



## Past Traumas and Future Generations: Cultural Memory Transmission in Hungarian Sites of Memory

Zsófia Réti

*University of Debrecen*

Now that we have reached the mid-2010s, a new generation of Hungarian citizens has grown up; the first Hungarian adults to have absolutely no memory of the state socialist period. It is not only a matter of “reconciliation,” “coming to terms with the past,” or “confessing the past” that are at stake here, but also making the past relevant to people who were born too late to experience it. Due to their lack of information, this generation is extremely susceptible to the various, often contradictory interpretations of the past, and because of their age, they bear the specific characteristics of the so-called Gen Z, the digital natives. How is the communist legacy represented to them? What are the primary media of historical knowledge transmission about the Kádár era? What are its main claims, what kinds of narratives are being presented, and how do young people react to these narratives? How does narrating the communist past affect the national identity of the youth? These are the primary questions I seek to answer in this essay. In addition to all the hardships and horrors of the twentieth century (World War I and II, 1956), there is one more trauma that post-socialist Hungarian society needs to deal with: the cultural rupture of 1989/90, which burned all the bridges between past and future, rendering all at once the language of parents unintelligible to their children and changing the ways in which the traumas of the past were contextualized in Hungarian cultural memory. Based on this fundamental assumption, in this essay I compare the practices adopted by the two most prominent Hungarian communism-related memory projects: the House of Terror and Memento Park. I combine two methods—discourse analysis of the written materials found in the two museums and semi-structured interviews with teenagers—in order to provide a balanced, interdisciplinary approach to the topic.

The two museum spaces in question present very different segments of Hungarian cultural memory. More precisely, they reflect on different pasts. The interplay and interference of memories related to the early and the late periods of the Kádár era, which are on display in the two museums, along with the reaction of young people to these memories provide fertile grounds for an examination of collective memory practices related to both the “system change” and the preceding period. I conclude by considering the possible ways, good practices, and existing solutions to the transmission of the traumatic experiences of the recent and not so recent past to the next generation and by offering a framework in which traumatic and nostalgic approaches to the past do not contradict, but rather complement each other.

Keywords: politics of memory, memory of Communism in Hungary, transmission of cultural memory, monuments, museums, Szoborpark, House of Terror

### *Erased/ Confessed/ Conveyed*

“The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there.” This is the first sentence of L.P. Hartley’s 1953 novel *The Go-Between*. And indeed, especially in post-socialist countries, there seems to be a major gap between the experiences of those who were born even a narrow generation earlier and people who are in their teens right now. The first children of the post-Cold War world, i.e. children who were born after the democratic transition in Hungary in 1989/90, are now in their mid or late 20s. As of 2016, they have had a chance to vote in the national elections at least twice. These young adults form a new generation of Hungarian citizens, having absolutely no firsthand memory of Hungary’s state socialist period. And behind them, the next generation is already coming of age. These two, non-localized generations, Generation Y and Generation Z, that is, the Millennials and the Digital Natives, need to be educated about the country’s recent past.

Péter György describes the abyss of understanding that has become unbridgeable after 1989:

Talking about communism, socialism, which is hoped to be self-evident, that is, the linguistic attempt to evoke the past is both impossible and deceptive, because the cultural space in which that rhetoric was legitimate and exclusively homely is no longer available. [...] For those who were born too late, the continent upon which these sentences were articulated is terra incognita.<sup>1</sup>

The transition of 1989/90 is perceived here as a rupture in the continuity of Hungarian culture, which burned all the bridges between past and future and which, all at once, rendered the language of parents unintelligible to their children and changed the ways in which the traumas of the past were contextualized in Hungarian cultural memory.

Therefore, what one can perceive here, parallel to the shift from the communicative memory of communism to institutionalized cultural memory, is an alteration in the ways in which the past is approached by professionals seeking to communicate it. Starting from the hope of the communist utopia

---

1 György, “Elveszett nyelv.” If not marked otherwise, all of the quotes from Hungarian texts are my translation. R.Zs.

to “erase the past once and for all”<sup>2</sup> (which was in line with the communist pedagogical program and the vision of the new Soviet man), in 2002, a decade after the transition, the second Memorial Day for the Victims of Communism in Hungary (which coincided with the opening ceremony of the House of Terror museum) chose a completely different motto. Quoting Attila József’s poem “A Dunánál” (By the Danube), the commemoration was organized under the phrase “A múltat be kell vallani” (“The past must be confessed”). Since then, fifteen years have passed, and now the annual ceremony runs under a very different motto: “Emlékezzünk, hogy emlékeztessünk” (“Remember in order to remind!”). In other words, there is a shift from the imperative that “the past must be confessed” to a new duty: “the past must be conveyed,” and the reason for this is possibly our confrontation with a new generation the members of which cannot in fact remember anything of the earlier regime because they were born after its fall.

Hence, it is not only the matter of “reconciliation,” “coming to terms with the past,” or “confessing the past” that are at stake here, but also making the past relevant and meaningful to people who were born too late to experience it. Due to their lack of information, this generation is extremely susceptible to the various, often contradictory interpretations of the past, and because of their age, they have very different attitudes towards digital media than members of previous generations. How is the near past represented to them? What are the primary media of historical knowledge transmission about Hungary’s state socialist period? What are its main claims, what kinds of narratives are being presented, and how do young people react to these narratives? These are the primary questions I seek to answer in this essay.

In order to explore how historical knowledge is conveyed in Hungary, in the following I compare the practices used by the two most prominent Hungarian communism-related memory projects: the House of Terror and Memento Park. These two institutions are exemplary cases because of their strategic position in terms of post-Kádarian memory practices. Alongside then, a number of other projects could have been included, such as the Iron Curtain Museum of Vashegy or the Pantheon of the Workers’ Movement in the Kerepesi Cemetery. However, the House of Terror and Memento Park stand out because they have by far the largest audiences. Both sites are open to the public and adolescents

2 Echoing the Hungarian translation of the Internationale, “a múltat végképp eltörölni,” which is a close translation of the French original: “*du passé faisons table rase.*”

are encouraged to visit them during school trips, so they can be regarded as the most central means of official practices of remembrance about Hungarian state socialism.

The purpose of the present paper is to look simultaneously at what the two memory projects have to offer, and how young visitors react to them. For this reason, along with analyses of the two sites of memory and the written and/or multimedia material distributed on the spot or available through their websites, I also conducted several semi-structured interviews with young visitors in order to explore the effects the two exhibitions had had on them (in short, to see whether or not the two museums are successful as memory and/or knowledge transmission projects). Altogether, I conducted 17 interviews between 2012 and 2016, 9 with teenage visitors to Statue Park (the first incarnation of what was to become Memento Park) and 8 with visitors to the House of Terror. The interviews were 10–15 minutes long, and they were generally performed one or two days after the trip to the museum. All of the interviewees were 13–14 years old at the time of the interview. Although such a sample is by no means representative of Hungarian youth as such, the answers given by these teenagers were often unexpected in many ways and may offer novel insights regarding the efficiency of the two institutions as memory projects.

After a brief review of the available literature, I explore the differences between various interpretations of the term “postmodern” in relation to the two museums, focusing on the mediality of the memory that they use and the coherent narrative that they seek to present. I then offer a discussion of Piotr Sztompka’s take on cultural trauma in support of my contention that the actual “cultural trauma” that influences both museums is not the terror of the 1950s, but the sudden paradigm shift of 1989. I conclude by identifying a very visible discrepancy between the heritage and the legacy of communism in Hungary. Although the two terms are sometimes used synonymously, referring to the (material, philosophical, or other) remnants of the past, they may represent two very different aspects of the same “remnants.” Heritage is understood here as a deliberately selected narrative of the past, while legacy is passed on involuntarily, usually as a set of semi-conscious actions and behavioral patterns. I conclude with the observation that while the transmission of a clearly defined heritage to subsequent generations should be the duty of any functional memory project, the legacy of the state socialist era makes it extremely difficult if not impossible for the past to be conveyed.

*Memento Park and the House of Terror: A Review of the Secondary Literature*

After 1989, there was growing public demand to make the “peaceful transition” of the system change visible, or rather invisible. The statues from the public spaces of Budapest were removed, and the unavoidable question about the further fate of these objects was also raised. The idea of simply destroying them was quickly dismissed, since this gesture would have contradicted the expectations that had been placed on the “new Hungarian democracy,” so alternative solutions were needed. The decision was made to remove the statues from the city center and deposit them at a site offered by the 22<sup>nd</sup> District, where they were fit into the artistic vision of designer architect Ákos Eleőd, who sought to present them in a way that enabled cool observation of the past and many other memory strategies. This is the conception story of Statue Park. Eleőd writes about this issue in his 1991 tender:

eventually, we would decide on the fate of artistic pieces based on political ideologies. At this point, the subtle dignity of art should present itself: to find and accept the responsibility, which, in this case, leads to a thin ethical path. [...] It is a joy to participate in the absence of book burning.<sup>3</sup>

Statue Park was opened in 1993, and later on, in 2006, the state owned but privately run project finally got the funding for major expansion. From that moment on, Statue Park was renamed *One Sentence on Tyranny Park*, being part of a larger project entitled Memento Park, hence the multiplicity of names.

The House of Terror, which was opened almost a decade after Statue Park, was based on very different considerations. The building at 60 Andrásy Road, in which the museum is housed, itself has a story to tell. First, it served as the Headquarters of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party from 1940 to 1945. Then, from 1945 to 1956, it functioned as the center of the communist secret police services, the State Protection Department and the State Protection Authority. After it was purchased in 2000 by the Public Foundation for the Research of Central and East European History and Society, it was opened as the House of Terror Museum in February 2002, a few months before the elections, with the

---

3 *Memento Park* website.

alleged purpose of erecting “a monument to the memory of those held captive, tortured, and killed in this building.”<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, although these two very unconventional museums are comparable because they are both related to the memory of communism in Hungary, they actually commemorate two very different segments of the past. While the House of Terror seeks to evoke the suffocating milieu of the 1940s and 1950s, Memento Park, while it certainly reflects on earlier decades, is a self-proclaimed memorial to the successful (i.e. non-violent) democratic transition of 1989/90.

Both museums have been subject to extensive academic engagement in the fields of history, sociology, cultural studies, and museology, not to mention the intellectual debates that sprang up concerning the opening ceremony of the House of Terror in the columns of the weekly *Élet és Irodalom* (debates which are revived from time to time). However, it is interesting to see that there are differences from the perspective of *who* writes about the two museum spaces. In the case of Memento Park, most reviewers are not Hungarian, and they often contrast the site with other, similar monuments, such as the Grutas Park in Lithuania,<sup>5</sup> the Berlin Wall, and the Casa Poporului of Bucharest.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, in the case of the House of Terror, the overwhelming majority of texts are written by Hungarians.

Regarding the latter case, critics of the House of Terror seem to have reached a broad consensus regarding the scientifically objectionable nature of the museum. One of the most frequent arguments made in order to support this claim (that the museum is objectionable on scholarly grounds) is that the House of Terror primarily targets emotions without presenting rational arguments along with the affective impact.<sup>7</sup> András Rényi, for instance,<sup>8</sup> argues that the House of Terror is less a historical and more a rhetorical achievement, proudly

---

4 *House of Terror* website. Although the English introduction to the website only mentions the need to “erect a fitting memorial to the victims and at the same time to present a picture of what life was like for Hungarians in those times,” the Hungarian variant is more specific about “those times”: “Forty-six years had to pass for 60 Andrassy Street, this neo-renaissance building, to resurrect truly. The authorities, who were defending the communist state at the cost of the sufferings and violent deaths of many, only left the palace in 1956.”

5 Williams, “The Afterlife of Communist Statuary.”

6 Light, “Gazing on Communism.”

7 Ungváry, “A káosz háza.”

8 Rényi, “A retorika terrorja.”

admitting that it does not calmly observe history from a distance, but rather directly, dedicatedly, and passionately *creates* history.

Another recurrent issue in the reception of the House of Terror is the inauthentic or at least unclear nature of the exhibited objects.<sup>9</sup> Maybe the most exemplary one such object is the can of pickled cucumbers, which was later replaced with a bottle of vodka,<sup>10</sup> as noted by Péter Apor. “The original can of cucumbers,” Apor argues, “represents an unusual epistemological position. Neither the original can nor the subsequent bottle makes any claim to any sort of historical authenticity: there is no visible intention to demonstrate that either of them might derive from the period of the past in question.”<sup>11</sup> Aesthete Sándor Radnóti even concludes that the most important object presented in the House of Terror is the building at Andrásy Road 60 itself, as the collection is almost ridiculously modest.<sup>12</sup>

Partly based on these objections, some critiques argue (in my assessment persuasively) that the House of Terror is not even a legitimate museum. Rényi for instance offers a very sharp dividing line between the general definition of museums and the self-classification of the House of Terror: “It is common knowledge that so far the House of Terror has established no archival background, and it is more than questionable even for laypeople whether the museum’s attempt at a coherent historical conception would stand up to even the most basic professional scrutiny.”<sup>13</sup> James Mark also argues that there is a tendency in Central and Eastern Europe to use museums of communism as places of symbolic justice instead of as places of knowledge transmission, a process which usually takes place at very significant historical sites. “The ‘cultural trial of Communism’ took place at sites of terror where the political condemnation of Communism could be made historically credible: these locations allowed their founders to present themselves as uncovering powerful direct evidence of the former regime’s violence and criminality, which could be linked to the ways in which the country as a whole had been victimized.”<sup>14</sup>

In the case of Memento Park, the early pieces of relevant secondary literature seem to share the perception of the park as an artistic work, emphasizing a

9 See for instance K. Horváth-Frazon, “A megsértett Magyarország” for an in-depth description of the issue.

10 At the time of my last visit in October 2016, the “original” cucumber jar was back in place.

11 Apor, “Rethinking History,” 329.

12 Radnóti, “Mi a terror háza?”

13 Rényi, “A retorika terrorja.”

14 Mark, “Criminalizing Communism?” 62.

civilized, “dignified” kind of remembering, in line with the creators’ intentions. In her 1999 discussion of the site, Beverly James remarks that a number of post-communist features are relevant to an analysis of the park, including “a strong sense of national identity [...] and a deep respect for the past.”<sup>15</sup> A few pages later, she adds that the “commodification of heritage [...] is not yet relevant to museums in Hungary, where [...] the past is still treated with respect.”<sup>16</sup>

A few years later, Maya Nadkarni first mapped out the immense discrepancy between the idea of a past “still treated with respect” and the marketing strategies used by the park, or, more specifically Ákos Réthly, the young entrepreneur who runs it. Nadkarni argues that Réthly’s marketing plan to frame Statue Park as a site of communist kitsch was strongly based on Western expectations of socialism, its ideology, and its iconography, and the marketing did more to confirm than to contest these expectations. “Indeed,” she contends, “Western reports of the park opening often played into these fantasies of monumental ignominy: describing the park’s architecture as a humorous ‘theme park’ or ‘Leninland,’ or romantically locating the park on a ‘bleak’ or ‘windy’ hilltop.”<sup>17</sup>

The secondary literature on the two memory projects also evokes a number of issues that come up in relation to both museums. Here, I cover only a single feature: the idea of postmodernity at the two sites of memory. Postmodernity seems to have different implications and emphases when applied to different museums. Beverly James for instance argues that Statue Park Museum is postmodern in the sense that “its holdings [...] had yet another layer of meaning slapped on them when they were uprooted from their familiar locations and repositioned in the fabricated terrain of an open-air park.” Furthermore, it can be considered postmodern because “it juxtaposes pieces that embody seemingly incongruous versions of communism.”<sup>18</sup> Parallel to that, Radnóti identifies the House of Terror as a “postmodern museum of torture,” where the architect and the curator are free to create, and where the wealth of multimedia content is mixed with traditional museum forms, relativizing them.<sup>19</sup> In a similar fashion, Rényi condemns the “aestheticizing intemperance of the postmodern, which, in order to have a more powerful impact, transcends each and every sacred

---

15 James, “Fencing in the Past,” 302.

16 Ibid., 304.

17 Nadkarni, “Making the Past,” 203.

18 James, “Fencing in the Past,” 294.

19 Radnóti, “Mi a Terror Háza?”

boundary and ignores the most fundamental differences between document and fiction, object and representation, fact and opinion.<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting to see how critics use the term “postmodern” differently for the two museums. In relation to Statue Park, it can be understood as a kind of inventive, novel, and inclusive attitude towards a difficult past, while for the House of Terror, postmodernity is but a formal solution to present a modernist national grand narrative of the equally problematic recent past. This distinction in meaning is vital if one seeks to understand how the two museums function as more or less successful memory projects. The differences between the two understandings of postmodernity can be mapped out by focusing on two central axes of the exhibitions. First, their mediality, and second, the narrative they create about the past. Although these two aspects are certainly linked, it is still expedient to separate them for analytical purposes.

### *The Materiality of Memory*

The materiality of remembering in the two museums is closely related to how the two museums deviate from the idea of written, textual knowledge. In her 2009 essay “Texts, Traces, Trash: The Changing Media of Cultural Memory,” Aleida Assmann outlines the trajectory of the written word in the realm of cultural memory, from the Renaissance up to the present day, identifying an important break in the monopoly of written knowledge, which she dates back to as early as the seventeenth century. She argues that while the privileged path to historical understanding was found in the texts of canonical male authors, “different routes of access to the past were opened by bypassing texts and tradition and concentrating on non-textual traces, such as ruins and relics, fragments and sherds, and songs and tales of a neglected oral tradition.”<sup>21</sup> In short, what Assmann detects is the origin of mistrust in written language as the only reliable medium through which one can “speak with the dead” in the Greenblattian sense, that is, as the only plausible way to get meaningful information about the past.<sup>22</sup> Assmann later moves on to locate one more radical change with the appearance of new

20 Rényi, “A retorika terrorja.”

21 Assmann, “Texts, Traces, Trash,” 129.

22 Stephen Greenblatt begins his book *Shakespearean Negotiations* with the following sentence: “I began with the desire to speak with the dead,” identifying the voice of the past in the textual residues it leaves behind, and the act of reading them: “It was true that I could hear only my own voice but my own voice was the voice of the dead, for the dead had contrived to leave textual traces of themselves, and those traces make themselves heard in the voices of the living.” Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 1.

media: “We might say that some contemporary writers, searching for authentic traces of the past in a mass media culture, are discovering these in trash. With the development of new technologies and channels of communication, writing is ceding its position as the foremost medium of communication and cultural transmission.”<sup>23</sup> This second remark may have twofold consequences, not only for writers, but for more general practices of cultural memory as well. First, we need to admit that knowledge about the past is often incidental and is of an almost random nature, and the most valuable insights may be gained from things discarded, like statues that no one wishes to see in their original places anymore. Second, one also needs to see that the written word as the single most reliable medium of historical knowledge may (sadly) become obsolete; its hegemony is threatened by media, both old and new.

Instead of written media, cultural memory is transmitted through novel and not so novel ways involving tangible remembrance and multimedia devices and contents. In terms of memory projects and museum spaces, objects (remnants, replicas, and things of questionable origin) naturally acquire a key position. The importance of material artefacts as mnemonic devices enhancing individual remembering has been acknowledged since Antiquity. However, their role in establishing cultural memory has only recently been made an object of serious interrogation, and they have gained attention largely due to the contributions of museum studies.

In understanding how museum artefacts can contribute to establishing and maintaining cultural memory, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s take on “presence effects” and “meaning effects” might help. In his book *The Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Gumbrecht distinguishes between “presence effects” and “meaning effects,” the latter referring to interpretational practices as transcendental meaning attributions, usually associated with the traditionally hermeneutical practices of the humanities and social sciences. In contrast, “presence effects” are defined by the materiality of the object of study, that is, they refer to the ways in which the objects of aesthetic experience occupy a certain space within reality; they “exclusively appeal to the senses.”<sup>24</sup> According to Gumbrecht, the metaphysical practice of interpretation should be altered considering that “we conceive of aesthetic experience as an oscillation (and sometimes as an interference) between ‘presence effects’ and ‘meaning

---

23 Ibid., 132.

24 Gumbrecht, *The Production of Presence*, xv.

effects’.”<sup>25</sup> This oscillation is especially relevant in terms of museum experiences, where the materiality of the objects displayed and the interpretations attached to them rarely coincide.

To illustrate this point, let us look at two examples from Statue Park and the House of Terror: texts with very visible and significant materiality, the presence effects and meaning effects of which happen to confront each other, offering subversive interpretations.

*From Tyranny to ETERNAL GLO*

In Statue Park a general characteristic feature of the site is a very visible absence of written texts. Next to the works, one finds only the name of the sculptor, the title of the composition, the date of the erection of the work, and the statue’s original place. This virtual absence of text emphasizes the ideal of the neutral preservation of works of art without contextual references. True, a visitor’s guide can be purchased at the entrance, and the website offers a lot of information, but in general the visitors are left alone with the works and their very symbolic environment. The longest written text visitors encounter during their trip is Gyula Illyés’s poem, *One Sentence on Tyranny*, which was borrowed as the name for the park in 2006. As visitors attempt to enter the actual territory of the park, they find their way blocked by a large and rusty iron door, the main entrance to the park, with the poem inscribed on it, exclusively in Hungarian. This manner of presentation can be regarded as a *mise-en-abyme* of the interplay between presence effects and meaning effects, while parallel to that, it also highlights the fundamental ambiguity between traumatic and alternative approaches to the past, such as nostalgic or ironic.

The materiality and position of the text, along with the interpretational framework it provides for an understanding of Statue Park as a whole, also assigns new dimensions of meaning to the original poem: the mutuality produced by the common context obviously influences the strategies of reading as well. The self as it is presented in the poem not only associates tyranny with a set of activities and behavioral patterns, it also describes it as a universal omnipresent feeling that is always already there in the everyday routines of the people. “Dohányod zamatába,/ ruháid anyagába/ Beivódik, évődik /Velődig” (It penetrates into the flavor of your tobacco, the fabric of your clothes, to your marrow).<sup>26</sup> The

25 Ibid., 2.

26 Although there are at least two English translations of the poem, I felt it necessary to provide a more faithful, yet less artistic interpretation, since the exact meaning of the original poem is not transmitted in

poem's image of omnipresent tyranny and the collection of the prominent Socialist Realist works seem to be in dialogue, which underlines the concept that the statues can be regarded as means of oppression. From this perspective, certain lines of the poem might be exceptionally illuminating in nature, since the relationship between art and social milieu (which is one of the focal points of the poem) is obviously not something to be dismissed in the case of Statue Park. Throughout the poem, as "tyranny" is personified and condensed into an indefinite third-person singular, it also penetrates deeper and deeper, from individual relationships to the general perception of the world: "Mert szépek csak azt véled/ mi egyszer már övé lett" (For you take as beautiful only the things that have already become his). The experience of the senses becomes legible exclusively through the filter of tyranny, and thus the possibilities of artistic reflection are also to be imagined within the framework of oppression.

However, the fact that the poem is displayed just in front of Statue Park provides an ironic position in reading the monuments. The lines "Mert ott áll/eleve sírodnál /ő mondja meg, ki voltál/ porod is neki szolgál" (For he stands there by your grave, he defines who you were, your ashes still serve him) illuminate, for instance, the fate of Socialist Realist statues: being closed into their own materiality, deprived of what they originally signified (i.e. the heroes and ideals of a past era), they become their own parodies. Illyés' text suggests that the oppressive power owns the soul and body of its subjects, and thus it is able to provide retrospective definitions of the people and objects serving them.

If one considers the mutual influence of site and poem, two crucial observations must be made. First, the verses are scribbled onto an enormous iron door, supposedly the main entrance to the park. Yet these doors remain closed *by design*, and one can only enter the museum through a tiny sideways. As Réthly explained during a guided tour, "you know that proverb that there is a side-door next to all large gates, which means that if you cannot do something in the official way, we should try to find some other solution." Thus, the museum offers "alternative," more inclusive approaches to remembrance of the past, while still preserving a more institutionalized, primary reading, according to which the past is presented as tyrannical: the main door that is always closed. Second, due to the corroding effects of the weather, certain parts of the text have become illegible, which could be understood as a dual game of inscribing

---

either of the English translations with which I am familiar, even if my rendering destroys the inherent presence effects, such as the rhythm and rhyme of the original poem.

and effacing meanings. On the one hand, there is a gesture of guiding the visitors' frame of understanding by the position of the text, while on the other, the owners of the museum let the rust eat away the letters, making it impossible to assign one single meaning to the park. The visitors have become unable to read the text, and they are once more on their own with the statues.

Similar material damage to written words can also be found in the House of Terror. As opposed to Memento Park, where most of the on-site information texts were absent, in the case of the House of Terror there is an abundance of written texts, which nonetheless results in a similar absence of information. Almost every room in the exhibition features a take-home information sheet, both in English and in Hungarian, and in absence of a guide, most visitors spend a great portion of their time huddled up in one of the dim corners of the exhibition rooms, reading the information materials (especially in the first few rooms). Furthermore, the walls often feature quotes (typically in Hungarian only), and sometimes, as in the *Resettlement and Deportation Room* and the *Justice Room*, entire walls are covered with replicas of old reports or indictments, rendering them illegible by their position, the dim lighting, or simply their sheer volume. Words extinguish one another, and they appear as visual noise or decorative fragments that bear no particular meaning.

The *Room of Soviet Advisors* offers a very fitting example of the dynamics of Gumbrechtian presence and meaning effects. At the time of my last visit to the House of Terror, there was an enormous marble memorial plaque leaning against a large wooden desk, broken in half, with the parts slightly slid behind each other.<sup>27</sup> The visible part of the text is as follows:

“ÖRÖK DICSÓS...RÖS HADSER...  
AKIK A SZOVJETUN...AGYARORSZ...  
ÉS FÜGGETLENS... VÍVOTT HARC”

I offer the following English translation of this: “ETERNAL GLO ...ED ARM... THE SOVIET UN... NGARY... WAR FO... NDEPENDEN...” First, this plaque clearly demonstrates how the ideologies of communism and fascism alike created a pseudo-language that was perceived as intimidating and uncanny precisely because it was rooted in everyday uses of language, but was rendered incomprehensible by the ideological jargon. As Péter György puts it, “communists spoke and wrote in a language unknown to Hungarians, in

<sup>27</sup> The House of Terror website features a photo on which the entire plate is behind another one, with the Soviet crest on it.

Hungarian. [...] Words partly lost their meanings, partly gained new ones.”<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, though, this marble plaque can also be regarded as an allegory for the approach to language and the written word as a source of historical knowledge adopted by the House of Terror. Words are everywhere in the House of Terror, yet they fall apart into sub-intelligible elements, giving the impression that something *beyond* linguistically understandable knowledge is being conveyed here. It is as if words lost their weight as soon as one enters the realms of terror.

In this sense, there is a fundamental similarity and an even deeper difference between Memento Park and the House of Terror. While both sites of memory exhibit an underlying mistrust of written knowledge (although the websites are both rich in detail text), their reaction to this scenario is entirely different. Memento Park, with the nearly complete lack of verbal interpretational crutches (apart from the rusty poem on the front gate), almost exclusively relies on the oral narration of the site, either by the guide or by older relatives, who tend to accompany young people to the site. One could argue that Statue Park offers a nostalgic pre-literacy medial condition, seeking to evoke the immediacy and intimacy of firsthand experience and even domestic oral history. In contrast, the House of Terror presents an entirely different scenario, which might be described as a post-literal media landscape. Here, the traditional role of written texts is taken over by both affective non-verbal elements, such as smell and lighting, and also by multimedia solutions, such as endless testimonies displayed on LCD-screens and the use of the most cutting-edge technology to support a specific vision of history.

#### *Digital Natives in a Pre-literacy or Post-literacy Situation*

The use of new media to emphasize certain interpretations of history is especially important when talking about knowledge transmission to members of younger generations. As members of Generation Z, the digital natives, teenage visitors have been socialized from an early age to use all kinds of multimedia and smart devices, and they are very open to technological innovation, for leisure activities and entertainment and also for learning and knowledge acquisition. Their reactions concerning the two museum spaces also underline how the abovementioned pre-verbal and post-verbal arrangements work. In the case of Memento Park, most of my respondents visited the park as part of a class excursion, with a guide. The young visitors all agreed that the presence of the

---

28 György, *Az ismeretlen nyelv*, 10–11.

guide brought the objects on exhibit closer to the audience. As one of the 14-year-olds I interviewed remarked, “Without the guide, no one would have cared about the statues.” All of them mentioned that they had positive feelings about the tour; three out of seven said that it helped them better understand “what those symbols actually meant” or confessed that the way they analyzed a particular statue together with the guide made them change their preliminary neutral or negative opinions about the work in question. Furthermore, the guided tour also succeeded in adding a set of memorable anecdotes and humorous personal stories to the display of statues, such as the one about the Smurf marzipan figurines that were dried on the right arm of a bronze Lenin in the early 1990s. According to their accounts, the young visitors were especially keen on these otherwise digressive remarks of the guide. As one of them put it, “there are museums that are dead boring, and all you get is a schematic text that you would learn in history lessons anyway. But this guy told us about really special things. He made us involved.” In this sense, according to the teenage visitors, the Memento Park guided tour managed to convey a kind of “insider,” firsthand knowledge about the years of the democratic transition, offering a chance for a very private and personal kind of knowledge transmission. The very same magic of orality was also mentioned by my other two interviewees from Statue Park, a brother and a sister aged 13 and almost 15 at the time of their visit, which was a Sunday trip on which they had been taken by their parents. Although they said that their parents could recall the locations of only a few of the statues or reliefs, as the family was not from Budapest, they nonetheless told them interesting stories about their youth (the parents were in their early 40s).

As for the House of Terror, the generational position of my interviewees had a very visible impact on the ways in which they perceived the exhibition. Although none of them took part in a guided tour, they were invariably accompanied by older relatives who helped them understand what they were seeing. One of them, a boy of 13, offered the following reply to my warm-up question as to whether or not he had liked the exhibition: “It was interesting all right, but as a child, I didn’t understand everything, unlike mum, so she had to explain things to me.” When asked about the information sheets, all but one of the teens admitted that they had not collected, read, or even looked at them extensively. Five out of eight respondents praised the video displays of the exhibition, claiming that although they had no time to watch all of the videos, those that they did see were all interesting. Most of the teens highlighted the oral history account in the elevator as the most

impressive one, while others mentioned “the one at the cashier desk about forgiveness”<sup>29</sup> or the newsreels.

As most of the respondents were in the last two years of elementary school (7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade), they had not had any history classes about the state socialist era.<sup>30</sup> When asked about their knowledge of state socialism in Hungary, many of them mentioned that although they do not generally watch films about “the era,” they do have an impression of it from video games.<sup>31</sup> This medial embeddedness was even visible in their reaction to the exhibitions. At the time of my last 3 interviews in 2016, there was a temporary exhibition for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1956 revolution entitled *Egy akaraton* (One Nation, One Will), which featured six short, 5-6 minute-long films designed for virtual reality glasses. All three of the teenagers who had seen this show were fascinated by the 360° VR films, which were, according to my respondents, so intense that they somewhat dimmed the experience of the permanent exhibition. By the time of their visit, each of them had at least tried virtual reality glasses (one of the respondents even had one at home), and they even offered technical remarks on how the glasses in the House of Terror were different from the ones they had used previously. “That was a very good point. I really liked them all. They were interesting, and it was better to see them in 360 than from an ordinary video,” one of them remarked. “And also, it was a lot better because it influenced your emotions more than looking at a whole bunch of writing. That was a great idea” another added. One could claim that teenagers are very, and perhaps dangerously, responsive to new digital media in memorial spaces, especially media that are relatively new even to them. The House of Terror presents itself as a conveyor of *zeitgeist*, so the primary content it seeks to transmit is an impression about the recent past, an artistic expression of the premise that “terror overshadowed daily life.”<sup>32</sup> For this purpose, the use of digital media (especially virtual reality technologies) is perhaps the most fitting choice. The caveat concerning such techniques, especially for adolescents, is that *a certain version of the past* is presented as *the only valid past*, leaving no room either for criticism or for questions. What is seen on the screen not only becomes believable, but it turns into reality itself. Probably

29 An approximately 30 second-long piece, played in an infinite loop while visitors wait in line.

30 The history curriculum of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade ends with World War I.

31 One of my respondents mentioned *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield*, while another one named *Metro 2033* and *Red Faction*, neither of which is strictly about communist dictatorships. Other, similar video games, such as *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* or *Red Orchestra*, could also be mentioned.

32 This is the very last sentence of the information sheet for the *Everyday Life* room, which might as well be regarded as an underlying concept for the entire museum.

this is one reason why my interviewees seemed to be so a-critical with regards to the exhibition in the House of Terror, while they were considerably more reflective about their Statue Park experiences.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast, my respondents could not recall much objective knowledge that they had gained from their visit to the House of Terror. Six out of eight teenagers did not realize that the exhibition was about two kinds of dictatorships, although they had a good understanding of Hungary having been under two different forms of occupation during those times. Indeed, the House of Terror has frequently been criticized for the extremely unbalanced nature of the museum's displays. As one reads on the English version of the House of Terror website, "[h]aving survived two terror regimes, it was felt that the time had come for Hungary to erect a fitting memorial to the victims, and at the same time to present a picture of what life was like for Hungarians in those times."<sup>34</sup> In other words, the House of Terror allegedly describes the two kinds of terror Hungary suffered between 1944 and 1989: the Nazi occupation and the establishment of the communist regime. The House of Terror does not include the Anti-Jewish Laws of the interwar years in its representation of terror, when Germany had not yet invaded Hungary, or the massacre of an estimated 23,000 Jews in near Kamianets-Podilskyi in August 1941, including 16,000 people who had been deported to the newly annexed territory from Hungary, hence denying any complicity Hungary might have had in these parts of the Holocaust. Furthermore, strictly speaking, only 2 or 3 of the 19 exhibition rooms focus on the Nazi occupation and the Hungarian Arrow Cross party and none focus on the crimes and massacres committed under the Horthy regime. However, as Krisztián Ungváry underlines,<sup>35</sup> the imbalance is not merely a matter of space. Three rooms perhaps would have been enough to evoke the terror in which many Hungarians lived under Horthy and the Arrow Cross, but as Mark argues, the memory of Fascism is only evoked "where it had the capacity to demonize Communism."<sup>36</sup> In this, the museum succeeds, yet no body of references is actually given in support of this emotional affect.

33 In addition, their reluctance to say negative things might also be attributed to the fact that due to my position as a researcher, they regarded me as a representative authority (much like a teacher of some sort), and they sought to comply with what they thought I expected to hear. In future research, this observer's paradox could perhaps be overcome if I were to spend extensive time with the adolescents.

34 Terror Háza website.

35 Ungváry, "A káosz háza."

36 Mark, "Criminalizing Communism?" 77.

Instead of facts, the House of Terror offers associations, but when one lacks the relevant historical knowledge, as a 13-year-old visitor sometimes does, the exhibition will not fill in the gaps. Perhaps the most telling example is the *Internment* room in the basement, which features a miners' car and some rocks in the middle, next to an LCD-screen on which a formerly interned person is giving testimony. This room is right after the prison reconstruction, which is perceived by many as the most emotionally burdening part of the exhibition. One of my interviewees, whom I followed through the museum, demonstrated significant behavioral change at this point. Prior to this room, the teenage boy was very open, asked many questions, and inspected everything closely, especially the prison part, but here he just looked at the plate with the name of the room, briefly glanced at the miners' car, and walked away. As he later informed me, he did not fully understand the word *internment* in this context, and due to the absence of descriptive material, he could not establish a logical link between the car that fills the whole room and the idea of internment. Although the room does have a take-home information sheet, it is only from the website that one can find out that the bogie with the rocks is in fact an original artefact from the Recsk Internment Camp.

This brief episode illustrates why the House of Terror often fails as a site of knowledge transmission about communism. The illusion of a zeitgeist conjured in its entirety by simulacra objects and multimedia devices is not suitable for knowledge transmission on its own, and the supplementary means were, in this case, insufficient to sustain an adolescent's attention.

### *From Trauma to Laughter*

Closely related to the materiality and mediality of remembering is the question of the various kinds of pasts that are presented to the visitors, especially younger visitors. Critics of the House of Terror condemn the exhibition for offering a one-sided interpretation of the past, which portrays Hungary as a hapless victim of evil foreign powers.<sup>37</sup> Péter György, for instance, contrasts the presence of victim-identifications with the absence of perpetrator memories, especially concerning the way in which the past is communicated to members of the younger generations: "We do not need the younger generations to feel personal

---

37 See for example Apor, "Rethinking History," Ungváry, "A káosz háza" or K. Horváth, "The Redistribution of the Memory of Socialism," Mark, "Criminalizing Communism," among others.

guilt for the acts committed by their predecessors. But we do need them to know what their predecessors did.”<sup>38</sup>

This idea is supported by the narrative on the information sheets: it consistently portrays “terror” and its manifestations, such as internment, deportation, secret agency, etc., as something in which Hungarians took no part and which was imposed from the outside. This process of externalization also appears on the level of grammatical structures and word choices. A prevalent use of the passive voice is a characteristic feature of the information sheets, even in Hungarian, which is unusual. While there the sentences make no mention of the names of perpetrators, the victim is almost without exception Hungary or the Hungarian people, who are depicted as silent and inert bystanders in their own history. “Hungary was plunged into a hopeless economic situation,” and then “the country became the theatre of war in the clash between the two Super Powers,” and later on, in the *Changing Clothes* room, the brochure explains that “the video clip depicts how an entire society was forced to ‘turn coat’, i.e. switch allies.”

The passive voice is but one example in the House of Terror of what Aleida Assmann calls “victim memory.” Assmann coined the term<sup>39</sup> to differentiate it from “losers” inasmuch as the victim is a passive target of violence, and the term obviously implies a sense of power asymmetry, while the term “loser” still implies a sense of heroism or a sacrifice made for a cause.<sup>40</sup> According to Assmann, the most characteristic feature of this kind of memorial practice is to offer an unambiguous image of the past, in which no dissenting opinions are appreciated or even accepted, since the whole community is imagined as the victim of a power external to it. It is also important to refer to Assmann’s comment in which she emphasizes that while in Western Europe such interpretations are being questioned and subverted, Eastern Europe is still bearing witness to the resurrection of national grand narratives emphasizing collective victimhood. With respect to the House of Terror, Zsolt K. Horváth claims that the institution is, in fact, an allegory of Hungary victimized by Communism.<sup>41</sup>

The House of Terror does not merely evoke a sense of collective victimhood, it also seeks to commemorate the collective traumatic experience that it links to

38 György, “A terror háza/A terror topográfija.” In the same work, he also dismisses Statue Park as a “Disneyland-ghetto of state socialist sculptures.”

39 Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 218.

40 Pabis, “A múlt hosszú árnyéka.”

41 K. Horváth, “The Redistribution of the Memory of Socialism,” 270.

foreign occupation. It focuses primarily on the “dark decades” of the 1940s and 1950s, but it also broadens the temporal spectrum of occupation significantly: from 1944 to 1989. As one reads on the website, “the Museum, while presenting the horrors in a tangible way, also intends to make people understand that the sacrifice for freedom was not in vain.”<sup>42</sup> Such a quest could potentially allow for collective healing: the examination, understanding, and eventually the dissolution of the wounds Hungarian society has suffered (and inflicted on itself), but unfortunately the House of Terror goes down on a different path. As Miklós Takács argues, individual traumatic experiences can be identified by involuntary repetition and by their appearance next to the body and non-verbality, while the prerequisite of cultural traumas is their mediated nature. He concludes that if a traumatic experience is removed from the body and transferred into another medium, it ceases to be a psychic trauma and is considered healed.<sup>43</sup> The House of Terror here presents just the opposite method. By using new digital media and reconstructions, such as the infamous basement prison, it de-medializes the horrors that took place in the House, and re-inscribes them into the medium of the body. The moment the visitor enters the elevator, taking a painfully slow ride down to the basement, the information sheets go missing. Visitors are left alone in the corridor with the tiny, wet cells, and they are given no information or no interpretational guidelines. Many of my respondents claimed that they felt “claustrophobic” during their visit to the basement, and although one of them, a girl of 14, ironically remarked that “it was Disneyland,” she also confessed a vague sense of sickness when listening to the testimony about executions in the elevator. This traumatic and potentially traumatizing approach does not allow for elaborate reflections on the space or the historical knowledge it might convey: where there are no words, there is no knowledge to speak of.

In Statue Park, the arrangement of “excluded” public statues enables a whole range of remembering practices, including a traumatic approach to the past. When asked about how the visitors interact with the statues on exhibit in the Park, Réthly spoke about a kind of respect for the past: “All the local visitors have a bit of an agent past, a bit of relocation, a sense of being unheeded... everyone has a bit of pain. I wouldn’t say that these feelings are brought to the surface here, but it gives a kind of basic restraint to their attitudes.” Therefore, Hungarians would not find it funny to pose with the statues due to their “personal involvement,” or

---

42 Terror Háza website.

43 Takács, “A kulturális trauma elmélete a bírálatok tükrében,” 49–50.

rather the communicative memory that still conveys the underlying idea of the statues being means of an oppressive, dictatorial regime.

Strangely enough, there is a certain ambiguity in the answers provided by the student visitors on this matter. When asked about the idea of posing, all of them said that their teacher had had a number of ideas about different poses even before they arrived to the park, but they also noted that by themselves they would not have thought of these statues as objects next to which to pose. One of them even mentioned that “probably it might be more exciting for the Americans, because we learn about it, we know about it, but they... they did not live through it. For them it’s fun to see... a big dictatorial man (sic!) and ha ha, let’s pose with him. But for us, we can feel what it was like for the people back then, and it’s less amusing to make fun of it.” However, based on my personal experience following them along the park, they actually enjoyed climbing onto the statues, and they started posing the minute the guide turned his back on them.

And indeed, in part due to Eleőd’s initial democratic intentions, the idea of laughter appears in many ways in the reception of the Park, ranging from mockery to irony. Furthermore, the intention of the park’s creators seems to have been very much in line with the way in which Linda Hutcheon defines irony: “Irony rarely involves a simple decoding of a single inverted message; [...] it is more often a semantically complex process of relating, differentiating, and combining said and unsaid meanings – and doing so with some evaluative edge.”<sup>44</sup> The designer envisioned a multiplicity of interpretations based precisely on this permanent ambiguity of meanings: “I would like this park to be right in the middle: neither a park to honor Communism, nor a sarcastic park that provokes tempers, but a place where everyone can feel whatever they want... People can feel nostalgic, or have a good laugh, or mourn a personal tragedy connected with the period.”<sup>45</sup>

Maya Nadkarni also identifies a kind of distanced, ironic nostalgia<sup>46</sup> in relation to the Park. She argues that “while countless Lenins proved the infuriating fact of Soviet occupation, it was perhaps even more pressing to remove [Ilya Afanasevich] Ostapenko, who called attention to the ways in which

44 Hutcheon, *Irony’s Edge*, 85.

45 Quoted by Nadkarni, “Making the Past.”

46 To resolve the apparent contradiction in terms, cf. Hutcheon, “Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern”: “Our contemporary culture is indeed nostalgic; some parts of it—postmodern parts—are aware of the risks and lures of nostalgia, and seek to expose those through irony.”

forty years of socialism had become cozy and familiar.”<sup>47</sup> In this fashion, along with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or coming to terms with the past, other kinds of remembering practices, such as irony or nostalgia, are also enabled by the park’s layout.

*“We don’t really ask them, so they don’t talk about it”:  
Mapping Terra Incognita*

Let us return to Péter György’s comment on *terra incognita* and the unbridgeable abyss between past and present that seems to be an underlying universal trope of the post-socialist condition. The idea of *terra incognita* is closely related to what Piotr Sztompka calls “cultural trauma.” Sztompka argues that sudden, unexpected, deep social change may lead to a very peculiar condition, cultural trauma, which occurs “when there is a break, displacement or disorganization in the orderly, taken-for-granted universe.”<sup>48</sup> One of the fundamental consequences of cultural trauma, according to Sztompka, is a sense of “cultural disorientation,” when “the socialized, internalized culture that they carry ‘in their heads’ or in their semi-automatic ‘habits of the heart’ clashes with the cultural environment in which they find themselves.”<sup>49</sup> In line with Sztompka’s definition, I argue that the actual cultural trauma that is reflected in *both* memory projects is not the hard dictatorship and the terrors of the 1940–50s, or even the retaliation after 1956, as recent memory politics seems to imply, but rather an event that happened much later, in 1989/90.

In the case of Statue Park, admittedly a monument for the transition itself, the narrative focus on the early 1990s is not that surprising. However, the primary cultural trauma on which the House of Terror reflects is also the “change of systems.” The sudden paradigm shift of 1989 created the imperative to remember everything that had been suppressed for decades, yet the transition provided neither a natural shift from communicative to cultural memory to support suppressed memories nor the appropriate language to present these memories to a new generation.

---

47 Nadkarni, “Making the Past,” 201. Ilya Afanasevich Ostapenko was a Soviet soldier who was killed during the Siege of Budapest. A statue of him by Jenő Kerényi was erected in 1951 at a major road intersection on the outskirts of Budapest. The statue was taken down in 1992.

48 Sztompka, “Cultural Trauma,” 457.

49 Ibid., 454.

The consequences of cultural traumatization to contemporary museum practices display a sharp dividing line between the *heritage* and the *legacy* of communism in Hungary. Heritage may be understood as a selection of items, opinions, or perspectives that can be used by the present in order to create a coherent narrative of the past. This definition bears close resemblance to what Jan Assmann calls “hot memory.”<sup>50</sup> This is the realm in which historical museums can feel most at home. Although the two sites discussed here theoretically reflect on two very different pasts, this is not self-explanatory at first sight. Yet they both present a narrative about the past, which, strangely enough, ends with the foundation of the museum: Statue Park or the House of Terror, respectively. However, in both cases, the language they use is not suitable for the transmission of historical knowledge to post-socialist generations, because it is rooted in the *legacy* of the late Kádár era (and not the hard dictatorship of the earlier decades): the involuntary remnants, the *doxa* of how people interacted with one another before 1989.

“If a disturbance occurs,” writes Sztompka, “the symbols start to mean something other than they normally do; values become valueless or demand unrealizable goals; [...] gestures and words signify something different from what they meant before; beliefs are refuted, faith undermined, trust breached; charisma collapses, idols fall.”<sup>51</sup> And this is precisely what happened after the democratic transition. The web of comfortably allegoric, familiar language, the depth of omissions, hints at things or events already known, associative networks of words unspoken, all this was suddenly lost, as it was no longer necessary to learn or reproduce them. In the case of cultural trauma, the language *beyond* the language is the first to go after such a rupture in the tissue of culture, and this trap might have been overlooked by both memory projects discussed here. The deeply allegorical visual language and the very specific arrangements and combinations of objects they use (such as the infinite circles leading to a wall in Memento Park, allegedly symbolizing the communist project, or the various kitchen interiors in the Resistance room of the House of Terror, alluding to the practice of critics of the system gathering in one another’s kitchens) remain unintelligible to the youth.

One of my interviewees, when I asked him whether he had heard anything about the past from his older relatives, gave the following answer: “Yes, sometimes

50 Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 50.

51 Sztompka, “Cultural Trauma,” 458.

I hear things. Mum's mother and father were, well, they were taken away [*elvitték őket*]. But we don't really ask, so they don't talk about it." This fragment gives a sobering illustration of the unbridgeable hermeneutical gap that lies between Hungarian teenagers and their parents generation and grandparents generation today, and this is by no means a regular "generation gap." I am convinced that my respondent had no idea what being "taken away," one of the most euphemistic expressions referring to non-localizable terrors of the recent past, might mean, which is why he never asked questions about it.

Although the legacy of the late Kádár era can be regarded as a burden for Hungarian museums that promote the transmission of historical knowledge, it is also a challenge to be met. The task of such memorial sites is not simply to initiate young people as full-fledged members of a memory community or convey some kind of objective knowledge about the past, but also to awaken their curiosity and make the past seem relevant to them. If they are successful in this, perhaps next time a child will ask his or her grandmother the obvious questions: Why? Where? When? By whom?

### *Bibliography*

- Apor, Péter. "An epistemology of the spectacle? Arcane knowledge, memory and evidence in the Budapest House of Terror." *Rethinking History* 18, no. 3 (2014): 328–44.
- Apor, Péter. "Hitelesség és hitetlenség: emlékezet, történelem és közelmúlt-feldolgozás Kelet-Közép-Európában" [Authenticity and incredulity: Memory, history, and examining the recent past in East Central Europe]. *Korall* 41 (2010): 159–83.
- Assmann, Aleida. "Texts, traces, trash: The changing media of cultural memory." *Representations* 56 (1996): 123–34.
- Assmann, Aleida. *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. Munich: C.H.Becks, 2006.
- Assmann, Jan. *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Frazon, Zsófia, and Zsolt K. Horváth. "A megsértett Magyarország: A Terror Háza mint tárgybemutató, emlékmű és politikai rítus" [Hungary wronged: The Terror House as a presentation of objects, a monument, and a political rite]. *Regio. Kisebbség, Politika, Társadalom* 9, no. 4 (2002): 303–47.

- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Berkeley–Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.
- Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- György, Péter. “Az elveszett nyelv” [The lost language]. *Élet és Irodalom* 61, no. 15 (2012). Accessed October 31, 2016. [http://www.es.hu/gyorgy\\_peter;az\\_elveszett\\_nyelv;2012-04-11.html](http://www.es.hu/gyorgy_peter;az_elveszett_nyelv;2012-04-11.html).
- György, Péter. “Múzeumkritika: A terror háza / A terror topográfiaja (Budapest, Berlin)” [Museum criticism: The Terror House / The topography of terror (Budapest, Berlin)]. *Élet és Irodalom* 54, no. 24 (2010). Accessed October 31, 2016. [http://www.es.hu/gyorgy\\_peter;muzeumkritika;2010-06-20.html](http://www.es.hu/gyorgy_peter;muzeumkritika;2010-06-20.html).
- György, Péter. *Az ismeretlen nyelv – A hatalom színpadja* [The unknown language – The staging of power]. Budapest: Magvető, 2016.
- Hutcheon, Linda. “Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern.” *Studies in Comparative Literature* 30 (2000): 189–207.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. London–New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Ihász, István: “Gomb és kabát: A profán valóság bemutatásának kísérlete a Terror Háza Múzeumban” [Button and coat: The attempt to present the profane reality in the Terror House Museum]. In *Történeti Muzeológiai Szemle: A Magyar Múzeumi Történész Társulat Évkönyve* [Historical museological review: Yearbook of the Hungarian Museum Historian’s Society], vol. 2, edited by János Pintér, 97–105. Budapest: Magyar Múzeumi Történész Társulat, 2002.
- James, Beverly. “Fencing in the Past: Budapest’s Statue Park Museum.” *Media, Culture, Society* 21 (1999): 291–311.
- K. Horváth, Zsolt. “The Redistribution of the Memory of Socialism: Identity Formations of the ‘Survivors’ in Hungary after 1989.” In *Past for the Eyes: East European Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989*, edited by Péter Apor and Oksana Sarkisova, 247–73. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008.
- Kovács, Éva. “Az ironikus és a cinikus: a kommunizmus emlékezeteiről” [The ironic and the cynical: On remembrances of communism]. *Élet és Irodalom* 47, no. 35. (2004). Accessed October 31, 2016. [http://www.es.hu/kovacs\\_eva;az\\_ironikus\\_es\\_a\\_cinikus;2003-09-01.html](http://www.es.hu/kovacs_eva;az_ironikus_es_a_cinikus;2003-09-01.html).
- Light, Duncan. “Gazing on communism: Heritage tourism and post-communist identities in Germany, Hungary and Romania.” *Tourism Geographies* 2, no. 2 (2000): 157–76.

- Losonczy, Anne-Marie. “Le patrimoine de l’oubli: Le «parc-musée des Statues» de Budapest.” *Ethnologie française* 29 (1999): 445–52.
- Mark, James. “Criminalizing Communism? History at Terror Sites and in Statue Parks and National Museums.” In idem. *The Unfinished Revolution: Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe*, 61–91. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Memento Park* website. Accessed July 17, 2017. [www.mementopark.hu](http://www.mementopark.hu).
- Nadkarni, Maya. “The Death of Socialism and the Afterlife of Its Monuments: Making the Past in Budapest’s Statue Park Museum.” In *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, edited by Katharine Radgkin and Susannah Radstone, 193–207. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Pabis, Eszter. “A múlt hosszú árnyéka: Történelempolitika és az emlékezés kultúrája Németországban 1945 után” [The past and its long shadow: History politics and the culture of remembrance in Germany after 1945]. *Klió*, no. 1 (2008). Accessed October 31, 2016. <http://www.c3.hu/~klio/klio081/klio103.html>.
- Radley, Alan. “Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past.” In *Collective Remembering*, edited by David Middleton and Derek Edwards, 46–59. London–New Bury–New Delhi: Sage, 1990.
- Radnóti, Sándor. “Mi a Terror Háza?” [What is the House of Terror?]. *Magyar Múzeumok* 2 (2003): 6–9.
- Rényi, András. “A retorika terrorja: A Terror Háza mint esztétikai probléma” [The Terror of rhetoric: The House of Terror as an aesthetic problem]. In idem. *Az értelmezés tébolya: Hermeneutikai tanulmányok* [The folly of interpretation: Hermeneutic essays], 215–31. Budapest: Kijárat, 2008.
- Rév, István. “A Terror Házának előképeiről” [Archetypes of the Terror House]. *Élet és Irodalom* 47, no. 10 (2003). Accessed October 31, 2016. [http://www.es.hu/rev\\_istvan;a\\_terror\\_hazanak\\_elokepeiro;2003-03-10.html](http://www.es.hu/rev_istvan;a_terror_hazanak_elokepeiro;2003-03-10.html).
- Seres, László. “Andrássy út 60” [Andrássy Avenue 60]. *Élet és Irodalom* 46, no. 6 (2002). Accessed October 31, 2016. [http://www.es.hu/seres\\_laszlo;andrassy\\_ut\\_60;2003-01-03.html](http://www.es.hu/seres_laszlo;andrassy_ut_60;2003-01-03.html).
- Sztompka, Piotr. “Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change.” *European Journal of Social Theory*, no. 3 (2000): 449–66.
- Takács, Miklós. “A kulturális trauma elmélete a bírálókat tükrében” [The theory of cultural trauma from the perspective of its critics]. *Studia Litteraria*, no. 3–4 (2011): 36–51.
- Terror Háza website. Accessed July 17, 2017. <http://www.terrorhaza.hu/en/museum>.

- Ungváry, Krisztián. "A káosz háza" [The house of chaos]. *Magyar Narancs*, no. 10 (2002). Accessed October 31, 2016. [http://magyarnarancs.hu/konyv/a\\_kaosz\\_haza-59381](http://magyarnarancs.hu/konyv/a_kaosz_haza-59381).
- Williams, Paul. "The Afterlife of Communist Statuary: Hungary's Szoborpark and Lithuania's Grutas Park." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008): 185–98.