

Narrative Threads
Ethnographic Tourism, Romani Tourist Tales, and Fiber Art



by

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Evan W. Zajdel, BPhil

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This thesis examines the need for the ethnographer to process their own emotions and experiences as part of the ethnographic experience. Specifically, it argues for the credibility of artistic expression resulting from fieldwork.

Drawing on the author's experience during the 2012 inaugural "Romani Music, Culture, and Human Rights" study abroad program at the University of Pittsburgh, this thesis offers an analysis of five works of fiber art. Originally perceived by the author as separate from the thesis writing process, they became an integral part of thesis once they were recognized as the non-verbal processing of the my emotional response to events abroad and, therefore, essential components of the research process.

I argue that emotional processing is an integral part of writing ethnography, for as the ethnographer works through their experiences, their understanding of the events changes, and this in turn impacts the ways in which the ethnographic is perceived and analyzed.

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§1.0 ROMANI STUDIES AND ETHNOGRAPHIC TOURISM

Visitors clog the hallways of Block 4 at Auschwitz, and I struggle to hear the tour guide over the radio. Against the din of the other tour guides and tourists, it is difficult to hear, much less understand. She guides us through rooms filled with personal effects confiscated from inmates at the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex, but each pile is an incomprehensible, jumbled mass. I move on, unaffected and protected by emotional distance and glass. Until Room 5.

In a display spanning the length of the room, a small mountain of shorn hair tumbles down to touch the glass. On the adjacent wall, yet-intact braids make an orderly tangle. I reach for my own hair, reassuring myself that it is still attached. Yes, that pony-tail still reaches to the middle of my back.

The hair. Not a mere possession, this was once attached to someone. All that hair. As a man with long hair and a full beard, part of my identity and the way others identify me is built upon hair. But this mass, it has no identity, except to speak of enforced loss of identity.

The rest of the day passes in comfortably unaware emotional detachment. At lunch, I contemplate how my caloric intake so easily exceeded that of a prisoner, but I feel nothing. With dispassion, I consider the preservation concern of the barbed-wire and concrete fence at Birkenau, yet I mentally praise how well integrated the

Roma memorial is with the visual language of the ruins of the *Zigeunerlager* (“Gypsy camp”). The tour guide leads my group past early gas chambers, but I can only think about how visitors have placed small pebbles on the fence as on the tombstones of the Jewish cemetery in Prague. Throughout this I am dimly aware of being disengaged, but I only realized its extent when I came to the “Sauna”.

This ironically titled building was where new inmates were stripped, bathed, shaved, and tattooed – no longer a name but a number, the “Sauna” was a place of de-identification. Today, in contrast, the “Sauna” exhibit guides visitors along the path of new inmates, allowing visitors to identify with inmates in a way that they could not with the piles of possessions. Before exiting, when inmates would have been scoured and shorn in their striped uniforms, with fresh tattoo burning, visitors can re-identify some of those men and women, reading stories of their lives before, during, and even after Auschwitz.

At least, that is the intended experience. My journey through the “Sauna” began devoid of emotion, and ended in shock when I found myself focusing on the raised glass walkway as an elegant solution to both guide and contain foot traffic and to preserve the floor and the rest of the historic fabric of the building.

I rarely speak of that day. It took me almost a year to begin to process that experience, that emotional detachment. But in many ways I did not completely realize how deep the impact was until well over a year later when I attempted to write of my experience at Auschwitz.

I had approached my research abroad, my “fieldwork”, believing that I would be “objectively” analyzing others’ experiences, while my own role would be erased through the abstraction. My academic background had been built upon the primacy of text as research material and mode of communication, with all other media taking a subordinate role.

Yet, as I reflected on my experience abroad during this year and a half of thesis writing and research, I questioned the superiority of text over other forms of expression. I doubted how I could write of what others experiences when I had such a difficult time verbalizing my own. Instead, I retreated to a more comfortable medium, and found that I was able to begin to process the difficult emotions and piece together a coherent understanding of my experience through my fiber art.

Since completing a total of 5 works of fiber art, I have been able to look back and see that, while ethnography applies successive layers of abstraction onto information to find “truth”, the ethnographer may in fact impose similar layers of abstraction onto their own experiences. However, I argue that the abstraction of emotion is to obscure “truth”, and to delay processing those experiences until we are ready to subject our own selves to scrutiny, but I would further argue that the process of peeling back these layers is essential, and an ethnography cannot be complete without this emotional processing.

1.1 BACKGROUND

In January of 2012 I turned in my application for the inaugural “Romani Music, Culture, and Human Rights” study abroad program. Led by my advisor, Dr. Adriana Helbig, I knew this trip would give me an opportunity to learn about the realities faced by the Roma, a people whose music I played in the Pitt Carpathian Ensemble and whose language I had studied with a linguistic anthropologist. I later realized how this program could become the catalyst for a larger research project, and proposed a Bachelor of Philosophy thesis focused on my fellow participants and the program itself as a case study in Romani Studies scholarship.

Cosponsored by the University of Pittsburgh and Charles University (Prague), the 2012 “Romani Music, Culture, and Human Rights” summer study abroad program was unprecedented both in study abroad and ethnographic research. Twelve students from the United States led by Dr. Adriana Helbig joined 5 students from the Czech Republic and their professor, Dr. Zuzana Jurkova, to travel through the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia for the first-ever study abroad program to focus solely on Romani music.

This unique program not only offered me and my fellow undergraduate students a rare chance to participate in ethnographic research, human rights policy research, and cultural/identity politics research, this program also gave the us a forum in which to present their research in a symposium held during the following semester¹.

¹ See Appendix A for a facsimile of the syllabus and itinerary, which was heavily subject to change but is representative of the actual trip.

One of the major goals of the program was to assist students in observing with the eyes of an ethnographer², but the short-term nature of our program required that we engage in a touristic approach. This combination of ethnographic research and tourist results in a rare kind of tourism: “ethnographic tourism”.

As ethnographic tourists, we did not want to accept the prescribed view of Roma culture, and, unlike the average tourist, we attempted to view each performance, each lecture, and each interaction as a production of specific political and cultural forces. We were not searching for a “true” Roma culture, but for the many, the different, and even the conflicting realities of being Roma in Central Europe.



© 2012, Julian Hayda

The two-and-a-half week program was organized into three distinct parts based on learning objectives and research setting³: Pittsburgh, Prague, and

² Bruner, p. 7, on the “disparity between touristic and ethnographic ways of seeing.”

³ It is important to note that while I call this tour an example of “ethnographic tourism”, I do not mean to dismiss it as less than academic. Despite the many prejudices in the US discourse on study abroad, as outlined by Joan Elias Gore in *Dominant Beliefs and Alternative Voices: Discourse,*

Poland/Slovakia. The first few days in Pittsburgh were important for creating group cohesion, discussing assigned texts to provide context for the future research, and generally preparing the group for departure.

The first week abroad was spent entirely in Prague for the duration of the 2012 Khamoro World Roma Festival. Prior to the evening concerts, each day included a lecture from a prominent ethnomusicologist, including Dr. Speranța Rădulescu, Dr. Iren Kertecz Wilkinson, Dr. Veronika Seidlova, and the program directors, Dr. Helbig and Dr. Jurkova. This week of lectures and tours of Prague and Jewish Prague provided the context for understanding the variety of Romani musics on display at Khamoro and how these styles had formed.

The second week was a stark contrast to the first. We left Prague for Kraków, Poland, and began the week with a presentation from Dr. Marcin Jarząbek of the Jagiellonian University. A full day was spent touring Auschwitz 1 and Auschwitz-Birkenau 3, including Block 13, dedicated to the Roma victims of Auschwitz, the aforementioned Roma Memorial at Birkenau, the early killing chambers and ash ponds, and the “Sauna” exhibit.

After resting a day in Kraków, recharging from the draining and overwhelming day at Auschwitz, we traveled to Tarnów to visit the Ethnographic Museum. The first contemporary museum with a permanent exhibit on Romani culture, the museum’s curator, Adam Bartosz, is also the editor of “*Studia Romologica*”, a tri-lingual Romani Studies journal with articles in English, Polish,

Beliefs, and Gender in American Study Abroad, I believe this study abroad program was an “academic tour” and its goals were best served through a touristic approach.

and Romani. A Kraków-based band of Romani musicians had been hired to give us a concert amid the museum's collection of *vardo* (wagon), and we were quick to join in with percussion, dancing, and even singing.

From Tarnów we traveled to Košice, Slovakia. Our first stop was Lunik IX, the largest urban Romani settlement in the world, notorious for overcrowding and other ills yet renowned for its award-winning pre-school. Following a group discussion/therapy session⁴, we met with representatives from the Roma Press Agency, the award-winning journalism agency which had provided us the contact with the director of the Lunik IX preschool.

We spent one more day in Košice to catch up on fieldnotes and decompress, before leaving for Bratislava. On the way, we stopped in the rural town of Nálepkovo, where one of the Czech students had previously conducted research. The rural Roma faced many of the same problems as the residents of Lunik IX, but in Nálepkovo, the Roma were more dispersed. Many did live in peripheral settlements, but there were two separate settlements and not one huge one, and some lived closer to the city center and had ethnic-Slovak neighbors.

The second week presented various pictures of what it means to be Roma in Eastern and Central Europe today. Where Khamoro revealed the splintered nature of the Roma community even in terms of musical style and how music is still one of the dominant ways to engage non-Roma, visits to Romani settlements showed just

⁴ We referred to this session as “group therapy” because of the many difficult experiences we had at Lunik IX, which ranged from being overwhelmed by the crushing poverty to being locked into a building “for our safety” and having police arrive to dispel the crowd we had attracted. In many ways, Lunik IX proved to just as difficult an experience to process as Auschwitz.

how far out of reach a musical career is for the average Rom. We all agreed that the second week was more stressful but perhaps more rewarding as there were more opportunities to interact with Roma outside of the politicized context of Khamoro.

Nearly three months after the end of the program, nearly all of the United States-based students presented their research at a symposium held at the University of Pittsburgh. Presentations were diverse, reflecting the unique backgrounds of the group, with topics ranging from fashion and Facebook to tuberculosis transmission and human security.

University of Pittsburgh Department of Music Presents

Symposium on Romani Music, Culture, and Human Rights

IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, POLAND, AND SLOVAKIA



SEPTEMBER 24, 2012, 8:30-3pm

Dining Room B, William Pitt Union | 4200 Fifth Avenue | Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Featuring presentations by students who participated in PWR's *Romani Spaces* summer study abroad program in Central and Eastern Europe, May 26-June 12, 2012

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS	
<p>8:30 – 9:00 Julian Hajda (DuPont University, Class of 2014) Roma Photo Exhibit</p> <p>9:00 – 9:30 Lisa Wysocki (University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2014) "Caste-Aways: The Precarious Position of Roma in Europe"</p> <p>9:30 – 10:00 Rachel Wiley (University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2014) "What Can Joe Cose Teach Europe? Dimensions of the Romani Movement in the Czech Republic and Slovakia"</p> <p>10:00 – 10:15 Coffee break</p> <p>10:15 – 10:45 Hope McLaughlin (University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2014) "Like my status if you like Gypsies" The Role of Social Media in the Roma Rights Movement"</p> <p>10:45 – 11:15 Dominique Dela Cruz (University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2013) "The Influence of Fashion on Roma Communities"</p> <p>11:15 – 11:30 Coffee break</p> <p>11:30 – 12:00 Christine Lin (University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2015) "Reducing Tuberculosis Transmission in Europe by Minimizing Romani Homelessness, Discrimination, and Other Stress Factors"</p>	<p>12:00 – 12:30 Lynsie Clift (University of Pittsburgh/USPA, MPA 2012) "Women's Rights and Gender Equality as Factors for Roma Social Inclusion, Development, and Security"</p> <p>12:30 – 12:45 Coffee break</p> <p>12:45 – 1:15 Dylan Crossen (University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2013) "Perceptions of Roma and Their Music"</p> <p>1:15 – 1:45 Evan Zagel (University of Pittsburgh/UMC, BPhil 2012) "Roma Rights Movement: A Fiber Artist's Interpretation" (introduction, applique, quilting, dye-work)</p> <p>1:45 – 2:00 Coffee break</p> <p>2:00 – 2:30 Lucas and Nicolas Durik-Hu (University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2012 and 2013) "Identity Crisis: Lessons Learned By Two Roma Brothers in an Ethnographic Ethos Across Europe"</p> <p>2:30 – 3:00 Laryssa Szyska (Franklin & Marshall College, Class of 2015) "Magic as a Factor in Romani Cultural Isolation"</p>

For more information, please contact **Dr. Adriana Helbig**, Assistant Professor of Music, at adh594@pitt.edu or 412-624-4193.

All students are invited to a special **workshop-performance** by **Fanfare Ciocărlia**, a 12 piece Gypsy brass band from Romania.

4pm, Bellefield Hall Auditorium
315 South Bellefield Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Fanfare Ciocărlia will also perform at the **Reception**, **September 24, 8pm**
4204 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15224
Tickets \$15

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The Department of Music of Arts & Sciences
Photo credit: Hope McLaughlin © 2012

Sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Music, Center of Russian and East European Studies, and the Study Abroad Office

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the 1976 inaugural issue of the *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly*, Jon Wagner writes that “the humanistic perspective in anthropology is nothing more or less than a realistic acceptance of involvement.”⁵ Writing against what is sometimes called a “heroic” narrative⁶, Wagner finds that humanism demands that the ethnographer “sheds his Olympian pretensions and accept human status.”⁷ In the years since Wagner’s article, a form of this understanding of humanism in anthropological research has risen to prominence and is known by the title “reflexivity”, a self-study of what the researcher, through background, prejudices, theoretical frames, etc., has brought to the research and how this may impact the resultant writing.

This concept of reflexivity, as practiced in ethnomusicology and ethnographies in general, is oft used to prevent the erasure of the ethnographer and to analyze how the interactions were shaped by the ethnographer’s presence⁸. Rather than footnote discussions about how the ethnographer had to manage the conflict between conforming to a role to understand the “host” culture and yet never truly being able to fit that role as an “outsider”, the ethnographer explicitly discusses “How did I/my presence impact the events?”

However, while this practice places the ethnographer back into their research and helps to transform the “host/guest” dichotomy into a more nuanced relationship

⁵ Wagner, p. 4.

⁶ Wherein the ethnographer has gone into a culture, struggled against the unknown, and returned triumphantly with new knowledge.

⁷ Wagner, p. 4.

⁸ Cooley and Barz, p. 20.

with “interlocutors”, it still does not completely correct the imbalance. If the ethnographer had an impact on the events and the community which produced them, is there not some sort of resultant impact upon the ethnographer?

If we are to recognize the humanity of the ethnographer and the subjective nature of fieldwork and ethnographic research, then the answer to that question must be “Yes.” Therefore, when I ask myself “How did I/my presence impact the events?” I should also ask the reciprocal question, “How did the events impact me?”

This is not to suggest that every ethnography need be an exposition on “How living in Culture X changed my life”⁹, nor will every ethnographer need to write of the personal part of their fieldwork experience. Instead, I argue that an ethnography will only be whole and complete when the ethnographer has reflected on their experiences and the changes wrought on the ethnographer. By examining the change in perspective over time, the ethnographer will be able to examine, synthesize, and present the “research” with greater clarity.

Humanism also provides another critique of anthropology, and academia in general, where text holds primacy above all other forms of communication and that all non-text subjects or sources must be reduced to text. While it is true that text is enduring and may often be more effective in communication, this obsession produces expectations that text is ideal and non-text is nigh unto illegitimate. However, humanistic anthropology’s explicit goal is to consider and include in

⁹ See Cooley and Barz, p. 20, writing of Rice’s objections to “confessional” ethnography, and Rice, p.34, describing “confessional ethnography” as “self-indulgent and unprofessional,” and that such ethnography, rather than beneficially placing the ethnographer back in the ethnography, actually “indicates the problem of displacement” by displacing the focus away from the culture under discussion.

ethnographic research the many aspects of humanity which do not fit into “empirical”, “objective” analysis¹⁰.

I am not a person who naturally turns to text and the art of writing to communicate, much less to process my emotions or to answer the question “How was I affected by the research process?” Instead, I turned to the non-verbal medium of fiber art. I certainly communicate *about* my works with spoken and written words, and two of my pieces contain written words, but ultimately the process of creation was guided by wordless emotion.

Only after the creation of the pieces and the processing of emotion somewhat complete, was a text-based analysis even possible. Thus, while text often has an aura of superiority, text is really quite often a substitute, playing a subordinate role to the subject of communication.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

I began researching for this thesis through ethnographic methods, including surveys, interviews, observations, trying to understand what the other participants expected from this program.

Survey #1 was handed out during the first few days abroad and completed sometime during the trip. I took notes on the activities, the actions of the participants, and on my state of mind during all of the activities.

Though my focus shifted soon after my return, I still continued to research using these methods, so I observed most of the American participants present at a

¹⁰ Wagner, p. 4.

symposium held on the 24th of September at the University of Pittsburgh, and I followed up with Survey #2 in October and November via SurveyMonkey.

While abroad and part of the group, I watched how we all were using social media to process experiences, posting status updates on Facebook and commenting on each other's posts. This semi-public process changed after we went to Auschwitz and Lunik IX; the nature of comments changed, photo albums went private, posts became more activist in nature.

Watching this process was influential in shifting my focus toward experience and tour narrative, but throughout this I still continued to efface myself from this process, from the need to work through my own experience, and even from having been a part of what and how my friends experienced the tour. I was looking at how others were processing, but I did not recognize that I was subconsciously processing my own experiences, just as they were. However, while they were using words, in the form of Facebook posts and academic papers, I wrote very little. I instead turned to the creation of fiber art.

Between July 2012 and June 2013, I produced five pieces of fiber art specifically based on my experience abroad. The nature of art creation requires some conscious thought—*What am I trying to do with this piece? How does my choice of materials/color impact how the work is interpreted?*—but it was not until after completing these works that I realized the unconscious, emotional statements I had made through these pieces.

However, I was still clinging to some semblance of “objectivity”, and attempted to analyze my own work from a third-person vantage point. To do the analysis, I used a modification of a technique I learned from Dr. Mrinalini Rajagopalan, University of Pittsburgh Assistant Professor and a Committee Member for this thesis. Dr. Rajagopalan uses this method to analyze historical photographs as primary source documents, but I used it to analyze visual elements by 1) writing a thick description, 2) connecting the details to larger symbolic/historical contexts, and 3) piecing together the artistic narrative.

This erasure of my own self from my work, a theoretically questionable and functionally impossible endeavor, I compounded by exhorting readers to interpret my pieces for themselves before reading my interpretation.

“The reader is perhaps best served by a careful examination of each piece and my ‘artist’s description’ before continuing on to the written analysis.” *(from a previous version of this thesis)*

I have left in the original, three-step analysis; I would instead encourage readers to examine the analysis in light of the more personal backstory.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My initial research focused on the expectations of participants, as well as their motivations for participating. I was curious as to whether the trip would meet their expectations, and how they would deal with what didn’t measure up. However, once abroad I realized that not only did most of my fellow participants have open-

ended expectations, but that the trip itself was not designed to encourage the expectations I had expected in others.

I still clung to my first surveys and the responses to questions regarding “authenticity” in music, and came upon the work of Philip Feifan Xie and the concept of “authentication”¹¹. This led my research into the realm of tourism studies and the work of Edward Bruner. Bruner’s ethnography of tourists was analogous to how I had begun my research as a “study of people who study”, but his concept of the “tour narrative” allowed me to separate the way one *thinks* about a tour as from how one *talks* about a tour.

My research then shifted to consider the unique nature of my case-study as an example of “ethnographic tourism”¹². I concerned myself with discovering how to understand and study ethnographic tourism, for I had not been prepared to do so prior to departure. Which is where tour narratives come in: we can listen to “tourist tales” (what tourists say about a tour, how they talk about it) to find pieces of their tour narratives (how they think about the tour). But tour narratives change with time, as the tourist’s understanding and perspective changes, and my fiber art then became an example of reading an evolving tour narrative.

¹¹ In brief, “authentication” is the process of arbitrating claims to “authenticity”. Xie and Bruner would likely argue that “authenticity” as defined by such claimants, is non-existent: for nothing can be “authentically” anything but that which it is. In the context of tourism, there are no “authentic” “native dances”, for example, but there are plenty of “authentic” “dances-which-are-performed-for-tourists”.

¹² I use the term “ethnographic tourism” in a different fashion from Bruner and others. Bruner would use it almost synonymously with “the ethnography of tourism”, i.e. *studying tourists*, which was a departure from earlier tourism ethnographies, which focused on the tourism practitioners. When I use the term “ethnographic tourism”, I refer to *the way in which the tourists approach the tour* and create their tour narratives.

Underneath this concern with narrative was really a desire to understand experiences; how can different individual experiences shape an understanding of the whole, and yet changes in perspective on the whole inform the understanding of the individual experience?

It was this underlying focus on the impact of experiences is what ultimately led to the questions posed in this thesis: How does the process of (ethnographic) research impact the ethnographer/researcher, and, in turn, how does this affect the research produced?

1.5 CONCLUSION

With high expectations that my research would go smoothly, aided by a structured schedule, I set off for Prague with high hopes that my “fieldwork” would be career-choice-affirming experience. Instead, my “fieldwork” plans disintegrated.

I had fallen prey to a common misconception that “fieldwork” is a well-defined thing. Timothy Rice finds that, upon close examination, there are doubts about whether there are methods for fieldwork, what exactly constitutes “the field”, and whether one does work there!¹³ In the end, Rice humorously suggests that a course on “fieldwork methods” might be better titled “life-experience understandings in ethnomusicology”¹⁴.

¹³ Rice, pp. 42-7.

¹⁴ Rice, p. 47.

Precisely because ethnographic research is derived from these “life-experience understandings” that I argue for the consideration of the emotional impact of the ethnographic experience upon the researcher.

§2.0 LAYERS OF ABSTRACTION

In order to deal with experiences, I have found that these experiences are layered under a series of abstraction. The outermost layers abstracted out to complete generalities, involving only parts of specific events or experiences. Thus, immediate responses are simplistic as they are a response to a simplification, but this is not to discount these early responses. Rather, these initial responses are used to process successive layers of increasingly specificity, eventually allowing the ethnographer to face the underlying experience.

Through my analysis of the following three pieces of fiber art, I found three separate layers worked out. The first layer is an anxiety of racism, and though this is worked out in other pieces, it appears as the first and simplest theme which suggests its overarching impact on the whole and that it is likely to be closely related to one of the deepest issues.

The second layer deals with an anxiety over the politicization of racial oppression and the trivializing of a human rights movement through opportunism. Again, this theme is also worked out in other pieces, but its simplest form is dealt with in the second piece.

Finally, the third abstracted layer is an anxiety over the artist's identity, both ethnic and positional. This anxiety is subtly worked out in preceding pieces,

but not necessarily on a conscious level; unlike the other layers, once worked through, this anxiety of identity is mostly put to rest after the third piece.

2.1 Z IS FOR ZIGEUNER



(Photo © 2013, Martha Wasik)

Born of the artist's experiences in Central and Eastern Europe and a visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, this piece celebrates the Roma survival of the Holocaust and their growing strength through the Roma Rights Movement.

2012

12" by 12" by 1"

Cotton thread on felt and canvas

Made for the 2013 Fiberart Guild of Pittsburgh's Member Show *Artabet*, on display at the Panza Gallery in Millvale, PA, from April 6th until the 27th, 2013.

2.1.1 The Analysis

Thick Visual Description

The piece is a white square dominated by a large black Z. Three words, each with a prominent Z, are written inside the large Z, and each are of a different color: blue, red, and green. The last word includes two symbols which appear to function as letters: the first an upward pointing white equilateral triangle, and the second a white circle with a red wheel spoke pattern. No signature is apparent¹⁵, despite the deeply personal nature of the piece as indicated by the description.

Symbol Analysis and Historical Context

The artist's description is the clue to the whole piece. Suddenly, the red wheel is now a Romani chakra, a part of the Romani flag and a symbol of the Roma Rights Movement. The flag is also referenced in the color choices for the words, which features a red chakra in the center of a field of blue above and green below.

In this light, the Z and the white triangle are understood as a reinterpretation of the armbands Roma prisoners wore in Auschwitz-Birkenau, which were white fabric appliquéd with a downward-pointing black triangle and a Z embroidered in the lower right corner.

That Z stood for “Zigeuner”, the top word in the piece, and is the German word for “Gypsy”. The middle word, “Tzigan”, is a transcription of the generic Slavic word for “Gypsy” which in Polish is written “cygan”. Finally, “Zingaro” is from Italian and occasionally used in English, as another word for “Gypsy”.

¹⁵ The signature is on the lower-right side in running stitch, while the title is written in pencil.

EXHIBITION OF ORIGINAL FIBERART

ARTabet



PANZAgallery

**Opening Saturday,
April 6, 6-9 pm**

115 Sedgwick Street
Millvale, PA 15209
412.821.0959

**show runs
April 6 – 27, 2013**

fi2013

 fiberarts guild of
pittsburgh, inc.

Original art by members of the Fiberarts Guild
of Pittsburgh to support Fiberart International 2013.
Wrapping paper printed with the artwork will be for sale.

Artistic Narrative

Unsurprisingly, the first piece I produced following the tour, made during the first few weeks after returning, is my immediate response to the most emotionally charged elements of the tour. This is a visceral response to the horrors of Auschwitz and continuing discrimination, each element has been reversed and its meaning inverted. The armband has become an art piece of celebration, not a mark of hate. The Z is now the focal point, not an annotation of condemnation. Rather than appliquéd, the Z has been carefully cut out in a reverse appliqué to reveal the black fabric beneath. Though still an appliqué, the triangle has been reversed in direction and color.

Though it is a simple, even simplistic, narrative, “Things were worse but there is hope for the future,” this narrative would have allowed me to work through the rest of the tour by temporarily setting aside the most difficult parts for the future when time and distance would bring clarity.

2.1.2 The Backstory

This piece, which began my whole process of using fiber art, was nearly never made. As a member of the Fiberart Guild of Pittsburgh (FGP), I had previously volunteered to assist with the Guild’s major triennial exhibition, Fiberart International (FI). When the opportunity arose in the spring of 2012 to participate in a member show, “Artabet”, to help raise funds for the upcoming FI2013, I jumped at the chance. I responded quickly, and was assigned the letter “Z” for based on my

last name. After briefly sketching out several possibilities, all executed in traditional, Western European embroidery techniques, I let it slip from my mind, waiting until I returned from abroad.

I didn't think about it again until we were in Košice, when I received a reminder email about the upcoming Artabet critique. I thought back to my original plan and was unmoved, but my recent experiences soon presented a new option. The phrase "Z is for Zigeuner" came to mind, as a similar phrase had been used by our tour guide at Auschwitz, and a theme was born.

The choice of languages in this piece was a long process, as indicated by the many lists of possibilities on the sketchbook pages on page 27. While the choice of "Zigeuner", "Zingaro", and the stylized "tZigan" were based on the Z, in the analysis I discuss the origin of the words, which in turn reveals that the choice was more deliberate than "does it have a Z?" This raises the question of why I found it important to convey the origins of these words.

A partial answer lies in my linguistic background, which includes all major West European languages (German, Spanish, Italian, French) as well as Polish, which provides some access to other West-Slavic languages (Czech and Slovak). These also tie in to my academic background, which has largely been focused on the music, architecture, and even economics of West Europe; notably, the only examples of the word "zingaro", apart from Italian texts, comes from two operas: the "Anvil Chorus" from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, and W.S. Gilbert's burlesque parody *The Merry Zingara*.

The more complete answer is based on these partials, and it is one of linguistic identity: how I use language to present myself to others. This is played out not just through this piece, but also through my translation of “Zigeunerlager”, my insistence upon correct diacritics for Polish and Slovak words (Tarnów, Košice), and, ultimately, my use of the word Roma.

Throughout this thesis, I have been using the term *Roma* is used to refer to the people commonly known by the ethnonym “the Gypsies”, and the term *Romani* as either an adjective or as a noun for the language common to that people group¹⁶. When a distinction between Roma and non-Roma must be made, the terms *Gažo* (singular) and *Gaze* (plural) will be used to refer to all non-Roma.

There are many dialects of Romani scattered across Europe, and years of language contact makes it impossible for a unified orthographic convention to be developed. Thus, due to my language background, this paper will use a mostly Slavic-influenced convention of orthography, with the notable exception of the use of the letter “ezh”, or ž. When used in Romani, the letter ezh represents a sound that is close to the “j” of “jeans”, and is frequently transcribed as “dj” or “dž” (i.e. “Gadjo”, “Gadžo”, and “Gažo” are the same). I chose the least common form for both concision and clarity: “dj” becomes problematic when “j” is used for the semi-consonant with English equivalent of “y”.

¹⁶ I feel it necessary to point out that, technically, it is still an adjective as it derives its origin from *romani čhib* “Gypsy tongue”. But that is quibbling.

Even the use of “Roma” is a convention, as that word is not always the plural ethnonym in every dialect of Romani and, furthermore, the use of *Rom/Roma/Romani* outside of speaking Romani is an intensely political choice.

For non-Roma (Gaze) the use of *Roma* indicates a political choice to either show cultural awareness or political correctness¹⁷, especially when used in English with other Gaze. And so it is in this paper: I, through my use of *Roma*, am making a statement about my status as an academic speaking to other informed academics. Though “Roma” was once a universal endonym (the in-group ethnonym), it has transformed into an exonym, applied by Roma elites and Gaze scholars.

Regardless of the politics of the use of “Roma” in place of “Gypsy”, the word “Gypsy” still has a lot of stereotypical cachet in the English language¹⁸. Even though the word represents hundreds of years of racism and oppression, I will use it in several translations in this paper because, no doubt, every one of my potential readers knows what the word means.

Though this piece initially treats only one layer of anxiety, it has important ties with other layers; this is consistent with the idea that the outer layers are abstractions and simplifications of deeper, more complex issues.

¹⁷ Here, used in the pejorative sense, suggesting a lack of sincerity and a desire to appear more [fill in your favorite attribute of choice] than their colleagues, etc.

¹⁸ What is more troubling is that in American popular culture (including television, music, and fashion) it is perhaps more frequent that the people group behind the word has been forgotten. “Gypsy” has been reduced to a word to an adjective connoting an unconventional lifestyle, a word suitable for “tag-mashing” with “boho”, “tribal”, and “hippie” to sell unconventional, handmade clothing¹⁸. While some are on a crusade against the use of “Gypsy”, I find it simpler to not worry about the usage of the word but the *intended meaning*. Educating someone on the realities of the discrimination and human rights violations experienced by the Roma would do more to eradicate the word “Gypsy” than a diatribe on the inherent racism of the word ever could.



Number patches © Pawel Sawicki, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

Both are of Polish political prisoners, denoted by the red triangle and P

The Romani Flag, as adopted by 1971 World Romani Congress



55

ZIGUENER
~~GYPSY~~
ZINGARO

Zigener
Zingaro
Zygon

Zigeuner
 Zigaro
 Tzigan
 GYPSY
 CYGAN
 GIZAN
 GITANO
 Z
 ROMA
 SINTO
 KALDERAS
 LOVARO

2.2 CHAKRA SCARF



Though the Roma Rights Movement has the potential to positively impact all levels of Roma society, and beyond, many view the movement as simply an accessory to be worn at one's convenience.

2012

9" by 74"

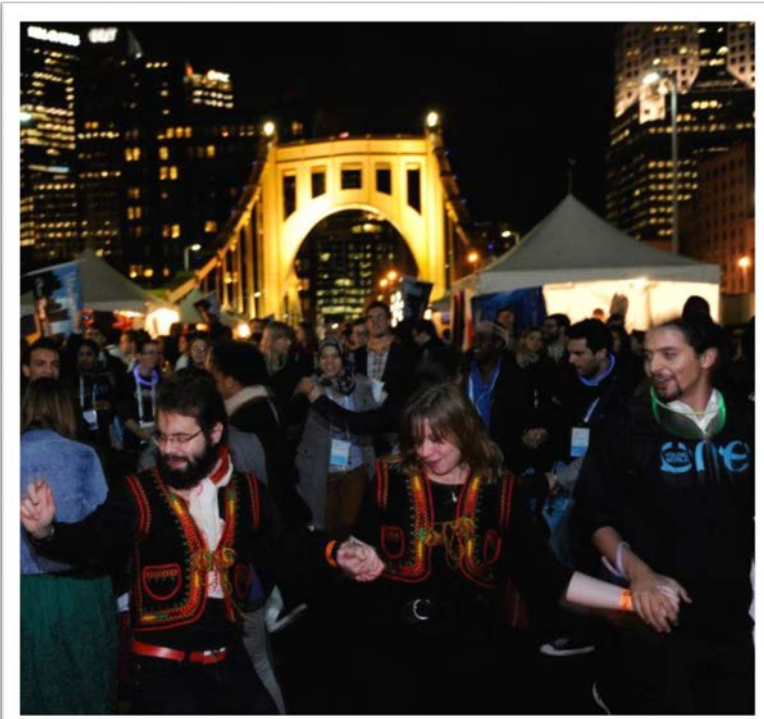
Dye and silk thread on cotton, linen, and silk

2.2.1 The Analysis

Thick Visual Description

This scarf has two distinct sides: the first is of red silk banded by cream linen; the other is of tan muslin banded by ecru silk. Romani chakras are printed in red, black, and brown on all parts of the scarf, including the patches on the red silk and the muslin.

The muslin is the most altered/distressed of the four fabrics, with streaks of red, spatters of brown, smudged and distorted chakras, multiple patches and quilting from patches on the other side, and what could be a tire-track across the center. The ecru silk has a high degree of spatter, either carried over from or carrying over to the muslin, but it has no patches and the chakras are relatively distinct. The cream linen has remarkably distinct chakras but is marked with equally distinct red spatter. The red silk, barring the several patches, has suffered



the least alteration and all the chakras are distinct, though faded.

The author (left) leads a dance line with Lisa (center) and an Algerian delegate to music by the Pitt Carpathian Ensemble at the “One Young World” Bridge Party, October 2012

Symbol Analysis and Historical Context

The Romani chakra was adopted as part of the Romani flag at the 1971 First World Romani Congress. However, recognition of the symbol is not complete among the Roma which is further complicated by the Roma/Gypsy self-identification issues, for some Roma retain the “Gypsy” exonym to differentiate/discriminate themselves from other Roma in a way which reflects class and power issues¹⁹.

The artist’s description, however, *does not specify* those for whom the Roma Rights Movement is ancillary. Criticism from, and of, Roma NGOs reveals that, while it is true that corruption and nepotism in Roma NGOs are problematic, it is more problematic that Gaze-run institutions lack both the understanding of the issues Roma face *and* the desire to investigate Roma NGOs and to appropriate money to those actually accomplishing something.²⁰ Thus, while some Roma may be using the Roma Rights Movement, it is more often Gaze who wear the costume of a concerned Roma Rights supporter for personal gain.

Artistic Narrative

For this piece, the artist’s description seems to capture all the relevant details. However, the self-censorship of who uses the Roma Rights Movement as an accessory is highly telling. Rather than simply state the parties using the Roma Rights Movement as a vehicle for political gain, I instead chose to hide that

¹⁹ Speranța Rădulescu testified to this in a May 30, 2012, presentation on contemporary Romani music in Romania to the students of the “Romani Music, Culture, and Human Rights”.

²⁰ Nicolae (a).

information behind a dissembling “many”. One possibility for the veiling of the criticism is that I did not feel that I had the standing to criticize.

However, why should a Gazo Roma Rights supporter not be able to criticize other Gaze Roma Rights supporters for perceived failure? Perhaps it is because this Gazo was afraid that he, too, was only using the Roma Rights Movement as an accessory.

2.2.2 The Backstory

The centerpiece of this work is the muslin, for it was the genesis of the entire piece and is perhaps the most powerful section of the scarf, as it speaks to the continuing oppression of the Roma and their vulnerability to changes in the political winds. However, I never intended that piece of muslin to be anything more than a test for what was to have been an altered yardage piece²¹. Furthermore, some of the strongest elements, the “tire tracks”, were originally just a dye-pot error.

Similarly to the previous piece, this one also has a subtle dealing with identity anxiety in the analysis. Consciously labeling myself a Gazo, I was essentially afraid of criticism that I was not in an appropriate position to comment on various aspects of the Roma Rights Movement.

As with the previous work, the simplistic response to the abstraction has ties to deeper issues which are slowly revealed as more layers are worked out in fiber.

²¹ Altered yardage is not as complicated a concept as it appears. Though it may be executed in a complicated manner, altered yardage is simply a continuous length of fabric which has been manipulated and embellished; no longer merely “fabric” it has been elevated to the level of art through any of the many fiber art techniques.

2.3 O KHAM UŠTEL



A Romani Sunrise – the partly-visible morning sun is rising from behind high mountains, but the gathering clouds threaten to hide the sun again as anti-Roma sentiment grows across Europe.

2013

30" by 44"

Cotton and silk threads on cotton appliqués and cotton batting

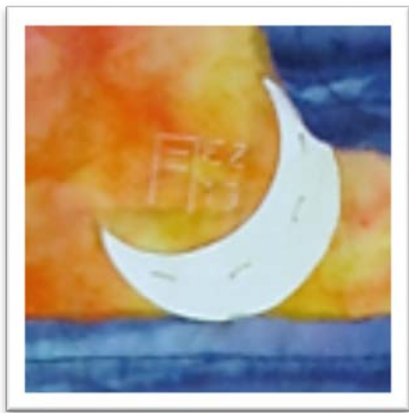
First shown (incomplete) at the University of Pittsburgh *Symposium on Romani Music, Culture, and Human Rights* held on September 24th, 2012.

2.3.1 The Analysis

Thick Visual Description

A partial Romani chakra figures as a red sun, rising in a pink, orange, and yellow sky. The green mountains are appliquéd from two kinds of vine-printed fabrics, and one even pierces the clouds with its snow-capped peak. Some clouds are low, light, and fluffy, made from a light blue fabric, while others are piled high, dark and stormy in dark blues and purples. A crescent moon is visible in the upper left-hand corner along with the artist's signature. The quilt has been bound with long strips of brown fabric with a crackle-like print.

Details of appliqués, quilting, and signature



Symbol Analysis and Historical Context

The artist's description seems to contain all the analysis needed, but the day-moon suggests a need to dig deeper. The signature, located in the invisible part of the moon, features a symbol which, read as *tsuki* in Japanese, also means "moon". This intrusion brings our attention to the unusual shapes of the clouds, which we find correspond with typical Japanese depictions of clouds.

In a piece so focused on Europe, both explicitly in the description and implicitly in the symbols and dimensions (the proportions are almost exact for the Romani Flag), these Asian elements seem out of place. Again, the day-moon holds the answer. The *kanji* in the signature suggests that this piece is a personal take on the situation in Europe. Indeed, in order to view the sunrise at this angle in relation to such high mountains, one must be facing east from a great distance to the west – America, perhaps.

Knowing now that that is a personal view, the decision to bind this quilt makes more sense. Rather than present a "photograph" of a skyline, it is almost as though I had taken a snapshot when the opportunity arose and the window frame was still in view.

Yet again our attention is back on the moon; why, with all the careful choices down to the shape of the clouds, was this moon placed as it was? A review of moon phases reveals this to be another careful choice: this is a waxing crescent moon.

Artistic Narrative

Though close analysis revealed that this piece is thoroughly about my interpretation of the state of the Roma Rights Movement in Europe, my ambiguous position either in a far window or in/on/as the moon reveals that this piece is also about how I view myself in relation to what is going on across the ocean. In this piece, I was beginning to find my voice on these issues and to see how I could use my art to speak.

2.3.2 The Backstory

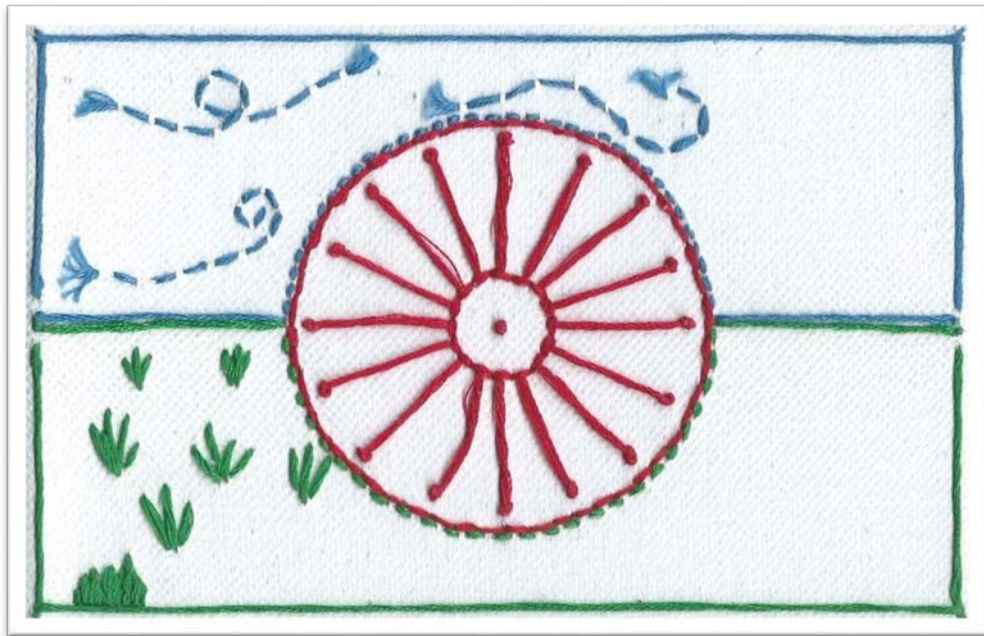
It is impossible to truly track the history of my love affair with the moon, but this long-standing connection makes it natural that it would be a major part of my processing of an identity anxiety, just as natural as when I turned to fiber to begin the process in the first place.

Interpretations of the Romani flag are numerous, and serve to visually tie an image into the larger context of the Roma Rights Movement and human rights politics more generally. This quilt is the third interpretation of the flag that I have made, the first of which is on page 36, while the second was recycled in the fourth piece in the series.

The third layer, though focused on identity, treats the other two issues with greater complexity. Oppression and opportunistic politics combine now in anti-Roma sentiment due to increasing economic pressures across Europe. The greatest detail, though, is given to working through my identity. This piece may be working

through issues of voice and perspective, but the use of Romani for the title suggests that I am here to stay and just need to find where I fit.

As noted, the use of “Roma” and “Romani” in my artist’s descriptions is highly political, but the actual use of the language Romani indicates that I am now positioning myself in a different way: Romani is now included in my linguistic identity. However, I am not really a speaker of Romani, and this use here is partly to self-reinforce my desire to speak the language.



First interpretation of Romani flag in fiber, yet incomplete

Logo for “Voice of Roma”, a US-based Roma Rights NGO



Proposed Logo for a Google World Romani Day, designed by Laďa Gažíová

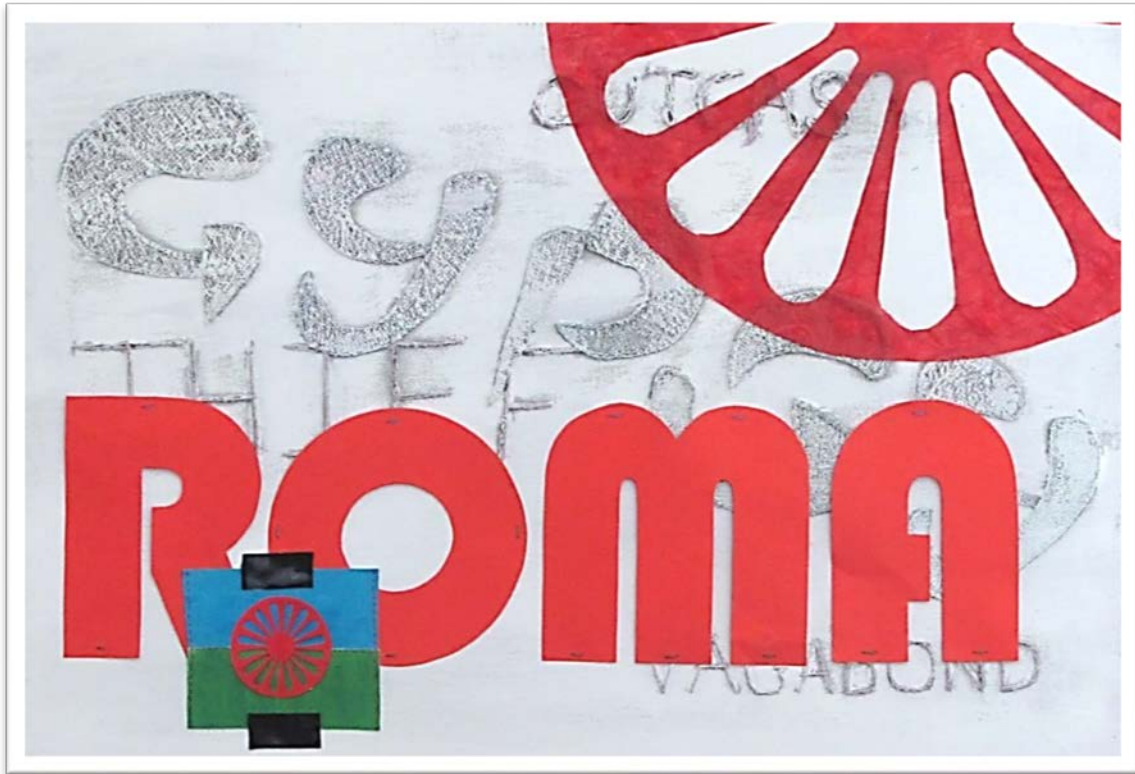


§3.0 CORE ANXIETIES

Once the three main themes of my experience were processed, in their more abstracted forms, I was able to begin the slow process of dealing with more specific issues and experiences. By working through some of the anxiety over my identity, such as my position and what it meant to employ fiber art to that end, I was able to more confidently speak through this medium. Further, this assurance decreased my need to actively position myself within the piece.

Before I could begin to really make sense of the other research I completed, I needed to work through these two core anxieties: the pervasive existence of “justified” racism, and a much deeper crisis of identity. From my newly reinforced place of externalized identity I was able to begin speaking out against the former, but the latter required a different approach as it struck to the core of my identity.

3.1 PARŇARDO



Can governmental and institutional initiatives for Roma inclusion really erase centuries of discrimination, or are they merely attempting to whitewash the dark reality of anti-Gypsy sentiment?

2013

21" by 31"

Sewing threads, yarns, interfacing, mulberry paper, and paint on fabric

3.1.1 The Analysis

Thick Visual Description

A stark piece dominated by a partial chakra of red Japanese *unryū* mulberry paper, the word “Roma” in block capitals of red paper, and an interpretation of the Romani flag. Underneath the paint, the words “vagabond”, “thief”, “outcast”, and “Gypsy” are still legible in stitched fabric and yarn.



Detail of the “fiber graffiti”

Symbol Analysis and Historical Context

Graffiti artists have many motivations for their work, but anonymity and covert-yet-public expression of opinions seem to figure here as most important. This fiber-graffiti espouses the view that “everyone”, and yet “no one”, has about the Roma.

Physical graffiti may either be power-washed or painted over; the former will remove the graffiti, but may be either incomplete or possibly damage the surface, while the latter will only cover the graffiti, and maybe not even that well. Here, the

European Commission's "Decade of Roma Inclusion" is suggested as a poor example of the latter.

Authorized postings or paintings are typically stapled or stenciled; the block-type of "Roma" and the geometric uniformity of the Romani Chakra reinforce the idea that these are not widely held views and that some entity has paid for or authorized these views on the same topic. This is another reference to the EU's "Roma Inclusion" initiatives, but this also includes the NGOs; as mentioned in §3.2.3, the use of "Roma" outside of Romani and the adoption of the Romani flag and chakra was decided by a small number of Roma. Thus "Roma" and the Romani chakra are not representative of public opinion in Roma communities.

Artistic Narrative

This piece is a decided and open critique of the European Commission and the large (Gazo-run) NGOs who only hand out money to those NGOs which pepper their grant proposals with buzzwords and praise for their benefactors. Meanwhile, those NGOs who criticize the grant-appropriation structure and attempt to affect change in the Roma community through non-EC-approved methods are blacklisted²².

In stark contrast to the previous works, I have a very pointed message to convey and I had to stretch fiber techniques to represent graffiti in order to do it. This change in my approach to my work represents a shift in my post-tour narrative, a shift caused by much reading, thinking, and making fiber art.

²² Nicolae (b).

3.1.2 The Backstory

Though this piece was always intended to be graffiti, I originally wanted to do a much larger piece and actually use spray paints, as though I had replicated an actual wall on a fabric background. However, I have no skills with a can of spray paint, and I am not acquainted with many who are skilled in such things. I did try to use what contacts I have to find someone willing to collaborate with me, but in the end I had to use what skills I do have, and so I executed the piece in fiber and use a paint brush to “whitewash”.

In way, that was just was well, because the use of fiber and cloth to form the graffiti gives the piece a tactile quality that the smoothness of painted cloth cannot rival. This textural complexity, coupled with the less cluttered visual elements, make this a substantially stronger piece than the preceding quilt. Not only was *O Kham Uštel* all of the same texture (printed cotton fabrics), all of the colors were highly saturated and had similar values. Thus, *Parňardo*²³ is able to speak even without the interpretation of the artist’s description.

This carries over to the continued use of Romani for the title; with *O Kham Uštel*, the non-literal translation was needed to assist the visual, but in *Parňardo*, the translation “whitewashed” is nearly assumed.

²³ In this case, “ň” is used to indicate the sound of “ng” in “sing”, which in IPA is /ŋ/.



Proof of Concept (2" by 3")

"Gypsy" Graffiti



3.2 AMNESIA IN A PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE



Numbed the horror of impersonally-presented personal effects and mountains of shorn hair, and elevated above the memory of the degradation of the “Sauna” by a glass walkway, the dehumanized presentation of Auschwitz-Birkenau helps visitors forget even as they “remember”.

2013

32” by 26”

The artist’s hair, silk thread, mulberry paper, silk dupioni, willow wood.

3.2.1 The Analysis

Thick Visual Description

This hanging of grey silk is dominated by the black triangle of lattice and satin stitch over hair and the appliqué of chenille-worked silk over more hair. Strips of torn *unryū* mulberry paper float over the surface and obscure parts of the embroidery. The piece hangs upon a debarked willow branch.



Detail of couched hair and *unryū* floats

Symbol Analysis and Historical Context

This time, the black, downward-facing triangle from the armband appears, rather than the inverse iteration in *Z is for Zigeuner*. The use of hair as padding in the triangle and the chenille references the Nazi practice of shaving victims *post mortem* with the intention of sending the hair to German factories for use in upholstery. In combination with the artist description and the hair, the chenille helps to reinforce the impersonal nature of the presentation of the camps.

The *unryū* is a direct quotation of the visual language of the “Sauna” exhibit, where visitors follow an inmate’s path from name to number, only visitors pass over the original concrete on elevated pathways of glass and steel. Unlike the exhibit, where the glass pathways psychologically insulate the visitor from the past, the *unryū* merely visually obscures the subject from the viewer.

Artistic Narrative

Though made in silk, this reinterpretation of an Auschwitz prisoner’s armband is no “Scarlet Letter”; instead this piece is a quietly scathing critique of the management and presentation of the concentration camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Katie Young presents a more complete critique of the management of the camps²⁴, and she praises the Sauna exhibit for the presentation of photographs and stories of prisoners, including their lives post-liberation. I do agree that that particular exhibit is well done, if considered in isolation, but my experience at Auschwitz placed the Sauna exhibit at the very end of my tour, which negated much of the positive aspects of the exhibit.

The typical visitor to Auschwitz would likely start at Auschwitz 1 with its iconic “Arbeit macht frei” (“Work makes free”) gate, perhaps visit the factory of Auschwitz 2, and then visit the vast and nearly empty Auschwitz-Birkenau 3. By the time the average visitor gets to the Sauna exhibit, and not everyone does, it may be after hours of emotional stress such that engaging with the personal accounts is no longer possible.

²⁴ Young.

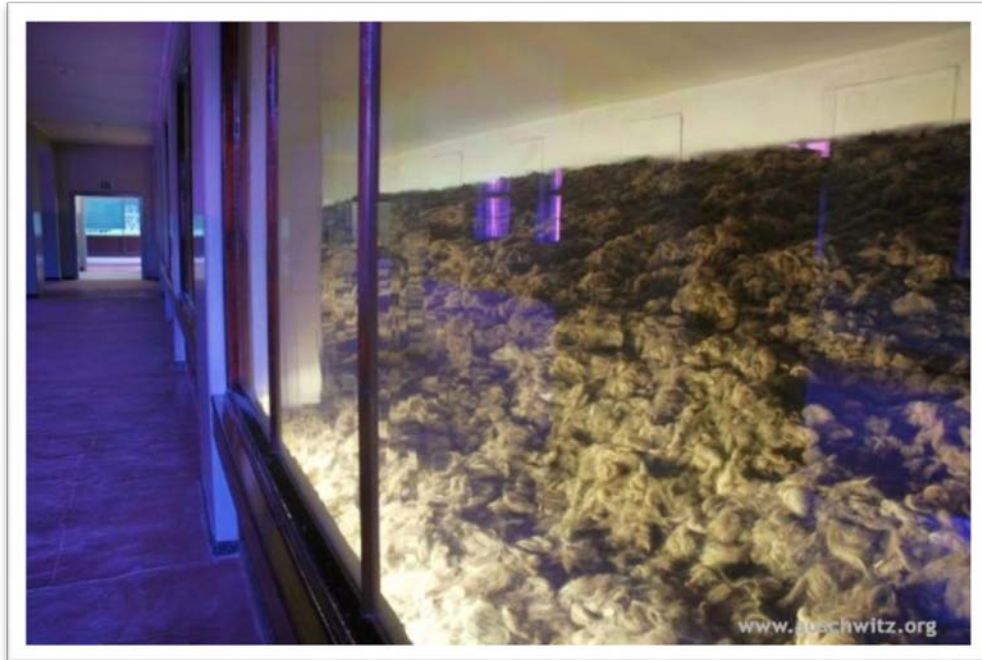
3.2.2 The Backstory

Just to clarify: yes, that is my hair, but no, it was not cut off.

This piece is presented as a critique of Auschwitz, but in the process of creating this piece allowed me to lay to rest one the heaviest experience weighing on me. The focus on hair, both in the introduction and in this piece, would suggest that my identity crisis was entirely based on my hirsute identity. Rather, this focus on hair is because it was Block 4 which caused my complete emotional shutdown. Without this shutdown, or without my later shock in the Sauna, I could perhaps have simply buried my memories of Auschwitz and let time help me forget.

Instead, my hair-centered identity shutdown, and I awoke to the shutdown through my historic-preservation-support identity looking at the glass walk and not at the significance of the building. These two identities now have forced me to consider some of my other identities, including the Polish-American side and my four Polish great-grandparents, my German-American self and my German grandmother (from whom I receive my smidgeon of Sinti heritage!), as well as my American self, and how being in the US places both physical distance between the me and the memories of World War II, but also the economic distance between me and other Auschwitz tourists (evidenced by my flight across the Atlantic).

This simple piece of grey silk represents a great deal of emotional processing over an entire year, and hides a great deal of yet un-verbalized processing. However, it could not exist without the preceding pieces paving the way, but without its existence, my processing of the experience would be incomplete.



Shorn hair © Paweł Sawicki, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

Braids, cloth made from hair © Jarko Mensfelt, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum





Sauna Exhibit

© Paweł Sawicki, Auschwitz-
Birkenau State Museum



Sauna Exhibit

© Paweł Sawicki,

Auschwitz-Birkenau

State Museum



§4.0 CONCLUSION

The importance of processing the emotional impact of the ethnographic research experience as part of the whole process, in many ways, lies in the way that this processing gives the ethnographer a greater understanding of themselves. Reflexivity attempts to depict what was brought to the process, but this time of reflection reveals both what the process gave to the ethnographer and how these things changed over time. Understanding these impacts can change how we perceive the whole experience: a once insignificant detail is suddenly a linchpin, or the whole premise of the trip is undermined.

Through my fiber art, I have examined how my non-verbal processing of a “difficult” experience led to important discoveries, but I would argue that this remains just as important for less “difficult” experiences. I have not truly examined how the changes in my relationships with the other tour participants impacted how I approached my research; for the ethnographer in contact with one community for an extended period of time, contemplating the implications of changing and maturing relationships with community members will be a much more complicated but even more necessary.

Yet, consciously processing “positive” experiences is perhaps more necessary, for “difficult” experiences often demand further reflection, while “easy” memories

are remembered to be enjoyed, not understood. Thus, it is perhaps easier to ignore our emotional selves and the impact of the research experience when nothing goes wrong or is resolved well; this blindness is much the same as ignoring our physical selves and making a pretense to uninvolved objectivity.

Regardless of the nature of the ethnographic research process, the insights gained from processing the impact on our emotions by the research and the impact on the research by our emotions is an important step in the research process. Revealing not only the importance, or unimportance, of events, this process requires that the ethnographer examine *how* these events interacted, and, ultimately, some of the underlying reasons *why*.

APPENDIX

The following are reproductions of all promotional and course material related to the “Romani Music, Culture, and Human Rights” study abroad program.

- #1. Syllabus [Reproduced, formatted]
- #2. Request for Consent Form [Reproduced, formatted]
- #3. Symposium Program Details [Schedule reproduced, formatted]
- #4. Survey 1 [Reproduced, formatted]
- #5. Survey 2 [Reproduced, formatted]

Document #1

Pitt Roma Studies Spring 2012 SYLLABUS

Professor (U.S.): Dr. Adriana Helbig, Ethnomusicologist, University of Pittsburgh – anh59@pitt.edu

Professor (Czech Republic): Dr. Zuzana Jurkova, Ethnomusicologist, Charles University (Prague) - zuzana.jurkova@post.cz

Course Description:

Gypsy music has emerged as one of the most popular world music genres in the last two decades. The genre's success on the world stage is closely connected with the Roma minority rights movement, which has strengthened on local, national, and international levels due to increased political organization, growing public condemnation of anti-Roma discrimination, increased educational opportunities for Roma, and more positive representation in the media. Though much remains to be done in terms of improving the socio-economic situation for Europe's most discriminated minority, it is significant that music, drawing on a historical cultural stereotype regarding "Gypsies" as natural musicians, has played a key role in drawing awareness to Romani political causes. The proposed study abroad program is the first of its kind to focus solely on Gypsy music and culture and to offer students hands-on opportunities to interact with, document, and interview Romani musicians, activists, and community members. Students will experience Romani culture on stage, as part of the Khamoro World Roma Festival in Prague, as well as in everyday impoverished contexts through visits to Romani settlements in Slovakia. Meetings with scholars and public figures from the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia will offer insights to enhance student understanding of Roma-related issues in the European Union and its borders.

Learning Objectives

Students participating in the study abroad course will develop Roma-related and human and cultural rights-related courses of study:

Roma-related Objectives:

Gain on-site understanding of discriminatory policies and their implementation regarding Roma
Develop ethnographic skills in documenting cultural events and interviewing musicians and public figures
Account for cultural, social, and political stereotypes regarding Roma in music, literature, and film
Analyze minority-related policy initiatives and recognize the historical reasons for economic, political, cultural, and social discrimination against Roma in different countries
Recognize cultural similarities and differences in Roma/non-Roma interactions in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia

Human and Cultural Rights Objectives:

Recognize the complex relationships between cultural and human rights in the EU and its borders
Assess racial, religious, and ethnic relations in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia
Gain understanding about the relationships between public policy and rights movements
Analyze the parameters within which culture-based political discourses are beneficial/detrimental to ethnic and minority groups

Recognize the ways in which cultural rights movements have become popularized in light of contemporary associations between “culture” and commercial value

Assessment

Students are expected to attend all classes and daily visits with musicians and activists in Prague, Krakow, Kosice, and Bratislava to do the reading assignments, and to participate in class discussions. Additionally, students will be required to keep a notebook in which they record their responses to readings and observations of sites (in the form of written notes and recordings).

Students will be required to engage in photographic-audio-video documentation of a chosen aspect of Roma culture and everyday life.

They will incorporate this ethnographic research into a 20-page final paper* of publishable quality. The paper is due one month after the students return from Europe.

*Students wishing to incorporate their research into a multi-media format such as a short film/documentary/photo exhibit, etc., may choose to do so in lieu of a 20-page paper.

Readings:

All readings are PDFs on a two-DVD set prepared by Dr. Zuzana Jurkova for this course. The readings are due on the date they are listed on the syllabus. Please take notes on the articles and underline 3-5 sentences in each article to which you can speak in class, and contribute to class discussions and debates.

Written Assignments:

Written assignments during our stay abroad will be in the form of journaling, oftentimes communal writing as we process the days’ events. Keeping track of fieldnotes is a very important part of fieldwork and an important way of organizing information gathered from interviews, live performances, media, newspapers, and conversations inside and outside the classroom, whether with a waiter in a restaurant or with a tour guide or a Czech student. **Please keep track of from whom you gather information, as all information is context-based and contributes to the building of the “bigger picture” of your experiences.** While fieldwork is motivated by our inquiries into the lives of others, essentially, we learn more about ourselves. Our shifting perspectives allow for more openness in what we experience without hindrance of our own formerly unaware positionings. Please do not underestimate the importance of down time while we are abroad, to think and rethink what we see or think we see.

Pittsburgh Orientation – May 25-26, 2012

All meetings will be in the Music Building, corner of Bellefield Ave/Fifth Ave, Rm 132. Students will have 90 minutes for lunch in between sessions, during which time the room will be locked so that students can leave their belongings in it when they go for lunch.

May 24 (Thursday) – USA

9:30-11:30am Introduction, discussion of individual research projects/fieldwork

***Please bring to this session a 500-word description of your project to present to the group.**

Readings: Silverman 2007 “Trafficking in the Exotic with ‘Gypsy’ Music”

Jurkova – RoadsRM file (47 pages)

11:30-1pm – Lunch break

1-3pm – Screening and discussion of Tony Gatlif's *Latcho Drom*

3-3:30pm – Gypsy Music lesson

3:30-5:30pm – free time

5:30pm – We will meet at the Music Building at 5:30pm to drive to Penn Hills for a BBQ
520 Crocus Ave, Pittsburgh PA 15235

6-9pm – BBQ and informal get-together

May 25 (Friday) – USA

9:30-11:30am Roma/Gypsy Musical Styles

Readings for class discussion:

Dietrich 2000 “Rom Music for the Tatars of Crimea”

Dimov 2009 “Romani Musicians in the Bulgarian Music Industry”

Doruzka 2003 “Minorities Entertain Majorities”

Elefteriades 2003 “Arab Roms”

Nixon 2000 “Life Patterns ... Gypsies, Tinkers, and Travellers in Great Britain”

Pettan 1992 “Lambada in Kosovo: A Profile of Gypsy Creativity”

Rasmussen 1991 “Gypsy Music in Yugoslavia”

Seeman 2009 “Turkish Roman Music and Dance”

1:00-3:00pm Screening of film *Swing Guitar: The Genius of Django*

Evening free

May 26 (Saturday) – USA

Departure from USA to Prague, Czech Republic – WOO HOO!!!!

May 27 (Sunday) – Prague, Czech Republic

Arrival in Prague, accommodations, orientation to the neighborhood

Evening: Welcome dinner

May 28 (Monday) – Prague, Czech Republic

Morning: Overview of Khamoro Gypsy Music Festival – Inka Jurkova

Guest lecture: “Roma in the Czech Republic” – Dr. Zuzana Jurkova, Charles University

Reading: Jurkova 2006 “Pentecostal Movement of Czech Roma Through Their Music”

Afternoon: Free

Evening: Khamoro Festival concert

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

May 29 (Tuesday) – Prague, Czech Republic

Morning: Tour of Prague Old Town and Castle

Mid-afternoon: Overview of individual research projects, lecture on ethnographic fieldwork methods by
Dr. Adriana Helbig

Readings: Helbig 2009 “Representation and Intracultural Dynamics”

Evening: Khamoro Festival concert

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

May 30 (Wednesday) – Prague, Czech Republic

Morning: Free

Afternoon: Lecture with Dr. Speranta Radulescu (Bucharest, Romania)

Reading: Radulescu 2003 “What is Gypsy Music”

Bonini Baraldi 2008 “The Gypsies of Ceaus, Romania: An Emotional Minority?”

Giurchescu 2000 “Gypsy Dancing in Southern Romania”

Stoichita 2006 “A Matter of Attitude: Gypsiness and Style in Zece Prajini (Romania)”

Evening: Khamoro Festival concert

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

May 31 (Thursday) – Prague, Czech Republic

Morning: Lecture – “Gypsy Popular Music” by Dr. Zuzana Jurkova, Charles University

Reading: Jurkova 2008 “The Czech Rompop Scene: (Un)Surprising Continuity?”

Afternoon: Lecture with Dr. Iren Kertecz Wilkinson (London, UK)

Reading: Kertecz Wilkinson 2000 “Bi-Musicality and the Hungarian Vlach Gypsies”

Kovalcsik 1996 “Roma or Boyash Identity?”

Evening: Khamoro Festival concert

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 1 (Friday) – Prague, Czech Republic

Morning Lecture: Jewish Music in Prague by Dr. Veronika Seidlova, Charles University

Afternoon: Tour of Jewish Prague

Evening: Khamoro Festival concert

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 2 (Saturday) – Prague, Czech Republic

Morning – Meeting with Khamoro Musicians – Inka Jurkova, Charles University

Afternoon: Free

Evening: Khamoro Festival concert

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 3 (Sunday) – Travel to Krakow, Poland

Free Day in Prague

Evening travel (bus) to Poland.

June 4 (Monday) – Krakow

Morning – Walking tour of Krakow city center

Reading: Janoviak-Janik 2009 “Musical Portrait of Carpathian Roma in Poland”

Afternoon: Visit to Holocaust Museum with Romani activists

Evening: Free

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 5 (Tuesday) – Krakow, Poland/Auschwitz Concentration Camp

Excursion to Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camps

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 6 (Wednesday)

Free day in Krakow

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 7 – Tarnow (2 hrs from Krakow)

Full-day excursion to the Tarnow Ethnographic Museum, home of the Roma Caravan of Memory (a Romani Holocaust Remembrance Camp held every summer

Overnight in Tarnow)

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 8 (Friday) – Kosice, Slovakia

Early morning departure to Kosice

Afternoon arrival and city tour

Late afternoon or dinner meeting/lecture with Roma activist/NGO

Evening: Preparation for fieldwork in Romani settlements

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 9 (Saturday) – Kosice, Slovakia (Lunik IX). Day visit to Lunik IX, Slovakia's largest urban Romani settlement, on the outskirts of Kosice

Evening: journaling as a group

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 10 (Sunday) – Slovensky Raj, full day visit to a poor Roma neighborhood in a former mining area

Overnight train to Bratislava

Homework: 500-word fieldnotes

June 11 (Monday) – Bratislava, Slovakia

Early departure to Bratislava, city tour

Afternoon: Free

Evening: Farewell Dinner

Accommodation in Bratislava

June 12 (Tuesday) – Vienna, Austria

Early morning departure to Vienna

Flights from Vienna to USA

FINAL PROJECTS (research paper/documentary film, etc.) Due Friday, July 22, 2012

Document #2

The “Request for Consent” form appears as distributed. Signed and dated forms were collected for each respondent to Survey #1.

REQUEST FOR CONSENT

To:

From: Evan W. Zajdel

Date:

Dear

I am a student researcher and ask for your consent to include an excerpt of my interview with you, [including photograph(s) of you, and/or sound or video performances pertaining to my study, etc.] in publications stemming from my scholarly research.

To agree that I may publish the information you disclosed during the interview [including my publishing of your photograph, sound and video recordings of your performances], please sign the statement below.

Sincerely yours,

Evan W. Zajdel
University of Pittsburgh Honors College

I/we consent to Evan W. Zajdel using the material [including photographs, sound, and video recordings] described above in above-mentioned scholarly publications and in materials advertising and promoting the publication. I release the author from any claims I might have against him.

I have no objection to my name appearing in connection with the interview [including photographs, sound and video recordings].

Signature:

Date:

Document #3

The schedule of the “Symposium on Romani Music, Culture, and Human Rights in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia” is reproduced below as given on September 24th, 2012, from 8:30 AM to 3 PM in Dining Room B of the William Pitt Union, University of Pittsburgh.

8:30–9:00	Julian Hayda [DePaul University, Class of 2014] (and throughout) Roma Photo Exhibit
9:00–9:30	Lisa Wojciechowicz [University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2014] Caste-Aways: The Precarious Position of Roma in Europe
9:30–10:00	Rachel McVey [University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2014] What Can Jim Crow Teach Europe?: Dimensions of the Romani Movement in the Czech Republic and Slovakia
10:00–10:15	Coffee Break
10:15–10:45	Hope McLaughlin [University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2014] Like my status if you like Gypsies: The Role of Social Media in the Roma Rights Movement
10:45–11:15	Dominique Dela Cruz [University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2014] The Influence of Fashion on Roma Communities

11:15–11:30	Coffee Break
11:30–12:00	<p>Christine Lim [University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2015]</p> <p>Reducing Tuberculosis Transmission in Europe by Minimizing Romani Homelessness, Discrimination, and Other Stress Factors</p>
12:00–12:30	<p>Lynsie Clott [University of Pittsburgh/GSPIA, MPIA 2013]</p> <p>Women’s Rights and Gender Equality as Factors for Roma Social Inclusion, Development, and Security</p>
12:30–12:45	Coffee Break
12:45–1:15	<p>Dylan Crossen [University of Pittsburgh, Class of 2013]</p> <p>Perceptions of Roma and Their Music</p>
1:15–1:45	<p>Evan Zajdel [University of Pittsburgh/UHC, BPhil 2013]</p> <p>Roma Rights Movement: A Fiber Artist’s Interpretation (embroidery, appliqué, quilting, dye-work)</p>
1:45–2:00	Coffee Break
2:00–3:00	<p>Lucas and Nicolas Durik-Ha</p> <p>[University of Pittsburgh, Classes of 2012 and 2013]</p> <p>Identity Crisis: Lessons Learned by Two Roma Brothers in an Ethnographic Effort Across Europe</p>

Document #4

Survey 1

The initial survey is reproduced in a condensed form below. 15 participants completed and returned Survey 1.

[Page 1]

Romani Music – Survey #1

Date:

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

Ethnicity:

Native Language:

Languages Spoken:

Languages Read:

How were these languages learned?

Home University/College:

Academic Major/Focus:

[Page 2]

How would you define Gypsy/Romani Music?

When did you first become interested in Gypsy/Romani Music?

[Page 3]

How did you get involved in Gypsy/Romani Music Studies?

What motivated you to go on a Gypsy/Romani Music summer study program?

[Page 4]

What do you want to learn or believe you will learn on this program?

How do you define “authenticity” as it relates to music and performance?

[Page 5]

How do you think about “inauthenticity” as it pertains to music and performance?

Document #5

Survey 2

This survey was distributed via SurveyMonkey, and is reproduced below and reformatted so as to take up as little space as possible. 6 responses were received from Survey 2.

Page 1:

Q1: What is your name?

[Single-line text box]

Page 2:

Q2: Which part(s) of the trip most strongly impacted you?

[Paragraph-sized text box]

Q3: Which word or phrase most accurately sums up your experience?

[Single-line text box]

Q4: Would you encourage others to participate in this or a similar study abroad experience?

[Radio button selection, with options randomly displayed in inverse order, excepting the “other response”]

- *Strongly Discourage
- *Discourage
- *Neither Encourage nor Discourage
- *Encourage
- *Strongly Encourage
- *Other (please specify)
[Single-line text box]

Q5: What reasons would you give to either encourage or discourage others from participating?

[Paragraph-sized text box]

Page 3:

Q6: How would you characterize your understanding/perception of the Roma prior to your time abroad?

[Paragraph-sized text box]

Q7: How would you compare your pre-trip understanding/perception of the Roma to your post-trip understanding?

[Paragraph-sized text box]

Q8: How does this change (if any) impact the way you view other cultures?

[Paragraph-sized text box]

Q9: Does this change (if any) prompt you to take any kind of action?

[check boxes]

☐ Yes

☐ No

Why?

[Paragraph-sized text box]

Page 4:

Q10: Do you have any comments to make about the trip?

Do you have any comment to make about the survey?

[Paragraph-sized text box]

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