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Redemptive Family Narratives: Olga Lengyel and the Textuality of the Holocaust*:

In Memoriam Elie Wiesel

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Abstract

Memoirs written by Holocaust survivors and (in some cases) their testimonies retain a salience unmatched by other historical sources. This article discusses one such memoir, Olga Lengyel's *Five Chimneys*, alongside her 1998 testimony, aiming to engage with broader methodological issues relating to the history of the Holocaust, particularly those about memory, narrative and textuality. Through a detailed discussion of certain moments shaping Olga Lengyel's personal experience, both pre-and post-arrival in Auschwitz, the article captures the tensions and contradictions characterizing the harrowing story of one woman's loss of family in the Holocaust.

Keywords

Holocaust; family narratives; Olga Lengyel; Auschwitz; textuality; memory

“Looking back, I, too, want to forget. I, too, yearn for sunshine and peace and happiness.”¹ Thus wrote the Holocaust survivor, Olga Lengyel, in the concluding chapter of her memoir, *Five Chimneys*, about her experience in Nazi concentration camps. Lengyel's desire for closure is very much intertwined with another notion, also expressed in her memoirs, that of the survivors' ethical responsibility for future generations and of their yearning to speak on behalf of those “many fellows internees at Auschwitz who perished so horribly”. To be subjected to such terrible brutality and violence is one thing; another is to live with the memory of that experience, as Olga Lengyel reminded us when interviewed by Nancy Fischer in New York in August 1998.

Memories are not only about remembering past events; they are also about guiding us in future actions. As Olga Lengyel makes clear in her memoir she had wanted to share her story for posterity with the utmost hope that the Nazi crimes would “never be permitted to happen again”³. This is one of the main goals of Holocaust memoirs, and one that endows these first-accounts with a sense of both emergency and warning. As Elie Wiesel noted in the preface to the new English translation of his classic *Night*, “The witness has forced

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himself to testify. For the youth of tomorrow, for the children who will be born tomorrow. He does not want his past to become their future”⁴.

There is another caveat to Olga Lengyel’s story though. She also survived with the “guilt”, caused by a perpetual gnawing at her conscience, that her actions, both in her hometown of Cluj/Kolozsvár and upon arrival in Auschwitz, may have caused the death of her parents and children. The opening lines of her memoir certainly are most startling: “Mea culpa, my fault, mea maxima culpa! I cannot acquit myself of the charge that I am, in part, responsible for the destruction of my own parents and of my two young sons”⁵. Their destiny was not, however, in Olga’s hands, but this certainly did not diminish her sense of guilt, which stayed with her until the end of her life. She was faced, in Lawrence L. Langer’s inspired description, with “choiceless choice”, namely the paradoxical situation in which “critical decisions did not reflect options between life and death, but between one form of ‘abnormal’ response and another, both imposed by a situation that was in no way of the victim’s own choosing”⁶. As a mother, wife and daughter, Olga knew that her multiple responsibility demanded radical decisiveness. And she acted accordingly.

Narrating the experience of the Holocaust has always been problematic. Survivors of the Holocaust and historians alike speak of this terrible event in modern European history as unique, not only in terms of human suffering and the scale of the genocide of the Jews, the Roma (Gypsies) and others, but equally in terms of human endurance, heroism and ability to survive in the most horrific circumstances⁷. Yet with the passing of time, memories tend to fade and even disappear altogether. The need to remember and not to forget what had happened in those Nazi camps has never been so important now that there are only a few Holocaust survivors still alive.

Historians, particularly cultural and intellectual historians, whilst probing deeper and deeper into the Holocaust’s sources, are keen to highlight the limits of its interpretation⁸. To be sure, to attempt to understand the Holocaust requires not only to recognize its historical significance but also to grasp its own specific narratives, brought forward by the victims⁹. Accordingly, the Holocaust is articulated at the same time historically, within its specific temporal context (1940-1945), and textually, by memoirs and accounts written by Holocaust survivors. Naturally, the textuality of the Holocaust refers to the texts about the event itself but equally important (and this is the aspect I highlight here) it allows us to bring out the signification of the human experiences narrated in those texts. It is through the narrative that the narrator conveys the meanings of a particular incident. As Hayden White remarked, “narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific”¹⁰.

There is no other event like it in modern history whose meaning is perpetually reaffirmed and re-articulated through each new reading of these stories and narratives of suffering, pain and survival. To paraphrase Paul Ricoeur, to read again and again is to understand better¹¹, and Holocaust narratives, such as memoirs, made available immediately after the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, consistently draw attention to this expectation¹². To be

sure, there is still, among Holocaust scholars, a debate whether memoirs can be considered “proper” historical documents or not, and over the difficulty in establishing the historical veracity of some of the events described in these memoirs¹³. I am, however, interested less in establishing the “historical truth” of certain events that may or may have not occurred in the concentration camp, and more in discussing some of moral and philosophical problems one can bring forth from Holocaust memoirs such as Olga Lengyel’s *Five Chimneys*¹⁴.

To write about the Holocaust is to confer it importance and to draw attention to its multiple meanings. Some of those freed by British, American and Russian soldiers in 1945 wanted to let the world know of their and others’ pain and loss, and of the sheer brutality of a political regime determined to bring about the extermination of those deemed “inferior”. They also wanted to preserve in perpetuity the memory of the dearly loved and lost in Nazi concentration camps.

Some of these accounts, including Primo Levi’s *If this is Man* (first published in Italian in 1947) and Elie Wiesel’s *The Night* (first published in Yiddish in 1956 and then in French in 1958) achieved cult status, and they are well-known both inside and outside academic circles. Other Holocaust memoirs have been adapted for film and theatre, having inspired novelists and directors, their dramatic quality greatly enhanced by the renewed contact with wider audiences. Perhaps no such film is better known than *Sophie’s Choice* (1982) with Meryl Streep as Sophie, a role for which she received an Academy Award. *Sophie’s Choice* is based on William Styron’s award-winning eponymous novel, published in 1979,¹⁵ which, in turn, was inspired by Olga Lengyel’s *Five Chimneys: A Woman Survivor’s True Story of Auschwitz*¹⁶. Perhaps not surprisingly, *Sophie’s Choice* was also made into an opera the British composer Nicholas Maw and premièred at the Covent Garden in London in 2002¹⁷.

Olga Lengyel’s book was first written in Hungarian, but published in French in 1946 under the title *Souvenirs de l’au-delà* (*Memoirs from the Beyond*)¹⁸. In 1947 it became available in English, under the title *Five Chimneys: The Story of Auschwitz*¹⁹, and it has since been translated into a number of languages, including Spanish, Romanian and Dutch²⁰. The attention of the scholarly community towards the book has been somehow uneven, however²¹. An in-depth discussion of the book is lacking, which may explain why *Five Chimneys* does not figure prominently in the Holocaust scholarship²². A notable exception is Petra M. Schweitzer, who devoted an entire chapter to Olga Lengyel in her book, *Gendered Testimonies of the Holocaust*²³.

In this article, I attempt to add to Schweitzer’s brilliant analysis by focusing on certain aspects described by Olga Lengyel in her memoir and the 1998 interview, aspects which I think could offer some hitherto unexplored possibilities to investigate the textuality of the Holocaust. Here I draw inspiration from the philosopher Jorge J. E. Gracia who offered an epistemologically grounded theory of textuality that accounts for our “ordinary experiences of texts without doing violence to the idiosyncrasies of particular species of texts”²⁴. In other words, I want to highlight certain idiosyncrasies in Olga Lengyel’s narratives (both written and oral) in relation not just to historical record but, especially, to the paradoxical “choiceless choice”, formulated by Lawrence L. Langer.

Accordingly, I treat Olga Lengyel's memoir not as a self-contained text with a single meaning, but as a set of interlocked narratives expressing a particular commitment to ethical principles and moral convictions. I am, therefore, not only engaged in the continuous interpretation of the Holocaust as a historical event, but I am also endeavouring to make a contribution to the debate on the ethical framework needed to explain one's responsibility for life and death decisions in the concentration camps²⁵. There is, I argue here, a pressing need (conceptual as well as moral) to explore the heroic situation in which one's external powerlessness is turned into an affirmation of the energy and flow of life. I interpret the heroic, as an essential component of a broader narrative about survival that was particularly effective in providing Lengyel with an ontological strategy to overcome her dreadful experiences of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Yet, I am not attempting to describe her as a "Holocaust heroine", by forcing her to fit androcentric notions of the heroic²⁶. And it was certainly not Olga Lengyel's intention to describe her actions in Auschwitz-Birkenau in heroic terms, although no one who has read her memoir would fail to be impressed by her heroism.

Olga Lengyel was born in 1908 in Kolozsvár, at the time in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy²⁷. She was the daughter of Ferdinánd Bernát (b. 1880)²⁸ and Ileana (Ida) Légmán²⁹. The citizenship document preserved in the Romanian National Archives in Cluj also mentions that Bernát was Jewish³⁰. This biographical detail may seem perhaps unnecessary here, but doubt has been cast over Olga Lengyel's Jewish origin. To be sure, she was always reluctant to openly declare herself Jewish. In her interview with Nancy Fischer, for instance, Olga did not mention any practices associated with a traditional Jewish life, whilst growing up in Kolozsvár. Tellingly, in fact, she mentioned that she went to the "Mariánum School," which was a Roman Catholic School for Girls.

Moreover, when Fischer inquired whether she had "a religious upbringing", Olga acknowledged that her family was "very, very liberal" and that "religion did not matter too much". And when Fischer asked her directly "How did you know that you were Jewish?", Olga's answer was rather vague: "It was not even a question what religion we were", admitting that her family was mixed: there was even a Muslim, on her mother side. She was keen to emphasise, however, that hers was a "very strong, elite, intellectual Jewish community"³¹.

What we know about that period confirms Olga's description of her Jewish family as completely integrated and assimilated in the predominant Hungarian environment of the Transylvanian capital. Her family was not an exception. The Jews of Kolozsvár were fully assimilated into the Hungarian culture and language. During the interwar period, the Jewish-Hungarian community of Cluj (the city took on the Romanian name after 1918) remained significant, amounting to ca. 13% of the total population³². It continued to be, as Olga's reminisced, strategically placed within the city's economic and cultural networks³³. Nevertheless, considering the events of 1919 in Hungary and the White Terror that followed³⁴, as well as the growing presence of Romanian anti-Semitism during the 1920s, it is very likely that many Hungarian Jews in Cluj may have downplayed their religiousness, at least in public. As Olga herself admitted: "It was not even convenient to talk about religion" and that "officially" her family did not belong to a synagogue and they did not observe Jewish holidays³⁵.

Olga first studied literature and geography at 'King Ferdinand I' University in Cluj. She became interested in medicine, after she married Dr Miklós (Nicolae) Lengyel (1896-1944), a Jewish physician, in 1924. Lengyel, who completed his medical degree in 1921 in Cluj³⁶, worked together with the professor of internal medicine Aladár Elfer (1877-1944), who was also Olga's godfather (and who, in fact, was not Jewish!). It was Elfer who arranged for Lengyel to help look after Olga's father, when he fell ill³⁷. It was under these circumstances that Olga and Miklós became romantically involved, and eventually married each other.

During the 1930s, Dr Lengyel worked as chief-physician at a private sanatorium in Cluj owned by Mátyás Mátyás (1888-1956)³⁸, as well as an assistant in the Clinic for Dermato-Venereal Diseases headed by Dr Coriolan Tătaru (1889-1957)³⁹. Apart from his clinical duties, Dr Lengyel was a member of the Romanian Society of Dermatology, published extensively in medical journals in Cluj, and was well respected in the medical community in Cluj. Dr Lengyel opened his own clinic, known first as the Dr Lengyel Hospital⁴⁰, and later as Dr Lengyel Szanatórium, devoted to obstetrics and gynaecology⁴¹. Olga, who "really and deeply"⁴² loved her husband, and wanted to spend more time with him, undertook medical training to become her husband's surgical assistant⁴³. By the late 1930s, the Lengyels had a successful medical practice and were well respected in the city. "No one," Olga thought, "could be happier than we were"⁴⁴.

Two children, Tamás and Dávid, made this idyllic life seem perfect.⁴⁵ The latter was an orphan Jewish boy who lost both his parents: his father was in the labour service (munkaszolgálat), and was blown up by a mine, whilst his mother died in the hospital as a result of unsuccessful medical intervention⁴⁶. Olga described him as "dark and rather Oriental looking, and not so bright, as he did not have the background". Moreover, the boy "could not read nor write," and was "a little wild"; in fact, Dávid "stole from patients" and for a while used to hide food⁴⁷, no doubt due to the deprivation prior to his embracing by the Lengyel family. But soon the two boys became very close and Olga lovingly referred to both of them as "my sons".

Dávid's story illustrates perfectly the gradual collapse of the Jewish community in Kolozsvár after 1940, when that city became again part of Hungary. The reunification with Hungary brought about not only the vindication of Hungarian demands for Transylvania but also the implementation of the Jewish Laws, introduced in Hungary since 1938, which excluded the Jews from university and from practicing various professions as well from owning certain property⁴⁸. Moreover, and as it happened with Dávid's biological father, many Jews were drafted into labour battalions on the front. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 70,000 of them (from all over Hungary) died in these circumstances⁴⁹.

Olga and her family seemed to have been able to continue with their lives undisturbed by the Hungarian anti-Semitic policies. "The first years of the war," she noted, "had been relatively calm for us" and "the [Hungarian] authorities in Cluj left [her husband] in peace"⁵⁰. Importantly, Dr Lengyel was able to continue with his medical practice and run his hospital, reflecting, perhaps, a more tolerant attitude towards Jewish physicians in the city. The Jewish General Hospital (Zsidó Közkórház), for instance, was allowed to stay open after the incorporation of northern Transylvania into Hungary in 1940.

The condition of Jews in Germany and German-occupied Europe, however, was rapidly deteriorating⁵¹. The first concentration camp at Auschwitz (on the outskirts of the Polish city of Oswiecim) was established in May 1941, followed in October 1941 by another one, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, known infamously as the “Vernichtungslager” (extermination camp). Finally, a third one, Auschwitz III, was established at Monowitz in May 1942, functioning primarily as an “Arbeitslager” (work camp). In March 1942, a women’s sub-camp was established at Auschwitz with 6,000 inmates, and moved in August 1942 to Birkenau. According to some estimates, by January 1944, 27,000 women were living in Birkenau in separated quarters.⁵²

Yet, according to Olga, very little was known in Kolozsvár about the Nazi concentration camps⁵³. And when one reads her account it is impossible not to be surprised by her bafflement, naïveté almost, coupled with an endemic admiration for the German culture and science, widely shared by the educated elites of East-Central Europe⁵⁴. It was impossible for her to believe that Germany (a country she also knew from her visits in the 1920s) had descended into barbarity. “As late as 1943”, she wrote:

[...] frightening accounts reached us of the atrocities committed inside the concentration camps in Germany. But, like so many of those who read this today, we could not believe such horrible stories. We still looked upon Germany as a nation which had given much culture to the world. If these tales were at all true, the shameful acts must be due to a handful of madmen; this could not be national policy, nor part of a plan for global mastery.

Retrospectively, she admitted: “How little we understood!”⁵⁵. Her refusal to believe such stories was, I think, authentic. To accept that a cultured nation, such as Germany, was capable of such atrocities was, in effect, to accept that the entire intellectual edifice upon which educated elites, such as the Lengyels, built their worldview and social status was also inherently malevolent. Her knowledge of Germany, the home of “wonderful writers and scientists”⁵⁶, could not appear alongside the image of another Germany, the home of Nazi racists and anti-Semites, determined to bring about the extermination of the Jews in Europe. Even when a German major in the Wehrmacht, who stayed with the Lengyels in late 1943, “spoke of the fog of terror with which his country had blanketed Europe, we could not accept it”. When told candidly about “motor vans, constructed expressly to gas prisoners”, and of “huge camps devoted solely to the extermination of civilian minorities by the millions”, Olga’s “flesh crawled”. Something was terribly wrong. Yet, she persisted: “How could anyone believe such fantastic tales?”⁵⁷.

As mentioned earlier, the Lengyels belonged to an urban and professional Jewish elite in Kolozsvár, which, even after 1940, remained strongly attached to their set of cultural beliefs. They shared the conviction that as Hungarians (as they defined themselves) they were protected by the Hungarian state. The Nazi occupation of Hungary in March 1944 would prove exactly the opposite. The Hungarian Jews of Kolozsvár, alongside the Jews from Transylvania and Maramureş were now faced with deportation and, ultimately, extermination⁵⁸.

As insistently as Olga outlined her incredulity to the enveloping tragedy around her, she dismantled the perception of her as a passive woman, lacking initiative. Realising her husband's imminent deportation to Germany she decided to accompany him. Once again, she assessed the situation as any wife and mother would, with great poise and confidence, and she knew that her place was at her husband's side:

Instantly my decision was made. We would have to face many hardships; the pleasant life we had known might well be ended for years. But separation would be even worse. The war might continue for months, for years. The front lines were always shifting, and we might be cut off from each other forever. By going together we would at least be assured a common fate⁵⁹.

Little did she know that her own tragedy was about to unfold. Not only would she lose her husband, but also her parents, who "too, decided to accompany" them, and her two sons.

After a tortuous seven-day journey in cattle cars across Central Europe the Lengyels, together with other Jews from Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania, finally arrived in Auschwitz. Olga continued to be confused as to what was the purpose of their journey, and her "imagination could not supply a reasonable explanation"⁶⁰. But her unswervingly positive view on life was much weakened by then. Accepting responsibility, she went to her parents and asked for forgiveness. With growing realisation of what would follow, she described this scene in detail:

'Forgive you?' asked my mother with her characteristic tenderness. You have done nothing you need to be forgiven for.'

But her eyes dimmed with tears. What did she suspect in this hour?

'You have always been the best of daughters,' added my father.

'Perhaps we shall die,' my mother went on quietly, 'but you are young. You have the strength to fight, and you will live. You can still do so much for yourself, and the others'.

Olga and her parents were, for a few brief moments, a family again. "This was to be the last time that I embraced them"⁶¹, she remembered repentantly. As customary upon arrival in Auschwitz, women were separated from men, and so Olga separated from her father and husband, never to be reunited with them, apart from a brief moment she spent with her husband in the infirmary in Buna-Monowitz camp, a few months later⁶².

A second selection, however, occurred when the women were separated from their children and mothers. The enormity of what was happening to her family finally dawned on Olga. The difficulty in seeing a purpose for their presence there was compounded by the struggle to come to terms with the terrifying dissolution of her family. In her book, she conveyed the true moral dilemma, the "choiceless choice", regarding her sons and mother. Trapped in that situation, Olga's attributions of reason seem insufficient:

Our turn came. My mother, my sons, and I stepped before the 'selectors'. Then I committed my second terrible error. The selector waved my mother and myself to the adult group. He classed my younger son Thomas with the children and aged

which was to mean immediate extermination. He hesitated before [Dávid]⁶³, my elder son.

Assuming that the boy was more than twelve, Dr Fritz Klein (1888-1945), the “selector”⁶⁴, wanted to send him to labour, but Olga protested, as she “wanted to spare him from labours that might prove too arduous for him”⁶⁵.

And the scene that follows, profoundly upsetting, describes the horror of the realisation of what was going to happen to her sons and mother, and the inescapable feeling that it was her decision to “spare” the oldest son from hard work that “condemned” him and her mother “to death in the gas chambers”⁶⁶. Before long, the abandonment to the camp’s vortex of degradation and extermination was complete. Lined up, naked, together with the other women prisoners, Olga glimpsed longingly for the last time at pictures of her family, laying at her feet, together with her personal belongings. “I looked once more at the faces of my loved ones”—she wrote in pain. “My parents, my husband, and my children seemed to be smiling at me...”⁶⁷. Olga’s dearly loved were now lost, forever. She alone would remain alive. As predicted by her mother she was young and strong enough to survive the concentration camps.

Olga Lengyel was, in her own words, “a woman who suffered, [and who] lost her husband, parents, children, and friends”⁶⁸. Her story is one of both commemoration and redemption, and it is difficult not to be impressed by narratives such as these. But, as Christopher Browning rightly pointed out, “the most serious challenge in the use of survivor testimony” is to “embrace it too uncritically and emotionally”⁶⁹. I agree, albeit this is easier said than done. I also suggest that the situations described by Olga Lengyel and the decisions she took illuminate the difficulty one encounters when trying to describe the Holocaust within the standard conventions of historical narratives. More to the point, and to cite James E. Young, “What is remembered of the Holocaust depends on how it is remembered.”⁷⁰ In Olga Lengyel’s case – as I have tried to argue here – we should accept that the juxtaposition of unpredictable and contradictory decisions was the outcome not of obsessive elaboration of what is right or wrong, but of a sequence of real moments in life, whose incoherence and perhaps naïveté may surprise us today, but whose significance to our continual interrogation of the Holocaust should not be underestimated.

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 31. USC Shoah Foundation Institute testimony of Olga Lengyel. [last accessed 6 May 2016] part. 1, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufxLw-xSEMM>
 32. In 1918, Transylvania, and its main city Kolozsvár/Cluj, became part of Greater Romania.
 33. See Mendelsohn, Ezra. *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; 1987; chapter 3
 34. The White Terror was the response to the Communist revolution of 1919 led by a Hungarian Jew, Béla Kun.
 35. USC Shoah Foundation Institute testimony of Olga Lengyel. [last accessed 6 May 2016] part. 1, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufxLw-xSEMM>
 36. See Karady, Viktor; Nastasă, Lucian. *The University of Kolozsvár/Cluj and the Students of the Medical Faculty (1872-1918)*. 2004:263. Budapest/Cluj: Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center
 37. In her interview Olga mentioned that Dr Lengyel was also one of the physicians of the Mariánum School.
 38. After 1945, Mátyás Mátyás became head of Surgery Department at the Medical Faculty in Târgu-Mureș /Marosvásárhely.
 39. Between 1931-1932 Coriolan Tătaru was also the Mayor of Cluj.
 40. In her book Olga mentioned 1937 as the date they built the hospital although a hospital with the same name seems to have existed in Cluj already in 1933. See Orosz F. *Cluj-Kolozsvári kalauz*. Cluj-Kolozsvár: Az EKE kiadása; 1933:86.
 41. Lengyel, Olga. op cit. :12. Testimony of Olga Lengyel. p. 1 The 'Lengyel Sanatorium' survived the war. Between 1946-1949, unsuccessful attempts were made by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to establish a medical center for Jewish patients with tuberculosis in the Lengyel Sanatorium. In 1948 Olga Lengyel had tried to sell the property to the Public Health Department, which had requisitioned it, most probably in 1946. It was too late, however, as all private properties were nationalized in Romania in 1948. See Letter from AJDC Bucharest to Mr.

Herbert Katzki, Re: Lengyel Sanatorium, Cluj, JDC Archives, Geneva, Folder Romania: Medical 1946-1949, Ref. G 45-54/4 /70 /15/RO.392.

42. Testimony of Olga Lengyel. p. 1
43. Lengyel, Olga. op cit. :12.
44. Ibidem.
45. In her book Olga does not mention that Dávid was adopted.
46. Testimony of Olga Lengyel. p. 1
47. Ibidem.
48. See Case, Holly. Navigating Identities: The Jews of Kolozsvár (Cluj) and the Hungarian Administration 1940-1944 Mueller, Wolfgang; Portmann, Michael Osteuropa vom Weltkrieg zur Ende. Vienna Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2007:39–53.
49. See Braham, Randolph L. The Hungarian Labor Service System, 1939-1945. New York East European Monographs 1977
50. Lengyel, Olga. op cit. :12.
51. See Segal, Raz. Genocide in the Carpathians: War, Social Breakdown, and Mass Violence, 1914-1945. Palo Alto Stanford University Press 2016
52. Rees, Laurence. Auschwitz. A New History. New York: Public Affairs; 2005.
53. The reason, she suggested, was that the state controlled the radio and the published media and censorship prevented any reporting on the Nazi concentration camps.
54. Miklós Lengyel, as many other physicians from Hungary and Romania at the time, had also specialised in Germany. Most of them, albeit encountering bouts of anti-Semitism in the Weimar republic, remained unflinchingly admirative of the Germans, as openly admitted by Olga in her interview. See Testimony of Olga Lengyel. :1.
55. Lengyel, Olga. op cit. :13.
56. Testimony of Olga Lengyel. p. 1
57. Ibidem.
58. On the deportation of Jews from Transylvania and Maramureş, see Braham, Randolph L. Genocide and Retribution: The Holocaust in Hungarian-Ruled Northern Transylvania. Boston Kluwer Nijhoff 1983 Löwy, Dániel. A Kálváriától a tragédiáig: Kolozsvár zsidó lakosságának története. Kolozsvár Koinónia 2005
59. Lengyel, Olga. op cit. :12–13.
60. Ibidem. p. 22
61. Ibidem.
62. Ibidem. p. 207-208. As Olga was to find out later her husband was shot dead by an SS guard whilst trying to help a fellow inmate.
63. In the book the boy is wrongly named Arvad.
64. He was a German from Transylvania, who after the war was hanged for his role in the Holocaust.
65. Lengyel, Olga. op cit. :24.
66. Ibidem.
67. Ibidem. p. 27
68. Ibidem. p. 227
69. Browning, Christopher R. op cit. :40.
70. Young, James E. Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; 1988. p. 1