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Starting with an analysis of artworks by Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, the paper examines the modalities of Romani (in)visibility in the context of Holocaust commemoration and knowledge production. Using a case study of one video testimony: an interview with Romani survivor Krystyna Gil conducted by Michał Sobelman and recorded for the Fortunoff Archive on 13 May 1995, the article scrutinizes Romani invisibility in four aspects. Firstly, as a specificity of Romani Holocaust, which according to Gil herself happened and is happening “on the fringes:” regarding both the geography of the Romani dispersed Holocaust and its hard-negotiated presence in historical research. Secondly, in the context of presence of Roma in visual archives of the Holocaust, dominated by Jewish stories of survival. Thirdly, as a form of mimicry in majority society that for the wartime generation of Roma – and Jews – would always be a reverberation of the “good looks” from the times of the Holocaust. Finally the paper asks how to commemorate the Romani Holocaust so that it becomes visible – visible on Romani terms. English translation will follow.

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On the Fringes, in Plain Sight: Negotiating Romani Visibility

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas's 2022 series of monumental textile collages entitled *Siukar Manusia* (Romani: Good, Wonderful People) depicts ten representatives of the first postwar generation of Romani builders engaged in the construction of the Nowa Huta district in Kraków. While overwhelming in size, the images manifest captivating intimacy. Against a satin navy blue backdrop, we can see the portraits based on photographs from family archives that show Romani men and women in everyday situations and configurations. Fabric collages by Mirga-Tas reclaim the forgotten—and nearly invisible—Romani history of Kraków's industrial district built also thanks to the efforts of the Roma who arrived there after the war from the Spiš and Podhale regions. Moreover, the collages reinterpret the monumentalized images of the "New Roma"² from visual materials of the 1950s propaganda in which Romani builders of Nowa Huta symbolized the success of "productivization." At the same time, these works take the Roma out from invisibility of the intimate constellations of ordinary people's families and friends.

One of the series' protagonists, Krystyna Gil (1938–2021), is a special figure for many reasons: a Romani woman who survived the Holocaust and worked for years to commemorate it, the founder and president of the Association of Romani Women in Poland, and a Nowa Huta activist. Mirga-Tas portrays Gil as a middle-aged woman wearing a red blouse and a floral-patterned skirt. Like other *Siukar Manusia* works, the image exudes a domestic atmosphere:



Fig. 1. Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, *Siukar Manusia*, International Cultural Center in Kraków, 2023. Photo: Paweł Mazur

the woman sits in a chair in a relaxed position, her hands resting on the armrests. A lamp with a yellow lampshade stands beside her, warming the collage's uniform dark background and giving the scene perspective. However, unlike other *Siukar Manusia* works, Mirga-Tas did not base this portrait on a photograph from a private collection. In fact, the author modeled Gil's textile likeness on a very public image: a frame from Gil's testimony for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, a North American institution which began collecting Holocaust survivors' video testimonies in the late 1970s.³

Mirga-Tas included an almost identical portrait of Krystyna Gil—this time without the lamp—in the series of over thirty images that constitutes the central band of *Re-Enchanting the World* (*Przeczarowując świat*), an installation created for the Polish Pavilion at the 2022 Venice Biennale and curated by Wojciech Szymański and Joanna Warsza. This twelve-part work is a variation of the Hall of the Months in the Renaissance Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara and may be interpreted as an artistic attempt to make Romani history visible. In the upper section, the artist references Jacques Callot's 17th-century engravings *Gypsies/Departure from Egypt*, reclaiming historical depictions of the Roma, created by non-Roma, in a decolonial gesture for herself and Romani history.⁴ The lower band features images of daily life in Romani settlements in Spiš and Podhale, including the artist's village, Czarna Góra. As a base for these images, Mirga-Tas used photographs taken by Kraków ethnographers who represent a discipline that has racialized and exoticized the Roma from its very beginning.⁵ In the central band, the artist showcases portraits of women important to her and to Romani herstory, as well as images of her family members and other allies.⁶ Like the Nowa Huta portraits, Mirga-Tas created these collages using private photographs. Once again, modeled on a frame from a commonly available video testimony, Krystyna

Gil's portrait has an ambiguous status as it situates itself at the intersection of the private and the public.

This double nature of Gil's representation in Mirga-Tas's installations will prove to be of an utmost significance here. Gil's intimate yet monumental portraits convey the fundamental paradox of video testimonies as documents: while recorded in the quiet of libraries or private apartments and rooted in the close dynamics of conversation, as historical documents accessible in archives, they are exposed to viewing and interpretation within entirely different frameworks. In this text, I explore the modalities of Romani (in)visibility in the context of Holocaust commemoration and knowledge production. One testimony will serve as my case study: Krystyna Gil's interview for the Fortunoff Archive, from which Mirga-Tas took a frame and used it for her installations. Conducted on May 13, 1995, the interview was the first of many that Gil would give to various institutions and on numerous occasions over the next years, making her one of the most recognized witnesses of the Romani Holocaust. I put "(in)" in parentheses for several reasons. First, for the Roma, excessive visibility, exoticization, and stereotyping frequently function as a way to make them invisible.⁷ Second, in testimony, (in)visibility becomes a dynamic field: in the over-hour-long recording, Krystyna Gil in a sense becomes a witness to the Romani Holocaust: she reclaims the history of the "forgotten Holocaust,"⁸ highlights the institutional and economic conditions of remembrance, and testifies to women's agency during and after the war. Gil's account demonstrates that video testimonies constitute important historical sources, not just because of their factual content but also as documents capturing how Holocaust knowledge is produced and disseminated.⁹ Gil was interviewed by Michał Sobelman, a historian, translator, press spokesperson for the Embassy of Israel, descendant of Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust, and March 1968 emigrant. Sobelman and Gil have almost nothing in common: they differ in social

background, gender, and ethnicity. Still, thanks to these differences, their conversation has a unique performative potential, and Gil's testimony becomes a field of dynamic negotiations, tensions and confrontations, but also sudden instances of understanding and solidarity. These glitches in Gil's testimony—*affective disruptions, incongruities, or infelicitous encounters that challenge our expectations*¹⁰—allow one to capture the fundamental modalities of the invisible Romani Holocaust and Romani experience in the majority culture.

Therefore, I would like to consider Roma invisibility in four aspects. In the interview, Gil says that the Romani Holocaust happened and continues to happen "on the fringes." We can understand this phrase in two ways. First, it describes the specific geography of the Romani Holocaust and its hardly-won presence in historical research. Most Roma were killed not in Auschwitz but on the peripheries of towns and villages or in forests, and the commemoration of these events remains on the margins of public remembrance. Second, Gil's textile portrait by Mirga-Tas—an image taken from a non-Romani archive—manifests another issue: the Roma rarely appear in the Holocaust visual archives centered on Jewish stories of survival. Each time, the Roma must negotiate the visibility of their different experience. Third, the perpetual condition of being in plain sight may be viewed as another form of Romani—and Jewish—invisibility, which Gil both testifies to and resists in her account: the mimicry required to navigate majority society. For the wartime generation of Roma and Jews, this condition will always resonate with the notion of "good looks," a trait that proved critical for survival during the Holocaust. This will finally lead me to the fourth issue: how can we commemorate the Romani Holocaust to make it visible, visible on Romani terms?

The Dispersed Holocaust

Survival lies at the heart of the testimony of Krystyna Gil, née Ciuroń. As a five-year-old girl, she and her grandmother survived the Nazi massacre of a Romani community in Szczurowa, a village in Lesser Poland. According to her account, on July 3, 1943, at three o'clock in the morning, German gendarmes and the Polish Blue Police surrounded the Romani settlement on the village outskirts. The first transport consisted of men who were taken on carts acquired from local peasants to a nearby cemetery where they were executed, and their bodies were thrown into a mass grave. The gendarmes and police then returned for the women and children. Krystyna Ciuroń ended up on a cart with her mother, younger siblings, and three aunts. When Justyna Ciuroń, Krystyna's grandmother, approached the cart, a German gendarme stopped her. Justyna's daughter handed Krystyna over to her, saying, "Mum, take her with you. If you are left behind, you shall at least have her."¹¹ In this way, Justyna and Krystyna Ciuroń became included in the last, third group of victims. Their cart was stopped in the center of the village, three hundred meters from the cemetery, by a Polish woman who, in an attempt to save her Romani employee, invited the gendarmes into the tavern. While the Germans were away from the cart, a Polish man from *Polnische Polizei des Generalgouvernements*, the so called Blue Police, allegedly said, "Run if you can." This allowed Krystyna and her grandmother to escape. When they returned home, they found that Krystyna's grandfather, Michał Ciuroń, had been shot in his bed, and their Polish neighbors looted their belongings. "People had stolen everything because they knew that Gypsies would not be coming back," Krystyna Gil recounts. For this reason, Justyna Ciuroń decided to immediately flight from the village, spending the rest of the war with her granddaughter in hiding in several locations

across central Poland.

Krystyna Gil does not mention this, but Engelbert Guzdek, a German gendarme from the post in Dąbrowa Tarnowska, led the execution in Szczurowa. Guzdek's later nicknames, "The Bloody Phantom" and "The Executioner of Powiśle," reflect his notoriety.¹² He commanded the so-called *Jagdkommando* unit composed of German gendarmes and the Polish Blue Police, infamous for its cruel treatment of civilians, especially hunts for Jews hiding near the Vistula River.¹³ A 1969 investigation by the Chief Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Poland determined that Guzdek arrived at Szczurowa for the execution with three other Germans: Paul Stosch, Robert Jahn, and Finder, and several "blue" policemen from the nearby Otfinów.¹⁴ Local policemen, commander Tadeusz Strycharz and Ludwiczak, also participated in the execution.¹⁵ Village firefighters dug the grave at the cemetery.¹⁶ A total of ninety-three people were killed. Besides Krystyna and Justyna Ciuroń, Petronela Ruwińska, Ludwika Ciuroń and Franciszka Duda survived.¹⁷

Krystyna Gil's case allows us to understand two issues. The first one is the specific geography of the Romani Holocaust. Until recently, historical research and Romani activism focused on the fate of Austrian and German Roma and Sinti communities, as well as the history of the largest ghettos and camps where European Roma died: Łódź, Warsaw, Ravensbrück, and Auschwitz. This stemmed from two reasons. First, German Roma and Sinti survivors were the most politically active ones.¹⁸ Second, scholars had access to primarily German archives. The latter documented mainly deportations and Nazi biopolitics, namely sterilization and medical experiments conducted on German Roma and Sinti by the Center for Research on Racial Hygiene and Demographic Biology in Berlin led by criminal biologist Robert Ritter.¹⁹ Consequently, after the war, Auschwitz became the symbol of the Romani Holocaust. Therefore, in the

post-war years, Auschwitz became a symbol of the Roma Holocaust, and August 2, the day of the liquidation of the Roma family camp block in Auschwitz (B II e) in 1944, was chosen as the Roma Genocide Remembrance Day. On this day, ceremonies are held at the site of the former camp to commemorate it.²⁰

However, this narrative has undergone significant decentralization over last past two decades.²¹ Historians have drafted an expanded cartography of the Romani Holocaust, revealing its far less organized and more dispersed nature across Eastern and Southern Europe. Polish ethnographer Jerzy Ficowski,²² one of the first scholars to research the fate of the Roma during the Second World War, addressed this issue as early as the 1950s:

It would be erroneous to think that the destruction of the Gypsies was limited to murdering them in concentration and in extermination camps. Gypsies used to be shot in the forests during almost the whole period of German occupation In comparison with the mass murders of the Gypsies in Auschwitz, those were relatively minor executions, but they were so numerous that they caused the tragic deaths of thousands of Gypsies outside the camps.²³

The vicinity of Szczurowa itself provides a telling example in this regard. Within a twenty-kilometer radius, three other villages witnessed massacres of the Roma in the same period. In July 1942, two large executions took place nearby: twenty-eight Romani men and women were murdered on the outskirts of Bielcza, and twenty-nine people were shot in a forest in Borzęcin. In July 1943, the same group led by Guzdek executed forty-nine Romani people at a local Catholic cemetery in Żabno.²⁴ As Jerzy Ficowski comments in the third edition of his pioneering book, *Cyganie w Polsce* (Gypsies in Poland) (1989; first edition published in 1953),²⁵ "It happened everywhere, they hunted and killed single families or single individuals who had managed to

escape from transports or execution squads.”²⁶ More than 200 such executions across Poland have been documented.²⁷

Polish–Romani poet Papusza (Bronisława Wajs) describes this dispersed rural Holocaust in her poem “Smutna pieśń” (A Sorrowful Song), drawing from her own experiences when she was hiding in the Volhynia forests:

There was no life for Gypsies in the cities
and they killed, they killed us in the villages.
What to do? Gypsy women walked with their children into the
forest
far into the forest, so the German dogs would not find us.²⁸

The forest, which represents a space of both the hunt and refuge, has become an important symbol of the post-Holocaust Romani imagination. It is present for example in paintings by Ceija Stojka, a Romani–Austrian artist and survivor (*Untitled*, 1993; *Untitled*, 1995; *Die 3 letzten Luftballons. In Auschwitz ist noch Platz*, 2008),²⁹ or in the work of younger Romani artists, such as Valérie Leray (*Castel “de la pierre,” Coudrecieux 2006 / Internment Camp for Gypsies 1940–1946*)³⁰ and Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, who created the Monument for Murdered Roma (2011/2016) in a forest near Borzęcin. Mirga-Tas’s work incorporates a quote from Papusza’s abovementioned poem.³¹ Located in the forest next to the road, the wooden memorial clearly reflects the dialectic of remaining “on the fringes” and “in plain sight” of the Romani Holocaust. The figure of a hiding woman is completely exposed and directed toward the road, suggesting that no hiding place is safe. Meanwhile, a falling man—a figure associated with heroism in Polish culture—is obscured from view behind the memorial plaque so that no one can witness his sacrifice.

Krystyna Gil explains this issue in her testimony:

but a large number of persons was buried at unknown sites.
The only thing we know [about our family’s grave] is the

location because the grave is there. But many people were buried and there are no graves. For example, the son of my grandmother. ... We don't know where he was buried. If we knew, we would have arranged for a grave to be built to commemorate him ... So in the forests you kind of get the feeling that they are somewhere but there is no sign that Roma people are there.³²

Gil describes the specific nature of the dispersed Romani Holocaust to Sobelman because he comes from a remote cognitive frame: he often confuses the name of Gil's home village and seems to overlook the provincial, peripheral context of her experiences. Faced with the lack of common ground, Sobelman resorts to his symbolic capital. Later in the interview, he asks Gil about her impressions of the 1988 film *And the Violins Stopped Playing* (*I skrzypce przestały grać*),³³ a Polish-American production describing the story of a Polish-Romani violinist from occupied Warsaw who ends up in Auschwitz. The film's narrative belongs to the domain of the "central" geography of the Holocaust, with two main points on the map: Warsaw and Auschwitz. However, Gil testifies to different experiences: those of the East European Romani Holocaust "on the fringes," which took place outside the camps, in multiple single locations, frequently on the outskirts of villages and towns, in fields and forests where Romani women and men were hunted and murdered, often with the involvement of their non-Romani neighbors. As Gil's testimony vividly demonstrates, in the countryside, the Romani Holocaust had a rather intimate character and was a matter of communal effort. It engaged entire villages in discrete acts of killing: providing carts, digging graves, informing the Germans about Romani residents' alleged crimes (for instance in Bielcza or Żabno), and looting the abandoned property. To a large extent, the rural Romani Holocaust proves invisible: in Poland, most sites of genocide remain unmarked³⁴ and systematic archival research is a task

for the future.³⁵

Krystyna Gil's testimony highlights another issue alongside the expanded geography of the Romani Holocaust: the frequently-debated question of whether the persecution of the Roma during the Second World War qualifies as genocide. In case of German and Austrian Roma and Sinti, the answer seems more obvious, as archives point to racially motivated and premeditated violence against them.³⁶ However, in the case of less organized executions carried out on the occupied lands of the Soviet Union, there is no clear interpretation. Some scholars argue that the German politics regarding Soviet Roma lacked genocidal intent, claiming that only nomadic Roma faced persecution, which resulted from their "asocial" status rather than ethnicity.³⁷ Nonetheless, historians such as Martin Holler or Mikhail Tyaglyy studied mass executions of Romani communities in the Soviet Union based on sources beyond German archives, particularly documentation from the Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Atrocities of the German Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices (ChGK). Their research demonstrated that the Roma were killed regardless of their social status or lifestyle. Both settled and nomadic groups became victims. Various forces committed these crimes: Security Police's *Einsatzgruppen*, the SS, the Wehrmacht, field gendarmerie, and civilian administration.³⁸ As Anton Weiss-Wendt summarizes, "The Nazis variably defined the Roma in racial and social terms. This duality enabled a malicious interpretation, according to which the sum total of the Roma's purportedly inherent social traits amounted to a certain negative racial type."³⁹ Although significantly less organized, differing in methods depending on a geographical context, and not grounded in racial stereotypes as strong as antisemitism, the persecution of the Roma aimed at their systematic extermination. Sybil Milton, followed by Sławomir Kaprański, even argues that the very ordinariness of the Romani Holocaust proves that the Roma

genocide was seen as the “natural” order of things.⁴⁰ Moreover, the Jewish and Roma Holocausts were chronologically connected: Jews were murdered first, immediately after the German forces entered, while the Roma became targets later, along with the Jewish survivors who were hiding.⁴¹

The case of Szczurowa confirms conclusions drawn by researchers examining crimes against Soviet Roma: the Romani people in the village died due to their ethnic identity, not their social status. The Roma in Szczurowa (from the Bergitka Roma group, or Carpathian Roma) constituted a settled community, deeply woven into the social fabric of the village where they resided for over a century.⁴² The Ciuroń, Siwak, Rakoczy, and Białoń families worked as musicians and blacksmiths. Krystyna Gil’s grandfather, Michał Ciuroń, was a renowned violinist and spent several years performing in the United States. Both Krystyna’s maternal grandmother, Justyna Ciuroń, and her father were ethnic Poles, which demonstrates that intermarriages occurred quite often.⁴³ Moreover, the murders of Roma in Lesser Poland took place in relation to the persecution of Jews. Before the war, 1,971 people had lived in Szczurowa, including 132 Jews and approximately one hundred Roma.⁴⁴ In May 1941, the Jewish population increased to 394 as a result of refugees’ influx, primarily from Kraków.⁴⁵ In July 1942, Germans ordered the deportation of Jews from Szczurowa to the Brzesko ghetto, with Polish peasants transporting them in carts. A few Jews who managed to avoid the deportation hid on the riverbank of the Vistula. The mass murder of Szczurowa’s Roma occurred at around the same time as hunts for Jews at the Vistula.⁴⁶ Finally, as with Soviet Roma, the fate of the Romani community depended largely on local specificities: their integration with the local population and Polish local authorities’ decisions. The case of Szczurowa prompts reflection on the attitudes of Polish neighbors, especially those serving in the Blue

Police or fire brigade.

Furthermore, the fact that we know victims' number and names today results from the integration of Szczurowa's Roma.⁴⁷ This proves a rare exception in the context of the Romani Holocaust. At some point during the interview, Michał Sobelman asks, "Do you know roughly how many Roma people, how many Gypsies, died during the Second World War here in Poland? Has any research been done?" Krystyna Gil elaborates:

Gypsies did not register their fixed addresses. They just stayed at a given place, they were there but it's not known how many there were and how many died. If we had been dealing with sedentary [Roma], we would have known how many there were. The way things are, we don't. The same goes for the Auschwitz camp. It is not certain how many persons died there. Has the number given been reliably established? Is it lower or higher compared to others? Is it the right number? There were incoming transports that were not recorded anywhere. They were not. Bodies were taken directly to the crematorium and it is not known how many were cremated. The same here. So we shall not get to the bottom of this. Our history shall probably not get to the bottom of this.⁴⁸

Indeed, the total number of Romani victims of Nazism remains unknown, with figures ranging from 96,000 to 500,000.⁴⁹ Most researchers believe 200,000 to be the most reliable figure. Jerzy Ficowski estimates that 8,000 out of 20,000 Polish Roma were killed.⁵⁰

On the Fringes

Krystyna Gil's testimony represents the only Romani account out of thirty-two recorded in Polish for the Fortunoff Archive and the only Polish-language account among forty-eight testimonies of Roma in the collection, which consists of over 4,400 recordings in total.⁵¹ Michał Sobelman conducted thirteen interviews for the

archive, and Gil was his only Romani interviewee. This situation illustrates the special way in which the testimony of Krystyna Gil as a Romani survivor depends on the context in which it could have emerged. Ari Joskowitz notes that the memory of the Romani Holocaust remains in a “profoundly asymmetrical” relationship with the memory of the Jewish Holocaust, and, “even today, Romani history cannot be written without taking account of Jewish archival and memory politics.”⁵²

This asymmetry is visible both on the institutional level and in the basic scripts of representation and commemorative practices. Video testimonies of Romani survivors are available thanks to Jewish archives: they were recorded by the largest institutions, such as the Fortunoff Archive, the USC Shoah Foundation, or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), as an addition to the personal histories of Jewish survivors. The history of Jewish Holocaust and its memorialization form the fundamental matrix which enables the interpretation and commemoration of the Romani Holocaust. The fact that Krystyna Gil’s testimony is the only Romani account recorded in Poland for the Fortunoff Archive, coupled with the interview’s context and the persona of the interviewer himself, evidence this status quo.

For Michał Sobelman, the second generation Polish Jew who emigrated to Israel in 1969 amid the March 1968 antisemitic campaign, Jewish history and collective memory constitute the primary interpretive framework. Throughout the testimony, the Jewish Holocaust remains a constant point of reference for Krystyna Gil as well. She directly compares her experiences to the Holocaust: “Both Jews and Gypsies lived through almost the same ordeal during the war.”⁵³ At one point, Sobelman explicitly asks her, “Are you interested in Jews’ martyrdom during the Second World War?” She replies, “Yes. Why? Because their fate was similar to ours.”⁵⁴ However, the situations of Jews and the Roma also serve as a source of distinction. When Gil describes

her need to frequently return to postwar Szczurowa to be close to her murdered family and friends, despite the destruction of the local Romani community, Sobelman comments, "While people sort of ran away, Jews, for instance, were leaving Poland to stay away from the country where their families had been killed." Gil replies, "It was like a magnet that attracted people."⁵⁵

Furthermore, Sobelman and Gil discuss collective memory of both genocides. At the end of the recording, Sobelman asks:

You know that Jews were the primary victim of Hitler's bestiality Jews honor the memory of all murdered Jews and there are museums, research is being conducted and there are institutions tasked with doing that. In that context, don't Gypsies who were also victims, even though few people are aware of it, along with Jews, feel upset? Don't you personally feel upset that the fate of Gypsies has been forgotten both by history and by people?

In her response, Gil uses an almost poetic phrase that I have already quoted: "The extermination of Gypsies seems to have taken place on the fringes."⁵⁶ This concise statement summarizes the decentralized nature of the Romani Holocaust and the power dynamics determining its commemoration. The consequences of the genocide are everlasting, as the Roma still face exclusion and racist violence. Among other things, this exclusion results in the marginalization of Romani Holocaust within the official politics of memory and collective memory. In this context, Gabrielle Tyrnauer writes: "memory and memorializing are also expressions of power."⁵⁷ Visibility and political agency prove critical for acknowledging the histories of excluded groups, but fighting for them becomes more difficult when the consequences of this violence are present also today.

In turn, Ari Joskowicz claims that we should seek reasons for Roma's institutional and discursive exclusion in the economy of knowledge production. Krystyna Gil's testimony provides insight into this issue. She recounts a planned visit to

Washington, D.C. As a member of a Romani delegation, along with Roman Kwiatkowski and Andrzej Mirga, founders of the Association of Roma in Poland (1992), she was to participate in the Days of Remembrance ceremony at the Capitol on April 29, 1995.⁵⁸ Gil ultimately resigned due to financial constraints.⁵⁹ The seemingly trivial circumstance serves as another example of “the economic context for memory work,”⁶⁰ essential for the Romani struggle for recognition of their historical persecution. Particularly in the light of the history of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and the fact that a very limited number of the Roma became part of the museum’s program board, only after long protests. The invitation sent to the Polish Romani delegation for the 1995 Days of Remembrance also resulted from these efforts. In the 1980s, Romani survivors were not invited to such events, which prompted activists and survivors to attend without formal invitations.⁶¹ Even today, in the USHMM’s permanent exhibition, the exonym “Gypsies,” commonly rejected by Romani communities, is used, albeit in quotation marks.

Krystyna Gil comments on the economic aspect of the forgotten Romani Holocaust also in the context of unpaid war reparations for the Roma⁶² and the absence of strong Romani organizations. She herself could not reclaim the plot of land in Szczurowa where her family home once stood. “Nobody reckons with a Gypsy,”⁶³ she states with resignation.

Moreover, in this light, we should remember that the very way we refer to the persecution of Roma during the Second World War has political significance. Efforts to find a term that would reflect its character and uniqueness, like *Shoah* for the Jewish Holocaust, have not led to consensus. Ian Hancock, a Romani–British linguist, proposes *Porrajmos*, but the fact that it is a word associated with sexual violence in many Romani dialects prevents its wide acceptance.⁶⁴ French researcher

Marcel Courthiade suggests *Samudaripen*, which stands for “complete destruction” in Romani and is similar to the Yiddish *Churban*. It has not, however, gained universal recognition and, consequently, political effectiveness. In Polish, the term *romska Zagłada* seems neutral. English does not offer a good corresponding phrase; the equivalent *Romani Holocaust* sparks opposition, especially from those emphasizing the uniqueness and singularity of the Jewish Holocaust.⁶⁵ Ari Joskowicz—whom I follow in this text—postulates to use the term “Romani Holocaust” despite its problematic etymology and complicated contexts, as a political statement in order to make Romani experiences more visible.⁶⁶

In Plain Sight

As the quotes from Gil and Sobelman’s conversation aptly demonstrate, there are significant differences between the witness and her interviewer: social class, ethnicity, and gender. Sobelman is not familiar with the specifics of Romani history, traditions, and intergroup differences, and his cognitive framework often traps him in stereotypes. He does not ask Gil which group she belongs to or if she speaks Romani. Although Gil comes from a non-nomadic Romani settlement, Sobelman inquires about her longing for “Gypsy caravan life” and asks about palaces owned by wealthy Roma in Zgierz near Łódź (who belong to Polska Roma, a group distant from Carpathian Roma in terms of customs and family connections). These questions exoticize and project otherness on Gil’s experience. We can consider them as the interviewer’s “ontological deafness,” or condition where “dominant discursive frames prevent [the majority society] from hearing what is really said,”⁶⁷ as Nicole Immler and Éva Kovács describe. Gil navigates well those situations, for instance, when Sobelman asks her about nostalgia for nomadic life, she wittily responds, “Well, I do get some idea

when I go camping with my grandchildren.”⁶⁸

Still, the tensions and ruptures in their conversation should not appear as flaws. As Noah Shenker observes, “the messier, more unplanned moments that emerge throughout the testimony process ... represent ... unexpected and essential traces of meaning.”⁶⁹ These glitches, affective disruptions, shifts, inadequacies, and unfortunate encounters challenge our cultural assumptions about testimony, memory, Holocaust representation, trauma, and identity.⁷⁰

The role of interviewers is rarely scrutinized in the analyses of Holocaust testimony.. Nevertheless, attentiveness to clashes between interviewee’s and interviewer’s positionalities allows one to better understand the witness’s experiences. The fact that Sobelman is himself a member of ethnic minority and experienced exclusion and violence are of key significance here. In their conversation, therefore, instances of distinction often occur simultaneously with moments of solidarity.

At the beginning of the interview, Sobelman asks Gil if she prefers to be called “Roma” (*Romka*) or “Gypsy” (*Cyganka*). When she responds that “maybe ‘Roma’ somehow sounds gentler,” Sobelman follows up with the next question: “When somebody calls you ‘Gypsy’ in the street, do you take offense?” Confounded, the witness explains:

It’s slightly diminishing but you cannot take offense. If somebody calls me a “Gypsy” and I actually am one, I tend to turn a deaf ear. It seldom happens in my close environment: I have been living among Poles for so many years. I’ve been living in this apartment block since 1956. No one has yet called me “Roma” or “Gypsy” there.”

The interviewer clarifies: “I’m just asking because you know sometimes even the word ‘Jew’ makes for an unpleasant association in Polish also, mainly to the person uttering the word ‘Jew’ and not to the Jew himself.”⁷¹ Sobelman references his

personal experience as the child of Jewish Holocaust survivors who lived through the March 1968 antisemitic campaign in Poland⁷² and then emigrated to Israel. He is well aware that the word "Jew" can serve as a slur. In his autobiographical essay entitled "Wyjazd. Marzec 1968 – refleksje świadka" (Departure: Witness's Reflections on March 1968), Sobelman writes: "On the football pitch, after a wrong pass or missed goal, I would first hear mild insults like 'loser,' 'moron,' or 'jerk,' but finally, the word 'Jew' would inevitably follow. At a very young age, when I was no older than eight or ten, I understood that nothing seemed worse than being a 'Jew' in Poland."⁷³

Assuming that these situations have an identical nature, Sobelman concludes that the term "Gypsy" is neutral, and only those with anti-Roma sentiments use it in an offensive way—much like "Jew" used as a slur or an "injurious word," as Judith Butler calls it.⁷⁴ Thus, he refers to Gil as "Gypsy" for the rest of the interview. However, unlike "Jew," "Gypsy" is far from being neutral: it is used by the majority group and has pejorative connotations.⁷⁵ Gil attempts to explain precisely this issue to Sobelman, stating that "maybe 'Roma' somehow sounds gentler," while "Gypsy" feels "slightly diminishing." She simultaneously recounts that in Nowa Huta, no one has (yet) called her using ethnic terms. This brings her closer to Sobelman's experience of blending in, hiding in plain sight.

The interview provides context for Gil's words, particularly the part about hiding with her grandmother after leaving Szczurowa. They spent the rest of the war in the Kielce region, where Justyna Ciuroń came from, in villages of Rzemienowice and Pawłowice where they were liberated by Soviet forces. The witness recalls staying with a Polish farmer and encountering two Jews who briefly joined them in their hideout but were later killed by Poles after leaving. Gil describes how she "didn't look like a Gypsy" as a child and passed as "white," non-Roma, which enabled her to move freely in the village. Sobelman quickly

recognizes this experience of surviving on “the Aryan papers,”⁷⁶ and asks, “You didn’t have the look?” “And your grandmother? ... She didn’t look like a Gypsy either? ... So you were beyond suspicion? You were very lucky.” Deeply rooted in Polish, these elliptical expressions, “to have the look,” “to be beyond suspicion” omit “Jewish look,” “look of a Romani woman,” or “suspicion that somebody is a Roma/Jew,” respectively. They reflect the violence of identification beyond one’s control. The omitted part can be heard loud and clear, even though no one says it aloud. The expression “to have the good looks,” which means “not to look like a Roma or Jew,” shares this violent origin. Recognizing similarities of their histories, Sobelman inquires Gil whether others mistook her a for Jew during the war.⁷⁷ The memory of such violent marking proves crucial for both participants: it returns in Sobelman’s memory of the word “Jew” used as an insult and Gil’s praise for her neighborhood: “No one has yet called me ‘Roma’ or ‘Gypsy’ there.” This stands in contrast to Szczurowa, where Gil returned after the war with her grandmother and attended a metal industry technical high school. Asked about her peers’ attitudes toward her as a Roma, she describes: “When we were getting along, they would call me ‘Krystyna, Krystyna,’ but when one of them got upset with me, they would call me ‘you Gypsy girl’.”⁷⁸

In 1954, Krystyna Gil moved to Nowa Huta, a developing industrial district on Kraków’s outskirts, and it turned out to be a leap into a new life for her. As she recalls, “I came to here to Nowa Huta ... to see how Gypsies lived. I was always very attracted to that Gypsy cheerful way of life.”

Sobelman asks, “Where did they work? Did they build Nowa Huta?” “Yes, from scratch,”⁷⁹ Gil replies. She describes how she



Fig. 2. Krystyna Gil in her office in Nowa Huta. Photo: Chad Evans Wyatt

met her husband there: Augustyn Gil, a Roma from Jurgów in Spiš who worked as a foreman. She also tells Sobelman about her husband's uncle, Walenty Gil, honored by Józef Cyrankiewicz for his outstanding achievements in work at a steel mill. Kraków's socialist district, whose construction started in 1949, drew thousands of rural migrants, including the Roma encouraged to settle there as part of the "productivization" program and planned prohibition of itinerant lifestyle, which ultimately took place in 1964. Ironically enough, the Roma who came to Nowa Huta were not the nomadic ones targeted by efforts of the state but rather settled Carpathian Roma from Spiš and Podhale in southern Poland, who sought opportunities for a new life and escape from poverty. This unique invisibility of Romani identity in the early years of Nowa Huta—or perhaps a sudden lack of its significance—defines how Gil recalls her move to Kraków. In her story, Nowa Huta represents a Romani New World: a reality of open possibilities, free from exclusions and the community's constraints; a space of ethnic, gender, and class equality.⁸⁰ "It felt like heaven," she confesses in another interview.⁸¹ To Sobelman, she outlines her family's social mobility: "Nowadays, my grandchildren go to school, some of them have already graduated. Others will now be graduating from a vocational school, including my granddaughter."⁸² Finally, she speaks of her job as a tram driver and her work as an activist within the Romani community. She served as the president of the Nowa Huta branch of the Association of Roma in Poland (its office was located in her private apartment)⁸³ and helped both children and elderly Roma. Gil's testimony brings Nowa Huta's Romani history out of invisibility: it revives the memory of a utopian postwar project where, at least for a moment, all lives held the same value and people could live in plain sight without fear of being recognized, called out, or marked as "alien."

Precarious Commemorations

Krystyna Gil describes how the site of the murder would draw her “like a magnet.”: “I go there twice a year. Because it is quite tiring for me and nearly 80 kilometers away but we are there on 3 July and, obligatorily, on All Saints’ Day: myself, my husband, our children and grandchildren.”⁸⁴ Her private commemorative practices encourage reflection on how to memorialize the Romani Holocaust while ensuring its visibility within the national “memoryscape.”⁸⁵ We can distinguish three strategies of commemoration which I call the communist–colossal, ethnographic–exoticizing, and performative–precarious.

Currently, three monuments of 1966, 1993, and 2014 commemorate the mass execution of Roma at the cemetery in Szczurowa. The first one constitutes a large boulder with the following inscription: “Mass grave / of ninety-three residents of Szczurowa / murdered by the Hitlerites / on July 3, 1943 / Honor their memory.” We can place this monument in the communist–colossal strategy. Authorities erected it on the occasion of the celebration of the millennium of the Polish state (1966) as part of the centralized memory policy. The Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (Rada Ochrony Pomników Walki i Męczeństwa) implemented the policy in the 1960s through the units of the official union of war veterans Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację, ZBOWiD) under the slogan “Let not one drop of blood be forgotten.”⁸⁶ A similar monument, the memorial in Zasław (1963), honors Romani, Jewish, Lemko, and Polish victims of a labor camp with the inscribed text: “In tribute / to the victims of Hitlerite barbarism / murdered during the occupation.” Witold Cęckiewicz’s famous Monument to the Victims of Fascism located in the area of the former camp in Płaszów (Kraków) commemorates “martyrs” without ethnicity. The

communist–colossal strategy of the 1960s promoted monumentalism and anti-fascist rhetoric and was characteristic for commemorative practices across the entire Eastern Bloc. Its rhetoric omitted victim's ethnic identity, neutralizing and concealing the racial nature of Nazi genocide.

Krystyna Gil was not the only one who traveled to Szczurowa every year. The Roma from nearby Tarnów have regularly visited the cemetery's memorial site since the 1960s. Since 1996, the International Roma Caravan Memorial has stopped in Szczurowa. This grassroots commemorative initiative emerged thanks to Adam Bartosz, an ethnographer and the then director of the Regional Museum in Tarnów, and Adam Andrasz, the president of the Cultural and Social Association of Roma in Tarnów. Memorial's participants, both Romani and non-Romani, visit sites of the Romani Holocaust in the four abovementioned villages and towns: Szczurowa, Bielcza, Borzęcin, and Żabno. Until 2018, the year of the Memorial's last edition in full form, some participants traveled in traditional Romani wagons borrowed from the Ethnographic Museum. After initial disputes over the Memorial's informal style, which combined visits at the Holocaust sites with concerts and social gatherings, Krystyna Gil became its regular participant and gave her testimony at the Szczurowa cemetery every year since 2007.

The Roma Caravan Memorial fits an ethnographic–exoticizing commemorative model, though only partially, which I will elaborate on below. This initiative is part of Adam Bartosz's long-term efforts to document Romani presence in Polish culture and history, including the pioneering 1979 exhibition *Cyganie w kulturze polskiej* (Gypsies in Polish Culture). The exhibition featured ethnographic objects, the representations of Roma in the majority culture, and information on the Romani Holocaust. In the exhibition, two strategies overlapped. First one was the ethnographic–exoticizing one: the Roma were presented as research subjects of an objective discipline and people

with specific customs and material culture, including orientalizing portraits of Romani women or racist “Gypsy” masks from nativity plays. Second strategy was the performative–precarious one, evident in the fact that Romani communities from Tarnów, Dębica, and surroundings attended the exhibition opening upon invitation. Moreover, the event was held in Romani and some of the exhibited objects were performatively taken over by Roma participants, for example a custom-made tent was crowded with Romani women who used it as their private space. The 1979 temporary exhibition evolved into a permanent one entitled *Cyganie. Historia i kultura* (Gypsies: History and Culture), which opened in 1990 at Tarnów’s Ethnographic Museum. Notably, the museum functioned as a starting point for the Roma Caravan Memorials.⁸⁷ Using a nomadic format, museum wagons, and Romani music concerts, the Memorial invoked the stereotype of a picturesque and exotic Romani culture, which was intended by its creators to serve educational and integrative functions.⁸⁸ The press only reinforced such an image. For instance, after the Nineteenth Memorial in 2017, *Gazeta Wyborcza* published an article entitled “Jadą wozy kolorowe...” (The Colorful Wagons Roll In) whose title evoked a popular song from the 1970s.⁸⁹

Simultaneously, the Memorial utilized many elements that matched the performative–precarious strategy based on recurring, even small gestures and ontologically “weak” forms. These included regular visits to execution sites, also the unmarked ones, and their commemoration: in 2007, a birch cross was erected on the Bielcza outskirts, 2011 saw the unveiling of Małgorzata Mirga-Tas’s wooden memorial in Borzęcin, and in 2014, the Memorial erected a plaque with victims’ names in Szczurowa. Other examples of performative practices included ritual retelling of the events at each visited site; reading the names of the victims and placing individual pieces of paper with the names on the grave at the cemetery in Szczurowa (2012); drinking alcohol in honor of the murdered; and leaving lit

cigarettes at the memorial..⁹⁰ Krystyna Gil's annual attendance and retelling of her story of survival matched this strategy. Finally, primarily thanks to Adam Bartosz's skillful cooperation with the media, the Memorial introduced the usage of the term "Roma" into the public discourse, which was not that common in the 1990s. It also developed a language to describe the dispersed Romani Holocaust. Thus, at the turn of the 1990s and 2000s, Polish regional and national press wrote about the "forgotten and neglected sites of the Gypsy Holocaust," "lands sanctified by the blood of murdered compatriots," "places of Romani martyrdom," and the "trail of martyrological memory."⁹¹ Referencing the Holocaust as the "model" genocide and incorporating the tragedy of the Roma into the national martyrdom made possible to conceptualize the Romani Holocaust as a specific historical event and a subject of Polish collective memory.

The precarity of commemorations of the Romani Holocaust became even more evident when unknown perpetrators destroyed Mirga-Tas's monument in Borzęcin in April 2016. Vandals almost tore the wooden panel from its foundations and chopped the figures with axes. This devastation exposed links between the unaddressed memory of genocide and Polish complicity, and increasingly strong xenophobic and anti-Roma sentiments in society, which only intensified due to the anti-refugee political campaign during the parliamentary elections in the fall of 2015. The destruction occurred around April 20, which also seems significant, as this date marks Adolf Hitler's birthday and has symbolic functions within far-right circles. A group of intellectuals and artists sent a letter to Andrzej Duda, the President of the Republic of Poland, who allocated funds for the memorial's restoration. Mirga-Tas kept the main board with traces of mutilation and created new figures of a woman and a man. The remnants of the destroyed monument—severed heads and limbs of the figures, fragments of the mauled

information board with the quote from Papusza's poem, and wooden shards—were kept by Adam Bartosz who handed them over to the artist. Mirga-Tas used them for a new artistic project. She made casts of the remnants in three materials: soap, porcelain, and wax, in various colors. Eventually, the wax casts, in a pink color of the (white) body, formed the installation entitled *29. Ceroplastic Exercises (29. Ćwiczenia ceroplastyczne)*, curated by Wojciech Szymański at the Center of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko in 2020.⁹²

The memorial remnants' casts not only indexically connect to the destroyed bodies of the wooden figures but also symbolize the massacred Romani bodies of the 1942 victims, as the "29" in the title stands for the number of victims of the Borzęcin execution. The casts represent both the consequences of and resistance to this double crime, first, committed by the occupiers, and then, by neighbors. Mirga-Tas's sculptures recreate ephemeral yet tangible features of the body: the remnants are simultaneously dead and peculiarly alive; they seem full of power, like relics.⁹³ Moreover, Mirga-Tas decided to use wax after several attempts with other materials, having experimented with soap and porcelain. The project's abandoned versions have strong corporeal characteristics as well: obviously, soap refers to the imaginary of the Holocaust and the body transformed into another matter, while porcelain has the appearance and texture of bones. Finally, as Szymański notes in his curatorial statement, Roma cultures used wax as a material in apotropaic practices. As Mirga-Tas says in an interview, "When I started making the casts, I felt that I could create so many of them that no nationalist would ever destroy them again."⁹⁴ It seems that such



Fig. 3. Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, *29. Ceroplastic Exercises*, Center of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko, 2020. Photo: Jan Gaworski

performative–precarious commemorative forms–communal and repetitive, but also manifesting the “weak agency” of their reproducible, multiplied, and unspectacular form–would best serve to make the Romani Holocaust visible. They would remind us of the dispersed character of the Romani Holocaust and its abiding consequences: everlasting exclusion and daily violence towards the Roma. In 2021, in Olszewnica Nowa, the Zapomniane Foundation in collaboration with Romani NGO JawDikh! put a wooden marker and a wooden matzevah at the site of execution of 120 Jewish and Romani people. This wooden marker can serve as a good example of such precarious–performative commemoration.⁹⁵ Started with this initiative, the precarious–performative mapping of the Romani Holocaust remains a task for the future.

I met Krystyna Gil at the Nineteenth International Roma Caravan Memorial in July 2017. As every year, she visited the Szczurowa cemetery to commemorate the victims of the 1943 murder. Surrounded by family and friends, Gil gave a short speech in which she said: “They were murdered [because] they were Roma, that was their only crime, they were guilty of being Roma.” By 2017, Gil had already become a “professional” witness: she had recorded several other testimonies, including the ones for the USC Shoah Foundation and the Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma (Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma) in Heidelberg.⁹⁶



Fig. 4. Wooden markers in Olszewnica Nowa. Phot: Zapomniane Foundation

She had also turned into a symbol of the struggle for public recognition of the Roma experiences during the war.⁹⁷ In the recording for the Fortunoff Archive, Gil, in a sense, becomes a witness: not only because she speaks about her experience publicly for the first time, but also because, within the framework in which she does so, she must negotiate her visibility – as a Romani woman explaining her experiences to a Jewish interlocutor, as a woman testifying to her emancipation, and as a worker recounting her story to an urban intellectual. Gil's testimony provides insight into the dynamics of producing knowledge about the past, complex relationships between memory and power, as well as political, institutional, and ethical contexts of the invisibility of the Romani Holocaust in (inter)national memory politics and imaginaries.



Fig. 5. Krystyna Gil at the Szczurowa cemetery during the 19th Roma Caravan Memorial. Photo: Aleksandra Szczepan

- 1 I would like to thank Sławomir Kaprański and two anonymous reviewers for their comments and corrections, which allowed me to improve this text.
- 2 *Newo Rom – newo drom*, in *Małgorzata Mirga-Tas: Travelling Images*, ed. Wojciech Szymański and Natalia Żak (Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2022), 165–182.
- 3 For more on the history of the Fortunoff Archive, see Noah Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony* (Indiana University Press), 19–55. The Archive collection is not fully available online. However, some interviews recorded in collaboration with United States Holocaust Memorial Museum are available on the Museum’s website. For the testimony of Krystyna Gil, see <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn507787>. This text draws on findings from my critical edition of Krystyna Gil’s testimony, available at the Fortunoff Archive’s website: <https://editions.fortunoff.library.yale.edu/essay/hvt-3178>.
- 4 *Małgorzata Mirga-Tas: Re-Enchanting the World*, eds. Wojciech Szymański and Joanna Warsza (Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, Archive Books, ERIAC, 2022); Wojciech Szymański, “Romskie spojrzenie. Małgorzata Mirga-Tas i dawni mistrzowie” *Studia Romologica* 16 (2023): 9–20.
- 5 Wojciech Szymański, “Romowie i sztuka europejska. Historia wizerunku od stereotypu do autoportretu,” *Wirtualne Muzea Małopolski*, January 11, 2022, <https://muzea.malopolska.pl/en/articles/1899>.
- 6 See “Decans.” In *Małgorzata Mirga-Tas: Re-Enchanting the World*, 155–233.
- 7 For more on Mirga-Tas’s art in the context of hypervisibility, see Thuc Linh Nguyen Vu, “Intersekcjonalny patchwork. Przeczarowując świat Małgorzaty Mirgi-Tas w Pawilonie Polonia na Biennale Sztuki w Wenecji,” *Magazyn Szum*, November 25, 2022, <https://magazynszum.pl/intersekcjonalny-patchwork-przeczarowujac-swiat-malgorzaty-mirgi-tas-w-pawilonie-polonia-na-biennale-sztuki-w-wenecji/>.

- 8 Gabrielle Tyrnauer calls the Romani Holocaust an “almost forgotten footnote to the history of Nazi genocide.” Gabrielle Tyrnauer, “‘Mastering the Past’: Germans and Gypsies,” in *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*, ed. Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn (Yale University Press, 1990), 366. See also Grattan Puxon, “The Forgotten Victims,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 11, no. 2 (1977): 23–28. Sławomir Kaprański postulates that we understand the “Forgetting” of the Romani Holocaust in a comparative perspective of postcolonial studies as a “silencing” and “erasing” of the colonized in the history of the colonizers. Sławomir Kaprański, *Naród z popiołów. Pamięć zagłady a tożsamość Romów* (Scholar, 2012), 196; Michel Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995).
- 9 Many scholars emphasize the key role of oral testimony in the research and commemoration of the Romani Holocaust, which often results in a lack of official documentation of the crime. See Michelle Kelso, “Romani Women and the Holocaust: Testimonies of Sexual Violence in Romanian-Controlled Transnistria,” in *Women and Genocide: Gendered Experience of Violence, Survival, and Resistance*, ed. JoAnn Di Georgio-Lutz and Donna Gosbee (Women's Press, 2016), 37–71; Volha Bartash, “Let the Victims Speak: Memories of Belarusian Roma as Sources for Genocide Studies,” in *Diskriminiert – vernichtet – vergessen. Behinderte in der Sowjetunion, unter nationalsozialistischer Besatzung und im Ostblock 1917–1991*, ed. Alexander Friedman, Rainer Hudemann (Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016), 499–507; Anton Weiss-Wendt, “Introduction,” in *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma: Reassessment and Commemoration*, ed. Anton Weiss-Wendt (Berghahn, 2013), 1–26.
- 10 Aleksandra Szczepan, “Przeczulone słowa i drgające obrazy. O potencjalnych metodach badań nad Zagładą,” *Teksty Drugie* 2021, no. 5: 32.
- 11 Testimony of Krystyna G., Fortunoff Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, HVT-3178, Segment 2, Tape 1, 11 min., 21 sec.
- 12 Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 96–100, 264, 265; Adam Kazimierz Musiał, *Krwawe Upiory. Dzieje powiatu Dąbrowa Tarnowska w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Karat, 1993).
- 13 Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews*.

- 14 A letter from the Commander of People's Militia precinct in Szczurowa, to the Local Commission for Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes, dated March 10, 1960, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (IPN), *Akta żandarmerii w Brzesku*, DS 43/67, vol. 2.
- 15 After the war, Strycharz was sentenced to 15 years in prison, for killing two Jews. IPN, DS 43/67, vol. 2.
- 16 USHMM, Interview with Józef Gofron.
- 17 IPN, DS 43/67, vol. 2. Petronela Ruwińska and Ludwika Ciuroń remained in Szczurowa after the war. The interview with Franciszka Duda (Siwak) is available in Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation (VHA), recording no. 44547 from March 16, 1998.
- 18 Particularly thanks to the actions of Romani Rose and the Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma (Main Commission of German Sinti and Roma). In 1973, on the initiative of Vincenzo Rose (Romani's father) and Oscar Bamberger, the first memorial for Roma victims at Auschwitz was erected at the site of the family block (B II e) in Birkenau. On April 4, 1980, Rose and a group of Sinti and Roma began a hunger strike at the site of the former Dachau camp, demanding official recognition of the crimes the Nazi regime committed against Roma communities, as well as reparations, and a cultural center for Sinti. The protest garnered significant attention in the German media and for the first time made the Roma Holocaust visible in the German public sphere. Since 1991, Rose has headed the Center for the Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma in Heidelberg. Gabrielle Tyrnauer, "Mastering the Past," 370–371; Sławomir Kaprański, *Naród z popiołów*, 267–268. See also Sławomir Kaprański, Maria Martyniak, and Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, *Voices of Memory 7: Roma in Auschwitz*, trans. William Brand (Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2011).
- 19 Gilad Margalit, *Germany and Its Gypsies: A Post-Auschwitz Ordeal* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 32–55; Sybil Milton, "Hidden Lives: Sinti and Roma Women," in *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust*, ed. Elizabeth Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (Wayne State University Press, 2003), 53–75.
- 20 The Sejm of the Republic of Poland declared 2 August the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day in the resolution from July 29, 2011. The European Parliament established the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day in a resolution from April 15, 2015. See Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, "Holokaust Romów. Czy rzeczywiście zapomniany?," *Nigdy Więcej* 2016, no. 2, n.p.

- 21 See, in particular, Martin Holler, *Der nationalsozialistische Völkermord an den Roma in der besetzten Sowjetunion (1941–1944)* (Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 2009); Martin Holler, "Like Jews?" The Nazi Persecution and Extermination of Soviet Roma Under the German Military Administration: A New Interpretation, Based on Soviet Sources," *Dapim: Studies on the Shoah* 24 (2010): 137–176; Mikhail Tyaglyy, "Nazi Occupation Policies and the Mass Murder of the Roma in Ukraine," in *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma*, 120–152; Tomislav Dulic, "Mass Killing in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945: A Case for Comparative Research," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 3 (2006): 255–281.
- 22 For more on Ficowski's work, see Emilia Kledzik, *Perspektywa poety. Cyganologia Jerzego Ficowskiego* (Wydawnictwo Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 2023).
- 23 Jerzy Ficowski, "The Polish Gypsies of Today," trans. Józef Rotblat, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 29, no. 3–4 (1950): 92.
- 24 Jerzy Ficowski, *Cyganie w Polsce. Dzieje i obyczaje* (Interpress, 1989), 40; Adam Bartosz, *Małopolski szlak martyrologii Romów* (Muzeum Okręgowe w Tarnowie, 2015); Aleksandra Szczepan and Łukasz Połuszny, "Bielcza i Borzęcin. Ustanawianie i uśmierzanie pamięci o romskiej Zagładzie," in *Nie-miejsca pamięci: nekrotopografie*, ed. Roma Sendyka, Maria Kobielska, Jakub Muchowski, and Aleksandra Szczepan (Wydawnictwo IBL, 2021), 169–245.
- 25 Ficowski, *Cyganie w Polsce*, p. 40. Ficowski mentions: "Already in 1942, an operation was underway in the southern provinces to kill those Gypsies who were not exterminated in Bełżec or Sobibór. In July, near Borzęcin, more than 30 people were killed by liquidating a tabor consisting of several wagons; in August, 28 men, women and children were shot in the nearby village of Bielcza; in the summer of 1943, 27 Gypsies were killed in Miechów; in 1944, 37 were murdered in Moczydło near the town of Książ Wielki; 30 were murdered in Krzeszowice, 20 near Zagórzycze, 12 in Wolbrom, 62 in Imbramowice, 47 in Żabno, 98 in Szczurowa, near Pilica in Olkusz powiat, approximately 40; in 1944 in Lipiny in Biłgoraj powiat – 28." Ficowski, *Cyganie w Polsce*, p. 40.
- 26 In the first edition of the book (1953), Ficowski includes the direct testimony of the Romani survivors. In the 1989, Ficowski adds the number of victims established during the 1960s and 1970s investigations of the Chief Commission for Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes, among other investigations.

- 27 Piotr Kaszyca, "Die Morde an Sinti und Roma im Generalgouvernement 1939–1945," in *Sinti und Roma im KL Auschwitz-Birkenau 1943–44. Vor dem Hintergrund ihrer Verfolgung unter der Naziherrschaft*, ed. Waclaw Długoborski (Verlag Staatliches Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1998), 117–143.
- 28 *Papusza, Pieśni mówione* (Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1973), 35. I thank Natalia Gancarz for giving me access to this piece.
- 29 See "La caza 1938–1948." In: Ceija Stojka, *Esto ha pasado* (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2019), 58–83.
- 30 See the artist's website: <https://www.valerieleray.com/place-with-no-name>.
- 31 For more on the monument's history, see Natalia Gancarz, "'I stanie się on częścią tego miejsca'. Jak pomnik staje się pomnikiem," *Studia Romologica* 2016, no. 9, 138–140.
- 32 Segment 9, Tape 2, 21 min., 17 sec.
- 33 Segment 11, Tape 3, 3 min., 22 sec.
- 34 For example, the execution site in nearby Bielcza. Szczepan and Połuszný, *Bielcza i Borzęcin*; Natalia Gancarz, "Na bister. Żeby pamiętać," *Studia Romologica*, no. 9 (2016): 283–292.
- 35 It must, however, be noted that for several years already, Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz have worked on the identification and commemoration of the sites of Romani Holocaust. See Bartosz, *Małopolski szlak martyrologii Romów*; Gancarz, *Na bister*; Natalia Gancarz, *Na bister – Nie zapomnij – Do not forget* (Muzeum Okręgowe – Komitet Opieki nad Zabytkami Kultury Żydowskiej w Tarnowie, 2020). Natalia Gancarz catalogs sites of Romani Holocaust in Poland and Europe on the website *Na Bister*: <https://muzeum.tarnow.pl/na-bister/en/>.
- 36 On December 8, 1938, Heinrich Himmler, the chief of German police, published a decree on *Combating the Gypsy Plague*, which presented the Roma and Sinti as a threat to the German race. Cf. Margalit, *Germany and Its Gypsies*, 35. Four years later, in December 1942, Himmler ordered the deportation of Roma from all of Europe to the so-called *Zigeunerlager* in Auschwitz. In the camp, 21,000 people died, and 80% of that number were Roma and Sinti from Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Cf. Celia Donert, "Introduction," in *The Legacies of the Romani Genocide in Europe since 1945*, ed. Celia Donert and Eve Rosenhaft (Routledge, 2022), 5; Weiss-Wendt, *Introduction*, 5.

- 37 Yehuda Bauer, *Die dunkle Seite der Geschichte: Die Shoah in historischer Sicht – Interpretationen und Re-Interpretationen* (Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2001), 90–93; Gilad Margalit, *Germany and Its Gypsies*; Günter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (Oxford, 2000), quoted in Weiss–Wendt, “Introduction,” 4; Martin Holler, “Like Jews?,” 138–139. See also Sławomir Kaprański, *Naród z popiołów*, 152–154, 179–193.
- 38 Tyaglyy, *Nazi Occupation Policies*, 121.
- 39 Weiss–Wendt, *Introduction*, 1.
- 40 Kaprański, *Naród z popiołów*, 192–193; Sybil Milton, “Persecuting the Survivors: The Continuity of ‘Anti-Gypsyism’ in Post-War Germany and Austria,” in *Sinti and Roma: Gypsies in German-Speaking Society and Literature*, ed. Susan Tebbutt (Berghahn Books, 1998), 38, quoted in Kaprański, *Naród z popiołów*, 192–193.
- 41 Holler, “Like Jews?,” 175.
- 42 Bartosz, *Małopolski szlak martyrologii Romów*, 18.
- 43 For more on mixed marriages among settled Roma, see Volha Bartash, “The Romani Family before and during the Holocaust: How Much Do We Know? An Ethnographic-Historical Study in the Belarusian–Lithuanian Border Region,” in *Jewish and Romani Families in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. Eliyana R. Adler and Katerina Capková (Rutgers University Press, 2021), 17–41.
- 44 According to the September 30, 1921 census. See *Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej opracowany na podstawie wyników pierwszego powszechnego spisu ludności z dn. 30 września 1921 r. i innych źródeł urzędowych*, vol. 12 *Województwo Krakowskie. Śląsk Cieszyński* (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1925). According to a German population census, in March 1943, Szczurowa had 1866 inhabitants. See *Amtliches Gemeinde- und Dorfverzeichnis für das Generalgouvernement auf Grund der Summarischen Bevölkerungsbstandsaufnahme am 1. März 1943* (Burgverlag Krakau G.m.b.H., 1943). I thank Łukasz Krzyżanowski for help in finding this information.
- 45 Joint Distribution Committee Archive, *Sprawozdanie z czynności komitetu za marzec 1941*, March 12, 1941, no. 2657971.

- 46 The account of Maria Długowiejska (née Blanka Finder, Langdorf after her husband), VHA, interview with Maria Długowiejska, recording no. 25576 from December 16, 1996. Stanisław Giemza also describes the hunt by the Vistula in his 1969 testimony for the Chief Commission for Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes. IPN, *Akta żandarmerii w Brzesku*, DS 43/67, vol. 2.
- 47 The list of victims appears on a monument in the Szczurowa cemetery set up on the initiative of Krystyna Gil, Lee-Elizabeth Hölscher-Langner and Laurids Hölscher, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Krakow in 2014. List of victims available at: <https://www.miejscapamiecinarodowej.pl/index.php/wojewodztwo-malopolskie/592-krakow-tablica-upamietniajaca-zmiane-nazwy-zwz-na-ak>
- 48 Segment 9, Tape 2, 21 min., 8 sec.; 21 min., 17 sec.
- 49 Weiss-Wendt, *Introduction*, 1.
- 50 Ficowski, *Cyganie w Polsce*, 44; Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"* (Christians, 1996), 283.
- 51 Large part of the interviews that comprise the Fortunoff archive collection were recorded the United States by the scholars trained in psychoanalysis and literary studies. Testimonies recorded in Europe joined the collection in the later years. In the small collection of interviews with Roma survivors, the most noteworthy are those conducted by Gabrielle Tyrnauer in Germany and Austria (17 recordings in all). As a Jewish Holocaust survivor, Tyrnauer gained trust of her Roma interviewees, and often bent the rules of the interview to suit their needs and habits (for example, she did not ask for personal information). See Ari Joskowicz, "The Age of the Witness and the Age of Surveillance: Romani Holocaust Testimony and the Perils of Digital Scholarship," *The American Historical Review* 125, no. 4 (2020): 1222–1224.
- 52 Ari Joskowicz, "Separate Suffering, Shared Archives: Jewish and Romani Histories of Nazi Persecution," *History and Memory* 28, no. 1 (2016): 112.
- 53 Segment 1, Tape 1, 3 min., 1 sec.
- 54 Segment 11, Tape 3, 6 min., 14 sec.
- 55 Segment 6, Tape 2, 1 min., 34 sec.; 1 min., 44 sec.
- 56 Segment 9, Tape 2, 23 min., 42 sec.; 24 min., 16 sec.

- 57 Gabrielle Tyrnauer, "Recording the Testimonies of Sinti Holocaust Survivors," in *Reflections on the Holocaust. Festschrift for Raul Hilberg on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Wolfgang Mieder and David Scrase (Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont, 2001), 232.
- 58 Days of Remembrance are an annual event that takes place in the Capitol to commemorate the Holocaust. The United States Holocaust Memorial Council was the organ that established the event and prepared the concept of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.
- 59 Segment 9, Tape 2, 20 min., 28 sec.
- 60 Ari Joskowicz, *Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust* (Princeton University Press, 2023), 174.
- 61 Joskowicz, *Rain of Ash*, 170–179.
- 62 For more on after-war reparations for the Roma, see Julia von dem Knesebeck, *The Roma Struggle for Compensation in Post-War Germany* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011); Michelle Kelso, "Holocaust-Era Compensation and the Case of the Roma," *Studia Hebraica* 8 (2008): 298–334.
- 63 Segment 10, Tape 2, 26 min., 49 sec.
- 64 Hancock then postulated for the term "o Baro Porrajmos" (The Great Devouring), to differentiate it from the colloquial term. For more on the terminological discussions, see in particular Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, "Holokaust, Porrajmos, Samudaripen... Tworzenie nowej mitologii narodowej," *Studia Romologica* 3 (2010): 75–94.

- 65 Michael Berenbaum, "The Uniqueness and Universality of the Holocaust," in *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, ed. Michael Berenbaum (New York University Press, 1990), 20–36; Steven T. Katz, "Quantity and Interpretation: Issues in the Comparative Historical Analysis of the Holocaust," *Holocaust Genocide Studies* 4, no. 2 (1989): 127–148; Yehuda Bauer, "Whose Holocaust?" *Midstream* 26, no. 9 (1980). See Ian Hancock's polemic "Uniqueness, Gypsies and Jews," in *Remembering for the Future: Working Papers and Addenda*, vol. 2, *The Impact of the Holocaust on the Contemporary World*, ed. Yehuda Bauer et al. (Pergamon Press, 1989). See also Margareta Matache et al., *The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in Southeastern Europe* (The François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University, 2022); Dan Stone, "The Historiography of Genocide: Beyond 'Uniqueness' and Ethnic Competition," *Rethinking History* 8, no. 1 (2004): 127–142.
- 66 Joskowicz, *Rain of Ash*, 20.
- 67 Nicole Immler and Éva Kovács, "Zum politischen Anspruch der Oral History. Über das epistemische Schweigen und die ontologische Taubheit der Mehrheitsgesellschaft," *FQS Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 23, no. 2 (2022): 2.
- 68 Segment 7, Tape 2, 8 min., 58 sec.; 9 min., 4 sec.; 9 min., 40 sec.
- 69 Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, 2.
- 70 Szczepan, *Przeczulone słowa i drgające obrazy*, 32.
- 71 Segment 1, Tape 1, 38 sec.; 44 sec.; 1 min., 30 sec.; 1 min., 33 sec.; 2 min., 40 sec.
- 72 Cf. Dariusz Stola, "Emigracja pomarcowa," *Prace Migracyjne* 34 (2000): 1–21; Dariusz Stola, *Kampania syjonistyczna w Polsce 1967–1968* (Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2000); Jerzy Eisler, *Polski Rok 1968* (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006); Piotr Osęka, *Marzec '68* (Wydawnictwo Żnak – Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2008); Feliks Tych, "Marzec '68'. Geneza, przebieg i skutki kampanii antysemitycznej lat 1967/1968," in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów: Polska 1944–2010*, ed. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2011), 385–412.

- 73 Michał Sobelman, "Wyjazd. Marzec 1968 – refleksje świadka," in *Europa wobec wyzwań XXI wieku. Deportacje, wysiedlenia i przymusowe migracje jako nieodłączny element konfliktów zbrojnych i wojen współczesnego świata*, ed. Alicja Bartuś (Urząd Miasta Oświęcim, 2014), 72. Sobelman also describes this experience in the interview: "Michał Sobelman: Babcia była antysemitką. Mówiła, że mój ojciec jest gburem, złym człowiekiem i Mośkiem," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, October 9, 2017, <https://wyborcza.pl/duzyformat/7,127290,22476131,michal-sobelman-babcia-byla-antysemitka-mowila-ze-moj.html>
- 74 Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (Taylor & Francis, 2021), 49.
- 75 "Roma" as a term for self-identification became more common with the emergence of Roma civil right movements in the 1960s and 1970s and the first World Roma Congresses – in London, in 1971, and in Geneva, in 1978, during which the International Romani Union was established. Therefore, in a broader meaning, the name serves the function of political self-identification, and is a collective name for the whole minority. In a more narrow meaning, the term refers to Roma groups from Eastern and Southern Europe. Some groups, like the German Sinti, do not identify with the latter, and suggest the phrase "Sinti and Roma." See Kapralski, *Naród z popiołów*, 78–84; "Erläuterungen zum Begriff 'Zigeuner'," *Central Council of Sinti and Roma*, <https://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/sinti-und-roma-zigeuner/>; Milton, *Hidden Lives*, 54; Margalit, *Germany and Its Gypsies*, 3–4. We should keep in mind that in mid-1990s, when the interview was recorded, the language was still changing, and many Roma did not consider the exonym offensive.
- 76 See Małgorzata Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni "na aryjskich papierach:" analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* (Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2004).
- 77 Segment 9, Tape 2, 22 min., 51 sec.; 23 min., 21 sec.; 23 min., 48 sec.
- 78 Segment 6, Tape 2, 5 min.; 6 sec.
- 79 Segment 6, Tape 2, 6 min., 58 sec.; Segment 7, Tape 2, 8 min., 5 sec.; 7 min., 8 sec.; 7 min., 11 sec.

- 80 See Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia. Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–56* (Cornell University Press, 2016), 106–112; Monika Golonka-Czajkowska, *Nowe miasto nowych ludzi. Mitologie nowohuckie* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013), 189–230; Aleksandra Szczepan, "Żyjąc nadzieją, pamiętając nadzieję. Romowie ocalali z Zagłady budują Nową Hutę," *Teksty Drugie* 2025 [forthcoming].
- 81 "Historie opowiedziane – wideo," Romowie w Nowej Hucie, <http://romowie.dobrawola.eu/romowie-w-nowej-hucie/historie-opowiedziane-wideo/>.
- 82 Segment 6, Tape 2, 8 min., 5 sec.
- 83 Krystyna Gil was active in the Association of Roma in Poland until 2000, when she founded Stowarzyszenie Kobiet Romskich w Polsce (Association of Romani Women in Poland).
- 84 Segment 6, Tape 2, 8 min., 5 sec.
- 85 Sławomir Kaprański, "(Nie)obecność Żydów w krajobrazach pamięci południowo-wschodniej Polski," *Sensus Historiae* 9, no. 4 (2012): 89–118.
- 86 Robert Traba, "Symbole pamięci: II wojna światowa w świadomości zbiorowej Polaków. Szkic do tematu," *Przegląd Zachodni*, no. 1(2000): 61.
- 87 Adam Bartosz, "Komu jest potrzebne romskie muzeum?," in *Kierunki integracji małopolskich Romów*, ed. Małgorzata Leśniak and Stanisław Sorys (Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego, 2014), 303–310.
- 88 Adam Bartosz, *Tabor Pamięci Romów/Roma Caravan Memorial* (Muzeum Okręgowe w Tarnowie, 2003), 11.
- 89 Angelika Pitoń, "Jadą wozy kolorowe... Międzynarodowy Tabor Pamięci Romów," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 30, 2018, <http://krakow.wyborcza.pl/krakow/7,44425,23731957,jada-wozy-kolorowe-miedzynarodowy-tabor-pamieci-romow.html>.
- 90 Sławomir Kaprański describes Tabor as a "ritualized commemorative practice." Kaprański, *Naród z popiołów*, 331–341. See the analysis of the Tabor's performative practices in Szczepan and Posłuszny, *Bielcza i Borzęcin*.
- 91 Quotations from the newspapers: *Życie Warszawy*, *Nasz Dziennik*, and *Gazeta Krakowska*, from the years 1998–2007.

- 92 Curatorial text: <https://magazynsum.pl/29-cwiczenia-ceroplastyczne-malgorzaty-mirgi-tas-w-centrum-rzezby-polskiej-w-oronsku/>
, English version: <https://rokantyfaszystowski.org/en/wydarzenia/29-cwiczenia-ceroplastyczne/>
- 93 Mirga-Tas recalls in an interview: "When I took the remains from Adam Bartosz, ... many Roma approached me and asked, what I am going to do with the cut up figures, if I am taking them home, or if I could give them some. They saw these remains as relics." Małgorzata Mirga-Tas and Aleksandra Szczepan, "Protest z wosku. Wywiad z Małgorzatą Mirgą-Tas," *Dwutygodnik*, 2020, no. 298, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artukul/9016-protest-z-wosku.html>.
- 94 Mirga-Tas and Szczepan, "Protest z wosku."
- 95 "Olszewnica Nowa," Fundacja Zapomniane: <https://zapomniane.org/miejsce/olszewnica-nowa/>
- 96 VHA, no. 30163 (March 13, 1997); *Szczurowa*, directed by Alexander von Plato and Loretta Walz, 1997.
- 97 Gil also gave her testimony to the *Yahad – In Unum* foundation (no. 1088 from June 28, 2019). She also recorded her account on the occasion of the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOHvdPkGs7s&ab_channel=EuropeanHolocaustMemorialDayforS
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