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Chapter 10

Forgotten Perpetrators: Photographs of  
Female Perpetrators after WWII

Andrea Pető

In January 2007, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives received a donation of a photograph album with the inscription “Auschwitz 21.6.1944” consisting of Karl Höcker’s photographs of his service years in Auschwitz. In Höcker’s Auschwitz album there are no photographs of prisoners, unlike in the parallel Auschwitz Album donated by Lili Jacob in 1983 to Yad Vashem, which aimed to demonstrate how inmates were handled there. The photographs of the Höcker Album show female guards at Auschwitz enjoying themselves while off duty. This series of photographs stimulated a new debate around how understood the research on female perpetrators is. The surprise and uneasiness surrounding the Höcker album reflected the fact that the presence of women among the camp guards is a rarely discussed element in historiography, and where it has been discussed, the women are usually framed as beasts, not as normal, diligent, reliable workers who love to have fun while off duty. This discussion spots a void in the literature on political violence, namely the portrayal of female perpetrators.<sup>1</sup> Recent research has tried to map the participation of women at every level of the Nazi state, not only focusing on concentration camp guards and wives.<sup>2</sup> The representational deficit, namely that no woman is a part of the visual canon of Nazi Germany other than the “beasts” and the wives (“Women of the Nazis”), has several political consequences. This chapter analyzes this representational deficit in an even more complex setting—post-WWII Hungary, which has yet to face the complicity and active participation of the Hungarian state in the killing of its citizens. This deficit is even timelier to investigate as Hungarian public life

1 Anette Kretzer, *NS-Täterschaft und Geschlecht. Der erste britische Ravensbrück-Prozess 1946/47 in Hamburg* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2009); Claudia Taake, *Angeklagt. SS-Frauen vor Gericht* (Oldenburg: Universität Oldenburg, 1998); Gudrun Schwarz, “Verdrängte Täterinnen. Frauen im Apparat der SS (1939–1945),” in *Nach Osten. Verdeckte Spuren nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen*, ed. Theresa Wobbe (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1992), 197–227.

2 Elizabeth Harvey, “Management and Manipulation: Nazi Settlement Planners and Ethnic German Settlers in Occupied Poland,” in *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies*, eds. Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen (New York: Routledge, 2005), 95–112.

1 was shaken at the time of the 2010 parliamentary election when 17 percent of  
 2 the popular vote was won by a far-right party that shows continuity—in terms  
 3 of symbology and rhetoric—with the right-wing extremist party of the pre-1945  
 4 period. The latter, the Arrow Cross Party, was in part responsible for Hungary's  
 5 defeat in World War II and for the death of half a million of the country's Jewish  
 6 citizens. The period that began with the political changes of 1989 and culminated  
 7 in the victory of the right wing in the 2010 election has seen a gradual questioning  
 8 of earlier anti-fascist historical interpretations and the incipient rehabilitation of  
 9 the pre-World War II era. The collapse of communism in 1989 reopened the public  
 10 debate on anti-fascism, and history in Eastern Europe, has become an unfinished  
 11 history. This chapter, as part of a larger work examining transitional justice in the  
 12 post-World War II period from a feminist gendered perspective, analyzes how this  
 13 past—divided and unfinished in terms of (the role of) the perpetrators—is shaped  
 14 by, and in return shapes, the visual representation. I examine the paradox that  
 15 although photography and film were already well established in Hungary by the  
 16 outbreak of World War II, very few photographs of extremist right-wing women  
 17 engaged in political activity during the war are to be found in the accessible  
 18 public collections.<sup>3</sup> Why are such pictures missing from the public collections  
 19 and from newspaper reports on the political justice process after World War  
 20 II? Why was there a failure to document female war criminals in a country in  
 21 which, only a few years earlier (in a two-month period in 1944), 460,000 Jews  
 22 had been transported to concentrations camps (mostly to Auschwitz) and where  
 23 10 to 30 percent of Hungarian women had given their support to the Arrow Cross  
 24 Party?<sup>4</sup> Why are women, who constituted 10 percent of war criminals sentenced  
 25 in the aftermath of World War II, absent from the photographs? Why were the  
 26 female executees erased from historical memory, even though Hungary—among  
 27 all the countries formerly allied with Germany—carried out the highest number  
 28 of female executions following people's court trials?<sup>5</sup> Even where photos of the  
 29 women do exist, they tend to be hidden away in uncataloged archive boxes or  
 30 inaccessible private collections. How did these photographs become forgotten  
 31 pictures?<sup>6</sup> What is the relationship between the failure to remember and Hungary's

3 Photo Archives of the Hungarian National Museum, Police History Museum  
 (Budapest), Hungarian Museum of Photography (Kecskemét), Getty Collection, Photo  
 Archives of the Hungarian News Agency.

4 The wide range is due to two factors: regional differences (in some areas membership  
 was 30 percent, in others it was closer to 10 percent) and uncertainty in numbers as  
 membership files have not been made available to me. Andrea Pető, "Arrow Cross Women  
 and Female Informants," *Baltic Worlds* 3–4 (2009): 48–52.

5 The number of executed women in Hungary is seven.

6 Andrea Pető, "Who is Afraid of the 'Ugly Women'?: Problems of Writing  
 Biographies of Nazi and Fascist Women in Countries of the Former Soviet Block," *Journal  
 of Women's History* 4 (2009): 147–151.

1 divided memory of World War II, and how is this relationship shaped by gender?<sup>7</sup> 1  
 2 How has this situation been altered by the Internet and the publication of these 2  
 3 formerly “forgotten” pictures (showing right-wing extremist women and female 3  
 4 perpetrators) by today’s far-right websites? 4

5 5

6 6

7 **Absent Female War Criminals: The Reasons for the Representational Deficit** 7

8 8

9 There are several reasons for the representational deficit in collective memory 9  
 10 as far as female perpetrators are concerned. One reason—as has been shown in 10  
 11 various works on the political role of far-right women—is the general invisibility 11  
 12 of women in the right-wing extremist movements: a manifestation of this was 12  
 13 that women’s activities in political life were rarely photographed. Women were 13  
 14 typically marginalized in politics, and in this respect the extremist right-wing 14  
 15 political parties were no exception. Examining the photos that have been found, 15  
 16 we see only secretaries or shorthand recorders.<sup>8</sup> 16

17 Yet there were, in the Arrow Cross Party, several charismatic female leaders, 17  
 18 of whom there are no surviving photographs. Many women worked in the 18  
 19 extremist right-wing parties both in peacetime and during the war; as in other 19  
 20 party apparatuses they tended to be employed in administrative positions.<sup>9</sup> The 20  
 21 formality of party life is manifest in the group photo taken at the time of a visit to 21  
 22 Kassa (today Kosice, Slovakia) by Ferenc Szálasi, the Arrow Cross leader<sup>10</sup> The 22  
 23 photograph of members of the Arrow Cross women’s organization celebrating St 23  
 24 Francis’ Day follows the usual iconography.<sup>11</sup> 24

25 The Arrow Cross Party seized power in Hungary on October 15, 1944, 25  
 26 following Horthy’s unsuccessful attempt to exit the war. At the time the Red Army 26  
 27 had already reached the country’s eastern borders. Arrow Cross rule was brutal 27  
 28 and short-lived (lasting barely six months). If we look at a photo taken during 28  
 29 an Arrow Cross congress at the House of Loyalty (the party’s headquarters), we 29  
 30 find—among the many men—Mrs. Thoma and Mrs. Dücső, two rival Arrow Cross 30  
 31 females leaders, who are seated far apart (Figure 10.1).<sup>12</sup> 31

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34 7 Andrea Pető and Klaartje Schrijvers, “Introduction,” in *Faces of Death. Visualising* 34  
 35 *History* (Pisa: Edizioni Plus, Pisa University Press, 2009), xi–xix. 35

36 8 Klára Kovács, *secretary of Szálasi keeps the minutes*, Getty Collection, 508770000, 36  
 37 and *Meeting of the Great Arrow Cross Council at the House of Loyalty*, Photo Archives of 37  
 38 the Hungarian National Museum, 1489–1954. Interestingly this latter photo was published 38  
 39 on [www.suttogo.hu](http://www.suttogo.hu) without the secretaries. 39

40 9 József Varga and Mrs. Károly Kis, [www.suttogo.hu](http://www.suttogo.hu), *Meeting*, [www.suttogo.hu](http://www.suttogo.hu), 40

41 10 Szálasi visits the women’s section in Kassa, Vojtech Kárpáty private collection. 41

42 11 *The party celebrates the name day of Ferenc in the 9th district of Budapest in* 42  
 42 *1940*, [www.suttogo.hu](http://www.suttogo.hu). 42

43 12 *Meeting at the House of Loyalty*, Photo Archives of the Hungarian National 43  
 44 Museum, 1511–1954. 44



**Figure 10.1 Meeting at the House of Loyalty. Photo Archives of the Hungarian National Museum, 1951–1954**

This is the only surviving photograph of the two women. The uniformed women serve as illustrations in the life of the extremist right-wing party, and the attractiveness and photogenic appearance also plays a role in selecting female activists for public meetings.<sup>13</sup> Of course, wives are also present in the photographs; they embody the middle-class ideal and are portrayed as loyal supporters of their husbands, who hold important positions in the party. An example is the wife of Kálmán Hubay, who was leader of the Arrow Cross Party during Szálasi's prison years and who became Minister of Culture under Arrow Cross rule.<sup>14</sup>

The second reason for why few photos have survived is that the 1940s was the era of iconoclasm. Although I examined many hundreds of files created by the people's tribunals, I found not a single photograph: photographs were not used as evidence. A crucial scene in Costa-Gavras's film *Music Box* is when the music box starts to produce self-documentary images of the atrocities perpetrated by the Arrow Cross in Budapest. I found no such pictures in the people's tribunal files or in museum collections. This raises questions about the relationship between the tribunal and photographs as evidence. The surviving photographs do not document the criminal

<sup>13</sup> János Salló at the opening of the exhibition of the National Front in 1939, Getty Collection, 50440527.

<sup>14</sup> Kálmán Hubay and his wife, [www.suttogo.hu](http://www.suttogo.hu), originally from Getty Collection.

1 acts as such, but instead they document the justice process. This supports the 1  
 2 hypothesis that the people's tribunals played a key role in establishing memory of 2  
 3 the war.<sup>15</sup> Even where a person did take a picture of an atrocity, he or she would 3  
 4 normally destroy it—out of fear of being held responsible. Thus the most important 4  
 5 attribute of a photograph—its evidential power stemming from synchronicity—was 5  
 6 lost. The Hungarian Museum of Photography in Kecskemét has collected private 6  
 7 photographs from this period. It was at the Museum that I discovered a private photo 7  
 8 of a woman in military clothing posing in her garden, which shows that women too 8  
 9 were affected by the power (and security) of a uniform. The picture was not taken 9  
 10 for a wider public, and it is only now that it has entered the public domain.<sup>16</sup> But as 10  
 11 in the case of the other pictures, we do not know who took it. 11

12 The third reason for the scarcity of photos is the dominant anti-fascist discourse 12  
 13 of the post-1945 period, which left no space for them, thus making it impossible to 13  
 14 share memories or to illustrate them. It is no accident that the photos analyzed here 14  
 15 have come from private collections and are now being used to document “history” 15  
 16 as interpreted by the far-right website *Suttogó* [Whisperer]. The website's name 16  
 17 reflects its founders' perception that “true” knowledge can only be whispered—as 17  
 18 the dominant anti-fascist discourse silences “true patriots.” The photos that we 18  
 19 have analyzed establish a special social time, for these pictures were not part of 19  
 20 the public discourse and were “overseen” during the post-World War II period. 20  
 21 The significance of the content of the photographs changes continuously, for it was 21  
 22 only after 1989 and the advent of the Internet that *Suttogó*, the far-right website, 22  
 23 made what had been family photos accessible to the public. 23

24

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## 26 **Women in Photographs Showing the Political Justice System in Operation** 26

27

28 The other half of the excavated photographic sources relate to the participation of 28  
 29 women in the people's tribunals. The portrait of Gizella Lutz, the wife of Szálasi, 29  
 30 was made at no. 60 Andrásy Street, the headquarters of the powerful Department 30  
 31 of State Protection (Figure 10.2). It would seem that the powerful head of this 31  
 32 department, Gábor Péter, made great efforts to ensure that the interrogation of war 32  
 33 criminals was documented. Thus, sources pertaining to this process are abundant.<sup>17</sup> 33

34 It was here, at the Department of State Protection or secret police headquarters, 34  
 35 that during his interrogation Szálasi showed to the camera an Arrow Cross 35  
 36 handkerchief that had been embroidered by members of the Arrow Cross women's 36  
 37 movement; this illustrates the contradictory relationship of the Arrow Cross 37

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40 \_\_\_\_\_ 40  
 41 15 Andrea Pető, “Problems of Transitional Justice in Hungary. An Analysis of the 41  
 42 People's Tribunals in Post-War Hungary and the Treatment of Female Perpetrators,” 42  
 43 *Zeitgeschichte* 3 (2007): 335–349. 43

44 16 *Woman in Uniform*, Hungarian Museum of Photography, Kecskemét, 0144063. 44

17 *Portrait of the wife of Szálasi*, Photo Archives of the Hungarian National Museum. 44





**Figure 10.2** Portrait of the wife of Szálasi. Photo Archives of the Hungarian National Museum

women's movement to female work; as I demonstrated previously, embroidery was of no interest to most of the Arrow Cross's female members.<sup>18</sup>

Many photos of the people's tribunal trials have survived—a significant number of which were taken by private individuals. Based on the documentation, many women attended the trials (Figure 10.3).<sup>19</sup>

Many men were still being held as prisoners-of-war, while others were working. The documentation of crimes by means of official photographs helped the people's courts to reach their goal of "searing" into citizens' consciousness what is good (Figure 10.4).<sup>20</sup> For this reason, the Hungarian daily newspapers and newsreels carried an abundance of pictures of war criminals under prosecution, all of whom were male. A photograph of the exhumation of a site in Maros Street is the only one to show a woman: apparently, she had taken an active part in the murder of patients at the Jewish hospital.

<sup>18</sup> *Szálasi at no. 60 Andrassy Street; during his interrogation he shows a handkerchief made for him by women in the party*, Photo Archives of the Hungarian News Agency, FMAFI 1945–34036.

<sup>19</sup> *Women participating as audience at the people's tribunal*, Photo Archives of the Hungarian National Museum, 64–730.

<sup>20</sup> *Massacre in Maros utca*, Photo Archives of the Hungarian National Museum, 00002916.

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20 **Figure 10.3** Women participating as audience at the people's tribunal.  
21 **Photo Archives of the Hungarian National Museum 64–730**

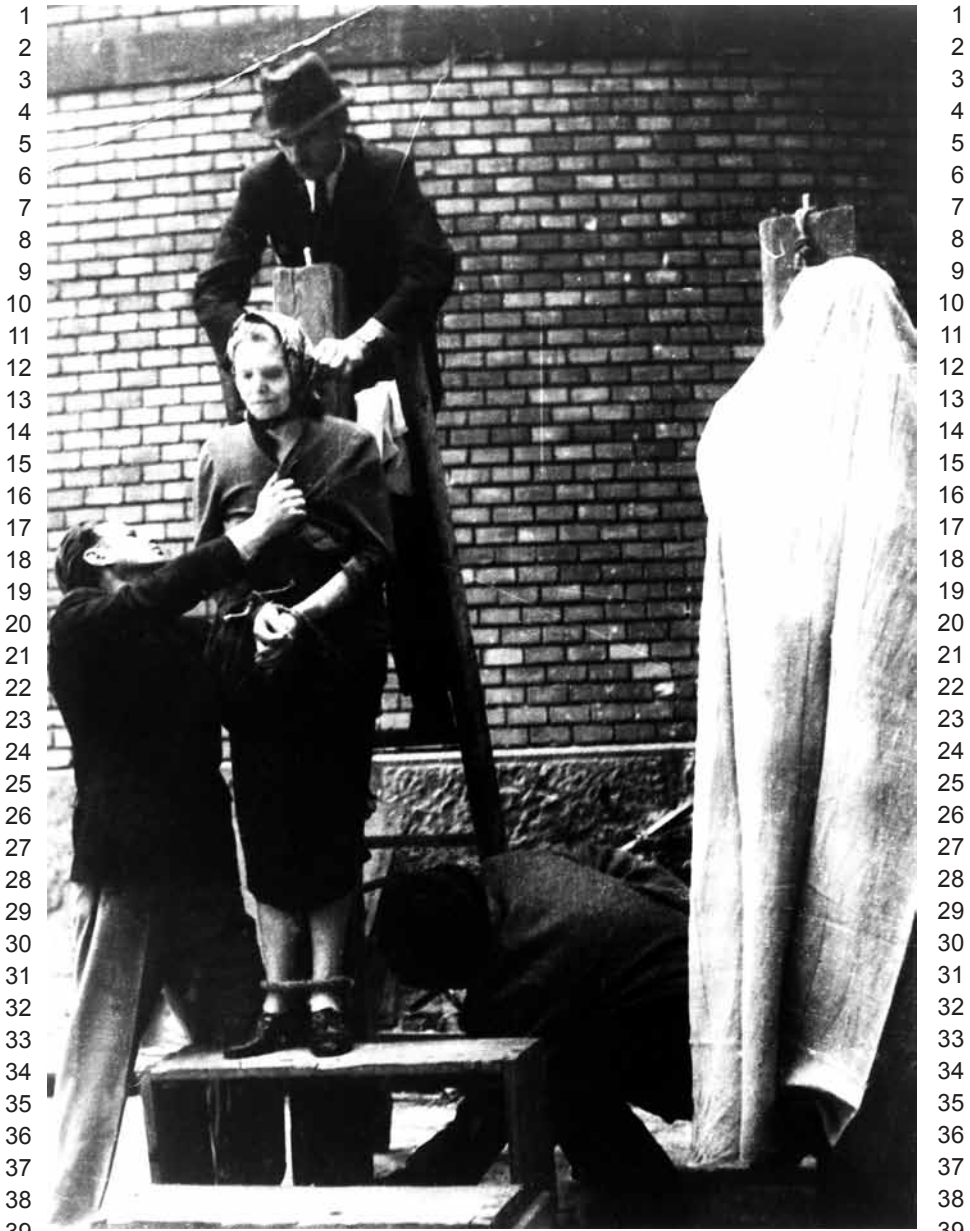
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43 **Figure 10.4** Massacre in Maros utca. **Photo Archives of the Hungarian**  
44 **National Museum, 00002916**





40 **Figure 10.5** Manci. Photo Archives of the Hungarian National  
41 **Museum, 83–766**  
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1 As far as our research is concerned, the most interesting collection is held by 1  
 2 the Police History Museum in Budapest. Not only do we receive a glimpse of the 2  
 3 hot and stuffy atmosphere of the people's tribunal trials, but also we get closer 3  
 4 to the women perpetrators, for they receive "faces."<sup>21</sup> The collection consists of 4  
 5 photographs commissioned by the police to document the process of the trials. 5  
 6 Here we return to the traditional documentary function of the photograph to 6  
 7 document what actually has happened. The women brought before the people's 7  
 8 tribunal, whose trials were held in the university auditorium or who awaited their 8  
 9 fate while sat on the narrow benches of the accused, were "unrecognized social 9  
 10 actors" until the discovery of the photos. We do not know who took the photos: the 10  
 11 crime reporter, a family member of one of the victims, or someone else. Evidently, 11  
 12 however, the photographs found their way into the collection of the Police History 12  
 13 Museum, and in this way these private photos became community photos, serving 13  
 14 as illustrations of the discourse on female war criminals. 14

15 The most important picture as far as this chapter is concerned is found in the 15  
 16 photographic archives of the Hungarian National Museum among photographs 16  
 17 relating to the people's court; it is entitled "Manci" (Figure 10.5).<sup>22</sup> 17

18 If we manage to overcome our surprise that in recent decades not one 18  
 19 researcher bothered to change this sexist title—for to my knowledge none of the 19  
 20 executed female war criminals was called Margit (and Manci is a nickname for 20  
 21 Margit)—we can then analyze the picture as a metonymy. This does not mean 21  
 22 what it was in the past, but what it remains even today—a part of our everyday 22  
 23 lives. In this way we close the gap between then and now. If we interpret the 23  
 24 picture in this manner, the photograph receives a *presence* rather than a *meaning*. 24  
 25 Its presence in the collection in a non-catalogued and marginalized way is the 25  
 26 historical fact, not the meaning which is difficult to attribute as basic information 26  
 27 is missing. My purpose, here, is to present the current presence/existence of the 27  
 28 past and to reveal those points that are, in an unfinished and unprocessed manner, a 28  
 29 part of our present reality. Although seven women were executed as war criminals 29  
 30 in Hungary, we have only a single photograph of a female execution. The photo 30  
 31 seems to show one of the seven women. We may think we know which one, but it 31  
 32 is not the *name* but the *absence of a name* that must be the subject of this research. 32

33 It is disturbing to look at this picture.<sup>23</sup> Thus, it is important to bear in mind 33  
 34 Liebman's methodological consideration, which he referred to as "double vision."<sup>24</sup> 34  
 35 Liebman also argues that when viewing photos of an execution, the researcher is 35  
 36 36

37  
 38 21 *The trial of Balogh*, Police History Museum (Budapest), 385. 38

39 22 Manci, Photo Archives of the Hungarian National Museum, 83–766. 39

40 23 For an analysis of photos documenting the execution of war criminals, see Andrea 40  
 41 Pető, "Death and the Picture. Representation of War Criminals and Construction of Divided 41  
 42 Memory about WWII in Hungary," in *Faces of Death. Visualising History*, eds. Andrea 42  
 43 Pető and Klaartje Schrijvers, 39–57. 43

44 24 Janet Liebman, "Women, Genocide and Memory. The Ethics of Feminist 43  
 44 Ethnography in Holocaust Research," *Gender and Society* 18 (2004): 223–238. 44

1 both a witness of the event and a historian collecting qualitative material. The other 1  
 2 methodological challenge is that if we know that history is written by the victors, 2  
 3 then we may also suppose that the victors are the ones photographing as a tool of 3  
 4 dominating narratives about the events. At the same time, this picture had been 4  
 5 hidden in the “miscellaneous” box of the National Museum until I found it and 5  
 6 decided to publish it. We must ask ourselves what will be the impact of publishing 6  
 7 this picture: Will it help to make truth part of consciousness by showing how those 7  
 8 women that reported on Jews or stole Jewish property were subsequently punished 8  
 9 as this was the major crime which brought women to justice? 9

10 Concerning the analysis of visual sources, Perlmutter established the criteria on 10  
 11 which basis such sources are established, accepted and interpreted.<sup>25</sup> The function 11  
 12 of a photograph is to present an event, and in doing so it shapes popular memory. A 12  
 13 great many official and private photographs were taken of war criminals, but only 13  
 14 one of them—an undated photo—shows the execution of a woman. Looking at old 14  
 15 photographs is a part of the “processing” (*Verarbeitung*) of the past, and so the fact 15  
 16 that the photo of “Manci” has remained invisible until now is important. According 16  
 17 to Barthes, a photograph has no meaning of itself, and it is only in dialogue with 17  
 18 other sources that a meaning emerges.<sup>26</sup> For this reason, we need to determine why 18  
 19 the female perpetrators were forgotten. Were they forgotten because of the lack of 19  
 20 a dialogue or because of the lack of a framework for such a dialogue? 20

21 We may also analyze the picture from an iconographic standpoint. The 21  
 22 photographer was facing the woman; as she awaited her execution on the gallows, 22  
 23 an executed corpse covered in a sheet lay alongside her. We see no other onlooker, 23  
 24 which is unusual, as executions were generally attended by large numbers of 24  
 25 people. The aim or task of the photograph’s maker was apparently to document the 25  
 26 carrying-out of the sentence. Foucault linked the notions of *gaze* and *power*, for 26  
 27 disciplinary power also operates using visual means. A public execution is a means 27  
 28 of this. At the same time, “visual truth” does not always accord with the truth of 28  
 29 the justice system, for in the picture we see a fragile woman in clean but modest 29  
 30 clothing: she seems almost to be preparing for martyrdom. The various cultures 30  
 31 of memory clash when it comes to interpreting the picture. Visual memory of 31  
 32 the execution of war criminals in Hungary has portrayed them as martyrs, and 32  
 33 the execution of “Manci” is no exception.<sup>27</sup> This was not so in the case of the 33  
 34 photographs depicting the men executed at Nuremberg. The iconography used in 34  
 35 Hungary, however, undermines the anti-fascist discourse in which the executions 35  
 36 took place. As early as 1764, Cesare Beccaria argued that execution is the state’s 36  
 37 weapon against uncooperative individuals.<sup>28</sup> But if pictures of an executed person 37

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 41 25 David Perlmutter, “Visual Historical Method Problems, Prospects, Applications,” 39  
 42 *Historical Method* 4 (1994): 167–184. 40

41 26 Roland Barthes, “Rhetoric of Image,” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas 41  
 42 Mirzoeff (New York: Routledge, 2002), 70–73. 42

43 27 Pető, “Death and the Picture. Representation of War Criminals,” 39–57. 43

44 28 Cesare Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene*, (1764). 44

1 evoke feelings of sympathy and sorrow in viewers, then the execution has not 1  
 2 fulfilled the disciplinary function anticipated by the state. On seeing the photo, 2  
 3 many people will wonder why the woman's cardigan was the main concern of 3  
 4 the man supervising the execution, given that the woman would be dead within 4  
 5 minutes. It is this humane gesture that renders "Manci" first and foremost a victim, 5  
 6 whereby the crimes she committed were left to fade into oblivion. Not only is 6  
 7 the female war criminal forgotten, but also the crime she has committed; in this 7  
 8 way the true victims become invisible in history. For researchers of this period, 8  
 9 sites and modes of silencing are becoming a historical fact itself which should be 9  
 10 analyzed while explaining how gendered memory of WWII has been constructed. 10  
 11 It was the "new cultural history" school that in its methodology turned away 11  
 12 from the idea of visual sources of history as the documentation of reality and 12  
 13 which focused instead on representation.<sup>29</sup> Photographs may be analyzed not only 13  
 14 as descriptive means for the documentation of historical truth but also as a visual 14  
 15 discourse that tells the story of the visual representation of right-wing extremist 15  
 16 women. The photographs are determined by *absence*: there are no pictures, or 16  
 17 if there are some, we do not know who took them and what they depict. Based 17  
 18 on Carol Zemel's theoretical approach, the photos are emblems of the past.<sup>30</sup> 18  
 19 Unknown, forgotten and absent photos belong just as much to the documentary 19  
 20 function of photographs as to the emblematic function. Why did the producers 20  
 21 of the photographs choose this kind of representational form, if their goal was to 21  
 22 preserve the subject of the photograph for collective memory? The question of 22  
 23 what and who are chosen to be photographed receives a political relevance as this 23  
 24 is a process of building up an archive of the past for future generations to read and 24  
 25 interpret. The photograph is mediating the past to us, and therefore the framing 25  
 26 of the photo and the accessibility of the photo are crucial issues. The photographs 26  
 27 published here were intended to be forgotten; no one thought that—by means of 27  
 28 this chapter too—they would become iconic pictures. 28

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### 31 **The "Memory Boom" and Photographs of the Perpetrators** 31

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33 Historians have at their disposal not only written sources, but also—from the mid- 33  
 34 twentieth century onwards—visual sources, the use of which requires a special 34  
 35 methodology. According to Manovich, the distinct borders between production 35  
 36 and consumption have been blurred by the new media.<sup>31</sup> This means that those who 36

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39 <sup>29</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: 39  
 40 Reaktion Books, 2001); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen. Film and Historical Vision* 40  
 41 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

42 <sup>30</sup> Carol Zemel, "Emblems of Atrocity. Holocaust Liberation Photographs," in *Image* 41  
 42 *and Remembrance. Representation and the Holocaust*, eds. Shelley Hornstein and Florence 42  
 43 Jacobowitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 201–219. 43

44 <sup>31</sup> Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001). 44

1 took the photograph of Szálasi's visit to Kassa (Kosice) and preserved it for decades 1  
 2 under difficult circumstances in a private collection in communist Czechoslovakia 2  
 3 or those who published—15 years after the collapse of communism—a group 3  
 4 photograph of smiling Arrow Cross party workers, not only produced a picture 4  
 5 but also contributed to the creation of a new knowledge and a new memory. This 5  
 6 is why the increasing number of far-right websites is so crucial to the memory 6  
 7 boom after 1989, for they opened, to a wider audience, locations of memory that 7  
 8 had previously been closed or private. Their aim was to emancipate their own 8  
 9 history, to make it possible to tell and represent their history—which had not been 9  
 10 an option before. 10

11 A photograph also signifies a memory space in which counter-memories can 11  
 12 be formed, for photographs represent a repeat socialization: we are likely to look 12  
 13 at a photograph more than once. As time passes, the memories associated with 13  
 14 a photograph will change, but the location and occasion of remembrance will 14  
 15 be the viewing of the picture. This is possible in various visual narrative modes, 15  
 16 whereby opportunities arise for injustices to be exposed from the perspective of 16  
 17 the subjective historical actor. Photographs have no meaning in themselves, but 17  
 18 they acquire meaning within the narrative of the interpretative framework.<sup>32</sup> In 18  
 19 1945 and after 1989, similar changes occurred in the narrative frame; a space 19  
 20 was created for the reinterpretation of the lives and deeds of those accused by the 20  
 21 people's tribunals. The spaces communicate with each other, for when previously 21  
 22 "unknown"—that is, unpublished—photographs of Arrow Cross members or 22  
 23 supporters were published, they immediately found their way to the far-right 23  
 24 "Hungarista" website. This is why I stress the need for a reverse process, whereby 24  
 25 photos of the far-right movement that have been lurking in private collections and 25  
 26 whose owners have uploaded them to the Suttogó [Whisperer] website should find 26  
 27 their place in the mainstream of historical criticism, thereby establishing a much- 27  
 28 needed dialogue on our evaluation of the past. 28

29 When analyzing photographs, we should take four criteria into consideration: 29  
 30 the material of the photo, its selection, provisionality and authenticity.<sup>33</sup> Concerning 30  
 31 the material of the photographs: the pictures showing the "Arrow Cross women" 31  
 32 are preserved as prints in the museums. In the collection of the Hungarian News 32  
 33 Agency (MTI), the negatives—the originals—are also present, as the photographs 33  
 34 are stills captured from newsreels or the roll of film came directly from the 34  
 35 photographer. Aware of historical trends, *Life* magazine hired a photographer 35  
 36 to produce pictures of emerging right-wing extremist politicians in the interwar 36  
 37 period and then, for a substantial sum, had the negatives enlarged. The first group 37  
 38 of photographs published here were stored in an unsystematic miscellaneous 38  
 39 box for decades, and they had never been cataloged. Photographs documenting 39  
 40 the people's tribunals are somewhat more ordered and were correctly labeled 40  
 41 "miscellaneous photographs of the people's tribunals." 41

42 \_\_\_\_\_ 42  
 43 32 Pető, "Death and the Picture. Representation of War Criminals," 39–57. 43  
 44 33 Pető and Schrijvers, "Introduction," xi–xix. 44



1 I have already referred to the selection aspects (what factors determine whether 1  
 2 a picture will be forgotten or become iconic). But a further aspect must also be 2  
 3 noted, namely the issue of their mass availability. The photographs became widely 3  
 4 available when they were published by such press outlets as *Life* magazine, whose 4  
 5 archive is now managed by Getty Images. When the photographs belonging to 5  
 6 Getty Images became researchable online, the material relating to the Hungarista 6  
 7 movement immediately appeared on the Suttogó [Whisperer] website, thereby 7  
 8 creating a cycle in which the representations “return” to the representational 8  
 9 milieu. A special feature of this cycle is that the period between its two extremes is 9  
 10 the era of both World War II and the Cold War, as well as the transition following 10  
 11 the collapse of communism. Yet the pictures are uploaded to the site without any 11  
 12 critical reflection; it is as if 70 years had never even passed. 12

13 The provisionality of a photograph has two dimensions: the survival of the 13  
 14 photo and its internal provisionality. Photographs transform reality into something 14  
 15 memorable. As soon as the exposure button on a camera is pressed, the present 15  
 16 becomes the past, a “frozen memory” and a privileged representation. Thereafter 16  
 17 the object of the photographs is lost; it is only present in the form of a memory. 17  
 18 This past is an unfinished past, which creates parallel pasts in viewers. A regular 18  
 19 visitor to the Suttogó [Whisperer] website and a historian will look differently 19  
 20 at a picture. For both of them the process of canonizational interpretation is 20  
 21 underway, even if the interpretation occurs along opposing value axes. The 21  
 22 question concerns the monopoly of interpretation: who has the right to say what 22  
 23 we (should) see in the photo. Thus, returning to the main question, that of the 23  
 24 divided memory of the war, we can state that the interpretation of photographs 24  
 25 has also contributed to the development of a divided memory. An important part 25  
 26 of World War II history—female perpetrators—became invisible in collective 26  
 27 memory, owing to the absence of visual representation. However, the special 27  
 28 features of the photographic genre mean that it also offers an opportunity to go 28  
 29 beyond this division. In this way, groups of alternative collective memories are 29  
 30 established—which, over time, strive for political representation. Susan Sontag 30  
 31 claimed that “Photographs of atrocity illustrate as well as corroborate.”<sup>34</sup> In the 31  
 32 case of photos about female perpetrators it depends on who is looking at these 32  
 33 types of photos while corroborating different claims. The process of viewing 33  
 34 might silence some other photos, which is the same selection process as the one 34  
 35 used in the case of selecting texts as traditional historical sources. The difference 35  
 36 is that as Sontag pointed out: “The problem is not that people remember through 36  
 37 photographs, but that they remember only the photograph.”<sup>35</sup> When certain photos 37  
 38 are remembered, the people portrayed in those photos gain frozen, iconic visual 38  
 39 status. In the case of the two Auschwitz Albums, the female guards enjoying 39  
 40 their break have also become a part of the Holocaust imagery, urging a rethink 40  
 41 of the relationship between gender and the Holocaust. In the case of Hungary, 41  
 42

43 34 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of the Other* (New York: Picador, 1993), 84. 43

44 35 *Ibid.*, 89. 44

1	my research searching for the visual representation of female perpetrators might	1
2	contribute to a further questioning of the anti-fascist framework, and this seems to	2
3	be too high a price for a feminist work to pay.	3
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