

16. A HUSHED CRISIS: THE VISUAL NARRATIVES OF (EASTERN) EUROPE'S ANTIZIGANISM

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There is a serious crisis across Europe today, a crisis of racism. It is particularly palpable in Eastern Europe, where openly racist talk and actions emanate from a range of people who practise hate speech on a daily basis – from football fans to yoga teachers to real estate agents – at their workplace, in their social interactions and on social media. Yet it is a crisis that remains unacknowledged – mainly because the objects of racism and hate speech are the Roma, aka Gypsies. This is a crisis of antiziganism, a hushed one.

Take Jan Gebert's acclaimed documentary, *Az prijde válka (When the War Comes, 2018)*. Set in Slovakia, the film follows the leader of a paramilitary group, Petr Švrček, a clean-cut youngster who is articulate and polite. We see him taking exams and helping older people around town, and on weekends training the other youngsters of his 'army' in the nearby woods. Is this training just for recreation purposes or has it real-life application? What is the war that these young people are preparing for? Who is the enemy that they will counter with their advanced fighting skills? This is never clearly identified. Viewers in Eastern Europe, however, know the answer – it will be a war against the Roma, against the refugees, against the 'foreign', against all those who are not 'us'. In fact, it is not a war that is still to come – rather, it is a war that has already quietly started and that such groups are involved with. My attention in this investigation is focused on the reality of antiziganism and the war against the Roma – one that is not officially recognised but that rages across the countries of Eastern Europe – and on the way it has been represented in cinema of the past decade.

Roma are mistreated in Western and Eastern Europe alike, albeit in different ways. In Western Europe, actions against Roma that verge on human rights abuse (demolition of settlements, deportations without the chance to be heard, restrictions on welfare) are carried out by official enforcement bodies such as the police or welfare officers. They are reported on – mainly in human rights monitoring and Roma media, with little in the mainstream sources – but rarely cause much public outcry. For example, from 2003 until at least 2005, illegal selective deportations of Roma from Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro were carried out in a particularly inhumane manner across Germany (Howden and Kuehnen 2005). The only case that seems to have sparked widespread protests was that of Kosovo teenager Leonarda Dibrani in 2010, who was dragged out by police from a school bus in France to be deported. This triggered mass student demonstrations, to no avail, as Dibrani was still deported. Later, the French police were known to be continually involved in actions demolishing Roma settlements across the country, such as La Petite Ceinture in Paris (Rubin 2013).

In general, the Roma are regarded as an East European problem, as a population that is 'foreign' to the West and that needs to be relocated back where it belongs; and indeed most deportations affect the Roma who come from countries that are not members of the EU, such as Kosovo. In Britain it took years of deportations and selective human rights abuses on an ethnic basis before the scandal of the Windrush Caribbeans became public and led to attempts to correct these injustices. Nothing like this is on the horizon for the Roma, many of whom are in a similar legal limbo and treated equally appallingly in the West.

In Eastern Europe, publicly and legislatively Roma are supposed to be treated equally, in terms of housing, education or health, even though there are investigative films that show this is not the case, such as *Scoala noastra* (*Our School*, 2011) or *Cambridge* (2015). Yet there is widespread racism that proclaims the Roma to be a major social problem. States do not normally engage in direct Roma-bashing, but at the same time they tolerate it and normally leave citizens from the main ethnic group to practise it at will. Vocal local anti-Roma activists openly reproach the state for not daring to act against alleged Roma criminality for fear of the European Community, as the EU membership position of these countries is fragile. Thus, West European countries act openly against the Roma without being punished, while East European countries cannot do this and instead leave the dirty work to paramilitaries. Racism is present in both regions, and indeed the extent of antiziganism is similar to that of antisemitism. This is one of the most serious crises in Europe but it remains little acknowledged and spoken about.¹

I structure my investigation in three parts. First I discuss some films that aim to combat the prevalent antiziganism and that remain hushed in the ghetto of arthouse cinema. Secondly, I analyse an antiziganist film trilogy from the Czech

Republic and the inventive ways that have been deployed for its silencing. And third, I discuss the presence of racist and antiziganist videos on YouTube.

HUSHED IN THE ARTHOUSE GHETTO

In this section I discuss three films that aim to present the Roma ordeal in contemporary Eastern Europe.² The films are characterised by a realist approach – shot in authentic settings, using non-professional actors and real stories, and rather dominated by pessimistic yet authentic gloom, fear and desperation. There is also a belief on the part of the directors that if they show the difficulties of the day-to-day existence of concrete Roma protagonists, this may lead to better understanding. These films point at Europe in crisis, and yet they remain insufficiently acknowledged – hushed in the ghetto of arthouse cinema – and have not succeeded in influencing public discourse, either at home or internationally.

Just the Wind

Hungarian Benedek Fliegauf's *Csak a szél* (*Just the Wind*, 2012) is the earliest in this recent lineage, though it follows in the footsteps of many other similar East European films.³ The film is based on a true story of deadly pogroms against Hungarian Roma; the opening screen reads:

In Hungary in the years 2008–2009 a group of offenders committed acts of violence against Romanies. 16 homes were attacked with Molotov cocktails and 63 shots were fired with shotguns and rifles. 55 people were victims of these crimes, 5 were severely injured, 6 killed. Suspects are currently the subject of criminal proceedings. Though it draws on facts, this film is not a documentary.

Just the Wind follows the daily routines of members of a Roma family who live in an isolated makeshift house in a remote forest at the edge of town. There has been a racist pogrom against their neighbours and people have been killed in their beds. The protagonists (a mother and two teenage children) know they may be next in line, but hope to survive for another few months until the time they can depart and join the father, who has already obtained asylum in Canada. But by the end of the film they have also become victims; the last shots are set in the local morgue instead of the transatlantic flight of their dreams.

Just the Wind's extraordinary cinematic achievement is in the depiction of unsettling fear – its protagonists' condition from beginning to end, an uncontrollable stress coming from perennial alertness, from a permanently activated flight or fight mode – which is conveyed through a masterful combination of close-up shots, hand-held camerawork, sound and editing. Even if the reactions



of the family members to the threat are different – the grandfather has given up, the teenage daughter tries to blend in as much as possible, the mother toils away at her two low-paying jobs and tries to keep the loan sharks at bay, whereas the young boy is rebellious – they will all end up victims.

An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker

While *Just the Wind* shows a police force that does not protect vulnerable Roma, the Bosnian *Epizoda u životu beraca željeza* (*An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker*, Danis Tanovic, 2013) shows a medical establishment that withdraws healthcare. The Roma family in the film play themselves; the day-to-day chores that take them through the winter are chronicled with documentary realism. They lead a hand-to-mouth existence in a remote mountain hamlet; four people – two adults and two children – survive on the paltry income that the father, Nazif, makes from dealing in scrap metal. Senada, the mother, is pregnant with her third child. Something goes wrong, however, and she is in terrible pain. It is an ordeal to get her to the hospital and once there, they learn that the foetus has died in the womb; her life is at risk. Rather than being rushed to the operating theatre, however, doors are closed for the Roma woman, as she has got no medical insurance and is not able to pay the bill for the operation. The ethical principles of the medical profession do not seem to apply in her case: Roma patients are not regarded as fully fledged people. Even though not overtly spelled out, the medics in the film act out of an unspoken but widespread conviction that the Roma are breeding too much anyhow. It is all the more painful knowing that the docudrama is based on a real story.

Goat

The Slovak film *Koza* (*Goat*, 2015) delivers one of the best portrayals of Roma's limited opportunities. Its slow continuous shots, exquisite framing and wintry aesthetics make it reminiscent of the tableaux in Ulrich Seidl's *Import/Export* (2007). Former lightweight Olympic boxing champion Peter Baláž, nicknamed 'Koza' ('Goat'), plays himself in a story that chronicles his own life. The Olympic glory long forgotten, he and his partner Misa live in dilapidated conditions. He is a loser now, with no chance of winning a fight, trapped in a downward spiral on the provincial boxing circuit. A fallen man in every respect, he is unable to convince his girlfriend to keep the child that they have conceived. No endurance is left in this small muscular man's body; he can no longer fight, and there is no respite for him, and no cushioned exit into retirement. The incessant disoriented travelling between bouts, on snowy provincial roads, instils a feeling of freezing and discomfort from beginning to end. His is a modern-day slavery: his manager calls him a 'dumb cripple' and looks to sell him down the chain.



Goat is an existential tale of a beaten protagonist, one who takes blow after blow after blow. There is no direct condemnation of police nor of medics nor of exploitative managers, and not even an explicit mention that the protagonist is a Rom – it is obvious to those who come from this region. A man who cannot expect respite from anywhere; he must be a Rom.

Reception

What about the reception of these realist chronicles? Each of these films made a splash in its respective country at the time of its release, and the works have been recognised for their sensitivity and civility. However, even where these films are held in great esteem by cinephiles, they only had limited circulation and were seen by limited audiences, both within the countries of their making and internationally.

These films, however, have played at numerous festivals; all were in competition at Berlinale, the grand festival that claims to be politically engaged. *The Iron Picker* won Silver Bear, Ecumenical Jury and Best Actor awards (for Nazif Mujic),⁴ *Just the Wind* got the Amnesty International Award and *Goat* was nominated for best director. Each of the films also received awards from or played at various other festivals around the world – Toronto, Mar Del Plata, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Hong Kong – and they have had some theatrical distribution internationally. None of this seems to have been enough. The accolades were not sufficient to make a difference to the actual subjects or to the prevailing public discourse. The pressing social matters that these films address remain hushed in the arthouse ghetto.

Nazif Mujic, the actor who plays himself in *The Iron Picker*, used the trip to Berlin in February 2013 to apply for asylum in Germany. After all, the discrimination his family had suffered was documented in the acclaimed film. However, he was turned down and deported back to Bosnia, where he is known to have sold the award from the festival to avoid destitution. He died in extreme poverty in February 2018 at the age of 47, precisely five years after winning at Berlinale.⁵

HUSHED OUT OF SHAME: *BASTARDS*

I first learned about *Bastardi/Bastards* – a privately produced, widely popular Czech anti-Roma film trilogy – during a visit to Moravia in 2013. My host, a film academic who was, at the time, also a member of the Czech film funding body, told me about it one day when we walked down the street – while the town looked calm, he said, in fact tensions between Czech and Roma were running high and the relations were marked by extreme hatred. This same hatred was the hallmark of *Bastards*. Comparing *Bastards* to the hugely popular output of neo-Nazi rock group Orlik and musician Daniel Landa, my friend

summarised: 'Czechs are ashamed of this unbelievably racist series [. . .] *Bastardi* is not a "B" movie, but rather a "C" or "D" one, and no one wants to take it seriously, because this would legitimize it [. . .] We are trying to act as if it doesn't exist.'⁶ It is this last statement – 'trying to act as if it doesn't exist' – that gives the key to understanding another of the discursive configurations that mark the hushed character of the crisis I am outlining. While hugely popular at home, this work of antiziganism is barely known beyond the borders of former Czechoslovakia, not least due to the efforts of people like my friend, who intentionally work to hush the fact of its embarrassing existence. But does hushing help to dissipate the crisis?

Bastards is an authorial project of Tomáš Magnusek, a prolific young Czech writer, actor and film director. The whole enterprise seems to be driven by personal conviction: the protagonist in *Bastards*, Tomas Majer, is an alter ego for Magnusek. Majer is a teacher who takes a job at a segregated 'practical school'⁷ where, some months previously, his sister, Jana Majerova, also a teacher, has been raped and murdered. The police have made no arrests and Majer suspects that the culprits are among the teenage Roma boys in the school. What follows is a story of revenge, in which Majer takes it upon himself, in a context where the authorities will not do their job, and where teachers like his sister are left vulnerable and exposed, to protect innocent citizens. The two sequels evolve into a franchise in which, once again, Majer and other vigilantes restore order, confronting and punishing the uncontrollable youths who keep creating havoc. The films are made to a television aesthetics standard; the camerawork, lighting, music and editing are not particularly different from other European TV series. It is not the artistic value of *Bastards*, however, that is my focus of interest, but rather the context of the film's production, dissemination and reception. I believe that the particularities of *Bastards*' handling in the public space once again – albeit differently – reveal the symptomatic hushing of the crisis related to the Roma in Eastern Europe at large.

The first instalment of *Bastards* – a film produced on a private basis with no state support – was extremely successful; the opening weekend generated about 70,000 euros and eventually the film ranked as the most successful Czech film of 2010. The revenues it generated, as well as sponsorships from various businesses that invested in it, generated a solid funding stream that permitted the immediate shooting and release of *Bastardi 2* just a year later. The same scenario was then repeated once again the next year, enabling the release of *Bastardi 3* in 2012. Beyond the theatrical release, all three films have been made available for free on YouTube, with no English or other subtitles. By the end of 2018, *Bastardi 1* had been viewed more than a million times on YouTube, *Bastardi 2* had about 780,000 views, and *Bastardi 3* 840,000 views.⁸

Outside the Czech Republic this film is little heard about, and one can see that special efforts have been made for things to stay that way. The film has not played at any film festivals internationally, and all the published reviews I was able to find about it were in the Czech language.⁹ On IMDb, one can find short and cryptically written synopses for each of the films, provided by the Czech Film Centre; there are no viewers' reviews whatsoever – quite unusual for a film that is apparently high in popularity – and I am inclined to think that the user reviews may have been disabled or removed. On the YouTube locations of the films, the comments feature is disabled.¹⁰ The IMDb links to an 'official site' for *Bastards* (<<http://filmbastardi.cz/>>) but on clicking through one finds an empty domain. It seems that the Czech Film Centre has also taken over the way the sequels are presented on IMDb: the main keywords related to *Bastards 2* are 'racist as protagonist' and 'psychopath as protagonist', and the synopsis for *Bastards 3* references justice and social responsibility.

A similar approach – one in which activists mobilised in various ways to prevent the spread of a hateful film that was posted on YouTube with full fanfare – was applied in the Netherlands around the time of the release of the infamous anti-Islamic video *Fitna* (2008), which the right-wing Dutch politician Geert Wilders posted on YouTube. These actions were put under academic scrutiny by a team of media scholars and sociologists, whose research showed that the activists' actions indeed managed to diminish *Fitna's* international exposure (Müller, Van Zoonen and Hirzalla 2014). Similarly, only a few people abroad now know of the *Bastards* series, and this is due, in part, to the efforts of anti-racist Czech intellectuals who have managed to turn the film series into a hushed home secret. The question is, however, whether this diminishes or eradicates support for racism within the country.

The situation with *Bastards* is representative of the conflicted public discourse in many of the countries of Eastern Europe. On the one hand, domestic nationalist parties and movements, whose agendas often border on racism and who are vocal proponents of antiziganism, enjoy popular support and have their own undisturbed media presence. On the other, there are those – typically intellectuals' – voices who denounce racism; due to their higher position in society they manage to prevail in the official media and – as we saw with the example of *Bastards* – to control the spread and limit the damage of hateful material. Populist politicians who have made it on to the international scene generally fall within the latter group, but not always out of conviction – they denounce antiziganism mainly in order to be seen as complying with the expectations of the European Community. With the growing populist and nationalist tendencies across Eastern Europe, even this may change. And if it does, the hushing will be swept away by a full-blown crisis.

HUSHED IN FULL VIEW: POGROM VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

There is another 'filmed' genre that represents antiziganism in action – video reportage of pogroms against Roma – and it is found in full view on YouTube. These videos are an extreme example of racial animosity; they provide a global platform where hate speech thrives, and reveal the true depth of the crisis. Yet this genre is also hushed – not because the such videos are, sooner or later, taken down, but because the circumstances of their making, posting, popularity and particularities of removal are not publicly discussed nor denounced.¹¹

Typically, these are short videos showing street confrontations and vigilante groups taking action against groups of Roma who are, allegedly, involved in illegal activities that the authorities do nothing about. The videos are mainly shot with hand-held camera, often lacking in any professionalism, and are poorly edited and put together – even though in some cases they have been set to music. In recent years, I have repeatedly come across such material, which originates from a variety of countries across Eastern Europe – Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania. As these videos are not fully fledged films, so to speak, and thus do not fall within the sphere of my scholarly interests, I only registered their existence and did not keep a systematic record of their content. This is something I now regret, as the content on YouTube fluctuates and different material pops up in response to searches done at different times. A number of these videos also seem to have been taken down – the record would have been of vital importance for my claim that such videos are, in fact, abundant. In the process of research, my thinking evolved, and I now believe it is essential to consider the pogrom videos (and the discourse that goes along with them) as part of this investigation. I picked out two videos that were posted in June 2018 and are available on YouTube at the moment of writing, six months later. These examples are from the Ukraine, but I do not want to single out this particular country, as I hope my discussion so far has provided sufficient evidence that hateful treatment of the Roma is characteristic of all countries in the region.

*Representatives of National Warbands Clear Out a
Roma Tabor in Golosyvski Park*

First, there is this 12-minute video, dated 7 June 2018, which I found posted on two different YouTube channels.¹² What does one see in this video? On an ordinary Thursday, a group of about twenty men armed with battle-axes, sledgehammers and bludgeons walk into a forest, wearing balaclavas and black T-shirts marked 'National Warbands'. The cameraman follows and provides occasional commentary. On the way, he stops for a brief impromptu 'interview' with two women, apparently members of the Roma community, who try to rush out of the forest salvaging some belongings. On arrival at the camp – consisting of about twenty primitive makeshift huts between the trees – the

boys jump into action and quickly break apart all the dwellings. The destruction of the slum takes just a few minutes, during which action the cameraman excitedly circles around and shouts, ‘davay, davay, patsany!’ (‘Go on, go on, boys!’). Most residents have escaped but a few are still around and look on; resident Maria watches the destruction, dumbfounded. ‘Do you have a passport?’, the cameraman asks in patronising voice. ‘Of course I do. In the house,’ she responds.¹³ A bearded pogrom master comes into a close-up to display a nauseated grimace – this is his way of suggesting that the stench one feels is unbearable. The men are in a hurry to finish the job soon so that they can go for a barbecue. A white kitten is rescued from one of the huts and cuddled by the heroes in balaclavas. The police arrive just as the destruction is complete and are shown around by the warband guys who inform them about what has been achieved. The brigade takes a proud group photo for a job well done. They have protected the environment.

Six months after the date of this filmed pogrom the video posted on the first YouTube channel (12ion) had been viewed 197,343 times and had generated 2,433 comments. The video posted on the second channel (EuroMaydan) had been seen 117,422 times and had generated more than 500 comments, bringing the total number of views to more than 300,000 and the comments to almost 3,000. The video itself is not translated, but this does not prevent international viewers from sending congratulatory comments from across the world (e.g. ‘Nice job from Finland’; ‘Hail from the USA!’; ‘Proud of you Ukrainian dudes!’). The majority of the other comments are domestic congratulations, usually coming with references to the inaction of the authorities, as well as expressing doubts about whether corruption in the higher echelons of power could be tackled the same way. One can also see comments expressing abhorrence and pointing out the racism of the action and of the other comments, but these are significantly fewer in number.

History of the Roma Problem in Kiev and Its Solution

This video, posted a day later (8 June 2018), evolves around the same pogrom footage but represents a longer edited (19 minutes) version of it. *History of the Roma Problem in Kiev and Its Solution* is posted on the YouTube channel of the National Corps – an organisation that operates under the slogan Power, Welfare, Order – and is watermarked with their emblem.¹⁴ Opening with a secondary title, ‘The Facts’, the video purports to provide contextualisation and justification for the violence by bringing in editorial interventions that give the material a certain slant and present it as environmental protection. It is edited to reportage standards, and identifies speakers by name, including the cameraman, Oleksandr Kulakov.¹⁵ It is prefaced by a seemingly objective background summary that references the growing problem of illegal settlements by Roma migrants and the inaction of the authorities, and presents the destruction of

the settlement as the only possible solution for protecting Kiev's environment and leisure areas. There is a lengthy description that sets up the pogrom as an example of civil action to protect the 'green zones' of the city, and denounces the behaviour of the police who at first appeared supportive but have since raised charges against the patriots. There is also a call for the further dissemination of the material via social media channels such as Instagram. In line with the videomakers' desire to maintain law and order, the music rights have been cleared. The commentary revolves around some of the tropes found on social media, mainly that Roma are unable to lead civilised lives and ought to be removed to the Zakarpacie region. It uses improvised interviews with Roma, where the person asking the questions maintains a patronising tone – Why is this 13-year-old boy not able to speak Ukrainian or Russian? Why is this woman not working? – while simultaneously treating the man who is working as if he has taken a more worthy person's job.

The reportage also covers the actions of the National Corps on the day after the pogrom, when the fighters return to clear away the remnants of the slum. The camera zooms in on the rubble to show found *compromats* ('compromising materials') such as syringes, dirty cooking utensils and a nunchaku, suggesting drug abuse, filth and violence. Wearing protective white clothing, the boys joke about the previous day's clearance; the vermin have been removed. The commentary towards the end of the video states: 'Our work gave results; the Roma are gathering around the south train station in Kiev.' A band of Roma, perhaps an extended family, are shown squatting in the open air in front of the city's train station and are described as 'preparing to leave'. The interviewer turns to an old woman and asks, in a patronising tone: 'What is stopping you from getting out of here and allowing us to restore order?' She tries to give an answer, stretching her arms, but her voice is cut out. The members of her group are dishevelled and do not look clean or healthy; it is not a pretty sight. The 'interviewer' continues his monologue: 'Have you heard what happened in the park? Do you want a repetition of what happened? You have only a few days to get out.'

An important narrative element that runs through this video is the footage of newborn kittens that are rescued from the debris. The kittens are shown on several occasions, first discovered in all their vulnerability, then pulled out and held gently, caressed by the gloved hands of the muscular warband members and, later on, in their new dwelling at the offices of the National Corps. Roughly the same amount of screen time is given to Roma and to the kittens, and the way the footage of these two visual tropes is edited clearly aims to build a contrast: the first are ugly and dirty intruders who must be excised, the second are sweet and cuddly little wonders that must be given loving care. This video was made public on 10 June 2018, three days after the pogrom. By comparison to the raw footage of the pogrom, it has attracted a much smaller number of views (20,000 views as opposed to 300,000).

You Are Not Human, You Should Be Exterminated

A third video, a nine-minute-long reportage from a Roma settlement in Uzhgorod in the Ukraine, produced by a 'European Media Center', was posted by Venerastudio channel in January 2012, and at the time of writing has been on YouTube for seven years.¹⁶ This is a report by journalist Mila Nedelska and cameraman Vlad Vishnevskiy shot in a Roma settlement where a pogrom – allegedly by Berkut forces – had taken place the previous morning.¹⁷ It shows a poor slum with muddy streets and makeshift houses. The female reporter, wearing a white fur coat, is surrounded by many Roma who speak over one another, rushing to complain, express anxiety and condemn the attackers. Piecing together the evidence, one understands that the settlement was attacked early in the morning, with the attackers rushing into the houses of people, some of who were still sleeping, shouting abuse and death threats. An old woman cries and swears: 'My children do not steal [. . .] What have we done?' The journalists are taken into several houses, which, even if cluttered, are modest and clean. Old and young, healthy and ill are consistent in the evidence: they are scared to death. The attackers promised to come back. A short epilogue to the video reports the death of one of the witnesses, a bed-ridden tuberculosis sufferer. According to the report, it has not been possible to confirm who precisely carried out the pogroms, so they ask the police. Apparently, as the alleged attackers belong to Berkut – a semi-autonomous government-affiliated force – it is an awkward issue.

The reporters appear to be independently sponsored by the European Union and certainly display bravery in making a report that aims to give voice to the victims. There is something profoundly wrong with the way this video is posted, though. The title of the report – *You Are Not Human; You Should Be Exterminated* – quotes lines used by the racist attackers. However, a title like this seems to work as a magnet for viewers who share the philosophy of the invaders. It is no wonder, therefore, that most of the 140 comments that the video has generated are probably the purest example of extreme hate speech that one can come across.

The importance of YouTube

'I love YouTube', says cultural anthropologist Grant McCracken. 'As an anthropologist, it gives me access to everything. I do not have to leave the house. Everything happening in the world gets into a video that's uploaded onto YouTube. That makes YouTube the raw feed of popular culture. It's anything and everything, completely non-curated' (McCracken 2016: 41). And indeed, the videos I have just discussed give access to aspects of life that in other circumstances would likely have stayed in the shadows. It is particularly important for the nationalists to show their actions; video is great for this purpose

and YouTube is their key medium in not only making the 'raw feed of popular culture' available, but also providing a platform for forthright hate speech at the very site where the deeds are displayed.

These videos, and the many other videos that they stand in for, belong to the 'blaming the victim' category, in which groups that are socially weak, disempowered and impoverished are presented as a menace of overwhelming proportions, as extensively discussed by scholars over time (Ryan 1972; Said and Hitchens 1988). Finding such videos in full view on YouTube directly feeds into further fostering the discourse that puts the blame squarely on those who are target of the violence, while glorifying (directly or indirectly) the actions of those carrying out the pogroms. My spontaneous reaction, in the process of finding, watching and then describing these examples of racism and antiziganism, is similar to the impulse of my Czech friend: their very existence is shameful; these examples of hate speech must be banned from public space. YouTube should be alerted about the presence of this hateful stuff right away; it should take the videos down and have the comments disabled.

Before I reach for the 'flag up' button, however, I am having second thoughts. Will the removal of these videos and comments resolve anything? It will certainly hide the ugly facts from sight. But it will not eradicate the racism; it will just tuck it away. If taken down, the videos I discuss here will no longer be available, and thus we will have no public record of the reality of the pogroms, nor the size of the problem. This is what has happened to those other pogrom videos that I have seen sporadically over the years and that are no longer there. Taking this material down without any public record of what was taken down makes it impossible to be aware of the extent of the crisis, which, as I tend to believe, is significantly wider than is visible on the surface. Disabling the comments will remove hate speech from the public space but will not change the fact that there are significant numbers of individuals out there who feel that they are entitled to practise hate; nor will it alter the fact that the Roma are at the receiving end of such hate speech more than any other group.¹⁸

What about YouTube's Hate Speech Policy? It clearly states parameters that these videos fall under *bona fide*.¹⁹ What about their enforcement routines (Lapowski 2017)? A news item about YouTube's resolve to combat racism was published in *Romea*, a Czech Roma-themed online news source (ČTK 2017). According to this, in 2017 YouTube was in process of hiring more than 10,000 staff to monitor hate speech and enforce standards. If such numbers were indeed hired, I find it hard to imagine what these 10,000 employees might be busy with. What other standards would they be busy enforcing as a priority as to allow the hateful material to stay up for months? I also find it hard to believe that no one has flagged up these videos to YouTube's attention; after all, there are a number of international NGOs whose job it is to protect Roma rights. No information is publicly available on which videos are flagged up nor how many

times a video has been reported; YouTube does not report statistics on what has been taken down. Could it be that YouTube has been alerted about these racist videos and has simply decided to apply their ‘demonetisation’ approach, namely is to block advertising revenue so that those who post such material are not able to benefit financially from a possible advertising stream? One would think it would be clear to YouTube that those who post racist videos are not after advertising revenues. They do not care about generating income but about engaging publicly in hateful practice, in full view.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed material from a variety of Eastern European countries – the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia, Bosnia, and so on. But I could have easily used material from other countries – the hushed crisis I am talking about is equally prevalent across the region. It is often the case that the problems are reduced and explored as if they are typical of one country; correspondingly, the attempts to resolve them are also focused nationally. Indeed, the nation-state is still the framework for social measures. However, working within issue-based film studies, I want to foreground the importance of the transnational approach in studying representation. The Roma are a transnational group, and a migratory group at that. One can see aspects of their movements and the way they are treated only once matters are explored supranationally.²⁰

It is, then, inappropriate to regard the problems of antiziganism as specific to Eastern Europe; in fact, it is an ideology that is present Europe-wide, as is the mistreatment of Roma. Film-makers have recorded a miscellany of human rights abuses against the Roma for the past two decades, from illegal detentions on the Dutch-German border as far back as 2001, through deportations of Roma from Germany in 2003 and thereafter, to the more recent destruction of Roma shantytowns in Paris and across France and the practice of separating children from their parents in France.²¹ It is important to note that one can find a number of videos on YouTube that report actions of Roma removal from different West European countries by law-enforcement officers; such videos are likely to be watched with mixed feelings by antiziganists in Eastern Europe: joy over the destruction of settlements, envy that this is done by the police rather than by paramilitaries, and hatred of the Roma who will soon be deported to their neighbourhoods.²² And indeed, Roma are usually rounded up in the West and deported to Eastern Europe, where they are believed to ‘belong’, but where they will be most certainly exposed to danger, a practice that undermines the key premises of the Geneva Convention.

I believe the size of this crisis to be of much bigger proportions than publicly acknowledged. I also believe that antiziganism is Europe’s most systematically

hushed and overlooked problem. This is why I argue that it is of the utmost importance to talk about these matters as often and as much as possible, with the aim of counteracting ignorance and raising concern. If awareness were improved, we would hopefully not see people such as the posh British comedian Jack Whitehall visiting the training fields of paramilitaries in the Ukraine and treating them as if they are just some innocuous goofy boys obsessed with militarised drills.²³ His seems an innocent encounter – but in fact it is celebrating people who today may entertain an eccentric Englishman, but on other days will engage in racist pogroms.

It would also be good to see the term antiziganism used more often, alongside instances in which antisemitism is discussed, because nowadays these two behaviours and ideologies go hand in hand. For some reason, however, talk of antisemitism is loud and uncompromising, whereas talk about antiziganism is muted and conditional. Everybody knows the meaning of antisemitism; those who know the term antiziganism are few and far between, and those who use it are an even smaller group. If the films I discussed here were about Jews, they would most likely receive more awards, would have a wider festival exposure and theatrical distribution, and what they show would be condemned much more vocally. Just as the world marks the 80th anniversary of Kristallnacht and repeats ‘never again’, one should ensure that this pledge applies equally to all those endangered by groups who seek to obliterate them.

Last but not least, I also appeal to social scientists and educationalists who still find it difficult to adopt film in the context of their work. For social scientists (politologists, sociologists), film does not have the same evidentiary power as a published report or a research paper, even if – as evidenced by the discussion so far – it may chronicle adverse actual events or else reveal serious social trouble. They continue to discount film – even documentary film – as a fantasy medium that is unsubstantiated by default. No wonder, then, that someone like Nazif Mujic, whose life story is the subject of a shocking film that chronicles humiliation and abuse, is rejected by an asylum court and left to die in poverty at the age of 47 in a Europe where an extensive network of social agencies is established to safeguard human rights and provide support to the needy.

I wonder how often matters of antiziganism are discussed by educationalists in the context of their work. It is likely that many teachers and college professors in various countries are trying to address these problems. But do they make good use of the medium of film to raise awareness? Three versions of the anti-racist Hungarian short *Their Skin Was Their Only Sin: Roma Serial Killings in Hungary 2008–2009*, for example, have been posted on YouTube.²⁴ These films address precisely the same deadly pogroms against Roma that are the subject of *Just the Wind*, which we discussed above. The two shorter versions (of 3 and 2 minutes’ length) have gained slightly over 4,000 views; the 10-minute-long version has been viewed 4,539 times, giving the film a total

of less than 9,000 views. The comments are disabled (one can only speculate about the content), but the ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’ are still there, and they show a ratio of 3 to 1 in favour of the ‘dislikes’ (165:48). Even this minor detail gives enough information about the balance of public opinion. So in the course of five years, the anti-racist film has been viewed less than 9,000 times, whereas the viewership for pogrom videos over six months is in the hundreds of thousands. Would this be the case, I wonder, if teachers routinely suggested that their students view the anti-racist video in class? It is inexcusable for racist pogrom videos to have clocked hundreds of thousands of views while anti-racism films remain in obscurity. Can we make sure that our students are more exposed to the anti-racist efforts of film-makers? It should not be so difficult for us all – academics, educators, social scientists and film-makers – to work together to bring the hushed crisis into the daylight and confront it.

NOTES

1. In what is claimed to be the most comprehensive survey of victimisation suffered by Europe’s minority and immigrant communities, the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency said that for Roma ‘racially motivated crime is an everyday experience’ (European Union 2000). *The Guardian*’s Ian Traynor quotes Morten Kjaerum, director of the Vienna-based agency that authored the report: ‘They emerge as the group most vulnerable to discrimination’ (Traynor 2009).
2. Films that chronicle the discrimination and destitution of Roma are also made across Europe, for example, *A Ciambra* (2017), by Jonas Carpignano.
3. At least two other important films were made in Hungary on the same issue, Eszter Hajdú’s feature-length documentary *Judgment in Hungary* (2013) and the short *Their Skin Was Their Only Sin – Roma Serial Killings in Hungary 2008–2009* (2013). These pogroms are also discussed in Murer 2020.
4. *The Iron Picker* received somewhat better international exposure than the other two films – not least, a DVD of it is available to acquire on Amazon, with English subtitles.
5. His death was reported by Agence France Presse, but I have not been able to find a European newspaper that picked up the news. It was published, however, by the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong (‘Award-winning actor Nazif Mujic dies penniless after selling trophy to feed his starving children’, 19 February 2018).
6. My colleague also lamented the fact that the series’ creator, Magnusek, enjoys quite high visibility in Czech public life and at one point was even elected head of the writers’ union. ‘We consider his work the worst expression of racism entrenched in Central Europe’s mentality’, he added.
7. According to the Wikipedia entry on education in the Czech Republic, the ‘special schools’ were a segregational educational arrangement for developmentally disabled children. ‘Many children of Romani heritage were made to study at these schools despite lack of disability; due to institutional and social discrimination, Romani students often failed to meet academic standards and were segregated from

- mainstream public schools.' After criticism from the European Court of Human Rights in 2007, the special schools 'were replaced by elementary and practical schools, though the problem of the over-representation of Romani pupils continues'. Available at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_Czech_Republic> (last accessed 12 December 2019).
8. *Bastardi* is available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNk-dIJZtGk>> and can also be viewed in full via Facebook. *Bastardi 2* is available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjO6UkbfD0>> and *Bastardi 3* at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx9XF-UHErk>> (last accessed 12 October 2019).
 9. Except for a single review by a Czech-Roma student, whose commentary on the hateful nature of *Bastards* is published on a Roma site: Martina Šafářová, 'Czech film series "Bastards" humiliates Romani people', Romea, 30 March 2015, translated by Gwendolyn Albert, available at <<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-film-series-bastards-humiliates-romani-people>> (last accessed 12 October 2019). The piece claims that the Roma teenagers who took part in the film were manipulated and misled by the film-makers.
 10. However, when I first did research on *Bastards 1* in 2016, there were more than 700 comments.
 11. As far as I can tell, most pogrom videos are removed, often after a 'successful' run over a period of some months during which they are seen and applauded by tens or hundreds of thousands of viewers.
 12. Available at 12иои <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APw2BNuI4mk>> and from EuroMaydan <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X73xIGsQLvw>> (last accessed 25 April 2019). I spent some time deliberating and consulting over how to translate the term *Нацдружини* and settled on 'National Warband', as it seems to me that this most closely relates to the intended meaning of the group's name. It is of importance that 'National' here is abbreviated to *Naz*, as in 'Nazi'. I translated *зачищають* as 'clear out', but the verb on its own can safely be translated as 'cleanse'.
 13. The question about the passport is representative of a popular discourse on the Roma; they are regarded as alien people who have come from who knows where and are not really in possession of the same citizenship rights. Destroying her passport along with Maria's dwelling is an example of a rights deprivation that is, in the view of these people, bringing the status quo into line with what it should be.
 14. Available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFKBktmBy28>> (last accessed 25 April 2019). The National Corps is the parent organisation for the National Warbands. Notably, the first video, which contains raw footage of the pogrom, does not seem to have been posted on the National Corps' YouTube channel. Here one finds only the video that is edited and 'contextualised' discursively.
 15. Notably, in the video, ethnic Ukrainians are mainly identified by their full name and position; the Roma are identified by first name only and the label 'Gypsy'.
 16. *Ви не люди, вас треба убивати/You Are Not Human, You Should Be Exterminated* (<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiwRmQPMg>>) has had nearly 82,000 views. During the month I was working on this text, December 2018, the video was still being actively watched. On 9 December 2018 it had been seen 73,000 times, while on 25 April 2019 the number of views had grown to 81,608.

17. Berkut was a notorious special branch of the Ukrainian police within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which was founded at the beginning of the post-Soviet period in 1992 and was dissolved in 2014 after it became associated with the kidnapping and brutal treatment of Euromaidan protesters. Berkut was created to fight organised crime but later was known for operating semi-autonomously in various regions, where it was also involved in antisemitism. For more, see Kuzio 2000.
18. In any case, as I feel it is as much my duty as anybody else's to combat hate speech, and even if I know that protection for the Roma is next to non-existent, I am planning to report these videos.
19. According to this, 'if the primary purpose of the content is to incite hatred against a group of people solely based on their ethnicity, or if the content promotes violence based on any of these core attributes, like religion, it violates our policy'. Available at <<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2801939?hl=en;>> (last accessed 20 December 2018).
20. One rare instance of journalism that approaches matters transnationally is Kirsti Melville's two-part project for Australia's ABS, 'The New Untouchables: Home and Abroad' (2011).
21. As seen in films such as *Gelem, Gelem* (Germany, 2001), *Kenedi Is Coming Home* (2003), *Spartacus and Cassandra* (2014), *Trapped by Law* (2015) and *Chakaraka* (2015).
22. In France, for example, the police are charged with destroying and clearing away Roma settlements, and have done so at places such as La Petite Ceinture and La Courneuve in Paris.
23. In the second season of *Travels with My Father* (2018).
24. The posts were made by X Kommunikációs Központ in July 2013. The first version is available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMjVjZDx7ug>>; the second at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzc2N9MirPI>>, and the third at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLwXpe_J3B0> (last accessed 12 October 2019).