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Source: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Sep., 2004), pp. 561-582

Published by: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3803795>

Accessed: 21-11-2015 13:58 UTC

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# REMEMBERING WITHOUT COMMEMORATION: THE MNEMONICS AND POLITICS OF HOLOCAUST MEMORIES AMONG EUROPEAN ROMA

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Much has been written in recent years about the ways Gypsies (Roma) relate to their past. One important study of Holocaust memory has used the Roma as a paradigmatic case of a people who forget rather than remember their history. Rather than examining processes of 'obliterating' or downplaying the past, the approach taken here is to consider ways in which, despite Gypsy 'presentist' rhetoric, the past is 'remembered' among Gypsy populations. Following Maurice Bloch's call for greater integration of psychological and anthropological work, this article considers what can be gained from seeing memory as a socially distributed function in which the role of 'implicit' memories, embedded in dealings with others, is significant. This approach enables us better to grasp how Romany communities, which were persecuted by the Nazis and their allies during the Second World War, 'remember' the past even though they may not commemorate it.

In discussing Gitano (Spanish Gypsy<sup>1</sup>) understandings of their own history, Paloma Gay y Blasco has recently suggested that out of undue homage to their informants' own sense of temporality, ethnographers have, commonly, 'neglected to analyse the Gypsies' attitudes towards their own origins or their own past' (2002: 631). On reflection, the same criticism can also be levelled at historians who work on Gypsy populations. The growing scholarly literature on the nature of the Nazi persecution of the Sinte, Roma, and other Gypsies (Burleigh & Wippermann 1991; Lewy 2000; Zimmermann 1996) almost entirely bypasses the relationship of the victims to their own history.<sup>2</sup>

In this article I hope to rectify some of the neglect that Gay y Blasco has rightly identified, but rather than focus on the means of 'forgetting', 'obliterating', and 'downplaying' the past' (2002: 636, 639), I focus on the ways in which, despite Gypsy 'presentist' rhetoric, the past is 'remembered' among Gypsy populations.<sup>3</sup> Apart from the ethnographic contribution of this analysis, there is a more general lesson to be learned here: the difficulty that ethnographers have in conceptualizing the past in the present (e.g. Stewart 1997) results from the imprecise way in which 'memory', especially so-called 'social memory', has been treated in the anthropological literature. Following the call of a number of anthropologists to engage in the contended relationship of cognitive psychology and anthropology, not just to mark the limits of

anthropological ambition (e.g. Bloch 1976), but also to enrich and make more precise our ethnographic interpretations (Bloch 1988: 39–53; Boyer 1990; Cole 2001; Sperber 1996), this article seeks to show that a more psychologically nuanced understanding of the workings of ‘memory’ can contribute significantly to the analysis of social practice.

Why, the reader may wonder, psychology in particular? After all, the boom in ‘memory studies’ has reached the point that almost any academic ship can now sail under this particular flag of convenience (J. Winter 2000). Moreover, if one turns to standard psychological textbooks on memory (e.g. Baddeley 1997), even when memory in the real world is in question, the analytic focus remains firmly on the workings of individual brains. Those intersubjective aspects of remembering in which anthropologists are most interested, involving people ‘thinking in partnership with others’ (Salamon, cited in Cole 2001: 29), appear in most psychological work in the form of technical devices or contexts which measurably enable or hinder registration and recall in individual brains. As a result, when one puts this laboratory work beside much of the recent anthropological literature on ‘memory’, it seems, as Carsten has observed, as though we are talking about two entirely different things (1995: 331). Like Carsten, I am unhappy with the prospect of leaving such a yawning gulf between psychological and anthropological usages.<sup>4</sup>

The advantage of a psychologically inspired approach to the way in which the past is actively remembered can most simply be made with reference to work which approaches ‘social memory’ from a different angle. To take one otherwise exemplary study, Rosalind Shaw has described a west African society where the slave trade is forgotten as history, in the sense of vernacularly transmitted narratives, but is ‘remembered’ as spirits, as a menacing landscape, and as images in divination, marriage, witchcraft, and postcolonial politics, all of which, we are told, contain what are, in effect, hidden memories of the slave trade (2002: 9). But Shaw also takes pains to point out that when Temne diviners invoke images of a past landscape involving roads and crossroads in their ritual practices, these do not express ‘explicit recollections of the past ... These diviners ... did not intend to recall a past landscape’ (2002: 94).<sup>5</sup> One of the difficulties I have here is that since these ‘memories’ are not only implicit and non-discursive but also hidden, there is no native exegesis to sustain claims that today’s practices recapitulate historical experiences. To take an example from our own experience, when English children dance round the playground singing ‘Ring-a-Ring-of-roses ... We all fall down’, their behaviour does carry the sediment of a seventeenth-century horror, but it would be perverse to say they are ‘remembering’ the plague or that this ditty is a hidden ‘memory’ of our collective past. The danger here is that the anthropologist may become like an ‘archaeologist of the word’, digging up meanings that are not only obscure to the outsider but also lost to the locals (Herzfeld 1981). When diverse Temne diviners ‘draw on different aspects of enslavement’ (Shaw 2002: 115–16) in their practices, whatever else they are doing they are not consciously reconfiguring a narrative of the past in the present – as Hebrew scholars do discursively and explicitly draw upon different aspects of the biblical history to reframe current concerns (Webber 2000).

It is relatively easy to distinguish cases like Temne divination from those like the Jewish or Christian commemorative celebrations of Purim, Passover, or Communion in which the past is explicitly commemorated. In these cases, events several thousand years ago are recalled and remembered (at least in Bartlett's sense) by participants in the rituals. The material I am dealing with in this article concerns yet another modality in which the past lives on in the present and one which demands a more precise analytic apparatus to link mental processes and social practices. Jennifer Cole has demonstrated an alternative, psychologically guided approach in a case that is, superficially at least, rather similar to mine. In a study of the Betsimisaraka on the northeast coast of Madagascar, Cole shows how a subterranean, socially repressed memory of colonial revolt erupts into conscious discourse in a particular historical context (an election campaign in 1992). In explaining this she uses a range of psychological literature to demonstrate that 'knowing how' to behave with others – the implicit understandings of everyday life – becomes in some contexts transformed into more discursive forms of 'knowing that' (2001: 282).

Like Cole, and in contrast to those who gloss as 'memory' social representations which might equally be called 'culture' or 'ritual', I am concerned here with how personal experiences of Roma in the Second World War have been handed on through time and, in various ways in diverse places, turned into shared memories, despite the paucity of occasions for their re-creation, the complete absence of any commemorative ceremonies, and a general lack of interest in matters past among the Roma. I thereby hope to make a contribution to cultural-psychological work which goes beyond both individualist and socio-centric stances. There is a range of work in this area that cannot be surveyed here. Whitehouse, for instance, has argued that different types of memory are supported by and linked to different social institutions and practices, and that mnemonic devices – means of focusing attention, for example – vary according to ritual forms and contexts of interaction (2000: 9–12). Of greater immediate relevance is the work of scholars such as Brockmeier (2002), Middleton (2002), Wertsch (2000) and White (2000) who are working towards a psychologically plausible theory of mind that is attentive to the ways in which minds 'extend beyond the skin' (Wertsch, cited in White 2000). In exploring memory in the social environment, these innovative authors have emphasized the role of narrative as a social form mediating between individual experience (mental processes) and public representations. This article proposes that it is time to focus attention on the way in which non-discursive forms of memory can fulfil a similar function.

### **Remembering without commemorating**

The source of this article lies in an ethnographic puzzle. Before my first visit to the field in 1984, I had assumed that during my research I would gather considerable oral historical material from my Romany-speaking Hungarian Gypsy informants. In particular, I expected to collect accounts of the war years when not only their way of life, but their very survival as a people had come

close to obliteration. Donald Kenrick and Gratton Puxon's pioneering study of the Nazi persecution of the Roma, *The destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, contained reference to deportations from villages situated only a few kilometres from the town of Harangos<sup>6</sup> where I was going to live (1972: 126–7), and so I was confident that I would be able to add significantly to the historical record of those times.

It is, of course, in the nature of field research that one's own preoccupations give way to those of one's hosts. Since the medium- or long-term past featured so little in the Gypsies' own conversations, as I was absorbed into the life of a Gypsy settlement I abandoned attempts to probe deeply into people's sense of their recent history, let alone the distant past. There was no term in colloquial Romany for the events that we have come to call 'the Holocaust' – an American Romany intellectual had coined the term *Porrajmos*, the 'devouring', but one is still more likely to find this term on the internet than on the lips of Roma in the lands occupied by the Germans during the Second World War.<sup>7</sup> Daily life was lived with barely a passing acknowledgement of those events.

This is not to say that there was no mention of the historical past in everyday life. The old man whose house I shared would every so often comment to me and anyone else who was listening<sup>8</sup> that if it had not been for the arrival of the Red Army, who occupied the area in 1945, none of the Roma I knew would be alive today. Occasionally he would briefly narrate an event from the end of the war when he and other members of his family – after hiding out 'on the plain' in a peasant barn – were sent on a forced march towards the railway line that had been used the previous year for the deportation of local Jews. As they crossed the fields near the station, gunfire could be heard from the surrounding hills; knowing this to be the sound of Red Army troops approaching the town, the German troops fled, leaving their Romany prisoners in the hands of local Hungarian fascists, the *Nyilas*.<sup>9</sup> They too then took to their heels, leaving the Roma to make their way home. There were other images too that came into people's minds. One man recalled a woman who had been raped while lying across her sister's legs as her father looked on. Other such experiences were described to me at second hand, most commonly from younger Roma who told me about conversations they remembered with their elders. I came to feel that for many people, the memory of the entire war was condensed into a few images that were normally kept deep in the shadows of the cave, illuminated occasionally and incandescently before being enveloped again in the penumbra of the past. In since talking about such phenomena with Roma from other parts of Hungary, I have come across similar practices in other settlements. Ágnes Daróczi, a Hungarian Romany cultural activist, told me of hearing as a small child of boards appearing outside every house in her settlement one evening towards the end of the war. On each of these boards the next morning there was a number written – indicating how many were to be taken from each house. Another fragment of a past, another image torn from an experience of terror and helplessness. And, in Ágnes's childhood, as in my experience in Harangos, these iconic moments were recalled and described by people as if they were understandable in and of themselves, without needing to be situated in any more general narrative framework. These are certainly memories,

but they do not seem to me to be part of a process of remembering which involves the possession and sharing of a narrative history.

And yet, eighteen months after I had left Harangos I saw that the past did live on in people's lives, albeit almost imperceptibly. Amid the turbulence which arose in the final years of Hungarian Socialism as 'civil society' gave birth to its natural twin, 'uncivil society', groups of youths, modelling themselves on British skinheads, formed rock bands. Their fans then toured the country performing their ostentatious and deliberately shocking displays of brutal fascist-like behaviour. Traditional anti-Gypsy graffiti, like 'Gypsy-Free Zone', which had occasionally been seen in the past on bus stops or on factory walls, now took on a more sinister resonance for the Roma. In the early summer of 1988 a series of what the media called 'skinhead hysterias' swept the Romany communities of Hungary. In Harangos, in June 1988, a colleague of mine, the late Zita Réger, visited 'my' settlement and found the twenty-eight families living there crammed into three houses in the centre of the settlement, with the men maintaining an armed watch at night. Skinheads had recently sprayed, 'we'll be back to get the stinking Gypsies' on a wall near the settlement. A few days later an elderly Gypsy woman had seen a car full of skinheads pass through the main square, or maybe she had seen skinheads gathering there; the stories varied. On her return home, a local self-defence strategy was agreed. The local factories went without Romany labour that night and until they laid on a bus to bring the night shift home. For weeks after the immediate panic had passed, the Roma walked home in groups protecting one another from the threat of racist attacks. In fact, no one is reported to have been attacked in Harangos or in any of the other communities in Hungary where 'skinhead panics' occurred at this time.<sup>10</sup> But the fear of attack was real. Zita Réger recounted later how Roma had talked to her of their fear of the return of the Arrow Cross (Nyilás), the wartime fascist party. The foreman of the Parquet flooring factory, István Németh, said that there had been talk of the *fajgyűlölő* (literally, 'race-haters') returning – the term used in official discourse for adherents of Nazi and other racist ideologies. Later that summer, when I was living in the settlement again, the more colloquial term 'racist' (*rasszista*) was being widely used by younger Roma to describe the skinheads. And while some said that these were just hooligans (this was the official Party line), others insisted that there were 'politics' at work here. It wasn't just older people who told me 'they would take us all away and kill us', using exactly the phrase that cropped up in accounts of the war. There had previously been next to none or even no official discourse about racism in communist Hungary – that was seen as a problem of the West and not one worth mediatizing. So, I feel confident in asserting that if these Roma saw the link between the 'hooligans' and the wartime fascists, this was their own construction.

Here then are the pieces of my puzzle: talk about the war was rare and moreover popped up in fleeting, fragmentary images. There were no forms of collective commemoration in which the historical memory of persecution was re-lived and re-created anew for each generation. I had come from a world where, as our common sense tells us, commemoration is the root of historical awareness. The Jewish injunction *zakhor!*<sup>11</sup> is surely self-explanatory, as is the slogan that sells poppies for 11 November, Armistice Day, 'Lest We Forget'.

But in that northern Hungarian town where I lived and worked, the people I knew had no literary tradition and barely spoke of the historical past; they certainly did not ritualize it. Yet this was a people who appeared to have suddenly acquired a strong historical awareness. Something was clearly amiss with my model.

### History

In re-thinking the ways in which Roma relate to the war, I need to consider how they relate to the past more generally. At one and the same time I wish to argue two apparently contradictory things. First, in contrast to those around them – readers of this article, for instance – many Roma in Eastern Europe do manage to live without history as we know it: the more or less formal, discursive or performative reproduction of the past in the present. But second, contrary to certain journalistic and even academic simplifications of this insight, Gypsies manage not to forget crucial aspects of their history because of the ways in which personal, fragmentary narratives interact with broader cultural understandings and a series of prompts in the world in which Gypsies live. These prompts remind them of the nature of their ongoing relationship with their defining others, the non-Gypsies.

Whether one draws inspiration from the early works of Halbwachs on collective memory (1925) or Connerton's more recent discussion of 'social memory' (1989), it is clear that Romany peoples lack many of the mnemonic devices which ground shared memories in European societies. The built environment in which they live, either of their own or others' making, is so temporary that it hardly bears a trace of the past. At death almost all personal possessions are normally given away, sold, or destroyed, and even in everyday life objects of daily use are passed on to others, almost as if with the deliberate intention of preventing them from acquiring the smell and feel of the past. This is a world without nostalgia, inhabited by a people who seem to 'celebrate impermanence' (Kaprow 1982). The institutional practices, calendrical rituals, for instance, by which others reproduce the past in the present are almost totally absent. How can I put this more succinctly than to say that, unlike their Jewish 'kin' (the Roma's image, not mine),<sup>12</sup> the Roma have no Passover? So, the 'more or less ritual performances' which Connerton sees as universally essential to conveying and sustaining 'images' and 'recollected knowledge of the past' simply do not exist for these people (1989: 40). There are no commemorative ceremonies, no prototypical events, and, therefore, no re-enactments.<sup>13</sup>

There are the kind of now-you-see-them-now-you-don't, flashbulb memories<sup>14</sup> I have mentioned, as well as extremely conventionalized accounts of the 'great poverty' in a period referred to as 'sometime' before the present (see Gay y Blasco 2002: 634-6; Stewart 1997: 245). Occasionally, in some communities, events of the war might be incorporated in a personally composed song. The following, recorded in Romania in 1995, tells of the experience of deportation across the Dniester river to the area known to Romanian Roma as 'the Bug.'

Sabu rom, Devla, d'avasa  
 Ando Bugo žasa  
 Haj nakhasa v'ò Nistro baro,  
 Haj merela e lumja ando Bugo, sja.  
 Ame kana avasa palpalje,  
 O namce mudaren ame  
 Haj le rusa kalaven ame,  
 Haj le rom but kay merena,  
 Haj luma buti ci maj xana.  
 (Bari 1999: 202).

All the Rom, oh God will come  
 They will go to the Bug  
 And will even reach the great Dniester  
 And the whole world will die in the Bug.  
 And we, when we return home,  
 The Germans kill us  
 And the Russians liberate us  
 And so many Roma will die  
 And so many will not eat again.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond such powerful, if dramatically disjointed and somewhat 'flattened', reminders, there was precious little record of the events of 1940-5. I heard no stories and saw no commemoration of the dead of that time. Personal accounts, of varying degrees of elaboration, could be elicited from those who had been through the camps, as I later discovered when researching a television film about the Holocaust, but in everyday life virtual silence seemed to be the answer of the Roma to 'the call of history'.<sup>16</sup> The past was, or so it seemed, truly 'another country' (Hartley 1953).

This perspective on the past was not just to be found in attitudes to the traumatic events of the war. As I have argued elsewhere (Stewart 1997), the Romany world I encountered was one without ancestors and ancestral justifications. In contrast to the Hungarians around them, who at times seemed to cultivate a popular nostalgia for ways of life and religious practices dating back to the mists of quasi-mythical Finno-Ugric time, most Roma were supremely unconcerned about their past. One man I knew, when asked where his ancestors had come from, joked that one of them, maybe his father's grandfather or great grandfather, might have lived in a good country but then made the terrible mistake of moving to Hungary. What a fool, was my informant's comment. The choice of personal names also reflects this casual relationship with the past. These names denote positions in a network rather than a unique, personal identity that endures over time (Williams 1984: 151-60), and so a person may have a *gažikano anav* (official, non-Gypsy name used for entries in the official birth registry), a *romano anav* (Romany name normally given by godparents) and others too, depending on where he or she has lived and whom he or she has befriended. Likewise, the names given to social networks (*nemzeto*) tend to refer not to a glorious but to a comic, bathetic past. Ronald Lee provides a striking illustration of this practice from Canada, where one of the main networks of Yugoslav Roma is known as the *Minešti*. *Minešti*, it turns out, was not some successful horse dealer, nor even the person who brought these Roma from Belgrade across the Atlantic. In fact *Minešti* was not a person at all, but a pig, a great fat Serbian sow which had served to carry many children across the Montenegrin mountains (Lee, cited in Williams 1984: 136). Similar, if less comic, examples could be drawn from Harangos.

So how are we to interpret the relationship of the Roma with their past? As a first stab at interpretation one could say that, like some other marginal peoples, they have turned the experience of living in a state of constant jeopardy into a positive celebration of the present moment. But this approach comes perilously close to a recycling of the old romantic view of



the carefree, footloose Gypsy which is now anathema to all serious anthropologists (Gay y Blasco 2002: 632). In earlier work I tried to give expression to the Roma's distinctive relationship to their frequently traumatic history suggesting that, being unable even to dream of re-assembling the past into a coherent present, they had turned their faces to the future, ignoring the chaos that Chronos wreaks behind them (Stewart 1988; also 1997: 245-6).

These are ideas which underpin a number of influential works, most notably Isabel Fonseca's widely read popular account of Gypsy life, *Bury me standing*, in which the author identifies an insouciant 'defiance' among the Roma, and makes much of the Gypsy 'art of forgetting' (1995: 276). Forgetting is identified as the Gypsy way of enduring when dealing with events like the Holocaust. Fonseca's material has been reworked in a more formal, academic mode by the anthropological historian Inge Clendinnen. Clendinnen's highly acclaimed study *Reading the Holocaust* (1999) refers to the case of Europe's Gypsies as an example of people who have chosen 'not to bother with history at all' and who 'seek no meanings beyond those relevant to immediate survival' (1999: 8).

Of course, the suggestion that Roma have somehow healed themselves of a painful past by insulating themselves from traumatic memory is a striking and even heartening proposition. But think of the implications. If it were true that 'the Roma forget', then the Nazi persecution of the Gypsies would have had no lasting effect on Romany social life, would have passed as an event without trace. Everything in 1950 would have been much as it had been in 1930. The events in between – war, hunger, fear, slaughter – would be on the way to being forgotten by those who went through them. The trouble is that all this may be no more than wishful thinking. The idea of people finding a way to live without reference to a burdensome past may be so appealing, even to an intelligence as sharp as Clendinnen's, that the troubling implications of such a claim may not be recognized.

### Living with the past

In fact, Roma are no more able than anyone else to forget in such a simple or unproblematic fashion. Take, by way of example, the experience of one German Gypsy woman of Sinto descent whom I have come to know in Britain. Of course, like every former victim's story, her tale is unique. Yet it can also stand for a number of general features of Romany people's experience both during and after the war (cf. Todorov 1999: 258-60), as its central character has herself discovered through meeting with members of the Heidelberg-based Romany Holocaust research centre as well as on trips to Auschwitz with fellow Romany and Sinte survivors.

Ilsa Schmidt was 7 years old in the summer of 1942, when, as she remembers it today, two men in military coats arrived at her home asking for her by name. They took her to a warehouse on the docks, where they left her among crowds of people already gathered there. Ilsa had no idea why she had been brought there. In fact, she had no idea that the people all around her were 'Gypsies'. Nor, on this occasion, did she have a chance to find out, for within hours her father had found her and brought her out of the docks. He

told her that there had been a misunderstanding and that she should forget all about what had happened.

Ilsa – though she did not know it then – was the daughter of a ‘half-Gypsy’ who had married a non-Gypsy ‘Aryan’. As such, under the Nazi race classification system that was in force at the time, she was automatically classed as a ‘ZM minus’, a mixed-race *Zigeuner* (Gypsy) with ‘a greater proportion of German blood’. Such *mischlinge* (persons of mixed ancestry) were seen as more of a menace than the so-called ‘pure Gypsies’ because the ‘mixed-race’ Gypsies threatened the purity of the ‘folk community’ (Ritter 1941). Ilsa was extremely lucky to have survived for this long, concealed as she was within a German ‘Aryan’ family which had adopted her some years before. She herself had been too young to remember any of this and had no inkling that she might possess ties to any family other than the one she had always regarded as her own natal kin.<sup>17</sup>

Two years later the men came to the door again. Ilsa’s adoptive father realized that it would not be so easy to bring her back this time, and so he told her she was not his biological child.

He cried when he said this. And my mother said through her tears, ‘we are not your real parents. You will meet your real mother at the place where you are going now.’ I was completely unprepared for all this and I just could not understand it ... There are details which you particularly remember as a child. For instance, I had always held hands with my adoptive parents when walking so as not to get lost. I can clearly remember that I looked for the hand of one of the Gestapo for me to hold, but he pushed my hand away. These are small things which I can remember quite clearly, because for me as a child they were big things (Rose 1995: 180-1).

Amongst the scores of thousands of people of Gypsy descent who were taken away from their homes and caravans between 1936 and 1945, Ilsa was almost uniquely fortunate.<sup>18</sup> Her adoptive father, having succeeded once, at the docks, braved the offices of the SS again and, after a prolonged correspondence, secured letters of release for her. Five months after she was taken away, he travelled to Ravensbruck to reclaim her.

In a recent interview Ilsa explained that her last obligation in the camp was to sign a paper in which she undertook not to tell anyone of her experiences there or of her earlier stay in Auschwitz. There was little need for the ritual of the signature. ‘My adoptive parents in Hamburg had no idea how cruel reality in the concentration camps was. They had accepted that there were very bad forced labour camps, but they could not imagine that people were ill-treated, murdered and burned there. So they could not understand the frightful things I had gone through’ (Rose 1995: 184).

After her return Ilsa’s parents drew a protective veil at home over her torment. Despite her parents’ best efforts, however, she could not be protected from the, perhaps unintended, consequences of school procedures.

I was told to tell people that I had been with an aunt in the German countryside. That was what I was to tell them – to get away from the bombing. I had the concentration camp number tattooed on my arm with just a plaster to hide it. And the children did not guess ... But not the adults, the teachers, you see ... In front of the classroom the teacher asked me what was under the elastoplast. I froze again. Froze again. Knowing, remembering, remembering. You see anything that made me remember made me freeze

... And he [the teacher] obviously never realized this. And I was told not to sit down till I told what was under the plaster. I just stood there like a zombie ...<sup>19</sup>

Ilsa never told her parents about this. 'Anything, anything relating to that [time] wasn't touched upon. Instinctively I knew I would freeze up again'. From that day, for nearly thirty years, Ilsa spoke with no one at all about what had happened to her in Auschwitz and Ravensbruck aged 8 and 9. She says she was numb, 'too numb. I don't think I came out of that numbness till I was thirty-nine years of age'.

This story of one Hamburg girl speaks, in some ways, to the experience of many Gypsy camp inmates.<sup>20</sup> On returning from the camps, they found that the price of gaining re-admission to their homes, villages, and towns was to remain silent about their exile and the attempted destruction of their people. And if any of them did try to speak of their experiences, their listeners would merely say 'you know, we suffered too'. Often it was they, the victims, who were blamed for their own suffering due to their 'criminal' or 'asocial' (*Gemeinschaftsfremd*) lifestyle.<sup>21</sup> It was easy enough for those who had stood by or even taken an active role in the deportations of their neighbours to generate this kind of expedient rewriting of history. For the Gypsies, however, such experiences could not just be willed out of consciousness.

Years later Ilsa's past welled up unbidden as she found herself dreaming of things she had observed but not fully understood during her time in the camps. At Auschwitz she had seen piles of 'white corpses', bodies which had been sprinkled with white lime,

all piled on top of each other. As a child, I just could not understand what it was. Very much later, years after my liberation, I had awful nightmares about this sight: that I am standing under the portal at the city hall in Hamburg, and the people standing next to me are saying to me I should come with them. But I say 'no, I cannot walk on the ground, the whole floor is full of corpses'. But the other people in the dream cannot see the dead; they just walk over them with their high-heeled shoes and take absolutely no notice of the corpses (Rose 1995: 182).

Ilsa Schmidt escaped her nightmares by fleeing to England and leaving the world of her childhood behind her. Most of Europe's Gypsies have had less success getting away from tangible reminders of the past.

### Forgetting

After the war Ilsa Schmidt continued to be raised by her adoptive family having lost nearly all her natal family in Auschwitz. She is, thus, unlike those Roma who returned from the camps to be reunited with surviving family members and with them set about reconstituting their prewar communities. But her experience of being unable to find a public place for the past in the present is typical (at least for those Roma who live outside of Germany). If we try to explain how this persecution never came to be publicly commemorated, two factors need to be considered, one external and one internal to Romany social life. First, and not in any way to be dismissed, there is the

fact that most of the pre-1933 persecution and, indeed, part of the Nazi persecution of the Sinte, Roma, and other Gypsies was carried out by official state institutions under the ideological pretext of dealing with an anti-social, indeed criminal, layer of the population (Strauss 1986). The Nazi Party had no need to construct its own lists of Gypsies in the 1920s and 1930s since so many central and eastern European countries possessed police files on Roma dating back as far as the eighteenth century (Lucassen 1996); in many cases there was also extensive twentieth-century documentation deriving from the work of various public welfare organizations. Moreover, these regulatory institutions had been operating in a climate where social policy had become gradually biologized (Peukert 1987: 208–35). In part then, the persecution of the Gypsies by the Nazis and their allies had its roots in prewar Weimar and Wilhelmine eugenics and social cleansing policies.<sup>22</sup> After the war the persecution of the Gypsies and even the mass slaughters were often explained, in the very terms the Nazis had used, as a necessarily firmly repressive, security-driven policy for dealing with the wayward (and nationally non-affiliated) poor (e.g. Döring 1964). Indeed, even today, there are still some historians whose ostensibly sympathetic accounts of the Holocaust explicitly suggest that in some way the Gypsies provoked their own persecution (Lewy 2000: 11).

Because, in part, there were no war crimes trials of those who persecuted Gypsies – no Romany witnesses spoke at Nuremberg – and the ‘German on German’ trials of the early 1960s barely dealt with the issue, no official criminalization of these acts took place until the 1970s. The fact that the persecution of the Gypsies was never properly delegitimized meant that after the war even senior officials who had taken a leading role in formulating genocidal policies against the Gypsies were neither prosecuted nor deprived of official posts; some were even restored to their original positions.<sup>23</sup> My recordings of oral testimony from Roma are replete with stories of encounters with former persecutors. From Angyalföld in Budapest, Jenő Daróczi told me about being visited on his return from the camps by the very policeman who had personally loaded him onto the cattle cars that had taken him to Dachau: ‘Don’t make a fuss (*ne ugrass*) or we will send you back’, he was told. The fact that many Gypsies have not received official reparations for their sufferings has also been an important factor; in this sense too there has been no public acknowledgement of a crime committed and a collective loss experienced.<sup>24</sup>

These, then, are elements of the external context which curtails talk of the past. As Laurence Kirmayer has put it, the ‘landscape of memory’ is such that the past remains out of view (1996: 187–90). But I doubt if this is a sufficient explanation. The Roma have not had much access to public space for the airing of their grievances and yet amongst themselves they manage to sustain an ever sharp sense of their own distinctive experience of the world. Much Romany cultural activity takes place in Romany landscapes of which the wider world is almost entirely ignorant. So, to understand fully Romany silences over the Holocaust we also have to consider factors internal to Gypsy social life, both the mnemonic devices available in Romany cultures and the very notion of what it is to be a Rom.

### Mnemonics and the local construction of the person

Concerning Romany mnemonics, it seems that narrative devices may themselves shape what is retained and what is forgotten in social memories (Bartlett 1932). Such devices can be of a quasi-technical nature – much Romany narration takes place in dialogue form – or they can be more thematic. A world view in which Roma are the superior party in a world divided between themselves and the ‘foolish’ or ‘stupid’ *gaže* (non-Gypsies; pronounced *gadje*), does not leave much narrative space for the massive historical defeat that was the Holocaust. Just as Cole has argued for the Betsimisaraka in relation to the 1947 uprising in Madagascar (1998, following Langer 1991), so it seems that for the Roma memories of the war are never redemptive but remain sources of ‘pure misery’. This judgement is confirmed by the only published study dealing with Romany memory of the war. Martins-Heuss notes that for many years German Sinto society was ‘able to maintain and reconstitute itself after National Socialism by means of the further marginalization – or even expulsion – of [former victims] who ... were regarded as “weakened” or socially impaired’ (1989: 202).<sup>25</sup>

The absence of a social landscape for the production of wartime memories is a subject worthy of much more extensive investigation. However, because it opens a broader perspective on the Roma and also broaches issues of broader concern for anthropologists, I want to focus here on Romany notions of ‘the person in time’. As Bloch has argued, while psychologists may plausibly assert universality for procedures of short-term, working memory, ‘as soon as we move to long term memories such as autobiographical memory ... the problem of the nature of the subject must come to the fore’ (1998: 81) and such subjects will have to be seen, in part, as culturally constructed.

In an argument that I can only summarize here, Day, Papataxiarchis, and I (1998) have suggested that Romany social practices constitute a very special sense of subjectivity in an expansive, non-durational ‘present’.<sup>26</sup> Building on an insight of Woodburn (1968) and Meillassoux (1973) concerning the economies of hunter-gatherers, we have argued that a resolute short-termism, which can become in some contexts a ‘present’ without duration, is established, *inter alia*, by practices such as:

- (i) representing economic activity as foraging/gathering, rather than as production;
- (ii) sustaining an ethic of immediate consumption; and
- (iii) conceptualizing sharing as a model of social relations rather than exchange.

Together these make possible

- (iv) the discursive construction of a sense of living in an abundant, affluent world in which temporality can be transcended (Day, Papataxiarchis & Stewart 1998: 1-3).

A few words of explanation may be in order here. ‘Economy’ is a limited-good model of behaviour (with associated notions of scarcity, saving, delayed

consumption, and planning) according to which present actions should provide for the future. 'Gathering' implies that there is no need for present action to provide for the future since this is guaranteed by a generous, affluent, physical environment (see also Stewart 1997: 17-26). Another crucial feature of Romany sociality – sharing – also has implications for the representation of temporality, since this too takes the sphere of distribution out of time. The interested calculation that is reciprocal exchange is replaced by an ethos of sharing that exists in, or, rather constitutes, an expansive 'present' (see Bourdieu 1972; Woodburn 1998). Though this is in so many ways a rhetorical, exaggerated (at times wilfully one-sided) representation of their existence in the world, this anti-economic social orientation helps form a sense of the person rooted in current relations with others. The explanation of the current dispositions or practices of persons is something that is always understood as existing in a present that owes nothing to the past and holds no hope for the future (Day, Papataxiarchis & Stewart 1998: 18-22).<sup>27</sup>

It is no surprise that the behaviour of subjects who are strategically constructed as living in a continuous present is rarely explained by reference to tales of the historical past that account for the present, that is, for our sense of history. This is not to say that there is no 'memory'. Both Fonseca and Clendinnen take the line that they do because they see memories as possessions, the enumeration or telling of which in narrative allows a self to be remembered or created (Bruner 1990). But as Neisser (1994) has argued, to think of memories as possessions implies and legitimates a very particular notion of identity. It is no surprise, then, to find Fonseca suggesting that recovery of 'memory' will be an act of cultural empowerment, and hence the route to cultural self-discovery (1995: 276-7).

And note here, again, where Fonseca and Clendinnen take us. If in Romany communities there is no remembered self, then there is perhaps no self, no identity at all. And if memory is cultural DNA (Lambek & Antze 1996: xi-xvi), the means to hold the past in the present, then if there is no memory there is no culture. The problem here is that while I am certain that this is not anything remotely like the intention of either Fonseca or Clendinnen, this kind of perspective comes perilously close to those which underpinned the views of the prewar and wartime racist commentators who derided the Roma as social parasites who were by definition devoid of 'culture'.

### **Memory in the midst of amnesia**

The problem that Fonseca and Clendinnen have created for themselves derives from the loose or metaphorical way in which social scientists have come to use 'memory' to cover a promiscuously wide variety of phenomena (Bloch 1998: 114-27) without reference to those who study memory as a mental process. I have been particularly struck by Connerton's path-breaking work, to which I turned initially with great enthusiasm, but which I ultimately found rather frustrating. Connerton (1989) was concerned to show that history can be embodied in non-textual (non-inscribed) practices, and so it seemed that he would be a good guide as to how people like the Roma, who live 'without history', do in fact live in diachrony. Connerton's interest in bodily practices,

however, focuses on cases in which habits contribute to a hierarchy of social practices with 'commemorative ceremonies' at its apex. Bodily automatisms (politeness gestures, for example) contribute to habits which themselves both constitute and structure 'commemorative ceremonies'; by re-enacting the past, these in turn embody and incorporate the past in the present (1989: 6-7). Habitual behaviour and practices, such as European peasants' treatment of bread and wine (see, e.g., Pina-Cabral 1986), are hierarchically incorporated in commemorations like Communion. Such commemorative ceremonies then provide a collective autobiography and so form the basis of an (historically shaped) collective identity (1989: 70).

When dealing with a population like the Gypsies who are 'without history' not because they lack inscribed (textual) history but because they lack any commemorative, calendrical, or other rites of re-enactment and ground their 'identity' not in a shared past but in shared activity in the present, clearly Connerton's work can be of little direct relevance.<sup>28</sup> But the difficulty in using Connerton's work is not just a matter of ethnographic suitability. While brilliantly portraying the relationship between ritual and everyday habits, Connerton, with an almost Durkheimian emphasis on the social and collective, skates over the mediation of personal experience and public representations of the past.

Searching for a route between Durkheimian exaggeration (societies remembering) and its psychological counterpart (brains working individually), I turned to work in the field of 'social remembering', in which cognition is seen (in part) as a property of intersubjective relations. William Hirst has been one of several pioneering contributors in this field (e.g. Hirst 1994; Hirst & Cuc 2001; though, see also Hutchins 1995 and Neisser 1994, amongst many others). Hirst's work on a group of patients with memory difficulties suggests a broad set of propositions about the nature of 'remembering' which can be applied beyond his experimental cohort, and throws particular light on my material in which commemorative recall cannot be the source of 'remembering'. Hirst reports on work with a small number of patients who had suffered limited brain damage, losing certain brain functions, but leaving linguistic, perceptual, and cognitive abilities intact (1994: 254). His key finding is that these amnesiacs do in fact 'remember' and 'construct a sense of self'. The implication of this is that Bruner (1990) may not be right to portray selves as constructed primarily through the recall of past events in personal narratives. The aim of Hirst's experiments was to test the area of his patients' cognitive functioning, which psychologists refer to as episodic memory. This is the form of memory which is thought to provide the raw material for autobiographical narratives, and from this work Hirst adduces a number of findings. Three of these are particularly relevant to my problem.

First, amnesiacs' recall appears to vary according to the type of cueing received, and, therefore, rather than rely on a simple record-recall model of memory, the process of recognition should be included in the forms of activity which we define as memory. Thus, for instance, one group of amnesiacs were asked to study a list of words and then recall them. On this task amnesiacs performed poorly compared with those without impaired memory function. But in a second experiment, after studying a word list, subjects were

asked to complete stems (some of which had occurred in the studied list) with the first word that came to mind. Here, amnesiacs performed as well as normals. Hirst's conclusion is that everyone possesses recollections which fall into the category of implicit memories; this entails memory in a form which is difficult to access declaratively or verbally, and may thus appear to be imperceptible to the individual almost all of the time (1994: 263).<sup>29</sup> Secondly, despite an inability to recall any events since the onset of amnesia, the subjects retained a sense of a unique and distinct identity and a changing autobiographical narrative. Most simply, the amnesiacs knew (remembered, even if they could not strictly 'recall') that they had lost their 'memory', and they were depressed at this realization. In other words, despite their difficulty in constructing declarative statements of an autobiographical kind, they lived with a sense of their own subjectivity, that is, of a self that they were aware was changing over time. Thirdly, these experiments, as well as work on diary-keeping among these subjects, led Hirst to reject the possessive individualist view of memory as a box in which is kept the property of the owner who can run through an inventory of all that makes him- or herself unique (1994: 273). By contrast, Hirst argues, there are ways in which the social situation remembers things for people – not just for amnesiacs, but for all of us. All kinds of 'reminders', that is to say, the traces of past actions, are effectively distributed in people's social relations, in the ways that others behave, their expectations and misunderstandings, as well as the socially constructed material environment through which they pass. For instance, a father who sees the empty room with a picture of a child who has left for university will recognize that his son is not at home. These are the ways in which amnesiacs can construct an accurate sense of a relationship with the past without recourse to declarative, narrative devices.

Autobiographical memory is thus, in part, rooted in quasi-procedural (or, for Connerton, 'habitual') dealings with others that act as implicit memories. Hirst's suggestion that such 'procedures' shape not so much what is narrated as what is done allows a much clearer picture of 'social' memory among the Roma, who lack many of the collective mnemonic devices with which we are familiar. I find it quite remarkable that Paloma Gay y Blasco reports a Gitano articulating just such an understanding of the social distribution of remembering. Accounting for Gitano ignorance of their past, this man told Gay y Blasco that in 'the life of before', 'we had no neighbours who could tell us who we were' (2002: 633). What I wish to suggest is that the Roma of Harangos are able to live without much of what we think of as 'history' because they have their relations with us, the *gaze*, the non-Gypsies, to remind themselves 'who they are' and who they have been, and thus to help them recognize the nature of the durational world in which, despite their best efforts, they are condemned to live.

So what do these Roma recognize in us? First of all, threats and danger. In earlier work I described Romany groups as living in a 'state of siege' vis-à-vis the outside world.<sup>30</sup> In Hungary (as elsewhere in the region) the very term for the Roma (*Cigány* and its equivalents elsewhere) acts as an ever-present reminder of their daily humiliation, since it is universally understood to refer to a people who have no culture or at least none worthy of respect. Repeated, if inconsistently pursued, attempts at assimilation of the Roma and



efforts to break up their communities since the Second World War, both during and since the Socialist period, have continually reminded the Roma of how the *gáze* see them (Stewart 1997). And then there are indeed all the institutional practices of repression, discrimination, and oppression from which Roma regularly suffer: lower wages for the same work, exclusion from public spaces such as common footpaths or the village bar or the local school that are nominally open to all. In the early years of Communist rule, some Roma even had their own identity documents: the so-called Black Identity Books, which they shared with other 'unreliables' (Sághy 1999). And, perhaps most dramatically, there were the carnivalesque celebrations of radical 'othering' which included forced annual bathing; this was referred to as 'disinfection' and was enacted by public health departments with the assistance of the police and military. These events, which took place in many settlements in Hungary, and which only ceased in Harangos in the year I went to live there (perhaps not coincidentally), surely kept in mind a memory of earlier forced cleansings (RSK 2002; Weindling 2000). In such ways, features of the social world act to sustain certain forms of remembering.<sup>31</sup>

It is a little easier, now, to imagine how the disjointed images of fear and terror flashing up in the cave operate to sustain a form of collective memory for Hungarian Roma. These highly compressed traces of traumatic events provoke interpretations in their listeners through a process of inference (Bloch 1998: 123). Ágnes Daróczi described to me how as a young Romany woman coming across one of these lightning-lit fragments from her grandmother's past, she constructed a story (an accurate one, as I later discovered) in which the moment made sense in terms of what she knew about the ways of the *gáze* and their world today. In brief (*pace* Connerton), the Roma do not need commemorations to remember – the rest of the world does it for them on a daily basis.<sup>32</sup>

The case of the Roma of Harangos and Hungary more generally, I would argue, represents the most common way in which Roma have had to deal with the experience of the war. Ilsa Schmidt's story, by contrast, points to the way in which a minority of Roma have been able to link personal experience with public representations. This is someone who came to Britain to escape the social contexts in which her memories made her 'freeze'. In fact the mere change of location did not enable her to resolve her paralysing unhappiness, but here, thanks to prolonged therapeutic analysis, she feels now that she has found a way to come to terms with her life, as far as this is possible. In the long transcript of Ilsa's narrative there are many traces of the context in which she found a way to narrate her life. In a longer study one could compare her experience with the ways in which other German Sinte have begun to create public narratives of their war experiences over the past twenty-five years (see, for example, Rosenberg 1998).

In cases such as these, the suggestion of authors like Brockmeier, Middleton, White, and Wertsch that narrative is the semiotic vehicle in which the social process of remembering and forgetting (cultural memory) is achieved can clearly be of great relevance (cf. Carsten 1995: 331). These authors see narrative as the crucial practice of memory, the hub around which a sense of self (individual or group) is formed and organized, because this form of 'mediated action' has the 'distinctive capacity to give shape to the

temporal dimension of human experience' (Brockmeier 2002: 27). For Brockmeier this places narrative at the centre of the process of transgenerational and historical meaning construction (2002: 38). Ilsa Schmidt's story has become part of the shared knowledge of German Sinte through the initiatives taken by the Heidelberg research centre, which both published her narrative and involved her in their commemorative activities. But it seems likely that this whole strategy has only become possible (for financial as well as moral reasons) thanks to a change of heart on the part of the German state (Margalit 2002: 180-214). Although Sinte camp survivors were long treated as criminals or asocials in the courts (see Burleigh & Wippermann 1991: 127; Margalit 2002: 123-59), from the 1960s onwards, and especially after 1979,<sup>33</sup> that situation began to change, at least in West Germany.<sup>34</sup> A public space became available to which Sinte like Ilsa Schmidt were asked to contribute and, in so doing, turn their memories into public cultural forms.<sup>35</sup>

For the majority of Gypsies in the rest of Europe, narrating themselves into public life is not possible. Geoffrey White wonders if historical narrative is not a 'universal medium in which people represent to themselves who they are' (2000: 496), but the Hungarian Romany case examined here shows this is not the case. Moreover, this material stands as a lesson to all who would focus on the centrality of narration in mediating personal and public representations. Taking my argument about the Harangos Roma one step further, I would suggest that a culturally attuned psychology should in future take greater note of the ways in which the social environment enables minds to live, in non-discursive fashions, outside and beyond their skins.

#### NOTES

I am grateful to the Leverhulme Foundation (Grant: F/4/BR, 'The persecution of the Gypsies: an ethnographic and historical investigation with special reference to Central and Eastern Europe') for generously supporting the interdisciplinary work on which this article is based. I thank Haldis Haukanes, Deema Kanef, and Frances Pine for inviting me to present material discussed here as a European Association of Social Anthropologists conference paper. For helpful comments on earlier drafts I am grateful to Maurice Bloch, Nigel Rapport, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, and Jonathon Webber. I also thank the two anonymous *JRAI* readers for their insightful suggestions.

<sup>1</sup>The term 'Gypsy' is used relatively loosely here to refer to all those people in Europe who self-identify as Gypsies (or synonyms of this), not all of whom are Romany speakers. Whether these 'Gypsies' or Roma – a term preferred by many of the more politically active – constitute 'a people' is really a political decision. In the absence of a nation state pursuing a 'nationalizing' political agenda, Roma may lack many of the common attributes thought to constitute 'a people'; nonetheless, most anthropologists would hesitate (and not just out of fear of offending their politically active friends) to say they are not a people. Romany, where it is spoken, constitutes a single language with dialectal variations (Matras 2002).

<sup>2</sup>But see S.M. Winter (1999) for an exception. Zimmermann's interview is notable for the way in which the relation of investigator and interviewee is carefully explained, in contrast to many 'collaborations' of writer and former victim (e.g. Rosenberg 1998). Sinte (pl.) (Sinto: m.; Sinteza: f.) has come to be used as an ethnonym of Romany-speaking Gypsies who have lived mostly in German speaking areas of Europe. In German usage (as well as in the literature of many international organizations) they are referred to as Sinti.

<sup>3</sup>Of course the marking of a line between past and present inevitably recollects the past (Connerton 1989: 6-12), and Gay y Blasco goes on to show how the discursive obliteration of the past is paralleled by its incorporation as silent memory in bodily practice of groups of

kin (2002: 636-9). Williams (2003) provides a particularly rich discussion of remembering and forgetting among French Manouches (Roma).

<sup>4</sup>Carsten proposes that we examine the ways in which everyday practices are transformed into narratives of community, and in a slightly different way I too seek to link the implicit knowledge and rules embodied in interaction with non-Gypsies to the generation of particular forms of memory at certain moments in time.

<sup>5</sup>In fact, many of the images of Temne ritual, we discover, do not literally bring forward direct images from the past, or what Shaw calls 'Durkheimian reflections of historical relationships' (2002: 110). Rather, she finds imaginative reconstructions and reconfigurations of historical patterns (2002: 111-13).

<sup>6</sup>Harangos is the name I have given to the northern Hungarian town where I conducted my fieldwork.

<sup>7</sup>In fact, since the term *porrajmos* has also an obscene meaning, it has recently been rejected by most Hungarian Romany speakers, who use the calqued term *Holocausto*.

<sup>8</sup>Other members of his extended family were aware of these stories, so they were not just elicited by my presence.

<sup>9</sup>The Arrow Cross (Nyilás) Party was a pro-German, anti-Semitic fascist party led by Ferenc Szálasi which ruled Hungary from October 1944 to January 1945. During its short reign, 80,000 Jews were deported from Hungary to their deaths. The persecution of the Gypsies was also intensified. After the war, Szálasi and other Arrow Cross leaders were tried as war criminals by Hungarian courts.

<sup>10</sup>See, e.g., *Népszava*, Thursday, 21 July 1998, p. 5, article by J. Udvády: *Bőrfejú-hisztéria Borsodban* (Skinhead hysteria in Borsod county); *Népszabadság*, 6 August 1998, p. 3, article by Szilvia Hámor: *Bőrfejúék pedig nincsenek ...* (But there aren't any skinheads ...).

<sup>11</sup>'Remember!' From the field of Holocaust studies, James Young asserts that societies remember 'only in so far as their institutions and rituals organize, shape and even inspire their constituents' memories' (1993: xi).

<sup>12</sup>Jewish friends and colleagues of mine would be greeted in Harangos as 'brothers' of the Roma; people would link their two index fingers to show how the fate of these peoples had been twinned.

<sup>13</sup>During my fieldwork in the late 1980s, Roma in Harangos attended the local Roman Catholic churches for the purposes of christening their children, burying their dead, and seeking blessings from the Virgin Mary. Therefore their participation in Catholic religious life featured only those forms and rituals which were least likely to involve the cultivation of an historical framework for their lives.

<sup>14</sup>The term 'flashbulb memory' was invented by Brown and Kulik (1977), who asked subjects to remember how they heard of John F Kennedy's death.

<sup>15</sup>Sung by Ileana, a Kelderaš woman, born in 1935, living in the village of Gura Văii, Bacău county, in 1995, to Károly Bari. This song is a personal account, liable to be sung to close acquaintances. (Text at Bari 1999: 202; the song is on CD V, track 23 of the ten-disc set which the booklet accompanies.)

<sup>16</sup>'The Forgotten Holocaust.' Historical documentary directed by George Case for World's End Films. Transmitted July 1989, BBC1, in the *Inside Story* series.

<sup>17</sup>I know of no other cases like this and official ideology was opposed to the idea that people of Gypsy descent could be assimilated via socialization. Robert Ritter's main collaborator, Eva Justin, published a study which purported to show the pointlessness of raising 'mixed-race' Gypsies in orphanages or German foster homes (Justin 1944). In Switzerland, non-Romany speaking *Jenische* traveller children were forcibly adopted out of their families in this period.

<sup>18</sup>Her arrival in Auschwitz is noted in the camp register for April 1944; her departure to Ravensbruck is not noted (State Museum 1995).

<sup>19</sup>Interview with Ilsa Schmidt, May 2001. Transcript and original in possession of the author. Schmidt herself referred to the teachers as 'bad Nazis'.

<sup>20</sup>As Ilsa has herself discovered during visits to the Holocaust documentation centre in Heidelberg, as well as at Roma/Sinte commemorative meetings at Auschwitz, two of which she has attended in recent years.

<sup>21</sup>This elastic term covered beggars, vagrants, Gypsies, petty criminals, and those who were deemed to avoid the duty of work. In practice it included a wide range of people whose

lifestyles did not fit the Nazi model of the *Volk* community, that is, the *Gemeinschaftsfremde*, or 'community aliens'.

<sup>22</sup> This is not to say that Nazi racial policies were the inevitable outcome of pre-war eugenicist programmes: see Evans (1987: 145-66) for a critique of determinist arguments of this kind.

<sup>23</sup> See Willems (1997: 262-74) for a discussion of the case of Robert Ritter in Germany.

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Buruma (1994: 137-76). During a research trip to Ukraine I discovered that the Soviet practice of celebrating the role of Romany partisans appears to have created a public space for Roma to articulate their history as part of a (supra-)national history.

<sup>25</sup> This is no Romany peculiarity. It is reminiscent, for example, of the use of the word *sabon* (soap) in Israel for Holocaust survivors until at least the Six Day War in 1967 (Jonathon Webber pers. comm.). In the Sinte case there may have been issues of guilt and betrayal in play, as some of those who evaded deportation appear to have done so by presenting themselves as 'pure' Gypsies, unlike the majority of *mischlinge* ('mixed race'), who were almost all slated for exile and destruction.

<sup>26</sup> The book argues this not just for the Roma but a range of other peoples.

<sup>27</sup> For evidence of the generality of this model among Romany populations, see Gay y Blasco (2002), for Gitanos; Gropper (1975), for the USA; Piasere (1985), for Italy; and Williams (1984), for France.

<sup>28</sup> In this sense his book might more accurately be titled 'How Societies Commemorate the Past'.

<sup>29</sup> The coherence of the category 'implicit memory' has been questioned. Baddeley stresses the diversity of the functions that this term covers (1997: 357-60).

<sup>30</sup> The image was taken over and developed from Luc de Heusch (1966).

<sup>31</sup> As part of a broader discussion of the difficulty of incorporating their past in the present, Martin-Heuss (1989) describes how German Sinte's willingness to be the subjects of social scientific or historical research has been effected by the persistence of such discriminatory treatment.

<sup>32</sup> This is not to say that the use of the *gaže* to hold an image of the past in the present is unproblematic or that all inferences are accurate. The fact is that in 1988 the fear of attack proved to have been exaggerated. Nor is it necessarily true, as Roma tend to believe in such conflict situations, that each non-Gypsy is an equally hostile 'other'.

<sup>33</sup> In January 1979 the US television miniseries *Holocaust* was transmitted in West Germany, leading to renewed interest not only in Jewish victims but also in non-Jewish victims of the Nazis (Margalit 2002: 180-3).

<sup>34</sup> For the contrast between West and East German treatment of the Gypsies after 1945, see Margalit (2002: 83-8 and 148-9).

<sup>35</sup> Strikingly it is in Germany alone in Central Europe that prominent intellectual figures and artists have stood up for human rights for Gypsies (e.g. Grass 1992).

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## **Remémoration sans commémoration : mnémonique et politique des souvenirs de l'Holocauste chez les Roms d'Europe**

### *Résumé*

On s'intéresse beaucoup, depuis quelques années, à la relation des Gitans (Roms) avec leur passé. Dans le cadre d'une importante étude consacrée à la mémoire de l'Holocauste, les Roms sont pris pour exemple paradigmatique d'un peuple qui préfère oublier son histoire plutôt que de se la rappeler. Au lieu d'examiner les processus « d'oblitération » ou de minimisation du passé, l'approche adoptée ici consiste à analyser les manières dont les Gitans, malgré leur rhétorique « présentistes », se remémorent le passé. En réponse à Maurice Bloch appelant de ses vœux une meilleure intégration des travaux psychologiques et anthropologiques, l'auteur cherche à savoir ce que peut apporter une étude de la mémoire en tant que fonction socialement distribuée, accordant une grande part aux souvenirs « implicites » tissés dans les relations avec les autres. Cette approche nous permet de comprendre comment les communautés roms, persécutées par les Nazis et leurs alliés pendant la seconde Guerre Mondiale, se remémorent le passé sans pour autant le commémorer.

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