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The European Roma: An Unsettled Right to Memory

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In the heartland of Europe there has been a critical amnesia: a 'blind spot in the consciousness of Europe' (Grass, 2011, p. 25). European politics of justice is unsettled by the disarticulated memory of slavery. This is not the memory of the transatlantic slave trade of African people, about which books have been written, films made, and exhibitions created. Neither is it the memory of the slavery of Jewish people during the genocide of the Nazi Holocaust, about which many films have been made, museums, and memorials created, and about which I, too, have written. Nor does this simply relate to the silencing of what has been termed the 'slavery, occupation, subjugation and Stalinist terror' felt by Eastern Europe at the end of World War II (Vike-Freiberga, 2005). I mean *rrobia*, the suppressed history and memories of hundreds of thousands of Roma and their enslavement in Europe predominantly by Romanian states, which continued until *desrrobireja* – the period of abolition in the middle of the nineteenth century. This has had a profound impact on European politics of justice in terms of the development of the public media, how European Roma were treated in the Nazi Holocaust and Cold War of the twentieth century, how Roma continue to be misrepresented in the media, and how they continue to experience some of the worst discrimination of any minority group within the European Union (EU). After 155 years, a campaign by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to have some public recognition of this landmark in Roma history will result in a monument created by Roma sculptor Marian Petre in Bucharest. This chapter considers this within the context of wider erasures and struggles for a Roma right to memory.

According to European Commission statistics, with an estimated population of 10–12 million people, Roma are the biggest ethnic minority in Europe, present in all 27 EU member states. (European Commission,

2010). Although a minority of Roma are without any kind of citizenship, most are European citizens having created settled communities as well as travelling communities in different European countries for more than 700 years. Yet, across Europe, despite the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005–2015)¹ European Roma are having their homes bulldozed, are publically vilified, suffer mass deportations and are forced to live on land unfit for human habitation (EU-MIDAS, 2009, p. 5) This chapter examines the right to memory in the context of the political, economic and social injustices that have occurred in relation to European Roma more generally, before focusing on the case of the Roma in Romania, as a response to some scholars who call for a ‘right to memory’ to add ‘a moment of radical heterogeneity into the historically largely Western European construction of ‘Europe’ (Malksoo, 2009, p. 656). I seek to add a more radical edge to this call for greater heterogeneity in the ‘memory’ of Europe by arguing that part of the neglected politics of justice within the new Europe concerns pluralizing its history, memory, and identity in relation to European Roma who live and travel throughout the region.

The chapter opens by discussing historical discourses relating to Roma and their past in Europe and in Romania specifically. I then argue that within public discourse, Roma memory has been discursively framed in a number of ways that have served to displace and erase the memory of 500 years of slavery as well as twentieth-century genocide during World War II. I then examine new dynamics in relation to Roma memory arising from European policies, as well as the impact of ‘the global memory field’ or synergetic combination of media digitization and globalization that allows for the articulation of memory that can be mobilized across media and across borders in new ways.

Historical discourses on Roma in Europe

Discursive struggles over the terms or words used to describe people or events are themselves indices of the degree of recognition of the right to memory, or the right to have forms of public representation of the otherness of a past. Roma, within official European discourse, are understood in terms of ‘a dynamic identity, a work in progress... primarily a political identity’ that relates to linked but heterogeneous groups (Kovats, 2011). When the World Roma Congress adopted the term ‘Roma’ in 1971, it marked an important change for Roma people from previous definitions in the mainstream media that used various pejorative versions of the word for ‘gypsy’. Since 1989, with the revolutions in Eastern Europe and the collapse of state socialism, this has also enabled a shift in

public discourse away from 'gypsy' defined in terms of a socio-economic category that required assimilation to Roma as people who are a recognized ethnic minority (Kovats, 2011, p. 161). Such public contestation continues, however, with a 2011 debate in Romanian media discourse arising out of a law project to legislate in Romania for the replacement of the term 'Roma' with 'gypsy' (Lakatis, 2011). To some, Roma identity is also a social identity that carries with it the specific historical inheritance of particular economic relationships of different countries (Guy, 2001). Mirga and Gheorghe's work suggests that the different words used in Europe articulate the socially inherited memory of a difference in economic status: in Western Europe the term gypsy 'means nomadic, travelling or migrant' whereas in Eastern Europe, especially Romania, where historically gypsies were enslaved, the word *tsigane* carries with it connotations of subordination and impoverishment (Mirga & Georghe, 1997, p. 5).

Although ethnic boundaries may be conceived as socially constructed, fuzzy, and variable, especially in relation to European Roma (Ladanyi & Szelenyi, 2001), most data strongly support the argument that although the Roma community is the largest 'ethnic' group in Europe, it has benefited little from the impact of human rights legislation (Pogany, 2006). A major challenge then for European public media and the politics of justice lies with recognition of the Roma 'legacy of the past', through, first of all, finding ways to articulate Roma past as part of European history (Kovats, 2011). Anti-gypsyism is different from post-colonial racism, which has its roots located in the particular history of European empire and colonialism. Anti-gypsyism is much less well understood, with longevity of hostility located within a history that is less well known (Kovats, 2011).

Having said this, the work of cultural anthropologists and linguists has developed a clearer sense of the earlier history of Roma, located in what is now understood as their departure from the Indian subcontinent in the eleventh century, with historic documents evidencing that Roma people were in Europe from the fourteenth century onwards. Digital and connective media now allow for the reprinting and distribution of earlier texts, and the assembly and wider distribution and analysis of historic texts and documents. Thus, there is an electronic version of English Quaker John Hoyland's early eighteenth-century ethnographic studies of gypsies in England showing the conditions under which they lived (Hoyland, 1816). Historians have shown how over the last six centuries Roma have been subjected to slavery and forced labour, sterilization, assimilation, and genocide (Renard et al., 2007). Roma were subject

in various ways to anti-gypsy legislation from the fifteenth century onwards that effectively treated 'gypsies' as subhuman. Across many European countries 'gypsies' have been banished, subject to branding and public floggings, with the law allowing for Roma people to be hunted to death in particular European states (Kenrick & Puxon, 1995). 'Heidenjachten' or gypsy hunts were a common sport in Germany in the eighteenth century (Mathews, 2011; Rroma Timeline, 2011). Roma have been banned from wearing 'gypsy' dress; have had their heads shaved; their children have been removed and raised by Christian families; Roma women and children in Spain in 1726 had their ears cut off and were whipped to the border. 'Gypsies' suffered the impact of ethnic and social cleansing long before the Nazi Holocaust, with a disproportionate number of 'gypsies' in the transportations of the 'unwanted' and 'undesirable population' that were effectively socially cleansed from Britain by transporting them to the USA and penal colonies in Australia in the late eighteenth century (Groome, 1899). In France, where Roma have been recorded as early as the fifteenth century, Roma were required to be registered in the nineteenth century and by 1913 it was obligatory if defined as a 'nomad, vagabond or bohemian' to have an identity card. In World War I many Roma were rounded up and interned (Ricard, 2011, p. 169). In Baden in 1922 and in Prussia in 1927 'gypsies' were fingerprinted (Kenrick & Puxon, 1995, p. 13).

Leading up to and during World War II, Roma were persecuted in Germany and other Nazi-occupied and Allied territories. An estimated 25 per cent of European Roma were murdered, with 'racial scientist' Robert Ritter and his assistant classifying and drawing up lists of those considered to be 'gypsies' or with 'mixed blood' during 'academic' studies in the 1930s. Roma men and women were forcibly sterilized and subjected to medical experiments; Roma were shot by *Einsatzgruppen* (death squads), and rounded up and put into concentration camps and transported to death camps, or left to die in the open (Asseo et al., 1997; Kenrick & Puxon, 1995; Lewy, 2000). A short, silent, colour film on the US Holocaust Museum website shows Roma children at St Josefspflege, a Catholic children's home in Mulfingen, Germany, where they were part of a racial hygiene study by Eva Justin. The children, captured on film playing games and polishing shoes, were all deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau (US Holocaust Museum, 2011). A record of 12-year-old Antoine Siegmeir (Tonia) by the criminal police in central Franconia shows that she was classified by Robert Ritter of the Race Hygiene Research Centre in 1942 as a 'gypsy half-breed'. Transported to Auschwitz in 1944, her record ends, 'No further action required.' The camp was

liquidated six weeks later and nothing more was heard of her (Heuss, 1997, pp. 15–16).

In Eastern European countries after World War II, policies towards Roma varied between socialist states (Barany, 2000). Some governments did not recognize Roma officially in terms of according them with a 'national minority' status: rather they were listed as members of other groups or nationalities, subject to forced assimilation, with the subsequent loss of traditional work. Many socialist states sent Roma children to special schools or schools for the disabled (Barany, 2000). In communist Czechoslovakia, research shows that 'a solution' to what was perceived as the Roma 'problem' was the 'the uninformed and non-consenting sterilization of Roma women, often under the guise of caesarean sections and abortions, and under pressure from social workers who would get their uninformed consent with promises of cash and tangible goods' (Lucero & Collum, undated).

With the entry of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union in 2007, reports of violence against Roma have increased, with Italy for example carrying out forced evictions at Roma sites. In 2008 Italy declared a state of emergency in relation to nomadic groups and many cities across Italy have 'security pacts' which provide legal powers to officials to target Roma for forced removal (Zaitchik, 2010).

Historical discourses on the Roma in Romania

The Roma in Romania make up one of the largest minorities with 2.5 per cent of the population according to the 2002 official census. According to *Romania News Watch*, 'Almost every country where there are Roma has Roma communities originating from Romania,' (Jianu, 2008). Most Roma in the territories that are now Romania were slaves. Although Roma came to Europe as free people, the first mention of '*atigani*' according to one source are in the inventories for goods and chattels for monasteries in Moldavia (1428) and Valahia (1385) (cited by Balcanu, Endnote, 23. http://hal-univ-lyon3.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/44/83/72/PDF/Anca_BALCANU_Romany_Issue_s_PAPER.pdf). They were used in monasteries, by the nobility, and by the upper classes as unpaid labourers bound to their place of work, bought and sold alongside other chattels (Jianu, 2008). Further, Jianu suggests a link between the more well known memory of the transatlantic slave trade of Africans by Europeans, which developed over the same period, describing similar classifications of slaves into field slaves and house slaves, which were then divided into specific groups according to their owners and

the kinds of labour performed (Jianu, 2008). There were also parallels in terms of the forms and instruments of discipline with evidence that there were similarities to African slaves, with punishments that included burning, flogging, having lips cut off, and the use of slave neck braces, shackles and other devices of restraint. Male Roma house slaves or '*scopoti*' were castrated so as not to be a threat to noblewomen (Jianu, 2008).

Desrrobireja, or abolition, is understood as a gradual and uneven process from the end of the eighteenth century onwards over more than 50 years. Those regions closer to Western European countries that were moving towards an industrial manufacturing capitalist model saw the abolition of slavery earlier than regions that remained within a more feudal agricultural economic system. By 1790 Transylvania had *desrrobireja*, yet 50 years later there were still bills of sale advertising 'gypsy slaves for sale' in Bucharest newspaper *Luna* (Hancock, 2002, p. 24). On 25 September 1848, students in Bucharest protested against gypsy slavery laws, but it was not until 1856 that the ownership of 'gypsies' was entirely outlawed. A bill of sale from the 1850s shows Roma being sold for less than the price of a few copper pots. An etching from the same period shows a *Shatra*, or slave village, with Roma slaves living in huts made from mud and straw (Rout, 2009).

During the period of *rrobia* (the time of Roma slavery), various legal codes and laws articulated a public discourse in which 'gypsies' were 'subhuman'. According to the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, those human beings who are legally framed as *Homo sacer*, or subhuman, are reduced to 'bare life' with none of the protection or legal rights accorded to the rest of the population by a state (Agamben, 1998). Thus in 1818, according to Hancock (2002, p. 22), despite the abolition of slavery in some regions, the Ottoman court implemented even more stringent conditions in which it stated, for example, that '2. Gypsies are born slaves; 3. Anyone born of a mother who is a slave is a slave. 4. Any owner has the right to sell or give away his slaves,' (Wallachian Penal Code cited in Hancock, 2002, p. 22). The Moldavian Civil Code of 1833 stated: '11 (154) Legal unions cannot take place between free persons and slaves; 11 (162) Marriage between slaves cannot take place without their owners consent,' (cited in Hancock, 2002, p. 23).

Even with the impact of the abolitionists resulting in *desrrobireja*, Roma were then evicted from slave owners' land with no means of survival. Consequently, 'many of them went back to their former masters, begging for food and shelter in exchange for hard work. That way, they continued to be half-slaves, servants in the masters' houses or working

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on the land, with no access to development resources or to school education,' (Rout, 2009). At the end of the nineteenth century, one text, *Gypsy Folk Tales* by the folklorist Francis Hindes Groome, described the situation for Roma in Romania at the time as follows:

Their implements and carriages, of a peculiar construction, display much ingenuity. They are in fact very able artisans and labourers, industrious and active, but are cruelly and barbarously treated. In the houses of their masters they are employed in the lowest offices, live in the cellars, have the lash continually applied to them, and are still subjected to the iron collar and a kind of spiked iron mask or helmet, which they are obliged to wear as a mark of punishment and degradation for every petty offence.

[Groome, 1899, p. xxii]

Little was done to help freed slaves, and, as with the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, it was the masters who were compensated for their loss rather than the enslaved people, in this case the Roma (Jianu, 2008).

It is understandable, though not particularly admirable, that there should be a deliberate lack of acknowledgment of this shameful period in Romanian history. Prejudice against the Roma population exists today at all levels partly because of this lack of self-awareness and critical evaluation of the past. Without reconciliation with past deeds and acceptance of this history, there is a very little chance for a successful integration of Roma into mainstream Romanian society (Jianu, 2008).

During World War II around 25,000 to 26,000 Romanian Roma were deported between 1942 and 1944 to Transnistria as a result of the internal policy of Marshal Ion Antonescu's regime. The policy had little popular support according to a study by Viorel Achim, with many letters of protest from villagers who saw Roma as an integral part of the community, who were highly valued for their crafts and skills (Achim, 2004). Roma were forced to drive their wagons with all their belongings into Transnistria, and once there their wagons and belongings were confiscated and they were left without food and water to die (Kelso, 1995; Crowe, 1991).

In Eastern Europe under communism the memory of the Nazi Holocaust was de-ethnicized and the particular targeting of Roma and Jews by the Nazi regime largely ignored in communist propaganda that sought to represent the struggle by the Red Army against fascism. In the Romanian Socialist Republic the subject of deportation of Roma to the

region of Transnistria was little researched with no official statistics or on-going field research within Roma communities (Achim, 1998, p. 153 cited by Foszto & Anastasoae, 2001, p. 355). At a national level, immediately after the 27 December 1989 revolution against the Ceausescu regime in Romania, the National Salvation Front stated that Romania's minorities would have equal rights. However, very rapidly 'gypsies' began to be used as scapegoats in the media. There were rumours that Ceausescu's family were 'gypsies' and both the regime and its opponents accused gypsies of opposing them. On 13 June 1990 protestors attacked the national television building and accused the Romanian state television station of continuing to broadcast propaganda for the communist regime. Emmanuel Valeriu, the general director of TVR 1, the main channel, then broadcast a statement saying that 'the building has been attacked and looted by Gypsies' (cited in Nicolae & Slavik, 2003).

A study of the presentation of Roma in Romania's five top newspapers shows that between 1990 and 1994 there was a prevalent anti-gypsyism that discursively framed Roma as criminals, stupid and lazy. Roma were consistently identified solely in terms of 'ethnicity', rather than by name, age or occupation for example, and their speech was represented as aggressive and incoherent (Hanganu, 1999). Another study states that in Romania, 'Journalists interested in sensationalist news often focus on the "Roma" issue but rarely with the intention of understanding the sources of tensions,' (Foszto & Anastasoae, 2001, p. 351).

After 2007 many Roma left Romania to seek better lives in West European countries. The particular plight of the Roma of Romania has come to public consciousness more recently with the impact of France's controversial policy to break up Roma camps outside French cities and deport Roma to Romania in 2010 (Fraser, 2010). Nevertheless the recognition for the first time in Romania of a Roma minority is allowing for new kinds of representations (Foszto & Anastasoae, 2001). In the next section I discuss how Roma memory is often displaced and erased before finally examining how European and global discourses, combined with digital media, are also enabling some new dynamics in relation to Romanian Roma and gaining recognition within public discourses of a right to memory.

Unsettling the right to memory

In 2008 one of the oldest settled communities of Roma at the current periphery of Europe was razed to the ground by the authorities

in Sulukule, Turkey. Photographs of before and after depict first a vibrant historic community with shops and houses and places of worship, which is then reduced to the equivalent of rubble after wartime bombing. Roma scholar Grattan Puxon publically protested against the destruction, writing: 'I can vouch for the great value Sulukule has as a centre for Romani culture and social life, and call upon you to intervene to stop the bulldozing of this community.' He argued that 'the main motivation for this destruction is to make a huge profit from demolishing the present houses, forcing Roma to go to another location 40 km outside the city and building new houses, affordable only to wealthy buyers,' (Puxon, 2008). In the final part of his letter he argued that the project went against the Vienna Convention for the Protection of World Culture and Natural Heritage. In response, the Turkish authorities invoked its own local legislation 5366 based on 'Urban Renewal Processes in the Historic City' to support its legal right to erase the Roma community that had been there for more than 500 years.

The destruction of Sulukule is illustrative of a number of discursive logics in the public sphere that erase Roma history and memory, including in this case the logic of protocol and legal convention, and the discursive framework that articulates Roma as nomadic people without the heritage associated with settled communities. In the following section I suggest that in order to understand a right to memory in relation to Roma, we need next to understand how Roma memory is unsettled and displaced through a number of logics and frameworks that erase the otherness of the Roma's past.

Distortions and misrepresentations of Roma in public memory

In terms of public representation, Roma identity is articulated through a number of discursive logics and frameworks that leave little place for the settling of the memory of European slavery and genocide. A number of studies have shown how Roma in news stories are associated with crime and criminality (Foszto & Anastasoae, 2001). Anca Balcanu shows in an analysis of Romanian media stereotypes that the majority of news stories associated with Roma associate them with crime and criminality (Balcanu, 2008, p. 7). This is often connected with the idea that Roma do not understand property rights and that subsequently, because of this cultural difference, they will not respect property and hence are inclined to steal. In terms of a right to memory, this framework serves to erase an historic crime. This is the historic crime against the Roma people who were held captive and stolen: as a stolen people the people-property

boundary was perverted by non-Roma who made Roma into property to be bought and sold. The historic misunderstanding about 'property rights' is, thus, not on the part of Roma but actually on the part of a *gaujo* society that refuses to acknowledge that a key change in European development from feudalism to capitalism included the ownership and trade of human beings at its heart.

A second framework that results in the erasure of Roma memory within public discourse is the construction of Roma as a primarily wandering nomadic people with few settled communities or real roots (Balcanu, 2008, p. 6). This framework often comes hand in hand with the romantic discourse of the wandering gypsy, the exotic other, who has no need to recognize national boundaries or community borders (Balcanu, 2008, p. 6). Most Roma in fact live near what is described as their 'historic heartland' in Southern and Eastern Europe: but because this is not their 'original homeland' they are constructed as a diasporic community which, it is suggested, adds to the difficulty and complexity of Roma memory as a diasporic community (Renard et al., 2007). Pogany also suggests that current conceptions of minority rights might not be well suited to such a heterogeneous 'people' as the Roma, since (unlike other minorities) many no longer have the particular cultural and linguistic features that formerly distinguished them as a minority.

Discursively, I would suggest that the nomadic framework erases Roma memory in public media in a number of ways: it excludes from public memory, first, Roma people's longevity within Europe and, second, erases the memory of Roma as having settled communities within particular places, as with the example of Sulukule. At the same time, it erases the crime of movement without choice, or forced eviction and migration, which is the historic experience of many Roma. Thus, in Romania specifically, it erases the memory of the Roma's deportation to Transnistria, as well as Roma people's flight from Romania in recent years to other parts of Europe to escape prejudice, violence and discrimination.

A third dominant framework within public discourse articulates Roma in terms of having no history, or indeed any need or interest in history or memory of their own culture because it is not written down. Thus, one study argues, for example, that with the history of the Holocaust the book does not hold the same memorial status or fit within Roma cultures of memory (Leoni, 2004). As Alaina Lemon points out, Roma within earlier ethnographic studies and in studies of the Holocaust are then articulated as a people 'without history' and as 'indifferent to recollection', living in an 'eternal present'. She argues that the relative

lesser knowledge and understanding in the public sphere of the Nazi liquidations of Roma 'is blamed on lack of Romani interest or even on alleged Gypsy taboos on remembering the dead' (Lemon, 2000, p. 3). She maintains, however, that 'memory must be broadcast and magnified to become known, and not only have Roma lacked access to mass media, but most Roma who survived World War II have been living in states that prohibited memorials of atrocities that laid bare their racial logic,' (Lemon, 2000, p. 3).

Marlene Kadar notes how Roma Holocaust survivors have not articulated their memories through the conventional and established forms of autobiography and testimony to the same extent as other survivors (Kadar, 2005). Similarly, Sonnerman states, 'I searched in vain for personal accounts, for memoirs from gypsy survivors... Without a voice, that personal voice, Gypsies were reduced to a faceless number in a history book,' (2002, p. 25). Similarly, my own earlier work on Holocaust museums showed how there were mute spaces concerning the longevity of the history of Roma persecution, but suggested that this was perhaps the fault of the curators of memory, rather than Roma themselves. Thus the US Holocaust Museum represents Roma through the artefacts of a 'gypsy wagon', a violin and a gypsy dress, but not through Roma people's own spoken, videoed, or written memories of their experiences of deportation, mass murder, and sterilization (Reading, 2002). Thus Stauber and Vago (2008) argue that the *Porajmos*, or Roma Holocaust memory, may be articulated in other ways, although more recent attempts to secure oral testimonies are showing that, with the right approach, it is entirely possible to develop a recorded history in this way: 'There was no evidence of the supposed unwillingness by Roma to revisit the past – the elderly interviewees were as ready as most other witnesses to answer our questions and make the journey back to a difficult, often traumatic time in their youth,' (Yahadblog, 2010).

Kadar suggests that the researcher needs to be attentive to narratives that are to be found elsewhere in what she terms fragments or 'traces of telling'. The Western will for taxonomies of the past in which the genre of autobiography is policed in particular ways works against Roma memory in that it serves to include only texts that are deliberate, whole and authored. This, she argues, constitutes an ideology of exclusion that is distinctly racialized and gendered. As an antidote to this, Kadar suggests that researchers seek to integrate archival fragments and historical information together in an attempt to build fuller narratives of the events that Roma experienced (2005). A right to memory for Roma, then, needs

to consider the appropriate forms that memory can take as well as its content.

Further, the discursive framework that Roma memory of the Holocaust is especially a result of their lack of interest, lack of right forms, or lack of interest, disarticulates the embodied memory not only of the logic of Nazi policies that were directed at Roma in particular, but of the German postwar logic of denial in relation to crimes against Roma people. The logic of Nazi policies included the branding of 'gypsies' as asocial and as criminals, which was then continued postwar with Germany's courts asserting, until 1982, that 'gypsies' were not persecuted on racial grounds but were persecuted for being asocial or criminals and were, therefore, not to receive the same compensation as Jewish survivors (Sonnerman, 2002). Consequently with the veracity and authority of Roma testimonies publically denied by part of the European judiciary for so many decades it is unsurprising that Roma memory of the events was disarticulated publically for many years.

In addition, it is important to recognize that a particular form of right to memory has been permanently disarticulated for all time through the embodied logic of the Nazi policy of sterilization of Roma men and women, which in itself built on earlier logic (at various points between the fifteenth and nineteenth century) of male castration and the forced removal of Roma children from their families. In the event that the media and public discourse do not culturally articulate memory in the public sphere, then there is usually the possibility for communities to articulate these memories within a family, particularly within genealogical memory: the inheritance of personal stories is still more important than mass media for the initial understanding of events (Reading, 2002). Hence much work has been done on the genealogically inherited memories of the children of Jewish Holocaust survivors (Berger & Berger, 2001; Epstein, 1988; Hass, 1990). But with Roma, many of those that did survive World War II could not pass on their stories to their children, because they could never have children of their own since they had been sterilized. To sterilize someone erases the next generation, and with it disarticulates the very possibility of genealogical memory for all time.

Finally, though not conclusively, especially since 1989, there is the logic of capitalism through which Roma memorial spaces and grave sites are erased. The locations of two former concentration camps in the Czech Republic for example have been 'consumed' by a pig farm in Lety (van Baar, 2008, p. 374) and a holiday resort in Zalov in Hodonin (van Baar, 2008, p. 375). Since 1989 the continual erasure of Roma memory involves a process of displacement, where 'there seems to be no "place"

for Romani memory' (van Baar, 2008, p. 377). Similarly in Transnistria, while tourist information articulates the beauty of the Dniester and Bug, there is no reference made to what took place there – Roma starved to death on its banks and were pushed into its waters to drown. In the final section I suggest that in tension with these logics of erasure, however, there are some 'new' dynamics that suggest a movement towards some limited recognition of the right to Roma memory through various public media as part of the process for equality and justice, as suggested by the move cited at the beginning of this chapter to create a monument to the slavery of Roma in Romania.

New dynamics of Roma memory

The new dynamics that are impacting on Roma memory involve new European policies and resolutions in relation to Roma, as well as the changes to memory practices through the 'global memory field', or the combination of digital, globalized media that is expanding the possibility for mediated memories to be captured and mobilized across borders and across media (Reading, 2011b, 2001c). After 1989 the expanding EU required a new transnational narrative that could create unity across East and West Europe. One important element in this narrative was the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust (Van Baar, 2008, p. 381). Thus a new dynamic in Roma memory post-1989 consists of various European level initiatives within policy and practice to acknowledge the otherness of the Roma past within the context of a wider Europe. In 2005, for example, a resolution of the European Parliament called for the removal of the pig farm in Lety, in the Czech Republic, linking 'the remembrance of the Holocaust to the promotion of social, economic and political integration of the Roma in the EU' (Huub van Baar, 2008, p. 382). In Brno the *Muzeum Romské Kultury* (2010) has played an important role in agitating for proper memorials at the Roma concentration camps at Lety u Písku and Hodonín u Kunštátu. At the same time, digital connective media provide a new form of articulation ensuring that the cultural history and memory of this actual site reaches beyond local and national boundaries geospatially as well as linguistically. The *Muzeum Romské Kultury* website, for example, provides a history of the Roma people, as well as information on language, arts and crafts (see <http://www.rommuz.cz/>).

Across different European countries there have been a number of public initiatives to articulate Roma memory, predominantly in terms of memorializing and commemorating the genocide against the Roma in

the Holocaust. In 2011 the East Berlin district of Friedrichshain renamed a street 'Ede und Unku'. The name is also the title of a book published in 1931 (later banned and burnt) by a young Jewish communist, Grete Weiskof, writing under the name Alex Wedding, who fled Germany in 1933. The book narrates the story of the friendship between a young factory worker and a young Sinti woman, Erna Lauenberger, who was deported to Auschwitz and later died. Germany has also inaugurated a memorial near the Reichstag to Sinti and Roma murdered by the Nazis (Anon, *The Telegraph*, 2011a).

Since 1989 there has been the erection of a number of public monuments and reconstruction of museum exhibits specifically to memorialize the murder of European Roma in death camps. The first memorial for the Roma and Sinti was erected in April 1997 at Buchenwald. Some 57 years after the events, an exhibition was created about Zigeunernacht, when all of the remaining gypsy families were gassed at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oswiecim. The Auschwitz exhibition was the first time in the museum's history that an exhibition was created depicting the sufferings of the Roma.

As well as monuments and museums, Western news media have begun to reinterpret Roma memory. New memory work includes a journalist who sought to trace the origins of a photograph which initially was thought to be of a Jewish girl, but which was actually a photograph of nine-year-old Roma Settela (also known as Blieta and Anna Maria) Steinbach at Transitcamp Westerbork who was then taken to Birkenau on 19 May 1944 (<http://www.cympm.com/gypsy.html>). Public media are articulating new dynamics of calendrical memory: A report by the BBC in 2009 provides new evidence of brutality during the Nazi period with interviews with Kalderash men and women from Vlasca, in Romania. The interviews emphasize the horrific hardships of both Roma men and women, with Roma recalling how the military dictator Ion Antonescu was given land between the Bug and Dniester to attack the Red Army, which was then used to deport Roma in their own carts and horses before taking all their possessions and leaving them to die. The report emphasizes the hunger experienced by the Roma, as well as the sexual assaults and rape of Roma women (BBC, 2009). Further such stories are archived and accessible in ways that were not possible prior to the global memory field. For the first time on 27 January 2011 Holocaust Memorial Day in Europe placed Roma victims of the Holocaust at the centre of its commemorative discourse.

Perhaps it is questionable whether the mobilization of Roma Holocaust memory in exhibitions, in memorials, and in newspapers will

'really challenge the widespread neglect of Romani history and memory in Europe' (van Baar, 2008, p. 383). In terms of the development of a European narrative that mobilizes Roma memory as part of European integration it allows for links to be made with current human rights abuses, but may result in a loss of specificity of Roma history in different regions and countries (van Barr, 2010). One further aspect of this concerns the remaining amnesia of different Roma historical conditions prior to the Nazi Holocaust. In the exhibition at Auschwitz-Birkenau, for example, Roma are largely mute, their stories represented through documents and photographs with no link to present day Roma and no link to an earlier past. While the destructive measures of the German Nazi regime are discussed, there is no mention of anti-gypsyism through harsh discriminatory legislation in many European countries in the interwar years (van Baar, 2010). These included a 1927 Czechoslovakian law that required Roma to carry identity cards and for Roma children to be placed in special institutions; a 1928 Hungarian law that implemented the fingerprinting and registration of Roma communities, as well as regular police raids of Roma communities to remove 'undesirable elements'.

Within Romania, as in other European countries, it is evident that there is a nascent new dynamic in relation to the *Porajmos* with political struggles to give a place to people's memories of the deportations and genocide that took place in Transnistria. A new project, specifically on the memory of the Holocaust in Romania, compares sites of remembrance for Jews and Roma, as well as developing new oral histories, seeking 'to make more central to holocaust memory the experience of relocation, concentration and mass extermination in Transnistria', (Abakunov et al., 2010). The project examines the tensions between mass-media images – such as tourist images of sites – and communist propaganda with historical significance of sites such as the crossing points over the Dniester river linking this to oral testimony. The research has led to active memory work with an exhibition 'Routes of disappearance: Jewish and Roma memory in Transnistria' at the Free International University of Moldova. Another interview project in collaboration with Sodertorn University in Sweden has uncovered more than 40 sites of Roma killings, as well as revealed new details of the humiliations that Roma suffered, such as the tearing out of their hair by soldiers to obtain the gold that many Roma women weave into it; and survival techniques such as sewing gold coins under the skins of animals (YahadBlog, 2010).

However, the European and Romanian memory of the Roma Holocaust remains largely within a logic of erasure in relation to the memory

of earlier Roma slavery. This aspect of Roma memory, unlike the memory of Roma in the Holocaust, remains unarticulated and marginalized within mainstream media and historical discourses. Within general history books on slavery, the slavery of Roma and the impact of the abolitionist movement in Eastern Europe is barely given a mention and is kept separate from wider European history. It is therefore significant that, as part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion since 2005, the *Bucharest Daily News* reported – 150 years after the abolition of Roma slavery – the first ‘March towards Freedom’ in 2006. It was organized by representatives from NGOs, Roma community groups and officials, and in Bucharest people came together to celebrate Roma freedom from slavery and to give prayers of thanks in local churches (Maruntoiu, 2006). This has since built into a campaign for a monument. In April 2011, NGOs in Romania celebrated 150 years since the abolition of slavery and announced that a monument would be constructed to commemorate *desrobireja*.

Conclusion

A right to memory is not overtly included in any international convention, although implicitly such rights are enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) (Lee, 2010, p. 8). However, in an earlier essay on the right to memory I have shown how international protocol and convention reveal four kinds of discursive precepts suggestive of the legal right to memory: these include the right to autochthonic memory, the right to world cultural memory, the right to national memory, and the rights of victims within states of exception to have the crimes of the state publically recognized through various media forms (Reading, 2011a). All are fraught with tensions and contradictions in various ways, and with the case of the Roma in Europe it is primarily within the latter, in terms of victim memory, through which we see the beginnings of the assertion of a right to memory. After many years of erasure and silence there is some growing recognition of the memory of the *Porajmos*, with European policies directed to eliminate discrimination against Roma combining with the global memory field to enable the past to be articulated at a local, national and transnational level, through mainstream media, through state initiatives but also through the new kinds of availability of sources that previously were not easily accessible. For Roma the connective possibilities provided through the global memory field, as evidenced through websites, the digitization of historic texts, and the new connectivities of social media, allow the

otherness of the past to begin to be mobilized across media and across national boundaries through NGOs and at grassroots level, as well as through mainstream media and state institutions.

There is, however, much still to be done: we might ask what of the other kinds of memory, other than victim memory, suggested in international protocol? A monument to Roma slavery will not in itself bring justice to Europe's heterogeneous Roma communities, but the struggle to create and retain public recognition of the monument will surely play some small but significant part. As Delia Grigore, president of the Roma centre Amare Rromentza said, 'The construction of this monument marks the beginning of a campaign to create landmarks for the history of Roma,' (Lakatis, 2011).

Note

1. The Decade of Roma Inclusion is a human rights initiative by a range of NGOs and governmental organizations across the European Union and the USA.

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