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1 Europe's other world

Romany memory within the new dynamics of the global memory field

Anna Reading

Slaves differed from other human beings in that they were not allowed freely to integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited meanings of their natural forebears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory. (Patterson 2011: 279)

Digital connective media are enabling new articulations of memory that reanimate what has been a viscous amnesia of slavery within the heartland of Europe. This chapter aims to examine how digital connective media may offer new possibilities in relation to the public memory of Roma in Europe. What may be loosely termed 'older media' have in various ways erased significant aspects of Roma – 'gypsy' – memory, including Europe's shameful history of *rrobija*, namely Roma people's enslavement for over 500 years in what is now predominantly the national territory of Romania. In escaping bondage, Roma people fled across Europe, resulting in the present-day Roma communities to be found in all countries of Europe, with substantial minorities in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Slavery in various forms continued until abolition, or *desrrobija*, which began as a social and legislative movement at the end of the eighteenth century. Inspired in part by other anti-slavery campaigns in Europe and North America, the anti-slavery movement continued as an ongoing social and political struggle until the end of Roma slavery in the middle of the nineteenth century.¹

This chapter's focus is also aimed at highlighting the fact that, when considering the post-socialist context, we need to be alive to the experience not only of nations with territories, but also of transnational minorities – minorities whose memory may have been previously de-legitimated within totalitarian regimes. As Orlando Patterson's work on memory and the slavery of African people suggests, a feature

of slavery is the denial of inheritance and of a community of memory (Patterson 2011). Roma people have suffered a double de-legitimation of their past which makes the study of Roma memory particularly important within any study of memory and digital media in the new Europe.

Roma are, in fact, the biggest ethnic minority in Europe.² They have an estimated population of 10 to 12 million people and live and work in all 27 EU

Member States (European Commission 2010), with significant minorities in Russia, Ukraine and Turkey.³ There are historically settled communities as well as travelling communities that go back more than 600 years. In 2005 the EU launched ‘The Decade of Roma Inclusion’, a major programme aimed at reducing discrimination and marginalization of Roma within education, employment, healthcare and housing. Yet more than five years on, many Roma continue to experience forced evictions from their homes and are subject to violence and discrimination in education, healthcare and at work, with many forced to live on sites comprising former refuse or chemical dumps, or former industrial land, often contaminated with lead or asbestos (EU-MIDIS 2009: 5).

When Orlando Patterson wrote *Slavery and Social Death* (2011) he was particularly referring to the impact upon collective memory of making African people into property that could be bought and sold as part of the transatlantic slave trade. In his idea of natal alienation, he encapsulates how being made into property erases ancestry and with it the sense of the past. Significantly, and in keeping with Patterson’s thesis, European narratives have also constructed Roma as a people without a past or a history (Trumpener 1992), often with the added ‘justification’ that Roma themselves are a present-centred people who supposedly have no interest in the past (Lemon 2000). The unarticulated memory of *rrobia* or Roma slavery within the public discourses of older media was then compounded with a lack of articulation in public memory of Nazi atrocities specifically against European Roma, and subsequent mistreatment after the Second World War within state socialist Eastern bloc countries that included the denial of human rights and forced sterilization of Roma women (Barany 2000; Crowe 1991; Heuss 1997).

Thus it was only in 2011, 155 years after the abolition of Roma slavery in Europe, that there was the beginning of some public recognition of *desrrobija* in the form of plans for a monument by Roma sculptor Marian Petre in Bucharest (Lakatis 2011). This came about within a context not only of political changes since 1989 in post-socialist countries, but, as importantly, also within the context of digitization. Connective technologies, such as mobile phones and social networking sites, combined with the impact of uneven processes of globalization, are developing what elsewhere I have termed a *globital memory field* that has new memory dynamics and forms of engagement.

This chapter briefly explains the six analytical dynamics of the *globital memory field*. Using the dynamics as a method of analysis enables a clearer understanding of the ways in which digital technologies are reshaping Roma mediated memory in post-socialist Europe. Analysing Roma digital memory through these dynamics suggests how Romany memories are being *dis embodied*, *dis embedded* and *dis connected*. These processes seem to be extending and enabling resilient ways of telling the past for Europe’s other world. This chapter argues for a greater heterogeneity to what has largely been a Western European construction of European history and memory (Mälksoo 2009). It also signals the need for a transnational approach. This is crucial, since some memory communities such as the Roma live and travel throughout the region. A transnational approach, this chapter argues, will enable a more complex understanding of how digital media may rearticulate neglected stories within the new Europe.

I begin the chapter with a short introduction to the concept of the global memory field. I then briefly summarize some of the ways in which Roma memory has been discursively erased within ‘older media’, before tracing the dynamics of the global memory field to reveal some of the emergent articulations of Roma memory in post-socialist Europe.

The global memory field

This chapter takes forward the work of Robert Saunders’ insights on Roma identities online in his book chapter ‘The Cybernetic Vanguard; The Roma’s Use of the Web to Protect a Minority Under Siege’ (Saunders 2010). Saunders’ work examines ethno-politics and minority nationalism in relation to webs of Roma identity. Drawing theoretically on cyber-theory, his work takes this forward specifically in relation to Roma memories. Theoretically and methodically, this moves beyond his studies through an understanding of the synergetic dynamics of *globalization* and *digitization* as an immanent process in memory.

A number of scholars have argued that globalization in combination with digitization is changing memory languages, practices and forms (Assmann and Conrad 2011; Frosh and Pinchevski 2009; Garde-Hansen *et al.* 2009; Morris-Suzuki 2005; van Dijck 2007). My own work has suggested that the synergetic dynamics of globalization with digitization is developing a *global memory field* that cuts across conventionally understood binaries of the communicative versus the cultural, the individual versus the social, or the national versus the transnational. With this come new kinds of memory practices, languages and forms that are redrawing and reshaping memory.

How, then, might the concept of the global memory field enable new approaches and methods of analysis within the field of digital memory studies? The conceptualization seeks to understand the intersecting processes of digitization and globalization, recognizing the importance of processes of assemblage and trajectory across and between the private and the public, the individual and the collective, the digital and the analogue, the material and the energetic. The term ‘global memory field’ as a term is meant to combine the word ‘global’ in tension with ‘bit’. *Bit* is a computing term that refers to the binary values of 0 and 1. Put together as a contiguous sequence, bits make up the smallest meaningful sequence of data – a *byte*. The term ‘global memory field’ thus seeks to denote the intermeshing processes that are often interrupted through the unevenness of digitization at various levels. These include the intersecting of micro with macro memory, the collective with the individual, the cultural with the social, the mediated with the non-mediated.

Put together with the word ‘field’, the term ‘global memory field’ borrows Pierre Bourdieu’s approach to the analysis of culture: for Bourdieu, culture is a *field*. For Bourdieu, the term ‘field’ refers to a setting in which agents struggle over cultural production, consumption and circulation (Bourdieu 2003). The global memory field, though, involves in particular the struggle by agents of memory (e.g. witnesses, journalists, museum curators and economic stakeholders) over what may be understood as the mobilization, assemblage and securitization of

memory. With the digital media era these struggles may be engaged within largely hidden languages of the computer, based on algorithms, and are enabled through the energetic connections of electricity. Thus the modes of struggle may be economic, they may be psychological, they may be socio-political, but they are also algorithmic and electric.

The struggles take place through intersecting pluri-medial assemblages. These are articulated through different material practices and discursive formations.⁴ These assemblages are subject to and combine with processes of securitization – processes that consolidate or secure the pluri-medial assemblage. At the same time, trajectories of mobilization open the assemblage to change. An example of this procedure is the way in which entries in *Wikipedia* are added to, altered and changed by Wiki developers, sometimes initially with more than one entry for the same referent. Over time, one version becomes fixed or made secure as the official *Wikipedia* entry; the entry may then be withdrawn or added to again, by different people and organizations with different interests and versions relating to the referent.

The global memory field is characterized by six core dynamics.⁵ These six dynamics may be used as an analytical framework or method to reveal new memorial emergences and engagements within the context of digital and connective communication. First, analytically there is the extent to which mediated memory is no longer secured within one medium but – through digitization and connectivity – is mobilized and transformed across different media: I call this the *dynamic of transmediality*. Second, within the global memory field there is the speed (which may be rapid or slow) with which mediated memory assemblages can be mobilized across the electric, algorithmic, socio-political, economic and psychic dimensions of the field: analytically, this is termed the *dynamic of velocity*. Third, there is the mediated memory assemblages' limit as well as reach from the historical point of origin: this is termed the *dynamic of extensity*. Fourth, there is the degree to which a mediated memory assemblage conforms to or is secured within a general pattern, particular group or category: analytically, this is termed the *dynamic of modality*. Fifth, drawing on the idea from chemistry of how atoms are bonded onto other atoms, there is the dynamic of valency. This refers to the degree of 'sticky points' between the assemblage and other assemblages. The sixth dynamic is the *dynamic of viscosity*. In part this term is suggested by Zygmunt Bauman's idea (2000) of liquid modernity. Liquid modernity refers to the present stage of modernity characterized by liquidity, change and instantaneity. In arguing for the significance of paying attention to viscosity, however, the global memory framework departs from the assumption that all is necessarily more liquid. Rather, the analyst is attentive to the mediated memory assemblage's particular processes of flux or change which may flow, melt, be resistant or solidify over time and space.

These six analytical dynamics may be discursively articulated across several different axes. The first axis (x) plots the material practices and discursive formations of the assemblage. These are then subject to the (y) axis – processes of mobilization and securitization.

Roma memory: forms of erasure in older media

How then might we use this model to analyse new emergences of Roma memory within the global memory field? To track these emergences, we need first to have some picture of how Roma memory has been articulated within older media. There are, within older media, a number of fairly stable identifiable discursive frameworks that articulate particular logics of erasure in relation to the Roma past and its community of memory.⁶ Earlier studies suggest that news reports nearly always frame Roma as criminals or as engaged in criminal activity, often basing this conception on the idea that Roma do not understand mainstream ideas of private property or the idea of property rights. This involves a significant discursive inversion: it erases Roma memory of slavery and the memory that it was in fact precisely the Roma in what is now the territory of Romania who were made into chattels or non-people from 1374 until the 1850s. Older media, through asserting that it is Roma who do not understand property rights or who steal from the European *gajo* (non-Roma or non-gypsy) society, invert and erase the central fact that it was *gajo* society that stole from the Roma: *Gajo* made Roma into property, held them captive and enslaved them. This discursive inversion is a clear example of ‘the social death’ of slaves that Patterson terms ‘natal alienation’. This means that owing to their earlier history of enslavement in Europe, Roma have often been cut off from the possibility of anchoring the present in what Patterson calls a ‘community of memory’ (Patterson 2011: 279).

Further, studies of the representation of Roma in ‘older media’ such as the press show what may then be deduced as three other discursive frameworks and logics of erasure. These are summarized in Table 1.1.⁷

So, what happens to these logics of erasure within the global memory field of post-socialist states? In tension with the older media logics there are some new dynamics that suggest the emergence of a limited recognition of Roma memory through various digitized public media.

Roma memory in the global memory field

Let us take as a discrete example the first of these discursive frameworks and logics of erasure, the one that erases the memory of slavery through the articulation of Roma as criminals or engaged in theft or criminal activity. Within general history books on slavery, the slavery of Roma and the impact of the abolitionist movement in Eastern Europe is barely mentioned, and is kept separate from wider European history. This statement also applies, incidentally, to the work of Orlando Patterson himself, who concentrates on the transatlantic slave trade and whose work does not reference the slavery of Roma peoples. If we turn to the global memory field, however, we see the emergence of a different picture. For example, digitization and connective media allow for the public circulation of some of the original Bills of Sale advertising Roma slaves that date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Originally, these would have been printed in local European newspapers, such as the Bucharest newspaper *Luna*, which features one such notice

Table 1.1 Discursive logics of erasure of mediated Roma memory

Discursive framework	Logic of erasure	Forgotten memory
Roma are criminals, they steal	Discursive inversion Roma do not understand property rights.	Erases fact that Roma were made into property and held captive
Roma are a nomadic people with few settled communities	Discursive inversion Roma are wanderers with no need for roots	Erases longevity of Roma in Europe Makes invisible settled Roma communities Makes invisible forced evictions, deportations
Roma are not interested in their past	Roma have no written culture They have taboos on remembering the dead	Makes invisible lack of public interest; post-war research: prohibition on memorials; continuation of anti-gypsy policies; Makes invisible impact of sterilization on genealogical memory
Roma have not contributed to European societies and therefore their past is of no national interest	Commercialism/capitalism	Erases and 'consumes' sites and places of Roma memory



Figure 1.1 For Sale: A prime lot of serfs or slaves. Gypsy (Tzigany). Through an auction at noon at the St Elias Monastery on 8 May 1852 consisting of 18 Men, 10 boys, 7 Women and 3 girls in excellent condition.⁸

advertising ‘gypsy slaves for sale’ in 1852. This bill was reproduced in 2002 in another printed form, the history book, *We are the Romani People: Ame Sam RRomane džene: Volume 28* (Hancock 2002). The printed book about Roma in Europe includes an historical overview of their enslavement by the well-known Romany scholar Ian Hancock. Sections of the book have since been made available online, and the Bill advertising the slaves has subsequently been digitally copied and circulated on the Web, through multiple sources including Wikipedia. I can easily search for ‘Roma, bills of sale’ from any networked computer sited anywhere on the globe. I can save it, download it and reassemble it with other material.

If we apply the analytical framework of the global memory field with its six dynamics, the resulting table brings into view the new emergences of the digitized Bill of Sale in comparison with its earlier (older media) reproduction in the printed book (Table 1.2).

I will describe in more detail what this analysis, using the six dynamics of the global memory field, reveals:

- The original newspaper advertisement reappeared in print form when it was reprinted in Hancock’s book. The digitized on-line source of the Bill of Sale is transmedial however: it becomes mobilized in multiple forms that include print media, but also screen media. It now has the *transmedial* potential to be used in other material forms, as well as to be assembled into moving images or reassembled and reworked with other images.
- The earlier *velocity* of transformation and access through older media moving from the original Bill of Sale to dissemination in the book was 150 years;

Table 1.2 Trajectories of mediated memory within the global memory field articulating new visibilities of Roma *rrobja* (slavery).

<i>Analytical dynamics of global memory field</i>	<i>Mediated memory</i>	<i>Global memory field</i>
Media memory example	Nineteenth-century newspaper Bill of Sale	Online source
(Trans)-mediality	Printed newspaper to printed book	Multiple digital media forms
Velocity	150 years	Seconds, minutes, hours
Extensity	Local-nation-nation	Local-nation, Europe-wide, transnational/global-local
Modality	Print to print: limited	Print media to poly-modal: Community websites; Wikipedia; Person – wearable prosthetic – network – prosthetic
Valency	Limited bonds	Multiple/contingent; bonds with wider abolitionist history
Viscosity	Fixed/solid	Multiple and multiplying bonds
Axis	X vertical	Liquid X vertical and Y horizontal

within the global memory field, the velocity of dissemination and distribution for the Bill of Sale is transformed, with the potential for multiple access points via computer and connective and mobile technologies in seconds, minutes and hours.

- In terms of the dynamic of *extensity*, the original Bill of Sale had very limited reach from its point of origin. By contrast, the digital Bill of Sale has extensive reach. It travels and is capable of being mobilized rapidly from its local points of origin. It is being disseminated worldwide, transnationally as well as moving from the global back to the local.
- The *modalities* of the original and reproduced book image are within only two categories: the categories are situated within the conventions of an advertisement and within the conventions of the historical text. But in terms of the modalities of the Bill of Sale within the global memory field, the digitized object of the Bill of Sale is poly-modal, articulated within a variety of different conventions that include community websites, Wikipedia, newspapers, campaigning organizations and so on. It may be downloaded to the PC but also to the mobile phone, thus moving from the public realm of the archive or public library to a personally networked wearable *memory prosthetic* – an artificial memory device that is so close to the body that it becomes an additional part of it.
- In terms of the dynamic of *valency*, the reproduced Bill of Sale in the book has very limited bonds or ‘sticky points’ with other historical discourses; the digital Bill of Sale has multiple and multiplying bonds with, for example, wider abolitionist history.
- Finally, in relation to the dynamic of *viscosity*, we can see that whereas the reproduced print image is fixed and travels vertically, the digital image within the global memory field has less *viscosity*; it flows easily, being mobilized and travelling vertically as well as horizontally between different memory agents and organizations.

Conclusion

The digitized Bill of Sale is of course just one discrete and minor indicator of new emergences of Roma memory that are being mobilized. There is much research still to be done in this regard, as there is so little work generally on Roma memory and even less in terms of how it is articulated within a globalized and digitized context. For example, as well as the digitization of older print journalism within the global memory field – newspaper to book, book to multiple assemblages – there are interesting emergences in the global memory field, of feature-length news stories around anniversaries related to the Holocaust, for example, that are then archived on mainstream news websites. One such report by the BBC in 2009 provided new evidence of brutality during the Nazi period using original interviews with men and women from Vlasca, the Kalderash (BBC 2009). Such journalism is then digitally archived and becomes more easily accessible, at least to those with Internet access, in ways that were not possible prior to the advent of the global memory field.

Another area to examine within the global memory field concerns the digitization of public and state archives themselves, with analogue documents that were once obscure and difficult to access becoming digitally accessible. Where previously Roma interviews or testimonies would have required extensive travel and fieldwork, Roma people's stories are now easily mobilized across multiple sites, with more extensive reach, and access worldwide, at least from anywhere with a computer or mobile device and broadband access. These stories may then be downloaded and reassembled within a localized context of meaning; they may also be digitally stitched together with other digital fragments to enable a fuller articulation of Roma memories. Further, digital media are more able to capture performances of culture that articulate a heritage and a community of memory in ways that include artworks, videos and dance, with a community of memory developing through, for example, Roma musicians capturing their work on video and uploading it to YouTube.

These performances in turn acquire poly-medial meaning, authority and veracity. Such material can be mobilized and reassembled within other community websites, and may be quoted or hyperlinked to other news sources, with modalities becoming contingent, multiple and multilingual. Once within the global memory field, such communities of Roma memory, instead of remaining isolated or cut off from wider or comparable communities of memory, are able to develop multiple bonds and connections with other related historical events, such as other stories of the Holocaust, or the Second World War.

It is difficult to tell at this juncture whether the mobilization of new emergences of Roma memory through digital media will actually make a difference to Roma lives in Europe or aid the elimination of discrimination and marginalization, as well as counteracting the effects of decades of denial and forgetting of Roma memory in Europe (Van Baar 2008). Yet, these new dynamics seem to make visible particular aspects of Roma memory in emergent ways. Within older media, to return to the work of Orlando Patterson, Roma were non-persons natively alienated by European discursive practices that prevented them from integrating 'the experience of their ancestors into their lives'. The global memory field seems to allow for Roma to more freely anchor the precarious present in a conscious community of memory that may amplify centuries of Roma resilience.

Notes

- 1 Anti-Gypsyism has a long etiology with hostility located within a history that is much less well known than post-colonial racism. It is subsequently much less well understood in comparison. Roma were listed as property or chattels within the inventories of monasteries and landowners. Etchings and early historical ethnographies show that Roma were kept apart in slave villages. Legislation in several European countries included the right to 'hunt' 'gypsies' to death, to physically assault them with public floggings and branding, and to remove Roma children from their parents in order to give them a Christian upbringing. A disproportionate number of Roma were transported to Colonial Penal colonies such as Australia. See Hancock 2002; Hoyland 2010; Kenrick and Puxon 1995.
- 2 Definitions of who the Roma in Europe are vary and are much contested. Martin Kovats (2011) argues that Roma are best defined dynamically in terms of a political

- and cultural identity that is highly varied and includes heterogeneous communities across the EU.
- 3 The Russian census (Vserossiiskaia perepis' naseleniia 2002 goda. Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia po regionam Rossii 2002) lists the Romani population as 183,000 in Russia with 3 million Roma in Turkey <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=taix-seminar-on-roma-people-in-turkey-2010-12-15>> (accessed 4 July 2011).
 - 4 On this process see Frosh and Pinchevski (2009: 298).
 - 5 For earlier studies that developed these analytical dynamics see Reading 2011a, 2011b, 2011c.
 - 6 See a number of studies of the representation of Roma in 'older media', including Balcanu 2009; Foszto and Anastasoae 2001; Guy 2001.
 - 7 For my more detailed analysis of the logics of erasure of Roma memory in older media based on a meta-analysis of a range of studies, see Reading 2012.
 - 8 Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Sclavi_Tiganesti.jpg> (accessed 4 July 2011).

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