

# Passings to the Margin: Berlin, 1932

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The title I have given to this paper is partly the title of my recently published book: *Passings. The (An)archaeology of Roma Image Making*.<sup>1</sup> It contains a chapter, in which I analyse two very different artistic attitudes toward the Roma, two differing forms of *passing* during the time span of two decades. László Moholy-Nagy, the prestigious Bauhaus artist and teacher, and Leni Riefenstahl, the ambitious dancer, actress, and in this film, screen-writer and director, both made a film connected to the Roma although in very different genres and styles. The history of their reception symptomatically shows that the formal analysis and the dynamics of the surrounding social space are equally important.

Let me start with a crucial reference to Trinh T. Minh-ha – a feminist, a postcolonial theoretician, a film director, and a composer – whose approach to Otherness called “speaking nearby,” expressed in the film titled *Reassemblage* (D: Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1983), has influenced me a lot. This approach is a form of *epistemic resistance*, which means (at least in my understanding) a high awareness of the fact that every single writing is part of the global knowledge production that determines power relations in society.<sup>2</sup> In my case, this has meant a decision to choose not a descriptive, systematising analysis of Roma related films that in my view strengthens and does not undermine existing power relations, (“speaking about”), but rather the more complex approach of cultural studies (“speaking nearby”). The methodology I use derives from content-driven media archaeology practiced by many outstanding German film historians. Among them, the most influential is Thomas Elsaesser who argues that film is “the century’s memory and imaginary.”<sup>3</sup> Its history teaches us to

1 Pócsik, Andrea: *Passings. The (An)archaeology of Roma Image Making*, Budapest 2016.

2 It could be ‘paired’ with the term of epistemic violence used by Angéla Kóczé in her article about Roma bodies constructed in media by racist gaze and discourse. The term derives from Chakravorty Spivak postcolonial theoretician. See Kóczé, Angéla: A rasszista tekintet és beszédmód által konstruált roma férfi és női testek a médiában, accessible at: <http://uj.apertura.hu/2014/nyar-osz/kocze-a-raszista-tekintet-es-beszedmod-altal-konstrualt-roma-ferfi-es-noi-testek-a-mediaban/>. [Accessed: 19.11.2019].

3 Elsaesser, Thomas: *Film History as Media Archaeology. Tracking Digital Cinema*, Amsterdam 2016.

recognise, identify the factors that make us construct cultural identity in our “imagined communities” (Benedict Anderson).<sup>4</sup>

Thus, I have chosen in each important film-historical period one or more related films and revealed the history of their origin and reception, and the discursive fields surrounding them (Roma representation in other arts, social sciences, etc.). My intension is to show how these are all connected and how what we call a stereotype and a prejudice usually shapes the same patterns in literature, popular cultural products and even in ethnographic research.

But how did media archaeology become (an)archaeology? Through *passings*. Even if I am aware of the political importance of films produced by Roma filmmakers, I have nevertheless focused on films by non-Roma authors. I pay attention to emancipation in my teaching,<sup>5</sup> in my curatorial<sup>6</sup> and academic practice.<sup>7</sup>

Another important theoretical cornerstone of my research is a writing by Arthur C. Danto about “moving images.” This philosophical essay on art was written in a postmodern media environment at a time when film and video recordings, as well as technical images overwhelmed art. Drawing parallels and pointing out the differences between theatre, fine art, photography and film, Danto calls attention to the “interpretational” frame, the “deal” between the perceiver and the artist. He differentiates between the *motif* (attributing meaning to a character or a pattern in its own reality), or as a subject of allegorical reference (*model*) and a *par excellence* representation of its own (*theme*).<sup>8</sup> I argue that we can “unlearn the inherent dominative mode”<sup>9</sup> in Roma representation when we learn to differentiate between the Roma as a model (seeing it as a poetic tool, e.g. the allegory of freedom), as a motif (seeing it determined by its sociological and anthropological factors) and as a theme (being aware of the reality-based works of Romani artists).

4 See: Elsaesser: Film History.

5 In 2011, I founded Roma Visual Lab, a film club, university course where Roma images have been analysed. Romakép Műhely, <http://www.romakepmuhely.hu/>. [Accessed: 29.8.2019].

6 Cineromani, [http://www.berlin.balassiintezet.hu/images/institutes/berlin/Events/Politik\\_Gesellschaft\\_Roma/2013/201305\\_Cineromani\\_Leporello\\_web.pdf](http://www.berlin.balassiintezet.hu/images/institutes/berlin/Events/Politik_Gesellschaft_Roma/2013/201305_Cineromani_Leporello_web.pdf). [Accessed: 29.8.2019].

7 Romarchive, <https://www.romarchive.eu/de/collection/p/andrea-pocsik/>. [Accessed: 29.8.2019]. A series of events I organised together with Romani artists (André J.e Raatzsch artist, curator, Rodrigo Balogh actor, theatre director) highlights this fact performatively. In the framework of an exhibition opening, we bought “Roma ethnicity” for our film club; [http://hu.tranzit.org/file/roma\\_the\\_contract\\_to\\_sell.pdf](http://hu.tranzit.org/file/roma_the_contract_to_sell.pdf). [Accessed: 1.5.2018]. The book I wrote about Roma representation in a critical approach is part of my imaginary contract.

8 Danto, Arthur C.: Mozgó képek, Metropolis, in: *ősz* (1997), pp. 8–21; originally published with the title „Moving Pictures,” in: *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 4.1 (1979), pp. 1–21, here pp. 9–10.

9 Said, Edward W.: *Orientalism*, New York 1979, p. 28.

Let me try to show these functions at work in an (an)archaeological case study about Berlin in 1932.

## *Kunstwollen* and *Machtwollen* during the Weimar Republic film culture

In my analysis, I create a dialogue between films produced very close together in time and space, but very distant in genre and approach. Thus, I argue that films are memory patterns and we can analyse in parallel the “poetics and politics” of very different films. My establishing idea is to map the biographical spaces of the above-mentioned artists and reveal the history of origin and reception (and in those the possible connections) of their works.

Both films were made around 1932 at the threshold of the National Socialist regime.

László Moholy-Nagy made two documentary films between 1931 and 1932 in Berlin.<sup>10</sup> I call these “images of resistance,” because the intention of the prestigious Bauhaus artist and pedagogue was to capture, to show “truly” the life and environment of the lower social classes, such as workers and Sinti, despite of all the threatening political and social changes.<sup>11</sup> Initially, I intended to collect sources about and examine two films, but then two became three: *Urban Gypsies* (*Großstadt-Zigeuner*, 1932) and Leni Riefenstahl’s *Blue Light* (*Das blaue Licht*, 1932), *Lowlands* (*Tiefland*, 1940–1954). I am now going to discuss the first one and connect it to the last one at the end of the paper as important puzzle pieces of the Romanies’ historicised memory.

I also take into consideration Moholy-Nagy’s conceptions about the documentary film-plans and I treat them as “informative situations” that can partly reveal the complexity of experiences available in the late Weimar Republic. In his theorisation of biographical spaces, Zsolt K. Horváth argues that this methodological change means that

the facts of biography do *not* determine the future author, ‘do not lead his hand’ while painting a picture, writing a poem or a study, all in all create the rhythm with the performative force of the experience and the pattern of the creative imagination of the subject, and at the same time create borderlines of the possible spaces for the construction of social reality (...) In this sense mapping and

10 *Urban Gypsies* (*Großstadt-Zigeuner*; D: László Moholy-Nagy, 1932); *Berlin Still Life* (*Berliner Stilleben*; D: László Moholy-Nagy, 1931).

11 In the autumn of 2016, in the framework of a DAAD scholarship, I spent two months in Berlin doing research about the late Weimar Republic film culture.

describing the ‘overlapping’ political, cultural, social, aesthetic contexts around the subject becomes the unavoidable source of the subject’s formulation and elaboration.<sup>12</sup>

László Moholy’s documentaries made in the late Weimar Republic, during the rise of National Socialism in Berlin, have been usually neglected by art and film historians compared to his experimental, artistic, and pedagogic activities and other avant-garde film movements. In the volume of collected essays of the so-called Bielefeld Symposium held in 1995, celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary the artist’s birth, we can find a few references to these films. Krisztina Passuth, who wrote an important monograph about Moholy-Nagy, characterises *Berliner Stilleben* as a work “stuck on the half way.”<sup>13</sup> Another art historian, Christiane Heuwinkel, says that “his films are less autonomous, finished works of art, but rather efforts to win the obstacles of different genres.”<sup>14</sup>

A few film historians used slightly different argumentations and tried to reveal in their analyses the characteristics of these documentaries, thus placing them in avant-garde filmmaking, among the important genre of city symphony films. We can see Moholy-Nagy as one of the forerunners of this genre, since he wrote a script in 1921–22 and published it in Lajos Kassák’s journal *Ma (Today)* in 1923, titled “The Dynamics of a Metropolis.”<sup>15</sup> In the 1920s, many avant-garde filmmakers – Walter Ruttmann, Alberto Cavalcanti, Joris Ivens, Dziga Vertov, Jean Vigo<sup>16</sup> – took this genre *seriously*, some of them not just as a formal experience but as a tool for raising social awareness. I argue that Moholy-Nagy’s intentions in the late twenties and early thirties were similar and even more radical and brave because of the completely different social and political environment. And yet most film historians judged them to

12 K. Horváth, Zsolt: Az életrajzi térről, Szempontok a biográfiai módszer és a szinoptikus szemlélet történeti alkalmazásához, in: Korall 44 (2011), pp. 154–176, here pp. 156–157.

13 Passuth, Krisztina: Moholy-Nagy und Berlin. Berlin als Modell der Metropole, in: Jäger, Gottfried/Wessing, Gudrun (eds.): Über Moholy-Nagy. Ergebnisse aus dem Internationalen László Moholy-Nagy-Symposium, Bielefeld 1995, zum 100. Geburtstag des Künstlers und Bauhauslehrers, Bielefeld 1997, pp. 37–44, here p. 44.

14 Heuwinkel, Christiane: Dynamik der Bilder. László Moholy-Nagy und der Experimental- und Avantgardefilm heute, in: Jäger, Gottfried/Wessing, Gudrun (eds.): Über Moholy-Nagy. Ergebnisse aus dem Internationalen László Moholy-Nagy-Symposium, Bielefeld 1995, zum 100. Geburtstag des Künstlers und Bauhauslehrers, Bielefeld 1997, pp. 199–214, here p. 201.

15 Moholy-Nagy, László: A nagyváros dinamikája. Filmvázlat. Egyszersmind tipofotó, MA 1923 /IX.8–9.

16 Symphony of a Metropolis (D: Walter Ruttmann, 1927); Rien que les heures (D: Alberto Cavalcanti, 1926); Man with the Movie Camera (D: Dziga Vertov, 1929); A Propos de Nice (D: Jean Vigo, 1929–30).

be “pure experiments,” with the sole intention of revealing the new medium and did not take into account the social responsibility they expressed.

This situation is changing, as I can see, due to the strengthening influence of critical, cultural approaches in film studies. Film and media archaeology, the influence of the memory and cultural turn undermine the descriptive, systematising aspects that take into account mostly formal devices, separating “the poetic from the political.”

In my research on Roma image making, *affectedness* is a central term. Originally, it comes from political sciences and democracy theories, but it is often used in public language describing groups of people who are the objects of a certain socio-economical initiative, and find themselves in life circumstances that ought to be changed. I use it in a broader and slightly different sense, since to be affected also means to be influenced, touched. That is, in my understanding affectedness means *a certain degree of empathy, solidarity which comes from either a similar life situation, or similar ethnic, class origin, or professional interest.*

László Moholy-Nagy was a bourgeois, middle-class artist of social responsibility and a Hungarian-Jewish emigrant, a stranger and a target of strengthening discrimination. So, in a way he was distant. In 1932, the year when *Großstadt-Zigeuner* was shot, he was excluded from the Association of German Filmmakers (Gesellschaft Deutscher Lichtbildner), and the post-production itself was stopped and the distribution prohibited. A few cinemas screened his short documentaries a couple of times in Germany, and after his emigration to Holland, England and finally to the United States, a few academic events were organised. The reception was very limited, a few articles were published in newspapers, but rarely analysing, mostly just stating the fact that shooting had taken place.

After the end of the war and the early death of László Moholy-Nagy, the first biographical volume was written by his second wife, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, whom he met before shooting these documentaries and who put together a memoir with many important subjective recollections (and yet, we have to be aware of the fact that the memoir was written not long after her husband's death). But we can formulate a detailed picture about his plans, and the circumstances. Interestingly, she does not describe the interaction with workers but only with the Sinti, e.g. the difficulties and obstacles of approaching them, persuading them to cooperate.<sup>17</sup>

What I call “passing” in this intercultural filmmaking is how the “affected” author builds the interaction on his/her cultural identity, how he/she

17 Moholy-Nagy hired a sort of mediator, a Jewish woman who lived with the community. She was his assistant and helped him organize the shooting. Moholy-Nagy, Sibyl: *Experiment in Totality*, Cambridge, MA 1969, p. 68.

approaches a certain community, a person who is similar in one way or another to him/her but not identifiable so he or she dissembles in order to get close. I argue that the “Romaphilia” described by the sociologist Éva Kovács<sup>18</sup> as one side of the attitude toward the Roma is connected to this socio-psychological phenomenon.

In the mid 1930s in National Socialist Germany, many cities started to round up Roma and Sinti and forced them to live in small concentration camps. The one built in Marzahn in Berlin in 1936 has crucial importance to my research, but I will explain that later.

It is difficult to judge the consequences of these actions on public opinion. The romantic attraction mixed with fear toward a supposed culture of “vaga-bonds,” the appropriation of an imagined freedom-loving closeness to nature, or an equally imagined resistance to modernism as represented in art, just as the hatred towards Roma and Sinti and their stigmatisation as criminals was represented in the press.

According to Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, those he perceived as ‘Gypsies’ aroused nostalgia in Moholy-Nagy, but the film itself does not reflect this emotional attitude. I agree with the arguments of several film historians, namely that it is rather an avant-garde experimental documentary in the spirit of the Bauhaus programme-like *Sinneserweiterung*. I would add that its object is the gaze, the camera-eye of the outsider, the intruder. Every tenth shot is a self-reflective one, the decomposed shots with strange camera angles make the viewer aware of the voyeuristic act. It evidently bears the impact of Dziga Vertov whose conceptions about filmmaking impressed Moholy-Nagy, and his theoretical writings and the concept of “vision in motion” support this argument. The shots that record the community’s rejection of the filmmaker create exceptional grotesque moments of Roma representation. From another point of view, they can be opposed to the “aesthetics of misery,” of the important trend of social criticism represented by the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. This “matter-of-fact approach,” often opposed to expressionism, was meant to represent members of marginalised groups and their surroundings focusing on their socially determined position thus victimising them. László Moholy-Nagy turns his camera to the “human” reactions. He lets the characters look frequently into the lens, thus heightening the level of reflectivity, and does not delete rejections, e.g. when some women turn and show their bottoms, laughing at the cameraman or simply shut the door in his face.

In my opinion, the constant borderline-crossing captured in the film makes this documentary an eternal metaphor of Otherness, and reflects the affectedness of the author, since its characters cross the “border” in their

18 Kovács, Éva: Fekete testek, fehér testek, in: *Beszélő* 14.1 (2009), pp. 74–92, here p. 77.

interaction with the urban citizens and the filmmaker himself crosses the border with his intruding presence. And formally, it is a borderline-crossing work of art since Moholy-Nagy's constructivist experiments with light and shadow are expressed through black and white moving images, the new medium of "camera-truth" and recall his diary-note from 1932: "Every human life has got shadows. There isn't any human without shadows."<sup>19</sup> But talking about border-crossing, we can easily get confused about "inside and outside" when we think about the "Germanness" of the Sinti and Roma, stigmatized as "Zigeuner" and excluded from the "imagined community" of the nation and when we think about László Moholy-Nagy, who spent his adult life in constant emigration, being a foreigner, a Hungarian, often actually associated with the Roma, and changing from a Bauhaus artist to a Jew excluded from society and forced into emigration again. That is why I would call his "passing" allegoric in the Walter Benjaminian sense: not as a symbol of solidarity with the poor Roma as a middle-class artist, but as the allegory of Otherness (an outcast Jew) – not as a playful poetic technique but as an expression like language or writing.

As I mentioned above, his short documentaries reached a very small audience. Cinema-goers were longing for melodramas and, as Thomas Elsaesser argues, "this genre meant the overwhelming hegemony of the attraction to "victim role" (*Opferrolle*) of the "world middle class" (*Weltmittelklasse*).<sup>20</sup> Just as in the most important genre of National Socialism, the mountain films (*Bergfilme*). Leni Riefenstahl, the celebrated star of the genre made her first feature film, the *Blue Light* (*Das blaue Licht*) in the same year (with the collaboration of another important Hungarian emigrant, the excellent film theoretician Béla Balázs). She also starred in the film as an outcast village girl, a mysterious girl, Junta. After she became one of the most important directors of the Nazi propaganda machine, she started another feature film in 1940, *Lowlands* (*Tiefland*), a mega-production, that was finished long after the war, in 1954.

In Riefenstahl's story, I would like to highlight her intention (what I call the "Machtwollen," or "urge for power" that is rooted in her biography and her career and, by the way, I juxtapose elsewhere<sup>21</sup> with Moholy-Nagy's "urge for art," "Kunstwollen"), and also a term that is central to my Roma image

19 Moholy-Nagy, Sibyl: Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Ein Totalexperiment, Mainz 1972, p. 79.

20 Elsaesser, Thomas: Gefühlte Opfer. Die mediale Inszenierung einer prominenten Rolle, in: Metelmann, Jörg / Beyes, Timon (eds.): Die Macht der Gefühle. Emotionen in Management, Organisation und Kultur, Berlin 2012, pp. 109–126, here p. 111.

21 Pócsik, Andrea: Images of Resistance in Our Historicized Memory. Kunstwollen: Formal Experiences of Social Force, in: László Moholy Nagy's Documentaries, accessible at: <https://www.romarchive.eu/en/collection/lecture-by-andrea-pocsik-images-of-resistance-in-our-historicized-memory-kunstwollen-formal-experiences-of-social-force-in-laszlo-moholy-nagys-documentaries/>. [Accessed: 19.11.2019].

analyses: *passing*. I extend its usage from the way it is widely understood in social psychology, where it describes a coping strategy for distancing oneself from a stigmatised identity by generating situations where the individual evokes (race, gender) norms in everyday life performances through “cheating,” camouflage, or covering up. I have collected “cases” from Hungarian film history, where we can witness a fictitious rearticulating of racial and class (sometimes gender related) belonging.

There are many examples of this popular melodramatic motif: a secret love affair, forced marriage or marriage for love between a man and a woman of different social backgrounds, where one of the partners, usually the woman, is a Roma. These are cases of *intersectionality*, which the Oxford Dictionary defines as: “The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.” It can be represented in different ways, but “the Roma” character always adds some romanticised, exoticised, or victimised attribution. The most well-known trope of the independent, seductive Roma woman, which returns from time to time in similar patterns in film history, is Carmen in the opera by Bizet.

*The Blue Light* and *Tiefland* were two important milestones in Leni Riefenstahl’s career. In both films, she is the protagonist and the director. In *The Blue Light*, she plays an outcast village girl with supernatural powers and extraordinary physical skills that enable her to climb mountains. And she knows how to get the precious crystals from the cave of Monte Cristallo. She is also placed morally above the greedy village inhabitants, where the young men are seduced by her beauty and her powers. Their attraction is paralleled in their greed. In *Tiefland*, her attractive power derives from her beauty and her dance skills and she is the target of the amoral, erotic desires of the wealthy landowner Don Sebastian. In *The Blue Light*, the emphasis is on her special Otherness rather than her “Gypsiness.” Actually, there aren’t any clear references to her ethnic origin except for her flowery clothes, but she was identified as Junta, “the Gypsy girl,” in reviews and in work by Siegfried Kracauer published after the war. We can read these female characters as two alter egos of Riefenstahl at different stages of her carrier: at the time of her upheaval and at the time of her downfall. Both are connected to the National Socialist era: the fact that Riefenstahl referred to *The Blue Light* as clear proof of her untainted talent (and this was also pointed out in several receptions of the film) became a recurring element of her self-victimisation. *Tiefland* is a totally different story: it is more about the powerless, exploited female character’s struggle.

One possible explanation for Riefenstahl’s *passings* – becoming a Roma outcast empowered with erotic, seductive strength and talent – can be interpreted in terms of the facts of her own biography. She was born from a marriage between the daughter (one of twelve children) of a poor mason and

a wealthy building contractor. According to her biographical notes, both her mother and she were subordinated to the will of an authoritarian husband and father. In spite of opposition from her father, she was allowed to start a dancing career. Then, after a series of foot injuries, she continued as an actress in *Bergfilme*, acting as one of the few female characters who could ski and climb mountains, both traditionally male sports. At the same time, her ambitions leant towards filmmaking: a totally male-dominated profession in that period.

How is all this connected to her Roma characters? I think that this imaginary “Gypsiness,” where the woman is endowed with great independence, could be paralleled with the women’s emancipation movement. Other lower social-class female protagonists did not have the same appeal. The struggle was part of Riefenstahl’s life-blood. (In fact, her book about her early career, published in 1933, was titled *Kampf in Schnee und Eis* (*Struggle in Snow and Ice*).

Her original film project, after the Nazi propaganda films, was titled *Penthesilea* and was about the last Queen of the Amazons in Greek mythology. It might have ensured the continuation of the Nazi attraction to Greek harmony and the cult of the body. But she gained approval for the shooting of *Tiefland* – no doubt the success of the opera was a strong argument for it. If *The Blue Light* represented a symbolic transition from the Weimar Republic to National Socialist film culture, *Tiefland* represented its totality. Riefenstahl said that she wanted to go beyond the *Bergfilme* and to create a production where “women are more important than mountains.”<sup>22</sup> I would add that, whereas *Tiefland* was a super-production (it was one of the most expensive films of the Nazi era), with power as the dominant theme, what we witness in *The Blue Light* is a poetic, allegoric *passing* (and that was mainly due to Béla Balázs’s contribution both as a scriptwriter and a director). In *Tiefland*, what Riefenstahl achieves is a *passing* which is egocentric, power-driven, and morally perverted.

She requested Roma and Sinti extras from internment camps, mainly children, who were then sent on to concentration camps. (It was not her idea, but it was a standard practice in the Babelsberg Film Studio to hire extras as forced labour.) This fact was revealed shortly after the war in 1949 in the Munich magazine *Revue*, before the film was even completed and premiered. Riefenstahl responded aggressively by suing the editor and winning the case. After a long production process, the film was finished and premiered in 1954. I will point out a few crucial facts in its reception history.

22 Rentschler, Eric: Hochgebirge und Moderne. Eine Standortbestimmung des Bergfilms, in: *Film und Kritik* 1.1 (1992), pp. 6–27, here p. 23.

This is a long story revealed in a painstaking research by the British film historian Susan Tegel,<sup>23</sup> and I mention it here because as *memory patterns* (Jan Assmann) *Großstadt-Zigeuner*, *Das blaue Licht* and *Tiefland* are connected. The characters of Moholy's film lived in Marzahn where a detention camp for Sinti and Roma was built just before the Olympic Games in 1936, and were probably taken there (as the first city injunctions wanted to "clean" the neighbourhood, and hide the disorder from the foreigners). In *Tiefland*, Leni Riefenstahl hired Roma extras from Maxglann and Marzahn to create an authentic Spanish environment. The whole story – I will not go into details now – with Riefenstahl's Holocaust denial and survivors' testimony is analysed by Tegel. But her research results are not mentioned, of course, in the DVD of *Tiefland* which is commercial. And what is more striking, the largest German film database gives the production dates of the film incorrectly. Instead of 1940–1954, it states 1940–1944, which is incredibly important for the history of reception. We are not informed about the extras and the processes, there is only a link to the general description of National Socialist film industry. But when we search for *Tiefland*, we get two other matches. One is the documentary by Nina Gladitz that investigated the story and was banned from distribution following an initiative by Riefenstahl in 1982, a year after the film's release.<sup>24</sup> The other match is even more interesting: it is an article titled: "Force Labour in a Film Studio."<sup>25</sup> It reveals that it was a usual practice during the Nazi period to use extras from forced labour camps in the Babelsberg Film Studio where UFA films were made. They were usually "not noticed," not even in Max W. Kimmich's *Germanin* that takes place in Africa with three hundred French black war prisoners and Riefenstahl's *Tiefland*, in which 68 Roma and Sinti, who were interned at the Marzahn camp, appeared as forced extras. We cannot know if Moholy's lively community took part in the shooting of *Tiefland*, but theoretically this is possible. What we know is that most of them died in concentration camps.

As a conclusion, I would stress that nowadays "knowledge production" is becoming a crucial term and has political consequences. RomArchive, the huge digital database, is one example, a precious initiative and an important project: the portent of more to come. In a text written for the photo section curated by André J. Raatzsch, I have stressed the importance of forgetting and

23 Tegel, Susan: Riefenstahl's "Gypsy Question," in: Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 23.1 (2003), pp. 3–10; Tegel, Susan: Riefenstahl's "Gypsy Question" Revisited. The Gypsy Extras in *Tiefland*, in: Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 26.1 (2006), pp. 21–43.

24 Filmportal, [http://www.filmportal.de/film/zeit-des-schweigens-und-der-dunkelheit\\_005ed2a3f22549ea9548c7ef584b2ac0](http://www.filmportal.de/film/zeit-des-schweigens-und-der-dunkelheit_005ed2a3f22549ea9548c7ef584b2ac0). [Accessed: 19.11.2019].

25 Filmportal, <http://www.filmportal.de/en/node/1173318>. [Accessed: 19.11.2019].

remembering, adding as a third psychological term “unlearning.” In memory studies, we often refer to the debate between two outstanding German scholars, Christian Meier and Aleida Assmann<sup>26</sup> about the role of forgetting in societal changes. When Assmann gives arguments for the dialogical memory politics instead of the monologic one, she refers to the thoughts of the postcolonial thinker Edward Said, about how nation building and remembering are tightly connected, stressing its transformative power. Here, I refer to another work of Said, *Orientalism*, where he states, as is often quoted in postcolonial critical theory, that in order to deconstruct power politics which determine representation, we need „to unlearn the inherent dominative mode.”<sup>27</sup> László Moholy-Nagy resisted the tradition of victimisation in the shadow of the systematic persecution and represented the Roma as seen *motifs* of inherent Otherness, but created an anthropological context for the purpose of deeper understanding. Leni Riefenstahl highlights victimisation and exploitation for melodramatic purposes creating *models*, allegories of powerlessness and transcends all ethical norms in order to attain success. In my understanding, we could practice “unlearning” by *re-writing*, *re-interpreting*, *re-thinking*, *re-telling our narratives* in the light of the memory and cultural turn and *decolonizing all the archives and databases in order to recover*.

26 Meier, Christian: *Das Gebot zu vergessen und die Unabweisbarkeit des Erinnerns. Vom öffentlichen Umgang mit schlimmer Vergangenheit*, München 2010; Assmann, Aleida: *Az emlékezet átalakító ereje*, in: *Studia Litteraria* 51.1–2 (2012), pp. 9–23.

27 Williams, Raymond: *Culture and Society 1780–1950*, London 1958, p. 376.