with a discussion of constitutional rights, the expository agent defines the racial laws as the starting point of the exhibition and the Constitution of the First Republic as its endpoint. The exhibition begins with the deprivation of the Jews' rights, leading to decline, suffering and war, climaxing in the occupation and the Civil War. The hardship ends after the liberation, and the exhibition closes in 1948 with the re-establishment of democracy in the Constitution.⁷⁸¹ The exhibition focuses on Turin, but connects the city's history with that of Italy as a whole. The timeframe chosen, and the explicit inclusion of the Holocaust within a broader narrative of the time before, during, and directly after the Second World War, follow the modified paradigm.

The Museo Diffuso is itself a product of the changing perspectives on the resistance. A very active group of historians in Turin took a critical approach towards fascism, the resistance and the representation of it; making Turin a centre where, as in Milan, scholars critically investigated contemporary history, calling for pluralised narratives and posing new and complex questions.⁷⁸² Two separate exhibition projects, one on the Second World War and another on crimes against humanity, came together after 1999 and evolved into the Museo Diffuso. In 1995 the city of Turin allowed the *Cinematographic Archive of the Resistance* (ANCR) and the *Giorgi Agosti Piedmont Institute for in the History of the Resistance and Contemporary Society* (Istoreto) to use the "Palazzo dei Quartieri Militari di San Celso". Simultaneously the municipality decided to establish an exhibition in the same premise relating to the themes addressed by

⁷⁸⁰ This is the translation that the museum provides of the Italian title "Torino 1938-1948. Dalle Leggi razziali alla Costituzione." The Istitutio piemontese per la storia della Resistenza provides an internet presentation of the permanent exhibition "Torino 1938/1945. Luoghi della Memoria" at <http://www.istoreto.it/torino38-45/index.htm> (accessed January 10th 2014).

⁷⁸¹ This is most explicit on the sign marking the entrance to the basement. The sign states: "Esso propone un viaggio in una città virtuale, partendo dal 1938, anno in cui la legislazione fascista cancellò i diritti di cittadinanza degli ebrei, per arrivare all'acquisizione della libertà e dei nuovi diritti, affermati e garantiti dalla Costituzione Repubblicana del 1948." My translation. In English: "It [the exhibit] offers a journey into a virtual city, that begins in 1938, the year the fascist legislation canceled the rights of the Jewish citizens, to arrive at the achievement of new rights and freedoms, established and guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic in 1948." Signpost at the entrance to the basement.

⁷⁸² In Milan critical research is furthered by the Fondazione centro di documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC).

those bodies.⁷⁸³ The two institutions curated the permanent exhibition which was designed by the studio Ennezerotre, a design firm specialised in multimedia exhibitions. Initially the city of Turin managed the museum, until 2006 when the city of Turin, the province of Piedmont, the ANCR and the Istoreto founded the association that currently runs the museum. From its inception up until today, Guido Vaglio has been the museum's director.

The museum opened its doors in 2003 with a temporary exhibition. The permanent exhibition then opened in two stages; the first part came on view from April 2004, the second was added in February 2006. The exhibition is presented in Italian but largely accessible to users of English, as all the main parts have been translated. The museum's offices as well as the temporary exhibitions are on the second floor, while the entrance and the historical introduction to the permanent exhibition are on the first. The main part of the permanent exhibition is in the basement. From there, the visitor can access an air raid shelter located even further below, which was rediscovered during the extensive renovations of the building carried out for the museum between 2000 and 2003.⁷⁸⁴

Approaching the military quarters, it is not obvious that the impressive brick building houses a museum (Photo no. 58). When walking below the arcades however, the visitor is greeted by large banners which name the museum and the main topics addressed within it (Photo no. 59). Each banner consists of three large, vertical stripes of fabric, in black, white and red, listing one of the words from the museum's title and thus referring to the content of the exhibition.⁷⁸⁵ The banners list the words resistance, deportations, war, human rights, and liberation; linking them with multimedia laboratory, meeting spaces, projections, conferences, temporary exhibitions and

⁷⁸³ The Palazzo was built from 1716 to 1728 by Filippo Juvarra. In 2009 the international Centre for the study of Primo Levi (Centro Internazionale di Studi Primo Levi) also moved into the military quarters.

⁷⁸⁴ The shelter was built during the Second World War for the staff of the daily newspaper *La gazetta del Popolo*, and also used by the population in its vicinity. By coincidence it serves to link the time addressed by the exhibition to the building itself, and has therefore been integrated into the permanent exhibition. Visiting the air raid shelter had to be suspended in 2013 for safety reasons, however. The shelter's ventilation shaft has been transformed into a historic monument that can be seen outside on the square. Its design stands out amongst its surroundings, and the historical panel next to it provides information about the shelter as well as about the Museo Diffuso through which it can be visited. Another commemorative marker near the museum outlines the history of the military quarters.

⁷⁸⁵ Further banners introduce the other two institutions located in the same building.

multimedia installation. The words projections and multimedia installation in the banners highlight what is special about the permanent exhibition of the Museo Diffuso: the multimedia elements used in its display.



Photo no. 59: Banner of the Museo Diffuso.

4.3 Opening preambles: parameters from the modified paradigm

4.3.1 Hesitant contextualisation in the Museo della Deportazione

Definition of an exhibition's general approach at its beginning is common in Italy, as well as in Austria and Hungary. Both museums discussed here open their exhibitions by providing historical context that introduces the main elements of the presentations. In both institutions, the lobby serves as a foreword to the coming exhibitions, which are arranged thematically rather than chronologically. The Museo della Deportazione does not present a sequential story with a clear beginning, middle point, climax and end, but

instead takes an impressionistic approach to the concentration camps. As a result, its main exhibition provides no information about specific camps or the camp system. All such information is given in the lobby, which thus serves as an introduction to the main hall.

Arriving at the museum, the visitor walks into the white and rather plain looking lobby, in which there are several simple text panels and two works of art. One of these, designed by the artist Fernando Montagner, hangs on the wall at the entrance. It is black and lists the names of the workers deported from Prato to Ebensee. Sculptured hands reach up and cling to barbed wire, gesturing to suffering in the concentration camp.⁷⁸⁶ Next to it is a stone from the quarry in Ebensee symbolising suffering under forced labour.⁷⁸⁷ A panel in the doorway precedes the exhibition; it is not clearly connected to it and hence is easily overlooked by visitors. It shows the crest of the commune of Prato, indicating the city's funding and support of the institution, with other sponsors listed at the bottom. The first two text panels opposite the entrance introduce the concentration camp system in Germany and in Europe, while a third around the corner explains how coloured triangles sewn onto the clothes differentiated the prisoners. Three panels next to the entrance of the main hall describe the concentration camp in Ebensee, while another provides detailed information on the general strike of the workers in Prato that led to their deportation. The panels do not provide a broad contextualisation of Italy during the war or under the occupation, but relate solely to the concentration camps. With only the camps addressed, the information provided is brief, and it is clear that the seven panels do not aim to give an all-encompassing story, but just selected information.

Although the panels do not provide an extensive narrative, they suffice to position the museum within the contemporary dominant discourse in Italy. The legacy of the former paradigm on the resistance is visible in the rhetoric and words chosen in the panel in the doorway. It refers to the resistance and defines anti-fascism, peace and solidarity as core values in Prato and pledges to remember the "crimes of Nazi fascism". The panel ends with a broad call for peace and friendship across Europe.⁷⁸⁸ The

⁷⁸⁶ Artwork titled "Deportazione" in the lobby.

⁷⁸⁷ Lapida Commemorativa, in the lobby.

⁷⁸⁸ "La cultura della memoria de crimini nazi-fascist, vocaziuone profonda e condivisa che esalta i valori dell'antifascismo." panel in the doorway. The same statements can be found in the catalogue, most

historical contextualisation in the lobby is then representative of the modified paradigm, even though it only addresses the time of the German occupation. The lobby alludes to Italy's specific wartime history, but rather than offering detailed explanation it equates it with broader developments in Europe. Introducing the concentration camp system, the panels mention Italy, but do not describe features specific to the Italian camps. The first panel on the camps begins by describing how the concentration camps were established from 1933 onwards, goes on to outline how they were utilised for racial persecution from 1936, and then states that the concentration camp system was "exported all over Europe" after 1939.⁷⁸⁹ The map that accompanies the copy shows four sites in Italy: Fossoli, San Sabbia, Bolzano and Borgo San Dalmazzo, labelling them as concentration camps. The copy, however, does not mention these camps, but focuses instead on German camps and the extermination camps in the East.⁷⁹⁰ According to this panel, camps in Italy were exported versions of the German camps, like other European camps shown on the map. These references to Europe, already introduced in the doorway, invoke a common ground to unite European countries' experiences during the Second World War. This presentation hides the differences between camps and the stories specific to Italian camps, as well as the unique experiences of individual prisoners, and the perpetrators responsible.⁷⁹¹ Italy remains marginal in the representation and particular conditions of the Italian context are left vague.

The exhibition is equally vague in its presentation of victim groups. The lobby pluralises the victim groups, at least nominally, and as such it goes beyond the dominant discourse. In addition to political civilians, resistance fighters, Prisoners of War

explicitly summed up in the chapter "A brief History of the Museum," 10-17. Some of the texts in the catalogue are the same as those in the lobby, but the catalogue is more extensive and includes some extra articles. As well as presenting the exhibition objects, the catalogue also provides 20 biographies of people who were deported from the region.

⁷⁸⁹ "essere esportati nel resto d'Europa" panel "Il sistema concentrazionario nazista" in the Lobby. My translation. In English: "as it [the concentration camp system] began to be exported all over Europe" in the catalogue, page 18.

⁷⁹⁰ For the history of Prato this lack of attention to Italy's camps is justified as the workers from Prato were deported directly to Mauthausen and other German camps. This is also stated by the panel "Lo sciopero generale del marzo 1944 e la deportazione da Prato" in the Lobby.

⁷⁹¹ Most of the interned in Borgo San Dalmazzo, Fossoli, were Jews; in Bolzano and San Sabba the prisoners were more diverse, also including hostages, partisans and Prisoners of War. Borgo San Dalmazzo was initially run by the German SS and later by the Italian police, Fossoli was set up by Italians and later operated by the SS.

and the Jews, the panel on the concentration camps also names “the so-called ‘asocials’, homosexuals, prostitutes, beggars, alcoholics, gypsies and common criminals” in its list of victims, to which Jehovah’s Witnesses are added a little later.⁷⁹² The similarity of this list to those found in Austrian and Hungarian museums is striking. The list constitutes the customary victim groups within European Holocaust commemoration. Just as in the Zeitgeschichte Museum and the Holokauszt Emlékközpont, the expository agent does not discuss these victim groups in their own right. Later panels refer to the resistance fighters, the political deportees and the Jews, hiding the other victim groups named earlier.⁷⁹³ Most of the copy uses the word “deportees” to refer to all victims together. In Italy the term deportee refers to any person deported to the concentration camps, merging the resistance fighters, soldiers, people deported for political reasons, Prisoners of War and those who fell victim to the racial persecutions into one category. The deportee is a person imagined as Italian, deported from Italy to a concentration camp outside Italy. The term continuously marks Italian origin, and is used even when the victim is no longer on the deportation route. Theoretically, the word is inclusive, encompassing all victims. In practise, however, the term generally used with reference to people deported for political reasons, is implicitly associated with the resistance fighters.⁷⁹⁴

The panels in the lobby also name the perpetrators. Since the exhibition is only concerned with the time of the occupation, it does not deal with fascism before 1943. The panel describing the deportation of the workers states that the fascists arrested the workers and that the industrialists, attempting to end the strike, collaborated with the Germans. Police officers drawn into the National Republic Guard also participated.⁷⁹⁵ This panel represents the modified paradigm. Naming Italian perpetrators,

⁷⁹² “i cosiddetti ‘asociali’, omosessuali, prostitute, mendicanti, alcoolisti, zingari e criminali comuni” panel “Il sistema concentrazionario nazista” in the Lobby. The “so-called” modification of “asocials” implies attention to wording, yet the terminology that follows is loaded with negative stereotypes and/or connotations.

⁷⁹³ See, for example, the panel “Il museo della Deportazione” doorway; “L’annientamento attraverso il lavoro”; “Lo sciopero generale del marzo 1944 e la deportazione da Prato” in the Lobby.

⁷⁹⁴ Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 112-118.

⁷⁹⁵ Panel “Lo sciopero generale del marzo 1944 e la deportazione da Prato” in the Lobby written by the historian Michele Di Sabato That industrialists participated in the extermination through labour is also stated in the panel on Ebensee, “Il Campo di concentramento (KZ) di Ebensee” in the Lobby. One panel in the main hall addresses individual perpetrators by name. Panel “Iniezioni” in the main hall.

the copy no longer externalises responsibility to the Germans. The fascists, industrialists and members of the police were also responsible for the deportations; the population and the workers of Prato were their victims. The expository agent maintains the representation of the population and the workers as the good Italians, who are not differentiated further. The former trope of the good population opposed to fascism and united with the resistance reappears here, but has been modified to exclude the fascists and industrialists.

The introduction presented at the Museo della Deportazione not only contextualises the concentration camp system, but also identifies the Holocaust as the main crime of Nazi Germany in need of commemoration. The lobby addresses plural victim groups and perpetrators, two tropes of common in worldwide commemoration of the Holocaust, but these elements are not significant in the later exhibition. Representation in the Museo della Deportazione draws on both the well-known tropes of the older paradigm about the resistance and elements of the modified version. The resistance, the antifascist consensus, the good Italian population and the reduction of the Holocaust only to the concentration camps, as well as the homogenisation of its victims are all on display. All these elements were part of the old paradigm. The tropes are modified – even if only hesitantly – when, for example, the exhibition separates the fascists or the industrialists from the innocent population, or when other victim groups are added.

4.3.2 Historical expertise in the Museo Diffuso

Like the Museo della Deportazione, the Museo Diffuso also provides historical contextualisation in the lobby that precedes the main exhibition. The Museo Diffuso's exhibition is also thematically structured, divided into five themes, which are roughly chronological. Entering, the visitor arrives in a lobby with a desk across the entrance and posters, leaflets, and flyers posted throughout. The staff at the desk hand out headphones and explain how the multimedia elements of the permanent exhibition work. The multimedia elements are triggered to start by an infrared signal from the headphones. The staff then direct the visitor to the right, where the exhibition begins. The first panel, still in the lobby, gives a general overview over the exhibition and the historical situation in Italy. On the right side, the visitor faces a large, white wall, with a broad silver band painted across it (Photo no. 60). The wall presents the title of the permanent

exhibition and a white line, which branches out to five buttons. Each button represents a thematic unit of the exhibition and, when pressed, starts a video sequence on a TV screen on the left, introducing the respective theme.



Photo no. 60: Introductory panel in the lobby of the Museo Diffuso.

The copy titled “The ‘underground’ memory” explains:

An imaginary five-line underground runs through the virtual Turin in the building basement. Each line relates to a theme, introduced by the historian Giovanni De Luna in this map, and illustrated by video projections at the stops at the beginning of the tour. The first four lines - living everyday life, living under the bombs, living under the regime, living under occupation - converge on a large interactive table, passing through twelve city spots where visitors can travel through time and space freely. The descent to the air raid shelter ends this part of the tour. Back to daylight, visitors come across the fifth line, living free. Visitors are invited to stop at the interactive workstation dedicated to fundamental rights endorsed by the constitution, linked to the

keywords yes to democracy, yes to liberty, yes to equality, no to state violence. The journey ends in the reference room for further research.⁷⁹⁶

The lines as well as the five points will be seen again in the main part of the exhibition in the basement. White lines painted on the floor guide the visitor from one room to the next (Photo no. 61). The lobby familiarises the visitor with the visual elements that later structure the exhibition. Each point or button marks a separate theme addressed. In the lobby the buttons and the associated video introduces the thematic units “Living everyday life”, “Living/Life under the bombings”, “Living/Life under the regime”, “Living/Life under/during the occupation” and “Living free”.⁷⁹⁷ In the basement there is also a sixth section, “Living the Constitution”, but the lobby does not explain this theme in depth.



Photo no. 61: Guiding lines on the basement floor announcing the thematic unit “Vivere sotto il regime” (“Life under the regime”).

⁷⁹⁶ Opening panel “Torino 1938-1948” in the lobby. The copy is quite small and the text stretches across the whole wall, which discourages reading. While the Italian version makes more sense, the English translation is difficult to understand without having seen the basement. Nevertheless, the buttons are partly self-explanatory and the historical introduction will be encountered in any case.

⁷⁹⁷ The Italian copy calls the sections “Vivere il quotidiano,” “Vivere sotto le bombe,” “Vivere sotto il Regime,” “Vivere sotto l’Occupazione/Vivere l’occupazione” and “Vivere liberi.” The word living is replaced with life in the English leaflet and the section on the occupation is titled inconsistent in both the Italian and the English copy, leaflet and floor painting. I decided to use the titles provided in the leaflet, “Life during the occupation”, while it is called “Living under the occupation” in the copy in the lobby. I would like to note however, that replacing the word “under” with “during” implies that the population had a different position to the regime.

Pressing the buttons connected to each unit, the visitor then sees a video of the historian Giovanni De Luna, who was one of the exhibition's academic advisors. He summarises each theme and in doing so offers his interpretation as a guide in approaching the content of the exhibition. The picture he paints focuses upon the experiences of people in Turin from 1942 to 1945. He describes life in Turin as relatively normal at the beginning of the war and during fascism, worsening as the war came closer, and becoming dire with the occupation that brought the violence and fear that governed people's lives until after the liberation. De Luna characterises Turin's population as people who simply attempted to live normal lives despite the larger societal developments beyond their reach.⁷⁹⁸

This image, in which people strive to lead a normal and regular life, also applies to De Luna's description of fascism, which portrays fascism as a largely harmless regime. According to De Luna, fascism failed because its bureaucratic apparatus was too large for people to identify with. People belonged to the fascist party because they had to, but the party did not affect their personal lives. In his understanding, fascism was not the problem; the Republic of Salò was. Fascists in the Republic of Salò were militant, and the militancy of the regime led to the Civil War.⁷⁹⁹ In an attempt to convey the experience of such hatred, De Luna describes the Civil War as a war fought against one's playmate, neighbour and companion.

Talking about the resistance, De Luna opposes the right wing and centre-right narratives, arguing that the resistance emerged as a reaction to the fascists and to German rule after 1943. Thus, he does not hold the resistance responsible for the Civil War. But De Luna also avoids presenting the resistance as unanimously positive and heroic. He pluralises resistance fighters' motivations to resist, and lists different groups of people who resisted.⁸⁰⁰ De Luna then states that the Allies liberated Italy and not the resistance, contradicting the notion that the Italians liberated themselves.⁸⁰¹ Ending on a positive note, De Luna says that political participation boomed after 1945.⁸⁰² De Luna's explications fit well to the modified paradigm. Describing most of the Italian

⁷⁹⁸ De Luna on "Living everyday life"; De Luna on "Life under the bombings."

⁷⁹⁹ De Luna on "Life under the regime."

⁸⁰⁰ De Luna on "Life during the occupation."

⁸⁰¹ De Luna on "Life under the regime."

⁸⁰² De Luna on "Living free."

population in positive terms, he nevertheless identifies some Italians as perpetrators. The Civil War and its violence are highlighted, undermining the glorification of the resistance and pluralising it without denigrating it. The fascist regime appears harmless and is not seen to have problematic implications for Italy. Slightly surprisingly, De Luna does not address the racial laws or the Constitution, so prominent in the title of the exhibition.

The expository agent uses the historian Giovanni De Luna to present the museum's position. The copy introduces De Luna as a historian and this legitimises him as an authority; an expert on the topics represented. Aligning the museum's position with his also legitimates the museum. The museum here represents an interpretation as it is clear that De Lunas is offering his own interpretation, speaking with his own voice and visible while doing so. The exhibition then presents the same conclusions as those of De Luna, strengthening his interpretation by repeating it, although the exhibition goes beyond the introduction and adds more content. In particular, the racial laws as well as the repression of the fascist regime before 1943 appear in detail in the exhibition. While conflicting interpretations are absent in the exhibition, this presentation does enable the visitor to see that other interpretations could have been possible.

4.4 Of sacred and absent objects – two positions on material culture

4.4.1 Reliquaries of the past in the Museo della Deportazione

Both museums reflect on the mediation of the past in the present through their mode of representation. The historical interpretation given at the beginning follows a traditional presentation structure often employed by historical museums, in which an expert provides his interpretation of the subsequent content, be it in writing or via a video interview. As familiar as this historical contextualisation may be to the visitor, the presentation that follows is unusual in both institutions.

In the Museo della Deportazione, the expository agent uses material objects to represent the past. The objects are the centrepieces of the exhibition. The main exhibition consists of one room, designed to establish a dark, gloomy and sombre atmosphere, which is silent and thought-provoking. The visitor steps through a heavy curtain that separates the main hall and the lobby. She encounters a dark room, with a

black tiled floor, black walls and dim yellow lighting. Irregularly shaped and positioned black display cases stretch from the floor to the ceiling. Together with the sixteen display cases, five large photo panels and three videos constitute the exhibition. The display cases are triangular or rectangular and most of them thin towards the top (Photo no. 62). The glass windows in the cases are equally irregular in shape, and while inviting visitors to view the individual objects placed inside, the size or the shape of the window partially impedes this view (Photo no. 63). The objects are illuminated from inside the cases, with individual yellow spotlights adding light to the cases from outside.

The cases inside the room are accessible from multiple sides, with space between them, so that the exhibition does not impose a clear walkway. Four of the cases are attached to the walls, but most are standalone pieces.⁸⁰³ The expository agent has dedicated each case to a separate theme such as food, clothing or imprisonment, and each theme functions independently of the others. The visitor can wander from one case to the next in a random order. Five enlarged photographs, also stretching from floor to ceiling, stand along the walls opposite the entrance. The photographs are the only lighter elements in the whole room. The expository agent has positioned them to coincide with the vistas established by the pathways between the cases. The photographs implicitly pull the visitor towards them, and guide her from the front of the room to its rear (Photo no. 64). Passing by the photographs along the wall, new vista points emerge, suggesting a different path back. The two videos and the slide show of photographs, all inserted into the walls of the main hall, supplement the display cases. The design of the room leaves no doubt that the cases and the objects within them are the central feature. Combining the black colour, the sparse lighting, the protruding shapes and sharp angles, the expository agent has created an atmosphere of gloom, hardship and sadness.

⁸⁰³ The cases can be moved and rearranged so that no fixed position exists for any of them.



Photo no. 62: Display cases in the main hall.



Photo no. 63: Partial view of the clubs used for beating prisoners.



Photo no. 64: One possible vista towards the photo panel at the back.

The display mode elevates the objects from mundane items to symbolic bearers of meaning. The exhibition shows clothing, eating utensils and small personal items, basic work tools, such as a drill or a saw, and objects from the concentration camp structures, such as parts of the fence, a bunk bed or the bell. A few perpetrator objects – several clubs, a replica of a bench on which prisoners were tortured, and a syringe used by the medical staff to murder prisoners – are also exhibited.⁸⁰⁴ The objects are ordinary, and, found in another context, might not arouse special interest. Knowing that the objects come from the former concentration camp, however, elevates their importance. A panel directly at the door of the main hall explains that most of the objects were brought from Ebensee to Prato by survivors who visited the former camp grounds in 1972. ANED commissioned the reconstruction of the few remaining objects for an exhibition shown in 1974 at the communal palace in Prato.⁸⁰⁵

The presentation of the objects in the cases sacralises the objects. With the exception of the work tools, each case shows two or three items, often with separate windows through which the individual objects can be glimpsed. Presented singly, illuminated from within their housings in a dark and quiet room, the objects become relics. A dish shown in the display on “Eating and drinking” exemplifies this sacralisation. The case has two windows, one opening up onto a rusty, bent cup, and the other onto an equally rusted and broken dish for food. The yellow light is dim and shines onto the dish from above, encircling it in its own shadow. With its base ripped open, the light falls through the dish (Photo no. 65). This dish is all that is left in the present of the past struggle for food in the concentration camp. Its rusted and broken form make the impression of inadequate nourishment, bad provisions and suffering all the more tangible – while irretrievably out of reach.

⁸⁰⁴ With the exception of the syringe, the cases hide more of the perpetrator objects than they reveal. The windows of the cases allow only very limited views of the objects, denying the visitor access.

⁸⁰⁵ Panel at the entrance of the main hall. Whenever a reconstruction is exhibited, this is noted on the panel next to it.



Photo no. 65: Dish presented in the display case “Mangiare e bere” in the main hall.

The object presentation of the dish cites the presentation of religious relics. In the Catholic tradition, material objects believed to have been left after the death of saints, acquire part of the saints’ spiritual powers. The relic embodies this power and through it represents God himself. Once an object has been successfully established as a relic, the church that owns it puts it on display for veneration. Presented in a central location, elevated for everyone to see and protected by a glass case, the single relic is transformed from a mundane to a sacred object. The object presentation in the Museo della Deportazione does the same for its secular exhibits. The catalogue makes this representation explicit when it states that the exhibition is a “sort of secular shrine.”⁸⁰⁶ The objects’ mundane origins heighten this analogy. The exhibition presents each object on a pedestal, behind glass, within a protected environment and an atmosphere of veneration. It are carefully lit, the yellow circle cast around it resembling a halo. Every

⁸⁰⁶ Fondazione Museo, *Fondazione Museo*, 10.

one a single relic, displayed alone, the objects in the Museo della Deportazione embody the suffering in the concentration camp.⁸⁰⁷ They allude to the loss of what they are not, the people who touched them, who were murdered. The partial view that the display cases allow of the objects and the uneven lighting, which creates looming shadows around the objects, reminds the visitor that what she sees is incomplete: a fragment only partially visible, partially knowable, left over from the past.

The expository agent specifies the meaning of the objects in the text that accompanies them. Each display case is devoted to a single theme that is identified in a text panel on the outside of each case. The text in the panel gives the display case a title, a caption for each object inside it and a quote that relates to the object or the theme.⁸⁰⁸ The titles are umbrella terms for the objects, elaborate upon the experience connected to them, or describe a situation encountered in the concentration camp. With words such as “Clothing”, “Hunger” or “No way of escaping”, the headings are short and incisive. They characterise the camps as places of suffering from hunger and punishment, of rigid structures into which the prisoners were inserted, as well as murderous living and working conditions.⁸⁰⁹ Suffering is the message common to all headings and as a result, the objects are tied to the notion of suffering and become placeholders that symbolise it. The captions also describe the objects in matter-of-fact language and, if needed, briefly outline how they were used. Like the headings, the captions are as short as possible and often simply state what the visitor can see in the display case.

The expository agent explains the suffering further in the rest of the text panel and generalises it to encompass all concentration camp experiences. A good example of how a material object can come to embody an experience as common to all concentration camps is the display case on hunger. Three small windows open up to cutlery, a bowl and a black, solid substance. Each object is presented alone, on a separate shelf with a separate window (Photo no. 62, Photo no. 66).

⁸⁰⁷ The archetypal figures of suffering were often not only generic but also based on Christian vocabulary and iconography. Gordon, *The Holocaust*, 115.

⁸⁰⁸ Where known and applicable, the expository agent has provided the name of the person cited, as well as the book from which the citation was taken.

⁸⁰⁹ Three display cases deal with working conditions in Ebensee and Mauthausen, three with different forms of punishment, two with clothing, two with food and hunger, and one each with imprisonment, everyday objects, prisoner numbers, roll-call, the barracks and what remains of those burned in the crematorium.



Photo no. 66: Display case “La fame” in the main hall.

The text panel provides the title “Hunger”, giving the captions on the left, while the right side presents six longer quotes all connected to the experience of hunger. The captions simply state that the display shows “two spoons and a knife”, “a metal bowl with a hook to attach it to the clothing of the deportee”, and a “piece of tar.”⁸¹⁰ The expository agent thus defines each sacred object, coupling it with the experience of hunger in the concentration camps via the heading “Hunger.” The following quotations then give insight into the experience of hunger. Primo Levi, for example, states about spoons:

The same debilitating feeling of impotence and destitution was caused, during the first days of our captivity, by the lack of a spoon (...) the daily soup could not be eaten otherwise than by lapping it up like dogs do.⁸¹¹

And Enzo Gandi states about the dish:

⁸¹⁰ Case “La fame” in the main hall.

⁸¹¹ Case “La fame” in the main hall. Quote from *Fondazione Museo, Fondazione Museo*, 69.

And so we will spend the days, waiting for noon when the bell would ring for the distribution of the so-called rations and we had to run, we had a bowl hooked to our clothes, the filthy, rusty iron basin (...) the meal was a ladleful of slop with something in it, potato peels, the few cabbage leaves, that was all, really.⁸¹²

The quotes describe how the object was used, its relevance in the camp, the specific experiences connected to it and, most importantly, the feelings associated with these experiences. The despair, anxiety, and tremendous pain of the inmates is conveyed by the quotation. The quotes reveal specific information about the objects or the type of food but do not provide a complete narrative about the provisions given in the concentration camps or the hunger experienced there. The specific information is random and could be replaced by other information, as long as it conveyed hunger, starvation and destitution. The quotes are not all-encompassing, but reveal a glimpse of the suffering experienced in a concentration camp. The limitedness of the quote, its possible replacement by a similar one – in fact its specific form as a subjective experience – enables its generalisation. The suffering of hunger is generalised, so that the quotes communicate that hunger and starvation was a constant condition for any prisoner in every concentration camp.

The representation of the Holocaust via the objects in the main hall is a fragmented one, open to interpretation, that evokes associations rather than telling a consecutive narrative. The visitor does not need to look at every display case to grasp the main meaning of the exhibition. Each case conveys a variant of the same message: that the concentration camp experience was one of plight and suffering for everyone interned there. Hunger, helplessness, imprisonment, and torture are common experiences. Sacred objects, coupled with the quotations, embody the concentration camp experiences in general, as fragments of the past standing for its totality. The relics preserve the past in the present and might even redeem it for the future. The objects embody the past; the past is present. Reliquaries in the Catholic tradition possess powers of their own, usually healing ones. Securely housed within the Museo della Deportazione, mere objects have the power to commemorate the past, and through the commemoration in the present, perhaps even to heal the past to some degree.

⁸¹² Case "La fame" in the main hall. Quote from Fondazione Museo, *Fondazione Museo*, 69.

4.4.2 Refraining from objects in the Museo Diffuso

In the Museo Diffuso, the expository agent has chosen the opposite direction to that of the Museo della Deportazione and largely refrains from showing material objects. The exhibition narrates the past through multimedia installations that are presented as authentic representations of the past. The mode of representation implicitly questions the two material objects that are included in the exhibition.⁸¹³ The possibility of using material objects to represent the past appears doubtful in result.

The video of the historian in the lobby is the first multimedia element. It familiarises the visitor with the video interviews that form a main part of the exhibition. Once finished with the introduction, the visitor proceeds to the permanent exhibition in the basement. Each theme has its own room and the first four each featuring a projection of historical film footage and two video interviews with people living in Turin during the time in question.⁸¹⁴ The films are montages of footage produced between 1938 and 1945, edited to relate to each theme. In the room on living everyday life, for example, the expository agent has chosen scenes from movies, advertising images and sports events, accompanied by music and singing, a fascist speech and a soccer commentator. The interviews describe life in the city and at the front. Two large, vertical structures that resemble mirrors house the video interviews. As the visitor approaches them, the interviews begins. In each section a woman and a man speak alternately about the topic in question. After these rooms, the lines on the floor guide the visitor to the media table, where twelve locations in the city are linked with the five themes of the exhibition (Photo no. 67). Looking down at the table, the visitor can touch different panels grouped together for each city location to activate documents, photographs, paintings, films and interviews screened on the panels.⁸¹⁵ These three elements: the film pieces, the video interviews, and the moving images on the media table, constitute the main exhibits in the Museo Diffuso. The multimedia displays tell stories to the visitor.

⁸¹³ Three more are encountered in the air raid shelter: two posters, one indicating the hygienic stations and one prohibiting smoking, and an electrical panel, found when the air raid shelter was excavated. Neither object is tied into the exhibition narrative or given any explication.

⁸¹⁴ The fifth room features four video interviews and no film screening; the room on the Constitution has a completely different set up, which I will describe in section 4.5.2.

⁸¹⁵ Other than the location title there is no information indicating what will be shown in each panel, so the visitor has to choose one blindly, without knowing what kind of information it might reveal.



Photo no. 67: The media table in the Museo Diffuso.

The virtual display elements in the Museo Diffuso authenticate its narrative. The narrative is credible because multimedia elements transmit it, presenting the content as a true depiction of the past, claiming to represent it directly. In the lobby the copy states that the themes will be “illustrated by video projections.”⁸¹⁶ With the film screenings as the first element of each room, the expository agent hopes to provide images for each theme that encapsulate its fundamental aspects. The verb ‘illustrate’ already indicates that the video seeks to depict how the past looked. In the section

⁸¹⁶ Panel “The ‘underground of memory’” in the lobby.

“Life under the bomb,” film footage taken by firefighters in Turin shows houses in flames after air raids. The images of burning houses and streets of rubble ‘illustrate’ the bombings. Aspects of reality not captured by the firefighters’ films remain invisible, as do the conditions under which the footage was produced.⁸¹⁷

The incompleteness of the visual representation of the past is particularly evident in the film screenings in the room “Life under the regime.” The footage shown is a montage of excerpts from Istituto Luce’s 1939 documentary on Mussolini’s visit to Turin in the same year. The expository agent has reassembled the documentary and at times even added different sounds to the footage. The scenes chosen are iconic and reproduce Mussolini and his regime as they are commonly imagined.⁸¹⁸ The images selected show the main topics of the Luce productions: Mussolini as the central, most important figure of the state, the population as an adoring mass applauding him and the omnipresence of the regime and the war effort.⁸¹⁹ This montage leaves out the boring and uneventful parts of the documentary; the lengthy scenes in which Mussolini visits individual groups in Turin, or the endlessly repetitive images of him and the cheering crowd. The exhibition film has been cut with a fast rhythm and only includes scenes that are visually striking and significant. It has been successfully adapted to present day viewing expectations and the anticipated attention span of the ideal visitor.

The video provides a general impression, a rough visual orientation, rather than specific information about the regime. It reproduces a familiar image of the fascist era, in which Mussolini is either a great, celebrated hero, or a slightly funny figure. The great hero was the intended message of the Istituto Luce, in keeping with the way the fascist dictator wanted to present himself. This self-representation no longer entirely works. The oversized M for example, set up for Mussolini’s visit to the Fiat production site, appears dated and pathetic, with the effect of belittling Mussolini.⁸²⁰

⁸¹⁷ A tiny reference to the production of the footage is made visible by the text, inserted into the films, that indicates when and by whom the scenes were recorded.

⁸¹⁸ On fascist image productions see: Tonia Siebers, *Mussolini's Medienmacht. Themen und Instrumente der Propaganda im faschistischen Italien* (Saarbrücken: VDM, 2007). On images in fascists’ self-representations: Giovanni Spagnoletti, “Gott gibt uns das Brot - Er bereitet es uns und verteidigt es’ Bild und Mythos Mussolini im Film,” in *Führerbilder. Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, Stalin in Fotografie und Film*, ed. by Martin Loiperdinger, Rudolf Herz, and Ulrich Pohlmann (Zürich: Pieper, 1995), 111-134.

⁸¹⁹ Alessandro Campi, *Mussolini* (Bologna: Mulino, 2001).

⁸²⁰ Similarly the weapons, seen today, might evoke a sense of doom instead of greatness.

This is, however, consistent with current dominant discourse, in which the figure of Mussolini is either celebrated and adored or belittled and ridiculed.⁸²¹ The visual memory presented in this room of the Museo Diffuso focuses on Mussolini. Enthusiasm for the regime is made visible by the cheering masses and the admiration they show for Mussolini, but active participation, commitment to the fascist regime's ideologies, active engagement to achieve its goals are not discernible. The masses appear distant, and the reasons for their cheers are no longer evident.⁸²² The rest of the exhibition – the interviews in this room as well as the media table – pluralise these images, adding opposition to Mussolini and his regime to the narrative. The visual representation, however, is one-sided; it does not encourage the visitor to view the regime's self-representation critically, but simply adopts and repeats its mode of representation.

The expository agent does not contextualise the film footage shown. The production of these images under the fascist regime and their history as iconic representations after 1945 is not discussed. With no contextualisation or critical discussion of the primary source, the visualised memory produced by the fascist regime is reproduced in the exhibition. This holds true despite the fact that many visitors know that media representations are not accurate depictions of reality and despite the evident manipulation of the scenes, frames and perspectives in the footage itself. The images are what the ideal visitor is already accustomed to, from TV programmes, movies and documentaries. The historical introduction in the lobby mentioned a looming presence of the regime, and the footage confirms this. The depiction of the regime conforms to what is expected of it. The contextualisation in the lobby also states that everyday life differed from the self-presentation of the state, but the expository agent offers no images of this other reality under the regime in Turin. The visual representations leave a gap – they show the partial reality of the regime's self-representation, but no other images to complement it. Visiting a museum in order to imagine the past, the visitor is

⁸²¹ On the image of Mussolini dominant in Italy today see: Aram Mattioli, *'Viva Mussolini!' Die Aufwertung des Faschismus im Italien Berlusconi* (Padaborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010).

⁸²² Alternative representations, such as workers' dissatisfaction with the way the state staged the visit of Mussolini, or simply images of everyday life under the regime in Turin, without focusing on Mussolini, are missing. The workers' displeasure, for example, has been documented by: Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory. The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. by Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987).

obliged to revisit iconic images for want of alternatives.⁸²³ Reproducing its self-presentations, the exhibition reasserts popular imagination of the fascist regime.

The multimedia technology serves to authenticate the images it presents. Merging it through montage, the exhibition recomposes archive material to create new messages. Dancing scenes, for example, are cut out from a movie's narrative and used instead to testify to the continuity of normal life. Furthermore, the fast cuts, striking sequences and iconic images that come together conform to the viewing expectations of the present. The new message, easy to grasp and enjoyable to watch, is more convincing and acceptable than the original reels of film in full length would be. Transposing the films, documents or photographs into the new format of computer projections, makes them familiar. This familiarity with the medium brings the past closer to the present, especially for younger visitors and/or those particularly well acquainted with multimedia technology. The multimedia elements claim to depict the past representations as they were, but actually transform them in several ways to establish authenticity and make the claimed authenticity accessible.

The Museo Diffuso has chosen a different path to that of most history museums, which traditionally authenticate material objects. In authenticating multimedia elements, the expository agent at the Museo Diffuso explicitly questions the status of material objects as capable of transmitting an authentic past. The two material objects that are displayed in the exhibition; a printing press and a wooden chair, inherently question the claim of authenticity traditionally associated with objects. The printing press is located in the section "Living under the occupation," hidden behind a gauze curtain onto which the film footage of the section is screened. The footage shows newspapers and flyers printed by the resistance. Banging and hammering sounds from a printing press accompany the display when the projection runs.⁸²⁴ The visitor sees the press exposed as a silhouette through the curtain in the short intervals when the

⁸²³ Later within the exhibition, the media table works in the same way, although the visual material it screens is more extensive. The expository agent does not discuss the origins of any of the material provided, gives no historical contextualisation of its production, and does not outline its history after 1945 or the selection criteria that brought it to the exhibition. My criticism here is that the reproduction of dominant perceptions of the fascist regime does not complicate them. Contextualising the source is just one way that the images provided could be complicated, other possible approaches would be to show alternative images and/or to confound expected viewing styles.

⁸²⁴ There is also music, interview snippets and a speech against fascism but the sound of the press is the most dominant sound.

film pauses momentarily. A small label explains that the resistance had a whole network of printers who used presses such as this one to secretly print newspapers and flyers at night. The label notes that this was a very dangerous activity; both the German and the fascist authorities identified and arrested many printers.⁸²⁵ The expository agent hides the printing press from the direct view of the visitor. This evokes the clandestine nature of the activity that took place in the past. The sound adds drama and suspense to the display, heightening the impression of a dangerous activity. Its presentation behind a gauze curtain also implicitly questions the materiality of the printing press, which is displayed yet hidden. It is not the material object as such, but its vague presence in the exhibition that makes the main statement here: gesturing to illegal, hidden activities, dangerous when unveiled. The visitor cannot explore the materiality of the printing press, she can only look at it from the distance, unable to touch it or really engage with it. What is directly visible is the projection of flyers, posters and pamphlets, superimposed over the printing press.

The expository agent shows the second material object directly after the printing press. The adjacent room commemorates the executions at the Martinetto shooting range in Turin. After September 1943, more than 60 partisans and members of the resistance were shot at Martinetto which has since been commemorated by a small memorial. The room at the Museo Diffuso is completely empty except for a single wooden chair on a small pedestal, lit by a single yellow light. A small label in front of the chair indicates that it was sitting on chairs like this one that prisoners had awaited execution. Projected above the chair are the names, professions, dates of birth and dates of execution of people murdered in Martinetto (Photo no. 68). Several gunshots interrupt the silence, stopping briefly, only to start again, suggesting terror and fear to the visitor. The installation is a memorial to the dead and does not provide much historical information.⁸²⁶ The chair represents the absent people, symbolising where the victims would have been; but the multimedia elements, the screening and the media table provide the meaning connected to the object. The chair is a placeholder for the commemoration, it does not represent the past but rather gestures to a past that no longer exists.

⁸²⁵ The label is classic in style and format, providing some context on the network of printers, detailed information about the specific press and its usage, as well as additional information that goes beyond the individual object.

⁸²⁶ The media table later provides this information. In the room on Martinetto, the atmosphere evoked is more important.

A past that, in this case, is not actually visualised by the object. Reality here is claimed by the screened names, signifiers of the real people; while the shooting sounds, an imitation disturbing the silence, signal that the shooting was real and not a mediated event. The multimedia elements appear more tangible and actually express reality in a more solid way than the material objects do. The mediated past is real, while the material objects are only placeholders symbolising an imagined past.



Photo no. 68: Chair and projection in the room dedicated to the executions at Marzabotto.

4.5 Generalisations: a European past and Italian politics

4.5.1 Universal concentration camp experiences at the Museo della Deportazione

In Italy, Holocaust representations link the Holocaust to broader ethical questions. The Holocaust is related to general suffering, to universal debates about humanity, humanistic and political values held in Europe and the world. Both museums I analysed move from the specific narratives they present to universalised ethical considerations. The Museo della Deportazione first generalises the experiences of one concentration camp to encompass all camps and all prisoner groups, and then extends its message further to address the suffering of humanity as a whole.

In the Museo della Deportazione's exhibition the expository agent mixes specific stories and generalised ones. Parts of the display in the main hall are very specific, dealing only with the concentration camps in Ebensee and Mauthausen. Prisoners in Ebensee sucked on a piece of tar for nourishment, exhibited in the case dedicated to hunger, and Roberto Castellani made a needle to mend his clothing, now presented in the case showing everyday objects.⁸²⁷ In the displays about forced labour in Ebensee and Mauthausen, the expository agent even mentions the names of the two concentration camps in the headings.⁸²⁸ The displays addressing work in both camps tie the objects shown to their specific uses, with each object standing for itself and its particular usage. The captions describe this usage and how working with this object felt for the prisoner.⁸²⁹ Two photographs from the gallery in Ebensee underline the specific relationship of the objects to Ebensee.

Other display cases are specific with respect to the object, but generalise the experiences they relate to it. The display "Numbers", for example, presents two metal plates with a number on them and a small wire attached. Above, the expository agent has placed a photograph of a child showing the number tattooed on its arm (Photo no. 69). The caption at the side defines the object as a "Metal plate with the inscription of the registration number and a copper wire used to attach it to the wrist (in Auschwitz

⁸²⁷ Display case "La fame" and "Ogetti d'uso quotidiano" in the main hall.

⁸²⁸ "Il lavoro nelle gallerie di Ebensee" and "Il lavoro nella cava di pietra di Mauthausen" in the main hall. If the expository agent is attempting to characterise work as a universal experience of all concentration camps, these specific links to Ebensee and Mauthausen counteract the generalisation.

⁸²⁹ Panel "Il lavoro nelle gallerie di Ebensee" in the main hall.

the number was tattooed on the arm).⁸³⁰ The first part of the caption is specific, naming the object and its usage. The bracketed supplement then informs the visitor about how numbers were inscribed in Auschwitz, indicating that a similar number system was used in all concentration camps. The bracketed text refers to the photograph but does not provide specific details about it.⁸³¹ The information is still specific, but central is the number system more generally. Full generalisation then comes through the quotes. The first quote by Franco Ferrante explains how the number was attached to his clothing as well as to his wrist. The second quote by Primo Levi outlines that each prisoner had to learn the number in German and present it, for example, when food was distributed. In the third quote Carlo Scatena reveals the impact of the roll-call and number system: “names did not exist anymore”.⁸³² The first quote explains the objects, the second describes the importance of the numbers and the third shows how this concept governed life in the concentration camps. The number plates shown do not communicate information about Ebensee as much as they provide specific examples from Ebensee that represent the impact of prisoner numbers in all concentration camps. The expository agent here provides a gradual transition from specific to general.

⁸³⁰ “Piastrine di latta con l’iscrizione del numero di matricola e filo di ferro per applicare al polso (ad Auschwitz il numero veniva tatuato sul braccio). Oggetto originale donato da Roberto Castellani (n. 57027) deportato ad Ebensee.” Panel “Il numero” in the main hall. It also states that one of the objects was donated to the Museum by Roberto Castellani, a former prisoner in Ebensee.

⁸³¹ The caption in the catalogue is more specific, stating that the photo shows a Roma or Sinti child “with a tattoo of registration number preceded by the Letter Z for ‘Zigeuner’ (gypsy).” *Fondazione Museo, Fondazione Museo*, 78. While the numbers were certainly important in the extermination camps, Annette Wieviorka has convincingly showed that the experiences connected to them differs between concentration camps; e.g. the numbers in Auschwitz also signified temporary survival. Annette Wieviorka, “On Testimony,” in *Holocaust Remembrance. The Shapes of Memory*, ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 23-32, 30.

⁸³² Panel “Il numero” in the main hall.



Photo no. 69: Display case "Il numero" in the main hall.

In most display cases however, the material objects are generalised immediately. The themes and the objects related to them transcend their usage, the specific concentration camp or the individual experience. Themes like “hunger”, “no means of escape”, “clothing” or “punishment”, presuppose this. The exhibition claims that all prisoners in all camps throughout Europe lived the experiences connected to these themes. Impossibility of escape, hunger, poor clothing and severe punishment were thus the defining features of the concentration camps. To achieve this generalisation the expository agent links each single object to a general theme, which stands for all camps. Even though individual survivors collected individual objects in Ebensee, the spoon or the metal bowl presented in the display on hunger do not represent hunger in Ebensee, but in all camps.⁸³³

⁸³³ That Ebensee is not necessarily in focus is also exemplified by the expository agent’s use of multiple quotes from Primo Levi, who was not interned in Ebensee.

In the Museo della Deportazione, it is not only objects and experiences that are generalised, but victims as well. They become one homogenous group, as exemplified by the use of the term deportee, discussed above. The generalisation of the victims is also apparent in the display “Ashes”. The display is located directly to the left of the entrance to the main hall. It is a large glass case inserted into the wall, within which a single small shelf bears a small grey pile of ashes (Photo no. 70). The label accompanying the display identifies the pile as “Ashes”. The text panel, the only example without a quote, states that “Over 10 million people were exterminated in Nazi concentration camps” and the caption defines the ashes as “Human ashes from the crematorium oven.”⁸³⁴ The expository agent does not reveal which oven the ashes came from, or how the museum obtained them.⁸³⁵ The effect of the minimalistic display is extremely powerful. The small amount of ashes stands in stark contrast to the over ten million dead and highlights the discrepancy between the horror of the past and the little that remains of it in the present. The expository agent unifies all victims and commemorates them together by using these few ashes to symbolise the remains of all victims.



Photo no. 70: Detail of the display case “Ceneri” in the main hall.

⁸³⁴ “Oltre 10 milioni di persone sono state annientate nei Lager nazisti.” Panel “Ceneri” in the main hall. “Ceneri umane provenienti da un forno crematorio.” Panel “Ceneri” in the main hall.

⁸³⁵ The question of whether the display of what might be human remains posed any problems or raised larger debates is also not addressed. The debate about the display of women's hair in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, for example, is notorious.

The generalised concentration camp experience, endured by homogenised victims, is ultimately linked to humanity – the widest generalisation possible. The expository agent achieves this with the five photo panels set up along the walls. All photographs were taken after the liberation in liberated concentration camps. On the left wall are two panels, one showing two gaunt children, sitting on the ground, their bones protruding from their bodies. One looks at the ground, while the other gazes out of the picture but without meeting the eye of the ideal visitor (Photo no. 71). Next to it is a photograph of a woman behind barbed wire, originally taken in Auschwitz. She has a blanket wrapped around her shoulders and looks at the visitor with a questioning face (Photo no. 71). On the back wall, the three remaining photo panels stand close to each other (Photo no. 72). The photograph on the left shows several men lining up in, probably during a roll-call. The photograph was taken in Mauthausen. The men wear light coloured shirts and pants and some have suspenders, their heads are shaven and, with the picture taken slightly from above, most seem to be looking at the ground. Next to this photograph is a boy or young man seated on the ground in a relaxed posture, looking out of the picture to the left. His head shaved, his rib cage protruding starkly from his body, he wears loose pants and slippers (Photo no. 72). The photograph on the right is the one I discussed in my introduction. It shows a man, again gaunt and with protruding bones, seated on a stool inside a barrack.⁸³⁶ He is naked, his legs are crossed and he gazes out of the picture slightly to the right – also not meeting the ideal visitor’s eyes (Photo no. 72).⁸³⁷ The last two photos were both taken in the forced labour camp in Ebensee.

The expository agent has enlarged all the photographs so that the people portrayed are close to the height of the ideal visitor, and cropped them so that the proportions meet the golden ratio western viewers are accustomed to.⁸³⁸ Those depicted are framed centrally, clearly visible, in focus, and lit with stark contrast. The exhibition provides no information about the photographs; it does not mention who took them,

⁸³⁶ This is the photograph I discussed briefly in the introduction.

⁸³⁷ The photograph of the man in the barrack is shown in Ebensee, the DÖW and the Holocaust Emlékközpont; the one of the boy in Ebensee and the DÖW.

⁸³⁸ The expository agent does not note this, but I have seen two of the photos in the Zeitgeschichte Museum, which exhibits them in their original size and proportions in the memorial exhibition; and one exhibited at the Mauthausen Concentration camp.

where or when, who they depict, nor how they came to be here. Furthermore, the photographs are not connected to a particular part of the exhibition. There is simply no caption to the photographs, leaving them without words.⁸³⁹ The photographs are visual markers, offering direction for the unspecified exhibition pathway, but they also represent all possible prisoners. They communicate that everyone, men women and children, could become victims of the concentration camp system.



Photo no. 71: Enlarged photographs on the left wall of the Museo della Deportazione.

⁸³⁹ Two of the photos, the men on the stool and the boy sitting on the ground, were taken in Ebensee after the liberation. The one of the men standing in rows is from Mauthausen and the photograph of the woman was taken after the liberation of Auschwitz I have been unable to identify the ones of the children yet.



Photo no. 72: Enlarged photographs at the back wall of the Museo della Deportazione.

Encompassing everyone, the photos do not represent individual victims, but humanity. The photographs show the victims not as Jews or resistance fighters, and without distinctions according to class or status.⁸⁴⁰ Unlike photographs of concentration camp inmates that dehumanise the victims, as those in the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* do for example, the people portrayed here remain human. All are clothed or do not show their genitals, which is highly unusual for representations of concentration camp victims. The photographs grant privacy, which is also visible in that the woman's head is not shaved. Following western rules of modesty, the exhibition represents the people without humiliating them. Humanity is also visible in their postures, gazes and positions. The depicted are not too distant from the ideal visitor. All of them are alive, and though gaunt, they do look as if they belong to this world. Their gazes are self-conscious and they seem to be aware of their position in time and place. The photographs arouse compassion and empathy, because suffering is clearly marked in them, and they allow identification, because the people remain human. The people in the photographs suffer but do so as every man, woman and child would have.

In generalising the experiences made in the concentration camp and homogenising the prisoner groups who made these experiences, a shared past is invoked. The

⁸⁴⁰ The group of men are represented as workers, but have been made workers by the concentration camp system rather than as a social class.

concentration camp system unites Europe, and the concentration camp prisoners of Europe unite European populations as representatives of their suffering. Italians are part of this shared experience. Here the expository agent promotes an image of Europe as a geographic area that shares the same, difficult past. This representation of human suffering common throughout Europe appeals to the ideal visitor to end suffering. Using the Holocaust as an extreme example of human suffering the museum can become an agent actively working to prevent further suffering. The dedication in the doorway states that the museum is committed to commemorating the past in order to develop “a civil conscience, firmly anchored in the values of freedom and democracy.” The museum “is the best place to address issues related to wars, persecution and the social injustices of our time, unfortunately still very present in all parts of the world.”⁸⁴¹ The generalisation of suffering is at the foundation of this pledge. The shared European past shown, according to this pledge, must lead to common European values, relevant worldwide.

4.5.2 The political agenda for a better world in the Museo Diffuso

With the words human rights and freedom within its very name, the Museo Diffuso already proposes to deal with broader ethical questions. Like the Museo della Deportazione, the Museo Diffuso establishes peace and freedom as core values, already presenting the words on its banners outside the entrance. Unlike the Museo della Deportazione, which names these values without defining them further, the Museo Diffuso relates them to Italian society and the Italian Constitution. The museum presents a broad ethical discussion, but avoids universal claims.

In the exhibition of the Museo Diffuso the core values of Italian society emerge in reaction to the negative experiences made during the Second World War. The narrative arc of the exhibition begins with the racial laws in 1938 and its suspension of individual rights for the Jews. The exhibition then discusses life under a dictatorial regime, during the World War and in the midst of a Civil War. During this time violence, fear, and suffering are experienced by everyone. The liberation ends this suffering and

⁸⁴¹ “(...) una coscienza civile, saldamente ancorata ai valori della libertà e della democrazia(...) il luogo più adatto per affrontare tematiche legate alle guerre, le persecuzioni e le ingiustizie sociali del nostro tempo, purtroppo ancora molto presenti in ogni parte del mondo”. Panel “Il museo della Deportazione” in the doorway.

opens up opportunities for political participation and the chance to shape the future of Italy. The room about the Constitution then presents how people used those opportunities. The expository agent argues that the new, democratic Constitution addressed the wrongs of the past, even if it did not always reconcile them. The expository agent presents the Constitution, ratified in 1948, as a legal guarantee of the triumph of core values. Core values are individual rights, the equality of all citizens, freedom to assemble, speak and make one's own choices, and the absence of state violence.

The room "Living the Constitution" addresses these core values in depth. The room consists of two presentations: a video installation and a video interview. In the interview Alfonso Di Giovine, an expert on the Constitution, contextualises it, providing a brief history of it, outlining its main elements, and explaining who wrote it.⁸⁴² The video installation presents specific paragraphs of the Constitution, accompanied by various interpretations and reflections on them. It introduces a new mode of presentation not yet encountered in the exhibition. The expository agent has placed four small stools in front of four large, dark, glass windows. The windows are empty but for three times the word "Yes" and one single word "No" projected onto them (Photo no. 73).⁸⁴³ Each of the four windows is devoted to a core value, "Yes to democracy", "Yes to freedom", "Yes to equality" and "No to violence". Once the visitor sits down, the video begins on the glass directly opposite the stool.

⁸⁴² At the end he evaluates the Constitution and criticises the revisions made to it in 2005. He also addresses the topic debated in the dominant discourse of the modified paradigm, the question of how much the resistance movement shaped the Constitution. He states that the values of the resistance were reflected within the Constitution, but only where these values were compatible with the democratic Republic. Alfonso Di Giovini in the video on the Constitution.

⁸⁴³ Video installation "Vivere la Costituzione."



Photo no. 73: Video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.”

The screening, running in a loop, begins with a paragraph from the Constitution, dealing with one of the four principal rights. In the first window, “Yes to democracy”, the democratic set up of the Italian Republic is the focus, established via equal vote of all citizens and shaped by the participation of all.⁸⁴⁴ The second window “Yes to freedom” addresses the inviolability of the individual, the right to choose one’s life as one pleases, with respect to personal, political and religious choices as well as the right to assemble and freedom of speech.⁸⁴⁵ Equality before the law, irrespective of race, language, religion, political opinion and personal and social position is addressed in

⁸⁴⁴ “Sì alla Democrazia” in the video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.”

⁸⁴⁵ “Sì alla Libertà” in the video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.”

the third part, entitled “Yes to equality”. It also mentions the right to equal opportunities and accessibility to education.⁸⁴⁶ Finally, the fourth window, “No to violence” denounces the legitimacy of war as a tool of the state and declares the death penalty, torture and any state violence to be illegal.⁸⁴⁷ In each window, several actors, their image projected onto the glass, read quotes that deal with the article presented after the respective paragraphs have been shown. The actors, an equal number of men and women, are dressed in clothing that is roughly contemporary with the time of the quote, nonetheless it is clear to the visitor that they are actors. Seated on the same stools they face the ideal visitor directly, returning their gaze. Many of the quotes are from 1946, but the installation also covers every decade from 1945 until 2005. The videos present several quotes for each paragraph, with a new actor for each.

The quotes are diverse. Some simply explicate what the article means, while others call for its fair implementation or criticise how it has or has not been met in reality. For the topic on equality, for example, a quote from Giangiulio Ambrosini from 2004 states that up until 1975 the civil code, by defining men as the owner of the household, had created inequality between men and women.⁸⁴⁸ The following citation, from Paola Corti and Chiara Ottaviano in 1999, describes the fight of female textile workers for equal pay in the 1960s.⁸⁴⁹ Not only is gender equality an explicit topic, but the exhibition also addresses injustices that have remained in place despite the constitutional promise of equality.⁸⁵⁰ The installation relates how injustices in the Constitution have been rectified because people fought for their constitutional rights. Several quotes mention the fascist regime, once more gesturing to the fact that the constitutional rights grew out of the wrongs of the past.⁸⁵¹ Article 3, which states that equality needs to exist irrespective of race, was a response to the racial persecutions. Here the

⁸⁴⁶ “Sì all’Egualianza” in the video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.”

⁸⁴⁷ “No alla Violenza” in the video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.”

⁸⁴⁸ “Senza distinzione di sesso” by Giangiulio Ambrosini, 2004, in “Sì all’Egualianza” in the video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.” Giangiulio Ambrosini, a member of the supreme court in Italy, has published extensively on the Italian constitution.

⁸⁴⁹ “Parità sul lavoro” by Paola Corti and Chiara Ottaviano, 1999, in “Sì all’Egualianza” in the video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.”

⁸⁵⁰ Nine quotes of 33 are from women and four of those six deal explicitly with women’s rights or the representation of women. Video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.”

⁸⁵¹ “Essere Elette” by Nadia Spano, 1998; “Sì alla Democrazia”; “Cardine della democrazia” by Giangiulio Ambrosini, 2004; “Pena di morte” by Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, 2005, in “No alla Violenza” all in the video installation “Vivere la Costituzione.”

expository agent shows that race should no longer lead to inequality and indicates that the state needs to actively prevent discrimination in order to implement equality. The expository agent uses the quotes to define the racial laws, and also social exclusion, to argue the importance of the article.

The different quotes speaking about rights secured and rights contested demonstrate that the values presented by the expository agent require active participation from the population to defend and implement them. Thus, the room on the Constitution, dedicated to its history, reaches into the present. According to the exhibition, the Second World War motivated people to fight for the implementation of fundamental rights. Representing this, the expository agent highlights historical agency and calls for active political engagement with the constitutional rights, directing this call to the ideal visitor. With the actors seated directly opposite the visitors, returning their gazes and mediating between the statements and the visitor the video installation appeals to its viewer. Quotes about recent political events or fights, such as the demonstrations against the Global Summit in Genoa, heighten this immediacy. The Museo Diffuso discusses broader ethical issues, linking them to specific political discussions in Italy. The expository agent avoids universal terminology that simply calls for peace or solidarity, and instead appeals to the ideal visitor become an active agent in their own present.

4.6 Historical agents: first person accounts and plural stories

4.6.1 Witnessing the concentration camp in the Museo della Deportazione

Drawing generalisations from the past to call upon the visitor to act ethically in the present implies that historical agency existed in the past and that the visitor has agency in the present. The Museo della Deportazione presents the concentration camp prisoner as a historical agent, while the Museo Diffuso highlights the historical agency of everyone who lived during the time in question. Both exhibitions display agency through first person narratives. The Museo della Deportazione presents statements in written form, while the Museo Diffuso uses video interviews. At the core of both representations is personal experience, narrated by the person who experienced it.

In the Museo della Deportazione, the general concentration camp experience is embodied in the objects – but the experience itself is told through first person narratives. At least one quotation from a former inmate of a concentration camp describes each object. Thus, the quotations narrate a story about each object, and all these quotes together define the concentration camp experience. The quotations give specific meaning to the object and define the experience it embodies. Without the quotations, the objects at the Museo della Deportazione would remain silent.⁸⁵² The importance of the quotation is confirmed by the design of the panels. The expository agent has placed the quotes, which are much longer than the captions or headings, in the middle of the text panel. No other copy is presented in the main hall. With the contextualisation of the concentration camp system in the lobby, the expository agent shows respect to the quotations, presenting them as stand-alone pieces. The museum lends authority to the quotations. The information they provide is enough to establish a narrative about the concentration camps. Choosing to display a quotation always legitimises its statement, but to make the quotation the centrepiece of the exhibition elevates the first person account to one with authority.

Whether the authority of a person giving testimony is accepted depends on the audience, the society and culture listening to this testimony.⁸⁵³ In this case, the Museo

⁸⁵² This is similar to the museum in Carpi, where quotations from members of the resistance define the experiences made during the persecutions. Leoni, “The First Blow”, 205.

⁸⁵³ Annette Wieviorka convincingly shows that having escaped the genocide legitimised those who wrote and spoke about it, but that public acceptance had to be established before these speech acts

della Deportazione allows the former inmates to speak and lends them cultural authority and credibility. A common claim about first person narratives of former victims is that the victims are the experts, the best source of knowledge about concentration camp experiences. Their accounts are considered authentic because the witnesses lived these experiences. This assumption, however, ignores what is known about memory and memory constructions: that these are deeply bound to the setting and the cultural constructions of their time.⁸⁵⁴ Nevertheless, exhibitions that use quotations draw strength from this assumption. The victims appear to speak independently of the museums, despite the fact that it is the expository agent who decides who speaks and what is said.⁸⁵⁵ The Museo della Deportazione employs the quotations as absolute truths about the object and the concentration camp experience. The statements seem to be beyond doubt, truthful and – surprisingly – objective. The Museo della Deportazione, using quotations from the survivors, presents their personal truths as historical truth, legitimising the narrative of the exhibition.

The museum further legitimises its narrative through the personal authority of Primo Levi. While most people quoted in the Museo della Deportazione are less well known, the name Primo Levi will be familiar to the ideal visitors. Primo Levi has influenced Holocaust commemoration in Italy since the 1960s, by participating as a witness and as an agent within the memory culture. Writing about his personal experiences but also speaking at events, aiding other survivors with publication, or pushing for more commemoration, Primo Levi has become the most famous Holocaust witness in Italy.⁸⁵⁶ Since his writing is certainly poignant, quotes from his books work well in museum settings. They are powerful and detailed and provide a rich description of his concentration camp experience, with much literary depth. His stories, cited, become history. The Museo della Deportazione cites his recollections about prisoners' shoes, for example:

could become widely known and heard. Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. by Jared Stark (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2006), 25.

⁸⁵⁴ Wieviorka, *The Era*, 137.

⁸⁵⁵ Elements of the statement are of course personal truths of the speaker. The personal experience of the former victim belongs to the individual who remembers it. It is their truth and constitutes their identity in the moment that they utter it.

⁸⁵⁶ Robert S. C. Gordon, "Which Holocaust? Primo Levi and the Field of Holocaust Memory in Post War Italy," *Italian Studies* 1, no. 61 (2006): 85-113. Gordon, *The Holocaust*.

At each step, a little snow and mud cling to our wooden soles, until we end up walking unsteadily on two heavy, shapeless heaps that we cannot get rid of (...) This explains the strange gait of the army of phantoms that parades back every evening.⁸⁵⁷

The quote creates a vivid image of the prisoners in the mind's eye of the ideal visitor. Not only Levi's compelling descriptions, but also his fame, have secured Primo Levi a place in nearly every representation of the Holocaust in Italy – and the whole western world. Citing Primo Levi references his fame and extends his authority to the other quotations in the exhibition and to the museum as a whole.

Although it quotes them, the expository agent does not provide biographical information about the survivors cited.⁸⁵⁸ Primo Levi is a well known public figure, but the exhibition does not explicate his story or his role in society. The people cited are only visible through their own, brief sentences. Quotation marks, the name of the person and the source from which each passage is taken identify the quotations as such, but no other information is given. The visitor knows that “The words quoted in the captions are excerpts from the accounts of former deportees in Nazi concentration camps, some taken from oral testimony, others quoted from the following books (...),”⁸⁵⁹ after which the expository agent lists the books. This categorises all quotes as personal testimonies about concentration camp experiences made by former inmates. The criterion for inclusion in the exhibition is having been deported from Italy. With the absence of biographical information, the statements themselves matter more than the individual behind them does. The goal of the expository agent is not to commemorate the person, but to reveal the experiences this person made as a representation for all possible experiences.

Transmitting experiences is one purpose of the quotation; the other is to evoke the ideal visitor's empathy. Removing each statement from its individual story, linking it to the object and the concentration camp, the expository agent generalises personal

⁸⁵⁷ Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*, cited from the exhibition catalogue, *Fondazione Museo*, *Fondazione Museo*, 60. Display case “Indumenti” in the main hall.

⁸⁵⁸ The only person cited who does appear elsewhere in the exhibition is Roberto Castallani, who is mentioned at the entrance to the museum as one of the survivors who has been most active in keeping memory alive and working towards the establishment of the museum. Beyond this, his individual story is not told either.

⁸⁵⁹ “Le frasi citate nelle didascalie sono testimonianze di ex-deportati nei lager nazisti, alcune orali, altre tratte dai seguenti volumi (...).” Opening panel in the main hall.

truths to truths about concentration camps. The words are cited to convey an essential concentration camp experience.⁸⁶⁰ However, each account is an individual, personal experience that reveals intimate insight into the emotional landscape of the person relating it. An essential element of first person narratives, biography, is withheld by the exhibition, but the power of the citations comes from the intimacy of the experiences told. This intimate insight is heightened by its apparent independence of any individual, of any specific life story. The representation suggests that everyone would feel and react similarly under such circumstances. The expository agent means to move the ideal visitor, appeal to the visitor's empathy, and invite identification with these statements.

At first glance, the knowledge about the concentration camps conveyed by the exhibition in the Museo della Deportazione appears diverse and plural. A large number of quotes by different people are presented by the exhibition and the quotes do not claim to tell a complete story. The visitor can imagine that other, similar narratives exist alongside those seen. Each quote offers an example experience relating to the object, not the only one. The quotes however, come from either political prisoners or people persecuted as Jews, while other victim categories are missing or only spoken about. The scope, language and themes are common to all quotes. Together, they combine to form a larger picture about the concentration camps, a picture of extreme suffering and, for the most part, the absence of humanity.⁸⁶¹ In all accounts, death looms large above the prisoners. Agony, fear, and destitution characterise most accounts. Only two quotations differ from this: one that describes a rare moment of solitude and peace, and another the luxury of owning an individual item.⁸⁶² The small splinters of hope they offer makes these descriptions stand out from the unrelenting horror that surrounds them. Suffering is the experience common to all, and the dark and gloomy descriptions of it are matched by the design of the main hall.

⁸⁶⁰ Wieviorka reveals that it is no longer the testimony itself that matters, but the transmission of knowledge by it that shapes the usage of first person narratives today. *Wieviorka, The Era*, 24.

⁸⁶¹ A few quotes do show humanity among the prisoners.

⁸⁶² Both quotes are by Roberto Castellani in the text panel "Oggetti d'uso quotidiano" in the main hall.

The common suffering is both true and not true at the same time. Some experiences were common to different camps or victim groups and most testimonies mention them.⁸⁶³ Many victims have described arriving at the camps, the shock when confronted by their horrors of them, or the transformations people underwent within them.⁸⁶⁴ The problem is not that it shows common experiences, but that the exhibition hides differing ones. Invisible here, for example, are experiences made in the extermination camps. The selections made upon arrival, the absolute lack of hope, the eradication of individuality or the difficulty coming to terms with having survived are just a few examples of absent narratives.⁸⁶⁵ Without stating it, the exhibition at the Museo della Deportazione deals with concentration and forced labour camps, but excludes the experiences made at the extermination camps. Also striking is that the expository agent does not quote a single woman. This would be justifiable if the exhibition were to deal only with Ebensee, a camp for men, but since the museum claims to represent concentration camp experiences in general and even shows a photograph of a woman, this absence is significant. It suggests that the experiences of women were like those of men and therefore require no special attention. Similarly, it implies that criminals, homosexuals, Roma and Sinti, or medical patients all experienced the concentration camps in the same way.

This group of 'deportees', united by their shared experiences, also act together as a single historical agent. Told in the first person, the accounts often include the word "I", but even more frequently those cited use "our", "us" or "we".⁸⁶⁶ Sometimes a quote singles out an individual prisoner as particularly helpful or friendly, but the group remains unified nonetheless.⁸⁶⁷ The prisoner group does not exist prior to the

⁸⁶³ Wieviorka, "On Testimony," 28.

⁸⁶⁴ On the transformations of the inmates see, for example: Enzo Peri in the text panel "La Baracca" in the main hall.

⁸⁶⁵ Wieviorka, "On Testimony," 30.

⁸⁶⁶ The exhibition's general approach to presentation aligns it with contemporary concentration camp historiography, but the unification of all prisoners into one group distinguished only from the perpetrators and the privileged prisoners is no longer supported. The panel in the lobby describing the ways the concentration camps were structured according to the different prisoner categories aims to counteract this representation.

⁸⁶⁷ Roberto Castellani in the text panels "La fame" and "Senza via di fuga" in the main hall.

camps, but after arrival each individual is initiated and integrated into prisoner society.⁸⁶⁸ In their testimonies, the survivors clearly distinguish a prisoner group from the perpetrators and privileged prisoners.⁸⁶⁹ In general it is striking how rarely the quotations mention perpetrators. Where they do, the perpetrators are often merely gestured towards by an abstract “they”. Describing punishments, Ilvo Nicoletti states “(...) they tied you on wooden trestles and then beat you on the buttocks.”⁸⁷⁰ Statements in two text panels mention “the SS.”⁸⁷¹ Aside from these examples, perpetrators are absent from the main hall.⁸⁷² More visible than the perpetrators, however, are prisoners with special privileges. The quotes repeatedly mention the Kapos, who, except in one quote, appear to be brutal men. The Kapos held special privileges, made life-and-death decisions in the quarry in Mauthausen, harassed the prisoners, or punished them severely on behalf of the SS.⁸⁷³ One single quote offers a positive image of an individual Kapo: Aldo Becucci reports that a Kapo helped to transfer him to less dangerous

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- ⁸⁶⁸ The process of becoming part of the group is referenced, for example, in the text panel “Indumenti”/“clothing” in the main hall. The prisoners are first described as beings from another world, wearing striped clothing, while in the following quotes the same clothes are referred to as “our miserable striped clothes”, “I nostri miseri indumenti zebrati”. Quoted from *Fondazione Museo, Fondazione Museo*, 60. Emil Eugen M. in the text panel “Indumenti” in the main hall.
- ⁸⁶⁹ Heidemarie Uhl claims that a clear distinction between innocence and guilt, victim and perpetrator is central to witness testimonies. Heidemarie Uhl, “Vom Pathos des Widerstandes zur Aura des Authentischen. Die Entdeckung des Zeitzeugen als Epochenschwelle der Erinnerung,” in *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, ed. by Norbert Frei and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 224-246, 242. Since many victims do not describe themselves as innocent I would agree with the distinction between perpetrator and victim, but not with that of innocence. Lawrence L. Langer offers an alternative interpretation, showing how a recurring theme in testimonies is the idea that the survivor has lost their innocence. Lawrence L. Langer, “Remembering Survival,” in *Holocaust Remembrance. The Shapes of Memory*, ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 70-80, 77.
- ⁸⁷⁰ “(...) ti legavano su dei cavalletti e poi botte sul sedere.” Quote by Ilvo Nicoletti in the panel “Le punizioni”, cited here from the catalogue *Fondazione Museo, Fondazione Museo*, 63. A similar “they” is encountered in the other quotes within the same panel, as well as in the text of the panel “Il lavoro nelle gallerie di Ebensee.”
- ⁸⁷¹ Serge a. de M. in the text panel “La fame”, unknown testimony in the text panel “Le punizioni” in the main hall. The major exception to this is when the camp physician Dr. Jobst is mentioned by name - the only perpetrator name in the whole exhibition. Unknown testimony in the text panel “Iniezioni” in the main hall.
- ⁸⁷² This absence is also true for the objects, as the exhibition only shows perpetrator objects in three of 16 display cases.
- ⁸⁷³ Roberto Castellani in the panel “Mangiare e bere”; Enzo Gandi in the panel “Il lavoro nella cava di pietra di Mauthausen”; Roberto Castellani in the panel “Oggetti d’uso quotidiano”; unknown testimony in the panel “Le punizioni”; Roberto Castellani in the panel “Il lavoro nella galleria di Ebensee” all in the main hall. A negative characterization is also given for other prisoners with privileges, for example the block supervisors, who are said to steal food from the prisoners. Franco Ferrante in the panel “Mangiare e Bere” in the main hall.

work.⁸⁷⁴ Emphasising the Kapos' role by mentioning it more often than that of the perpetrators, the testimonies exclude 'the Kapo' from the group of inmates; thus vilifying him. Since the majority of the quotations stem from the 1980s, when the dominant discourse about the Kapos was still harsh and held them responsible for the terror they were forced to enforce, this aspect of the quotations also reveals how first person narratives are bound to the time and the specific situations in which they are recounted.

The former inmates, subjects describing their own actions, appear as agents within the concentration camp structure. In the exhibition, the camp emerges as a cosmos of its own, mostly one where the German guards are absent. The prisoners act within its bounds, struggling to survive. They exist as a unit in opposition to the camp and the inmates with privileges. They react to the situations encountered in the concentration camp. The quotations speak of actions, make personal evaluations and reveal decisions made within the limited range of available options. The inmate quoted at the Museo della Deportazione was an agent in his own story in the past and is given an active position as he narrates that story in the present. Referencing the former paradigm of the resistance, the witnesses are active agents in the past and the present.

4.6.2 Vocal participants in the Museo Diffuso

The Museo Diffuso also bases its narrative on first person accounts. The video interviews, provided for each section, narrate the stories. The historian's introduction in the lobby and the thematic structuring between rooms establish the frame within which the film screenings, the atmosphere, and the video interviews provide the exhibition's content. The video interviews are the most important elements in the Museo Diffuso. All the interviews presented were recorded by the Istoreto in 2005, and can be watched in full length in the institute's archive. The targeted production of the videos is visible: they all share a consistent style that blends into the exhibition design. The expository agent had already chosen the themes to be exhibited and structured the interviews accordingly, asking interviewees to speak about the bombings, life under the regime, the resistance, the occupation, or the liberation. Most of the interviews last an hour or more and present an extensive account of the interviewee's life from 1938 to 1948. Marisa Scala's interview, for example, is 49 minutes long and talks

⁸⁷⁴ Aldo Becucci in the panel "Il lavoro nelle gallerie di Ebensee" in the main hall.

about her and her brother's engagement in the resistance, their imprisonment, their concentration camp experiences and their return from the camps.⁸⁷⁵

The expository agent uses short passages from the interviews at different stages of the exhibition, but they are most important within the five thematic sections. The first four sections feature two interviews each, while the room focusing on the liberation shows four. Each interview is presented on a large glass panel, leaning on the wall, with its title visible from a distance (Photo no. 74). When the visitor stands in front of the panel, the interviews begin, screened on the dark, reflecting surface. The visitor hears the person speaking over the headphones, while the English translation appears in subtitles on the surface. Each video shows the interviewee in a frontal head shot, their face roughly at the height of the ideal visitor, looking straight out of the panel, as if speaking directly to the visitor. Watching the video, the visitor also sees her own reflection in the panel (Photo no. 75).

⁸⁷⁵ Archivio Istoreto, "Intervista a Marisa Scala", http://metarchivi.istoreto.it/dett_documento.asp?id=3076&tipo=FASCICOLI_DOCUMENTI, (accessed January 10th 2014). I will analyse the interview in detail below.



Photo no. 74: Interview panels in the room "Living free". The panels show the titles of the interviews and also reflect the photograph on the opposite wall, which shows celebration of the liberation at the central square in Turin.

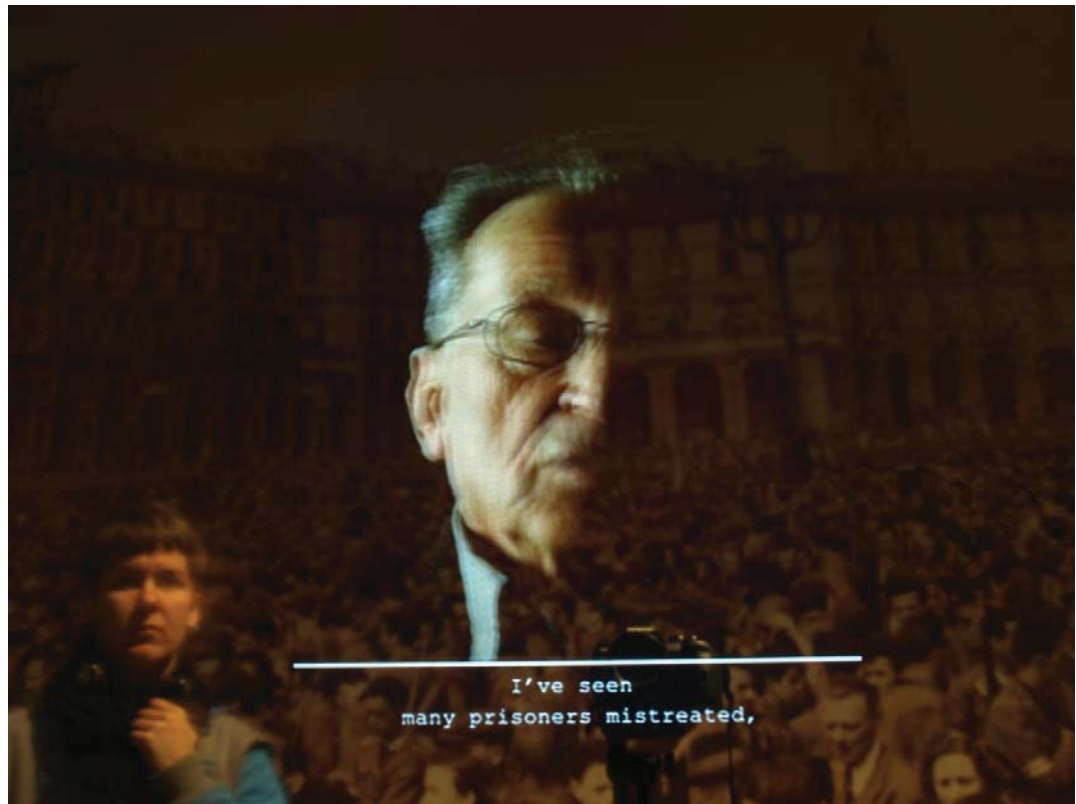


Photo no. 75: Interview of Cesare Alvazzi Del Frate in the section “Living Free”. The Photograph shows the interviewee, me taking the photograph and the reflection of the photo on the opposite wall.

With the exception of the room on the liberation, two interviews are always presented simultaneously. The two panels are directly next to each other and the interviews alternate (Photo no. 76). One person begins, speaking for a few sentences before the screen freezes, then the second interview plays until it also freezes, whereupon the first one takes over again. This switching back and forth continues for a little while, but no pair of interviews lasts much longer than five minutes. The room on the liberation shows four interviews, each one individually. The presentation of the interviews is engaging and the narratives are fast-paced, especially when jumping from one person to the other. The presentation captures the attention of the ideal visitor and each video sequence is short enough to be watched in full, without having to spend a long time in front of any one panel. The minimalistic design of each room, mostly empty apart from the films and video interviews, focuses the visitor's concentration on the interviews. The video interviews of the Museo Diffuso hold the attention of the ideal visitor very well, which is a clear advantage of this representation technique.

Like the Museo della Deportazione, the Museo Diffuso both lends authority to the first person accounts it presents and legitimises its own narrative through them. It also uses the interviews to convey knowledge about the past. The interviews, not individually contextualised, stand alone and the people shown have full authority to speak. The expository agent does not provide biographical information. The leaflets handed out in the lobby name each participant, but within the exhibition the names are not displayed and appear largely irrelevant to the narrative.⁸⁷⁶



Photo no. 76: Carmen Nanotti and Emilio Joana in the section "Life under the bombings".

The exhibition in the Museo Diffuso does not explain who the people interviewed are. It appears as though the expository agent has chosen men and women from all strata of society. The common denominator seems to be that they all lived in Turin between 1935 and 1945, their expertise lies in having experienced everyday life, the bombs, the regime, the occupation or the liberation in or around Turin. The titles of the interviews categorise experiences as relating to "the evacuation" or life "under

⁸⁷⁶ Since the leaflet is not required for navigating the exhibition space, I doubt that many visitors read the names while watching the videos.

the bomb” rather than to the interviewee who made them.⁸⁷⁷ Giving the impression that a variety of people are speaking about their experiences, the criteria applied in selecting interviewees are invisible. The Istoreto recorded 29 interviews in total, 12 of which feature in the exhibition’s main sections. The Istoreto’s descriptions make it clear that 19 interviewees were directly involved in the resistance or were close to it. Of the four Jews interviewed, most had a positive relationship to the resistance and all survived in hiding in Italy. Additionally, the Istoreto interviewed one soldier, one fascist, a filmmaker, and one person who speaks to the role of religion, as well as the two historians who are presented at the beginning and the end of the exhibition. The dominance of resistance fighters is most conspicuous in the exhibition’s main sections, where nine of the twelve interviewees are members of the resistance. The expository agent thus effectively presents a past as it was seen by former resistance fighters in 2005, but the exhibition does not acknowledge this bias. Equally absent are the questions that prompted interviewees’ statements; the structure imposed by the interview situation is invisible.

Despite representing a dominant group, the selected statements and their placement in the exhibition do present plural and diverse stories. This is particularly true of the gender representations. Each room presents one man and one woman, with two men and two women in the room on the liberation. The equal gender representation is striking and unique among all the museums I visited. Equality for women is addressed as an explicit topic in the Museo Diffuso, revealing its importance to the expository agent; but the novelty is that the exhibition not only discusses gender equality, but also realises it in its presentation.⁸⁷⁸ While gender is shown to be relevant in the narratives, the exhibition does not represent gender constructions as essential categories. The narratives do not follow preconceived notions of what men and women would do or feel, but instead go beyond the classic stereotypes of the caring woman or the hard and strong man. Women speak about their children and their families or about obtaining food, but they also talk about their work, their political views or their active engagement within the resistance. Mariuccia Gandenzi, for example, talks about

⁸⁷⁷ Both from the section “Life under the bombings.” The only exception to this is the section “Live during the occupation”, where the headings state, that “a male partisan” and “a female partisan” are represented. Video interviews in “Life during the occupation.”

⁸⁷⁸ Gaining the vote, for example, is addressed by Bianca Guidetti Serra “Becoming actual citizens” in the section “Living free”.

the importance of food in her family and remembers how her mother stored it carefully because they were poor and food was expensive and difficult to obtain.⁸⁷⁹ A little later Matilde di Pietranoni proudly states that she became very good at taking hostages while she was involved in the resistance.⁸⁸⁰ The men talk about their actions but also address their emotions, even the complicated and difficult ones. Mario Giacometti, for example, explains his enthusiasm for the Republic of Salò, and Ennio Pistoï confides that he felt so homesick when he left to fight at the front that he sat down and cried.⁸⁸¹ In part, the narratives recounted are gendered ones, but the different experiences described result from individuals' positions within society rather than from essentialised notions of gender roles.

The narratives are not only diverse with respect to gender, but also with respect how the people interviewed viewed this past. In each section, the interviews approach the topic from different angles, neither of them presented as more legitimate than the other. The section "Living everyday life" presents life in the city and at the front; the interviews in "Life under the bombings" discuss experiences made in the city and in the countryside. In "Life under the regime," a woman who opposed the fascist regime and a man who supported it speak. The section "Life during the occupation" features acts of resistance in the factories as well as in clandestine operations. Finally, the section "Living free" presents the positive side of the liberation and the political opportunities for the population that emerged from it, without underestimating the hardship experienced by former political prisoners and the violence committed by the resistance.

The positions presented also reveal different, even contradictory, evaluations of the same topics. In "Life under the bombings", Carmen Nanotti describes the hatred many people felt towards the United States for bombing the city, while Emilio Jona asserts that he did not blame the United States, but thought the fascists and the Germans responsible.⁸⁸² The differing perspectives presented in the video interviews are most conspicuous in the section "Life under the regime". The panel presents Giordina Arian

⁸⁷⁹ Mariuccia Gandenzi "Life in the city" in "Living everyday life."

⁸⁸⁰ Matilde di Pietranoni "A partisan woman" in "Life during the occupation."

⁸⁸¹ Mario Giacometti "Consent" in the section "Life under the regime"; Ennio Pistoï "Life at the front" in the section "Living everyday life."

⁸⁸² Carmen Nanotti "Under the bomb" and Emilio Jona "The evacuation" in "Life under the bombings."

Levi who rejected fascist ideologies and went into exile in 1938, alongside Mario Giacometti who enthusiastically supported both the fascist regime and the Republic of Salò.⁸⁸³ A slight exception to the plurality of perspectives is found in the interviews with the partisans, whose interpretations of the past are generally in agreement.⁸⁸⁴ This is counterbalanced, however, by the interview with the supporter of the fascist regime that directly precedes them. In the section on the liberation, the interview with Cesare Avazzi Del Frate, who describes the violent acts committed by the resistance after April 25th, also offers an alternative to the partisans' positive and heroic presentation of the resistance.⁸⁸⁵

Overall, the expository agent presents not one story but several, and approaches the past from multiple angles. The video interviews at the Museo Diffuso are diverse and, while most interviewees were associated with the resistance, they speak from different positions within society. The voices of a soldier, a housewife, a teacher, a worker or an intellectual are presented as equally important. They represent people who lived in Turin rather than members of the resistance, victims of the regime or the occupation, or perpetrators for that matter. As such, the exhibition shows all members of Italian society as participants in history. No definitive narrative, no single perspective on the past claims moral authority; the exhibition values the truth and authenticity of every perspective. Each interviewee presents his or her interpretation of the past and this remains particular to him or her.

Within these plural stories the Holocaust, and more specifically the Shoah, has its place as one topic among others. Since personal narratives are seldom restricted to a single topic, the plural stories touch multiple ones in passing. Except when speaking about life during the occupation or the liberation, every interview references the Shoah. In "Living everyday life", Ennio Pistoï mentions the extermination camps in Poland and evokes the well-known image of hands reaching out of cattle wagons asking for water.⁸⁸⁶ Emilio Joana, in "Life under the bombings," refers to the racial laws, talks about Jewish school after 1938 and later discusses the acceptance of Jews within the

⁸⁸³ Giorgina Arian Levi "Opposition" and Mario Giacometti "Consent" in "Life under the regime."

⁸⁸⁴ Matilde di Pietranoni "A partisan woman" and Enzo Pettini "A partisan" in "Life during the occupation."

⁸⁸⁵ Cesare Avazzi Del Frate "Justice and Purges" in "Living free."

⁸⁸⁶ Ennio Pistoï "Life at the front" in the section "Living everyday life."

bomb shelters.⁸⁸⁷ In “Life under the regime”, Giorgina Arian Levi talks about going into exile to Bolivia in 1938, because her husband was Jewish and no longer allowed to work.⁸⁸⁸ The Shoah thus emerges as a sub-strand within other stories. The exhibition does not reveal how these stories continued, how Ennio Pistoï now evaluates the Shoah, how Emilio Joana survived in hiding or when and why Giorgina Arian Levi returned to Italy. The interviewees interweave sub-strands into other stories, and then leave them trailing. This reflects the way spoken narratives tend to fray, rather than tying up all the elements they introduce.⁸⁸⁹ The Shoah is thus not a separate topic but rather an integral part of the experiences of the people. Racial persecution shaped their lives under the regime or under the bombs, just as gender or their class status influenced it. This presentation normalises the Shoah, not by downplaying its importance, but instead by integrating it as a relevant topic among other, equally relevant topics. The Shoah emerges as a topic just as diverse as other topics, and the stories told go beyond the well-established tropes of suffering in the concentration camps.

Nonetheless the trope of the Holocaust, subsuming all victims under this term, also appears in the Museo Diffuso. Marisa Scala, in the section “Living free”, talks about her difficult return from the concentration camps to Turin. The expository agent has titled the interview “Back home from the concentration camps” (Photo no. 74); gesturing towards the Holocaust, without indicating which camps it refers to. Within the excerpt the expository agent has chosen from the interview of Marisa Scala, the identity of the victims spoken about is unclear. Marisa Scala discusses her own internment in the concentration camp, her return home and then describes her repeated journeys to the camp in Bozano to rescue her brother and some other men. She mentions the horrors she saw and describes how sick and weak the people were, adding that they all died after the liberation. When the full interview with Marisa Scala is viewed, it becomes clear that she and her brother were imprisoned for their illegal activities during the resistance. The excerpt shown in the exhibition, however, does not mention this. While Marisa Scala talks about Bolzano by name, it serves as an example of any camp,

⁸⁸⁷ Emilio Jona “The evacuation” in “Life under the bombings.”

⁸⁸⁸ Giorgina Arian Levi “Opposition” in “Life under the regime”. Exile is not discussed in any of the other exhibitions in Italy.

⁸⁸⁹ The colonial wars, excluded from the timeframe chosen by the expository agent, appear only in one interview as a sub-strand. Matilde di Pietranoni “A partisan woman” in “Life during the occupation.”

and she does not specify the concentration camp structures or the victims. Marisa Scala gestures towards the Holocaust without really confronting it. While her account of the concentration camps thus remains within the modified paradigm, she transcends it when she describes the time after 1945. Describing the difficulties of returning from a concentration camp after the liberation is a novelty in Italy. It counters the notion that everything was good after the liberation and that the population welcomed the returning resistance fighters.

The exhibition presents Marisa Scala as an agent, who actively shaped her past. She draws the conclusion that no one in Italy actually cared about the former prisoners.⁸⁹⁰ Since most Italians ignored the prisoners, she took matters into her own hands, rescuing her brother so he could die in a hospital bed instead of in the camp. She encountered a situation, formed an opinion about it and acted in order to change what she did not approve of. She clearly states her opinions and actions and stands by them. Other interviewees also present their opinions and actions in this way. The interviewees actively engaged with society in the past and in 2005 they tell their own story of this engagement.

The agency attributed to the interviewees reflects the tradition of recognising the personal accounts of resistance fighters within Italy. Testimonies about the time of the Second World War have been treated slightly differently in Italy than in the rest of Europe because the resistance became integral to the founding myth of the country. Members of the resistance subsequently shaped Italian politics, participated in intellectual debates, initiated and carried out research on the resistance. They did so not despite their past, but because of it, proudly referencing and defending it. The former fighters were accepted figures in Italy's political and cultural life and became even more so when the former paradigm consolidated in the 1960s.⁸⁹¹ From the 1960s, survivors of the Shoah also spoke about their experiences, integrating their accounts into the dominant paradigm. Personal experiences, recounted by members of the resistance, political deportees or victims of the racial persecutions, constituted a core element in narratives about the Second World War and the Holocaust. Within

⁸⁹⁰ Marisa Scala "Back home from the concentration camps" in "Living free."

⁸⁹¹ Filippo Focardi, "Ursprung und Krise eines Paradigmas. Die Resistenza in Italien und ihre Zeitzeugen," in *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, ed. by Norbert Frei and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 247-265, 250-253.

these stories, the former fighters, anti-fascists or political opponents of the regime were active agents; they had influenced the past and now shaped present understandings of it.⁸⁹²

Conceptualising a person who experienced the past as an active historical agent shapes the reception of first person narratives in Italy. As the paradigm of the resistance became modified and different first person narratives emerged, the notion of people influencing their own situations persisted.⁸⁹³ The modified paradigm allowed new groups to speak, and these speakers were also granted agency.⁸⁹⁴ Both new and old narratives recounted by these speakers entered the museums. The newest of the groups represented in the Museo Diffuso is represented by the former fascist. As the speakers diversify, the central role of the witness in Italian museums is upheld. First-hand experience is granted authority, and the person who experienced it, agency.

4.6.3 Who speaks? Participants, witnesses, survivors or the expository agent?

The Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso both use personal testimonies to narrate the past, one in writing and the other through video interviews. Testimonies raise the question of what role witnesses play in representations of the Holocaust. The Museo Diffuso presents people who participated in the past, while the Museo della Deportazione displays a different variant of the Holocaust witness.

The Museo Diffuso presents the population of Piedmont. The people interviewed appear to come from several groups in society and represent different political positions; the common denominator is that they are from Turin or its surrounding region, Piedmont. This enables a wide variety of speakers and plural positions to be encompassed. With the past not limited to the perspectives of victims, it is possible to include a former fascist, without denigrating the victims or inviting condemnation of individuals who were fascists. The exhibition allows each person to explain why she or he arrived at a particular political position in her or his life. The multiple motivations and perspectives put forward pluralise historical reality. Individual decisions become

⁸⁹² The same could be argued about the resistance in Austria, except that in Austria the resistance fighters never gained the same prominence, as Heidmarie Uhl shows: Uhl, "Vom Pathos."

⁸⁹³ Focardi, "Ursprung und Krise," 262.

⁸⁹⁴ The role of language and its datedness is described by Wieviorka, *The Era*,

accessible and comprehensible within this plurality. At the same time, no single position holds moral authority over another. However, by weighting the exhibition to include more narratives from resistance supporters, the expository agent suggests that an antifascist position or at least a neutral one would have been favourable. This suggestion emerges in viewing the past from the present, but the exhibition narrative does not condemn the people who, in the past, did not take this stand. Presenting multiple individual participants limits the moral authority of each interviewee. Each narrative is true for its narrator, but that does not imply that the visitor should agree with its truth. The overall assemblage is less authoritative than the speech acts in other museums and allows narratives to contradict each other. Everyone is able to speak. The expository agent presents a participant and then offers that participant's narrative to the ideal visitor, but does not imbue it with moral authority. Thus, the visitor is not expected to identify with the testimony, but can form her own opinion about it. The visitor can remain distant to the testimony, if she wishes.

In the Museo della Deportazione, by contrast, it is only former victims who speak. The witnesses were assigned the role of victims in the concentration camps. They form a unified group, and are each legitimised to speak due to their belonging to this group. Their authority rests upon their victim status, which also gives them moral authority. Because the victim status, and not the personal position of the speaker, governs the narrative, the individuals disappear behind the victim position. This representation defines those it quotes as essentialised victims. The representation then equates each personal story with the truth and the museum uses the intimacy of these reports to evoke empathy and emotional attachment in the ideal visitor. Appealing for identification, the representation draws the ideal visitor in, forcing the ideal visitor to take the same subject position as the victim. Annette Wiviorka, in her thoughtful study on testimonies given by Holocaust survivors, calls this the "compassionate pact." The interviewee tells an emotional story and this elicits identification. The person giving testimony in this pact has to show her or his own particular suffering intimately; the person listening or viewing the testimony in the pact agrees to believe the testimony,

to identify with and empathise with the victim.⁸⁹⁵ The victim, assigned a clear victim position, represents the truth, which the receiver does not question.⁸⁹⁶

While the testimonies of the participants in the Museo Diffuso are unusual, the testimonies in the Museo della Deportazione are comparable to other survivor accounts used to represent the Holocaust. Testimonies on the Holocaust were given during and directly after it took place, but western societies only accepted them from the 1960s onwards. The testimonies given at the Eichmann trial led to personal stories about the Holocaust being accorded central importance, and in the years that followed it, testimonies were increasingly recorded. Oral history became an accepted focus of study, and with the development of video and other media techniques, a multitude of sound and video recordings emerged. Over the course of 30 years, testimonies given by survivors, often on video, have become a well-established component of Holocaust representation. The Fortunoff archive in Yale or the Visual History Archive of Spielberg's Shoah Foundation are the most well known examples of the heightened attention to testimony.⁸⁹⁷

Museums today rediscover testimonies for Holocaust representations. Initially used as primary sources, cultural institutions now integrate video interviews to narrate the Holocaust. Thus, the primary source becomes a tool in the communication of knowledge. The witness replaces the historian, becoming the new expert, who tells the truth. The motivations of the witnesses, those who record the testimonies, and those

⁸⁹⁵ Wieviorka, *The Era*, 142-143

⁸⁹⁶ This relates to the Christian tradition of testimony, wherein the Jews become the ones that suffer for Christian redemption. The Christians identify with the Jewish suffering and in this identification, they are relieved of their own guilt, as Samuel Moyn thought provoking article outlines. Samuel Moyn, "Bearing Witness. Theological Roots of a New Secular Morality," in *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology*, ed. by Dan Stone (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), 128-142. Also on Christian traditions: David Tracy, "Christian Witness and the Shoah," in *Holocaust Remembrance. The Shapes of Memory*, ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 81-89. On the differing Jewish tradition of testimony see: Moyn, "Bearing Witness." The only way for the visitor to avoid this compassionate, undoubting subject position is to distance herself from the position offered, mostly by rejecting it completely.

⁸⁹⁷ On the difference between the Fortunoff and the Visual History archive, see Wieviorka's compelling evaluation. Wieviorka, *The Era*, 107-125. Saul Friedländer's two volume work in which he calls for the integration of personal victim narratives into historical accounts is a more recent example of the era of witnessing. Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. Volume 1: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997) Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. Vol 2: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008). Acknowledging the brilliant style of Friedländer's much-acclaimed book, Moyn points out that taking witness as the basis of historical narrative is not as new as many of the book's proponents may think. Moyn, "Bearing Witness," 138-139.

who display them differ however. This is the case even if the desires to commemorate the dead and to give testimony for the sake of a better future are shared. Cultural practices influence what the survivor says, what the interviewer asks and what the expository agent then chooses to display. In the 1970s, for example, testimonies emphasised the heroic struggle, identification with one's nation and the successful return to life in society. Currently, intimacy of the account and visible, tangible suffering is favoured. Common tropes are the loss of personal identity and the difficulties of living after the Holocaust. The renewed interest in testimony allows survivors to tell their stories, but the dominant tropes tend to encapsulate the survivor forever in the past, from which there is no escape. Accordingly, the Holocaust must have been the pivotal moment in the survivor's biography, thus making it the defining constituent of identity.⁸⁹⁸

First person narratives, in the form of video interviews, audio material or quotations are currently favoured by many museums.⁸⁹⁹ The increased acceptance of first person accounts has led to their being seen as a valuable tool in educating about the Holocaust. As museums slowly integrate videos in their representations, the videographic styles chosen are often similar. I have already presented a detailed account of how the Zeitgeschichte Museum in Ebensee utilises audio interviews. That museum also supplements its exhibition with longer video interviews presented on a computer in the hallway (Photo no. 77). Since 1998 the Zeitgeschichte Museum has recorded video interviews, most of them shot in the library of the museum, in which survivors speak directly to the camera. The copy preceding the interviews discusses moral authority, and the expository agent defines the video interviews as a primary source.⁹⁰⁰ The interviews are biographic and narrate the survivors' life stories. For the exhibition, the expository agent has selected individual excerpts relating to specific topics. The excerpts themselves have not been edited, however, so that parts of the biographical story, and the autonomy of each interviewee as a speaker is preserved. While most excerpts only show the survivor speaking to the camera, some also include other people present during the recording.

⁸⁹⁸ The argument is not that this is not true, but that with this as a dominant trope other experiences are harder to voice and recognise. Wieviorka, *The Era*.

⁸⁹⁹ Selma Thomas, "Private Memory in Public Space. Oral History and Museums," in *Oral History and Public Memories*, ed. by Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2008), 87-100, 94.

⁹⁰⁰ Copy titled "Videointerview mit Überlebenden Nationalsozialistischer Konzentrationslager" at the Infopoint on the second floor of the Zeitgeschichte Museum.

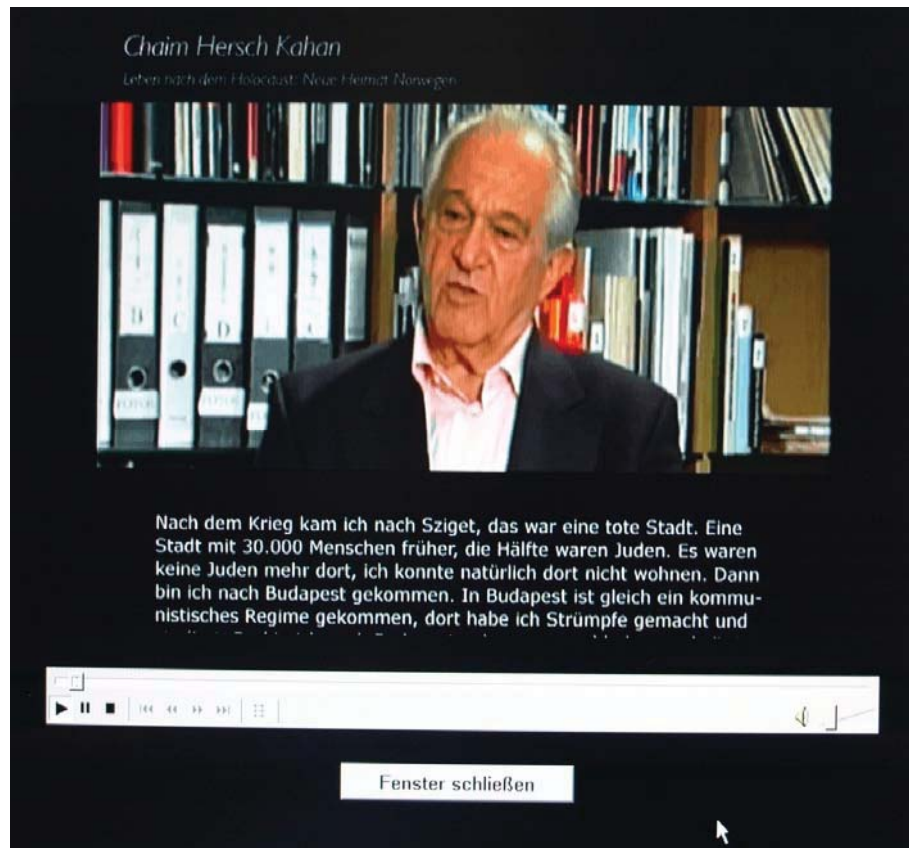


Photo no. 77: Video Interview of Chaim Hersch Kahan, presented at the Infopoint in the Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee.

The Holocaust Emlékközpont in Budapest also uses video interviews, commissioned to supplement the narrative of the main exhibition. Each witness, isolated in front of a black background, speaks directly to the ideal visitor, and the testimonies fit precisely into the exhibition narrative. The expository agent shows the interviewees' names on the screen, but leaves the rest of their biographies unknown (Photo no. 78). The questions posed are not heard, nor does the expository agent elaborate upon the recording situation. The interviewees speak about different topics but do not necessarily offer diverse perspectives upon them. All the speakers are victims of the Holocaust and present themselves within the dominant tropes. The Holocaust Emlékközpont uses the witnesses' accounts to add authenticity to its narrative, but leaves the witnesses themselves by the wayside.



Photo no. 78: Video interview with László Kovacs, presented in section 5 at the Holokauszt Emlékközpont.

The new permanent exhibition explaining the camp history at Mauthausen will also draw on video testimonies. Forty-eight video interviews will provide parts of the narrative in one of the new permanent exhibitions in the main camp, with survivors explaining crucial components of the story. Here the expository agent will utilise the survivors as experts, telling an intimate story about the concentration camp to the ideal visitor.⁹⁰¹ The video interviews will be taken from recordings produced by *the Mauthausen Survivor Project*, which has collected in-depth biographic interviews with survivors of Mauthausen. The exhibition *Narrating Mauthausen*, already discussed within the subchapter on the Austrian museum landscape, also uses video interviews from this project. This exhibition consists of 20 video interviews, each lasting roughly 30 minutes and representing men and women from several victim groups and diverse social strata.⁹⁰² In keeping with common practice, the exhibition does not include the questions posed to the interviewees. The expository agent presents the interviews in separate booths, with space in each for two visitors to sit and watch the interviews.

⁹⁰¹ On the planned use of Oral History interviews see: Regina Fritz, "Das Lager erzählen. Der Einsatz von Oral-History Interviews bei der Neugestaltung," *Jahrbuch KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen* (2012): 99-101.

⁹⁰² An overview over the interviews in Mauthausen is given by Botz, Dewald, Prenninger, "Mauthausen erzählen." On the Mauthausen Survivor Project, see: Amesberger, Botz, Halbmayr, "Mauthausen."

The screens are placed opposite the seats so that the interviewees face the visitors directly. The booths are set up in a circle, with the interviews immediately next to each other presenting differing perspectives on the concentration camp.⁹⁰³ A panel on the outside of each booth provides a brief biography of the respective interviewee, in a chronological format (Photo no. 79). The copy for the whole exhibition states that the personal narratives convey feelings and emotions of the former inmates that “complement” the hard and cold facts of the documents of the persecution.⁹⁰⁴ To characterise video interviews as “warm” compared to supposedly “cold” documents is a common trope employed in advocating testimonies.⁹⁰⁵



Photo no. 79: Exhibition “Narrating Mauthausen” at the visitor centre of the Mauthausen Memorial.

⁹⁰³ Botz, Dewald, and Prenninger, “Mauthausen erzählen,” 79.

⁹⁰⁴ Text panel in the exhibition “Narrating Mauthausen” in the visitor centre in the Mauthausen Memorial.

⁹⁰⁵ Thomas, “Private Memory,” 93.

Video interviews shown in museums differ with respect to the interview setting, the narratives selected, the length of the interview and the contextualisation added to them by the expository agent. The messages communicated differ accordingly. An essential difference is whether the interview excerpts displayed are biographic or if the expository agent has selected short passages to illustrate the topic presented in the exhibition. In the first case, the interviewee speaks about her or his life in relationship to the Holocaust. In the second, the interviewee provides supplementary information about the topic presented, primarily conveying knowledge about the Holocaust, in which its meaning within her or his life is secondary.

While the messages differ, the representation mode typically chosen for video interviews is similar throughout the three countries, Europe and even the world. Interviewees are shown in medium close shots or close-ups, enabling the camera to closely record body language and reveal every sign of feelings or emotions.⁹⁰⁶ The interviewer's questions are edited out, as are other indicators of the recording situation. Often biographical information about the person interviewed is sparse. In most cases, the expository agents place the interviewee directly opposite the ideal visitor to create the impression that the witness is speaking to the visitor, increasing the intimacy of the encounter.

Using first person narratives without transparent contextualisation of the circumstances of their recording, expository agents hide their authorship of the museums' speech act. It appears as though the witness speaks directly to the ideal visitor, sharing an intimate story, a personal truth. Each interview, however, is specific to the time and place of its recording. Inserting an interview into an exhibition transforms the interviewee's message. The expository agent chooses the interviewee, selects the particular sequence shown and situates the interview within the exhibition. The video encountered in this way is a statement made by the expository agent. The agent uses the interviewee's statement but allows the interviewee to state it. By claiming to be an individual voice, the video interview actually legitimises the speech act of the expository agent and gives it credibility. The expository agent speaks through the person interviewed, hiding his own speech act and creating the impression that only the survivors are speaking.

⁹⁰⁶ Wieviorka, *The Era*, 142.

4.7 Conclusion

If a visitor standing at the media table in the Museo Diffuso is interested in the key word “Synagogue” she can turn to four different panels. Beyond the heading, the media table offers no clues as to what will be revealed by touching the panels. Photographs, documents, films, and an array of voices await the visitor at the media table. As well as showing the synagogue in Turin, the information shown under the key word “Synagogue” addresses the racial laws, the deportations from Turin, and the Jewish orphanage in the city. The main interview at the top of the panel describes how beautiful the synagogue in Turin was, then later shows its burned remains, after it had been hit by bombs. In the panel dedicated to the deportations of Jews from Turin, different people talk about the gatherings at the central train station, about the horrors of encountering the concentration camp, and the terrible living conditions within it. Photographs of the deportations and films from the concentration camps accompany these accounts. The panel on the Jewish orphanage tells a slightly happier story. The visitor hears children playing, while typed words appear on the screen providing basic information about the orphanage. A woman talks about life there and her impressions of the cold behaviour of the woman who led it, before the copy reveals that the last children of the orphanage escaped deportation thanks to the courage of this woman, *Miss Gioconda Carmi*, and her assistant. Together they led the children into the mountains before they could be deported.

One of the 12 geographic sites presented on the Museo Diffuso’s media table, the panels on the synagogue are typical of museum representations of the Shoah in Italy. One topic among many, the Shoah has become a fixed category within Italian 20th century history. It is part of Italian history; the Jews are a part of the Italian nation and their suffering is a milestone, marking the decline of Italy before the Second World War. Representations of the Shoah usually begin with the racial laws in 1938, gesturing to discrimination in Italy without explaining it in detail. According to the dominant narrative, the fascist regime in 1938 prepared the population for the persecutions that came after 1943. Unlike the Museo Diffuso, most museums simply mention the racial laws, without explaining them. Other representations quickly jump from the racial laws to the persecution of the Jews during the occupation. Such representations characterise the fascist regime as antisemitic, but do not elaborate

upon this. Representations of the Shoah are often strikingly superficial. The representation at the Museo Diffuso is more diverse than most, since it touches on the deportations to the concentration camps and survival in hiding or through exile. Most other exhibitions use the Shoah as a synonym for the murder in the concentration camps. Not even the Italian transit camps are given much space in such representations. Evoking classic images of *the* concentration camp and the suffering within, the museums rarely distinguish between concentration camps and extermination camps, nor do they show that mass murders were also committed outside of the camps. Italian museums represent the Shoah, but the representations remain incomplete.

While the term Shoah stands for the persecution of the Jews, the term Holocaust in Italy still stands for the suffering of several undifferentiated victim groups within concentration camps. It references Jews, soldiers and Italians persecuted for political reasons. The Museo della Deportazione champions such a representation. Mentioning Jews as a separate victim group, the exhibition mostly uses the terms 'prisoners' or 'deportees', to collectively refer to the Jews, members of the resistance, Prisoners of War, and workers who were deported. The victim groups are pluralised, but not as extensively as elsewhere in Europe. Nearly all representations of the Holocaust marginalise the 'other' victims who were not part of the four groups regularly referenced, if they even mention them at all. When the narrative proceeds after pausing to mention the 'other' victim groups, it often leaves this nominal pluralisation behind. Holocaust representations in Italy generalise the experiences of victims treated as one, unified group. The Museo della Deportazione exhibits victims who have suffered as Italians, and then extends their suffering to symbolise not only the suffering of the Italian nation, but of all humanity. Italian museum representations do not shy away from broader ethical positions or political discussions. The Holocaust is seen as a starting point from which to reflect about the present, most explicitly in the Museo Diffuso and its political discussion of the Constitution and its implementation in post-war Italy.

Italian museums hesitantly address certain themes dominant in European Holocaust representations. The perpetrators, the role of the general population, and the national regime appear, but only in passing. The exhibitions gesture towards Italian perpetrators within the regime, mentioning their crimes, but do not discuss them in detail. While individual museums' representations do refer to the police forces or the units of the Republic of Salò, names, structures of command or motivations are not

provided. The general population rarely appears and when it does it tends to be represented as the good and innocent within the story. Unlike representations in Hungary or Austria that include negative narratives about their national political histories, representations in Italy largely play down the role of the fascist regime. Narratives about the occupation, the liberation and the war have been pluralised since the late 1980s, but fascism remains strikingly absent. Apart from the racial laws, fascism seems to have escaped untarnished with problematic issues attributed to the Republic of Salò, not fascism per se. Even the Republic of Salò is not probed in detail, leaving the structures of the regime, its functioning and the people who supported it undisturbed and vague. Furthermore, Europe and European history is not relevant in Italian museums, except when showing the concentration camp system or drawing generalisations from the Holocaust, in which case the ethical conclusions are applied to Europe as a whole.

The representation mode of Italian museums is also different from other European representations. The Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso have created unique exhibition designs, in which the spatial design and the mediation of the content is done in a highly artistic manner. The museum tradition in Italy, in which artistic representations of the past are common, has influenced these modes of representation. Within this tradition, design is as important as content in the quest to reach an audience. The representations also reflect on the mediation of the past in the present. The Museo della Deportazione encapsulates the past in its objects, whereas the Museo Diffuso transposes it into the present via multimedia installations. Reflecting on materiality and mediality, both museums create an atmosphere that stimulates thought and provokes emotional reactions in the visitor. Thematic approaches, a pathway that is not prescribed, and fragmented narratives give the ideal visitor the freedom to decide for herself how to react to these representations.

Most striking in Italian museums is the use of first person narratives. In the Museo della Deportazione witnesses narrate the content, and in the Museo Diffuso participants tell the story of the exhibition. Both exhibitions place personal testimony at the centre of their narratives. The Italian tradition to see the resistance fighters as experts on their own story merges with the advent of testimony, also visible in other European museums. First person testimonies are beginning to appear in Austria and Hungary, but Italy champions this approach. In Italy the contemporary person speaking in the museum is an active agent in the past as well as in the present. In the past

the person had encountered a situation, formed an opinion about it and reacted accordingly. In the present, he or she tells the story of this action self-consciously. The best example of this is the Museo Diffuso, which represents people no longer defined by their victim status, but by their position in society. This allows for diverse stories and less rigid subject positions. Since each narrative is true for its narrator and no moral authority is given exclusively to anyone, contradicting narratives can stand side-by-side, without devaluing either storyteller. In this approach, perpetrators and bystanders as well as observers contribute to the visitor's understanding of the past, and individual truth is valid even if it is contradicted by another individual truth presented.

Representations of the Holocaust in Italy appear to be at an intermediate position between national and international forms. The pluralisation of victim groups and the emerging focus on Italian perpetrators reflects the worldwide trend.⁹⁰⁷ Holocaust commemorations in their older format, representing all victims together, largely subsuming victims of the racial persecutions within the category of political prisoners and resistance fighters, still exist. However, museums across Italy do represent the Shoah. Holocaust representations thus now address the racial persecutions more explicitly, even if so far most museums only represent the Jewish victims. Italians are also beginning to see a need for their country to commemorate its "negative memory", and the first signs of such a commemoration can be found in the museums. Inevitably, this brings up the question of responsibility. Responsibility for the negative memory, however, continues to be externalised. Italian museums largely exclude the general population from the sphere of responsibility, and perpetrator history is being approached only hesitantly. I believe that future representations of the Holocaust in Italy will adapt to the worldwide trend, despite the current dominance of right-wing positions in Italy. The worldwide trend has already been accepted in theory. In representations of the Shoah, perpetrators are beginning to appear in museum exhibitions. This comes together with the fact that past fascism is no longer a taboo in Italy, with even neo-fascists starting to distance themselves from it. Thus, a critical investigation of Italian participation in the Holocaust before and after 1943 already seems to be underway.

⁹⁰⁷ Fogu, "Italiana brava gente," 172.

The tradition of artistic exhibition designs and the utilisation of first person narratives have much to offer to Holocaust representations worldwide. The exhibition design is unique in Italy and visualises a fragmented and pluralised perspective on the Holocaust. First person narratives, at least as the Museo Diffuso presents them, allow for a conceptualisation of historical agency that understands agency as applicable to every member of society. Within this representation, historical agency does not reduce a person's actions to those of a victim, a perpetrator or a spectator. The exhibition of the Museo Diffuso does not restrict historical agency to one or more fixed subject positions. This stance also grants agency to the visitor, who is as autonomous to choose what to believe and how to act in the present as the people in the past were.

5 Unfamiliar familiarity: Holocaust representations in Austria, Hungary and Italy

Summing up my results, I will focus on two lines of questioning: first, I will compare museum representations of the Holocaust in Austria, Hungary and Italy; second, I will examine the different ways that each museum constructs historical agency. Both questions essentially address how history museums in European countries that were closely associated with Germany in the Second World War construct and represent the Holocaust as a knowable object. The short answer to the first question is that each museum display is a hybrid text comprised of internationally relevant components that structure how museum exhibitions across the three countries conceptualise the Holocaust. The museums exhibit this conceptualisation according to national narratives and through modes of representation favoured in each country. The short answer to the second question is that within these hybrid texts the museums present different models of historical agency unique to each country. Each exhibition represents the historical agency of the perpetrators and the victims differently and thus the museums offer alternative evaluations of the Holocaust. Consequently, the meaning assigned to the Holocaust and the values derived from it for the present also differ.

Studying Holocaust representations in museums in Austria, Hungary and Italy in a comparative frame encompasses the question of whether, with respect to the Holocaust, a shared past is commemorated in these European countries. Whether a European Holocaust representation exists has been debated considerably in Europe since the 1990s, as I discussed in my introduction. Europe is currently reinventing its past, searching for an identity that might be able to unite the geographic region after the bloc confrontation. In these conceptualisations of shared national identities, a shared past supposedly defines Europe, with its history defining its current values. For the shared past and the values this past shapes, the Holocaust carries significant weight. Since the 1990s the Holocaust has become a fixed point of reference within the history of most European countries, and it is commemorated in all of them. To what extent the representations of the Holocaust, the meanings they establish, and the values drawn from

them are alike is less clear, however. Debates about this are controversial and very few pronouncements within them are based on actual studies in multiple countries.

My work provides answers, grounded in empirical research, to whether common Holocaust representations exist in Europe and how such commonalities might be expressed. I turned to a subgroup of European countries that were allied with Germany or had close ties to it at the time of the Holocaust, and analysed how permanent museum exhibitions in this subgroup represent the Holocaust. I examined how the museums construct the Holocaust as an object of knowledge, and compared the different representations with each other. This relates the question of whether Europe invents a shared Holocaust history to the actual representations. My work does not address whether the Holocaust has been invented as a new founding myth of the whole of Europe overall, as this could happen independently of existing representations. Instead I answer whether the museums representing the Holocaust participate in such a construction, and if so, how.

In addition to describing the representations, I critically examined the represented narratives. I evaluated the exhibitions against the ideals of Holocaust representation and historiography proposed by critical museology and pluralised Holocaust historiography respectively. Deconstructing the conceptualisations of the Holocaust represented in the museum exhibitions I assessed whether the museums' representations meet the standards formulated in both ideals. This was motivated by the question of whether, and if so where and to what extent, the museums show Holocaust history from a plural perspective that integrates diverse subjects understood as historical agents – which I believe has been one of the most important recent innovations in Holocaust historiography. It was also motivated by the question of whether, where, and to what extent the narratives presented are self-reflective and transparent – in my view one of the most important incitements critical museology has offered to the museum world. To me this is crucial, as I believe that the recognition of diverse subject positions enables the political participation of individuals, seen as equals and respected as human beings – which are the values I consider relevant and would hope to find in museum exhibitions not only, but also in Europe. I therefore assessed the exhibitions with these ideals in mind, in the belief that an extensive evaluation of existing representations can facilitate improved representations that meet these ideals.

When I commenced this project, I assumed that the different exhibitions would be quite similar. This was not the case. Holocaust representations in museums or elsewhere are complex texts constructed within a broad and multifaceted discourse. The four permanent exhibitions I analysed in detail in Austria, Hungary and Italy draw on these multiple discourses and are necessarily diverse. Each historical exhibition constructs the Holocaust as a unique object of knowledge, providing its very own answer to the question “what is the Holocaust?” While the final narratives differ, they nonetheless draw on common components that reappear throughout exhibitions in the three countries. In the following pages I will outline these commonalities. My arguments hold true for permanent exhibitions in Austria, Hungary and Italy, which were conceived after 1990, curated between 1995 and 2006, and exhibited until 2013. Having visited seventeen historical museums with permanent exhibitions on the 20th century in Austria, Hungary and Italy, I gained a comprehensive overview of the museum landscape in each country. This enabled me to choose four museums representative of museums exhibiting the Holocaust in each country for my discourse analyses, which provide in-depth examination of the content of individual exhibitions within each country. Relating my findings to studies on museum representations and to the literature on Holocaust representation, I situate my results with respect to other museum representations of the Holocaust, mainly those in Europe, North America and Israel.

5.1 International discourse formations within the exhibitions

The first result of my research at the selected twenty-one contemporary history museums was confirmation of the relevance of the Holocaust in Europe. I discovered that every institution devoted to the 20th century represents the Holocaust. The displays might be small and are often problematic in content, but the Holocaust is sufficiently significant to be included in every exhibition. This proves that the Holocaust is recognised as one of the crucial topics of the 20th century. For history museums, this recognition of the Holocaust makes its inclusion within their exhibitions obligatory. After 1990 expository agents in all three countries created new exhibitions or redesigned existing ones, partly with the explicit aim of adding the Holocaust to them.

In addition to the mere fact that the Holocaust is exhibited in European history museums, I also found commonalities within the different exhibitions that constituted my case studies. Permanent exhibitions devoted entirely or to a large extent to the Holocaust in Austria, Hungary and Italy share three common themes in their representation of the Holocaust. All exhibitions divide the Holocaust into the same stages, display perpetrator history, and attempt to represent multiple victim groups. These commonalities structure the exhibitions, defining what the Holocaust was, who was responsible for it and who suffered during it. The three themes establish the basic content that the exhibitions represent. Each theme is a significant component of the international Holocaust discourse formations currently addressed in exhibitions around the globe, which links the museum representations in this subgroup of European countries to international representations.

The first commonality I want to discuss is the division of the Holocaust into roughly four stages. The Zeitgeschichte Museum in Austria, the Holokauszt Emlékközpont in Hungary, the Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso in Italy all present discrimination, exclusion, mass murder, and the aftermath of the Holocaust as separate stages. The prologues of the exhibitions narrate the discrimination of the later victims, mostly of the Jews, beginning in the 1920s and 1930s. The exhibitions address the negative opinions that the public held about later victims, reveal common stereotypes, or turn to the antisemitic ideology propagated. The museums represent this as the first stage leading to the Holocaust. According to the exhibitions, the second stage, in which the situation worsened, was when legal measures were taken to exclude the discriminated people from the non-victimised national populations, thereby limiting their participation in society as well as their economic survival. The exhibitions mainly address the racial laws and touch on the pauperisation that began in the 1930s. The Zeitgeschichte Museum and the Holokauszt Emlékközpont also describe the theft and plundering of the victims' property, while the other museums do not. The exhibitions then turn to mass murder as the third and principal stage in the Holocaust. With the exception of the Museo Diffuso, this constitutes the climax of each exhibition. The narratives address ghettoisation, deportation, and the mass murder in the concentration camps. The epilogue to the mass murder, the fourth stage, is then the aftermath of the Holocaust after 1945. Most exhibitions discuss the liberation of the camps and

the legal prosecution of the perpetrators, while some exhibitions also present the memory of the Holocaust after 1945. The four stages follow the actions of the perpetrators; the museums structure their exhibitions in line with the persecutions that took place. This division of the Holocaust into four different stages is in accordance with current international Holocaust historiography. The result is a representation of the Holocaust in stages that resemble those of other representations in Europe, North America and Israel.

A second commonality is that each of the four museums addresses perpetrators within the national populations. Each exhibition asks to what degree the national population perpetrated the crimes of the Holocaust or aided the German perpetrators. All four museums thus raise the question of national responsibility and then represent the national population as at least partly responsible for the Holocaust. The *Zeitgeschichte* Museum in Austria and the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* in Hungary present the entire national population as perpetrators, while the *Museo della Deportazione* and the *Museo Diffuso* in Italy show a portion of the national population to have sided with the Italian fascist regimes and the Germans. All four museums here reflect the change in memory culture with respect to perpetrator history. Since the 1990s, Holocaust historiography worldwide has been highlighting perpetrator history. In addressing state responsibility for the Holocaust, most scholars turn to the members of national populations who participated in the Holocaust, collaborated with the perpetrators, benefited from it, or simply tolerated the crimes. Confronting this 'negative past' has become a milestone in national historiography.

Most European museums exhibit the negative past of the nation state by representing the perpetrators and collaborators of the national population of the state within which the museum is located. Perpetrator history appears in all European countries, irrespective of their wartime relationships with Germany. It is particularly strong, however, in the countries that were allied with Germany. In Austria, which became part of the Third Reich, as well as in Hungary and Italy, both initially closely associated and later allied with Germany, before being occupied by German forces, the question of responsibility becomes all the more urgent. Since the national regimes openly and officially aligned themselves with Germany, state structures and official institutions were complicit with the Holocaust, and a significant percentage of

the population participated in the crimes. Austria, Hungary, and Italy, as well as other countries closely connected to Germany, thus form a subgroup. Museums in this subgroup represent the nation state, the government, the institutions of the state and the non-persecuted national population as at least partly responsible for the Holocaust. In this subgroup of countries perpetrator history is particularly emphasised, widening the focus from individual perpetrators within the national population to the national institutions and governing bodies.

A third commonality is that all four museums attempt to represent several different victim groups. Each of the twenty-one museums I visited references the Jewish victims. The case studies then show that, with the exception of the Museo Diffuso, the museum references several other victim groups, usually within a list at the beginning of the exhibitions. This constitutes a move to include all possible victims within the exhibitions. The Zeitgeschichte Museum, the Holokauszt Emlékközpont and the Museo della Deportazione name roughly the same groups, acknowledging that Jews, Roma, Sinti, people defined as asocial or persecuted as criminals, medical patients, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses were all victims of the Holocaust. This gesture to multiple victim groups responds to the pluralisation of victims that emerged in international discourses after Jewish victims gained visibility from the 1960s onwards. In the 1970s and especially the 1980s, other victim groups slowly came to be recognised. From the 1990s it became common to include plural victims in Holocaust representations, and today this is reflected in museum exhibitions around the world.

However, the attention that expository agents give to these groups generally ends after their nominal inclusion within the obligatory list. All museum exhibitions name multiple victim groups, but hardly elaborate upon them. The Holokauszt Emlékközpont discusses the Roma in detail and the Zeitgeschichte Museum presents Roma, Sinti and medical patients, but these victims appear marginal compared to the Jews. As a result, the attempted inclusion of multiple victims falls short. The main exhibitions deal with Jewish victims and the victim groups that were particularly important nationally. The Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso represent members of the resistance, political prisoners, Prisoners of War and Jewish victims. The Zeitgeschichte Museum represents Austrian resistance fighters and the political opposition alongside the Jews, Roma and Sinti, and medical patients. It also mentions

the Slovenes who suffered particular persecution in Austria. Adding regionally relevant victims, the museum also discusses forced labourers and Prisoners of War. The exception here is the Holokauszt Emlékközpont in Hungary, which only represents the persecution of the Jews and Roma who lived in the historic nation state in detail.

Common to all representations of the victims is that the exhibitions treat the victim groups as homogenous units sharing common characteristics and experiences. By viewing the victims as unified groups the exhibitions reiterate an aspect of the perpetrator perspective. In some instances, the exhibitions even reproduce racist or anti-semitic perceptions of the perpetrators, albeit unintentionally. The homogenisation remains even where, as in the Holokauszt Emlékközpont and the Museo della Deportazione, the museums relate the experiences of individual victims. The exhibitions present these as variations of a general story representative of all the victims of one group. The representation of victims as homogenous groups references the division of victims into separate groups that has become dominant in international Holocaust historiography since the 1990s. Since the year 2000 the characterisation of victims according to their group belonging has been modified and slowly begun to pluralise. It was only after 2010 however, that scholars, most prominently Saul Friedländer, began calling for integrated plural narratives of individual victims. The fact that museum exhibitions put together at least a decade earlier do not incorporate these ideas is not surprising. The striking exception is the Museo Diffuso, which bases most of its exhibition on individual stories, as I will outline in detail below.

The common themes structuring current Holocaust representations are not immediately apparent in the exhibitions. Each of the four museums narrates the common components within national historiography. The exhibition narratives define the different stages of the Holocaust in relation to national events and developments within each nation state. The same applies to the representation of the perpetrators. Each exhibition represents the national perpetrators and nationalist and right-wing groups that operated in the respective country. In Austria, the national socialist party is most relevant, in Hungary, the conservative right and Arrow Cross movement are focused upon, while in Italy, the two fascist regimes are referenced as perpetrators. In the same way, the exhibitions focus upon the most nationally significant victims of the racial persecutions, to whom other national victims are added in part. This technique of

“nationalisation” of all three common themes masks the commonality of the themes across national borders. The commonality is there, but not directly visible in the exhibitions. The national frame within which the exhibitions narrate the Holocaust is in fact another commonality across the three countries.

While international discourse formations structure the exhibitions, European references are less significant. Where the museums do reference Europe, these references remain particular and do not follow common patterns. The *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* compares what happened in Hungary to other events in Europe and constructs a common European history of the Holocaust. The *Museo della Deportazione* exhibits the concentration camp experience as one that unites Europe, and uses this to invoke a European identity. The *Zeitgeschichte Museum* only mentions Europe on the periphery, while in the *Museo Diffuso* Europe does not appear at all. This may be due to the unclear role assigned to Europe in discourses about the Holocaust. Debates about a shared European history emerged in the 1990s, but have only come into full force since the year 2000. The question of whether Europe shares the same past and has a similar identity continues to be contested to this day. Many individual scholars, intellectuals, and politicians, as well as a large percentage of the general population emphasise the uniqueness of nation states. That the museums present Holocaust history through a national and not European lens is a case in point for the reluctance to acknowledge a shared European history as a common point of reference. My research demonstrates that explicit European references in museum representations of the Holocaust are still marginal, despite contemporary assertions of a European past. Instead, international components, drawn from a Holocaust historiography accepted worldwide, prove far more influential.

Until now I have not addressed the gender representations I encountered in the exhibitions. I focus on this aspect separately because the gender representations are neither dependent on the common themes nor national particularities, but cut across both. With the exception of the *Museo Diffuso* I criticise the gender representations in all museums, albeit to different degrees. The *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* and the *Museo della Deportazione* leave gender unmarked and present the Holocaust from a male perspective only. The *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* presents a classic perspective, relegating women to the private or social sphere while featuring men in the public realm.

Men were the active agents of capitalist Hungary; women stood at their sides. All the perpetrators represented are men, while the victims are feminised. The Museo della Deportazione simply subsumes women within the male narratives. Despite claiming to represent all concentration camp experiences, the exhibition only narrates those of men. Differences between the experiences of men and women vanish. Since the exhibition narrative does not reflect on this, the expository agent hides the inherent gender bias. The exhibition at the Zeitgeschichte Museum does discuss gender as a category, which is an exception in the museum world and noteworthy in itself. Gender comes to the fore when the exhibition represents women and their experiences. This creates the impression that gender is only relevant for women, while male gender constructions, unmarked, appear as the seemingly neutral norm. Furthermore, the expository agent only represents women within separate displays, thus effectively relegating them to women's corners. In none of the three museums are women and men represented in equal numbers. Ignorance or indifference towards gender categories, the equation of gender with women's history, and the unequal representation of men and women is common across national borders, museum types and historic topics. The hesitant and sometimes even unwilling recognition of gender as a relevant category within Holocaust historiography further exacerbates this. The striking exception to this blind spot is the representation at the Museo Diffuso. The exhibition represents women and men in equal numbers for every topic addressed. The exhibition's narrative, plural and diverse, includes reflections on gendered experiences made by individuals of two sexes.

5.2 National discourses and the hybridisation of representations

That common themes structure their overall narratives does not mean that national discourse formations particular to Austria, Hungary and Italy are irrelevant in the exhibitions. As I discussed in the introduction, scholars addressing Holocaust representations in Europe tend to pose Europe against the nation states in a binary. Holocaust representations are either global or national, European or national. My study instead confirms and elaborates upon the thesis proposed by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider: that Holocaust representations are hybrid. Moving away from the binary between international and national representations allows a perspective that recognises

the interdependence of both. National identity thus re-emerges within an international frame, even if the museums claim to represent only national narratives.

My study successfully explicates how international and national discourse formations merge to create new, hybrid narratives of the Holocaust. I show that international discourse formations provide the overall structure for Holocaust representations. The three common themes described above establish the outline within which a national narrative is then presented. The way in which the two discourses adapt to each other within this structure is unique to each exhibition. The national discourses can adopt the international ones, can adapt and transform them, or simply exist alongside them. The specific form of the hybrid narrative depends on the museum's stance towards and interpretation of the international and national discourse formations. In addition, some expository agents supplement international and national discourses with regional particularities. This is most evident in the Museo Diffuso or the Zeitgeschichte Museum, which significantly focus on regional history. I discovered that regional history serves to supplement national and international discourses, rather than transforming them. In most cases, the exhibitions subordinate the regional discourses to the national and international discourses.

I have already outlined the exemplification of common themes through national events. Where this occurs, the expository agent narrates the Holocaust via common themes but draws on national events to describe them. A hybridisation still takes place, as the international discourse changes in the process of this explication. Every museum, for example, presents the legally sanctioned exclusions, but describes them differently. This changes the image of exclusion, as the examples chosen affect how the visitor imagines this stage of the Holocaust. The Holocaust Emlékközpont emphasises several individual laws that legally prohibited Jews' participation in Hungarian society. The Zeitgeschichte Museum shows their exclusion from social events, when clubs and associations no longer allowed Jewish members to participate. Finally, the Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso represent the racial laws as a state measure defining and excluding the Jews, passed by the fascist regime not closely defined. In the first instance individual politicians responsible for the laws are most visible, in the second cultural institutions applying exclusionary laws, and in the

third an abstract government body. The theme common to all is exclusion, but it is merged with and adapted to the specific examples provided.

National discourse formations can also alter the international discourse. This happens, for example, when the museums address who was responsible for the Holocaust. Depending on the pervasiveness of the respective national discourse formations, the answers offered by the museums differ substantially between countries. The Zeitgeschichte Museum and the Holokauszt Emlékközpont present the non-persecuted national populations as perpetrators, while the Museo Diffuso and the Museo della Deportazione represent only part of the non-persecuted national population in this way. The modified paradigm in Italy with its hesitant recognition that parts of the population were perpetrators affects the perspective on perpetrators. It limits the radius of who is considered a perpetrator in Italy, without denying their presence altogether. Even where the representation of perpetrator history is similar, as the examples of the Zeitgeschichte Museum and the Holokauszt Emlékközpont show, the reasons for similar representations of the population as perpetrators may differ. In Austrian memory culture, Austria is defined as a perpetrator country, accepting that a large percentage of the Austrian population welcomed the incorporation into Germany and that Austria participated in the Holocaust. The Zeitgeschichte Museum is thus representative of both the national discourse and the worldwide trend of perpetrator representation. In Hungary, awareness of the participation and collaboration of the non-persecuted national population is not part of the dominant national discourse. Most museums in Hungary avoid representing the national population as perpetrators, shifting responsibility instead to the Germans and high-ranking Arrow Cross members. Since the Holokauszt Emlékközpont aims to counter this discourse, it emphasises the participation of the non-persecuted national population. It is thus representative of the worldwide trend but not the national discourse. This example also shows that a museum's particular stance towards the national and international discourses is the decisive factor for the representation chosen.

In addition to exemplification and adaptation, each exhibition also represents unique discourse formations surrounding national events alongside international themes. In Austria, this is the country's incorporation into Germany in 1938 and, perhaps more importantly, the prelude to that during the austrofascist years. In Hungary,

nationally specific topics are the treaty of Trianon and the influence of the conservative, authoritarian rule of Miklós Horthy until the occupation in 1943. In Italy, the two fascist regimes and the resistance against the Republic of Salò after 1943 are unique. Each of these discourses contributes individual narratives to the exhibitions, which do not appear in other countries. In Austria, Hungary, and Italy, current national narratives evolve around the common theme of national perpetrators. Each of the discourses mentioned deals with the questions of how and why the nation state sided with Germany, who participated in the crimes of the Holocaust, and who was responsible for them. The national narratives here complement the theme of perpetrator history but add stand-alone elements, with their very own discursive interpretations of the broader theme.

One reason why the simultaneous presence of international and national narratives is so rarely noticed in museum representations of the Holocaust is that the exhibitions emphasise the national narratives they supposedly present. The exhibitions claim to show national history, even though they actually represent it within international discourse formations. Another factor that obscures the internationality of themes is the different mode of representation. While the same content may be displayed across national borders, the mode of representation differs substantially in each country. With respect to the mode of representation, national aesthetics are decisive. Every mode of representation is theoretically available in every country, but the national discourses on Holocaust representation preconfigure the ones chosen.

The Zeitgeschichte Museum has a scholarly approach to the Holocaust. The ideal visitor learns facts about the Holocaust and its effects on the region; the expository agent explains the Holocaust. The exhibition presents the Holocaust in a very reserved and minimalistic design, with few climatic points in the narrative and the exhibition design and a very educative tone. The narrative proceeds in a chronological fashion, one event leading to the next. Muted colours dominate, with silver, light brown and red. As I have shown, the museum claims that its exhibition is open for interpretation, but the national narrative that the museum presents appears to offer a complete and accurate representation of the past as *the* truth. The academic knowledge on which it is based enforces the truth claim of the museum. This presentation responds to and reaffirms the

dominant assumption in Austria that representations of the Holocaust are only adequate when cast in a scholarly, reserved and distanced tone. The same seemingly neutral description of seemingly plain facts is found in the Dokumentationsarchiv or the Geschichte(n)museum Bildein. Newer exhibitions, however, such as the redesigned ones at the Mauthausen memorial, are beginning to depart from this mode of representation.

The design of the Holokauszt Emlékközpont's exhibition stands in stark contrast to that at the Zeitgeschichte Museum. It captivates the visitor with a fast-paced narrative, full of suspense, in which mass murder provides the climax. The narrative arc, with its clear beginning, middle, turning point and end creates a closed narrative, an all-encompassing story of the Holocaust without any gaps. The exhibition constructs a tragic story that is intended to evoke the ideal visitor's compassion for the victims by showing the victims' suffering. The ideal visitor should then mourn the deaths of those victims. The colour scheme of the exhibition is dark, dominated by black, and sparsely lit. The expository agent attempts to create an experience that can be seen, heard, read and felt. This is in keeping with other Hungarian museums that also attempt to create impressive experiences for the visitor, appealing to their emotions. The Terror Háza and the Holokauszt Múzeum are the most obvious, but the Nemzeti Múzeum also takes this approach. Historical representations in Hungary tend to stimulate all the senses and favour strong and sometimes declamatory expressions.

The Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso choose yet another mode of representation, referencing artistic exhibitions. The minimalistic designs focus the attention of the ideal visitor onto a few, carefully placed exhibits that inspire personal reflection about the past. The expository agent allows the visitor to wander among the objects independent of a fixed path. The narrative is open, raising topics without discussing them exhaustively, representing fragments of the past, rather than a complete and closed narrative. The goal of both expository agents is to stimulate thought about the narratives displayed. Both museums employ a dark colour scheme, featuring black in the Museo della Deportazione and dark brown and black in the Museo Diffuso. Casting reflections about the past in a dark and sober tone, the exhibitions present a difficult and terrible past, which the visitor should reflect upon. These more artistic exhibitions stand within the tradition of other Holocaust memorials in Italy, such as the

Museo al Deportazione in Carpi. Italy's memorials also tend to highlight a few, carefully placed displays, and to privilege symbolic representations over totalising historical narratives.

The exhibition at the Holocaust Emlékközpont centres on the recreation of tragic experiences, the one at the Zeitgeschichte Museum on scholarly learning about the horrific developments of the Holocaust, while those at the Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso employ artistic symbolism to evoke the suffering of the victims. All three approaches to exhibition practice are well known within the museum world. The Holocaust Emlékközpont references the permanent exhibitions of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum or Yad Vashem, and shares some components with the Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London. The scholarly tone of the Zeitgeschichte Museum is similar to the representation at the later established Topography of Terror in Berlin and other exhibitions on the Holocaust in Germany. Some of the artistic elements employed by the Museo della Deportazione and the Museo Diffuso can also be found in the Holocaust exhibition of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, or the children's memorial in Yad Vashem.

5.3 International exhibition practices within national representations

While the aesthetics and the narrative structures differ, the museums exhibitions in Austria and Hungary, and partly the ones in Italy, do share a common approach to the content they display. This commonality results from traditional museum practices applied worldwide. Not to display the museum's own embeddedness in time, its own historicity and the implicit assumptions that structure its displays is common in the museum world, despite the critiques introduced by critical museology. Every museum works with implicit assumptions structuring what to exhibit, in which way and how. Since the museums I analysed are historical museums, their most essential position to and perspective on the Holocaust are derived from Holocaust historiography and the most important exhibits are primary sources remaining from it. The historiography of the Holocaust adopted by each institution structures the way the expository agents approach the Holocaust and their viewpoint on it; the primary sources, originally evidence that inform historical inquiry, transform to items displayed – in specific ways – in all exhibitions.

Holocaust historiography considerably shapes the narratives on display. Nevertheless, expository agents do not mention the historiography and, more critically, nearly always present their narratives as if the historiographical perspective chosen were the only possible perspective on the Holocaust. The Holocaust Emlékközpont and the Zeitgeschichte Museum present their narratives as singular historical truths. Their speech acts are authoritative, disqualifying conflicting interpretations of the past. Presented with factual truth, the visitor cannot trace how the scholars, or the expository agent for that matter, have reached a particular interpretation. This holds despite the Zeitgeschichte Museum's noteworthy introductory statement that history is a construction, dependent on the present perspective. Because much of the subsequent exhibition employs an authoritative voice, further legitimised by academic truth speak, the expository agent hides the museum's own participation in the further construction of history. The example of the Zeitgeschichte Museum shows that it is not enough to mention the construction of the past; rather the representation itself has to continuously make this construction visible.

The representations in Italy are less authoritative than those in Austria or Hungary, and demand instead active thinking from the visitor. The Museo della Deportazione presents a 'factual' narrative in an authoritative voice in the lobby, but then allows the visitor to come to her own conclusions in the main hall. Yet the perspective on the past presented restricts itself to several variants of the same interpretation, all of which follow the perspective of 'the' concentration camp survivor. The viewpoint behind this perspective, the historiography that structures this presentation is not shown. The Museo Diffuso also encourages the visitor to think for herself. It displays multiple perspectives of the past, showing that several narratives can exist simultaneously. Nevertheless, the full construction of historical truth in the Museo Diffuso is not transparent. The historian speaks from his own viewpoint, but is the voice of authority, with conflicting interpretations remaining unspecified, albeit conceivable. The museums in Austria and Hungary hide most of their own history and shy away from a self-conscious, self-reflective representation of their own embeddedness in time. The museums in Italy show some of this and provide plural historic narratives, whilst hiding most of the historiography from which these narratives have been constructed.

Another commonality in the mode of representation lies in the museums' use of primary sources. The primary sources, the building blocks of the museums' narratives, largely resemble each other or are actually the same across national borders. This is because the Holocaust affected all of Europe in a similar way, producing similar sources, as well as the globalised network of Holocaust historiography and commemoration, which makes these sources easily available in every country. Because the perpetrators enacted similar methods of persecution in each country, analogous primary sources have been left behind by the Holocaust. The uniforms of concentration camp inmates, the photographs taken by perpetrators of the persecutions, and the mundane objects retrieved from the concentration camps are good examples for this. As I showed in my analysis of the Zeitgeschichte Museum, prisoner uniforms were widely available after 1945, with the result that many museums own prisoner uniforms and nearly every institution displays them. Perpetrator photographs, such as the one I examined in the Holocaust Emlékközpont, appear equally often in museums, since they constitute the most readily – and in some cases the only – available visual evidence for the persecutions. Mundane objects such as cutlery, cups or spoons from the concentration camps, like those I analysed in the Museo della Deportazione, are among the few material objects left behind from the concentration camps. They now reappear in many museums exhibiting the Holocaust, partly because there simply are no other material objects to display. In addition to these sources, since 1945 survivors, scholars, and museum professionals have also produced primary sources, such as the video interviews in the Museo Diffuso. Museums often commission these kinds of testimonies or draw on existing testimonies for their exhibitions. In some cases, the exhibitions actually show identical primary sources, even if in a different format or medium. Most often, these are iconic primary sources, such as the photographs from the Auschwitz Album, which I analysed in the Holocaust Emlékközpont.

Their use of similar primary sources does make the exhibitions in Austria, Hungary and Italy resemble each other. In fact exhibitions all over the world use similar sources. These sources are able to transcend national borders easily, and are relevant in Holocaust representations worldwide. The fact that the primary sources displayed by the different institutions often resemble each other is noteworthy as another commonality of Holocaust representations in exhibitions. Prisoner uniforms, perpetrator

photographs, mundane objects and survivors' testimonies have all become iconic. The meanings assigned to these sources have changed over time and remain subject to change in the future. Nevertheless, because of their iconic status they have their own unique discourses, and transport specific messages. The individual meaning established depends on the specific frame within which an exhibition displays the source and the contextualisation the expository agent provides. Hence, not all the meanings established by iconic primary sources can be generalised across viewing situations.

The meaning established via photographs and testimony is very different in the museums exhibitions. I did not, for example, find similar messages connected to the Auschwitz Album in different museums, even though the photographs are usually used in museum exhibitions to represent Jewish Holocaust victims imagined as *the* typical victim. Beyond this, the messages are unique. Although photographs from the Album appear in nearly every museum, the meanings differ depending on the particular photograph chosen, the size, format and media within which it is shown, and its contextualisation. In the Holocaust Emlékközpont, for example, the photographs from the Auschwitz Album represent Jewish victims as a homogenous group, devoid of agency, and construct the Jewish victims as helpless and passive. Testimonies used in exhibitions also carry very different messages, depending on the specific exhibition and how the testimonies are used within it. The testimonies in the Museo Diffuso provide the personal narratives of individual people, which together create the diverse stories that establish the exhibition narrative. In most other exhibitions, testimonies merely add supplementary information, in depth or as brief examples. Expository agents often use them to add a personal voice, explicating the suffering, to an otherwise abstract and depersonalised narrative of persecution. In most cases however, the person giving testimony is depicted in a frontal head shot or half portrait and the screen is positioned in a way that the person seems to speak directly to the visitor.

Prisoner uniforms and mundane objects appear to communicate similar messages in all the museums I analysed. In the Zeitgeschichte Museum prisoner uniforms symbolise an unknown, absent concentration camp prisoner, standing for a Holocaust victim; presumably a Jewish one. In most museum representations prisoner uniforms replace the inmate, who is invisible as a person and rarely named or talked about explicitly. The uniform is no longer associated with the political prisoner, but

instead alludes to the Jewish victims. It homogenises not only the inmates, but also the primary sources, suggesting that the striped uniform was typical and used in all concentration camps at all times. The mundane objects in the Museo della Deportazione represent the suffering under horrific conditions in concentration camps. They also gesture to an incomprehensible enormity of loss, symbolised by the pitiful few scattered and scarred objects to have endured the Holocaust. In most Holocaust exhibitions at least one or two mundane objects are exhibited, usually symbolising suffering in general, and hunger in particular. When exhibitions display these iconic primary sources, they evoke the associations commonly connected to them. The exhibitions and the discourses resemble each other here as they draw on the same primary sources; sources familiar worldwide.

As well as using similar or the same primary sources in their exhibitions, the museums use the sources in similar ways. One main commonality is that the sources serve the exhibition narratives. In most cases the primary sources illustrate a previously established narrative that is largely independent of the primary source. The primary source is then employed to legitimise and offer 'evidence' to support the narrative. Primary sources also provide supplementary information, introducing additional storylines that again are often only vaguely related to the sources themselves. The unique narratives specific to each source remain untold. In most cases the frame defines the source and the text written by the expository agent informs about some elements of the source, but ignores its broader history. Who produced the primary sources, how and why; what it represents and which information this representation can convey; and how the source was preserved, transmitted and used after 1945 is not explicated in any exhibition I analysed. In most cases, the contextualisation of the sources is scarce and it hardly narrates the history of the item on display. The iconic primary sources are given even less contextualisation. In the exhibitions analysed the iconic primary sources are displayed without much explication, presumed to speak for themselves and to be immediately recognisable. The result of an instrumental usage of primary sources is an authoritative narrative that just uses the fragments from the past as fits the narrative. As in the case of historiography, the authoritative use of sources to illustrate or legitimise a preconceived narrative disables

reflection about those sources, their content and the contexts within which they were produced and preserved, and are viewed today.

5.4 Four conceptualisations of historical agency for the past and the present

My work not only identifies common and diverse Holocaust representations in museums in Austria, Hungary and Italy, but also interrogates the meanings assigned to the Holocaust by the representations. The meaning attributed to the Holocaust defines how the past is used in the present. This addresses whether, and if so how, a shared identity might be constructed via Holocaust representations in museums. I found that it is mainly through historical agency that the museum exhibitions give meaning to the Holocaust. Every Holocaust exhibition allocates specific subject positions to the people in past. In doing so the expository agent defines how the Holocaust could happen, who was responsible for it, who was affected by it and in what ways. Thus the expository agent determines who qualifies as a victim and what range of actions were available to this victim. The allocation of subject positions also defines the perpetrators; who is to be considered as a perpetrator, the extent of their power, and often their motivations. Finally, the representations also evaluate the structures of the societies within which the different subjects acted.

In presenting subject positions for people in the past, the expository agents also construct subject positions in the present. Looking at subject positions in the past we, as museum visitors, scholars and curators, position ourselves as subjects in the present. This is crucial to how we 'experience' the Holocaust, i.e. how we construct and imagine our own agency as subjects in relation to it. Thus by defining subject positions the museums exercise their power to define both past and present. It is through the presentation of historical agency that I believe museums can offer subject positions that recognise and respect the individual as a political subject with power. This political subject includes, at least theoretically, a multitude of individual positions, each of them with agency.

The types of agency accorded to the subject positions represented is different in each of the museums I analysed. In the Zeitgeschichte Museum, it is the way that society functions, its historical developments that shape the course of time. According to

the exhibition, time progresses relentlessly. Developments were caused by previous events, which themselves have resulted from those before. A never-ending line of developments emerges. It appears that, once the first step towards the Holocaust had been taken, mass murder was inevitable. The exhibition provides an overview of this path towards the Holocaust. The result is an abstract story, a history almost devoid of the influence of individual people. In rare parts of the national narrative, political parties or high-ranking politicians appear as historical agents. Nevertheless, even their power to change or affect the course of time is limited. At the regional level, the exhibition presents individual agents who acted within the range the larger developments allowed. Their agency is restricted and the exhibition does not elaborate upon the results of their actions. The only individuals granted agency by the expository agent are the members of the resistance. The resistance fighters held their own opinions about the political situation and acted accordingly. In this way they were able to at least influence their own biographies. Because the expository agent does not discuss the impacts of their actions in relation to Austria, their agency remains nonetheless narrowly focused on themselves. Victims are all but absent from the Zeitgeschichte Museum and this invisibility renders obsolete the question of whether and to what extent the victims had any agency. Historical agency in the Zeitgeschichte Museum is thus almost entirely depersonalised. This depersonalisation of historical agency at the Zeitgeschichte Museum allows equally little recognition of agency in the present. History is not made, it happens. Neither the people in the past nor the present can really affect it. With respect to the Holocaust, the visitor can only observe what happened. Looking back from the present the outcome is known; the exhibition imparts this knowledge to the visitor. This representation positions the visitor as a mere observer of events beyond her reach. The exhibition provides no opportunity for the identification of a political subject in the past, or the self-identification as a political subject in the present.

The Holocaust Emlékközpont constructs a very different historical agent; a highly personalised one. The exhibition links historical agency to individual people: to the men in charge and in power. The exhibition constructs the historical agents – the politicians, the administration, the executive forces and the Hungarian population – as autonomous and self-conscious individuals, in full command of their actions. As active agents, the perpetrators are responsible for the vicious murders. Equating agency with

murder, the exhibition does not differentiate between historical agency and its deployment, thus condemning agency completely. The exhibition suggests that after 1945 Hungarian society, by prosecuting the perpetrators, punished them according to their responsibilities. The Hungarian prosecutors sentenced the perpetrators to death, which solved the problem that perpetrators would otherwise have posed to Hungarian society after 1945. According to the exhibition narrative, the victims had no agency. They received their persecution silently, passively, and helplessly. The exhibition qualifies powerful actions that define outcomes as the only relevant ones, while thoughts, processes or less effective actions, such as those of the victims, are insignificant. Presenting agency as personified by the perpetrators positions the ideal visitor as a witness to the crimes of the perpetrators. The visitor sees the powerful oppressing the weak and testifies that this was wrong. The agency available to the visitor is thus restricted to watching the tragedy and mourning its outcome. As a witness, the ideal visitor is a moral agent condemning the crimes. Accordingly, the visitor is granted agency to testify and tell the world about history, but not to change its course. Because of this the exhibition does not offer self-identification as a historical subject in the present. Furthermore, it equates agency with the abuse of power, making agency in the present undesirable.

The victims, invisible in Austria and passive in Hungary, are the historical agents in the Museo della Deportazione. Its permanent exhibition also presents a personalised historical agent, this time the oppressed. The people deported to the concentration camps are historical agents in their fight for survival. The impact of the former paradigm of the resistance, celebrating the political prisoners as righteous fighters against an unjust occupation, is felt here. According to the exhibition, the victims of the Holocaust fight against the evil in the world for the greater good. The political prisoners, Prisoners of War, and the Jews are the moral authority representing humanity in its purest form. The expository agent gestures to the perpetrators, but their agency remains marginal. Perpetrators do not appear as individual people and the exhibition does not explicate their actions. In this representation, the perpetrators seem to have little effect on historical reality. Within the exhibition, it is not clear how the Holocaust could happen or who carried it out. This construction personalises agency, linking it this time to the person who suffered and overcame a crushing force. The narrative of

the Museo della Deportazione transforms the victims into inviolable figures of authority. The expository agent invites the ideal visitor to identify with the victims. This identification is possible as long as the visitor does not perceive herself as different. The imagined congruence with the victims invites the ideal visitor to imagine historical agency; in the form of suffering, fighting, and struggling for a better world. Based on moral superiority, agency is unquestionable, as long as it lies within the right group and for the right cause. If moral superiority ceases, agency also loses its legitimisation. The agency of the visitor is thus once more limited. Here, taking action in the present is possible, but only as long as the conditions of victimhood apply. The visitor is a political subject if she fits into the right group within the moral framework of victims versus perpetrators.

The Museo Diffuso offers the most exceptional conceptualisation of agency. According to its exhibition, every person; every woman and every man, is a historical agent. No matter what the decision, no matter how large or small the action and what impact it had, everyone has agency. The exhibition presents agency as being in the world and perceiving it, forming an opinion about the world, and acting upon it. This agency is nonetheless affected by the specific position a person has within society at a given time and place. The biography of a person largely explains her or his actions but does not determine them. Everyone acts and is capable of doing so. Unlike in the other three exhibitions, women are explicitly included as historical agents. This agency is not limited to a specific moment in time or an essentialised subject position as a victim or perpetrator, but performed continuously by individual people. The Museo Diffuso does not homogenise the victims into one or more unified group(s) according to shared, essential and unchanging characteristics. Instead it reveals how an individual at a specific moment in time found herself or himself in the victim position. And it reveals the same for other individuals, equally individually. Being victimised does not disable agency because the person is still capable of acting, even when the range of available actions and their efficacy is limited. As place and time change, the position of the subject changes again, and people cease to be defined eternally by their victim position. By contrast, the other four exhibitions all unify the victims, assigning essentialised characteristics to them. In the Holocaust Emlékközpont the victims are passive and have no agency; in the Zeitgeschichte Museum they are absent and unimaginable; and in the

Museo della Deportazione they are righteous and morally superior. All these victims retain their respective positions after 1945. The representation of agency at the Museo Diffuso also allows an equally open view of the perpetrators. The exhibition presents how people who committed the crimes of the Holocaust perceived and evaluated their own agency. It seeks to understand why a person, at a specific moment in time and place, participated in mass murder. This is possible without downplaying the responsibility of that person or denigrating his or her victims. While the exhibition condemns the act, it does not condemn the person. Here the expository agent does not define victims or perpetrators as such, even though people were victimised and acted accordingly, while others victimised them and were responsible for this. Conceptualising agency as a quality inherent to every person at all times, the Museo Diffuso calls on the visitor to understand her- or himself as a historical agent, capable of influencing the present. The visitor has agency, can interpret the past presented and can perceive herself as a political subject. As a political subject the visitor is situated in time and place, but her actions are not determined purely by her position.

I find the Museo Diffuso's conception of historical agency the most compelling, as it can apply to everyone. By situating each person within their historical context it enables the representation of diverse political positions in the past and the present. A generalised subject position, assigned to and fixed for a group – be they perpetrators or victims – does not allow for plural narratives. Group-based agency predetermines who can act at all and what these actions can look like. Fixing subject positions to specific people across time does not allow the subject to change when the conditions do, or when the person decides to act differently. Such limited subject positions establish closed narratives that are too seamless and clear-cut to represent reality. Instead, agency as the Museo Diffuso presents it allows for plural, contradictory and changing subject positions that address every member of society and treat each member with respect. The presentation at the Museo Diffuso attempts to understand the specific perspectives of every historical agent in and on the past. I believe that such an understanding of one's own role in society is beneficial when choosing which possible subject identifications are to be drawn from Holocaust representations. I believe an active and political individual should be the ideal visitor we envision when designing exhibitions. After all, to call on the visitor to fight against wars, help prevent crimes, and oppose racial or ethnic

hatred – as many museums do – would be much more effective if the visitor called upon were to be addressed as a political subject capable of acting autonomously.

5.5 Closing my own narrative

My work shows that common Holocaust representations in Europe exist within national representations. International discourse formations, told through national narratives, structure the museum exhibitions in Austria, Hungary and Italy. Comparing the exhibitions in these countries has enabled me to identify the following themes common to all of them: the stages of the Holocaust, the display of a negative national history, and the attempted pluralisation of victim groups. These common components do not reference unique European discourse formations about the Holocaust however, but instead discourse formations that are relevant worldwide. The common themes are represented within national narratives and in national modes of representation, which masks their commonalities. The national discourses exemplify, transform, and/or complement international discourses, resulting in new, hybrid narratives. The national discourses also determine whether a scholarly, all-encompassing, or artistic aesthetic is chosen for the displays. Within the national aesthetic, however, all exhibitions hide the historiography that informed the display and do not discuss the primary sources in their own right, a practice derived from museum practices relevant worldwide. My research thus reveals that museums in European countries that were closely associated with Germany in the Second World War share common ways of representing the Holocaust with respect to the content of the narrative displayed but show this content in different way, effectively conceptualising Holocaust history differently.

The different modes of representations promote different conceptualisations of Holocaust history and thus of historical agency. In fact every museum I analysed focuses on a different historical agent. The representations locate agency within the structures according to which a society functions, assign agency to the powerful, to the oppressed, or allow everyone to be an agent. These conceptualisations are – like the common themes, the historiography and the treatment of primary sources – factors that structure the exhibitions without being made explicit. Three of these representations offer a limited subject position to the visitor, in which she cannot perceive herself as a political subject, while the fourth recognises the historical agency everyone

has in the world. Thus, the first three museums all propose a depoliticised perspective on the individuals that lived and live within Europe.

Identifying these conceptualisations of Holocaust history and historical agency facilitates reflection on the model of both history and agency propagated by each institution. I believe it is necessary to think about these concepts, as this enables us to ask whether the identity offered by these representations meets our standards for how we would like to understand our own being in the world. I assessed the exhibitions against my own understanding of history as plural and necessarily diverse, as well as against my understanding of universal historical agency. Equal gender representations of women and men, considerations of class, race, and ethnic belonging should be represented in exhibitions. With respect to history in general I am furthermore convinced that we can only grasp fragments of the past, which we necessarily interpret from the present. Present time, place, and perspectives inform the questions we ask and the answers we find; the present determines the interpretations we draw from the fragments of the past and thus shapes how we make sense of it. Ultimately, to understand the past as constructed allows us to see the present as one we can construct. Historical truth is a fiction we need to abandon sooner rather than later. In my opinion, Holocaust representations need to take this into account by displaying plural, inclusive and respectful narratives that present different speech acts. They should reveal the fragmentary state of our knowledge, enabling people to interpret the past in their own ways, to define their own identities and values in relation to the past. Within this, the position chosen by the expository agent should not only be reflected upon, but also made visible to the visitor. This would improve Holocaust representations and allow room for visitors to perceive themselves as conscious participants in society, with agency and political effect in the world.

By contrast, my analysis showed that most museum representations of the Holocaust propose an ultimate truth, exhibiting the past as a series of facts within a normative narrative that defines and evaluates the people it talks about. Plural voices and diverse experiences may appear at the margins, but in general a homogenised narrative of the Holocaust is presented. I criticise such representations – especially where a singular truth is proclaimed in an authoritative voice – as speech acts I consider not only to be inaccurate and exclusionary representations of the past, but also harmful

guidelines for the present. As a result I advocate changing how the Holocaust is exhibited. My criticism of the existing narratives has helped me to identify where change might be necessary and how it could be achieved. A self-reflective and transparent representation of the Holocaust needs to indicate which historiographies have shaped the representation, show alternative and conflicting interpretations, discuss the primary sources in their own right, explicitly state the meaning the representation assigns to the Holocaust, and highlight the voice of the expository agent. Simply stating these commitments within the exhibition does not suffice, because authoritative devices are embedded within the current mode of representation. Therefore the narratives themselves and the way they are presented need to change.

Apart from an urgent call to change how museums exhibitions represent gender, I advocate that exhibitions begin to narrate the stories of primary sources, with particular attention to the historical agency represented within them. Returning to my very first example, described briefly in the introduction, I can elaborate upon this. On May 8th 1945, a soldier of the US Army photographed a former prisoner of the liberated concentration camp in Ebensee. He took the photograph inside the infirmary of the camp. This photograph was created in response to a directive from the US Army to the Signal Corps, to document what they encountered in the concentration camps as evidence for subsequent prosecutions and to the world. Seldom used in the prosecutions, the photographs soon became famous representations in newspaper reports about the camps, and were later used repeatedly to depict the concentration camps, the prisoners, and the Holocaust more generally. The photographs from the liberated camps became iconic and are now used in Holocaust representations worldwide.

This specific image can be viewed in the *Holokauszt Emlékközpont*, the exhibition in the memorial to the concentration camp in Ebensee, and the *Museo della Deportazione*. The memorial in Ebensee uses the photograph to provide supplementary information about Jewish forced labourers and the dire working conditions they had to endure. The *Holokauszt Emlékközpont* uses it to illustrate what the survivors looked like, defining the man as a Hungarian Jew. Finally, the *Museo della Deportazione* represents the photograph as an example of human suffering. Instead of narrating stories unrelated to what we can infer directly from the primary source, I would

advocate narrating the story of the photograph itself. It tells us a little bit about the infirmary and the barracks after the liberation. More importantly, the photograph reveals how the former prisoner at its centre presented himself to the camera, how he was staged by the photographer, and how the people in the background reacted to the situation. The image's composition reveals the gaze of the photographer and his photographic tradition. Bodies, gender, and subject construction within the event of the liberation all come into view. The genealogy of the photograph conveys information about the liberation of the concentration camps and the way the US Army dealt with it. The history of the photograph after 1945 would indicate how the press and its readers, as well as producers of other cultural products, have dealt and now deal with the photograph; with what today is an iconic representation of the Holocaust. This would include how a museum exhibiting this photograph selects, interprets and represents it, necessarily introducing self-reflection of the institution and its institutional practices. If the representation were to recognise that all this information is a limited interpretation and not an absolute truth, an authoritative narrative would cease to be possible. The exhibition would be offered as an interpretation, and the representation as one among other possible representations.

The historical agents that emerge through such a discussion are manifold. First, the photograph itself has agency, evoking an effect in the viewer and communicating knowledge. The people depicted within it also have agency, in that they stage themselves in a specific way for the photographer. The individual stories of the people depicted also reveal the agency of those individuals within the Holocaust, which they survived at least until liberation, although we may never know how. The agency of the photographer is visible, as he frames his perspective on what he sees. The US Army and the Signal Corps have agency, as do the journalists, newspapers and other cultural institutions involved in the production, dissemination, interpretation and reception of the photograph. Finally, the museum's own agency is included and can be directly addressed in the exhibition.

The primary source and the agency that it embodies and communicates tell numerous narratives about the Holocaust and its representations. They also tell numerous stories about historical agency, including our own. Ultimately, the photograph of the

man in Ebensee in 1945 does not speak about his Jewish, Hungarian or his human identity and does not convey how it felt to work as a Jew in the labour camp in Ebensee. All these stories can and should be told, but other primary sources address these topics. I advocate telling a story that is derived from the primary sources we use to construct the story in the first place. I also propose telling a story that takes the agency of each individual person seriously in an attempt to understand the subject positions within it. I believe that this not only enables the visitor to see herself as a historical agent who can form an opinion about the Holocaust and the world around her and act as she sees fit, but also restores agency to the man depicted in the photograph and thus values and respects him as a human being.



Photo no. 80: Former prisoner of the concentration camp in Ebensee, photographed by the US Army on May 8th 1945 in the infirmary of the liberated camp.

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