

Memory Theatre
Notes on Remembrance and Oblivion

*from chaos
through abstraction
towards nothingness*

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Abstract

The paper *Memory Theatre. Notes on Remembrance and Oblivion. From Chaos through Abstraction towards Nothingness* examines the situation of projected traumatic memory through the microhistory of a family heritage, the author's own family archive. The work is an artistic research and has two main pillars: a theoretical research which is presented in the form of this thesis, and the collection of artworks.

Memory Theatre outlines the process of remembering and forgetting while it delineates the transformation of the family heritage. This research consists of three parts: Chaos, Abstraction and Nothingness. The first chapter, Chaos discusses the initial state of burdensome remembrance and how is it mediated in the form of the physical archive. The key theoretical concept of the first chapter is *postmemory* - a term created by Marianne Hirsch -, that refers to inherited remembrance which is passed on through projection from the first generation of survivors of a cultural trauma. Based on the concept of postmemory and on her own interpretation of inherited remembrance and mourning, the author formulates her own term, *postfamily*.

The second part of the thesis reflects on the abstraction of the family archive and on the transformation of certain memorial entities, objects and spaces. It aims to show how the initial state of obsessive remembering turns into a liberating oblivion. As the archival heritage itself becomes more abstract, the burdensome memory gradually dissolves. The process of bereavement and forgetting leads us towards the closing part of this paper, *nothingness*, which refers to an active, contemplating state. Similarly to the act of remembering and forgetting, Memory Theatre is fragmented and it is always in transition; an open conversation between time parallels, layers of history and generations.

Keywords family heritage, archival systems, oblivion, postmemory, trauma

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INTRODUCTION

*'It is necessary to spend fortunes for generations on repairing
an old ruined castle before one learns to love it.'*¹
(Saint-Exupéry)

Memory Theatre is the abstraction of compressed knowledge and family history. It is the abstraction of loss and remembrance; and the abstraction of the Self, the 'Ego'²: the one who takes care of it, the one who interprets it – and the same one who forgets. And abstraction hereby can be substituted by repetition.

Through the act of consciously cultivated repetition and the inevitable process of forgetting, *Memory Theatre* has been in the phase of transforming into something new, towards an active state of living.

Memory Theatre is built around the family archive that I have inherited from my grandfather, Imre Schuller. It is the starting point, the focal point, and in some aspects the conclusion and absolution of the whole project, the 'project' that was started by earlier generations. The family heritage has been in transition since I started to deal with it in 2011. *Memory Theatre*, the collection of works I have been creating through the artistic interpretation of the family heritage and the written thesis as well, follow the same three-pillar structure of the transformation of the family archive: chaos, abstraction and nothingness. *Memory Theatre*, in some ways, will always be an unfinished, eternally ongoing project, in a similar way as remembrance and forgetting works: it requires an active and continuous work, but it is never complete, it exists in the form of fragments. I do not attempt to proceed the whole archive or regard the *Memory Theatre* or even the thesis as finished works. They are fluid entities, built around a structured mindset with an open closing. I reveal certain parts of the archive in the form of art pieces (within the whole frame of *Memory Theatre*), and I deal with the heritage as an entity, regarding both its physical and its mental aspects. In my thesis, based on the above-mentioned three pillars, I research and touch upon the related theoretical topics. At the same time, I intend to approach it from a personal aspect, as the contemporary narrator of the family heritage, as the *Ego* within the *Memory Theatre*.

The state of *chaos* refers to the initial stage of the heritage, to the time when I started taking over the role of the caregiver of the archive. At that time, the family heritage was in a transitional state in between a family heritage and an archive³. The habit of consciously collecting and carrying out research on the genealogy was initially started by my great-grandfather Rezső Schuller⁴. After he perished in the Holocaust – along with his elder son, Miklós Schuller –, my grandfather carried on the preserving attitude and he actively became engaged in archiving the family's past and turning his very own present into archival material.

Chaos, the first section of the thesis deals with the phenomenon of inheritance. Inheritance manifests in many forms: besides the physically inherited archive, I discuss the inherited attitudes, memories, states and mindsets. I regard these inherited phases and acts as repetitive patterns within the genealogy. The act of collecting itself is an act based on repetition: the same act is performed over and over again, conducted by the attempt to possess everything that is relevant for the collection.

The act of collecting is strongly connected to the phenomenon of objecthood. The objects from the family archive are the material representatives of the ancestors and of the void that is formulated by their absence. In this part of the thesis I examine the attachment felt toward the objects of the family collection and the intuitive process of finding and selecting them from the enormous mass.

The key theoretical pillars of the first section of my paper are the terms *postmemory* and *postfamily*. Based on the term postmemory, which was created by Marianne Hirsch, I have formulated and use the term postfamily. Postfamily does not merely refer to the inherited projection-based memory but to family members that someone can inherit in the same way as postmemory operates – through projection from the first generation, the survivors of cultural and collective trauma.

The part *Abstraction* is a transition chapter between the initial *Chaos* and the final state of *Nothingness*. It deals with the theme of archives, and with the abstraction and transformation of death and (inherited and interrupted) mourning. I discuss the terms *lieux de memoire* by Pierre Nora and the concept of *unheimlich* by Heidegger. *Lieux de memoire* or *sites of memory* examine those special entities that encode and connect particular memories to our remembrance. I dissect the term in a reverse aspect: I examine the transformation of situations,

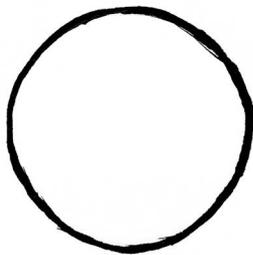
when a particular thing stops existing as a *lieu de memoire*. What endures is what leads us towards *unheimlich*.

The analysis of *unheimlich* connects the second part of the thesis to the final, third one. As the objects, places or even smells are becoming uncanny entities they open up new possibilities towards something that liberates the Ego from the burden of the family archive. This newness and nothingness can only be reached by an active state of forgetting. Walking as an active act aims to possess no material object, it attempts to reach a condensed state of contemplation. I discuss walking as a repetitive action, thereby creating a frame for the body of the text that refers back to the beginning of my paper, where I examine repetition in the light of collecting. Walking is the metaphor for the act of counter-collecting. It liberates the mind and creates new patterns and new types of mindsets.

PROLOGUE

Around the age of 11, my grandfather took me to a jewellery shop with the purpose of getting me a ring, as a present. He was stubbornly insisting on buying me a huge, decorative ring, however I chose the simplest piece: silver, with two small lines engraved in it. A circular form, a loop, a continuous line where the starting point and the ending is the same. *The uninterrupted state of absence and mourning.*

I kept wearing this ring for more than 14 years. Even though sometimes I lost it, eventually, I found it every time. At the age of 25, I have decided to stop wearing it and replace it with another one. In 2016, I spontaneously found a ring at a flea market in Berlin that became the substitution of the piece that my grandfather gave me before. This new ring is not closed completely, there is a gap in the circle, one of the ends pointing toward and above the other end or beginning. *The state I have been consciously working on to approach: the state of 'mourned absence' that releases the descendant from the act of repetitive remembrance.*



In my paper, *Memory Theatre. Notes on Remembrance and Oblivion. From Chaos through Abstraction towards Nothingness I* (attempt to) outline and depict the fragmented story of my own genealogy, focusing on my own personal approach and on the burden of memory that is connected to the inheritance. I regard my project, *Memory Theatre* as a fluid artistic research, that consists of a theoretical approach and a collection of artworks that are based on and inspired by the family archive. During the process of working with the actual archive and carrying out research on the theoretical themes that are related to it, for me ‘memory theatre’ has become a concept. I use the term both for my research-based writing and for the art pieces I have created. In a similar way to the family heritage itself, *Memory Theatre* has become an entity which is always in transition, by balancing between three phases: chaos, abstraction and nothingness.

The term *Memory Theatre*, as the collection and cluster of different art pieces, refers to the art works I made since 2012. The smaller works are complete pieces by themselves, therefore they can be exhibited and interpreted separately. As a complete entity (hereby I mean it as a visual art project), I consider *Memory Theatre* an installation-like piece. When it is exhibited together, the pieces enter into a dialogue with each other, the layers of different segments of time (the past of my ancestors and my current present) are juxtaposed in the same space. The way the pieces are installed and exhibited can vary, and by doing so they reinforce the transformative characteristics of the work and can create new patterns during the process of interpretation. In February 2018, *Memory Theatre* was shown in the form of a solo exhibition at Labor Gallery in Budapest. The exhibition, which is the visual and artistic part of my thesis is part of the research project. The documentation of the show, and the images of the art pieces are presented in the supplementary booklet.

CHAOS

heritage/family archive/home museum/archival attitude/donation/archive as entity/burden/objecthood/thing-power/attachment/repetition/obsession/nth power/postmemory/postfamily/continuity

INHERITENCE

It is hard to define the beginning of the family heritage in the aspect of time. According to my knowledge, my great-grandfather, Rezső was the first person who started to carry out research on the family's microhistory and to collect materials that were somehow connected to the family. After his death, my grandfather, Imre Schuller continued this collecting and preserving attitude. But perhaps this kind of mentality and approach precede them, as it lies within the threads of the genealogy, like a hidden gene. I regard this act of archiving – that is itself based on reiteration – as a repetitive pattern that is infiltrated in the family, and passed on through projection and imitation.

This preserving attitude towards the past, had culminated in the form of a vast archival material. It is not easy to estimate the physical dimensions of the heritage either. In my grandparents' apartment, there was a small room which was completely filled with family related items. My grandfather used to call this room 'Family Museum'⁵. Besides this room, there were several small storage spaces and shelves in the flat, that were built exclusively to provide shelter for the archival pieces. The family archive consists of several types of documents that are preserved in the form of different mediums: photographs, family albums, official documents, personal writings, correspondences, paintings, audio tapes, objects and analogue film material. My grandfather, Imre Schuller, was a camera-man and director, hence some parts of the archive are related to his work and career as a filmmaker. The other significant part of the heritage is the material representation of the deceased members of the family. The major part of the family archive is connected to close family members, whose memory was kept alive in the familiar remembrance.

Naturally, the family remembrance is always in transition, it depends on the knowledge of the living members of the family as well as on the inherited knowledge that is passed on by previous generations. This acquired erudition fades away by the death of older generations.

According to Jan Vansina, we have the most accurate knowledge about the recent and the farthest periods of the past. Between the contemporary remembrance – that goes back to 3-4 generations – and a mythical genesis-like story, the historical consciousness and our knowledge is blurred and fragmented. Vansina calls this in-between, obscure period a ‘floating gap’. As time goes by, the constellation of these three historical intervals – the genesis, the floating gap and the contemporary remembrance – is moving on in a parallel way, it is in transition. Our contemporary knowledge will fade away and become a floating gap in approximately 120 years.⁶ The furthest thread of my own genealogy goes back to the 1700s. Based on my grandfather’s and great-grandfather’s knowledge and research, our first known forefather was called Abraham – a delightful name to start a (Jewish) family tree with.

To summarize the dimensions of the inherited family archive, even though it is fragmented by its own nature, it goes back to the 1700s. The knowledge that is preserved by this rich material is in the form of a cluster of different kinds of documents and mediums.

2015 was a milestone in the ‘life’ of the family archive: the flat had to be emptied. (*Though ‘life’ is an interesting phrase in the case of this collection, it is a controversial attempt to define its tense. Is it always in the present, in a continuity, taking different shapes and forms based on the current reader and interpreter, or on the contrary, has it always been in the past? But if so, it still has to be a continuous past that, from time to time, transforms and affects our present and future. Referring back to the metaphor of the rings, perhaps the best way to imagine the archive in the sense of time, as an open-ended loop, a growing spiral that both possesses an active, transforming past and a present.*) Personally, I have been dealing with the heritage in my art projects and research since 2011-12. I have used archival pieces in my artworks before, sometimes as inspirational sources. Sometimes, I directly appropriated certain fragments from the family archive. However, the new situation, the vacating process of the flat, required a different approach. I had to balance in between these roles, the role of an artist, and the role of the contemporary caregiver of the inheritance. Primarily, I had to be a responsible descendant when I had to make decisions about the removal of the archive. During the process of categorizing the heritage, that had been in a phase in between chaos and order, I asked for help from professionals, and I engaged in discussions with museums and official

archival institutions. Together with my family, we decided to donate the majority of the family heritage to the Open Society Archives (OSA), that operates in Budapest.⁷ The smaller part of the archive (the most personal photographs and written documents) was moved to the basement of our family home, while some of it can be found in boxes in my working space. Certain objects, mainly huge painted portraits, photographs, and cameras and other work equipment, that belonged to my grandfather was left and locked in a storage compartment in my grandparents' flat.

The process of clearing up the flat required a concentrated and precise work from my side. In that particular situation, my role, as the 'caregiver' and descendant, had to be prioritized, while the artistic approach had to be 'toned down'. After the donation, and the vacation of the flat, I moved to Finland. This physical distance, and the removal of the archive to the OSA, have changed my overall approach towards the family heritage. In spite of the sudden and substantial change, over some time I realized that it was a beneficial and positive distance for my working process. It helped me to create a mental distance and change the tone of my artistic and personal approach. Instead of being lost in the fragmented details, I managed to look at the whole picture. During the past two years, I started to regard the family archive as an entity, as the fluid collection of all the inherited material beings. In my recent art works, I reflect on this archival entity itself. Even when my focus is pointed towards particular fragments, the emphasis is on the complexity of the family heritage and the related themes. The distance and the inherently new approach have started to dissolve the mental burden that comes with the inherited family archive and with remembrance.

OBJECTHOOD

At the initial phase of my artistic process and archival inquiry, my interest and connection towards the past, derived from a fascination that had been evoked by old photographs and photo albums. A certain nostalgia affected me and made me particularly receptive toward the heritage and my family's history. Gradually, I selected and assembled the photographic material from the collection. They represented a strong emotional and aesthetic aspect within the chaos of the archive, which at that point seemed limitless and infinite. It was inevitable to create ostensible and temporary connections with the photographically represented family members. This photographic engagement had no particular aim, I was merely guided by an intuitive need – the first phase of my archival attachment.

*Photographs, especially family photographs, play a crucial role, both in theoretical inquiries and art, when it is about the investigation and interpretation of the past, in the light of personal and familial remembrance. Presumably, this strong attachment towards old photographs stems from one of the main features of the photographic medium, the direct resemblance with reality. According to Roland Barthes – whose most famous book, Camera Lucida itself was partly inspired by the Winter Garden photograph, a family image that depicts the writer's mother as a child –, a photographic image is always more than a similitude with the represented object. He created the phrase 'ça a été', which means, the thing has been there. What we see on a photograph, has existed before. In relation to historical and personal, familial images, the photographic medium operates as a visual testimony of our genealogy. The existence and everyday life of our ancestors is documented and preserved on light-sensitive paper, and therefore our own existence becomes more 'valid'. 'Every photograph is a certificate of presence. (...) Perhaps we have an invincible resistance to believing in the past, in History, except in the form of myth. The Photograph, for the first time, puts an end to this resistance: henceforth the past is as certain as the present, what we see on paper is as certain as what we touch.'*⁸ For me, even though I have tons of photographic, and other documents, that prove my ancestors' and therefore my own existence and material presence, the past, to some extent, still and always remains mythical. Thanks to some photographs that depict my grandfather and his brother in their 20s as they are hiking with their friends, taking walks with their parents, or doing sport activities in the nature, I know how they looked like, dressed like, what kind of hobbies they pursued, how they posed in front of the camera. (The layer of information that is called 'studium' by Barthes.) But the rest – sometimes luckily, since we cannot, and should not know everything – remains unknown, silent and fragmented. I regard the family archive as a possible narrative that can create different patterns and can take many forms, it depends on its reader, interpreter.

In the course of the past years, as I was working with the archival material, my approach toward photographs has changed, in parallel way to my overall attitude, that has been in transformation as well. Despite the special role of these photographs within the collection, they have started to become mere objects to me. They did not stop existing as a photographic medium, neither did they lose their visual essence or value. However, as a side effect of a distancing attitude, to me, the photographs from the archive have turned into objects. I consider this paper-

based medium as part of the whole archival material, wherein every kind of materialistic entity is equal and important, regardless their medium or type. The archive, as a material being, is embodied by the objects, without them, it would solely be a theoretical system. The objects from the heritage act as the provokers and testimonies of memory at the same time. They form a communication channel, a bridge between generations. My remembrance has two main pillars: oral history in the form of non-material knowledge, and the physical archive.

The family archive – by its nature – has gone through multiple selective processes. Predominantly, it was my grandfather who filtered and defined the content and formed the archive according to his own choices. *Once, I had a conversation with his cousin who called my attention to the fact that my grandfather paid particular attention to the ‘Schuller’ thread of the genealogy. As a matter of fact, our family tree is the most accurate, when it follows the path of the origin of the name Schuller. There must have been several other times when he consciously and discriminately focused his preserving and archiving attention on certain themes, events or people.* My attention is selective and intuitive as well, I prefer some particular objects to others. My selection method is intuitive but it is also affected by my grandfather’s projection. Besides the above-mentioned human selection and preferences, sometimes there is another kind of guidance that influences my choices when I am searching among the pieces: an undefinable, guiding power, which seems to be external, an intuition that comes from the outside. It feels as if the objects themselves would attract my receptive attention, revealing themselves to me. I have been contemplating on the phenomenon of finding particular objects within the mass of the archive. It often occurred, that in the case of important elements, I felt some kind of connection with the objects, as the objects would have wanted to be found by me.

In 2012, I found an audio recording with a label on it that said ‘Miklós’s voice message’. Miklós Schuller, my grandfather’s brother sent a voice recording in 1942 for his mother’s birthday. The audio was probably recorded by a phonograph machine and was sent by mail from Ukraine, where he was on forced-labor service. His voice is pure and hopeful, talking about a better future when the war is over, it is springtime and the family is reunited. The birthday message became a farewell. Miklós never returned from Russia, he died there as an inmate of the forced labor army. I had my own image of him, which was based on the photographs, and on the memories and stories of my grandfather. But having access to an audio

recording and get to know him by his tone of voice has changed my connection to him. My perception of him has become more personal – a photograph or a written document could have never brought me to this scale of intimacy and closeness to him. The discovery of Miklós’s voice message is one of the many occasions when I felt a dual intuitive power, one of them derived from me, but the other one stemmed from the object itself.

As I was taking notes during a university lecture, I misheard the term ‘efficacy of objects’, and I wrote down the compound ‘epiphany of objects’. I like this coincidental term since it presupposes an active role from the side of the object, and has the connotation of some kind of holistic, irrational feature. American philosopher and political theorist, Jane Bennett describes ‘thing-power’ in her book *Vibrant Matter, A political ecology of Things*. ‘Thing-Power: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle.’⁹ During the encounter of a human and an object, both participants play a vital part. As Bennett describes her own experience with encountering special objects at a bay in Baltimore: ‘In the second moment, stuff exhibited its thing-power: it issued a call, even if I did not quite understand what it was saying.’¹⁰ But, in order to be able to notice and experience the thing-power deriving from those special material beings, the presence of a ‘certain anticipatory readiness’¹¹ on her side was necessary. Humans need to be open to perceive and acknowledge the call, *the power of the thing*.

When I was on a ‘field-work’ in my grandparents’ flat, selecting and searching among the archival pieces, a balanced constellation of an ‘inner-intuition’ and an ‘object-intuition’ was present (or by Bennett’s terms: a ‘thing-power’ and a ‘certain anticipatory readiness’). Besides my rational choices and decisions, they guided me, focused my attention on certain things, and made the encounters possible with them.

REPETITION – COLLECTING

Repetition is the core essence of Memory Theatre. The family archive itself is based on repetition: the act of collecting had been continuously and consciously repeated by the ancestors, whom were driven by the desire of preserving the past in the form of material entities. Thereby, the objects of the archive are the byproducts of the repetitive acts of collecting and remembering.

Even some of the pieces within the family heritage are repetitions themselves. As an example, my grandfather used to make interviews with his mother, from time to time. These directed conversations are preserved on audio cassettes, marked with the date of the year when the discussion was recorded. He asked her to talk about important personal memories and stories. The same anecdotes are often repeated in different years. This attempt, also proves my grandfather's systematic, and archival approach towards the past. Another example is the, previously mentioned, audio recording of Miklós's voice. Besides the original disk, I found several copies on audio tapes, which I transformed into a digital file later on. In this latter case, I consider, the act of making duplicates as repetition, and not the by-product objects themselves. If we conceive the archive as a repetitive system, these repetitive acts and repeated things operate as 'repetitions within repetition'. They draw and guide the attention of the interpreter of the archive on certain fragments.

This kind of preserving and collecting repetitions do not aim for perfection, it is pursued for its own sake, against oblivion, in favor of remembrance.

Besides the physical evidence of the act of collecting (the family heritage itself), the archival attitude has been repeated within the genealogy as well. This behavioral pattern was present and active in the case of my grandfather, who was the representative of the first generation.¹² In my interpretation, his archival approach and interest in the family's past had become conscious and active, and at some point, even obsessive, after the tempest of World War II. From the closest circle of the family, he lost his father and brother in the Holocaust, and was left behind with an unspoken and 'unmourned' void. He continued the archiving work that was originally commenced by his father, and as a result he was kept in the state of interrupted mourning. I think, he never mourned the absent members of the family, his bereavement was never complete. As a counter-act, he turned their memory into an archive, a 'home-museum'. The transformation of absence into materiality. Many years later, as a representative of the third generation, after my grandfather had passed away, I continued to carry on the archival work. I have gradually become the next element within the repetitive pattern.

In his book *Repetition and Difference*, Gilles Deleuze examines philosophy in the light of the history of philosophy. As he claims, 'the history of philosophy plays a patently repressive role in philosophy,

it's philosophy's own version of the Oedipus complex.¹³ It keeps repeating that once existed in the field of philosophy. However, this kind of repetition is not necessarily a negative act, it is always particular and unique. 'To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent.'¹⁴ The repetitive patterns – in relation to the genealogy and the family archive – behave in a similar manner. Every single repetitive act takes place within an already existing, principal system. Unique repetitions within a superior conduct.

Deleuze explains the term 'nth power' in the relation of festivals: 'they repeat an "unrepeatable"'. They do not add a second and a third time to the first, but carry the first time to the nth power.¹⁵ Festivals are usually associated with faith or some kind of profane tradition which is based on belief. I can discern a similarity between the nth power, belief and the family archive. It requires obsession and strong faith to effectuate the same act or chain of acts over and over, in order not to bring them to a superior level, but to the nth power. Once more, nth power is carried out for its own sake, for the act of repetition. In this aspect, repetition can easily become a loop that keeps the repeater within the repetition of his or her own acts. As I see it, my grandfather became this kind of repeater and collector. He was driven by an undeniable inner belief and a profound respect towards the family archive. In the meantime, he was limited by the very nature of his acts and stayed within the loop of repetition. I aim to create a rupture in the repetitive patterns, in order to break out of the closed cycle of remembrance.

POSTMEMORY

My grandfather was an enthusiastic and obsessive walker. Sometimes, he meandered together with me and my brother, when we were children. During these walks, we discovered the hidden parts of Budapest, went into abandoned inner yards of old buildings, visited historical places and sites. In the meantime, we listened to his anecdotes. He was alternately telling us biblical stories and intimate family fables. I still have blurred images in my head how I pictured certain biblical characters and family members. The past became a strange mythical mixture in my 6-year-old head – and to some extent, it remains to still exist in that form.

Apparently, I cannot evade to cite or refer to my grandfather from time to time in this paper. It is inevitable not to mention him when I am talking about the family archive and Memory Theatre. He acts as an intermediary, as a bond between the segments of the past – that I am not able to possess any direct experience or memory about – and my own consciousness. Through my grandfather’s mentality and approach, the past became an active factor, intertwined with the tense of the present.

Postmemory, a term that comprehends the phenomenon of trauma, projected memory and inherited past. As Marianne Hirsch, the creator of the expression, defines it: ‘ “Postmemory” describes the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation.’¹⁶ Postmemory is present and dominant in the lives of post-generations, the descendants of survivors of cultural traumas.¹⁷ They inherit a mediated past, a mediated remembrance through projection. The representatives of the post-generations unintentionally identify with the inherited memories, they embrace them as their own remembrance and identity. ‘Certainly, we do not have literal “memories” of others’ experiences, and certainly, one person’s lived memories cannot be transformed into another’s. Postmemory is not identical to memory: it is “post”; but, at the same time, I argue, it approximates memory in its affective force and its psychic effects.’¹⁸

Postmemory was elaborated and analyzed through the example of the Holocaust. However, it does not merely refer to the afterlife of the Shoah, but it ‘is in dialogue with numerous other contexts of traumatic transfer that can be understood as postmemory’¹⁹. ‘ (...) the Holocaust can no longer serve simply as a conceptual limit case in the discussion of historical trauma, memory, and forgetting.’^{20,21} I consider and deal with the theme of the Holocaust in my thesis and artworks in a similar way. I am a representative of the third generation, my grandparents on my father’s side were survivors of the Shoah. During the past years, as part of the process of reconciliation with the familial past, my approach has transformed. I conceive this burden with a profound respect, though in my artistic works I attempt to deal with it as a trauma in a general aspect,

not as a ‘unique’ traumatic event. My work is infiltrated by and based on the family’s personal involvement in the Holocaust, but it is not about it.

Postfamily is a term I created, and use, based on Marianne Hirsch’s studies on postmemory. For me, postfamily does not merely refer to the projection-based remembrance, but to actual family members whom can be inherited and adopted through projection and identification. It is a concentrated and active state of remembrance. My grandfather so consciously cultivated the memories of the deceased family members, especially his father’s and brother’s memory, that they almost felt alive to me. Their absence was transferred into our presence. They were in existence, remains of a traumatic past and representatives of an interrupted and unfinished process of bereavement.

‘Photographs, ghostly revenants, are very particular instruments of remembrance, since they are perched at the edge between memory and postmemory, and also, though differently, between memory and forgetting.’²² There is one photograph in the family archive, out of the many thousands, that I am particularly fond of, it depicts Miklós. He is standing in front of a mirror with a twin-lens reflex camera, he is taking his own portrait. The photograph can be analyzed in many ways. I could talk about the direction of his gaze, the calmness of his posture or the physical resemblance I recognized. Instead, what stands out to me, is the text on the back of the photograph. There, I could find Barthes’ noeme, a punctum within the aspect of time.²³ ‘Ego, 1941. 05. 14.’ – says the handwritten text. 50 years later, on the very same day, I was born. Postmemory and postfamily emerges where life continues, within the context of post-generations. (Post)trauma becomes dissolved in the light of new lives, in the continuity of interrupted genealogies.

‘The dead must be thought of as dead.’²⁴

ABSTRACTION

*Archival order/disorder/personal archive – institutional archive/donation/OSA/
memory theatre/symbolic funeral/detachment/mourning/oblivion/lieux de
memoire/involuntary museum/post-lieux de mémoire/uncanny*

ARCHIVES

Probably, the word, archive is the most used term in my paper.²⁵ Previously, I defined the inheritance with similar expressions and locutions, such as ‘family heritage’, ‘family collection’, or ‘family archive’. An ordinary family heritage is not an archive – at least it should not be called that – according to the original meaning and usage of the term. Archive, in its genuine interpretation refers to institutional systems, that are based on order, and they are usually placed in a building. The information within the system of an archive is retrievable.²⁶ However, in the case of my family collection, terms and expressions are fused as the inheritance have always been an entity in transition, balancing in between the state of family heritage and archive.

‘L’archive naît du désordre.’²⁷ Besides being an obsessed collector and repeater, my grandfather consciously constructed, or at least, he attempted to create, a systematic order. He built special storage spaces for the documents, put labels on them, and made categories. Nevertheless, ‘his archive’, ‘his home museum’ in its entirety was only readable and retrievable for him. Like a musical instrument in a stranger’s hand, it might sound false. Without his knowledge and mental map, at the initial state, I was lost in the mass of the family archive, an archive infiltrated by chaos and order. I needed to create my own categories and preferences, in order to attempt to generate a structure that follows my archival mind map.

‘Thus, the life of a collector manifests a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order.’²⁸ The quotation comes from Walter Benjamin, who was an essential archivist himself. He cultivated his own remembrance, he conserved his oeuvres and notes as well as other kind of documents, like a collection of quotations or postcards, during the course of his life. Benjamin’s approach and collection are different from the official, institutionalized concept of the archive. ‘Order, efficiency, completeness, and objectivity are the principles of archival work. In contrast to this, Benjamin’s archives reveal the

passions of the collector. The remains heaped up in them are reserve funds or something like iron reserves, crucial to life, and which for that reason must be conserved.²⁹ Thereby, a personal archive is ‘subjective, full of gaps, unofficial.’³⁰ Apparently, an intimate, personal archive cannot be equal with an institutionalized archive. In some aspects, it always differs. But what happens, when the archival content remains the same but the contextual situation transforms?

In the summer of 2015, the majority of the family archive was donated to the Open Society Archive. OSA is a complex archival and research institution that has been operating in Budapest since 1996. Besides the archival collection, that primarily focuses on the Cold War era and on international human rights violations, they organize research and art projects, as well as exhibitions, public lectures and teaching events.³¹ I got in touch with the institution through a relative of mine during the time when I was cleaning out my grandparents’ flat. Our collaboration is unique in its kind, this was the first time that OSA adopted a complete personal family heritage. *The fact that my grandfather was a filmmaker, tinges and affects the categorical label on the family archive. Even though the majority of the materials are documents that are connected to the private life of the family, a certain part of the collection is related to my grandfather’s career. That is, the family heritage consists of both personal and artistic archival materials, but all are historical traces and revenants of the past centuries.*

As I indicated in a previous chapter of my paper, a smaller part of the family heritage – mostly photographs and written documents that were considered remarkably intimate and personal by my father – is still kept in the family’s property. But another, significant part has become part of the Open Society Archive. By the act of donation, the family archive has become ‘institutionalized’. As a part of OSA’s official archival collection, the family archive is publicly available and researchable for anyone. The family has lost the ownership over the archive, but our permission is needed when someone wishes to use it as part of a research. Due to the removal and the donation, the family heritage and its collection has become part of an archival system. Hereby, the family archive is preserved for eternity. The knowledge that is represented and condensed in the archival documents is retrievable and publicly available. Now, the family archive has a third tense: it has a future in the form of eternal preservation.

The archive is an especially slow medium. In some aspects, it seems to exist in a different time zone, outside of the quotidian perception. An archive cannot be rushed, it requires patience and slowness from its reader and researcher. When the family heritage was given to the Open Society Archive, the professional archivists created a detailed inventory list as they were packing the pieces. (Primarily they registered the items based on their medium.) Since the family archive became part of OSA's collection, it has not been revised by the archivists of the institution. Even though it was scheduled, the work has been postponed several times. In the past years, I visited the archive repeatedly to follow up the process and to carry out research within our own family archive – hereby as part of the institutional archive. The materials of the family heritage are still patiently waiting to go through an additional phase of revision and selection. I am passionate about the time-consuming nature of the archive as a medium. In order to gain access to its files, the researcher needs to adapt to the 'inner time' of the archive. It is an analogue medium, kept in darkness until the long process of developing.

MEMORY THEATRE

At the initial state of my project, I was planning to name it 'Home Museum'. Later on, as I was reading a paper, I got inspired and started to call my work 'Memory Theatre'. For me, memory theatre represents the fusion of remembrance, facts and fiction. As Wolfgang Ernst articulates it: "The archive oscillates between a cemetery of facts and a "garden of fictions".³² The past that is preserved in the form of an archive is fictitious by its nature. It operates as a fragmented and incomplete text that needs to be translated. The translator creates an interpretation that is based on the original material. No matter how close we observe an archive, we are only able to extract a subjective layer out of it. It is the researcher, the reader, the archivist who creates a narrative, based on the fragmented facts of the past. The word theatre indicates a participatory approach. Both the 'artist', who is also a researcher in this case, and the 'spectator' need to be active agents in order to interpret it. Memory Theatre is only accessible and readable by their mutual participation.

After I gave a final name to my work, I became acquainted with Giulio Camillo's Memory Theatre. Camillo was a renaissance thinker and philosopher, who created a wooden Amphitheatre wherein he stored up knowledge eternally.³³ When a visitor entered into the theatre, he was able to recall the information which was placed in the construction in the

form of images and texts. Even though Camillo's work was never fully finished, the concept itself is a great representative of the classical art of memory.³⁴ 'Camillo never loses sight of the fact that his Theatre is based on the principles of the classical art of memory. But his building is to represent the order of eternal truth; in it the universe will be remembered through organic association of all its parts with their underlying eternal order.'³⁵ His wooden structure was based on traditional mnemonic techniques, such as the system of memory places. In a similar way as an archive behaves, the items of the Theatre were organized according to a systematic order. The location of certain items was essential in the process of retrieving. Memory Theatre is similar to archives in another important aspect, both kinds of systems aim to store and preserve knowledge eternally. '(...) it is right that we, wishing to store up eternally the eternal nature of all things which can be expressed in speech...should assign them to eternal places.'³⁶

OBLIVION - TOWARDS ABSTRACTION

'Losing smells and scents is the first phase of oblivion.' I marked down this fragmented sentence in my notebook on the 4th of September 2016. 'Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects (...)'³⁷ These palpable entities are the mediators of remembrance. Some of them are physical objects, while other entities are immaterial agents of memory. Despite their inconceivability, their presence can be particularly strong, like smells (scents), and sites (spaces). Even though they are associated with material beings – smells are connected to someone or something, while meaningful sites can be described by certain locations or places –, the concepts do not have physical extensions themselves. The associative remembrance makes them able to exist as memory traces. Smells and spaces are more abstract pillars of remembrance than objects. Especially, if they are connected to a mediated past, to postmemory.

As I indicated it earlier, during the past years, I have become less attached to the family archive, or more precisely, my attachment has changed. I feel connected to the archive in its complexity and I regard it as an entity. In contrast to my initial approach and attachment, I do not cultivate strong (emotional) bonds with certain objects from the family archive. Even though I made attempts to reconnect with the archival pieces – once I brought Miklós's personal notebook with me to Helsinki –, the distance did not fade away. I still venerated the notebook, but it did not

affect me in a way it used to. Miklós's writings and thoughts seemed like a distant echo. What genuinely stirred me was the scent of the notebook. The scent of old paper, the smell of the flat, a concentrate of the whole Memory Theatre. The notebook was part of my solo exhibition, it was the only item from the family archive that I directly exposed. It was placed on a shelf – together with my own personal notes in the form of a booklet –, but Miklós's diary-like writing was covered with a glass that protected it, while it also made it unreadable. After I took down the exhibition and packed the pieces, I perceived that Miklós's notebook had lost its unique smell. The cold and wet air of the gallery had infiltrated into the pages of the booklet and materially transformed it, the scent of the archive was gone.

Archives are created in order to cultivate memory against oblivion. However, remembrance by its nature is (partly) ephemeral. Forgetting is a significant part of memory.³⁸ As Marc Augé phrases it: 'To praise oblivion is not to revile memory. (...) Memory and oblivion in some way have the same relationship as life and death.'³⁹ As the capacity of the human mind, in terms of remembering, is limited, memory and forgetting are part of a circulation. Augé compares memories to plants: 'Memories are like plants: there are those that need to be quickly eliminated in order to help the others burgeon, transform, flower.'⁴⁰ Certain memories inevitably fade away, so they provide space for new memorial inputs or make the ones, already existing, stronger. Oblivion transforms into novel memories. This circulation outlines a similar spiral form similar to the shape of my new ring. It is an open-ended loop, a cycle that exceeds itself. 'The flower is the seed's oblivion'.⁴¹

Mourning is the active and conscious state of oblivion. Grief can be transmuted into mourning by attempting to exceed the poignant void that is formulated by absence.⁴² Barthes writes about grief and mourning in *Camera Lucida* from the perspective of the son, who has lost his mother. This pain is an elementary soreness for him that he cannot exceed. 'It is said that mourning, by its gradual labor slowly erases pain; I could not, I cannot believe this, because for me, Time eliminates the emotion of loss (I do not weep), that is all. For the rest, everything has remained motionless.'⁴³ Later, he continues this train of thought: 'I cannot transform my grief (...) when it is painful, nothing in it can transform grief into mourning.'⁴⁴ In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes is trapped by his own sorrow for his deceased mother. Love and loss have different forms and phases, which I do not intend to compare or distinguish. Nevertheless, in their core essence they are identical. In his book *A Lover's Discourse*, as Barthes speaks about absence, he contradicts

his above quoted thoughts. 'This endured absence is nothing more or less than forgetfulness. I am, intermittently, unfaithful. This is the condition of my survival; for if I did not forget, I should die. The lover who does not forget sometimes dies of excess, exhaustion, and tension of memory.'⁴⁵ The process of bereavement requires an active attitude from the mourning person. In order to transcend the state of grief, that immobilizes the emotional progress of the 'lover', one needs to willingly forget. In this aspect, oblivion becomes a positive, healing process. For me, oblivion does not mean the obliteration of memories. It is more like an active attempt to proceed in the present.

My grandfather – similarly to Barthes's position in *Camera Lucida* – was numb with grief. He lived together with the unfilled void that was formulated by the absence of the tragically deceased family members. He worked on the cultivation of remembrance, he enriched the family archive, he conducted research, he remembered repetitively. And in the meantime, he felt angst about the future of the family archive, he was afraid it would vanish with with him. I took over the burden of this interrupted mourning. My process of bereavement derives from post-memory. Therefore, the grief is not directly mine, I am in an inherited position. Howsoever, loss has to be elaborated, burdensome memories need to be transformed toward oblivion. Without oblivion, trauma and loss can become protagonists. By the aid of oblivion, traumatic absence can be turned into a positive absence that leads the person towards new beginnings.

In the documentary film 'One More Time with Feeling', Nick Cave uses the expression 'elastic time' as he shares his thoughts about the tragic death of his son. Elastic time refers to the changed perception of time after a tragedy. The tragic event is marked by a strong fracture – which now belongs chronologically to the past. Even though the family members practically move on with their lives, eventually they always come back to the event, it pulls them back like a rubber band. 'We are attached to the event', as Cave says.⁴⁶

I like the concept of 'elastic time' in the light of traumatic past, and the process of mourning and oblivion. After a traumatic event, in some aspects, time stops existing in a linear, chronological manner. It is inevitable to be pulled back from time to time, even in a progressed state of bereavement. My artworks follow a similar pattern, even though some of

the pieces deal with forgetting, the next work might go back to an earlier phase and depict a stronger and more personal connection to loss. Albeit, the process is not linear and is full of ruptures, I believe in a lingering progress.

LES LIEUX DE MÉMOIRE

A couple of weeks after the family archive was moved to the Open Society Archive, I visited my grandparents' flat – and ever since, I have not attempted to go again. Besides the furniture, it was already empty, no personal objects were left in the rooms. The walls were being repainted, the rooms felt smaller. The smell of fresh paint became the indicator of the recognition that the flat stopped existing as a home museum, as my grandparents' flat, as the store of the family archive. The ritual and 'sacred' space of familial remembrance transformed into an unknown site.

'*Lieux de mémoire*', 'sites of memory' is a term that was created by Pierre Nora. He claims, that due to the 'acceleration of history' and different societal constructions, memory exists out of the context of social practice. Sites of memory refer to those entities that substitute the acts of pursuing memories. 'Lieux de mémoire originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations (...) because such activities no longer occur naturally.'⁴⁷ Lieux de mémoire appear 'where memory crystallizes and secretes itself.'^{48,49} The significant representatives of the family heritage, now as part of OSA and the whole system of the Memory Theatre, are sites of memories themselves. The rings, the archive itself, letters that were sent from the forced labor camp, the scent of the notebook, the voices that are recorded on audio cassettes. They became sites of memory, because there was 'a will to remember' that endowed them with a 'symbolic aura'.⁵⁰ My interest does not lie in the transformation of a thing into a lieu de mémoire, but in the counter-process, that endures when a meaningful entity stops existing as a site of memory.

The flat of my grandparents is a *topographical lieu de mémoire*, an immaterial site of memory with a physical extension. '(...) there are the topographical ones, which owe everything to the specificity of their location and to being rooted in the ground.'⁵¹ The flat in Szondi street was a neutral space, until my grandfather gradually converted it into a site of memory. The space became a representative of remembrance, a hybrid

archive and museum. It also existed as a family home. It was alive in a dual manner, as an active site of memory and as a space in active use. Principally, it was a living archive, a living museum. While an institutionalized archive is placed in darkness and rests in silence – until an archivist brings the items out to the daylight. The flat was naturally filled with light, it had its ‘own blood circulation’, the archival fragments were cells within a constantly changing space.

In 2014, I had the opportunity to visit the islands of Brijuni. The Croatian archipelago has a unique microhistory. It was used as the Yugoslavian president, Josip Broz Tito’s private island between 1947 and 1979. Tito turned the entire island, and its fauna, for his own private use. He turned Brijuni into his summer residence where he hosted important politicians and famous celebrities as his guests. Due to the temporary presence of the important guests and Tito’s appropriative attitude, the islands transmuted into a space with historical aura. The archipelago slowly transformed into a living lieu de memoire. After Tito passed away, the islands were declared as a National Park of Yugoslavia in 1983. Nowadays Brijuni is primarily a touristic resort, where visitors can enjoy the natural endowment of the islands, visit the Tito museum and the safari-like zoo, that was created by the ex-president himself.⁵²

Prora is a building complex on the island of Rügen, in North-East Germany. It was designed by Clemens Klotz and built by forced labor workers from Czechoslovakia and Poland. The ‘Colossus of Rügen’ is an illustrious example of the National Socialist’s ideas. The original purpose of the building was a holiday resort for a Nazi organization (KdF, ‘Strength through Joy’). The seaside complex was designed to host more than 20,000 German citizens. The complex was never used as a seaside resort, and the architectural plan was only partly completed. Still, the buildings lie 2-3 kilometers long on the coast of the Baltic sea, though the original plan was a 5-kilometer-long complex. The ‘Colossus of Rügen’ was the largest architectural project that was realized during the Nazi era. Today, the buildings are still standing. They operate as an open and alive memory site. Even though two museums were created within the buildings, the massive size and the historical layer, the ‘genius loci’ of the complex dominate the space.⁵³

‘Prora is an authentic place, an excellent example of the involuntary museum.’⁵⁴ Péter György uses the expression, involuntary museum, to illustrate how the building complex of Prora operates these days. As he claims, it is a site that involuntarily provokes remembrance, even though it was not created to be a place for memorial contemplation. For me, Brijuni and the flat are involuntary museum sites and lieux de mémoire at the same time.⁵⁵ More precisely, they are ‘*post-sites of memory*’. They used to exist and affect their visitors as living lieux de memoire. Since their original function is lost, what is left is a hardly definable essence, a space, and a post-site of memory. Both, the natural space of Brijuni, and the architectural milieu of the flat, became uncanny entities. They are still mediators, the embodiments of remembrance, but with a different aura. The past can be still sensed there, though not directly, but merely by a post-essence. As oblivion accompanies memory, the sense of uncanniness pertains to les lieux de mémoire.

NOTHINGNESS

*unheimlich/feeling uncanny/being uncanny/towards life/towards nothingness/
active state/counter-collecting/repetition/contemplation/walking*

UNCANNY

My inquiry about the uncanny begins where the sites of memory end.⁵⁶ In the light of Memory Theatre, the feeling of uncanny is primarily connected to the ‘post-lieux de mémoire’ entities. To me, the scent of Miklós’s notebook and my grandparents’ flat are the strongest personal representatives of the uncanny feeling.

The term *uncanny* is the translation of the German word: *unheimlich*. The term ‘unheimlich’ comprises the word ‘home’ (*heim*) which is left out and substituted by ‘canny’ in the English version of the expression. While ‘canny’ merely refers to coziness and comfort, ‘home’ has a connotation implying a much deeper meaning. The fact that the word ‘home’ was neglected reveals how the act of translation can abstract the semantic layer of an expression. Both ‘uncanny’ and ‘unheimlich’ indicate the presence of something strange, unfamiliar, and weird. ‘The initial force of “uncanny” (or unheimlich) is a sense of strangeness or, more strongly, eeriness.’³⁷ However, as the word ‘home’ is part of the genuine German term, it unreservedly predicts the loss of home, the loss of feeling ourselves at home.

Uncanny is primarily related to objects, to entities that are perceived as strange and unfamiliar by human cognition. ‘“The uncanny” is an object that possesses this property, and the “uncanny feeling” is the corresponding affect. To understand uncanniness is to investigate uncanny objects and the uncanny feelings that they arouse, and to determine what is distinctive about such objects and such feelings.’⁵⁸ When I tried to describe my own feelings about the transformed essence of the flat or about the vanished scent of the notebook, I could not entirely grasp and specify *how* these entities have changed. Simply, they felt different and unfamiliar, and there was some kind of disturbance within this dissimilarity. Perhaps, the feeling of this discrepancy derived from the recognition that these objects can never repossess the state of their original existence. In addition, the limits of our understanding of uncanny objects evokes disturbance as well. ‘(...) the concept of uncanny, and so any investigation of it, is itself uncanny and so resists full understanding.’⁵⁹

Besides, the *unheimlich* objects, that are connected to the feeling of uncanniness, Heidegger perceives human existence itself as uncanny. As Withy introduces this different approach: “To go even further, we might say that the human condition is itself an uncanny one – not because we are capable of experiencing the uncanny affect (...), but because there is something inherently strange or unsettled about being human.”⁶⁰ Heidegger asserts, that uncanniness is fundamentally attached to human existence. ‘Uncanniness is in a sense the human origin, the essential prerequisite for the human being what it is at all: “humankind emerges from uncanniness and remains within it – looms out of it and stirs within it.”’⁶¹ Similarly to the *uncanny feeling*, *being uncanny* cannot be entirely explained. ‘(...) we cannot grasp the origin or condition of possibility of our own essence. This is a familiar claim about human nature: the human seeks to explain itself, desires to know, but can never achieve this (...).’⁶² It exists by its own limitation, uncanniness emerges when *Dasein*⁶³ is exposed to its own being, to its own boundedness. ‘This is because *Dasein*’s finitude is essential to it: in being uncanny it is not failing to be what it is. What *Dasein* is, in fact, is essentially *un-at-home*.’⁶⁴

As *Dasein* perceives its own finitude it reveals the state of *being uncanny*. Heidegger approaches being from the perspective, or rather, from the awareness of death. That is how Memory Theatre, and its ‘pre-state’, the family archive, perceives its own existence: from the acceptance and awareness of *death* towards *life*.

REPETITION – TOWARDS NOTHINGNESS

'It is Jewish New Year today. A warm and beautiful day. The windows of our shop face the Erzsébet square, I am looking at the nicely dressed Jewish youth as they are walking towards the promenade.

I am typing here in the office, in front of the square, I interrupt my writing process from time to time to stare at the withering leaves of the horse chestnut trees, they are turning into yellow. It is autumn again, the autumn hikes will start again, the theatre performances, everything starts over, everything repeats itself, circulation, circulation.'

(Fragment from a letter, Miklós Schuller, September 1939)

I interrupted my thesis writing process yesterday, I went to a Seder dinner.⁶⁵ Some of my friends invited me over to spend the evening with them and their friends. My family – so did theirs – abandoned the Jewish traditions after the war. These families assimilated into an unspoken silence.

Sometimes, repetition heals itself.

It was repetition that created the family archive, as it was the core essence of the archival attitude. The repetitive acts of my ancestors derived from the desire of preserving the past; to subsist against oblivion.

I have chosen to end this repetitive pattern, to mourn the inherited memories. I preserve and process the archival pieces, but I do not enrich the archive itself. I remember in order to be able to forget.

The family archive is preserved; it is stored for eternity. The archive rests, therefor the archivist, the Ego within the Memory Theatre can rest as well.

In a documentary portrait film, János Pilinszky – a Hungarian poet and writer – contemplates on the concept of ‘nothing’ in the context of writing and thinking. He compares the process of writing to the act of hunting, it requires an active state of passive waiting until it reaches the phase of an absolute concentration. At that particular point, thoughts are born in the form of words. In a similar way as a hunter waits for the game. It is not about ‘doing nothing’, it is about ‘actively concentrating, actively focusing on nothing.’ ‘It may happen, that we find an answer in this nothing. This is the chance of the hunter.’

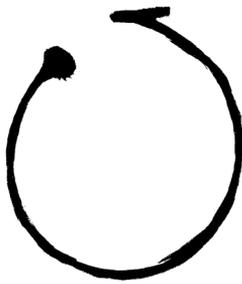
Pilinszky believes that a writer wishes to know nothing, unlike a philosopher. It is a reverse act, while a philosopher would like to reach the state of ultimate cognition, a writer works on ‘knowing nothing’. (He notes that it takes an enormous effort to know nothing.) ‘And the strange thing is, that the final outcome is the same: a writer has the same knowledge about the world as a philosopher does.’⁶⁶

Within the archive, my grandfather was a philosopher. I attempt, and I work on becoming the writer of the narrative of the Memory Theatre.

110 lone walks between 28. August 2015 and 9. September 2017. These wanderings were pursued for the sake of walking, without any aim. Most of them led me to the sea, to the place that first evoked the sense of home in me, in Helsinki. It is a real, though abstract and unlimited, open space. Similarly, the process of contemplation which is the core essence of the walks. For me, walking has become an obsessive act, a repetition, similarly to the ancestors' archiving attitude. But unlike collecting, which aims to possess everything in the form of material entities, walking is immaterial and focused around nothing. It is equally an active and passive act at the same time. A metaphoric process that symbolizes an active and condensed state of nothingness, that gradually leads the walker towards new beginnings.

Memory Theatre is dissolved when there is an active state of 'nothingness'. That is where life continues towards 'being'.

*“What endures, is where one can say –
'Beginning and ending - always the same'.”⁶⁷*



FOOTNOTES

¹ Saint-Exupéry, A., De. (2013). Letter to a hostage [Kindle DX Version]. Pushkin Books. para. 15

² Within the family archive, both my grandfather and his brother refer to themselves on the backside of photographs as 'Ego'. In my text, I use the word for the interpreter of the archive. In our present tense, it refers to me and it indicates the personal and subjective tone. As Wolfgang Ernst writes about it in his book *Stirring from the Archives Order from Disorder*, 'It is the researcher rather than the past that is formatted at the moment of reading in the archive' Ernst, W., & Siegel, A. (2015). *Stirrings in the archives: Order from disorder*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 68

³ By the term archive I mean the official, institutional definition, which significantly differs from the common usage of the word.

⁴ As far as I can gain knowledge from oral history – through my grandfather -, and from written documents, my great-grandfather was the first person, who consciously started to collect the family archive and carried on research on the genealogy.

⁵ 'I transformed the small room of our flat into a "family museum". It seems like it is only me who is interested in it, my children and grandchildren are not yet. Would you like to have a "guided tour"?' (The interview was found in the family archive, but it is available online as well.)
Schuller Imre (Belvárosi természetjáró) életműdíjas. (n.d.). Retrieved April 01, 2018, from <http://www.filmkultura.hu/regi/2002/articles/profiles/schuller.hu.html>

⁶ Vansina, J. (1985). *Oral tradition as history*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin. p. 23

⁷ I am going to discuss the details and the symbolic aspect of the donation in section II, Abstraction.

⁸ Barthes, R. (2000). *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage. p. 87

⁹ Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 6

¹⁰ Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 4

¹¹ Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 5

¹² The term first generation refers to the survivors of cultural and collective trauma. It is elaborated under the section of Postmemory.

¹³ Deleuze, G. (1995). *Negotiations, 1972-1990*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 5

¹⁴ Deleuze, G. (2004). *Difference and repetition*. New York: Continuum. p. 1

¹⁵ Deleuze, G. (2004). *Difference and repetition*. New York: Continuum. p. 2

¹⁶ Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of postmemory: writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 5

¹⁷ Within the expression postgeneration(s), two – and soon three – generations are present. The first generation refers to the children of the survivors of collective cultural trauma, while the representatives of the third generation are the grandchildren. Marianne Hirsch primarily discusses postmemory in the context of the second generation, however the third one plays a different but equally important role in the post-traumatic era. Traumatic projection is sometimes even stronger in between grandparents and grandchildren. Survivors are often more prone and open to share their personal traumas with their grandchildren due to the healing and distancing feature of time. In the case of post-socialist countries – including Hungary – another factor need to be acknowledged: the reconciliation of the Holocaust – both on historical, political and personal levels – was postponed until the 1990s. This time gap means almost 50 years of silence and regression.

¹⁸ Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of postmemory: writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 31

¹⁹ Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of postmemory: writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 18

²⁰ Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of postmemory: writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 18

²¹ Marianne Hirsch distinguishes familial postmemory from affiliative postmemory. She argues 'postmemory is not an identity position but a generational structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation'. (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 35). Familial postmemory refers to cases when the descendant's family is personally involved, while affiliative postmemory operates as a generational identification.

²² Hirsch, M. (2016). *Family frames: Photography narrative and postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 22

²³ 'I know now that there is another punctum (another stigmatum) than the "detail". This new punctum, which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the noeme ("that-has-been", its pure representation.' Barthes, R. (2000). *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage. p. 96

²⁴ Saint-Exupéry, A., De. (2013). *Letter to a hostage* [Kindle DX Version]. Pushkin Books. para. 6

²⁵ 'Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive. But rather at the word "archive" – and with the archive of so familiar a word.' Jacques Derrida commences his book, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* by defining the origin of the term archive. He traces it back to the Greek word *arkheion*, which refers to a place where official documents are stored and preserved. '(...) the meaning of the "archive", its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. (...) in that place (...) that official documents are filed.' Besides emphasizing the fact that an archive is intertwined with the place where it is stored, Derrida also lays emphasize on the role of the archivists, the 'magistrates'.

Derrida, J. (1998). *Archive fever: A Freudian impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 1-2

²⁶ Wolfgang Ernst examines the medium of the archive by following the studies of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Ernst strictly distinguishes the official archival term from the everyday usage of the word. 'Archivists, look out: not everything that is called an archive is actually an archive. Foucault defines the archive neither as the sum of all the transmitted but rather as a system that governs not only the emergence of such statements but also their current functioning.'

Ernst, W., & Siegel, A. (2015). *Stirrings in the archives: Order from disorder*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 7

²⁷ 'The archive is born from disorder.'

Arlette Farge in Ernst, W., & Siegel, A. (2015). *Stirrings in the archives: Order from disorder*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 5

²⁸ W. B., U. M., G. S., M. S., & E. W. (2015). *Walter Benjamin's Archive. Images, Texts, Signs*. London: Verso. p. 7

^{29,30} W. B., U. M., G. S., M. S., & E. W. (2015). *Walter Benjamin's Archive. Images, Texts, Signs*. London: Verso. p. 2

³¹About Us. (n.d.). Retrieved March 21, 2018, from <http://www.osaarchivum.org/about-us>

³²Ernst, W., & Siegel, A. (2015). *Stirrings in the archives: Order from disorder*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 42

³³Camillo's theatre functions in a reverse manner. 'There is no audience sitting in the seats watching a play on the stage. The solitary 'spectator' of the Theatre stands where the stage would be and looks towards the auditorium, gazing at the images (...).'

Yates, F. A. (1999). *Selected works of Frances Yates. The Art of Memory*. London: Routledge. p. 137

³⁴There is a written proof – in the form of a letter – that verifies the existence of the Memory Theatre as a building. Based on his writing, Viglius had the chance to physically enter into a model version of the wooden theatre, which was suitable for two persons at the same time.

³⁵Yates, F. A. (1999). *Selected works of Frances Yates. The Art of Memory*. London: Routledge. p. 138

³⁶Yates, F. A. (1999). *Selected works of Frances Yates. The Art of Memory*. London: Routledge. p. 138

³⁷Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations, (26), 7-24*. p. 9

³⁸In my paper, I do not intend to examine forgetting from a scientific point of view. Psychology explains the occurrence of forgetting with different assumptions. One of them even claims that memories are never entirely erased, they are merely repressed and non-retrievable. In the conclusion of the dictionary article, Yadin Dudai notes that forgetting can have positive effects, as 'it could also facilitate the acquisition of new skills, by weakening distractive, older ones. And last but not least, forgetting bad memories could smoothen the roughness of life. We should not forget that.'

Dudai, Y. (2002). *Memory from A to Z: Keywords, concepts, and beyond*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. pp.100-101

³⁹Augé, M. (2004). *Oblivion*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 14

⁴⁰Augé, M. (2004). *Oblivion*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 17

⁴¹Augé, M. (2004). *Oblivion*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 17

⁴²Grief is the elementary, emotional reaction to loss, while mourning is the process of dealing with the absence of the missing person. In broader terms, loss does not necessarily mean death. In my text, I primarily interpret grief as the consequence of death, as part of the process of bereavement.

N., & M.S., P. (2015, June 29). What is GRIEF? definition of GRIEF (Psychology Dictionary). Retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://psychologydictionary.org/grief/>

⁴³Barthes, R. (2000). *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage. p. 75

- ⁴⁴ Barthes, R. (2000). *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage. p. 90
- ⁴⁵ Barthes, R., & Howard, R. (1978). *A lover's discourse: Fragments*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang. pp.14-15
- ⁴⁶ Dominick, A. (Director). (2016). *One More Time with Feeling* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom.
- ⁴⁷ Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations, (26), 7-24*. p. 12
- ⁴⁸ Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations, (26), 7-24*. p. 7
- ⁴⁹ Nora mainly examines the term in the context of collective memory. Since the family archive is part of an institutionalized and open archival system, I dare to borrow and use the term site of memory to examine the transformation of certain memorial entities. When all comes to all, personal remembrance is part of the collective conscious. Even Nora notes that memory has transformed and shifted from the social experience toward an individual approach. 'The less memory is experienced collectively, the more it will require individuals to undertake to become themselves memory-individuals (...)' Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations, (26), 7-24*. p. 16
- ⁵⁰ Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations, (26), 7-24*. p. 19
- ⁵¹ Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations, (26), 7-24*. p. 22
- ⁵² Brijuni Meteo. (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2018, from <http://www.np-brijuni.hr/en/>
- ⁵³ The Prora documentation centre at the site of the planned "KdF-seaside-resort". (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2018, from <http://www.proradok.de/en/startseite-2/>
- ⁵⁴ György, P. (2013). *Múzeum, A tanuló-ház. Múzeumelméleti esettanulmányok*. Budapest: MúzeumCafé. p. 164
- ⁵⁵ This train of thought derives from my personal experience and visit on the islands of Brijuni and from my long-term connection to the flat. Since I have not had the chance to physically visit Prora, I cannot use the same category for it.
- ⁵⁶ I base my (fragmented and expedient) research about the uncanny on Katherine Withy's book, *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Withy briefly presents the history of the uncanny, by introducing – among others – Jentsch's, Freud's and Jonathan Lear's study on the topic. Freud – who is primarily associated with the term uncanny – has a particularly phenomenological approach. He concentrates on the examination of entities that evoke a feeling of uncanniness in humans – that he connects to repression. Heidegger's inquiry does not merely analyze the feeling of uncanniness but the ontological essence of the phenomenon and how does it relate to human existence itself.
- Withy, K. (2015). *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.

⁵⁷Withy, K. (2015). *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press. p. 1

⁵⁸Withy, K. (2015). *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press. pp.1-2

⁵⁹Withy, K. (2015). *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press. p. 8

⁶⁰Withy, K. (2015). *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press. p. 2

⁶¹Withy, K. (2015). *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press. p. 142

⁶²Withy, K. (2015). *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press. p. 93

⁶³Roughly, Dasein can be understood as being. 'It is here that Heidegger introduces the notion of Dasein (Da-sein: there-being). One proposal for how to think about the term 'Dasein' is that it is Heidegger's label for the distinctive mode of Being realized by human beings.'

Wheeler, M. (2011, October 12). *Martin Heidegger*. Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/>

⁶⁴Withy, K. (2015). *Heidegger on being uncanny*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press. p. 101

⁶⁵Seder is part of the Jewish holiday, Passover that commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. It is also the celebration of spring and recommencement.

⁶⁶Maár, Gy. (Director). (1965). *Lírai beszélgetés Pilinszky Jánossal* [Motion picture]. Hungary, and

Maár, Gy. (Director). (1978). *Hűség a labirintushoz - Beszélgetés Pilinszky Jánossal* [Motion picture]. Hungary: MTV.

⁶⁷Maier-Katkin, D., & Maier-Katkin, B. (2007). *Love and Reconciliation: The Case of Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger*. *Harvard Review*, (32), 34-48. p.47
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27569287>

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